

In vision or in dream, clove to my breast:
 Among mankind, or when gone far away
 To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest 800
 Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

XVI

These hopes found words through which my spirit sought
 To weave a bondage of such sympathy,
 As might create some response to the thought
 Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie 805
 Bright in the outspread morning's radiance,
 So were these thoughts invested with the light
 Of language: and all bosoms made reply
 On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might
 Through darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.

XVII

Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim, 811
 And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother,
 When I could feel the listener's senses swim,
 And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother
 Even as my words evoked them—and another, 815
 And yet another, I did fondly deem,
 Felt that we all were sons of one great mother;
 And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem,
 As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

XVIII

Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth 820
 Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep,
 Did Laon and his friend, on one gray plinth,
 Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap,
 Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep:
 And that this friend was false, may now be said 825
 Calmly—that he like other men could weep
 Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread
 Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

XIX

Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow,
 I must have sought dark respite from its stress 830
 In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow—
 For to tread life's dismaying wilderness
 Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless,
 Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind,
 Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less 835
 With love that scorned return, sought to unbind
 The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

XX

With deathless minds which leave where they have passed
 A path of light, my soul communion knew ;
 Till from that glorious intercourse, at last, 840
 As from a mine of magic store, I drew
 Words which were weapons ;—round my heart there grew
 The adamantine armour of their power,
 And from my fancy wings of golden hue
 Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom's tower, 845
 A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

XXI

An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes
 Were lodestars of delight, which drew me home
 When I might wander forth ; nor did I prize
 Aught human thing beneath Heaven's mighty dome 850
 Beyond this child : so when sad hours were come,
 And baffled hope like ice still clung to me,
 Since kin were cold, and friends had now become
 Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be,
 Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee. 855

XXII

What wert thou then? A child most infantine,
 Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age
 In all but its sweet looks and mien divine :
 Even then, methought, with the world's tyrant rage
 A patient warfare thy young heart did wage, 860
 When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought
 Some tale, or thine own fancies, would engage
 To overflow with tears, or converse fraught
 With passion, o'er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

XXIII

She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness, 865
 A power, that from its objects scarcely drew
 One impulse of her being—in her lightness
 Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew,
 Which wanders through the waste air's pathless blue,
 To nourish some far desert : she did seem 870
 Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew,
 Like the bright shade of some immortal dream
 Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life's darkstream.

XXIV

As mine own shadow was this child to me,
 A second self, far dearer and more fair ; 875
 Which clothed in undissolving radiancy
 All those steep paths which languor and despair
 Of human things, had made so dark and bare,

But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft
 Of friends, and overcome by lonely care, 880
 Knew I what solace for that loss was left,
 Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

XXV

Once she was dear, now she was all I had
 To love in human life—this playmate sweet,
 This child of twelve years old—so she was made 885
 My sole associate, and her willing feet
 Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet,
 Beyond the aëreal mountains whose vast cells
 The unreposing billows ever beat,
 Through forests wide and old, and lawny dells 890
 Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

XXVI

And warm and light I felt her clasping hand
 When twined in mine: she followed where I went,
 Through the lone paths of our immortal land.
 It had no waste but some memorial lent 895
 Which strung me to my toil—some monument
 Vital with mind: then, Cythna by my side,
 Until the bright and beaming day were spent,
 Would rest, with looks entreating to abide,
 Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied. 900

XXVII

And soon I could not have refused her—thus
 For ever, day and night, we two were ne'er
 Parted, but when brief sleep divided us:
 And when the pauses of the lulling air
 Of noon beside the sea, had made a lair 905
 For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept,
 And I kept watch over her slumbers there,
 While, as the shifting visions o'er her swept,
 Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

XXVIII

And, in the murmur of her dreams was heard 910
 Sometimes the name of Laon:—suddenly
 She would arise, and, like the secret bird
 Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky
 With her sweet accents—a wild melody!
 Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong 915
 The source of passion, whence they rose, to be;
 Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit's tongue,
 To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung—

XXIX

Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream
 Of her loose hair—oh, excellently great 920
 Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme
 Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate
 Amid the calm which rapture doth create
 After its tumult, her heart vibrating,
 Her spirit o'er the ocean's floating state 925
 From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing
 Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring.

XXX

For, before Cythna loved it, had my song
 Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe,
 A mighty congregation, which were strong 930
 Where'er they trod the darkness to disperse
 The cloud of that unutterable curse
 Which clings upon mankind:—all things became
 Slaves to my holy and heroic verse,
 Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame 935
 And fate, or whate'er else binds the world's wondrous frame.

XXXI

And this beloved child thus felt the sway
 Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud
 The very wind on which it rolls away:
 Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed 940
 With music and with light, their fountains flowed
 In poesy; and her still and earnest face,
 Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed
 Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace,
 Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

XXXII

In me, communion with this purest being 946
 Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise
 In knowledge, which, in hers mine own mind seeing,
 Left in the human world few mysteries:
 How without fear of evil or disguise 950
 Was Cythna!—what a spirit strong and mild,
 Which death, or pain or peril could despise,
 Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild
 Yet mighty, was enclosed within one simple child!

XXXIII

New lore was this—old age, with its gray hair, 955
 And wrinkled legends of unworthy things,
 And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare
 To burst the chains which life for ever flings
 On the entangled soul's aspiring wings,

So is it cold and cruel, and is made
 The careless slave of that dark power which brings 960
 Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,
 Laughs o'er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

XXXIV

Nor are the strong and the severe to keep
 The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught 965
 Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep,
 Unconscious of the power through which she wrought
 The woof of such intelligible thought,
 As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay
 In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought 970
 Why the deceiver and the slave has sway
 O'er heralds so divine of truth's arising day.

XXXV

Within that fairest form, the female mind
 Untainted by the poison-clouds which rest
 On the dark world, a sacred home did find: 975
 But else, from the wide earth's maternal breast,
 Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed
 All native power, had those fair children torn,
 And made them slaves to soothe his vile unrest,
 And minister to lust its joys forlorn, 980
 Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

XXXVI

This misery was but coldly felt, till she
 Became my only friend, who had endued
 My purpose with a wider sympathy;
 Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude 985
 In which the half of humankind were mewed
 Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves,
 She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food
 To the hyaena lust, who, among graves,
 Over his loathèd meal, laughing in agony, raves. 990

XXXVII

And I, still gazing on that glorious child,
 Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her:—'Cythna sweet,
 Well with the world art thou unreconciled;
 Never will peace and human nature meet
 Till free and equal man and woman greet 995
 Domestic peace; and ere this power can make
 In human hearts its calm and holy seat,
 This slavery must be broken'—as I spake,
 From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

XXXVIII

She replied earnestly:—‘It shall be mine, 1000
 This task, mine, Laon!—thou hast much to gain;
 Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna’s pride repine,
 If she should lead a happy female train
 To meet thee over the rejoicing plain,
 When myriads at thy call shall throng around 1005
 The Golden City.’—Then the child did strain
 My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound
 Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

XXXIX

I smiled, and spake not.—‘Wherefore dost thou smile
 At what I say? Laon, I am not weak, 1010
 And though my cheek might become pale the while,
 With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek
 Through their array of banded slaves to wreak
 Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought
 It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek 1015
 To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot
 And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

XL

‘Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest
 How a young child should thus undaunted be;
 Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest, 1020
 Through which I seek, by most resembling thee,
 So to become most good and great and free,
 Yet far beyond this Ocean’s utmost roar
 In towers and huts are many like to me,
 Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore 1025
 As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

XLI

‘Think’st thou that I shall speak unskilfully,
 And none will heed me? I remember now,
 How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die,
 Was saved, because in accents sweet and low 1030
 He sung a song his Judge loved long ago,
 As he was led to death.—All shall relent
 Who hear me—tears, as mine have flowed, shall flow,
 Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent
 As renovates the world; a will omnipotent! 1035

XLII

‘Yes, I will tread Pride’s golden palaces,
 Through Penury’s roofless huts and squalid cells
 Will I descend, where’er in abjectness
 Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells,
 There with the music of thine own sweet spells 1040

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

XLIII

'Can man be free if woman be a slave? 1045
 Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air,
 To the corruption of a closed grave!
 Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear
 Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare
 To trample their oppressors? in their home 1050
 Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear
 The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come
 Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

XLIV

'I am a child:—I would not yet depart.
 When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp 1055
 Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart,
 Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp
 Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp
 Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm
 Thy Cythna ever—truth its radiant stamp 1060
 Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm
 Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to disarm.

XLV

'Wait yet awhile for the appointed day—
 Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand
 Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean gray; 1065
 Amid the dwellers of this lonely land
 I shall remain alone—and thy command
 Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance,
 And, multitudinous as the desert sand
 Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance, 1070
 Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

XLVI

'Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain,
 Which from remotest glens two warring winds
 Involve in fire which not the loosened fountain
 Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds
 Of evil, catch from our uniting minds 1076
 The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then
 Will have cast off the impotence that binds
 Her childhood now, and through the paths of men
 Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

XLVII

‘We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble
 To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke!
 Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble
 The agony of this thought?’—As thus she spoke
 The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke, 1085
 And in my arms she hid her beating breast.
 I remained still for tears—sudden she woke
 As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed
 My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

XLVIII

‘We part to meet again—but yon blue waste, 1090
 Yon desert wide and deep holds no recess,
 Within whose happy silence, thus embraced
 We might survive all ills in one caress:
 Nor doth the grave—I fear ’tis passionless—
 Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again 1095
 Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless
 Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain
 When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.’

XLIX

I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now
 The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep, 1100
 Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow;
 So we arose, and by the starlight steep
 Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep,
 But, pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued
 Like evening shades that o’er the mountains creep, 1105
 We moved towards our home; where, in this mood,
 Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO III

I

WHAT thoughts had sway o’er Cythna’s lonely slumber
 That night, I know not; but my own did seem
 As if they might ten thousand years outnumber 1110
 Of waking life, the visions of a dream
 Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream
 Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast,
 Whose limits yet were never memory’s theme:
 And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed, 1115
 Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

II

Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace
 More time than might make gray the infant world,
 Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space:
 When the third came, like mist on breezes curled, 1120
 From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled:
 Methought, upon the threshold of a cave
 I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearled
 With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave,
 Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

III

We lived a day as we were wont to live, 1126
 But Nature had a robe of glory on,
 And the bright air o'er every shape did weave
 Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone,
 The leafless bough among the leaves alone, 1130
 Had being clearer than its own could be,
 And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown,
 In this strange vision, so divine to me,
 That, if I loved before, now love was agony.

IV

Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended,
 And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere 1136
 Of the calm moon—when suddenly was blended
 With our repose a nameless sense of fear;
 And from the cave behind I seemed to hear
 Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete, 1140
 And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near,
 A tumult and a rush of thronging feet
 The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

V

The scene was changed, and away, away, away!
 Through the air and over the sea we sped, 1145
 And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay,
 And the winds bore me—through the darkness spread
 Around, the gaping earth then vomited
 Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung
 Upon my flight; and ever, as we fled, 1150
 They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung
 A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

VI

And I lay struggling in the impotence
 Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound,
 Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense 1155
 To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound
 Which in the light of morn was poured around

Our dwelling—breathless, pale, and unaware
 I rose, and all the cottage crowded found
 With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare, 1160
 And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

VII

And, ere with rapid lips and gathered brow
 I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek—
 It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low,
 Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek, 1165
 And grasping a small knife, I went to seek
 That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry!
 Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak
 Its whirlwind rage:—so I passed quietly
 Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie. 1070

VIII

I started to behold her, for delight
 And exultation, and a joyance free,
 Solemn, serene and lofty, filled the light
 Of the calm smile with which she looked on me:
 So that I feared some brainless ecstasy, 1175
 Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her—
 'Farewell! farewell!' she said, as I drew nigh.
 'At first my peace was marred by this strange stir,
 Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

IX

'Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope, 1180
 These bloody men are but the slaves who bear
 Their mistress to her task—it was my scope
 The slavery where they drag me now, to share,
 And among captives willing chains to wear
 Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend! 1185
 Let our first triumph trample the despair
 Which would ensnare us now, for in the end,
 In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.'

X

These words had fallen on my unheeding ear,
 Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew 1190
 With seeming-careless glance; not many were
 Around her, for their comrades just withdrew
 To guard some other victim—so I drew
 My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly
 All unaware three of their number slew, 1195
 And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry
 My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

XI

What followed then, I know not—for a stroke
 On my raised arm and naked head, came down,
 Filling my eyes with blood—when I awoke, 1200
 I felt that they had bound me in my swoon,
 And up a rock which overhangs the town,
 By the steep path were bearing me: below,
 The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown
 The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow 1205
 Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

XII

Upon that rock a mighty column stood,
 Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky,
 Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude
 Of distant seas, from ages long gone by, 1210
 Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly
 Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast,
 Has power—and when the shades of evening lie
 On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast
 The sunken daylight far through the aërial waste. 1215

XIII

They bore me to a cavern in the hill
 Beneath that column, and unbound me there:
 And one did strip me stark; and one did fill
 A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare
 A lighted torch, and four with friendless care 1220
 Guided my steps the cavern-paths along,
 Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair
 We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue
 Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

XIV

They raised me to the platform of the pile, 1225
 That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass
 Through which they thrust me, open stood the while,
 As to its ponderous and suspended mass,
 With chains which eat into the flesh, alas!
 With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound: 1230
 The grate, as they departed to repass,
 With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound
 Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom were drowned.

XV

The noon was calm and bright:—around that column
 The overhanging sky and circling sea 1235
 Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn
 The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me,
 So that I knew not my own misery:

The islands and the mountains in the day
 Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see 1240
 The town among the woods below that lay,
 And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

XVI

It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed
 Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone
 Swayed in the air:—so bright, that noon did breed 1245
 No shadow in the sky beside mine own—
 Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone.
 Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame
 Rested like night, all else was clearly shown
 In that broad glare, yet sound to me none came, 1250
 But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

XVII

The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon!
 A ship was lying on the sunny main,
 Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon—
 Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again 1255
 Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain
 The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold:
 I knew that ship bore Cythna o'er the plain
 Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold,
 And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

XVIII

I watched, until the shades of evening wrapped 1261
 Earth like an exhalation—then the bark
 Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped.
 It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark:
 Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark 1265
 Its path no more!—I sought to close mine eyes,
 But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark;
 I would have risen, but ere that I could rise,
 My parchèd skin was split with piercing agonies.

XIX

I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever 1270
 Its adamantine links, that I might die:
 O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour,
 Forgive me, if, reserved for victory,
 The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.—
 That starry night, with its clear silence, sent 1275
 Tameless resolve which laughed at misery
 Into my soul—linkèd remembrance lent
 To that such power, to me such a severe content.

XX

To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair
 And die, I questioned not; nor, though the Sun 1280
 Its shafts of agony kindling through the air
 Moved over me, nor though in evening dun,
 Or when the stars their visible courses run,
 Or morning, the wide universe was spread
 In dreary calmness round me, did I shun 1285
 Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead
 From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

XXI

Two days thus passed—I neither raved nor died—
 Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest
 Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside 1290
 The water-vessel, while despair possessed
 My thoughts, and now no drop remained! The uprest
 Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust
 Which had been left, was to my craving breast
 Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust, 1295
 And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

XXII

My brain began to fail when the fourth morn
 Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep,
 Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn
 Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep 1300
 With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,—
 A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness—
 These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep
 Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness,
 A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless! 1305

XXIII

The forms which peopled this terrific trance
 I well remember—like a choir of devils,
 Around me they involved a giddy dance;
 Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels
 Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels, 1310
 Foul, ceaseless shadows:—thought could not divide
 The actual world from these entangling evils,
 Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried
 All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

XXIV

The sense of day and night, of false and true, 1315
 Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst
 That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew,
 Was not a phantom of the realms accursed,
 Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first

I know not yet, was it a dream or no. 1320
 But both, though not distincter, were immersed
 In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow,
 Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

XXV

Methought that grate was lifted, and the seven
 Who brought me thither four stiff corpses bare, 1325
 And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven
 Hung them on high by the entangled hair:
 Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair:
 As they retired, the golden moon upsprung,
 And eagerly, out in the giddy air, 1330
 Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung
 Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

XXVI

A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue,
 The dwelling of the many-coloured worm,
 Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew 1335
 To my dry lips—what radiance did inform
 Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form?
 Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost
 Laughed in those looks, and that the flesh was warm
 Within my teeth!—A whirlwind keen as frost 1340
 Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tossed.

XXVII

Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane
 Arose, and bore me in its dark career
 Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane
 On the verge of formless space—it languished there, 1345
 And dying, left a silence lone and drear,
 More horrible than famine:—in the deep
 The shape of an old man did then appear,
 Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep
 His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

XXVIII

And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw 1351
 That column, and those corpses, and the moon,
 And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw
 My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon
 Of senseless death would be accorded soon;— 1355
 When from that stony gloom a voice arose,
 Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune
 The midnight pines; the grate did then uncloze,
 And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

XXIX

He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled: 1360
 As they were loosened by that Hermit old,
 Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled,
 To answer those kind looks—he did enfold
 His giant arms around me, to uphold
 My wretched frame, my scorched limbs he wound 1365
 In linen moist and balmy, and as cold
 As dew to drooping leaves;—the chain, with sound
 Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did
 bound,

XXX

As, lifting me, it fell!—What next I heard,
 Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar, 1370
 And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred
 My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star
 Shining beside a sail, and distant far
 That mountain and its column, the known mark
 Of those who in the wide deep wandering are, 1375
 So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark,
 In trance had lain me, thus within a fiendish bark.

XXXI

For now indeed, over the salt sea-billow
 I sailed: yet dared not look upon the shape
 Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow 1380
 For my light head was hollowed in his lap,
 And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap,
 Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent
 O'er me his aged face, as if to snap
 Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent, 1385
 And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

XXXII

A soft and healing potion to my lips
 At intervals he raised—now looked on high,
 To mark if yet the starry giant dips
 His zone in the dim sea—now cheeringly, 1390
 Though he said little, did he speak to me.
 'It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer,
 Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!'
 I joyed as those a human tone to hear,
 Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

XXXIII

A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft 1396
 Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams,
 Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft

The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams
 Of morn descended on the ocean-streams, 1400
 And still that aged man, so grand and mild,
 Tended me, even as some sick mother seems
 To hang in hope over a dying child,
 Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

XXXIV

And then the night-wind steaming from the shore, 1405
 Sent odours dying sweet across the sea,
 And the swift boat the little waves which bore,
 Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly;
 Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see
 The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove, 1410
 As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee
 On sidelong wing, into a silent cove,
 Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO IV

I

THE old man took the oars, and soon the bark
 Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone; 1415
 It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark
 With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown;
 Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown,
 And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood,
 Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown 1420
 Within the walls of that gray tower, which stood
 A changeling of man's art, nursed amid Nature's brood.

II

When the old man his boat had anchorèd,
 He wound me in his arms with tender care,
 And very few, but kindly words he said, 1425
 And bore me through the tower adown a stair,
 Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear
 For many a year had fallen.—We came at last
 To a small chamber, which with mosses rare
 Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed 1430
 Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

III

The moon was darting through the lattices
 Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day—
 So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze,
 The old man opened them; the moonlight lay 1435
 Upon a lake whose waters wove their play

Even to the threshold of that lonely home :
 Within was seen in the dim wavering ray
 The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome
 Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

IV

The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,— 1441
 And I was on the margin of a lake,
 A lonely lake, amid the forests vast
 And snowy mountains :—did my spirit wake
 From sleep as many-coloured as the snake 1445
 That girds eternity? in life and truth,
 Might not my heart its cravings ever slake?
 Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth,
 And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

V

Thus madness came again,—a milder madness, 1450
 Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow
 With supernatural shades of clinging sadness ;
 That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe,
 By my sick couch was busy to and fro,
 Like a strong spirit ministrant of good : 1455
 When I was healed, he led me forth to show
 The wonders of his sylvan solitude,
 And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

VI

He knew his soothing words to weave with skill
 From all my madness told ; like mine own heart, 1460
 Of Cythna would he question me, until
 That thrilling name had ceased to make me start,
 From his familiar lips—it was not art,
 Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke—
 When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart 1465
 A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke
 When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

VII

Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled,
 My thoughts their due array did re-assume
 Through the enchantments of that Hermit old ; 1470
 Then I bethought me of the glorious doom
 Of those who sternly struggle to relume
 The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot,
 And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom
 Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought— 1475
 That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

VIII

That hoary man had spent his livelong age
 In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp
 Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page,
 When they are gone into the senseless damp 1480
 Of graves;—his spirit thus became a lamp
 Of splendour, like to those on which it fed:
 Through peopled haunts, the City and the Camp,
 Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led,
 And all the ways of men among mankind he read. 1485

IX

But custom maketh blind and obdurate
 The loftiest hearts:—he had beheld the woe
 In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate
 Which made them abject, would preserve them so;
 And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know, 1490
 He sought this cell: but when fame went abroad,
 That one in Argolis did undergo
 Torture for liberty, and that the crowd
 High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood;

X

And that the multitude was gathering wide,— 1495
 His spirit leaped within his aged frame,
 In lonely peace he could no more abide,
 But to the land on which the victor's flame
 Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came:
 Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue 1500
 Was as a sword, of truth—young Laon's name
 Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung
 Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

XI

He came to the lone column on the rock,
 And with his sweet and mighty eloquence 1505
 The hearts of those who watched it did unlock,
 And made them melt in tears of penitence.
 They gave him entrance free to bear me thence.
 'Since this,' the old man said, 'seven years are spent,
 While slowly truth on thy benighted sense 1510
 Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent
 Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

XII

'Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
 And from the lore of bards and sages old,
 From whatso'er my wakened thoughts create 1515
 Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
 Have I collected language to unfold

Truth to my countrymen ; from shore to shore
 Doctrines of human power my words have told,
 They have been heard, and men aspire to more 1520
 Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

XIII

'In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
 My writings to their babes, no longer blind ;
 And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
 And vows of faith each to the other bind ; 1525
 And marriageable maidens, who have pined
 With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
 A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now find ;
 And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
 Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain-brook.

XIV

'The tyrants of the Golden City tremble 1531
 At voices which are heard about the streets,
 The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble
 The lies of their own heart ; but when one meets
 Another at the shrine, he inly weets, 1535
 Though he says nothing, that the truth is known ;
 Murderers are pale upon the judgement-seats,
 And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone,
 And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

XV

'Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds 1540
 Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law
 Of mild equality and peace, succeeds
 To faiths which long have held the world in awe,
 Bloody and false, and cold :—as whirlpools draw
 All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway 1545
 Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
 This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
 Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

XVI

'For I have been thy passive instrument'—
 (As thus the old man spake, his countenance 1550
 Gleamed on me like a spirit's)—'thou hast lent
 To me, to all, the power to advance
 Towards this unforeseen deliverance
 From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear
 That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance 1555
 Nor change may not extinguish, and my share
 Of good, was o'er the world its gathered beams to bear.

XVII

'But I, alas! am both unknown and old,
 And though the woof of wisdom I know well
 To dye in hues of language, I am cold 1560
 In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell,
 My manners note that I did long repel;
 But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng
 Were like the star whose beams the waves compel
 And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue 1565
 Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

XVIII

'Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length
 Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare
 Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength
 Of words—for lately did a maiden fair, 1570
 Who from her childhood has been taught to bear
 The tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise, and make
 Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear,
 And with these quiet words—"For thine own sake
 I prithee spare me;"—did with ruth so take 1575

XIX

'All hearts, that even the torturer who had bound
 Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled,
 Loosened her, weeping then; nor could be found
 One human hand to harm her—unassailed
 Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled 1580
 In virtue's adamantine eloquence,
 'Gainst scorn, and death and pain thus trebly mailed,
 And blending, in the smiles of that defence,
 The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

XX

'The wild-eyed women throng around her path: 1585
 From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust
 Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath,
 Or the caresses of his sated lust
 They congregate:—in her they put their trust;
 The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell 1590
 Her power;—they, even like a thunder-gust
 Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell
 Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

XXI

'Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach
 To woman, outraged and polluted long; 1595
 Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach
 For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong
 Trembles before her look, though it be strong;

Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright,
 And matrons with their babes, a stately throng! 1600
 Lovers renew the vows which they did plight
 In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite,

XXII

'And homeless orphans find a home near her,
 And those poor victims of the proud, no less,
 Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir, 1605
 Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness:—
 In squalid huts, and in its palaces
 Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne
 Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress
 All evil, and her foes relenting turn, 1610
 And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

XXIII

'So in the populous City, a young maiden
 Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he
 Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen
 Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,— 1615
 False arbiter between the bound and free;
 And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns
 The multitudes collect tumultuously,
 And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns
 Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling
 thrones. 1620

XXIV

'Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed,
 The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves,
 The hoodwinked Angel of the blind and dead,
 Custom, with iron mace points to the graves
 Where her own standard desolately waves 1625
 Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings.
 Many yet stand in her array—"she paves
 Her path with human hearts," and o'er it flings
 The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

XXV

'There is a plain beneath the City's wall, 1630
 Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast,
 Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call
 Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast
 Which bears one sound of many voices past,
 And startles on his throne their sceptred foe: 1635
 He sits amid his idle pomp aghast,
 And that his power hath passed away, doth know—
 Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

1625 Where] When *ed.* 1818.

XXVI

'The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain :
 Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood, 1640
 They stand a speck amid the peopled plain ;
 Carnage and ruin have been made their food
 From infancy—ill has become their good,
 And for its hateful sake their will has wove
 The chains which eat their hearts—the multitude 1645
 Surrounding them, with words of human love,
 Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

XXVII

'Over the land is felt a sudden pause,
 As night and day those ruthless bands around,
 The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes 1650
 The thoughts of men with hope—as, when the sound
 Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds
 confound,
 Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear
 Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound,
 The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen ne'er 1655
 Clasp the relentless knees of Dread the murderer!

XXVIII

'If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice
 Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice
 A wretched fall!—Uplift thy charmèd voice!
 Pour on those evil men the love that lies 1660
 Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes—
 Arise, my friend, farewell!'—As thus he spake,
 From the green earth lightly I did arise,
 As one out of dim dreams that doth awake,
 And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake. 1665

XXIX

I saw my countenance reflected there;—
 And then my youth fell on me like a wind
 Descending on still waters—my thin hair
 Was prematurely gray, my face was lined
 With channels, such as suffering leaves behind, 1670
 Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek
 And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find
 Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak
 A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

XXX

And though their lustre now was spent and faded, 1675
 Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien
 The likeness of a shape for which was braided

The brightest woof of genius, still was seen—
 One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene,
 And left it vacant—'twas her lover's face— 1680
 It might resemble her—it once had been
 The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace
 Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

XXXI

What then was I? She slumbered with the dead.
 Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone. 1685
 Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled
 Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark and lone,
 Doth it not through the paths of night unknown,
 On outspread wings of its own wind upborne
 Pour rain upon the earth? The stars are shown, 1690
 When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn
 Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

XXXII

Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man
 I left, with interchange of looks and tears,
 And lingering speech, and to the Camp began 1695
 My way. O'er many a mountain-chain which rears
 Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears
 My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor,
 And gaily now meseems serene earth wears
 The blosmy spring's star-bright investiture, 1700
 A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

XXXIII

My powers revived within me, and I went
 As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass,
 Through many a vale of that broad continent.
 At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass 1705
 Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was,
 Not like a child of death, among them ever;
 When I arose from rest, a woful mass
 That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever,
 As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever. 1710

XXXIV

Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared
 The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds
 The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard,
 Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds
 With whatso'er it finds, or flowers or weeds! 1715
 Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade
 Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds?
 Why was this hope not torture? Yet it made
 A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO V

I

OVER the utmost hill at length I sped, 1720
 A snowy steep:—the moon was hanging low
 Over the Asian mountains, and outspread
 The plain, the City, and the Camp below,
 Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow;
 The City's moonlit spires and myriad lamps, 1725
 Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow,
 And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps,
 Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earthquake
 stamps.

II

All slept but those in watchful arms who stood,
 And those who sate tending the beacon's light, 1730
 And the few sounds from that vast multitude
 Made silence more profound.—Oh, what a might
 Of human thought was cradled in that night!
 How many hearts impenetrably veiled
 Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight 1735
 Evil and good, in woven passions mailed,
 Waged through that silent throng; a war that never failed!

III

And now the Power of Good held victory,
 So, through the labyrinth of many a tent,
 Among the silent millions who did lie 1740
 In innocent sleep, exultingly I went;
 The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent
 From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed
 An armèd youth—over his spear he bent
 His downward face.—'A friend!' I cried aloud, 1745
 And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

IV

I sate beside him while the morning beam
 Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him
 Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme!
 Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim: 1750
 And all the while, methought, his voice did swim
 As if it drownèd in remembrance were
 Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim:
 At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air,
 He looked on me, and cried in wonder—'Thou art here!' 1755

V

Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth
 In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found;
 But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth,
 And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound,
 And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound, 1760
 Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded;
 The truth now came upon me, on the ground
 Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded,
 Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

VI

Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes 1765
 We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread
 As from the earth did suddenly arise;
 From every tent roused by that clamour dread,
 Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped
 Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far. 1770
 Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead
 Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war
 The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

VII

Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child
 Who brings them food, when winter false and fair 1775
 Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild
 They rage among the camp;—they overbear
 The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair
 Descends like night—when 'Laon!' one did cry:
 Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare
 The slaves, and widening through the vaulted sky, 1781
 Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

VIII

In sudden panic those false murderers fled,
 Like insect tribes before the northern gale:
 But swifter still, our hosts encompassèd 1785
 Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale,
 Where even their fierce despair might nought avail,
 Hemmed them around!—and then revenge and fear
 Made the high virtue of the patriots fail:
 One pointed on his foe the mortal spear— 1790
 I rushed before its point, and cried, 'Forbear, forbear!'

IX

The spear transfixèd my arm that was uplifted
 In swift expostulation, and the blood
 Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—'Oh! thou gifted
 With eloquence which shall not be withstood, 1795
 Flow thus!'—I cried in joy, 'thou vital flood,

Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause
 For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued—
 Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,—
 'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws. 1800

X

'Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain.
 Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep!
 Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain
 Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep,
 But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep
 Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe; 1806
 And those whom love did set his watch to keep
 Around your tents, truth's freedom to bestow,
 Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

XI

'Oh wherefore should ill ever flow from ill, 1810
 And pain still keener pain for ever breed?
 We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill
 For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed
 On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed
 With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven! 1815
 And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed
 And all that lives or is, to be hath given,
 Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven!

XII

'Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past
 Be as a grave which gives not up its dead 1820
 To evil thoughts.'—A film then overcast
 My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled
 Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed.
 When I awoke, I lay mid friends and foes,
 And earnest countenances on me shed 1825
 The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close
 My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose;

XIII

And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside,
 With quivering lips and humid eyes;—and all
 Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide 1830
 Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall
 In a strange land, round one whom they might call
 Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay
 Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall
 Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array 1835
 Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

XIV

Lifting the thunder of their acclamation,
 Towards the City then the multitude,
 And I among them, went in joy—a nation
 Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood 1840
 Linked by a jealous interchange of good;
 A glorious pageant, more magnificent
 Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood,
 When they return from carnage, and are sent
 In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement. 1845

XV

Afar, the city-walls were thronged on high,
 And myriads on each giddy turret clung,
 And to each spire far lessening in the sky
 Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung;
 As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung 1850
 At once from all the crowd, as if the vast
 And peopled Earth its boundless skies among
 The sudden clamour of delight had cast,
 When from before its face some general wreck had passed.

XVI

Our armies through the City's hundred gates 1855
 Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair
 Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits,
 Throng from the mountains when the storms are there,
 And, as we passed through the calm sunny air
 A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed, 1860
 The token flowers of truth and freedom fair,
 And fairest hands bound them on many a head,
 Those angels of love's heaven, that over all was spread.

XVII

I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision:
 Those bloody bands so lately reconciled, 1865
 Were, ever as they went, by the contrition
 Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled,
 And every one on them more gently smiled,
 Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe
 Of such mild looks made their own hearts grow mild,
 And did with soft attraction ever draw 1871
 Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

XVIII

And they, and all, in one loud symphony
 My name with Liberty commingling, lifted,
 'The friend and the preserver of the free! 1875
 The parent of this joy!' and fair eyes gifted
 With feelings, caught from one who had uplifted

The light of a great spirit, round me shone;
 And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted
 Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun,— 1880
 Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

XIX

Laone was the name her love had chosen,
 For she was nameless, and her birth none knew:
 Where was Laone now?—The words were frozen
 Within my lips with fear; but to subdue 1885
 Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due,
 And when at length one brought reply, that she
 To-morrow would appear, I then withdrew
 To judge what need for that great throng might be,
 For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea. 1890

XX

Yet need was none for rest or food to care,
 Even though that multitude was passing great,
 Since each one for the other did prepare
 All kindly succour—Therefore to the gate
 Of the Imperial House, now desolate, 1895
 I passed, and there was found aghast, alone,
 The fallen Tyrant!—Silently he sate
 Upon the footstool of his golden throne,
 Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

XXI

Alone, but for one child, who led before him 1900
 A graceful dance: the only living thing
 Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him
 Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring
 In his abandonment!—She knew the King
 Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove 1905
 Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring
 Mid her sad task of unregarded love,
 That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

XXII

She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet
 When human steps were heard:—he moved nor spoke,
 Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet 1911
 The gaze of strangers—our loud entrance woke
 The echoes of the hall, which circling broke
 The calm of its recesses,—like a tomb
 Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke 1915
 Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom
 Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

XXIII

The little child stood up when we came nigh ;
 Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan,
 But on her forehead, and within her eye 1920
 Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon
 Sick with excess of sweetness ; on the throne
 She leaned ;—the King, with gathered brow, and lips
 Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown
 With hue like that when some great painter dips 1925
 His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

XXIV

She stood beside him like a rainbow braided
 Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast
 From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded ;
 A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast 1930
 One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast,
 O'er that child's parted lips—a gleam of bliss,
 A shade of vanished days,—as the tears passed
 Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss
 I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness. 1935

XXV

The sceptred wretch then from that solitude
 I drew, and, of his change compassionate,
 With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood.
 But he, while pride and fear held deep debate,
 With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate 1940
 Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare :
 Pity, not scorn I felt, though desolate
 The desolator now, and unaware
 The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

XXVI

I led him forth from that which now might seem 1945
 A gorgeous grave : through portals sculptured deep
 With imagery beautiful as dream
 We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep
 Over its unregarded gold to keep
 Their silent watch.—The child trod faintingly, 1950
 And as she went, the tears which she did weep
 Glanced in the starlight ; wildered seemèd she,
 And when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

XXVII

At last the tyrant cried, 'She hungers, slave,
 Stab her, or give her bread!'—It was a tone 1955
 Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave
 Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known ;
 He with this child had thus been left alone,

And neither had gone forth for food,—but he
 In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne,
 And she a nursling of captivity 1961
 Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change
 might be.

XXVIII

And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn
 Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more—
 That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone, 1965
 Which once made all things subject to its power—
 Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour
 The past had come again; and the swift fall
 Of one so great and terrible of yore,
 To desolateness, in the hearts of all 1970
 Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

XXIX

A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours
 Once in a thousand years, now gathered round
 The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers
 Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground, 1975
 Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound
 From the wide multitude: that lonely man
 Then knew the burden of his change, and found,
 Concealing in the dust his visage wan,
 Refuge from the keen looks which through his bosom ran.

XXX

And he was faint withal: I sate beside him 1981
 Upon the earth, and took that child so fair
 From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him
 Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share
 To his averted lips the child did bear, 1985
 But, when she saw he had enough, she ate
 And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair
 Hunger then overcame, and of his state
 Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

XXXI

Slowly the silence of the multitudes 1990
 Passed, as when far is heard in some lone dell
 The gathering of a wind among the woods—
 'And he is fallen!' they cry, 'he who did dwell
 Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell
 Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer 1995
 Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well
 Of blood and tears with ruin! he is here!
 Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!'

XXXII

Then was heard—'He who judged let him be brought
 To judgement! blood for blood cries from the soil 2000
 On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought!
 Shall Othman only unavenged despoil?
 Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil
 Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries,
 Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil, 2005
 Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise!
 And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice.'

XXXIII

'What do ye seek? what fear ye,' then I cried,
 Suddenly starting forth, 'that ye should shed
 The blood of Othman?—if your hearts are tried 2010
 In the true love of freedom, cease to dread
 This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven spread
 In purest light above us all, through earth
 Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed
 For all, let him go free; until the worth 2015
 Of human nature win from these a second birth.'

XXXIV

'What call ye *justice*? Is there one who ne'er
 In secret thought has wished another's ill?—
 Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear,
 And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill, 2020
 If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill
 With the false anger of the hypocrite?
 Alas, such were not pure,—the chastened will
 Of virtue sees that justice is the light
 Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.' 2025

XXXV

The murmur of the people, slowly dying,
 Paused as I spake, then those who near me were,
 Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying
 Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair
 Clasped on her lap in silence;—through the air 2030
 Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet
 In pity's madness, and to the despair
 Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet
 His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

XXXVI

Then to a home for his repose assigned, 2035
 Accompanied by the still throng he went
 In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind,
 Some likeness of his ancient state was lent;
 And if his heart could have been innocent

As those who pardoned him, he might have ended 2040
 His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent,
 Men said, into a smile which guile portended,
 A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

XXXVII

'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day
 Whereon the many nations at whose call 2045
 The chains of earth like mist melted away,
 Decreed to hold a sacred Festival,
 A rite to attest the equality of all
 Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake
 All went. The sleepless silence did recall 2050
 Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make
 The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

XXXVIII

The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains
 I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail,
 As to the plain between the misty mountains 2055
 And the great City, with a countenance pale
 I went:—it was a sight which might avail
 To make men weep exulting tears, for whom
 Now first from human power the reverend veil
 Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb 2060
 Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

XXXIX

To see, far glancing in the misty morning,
 The signs of that innumerable host,
 To hear one sound of many made, the warning
 Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tossed, 2065
 While the eternal hills, and the sea lost
 In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky
 The city's myriad spires of gold, almost
 With human joy made mute society—
 Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be. 2070

XL

To see, like some vast island from the Ocean,
 The Altar of the Federation rear
 Its pile i' the midst; a work, which the devotion
 Of millions in one night created there,
 Sudden, as when the moonrise makes appear 2075
 Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid
 Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear
 The light of genius; its still shadow hid
 Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

XLI

To hear the restless multitudes for ever
 Around the base of that great Altar flow, 2080
 As on some mountain-islet burst and shiver
 Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow
 As the wind bore that tumult to and fro,
 To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim 2085
 Like beams through floating clouds on waves below
 Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim
 As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aëreal hymn.

XLII

To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn
 Lethean joy! so that all those assembled 2090
 Cast off their memories of the past outworn;
 Two only bosoms with their own life trembled,
 And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled;
 So with a beating heart I went, and one,
 Who having much, covets yet more, resembled; 2095
 A lost and dear possession, which not won,
 He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

XLIII

To the great Pyramid I came: its stair
 With female choirs was thronged: the loveliest
 Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare; 2100
 As I approached, the morning's golden mist,
 Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kissed
 With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone
 Like Athos seen from Samothracia, dressed
 In earliest light, by vintagers, and one 2105
 Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne:

XLIV

A Form most like the imagined habitant
 Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn,
 By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant
 The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn, 2110
 As famished mariners through strange seas gone
 Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light
 Of those divinest lineaments—alone
 With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight
 I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

XLV

And, neither did I hear the acclamations, 2116
 Which from brief silence bursting, filled the air
 With her strange name and mine, from all the nations
 Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there
 From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair 2120

Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind
 And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare,
 Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind
 To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o'er my troubled mind.

XLVI

Like music of some minstrel heavenly-gifted, 2125
 To one whom fiends enthral, this voice to me;
 Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted,
 I was so calm and joyous.—I could see
 The platform where we stood, the statues three
 Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine, 2130
 The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea;
 As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine
 To men's astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

XLVII

At first Laone spoke most tremulously:
 But soon her voice the calmness which it shed 2135
 Gathered, and—'Thou art whom I sought to see,
 And thou art our first votary here,' she said:
 'I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!—
 And of all those on the wide earth who breathe,
 Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread 2140
 This veil between us two, that thou beneath
 Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

XLVIII

'For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me?
 Yes, but those joys which silence well requite
 Forbid reply;—why men have chosen me 2145
 To be the Priestess of this holiest rite
 I scarcely know, but that the floods of light
 Which flow over the world, have borne me hither
 To meet thee, long most dear; and now unite
 Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither 2150
 From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

XLIX

'If our own will as others' law we bind,
 If the foul worship trampled here we fear;
 If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!—
 She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there 2155
 Three shapes around her ivory throne appear;
 One was a Giant, like a child asleep
 On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were
 In dream, sceptres and crowns; and one did keep
 Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep; 2160

L

A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk
 Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast
 A human babe and a young basilisk;
 Her looks were sweet as Heaven's when loveliest
 In Autumn eves. The third Image was dressed 2165
 In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies;
 Beneath his feet, 'mongst ghastliest forms, repressed
 Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise,
 While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

LI

Beside that Image then I sate, while she 2170
 Stood, mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed,
 Like light amid the shadows of the sea
 Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd
 That touch which none who feels forgets, bestowed;
 And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze 2175
 Of the great Image, as o'er Heaven it glode,
 That rite had place; it ceased when sunset's blaze
 Burned o'er the isles. All stood in joy and deep amaze—
 —When in the silence of all spirits there
 Laone's voice was felt, and through the air 2180
 Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair:—

I

'Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and strong
 As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young,
 That float among the blinding beams of morning;
 And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly, 2185
 Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy—
 Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning
 Of thy voice sublime and holy;
 Its free spirits here assembled,
 See thee, feel thee, know thee now,— 2190
 To thy voice their hearts have trembled
 Like ten thousand clouds which flow
 With one wide wind as it flies!—
 Wisdom! thy irresistible children rise
 To hail thee, and the elements they chain 2195
 And their own will, to swell the glory of thy train.

2

'O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven!
 Mother and soul of all to which is given
 The light of life, the loveliness of being,
 Lo! thou dost re-ascend the human heart, 2200
 Thy throne of power, almighty as thou wert

In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing
 The shade of thee :—now, millions start
 To feel thy lightnings through them burning :
 Nature, or God, or Love, or Pleasure, 2205
 Or Sympathy the sad tears turning
 To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure,
 Descends amidst us ;—Scorn, and Hate,
 Revenge and Selfishness are desolate—
 A hundred nations swear that there shall be 2210
 Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free!

3

‘Eldest of things, divine Equality!
 Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee,
 The Angels of thy sway, who pour around thee
 Treasures from all the cells of human thought, 2215
 And from the Stars, and from the Ocean brought,
 And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee :
 The powerful and the wise had sought
 Thy coming, thou in light descending
 O’er the wide land which is thine own 2220
 Like the Spring whose breath is blending
 All blasts of fragrance into one,
 Comest upon the paths of men!—
 Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken,
 And all her children here in glory meet 2225
 To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

4

‘My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains,
 The gray sea-shore, the forests and the fountains,
 Are haunts of happiest dwellers ;—man and woman,
 Their common bondage burst, may freely borrow 2230
 From lawless love a solace for their sorrow ;
 For oft we still must weep, since we are human.
 A stormy night’s serenest morrow,
 Whose showers are pity’s gentle tears,
 Whose clouds are smiles of those that die 2235
 Like infants without hopes or fears,
 And whose beams are joys that lie
 In blended hearts, now holds dominion ;
 The dawn of mind, which upwards on a pinion
 Borne, swift as sunrise, far illumines space, 2240
 And clasps this barren world in its own bright embrace!

5

‘My brethren, we are free! The fruits are glowing
 Beneath the stars, and the night winds are flowing
 O’er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming—

Never again may blood of bird or beast
 Stain with its venomous stream a human feast, 2245
 To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
 Avenging poisons shall have ceased
 To feed disease and fear and madness,
 The dwellers of the earth and air 2250
 Shall throng around our steps in gladness
 Seeking their food or refuge there.
 Our toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull,
 To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful,
 And Science, and her sister Poesy, 2255
 Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

6

'Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations!
 Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
 Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars!
 Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no more!
 Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore, 2261
 Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
 The green lands cradled in the roar
 Of western waves, and wildernesses
 Peopled and vast, which skirt the oceans 2265
 Where morning dyes her golden tresses,
 Shall soon partake our high emotions:
 Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear
 The Fiend-God, when our charmèd name he hear,
 Shall fade like shadow from his thousand fanes, 2270
 While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire reigns!'

LII

Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining
 Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite throng;
 She, like a spirit through the darkness shining,
 In tones whose sweetness silence did prolong, 2275
 As if to lingering winds they did belong,
 Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate speech
 With wild and thrilling pauses woven among,
 Which whoso heard, was mute, for it could teach
 To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach. 2280

LIII

Her voice was as a mountain-stream which sweeps
 The withered leaves of Autumn to the lake,
 And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps
 In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves wake
 Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make 2285

Those green depths beautiful when skies are blue,
 The multitude so moveless did partake
 Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
 As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

LIV

Over the plain the throngs were scattered then 2290
 In groups around the fires, which from the sea
 Even to the gorge of the first mountain-glen
 Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free
 Was spread beneath many a dark cypress-tree,
 Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red flame, 2295
 Reclining, as they ate, of Liberty,
 And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name,
 Earth's children did a woof of happy converse frame.

LV

Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother,
 Pours from her fairest bosom, when she smiles 2300
 In the embrace of Autumn;—to each other
 As when some parent fondly reconciles
 Her warring children, she their wrath beguiles
 With her own sustenance; they relenting weep:
 Such was this Festival, which from their isles 2305
 And continents, and winds, and oceans deep,
 All shapes might throng to share, that fly, or walk, or creep,—

LVI

Might share in peace and innocence, for gore
 Or poison none this festal did pollute,
 But piled on high, an overflowing store 2310
 Of pomegranates, and citrons, fairest fruit,
 Melons, and dates, and figs, and many a root
 Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet
 Accursed fire their mild juice could transmute
 Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set 2315
 In baskets; with pure streams their thirsting lips they wet.

LVII

Laone had descended from the shrine,
 And every deepest look and holiest mind
 Fed on her form, though now those tones divine
 Were silent as she passed; she did unwind 2320
 Her veil, as with the crowds of her own kind
 She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain
 From seeking her that night, so I reclined
 Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain
 A festal watchfire burned beside the dusky main. 2325

LVIII

And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk,
 And wit, and harmony of choral strains,
 While far Orion o'er the waves did walk
 That flow among the isles, held us in chains
 Of sweet captivity, which none disdains 2330
 Who feels: but when his zone grew dim in mist
 Which clothes the Ocean's bosom, o'er the plains
 The multitudes went homeward, to their rest,
 Which that delightful day with its own shadow blessed.

CANTO VI

I

BESIDE the dimness of the glimmering sea, 2335
 Weaving swift language from impassioned themes,
 With that dear friend I lingered, who to me
 So late had been restored, beneath the gleams
 Of the silver stars; and ever in soft dreams
 Of future love and peace sweet converse lapped 2340
 Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams
 Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapped
 The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapped;

II

And till we came even to the City's wall
 And the great gate; then, none knew whence or why,
 Disquiet on the multitudes did fall: 2346
 And first, one pale and breathless passed us by,
 And stared and spoke not;—then with piercing cry
 A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks
 Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously 2350
 Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks,
 Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

III

Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger
 Resounded: and—'They come! to arms! to arms!
 The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger 2355
 Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!'
 In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms
 Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept
 Like waves before the tempest—these alarms
 Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt 2360
 On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

IV

For to the North I saw the town on fire,
 And its red light made morning pallid now,
 Which burst over wide Asia;—louder, higher,
 The yells of victory and the screams of woe 2365
 I heard approach, and saw the throng below
 Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls
 Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow
 Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals
 The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls. 2370

V

And now the horsemen come—and all was done
 Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld
 Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun.
 I rushed among the rout, to have repelled
 That miserable flight—one moment quelled 2375
 By voice and looks and eloquent despair,
 As if reproach from their own hearts withheld
 Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there
 New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

VI

I strove, as, drifted on some cataract 2380
 By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive
 Who hears its fatal roar:—the files compact
 Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive
 With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive
 Their ranks with bloodier chasm:—into the plain 2385
 Disgorged at length the dead and the alive
 In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain
 Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

VII

For now the despot's bloodhounds with their prey
 Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep 2390
 Their gluttony of death; the loose array
 Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep,
 And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap
 A harvest sown with other hopes, the while,
 Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep 2395
 A killing rain of fire:—when the waves smile
 As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano-isle,

VIII

Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread
 For the carrion-fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—
 I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead, 2400
 Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light

I trod;—to me there came no thought of flight,
 But with loud cries of scorn which whoso heard
 That dreaded death, felt in his veins the might
 Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred,
 And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

IX

A band of brothers gathering round me, made,
 Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and still
 Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade
 Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill
 With doubt even in success; deliberate will
 Inspired our growing troop, not overthrown
 It gained the shelter of a grassy hill,
 And ever still our comrades were hewn down,
 And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

X

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

XI

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

XII

For on one side alone the hill gave shelter,
 So vast that phalanx of unconquered men,
 And there the living in the blood did welter
 Of the dead and dying, which, in that green glen,
 Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen
 Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged
 While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when
 It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged,
 For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

XIII

Within a cave upon the hill were found
 A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument
 Of those who war but on their native ground 2445
 For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent
 Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent,
 As those few arms the bravest and the best
 Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did now present
 A line which covered and sustained the rest, 2450
 A confident phalanx, which the foe on every side invest.

XIV

That onset turned the foes to flight almost;
 But soon they saw their present strength, and knew
 That coming night would to our resolute host
 Bring victory; so dismounting, close they drew 2455
 Their glittering files, and then the combat grew
 Unequal but most horrible;—and ever
 Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew,
 Or the red sword, failed like a mountain-river
 Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands for ever. 2460

XV

Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind
 Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood,
 To mutual ruin armed by one behind
 Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good,
 Who like its shadow near my youth had stood, 2465
 Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair
 With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed
 Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care,
 And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

XVI

The battle became ghastlier—in the midst 2470
 I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell
 O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st
 For love. The ground in many a little dell
 Was broken, up and down whose steep befell
 Alternate victory and defeat, and there 2475
 The combatants with rage most horrible
 Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare,
 And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

XVII

Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging;
 Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane 2480
 When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging—
 Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain;

And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain
 Thou loathèd slave. I saw all shapes of death
 And ministered to many, o'er the plain
 While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe, 2485
 Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

XVIII

The few who yet survived, resolute and firm
 Around me fought. At the decline of day
 Winding above the mountain's snowy term 2490
 New banners shone: they quivered in the ray
 Of the sun's unseen orb—ere night the array
 Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands
 I soon survived alone—and now I lay
 Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands 2495
 I felt, and saw on high the glare of falling brands:

XIX

When on my foes a sudden terror came,
 And they fled, scattering—lo! with reinless speed
 A black Tartarian horse of giant frame
 Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed 2500
 Beneath the hoofs of that tremendous steed,
 On which, like to an Angel, robed in white,
 Sate one waving a sword;—the hosts recede
 And fly, as through their ranks with awful might,
 Sweeps in the shadow of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

XX

And its path made a solitude.—I rose 2506
 And marked its coming: it relaxed its course
 As it approached me, and the wind that flows
 Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force
 Might create smiles in death—the Tartar horse 2510
 Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed,
 And heard her musical pants, like the sweet source
 Of waters in the desert, as she said,
 'Mount with me Laon, now!'—I rapidly obeyed.

XXI

Then: 'Away! away!' she cried, and stretched her sword
 As 'twere a scourge over the courser's head, 2516
 And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word,
 But like the vapour of the tempest fled
 Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread
 Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast; 2520
 Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread
 Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast,
 As o'er their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow passed.

XXII

And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust,
 His strong sides made the torrents rise in spray, 2525
 And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust
 Surrounded us;—and still away! away!
 Through the desert night we sped, while she always
 Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest,
 Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray 2530
 Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast
 The steed strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

XXIII

A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:—
 From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
 Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion 2535
 Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted
 By the choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted
 To music, by the wand of Solitude,
 That wizard wild, and the far tents implanted
 Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood 2540
 Thence marking the dark shore of Ocean's curvèd flood.

XXIV

One moment these were heard and seen—another
 Passed; and the two who stood beneath that night,
 Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other;
 As from the lofty steed she did alight, 2545
 Cythna, (for, from the eyes whose deepest light
 Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale
 With influence strange of mournfullest delight,
 My own sweet Cythna looked), with joy did quail,
 And felt her strength in tears of human weakness fail. 2550

XXV

And for a space in my embrace she rested,
 Her head on my unquiet heart reposing,
 While my faint arms her languid frame invested:
 At length she looked on me, and half unclosing
 Her tremulous lips, said: 'Friend, thy bands were losing
 The battle, as I stood before the King 2556
 In bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing
 The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
 Upon his horse, and, swift as on the whirlwind's wing,

XXVI

'Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer, 2560
 And we are here.'—Then turning to the steed,
 She pressed the white moon on his front with pure
 And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed

From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed;—
 But I to a stone seat that Maiden led, 2565
 And kissing her fair eyes, said, 'Thou hast need
 Of rest,' and I heaped up the courser's bed
 In a green mossy nook, with mountain-flowers dispread.

XXVII

Within that ruin, where a shattered portal
 Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now 2570
 By man, to be the home of things immortal,
 Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go,
 And must inherit all he builds below,
 When he is gone, a hall stood; o'er whose roof
 Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow, 2575
 Claspings its gray rents with a verdurous woof,
 A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

XXVIII

The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made
 A natural couch of leaves in that recess,
 Which seasons none disturbed, but, in the shade 2580
 Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress
 With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness
 Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, whene'er
 The wandering wind her nurslings might caress;
 Whose intertwining fingers ever there 2585
 Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

XXIX

We know not where we go, or what sweet dream
 May pilot us through caverns strange and fair
 Of far and pathless passion, while the stream
 Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear, 2590
 Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air;
 Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion
 Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there
 Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean
 Of universal life, attuning its commotion. 2595

XXX

To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapped
 Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow
 Of public hope was from our being snapped,
 Though linkèd years had bound it there; for now 2600
 A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below
 All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere,
 Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow,
 Came on us, as we sate in silence there,
 Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air:—

XXXI

In silence which doth follow talk that causes 2605
 The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears,
 When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses
 Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years
 Which we together passed, their hopes and fears,
 The blood itself which ran within our frames, 2610
 That likeness of the features which endears
 The thoughts expressed by them, our very names,
 And all the wingèd hours which speechless memory claims,

XXXII

Had found a voice—and ere that voice did pass,
 The night grew damp and dim, and through a rent 2615
 Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass,
 A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent,
 Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent
 A faint and pallid lustre; while the song
 Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent, 2620
 Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among;
 A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

XXXIII

The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate,
 And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties
 Of her soft hair, which bent with gathered weight 2625
 My neck near hers, her dark and deepening eyes,
 Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies
 O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes,
 Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies,
 Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses, 2630
 With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half
 uncloses.

XXXIV

The Meteor to its far morass returned:
 The beating of our veins one interval
 Made still; and then I felt the blood that burned
 Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall 2635
 Around my heart like fire; and over all
 A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep
 And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall
 Two disunited spirits when they leap
 In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep. 2640

XXXV

Was it one moment that confounded thus
 All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one
 Unutterable power, which shielded us
 Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone

Into a wide and wild oblivion
 Of tumult and of tenderness? or now
 Had ages, such as make the moon and sun,
 The seasons, and mankind their changes know,
 Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

XXXVI

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

XXXVII

It is the shadow which doth float unseen,
 But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality,
 Whose divine darkness fled not, from that green
 And lone recess, where lapped in peace did lie
 Our linkèd frames till, from the changing sky,
 That night and still another day had fled;
 And then I saw and felt. The moon was high,
 And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread
 Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

XXXVIII

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

XXXIX

There we unheeding sate, in the communion
 Of interchangèd vows, which, with a rite
 Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.—
 Few were the living hearts which could unite
 Like ours, or celebrate a bridal-night
 With such close sympathies, for they had sprung
 From linkèd youth, and from the gentle might
 Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long,
 Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

XL

And such is Nature's law divine, that those 2686
 Who grow together cannot choose but love,
 If faith or custom do not interpose,
 Or common slavery mar what else might move
 All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove 2690
 Which shades the springs of Ethiopian Nile,
 That living tree, which, if the arrowy dove
 Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile,
 But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile;

XLI

And clings to them, when darkness may dissever 2695
 The close caresses of all duller plants
 Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we for ever
 Were linked, for love had nursed us in the haunts
 Where knowledge, from its secret source enchants
 Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing, 2700
 Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants,
 As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever flinging
 Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

XLII

The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were
 Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell,
 Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,— 2706
 And so we sate, until our talk befell
 Of the late ruin, swift and horrible,
 And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown,
 Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison: well, 2710
 For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone,
 But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

XLIII

Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken
 The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane
 Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken, 2715
 Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein,
 Following me obediently; with pain
 Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress,
 When lips and heart refuse to part again
 Till they have told their fill, could scarce express 2720
 The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

XLIV

Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode
 That willing steed—the tempest and the night,
 Which gave my path its safety as I rode
 Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite 2725

The darkness and the tumult of their might
 Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain
 Floating at intervals the garments white
 Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again
 Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain. 2730

XLV

I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he
 Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red
 Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly;
 And when the earth beneath his tameless tread,
 Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread 2735
 His nostrils to the blast, and joyously
 Mock the fierce peal with neighings;—thus we sped
 O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry
 Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

XLVI

There was a desolate village in a wood 2740
 Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed
 The hungry storm; it was a place of blood,
 A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead
 Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled
 From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky 2745
 Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead
 By the black rafters, and around did lie
 Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

XLVII

Beside the fountain in the market-place
 Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare 2750
 With horny eyes upon each other's face,
 And on the earth and on the vacant air,
 And upon me, close to the waters where
 I stooped to slake my thirst;—I shrank to taste,
 For the salt bitterness of blood was there; 2755
 But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste
 If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

XLVIII

No living thing was there beside one woman,
 Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she
 Was withered from a likeness of aught human 2760
 Into a fiend, by some strange misery:
 Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me,
 And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed
 With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee,
 And cried, 'Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed 2765
 The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the
 draught!

XLIX

' My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry,
 Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother—
 When I came home, one in the blood did lie
 Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other!
 Since then I have no longer been a mother, 2771
 But I am Pestilence ;—hither and thither
 I flit about, that I may slay and smother :—
 All lips which I have kissed must surely wither,
 But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together! 2775

L

' What seek'st thou here ? The moonlight comes in flashes,—
 The dew is rising dankly from the dell—
 'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes
 In my sweet boy, now full of worms—but tell
 First what thou seek'st.'—' I seek for food.'—' 'Tis well,
 Thou shalt have food ; Famine, my paramour, 2781
 Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell
 Is Famine, but he drives not from his door
 Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!'

LI

As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength 2785
 Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth
 She led, and over many a corpse :—at length
 We came to a lone hut where on the earth
 Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth
 Gathering from all those homes now desolate, 2790
 Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth
 Among the dead—round which she set in state
 A ring of cold, stiff babes ; silent and stark they sate.

LII

She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high
 Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried : ' Eat ! 2795
 Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die !'
 And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet,
 Towards her bloodless guests ;—that sight to meet,
 Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she
 Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat 2800
 Despair, I might have raved in sympathy ;
 But now I took the food that woman offered me ;

LIII

And vainly having with her madness striven
 If I might win her to return with me,
 Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven 2805
 The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly,

As by the shore of the tempestuous sea
 The dark steed bore me, and the mountain gray
 Soon echoed to his hoofs, and I could see
 Cythna among the rocks, where she always
 Had sate, with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day. 2810

LIV

And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale,
 Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast
 My arms around her, lest her steps should fail
 As to our home we went, and thus embraced, 2815
 Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste
 Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind
 Trod peacefully along the mountain waste:
 We reached our home ere morning could unbind
 Night's latest veil, and on our bridal-couch reclined. 2820

LV

Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom,
 And sweetest kisses past, we two did share
 Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom
 Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air,
 After cold showers, like rainbows woven there, 2825
 Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit
 Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere
 Of health, and hope; and sorrow languished near it,
 And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO VII

I

So we sate joyous as the morning ray 2830
 Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm
 Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play
 Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm,
 And we sate linked in the inwoven charm
 Of converse and caresses sweet and deep, 2835
 Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm
 Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep,
 And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

II

I told her of my sufferings and my madness, 2840
 And how, awakened from that dreamy mood
 By Liberty's uprising, the strength of gladness
 Came to my spirit in my solitude;

And all that now I was—while tears pursued
 Each other down her fair and listening cheek
 Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood 2845
 From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak,
 Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

III

She told me a strange tale of strange endurance,
 Like broken memories of many a heart
 Woven into one; to which no firm assurance, 2850
 So wild were they, could her own faith impart.
 She said that not a tear did dare to start
 From the swoln brain, and that her thoughts were firm
 When from all mortal hope she did depart,
 Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term, 2855
 And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

IV

One was she among many there, the thralls
 Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust: and they
 Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls;
 But she was calm and sad, musing alway 2860
 On loftiest enterprise, till on a day
 The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute
 A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay,
 Like winds that die in wastes—one moment mute
 The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute. 2865

V

Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness,
 One moment to great Nature's sacred power
 He bent, and was no longer passionless;
 But when he bade her to his secret bower
 Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore 2870
 Her locks in agony, and her words of flame
 And mightier looks availed not; then he bore
 Again his load of slavery, and became
 A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

VI

She told me what a loathsome agony 2875
 Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight,
 Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery
 To dally with the mowing dead—that night
 All torture, fear, or horror made seem light
 Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day 2880
 Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight
 Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay
 Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

VII

Her madness was a beam of light, a power 2884
 Which dawned through the rent soul; and words it gave,
 Gestures, and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore
 Which might not be withstood—whence none could save—
 All who approached their sphere,—like some calm wave
 Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath;
 And sympathy made each attendant slave 2890
 Fearless and free, and they began to breathe
 Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

VIII

The King felt pale upon his noonday throne:
 At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,—
 One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown 2895
 From human shape into an instrument
 Of all things ill—distorted, bowed and bent.
 The other was a wretch from infancy
 Made dumb by poison; who nought knew or meant
 But to obey: from the fire-isles came he, 2900
 A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

IX

They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke
 Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas,
 Until upon their path the morning broke;
 They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze, 2905
 The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades
 Shakes with the sleepless surge;—the Ethiop there
 Wound his long arms around her, and with knees
 Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her
 Among the closing waves out of the boundless air. 2910

X

'Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain
 Of morning light, into some shadowy wood,
 He plunged through the green silence of the main,
 Through many a cavern which the eternal flood
 Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood; 2915
 And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder,
 And among mightier shadows which pursued
 His heels, he wound: until the dark rocks under
 He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

XI

'A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling 2920
 Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven
 As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling:
 And in that roof of crags a space was riven

Through which there shone the emerald beams of heaven,
 Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven, 2925
 Like sunlight through acacia woods at even,
 Through which, his way the diver having cloven,
 Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

XII

'And then,' she said, 'he laid me in a cave
 Above the waters, by that chasm of sea, 2930
 A fountain round and vast, in which the wave
 Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually,
 Down which, one moment resting, he did flee,
 Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell
 Like an hupaithric temple wide and high, 2935
 Whose aëry dome is inaccessible,
 Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sun-
 beams fell.

XIII

'Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven
 With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand
 Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven 2940
 With mystic legends by no mortal hand,
 Left there, when thronging to the moon's command,
 The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate
 Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand
 Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state 2945
 Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

XIV

'The fiend of madness which had made its prey
 Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile:
 There was an interval of many a day,
 And a sea-eagle brought me food the while, 2950
 Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle,
 And who, to be the gaoler had been taught
 Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile
 Like light and rest at morn and even is sought 2954
 That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

XV

'The misery of a madness slow and creeping,
 Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air,
 And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping,
 In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair,
 Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there; 2960
 And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore
 Thy mangled limbs for food!—Thus all things were
 Transformed into the agony which I wore
 Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

XVI

'Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing, 2965
 The eagle, and the fountain, and the air;
 Another frenzy came—there seemed a being
 Within me—a strange load my heart did bear,
 As if some living thing had made its lair
 Even in the fountains of my life:—a long 2970
 And wondrous vision wrought from my despair,
 Then grew, like sweet reality among
 Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

XVII

'Methought I was about to be a mother—
 Month after month went by, and still I dreamed 2975
 That we should soon be all to one another,
 I and my child; and still new pulses seemed
 To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed
 There was a babe within—and, when the rain
 Of winter through the rifted cavern streamed, 2980
 Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain,
 I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

XVIII

'It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,—
 It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine,
 Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth 2985
 It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine
 Thine own, beloved!—'twas a dream divine;
 Even to remember how it fled, how swift,
 How utterly, might make the heart repine,—
 Though 'twas a dream.'—Then Cythna did uplift 2990
 Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift:

XIX

A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness
 Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears:
 Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress
 She spoke: 'Yes, in the wilderness of years 2995
 Her memory, aye, like a green home appears;
 She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love,
 For many months. I had no mortal fears;
 Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,—
 It was a human thing which to my bosom clove. 3000

XX

'I watched the dawn of her first smiles, and soon
 When zenith-stars were trembling on the wave,
 Or when the beams of the invisible moon,
 Or sun, from many a prism within the cave

Their gem-born shadows to the water gave, 3005
 Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand,
 From the swift lights which might that fountain pave,
 She would mark one, and laugh, when that command
 Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

XXI

'Methought her looks began to talk with me; 3010
 And no articulate sounds, but something sweet
 Her lips would frame,—so sweet it could not be,
 That it was meaningless; her touch would meet
 Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat
 In response while we slept; and on a day 3015
 When I was happiest in that strange retreat,
 With heaps of golden shells we two did play,—
 Both infants, weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

XXII

'Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown
 Weary with joy, and tired with our delight, 3020
 We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down
 On one fair mother's bosom:—from that night
 She fled;—like those illusions clear and bright,
 Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high
 Pause ere it wakens tempest;—and her flight, 3025
 Though 'twas the death of brainless fantasy,
 Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

XXIII

'It seemed that in the dreary night, the diver
 Who brought me thither, came again, and bore
 My child away. I saw the waters quiver, 3030
 When he so swiftly sunk, as once before:
 Then morning came—it shone even as of yore,
 But I was changed—the very life was gone
 Out of my heart—I wasted more and more,
 Day after day, and sitting there alone, 3035
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXIV

'I was no longer mad, and yet methought
 My breasts were swoln and changed:—in every vein
 The blood stood still one moment, while that thought
 Was passing—with a gush of sickening pain 3040
 It ebb'd even to its withered springs again:
 When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned
 From that most strange delusion, which would fain
 Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned
 With more than human love,—then left it unreturned. 3045

XXV

'So now my reason was restored to me
 I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast
 Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory
 Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast;
 But all that cave and all its shapes, possessed 3050
 By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one
 Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blessed
 Me heretofore: I, sitting there alone,
 Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

XXVI

'Time passed, I know not whether months or years;
 For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made 3056
 Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears:
 And I became at last even as a shade,
 A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed,
 Till it be thin as air; until, one even, 3060
 A Nautilus upon the fountain played,
 Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven
 Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

XXVII

'And, when the Eagle came, that lovely thing,
 Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat, 3065
 Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing,
 The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey did float;
 But when he saw that I with fear did note
 His purpose, proffering my own food to him,
 The eager plumes subsided on his throat— 3070
 He came where that bright child of sea did swim,
 And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

XXVIII

'This wakened me, it gave me human strength;
 And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose,
 But I resumed my ancient powers at length; 3075
 My spirit felt again like one of those
 Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes
 Of humankind their prey—what was this cave?
 Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows
 Immutable, resistless, strong to save, 3080
 Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

XXIX

'And where was Laon? might my heart be dead,
 While that far dearer heart could move and be?
 Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread,
 Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free, 3085

Could I but win that friendly bird to me,
 To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought
 By intercourse of mutual imagery
 Of objects, if such aid he could be taught;
 But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

XXX

'We live in our own world, and mine was made 3091
 From glorious fantasies of hope departed:
 Aye we are darkened with their floating shade,
 Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted
 Such power to me—I became fearless-hearted, 3095
 My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind,
 And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted
 Its lustre on all hidden things, behind
 Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

XXXI

'My mind became the book through which I grew 3100
 Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave,
 Which like a mine I rifled through and through,
 To me the keeping of its secrets gave—
 One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave
 Whose calm reflects all moving things that are, 3105
 Necessity, and love, and life, the grave,
 And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear;
 Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural sphere.

XXXII

'And on the sand would I make signs to range
 These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought; 3110
 Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change
 A subtler language within language wrought:
 The key of truths which once were dimly taught
 In old Crotona;—and sweet melodies
 Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught 3115
 From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes
 Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

XXXIII

'Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will,
 As in a wingèd chariot, o'er the plain
 Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill 3120
 My heart with joy, and there we sate again
 On the gray margin of the glimmering main,
 Happy as then but wiser far, for we
 Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain
 Fear, Faith, and Slavery; and mankind was free, 3125
 Equal, and pure, and wise, in Wisdom's prophecy.

XXXIV

'For to my will my fancies were as slaves
 To do their sweet and subtile ministries;
 And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves
 They would make human throngs gather and rise 3130
 To combat with my overflowing eyes,
 And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew
 Familiar with the shock and the surprise
 And war of earthly minds, from which I drew
 The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts
 anew.

XXXV

'And thus my prison was the populous earth— 3136
 Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn
 Before the east has given its glory birth—
 Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn
 Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn, 3140
 And dwellings of mild people interspersed
 With undivided fields of ripening corn,
 And love made free,—a hope which we have nursed
 Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

XXXVI

'All is not lost! There is some recompense 3145
 For hope whose fountain can be thus profound,
 Even thronèd Evil's splendid impotence,
 Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound
 Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound
 Of life and death passed fearlessly and well, 3150
 Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found,
 Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell,
 And what may else be good and irresistible.

XXXVII

'Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare
 In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet 3155
 In this dark ruin—such were mine even there;
 As in its sleep some odorous violet,
 While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet,
 Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprising,
 Or, as ere Scythian frost in fear has met 3160
 Spring's messengers descending from the skies,
 The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

XXXVIII

'So years had passed, when sudden earthquake rent
 The depth of ocean, and the cavern cracked
 With sound, as if the world's wide continent 3165
 Had fallen in universal ruin wracked:

And through the cleft streamed in one cataract
 The stifling waters—when I woke, the flood
 Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked
 Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode 3170
 Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

XXXIX

‘Above me was the sky, beneath the sea:
 I stood upon a point of shattered stone,
 And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously
 With splash and shock into the deep—anon 3175
 All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone.
 I felt that I was free! The Ocean-spray
 Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone
 Around, and in my hair the winds did play
 Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way. 3180

XL

‘My spirit moved upon the sea like wind
 Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover,
 Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind
 The strength of tempest: day was almost over,
 When through the fading light I could discover 3185
 A ship approaching—its white sails were fed
 With the north wind—its moving shade did cover
 The twilight deep;—the Mariners in dread
 Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

XLI

‘And when they saw one sitting on a crag, 3190
 They sent a boat to me;—the Sailors rowed
 In awe through many a new and fearful jag
 Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed
 The foam of streams that cannot make abode.
 They came and questioned me, but when they heard 3195
 My voice, they became silent, and they stood
 And moved as men in whom new love had stirred
 Deep thoughts: so to the ship we passed without a word.

CANTO VIII

I

‘I SATE beside the Steersman then, and gazing
 Upon the west, cried, “Spread the sails! Behold! 3200
 The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing
 Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold

Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold;
 The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily
 Beneath the stars, they tremble with the cold! 3205
 Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea!—
 Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!”

II

‘The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood
 Aloof, and, whispering to the Pilot, said,
 “Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued 3210
 By wicked ghosts: a Phantom of the Dead,
 The night before we sailed, came to my bed
 In dream, like that!” The Pilot then replied,
 “It cannot be—she is a human Maid—
 Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride, 3215
 Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside.”

III

‘We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream,
 And as we sailed, the Mariners came near
 And thronged around to listen;—in the gleam
 Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear 3220
 May not attain, and my calm voice did rear;
 “Ye all are human—yon broad moon gives light
 To millions who the selfsame likeness wear,
 Even while I speak—beneath this very night, 3224
 Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

IV

“What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home,
 Even for yourselves on a beloved shore:
 For some, fond eyes are pining till they come,
 How they will greet him when his toils are o’er, 3229
 And laughing babes rush from the well-known door!
 Is this your care? ye toil for your own good—
 Ye feel and think—has some immortal power
 Such purposes? or in a human mood,
 Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude?

V

“What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves, and give
 A human heart to what ye cannot know: 3236
 As if the cause of life could think and live!
 ’Twere as if man’s own works should feel, and show
 The hopes, and fears, and thoughts from which they flow,
 And he be like to them! Lo! Plague is free 3240
 To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow,
 Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity
 Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny!

VI

“What is that Power? Some moon-struck sophist stood
 Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown 3245
 Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood
 The Form he saw and worshipped was his own,
 His likeness in the world’s vast mirror shown;
 And ’twere an innocent dream, but that a faith
 Nursed by fear’s dew of poison, grows thereon, 3250
 And that men say, that Power has chosen Death
 On all who scorn its laws, to wreak immortal wrath.

VII

“Men say that they themselves have heard and seen,
 Or known from others who have known such things,
 A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between 3255
 Wiolds an invisible rod—that Priests and Kings,
 Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings
 Man’s freeborn soul beneath the oppressor’s heel,
 Are his strong ministers, and that the stings
 Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel, 3260
 Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

VIII

“And it is said, this Power will punish wrong;
 Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain!
 And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among,
 Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain, 3265
 Which, like a plague, a burden, and a bane,
 Clung to him while he lived;—for love and hate,
 Virtue and vice, they say are difference vain—
 The will of strength is right—this human state
 Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate. 3270

IX

“Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail
 Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon
 Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail
 To hide the orb of truth—and every throne
 Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow, rests thereon, 3275
 One shape of many names:—for this ye plough
 The barren waves of ocean, hence each one
 Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow,
 Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

X

“Its names are each a sign which maketh holy 3280
 All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade
 Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly;
 The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made,

A law to which mankind has been betrayed ;
 And human love, is as the name well known 3285
 Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid
 In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown,
 Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

XI

“O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men
 Art as the calm to Ocean’s weary waves! 3290
 Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can
 From slavery and religion’s labyrinth caves
 Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves.
 To give to all an equal share of good,
 To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves
 She pass, to suffer all in patient mood, 3296
 To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend’s dearest
 blood,—

XII

“To feel the peace of self-contentment’s lot,
 To own all sympathies, and outrage none,
 And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought, 3300
 Until life’s sunny day is quite gone down,
 To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone,
 To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe ;
 To live, as if to love and live were one,—
 This is not faith or law, nor those who bow 3305
 To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

XIII

“But children near their parents tremble now,
 Because they must obey—one rules another,
 And as one Power rules both high and low,
 So man is made the captive of his brother, 3310
 And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother,
 Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells,
 Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other,
 Are darkened—Woman as the bond-slave dwells
 Of man, a slave ; and life is poisoned in its wells. 3315

XIV

“Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave
 A lasting chain for his own slavery ;—
 In fear and restless care that he may live
 He toils for others, who must ever be
 The joyless thralls of like captivity ; 3320
 He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin ;
 He builds the altar, that its idol’s fee
 May be his very blood ; he is pursuing—
 O, blind and willing wretch!—his own obscure undoing.

XV

“Woman!—she is his slave, she has become 3325
 A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn,
 The outcast of a desolated home;
 Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn
 Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn,
 As calm decks the false Ocean:—well ye know 3330
 What Woman is, for none of Woman born,
 Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe,
 Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

XVI

“This need not be; ye might arise, and will
 That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory;
 That love, which none may bind, be free to fill 3336
 The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary
 With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory
 Even now eclipses the descending moon!—
 Dungeons and palaces are transitory— 3340
 High temples fade like vapour—Man alone
 Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

XVII

“Let all be free and equal!—From your hearts
 I feel an echo; through my inmost frame
 Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts— 3345
 Whence come ye, friends? Alas, I cannot name
 All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame,
 On your worn faces; as in legends old
 Which make immortal the disastrous fame
 Of conquerors and impostors false and bold, 3350
 The discord of your hearts, I in your looks behold.

XVIII

“Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood
 Forth on the earth? Or bring ye steel and gold,
 That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude?
 Or from the famished poor, pale, weak, and cold, 3355
 Bear ye the earnings of their toil? Unfold!
 Speak! Are your hands in slaughter’s sanguine hue
 Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old?
 Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew,
 And I will be a friend and sister unto you. 3360

XIX

“Disguise it not—we have one human heart—
 All mortal thoughts confess a common home:
 Blush not for what may to thyself impart
 Stains of inevitable crime: the doom

Is this, which has, or may, or must become
Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil 3365
Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb,
Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil
Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

XX

“Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate, 3370
And Enmity is sister unto Shame;
Look on your mind—it is the book of fate—
Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name
Of misery—all are mirrors of the same;
But the dark fiend who with his iron pen 3375
Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame
Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men
Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

XXI

“Yes, it is Hate—that shapeless fiendly thing
Of many names, all evil, some divine, 3380
Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting;
Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine
Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine
To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside
It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine 3385
When Amphisbæna some fair bird has tied,
Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

XXII

“Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself,
Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own.
It is the dark idolatry of self, 3390
Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone,
Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan;
O vacant expiation! Be at rest.—
The past is Death's, the future is thine own;
And love and joy can make the foulest breast 3395
A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

XXIII

“Speak thou! whence come ye?”—A Youth made reply:
“Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep
We sail;—thou readest well the misery
Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep 3400
Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep,
Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow;
Even from our childhood have we learned to steep
The bread of slavery in the tears of woe,
And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now. 3405

XXIV

"Yes—I must speak—my secret should have perished
 Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand
 Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished,
 But that no human bosom can withstand
 Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command 3410
 Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves,
 Who from their wonted loves and native land
 Are reft, and bear o'er the dividing waves
 The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

XXV

"We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest 3415
 Among the daughters of those mountains lone,
 We drag them there, where all things best and rarest
 Are stained and trampled:—years have come and gone
 Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known
 No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid 3420
 On mine with light of mutual love have shone—
 She is my life,—I am but as the shade
 Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

XXVI

"For she must perish in the Tyrant's hall—
 Alas, alas!"—He ceased, and by the sail 3425
 Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all,
 And still before the ocean and the gale
 The ship fled fast till the stars 'gan to fail,
 And, round me gathered with mute countenance,
 The Seamen gazed, the Pilot, worn and pale 3430
 With toil, the Captain with gray locks, whose glance
 Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

XXVII

"Recede not! pause not now! Thou art grown old,
 But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth
 Are children of one mother, even Love—behold! 3435
 The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth
 Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth
 For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear
 A heart which not the serpent Custom's tooth
 May violate?—Be free! and even here, 3440
 Swear to be firm till death!" They cried "We swear! We
 swear!"

XXVIII

"The very darkness shook, as with a blast
 Of subterranean thunder, at the cry;
 The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast
 Into the night, as if the sea, and sky, 3445

And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty,
 For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn,
 And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye
 The captives gazing stood, and every one
 Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone. 3449

XXIX

'They were earth's purest children, young and fair,
 With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought,
 And brows as bright as Spring or Morning, ere
 Dark time had there its evil legend wrought
 In characters of cloud which wither not.— 3455
 The change was like a dream to them; but soon
 They knew the glory of their altered lot,
 In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon,
 Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

XXX

'But one was mute, her cheeks and lips most fair, 3460
 Changing their hue like lilies newly blown,
 Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair,
 Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon,
 Showed that her soul was quivering; and full soon
 That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look 3465
 On her and me, as for some speechless boon:
 I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took,
 And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

CANTO IX

I

'THAT night we anchored in a woody bay,
 And sleep no more around us dared to hover 3470
 Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away,
 It shades the couch of some unresting lover,
 Whose heart is now at rest: thus night passed over
 In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew
 Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover 3475
 The waning stars pranked in the waters blue,
 And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

II

'The joyous Mariners, and each free Maiden,
 Now brought from the deep forest many a bough,
 With woodland spoil most innocently laden; 3480
 Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow

Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow
 Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while
 On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go
 Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle 3485
 Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

III

'The many ships spotting the dark blue deep
 With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh,
 In fear and wonder; and on every steep
 Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry, 3490
 Like Earth's own voice lifted unconquerably
 To all her children, the unbounded mirth,
 The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty!
 They heard!—As o'er the mountains of the earth
 From peak to peak leap on the beams of Morning's birth:

IV

'So from that cry over the boundless hills 3496
 Sudden was caught one universal sound,
 Like a volcano's voice, whose thunder fills
 Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found
 A path through human hearts with stream which drowned
 Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom's brood; 3501
 They knew not whence it came, but felt around
 A wide contagion poured—they called aloud
 On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

V

'We reached the port.—Alas! from many spirits 3505
 The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled,
 Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits
 From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread,
 Upon the night's devouring darkness shed:
 Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm 3510
 Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead,
 Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm,
 To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm!

VI

'I walked through the great City then, but free
 From shame or fear; those toil-worn Mariners 3515
 And happy Maidens did encompass me;
 And like a subterranean wind that stirs
 Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears
 From every human soul, a murmur strange
 Made as I passed: and many wept, with tears 3520
 Of joy and awe, and wingèd thoughts did range,
 And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of change.

VII

'For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid
 Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,—
 As one who from some mountain's pyramid
 Points to the unrisen sun!—the shades approve 3525
 His truth, and flee from every stream and grove.
 Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,—
 Wisdom, the mail of tried affections wove
 For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill, 3530
 Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

VIII

'Some said I was a maniac wild and lost;
 Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave,
 The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:—
 Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave, 3535
 Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave,
 The forest, and the mountain came;—some said
 I was the child of God, sent down to save
 Women from bonds and death, and on my head
 The burden of their sins would frightfully be laid. 3540

IX

'But soon my human words found sympathy
 In human hearts: the purest and the best,
 As friend with friend, made common cause with me,
 And they were few, but resolute;—the rest,
 Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed, 3545
 Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber,
 Their hourly occupations, were possessed
 By hopes which I had armed to overnumber
 Those hosts of meaner cares, which life's strong wings
 encumber.

X

'But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken 3550
 From their cold, careless, willing slavery,
 Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,—
 They looked around, and lo! they became free!
 Their many tyrants sitting desolately
 In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain; 3555
 For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye,
 Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain
 Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

XI

'Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt
 Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round,
 Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt 3561
 In the white furnace; and a visioned swound,

A pause of hope and awe the City bound,
 Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth,
 When in its awful shadow it has wound 3565
 The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth,
 Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leaped forth.

XII

'Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky,
 By winds from distant regions meeting there,
 In the high name of truth and liberty, 3570
 Around the City millions gathered were,
 By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair,—
 Words which the lore of truth in hues of flame
 Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air
 Like homeless odours floated, and the name 3575
 Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in
 flame.

XIII

'The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear,
 The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event—
 That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer,
 And whatso'er, when force is impotent, 3580
 To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent,
 Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway.
 Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent
 To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they
 For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

XIV

'And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell 3586
 From seats where law is made the slave of wrong,
 How glorious Athens in her splendour fell,
 Because her sons were free,—and that among
 Mankind, the many to the few belong, 3590
 By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity.
 They said, that age was truth, and that the young
 Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery,
 With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

XV

'And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips 3595
 They breathed on the enduring memory
 Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse;
 There was one teacher, who necessity
 Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind,
 His slave and his avenger aye to be; 3600
 That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind,
 And that the will of one was peace, and we
 Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery—

XVI

"For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter."
 So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied; 3605
 Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter
 Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride
 Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide;
 And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow,
 And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide, 3610
 Said, that the rule of men was over now,
 And hence, the subject world to woman's will must bow;

XVII

'And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine
 Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall.
 In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine 3615
 As they were wont, nor at the priestly call
 Left Plague her banquet in the Ethiop's hall,
 Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,
 Where at her ease she ever preys on all
 Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame, 3620
 Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope's newly kindled flame.

XVIII

'For gold was as a god whose faith began
 To fade, so that its worshippers were few,
 And Faith itself, which in the heart of man
 Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew 3625
 Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew,
 Till the Priests stood alone within the fane;
 The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew,
 And the cold sneers of calumny were vain,
 The union of the free with discord's brand to stain. 3630

XIX

'The rest thou knowest.—Lo! we two are here—
 We have survived a ruin wide and deep—
 Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve or fear,
 Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep
 I smile, though human love should make me weep. 3635
 We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow,
 And I do feel a mighty calmness creep
 Over my heart, which can no longer borrow
 Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

XX

'We know not what will come—yet Laon, dearest, 3640
 Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love,
 Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest,
 To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove

Within the homeless Future's wintry grove ;
 For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem 3645
 Even with thy breath and blood to live and move,
 And violence and wrong are as a dream
 Which rolls from steadfast truth, an unreturning stream.

XXI

'The blasts of Autumn drive the wingèd seeds
 Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain, 3650
 And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads
 Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train ;
 Behold ! Spring sweeps over the world again,
 Shedding soft dew's from her ethereal wings ;
 Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain, 3655
 And music on the waves and woods she flings,
 And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

XXII

'O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness
 Wind-wingèd emblem ! brightest, best and fairest !
 Whence comest thou, when, with dark Winter's sadness 3660
 The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest ?
 Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest
 Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet ;
 Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest
 Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet, 3665
 Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

XXIII

'Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven,
 Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves.
 Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven
 Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves ? 3670
 Lo, Winter comes !—the grief of many graves,
 The frost of death, the tempest of the sword,
 The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves
 Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter's word,
 And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred. 3675

XXIV

'The seeds are sleeping in the soil : meanwhile
 The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey,
 Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile
 Because they cannot speak ; and, day by day,
 The moon of wasting Science wanes away 3680
 Among her stars, and in that darkness vast
 The sons of earth to their foul idols pray,
 And gray Priests triumph, and like blight or blast
 A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

XXV

'This is the winter of the world;—and here 3685
 We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade,
 Expiring in the frore and foggy air.—
 Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made
 The promise of its birth,—even as the shade
 Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings 3690
 The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed
 As with the plumes of overshadowing wings,
 From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

XXVI

'O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold
 Before this morn may on the world arise; 3695
 Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold?
 Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes
 On thine own heart—it is a paradise
 Which everlasting Spring has made its own,
 And while drear Winter fills the naked skies, 3700
 Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh-blown,
 Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

XXVII

'In their own hearts the earnest of the hope
 Which made them great, the good will ever find;
 And though some envious shades may interlope 3705
 Between the effect and it, One comes behind,
 Who aye the future to the past will bind—
 Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever
 Evil with evil, good with good must wind
 In bands of union, which no power may sever: 3710
 They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

XXVIII

'The good and mighty of departed ages
 Are in their graves, the innocent and free,
 Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages,
 Who leave the vesture of their majesty 3715
 To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we
 Are like to them—such perish, but they leave
 All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty,
 Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive,
 To be a rule and law to ages that survive. 3720

XXIX

'So be the turf heaped over our remains
 Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot,
 Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins
 The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought

Pass from our being, or be numbered not 3725
 Among the things that are; let those who come
 Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought
 A calm inheritance, a glorious doom,
 Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

XXX

'Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love, 3730
 Our happiness, and all that we have been,
 Immortally must live, and burn and move,
 When we shall be no more;—the world has seen
 A type of peace; and—as some most serene
 And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye, 3735
 After long years, some sweet and moving scene
 Of youthful hope, returning suddenly,
 Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

XXXI

'And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us,
 As worms devour the dead, and near the throne 3740
 And at the altar, most accepted thus
 Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done
 None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known;
 That record shall remain, when they must pass
 Who built their pride on its oblivion; 3745
 And fame, in human hope which sculptured was,
 Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

XXXII

'The while we two, beloved, must depart,
 And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair,
 Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart 3750
 That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair:
 These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there
 To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep
 Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air,
 Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep 3755
 In joy;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep!

XXXIII

'These are blind fancies—reason cannot know
 What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive;
 There is delusion in the world—and woe,
 And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live, 3760
 Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give
 Their being to each plant, and star, and beast,
 Or even these thoughts.—Come near me! I do weave
 A chain I cannot break—I am possessed
 With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human
 breast. 3765

XXXIV

‘Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm—
 O! willingly, belovèd, would these eyes,
 Might they no more drink being from thy form,
 Even as to sleep whence we again arise,
 Close their faint orbs in death: I fear nor prize 3770
 Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee—
 Yes, Love when Wisdom fails makes Cythna wise:
 Darkness and death, if death be true, must be
 Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

XXXV

‘Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters
 Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven, 3776
 The Ocean and the Sun, the Clouds their daughters,
 Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even,
 All that we are or know, is darkly driven
 Towards one gulf.—Lo! what a change is come 3780
 Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven,
 Though it change all but thee!’—She ceased—night’s gloom
 Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky’s sunless dome.

XXXVI

Though she had ceased, her countenance uplifted
 To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright; 3785
 Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted
 The air they breathed with love, her locks undight.
 ‘Fair star of life and love,’ I cried, ‘my soul’s delight,
 Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies?
 O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night, 3790
 Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!’
 She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise!

CANTO X

I

WAS there a human spirit in the steed,
 That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone,
 He broke our linkèd rest? or do indeed 3795
 All living things a common nature own,
 And thought erect an universal throne,
 Where many shapes one tribute ever bear?
 And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan
 To see her sons contend? and makes she bare 3800
 Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

II

I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue
 Which was not human—the lone nightingale
 Has answered me with her most soothing song,
 Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale 3805
 With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale
 The antelopes who flocked for food have spoken
 With happy sounds, and motions, that avail
 Like man's own speech; and such was now the token
 Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was
 broken. 3810

III

Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad,
 And I returned with food to our retreat,
 And dark intelligence; the blood which flowed
 Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet;
 Soon the dust drips that bitter dew,—then meet 3815
 The vulture, and the wild dog, and the snake,
 The wolf, and the hyæna gray, and eat
 The dead in horrid truce: their throngs did make
 Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

IV

For, from the utmost realms of earth, came pouring 3820
 The banded slaves whom every despot sent
 At that throned traitor's summons; like the roaring
 Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent
 In the scorched pastures of the South; so bent
 The armies of the leaguèd Kings around 3825
 Their files of steel and flame;—the continent
 Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound,
 Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their Navies' sound.

V

From every nation of the earth they came,
 The multitude of moving heartless things, 3830
 Whom slaves call men: obediently they came,
 Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings
 To the stall, red with blood; their many kings
 Led them, thus erring, from their native land;
 Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings 3835
 Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band
 The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

VI

Fertile in prodigies and lies;—so there
 Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill.
 The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear 3840
 His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will

Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill
 Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure;
 But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill,
 And savage sympathy: those slaves impure, 3845
 Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

VII

For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe
 His countenance in lies,—even at the hour
 When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe,
 With secret signs from many a mountain-tower, 3850
 With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power
 Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators,
 He called:—they knew his cause their own, and swore
 Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars
 Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven
 abhors. 3855

VIII

Myriads had come—millions were on their way;
 The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel
 Of hired assassins, through the public way,
 Choked with his country's dead:—his footsteps reel
 On the fresh blood—he smiles. 'Ay, now I feel 3860
 I am a King in truth!' he said, and took
 His royal seat, and bade the torturing wheel
 Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook,
 And scorpions; that his soul on its revenge might look.

IX

'But first, go slay the rebels—why return 3865
 The victor bands?' he said, 'millions yet live,
 Of whom the weakest with one word might turn
 The scales of victory yet;—let none survive
 But those within the walls—each fifth shall give
 The expiation for his brethren here.— 3870
 Go forth, and waste and kill!'—'O king, forgive
 My speech,' a soldier answered—'but we fear
 The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

X

'For we were slaying still without remorse,
 And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand 3875
 Defenceless lay, when, on a hell-black horse,
 An Angel bright as day, waving a brand
 Which flashed among the stars, passed.'—'Dost thou
 stand
 Parleying with me, thou wretch?' the king replied;
 'Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band, 3880
 Whoso will drag that woman to his side
 That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside;

XI

‘And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth!’
 They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar
 Of their career: the horsemen shook the earth; 3885
 The wheeled artillery’s speed the pavement tore;
 The infantry, file after file, did pour
 Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew
 Among the wasted fields; the sixth saw gore
 Stream through the city; on the seventh, the dew 3890
 Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace anew:

XII

Peace in the desert fields and villages,
 Between the glutted beasts and mangled dead!
 Peace in the silent streets! save when the cries
 Of victims to their fiery judgement led, 3895
 Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed to dread
 Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue
 Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed;
 Peace in the Tyrant’s palace, where the throng
 Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song! 3900

XIII

Day after day the burning sun rolled on
 Over the death-polluted land—it came
 Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone
 A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame
 The few lone ears of corn;—the sky became 3905
 Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast
 Languished and died,—the thirsting air did claim
 All moisture, and a rotting vapour passed
 From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

XIV

First Want, then Plague came on the beasts; their food
 Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay. 3911
 Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood
 Had lured, or who, from regions far away,
 Had tracked the hosts in festival array,
 From their dark deserts; gaunt and wasting now, 3915
 Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey;
 In their green eyes a strange disease did glow,
 They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

XV

The fish were poisoned in the streams; the birds
 In the green woods perished; the insect race 3920
 Was withered up; the scattered flocks and herds
 Who had survived the wild beasts’ hungry chase

Died moaning, each upon the other's face
 In helpless agony gazing; round the City
 All night, the lean hyaenas their sad case 3925
 Like starving infants wailed; a woeful ditty!
 And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

XVI

Amid the aëreal minarets on high,
 The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell
 From their long line of brethren in the sky, 3930
 Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well
 These signs the coming mischief did foretell:—
 Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread
 Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell,
 A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread 3935
 With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

XVII

Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts
 Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare;
 So on those strange and congregated hosts
 Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air 3940
 Groaned with the burden of a new despair;
 Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter
 Feeds from her thousand breasts, though sleeping there
 With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
 A ghastly brood; conceived of Lethe's sullen water. 3945

XVIII

There was no food, the corn was trampled down,
 The flocks and herds had perished; on the shore
 The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown;
 The deeps were foodless, and the winds no more
 Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before 3950
 Those wingèd things sprang forth, were void of shade;
 The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store,
 Were burned;—so that the meanest food was weighed
 With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

XIX

There was no corn—in the wide market-place 3955
 All loathliest things, even human flesh, was sold;
 They weighed it in small scales—and many a face
 Was fixed in eager horror then: his gold
 The miser brought; the tender maid, grown bold
 Through hunger, bared her scornèd charms in vain; 3960
 The mother brought her eldest-born, controlled
 By instinct blind as love, but turned again
 And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

XX

Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man.
 'O, for the sheathèd steel, so late which gave 3965
 Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran
 With brothers' blood! O, that the earthquake's grave
 Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!
 Vain cries—throughout the streets, thousands pursued
 Each by his fiery torture howl and rave, 3970
 Or sit, in frenzy's unimagined mood,
 Upon fresh heaps of dead; a ghastly multitude.

XXI

It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well
 Was choked with rotting corpses, and became
 A cauldron of green mist made visible 3975
 At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came,
 Seeking to quench the agony of the flame,
 Which raged like poison through their bursting veins;
 Naked they were from torture, without shame,
 Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains, 3980
 Childhood, and youth, and age, writhing in savage pains.

XXII

It was not thirst but madness! Many saw
 Their own lean image everywhere, it went
 A ghastlier self beside them, till the awe
 Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent 3985
 Those shrieking victims; some, ere life was spent,
 Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed
 Contagion on the sound; and others rent
 Their matted hair, and cried aloud, 'We tread
 On fire! the avenging Power his hell on earth has spread!'

XXIII

Sometimes the living by the dead were hid. 3991
 Near the great fountain in the public square,
 Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid
 Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer
 For life, in the hot silence of the air; 3995
 And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see
 Some shrouded in their long and golden hair,
 As if not dead, but slumbering quietly
 Like forms which sculptors carve, then love to agony.

XXIV

Famine had spared the palace of the king:— 4000
 He rioted in festival the while,
 He and his guards and priests; but Plague did fling
 One shadow upon all. Famine can smile

On him who brings it food, and pass, with guile
 Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier gray, 4005
 The house-dog of the throne; but many a mile
 Comes Plague, a wingèd wolf, who loathes alway
 The garbage and the scum that strangers make her prey.

XXV

So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast,
 Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight 4010
 To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased
 That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might
 Was loosened, and a new and ghastlier night
 In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell
 Headlong, or with stiff eyeballs sate upright 4015
 Among the guests, or raving mad, did tell
 Strange truths; a dying seer of dark oppression's hell.

XXVI

The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror;
 That monstrous faith wherewith they ruled mankind,
 Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error, 4020
 On their own hearts: they sought and they could find
 No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind!
 So, through the desolate streets to the high fane,
 The many-tongued and endless armies wind
 In sad procession: each among the train 4025
 To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

XXVII

'O God!' they cried, 'we know our secret pride
 Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name;
 Secure in human power we have defied
 Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame 4030
 Before thy presence; with the dust we claim
 Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven!
 Most justly have we suffered for thy fame
 Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven,
 Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven. 4035

XXVIII

'O King of Glory! thou alone hast power!
 Who can resist thy will? who can restrain
 Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower
 The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain?
 Greatest and best, be merciful again! 4040
 Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made
 The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane,
 Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid
 Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have
 weighed?

XXIX

'Well didst thou loosen on this impious City 4045
 Thine angels of revenge: recall them now;
 Thy worshippers, abased, here kneel for pity,
 And bind their souls by an immortal vow:
 We swear by thee! and to our oath do thou
 Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame, 4050
 That we will kill with fire and torments slow,
 The last of those who mocked thy holy name,
 And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.'

XXX

Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips
 Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast,
 Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse 4056
 The light of other minds;—troubled they passed
 From the great Temple;—fiercely still and fast
 The arrows of the plague among them fell,
 And they on one another gazed aghast, 4060
 And through the hosts contention wild befell,
 As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

XXXI

And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet,
 Moses and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh,
 A tumult of strange names, which never met 4065
 Before, as watchwords of a single woe,
 Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw
 Aloft his armèd hands, and each did howl
 'Our God alone is God!'—and slaughter now
 Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl 4070
 A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every soul.

XXXII

'Twas an Iberian Priest from whom it came,
 A zealous man, who led the legioned West,
 With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame,
 To quell the unbelievers; a dire guest 4075
 Even to his friends was he, for in his breast
 Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined,
 Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest;
 He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined
 To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

XXXIII

But more he loathed and hated the clear light 4081
 Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear,
 Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night,
 Even where his Idol stood; for, far and near

Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear
 That faith and tyranny were trampled down; 4085
 Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share
 The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan,
 The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

XXXIV

He dared not kill the infidels with fire 4090
 Or steel, in Europe; the slow agonies
 Of legal torture mocked his keen desire;
 So he made truce with those who did despise
 The expiation, and the sacrifice,
 That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed 4095
 Might crush for him those deadlier enemies;
 For fear of God did in his bosom breed
 A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

XXXV

'Peace! Peace!' he cried, 'when we are dead, the Day
 Of Judgement comes, and all shall surely know 4100
 Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay
 The errors of his faith in endless woe!
 But there is sent a mortal vengeance now
 On earth, because an impious race had spurned
 Him whom we all adore,—a subtle foe, 4105
 By whom for ye this dread reward was earned,
 And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

XXXVI

'Think ye, because ye weep, and kneel, and pray,
 That God will lull the pestilence? It rose
 Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day, 4110
 His mercy soothed it to a dark repose:
 It walks upon the earth to judge his foes;
 And what are thou and I, that he should deign
 To curb his ghastly minister, or close
 The gates of death, ere they receive the twain 4115
 Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

XXXVII

'Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell,
 Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn,—
 Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell
 By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn, 4120
 Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn
 Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent
 To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn
 Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent,
 When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent! 4125

XXXVIII

'Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep:—
 Pile high the pyre of expiation now,
 A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap
 Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow,
 When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow,
 A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high 4131
 A net of iron, and spread forth below
 A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry
 Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny!

XXXIX

'Let Laon and Laone on that pyre, 4135
 Linked tight with burning brass, perish!—then pray
 That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire
 Of Heaven may be appeased.' He ceased, and they
 A space stood silent, as far, far away
 The echoes of his voice among them died; 4140
 And he knelt down upon the dust, alway
 Muttering the curses of his speechless pride,
 Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

XL

His voice was like a blast that burst the portal
 Of fabled hell; and as he spake, each one 4145
 Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal,
 And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne
 Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone
 Their King and Judge—fear killed in every breast
 All natural pity then, a fear unknown 4150
 Before, and with an inward fire possessed,
 They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

XLI

'Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth,
 Proclaiming through the living and the dead,
 'The Monarch saith, that his great Empire's worth 4155
 Is set on Laon and Laone's head:
 He who but one yet living here can lead,
 Or who the life from both their hearts can wring,
 Shall be the kingdom's heir, a glorious meed!
 But he who both alive can hither bring, 4160
 The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.'

XLII

Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron
 Was spread above, the fearful couch below;
 It overtopped the towers that did environ
 That spacious square; for Fear is never slow 4165

To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe,
 So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude
 To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow,
 Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued
 By gadflies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and wood.

XLIII

Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom. 4171
 Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation
 Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb
 Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation;
 And in the silence of that expectation, 4175
 Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl—
 It was so deep—save when the devastation
 Of the swift pest, with fearful interval,
 Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

XLIV

Morn came,—among those sleepless multitudes, 4180
 Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine still
 Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods
 The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill
 Earth's cold and sullen brooks; in silence, still
 The pale survivors stood; ere noon, the fear 4185
 Of Hell became a panic, which did kill
 Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear,
 As 'Hush! hark! Come they yet? Just Heaven! thine
 hour is near!'

XLV

And Priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting
 The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed 4190
 With their own lies; they said their god was waiting
 To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,—
 And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need
 Of human souls:—three hundred furnaces
 Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed,
 Men brought their infidel kindred to appease 4196
 God's wrath, and while they burned, knelt round on quivering
 knees.

XLVI

The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke,
 The winds of eve dispersed those ashes gray.
 The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke 4200
 Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say
 The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh
 In balance just the good and evil there?
 He might man's deep and searchless heart display,
 And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where 4205
 Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

4176 reptiles'] reptiles *ed.* 1818.

XLVII

'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then,
 To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head,
 And laughed, and died; and that unholy men,
 Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead, 4210
 Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread
 The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she!
 And, on that night, one without doubt or dread
 Came to the fire, and said, 'Stop, I am he!
 Kill me!'—They burned them both with hellish mockery.

XLVIII

And, one by one, that night, young maidens came, 4216
 Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone
 Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame
 Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down,
 And sung a low sweet song, of which alone 4220
 One word was heard, and that was Liberty;
 And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan
 Like love, and died; and then that they did die
 With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO XI

I

SHE saw me not—she heard me not—alone 4225
 Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood;
 She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown
 Over her look, the shadow of a mood
 Which only clothes the heart in solitude,
 A thought of voiceless depth;—she stood alone, 4230
 Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood
 Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown
 Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

II

A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains;
 Before its blue and moveless depth were flying 4235
 Gray mists poured forth from the unresting fountains
 Of darkness in the North:—the day was dying:—
 Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying
 Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see,
 And on the shattered vapours, which defying 4240
 The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly
 In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

III

It was a stream of living beams, whose bank
 On either side by the cloud's cleft was made;
 And where its chasms that flood of glory drank, 4245
 Its waves gushed forth like fire, and as if swayed
 By some mute tempest, rolled on *her*; the shade
 Of her bright image floated on the river
 Of liquid light, which then did end and fade—
 Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver; 4250
 Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

IV

I stood beside her, but she saw me not—
 She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth;
 Rapture, and love, and admiration wrought
 A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth, 4255
 Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth
 From common joy; which with the speechless feeling
 That led her there united, and shot forth
 From her far eyes a light of deep revealing,
 All but her dearest self from my regard concealing. 4260

V

Her lips were parted, and the measured breath
 Was now heard there;—her dark and intricate eyes
 Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death,
 Absorbed the glories of the burning skies,
 Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies, 4265
 Burst from her looks and gestures;—and a light
 Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise
 From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite
 Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

VI

She would have clasped me to her glowing frame; 4270
 Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed
 On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame
 Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid
 Upon my languid heart her dearest head;
 I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet; 4275
 Her eyes mingling with mine, might soon have fed
 My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet
 I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

VII

Never but once to meet on Earth again!
 She heard me as I fled—her eager tone 4280
 Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain
 Around my will to link it with her own,
 So that my stern resolve was almost gone.

'I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly?
 My steps are faint—Come back, thou dearest one—
 Return, ah me! return!'—The wind passed by 4286
 On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

VIII

Woe! Woe! that moonless midnight!—Want and Pest
 Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear,
 As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest 4290
 Eminent among those victims—even the Fear
 Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere
 Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung
 By his own rage upon his burning bier
 Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung 4295
 One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

IX

Not death—death was no more refuge or rest;
 Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep,
 For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed
 All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep, 4300
 But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap
 To which the Future, like a snaky scourge,
 Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep
 Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge
 Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous surge.

X

Each of that multitude, alone, and lost 4306
 To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew;
 As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tossed
 Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew
 Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through;
 Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard, 4311
 Started from sick despair, or if there flew
 One murmur on the wind, or if some word
 Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

XI

Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death, 4315
 Paler from hope? they had sustained despair.
 Why watched those myriads with suspended breath
 Sleepless a second night? they are not here,
 The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear,
 Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead; 4320
 And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.—
 The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead
 Silent Arcturus shines—'Ha! hear'st thou not the tread

XII

‘Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream,
 Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark! 4325
 They come, they come! give way!’ Alas, ye deem
 Falsely—’tis but a crowd of maniacs stark
 Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark,
 From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung,
 A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark 4330
 From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung
 To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

XIII

And many, from the crowd collected there,
 Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies;
 There was the silence of a long despair, 4335
 When the last echo of those terrible cries
 Came from a distant street, like agonies
 Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant’s throne
 All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes
 In stony expectation fixed; when one 4340
 Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

XIV

Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him
 With baffled wonder, for a hermit’s vest
 Concealed his face; but, when he spake, his tone,
 Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,— 4345
 Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast
 Void of all hate or terror—made them start;
 For as with gentle accents he addressed
 His speech to them, on each unwilling heart
 Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart. 4350

V

‘Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast
 Amid the ruin which yourselves have made,
 Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet’s blast,
 And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obeyed
 Your bidding—O, that I whom ye have made 4355
 Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free
 From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade,
 Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be
 The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

VI

‘Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress; 4360
 Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise,
 Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less
 Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies

4361 the mighty] tho’ mighty *ed.* 1818. 4362 ye] he *ed.* 1818.

Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries
 To blind your slaves:—consider your own thought, 4365
 An empty and a cruel sacrifice
 Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought
 Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

XVII

‘Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day!
 Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold, 4370
 Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway
 For which, O willing slaves to Custom old,
 Severe taskmistress! ye your hearts have sold.
 Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream
 No evil dreams: all mortal things are cold 4375
 And senseless then; if aught survive, I deem
 It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

XVIII

‘Fear not the future, weep not for the past.
 O, could I win your ears to dare be now
 Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast 4380
 Into the dust those symbols of your woe,
 Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go
 Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came,
 That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow;
 And that mankind is free, and that the shame 4385
 Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom’s fame!

XIX

‘If thus, ’tis well—if not, I come to say
 That Laon—’ while the Stranger spoke, among
 The Council sudden tumult and affray
 Arose, for many of those warriors young, 4390
 Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung
 Like bees on mountain-flowers; they knew the truth,
 And from their thrones in vindication sprung;
 The men of faith and law then without ruth
 Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

XX

They stabbed them in the back and sneered—a slave 4396
 Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew
 Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave;
 And one more daring raised his steel anew
 To pierce the Stranger. ‘What hast thou to do 4400
 With me, poor wretch?’—Calm, solemn, and severe,
 That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw
 His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear,
 Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

XXI

‘It doth avail not that I weep for ye—
 Ye cannot change, since ye are old and gray,
 And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be
 A book of blood, whence in a milder day
 Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapped in clay:
 Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon’s friend,
 And him to your revenge will I betray,
 So ye concede one easy boon. Attend!
 For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

XXII

‘There is a People mighty in its youth,
 A land beyond the Oceans of the West,
 Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth
 Are worshipped; from a glorious Mother’s breast,
 Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest
 Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe,
 By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed,
 Turns to her chainless child for succour now,
 It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom’s fullest flow.

XXIII

‘That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze
 Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume
 Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze
 Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped in gloom;
 An epitaph of glory for the tomb
 Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made,
 Great People! as the sands shalt thou become;
 Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade;
 The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

XXIV

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

XXV

‘With me do what you will. I am your foe!’
 The light of such a joy as makes the stare
 Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow,
 Shone in a hundred human eyes—‘Where, where

443^a there] then *ed.* 1818.

Is Laon? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly here! 4445
 We grant thy boon.'—'I put no trust in ye,
 Swear by the Power ye dread.'—'We swear, we swear!'
 The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly,
 And smiled in gentle pride, and said, Lo! I am he!'

CANTO XII

I

THE transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness 4450
 Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying
 Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness
 The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying,
 Among the corpses in stark agony lying,
 Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope 4455
 Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying
 With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope,
 And filled the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope.

II

Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array
 Of guards in golden arms, and Priests beside, 4460
 Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray
 The blackness of the faith it seems to hide;
 And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide
 Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears—
 A Shape of light is sitting by his side, 4465
 A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears
 Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

III

His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound
 Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak
 Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around; 4470
 There are no sneers upon his lip which speak
 That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek
 Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild
 And calm, and, like the morn about to break,
 Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled 4475
 To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

IV

Tumult was in the soul of all beside,
 Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw
 Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide
 Into their brain, and became calm with awe.— 4480

See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw.
 A thousand torches in the spacious square,
 Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law,
 Await the signal round: the morning fair
 Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare. 4485

V

And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy,
 Upon a platform level with the pile,
 The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high,
 Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile
 In expectation, but one child: the while 4490
 I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier
 Of fire, and look around: each distant isle
 Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near,
 Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

VI

There was such silence through the host, as when 4495
 An earthquake trampling on some populous town,
 Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men
 Expect the second; all were mute but one,
 That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone
 Stood up before the King, without avail, 4500
 Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan
 Was heard—she trembled like one aspen pale
 Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

VII

What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun,
 Among those reptiles, stingless with delay, 4505
 Even like a tyrant's wrath?—The signal-gun
 Roared—hark, again! In that dread pause he lay
 As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey—
 A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last
 Bursts on that awful silence; far away, 4510
 Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast,
 Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

VIII

They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear
 Has startled the triumphant!—they recede!
 For ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear 4515
 The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed
 Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed,
 Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon,
 Fairer, it seems, than aught that earth can breed,
 Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn, 4520
 A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.