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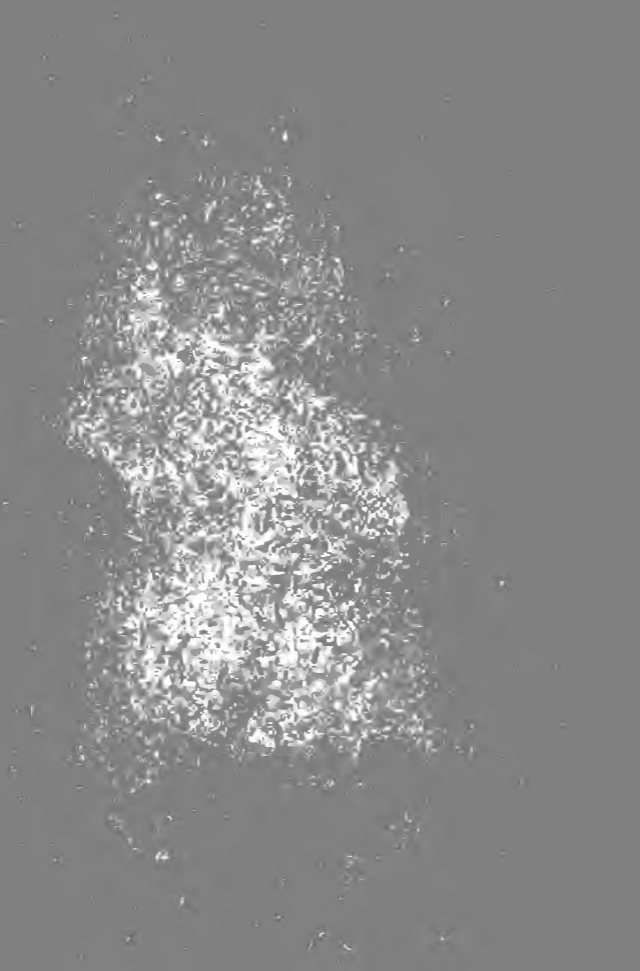




The Canterbury Poets.

EDITED BY WILLIAM SHARP.

P O E.



THE POETICAL WORKS
OF EDGAR ALLAN POE.
WITH A PREFATORY NOTICE,
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL,
BY JOSEPH SKIPSEY.

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Prefatory Notice.



EDGAR ALLAN POE was the son of David and Elizabeth Poe, both of the histrionic profession, and was born on the 19th of January 1809, in Boston, America. While yet a child he and a brother and a sister were left orphans by the sudden death of their father and mother at Richmond in 1811. The attention of some kind-hearted people was soon drawn to the bereaved children, and they were adopted into families in good position. The boy Edgar was taken charge of by a Mr. and Mrs. Allan—a wealthy childless couple—of Richmond, and these people soon became so captivated by the beauty and manners of the child, that they resolved upon giving him the education of a gentleman, with the

view, it is said, of making him their heir. When Edgar was eight years old they brought him to England, and as their stay in this country was to be of some duration, they placed him in the care of the Rev. J. Bransby, who had a school at Stoke Newington, where he stayed for nearly two years, when his foster-parents, returning to America, took him back with them, and placed him at a school at Richmond, under the care of Professor Clarke. He was about five years under the tuition of Dr. Clarke, during which time his progress in the Greek and Latin classics was immense. He also became an expert athlete, and was one of the best boxers, runners, and swimmers at the school. Better still, he was accounted "a free-hearted boy—kind to his companions, and always ready to assist them with hand or head." This—the mere surface of his life—would be appreciated ; but the life within of Edgar would be too vast to be understood by boys of his own age, and when the toil and strife of the day were over, I may add, on the strength of his early poems, which he was then composing, he would have moods with which they would not be able to sympathise, and for which he himself would not be able to account—such moods in a youth being the natural attendants of genius of a high order.

About this time he met with a lady, one of those

rare beings whose vast though unconscious goodness and purity of soul send a shower of gladness into the hearts of all with whom they come in contact, and the effect upon the sensitive nature of the poet, whose mental condition from his infancy had evidently been an isolated one, was such as to almost electrify him, and to cause him to think of her rather as a celestial spirit than as of one possessed of the passions and weaknesses of ordinary women. This lady was a Mrs. Stannard, the mother of a school-mate of the young poet. From the moment he met with this lady she became his idol—while she in turn clearly enough appreciated the feelings of her idolater, and entertained a mother's holy love for the boy, united with a reverence for the precocious genius which she would undoubtedly discover in his very demeanour, and more especially in the light of his beautiful eyes, and in the weird tones of his voice—if not in the gravity of much of his speech, which, I have no doubt, such a youth would be noted for. That she should become his confidant, and the theme and inspirer of the songs of such an one, was surely natural; and when I think of some of those songs, and more particularly of the verses addressed to "Helen"—to herself—I cannot, also, help yielding my homage to the memory of the woman who

inspired them. Again, I say, this "Helen" of the poet's youth must have been a rare and precious being, and

"What though that light, through storm and night, so
trembled from afar,
What could there be more purely bright in Truth's day-
star?"

I am not afraid of being misunderstood here by the pure in soul, and all who read the poet's poems are too much struck by their purity and spirituality to believe that they had their inspiration in aught save the very purest of sources. Had it been the lot of this good lady, after the poet's introduction to her, to have lived a few years to have given him the wise counsel, and to have exercised the beneficial influence over him of which she was capable, in all likelihood his after-career would have been a happier, if not in a literary sense a yet brighter one; but this was not to be. She was ordained to appear to him, and disappear like a dream—to shoot like a star through the gloom of his life, only to leave that gloom the more dense from the recollection of the glory by which it had for the moment been illumined. Then, alas, alas, as he in later years sang, with him "the light of life *was o'er.*" And the strain upon his mind

caused by the loss of this guardian spirit was indeed great, and the reaction from which was such as to drive him into courses one can never think of but with regret. A disposition to eccentricity had repeatedly manifested itself from his infancy upwards, yet there can be no doubt as to the depth of the affliction caused him by the death of "the Helen of his youth," nor as to an impetus being somehow given to the irregularities of which he is accused, some short time after her death. I am aware that a certain Miss Royston is cited as having about this time caused him some trouble through her marriage with another, after having shown some favour to himself; but the eternal burden of his song is that of sorrow for an idol that is dead rather than that of regret or of the pain of wounded pride, caused by the loss or the conduct of one who is yet in the flesh. Moreover, his love is always a pure spiritual love—a love of the soul rather than of the body, however beautiful that body may be painted by his own inimitable pen; and such a love, I hold, is more likely to be inspired in the soul of a precocious genius by a pure-minded mature woman than by any girl in her teens, however charming. These surmises may not in themselves be sufficient to form a key to the apparent inconsistencies

so often laid to the charge of the poet, yet I think they will help to throw some light on the unpleasant subject, and as such ought to be kept in view while we give a hurried glance at his after-career.

As I have intimated, he was but a mere youth when Mrs. Stannard died—in fact he was a school-boy—and “as such was here and there,” as Mr. Stedman says, “till 1826, when he passed a winter at the University of Virginia. He ended his brief course in the school of ancient and modern languages with a successful examination; but after much dissipation and gambling, which deeply involved him in debt.” A rupture, as might have been expected, ensued between him and his guardian—Mr. Allan finally refusing to countenance Edgar’s extravagances; and the young man betook himself to his aunt, Mrs. Maria Clemm of Baltimore, in whose house he found a home for about two years, during which time he acted as tutor to his cousin Virginia, who was then a beautiful child, and who afterwards became his wife. In 1829 his foster-mother, Mrs. Allan, died, when a reconciliation was effected between him and Mr. Allan, and he was asked to choose a profession. He chose that of Arms, and found an appointment at West Point; but of this he soon tired—he could not

endure military discipline, and ere long brought about his expulsion, and so again incurred the displeasure of his patron. This gentleman by this time had again married, and as the second wife was likely to have children, and as these children would naturally enough be considered the heirs of their father's possessions, an intimation was given to the effect that in future Edgar must provide for himself. High words are said to have ensued on the occasion, which only served the purpose of ventilating the justly excited anger of Edgar, and of causing the doors of Mr. Allan to be the more securely bolted in future against the young man who, from his boyhood, had been taught to consider Mr. Allan's house as his own home. He now published a volume of poems, some of which had been printed while he yet stayed with his aunt, chiefly valuable as containing the germs of several of his later masterpieces. Two or three of them, however, have a positive value—such as the "Sonnet to Science," and more especially his verses beginning, "Helen, thy beauty is to me," and that exquisite lyric in Aalraaf beginning "Ligeia, Ligeia, my beautiful one, whose harshest idea will to melody run." Indeed, up to this period I am not aware of any verses produced by an American that would bear comparison for pure poetic power with these two

lyrics, the products of this outcast youth. They are noted for that delicacy of touch, purity of sentiment, and rarity of melody, which were afterwards to characterise all his best poems. Whether Poe realised any money on this publication is a question, and if he did, it could not have been much, and must have been soon spent, as he is supposed to have had no other means on which he could live; and what became of him for two years after making another vain attempt to gain admission into the home of his boyhood is not positively known. He had been thrust from the rich man's house, it is supposed without a penny in his pocket, on the wide, wide world, to sink or swim for what his Richmond patrons appeared to care; and somehow he had managed to swim, and when he did again turn up (1833) it was as the winner of a hundred dollar prize, which had been offered by the proprietors of a periodical—the *Saturday Visitor*—for the best tale that should be sent to them. The tale for which the prize was adjudged to Poe was the “MS. found in a Bottle;” and the gentlemen who adjudged it, on finding the author in a state of the deepest distress, at once became his friends, and secured him employment on journals over which they had influence.

He was now fairly launched upon the career of a journalist, and tale after tale, and critique after critique, came from his pen with a surprising rapidity; and before the lapse of many years several periodicals—the *Saturday Visitor*, the *Literary Messenger*, *Graham's Magazine*, the *Broadway Journal*, and others—were all enriched and had their fame widened by his various productions. In 1836 he married his young cousin, the beautiful Virginia Clemm, for whom he possessed and always had cherished the sweetest and tenderest feelings; and every nerve was strained to provide a comfortable home for her and her dear widow mother, who continued to live with him and Virginia, and to care for them and to assist them all through the few years of their married life, and who, even after the death of her idolised daughter (1847), continued to be a mother in the noblest sense of the word to the bereaved poet. And somehow he managed to provide the desired home and to maintain it, though his literary labours, brilliant and successful as they undoubtedly were, were only very poorly remunerated. This want of adequate remuneration for his work, and a consequent want of adequate means for his household needs, was the chief cause of his frequent dissatisfaction with his employers. About these changes there has been much foolish

controversy, and many, without looking further than the length of their noses, have ascribed them to a bad and querulous disposition of the poet, and his use or abuse of strong drink. That Poe, from his extreme nervousness, was naturally somewhat sharp-tempered, is likely enough, and quite as likely is it that in moments of deep depression he resorted to alcoholic stimulants ; but that he was worse in these respects than other men who pass through life without a supposed stain on their character, and who have neither the keen sensibility nor the trials to put their temper to the test, on the one hand, nor are subject, nor have anything to cause them to be subjected, to the heart and soul-sickening depressions to which this brave man was subject, on the other, I very much doubt. Edgar Poe for years—I might say for the whole of his literary life—was condemned to work like a literary hack for a hack's wages, though at the same time much of his work was the finest of its kind, and such as not more than two or three writers in the whole world of English letters had, at the period, a capacity to produce. I am here speaking in particular of his tales, not of his great poems, for the very best of these had not yet appeared, and the merits of the few pieces that had been issued in pamphlet or book form, and in

the columns of the magazines, were unknown to the mass of readers until "The Raven" took the world of letters by storm, and produced a sensation throughout America, and wherever the English tongue was spoken, such as no single poem had ever done before or is likely to do again. His "Hans Pfaal," his "Berenice," his "Ligeia," his "Gold Bug," for which he, in 1843 (as with "MS. found in a Bottle"), gained a one hundred dollar prize, were all known to magazine readers when "The Raven" was ushered into the world, and brought with it the golden day of Poe's popularity. Still, his income was far from being equal to his needs, and to increase this, he delivered a lecture about this period on "The Poets and Poetry of America," in which he was tempted to make an onslaught on the writers of the fashionable verse of the times; and this lecture being followed up by a series of papers on the *literati* of New York, in which a similar mode of procedure was adopted, he excited the animosity of the scourged scribblers, and involved himself in a literary warfare, and so created a host of enemies, who never rested satisfied so long as they could see a chance of doing him harm while he lived, or while there appeared one bright spot on his character, which they could, by hook or crook, blacken after he

was dead. The papers here spoken of were issued in the columns of the *Broadway Journal*, of which he had become editor and proprietor—positions which, notwithstanding the wide circulation of the journal, he, from want of funds, we are given to understand, failed to keep, and this would clearly be to him a bitter trial. In the meantime, his beautiful Virginia sickened and died; and this long-dreaded blow was such as to drive him into a state of frenzy from which he cannot be said to have ever wholly recovered. In his extremity he resorted, as on other disastrous occasions, to the dangerous nepenthe of strong drink; and this only subjected him the more to adversity, which, after the death of his beloved young wife, now “followed fast and followed faster” until the bitter end. How that end was effected is a mystery as deep as that which at first sight envelops some of his own weird tales. All that we are certain of is that he was, on the 7th of October 1849, discovered lying on a bench by a wharf in Baltimore, in a state of insensibility, and having been recognised, was taken to the hospital, where he died the same night. His enemies, of course, ascribe his death to his having taken an excessive quantity of alcoholic stimulants; the Baltimoreans, however, may be quite as right who ascribe it to foul play. So

ended the career of the finest and most brilliant poetic genius that America has yet produced.

The career of Edgar Poe was one of harassment, strife, and sorrow—gilded, indeed, with a series of splendid literary triumphs; and his death was a tragic one—as lamentable and as tragic as that of Shelley, as that of Chatterton, or that even of Marlowe of “the mighty line” himself. “And for this,” cry his enemies, with Griswold at their head, “he was himself to blame.” But that is a base lie. That we have in Edgar Poe an illustration of the paradox that an individual may be a wise writer without being a wise man, many of his friends are inclined to admit, and may be admitted if we are supposed to always have prudence of conduct combined with high power of thinking; only it is quite possible that such errors or follies attributable to Poe may have arisen out of circumstances over which no power of thought could have given him control. His temperament, not a lack of wisdom, essentially rendered him a being of extremes. Under powerful opposition and provocation he would seem at times to have been a very “Imp of the Perverse,” while at others—and this was his general mood—he was as gentle and as docile as a child; and many of the noblest women of America who had had the good fortune to come in contact

with him would have added to this, that he was as lovable. I think, after reading what can be said for and against the accused one, as Mr. Ingram and Mr. Gill before they sat down to write their respective lives of our poet appear to have done, there can be no two opinions on this point. Indeed, the more attention an unbiassed reader pays to the subject, the more convinced he becomes of the treachery and unpardonable nature of the conduct of Griswold and his confreres towards their antagonist. Had Griswold been a weakling, and unfit from lack of ability to sit in judgment on the poet and his life, he could have been more easily pardoned; but he was not entirely that, and his estimate of the poet's genius betrays symptoms that he must have had some faint perception at least of the greatness of the subject he attempted to deal with. On that point the poet was safe, simply because everybody, as well as his adversary, had the facts of the case before them on which to form an opinion for themselves; and the critic was acute enough to see this, and had the craft to perceive that the easiest way for him to work out his purpose would be to chime in with the pæan which the world sung, and would be sure to sing, to the genius that had conferred upon it so many glorious gifts in prose and verse, and to concentrate his efforts

instead on the defamation of his private life and character—a matter which only few were in a position to defend ; and simply because Poe, in his endeavours to obtain the best possible remuneration for his services, had been driven from town to town, and from state to state, with a swiftness that left it difficult for any except a few people to really know much about the man apart from the writer. A few, however, were in possession of the required facts, and these few readily took up the cudgels on the poet's behalf ; “ but,” as Mr. Ingram observes, “ as Griswold's memoir prefaced the poet's works, and all refutations and objections were published in the ephemeral pages of periodicals until 1874, the veritable *scandalum magnatum* remained unexpunged,” and so continued to propagate and spread abroad the mischief its author had intended it should. And the evil effect of it in consequence is dominant to this day in many quarters, though a glance at the paragraph in which the chief charges are couched is in itself almost sufficient to show their hollowness. What are those charges ? “ Passion in him,” says Griswold, “ comprehended many of the worst emotions that militate against human happiness. . . You could not contradict him but you raised in him quick choler.” That might be ; but is *choler* one of the worst emotions ? I have gene-

rally found it in company with open-heartedness, honesty, and truth—qualities which Griswold denies Poe to have possessed. But again, “You could not speak of wealth but his cheek paled with gnawing envy.” This would have been a great pity if it had been true, but would have only shown that Poe must have greatly underrated the wealth—the mental wealth—of which he *was* possessed, and which was of more value than the coffer of a millionaire. If such had been so, then the poet must have been a humble-minded man and a modest one. But what says Griswold to this? “The natural advantages of this poor boy—his beauty, his readiness, his daring spirit, that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere, had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudice against him.” Then Poe was not so modest after all? Not quite. “He had,” adds Griswold, “a morbid desire” for what is “called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or love of his species; only the hard wish to *succeed*, NOT SHINE.” And why?—“that he might have the right to despise a world that galled his self-conceit.” Now I submit that the utter fallacy of this statement will be at once apparent if we only reflect for a moment on the fact that if success could only have

given our poet "the right to despise a world"—by which big phrase, I take it, Griswold simply meant one of the many small groups of writers which formed the American world of letters—then that right, such as it was, had been achieved at the very outset of his career, since, as I have shown in his very earliest literary efforts, he had surpassed every other writer that America had produced. Having achieved what he desired, what need was there for him to spend his life in one huge endeavour simply to do it over again? Again, what in the name of reason can Griswold mean by the words self-conceit as applied to Edgar Allan Poe? We speak of a man as being self-conceited when he has a ridiculously high notion of his self-importance; but what notion had Poe of himself that was not justifiable on the strength of his supreme abilities? How many more than a dozen writers were living in the fifth decade of the present century that were worthy to help this man off with his boots? and yet, forsooth, because on matters of taste he happened to speak in a tone of authority, he is to be accused by a third-rate essayist of self-conceit! On whom ought the stigma to rest? On him who has enriched the world of literature with some of its most precious jewels in shape of tale and song, or on him whose

strongest claim to consideration is a sinister one—is a fiendish attempt to damn to infamy the inspired author of these same treasures? Whether had Edgar Allan Poe or Rufus Griswold the most self-conceit? To talk of Edgar Poe being self-conceited and arrogant, and envious, and choleric, and what not! Then “this was not the worst,” though “bad enough,” says Rufus, “for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold, repellent cynicism—his passions vented themselves in sneers.” Poe, as I have inferred, had his foibles, truly, and this habit of sneering, which he sometimes adopted in his controversies, was one of them; but his sneers were always directed at those who deserved nothing else, if they were to be answered at all. Perhaps his silence, could he have thought so, would have been better, as assuredly it would have been more keenly felt, since the passion for notoriety of some of his thick-skinned assailants was such that they would have risked their lives only to have had it said that they had dared to put their heads in the lion’s mouth.

But let us change the theme, and let us glance a few moments at the works—at the tales, poems, and critiques of Edgar Poe. The least valuable of these appear to me to be the so-called humorous or grotesque—not but these are excellent in

their way—only the kind is not of the highest. Moreover, other writers have produced their equals ; but who besides Poe has written anything to equal the “Ligeia,” “Eleanora,” the “Assignment,” or the “Mask of the Red Death,” and one or two others of the poet’s serious tales? These pieces are in prose form, but they have all the harmonic organic completeness and aërial beauty of fine poems—I had nearly said of Poe’s own finest poems. Of the very best of the latter it would not be too much to say that they are among the very finest things that ever sprang from the depths of the human soul. Their very titles have become names which serve to conjure up in the imagination of the reader scenes of the most weird beauty, and such as none save the best poets have ever imagined or realised. The sphere of the poet’s activity in general lay “out of space” and “out of time,” and it must be conceded to have been only a small sphere ; “but it was,” as Hannay observed, “a magic one,” and it was Poe’s own. Hints he may have had for two or three of his best pieces, as some critics think, or for all of them for that matter, as all creative artists more or less have had ; but it is not the mere suggestion, but what is developed out of it, that forms the charm and the value of a poem. The ray of light in itself may be

valuable, but it requires a prism to resolve it into the charming variety of colour which glorifies the rainbow ; and so only in the hands of a true poet can the most precious hint be shown to possess the possibilities of the beauty essential to a poem. Such was the power displayed by Burns in the many snatches of old song which he converted into a series of lyrics so charming, that had he done nothing else in verse, he had done sufficient to keep his name green for all time. But the poet must sometimes perform even a greater miracle than aught Burns performed with such old verse before his supposed borrowed materials can be shown to possess the required poetic value. The hint is not always so precious as the said ray of light or old verse, and may only contain one among a thousand thoughts essential to the poet's purpose, and the touch of genius required to show its utility in such a case can only fitly find its parallel in the power that enables Nature herself to elicit from apparently the most heterogeneous elements the ingredients and the qualities with which she builds up and renders glorious with perfume and colour the most perfect blossom in the lap of Flora. Such is the power displayed by Shakespeare in his immortal works, and such the power evinced by Tennyson in his. True, all great poets have a vast personal

experience from which they are able to draw the rarest poetic symbol ; but they have over and above a culture which gives them possession of the wisdom of their own and of other eras ; and it is as much owing to the rare ability with which they utilise this in the working out of their grand designs that their pages possess that luminosity that arrests, and ever must arrest with delight, the attention of the intelligent reader. Nor are their works less essentially original on that account ; the aids thus obtained are not only used in a way which genius only can, but in a way that the special genius of each of the said poets only can use them, and bear the impress of such genius to such a degree that the product itself can only be well characterised by an epithet derived from the poet's name. We not only use, I would remark, with propriety and from choice, such terms as Shakespearean, Miltonic, Tennysonian, and the like when we want to express the character of some poem, but often from sheer necessity—from the circumstance that no amount of language would otherwise convey such a comprehensive idea of what we mean ; and it is the power to impress his individuality upon his writings that gives the poet a claim to be considered original. Not so much is it the subject itself as the *how*—the ability with which a subject

is handled—that we most prize in a poem, a picture, or a piece of sculpture. Of course some subjects in themselves are attractive, while others are unfit for artistic purposes; but such attractiveness is not to be compared with that charm which the “right promethean fire” can impart to even less favourable subjects; while, on the other hand, a true poet will in general select those subjects on which his genius can be exercised to the best advantage.

These remarks may be verified by a reference to the writings of our best poets, and emphatically by a reference to those of Edgar Poe himself. From some reason he loved to brood over not only the terrible, but the horrible, and not only over death, but the life in death. The grave and the “phosphorescence of putrefaction” at times afforded favourite themes and material for poem and tale; and yet see in “The Conqueror Worm,” and “For Annie,” as well as in several of his prose pieces, what he has been able to witch out of it all. In general, however, his themes are more consonant with the perfection of his treatment; though even in these, as Griswold observed, “his imagery was from the worlds which no mortal can see but with the vision of genius.” With the “sheeted memories of the past,” with the spec-

tral tenants of some Haunted Palace, or with some entombed Ulalume in some "misty mid-region of Weir," the poet's sympathies have their abiding place, and into the weird homes of these weird and silent people we are led, and therein held with a spell as powerful as that ascribed to the Evil Eye, or possessed by his own grim Raven from the "Night's Plutonian Shore." And this spell, as sweet as it is potent, from whence proceeds it, if not from a music which at once emanates from and reflects a feeling that has its roots in the very bottom of the poet's soul? The truth and depth of those feelings, I contend, cannot be doubted; no more than I can doubt that it was from his rare ability to give an adequate expression to such feeling, and from no other cause, that he was enabled to bring to our apprehension visions of "the gloomiest or ghastliest grandeur," or of "the most airy and delicious beauty," and to hold us in a spell of wonder and delight. That Poe was a master in logic is patent to all who have read almost any one of his tales or critiques; but that the subtlety of his reasoning powers, as some of his critics have thought, was sufficient to enable him to produce his marvellous poems without his first having being possessed—inspired—illuminated—by the feelings he sought to express in those

poems, is a supposition almost too glaringly absurd to need refutation. That feelings can only be conceivable to a soul who can feel or has felt—as the perfume of the rose can only be known to one who has the sense of smelling, and has smelt one ; or as the flavour of the juice of the grape can only be apprehended by one who has the sense of taste, and has tasted it ; or as the charm of some rare melody can only be appreciated by one who is not deaf, or has not always been so, and has heard one, is self-evident ; and so assuredly can the power to express such feelings and apprehension only reside in the soul who has the capacity to conceive them. That one born blind may be found who can talk about colours in a somewhat sensible way is possible, and may, on certain grounds foreign to our subject, be accounted for ; but has such a one a thorough conception of what he talks about?—that's the rub ; for I argue that without such a conception of the feeling—or the effect, as Poe himself would have put it—desired to be produced, no such feeling or effect were possible.

That our poet in his “*Philosophy of Composition*” should have afforded a plea for the foolish doctrine which has been put to such vile use by his enemies is to be regretted ; and yet, though his having put forth such a theory is somewhat of a mystery,

I think it is not an utterly unsolvable one, and that too without implying anything that would form a heinous offence against truth as the world goes. Poe, in short, was fond of a hoax, and I can conceive it possible the "Philosophy of Composition" was begun in such a spirit, but that as he progressed in his work he became a dupe to the subtlety of his own reasoning, and so was hurried into the promulgation of that against which his better instincts would at other moments have rebelled. Be this as it may, the celebrated essay in question can only be accepted as a clever attempt to account for what already existed. It would have been more to the purpose had Poe been able to show how other ingenious people, as well as himself, could have produced other such poems as "The Raven," but this he did not do, otherwise we should have had a flood of them ere now; and until we have such I hold we are justified in rejecting his theory as unsound. Of inquiries into such matters I would observe we have had more than enough; for could we fathom the processes through which a poet is always able to produce his masterpieces, what would be our gain? Would our grand poems have for us then a deeper significance, and be able to possess us with richer feelings and sentiments, and confer upon us a more

exquisite delight than they do now? This I doubt—and of one thing we are sure, and that is, whenever a powerful passion for analysis takes possession of a reader, instead of yielding himself up to the influence of a poem, he is more apt to pry into the processes, or to try to do so, whence such influence is supposed to have proceeded, and having, as he imagines, plucked the heart from the mystery, he is more apt to chuckle over his own success than to congratulate the poet upon his. The pleasure derivable in such a case may be a refined one, but is it a noble one?—nay, how far is it above that of the solver of a conundrum, or the winner of a game of chess, whose pleasure, though refined if you like, is surely an utterly selfish one, and not one in which others, as well as himself, can participate. Of course we have critics and critics. I allude to the many, and one need not be reminded that among a thousand there are a small group who themselves, being possessed of true poetic instinct, can crown the lesser pleasure of the verse-analyst with the diviner joy to be derived from a due appreciation of the poem. Some of the critiques of those writers are, indeed, ornaments and not eye-sores in our literary treasury; and among the finest of these, by-the-by, are some of the critiques of the poet under review.

Edgar Poe was always in the right when he was true to his own feelings—when he was not driven by need, hunger, and hardship to cater for popularity, to try to hoax or cajole his readers or his patrons ; always in the right when he was at liberty to choose a subject after his own heart, and had leisure to work it out after his own fashion. This is shown in the fact that his most elaborate critiques—the “Philosophy of Composition” excepted—are those in which his most profound judgments are pronounced. His reviews of the poems of Mrs. Browning, of the “Orion” of R. H. Horne, the ballads of Longfellow, and the tales of Hawthorne, are of this stamp ; and so is his Essay on the Poetic Principle. The theory propounded in the latter and some other of his papers—namely, “That a long poem is a flat contradiction in terms,” has excited the opposition of some critics, and with apparent reason ; and yet on the whole it is surely better that such a notion should obtain among literary aspirants than the old one, which I am sorry to say is still current, that no poem can be termed great that is not a long one. The evil fruit of this last belief is evident ; the notion results in the further belief that to be truly great the poet must write a long poem, and so encourages the production of vast volumes of verse that a sensitive

mind is at a loss what to do with, since it is generally supposed that one, to be in a position to judge of the merits of a book, must first have read it through, and so, to satisfy his conscience, he feels, at whatever cost of precious time and vital force, he must either do this or be prepared to listen in silence, while some Master Holofernes, who has found something in it to fit exactly his own hobby-horse, extols it as such a magnificent book "as never was," and its author as another Shakespeare, though the huge product itself may only consist of a mass of the veriest twaddle that was ever penned. Few things surely can be more pitiable to see than that of a poor wretch who has set himself the dreary task to wade through such fearful verse-books, raising his head at long intervals, with a sigh, to count the pages, and so to compare the long suffering he may have endured with the longer suffering that may yet remain to be endured, before his Herculean labours are at an end. I speak in sincerity when I say that the supposed necessity of any one having to do this is a huge evil, and that we owe our best thanks to Edgar Poe for having bravely tried to put an end to it even at the risk of our losing a really noble long poem once in a couple of centuries or so. The loss, after all, would not be so great as many people

imagine, since the very few poets who have shown a capacity for writing valuable long poems have in general shown a capacity for the production of still more valuable short ones—that is, if the time consumed in the production of long poems could be utilised in the production of short ones. This the author himself can only tell; but if he cannot so utilise his time, then let him write his long poem, for surely it would have been a loss to the world had Milton not written his, or have given us several such poems as “Comus,” “Lycidas,” “L’Allegro,” or “Il Penseroso” instead. Milton’s, however, was an exceptional case, since great as he was in a short poem, he was, perhaps, yet greater in a long one, and this cannot be said of any other English poet since his time. Compare Coleridge’s short poems, for instance, with his long ones—his “Ancient Mariner,” his “Christabel,” his “Genevieve,” with the “Remorse” and his other dramas; or Shelley’s short poems with his long ones, his “Sensitive Plant” and the “Epipsychidion” with the “Revolt of Islam,” and even the “Cenci;” or Tennyson’s short poems, for example, with his long ones—his “Ænone,” his “Locksley Hall,” or the “Grandmother” with his later epics and dramas, and then let us ask ourselves the question, How much

would have been our loss if even this trio of supreme poets had been able, without any actual loss of time, to have confined their efforts to the production of short poems only? Excellent as the dramas of Shelley at least, and the epics of Tennyson undoubtedly are, both of these poets have shown a capacity for finer, rarer, more precious, and so greater work in their short poems than they have in their long ones; and so on the strength of the former, rather than on that of the latter, must essentially rest their claims to consideration as poets. If that consideration be the highest, as I believe it is, then they are poets of the highest order, and that on the strength of their short poems. This fact is not to be ignored, and cannot be too emphatically insisted upon, since, if it can be shown that rank in literature is fixed rather by quality than quantity in writing, it may have the tendency to cause aspirants to the laurel to concentrate their efforts to give "infinite riches in a little room," rather than to scatter a few golden grains over interminable acres which might, indeed, possibly be reached by the mere plodding book-worm, but which could prove of no service to the world of intelligent readers whatever.

In his "Essay on the Poetic Principle," and his other critiques, Poe laboured to impress such views

as these upon the minds of his readers ; while in his practice as a poet and as a tale-writer, he has illustrated the general truth of his theories in a way that few poets have been able to do. Like the poets just named, his genius was essentially lyrical, and like theirs his verse was of the finest quality, though the lyrics of Edgar Poe were too few in number for their author to bear a fair comparison with Tennyson or with Shelley ; while he had no poetic jewels of sufficient size to justify them in being placed alongside of two or three of Coleridge's master-works. In the narrowness and unearthliness of his sphere, and in his having made the best that was possible out of his "cribbed, cabined, and confined" conditions, he would endure a better comparison with the forerunner of all these—namely, Collins ; and if he excels Collins in the sweetness and magic of his melody—as great a musician as the elder poet was—he is excelled by Collins in turn in the deeper significance of his symbols, as well as in the greater rapidity and surety with which he was able to shoot direct to the mark at which he aimed. The younger had a decided advantage over the elder poet in the power with which he was able to impart a human interest to some of his exquisite poems, which causes them to be relished by all

classes of readers, while the creations of Collins are not to be appreciated by any save the most imaginative minds. To those who can appreciate them, however, it must be added, they possess a charm through which, like those of the more popular poet, their immortality is clearly ensured. In the speciality of melody, as I have said, he excels Collins, and indeed all others except some two or three of the very greatest poets in the English tongue ; and yet in this speciality, in which he is so supreme, he has been all but equalled at times by one who in other respects was altogether unlike either Collins or himself—I mean the Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan. It has been supposed that Poe caught the idea of utilising for musical effects—as he has done in “Lenore,” “Eulalie,” and other pieces—the refrain derived from the repetition of some emphatically significant word or line of the poem, from the practice of Mangan, in whose “Times of the Barmecides,” and “Dark Rosaleen,” such refrains are made to play a similar effective part. That may be, but it must not be overlooked that Edgar Poe was essentially lyrical to the very core, and that he has produced melodies as fine as “Lenore,” or “Eulalie,” in which the refrain is not adopted, as “Israfel,” and “The Haunted Palace,” for instance, and that his melodies at all times—

even those which possess the refrain—have a distinct character, and bear the Edgar Poe impress just as Clarence Mangan's bear his. I speak of Mangan on the merit of some lyrics solely, which are to be found in two or three Irish ballad books published by Duffy of Dublin, and which, besides the splendid and pathetic "Times of the Barmecides" and "Dark Rosaleen," the "Lament for the Tironian Princes," and "Cahal Mor of the Wine Red Hand," are equally worthy of special remark. The most of these lyrics are professedly translations, for which profession there may just possibly be a groundwork of fact; but setting aside these, and judging him upon the pieces which were all his own, he was a sublime lyrist, but unfortunately one who, like his more famous brother bard of "The Bells" and "The Raven"—in whose veins also, by-the-by, the wild Irish blood ran—was unhappy in his life and unhappy in his death. He was born in Dublin, 1803, and died there 1849, the same year that was also made memorable by the death of America's finest and most brilliant bard, the flower of whose genius is contained in this volume.

JOSEPH SKIPSEY.

October 1884.

PREFACE TO THE POEMS.

THESE trifles are collected and republished chiefly with a view to their redemption from the many improvements to which they have been subjected while going at random "the rounds of the press." I am naturally anxious that what I have written should circulate as I wrote it, if it circulate at all. In defence of my own taste, nevertheless, it is incumbent upon me to say that I think nothing in this volume of much value to the public, or very creditable to myself. Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making at any time serious effort in what, under happier circumstances, would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must—they cannot at will be excited, with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind.

E. A. P.



Miscellaneous Poems.

THE RAVEN.

ONCE upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there
came a tapping, [chamber door.
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my
chamber door—

Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak
December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost
upon the floor.

Eagerly I wished the morrow—vainly I had sought
to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the
lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels
name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple
curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never
felt before :
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I
stood repeating,
“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my
chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my
chamber door—
This it is and nothing more.”

Presently my soul grew stronger ; hesitating then
no longer,
“ Sir,” said I, “ or Madam, truly your forgiveness
I implore ;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you
came rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my
chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you——” Here
I opened wide the door—
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there
wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared
to dream before ;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness
gave no token.
And the only word there spoken was the whispered
word, “Lenore?”
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the
word, “Lenore!”—
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within
me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping, something louder
than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my
window lattice ;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery
explore—

Let my heart be still a moment, and this mystery
explore—

'Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a
flirt and flutter, [of yore.

In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days
Not the least obeisance made he ; not a minute
stopped or stayed he ;

But, with mien of lord or lady perched above my
chamber door—

Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my
chamber door—

Perched and sat and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into
smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance
it wore,

"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I
said, "art sure no craven,

Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from
the Nightly shore—

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's
Plutonian shore !"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear dis-
course so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy
bore ; [being
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his
chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his
chamber door,
With such a name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust,
spoke only [did outpour.
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he
Nothing farther then he uttered ; not a feather
then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other friends
have flown before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my Hopes
have flown before,”
Then the bird said, “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly
spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only
stock and store,

Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never—nevermore.'”

But the Raven, still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust, and door ;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core ;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining

On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight
 gloated o'er,
 But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight
 gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore.

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed
 from an unseen censer [tufted floor.
 Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the
 "Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by
 these angels he hath sent thee
 Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories
 of Lenore !
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this
 lost Lenore !"
 Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet," said I, "thing of evil !—prophet still, if
 bird or devil !—
 Whether Tempter sent, or whether Tempest tossed
 thee here ashore, [chanted—
 Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land en-
 On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I
 implore—
 Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead ?—tell me—tell
 me, I implore !"
 Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."
 D

“Prophet,” said I, “thing of evil—prophet still, if
bird or devil !

By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God
we both adore—

Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the
distant Aidenn,

It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels
name Lenore— [name Lenore.”

Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend !”
I shrieked, upstarting—

“Get thee back into the tempest, and the Night’s
Plutonian shore !

Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul
hath spoken !

Leave my loneliness unbroken !—quit the bust
above my door !

Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy
form from off my door !”

Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is
sitting [ber door ;

On the pallid bust of Pallas, just above my cham-

And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that
 is dreaming,
 And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his
 shadow on the floor ;
 And my soul, from out that shadow that lies float-
 ing on the floor,
 Shall be lifted—nevermore !

 LENORE.

AH, broken is the golden bowl ! the spirit flown
 for ever !
 Let the bell toll !—a saintly soul floats on the
 Stygian river !
 And, Guy De Vere, hast *thou* no tear ?—weep now
 or never more !
 See ! on yon drear and rigid bier low lies thy
 love, Lenore ! [be sung !
 Come ! let the burial rite be read—the funeral song
 An anthem for the queenliest dead that ever died
 so young— [so young.
 A dirge for her, the doubly dead, in that she died
 “ Wretches ! ye loved her for her wealth and hated
 her for her pride,
 And when she fell in feeble health, ye blessed her
 —that she died !

How *shall* the ritual, then, be read?—the requiem
how be sung

By you—by yours, the evil eye—by yours, the
slandrous tongue

That did to death the innocence that died, and died
so young?"

Peccavimus; but rave not thus! and let a Sab-
bath song [wrong!

Go up to God so solemnly the dead may feel no
The sweet Lenore hath "gone before," with Hope,
that flew beside,

Leaving thee wild for the dear child that should
have been thy bride— [lies,

For her, the fair and *débonnaire*, that now so lowly
The life upon her yellow hair, but not within her
eyes— [her eyes.

The life still there, upon her hair—the death upon

"Avaunt! to-night my heart is light. No dirge
will I upraise, [days!

But waft the angel on her flight with a pæan of old
Let *no* bell toll!—lest her sweet soul, amid its
hallowed mirth,

Should catch the note, as it doth float up from the
damnèd Earth.

To friends above, from fiends below, the indignant
ghost is riven—

From hell unto a high estate far up within the
 Heaven—
 From grief and groan to a golden throne beside the
 King of Heaven."

A VALENTINE.

To Frances Sargent Osgood.

FOR her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous
 eyes,

Brightly expressive as the twins of Læda,
 Shall find her own sweet name, that, nestling lies,
 Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.
 Search narrowly the lines!—they hold a treasure
 Divine—a talisman—an amulet [measure—
 That must be worn *at heart*. Search well the
 The words—the syllables! Do not forget
 The trivialest point, or you may lose your labour!
 And yet there is in this no Gordian knot
 Which one might not undo without a sabre,
 If one could merely comprehend the plot.
 Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering
 Eyes' scintillating soul, there lie *perdus*
 Three eloquent words oft uttered in the hearing
 Of poets, by poets—as the name is a poet's, too.
 Its letters, although naturally lying
 Like the knight Pinto—Mendez Ferdinando—

Still form a synonym for Truth. Cease trying !
 You will not read the riddle, though you do the
 best you *can* do.

[To translate the address, read the first letter of the first line in connection with the second letter of the second line, the third letter of the third line, and fourth of the fourth, and so on to the end. The name will thus appear.]

THE COLISEUM.

TYPE of the antique Rome ! Rich reliquary
 Of lofty contemplation left to Time
 By buried centuries of pomp and power !
 At length—at length—after so many days
 Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst
 (Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie),
 I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
 Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
 My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory !

Vastness ! and Age ! and Memories of Eld !
 Silence ! and Desolation ! and dim Night !
 I feel ye now—I feel ye in your strength—
 O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king
 Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane !
 O charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee
 Ever drew from out the quiet stars !

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls !
Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat !
Here, where the dames of Rome their gilded
hair [thistle !
Waved to the wind, now wave the reed and
Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,
Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,
Lit by the wan light of the hornèd moon,
The swift and silent lizard of the stones !
But stay ! these walls—these ivy-clad arcades—
These mouldering plinths — these sad and
blackened shafts—
These vague entablatures—this crumbling frieze,
These shattered cornices—this wreck—this ruin—
These stones—alas ! these grey stones—are they
all—
All of the famed and the colossal left
By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me ?

“ Not all ”—the Echoes answer me—“ not all !
Prophetic sounds and loud arise for ever
From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,
As melody from Memnon to the Sun.
We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule
With a despotic sway all giant minds.
We are not impotent—we pallid stones.

Not all our power is gone—not all our fame—
 Not all the magic of our high renown—
 Not all the wonder that encircles us—
 Not all the mysteries that in us lie—
 Not all the memories that hang upon
 And cling around about us as a garment,
 Clothing us in a robe of more than glory.”

TO _____

NOT long ago the writer of these lines,
 In the mad pride of intellectuality,
 Maintained “the power of words,” denied that ever
 A thought arose within the human brain
 Beyond the utterance of the human tongue ;
 And now, as if in mockery of that boast,
 Two words—two foreign soft dissyllables—
 Italian tones, made only to be murmured
 By angels dreaming in the moonlit “dew [hill,”
 That hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon
 Have stirred from out the abysses of his heart
 Unthought-like thoughts that are the souls of
 thought,
 Richer, far wilder, far diviner visions
 Than even the seraph harper, Israfel

(Who has "the sweetest voice of all God's creatures"),
Could hope to utter. And I! my spells are broken,
The pen falls powerless from my shivering hand.
With thy dear name as text, though bidden by thee,
I cannot write—I cannot speak or think—
Alas, I cannot feel ; for 'tis not feeling,
This standing motionless upon the golden
Threshold of the wide-open gate of dreams,
Gazing, entranced, adown the gorgeous vista,
And thrilling as I see, upon the right,
Upon the left, and all the way along,
Amid unpurpled vapours, far away
To where the prospect terminates—*thee only*.

TO HELEN.

I SAW thee once—once only—years ago :
I must not say *how* many—but *not* many.
It was a July midnight ; and from out
A full-orbed moon, that, like thine own soul,
soaring,
Sought a precipitate pathway up through heaven,
There fell a silvery-silken veil of light,
With quietude, and sultriness, and slumber,

Upon the upturn'd faces of a thousand
Roses that grew in an enchanted garden,
Where no wind dared to stir, unless on tiptoe—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That gave out, in return for the love-light,
Their odorous souls in an ecstatic death—
Fell on the upturn'd faces of these roses
That smiled and died in this parterre, enchanted
By thee, and by the poetry of thy presence.
Clad all in white, upon a violet bank
I saw thee half reclining ; while the moon
Fell on the upturn'd faces of the roses,
And on thine own, upturn'd—alas, in sorrow !

Was it not Fate, that, on this July midnight—
Was it not Fate (whose name is also Sorrow)
That bade me pause before that garden-gate,
To breathe the incense of those slumbering roses ?
No footstep stirred : the hated world all slept,
Save only thee and me. (Oh, Heaven !—oh, God !
How my heart beats in coupling those two words !)
Save only thee and me. I paused—I looked—
And in an instant all things disappeared.
(Ah, bear in mind this garden was enchanted !)
The pearly lustre of the moon went out :
The mossy banks and the meandering paths,
The happy flowers and the repining trees,

Were seen no more : the very roses' odours
Died in the arms of the adoring airs.
All—all expired save thee—save less than thou :
Save only the divine light in thine eyes—
Save but the soul in thine uplifted eyes.
I saw but them—they were the world to me.
I saw but them—saw only them for hours—
Saw only them until the moon went down.
What wild heart-histories seemed to lie enwritten
Upon those crystalline, celestial spheres !
How dark a woe ! yet how sublime a hope !
How silently serene a sea of pride !
How daring an ambition ! yet how deep—
How fathomless a capacity for love !
But now, at length, dear Dian sank from sight,
Into a western couch of thunder-cloud ;
And thou, a ghost, amid the entombing trees
Didst glide away. *Only thine eyes remained.*
They *would not* go—they never yet have gone.
Lighting my lonely pathway home that night,
They have not left me (as my hopes have) since.
They follow me—they lead me through the years.
They are my ministers—yet I their slave.
Their office is to illumine and enkindle—
My duty, *to be saved* by their bright light,
And purified in their electric fire,
And sanctified in their elysian fire.

They fill my soul with Beauty (which is Hope),
 And are far up in Heaven—the stars I kneel to
 In the sad, silent watches of my night ;
 While even in the meridian glare of day
 I see them still—two sweetly scintillant
 Venuses, unextinguished by the sun !

AN ENIGMA.

“**S**ELDOM we find,” says Solomon Don Dunce,
 “Half an idea in the profoundest sonnet.
 Through all the flimsey things we see at once
 As easily as through a Naples bonnet—
 Trash of all trash !—how *can* a lady don it?
 Yet heavier far than your Petrarchan stuff—
 Owl-downy nonsense, that the faintest puff
 Twirls into trunk-paper the while you con it.”
 And, veritably, Sol is right enough.
 The general tuckermanities are arrant
 Bubbles—ephemeral and *so* transparent—
 But *this* is, now—you may depend upon it—
 Stable, opaque, immortal—all by dint
 Or the dear names that lie conceal’d within’t.

[The key to this Enigma is the same as already given in the
 “Valentine.” See page 53.]

ULALUME.

THE skies they were ashen and sober ;
The leaves they were crisped and sere—
The leaves they were withering and sere ;
It was night in the lonesome October
Of my most immemorial year ;
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,
In the misty mid region of Weir—
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber,
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Here once, through an alley Titanic,
Of cypress, I roamed with my Soul—
Of cypress, with Psyche, my soul.
These were days when my heart was volcanic
As the scoriac rivers that roll—
As the lavas that restlessly roll
Their sulphurous currents down Yaanek
In the ultimate climes of the pole—
That groan as they roll down Mount Yaanek
In the realms of the boreal pole.

Our talk had been serious and sober,
But our thoughts they were palsied and sere—
Our memories were treacherous and sere—

For we knew not the month was October,
And we marked not the night of the year—
(Ah, night of all nights in the year !)
We noted not the dim lake of Auber—
(Though once we had journeyed down here)—
Remembered not the dank tarn of Auber,
Nor the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

And now, as the night was senescent
And star-dials pointed to morn—
As the star-dials hinted of morn—
At the end of our path a liquescent
And nebulous lustre was born,
Out of which a miraculous crescent
Arose with a duplicate horn—
Astarte's dediamonded crescent
Distinct with its duplicate horn.

And I said—" She is warmer than Dian :
She rolls through an ether of sighs—
She revels in a region of sighs :
She has seen that the tears are not dry on
These cheeks, where the worm never dies,
And has come past the stars of the Lion
To point us the path to the skies—
To the Lethean peace of the skies—

Come up, in despite of the Lion,
To shine on us with her bright eyes—
Come up through the lair of the Lion,
With love in her luminous eyes.”

But Psyche, uplifting her finger,
Said—“ Sadly this star I mistrust—
Her pallor I strangely mistrust—
Oh, hasten !—oh, let us not linger !
Oh, fly ! let us fly !—for we must.”
In terror she spoke, letting sink her
Wings until they trailed in the dust—
In agony sobbed, letting sink her
Plumes till they trailed in the dust—
Till they sorrowfully trailed in the dust.

I replied—“ This is nothing but dreaming :
Let us on by this tremulous light !
Let us bathe in this crystalline light !
Its Sybilic splendour is beaming
With Hope and in Beauty to-night— [night !
See !—it flickers up the sky through the
Ah, we safely may trust to its gleaming,
And be sure it will lead us aright—
We safely may trust to a gleaming
That cannot but guide us aright, [night.’
Since it flickers up to Heaven through the

Thus I pacified Psyche and kissed her,
And tempted her out of her gloom—
And conquered her scruples and gloom ;
And we passed to the end of the vista,
But were stopped by the door of a tomb—
By the door of a legended tomb ;
And I said—“ What is written, sweet sister,
On the door of this legended tomb ? ”
She replied—“ Ulalume—Ulalume—
'Tis the vault of thy lost Ulalume ! ”

Then my heart it grew ashen and sober
As the leaves that were crispèd and sere—
As the leaves that were withering and sere,
And I cried—“ It was surely October
On *this* very night of last year
That I journeyed—I journeyed down here—
That I brought a dread burden down here—
On this night of all nights in the year,
Ah ! what demon has tempted me here ?
Well I know, now, this dim lake of Auber—
This misty mid region of Weir—
Well I know, now, this dank tarn of Auber,
This ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.”



TO MY MOTHER.

BECAUSE I feel that, in the heavens above,
The angels, whispering to one another,
Can find, among their burning terms of love,
None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
You who are more than mother unto me,
And fill my heart of hearts, where Death
installed you
In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
My mother—my own mother, who died early,
Was but the mother of myself; but you
Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
By that infinity with which my wife
Was dearer to my soul than its soul-life.

THE BELLS.

I.

HEAR the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells !
What a world of merriment their melody foretells !
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night !

E

While the stars that oversprinkle
 All the heavens, seem to twinkle
 With a crystalline delight ;
 Keeping time, time, time,
 In a sort of Runic rhyme,
 To the tintinabulation that so musically wells
 From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells—
 From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II.

HEAR the mellow wedding bells,
 Golden bells !
 What a world of happiness their harmony foretells !
 Through the balmy air of night
 How they ring out their delight !
 From the molten-golden notes,
 And all in tune,
 What a liquid ditty floats
 To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
 On the moon !
 Oh, from the sounding cells,
 What a gush of euphony voluminously wells !
 How it swells !
 How it dwells
 On the Future ! how it tells
 Of the rapture that impels

To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells !

III.

HEAR the loud alarm bells—
Brazen bells !

What a tale of terror now their turbulency tells !
In the startled ear of night
How they scream out their affright !
Too much horrified to speak,
They can only shriek, shriek,
Out of tune,

In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire.

Leaping higher, higher, higher,
With a desperate desire,
And a resolute endeavour,
Now—now to sit or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
Oh, the bells, bells, bells !
What a tale their terror tells
Of Despair !

How they clang, and clash, and roar !
What a horror they outpour

On the bosom of the palpitating air !
 Yet the ear it fully knows,
 By the twanging,
 And the clanging,
 How the danger ebbs and flows ;
 Yet the ear distinctly tells ;
 In the jangling
 And the wrangling,
 How the danger sinks and swells,
 By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the
 Of the bells— [bells—
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells—
 In the clamour and the clangour of the bells !

IV.

HEAR the tolling of the bells—
 Iron bells ! [compels !
 What a world of solemn thought their monody
 In the silence of the night,
 How we shiver with affright
 At the melancholy menace of their tone !
 For every sound that floats
 From the rust within their throats
 Is a groan.
 And the people—ah, the people—
 They that dwell up in the steeple,

All alone,
And who tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone—
They are neither man nor woman—
They are neither brute nor human—
They are Ghouls :
And their kings it is who tolls ;
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls

A pæan from the bells !
And his merry bosom swells
With the pæan of the bells !
And he dances, and he yells ;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the pæan of the bells—
Of the bells—
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells—
Of the bells, bells, bells,
To the sobbing of the bells ;
Keeping time, time, time,
As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,

To the rolling of the bells—
 Of the bells, bells, bells,
 To the tolling of the bells,
 Of the bells, bells, bells, bells—
 Bells, bells, bells—
 To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

THE CONQUEROR WORM.

LO! 'tis a gala night
 Within the lonesome latter years!
 An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
 In veils, and drowned in tears,
 Sit in the theatre, to see
 A play of hopes and fears,
 While the orchestra breathes fitfully
 The music of the spheres.

Mimes, in the form of God on high,
 Mutter and mumble low,
 And hither and thither fly—
 Mere puppets they, who come and go
 At bidding of vast formless things
 That shift the scenery to and fro,
 Flapping from out their Condor wings
 Invisible Woe!

That motley drama—oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot !
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot,
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see, amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude !
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude !
It writhes !—it writhes !—with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And the angels sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbrued.

Out—out are the lights—out all !
And, over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm,
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, "Man,"
And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

ANNABEL LEE.

IT was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of ANNABEL LEE.
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child
In this kingdom by the sea :
But we loved with a love that was more than love—
I and my ANNABEL LEE,
With a love that the wingèd seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful ANNABEL LEE,
So that her high-born kinsman came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me—

Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud one night,
Chilling and killing my ANNABEL LEE.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we—
Of many far wiser than we—
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE :

For the moon never beams without bringing me
dreams

Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;
And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE ;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling—my darling—my life and my bride,
In the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.



TO —————

I HEED not that my earthly lot
Hath little of Earth in it—
That years of love have been forgot
In the hatred of a minute—
I mourn not that the desolate
Are happier, sweet, than I,
But that *you* sorrow for *my* fate
Who am a passer by.

THE VALLEY OF UNREST.

ONCE it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell ;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers,
In the midst of which all day
The red sunlight lazily lay.
Now each visitor shall confess
The sad valley's restlessness.
Nothing there is motionless—

Nothing save the airs that brood
 Over the magic solitude.
 Ah, by no winds are stirred those trees
 That palpitate like the chill seas
 Around the misty Hebrides !
 Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
 That rustle through the unquiet heaven
 Uneasily, from morn till even,
 Over the violets there that lie
 In myriad types of the human eye—
 Over the lilies there that wave
 And weep above a nameless grave !
 They wave—from out their fragrant tops
 Eternal dews come down in drops.
 They weep—from off their delicate stems
 Perennial tears descend in gems.

 ISRAFEL.*

I N Heaven a spirit doth dwell
 “Whose heart-strings are a lute ;”
 None sing so wildly well
 As the angel Israfel,

* “And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God’s creatures.”—
 KORAN.

And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above
In her highest noon,
The enamoured moon
Blushes with love,
While, to listen, the red levin
(With the rapid Pleiades, even,
Which were seven),
Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir
And the other listening things)
That Israfeli's fire
Is owing to that lyre
By which he sits and sings—
The trembling living wire
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,
Where deep thoughts are a duty—
Where Love's a grown-up God—
Where the Houri glances are
Imbued with all the beauty
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfeli, who despisest
An unimpassioned song ;
To thee the laurels belong,
Best bard, because the wisest !
Merrily live, and long !

The ecstasies above
With thy burning measures suit—
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
With the fervour of thy lute—
Well may the stars be mute !

Yes, Heaven is thine ; but this
Is a world of sweets and sour ;
Our flowers are merely—flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
Where Israfel
Hath dwelt, and he where I,
He might not sing so wildly well
A mortal melody,
While a bolder note than this might swell
From my lyre within the sky.

SILENCE.

THERE are some qualities—some incorporate things,

That have a double life, which thus is made
A type of that twin entity which springs

From matter and light, evinc'd in solid and shade.

There is a two-fold *Silence*—sea and shore—

Body and soul. One dwells in lonely places,
Newly with grass o'ergrown; some solemn
graces,

Some human memories and tearful lore,
Render him terrorless : his name's "No More."
He is the corporate Silence : dread him not !

No power hath he of evil in himself;
But should some urgent fate (untimely lot !)

Bring thee to meet his shadow (nameless elf,
That haunteth the lone regions where hath trod
No foot of man), commend thyself to God !

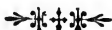
TO ZANTE.

FAIR isle, that from the fairest of all flowers,
Thy gentlest of all gentle names dost take !
How many memories of what radiant hours
At sight of thee and thine at once awake !

How many scenes of what departed bliss !
 How many thoughts of what entombèd hopes :
 How many visions of a maiden that is
 No more—no more upon thy verdant slopes !
No more ! alas, that magical sad sound
 Transforming all ! Thy charms shall please *no*
more,
 Thy memory *no more !* Accursèd ground !
 Henceforth I hold thy flower-enamelled shore,
 O hyacinthine isle ! O purple Zante !
 “ Isola d’oro ! Fior di Levante ! ”

TO F——S S. O——D.

THOU wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart
 From its present pathway part not !
 Being everything which now thou art,
 Be nothing which thou art not.
 So with the world thy gentle ways,
 Thy grace, thy more than beauty,
 Shall be an endless theme of praise,
 And love—a simple duty.



BRIDAL BALLAD.

THE ring is on my hand,
And the wreath is on my brow ;
Satins and jewels grand
Are all at my command,
And I am happy now.

And my lord he loves me well ;
But, when first he breathed his vow, . . .
I felt my bosom swell—
For the words rang as a knell,
And the voice seemed *his* who fell
In the battle down the dell,
And who is happy now.

But he spoke to re-assure me,
And he kissed my pallid brow,
While a reverie came o'er me,
And to the churchyard bore me,
And I sighed to him before me,
Thinking him dead D'Elormie,
“ Oh, I am happy now ! ”

And thus the words were spoken,
And thus the plighted vow ;

And though my faith be broken,
And though my heart be broken,
Behold the golden token
That *proves* me happy now !

Would God I could awaken !
For I dream I know not how,
And my soul is sorely shaken
Lest an evil step be taken—
Lest the dead who is forsaken
May not be happy now.

THE HAUNTED PALACE.

IN the greenest of our valleys
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
It stood there !
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair !

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow,

(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago),
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A wingèd odour went away.

Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically,
To a lute's well-tunèd law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(Porphyrogene !)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch's high estate.

(Ah, let us mourn !—for never morrow
Shall draw upon him desolate !)
And round about his home, the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

And travellers now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms, that move fantastically
To a discordant melody,
While, like a ghastly rapid river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out for ever
And laugh—but smile no more.

EULALIE.

I DWELT alone
In a world of moan
And my soul was a stagnant tide,
Till the fair and gentle Eulalie became my blushing
bride—
Till the yellow-haired young Eulalie became my
smiling bride.

Ah less—less bright
 The stars of the night
 Than the eyes of the radiant girl !
 And never a flake
 That the vapour can make
 With the moon-tints of purple and pearl,
 Can vie with the modest Eulalie's most unregarded
 curl—
 Can compare with the bright-eyed Eulalie's most
 humble and careless curl.

Now Doubt—now Pain
 Come never again,
 For her soul gives me sigh for sigh,
 And all the day long
 Shines bright and strong,
 Astartè within the sky, [eye—
 While ever to her dear Eulalie upturns her matron
 While ever to her young Eulalie upturns her violet
 eye.

TO F——

BELOVED ! amid the earnest woes
 That crowd around my earthly path—
 (Drear path, alas ! where grows
 Not even one lonely rose)—
 My soul at least a solace hath

In dreams of thee, and therein knows
An Eden of bland repose.

And thus thy memory is to me
Like some enchanted far-off isle
In some tumultuous sea—
Some ocean throbbing far and free
With storms—but where meanwhile
Serenest skies continually
Just o'er that one bright island smile.

TO ONE IN PARADISE.

THOU wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers,
And all the flowers were mine.

Ah, dream too bright to last !
Ah, starry Hope ! that didst arise
But to be overcast !
A voice from out the Future cries,
“ On ! on ! ”—but o'er the Past
(Dim gulf !) my spirit hovering lies
Mute, motionless, aghast !

For, alas ! alas ! with me
 The light of Life is o'er !
 “ No more—no more—no more—”
 (Such language holds the solemn sea
 To the sands upon the shore)
 Shall bloom the thunder blasted tree,
 Or the stricken eagle soar !

And all my days are trances,
 And all my nightly dreams
 Are where thy dark eye glances,
 And where thy footstep gleams—
 In what ethereal dances,
 By what eternal streams.

DREAMLAND.

BY a route obscure and lonely,
 Haunted by ill angels only,
 Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
 On a black throne reigns upright,
 I have reached these lands but newly
 From an ultimate dim Thule—
 From a wild, weird clime that lieth sublime,
 Out of SPACE—out of TIME.

Bottomless vales and boundless floods,
And chasms, and caves, and Titan woods,
With forms that no man can discover
From the dews that drip all over ;
Mountains toppling evermore
Into seas without a shore ;
Seas that restlessly aspire,
Surging, unto skies of fire ;
Lakes that endlessly outspread
Their lone waters—lone and dead—
Their still waters—still and chilly
With the snow of the lolling lily.
By the lakes that thus outspread
Their lone waters—lone and dead—
Their sad waters—sad and chilly
With the snows of the lolling lily—
By the mountains—near the river
Murmuring lowly, murmuring ever—
By the grey woods—by the swamp
Where the toad and the newt encamp—
By the dismal tarns and pools
 Where dwell the Ghouls—
By each spot the most unholy—
In each nook most melancholy,
There the traveller meets aghast
Sheeted Memories of the Past—
Shrouded forms that start and sigh

As they pass the wanderer by—
White-robed forms of friends long given,
In agony, to the Earth—and Heaven.
For the heart whose woes are legion
'Tis a peaceful, soothing region—
For the spirit that walks in shadow
'Tis—oh, 'tis an Eldorado !
But the traveller, travelling through it,
May not—dare not openly view it ;
Never its mysteries are exposed
To the weak human eye unclosed ;
So wills its King, who hath forbid
The uplifting of the fringed lid ;
And thus the sad Soul that here passes
Beholds it but through darkened glasses.

By a route obscure and lonely,
Haunted by ill angels only,
Where an Eidolon, named NIGHT,
On a black throne reigns upright,
I have wandered home but newly
From this ultimate dim Thule.



HYMN.

AT morn—at noon—at twilight dim—
Maria ! thou hast heard my hymn !
In joy and woe—in good and ill—
Mother of God, be with me still !
When the Hours flew brightly by,
And not a cloud obscured the sky,
My soul, lest it should truant be,
Thy grace did guide to thine and thee ;
Now, when storms of Fate o'ercast
Darkly my Present and my Past,
Let my Future radiant shine
With sweet hopes of thee and thine !

THE SLEEPER.

AT midnight, in the month of June,
I stand beneath the mystic moon.
An opiate vapour, dewy, dim,
Exhales from out her golden rim,
And, softly dripping, drop by drop,
Upon the quiet mountain top,
Steals drowsily and musically
Into the universal valley.

The rosemary nods upon the grave ;
The lily lolls upon the wave ;
Wrapping the fog about its breast,
The ruin moulders into rest ;
Looking like Lethe, see ! the lake
A conscious slumber seems to take,
And would not, for the world, awake.
All Beauty sleeps ! and lo ! where lies
(Her casement open to the skies)
Irene, with her Destinies ?

Oh, lady bright ! can it be right—
This window open to the night ?
The wanton airs, from the tree-top,
Laughingly through the lattice drop—
The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,
Flit through thy chamber in and out,
And wave the curtain canopy
So fitfully—so fearfully—
Above the close and fringed lid
'Neath which thy slumb'ring soul lies hid,
That, o'er the floor and down the wall,
Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall !
Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear ?
Why and what art thou dreaming here ?
Sure thou art come o'er far-off seas,
A wonder to these garden trees !

Strange is thy pallor ! strange thy dress !
Strange, above all, thy length of tress,
And this all solemn silentness !

The lady sleeps. Oh, may her sleep,
Which is enduring, so be deep !
Heaven have her in its sacred keep !
This chamber changed for one more holy,
This bed for one more melancholy,
I pray to God that she may lie
For ever with unopened eye,
While the dim sheeted ghosts go by !

My love, she sleeps ! Oh, may her sleep
As it is lasting, so be deep !
Soft may the worms about her creep !
Far in the forest, dim and old,
For her may some tall vault unfold—
Some vault that oft hath flung its black
And wingèd panels fluttering back,
Triumphant, o'er the crested palls,
Of her grand family funerals—
Some sepulchre, remote, alone,
Against whose portal she hath thrown,
In childhood, many an idle stone—
Some tomb from out whose sounding door
She ne'er shall force an echo more,

Thrilling to think, poor child of sin !
It was the dead who groaned within.

FOR ANNIE.

THANK Heaven ! the crisis—
The danger is past,
And the lingering illness
Is over at last—
And the fever called " Living "
Is conquered at last.

Sadly, I know
I am shorn of my strength,
And no muscle I move
As I lie at full length—
But no matter—I feel
I am better at length.

And I rest so composedly
Now, in my bed,
That any beholder
Might fancy me dead—
Might start at beholding me,
Thinking me dead.

The moaning and groaning,
The sighing and sobbing,
Are quieted now,
With that horrible throbbing
At heart—ah, that horrible,
Horrible throbbing !

The sickness—the nausea—
The pitiless pain—
Have ceased, with the fever
That maddened my brain—
With the fever called “ Living ”
That burned in my brain.

And oh ! of all tortures
That torture the worst
Has abated—the terrible
Torture of thirst
For the naphthaline river
Of Passion accurst—
I have drunk of a water
That quenches all thirst—

Of a water that flows,
With a lullaby sound,
From a spring but a very few
Feet under ground—

From a cavern not very far
Down under ground.

And ah ! let it never
Be foolishly said
That my room it is gloomy,
And narrow my bed ;
For man never slept
In a different bed—
And, to *sleep*, you must slumber
In just such a bed.

My tantalised spirit
Here blandly reposes,
Forgetting, or never
Regretting its roses—
Its old agitations
Of myrtles and roses :

For now, while so quietly
Lying, it fancies
A holier odour
About it, of pansies—
A rosemary odour,
Commingled with pansies—
With rue and the beautiful
Puritan pansies.

And so it lies happily,
 Bathing in many
A dream of the truth
 And the beauty of Annie—
Drowned in a bath
 Of the tresses of Annie.

She tenderly kissed me,
 She fondly caressed,
And then I fell gently
 To sleep on her breast—
Deeply to sleep
 From the heaven of her breast.

When the light was extinguished,
 She covered me warm,
And she prayed to the angels
 To keep me from harm—
To the queen of the angels
 To shield me from harm.

And I lie so composedly,
 Now, in my bed
(Knowing her love),
 That you fancy me dead—
And I rest so contentedly,
 Now, in my bed

(With her love at my breast),
That you fancy me dead—
That you shudder to look at me,
Thinking me dead—

But my heart it is brighter
Than all of the many
Stars in the sky,
For it sparkles with Annie—
It glows with the light
Of the love of my Annie—
With the thought of the light
Of the eyes of my Annie.

ELDORADO.

GAILY bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow

Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
“Shadow,” said he,
“Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?”

“Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,”
The shade replied—
“If you seek for Eldorado!”

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM.

TAKE this kiss upon the brow !
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream ;

Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less *gone*?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

THE CITY IN THE SEA.

LO! Death has reared himself a throne
In a strange city lying alone
Far down within the dim West,

Where the good, and the bad, and the worst,
and the best
Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines, and palaces, and towers
(Time-eaten towers that tremble not !)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town ;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently—
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free—
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers—
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathèd friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.

Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,

While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves ;
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye—
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed ;
For no ripples curl, alas !
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swelling tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea—
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air !
The wave—there is a movement there !
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow—
The hours are breathing faint and low—
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones
Shall do it reverence.

SCENES FROM "POLITIAN."

I.

ROME.—*A hall in a palace.* ALESSANDRA and
CASTIGLIONE.

ALESSANDRA. Thou art sad, Castiglione.

CASTIGLIONE. Sad!—not I.

Oh, I'm the happiest, happiest man in Rome!
A few days more, thou knowest, my Alessandra,
Will make thee mine. Oh, I am very happy!

ALESSANDRA. Methinks thou hast a singular
way of showing

Thy happiness!—what ails thee, cousin of mine?
Why didst thou sigh so deeply?

CASTIGLIONE. Did I sigh?

I was not conscious of it. It is a fashion,
A silly—a most silly fashion I have
When I am *very* happy. Did I sigh? [*Sighing.*]

ALESSANDRA. Thou didst. Thou art not well.
Thou hast indulged

Too much of late, and I am vexed to see it.
Late hours and wine, Castiglione—these
Will ruin thee! thou art already altered—
Thy looks are haggard—nothing so wears away
The constitution as late hours and wine.

CASTIGLIONE [*musings*]. Nothing, fair cousin,
 nothing—not even deep sorrow—
 Wears it away like evil hours and wine.
 I will amend.

ALESSANDRA. Do it! I would have thee drop
 Thy riotous company, too—fellows low born
 Ill suit the like with old Di Broglio's heir
 And Alessandra's husband.

CASTIGLIONE. I will drop them.

ALESSANDRA. Thou wilt—thou must.—Attend
 thou also more
 To thy dress and equipage—they are over plain
 For thy lofty rank and fashion—much depends
 Upon appearances.

CASTIGLIONE. I'll see to it.

ALESSANDRA. Then see to it!—pay more at-
 tention, sir,
 To a becoming marriage—much thou wantest
 In dignity.

CASTIGLIONE. Much, much, oh much I want
 In proper dignity.

ALESSANDRA [*haughtily*]. Thou mockest me,
 sir!

CASTIGLIONE [*abstractedly*]. Sweet, gentle
 Lalage!

ALESSANDRA. Heard I aright?
 I speak to him—he speaks of Lalage!

Sir Count! [*Places her hand on his shoulder.*]

What, art thou dreaming? he's not well!

What ails thee, sir?

CASTIGLIONE [*starting*]. Cousin! fair cousin!—
madam,

I crave thy pardon—indeed I am not well—

Your hand from off my shoulder, if you please.

This air is most oppressive!—madam—the Duke!

Enter DI BROGLIO.

DI BROGLIO. My son, I've news for thee!—
hey?—what's the matter?

[*Observing ALESSANDRA.*

I' the pouts? Kiss her, Castiglione! kiss her,

You dog! and make it up, I say, this minute!

I've news for you both. Politian is expected

Hourly in Rome—Politian, Earl of Leicester!

We'll have him at the wedding. 'Tis his first visit

To the imperial city.

ALESSANDRA. What! Politian

Of Britain, Earl of Leicester!

DI BROGLIO.

The same, my love.

We'll have him at the wedding. A man quite
young

In years but grey in fame. I have not seen him,

But Rumour speaks of him as of a prodigy

Pre-eminent in arts, and arms, and wealth,
And high descent. We'll have him at the wedding.

ALESSANDRA. I have heard much of this
Politian.

Gay, volatile, and giddy—is he not?
And little given to thinking.

DI BROGLIO. Far from it, love.
No branch, they say, of all philosophy
So deep abstruse he has not mastered it.
Learned as few are learned.

ALESSANDRA. 'Tis very strange!
I have known men have seen Politian
And sought his company. They speak of him
As of one who entered madly into life,
Drinking the cup of pleasure to the dregs.

CASTIGLIONE. Ridiculous! Now, I have seen
Politian
And know him well—nor learned nor mirthful he.
He is a dreamer and a man shut out
From common passions.

DI BROGLIO. Children, we disagree.
Let us go forth and taste the fragrant air
Of the garden. Did I dream, or did I hear
Politian was a *melancholy* man? [Exeunt.]

II.

ROME.—*A Lady's apartment, with a window open and looking into a garden. LALAGE, in deep mourning, reading at a table on which lies some books and a hand mirror. In the background JACINTA (a servant maid) leans carelessly upon a chair.*

LALAGE. Jacinta ! is it thou ?

JACINTA [*pertly*]. Yes, ma'am, I'm here.

LALAGE. I did not know, Jacinta, you were in waiting.

Sit down !—let not my presence trouble you—

Sit down !—for I am humble, most humble.

JACINTA [*aside*]. 'Tis time.

[JACINTA *seats herself in a side-long manner upon the chair, resting her elbows upon the back, and regarding her mistress with a contemptuous look. LALAGE continues to read.*

LALAGE. "It in another climate, so he said,
Bore a bright golden flower, but not i' this soil !"

[*Pauses—turns over some leaves, and resumes.*

"No lingering winters there, nor snow, nor shower,
But Ocean ever to refresh mankind
Breathes the shrill spirit of the western wind."
O beautiful !—most beautiful !—how like

To what my fevered soul doth dream of Heaven !
O happy land ! [*Pauses.*] She died !—the maiden
died !

O still more happy maiden who couldst die !
Jacinta ! [*JACINTA returns no answer, and
LALAGE presently resumes.*

Again ?—a similar tale
Told of a beauteous dame beyond the sea !
Thus speaketh one Ferdinand in the words of the
play—

"She died full young"—one Bossola answers
him—

"I think not so—her infelicity [*lady !*
Seemed to have years too many"—Ah luckless
Jacinta ! [*Still no answer.*

Here's a far sterner story,
But like—oh, very like in its despair—
Of that Egyptian queen, winning so easily
A thousand hearts—losing at length her own.
She died. Thus ended the history—and her maids
Lean over her and weep—two gentle maids
With gentle names—Eiros and Charmion !
Rainbow and Dove !—Jacinta !

JACINTA [*pettishly*]. Madame, what *is* it ?

LALAGE. Wilt thou, my good Jacinta, be so kind
As go down to the library and bring me
The Holy Evangelists ?

JACINTA. Pshaw ! [Exit.

LALAGE. If there be balm
For the wounded spirit in Gilead, it is there !
Dew in the night-time of my bitter trouble
Will there be found—"dew sweeter far than that
Which hangs like chains of pearl on Hermon hill."

[Re-enter JACINTA, and throws a volume on the table.

JACINTA. There, ma'am, 's the book. Indeed
she is very troublesome. [Aside.

LALAGE [astonished]. What didst thou say,
Jacinta ? have I done aught
To grieve thee or to vex thee ?—I am sorry,
For thou hast served me long, and ever been
Trustworthy and respectful. [Resumes her reading.

JACINTA. I can't believe
She has any more jewels—no—no—she gave me
all. [Aside.

LALAGE. What didst thou say, Jacinta ? Now
I bethink me
Thou hast not spoken lately of thy wedding.
How fares good Ugo ?—and when is it to be ?
Can I do aught ?—is there no farther aid
Thou needst, Jacinta ?

JACINTA. Is there no farther aid !
That's meant for me. [Aside.] I'm sure, madame,
you need not

Be always throwing those jewels in my teeth.

LALAGE. Jewels ! Jacinta—now indeed, Jacinta, I thought not of the jewels.

JACINTA. Oh ! perhaps not !
But then I might have sworn it. After all,
There's Ugo says the ring is only paste,
For he's sure the Count Castiglione never
Would have given a real diamond to such as you ;
And at the best I'm certain, madam, you cannot
Have use for jewels *now*. But I might have sworn
it. [Exit.

*LALAGE bursts into tears, and leans her
head upon the table—after a short
pause raises it.*

LALAGE. Poor Lalage !—and is it come to this ?
Thy servant maid !—but courage !—'tis but a viper
Whom thou hast cherished to sting thee to the soul !
[Taking up the mirror.

Ha ! here at least's a friend—too much a friend
In earlier days—a friend will not deceive thee.
Fair mirror and true ! now tell me (for thou canst)
A tale—a pretty tale—and heed thou not
Though it be rife with woe. It answers me.
It speaks of sunken eyes, and wasted cheeks,
And beauty long deceased—remembers me
Of Joy departed—Hope, the Seraph Hope,
Inurned and entombed !—now, in a tone

Low, sad, and solemn, but most audible,
 Whispers of early grave untimely yawning
 For ruined maid. Fair mirror and true!—thou
 liest not!

Thou hast no end to gain—no heart to break—
 Castiglione lied who said he loved—
 Thou true—he false!—false!—false!

[*While she speaks, a MONK enters her apartment, and approaches unobserved.*

MONK. Refuge thou hast,
 Sweet daughter! in Heaven. Think of eternal
 things;

Give up thy soul to penitence, and pray!

LALAGE [*arising hurriedly*]. I cannot pray!—
 My soul is at war with God!

The frightful sounds of merriment below
 Disturb my senses—go! I cannot pray—
 The sweet airs from the garden worry me!
 Thy presence grieves me—go!—thy priestly
 raiment

Fills me with dread—thy ebony crucifix
 With horror and awe!

MONK. Think of thy precious soul!

LALAGE. Think of my early days!—think of my
 father

And mother in heaven! think of our quiet home,
 And the rivulet that ran before the door!

Think of my little sisters!—think of them!
 And think of me!—think of my trusting love
 And confidence—his vows—my ruin—think—think
 Of my unspeakable misery!—begone!
 Yet stay!—yet stay!—what was it thou saidst of
 prayer

And penitence? Didst thou not speak of faith
 And vows before the Throne?

MONK. I did.

LALAGE. 'Tis well.

There *is* a vow were fitting should be made—
 A sacred vow, imperative, and urgent,
 A solemn vow!

MONK. Daughter, this zeal is well!

LALAGE. Father, this zeal is anything but well!
 Hast thou a crucifix fit for this thing?
 A crucifix whereon to register

This sacred vow? [*He hands her his own.*]

Not that—Oh!—no!—no!—no! [*Shuddering.*]
 Not that! Not that!—I tell thee, holy man,
 Thy raiments and thy ebony cross affright me!
 Stand back! I have a crucifix myself—
 I have a crucifix! Methinks 'twere fitting
 The deed—the vow—the symbol of the deed—
 And the deed's register should tally, father!

[*Draws a cross-handled dagger, and raises
 it on high.*]

Behold the cross wherewith a vow like mine
Is written in heaven !

MONK. Thy words are madness, daughter,
And speak a purpose unholy—thy lips are livid—
Thine eyes are wild—tempt not the wrath divine !
Pause ere too late !—oh be not—be not rash !
Swear not the oath—oh swear it not ?

LALAGE. 'Tis sworn !

III.

An apartment in a palace. POLITIAN and
BALDAZZAR.

BALDAZZAR. Arouse thee now, Politian !
Thou must not—nay, indeed, indeed, thou shalt not
Give way unto these humours. Be thyself !
Shake off the idle fancies that beset thee,
And live, for now thou diest !

POLITIAN. Not so, Baldazzar !
Surely I live.

BALDAZZAR. Politian, it doth grieve me
To see thee thus.

POLITIAN. Baldazzar, it doth grieve me
To give thee cause for grief, my honoured friend.
Command me, sir ! what wouldst thou have me do ?

At thy behest I will shake off that nature
Which from my forefathers I did inherit,
Which with my mother's milk I did imbibe,
And be no more Politian, but some other.
Command me, sir !

BALDAZZAR. To the field then—to the field—
To the senate or the field.

POLITIAN. Alas ! alas !
There is an imp would follow me even there !
There is an imp *hath* followed me even there !
There is——what voice was that ?

BALDAZZAR. I heard it not.
I heard not any voice except thine own,
And the echo of thine own.

POLITIAN. Then I but dreamed.

BALDAZZAR. Give not thy soul to dreams : the
camp—the court
Befit thee—Fame awaits thee—Glory calls—
And her, the trumpet-tongued, thou wilt not hear
In hearkening to imaginary sounds
And phantom voices.

POLITIAN. It *is* a phantom voice !
Didst thou not hear it *then* ?

BALDAZZAR. I heard it not.

POLITIAN. Thou heardst it not ?——Baldazzar,
speak no more
To me, Politian, of thy camps and courts.

Oh ! I am sick, sick, sick, even unto death,
 Of the hollow and high-sounding vanities
 Of the populous Earth ! Bear with me yet
 awhile !

We have been boys together—school-fellows—
 And now are friends—yet shall not be so long—
 For in the eternal city thou shalt do me
 A kind and gentle office, and a Power—
 A Power august, benignant and supreme—
 Shall then absolve thee of all farther duties
 Unto thy friend.

BALDAZZAR. Thou speakest a fearful riddle ;
 I *will* not understand.

POLITIAN. Yet now as Fate
 Approaches, and the Hours are breathing low,
 The sands of Time are changed to golden grains,
 And dazzle me, Baldazzar. Alas ! alas !
 I *cannot* die, having within my heart
 So keen a relish for the beautiful
 As hath been kindled within it. Methinks the air
 Is balmier now than it was wont to be—
 Rich melodies are floating in the winds—
 A rarer loveliness bedecks the earth—
 And with a holier lustre the quiet moon
 Sitteth in heaven.—Hist ! hist ! thou canst not say
 Thou hearest not *now*, Baldazzar ?

BALDAZZAR. Indeed, I hear not.

H

POLITIAN. Not hear it !—listen now—listen !—
 the faintest sound,
 And yet the sweetest that ear ever heard !
 A lady's voice !—and sorrow in the tone !
 Baldazzar, it oppresses me like a spell !
 Again !—again !—how solemnly it falls
 Into my heart of hearts ! that eloquent voice
 Surely I never heard—yet it were well
 Had I *but* heard it with its thrilling tones
 In earlier days !

BALDAZZAR. I myself hear it now.
 Be still ?—the voice, if I mistake not greatly,
 Proceeds from yonder lattice—which you may see
 Very plainly through the window—it belongs,
 Does it not ? unto this palace of the Duke.
 The singer is undoubtedly beneath
 The roof of his Excellency—and perhaps
 Is even that Alessandra of whom he spoke
 As the betrothed of Castiglione,
 His son and heir.

POLITIAN. Be still !—it comes again !

Voice [very faintly].

“And is thy heart so strong
 As for to leave me thus,
 Who hath loved thee so long,
 In wealth and woe among ?

And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus ?
Say nay—say nay !”

BALDAZZAR. The song is English, and I oft
have heard it
In merry England—never so plaintively—
Hist ! hist ! it comes again !

Voice [more loudly].

“ Is it so strong
As for to leave me thus,
Who hath loved thee so long,
In wealth and woe among ?
And is thy heart so strong
As for to leave me thus ?
Say nay—say nay !”

BALDAZZAR. 'Tis hushed, and all is still !

POLITIAN. All *is not* still.

BALDAZZAR. Let us go down.

POLITIAN. Go down, Baldazzar, go !

BALDAZZAR. The hour is growing late—the
Duke awaits us—

Thy presence is expected in the hall

Below. What ails thee, Earl Politian ?

Voice [distinctly.]

"Who hath loved thee so long,
In wealth and woe among,
And is thy heart so strong?
Say nay—say nay!"

BALDAZZAR. Let us descend!—'tis time.
Politian, give
These fancies to the wind. Remember, pray,
Your bearing lately savoured much of rudeness
Unto the Duke. Arouse thee! and remember!

POLITIAN. Remember? I do. Lead on! I *do*
remember. *[Going.*

Let us descend. Believe me, I would give,
Freely would give, the broad lands of my earldom
To look upon the face hidden by yon lattice—
"To gaze upon that veiled face, and hear
Once more that silent tongue."

BALDAZZAR. Let me beg you, sir,
Descend with me—the Duke may be offended.
Let us go down, I pray you.

Voice [loudly].

"Say nay!—say nay!"

POLITIAN *[aside]*. 'Tis strange!—'tis very
strange—methought the voice

Chimed in with my desires and bade me stay !
 [*Approaching the window.*]

Sweet voice ! I heed thee, and will surely stay.
 Now be this Fancy, by Heaven, or be it Fate,
 Still will I not descend. Baldazzar, make
 Apology unto the Duke for me ;
 I go not down to-night.

BALDAZZAR. Your lordship's pleasure
 Shall be attended to. Good night, Politian.

POLITIAN. Good night, my friend, good night.

IV.

The Gardens of a Palace—Moonlight. LALAGE
 and POLITIAN.

LALAGE. And dost thou speak of love
 To *me*, Politian?—dost thou speak of love
 To Lalage?—ah woe—ah woe is me !
 This mockery is most cruel—most cruel indeed !

POLITIAN. Weep not ! oh, sob not thus !—thy
 bitter tears
 Will madden me. Oh mourn not, Lalage—
 Be comforted ! I know—I know it all,
 And *still* I speak of love. Look at me, brightest

And beautiful Lalage !—turn here thine eyes !
Thou askest me if I could speak of love,
Knowing what I know, and seeing what I have seen.
Thou askest me that—and thus I answer thee—
Thus on my bended knee I answer thee. [*Kneeling.*
Sweet Lalage, *I love thee—love thee—love thee ;*
Thro' good and ill—thro' weal and woe I *love thee.*
Not mother, with her first-born on her knee,
Thrills with intenser love than I for thee,
Not on God's altar, in any time or clime,
Burned there a holier fire than burneth now
Within my spirit for *thee.* And do I love ? [*Arising.*
Even for thy woes I love thee—even for thy woes—
Thy beauty and thy woes.

LALAGE. Alas, proud Earl,
Thou dost forget thyself, remembering me !
How, in thy father's halls, among the maidens
Pure and reproachless of thy princely line,
Could the dishonoured Lalage abide ?
Thy wife, and with a tainted memory—
My seared and blighted name, how could it tally
With the ancestral honours of thy house,
And with thy glory ?

POLITIAN. Speak not to me of glory !
I hate—I loathe the name ; I do abhor
The unsatisfactory and ideal thing.
Art thou not Lalage, and I Politian ?

Do I not love—art thou not beautiful—
 What need we more? Ha! glory!—now speak
 not of it :

By all I hold most sacred and most solemn—
 By all my wishes now—my fears hereafter—
 By all I scorn on earth and hope in heaven—
 There is no deed I would more glory in,
 Than in thy cause to scoff at this same glory
 And trample it under foot. What matters it—
 What matters it, my fairest, and my best,
 That we go down unhonoured and forgotten
 Into the dust—so we descend together.

Descend together—and then—and then perchance—

LALAGE. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

POLITIAN. And then perchance

Arise together, Lalage, and roam

The starry and quiet dwellings of the blest,
 And still—

LALAGE. Why dost thou pause, Politian?

POLITIAN. And still *together—together.*

LALAGE. Now, Earl of Leicester!

Thou *lovest* me, and in my heart of hearts

I feel thou *lovest* me truly.

POLITIAN. Oh, Lalage!

[*Throwing himself upon his knee.*

And *lovest* thou *me*?

LALAGE. Hist! hush! within the gloom

Of yonder trees methought a figure pass'd—
A spectral figure, soleinn, and slow, and noiseless—
Like the grim shadow Conscience, solemn and
noiseless. [Walks across and returns.

I was mistaken—'twas but a giant bough
Stirred by the autumn wind. Politian !

POLITIAN. My Lalage—my love ! why art thou
moved ?

Why dost thou turn so pale ? Not Conscience
'self,

Far less a shadow which thou likenest to it,
Should shake the firm spirit thus. But the night
wind

Is chilly—and these melancholy boughs
Throw over all things a gloom.

LALAGE. Politian !

Thou speakest to me of love. Knowest thou the
land

With which all tongues are busy—a land new
found—

Miraculously found by one of Genoa—

A thousand leagues within the golden west ?

A fairy land of flowers, and fruit, and sunshine,

And crystal lakes, and over-arching forests,

And mountains, around whose towering summits
the winds

Of Heaven untrammelled flow—which air to breathe

Is Happiness now, and will be Freedom hereafter,
In days that are to come?

POLITIAN. O wilt thou—wilt thou
Fly to that Paradise—my Lalage, wilt thou
Fly thither with me? There care shall be forgotten,
And Sorrow shall be no more, and Eros be all.
And life shall then be mine, for I will live
For thee, and in thine eyes—and thou shalt be
No more a mourner—but the radiant Joys
Shall wait upon thee, and the angel Hope
Attend thee ever; and I will kneel to thee
And worship thee, and call thee my beloved,
My own, my beautiful, my love, my wife,
My all; oh, wilt thou—wilt thou, Lalage,
Fly thither with me?

LALAGE. A deed is to be done—
Castiglione lives!

POLITIAN. And he shall die! [Exit.

LALAGE [after a pause]. And—he—shall—
die!———alas!

Castiglione die? Who spoke the words?
Where am I?—what was it he said?—Politian!
Thou *art* not gone—thou art not *gone*, Politian!
I *feel* thou art not gone—yet dare not look,
Lest I behold thee not; thou *couldst* not go
With those words upon thy lips—O, speak to me!
And let me hear thy voice—one word—one word,

To say thou art not gone,—one little sentence,
 To say how thou dost scorn—how thou dost hate
 My womanly weakness. Ha! ha! thou *art* not
 gone—

O speak to me! I *knew* thou wouldst not go.
 I knew thou wouldst not, couldst not, *durst* not go.
 Villain, thou *art* not gone—thou mockest me!
 And thus I clutch thee—thus!——He is gone, he
 is gone—

Gone—gone. Where am I?——'tis well—'tis very
 well!

So that the blade be keen—the blow be sure,
 'Tis well, 'tis *very* well—alas! alas!

V.

The Suburbs. POLITIAN *alone.*

POLITIAN. This weakness grows upon me. I
 am faint,

And much I fear me ill—it will not do
 To die ere I have lived!—Stay—stay thy hand,
 O Azrael, yet awhile!—Prince of the Powers
 Of Darkness and the Tomb, O pity me!
 O pity me! let me not perish now,
 In the budding of my Paradisal Hope!

Give me to live yet—yet a little while :
 'Tis I who pray for life—I who so late
 Demanded but to die !—what sayeth the Count ?

Enter BALDAZZAR.

BALDAZZAR. That, knowing no cause of quarrel
 or of feud
 Between the Earl Politian and himself,
 He doth decline your cartel.

POLITIAN. *What didst thou say ?*
 What answer was it you brought me, good Bal-
 dazzar ?

With what excessive fragrance the zephyr comes
 Laden from yonder bowers !—a fairer day,
 Or one more worthy Italy, methinks
 No mortal eyes have seen !—*what* said the Count ?

BALDAZZAR. That he, Castiglione, not being
 aware
 Of any feud existing, or any cause
 Of quarrel between your lordship and himself,
 Cannot accept the challenge.

POLITIAN. *It is most true—*
 All this is very true. When saw you, sir,
 When saw you now, Baldazzar, in the frigid
 Ungenial Britain which we left so lately,
 A heaven so calm as this—so utterly free
 From the evil taint of clouds ?—and he did *say* ?

BALDAZZAR. No more, my lord, than I have
told you, sir,
The Count Castiglione will not fight,
Having no cause for quarrel.

POLITIAN. Now this is true—
All very true. Thou art my friend, Baldazzar,
And I have not forgotten it—thou'lt do me
A piece of service ; wilt thou go back and say
Unto this man, that I, the Earl of Leicester,
Hold him a villain?—thus much, I pr'ythee, say
Unto the Count—it is exceeding just
He should have cause for quarrel.

BALDAZZAR. My lord!—my friend!—

POLITIAN [*aside*]. 'Tis he—he comes himself!
[*aloud*] thou reasonest well. [message—
I know what thou wouldst say—not send the
Well!—I will think of it—I will not send it.
Now, pr'ythee, leave me—hither doth come a
person

With whom affairs of a most private nature
I would adjust.

BALDAZZAR. I go—to-morrow we meet,
Do we not?—at the Vatican.

POLITIAN. At the Vatican. [*Exit* BALDAZZAR.]

Enter CASTIGLIONE.

CASTIGLIONE. The Earl of Leicester here!

POLITIAN. I *am* the Earl of Leicester, and thou seest,

Dost thou not ? that I am here.

CASTIGLIONE. My lord, some strange, Some singular mistake—misunderstanding—Hath without doubt arisen : thou hast been urged Thereby, in heat of anger, to address Some words most unaccountable, in writing, To me, Castiglione ; the bearer being Baldazzar, Duke of Surrey. I am aware Of nothing which might warrant thee in this thing,

Having given thee no offence. Ha !—am I right ? 'Twas a mistake ?—undoubtedly—we all Do err at times.

POLITIAN. Draw, villain, and prate no more !

CASTIGLIONE. Ha !—draw ?—and villain ? have at thee then at once,

Proud Earl ! [Draws.

POLITIAN [*drawing*]. Thus to the expiatory tomb,

Untimely sepulchre, I do devote thee
In the name of Lalage !

CASTIGLIONE [*letting fall his sword, and recoiling to the extremity of the stage*]. Of Lalage ! Hold off—thy sacred hand !—avaunt, I say !
Avaunt—I will not fight thee—indeed, I dare not.

POLITIAN. Thou wilt not fight with me, didst say, Sir Count?

Shall I be baffled thus?—now this is well;
Didst say thou *darest* not? Ha!

CASTIGLIONE. I dare not—dare not—
Hold off thy hand—with that beloved name
So fresh upon thy lips I will not fight thee—
I cannot—dare not.

POLITIAN. Now, by my halidom
I do believe thee!—coward, I do believe thee!

CASTIGLIONE. Ha!—coward!—this may not be!
[*Clutches his sword, and staggers towards
POLITIAN, but his purpose is changed
before reaching him, and he falls upon his
knee at the feet of the Earl.*

Alas! my lord,
It is—it is—most true. In such a cause
I am the veriest coward. O pity me!

POLITIAN [*greatly softened*]. Alas!—I do—
indeed I pity thee.

CASTIGLIONE. And Lalage—

POLITIAN. *Scoundrel! arise and die!*

CASTIGLIONE. It needeth not be—thus—thus—
O let me die

Thus on my bended knee. It were most fitting
That in this deep humiliation I perish,
For in the fight I will not raise a hand

Against thee, Earl of Leicester. Strike thou home—
[Baring his bosom.

Here is no let or hindrance to thy weapon—
 Strike home. I *will not* fight thee.

POLITIAN. Now's Death and Hell !
 Am I not—am I not sorely—grievously tempted
 To take thee at thy word ? But, mark me, sir,
 Think not to fly me thus. Do thou prepare
 For public insult in the streets—before
 The eyes of the citizens. I'll follow thee—
 Like an avenging spirit I'll follow thee
 Even unto death. Before those whom thou lovest—
 Before all Rome I'll taunt thee, villain—I'll taunt
 thee,

Dost hear ? with *cowardice*—thou *wilt not* fight me ?
 Thou liest ! thou *shalt* ! [Exit.

CASTIGLIONE. Now this indeed is just !
 Most righteous, and most just, avenging Heaven !





Poems Written in Youth.

AL AARAAF.¹

PART I.

O ! NOTHING earthly save the ray
 (Thrown back from flowers) of Beauty's eye,
As in those gardens where the day
Springs from the gems of Circassy—
O ! nothing earthly save the thrill
Of melody in woodland rill—
Or (music of the passion-hearted)
Joy's voice so peacefully departed
That, like the murmur in the shell,
Its echo dwelleth and will dwell—
Oh, nothing of the dross of ours—
Yet all the beauty—all the flowers
That list our Love, and deck our bowers—
Adorn yon world afar, afar—
The wandering star.

'Twas a sweet time for Nesace—for there
Her world lay lolling on the golden air,
Near four bright suns—a temporary rest—
An oasis in desert of the blest.
Away—away—'mid seas of rays that roll
Empyrean splendour o'er th' unchained soul—
The soul that scares (the billows are so dense)
Can struggle to its destined eminence—
To distant spheres, from time to time, she rode,
And late to ours, the favoured one of God—
But, now, the ruler of an anchored realm,
She throws aside the sceptre—leaves the helm,
And, amid incense and high spiritual hymns,
Laves in quadruple light her angel limbs.

Now happiest, loveliest in yon lonely Earth,
Whence sprang the " Idea of Beauty " into birth
(Falling in wreaths thro' many a startled star,
Like woman's hair 'mid pearls, until, afar,
It lit on hills Achaian, and there dwelt),
She looked into Infinity—and knelt.
Rich clouds, for canopies, about her curled—
Fit emblems of the model of her world—
Seen but in beauty—not impeding sight
Of other beauty glittering thro' the light—
A wreath that twined each starry form around,
And all the opaled air in colour bound.

All hurriedly she knelt upon a bed
Of flowers : of lilies such as reared the head
On the fair Capo Deucato,² and sprang
So eagerly around about to hang
Upon the flying footsteps of—deep pride—
Of her³ who loved a mortal—and so died.
The Sephalica, budding with young bees,
Upreared its purple stem around her knees :
And gemmy flower,⁴ of Trebizond misnamed—
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it shamed
All other loveliness : its honied dew
(The fabled nectar that the heathen knew),
Deliriously sweet, was dropp'd from heaven,
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond—and on a sunny flower
So like its own above that, to this hour,
It still remaineth, torturing the bee
With madness, and unwonted reverie :
In heaven, and all its environs, the leaf
And blossom of the fairy plant, in grief
Disconsolate linger—grief that hangs her head,
Repenting follies that full long have fled,
Heaving her white breast to the balmy air,
Like guilty beauty, chastened, and more fair :
Nyctanthes too, as sacred as the light,
She fears to perfume, perfuming the night :
And Clytia⁵ pondering between many a sun,

While pettish tears adown her petals run :
 And that aspiring flower⁶ that sprang on Earth—
 And died, ere scarce exalted into birth,
 Bursting its odorous heart in spirit to wing
 Its way to heaven, from garden of a king :
 And Valisnerian lotus⁷ thither flown
 From struggling with the waters of the Rhone :
 And thy most lovely purple perfume,⁸ Zante !
 Isola d'oro !—Fior di Levante !
 And the Nelumbo bud that floats for ever ;
 With Indian Cupid⁹ down the holy river—
 Fair flowers, and fairy ! to whose care is given
 To bear¹⁰ the Goddess song, in odours, up to
 heaven :

“SPIRIT ! that dwellest where,
 In the deep sky,
 The terrible and fair
 In beauty vie !
 Beyond the line of blue—
 The boundary of the star
 Which turneth at the view
 Of thy barrier and thy bar—
 Of the barrier overgone
 By the comets who were cast
 From their pride, and from their throne
 To be drudges till the last—

To be carriers of fire
 (The red fire of their heart)
 With speed that may not tire,
 And with pain that shall not part—
 Who livest—*that* we know—
 In Eternity—we feel—
 But the shadow of whose brow
 What spirit shall reveal?
 Tho' the beings whom the Nesace,
 Thy messenger hath known,
 Have dreamed for thy Infinity
 A model¹¹ of their own—
 Thy will is done, O God!
 The star hath ridden high
 Thro' many a tempest, but she rode
 Beneath thy burning eye;
 And here, in thought, to thee—
 In thought that can alone
 Ascend thy empire and so be
 A partner of thy throne—
 By winged Fantasy,¹²
 My embassy is given,
 Till secrecy shall knowledge be
 In the environs of Heaven.”

She ceased—and buried then her burning cheek
 Abashed, amid the lilies there, to seek

A shelter from the fervour of His eye ;
For the stars trembled at the Deity.
She stirred not—breathed not—for a voice was there
How solemnly pervading the calm air !
A sound of silence on the startled ear
Which dreamy poets name “the music of the
sphere.”

Ours is a world of words : Quiet we call
“ Silence ”—which is the merest word of all.
All nature speaks, and e'en ideal things
Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings—
But ah ! not so when, thus, in realms on high
The eternal voice of God is passing by,
And the red winds are withering in the sky !

“ What tho' in worlds where sightless cycles¹⁸ run,
Linked to a little system, and one sun—
Where all my love is folly, and the crowd
Still think my terrors but the thunder cloud,
The storm, the earthquake, and the ocean-wrath—
(Ah ! will they cross me in my angrier-path ?)
What tho' in worlds which own a single sun
The sands of Time grow dimmer as they run,
Yet thine is my resplendency, so given
To bear my secrets thro' the upper heaven.
Leave tenantless thy crystal home, and fly,
With all thy train, athwart the moony sky—

Apart—like fire-flies¹⁴ in Sicilian night,
 And wing to other worlds another light !
 Divulge the secrets of thy embassy
 To the proud orbs that twinkle—and so be
 To ev'ry heart a barrier and a ban,
 Lest the stars totter in the guilt of man !”

Up rose the maiden in the yellow night,
 The single-moonèd eve—on Earth we plight
 Our faith to one love—and one moon adore—
 The birth-place of young Beauty had no more.
 As sprang that yellow star from downy hours,
 Up rose the maiden from her shrine of flowers,
 And bent o'er sheeny mountain and dim plain
 Her way—but left not yet her Therasæan¹⁵ reign.

PART II.

HIGH on a mountain of enamelled head—
 Such as the drowsy shepherd on his bed
 Of giant pasturage lying at his ease,
 Raising his heavy eyelid, starts and sees
 With many a muttered “hope to be forgiven”
 What time the moon is quadrated in heaven—
 Of rosy head, that towering far away
 Into the sunlit ether, caught the ray

Of sunken suns at eve—at noon of night, [light—
While the moon danced with the fair stranger
Upreared upon such height arose a pile
Of gorgeous columns on th' unburthened air,
Flashing from Parian marble that twin smile
Far down upon the wave that sparkled there,
And nursled the young mountain in its lair.
Of molten stars¹⁶ their pavement, such as fall
Thro' the ebon air, besilvering the pall
Of their own dissolution, while they die—
Adorning then the dwellings of the sky.
A dome, by linkèd light from heaven let down,
Sat gently on these columns as a crown—
A window of one circular diamond, there,
Looked out above into the purple air,
And rays from God shot down that meteor chain
And hallowed all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between th' Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapped his dusky wing.
But on the pillars seraph eyes have seen
The dimness of this world ; that greyish green
That Nature loves the best for Beauty's grave
Lurked in each cornice, round each architrave—
And every sculptured cherub thereabout,
That from his marble dwelling peerèd out,
Seemed earthly in the shadow of his niche—
Achaian statues in a world so rich ?

Friezes from Tadmor and Persepolis—¹⁷
From Balbec, and the stilly, clear abyss
Of beautiful Gomorrah ! Oh ! the wave¹⁸
Is now upon thee—but too late to save !

Sound loves to revel in a summer night :
Witness the murmur of the grey twilight
That stole upon the ear, in Eyraco,¹⁹
Of many a wild star-gazer long ago—
That stealeth ever on the ear of him
Who, musing, gazeth on the distance dim,
And sees the darkness coming as a cloud—
Is not its form—its voice—most palpable and
loud?"²⁰

But who is this ?—it cometh—and it brings
A music with it—'tis the rush of wings—
A pause—and then a sweeping, falling strain,
And Nesace is in her halls again.
From the wild energy of wanton haste
Her cheeks were flushing, and her lips apart ;
And zone that clung around her gentle waist
Had burst beneath the heaving of her heart.
Within the centre of that hall to breathe
She paused and panted, Zante ! all beneath,
The fairy light that kissed her golden hair
And longed to rest, yet could but sparkle there !

Young flowers were whispering in melody²¹
To happy flowers that night—and tree to tree ;
Fountains were gushing music as they fell
In many a star-lit grove, or moon-lit dell ;
Yet silence came upon material things—
Fair flowers, bright waterfalls, and angel wings—
And sound alone that from the spirit sprang
Bore burthen to the charm the maiden sang :

“’Neath blue-bell or streamer—
Or tufted wild spray
That keeps, from the dreamer,
The moonbeam away—²²
Bright beings ! that ponder,
With half-closing eyes
On the stars, which your wonder
Hath drawn from the skies,
Till they glance through the shade, and
Come down to your brow
Like——eyes of the maiden
Who call on you now—
Arise ! from your dreaming
In violet bowers,
To duty beseeming
These star-litten hours—
And shake from your tresses
Encumbered with dew

The breath of those kisses
That cumber them too—
(O ! how, without you, Love !
Could angels be blest ?)
Those kisses of true love
That lulled ye to rest !
Up !—shake from your wing
Each hindering thing :
The dew of the night—
It would weigh down your flight
And true love caresses—
O ! leave them apart !
They are light on the tresses,
But lead on the heart.

“ Ligeia ! Ligeia !
My beautiful one !
Whose harshest idea
Will to melody run,
Oh ! is it thy will
On the breezes to toss ?
Or capriciously still,
Like the lone Albatross,²³
Incumbent on night
(As she on the air)
To keep watch with delight
On the harmony there ?

“ Ligeia ! wherever
Thy image may be,
No magic shall sever
Thy music from thee.
Thou hast bound many eyes
In a dreamy sleep—
But the strains shall arise
Which *thy* vigilance keep—
The sound of the rain
Which leaps down to the flower
And dances again
In the rhythm of the shower—
The murmur that springs²⁴
From the growing of grass
Are the music of things—
But are modelled, alas !—
Away, then, my dearest,
Oh ! hie thee away
To springs that lie clearest
Beneath the moon-ray—
To lone lake that smiles,
In its dream of deep rest,
At the many star-isles
That enjewel its breast—
Where the wild flowers ‘creeping’
Have mingled their shade,
On its margin is sleeping

Full many a maid—
 Some have left the cool glade, and
 Have slept with the bee—²⁵
 Arouse them, my maiden,
 On moorland and lea—
 Go ! breathe on their slumber
 All softly in ear,
 The musical number
 They slumbered to hear—
 For what can awaken
 An angel so soon
 Whose sleep hath been taken
 Beneath the cold moon,
 As the spell which no slumber
 Of witchery may test,
 The rhythmical number
 Which lulled him to rest ? ”

Spirits in wing, and angels to the view
 A thousand seraphs burst th' Empyrean thro',
 Young dreams still hovering on their drowsy
 flight—
 Seraphs in all but “ Knowledge,” the keen light
 That fell, refracted, thro' thy bounds, afar,
 O Death ! from eye of God upon that star :
 Sweet was that error—sweeter still that death—
 Sweet was that error—e'en with *us* the breath

Of Science dims the mirror of our joy—
To them 'twere the Simoon, and would destroy—
For what (to them) availeth it to know
That Truth is Falsehood—or that Bliss is Woe?
Sweet was their death—with them to die was rife
With the last ecstasy of satiate life—
Beyond that death no immortality—
But sleep that pondereth and is not “to be”—
And there—oh ! may my weary spirit dwell—
Apart from Heaven's Eternity—and yet how far
from Hell !²⁶

What guilty spirit, in what shrubbery dim,
Heard not the stirring summons of that hymn?
But two : they fell : for Heaven no grace imparts
To those who hear not for their beating hearts.
A maiden-angel and her seraph-lover—
O ! where (and ye may seek the wide skies over)
Was Love the blind, near sober Duty known?
Unguided Love hath fallen—'mid “tears of perfect moan.”²⁷

He was a goodly spirit—he who fell :
A wanderer by mossy-mantled well—
A gazer on the lights that shine above—
A dreamer in the moonbeam by his love :
What wonder ? for each star is eye-like there,
And looks so sweetly down on Beauty's hair—

And they and ev'ry mossy spring were holy
To his love-haunted heart and melancholy.
The night had found (to him a night of woe)
Upon a mountain crag, young Angelo—
Beetling it bends athwart the solemn sky,
And scowls on starry worlds that down beneath it lie.
Here sat he with his love—his dark eye bent
With eagle gaze along the firmament :
Now turned upon her—but ever then
It trembled to the orb of EARTH again.

“ Ianthe, dearest, see ! how dim that ray !
How lovely 'tis to look so far away !
She seemed not thus upon that autumn eve
I left her gorgeous halls—nor mourned to leave.
That eve—that eve—I should remember well.
The sun-ray dropped, in Lemnos, with a spell
On th' arabesque carving of a gilded hall
Wherein I sat, and on the draperied wall—
And on my eye-lids—O the heavy light !
How drowsily it weighed them into night !
On flowers, before, and mist, and love they ran
With Persian Saadi in his Gulistan !
But O that light !—I slumber'd—Death, the while
Stole o'er my senses in that lovely isle,
So softly that no single silken hair
Awoke that slept—or knew that he was there.

“ The last spot of Earth’s orb I trod upon
Was a proud temple called the Parthenon.²⁸
More beauty clung around her column’d wall
Than e’en thy glowing bosom beats withal ;²⁹
And when old Time my wing did disenthral,
Thence sprang I—as the eagle from his tower,
And years I left behind me in an hour.
What time upon her airy bounds I hung
One half the garden of her globe was flung,
Unrolling as a chart unto my view—
Tenantless cities of the desert too !
Ianthe, beauty crowded on me then,
And half I wished to be again of men.”

“ My Angelo ! and why of them to be ?
A brighter dwelling-place is here for thee—
And greener fields than in yon world above,
And woman’s loveliness—and passionate love.”

“ But, list, Ianthe ! when the air so soft
Failed, as my pennon’d spirit leapt aloft,³⁰
Perhaps my brain grew dizzy—but the world
I left so late was into chaos hurled—
Sprang from her station, on the winds apart,
And rolled, a flame, the fiery heaven athwart.
Methought, my sweet one, then I ceased to soar,
And fell—not swiftly as I rose before,

But with a downward, tremulous motion thro'
Light, brazen rays, this golden star unto !
Nor long the measure of my falling hours,
For nearest of all stars was thine to ours—
Dread stars ! that came, amid a night of mirth,
A red Dædalion on the timid Earth.

“ We came—and to thy Earth—but not to us
Be given our lady's bidding to discuss :
We came, my love : around, above, below,
Gay fire-fly of the night we come and go,
Nor ask a reason save the angel-nod
She grants to us, as granted by her God—
But, Angelo, than thine grey Time unfurled
Never his fairy wing o'er fairer world !
Dim was its little disc, and angel eyes
Alone could see the phantom in the skies,
When first Al Aaraaf knew her course to be
Headlong thitherward o'er the starry sea—
But when its glory swelled upon the sky,
As glowing Beauty's bust beneath man's eye,
We paused before the heritage of men,
And thy star trembled—as doth Beauty then ! ”

Thus, in discourse, the lovers whiled away
The night that waned and waned and brought no day.
They fell : for Heaven to them no hope imparts
Who hear not for the beating of their hearts.

SONNET—TO SCIENCE.

SCIENCE ! true daughter of Old Time thou art !
 Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes,
 Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,
 Vulture, whose wings are dull realities ?
 How should he love thee ? or how deem thee wise,
 Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering
 To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies,
 Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing ?
 Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car ?
 And driven the Hamadryad from the wood
 To seek a shelter in some happier star ?
 Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,
 The Elfin from the green grass, and from me
 The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree ?

TO THE RIVER —

FAIR river ! in thy bright, clear flow
 Of crystal, wandering water,
 Thou art an emblem of the glow
 Of beauty—the unhidden heart—
 The playful mazziness of art
 In old Alberto's daughter ;

But when within thy wave she looks—
 Which glistens then, and trembles—
 Why, then, the prettiest of brooks
 Her worshipper resembles ;
 For in his heart, as in thy stream,
 Her image deeply lies—
 His heart which trembles at the beam
 Of her soul-searching eyes.

TAMERLANE.

I.

KIND solace in a dying hour !
 Such, father, is not (now) my theme—
 I will not madly deem that power
 Of Earth may shrive me of the sin
 Unearthly pride hath revelled in—
 I have no time to dote or dream :
 You call it hope—that fire of fire !
 It is but agony of desire :
 If I *can* hope—Oh God ! I can—
 Its fount is holier—more divine—
 I would not call thee fool, old man,
 But such is not a gift of thine.

II.

Know thou the secret of a spirit
Bowed from its wild pride into shame.
O yearning heart ! I did inherit
Thy withering portion with the fame,
The searing glory which hath shone
Amid the Jewels of my throne,
Halo of Hell ! and with a pain
Not Hell shall make me fear again—
O craving heart, for the lost flowers
And sunshine of my summer hours !
The undying voice of that dead time,
With this interminable chime,
Rings, in the spirit of a spell,
Upon the emptiness—a knell.

III.

I have not always been as now,
The fevered diadem on my brow
I claimed and won usurpingly—
Hath not the same fierce heirdom given
Rome to the Cæsar—this to me ?
The heritage of a kingly mind,
And a proud spirit which hath striven
Triumphantly with human kind.

IV.

On mountain soil I first drew life :
The mists of the Taglay have shed
Nightly their dews upon my head,
And, I believe, the wingèd strife
And tumult of the headlong air
Have nestled in my very hair.

V.

So late from Heaven—that dew—it fell
(’Mid dreams of an unholy night)
Upon me with the touch of Hell,
While the red flashing of the light
From clouds that hung, like banners, o’er,
Appeared to my half-closing eye
The pageantry of monarchy,
And the deep trumpet-thunder’s roar
Came hurriedly upon me, telling
Of human battle, where my voice—
My own voice, silly child !—was swelling
(O ! how my spirit would rejoice,
And leap within me at the cry)
The battle-cry of Victory !

VI.

The rain came down upon my head
Unsheltered—and the heavy wind
Rendered me mad, and deaf, and blind.
It was but man, I thought, who shed
Laurels upon me : and the rush—
The torrent of the chilly air
Gurgled within my ear the crush
Of empires—with the captive's prayer—
The hum of suitors—and the tone
Of flattery round a sovereign's throne.

VII.

My passions, from that hapless hour,
Usurped a tyranny which men
Have deemed, since I have reached to power,
My innate nature—be it so :
But, father, there lived one who, then,
Then—in my boyhood—when their fire
Burned with a still intenser glow
(For passion must, with youth, expire),
E'en *then* who knew this iron heart
In woman's weakness had a part.

VIII.

I have no words—alas !—to tell
The loveliness of loving well !
Nor would I now attempt to trace
The more than beauty of a face
Whose lineaments, upon my mind,
Are—shadows on th' unstable wind !
Thus I remember having dwelt
 Some page of early lore upon,
With loitering eye, till I have felt
The letters—with their meaning—melt
 To fantasies—with none.

IX.

O, she was worthy of all love !
 Love as in infancy was mine—
'Twas such as angel minds above
 Might envy ; her young heart the shrine
On which my every hope and thought
 Were incense—then a goodly gift,
 For they were childish and upright—
Pure—as her young example taught :
 Why did I leave it, and, adrift,
 Trust to the fire within, for light ?

X.

We grew in age—and love—together—
Roaming the forest and the wild ;
My breast her shield in wintry weather—
And, when the friendly sunshine smiled,
And she would mark the opening skies,
I saw no Heaven—but in her eyes.

XI.

Young Love's first lesson is—the heart :
For 'mid that sunshine, and those smiles,
When, from our little cares apart,
And laughing at her girlish wiles,
I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,
And pour my spirit out in tears—
There was no need to speak the rest—
No need to quiet any fears
Of her—who asked no reason why,
But turned on me her quiet eye !

XII.

Yet *more* than worthy of the love
My spirit struggled with, and strove,
When, on the mountain peak, alone,
Ambition lent it a new tone—

I had no being—but in thee :
The world, and all it did contain
In the earth—the air—the sea—
Its joy—its little lot of pain
That was new pleasure—the ideal,
Dim, vanities of dreams by night—
And dimmer nothings which were real—
(Shadows—and a more shadowy light !)
Parted upon their misty wings,
And so confusedly became
Thine image and—a name—a name !
Two separate—yet most intimate things.

XIII.

I was ambitious—have you known
The passion, father? You have not :
A cottager, I marked a throne
Of half the world as all my own,
And murmured at such lowly lot—
But, just like any other dream,
Upon the vapour of the dew
My own had past, did not the beam
Of beauty which did while it thro'
The minute—the hour—the day—oppress
My mind with double loveliness.

XIV.

We walked together on the crown
Of a high mountain which looked down
Afar from its proud natural towers
Of rock and forest, on the hills—
The dwindled hills ! begrit with bowers,
And shouting with a thousand rills.

XV.

I spoke to her of power and pride,
But mystically—in such guise
That she might deem it nought beside
The moment's converse ; in her eyes
I read, perhaps too carelessly—
A mingled feeling with my own—
The flush on her bright cheek to me
Seemed to become a queenly throne,
Too well that I should let it be
Light in the wilderness alone.

XVI.

I wrapped myself in grandeur then,
And donned a visionary crown—
Yet it was not that Fantasy
Had thrown her mantle over me—

But that, among the rabble—men,
Lion ambition is chained down—
And crouches to a keeper's hand—
Not so in deserts where the grand—
The wild—the terrible conspire
With their own breath to fan his fire.

XVII.

Look round thee now on Samarcand !
Is she not queen of Earth ? her pride
Above all cities ? in her hand
Their destinies ! in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone ?
Falling—her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne—
And who her sovereign ? Timour—he
Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily
A diademed outlaw.

XVIII.

O human love ! thou spirit given,
On earth, of all we hope in heaven !
Which fall'st into the soul like rain
Upon the Siroc-withered plain,

And, failing in thy power to bless,
But leav'st the heart a wilderness !
Idea ! which bindest life around
With music of so strange a sound,
A beauty of so wild a birth—
Farewell ! for I have won the Earth.

XIX.

When Hope, the eagle that towered, could see
No cliff beyond him in the sky,
His pinions were bent droopingly—
And homeward turned his softened eye.
'Twas sunset : when the sun will part
There comes a sullenness of heart
To him who still would look upon
The glory of the summer sun.
That soul will hate the ev'ning mist
So often lovely, and will list
To the sound of the coming darkness (known
To those whose spirits hearken) as one
Who, in a dream of night, *would* fly
But *cannot*, from a danger nigh.

XX.

What tho' the moon the white moon
Shed all the splendour of her noon,

Her smile is chilly—and *her* beam,
In that time of dreariness, will seem
(So like you gather in your breath)
A portrait taken after death.
And boyhood is a summer sun
Whose waning is the dreariest one—
For all we live to know is known,
And all we seek to keep hath flown—
Let life, then, as the day-flower, fall
With the noon-day beauty—which is all.

XXI.

I reached my home—my home no more—
For all had flown who made it so.
I passed from out its mossy door,
And, tho' my tread was soft and low,
A voice came from the threshold stone
Of one whom I had earlier known—
O, I defy thee, Hell, to show
On beds of fire that burn below,
An humbler heart—a deeper woe.

XXII.

Father, I firmly do believe—
I *know*—for Death who comes for me
From regions of the blest afar,

Where there is nothing to deceive,
Hath left his iron gate ajar,
And rays of truth you cannot see
Are flashing through Eternity—
I do believe that Eblis hath—
A snare in every human path—
Else how, when in the holy grove
I wandered of the idol, Love,
Who daily scents his snowy wings
With incense of burnt offerings
From the most unpolluted things,
Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
Above with trellised rays from Heaven
No mote may shun—no tiniest fly—
The lightning of his eagle eye—
How was it that Ambition crept,
Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till, growing bold, he laughed and leapt
In the tangles of Love's very hair?

TO ———

THE bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
The wantonest singing birds,
Are lips—and all thy melody
Of lip-begotten words—

Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrined,
Then desolately fall,
O God ! on my funereal mind
Like starlight on a pall—

Thy heart—*thy* heart !—I wake and sigh,
And sleep to dream till day
Of the truth that gold can never buy—
Of the baubles that it may.

A DREAM.

IN visions of the dark night
I have dreamed of joy departed—
But a waking dream of life and light
Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah ! what is not a dream by day
To him whose eyes are cast
On things around him with a ray
Turned back upon the past ?

That holy dream—that holy dream,
While all the world were chiding,
Hath cheered me as a lovely beam
A lonely spirit guiding.

What though that light, thro' storm and night,
So trembled from afar—
What could there be more purely bright
In Truth's day-star?

ROMANCE.

ROMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,
With drowsy head and folded wing,
Among the green leaves as they shake
Far down within some shadowy lake,
To me a painted paroquet
Hath been—a most familiar bird—
Taught me my alphabet to say—
To lisp my very earliest word
While in the wild wood I did lie,
A child—with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor years
So shake the very heaven on high
With tumult as they thunder by,
I have no time for idle cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon my spirit flings—

That little time with lyre and rhyme.
To while away—forbidden things !
My heart would feel to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the strings.

FAIRYLAND.

DIM vales—and shadowy floods—
And cloudy-looking woods,
Whose forms we can't discover
For the tears that drip all over—
Huge moons there wax and wane—
Again—again—again—
Every moment of the night—
For ever changing places—
And they put out the starlight
With the breath from their pale faces.
About twelve by the moon-dial
One more filmy than the rest
(A kind, which, upon trial,
They have found to be the best)
Comes down—still down—and down
With its centre on the crown
Of a mountain's eminence,
While its wide circumference
In easy drapery fall

Over hamlets, over halls,
Wherever they may be—
O'er the strange woods—o'er the sea—
Over spirits on the wing—
Over every drowsy thing—
And buries them up quite
In a labyrinth of light—
And then, how deep!—O, deep!
Is the passion of their sleep.
In the morning they arise,
And there moony covering
Is soaring in the skies,
With the tempests as they toss,
Like—almost anything—
Or a yellow Albatross.
They use that moon no more
For the same end as before—
Videlicet, a tent—
Which I think extravagant :
Its atomies, however,
Into a shower dissever,
Of which those butterflies
Of earth, who seek the skies,
And so come down again,
(Never contented things !)
Have brought a specimen
Upon their quivering wings.

THE LAKE.

TO —

I N spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide world a spot
The which I could not love the less—
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that towered around.

But when the Night had thrown her pall
Upon that spot, as upon all,
And the mystic wind went by
Murmuring in melody—
Then—ah, then, I would awake
To the terror of the lone lake.

Yet that terror was not fright,
But a tremulous delight—
A feeling not the jewelled mine
Could teach or bribe me to define—
Nor Love—although the Love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave

For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining—
Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.

SONG.

I SAW thee on thy bridal day—
When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee :

And in thine eye a kindling light
(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of Loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame—
As such it well may pass—
Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas !

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.

TO M. L. S.—

OF all who hail thy presence as the morning—
Of all to whom thine absence is the night—
The blotting utterly from out high heaven
The sacred sun—of all who, weeping, bless thee
Hourly for hope—for life—ah ! above all,
For the resurrection of deep-buried faith
In Truth—in Virtue—in Humanity—
Of all who, on Despair's unhallowed bed
Lying down to die, have suddenly arisen
At thy soft-murmured words, " Let there be light ! "
At the soft-murmured words that were fulfilled
In the seraphic glancing of thine eyes—
Of all who owe thee most—whose gratitude
Nearest resembles worship—oh, remember
The truest—the most fervently devoted,
And think that these weak lines are written by
him—
By him who, as he pens them, thrills to think
His spirit is communing with an angel's.



TO HELEN

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicéan barks of yore
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary way-worn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
And the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo, in yon brilliant window-niche
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand,
Ah ! Psyche, from the regions which
Are holy-land !





NOTES TO AL AARAAF.

Note ¹ page 128. *Al Aaraaf.*

A star was discovered by Tycho Brahe which appeared suddenly in the heavens—attained, in a few days, a brilliancy surpassing that of Jupiter—then as suddenly disappeared, and has never been seen since.

² P. 130. *On the fair Capo Deucato.*

On Santa Maura—olim Deucadia.

³ P. 130. *Of her who loved a mortal—and so died.—*
Sappho.

⁴ P. 130. *And gemmy flower, of Trebizond misnamed.*

This flower is much noticed by Leuwenhoek and Tournefort. The bee, feeding upon its blossom, becomes intoxicated.

⁵ P. 130. *And Clytia pondering between many a sun.*

Clytia—The Chrysanthemum Peruvianum, or, to employ a better-known term—the turnsol—which turns continually towards the sun, covers itself, like Peru, the country from which it comes, with dewy clouds, which cool and refresh its flowers during the most violent heat of the day.—*B. de St. Pierre.*

⁶ P. 131. *And that aspiring flower that sprang on Earth.*

There is cultivated in the king's garden at Paris a species of serpentine aloes without prickles, whose large and beautiful flower exhales a strong odour of the vanilla, during the time of its expansion, which is very short. It does not blow till towards the month of July—you can perceive it gradually open its petals—expand them—fade and die.—*St. Pierre.*

⁷ P. 131. *And Valisnerian lotus thither flown.*

There is found, in the Rhone, a beautiful lily of the Valisnerian kind. Its stem will stretch to the length of three or four feet—thus preserving its head above water in the swellings of the river.

⁸ P. 131. *And thy most lovely purple perfume, Zante !
The Hyacinth.*

- ⁹ P. 131. *And the Nelumbo bud that floats for ever ;
With Indian Cupid down the holy river.*

It is a fiction of the Indians that Cupid was first seen floating in one of these down the river Ganges—and that he still loves the cradle of his childhood.

- ¹⁰ P. 129. *To bear the Goddess' song, in odours, up to
heaven.*

“And golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints.”—*Revelations.*

- ¹¹ P. 132. *A model of their own.*

The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having really a human form.—*Vide Clarke's Sermons*, vol. i. page 26, fol. edit.

The drift of Milton's argument leads him to employ language which would appear, at first sight, to verge upon their doctrine ; but it will be seen immediately that he guards himself against the charge of having adopted one of the most ignorant errors of the dark ages of the Church.—*Dr. Sumner's Notes on Milton's Christian Doctrine.*

This opinion, in spite of many testimonies to the contrary, could never have been very general. Andeus, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, was condemned for the opinion, as heretical. He lived in the beginning of the fourth

century. His disciples were called Anthropomorphites.
— *Vide Du Pin.*

Among Milton's minor poems are these lines :—

“ Dicite sacrorum præsidēs nemorum Deæ, etc.
Quis ille primus cujus ex imagine
Natura solers finxit humanum genus?
Eternus, incorruptus, æquævus polo,
Unusque et universus exemplar Dei.”

And afterwards—

“ Non cui profundum Cæcitas lumen dedit
Dircæus augur vidit hunc alto sinu,” etc.

—
¹² P. 132. *By winged Fantasy.*

Seltsamen Tochter Jovis
Seinem Schosskinde
Der Phantasie.—*Goethe.*

—
¹³ P. 133. *What tho' in worlds where sightless cycles run.*

Sightless—too small to be seen.—*Legge.*

—
¹⁴ P. 134. *Apart—like fire-flies in Sicilian night.*

I have often noticed a peculiar movement of the fire-flies; they will collect in a body and fly off, from a common centre, into innumerable radii.

¹⁵ 134. *Her way—but left not yet her Therasæan reign.*

Therasæa, or Therasea, the island mentioned by Seneca, which, in a moment, arose from the sea to the eyes of the astonished mariners.

¹⁶ P. 135. *Of molten stars their pavement, such as fall
Thro' the ebon air.*

Some star which, from the ruin'd roof
Of shaked Olympus, by mischance, did fall.—*Milton.*

¹⁷ P. 136. *Friezes from Tadmar and Persepolis.*

Voltaire, in speaking of Persepolis, says, “Je connois bien l'admiration qu'inspirent ces ruines—mais un palais érigé au pied d'une chaîne des rochers sterils—peut être un chef-d'œuvre des arts ?”

¹⁸ P. 136. *Of beautiful Gomorrah! O, the wave.*

“O, the wave.”—Ula Deguisi is the Turkish appellation; but, on its own shores, it is called Bahar Loth, or Almotanah. There were undoubtedly more than two cities engulfed in the “Dead Sea.” In the valley of Siddim were five—Adrah, Zeboin, Zoar, Sodom, and Gomorrah. Stephen of Byzantium mentions eight, and Strabo thirteen (engulfed)—but the last is out of all reason.

It is said [Tacitus, Strabo, Josephus, Daniel of St. Saba, Nau, Maundrell, Troilo, D'Arvieux] that after an excessive drought the vestiges of columns, walls, etc., are seen above the surface. At *any* season, such remains may be discovered by looking down into the transparent lake, and at such distances as would argue the existence of many settlements in the space now usurped by the "Asphaltites."

¹⁹ P. 136. *That stole upon the ear, in Eyraco.*

Eyraco—Chaldæa.

²⁰ P. 136. *Is not its form—its voice—most palpable and loud?*

I have often thought I could distinctly hear the sound of the darkness as it stole over the horizon.

²¹ P. 166. *Young flowers were whispering in melody.*

Fairies use flowers for their charactery.—*Merry Wives of Windsor.*

²² P. 137. *The moonbeam away.*

In Scripture is this passage—"The sun shall not harm thee by day, nor the moon by night." It is perhaps not generally known that the moon, in Egypt, has the effect of producing blindness to those who sleep with the face

exposed to its rays, to which circumstance the passage evidently alludes.

²³ P. 138. *Like the lone Albatross.*

The Albatross is said to sleep on the wing.

²⁴ P. 139. *The murmur that springs.*

I met with this idea in an old English tale, which I am now unable to obtain, and quote from memory:—
 “The verie essence and, as it were, spring-heade and origine of all musiche is the verie pleasaunte sounde which the trees of the forest do make when they growe.”

²⁵ P. 140. *Have slept with the bee.*

The wild bee will not sleep in the shade if there be moonlight.

The rhyme in this verse, as in one about sixty lines before, has an appearance of affectation. It is, however, imitated from Sir W. Scott, or rather from Claud Halcro—in whose mouth I admired its effect:

Oh, were there an island,
 Tho' ever so wild,
 Where woman might smile, and
 No man be beguiled, etc.

25 P. 141. *Apart from Heaven's Eternity—and yet how far from Hell?*

With the Arabians there is a medium between Heaven and Hell, where men suffer no punishment, but yet do not attain that tranquil and even happiness which they suppose to be characteristic of heavenly enjoyment.

Un no rompido sueno—

Un dia puro—allegre—libre

Quiera—

Libre de amor—de zelo

De odio—de esperanza—de rezelo.

—*Luis Ponce de Leon.*

Sorrow is not excluded from "Al Aaraaf," but it is that sorrow which the living love to cherish for the dead, and which, in some minds, resembles the delirium of opium. The passionate excitement of Love and the buoyancy of spirit attendant upon intoxication are its less holy pleasures—the price of which, to those souls who make choice of "Al Aaraaf" as their residence after life, is final death and annihilation.

27 P. 141. *Unguided Love hath fallen—'mid "tears of perfect moan."*

There be tears of perfect moan
Wept for thee in Helicon.—*Milton.*

²⁸ P. 143. *Was a proud temple called the Parthenon.*

It was entire in 1687—the most elevated spot in Athens.

²⁹ P. 143. *Than e'en thy glowing bosom beats withal.*

Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows.

Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.—

Marlowe.

³⁰ P. 143. *Failed, as my pennoned spirit leapt aloft.*

Pennon—for pinion.—*Milton.*





THE POETIC PRINCIPLE.

IN speaking of the Poetical Principle, I have no design to be either thorough or profound. While discussing, very much at random, the essentiality of what we call Poetry, my principal purpose will be to cite for consideration some few of those minor English or American poems which best suit my own taste, or which, upon my own fancy, have left the most definite impression. By "minor poems" I mean, of course, poems of little length. And here, in the beginning, permit me to say a few words in regard to a somewhat peculiar principle, which, whether rightfully or wrongfully, has always had its influence in my own critical estimate of the poem. I hold that a long poem does not exist. I maintain that the phrase "a long poem" is simply a flat contradiction in terms.

I need scarcely observe that a poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites by elevating the soul. The value of the poem is in the ratio of this elevating excitement. But all excitements are, through a psychical

necessity, transient. That degree of excitement which would entitle a poem to be so called at all cannot be sustained throughout a composition of any great length. After the lapse of half-an-hour, at the very utmost, it flags, fails, a revulsion ensues ; and then the poem is, in effect and in fact, no longer such.

There are, no doubt, many who have found difficulty in reconciling the critical dictum that the "Paradise Lost" is to be devoutly admired throughout with the absolute impossibility of maintaining for it, during perusal, the amount of enthusiasm which that critical dictum would demand. This great work, in fact, is to be regarded as poetical only when, losing sight of that vital requisite in all works of art, unity, we view it merely as a series of minor poems. If, to preserve its unity—its totality of effect or impression—we read it (as would be necessary) at a single sitting, the result is but a constant alternation of excitement and depression. After a passage of what we feel to be true poetry, there follows, inevitably, a passage of platitude which no critical pre-judgment can force us to admire ; but if, upon completing the work, we read it again, omitting the first book—that is to say, commencing with the second—we shall be surprised at now finding that admirable which we before condemned, that damnable which we had previously so much admired. It follows from all this that the ultimate, aggregate, or absolute effect of even the best epic under the sun is a nullity : and this is precisely the fact.

In regard to the "Iliad," we have, if not positive proof, at least very good reason for believing it intended as a series of lyrics; but granting the epic intention, I can say only that the work is based in an imperfect sense of art. The modern epic is of the suppositious ancient model, but an inconsiderate and blindfold imitation. But the day of these artistic anomalies is over. If, at any time, any very long poem *were* popular in reality—which I doubt—it is at least clear that no very long poem will ever be popular again.

That the extent of a poetical work is, *ceteris paribus*, the measure of its merit, seems undoubtedly, when we thus state it, a proposition sufficiently absurd; yet we are indebted for it to the Quarterly Reviews. Surely there can be nothing in mere *size*, abstractly considered, there can be nothing in mere *bulk*, so far as a volume is concerned, which has so continuously elicited admiration from these saturnine pamphlets! A mountain, to be sure, by the mere sentiment of physical magnitude which it conveys, *does* impress us with a sense of the sublime; but no man is impressed after *this* fashion by the material grandeur of even "The Columbiad." Even the Quarterlies have not instructed us to be so impressed by it. *As yet*, they have not *insisted* on our estimating Lamartine by the cubic foot, or Pollock by the pound; but what else are we to *infer* from their continual prating about "sustained effort?" If by "sustained effort" any little gentleman has accomplished an epic, let us frankly commend him for the effort—if this indeed be a

thing commendable—but let us forbear praising the epic on the effort's account.

It is to be hoped that common sense, in the time to come, will prefer deciding upon a work of art rather by the impression it makes, by the effect it produces, than by the time it took to impress the effect, or by the amount of "sustained effort" which had been found necessary in effecting the impression. The fact is, that perseverance is one thing and genius quite another, nor can all the Quarterlies in Christendom confound them. By-and-by this proposition, with many which I have been just urging, will be received as self-evident. In the meantime, by being generally condemned as falsities, they will not be essentially damaged as truths.

On the other hand, it is clear that a poem may be improperly brief. Undue brevity degenerates into mere epigrammatism. A *very* short poem, while now and then producing a brilliant or vivid, never produces a profound or enduring effect. There must be the steady pressing down of the stamp upon the wax. De Béranger has wrought innumerable things, pungent and spirit-stirring; but in general they have been too imponderous to stamp themselves deeply into the public attention; and thus, as so many feathers of fancy, have been blown aloft only to be whistled down by the wind.

A remarkable instance of the effect of undue brevity in depressing a poem—in keeping it out of the popular view—is afforded by the following exquisite little serenade—

“ I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low
And the stars are shining bright.
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?—
To thy chamber-window, sweet !

“ The wandering airs, they faint
On the dark, the silent stream ;
The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
The nightingale’s complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
Oh, beloved, as thou art !

“ Oh, lift me from the grass !
I die, I faint, I fail !
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas !
My heart beats loud and fast :
Oh, press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last.”

Very few, perhaps, are familiar with these lines, yet no less a poet than Shelley is their author. Their warm yet delicate and ethereal imagination will be appreciated by all ; but by none so thoroughly as by him who has himself arisen from sweet dreams of one beloved, to

bathe in the aromatic air of a southern midsummer night.

One of the finest poems by Willis—the very best, in my opinion, which he has ever written—has, no doubt, through this same defect of undue brevity, been kept back from its proper position not less in the critical than in the popular view.

“ The shadows lay along Broadway,
’Twas near the twilight tide,
And slowly there a lady fair
Was walking in her pride.
Alone walked she, but viewlessly
Walked spirits at her side.

“ Peace charmed the street beneath her feet,
And Honour charmed the air,
And all astir looked kind on her,
And called her good as fair ;
For all God ever gave to her
She kept with chary care.

“ She kept with care her beauties rare
From lovers warm and true,
For her heart was cold to all but gold,
And the rich came not to woo :
But honoured well are charms to sell,
If priests the selling do.

“ Now walking there was one more fair—
A slight girl, lily-pale ;
And she had unseen company
To make the spirit quail :

'Twixt Want and Scorn she walked forlorn,
And nothing could avail.

“ No mercy now can clear her brow
For this world's peace to pray ;
For, as love's wild prayer dissolved in air,
Her woman's heart gave way !—
But the sin forgiven by Christ in Heaven,
By man is cursed away.”

In this composition we find it difficult to recognise the Willis who has written so many mere “verses of society.” The lines are not only richly ideal, but full of energy, while they breathe an earnestness, an evident sincerity of sentiment, for which we look in vain throughout all the other works of this author.

While the epic mania—while the idea that to merit, in poetry, prolixity is indispensable—has, for some years past, been gradually dying out of the public mind by mere dint of its own absurdity, we find it succeeded by a heresy too palpably false to be long tolerated, but one which, in the brief period it has already endured, may be said to have accomplished more in the corruption of our poetical literature than all its other enemies combined. I allude to the heresy of *The Didactic*. It has been assumed, tacitly and avowedly, directly and indirectly, that the ultimate object of all poetry is truth. Every poem, it is said, should inculcate a moral ; and by this moral is the poetical merit of the work to be adjudged. We Americans especially have patronised this happy idea ; and we Bostonians, very especially,

have developed it in full. We have taken it into our heads that to write a poem simply for the poem's sake, and to acknowledge such to have been our design, would be to confess ourselves radically wanting in the true poetic dignity and force; but the simple fact is that, would we but permit ourselves to look into our own souls, we should immediately there discover that under the sun there neither exists nor *can* exist any work more thoroughly dignified, more supremely noble, than this very poem; this poem *per se*; this poem which is a poem and nothing more; this poem written solely for the poem's sake.

With as deep a reverence for the True as ever inspired the bosom of man, I would nevertheless limit, in some measure, its modes of inculcation. I would limit to enforce them. I would not enfeeble them by dissipation. The demands of Truth are severe. She has no sympathy with the myrtles. All *that* which is so indispensable in Song is precisely all *that* with which *she* has nothing whatever to do. It is but making her a flaunting paradox to wreath her in gems and flowers. In enforcing a truth, we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse; we must be cool, calm, unimpassioned; in a word, we must be in that mood which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical. *He* must be blind, indeed, who does not perceive the radical and chasmal differences between the truthful and the poetical modes of inculcation. He must be theory-mad beyond redemp-

tion who, in spite of these differences, shall still persist in attempting to reconcile the obstinate oils and waters of Poetry and Truth.

Dividing the world of mind into its three most immediately obvious distinctions, we have the Pure Intellect, Taste, and the Moral Sense. I place Taste in the middle, because it is just this position which, in the mind, it occupies. It holds intimate relations with either extreme, but from the Moral Sense is separated by so faint a difference that Aristotle has not hesitated to place some of its operations among the virtues themselves. Nevertheless, we find the *offices* of the trio marked with a sufficient distinction. Just as the Intellect concerns itself with Truth, so Taste informs us of the Beautiful, while the Moral Sense is regardful of Duty. Of this latter, while Conscience teaches the obligation, and Reason the expediency, Taste contents herself with displaying the charms; waging war upon Vice solely on the ground of her deformity, her disproportion, her animosity to the fitting, to the appropriate, to the harmonious—in a word, to Beauty.

An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful. This it is which administers to his delight in the manifold forms, and sounds, and odours, and sentiments amid which he exists. And just as the lily is repeated in the lake, or the eyes of Amaryllis in the mirror, so is the mere oral or written repetition of these forms, and sounds, and colours, and odours, and sentiments a duplicate source

of delight. But this mere repetition is not poetry. He who shall simply sing, with however glowing enthusiasm, or with however vivid a truth of description, of the sights, and sounds, and odours, and colours, and sentiments which greet *him* in common with all mankind—he, I say, has yet failed to prove his divine title. There is still a something in the distance which he has been unable to attain. We have still a thirst unquenchable, to allay which he has not shown us the crystal springs. This thirst belongs to the immortality of man. It is at once a consequence and an indication of his perennial existence. It is the desire of the moth for the star. It is no mere appreciation of the beauty before us, but a wild effort to reach the beauty above. Inspired by an ecstatic prescience of the glories beyond the grave, we struggle, by multiform combinations among the things and thoughts of time, to attain a portion of that loveliness whose very elements, perhaps, appertain to eternity alone. And thus when by poetry—or when by music, the most entrancing of the poetic moods—we find ourselves melted into tears, we weep then, not, as the Abbate Gravina supposes, through excess of pleasure, but through a certain petulant, impatient sorrow at our inability to grasp *now*, wholly, here on earth, at once and for ever, those divine and rapturous joys, of which *through* the poem or *through* the music, we attain to but brief and indeterminate glimpses.

The struggle to apprehend the supernal loveliness, this struggle, on the part of souls fittingly constituted, has

given to the world all that which it (the world) has ever been enabled at once to understand and *to feel* as poetic.

The poetic sentiment, of course, may develop itself in various modes—in painting, in sculpture, in architecture, in the dance, very especially in music, and very peculiarly, and with a wide field, in the composition of the landscape garden. Our present theme, however, has regard only to its manifestation in words. And here let me speak briefly on the topic of rhythm. Contenting myself with the certainty that music, in its various modes of metre, rhythm, and rhyme, is of so vast a moment in poetry as never to be wisely rejected, is so vitally important an adjunct that he is simply silly who declines its assistance, I will not now pause to maintain its absolute essentiality. It is in music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired by the poetic sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of poetry with music in its popular sense we shall find the widest field for the poetic development. The old bards and minnesingers had advantages which we do not possess; and Thomas Moore, singing his own songs, was, in the most legitimate manner, perfecting them as poems.

To recapitulate, then:—I would define, in brief, the

poetry of words as *the rhythmical creation of beauty*. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the intellect or with the conscience it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.

A few words, however, in explanation. *That* pleasure which is at once the most pure, the most elevating, and the most intense, is derived, I maintain, from the contemplation of the Beautiful. In the contemplation of Beauty, we alone find it possible to attain this pleasurable elevation or excitement *of the Soul* which we recognise as the poetic sentiment, and which is so easily distinguished from Truth, which is the satisfaction of the Reason, or from Passion, which is the excitement of the heart. I make beauty, therefore, using the word as inclusive of the sublime—I make Beauty the province of the poem, simply because it is an obvious rule of art that effects should be made to spring as directly as possible from their causes—no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation in question is at least *most readily* attainable in the poem. It by no means follows, however, that the incitements of Passion or the precepts of Duty, or even the lessons of Truth, may not be introduced into a poem, and with advantage; for they may subserve, incidentally, in various ways, the general purposes of the work: but the true artist will always contrive to tone them down in proper subjection to that *Beauty* which is the atmosphere and the real essence of the poem.

I cannot better introduce the few poems which I shall present for your consideration than by the citation of the præm to Mr. Longfellow's "Waif."

- "The day is done, and the darkness
Falls from the wings of Night,
As a feather is wafted downward
From an eagle in his flight.
- "I see the lights of the village
Gleam through the rain and the mist,
And a feeling of sadness comes o'er me
That my soul cannot resist—
- "A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.
- "Come, read to me some poem,
Some simple and heartfelt lay,
That shall soothe this restless feeling,
And banish the thoughts of day.
- "Not from the grand old masters,
Not from the bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time ;
- "For like strains of martial music,
Their mighty thoughts suggest
Life's endless toil and endeavour ;
And to-night I long for rest.

- “ Read from some humbler poet,
Whose songs gushed from his heart
As showers from the clouds of summer
Or tears from the eyelids start ;
- “ Who, through long days of labour
And nights devoid of ease,
Still heard in his soul the music
Of wonderful melodies.
- “ Such songs have power to quiet
The restless pulse of care,
And come like the benediction
That follows after prayer.
- “ Then read from the treasured volume
The poem of thy choice,
And lend to the rhyme of the poet
The beauty of thy voice.
- “ And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.”

With no great range of imagination, these lines have been justly admired for their delicacy of expression. Some of the images are very effective. Nothing can be better than—

—————“ The bards sublime,
Whose distant footsteps echo
Through the corridors of Time.”

The idea of the last quatrain is also very effective. The poem, on the whole, however, is chiefly to be admired for the graceful *insouciance* of its metre, so well in accordance with the character of the sentiments, and especially for the *ease* of the general manner. This "ease," or naturalness, in a literary style, it has long been the fashion to regard as ease in appearance alone—as a point of really difficult attainment. But not so : a natural manner is difficult only to him who should never meddle with it—to the unnatural. It is but the result of writing with the understanding, or with the instinct, that *the tone*, in composition, should always be that which the mass of mankind would adopt, and must perpetually vary, of course, with the occasion. The author who, after the fashion of *The North American Review*, should be, upon *all* occasions, merely "quiet," must necessarily, upon *many* occasions, be simply silly or stupid ; and has no more right to be considered "easy" or "natural," than a cockney exquisite, or than the Sleeping Beauty in the wax-works.

Among the minor poems of Bryant, none has so much impressed me as the one which he entitles "June." I quote only a portion of it :—

“ There, through the long, long summer hours
The golden light should lie,
And thick young herbs and groups of flowers
Stand in their beauty by.
The oriole should build and tell
His love-tale, close beside my cell ;

The idle butterfly
Should rest him there, and there be heard
The housewife-bee and humming-bird.

“ And what if cheerful shouts, at noon,
Come, from the village sent,
Or songs of maids, beneath the moon,
With fairy laughter blent?
And what if, in the evening light,
Betrothed lovers walk in sight
Of my low monument?
I would the lovely scene around
Might know no sadder sight nor sound.

“ I know, I know I should not see
The season's glorious show,
Nor would its brightness shine for me,
Nor its wild music flow;
But if around my place of sleep,
The friends I love should come to weep,
They might not haste to go.
Soft airs, and song, and light, and bloom
Should keep them lingering by my tomb.

“ These to their softened hearts should bear
The thought of what has been,
And speak of one who cannot share
The gladness of the scene;
Whose part in all the pomp that fills
The circuit of the summer hills,
Is—that his grave is green;
And deeply would their hearts rejoice
To hear again his living voice.”

The rhythmical flow here is even voluptuous—nothing

could be more melodious. The poem has always affected me in a remarkable manner. The intense melancholy which seems to well up, perforce, to the surface of all the poet's cheerful sayings about his grave, we find thrilling us to the soul, while there is the truest poetic elevation in the thrill. The impression left is one of a pleasurable sadness. And if, in the remaining compositions which I shall introduce to you, there be more or less of a similar tone always apparent, let me remind you that (how or why we know not) this certain taint of sadness is inseparably connected with all the higher manifestations of true beauty. It is, nevertheless—

“ A feeling of sadness and longing
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles the rain.”

The taint of which I speak is clearly perceptible even in a poem so full of brilliancy and spirit as the “Health” of Edward Coate Pinckney—

“ I fill this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon ;
To whom the better elements
And kindly stars have given
A form so fair, that, like the air,
’Tis less of earth than heaven.

- “ Her every tone is music’s own,
Like those of morning birds,
And something more than melody
Dwells ever in her words ;
The coinage of her heart are they,
And from her lips each flows
As one may see the burden’d bee
Forth issue from the rose.
- “ Affections are as thoughts to her,
The measures of her hours ;
Her feelings have the fragranc’y,
The freshness of young flowers ;
And lovely passions, changing oft,
So fill her, she appears
The image of themselves by turns—
The idol of past years !
- “ Of her bright face one glance will trace
A picture on the brain,
And of her voice in echoing hearts
A sound must long remain ;
But memory, such as mine of her,
So very much endears,
When death is nigh my latest sigh
Will not be life’s, but hers.
- “ I fill’d this cup to one made up
Of loveliness alone,
A woman, of her gentle sex
The seeming paragon.
Her health ! and would on earth there stood
Some more of such a frame,
That life might be all poetry,
And weariness a name.”

It was the misfortune of Mr. Pinckney to have been born too far south. Had he been a New Englander, it is probable that he would have been ranked as the first of American lyrists by that magnanimous cabal which has so long controlled the destinies of American Letters in conducting the thing called *The North American Review*. The poem just cited is especially beautiful ; but the poetic elevation which it induces, we must refer chiefly to our sympathy in the poet's enthusiasm. We pardon his hyperboles for the evident earnestness with which they are uttered.

It was by no means my design, however, to expatiate upon the *merits* of what I should read you. These will necessarily speak for themselves. Boccacini, in his "Advertisements from Parnassus," tells us that Zoilus once presented Apollo a very caustic criticism upon a very admirable book, whereupon the god asked him for the beauties of the work. He replied that he only busied himself about the errors. On hearing this, Apollo, handing him a sack of unwinnowed wheat, bade him pick out *all the chaff* for his reward.

Now this fable answers very well as a hit at the critics ; but I am by no means sure that the god was in the right. I am by no means certain that the true limits of the critical duty are not grossly misunderstood. Excellence, in a poem especially, may be considered in the light of an axiom, which need only be properly *put* to become self-evident. It is *not* excellence if it require to be demonstrated as such : and thus, to point out too

particularly the merits of a work of art is to admit that they are *not* merits altogether.

Among the "Melodies" of Thomas Moore is one whose distinguished character as a poem proper seems to have been singularly left out of view. I allude to his lines beginning "Come, rest in this bosom." The intense energy of their expression is not surpassed by anything in Byron. There are two of the lines in which a sentiment is conveyed that embodies the *all in all* of the divine passion of love—a sentiment which, perhaps, has found its echo in more, and in more passionate human hearts, than any other single sentiment ever embodied in words:—

"Come, rest in this bosom, my own stricken deer,
Though the herd have fled from thee, thy home is still
 here ;
Here still is the smile that no cloud can o'er cast,
And a heart and a hand all thy own to the last.

"Oh ! what was love made for, if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through torment, through glory and
 shame ?
I know not, I ask not, if guilt's in that heart :
I but know that I love thee, whatever thou art.

"Thou hast call'd me thy angel in moments of bliss,
And thy angel I'll be, 'mid the horrors of this—
Through the furnace, unshrinking, thy steps to pursue,
And shield thee, and save thee—or perish there too !

It has been the fashion of late days to deny Moore imagination, while granting him fancy—a distinction originating with Coleridge, than whom no man more fully comprehended the great powers of Moore. The fact is that the fancy of this poet so far predominates over all his other faculties, and over the fancy of all other men, as to have induced, very naturally, the idea that he is fanciful *only*. But never was there a greater mistake, never was a grosser wrong done the fame of a true poet. In the compass of the English language I can call to mind no poem more profoundly, more weirdly *imaginative*, in the best sense, than the lines commencing "I would I were by that dim lake," which are the composition of Thomas Moore. I regret that I am unable to remember them.

One of the noblest—and, speaking of fancy, one of the most singularly fanciful of modern poets—was Thomas Hood. His "Fair Ines" had always, for me, an inexpressible charm:—

"Oh, saw ye not Fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest.
She took our daylight with her,
The smiles that we love best,
With morning blushes on her cheek,
And pearls upon her breast.

"Oh, turn again, fair Ines,
Before the fall of night,

For fear the moon should shine alone,
And stars unrivalled bright ;
And blessed will the lover be
That walks beneath their light,
And breathes the love against thy cheek
I dare not even write !

“ Would I had been, fair Ines,
That gallant cavalier,
Who rode so gaily by thy side,
And whispered thee so near !
Were there no bonny dames at home,
Or no true lovers here,
That he should cross the seas to win
The dearest of the dear ?

“ I saw thee, lovely Ines,
Descend along the shore,
With a band of noble gentlemen,
And banners wav'd before ;
And gentle youth and maidens gay,
And snowy plumes they wore ;
It would have been a beauteous dream
—If it had been no more !

“ Alas, alas, fair Ines !
She went away with song,
With music waiting on her steps,
And shoutings of the throng ;
But some were sad and felt no mirth,
But only Music's wrong,
In sounds that sang Farewell, Farewell,
To her you've loved so long.

“Farewell, farewell, fair Ines !
That vessel never bore
So fair a lady on its deck,
Nor danced so light before.
Alas for pleasure on the sea
And sorrow on the shore !
The smile that blest one lover's heart
Has broken many more !”

“The Haunted House,” by the same author, is one of the truest poems ever written, one of the *truest*, one of the most unexceptionable, one of the most thoroughly artistic, both in its theme and in its execution. It is, moreover, powerfully ideal, imaginative. I regret that its length renders it unsuitable for the purposes of this Lecture. In place of it, permit me to offer the universally appreciated “Bridge of Sighs :”—

“One more Unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death.

“Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care—
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young and so fair !

“Look at her garments,
Clinging like cerements ;
Whilst the wave constantly
Drips from her clothing.

Take her up instantly,
Loving, not loathing.

“Touch her not scornfully,
Think of her mournfully,
Gently and humanly ;
Not of the stains of her,
All that remains of her
Now, is pure womanly.

“ Make no deep scrutiny
Into her mutiny
Rash and undutiful ;
Past all dishonour,
Death has left on her
Only the beautiful.

“ Still, for all slips of hers,
One of Eve's family,
Wipe those poor lips of hers,
Oozing so clammily ;
Loop up her tresses,
Escaped from the comb,
Her fair auburn tresses ;
Whilst wonderment guesses
Where was her home ?

“ Who was her father ?
Who was her mother ?
Had she a sister ?
Had she a brother ?
Or was there a dearer one
Still, and a nearer one
Yet, than all other ?

“ Alas ! for the rarity
Of Christian charity
Under the sun !
Oh, it was pitiful !
Near a whole city full,
Home she had none.

“ Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly
Feelings had changed ;
Love, by harsh evidence,
Thrown from its eminence ;
Even God’s providence
Seeming estranged.

“ Where the lamps quiver
So far in the river,
With many a light
From window and casement,
From garret to basement,
She stood with amazement,
Houseless by night.

“ The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver,
But not the dark arch,
Or the black flowing river ;
Mad from life’s history,
Glad to death’s mystery
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere
Out of the world !

“ In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly

The rough river ran—
Over the brink of it,
Picture it, think of it,
Dissolute man !
Lave in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can !

“ Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care—
Fashion'd so slenderly,
Young and so fair !

“ Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently—kindly—
Smooth and compose them
And her eyes close them,
Staring so blindly !

“ Dreadfully staring
Through muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fixed on futurity.

“ Perishing gloomily,
Spurred by contumely,
Cold inhumanity,
Burning insanity,
Into her, rest—
Cross her hands humbly,
As if praying dumbly
Over her breast !

Owning her weakness,
Her evil behaviour,
And leaving, with meekness,
Her sins to her Saviour ! ”

The vigour of this poem is no less remarkable than its pathos. The versification, although carrying the fanciful to the very verge of the fantastic, is nevertheless admirably adapted to the wild insanity which is the thesis of the poem.

Among the minor poems of Lord Byron is one which has never received from the critics the praise which it undoubtedly deserves :—

“ Though the day of my destiny’s over,
And the star of my fate hath declined,
Thy soft heart refused to discover
The faults which so many could find ;
Though thy soul with my grief was acquainted,
It shrunk not to share it with me,
And the love which my spirit hath painted
It never hath found but in *thee*.

“ Then when nature around me is smiling,
The last smile which answers to mine,
I do not believe it beguiling,
Because it reminds me of thine ;
And when winds are at war with the ocean,
As the breasts I believed in with me,
If their billows excite an emotion,
It is that they bear me from *thee*.

- “ Though the rock of my last hope is shivered,
And its fragments are sunk in the wave,
Though I feel that my soul is delivered
To pain—it shall not be its slave.
There is many a pang to pursue me :
They may crush, but they shall not contemn ;
They may torture, but shall not subdue me ;
'Tis of *thee* that I think—not of them.
- “ Though human, thou didst not deceive me,
Though woman, thou didst not forsake,
Though loved, thou forborest to grieve me,
Though slandered, thou never couldst shake—
Though trusted, thou didst not disclaim me,
Though parted, it was not to fly,
Though watchful, 'twas not to defame me,
Nor mute, that the world might belie.
- “ Yet I blame not the world, nor despise it,
Nor the war of so many with one—
If my soul was not fitted to prize it,
'Twas folly not sooner to shun ;
And if dearly that error hath cost me,
And more than I once could foresee,
I have found that, whatever it lost me,
It could not deprive me of *thee*.
- “ From the wreck of the past, which hath perished,
Thus much I at least may recall,
It hath taught me that which I most cherished,
Deserved to be dearest of all :
In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wide waste there still is a tree,
And a bird in the solitude singing,
Which speaks to my spirit of *thee*.”

Although the rhythm, here, is one of the most difficult, the versification could scarcely be improved. No nobler *theme* ever engaged the pen of poet. It is the sole elevating idea that no man can consider himself entitled to complain of Fate, while in his adversity he still retains the unwavering love of woman.

From Alfred Tennyson—although in perfect sincerity I regard him as the noblest poet that ever lived—I have left myself time to cite only a very brief specimen. I call him, and *think* him the noblest of poets—*not* because the impressions he produces are, at *all* times, the most profound; *not* because the poetical excitement which he induces, is, at *all* times, the most intense; but because it is, at all times, the most ethereal, in other words, the most elevating and the most pure. No poet is so little of the earth, earthy. What I am about to read is from his last long poem, “The Princess :”—

“Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depths of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes,
In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.

“Fresh as the first beam glittering on a sail,
That brings our friends up from the under world,
Sad as the last which reddens over one
That sinks with all we love below the verge—
So sad, so fresh, the days that are no more.

“ Ah ! sad and strange as in dark summer dawns
The earliest pipe of half-awaken'd birds
To dying ears, when unto dying eyes
The casement slowly grows a glimmering square—
So sad, so strange, the days that are no more.

“ Dear as remember'd kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feign'd
On lips that are for others ; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret ;
O Death in Life ! the days that are no more.”

Thus, although in a very cursory and imperfect manner, I have endeavoured to convey to you my conception of the Poetic Principle. It has been my purpose to suggest that, while this principle itself is, strictly and simply, the human aspiration for supernal beauty, the manifestation of the principle is always found in *an elevating excitement of the soul*, quite independent of that passion which is the intoxication of the heart, or of that truth which is the satisfaction of the reason. For, in regard to passion, alas ! its tendency is to degrade rather than to elevate the soul. Love, on the contrary—Love, the true, the divine Eros, the Uranian as distinguished from the Dionæan Venus—is unquestionably the purest and truest of all poetical themes. And in regard to Truth, if, to be sure, through the attainment of a truth we are led to perceive a harmony where none was apparent before, we experience at once the true poetical effect ; but this effect is referable to the harmony alone,

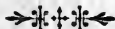
and not in the least degree to the truth, which merely served to render the harmony manifest.

We shall reach, however, more immediately, a distinct conception of what the true poetry is, by mere reference to a few of the simple elements which induce in the poet himself the true poetical effect. He recognises the ambrosia which nourishes his soul, in the bright orbs that shine in Heaven, in the volutes of the flower, in the clustering of low shrubberies, in the waving of the grain-fields, in the slanting of tall eastern trees, in the blue distance of mountains, in the grouping of clouds, in the twinkling of half-hidden brooks, in the gleaming of silver rivers, in the repose of sequestered lakes, in the star-mirroring depths of lonely wells. He perceives it in the songs of birds, in the harp of *Æolus*, in the sighing of the night-wind, in the repining voice of the forest, in the surf that complains to the shore, in the fresh breath of the woods, in the scent of the violet, in the voluptuous perfume of the hyacinth, in the suggestive odour that comes to him, at eventide, from far-distant, undiscovered islands, over dim oceans, illimitable and unexplored. He owns it in all noble thoughts, in all unworldly motives, in all holy impulses, in all chivalrous, generous, and self-sacrificing deeds. He feels it in the beauty of woman—in the grace of her step, in the lustre of her eye, in the melody of her voice, in her soft laughter, in her sigh, in the harmony of the rustling of her robes. He deeply feels it in her winning endearments, in her burning enthusiasms, in her gentle

charities, in her meek and devotional endurances ; but above all, ah ! far above all, he kneels to it, he worships it in the faith, in the purity, in the strength, in the altogether divine majesty of her *love*.

Let me conclude by the recitation of yet another brief poem, one very different in character from any that I have before quoted. It is by Motherwell, and is called "The Song of the Cavalier." With our modern and altogether rational ideas of the absurdity and impiety of warfare, we are not precisely in that frame of mind best adapted to sympathise with the sentiments, and thus to appreciate the real excellence of the poem. To do this fully, we must identify ourselves, in fancy, with the soul of the old cavalier.

" Then mounte ! then mounte, brave gallants, all,
 And don your helmes amaine ;
 Deathe's couriers, Fame and Honour, call
 Us to the field againe.
 No shrewish teares shall fill our eye
 When the sword-hilt's in our hand ;
 Heart-whole we'll part, and no whit sighe
 For the fayrest of the land.
 Let piping swaine and craven wight
 Thus weepe and puling crye :
 Our business is like men to fight,
 And hero-like to die !"





LIGEIA.

“ And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”—*Joseph Glanvil*.

I CANNOT, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot *now* bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid caste of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive, that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying

city near the Rhine. Of her family I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone—by Ligeia—that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own—a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself—what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance*—if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged *Ashtophet* of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine.

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanour, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her foot-

fall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study, save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium-dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the fantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labours of the heathen. “There is no exquisite beauty,” says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and *genera* of beauty, “without some *strangeness* in the proportion.” Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity—although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed “exquisite,” and felt that there was much of “strangeness” pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of “the strange.” I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead—it was faultless—how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine!—the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, “hyacinthine!” I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose—and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a

similar perfection. There were the same luxuriant smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly—the magnificent turn of the short upper lip—the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under—the dimples which sported, and the colour which spoke—the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinised the formation of the chin—and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fulness and the spirituality, of the Greek—the contour which the god Apollo revealed, but in a dream, to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. Yet it was only at intervals—in moments of intense excitement—that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia. And at such moments was her beauty—in my heated fancy thus it appeared perhaps—the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth—the beauty of the fabulous Houri

of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The "strangeness," however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the colour, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia! How for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it—that something more profound than the well of Democritus—which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes, those large, those shining, those divine orbs? they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers.

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact—never, I believe, noticed in the schools—that in our endeavours to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia's eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression—felt it approaching—yet not quite be mine—and so at length

entirely depart ! And (strange, oh, strangest mystery of all !) I found in the commonest objects of the universe a circle of analogies to that expression. I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia's beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always around, within me, by her large and luminous orbs. Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyse, or even steadily view it. I recognised it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly-growing vine—in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean ; in the falling of a meteor. I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people. And there are one or two stars in heaven (one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in Lyra), in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling. I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books. Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvil, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness—who shall say ?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment : "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour ? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death

utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will."

Length of years and subsequent reflection have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia. An *intensity* in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me—by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice—and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with her manner of utterance) of the wild words which she habitually uttered.

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia: it was immense—such as I have never known in woman. In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault. Indeed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I *ever* found Ligeia at fault? How singularly—how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of

my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman—but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a child-like confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during the earlier years of our marriage. With how vast a triumph—with how vivid a delight—with how much of all that is ethereal in hope—did I *feel*, as she bent over me in studies but little sought—but less known—that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted. Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed. Wanting the radiant lustre of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead. And now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia

grew ill. The wild eyes blazed with a too—too glorious effulgence ; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave ; and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion. I saw that she must die—and I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael. And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own. There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors ; but not so. Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow. I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle. I would have soothed—I would have reasoned ; but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life—for life—*but* for life—solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanour. Her voice grew more gentle—grew more low—yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened, entranced, to a melody more than mortal—to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known.

That she loved me I should not have doubted ; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion. But in death only was I fully impressed with the strength of

affection. For long hours, detaining my hand, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry. How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions?—how had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate. Let me say only, that in Ligeia's more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognised the principle of her longing, with so wildly earnest a desire, for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing—it is this eager vehemence of desire for life—*but* for life—that I have no power to portray—no utterance capable of expressing.

At high noon of the night in which she departed, beckoning me, peremptorily, to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before. I obeyed her. They were these:—

“Lo! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.

“Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,

And hither and thither fly—
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their Condor wings
Invisible Woe !

“ That motley drama—oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot !
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot ;
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror, the soul of the plot !

“ But see, amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude !
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude !
It writhes !—it writhes !—with mortal pangs
The mimes becomes its food,
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

“ Out—out are the lights—out all !
And over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm—
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy ‘ Man,’
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.”

“O God!” half-shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines—“O God! O Divine Father!—shall these things be undeviatingly so?—shall this conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who—who knoweth the mysteries of the will with its vigour? Man doth not yield him to the angels, *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear, and distinguished again the concluding words of the passage in Glanvil:—“*Man doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.*”

She died: and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow, could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honoured memories con-

nected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet although the external abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way, with a child-like perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within. For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste, and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labours and my orders had taken a colouring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber, ever accursed, whither, in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride—as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia—the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden and a daughter so beloved? I have said that I minutely remember the details of the

chamber—yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment ; and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window—an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice—a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the massy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting depended, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if indued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-coloured fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about ; and there was the couch, too—the bridal couch—of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with

their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief fantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height—even unproportionably so—were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry—tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a further advance, this appearance gradually departed; and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies—giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these—in a bridal chamber such as

this—I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhal-
lowed hours of the first month of our marriage—passed
them with but little disquietude. That my wife
dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper—that she
shunned me, and loved me but little—I could not help
perceiving ; but it gave me rather pleasure than other-
wise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to
demon than to man. My memory flew back (oh, with
what intensity of regret !) to Ligeia, the beloved, the
august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in
recollections of her purity, of her wisdom, of her lofty,
her ethereal nature, of her passionate, her idolatrous
love. Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn
with more than all the fires of her own. In the excite-
ment of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered
in the shackles of the drug), I would call aloud upon her
name, during the silence of the night, or among the
sheltered recesses of the glens by day, as if, through the
wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardour
of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to
the pathway she had abandoned—ah, *could* it be for
ever?—upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the
marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden
illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever
which consumed her rendered her nights uneasy ; and
in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of
sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the
turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the dis-

temper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent—finally, well. Yet but a brief period elapsed ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering; and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease, which had thus, apparently, taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds—of the slight sounds—and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she *then* heard, but which I could not hear—of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing

hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not *all* believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor overspreading her face had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer, two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person ; and I saw that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer, a shadow—a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect—such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke of them to Rowena. Having found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a gobletful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, however, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle footfall upon the carpet, and near the couch ; and in a second there-

after, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby-coloured fluid. If this I saw—not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must, after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby-drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride.—Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted, shadow-like, before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-coloured fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where I had seen the faint traces of the shadow. It was there, however, no longer; and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia—and then came back upon my heart,

with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded *her* thus enshrouded. The night waned ; and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I *felt* that it came from the bed of ebony—the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror—but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse—but there was not the slightest perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I *had* heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of colour had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficiently energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations—that Rowena still lived. It was necessary that some immediate exertion be made ; yet the turret

was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants—there were none within call—I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes—and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavours to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place; the colour disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death; a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body; and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startingly aroused, and again gave myself up to passionate waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed, when (could it be possible?) I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened—in extremity of horror. The sound came again—it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw—distinctly saw—a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterwards they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my vision grew dim, that my reason wandered; and it was only by a violent effort that I at length succeeded in nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the

forehead and upon the cheek and throat ; a perceptible warmth pervaded the whole frame ; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady *lived* ; and with redoubled ardour I betook myself to the task of restoration. I chafed and bathed the temples and the hands, and used every exertion which experience, and no little medical reading, could suggest. But in vain. Suddenly the colour fled, the pulsation ceased, the lips resumed the expression of the dead, and, in an instant afterward, the whole body took upon itself the icy chilliness, the livid hue, the intense rigidity, the sunken outline, and all the loathsome peculiarities of that which has been, for many days, a tenant of the tomb.

And again I sank into visions of Ligeia—and again (what marvel that I shudder while I write ?) *again* there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed. But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night ? Why shall I pause to relate how, time after time, until near the period of the grey dawn, this hideous drama of revivification was repeated ; how each terrific relapse was only into a sterner and apparently more irredecimable death ; how each agony wore the aspect of a struggle with some invisible foe ; and how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse ? Let me hurry to a conclusion.

The greater part of the fearful night had worn away, and she who had been dead once again stirred—and now more vigorously than hitherto, although arousing

from a dissolution more appalling in its utter hopelessness than any. I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions, of which extreme awe was perhaps the least terrible, the least consuming. The corpse, I repeat, stirred, and now more vigorously than before. The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance—the limbs relaxed—and, save that the eyelids were yet pressed heavily together and that the bandages and draperies of the grave still imparted their charnel character to the figure, I might have dreamed that Rowena had indeed shaken off, utterly, the fetters of Death. But if this idea was not, even then, altogether adopted, I could at least doubt no longer, when arising from the bed, tottering, with feeble steps, with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced boldly and palpably into the middle of the apartment.

I trembled not—I stirred not—for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanour of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralysed—had chilled me into stone. I stirred not—but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts—a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the *living* Rowena who confronted me? Could it indeed be Rowena *at all*—the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, *why* should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily

about the mouth—but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks—there were the roses as in her noon of life—yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers?—but *had she then grown taller since her malady?* What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; *it was blacker than the raven wings of midnight!* And now slowly opened *the eyes* of the figure which stood before me. “Here then, at least,” I shrieked aloud, “can I never—can I never be mistaken—these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes—of my lost love—of the Lady—of the LADY LIGEIA.”





THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER.

"Son cœur est un luth suspendu ;
Sitot qu'on le touche il résonne."—DE BÉRANGER.

DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country ; and at length found myself, as the shades of evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable ; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the

vacant eye-light windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there *are* combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate, its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stem, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more was said—it was the apparent *heart* that went with his request—which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisable beauties, of musical science. I had learned,

too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other—it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission from sire to son of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two, as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the "House of Usher"—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment—that of looking down within the tarn—had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition—for why should I not so term it?—served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in

the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy—a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity—an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the grey wall, and the silent tarn—a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what *must* have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principle feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discolouration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinising observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of

the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the *studio* of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me—while the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy—while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this—I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation, and passed on. The valet now threw open a door, and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams

of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a

nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations ; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy ; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity ; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency ; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision—that

abrupt, weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation—that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy—a mere nervous affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, interested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of the narration, had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall perish,” said he, “I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial

incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved—in this pitiable condition—I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth—in regard to an influence whose superstitious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be restated—an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the grey walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister—his sole companion for long years—his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would

leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread—and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door at length closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother—but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the Lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night, with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing her name was unmentioned

by either Usher or myself : and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavours to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together ; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphurous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring for ever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why ; from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity,

by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least—in the circumstances then surrounding me—there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light, was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid *facility*

of his *impromptus* could not be so accounted for. They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher of the tottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled "The Haunted Palace," ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:—

I.

"In the greenest of our valleys,
By good angels tenanted,
Once a fair and stately palace—
Radiant palace—reared its head.
In the monarch Thought's dominion—
It stood there!
Never seraph spread a pinion
Over fabric half so fair!

II.

'Banners yellow, glorious, golden,
On its roof did float and flow;

(This—all this—was in the olden
Time long ago)
And every gentle air that dallied,
In that sweet day,
Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,
A wingèd odour went away.

III.

“Wanderers in that happy valley,
Through two luminous windows, saw
Spirits moving musically
To a lute’s well tunéd law,
Round about a throne where, sitting
(PorphYROGENE !)
In state his glory well befitting,
The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV.

“And all with pearl and ruby glowing
Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes, whose sweet duty
Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
The wit and wisdom of their king.

V.

“But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
Assailed the monarch’s high estate ;
(Ah, let us mourn !—for never morrow
Shall dawn upon him desolate !)

And round about his home, the glory
That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
Of the old time entombed.

VI.

“And travellers now, within that valley,
Through the red-litten windows see
Vast forms that move fantastically
To a discordant melody ;
While, like a rapid ghastly river,
Through the pale door
A hideous throng rush out for ever,
And laugh—but smile no more.”

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher's which I mention not so much on account of its novelty (for other men* have thought thus), as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganisation. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest *abandon* of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the grey

* Watson, Dr. Percival, Spallanvani, and especially the Bishop of Landaff.—See *Chemical Essays*, vol. v.

stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones—in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many *fungi* which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around—above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence—the evidence of the sentience—was to be seen, he said (and I here started as he spoke), in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made *him* what I now saw him—what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books—the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid—were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as *The Ververt et Chartreuse* of Gresset; *The Belphegor* of Machiavelli; *The Heaven and Hell* of Swendenborg; *The Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm*, by Holberg; *The Chiromancy* of Robert Flud, of Jean d' Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; *The Journey into the Blue Distance* of Tieck; and *The City of the Sun* of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of *The Directorium Inquisitorium*,

by the Dominican EymERIC de Gironne; and there were passages in *Pomponius Mela*, about the old African Satyrs and Ægipans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic—the manual of a forgotten church—*The Vigiliae Mortuorum secundum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae*.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the Lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight (previously to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and cager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the

arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease

which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterised his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping

upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic, yet impressive, superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the Lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavoured to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremour gradually pervaded my frame : and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened—I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me—to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavoured to arouse myself

from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on the adjoining staircase arrested my attention: I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped with a gentle touch at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan—but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes—an evidently restrained *hysteria* in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me—but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

“And you have not seen it?” he said, abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous, yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-long velocity with which they flew careering from all points against each other,

without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this—yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars—nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapour, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I, shudderingly, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement; the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen—and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

The antique volume which I had taken up was the *Mad Trist* of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favourite of Usher’s more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies)

even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus :—

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and maliceful turn, but feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand ; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and reverberated throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started, and, for a moment, paused ; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me) —it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion

of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention ; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story :—

“ But the good champion, Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit ; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanour, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver ; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten :—

‘ Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin ;
Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win :’

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt what-

ever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon's unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of this second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair, so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmuring inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast—yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea—for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded :—

“And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, bethinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and approached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was upon the wall; which, in sooth, tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver—I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Not hear it!—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I

not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak!* And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield!—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh, whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!”—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—*“Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!”*

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell, the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed, threw slowly back upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the Lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother,

and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon, which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the "*House of Usher.*"





THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH.

THE "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal, or so hideous: Blood was its Avator and its seal—the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body, and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress, and termination of the disease, were the incidents of half-an-hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy, and dauntless, and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion

of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress or egress to the sudden impulses of despair or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."

It was toward the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence.

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven—an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as

might have been expected from the duke's love of the *bizarre*. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass, whose colour varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue—and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and lighted with orange—the fifth with white—the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But in this chamber only the colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro, or depended from the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that

followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire, that projected its rays through the tinted glass, and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear, and loud, and deep, and exceedingly musical; but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians of the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to harken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at

each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion ; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies), there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colours and effects. He disregarded the *decora* of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear, and see, and touch him to be *sure* that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête* ; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare, and glitter, and piquancy, and phantasm — much of what has been since seen in “Hernani.” There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There were much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the *bizarre*, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude

of dreams. And these—the dreams—writhe in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, for a moment, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away—they have endured but an instant—and a light half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven, there are now none of the maskers who venture ; for the night is waning away ; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-coloured panes ; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals ; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches *their* ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told ; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted ; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were

twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock ; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumour of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise—then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms, such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited ; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the

visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in *blood*—and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its *rôle*, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment, with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

“Who dares?” he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him—“who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him—that we may know whom we have to hang at sunrise from the battlements!”

It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly—for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand.

It was in the blue room where stood the prince with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who, at the moment, was also

near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way, uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple—through the purple to the green—through the green to the orange—through this again to the white—and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers, while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry—and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer,

whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave cerements and corpse-like mask which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.





THE ASSIGNATION.

“ Stay for me there ! I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale.”

[*Exequy on the death of his wife, by Henry King,
Bishop of Chichester.*]

ILL-FATED and mysterious man !—bewildered in the
brilliancy of thine own imagination, and fallen in
the flames of thine own youth ! Again in fancy I
behold thee ! Once more thy form hath risen before
me !—not—oh, not as thou art—in the cold valley and
shadow—but as thou *shouldst be*—squandering away a
life of magnificent meditation in that city of dim visions,
thine own Venice—which is a star-beloved Elysium of
the sea, and the wide windows of whose Palladian
palaces look down with a deep and bitter meaning upon
the secrets of her silent waters. Yes ! I repeat it—as
thou *shouldst be*. There are surely other worlds than

this—other thoughts than the thoughts of the multitude—other speculations than the speculations of the sophist. Who then shall call thy conduct into question? who blame thee for thy visionary hours, or denounce those occupations as a wasting away of life, which were but the overflowings of thine everlasting energies?

It was at Venice, beneath the covered archway there called the *Ponte di Sospiri*, that I met for the third or fourth time the person of whom I speak. It is with a confused recollection that I bring to mind the circumstances of that meeting. Yet I remember—ah! how should I forget!—the deep midnight, the Bridge of Sighs, the beauty of woman, and the Genius of Romance that stalked up and down the narrow canal.

It was a night of unusual gloom. The great clock of the Piazza had sounded the fifth hour of the Italian evening. The square of the Campanile lay silent and deserted, and the lights in the old Ducal Palace were dying fast away. I was returning home from the Piazzetta, by way of the Grand Canal. But as my gondola arrived opposite the mouth of the canal San Marco, a female voice from its recesses broke suddenly upon the night, in one wild, hysterical, and long continued shriek. Startled at the sound, I sprang upon my feet: while the gondolier, letting slip his single oar, lost it in the pitchy darkness beyond a chance of recovery, and we were consequently left to the guidance of the current which here sets from the greater into the smaller channel. Like some huge and sable-feathered condor,

we were slowly drifting down towards the Bridge of Sighs, when a thousand flambeaux flashing from the windows, and down the staircase of the Ducal Palace, turned all at once that deep gloom into a livid and preternatural day.

A child, slipping from the arms of its own mother, had fallen from the upper window of the lofty structure into the deep and dim canal. The quiet waters had closed placidly over their victim; and, although my gondola was the only one in sight, many a stout swimmer, already in the stream, was seeking in vain upon the surface, the treasure which was to be found, alas! only within the abyss. Upon the broad black marble flagstones, at the entrance of the palace, and a few steps above the water, stood a figure which none who then saw can have ever since forgotten. It was the Marchesa Aphrodite—the adoration of all Venice—the gayest of the gay—the most lovely where all were beautiful—but still the young wife of the old and intriguing Mentoni, and the mother of that fair child, her first and only one, who now, deep beneath the murky water, was thinking in bitterness of heart upon her sweet caresses, and exhausting its little life in struggles to call upon her name.

She stood alone. Her small, bare, and silvery feet gleamed in the black mirror of marble beneath her. Her hair, not as yet more than half loosened for the night from its ball-room array, clustered, amid a shower of diamonds, round and round her classical head, in

curls like those of the young hyacinth. A snowy-white and gauze-like drapery seemed to be nearly the sole covering to her delicate form ; but the mid-summer and midnight air was hot, sullen, and still, and no motion in the statue-like form itself stirred even the folds of that raiment of very vapour which hung around it as the heavy marble hangs around the Niobe. Yet—strange to say !—her large lustrous eyes were not turned downwards upon that grave wherein her brightest hope lay buried—but riveted in a widely different direction ! The prison of the Old Republic is, I think, the stateliest building in all Venice—but how could that lady gaze so fixedly upon it, when beneath her lay stifling her own child ? Yon dark, gloomy niche, too, yawns right opposite her chamber window—what, then, *could* there be in its shadows—in its architecture—in its ivy-wreathed and solemn cornices—that the Marchesa di Mentoni had not wondered at a thousand times before ? Nonsense !—who does not remember that, at such a time as this, the eye, like a shattered mirror, multiplies the images of its sorrow, and sees, in innumerable far off places, the woe which is close at hand ?

Many steps above the Marchesa, and within the arch of the water-gates, stood, in full dress, the satyr-like figure of Mentoni himself. He was occasionally occupied in thrumming a guitar, and seemed *ennuyé* to the very death, as at intervals he gave directions for the recovery of his child. Stupified and aghast, I had myself no power to move from the upright position I had assumed

upon first hearing the shriek, and must have presented to the eyes of the agitated group a spectral and ominous appearance, as with pale countenance and rigid limbs I floated down among them in that funereal gondola.

All efforts proved in vain. Many of the most energetic in the search were relaxing their exertions, and yielding to a gloomy sorrow. There seemed but little hope for the child (how much less than for the mother !); but now, from the interior of that dark niche which has been already mentioned as forming a part of the Old Republican prison, and as fronting the lattice of the Marchesa, a figure muffled in a cloak stepped out within reach of the light, and, pausing a moment upon the verge of the giddy descent, plunged headlong into the canal. As, in an instant afterwards, he stood with the still living and breathing child within his grasp, upon the marble flagstones by the side of the Marchesa, his cloak, heavy with the drenching water, became unfastened, and, falling in folds about his feet, discovered to the wonder-stricken spectators the graceful person of a very young man, with the sound of whose name the greater part of Europe was then ringing.

No word spoke the deliverer. But the Marchesa ! She will now receive her child—she will press it to her heart—she will cling to its little form, and smother it with her caresses. Alas ! *another's* arms have taken it from the stranger—*another's* arms have taken it away, and borne it afar off, unnoticed, into the palace ! And the Marchesa ! Her lip—her beautiful lip trembles :

tears are gathering in her eyes—those eyes which, like Pliny's acanthus, are "soft and almost liquid." Yes! tears are gathering in those eyes—and see! the entire woman thrills throughout the soul, and the statue has started into life! The pallor of the marble countenance, the swelling of the marble bosom, the very purity of the marble feet, we behold suddenly flushed over with a tide of ungovernable crimson; and a slight shudder quivers about her delicate frame, as a gentle air at Napoli about the rich silver lilies in the grass.

Why *should* that lady blush? To this demand there is no answer—except that, having left, in the eager haste and terror of a mother's heart, the privacy of her own *boudoir*, she has neglected to enthrall her tiny feet in their slippers, and utterly forgotten to throw over her Venetian shoulders that drapery which is their due. What other possible reason could there have been for her so blushing?—for the glance of those wild appealing eyes? for the unusual tumult of that throbbing bosom?—for the convulsive pressure of that trembling hand?—that hand which fell, as Mentoni turned into the palace, accidentally, upon the hand of the stranger. What reason could there have been for the low—the singularly low tone of those unmeaning words which the lady uttered hurriedly in bidding him adieu? "Thou hast conquered," she said, or the murmurs of the water deceived me; "thou hast conquered—one hour after sunrise—we shall meet—so let it be!"

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The tumult had subsided, the lights had died away within the palace, and the stranger, whom I now recognised, stood alone upon the flags. He shook with inconceivable agitation, and his eye glanced around in search of a gondola. I could not do less than offer him the service of my own; and he accepted the civility. Having obtained an oar at the water-gate, we proceeded together to his residence, while he rapidly recovered his self-possession, and spoke of our former slight acquaintance in terms of great apparent cordiality.

There are some subjects upon which I take pleasure in being minute. The person of the stranger—let me call him by this title, who to all the world was still a stranger—the person of the stranger is one of these subjects. In height he might have been below rather than above the medium size: although there were moments of intense passion when his frame actually *expanded* and belied the assertion. The light, almost slender symmetry of his figure, promised more of that ready activity which he evinced at the Bridge of Sighs, than of that Herculean strength which he has been known to wield without an effort, upon occasions of more dangerous emergency. With the mouth and chin of a deity—singular, wild, full, liquid eyes, whose shadows varied from pure hazel to intense and brilliant jet—and a profusion of curling, black hair, from which a forehead of unusual breadth gleamed forth at intervals all light and ivory—his were features than which I have seen none

more classically regular, except, perhaps, the marble ones of the Emperor Commodus. Yet his countenance was, nevertheless, one of those which all men have seen at some period of their lives, and have never afterwards seen again. It had no peculiar—it had no settled predominant expression to be fastened upon the memory; a countenance seen and instantly forgotten—but forgotten with a vague and never-ceasing desire of recalling it to mind. Not that the spirit of each rapid passion failed, at any time, to throw its own distinct image upon the mirror of that face—but that the mirror, mirror-like, retained no vestige of the passion, when the passion had departed.

Upon leaving him on the night of our adventure, he solicited me, in what I thought an urgent manner, to call upon him *very* early the next morning. Shortly after sunrise, I found myself accordingly at his Palazzo, one of those huge structures of gloomy, yet fantastic pomp, which tower above the waters of the Grand Canal in the vicinity of the Rialto. I was shown up a broad winding staircase of mosaics, into an apartment whose unparalleled splendour burst through the opening door with an actual glare, making me blind and dizzy with luxuriousness.

I knew my acquaintance to be wealthy. Report had spoken of his possessions in terms which I had even ventured to call terms of ridiculous exaggeration. But as I gazed about me, I could not bring myself to believe that the wealth of any subject in Europe could have

supplied the princely magnificence which burned and blazed around.

Although, as I say, the sun had arisen, yet the room was still brilliantly lighted up. I judge from this circumstance, as well as from an air of exhaustion in the countenance of my friend, that he had not retired to bed during the whole of the preceding night. In the architecture and embellishments of the chamber, the evident design had been to dazzle and astound. Little attention had been paid to the *decora* of what is technically called *keeping*, or to the proprieties of nationality. The eye wandered from object to object, and rested upon none—neither the *grotesques* of the Greek painters, nor the sculptures of the best Italian days, nor the huge carvings of untutored Egypt. Rich draperies in every part of the room trembled to the vibration of low, melancholy music, whose origin was not to be discovered. The senses were oppressed by mingled and conflicting perfumes, reeking up from strange convolute censers, together with multitudinous flaring and flickering tongues of emerald and violet fire. The rays of the newly risen sun poured in upon the whole, through windows, formed each of a single pane of crimson-tinted glass. Glancing to and fro, in a thousand reflections, from curtains which rolled from their cornices like cataracts of molten silver, the beams of natural glory mingled at length fitfully with the artificial light, and lay weltering in subdued masses upon a carpet of rich, liquid-looking cloth of Chili gold.

“Ha! ha! ha!—ha! ha! ha!”—laughed the proprietor, motioning me to a seat as I entered the room, and throwing himself back at full length upon an ottoman. “I see,” said he, perceiving that I could not immediately reconcile myself to the *bienséance* of so singular a welcome—“I see you are astonished at my apartment—at my statues—my pictures—my originality of conception in architecture and upholstery! absolutely drunk, eh, with my magnificence? But pardon me, my dear sir” (here his tone of voice dropped to the very spirit of cordiality), “pardon me for my uncharitable laughter. You appeared so *utterly* astonished. Besides, some things are so completely ludicrous, that a man *must* laugh, or die. To die laughing, must be the most glorious of all glorious deaths! Sir Thomas More—a very fine man was Sir Thomas More—Sir Thomas More died laughing, you remember. Also in the *Absurdities* of Ravisius Texter, there is a long list of characters who came to the same magnificent end. Do you know, however,” continued he, musingly, “that at Sparta (which is now Palæochori), at Sparta, I say, to the west of the citadel, among a chaos of scarcely visible ruins, is a kind of *socle*, upon which letters are still legible. Now, at Sparta, were a thousand temples and shrines to a thousand different divinities. How exceedingly strange that the altar of Laughter should have survived all the others! But in the present instance,” he resumed, with a singular alteration of voice and manner, “I have no right to be merry at your expense.

You might well have been amazed. Europe cannot produce anything so fine as this, my little regal cabinet. My other apartments are by no means of the same order—mere *ultras* of fashionable insipidity. This is better than fashion—is it not? Yet this has but to be seen to become the rage—that is, with those who could afford it at the cost of their entire patrimony. I have guarded, however, against any such profanation. With one exception, you are the only human being besides myself and my *valet*, who has been admitted within the mysteries of these imperial precincts, since they have been bedizened as you see!

I bowed in acknowledgment—for the overpowering sense of splendour, and perfume, and music, together with the unexpected eccentricity of his address and manner, prevented me from expressing my appreciation of what I might have construed into a compliment.

“Here,” he resumed, arising and leaning on my arm as he sauntered around the apartment, “here are paintings from the Greeks to Cimabue, and from Cimabue to the present hour. Many are chosen, as you see, with little deference to the opinions of *Virtu*. They are all, however, fitting tapestry for a chamber such as this. Here, too, are some *chef-d’œuvres* of the unknown great; and here unfinished designs by men, celebrated in their day, whose very names the perspicacity of the academies has left to silence and to me. What think you,” said he, turning abruptly as he spoke—“what think you of this Madonna della Pieta?”

“It is Guido’s own!” I said, with all the enthusiasm of my nature, for I had been poring intently over its surpassing loveliness. “It is Guido’s own!—how *could* you have obtained it? she is undoubtedly in painting what the Venus is in sculpture.”

“Ha!” said he, thoughtfully, “the Venus—the beautiful Venus?—the Venus of the Medici?—she of the diminutive head and the gilded hair? Part of the left arm” (here his voice dropped so as to be heard with difficulty), “and all the right, are restorations; and in the coquetry of that right arm lies, I think, the quintessence of all affectation. Give *me* the Canova! The Apollo, too, is a copy—there can be no doubt of it—blind fool that I am, who cannot behold the boasted inspiration of the Apollo! I cannot help—pity me!—I cannot help preferring the Antinous. Was it not Socrates who said that the statuary found his statue in the block of marble? Then Michael Angelo was by no means original in his couplet—

“ ‘Non ha l’ottimo artista alcun concetto
Che un marmo solo in se non circumscriva.’ ”

It has been, or should be remarked, that, in the manner of the true gentleman, we are always aware of a difference from the bearing of the vulgar, without being at once precisely able to determine in what such difference consists. Allowing the remark to have applied in its full force to the outward demeanour of my acquaintance, I felt it, on that eventful morning, still more fully

applicable to his moral temperament and character. Nor can I better define that peculiarity of spirit which seemed to place him so essentially apart from all other human beings, than by calling it a *habit* of intense and continual thought, pervading even his most trivial actions—intruding upon his moments of dalliance—and interweaving itself with his very flashes of merriment—like adders which writhe from out the eyes of the grinning masks in the cornices around the temples of Persepolis.

I could not help, however, repeatedly observing, through the mingled tone of levity and solemnity with which he rapidly descanted upon matters of little importance, a certain air of trepidation—a degree of nervous *unction* in action and in speech—an unquiet excitability of manner which appeared to me at all times unaccountable, and upon some occasions even filled me with alarm. Frequently, too, pausing in the middle of a sentence whose commencement he had apparently forgotten, he seemed to be listening in the deepest attention, as if either in momentary expectation of a visitor, or to sounds which must have had existence in his imagination alone.

It was during one of these reveries or pauses of apparent abstraction, that, in turning over a page of the poet and scholar Politian's beautiful tragedy, "The Orfeo" (the first native Italian tragedy), which lay near me upon an ottoman, I discovered a passage underlined in pencil. It was a passage towards the end of the

third act—a passage of the most heart-stirring excitement—a passage which, although tainted with impurity, no man shall read without a thrill of novel emotion—no woman without a sigh. The whole page was blotted with fresh tears ; and, upon the opposite interleaf were the following English lines, written in a hand so very different from the peculiar characters of my acquaintance, that I had some difficulty in recognising it as his own :—

“Thou wast that all to me, love,
For which my soul did pine—
A green isle in the sea, love,
A fountain and a shrine,
All wreathed with fairy fruits and flowers ;
And all the flowers were mine.

“Ah, dream too bright to last !
Ah, starry Hope, that didst arise
But to be overcast !
A voice from out the Future cries,
‘Onward !’—but o’er the Past
(Dim gulf !) my spirit hovering lies,
Mute—motionless—aghast !

“For alas ! alas ! with me
The light of life is o’er.
‘No more—no more—no more,’
(Such language holds the solemn sea
To the sands upon the shore),
Shall bloom the thunder-blasted tree,
Or the stricken eagle soar !

“ Now all my hours are trances ;
And all my nightly dreams
Are where thy dark eye glances,
And where thy footstep gleams,
In what ethereal dances,
By what Italian streams.

“ Alas ! for that accursed time
They bore thee o’er the billow,
From Love to titled age and crime,
And an unholy pillow !—
From me, and from our misty clime,
Where weeps the silver willow ! ”

That these lines were written in English—a language with which I had not believed their author acquainted—afforded me little matter for surprise. I was too well aware of the extent of his acquirements, and of the singular pleasure he took in concealing them from observation, to be astonished at any similar discovery ; but the place of date, I must confess, occasioned me no little amazement. It had been originally written *London*, and afterwards carefully overscored—not, however, so effectually as to conceal the word from a scrutinising eye. I say, this occasioned me no little amazement ; for I well remember that, in a former conversation with my friend, I particularly inquired if he had at any time met in London the Marchesa di Mentoni (who for some years previous to her marriage had resided in that city), when his answer, if I mistake not, gave me to understand that he had never visited the metropolis of Great Britain.

I might as well here mention, that I have more than once heard (without, of course, giving credit to a report involving so many improbabilities), that the person of whom I speak was not only by birth, but in education, an *Englishman*.

“There is one painting,” said he, without being aware of my notice of the tragedy—“there is still one painting which you have not seen.” And throwing aside a drapery, he discovered a full-length portrait of the Marchesa Aphrodite.

Human art could have done no more in the delineation of her superhuman beauty: The same ethereal figure which stood before me the preceding night upon the steps of the Ducal Palace, stood before me once again. But in the expression of the countenance, which was beaming all over with smiles, there still lurked (incomprehensible anomaly!) that fitful stain of melancholy which will ever be found inseparable from the perfection of the beautiful. Her right arm lay folded over her bosom. With her left she pointed downward to a curiously fashioned vase. One small, fairy foot, alone visible, barely touched the earth; and scarcely discernible in the brilliant atmosphere which seemed to encircle and enshrine her loveliness, floated a pair of the most delicately imagined wings. My glance fell from the painting to the figure of my friend, and the vigorous words of Chapman's *Bussy D' Ambois*, quivered instinctively upon my lips—

“He is up
There like a Roman statue! He will stand
‘Till Death hath made him marble!”

“Come,” he said at length, turning towards a table of richly enamelled and massive silver, upon which were a few goblets fantastically stained, together with two large Etruscan vases, fashioned in the same extraordinary model as that in the foreground of the portrait, and filled with what I supposed to be Johannisberger. “Come,” he said, abruptly, “let us drink! It is early—but let us drink. “Is is *indeed* early,” he continued, musingly, as a cherub with a heavy golden hammer made the apartment ring with the first hour after sunrise: “it is *indeed* early—but what matters it? let us drink! Let us pour out an offering to yon solemn sun which these gaudy lamps and censers are so eager to subdue!” And, having made me pledge him in a bumper, he swallowed in rapid succession several goblets of the wine.

“To dream,” he continued, resuming the tone of his desultory conversation, as he held up to the rich light of a censer one of the magnificent vases—“to dream has been the business of my life. I have therefore framed for myself, as you see, a bower of dreams. In the heart of Venice could I have erected a better? You behold around you, it is true, a medley of architectural embellishments. The chastity of Ionia is offended by antedeluvian devices, and the sphynxes of Egypt are outstretched upon carpets of gold. Yet the effect is

incongruous to the timid alone. Proprieties of place, and especially of time, are the bugbears which terrify mankind from the contemplation of the magnificent. Once I was myself a decorist; but that sublimation of folly has palled upon my soul. All this is now the fitter for my purpose. Like these arabesque censers, my spirit is writhing in fire, and the delirium of this scene is fashioning me for the wilder visions of that land of real dreams whither I am now rapidly departing." He here paused abruptly, bent his head to his bosom, and seemed to listen to a sound which I could not hear. At length, erecting his frame, he looked upwards, and ejaculated the lines of the Bishop of Chichester—

*"Stay for me there! I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale."*

In the next instant, confessing the power of the wine, he threw himself at full-length upon an ottoman.

A quick step was now heard upon the staircase, and a loud knock at the door rapidly succeeded. I was hastening to anticipate a second disturbance, when a page of Mentoni's household burst into the room, and faltered out, in a voice choking with emotion, the incoherent words, "My mistress!—my mistress!—Poisoned!—poisoned! Oh, beautiful—oh, beautiful Aphrodite!"

Bewildered, I flew to the ottoman, and endeavoured to arouse the sleeper to a sense of the startling intelligence. But his limbs were rigid—his lips were livid—his lately

beaming eyes were rivetted in *death*. I staggered back towards the table—my hand fell upon a cracked and blackened goblet—and a consciousness of the entire and terrible truth flashed suddenly over my soul.



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