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AGAMEMNON'S DAUGHTER.

A POEM

BY

DENTON J. SNIDER.

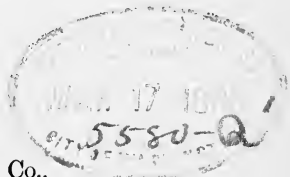
Author of "*A Walk in Hellas*," "*Delphic Days*," etc.



BOSTON:

JAMES R. OSGOOD & Co.,

1885.



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INSCRIBED

To mine own only daughter, still young, but old enough to be deeply sympathetic with this story of Agamemnon's daughter, and often recalled, between lines, in strong compassion for the father by the

FATHER.

CANTO I.

IPHIGENIA AT MYCENAE.

I.

IT was a golden day around the towers
Of rich Mycenae with her crown of stone ;
The Spring danced up the hill with lap of flowers,
Which she through all the blooming plain had strown ;
The fragrant wind did flute his sweetest tone
Amid the bending branches of the tree ;
On every grassy plot Love built a throne,
The time was full of Heaven's minstrelsy.

II.

Around the youthful city's swelling breast
Was drawn a wall, a moveless rocky band,
Whose heavy clasp her heart within had pressed,
Without had kept each wanton, lustful hand;
Still every breeze strewed kisses through the land,
And tender speechless missives on their way
Fell down the air, by Aphrodite fanned,
And all declared it was a golden day.

III.

Then broke upon the sight a pageant new
Across the grainfields by the sunlit sea,
Where many a sail swan-winged over the blue
Far-quivering main was floating airily;
That pageant soon a troop was seen to be,
Swimming upon the golden stream of morn;
A youthful troop of argent chivalry,
With blazons strange bedight and Orient-born.

IV.

Paris of Troy the foremost lord was light,
The fairest youth of all the Trojan land,
Within his face he bore a sunrise bright,
The curls danced round his neck in many a strand,
A feathery touch slept in his tender hand,
Love's smiles played from his lips into his eye
Which coldly thence its charmed object scanned,
Could sing to harp sweet strains of poesy.

V.

And with him many Trojan gallants came
With lightsome heads and lively hearts, save one
Who Antenorides was called by name,
Of noble father the still nobler son;
He left in Troy a dame whom he had won,
Who unto him, as he to her, was true;
But his great love could never sadness shun,
For his deep soul presaged the day of rue.

VI.

The town came forth to see that troop of kings
In shining pomp and grand festivity;
The altars smoked with fragrant offerings,
And through the streets processions moved in glee,
Chariots dashed down the hill into the lea,
The merry stream poured out the Lion's Gate,
Thrown open was old Atreus' treasury,
And ancient fanes shone forth in golden state.

VII.

King Agamemnon moved with gracious cheer,
He was a lordly man, not old, not young ;
His word was always musical to hear,
A gold-bossed scepter in his hand he swung,
While honeyed speech dropped from his fluent tongue
"Pour out thy heart with us, oh noble guest,
This stay of thine shall not remain unsung,
Not all of ours be thine, but all our best.

VIII.

“Thy glorious name before thee crossed the sea,
Thy gracious form, the sweetness of thy word;
Friends with the Trojan folk I fain would be,
And knit a bond whereof no soul has heard;
Deep in my heart to-day I am bestirred
To break the barrier of yon blue salt flood;
See there! above us wheels the favoring bird
To join all Hellenes in one brotherhood.”

IX.

A look he cast upon his daughter fair,
Iphigenia, stainless at his side;
The moment Paris bent his glances there,
She hung her head, her eyes to earth she tied,
The stranger's look she could not well abide;
She turned away and hurried through the crowd,
For in some secret nook she thought to hide,
Far from the festival and tumult loud.

X.

Back of the court she had a garden seat,
Where she had nourished many a loving flower;
These were her friends whom daily she would meet
To hold mute converse for the passing hour,
And over them she held a gentle power;
Oft would they seem to bloom her future ways,
Of pain and pleasure all the motley shower,
The silent destiny in fairest days.

XI.

To his high palace Agamemnon sped,
He set before his guests a banquet rare,
The wine soon flashed each face with sunsets red,
The courtly tongues were cloyed with dainty fare;
Many an Argive chieftain too was there,
Out high-hilled cities of the land they came,
And mingled with the Trojans killing care,
And much they honored the great Prince's name.

XII.

Paris led off in festive merriment,
His Trojans well the beaded cup could tease;
Their song of wine with that of women blent
Revealed the heart in all its hid degrees;
But other strains heard Antenorides,
As he sat by and the mad revel saw;
For in the wine he could behold the lees,
And could in license read avenging law.

XIII.

Yet one relief he had of suffering,
A single bliss in Hellas he could find,
It was to see the daughter of the king,
She raised to life within his boding mind
The image of the Love he left behind,
And darted through him gleams of happiness
For one sweet hour; but then again he pined,
And saw his lady pallid in distress.

XIV.

A bard there was who in the palace sang,
An aged holy man who much had seen;
Of sorrow he had known the deepest pang,
Of joy he felt the finest rapture, keen
Within his soul full strung; at Thebes had been
Twice with the seven Argive chiefs, who sought
By the pure fire to make that city clean
Of its Cadmeian taint from Asia brought.

XV.

Defeat and victory had been his life,
Once he had lost at Thebes his chieftains all;
Then he beheld renewed the deadly strife,
And the proud town one heap of ashes fall,
Of changeful destiny he was the thrall,
His heart became a harp of many strings
Which Fate would strike to make her madrigal,
Whence sparkles fell of all melodious things.

XVI.

The Muses gave to him a voice divine
The famous deed heroical to sing;
He put a Grecian soul in every line,
Which all the world to harmony did bring,
And see its image in the smallest thing;
But what his people felt, he saw with eyes,
He flew before them high on eagle's wing,
Discerned the speck across the furthest skies.

XVII.

He felt the struggle coming on afar,
The burden of his song was Zeus's hest;
He knew that in the Trojan lay the war
Which Greek must end by voyages unblest,
And by a ten years' time of wild unrest;
That bard—he was a man born into all,
His glance he threw behind the mountain crest,
Where he the Future saw and heard it call.

XVIII.

To Agamemnon now these words he spake:

“I bear to thee my heavy thought, oh king;

To-day I fear thou wilt thyself unmake

By thy too vast ambitious reckoning;

Across the seas thy fancy skims its wing,

While one now walks thy court in silent quest

The jewel of our Greece to Troy to bring:

That man beware, beware the fateful guest.

XIX.

“I saw him in my dazzled dream last night

Fulfil the perfect circle of his deed;

What is already done, was but a mite,

A little point flashed with a burning glede;

More swiftly ran the point than any steed

As it sped round to what was next to be;

The Future slid into my vision, freed

From that dark line which is Time's boundary.

XX.

“High over Troy that point a blaze became,
It lit and flared on Paris’ pregnant sail,
The raving Hellespont upsprang in flame,
Outburning all Jove’s lightning and the gale;
Into Mycenæ swept the fiery trail,
Then back it streamed with tenfold passion dire;
The sea-foam, Aphrodite’s mother pale,
Flamed round the ship and set the waves on fire.

XXI.

“In his returning ship I saw to be
What brings to sons of men the most delight,
The highest prize of lofty minstrelsy,
The soul that thrills into the sense of sight,
A look that seems to set the world in light;
Then many warriors follow on the wave,
They fill a plain and soon begin a fight
The stolen prize of their own land to save.”

XXII.

To him replies then Agamemnon proud:

“Great now in Hellas is my sovereign power!
Of men to serve I cannot count the crowd,
Of islands of the sea I have the flower,
Beneath this scepter wild Arcadians cower,
The Isthmus joins two mighty seas for me,
Two continents it joins in one high tower
Which shows me forth to rule all Barbary.

XXIII.

“But now I bend my look across the sea,
This day to Asia I shall reach my hand,
And of Troy's citadel the taker be,
And towns and fields until the Phrygian land,
By that which I have in my bosom planned;
To Priam's son I shall my daughter wed,
Troy and Mycenae shall together stand,
Or shall together lie with cities dead.”

XXIV.

Forthright the father sought that garden spot,
His daughter's mind in gentle wise to test,
He found her deep within a darksome grot,
Where but a single sunbeam, doubly blest
Played down her forehead and her lips caressed:
"Why hast thou fled away beyond my call?
Fill up the festal day with thy full zest,
Prince Paris now awaits thee in the hall."

XXV.

Iphigenia was a maiden rare,
Upon the world she gazed with deep blue eyes,
Wherein it melted to a vision fair,
And rose with music sweet unto the skies,
As Earth might turn a sudden Paradise;
It was her gift to change the small and bad
Into a boundless world of charities,
Yet in her glance a suffering she had.

XXVI.

Of the rich summer time she was the flower
That dwells beside the wild, far-flashing sea;
To look beyond she had a subtle power,
A gleam she threw into infinity
And there another world could plainly see;
She looked upon a man without a motion,
Born in her glance was all he was to be,
His hidden genius on its hidden ocean.

XXVII.

Gentle the maiden spoke her word, but strong:
"The stranger who has come from Troy to-day—
Father, I would not do him any wrong,
But when I think of him, I cannot pray
To purest Artemis who is my stay;
His glances light the air but to cajole,
To heart he never will a heart repay,
Cannot believe he loves one human soul."

XXVIII.

The father quenched his angry flush, and smiled:

“Oh let no more the winds foreboding sigh
Through all thy young and sunny days, my child!

Let minutes now be mad, and wildly fly

Round thee and Paris mid our revelry.

Not often such a day shines on our towers!

The ancient Sun upon our stones doth lie,

And pours the city full of golden hours.”

XXIX.

He turned because he heard the trumpet blare

Hurrying to his ear leap after leap,

As if a war steed galloped through the air,

Bearing a message o'er a mountain steep,

To rouse the soldier on his guard asleep;

The king in haste turned back to find his guest,

But he could catch a word that he should keep,

A woful word torn out his daughter's breast:

xxx.

“I feel my foe has come and I shall reap
The harvest ripe which he this day will sow;
For deed of his I long shall have to weep,
As Ida's maids now melt the mountain snow
With tears for his deep wrongs: I shall not go
With him to Troy; oh let me die forlorn
In Greece! To me and mine he is the foe,
And I proclaim, the foe to Time unborn.”

xxxI.

There stands high up above the town a fane
Whose marble front peeps out the thicket green,
And every stone a softened tint hath ta'en,
Purer than any pearl was ever seen,
Washed in the waters of an ocean clean;
The leaflets flutter noiseless round the side,
The tree-tops to the roof do fondly lean,
The jewel of the wood within to hide.

XXXII.

The timid deer sports there without alarm,
The wary bird can there no trapper fear,
It was a spot where man dared do no harm,
Peace reigneth in that wood the entire year,
The fountains modest joy one scarce will hear,
As it wells out beneath a root of might,
And trails in crystal pure a leaflet sere,
Or paints a tender stain on pebble white.

XXXIII.

In secret soon the maiden thither fled,
Following the transparent happy rill,
That to the fane up in the greenwood led
Along a channel sweet with many a trill,
Whereby she moved through music up the hill;
A pretty fawn she saw within a grot
To slake its thirst beside the forest still,
Then pass before her to the sacred spot.

XXXIV.

It was a pretty dappled timid thing
That trembled to its silvery spots of hair,
Then faded from the margent of the spring,
As if it saw within the waters there
Some ugly image of a brutish bear;
But as it fled, it ran into a cloud
Whence flowed soft strains upon the forest air,
Of flute and song mid rustling of a crowd.

XXXV.

At once broke out of music to the glance
Bright wreaths of maidens floating in the breeze,
And to the strain they soon began a dance
Upon the vacant air and through the trees;
But scarce the eye their fleeting shapes could seize,
Until they wheeled above the secret fane,
Hovering down the sky they dropped with ease,
While to a distant lull had died the strain.

XXXVI.

This was the home of Dian, these her woods,
Where oft the Goddess rested from the chase,
When she amid the sylvan solitudes
Had led her choir in the tumultuous race,
And of that sport the air felt long the trace,
Though the gay rout had faded all away;
It was the soft worn heart's own resting place,
Far from the town, and the bold stare of day.

XXXVII.

A billowy moon-tipped play of fold on fold
Waved through the middle of the multitude ;
The wreath was broke, and one might then behold
A form that stepped into the fane and stood,
While all the train of Nymphs fled through the wood,
Some to delight in oaks and some in water ;
Then spake the queen of that sweet sisterhood
In fond low tones to Agamemnon's daughter:

XXXVIII.

“Beware the handsome man within thy walls!
His eyes' soft sunbeams are a sea of ill,
Within his slippery words lie many falls
For those who touch the circle of his will;
Float not upon the raptured waves that thrill
Out of his being, by Aphrodite's breath
Stirred to a frenzy that the world shall fill,
And sweep the woman with the man to death.

XXXIX.

“Thee have I chosen for another deed,
Thou art to be the vase of suffering;
The Trojan love shall never be thy meed,
But a new love thy life to light will bring;
And yet thou too wilt not escape the sting
Which the high Gods in greatest deed bestow;
For states, for worlds thou art the offering,
But I shall save thee at the last sharp blow.

XL.

“And I shall bear thee to a foreign land,
Where thou a holy priestess art to be
Within my temple on the wild sea’s strand,
Where broods a world of slavish savagery,
Which is, through deed of thine, to be made free.
This is the Love which now in thee hath gleamed,
And not before thou hast brought liberty
Unto that land, art thou thyself rødeemed.

XLI.

“Oh virgin, I am Artemis, the Queen,
I roam the wood, I ramble in the sky;
My silver bow hung there thou oft hast seen,
Illuming night with modest purity;
To thee of all mankind I feel most nigh,
Upon my path in Heaven the brightest star
Is thine, dispensing light to Barbary;
Go forth and softly shine with me afar.

XLII.

“After long years to this old home of thine,
The Hellas new, thou shalt in joy return;
My brother Phoebus calls thee to his shrine,
Where thou wilt teach the world what it must learn,
A duty new in living to discern;
By thee his seeress shall his fane be trod,
A higher priesthood will thy exile earn,
From me thou wilt ascend to wisest God.

XLIII.

“There on old rocky Pytho's deep-cleft crest
In light thou shalt sit down with voice renewed,
When the great war is over, and holy rest
Settles upon the land in golden mood
Of sun and song and blissful plenitude;
The far Barbarian's wisdom thou wilt hoard
To bring to Hellas as her final good;
Restoring her, thou art thyself restored.”

XLIV.

The Goddess vanished from the maiden's look,
But left her in the glimmer of a dawn
Through which did faint away the tuneful brook,
And through whose milky haze she saw the fawn
Dart trembling from the wood across a lawn,
By men pursued with axes flashing bright,
Till in the rosy distance it was drawn
Behind the hills, whence shot anew the light.

XLV.

There long she stayed, nor did her people know
Whither the maid this merry while had fled;
Meantime Mycenae had an overflow
Of earth below and heaven overhead,
Of wine and sunshine which all golden shed
Upon that happy feast their richest showers,
And lightly mid the throng the Muses led
And lulled to rest the swiftly-stepping hours.

XLVI.

It was a time of sweet forgetfulness,
When Lethe hands to men her deepest draught,
For which full pay she asks—a fierce distress
When they awake and feel the poisoned shaft,
Whereof there is no cure in human craft,
But in hot blood-drops gurgling from war's blow,
When Furies have upon the nations laughed
Their diabolic scorn and overthrow.

XLVII.

Ah yes, it was a merry cheery time,
Paris the gallant Trojan conquered all,
His Asian tongue could lisp a Grecian chime,
And sweetest accents mingle in its fall ;
E'en mother Clytemnestra was a thrall
Of that soft spell which men were fain to own ;
He made the people whisper, great and small,
"Look ! he has stolen Aphrodite's zone".

XLVIII.

Each minstrel sought to sing his bravest song
Of heroes great and the heroic deed;
Of war between the Gods and Giants strong,
Of captive maid by doughty warrior freed,
Of hearts that must with all men's sorrow bleed,
Of Theseus bold, of suffering Hercules
Who hath of heroes won the golden meed,
As he who can endure until himself he frees.

XLIX.

But the one song that people heard above
All others sung upon that fatal day
With maddest sting—it was the song of love.
From every street uprose the dulcet lay,
Tingling the blood to fancy's tricky play,
And hymning viewless nets by Eros wove,
Which tangled mortals in the fateful fray
And caught the highest God, old father Jove.

L.

Oh Antenorides, what silence deep
Broods over thee amid the festival!
He marked a moving eye that knew no sleep,
He heard Cassandra's far forewarning call
Through revel moan like distant waterfall;
Many a ghostly shape before him stood,
And drew a bloody sign upon the wall
Mid whisperings low: It cannot come to good.

LI.

But look beyond, there comes a distant train
Slow-winding over the blue Arcadian hills,
Like a sea-serpent of the richest stain
It swims and every heart with beauty thrills,
Yet with prophetic flashings of its ills;
It rears its crest above the verdant height,
The little vales with lambent streak it fills,
Swimming the landwaves green into the sight.

LII.

In gorgeous curves rolled on the beauteous thing,
As it unfolded in the haze of afternoon,
And sweet delirious currents it did bring
Into the eye, and make the daylight swoon
Away to dreamy glimmers of the moon;
But in the sky above there hung a frown,
A cloud that made a dismal threat, but soon
That cloud had melted to a golden crown.

LIII.

'T was Helen coming up from Lacedemon,
In bright Mycenae's joy awhile to stay,
And see the festival of Agamemnon,
The song, the dance, and the procession gay
With the sweet bloom of manhood in its May;
Iphigenia's aunt by birth was she,
The two belong together in my lay,
Twinned deep in storied old calamity.

LIV.

But now she comes, the glorious Spartan Helen,
Into the Argive plain she bursts like day,
And with her a new world for men to dwell in,
Life, weary theme, becomes a happy play,
To Gods serene is turned the human clay,
Of an Elysian change she hath the power,
Beneath her glance each tree throws out a spray,
And where she treads, the earth sends up a flower.

LV.

She moves in Lions' Gate, the fairest woman;
The stony Lions' Heads peep out their lair
Above the rock-built portal, with traces human
Of Love's sweet trouble for that being rare,
Whom they within the walls will guard with care,
As they the city guard and its wise laws;
To glances soft drops down their savage glare,
And tender-hearted grow ferocious claws.

LVI.

The people ope her way along the street,
The heroes bold take on an humble air,
And in their hearts adore that shape complete;
The children stand in little groups and stare,
Wishing that they had Helen's golden hair,
Or hand, or her white robe of fold on fold:
Even the women must pronounce her fair,
When they her failings all had scanned and told.

LVII.

Within the walls there stands a palace high,
Whose court is girt with many columns white,
And there the silver fountains gaily ply
The fragrant air with jets of crystal bright,
Or send along the sand swift streams of light,
Wreathing around the feet of boys of stone,
Who hold their torches in the eye of night,
Or lean beside a kingly carven throne.

LVIII.

Those graven boys will stir from spot to spot,
They have a life within their marble breast,
For ever fixed in motion is their lot,
Forever moved by passion is their rest ;
So has their Maker on their form impressed,
With heart-beats all his own a double soul,
Which he himself in struggle long possessed,
Ere he could make the warring twain one whole.

LIX.

Beneath a chiseled shape of youthful maid,
Who coyly touched with dainty finger tip
Her own chaste bosom, full of thoughts unsaid
Of that sweet hour which brings the lip to lip,
From whose deep rubied flower lovers sip
Busy as bees—there Helen sat in state;
Into all hearts her glances slip
Never to be forgotten—it is their fate.

LX.

She greets the thronging heroes one by one;
Lord Agamemnon speaks the golden word:
“Hail, Helen, coming like the singing Sun;
Through thee what lies within us dark or blurred
Breaks out the brightest strain that time hath heard;
That look of thine shall be forever ours,
And thine our hearts, for thee to battle stirred:
Hear while we swear it, ye Olympian Powers.”

LXI.

All shouted loud applause, the oath they swore,
Heard by the Gods above in council deep,
Who then resolved the casket to outpour,
Which, full of evils, they beside them keep
For man, lest he in sloth may fall asleep,
Or may for fateful deed unpunished go;
Whereby the innocent must ever weep,
Yoked with the guilty in the chain wo.

LXII.

Meantime from Dian's fane within the wood
The maiden Iphigenia homeward sped,
And soon beside the restless brook she stood
Which leaps beneath the towers to its bed;
Many a thought was whirling through her head
Of that strange life of hers which was to be;
The bodeful words the Goddess to her said,
Fell cascades bright down to a dark-faced sea.

LXIII.

She passed within the court where Helen stood,
Who spake to her full sweetly as she came;
"Dear Niece, thou hast upon thy face a mood
Which calls the restless world by a new name;
Before thee I confess I feel a shame
That I cannot attain to what thou art;
How gladly would I change for thee my fame,
And in my life feel full thy steadfast heart.

LXIV.

“Deep longing for I know not what I had;
But when I see thee I am whole again;
I cannot tell what makes me feel so sad,
Oft must I shed my tears without a pain,
Without a cloud it could forever rain;
Oh I am rent in twain, I can but wail,
The other part of me I seek in vain,
Methinks thou hast it—tell me now thy tale.”

LXV.

“I have no tale, oh lovely tears,” she said,
“But let me give instead this little ring,
Within doth sleep a gem, in golden bed,
A little token of my heart I bring;
But let it nestle in its covering
Lest it be lost, and lose its setting too;
When coming trials leave in thee a sting,
Perchance it may hint help to bear thee through.”

LXVI.

“Ah were I but an hour so fair as thou!

But as I am I shall contented be;

I look so gladly on thy beauteous brow,

And yet a line of pain I there can see,

An agony that struggles to get free.

Can suffering interlock with beauty so?

At whom lookst thou? That is young Paris, he

Who came from Troy to-day, as thou mayst know.”

LXVII.

The crowd broke in with noisy reverence,

Their prayers rapt by deep-lost looks to say

Before that form divine; without defence,

Iphigenia lone was swept away

On living surges crazy with delay;

Many a gallant Greek crushed in, one glance

To get far dearer to him than the day,

And stood in worship sunk as if trance.

LXVIII.

And Paris came and the full Trojan band,
To gaze on her whom men agreed to call
The fairest woman of the Grecian land,
With them a guest now in Mycenae's hall,
And Helen had a winsome word for all;
But when on Paris she had turned her look,
Each was the other's victor and the thrall,
Each read the other's fate as in a book.

LXIX.

But hark! the bard begins a song in praise
Of Argive Helen, Lacedemon's Queen;
Strong are the words whereof he builds his lays,
And sweet the cadence falling in between,
Dropping like skiey notes from choirs unseen:
"Oh thou, of all our hearts the very heart,
Of our fair stock the branch forever green,
What Hellas is in all her best, thou art.

LXX.

“For thee we give with joy this pearl of life,
For thee our city and its law are naught,
For thee with tears our children and our wife
We leave, and let them die at home distraught,
While we shall haste to distant battle, fraught
With danger unto thee and thy fair form;
When once the bosom’s guest is thy sweet thought,
Farewell our home of peace, and welcome storm.

LXXI.

“From our deep fealty to what is thine
Doth trill, of all our life, the sweetest drop;
Through us doth pour from thee a stream divine,
Which fills our human lot unto the top
With cataracts of joy that never stop
E’en in the tempest or the whirlwind’s blast,
Though we be dashed with all the ills that drop
From out the skies, and smite the world aghast.

LXXII.

“For thine own honor lives heroic song,
The tune of flutes, the touch of thin-shelled lyre;
In many-folded robes the Graces sweep along,
Who the dear maidens in the dance inspire
To be as thou art, fairest of the choir;
Youth hands to thee her overflow of wine
Lit with the sparkle of Olympian fire,
Before Jove’s beaker, Hebe fills thee thine.

LXXIII.

“The mighty Gods for thee come down to earth,
And in a burst of joy their forms reveal;
The Muses sing themselves to sudden birth
In strains of thine, to lighten and to heal
Our being’s pain, which the born man must feel,
While he shall stain with tears his prison bars;
The man must sorrow know as manhood’s seal,
To take within his boundary the stars.

LXXIV.

“The sword waits in its sheath on thy behalf,
And always we shall have to draw it too;
Our life for thee we offer with a laugh,
And it will be demanded through and through;
If false to all, to thee we shall be true;
The price we pay for what of thine we get,
Who beauty loves, must ever beauty rue,
This law the Gods on mortal men have set.”

LXXV.

So sang the bard, and from his heart he sang;
He knew the Future, Present, and the Past;
He knew the joy of beauty and its pang,
Love gave him bitter-sweet unto the last,
Though the white years on him their crop had cast;
Love made him young, but thereto gave him sorrow,
While Poesy did wing him for the blast,
That where he fell to-day, he rose to-morrow.

LXXVI.

But Helen glided softly out the throng,
A sudden pain she felt, a double pain;
She felt old burdens of that poet's song
Return and press upon her life again ;
And with them now a burden new did strain
Her heart-strings tense, already sorely weighed ;
Soon Paris had her footsteps overta'en,
He knew his prize, and openly he said :

LXXVII.

“In thy first glance the Gods declared thee mine;
Not Hellas is thy worthy dwelling place,
Go with me to the East, where thou shalt shine
The rising sun upon a starry race;
Leave homely duty to the homely face;
Choose now a life of love with me to roam,
Leave thy dull husband here, and his dull days,
Quit rocky Sparta—Troy shall be thy home.”

LXXVIII.

But faintly Helen stemmed his strong command:

“Oh can I leave behind what I have been—
The golden years that clasp me to my land,
Leave husband and my babe to scorn and teen,
Leave Hellas too, where I so fair am seen,
Where longer than the Gods themselves remain
I shall upon my Grecian throne be queen,
For Zeus hath promised me his future reign.

LXXIX.

“But ah! no word of Zeus my step can stay,
When close behind me steals my destiny;
Yes, Love, I feel I must with thee away,
To-morrow on thy bosom I shall flee
Through storms of all the Gods across the sea,
Though I presage some mighty overthrow
To lurk in this rash deed I do for thee;
Fate rules my world, not Zeus—with thee I go.”

LXXX.

Then Paris hied, for falling like a ray
On night came Iphigenia, maiden free ;
She met Aunt Helen gliding out the way,
But marked upon her brow the mystery :
“What aileth thee—art ill, my dear?” said she.
“Thy looks that were erewhile the sweetest grace
To music wed, have lost their melody ;
Methinks I hear a battle in thy face.”

LXXXI.

Helen gave answer in a flooded strain:
“Sweet girl, me to myself thou dost recall ;
I had a sigh that tore my heart in twain,
And I was cast away from home and all.
But now I shall myself anew install,
And my whole life I shall through thee redeem ;
Music returns within, I hear its fall,
Zeus ruleth now, and Fate is not supreme.

LXXXII.

“To-morrow with the lark I shall be seen
Hurrying home beneath the Spartan shield,
There still to be what I have ever been,
Till it be time to rove the Elysian field
With husband Menelaus, who will wield
A spirit sway with me for all my days ;
And I shall never die, shall never yield
To age, but stay the soul of Poet's lays.”

LXXXIII.

In secret Helen left with rising day,
She kept her promise Paris not to see ;
But ere she went a mile upon her way,
A soft repentance she could feel to be
Mellowing her heart into Love's piety ;
And longing came, which deepened to a sigh :
“Ah me, why did I treat him churlishly,
And did not even tell him once good-bye.”

LXXXIV.

The road ran down along the loving sea,
Whose billows, one by one, upon the shore
Would fall and plead at Helen's feet to be
One moment, then would break forevermore
Into the sand; far out was heard the roar
As ancient Ocean felt the power near,
And splash of sea-nymphs and of Tritons hoar,
Hurrying to the beach, now grown so dear.

LXXXV.

Then from the foam did Aphrodite rise,
And step with grace upon her pearly car
Made of a sea-shell streaked with ruby skies,
And tuned to music's lull without a jar;
Nereids gathered round her near and far,
Who strook the brine from fervid coal-black hair,
Whereon white hands would tremble like a star,
Twirling the tresses round their bosoms fair.

LXXXVI.

And sea-boys, even one short glimpse to get
Of perfect being, hovered far in droves ;
The mighty whale, the little finny set,
And the strange dweller of lone island coves,
The odd fantastic shape that shyly roves
In deep sea-vales—all felt the strong constraint ;
The heart of Ocean, full of many loves,
Swelled to a mountain high, then fell down faint,

LXXXVII.

As Aphrodite stepped from out the wave,
And entered in her fane upon the land ;
The sea grew calm at her old task to lave
The shoaly ledges with her pale blue hand,
Calm at her ceaseless washing of the sand
That it be clean for the last day ; then fled
The sea-boys with the nymphs far from the strand,
Oceanus droops down as he were dead.

LXXXVIII.

The Goddess went within her temple rare,
Whose slender amorous columns strove in vain
To kiss the sea which bore her gently there,
In purple billows imaging the fane,
With every form of Love's strong joy and pain
That lay upon the temple's front up high,
Carven so that they seemed to live again,
Or in their agony again to die.

LXXXIX.

Those sculptured forms of old fond histories
Must then have heard within the house a call
From that fair Queen, as she did lightly rise,
And take her place upon the pedestal,
Where, as she stood, her garment she let fall,
Which, sea-stained, hid away her shape divine,
Whose glow the cold hard marble can enthrall,
And make men drunk with beauty as with wine.

XC.

And there in lofty state the Goddess stood,
With her deep bosom bared unto the sight,
Whence rose the first sweet throb of motherhood,
The thrill to sink away in Love's last rite
And in a dream of it to vanish quite ;
The robe dropped down the loins, when was revealed
To mortal men the Goddess in her might,
Who deepest wounds hath made, and deepest healed.

XCI.

To Aphrodite's temple Helen came,
In her long journey of the lonely day,
Within her bosom burned the hidden flame,
She longed the Goddess one short prayer to say,
Perchance a little sacrifice to pay,
Some solace to receive from her sad thought
Which dwelt upon a stranger's face away,
Or left her for a moment more distraught.

XCII.

She looked, and words broke deeply from her breast:

“Goddess, I never knew thee until now ;
Of all divinities thou art the best,
Though oft before I paid to thee my vow,
My life with thine thou never didst endow.
Of land and sea thou art the conqueress,
Henceforth in all I shall be thine, be thou,
Be it to bring me joy or bring distress.”

XCIII.

Therewith from ruffled skies the thunder fell,
Down through the temple roof red lightning broke,
And made from clouds a falling fiery well,
Whence mid the flames the Goddess sternly spoke,
In words which Helen smote like hammer stroke:
“My Paris whom I sent, why dost thou flee?
This burning wrath of mine wilt thou provoke?
Yield me and follow forth thy destiny.

XCIV.

“With him to Troy thou must erelong depart,
This Hellas must thou leave and family,
Here Pallas wise and Juno chaste thy heart
Will share; my sway must undivided be;
A life of roses wilt thou lead with me;
Why turn thine eye to look upon that ring?
Halved shall I not endure the sovereignty;
Beware my curse, beware the Paphian sting.

XCV.

‘A God can give or take away his meed,
Love can I give, but also I give hate;
Detested shall I make thy life indeed,
As thou art now beloved by small and great;
Nor this hard blow will yet my anger sate:
What makes thee Helen I shall take away,
What holds the world in thrall to thee like Fate—
Thy beauty shall I shrivel in a day.

XCVI.

"I bid thee break at once that hated ring,
Else I shall strike thy youthful body sere,
Leave thee a withered, wrinkled virtuous thing,
Whose lusty spring is torn from all the year,
Whose juices scarce will furnish one moist tear
Which thou wilt try in loneliness to shed—
'Tis broke! Seek Spartan home without a fear,
I shall be there and everywhere ahead."

XCVII.

So Helen fled out in the tempest dazed,
To hollow Lacedemon in a dale;
The hill-tops flew, upon the thunder raised,
As if they would the skies above assail,
And over all the Gods of Greece prevail;
The lightning chained with fire the peak to peak,
Then leaped with molten links into the vale,
And whirled them round the dame in vivid streak.

XCVIII.

Still Helen fled amid the storm forlorn,
To her a saving power had been given,
Zeus twirled his ragged lightnings all unshorn,
He threatened the lone woman with his levin,
In some deep protest raged the hills and heaven,
Still on she went through brakes and thickest holts,
Around her everywhere the crags fell riven,
That woman slid through all the thunder bolts.

XCIX.

The house of Agamemnon woke that day,
In misty morn to find fair Helen fled;
Still flocked the heroes greetings sweet to say,
For each had risen early from his bed,
To catch his dearest dream ere it had sped;
In vain, for she was gone, their hearts were shent:
"Tis some curst whim in beauty's fickle head",
So guesses flew in deep bewilderment.

c.

But in those bosoms pique soon rose to prayer:

“Though thou be gone, Oh leave thy look behind;
It builds in us the world each day more fair,
Till yestreen we saw Helen, we were blind;
Rest thou the image painted in our mind
Of man and woman’s love in fond caress;
Thou art the very self of human kind,
Blent to a vision of all loveliness.”

cl.

They shouted for the bard, but he was sad,
He would not sing his music-flooding ode
Which bubbles out Castalia’s waters glad,
But spake a word of melancholy bode:
“Gone! still her look in us she hath bestowed;
It is in me, I see it in you all;
Whoever bears within his soul the goad
Of Helen’s look, must soon obey her call.”

CII.

Now Paris, when he heard that she had gone,
Bethought himself that he must also leave;
Next day he bade farewell at early dawn,
With tears at parting he did seem to grieve;
Whereat the king began anew to weave
His scheme, and called his daughter, but she had flown
Unto her flowers, fresh buds to interleave
With thoughts about the life to be her own.

CIII.

Paris gave out he would return to Troy,
To tell the happy tale of what he saw,
The festival, the friendliness, the joy,
With sober things—the city, land and law;
But southward all his sails were seen to draw
By the Laconic coast into the sea;
Mycenae gazed afar, presaged no flaw,
But turned to games and dance and minstrelsy.

CIV.

One man alone of all the Trojan band,
While out at sea, sought Paris to dissuade,
And begged to steer his ship to his own land;
'T was Antenorides who loved a maid
At home, to whom his mind was ever staid;
"This Spartan tour", said he, "portends no good;
In us the Grecian woman in a blade
To pierce the Trojan heart and let its blood.

CV.

The Trojans laughed at the prophetic word,
And all applauded Paris and his scheme;
The madmen their true voice no longer heard,
They too found Helen's look deep in their dream,
And all was not which there to be did seem;
So shouted they: Now is our happy mood,
We must again behold high beauty's gleam,
And pluck the reddest rose of womanhood."

CVI.

So sailed they on, nor had they any care,
They stirred long ripples in the silent seas,
And in the night they saw the starry Bear
With many blazing eyes look through the trees,
And heard strange voices coming down the breeze;
Still sailed they on, their deed could not be let,
But wise, forethoughtful Antenorides
Was dragged along with them in fateful net.

CVII.

A horseman dashed into the Lion's Gate
One day, with foam-flakes snowing from his steed,
And the pale rider scarcely could await
The struggling word to break the woeful deed:
"The Gods the loss of Hellas have decreed!
A Spartan home hath our fair Helen quit;
Along my path the mother Earth did bleed,
As if she in her very heart were hit.

CVIII.

“To Lacedemon came a Trojan man,
And Menelaus gave a holiday,
The dearest maidens danced, the young men ran,
And all the people turned their thoughts to play;
Meanwhile the stranger planned his wicked way
To carry Helen off beneath the night;
To Grecian gifts behold the Trojan pay,
And it shall be re-paid with all our might.

CIX.

Still yonder ye may see the loving pair
In loungeing sail to dally on the wave,
Which Zephyrus caresses with his air,
While soft Oceanus the keel doth lave,
And flocks of doves fly in the sun to save
From view of men the hour of lovers' flight;
Now is my country but an unknown grave,
And all her golden days are gone in night.”

CX.

Iphigenia too in sorrow spoke:

“So thou art gone at last, it was my fear;
By some fell power, my ring, I know, is broke,
I gave it thee, stained with thy dropping tear,
When thy full heart had drawn to me so near;
Ah never have I felt my life so crossed,
No more than thou can I stay longer here,
With thee now lost am I, the world is lost.”

CXI.

But Agamemnon's words were open joy:

“Let the fair woman go, I fain would pray;
I shall restore her soon, and lofty Troy
In mighty war I shall bring under sway,
Whereto I have long sought some secret way;
I shall that Asian bound to my full power
Now push far out into the rising day;
To Priam's son I yet shall give a dower.

CXII.

But while they talked, arose a distant dust
Upon the road around a little hill;
That dusty cloud was whirled within a gust
Of sudden wind into the town so shrill,
That all the people leaped up in a thrill;
Then from the cloud was born a mounted group,
And of the group one man each eye did fill,
Spurring ahead of all the sweaty troop.

CXIII.

Soon any child within the town could tell
That Menelaus was the foremost man;
Quickly he rode into the citadel,
While all the crowd his broken look did scan,
And wonder what might be his anxious plan;
Then came Presentiment's dark underflow,
While Rumor wildly raged about, and ran
Proclaiming tumult, war and overthrow.

CXIV.

He cried in pain: "Where is my Helen, where?"

To him was pointed then far out at sea
A speck that danced between the wave and air,
A sparkling sail that lingered laughingly,
And gave one parting glance in tiny glee,
Then twinkled out the blue to nothingness;
Whereat his eyes strained to their last degree,
Broke silent tears that told his deep distress.

CXV:

To that same spot had come the Grecian chiefs,
Speechless they gazed at the retreating sail
Which left behind in them a world of griefs;
It seemed as their own soul began to fail
And flicker off upon the ship's sea trail;
But when at last from view the vessel sped,
They stood not valiant Greeks in coats of mail,
But bronzed corpses, of a sudden dead.

CXVI.

As rustling leaves break in October dreams,
When under trees we lie but half asleep,
And what we are awake blends into gleams
Of life when it has broken Time's strong keep,
And of the world beyond we get a peep;
So all the Greeks saw through their ghostly stare
The future deed rise pictured from the deep,
And sprang at once their armor to prepare.



CANTO II.

IPHIGENIA AT AULIS.

I.

Listen to the winds and catch their moody lay!
Unrestful up and down the strait they blow,
They meet at Aulis, tumble up the bay,
They twist the curls of Tritons to and fro,
And all the fleet without an oar they row,
No sail can be unfurled, no rope be cast,
Above the sea-war voices singing low
Are heard out of the bosom of the blast:

II.

“We blow to the East and West, to the South and North,
Over the water and land unseen we break,
Around, about, above, below, and back and forth,
Forever change we are and change we make,
Eternally the heavy ships we shake,
The drowsy men we rouse with our commotion,
We move the deeps for the movement’s sake,
And stir to life anew the ancient Ocean.”

III.

Hear Boreas whistle in his chilly blast!
Upon the sail he leaves his icy coat,
The Southwind breathes warm kisses on the mast,
And sings its passion in a tender rote,
The ice melts in the ripple to the note,
And Zephyrus doth come and lay his balm,
The waves drop in a trance around the boat,
The sails are dead, and Aulis in a calm.

IV.

So sweep the winged winds from rage to rest,
And then from rest they rush to rage again,
The wave mounts upward to their wild behest,
Or sleeps in peace beneath their soothing strain,
With dreams of skies held fast in crystal plain,
But soon the blasts are loosed, and bring anew
In wrathful energy their stress and pain,
For in this world must all receive its due.

V.

Now on this windy watery element,
Where sea-lit Aulis lies along her strand,
The Greeks were kept, with double purpose rent,
Whether to bring back Helen to her land,
Or to send home all of their warrior band;
Oft had they spoken, yet could not agree,
Contention rose, whatever might be planned,
And dashed them round as surges on the sea.

VI.

For every madding wind burst out released,
When but a sail upreared would give a sign;
They rushed from South and North, from West and East,
As if sent on their way by power malign;
But when the boats were moored, the sun would shine,
Then all the wise men wondered what it was
That could the eager ships so long confine;
Some said the Gods, and some, that Man was cause.

VII.

The oldest chief was prudent, white-haired Nestor,
Words sweeter flowed than honey from his tongue:
The holy priest was Calchas, son of Thestor,
Who on the voice of God or Goddess hung,
And knew what every bird in heaven sung;
Ulysses always deepest wisdom taught,
Though it might not prevail at first among
His people, till they took the second thought.

VIII.

Ajax had come, the bulky man of brawn,
Who bore a mighty fortress in his frame;
Small Menelaus too, whose wrong had drawn
All Greece to seek revenge for Helen's shame;
Young Diomed, a doughty knight who came
From Argive land, whose fiery soul sought fight;
Thersites, who had won a bitter name
Abusing leaders whether wrong or right.

IX.

But Agamemnon was the greatest king,
Of all the chiefs he had most towns and land,
And most ambition to the war could bring,
Achilles had inborn the Hero's strand,
Yet not with it the gift of self-command
Which trains to duty first the rebel soul;
Still he would be the leader of the band,
And all the rest, but not himself, control.

X.

Good Palamedes, too, was present there,
The man who always sought to look at right;
For beauty he had not a single care,
Its tender thrill ruled not his sense of sight,
Whereby his Grecian soul had left him quite.
They all were gathered now the chief to choose,
The herald, who Talthybius was hight,
Bade silence so that each could tell his views.

XI.

King Agamemnon was the first to rise,
A politician's wiles he knew to life,
Tears started as he looked up in the skies:
"I think I shall go home to mine own wife,
And Helen leave with all this Trojan strife;
Our stay at Troy will last for many suns,
Far, far it lies, with all disaster rife,
Let us return to home and little ones."

XII.

Broke Palamedes in, the rightful man:

“So many faithful wives why should we leave,
For that one faithless Argive wife who ran
Away from husband, leaving him to grieve,
And tell the time in tears without reprieve?
I say she hath not won a goodly fame;
And shall we every household now bereave
For her who boldly threw away her name?”

XIII.

“She went with Paris of her own free-will,
Though she may blame the Goddess for the deed;
The stain upon her life remaineth still,
Although she seek to hide it in a creed,
And make divine whatever may mislead;
The woman who is led by Aphrodite’s word,
Or shall for guilt the Paphian power plead,
Must first herself by harlotry be stirred.

XIV.

“ I shall not quit my home for such a jade,
And leave to sigh and sorrow all mine own ;
Perish the oaths to Tyndarus we made,
By breaking them is now the strong man shown,
I shall do so, although I stand alone.
Oh Helen, for thine ills what deadly cure !
Thou art not worth this solitary moan,
For thee distained we shall not give the pure.”

XV.

Then forward sprang to speak young Diomed,
Within his eyes the flint kept striking fire,
And sparkles threw with every word he said,
Whereby that word did drop red-hot with ire,
Yet had a music in it as a lyre
When burn harmonic ardors in the strings,
Attuned to song aflame from warlike choir,
When it the blood-beat of the battle sings.

XVI.

“I say, let us at once sweep forth to Troy,
For Helen give our lives in valor’s glee;
Without her glance the world hath not one joy,
The all-in-all of all our hearts is she;
What’s wife and child, what’s all that is to be,
If fairest Helen must a captive sigh?
What then am I myself in verity,
If I the Greek cannot for Helen die?”

XVII.

Whereat the Greeks sent up a mighty shout,
That rose an unseen mountain to the skies,
For each one heard the very word spoke out,
Which in his heart had struggled hard to rise
From that dim lake where speech unbodied lies;
Then stood Ulysses forth who knew the dutiful,
Well he deserved to be entitled wise,
Though wisdom coined he not into the beautiful.

XVIII.

“A wife and babe I too at home have left,
Telemachus and true Penelope,
But of them both I am this day bereft,
Unless through Troy I bring them back to me,
And raze that hold of Greek captivity.
If I shall win them, Helen is the cost,
In her the one, all wives we must set free,
And in her loss, behold we all are lost.”

XIX.

No shout the Greeks gave wise Ulysses' speech,
For by them he was hardly understood;
His thoughts flew high in air beyond their reach,
And yet they somehow felt his words were good,
Except Thersites, of the scoffers' brood;
He turned grave wisdom into ridicule,
He railed at Helen and all womanhood,
And made the world just like himself—a fool.

XX.

“The game in this whole war is love”, he said,
“The love of Trojan booty is the main;
Yet if the love of Helen tickles Diomed,
Why then should I and other Greeks be slain
For that one woman, vainest of the vain?
But we are told in one to see the all,
Such misty music is our wise man’s strain;
So be it—in Helen see each woman’s fall.”

XXI.

Then Nestor rose and caught from him the word,
And tore from it the lie in knavery wrapped;
The old man’s voice the people gladly heard,
He after wise Ulysses spoke, and capped
Dim wisdom with some shining legend apt,
Or story taken from his far-off youth,
Telling a wondrous tale that deeply lapped
In folds of rich romance the wise man’s truth.

XXII.

High sounded the applause of Grecians, for
He called them back from scorn to their own heart,
In sweetest tones of silvery orator,
And many turns delicious of his art,
Yet flashing wisdom out of every part.
The aged man sat down, a youth arose
Whose single glance made all the people start
The battle cry, as if to charge their foes.

XXIII.

It was Achilles who in splendor came,
The noblest form of all the Grecian host,
Each muscle was athirst for glorious fame
In tear-worn war, whatever be the cost;
But the great world in his own self was lost;
He knew who was the Hero, his name could call,
A name on fleeting Time to be engrossed,
All men were there for him, not he for all.

XXIV.

Yet he had nobler strands within his breast,
Which Cheiron, wisest teacher, raised to day;
Of music's concord was his soul possessed,
He well could touch the lyric chords in play,
And sing heroic deeds in lofty lay,
Till fired by his own strains he soared above
And found a tuneful sphere, where every way
Led unto harmony and human love.

XXV.

But Cheiron's lesson was now well forgot,
The Hero sought the army's chieftaincy,
He was for fairest Helen, yet was not,
But for his own fair deed that was to be;
He rose to speak, the entire company,
Rapt with his beauty, whispered each to other:
"He is the man for all supremacy,
Godlike his shape, a Goddess is his mother.

XXVI.

“See but the motion of his hand -- what joy!
It pours within us more than Bacchic stream;
For him now could we take another Troy,
More beautiful than Helen is that gleam,
With our last breath we would his life redeem,
If he a captive were as she is now,
Of gloried Hercules he comes the dream,
The ray divine is flashing from his brow.”

XXVII.

Quick words of short contempt Achilles shot:
“Let us no more in useless speech debate
Whether the dame shall be restored or not,
But let us choose a chief at any rate,
Then can I tell what is to be her fate
When I shall see our leader and his might,
If he be merely first in wealth and state,
Or he who in the front rank best can fight.”

XXVIII.

Ulysses seized the helm with lots, and prayed:

“Oh Zeus, put the right man in the right place!

Let rule disjoint from body's might be made,

Lest brawny arm take all for its own grace,

And smite both rule and reason down apace!”

The Greeks with wise Ulysses prayed the prayer,

When Agamemnon's lot leaped out the case

Of brilliant bronze into the eager air.

XXIX.

Achilles turned in silent wrath aside,

Back to his sylvan home he thought to go,

In Aulis he would not one day abide,

But leave ungrateful Grecians to their wo,

Who were not able their best man to know;

He went alone along the ridged sand,

His tears into the sea began to flow,

And swell the waves that strook in peace the strand.

XXX.

“Ah, why was I not born of slaves a slave,
Why was heroic heart put in my breast,
To be the scorn of every subtle knave,
And from the struggle never to have rest?
Oh mother Thetis, mount thy billows' crest,
And tell why thou divine hast brought me forth,
Me Goddess-born, to be by time distressed,
By men to be cast out as nothing worth.”

XXXI.

Therewith he flung a tear into the brine,
Which heaved to meet him like a mother's heart;
A thousand hands above the waves did shine,
And reach out to him there as to impart
Some touch of balm to soothe his fiery smart;
And all the sea became a sea of light,
While from the ripples' break soft tones did start
And turn to speech just at the margent white.

XXXII.

“My son, I hear thee weeping at my shore,
Would it were the last tear that thou wilt shed!
Thy honor yet will be neglected more,
And contumely’s dart will pierce thy head,
Until thou liest cold among the dead.
Thy lot it is by men of little worth,
To be misprized till thy full time be sped,
This is the badge of thy heroic birth.

XXXIII.

“Gods, pity me, the mother of but one,
Who is so great that he must early die;
Could I have borne a weak, ignoble son,
Then mine had been a blest maternity.
Yet wherefore am I mother but to cry?
And wherefore am I Goddess but to bear
The sorrows of the world upon my sigh?
Oh stay, my son, it is thy mother’s prayer.”

XXXIV.

Therewith she rose above the mighty mere,
Her son she kissed as the great waters drave,
And with her own she washed away his tear,
Yet with her breath divine endurance gave
Of the heroic pang which stills the grave.
Up with her rose the ocean many-tressed,
Who fitted to her form his yielding wave,
And with her clasped the Hero's shaggy breast.

XXXV.

With one embrace she sank down in the main,
The struggling waters rested from their coil,
Peace spread on billows blue afar her train,
And busy ripples turned back to their toil;
Achilles felt no more his bosom's broil,
When he had heard his loving mother's speech;
He traced strange thoughts upon the sandy soil,
And picked up gorgeous shells along the beach.

XXXVI.

Proud Agamemnon sat within his tent,
The Chieftains flocked the newest man to greet,
And many costly presents to him sent
Of golden beakers, tripods, vestments meet
For body, bed, for stool beneath his feet;
It was a wild exultant gathering
That surged around to knee the royal seat,
And loud proclaimed a God to be the king.

XXXVII.

The Leader deigns to deem himself a God,
Himself to be above all guilt he deems,
And of man's punishment to bear the rod,
Dire Até feeds his heart with all her dreams,
And insolence from every action gleams,
E'en royal courtesy is throned in pride,
No limit to his will to have he seems,
No Zeus, but he Olympus doth bestride.

XXXVIII.

Full early in the morn he seeks the chase,
To vent in wildest sport his wanton mood,
To hunt instead of men the sylvan race,
When suddenly he comes to Dian's wood,
Which on a hill not far from Aulis stood;
A sacred spot, that was encircled round
With walls and hedges, woven to exclude
All trespass from the hidden holy ground.

IXL.

Within the close were many pretty fawns,
That cropped the leaves with kisses delicate,
Or played in coyish pleasantry on lawns,
Without the dream of hairy horned mate,
All to the purest Goddess dedicate.
It was a sport where none with stained thought
Might enter in the pearl-embosomed gate;
The very air breathed innocence untaught.

XL.

But Agememnon knew no sacred bound,
Desire had now become his only law,
He leaped the wall and sprang upon the ground,
The fairest fawn within the grove he saw,
And there he smote her with goat-footed paw,
As if he were a satyr of the wood;
Deep in her tender heart sunk down the claw,
And o'er her body white was written blood.

XLI.

The heart-struck fawn ran off toward the fane
Spilling her virgin drops with helpless shriek;
Along the grass was trailed a purple stain,
Which burned the greenest sod to a sere streak,
And called on Mother Earth revenge to wreak.
To altar of the Goddess pure she fled,
And gave one piteous look of prayer meek,
Then fell down at the feet of Dian, dead.

XLII.

At once the sky was dashed in blackest wrath,
Amid the trees leaped red the ragged fire,
The heavens everywhere portended scath,
As if they sought to make the world a pyre,
And singe it to a crisp with lightnings dire;
The thunder chain, with dreadful links of sound,
Clanked on the flaming air with wrong afire,
And flung fleet molten fetters to the ground.

XLIII.

The timid fawns had scampered through the grove,
With terror of the time their bodies shook,
Through hiding thicket one by one they strove,
Or huddled in a mass within a nook,
Around they dared not for a moment look;
It seemed as if the Goddess could not shield
Her innocents along the forest brook,
But must to ruthless ravager them yield.

XLIV.

The Leader knew at once what he had done,
He hurried pale from forest to the fleet,
The glance of Goddess there he thought to shun;
He ordered all the chiefs betimes to meet,
And bring aboard the armament complete:
"Aboard, Aboard, I shall no more delay,
Seize hold the oar, hoist to the wind the sheet,
And strike the foamy wave to-day, to-day."

XLV.

The people deeply wondered, but obeyed;
Like ants they swarmed along the shelving shore,
And not a moment in their task delayed;
They dragged the ships down to the water hoar
With shouts that capped the hill-tops in a roar;
They cut in haste the hawser from the land,
Then rose to smite the salt sea with the oar,
And thought to leave at once old Aulis' strand.

XLVI.

But when the air had heard one lusty stroke,
It madly changed into a furious blast;
Each sail did seem the wind-god to provoke,
So that he stripped it from the reeling mast,
And its white tatters in the sea did cast;
The Furies of the air would hiss and howl,
The Demons of the sea would scurry past,
And furrow its calm face with gloaming scowl.

XLVII.

The wrathful winds again were heard to sing:
"The man shall not escape, the guilty man;
We come, we come, his wicked deed we bring,
Our hands have been at work since Time began,
And we have built the world the Gods did plan,
The blast on sea and land is but our speed
The hidden wrong from out the earth to ban,
We spirits are that blow to man his deed."

XLVIII.

Thus in a chorus dolorous they sang,
With its vast bass of waters chimed the deep,
The skies attuned thereto with thunder rang,
Long rocky hands would catch the keel, and keep
It fast on shoals, or hurl it on the steep,
Till every ship put back into the bay;
Then would the winds begin to fall asleep,
Or mid the masts low notes of guilt to play.

XLIX.

And every Grecian soul amazed did ask:
“Why do the Gods to us opposed stand?
For it is they who stop us from our task
Fair Helen’s wrong to quit with vengeful hand.
Some unseen crime is lurking in the land,
Innocent blood its curses on us wreaks,
The culprit must be found, his guilt be banned,
Although he be the first man of the Greeks.”

L.

Then sounded through the multitude of masts
The herald's voice, Talthybius shrill;
It sent a shudder like the shrieking blasts,
And made the host that felt its keenness, chill
With fearful bodements of a coming ill;
To the assembly all the Grecians throng
To hear what is the word divine, while still
The winds at parting lisp a sigh of wrong.

LI.

Then Calchas, holy Priest, the first arose,
The darkness was transparent to his view,
He kened the will of Gods and of their foes,
How the great Universe is ruled he knew,
How man in it is governed saw he too,
Upon his heart the law was deeply writ,
His eye shone sunlike looking on the True,
The world he saw not, but the God in it,

LII.

The brook he heard not but the Nymph therein,
The roar of skies would speak to him of Jove;
So he had heard the winds beneath their din
Announce the deed that wronged the Gods above,
And had on Earth below slain human love;
He was the only man in all the fleet
Who knew the voice in which the tempest strove,
And could its very words to men repeat.

LIII.

Beside the will of Gods to him was known
The human soul, which he could clearly scan
When it in darkest depths was left alone
With guilt, by Gods forsaken and by man,
By all the lightnings pierced of its own ban;
He looked in it and saw the deep disease,
Straightway he sought to carry out the plan
Whereby to give to it the sweet release.

LIV.

Such was of holy priest the greatest gift.
He sought the errant spirit to reclaim,
The burden from the breaking heart to lift,
To bring atonement for all wicked blame,
And new existence give and a new name;
The guilty life he could far down unroll,
And take the evil strain out of its frame,
And reconcile with Gods the cast-off soul.

LV.

He spake a speech that all the host could hear:
"I tell what Zeus and mine own soul command,
Although my sharp rebuke shall smite the ear
Of highest man in all the Grecian band:
Ye sail away unto the Trojan Land
Wrong to avenge, and yet that very wrong
At Aulis has been done with wanton hand;
Now Helen's injuries to Greeks belong."

LVI.

“A fawn devote to virgin Artemis
Is lying slain within her holy ground;
The guilt of Paris I proclaim, is his
Who did the lustful deed, and made a wound
On innocence which would all Troy astound;
Think not the Gods will pass in us offence
For which they shall the Trojan town confound;
They punish in us too its insolence.

LVII.

“Our deities are high because the rods
They bear for all who shall their law transgress;
Greek wrong is punished hardest by Greek Gods,
For deed of guilt give ye to them redress,
Impartial is their wrath, their blessedness;
If they have judgement sent against proud Troy,
By that same judgement now they send us stress
Of winds, whereof take heed lest they destroy.

LVIII.

“A contradiction is of Gods the hate,
They will not long abide discordancy;
That man they leave unhelped to vengeful fate,
Who seeketh not from guilt himself to free,
And to bring back his life to harmony;
By sacrifice alone can he be rid
Of wrongful deed, whose ruth he feels when he
Does to himself what he to others did.

LIX.

“Oh Leader brave, thou hast a daughter dear,
A virgin pure as is the sky-born snow;
I cannot speak the word without a tear,
The Goddess bids thy child to be laid low
Upon her altar with the axe's blow,
The winds will never cease from out the skies
To pour upon the fleet their blasts of wo,
Till with the fawn thy bleeding daughter lies.

LX.

“If to the Gods for all thou wilt her lend,
Thou shalt thyself from thine own wrong redeem,
For thou hast taken back thy deed to mend,
And plucked it from the penalty supreme;
True leadership will out thine action gleam
When for thy land thou yieldest dearest ties;
And the new Helen will restored beam
In thine own daughter and her sacrifice.”

LXI.

So spake the holy Priest, who truly saw
In all its deeps what lies in human deed;
But Agamemnon spurned the sacred law,
And cursed the spotless man who said the creed;
Thou coward Priest! I know thy calling's greed,
'Tis gold that buys thy word, somebody's gold,
Who is mine enemy; the Gods take heed
Through thee on pelf and power to keep their hold.

LXII.

“Thy subtle priestly craft shall not rule me,
Although thou make weak men in fear opine
Thy will to be the will of deity;
My own sweet will is just as good as thine,
And I believe it is quite as divine,
Nay more divine, for I have power. The oar
Now seize again, Oh Greeks, and smite the brine
For Troy, our injured Helen to restore.”

LXIII.

The men went down into their ships once more,
And stirred unwilling waves with busy blade,
But soon they heard approach a wild uproar
From blackest cloud, wherein the flashes played
So fast that every seaman was dismayed;
And suddenly the winds smote in a throng
The sails to ghostly shrouds of gloomy shades
Singing a new and more destructive song:

LXIV.

“ Know ye that twice have we with shrilly lay
To Aulis come and sung amid the fleet;
Our first was gay and chimed a changeful play,
The second moved to a far deeper beat
Taken from vengeance whistling through the sheet;
The third time we are here with curse more savage,
And still ye may be saved by quick retreat,
The next is last, beware its song of ravage.”

LXV.

Then ship on ship was driven in the clamor,
Men fell into the wave and rose no more,
Over the water flared a lurid glamour,
Wherein damned phantoms smote the sea and shore,
And every sail from mast and halyard tore;
The ships could scarce escape the crackling flame
Which out the belly of the winds upbore,
By fleeing back to Aulis whence they came.

LXVI.

The first to put about into the bay,
Was Agamemnon, palsied at the sign
Which Gods had shown to him of their own way;
He sent at once for Calchas, man divine,
To break the spell of that great might malign,
He fell down by the Priest with heavy groans,
Yet his new life through tears began to shine,
As he with soothed winds did mingle moans:

LXVII.

“Zeus, Father, must I sacrifice my daughter!
Of womanhood the tender blooming rose!
The sweetest flower of my life I thought her;
What then have I to live for if she goes?
Help, Calchas, stroke thy hand along my throes:
Thine eye bids me to think myself a king;
I am a king—the Leader here bestows
His daughter and himself an offering.”

LXVIII.

Meantime Mycenae gay its song had lost,
The dance had ceased and merry festival;
In place of joy its hearts were sorrow-tossed,
The mother, wife, the little children all
Oft gathered lonely on the city wall
To gaze for messenger or ship afar;
No voice was heard but woman's cry or call,
For every man had gone to tearful war.

LXIX.

No word from Aulis came, they cannot hear
What is the reason of so long delay:
Iphigenia thinks without a fear
A visit to her noble sire to pay,
Ere he to distant Troy be gone away;
Out of the Lions' Gate she drove her team
Of mules that shook the sweaty yoke all day,
Up hill and down, and by the rippling stream.

LXX.

Her chariot first ran through the stony glen,
Where once the Gods and Titans fought their fight,
In ages hoar, then left it unto men;
She saw rocks hurled with superhuman might,
And dark chaotic powers put to flight
Long long ago, when first this sunny world
Of Grecian Gods dawned gleaming on the sight,
And gloomy deities to Tartarus whirled.

LXXI.

And then she went through silent piney dells,
Where she would hardly dare her breath to hear,
Lest she disturb the spirit that indwells
The oak, the bubbling spring, the lonely weir,
Or skims high woodlands like a star in fear;
The Hamadryad's lightest lisp she heard,
As it would vanish on a gossamer,
And oft she caught and kept its dying word.

LXXII.

The women of each village hugged her path,
With babe at breast and children at the dress,
A kindly look and speech for all she hath,
Their husbands were at Aulis in the stress,
And they could see ahead long wretchedness;
True wives, they sent by her some word or token,
To those they loved, whom they in faithfulness
Must give for that one wife whose faith was broken.

LXXIII.

Past Ephyre's high breast she quickly rides,
Whose city lies between Poseidon's knees,
While Aphrodite's foam laves both its sides,
And Acrocorinthus halts the stirring breeze,
Until it swoons away amid the trees
To soft Idalian kisses round a shrine;
Through that lax luscious air the maiden flees,
And touches not her lip to Corinth's wine.

LXXIV.

She rests not till she comes unto the bound
Which sends her high up to a mountain land,
Where ancient fable sported with the sound
Of sweetest minstrelsy, or chanson grand,
Hymning the mighty gests of Hero's hand.
One path she shuns where Theseus of yore
With stolen Helen fled along the strand,
The Trojan deed presaging long before.

LXXV.

From heights she passed into a fruitful dale,
Which fluttered everywhere with silvery leaves
Of Olives, changing sunlight to a pale
Moonlight that with the treetops interweaves;
Like sobbing heart afar the orchard heaves;
Women are there culling the fruit alone,
Yet each looks up at passing team, and leaves
Her task awhile to think of some one gone.

LXXVI.

To plain of Ceres then the maiden drove,
Where the broad land springs into yellow corn,
At hidden tender touch of Goddess' love,
As if out of the earth the golden morn
With a new sun were of a sudden born;
O'er all was felt the sacred mystery
Of man, who also springs from night forlorn
To day, till he again in night shall lie.

LXXVII.

Through many a grove of plaintain and of myrtle,
Over Kephissus' gentle element,
To voice of nightingale and Attic turtle,
Mid strains of seas and skies and mountains blent,
Royally into Athena's town she went;
From Pallas' hill she looked far on the sea,
Unto its very bound her glance she sent,
And saw the empire there which was to be.

LXXVIII.

The Muses sang around her their own rule,
As she did loiter on their sacred hill,
Where was intoned the note of every school
Which hath through Time's deep bosom sent its thrill
Of harmony—mind's cunning, hand's skill;
Then looked she to the East and saw the proud
High threat the Greek horizon darkly fill,
But soon the Attic sun smote through the cloud.

LXXIX.

Over the radiant hills to Marathon
She darts as if she held Apollo's ways,
There on a plain she saw that Attic sun
From skies descend transfigured in a blaze,
Which all the earth illumined with its rays;
A little village glowed within the sunset crest,
As drew to end the greatest day of days,
And turned down Grecian hills into the West.

LXXX.

Another note was sung in Marathon

Mid golden cornfields leaping from their grave;
She stopped along the sea when day was done,
She heard the never-ending waters rave,
And thought, Will Asia ever cross this wave
To Greece, as now to Troy we Grecians go?

Such deeds bring forth their like however brave,
Oh where shall break this endless chain of wo!

LXXXI.

She came to Rhamnus, town of ancient fane,
The home of Nemesis, the Goddess hoar
Whose blow requites on man his action's bane!
No rest she found, she quit the temple door,
And hurried past unto the lonely shore,
Where of that Titaness she might be free,
Whose furious word is vengeance evermore;
Sweet peace she found beside the yielding sea.

LXXXII.

All day her chariot wound about the bank,
Whose sunny path the whitest pebbles pave,
To smiling stillness the wide waters sank
Before the presence of the maiden brave;
Or rose in ripples mild her feet to lave,
When she would walk along the beached sea;
Oft tresses of the Nymphs would float the wave,
Then melt into the blue transparency.

LXXXIII.

As Aulis rises slowly into view,
She hears the angry bustle of the blast,
She sees the waves swell up with trouble new:
And drive within her ken a slivered mast,
Which breakers smite, till it on land be cast;
Then reeling ships she spies, which seaman row,
In secret nooks they huddle all aghast,
As if to shun a second hidden blow.

LXXXIV.

Iphigenia rode in peaceful mood

Deeper and deeper to the storm's fierce heart,
Where lone within his tent her father stood,
Whose tears at sight of her began to start,
And ashen quiverings of pain to dart
Through chorded limbs, tense in the bitter strain;
Then would he he seek suppression of the smart,
Grow calm apace, till tears fell down again.

LXXXV.

“What is it that so pains thee, father dear?

What winds are those I heard not long ago?
I see that thou art struggling with a tear,
Those blasts still threaten as they whirl and blow
Far out upon the sea, where now they go;
Their biting edge I touched upon my way,
Still I in thee can feel their afterthroe;
What is thy sorrow? Let me its pang allay.

LXXXVI.

While yet she spake, the captains one by one
Dropped in to speak a word unto the chief;
They viewed the maid who soon all hearts had won,
Yet not by love like Helen, but by grief;
Fair words they spake of deep regard but brief,
They felt the awe, and in her look could see
All time before them pass, like falling leaf,
Which drops to earth, and leaves the heavens free.

LXXXVII.

Achilles, too, had sought the Leader's tent,
To bid a grim good-bye to chieftains there;
He looked upon the maiden's face, he went
Not forth, but on him settled unaware
A distant view of something more than fair,
Than Honor worthier, higher than Glory,
He wandered with it far up in the air,
While it to him alone told all its story.

LXXXVIII.

He said unto himself: "I now must change,
Old Cheiron never could have taught me this,
He never could have shown the vision strange
Now shown by simple maid, a little miss,
Whose lips, methinks, I could forever kiss;
To me her glance is more than Helen's glance,
Henceforth its guidance I shall not dismiss,
Its spell may yet my deepest hours entrance."

LXXXIX.

Then Calchas came he scarce could his moan,
He hinted that he had a word to say apart,
And when he spake unto the maid alone,
The parting of his lips cleft to his heart:
"I must speak forth the word with all its smart:
That ill winds cease to blow, and fair ones rise
To bear the Grecian fleet to Troy, thou art
To be to Artemis the sacrifice."

XC.

“That Helen may be saved, thou art to die,
The pure must give itself for the distained,
It is the world’s last law, which to defy
Is breach for which the man will be arraigned
Before that court where justice is not feigned;
Shun wrong of shirking what is on thee laid;
Innocence lost by guilt, is then regained,
When the pure soul its offering is made.

XCI.

“In Troy’s own wickedness we Greeks are strong;
The Goddess now demands our highest meed;
Then only may we right the Trojan wrong,
When we ourselves the way to right may lead;
We can avenge another’s wrongful deed,
Not till that deed out of our heart is burned;
Never can we take Troy till we are freed
Of Troy’s own guilt, and to ourselves returned.

XCII.

“From Zeus supreme comes down one great behest
That good men owe themselves unto the bad;
Else were they hardly good, and never blest
Through that high suffering that pure and glad
Maketh all hearts by making them so sad;
From Helen’s beauty thou wilt bear the prize,
Thy land in thee its rescue will have had,
And the whole world in thee its sacrifice.”

XCIII.

So spake the holy Priest, a noble man,
Who wrought not for himself, for all he wrought;
The Future in the Now he well could scan,
That which must be forever was his thought,
And that was what he to his people taught;
Yet truest Greek he was, most true of all,
What Hellas was to Time itself he sought,
Not to the East he looked, not to Troy’s fall,

XCIV.

But in the West he saw futurity
Grow out the deed of heavy suffering,
Saw a new world rise out the farthest sea,
And a new Hellas in it upward spring,
And to mankind afresh its blessing bring;
Far-off dim visions and blest auguries,
Snatches of song he heard the poets sing,
Hymning in ages late the sacrifice.

XCV.

His was no cruel speech but tender grace,
With every word his own great heart was rent,
And if he could, he would have ta'en her place,
For her endured the bitter punishment;
Into her sorrow was his soul so blent
That she could nought but his sweet presence bless,
As his strong thought into her breast he sent
Armed with his pity and tender-heartedness.

XCVI.

Thus sighed she answer to the holy Priest:

“Oh must I die, who love my life, so young?
And must I now be slaughtered like a beast
At the blest shrine to which I oft have clung,
When with the pain of life I have been stung?
Have mercy on me, Goddess, hope is spilt—
The howling winds through all the shores have sung
The strain of vengeance for some hidden guilt.

XCVII.

“But ah! the more men need to be set free;
If they were guiltless, they no help would need;
What is life good for, but to give it thee?
To keep it for myself is but a greed,
To yield it up makes of it fruitful seed;
Here take it, I give the last of earthly joys,
This bloom tear from my cheek, and let me bleed,
Guide me to the altar's ax—it is my choice.”

XCVIII.

Achilles came and looked, a changed man,
He hears what he before had never heard;
He saw his life anew and made its plan,
To bitter sacrifice he too is stirred
By that sole thrill of tender maiden's word;
His mien superb becomes her humble thrall,
Now his heroic sword he will engird,
To fight not for his glory, but for all.

XCIX.

"Ah me! I know I am short-lived by fate,
But I prefer to die as thou shalt die;
If I should stay at home I might live late,
And pass my days without a single sigh;
But I shall equal thee in destiny,
And give myself in bond to sharpest wo,
For thee I shall my very wrath deny,
Be placable to friend, and e'en to foe."

c.

So thought Achilles then, when he had seen
In wonderment of love that spirit staid;
But on the Trojan plain in quarrel keen
Hereafter will forget the vow he made,
And turn to wrath that will not soon be laid,
Unmindful of his country, friend, and cause,
For vanished is the image of the maid;
Dark lines through his bright fame a Fury draws.

ci.

Yet memory of her afresh will live
When he doth weep o'er dear Patroclus slain:
He rueful will his Grecian foe forgive,
Now softened by the mighty mass of pain;
Yet to forgetfulness will fall again
And her sweet image blot in Trojan strife;
Then will compassion cleanse at last that stain,
And give to Priam old both son and life.

CII.

Rumor went buzzing through the gathered Greeks,
It told the sacrifice of high degree,
Whose blood would end delay of many weeks,
And bring fair winds upon a tranquil sea,
Yet fetching too the fierce fatality.
Their hearts were torn, it was a time of wail,
Low words they moaned of crushed anxiety,
That day all wished the fleet might never sail.

CIII.

Still the Euboic hills detained the sun,
Who threw upon their peaks his last of light
For that one day, and then his course was done;
In silence flew the silken wings of night,
To brush out of the skies the cloudlets bright,
And tinted films hung high on heaven's way;
Then sank into the mist the mountain height,
And twilight poured its flood on Aulis' bay.

CIV.

Meantime, they bore the maiden to the shrine,
Which lay upon a knoll within a wood;
There Calchas led her through a weeping line
Of massive men, who round her pathway stood,
To see the highest worth of womanhood;
The hearts of all burst out in tearful rue,
As they beheld in her what was the good,
And made the vow to her they would be true.

CV.

The fair white fane of marbled Artemis
A smile into the twilight seemed to throw;
From its fond pillars flowed a silent kiss
Which showered love around the deed of wo,
As there in flight of stone she grasped her bow
To save a fleeing fawn from savage chase;
She touched the arrow in a sacred glow,
The very marble lit up in her face.

CVI.

Within the door the maiden disappears,
A cloud descends and fills the holy space,
And for a moment sheds its gentle tears,
Till every leaf and grass-blade in the place
Hath on it one pure drop of sorrow's grace,
And bends to let it fall upon the ground,
Which swallows it at once and shows no trace,
Though leaf and grass, freed from the weight, rebound.

CVII.

But soon with ragged rent is pierced the cloud,
And through it looks the silver-shining moon,
Which softly strokes the melancholy crowd,
And to a music sweet doth them attune,
While they quite sink away into its swoon;
It drives far off the night with the dark cloud,
And out the air into her lunar noon
The Goddess stepped at once and spake aloud:

CVIII.

“Thy time is full, thee have I come to save,
As promised in Mycenæ from my shrine;
Men say I in revenge thy life must have,
Because thy father slew with heart malign
The guiltless fawn he knew I loved as mine;
But no! the Goddess must not vengeance pay,
Not death for death can be the law divine,
Though he slay mine, his shall I never slay.

CIX.

“The Gods must not revengeful be to man,
Else they will not escape his penalty;
The Gods must also learn, and learn they can,
To give up hate, and turn to charity,
Whereby alone we Gods are whole and free.
The Greeks shall deem thee dead, with grief beracked,
But sacrifice they shall hereafter see,
And find the richer blessing for thine act.”

CX.

“ But to myself I shall now rescue thee,
I, the mild Goddess dare not take thy blood;
Thee shall I bear away to Barbary,
There in a land remote to do the good,
Anew the offering for a multitude
Vaster than all on earth, to be now found;
The world, all time thy deed will yet include,
Far wilt thou pass beyond the Grecian bound.

CXI.

“ This hour auspicious gales begin to blow,
Helen, the erring one, is to return,
The armament shall crush the Trojan foe
Through deed of thine to-day, which men will burn
To imitate, and from a maiden learn
To offer life for land and family;
With Helen home, thou too wilt homeward turn,
And Greece once saved, is saved again by thee.”

CXII.

The moon has fled with night, and timid rays
Of rosy dawn into the heavens rise;
While in the woods a godlike presence prays,
Soft hymns of triumph float up to the skies,
Bearing aloft a world of harmonies;
The Greeks rush to the fane to hear the word,
The ax unbloody on the altar lies,
The maid is gone, and naught of her is heard.

CXIII.

Astonied they all stand at plan divine,
But see, there is another wonder new:
The fawn that dead was lying at the shrine,
Rose up to sudden life before their view,
And to its perfect strength at once it grew;
Unharm'd through all the gazing crowd it flees,
No stains upon the grass it now doth strew,
And soon from sight is lost amid the trees.

CXIV.

A wave of silent sorrow sways the host,
No heart so dumb but feels the common pain;
They would have spared her death at any cost,
But felt somehow it was her greatest gain
And theirs, to die for them without a stain;
A universal tear doth make them one—
One people now, and ready to be slain;
By that sole maiden's deed it has been done.

CXV.

“This law of deity each man must find,
Sorrow alone can purify the heart,
And make it deeply one with its own kind,
Whereby in all it feels its own keen smart;
Charity then comes and draws the dart,
Compassion cures, yet is the child of pain;
The Gods give first a loss, in loving part,
Whereby to give in turn a greater gain.”

CXVI.

Thus Calchas first that solemn silence broke,
As in deep thought he out the wood did wend,
And to the people round him further spoke:
“ I thought the maiden’s death to be the end
To which the Goddess did her power bend;
But I the priest must learn a lesson late
Through this dear girl, that Gods must not offend
By vengeance, but be themselves compassionate.”

CXVII.

Then Palamedes spoke, the rightful man:
“ I too have learned the lesson of this day,
And a new glimpse have had into the plan
Of Zeus who over all doth bear the sway;
In pride of right I spurned the castaway,
I thought myself so good, her not t’endure;
I change, I go to Troy for Helen, and pray,
For the distained may there I die the pure.”

CXVIII.

All Grecian hearts are beating to one throb,
They are one wave of vast humanity,
With undertone of sigh or secret sob,
That breaks up from that sympathetic sea;
Silent is glory and moral vanity,
Assemblies are not needed, there is heard
An inner voice of last authority,
Which every man obeys without a word.

CXIX.

They go down to the beach in quietude,
The waters rest in calm transparency
Reflecting hill and cloud in peaceful mood;
They go into a thousand ships which lie
Upon the bay beneath the tranquil sky,
They touch the pictured deep with muffled oar,
The silent tear to Hellas says good-bye,
And drops at thought of seeing it no more.

CXX.

Yet with a heavier sorrow they are fraught,
A deeper loss than Helen's fills the host,
Each soul within the fleet has this one thought,
What's Helen saved with Iphigenia lost?
What recompense is greater than the cost?
Unless there be some other restoration
Undreamt by Greek, beauty the uttermost
Will never save itself nor save the nation.

CXXI.

Again the feeling winds begin to blow,
Not now with vengeful whistle of a squall,
But piping a delicious music low
That drives the fleet to its soft tuneful fall,
Whose long melodious beats the oars enthrall,
Yet underneath a note of sweet distress
Sings in the winds, and tunes the souls of all
To tender grief akin to blessedness:

CXXII.

“Oh let us sing our song, our farewell song !
We too, the blasts, are conquered by the maid;
However long we blow, however strong,
We in that harmony of love are laid
To which the Gods serene the world have made ;
Whatever be the time, the clime, the creed,
Be it the king or slave, the due is paid,
For pain, for gain, we blow to man his deed.”



CANTO III.

IPHIGENIA AT TAURIS.

I.

Far in the north imbedded lies a sea,
 Around whose chilly marge the tempests rave,
And lash its forests dark of savagery;
 Upon the dreary shore a lonely cave
 Leans down its ragged mouth to touch the wave,
That sends into the deep recess a moan
 On endless billows, which the lintel lave,
Or swell to kiss the dome of drooping stone.

II.

One narrow heaving path of watery flow
From Hellas leads unto that far-off place,
Whereby a Grecian ship would sometimes go,
And break the silence of the vasty space,
But soon would flee in fear of savage race;
Or if the vessel ran into the grot,
All perished there unseen and left no trace:
This Tauris was, to Greek a fearful spot.

III.

Here was the fane by eldest Titans built,
With pillars dropped from gemmed ceilings down;
Upon its altar human blood was spilt .
Unto an idol there in stony gown,
An ugly idol with a horrid frown,
That loved to see the victim in his gore,
Or watch him in the surges helpless drown;
The Taurian Goddess she who held this shore.

iv.

Within the grot asleep the maiden lay,
Iphigenia, there divinely borne;
She woke and went to seek the radiant day,
But saw dim fog-light on a world forlorn;
The heart dropped in her breast to see that morn,
No columns wrought upheld in joy her soul,
She only saw huge rocks by water worn,
No sunny temple, but a dark, dank hole.

v.

Such was the change from her fair Grecian home,
No trailing vineyard waved within her look,
With leaves and vines that over hillsides roam,
With Bacchus garlanded along the brook,
While maids from trees the golden fruitage shook,
Or did in merry song ripe clusters cull;
No God or Goddess in each sacred nook,
In sun-born shape revealed the Beautiful.

VI.

The Olive, pyramid of fruit and green,
 Rose not, the very tree of Pallas wise;
The sunshine came, but not with the soft sheen
 That glows within the liquid Doric skies,
 And falls on sea and land a Paradise:
No smiling sunlike rays of yellow corn
 Shot up to greet the glad festivities,
And wrapped the earth in endless golden morn.

VII.

The howl was heard of savage roaming beast,
 Above the endless sough of forest drear;
Each preyed on each, from largest to the least,
 The lion in his hunt would straggle near,
 His bloody trail would print the stones with fear;
The falcon in the skies would claw the dove,
 The cruel pard below would tear the deer,
The eagle clove the hare, then soared above.

VIII.

Wild were the beasts, and wilder yet the men;
Of whom a sudden rout sprang out the wood,
And hurried to the fane through tangled fen,
A shaggy fell hung round the body nude,
They howled in savage dance and gesture rude,
While in their midst a prisoner was bound;
Expecting death, he oft in terror stood,
Or oft was fiercely dragged along the ground.

IX.

Yet once from his tormentors he did leap,
And fled away as fleet as any deer,
And sprang into the sea far down a steep;
The maiden looked with sympathetic fear,
To her at once the wretched man grew dear;
She hoped he might escape but he was caught,
Whereat within her eye beat up the tear,
As she on him and on herself too, thought.

x.

Him struggling to that very fane they bore,
A sacrifice to Goddess there to pay,
They saw what they had never seen before,
A maiden put herself within their way;
She bade them not the guiltless captive slay,
But offered them herself instead of him;
Blood ceased to flow on Taurian shrine that day,
And reverence did soften bosoms grim.

xi.

Thoas was there, of all that region king;
He kept his people back by his strong word,
When he beheld the maiden offering;
By her one look his heart was strangely stirred,
Then by her gentle hand he was deterred;
Awe seized him, as in her the Gods above
He saw, and then a deeper note he heard:
The awe divine began to whisper love.

XII.

But she who once was by the Goddess spared,
She must now others save in that same need;
Again she dares what she at Aulis dared,
An offering for her own kind to bleed;
It is the consecration of her deed,
Her sacrifice she will henceforth repeat,
Until it is become her life and creed,
And every day her death she dares to meet.

XIII.

She is to tame to peace those bosoms wild,
And make them lose their mad delight in blood;
It is her task to put her spirit mild
Into the very soil whereon she stood,
And make it bear her image of the good;
When she the fierce barbarian hath won,
Vengeance no more shall be his daily food,
He shall forever do as she hath done.

XIV.

Still longed she for her own dear native land,
The Hellas far away, which had her slain
In its own thought, yet by divine command,
When she at Aulis entered Dian's fane;
But now the long, long years she must remain
Within this distant savage wilderness,
Busy until her time be come again;
Yet could she not the bitter sigh suppress.

XV.

“How heavy o'er me hang these leaden skies!
Oh where is sunshine, where my own fair clime,
And its fair works that everywhere uprise
In splendor on the land and sea sublime!
The song and dance of youths in golden prime,
Labors of men, the sowing of the seed,
The forms of Gods far looking down on Time,
The heroes great and the heroic deed!

XVI.

“It is a gloomy land, a savage brood,
Where I must pass my youthful holiday;
The people know nought of the fair or good,
But from all human feeling turn away,
They kill themselves, and me perchance will slay.
Yet I have now to change them by my life;
Yes, home is here, I feel, and I must stay,
And bring a world of peace out of the strife.

XVII.

“The time has come, another Greece to make
In new-born hope spring from this weary wild;
I shall both for its own and for my sake
Transform it daily to the image mild
Which hath on men from Hellas ever smiled;
I think the Olive may be hither brought,
Though of the sunny skies it be the child,
But surely works of hand may here be wrought.

XVIII.

“The labors of the oxen at the plow
Are first to tame to peace the savage earth;
In brotherhood the horse, and sheep, and cow
Shall gather round the tranquil human hearth,
And even brutes receive their higher worth;
This horrent waste I see rise up before
All others hitherto in a new birth:
Will be what Hellas is, it will be more.”

XIX.

So flashed afar in dreams her shadowy thought:
More than what Hellas hath she will impart
Unto that savage folk; it will be taught
A deeper Beauty and a holier Art,
Which is the inner flow of human heart;
The people will to nobler regions rise;
Her deed, her life become their highest part,
She will endow them with her sacrifice.

xx.

The bound of Barbary she will transcend,
And make all Greek beyond the Grecian pale;
The gentile hate in her will have an end
When her new spirit shall in love prevail,
And free the prisoned world from its own jail;
Old Hellas too, will share her blessing great,
The distant threat she sweeps from hill and dale,
For the Hellenic land she breaks down Fate.

xxi.

And there she stayed for twenty years
With that sole purpose in her sincere breast;
She moved through troubled seas of hopes and fears,
Still on she went in faith with all her zest,
And never failed to think and do the best;
The people came to see her from afar,
They went away with her high soul possessed,
And to her looking up as to their star.

XXII.

The noisome grot she turned to temple fair,
With columns white that stood along the seas,
And saw their limpid beauty imaged there,
With wavy architrave and flowing frieze,
And sculptured shapes of liquid deities;
The ugly idol rose no more to view,
The Taurian shrine no bloody death decrees,
The Goddess is herself transformed too.

XXIII.

With her are all the Gods of Greece transformed
Into fresh founts of mild beatitude,
By a new inner sun their looks are warmed,
Not now the horrid Taurian monster rude,
Whose stony frown was with cold death bedewed,
But sweet Greek Artemis is throned above,
The Goddess who refused the maiden's blood,
And looked beyond Olympus, seat of Jove.

XXIV.

Demeter too, sought in that land a home,
Where she could sow broad-cast her foodful seed,
Which springs on heights or low in valleys loam,
Wherewith she might the teeming millions feed,
And no one in her bounty suffer need;
The cattle grazed on every hill in peace,
Through endless plains of pasture roamed the steed,
The mother Earth gave forth her full increase.

XXV.

And all the land was filled with gardens sweet,
Which Pallas made her favored dwelling place;
Where stood fair boys of bronze that moved their feet,
And steeds of stone that ran the swiftest race,
And tripods moving to and fro with grace;
Within each brazen breast there breathed sweet life,
The fiercest struggle calmed in marble face,
That told the Greek and the Barbarian strife.

XXVI.

The maiden taught the labors of the loom,
In which her own strange life she deftly wove,
Her youth's deep dream, and then her sudden doom;
Her web could tell how the great heroes strove,
Reveal the deed of wrath, the deed of love,
Her Taurian life she did therein unfold,
How it flowed on within the plan of Jove:
In gold and purple threads the tale was told.

XXVII.

She tells anew the Grecian histories,
The mighty gests of great Bellerophon,
Yet coupled with the saddest destinies,
How highest action holds the deepest groan,
And greatness is but suffering alone;
The Hero vanquished monsters of the East,
And made the fair Hellenic world his own,
Then senseless roamed the field as any beast.

XXVIII.

She tells the fairest story of the sea,
Of ship that bore the princely Argonaut;
She lapped the tale in folds of poesy
More rich than all the gold the vessel brought,
Yet with her own deep store of wisdom fraught;
Barbaric minds now build that ship of Greece,
Which newer Colchian treasures further sought,
And bore to their own land the Golden Fleece.

XXIX.

But of the many wondrous tales she told,
The chief was legend of stout Hercules,
The mighty darling of romances old,
Who had to labor through all lands and seas,
Until the earth of his fierce foes he frees;
He drained the bog, the mountain way he rent,
He turned the rivers, felled the forest trees,
Through him this earth was made man's instrument.

xxx.

The wildest beasts, the wildest men he tamed,
When Greece her wilderness began to shed,
And the first law for human dwelling framed;
But when he over every land had sped,
And bravely freed it of its monsters dread,
He must descend to Hades, free it too,
Of its damned dog, which guards the gloomy dead;
Both worlds, above, below he must pass through.

xxxI.

To the Barbarians the myth she sings,
Which they take up and sing in their own tongue
Through all the distant realms of icy kings,
Beside the northern seas, and up among
The frosty blasts, whence Boreas is flung
Upon the South, where scarce the sun will shine;
Deep unknown rivers float the strains there sung,
And bards chant from the Danube to the Rhine.

XXXII.

The Getans of the farthest Dacian plain
Catch up the echo of Hellenic lay,
And warp and weave it in their Gothic strain,
That floats beneath the Hypeborean day,
And wraps itself in misty folds of gray,
Far, far beyond the sunny Ionian skies,
Where now Europa sleeps her time away,
And where in might hereafter she will rise.

XXXIII.

In magic spell of strange barbaric measures
Are hymned those antique fables never trite;
And all the storied world of Grecian treasures
Is richly there inlaid with fancies bright,
That flash and soar in new poetic flight,
Though they still keep their first Hellenic soul;
The ancient germ doth now unfold to light,
And its deep hidden wealth in time unroll.

XXXIV.

A weird spirit entered in the word,
Which danced as if possessed and sparkled round;
And by some harmony most deeply stirred,
It wooed another like itself in sound,
Until the happy pair were linked and bound;
So word would chase another word to kiss,
In many strains of love they locked and wound,
And gave to man a foretaste of his bliss.

XXXV.

Through all that wilderness sang Helen's story,
In sweet melodic concords of the rhyme,
And builded up afresh in ancient glory,
Though now transplanted from its Grecian clime,
And moving to another tune and time;
The very sounds of it were wont to wed,
As winged with Eros, they uprose sublime,
And glowed in raptured flight with passion red.

XXXVI.

It melted to its thrill the wildest heart,
Which felt the honeyed spell of that great love,
And felt the pain, which was its other part,
Sent down on guilty pair from Gods above;
The human deed inside the will of Jove,
With all the strains of noble minstrelsy,
In one vast strand of destiny was wove;
That guilt, to be o'ercome had first to be.

XXXVII.

Far on the air resounds that song of songs,
Through all the spacious realms of Barbary,
It flames the hearts of Bards, who rise in throngs,
To sing that lay of deep fatality,
And then the still more deep recovery;
It is the eternal song which they must sing,
They hymn in it their own true history,
What Time has brought and will forever bring.

XXXVIII.

The lay of Helen far resounded then,
And still resounds afresh through all those lands;
It weaves its magic chain in souls of men,
And holds them tranced in its fine golden bands
Which seem to grow to be life's very strands;
The oldest song and yet the latest too,
It bears the human and divine commands,
True in that elder world and in this new.

XXXIX.

Ah me, could I but catch one straying shred
Of that high strain and fix it in my line,
As it comes floating down to music wed,
I, the barbaric singer, might now shine
And call my sisters all the Muses nine.
But one is born too late, aye, or too soon;
'T is all the same, without the light divine,
To watch at night or go to bed at noon.

XL.

The maiden teaches a yet nobler lay—

It is the lay of Helen's restoration

Through her own sacrifice, upon that day

When she dared offer life for the salvation

Of the lost woman and the lost nation;

Through that high deed was broke the future path

Whereon man travels to his godlike station,

And with him bears the world from its own wrath.

XLI.

And deeper still and warmer flowed the stream,

The tuneful stream of song in pulses great,

Which all the wilds to clear away did seem,

And cleanse the savage heart of all its hate;

It was the song of maiden dedicate

In barbarous Tauris now as once in Greece;

It hymned her life supreme, there consecrate

That world as well as Hellas to release.

XLII.

She shows how each is to regard the other,
Deeper than difference is unity,
The man is to behold in man his brother,
And bind him to himself in kindred tie;
Hers is the golden word of charity,
Which stops the hate of men, the war of nations,
Which melts to one the human family,
And interlinks the future generations.

XLIII.

Many a Grecian man she did there save
From wretched wreck along the rugged coast,
When he had strayed too far upon the wave;
She heard of sack of Troy by Argive host,
And wanderings of Greeks by tempest tossed;
But she was deeply filled with other thought:
Greek or Barbarian, if he were lost,
In one great deed of love to save she sought.

XLIV.

And then she would transform him to her life,
She lights herself into the hearts of all,
Whereby she puts an end to mortal strife
'Tween East and West where stands the Trojan wall,
Which she will take, not by the city's fall,
She will no lands lay waste, no towns destroy,
She give both sides her image magical,
With it she takes, and thereby saves old Troy.

XLV.

Band after band of priestesses she trained,
Whom to the deepest wilderness she sent;
Of hardship, toil, and death they never plained,
They spurned their home and welcomed banishment;
For savage man and child their lives were spent,
To whom they bore the lamp of their great school;
Into the frozen, fiery zone they went,
And burst upon the shore of farthest Thule.

XLVI.

They stood beside the broad Atlantic seas,
Whose waters measureless seemed their last bound;
But soon to land of far Hesperides,
They crossed the wave, where a new world was found,
And they at once began to break the ground;
Through wilder, vaster forests on they went,
O'er mighty rivers, till they made their round,
And spanned with bridge of light a continent.

XLVII.

These women were the greatest conquerors,
Theirs, too, the lasting victory has been,
Though it was never gained in cruel wars,
The bloody cutting sword was not their mean,
They used a brighter weapon and more keen,
Their mind it was by which this deed was done;
They wrapped the earth in zones of mental sheen,
To make the wide world one and keep it one.

XLVIII.

How all that people loved her, called her blest!

Her as a Goddess they would fain adore,
She ever called up in them what was best;
King Thoas was the man who loved her more
Than any other on the Taurian shore;
A noble man, and a yet nobler king,
Of ruler's virtues he possessed the store,
He sought like her to be an offering.

XLIX.

The days roll on, the mighty years roll on,
Devotion in him suffers a slow change,
No longer awe of her religion
He feels, but to a transformation strange
He falls, which doth his life and hers derange;
The king now loves her with a lover's love,
Into his bride he will the priestess change,
And from her maiden destiny will move.

L.

Still she doth long for her far native land,
To her Greek folk she knows she must return,
They are to be made free by her own hand
From Trojan strifes, from Fates and Furies stern;
The Greek in thought has slain her, and must yearn
Her once again in his own world to see;
All Hellas has through her anew to learn
To be transformed as well as Barbary.

LI.

Helen they have restored with mighty arm;
A deeper restoration must be won,
Which Iphigenia brings without a harm;
She teaches them to do what she has done,
Her double sacrifice they must not shun,
The vengeful must to helpful heart be turned,
Then is Greek wrong to her for aye undone,
Her image is into their bosoms burned.

LII.

In royal suit she day by day is pressed,
Which she must meet by craft, a trial new
That bears the deepest discord in her breast;
Her heart by double duty cut in two
She feels; to Truth the first she must be true,
Yet to her mission true; if she deceive
The King, it will her very life undo,
Yet her last destiny she cannot leave.

LIII.

Suspicion darkly broods in high-born breast,
The King begins to change his confidence;
The burden of his heart gives him no rest,
In every act of hers he sees offence,
Even her good he notes as insolence,
The savage, long suppressed, begins to burn,
To cruel thoughts are changed his new intents,
To ancient Taurian times he will return.

LIV.

One day he sends his trusty messenger,
Demanding answer to be brought forthright;
Again she seeks her pretext to defer,
And turns her step to hasten out of sight
Into the fane, when suddenly in might
The King appears, and wrathful to her speaks;
As if he had a battle there to fight,
His eyes flash vengeance which the savage wreaks:

LV.

“Thy subtle Grecian craft will do no good,
Thy answer on the morrow I must have;
For thee I stopped the flow of human blood,
I from the gory altar did thee save
When savages did fiercely round thee rave,
I made thee greatest power in my state,
Thy power through the world I to thee gave:
But now I feel my love turn into hate.

LVI.

“The wild man’s heart once more begins to rise,
My deadly foe shall be again the Greek,
Vengeance comes back, within I hear its cries
To rash its claws into thy visage meek;
Thy labors to undo is what I seek,
Ingratitude I shall re-pay to thee,
A maddened savage I revenge shall weak,
This altar’s victim now thou art to be.”

LVII.

In rage he turns away, she doth appeal
Once more unto the Goddess at her shrine:
“High Virgin, thou who didst in light reveal
Thyself to me, and take me to be thine,
Didst make thy very ministry be mine,
And promise me return to my dear land,
Me, fragile bearèr of thy plan divine,
Oh help me execute thy high command.

LXIII.

“Like Helen let me not from thee be taken,
Whose lot Dardanian now threatens me;
Must I from thee, Protectress, turn forsaken,
To Aphrodite given o'er, to be
In foreign land held in captivity?
Another Trojan war, yet far more dread,
More stained with Grecian blood I can foresee,
And in that war I shall return, but dead.

LIX.

“Thou Goddess chaste, to thine own love enthrall
This noble man's still savage love, I pray,
Which seeks me for itself and not for all,
Immortal thou beam out my mortal clay,
That he through passion rise to thy clear day.
Be not barbaric Tauris doomed like Troy,
Let not good Thoas cast his gain away,
And by enslaving me himself destroy.”

LX.

While thus she prayed, far out at sea a ship
Was seen to struggle through the plunging wave;
Deep in the watery chasm it would dip,
Then from the top of highest surge it drave,
Till scarce its keel the madding floods could lave;
Again would sink and almost disappear,
Then rise and rear in air from its wet grave,
While ever to the land it drew anear.

LXI.

In steady strife with that wild element
The oarsmen long had beat the sullen brine;
But now they many feverish glances sent
To see what on the shore might give a sign;
They saw around them rise a walled line
Of sea-smit rock on which they read their doubt;
Oft had they heard it was a land malign,
Still pulled they on, and dared with bosoms stout.

LXII.

From far-off Hellas they had hither come;
They took to ship at Aulis, in the bay
Where many years ago a troubled hum
Of men would o'er the waters aimless stray;
But this ship northward cut its lonely way,
And passed Olympus lofty on the left,
Where happy Gods dwell in eternal day,
And of the song and feast are never reft.

LXIII.

The ship threads narrow Hellespont,
Darts through the jaws of fierce Symplegades,
Where only Jove's swift-flying dove is wont
To pass, when borne on strong Olympian breeze;
The ship broke into solitary seas
Which were begirt with distant unknown world;
The bonded Euxine felt a strange release,
And with new life its ancient billows whirled.

LXIV.

Two Grecian Youths were sitting on the deck,
The one did seem to guide the ship in thought,
His face was graven with a fearful wreck,
And showed deep netted storm-lines interwrought
Into his life, which the rough days had brought,
The other let no glance turn from his mate,
Affection overflowed his eyes, yet fraught
With wearied sorrow, watching long and late.

LXV.

One Orestes was, slayer of his mother,
Whom Furies had at home pursued to rend;
Pylades, soul sympathetic, was the other,
He was the Grecian Hero, but as friend,
Whose heart, not guilt or glory, did him send
Along with Agamemnon's wretched son,
Until the frenzied mind might haply mend,
Or of this life the frantic trip be done.

LXVI.

Upon them lay a stern divine command,
The Delphic God bade them the sister find,
And said she was detained in barbarous land
At Tauris, where she kept her fervent mind
To be restored to her own Grecian kind.
Apollo's sister Artemis they thought,
To the wise God's deep meaning they were blind,
But clearest truth from error dark is wrought.

LXVII.

Far had they sailed, and still must onward sail;
Where Tauris was, they did not fully know,
They kept by faith along an unseen trail,
Until the chilly blast began to blow;
The sailors murmured, would no further go,
Worn by the seas, they ran into the shore,
Although they should be eaten by the foe,
They laid down in the sand and quit the oar.

LXVIII.

Not far away a spring flowed down a hill,
And peacefully did mingle with the wave;
It was a soft, yet merry buoyant rill,
Which had a speech as if the stones would lave,
And e'en of music it would sing a stave,
Then fade away into a bubbling noise;
A word in fond low tone it often gave,
Then in the flow of waters lost its voice.

LXIX.

It was of loving Nymphs the favored spot,
Who the worn stranger with a balm receive,
And soon refresh him in their shady grot,
Or in the brook their bosoms to him heave,
Or sing a strain to which his soul will cleave;
To follow up the hill they lure their guest,
And with soft notes his footsteps interweave,
Strike snatches sweet when he sits down to rest.

LXX.

Both youths went up the brook to fields of grain,
A garden vast they saw from the high hill,
The island hamlets flecked the sun-gilt plain,
In seas of verdure herds were lying still,
Or cropped lush grass, or stood within the rill,
The yellow grain waved into red-barred skies,
Which sent around the world a tender trill,
As playing music of that Paradise.

LXXI.

Not far away a noble temple stood,
Which seemed the shining center whence did ray
All of those glories of sweet plenitude;
They had to follow but the nearest way
To come to where the sunny structure lay;
They entered it, the landscape's very heart,
To the divinity therein to pray,
If it might be appeased to take their part.

LXXII.

And there within uprose a sacred shrine,
Near which the priestess stood with kindly glance;
She seemed to shed on all a hope divine,
Which would the shyest shrinking heart perchance
Embolden to its prayer to advance.
But hark! she speaks true tones of honeyed Greek,
Bids them be now at home, and gently grants
Their dumb request to tell what here they seek.

LXXIII.

They answer liquid notes, how sweet the sound!
She heard again her dear Hellenic speech;
Her home, her youthful days, her faith she found
When she in words heart-born her thoughts could
reach,
And could without barbaric discord teach
What with her eye, what with her soul she saw,
And in the purest mother tongue beseech
The Gods, without a stammer or a flaw.

LXXIV.

But a still deeper music struck a note,
Which tuned the priestess' soul unto one thought:
"I cannot tell what makes my fancies float
Far back to childish things which once I sought.
What hidden spirit hath upon me wrought,
That I to this sad youth should feel so near?
Some destiny hath him unto me brought;
Him I must ask about my father dear."

LXXV.

She spake to him of Agamemnon then,
Foreboding by her soul's own magic spell
That this young man knew of the King of men,
And could her father's latest story tell;
That same deep feeling did the youth compel,
That he her heart within his own caressed;
But now her speech dropped on him like a knell,
Yet he replied thereto with soul suppressed:

LXXVI.

“The mighty leader felled the town of Troy,
Then safely home into Mycenae came,
And there his spouse conspired him to destroy;
She said that he at Aulis was to blame
That her own daughter bled like beastly game;
The wife her husband hacked from limb to limb,
She would blot out in blood his very name:
As he her daughter slew, so slew she him.

LXXVII.

“Years passed away, but vengeance was not stayed;
The son Orestes up to manhood grew,
On him the Gods their heavy duty laid,
The slayer of his father next he slew,
The murderess who was his mother too;
Justice it was and the divine command,
She did receive but what was her own due,
So Clytemnestra fell by her son's hand.”

LXXVIII.

The priestess softened doomful words in tears:

“Oh curse of Hellas, horror to the sight!

A land of sighs which deepen with the years,

Where vengeance fiercely reigns and man's despite,

The kindly human eye is put out quite;

Nor yet is broke that fatal chain of wrongs;

Revenge begets revenge—somewhere in night

The Furies dog Orestes now in throngs.”

LXXIX.

Therewith the youth in speech convulsive shook:

“See where they come and fling their snaky hair

At me; with burning demon eyes they look

Into my heart and what lies hidden there;

They slime the temple's threshold—now they stare—

Keep off, keep off, I see the clotted stain;

I did the deed and would again it dare,

I slew her in revenge for father slain.”

LXXX.

His eyes turned inward while his body broke,
He coiled low down into a speechless fit;
Sad Pylades in tender heart throbs spoke:
"Again by his own reptile he is bit,
Not soon, I fear, the spell will intermit;
He is Orestes, same of whom he told,
He tries to hide, but ne'er hath hidden it,
His strong attempt doth but his guilt unfold.

LXXXI.

"He often lapsed before in such a swoon,
When I went with him everywhere as friend;
His cure were now for me the greatest boon,
Still I shall with him go unto the end,
From beast and man and from himself defend;
When the wild fit comes on, he raves and shrieks
At the Erinyes, whose serpents send
The maddening hiss which vengeance wreaks.

LXXXII.

“Much have we roamed the world in search of cure,
All Greece we have gone through, no help we found;
We sought afar the high-hilled fountains pure
Of healing Nymphs who babble from the ground,
And Aesculapius who mends each wound;
All, all in vain; till now my hope was fair,
While he came hither every hour was sound,
To him returns disease, to me despair.”

LXXXIII.

The priestess quick in thought to him replied:
“Revenge he takes, revenge him then pursues;
That house of Tantalus which hath defied
The Gods, is his; that house would ever choose
Its own curse first, its blessing would refuse,
In its own ruin than all foes more strong;
No heir of it forgives his bloody dues,
And stops the stream of wrong begetting wrong.

LXXXIV.

“From father to the son descends the curse,
The son gives it anew unto his child,
And with each gory deed it groweth worse,
Till human hearts which Help should render mild,
Barbaric passion fills with rancor wild;
The time is come to make the great release
From vengeance which hath all our land defiled;
Orestes cure is too the cure for Greece.”

LXXXV.

Good Pylades in wonder stared, then said:
“The Grecian Gods for us are powerless;
When our worn footsteps had to Delphi led,
Apollo his own weakness did confess;
The God declared we must ourselves address
To one who lived in barbarous land, not him;
But what he meant by that, we could not guess;
We asked again, he spake new riddles dim:

LXXXVI.

“Bring back from Taurian shore *thy* sister dear,
Whose image there in starry sheen doth rise
Along the Northern seas, where thou must steer;
It is a sacred image, from the skies
It fell on Tauris with blest auguries;
That land was then a dark and savage land,
She let my sunshine in, now bright it lies,
And merciful will give a helping hand.

LXXXVII.

“Bring back *my* sister thence, who did not take
At Aulis once the dark avenging blood;
Who ancient cruel rites of Goddess brake,
When guiltless maiden at her altar stood,
And sacrifice became the doing good;
Then will Orestes be forever healed,
But he by Furies must be still pursued,
Until to Hellas whole she be revealed.’”

LXXXVIII.

The priestess saw at once the God's intent,
His double word to her was one, and clear;
She spake in tones of mild admonishment:
"Blame not the God before thou rightly hear,
Thy mortal speech is not the speech of Seer
Or God, which thou wilt never understand
Until thou see it double, far and near,
See future and the past knit in one strand.

LXXXIX.

"I tell thee now what wise Apollo meant,
When he from inmost shrine his riddles read:
I am Orestes' sister, he is sent
To bring me back to those who think me dead;
My blood was not upon the altar shed,
By the God's sister I was saved and brought
To Tauris here, amid Barbarians dread,
Whom fair Humanity we both have taught.

CX.

“The sisters twain of whom the God hath spoken
Are we – the mortal and immortal dwell
Together in a life of deeds unbroken;
I am the priestess who in word can tell
The speechless thought the Goddess doth indwell;
'Tis I who shall return, the image bear
Of her who venges not, but will dispel
The hate which Furies nurse into despair.”

XCI.

Not yet was lost the lisp of her last word,
Orestes woke, and to his feet arose,
That final healing speech of hers he heard
In trance, which was the end of all his woes,
To a sweet rest were soothed convulsive throes;
The new man from his healthy eyes now beams,
As he up to the holy priestess goes,
And to her speaks fulfillment of her dreams:

XCII.

“Thou art my long-dead sister, now I know,
What I at first but felt dim in my heart;
With me thy lot it is to Greece to go,
And there to thine own land thyself impart,
Draw from its raging breast the venom'd dart,
For it is truly mad, as I was mad,
With hot revenge; it must be what thou art,
Be cured like me of having what I had.

XCIII.

“I saw the Furies flee to their dark cave,
I heard the clashing door behind them close,
Within the earth's stone bowels let them rave,
And smite her granit bosom with their blows,
For I am free forever of their woes;
Thy word, thy healing word, hath done it all,
Hath put to sudden flight my fiercest foes,
And me from frenzy back to life doth call.

XCIV.

“Not stony idol set in fane, I see,
Can be the image of the Goddess true,
She hath another higher ministry,
Thou art her holy image, brought to view
In deeds of life, and every day anew;
Thou dost her worthy form divine reveal
In freshest bloom of living human hue,
And poor mankind in helpfulness dost heal.

XCV.

“Apollo’s sister I shall with me take,
And with the Goddess mine own sister too,
Both for my sake and for my people’s sake;
As she hath done, are they henceforth to do,
Yea, she must all men with her deed endue;
It is her deed that us of evil rids,
The Fates shall fly from her as Furies flew,
She brings to end the curse of Tantalids.”

XCVI.

While thus they talk, another raving man
 With violence into their presence breaks;
A fit of madness shrieks from visage wan,
 Fierce grimaces and gestures wild he makes,
 Each limb, each muscle in his body shakes;
Thoas it is, already mad with love;
 But when he sees the Greeks, anew he quakes
For jealousy, and frights the holy grove:

XCVII.

“Woman, Fury, thou art my greatest curse!
 Thou owest me thy life and influence,
Thy purpose newly planted I did nurse,
 I saved thee from the hand of insolence,
 I calmed to hope thy fleeing, frightended sense,
I gave thee love, I gave this kingly heart;
 Now I am scorned by thee, reap but offence,
And my kind breast is pierced by thy fell dart.

xcviii.

“Traitor, ingrate, incapable of love,
False to thy doctrine, in thyself untrue,
My good thou dost requite with wrong above
What demons dare; I know what I shall do,
For I see other knavish Greeks here too—
Thy lovers, come to carry thee away;
On ancient Taurian altar, all of you,
I shall as pious debt long due, now slay.”

ic.

The priestess caught his eye and touched his arm,
Which, soon unnerved, writhed slowly to his side,
As if held itself from doing harm;
His savage lips did quiver, but not chide,
Her gentleness o'erwhelmed him in its tide:
“Oh Thoas, friend—what hast thou done almost?
A storm thy years of good doth override,
And oh, methought I saw thee in it lost.

c.

“Thy dark reproach I merit not, oh King;
Far more than all thee have I loved and thine,
For thee I have been here an offering,
My days I have all given at thy shrine,
My youthful days which will no more be mine;
If not my body, to thee my soul I give,
That is my dearest boon, my part divine,
By which I hope thou mayst forever live.

ci.

“To mine own hapless land I am now called,
To Hellas which me once did immolate,
Whereby to-day it is to guilt enthralled;
Barbarian thou hast rescued me from fate,
And thou must rescue too the Grecian State,
If I to thee have taught my highest worth;
Thou wilt anew the priestess dedicate,
Restoring her to country of her birth.

CII.

“If thou dost truly love and honor me,
Thou wilt surrender me to blessedness;
If what I am, in truth possesses thee,
Thou wilt pass by thy right, thy sharp distress,
And thine own sacrifice alone wilt press;
By keeping me, thou hast me not indeed,
By sending me, thou hast me none the less,
This is to thee my last, my highest need.

CIII.

“If I may not my native land restore,
The spirit cries, I shall myself not save;
If thou detain me on the Taurian shore,
Thy liberator me thou wilt enslave,
And thou no liberty thyself wilt have;
It is my time to go, my time just now,
As long as the Greek brother is a slave,
I am not free myself—not free art thou.

civ.

“No family is mine, another law
Hath claimed me with its strong behest;
No babe with rosy lips will ever draw
Its life out of the fountain of my breast,
Or lisp to me of names the tenderest;
Of Nature's loss I have to bear the pain,
And rise upon it into duty blest;
Another motherhood is there my gain.”

cv.

Barbarian Thoas drops the ruthless tear,
He has received her final blessing too,
In giving up what is to him most dear;
Yet he will keep of her what is the true,
His hasty deed in penitence undo,
Whereby in him the last dark savage strand
Is struck from Nature, and his spirit new
Begs now to bear her to her own dear land.

CVI.

And many barbarous peoples thither flock
From lands whereof no Greek hath yet a notion,
From East and West, from North new Teuton stock;
Round her they roll and rage in grand commotion,
Yet in her find their soul's most sweet devotion;
They come, they come from farthest bleakest Thule,
Where her fair temples bind the edge of Ocean,
E'en from Atlantis where no King hath rule.

CVII.

Europa's children seize the fleeting chance,
To bring her home and to perfect their deed;
For they will hers and their own worth enhance,
When they have to the full re-paid her meed,
And in their fealty are ripe to bleed;
When placed again upon her ancient seat,
She too hath won herself, is truly freed,
And they, completing her, themselves complete.

CVIII.

More ships at Tauris now are brought together
Than in the olden time to Aulis came,
They had no stress of winds, had no foul weather;
A greater act, to be of greater fame,
Than hath been yet bound up with Helen's name;
And the new Gods send gales, not to take Troy,
Not to avenge in hate a woman's shame,
Their will is to redeem, not to letroy.

CIX.

So act these men in noble gratitude
To her who gave to them what was their best,
Who changed the jungled earth, the savage rude,
Into a land and people that were blest,
Obeying human law and God's behest;
But now the last and greatest deed is done,
Return to Hellas is the final test
Whereby Greek and Barbarian are one.

CX.

Orestes, the mad Greek, his cure has found,
The vengeful Furies him no more pursue;
Thoas, the wild Barbarian, is now sound,
His jealous wrath is chastened into rue;
Both men are healed, begin their life anew,
Their hateful limit they will both erase,
Both feel their oneness, have one thing to do,
Both sink down at her feet, and there embrace.



CANTO IV.

IPHIGENIA AT DELPHI.

I.

A round, around we circle hand in hand,
We rule this Lower World, the Gods we rule,
We tie up Time itself within our band,
The human Will is but our tiny tool,
The man who fights against is the fool,
In our vast rim of fierce barbaric powers
This little Greece we bind and press and pull;
The man, the land, the God, e'en Zeus are ours."

II.

So sang the Fates, while they kept wheeling round
In ever-closing curves the Delphic fane,
In wrath they beat the air, they smote the ground,
Then tightly shut their triple grip again
To rhythm of a wild tyrannic strain;
Blent in their song were heard the Furies too,
Who screamed afar in vengeful sharp refrain
What they had done, and what they still would do.

III.

“We leave rude Tauris and to Delphi go,
With triple Fates, we triple share control,
And with them we one life in twain bestow,
The outer world of man is theirs, the whole,
His inner world is ours, we rule the soul
Within the state of Greece, within the Greek;
From them, the Fates, the guilty deed shall roll,
From us, the Furies, comes revenge to wreak.

IV.

The strain arose from Delphic lands high-hilled,
And flowed adown the slopes unto the dale,
The vineyards and the olive-groves it filled
Where men and women echoed all the tale
In far-heard notes that swung from height to vale,
They sang it at their work and at their feast,
They hymned it to the beat of threshing flail,
And felt its awe from highest to the least.

V.

From the Parnassian tops, where Muses played,
Was floating over land and sea the lay
Of Fates and Furies to a world dismayed;
It bubbled out of bright Castralia,
And dimmed her lucent rill on all its way;
The Oracle could speak no other word
Unto the multitude who came to pray,
And all their hearts were with it deeply stirred.

VI.

Oh rocky Pytho, the one soul thou art
Of this wide Grecian land and of the time;
Thou sendest thine own breath to every part,
To touch the hidden chords of this fair clime,
Whose thrill sets all the earth to thy deep chime;
From out thy mountain breast deep-cleft in twain,
Speaks prophecy with freshest voice of prime,
And furthest Hellas hears the sacred strain.

VII.

Yet many years had Delphi lain untrod
By heroes who were in the Trojan war;
But now to land and family and God
They had returned in spite of adverse star,
And leaped the human and celestial bar;
Again they gathered at the Delphic call,
Which they had heard resounding near and far,
To come and hold a mighty festival.

VIII.

Those Grecian men were fain their grand return
In that most sacred town to celebrate;
They had no more in foreign land to yearn
For wife and home, or haply to await
On bloody bridge of war the blow of fate;
A day of joy, yet not without a tear,
For each had lost what Time could never mate;
Again heroic shapes from Troy drew near.

IX.

The first was Nestor, aged man and wise,
Whose snowy beard would brush the Delphic shrine,
As he unto the God gave sacrifice;
In burning Troy he saw the strifeful sign,
And homeward fled at once across the brine;
That city's fall was for his glance the end,
He would not further probe the ways divine,
The will of Gods he sought not to transcend.

x.

Next Spartan Menelaus thither came,
Who wandered long, yet reached at last his home,
With Helen still his wife, but all men's fame;
Far, far into the East he had to roam,
And cut a path unknown through through salty foam;
When he the wiles of Proteus had outdone,
And through old Egypt's mystic stream had swom,
He caught beneath all changing forms the One.

xi.

Ulysses, too, at Delphi now appears,
Though his return was farthest of them all,
He fought and wandered homeward twenty years,
He saw strange lands and beings magical,
With giants strove, who sought him to enthrall,
He passed the Underworld of ghostly forms,
Where all the shades gave answer to his call,
Then back to home on earth outrode the storms.

XII.

He was the man who pried below, above;
The dear Unknown he made his daily guest,
With the Impossible he was in love,
Beyond the ken of men he took his test;
With bold emprise he plunged into the West,
Whose far domains he first of mortals trods,
Yet on the bound of worlds he cannot rest,
He seeks to burst the limits of the Gods.

XIII.

Oh Chian voice, could I to mine but tell
As thou to thine his wondrous tale hast told,
Again would flow the deep Pierian well
In which are seen the ages to unfold;
All Time would move as I my leaves unrolled,
And out my lines would step the man to-day,
Who to my music would the world uphold:
But stop—mine is another tale—away.

XIV.

With him his wife had come, Penelope,
Hers was the steadfast heart, most loyal, true:
Yet prudence joined she to fidelity,
She kept her husband's home and country too,
Whereby he ever could return anew;
Well she deserved with him the equal part
Of honor now to the most honored due—
The wisest head had paired the truest heart.

XV.

So gathered round the fane the heroes great,
Now old and full of silent suffering,
To hear the past, their deeds to celebrate,
Some little joy into their lives to bring,
And dull awhile the point of sorrow's sting;
Their days were full of deep-remembered pain
Though they had taken Troy and slain its king,
And had returned to land and home again.

XVI.

And e'en the Delphic God was one of those
Who out the East to Hellas had returned;
Apollo smote in Troy the Greeks as foes,
The God had not the trend of Time discerned,
Yet through his error he his wisdom learned,
He, though a God, transformed his vast mistake,
Whereby he had a new devotion earned,
Him, wisest God, the Greeks not will forsake.

XVII.

Fair maidens soon attuned the merry song,
And interwove sweet sounds into the dance,
While in their steps the Graces tripped along,
At whose dear shapes the eye falls in a trance,
And to a music seen is blent each glance;
A stream of mounted youths then overfills
The wavy slopes that keep the war-steeds prance,
Far the procession tosses mid the hills.

XVIII.

Soft flutes and frantic timbrels mingle joy,
And fling on breathing air life's anodyne;
Where now have vanished all the ills of Troy?
Ah, woe the word! what darker, deeper line
That in the joyful strain doth intertwine!
Of Fates and Furies still breaks out the hymn,
To jar the song around the fane divine,
While o'er the Graces hover goblins grim.

XIX.

"Forget us not, we too are in the song,
Within each Grecian voice and soul we dwell;
We circle round about each Grecian throng,
On all the heavy world we cast our spell,
And Time the echo is of what we tell.
Hist, Hist! A foe we scent on Delphic air,
Low-sounding up the vale we hear a knell,
A stranger draweth near, beware, beware."

XX.

The joyous festival had well begun,
When lo! a dame moves round the hiding hill,
And enters Delphi in the morning sun;
She walks up to the clear Castalian rill,
And drinks of it and hears its sweetest trill ;
She turns to pass into the town above,
But first in a deep glance she standeth still,
Then slowly moves into the sacred grove.

XXI.

Who is the lady of the look unknown ?
Iphigenia—she without delay
From port of Aulis had set out alone,
Where she had landed only yesterday,
And where again a thousand vessels lay,
Tall ships barbarian, which there did bring
Her with Orestes o'er the watery way ;
The leader Thoas was, the Taurian King.

XXII.

Her name none knew, or how she came, or when;
Nor made she haste her lineage to say,
She fitted through the surging crowds of men,
From every side she heard the bodeful lay
Of Fates and Furies pierce the holiday;
In every deed entwined their lurid song,
Which shot dark threads through colors bright and gay,
Yet had their counterpart in all the throng.

XXIII.

Her sorrow throbbed when she that song had heard
Tinge with its discord all the Delphic dale,
Nor could she to herself suppress the word:
"I see at home these monsters still prevail
Which once I saw far Barbary assail;
But there they are put down and sway no more;
My Hellas hath beneath its joy a wail,
It is not what it seemed to me before.

XXIV.

“I hear but of the vengeful sack of Troy,
The many men and women slaved or slain;
The spirit everywhere is to destroy,
Such deeds, I know leave tinct in man their grain,
What he hath done, comes back to him again,
The city burnt a wraith of vengeance hath
Which in the victor's heart will cleave amain,
And him will smite in turn with his own wrath.

XXV.

“I see that in my land I have again to do
What I at Tauris with the years have done,
To give my spirit's offering anew,
Change vengeful father to the gentle son;
Another Troy must on this soil be won,
Not by fierce arms or furious conflagration,
All Troy, the East and West, must be made one
In helpful deed with the Hellenic nation.”

XXVI.

So moved the woman lone among the Greeks,
By men unrecognized in her own land;
To learn the story of the time she seeks,
From all she hears of Agamemnon's band,
The mighty deed done on the Trojan strand,
The valor bursting red in streams of blood;
She feels the war-beat to a fever fanned,
As round each singer men admiring stood.

XXVII.

But soon she caught the fragment of a strain
That waved the air more mellow than the rest,
And as she neared the spot, it swelled again,
And sounded, as it sweetly rose, more blest;
She stood and looked from a small hilly crest
Above the shoulders of the listening crowd;
She saw an ancient bard, from whose deep breast
The tender notes were welling clear and loud.

XXVIII.

It was the bard who in Mycenae sang
 Long since when she was but a little maid;
His deep bass-voice had now a melting pang,
 Round his great thoughts the nimble fancies played,
As his white beard on toying breezes strayed;
His winged words agleam would flit the air,
 Like long thin cloudlets through the welkin frayed,
Was wirled in passing wind his blanchéd hair.

XXIX.

Thus looked and sang that bard Meonides,
 Who hymned so well the famous Trojan wo,
Who knew fatality in all degrees,
 As it was stamped on men long, long ago;
Like him, this singer too had felt the blow
Of deep-dispensing Gods, for he was blind;
 Yet deeper, purer was the inner flow,
As he the world more clearly saw in mind.

xxx.

She slid into the crowd and heard the song;
It sang the wrath which stirred Achilles dread,
When he rose up against a Grecian wrong,
Done by the King who was the Army's head,
That wrongful King, it was her father dead;
The Ruler and the Hero caused the strife,
Whereby not they, but their true people bled,
And many a gallant chieftain lost his life.

xxxI.

Ah, fateful, furious was that song of wrath,
The words of blood poured out the deeds of blood!
But a far deeper note the singer hath,
Which sang Achilles imaging the good,
Forgiving to his foes in tender mood;
The Hero true she saw in him arise,
Not by the cruel deed, but brotherhood;
It was the image of her sacrifice.

XXXII.

Great was her joy, when in her low disguise
She heard her act wind through the Hero's lot,
How he to vision of her life did rise,
Though oftentimes she was by him forgot,
And he in mad revenge would slay and plot;
Still he would soon bethink himself again,
The Leader he forgave, and then would not
Slay Priam old for dear Patroclus slain.

XXXIII.

The singer struck a newer, sadder strain,
The piteous tale of Agamemnon's fate,
How he at home by his own wife was slain,
How she her hearth with lust did desecrate;
That story on the daughter's heart-strings ate,
Of her own mother and her father sung
To all assembled Greeks, both small and great;
Her lips turned pale and down her head she hung:

XXXIV.

“Ye Gods! the mighty Leader of the Greeks
Is butchered like an ox within its stall!
Return to home he hath not, which he seeks;
Instead of it he finds his funeral,
Just as he steps into his palace hall;
Return is not for him from Trojan strife,
Revenge, not Love, sits on Mycenae’s wall,
With broken vows that lap the blood of life.

XXXV.

“Oh mother, mother, what a great mistake
For thee and me thy vengeful lesson was;
Thou boldly slewest husband for my sake,
And yet I was not dead, thou hadst no cause
To overturn the deity’s last laws;
Thus err we, when we take into our hands
The justice, which the Gods without our flaws,
In foresight far, dispense to men and lands.”

XXXVI.

More deeply still sobbed Agamemnon's daughter:

“Then such am I, and of such parents born,
Of parents' parents slain in kindred slaughter!
Methinks till now I never felt forlorn;
Oh might I never see to-morrow morn!
Can I now change ancestral bloody strands,
Release from Furies' fang the bosom torn,
Oh can I whiten still these gory hands!”

XXXVII.

The bard began a milder lay to sing,
Which soothed with tender notes her hapless pain,
It was the lay of her own offering
At Aulis by the sea, where she was slain,
Yet saved, that she might do her deed again;
Lost Helen's restoration there she earned,
And freedom gave to clear the guilty stain;
Through her deed, too, the Greek has now returned.

XXXVIII.

The song's deep solace bore her in its flood,
She felt that she had stemmed her house's guilt,
And stanch'd the ever-flowing stream of blood,
Which, in the time of old Thyestes spilt,
Had stained each kindred sword from point to hilt;
But yet more deeply ran the tuneful word:
A new Greek world, by her to be re-built,
Had to prophetic strain the bard now stirred:

XXXIX.

"I yet shall touch her with this aged hand,
For I have heard in truth she is not dead,
But is still living in a far-off land,
And she on Dian's altar never bled,
But by the Goddess she away was led,
Until the strifeful Trojan time be past,
And Helen be to home returned who fled;
Then will she too return to Greece, the last.

XL.

“This last return will be the greatest, best;
To end of Time she will in Hellas stay,
I have deep faith it is the God's behest,
That she no longer shall remain away,
Who gave herself for all upon that day;
And some great blessing she will with her bring,
When to Apollo's fane she comes to pray,
And bears anew to us her offering.”

XLI.

“She cannot long be absent from us still,
I feel the very point of time draw near,
When she in coming home, will all fulfil,
And in this Delphic seat she will appear,
Led by the love of her own people dear;
All have returned but her, e'en the lost wife,
Methinks that she already must be here,
This day, this spot is telling of her life.”

XLII.

She listened to her piteous fate, but kept
 Within distressful heart the bursting sigh;
Yet inwardly at her own tale she wept,
 A lonely tear would wander to her eye,
 The silent herald of her sympathy.
She seemed to think it was another's lot,
 When she beheld the maid at Aulis die,
That she the sufferer was she quite forgot.

XLIII.

Oh woman, woman! oh thou image truest
 Which sorrow moulds through its long painful stress;
Only to be compassionate thou knewest,
 Thou didst not know it was thine own distress
 That touched thy soul of self-forgetfulness;
On thee comes back thy pity's overflow,
 Which always through another must thee bless,
E'en that thou art not dead, thou scarce dost know.

XLIV.

Yet one dark mystery she could not break,
She saw that she a guilt untold had brought
On one who was mistaken for her sake;
Her death to quit the darkest crime was wrought,
That crime was done but for a phantom thought;
For her she saw a father slain, a mother stained,
Fate seemed at last to have her life-thread caught,
In voiceless woe unto herself she plained:

XLV.

“Of being’s source to be the enemy,
The vengeful child to be, though innocent,
Who whelms both parents to fatality,
It wraps the Gods in deep bewilderment.
Oh why have I been darkly hither sent?
It is the Fates who turn on me their power;
To their decree I shall at last be bent,
They come, and I must yield—it is their hour.”

XLVI.

“I too must be a link of that long chain
Which hangs from Tantalus, and ever will;
To slay mine own and by them to be slain,
Is the last law which I must too fulfil.
—No, no; 'tis madness; I shall conquer still,
Transform my birth into a source of good,
I destiny shall weave into my will,
And guilt of Tantalids cleanse from my blood.”

XLVII.

Meanwhile the crowd rushed to the wall to gaze
Far down the slope, beyond the Delphic dale,
Till where the soft Corinthian bosom sways
On gentle throbbing waves the nodding sail,
Or heaves on high the reeling bark more frail;
The silvery sparkle snaps into the view,
Or flashes out a momentary trail,
Then vanishes into the billows blue.

XLVIII.

Above those azure pulses of the deep,
Uprearing from the valley rose a train,
It slowly curled about the mountain steep
Through pointed rocks athwart its pathway lain;
At times it seemed to grapple might and main,
As if in mortal wrestle with the way,
Which showed a fierce resistance, but in vain;
The line kept creeping up, and made no stay.

II.

When it at last had reached the Delphic gate,
It seemed to turn upon itself and think,
As if it for a time did hesitate,
Standing alone with doubt on some deep brink,
Which for a moment made the courage sink;
It would not enter in the sacred wall,
Smit by some sudden scruple it did shrink,
Or fear again a hidden guilt or fall.

L.

But yielding soon it came into the town,
For many voices shouted strong request,
It marched in still procession up and down,
All flocked to see who was the novel guest,
They marked one shape far more than all the rest,
The dame with penitential, broken eye,
Which told the sorrowing tale of years unblest;
She never would look up as she passed by.

LI.

It Helen was, who had from Troy returned,
Once more in her old Spartan home she dwelt,
The deepest lesson of the world had learned,
The sharpest pang of human life had felt,
The fiercest blow to her own land had dealt,
And to her spouse, though he had all forgiven;
To him she hurried and beside him knelt,
And looked up in his face with rue heart-riven.

LII.

The heroes, too, could not restrain the tear
At such great beauty to such sorrow bound;
They wept for her, their image still most dear,
And for themselves, who such distress had found,
And left so many friends cold in Troy's ground;
Fell Memory shot deep into the heart
The look of brothers slain, or starved, or drowned,
And in themselves they felt the deathly dart.

LIII.

The mighty multitude of people wept,
It would have broken up the festival,
If fairest Helen had not forward stepped,
And gave her drug which men Nepenthe call;
At once it soothed the sorrows of them all,
At her sweet word they soon forgot their pain,
In her they saw the rise out of the fall,
Great was the loss, but greater still the gain.

LIV.

The tender lines of hidden suffering
Wove all their saddest story through her face,
But o'er them other lines would greatly cling,
Which would the sharp, remorseful thought erase,
And softly write forgiveness there and grace;
So could she quench the very grief she made,
Though trouble gone would leave for proof its trace;
The guilt had fled, but still had left its shade.

LV.

Out of her life there shone calm penitence,
With steadfast will her deed yet to atone;
Though never more she could have innocence,
She still had something gained for what was gone,
That to remorse she was not left alone;
She had for error won the compensation,
She knew the thorny way, the heart-torn moan,
And through the lapse she knew the restoration.

LVI.

In Troy already she had often tried
Her heavy lot of servitude to flee,
In agony of self-reproach she cried
That Aphrodite's thrall she would not be,
Yet could herself not of the Goddess free.
She fought within, the Grecians fought without,
To save her and themselves to liberty;
Both of their struggles were a ten years' doubt.

LVII.

Once Aphrodite to her chamber came,
When Paris had been slain, her Trojan spouse,
And she had willed henceforth to cleanse her blame;
The Goddess sought desire again to rouse,
That it might snap afresh her holy vows,
And promised youth's sweet victory anew,
With every potent charm Love's zone endows,
Would give a young heroic husband too.

LVIII.

The Goddess tried her far away to lure,
To distant East, to curse of Babylon,
Where she would have no struggle to endure;
Where she could lie forever in the sun
Which showed no guilt, no deed to be undone;
But she resisted all that blandishment,
She did the temple of the Goddess shun,
And to her soul's own trysting-place she went.

LIX.

Yet Memnon found her once, the son of Morn,
And prayed that he might bear her to the day,
Far in the Orient where he was born,
And with him there to shine the early ray
Which lightly wakes the world in jocund play;
But she refused, she would return to Greece,
Back to her home would walk the prickly way,
And there work out in sorrow her release.

LX.

Then Memnon left, he was the last of all,
Most brave, most beautiful of Troy's array;
At once he dashed out of the Trojan wall,
And fighting fell upon that very day,
Foreknowing well what in the battle lay;
As he breathed out his breath, that hour Troy fell,
Its soul was dead, and in him passed away,
The Gods departed from its citadel.

LXI.

The Greeks rushed in the gate, the city burned,
The people and the aged king they slew;
Whom once Achilles' wrath had spared, they spurned,
The captives' prayer they would not listen to,
The cry of babes no tear of pity drew,
Vengeance they showed with all its rage unblest,
Nor thought that they shall suffer what they do,
By waking Furies fierce in their own breast.

LXII.

The Greeks ere long the wretched Helen found,
They bore her hastily into a tent,
With hands and feet in triple cordage bound,
And in their wrath at once they would have sent
Her soul to Hades for its punishment;
But holy Calchas said: "It must not be,
She hath a spirit new, a new intent,
And of her guilty life she now is free"

LXIII.

"She hath her evil deed in full undone,
She is renewed by her contrition deep,
And her young days of blamelessness hath won;
Troy could no longer changed Helen keep,
Yet with her lost it lies a burning heap;
Home she will now return without a stain,
Though she the past distress will oft bewEEP,
She is restored, is Helen once again."

LXIV.

So spake the priest of her mid blazing Troy.
But now she comes to seek the Delphic fane,
To have a share of all that tearful joy,
A share of the great loss and greater gain,
Of all those sad returns to learn the bane,
To learn the blessing which doth renovate,
Returning Phoebus here to greet again,
Beholding, too, a God regenerate.

LXV.

The way to Delphi ran beside the sea,
Which gently rose and seemed to stroke the shrine
Of Aphrodite in a loving glee,
There Helen once beheld the form divine,
And from the lightning heard a voice malign
Commanding her to cross to Troy the wave:
But now the Goddess showed a milder sign,
And spake in tones subdued these speeches grave:

LXVI.

“Oh Helen, I, the Goddess, must confess,
In thy self-conquest thou hast conquered me;
In thy great struggle felt I mine own stress,
And now I feel that I must change with thee,
Or yield to time and pale mortality.
My Trojan home doth lie a ruined heap,
Ah me! what shall I do henceforth to be?
My ancient throne I can no longer keep.

LXVII.

“With all the Gods old Troy I have to leave,
The spirit new into my life instil,
Yet I must not me of myself bereave,
Love must not perish; Love I can be still,
Though all transfigured with another will,
Which binds the family in its sweet grace,
Whence Love shall flow till it the world shall fill,
And reaching up, it shall the Gods embrace.”

LXVIII.

The voice had ceased, but left a vision strange,
 Upon which Helen all her journey thought;
A God has then along with man to change,
 To be a God who man has truly taught,
 To be the spirit into spirit caught;
From him eternally the transformation
 Into man and world is overwrought,
That he, the God, be one in all mutation.

LXIX.

So Argive Helen came through guilt to thought;
 The bottom of her mystery to find
By looking deep into herself she sought;
 But quickly out the reaches of her mind
 The thought would flit, and leave all dark behind.
Still glimpses flashed through mystic meditation,
 Of one whose love of self took in her kind,
And saw her own in man's salvation.

LXX.

There Helen stands amid the Grecian throng,
More beautiful she seemeth than before,
She shows the depth which comes from struggles long,
Not youthful bloom, which they did once adore,
But all the wealth that flows from Time's rich store
Seems now to lie within her graven face,
Whose melting lines would tremble evermore,
And tender throbs would follow every trace.

LXXI.

Again the Grecian heroes gather round,
Her to behold, with worship in the heart;
In her new look is healed the last old wound,
Each knows himself to be of her a part;
He, too, of destiny had felt the dart
For sharing in the guilt of Trojan life;
Yet was a wiser man for all the smart,
When he to harmony returned from strife.

LXXII.

Then came the bard with harp and tuneful voice,
Began to touch the sure responsive string,
Which with his note would weep or would rejoice;
He, too, had been at Troy and felt the sting,
He knew the triumph and the suffering;
He, too, had thence returned, in deed and song;
His deep-changed strain he now began to sing,
As he stood up before her in the throng;

LXXIII.

“O Helen, I am old, and I am blind,
My human strength, I feel, is nearly spent;
But I have left in clearer sight my mind,
Thee to behold still supereminent,
And see new glories in thy beauty blent;
Thou hast preserved all of thine ancient treasures,
And to them pain and gain of life hast lent;
Fair thou art now beyond my Grecian measures.

LXXIV.

“I sang thy youth in wildest strains of youth,
Upon my line I put thy precious bloom,
Thy beauty was for me the highest truth,
For aught but thee the world had not the room;
I knew not then the silent spreading doom
Which over thee and over me was hung,
That we must march not to, but through tomb,
Return alive once more, though old, yet young.

LXXV.

“Oh might I see again what once I saw,
The hill and sky and sea, the Earth's sweet flower!
Behold thee beautiful without a flaw,
And feel thee flash into my sight the power
Whose spell into a moment makes the hour!
My Grecian clime without mine eye is cold,
It seemeth to have lost Time's fairest dower;
Oh Helen, I am blind and I am old.

LXXVI.

“But I must stop the Muse of aged regret,
And sing what recompense the Gods bestow:
The senses' wilder rapture is now let,
The sunset calm, but not the sunrise glow
Is mine; the less I see, the more I know;
Now might I build of thy return the lay:
I sing no more the Battle's overthrow,
The ecstasy of Joy, or Love's light play.

LXXVII.

“I have returned, my song has too returned,
In tender mood from furious Trojan vein;
It has in thine its own new world discerned,
And tunes to thy deep soul its inward strain,
That the great loss doth bring the greater gain;
And all these Grècians have returned with thee,
Not over Troy we chant the loud refrain,
But over our own selves the victory.

LXXVIII.

“But there is one whom still I deeply miss,
The one who gave herself for Hellas free,
Whom as a little maid I oft would kiss,
When at the hearth she sat upon my knee,
And listened rapt to childhood minstrelsy;
The consecrated one of all, I say;
She must return to home as well as we,
Return to feast with us this very day.”

LXXIX.

Out of the multitude then Helen moved,
She felt upheld in hope by bard's strong word,
And all its truth in her own bosom proved;
Yet she too felt the selfsame loss which stirred
Him to the tender tuneful plaint she heard,
Till sense of loss turned one still cry for her
Who always gave herself for those who erred,
But in her own life never once did err.

LXXX.

So tender flowed the thoughts of that high dame,
That from them fell to earth a tearful dew;
Unto the border of the throng she came,
There she beheld a face she thought she knew,
She stopped, astonished at the sudden view,
As if she saw a spirit in the air;
And when her stricken speech she could renew,
She spake unto that face before her there:

LXXXI.

“Iphigenia, my hope, hast thou returned?
And with the other Greeks art weeping here?
For thee alone we all just now have yearned,
And yet my sense of sight I have to fear—
Mine eye doth paint thy picture on its tear;
Returned thou hast from a much further land
Than Troy, I ween; from Hades drawest near,
To make once more complete our earthly band.”

LXXXII.

“Ah yes; thou hast returned whence none return,
Thou art the shade my longing makes of thee;
Thy life on earth to live I daily burn;
But thou hast burst the last captivity,
And wilt no more the tomb’s dark vassal be;
Thou hast returned, I hear thy highest call,
Now first I feel that I am truly free,
Thou hast returned from death, to save us all.”

LXXXIII.

She spake the hintful words, yet scarcely durst
Draw near and touch in love the ghostly hand;
Yet Helen was of all the Greeks the first
To recognize her strange in her own land,
What lay in her return to understand;
Of womanhood the twain most different—
Yet in one plan complete they both were planned,
Two lives in one great providence were blent.

LXXXIV.

The one through deepest fall could highest rise,
And from her stain become once more unstained;
The other rose through perfect sacrifice,
Without the fall she stainless aye remained;
Yet each of them her own true good attained,
Each only through the other grew complete,
Both sides were one, in thought divine contained;
Now speaks the seeming ghost in language meet:

LXXXV.

“I am the same and I was never slain,
To Lower Hades I have yet to go,
Where dark Persephone doth hold her reign;
Yet through one Hades I have passed in wo,
I have come back to tell you what I know;
In far barbaric world has been my stay,
Where I was borne divinely long ago,
When I at Aulis vanished out the day.

LXXXVI.

“But tell, what sad yet happy time is this,
Wherein ye make the noble festival?
I feel the sorrow mingled in the bliss,
A mellow joy that ripens from the fall,
A gain that doth its very pain recall;
A melting change flows out the common heart,
Ye Greeks must well have tasted of the gall,
But the old wound renews a better part.

LXXXVII.

“I think now of another holiday,
The last I saw in high Mycenæ's hall,
When Paris thither bent his doomful way,
And every Grecian soul he made his thrall,
Who in the glances of his eye might fall;
Yet would I not a single person name,
We all were blind, the guilt belonged to all,
And to the Gods we have re-paid the blame.

LXXXVIII.

“But now we are restored to Greece at last,
Though while we sing with joy, we have to weep,
For with us we have brought all of the past;
What we have won, we shall forever keep,
And the full harvest of our sorrows reap;
Here shall we gather on Apollo's hill,
Where rests the sacred sun upon the steep,
And Harmony flows down to Muses' trill.”

LXXXIX.

From Helen, then, the people turn away,
And Helen turns, in deep devotion's flush,
As to some sky-descended God to pray,
Round Iphigenia all begin to rush,
It seems as if they will the woman crush,
They seek to near the center of their life,
Yet all those fervid souls with awe are hush,
Transfigured to her spirit out of strife.

XC.

They choose her priestess of Apollo's fane,
The oracle she will henceforth declare;
The double word she will to men explain,
Of breath divine she also hath a share;
She will inform with speech the Delphic air,
And add thereto a measure musical;
The true Hellenic spirit everywhere
She feels, then speaks it clear to all.

XCI.

In her the new Apollo finds his speech,
Not he who once against the Greeks did fight,
But he who will his faithful people teach
The word of wisdom, and the deed of right;
He hath become the God of inner light,
Transformed from outer sheen of Eastern sun;
When back to Hellas turned his glances bright,
Another character divine he won.

XCII.

As once the self-same God in daily toil
Served King Admetus of fair Thessaly,
And labored like a bondman of the soil,
Till of himself he wrought a being free;
And rose therefrom into a deity;
So now the servile Trojan time is past,
To which the Grecian god was held in fee;
He has with other Greeks returned at last.

XCIII.

With him at Delphi all was else transformed,
The very stones sprang into temples rare,
And by a soul divine within were warmed,
Each block sought in itself to be the fair
White fane, which perfect rose upon the air;
To music sweet the shapeless forms were trimmed,
All marched in place out of their rocky lair,
While lofty old Parnassus to them hymned.

XCIV.

And helpless marble at a touch would spring
 Into life-seeming shapes of look divine:
The Muses, who the sweetest strain could sing,
 Apollo who from stone began to shine,
 And chant his Delphic lay with Sisters nine—
Forth Gods would start at Artist's strong command;
 He only smote with chisel on a line,
But had a heart-stroke beating from his hand.

XCV.

There is the transformation, too, of man
 To one who looks before and looks behind,
Who in himself doth past and future scan,
 Pours all the vasty world into his mind,
 And cannot rest till in it truth he find;
Who trains his body, too, until it be
 The semblance beautiful of all mankind,
Revealed in games and dance and poesy.

XCVI.

The Gods, too, were transformed in that great time,
They broke the bound which everywhere had stood,
And upwards rose into Olympian prime,
Cast off the ugly form of idol rude,
Which could but show the brand of finitude;
That was the happy hour they were set free,
They passed from lust to love, from greed to good,
From red revenge they turned to charity.

XCVII.

And Delphi was the lofty seat thereof,
The bringer of the mighty transformation,
Which came to earth and man and Gods above,
It was of all the world a new creation,
Whose fragrance sweetest fell on that Greek nation;
The priestess now was borne into her place,
To bring about the final restoration,
Which would the Greek unite with all his race.

XCVIII.

But see! what new procession at the gate?

It moves in stately march into the fane,

And at its head a man of royal state:

Thoas it is, the king with all his train,

In vesture tinct with many-shaded grain,

Not in white play of Grecian fold on fold,

Whose simple ripple flows without a stain,

But decked in shifting hues and shining gold.

XCIX.

Soon in the train the swell of music rose

In many a blending tone and winding turn,

Which leaped up with the joys, dropped with the woes,

As they in human feeling wordless burn,

Or can, unsatisfied with speech, but yearn;

Then voices rose together in a cry

Of suffering, or song of struggle stern,

Wove in the fancies bright of minstrelsy.

c.

And mighty bards were in that lordly train,
Who there began to chant around the king,
In measures new, a strange barbaric strain,
Whose very words would kiss to one, and cling,
Yet in a melody were ever vanishing
Out of the world of sight to realms unseen,
As they would hymn the noble offering,
Which made the stream of time flow down more clean.

ci.

The Greeks looked on that King in wonderment,
He was all what they were, yet he was more;
Unto their Art, Humanity he lent,
The deepest love he joined to widest lore,
In him the Graces gave to worth their store,
In him had vanished quite the gentile hate,
Barbarian he would the Greek restore,
The bound of nations was for him no fate.

CII.

They asked him from what region he had come,
Whence he such wisdom in his life had learned;
Was it the gathered treasures of his home,
Or of some other land where people turned
To find what knowledge sought, what virtue earned?
He was a Greek, yet Greek beyond their ken,
In him a brother they indeed discerned,
Yet not to them alone, but to all men.

CIII.

To queries yet unspoken, Thoas spake:
"This priestess is the one who hath us taught
And all our world the spirit's bond to break;
She came to us a sacrifice unsought,
When she to altar was a victim brought
By her own people; still the Taurians say,
An image fell from heaven, that hath wrought
Us to herself by her long priestly stay.

civ.

“She hath the wild barbarian conquered,
Not by the vengeance of a Trojan war;
The savage world she hath in triumph led,
But not enchained to a prisoner's car;
No city sacked, no town in blackened char,
Doth mark her path like ghostly skeleton;
She to her soul hath changed the Near and Far,
And freedom for a prisoned world hath won.

cv.

“Now she hath come to save her own fair land,
As she hath saved already Barbary;
Home I have brought her with this grateful band,
I see no more in Greek an enemy,
The surest sign whereof is, Here an I.
Her sacrifice henceforth the Greeks must show,
And from revenge live unto charity,
Which out the bosom doth the Furies throw.

CVI.

“ When Greeks have blotted out their spirit’s bound,
Which them from Barbary doth separate;
They have the holy medicine then found,
Which will forever cure their sickly state,
By taking off that outer world of Fate;
And when the Furies out their breast they cast,
Pursuing men no more in vengeful hate,
The Furies too, will cease pursuit at last.”

CVII.

At this strong regal word, forth from the train
Orestes stepped, in presence magical;
On Delphic sacred ground he stood again,
From which he once had fled and leaped the wall,
And ran with horrid cries funereal,
By snaky Furies down the rocks pursued,
Till he to Tauris had obeyed the call:
Now of the monsters freed, he calmly stood.

CVIII.

All Greece had seen his spell and pitied him,
Yet for his ransom knew not what to do;
For Greeks themselves were prey to vengeance grim,
As well as he, they needed pity too;
And now, when they beheld Orestes new,
They could not think that he was truly cured:
Near to his tranquil countenance they drew,
And then by word and touch themselves assured.

CIX.

It was a time of wild astonishment;
Orestes to their thousand queries said:
"For wise Apollo's sister, Artemis, I went;
I trailed the mighty sea to Tauris dread,
For so the God's deep oracle I read;
There in a fane was spoke the flaming word,
Whose light at once me out of madness led,
When I in my dark trance the priestess heard.

CX.

“First from that speech myself I truly learned,
I rose renewed, and looked in vision free;
My thought flashed forward, backward, in me burned,
Till all the circling deed I seemed to see
Take in the past, take in futurity.
I saw the vengeance which man wrecks on man
Turn back on him, and the avenger be;
His curse on others is but his own ban.

CXI.

“That priestess strange I found to be my sister,
Whom I, perturbed, knew not, but deemed as dead,
Since that dark day the Greeks at Aulis missed her
From Dian’s temple, whither she was led.
This is the sister whom the God instead
Of stony idol means to be adored;
Through her the fanged Furies from me fled,
With her restored, am I and you restored.”

CXII.

His word was done, but hark! what gnashing throng
In maddened wind which out of Delphi blows!
And in that wind is heard a wailing song
Which weaker, weaker in the distance grows,
Yet wrathful still, as strain of dying foes.
The pang of banishment that voice doth wring,
And with it other voices mingle woes;
List, list! Again the Fates and Furies sing:

CXIII.

“Farewell, oh lovely Delphi, our last seat!
Oh Hellas dear, our ancient home, farewell!
The bitter hour has come for our retreat,
In Thoas' word we Fates have heard our knell,
The outer world we can no more compel;
Orestes, too, hath gained anew his powers,
The inner world we Furies cannot quell,
We both are lost, man is no longer ours.”

CXIV.

Behind the Delphic mountain soon they sank,
 Into its caverns deep they darkly sped;
Castalian waters they no longer drank,
 Nor threatened happy Delphi overhead;
The holy priestess has them banished,
Where still by mountain dwarfs they are adored;
 For Fates and Furies are not wholly dead,
Though Agamemnon's daughter be restored.

CXV.

But now in Delphi breathes another strain,
 Which rises out the rill of Castaly,
And sings through vines and olive groves again,
 With its sweet cadence wreathes the farthest sea;
It is the joyous strain of Muses, free
From savage monsters, which did them affray;
 For with the priestess won they liberty,
And thus they hymned her and themselves that day:

CXVI.

“Now hast thou made thy deed, thyself complete,
Not till thou hast removed man's narrow bound,
Can we in song thine own fair freedom greet,
Thy brother's limits must thine own be found,
Thou shalt not stand, till he rise from the ground;
In freeing him, thou art thyself set free,
Thy sacrifice hath to thyself come round,
And through another hath perfected thee.

CXVII.

“We sing thine Aulian, Taurian, Delphic deed,
Done for the sake of Greek and all mankind;
But in the deed thou hast received the meed,
Thou art now whole in character and mind,
Thou and the world one harmony designed,
Of human life thou hast well won the height,
All in thyself, thyself in all dost find,
And show what man will be in his own right.

CXVIII.

“Not thou alone, all are to be made whole,
Each being on the earth thine image true,
And in his own reflect thy perfect soul,
As thou hast done, will he forever do.
Yet to us rises a still vaster view:
The nations shall renounce for one another,
Therein like thee, shall win their freedom too,
When each shall look on each as its own brother.”

CXIX.

Such strains rose out the fount where Muses dwell,
Last herald of the newer minstrelsy;
The perfect image floating in their well
Did rise and walk into the mortal eye,
Clad in the vesture Time shall on it try,
Transfigured into music and sweet grace;
And all therein the mightier semblance could descry:
The man's, the nation's, and the world's one face.











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