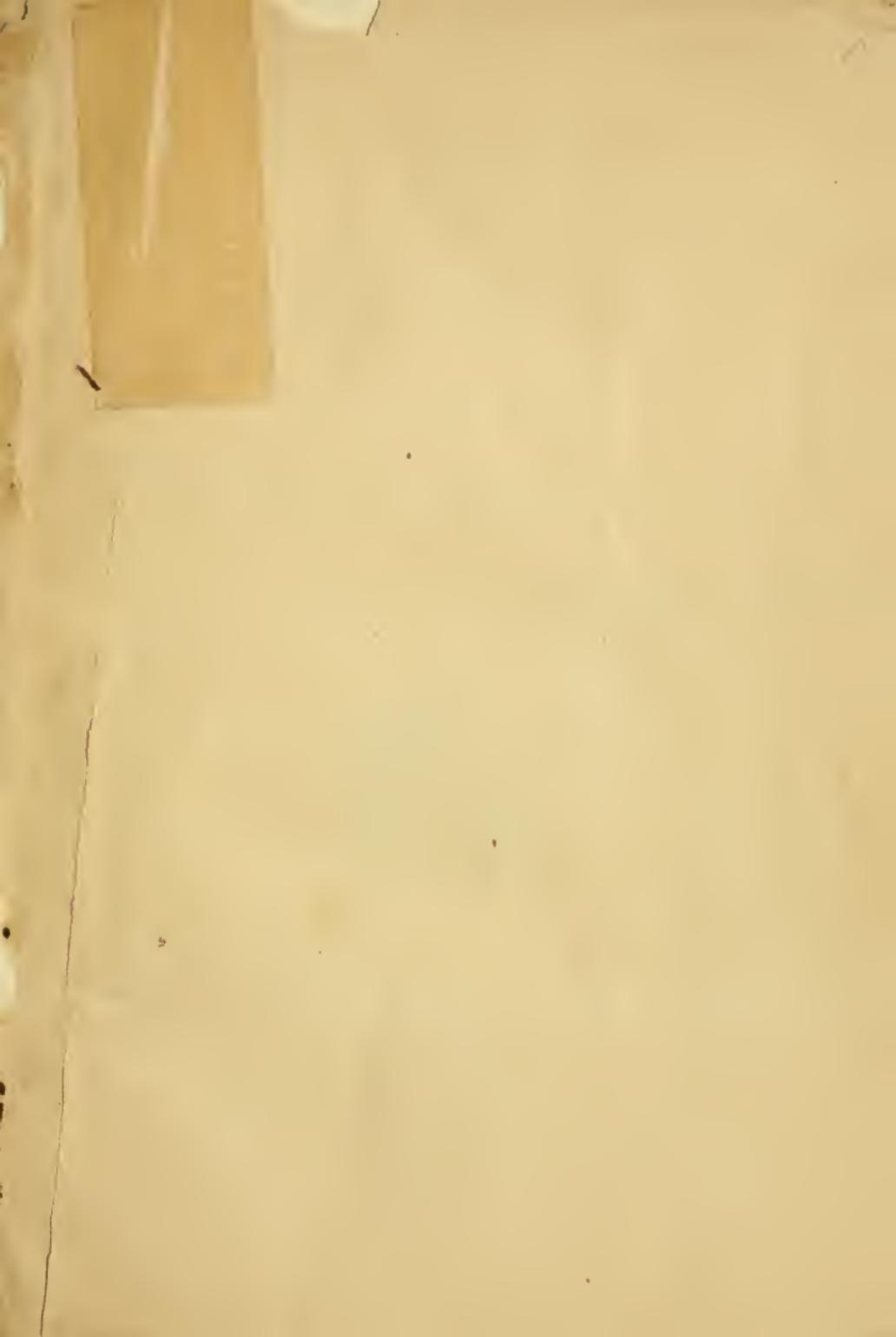


SATAN
BY
C. P. CRANCH

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SATAN:

A Libretto.

BY

CHRISTOPHER PEARSE CRANCH.

1399a. 1434



BOSTON:

ROBERTS BROTHERS.

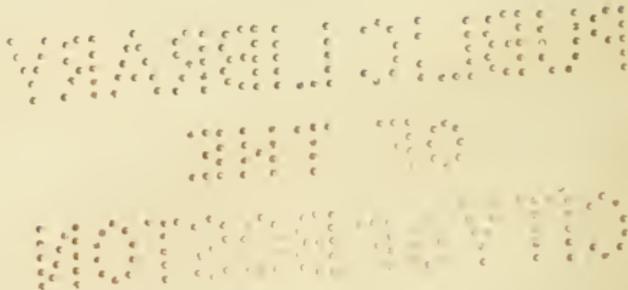
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CAMBRIDGE:
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I CALL this poem a Libretto, because, as in a Cantata, Opera, or Oratorio, the verses may suggest or accompany a music they only in part embody. A Libretto is too often a mere thread on which the composer strings his pearls, — a text for some work of art nobler than itself. While this poem makes no claim to be full-strung, it may perhaps serve to awaken a few snatches of a music containing some vital symbolic conceptions of the grandest of all harmonies, — the Divine Order in Creation.

C. P. C.

CAMBRIDGE, December, 1873.

O H that I could sinne once see !
We paint the devil foul, yet he
Hath some good in him, all agree.
Sinne is flat opposite to the Almighty, seeing
It wants the good of vertue, and of being.

But God more care of us hath had.
If apparitions make us sad,
By sight of sinne we should grow mad.
Yet as in sleep we see foul death, and live,
So devils are our sinnes in prospective.

GEORGE HERBERT.

SATAN.

THE OVERTURE.

HAD I — instead of unsonorous words —
The skill that moves in airy melodies
And modulations of entrancing chords
Through mystic mazes of all harmonies, —
The sounding pulses of an overture
Whose grand orchestral movement might allure
The listener's soul through chaos and through night,
And seeming dissonance, to concord and to light, —
I would allow the harsh Titanic strains
To wrestle with Apollo and with Jove ;
The savage war-cries on barbaric plains
To affright the chords of wisdom and of love.
For still the evolutions of old Time,
Amid the wrecks in wild confusion hurled,
Would move with grander rhythm and nobler rhyme
Along the eternal order of the world.
The swift contending fugue, — the wild escape
Of passions, — long-drawn wail, and sudden blast,
And heavy-footed bass should weave and shape
The prelude of a symphony so vast,

That only to the ears
Of spirits listening from serener spheres
Of thought, the differing tones would blend and twine
Into the semblance of a work divine.
I would unloose the soul beneath the wings
Of every instrument :
I would enlist the deep-complaining strings
Of doubt and discontent ;
The low sad mutterings and entangled dreams
Of viols and bassoons,
Groping for light athwart the clouds and streams
That drown the laboring moons ;
The tones of crude half-truth, — the good within
The mysteries of evil and of sin ;
The trumpet-cries of anger and despair ;
The mournful marches of the muffled drums ;
The bird-like flute-notes leaping into air,
Ere the great human-heavenly music comes
Emerging from the dark, with bursts of song
And hope and victory, delayed too long.

Ah, what are all the discords of all time
But stumbling steps of one persistent life
That struggles up through mists to heights sublime,
Fore-felt through all creation's lingering strife ? —
The deathless motion of one undertone
Whose deep vibrations thrill from God to God alone !

PART I.

Daybreak.

CHORUS OF WORLD-SPIRITS.

Ye interstellar spaces serene and still and clear,
 Above, below, around !
Ye gray unmeasured breadths of ether, sphere on
 sphere,
 We listen, but no sound
 Rings from your depths profound.

But ever along and all across the morning bars
 Fast-flashing meteors run,
The trailing wrecks of fierce and fiery-bearded stars
 Scattered and lost, and won
 Back to their parent sun.

Through rifts of bronzing clouds the tides of morning
 glow
 And swell and mount apace.
We watch and wait, if haply we at last may know
 Some record we may trace
 Upon the orbs of space.

Above, below, around we track the planets' flight.
 Their paths and destinies
Are intertwined with ours. Remote or near, their light
 Or darkness on our eyes
 A mystic picture lies.

FIRST SPIRIT.

Close to the morn a small and sparkling star-world
dances,
Bathed in the flaming mist,
Flashing and quivering like a million shivered lances
Of gold and amethyst
By bursts of moonlight kissed :

A fairy realm of rapid and unimpeded sprites
That fly and leap and dart ;
All fierce and tropic fervors, all swift and warm delights,
Bound and flash and start
In every fiery heart.

SECOND SPIRIT.

Deep in the dawn there floats a star of dewy fire,
So pure it seems new-born,
As though the soul of morn
Were pulsing through its heart in deep divine desire
Of poesy and love ; — the star of morn and eve,
Whose crystal sphere is shining
With joys beyond divining, —
Passion that never tortures, and hopes that ne'er
deceive.

THIRD SPIRIT.

There swims a pale green world, half drowned and
thunder-rifted,
Steeped in a sea of rain. One peak alone uplifted,

The baffled lightnings play around its crags and
chasms ;
So far away they flash, I hear no thunder-spasms.
But now the scowling clouds are drifting from its spaces,
And leave it to the wind and coming day's embraces.

FOURTH SPIRIT.

See where yon planet rolls with darkly lurid sides,
Flooded and seamed and stained by drenching Stygian
tides ;
Deep gorges up whose black and slimy slopes there
peep
All monstrous Saurian growths that run or fly or creep ;
And in and out the holes and caverns clogged with
mud,
Crawl through their giant ferns to suck each other's
blood.
I see them battling there in fog and oozy water,
Symbols of savage lust, deformity, and slaughter.

FIFTH SPIRIT.

I see an orb above that spins with rapid motion,
Vaster and vaster growing,
Belted with sulphurous clouds, and through the rents
an ocean
Boiling and plunging up on a crust of fiery shore.
And now I hear far off the elemental roar,
And the red fire-winds blowing :

A low dull steady moan, a million miles away,
Of whirling hurricanes that rage all night, all day.
No life of man or beast, were life engendered there,
Could bide the flaming winds and white metallic glare.

SIXTH SPIRIT.

But yonder, studded round with lamps of moonlight
tender,
And arched from pole to pole with rings of rainbow
splendor,
A world rolls far apart, as though in haughty scorning
Of all the alien light of his diminished morning.

SEVENTH AND EIGHTH SPIRITS.

Cold, cold and dark, and farther still,
We dimly see the icy spheres,
Like spectre-worlds who yet fulfil,
Through slow dull centuries of years,
Their circuit round the distant sun, who winds them at
his will.

CHORUS.

Round and round one central orb
The wheeling planets move,
And some reflect and some absorb
The floods of light and love.

The rolling globe of molten stones,
The spinning watery waste,
The forests whirled through tropic zones,
By circling moons embraced,

We watch their elemental strife,
We wait, that we may see
Some record of their inner life,
Where all is mystery.

Their future, like their voiceless past,
Is but a clouded gleam,
Our hope with fear is overcast,
Our prophecy a dream.

A Pause. The Sun rises.

SECOND SPIRIT.

Look, brothers, look ! The quivering sunrise tinges
Our nearest orb of Earth. The forest fringes
Redden with joy, and all about the sun
That gilds the boundless east the cloud-banks dun
Flame into gold, and with a crimson kiss
Wake the green world to beauty and to bliss.
See how she glows with sweet responsive smile !
Hark how the waves of air lap round her !
As though she were some green embowered isle,
And the fond Ocean had just found her
In Time's primeval morn of unrecorded calms,
Hidden away with all her lilies and her palms ;
And, flattering at her feet, had smoothed his angry mane,
And moving round her kissed her o'er and o'er again.

THIRD SPIRIT.

And now, behold, our wings are rapid as our thought,
And nearer yet have brought

Our feet, until we hover above the Asian lands
Beyond the desert sands.

There, girt around by mountain peaks that cleave the
skies,

A blooming valley lies ;

A pathway sloping down from visionary heights,
Through shades and dappled lights,

Lost in a garden wilderness of tropic trees
And flowers and birds and bees.

Far off I smell the rose, the amaranth, the spice,
The breath of Paradise.

Far off I hear the singing, through hidden groves and
vales,

Of Eden's nightingales ;

And, sliding down through pines and moss and rocky
walls,

The murmuring water-falls,

And lo ! two radiant forms that seem akin to us
Walk calm and beauteous,

Crowned with the light of thought, and mutual love
whose blisses

Are sealed with rapturous kisses.

Ah, beautiful green earth ! ah, happy, happy pair !
Can there be aught so fair,

O brothers, in your vast and fiery worlds afar,
As these bright beings are ?

(A Pause.)

SECOND SPIRIT.

But what is yon Shadow that creeps
 On the marge of her crystalline deeps?
 On the field and the river and grove,
 On the borders of hope and of rest,
 On the Eden of wedlock and love,
 On the labor contentment hath blessed?
 That crawls like a serpent of mist
 Through the vales and the gardens of peace,
 With a blight upon all it hath kissed,
 And a shade that shall never decrease?
 That maddens the wings of desire,
 And saddens the ardors of joy, —
 Winged like a phantom of fire,
 And armed like a fiend to destroy?

THIRD SPIRIT.

Before me there flitted a vision, —
 A vision of dawn and creation,
 Of faith and of doubt and division,
 Of mystical fruit and temptation;
 A garden of lilies and roses,
 Ah! sweeter than dreams ever fashioned;
 Hopes in whose splendor reposes
 A love that was pure and impassioned.
 But alas for the sons and the daughters
 Of man in the morning of nations!
 Alas for their rivers of waters!

Alas for their fruitless oblations !
 The curse and the blight and the sentence
 Have fallen too swift for repentance.
 I see it — I feel it — O brother !
 It shadows one half of the garden.
 O Earth ! O improvident Mother !
 Where left'st thou thy angel, thy warden ?
 Is it theirs, or the guilt of another ?
 Must they die, without hope of a pardon ?
 What is it they suffer, O brother,
 In the red rosy light of their garden ?

THE ANGEL RAPHAEL.

Beyond the imagined limits of such space
 As ye can guess, I passed, yet heard your cry.
 For ye are brother-spirits. And I come,
 Swifter than light, to shield you from the dread
 Of earth-born shadows, and the ghostly folds
 Of seeming evil curtaining round your worlds.
 Yet can I bring no amulet to guard
 One peaceful breast from sorrow ; for yourselves
 Are girt about, as I, by that divine
 Exhaustless Love, whose pledge your souls contain.

THE SPIRITS.

Ah, not for ourselves, for our brothers
 We plead, in their dawn overglooming !
 For the death is not ours, but another's.
 Help ! help ! from the doom that is coming.

RAPHAEL.

To spirits time and space may be condensed
Into a throb of feeling, or a thought.
While ye were singing, as ye watched your worlds,
They budded into life, from fiery globes
Girdled with thunder, wreathed with sulphurous steam ;
Or from the slime where rude gigantic forms
Of crocodile or bat plunged through the dense
And flowerless wilds of cane, or flapped like dreams
Of darkness through the foul mephitic air.
These shapes gave way to forests, rocks, and seas,
And shapely forms of beast and bird, and man, —
The last result of wonder-working Time, —
And the vast complex tissues he hath wrought,
Of life and laws and governments and arts.
All this ye knew not, tranced in choral song :
Your music was the oblivion of all time.

THE SPIRITS.

Have we not seen the approaching doom of Earth ?

RAPHAEL.

The vision ye have had of joy and doom,
Flashing and glooming o'er two little lives,
Is truth half-typed in legend, such as fed
The people of the ancient days, distilled
From crude primordial growths of time, when sin

Saw the fierce flaming sword of conscience shake
 Its terror through the groves of Paradise,
 Grasped by Jehovah's red right hand, in wrath.

THE SPIRITS.

Was it a dream? We saw that red right hand.

RAPHAEL.

The events and thoughts that passed in olden time
 Dawn on your senses with the beams of light
 That left long, long ago, those distant worlds,
 And flash from out the past, like present truths.
 It was a poet's dream ye saw. The earth,
 That seems so near, is many myriad leagues
 Away. 'Tis yours to unfold the mythic form
 And guess the meaning of the ancient tale.

THE SPIRITS.

We mark thy words: we know that thou art wise
 And good; and yet we hover in a mist
 Of doubt. Help us! our sight is weak and dim.

RAPHAEL.

Know, then, that men and angels can conceive
 Through symbols only, the eternal truths.
 Through all creation streams this dual ray,
 This marriage of the spirit with the form, —

The correspondence of the universe
 With souls through sense, — the incessant undertone
 Of melody and chord through all the worlds ; —
 The life of man reflecting life divine ;
 Yea, even the blank and sterile voids that span
 The dead unpalpitating space twixt star
 And star, shall speak, as light hath spoken once.
 Hark ! even now the unfathomable shades
 Of fate begin to stir. I hear a sound
 Of shuddering wings, beyond the hurrying clouds,
 Beyond the stars, — yet nearer, nearer still !

DISTANT VOICES *confusedly.*

Behind us shines the Light of lights.
 We are the Shadows, we the nights,
 That blot the pure expanse of time.
 And yet we weave the destined rhyme
 Of creatures with the Increate,
 Of God and man, free-will and fate ;
 The warp and woof of heavens and hells ;
 The noiseless round of death and birth ;
 The eternal protoplastic spells
 That bind the sons of God to earth ; —
 The ceaseless web of mystery
 That has been and shall ever be.

RAPHAEL.

Far off I seem to hear a chorus strange,
 Rising and falling through the gathering gloom.

And now the congregated clouds appear
 To take the semblance of a Shape that bends
 This way, as when a whirling ocean-spout
 Drinks, as it moves along, the light of heaven.

Spirit, — if Spirit or Presence
 Thou art. or the gloom of a symbol, —
 Approach, if thou canst, to interpret
 Thy name and thy work and thy essence !

(A Pause.)

Behold, the Shadow spreads and towers apace,
 Like a dense cloud that rolls along the sea
 Landward, then shrouds the winding shore, the fields,
 The net-work of the gray autumnal woods,
 And the low cottage-roofs of upland farms.
 What seemed a vapor with a ragged fringe,
 Changes to wings that sweep from north to south.
 And, round about the mass whose cloudy dome
 Should be a head, I see the lambent flame
 Of distant lightnings play. And now a voice
 Of broken thunder-tones, and winds and waves
 Commingled, muttering unintelligible things,
 Approaches us. The air grows strangely chill
 And nebulous. Daylight hath backward stepped,
 And blotted with eclipse the morning sun.

CHORUS OF THE WORLD-SPIRITS.

Like the pale stricken leaves of the Autumn
 When Winter swoops downward to whirl them

Afar from the nooks of the woodlands,
And up through the clouds of the twilight,
We shudder ! We hear a wind roaring
And booming below in the darkness ;
A voice whose low thunder is mingled
With waves of the whispering ocean.
The clouds that were pearly and golden
Are steeped in a blackening crimson.
The spell of a magical presence
Is nearing us out of the darkness.
What is it ? No shape we distinguish ;
The shadows are hopeless and voiceless.
We are troubled. O help us, strong Angel !
A Form gathers out of the darkness,
Awful and dim and abysmal !

RAPHAEL.

Fear not the gloomy Phantasm. Speak to him.
If he will answer, ye may learn of him
Some truths your books of dead theology
Have never taught, nor poets, though they sang
Of Eden and the primal curse of man.

THE SPIRITS.

What art thou ? Speak ! whose shadow darkens thus
The eye of morn ?

SATAN.

I am not what I seem.

THE SPIRITS.

Art thou that fallen angel who seduced
From their allegiance the bright hosts of heaven,
And men, and reignest now the lord of doom ?

SATAN.

I am not what I seem to finite minds ; —
No fallen angel ; for I never fell,
Though priest and poet feign me exiled and doomed ;
But ever was and ever shall be thus, —
Nor worse nor better than the Eternal planned.
I am the Retribution, not the Curse,
I am the shadow and reverse of God ;
The type of mixed and interrupted good ;
The clod of sense, without whose earthly base
You spirit-flowers can never grow and bloom.

THE SPIRITS.

We dread to ask, — what need have we of thee ?

SATAN.

I am that stern necessity of fate,
Creation's temperament, — the mass and mould
Of circumstance, through which eternal law
Works, in its own mysterious way, its will.

THE SPIRITS.

Art thou not Evil, — Sin abstract and pure ?

SATAN.

There were no shadows till the worlds were made ;
No evil and no sin till finite souls,
Imperfect thence, conditioned in free will,
Took form, projected by eternal law,
Through co-existent realms of time and space.

THE SPIRITS.

Thy words are dark : we dimly catch their sense.

SATAN.

Naught evil, though it were the Prince of evil,
Hath being in itself. For God alone
Existeth in Himself, and good, which lives
As sunshine lives, born of the Parent Sun.
I am the finite shadow of that Sun,
Opposite, not opposing, only seen
Upon the nether side.

THE SPIRITS.

Art happy, then ?

SATAN.

Nor happy I, nor wretched. I but do
My work, as finite fate and law prescribe.

THE SPIRITS.

Didst thou not tempt the woman and the man
Of Eden, and beguile them to their doom?

SATAN.

No personal will am I, no influence bad
Or good. I symbolize the wild and deep
And unregenerated wastes of life,
Dark with transmitted tendencies of race,
And blind mischance ; all crude mistakes of will
And tendency unbalanced by due weight
Of favoring circumstance ; all passion blown
By wandering winds ; all surplusage of force
Piled up for use, but slipping from its base
Of law and order ; all undisciplined
And ignorant mutiny against the wise
Restraint of rules by centuries old indorsed,
And proved the best so long it needs no proof ;
All quality o'erstrained until it cracks, —
Yet but a surface-crack : the Eternal Eye
Sees underneath the soul's sphere, as above,
And knows the deep foundations of the world

Will not be jarred or loosened by the play
Of sun and wind and rain upon the crust
Of upper soil. Nay, let the earthquake split
The mountains into steep and splintered chasms : —
Down deeper than the shock the adamant
Of ages stands, symbol no less divine
Of the Eternal Law, than heaven above.

THE SPIRITS.

Shall we, then, doubt the sacred books, — the faith
That Satan was of old the foe of God ?

SATAN.

Nations have planned their Devil as they planned
Their gods. Say rather, God and Satan mixed,
A hybrid of diseased theology,
Stood at the centre of the universe,
Ormazd and Ahriman, in ceaseless war ; —
A double spirit, through whose nerves and veins
Throbbled the vast pulses of his feverish moods
Of blight and benediction. Did the Jew
Or Pagan (save the few of finer mould)
Own an unchanging God, or one, flesh-veiled,
Who like themselves was moved to wrath, revenge,
And jealousy, to petty strifes and bars
Of sect and clan, — the echo of their thought ?

THE SPIRITS.

What if it were revealed to holy men
By faith, that God had formed a spirit vast,
Who fell, rebelled, tempted the race to death?
Whether a foe who rode upon the wind,
Or one within, in league with some sweet drift
Of natural desire, tainted yet sweet.

SATAN.

Alas! did ever human eyes o'erthop
And pierce beyond the hemisphere of tints
That overarched their thought and hope, yet seemed
A heaven of truth? As man is, so his God.
So, too, his spirit of evil. Evil fixed
He saw, eternal and abstract, whose tree
Thrust down its grappling tap-roots in the heart,
And poisoned where it grew; its blighting shade
By no sweet wandering winds of heaven caressed,
No rain-drops from the pitying clouds. No birds
Of song and summer in its branches built
Their little nests of love: no hermit sought
The shivering rustle of its chilly shade.
Accursed of God it stood, — accursed and drear
It stood apart, — a thing by God and man
Hated, or pitied, as a pestilence
O'erpassing cure. So hate not me. For I
Am but the picture mortal eyes behold,

Shadowing the dread results of broken laws
Designed by Eternal Wisdom for the good
Of man, though typed as Darkness, Pain, and Fire.

THE SPIRITS.

Must not the Eternal Justice punish man
And spirits — now, or in the great To-Be?
What sinner can escape His burning wrath?

SATAN.

His name is Love. He wills no curse on men
Or spirits, who condemn themselves, and hide
Their faces in the murky fogs of sense
And lawless passion, and the hate and feud
Born of all dense inwoven ignorance.
Man loves or fears the shadow of himself.
God shines behind him. Let him turn and see.

[Vanishes slowly.]

PART II.

A CHORUS OF ANGELS IN THE DARKNESS.

Far in the shuddering spaces of the North
 We live. We saw a Shape
Of terror rise and spread and issue forth ;
 And we would fain escape
The anger of his frown. We know him not,
 Nor whether it be he
Who claims our homage, for the shadows blot
 The sun we may not see.

We lift our prayers on heavy wings to One
 Who dwells beyond the sun,
Whose lightnings are decrees of life or doom,
 Whose laws are veiled in gloom.
Thick clouds and darkness are about thy throne
 Where thou dost reign alone ;
And we amid the mists and shadows grope
 With faint bewildered hope.
We fear thy awful judgments and thy curse
 Upon thy universe.
For we are told it is a fearful thing,
 O thou Almighty King,
To fall into thy hands. Oh, spare the rod, —
 Thou art a jealous God !

O save us by the blood of Him who died
That sin might not divide
Our guilty souls from heaven and Christ and thee.
And yet we dread to see
Thy face. How can the trembling fugitive
Behold that face, and live !

A VOICE BEHIND THE DARKNESS.

Fear not ; for ye shall live. There is no frown
Upon his face. He shall lift up your heads.
Fear not, but trust him ; for his name is Love.

CHOIR OF ANGELS IN THE DISTANCE.

God who madest the tempest's wingèd terror,
And the smile of morn,
Who art bringing truth from sin and error,
Love from hate and scorn ;

Lo, thy presence glows through all thy creatures,
Passion-stained or fair ;
Saint and sinner bear the self-same features
Thy bright angels wear.

Human frailty all alike inherit ;
Yet our souls are free.
Giver of all good, it is no merit
That we turn to thee.

Thou alone art pure in thy perfection :
 We thy children shine,
But as our soiled garments take reflection
 From thy light divine.

Thou art reaching forth thine arms for ever
 Struggling souls to free,
Leading man by every good endeavor
 Back to heaven and thee !

CHORUS OF WORLD-SPIRITS.

The presence that awed us and chilled us
Dissolves in the dews of the morning ;
The darkness has vanished around us,
And shrunk to the shadows that color
The cloud-flakes of gold and of purple.
So vanish the thoughts that obscured us,
The doubt and the dread of the evil
That stained the starred robe of creation ;
And we hear but one music pervading
The planets and suns that are shining ;
The spirits that pine in the darkness,
Or float in the joy of the morning.

SEMICHORUS.

Have we wronged thee, O monarch of shadows?
 Have we named thee the Demon of spirits?
We know that the good and the evil
 Each mortal and angel inherits —

The evil and good that are twisted
As fibres of brass and of gold —
To the All-seeing Eye have a meaning
We know not, — too deep to be told.
But the wise and the merciful Father,
Though they stray in the desert and wold,
Will lift up his lambs to his bosom,
And gather them into his fold.

CHORUS OF HOPEFUL SPIRITS.

I.

Praise, praise ye the poets, whose pages
Were wisdom and love for the ages ;
Who saw, in their marvellous trances
Of thoughts and of rhythmical fancies,
The manhood of man in all errors ;
The hopes that have triumphed o'er terrors ;
The great human heart ever pleading
Its kindred divine, though misleading
Fate held it aloof from the heaven
That to spirits untempted was given.

2.

Praise, praise ye the prophets, — the sages
Who lived and who died for the ages ;
The grand and magnificent dreamers ;
The heroes, the mighty redeemers ;

The martyrs, reformers, and leaders ;
 The voices of mystical Vedas ;
 The bibles of races long shrouded,
 Who left us their wisdom unclouded,
 The truth that is old as their mountains,
 But fresh as the rills from their fountains.

SEMICHORUS.

The creeds of the past that have bound us
 With visions of terror around us,
 Like dungeons of stone that have crumbled,
 Beneath us lie shattered and humbled.
 The tyranny mitred and crested,
 Flattered and crowned and detested ;
 The blindness that trod upon Science ;
 The bigotry Ignorance cherished ;
 The armed and the sainted alliance
 Of conscience and hate, — they have perished,
 Have melted like mists in the splendor
 Of light and of beauty supernal ;
 Of love ever watchful and tender,
 Of law ever one and eternal.

THE SONG OF A WISE SPIRIT.

The light of central suns o'erflows
 The farthest bounds of time and space ;
 The shadows are but passing shows
 And clouds upon creation's face.

From out the chaos and the slime,
 From out the whirling winds of fire,
 From years of ignorance and crime,
 From centuries of wild desire,
 The shaping laws of truth and love
 Shall lift the savage from the clod ;
 Shall till the field, and gild the grove
 With homes of man and domes of God.
 And Love and Science, side by side
 With starry lamps of heavenly flame,
 Shall light the darkness far and wide,
 That fixed the nations' curse and shame ;
 Shall bury in forgotten graves
 Old Superstition's tyrant brood ;
 Shall break the fetters of the slaves ;
 Shall bind the world in brotherhood ;
 Shall hurl all despots from the throne,
 And lift the saviors of the race :
 And law and liberty alone
 From sea to sea the lands embrace.

THE HYMN OF A DEVOUT SPIRIT.

The time shall come when men no more
 Shall deem the sin that blights the earth
 A taint inherited at birth,
 A curse for ever to endure.

Shall see that from one common root
 Must spring the better and the worse,
 And seek to cure before they curse
 The tree that drops its wormy fruit.

For God must love, though men should hate
The vine whose mildew blights its grape :
And he shall give a fairer shape
To lives deformed by earthly fate.

O, praise him not that on a throne
Of glory unapproached he sits,
Nor deem a slavish fear befits
The child a Father calls his own.

But praise him that in every thrill
Of life his breath is in our lungs,
And moves our hearts and tunes our tongues,
Howe'er rebellious to his will.

Praise him that all alike drink in
A portion of the life divine,
A light whose struggling soul-beams shine
Through all the blinding mists of sin.

For sooner shall the embracing day,
The air that folds us in its arms,
The morning sun that cheers and warms,
Hold back their service, and decay,

Ere God who wraps the universe
With love, shall let the souls he made
Fall from his omnipresent aid
O'ershadowed by a human curse.

THE SPIRIT OF A POET

sings from a bright cloud on a mountain-top.

I sang of Eden and Creation's morn ;
 Of fiend and angel, triumph and despair.
 I caught the world's old music in the air,
 The strains that from a people's creed were born.

I soared with seraphs, walked with lords of doom ;
 Basked in the sun, and groped in utter dark.
 I lit the olden legends with a spark
 Whose radiance but revealed eternal gloom.

I stood enveloped in a cloud o'ercharged
 With thunder ; and the blind, mad bolts that flew
 Were heaven's decrees. They spared alone the few
 Whose hearts by grace supernal were enlarged.

Upon imagination's star-lit wings
 I flew beyond the steadfast earth's supports ;
 And stood within Jehovah's shining courts,
 And heard what seemed the murmur of the springs,

The streams of living and eternal youth.
 Was it a dream ? Hath God another word
 Than that between the cherubim we heard,
 When Israel served the Lord with zeal and truth ?

Are those but earth-born shadows that we saw
 Thronging the spaces of the heavens and hells ?
 Is there a newer prophet-voice that tells
 The trumpet-tidings of a grander law ?

The lurid words above the fatal door, —
The door itself, — the circles of despair,
Are fast dissolving in serener air.
They were but dreams. They can return no more.

No more the vengeance of a demon-god ;
No more the lost souls whirling in black drifts
Of endless pain. The illumined spirit lifts
The fog where once its trembling footsteps trod.

I looked, and, lo ! the abyss was all ablaze
With light of heaven, and not abysmal fire ;
And fain would tune to other chords my lyre,
And fain would sing the alternate nights and days, —

The days and nights that are the wings of Time ;
The love that melts away the eternal chains ;
The judgments only of remedial pains ;
The hidden innocence in guilt and crime.

Behold, the light that dawneth on the earth
Is but the primal light now first discerned ;
And the great creeds the world hath slowly learned
Are truth evolved from forms of ruder birth.

The tides of life, divine and human, swell
And flood the desert shore, the stagnant pool.
And sage and poet know where God hath rule
There is no cloud in heaven, — no doom in hell.

FULL CHORUS OF THE WORLD-SPIRITS.

Hear ye, O brothers, the voices around that are swelling in chorus,
Nearer and sweeter they rise and fall through the nebulous light ;
Voices of sages and prophets, while, under our footsteps and o'er us,
Roll in their orbits the worlds whose circles we tracked through the night.

Melting away in the morning, we follow their pathways no longer,
Knowing the hand that has guided will bear them for ever along,
Bear them for ever, and shape them to destinies fairer and stronger
Than when the joyous archangels hailed their creation with song.

Not with a light that is waning, not with the curse of a dooming,
They shall accomplish their cycles through ages of fire and of cloud :
Ever from chaos to order unfolding, progressing, and blooming,
Till with the wisdom and beauty of ages on ages endowed.

Out of the regions of discord, out of the kingdoms of
evil,

God in the races to come shall abolish the reign
of despair.

Who shall affront his decrees with the phantoms of
demon and devil?

Who shall unhallow the joy of his light, and the
health of his air?

Lo! on the day-star itself there are spots that, coming
and going,

Send through the spaces mysterious thrillings, like
omens of blight.

And the great planets afar are convulsed, as when win-
ter comes blowing

Over the shuddering oceans and islands of tropical
light.

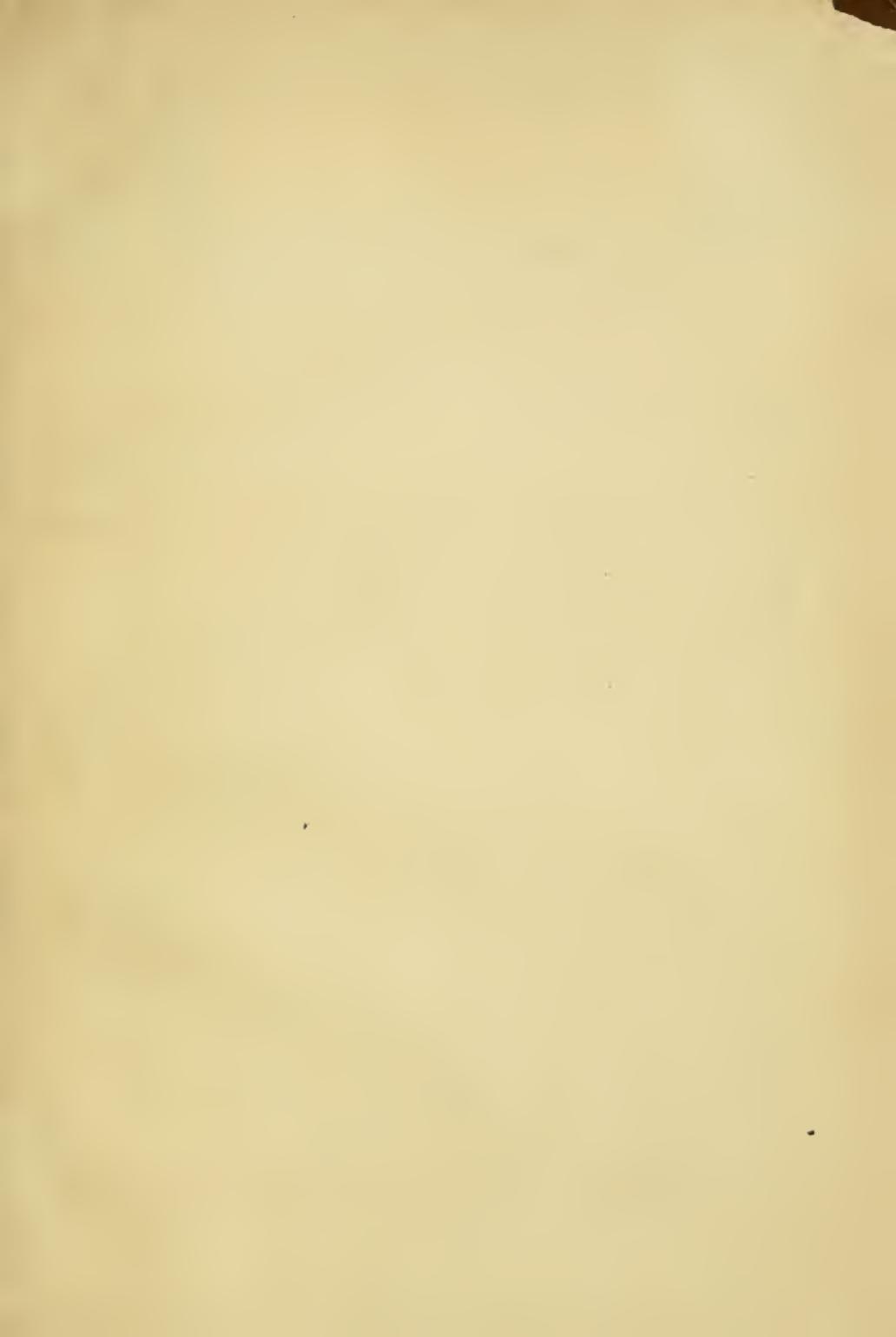
Shadows are shadows; and all that is made is
illumined and shaded;

Bound by the laws of its being, heaven and earth in
its breath.

He who hath made us will lift us, though stained and
deformed and degraded,

Lift us and love us, though drowned in the surges of
darkness and death!

THE END.



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