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THE POETICAL WORKS OF

JOHN KEATS

REPRINTED FROM THE ORIGINAL EDITIONS WITH NOTES

BY

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Quae Tibi, quae tali reddam pro carmine dona? nam neque me tantum venientis sibilus austri, nec percussa iuvant fluctu tam litora, nec quae saxosas inter decurrunt flumina valles.

COPIOUSNESS in exquisite detail, perpetual freshness of phrase, characterize all the poetry of Keats, and in the work of his earlier days are generally more conspicuous than unity of interest or perfection of form; —qualities which, (as, perhaps, with Shakespeare), his imaginative wealth of mind,—*aurea facilitas*,—prevented him from acquiring until first youth was over. Keats is hence a poet especially fit to be read, as the bee tastes the flower, a little at a time, and in those pleasant places which he loves and describes so well : —He is a companion for the fortunate moments of travel or the country :—the

latis otia fundis, speluncae vivique lacus,

are his natural landscape, the stage and the scenery in presence of which he, in the fullest measure, adds happiness to happiness. And it is for such times, and such sympathetic readers, that this little volume has been planned; no edition handy for the purpose being at present easily attainable.

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Keats was not only among the most spontaneous of our poets; in his regard for his own art, for its own art's sake, he appears also to have been eminent. He certainly revised his three little volumes, (not reprinted till long after his death), with great care, following certain rules of his own, as every finely-gifted Poet will, in order to express and aid his rhythm by his punctuation and arrangement. On this ground, therefore, it seemed to me worth while to reproduce exactly the rare original texts ; and also, as a little tribute of affectionate honour to one, who, through the story of his brief life, and the character revealed in his poems and letters, is invested with a personal interest and attraction perhaps beyond any in the noble army of our Poets. Every line has therefore been thrice collated with the primary issues; My printers have aided with their well-known accuracy :-- the fault is probably with me, if the reproduction be, anywhere, imperfect. And, as such a facsimile has also a bibliographical interest, variations in spelling,-even a few trifling errors or omissions, -have been strictly followed.

If, however, the text here given is, on this last account, not absolutely what Keats, had he lived, might have finally left us, it is incomparably nearer to his Autotype than that which, in the ordinary editions, has hitherto been accepted. So vast a number of deviations, great and small, and (in the large majority of instances) injurious, from the Author's own published words, was brought before me in the process of collation, that Keats, I may without exaggeration say, cannot be truly read, as he has, hitherto, been generally accessible.

My scheme being to reprint the poetry which bore the sanction of the poet's own *imprimatur*, it may be

asked on what principle a few pieces, left in manuscript, (but the absence of which most readers, I think, would have regretted), have been here diffidently added? No rigid law can be laid down, perhaps, upon this difficult problem, except that it is treason to the dead to publish, (unless for purposes of historical truth), anything discreditable to the living man. The rule which, ordinarily, seems to me the safest and best,-to insert only what is altogether, or fairly, on a level with the Poet's best work,-I have here endeavoured to follow. And, in the case of Keats, it is in favour of this canon that his hasty, tentative, or simply personal verse is, generally, much inferior, (except in those isolated phrases which so great a genius could not, as it were, escape), to his finished efforts ;---and that we have, also, reasonable grounds to infer that he himself printed what he thought worthy of publication.

In the Notes, beside a few simply exegetical, my wish has been, avoiding the ambitious attempt at an Essay on Keats, to elucidate the rapid, yet gradual, development of his powers. Here, by frequent reference to his beautiful Letters, I have endeavoured to make the Poet his own interpreter :---and I allow myself the hope, that few readers will find these quotations too lengthy. For the rest, in so small a volume, I have thought it wisest to consult little and use less of what has been supplied by previous commentaries and essays upon Keats ;- including here two recent critical editions, announced and published after I had framed the plan of this book. And, as its object is different, mine will, I hope, be found to compete only in the common aim of extending the high permanent pleasure and profit, which it is the peculiar privilege of Poetry such as this to confer upon mankind.

A drawing by the great and tender-souled Flaxman, illustrative of the *Oedipus at Colonos* of Sophocles, has been reproduced for the Vignette :—the motive, though not wholly identical with that of the magnificent introduction to *Hyperion*, appearing sufficiently near it to enable me to please myself by prefacing Keats with a design which is so much in harmony with his own art, in point of grandeur and of beauty.

F. T. P. August, 1884

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[PUBLISHED 1817]

Poems,

BY

JOHN KEATS.

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"What more felicity can fall to creature, "Than to enjoy delight with liberty." Fate of the Butterfly.—SPENSER.

DEDICATION.

TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

GLORY and loveliness have passed away; For if we wander out in early morn, No wreathed incense do we see upborne Into the east, to meet the smiling day: No crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay, In woven baskets bringing ears of corn, Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn The shrine of Flora in her early May. But there are left delights as high as these, And I shall ever bless my destiny, That in a time, when under pleasant trees Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free A leafy luxury, seeing I could please With these poor offerings, a man like thee. [THE Short Pieces in the middle of the Book, as well as some of the Sonnets, were written at an earlier period than the rest of the Poems.]

POEMS.

"Places of nestling green for Poets made." STORY OF RIMINI.

I STOOD tip-toe upon a little hill, The air was cooling, and so very still, That the sweet buds which with a modest pride Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside, Their scantly leaved, and finely tapering stems, Had not yet lost those starry diadems Caught from the early sobbing of the morn. The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn, And fresh from the clear brook ; sweetly they slept On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept A little noiseless noise among the leaves, Born of the very sigh that silence heaves : For not the faintest motion could be seen Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green. There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye, To peer about upon variety; Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim, And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim ; To picture out the quaint, and curious bending Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending ; Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves, Guess where the jaunty streams refresh themselves. I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free As though the fanning wings of Mercury Had played upon my heels : I was light-hearted, And many pleasures to my vision started ; So I straightway began to pluck a posey Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

POEMS.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them; Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them; And let a lush laburnum oversweep them, And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets, That they may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wildbriar overtwined, And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind Upon their summer thrones; there too should be The frequent chequer of a youngling tree, That with a score of light green breth[r]en shoots From the quaint mossiness of aged roots: Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters The spreading blue bells: it may haply mourn That such fair clusters should be rudely torn From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds, Ye ardent marigolds ! Dry up the moisture from your golden lids, For great Apollo bids That in these days your praises should be sung On many harps, which he has lately strung ; And when again your dewiness he kisses, Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses : So haply when I rove in some far vale, His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight : With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white, And taper fingers catching at all things, To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks, And watch intently Nature's gentle doings : They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings. How silent comes the water round that bend ; Not the minutest whisper does it send

To the o'erhanging sallows : blades of grass Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass. Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach To where the hurrying freshnesses ave preach A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds; Where swarms of minnows show their little heads. Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams, To taste the luxury of sunny beams Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand. If you but scantily hold out the hand, That very instant not one will remain ; But turn your eye, and they are there again. The ripples seem right glad to reach those cresses, And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses ; The while they cool themselves, they freshness give, And moisture, that the bowery green may live : So keeping up an interchange of favours, Like good men in the truth of their behaviours[.] Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop From low hung branches; little space they stop; But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek ; Then off at once, as in a wanton freak : Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings, Pausing upon their yellow flutterings. Were I in such a place, I sure should pray That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts away, Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown Fanning away the dandelion's down; Than the light music of her nimble toes Patting against the sorrel as she goes. How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught Playing in all her innocence of thought. O let me lead her gently o'er the brook, Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look ; O let me for one moment touch her wrist; Let me one moment to her breathing list; And as she leaves me may she often turn Her fair eyes looking through her locks auburne. What next? A tuft of evening primroses, O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes ;

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POEMS.

O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep, But that 'tis ever startled by the leap Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting ; Or by the moon lifting her silver rim Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim Coming into the blue with all her light. O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers; Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers, Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams, Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams, Lover of loneliness, and wandering, Of upcast eye, and tender pondering ! Thee must I praise above all other glories That smile us on to tell delightful stories. For what has made the sage or poet write But the fair paradise of Nature's light? In the calm grandeur of a sober line, We see the waving of the mountain pine; And when a tale is beautifully staid, We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade : When it is moving on luxurious wings, The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings : Fair dewy roses brush against our faces, And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases; O'erhead we see the jasmine and sweet briar, And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire ; While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles Charms us at once away from all our troubles : So that we feel uplifted from the world, Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and curl'd. So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment : What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips First touch'd ; what amorous and fondling nips They gave each other's cheeks ; with all their sighs, And how they kist each other's tremulous eyes : The silver lamp,-the ravishment,-the wonder-The darkness,-loneliness,-the fearful thunder ; Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown, To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne.

So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside, That we might look into a forest wide, To catch a glimpse of Fawns, and Dryades Coming with softest rustle through the trees; And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet, Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet: Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread. Poor Nymph,—poor Pan,—how did he weep to find, Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind Along the reedy stream; a half heard strain, Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring? In some delicious ramble, he had found A little space, with boughs all woven round ; And in the midst of all, a clearer pool Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool, The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping. And on the bank a lonely flower he spied, A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride, Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness, To woo its own sad image into nearness : Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move : But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love. So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot, Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot : Nor was it long ere he had told the tale Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew That sweetest of all songs, that ever new, That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness, Coming ever to bless The wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing From out the middle air, from flowery nests, And from the pillowy silkiness that rests Full in the speculation of the stars. Ah ! surely he had burst our mortal bars ;

POEMS.

Into some wond'rous region he had gone, To search for thee, divine Endymion !

He was a Poet, sure a lover too, Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below; And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswelling, The incense went to her own starry dwelling. But though her face was clear as infant's eyes, Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice, The Poet wept at her so piteous fate, Wept that such beauty should be desolate : So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won, And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air ; thou most lovely queen Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen ! As thou exceedest all things in thy shine, So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine. O for three words of honey, that I might Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night !

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels, Phœbus awhile delayed his mighty wheels, And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes, Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize. The evening weather was so bright, and clear, That men of health were of unusual cheer; Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call, Or young Apollo on the pedestal : And lovely women were as fair and warm, As Venus looking sideways in alarm. The breezes were ethereal, and pure, And crept through half closed lattices to cure The languid sick ; it cool'd their fever'd sleep, And soothed them into slumbers full and deep. Soon they awoke clear eyed: nor burnt with thirsting, Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting : And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight : Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare,

And on their placid foreheads part the hair. Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd To see the brightness in each others' eyes ; And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise, Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy. Therefore no lover did of anguish die : But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken, Made silken ties, that never may be broken. Cynthia ! I cannot tell the greater blisses, That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses : Was there a Poet born ?—but now no more, My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.—

SPECIMEN

OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM.

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry; For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye. Not like the formal crest of latter days : But bending in a thousand graceful ways ; So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand, Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand, Could charm them into such an attitude. We must think rather, that in playful mood, Some mountain breeze had turned its chief delight, To show this wonder of its gentle might. Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry; For while I muse, the lance points slantingly Athwart the morning air : some lady sweet, Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet, From the worn top of some old battlement Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent : And from her own pure self no joy dissembling, Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling. Sometimes, when the good Knight his rest would take, It is reflected, clearly, in a lake, With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which it rests, And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests.

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And start with awe at mine own strange pretence. Him thou wilt hear ; so I will rest in hope To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope : The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers ; Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

CALIDORE.

A Fragment.

YOUNG Calidore is paddling o'er the lake : His healthful spirit eager and awake To feel the beauty of a silent eve. Which seem'd full loath this happy world to leave ; The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly. He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky. And smiles at the far clearness all around. Until his heart is well nigh over wound. And turns for calmness to the pleasant green Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean So elegantly o'er the waters' brim And show their blossoms trim. Scarce can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow. Delighting much, to see it half at rest, Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast 'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon, The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat Comes up with ripple, and with easy float, And glides into a bed of water lillies : Broad leav'd are they and their white canopies Are upward turn'd to catch the heavens' dew. Near to a little island's point they grew ; Whence Calidore might have the goodliest view Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore Went off in gentle windings to the hoar And light blue mountains : but no breathing man With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan

POEMS.

Ah ! shall I ever tell its cruelty, When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye, And his tremendous hand is grasping it, And his dark brow for very wrath is knit? Or when his spirit, with more calm intent, Leaps to the honors of a tournament, And makes the gazers round about the ring Stare at the grandeur of the ballancing? No. no! this is far off:-then how shall I Revive the dving tones of minstrelsy, Which linger yet about lone gothic arches, In dark green ivy, and among wild larches? How sing the splendour of the revelries, When but [t]s of wine are drunk off to the lees? And that bright lance, against the fretted wall, Beneath the shade of stately banneral, Is slung with shining cuirass, sword, and shield? Where ye may see a spur in bloody field. Light-footed damsels move with gentle paces Round the wide hall, and show their happy faces; Or stand in courtly talk by fives and sevens : Like those fair stars that twinkle in the heavens. Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry : Or wherefore comes that knight so proudly by? Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight, Rein in the swelling of his ample might?

Spenser ! thy brows are arched, open, kind, And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind ; And always does my heart with pleasure dance, When I think on thy noble countenance : Where never yet was ought more earthly seen Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green. Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh My daring steps : or if thy tender care, Thus startled unaware, Be jealous that the foot of other wight Should madly follow that bright path of light Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas ; he will speak, And tell thee that my prayer is very meek ; That I will follow with due reverence,

POEMS.

Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by Objects that look'd out so invitingly On either side. These, gentle Calidore Greeted, as he had known them long before.

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness, Which the glad setting sun, in gold doth dress; Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings, And scales upon the beauty of its wings.

The lonely turret, shatter'd, and outworn, Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around, Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.

The little chapel with the cross above Upholding wreaths of ivy; the white dove, That on the windows spreads his feathers light, And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.

Green tufted islands casting their soft shades Across the lake : sequester'd leafy glades, That through the dimness of their twilight show Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems A little brook. The youth had long been viewing These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught A trumpet's silver voice. Ah ! it was fraught With many joys for him : the warder's ken Had found white coursers prancing in the glen : Friends very dear to him he soon will see; So pushes off his boat most eagerly, And soon upon the lake he skims along. Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song ; Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly : His spirit flies before him so completely.

And now he turns a jutting point of land, Whence may be seen the castle gloomy, and grand : Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches, Before the point of his light shallop reaches Those marble steps that through the water dip: Now over them he goes with hasty trip, And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors : Anon he leaps along the oaken floors Of halls and corridors.

Delicious sounds ! those little bright-eyed things That float about the air on azure wings, Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang Of clattering hoofs ; into the court he sprang, Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain, Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein ; While from beneath the threat'ning portcullis They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss, What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand ! How tremblingly their delicate ancles spann'd ! Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone, While whisperings of affection Made him delay to let their tender feet Come to the earth ; with an incline so sweet From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent : And whether there were tears of languishment, Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses, He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye All the soft luxury

That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand, Fair as some wonder out of fairy land, Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers : And this he fondled with his happy cheek. As if for joy he would no further seek ; When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond Came to his ear, like something from beyond His present being : so he gently drew His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new, From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending, Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending ; While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd ; A hand that from the world's bleak promontory Had lifted Calidore for deeds of glory.

POEMS.

Amid the pages, and the torches' glare, There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair Of his proud horse's mane : he was withal A man of elegance, and stature tall : So that the waving of his plumes would be High as the berries of a wild ash tree, Or as the winged cap of Mercury. His armour was so dexterously wrought In shape, that sure no living man had thought It hard, and heavy steel : but that indeed It was some glorious form, some splendid weed, In which a spirit new come from the skies Might live, and show itself to human eyes. 'Tis the far-fam'd, the brave Sir Gondibert, Said the good man to Calidore alert; While the young warrior with a step of grace Came up, -a courtly smile upon his face, And mailed hand held out, ready to greet The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat Of the aspiring boy; who as he led Those smiling ladies, often turned his head To admire the visor arched so gracefully Over a knightly brow; while they went by The lamps that from the high-roof'd hall were pendent.

And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent.

Soon in a pleasant chamber they are seated ; The sweet-lipp'd ladies have already greeted All the green leaves that round the window clamber, To show their purple stars, and bells of amber. Sir Gondibert has doff'd his shining steel, Gladdening in the free, and airy feel Of a light mantle ; and while Clerimond Is looking round about him with a fond, And placid eye, young Calidore is burning To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning Of all unworthiness ; and how the strong of arm Kept off dismay, and terror, and alarm From lovely woman : while brimful of this, He gave each damsel's hand so warm a kiss, And had such manly ardour in his eye, That each at other look'd half staringly; And then their features started into smiles Sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles.

Softly the breezes from the forest came, Softly they blew aside the taper's flame; Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower; Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower; Mysterious, wild, the far-heard trumpet's tone; Lovely the moon in ether, all alone: Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals, As that of busy spirits when the portals Are closing in the west; or that soft humming We hear around when Hesperus is coming. Sweet be their sleep. * * * * * * * *

TO

SOME LADIES.

WHAT though while the wonders of nature exploring, I cannot your light, mazy footsteps attend; Nor listen to accents, that almost adoring, Bless Cynthia's face, the enthusiast's friend:

Yet over the steep, whence the mountain stream rushes,

With you, kindest friends, in idea I rove; Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes, Its spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.

Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling? Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare? Ah! you list to the nightingale's tender condoling, Responsive to sylphs, in the moon beamy air.

'Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping, I see you are treading the verge of the sea : And now ! ah, I see it—you just now are stooping. To pick up the keep-sake intended for me.

POEMS.

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,

- Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven :
- And smiles, with his star cheering voice sweetly blending,

The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given ;

It had not created a warmer emotion

- Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you,
- Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean

Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure, (And blissful is he who such happiness finds,)To possess but a span of the hour of leisure, In elegant, pure, and aerial minds.

On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies.

HAST thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem Pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain? Bright as the humming-bird's green diadem, When it flutters in sun-beams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine? That goblet right heavy, and massy, and gold? And splendidly mark'd with the story divine Of Armida the fair, and Rinaldo the bold?

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing? Hast thou a sword that thine enemy's smart is? Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing? And wear'st thou the shield of the fam'd Britomartis? What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave, Embroidered with many a spring peering flower?

Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave? And hastest thou now to that fair lady's bower?

Ah ! courteous Sir Knight, with large joy thou art crown'd;

Full many the glories that brighten thy youth ! I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound In magical powers to bless, and to sooth.

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair A sun-beamy tale of a wreath, and a chain; And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark : 'tis the work of a fay ; Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish, When lovely Titania was far, far away, And cruelly left him to sorrow, and anguish.

- There, oft would he bring from his soft sighing lute Wild strains to which, spell-bound, the nightingales listened;
- The wondering spirits of heaven were mute, And tears mong the dewdrops of morning oft glistened.

In this little dome, all those melodies strange, Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh; Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change; Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein,

I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose, And list to the tale of the wreath, and the chain, Till its echoes depart ; then I sink to repose.

Adieu, valiant Eric ! with joy thou art crown'd; Full many the glories that brighten thy youth, I too have my blisses, which richly abound In magical powers, to bless and to sooth.

TO * * * *

POEMS.

HADST thou liv'd in days of old, O what wonders had been told Of thy lively countenance, And thy humid eyes that dance In the midst of their own brightness; In the very fane of lightness. Over which thine eyebrows, leaning, Picture out each lovely meaning : In a dainty bend they lie, Like to streaks across the sky, Or the feathers from a crow, Fallen on a bed of snow. Of thy dark hair that extends Into many graceful bends : As the leaves of Hellebore Turn to whence they sprung before. And behind each ample curl Peeps the richness of a pearl. Downward too flows many a tress With a glossy waviness ; Full, and round like globes that rise From the censer to the skies Through sunny air. Add too, the sweetness Of thy honied voice ; the neatness Of thine ankle lightly turn'd : With those beauties, scarce discern'd, Kept with such sweet privacy, That they seldom meet the eye Of the little loves that fly Round about with eager pry. Saving when, with freshening lave, Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave ; Like twin water lillies, born In the coolness of the morn. O, if thou hadst breathed then. Now the Muses had been ten. Couldst thou wish for lineage higher Than twin sister of Thalia?

At least for ever, evermore, Will I call the Graces four.

Hadst thou liv'd when chivalry Lifted up her lance on high, Tell me what thou wouldst have been? Ah ! I see the silver sheen Of thy broidered, floating vest Cov'ring half thine ivory breast : Which, O heavens ! I should see, But that cruel destiny Has placed a golden cuirass there : Keeping secret what is fair. Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested Thy locks in knightly casque are rested : O'er which bend four milky plumes Like the gentle lilly's blooms Springing from a costly vase. See with what a stately pace Comes thine alabaster steed : Servant of heroic deed ! O'er his loins, his trappings glow Like the northern lights on snow. Mount his back ! thy sword unsheath ! Sign of the enchanter's death ; Bane of every wicked spell; Silencer of dragon's vell. Alas ! thou this wilt never do : Thou art an enchantress too, And wilt surely never spill Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

TO

HOPE.

WHEN by my solitary hearth I sit, And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom; When no fair dreams before my "mind's eye" flit, And the bare heath of life presents no bloom;

POEMS.

Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed, And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,
Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
Should sad Despondency my musings fright,
And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away,
Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof,
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair, Strive for her son to seize my careless heart ; When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air, Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart : Chase him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright, And fright him as the morning frightens night !

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow, O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer; Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow: Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed, And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,
From cruel parents, or relentless fair;
O let me think it is not quite in vain
To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air !
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head !

In the long vista of the years to roll, Let me not see our country's honour fade : O let me see our land retain her soul, Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade. From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed— Beneath thy pinions canopy my head !

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest, Great Liberty ! how great in plain attire ! With the base purple of a court oppress'd, Bowing her head, and ready to expire : But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings That fill the skies with silver glitterings !

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud; Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar: So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud, Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed, Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

February, 1815.

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

Now Morning from her orient chamber came, And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill; Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame, Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill; Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distill, And after parting beds of simple flowers, By many streams a little lake did fill, Which round its marge reflected woven bowers, And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the king-fisher saw his plumage bright Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below; Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow: There saw the swan his neck of arched snow, And oar'd himself along with majesty; Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony, And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle That in that fairest lake had placed been, I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile; Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen:

POEMS.

For sure so fair a place was never seen, Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye: It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen Of the bright waters; or as when on high, Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the coerulean sky.

And all around it dipp'd luxuriously Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide, Which, as it were in gentle amity, Rippled delighted up the flowery side ; As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried, Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem ! Haply it was the workings of its pride, In strife to throw upon the shore a gem Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

* * * * *

WOMAN ! when I behold thee flippant, vain, Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies ; Without that modest softening that enhances The downcast eye, repentant of the pain That its mild light creates to heal again : E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances, E'en then my soul with exultation dances For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain : But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender, Heavens ! how desperately do I adore Thy winning graces ;—to be thy defender I hotly burn—to be a Calidore— A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander— Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair ; Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast, Are things on which the dazzled senses rest Till the fond, fixed eyes, forget they stare. From such fine pictures, heavens ! I cannot dare To turn my admiration, though unpossess'd They be of what is worthy,—though not drest In lovely modesty, and virtues rare. Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark ; These lures I straight forget,—e'en ere I dine, Or thrice my palate moisten : but when I mark Such charms with mild intelligences shine, My ear is open like a greedy shark, To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being? Who can forget her half retiring sweets? God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing, Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing, Will never give him pinions, who intreats Such innocence to ruin, —who vilely cheats A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing One's thoughts from such a beauty; when I hear A lay that once I saw her hand awake, Her form seems floating palpable, and near; Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear, And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake.

EPISTLES.

"Among the rest a shepheard (though but young "Yet hartned to his pipe) tith all the skill "His few yeeres could, be an to fit his quill." Britannia's Pastorals.—Browne.

TO

GEORGE FELTON MATHEW.

SWEET are the pleasures that to verse belong, And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song; Nor can remembrance, Mathew ! bring to view A fate more pleasing, a delight more true

EPISTLES.

Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd, Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd To raise a trophy to the drama's muses. The thought of this great partnership diffuses Over the genius loving heart, a feeling Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend ! fain would I follow thee Past each horizon of fine poesy; Fain would I echo back each pleasant note As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float 'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted, Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted : But 'tis impossible ; far different cares Beckon me sternly from soft "Lydian airs," And hold my faculties so long in thrall, That I am oft in doubt whether at all I shall again see Phœbus in the morning : Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning ! Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream ; Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam; Or again witness what with thee I've seen, The dew by fairy feet swept from the green, After a night of some quaint jubilee Which every elf and fay had come to see : When bright processions took their airy march Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.

But might I now each passing moment give To the coy muse, with me she would not live In this dark city, nor would condescend 'Mid contradictions her delights to lend. Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind, Ah ! surely it must be whene'er I find Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic, That often must have seen a poet frantic ; Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing, And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing ; Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping clusters Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres, And intertwined the cassia's arms unite, With its own drooping buds, but very white. Where on one side are covert branches hung, 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung In leafy quiet; where to pry, aloof, Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof, Would be to find where violet beds were nestling, And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling. There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy, To say "joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

Yet this is vain-O Mathew lend thy aid To find a place where I may greet the maid-Where we may soft humanity put on, And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton; And that warm-hearted Shakspeare sent to meet him Four laurell'd spirits, heaven-ward to intreat him. With reverence would we speak of all the sages Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages : And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness, And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness To those who strove with the bright golden wing Of genius, to flap away each sting Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell Of those who in the cause of freedom fell; Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell; Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace, High-minded and unbending William Wallace. While to the rugged north our musing turns We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.

Felton ! without incitements such as these, How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease : For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace, And make "a sunshine in a shady place :" For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild, Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefil'd, Whence gush the streams of song : in happy hour Came chaste Diana from her shady bower, Just as the sun was from the east uprising ; And, as for him some gift she was devising, Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the stream To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam. I marvel much that thou hast never told

EPISTLES.

How, from a flower, into a fish of gold Apollo chang'd thee; how thou next didst seem A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream; And when thou first didst in that mirror trace The placid features of a human face: That thou hast never told thy travels strange, And all the wonders of the mazy range O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands; Kissing thy daily food from Naiad's pearly hands.

November, 1815.

TO

MY BROTHER GEORGE.

FULL many a dreary hour have I past, My brain bewilder'd, and my mind o'ercast With heaviness ; in seasons when I've thought No spherey strains by me could e'er be caught From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays; Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely, Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely : That I should never hear Apollo's song, Though feathery clouds were floating all along The purple west, and, two bright streaks between. The golden lyre itself were dimly seen : That the still murmur of the honey bee Would never teach a rural song to me : That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting Would never make a lay of mine enchanting, Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay, Fly from all sorrowing far, far away; A sudden glow comes or them, nought they see In water, earth, or air, but poesy. It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it, (For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,) That when a Poet is in such a trance,

In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance, Bestridden of gay knights, in gay apparel, Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel, And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call, Is the swift opening of their wide portal, When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear, Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear. When these enchanted portals open wide, And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide, The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls, And view the glory of their festivals : Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream ; Their rich brimm'd goblets, that incessant run Like the bright spots that move about the sun ; And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar Pours with the lustre of a falling star. Yet further off, are dimly seen their bowers, Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers; And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows 'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose. All that's reveal'd from that far seat of blisses, Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses, As gracefully descending, light and thin, Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin, When he upswimmeth from the coral caves, And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange he sees, and many more, Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore. Should he upon an evening ramble fare With forehead to the soothing breezes bare, Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue With all its diamonds trembling through and through? Or the coy moon, when in the waviness Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress, And staidly paces higher up, and higher, Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire? Ah, yes ! much more would start into his sight— The revelries, and mysteries of night : And should I ever see them, I will tell you Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

EPISTLES.

These are the living pleasures of the bard : But richer far posterity's award. What does he murmur with his latest breath, While his proud eye looks through the film of death? "What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould, "Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold "With after times.-The patriot shall feel "My stern alarum, and unsheath his steel; "Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers "To startle princes from their easy slumbers. "The sage will mingle with each moral theme "My happy thoughts sententious; he will teem "With lofty periods when my verses fire him, "And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him. "Lays have I left of such a dear delight "That maids will sing them on their bridal night. "Gay villagers, upon a morn of May, "When they have tired their gentle limbs with play, "And form'd a snowy circle on the grass, "And plac'd in midst of all that lovely lass "Who chosen is their queen, ---with her fine head "Crowned with flowers purple, white, and red : "For there the lily, and the musk-rose, sighing, "Are emblems true of hapless lovers dying : "Between her breasts, that never yet felt trouble, "A bunch of violets full blown, and double, "Serenely sleep :---she from a casket takes "A little book,-and then a joy awakes "About each youthful heart, -with stifled cries, "And rubbing of white hands, and sparkling eyes : "For she's to read a tale of hopes, and fears ; "One that I foster'd in my youthful years : "The pearls, that on each glist'ning circlet sleep, "Gush ever and anon with silent creep, "Lured by the innocent dimples. To sweet rest "Shall the dear babe, upon its mother's breast, "Be lull'd with songs of mine. Fair world, adieu ! "Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view : "Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions, "Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions. "Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air,

"That my soft verse will charm thy daughters fair, "And warm thy sons !" Ah, my dear friend and brother. Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother. For tasting joys like these, sure I should be Happier, and dearer to society. At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain When some bright thought has darted through my brain : Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure. As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them, I feel delighted, still, that you should read them. Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment, Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught. E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades, Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades. On one side is a field of drooping oats, Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats ; So pert and useless, that they bring to mind The scarlet coats that pester human-kind. And on the other side, outspread, is seen Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green. Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now Mark the bright silver curling round her prow. I see the lark down-dropping to his nest, And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest ; For when no more he spreads his feathers free, His breast is dancing on the restless sea. Now I direct my eyes into the west, Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest : Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu ! 'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you !

August, 1816.

EPISTLES.

TO

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

OFT have you seen a swan superbly frowning, And with proud breast his own white shadow crowning ; He slants his neck beneath the waters bright So silently, it seems a beam of light Come from the galaxy : anon he sports,-With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts, Or ruffles all the surface of the lake In striving from its crystal face to take Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure. But not a moment can he there insure them, Nor to such downy rest can he allure them ; For down they rush as though they would be free, And drop like hours into eternity. Just like that bird am I in loss of time, Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme ; With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvass rent, I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent ; Still scooping up the water with my fingers, In which a trembling diamond never lingers.

By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see Why I have never penn'd a line to thee: Because my thoughts were never free, and clear, And little fit to please a classic ear ; Because my wine was of too poor a savour For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour Of sparkling Helicon :--small good it were To take him to a desert rude, and bare, Who had on Baiæ's shore reclin'd at ease, While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze That gave soft music from Armida's bowers, Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers : Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream : Who had beheld Belphœbe in a brook. And lovely Una in a leafy nook, And Archimago leaning o'er his book :

Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen, From silv'ry ripple, up to beauty's queen ; From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania, To the blue dwelling of divine Urania : One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks With him who elegantly chats, and talks-The wrong'd Libertas, -who has told you stories Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories; Of troops chivalrous prancing through a city, And tearful ladies made for love, and pity : With many else which I have never known. Thus have I thought ; and days on days have flown Slowly, or rapidly-unwilling still For you to try my dull, unlearned quill. Nor should I now, but that I've known you long; That you first taught me all the sweets of song : The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine ; What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine : Spenserian vowels that elope with ease, And float along like birds o'er summer seas; Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness; Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderness.

Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly Up to its climax and then dying proudly? Who found for me the grandeur of the ode, Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load? Who let me taste that more than cordial dram, The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram? Shew'd me that epic was of all the king, Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring? You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty, And pointed out the patriot's stern duty ; The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell; The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell Upon a tyrant's head. Ah ! had I never seen, Or known your kindness, what might I have been? What my enjoyments in my youthful years, Bereft of all that now my life endears? And can I e'er these benefits forget? And can I e'er repay the friendly debt ? No, doubly no ;-yet should these rhymings please,

EPISTLES.

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I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease : For I have long time been my fancy feeding With hopes that you would one day think the reading Of my rough verses not an hour mis[s]pent ; Should it e'er be so, what a rich content ! Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the spires In lucent Thames reflected :--warm desires To see the sun o'er peep the eastern dimness, And morning shadows streaking into slimness Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water ; To mark the time as they grow broad, and shorter ; To feel the air that plays about the hills, And sips its freshness from the little rills ; To see high, golden corn wave in the light When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night, And peers among the cloudlet's jet and white, As though she were reclining in a bed Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed. No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures Than I began to think of rhymes and measures : The air that floated by me seem'd to say "Write ! thou wilt never have a better day." And so I did. When many lines I'd written, Though with their grace I was not oversmitten, Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter. Such an attempt required an inspiration Of a peculiar sort, -a consummation ;-Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have been Verses from which the soul would never wean : But many days have past since last my heart Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart ; By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd : Or by the song of Erin pierc'd and sadden'd : What time you were before the music sitting, And the rich notes to each sensation fitting. Since I have walk'd with you through shady lanes That freshly terminate in open plains, And revel'd in a chat that ceased not When at night-fall among your books we got : No, nor when supper came, nor after that,-Nor when reluctantly I took my hat ;

No, nor till cordially you shook my hand Mid-way between our homes :--your accents bland Still sounded in my ears, when I no more Could hear your footsteps touch the grav'ly floor. Sometimes I lost them, and then found again ; You chang'd the footpath for the grassy plain. In those still moments I have wish'd you joys That well you know to honour :---" Life's very toys "With him," said I, " will take a pleasant charm ; " It cannot be that ought will work him harm." These thoughts now come o'er me with all their might :---

Again I shake your hand,-friend Charles, good night.

September, 1816.

SONNETS.

I.

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

MANY the wonders I this day have seen : The sun, when first he kist away the tears That fill'd the eyes of morn ;—the laurel'd peers Who from the feathery gold of evening lean ;— The ocean with its vastness, its blue green, Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,— Its voice mysterious, which whose hears Must think on what will be, and what has been. E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write, Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping So scantly, that it seems her bridal night, And she her half-discover'd revels keeping. But what, without the social thought of thee, Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

SONNETS.

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II.

To * * * * * *

HAD I a man's fair form, then might my sighs Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart ; so well
Would passion arm me for the enterprize :
But ah I I am no knight whose foeman dies ; No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell ; I am no happy shepherd of the dell
Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes.
Yet must I doat upon thee, —call thee sweet, Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication.
Ah ! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet, And when the moon her pallid face discloses, I'll gather some by spells, and incantation.

III.

Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison.

WHAT though, for showing truth to flatter'd state, Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he, In his immortal spirit, been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
Minion of grandeur ! think you he did wait ? Think you he nought but prison walls did see, Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key ?
Ah, no ! far happier, nobler was his fate ! In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair, Culling enchanted flowers ; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air : To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew ? How many bards gild the lapses of time ! A few of them have ever been the food Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime : And often, when I sit me down to rhyme, These will in throngs before my mind intrude : But no confusion, no disturbance rude Do they occasion ; 'tis a pleasing chime. So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store ; The songs of birds—the whisp'ring of the leaves— The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves With solemn sound,—and thousand others more, That distance of recognizance bereaves,

Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

v.

To a Friend who sent me some Roses.

As late I rambled in the happy fields, What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew From his lush clover covert ;—when anew Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields : I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields, A fresh-blown musk-rose ; 'twas the first that threw Its sweets upon the summer : graceful it grew As is the wand that queen Titania wields. And, as I feasted on its fragrancy, I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd : But when, O Wells ! thy roses came to me My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd : Soft voices had they, that with tender plea ' Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquell'd.

SONNETS.

VI.

To G. A. W.

NYMPH of the downward smile, and sidelong glance, In what diviner moments of the day Art thou most lovely? When gone far astray Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance? Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance Of sober thought? Or when starting away, With careless robe, to meet the morning ray, Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance? Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly, And so remain, because thou listenest : But thou to please wert nurtured so completely That I can never tell what mood is best. I shall as soon pronounce which grace more neatly Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

VII.

O SOLITUDE ! if I must with thee dwell, Let it not be among the jumbled heap Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,— Nature's observatory—whence the dell, Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell, May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep 'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell. But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee, Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind, Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd, Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be Almost the highest bliss of human-kind, When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

VIII.

TO MY BROTHERS.

SMALL, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals, And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep Like whispers of the household gods that keep
A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls.
And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles, Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep, Upon the lore so voluble and deep,
That aye at fall of night our care condoles.
This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice
That thus it passes smoothly, quietly.
Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise
May we together pass, and calmly try
What are this world's true joys, —ere the great voice, From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

November 18, 1816.

IX.

KEEN, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there Among the bushes half leafless, and dry; The stars look very cold about the sky,
And I have many miles on foot to fare.
Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air,
Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily,
Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair :
For I am brimfull of the friendliness
That in a little cottage I have found;
Of foir-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress,
And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd;
Of lovely Laura in her light green dress,
And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

SONNETS.

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To one who has been long in city pent, 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer Full in the smile of the blue firmament. Who is more happy, when, with hearts content, Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair And gentle tale of love and languishment? Returning home at evening, with an ear Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career, He mourns that day so soon has glided by : E'en like the passage of an angel's tear That falls through the clear ether silently.

XI.

On first looking into Chapman's Homer.

MUCH have I travell'd in the realms of gold, And many goodly states and kingdoms seen; Round many western islands have I been Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. Oft of one wide expanse had I been told That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne; Yet did I never breathe its pure serene Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold : Then felt I like some watcher of the skies When a new planet swims into his ken; Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men Look'd at each other with a wild surmise— Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

On leaving some Friends at an early Hour.

GIVE me a golden pen, and let me lean On heap'd up flowers, in regions clear, and far; Bring me a tablet whiter than a star, Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen The silver strings of heavenly harp atween : And let there glide by many a pearly car, Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar, And half discovered wings, and glances keen. The while let music wander round my ears, And as it reaches each delicious ending, Let me write down a line of glorious tone, And full of many wonders of the spheres : For what a height my spirit is contending ! 'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

XIII.

ADDRESSED TO HAYDON.

HIGHMINDEDNESS, a jealousy for good,
A loving-kindness for the great man's fame,
Dwells here and there with people of no name,
In noisome alley, and in pathless wood :
And where we think the truth least understood,
Oft may be found a "singleness of aim,"
That ought to frighten into hooded shame
A money mong'ring, pitiable brood.
How glorious this affection for the cause
Of stedfast genius, toiling gallantly !
What when a stout unbending champion awes
Envy, and Malice to their native sty ?
Unnumber'd souls breathe out a still applause,
Proud to behold him in his country's eye.

SONNETS.

XIV.

ADDRESSED TO THE SAME.

GREAT spirits now on earth are sojourning; He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake, Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,

Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing : He of the rose, the violet, the spring,

The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake: And lo !—whose stedfastness would never take A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering. And other spirits there are standing apart

Upon the forehead of the age to come; These, these will give the world another heart, And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum Of mighty workings?——— Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

XV.

On the Grasshopper and Cricket.

THE poetry of earth is never dead : When all the birds are faint with the hot sun, And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead ; That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead In summer luxury,—he has never done With his delights ; for when tired out with fun He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed. The poetry of earth is ceasing never : On a lone winter evening, when the frost Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever, And seems to one in drowsiness half lost, The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

December 30, 1816.

XVI.

TO KOSCIUSKO.

Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling; It comes upon us like the glorious pealing Of the wide spheres—an everlasting tone. And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown, The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing, And changed to harmonies, for ever stealing Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne. It tells me too, that on a happy day, When some good spirit walks upon the earth, Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore

Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away To where the great God lives for evermore.

XVII.

HAPPY is England ! I could be content To see no other verdure than its own ; To feel no other breezes than are blown
Through its tall woods with high romances blent : Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment For skies Italian, and an inward groan To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
And half forget what world or worldling meant.
Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters ; Enough their simple loveliness for me, Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging : Yet do I often warmly burn to see

Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing, And float with them about the summer waters.

SLEEP AND POETRY.

"As I lay in my bed slepe full unmete "Was unto me, but why that I ne might "Rest I ne wist, for there n'as erthly wight "As I suppose] had more of hertis ese "Than I, for I n'ad sicknesse nor disese." CHAUCER.

WHAT is more gentle than a wind in summer? What is more soothing than the pretty hummer That stays one moment in an open flower, And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower? What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing In a green island, far from all men's knowing? More healthful than the leafiness of dales? More secret than a nest of nightingales? More serene than Cordelia's countenance? More full of visions than a high romance? What, but thee Sleep? Soft closer of our eyes! Low murmurer of tender lullabies ! Light hoverer around our happy pillows ! Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows ! Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses ! Most happy listener ! when the morning blesses Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee? Fresher than berries of a mountain tree? More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal,

Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle?

What is it? And to what shall I compare it? It has a glory, and nought else can share it: The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy, Chacing away all worldliness and folly; Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder, Or the low rumblings earth's regions under; And sometimes like a gentle whispering Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing That breathes about us in the vacant air ; So that we look around with prying stare, Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial lymning, And eatch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning ; To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended, That is to crown our name when life is ended. Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice, And from the heart up-springs, rejoice ! rejoice ! Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things, And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen, And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean For his great Maker's presence, but must know What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow : Therefore no insult will I give his spirit, By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy ! for thee I hold my pen That am not yet a glorious denizen Of thy wide heaven-Should I rather kneel Upon some mountain-top until I feel A glowing splendour round about me hung, And echo back the voice of thine own tongue? O Poesy ! for thee I grasp my pen That am not yet a glorious denizen Of thy wide heaven; yet, to my ardent prayer, Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air, Smoothed for intoxication by the breath Of flowering bays, that I may die a death Of luxury, and my young spirit follow The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo Like a fresh sacrifice ; or, if I can bear The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring me to the fair Visions of all places : a bowery nook Will be elysium—an eternal book Whence I may copy many a lovely saying About the leaves, and flowers-about the playing Of nymphs in woods, and fountains ; and the shade Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid : And many a verse from so strange influence

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SLEEP AND POETRY.

That we must ever wonder how, and whence It came. Also imaginings will hover Round my fire-side, and haply there discover Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander In happy silence, like the clear meander Through its lone vales ; and where I found a spot Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot, Or a green hill o'erspread with chequered dress Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness, Write on my tablets all that was permitted, All that was for our human senses fitted. Then the events of this wide world I'd seize Like a strong giant, and my spirit teaze Till at its shoulders it should proudly see Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider ! life is but a day; A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan? Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown; The reading of an ever-changing tale; The light uplifting of a maiden's veil; A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air; A laughing school-boy, without grief or care, Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed That my own soul has to itself decreed. Then I will pass the countries that I see In long perspective, and continually Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass, Feed upon apples red, and strawberries, And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees; Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places, To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,— Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white Into a pretty shrinking with a bite As hard as lips can make it : till agreed, A lovely tale of human life we'll read. And one will teach a tame dove how it best May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest ; Another, bending o'er her nimble tread, Will set a green robe floating round her head, And still will dance with ever varied ease, Smiling upon the flowers and the trees : Another will entice me on, and on Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon ; Till in the bosom of a leafy world We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell? Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life, Where I may find the agonies, the strife Of human hearts : for lo ! I see afar, O'er sailing the blue cragginess, a car And steeds with streamy manes-the charioteer Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear : And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly Wheel downward come they into fresher skies, Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes. Still downward with capacious whirl they glide ; And now I see them on a green-hill's side In breezy rest among the nodding stalks. The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks To the trees and mountains ; and there soon appear Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear, Passing along before a dusky space Made by some mighty oaks : as they would chase Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep. Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep : Some with upholden hand and mouth severe : Some with their faces muffled to the ear Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom, Go glad and smilingly athwart the gloom : Some looking back, and some with upward gaze ; Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways Flit onward-now a lovely wreath of girls Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls ;

And now broad wings. Most awfully intent The driver of those steeds is forward bent, And seems to listen : O that I might know All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled Into the light of heaven, and in their stead A sense of real things comes doubly strong, And, like a muddy stream, would bear along My soul to nothingness : but I will strive Against all doubtings, and will keep alive The thought of that same chariot, and the strange Journey it went.

Is there so small a range In the present strength of manhood, that the high Imagination cannot freely fly As she was wont of old ? prepare her steeds, Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds Upon the clouds? Has she not shewn us all? From the clear space of ether, to the small Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening Of April meadows? Here her altar shone, E'en in this isle ; and who could paragon The fervid choir that lifted up a noise Of harmony, to where it aye will poise Its mighty self of convoluting sound, Huge as a planet, and like that roll round, Eternally around a dizzy void? Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd With honors; nor had any other care Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a sc[h]ism Nurtured by foppery and barbarism, Made great Apollo blush for this his land. Men were thought wise who could not understand His glories: with a puling infant's force They sway'd about upon a rocking horse, And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd ! The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue

SLEEP AND POETRY.

Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew Of summer nights collected still to make The morning precious : beauty was awake ! Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead To things ye knew not of,-were closely wed To musty laws lined out with wretched rule And compass vile : so that ye taught a school Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit, Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit. Their verses tallied. Easy was the task : A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race ! That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face, And did not know it, -no, they went about, Holding a poor, decrepid standard out Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large The name of one Boileau !

O ye whose charge

It is to hover round our pleasant hills ! Whose congregated majesty so fills My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace Your hallowed names, in this unholy place, So near those common folk ; did not their shames Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames Delight you? Did ve never cluster round Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound, And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu To regions where no more the laurel grew? Or did ye stay to give a welcoming To some lone spirits who could proudly sing Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so : But let me think away those times of woe : Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard In many places ;--some has been upstirr'd From out its crystal dwelling in a lake, By a swan's ebon bill ; from a thick brake, Nested and quiet in a valley mild, Bubbles a pipe ; fine sounds are floating wild About the earth : happy are ye and glad. E

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These things are doubtless : yet in truth we've had Strange thunders from the potency of song ; Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong, From majesty : but in clear truth the themes Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower Of light is poesy ; 'tis the supreme of power ; 'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm. The very archings of her eye-lids charm A thousand willing agents to obey, And still she governs with the mildest sway : But strength alone though of the Muses born Is like a fallen angel : trees uptorn, Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres Delight it ; for it feeds upon the burrs, And thorns of life ; forgetting the great end Of poesy, that it should be a friend To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice : a myrtle fairer than E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds A silent space with ever sprouting green. All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen, Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering, Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing. Then let us clear away the choaking thorns From round its gentle stem ; let the young fawns, Yeaned in after times, when we are flown, Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown With simple flowers : let there nothing be More boisterous than a lover's bended knee ; Nought more ungentle than the placid look Of one who leans upon a closed book ; Nought more untranquil than the grassy slopes Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes ! As she was wont, th' imagination Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone, And they shall be accounted poet kings Who simply tell the most heart-easing things. O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace 'Twere better far to hide my foolish face? That whining boyhood should with reverence bow Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How! If I do hide myself, it sure shall be In the very fane, the light of Poesy : If I do fall, at least I will be laid Beneath the silence of a poplar shade ; And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven ; And there shall be a kind memorial graven. But off Despondence ! miserable bane ! They should not know thee, who athirst to gain A noble end, are thirsty every hour. What though I am not wealthy in the dower Of spanning wisdom ; though I do not know The shiftings of the mighty winds that blow Hither and thither all the changing thoughts Of man : though no great minist'ring reason sorts Out the dark mysteries of human souls To clear conceiving : yet there ever rolls A vast idea before me, and I glean Therefrom my liberty ; thence too I've seen The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear As anything most true ; as that the year Is made of the four seasons-manifest As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest, Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I Be but the essence of deformity, A coward, did my very eye-lids wink At speaking out what I have dared to think. Ah ! rather let me like a madman run Over some precipice ; let the hot sun Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down Convuls'd and headlong ! Stay ! an inward frown Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile. An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle, Spreads awfully before me. How much toil ! How many days ! what desperate turmoil ! Ere I can have explored its widenesses. Ah, what a task ! upon my bended knees,

I could unsay those—no, impossible ! Impossible !

For sweet relief I'll dwell On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay Begun in gentleness die so away. E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades : I turn full hearted to the friendly aids That smooth the path of honour ; brotherhood, And friendliness the nurse of mutual good. The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet Into the brain ere one can think upon it; The silence when some rhymes are coming out ; And when they're come, the very pleasant rout : The message certain to be done to-morrow. 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow Some precious book from out its snug retreat, To cluster round it when we next shall meet. Scarce can I scribble on ; for lovely airs Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs; Many delights of that glad day recalling, When first my senses caught their tender falling. And with these airs come forms of elegance Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance, Careless, and grand-fingers soft and round Parting luxuriant curls ;---and the swift bound Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye Made Ariadne's cheek look blushingly. Thus I remember all the pleasant flow Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers To trains of peaceful images : the stirs Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes : A linnet starting all about the bushes : A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted With over pleasure—many, many more, Might I indulge at large in all my store Of luxuries : yet I must not forget Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet : For what there may be worthy in these rhymes

I partly owe to him : and thus, the chimes Of friendly voices had just given place To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease. It was a poet's house who keeps the keys Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung The glorious features of the bards who sung In other ages-cold and sacred busts Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts To clear Futurity his darling fame ! Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim At swelling apples with a frisky leap And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap Of vine leaves. Then there rose to view a fane Of liny marble, and thereto a train Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward : One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward The dazzling sun-rise : two sisters sweet Bending their graceful figures till they meet Over the trippings of a little child : And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping. See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ;--A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothiness o'er Its rocky marge, and balances once more The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down At nothing ; just as though the earnest frown Of over thinking had that moment gone From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes, As if he always listened to the sighs Of the goaded world ; and Kosciusko's worn By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.

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Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green, Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they! For over them was seen a free display Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone The face of Poesy: from off her throne She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell. The very sense of where I was might well Keep Sleep aloof: but more than that there came Thought after thought to nourish up the flame Within my breast; so that the morning light Surprised me even from a sleepless night; And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay, Resolving to begin that very day These lines; and howsoever they be done, I leave them as a father does his son.

Finis.

[PUBLISHED 1818]

ENDYMION:

A Poetic Romance.

"THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG."

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF

THOMAS CHATTERTON.

PREFACE.

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

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

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

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

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

Teignmouth, April 10, 1818.

ENDYMION.

BOOK I.

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

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

BOOK L

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

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

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed So plenteously all weed-hidden roots Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits. And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep, Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens, Never again saw he the happy pens BOOK I.

Whither his brethren, bleating with content, Over the hills at every nightfall went. Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever, That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever From the white flock, but pass'd unworried By angry wolf, or pard with prying head, Until it came to some unfooted plains Where fed the herds of Pan : ay great his gains Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many, Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny, 80 And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly To a wide lawn, whence one could only see Stems thronging all around between the swell Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell The freshness of the space of heaven above, Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through which a dove

ENDYMION.

Would often beat its wings, and often too A little cloud would move across the blue.

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

Now while the silent workings of the dawn Were busiest, into that self-same lawn All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped 00

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A troop of little children garlanded ; 110 Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry Earnestly round as wishing to espy Some folk of holiday : nor had they waited For many moments, ere their ears were sated With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then Fill'd out its voice, and died away again. Within a little space again it gave Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave, To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking Through copse-clad vallies, —ere their death, o'ertaking

The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

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

Leading the way, young damsels danced along, Bearing the burden of a shepherd song ; Each having a white wicker over brimm'd With April's tender younglings : next, well trimm'd, A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks As may be read of in Arcadian books ; Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe, When the great deity, for earth too ripe, Let his divinity o'er-flowing die In music, through the vales of Thessaly : Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the ground, And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound With ebon-tipped flutes : close after these, BOOK I.

ENDYMION.

Now coming from beneath the forest trees, A venerable priest full soberly, Begirt with ministring looks : alway his eye 150 Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept, And after him his sacred vestments swept. From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white, Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light; And in his left he held a basket full Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull : Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill. His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath, Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth 160 Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd, Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car, Easily rolling so as scarce to mar The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown : Who stood therein did seem of great renown Among the throng. His youth was fully blown, Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown; 170 And, for those simple times, his garments were A chieftain king's : beneath his breast, half bare, Was hung a silver bugle, and between His nervy knees there lay a boar-spear keen. A smile was on his countenance ; he seem'd, To common lookers on, like one who dream'd Of idleness in groves Elysian : But there were some who feelingly could scan A lurking trouble in his nether lip, And see that oftentimes the reins would slip 180 Through his forgotten hands : then would they sigh, And think of yellow leaves, of owlets cry, Of logs piled solemnly .- Ah, well-a-day, Why should our young Endymion pine away !

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd, Stood silent round the shrine : each look was chang'd To sudden veneration : women meek Beckon'd their sons to silence ; while each cheek

Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear. Endymion too, without a forest peer, Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face, Among his brothers of the mountain chase. In midst of all, the venerable priest Eved them with joy from greatest to the least, And, after lifting up his aged hands, Thus spake he : "Men of Latmos ! shepherd bands ! Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks : Whether descended from beneath the rocks That overtop your mountains ; whether come From vallies where the pipe is never dumb; 200 Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze Buds lavish gold ; or ye, whose precious charge Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge, Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn : Mothers and wives ! who day by day prepare The scrip, with needments, for the mountain air : And all ye gentle girls who foster up Udderless lambs, and in a little cup 210 Will put choice honey for a favoured youth : Yea, every one attend ! for in good truth Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan. Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had Great bounty from Endymion our lord. The earth is glad : the merry lark has pour'd 220 His early song against yon breezy sky, That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire; Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god. Now while the earth was drinking it, and while Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile, And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright BOOK I.

ENDYMION.

'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light 230 Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang :

"O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth hang From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness; Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken; And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken The dreary melody of bedded reeds— In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds 240 The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth; Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx—do thou now, By thy love's milky brow ! By all the trembling mazes that she ran, Hear us, great Pan !

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles, What time thou wanderest at eventide Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side 250 Of thine enmossed realms : O thou, to whom Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom Their ripen'd fruitage ; yellow girted bees Their golden honeycombs; our village leas Their fairest-blossom'd beans and poppied corn ; The chuckling linnet its five young unborn, To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries Their summer coolness ; pent up butterflies Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year All its completions-be quickly near, 260 By every wind that nods the mountain pine, O forester divine !

"Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies For willing service ; whether to surprise The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit ; Or upward ragged precipices flit To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw ; Or by mysterious enticement draw

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Bewildered shepherds to their path again ; Or to tread breathless round the frothy main, And gather up all fancifullest shells For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells, And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping ; Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping, The while they pelt each other on the crown With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown— By all the echoes that about thee ring, Hear us, O satyr king !

ENDYMION.

"O Hearkener to the loud clapping shears, While ever and anon to his shorn peers A ram goes bleating : Winder of the horn, When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn Anger our huntsman : Breather round our farms, To keep off mildews, and all weather harms : Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds, That come a swooning over hollow grounds, And wither drearily on barren moors : Dread opener of the mysterious doors Leading to universal knowledge—see, Great son of Dryope, The many that are come to pay their vows With leaves about their brows !

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

Even while they brought the burden to a close, A shout from the whole multitude arose, BOOK I.

ENDYMION.

That lingered in the air like dying rolls Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals 310 Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine. Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine, Young companies nimbly began dancing To the swift treble pipe, and humming string. Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly To tunes forgotten—out of memory : Fair creatures ! whose young children's children bred Thermopylæ its heroes-not vet dead. But in old marbles ever beautiful. High genitors, unconscious did they cull 320 Time's sweet first-fruits-they danc'd to weariness, And then in quiet circles did they press The hillock turf, and caught the latter end Of some strange history, potent to send A young mind from its bodily tenement. Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent On either side; pitying the sad death Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath Of Zephyr slew him,-Zephyr penitent, Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament, 330 Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain. The archers too, upon a wider plain, Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft, And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top. Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee And frantic gape of lonely Niobe, Poor, lonely Niobe ! when her lovely young

Poor, lonely Niobe ! when her lovely young Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue 340 Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip, And very, very deadliness did nip Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad mood By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd, Uplifting his strong bow into the air, Many might after brighter visions stare : After the Argonauts, in blind amaze Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways, Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,

BOOK I.

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There shot a golden splendour far and wide, 350 Spangling those million poutings of the brine With quivering ore : 'twas even an awful shine From the exaltation of Apollo's bow; A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe. Who thus were ripe for high contemplating, Might turn their steps towards the sober ring Where sat Endymion and the aged priest 'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd The silvery setting of their mortal star. There they discours'd upon the fragile bar 360 That keeps us from our homes ethereal; And what our duties there : to nightly call Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather ; To summon all the downiest clouds together For the sun's purple couch : to emulate In ministring the potent rule of fate With speed of fire-tailed exhalations ; To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons Sweet poesy by moonlight : besides these, A world of other unguess'd offices. 370 Anon they wander'd, by divine converse, Into Elysium ; vieing to rehearse Each one his own anticipated bliss. One felt heart-certain that he could not miss His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs, Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows Her lips with music for the welcoming. Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring, To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails, Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond vales : 380 Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind.

ENDYMION.

And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind; And, ever after, through those regions be His messenger, his little Mercury. Some were athirst in soul to see again Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign In times long past; to sit with them, and talk Of all the chances in their earthly walk; Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores Of happiness, to when upon the moors. ENDYMION.

Benighted, close they huddled from the cold, And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-told Their fond imaginations,-saving him Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim, Endymion : yet hourly had he striven To hide the cankering venom, that had riven His fainting recollections. Now indeed His senses had swoon'd off : he did not heed The sudden silence, or the whispers low, Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe, 400 Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms, Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms : But in the self-same fixed trance he kept, Like one who on the earth had never stept. Ave, even as dead-still as a marble man. Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close? Peona, his sweet sister : of all those, His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made, And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade 410 A yielding up, a cradling on her care. Her eloquence did breathe away the curse : She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse Of happy changes in emphatic dreams, Along a path between two little streams,— Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow, From low-grown branches, and his footsteps slow From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small; Until they came to where these streamlets fall, With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush, 420 Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush With crystal mocking of the trees and sky. A little shallop, floating there hard by, Pointed its beak over the fringed bank ; And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank, And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,-Peona guiding, through the water straight, Towards a bowery island opposite; Which gaining presently, she steered light Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove, 430 Where nested was an arbour, overwove

BOOK L

By many a summer's silent fingering; To whose cool bosom she was used to bring Her playmates, with their needle broidery, And minstret memories of times gone by.

ENDYMION.

So she was gently glad to see him laid Under her favourite bower's quiet shade, On her own couch, new made of flower leaves, Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves When last the sun his autumn tresses shook, 440 And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took. Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest : But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest Peona's busy hand against his lips, And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps A patient watch over the stream that creeps Windingly by it, so the quiet maid Held her in peace : so that a whispering blade Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling 450 Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling Among seer leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep ! O comfortable bird. That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind Till it is hush'd and smooth ! O unconfin'd Restraint ! imprisoned liberty ! great key To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy, Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves, Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves And moonlight ; aye, to all the mazy world Of silvery enchantment !--who, upfurl'd Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour, But renovates and lives ?- Thus, in the bower, Endymion was calm'd to life again. Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain, He said : " I feel this thine endearing love All through my bosom : thou art as a dove Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings About me; and the pearliest dew not brings Such morning incense from the fields of May, 470 As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray

From those kind eyes,-the very home and haunt Of sisterly affection. Can I want Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears? Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears That, any longer, I will pass my days Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise My voice upon the mountain-heights ; once more Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar : Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll 480 Around the breathed boar : again I'll poll The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow : And, when the pleasant sun is getting low, Again I'll linger in a sloping mead To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet, And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source, Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim, And took a lute, from which there pulsing came A lively prelude, fashioning the way In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay More subtle cadenced, more forest wild Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child ; And nothing since has floated in the air So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand ; For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd The quick invisible strings, even though she saw 500 Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw Before the deep intoxication. But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon Her self-possession-swung the lute aside, And earnestly said : "Brother, 'tis vain to hide That thou dost know of things mysterious, Immortal, starry ; such alone could thus Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught A Paphian dove upon a message sent? 510 Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd bent, Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen

ENDYMION.

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Her naked limbs among the alders green; And that, alas ! is death. No, I can trace Something more high perplexing in thy face !"

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Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand, . And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland And merry in our meadows? How is this? Tell me thine ailment : tell me all amiss !--Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change 520 Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange? Or more complete to overwhelm surmise? Ambition is no sluggard : 'tis no prize, That toiling years would put within my grasp, That I have sigh'd for : with so deadly gasp No man e'er panted for a mortal love. So all have set my heavier grief above These things which happen. Rightly have they done: I, who still saw the horizontal sun Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world, Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd 531 My spear aloft, as signal for the chace-I, who, for very sport of heart, would race With my own steed from Araby ; pluck down

A lion into growling, loth retire— To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire, And sink thus low ! but I will ease my breast Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

A vulture from his towery perching ; frown

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

His snorting four. Now when his chariot last Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast, There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red : At which I wondered greatly, knowing well That but one night had wrought this flowery spell ; And, sitting down close by, began to muse What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus, In passing here, his owlet pinions shook ; Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth, Had dipt his rod in it : such garland wealth Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought, Until my head was dizzy and distraught. Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul; And shaping visions all about my sight Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light ; The which became more strange, and strange, and dim.

ENDYMION.

And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim : 571 And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell The enchantment that afterwards befel? Yet it was but a dream : yet such a dream That never tongue, although it overteem With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring, Could figure out and to conception bring All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay Watching the zenith, where the milky way Among the stars in virgin splendour pours ; 580 And travelling my eye, until the doors Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight, I became loth and fearful to alight From such high soaring by a downward glance : So kept me stedfast in that airy trance, Spreading imaginary pinions wide. When, presently, the stars began to glide, And faint away, before my eager view : At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue, And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge ; 590 And lo ! from opening clouds, I saw emerge The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er

BOOK I.

A shell for Neptune's goblet : she did soar So passionately bright, my dazzled soul Commingling with her argent spheres did roll Through clear and cloudy, even when she went At last into a dark and vapoury tent-Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train Of planets all were in the blue again. To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd 600 My sight right upward : but it was quite dazed By a bright something, sailing down apace, Making me quickly veil my eyes and face : Again I look'd, and, O ye deities, Who from Olympus watch our destinies ! Whence that completed form of all completeness? Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness? Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair? Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun ; 610 Not-thy soft hand, fair sister ! let me shun Such follying before thee-yet she had, Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad ; And they were simply gordian'd up and braided, Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded, Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orbed brow: The which were blended in, I know not how, With such a paradise of lips and eyes, Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs, That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings 620 And plays about its fancy, till the stings Of human neighbourhood envenom all. Unto what awful power shall I call? To what high fane ?- Ah ! see her hovering feet, More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion ; 'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed, 630 Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed, Handfuls of daisies."—" Endymion, how strange ! Dream within dream !"—" She took an airy range, And then, towards me, like a very maid,

ENDYMION.

Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid, And press'd me by the hand : Ah ! 'twas too much : Methought I fainted at the charmed touch, Yet held my recollection, even as one Who dives three fathoms where the waters run Gurgling in beds of coral : for anon, 640 I felt upmounted in that region Where falling stars dart their artillery forth, And eagles struggle with the buffeting north That balances the heavy meteor-stone ;--Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone, But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky. Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high, And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd ; Such as ay muster where grey time has scoop'd Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side : 650 There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd To faint once more by looking on my bliss-I was distracted ; madly did I kiss The wooing arms which held me, and did give My eyes at once to death : but 'twas to live, To take in draughts of life from the gold fount Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and count The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd A second self, that each might be redeem'd And plunder'd of its load of blessedness. 660 Ah, desperate mortal ! I ev'n dar'd to press Her very cheek against my crowned lip, And, at that moment, felt my body dip Into a warmer air : a moment more, Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes A scent of violets, and blossoming limes, Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells, Made delicate from all white-flower bells ; And once, above the edges of our nest, 670 An arch face peep'd,-an Oread as I guess'd.

ENDYMION.

"Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me In midst of all this heaven? Why not see, Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark, And stare them from me? But no, like a spark

That needs must die, although its little beam Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream Fell into nothing—into stupid sleep. And so it was, until a gentle creep, A careful moving caught my waking ears, 680 And up I started : Ah ! my sighs, my tears, My clenched hands ;- for lo ! the poppies hung Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung A heavy ditty, and the sullen day Had chidden herald Hesperus away, With leaden looks : the solitary breeze Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did teaze With wayward melancholy; and I thought, Mark me, Peona ! that sometimes it brought Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled adieus !- 60 Away I wander'd-all the pleasant hues Of heaven and earth had faded : deepest shades Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd gills Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd In little journeys, I beheld in it A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit 700 My soul with under darkness ; to entice My stumblings down some monstrous precipice : Therefore I eager followed, and did curse The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse, Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven! These things, with all their comfortings, are given To my down-sunken hours, and with thee, Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea Of weary life." 710

ENDYMION.

Thus ended he, and both Sat silent : for the maid was very loth To answer ; feeling well that breathed words Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,

And wonders ; struggles to devise some blame ; To put on such a look as would say, Shame On this poor weakness ! but, for all her strife, She could as soon have crush'd away the life 720 From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause, She said with trembling chance : "Is this the cause? This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas ! That one who through this middle earth should pass Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave His name upon the harp-string, should achieve No higher bard than simple maidenhood, Singing alone, and fearfully,-how the blood Left his young cheek ; and how he used to stray He knew not where; and how he would say, nay, 730 If any said 'twas love : and yet 'twas love ; What could it be but love? How a ring-dove Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path; And how he died : and then, that love doth scathe, The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses; And then the ballad of his sad life closes With sighs, and an alas !- Endymion ! Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,-anon Among the winds at large-that all may hearken ! Although, before the crystal heavens darken, 740 I watch and dote upon the silver lakes Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands, Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands With horses prancing o'er them, palaces And towers of amethyst,-would I so tease My pleasant days, because I could not mount Into those regions? The Morphean fount Of that fine element that visions, dreams, And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams 750 Into its airy channels with so subtle, So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle, Circled a million times within the space Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace, A tinting of its quality : how light Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight Than the mere nothing that engenders them ! Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem

ENDYMION.

Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick? Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth Look'd up : a conflicting of shame and ruth Was in his plaited brow : yet his eyelids Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids A little breeze to creep between the fans Of careless butterflies : amid his pains He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew, Full palatable ; and a colour grew Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

ENDYMION.

"Peona ! ever have I long'd to slake 770 My thirst for the world's praises : nothing base, No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd-Though now 'tis tatter'd ; leaving my bark bar'd And sullenly drifting : yet my higher hope Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope, To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks. Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks Our ready minds to fellowship divine, A fellowship with essence ; till we shine, 780 Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold The clear religion of heaven ! Fold A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness, And soothe thy lips : hist, when the airy stress Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds, And with a sympathetic touch unbinds Eolian magic from their lucid wombs : Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs; Old ditties sigh above their father's grave; Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave 790 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot ; Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit, Where long ago a giant battle was; And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass In every place where infant Orpheus slept. Feel we these things ?- that moment have we stept Into a sort of oneness, and our state Is like a floating spirit's. But there are Richer entanglements, enthralments far

More self-destroying, leading, by degrees, 800 To the chief intensity : the crown of these Is made of love and friendship, and sits high Upon the forehead of humanity. All its more ponderous and bulky worth Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth A steady splendour ; but at the tip-top, There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop Of light, and that is love : its influence, Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense, At which we start and fret ; till in the end, 810 Melting into its radiance, we blend, Mingle, and so become a part of it,-Nor with aught else can our souls interknit So wingedly: when we combine therewith, Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith, And we are nurtured like a pelican brood. Ave, so delicious is the unsating food, That men, who might have tower'd in the van Of all the congregated world, to fan And winnow from the coming step of time 820 All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime Left by men-slugs and human serpentry, Have been content to let occasion die, Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium. And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb, Than speak against this ardent listlessness : For I have ever thought that it might bless The world with benefits unknowingly; As does the nightingale, upperched high, And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves- 830 She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood. Just so may love, although 'tis understood The mere commingling of passionate breath, Produce more than our searching witnesseth : What I know not : but who, of men, can tell That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell

ENDYMION.

To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail, The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale, The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones, 840

BOOK I.

The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones, Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet, If human souls did never kiss and greet?

ENDYMION.

"Now, if this earthly love has power to make Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake Ambition from their memories, and brim Their measure of content ; what merest whim, Seems all this poor endeavour after fame, To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim A love immortal, an immortal too. Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true, 850 And never can be born of atomies That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies, Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure, My restless spirit never could endure To brood so long upon one luxury, Unless it did, though fearfully, espy A hope beyond the shadow of a dream. My sayings will the less obscured seem, When I have told thee how my waking sight 860 Has made me scruple whether that same night Was pass'd in dreaming. Hearken, sweet Peona! Beyond the matron-temple of Latona, Which we should see but for these darkening boughs, Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart, And meet so nearly, that with wings outraught, And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide Past them, but he must brush on every side. Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell, 870 Far as the slabbed margin of a well, Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky. Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet Edges them round, and they have golden pits: 'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat, When all above was faint with mid-day heat. And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed, 880 I'd bubble up the water through a reed ;

So reaching back to boy-hood : make me ships Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips, With leaves stuck in them ; and the Neptune be Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily, When love-lorn hours had left me less a child, I sat contemplating the figures wild Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through. Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver ; 800 So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver The happy chance : so happy, I was fain To follow it upon the open plain, And, therefore, was just going ; when, behold ! A wonder, fair as any I have told-The same bright face I tasted in my sleep, Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap Through the cool depth.-It moved as if to flee-I started up, when lo ! refreshfully, There came upon my face, in plenteous showers, 900 Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers, Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight, Bathing my spirit in a new delight. Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss Alone preserved me from the drear abyss Of death, for the fair form had gone again. Pleasure is oft a visitant ; but pain Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth On the deer's tender haunches : late, and loth, 'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure. 010 How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure Of weary days, made deeper exquisite, By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night ! Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still, Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill : And a whole age of lingering moments crept Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept Away at once the deadly yellow spleen. Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen ; Once more been tortured with renewed life. 020 When last the wintry gusts gave over strife With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes

BOOK I.

In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,-That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs, My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd, Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd All torment from my breast ;--'twas even then, Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den Of helpless discontent,-hurling my lance 030 From place to place, and following at chance, At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck, And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck In the middle of a brook, -whose silver ramble Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble, Tracing along, it brought me to a cave, Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,-'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead, Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and spread Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home. "Ah ! impious mortal, whither do I roam?" Said I, low voic'd : "Ah, whither ! 'Tis the grot Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot, Doth her resign ; and where her tender hands She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands : Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits, And babbles thorough silence, till her wits Are gone in tender madness, and anon, 050 Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone Of sadness. O that she would take my vows, And breathe them sighingly among the boughs, To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head, Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed, And weave them dyingly-send honey-whispers Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers May sigh my love unto her pitying ! O charitable echo! hear, and sing This ditty to her !-tell her "-so I stay'd 060 My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid, Stood stupefied with my own empty folly, And blushing for the freaks of melancholy. Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came :

'Endymion ! the cave is secreter Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys And trembles through my labyrinthine hair." 970 At that oppress'd I hurried in.-Ah ! where Are those swift moments? Whither are they fled? I'll smile no more, Peona : nor will wed Sorrow the way to death : but patiently Bear up against it : so farewel, sad sigh : And come instead demurest meditation. To occupy me wholly, and to fashion My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink. No more will I count over, link by link, My chain of grief : no longer strive to find 980 A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind Blustering about my ears : ave, thou shalt see. Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be : What a calm round of hours shall make my days. There is a paly flame of hope that plays Where'er I look : but yet, I'll say 'tis naught-And here I bid it die. Have not I caught, Already, a more healthy countenance? By this the sun is setting ; we may chance Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car." 990

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

G

ENDYMION.

BOOK II.

O SOVEREIGN power of love ! O grief ! O balm ! All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm, And shadowy, through the mist of passed years : For others, good or bad, hatred and tears Have become indolent ; but touching thine, One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine, One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days. The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze, Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades, Struggling, and blood, and shrieks-all dimly fades 10 Into some backward corner of the brain : Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet. Hence, pageant history ! hence, gilded cheat ! Swart planet in the universe of deeds ! Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds Along the pebbled shore of memory ! Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified To goodly vessels ; many a sail of pride, And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry. But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly About the great Athenian admiral's mast? What care, though striding Alexander past The Indus with his Macedonian numbers? Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers The glutted Cyclops, what care ?--Juliet leaning Amid her window-flowers,-sighing,-weaning Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow, Doth more avail than these : the silver flow 30 Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,

BOOK II.

Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den, Are things to brood on with more ardency Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully Must such conviction come upon his head, Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread, Without one muse's smile, or kind behest, The path of love and poesy. But rest, In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear Love's standard on the battlements of song. So once more days and nights aid me along, Like legion'd soldiers.

ENDYMION.

Brain-sick shepherd-prince, What promise hast thou faithful guarded since The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows? Alas ! 'tis his old grief. For many days, Has he been wandering in uncertain ways : Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks ; 50 Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes Of the lone woodcutter ; and listening still, Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill. Now he is sitting by a shady spring, And elbow-deep with feverous fingering Stems the upbursting cold : a wild rose tree Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see A bud which snares his fancy : lo ! but now He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water : how ! It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight; And, in the middle, there is softly pight A golden butterfly; upon whose wings There must be surely character'd strange things, For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft, Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands : Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies. It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was; And like a new-born spirit did he pass

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BOOK II.

Through the green evening quiet in the sun, O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun, Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams The summer time away. One track unseams A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew, He sinks adown a solitary glen, Where there was never sound of mortal men, Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences 80 Melting to silence, when upon the breeze Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet, To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide, Until it reached a splashing fountain's side That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd Unto the temperate air : then high it soar'd, And, downward, suddenly began to dip, As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip The crystal spout-head : so it did, with touch 00 Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch Even with mealy gold the waters clear. But, at that very touch, to disappear So fairy-quick, was strange ! Bewildered, Endymion sought around, and shook each bed Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue, What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest? It was a nymph uprisen to the breast In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood 100 'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood. To him her dripping hand she softly kist, And anxiously began to plait and twist Her ringlets round her fingers, saying : "Youth ! Too long, alas, hast thou stary'd on the ruth. The bitterness of love : too long indeed. Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer All the bright riches of my crystal coffer To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish. IIO Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish, Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze ; Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws

A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells, My charming rod, my potent river spells; Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup Meander gave me,-for I bubbled up To fainting creatures in a desert wild. But woe is me, I am but as a child To gladden thee; and all I dare to say, Is, that I pity thee; that on this day I've been thy guide ; that thou must wander far In other regions, past the scanty bar To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en From every wasting sigh, from every pain, Into the gentle bosom of thy love. Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above : But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewel! I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

ENDYMION.

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze, Who brooded o'er the water in amaze : The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool, Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still, And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer, Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down; And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps, Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whoso encamps To take a fancied city of delight, O what a wretch is he ! and when 'tis his, After long toil and travelling, to miss The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile : Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil; Another city doth he set about, Free from the smallest pebble-bead of doubt That he will seize on trickling honey-combs : Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams, And onward to another city speeds. But this is human life : the war, the deeds,

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BOOK II.

The disappointment, the anxiety, Imagination's struggles, far and nigh, All human ; bearing in themselves this good, That they are still the air, the subtle food, To make us feel existence, and to shew How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow, 160 Whether to weeds or flowers ; but for me, There is no depth to strike in : I can see Nought earthly worth my compassing; so stand Upon a misty, jutting head of land-Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute, When mad Eurydice is listening to 't; I'd rather stand upon this misty peak, With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek, But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love, Than be-I care not what. O meekest dove 170 Of heaven ! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and fair ! From thy blue throne, now filling all the air, Glance but one little beam of temper'd light Into my bosom, that the dreadful might And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd ! Yet do not so, sweet queen ; one torment spar'd, Would give a pang to jealous misery, Worse than the torment's self : but rather tie Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout 180 Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou, Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream. O be propitious, nor severely deem My madness impious; for, by all the stars That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars That kept my spirit in are burst-that I Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky! How beautiful thou art ! The world how deep ! How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep 100 Around their axle ! Then these gleaming reins, How lithe ! When this thy chariot attains Its airy goal, haply some bower veils Those twilight eyes? Those eyes !---my spirit fails--Dear goddess, help ! or the wide-gaping air Will gulph me-help !"-At this with madden'd stare,

And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood ; Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood, Or blind Orion hungry for the morn. And, but from the deep cavern there was borne 200 A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone ; Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth : "Descend,

Young mountaincer ! descend where alleys bend Into the sparry hollows of the world ! Of thast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd As from thy threshold ; day by day hast been A little lower than the chilly sheen Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms Into the deadening ether that still charms 210 Their marble being : now, as deep profound As those are high, descend ! He ne'er is crown'd With immortality, who fears to follow Where airy voices lead : so through the hollow, The silent mysteries of earth, descend !"

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

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness ; Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite 221 To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light, The region ; nor bright, nor sombre wholly, But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy; A dusky empire and its diadems; One faint eternal eventide of gems. Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold, Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told, With all its lines abrupt and angular : Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star, 230 Through a vast antre ; then the metal woof, Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss, It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss Fancy into belief : anon it leads

Through winding passages, where sameness breeds Vexing conceptions of some sudden change; Whether to silver grots, or giant range Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge 240 Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb His bosom grew, when first he, far away, Descried an orbed diamond, set to fray Old darkness from his throne : 'twas like the sun Uprisen o'er chaos : and with such a stun Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it, He saw not fiercer wonders-past the wit 250 Of any spirit to tell, but one of those Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close, Will be its high remembrancers : who they? The mighty ones who have made eternal day For Greece and England. While astonishment With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went Into a marble gallery, passing through A mimic temple, so complete and true In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd, 260 Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine, And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine, A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully, The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd eye Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old. And when, more near against the marble cold He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread All courts and passages, where silence dead Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint : And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint 270 Himself with every mystery, and awe : Till, weary, he sat down before the maw Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim To wild uncertainty and shadows grim. There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before, And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore The journey homeward to habitual self!

A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf, Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar, Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire, Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought, The deadly feel of solitude : for lo ! He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd, The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west, Like herded elephants ; nor felt, nor prest Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air ; But far from such companionship to wear An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away, Was now his lot. And must he patient stay, Tracing fantastic figures with his spear ? "No !" exclaimed he, " why should I tarry here ?" No ! loudly echoed times innumerable. At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell His paces back into the temple's chief ; Warming and glowing strong in the belief 300 Of help from Dian : so that when again He caught her airy form, thus did he plain, Moving more near the while. "O Haunter chaste Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste, Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen, What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos? Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos Of thy disparted nymphs ? Through what dark tree Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be, 310 'Tis in the breath of heaven : thou dost taste Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste Thy loveliness in dismal elements; But, finding in our green earth sweet contents, There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee It feels Elysian, how rich to me, An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name ! Within my breast there lives a choking flame-

O let me cool it among the zephyr-boughs ! A homeward fever parches up my tongue-320 O let me slake it at the running springs ! Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings-O let me once more hear the linnet's note ! Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float-O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light ! Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white? O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice ! Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice? O think how this dry palate would rejoice ! If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice, 330 Oh think how I should love a bed of flowers !--Young goddess! let me see my native bowers! Deliver me from this rapacious deep !"

ENDYMION.

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap His destiny, alert he stood : but when Obstinate silence came heavily again, Feeling about for its old couch of space And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill. But 'twas not long ; for, sweeter than the rill 340 To its old channel, or a swollen tide To margin sallows, were the leaves he spied, And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns Up heaping through the slab : refreshment drowns Itself, and strives its own delights to hide-Nor in one spot alone ; the floral pride In a long whispering birth enchanted grew Before his footsteps; as when heav'd anew Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore, Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar, Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence. 351

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense, Upon his fairy journey on he hastes; So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes One moment with his hand among the sweets: Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,

BOOK II.

This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe : For it came more softly than the east could blow 360 Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles ; Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

ENDYMION.

O did he ever live, that lonely man, Who lov'd—and music slew not? 'Tis the pest Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest; That things of delicate and tenderest worth Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth, By one consuming flame : it doth immerse 370 And suffocate true blessings in a curse. Half-happy, by comparison of bliss, Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear; First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear, Vanish'd in elemental passion.

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

After a thousand mazes overgone, At last, with sudden step, he came upon A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high, Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy, And more of beautiful and strange beside : For on a silken couch of rosy pride, In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth Of fondest beauty ; fonder, in fair sooth, Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach : And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach, Or ripe October's faded marigolds, 91

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Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds-Not hiding up an Apollonian curve Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light; But rather, giving them to the filled sight Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd, By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth To slumbery pout ; just as the morning south Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head, Four lily stalks did their white honours wed To make a coronal; and round him grew All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue, Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh : The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh, Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine, Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine : Convolvulus in streaked vases flush; The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush; And virgin's bower, trailing airily; With others of the sisterhood. Hard by, Stood serene Cupids watching silently. One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings, Muffling to death the pathos with his wings; And, ever and anon, uprose to look At the youth's slumber; while another took A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew, And shook it on his hair ; another flew In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

ENDYMION.

At these enchantments, and yet many more, The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er ; 430 Until, impatient in embarrassment, He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway, Smiling, thus whisper'd : "Though from upper day Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer ! For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour, When some ethereal and high-favouring donor Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense ;

As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence 440 Was I in no wise startled. So recline Upon these living flowers. Here is wine, Alive with sparkles-never, I aver, Since Ariadne was a vintager, So cool a purple : taste these juicy pears, Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears Were high about Pomona : here is cream, Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam ; Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd For the boy Jupiter : and here, undimm'd 450 By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums Ready to melt between an infant's gums : And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees, In starlight, by the three Hesperides. Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know Of all these things around us." He did so, Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre ; And thus : "I need not any hearing tire By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind 460 Him all in all unto her doting self. Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf, He was content to let her amorous plea Faint through his careless arms ; content to see An unseiz'd heaven dving at his feet ; Content, O fool ! to make a cold retreat, When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn, Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born Of diverse passion ; when her lips and eyes Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs 470 Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small. Hush ! no exclaim-yet, justly mightst thou call Curses upon his head.-I was half glad, But my poor mistress went distract and mad, When the boar tusk'd him : so away she flew To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's beard ; Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd Each summer time to life. Lo ! this is he, That same Adonis, safe in the privacy 480 Of this still region all his winter-sleep.

ENDYMION.

ENDYMION.

BOOK II.

Aye, sleep; for when our love-sick queen did weep Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power, Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness : The which she fills with visions, and doth dress In all this quiet luxury ; and hath set Us young immortals, without any let, To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd, Even to a moment's filling up, and fast She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle. Look ! how those winged listeners all this while Stand anxious : see ! behold !"-This clamant word Broke through the careful silence; for they heard A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd Pigeons and doves : Adonis something mutter'd, The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually 500 Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come ! come ! Arise ! awake ! Clear summer has forth walk'd Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd Full soothingly to every nested finch : Rise, Cupids ! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin !" At this, from every side they hurried in, Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists, And doubling overhead their little fists 510 In backward yawns. But all were soon alive : For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair, So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air Odorous and enlivening; making all To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call For their sweet queen : when lo ! the wreathed green Disparted, and far upward. could be seen Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne, Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn, Spun off a drizzling dew,-which falling chill 521 On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still Nestle and turn uneasily about.

Soon were the white doves plain, with necks stretch'd out,

And silken traces lighten'd in descent ; And soon, returning from love's banishment, Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd : Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd A tumult to his heart, and a new life Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife, 530 But for her comforting ! unhappy sight, But meeting her blue orbs ! Who, who can write Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there, Saving love's self, who stands superb to share The general gladness : awfully he stands ; A sovereign quell is in his waving hands ; No sight can bear the lightning of his bow ; His quiver is mysterious, none can know 540 What themselves think of it ; from forth his eyes There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes : A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who Look full upon it feel anon the blue Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls. Endymion feels it, and no more controls The burning prayer within him ; so, bent low, He had begun a plaining of his woe. But Venus, bending forward, said : " My child, Favour this gentle youth ; his days are wild 550 With love-he-but alas ! too well I see Thou know'st the deepness of his misery. Ah, smile not so, my son : I tell thee true, That when through heavy hours I used to rue The endless sleep of this new-born Adon', This stranger ay I pitied. For upon A dreary morning once I fled away Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray For this my love : for vexing Mars had teaz'd Me even to tears : thence, when a little eas'd, 560 Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood, I saw this youth as he despairing stood : Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind :

Those same full fringed lids a constant blind Over his sullen eyes : I saw him throw Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though Death had come sudden ; for no jot he mov'd, Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd Some fair immortal, and that his embrace Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace 57°

ENDYMION.

Of this in heaven : I have mark'd each cheek, And find it is the vainest thing to seek ; And that of all things 'tis kept secretest. Endymion ! one day thou wilt be blest : So still obey the guiding hand that fends Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends. 'Tis a concealment needful in extreme ; And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu ! Here must we leave thee." — At these words up flew

The impatient doves, up rose the floating car, Up went the hum celestial. High afar The Latmian saw them minish into nought; And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow. When all was darkened, with Etnean throe The earth clos'd—gave a solitary moan— And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast, For all those visions were o'ergone, and past, And he in loneliness : he felt assur'd Of happy times, when all he had endur'd Would seem a feather to the mighty prize. So, with unusual gladness, on he hies Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore, Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquois floor, Black polish'd porticos of awful shade, And, at the last, a diamond balustrade, Leading afar past wild magnificence, Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,

BOOK II.

Streams subterranean tease their granite beds ; Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash The waters with his spear ; but at the splash, Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound, 610 Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells On this delight ; for, every minute's space, The streams with changed magic interlace : Sometimes like delicatest lattices, Cover'd with crystal vines ; then weeping trees, Moving about as in a gentle wind, Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd, Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies, Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries 620 Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair. Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare : And then the water, into stubborn streams Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams, Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof. Of those dusk places in times far aloof Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewel To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell, And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes, Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly gapes, 630 Blackening on every side, and overhead A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread With starlight gems : aye, all so huge and strange, The solitary felt a hurried change Working within him into something dreary,---Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary, And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds. But he revives at once : for who beholds New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough? Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below, 640 Came mother Cybele ! alone-alone-In sombre chariot ; dark foldings thrown About her majesty, and front death-pale. With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale H

The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws, Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,

BOOK II.

650

Young traveller, in such a mournful place? Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace The diamond path? And does it indeed end Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne Call ardently ! He was indeed wayworn ; Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost ; To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings, 660 Without one impious word, himself he flings, Committed to the darkness and the gloom : Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom, Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell Through unknown things ; till exhaled asphodel, And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd, Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd With airs delicious. In the greenest nook 670 The eagle landed him, and farewel took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown With golden moss. His every sense had grown Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread Was Hesperean; to his capable ears Silence was music from the holy spheres; A dewy luxury was in his eyes; The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell 680 He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas! Said he, " will all this gush of feeling pass Away in solitude? And must they wane,

Like melodies upon a sandy plain, Without an echo? Then shall I be left So sad, so melancholy, so bereft ! Yet still I feel immortal ! O my love, My breath of life, where art thou? High above, Dancing before the morning gates of heaven? 600 Or keeping watch among those starry seven, Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters. One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters? Or art, impossible ! a nymph of Dian's, Weaving a coronal of tender scions For very idleness? Where'er thou art. Methinks it now is at my will to start Into thine arms ; to scare Aurora's train, And snatch thee from the morning ; o'er the main To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off 700 From thy sea-foamy cradle ; or to doff Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves. No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives Its powerless self : I know this cannot be. O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee To her entrancements : hither sleep awhile ! Hither most gentle sleep ! and soothing foil For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued With power to dream deliciously; so wound 710 Through a dim passage, searching till he found The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where He threw himself, and just into the air Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss ! A naked waist : " Fair Cupid, whence is this?" A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am I !" At which soft ravishment, with doating cry They trembled to each other.—Helicon ! O fountain'd hill ! Old Homer's Helicon ! That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er 720 These sorry pages ; then the verse would soar And sing above this gentle pair, like lark Over his nested young : but all is dark Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count

98

Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll Is folded by the Muses ; the bright roll Is in Apollo's hand : our dazed eyes Have seen a new tinge in the western skies : The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet, 730 Although the sun of poesy is set, These lovers did embrace, and we must weep That there is no old power left to steep A quill immortal in their joyous tears. Long time in silence did their anxious fears Question that thus it was; long time they lay Fondling and kissing every doubt away ; Long time ere soft caressing sobs began To mellow into words, and then there ran Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips. 740 "O known Unknown ! from whom my being sips Such darling essence, wherefore may I not Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot Pillow my chin for ever? ever press These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess? Why not for ever and for ever feel That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal Away from me again, indeed, indeed-Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair ! 750 Is-is it to be so? No! Who will dare To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will, Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still Let me entwine thee surer, surer-now How can we part? Elysium ! who art thou? Who, that thou canst not be for ever here, Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere? Enchantress ! tell me by this soft embrace, By the most soft completion of thy face, Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes, 760 And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties-These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine, The passion "------" O lov'd Ida the divine ! Endymion ! dearest ! Ah, unhappy me ! His soul will 'scape us-O felicity ! How he does love me! His poor temples beat To the very tune of love-how sweet, sweet, sweet.

ENDYMION.

Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die : Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell 770 Affright this lethargy ! I cannot quell Its heavy pressure, and will press at least My lips to thine, that they may richly feast Until we taste the life of love again. What ! dost thou move ? dost kiss ? O bliss ! O pain ! I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive; And so long absence from thee doth bereave My soul of any rest : yet must I hence : Yet, can I not to starry eminence Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own 780 Myself to thee. Ah, dearest, do not groan Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy. And I must blush in heaven. O that I Had done it already; that the dreadful smiles At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles, Had waned from Olympus' solemn height, And from all serious Gods; that our delight Was quite forgotten, save of us alone ! And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes : 790 Yet must I be a coward !--Horror rushes Too palpable before me-the sad look Of Jove-Minerva's start-no bosom shook With awe of purity-no Cupid pinion In reverence veiled-my crystaline dominion Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity ! But what is this to love? O I could fly With thee into the ken of heavenly powers, So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours, Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once 800 That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce-Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown-O I do think that I have been alone In chastity : yes, Pallas has been sighing, While every eve saw me my hair uptying With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love, I was as vague as solitary dove, Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss-Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,

ENDYMION.

810 An immortality of passion's thine : Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade Ourselves whole summers by a river glade; And I will tell thee stories of the sky, And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy. My happy love will overwing all bounds ! O let me melt into thee; let the sounds Of our close voices marry at their birth; Let us entwine hoveringly-O dearth Of human words ! roughness of mortal speech ! 820 Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach Thine honied tongue-lute-breathings, which I gasp To have thee understand, now while I clasp Thee thus, and weep for fondness-I am pain'd, Endymion : woe ! woe ! is grief contain'd In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"-Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife Melted into a languor. He return'd Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd 830

With too much passion, will here stay and pity, For the mere sake of truth ; as 'tis a ditty Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told By a cavern wind unto a forest old ; And then the forest told it in a dream To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam A poet caught as he was journeying To Phœbus' shrine ; and in it he did fling His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space, And after, straight in that inspired place 840 He sang the story up into the air, Giving it universal freedom. There Has it been ever sounding for those ears Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers Yon centinel stars; and he who listens to it Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it : For quenchless burnings come upon the heart, Made fiercer by a fear lest any part Should be engulphed in the eddying wind. As much as here is penn'd doth always find 840[50] A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain; Anon the strange voice is upon the wane— And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound, That the fair visitant at last unwound Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.— Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

ENDYMION.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.-Endymion awoke, that grief of hers Sweet paining on his ear : he sickly guess'd How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd 860 His empty arms together, hung his head, And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed Sat silently. Love's madness he had known : Often with more than tortured lion's groan Moanings had burst from him ; but now that rage Had pass'd away : no longer did he wage A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars. No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars : The lyre of his soul Eolian tun'd Forgot all violence, and but commun'd 870 With melancholy thought : O he had swoon'd Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love Henceforth was dove-like .- Loth was he to move From the imprinted couch, and when he did, 'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd Alecto's serpents ; ravishments more keen Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean Over eclipsing eyes : and at the last 880 It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast, O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls, And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls, Of every shape and size, even to the bulk In which whales arbour close, to brood and sulk Against an endless storm. Moreover too, Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue, Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder On all his life : his youth, up to the day 800 When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,

He stept upon his shepherd throne : the look Of his white palace in wild forest nook, And all the revels he had lorded there : Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair, With every friend and fellow-woodlander-Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur Of the old bards to mighty deeds : his plans To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans : That wondrous night : the great Pan-festival : 000 His sister's sorrow ; and his wanderings all, Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd : Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd High with excessive love. "And now," thought he, "How long must I remain in jeopardy Of blank amazements that amaze no more? Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core All other depths are shallow : essences, Once spiritual, are like muddy lees, Meant but to fertilize my earthly root, QIO And make my branches lift a golden fruit Into the bloom of heaven : other light, Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark, Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark ! My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells; Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells Of noises far away ?-list !"-Hereupon He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone Came louder, and behold, there as he lay, 020 On either side outgush'd, with misty spray, A copious spring; and both together dash'd Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and lash'd Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot, Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize Upon the last few steps, and with spent force Along the ground they took a winding course. Endymion follow'd-for it seem'd that one 930 Ever pursued, the other strove to shun-Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh He had left thinking of the mystery,-

ENDYMION.

And was now rapt in tender hoverings Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah ! what is it sings His dream away? What melodies are these? They sound as through the whispering of trees, Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

ENDYMION.

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph ! why fear Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why, 940 Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I Were rippling round her dainty fairness now, Circling about her waist, and striving how To entice her to a dive ! then stealing in Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin. O that her shining hair was in the sun, And I distilling from it thence to run In amorous rillets down her shrinking form ! To linger on her lily shoulders, warm Between her kissing breasts, and every charm 050 Touch raptur'd !- See how painfully I flow : Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe. Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead, A happy wooer, to the flowery mead Where all that beauty snar'd me."-" Cruel god. Desist ! or my offended mistress' nod Will stagnate all thy fountains :--tease me not With syren words-Ah, have I really got Such power to madden thee? And is it true-Away, away, or I shall dearly rue 960 My very thoughts : in mercy then away, Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane."-"O, Oread-Queen ! would that thou hadst a pain Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn And be a criminal."-" Alas, I burn, I shudder-gentle river, get thee hence. Alpheus ! thou enchanter ! every sense Of mine was once made perfect in these woods. Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods, 970 Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave ; But ever since I heedlessly did lave In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow Grew strong within me : wherefore serve me so.

And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty. Not once more did I close my happy eyes Amid the thrush's song. Away ! Avaunt ! O 'twas a cruel thing."—" Now thou dost taunt So softly, Arethusa, that I think If thou wast playing on my shady brink, Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid ! Stifle thine heart no more ;- nor be afraid Of angry powers : there are deities Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs 'Tis almost death to hear : O let me pour A dewy balm upon them !- fear no more, Sweet Arethusa ! Dian's self must feel Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal Blushing into my soul, and let us fly These dreary caverns for the open sky. 900 I will delight thee all my winding course, From the green sea up to my hidden source About Arcadian forests ; and will shew The channels where my coolest waters flow Through mossy rocks ; where, 'mid exuberant green, I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees Buzz from their honied wings: and thou shouldst please

ENDYMION.

Thyself to choose the richest, where we might 1001 Be incense-pillow'd every summer night. Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness, And let us be thus comforted ; unless Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam, And pour to death along some hungry sands."-"What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands Severe before me : persecuting fate ! Unhappy Arethusa ! thou wast late IOIO A huntress free in "-At this, sudden fell Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell. The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more, Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er The name of Arethusa. On the verge

BOOK II. ENDYMION.

Of that dark gulph he wept, and said : "I urge Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage, By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage, If thou art powerful, these lovers pains; And make them happy in some happy plains.

He turn'd—there was a whelming sound—he stept, There was a cooler light; and so he kept Towards it by a sandy path, and lo ! More suddenly than doth a moment go, The visions of the earth were gone and fled— He saw the giant sea above his head.

ENDYMION.

BOOK III.

THERE are who lord it o'er their fellow-men With most prevailing tinsel : who unpen Their baaing vanities, to browse away The comfortable green and juicy hay From human pastures ; or, O torturing fact ! Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one tinge Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight Able to face an owl's, they still are dight IO By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests, And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts, Save of blown self-applause, they proudly mount To their spirit's perch, their being's high account, Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones-Amid the fierce intoxicating tones Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums, And sudden cannon. Ah ! how all this hums, In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone-Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon, 20 And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks .--Are then regalities all gilded masks? No, there are throned seats unscalable But by a patient wing, a constant spell, Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd, Can make a ladder of the eternal wind, And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents To watch the abysm-birth of elements. Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate A thousand Powers keep religious state, 30 In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne :

And, silent as a consecrated urn. Hold sphery sessions for a season due. Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few ! Have bared their operations to this globe-Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe Our piece of heaven-whose benevolence Shakes hand with our own Ceres ; every sense Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude. As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud 40 'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear, Eterne Apollo ! that thy Sister fair Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest. When thy gold breath is misting in the west, She unobserved steals unto her throne. And there she sits most meek and most alone : As if she had not pomp subservient : As if thine eye, high Poet ! was not bent Towards her with the Muses in thine heart : As if the ministring stars kept not apart, 50 Waiting for silver-footed messages. O Moon ! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees Feel palpitations when thou lookest in : O Moon ! old boughs lisp forth a holier din The while they feel thine airy fellowship. Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine. Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields divine : Innumerable mountains rise, and rise, Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes ; 60 And yet thy benediction passeth not One obscure hiding-place, one little spot Where pleasure may be sent : the nested wren Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken, And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf Takes glimpses of thee ; thou art a relief To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps Within its pearly house.-The mighty deeps. The monstrous sea is thine-the myriad sea ! O Moon ! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee, 70 And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

ENDYMION.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode

Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale For one whose cheek is pale : thou dost bewail His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh? Ah ! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye, Or what a thing is love ! 'Tis She, but lo! How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe! 80 She dies at the thinnest cloud ; her loveliness Is wan on Neptune's blue : yet there's a stress Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees, Dancing upon the waves, as if to please The curly foam with amorous influence. O, not so idle : for down-glancing thence She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about O'erwhelming water-courses ; scaring out The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and fright'ning Their savage eyes with unaccustomed lightning. Where will the splendor be content to reach? O love ! how potent hast thou been to teach Strange journeyings ! Wherever beauty dwells, In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells, In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun, Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won. Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath ; Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death; Thou madest Pluto bear thin element ; And now, O winged Chieftain ! thou hast sent 100 A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world, To find Endymion.

ENDYMION.

On gold sand impearl'd With lily shells, and pebbles milky white, Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light Against his pallid face : he felt the charm To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm Of his heart's blood : 'twas very sweet ; he stay'd His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds, To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads, Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails. And so he kept, until the rosy veils ENDYMION.

Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd Into sweet air ; and sober'd morning came Meekly through billows :—when like taper-flame Left sudden by a dallying breath of air, He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd, With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd Above, around, and at his feet : save things More dead than Morpheus' imaginings : Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large Of gone sea-warriors ; brazen beaks and targe ; Rudders that for a hundred years had lost The sway of human hand ; gold vase emboss'd With long-forgotten story, and wherein No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin 130 But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls, Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls Who first were on the earth ; and sculptures rude In ponderous stone, developing the mood Of ancient Nox :- then skeletons of man, Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan, And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe These secrets struck into him ; and unless Dian had chaced away that heaviness, 140 He might have died : but now, with cheered feel, He onward kept ; wooing these thoughts to steal About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

"What is there in thee, Moon ! that thou shouldst move

My heart so potently? When yet a child I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd. Thou seem'dst my sister : hand in hand we went From eve to morn across the firmament. No apples would I gather from the tree, Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously : 150 No tumbling water ever spake romance, But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance :

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II2

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No woods were green enough, no bower divine, Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine : In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take, Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake ; And, in the summer tide of blossoming, No one but thee hath heard me blithly sing And mesh my dewy flowers all the night. No melody was like a passing spright 160 If it went not to solemnize thy reign. Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end ; And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend With all my ardours : thou wast the deep glen ; Thou wast the mountain-top-the sage's pen-The poet's harp-the voice of friends-the sun ; Thou wast the river-thou wast glory won ; Thou wast my clarion's blast-thou wast my steed-My goblet full of wine-my topmost deed :--170 Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon ! O what a wild and harmonized tune My spirit struck from all the beautiful ! On some bright essence could I lean, and lull Myself to immortality : I prest Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest. But, gentle Orb ! there came a nearer bliss-My strange love came—Felicity's abyss ! She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away-Yet not entirely: no, thy starry sway Has been an under-passion to this hour. Now I begin to feel thine orby power Is coming fresh upon me : O be kind, Keep back thine influence, and do not blind My sovereign vision.-Dearest love, forgive That I can think away from thee and live !-Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize One thought beyond thine argent luxuries ! How far beyond !" At this a surpris'd start Frosted the springing verdure of his heart ; For as he lifted up his eyes to swear How his own goddess was past all things fair, He saw far in the concave green of the sea An old man sitting calm and peacefully.

Upon a weeded rock this old man sat. And his white hair was awful, and a mat Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet : And, ample as the largest winding-sheet, A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones, O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans 200 Of ambitious magic : every ocean-form Was woven in with black distinctness ; storm, And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar Were emblem'd in the woof ; with every shape That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.

ENDYMION.

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

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

BOOK III.

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"Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my head In peace upon my watery pillow : now Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow. O Jove! I shall be young again, be young ! O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go,

ENDYMION.

BOOK III.

O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go, 240 When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe ?-I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten ; Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be, That writhes about the roots of Sicily : To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail, And mount upon the snortings of a whale To some black cloud ; thence down I'll madly sweep On forked lightning, to the deepest deep, Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd 250 With rapture to the other side of the world ! O, I am full of gladness ! Sisters three, I bow full hearted to your old decree ! Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign, For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine. Thou art the man !" Endymion started back Dismay'd ; and, like a wretch from whom the rack Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony, Mutter'd : "What lonely death am I to die In this cold region? Will he let me freeze, 260 And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas? Or will he touch me with his searing hand, And leave a black memorial on the sand? Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw, And keep me as a chosen food to draw His magian fish through hated fire and flame? O misery of hell! resistless, tame, Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout, Until the gods through heaven's blue look out !--O Tartarus! but some few days agone 270 Her soft arms were entwining me, and on Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves : Her lips were all my own, and-ah, ripe sheaves Of happiness ! ye on the stubble droop, But never may be garner'd. I must stoop

My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love, farewel!

Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell Would melt at thy sweet breath.—By Dian's hind Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan, 280 I care not for this old mysterious man!"

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

"Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus' sake ! I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel A very brother's yearning for thee steal Into mine own: for why? thou openest The prison gates that have so long opprest My weary watching. Though thou know'st it not, Thou art commission'd to this fated spot For great enfranchisement. O weep no more; 300 I am a friend to love, to loves of vore : Aye, hadst thou never lov'd an unknown power I had been grieving at this joyous hour But even now most miserable old. I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold Gave mighty pulses : in this tottering case Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid, For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd, Now as we speed towards our joyous task." 310

So saying, this young soul in age's mask Went forward with the Carian side by side : Resuming quickly thus ; while ocean's tide

BOOK III.

And left me tossing safely. But the crown Of all my life was utmost quietude : More did I love to lie in cavern rude, Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice, And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice ! There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear 360 The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep, Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep : And never was a day of summer shine, But I beheld its birth upon the brine : For I would watch all night to see unfold Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning gold Wide o'er the swelling streams : and constantly At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea, My nets would be spread out, and I at rest. The poor folk of the sea-country I blest 370 With daily boon of fish most delicate : They knew not whence this bounty, and elate Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach At things which, but for thee, O Latmian ! Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began To feel distemper'd longings : to desire The utmost privilege that ocean's sire Could grant in benediction : to be free Of all his kingdom. Long in misery 380 I wasted, ere in one extremest fit I plung'd for life or death. To interknit One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff Might seem a work of pain; so not enough Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt, And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt Whole days and days in sheer astonishment; Forgetful utterly of self-intent; Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow. Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth shew 300 His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill, I tried in fear the pinions of my will. 'Twas freedom ! and at once I visited The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.

Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands Took silently their foot-prints.

ENDYMION.

"My soul stands

BOOK III.

Now past the midway from mortality, And so I can prepare without a sigh To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain. I was a fisher once, upon this main, 320 And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay; Rough billows were my home by night and day,-The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had No housing from the storm and tempests mad, But hollow rocks, -and they were palaces Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease : Long years of misery have told me so. Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago. One thousand years !- Is it then possible To look so plainly through them? to dispel 330 A thousand years with backward glance sublime? To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime From off a crystal pool, to see its deep, And one's own image from the bottom peep? Yes : now I am no longer wretched thrall, My long captivity and moanings all Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum, The which I breathe away, and thronging come Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures : I was a lonely youth on desert shores. 341 My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars, And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry Plaining discrepant between sea and sky. Dolphins were still my playmates ; shapes unseen Would let me feel their scales of gold and green, Nor be my desolation ; and, full oft, When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe 350 My life away like a vast sponge of fate, Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state, Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down,

BOOK III.

No need to tell thee of them, for I see That thou hast been a witness-it must be For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth, By the melancholy corners of that mouth. So I will in my story straightway pass To more immediate matter. Woe, alas ! 400 That love should be my bane ! Ah, Scylla fair ! Why did poor Glaucus ever-ever dare To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-youth! I lov'd her to the very white of truth, And she would not conceive it. Timid thing ! She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing, Round every isle, and point, and promontory, From where large Hercules wound up his story Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew The more, the more I saw her dainty hue 410 Gleam delicately through the azure clear : Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear ; And in that agony, across my grief It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief-Cruel enchantress ! So above the water I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus' daughter. Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon :-It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower ; 420 Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees, Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees. How sweet, and sweeter! for I heard a lyre, And over it a sighing voice expire. It ceased-I caught light footsteps; and anon The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove! With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall 430 The dew of her rich speech : "Ah! Art awake? O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake! I am so oppress'd with joy! Why, I have shed An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead : And now I find thee living, I will pour

From these devoted eyes their silver store, Until exhausted of the latest drop, So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop Here, that I too may live : but if beyond Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond 440 Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme : If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream : If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute. Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit, O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd Her charming syllables, till indistinct Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul : And then she hover'd over me, and stole So near, that if no nearer it had been This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen. 450

ENDYMION.

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

"Who could resist? Who in this universe? She did so breathe ambrosia ; so immerse My fine existence in a golden clime. She took me like a child of suckling time. And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd, The current of my former life was stemm'd. 460 And to this arbitrary queen of sense I bow'd a tranced vassal : nor would thence Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had woo'd Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude. For as Apollo each eve doth devise A new appareling for western skies; So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour Shed balmy consciousness within that bower. And I was free of haunts umbrageous ; Could wander in the mazy forest-house 470 Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer, And birds from coverts innermost and drear Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow-To me new born delights !

"Now let me borrow,

ENDYMION.

BOOK III.

For moments few, a temperament as stern As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

"One morn she left me sleeping : half awake 480 I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts; But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts Of disappointment stuck in me so sore, That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er. Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom Damp awe assail'd me; for there 'gan to boom A sound of moan, an agony of sound, Sepulchral from the distance all around. Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled

That fierce complain to silence : while I stumbled Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd. I came to a dark valley .- Groanings swell'd Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew, The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue, That glar'd before me through a thorny brake. This fire, like the eye of gordian snake, Bewitch'd me towards ; and I soon was near A sight too fearful for the feel of fear : In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene-500 The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen, Seated upon an uptorn forest root ; And all around her shapes, wizard and brute, Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpenting, Shewing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting! O such deformities ! Old Charon's self, Should he give up awhile his penny pelf, And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian, It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan, And tyrannizing was the lady's look, 510 As over them a gnarled staff she shook. Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out, And from a basket emptied to the rout Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick And roar'd for more ; with many a hungry lick

BOOK III.

About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow, Anon she took a branch of mistletoe, And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial : Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial Was sharpening for their pitiable bones. 520 She lifted up the charm : appealing groans From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear In vain ; remorseless as an infant's bier She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil. Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil, Increasing gradual to a tempest rage, Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-pilgrimage ; Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat: Then was appalling silence : then a sight 530 More wildering than all that hoarse affright : For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen, Went through the dismal air like one huge Python Antagonizing Boreas,-and so vanish'd. Yet there was not a breath of wind : she banish'd These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark, With dancing and loud revelry,-and went Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.-Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd 540 Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud In human accent : "Potent goddess! chief Of pains resistless ! make my being brief, Or let me from this heavy prison fly: Or give me to the air, or let me die! I sue not for my happy crown again; I sue not for my phalanx on the plain; I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife; I sue not for my ruddy drops of life, My children fair, my lovely girls and boys ! 550 I will forget them; I will pass these joys; Ask nought so heavenward, so too-too high : Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die, Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh, From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh, And merely given to the cold bleak air. Have mercy, Goddess ! Circe, feel my prayer !"

ENDYMION.

That curst magician's name fell icy numb Upon my wild conjecturing : truth had come Naked and sabre-like against my heart. 560 I saw a fury whetting a death-dart; And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright, Fainted away in that dark lair of night. Think, my deliverer, how desolate My waking must have been ! disgust, and hate, And terrors manifold divided me A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee Into the dungeon core of that wild wood : I fled three days-when lo! before me stood Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now, 570 A clammy dew is beading on my brow, At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse. "Ha! ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express, To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee : yes, I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch : My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch. So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies Unheard of yet; and it shall still its cries Upon some breast more lily-feminine. 580 Oh, no-it shall not pine, and pine, and pine More than one pretty, trifling thousand years; And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt ! Young dove of the waters ! truly I'll not hurt One hair of thine : see how I weep and sigh, That our heart-broken parting is so nigh. And must we part? Ah, yes, it must be so. Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe, Let me sob over thee my last adieus, 590 And speak a blessing : Mark me ! thou hast thews Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race : But such a love is mine, that here I chase Eternally away from thee all bloom Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb. Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast ; And there, ere many days be overpast, Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then

Thou shalt not go the way of aged men ; But live and wither, cripple and still breathe 600 Ten hundred years : which gone, I then bequeath Thy fragile bones to unknown burial. Adieu, sweet love, adieu !"-As shot stars fall, She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung And poisoned was my spirit : despair sung A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell. A hand was at my shoulder to compel My sullen steps ; another 'fore my eyes Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam 610 I found me ; by my fresh, my native home. Its tempering coolness, to my life akin, Came salutary as I waded in : And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

ENDYMION.

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

Met palsy half way: soon these limbs became 640 Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

ENDYMION.

"Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space, Without one hope, without one faintest trace Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble Of colour'd phantasy; for I fear 'twould trouble Thy brain to loss of reason : and next tell How a restoring chance came down to quell One half of the witch in me.

On a day,

Sitting upon a rock above the spray, 650 I saw grow up from the horizon's brink A gallant vessel: soon she seem'd to sink Away from me again, as though her course Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force-So vanish'd : and not long, before arose Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose. Old Eolus would stifle his mad spleen, But could not : therefore all the billows green Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds. The tempest came : I saw that vessel's shrouds 660 In perilous bustle ; while upon the deck Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck ; The final gulphing; the poor struggling souls : I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls. O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld Annull'd my vigorous cravings : and thus quell'd And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian ! did I sit Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone, By one and one, to pale oblivion; 670 And I was gazing on the surges prone, With many a scalding tear and many a groan, When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand, Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand. I knelt with pain-reached out my hand-had grasp'd These treasures-touch'd the knuckles-they unclasp'd-

I caught a finger : but the downward weight O'erpowered me—it sank. Then 'gan abate BOOK III.

The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst The comfortable sun. I was athirst 680 To search the book, and in the warming air Parted its dripping leaves with eager care. Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on My soul page after page, till well-nigh won Into forgetfulness ; when, stupefied, I read these words, and read again, and tried My eyes against the heavens, and read again. O what a load of misery and pain Each Atlas-line bore off !-- a shine of hope Came gold around me, cheering me to cope 600 Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend ! For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

ENDYMION.

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

"Then," cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd, "We are twin brothers in this destiny! Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high

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710

Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd. What ! if from thee my wandering feet had swerv'd, 720 Had we both perish'd?"-" Look !" the sage replied, "Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide, Of divers brilliances? 'tis the edifice I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies; And where I have enshrined piously All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on They went till unobscur'd the porches shone ; Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight. Sure never since king Neptune held his state 730 Was seen such wonder underneath the stars. Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars Has legion'd all his battle; and behold How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold His even breast: see, many steeled squares, And rigid ranks of iron-whence who dares One step? Imagine further, line by line, These warrior thousands on the field supine :--So in that crystal place, in silent rows, Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.-740 The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd; Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips All ruddy,-for here death no blossom nips. He mark'd their brows and foreheads ; saw their hair Put sleekly on one side with nicest care ; And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence, Put cross-wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,

Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, even now." 750 He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough, Began to tear his scroll in pieces small, Uttering the while some mumblings funeral. He tore it into pieces small as snow That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns blow; And having done it, took his dark blue cloak And bound it round Endymion : then struck His wand against the empty air times nine.— ENDYMION.

"What more there is to do, young man, is thine : But first a little patience ; first undo 760 This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue. Ah, gentle ! 'tis as weak as spider's skein ; And shouldst thou break it—What, is it done so clean?

A power overshadows thee! Oh, brave! The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave. Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me, Nor mark'd with any sign or charactery— Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake! Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal." 770

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and fall Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd A lullaby to silence. —"Youth! now strew These minced leaves on me, and passing through Those files of dead, scatter the same around. And thou wilt see the issue."-'Mid the sound Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart, Endymion from Glaucus stood apart, And scatter'd in his face some fragments light. How lightning-swift the change! a youthful wight 780 Smiling beneath a coral diadem. Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem, Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse, Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force Press'd its cold hand, and wept-and Scylla sigh'd! Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied-The nymph arose : he left them to their joy, And onward went upon his high employ. Showering those powerful fragments on the dead. And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head, 790 As doth a flower at Apollo's touch. Death felt it to his inwards; 'twas too much: Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house. The Latmian persever'd along, and thus All were re-animated. There arose A noise of harmony, pulses and throes Of gladness in the air—while many, who Had died in mutual arms devout and true.

Sprang to each other madly; and the rest

ENDYMION.

Felt a high certainty of being blest. 800 They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent. Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers, Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full showers Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine. The two deliverers tasted a pure wine Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out. Speechless they eyed each other, and about The fair assembly wander'd to and fro, Distracted with the richest overflow 810 Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

---- "Away !"

820

BOOK III.

Shouted the new-born god; "Follow, and pay Our piety to Neptunus supreme !"-Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream, They led on first, bent to her meek surprise, Through portal columns of a giant size, Into the vaulted, boundless emerald. Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd, Down marble steps ; pouring as easily As hour-glass sand-and fast, as you might see Swallows obeying the south summer's call, Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far, Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar, Just within ken, they saw descending thick Another multitude. Whereat more quick Moved either host. On a wide sand they met, And of those numbers every eye was wet; For each their old love found. A murmuring rose, 830 Like what was never heard in all the throes Of wind and waters : 'tis past human wit To tell ; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and lost Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array, And from the rear diminishing away,-Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,

"Behold ! behold, the palace of his pride ! God Neptune's palaces !" With noise increas'd, 840 They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east. At every onward step proud domes arose In prospect, -diamond gleams, and golden glows Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling. Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring, Still onward : still the splendour gradual swell'd. Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts Each gazer drank ; and deeper drank more near : 850 For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere As marble was there lavish, to the vast Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd, Even for common bulk, those olden three, Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

ENDYMION.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow Of Iris, when unfading it doth shew Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch Through which this Paphian army took its march, Into the outer courts of Neptune's state : 860 Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate, To which the leaders sped ; but not half raught Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought, And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes Like callow eagles at the first sunrise. Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze, And then, behold ! large Neptune on his throne Of emerald deep : yet not exalt alone ; At his right hand stood winged Love, and on 870 His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast Can see all round upon the calmed vast, So wide was Neptune's hall : and as the blue Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew Their doming curtains, high, magnificent, Aw'd from the throne aloof ;--and when storm-rent Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air; K

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But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere, Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering 880 Death to a human eye: for there did spring From natural west, and east, and south, and north, A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head. Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through The delicatest air : air verily, But for the portraiture of clouds and sky: This palace floor breath-air,—but for the amaze 890 Of deep-seen wonders motionless, -and blaze Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes, Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang : The Nereids danc'd ; the Syrens faintly sang ; And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head. Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed On all the multitude a nectarous dew. The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew 000 Fair Scylla and her guides to conference ; And when they reach'd the throned eminence She kist the sea-nymph's cheek, --- who sat her down A toying with the doves. Then, -"Mighty crown And sceptre of this kingdom !" Venus said, "Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid : Behold !"-Two copious tear-drops instant fell From the God's large eyes; he smil'd delectable, And over Glaucus held his blessing hands .--"Endymion ! Ah ! still wandering in the bands 910 Of love? Now this is cruel. Since the hour I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net? A little patience, youth ! 'twill not be long, Or I am skilless quite : an idle tongue, A humid eye, and steps luxurious, Where these are new and strange, are ominous. Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,

When others were all blind; and were I given 920 To utter secrets, haply I might say Some pleasant words:—but Love will have his day. So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon, Even in the passing of thine honey-moon, Visit my Cytherea : thou wilt find Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind; And pray persuade with thee—Ah, I have done, All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son !"— Thus the fair goddess : while Endymion Knelt to receive those accents halcyon. 930

ENDYMION.

Meantime a glorious revelry began Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd; And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd New growth about each shell and pendent lyre; The which, in disentangling for their fire, Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure, Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng

Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song, 940 And garlanding grew wild; and pleasure reign'd. In harmless tendril they each other chain'd, And strove who should be smother'd deepest in Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin For one so weak to venture his poor verse In such a place as this. O do not curse, High Muses ! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending Of dulcet instruments came charmingly; And then a hymn.

"KING of the stormy sea! Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor Of elements! Eternally before Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock, At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock

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Its deep foundations, hissing into foam. All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home Of thy capacious bosom ever flow. Thou frownest, and old Eolus thy foe 960 Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along To bring thee nearer to that golden song Apollo singeth, while his chariot Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not For scenes like this : an empire stern hast thou ; And it hath furrow'd that large front : yet now, 970 As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit To blend and interknit Subdued majesty with this glad time. O shell-borne King sublime! We lay our hearts before thee evermore-We sing, and we adore !

ENDYMION.

"Breathe softly, flutes ; Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes ; Nor be the trumpet heard ! O vain, O vain : Not flowers budding in an April rain. Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,-No, nor the Eolian twang of Love's own bow, Can mingle music fit for the soft ear Of goddess Cytherea ! Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes On our souls' sacrifice.

" Bright-winged Child ! Who has another care when thou hast smil'd? Unfortunates on earth, we see at last All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions. O sweetest essence ! sweetest of all minions ! God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair, And panting bosoms bare ! Dear unseen light in darkness ! eclipser Of light in light ! delicious poisoner !

BOOK III.

Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until We fill-we fill ! And by thy Mother's lips-"

ENDYMION.

Was heard no more 1000 For clamour, when the golden palace door Opened again, and from without, in shone A new magnificence. On oozy throne Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old. To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold, Before he went into his quiet cave To muse for ever-Then a lucid wave, Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea, Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty Of Doris, and the Egean seer, her spouse-Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs, Theban Amphion leaning on his lute : His fingers went across it—All were mute To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls, And Thetis pearly too.--

The palace whirls

Around giddy Endymion ; seeing he Was there far strayed from mortality. He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain ; Imagination gave a dizzier pain. "O I shall die ! sweet Venus, be my stay ! Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away ! I die-I hear her voice-I feel my wing-" At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife To usher back his spirit into life : But still he slept. At last they interwove Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying crowd, To his inward senses these words spake aloud; 1031 Written in star-light on the dark above : Dearest Endymion ! my entire love ! How have I dwelt in fear of fate : 'tis done-Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.

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ENDYMION.

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BOOK III.

Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

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

ENDYMION.

BOOK IV.

MUSE of my native land ! loftiest Muse ! O first-born on the mountains ! by the hues Of heaven on the spiritual air begot : Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot, While yet our England was a wolfish den ; Before our forests heard the talk of men ; Before the first of Druids was a child ;--Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude. There came an eastern voice of solemn mood :- 10 Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine, Apollo's garland :- yet didst thou divine Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain, "Come hither, Sister of the Island !" Plain Spake fair Ausonia ; and once more she spake A higher summons :--still didst thou betake Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won A full accomplishment ! The thing is done, Which undone, these our latter days had risen On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets 21 Our spirit's wings : despondency besets Our pillows ; and the fresh to-morrow morn Seems to give forth its light in very scorn Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives. Long have I said, how happy he who shrives To thee ! But then I thought on poets gone, And could not pray :-- nor can I now--so on I move to the end in lowliness of heart.----

"Ah, woe is me ! that I should fondly part 30

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

ENDYMION.

Endymion to heaven's airy dome Was offering up a hecatomb of vows, When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows His head through thorny-green entanglement 41 Of underwood, and to the sound is bent, Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

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

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air, Warm mountaineer ! for canst thou only bear A woman's sigh alone and in distress? See not her charms! Is Phoebe passionless? Phoebe is fairer far—O gaze no more :— Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store, Behold her panting in the forest grass ! Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass For tenderness the arms so idly lain Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain, To see such lovely eyes in swimming search After some warm delight, that seems to perch Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond Their upper lids ?—Hist !

"O for Hermes' wand, To touch this flower into human shape ! BOOK IV.

That woodland Hyacinthus could escape From his green prison, and here kneeling down 70 Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown ! Ah me, how I could love !- My soul doth melt For the unhappy youth—Love! I have felt So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender To what my own full thoughts had made too tender, That but for tears my life had fled away !--Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day, And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true, There is no lightning, no authentic dew But in the eye of love : there's not a sound, 80 Melodious howsoever, can confound The heavens and earth in one to such a death As doth the voice of love : there's not a breath Will mingle kindly with the meadow air, Till it has panted round, and stolen a share Of passion from the heart !"-

ENDYMION.

Upon a bough

He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now Thirst for another love: O impious, That he can even dream upon it thus !— 90 Thought he, "Why am I not as are the dead, Since to a woe like this I have been led Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea?

Goddess ! I love thee not the less : from thee By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no— While the great waters are at ebb and flow.— I have a triple soul ! O fond pretence— For both, for both my love is so immense, I feel my heart is cut in twain for them."

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain. The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously. He sprang from his green covert : there she lay, Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay ; With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries. "Fair damsel, pity me ! forgive that I

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Thus violate thy bower's sanctity ! O pardon me, for I am full of grief-Grief born of thee, young angel ! fairest thief ! IIC Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith Thou art my executioner, and I feel Loving and hatred, misery and weal, Will in a few short hours be nothing to me, And all my story that much passion slew me; Do smile upon the evening of my days : And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze, Be thou my nurse ; and let me understand How dying I shall kiss that lily hand .--120 Dost weep for me? Then should I be content. Scowl on, ye fates ! until the firmament Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst To meet oblivion."-As her heart would burst The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied : "Why must such desolation betide As that thou speakest of? Are not these green nooks

ENDYMION.

Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks 130 Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush, Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush About the dewy forest, whisper tales ?--Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou wilt. Methinks 'twould be a guilt-a very guilt-Not to companion thee, and sigh away The light-the dusk-the dark-till break of day !" "Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past : I love thee ! and my days can never last. 140 That I may pass in patience still speak : Let me have music dying, and I seek No more delight-I bid adieu to all. Didst thou not after other climates call, And murmur about Indian streams?"-Then she, Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree, For pity sang this roundelayBOOK IV.

ENDYMION.

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

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

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

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

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

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side, I sat a weeping : in the whole world wide 180

ENDYMION.

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BOOK IV.

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There was no one to ask me why I wept,— And so I kept Brimming the water-lily cups with tears Cold as my fears.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side, I sat a weeping : what enamour'd bride, Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds, But hides and shrouds Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills There came a noise of revellers : the rills Into the wide stream came of purple hue— 'Twas Bacchus and his crew ! The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills From kissing cymbals made a merry din— 'Twas Bacchus and his kin ! Like to a moving vintage down they came, Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame ; All madly dancing through the pleasant valley, To scare thee, Melancholy!

O then, O then, thou wast a simple name ! And I forgot thee, as the berried holly By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June, Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon :— I rush'd into the folly !

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

"Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye! So many, and so many, and such glee ? 221 Why have ye left your bowers desolate, Your lutes, and gentler fate ?— To our mad minstrelsy !'

'We follow Bacchus ! Bacchus on the wing, A conquering ! Bacchus, young Bacchus ! good or ill betide, We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide :---Come hither, lady fair, and joined be To our wild minstrelsy!'

ENDYMION.

"Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye! 230 So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?—
'For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms, And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth !—
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be

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

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

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown Before the vine-wreath crown ! I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing To the silver cymbals' ring ! 141

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I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce Old Tartary the fierce !

The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres vail, And from their treasures scatter pearled hail; Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,

And all his priesthood moans; Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.— Into these regions came I following him, Sick hearted, weary—so I took a whim To stray away into these forests drear Alone, without a peer: And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

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

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

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

O what a sigh she gave in finishing, And look, quite dead to every worldly thing ! Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her ; And listened to the wind that now did stir About the crisped oaks full drearily, Yet with as sweet a softness as might be Remember'd from its velvet summer song. At last he said : "Poor lady, how thus long

Have I been able to endure that voice? Fair Melody ! kind Syren ! I've no choice : I must be thy sad servant evermore : I cannot choose but kneel here and adore. Alas, I must not think-by Phoebe, no ! Let me not think, soft Angel ! shall it be so? Sav. beautifullest, shall I never think? O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink Of recollection ! make my watchful care Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair ! 310 Do gently murder half my soul, and I Shall feel the other half so utterly !--I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth ; O let it blush so ever ! let it soothe My madness ! let it mantle rosy-warm With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm .--This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is; And this is sure thine other softling-this Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near ! Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear! 320 And whisper one sweet word that I may know This is this world-sweet dewy blossom !"-Woe ! Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?-Even these words went echoing dismally Through the wide forest-a most fearful tone, Like one repenting in his latest moan; And while it died away a shade pass'd by, As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves sleek forth

ENDYMION.

Their timid necks and tremble; so these both 330 Leant to each other trembling, and sat so Waiting for some destruction—when lo, Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he dropt Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt One moment from his home : only the sward He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward Swifter than sight was gone—even before The teeming earth a sudden witness bore 349 Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear

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Above the crystal circlings white and clear; And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise, How they can dive in sight and unseen rise— So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-black, Each with large dark blue wings upon his back. The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew, High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew 350 Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone, Far from the earth away-unseen, alone, Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free, The buoyant life of song can floating be Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.-Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd? This is the giddy air, and I must spread Wide pinions to keep here ; nor do I dread Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance Precipitous : I have beneath my glance 360 Those towering horses and their mournful freight. Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid ?-There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade From some approaching wonder, and behold Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire, Dying to embers from their native fire !

There curl'd a purple mist around them; soon, It seem'd as when around the pale new moon 370 Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow: 'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow. For the first time, since he came nigh dead born From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn Had he left more forlorn; for the first time, He felt aloof the day and morning's prime-Because into his depth Cimmerian There came a dream, shewing how a young man, Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin, Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win 380 An immortality, and how espouse Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.

ENDYMION.

Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate, That he might at the threshold one hour wait To hear the marriage melodies, and then Sink downward to his dusky cave again. His litter of smooth semilucent mist, Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst, Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought ; And scarcely for one moment could be caught His sluggish form reposing motionless. Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress Of vision search'd for him, as one would look Athwart the sallows of a river nook To catch a glance at silver throated eels,— Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals His rugged forehead in a mantle pale, With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are 400 Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop Their full-yeined ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop; Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,— And on those pinions, level in mid air, Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair. Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle Upon a calm sea drifting : and meanwhile The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold ! he walks On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks 410 To divine powers : from his hand full fain Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain : He tries the nerve of Phœbus' golden bow, And asketh where the golden apples grow : Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield, And strives in vain to unsettle and wield A Jovian thunderbolt : arch Hebe brings A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings And tantalizes long; at last he drinks, And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks, 420 Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand. He blows a bugle, —an ethereal band Are visible above: the Seasons four,-

Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar, Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the blast.

ENDYMION.

In swells unmitigated, still doth last To sway their floating morris, "Whose is this? Whose bugle?" he inquires : they smile-"O Dis! Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know 430 Its mistress' lips? Not thou ?-- 'Tis Dian's: lo! She rises crescented !" He looks, 'tis she, His very goddess : good-bye earth, and sea, And air, and pains, and care, and suffering ; Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring Towards her, and awakes-and, strange, o'erhead, Of those same fragrant exhalations bred, Beheld awake his very dream : the gods Stood smiling ; merry Hebe laughs and nods ; And Phœbe bends towards him crescented. 440 O state perplexing ! On the pinion bed, Too well awake, he feels the panting side Of his delicious lady. He who died For soaring too audacious in the sun, Where that same treacherous wax began to run, Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion. His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne, To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way-Ah, what perplexity ! Ah, well a day ! So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow, 450 He could not help but kiss her : then he grew Awhile forgetful of all beauty save Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd ; and so 'gan crave Forgiveness : yet he turn'd once more to look At the sweet sleeper, -all his soul was shook, -She press'd his hand in slumber ; so once more He could not help but kiss her and adore. At this the shadow wept, melting away. The Latmian started up : "Bright goddess, stay ! Search my most hidden breast ! By truth's own tongue. I have no dædale heart : why is it wrung 461

To desperation? Is there nought for me, Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?" BOOK IV.

ENDYMION.

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

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

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak, The moon put forth a little diamond peak, No bigger than an unobserved star, Or tiny point of fairy scymetar; Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie Her silver sandals, ere deliciously 147

She bow'd into the heavens her timid head. Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled, While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd, To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd This beauty in its birth—Despair ! despair ! He saw her body fading gaunt and spare In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist; It melted from his grasp : her hand he kiss'd, And, horror ! kiss'd his own—he was alone. Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den.

Beyond the seeming confines of the space Made for the soul to wander in and trace Its own existence, of remotest glooms. Dark regions are around it, where the tombs Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce 520 One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart : And in these regions many a venom'd dart At random flies ; they are the proper home Of every ill: the man is yet to come Who hath not journeyed in this native hell. But few have ever felt how calm and well Sleep may be had in that deep den of all. There anguish does not sting ; nor pleasure pall : Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate, 530 Yet all is still within and desolate. Beset with painful gusts, within ve hear No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none Who strive therefore : on the sudden it is won. Just when the sufferer begins to burn. Then it is free to him ; and from an urn, Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught-Young Semele such richness never quaft In her maternal longing. Happy gloom ! 540 Dark Paradise ! where pale becomes the bloom Of health by due ; where silence dreariest Is most articulate ; where hopes infest ; Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep

Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep. O happy spirit-home ! O wondrous soul ! Pregnant with such a den to save the whole In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian ! For, never since thy griefs and woes began, Hast thou felt so content : a grievous feud 550 Hath let thee to this Cave of Ouietude. Ave, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne With dangerous speed : and so he did not mourn Because he knew not whither he was going. So happy was he, not the aerial blowing Of trumpets at clear parley from the east Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast. They stung the feather'd horse : with fierce alarm He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd 560 A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,-And silvery was its passing : voices sweet Warbling the while as if to lull and greet The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they, While past the vision went in bright array.

ENDYMION.

"Who, who from Dian's feast would be away? For all the golden bowers of the day Are empty left? Who, who away would be From Cynthia's wedding and festivity? Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings He leans away for highest heaven and sings, Snapping his lucid fingers merrily !— Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too! Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew, Young playmates of the rose and daffodil, Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill

Your baskets high With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines, Savory, latter-mint, and columbines, Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme; Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime, All gather'd in the dewy morning : hie . Away ! fly, fly !--

Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven, Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given 149

570

ENDYMION.

Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings, Two fan-like fountains,-thine illuminings

BOOK IV.

610

For Dian play: Dissolve the frozen purity of air; Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare Shew cold through watery pinions ; make more bright The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night :

Haste, haste away !--Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see! And of the Bear has Pollux mastery : A third is in the race ! who is the third, Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?

The ramping Centaur ! The Lion's mane's on end : the Bear how fierce ! The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce 600 Some enemy : far forth his bow is bent Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

Pale unrelentor, When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing .--Andromeda ! sweet woman ! why delaying So timidly among the stars : come hither ! Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither

They all are going. Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd, Has wept for thee, calling to love aloud. Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral : Ye shall for ever live and love, for all Thy tears are flowing .--By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo !-- "

More Endymion heard not : down his steed him bore, Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill. "Alas !" said he, "were I but always borne Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps wom A path in hell, for ever would I bless Horrors which nourish an uneasiness 621 For my own sullen conquering : to him Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim, Sorrow is but a shadow : now I see

The grass; I feel the solid ground—Ah, me ! It is thy voice-divinest ! Where ?---who? who Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew? Behold upon this happy earth we are; Let us ay love each other; let us fare On forest-fruits, and never, never go Among the abodes of mortals here below, Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny ! Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly, But with thy beauty will I deaden it. Where didst thou melt too? By thee will I sit For ever : let our fate stop here—a kid I on this spot will offer : Pan will bid Us live in peace, in love and peace among His forest wildernesses. I have clung To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen Or felt but a great dream ! O I have been Presumptuous against love, against the sky, Against all elements, against the tie Of mortals each to each, against the blooms Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs Of heroes gone ! Against his proper glory Has my own soul conspired : so my story Will I to children utter, and repent. There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent His appetite beyond his natural sphere, But stary'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here, Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast My life from too thin breathing : gone and past Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewel ! And air of visions, and the monstrous swell Of visionary seas ! No, never more Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast. Adieu, my daintiest Dream ! although so vast My love is still for thee. The hour may come When we shall meet in pure elysium.

On earth I may not love thee; and therefore

And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss !

All through the teeming year : so thou wilt shine

Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store

On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,

ENDYMION.

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My river-lily bud ! one human kiss ! One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze, Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees, 670 And warm with dew at ooze from living blood ! Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that !-- all good We'll talk about-no more of dreaming.-Now. Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none : And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through, Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew? O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place : Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace 680 Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd : For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find, And by another, in deep dell below. See, through the trees, a little river go All in its mid-day gold and glimmering. Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring, And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,-Cresses that grow where no man may them see, And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag : Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag, 600 That thou mayst always know whither I roam, When it shall please thee in our quiet home To listen and think of love. Still let me speak ; Still let me dive into the joy I seek,-For yet the past doth prison me. The rill, Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn, And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn. Its bottom will I strew with amber shells, And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells. 700 Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine, And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine. I will entice this crystal rill to trace Love's silver name upon the meadow's face. I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire ; And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre ; To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear ; To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear, That I may see thy beauty through the night ;

ENDYMION.

BOOK IV.

To Flora, and a nightingale shall light Tame on thy finger ; to the River-gods, And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress. Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness ! Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be 'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee : Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek, Trembling or stedfastness to this same voice, And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice : 720 And that affectionate light, those diamond things, Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,

ENDYMION.

Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure. Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure? O that I could not doubt?"

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear His briar'd path to some tranquillity. It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye, And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow ; 730 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east : "O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd, Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away. Young feather'd tyrant ! by a swift decay Wilt thou devote this body to the earth : And I do think that at my very birth I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly; For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee, With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven. 740 Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do! When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave To the void air, bidding them find out love : But when I came to feel how far above All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood, All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good, Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,-

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ENDYMION.

BOOK IV.

780

Even then, that moment, at the thought of this, 750 Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers, And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers. Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave With my own fancies garlands of sweet life, Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife ! I may not be thy love : I am forbidden-Indeed I am-thwarted, affrighted, chidden, By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath. Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went : henceforth 760 Ask me no more ! I may not utter it. Nor may I be thy love. We might commit Ourselves at once to vengeance ; we might die ; We might embrace and die : voluptuous thought ! Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught In trammels of perverse deliciousness. No, no, that shall not be : thee will I bless, And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word return'd : both lovelorn, silent, wan, 770 Into the vallies green together went. Far wandering, they were perforce content To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree ; Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion ! unhappy ! it nigh grieves Me to behold thee thus in last extreme : Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem Truth the best music in a first-born song. Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long, And thou shalt aid—hast thou not aided me? Yes, moonlight Emperor ! felicity Has been thy meed for many thousand years ; Yet often have I, on the brink of tears, Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester ;— Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse BOOK IV.

Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays Through the old garden-ground of boyish days. A little onward ran the very stream By which he took his first soft poppy dream ; And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent His skill in little stars. The teeming tree Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery, But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope Up which he had not fear'd the antelope : And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade He had not with his tamed leopards play'd. Nor could an arrow light, or javelin, Fly in the air where his had never been-And yet he knew it not.

ENDYMION.

O treachery ! Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye With all his sorrowing? He sees her not. But who so stares on him? His sister sure ! Peona of the woods !—Can she endure— Impossible—how dearly they embrace ! His lady smiles ; delight is in her face ; It is no treachery.

"Dear brother mine ! Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine When all great Latmos so exalt wilt be? Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly; And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more. Sure I will not believe thou hast such store Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again. Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain, 820 Come hand in hand with one so beautiful. Be happy both of you ! for I will pull The flowers of autumn for your coronals. Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls; And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame, Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame To see ye thus, -not very, very sad? Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad :

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O feel as if it were a common day ; Free-voic'd as one who never was away. 830 No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall Be gods of your own rest imperial. Not even I, for one whole month, will pry Into the hours that have pass'd us by, Since in my arbour I did sing to thee. O Hermes! on this very night will be A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light; For the soothsayers old saw yesternight Good visions in the air, -whence will befal, As say these sages, health perpetual 840 To shepherds and their flocks ; and furthermore, In Dian's face they read the gentle lore: Therefore for her these vesper-carols are. Our friends will all be there from nigh and far. Many upon thy death have ditties made: And many, even now, their foreheads shade With cypress, on a day of sacrifice. New singing for our maids shalt thou devise, And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows. Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse 850 This wayward brother to his rightful joys! His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray, To lure-Endymion, dear brother, say What ails thee?" He could bear no more, and so Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow, And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said : "I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid! My only visitor ! not ignorant though, That those deceptions which for pleasure go 860 'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be: But there are higher ones I may not see. If impiously an earthly realm I take. Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake Night after night, and day by day, until Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill. Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me More happy than betides mortality. A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave. Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave 870

BOOK IV.

ENDYMION.

Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell. Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well; For to thy tongue will I all health confide. And, for my sake, let this young maid abide With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone, Peona, mayst return to me. I own This may sound strangely : but when, dearest girl, Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair ! Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share 880 This sister's love with me?" Like one resign'd And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown: "Ave, but a buzzing by my ears has flown, Of jubilee to Dian :- truth I heard ! Well then, I see there is no little bird, Tender soever, but is Jove's own care. Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware, Behold I find it ! so exalted too ! So after my own heart! I knew, I knew 890 There was a place untenanted in it: In that same void white Chastity shall sit, And monitor me nightly to lone slumber. With sanest lips I vow me to the number Of Dian's sisterhood ; and, kind lady, With thy good help, this very night shall see My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create His own particular fright, so these three felt : Or like one who, in after ages, knelt 900 To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine After a little sleep: or when in mine Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends Who know him not. Each diligently bends Towards common thoughts and things for very fear ; Striving their ghastly malady to cheer, By thinking it a thing of yes and no, That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last Endymion said: "Are not our fates all cast? OIO Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair !

Adieu !" Whereat those maidens, with wild stare, Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot His eyes went after them, until they got Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw, In one swift moment, would what then he saw Engulph for ever. "Stay!" he cried, "ah, stay! Turn, damsels ! hist ! one word I have to say. Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again. It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain. 920 Peona, ye should hand in hand repair Into those holy groves, that silent are Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon, At vesper's earliest twinkle-they are gone-But once, once, once again-" At this he press'd His hands against his face, and then did rest His head upon a mossy hillock green, And so remain'd as he a corpse had been All the long day; save when he scantly lifted His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted 030 With the slow move of time,-sluggish and weary Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary, Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose, And, slowly as that very river flows, Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament : "Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall Before the serene father of them all Bows down his summer head below the west. Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest, 940 But at the setting I must bid adieu To her for the last time. Night will strew On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves, And with them shall I die ; nor much it grieves To die, when summer dies on the cold sward. Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies, Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses; My kingdom's at its death, and just it is That I should die with it : so in all this 950 We miscal grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe, What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe I am but rightly serv'd." So saying, he

ENDYMION.

ENDYMION.

Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee; Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun, As though they jests had been: nor had he done His laugh at nature's holy countenance, Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance, And then his tongue with sober seemlihed Gave utterance as he entered : "Ha!" I said, 960 "King of the butterflies; but by this gloom, And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom, This dusk religion, pomp of solitude. And the Promethean clay by thief endued, By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed Myself to things of light from infancy; And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die, Is sure enough to make a mortal man Grow impious." So he inwardly began 970 On things for which no wording can be found; Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd Beyond the reach of music: for the choir Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full, Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles. He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles, Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight By chilly finger'd spring. "Unhappy wight! 080 Endymion !" said Peona, "we are here ! What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?" Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand Press'd, saying : "Sister, I would have command, If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate." At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love, To Endymion's amaze : "By Cupid's dove, And so thou shalt ! and by the lily truth Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth !" 990 And as she spake, into her face there came Light, as reflected from a silver flame : Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display Full golden ; in her eyes a brighter day Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld

BOOK IV.

Pheebe, his passion ! joyous she upheld Her lucid bow, continuing thus; "Drear, drear Has our delaying been; but foolish fear Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate; And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state 1000 Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range These forests, and to thee they safe shall be As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night : Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon. She gave her fair hands to him, and behold, Before three swiftest kisses he had told, 1010 They vanish'd far away !—Peona went Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

ENDYMION.

THE END.

[PUBLISHED 1820]

LAMIA, ISABELLA, THE EVE OF ST. AGNES,

AND

OTHER POEMS.

LAMIA.

PART I.

IF any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of HYPERION, the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to have been of equal length with ENDYMION, but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding.

ADVERTISEMENT.

Fleet-Street, June 26, 1820.

UPON a time, before the faery broods Drove Nymph and Satyr from the prosperous woods, Before King Oberon's bright diadem. Sceptre, and mantle, clasp'd with dewy gem, Frighted away the Dryads and the Fauns From rushes green, and brakes, and cowslip'd lawns, The ever-smitten Hermes empty left His golden throne, bent warm on amorous theft : From high Olympus had he stolen light, On this side of Jove's clouds, to escape the sight Of his great summoner, and made retreat Into a forest on the shores of Crete. For somewhere in that sacred island dwelt A nymph, to whom all hoofed Satyrs knelt : At whose white feet the languid Tritons poured Pearls, while on land they wither'd and adored. Fast by the springs where she to bathe was wont, And in those meads where sometime she might haunt. Were strewn rich gifts, unknown to any Muse, Though Fancy's casket were unlock'd to choose. Ah, what a world of love was at her feet ! So Hermes thought, and a celestial heat Burnt from his winged heels to either ear, That from a whiteness, as the lily clear, Blush'd into roses 'mid his golden hair, Fallen in jealous curls about his shoulders bare. From vale to vale, from wood to wood, he flew, Breathing upon the flowers his passion new, And wound with many a river to its head, To find where this sweet nymph prepar'd her secret bed :

In vain ; the sweet nymph might nowhere be found, And so he rested, on the lonely ground, Pensive, and full of painful jealousies Of the Wood-Gods, and even the very trees. There as he stood, he heard a mournful voice, Such as once heard, in gentle heart, destroys All pain but pity : thus the lone voice spake : "When from this wreathed tomb shall I awake ! "When move in a sweet body fit for life, "And love, and pleasure, and the ruddy strife "Of hearts and lips ! Ah, miserable me !" The God, dove-footed, glided silently Round bush and tree, soft-brushing, in his speed, The taller grasses and full-flowering weed, Until he found a palpitating snake, Bright, and cirque-couchant in a dusky brake.

LAMIA.

She was a gordian shape of dazzling hue, Vermilion-spotted, golden, green, and blue ; Striped like a zebra, freckled like a pard, Eyed like a peacock, and all crimson barr'd; And full of silver moons, that, as she breathed, Dissolv'd, or brighter shone, or interwreathed Their lustres with the gloomier tapestries-So rainbow-sided, touch'd with miseries, She seem'd, at once, some penanced lady elf, Some demon's mistress, or the demon's self. Upon her crest she wore a wannish fire Sprinkled with stars, like Ariadne's tiar : Her head was serpent, but ah, bitter-sweet ! She had a woman's mouth with all its pearls complete : And for her eyes : what could such eyes do there But weep, and weep, that they were born so fair? As Proserpine still weeps for her Sicilian air. Her throat was serpent, but the words she spake Came, as through bubbling honey, for Love's sake, And thus ; while Hermes on his pinions lay, Like a stoop'd falcon ere he takes his prey.

"Fair Hermes, crown'd with feathers, fluttering light,

"I had a splendid dream of thee last night :

PART I.

"I saw thee sitting, on a throne of gold, "Among the Gods, upon Olympus old, "The only sad one; for thou didst not hear "The soft, lute-finger'd Muses chaunting clear, "Nor even Apollo when he sang alone, "Deaf to his throbbing throat's long, long melodious moan. "I dreamt I saw thee, robed in purple flakes, "Break amorous through the clouds, as morning breaks, "And, swiftly as a bright Phœbean dart. "Strike for the Cretan isle; and here thou art! "Too gentle Hermes, hast thou found the maid?" Whereat the star of Lethe not delay'd His rosy eloquence, and thus inquired : "Thou smooth-lipp'd serpent, surely high inspired ! "Thou beauteous wreath, with melancholy eyes, "Possess whatever bliss thou canst devise, "Telling me only where my nymph is fled,-"Where she doth breathe !" "Bright planet, thou hast said." Return'd the snake, "but seal with oaths, fair God !" "I swear," said Hermes, "by my serpent rod, "And by thine eves, and by thy starry crown !" Light flew his earnest words, among the blossoms blown. Then thus again the brilliance feminine : "Too frail of heart ! for this lost nymph of thine, "Free as the air, invisibly, she strays "About these thornless wilds; her pleasant days "She tastes unseen ; unseen her nimble feet "Leave traces in the grass and flowers sweet; "From weary tendrils, and bow'd branches green, "She plucks the fruit unseen, she bathes unseen : "And by my power is her beauty veil'd "To keep it unaffronted, unassail'd "By the love-glances of unlovely eyes, "Of Satyrs, Fauns, and blear'd Silenus' sighs. "Pale grew her immortality, for woe "Of all these lovers, and she grieved so "I took compassion on her, bade her steep "Her hair in weird syrops, that would keep

"Her loveliness invisible, yet free
"To wander as she loves, in liberty.
"Thou shalt behold her, Hermes, thou alone,
"If thou wilt, as thou swearest, grant my boon !"
Then, once again, the charmed God began
An oath, and through the serpent's ears it ran
Warm, tremulous, devout, psalterian.
Ravish'd, she lifted her Circean head,
Blush'd a live damask, and swift-lisping said,
"I was a woman, let me have once more
"A woman's shape, and charming as before.
"I love a youth of Corinth—O the bliss !
"Give me my woman's form, and place me where he is.

"Stoop, Hermes, let me breathe upon thy brow, "And thou shalt see thy sweet nymph even now." The God on half-shut feathers sank serene, She breath'd upon his eyes, and swift was seen Of both the guarded nymph near-smiling on the green. It was no dream ; or say a dream it was, Real are the dreams of Gods, and smoothly pass Their pleasures in a long immortal dream. One warm, flush'd moment, hovering, it might seem Dash'd by the wood-nymph's beauty, so he burn'd; Then, lighting on the printless verdure, turn'd To the swoon'd serpent, and with languid arm, Delicate, put to proof the lythe Caducean charm. So done, upon the nymph his eyes he bent, Full of adoring tears and blandishment, And towards her stept : she, like a moon in wane, Faded before him, cower'd, nor could restrain Her fearful sobs, self-folding like a flower That faints into itself at evening hour : But the God fostering her chilled hand, She felt the warmth, her eyelids open'd bland, And, like new flowers at morning song of bees, Bloom'd, and gave up her honey to the lees. Into the green-recessed woods they flew ; Nor grew they pale, as mortal lovers do.

Left to herself, the serpent now began To change; her elfin blood in madness ran, PART I.

LAMIA.

Her mouth foam'd, and the grass, therewith besprent, Wither'd at dew so sweet and virulent; Her eyes in torture fix'd, and anguish drear, Hot, glaz'd, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear, Flash'd phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.

The colours all inflam'd throughout her train. She writh'd about, convuls'd with scarlet pain : A deep volcanian yellow took the place Of all her milder-mooned body's grace; And, as the lava ravishes the mead, Spoilt all her silver mail, and golden brede; Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks and bars, Eclips'd her crescents, and lick'd up her stars : So that, in moments few, she was undrest Of all her sapphires, greens, and amethyst, And rubious-argent : of all these bereft, Nothing but pain and ugliness were left. Still shone her crown ; that vanish'd, also she Melted and disappear'd as suddenly; And in the air, her new voice luting soft, Cried, "Lycius ! gentle Lycius !"-Borne aloft With the bright mists about the mountains hoar These words dissolv'd : Crete's forests heard no more.

Whither field Lamia, now a lady bright, A full-born beauty new and exquisite ? She field into that valley they pass o'er Who go to Corinth from Cenchreas' shore ; And rested at the foot of those wild hills, The rugged founts of the Peræan rills, And of that other ridge whose barren back Stretches, with all its mist and cloudy rack, South-westward to Cleone. There she stood About a young bird's flutter from a wood, Fair, on a sloping green of mossy tread, By a clear pool, wherein she passioned To see herself escap'd from so sore ills, While her robes flaunted with the daffodils.

Ah, happy Lycius !--for she was a maid More beautiful than ever twisted braid,

LAMIA.

Or sigh'd, or blush'd, or on spring-flowered lea Spread a green kirtle to the minstrelsy : A virgin purest lipp'd, yet in the lore Of love deep learned to the red heart's core : Not one hour old, yet of sciential brain To unperplex bliss from its neighbour pain ; Define their pettish limits, and estrange Their points of contact, and swift counterchange ; Intrigue with the specious chaos, and dispart Its most ambiguous atoms with sure art ; As though in Cupid's college she had spent Sweet days a lovely graduate, still unshent, And kept his rosy terms in idle languishment.

LAMIA.

PART I.

Why this fair creature chose so fairily By the wayside to linger, we shall see; But first 'tis fit to tell how she could muse And dream, when in the serpent prison-house, Of all she list, strange or magnificent : How, ever, where she will'd, her spirit went ; Whether to faint Elysium, or where Down through tress-lifting waves the Nereids fair Wind into Thetis' bower by many a pearly stair ; Or where God Bacchus drains his cups divine, Stretch'd out, at ease, beneath a glutinous pine ; Or where in Pluto's gardens palatine Mulciber's columns gleam in far piazzian line. And sometimes into cities she would send Her dream, with feast and rioting to blend ; And once, while among mortals dreaming thus, She saw the young Corinthian Lycius Charioting foremost in the envious race, Like a young Jove with calm uneager face, And fell into a swooning love of him. Now on the moth-time of that evening dim He would return that way, as well she knew, To Corinth from the shore ; for freshly blew The eastern soft wind, and his galley now Grated the quaystones with her brazen prow In port Cenchreas, from Egina isle Fresh anchor'd; whither he had been awhile To sacrifice to Jove, whose temple there

Waits with high marble doors for blood and incense rare.

Iove heard his yows, and better'd his desire ; For by some freakful chance he made retire From his companions, and set forth to walk, Perhaps grown wearied of their Corinth talk : Over the solitary hills he fared. Thoughtless at first, but ere eve's star appeared His phantasy was lost, where reason fades, In the calm'd twilight of Platonic shades. Lamia beheld him coming, near, more near-Close to her passing, in indifference drear, His silent sandals swept the mossy green : So neighbour'd to him, and yet so unseen She stood : he pass'd, shut up in mysteries, His mind wrapp'd like his mantle, while her eyes Follow'd his steps, and her neck regal white Turn'd-syllabling thus, "Ah, Lycius bright, "And will you leave me on the hills alone? "Lycius, look back ! and be some pity shown." He did; not with cold wonder fearingly, But Orpheus-like at an Eurydice; For so delicious were the words she sung. It seem'd he had lov'd them a whole summer long : And soon his eyes had drunk her beauty up, Leaving no drop in the bewildering cup, And still the cup was full,-while he, afraid Lest she should vanish ere his lip had paid Due adoration, thus began to adore; Her soft look growing coy, she saw his chain so sure : "Leave thee alone ! Look back ! Ah, Goddess, see "Whether my eyes can ever turn from thee! "For pity do not this sad heart belie-"Even as thou vanishest so I shall die. "Stay ! though a Naiad of the rivers, stay ! "To thy far wishes will thy streams obey : "Stay! though the greenest woods be thy domain, "Alone they can drink up the morning rain : "Though a descended Pleiad, will not one "Of thine harmonious sisters keep in tune "Thy spheres, and as thy silver proxy shine? "So sweetly to these ravish'd ears of mine

"Came thy sweet greeting, that if thou shouldst fade "Thy memory will waste me to a shade :--"For pity do not melt !"-" If I should stay," Said Lamia, "here, upon this floor of clay, "And pain my steps upon these flowers too rough, "What canst thou say or do of charm enough "To dull the nice remembrance of my home? "Thou canst not ask me with thee here to roam "Over these hills and vales, where no joy is,-"Empty of immortality and bliss ! "Thou art a scholar, Lycius, and must know "That finer spirits cannot breathe below "In human climes, and live : Alas ! poor youth, "What taste of purer air hast thou to soothe "My essence? What serener palaces, "Where I may all my many senses please, "And by mysterious sleights a hundred thirsts appease? "It cannot be-Adieu !" So said, she rose Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose

LAMIA.

Tiptoe with white arms spread. He, sick to lose The amorous promise of her lone complain, Swoon'd, murmuring of love, and pale with pain. The cruel lady, without any show Of sorrow for her tender favourite's woe, But rather, if her eyes could brighter be, With brighter eyes and slow amenity, Put her new lips to his, and gave afresh The life she had so tangled in her mesh : And as he from one trance was wakening Into another, she began to sing, Happy in beauty, life, and love, and every thing, A song of love, too sweet for earthly lyres, While, like held breath, the stars drew in their pant ing fires.

And then she whisper'd in such trembling tone, As those who, safe together met alone For the first time through many anguish'd days, Use other speech than looks; bidding him raise His drooping head, and clear his soul of doubt, For that she was a woman, and without Any more subtle fluid in her veins Than throbbing blood, and that the self-same pains LAMIA.

Inhabited her frail-strung heart as his. And next she wonder'd how his eyes could miss Her face so long in Corinth, where, she said, She dwelt but half retir'd, and there had led Days happy as the gold coin could invent Without the aid of love ; yet in content Till she saw him, as once she pass'd him by, Where 'gainst a column he leant thoughtfully At Venus' temple porch, 'mid baskets heap'd Of amorous herbs and flowers, newly reap'd Late on that eve, as 'twas the night before The Adonian feast ; whereof she saw no more, But wept alone those days, for why should she adore?

Lycius from death awoke into amaze, To see her still, and singing so sweet lays; Then from amaze into delight he fell To hear her whisper woman's lore so well; And every word she spake entic'd him on To unperplex'd delight and pleasure known. Let the mad poets say whate'er they please Of the sweets of Fairies, Peris, Goddesses, There is not such a treat among them all, Haunters of cavern, lake, and waterfall, As a real woman, lineal indeed, From Pyrrha's pebbles or old Adam's seed. Thus gentle Lamia judg'd, and judg'd aright, That Lycius could not love in half a fright, So threw the goddess off, and won his heart More pleasantly by playing woman's part, With no more awe than what her beauty gave, That, while it smote, still guaranteed to save. Lycius to all made eloquent reply, Marrying to every word a twinborn sigh; And last, pointing to Corinth, ask'd her sweet, If 'twas too far that night for her soft feet. The way was short, for Lamia's eagerness Made, by a spell, the triple league decrease To a few paces; not at all surmised By blinded Lycius, so in her comprized. They pass'd the city gates, he knew not how, So noiseless, and he never thought to know.

PART I.

PART I.

Of the wide doors disclos'd a place unknown Some time to any, but those two alone, And a few Persian mutes, who that same year Were seen about the markets: none knew where They could inhabit; the most curious Were foil'd, who watch'd to trace them to their house: And but the flitter-winged verse must tell, For truth's sake, what woe afterwards befel, 'Twould humour many a heart to leave them thus, Shut from the busy world of more incredulous.

As men talk in a dream, so Corinth all, Throughout her palaces imperial, And all her populous streets and temples lewd, Mutter'd, like tempest in the distance brew'd, To the wide-spreaded night above her towers. Men, women, rich and poor, in the cool hours, Shuffled their sandals o'er the pavement white, Companion'd or alone ; while many a light Flared, here and there, from wealthy festivals, And threw their moving shadows on the walls, Or found them cluster'd in the corniced shade Of some arch'd temple door, or dusky colonnade.

LAMIA.

Muffling his face, of greeting friends in fear, Her fingers he press'd hard, as one came near With curl'd gray beard, sharp eyes, and smooth bald crown,

Slow-stepp'd, and robed in philosophic gown: Lycius shrank closer, as they met and past, Into his mantle, adding wings to haste, While hurried Lamia trembled: "Ah," said he, "Why do you shudder, love, so ruefully? "Why does your tender palm dissolve in dew?"— "I'm wearied," said fair Lamia: "tell me who "Is that old man? I cannot bring to mind "His features:—Lycius! wherefore did you blind "Yourself from his quick eyes?" Lycius replied, "'Tis Apollonius sage, my trusty guide "And good instructor ; but to-night he seems "The ghost of folly haunting my sweet dreams.

While yet he spake they had arrived before A pillar'd porch, with lofty portal door, Where hung a silver lamp, whose phosphor glow Reflected in the slabbed steps below, Mild as a star in water; for so new, And so unsullied was the marble hue, So through the crystal polish, liquid fine, Ran the dark veins, that none but feet divine Could e'er have touch'd there. Sounds Æolian Breath'd from the hinges, as the ample span

LAMIA.

PART II.

LOVE in a hut, with water and a crust, Is—Love, forgive us !—cinders, ashes, dust ; Love in a palace is perhaps at last More grievous torment than a hermit's fast :— That is a doubtful tale from faery land, Hard for the non-elect to understand. Had Lycius liv'd to hand his story down, He might have given the moral a fresh frown, Or clench'd it quite : but too short was their bliss To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.

Besides, there, nightly, with terrific glare, Love, jealous grown of so complete a pair, Hover'd and buzz'd his wings, with fearful roar, Above the lintel of their chamber door, And down the passage cast a glow upon the floor.

For all this came a ruin: side by side They were enthroned, in the even tide, Upon a couch, near to a curtaining Whose airy texture, from a golden string, Floated into the room, and let appear Unveil'd the summer heaven, blue and clear, Betwixt two marble shafts:—there they reposed, Where use had made it sweet, with eyelids closed, Saving a tythe which love still open kept, That they might see each other while they almost slept; When from the slope side of a suburb hill, Deafening the swallow's twitter, came a thrill Of trumpets—Lycius started—the sounds fled, But left a thought, a buzzing in his head. PART II.

For the first time, since first he harbour'd in That purple-lined palace of sweet sin. His spirit pass'd beyond its golden bourn Into the noisy world almost forsworn. The lady, ever watchful, penetrant, Saw this with pain, so arguing a want Of something more, more than her empery Of joys; and she began to moan and sigh Because he mused beyond her, knowing well (That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.) "Why do you sigh, fair creature?" whisper'd he: "Why do you think?" return'd she tenderly: "You have deserted me;-where am I now? "Not in your heart while care weighs on your brow : "No, no, you have dismiss'd me; and I go "From your breast houseless: ay, it must be so." He answer'd, bending to her open eyes, Where he was mirror'd small in paradise. "My silver planet, both of eve and morn ! "Why will you plead yourself so sad forlorn, "While I am striving how to fill my heart "With deeper crimson, and a double smart? "How to entangle, trammel up and snare "Your soul in mine, and labyrinth you there "Like the hid scent in an unbudded rose? "Ay, a sweet kiss—you see your mighty woes. "My thoughts ! shall I unveil them? Listen then ! "What mortal hath a prize, that other men "May be confounded and abash'd withal, "But lets it sometimes pace abroad majestical, "And triumph, as in thee I should rejoice "Amid the hoarse alarm of Corinth's voice. "Let my foes choke, and my friends shout afar, "While through the thronged streets your bridal car "Wheels round its dazzling spokes." - The lady's cheek Trembled; she nothing said, but, pale and meek, Arose and knelt before him, wept a rain

LAMIA.

Of sorrows at his words; at last with pain Beseeching him, the while his hand she wrung, To change his purpose. He thereat was stung, Perverse, with stronger fancy to reclaim PART II.

Had not a friend. So being left alone, (Lycius was gone to summon all his kin) And knowing surely she could never win His foolish heart from its mad pompousness, She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress The misery in fit magnificence. She did so, but 'tis doubtful how and whence Came, and who were her subtle servitors. About the halls, and to and from the doors, There was a noise of wings, till in short space The glowing banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.

A haunting music, sole perhaps and lone Supportress of the faery-roof, made moan Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade. Fresh carved cedar, mimicking a glade Of palm and plantain, met from either side, High in the midst, in honour of the bride: Two palms and then two plantains, and so on, From either side their stems branch'd one to one All down the aisled place; and beneath all There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.

So canopied, lay an untasted feast Teeming with odours. Lamia, regal drest, Silently paced about, and as she went, In pale contented sort of discontent, Mission'd her viewless servants to enrich The fretted splendour of each nook and niche. Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first, Came jasper pannels; then, anon, there burst Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees, And with the larger wove in small intricacies. Approving all, she faded at self-will, And shut the chamber up, close, hush'd and still, Complete and ready for the revels rude, When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude.

The day appear'd, and all the gossip rout. O senseless Lycius! Madman! wherefore flout The silent-blessing fate, warm cloister'd hours,

PART II.

Her wild and timid nature to his aim : Besides, for all his love, in self despite, Against his better self, he took delight Luxurious in her sorrows, soft and new. His passion, cruel grown, took on a hue Fierce and sanguineous as 'twas possible In one whose brow had no dark veins to swell. Fine was the mitigated fury, like Apollo's presence when in act to strike The serpent-Ha, the serpent ! certes, she Was none. She burnt, she lov'd the tyranny, And, all subdued, consented to the hour When to the bridal he should lead his paramour. Whispering in midnight silence, said the youth, "Sure some sweet name thou hast, though, by my truth,

"I have not ask'd it, ever thinking thee "Not mortal, but of heavenly progeny, "As still I do. Hast any mortal name, "Fit appellation for this dazzling frame? " Or friends or kinsfolk on the citied earth, "To share our marriage feast and nuptial mirth?" "I have no friends," said Lamia, "no, not one; "My presence in wide Corinth hardly known: "My parents' bones are in their dusty urns "Sepulchred, where no kindled incense burns, "Seeing all their luckless race are dead, save me, "And I neglect the holy rite for thee. "Even as you list invite your many guests; "But if, as now it seems, your vision rests "With any pleasure on me, do not bid "Old Apollonius-from him keep me hid." Lycius, perplex'd at words so blind and blank, Made close inquiry; from whose touch she shrank, Feigning a sleep; and he to the dull shade Of deep sleep in a moment was betray'd.

It was the custom then to bring away The bride from home at blushing shut of day, Veil'd, in a chariot, heralded along By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage song, With other pageants: but this fair unknown

And show to common eyes these secret bowers? The herd approach'd; each guest, with busy brain, Arriving at the portal, gaz'd amain, And enter'd marveling: for they knew the street, Remember'd it from childhood all complete Without a gap, yet ne'er before had seen That royal porch, that high-built fair demesne; So in they hurried all, maz'd, curious and keen: Save one, who look'd thereon with eye severe, And with calm-planted steps walk'd in austere; 'Twas Apollonius: something too he laugh'd, As though some knotty problem, that had daft His patient thought, had now begun to thaw, And solve and melt:—'twas just as he foresaw.

LAMIA.

He met within the murmurous vestibule His young disciple. "'Tis no common rule, "'Lycius," said he, "for uninvited guest "To force himself upon you, and infest "With an unbidden presence the bright throng "Of younger friends; yet must I do this wrong, "And you forgive me." Lycius blush'd, and led The old man through the inner doors broad-spread; With reconciling words and courteous mien Turning into sweet milk the sophist's spleen.

Of wealthy lustre was the banquet-room, Fill'd with pervading brilliance and perfume: Before each lucid pannel fuming stood A censer fed with myrrh and spiced wood, Each by a sacred tripod held aloft, Whose slender feet wide-swerv'd upon the soft Wool-woofed carpets: fifty wreaths of smoke From fifty censers their light voyage took To the high roof, still mimick'd as they rose Along the mirror'd walls by twin-clouds odorous. Twelve sphered tables, by silk seats insphered, High as the level of a man's breast rear'd On libbard's paws, upheld the heavy gold Of cups and goblets, and the store thrice told Of Ceres' horn, and, in huge vessels, wine Came from the gloomy tun with merry shine.

Thus loaded with a feast the tables stood,

PART II.

Each shrining in the midst the image of a God.

When in an antichamber every guest Had felt the cold full sponge to pleasure press'd, By minist'ring slaves, upon his hands and feet, And fragrant oils with ceremony meet Pour'd on his hair, they all mov'd to the feast In white robes, and themselves in order placed Around the silken couches, wondering Whence all this mighty cost and blaze of wealth could spring.

LAMIA.

Soft went the music the soft air along. While fluent Greek a vowel'd undersong Kept up among the guests, discoursing low At first, for scarcely was the wine at flow: But when the happy vintage touch'd their brains, Louder they talk, and louder come the strains Of powerful instruments :- the gorgeous dyes, The space, the splendour of the draperies. The roof of awful richness, nectarous cheer, Beautiful slaves, and Lamia's self, appear, Now, when the wine has done its rosy deed. And every soul from human trammels freed, No more so strange; for merry wine, sweet wine, Will make Elysian shades not too fair, too divine. Soon was God Bacchus at meridian height; Flush'd were their cheeks, and bright eyes double bright:

Garlands of every green, and every scent From vales deflower'd, or forest-trees branch-rent, In baskets of bright osier'd gold were brought High as the handles heap'd, to suit the thought Of every guest; that each, as he did please, Might fancy-fit his brows, silk-pillow'd at his ease.

What wreath for Lamia? What for Lycius? What for the sage, old Apollonius? Upon her aching forehead be there hung The leaves of willow and of adder's tongue; And for the youth, quick, let us strip for him.

The thyrsus, that his watching eyes may swim Into forgetfulness; and, for the sage, Let spear-grass and the spiteful thistle wage War on his temples. Do not all charms fly At the mere touch of cold philosophy? There was an awful rainbow once in heaven: We know her woof, her texture; she is given In the dull catalogue of common things. Philosophy will clip an Angel's wings, Conquer all mysteries by rule and line, Empty the haunted air, and gnomed mine— Unweave a rainbow, as it crewhile made The tender-person'd Lamia melt into a shade.

LAMIA.

PART II.

By her glad Lycius sitting, in chief place, Scarce saw in all the room another face, Till, checking his love trance, a cup he took Full brimm'd, and opposite sent forth a look 'Cross the broad table, to beseech a glance From his old teacher's wrinkled countenance, And pledge him. The bald-head philosopher Had fix'd his eye, without a twinkle or stir Full on the alarmed beauty of the bride, Brow-beating her fair form, and troubling her sweet pride.

Lycius then press'd her hand, with devout touch, As pale it lay upon the rosy couch : 'Twas icy, and the cold ran through his veins; Then sudden it grew hot, and all the pains Of an unnatural heat shot to his heart. "Lamia, what means this? Wherefore dost thou

start?

"Know'st thou that man?" Poor Lamia answer'd not.

He gaz'd into her eyes, and not a jot Own'd they the lovelorn piteous appeal: More, more he gaz'd: his human senses reel: Some hungry spell that loveliness absorbs; There was no recognition in those orbs: "Lamia!" he cried—and no soft-toned reply. The many heard, and the loud revelry Grew hush; the stately music no more breathes;

The myrtle sicken'd in a thousand wreaths. By faint degrees, voice, lute, and pleasure ceased ; A deadly silence step by step increased, Until it seem'd a horrid presence there, And not a man but felt the terror in his hair. "Lamia!" he shriek'd ; and nothing but the shriek With its sad echo did the silence break. "Begone, foul dream!" he cried, gazing again In the bride's face, where now no azure vein Wander'd on fair-spaced temples: no soft bloom Misted the cheek; no passion to illume The deep-recessed vision :-- all was blight; Lamia, no longer fair, there sat a deadly white. "Shut, shut those juggling eyes, thou ruthless man! "Turn them aside, wretch! or the righteous ban "Of all the Gods, whose dreadful images "Here represent their shadowy presences, "May pierce them on the sudden with the thorn "Of painful blindness; leaving thee forlorn, "In trembling dotage to the feeblest fright "Of conscience, for their long offended might, "For all thine impious proud-heart sophistries, "Unlawful magic, and enticing lies. "Corinthians! look upon that gray-beard wretch! "Mark how, possess'd, his lashless eyelids stretch "Around his demon eyes! Corinthians, see! "My sweet bride withers at their potency." "Fool!" said the sophist, in an under-tone Gruff with contempt; which a death-nighing moan From Lycius answer'd, as heart-struck and lost, He sank supine beside the aching ghost. "Fool! Fool!" repeated he, while his eyes still Relented not, nor mov'd; "from every ill "Of life have I preserv'd thee to this day, "And shall I see thee made a serpent's prey? Then Lamia breath'd death breath; the sophist's eye, Like a sharp spear, went through her utterly, Keen, cruel, perceant, stinging : she, as well As her weak hand could any meaning tell, Motion'd him to be silent; vainly so, He look'd and look'd again a level-No! "A Serpent!" echoed he; no sooner said,

Than with a frightful scream she vanished : And Lycius' arms were empty of delight, As were his limbs of life, from that same night. On the high couch he lay !—his friends came round— Supported him—no pulse, or breath they found, And, in its marriage robe, the heavy body wound.*

LAMIA.

* "Philostratus, in his fourth book De Vita Apollonii, hath a memorable instance in this kind, which I may not omit, of one Menippus Lycius, a young man twenty-five years of age, that going betwixt Cenchreas and Corinth, met such a phantasm in the habit of a fair gentlewoman, which taking him by the hand, carried him home to her house, in the suburbs of Corinth, and told him she was a Phoenician by birth, and if he would tarry with her, he should hear her sing and play, and drink such wine as never any drank, and no man should molest him; but she, being fair and lovely, would live and die with him, that was fair and lovely to behold. The young man, a philosopher, otherwise staid and discreet, able to moderate his passions, though not this of love, tarried with her a while to his great content, and at last married her, to whose wedding, amongst other guests, came Apollonius; who, by some probable conjectures, found her out to be a serpent, a lamia ; and that all her furniture was, like Tantalus' gold, described by Homer, no substance but mere illusions. When she saw herself descried, she wept, and desired Apollonius to be silent, but he would not be moved, and thereupon she, plate, house, and all that was in it, vanished in an instant : many thousands took notice of this fact, for it was done in the midst of Greece."

Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy.' Part 3. Sect. 2. Memb. 1. Subs. 1.

ISABELLA;

OR,

THE POT OF BASIL.

A STORY FROM BOCCACCIO.

FAIR Isabel, poor simple Isabel! Lorenzo, a young palmer in Love's eye! They could not in the self-same mansion dwell Without some stir of heart, some malady; They could not sit at meals but feel how well It soothed each to be the other by;

They could not, sure, beneath the same roof sleep But to each other dream, and nightly weep.

II.

With every morn their love grew tenderer, With every eve deeper and tenderer still; He might not in house, field, or garden stir, But her full shape would all his seeing fill; And his continual voice was pleasanter

To her, than noise of trees or hidden rill; Her lute-string gave an echo of his name, She spoilt her half-done broidery with the same.

III.

He knew whose gentle hand was at the latch, Before the door had given her to his eyes; And from her chamber-window he would catch Her beauty farther than the falcon spies;

ISABELLA.

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And constant as her vespers would he watch, Because her face was turn'd to the same skies; And with sick longing all the night outwear, To hear her morning-step upon the stair.

IV.

A whole long month of May in this sad plight Made their cheeks paler by the break of June: "To-morrow will I bow to my delight, "To-morrow will I ask my lady's boon."— "O may I never see another night, "Lorenzo, if thy lips breathe not love's tune."—

So spake they to their pillows; but, alas, Honeyless days and days did he let pass;

v.

Until sweet Isabella's untouch'd cheek Fell sick within the rose's just domain, Fell thin as a young mother's, who doth seek By every lull to cool her infant's pain : "How ill she is," said he, "I may not speak, "And yet I will, and tell my love all plain : "If looks speak love-laws, I will drink her tears, "And at the least 'twill startle off her cares."

VI.

So said he one fair morning, and all day His heart beat awfully against his side; And to his heart he inwardly did pray For power to speak; but still the ruddy tide Stified his voice, and puls'd resolve away— Fever'd his high conceit of such a bride,

Yet brought him to the meekness of a child: Alas ! when passion is both meek and wild !

VII.

So once more he had wak'd and anguished A dreary night of love and misery, If Isabel's quick eye had not been wed To every symbol on his forehead high: She saw it waxing very pale and dead, And straight all flush'd; so, lisped tenderly, "Lorenzo!"—here she ceas'd her timid quest, But in her tone and look he read the rest.

VIII.

"O Isabella, I can half perceive "That I may speak my grief into thine ear; "If thou didst ever any thing believe, "Believe how I love thee, believe how near "My soul is to its doom: I would not grieve "Thy hand by unwelcome pressing, would not fear "Thine eyes by gazing; but I cannot live "Another night, and not my passion shrive.

IX.

"Love! thou art leading me from wintry cold, "Lady! thou leadest me to summer clime, "And I must taste the blossoms that unfold "In its ripe warmth this gracious morning time." So said, his erewhile timid lips grew bold, And poesied with hers in dewy rhyme: Great bliss was with them, and great happiness Grew, like a lusty flower in June's caress.

х.

Parting they seem'd to tread upon the air, Twin roses by the zephyr blown apart Only to meet again more close, and share

The inward fragrance of each other's heart. She, to her chamber gone, a ditty fair

Sang, of delicious love and honey'd dart; He with light steps went up a western hill, And bade the sun farewell, and joy'd his fill.

XI.

All close they met again, before the dusk Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil, All close they met, all eves, before the dusk Had taken from the stars its pleasant veil,

Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk, Unknown of any, free from whispering tale.

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Ah ! better had it been for ever so, Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be— Too many tears for lovers have been shed, Too many sighs give we to them in fee, Too much of pity after they are dead, Too many doleful stories do we see,

Whose matter in bright gold were best be read; Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love, The little sweet doth kill much bitterness; Though Dido silent is in under-grove, And Isabella's was a great distress, Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less-

Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers, Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt, Enriched from ancestral merchandize, And for them many a weary hand did swelt In torched mines and noisy factories, And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt In blood from stinging whip ;—with hollow eyes Many all day in dazzling river stood,

To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath, And went all naked to the hungry shark; For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark

ISABELLA.

Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe A thousand men in troubles wide and dark: Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel, That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?— Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?— Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?— Why were they proud? again we ask aloud.

Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired In hungry pride and gainful cowardice, As two close Hebrews in that land inspired, Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies; The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies— Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,— Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy Fair Isabella in her downy nest? How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest Into their vision covetous and sly !

How could these money-bags see east and west?— Yet so they did—and every dealer fair Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio! Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon, And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow, And of thy roses amorous of the moon,

Close in a bower of hyacinth and musk, Unknown of any, free from whispering tale. Ah ! better had it been for ever so, Than idle ears should pleasure in their woe.

XII.

Were they unhappy then ?—It cannot be— Too many tears for lovers have been shed, Too many sighs give we to them in fee, Too much of pity after they are dead, Too many doleful stories do we see, Whose matter in bright gold were best be read; Except in such a page where Theseus' spouse Over the pathless waves towards him bows.

XIII.

But, for the general award of love, The little sweet doth kill much bitterness; Though Dido silent is in under-grove, And Isabella's was a great distress, Though young Lorenzo in warm Indian clove Was not embalm'd, this truth is not the less— Even bees, the little almsmen of spring-bowers, Know there is richest juice in poison-flowers.

XIV.

With her two brothers this fair lady dwelt, Enriched from ancestral merchandize, And for them many a weary hand did swelt In torched mines and noisy factories, And many once proud-quiver'd loins did melt In blood from stinging whip ;—with hollow eyes Many all day in dazzling river stood, To take the rich-ored driftings of the flood.

XV.

For them the Ceylon diver held his breath, And went all naked to the hungry shark; For them his ears gush'd blood; for them in death The seal on the cold ice with piteous bark

ISABELLA.

Lay full of darts; for them alone did seethe A thousand men in troubles wide and dark: Half-ignorant, they turn'd an easy wheel, That set sharp racks at work, to pinch and peel.

XVI.

Why were they proud? Because their marble founts Gush'd with more pride than do a wretch's tears?— Why were they proud? Because fair orange-mounts Were of more soft ascent than lazar stairs?—

Why were they proud? Because red-lin'd accounts Were richer than the songs of Grecian years?— Why were they proud? again we ask aloud,

Why in the name of Glory were they proud?

XVII.

Yet were these Florentines as self-retired In hungry pride and gainful cowardice, As two close Hebrews in that land inspired, Paled in and vineyarded from beggar-spies; The hawks of ship-mast forests—the untired And pannier'd mules for ducats and old lies— Quick cat's-paws on the generous stray-away,— Great wits in Spanish, Tuscan, and Malay.

XVIII.

How was it these same ledger-men could spy Fair Isabella in her downy nest? How could they find out in Lorenzo's eye A straying from his toil? Hot Egypt's pest Into their vision covetous and sly !

How could these money-bags see east and west?— Yet so they did—and every dealer fair Must see behind, as doth the hunted hare.

XIX.

O eloquent and famed Boccaccio! Of thee we now should ask forgiving boon, And of thy spicy myrtles as they blow, And of thy roses amorous of the moon, 187

And of thy lilies, that do paler grow

188

Now they can no more hear thy ghittern's tune, For venturing syllables that ill beseem The quiet glooms of such a piteous theme.

XX.

Grant thou a pardon here, and then the tale Shall move on soberly, as it is meet; There is no other crime, no mad assail To make old prose in modern rhyme more sweet:

But it is done—succeed the verse or fail— To honour thee, and thy gone spirit greet; To stead thee as a verse in English tongue,

An echo of thee in the north-wind sung.

XXI.

These brethren having found by many signs What love Lorenzo for their sister had, And how she lov'd him too, each unconfines His bitter thoughts to other, well nigh mad That he, the servant of their trade designs, Should in their sister's love be blithe and glad. When 'twas their plan to coax her by degrees To some high noble and his olive-trees.

XXII.

And many a jealous conference had they, And many times they bit their lips alone, Before they fix'd upon a surest way To make the youngster for his crime atone; And at the last, these men of cruel clay

Cut Mercy with a sharp knife to the bone; For they resolved in some forest dim To kill Lorenzo, and there bury him.

XXIII.

So on a pleasant morning, as he leant Into the sun-rise, o'er the balustrade Of the garden-terrace, towards him they bent Their footing through the dews; and to him said,

ISABELLA.

"You seem there in the quiet of content, "Lorenzo, and we are most loth to invade "Calm speculation; but if you are wise, "Bestride your steed while cold is in the skies.

XXIV.

"To-day we purpose, ay, this hour we mount "To spur three leagues towards the Apennine;

"Come down, we pray thee, ere the hot sun count "His dewy rosary on the eglantine."

Lorenzo, courteously as he was wont,

Bow'd a fair greeting to these serpents' whine ; And went in haste, to get in readiness, With belt, and spur, and bracing huntsman's dress.

XXV.

And as he to the court-yard pass'd along, Each third step did he pause, and listen'd oft If he could hear his lady's matin-song, Or the light whisper of her footstep soft; And as he thus over his passion hung, He heard a laugh full musical aloft; When, looking up, he saw her features bright Smile through an in-door lattice, all delight.

XXVI.

"Love, Isabel!" said he, "I was in pain "Lest I should miss to bid thee a good morrow: "Ah! what if I should lose thee, when so fain "I am to stifle all the heavy sorrow

"Of a poor three hours' absence? but we'll gain "Out of the amorous dark what day doth borrow.

"Good bye! I'll soon be back."—"Good bye!" said she:—

And as he went she chanted merrily.

XXVII.

So the two brothers and their murder'd man Rode past fair Florence, to where Arno's stream Gurgles through straiten'd banks, and still doth fan Itself with dancing bulrush, and the bream

Not long—for soon into her heart a throng Of higher occupants, a richer zest, Came tragic; passion not to be subdued, And sorrow for her love in travels rude.

XXXII.

In the mid days of autumn, on their eves The breath of Winter comes from far away, And the sick west continually bereaves Of some gold tinge, and plays a roundelay Of death among the bushes and the leaves, To make all bare before he dares to stray From his north cavern. So sweet Isabel By gradual decay from beauty fell,

XXXIII.

Because Lorenzo came not. Oftentimes She ask'd her brothers, with an eye all pale, Striving to be itself, what dungeon climes

Could keep him off so long? They spake a tale Time after time, to quiet her. Their crimes

Came on them, like a smoke from Hinnom's vale; And every night in dreams they groan'd aloud, To see their sister in her snowy shroud.

XXXIV.

And she had died in drowsy ignorance, But for a thing more deadly dark than all; It came like a fierce potion, drunk by chance, Which saves a sick man from the feather'd pall For some few gasping moments; like a lance, Waking an Indian from his cloudy hall With cruel pierce, and bringing him again Sense of the gnawing fire at heart and brain.

XXXV.

It was a vision.—In the drowsy gloom, The dull of midnight, at her couch's foot Lorenzo stood, and wept: the forest tomb Had marr'd his glossy hair which once could shoot

ISABELLA.

Keeps head against the freshets. Sick and wan The brothers' faces in the ford did seem,

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Lorenzo's flush with love.—They pass'd the water Into a forest quiet for the slaughter.

XXVIII.

There was Lorenzo slain and buried in, There in that forest did his great love cease; Ah ! when a soul doth thus its freedom win,

It aches in loneliness—is ill at peace As the break-covert blood-hounds of such sin:

They dipp'd their swords in the water, and did tease Their horses homeward, with convulsed spur, Each richer by his being a murderer.

XXIX.

They told their sister how, with sudden speed, Lorenzo had ta'en ship for foreign lands, Because of some great urgency and need In their affairs, requiring trusty hands. Poor Girl! put on thy stifling widow's weed, And 'scape at once from Hope's accursed bands; To-day thou wilt not see him, nor to-morrow, And the next day will be a day of sorrow.

XXX.

She weeps alone for pleasures not to be; Sorely she wept until the night came on, And then, instead of love, O misery! She brooded o'er the luxury alone: His image in the dusk she seem'd to see, And to the silence made a gentle moan, Spreading her perfect arms upon the air, And on her couch low murmuring, "Where? O where?"

XXXI.

But Selfishness, Love's cousin, held not long Its fiery vigil in her single breast; She fretted for the golden hour, and hung Upon the time with feverish unrest—

Lustre into the sun, and put cold doom

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Upon his lips, and taken the soft lute From his lorn voice, and past his loamed ears Had made a miry channel for his tears.

XXXVI.

Strange sound it was, when the pale shadow spake; For there was striving, in its piteous tongue, To speak as when on earth it was awake, And Isabella on its music hung: Languor there was in it, and tremulous shake, As in a palsied Druid's harp unstrung;

And through it moan'd a ghostly under-song, Like hoarse night-gusts sepulchral briars among.

XXXVII.

Its eyes, though wild, were still all dewy bright With love, and kept all phantom fear aloof From the poor girl by magic of their light, The while it did unthread the horrid woof Of the late darken'd time,—the murderous spite Of pride and avarice,—the dark pine roof In the forest,—and the sodden turfed dell, Where, without any word, from stabs he fell.

XXXVIII.

Saying moreover, "Isabel, my sweet! "Red whortle-berries droop above my head, "And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet; "Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed "Their leaves and prickly nuts; a sheep-fold bleat "Comes from beyond the river to my bed: "Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom, "And it shall comfort me within the tomb.

XXXIX.

"I am a shadow now, alas! alas! "Upon the skirts of human-nature dwelling "Alone: I chant alone the holy mass, "While little sounds of life are round me knelling,

ISABELLA.

"And glossy bees at noon do fieldward pass,

"And many a chapel bell the hour is telling,

"Paining me through: those sounds grow strange to me,

"And thou art distant in Humanity.

XL.

"I know what was, I feel full well what is, "And I should rage, if spirits could go mad; "Though I forget the taste of earthly bliss, "That paleness warms my grave, as though I had "A Seraph chosen from the bright abyss "To be my spouse: thy paleness makes me glad; "Thy beauty grows upon me, and I feel

"A greater love through all my essence steal."

XLI.

The Spirit mourn'd "Adieu !"—dissolv'd, and left The atom darkness in a slow turmoil; As when of healthful midnight sleep bereft,

Thinking on rugged hours and fruitless toil, We put our eyes into a pillowy cleft,

And see the spangly gloom froth up and boil: It made sad Isabella's eyelids ache, And in the dawn she started up awake;

XLII.

"Ha! ha!" said she, "I knew not this hard life, "I thought the worst was simple misery;
"I thought some Fate with pleasure or with strife "Portion'd us—happy days, or else to die;
"But there is crime—a brother's bloody knife! "Sweet Spirit, thou hast school'd my infancy: "I'll visit thee for this, and kiss thine eyes, "And greet thee morn and even in the skies."

XLIII.

When the full morning came, she had devised How she might secret to the forest hie; How she might find the clay, so dearly prized, And sing to it one latest lullaby;

ISABELLA.

How her short absence might be unsurmised,

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While she the inmost of the dream would try. Resolv'd, she took with her an aged nurse, And went into that dismal forest-hearse.

XLIV.

See, as they creep along the river side, How she doth whisper to that aged Dame, And, after looking round the champaign wide,

Shows her a knife.-" What feverous hectic flame

"Burns in thee, child?-What good can thee betide, "That thou should'st smile again?"-The evening

came, And they had found Lorenzo's earthy bed :

The flint was there, the berries at his head.

XLV.

Who hath not loiter'd in a green church-yard, And let his spirit, like a demon-mole, Work through the clayey soil and gravel hard, To see skull, cofin'd bones, and funeral stole; Pitying each form that hungry Death hath marr'd, And filling it once more with human soul? Ah! this is holiday to what was felt When Isabella by Lorenzo knelt.

XLVI.

She gaz'd into the fresh-thrown mould, as though One glance did fully all its secrets tell; Clearly she saw, as other eyes would know Pale limbs at bottom of a crystal well; Upon the murderous spot she seem'd to grow, Like to a native lily of the dell: Then with her knife, all sudden, she began To dig more fervently than misers can.

XLVII.

Soon she turn'd up a soiled glove, whereon Her silk had play'd in purple phantasies, She kiss'd it with a lip more chill than stone, And put it in her bosom, where it dries And freezes utterly unto the bone

Those dainties made to still an infant's cries: Then 'gan she work again; nor stay'd her care, But to throw back at times her veiling hair.

XLVIII.

That old nurse stood beside her wondering, Until her heart felt pity to the core At sight of such a dismal labouring, And so she kneeled, with her locks all hoar, And put her lean hands to the horrid thing : Three hours they labour'd at this travail sore; At last they felt the kernel of the grave, And Isabella did not stamp and rave.

XLIX.

Ah! wherefore all this wormy circumstance? Why linger at the yawning tomb so long? O for the gentleness of old Romance, The simple plaining of a minstrel's song!

Fair reader, at the old tale take a glance, For here, in truth, it doth not well belong To speak:—O turn thee to the very tale, And taste the music of that vision pale.

L.

With duller steel than the Perséan sword They cut away no formless monster's head, But one, whose gentleness did well accord With death, as life. The ancient harps have said, Love never dies, but lives, immortal Lord: If Love impersonate was ever dead, Pale Isabella kiss'd it, and low moan'd. 'Twas love; cold,—dead indeed, but not dethroned.

LI.

In anxious secrecy they took it home, And then the prize was all for Isabel: She calm'd its wild hair with a golden comb, And all around each eye's sepulchral cell

Pointed each fringed lash; the smeared loam

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With tears, as chilly as a dripping well, She drench'd away:—and still she comb'd, and kept Sighing all day—and still she kiss'd, and wept.

LII.

Then in a silken scarf,—sweet with the dews Of precious flowers pluck'd in Araby,

And divine liquids come with odorous ooze Through the cold serpent pipe refreshfully,— She wrapp'd it up; and for its tomb did choose

A garden-pot, wherein she laid it by, And cover'd it with mould, and o'er it set Sweet Basil, which her tears kept ever wet.

LIII.

And she forgot the stars, the moon, and sun, And she forgot the blue above the trees, And she forgot the dells where waters run, And she forgot the chilly autumn breeze; She had no knowledge when the day was done, And the new morn she saw not: but in peace Hung over her sweet Basil evermore, And moisten'd it with tears unto the core.

LIV.

And so she ever fed it with thin tears, Whence thick, and green, and beautiful it grew, So that it smelt more balmy than its peers Of Basil-tufts in Florence; for it drew Nurture besides, and life, from human fears, From the fast mouldering head there shut from view: So that the jewel, safely casketed, Came forth, and in perfumed leafits spread.

LV.

O Melancholy, linger here awhile!
O Music, Music, breathe despondingly!
O Echo, Echo, from some sombre isle, Unknown, Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh!

ISABELLA.

Spirits in grief, lift up your heads, and smile; Lift up your heads, sweet Spirits, heavily, And make a pale light in your cypress glooms, Tinting with silver wan your marble tombs.

LVI.

Moan hither, all ye syllables of woe, From the deep throat of sad Melpomene! Through bronzed lyre in tragic order go, And touch the strings into a mystery; Sound mournfully upon the winds and low; For simple Isabel is soon to be Among the dead: She withers, like a palm Cut by an Indian for its juicy balm.

LVII.

O leave the palm to wither by itself; Let not quick Winter chill its dying hour !--It may not be—those Baälites of pelf, Her brethren, noted the continual shower From her dead eyes; and many a curious elf, Among her kindred, wonder'd that such dower

Of youth and beauty should be thrown aside By one mark'd out to be a Noble's bride.

LVIII.

And, furthermore, her brethren wonder'd much Why she sat drooping by the Basil green, And why it flourish'd, as by magic touch;

Greatly they wonder'd what the thing might mean: They could not surely give belief, that such

A very nothing would have power to wean Her from her own fair youth, and pleasures gay, And even remembrance of her love's delay.

LIX.

Therefore they watch'd a time when they might sift This hidden whim; and long they watch'd in vain; For seldom did she go to chapel-shrift, And seldom felt she any hunger-pain;

And when she left, she hurried back, as swift As bird on wing to breast its eggs again:

And, patient as a hen-bird, sat her there Beside her Basil, weeping through her hair.

LX.

Yet they contriv'd to steal the Basil-pot, And to examine it in secret place : The thing was vile with green and livid spot,

And yet they knew it was Lorenzo's face:

The guerdon of their murder they had got, And so left Florence in a moment's space, Never to turn again.—Away they went, With blood upon their heads, to banishment.

LXI.

O Melancholy, turn thine eyes away! O Music, Music, breathe despondingly! O Echo, Echo, on some other day, From isles Lethean, sigh to us—O sigh! Spirits of grief, sing not your "Well-a-way!" For Isabel, sweet Isabel, will die;

Will die a death too lone and incomplete, Now they have ta'en away her Basil sweet.

LXII.

Piteous she look'd on dead and senseless things, Asking for her lost Basil amorously: And with melodious chuckle in the strings Of her lorn voice, she oftentimes would cry After the Pilgrim in his wanderings, To ask him where her Basil was; and why 'Twas hid from her: "For cruel 'tis," said she,

"To steal my Basil-pot away from me."

LXIII.

And so she pined, and so she died forlorn, Imploring for her Basil to the last. No heart was there in Florence but did mourn In pity of her love, so overcast.

And a sad ditty of this story born From mouth to mouth through all the country pass'd: Still is the burthen sung—"O cruelty, "To steal my Basil-pot away from me!"

Alle many which which a married being

EVE OF ST. AGNES.

His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve: Another way he went, and soon among Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve, And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

IV.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft; And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide. From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft, The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide: The level chambers, ready with their pride, Were glowing to receive a thousand guests: The carved angels, ever eager-eved, Star'd, where upon their heads the cornice rests, With hair blown back, and wings put cross-wise on their breasts.

v.

At length burst in the argent revelry, With plume, tiara, and all rich array, Numerous as shadows haunting fairily

The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs

Of old romance. These let us wish away, And turn, sole-thoughted, to one Lady there, Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day, On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care, As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

VI.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve, Young virgins might have visions of delight, And soft adorings from their loves receive Upon the honey'd middle of the night, If ceremonies due they did aright; As, supperless to bed they must retire, And couch supine their beauties, lily white; Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

THE

EVE OF ST. AGNES

Ι.

ST. AGNES' Eve-Ah, bitter chill it was! The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold; The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass, And silent was the flock in woolly fold: Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told His rosary, and while his frosted breath, Like pious incense from a censer old, Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death, Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

II.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man; Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees, And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan, Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees: The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze, Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails: Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries, He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

III.

Northward he turneth through a little door, And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue. Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor; But no-already had his deathbell rung; The joys of all his life were said and sung:

VII.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline: The music, yearning like a God in pain, She scarcely heard : her maiden eyes divine, Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train Pass by-she heeded not at all: in vain Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier, And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain, But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere: She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

VIII.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes, Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short: The hallow'd hour was near at hand : she sighs Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort Of whisperers in anger, or in sport ; 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate, and scorn, Hoodwink'd with faery fancy ; all amort, Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn, And all the bliss to be before to-morrow morn.

IX.

So, purposing each moment to retire, She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors, Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire For Madeline. Beside the portal doors, Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores All saints to give him sight of Madeline, But for one moment in the tedious hours, That he might gaze and worship all unseen; Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss-in sooth such things have been.

x.

He ventures in : let no buzz'd whisper tell : All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel: For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes, Hyena foemen, and hot-blooded lords,

Whose very dogs would execrations howl Against his lineage : not one breast affords Him any mercy, in that mansion foul, Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

XI.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came, Shuffling along with ivory-headed wand, To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame, Behind a broad hall-pillar, far beyond The sound of merriment and chorus bland: He startled her : but soon she knew his face. And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand, Saying, "Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;

"They are all here to-night, the whole blood-thirsty race !

XII.

"Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand:

"He had a fever late, and in the fit

"He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:

"Then there 's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit

- "More tame for his gray hairs—Alas me! flit! "Flit like a ghost away."—"Ah, Gossip dear,
- "We're safe enough; here in this arm-chair sit,

"And tell me how"-"Good Saints! not here, not here:

"Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

XIII.

He follow'd through a lowly arched way, Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume; And as she mutter'd "Well-a-well-a-day !" He found him in a little moonlight room, Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb. "Now tell me where is Madeline," said he, "O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom "Which none but secret sisterhood may see, "When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously."

XIV.

"St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve—
"Yet men will murder upon holy days:
"Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
"And be liege-lord of all the Elves and Fays,
"To venture so: it fills me with amaze
"To see thee, Porphyro!—St. Agnes' Eve!
"God's help! my lady fair the conjuror plays
"This very night: good angels her deceive!
"But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve."

XV.

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon, While Porphyro upon her face doth look, Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle-book, As spectacled she sits in chimney nook. But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold, And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

XVI.

Sudden a thought came like a full-blown rose, Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart Made purple riot : then doth he propose A stratagem, that makes the beldame start : "A cruel man and impious thou art :

"Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream "Alone with her good angels, far apart

"From wicked men like thee. Go, go !-- I deem

"Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.

XVII.

"I will not harm her, by all saints I swear," Quoth Porphyro: "O may I ne'er find grace "When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer, "If one of her soft ringlets I displace, "Or look with ruffian passion in her face: "Good Angela, believe me by these tears;

"Or I will, even in a moment's space,

"Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears, "And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears."

XVIII.

"Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
"A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
"Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll;
"Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
"Were never miss'd."—Thus plaining, doth she bring
A gentler speech from burning Porphyro ;

So woful, and of such deep sorrowing, That Angela gives promise she will do Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

XIX.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy, Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide Him in a closet, of such privacy That he might see her beauty unespied, And win perhaps that night a peerless bride, While legion'd fairies pac'd the coverlet, And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed. Never on such a night have lovers met, Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

XX.

"It shall be as thou wishest," said the Dame: "All cates and dainties shall be stored there "Quickly on this feast-night: by the tambour frame "Her own lute thou will see: no time to spare, "For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare "On such a catering trust my dizzy head. "Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in

prayer "The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,

"Or may I never leave my grave among the dead."

EVE OF ST. AGNES.

XXI.

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear. The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd; The dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear To follow her; with aged eyes aghast From fright of dim espial. Safe at last, Through many a dusky gallery, they gain The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste; Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain. His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

XXII.

Her falt'ring hand upon the balustrade, Old Angela was feeling for the stair, When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid, Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware: With silver taper's light, and pious care, She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led To a safe level matting. Now prepare, Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed; She comes, she comes again, like ring-dove fray'd and fled.

XXIII.

Out went the taper as she hurried in; Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died: She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin To spirits of the air, and visions wide: No uttered syllable, or, woe betide! But to her heart, her heart was voluble, Paining with eloquence her balmy side; As though a tongueless nightingale should swell Her throat in vain, and die, heart-stifled, in her dell.

XXIV.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was, All garlanded with carven imag'ries Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot-grass, And diamonded with panes of quaint device, Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes, As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings; And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries, And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings, A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

XXV.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon, And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast, As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon; Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest, And on her silver cross soft amethyst, And on her hair a glory, like a saint: She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest, Save wings, for heaven :--Porphyro grew faint : She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

XXVI.

Anon his heart revives : her vespers done, Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees; Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one; Loosens her fragrant boddice; by degrees Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees: Half-hidden, like a mermaid in sea-weed, Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees, In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed, But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

XXVII.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest, In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay, Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away; Flown, like a thought, until the morrow-day; Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain; Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray; Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain, As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

XXVIII.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced, Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,

And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced To wake into a slumberous tenderness; Which when he heard, that minute did he bless, And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept, Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness, And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stept,

And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo !-- how fast she slept.

XXIX.

Then by the bed-side, where the faded moon Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set A table, and, half anguish'd, threw thereon A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet:--O for some drowsy Morphean amulet ! The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion, The kettle-drum, and far-heard clarionet, Affray his ears, though but in dying tone :--The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

XXX.

And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep, In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd, While he from forth the closet brought a heap Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd; With jellies soother than the creamy curd, And lucent syrops, tinct with cinnamon; Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one, From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

XXXI.

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand On golden dishes and in baskets bright Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand In the retired quiet of the night, Filling the chilly room with perfume light.— "And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake! "Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite: "Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake, "Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache."

XXXII.

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream By the dusk curtains:—'twas a midnight charm Impossible to melt as iced stream: The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam; Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies: It seem'd he never, never could redeem From such a stedfast spell his lady's eyes; So mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

XXXIII.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute,— Tumultuous,—and, in chords that tenderest be, He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute, In Provence call'd, "La belle dame sans mercy:" Close to her ear touching the melody;— Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan: He ceased—she panted quick—and suddenly Her blue affrayed eyes wide open shone: Upon his knees he sank, pale as smooth-sculptured stone.

XXXIV.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld, Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep: There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd The blisses of her dream so pure and deep At which fair Madeline began to weep, And moan forth witless words with many a sigh; While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep; Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye, Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

XXXV.

"Ah, Porphyro!" said she, "but even now "Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear, "Made tuneable with every sweetest vow; "And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:

EVE OF ST. AGNES.

"How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear !

"Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,

"Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!

"Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,

"For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go."

XXXVL

Beyond a mortal man impassion'd far At these voluptuous accents, he arose, Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose: Into her dream he melted, as the rose Blendeth its odour with the violet,-Solution sweet: meantime the frost-wind blows Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet Against the window-panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

XXXVII.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flaw-blown sleet: "This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!" 'Tis dark : the iced gusts still rave and beat: "No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine! " Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine .--"Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring? "I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine, "Though thou forsakest a deceived thing;-"A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing."

XXXVIII.

"My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!

"Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?

"Thy beauty's shield, heart-shap'd and vermeil dyed ?

"Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest

"After so many hours of toil and quest,

"A famish'd pilgrim, --saved by miracle.

"Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest "Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well "To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel."

XXXIX.

"Hark! 'tis an elfin-storm from faery land. "Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed: "Arise-arise! the morning is at hand ;-"The bloated wassaillers will never heed :---"Let us away, my love, with happy speed; "There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see,-"Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead: "Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be, "For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee."

XL.

She hurried at his words, beset with fears, For there were sleeping dragons all around, At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears-Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found.-In all the house was heard no human sound. A chain-droop'd lamp was flickering by each

door;

The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound, Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar; And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

XLI.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall; Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide; Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl, With a huge empty flaggon by his side : The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide, But his sagacious eye an inmate owns: By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide :--The chains lie silent on the footworn stones :--

The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

XLII.

And they are gone: ay, ages long ago These lovers fled away into the storm. That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe, And all his warrior-guests, with shade and form

Of witch, and demon, and large coffin-worm, Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform; The Beadsman, after thousand aves told, For aye unsought for slept among his ashes cold.

POEMS.

ODE TO A NIGHTINGALE.

Ι.

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk, Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk : 'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot, But being too happy in thine happiness,— That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees, In some melodious plot Of beechen green, and shadows numberless, Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

2.

O, for a draught of vintage ! that hath been Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green, Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth !
O for a beaker full of the warm South,
Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple-stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

3.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget What thou among the leaves hast never known, The weariness, the fever, and the fret Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;

Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain-To thy high requiem become a sod.

7.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird! No hungry generations tread thee down; The voice I hear this passing night was heard In ancient days by emperor and clown: Perhaps the self-same song that found a path Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home, She stood in tears amid the alien corn; The same that oft-times hath Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

8.

Forlorn ! the very word is like a bell To toll me back from thee to my sole self ! Adieu ! the fancy cannot cheat so well As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf. Adieu ! adieu ! thy plaintive anthem fades Past the near meadows, over the still stream, Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep In the next valley-glades: Was it a vision, or a waking dream ? Fled is that music :- Do I wake or sleep?

ODE ON A GRECIAN URN.

I.

THOU still unravish'd bride of quietness, Thou foster-child of silence and slow time, Sylvan historian, who canst thus express A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme: What leaf-fring'd legend haunts about thy shape Of deities or mortals, or of both, In Tempe or the dales of Arcady? What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?

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Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs, Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies; Where but to think is to be full of sorrow And leaden-eyed despairs, Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes, Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

POEMS.

4-

Away! away! for I will fly to thee, Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards, But on the viewless wings of Poesy, Though the dull brain perplexes and retards: Already with thee! tender is the night, And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne, Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays; But here there is no light, Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

5

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet, Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs, But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet Wherewith the seasonable month endows The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild; White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine; Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves; And mid-May's eldest child, The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine, The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time I have been half in love with easeful Death, Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme, To take into the air my quiet breath; Now more than ever seems it rich to die, To cease upon the midnight with no pain, While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad In such an ecstasy!

POEMS.

What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape? What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

2.

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on; Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd, Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone: Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare; Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss, Though winning near the goal—yet, do not grieve; She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,

For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair !

3.

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
And, happy melodist, unwearied, For ever piping songs for ever new;
More happy love! more happy, happy love! For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd, For ever panting, and for ever young;
All breathing human passion far above, That leaves a heart high-sorrowful and cloy'd, A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

4.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice? To what green altar, O mysterious priest, Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies, And all her silken flanks with garlands drest? What little town by river or sea shore, Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel, Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn? And, little town, thy streets for evermore Will silent be; and not a soul to tell Why thou art desolate, can e'er return. O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede Of marble men and maidens overwrought, With forest branches and the trodden weed; Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral! When old age shall this generation waste, Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st, "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

ODE TO PSYCHE.

O GODDESS ! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear, And pardon that thy secrets should be sung Even into thine own soft-conched ear: Surely I dreamt to-day, or did I see The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes? I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly, And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise, Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran A brooklet, scarce espied : 'Mid hush'd, cool-rooted flowers, fragrant-eyed, Blue, silver-white, and budded Tyrian, They lay calm-breathing on the bedded grass; Their arms embraced, and their pinions too; Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu, As if disjoined by soft-handed slumber, And ready still past kisses to outnumber At tender eye-dawn of aurorean love: The winged boy I knew; But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove? His Psyche true!

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With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign, Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same: And there shall be for thee all soft delight That shadowy thought can win, A bright torch, and a casement ope at night, To let the warm Love in !

FANCY.

EVER let the Fancy roam, Pleasure never is at home: At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth, Like to bubbles when rain pelteth; Then let winged Fancy wander Through the thought still spread beyond her: Open wide the mind's cage-door, She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar. O sweet Fancy! let her loose; Summer's joys are spoilt by use, And the enjoying of the Spring Fades as does its blossoming; Autumn's red-lipp'd fruitage too, Blushing through the mist and dew, Cloys with tasting: What do then? Sit thee by the ingle, when The sear faggot blazes bright, Spirit of a winter's night; When the soundless earth is muffled, And the caked snow is shuffled From the ploughboy's heavy shoon; When the Night doth meet the Noon In a dark conspiracy To banish Even from her sky. Sit thee there, and send abroad, With a mind self-overaw'd, Fancy, high-commission'd :---send her ! She has vassals to attend her: She will bring, in spite of frost, Beauties that the earth hath lost;

POEMS.

O latest born and loveliest vision far Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy! Fairer than Phœbe's sapphire-region'd star, Or Vesper, amorous glow-worm of the sky; Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none, Nor altar heap'd with flowers; Nor virgin-choir to make delicious moan Upon the midnight hours; No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet From chain-swung censer teeming; No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest ! though too late for antique vows, Too, too late for the fond believing lyre, When holy were the haunted forest boughs, Holy the air, the water, and the fire; Yet even in these days so far retir'd From happy pieties, thy lucent fans, Fluttering among the faint Olympians, I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired. So let me be thy choir, and make a moan Upon the midnight hours; Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet From swinged censer teeming; Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat Of pale-mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane In some untrodden region of my mind, Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain, Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:

Far, far around shall those dark-cluster'd trees

Fledge the wild-ridged mountains steep by steep; And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,

The moss-lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep; And in the midst of this wide quietness A rosy sanctuary will I dress

With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain, With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,

She will bring thee, all together, All delights of summer weather; All the buds and bells of May, From dewy sward or thorny spray; All the heaped Autumn's wealth, With a still, mysterious stealth: She will mix these pleasures up Like three fit wines in a cup, And thou shalt quaff it :- thou shalt hear Distant harvest-carols clear: Rustle of the reaped corn: Sweet birds antheming the morn: And, in the same moment-hark ! 'Tis the early April lark, Or the rooks, with busy caw, Foraging for sticks and straw. Thou shalt, at one glance, behold The daisy and the marigold; White-plum'd lilies, and the first Hedge-grown primrose that hath burst: Shaded hyacinth, alway Sapphire queen of the mid-May; And every leaf, and every flower Pearled with the self-same shower. Thou shalt see the field-mouse peep Meagre from its celled sleep: And the snake all winter-thin Cast on sunny bank its skin; Freckled nest-eggs thou shalt see Hatching in the hawthorn-tree. When the hen-bird's wing doth rest Quiet on her mossy nest: Then the hurry and alarm When the bee-hive casts its swarm: Acorns ripe down-pattering, While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose; Every thing is spoilt by use: Where's the cheek that doth not fade, Too much gaz'd at? Where's the maid Whose lip mature is ever new? Where's the eye, however blue, Doth not weary? Where's the face One would meet in every place? Where's the voice, however soft, One would hear so very oft? At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth Like to bubbles when rain pelteth. Let, then, winged Fancy find Thee a mistress to thy mind: Dulcet-eyed as Ceres' daughter, Ere the God of Torment taught her How to frown and how to chide; With a waist and with a side White as Hebe's, when her zone Slipt its golden clasp, and down Fell her kirtle to her feet, While she held the goblet sweet, And Jove grew languid.-Break the mesh Of the Fancy's silken leash; Quickly break her prison-string And such joys as these she'll bring .--Let the winged Fancy roam, Pleasure never is at home.

ODE

BARDS of Passion and of Mirth, Ye have left your souls on earth ! Have ye souls in heaven too, Double-lived in regions new? Yes, and those of heaven commune With the spheres of sun and moon; With the noise of fountains wond'rous, And the parle of voices thund'rous; With the whisper of heaven's trees And one another, in soft ease Seated on Elysian lawns Brows'd by none but Dian's fawns; Underneath large blue-bells tented, Where the daisies are rose-scented,

Or are fruits of Paradise Sweeter than those dainty pies Of venison? O generous food ! Drest as though bold Robin Hood Would, with his maid Marian, Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day Mine host's sign-board flew away, Nobody knew whither, till An astrologer's old quill To a sheepskin gave the story, Said he saw you in your glory, Underneath a new old-sign Sipping beverage divine, And pledging with contented smack The Mermaid in the Zodiac.

Souls of Poets dead and gone, What Elysium have ye known, Happy field or mossy cavern, Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

ROBIN HOOD.

TO A FRIEND.

No! those days are gone away, And their hours are old and gray, And their minutes buried all Under the down-trodden pall Of the leaves of many years: Many times have winter's shears, Frozen North, and chilling East, Sounded tempests to the feast Of the forest's whispering fleeces, Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more, And the twanging bow no more;

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And the rose herself has got Perfume which on earth is not; Where the nightingale doth sing Not a senseless, tranced thing, But divine melodious truth; Philosophic numbers smooth; Tales and golden histories Of heaven and its mysteries.

POEMS.

Thus ye live on high, and then On the earth ye live again; And the souls ye left behind you Teach us, here, the way to find you, Where your other souls are joying, Never slumber'd, never cloying. Here, your earth-born souls still speak To mortals, of their little week; Of their sorrows and delights; Of their passions and their spites; Of their glory and their shame; What doth strengthen and what maim. Thus ye teach us, every day, Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth, Ye have left your souls on earth! Ye have souls in heaven too, Double-lived in regions new!

LINES

ON

THE MERMAID TAVERN.

Souls of Poets dead and gone, What Elysium have ye known, Happy field or mossy cavern, Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern? Have ye tippled drink more fine Than mine host's Canary wine? Silent is the ivory shrill Past the heath and up the hill; There is no mid-forest laugh, Where lone Echo gives the half To some wight, amaz'd to hear Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June You may go, with sun or moon, Or the seven stars to light you; But you never may behold Little John, or Robin bold; Never one, of all the clan, Thrumming on an empty can Some old hunting ditty, while He doth his green way beguile To fair hostess Merriment, Down beside the pasture Trent; For he left the merry tale Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din ; Gone, the song of Gamelyn; Gone, the tough-belted outlaw Idling in the "grene shawe;" All are gone away and past ! And if Robin should be cast Sudden from his turfed grave, And if Marian should have Once again her forest days, She would weep, and he would craze: He would swear, for all his oaks, Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes, Have rotted on the briny seas : She would weep that her wild bees Sang not to her-strange! that honey Can't be got without hard money !

So it is: yet let us sing, Honour to the old bow-string! Honour to the bugle-horn!

POEMS.

Honour to the woods unshorn ! Honour to the Lincoln green ! Honour to the archer keen ! Honour to tight Little John, And the horse he rode upon ! Honour to bold Robin Hood, Sleeping in the underwood ! Honour to Maid Marian, And to all the Sherwood-clan ! Though their days have hurried by, Let us two a burden try.

TO AUTUMN.

I.

SEASON of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;
Conspiring with him how to load and bless
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
And still more, later flowers for the bees,
Until they think warm days will never cease,
For Summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells.

2.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store? Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find Thee sitting careless on a granary floor, Thy hair soft-lifted by the winnowing wind; Or on a half-reap'd furrow sound asleep, Drows'd with the fume of poppies, while thy hook Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers: And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep Steady thy laden head across a brook; Or by a cyder-press, with patient look, Thou watchest the last oozings hours by hours. Q

3.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they? Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,— While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day, And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue; Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn Among the river sallows, borne aloft Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies; And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn; Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft; And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

ODE ON MELANCHOLY.

Ι.

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist Wolf s-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine; Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine; Make not your rosary of yew-berries, Nor let the beetle, nor the death-moth be Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl A partner in your sorrow's mysteries; For shade to shade will come too drowsily, And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

2.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud, That fosters the droop-headed flowers all, And hides the green hill in an April shroud; Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose, Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave, Or on the wealth of globed peonies; Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows, Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave, And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes. 3.

She dwells with Beauty—Beauty that must die; And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh, Turning to poison while the bee-mouth sips : Ay, in the very temple of Delight Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,

Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue

Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine; His soul shall taste the sadness of her might, And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

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HYPERION.

A FRAGMENT.

BOOK I.

DEEP in the shady sadness of a vale . Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn, Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star, Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone, Still as the silence round about his lair; Forest on forest hung about his head Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there, Not so much life as on a summer's day Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass, But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest. A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more By reason of his fallen divinity Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips.

Along the margin-sand large foot-marks went, No further than to where his feet had stray'd, And slept there since. Upon the sodden ground His old right hand lay nerveless, listless, dead, Unsceptred; and his realmless eyes were closed; While his bow'd head seem'd list'ning to the Earth, His ancient mother, for some comfort yet.

It seem'd no force could wake him from his place; But there came one, who with a kindred hand Touch'd his wide shoulders, after bending low With reverence, though to one who knew it not. She was a Goddess of the infant world; By her in stature the tall Amazon Had stood a pigmy's height: she would have ta'en Achilles by the hair and bent his neck;

Or with a finger stay'd Ixion's wheel. Her face was large as that of Memphian sphinx, Pedestal'd haply in a palace court. When sages look'd to Egypt for their lore. But oh ! how unlike marble was that face : How beautiful, if sorrow had not made Sorrow more beautiful than Beauty's self. There was a listening fear in her regard, As if calamity had but begun; As if the vanward clouds of evil days Had spent their malice, and the sullen rear Was with its stored thunder labouring up. One hand she press'd upon that aching spot Where beats the human heart, as if just there, Though an immortal, she felt cruel pain: The other upon Saturn's bended neck She laid, and to the level of his ear Leaning with parted lips, some words she spake In solemn tenour and deep organ tone : Some mourning words, which in our feeble tongue Would come in these like accents; O how frail To that large utterance of the early Gods ! "Saturn, look up !- though wherefore, poor old King? "I have no comfort for thee, no not one: "I cannot say, 'O wherefore sleepest thou?" "For heaven is parted from thee, and the earth "Knows thee not, thus afflicted, for a God; "And ocean too, with all its solemn noise, "Has from thy sceptre pass'd; and all the air " Is emptied of thine hoary majesty. "Thy thunder, conscious of the new command, "Rumbles reluctant o'er our fallen house; "And thy sharp lightning in unpractised hands "Scorches and burns our once serene domain. "O aching time ! O moments big as years ! "All as ye pass swell out the monstrous truth, "And press it so upon our weary griefs "That unbelief has not a space to breathe. "Saturn, sleep on :--- O thoughtless, why did I "Thus violate thy slumbrous solitude? "Why should I ope thy melancholy eyes?

HYPERION.

"Saturn, sleep on ! while at thy feet I weep."

BOOK I.

HYPERION.

As when, upon a tranced summer-night, Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods, Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars, Dream, and so dream all night without a stir, Save from one gradual solitary gust Which comes upon the silence, and dies off. As if the ebbing air had but one wave; So came these words and went; the while in tears She touch'd her fair large forehead to the ground, Just where her falling hair might be outspread A soft and silken mat for Saturn's feet. One moon, with alteration slow, had shed Her silver seasons four upon the night, And still these two were postured motionless, Like natural sculpture in cathedral cavern; The frozen God still couchant on the earth, And the sad Goddess weeping at his feet: Until at length old Saturn lifted up His faded eyes, and saw his kingdom gone, And all the gloom and sorrow of the place, And that fair kneeling Goddess; and then spake, As with a palsied tongue, and while his beard Shook horrid with such aspen-malady: "O tender spouse of gold Hyperion, "Thea, I feel thee ere I see thy face; "Look up, and let me see our doom in it; "Look up, and tell me if this feeble shape "Is Saturn's; tell me, if thou hear'st the voice "Of Saturn; tell me, if this wrinkling brow, "Naked and bare of its great diadem, "Peers like the front of Saturn. Who had power "To make me desolate? whence came the strength? "How was it nurtur'd to such bursting forth, "While Fate seem'd strangled in my nervous grasp? "But it is so; and I am smother'd up, "And buried from all godlike exercise "Of influence benign on planets pale, "Of admonitions to the winds and seas, "Of peaceful sway above man's harvesting, "And all those acts which Deity supreme "Doth ease its heart of love in.-I am gone

"Away from my own bosom: I have left

"My strong identity, my real self,

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"Somewhere between the throne, and where I sit "Here on this spot of earth. Search, Thea, search!

"Open thine eyes eterne, and sphere them round "Upon all space: space starr'd, and lorn of light;

"Space region'd with life-air; and barren void;

"Spaces of fire, and all the yawn of hell .--

"Search, Thea, search! and tell me, if thou seest "A certain shape or shadow, making way

"With wings or chariot fierce to repossess

"A heaven he lost erewhile: it must-it must

"Be of ripe progress-Saturn must be King.

"Yes, there must be a golden victory;

"There must be Gods thrown down, and trumpets blown

"Of triumph calm, and hymns of festival

" Upon the gold clouds metropolitan,

"Voices of soft proclaim, and silver stir

"Of strings in hollow shells; and there shall be

"Beautiful things made new, for the surprise

"Of the sky-children; I will give command:

"Thea! Thea! Thea! where is Saturn?"

This passion lifted him upon his feet, And made his hands to struggle in the air, His Druid locks to shake and ooze with sweat, His eyes to fever out, his voice to cease. He stood, and heard not Thea's sobbing deep; A little time, and then again he snatch'd Utterance thus.—" But cannot I create? "Cannot I form? Cannot I fashion forth "Another world, another universe, " To overbear and crumble this to nought? "Where is another chaos? Where?"—That word Found way unto Olympus, and made quake The rebel three.—Thea was startled up, And in her bearing was a sort of hope, As thus she quick-voic'd spake, yet full of awe.

"This cheers our fallen house : come to our friends, "O Saturn ! come away, and give them heart; "I know the covert, for thence came I hither." Thus brief; then with beseeching eyes she went With backward footing through the shade a space: He follow'd, and she turn'd to lead the way Through aged boughs, that yielded like the mist Which eagles cleave upmounting from their nest.

HYPERION.

Meanwhile in other realms big tears were shed, More sorrow like to this, and such like woe, Too huge for mortal tongue or pen of scribe: The Titans fierce, self-hid, or prison-bound, Groan'd for the old allegiance once more, And listen'd in sharp pain for Saturn's voice. But one of the whole mammoth-brood still kept His sov'reignty, and rule, and majesty;-Blazing Hyperion on his orbed fire Still sat, still snuff d the incense, teeming up From man to the sun's God; yet unsecure: For as among us mortals omens drear Fright and perplex, so also shuddered he-Not at dog's howl, or gloom-bird's hated screech, Or the familiar visiting of one Upon the first toll of his passing-bell, Or prophesyings of the midnight lamp; But horrors, portion'd to a giant nerve, Oft made Hyperion ache. His palace bright Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold, And touch'd with shade of bronzed obelisks, Glar'd a blood-red through all its thousand courts, Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries; And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds Flush'd angerly: while sometimes eagle's wings, Unseen before by Gods or wondering men, Darken'd the place; and neighing steeds were heard, Not heard before by Gods or wondering men. Also, when he would taste the spicy wreaths Of incense, breath'd aloft from sacred hills, Instead of sweets, his ample palate took Savour of poisonous brass and metal sick: And so, when harbour'd in the sleepy west, After the full completion of fair day,-For rest divine upon exalted couch

And slumber in the arms of melody, He pac'd away the pleasant hours of ease With stride colossal, on from hall to hall; While far within each aisle and deep recess, His winged minions in close clusters stood. Amaz'd and full of fear ; like anxious men Who on wide plains gather in panting troops, When earthquakes jar their battlements and towers, Even now, while Saturn, rous'd from icy trance, Went step for step with Thea through the woods, Hyperion, leaving twilight in the rear, Came slope upon the threshold of the west; Then, as was wont, his palace-door flew ope In smoothest silence, save what solemn tubes, Blown by the serious Zephyrs, gave of sweet And wandering sounds, slow-breathed melodies; And like a rose in vermeil tint and shape, In fragrance soft, and coolness to the eye, That inlet to severe magnificence Stood full blown, for the God to enter in.

HYPERION.

He enter'd, but he enter'd full of wrath ; His flaming robes stream'd out beyond his heels, And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire, That scar'd away the meek ethereal Hours And made their dove-wings tremble. On he flared, From stately nave to nave, from vault to vault, Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light, And diamond-paved lustrous long arcades. Until he reach'd the great main cupola; There standing fierce beneath, he stampt his foot, And from the basements deep to the high towers Jarr'd his own golden region; and before The quavering thunder thereupon had ceas'd, His voice leapt out, despite of godlike curb, To this result : "O dreams of day and night ! "O monstrous forms! O effigies of pain! "O spectres busy in a cold, cold gloom ! "O lank-ear'd Phantoms of black-weeded pools ! "Why do I know ye? why have I seen ye? why " Is my eternal essence thus distraught "To see and to behold these horrors new?

"Saturn is fallen, am I too to fall? "Am I to leave this haven of my rest, "This cradle of my glory, this soft clime, "This calm luxuriance of blissful light, "These crystalline pavilions, and pure fanes, "Of all my lucent empire? It is left "Deserted, void, nor any haunt of mine. "The blaze, the splendor, and the symmetry, "I cannot see-but darkness, death and darkness. "Even here, into my centre of repose, "The shady visions come to domineer, "Insult, and blind, and stifle up my pomp.-"Fall !- No, by Tellus and her briny robes! "Over the fiery frontier of my realms "I will advance a terrible right arm "Shall scare that infant thunderer, rebel Jove, "And bid old Saturn take his throne again."-He spake, and ceas'd, the while a heavier threat Held struggle with his throat but came not forth ; For as in theatres of crowded men Hubbub increases more they call out "Hush!" So at Hyperion's words the Phantoms pale Bestirr'd themselves, thrice horrible and cold; And from the mirror'd level where he stood A mist arose, as from a scummy marsh. At this, through all his bulk an agony Crept gradual, from the feet unto the crown, Like a lithe serpent vast and muscular Making slow way, with head and neck convuls'd From over-strained might. Releas'd, he fled To the eastern gates, and full six dewy hours Before the dawn in season due should blush, He breath'd fierce breath against the sleepy portals, Clear'd them of heavy vapours, burst them wide Suddenly on the ocean's chilly streams. The planet orb of fire, whereon he rode Each day from east to west the heavens through, Spun round in sable curtaining of clouds; Not therefore veiled quite, blindfold, and hid, But ever and anon the glancing spheres, Circles, and arcs, and broad-belting colure, Glow'd through, and wrought upon the muffling dark

BOOK I.

Sweet-shaped lightnings from the nadir deep Up to the zenith, -hieroglyphics old, Which sages and keen-eyed astrologers Then living on the earth, with labouring thought Won from the gaze of many centuries: Now lost, save what we find on remnants huge Of stone, or marble swart; their import gone, Their wisdom long since fled.-Two wings this orb Possess'd for glory, two fair argent wings, Ever exalted at the God's approach : And now, from forth the gloom their plumes immense Rose, one by one, till all outspreaded were; While still the dazzling globe maintain'd eclipse, Awaiting for Hyperion's command. Fain would he have commanded, fain took throne And bid the day begin, if but for change. He might not :- No, though a primeval God : The sacred seasons might not be disturb'd. Therefore the operations of the dawn Stay'd in their birth, even as here 'tis told. Those silver wings expanded sisterly, Eager to sail their orb; the porches wide Open'd upon the dusk demesnes of night ; And the bright Titan, phrenzied with new wocs, Unus'd to bend, by hard compulsion bent His spirit to the sorrow of the time; And all along a dismal rack of clouds, Upon the boundaries of day and night, He stretch'd himself in grief and radiance faint. There as he lay, the Heaven with its stars Look'd down on him with pity, and the voice Of Cœlus, from the universal space, Thus whisper'd low and solemn in his ear. "O brightest of my children dear, earth-born "And sky-engendered, Son of Mysteries "All unrevealed even to the powers "Which met at thy creating; at whose joys "And palpitations sweet, and pleasures soft, "I, Cœlus, wonder, how they came and whence; "And at the fruits thereof what shapes they be, "Distinct, and visible; symbols divine, "Manifestations of that beauteous life

HYPERION.

BOOK I.

"Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space: "Of these new-form'd art thou, oh brightest child ! "Of these, thy brethren and the Goddesses! "There is sad feud among ye, and rebellion "Of son against his sire. I saw him fall, "I saw my first-born tumbled from his throne! "To me his arms were spread, to me his voice "Found way from forth the thunders round his head! "Pale wox I, and in vapours hid my face. "Art thou, too, near such doom? vague fear there is: "For I have seen my sons most unlike Gods. "Divine ye were created, and divine "In sad demeanour, solemn, undisturb'd, "Unruffled, like high Gods, ye liv'd and ruled: "Now I behold in you fear, hope, and wrath; "Actions of rage and passion; even as "I see them, on the mortal world beneath, "In men who die.—This is the grief, O Son! "Sad sign of ruin, sudden dismay, and fall! "Yet do thou strive ; as thou art capable, "As thou canst move about, an evident God; "And canst oppose to each malignant hour "Ethereal presence :- I am but a voice; "My life is but the life of winds and tides, "No more than winds and tides can I avail :---"But thou canst.-Be thou therefore in the van "Of circumstance; yea, seize the arrow's barb "Before the tense string murmur.-To the earth! "For there thou wilt find Saturn, and his woes. "Meantime I will keep watch on thy bright sun, "And of thy seasons be a careful nurse."-Ere half this region-whisper had come down, Hyperion arose, and on the stars Lifted his curved lids, and kept them wide Until it ceas'd; and still he kept them wide: And still they were the same bright, patient stars. Then with a slow incline of his broad breast, Like to a diver in the pearly seas, Forward he stoop'd over the airy shore, And plung'd all noiseless into the deep night.

HYPERION.

BOOK II.

JUST at the self-same beat of Time's wide wings Hyperion slid into the rustled air, And Saturn gain'd with Thea that sad place Where Cybele and the bruised Titans mourn'd. It was a den where no insulting light Could glimmer on their tears; where their own groans They felt, but heard not, for the solid roar Of thunderous waterfalls and torrents hoarse, Pouring a constant bulk, uncertain where. Crag jutting forth to crag, and rocks that seem'd Ever as if just rising from a sleep, Forehead to forehead held their monstrous horns ; And thus in thousand hugest phantasies Made a fit roofing to this nest of woe. Instead of thrones, hard flint they sat upon. Couches of rugged stone, and slaty ridge Stubborn'd with iron. All were not assembled: Some chain'd in torture, and some wandering. Cœus, and Gyges, and Briareüs, Typhon, and Dolor, and Porphyrion, With many more, the brawniest in assault, Were pent in regions of laborious breath; Dungeon'd in opaque element, to keep Their clenched teeth still clench'd, and all their limbs Lock'd up like veins of metal, crampt and screw'd; Without a motion, save of their big hearts. Heaving in pain, and horribly convuls'd With sanguine feverous boiling gurge of pulse. Mnemosyne was straying in the world : Far from her moon had Phoebe wandered : And many else were free to roam abroad,

But for the main, here found they covert drear. Scarce images of life, one here, one there, Lay vast and edgeways; like a dismal cirque Of Druid stones, upon a forlorn moor, When the chill rain begins at shut of eve, In dull November, and their chancel vault, The Heaven itself, is blinded throughout night. Each one kept shroud, nor to his neighbour gave Or word, or look, or action of despair. Creüs was one; his ponderous iron mace Lay by him, and a shatter'd rib of rock Told of his rage, ere he thus sank and pined. Iäpetus another; in his grasp, A serpent's plashy neck ; its barbed tongue Squeez'd from the gorge, and all its uncurl'd length Dead; and because the creature could not spit Its poison in the eyes of conquering Jove. Next Cottus: prone he lay, chin uppermost, As though in pain; for still upon the flint He ground severe his skull, with open mouth And eyes at horrid working. Nearest him Asia, born of most enormous Caf, Who cost her mother Tellus keener pangs, Though feminine, than any of her sons: More thought than woe was in her dusky face, For she was prophesying of her glory; And in her wide imagination stood Palm-shaded temples, and high rival fanes, By Oxus or in Ganges' sacred isles. Even as Hope upon her anchor leans, So leant she, not so fair, upon a tusk Shed from the broadest of her elephants. Above her, on a crag's uneasy shelve, Upon his elbow rais'd, all prostrate else, Shadow'd Enceladus; once tame and mild As grazing ox unworried in the meads; Now tiger-passion'd, lion-thoughted, wroth, He meditated, plotted, and even now Was hurling mountains in that second war, Not long delay'd, that scar'd the younger Gods To hide themselves in forms of beast and bird. Nor far hence Atlas; and beside him prone

HYPERION. BOOK II.

Phorcus, the sire of Gorgons. Neighbour'd close Oceanus, and Tethys, in whose lap Sobb'd Clymene among her tangled hair. In midst of all lay Themis, at the feet Of Ops the queen all clouded round from sight : No shape distinguishable, more than when Thick night confounds the pine-tops with the clouds: And many else whose names may not be told. For when the Muse's wings are air-ward spread, Who shall delay her flight? And she must chaunt Of Saturn, and his guide, who now had climb'd With damp and slippery footing from a depth More horrid still. Above a sombre cliff Their heads appear'd, and up their stature grow Till on the level height their steps found case : Then Thea spread abroad her trembling arms Upon the precincts of this nest of pain, And sidelong fix'd her eye on Saturn's face : There saw she direst strife ; the supreme God At war with all the frailty of grief, Of rage, of fear, anxiety, revenge, Remorse, spleen, hope, but most of all despair. Against these plagues he strove in vain ; for Fate Had pour'd a mortal oil upon his head, A disanointing poison : so that Thea. Affrighted, kept her still, and let him pass First onwards in, among the fallen tribe.

As with us mortal men, the laden heart Is persecuted more, and fever'd more, When it is nighing to the mournful house Where other hearts are sick of the same bruise; So Saturn, as he walk'd into the midst, Felt faint, and would have sunk among the rest, But that he met Enceladus's eye, Whose mightiness, and awe of him, at once Came like an inspiration; and he shouted, "Titans, behold your God!" at which some groan'd; Some started on their feet; some also shouted; Some wept, some wail'd, all bow'd with reverence; And Ops, uplifting her black folded veil, Show'd her pale cheeks, and all her forehead wan, BOOK II.

HYPERION.

Her eye-brows thin and jet, and hollow eyes. There is a roaring in the bleak-grown pines When Winter lifts his voice; there is a noise Among immortals when a God gives sign, With hushing finger, how he means to load His tongue with the full weight of utterless thought, With thunder, and with music, and with pomp: Such noise is like the roar of bleak-grown pines; Which, when it ceases in this mountain'd world, No other sound succeeds; but ceasing here, Among these fallen, Saturn's voice therefrom Grew up like organ, that begins anew Its strain, when other harmonies, stopt short, Leave the dinn'd air vibrating silverly. Thus grew it up-" Not in my own sad breast, "Which is its own great judge and searcher out, "Can I find reason why ye should be thus: "Not in the legends of the first of days, "Studied from that old spirit-leaved book "Which starry Uranus with finger bright "Sav'd from the shores of darkness, when the waves "Low-ebb'd still hid it up in shallow gloom ;--"And the which book ye know I ever kept "For my firm-based footstool:-Ah, infirm! "Not there, nor in sign, symbol, or portent "Of element, earth, water, air, and fire,-"At war, at peace, or inter-quarreling "One against one, or two, or three, or all "Each several one against the other three, "As fire with air loud warring when rain-floods "Drown both, and press them both against earth's face, "Where, finding sulphur, a quadruple wrath "Unhinges the poor world ;---not in that strife, "Wherefrom I take strange lore, and read it deep, "Can I find reason why ye should be thus: "No, no-where can unriddle, though I search, "And pore on Nature's universal scroll "Even to swooning, why ye, Divinities, "The first-born of all shap'd and palpable Gods, "Should cower beneath what, in comparison, "Is untremendous might. Vet ye are here, "O'erwhelm'd, and spurn'd, and batter'd, ye are here !

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BOOK II.

BOOK II.

HYPERION.

"O Heaven wide! O unseen parent dear! "What can I? Tell me, all ve brethren Gods, "How we can war, how engine our great wrath! "O speak your counsel now, for Saturn's ear "Is all a-hunger'd. Thou, Oceanus, "Ponderest high and deep; and in thy face "I see, astonied, that severe content "Which comes of thought and musing : give us help !" So ended Saturn; and the God of the Sea, Sophist and sage, from no Athenian grove, But cogitation in his watery shades, Arose, with locks not oozy, and began, In murmurs, which his first-endeavouring tongue Caught infant-like from the far-foamed sands. "O ye, whom wrath consumes! who, passion-stung, "Writhe at defeat, and nurse your agonies! "Shut up your senses, stifle up your cars, "My voice is not a bellows unto ire. "Yet listen, ye who will, whilst I bring proof "How ye, perforce, must be content to stoop: "And in the proof much comfort will I give, "If ye will take that comfort in its truth. "We fall by course of Nature's law, not force "Of thunder, or of Jove. Great Saturn, thou "Hast sifted well the atom-universe; "But for this reason, that thou art the King, "And only blind from sheer supremacy, "One avenue was shaded from thine eyes, "Through which I wandered to eternal truth. "And first, as thou wast not the first of powers, "So art thou not the last; it cannot be: "Thou art not the beginning nor the end. "From chaos and parental darkness came "Light, the first fruits of that intestine broil, "That sullen ferment, which for wondrous ends "Was ripening in itself. The ripe hour came, "And with it light, and light, engendering "Upon its own producer, forthwith touch'd "The whole enormous matter into life.

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"Shall I say 'Crouch !'-Ye groan. What can I then?

"O Titans, shall I say 'Arise!'-Ye groan:

"Upon that very hour, our parentage, "The Heavens and the Earth, were manifest: "Then thou first-born, and we the giant-race, "Found ourselves ruling new and beauteous realms. "Now comes the pain of truth, to whom 'tis pain; "O folly! for to bear all naked truths, "And to envisage circumstance, all calm, "That is the top of sovereignty. Mark well! "As Heaven and Earth are fairer, fairer far "Than Chaos and blank Darkness, though once chiefs; "And as we show beyond that Heaven and Earth "In form and shape compact and beautiful, "In will, in action free, companionship, "And thousand other signs of purer life; "So on our heels a fresh perfection treads, "A power more strong in beauty, born of us "And fated to excel us, as we pass "In glory that old Darkness: nor are we "Thereby more conquer'd, than by us the rule "Of shapeless Chaos. Say, doth the dull soil "Quarrel with the proud forests it hath fed, "And feedeth still, more comely than itself? "Can it deny the chiefdom of green groves? "Or shall the tree be envious of the dove "Because it cooeth, and hath snowy wings "To wander wherewithal and find its joys? "We are such forest-trees, and our fair boughs "Have bred forth, not pale solitary doves, "But eagles golden-feather'd, who do tower "Above us in their beauty, and must reign "In right thereof; for 'tis the eternal law "That first in beauty should be first in might: "Yea, by that law, another race may drive "Our conquerors to mourn as we do now. "Have ye beheld the young God of the Seas, "My dispossessor? Have ye seen his face? "Have ye beheld his chariot, foam'd along "By noble winged creatures he hath made? "I saw him on the calmed waters scud, "With such a glow of beauty in his eyes, "That it enforc'd me to bid sad farewell "To all my empire: farewell sad I took,

"And hither came, to see how dolorous fate "Had wrought upon ye; and how I might best "Give consolation in this woe extreme. "Receive the truth, and let it be your balm."

HYPERION.

BOOK IL.

Whether through poz'd conviction, or disdain, They guarded silence, when Oceanus Left murmuring, what deepest thought can tell? But so it was, none answer'd for a space, Save one whom none regarded, Clymene; And yet she answer'd not, only complain'd, With hectic lips, and eyes up-looking mild, Thus wording timidly among the fierce: "O Father, I am here the simplest voice, "And all my knowledge is that joy is gone, "And this thing woe crept in among our hearts, "There to remain for ever, as I fear: "I would not bode of evil, if I thought "So weak a creature could turn off the help "Which by just right should come of mighty Gods; "Yet let me tell my sorrow, let me tell "Of what I heard, and how it made me weep, "And know that we had parted from all hope. "I stood upon a shore, a pleasant shore, "Where a sweet clime was breathed from a land "Of fragrance, quietness, and trees, and flowers. "Full of calm joy it was, as I of grief; "Too full of joy and soft delicious warmth; "So that I felt a movement in my heart "To chide, and to reproach that solitude "With songs of misery, music of our woes; "And sat me down, and took a mouthed shell "And murmur'd into it, and made melody-"O melody no more! for while I sang, "And with poor skill let pass into the breeze "The dull shell's echo, from a bowery strand " Just opposite, an island of the sea, "There came enchantment with the shifting wind, "That did both drown and keep alive my ears. "I threw my shell away upon the sand, "And a wave fill'd it, as my sense was fill'd "With that new blissful golden melody.

"A living death was in each gush of sounds, "Each family of rapturous hurried notes, "That fell, one after one, yet all at once, "Like pearl beads dropping sudden from their string: "And then another, then another strain, "Each like a dove leaving its olive perch, "With music wing'd instead of silent plumes, "To hover round my head, and make me sick "Of joy and grief at once. Grief overcame, "And I was stopping up my frantic ears, "When, past all hindrance of my trembling hands, "A voice came sweeter, sweeter than all tune, "And still it cried, 'Apollo ! young Apollo ! "' The morning-bright Apollo! young Apollo!' "I fled, it follow'd me, and cried 'Apollo !' "O Father, and O Brethren, had ye felt "Those pains of mine; O Saturn, hadst thou felt, "Ye would not call this too indulged tongue "Presumptuous, in thus venturing to be heard."

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So far her voice flow'd on, like timorous brook That, lingering along a pebbled coast, Doth fear to meet the sea: but sea it met, And shudder'd; for the overwhelming voice Of huge Enceladus swallow'd it in wrath: The ponderous syllables, like sullen waves In the half-glutted hollows of reef-rocks, Came booming thus, while still upon his arm He lean'd; not rising, from supreme contempt. "Or shall we listen to the over-wise, "Or to the over-foolish giant, Gods? "Not thunderbolt on thunderbolt, till all "That rebel Jove's whole armoury were spent, "Not world on world upon these shoulders piled, "Could agonize me more than baby-words "In midst of this dethronement horrible. "Speak! roar! shout! yell! ye sleepy Titans all. "Do ye forget the blows, the buffets vile? "Are ye not smitten by a youngling arm? "Dost thou forget, sham Monarch of the Waves, "Thy scalding in the seas? What, have I rous'd "Your spleens with so few simple words as these? BOOK II.

"O joy! for now I see ye are not lost: "O joy! for now I see a thousand eyes "Wide glaring for revenge !"-As this he said, He lifted up his stature vast, and stood, Still without intermission speaking thus: "Now ye are flames, I'll tell you how to burn. "And purge the ether of our enemies: "How to feed herce the crooked stings of fire, "And singe away the swollen clouds of Jove, "Stifling that puny essence in its tent. "O let him feel the evil he hath done; "For though I scorn Oceanus's lore, "Much pain have I for more than loss of realms: "The days of peace and slumberous calm are fled; "Those days, all innocent of scathing war, "When all the fair Existences of heaven "Came open-eyed to guess what we would speak :---"That was before our brows were taught to frown, "Before our lips knew else but solemn sounds; "That was before we knew the winged thing, " Victory, might be lost, or might be won. "And be ye mindful that Hyperion, "Our brightest brother, still is undisgraced-"Hyperion, lo ! his radiance is here !"

All eves were on Enceladus's face, And they beheld, while still Hyperion's name Flew from his lips up to the vaulted rocks, A pallid gleam across his features stern: Not savage, for he saw full many a God Wroth as himself. He look'd upon them all, And in each face he saw a gleam of light, But splendider in Saturn's, whose hoar locks Shone like the bubbling foam about a keel When the prow sweeps into a midnight cove. In pale and silver silence they remain'd, Till suddenly a splendour, like the morn, Pervaded all the beetling gloomy steeps, All the sad spaces of oblivion, And every gulf, and every chasm old, And every height, and every sullen depth, Voiceless, or hoarse with loud tormented streams: And all the everlasting cataracts, And all the headlong torrents far and near. Mantled before in darkness and huge shade, Now saw the light and made it terrible. It was Hyperion :--- a granite peak His bright feet touch'd, and there he stay'd to view The misery his brilliance had betray'd To the most hateful seeing of itself. Golden his hair of short Numidian curl, Regal his shape majestic, a vast shade In midst of his own brightness, like the bulk Of Memnon's image at the set of sun To one who travels from the dusking East: Sighs, too, as mournful as that Memnon's harp He utter'd, while his hands contemplative He press'd together, and in silence stood. Despondence seiz'd again the fallen Gods At sight of the dejected King of Day, And many hid their faces from the light: But fierce Enceladus sent forth his eyes Among the brotherhood; and, at their glare, Uprose Iäpetus, and Creüs too, And Phorcus, sea-born, and together strode To where he towered on his eminence. There those four shouted forth old Saturn's name ; Hyperion from the peak loud answered, "Saturn! Saturn sat near the Mother of the Gods, In whose face was no joy, though all the Gods Gave from their hollow throats the name of "Saturn !"

HYPERION.

BOOK III.

THUS in alternate uproar and sad peace, Amazed were those Titans utterly. O leave them, Muse! O leave them to their woes; For thou art weak to sing such tumults dire: A solitary sorrow best befits Thy lips, and antheming a lonely grief. Leave them, O Muse! for thou anon wilt find Many a fallen old Divinity Wandering in vain about bewildered shores. Meantime touch piously the Delphic harp, And not a wind of heaven but will breathe In aid soft warble from the Dorian flute ; For lo! 'tis for the Father of all verse. Flush every thing that hath a vermeil hue, Let the rose glow intense and warm the air, And let the clouds of even and of morn Float in voluptuous fleeces o'er the hills; Let the red wine within the goblet boil, Cold as a bubbling well; let faint-lipp'd shells, On sands, or in great deeps, vermilion turn Through all their labyrinths; and let the maid Blush keenly, as with some warm kiss surpris'd. Chief isle of the embowered Cyclades, Rejoice, O Delos, with thine olives green, And poplars, and lawn-shading palms, and beech, In which the Zephyr breathes the loudest song, And hazels thick, dark-stemm'd beneath the shade : Apollo is once more the golden theme ! Where was he, when the Giant of the Sun Stood bright, amid the sorrow of his peers? Together had he left his mother fair

BOOK III.

And his twin-sister sleeping in their bower, And in the morning twilight wandered forth Beside the osiers of a rivulet, Full ankle-deep in lilies of the vale. The nightingale had ceas'd, and a few stars Were lingering in the heavens, while the thrush, Began calm-throated. Throughout all the isle There was no covert, no retired cave Unhaunted by the murmurous noise of waves, Though scarcely heard in many a green recess. He listen'd, and he wept, and his bright tears Went trickling down the golden bow he held. Thus with half-shut suffused eyes he stood, While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by With solemn step an awful Goddess came, And there was purport in her looks for him, Which he with eager guess began to read Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said : "How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea? "Or hath that antique mien and robed form "Mov'd in these vales invisible till now? "Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er "The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone "In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced "The rustle of those ample skirts about "These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers "Lift up their heads, as still the whisper pass'd. "Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before, "And their eternal calm, and all that face, "Or I have dream'd."—"Yes," said the supreme shape, "Thou hast dream'd of me; and awaking up "Didst find a lyre all golden by thy side, "Whose strings touch'd by thy fingers, all the vast "Unwearied ear of the whole universe "Listen'd in pain and pleasure at the birth "Of such new tuneful wonder. Is't not strange "That thou shouldst weep, so gifted? Tell me, youth, "What sorrow thou canst feel; for I am sad "When thou dost shed a tear: explain thy griefs "To one who in this lonely isle hath been "The watcher of thy sleep and hours of life,

HYPERION.

BOOK III.

"From the young day when first thy infant hand "Pluck'd witless the weak flowers, till thine arm "Could bend that bow heroic to all times. "Show thy heart's secret to an ancient Power "Who hath forsaken old and sacred thrones "For prophecies of thee, and for the sake "Of loveliness new born."-Apollo then, With sudden scrutiny and gloomless eyes, Thus answer'd, while his white melodious throat Throbb'd with the syllables, -" Mnemosyne ! "Thy name is on my tongue, I know not how; "Why should I tell thee what thou so well seest? "Why should I strive to show what from thy lips "Would come no mystery? For me, dark, dark, "And painful vile oblivion seals my eyes: "I strive to search wherefore I am so sad, "Until a melancholy numbs my limbs ; "And then upon the grass I sit, and moan, "Like one who once had wings .- O why should I "Feel curs'd and thwarted, when the liegeless air " Yields to my step aspirant? why should I "Spurn the green turf as hateful to my feet? "Goddess benign, point forth some unknown thing: "Are there not other regions than this isle? "What are the stars? There is the sun, the sun! "And the most patient brilliance of the moon ! "And stars by thousands ! Point me out the way "To any one particular beauteous star, "And I will flit into it with my lyre, "And make its silvery splendour pant with bliss. "I have heard the cloudy thunder: Where is power? "Whose hand, whose essence, what divinity "Makes this alarum in the elements, "While I here idle listen on the shores "In fearless yet in aching ignorance? "O tell me, lonely Goddess, by thy harp, "That waileth every morn and eventide, "Tell me why thus I rave, about these groves! "Mute thou remainest-Mute ! yet I can read "A wondrous lesson in thy silent face: "Knowledge enormous makes a God of me. "Names, deeds, gray legends, dire events, rebellions,

"Majesties, sovran voices, agonies, "Creations and destroyings, all at once "Pour into the wide hollows of my brain, "And deify me, as if some blithe wine "Or bright elixir peerless I had drunk, "And so become immortal."-Thus the God, While his enkindled eyes, with level glance Beneath his white soft temples, stedfast kept Trembling with light upon Mnemosyne. Soon wild commotions shook him, and made flush All the immortal fairness of his limbs ; Most like the struggle at the gate of death; Or liker still to one who should take leave Of pale immortal death, and with a pang As hot as death's is chill, with fierce convulse Die into life: so young Apollo anguish'd; His very hair, his golden tresses famed Kept undulation round his eager neck. During the pain Mnemosyne upheld Her arms as one who prophesied .- At length Apollo shriek'd;-and lo! from all his limbs Celestial

HYPERION.

THE END.

I

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charact'ry, Hold like rich garners the full-ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face, Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour ! That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the facry power Of unreflecting love !—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

II

IN a drear-nighted December, Too happy, happy tree, Thy branches ne'er remember Their green felicity: The north cannot undo them, With a sleety whistle through them; Nor frozen thawings glue them From budding at the prime.

In a drear-nighted December, Too happy, happy brook,

Thy bubblings ne'er remember Apollo's summer look; But with a sweet forgetting, They stay their crystal fretting, Never, never petting About the frozen time.

Ah! would 't were so with many A gentle girl and boy! But were there ever any Writhed not at passed joy? To know the change and feel it, When there is none to heal it, Nor numbed sense to steal it, Was never said in rhyme.

III

ASLEEP! O sleep a little while, white pearl! And let me kneel, and let me pray to thee, And let me call Heaven's blessing on thine eyes, And let me breathe into the happy air, That doth enfold and touch thee all about, Vows of my slavery, my giving up, My sudden adoration, my great love!

IV

LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI.

BALLAD.

1

O WHAT can ail thee, knight-at-arms, Alone and palely loitering? The sedge has wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing.

II.

O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms ! So haggard and so woe-begone? The squirrel's granary is full, And the harvest's done.

III.

I see a lily on thy brow With anguish moist and fever dew, And on thy cheeks a fading rose Fast withereth too.

IV.

I met a lady in the meads, Full beautiful—a faery's child, Her hair was long, her foot was light, And her eyes were wild.

v.

I made a garland for her head, And bracelets too, and fragrant zone; She look'd at me as she did love, And made sweet moan.

VI.

I set her on my pacing steed, And nothing else saw all day long, For sidelong would she bend, and sing A faery's song.

VII.

She found me roots of relish sweet, And honey wild, and manna dew, And sure in language strange she said— "I love thee true."

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VIII.

She took me to her elfin grot, And there she wept, and sigh'd full sore, And there I shut her wild wild eyes With kisses four.

IX.

And there she lulled me asleep, And there I dream'd—Ah! woe betide! The latest dream I ever dream'd On the cold hill's side.

x.

I saw pale kings and princes too, Pale warriors, death-pale were they all; They cried—"La Belle Dame sans Merci Hath thee in thrall!"

XI.

I saw their starved lips in the gloam, With horrid warning gaped wide, And I awoke and found me here, On the cold hill's side.

XII.

And this is why I sojourn here, Alone and palely loitering, Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake, And no birds sing.

V

THE HUMAN SEASONS.

FOUR Seasons fill the measure of the year; There are four seasons in the mind of man: He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear Takes in all beauty with an easy span:

POSTHUMA

He has his Summer, when luxuriously Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves To ruminate, and by such dreaming high Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings He furleth close; contented so to look On mists in idleness—to let fair things Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook. He has his Winter too of pale misfeature, Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

VI

ON FAME.

I.

FAME, like a wayward girl, will still be coy To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy, And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a Gipsey,—will not speak to those Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A Jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close, Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very Gipsey is she, Nilus-born, Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick Bards ! repay her scorn for scorn; Ye Artists lovelorn ! madmen that ye are ! Make your best bow to her and bid adieu, Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.

VII

ON FAME.

II.

"You cannot eat your cake and have it too."—*Proverb.* How fever'd is the man, who cannot look Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,

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Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book, And robs his fair name of its maidenhood; It is as if the rose should pluck herself, On the ripe plum finger its misty bloom, As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf, Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom: But the rose leaves herself upon the briar, For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed, And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire, The undisturbed lake has crystal space; Why then should man, teasing the world for grace, Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed?

VIII

NOTES

BRIGHT star! would I were steadfast as thou art-Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night, And watching, with eternal lids apart, Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite, The moving waters at their priestlike task Of pure ablution round earth's human shores, Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask Of snow upon the mountains and the moors-No-yet still steadfast, still unchangeable, Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast, To feel for ever its soft fall and swell, Awake for ever in a sweet unrest, Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath, And so live ever-or else swoon to death.

Finis

NOTES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I JOHN KEATS, born Oct. 29, 1795, died Feb. 23, 1821, published his first volume in 1837. It is dated—" London : Printed for C. & J. Ollier, 3, Welbeck Street, Cavendish Square." The title-page (in addition to the foregoing and to the reprint on p. 1) bears the woodcut of a laurelled head in profile, which may be meant for Spenser. The text, preceded by three leaves, covers 121 pages in small octavo size.

II Endymion bears on the title (in addition to the reprint on p. 53) "By John Keats. London: Printed for Taylor and Hessey, 93. Fleet Street. 1818." Five leaves, in the example before me, precede the text, which (including titles before each book), extends to sor pages. Sized] 8vo, price 9s. boards," says the Advertisement appended to the next volume.

III Lamia etc., in addition to the reprint on p. 161, bears, "By John Keats, author of Endymion. London: Printed for Taylor and Hessey, Fleet-Street, 1800." Four leaves precede the text, which (including separate titles for Lamia, Isakelia, The Evy of St. Agnes, and Poems), covers 199 pages in an octavo size between that of the two former volumes.

Lastly, I was printed by C. Richards, 18, Warwick Street, Golden Square, London; II by T. Miller, Noble Street, Cheapside; III by Thomas Davison, Whitefriars.

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3 Glory and leveliness: This Dedicatory Sonnet was written in 1817, whilst the volume was in course of pristing. The acquaintance of Keats with Leigh Hunt, ten or eleven years his senior, had begun by 1816. It is doubtful whether the Poet gained on the whole by the familiarity-(for, on his side, it does not seem to me to have risen to real friendship)-which followed. Hunt was at the least satifactory stage of his long life, a State prosecution for a violently personal attack on the Prince Regent having just PAGE 3 CC

converted him, in his own eyes and those of his friends, into a political martyr, as the harsh criticism of the day had raised him into the literary idol of a coterie. The "self-delusion" he entertained that he was a great poet, struck Keats, -a man of much stronger nature, and wholly free from such weakness,—as "lamentable," so early as May, 1817. In December, 1818, writing to his brother George, he describes Hunt as "a pleasant enough fellow in the main, when you are with him; but in reality he is vain, egotistic. . . . Hunt does one harm by making fine things pretty, and beautiful things hateful; through him I am indifferent to Mozart, . . . and many a glorious thing when associated with him becomes nothing." Some of the gloom of his last years had fallen on Keats when he wrote thus; yet the picture is confirmed in too many ways to be essentially doubtful. On the other hand, Hunt's affection for Keats was real; he had genuine tenderness of nature, and strong, though narrow, literary enthusiasm. Had his younger friend lived, he would doubtless have done justice to those fine qualities in Hunt which, as his West Indian blood calmed down, freed themselves, more or less, from their youthful alloy of vanity and intemperateness, during the latter half of his life.

Despite the clear insight into those faults of taste in Hunt which the preceding extract shows, the style of Keats, in his earlier work especially, was in some degree influenced by the elder poet. He seems to owe to him a rather frequent and unpleasing mannerism in the use of the word *luxury*: and the *Rimini* and *Hero* and *Leander* exhibit sudden lapses into prosaicism, words used with an abrupt or even coarse directness, strange momentary failures in good taste, from which Keats, also, is not always free. Beyond this, there is little in common between the two writers: the similarity, in case of the poems just named, is only a superficial likeness of manner. Where Keats is penetrative, Hunt is decorative : his work is formed on Dryden, but Dryden ornamentalized and without his vigour. It was to very different results that Keats studied the great Fabulist for *Lamia*.

In regard to the volume of 1817, it may be noted here, in Lord Houghton's words, that "this little book, the beloved first-born of so great a genius, scarcely touched the public attention."

5 This nameless Poem, to judge by its style and matter, may be safely placed amongst the latest-written pieces in the volume of r8r7, and was, doubtless, chosen by Keats as a kind of "Induction," (to use the fine Elizabethan word with which he entitled the piece next following), to his little venture. But we may take it also as a fit preface to the work which his short life enabled him to give us :--presenting, as it does, two of the leading colours or motives that appear throughout his poetry,--the passion

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- 12 justice itself into injustice, and the other's vague emotional creed :--between the almost ascetic loftiness of manhood which underlies the *Faerie Queene*, and the slipshod morality of *Rimini* and *Hero*.
- 13 Calidore may be a rather earlier piece than the two which precede it; the use of elegantly, of soft luxury, the skining quite transcendent, all belong to the mannerisms which the poet's boyhood had learned from his first English contemporary models, and are in curious contrast with the penetrative insight shown in the descriptions of the sequester'd leafy glades, the palfreys slanting out their necks, the far heard trumpet's tone, or the voice of the good knight, audible

like something from beyond His present being.

It is the essence of chivalry—its picturesqueness, its tenderness to woman, its manly elevation, which we already find in this Fragment. But the tale itself is yet wanting ;—we have the artist's palette, rather than his picture.—P. 14, 1. at cat's eyes: Country name for the Speedwell, Veronica Chamaedrys, Linn.

- 17 To some Ladies: This and the next two poems, without the aid given by the note on p. 4, might, upon internal evidence of manner, be safely referred to the earliest surviving work of Keats, written perhaps before he was twenty, or had fully resigned himself to the magic of Spenser. The style here is manifestly formed on the model of the "elegant" writers of the beginning of this century, whose influence is similarly perceptible in the first poems of Byron or Moore. And it is curious to note how wholly different is the effect between the picture of the knight given us in *Calidore*, (with all its immaturity in writing), and that given in the starzas before us (p. 16, rg):-how, in place of the chivalric melody and colours of Spenser, we have something not far removed from melodramatic tinsel, nor free from descent into simple prosaicism.
- 18 I. 4 Mrs. Tighe (died r810) is still faintly remembered as authoress of "Psyche, or The Legend of Love," six cantos in the metre of the *Faarie Queene*, a poem popular when Keats wrote, and which is in truth a really graceful piece of pure and delicate work. It might be a short lyric "written for her niece," and published in 1816, which is here alluded to as "the blessings of Tighe." I give the first lines:

Sweetest ! if thy fairy hand Culls for me the latest flowers, Smiling hear me thus demand Blessings for thy early hours.

But, if so, the poem, (or the stanza), can hardly belong to the earliest work of Keats.

In st. ii, l. 2, 4, the rhyme in the poet's mind answering to *bedews* was probably *muse*.

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5 for pure nature-painting, and the love for Hellenic myths, treated, not as the Greeks themselves treated them, but with a lavish descriptiveness which belongs to the English Renaissance movement, as represented in the *Paeric Queene*, and with a strong tinge of the still more modern movement, which is intelligibly summed up under the name Romantic. Upon both of these dominant features in Keats I propose to add a few words later on. Mean-while, we may remark that already the take of *Endymion* had seized on the Poet's imagination, and that his later treatment of it is shadowed forth, in essentials, in the six final paragraphs of this lovely poem.

Two other notable characteristics of Keats should be also observed : his chivalrous devotion to Woman, which is in close analogy with the tone of Milton in the Comus and the Paradise, and his singular gift in closeness and accuracy of descriptive characterization. Here he far surpasses Spenser, whose landscape, like that of the painters of his age, is seen always through a generalizing medium of literature and of human interest, and wants, as a rule, those touches, so frequent in Keats that it would be idle to quote them, which testify to immediate contact with and inspiration from Nature. If, however, the young Poet has here a point of superiority (due, in part, to the influence of his age), his landscape falls short of the landscape of Shelley in its comparative absence of the larger features of sky and earth : it is foreground work in which he excels ; whilst again, in comparison with Wordsworth, Keats rests satisfied with exquisitely true delineation, and has little thought (thus far) of allying Nature with human sympathy ; still less, of penetrating and rendering her deeper eternal significance.

- 9 1. 13 What first inspired: It was fortunate for Keats and for us that, when devising the pretty fancy which he here gives as the possible origin of the Narcisus legend, he was not hampered by the often trivial and prosaic elements, etymological or ethnological, with which the (thus far, at least) inchoate and hypothetical Science of Comparative Mythology has of late years dulled the beautiful legends of Hellas.
- 11 If the attraction of the Grečian world to Keats is represented in the preceding poem, this *Induction* and *Calidore* represent the influence of his first love in poetry,—Spenser; nor, amongst the many pieces in Spenser's style which the magic of that great Master has called forth in our literature, are there any more completely imbued with the picturesque side of his genius.
- 12 l. 39 thy lov'd Libertas: a name under which Keats, in this first volume, euphemistically signifies Leigh Hunt. There is, however, no nearer affinity between Hunt and Spenser in regard to their respective gifts in poetry, than between Spenser's severe Elizabethan politics, pushing

20 Hadst thou lived : An early effort, perhaps, in the beautiful metre, (rarely seen in our serious poetry since Milton's youth, probably from its great difficulty), brought to perfection by Keats in his last volume.

- 23 This Imitation is the earliest known poem by Keats, according to Lord Houghton, who dates it in 1812. A somewhat later date would appear to me more probable.
- 24 Woman : What union of manly sense and exquisite tenderness,-not without amusing boyish candour,-in these three Sonnets !- which, for chivalrous devotion and picturesqueness, I would class between the best of Dante and Petrarch. There are here faults of taste, doubtless, due to early youth and the bad example of some among the models by whom Keats was then influenced : but they will be pardoned easily not only by the lovers of poetry itself, but by those who know how strangely rare, in our recent verse, is the note of disinterested passion .-"One saying of yours," he says, in a letter of 23 Jan. 1818 to his friend Mr. Bailey, "I shall never forget : you may not recollect it : . . . merely you said, "Why should woman suffer?' Aye, why should she? 'By heavens, I'd coin my very soil, and drop my blood for drachmas!' These things are, and he, who feels how incompetent the most skyey knight-errantry is, to heal this bruised fairness, is like a sensitive leaf on the hot hand of thought."-But this is a noble sensitiveness,
- 25 G. F. Mathew: An early friend of Keats, described by Lord Houghton as "of high literary merit."
- 26 l. 13 far different cares: His surgical training between 1810 and 1817.
- 28 George Keats: Elder brother to John: died in Kentucky, 1841.
- 30 l. 33 The fearls: Apparently, Tears arise from the very pleasure of smiling.
- 31 l. 21 The scarlet-conts: So in a letter from Carisbrooke (Ap. 17, 1817) Keats remarks: "On the road from Cowes to Newport I saw some extensive Barracks, which disgusted me extremely with the Government for placing such a next of debauchery in so beautiful a place. I asked a man on the coach about this, and he said that the people had been spoiled."
- 32 C. C. Clarke: Son to the master of the school at Enfield where Keats was educated till the summer of 1810. Mr. Clarke, who was a man of considerable literary accomplishment, died in 1877.
- 1. 33 by Mulla's stream: The reference is to Spenser. The critical estimates of poetry given here (whilst never falling below the high level of imaginative, as opposed to epigrammatic, verse) are of singular truth and beauty: note especially the "and more, Miltonian tenderness"; a feature in that great Poet which is often overlooked

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- 34 l. 32 divine Mozart: Keats here, as usual, shows his true Poet's intuition. Of all musicians, Mozart is the one in whom the passion for beauty, the cry of humanity, are most eminent, most constantly audible. Hence the supremacy naturally and rightly assigned to him.
- 35 I l. 3 laurel'd peers : Spirits of heroes dead?
- 36 III The day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison: 3 Feb. 1815. To this fortunate incarceration Hunt has owed no small part of his later celebrity :--although its direct result,--his politico-literary alliance with Lord Byron,-was unsatisfactory for both. For this, Hunt, in his Autobiography, generously if justly, takes the blame to himself.
- 37 V To a Friend: Charles Wells,—who gave in his early poem, Joseph and his Brethren, a promise which was never fulfilled,—with Joseph Severn, to the last the faithful friend of Keats, overlived him to 1879.
- 40 XI Chapman's fine paraphrase was put before Keats by his friend C. C. Clarke, and they sat up together till daylight to read it: "Keats shouting with delight as some passage of especial energy struck his imagination. At ten o'clock the next morning, Mr. Clarke found the sonnet on his breakfast-table."
- 41 XII 1. 7 diamond jar: Meant to express the flashing of diamonds as they move and clash?
- 42 XIV That frequent absence of prophetic insight as to the future fame of contemporaries which marks not a few of Spenser's judgments on his fellow-poets in the magnificent *Colin Clout*, is shared by Keats in this Sonnet. Time, indeed, "the wisset witness," has confirmed the verdict given upon Wordsworth : but Hunt, despite his real merits, is far too wanting in good taste and in power, to deserve the "collateral glory" here assigned : whilst of Haydon we may now say, when the sad story of his life lies far behind us, that the pictures which he left testify to inborn incapacity for valid success in the art to which he devoted himself with unhappily mistaken ardour and perseverance:—

ibi omnis Effusus labor !

- 43 XVI 1. 7 And: Are is conjecturally read in the Aldine text. If conjecture be needed, I would retain And, inserting are before ever.
- 44 Sleep and Poetry: This fine, though unequal, soliloquy was manifestly intended by Keats to form the Epilogue to his first venture, as the "I stood" (p. 5) is the young poet's Prologue. A more sincere avowal was never made. We see here with what modest self-consciousness, how truly, he understood his art:—It alone would justify me (were justification needed), for this literal reprint of the text which passed before his clear and sensitive eyes.

Keats here shows that whilst yielding, (as in the *Epistles* and other pieces which begin the volume of 1817),

264 PAGE 44 to the pleasure of frank and simple description of Nature, he was aware how Poetry, in the high and serious sense with which all who deserve to be called Poets always regard their art, must have far other and higher aims :

-the agonies, the strife Of human hearts :--

that Beauty alone, even to this Poet of the Beautiful, is insufficient. And if the "real things" of contemporary life press on him, bearing his soul down "to nothingness," he thinks of the great imaginative literature of England before the critical period of comparative coldness in the years of the latter Stuarts and the eighteenth century (symbolized here by Boileau), and gains strength and "delightful hopes":--destined, even during his short life, to how noble a fulfilment !

The concluding lines describe Leigh Hunt's library in his little house at Hampstead.

- 49 1. 20 my boundly reverence : Boundly seems an invention by Keats to signify what he felt bound to give.
- 50 I. 1-6 These lines are harshly and obscurely expressed : Keats appears to be thinking of certain "themes," unfit for imaginative literature, which had tempted,—or might tempt,—his contemporaries to poetry in which Beauty should be supplanted by simple Strength:—comparing such subjects to the *clasts*, (altered to *cube* in most editions), with which Polyphemus and his fellows pursued Ulysses.— It is, however, difficult to identify the apparent allusion.
- 51 l. 5 It is doubtful whether we should supply me, or him, alter reach; or whether Keats here thought of reach as a dissyllable:—as (p. 52, l. 23) grand seems to have been considered.
- 53 l. 15 liny marble: The epithet, if Keats here describes, not the veining, but the sharp thin flutings and frizemouldings of a Greek Temple, is singularly felicitous.
- 1. 30 unshent : used apparently for purified, or free from.
- 57 As with other ancient legends, several variations of the story of Endymion have reached us. Keats has followed little except the mere outline of the simplest form : treating him as a Carian King, who slept on Mount Latmos, and was there visited by Selene. He has passed over the perpetual sleep which is the common point in the old stories, and, in itself, is sufficient to show that the modern interpretation, confidently making Endymion the Sun, and resolving the poetry of the myth into a mode of saying, "The sun sets behind a mountain, and the Moon rises over it," is as lame as it is prosaic.

Kents may have framed Peona, the name assigned to the sister with whom he provides Endymion, from *Peana*, one of the minor heroines of the *Faceric Queene* (B, iv, C, 8 and 9): or he may have had in view Paean, the Healer or

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Deliverer ;—the name given in Greek mythology to Asclepius.—But neither for this poem, nor for *Hyperion*, have I cared to enquire closely into names employed, or the allusions connected with them. They seem to be either derived from the common mythological works in use seventy years since, or invented by Keats himself. He has here a predecessor, perhaps a guide, in Spenser, who, (with wider classical knowledge than Keats had reached), has handled classical legends in the same free, inventive, way, and with the same indifference to correct scholarship.

Endymion, in truth, despite the name, is not, on the whole, more genuinely a Grecian tale than the Faerie Queene. Keats need not have feared, with his charming modesty, that he had here dulled the brightness of the beautiful mythology of Hellas. He has taken hardly more than that the goddess Selene loved the youth Endymion, from the old legend. It is not so much the canvas as the framework upon which he has woven and stretched a romantic piece of modern embroidery. To give this simple outline extension, a few of the best-known myths are introduced : they form the scenery, as it were, in and before which the long narrative of passion,-or, rather, the picture of passion, for vera passio is hardly here, -unfolds itself.-It is said that, on some one asking how Keats. the livery-stable-keeper's son, the surgeon's apprentice. could have learned his Grecian allusions, Shelley replied, "Because he was a Greek." In the enthusiastic warmth of this fine answer Shelley was, probably, thinking of Hyperion, the one poem which, -at any rate during the lifetime of Keats,-he admired. Even in that, however, we have really the same romantic (as opposed to classical) groundwork which we find in Endymion, presented under a Miltonic disguisal.

Where, then, are we to look for the Greek element in Keats? Chiefest and best I find it in that gift which only deserves the name because it is exhibited by Greek literature more perfectly and, on the whole, more continuously and consistently than by any other literature :-the gift of absolutely direct and, as it were, spontaneous expression of the thought, whether of description or of emotion, before the poet. Or rather, Nature herself appears to speak for him : the words come by inner law ; they do not, as such, strike one either as prose or as poetry :- they seem as if they could not have been otherwise. This freedom from conventional colour or phrase, this Simplicity, in one word, -and Lucidity and Sanity with Simplicity, - is what marks all the great Hellenic poets, from Homer to the followers of Theocritus. When read closely, it is astonishing how little the diction differs from prose, whilst all the while it is felt to be the purest, the most essential, poetry. The early education of Keats had not given him the advantage of this experience, which, with longer life, he would doubtless have attained.

57 Hence one may say that he has done his best, by overrichness of ornament, and by a vocabulary surcharged with Elizabethan verbal experiments and modern man-recognized by Shelley. A similar criticism may be made, not unfrequently, upon the language of Shakespeare. And Shakespeare himself, also, has hardly displayed a nobler simplicity, a more complete and appropriate directness of speech, than Keats continually offers for our enjoyment. The freshness of phrase, going straight from his imagination to ours, the absolute sincerity and insight of the descriptive touches, even in the volume of 1817, are amazing. But these wonders, as Keats himself said upon Milton, " are, according to the great prerogative of poetry, better described in themselves than by a volume." I had thought of adding examples; but the reader will enjoy them most, if left to his own chase after Beauty.

This word,-the one which arises first upon the mind, like sunshine, at the very name of Vergil, Mozart, or Flaxman,-is also our first, our truest, thought in the case of that child of genius, upon whom, with reverent diffidence, these notes are offered. Beauty, with him, -as with the Greeks above all the world,-is the first word and the last of Art ; the one quality without which it is not. In this respect, again, Keats is a true son of Hellas. Yet, as he soon felt and acknowledged, in his early days it is too much the beautiful for beauty's sake only,--too much its outward visible form,-that he pursued. It is at this period that we find that splendid outburst of delight in pure natural loveliness which even he could hardly have bettered by verse :- "In truth, the great Elements we know of, are no mean comforters : the open sky sits upon our senses like a sapphire crown; the air is our robe of state; the carth is our throne, and the sea a mighty minstrel playing before it ":--and again, "O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts !"-It is not thus, however, that the greater poets of Greece thought and wrote. With them, (as indeed with most writers and artists till modern times), the landscape is persistently viewed in reference to human feeling and action, or, occasionally, to the presence of divine beings latent in or about stream and forest ; rarely and cursorily painted for its own sake only. Nor, again, despite the Hellenic passion for simple, sensuous, beauty, (although pushed occasionally to a certain extravagance which has been sometimes taken for its normal expression), do the ancients announce such a worship of the Beautiful in this external sense, for its own sake, as we find revealed in the earlier work of Keats. If they seem to say

Beauty is truth, truth beauty,

the Beautiful was taken in its wider and deeper meaning, carrying with it the ideas of eternal Law, of divine Justice, of the Theoretic happiness, man living on earth a life PAGE

57 worthy of heaven, which the "Master of those who know" set forth as the final aim of human existence. In Beauty, thus considered,—Man, with his passions, his joys and griefs, his destiny,—the world beyond the world, the things beneath the veil,—formed necessarily the principal objects: and the Lamia and the Eve of St. Agnes show how soon our youthful poet began to move into that loftier sphere in which alone a thing of beauty can be a joy for ever.

For this first, simply-sensuous Beauty-worship, this picture of a world in which real humanity, with right and wrong, are not so much excluded as not recognized, Keats might have found a precedent, not in "the beautiful mythology of Greece," referred to in the Preface to *Endymion*, but in the beginning of the later half of the Italian Renaissance; the great age of Florentine art and classicalism. It is, however, improbable that he could have drunk deeply, if at all, at that source : nor, as I shall presently endeavour to show, could he have derived his direction from his great Master, Spenser. He was, I conjecture, led in part by the tone of mind, bordering closely on a certain moral laxity, which he was conscious of in Leigh Hunt, mostly by the fervour and rush of perceptive and imaginative energy which boiled like a torrent through his youthful nature. I can best give an idea of this by a quotation,-which is not likely to be thought too long by any reader worthy of Keats,-from a letter written on his twenty-third birthday (29 Oct. 1818) to his dearly-loved brother George. Nowhere else, perhaps, is his innermost mind shown so freely: nor has any other Poet known to me made his confession with equal intensity and beauty of language, or given us such frank admission to the "mysteries of the studio."

"Notwithstanding your happiness and your recom-mendations, I hope I shall never marry : though the most beautiful creature were waiting for me at the end of a journey or a walk; though the carpet were of silk, and the curtains of the morning clouds, the chairs and sofas stuffed with cygnet's down, the food manna, the wine beyond claret, the window opening on Winandermere, I should not feel, or rather my happiness should not be, so fine; my solitude is sublime-for, instead of what I have described, there is a sublimity to welcome me home ; the roaring of the wind is my wife; and the stars through the window-panes are my children; the mighty abstract Idea of Beauty in all things, I have, stifles the more divided and minute domestic happiness. . . . I feel more and more every day, as my imagination strengthens, that I do not live in this world alone, but in a thousand worlds. No sooner am I alone, than shapes of epic greatness are stationed around me, and serve my spirit the office which is equivalent to a King's Body-guard : "then Tragedy with scepter'd pall comes sweeping by :" according to my

57 state of mind, I am with Achilles shouting in the trenches, or with Theocritus in the vales of Sicily; or throw my whole being into Troilus, and, repeating those lines, "I wander like a lost soul upon the Stygian bank, staying for waftage," I mel into the air with a voluptuousness so delicate, that I am content to be alone."

The letters of Keats, and, in some degree, his last poems, show that it was not from want of manly power, lofty purpose, or interest in humanity, that he thought and wrote in this almost Epicurean strain :-although it is idle to conjecture in what direction his great genius,greater in promise, as his illustrious successor in Poetry has more than once remarked to me, than any born among us since Milton, - would have exhibited its maturity. The want of high, human, aim in its noblest sense is, however, the point in which Keats most differs from that Master to whom in early youth he was mainly indebted. In the prefatory letter to the Faerie Queene Spenser,-"our sage and serious Spenser," as Milton named him,-himself sets forth as his object, "to fashion a gentleman or a noble person in vertuous and gentle discipline," " No one," says Mr. Aubrey de Vere in a recent Essay, published in Dr. Grosart's edition, "no one was more familiar with forest scenery, or with the charm of mead and meadow and river-bank ; but he left it for poets of a later age to find in natural description the chief sphere for the exercise of their faculties. He lived too near the chivalrous age of action and passion. . . . His imagination and his affections followed the mediaval type. All that he saw was to him the emblem of things unseen; the material world thus became the sacrament of a spiritual world, and the earthly life a betrothal to a life beyond the grave." So Professor Dowden, in his equally able Essay :- "The high distinction of Spenser's poetry is to be found in the rare degree in which it unites sense and soul, moral seriousness and the Renaissance appetite for beauty. With all its opulence of colour and melody, with all its imagery of delight, the Faerie Querne has primarily a moral or spiritual intention. While Spenser sees the abundant beauty of the world, and the splendour of man and of the life of man, his vision of human life is grave and even stern."

It will easily be seen how far the *Endymion* falls below this ideal, and suffers, hence, in sustained interest. In one element, indeed, he was without Spenser's advantage :--- Mediaeval types, as employed throughout the *Farrie Queene*, were not available for Keats. That element he has replaced by recurrence to Grecian mythology. And,--had he rendered this in its vital essence, though more remote in time than Mediaevalism, its beauty and its breadth of human nature might have supplied some compensation. As it is, the somewhat external Hellenism which he reproduced here and (though in severer style) in PAGE

57 Hyperion, was incapable of supplying adequate body or unity to the narrative. These poems want the unifying "architectonic" faculty: --the "touch of nature" that gives life to the whole.—But the Poet, (whose perfect modesty in regard to his own work is in curious contrast with the over-frequent self-laudation of Spenser), himself remarked upon *Endymion*; "I have most likely but moved into the go-cart from the leading-strings."

As a true artist, Keats knew his own deficiencies: nor does Shelley's estimate of *Endymion*, both at the time of publication and when he wrote his letter of remonstrance to Mr. Gifford, (r820), view the poem more favourably. It would be more agreeable to dwell here upon the magical beauties of detail which even in Spenser himself are not more frequent or more magical. One might transfer Ben Jonson's name for his own minor poems to *Endymion*: It is not so much a forest, as *Underwoods*. Or we may think of the *luxcuria foliorum* of that tree in the Garden of Proserpine described by Spenser,

Clothed with leaves, that none the wood mote see, And loaden all with fruit as thick as it might bee.

Splendid as are the foliage and the flowers, *Endymion* is an almost pathless intricacy of story : a Paradise without a plan. What page, however, is there here in which the Poet does not give us lines or touches so fresh, so vigorous, so directly going to the very heart of Nature, that more of essential Poetry is concentrated in one than can be found in whole volumes by his imitators? I had marked many such phrases :--but, as noticed before, they are best left for the reader's delight and discernment. Meanwhile, a few words by the Poet's biographer may close this over-lengthy attempt. "Let us never forget," says Lord Houghton, "that, wonderful as are the poems of Keats, yet, after all, they are rather the records of a poetical education, than the accomplished work of the mature artist." Even thus, however, what poet, in the whole range of literature, at twenty-four, has rivalled them?

- 58 I. 39-57 Endymion was begun, (it seems at Carisbrooke), April r817 : by September following, (at Oxford), he had reached B. iii: B. iv was finished on 28 November; B. i was given to the publisher January r818. "I am anxious to get Endymion printed that I may forget it, and proceed," Keat says with his usual utter and delightful modesty, in a letter of 27 February. The lovely Preface is dated to April.
- 65 l. 334 the raft Branch: Apparently, the branch torn off. Keats, who may have taken the word from Spenser, appears either not to have noticed the want of a syllable in l. 335, or to have satisfied his ear with the words as they stand.

- 67 l. 411 The last word of this line, with eight others in Endymion, is,—I do not doubt, intentionally,—left without a rhyme.
- 69 L 472-3 One of the rare touches of exquisite human feeling which Keats has allowed himself, —perhaps, which his chosen subject and treatment allowed him,—in *Eudymion*: —a poem, under this aspect, curiously contrasted with the *Isabella* and the St. Agues.
- 493-5 "A substantive," says Professor Earle, " may suddenly by a vigorous stroke of art be transformed into an adverb, as *forest* in the following passage :

more forest wild."

(Philology of the English Tongue : 1873).

- 71 l. 555 ditamy, dittany : In Old French, dictame ; whence, probably, the spelling used by Keats.
- 75 l. 748-757 This analysis of Sleep and Dream is worthy of Shakespeare, in Shakespeare's best manner.
- 83 I. 34-38 Keats here alludes to the ill-success of his volume of 1817.
- 1. 39 chaffing : chafing.
- 1. 61 pight : placed.
- 90 I. 319 "zephyr-boughs among," the common reading here, was probably in the mind of Keats. But with a poet of literary training so incomplete, so unconventional, and of such imaginative force, conjectural emendation, to which his abnormal phrases and rhythms tempt, is even more than ordinarily uncertain and undesirable.—The verbal peculiarities of Keats I have hence, also, in general left unnoticed. He copied much, no doubt, from our elder poets : but he also invents with the freedom which is one of the prerogatives of all Poetry, and of all language in a vital condition.
- 92 L 401 lenting: perhaps, (it has been suggested to me), referring to the drapery of Adonis, stretched from knee to knee.
- 93 l. 444 Since Ariadne became companion to Dionysos.
- 1. 446 Vertumnus: This name, with Pomona, after the fashion of the Italian Renaissance, carries us abruptly from Hellenic to Graeco-Roman mythology. —The Cupid picture (1. 506) is classical, but in a similar vein.
- 100 l. 763 In this amorous extravagance, which reminds us of the conceits of Lovelace, rather than of the Ancients, it is probably idle to enquire why *Ida* is introduced.
- 103 l. 879 Hermes' pipe: Argus was thus lulled to sleep as he was guarding Io, and slain by Hermes at command of Zeus.
- 108 I. 1-20 "It was an unfortunate occurrence," writes Lord Houghton, narrating the introduction of Keats to Leigh Hunt and his associates, "that Keats became unwittingly

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108 identified, not only with a literary coterie, with whose specialities he had little in common, but with a supposed political association for revolutionary objects with which he entertained nothing beyond the vaguest sympathy."--In this atmosphere it is no wonder that the Poet's wing should flag, and his verse go heavily. But he soon renews his mighty youth;--nor has the whole poem a lovelier passage, nor one more deeply felt, than the moonlight landscape which concludes the paragraph.

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Lines 395-400, on the other hand, are a specimen of the singular prose matter which occasionally occurs, entwined in the golden tissue of the song. This lapse seems to me especially to characterize the transitions, (always so difficult to manage), in the story.

- 111 l. 121 Two other magnificent pictures of the world beneath sea may be compared with this: Clarence's dream in *Richard III*, and the vision related by Panthea in *Prometheus Unbound*, Act iv. – Keats, at twenty-two, fairly rises to his place beside Shakespeare and Shelley.
- 118 l. 408 Hercules: From Gades to Egypt.
- 133 l. 1010 Doris: daughter to Oceanus, and wife of the wise Nereus, --named sometimes the Aegaean, as finding in that sea his chief seat of empire.
- 137 l. 99 in twain should here, doubtless, follow for them.
- 146 1. 461 dædale: Appears used for variable.
- 147 l. 487 *throe*: possibly, to tremble: or, to *throw*, in its sense of twisting and turning.
- 148 1. 515-545 This strongly felt and written psychological picture seems to reveal the seriousness of the poet's later years, when the sensuous beauty-world of boyhood was no longer sufficient to distract the soul from the "burthen of the mystery," which no highly-gifted spirit can long escape recognizing.
- 150 l. 602 shent : disgraced.
- 152 l. 671 This line presents the single clear trace of experience derived from his medical training which I am aware of, in all the poetry of Keats. The absence of such is remarkable; for anatomy and physiology are fertile in suggestive images, beautiful or powerful, for poetry.
- 1. 605-714 The sustained flow and clear diction of these beautiful lines,—like those noticed (515-545),—foreshadow the poet's maturest style. There is in this book,—apparently not written in immediate sequence with the preceding, an ideal character, strangely blended with a few notes of sweet human feeling, which seems to me similarly prelusive.
- 154 l. 780 Alludes, presumably, to Hyperion.
- 159 l. 960 *I said*: Endymion here, soliloquizing, refers to the phrase in l. 946, and it is needless to change the pronoun for "he": See note, p. 90, l. 319.

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162 For this note Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, the publishers, appear to be responsible. The reason here alleged for the abandonment of *Hyperion* may have coexisted in the mind of Keats with that which can be inferred from his letter of Sep. 22, 1819, quoted later on. It should be noticed that he is named on the title-page as "Author of Endymion."

"My book is coming out," Keats says of this little volume (Summer, 1820), "with very low hopes, though not spirits, on my part. This shall be my last trial;"—Alas ! and it was so—: "not succeeding, I shall try what I can do in the apothecary line." With this compare Shelley's remark (Feb. 1821) upon the failure, as he believed, of his *Cenci*: "Nothing is more difficult and unwelcome than to write without a confidence of finding readers."

163 Lamia, in hand by July 12, was finished by September 5, 1810. I give these and similar dates, because in the short life and (if the phrase may be admitted) tropical rapidity of growth in the mind and powers of Keats, months count like the years of advance in case of ordinary mortals. Lamia, placed first in the volume of 1820, may, however, be considered as his last poem: written "with great care, and after much study of Dryden's versification." "I have great hopes of success," says Keats in his letter of 12 July 1810, "because I make use of my judgment more deliberately than I have yet done; but in case of failure with the world, I shall find my content."

The clear, close narration, and the metre of Lamia, reveal at once the influence of Dryden's Tales: Keats here freely admits the Alexandrine, and the coupletstructure is much more marked than in Endymion or the Epistles : while he has admirably found and sustained the balance between a blank-verse treatment of the "Heroic" and the epigrammatic form carried to perfection by Pope. A little of the early mannerism remains : but those overdaring strokes of imaginative diction, those epithets jarringly bold or familiar, which we find in the volumes of 1817 and 1818, have here given place to the secure and lucid touches of masterly art. Details no longer urge themselves forward in lavish and bewildering profusion : the whole is supreme over the parts, every word in its place, and yielding its effect in fulness. The rhyme, in Endymion often forced, is managed with an "opulent case," a Spenserian fluency. Lamia leaves on my car an echo like the delicate richness of Vergil's hexameter in the Eclogues : the note of his magical inner sweetness is, in some degree, reached upon a different instrument. I offer this as an illustration, without wishing to press far the parallel between the two great Poets; yet we are reminded of Vergil's grand style by the exquisite skill with which Lamia's love-song (p. 170, l. 28-32), like that of Silenus in Eclogue VI, is brought in without breaking the current and continuity of the metre.

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After the remarks on the Hellenism of Keats in my note upon Endymion, it may be enough here to add that Lamia is truly Greek in its direct lucidity of phrase, in its touches fresh from Nature, in its descriptive details subordinated to serious human interest. It is Greek also, (though of a lower phase), in its simple sensuousness, which indeed, at times, though rarely, (as in p. 171, l. 20-25), passes the line of taste: whilst here, also, the Peris and Adam touch a dissonant chord. Some writers of modern date have gained the praise of being Greek by linguistic turns, quaint archaeological accuracy, or baldness supposed statuesque :- Keats cares for none of these things; so far as he is Greek, he is so by birthright; yet, as mere truthful description, nothing, probably, can be found more true to Hellenic life than such a picture as that given, -p. 172, l. 1-12, -of Corinth at night-fall.

Lamia is, however, essentially "romantic" rather than "classical,"—as the *Eve of St. Agnes* is a frank piece of mediaeval legend.

Poetry more absolutely and triumphantly poetical than these two tales display, I know in no literature: if the estimate may be hazarded, they appear to me emphatically the masterpieces among the Poet's longer work.

- 165 l. 12 the star of Lethe : Hermes, apparently, is here thus named in allusion to his office of soul-leader from life to Tartarus.
- 167 1. 24 Whither Acd Lamia : Cenchreae is a seaport on the south side of the Isthmus of Corinth ; the Peraea, a mountainous district to north-west. Cleone lies to the southward.
- 168 l. 12 unshent: Keats here seems to use this, one of his favourite old words, as equivalent to maiden.
- 183 Isabella: finished by 27 Ap. 1818, at Teignmouth. The source is Boccaccio's Decamerone, Gior. iv, Nov. 5, where the tale is placed in the mouth of Philomena. But the story, rather baldly told, is without the fine detail, the touches of character, the depth of sentiment,-the poetry, in short, with which Keats has clothed it. In st. xix he makes a graceful apology for his enlargement of the original theme by the episode upon Isabella's brothers and their trading ventures. Boccaccio, true to his usual creeping morality, treats their conduct to Lorenzo as a piece of natural common sense. - The old literary superstition, (analogous to that which placed Ariosto among the supreme poets, or Guido among the supreme painters, of the world), clinging still about Boccaccio, influenced Leigh Hunt, and, probably through him, Keats. But although the Decamerone had great value in its own day as a masterwork in style, singularly graceful and lucid in point of narrative diction, yet it really contains very few stories



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- 183 which, even looking to bare plan and form, have any poetical merit : whilst in his moralization and the general character of his tales, Boccaccio is own brother to Polonius. Even the skill and taste of Keats have not here fully succeeded in turning the coarse, physical motives common to the *Decamerone* and other mediaeval stories, into beauty. Yet the pathos and picturesqueness of the whole is such that we have no reason to regret that song upon the fate of the lovers which, (according to Philomena), "anchora hoggi si canta,"—in Naples or Messina.
- 185 st. ix Some overcolour, some overpressure of the phrase remains here: so in st. xiii -- Keats has not yet reached the self-restraint and clearness of his latest work. But the rhyme is very rarely forced.
- 187 st. xvi, xvii The general sense of these stanzas is more intelligible than the expression, in which closeness and condensation pass into obscurity. Hawks of the shipmast forests I take to be, Ready to pounce on the trading-vessels as they come in: Malay, Oriental trade in general.
- 195 st. l. l. 1 the Perulan sword: Perseus, the slayer of Medusa.
- 196 st. liv, l. 8 *leafits*: In this pretty diminutlye, (whether borrowed by Keats or coined), the analogy of *flowerst* may have been followed.
- 200 The Eve of St. Agnes: Keats, doubtless, was indebted for his subject to Brand's "Popular Antiquities," 1795. "On the eve of her day," st Jan., that writer says, "many kinds of divination were practised by virgins to discover their future husbands." He cites some lines, assigned to Ben Jonson, upon the subject, and refers to Burton's "Anatomy of Melancholy," as speaking of "Maids fasting on St. Agnes' Eve, to know who shall be their first husband." A long quotation from an old chap-book then gives the legend in detail;--furnishing obviously the outline of our poem.

St. Agner' wood (st. xiii) is that shorn from two lambs which, (allusive to the Saint's name), were upon that day brought to Mass, and offered whilst the Agnus was chanted. The wool was then spun, dressed, and woven by the hand of Nuns.

It is, apparently, as a poetical contrast to the fasting which was generally accepted as the due method by the gorgeous supper-picture of st. xxx was introduced. Keats, who was Leigh Hunt's guest at the time when this volume appeared, read aloud the passage to Hunt, with manifest pleasure in his work :- the sole instance I can recall when the poet, -- modest in proportion to his greatness, -- yielded even to so innocent an impulse of vanity.

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200 A fine remark by Mr. A. de Vere upon the Faeric Queene is equally applicable to this Poem, and also to Lamia :--""The gift of delineating beauty finds perhaps its most arduous triumph when exercised on the description of incident, a thing that passes necessarily from change to change,--and not on permanent objects, which less elude the artist's eye and hand."

"There is a tendency to class women in my books with roses and sweetmeats,—they never see themselves dominant," said Keats, (about Aug. 1820), alluding to a report that his last book was unpopular among them. This remark applies, perhaps, most to the *Eve of St. Agnes.* Keats did not live long enough to attain,—as, despite his own criticism, many passages in his poems show that he would have attained,—the standard of his great Master, of whom Professor Dowden truly notes that "For Spenser, behind each woman made to worship or love, rises a sacred presence—Womanhood itself."

- This magnificent poem was written by Feb., and revised in Sep. 1819.
- 201 st. vi-viii The mode in which Keats, that Elizabethan born out of due time, — here and elsewhere, as in *Isabella*, "dallies with the innocence of love, Like the old age," seems to me rather the naïveté of Mediaevalism than that of Antiquity.
- 210 st. xix, l. 9 Merlin: Can it have been that a confused recollection of the tale how Uther, transformed by Merlin into the likeness of Gorlois, loved Igerna in Tintagel, by night, was in the poet's mind?
- 207 st. xxv, l. 2 gules : a heraldic term for red :--transmitted here through the coat-of-arms in the casement.

208 st. xxx, l. 5 soother: seems used for sweeter, or softer.

- 210 st. xxxvii flaw : flying blast.
- 213 Nightingale: What language, except ours, is honoured by three such splendid bird-songs as Skylark and Nightingale have received from Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats?—His was written in the spring of 1819, and is one of the six or eight among his poems so unique and perfect in style, that it is hard to see how any experience could have improved them.
- 215 Grecian Urn: The rhyme-formulae of the latter six lines are here curiously varied.

Had the first and last stanzas been throughout equal to the second, third, and fourth, this Ode would have had few rivals in our, or any, literature.

- 216 st. iv, l. 7 this folk: its (for this) has less improbability than the great majority of the alterations which the ordinary editions present.
- 217 Psyche: Upon this noble Ode, where Collins and Gray

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- 217 may have been before his mind, Keats, in a letter of Ap. 1819, remarks : "The following poem, the last I have written, is the first and only one with which I have taken even moderate pains; I have, for the most part, dashed off my lines in a hurry ; this one I have done leisurely ; I think it reads the more richly for it, and it will I hope encourage me to write other things in even a more peaceable and healthy spirit. You must recollect that Psyche was not embodied as a goddess before the time of Apuleius the Platonist, who lived after the Augustan age, and consequently the goddess was never worshipped or sacrificed. to with any of the ancient fervour, and perhaps never thought of in the old religion : I am more orthodox than to let a heathen goddess be so neglected."
- st. i, l. 4 soft-conched : like a soft shell. Tyrian (l. 14): doubtless, purple .- St. iv, 1. 6, fledge : furnish with feathers.
- 219 Fancy : Written, apparently, by Nov. 1817. I know no other poem which so closely rivals the richness and melody, - and that in this very difficult and rarely attempted metre, -of Milton's Allegro and Penserves. For the Ode, I find no date given : the Robin Hood and the Lines on the Mermaid were in existence by Feb. 1818 .- These four little masterpieces, if compared with the lines Hadst then lived (p. 20), show the rapid advance,-the exotic growth,-of the poet's powers.
- 225 Autumn : Sep. 1810. Another masterpiece : If, in the vulgar sense, not Greek, essentially it is more so than Hyperian ; it is such as a Theocritus might have longed to write.
- 226 Melancholy : Earlier, perhaps, than the preceding Ode. It has (to me) more of youthful mannerism. But this may be due to the somewhat morbid and over-subtle nature of the subject here handled by Keats, which a little out-ran his psychological powers. His letters furnish several analogous speculative passages, full of interest and of promise, even in the tentativeness and immaturity which the writer avows,
- 229 Hyperian : Begun in Dec. 1818: in hand during the next autumn : dropped Sep. 1819.

This famous fragmentary poem seems to have afforded Keats less satisfaction than any other of his works. It was printed, as the "Advertisement" shows, at his Publishers' desire, "and contrary to the wish of the author." Still later, he "re-cast it into the shape of a Vision, which remains equally unfinished." "I have given up Hyperion," Keats writes from Winchester, Sep. 22, 1819 "- there were too many Miltonic inversions in it-Miltonic verse cannot be written but in an artful, or rather, artist's humour. I wish to give myself up to other sensations. English ought to be kept

220 up." This phrase apparently refers to the mood in which he had just written those noble lines to Autumn, which I put, with Lamia, and five or six more pieces, amongst his maturest work ; the work wherein art touches its genuine triumph in concealing itself : the work which, in matter and manner alike, embodies his most essential, his most intimate, genius. And, in the remarks which follow, the poet clearly shows a consciousness that in Hyperion the "artist's humour" was too prevalent: "the false beauty, proceeding from art," blended with "the true voice of feeling."—Keats, criticizing here for the last time his own work, touches on the note which is most sensible in his poetry, as it is that which lay the deepest in his own nature. Almost more than passion for beauty,-although, indeed it is, rather, itself the fine flower of beauty,-tenderness, -almost passing into tremulousness, -seems to me his characteristic. Here and there, whilst he was little more than a boy, we hear this note in excess. But Keats, in both the qualities just named, true child of Spenser, has also the manliness of nature, the sanity of sentiment, which underlie everywhere that river of gold which ripples through the Faerie Queene. Beyond any of his great compeers during the last two centuries, (if I may here venture thus to sum up the imperfect criticisms on his genius which are offered in these notes), Keats had inherited, not only as Man but as Poet,-or rather, as Poet because he was so as Man,- the inspiration and the magnanimity of the great age of our Muses ;--more than any, he is true English-Elizabethan :-Had the years of Milton been destined for him, of him, more than of any other it might have been prophesied,

Fortunate puer ! Tu nunc eris alter ab illo.

Despite the marvellous grandeur of its execution, the judgment of Keats upon this work appears to be thoroughly well founded. After an introduction worthy to be compared with what the Propylaea of the Acropolis at Athens must have been, at once in severe majesty and in refinement of execution, the interest of the story rapidly and irremediably falls off. It is, truly, to take a phrase from the Preface to Endymion, "too late a day." The attempt to revivify an ancient myth, -as distinguished from an ancient story of human life,-however alluring, however illustrated by poets of genius, seems to me essentially impossible. It is for the details, not for the whole, that we read Hyperion, or Prometheus Unbound, or the German *Iphigeneia*. Like the great majority of post-classical verse in classical languages, those modern myths are but exercises, (and, as such, with their value to the writer), on a splendid scale. The story of which Hyperion tells the beginning is, in fact, far too remote, too alien from the modern world : it has neither any definite symbolical meaning, nor any of that "soft humanity" which

229 underlies the wild magic of Lamia, and has rendered possible a picture, true not only to Corinth two thousand years ago, but to all time .- Yet, with such strange vital force has he penetrated into the Titan world, and all but given the reality of life to the old shadows before him, that, had this miracle been possible, we may fairly say that Keats would have worked it.

The author was, hence, right in "giving up" Hyperion. Yet, by a singular irony of literary fate, Hyperion was the first of his poems which seems to have reached fame beyond his own English circle of admirers. Byron, in a passage often quoted, placed its sublimity on a level with Aeschylus. But the criticisms which it called forth from Shelley are the most noteworthy. In Nov. 1820 we find him writing that he has received "a volume of poems by Keats ; in other respects insignificant enough, but containing the fragment of a poem called Hypericen. . . . It is certainly an astonishing piece of writing." Nor was this Shelley's first impression only; for on 15 Feb. 1821 he returns to Keats: "His other poems are worth little ; but, if the Hyperion be not grand poetry, none has been produced by our contemporaries."--If we remember the masterpieces contained in the precious little book of 1820, it may be reasonably held that even the political antagonists of Keats and his friends could hardly have exceeded these criticisms in blind prosaic injustice. So may one great poet,-and he, snow-pure from taint of envy or malice, -- misunderstand and misestimate another !

My object in these notes has been only to aid readers to enjoy the Poems before them ; not to offer a formal estimate of the genius of Keats, or of his place in English poetry. But, as the writer is little known in England, I will anggest to some readers that in André Chénier (1762-1794) they will find a poet curiously and, on the whole, (I would venture to think), nearly analogous to Keats. In both, Beauty is the first and last note heard ; both were led to the legends of Hellas as a natural source of inspiration ; in both, freshness of phrase, picturesqueness of form and presentation, easy abundance of imaginative description, are conspicuous. I may refer, as illustrations, to Chenier's Epistle to Le Brun and the Marquis of Brazais (No. i, Ed. 1852), to the Third Epistle to Le Brun, and that to De Pange (No. iv): to the fragmentary Idyll, Les Colomber (No. xix), and that numbered xii, the influence of which over Alfred de Musset is obvious.-Chénier's longer Idylls, though brilliant in skill, have too much of Gallic epigram and rhetoric to do full justice to his ex-

242 The speech of Oceanus, with its reasonings from natural law and development, may remind us of the rationalistic vein which we find, here and there, throughout the Idyils

PAGE

- 253 I This fine sonnet was written by Jan. 1818, soon after the completion of Endymion.
 - II This song, of a strange and ineffable beauty, with Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, I conjecturally place in 1818-9.
- 254 III A fragment from an Opera.
- 254 La belle Dame: Keats is not quite at his best, not quite himself, in this imitative Ballad, --which, alone among his poems, is admirable rather for the picturesqueness of the whole, than, (as with Lamia or the Nightingale), for the equal wealth of the details also.

256 V Composed at Teignmouth by Sep. 1818.

258 VIII Keats wrote this,-said to have been his last poem.after landing on the grand Dorset coast at the beginning of his voyage to Italy, Autumn, 1820 :- when "the bright beauty of the day and the scene revived for a moment the poet's drooping heart."

What would have been the next development in the genius and poetry of Keats, - aged but twenty-four when he sighed out his soul in this lovely Sonnet? I can offer nothing here but the Poet's letters: It is better to close the book with his own words. Lamia had been completed, Hyperion laid aside, in September 1819. Two months later, speaking of some poem, undefined, perhaps, even to himself, which he desired to write, he says : "As the marvellous is the most enticing, and the surest guarantee of harmonious numbers, I have been endeavouring to persuade myself to untether Fancy, and to let her manage for herself. I and myself cannot agree about this at all. Wonders are no wonders to me. I am more at home amongst men and women. I would rather read Chaucer than Ariosto" :-- adding, (in another letter), with characteristic modest sincerity, "Some think I have lost that poetic fire and ardour they say I once had. The fact is, I perhaps have, but instead of that I hope I shall substitute a more thoughtful and quiet power. I am more contented to read and think, but seldom haunted with ambitious thoughts. I am scarcely content to write the best verse from the fever they leave behind. I want to compose without this fever; I hope I shall one day."-That day, however, Keats was never to see. His fatal attack followed very shortly upon the letter above quoted, and his medical knowledge forbade him to nourish the hopes which often delude and alleviate consumption. Once more, (Feb. 16, 1820), he turns to Nature, but with what a pathos, - with how deeper a sense of humanity, than in his younger days !

"How astonishingly does the chance of leaving the world impress a sense of its natural beauties upon me ! Like poor Falstaff, though I do not "babble," I think of green fields; I muse with the greatest affection on every

PAGE 258 flower I have known from my infancy—their shapes and colours are as new to me as if I had just created them with a superhuman fancy. It is because they are con-nected with the most thoughtless and the happest mo-ments of our lives. I have seen foreign flowers in hot-houses, of the most beautiful nature, but I do not care a straw for them. The simple flowers of our Spring are what I want to see again."

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