

As they had grown to thine: erewhile I slept
 Under the glaucous caverns of old Ocean
 Within dim bowers of green and purple moss, 45
 Our young Ione's soft and milky arms
 Locked then, as now, behind my dark, moist hair,
 While my shut eyes and cheek were pressed within
 The folded depth of her life-breathing bosom:
 But not as now, since I am made the wind 50
 Which fails beneath the music that I bear
 Of thy most wordless converse; since dissolved
 Into the sense with which love talks, my rest
 Was troubled and yet sweet; my waking hours
 Too full of care and pain.

Asia. Lift up thine eyes, 55
 And let me read thy dream.

Panthea. As I have said
 With our sea-sister at his feet I slept.
 The mountain mists, condensing at our voice
 Under the moon, had spread their snowy flakes,
 From the keen ice shielding our linkèd sleep. 60
 Then two dreams came. One, I remember not.
 But in the other his pale wound-worn limbs
 Fell from Prometheus, and the azure night
 Grew radiant with the glory of that form
 Which lives unchanged within, and his voice fell 65
 Like music which makes giddy the dim brain,
 Faint with intoxication of keen joy:
 'Sister of her whose footsteps pave the world
 With loveliness—more fair than aught but her,
 Whose shadow thou art—lift thine eyes on me.' 70
 I lifted them: the overpowering light
 Of that immortal shape was shadowed o'er
 By love; which, from his soft and flowing limbs,
 And passion-parted lips, and keen, faint eyes,
 Steamed forth like vaporous fire; an atmosphere 75
 Which wrapped me in its all-dissolving power,
 As the warm aether of the morning sun
 Wraps ere it drinks some cloud of wandering dew.
 I saw not, heard not, moved not, only felt
 His presence flow and mingle through my blood 80
 Till it became his life, and his grew mine,
 And I was thus absorbed, until it passed,
 And like the vapours when the sun sinks down,
 Gathering again in drops upon the pines,
 And tremulous as they, in the deep night 85
 My being was condensed; and as the rays
 Of thought were slowly gathered, I could hear
 His voice, whose accents lingered ere they died

Like footsteps of weak melody: thy name
 Among the many sounds alone I heard 90
 Of what might be articulate; though still
 I listened through the night when sound was none.
 Ione wakened then, and said to me:
 'Canst thou divine what troubles me to-night?
 I always knew what I desired before, 95
 Nor ever found delight to wish in vain.
 But now I cannot tell thee what I seek;
 I know not; something sweet, since it is sweet
 Even to desire; it is thy sport, false sister;
 Thou hast discovered some enchantment old, 100
 Whose spells have stolen my spirit as I slept
 And mingled it with thine: for when just now
 We kissed, I felt within thy parted lips
 The sweet air that sustained me, and the warmth
 Of the life-blood, for loss of which I faint, 105
 Quivered between our intertwining arms.'
 I answered not, for the Eastern star grew pale,
 But fled to thee.

Asia. Thou speakest, but thy words
 Are as the air: I feel them not: Oh, lift
 Thine eyes, that I may read his written soul! 110

Panthea. I lift them though they droop beneath the load
 Of that they would express: what canst thou see
 But thine own fairest shadow imaged there?

Asia. Thine eyes are like the deep, blue, boundless heaven
 Contracted to two circles underneath 115
 Their long, fine lashes; dark, far, measureless,
 Orb within orb, and line through line inwoven.

Panthea. Why lookest thou as if a spirit passed?

Asia. There is a change: beyond their inmost depth
 I see a shade, a shape: 'tis He, arrayed 120
 In the soft light of his own smiles, which spread
 Like radiance from the cloud-surrounded moon.
 Prometheus, it is thine! depart not yet!
 Say not those smiles that we shall meet again
 Within that bright pavilion which their beams 125
 Shall build o'er the waste world? The dream is told.
 What shape is that between us? Its rude hair
 Roughens the wind that lifts it, its regard
 Is wild and quick, yet 'tis a thing of air,
 For through its gray robe gleams the golden dew 130
 Whose stars the noon has quenched not.

Dream.

Follow! Follow!

Panthea. It is mine other dream.

It disappears.

Asia.

122 moon B; morn 1820.

126 o'er B; on 1820.

Panthea. It passes now into my mind. Methought
 As we sate here, the flower-infolding buds
 Burst on yon lightning-blasted almond-tree, 135
 When swift from the white Scythian wilderness
 A wind swept forth wrinkling the Earth with frost:
 I looked, and all the blossoms were blown down;
 But on each leaf was stamped, as the blue bells
 Of Hyacinth tell Apollo's written grief, 140
 O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

Asia. As you speak, your words
 Fill, pause by pause, my own forgotten sleep
 With shapes. Methought among these lawns together
 We wandered, underneath the young gray dawn,
 And multitudes of dense white fleecy clouds 145
 Were wandering in thick flocks along the mountains
 Shepherded by the slow, unwilling wind;
 And the white dew on the new-bladed grass,
 Just piercing the dark earth, hung silently;
 And there was more which I remember not: 150
 But on the shadows of the morning clouds,
 Athwart the purple mountain slope, was written
 FOLLOW, O, FOLLOW! as they vanished by;
 And on each herb, from which Heaven's dew had fallen,
 The like was stamped, as with a withering fire; 155
 A wind arose among the pines; it shook
 The clinging music from their boughs, and then
 Low, sweet, faint sounds, like the farewell of ghosts,
 Were heard: O, FOLLOW, FOLLOW, FOLLOW ME!
 And then I said: 'Panthea, look on me.' 160
 But in the depth of those belovèd eyes
 Still I saw, FOLLOW, FOLLOW!

Echo. Follow, follow!

Panthea. The crags, this clear spring morning, mock our
 voices
 As they were spirit-tongued.

Asia. It is some being
 Around the crags. What fine clear sounds! O, list! 165

Echoes (unseen).
 Echoes we: listen!
 We cannot stay:
 As dew-stars glisten
 Then fade away—
 Child of Ocean! 170

Asia. Hark! Spirits speak. The liquid responses
 Of their aëreal tongues yet sound.

Panthea. I hear.

Echoes.

O, follow, follow,
 As our voice recedeth
 Through the caverns hollow,
 Where the forest spreadeth ;

175

(More distant.)

O, follow, follow !
 Through the caverns hollow,
 As the song floats thou pursue,
 Where the wild bee never flew,
 Through the noontide darkness deep,
 By the odour-breathing sleep
 Of faint night flowers, and the waves
 At the fountain-lighted caves,
 While our music, wild and sweet,
 Mocks thy gently falling feet,
 Child of Ocean !

180

185

Asia. Shall we pursue the sound ? It grows more faint
 And distant.

Panthea. List ! the strain floats nearer now.

Echoes.

In the world unknown
 Sleeps a voice unspoken ;
 By thy step alone
 Can its rest be broken ;
 Child of Ocean !

190

Asia. How the notes sink upon the ebbing wind !

195

Echoes.

O, follow, follow !
 Through the caverns hollow,
 As the song floats thou pursue,
 By the woodland noontide dew ;
 By the forest, lakes, and fountains,
 Through the many-folded mountains ;
 To the rents, and gulfs, and chasms,
 Where the Earth reposed from spasms,
 On the day when He and thou
 Parted, to commingle now ;
 Child of Ocean !

200

205

Asia. Come, sweet Panthea, link thy hand in mine,
 And follow, ere the voices fade away.

SCENE II.—*A Forest, intermingled with Rocks and Caverns.* ASIA
 and PANTHEA pass into it. Two young Fauns are sitting on
 a Rock listening.

Semichorus I. of Spirits.

The path through which that lovely twain
 Have passed, by cedar, pine, and yew,

And each dark tree that ever grew,
 Is curtained out from Heaven's wide blue;
 Nor sun, nor moon, nor wind, nor rain, 5
 Can pierce its interwoven bowers,
 Nor aught, save where some cloud of dew,
 Drifted along the earth-creeping breeze,
 Between the trunks of the hoar trees,
 Hangs each a pearl in the pale flowers 10
 Of the green laurel, blown anew;
 And bends, and then fades silently,
 One frail and fair anemone:
 Or when some star of many a one
 That climbs and wanders through steep night, 15
 Has found the cleft through which alone
 Beams fall from high those depths upon
 Ere it is borne away, away,
 By the swift Heavens that cannot stay,
 It scatters drops of golden light, 20
 Like lines of rain that ne'er unite:
 And the gloom divine is all around,
 And underneath is the mossy ground.

Semichorus II.

There the voluptuous nightingales,
 Are awake through all the broad noonday. 25
 When one with bliss or sadness fails,
 And through the windless ivy-boughs,
 Sick with sweet love, droops dying away
 On its mate's music-panting bosom;
 Another from the swinging blossom, 30
 Watching to catch the languid close
 Of the last strain, then lifts on high
 The wings of the weak melody,
 'Till some new strain of feeling bear
 The song, and all the woods are mute; 35
 When there is heard through the dim air
 The rush of wings, and rising there
 Like many a lake-surrounded flute,
 Sounds overflow the listener's brain
 So sweet, that joy is almost pain. 40

Semichorus I.

There those enchanted eddies play
 Of echoes, music-tongued, which draw,
 By Demogorgon's mighty law,
 With melting rapture, or sweet awe, 45
 All spirits on that secret way;
 As inland boats are driven to Ocean

Down streams made strong with mountain-thaw :
 And first there comes a gentle sound
 To those in talk or slumber bound,
 And wakes the destined soft emotion,— 50
 Attracts, impels them ; those who saw
 Say from the breathing earth behind
 There steams a plume-uplifting wind
 Which drives them on their path, while they
 Believe their own swift wings and feet 55
 The sweet desires within obey :
 And so they float upon their way,
 Until, still sweet, but loud and strong,
 The storm of sound is driven along,
 Sucked up and hurrying : as they fleet 60
 Behind, its gathering billows meet
 And to the fatal mountain bear
 Like clouds amid the yielding air.

First Faun. Canst thou imagine where those spirits live
 Which make such delicate music in the woods? 65
 We haunt within the least frequented caves
 And closest coverts, and we know these wilds,
 Yet never meet them, though we hear them oft :
 Where may they hide themselves?

Second Faun. 'Tis hard to tell :
 I have heard those more skilled in spirits say, 70
 The bubbles, which the enchantment of the sun
 Sucks from the pale faint water-flowers that pave
 The oozy bottom of clear lakes and pools,
 Are the pavilions where such dwell and float
 Under the green and golden atmosphere 75
 Which noontide kindles through the woven leaves ;
 And when these burst, and the thin fiery air,
 The which they breathed within those lucent domes,
 Ascends to flow like meteors through the night,
 They ride on them, and rein their headlong speed, 80
 And bow their burning crests, and glide in fire
 Under the waters of the earth again.

First Faun. If such live thus, have others other lives,
 Under pink blossoms or within the bells 85
 Of meadow flowers, or folded violets deep,
 Or on their dying odours, when they die,
 Or in the sunlight of the spherèd dew ?

Second Faun. Ay, many more which we may well divine.
 But, should we stay to speak, noontide would come, 90
 And thwart Silenus find his goats undrawn,
 And grudge to sing those wise and lovely songs
 Of Fate, and Chance, and God, and Chaos old,

50 destined] destinied 1820.

86 on 1820 ; in B.

And Love, and the chained Titan's woful doom,
 And how he shall be loosed, and make the earth
 One brotherhood: delightful strains which cheer 95
 Our solitary twilights, and which charm
 To silence the unenvying nightingales.

SCENE III.—A PINNACLE OF ROCK AMONG MOUNTAINS.
 ASIA and PANTHEA.

Panthea. Hither the sound has borne us—to the realm
 Of Demogorgon, and the mighty portal,
 Like a volcano's meteor-breathing chasm,
 Whence the oracular vapour is hurled up
 Which lonely men drink wandering in their youth, 5
 And call truth, virtue, love, genius, or joy,
 That maddening wine of life, whose dregs they drain
 To deep intoxication; and uplift,
 Like Mænads who cry loud, Evoe! Evoe!
 The voice which is contagion to the world. 10

Asia. Fit throne for such a Power! Magnificent!
 How glorious art thou, Earth! And if thou be
 The shadow of some spirit lovelier still,
 Though evil stain its work, and it should be
 Like its creation, weak yet beautiful, 15
 I could fall down and worship that and thee.
 Even now my heart adareth: Wonderful!
 Look, sister, ere the vapour dim thy brain:
 Beneath is a wide plain of billowy mist,
 As a lake, paving in the morning sky, 20
 With azure waves which burst in silver light,
 Some Indian vale. Behold it, rolling on
 Under the curdling winds, and islanding
 The peak whereon we stand, midway, around,
 Encinctured by the dark and blooming forests, 25
 Dim twilight-lawns, and stream-illumèd caves,
 And wind-enchanted shapes of wandering mist;
 And far on high the keen sky-cleaving mountains
 From icy spires of sun-like radiance fling
 The dawn, as lifted Ocean's dazzling spray, 30
 From some Atlantic islet scattered up,
 Spangles the wind with lamp-like water-drops.
 The vale is girdled with their walls, a howl
 Of cataracts from their thaw-cloven ravines,
 Satiates the listening wind, continuous, vast, 35

Which from the links of the great chain of things,
 To every thought within the mind of man 20
 Sway and drag heavily, and each one reels
 Under the load towards the pit of death;
 Abandoned hope, and love that turns to hate;
 And self-contempt, bitterer to drink than blood; 25
 Pain, whose unheeded and familiar speech
 Is howling, and keen shrieks, day after day;
 And Hell, or the sharp fear of Hell?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia. Utter his name: a world pining in pain
 Asks but his name: curses shall drag him down. 30

Demogorgon. He reigns.

Asia.

I feel, I know it: who?

Demogorgon.

He reigns.

Asia. Who reigns? There was the Heaven and Earth at
 first,

And Light and Love; then Saturn, from whose throne
 Time fell, an envious shadow: such the state
 Of the earth's primal spirits beneath his sway, 35
 As the calm joy of flowers and living leaves
 Before the wind or sun has withered them
 And semivital worms; but he refused
 The birthright of their being, knowledge, power,
 The skill which wields the elements, the thought 40
 Which pierces this dim universe like light,
 Self-empire, and the majesty of love;
 For thirst of which they fainted. Then Prometheus
 Gave wisdom, which is strength, to Jupiter,
 And with this law alone, 'Let man be free,' 45
 Clothed him with the dominion of wide Heaven.
 To know nor faith, nor love, nor law; to be
 Omnipotent but friendless is to reign;
 And Jove now reigned; for on the race of man
 First famine, and then toil, and then disease, 50
 Strife, wounds, and ghastly death unseen before,
 Fell; and the unseasonable seasons drove
 With alternating shafts of frost and fire,
 Their shelterless, pale tribes to mountain caves:
 And in their desert hearts fierce wants he sent, 55
 And mad disquietudes, and shadows idle
 Of unreal good, which levied mutual war,
 So ruining the lair wherein they raged.
 Prometheus saw, and waked the legioned hopes
 Which sleep within folded Elysian flowers, 60
 Nepenthe, Moly, Amaranth, fadeless blooms,
 That they might hide with thin and rainbow wings
 The shape of Death; and Love he sent to bind

The disunited tendrils of that vine
 Which bears the wine of life, the human heart; 65
 And he tamed fire which, like some beast of prey,
 Most terrible, but lovely, played beneath
 The frown of man; and tortured to his will
 Iron and gold, the slaves and signs of power,
 And gems and poisons, and all subtlest forms 70
 Hidden beneath the mountains and the waves.
 He gave man speech, and speech created thought,
 Which is the measure of the universe;
 And Science struck the thrones of earth and heaven,
 Which shook, but fell not; and the harmonious mind 75
 Poured itself forth in all-prophetic song;
 And music lifted up the listening spirit
 Until it walked, exempt from mortal care,
 Godlike, o'er the clear billows of sweet sound;
 And human hands first mimicked and then mocked, 80
 With moulded limbs more lovely than its own,
 The human form, till marble grew divine;
 And mothers, gazing, drank the love men see
 Reflected in their race, behold, and perish.
 He told the hidden power of herbs and springs, 85
 And Disease drank and slept. Death grew like sleep.
 He taught the implicated orbits woven
 Of the wide-wandering stars; and how the sun
 Changes his lair, and by what secret spell
 The pale moon is transformed, when her broad eye 90
 Gazes not on the interlunar sea:
 He taught to rule, as life directs the limbs,
 The tempest-wingèd chariots of the Ocean,
 And the Celt knew the Indian. Cities then
 Were built, and through their snow-like columns flowed
 The warm winds, and the azure aether shone, 96
 And the blue sea and shadowy hills were seen.
 Such, the alleviations of his state,
 Prometheus gave to man, for which he hangs
 Withering in destined pain: but who rains down 100
 Evil, the immedicable plague, which, while
 Man looks on his creation like a God
 And sees that it is glorious, drives him on,
 The wreck of his own will, the scorn of earth,
 The outcast, the abandoned, the alone? 105
 Not Jove: while yet his frown shook Heaven, ay, when
 His adversary from adamantine chains
 Cursed him, he trembled like a slave. Declare
 Who is his master? Is he too a slave?

Demogorgon. All spirits are enslaved which serve things evil :
Thou knowest if Jupiter be such or no.

Asia. Whom calledst thou God? 111

Demogorgon. I spoke but as ye speak,
For Jove is the supreme of living things.

Asia. Who is the master of the slave?

Demogorgon. If the abysm
Could vomit forth its secrets. . . . But a voice 115

Is wanting, the deep truth is imageless ;
For what would it avail to bid thee gaze
On the revolving world? What to bid speak
Fate, Time, Occasion, Chance, and Change? To these
All things are subject but eternal Love. 120

Asia. So much I asked before, and my heart gave
The response thou hast given ; and of such truths
Each to itself must be the oracle.

One more demand ; and do thou answer me
As mine own soul would answer, did it know 125

That which I ask. Prometheus shall arise
Henceforth the sun of this rejoicing world :
When shall the destined hour arrive?

Demogorgon. Behold !

Asia. The rocks are cloven, and through the purple night
I see cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd steeds 130
Which trample the dim winds : in each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their flight.

Some look behind, as fiends pursued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the keen stars : 135

Others, with burning eyes, lean forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on before,

And now, even now, they clasped it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet's flashing hair : they all
Sweep onward.

Demogorgon. These are the immortal Hours, 140
Of whom thou didst demand. One waits for thee.

Asia. A spirit with a dreadful countenance
Checks its dark chariot by the craggy gulf.
Unlike thy brethren, ghastly charioteer,
Who art thou? Whither wouldst thou bear me? Speak! 145

Spirit. I am the shadow of a destiny
More dread than is my aspect : ere yon planet
Has set, the darkness which ascends with me
Shall wrap in lasting night heaven's kingless throne.

Asia. What meanest thou?

Panthea. That terrible shadow floats
Up from its throne, as may the lurid smoke 151
Of earthquake-ruined cities o'er the sea.

Lo! it ascends the car; the coursers fly
Terrified: watch its path among the stars
Blackening the night!

Asia. Thus I am answered: strange! 155

Panthea. See, near the verge, another chariot stays;
An ivory shell inlaid with crimson fire,
Which comes and goes within its sculptured rim
Of delicate strange tracery; the young spirit
That guides it has the dove-like eyes of hope; 160
How its soft smiles attract the soul! as light
Lures wingèd insects through the lampless air.

Spirit.

My coursers are fed with the lightning,
They drink of the whirlwind's stream,
And when the red morning is bright'ning 165
They bathe in the fresh sunbeam;
They have strength for their swiftness I deem,
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

I desire: and their speed makes night kindle;
I fear: they outstrip the Typhoon; 170
Ere the cloud piled on Atlas can dwindle
We encircle the earth and the moon:
We shall rest from long labours at noon:
Then ascend with me, daughter of Ocean.

SCENE V.—*The Car pauses within a Cloud on the top of a snowy Mountain.* ASIA, PANTHEA, and the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

Spirit.

On the brink of the night and the morning
My coursers are wont to respire;
But the Earth has just whispered a warning
That their flight must be swifter than fire:
They shall drink the hot speed of desire! 5

Asia. Thou breathest on their nostrils, but my breath
Would give them swifter speed.

Spirit. Alas! it could not.

Panthea. Oh Spirit! pause, and tell whence is the light
Which fills this cloud? the sun is yet unrisen.

Spirit. The sun will rise not until noon. Apollo 10
Is held in heaven by wonder; and the light
Which fills this vapour, as the aëreal hue
Of fountain-gazing roses fills the water,
Flows from thy mighty sister.

Panthea. Yes, I feel—

Asia. What is it with thee, sister? Thou art pale. 15

Panthea. How thou art changed! I dare not look on thee;
I feel but see thee not. I scarce endure
The radiance of thy beauty. Some good change
Is working in the elements, which suffer
Thy presence thus unveiled. The Nereids tell 20
That on the day when the clear hyaline
Was cloven at thine uprise, and thou didst stand
Within a veinèd shell, which floated on
Over the calm floor of the crystal sea,
Among the Ægean isles, and by the shores 25
Which bear thy name; love, like the atmosphere
Of the sun's fire filling the living world,
Burst from thee, and illumined earth and heaven
And the deep ocean and the sunless caves
And all that dwells within them; till grief cast 30
Eclipse upon the soul from which it came:
Such art thou now; nor is it I alone,
Thy sister, thy companion, thine own chosen one,
But the whole world which seeks thy sympathy.
Hearest thou not sounds i' the air which speak the love 35
Of all articulate beings? Feelest thou not
The inanimate winds enamoured of thee? List! [*Music.*]

Asia. Thy words are sweeter than aught else but his
Whose echoes they are: yet all love is sweet,
Given or returned. Common as light is love, 40
And its familiar voice wearies not ever.
Like the wide heaven, the all-sustaining air,
It makes the reptile equal to the God:
They who inspire it most are fortunate,
As I am now; but those who feel it most 45
Are happier still, after long sufferings,
As I shall soon become.

Panthea. List! Spirits speak.

Voice in the Air, singing.

Life of Life! thy lips enkindle
With their love the breath between them;
And thy smiles before they dwindle 50
Make the cold air fire; then screen them
In those looks, where whoso gazes
Faints, entangled in their mazes.

Child of Light! thy limbs are burning
Through the vest which seems to hide them; 55
As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds ere they divide them;

22 thine B; thy 1820.

54 limbs B, ed. 1839; lips 1820.
s 2

And this atmosphere divinest
Shrouds thee wheresoe'er thou shinest.

Fair are others; none beholds thee, 60
But thy voice sounds low and tender
Like the fairest, for it folds thee
From the sight, that liquid splendour,
And all feel, yet see thee never,
As I feel now, lost for ever! 65

Lamp of Earth! where'er thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with lightness,
Till they fail, as I am failing, 70
Dizzy, lost, yet unbewailing!

Asia.

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit 75
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses, 80
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions 85
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven; 90
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love, 95
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,

As the radiant lines of morning
Through the clouds he they divide them
And the atmosphere divinest
Spreads the whences thou shinest

~~Camp of South; wherever thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness
And the sun~~

Fair are others; none beholds thee,
But thy voice sounds low & tender
Like the fairest - for it folds thee
From the sight that liquid splendour
And all feel, yet see thee never
As I feel now, lost forever! 555

Camp of South! wherever thou movest
Its dim shapes are clad with brightness,
And the souls of whom ^{thou} thou lovest
Walk upon the winds with light steps
Till they fail, as I am failing,
Aidless, lost... yet unbelievedly 55,

And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray: 100
 Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
 Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
 Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
 A paradise of vaulted bowers,
 Lit by downward-gazing flowers, 105
 And watery paths that wind between
 Wildernesses calm and green,
 Peopled by shapes too bright to see,
 And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
 Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously! 110

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*Heaven.* JUPITER on his Throne; THETIS and the
 other Deities assembled.

Jupiter. Ye congregated powers of heaven, who share
 The glory and the strength of him ye serve,
 Rejoice! henceforth I am omnipotent.
 All else had been subdued to me; alone
 The soul of man, like unextinguished fire, 5
 Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt,
 And lamentation, and reluctant prayer,
 Hurling up insurrection, which might make
 Our antique empire insecure, though built
 On eldest faith, and hell's coeval, fear; 10
 And though my curses through the pendulous air,
 Like snow on herbless peaks, fall flake by flake,
 And cling to it; though under my wrath's night
 It climbs the crags of life, step after step,
 Which wound it, as ice wounds unsandalled feet, 15
 It yet remains supreme o'er misery,
 Aspiring, unrepressed, yet soon to fall:
 Even now have I begotten a strange wonder,
 That fatal child, the terror of the earth,
 Who waits but till the destined hour arrive, 20
 Bearing from Demogorgon's vacant throne
 The dreadful might of ever-living limbs
 Which clothed that awful spirit unbeheld,
 To redescend, and trample out the spark.
 Pour forth heaven's wine, Idæan Ganymede, 25

5 like unextinguished *B*, ed. 1839; like an unextinguished 1820.
 13 night *B*, ed. 1839; might 1820. 20 destined *B*, ed. 1839;
 distant 1820.

And let it fill the Dædal cups like fire,
 And from the flower-inwoven soil divine
 Ye all-triumphant harmonies arise,
 As dew from earth under the twilight stars :
 Drink! be the nectar circling through your veins 30
 The soul of joy, ye ever-living Gods,
 Till exultation burst in one wide voice
 Like music from Elysian winds.

And thou

Ascend beside me, veiled in the light
 Of the desire which makes thee one with me, 35
 Thetis, bright image of eternity!
 When thou didst cry, 'Insufferable might!
 God! Spare me! I sustain not the quick flames,
 The penetrating presence; all my being,
 Like him whom the Numidian seps did thaw 40
 Into a dew with poison, is dissolved,
 Sinking through its foundations: ' even then
 Two mighty spirits, mingling, made a third
 Mightier than either, which, unbodied now,
 Between us floats, felt, although unbeheld, 45
 Waiting the incarnation, which ascends,
 (Hear ye the thunder of the fiery wheels
 Griding the winds?) from Demogorgon's throne.
 Victory! victory! Feel'st thou not, O world,
 The earthquake of his chariot thundering up 50
 Olympus?

*[The Car of the Hour arrives. DEMOGORGON descends,
 and moves towards the Throne of JUPITER.]*

Awful shape, what art thou? Speak!

Demogorgon. Eternity. Demand no direr name.
 Descend, and follow me down the abyss.
 I am thy child, as thou wert Saturn's child;
 Mightier than thee: and we must dwell together 55
 Henceforth in darkness. Lift thy lightnings not.
 The tyranny of heaven none may retain,
 Or reassume, or hold, succeeding thee:
 Yet if thou wilt, as 'tis the destiny
 Of trodden worms to writhe till they are dead, 60
 Put forth thy might.

Jupiter. Detested prodigy!
 Even thus beneath the deep Titanian prisons
 I trample thee! thou lingerest?

Mercy! mercy!

No pity, no release, no respite! Oh,
 That thou wouldst make mine enemy my judge, 65
 Even where he hangs, seared by my long revenge,
 On Caucasus! he would not doom me thus.

Gentle, and just, and dreadless, is he not
The monarch of the world? What then art thou?
No refuge! no appeal!

Sink with me then, 70
We two will sink on the wide waves of ruin,
Even as a vulture and a snake outspent
Drop, twisted in inextricable fight,
Into a shoreless sea. Let hell unlock
Its mounded oceans of tempestuous fire, 75
And whelm on them into the bottomless void
This desolated world, and thee, and me,
The conqueror and the conquered, and the wreck
Of that for which they combated.

Ai! Ai!

The elements obey me not. I sink 80
Dizzily down, ever, for ever, down.
And, like a cloud, mine enemy above
Darkens my fall with victory! Ai, Ai!

SCENE II.—*The Mouth of a great River in the Island Atlantis.*

OCEAN is discovered reclining near the Shore; APOLLO stands beside him.

Ocean. He fell, thou sayest, beneath his conqueror's frown?

Apollo. Ay, when the strife was ended which made dim
The orb I rule, and shook the solid stars,
The terrors of his eye illumined heaven
With sanguine light, through the thick ragged skirts 5
Of the victorious darkness, as he fell:
Like the last glare of day's red agony,
Which, from a rent among the fiery clouds,
Burns far along the tempest-wrinkled deep.

Ocean. He sunk to the abyss? To the dark void? 10

Apollo. An eagle so caught in some bursting cloud
On Caucasus, his thunder-baffled wings
Entangled in the whirlwind, and his eyes
Which gazed on the undazzling sun, now blinded 15
By the white lightning, while the ponderous hail
Beats on his struggling form, which sinks at length
Prone, and the aëreal ice clings over it.

Ocean. Henceforth the fields of heaven-reflecting sea
Which are my realm, will heave, unstained with blood, 20
Beneath the uplifting winds, like plains of corn
Swayed by the summer air; my streams will flow
Round many-peopled continents, and round
Fortunate isles; and from their glassy thrones

69 then *B*, ed. 1839; om. 1820.
peopled 1820.

22 many-peopled *B*; many

Blue Proteus and his humid nymphs shall mark
 The shadow of fair ships, as mortals see 25
 The floating bark of the light-laden moon
 With that white star, its sightless pilot's crest,
 Borne down the rapid sunset's ebbing sea;
 Tracking their path no more by blood and groans,
 And desolation, and the mingled voice 30
 Of slavery and command; but by the light
 Of wave-reflected flowers, and floating odours,
 And music soft, and mild, free, gentle voices,
 And sweetest music, such as spirits love.

Apollo. And I shall gaze not on the deeds which make 35
 My mind obscure with sorrow, as eclipse
 Darkens the sphere I guide; but list, I hear
 The small, clear, silver lute of the young Spirit
 That sits i' the morning star.

Ocean. Thou must away;
 Thy steeds will pause at even, till when farewell: 40
 The loud deep calls me home even now to feed it
 With azure calm out of the emerald urns
 Which stand for ever full beside my throne.
 Behold the Nereids under the green sea,
 Their wavering limbs borne on the wind-like stream, 45
 Their white arms lifted o'er their streaming hair
 With garlands pied and starry sea-flower crowns,
 Hastening to grace their mighty sister's joy.

[*A sound of waves is heard.*]

It is the unpastured sea hungering for calm.
 Peace, monster; I come now. Farewell.

Apollo. Farewell. 50

SCENE III.—*Caucasus.* PROMETHEUS, HERCULES, IONE, *the* EARTH,
 SPIRITS, ASIA, and PANTHEA, borne in the Car with the SPIRIT
 OF THE HOUR. HERCULES *unbinds* PROMETHEUS, who descends.

Hercules. Most glorious among Spirits, thus doth strength
 To wisdom, courage, and long-suffering love,
 And thee, who art the form they animate,
 Minister like a slave.

Prometheus. Thy gentle words
 Are sweeter even than freedom long desired 5
 And long delayed.

Asia, thou light of life,
 Shadow of beauty unbeheld: and ye,
 Fair sister nymphs, who made long years of pain

26 light-laden *B*; light laden 1820.

39 i' the *B*, ed. 1839; on the

1820.

Sweet to remember, through your love and care :
Henceforth we will not part. There is a cave, 10
All overgrown with trailing odorous plants,
Which curtain out the day with leaves and flowers,
And paved with veinèd emerald, and a fountain
Leaps in the midst with an awakening sound.
From its curved roof the mountain's frozen tears 15
Like snow, or silver, or long diamond spires,
Hang downward, raining forth a doubtful light :
And there is heard the ever-moving air,
Whispering without from tree to tree, and birds,
And bees ; and all around are mossy seats, 20
And the rough walls are clothed with long soft grass ;
A simple dwelling, which shall be our own ;
Where we will sit and talk of time and change,
As the world ebbs and flows, ourselves unchanged.
What can hide man from mutability ? 25
And if ye sigh, then I will smile ; and thou,
Ione, shalt chant fragments of sea-music,
Until I weep, when ye shall smile away
The tears she brought, which yet were sweet to shed.
We will entangle buds and flowers and beams 30
Which twinkle on the fountain's brim, and make
Strange combinations out of common things,
Like human babes in their brief innocence ;
And we will search, with looks and words of love,
For hidden thoughts, each lovelier than the last, 35
Our unexhausted spirits ; and like lutes
Touched by the skill of the enamoured wind,
Weave harmonies divine, yet ever new,
From difference sweet where discord cannot be ;
And hither come, sped on the charmèd winds, 40
Which meet from all the points of heaven, as bees
From every flower aëreal Enna feeds,
At their known island-homes in Himera,
The echoes of the human world, which tell
Of the low voice of love, almost unheard, 45
And dove-eyed pity's murmured pain, and music,
Itself the echo of the heart, and all
That tempers or improves man's life, now free ;
And lovely apparitions,—dim at first,
Then radiant, as the mind, arising bright 50
From the embrace of beauty (whence the forms
Of which these are the phantoms) casts on them
The gathered rays which are reality—
Shall visit us, the progeny immortal
Of Painting, Sculpture, and rapt Poesy, 55
And arts, though unimagined, yet to be.

The wandering voices and the shadows these
 Of all that man becomes, the mediators
 Of that best worship love, by him and us
 Given and returned; swift shapes and sounds, which grow
 More fair and soft as man grows wise and kind, 61
 And, veil by veil, evil and error fall:
 Such virtue has the cave and place around.

[Turning to the SPIRIT OF THE HOUR.

For thee, fair Spirit, one toil remains. Ione,
 Give her that curvèd shell, which Proteus old 65
 Made Asia's nuptial boon, breathing within it
 A voice to be accomplished, and which thou
 Didst hide in grass under the hollow rock.

Ione. Thou most desired Hour, more loved and lovely
 Than all thy sisters, this is the mystic shell; 70
 See the pale azure fading into silver
 Lining it with a soft yet glowing light:
 Looks it not like lulled music sleeping there?

Spirit. It seems in truth the fairest shell of Ocean:
 Its sound must be at once both sweet and strange. 75

Prometheus. Go, borne over the cities of mankind
 On whirlwind-footed coursers: once again
 Outspeed the sun around the orbèd world;
 And as thy chariot cleaves the kindling air,
 Thou breathe into the many-folded shell, 80
 Loosening its mighty music; it shall be
 As thunder mingled with clear echoes: then
 Return; and thou shalt dwell beside our cave.
 And thou, O, Mother Earth!—

The Earth. I hear, I feel;
 Thy lips are on me, and their touch runs down 85
 Even to the adamantine central gloom
 Along these marble nerves; 'tis life, 'tis joy,
 And through my withered, old, and icy frame
 The warmth of an immortal youth shoots down
 Circling. Henceforth the many children fair 90
 Folded in my sustaining arms; all plants,
 And creeping forms, and insects rainbow-winged,
 And birds, and beasts, and fish, and human shapes,
 Which drew disease and pain from my wan bosom,
 Draining the poison of despair, shall take 95
 And interchange sweet nutriment; to me
 Shall they become like sister-antelopes
 By one fair dam, snow-white and swift as wind,
 Nursed among lilies near a brimming stream.
 The dew-mists of my sunless sleep shall float 100
 Under the stars like balm: night-folded flowers

Shall suck unwithering hues in their repose :
 And men and beasts in happy dreams shall gather
 Strength for the coming day, and all its joy :
 And death shall be the last embrace of her 105
 Who takes the life she gave, even as a mother
 Folding her child, says, 'Leave me not again.'

Asia. Oh, mother! wherefore speak the name of death?
 Cease they to love, and move, and breathe, and speak,
 Who die?

The Earth. It would avail not to reply : 110
 Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
 But to the uncommunicating dead.
 Death is the veil which those who live call life :
 They sleep, and it is lifted : and meanwhile
 In mild variety the seasons mild 115
 With rainbow-skirted showers, and odorous winds,
 And long blue meteors cleansing the dull night,
 And the life-kindling shafts of the keen sun's
 All-piercing bow, and the dew-mingled rain
 Of the calm moonbeams, a soft influence mild, 120
 Shall clothe the forests and the fields, ay, even
 The crag-built deserts of the barren deep,
 With ever-living leaves, and fruits, and flowers.
 And thou! There is a cavern where my spirit
 Was panted forth in anguish whilst thy pain 125
 Made my heart mad, and those who did inhale it
 Became mad too, and built a temple there,
 And spoke, and were oracular, and lured
 The erring nations round to mutual war,
 And faithless faith, such as Jove kept with thee; 130
 Which breath now rises, as amongst tall weeds
 A violet's exhalation, and it fills
 With a serener light and crimson air
 Intense, yet soft, the rocks and woods around ;
 It feeds the quick growth of the serpent vine, 135
 And the dark linkèd ivy tangling wild,
 And budding, blown, or odour-faded blooms
 Which star the winds with points of coloured light,
 As they rain through them, and bright golden globes
 Of fruit, suspended in their own green heaven, 140
 And through their veined leaves and amber stems
 The flowers whose purple and translucent bowls
 Stand ever mantling with aëreal dew,
 The drink of spirits : and it circles round,
 Like the soft waving wings of noonday dreams, 145
 Inspiring calm and happy thoughts, like mine,
 Now thou art thus restored. This cave is thine.

Arise! Appear!

[A SPIRIT rises in the likeness of a winged child.

This is my torch-bearer;

Who let his lamp out in old time with gazing
 On eyes from which he kindled it anew 150
 With love, which is as fire, sweet daughter mine,
 For such is that within thine own. Run, wayward,
 And guide this company beyond the peak
 Of Bacchic Nysa, Mænad-haunted mountain,
 And beyond Indus and its tribute rivers, 155
 Trampling the torrent streams and glassy lakes
 With feet unwet, unwearied, undelaying,
 And up the green ravine, across the vale,
 Beside the windless and crystalline pool,
 Where ever lies, on unerasing waves, 160
 The image of a temple, built above,
 Distinct with column, arch, and architrave,
 And palm-like capital, and over-wrought,
 And populous with most living imagery,
 Praxitelean shapes, whose marble smiles 165
 Fill the hushed air with everlasting love.
 It is deserted now, but once it bore
 Thy name, Prometheus; there the emulous youths
 Bore to thy honour through the divine gloom
 The lamp which was thine emblem; even as those 170
 Who bear the untransmitted torch of hope
 Into the grave, across the night of life,
 As thou hast borne it most triumphantly
 To this far goal of Time. Depart, farewell.
 Beside that temple is the destined cave. 175

SCENE IV.—*A Forest. In the Background a Cave.* PROMETHEUS,
 ASIA, PANTHEA, IONE, and the SPIRIT OF THE EARTH.

Ione. Sister, it is not earthly: how it glides
 Under the leaves! how on its head there burns
 A light, like a green star, whose emerald beams
 Are twined with its fair hair! how, as it moves,
 The splendour drops in flakes upon the grass! 5
 Knowest thou it?

Panthea. It is the delicate spirit
 That guides the earth through heaven. From afar
 The populous constellations call that light
 The loveliest of the planets; and sometimes
 It floats along the spray of the salt sea, 10

164 with most B; most with 1820.

Or makes its chariot of a foggy cloud,
 Or walks through fields or cities while men sleep,
 Or o'er the mountain tops, or down the rivers,
 Or through the green waste wilderness, as now,
 Wondering at all it sees. Before Jove reigned 15
 It loved our sister Asia, and it came
 Each leisure hour to drink the liquid light
 Out of her eyes, for which it said it thirsted
 As one bit by a dipsas, and with her
 It made its childish confidence, and told her 20
 All it had known or seen, for it saw much,
 Yet idly reasoned what it saw; and called her—
 For whence it sprung it knew not, nor do I—
 Mother, dear mother.

The Spirit of the Earth (running to Asia). Mother, dearest
 mother;

May I then talk with thee as I was wont? 25
 May I then hide my eyes in thy soft arms,
 After thy looks have made them tired of joy?
 May I then play beside thee the long noons,
 When work is none in the bright silent air?

Asia. I love thee, gentlest being, and henceforth 30
 Can cherish thee unenvied: speak, I pray:
 Thy simple talk once solaced, now delights.

Spirit of the Earth. Mother, I am grown wiser, though a child
 Cannot be wise like thee, within this day;
 And happier too; happier and wiser both. 35
 Thou knowest that toads, and snakes, and loathly worms,
 And venomous and malicious beasts, and boughs
 That bore ill berries in the woods, were ever
 An hindrance to my walks o'er the green world:
 And that, among the haunts of humankind, 40
 Hard-featured men, or with proud, angry looks,
 Or cold, staid gait, or false and hollow smiles,
 Or the dull sneer of self-loved ignorance,
 Or other such foul masks, with which ill thoughts
 Hide that fair being whom we spirits call man; 45
 And women too, ugliest of all things evil,
 (Though fair, even in a world where thou art fair,
 When good and kind, free and sincere like thee),
 When false or frowning made me sick at heart
 To pass them, though they slept, and I unseen. 50
 Well, my path lately lay through a great city
 Into the woody hills surrounding it:
 A sentinel was sleeping at the gate:
 When there was heard a sound, so loud, it shook
 The towers amid the moonlight, yet more sweet 55
 Than any voice but thine, sweetest of all;

A long, long sound, as it would never end :
 And all the inhabitants leaped suddenly
 Out of their rest, and gathered in the streets,
 Looking in wonder up to Heaven, while yet 60
 The music pealed along. I hid myself
 Within a fountain in the public square,
 Where I lay like the reflex of the moon
 Seen in a wave under green leaves ; and soon
 Those ugly human shapes and visages 65
 Of which I spoke as having wrought me pain,
 Passed floating through the air, and fading still
 Into the winds that scattered them ; and those
 From whom they passed seemed mild and lovely forms
 After some foul disguise had fallen, and all 70
 Were somewhat changed, and after brief surprise
 And greetings of delighted wonder, all
 Went to their sleep again : and when the dawn
 Came, wouldst thou think that toads, and snakes, and efts,
 Could e'er be beautiful ? yet so they were, 75
 And that with little change of shape or hue :
 All things had put their evil nature off :
 I cannot tell my joy, when o'er a lake
 Upon a drooping bough with nightshade twined,
 I saw two azure halcyons clinging downward 80
 And thinning one bright bunch of amber berries,
 With quick long beaks, and in the deep there lay
 Those lovely forms imaged as in a sky ;
 So, with my thoughts full of these happy changes,
 We meet again, the happiest change of all. 85

Asia. And never will we part, till thy chaste sister
 Who guides the frozen and inconstant moon
 Will look on thy more warm and equal light
 Till her heart thaw like flakes of April snow
 And love thee.

Spirit of the Earth. What ; as Asia loves Prometheus ? 90

Asia. Peace, wanton, thou art yet not old enough.
 Think ye by gazing on each other's eyes
 To multiply your lovely selves, and fill
 With spherèd fires the interlunar air ?

Spirit of the Earth. Nay, mother, while my sister trims her lamp
 'Tis hard I should go darkling.

Asia. Listen ; look ! 96

[*The SPIRIT OF THE HOUR enters.*

Prometheus. We feel what thou hast heard and seen : yet
 speak.

Spirit of the Hour. Soon as the sound had ceased whose thunder
 filled
 The abysses of the sky and the wide earth,

There was a change: the impalpable thin air 100
 And the all-circling sunlight were transformed,
 As if the sense of love dissolved in them
 Had folded itself round the spherèd world.
 My vision then grew clear, and I could see
 Into the mysteries of the universe: 105
 Dizzy as with delight I floated down,
 Winnowing the lightsome air with languid plumes,
 My coursers sought their birthplace in the sun,
 Where they henceforth will live exempt from toil,
 Pasturing flowers of vegetable fire; 110
 And where my moonlike car will stand within
 A temple, gazed upon by Phidian forms
 Of thee, and Asia, and the Earth, and me,
 And you fair nymphs looking the love we feel,—
 In memory of the tidings it has borne,— 115
 Beneath a dome fretted with graven flowers,
 Poised on twelve columns of resplendent stone,
 And open to the bright and liquid sky.
 Yoked to it by an amphisbaenic snake
 The likeness of those wingèd steeds will mock 120
 The flight from which they find repose. Alas,
 Whither has wandered now my partial tongue
 When all remains untold which ye would hear?
 As I have said, I floated to the earth:
 It was, as it is still, the pain of bliss 125
 To move, to breathe, to be; I wandering went
 Among the haunts and dwellings of mankind,
 And first was disappointed not to see
 Such mighty change as I had felt within
 Expressed in outward things; but soon I looked, 130
 And behold, thrones were kingless, and men walked
 One with the other even as spirits do,
 None fawned, none trampled; hate, disdain, or fear,
 Self-love or self-contempt, on human brows
 No more inscribed, as o'er the gate of hell, 135
 'All hope abandon ye who enter here;'
 None frowned, none trembled, none with eager fear
 Gazed on another's eye of cold command,
 Until the subject of a tyrant's will
 Became, worse fate, the abject of his own, 140
 Which spurred him, like an outspent horse, to death.
 None wrought his lips in truth-entangling lines
 Which smiled the lie his tongue disdained to speak;
 None, with firm sneer, trod out in his own heart
 The sparks of love and hope till there remained 145
 Those bitter ashes, a soul self-consumed,

And the wretch crept a vampire among men,
 Infecting all with his own hideous ill ;
 None talked that common, false, cold, hollow talk
 Which makes the heart deny the *yes* it breathes, 150
 Yet question that unmeant hypocrisy
 With such a self-mistrust as has no name.
 And women, too, frank, beautiful, and kind
 As the free heaven which rains fresh light and dew
 On the wide earth, past ; gentle radiant forms, 155
 From custom's evil taint exempt and pure ;
 Speaking the wisdom once they could not think,
 Looking emotions once they feared to feel,
 And changed to all which once they dared not be,
 Yet being now, made earth like heaven ; nor pride, 160
 Nor jealousy, nor envy, nor ill shame,
 The bitterest of those drops of treasured gall,
 Spoilt the sweet taste of the nepenthe, love.

Thrones, altars, judgement-seats, and prisons ; wherein,
 And beside which, by wretched men were borne 165
 Sceptres, tiaras, swords, and chains, and tomes
 Of reasoned wrong, glozed on by ignorance,
 Were like those monstrous and barbaric shapes,
 The ghosts of a no-more-remembered fame,
 Which, from their unworn obelisks, look forth 170
 In triumph o'er the palaces and tombs
 Of those who were their conquerors : mouldering round,
 These imaged to the pride of kings and priests
 A dark yet mighty faith, a power as wide
 As is the world it wasted, and are now 175
 But an astonishment ; even so the tools
 And emblems of its last captivity,
 Amid the dwellings of the peopled earth,
 Stand, not o'erthrown, but unregarded now.
 And those foul shapes, abhorred by god and man,— 180
 Which, under many a name and many a form
 Strange, savage, ghastly, dark and execrable,
 Were Jupiter, the tyrant of the world ;
 And which the nations, panic-stricken, served
 With blood, and hearts broken by long hope, and love
 Dragged to his altars soiled and garlandless, 186
 And slain amid men's unreclaiming tears,
 Flattering the thing they feared, which fear was hate,—
 Frown, mouldering fast, o'er their abandoned shrines :
 The painted veil, by those who were, called life, 190
 Which mimicked, as with colours idly spread,

173 These *B* ; Those 1820.187 amid *B* ; among 1820.

All men believed or hoped, is torn aside;
 The loathsome mask has fallen, the man remains
 Sceptreless, free, uncircumscribed, but man
 Equal, unclassed, tribeless, and nationless,
 Exempt from awe, worship, degree, the king 195
 Over himself; just, gentle, wise: but man
 Passionless?—no, yet free from guilt or pain,
 Which were, for his will made or suffered them,
 Nor yet exempt, though ruling them like slaves,
 From chance, and death, and mutability, 200
 The clogs of that which else might oversoar
 The loftiest star of unascended heaven,
 Pinnacled dim in the intense inane.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

SCENE.—*A Part of the Forest near the Cave of PROMETHEUS.*
PANTHEA and IONE are sleeping: they awaken gradually during
the first Song.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

The pale stars are gone!
 For the sun, their swift shepherd,
 To their folds them compelling,
 In the depths of the dawn,
 Hastes, in meteor-eclipsing array, and they flee 5
 Beyond his blue dwelling,
 As fawns flee the leopard.
 But where are ye?

A Train of dark Forms and Shadows passes by confusedly,
singing.

Here, oh, here:
 We bear the bier 10
 Of the Father of many a cancelled year!
 Spectres we
 Of the dead Hours be,
 We bear Time to his tomb in eternity.
 Strew, oh, strew 15
 Hair, not yew!
 Wet the dusty pall with tears, not dew!
 Be the faded flowers
 Of Death's bare bowers
 Spread on the corpse of the King of Hours! 20

192 or B; and 1820.

Haste, oh, haste!
 As shades are chased,
 Trembling, by day, from heaven's blue waste.
 We melt away,
 Like dissolving spray, 25
 From the children of a diviner day,
 With the lullaby
 Of winds that die
 On the bosom of their own harmony!

Ione.

What dark forms were they? 30

Panthea.

The past Hours weak and gray,
 With the spoil which their toil
 Raked together
 From the conquest but One could foil.

Ione.

Have they passed?

Panthea.

They have passed; 35
 They outspeded the blast,
 While 'tis said, they are fled:

Ione.

Whither, oh, whither?

Panthea.

To the dark, to the past, to the dead.

Voice of unseen Spirits.

Bright clouds float in heaven, 40
 Dew-stars gleam on earth,
 Waves assemble on ocean,
 They are gathered and driven
 By the storm of delight, by the panic of glee!
 They shake with emotion, 45
 They dance in their mirth.
 But where are ye?

The pine boughs are singing
 Old songs with new gladness,
 The billows and fountains 50
 Fresh music are flinging,
 Like the notes of a spirit from land and from sea;
 The storms mock the mountains
 With the thunder of gladness.
 But where are ye? 55

Ione. What charioteers are these?

Panthea.

Where are their chariots?

Semichorus of Hours.

The voice of the Spirits of Air and of Earth
 Have drawn back the figured curtain of sleep
 Which covered our being and darkened our birth
 In the deep.

A Voice.

In the deep?

Semichorus II.

Oh, below the deep. 60

Semichorus I.

An hundred ages we had been kept
 Cradled in visions of hate and care,
 And each one who waked as his brother slept,
 Found the truth—

Semichorus II.

Worse than his visions were!

Semichorus I.

We have heard the lute of Hope in sleep; 65
 We have known the voice of Love in dreams;
 We have felt the wand of Power, and leap—

Semichorus II.

As the billows leap in the morning beams!

Chorus.

Weave the dance on the floor of the breeze,
 Pierce with song heaven's silent light, 70
 Enchant the day that too swiftly flees,
 To check its flight ere the cave of Night.

Once the hungry Hours were hounds
 Which chased the day like a bleeding deer,
 And it limped and stumbled with many wounds 75
 Through the nightly dells of the desert year.

But now, oh weave the mystic measure
 Of music, and dance, and shapes of light,
 Let the Hours, and the spirits of might and pleasure,
 Like the clouds and sunbeams, unite.

A Voice.

Unite! 80

Panthea. See, where the Spirits of the human mind
 Wrapped in sweet sounds, as in bright veils, approach.

Chorus of Spirits.

We join the throng
 Of the dance and the song,
 By the whirlwind of gladness borne along; 85
 As the flying-fish leap
 From the Indian deep,
 And mix with the sea-birds, half asleep.

Chorus of Hours.

Whence come ye, so wild and so fleet,
 For sandals of lightning are on your feet, 90
 And your wings are soft and swift as thought,
 And your eyes are as love which is veiled not?

Chorus of Spirits.

We come from the mind
 Of human kind
 Which was late so dusk, and obscene, and blind, 95
 Now 'tis an ocean
 Of clear emotion,
 A heaven of serene and mighty motion
 From that deep abyss
 Of wonder and bliss, 100
 Whose caverns are crystal palaces;
 From those skiey towers
 Where Thought's crowned powers
 Sit watching your dance, ye happy Hours!
 From the dim recesses 105
 Of woven caresses,
 Where lovers catch ye by your loose tresses;
 From the azure isles,
 Where sweet Wisdom smiles,
 Delaying your ships with her siren wiles. 110
 From the temples high
 Of Man's ear and eye,
 Roofed over Sculpture and Poesy;
 From the murmurings
 Of the unsealed springs 115
 Where Science bedews her Dædal wings.
 Years after years,
 Through blood, and tears,
 And a thick hell of hatreds, and hopes, and fears;
 We waded and flew, 120
 And the islets were few
 Where the bud-blighted flowers of happiness grew.
 Our feet now, every palm,
 Are sandalled with calm,
 And the dew of our wings is a rain of balm; 125
 And, beyond our eyes,
 The human love lies
 Which makes all it gazes on Paradise.

Chorus of Spirits and Hours.

Then weave the web of the mystic measure;
 From the depths of the sky and the ends of the earth,

Come, swift Spirits of might and of pleasure,
 Fill the dance and the music of mirth,
 As the waves of a thousand streams rush by
 To an ocean of splendour and harmony!

Chorus of Spirits.

Our spoil is won,
 Our task is done,
 We are free to dive, or soar, or run;
 Beyond and around,
 Or within the bound
 Which clips the world with darkness round.

We'll pass the eyes
 Of the starry skies
 Into the hoar deep to colonize:
 Death, Chaos, and Night,
 From the sound of our flight,
 Shall flee, like mist from a tempest's might.

And Earth, Air, and Light,
 And the Spirit of Might,
 Which drives round the stars in their fiery flight;
 And Love, Thought, and Breath,
 The powers that quell Death,
 Wherever we soar shall assemble beneath.

And our singing shall build
 In the void's loose field
 A world for the Spirit of Wisdom to wield;
 We will take our plan
 From the new world of man,
 And our work shall be called the Promethean.

Chorus of Hours.

Break the dance, and scatter the song;
 Let some depart, and some remain.

Semichorus I.

We, beyond heaven, are driven along:

Semichorus II.

Us the enchantments of earth retain:

Semichorus I.

Ceaseless, and rapid, and fierce, and free,
 With the Spirits which build a new earth and sea,
 And a heaven where yet heaven could never be.

Semichorus II.

Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
 Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
 With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Semichorus I.

We whirl, singing loud, round the gathering sphere,
Till the trees, and the beasts, and the clouds appear 170
From its chaos made calm by love, not fear.

Semichorus II.

We encircle the ocean and mountains of earth,
And the happy forms of its death and birth
Change to the music of our sweet mirth.

Chorus of Hours and Spirits.

Break the dance, and scatter the song, 175
Let some depart, and some remain,
Wherever we fly we lead along
In leashes, like starbeams, soft yet strong,
The clouds that are heavy with love's sweet rain.

Panthea. Ha! they are gone!

Ione. Yet feel you no delight 180
From the past sweetness?

Panthea. As the bare green hill
When some soft cloud vanishes into rain,
Laughs with a thousand drops of sunny water
To the unpavilioned sky!

Ione. Even whilst we speak
New notes arise. What is that awful sound? 185

Panthea. 'Tis the deep music of the rolling world
Kindling within the strings of the waved air
Æolian modulations.

Ione. Listen too,
How every pause is filled with under-notes,
Clear, silver, icy, keen, awakening tones, 190
Which pierce the sense, and live within the soul,
As the sharp stars pierce winter's crystal air
And gaze upon themselves within the sea.

Panthea. But see where through two openings in the forest
Which hanging branches overcanopy, 195
And where two runnels of a rivulet,
Between the close moss violet-inwoven,
Have made their path of melody, like sisters
Who part with sighs that they may meet in smiles,
Turning their dear disunion to an isle 200
Of lovely grief, a wood of sweet sad thoughts;
Two visions of strange radiance float upon
The ocean-like enchantment of strong sound,
Which flows intenser, keener, deeper yet
Under the ground and through the windless air. 205

Ione. I see a chariot like that thinnest boat,
In which the Mother of the Months is borne

By ebbing light into her western cave,
 When she upsprings from interlunar dreams ;
 O'er which is curved an orblike canopy 210
 Of gentle darkness, and the hills and woods,
 Distinctly seen through that dusk aery veil,
 Regard like shapes in an enchanter's glass ;
 Its wheels are solid clouds, azure and gold,
 Such as the genii of the thunderstorm 215
 Pile on the floor of the illumined sea
 When the sun rushes under it ; they roll
 And move and grow as with an inward wind ;
 Within it sits a wingèd infant, white
 Its countenance, like the whiteness of bright snow, 220
 Its plumes are as feathers of sunny frost,
 Its limbs gleam white, through the wind-flowing folds
 Of its white robe, woof of ethereal pearl.
 Its hair is white, the brightness of white light
 Scattered in strings ; yet its two eyes are heavens 225
 Of liquid darkness, which the Deity
 Within seems pouring, as a storm is poured
 From jagged clouds, out of their arrowy lashes,
 Tempering the cold and radiant air around,
 With fire that is not brightness ; in its hand 230
 It sways a quivering moonbeam, from whose point
 A guiding power directs the chariot's prow
 Over its wheelèd clouds, which as they roll
 Over the grass, and flowers, and waves, wake sounds,
 Sweet as a singing rain of silver dew. 235

Panthea. And from the other opening in the wood
 Rushes, with loud and whirlwind harmony,
 A sphere, which is as many thousand spheres,
 Solid as crystal, yet through all its mass
 Flow, as through empty space, music and light : 240
 Ten thousand orbs involving and involved,
 Purple and azure, white, and green, and golden,
 Sphere within sphere ; and every space between
 Peopled with unimagivable shapes,
 Such as ghosts dream dwell in the lampless deep, 245
 Yet each inter-transparent, and they whirl
 Over each other with a thousand motions,
 Upon a thousand sightless axles spinning,
 And with the force of self-destroying swiftness,
 Intensely, slowly, solemnly roll on, 250
 Kindling with mingled sounds, and many tones,
 Intelligible words and music wild.

208 light *B* ; night 1820.
B, ed. 1839 ; string 1820.

212 aery *B* ; airy 1820. 225 strings
 242 white and green *B* ; white, green 1820.

With mighty whirl the multitudinous orb
 Grinds the bright brook into an azure mist
 Of elemental subtlety, like light; 255
 And the wild odour of the forest flowers,
 The music of the living grass and air,
 The emerald light of leaf-entangled beams
 Round its intense yet self-conflicting speed,
 Seem kneaded into one aëreal mass 260
 Which drowns the sense. Within the orb itself,
 Pillowed upon its alabaster arms,
 Like to a child o'erwearied with sweet toil,
 On its own folded wings, and wavy hair,
 The Spirit of the Earth is laid asleep, 265
 And you can see its little lips are moving,
 Amid the changing light of their own smiles,
 Like one who talks of what he loves in dream.

Ione. 'Tis only mocking the orb's harmony.

Panthea. And from a star upon its forehead, shoot, 270
 Like swords of azure fire, or golden spears
 With tyrant-quelling myrtle overtined,
 Embleming heaven and earth united now,
 Vast beams like spokes of some invisible wheel
 Which whirl as the orb whirls, swifter than thought, 275
 Filling the abyss with sun-like lightnings,
 And perpendicular now, and now transverse,
 Pierce the dark soil, and as they pierce and pass,
 Make bare the secrets of the earth's deep heart;
 Infinite mines of adamant and gold, 280
 Valueless stones, and unimagined gems,
 And caverns on crystalline columns poised
 With vegetable silver overspread;
 Wells of unfathomed fire, and water springs
 Whence the great sea, even as a child is fed, 285
 Whose vapours clothe earth's monarch mountain-tops
 With kingly, ermine snow. The beams flash on
 And make appear the melancholy ruins
 Of cancelled cycles; anchors, beaks of ships;
 Planks turned to marble; quivers, helms, and spears, 290
 And gorgon-headed targes, and the wheels
 Of scythed chariots, and the emblazonry
 Of trophies, standards, and armorial beasts,
 Round which death laughed, sepulchred emblems
 Of dead destruction, ruin within ruin! 295
 The wrecks beside of many a city vast,
 Whose population which the earth grew over

274 spokes *B*, ed. 1839; spoke 1820. 276 lightnings *B*; lightnings 1820.
 280 mines *B*; mine 1820. 282 poised *B*; poized ed. 1839; poured 1820.

Was mortal, but not human; see, they lie,
 Their monstrous works, and uncouth skeletons,
 Their statues, homes and fanes; prodigious shapes 300
 Huddled in gray annihilation, split,
 Jammed in the hard, black deep; and over these,
 The anatomies of unknown wingèd things,
 And fishes which were isles of living scale,
 And serpents, bony chains, twisted around 305
 The iron crags, or within heaps of dust
 To which the tortuous strength of their last pangs
 Had crushed the iron crags; and over these
 The jagged alligator, and the might
 Of earth-convulsing behemoth, which once 310
 Were monarch beasts, and on the slimy shores,
 And weed-overgrown continents of earth,
 Increased and multiplied like summer worms
 On an abandoned corpse, till the blue globe
 Wrapped deluge round it like a cloak, and they 315
 Yelled, gasped, and were abolished; or some God
 Whose throne was in a comet, passed, and cried,
 'Be not!' And like my words they were no more.

The Earth.

The joy, the triumph, the delight, the madness!
 The boundless, overflowing, bursting gladness, 320
 The vaporous exultation not to be confined!
 Ha! ha! the animation of delight
 Which wraps me, like an atmosphere of light,
 And bears me as a cloud is borne by its own wind.

The Moon.

Brother mine, calm wanderer, 325
 Happy globe of land and air,
 Some Spirit is darted like a beam from thee,
 Which penetrates my frozen frame,
 And passes with the warmth of flame,
 With love, and odour, and deep melody 330
 Through me, through me!

The Earth.

Ha! ha! the caverns of my hollow mountains,
 My cloven fire-crags, sound-exulting fountains
 Laugh with a vast and inextinguishable laughter.
 The oceans, and the deserts, and the abysses, 335
 And the deep air's unmeasured wildernesses,
 Answer from all their clouds and billows, echoing after.

They cry aloud as I do. Sceptred curse,
 Who all our green and azure universe

335-6 the abysses, And 1820, 1839; the abysses Of B.

Threatenedst to muffle round with black destruction, sending
 A solid cloud to rain hot thunderstones, 341
 And splinter and knead down my children's bones,
 All I bring forth, to one void mass battering and blending,—
 Until each crag-like tower, and storied column,
 Palace, and obelisk, and temple solemn, 345
 My imperial mountains crowned with cloud, and snow, and fire ;
 My sea-like forests, every blade and blossom
 Which finds a grave or cradle in my bosom,
 Were stamped by thy strong hate into a lifeless mire :
 How art thou sunk, withdrawn, covered, drunk up 350
 By thirsty nothing, as the brackish cup
 Drained by a desert-troop, a little drop for all ;
 And from beneath, around, within, above,
 Filling thy void annihilation, love
 Burst in like light on caves cloven by the thunder-ball. 355

The Moon.

The snow upon my lifeless mountains
 Is loosened into living fountains,
 My solid oceans flow, and sing, and shine :
 A spirit from my heart bursts forth,
 It clothes with unexpected birth 360
 My cold bare bosom : Oh ! it must be thine
 On mine, on mine !

Gazing on thee I feel, I know
 Green stalks burst forth, and bright flowers grow,
 And living shapes upon my bosom move : 365
 Music is in the sea and air,
 Wingèd clouds soar here and there,
 Dark with the rain new buds are dreaming of :
 'Tis love, all love !

The Earth.

It interpenetrates my granite mass, 370
 Through tangled roots and trodden clay doth pass
 Into the utmost leaves and delicatest flowers ;
 Upon the winds, among the clouds 'tis spread,
 It wakes a life in the forgotten dead,
 They breathe a spirit up from their obscurest bowers. 375
 And like a storm bursting its cloudy prison
 With thunder, and with whirlwind, has arisen
 Out of the lampless caves of unimagined being :
 With earthquake shock and swiftness making shiver 380
 Thought's stagnant chaos, unremoved for ever,
 Till hate, and fear, and pain, light-vanquished shadows, fleeing,

Leave Man, who was a many-sided mirror,
 Which could distort to many a shape of error,
 This true fair world of things, a sea reflecting love;
 Which over all his kind, as the sun's heaven 385
 Gliding o'er ocean, smooth, serene, and even,
 Darting from starry depths radiance and life, doth move:

Leave Man, even as a leprous child is left,
 Who follows a sick beast to some warm cleft
 Of rocks, through which the might of healing springs is poured;
 Then when it wanders home with rosy smile, 391
 Unconscious, and its mother fears awhile
 It is a spirit, then, weeps on her child restored.

Man, oh, not men! a chain of linkèd thought,
 Of love and might to be divided not, 395
 Compelling the elements with adamantine stress;
 As the sun rules, even with a tyrant's gaze,
 The unquiet republic of the maze
 Of planets, struggling fierce towards heaven's free wilderness.

Man, one harmonious soul of many a soul, 400
 Whose nature is its own divine control,
 Where all things flow to all, as rivers to the sea;
 Familiar acts are beautiful through love;
 Labour, and pain, and grief, in life's green grove
 Sport like tame beasts, none knew how gentle they could be!

His will, with all mean passions, bad delights, 406
 And selfish cares, its trembling satellites,
 A spirit ill to guide, but mighty to obey,
 Is as a tempest-wingèd ship, whose helm
 Love rules, through waves which dare not overwhelm, 410
 Forcing life's wildest shores to own its sovereign sway.

All things confess his strength. Through the cold mass
 Of marble and of colour his dreams pass;
 Bright threads whence mothers weave the robes their children
 wear;

Language is a perpetual Orphic song, 415
 Which rules with Dædal harmony a throng
 Of thoughts and forms, which else senseless and shapeless were.

The lightning is his slave; heaven's utmost deep
 Gives up her stars, and like a flock of sheep
 They pass before his eye, are numbered, and roll on! 420
 The tempest is his steed, he strides the air;
 And the abyss shouts from her depth laid bare,
 Heaven, hast thou secrets? Man unveils me; I have none.

The Moon.

The shadow of white death has passed
 From my path in heaven at last, 425
 A clinging shroud of solid frost and sleep ;
 And through my newly-woven bowers,
 Wander happy paramours,
 Less mighty, but as mild as those who keep
 Thy vales more deep. 430

The Earth.

As the dissolving warmth of dawn may fold
 A half unfrozen dew-globe, green, and gold,
 And crystalline, till it becomes a wingèd mist,
 And wanders up the vault of the blue day,
 Outlives the moon, and on the sun's last ray 435
 Hangs o'er the sea, a fleece of fire and amethyst.

The Moon.

Thou art folded, thou art lying
 In the light which is undying
 Of thine own joy, and heaven's smile divine ;
 All suns and constellations shower 440
 On thee a light, a life, a power
 Which doth array thy sphere ; thou pourest thine
 On mine, on mine !

The Earth.

I spin beneath my pyramid of night,
 Which points into the heavens dreaming delight, 445
 Murmuring victorious joy in my enchanted sleep ;
 As a youth lulled in love-dreams faintly sighing,
 Under the shadow of his beauty lying,
 Which round his rest a watch of light and warmth doth keep.

The Moon.

As in the soft and sweet eclipse, 450
 When soul meets soul on lovers' lips,
 High hearts are calm, and brightest eyes are dull ;
 So when thy shadow falls on me,
 Then am I mute and still, by thee
 Covered ; of thy love, Orb most beautiful, 455
 Full, oh, too full !

Thou art speeding round the sun
 Brightest world of many a one ;
 Green and azure sphere which shinest
 With a light which is divinest 460
 Among all the lamps of Heaven
 To whom life and light is given ;
 I, thy crystal paramour

Borne beside thee by a power
 Like the polar Paradise, 465
 Magnet-like of lovers' eyes;
 I, a most enamoured maiden
 Whose weak brain is overladen
 With the pleasure of her love,
 Maniac-like around thee move 470
 Gazing, an insatiate bride,
 On thy form from every side
 Like a Mænad, round the cup
 Which Agave lifted up
 In the weird Cadmæan forest. 475
 Brother, wheresoe'er thou soarest
 I must hurry, whirl and follow
 Through the heavens wide and hollow,
 Sheltered by the warm embrace
 Of thy soul from hungry space, 480
 Drinking from thy sense and sight
 Beauty, majesty, and might,
 As a lover or a chameleon
 Grows like what it looks upon,
 As a violet's gentle eye 485
 Gazes on the azure sky
 Until its hue grows like what it beholds,
 As a gray and watery mist
 Glows like solid amethyst
 Athwart the western mountain it enfolds, 490
 When the sunset sleeps
 Upon its snow—

The Earth.

And the weak day weeps
 That it should be so.

Oh, gentle Moon, the voice of thy delight 495
 Falls on me like thy clear and tender light
 Soothing the seaman, borne the summer night,
 Through isles for ever calm;
 Oh, gentle Moon, thy crystal accents pierce
 The caverns of my pride's deep universe, 500
 Charming the tiger joy, whose trappings fierce
 Made wounds which need thy balm.

Panthea. I rise as from a bath of sparkling water,
 A bath of azure light, among dark rocks,
 Out of the stream of sound.

Ione. Ah me! sweet sister, 505
 The stream of sound has ebbed away from us,
 And you pretend to rise out of its wave,
 Because your words fall like the clear, soft dew
 Shaken from a bathing wood-nymph's limbs and hair.

Panthea. Peace! peace! A mighty Power, which is as
 darkness, 510
 Is rising out of Earth, and from the sky
 Is showered like night, and from within the air
 Bursts, like eclipse which had been gathered up
 Into the pores of sunlight: the bright visions,
 Wherein the singing spirits rode and shone, 515
 Gleam like pale meteors through a watery night.
Ione. There is a sense of words upon mine ear.
Panthea. An universal sound like words: Oh, list!

Demogorgon.
 Thou, Earth, calm empire of a happy soul,
 Sphere of divinest shapes and harmonies, 520
 Beautiful orb! gathering as thou dost roll
 The love which paves thy path along the skies:

The Earth.
 I hear: I am as a drop of dew that dies.

Demogorgon.
 Thou, Moon, which gazest on the nightly Earth
 With wonder, as it gazes upon thee; 525
 Whilst each to men, and beasts, and the swift birth
 Of birds, is beauty, love, calm, harmony:

The Moon.
 I hear: I am a leaf shaken by thee!

Demogorgon.
 Ye Kings of suns and stars, Dæmons and Gods,
 Aetherial Dominations, who possess 530
 Elysian, windless, fortunate abodes
 Beyond Heaven's constellated wilderness:

A Voice from above.
 Our great Republic hears, we are blest, and bless.

Demogorgon.
 Ye happy Dead, whom beams of brightest verse
 Are clouds to hide, not colours to portray, 535
 Whether your nature is that universe
 Which once ye saw and suffered—

A Voice from beneath.
 Or as they
 Whom we have left, we change and pass away.

Demogorgon.
 Ye elemental Genii, who have homes
 From man's high mind even to the central stone 540
 Of sullen lead; from heaven's star-fretted domes
 To the dull weed some sea-worm battens on:

A confused Voice.

We hear: thy words waken Oblivion.

Demogorgon.

Spirits, whose homes are flesh: ye beasts and birds,
Ye worms, and fish; ye living leaves and buds; 545
Lightning and wind; and ye untameable herds,
Meteors and mists, which throng air's solitudes:—

A Voice.

Thy voice to us is wind among still woods.

Demogorgon.

Man, who wert once a despot and a slave;
A dupe and a deceiver; a decay; 550
A traveller from the cradle to the grave
Through the dim night of this immortal day:

All.

Speak: thy strong words may never pass away.

Demogorgon.

This is the day, which down the void abysm
At the Earth-born's spell yawns for Heaven's despotism,
And Conquest is dragged captive through the deep: 556
Love, from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery, steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs 560
And folds over the world its healing wings.

Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's strength;
And if, with infirm hand, Eternity, 565
Mother of many acts and hours, should free
The serpent that would clasp her with his length;
These are the spells by which to reassume
An empire o'er the disentangled doom.

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite; 570
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent; 575
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

547 throng 1820, 1839; cancelled for feed B. 559 dread B, ed. 1839;
dead 1820. 575 falter B, ed. 1839; flatter 1820.

CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF PROMETHEUS
UNBOUND

[First printed by Mr. C. D. Locock, *Examination of the Shelley MSS.*
at the Bodleian Library, 1903, pp. 33-7.]

(following I. 37)

When thou descendst each night with open eyes
In torture, for a tyrant seldom sleeps,
Thou never;

(following I. 195)

Which thou henceforth art doomed to interweave

(following the first two words of I. 342).

[Of Hell:] I placed it in his choice to be
The crown, or trampled refuse of the world
With but one law itself a glorious boon—
I gave—

(following I. 707)

Second Spirit.

I leaped on the wings of the Earth-star damp
As it rose on the steam of a slaughtered camp—
The sleeping newt heard not our tramp
As swift as the wings of fire may pass—
We threaded the points of long thick grass
Which hide the green pools of the morass
But shook a water-serpent's couch
In a cleft skull, of many such
The widest; at the meteor's touch
The snake did seem to see in dream
Thrones and dungeons overthrown
Visions how unlike his own . . .
'Twas the hope the prophecy
Which begins and ends in thee

(following II. i. 110)

Lift up thine eyes Panthea—they pierce they burn!

Panthea.

Alas! I am consumed—I melt away
The fire is in my heart—

Asia.

Thine eyes burn burn!—
Hide them within thine hair—

Panthea.

I sink I perish

O quench thy lips

you say said that spirits ^{Asia} speak, but it was the
 sweet sister, for even now they curried up
 remembrance as if the sound were dying there
 Not dead!

Panthea ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{something} ~~something~~ ^{speaking}
 within me, ~~if I spoke, & even now it must be~~
 I mixed my own weak nature with his life
 and

and my thoughts
 are like the many forests of a vale
 through which the night of whistling & of
 had passed ~~but~~ ^{lest} ~~and they~~ ^{lest} ~~illumined~~ ^{lest} ~~the~~ ^{lest} ~~evening~~ ^{lest} ~~light~~
 As mine do now in the beloved ^{evening} ~~smile~~ ^{light}

Asia

My soul is in enchanted Boat
 which, like a sleeping swan doth float
 upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing,
 and thine doth like an Angel sit
 beside the helm conducting it.
 Whilst all the winds with melody are singing
 It seems to float ever - forever -
~~But~~ ^{But} upon that many winding River

Asia.

Shelter me now—they burn
 It is his spirit in their orbs . . . my life
 Is ebbing fast—I cannot speak—

Panthea.

Rest, rest!
 Sleep death annihilation pain! aught else

(following II. iv. 27)

Or looks which tell that while the lips are calm
 And the eyes cold, the spirit weeps within
 Tears like the sanguine sweat of agony;

UNCANCELLED PASSAGE

(following II. v. 71)

Asia.

You said that spirits spoke, but it was thee
 Sweet sister, for even now thy curvèd lips
 Tremble as if the sound were dying there
 Not dead

Panthea.

Alas it was Prometheus spoke
 Within me, and I know it must be so
 I mixed my own weak nature with his love
 And my thoughts
 Are like the many forests of a vale
 Through which the might of whirlwind and of rain
 Had passed—they rest rest through the evening light
 As mine do now in thy beloved smile.

CANCELLED STAGE DIRECTIONS

(following I. 221)

The sound beneath as of earthquake and the driving of whirlwinds—The Ravine is split, and the Phantasm of Jupiter rises, surrounded by heavy clouds which dart forth lightning.

(following I. 520)

enter rushing by groups of horrible forms; they speak as they pass in chorus

(following I. 552)

a shadow passes over the scene, and a piercing shriek is heard

NOTE ON PROMETHEUS UNBOUND, BY
MRS. SHELLEY

ON the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England, never to return. His principal motive was the hope that his health would be improved by a milder climate; he suffered very much during the winter previous to his emigration, and this decided his vacillating purpose. In December, 1817, he had written from Marlow to a friend, saying:

‘My health has been materially worse. My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or awakened to such a state of unnatural and keen excitement that, only to instance the organ of sight, I find the very blades of grass and the boughs of distant trees present themselves to me with microscopic distinctness. Towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission, is my condition. The hours devoted to study are selected with vigilant caution from among these periods of endurance. It is not for this that I think of travelling to Italy, even if I knew that Italy would relieve me. But I have experienced a decisive pulmonary attack; and although at present it has passed away without any considerable vestige of its existence, yet this symptom sufficiently shows the true nature of my disease to be consumptive. It is to my advantage that this malady is in its nature slow, and, if one is sufficiently alive to its advances, is susceptible of cure

from a warm climate. In the event of its assuming any decided shape, *it would be my duty* to go to Italy without delay. It is not mere health, but life, that I should seek, and that not for my own sake—I feel I am capable of trampling on all such weakness; but for the sake of those to whom my life may be a source of happiness, utility, security, and honour, and to some of whom my death might be all that is the reverse.’

In almost every respect his journey to Italy was advantageous. He left behind friends to whom he was attached; but cares of a thousand kinds, many springing from his lavish generosity, crowded round him in his native country, and, except the society of one or two friends, he had no compensation. The climate caused him to consume half his existence in helpless suffering. His dearest pleasure, the free enjoyment of the scenes of Nature, was marred by the same circumstance.

He went direct to Italy, avoiding even Paris, and did not make any pause till he arrived at Milan. The first aspect of Italy enchanted Shelley; it seemed a garden of delight placed beneath a clearer and brighter heaven than any he had lived under before. He wrote long descriptive letters during the first year of his residence in Italy, which, as compositions, are the most beautiful in the world, and show how truly he appreciated and studied the wonders of Nature and Art in that divine land.

The poetical spirit within him

speedily revived with all the power and with more than all the beauty of his first attempts. He meditated three subjects as the groundwork for lyrical dramas. One was the story of Tasso; of this a slight fragment of a song of Tasso remains. The other was one founded on the *Book of Job*, which he never abandoned in idea, but of which no trace remains among his papers. The third was the *Prometheus Unbound*. The Greek tragedians were now his most familiar companions in his wanderings, and the sublime majesty of Æschylus filled him with wonder and delight. The father of Greek tragedy does not possess the pathos of Sophocles, nor the variety and tenderness of Euripides; the interest on which he founds his dramas is often elevated above human vicissitudes into the mighty passions and throes of gods and demi-gods: such fascinated the abstract imagination of Shelley.

We spent a month at Milan, visiting the Lake of Como during that interval. Thence we passed in succession to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back again to Rome, whither we returned early in March, 1819. During all this time Shelley meditated the subject of his drama, and wrote portions of it. Other poems were composed during this interval, and while at the Bagni di Lucca he translated Plato's *Symposium*. But, though he diversified his studies, his thoughts centred in the *Prometheus*. At last, when at Rome, during a bright and beautiful Spring, he gave up his whole time to the composition. The

spot selected for his study was, as he mentions in his preface, the mountainous ruins of the Baths of Caracalla. These are little known to the ordinary visitor at Rome. He describes them in a letter, with that poetry and delicacy and truth of description which render his narrated impressions of scenery of unequalled beauty and interest.

At first he completed the drama in three acts. It was not till several months after, when at Florence, that he conceived that a fourth act, a sort of hymn of rejoicing in the fulfilment of the prophecies with regard to Prometheus, ought to be added to complete the composition.

The prominent feature of Shelley's theory of the destiny of the human species was that evil is not inherent in the system of the creation, but an accident that might be expelled. This also forms a portion of Christianity: God made earth and man perfect, till he, by his fall,

‘Brought death into the world
and all our woe.’

Shelley believed that mankind had only to will that there should be no evil, and there would be none. It is not my part in these Notes to notice the arguments that have been urged against this opinion, but to mention the fact that he entertained it, and was indeed attached to it with fervent enthusiasm. That man could be so perfectionized as to be able to expel evil from his own nature, and from the greater part of the creation, was the cardinal point of his system. And the subject he loved best to dwell on was the

image of One warring with the Evil Principle, oppressed not only by it, but by all—even the good, who were deluded into considering evil a necessary portion of humanity; a victim full of fortitude and hope and the spirit of triumph emanating from a reliance in the ultimate omnipotence of Good. Such he had depicted in his last poem, when he made Laon the enemy and the victim of tyrants. He now took a more idealized image of the same subject. He followed certain classical authorities in figuring Saturn as the good principle, Jupiter the usurping evil one, and Prometheus as the regenerator, who, unable to bring mankind back to primitive innocence, used knowledge as a weapon to defeat evil, by leading mankind, beyond the state wherein they are sinless through ignorance, to that in which they are virtuous through wisdom. Jupiter punished the temerity of the Titan by chaining him to a rock of Caucasus, and causing a vulture to devour his still-renewed heart. There was a prophecy afloat in heaven portending the fall of Jove, the secret of averting which was known only to Prometheus; and the god offered freedom from torture on condition of its being communicated to him. According to the mythological story, this referred to the offspring of Thetis, who was destined to be greater than his father. Prometheus at last bought pardon for his crime of enriching mankind with his gifts, by revealing the prophecy. Hercules killed the vulture, and set him free; and Thetis was married to Peleus, the father of Achilles.

Shelley adapted the catastrophe of this story to his peculiar views. The son greater than his father, born of the nuptials of Jupiter and Thetis, was to dethrone Evil, and bring back a happier reign than that of Saturn. Prometheus defies the power of his enemy, and endures centuries of torture; till the hour arrives when Jove, blind to the real event, but darkly guessing that some great good to himself will flow, espouses Thetis. At the moment, the Primal Power of the world drives him from his usurped throne, and Strength, in the person of Hercules, liberates Humanity, typified in Prometheus, from the tortures generated by evil done or suffered. Asia, one of the Oceanides, is the wife of Prometheus—she was, according to other mythological interpretations, the same as Venus and Nature. When the benefactor of mankind is liberated, Nature resumes the beauty of her prime, and is united to her husband, the emblem of the human race, in perfect and happy union. In the Fourth Act, the Poet gives further scope to his imagination, and idealizes the forms of creation—such as we know them, instead of such as they appeared to the Greeks. Maternal Earth, the mighty parent, is superseded by the Spirit of the Earth, the guide of our planet through the realms of sky; while his fair and weaker companion and attendant, the Spirit of the Moon, receives bliss from the annihilation of Evil in the superior sphere.

Shelley develops, more particularly in the lyrics of this drama, his abstruse and imaginative theories with regard to the Creation. It

requires a mind as subtle and penetrating as his own to understand the mystic meanings scattered throughout the poem. They elude the ordinary reader by their abstraction and delicacy of distinction, but they are far from vague. It was his design to write prose metaphysical essays on the nature of Man, which would have served to explain much of what is obscure in his poetry; a few scattered fragments of observations and remarks alone remain. He considered these philosophical views of Mind and Nature to be instinct with the intensest spirit of poetry.

More popular poets clothe the ideal with familiar and sensible imagery. Shelley loved to idealize the real—to gift the mechanism of the material universe with a soul and a voice, and to bestow such also on the most delicate and abstract emotions and thoughts of the mind. Sophocles was his great master in this species of imagery.

I find in one of his manuscript books some remarks on a line in the *Œdipus Tyrannus*, which show at once the critical subtlety of Shelley's mind, and explain his apprehension of those 'minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us,' which he pronounces, in the letter quoted in the note to the *Revolt of Islam*, to comprehend all that is sublime in man.

'In the Greek Shakespeare, Sophocles, we find the image,

Πολλὰς δ' ὁδοὺς ἐλθόντα φροντίδος
πλάνοις :

a line of almost unfathomable depth of poetry; yet how simple

are the images in which it is arrayed!

"Coming to many ways in the wanderings of careful thought."

If the words ὁδοὺς and πλάνοις had not been used, the line might have been explained in a metaphorical instead of an absolute sense, as we say "ways and means," and "wanderings" for error and confusion. But they meant literally paths or roads, such as we tread with our feet; and wanderings, such as a man makes when he loses himself in a desert, or roams from city to city—as Œdipus, the speaker of this verse, was destined to wander, blind and asking charity. What a picture does this line suggest of the mind as a wilderness of intricate paths, wide as the universe, which is here made its symbol; a world within a world which he who seeks some knowledge with respect to what he ought to do searches throughout, as he would search the external universe for some valued thing which was hidden from him upon its surface.'

In reading Shelley's poetry, we often find similar verses, resembling, but not imitating the Greek in this species of imagery; for, though he adopted the style, he gifted it with that originality of form and colouring which sprung from his own genius.

In the *Prometheus Unbound*, Shelley fulfils the promise quoted from a letter in the Note on the *Revolt of Islam*¹. The tone of

¹ While correcting the proof-sheets of that poem, it struck me that the poet had indulged in an exaggerated view of the evils of restored despotism; which, how-

the composition is calmer and more majestic, the poetry more perfect as a whole, and the imagination displayed at once more pleasingly beautiful and more varied and daring. The description of the Hours, as they are seen in the cave of Demogorgon, is an instance of this—it fills the mind as the most charming picture—we long to see an artist at work to bring to our view the

‘cars drawn by rainbow-wingèd
steeds
Which trample the dim winds: in
each there stands
A wild-eyed charioteer urging their
flight.
Some look behind, as fiends pur-
sued them there,
And yet I see no shapes but the
keen stars:
Others, with burning eyes, lean
forth, and drink
With eager lips the wind of their
own speed,
As if the thing they loved fled on
before,
And now, even now, they clasped
it. Their bright locks
Stream like a comet’s flashing hair:
they all
Sweep onward.’

ever injurious and degrading, were less openly sanguinary than the triumph of anarchy, such as it appeared in France at the close of the last century. But at this time a book, *Scenes of Spanish Life*, translated by Lieutenant Crawford from the German of Dr. Huber, of Rostock, fell into my hands. The account of the triumph of the priests and the serviles, after the French invasion of Spain in 1823, bears a strong and frightful resemblance to some of the descriptions of the massacre of the patriots in the *Revolt of Islam*.

Through the whole poem there reigns a sort of calm and holy spirit of love; it soothes the tortured, and is hope to the expectant, till the prophecy is fulfilled, and Love, untainted by any evil, becomes the law of the world.

England had been rendered a painful residence to Shelley, as much by the sort of persecution with which in those days all men of liberal opinions were visited, and by the injustice he had lately endured in the Court of Chancery, as by the symptoms of disease which make him regard a visit to Italy as necessary to prolong his life. An exile, and strongly impressed with the feeling that the majority of his countrymen regarded him with sentiments of aversion such as his own heart could experience towards none, he sheltered himself from such disgusting and painful thoughts in the calm retreats of poetry, and built up a world of his own—with the more pleasure, since he hoped to induce some one or two to believe that the earth might become such, did mankind themselves consent. The charm of the Roman climate helped to clothe his thoughts in greater beauty than they had ever worn before. And, as he wandered among the ruins made one with Nature in their decay, or gazed on the Praxitelean shapes that throng the Vatican, the Capitol, and the palaces of Rome, his soul imbibed forms of loveliness which became a portion of itself. There are many passages in the *Prometheus* which show the intense delight he received from such studies, and give back the impression with a beauty of poetical

description peculiarly his own. He felt this, as a poet must feel when he satisfies himself by the result of his labours; and he wrote from Rome, 'My *Prometheus Unbound* is just finished, and in a month or two I shall send it. It is a drama, with characters and mechanism of a kind

yet unattempted; and I think the execution is better than any of my former attempts.'

I may mention, for the information of the more critical reader, that the verbal alterations in this edition of *Prometheus* are made from a list of errata written by Shelley himself.

THE CENCI

A TRAGEDY IN FIVE ACTS

[Composed at Rome and near Leghorn (Villa Valsovano), May-August 8, 1819; published 1820 (spring) by C. & J. Ollier, London. This edition of two hundred and fifty copies was printed in Italy 'because,' writes Shelley to Peacock, Sept. 21, 1819, 'it costs, with all duties and freightage, about half what it would cost in London.' A Table of Errata in Mrs. Shelley's handwriting is printed by Forman in *The Shelley Library*, p. 91. A second edition, published by Ollier in 1821 (C. H. Reynell, printer), embodies the corrections indicated in this Table. No MS. of *The Cenci* is known to exist. Our text follows that of the second edition (1821); variations of the first (Italian) edition, the title-page of which bears date 1819, are given in the footnotes. The text of the *Poetical Works*, 1839, 1st and 2nd edd. (Mrs. Shelley), follows for the most part that of the *editio princeps* of 1819.]

DEDICATION, TO LEIGH HUNT, Esq.

MY DEAR FRIEND—I inscribe with your name, from a distant country, and after an absence whose months have seemed years, this the latest of my literary efforts.

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

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

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

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

All happiness attend you! Your affectionate friend,

PERCY B. SHELLEY.

ROME, May 29, 1819.

PREFACE

A MANUSCRIPT was communicated to me during my travels in Italy, which was copied from the archives of the Cenci Palace at Rome, and contains a detailed account of the horrors which ended in the extinction of one of the noblest and richest families of that city during the Pontificate of Clement VIII, in the year 1599. The story is, that an old man having spent his life in debauchery and wickedness, conceived at length an implacable hatred towards his children; which showed itself towards one daughter under the form of an incestuous passion, aggravated by every circumstance of cruelty and violence. This daughter, after long and vain attempts to escape from what she considered a perpetual contamination both of body and mind, at length plotted with her mother-in-law and brother to murder their common tyrant. The young maiden, who was urged to this tremendous deed by an impulse which overpowered its horror, was evidently a most gentle and amiable being, a creature formed to adorn and be admired, and thus violently thwarted from her nature by the necessity of circumstance and opinion. The deed was quickly discovered, and, in spite of the most earnest prayers made to the Pope by the highest persons in Rome, the criminals were put to death. The old man had during his life repeatedly bought his pardon from the Pope for capital crimes of the most enormous and unspeakable kind, at the price of a hundred thousand crowns; the

death therefore of his victims can scarcely be accounted for by the love of justice. The Pope, among other motives for severity, probably felt that whoever killed the Count Cenci deprived his treasury of a certain and copious source of revenue¹. Such a story, if told so as to present to the reader all the feelings of those who once acted it, their hopes and fears, their confidences and misgivings, their various interests, passions, and opinions, acting upon and with each other, yet all conspiring to one tremendous end, would be as a light to make apparent some of the most dark and secret caverns of the human heart.

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

¹ The Papal Government formerly took the most extraordinary precautions against the publicity of facts which offer so tragical a demonstration of its own wickedness and weakness; so that the communication of the MS. had become, until very lately, a matter of some difficulty.

picture of Beatrice which is preserved in the Colonna Palace, and my servant instantly recognized it as the portrait of *La Cenci*.

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

This story of the Cenci is indeed eminently fearful and monstrous: anything like a dry exhibition of it on the stage would be insupportable. The person who would treat such a subject must increase the ideal, and diminish the actual horror of the events, so that the pleasure which arises from the poetry which exists in these tempestuous sufferings and crimes may mitigate the pain of the contemplation of the moral deformity from which they spring. There must also be

nothing attempted to make the exhibition subservient to what is vulgarly termed a moral purpose. The highest moral purpose aimed at in the highest species of the drama, is the teaching the human heart, through its sympathies and antipathies, the knowledge of itself; in proportion to the possession of which knowledge, every human being is wise, just, sincere, tolerant and kind. If dogmas can do more, it is well: but a drama is no fit place for the enforcement of them. Undoubtedly, no person can be truly dishonoured by the act of another; and the fit return to make to the most enormous injuries is kindness and forbearance, and a resolution to convert the injurer from his dark passions by peace and love. Revenge, retaliation, atonement, are pernicious mistakes. If Beatrice had thought in this manner she would have been wiser and better; but she would never have been a tragic character: the few whom such an exhibition would have interested, could never have been sufficiently interested for a dramatic purpose, from the want of finding sympathy in their interest among the mass who surround them. It is, in the restless and anatomizing casuistry with which men seek the justification of Beatrice, yet feel that she has done what needs justification; it is in the superstitious horror with which they contemplate alike her wrongs and their revenge, that the dramatic character of what she did and suffered, consists.

I have endeavoured as nearly as possible to represent the characters as they probably were, and have sought to avoid the error

of making them actuated by my own conceptions of right or wrong, false or true: thus under a thin veil converting names and actions of the sixteenth century into cold impersonations of my own mind. They are represented as Catholics, and as Catholics deeply tinged with religion. To a Protestant apprehension there will appear something unnatural in the earnest and perpetual sentiment of the relations between God and men which pervade the tragedy of the Cenci. It will especially be startled at the combination of an undoubting persuasion of the truth of the popular religion with a cool and determined perseverance in enormous guilt. But religion in Italy is not, as in Protestant countries, a cloak to be worn on particular days; or a passport which those who do not wish to be railed at carry with them to exhibit; or a gloomy passion for penetrating the impenetrable mysteries of our being, which terrifies its possessor at the darkness of the abyss to the brink of which it has conducted him. Religion coexists, as it were, in the mind of an Italian Catholic, with a faith in that of which all men have the most certain knowledge. It is interwoven with the whole fabric of life. It is adoration, faith, submission, penitence, blind admiration; not a rule for moral conduct. It has no necessary connection with any one virtue. The most atrocious villain may be rigidly devout, and without any shock to established faith, confess himself to be so. Religion pervades intensely the whole frame of society, and is according to the

temper of the mind which it inhabits, a passion, a persuasion, an excuse, a refuge; never a check. Cenci himself built a chapel in the court of his Palace, and dedicated it to St. Thomas the Apostle, and established masses for the peace of his soul. Thus in the first scene of the fourth act Lucretia's design in exposing herself to the consequences of an expostulation with Cenci after having administered the opiate, was to induce him by a feigned tale to confess himself before death; this being esteemed by Catholics as essential to salvation; and she only relinquishes her purpose when she perceives that her perseverance would expose Beatrice to new outrages.

I have avoided with great care in writing this play the introduction of what is commonly called mere poetry, and I imagine there will scarcely be found a detached simile or a single isolated description, unless Beatrice's description of the chasm appointed for her father's murder should be judged to be of that nature¹.

In a dramatic composition the imagery and the passion should interpenetrate one another, the former being reserved simply for the full development and illustration of the latter. Imagination is as the immortal God which should assume flesh for the redemption of mortal passion. It is thus that the most remote and

¹ An idea in this speech was suggested by a most sublime passage in *El Purgatorio de San Patricio* of Calderon; the only plagiarism which I have intentionally committed in the whole piece.

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

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

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

The Cenci Palace is of great extent; and though in part modernized, there yet remains a vast and gloomy pile of feudal architecture in the same state as during the dreadful scenes which are the subject of this tragedy. The Palace is situated in an obscure corner of Rome, near the quarter of the Jews, and from the upper windows you see the immense ruins of Mount Palatine half hidden under their profuse overgrowth of trees. There is a court in one part of the Palace (perhaps that in which Cenci built

the Chapel to St. Thomas), supported by granite columns and adorned with antique friezes of fine workmanship, and built up, according to the ancient Italian fashion, with balcony over balcony of open-work. One of the gates of the Palace formed of immense

stones and leading through a passage, dark and lofty and opening into gloomy subterranean chambers, struck me particularly.

Of the Castle of Petrella, I could obtain no further information than that which is to be found in the manuscript.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

COUNT FRANCESCO CENCI.

GIACOMO, } *his Sons.*
BERNARDO, }

CARDINAL CAMILLO.

ORSINO, *a Prelate.*

SAVELLA, *the Pope's Legate.*

OLIMPIO, } *Assassins.*
MARZIO, }

ANDREA, *Servant to Cenci.*

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

LUCRETIA, *Wife of CENCI, and Step-mother of his children.*

BEATRICE, *his Daughter.*

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

TIME. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.*

Enter COUNT CENCI, and CARDINAL CAMILLO.

Camillo. That matter of the murder is hushed up
If you consent to yield his Holiness
Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.—
It needed all my interest in the conclave
To bend him to this point: he said that you 5
Bought perilous impunity with your gold;
That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded
Enriched the Church, and respited from hell
An erring soul which might repent and live:—
But that the glory and the interest 10
Of the high throne he fills, little consist
With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci. The third of my possessions—let it go! 15
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so! 20

13 *As ed.* 1821; *So edd.* 1819, 1839.

Henceforth no witness—not the lamp—shall see
 That which the vassal threatened to divulge
 Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
 The deed he saw could not have rated higher
 Than his most worthless life:—it angers me! 25
 Respited me from Hell!—So may the Devil
 Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
 And his most charitable nephews, pray
 That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
 Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy 30
 Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
 Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
 Of their revenue.—But much yet remains
 To which they show no title.

Camillo. Oh, Count Cenci!
 So much that thou mightst honourably live 35
 And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
 And with thy God, and with the offended world.
 How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
 Through those snow white and venerable hairs!—
 Your children should be sitting round you now, 40
 But that you fear to read upon their looks
 The shame and misery you have written there.
 Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
 Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
 Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you. 45
 Why is she barred from all society
 But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
 Talk with me, Count,—you know I mean you well
 I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
 Watching its bold and bad career, as men 50
 Watch meteors, but it vanished not—I marked
 Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
 Do I behold you in dishonoured age
 Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
 Yet I have ever hoped you would amend, 55
 And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci. For which Aldobrandino owes you now
 My fief beyond the Pincian.—Cardinal,
 One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
 And so we shall converse with less restraint. 60
 A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter—
 He was accustomed to frequent my house;
 So the next day *his* wife and daughter came
 And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
 I think they never saw him any more. 65

25 Than *ed.* 1839; That *edd.* 1819, 1821.
 1821; Respited from *edd.* 1819, 1839.

26 Respited me from *ed.*

Camillo. Thou execrable man, beware!—

Cenci. Of thee?

Nay this is idle:—We should know each other.
 As to my character for what men call crime
 Seeing I please my senses as I list,
 And vindicate that right with force or guile, 70
 It is a public matter, and I care not
 If I discuss it with you. I may speak
 Alike to you and my own conscious heart—
 For you give out that you have half reformed me,
 Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent 75
 If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
 All men delight in sensual luxury,
 All men enjoy revenge; and most exult
 Over the tortures they can never feel—
 Flattering their secret peace with others' pain. 80
 But I delight in nothing else. I love
 The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
 When this shall be another's, and that mine.
 And I have no remorse and little fear,
 Which are, I think, the checks of other men. 85
 This mood has grown upon me, until now
 Any design my captious fancy makes
 The picture of its wish, and it forms none
 But such as men like you would start to know,
 Is as my natural food and rest debarred 90
 Until it be accomplished.

Camillo. Art thou not
 Most miserable?

Cenci. Why, miserable?—
 No.—I am what your theologians call
 Hardened;—which they must be in impudence,
 So to revile a man's peculiar taste. 95
 True, I was happier than I am, while yet
 Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
 While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
 Invention palls:—Ay, we must all grow old—
 And but that there yet remains a deed to act 100
 Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
 Duller than mine—I'd do—I know not what.
 When I was young I thought of nothing else
 But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
 Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees, 105
 And I grew tired:—yet, till I killed a foe,
 And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
 Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
 Which now delights me little. I the rather

100 And but that *ed.* 1821; But that *edd.* 1819, 1839.

Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals, 110
 The dry fixed eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
 Which tell me that the spirit weeps within
 Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
 I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
 Like a strong prison, the soul within my power, 115
 Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
 For hourly pain.

Camillo. Hell's most abandoned fiend
 Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
 Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
 I thank my God that I believe you not. 120

Enter ANDREA.

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

Cenci. Bid him attend me in
 The grand saloon. [*Exit ANDREA.*]

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

Cenci. The third of my possessions! I must use 126
 Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,
 Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
 There came an order from the Pope to make
 Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons; 130
 Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
 Hoping some accident might cut them off;
 And meaning if I could to starve them there.
 I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
 Bernardo and my wife could not be worse 135
 If dead and damned:—then, as to Beatrice—

[*Looking around him suspiciously.*]
 I think they cannot hear me at that door;
 What if they should? And yet I need not speak
 Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
 O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear 140
 What now I think! Thou, pavement, which I tread
 Towards her chamber,—let your echoes talk
 Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
 But not of my intent!—Andrea!

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. My lord?

Cenci. Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber 145
 This evening:—no, at midnight and alone. [*Exeunt.*]

131 Whom I had *ed.* 1821; Whom I have *edd.* 1819, 1839. 140 that
 shalt *ed.* 1821; that shall *edd.* 1819, 1839.

SCENE II.—*A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter BEATRICE and ORSINO, as in conversation.*

Beatrice. Pervert not truth,

Orsino. You remember where we held
That conversation;—nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;—two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath 5
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

Orsino. You said you loved me then.

Beatrice. You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.

Orsino. I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry. 10
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?

Beatrice. As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation I have not; 15
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once 20
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might; 25
And so I swear a cold fidelity.

And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.—Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me 30
As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no! forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Sternier than else my nature might have been; 35
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,—but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure?

Orsino. All will be well.
Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice; 40
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill

24 And thus *edd.* 1821, 1839; And yet *ed.* 1819.

So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice. Your zeal for all I wish ;—Ah me, you are cold !
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (*aside*) Alas !
Weak and deserted creature that I am, 45
Here I stand bickering with my only friend ! [*To ORSINO.*
This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino ; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks 50
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees :
Great God ! that such a father should be mine !
But there is mighty preparation made, 55
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady ! She expects some happy change 60
In his dark spirit from this act ; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition :
Till when—farewell.

Orsino. Farewell. (*Exit BEATRICE.*) I know the Pope
Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow
But by absolving me from the revenue 65
Of many a wealthy see ; and, Beatrice,
I think to win thee at an easier rate.
Nor shall he read her eloquent petition :
He might bestow her on some poor relation
Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister, 70
And I should be debarred from all access.
Then as to what she suffers from her father,
In all this there is much exaggeration :—
Old men are testy and will have their way ;
A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal, 75
And live a free life as to wine or women,
And with a peevish temper may return
To a dull home, and rate his wife and children ;
Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.
I shall be well content if on my conscience 80
There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer
From the devices of my love—a net
From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear
Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,
Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve 85
And lay me bare, and make me blush to see
My hidden thoughts.—Ah, no ! A friendless girl

Who clings to me, as to her only hope :—
 I were a fool, not less than if a panther
 Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,
 If she escape me. 90
[Exit.]

SCENE III.—*A Magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet.*
Enter CENCI, LUCRETIA, BEATRICE, ORSINO, CAMILLO,
NOBLES.

Cenci. Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
 Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
 Whose presence honours our festivity.
 I have too long lived like an anchorite,
 And in my absence from your merry meetings 5
 An evil word is gone abroad of me;
 But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
 When you have shared the entertainment here,
 And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
 And we have pledged a health or two together, 10
 Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
 Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
 But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

First Guest. In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
 Too sprightly and companionable a man, 15
 To act the deeds that rumour pins on you.
(To his Companion.) I never saw such blithe and open cheer
 In any eye!

Second Guest. Some most desired event,
 In which we all demand a common joy,
 Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count. 20

Cenci. It is indeed a most desired event.
 If, when a parent from a parent's heart
 Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
 A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
 And when he rises up from dreaming it; 25
 One supplication, one desire, one hope,
 That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
 Even all that he demands in their regard—
 And suddenly beyond his dearest hope 30
 It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
 And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
 And task their love to grace his merriment,—
 Then honour me thus far—for I am he.

Beatrice (to LUCRETIA). Great God! How horrible! Some
 dreadful ill
 Must have befallen my brothers.

Lucretia. Fear not, Child, 35
 He speaks too frankly.

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

Cenci. Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God! 40

I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons

Are dead!—Why, dead!—What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead; 45

And they will need no food or raiment more:
The tapers that did light them the dark way

Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.

Rejoice with me—my heart is wondrous glad. 50

[*LUCRETIA sinks, half fainting; BEATRICE supports her.*]

Beatrice. It is not true!—Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,

He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

Cenci. Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call 55
To witness that I speak the sober truth;—

And whose most favouring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco

Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy, 60

The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,

Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;

Which shows that Heaven has special care of me. 65
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark

The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:

Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.
[*The Assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.*]

First Guest. Oh, horrible! I will depart—

Second Guest. And I.—

Third Guest. No, stay! 70

I do believe it is some jest; though faith!
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.

I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado;

'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay! 75
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

Cenci (*filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up*). Oh, thou
bright wine whose purple splendour leaps

And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl

Under the lamplight, as my spirits do,
 To hear the death of my accursèd sons! 80
 Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
 Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
 And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
 Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
 Climb with swift wings after their children's souls, 85
 And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
 Now triumphs in my triumph!—But thou art
 Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
 And I will taste no other wine to-night.
 Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest (rising). Thou wretch! 90
 Will none among this noble company
 Check the abandoned villain?

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

Second Guest. Seize, silence him!

First Guest. I will!

Third Guest. And I!

Cenci (addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture).
 Who moves? Who speaks?

(turning to the Company)
 'tis nothing, 95

Enjoy yourselves.—Beware! For my revenge
 Is as the sealed commission of a king
 That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.]

Beatrice. I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
 What, although tyranny and impious hate 100
 Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
 What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
 Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
 The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
 His children and his wife, whom he is bound 105
 To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
 No refuge in this merciless wide world?
 O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
 First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,
 Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O think! 110
 I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
 Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
 Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
 Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
 Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears 115
 To soften him, and when this could not be
 I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights

And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
 Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
 I have still borne,—until I meet you here, 120
 Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
 Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
 His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
 Ye may soon share such merriment again
 As fathers make over their children's graves. 125
 O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,
 Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,
 Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,
 Take us away!

Cenci. (*He has been conversing with CAMILLO during the first part of BEATRICE'S speech; he hears the conclusion, and now advances.*) I hope my good friends here
 Will think of their own daughters—or perhaps 130
 Of their own throats—before they lend an ear
 To this wild girl.

Beatrice (*not noticing the words of Cenci*). Dare no one
 look on me?

None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
 The sense of many best and wisest men?
 Or is it that I sue not in some form 135
 Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
 O God! That I were buried with my brothers!
 And that the flowers of this departed spring
 Were fading on my grave! And that my father
 Were celebrating now one feast for all! 140

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

Colonna. Nothing that I see.
 Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
 Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal. And I.

Cenci. Retire to your chamber, insolent girl! 145

Beatrice. Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
 Where never eye can look upon thee more!
 Wouldst thou have honour and obedience
 Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
 Though thou mayst overbear this company, 150
 But ill must come of ill.—Frown not on me!
 Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
 My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
 Cover thy face from every living eye,
 And start if thou but hear a human step: 155
 Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
 Bow thy white head before offended God,

And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cenci. My friends, I do lament this insane girl 160
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.

Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.

Another time.— [*Exeunt all but CENCI and BEATRICE.*

My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine! [*To BEATRICE.*

Thou painted viper! 165
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!

I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight! [*Exit BEATRICE.*

Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must; 170
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.—

[*Drinking the wine.*

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy; 175

As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear! [*Exit.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter
LUCRETIA and BERNARDO.*

Lucretia. Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.

O God, Almighty, do Thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only Thee! 5
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

Bernardo. O more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep! 10

Lucretia. Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter BEATRICE.

Beatrice (in a hurried voice). Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?

Ah, no! that is his step upon the stairs;
 'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
 Mother, if I to thee have ever been 15
 A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
 Whose image upon earth a father is,
 Dost Thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
 The door is opening now; I see his face;
 He frowns on others, but he smiles on me, 20
 Even as he did after the feast last night.

Enter a Servant.

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

Servant. My master bids me say, the Holy Father
 Has sent back your petition thus unopened. [*Giving a paper.*
 And he demands at what hour 'twere secure 26
 To visit you again?

Lucretia. At the Ave Mary. [*Exit Servant.*
 So, daughter, our last hope has failed; Ah me!
 How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
 Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation, 30
 As if one thought were over strong for you:
 Your eyes have a chill glare; O, dearest child!
 Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

Beatrice. You see I am not mad: I speak to you.

Lucretia. You talked of something that your father did 35
 After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
 Than when he smiled, and cried, 'My sons are dead!'
 And every one looked in his neighbour's face
 To see if others were as white as he?
 At the first word he spoke I felt the blood 40
 Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
 And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
 Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
 Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
 The devil was rebuked that lives in him. 45
 Until this hour thus have you ever stood
 Between us and your father's moody wrath
 Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
 Has been our only refuge and defence:
 What can have thus subdued it? What can now 50
 Have given you that cold melancholy look,
 Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

Beatrice. What is it that you say? I was just thinking
 'Twere better not to struggle any more.

Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody, 55
 Yet never—Oh! Before worse comes of it
 'Twere wise to die: it ends in that at last.

Lucretia. Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
 What did your father do or say to you?
 He stayed not after that accursèd feast 60
 One moment in your chamber.—Speak to me.

Bernardo. Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

Beatrice (*speaking very slowly with a forced calmness*). It
 was one word, Mother, one little word;
 One look, one smile. (*Wildly.*) Oh! He has trampled me
 Under his feet, and made the blood stream down 65
 My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
 Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
 Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
 And we have eaten.—He has made me look
 On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust 70
 Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
 And I have never yet despaired—but now!
 What could I say? [*Recovering herself.*]

Ah, no! 'tis nothing new.

The sufferings we all share have made me wild:
 He only struck and cursed me as he passed; 75
 He said, he looked, he did;—nothing at all
 Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
 Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
 I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucretia. Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl, 80
 If any one despairs it should be I
 Who loved him once, and now must live with him
 Till God in pity call for him or me.
 For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
 And smile, years hence, with children round your knees; 85
 Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil
 Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatrice. Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
 Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
 Did you not shield me and that dearest boy? 90
 And had we any other friend but you
 In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
 To win our father not to murder us?
 And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
 Of my dead Mother plead against my soul 95
 If I abandon her who filled the place
 She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!

Bernardo. And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
 I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
 Even though the Pope should make me free to live 100

In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother!

Lucretia. My dear, dear children!

Enter CENCI, suddenly.

Cenci. What, Beatrice here!
Come hither! [*She shrinks back, and covers her face.*

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair; 105
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow

On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you—but in vain. 110

Beatrice (wildly, staggering towards the door). O that the
earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cenci. Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you—from this day and hour 115

Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber! 120
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother,

[*To BERNARDO.*

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate!

[*Exeunt BEATRICE and BERNARDO.*

(*Aside.*) So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.—'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive: 125
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in . . .
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

Lucretia (advancing timidly towards him). O husband! Pray
forgive poor Beatrice.

She meant not any ill.

Cenci. Nor you perhaps? 130

Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote
Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?

Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred
Enmity up against me with the Pope?

Whom in one night merciful God cut off: 135

Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.

You were not here conspiring? You said nothing

Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;

Or be condemned to death for some offence,

And you would be the witnesses?—This failing, 140
 How just it were to hire assassins, or
 Put sudden poison in my evening drink?
 Or smother me when overcome by wine?
 Seeing we had no other judge but God,
 And He had sentenced me, and there were none 145
 But you to be the executioners
 Of His decree enregistered in Heaven?
 Oh, no! You said not this?

Lucretia. So help me God,
 I never thought the things you charge me with!
Cenci. If you dare speak that wicked lie again 150
 I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
 That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
 You did not hope to stir some enemies
 Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
 What every nerve of you now trembles at? 155
 You judged that men were bolder than they are;
 Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

Lucretia. Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
 I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
 Nor do I think she designed any thing 160
 Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cenci. Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
 But I will take you where you may persuade
 The stones you tread on to deliver you:
 For men shall there be none but those who dare 165
 All things—not question that which I command.
 On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
 That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
 'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
 Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers 170
 Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
 What might make dumb things speak.—Why do you linger?
 Make speediest preparation for the journey! [*Exit* LUCRETIA.
 The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
 A busy stir of men about the streets; 175
 I see the bright sky through the window panes:
 It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
 Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
 And every little corner, nook, and hole
 Is penetrated with the insolent light. 180
 Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
 And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
 A deed which shall confound both night and day?
 'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
 Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven 185
 She shall not dare to look upon its beams;

Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night;
 The act I think shall soon extinguish all
 For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
 Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air, 190
 Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
 In which I walk secure and unbeheld
 Towards my purpose.—Would that it were done! [*Exit.*]

SCENE II.—*A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter CAMILLO
 and GIACOMO, in conversation.*

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

Giacomo. Nothing more? Alas!
 Bare must be the provision which strict law
 Awards, and agèd, sullen avarice pays. 5
 Why did my father not apprentice me
 To some mechanic trade? I should have then
 Been trained in no highborn necessities
 Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
 The eldest son of a rich nobleman 10
 Is heir to all his incapacities;
 He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
 Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
 From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
 An hundred servants, and six palaces, 15
 To that which nature doth indeed require?—

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

Giacomo. 'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
 Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
 Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father 20
 Without a bond or witness to the deed:
 And children, who inherit her fine senses,
 The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
 And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
 Do you not think the Pope would interpose 25
 And stretch authority beyond the law?

Camillo. Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
 The Pope will not divert the course of law.
 After that impious feast the other night
 I spoke with him, and urged him then to check 30
 Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
 'Children are disobedient, and they sting
 Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
 Requiring years of care with contumely.
 I pity the Count Cenci from my heart; 35

His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
 And thus he is exasperated to ill.
 In the great war between the old and young
 I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
 Will keep at least blameless neutrality.'

40

Enter ORSINO.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

Orsino. What words?

Giacomo. Alas, repeat them not again!
 There then is no redress for me, at least
 None but that which I may achieve myself,
 Since I am driven to the brink.—But, say,
 My innocent sister and my only brother
 Are dying underneath my father's eye.

45

The memorable torturers of this land,
 Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
 Never inflicted on the meanest slave

50

What these endure; shall they have no protection?

Camillo. Why, if they would petition to the Pope
 I see not how he could refuse it—yet
 He holds it of most dangerous example
 In aught to weaken the paternal power,
 Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.

55

I pray you now excuse me. I have business
 That will not bear delay.

[Exit CAMILLO.]

Giacomo. But you, Orsino,
 Have the petition: wherefore not present it?

Orsino. I have presented it, and backed it with
 My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
 It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
 But that the strange and execrable deeds
 Alleged in it—in truth they might well baffle
 Any belief—have turned the Pope's displeasure
 Upon the accusers from the criminal:
 So I should guess from what Camillo said.

65

Giacomo. My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
 Has whispered silence to his Holiness:
 And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
 What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
 For he who is our murderous persecutor
 Is shielded by a father's holy name,
 Or I would—

70

[Stops abruptly.]

Orsino. What? Fear not to speak your thought.
 Words are but holy as the deeds they cover:
 A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
 A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;

75

77 makes Truth *ed.* 1821; makes the truth *edd.* 1819, 1839.

A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
 But as the mantle of some selfish guile ;
 A father who is all a tyrant seems, 80
 Were the profaner for his sacred name.

Giacomo. Ask me not what I think ; the unwilling brain
 Feigns often what it would not ; and we trust
 Imagination with such phantasies
 As the tongue dares not fashion into words, 85
 Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
 To the mind's eye.—My heart denies itself
 To think what you demand.

Orsino. But a friend's bosom
 Is as the inmost cave of our own mind
 Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day, 90
 And from the all-communicating air.
 You look what I suspected—

Giacomo. Spare me now !
 I am as one lost in a midnight wood,
 Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
 The path across the wilderness, lest he, 95
 As my thoughts are, should be—a murderer.
 I know you are my friend, and all I dare
 Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
 But now my heart is heavy, and would take
 Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care. 100
 Pardon me, that I say farewell—farewell !
 I would that to my own suspected self
 I could address a word so full of peace.

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

[*Exit GIACOMO.*]

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo 105
 To feed his hope with cold encouragement :
 It fortunately serves my close designs
 That 'tis a trick of this same family
 To analyse their own and other minds.
 Such self-anatomy shall teach the will 110
 Dangerous secrets : for it tempts our powers,
 Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
 Into the depth of darkest purposes :
 So Cenci fell into the pit ; even I,
 Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself, 115
 And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
 Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
 To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
 As little mischief as I can ; that thought
 Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(*After a pause.*) Now what harm 120
 If Cenci should be murdered ?—Yet, if murdered,

Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
 The profit, yet omit the sin and peril
 In such an action? Of all earthly things
 I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words; 125
 And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
 His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
 If a priest wins her.—Oh, fair Beatrice!
 Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
 Could but despise danger and gold and all 130
 That frowns between my wish and its effect,
 Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape . . .
 Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
 And follows me to the resort of men,
 And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams, 135
 So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
 And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
 My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
 But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
 Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably 140
 I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
 Till weak imagination half possesses
 The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
 Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
 From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo 145
 I must work out my own dear purposes.
 I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
 Her father dead; her brother bound to me
 By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
 Her mother scared and unexpostulating 150
 From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
 And she!—Once more take courage, my faint heart;
 What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
 I have such foresight as assures success:
 Some unbeheld divinity doth ever, 155
 When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
 To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
 Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
 But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
 Its empire and its prey of other hearts 160
 Till it become his slave . . . as I will do. [*Exit.*]

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.* LUCRETIA,
to her enter BEATRICE.

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

Lucretia. My sweet child,
You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew
That starts from your dear brow . . . Alas! Alas! 5
What has befallen?

Beatrice. How comes this hair undone?
Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,
And yet I tied it fast.—O, horrible!
The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls
Spin round! I see a woman weeping there, 10
And standing calm and motionless, whilst I
Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God!
The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!
The sunshine on the floor is black! The air
Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe 15
In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps
A clinging, black, contaminating mist
About me . . . 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,
I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues
My fingers and my limbs to one another, 20
And eats into my sinews, and dissolves
My flesh to a pollution, poisoning
The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!
My God! I never knew what the mad felt
Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt! 25
(More wildly.) No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! (A pause.)
What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here 30
O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart!
O, world! O, life! O, day! O, misery!

Lucretia. What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away 35
The source from which it sprung . . .

Beatrice (frantically). Like Parricide . . .
Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine . . . O, God! What thing am I?

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

Beatrice (doubtfully). Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.

40

(Aside.) She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me, It is a piteous office. [*To LUCRETIA, in a slow, subdued voice.*

Do you know

I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;

45

At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be!

50

Horrible things have been in this wide world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed

55

As . . . [*Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.*

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

Lucretia. Oh!

My sweet child, know you . . .

Beatrice. Yet speak it not:

For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.

60

Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am . . . [*Her voice dies away faintly.*

65

Lucretia. Alas! What has befallen thee, child?

What has thy father done?

Beatrice. What have I done?

Am I not innocent? Is it my crime

70

That one with white hair, and imperious brow,
Who tortured me from my forgotten years,
As parents only dare, should call himself

My father, yet should be!—Oh, what am I?
What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?
What retrospects, outliving even despair?

75

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

We know that death alone can make us free;

His death or ours. But what can he have done

Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?

80

Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth
A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,
Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine
With one another.

Beatrice. 'Tis the restless life
Tortured within them. If I try to speak 85
I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;
What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make
The thing that I have suffered but a shadow
In the dread lightning which avenges it;
Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying 90
The consequence of what it cannot cure.
Some such thing is to be endured or done:
When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now!—O blood, which art my father's blood, 95
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above 100
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucretia. It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief 105
Thy sufferings from my fear.

Beatrice. I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me: I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up 110
In its own formless horror: of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery: if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die, 115
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved?

Lucretia. The peace of innocence;
Till in your season you be called to heaven. 120
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down
The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatrice. Ay, death . . . 125
 The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
 Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
 If I must live day after day, and keep
 These limbs, the unworthy temple of Thy spirit,
 As a foul den from which what Thou abhorrest 130
 May mock Thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be!
 Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,
 For Thy decree yawns like a Hell between
 Our will and it:—O! In this mortal world
 There is no vindication and no law 135
 Which can adjudge and execute the doom
 Of that through which I suffer.

Enter ORSINO.

(She approaches him solemnly.) Welcome, Friend!
 I have to tell you that, since last we met,
 I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
 That neither life nor death can give me rest. 140
 Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
 Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

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

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

Orsino. It cannot be . . .

Beatrice. What it can be, or not, 145
 Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
 Advise me how it shall not be again.
 I thought to die; but a religious awe
 Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
 Might be no refuge from the consciousness 150
 Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!
Orsino. Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
 Avenge thee.

Beatrice. Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
 If I could find a word that might make known
 The crime of my destroyer; and that done, 155
 My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
 Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare
 So that my unpolluted fame should be
 With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
 A mock, a byword, an astonishment:— 160
 If this were done, which never shall be done,
 Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
 And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
 Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
 Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped 165
 In hideous hints . . . Oh, most assured redress!

140 nor ed. 1821; or edd. 1819, 1839 (1st).

Orsino. You will endure it then?

Beatrice. Endure?—Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.

[Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.

Ay,

All must be suddenly resolved and done.

What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other? 170

Orsino. Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayst become 175
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

Beatrice (to herself). Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow? Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter! [She retires absorbed in thought.

Lucretia. If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . . 180

Orsino. Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs
Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime . . .

Lucretia. But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power? 185
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make 190
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

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

Lucretia. How? 195
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not . . . but I think it might be good
To . . .

Orsino. Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her 200
Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel . . .

Lucretia. For we cannot hope

That aid, or retribution, or resource
 Will arise thence, where every other one 205
 Might find them with less need. [BEATRICE advances.

Orsino.

Then . . .

Beatrice.

Peace, Orsino!

And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
 That you put off, as garments overworn,
 Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
 And all the fit restraints of daily life, 210
 Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
 Would be a mockery to my holier plea.

As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
 Which, though it be expressionless, is such
 As asks atonement; both for what is past, 215

And lest I be reserved, day after day,
 To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
 And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
 To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
 And have unravelled my entangled will, 220
 And have at length determined what is right.
 Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
 Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Orsino.

I swear

To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
 My silence, and whatever else is mine, 225
 To thy commands.

Lucretia.

You think we should devise

His death?

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

Orsino. And yet most cautious.

Lucretia.

For the jealous laws

Would punish us with death and infamy 230
 For that which it became themselves to do.

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

Orsino.

I know two dull, fierce outlaws,

Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
 Would trample out, for any slight caprice, 235
 The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
 Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
 What we now want.

Lucretia.

To-morrow before dawn,

Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
 Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines. 240
 If he arrive there . . .

Beatrice.

He must not arrive.

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

Lucretia. The sun will scarce be set.

Beatrice. But I remember
Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow, 245
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony 250
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life; yet clinging, leans;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall: beneath this crag 255
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow, 260
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night. 265

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

Beatrice. What sound is that?

Lucretia. Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly 270
Returned . . . Make some excuse for being here.

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

[*Exeunt* LUCRETIA and BEATRICE.]

Orsino. What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks 275
As to what brought me hither: let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile.

Enter GIACOMO, *in a hurried manner.*

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

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

Orsino. Great God! 280
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

Giacomo. Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,
But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe: 285
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories 290
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee, 295
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?

Orsino. Be calm, dear friend.

Giacomo. Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me, 300
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my raggèd babes, 305
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together 310
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us 315
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined
A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw 320
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again; 325

Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
 My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
 'Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
 What you in one night squander were enough
 For months!' I looked, and saw that home was hell. 330
 And to that hell will I return no more
 Until mine enemy has rendered up
 Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
 I will, reversing Nature's law . . .

Orsino. Trust me,
 The compensation which thou seekest here 335
 Will be denied.

Giacomo. Then . . . Are you not my friend?
 Did you not hint at the alternative,
 Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
 The other day when we conversed together?
 My wrongs were then less. That word parricide, 340
 Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

Orsino. It must be fear itself, for the bare word
 Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
 Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
 So sanctifying it: what you devise 345
 Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giacomo. Is he dead?

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

Giacomo. What outrage?

Orsino. That she speaks not, but you may
 Conceive such half conjectures as I do, 350
 From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
 Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
 And her severe unmodulated voice,
 Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
 From this; that whilst her step-mother and I, 355
 Bewildered in our horror, talked together
 With obscure hints; both self-misunderstood
 And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
 Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
 She interrupted us, and with a look 360
 Which told before she spoke it, he must die: . . .

Giacomo. It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
 There is a higher reason for the act
 Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
 A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice, 365
 Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
 Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
 A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
 With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom

Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
 Did not destroy each other! Is there made
 Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
 Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
 Till he return, and stab him at the door?

Orsino. Not so; some accident might interpose
 To rescue him from what is now most sure;
 And you are unprovided where to fly,
 How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
 All is contrived; success is so assured
 That . . .

Enter BEATRICE.

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

Giacomo. My sister, my lost sister!

Beatrice. Lost indeed! 381

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
 That you conjecture things too horrible
 To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
 He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know 385
 That then thou hast consented to his death.

Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
 Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
 And all things that make tender hardest hearts
 Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell. 390
 [*Exeunt severally.*]

SCENE II.—*A mean Apartment in GIACOMO'S House.*

GIACOMO alone.

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

[*Thunder, and the sound of a storm.*]

What! can the everlasting elements
 Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
 Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
 On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep: 5
 They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
 But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
 Be just which is most necessary. O,
 Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire
 Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge 10
 Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
 Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
 Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
 Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
 As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks 15
 Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
 But that no power can fill with vital oil

That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
 Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold :
 It is the form that moulded mine that sinks 20
 Into the white and yellow spasms of death :
 It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
 In God's immortal likeness which now stands
 Naked before Heaven's judgement seat! [A bell strikes.

One! Two!

The hours crawl on; and when my hairs are white, 25
 My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
 Tortured between just hate and vain remorse ;
 Chiding the tardy messenger of news
 Like those which I expect. I almost wish
 He be not dead, although my wrongs are great ; 30
 Yet . . . 'tis Orsino's step . . .

Enter ORSINO.

Speak!

Orsino. I am come
 To say he has escaped.

Giacomo. Escaped!

Orsino. And safe
 Within Petrella. He passed by the spot
 Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

Giacomo. Are we the fools of such contingencies? 35
 And do we waste in blind misgivings thus
 The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,
 Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter
 With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth
 Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done 40
 But my repentance.

Orsino. See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo. If no remorse is ours when the dim air
 Has drank this innocent flame, why should we quail
 When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits
 See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever? 45
 No, I am hardened.

Orsino. Why, what need of this?
 Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
 In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
 Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
 But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark. 50

Giacomo (lighting the lamp). And yet once quenched I cannot
 thus relume

My father's life: do you not think his ghost
 Might plead that argument with God?

Orsino. Once gone
 You cannot now recall your sister's peace ;
 Your own extinguished years of youth and hope ; 55

Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor . . .

Giacomo. O, speak no more!
I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it. 60

Orsino. There is no need of that. Listen: you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year 65
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

Giacomo. I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Orsino. Marzio's hate 70
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giacomo. Only to talk?

Orsino. The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour 75
May memorize their flight with death: ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end . . .

Giacomo. Listen! What sound is that?

Orsino. The house-dog moans, and the beams crack: nought
else.

Giacomo. It is my wife complaining in her sleep: 80
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

Orsino. Whilst he 85
Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

Giacomo. If e'er he wakes
Again, I will not trust to hireling hands . . .

Orsino. Why, that were well. I must be gone; good-night.
When next we meet—may all be done!

Giacomo. And all 91
Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been! [Exeunt.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

91 may all be done! GIACOMO: And all *ed.* 1821; GIACOMO: May all be
done, and all *ed.* 1819.

ACT IV

SCENE I.—*An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella.*
Enter CENCI.

Cenci. She comes not; yet I left her even now
 Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
 Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
 Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
 Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome? 5
 Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
 Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain
 Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
 Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
 What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will 10
 Which by its own consent shall stoop as low
 As that which drags it down.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Thou loathèd wretch!
 Hide thee from my abhorrence: fly, begone!
 Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia. Oh,
 Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake 15
 Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
 Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
 Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
 And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
 As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell, 20
 Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
 In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
 To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cenci. What! like her sister who has found a home
 To mock my hate from with prosperity? 25
 Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
 And all that yet remain. My death may be
 Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
 Bid her come hither, and before my mood
 Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair. 30

Lucretia. She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
 She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
 And in that trance she heard a voice which said,
 'Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
 Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear 35
 If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
 Harden his dying heart!'

Cenci. Why—such things are . . .

No doubt divine revealings may be made.
 'Tis plain I have been favoured from above, 39
 For when I cursed my sons they died.—Ay . . . so . . .
 As to the right or wrong, that's talk . . . repentance . . .
 Repentance is an easy moment's work
 And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .
 I must give up the greater point, which was
 To poison and corrupt her soul.

[A pause; LUCRETIA approaches anxiously, and
 then shrinks back as he speaks.

One, two; 45

Ay . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
 Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
 Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
 Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
 Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo, 50
 He is so innocent, I will bequeath
 The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
 The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
 Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
 When all is done, out in the wide Campagna, 55
 I will pile up my silver and my gold;
 My costly robes, paintings and tapestries;
 My parchments and all records of my wealth,
 And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
 Of my possessions nothing but my name; 60
 Which shall be an inheritance to strip
 Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
 My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign
 Into the hands of him who wielded it;
 Be it for its own punishment or theirs, 65
 He will not ask it of me till the lash
 Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
 Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
 Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
 Short work and sure . . . [Going.

Lucretia. (Stops him.) Oh, stay! It was a feint: 70
 She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
 I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci. That is well.
 Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
 Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
 For Beatrice worse terrors are in store 75
 To bend her to my will.

Lucretia. Oh! to what will?
 What cruel sufferings more than she has known
 Canst thou inflict?

Cenci. Andrea! Go call my daughter,

And if she comes not tell her that I come.
 What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step, 80
 Through infamies unheard of among men:
 She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
 Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
 One among which shall be . . . What? Canst thou guess?
 She shall become (for what she most abhors 85
 Shall have a fascination to entrap
 Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
 All she appears to others; and when dead,
 As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
 A rebel to her father and her God, 90
 Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
 Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
 Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
 Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
 Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin. 95

Enter ANDREA.

Andrea. The Lady Beatrice . . .

Cenci. Speak, pale slave! What
 Said she?

Andrea. My Lord, 'twas what she looked; she said:
 'Go tell my father that I see the gulf
 Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,
 I will not.'

[Exit ANDREA.

Cenci. Go thou quick, Lucretia, 100
 Tell her to come; yet let her understand
 Her coming is consent: and say, moreover,
 That if she come not I will curse her. *[Exit LUCRETIA.*

Ha!

With what but with a father's curse doth God
 Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale 105
 Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
 Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
 Be he who asks even what men call me.
 Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
 Awe her before I speak? For I on them 110
 Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came.

Enter LUCRETIA.

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

Lucretia. She said, 'I cannot come;
 Go tell my father that I see a torrent
 Of his own blood raging between us.'

Cenci (kneeling). God!
 Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh, 115
 Which Thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
 This particle of my divided being;

Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
 Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
 Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant 120
 To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
 Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
 If nursed by Thy selectest dew of love
 Such virtues blossom in her as should make
 The peace of life, I pray Thee for my sake, 125
 As Thou the common God and Father art
 Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
 Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
 Poison, until she be encrusted round
 With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head 130
 The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
 Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
 Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
 To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
 Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes 135
 With thine own blinding beams!

Lucretia. Peace! Peace!

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.

When high God grants He punishes such prayers.

Cenci (leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven).

He does His will, I mine! This in addition,
 That if she have a child . . .

Lucretia. Horrible thought! 140

Cenci. That if she ever have a child; and thou,
 Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
 That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
 And multiply, fulfilling his command, 145
 And my deep imprecation! May it be
 A hideous likeness of herself, that as
 From a distorting mirror, she may see
 Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
 Smiling upon her from her nursing breast. 150
 And that the child may from its infancy
 Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
 Turning her mother's love to misery:
 And that both she and it may live until
 It shall repay her care and pain with hate, 155
 Or what may else be more unnatural.
 So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
 Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
 Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
 Before my words are chronicled in Heaven. [*Exit* LUCRETIA. 160
 I do not feel as if I were a man,
 But like a fiend appointed to chastise
 The offences of some unremembered world.