OTHURIEL;

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY THOMAS AIRD.

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PREFACE TO OTHURIEL.

The Fall of Jerusalem as a subject for an Epic Poem, it is profoundly remarked by Coleridge:—“This subject, with all its great capabilities, has this one grand defect, that, whereas a Poem to be epic must have a personal interest, in the Destruction of Jerusalem no genius or skill could possibly preserve the interest for the hero from being merged in the interest for the event. The fact is, the event itself is too sublime and overwhelming.” Impressed with the justness of this opinion, and no less conscious of his own want of fitness to take up the subject-matter in its wide extent, even were it free from the fundamental difficulty thus expounded by the critic, the Author of this little poem, Othuriel, has attempted nothing beyond cutting out a story, in a great measure domestic, from the Siege and Fall of the Holy City. He has kept his principal character central in every Canto; and, though he has given a few of the leading circumstances of that Siege and Fall, he has been studious that the fortunes and fate of his hero should be illustrated merely, and not overlaid, by the general calamity. In this way, and this alone, perhaps, such vast quarries of terror and pity as the Destruction of Jerusalem, the French Revolution, &c., may be turned to good account by the poet.

DUMFRIES, 28th August, 1839.
OTHURIEL.

CANTO I.

THE BATTLE.

Forth comes the day: Othuriel through the land
Of Judah southward leads that Roman band,
To help Vespasian from the Jordan's mouth
Fighting to Idumea on the south.
Down the clear plains they go; but lo! afar
The illumined coming of a host of war,
Banners and flashing spears! From side to side
Sharpening its crescent horns, it barred the valley wide.
Upraised, high forward o'er his charger bent,
Throughout that host his eye Othuriel sent.
He turned:—"On must we, soldiers, undismayed,
Beyond those Jews Vespasian needs our aid;
And ere yon sun be down into the west,
In Judah's southern gardens shall we rest."

On went they: silent on his conscious steed,
That trode on fire and minced his governed speed,
Othuriel went—shocked to a sudden pause,
Swart gleams his brow, intenser breath he draws,
To see along yon front in warlike pride
His foe peculiar, dark Manasseh, ride,—
His hated foe; forth springing, down he led
His Roman foot; it pushed its columned head
With quick short heaves against the Jews' array,
Crashing it dipped into that iron bay;
His widening horse dash out on either side:
The kindling battle rages far and wide.

Along the mingled van with ranging speed
Manasseh rode; leapt from his stricken steed
Othuriel, trembled through his eager frame
His heart absorbed as near his enemy came,
His still sword hung upon his eye, with might
Stamping he dared the Hebrew to the fight.
Manasseh turned and said:—"I know thee, youth;
I wronged thee much when I impeached thy truth;
But I will give thee"—from his charger down
He sprung—"a chance for vengeance and renown."
"My welcome this!" Othuriel grimly spoke,
And launched his heart upon a mighty stroke;
But warding well unhurt the Hebrew stood,
And still was proof against the blow renewed.
He smote in turn with swiftest vehemence;
His soul Othuriel threw into defence,
Yet wounded deeply, bled. Ha! on his neck
If fall that sheer-driven weapon without check—
Aside he swerves, is saved; his eye's bold gleam,
Half smiling, darkens into wrath extreme;
His foe has stumbled—o'er the Hebrew's head
Uprising, rose his falchion; down it sped
With might collected, unresisted main,
And drove cold darkness through his cloven brain.

Staggering Othuriel stands, and clears his eye
From dizzy motes to see his foeman die;
Reeling he sinks: The yell is in his ears
Of trampling squadrons; o'er his eye careers
A storm of faces, in a moment dim:
And all is blank and silent now to him.
OTHURIEL.

CANTO II.

OTHURIEL’S INTERVIEW WITH JOANNA.

Othuriel wakes; a glimmer shews him laid,
But where he knows not, on a broidered bed.
Came muffled feet; before him stood in sight
A child of lustrous beauty; she a light
Bore, shaded half, and half from him away
Back held, his eyes to hurt not with the ray.
“Water!” he murmured; she a draught supplied,
That struck cold healing through his thirsty side.
Sweet food she brought him; bowing o’er his bed,
She salved his shoulder and his wounded head
With balsams cool and bland; refreshed he lies,
His bosom swelling with delicious sighs.
Pleased on him gazed the girl, then tripped away;
But back returned with each returning day:
With ointments, milk and honey, Tamar came,
(So silent she, he scarcely learned her name)
Till months revolving saw Othuriel there
Wax slowly well beneath her gentle care.

II.

Othuriel, healed, to Titus northward goes;
His way, at first perplexed, a female shews,
Vailed, sackcloth-clad; she paused, her lifted vail
Revealed Joanna beautiful but pale;
Northward she pointed:—“Lo!” she said, “thy way
To Zion Hill throughout the autumnal day!
On to Jerusalem straight! there let thy hand,
Red with thy country’s blood, upsnatch a brand,
Hurl the swift fire, her sainted citadel
Strike, down her arches, down her Temple fell;
Then come before me, there declare at last
Thou well in all hast justified the past!"

"Be mine to follow to its utmost bound
Thy scornful guidance, Zion to confound!
If of my will, my power, you still demand
A pledge—Manasseh perished by this hand:
Mine was the blow"

"But mine to mourn the deed,
For was he not a father in my need?
For was not she—ah! now his widowed wife—
More than a mother to my orphan life,
Adopted? Great in war, with patriot haste
He left Jerusalem where his power was placed
Highest, disdaining power, that he might dwell
In native Judah and her enemies quell;
And I, his daughter, there was doomed to see
His manly body gashed by thee—oh thee!"

"But hear me now! But I had savage cause!
Who made me what I am from what I was?
Did I not bravely fight? from day to day
The foes of Zion did I fail to slay?
I saw, and loved thee well; by thee beloved,
How burned my heart to be in deeds approved
Of greater wars, to win a name of pride,
That I might put it on my virgin bride!
Judge me, just maid! Hell and her Powers of Shame
Sent forth a scum of lies to blast my name:
They called me traitor! Ha! against me rose
Manasseh, foremost of my envious foes;
He led that host of lies: Faction and Hate
Our Council ruled, and drove me from the State:
They drove me forth! On the first mountain's brow
I knelt against them, and I vowed a vow;
To Rome I sped; I sought and found a friend
In Titus, power unto my wrath to lend;
Fired him with lust of fame; beyond my oath,
Jerusalem razed shall glorify us both."

Othuriel thus. Joanna deeply sighed,
But with heroic dignity replied:—
"Too late I heard thy wrongs. But be we just
First to thy noble enemy in the dust:
I traced the plot; thou by a rival mean
Traduced, Manasseh only rash had been;
Without reserve the injustice he confessed,
Straight to the Council went, and there thy name redressed.
Still grant thee harshly used—and wert thou not?—
Must then thy sacred country be forgot?
Patience magnanimous, the lofty right
To serve that country in her own despite,
O! silent deeds, why do you not with these
Thy foes best vanquish, best thy spirit please?
What then? Nay try it, tremble, and declare
Such wrath as thine but finds its triumphs air:
Walk o'er Jerusalem's waste, and where are they
That wronged thee so upon a former day,—
They (grant that waste) in whose peculiar eyes
Thou long'st the proud avenger to arise,
To stand, to point their wretchedness, to win
Their meek repentance for their former sin?
Ha! they have fallen for Zion, well have they
Their faults redeemed; what more can vengeance say?
This, this alone:—additional to the guilt
That thou thy people's hallowed blood hast spilt,
The empty glory's thine, to stand redressed
Before that people which is now at best
A mere abstraction, since the men are gone
Whom thou wouldst have for wrongs to thee atone."

"But thou shalt see it; doubly shall I be
Avenged, they stricken, and thou saved by me,—
Saved, honoured, loved: when I have quelled their pride,
How will I glory in my virgin bride?

"Manasseh fell in fight; his wife with me,
Maromne, sought him; there he lay by thee;
We bore him thence: You lived, I saw and bade
You to a home be secretly conveyed;
'Twas done; instructed by my cautious care,
Her daughter Tamar was thy handmaid there.
So saved by us, our land you'll first o'erthrow,
Then come with offers to insult our wo?
No, no! why think it? Let me speak aright,
Nor do thee wrong—O! never will you fight
Against your parents' God, ne'er lift unblest
Your hand against your country sore distressed!
Turn; help her—help us all; her hero be;
Win loftiest vengeance—make her think of thee,
Sue thy forgiveness, love thee; be her boast,
Her young deliverer, in thyself a host!
O! can you not? O! can you not, indeed?
Now is your time, for now our day of need."

Impassioned thus, she to Othuriel raised
Her dear young eyes; imploringly she gazed.
But downward looking, oft his hand he passed
Along his forehead darkly overcast.
"'Tis o'er: to speak not of my vow," he said,
"The trust of Titus must with truth be paid;
And then the issue of that battle-field—
(At length by Tamar to my prayers revealed)
My men cut off—my perfect overthrow—
Forbids me now my purpose to forego:
Yes—yes"—long paused he; looking round, he sees
Joanna far retiring through the trees.
Then be it so! Anew with fiercer threat,
His face against Jerusalem was set.
OTHURIEL.

CANTO III.

THE ASSAULT BY NIGHT.

Still is the eve on high Jerusalem's walls,
Save lonely sentinel heard at intervals,
As he with psalms of Judah's prosperous day,
And holy anthems, whiles his watch away.

Lo! by the moon's uncertain struggling light,
Come dusky masses glimpsing through the night,
Of Romans drawn from their suburban rest
To gain a new wall, of the first possessed.
While in the south Othuriel wounded lay,
Vespasian rose to the Imperial sway;
And Titus well his promise can redeem
Against these walls to urge his vengeful scheme.
Othuriel joined him, healed; ere rolled the year
They compassed Zion—they are sternly here!
They mount their engines softly; nor they seem
To wake the City from its weary dream.
But hark! it sleeps not: ha! behold yon line
Of kindling fires along its ramparts shine.
Dusk figures throng the wall; ere you can say
When, whence they rose, behind a thick array:
On every tower, o'er every battlement,
With nimble gestures their bold heads present.
Loud bursts the night: o'erhead huge javelins go
From catapults, their stones balistas throw,
By stones and javelins met; red balls expire,
And blazing arrows trail their arching fire.
More safe the Romans in the shade below,
Their lights above the swarthy Hebrews shew;
Yet still, as high and far the wall is swept,  
New hordes upstarting to the fray have leapt.  
But now the Ram in dreadful poise is hung,  
Beneath its shed at first 'tis gently swung;  
Huzza! at once its brawny men back strain  
Madly, and drive it on the walls again;  
They thunder-smitten throb. With every stroke  
An answering yell from the defenders broke;  
Down came their crashing stones. On either flank  
The Ram is aided by a stationed rank,  
With slings and bows to clear away the foe  
Above, and guard its battering play below.  
But vain the arrows of these galling wings,  
Nor boots the dread precision of their slings;  
Though stricken thousands fall, new faces grim  
Upspringing umbered crowd the City's brim,  
That spills its valour wild: in either hand,  
A blazing torch, in every mouth a brand,  
Down leap the Jews, fast to the penthouse cling,  
And all around their flames to fire the engine fling;  
Till by the Roman archers, placed aloof,  
Transfixed, writhing they roll from off the roof,  
And leave the Ram its last just blow to reach,  
To drive its dull head through the dusty breach.  
Stern pause the Romans: sternly stands within  
That breach a wall of warriors chin by chin;  
Their spears intensely ready, waiting still  
Their eyes' concentrated lightnings to fulfil,  
Blent with the darkness of immortal hate,  
As looking down unwinking they dilate.  
Dread silence hangs: the moving of a head—  
A foot advanced—the twinkling of a lid,  
Has burst the entranced pause; the mutual front  
Has met, is swayed in one commingled brunt,  
Is locked, is cloyed, is calm in the excess  
Of might and hatred in one glutted stress.
Slowly it loosens; from that cramping shock
Men's hearts can breathe, and wide the fight is broke,
And wild and high the shouts of battle rise,
And trumpets blow along the rending skies.

Far foremost fought Othuriel; from the van
Swerving he dashed, upwards he widely ran.
To pierce their flank, to turn and drive the foe
Down on the waste that met them from below.
Joanna stood before him! Kneeling down,
He prayed to guard her from that fated town.
But, "No," she said, "whate'er Maromne's fate,
'Tis mine; as mine has been her good estate.
Would she be saved by thee? Would she by night
Secure her safety by a stealthy flight—
Last of the Maccabees, whose duty high
She deems with straitened Judah is to die;
Where she can do no more; at least to shew
A brave example, fearing not the foe?
But yet for her I dare not now refrain
Thy pity—no, thy gratitude to gain:
So now my purpose let me briefly tell:—
Maromne came to Zion; short her stay
Designed, we hoped her back from day to day.
But sickness seized her; well its work was done
Where sad bereavement had the waste begun.
I heard and came: behind the tainted air
Caused leave her daughter to a nurse's care.
God raised her up; her home she'll see once more,
And Tamar's presence shall her health restore.
But now you sieged us. Fearing ne'er that you
Jehovah's sainted dwelling could subdue;
Yet, trouble-weakened, many a terror wild,
She could not hide, came o'er her for her child.
For this I've sought thee oft, I've found thee now;
Up to Jerusalem bring her daughter thou.
Start not, you've promised; dear your handmaid she,
And great the hazard, yet she brought must be;
For her Maromne pines. My signet here,
Be this your pledge to calm nurse Esther's fear.
You know our home in Judah. Then, when high,
Two nights from this, the moon is in the sky,
Smite thou our northern gate; I waiting there
Will glad receive the damsel from your care:
Maromne's name beloved, our men for it
Even thee in honoured safety would admit."
She said and turned; he downward fought his way,
Till coming midnight closed the doubtful fray.
OTHURIEL.

OTHURIEL.

CANTO IV.

OTHURIEL BRINGS TAMAR TO JERUSALEM.

Othuriel south, by Salem's eastern side,
Went; frequent fires above a light supplied.
Slowly he rode along the ghastly plain
Blood-soaked, and heaped with corpses of the slain
Cast from the walls; the wounded, too, were there,
And thickened with their groans the burdened air.
His snorting charger swerved as oft, beneath,
Some trampled wretch howled forth his curse of death;
Or wing of blood-cloyed vulture from the dead
Rose heavy up and flapped around his head;
Or lazy dog, whose muddy gloatung eye
Shone in the red light, with a startled cry
Was frightened off: behind, the loathsome beast
Came sinking back to its polluted feast.
As burned the brighter fires, he there beheld
The brows of infants, and the forms of eld,
Strong men, and youths untimely cut away;
And there the virgin in her beauty lay.

He trode a stiller and a darker space;
Then neared a high and fiercely-lighted place,
Thick set with crosses: bodies hung thereon
Of captive Jews, whose writhing faces shone
Turned to the wall, by Titus lifted there
To storm the City with their dying glare,
With terror day and night to strike the town,
To beat the hearts of the defenders down.
Downcast his eyes, his spirit awe-subdued,
Othuriel went into that painful wood.
Shrill neighed his horse, with cries the brooding air
Was startled: “Water! water!” was each prayer.  
Slowly he passed. Heroic murmurs drew
Aloft his eye: a warrior hung in view;
Perfect of beauty seemed his head sublime,
With power were clothed his limbs in manhood’s prime,
Towards Zion fixed; down looking by his side,
As paused the rider, thus he loudly cried:—
“Ho! Jew or Roman, if thy heart is great,
To me the issue of this day you’ll state.
On yon delightful wall, so cool and high,
The watchman paces o’er my weary eye;
I’ve cried to him to tell me of the war,
But ne’er he seems to hear me from afar.
Thou son of milky woman, grant my prayer;
O! tell me, tell me how my brethren fare!”
Came pain’s quick cords; his curves convulsive throw
His bosom forward like a bended bow,
Drawn; jerking back his loins the dull tree beat;
Thick rains the bloody sorrow from his feet.
Othuriel longed the struggling soul to cheer;
Yet paused, his own voice daring not to hear
In such a place, by sufferings sanctified
More than hushed temples where great gods abide;
And mute he gazed upon that lofty face
Chastised with pain—and sorrow for a space.
But hark! far blowing their defiance shrill,
The silver trumpets of the Holy Hill!
From off the countenance of the crucified
Pangs passed away, came on a gleam of pride;
Upstretched he rose, his gathered might was racked
With noble toils till all his sinews cracked;
His face was beautified, with joy was fired;
And with a shout he gloriously expired.
Uprose the eastern moon: by silvered floods,
And mountains bearded with old hoary woods,
There clear the vales, here dark, Othuriel rode,  
And silent vineyards now by man untrode.  
Undriven away he saw the foxes young  
Tear down the vintage that neglected hung;  
Such dread for Zion, hemmed with Roman lines,  
Had struck the careless keepers of the vines.  

Morn broke: by many a fountain fair to see  
He went, and many a patriarchal tree;  
O'er the green swelling loins of summer hills,  
Down the fresh valleys which the sun now fills,  
There tumbling waters clean, to morning's beams  
Here far uncurled the lapse of glassy streams,  
With bordering trees delectable; in haste  
He trode the extended skirts of Tekoa's waste,  
High Hebron on the west; and south, between,  
He rode through Judah's pastures broad and green.  

Down went the day: he found at evening-tide  
Young Tamar weeping by old Esther's side.  
She rose, she knew him; he his mission tells;  
Joanna's ring each lingering doubt dispels,  
Pledge of his truth: they knew, they kissed it:—"So,"  
Exclaimed the nurse, "thou too from me must go,  
Tamar, Oh! child! My young lamb of the fold,"  
Who goest to troubles and to fears untold,  
What shall I say? The Everlasting arms  
Be round about thee in the last alarms!  
Yet stay, I have a sacred ring; 'twill prove,  
If no defence, a token of my love."  

"Nay then," Othuriel said, "of virtue tried,  
Around her neck shall be an amulet tied.  
Here, since a child, I've worn it on my breast;  
Nor seldom doubtless me the charm has bless'd,  
From ills has kept me: Surely me it laid,  
When wounded, here beneath sweet Tamar's aid;  
For this it shall be hers." From off his own  
Unloosed, the chain round Tamar's neck was thrown.
"Ha! what?" cried Esther, as she saw and seized
The hanging charm, and kissed it strangely pleased;
"It is—ah! who art thou? declare thy name—
Well should I know it!—'tis, it is the same!
These woven words! My brother—ah! more dear—
For his wild lore that filled my heart with fear—
From Memphis brought it: in an old dim fane
A youthful priestess wrought the mystic chain;
Dipped in the Nile, in a divine lagoon,
Bleached in the pale eye of the Egyptian moon,
'Twas cleared; then was it with the sacred blood
Of the ibis spotted, and the spell was good.
Ere far he went, my brother's wizard hand
Cast round Manasseh's son the enchanted band,—
Maromne's first-born son; for kindly they
Had kept me with them since their nuptial day:
(How gracious he! O! she the noblest bride
That e'er was knit unto a manly side!)
But vain their love for me, and vain that spell
To stay the mighty evil that befell;
Lost was that son, and I alas! to blame.
But speak: say where, when, whence to thee it came?"

"Woman of Judah, then, it hung around
My neck, when me a Galilean found.
Large was his heart, he reared me as his own;
But dying told me of my birth unknown.
Tamar! my sister! my sweet sister dear!
Yet stay one moment till the whole be clear."

Before him bowed, the nurse with eager hands
Unbinds his sandal; passively he stands.
"The scar," she murmured, "if I find it here!"
She found, she kissed it, dropping many a tear.
Slow rising pale, "My son!" she said, "'twere meet
That ne'er I rose, but died upon thy feet;
For mine the blame. I saw thy father's spear
Fall on that infant foot—an omen drear!"
Othuriel.

Oh! was it not? for scarcely wert thou healed,
When forth I took thee to the harvest field;
Homeward returning, in the noontide hour,
With thee I slumbered in a leafy bower;
I waked, but thou wert gone: All search was vain,
Through long long years we saw thee ne'er again.
Hope came at last: An aged kinsman sought
Your father's house, by want and sickness brought;
Death came, your mother soothed him; forth at last
To her the burden of his soul he cast:—
'Fair was thy youth, Maromne; far above
The maids of Judah thee my son did love,
Mine only one; but favour you denied;
He rushed to battle, and for you he died.
Vengeance be mine! I saw your first-born creep
Before a bower, his nurse was there asleep;
Upsnatched I bore him far, with gentle care
I laid him down—he died, nor told her where.
Hope sunk anew, for still the quest was vain.
Would, would thy sire had seen thee once again!
Come from his lofty battles, how he smiled
To take thee to him, a heroic child!
How joyed his little warrior thee to call,
His bloody lance bestriding through the hall!
Then on his knee he set thee, by thy side
Joanna, meant to be thy future bride.
But thou wert lost. Jehovah called away
His other children in their early day.
Nobly at last he fell.''

"By whom? by whom?"
Othuriel cried. "Who struck him to the tomb?
There's the right hand that did it! bloody hand,
Which all that love for me could not withstand!
Oh! I to do it! I to smite him dead,
Lifting my hand against that sacred head!
My foe—my father!" hoarsely thus he cried.
How shrieked his little sister terrified!
He glanced upon her in his stern distress,
And up he snatched her with a fierce caress;
But softening kissed her forehead:—"Fear me not,
My sweet young sister! dread though be my lot,
I'll be thy brother aye. When night is past,
I'll bear thee with me to our mother fast.
Sleep thou the while." He said, in anguish sore
Groaning, he bowed his forehead to the floor;
There, left alone, his sorrows had their way
As through the dark hours in the dust he lay.

II.

Uprose the morn: how shall Othuriel dare
His sister Tamar to that siege to bear?
Shuddering he paused, he strove to make her know
The whelming danger, but she prayed to go,
With tears she pleaded; his the hope that yet
His Roman favour them all safe might set,
He took, he bore her quickly by the way
He came, and rode till the decline of day.
His steed, aloof from the beleaguered towers
Of Zion, fastened 'midst neglected bowers,
He sought ripe fruits for Tamar; by his side
He made her sit throughout the evening-tide;
Close to his bosom gently drew her head,
Till slumber came and sealed each silken lid;
Then bowed his cheek to hers with love so deep,
And hid her face that she might longer sleep.

III.

High walks the midnight moon: Wide opening go
The gates of Zion to Othuriel's blow,
Struck by his sounding spear; Joanna there
Forth stands to take young Tamar from his care.
But entering with them through a stern array
Of jealous guards he dared his onward way,—
Jealous but silent all; till, as he passed,
They closed behind him and the gates made fast,
With crowding murmurs. But he heard them not,
Far other things are in his eager thought;
For homeward with Joanna as he goes,
The tokens of his parentage he shews.
How dares he go? he thinks not, heeds not, he,
All else forgot, his mother's face must see.
His sister leads him home; remote from all,
He waits his mother in a silent hall.
She came:—"My son!" He met her dear embrace,
And long he sobbed and wept upon her face.
Down then he knelt:—"My mother! let me go
And ask great Rome to hold thee not a foe,
To save you all, if you your son would give
One chance with gleams of happiness to live.
This be my purpose; though, all else forgot,
To see my mother was my only thought.
But more than sorrow shall my coming be,
Oh! dread my going, if I save not thee.
Swift let me go, thus save you; then, for aye
With you in native Judah will I stay."
"Behold," she said, "my late-won soldier, here
Thy father's shield, his helmet and his spear,
Who living now had been a full-orbed name—
Start not my son, he died but lives in fame.
His great example, for our country's sake,
Thee the fulfiller of his deeds must make.
Joanna told me something, but my ear
Alone the tokens of my son could hear.
What though, your birth unknown, for Rome you fought;
No blame was yours, yours was no traitor's thought.
Known now your birth, Rome has no claim on you;
A Jew must do the duties of a Jew.
For this, my boy, I nursed thee on my knees,
In days gone by, beneath our native trees.
Thee forth I'll lead all gloriously; come then
Put on the harness of our mighty men.
Why look'st thou so? O! wherfore, if not free
To fight for Zion, art thou come to me?"

"Thou wise—ah! widow—of the man I slew!
(I say not mother, I'm no son to you;
Though pangs take hold on me, and sore affright
To call you else) what shall I do this night?
'Twas I that slew him. O! but let me say
Had nature blessed me in my early day,
Had I been reared upon thy sacred knee,
(O! let me name that name so dear to me!)
My mother, ever mine! then had I ne'er
By such a deed been linked unto despair.
I knew him not. But what shall quell the shame
That still remains? Apostate is my name.
My birth unkown I plead not; up I grew
In all the nurture of a warrior Jew:
This land was mine; yet darkly did I go
And swear with Rome to lay Jerusalem low,
Because my father in the Sanhedrim
(My foe, I since have learned, misleading him,)
Denounced me as a traitor: from their gate
Forth was I driven by Envy and by Hate.
Dread was my oath! that oath must I pursue,
And with high hand do what I have to do.
Yet see me kneel—O! help me to contrive
Some surest way to save thy house alive:
Let not my oath another parent cost;
O! let me, let me not be wholly lost!"
He said, and kneeling bowed. Uprising slow,
He saw his mother from the chamber go;
Sharp turned a bolt behind her. He the room,
A prisoner, paced till morning chased the gloom.
OTHURIEL.

CANTO V.

OTHURIEL A PRISONER.

Morn rose on Zion: still his dim retreat
Othuriel traversed with impetuous feet.
Maromne came; lean men behind her bore
A trailing chain that rattled on the floor.
Near stepped her son, she pointed to him, fast
The links of iron were around him cast.
Thence guarded forth behind her, he was led
To where a vault’s dim lamp its glimmer shed;
There to a pillar of black gopher wood
Brought near, a fettered prisoner he stood.

II.

Weeks o’er Othuriel went; in silent haste
For him each morn was bread by Tamar placed.
But now a book his sweet young sister brought,
And smiled to him as down she sate remote:
Beneath the scented lamp that lit the place,
Low o’er the opened scroll she bowed her face;
With silver voice, with childhood’s reverent awe,
She read the wonders of Jehovah’s law.
Each night she did the same: he questioned ne’er
Why thus she came—he knew the loving care
That sent her thus—but silent leant his head
Against his pillar as she nightly read,
With looks to her of love ineffable,
As down the light upon her countenance fell,
Down on the holy page; and listening hung
To hear her softly-modulated tongue.
And O! how swelled his bosom at the sight
Of that sweet child struck through with hunger's blight,
Yet there each night with smiles for him that he
Might fear his God, might thus her brother truly be!

III.

Day passed, nor Tamar came: at dead of night,
With famine dark, his mother stood in sight;
Yet still her brow a grace majestic wore,
Seen by the lamp that in her hand she bore.
In slumber feigned he kept his lowly bed
Which near his pillar Tamar's love had spread,
As stealthy came she, placed him food, and threw
One glance on him, then hurriedly withdrew.
Swift gleaming back she turned; a space she stood,
Her eyes the while seemed bent upon his food,
Fiercely they shone; in nature's awful stress,
Down shaken fell in many a streaming tress
Her long black hair, concealing half her face;
But back she flung it with a savage grace,
Forth sprung and seized the bread:—"Ah! wo is me,"
Upstarting cried her son, "that this should be!
My mother! Oh my mother! thy sore want
Is more to me than pains extravagant."
She shrunk with startled pride, with sudden check
Shrieking she turned, she sunk upon his neck,
With passionate vehemence kissed him, sobbing lay
Within his arms, and there she swooned away.
With holy care Othuriel held her head
Till, soon reviving, faint to him she said:—
"My son has vanquished me! 'tis now confessed
Beyond them all I love him far the best.
My lost! my dearly found! come near my heart
And tell me all, for thou in trouble art."
OTHURIEL.

Speak to thy mother! well thou can'st not be,
But ill indeed! Yea, I have ruined thee,
Have kept thee here, have ruined thee: the foe
The cause of thy desertion shall not know,
Shall find, shall slay thee. O! forgive! forgive!
My soul desired to have thee near me live:
How could I let thee go? Yea more, from this
I thought that you the enlarged remorse would miss
Of that dread vow fulfilled, and chained you thus
From pangs to keep you, warring not on us.
Have I done wrong, my son? But if you deemed
Me harsh and cruel, such I only seemed:
I was not so to thee; for dear thou wert,
Thou first-born of my body and my heart,
And dear thou art! Old kingdoms may remove,
But I will love thee with eternal love!
Ha! this is vain; but I will go this hour,
And fight to save you from their vengeful power."
She said, nor looked as he implored, but threw
Far back her hair, and glanced from out his view.

IV.

Othuriel strove, but still he strove in vain,
To bow his pillar and to burst his chain.
Joanna came, and in her hand a sword:—
"'Tis now your hour to be from thrall restored:
This key," she said, "I've managed this to gain,
Lest aught should threaten you; it unlocks your chain.
Our Temple's burnt! Bent on our Upper Town,
Hark! how the Romans beat our last defences down!
High streams upon our palace to the breeze
The glorious banner of the Maccabees,
Raised by your mother; forth she rushed:—'This night,'
She cried, 'I'll save you, for you all I'll fight.'
Haste—follow—win her back; this danger past,
Your Roman power may shield her yet at last.
Think but of her: your father's sword here take,
But use it only for protection's sake,
Assured of this, that caution best defends
Her life; your sister's on the same depends;
Mine too, if I—But lo! you're free; away!
Silent he snatched the sword, and sprung unto the fray.
OTHURIEL.

CANTO VI.

THE DEATH AND BURIAL OF MAROMNE AND JOANNA.

Loud tumults rend the night; the loudest drew
Othuriel northwards: thither fast he flew;
Yet pausing oft as came behind him cries,
And ruddy wavings fired the midnight skies.
There oft he saw in some sequestered nook
A famished mortal eat with hurried look,
The very joy of whose possession foiled
Itself with jealous fears to be despoiled;
He ne'er unslacking o'er his chance supply
The gaunt and strict-drawn wolf within his eye.
Here blackened forms, a visionary throng,
With noiseless feet came flittingly along;
In eager silence glaring some retreat,
Some feebly chatter in the lonely street.
But lo, the wall embattled! High and far
Maromne's spear led on the Hebrew war.
Othuriel saw, and swift to her he sprung;
Nor vainly; back a foe from her he flung,
Who leapt to seize her; he enraged his spear
Struck out; Maromne with a shriek of fear
Before her son her shielding bosom cast,
And far that weapon through her body passed.
Othuriel raised her; back the Jews were driven,
The Romans knew him now, and space was given
To gaze in tearless silence on her face,
As blanching death came over it apace;
Yet there her love, his sorrow to beguile,
Kept up a pale and melancholy smile:—
"My very dear young son! I see thee yet,
And loath my eyes from thee in death to set!
In happier days, and earlier to me won,
Would I had known thee, O my son! my son!"
She paused exhausted; aye, as aye grew dim
Her eye, she cleared it still to look on him.
Convulsive shudders passed throughout her frame,
And o'er her face an awful sorrow came:—
"Joanna! Tamar!" cried she, "Night of fear!
Away, my son! we must not both be here.
Lord, let me up! lift up my painful side,
That in the rock my children I may hide,
Till thy great indignation be o'erpast,
Descending on us to consume us fast!
Lord God of Abraham! shall mean kingdoms buy
My lovely children? help! I must not die!"
But she is dead. Othuriel closed her eyes;
And lifting carried through tumultuous cries
Her body homeward, dipping still his feet
In blood clear glittering on the flaming street.
Captives he passed, young men and virgin bands
Far to be driven to strange and cruel lands,
A huddled throng: scarce glutted Strength and Rage
Could thrust their cloyed blades through encumbering Age.
When foes he met, his dead one down he laid,
O'er her he stood, fiercely he waved his blade;
Allof they passed, he raised his sacred load,
And soon again Maromne's chambers trode.
There on a bed he laid her; swift he traced
His mother's rooms deserted, silent, waste;
He calls on Tamar, on Joanna calls,
But hears alone the echo of the halls.
He sought that vault where, many a night and day,
His own dear mother's prisoner he lay;
There by the lamp still burning lo! 'tis she,
His own Joanna kneeling on her knee,
But pale as death; her left hand back entwined
In Tamar’s hair, who shrinking sits behind,
Her right upstays her leaning on a spear.
Ah! blood is welling from that side so dear!
Down o’er her snowy vesture far it streams.
But still her eye with angry beauty gleams,
Fixed on that slaughtered Roman whom her lance
Pierced doubtless first to stay his base advance.
Slow went Othuriel near; the virgin raised
Her eyes, and strangely, keenly, on him gazed
One moment; shrieking in her gladness, she
Sprung, stretched her arms in death with him to be,
Fell, ere he met her, o’er that soldier’s head;
He rushed, he raised his young Joanna—dead.
A grief so stern as his no tears supplied,
He bore and laid her by his mother’s side;
Tamar went with him, her he held a space
Upraised to look upon their mother’s face:—
“You know her, Tamar? She to us has been
A dearer mother than wide earth has seen,
But she is gone from us; yet better far
That she is dead in these sore days of war.
Weep not my sister lamb, of thee I’ll take
Great care, and love thee greatly for her sake:
I am thy brother, come with me!” He led
The stumbling child, and from the chamber sped;
Nor, by the very greatness of the ill
Awed, much she wept, but clung unto him still.
The roof he sought; high streaming in the breeze,
He saw the banner of the Maccabees;
Down quick he tore its lettered flag; he sought,
By Tamar led, a sepulchre remote
Behind the house; away its stone he rolled,
And spread within that standard’s silken fold;
Then forth he brought his dead ones from that room,
And side by side he laid them in the tomb;
And round their holy heads, and round their feet,
With gentlest care he wrapped the embroidered sheet;
Rolled back the stone to guard their long long rest;
Upsnatched his sister, to his swelling breast
Strained; kissed her forehead, and her face bedewed
With silent tears still checked but still renewed;
Then strove in vain his sobbings to repress,
That she might fear not from his great distress:
The while he bore her in his arms away,
And came to Titus ere the rising day.
"No, princely Titus! On my head amain
Just Heaven exhaust the armoury of pain!"
Othuriel said, as down a valley they
From wasted Zion far pursued their way,
Leading their steeds; young Tamar went between;
Far on before a Roman host was seen.
"So dread my sin, 'tis nought that I repent
My country's fall; mine must be punishment:
'Tis now begun. But let me not forget
For all thy gracious thoughts my mighty debt.
Kings hate their traitor instruments, and this
The more when they have helped them not amiss;
But not so thou: a nobler rule is thine,
Still work for me, and safety to design,
And hope. Though stern must be my future lot,
My heart shall keep the mitigating thought
That through my rash dark treason thou hast seen
A better nature, and my friend hast been.
I thank thee, generous Caesar; but my vow
Is wholly finished, and I leave thee now.
Whither to roam, where resting must be met
My plague of memory, I have fixed not yet.
Would I were in the deserts, to be borne
Fleet o'er a hundred hill-tops through the morn,
To drive the tempest of the chase, to slay
The wild boar only at the fall of day,
When sleep should catch me dropping from my toil,
And dreams alone have time my peace to spoil!
Or give me war—O! give me boundless strife;
Let me be swift and silent all my life!
But ha! this damsel—for her tender sake,
My worthless life in keeping I must take.
For her I've lingered till your host you drew
From ruined Salem, to be safe with you,
My convoy hither. But for me you stay
Too long conversing thus; your troops are on away.
Farewell, heroic man! yon hills afar,
And these the plains of Judah free from war,
Will yield me safety now," Othuriel said.
But see! outbursting from a neighbouring shade
Of trees, six mounted Jews; their bearing shews
Vindictive knowledge of their country's foes.
Stern, swift they came. Sprung with a startled bound
Othuriel's charger, wheeling round and round.
Upsmatching Tamar, to his reader steed
The Caesar leapt, and pushed him to his speed.
Othuriel follows; dashing as he went,
A gleaming javelin by a Jew was sent;
Whizzing it overtakes him in its track,
Ha! deep it quivers buried in his back.
Caught with dread check, round writhed Othuriel struck,
With clutching hand that weapon forth to pluck;
Yet kept his seat, and, urging his career,
Pursued yon Hebrew with his levelled spear,
Who followed Titus; well his speed maintained,
He neared him fast as on the Prince he gained,
Ground his clenched teeth, his lance transfixing thrust,
And hurled the Jew down headlong to the dust.
Down too he reeled; yet rising, staggering, he
Leant on his spear that Tamar he might see.
Back gallops Titus in his friendly fear.
But hark, those other horsemen coming near!
"They come, they come! why, Roman, dare you stay?"
Othuriel cried, "Save her! away, away!"
Hold but thy hand aloft, a princely sign
To keep my Tamar as if she were thine,
Thy sister or thy daughter; and till death,
Let no man draw her from her father's faith.
Thanks, lifted hand! high token! Now then, flee!
Ride! ere I die, her safety let me see!
The God of Jacob help you, and help her!
I see you sister, would I with you were!
But I am hurt, I cannot go with you;
Yet long I'll look”—Away his Tamar flew:
And sore the pangs that his young bosom rent,
And much he waved his hand, as on she went;
As still he heard her name him o'er and o'er,
And cry for him, and shriekingly implore
That he would come to her; as turned and bent
To him, to him, o'er Titus' neck she leant,
Yearning for him, her arms outstretched in air
In blent confusion with her floating hair;
As died her voice, her looks from him for aye;
As fast and far she saw her borne away.
But soon the parting grief that him subdued,
Was swallowed up by anxious fear renewed;
For lo! those Hebrews still pursuit maintain,
And chance may give them what speed cannot gain.
Heavy with death he staggered; aye the more
He leant upon the spear which scarcely him upbore;
And still from thickening mists his eye he cleared
To see his sister saved; still faint to Titus cheered.
Joy! joy! he sees the Caesar far before
His following foes; they pause, the chase is o'er!
Tamar is saved! Othuriel satisfied,
Sprung, clapped his hands, and falling calmly died.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

PART I.

I.
Young Torthil sits below the woody steeps
Of Apennine, beneath a spreading oak.
His downcast eye a stern abstraction keeps;
Dawn not for him with purple stains has broke,
Nor sunshine filled the world: the captive's yoke
Is on his heart—bright things are not for him.
The cloudy day, the high-winged tempest's shock
Would more delight him, with unbounded limb
Swift o'er far Morven's hills, throughout her forests dim.

II.
Who knows not Torthil from Ausonia's bound
Of Alps Helvetic to her southern heel?
Now homeward musing o'er the vast profound,
The fisher sees him by the ocean kneel;
Now o'er the mountains with impetuous zeal
He strikes the tusky monsters with his spear;
The chamois leaps, the bird in airy wheel
Screams to his piercing arrow; far and near
Throughout that famous land he hunts the spotted deer.

III.
In wilds Italian, on the ocean shores,
Thus far was known that stranger golden-haired;
His foot unconscious of their city floors,
Save when from time to time the roof he shared
Of Tacitus his faithful friend declared.
Disdainful then of wonder as he trode,
With dauntless eye Rome’s boldest brows he dared;
Admiring smiles her stately daughters shewed,
As through the imperial streets the grand Barbarian strode.

IV.

There sate young Torthil: brooding as he sate,
His arms were folded o’er his bosom high;
His vest a skin won from a leopard great
That in the forest he had forced to die.
Cast from him now his spear lay idly by.
O’er fronting hills, that formed the valley’s side,
A yellow bird upraised at length his eye;
His glance went through the crystalline so wide,
Till mingling with the sun the eagle he descried.

V.

His shortened eye came down the opposing steep,
Rock-roughened there, with many a waterfall,
Here thickets shy, and trailing flowers that weep
In sunless hollows where the rills down brawl;
The goat’s bold head was looking over all.
A flowing wood the middle mountain braced,
Descending fast to fringe with thin trees tall
A lap of grass; a nearer brook in haste
Its twining silver spun, and the green valley traced.

VI.

But ha! a maid on yonder bank he sees
Read on a scroll, as up and down she strays,
Now forth among the sun-illumined trees,
Now back withdrawn into the twilight maze.
A graceful robe her moulded form betrays;
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

In wavy curls her dark hair backwards thrown
A fillet binds; the flashing lustre plays,
As aye she turns, upon a jewel-stone
On her consummate brow set like a star alone.

VII.

Ne'er Grecian poet in his dreamy moods
Beheld a nymph, or visioned one more sweet,
Near walking on the checkered floors of woods,
Or far illapsing through their green retreat,
Chasing the shadows with her glimpsing feet:
So fair that maid. But hark! adown the vale
A tumult comes, the wild-boar gallops fleet,
Fell dogs are hanging on the foamy trail,
A single huntress drives the tempest through the dale.

VIII.

Her brows tiara'd, her high-managed steed,
Her boar-spear grasped with Amazonian hand,
Bespeak a queen: she cheers the stormy speed:
No fears for her! aloft she waves her brand,
Like one accustomed kingdoms to command.
On sweeps the chase, her brilliant head comes on.
But lo! that damsel of the grove her stand
Before her takes, down on her knee is gone:
"Ah! Lady, stay," she prays, "pursue not thus alone."

IX.

"Degenerate thing!" the proud Zenobia cried,
Scorn in her eye, and on her brow severe;
She launched her courser past the virgin's side,
And onward bounding held her levelled spear.
Uprose the damsel in her trembling fear
To see the Queen on danger rush amain;
But Torthil marks, and hastes to bid her cheer:
Advancing near before her, back again
He starts, with passionate gaze he kneels upon the plain.
"Lady," he said, "forgive me if I've been
Too bold in this; but in my own far land
Thee in the visions of the night I've seen,
That brow inviolate, those eyes so bland!
I joy to rise, to run at thy command:
Strong is my arm and lance; shall I pursue,
O'ertake and shield the lady? Nor my hand
Shall smite the boar to rob her of her due;
That honour be her own, if I no danger view.

"Virgin! sweet paramount creature! bid me go."
Upsprings his bright head in the blowing wind;
In golden beauty o'er his shoulders flow
His locks of youth, all free and unconfined,
As fleet he goes, nor soon shall be behind
The echoing storm that leaves the hollow ground.
But, lo! he pauses with his ear inclined:
And hark! from round the valley’s hilly bound,
The startled maiden lists the hunt's returning sound.

Back Tortil speeds. But she the tumult hears
Behind—she turns; the crashing shrubs are tossed,
That skirt the near loin of the hill; appears
The boar, the boar with churny foam embossed!
Soaked with death-sweats the grass he darkly crossed;
Two hounds close track him with devouring bay;
No huntress comes; the embodied pack have lost
Their quarry prime, wide puzzling on their way,
Or traversed by the lure of secondary prey.

The affrighted girl has fled across the brook,
Behind she hears the panting brute advance,
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

One moment agonized she turns to look—
O! terror! joy! her eye's bewildered trance
With death, with safety is filled up at once.
The monster's sidelong, half-upturning head
Is gnarled to strike, his bared tusks backward glance
To gather fury for his onset dread,
To unseam her lovely limb—bold Torthil's thrust has sped.

xiv.

But ah! he stumbles from his forceful blow;
The beast transfixed, disdaining yet to fly,
Has bowed his levelled head, and, ploughing low
As if to pass his rising enemy,
With tearing side-stroke rips his spouting thigh;
Then forward stagger, darkly crushed to fall;
But bites his fiery wound ere he will die,
Snaps with his teeth that shaft of deadly gall,
And grinds with foam and blood the sputtered splinters small.

xv.

Turned to the rescued maid, along the brow
Of Torthil lightens a heroic smile;
Till, o'er his drained benumbed limb forced to bow,
To earth succumbs he, gazing yet the while
On her whose presence can his pains beguile.
But she for him her silken vesture tears,
Binds his stanched wound with pity's gentlest wile;
Cold sprinklings then from out the stream she bears,
Refreshes his sick face, his fainting strength repairs.

xvi.

"And spare," he said, upturned to her, "those tears,
My love, first brought to me in dreams of yore!
I know thee well; not ages of long years
Could more instruct me, make me love thee more.
My heart's last blood I'd give thee o'er and o'er!
I would but have thee know me should I die;
Afar I come from Caledonia's shore,
Torthil my name, a chieftain there was I,
A captive next—nay, sent thy safety thus to buy.

XVII.
"I am a savage; but in thy sweet sight
To live, would make me gentle soon, and wise.
Would thou couldst love me!" With impassioned might
He strove, nor vainly, from the ground to rise.
The light was thickened in his heavy eyes;
He fell, yet falling kissed her dear young feet.
Alone the fainting Caledonian lies,
The maid in haste has sought the wood's retreat;
But soon she reappears with new assistance meet.

XVIII.
A reverend father and a female old
Come to her guidance, and the youth upraise;
His drooping head the virgin's hands uphold:
Borne o'er the rivulet, through the woodland maze,
Where many a path the uncertain foot betrays,
A cave withdrawn into the mountain's side,
Received them from the forest's puzzling ways.
There Father Hippo healing bands supplied;
And there, till he wax well, young Torthil shall abide.

XIX.
But oft Roscrana came, that princess good,
Niece of Zenobia, Tadmor's famous queen,
Who, since Aurelian had her throne subdued,
With honour placed in Italy had been.
A huntress, she her summer dwelling green
Chose near the central mountains of the land.
Fair daughters round her graced the silvan scene;
But she, and they, a haughty sister band,
Roscrana's meekness scorned, and ruled her with high hand.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

XX.
Yet more divided from her kindred blood,
Roscrana's heart confessed our holy faith;
Nursed by a Christian Jewess, and imbued
With early love for Him of Nazareth,
She to his cross will cling unto the death.
The sovereign knowledge fain would she declare
To her proud kin, but still they shunned her path;
Then sought she solace in the woods, and there
She found the cave proscribed of that old Christian pair.

XXI.
They o'er the Syrian orphan, as their child,
Rejoiced, that dear faith mutually confessed.
More than a daughter, she their fears beguiled,
She brought them food, she watched their aged rest,
Fair garments wrought by her their bodies dressed.
For this, the scrolls of the Eternal Word
Given by those saints, she hid beneath her vest,
Till to the night, to shady walks restored,
She drew them forth and read of her incarnate Lord.

XXII.
Within the cavern of those Christians laid,
With plants of healing gathered from the hill,
Was Torthil cured by that good Eastern maid,
O! more to love her for her gentle skill.
And soon he blessed those days of wounded ill,
For aye young pity trembles into love;
Lord of her heart is he and virgin will.
And aye to him of Jesus from above
She reads, or in the cave, or walking through the grove.

XXIII.
Upsprings the sun, now flit the thin bright wings
Of twinkling birds upon the morning trees;
Torthil abroad longs for the hour that brings
His young affianced o'er the grassy leas.
Beyond the vale Zenobia's home he sees—
'Tis she! he hastes his virgin to receive,
Her quick robe flutters on the early breeze;
This time at least O! him she will not leave,
Till come 'twixt day and night soft reconciling eve.

XXIV.
Sequestered they in love's unworldly dream,
In haunts of beauty lose the lapsing hours;
The lake's unrippled glass, the shining stream
Allure their footsteps through the blooming flowers;
They hear the songs of birds within their bowers;
High rocks afar they see, and vales between.
Then glance the clear drops of the slanting showers;
The illumined tops of ancient woods are seen,
With weeping sunshine fused, and golden rainbows green.

XXV.
Together stood they on the tall hills,—there
They saw the great sea lying in the West,
Like to a floor of fine-compact ed air;
The white ships o'er the element at rest,
Though moving, seemed of motion unpossessed.
Long homeward looking dimmed was Torthil's eye,
Away he turned, Roscrama's hand he pressed,
He led his Eastern princess from on high,
Nor checked his silent haste until he heard her sigh.

XXVI.
The stock-dove's voice, sweet intermittent bird,
That aye the shadow of the hawk's wing fears,
Along the twilight valleys now is heard,
Whose murmur love to lovers still endears.
The Moon, mild empress of the night, appears;
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

Beauty and Peace lead on the silver queen;
The forests, brightening silently, she clears;
She walks the mountains; o'er the polished sheen
Of dimpling rivers far her sliding feet are seen.

XXVII.

To the young captive his Roscrana's eyes,
Of marvellous beauty, harmonize the whole,
Subduing still, as still to him they rise,
The fainter longings of his home-sick soul.
How swift away the hour of evening stole!
Would morn were come their meeting to renew!
By bordering river, and by tufted knoll,
Homeward he led her through the drops of dew,
Till shone through glimmering trees Zenobia's walls in view.

XXVIII.

In the sweet sunlight of the summer-tide,
Those lovers wander by a central lake
Embosed high; two cardinal rivers glide
Or to or from it, not a slope to break
The slippery level of each molten snake:
They, each along his mountainous ravine,
With hanging banks a lengthened vista make;
Suffused with purple haze, their wood-tops green
Bowed to the watery lapse, therein are softly seen.

XXIX.

Round silvan cove and unillumined nook,
Missing the shadow of the drinking deer,
Its rim of darkened glass the curved lake took;
Where lies its nearer crystal swept and clear,
Thereon the sapphire and the gold appear
Of day's last look, the loveliest as the last.
There glossy fowls swim in the glory; here
The deepening shadows of the mountains vast,
That stand up by the sun, through the blent wave are cast.
XXX.
With saddening gaze upon the lord of day,
"So sinks," said Torthil, "the immortal flame!
I too go down: Back takes he on his way
His retrospect; if I should do the same,
Pride overthrown, youth crushed, the baffled aim,
Defeat, and exile from my native shore,
Are my memorials; felt by me, for shame
Was never in my father's house; yet sore
Though be my pangs for these, my country plagues me more.

XXXI.
"For me her youth into the battle's waste
She poured, she perished at my sole command.
Was this not much? Am I not all disgraced?
The exulting rivers of my native land,
These are not they—a captive here I stand.
Why fell I not? Yea farther hear my shame:
Lady, I chose to stoop beneath their band
That binds me by the honour of my name,
Since slain not here in Rome, my freedom ne'er to claim,

XXXII.
"Ne'er to attempt return. O! I might say,
My very wish that shame to uncreate
Forbade my death, throughout the slavish day
Of circumstances bade me tamely wait
Some better morn of fortune or of fate.
What then? Unbounded blame is still my due
For you betrothed to my forlorn estate.
'Tis time to question thus myself for you:—
What hope contrive, sweet maid, what plan shall I pursue?

XXXIII.
"This I might do—Oh! I no more can live
For thee to see me in my slavery!"
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

Yes I will do it—I will go—will give
My life again from vows to be set free;
They call me so! His slave I will not be;
I'll go, I'll brave him on his Roman throne.
Ha! first I'll promise to mine enemy
Long years of service in his battles done;
For thee with power fulfilled, he'll let me then be gone.

XXXIV.

"Then home with me to Morven shalt thou go,
And be a daughter to my mother there.
There forth I'll lead thee by the hand, and shew
The green translucent brine, when mermaids rare
Sing on the rocks and comb their slippery hair;
The bliss of morn, clear wells, and forests green;
The pure suffusion of the evening air,
When dipped in delicate lights far hills are seen.
To thee high bards shall chant each dawn, each solemn e'en.

XXXV.

"Ha! idle visions these! Why am I here?
Sweet Lady, come with me unto our cave;
Then home I'll guide thee. Ere next noon appear,
Aurelian hears me; wise, and just, and brave,
He'll grant the death or freedom that I crave.
O! not in vain last night in dreams did come
To me my mother, pale, as from the grave;
Yet smiled the vested image from her home
O'er the wan waters far, over the travelled foam."

XXXVI.

Within the cave they wait the evening star.
But came Zenobia, beautifully keen;
Behind her thronging entered men of war;
A Jewish dwarf, mis-shapen, ugly, lean,
Who long her servant in the East had been,
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

Led on the party: he, of Christ the foe,
Had learned Roscrana's faith, had brought his queen
Her doubtful haunt, her friends proscribed to know.
O'erpowered now must they all before Aurelian go.

XXXVII.

Yea, worse than vain was Torthil's manly haste
His name to tell, his passion to declare;
Vain priestly Hippo's act, before them placed,
To wed Roscrana to her Torthil there.
Joy then be with them, a divided pair!
The Imperial lady with a deadly smile
Swore (for the Caesar ne'er denies her prayer)
A dungeon's chains shall Torthil have the while,
Roscrana banished be to some far foreign isle.

XXXVIII.

Aurelian ratified the stern decree;
But yielded this to Torthil young and brave,—
That his dear wife, since banished she must be,
Should go to Morven o'er the western wave,
To soothe his mother drooping to the grave;
A widow she, and he far from her ta'en,
Her only son, to be a captive slave.
But Hippo and his wife their freedom gain,
To enhance Zenobia's wrath against that youthful twain.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

PART II.

I.
In Morven's woody land, Roscrana kissed
Her Torthil's mother, at her tale amazed;
Then lowly bowed the virgin to be blessed:—
"My far-come daughter!" Cathla said, and raised,
And still with wonder on the lady gazed,
"If thou indeed art Torthil's chosen bride;
Yea, well that forehead's beauty undebased
Beseems the scion of a prince's side:
Worthy art thou to be my Torthil's spouse of pride.

II.
"Thou from the dowried kingdoms of the East,
To lands of poor but of heroic men
Art come; yet court nor Oriental feast
Shall make thy sweet soul scorn our humblest den.
But when great wars befall, my daughter then
Shall bless the safety that wild Morven yields;
Then shall her sons, from mountain and from glen,
Hang round about thee with their sounding shields:
They for young Torthil's bride would fight a hundred fields.

III.
Sweetly repeated was Roscrana's tale,
As she by Cathla in her chamber sate,
Of Torthil's exile, of his wounded ail,
And how they loved, and their divided fate.
Zenobia's harshness, lightly delicate
She touched; her hopes she hastened to unfold
Of Torthil's rescue from his shackled state;
Her wanderings then in Britain's isle she told,
Her second mother thus by the dear hand to hold.

IV.
Forth came the day-spring: forth with Cathla walked
In sleepless love Roscrama from her door.
Before the gate a grizzly giant stalked,
A rough dog gamboled on the grassy floor.
Near stepped the former, this his play gave o'er:—
"Behold thy keepers," Cathla said, and smiled:
"Here Rumal, Torthil's hound, feared of the boar;
There silent Erc, who knows each mountain wild:
Where'er inclined to roam, they'll guard my Syrian child.

V.
"One daughter Erc, young Oina-Morul, had,
The white-armed gladdener of his heart and eyes;
She crossed a bridging tree, the torrent mad
Devoured her beauty, stumbling from surprise.
My Torthil sees her, down the bank he flies,
He follows shooting through the giant wave,
Green boiling gulf and dull black pool he tries;
Ah! to his sight a filmy whiteness gave
The virgin, only won to a more honoured grave.

VI.
"Wild was the sorrow of the savage Erc,
Leapt in his eye the fiercest lights of pain,
Grief bore him to the deserts far and dark,
To winds he howled, to the tempestuous main;
Nor night, nor sleep could quench his eye or brain;
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

His path was by the eagle’s dizzy nest;
Danger his solace, scornful of the plain,
On hills adust, or on the hoarded chest
Of winter’s mountain snows he flung his naked breast.

VII.

“Back to that flood, each sucking whirl he tried,
That took from him his child so young and fair.
We saw him, as he buffeted the tide,
Wrunq with the assurance, had he but been there,
No gulf had drawn her from a father’s care.
Then like a lifeless thing did he allow
The waves to drift him on the margin bare,
Where lay his Oina-Morul’s marble brow;
He kissed the silver sands—his spirit has her now!

VIII.

“He loved my boy, he fought for him, he fell;
Healed by my care, his life from death was won
To be my dragon and to guard me well:
For you how gladly shall the same be done!
Far to the peaks of mountains does he run,
O’er lake below, o’er river, wood, and plain,
He casts his eagle eye to ken my son;
He hies to the wild margin of the main,
To look for the white ships—for Torthil back again.”

IX.

On mountain-tops when morning lights appear,
When silent dewdrops through the eve distil,
Or by the rising moon, or Hesper clear,
Or when the gusts of gloomier twilight fill
Old creaking thorn upon the stony hill,
Ere, brave and modest, was Roscraa’s guide,
The shaggy Rumal was beside him still;
With them the virgin every fear defied,
As over Morven’s land she loved to wander wide.
X.

The great north winds that on the pinewoods blow,
And heave the ocean's elemental floor,
Toss her dark locks that through them boldly go,
Sublime her spirit with their stormy roar.
Heroic land! she loved thee more and more,
Fair, but still roughening to her young surprise;
On heaths she met, and on the awful shore,
Majestic men who looked unto the skies,
For never slavery bowed their unpolluted eyes.

XI.

And Cathla told her of her fathers' land,
The deeds of Fingal, his illustrious race,
The songs of Ossian, the bards' priestly band,
The ghosts of heroes, and their dwelling-place:
They oft, when laid within the desert's space
Their sons have slept beneath the moon's wan beams
By the grey stone benumbed, before them trace
Events to come, vouchsafing them in dreams
Prefiguring gestures stern, soft monitory gleams.

XII.

But sad are they that want the funeral-song;
Their spirits mount not to the airy hall
Of eddying winds, for ever rolled along
By weedy lakes within their misty pall.
Of signs she told, of showers of blood that fall
To gifted eyes, the Druid's shuddering grove,
The twangs of death that in the harp-strings call,
The attendant Genii on the maids they love;
And of the Culdees told in many a rocky cove.

XIII.

Then much she loved to hear Roscrama tell
The climes, the wonders of the early East.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

But who are they that in those caverns dwell?
Each hoary Culdee is a Christian priest.
Roscrana knew them; nor the princess ceased
Till, more than eloquent, till, greatly bold,
Of Christ, and of her love for him increased
From this her exile—nay, her home—she told,
Till Cathla joyed to hear her the high scheme unfold.

xiv.

"Awake, my Christian child!"—this holy name
Now Cathla gave her, as for Torthil's sake
She ever sleepless, when the morning came
Longed for Roscrana—"My true daughter, wake!
Forth let us go and walk by bower and brake.
Alas! in tears those eyes of beauty swim;
Thee far from me thy nightly visions take,
Far to thy buried mother, far to him
Thy princely sire, who sleeps in Tadmor's aisles so dim.

xv.

"Or when thy spirit, winged with ghostly dreams,
Flies through the pale dominions of the night,
Thou meet'st thy Torthil by the midnight gleams.
Thou wak'st, and I alone am in thy sight.
Oft wilt thou sigh when comes the morrow bright,
Long wilt thou look unto the East by day,
(There were the kingdoms of thy young delight)
Weeping to feel thyself too far away,
Doomed with thy father's dust not even thy dust to lay.

xvi.

"Fain would I bid thee weep not, bid thee cheer,
With pastimes please thee, with my love make glad!
Thou call'st me mother; for that name so dear,
Much would I do to let thee ne'er be sad!
For ought I not? For I in thee have had
O! more than many sons and daughters: I
From thee have learned the Almighty One who bade
Be formed the lucid pillars of the sky,
Him who has us redeemed, Him who must sanctify.

XVII.
"Beautiful Alien! daughter unto me!
Shall I not know thee in the end of days?
Christ send our Torthil home to us, that he
May learn the truth, may learn the Eternal ways!
Then, if redeemed, shall we not be thy praise,
Immortal Creature! who hast given us up
To dwell with God, his glory to upraise?
Perish the Druid's fable! the true cup
Of life alone is theirs who with the Lamb shall sup."

XVIII.
And aye with Cathla forth that daughter went,
Grief-silent Erc and Rumal still behind;
Their steps they to the blameless people bent,
Dwelling upon the mountains unconfined,
With peace the broken spirit to upbind,
Want from the poor and sickness to repel.
So meek their Torthil's wife, so sweetly kind,
Grey fathers bade their daughters thus excel,
The mothers called her good, the virgins loved her well.

XIX.
Too much by Swarno loved, impure of heart,
Her Torthil's foe, he tempted her with sighs;
But true her faith, and vain the chieftain's art,
He with his friend in every enterprise,
The red Gurthullin, did a plot devise:—
Near grows a struggle with the Roman foe,
(Succumb shall Morven, or shall greater rise)
The battle o'er, abroad while stragglers go,
They'll watch, they'll bear her off, and none their guilt shall know.
Yea, chastely modest, boldly innocent,
She ne'er has hinted Swarno's love impure;
Hence ne'er her friends shall guess the way she went:—
"But ha! old dragon Eric must we secure;
Chained must he be, our scheme were else unsure:
Thus be it done,—upon the battle-eve
Him to our nearest castle shall we lure;
Rumal his dog we'll slay, and him we'll leave
Chained in our dungeon till the maid has ceased to grieve."
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.

PART III.

I.

"All night the songs of bards went through our vale;
Aye as they ceased, as ceased the horns to blow,
Faint through the stillness, louder on the gale
Was heard the trampling of the distant foe.
To yonder peak, my Syrian child, we'll go,
And see the fight; so near, 'tis worse to bear
Our own conjectures, than defeat to know.
But where is Erc? for me bereft, he sware
To shun the field, but thou art come, and he is there."

II.

Thus Cathla spake, Roscana by her side.
But now they heard—the air was all so still—
Trumpet and horn beyond the mountains wide.
The shouts of conflict, as they climb the hill,
With din their ears, their breasts with trembling fill.
Yon valley now! the glory of yon war!
O! day of safety, or of endless ill!
Be still, ye hearts of women dear that are;
Behold your country's might piled round the east afar!

III.

Down came her gleaming galleries of men,
From ridge to ridge descending on the east.
Pushed north and south around that opening glen,
Those eastern hills their half-moon range increased.
Her lofty tiers of battle never ceased.
To glance, commingled with their woody tops.
Down swift they came, like panthers to the feast,
The lowest ranks still stepping from the slopes,
Still swallowed by the vale with all their mighty hopes.

IV.

There was devouring war: Already there
Her horse and chariots o’er the plain were blent
With Roman horse in one bewildering glare
Of thickened ruin, jostling, leaping, pent,
O’erstiffed, swayed, with rifts of havoc rent,
With gestures maddened—savage—fiercely strange.
Around the west the Roman foot were bent
From tip to tip of that high crescent range,
To save their flanks, to watch the embosomed battle’s change.

V.

Here many darts the Caledonians throw;
And aye, as aye into their chariots leap
Bold Roman forms, they seize, they heave the foe
Over the wheels; their onward cars they keep,
They drive them bounding o’er each swelling heap.
Joy for their valour! how with fervour prayed,
That such high daring its reward might reap,
The grateful Cathla and the Syrian maid!
But see! but see! Oh God!—they tremble now afraid.

VI.

The numerous weight of her superior foes
O’erbears the mounted strength of Morven back,
Eastward away her fainting battle goes;
Their closer forms the o’ermastered horse unslack,
They flee, the skirting mountains wide they track;
The abandoned chariots with unmanaged steeds
Roll mad about, and tear the harrowed rack
Of infantry that to the sheer scythe bleeds,
Wrapping the cloyed wheels round with torn limbs as with weeds.
VII.
Ere down, obstructed by that thick retreat,
Can Morven's might descend upon the foe,
Rome's columned infantry has met, has beat
Her storied ranks; cleft, shouldered, wide they go.
Yon loftiest piles seem loosened to and fro,—
Has terror climbed already? Through the trees
Away they gleam, they melt like sun-struck snow,
They feel their far-pervading enemies;
Upwards the scattered fight is pushed by quick degrees.

VIII.
"My daughter!" sinking on Roscana's breast,
Thus Cathla murmured, "in the days gone by,
Pleasant to me, to me how dearly blessed
Have been the valley and the stream where I"—
But hark! she starts—wild fears a moment fly—
Yon staggering mountain of dishonoured flight
Sends forth a trumpet from its summit high;
A thousand horns from off its wondering height
Pour back the soul of hope—of war—of patriot might.

IX.
Behold! behold, upon its open top
A stately warrior stationed like a god!
A band behind fills up the new-grown hope.
In boldest attitude he stood, he shewed
The onward way with the commanding rod
Of his high-lifted, forth-directing spear.
Back o'er the shoulders of the mountains flowed
Repentant Flight, more daring from its fear;
Till far behind that form was swelled the thronging rear.

X.
There grimly, silently, they stood below
The cloud that darkened o'er the mountain's crest.
From out the north a wind began to blow,
It smote the gloom, it broke its inner breast
To boiling racks of white that, ne'er at rest,
Relieved against its sabler texture flew.
Shook terribly the high trees wind-possessed.
The great old bards, white-vested, forth to view
Stepped awfully, their harps down from the boughs they drew:

XI.

For they their harps had hung upon the trees,
With shame despairing o'er their country's flight;
But now with streaming stoles they reach, they seize
The glorious fruitage, plucking it with might;
They stand prepared. Down leaping to the fight,
That warrior led the men of Caledon;
Aye gleamed their surfy plumes in the dun light;
Loud waxed the horn, but high o'er all was known
The chant of great-souled bards that poured the battle on.

XII.

O! their white heads! their harps inviolate!
The wands of lightning o'er the deathless throng
Ran, as on either side they stood sedate,
As through this gateway of immortal song
The might renewed of Morven rushed along
To war, to vengeance—O! to victory;
For see! for see, its columned forehead strong
Has smote the army of the enemy
Down to its very heart, a stunning stroke—they flee!

XIII.

Astonied, backwardswhelmed upon the plain
They go; still farther, as behind, sustained
By numbers gathering from their rout amain,
The great descent of Morven is maintained.
Back-rattling chariots have the flight disdained;
They roll around the outskirts of the fight,
That onward struggles through the field regained.
But o'er them falls the thundercloud, like night,
Down on the battle falls, and hides it from the sight.

XIV.

With bosoms hushed, as if a shock were nigh
Of earthquake, trembling, pale as from the tomb,
Bending, Roscrana and her mother try
With eyes intense to pierce the hidden doom.
O! joy! their panting bosoms now have room;
They know at least the battle westward sweeps.
A windy flaw has rent the shrouded gloom;
O'er their far trench they see the foe in heaps
Driven; on the fosse behind a chasing warrior leaps.

XV.

From out the cloud a slip of sunshine down
With glory streams on his illumined head;
'Tis he! the same! that heir of great renown!
That chief unknown! his country who has led
Through shame to glory—thus at least far sped.
Aloft he stands, he waves his sun-lit spear,
Its brazen gleam on Mor ven's heads is shed;
Around they spring, they crowd; one mighty cheer,
Down in the camp they plunge. Again falls darkness drear.

XVI.

But round those women winds began to wail,
The wild heath whistled fearfully and shrill,
Fell spotty rains, the burden of the hail
Was heard sonorous round from hill to hill:—
"Hope shall we, mother, yet," Roscrana, still
Her white hands clapping through the dim blasts, cried;
"Yea peace, yea joy, let these thy bosom fill,
As home I guide thee o'er the mountains wide:
Lean on me very much, lean on thy daughter's side.
THE CHRISTIAN BRIDE.
XVII.
“Nay, I will lead thee to the Culdee’s rock,
Not distant by the margin of the wave,
There to abide till overblown this shock.
By moon, or dawnlight, issuing from his cave,
Our noble wounded let us help to save.
Would Erc were here thee in his arms to bear!
Not he it was that thus renewed the brave;
Powerful though Erc, that captain’s godlike air
None but a prince could shew: be sure a prince was there.”

XVIII.
They reached the cell: o’erwearied with the day,
Within an inner cavern Cathla slept.
Before the embers, as reclined he lay,
The bliss of slumber o’er the Culdee crept.
Alone her vigil young Roscrena kept;
That champion still in her recurring thought,
She generous tears of admiration wept.
But now the storm was lulled, or heard remote;
Rising, on tiptoe forth the moonlight air she sought.

XIX.
Neighed oft the steed, the chariot wheels were heard,
The distant horn blew swelling through the night.
She thought of him, that chief, for him she feared;
O! lives he still, the gleaner of the fight?
Her thoughts have drawn her towards that field aright,
Along the damp wood’s intervening glade;
She pauses, longing for the morning light,
To go with Cathla; back she steps afraid,
Rustle the dropping leaves—rough men have seized the maid.

XX.
Greater her terror since unseen the ill,
For now of clouds a heavy continent
Came o'er the moon, the wood's abysses still
The floating darkness smoothed up and blent.
Vainly she shrieked, as farther still she went,
Borne through the listless forests far away;
Ha! no, not vainly yet,—her ear intent
A din, like ban-dogs opening on their prey,
Has caught; deep in the woods she sees a gleaming ray.

XXI.

Near come the yell, the light; the stems that skirt
The glade, the glade's wet grass is ruddied o'er;
Forth bursts, with crowds ofumbered figures girt,
A stately savage on the woody floor:
'Tis Ere! aloft his pinioned arms he bore,
Unheld to keep them from that galling throng;
Blazed his wild hair; his bleeding loins were sore
With hanging dogs, deep dragged by him along;
Torch-bearing serfs behind strike at the giant strong.

XXII.

Still on the encumbered warrior draws his trail
Of death and danger to the princess near;
Her arms to him, to him her face so pale
Imploring stretched, mighty for one so dear
He turns, he sweeps obstruction from his rear;
Bounding he comes; and round Gurthullin's throat,
Who chiefly holds her, wraps his chains severe;
Then wide apart and high his wrists he shot,
And hanged the uplifted wretch who now his prey forgot.

XXIII.

With starting eyeballs, and self-bitten tongue,
Erc to the ground has dashed the caitiff base.
He snatched the maid; as to his neck she clung,
A smile of daring lit his fire-scarred face.
With her he waded through the thickening chase,
Still dashing off the war that on him hung;  
Then down he set her; in the embattled place  
There as she stood, away from her he flung  
Her circling foes, around so lion-like he sprung.

xxiv.
Before her now o’erwhelmed he’s on his knee,  
Yet fighting still; a near horn blew a blast;  
Forth leapt a haughty figure, followed he  
By swift retainers, round his glance he cast,  
He saw Roscrana and he seized her fast.  
Upsprung, with power indignantly renewed,  
Old Ern, a groan from out his large heart passed  
To see the maid by Swarno’s grasp subdued;  
Staggering he reached the chief who bore her through the wood;

xxv.
Reeling he caught him by the raven locks,  
And curbed his bowed head, as himself down fell:—  
“Slaves!” cried the entangled prince, “one savage mocks  
Your gyves? your daggers? ha! ’tis mighty well!  
No manacles could keep him in his cell?  
O! no, why should they, subtle he as wind?  
Slay—make him die then—hurl him down to hilt.  
Shear through those fingers in my hair entwined.”  
As onward speed his serfs a trumpet blows behind.

xxvi.
They turn astonished, and they pause to see  
That coming party whether friends or foes.  
Them has Roscrana seen—’tis he! ’tis he!  
The chosen hero of that day she knows:  
A valiant band around their leader close:  
Salvation’s near:—“Save! save me, helper true!  
Young Torthil’s wife am I; this Swarno knows,  
Yet here he”—“But will I not rescue you,  
My own good Syrian wife?” And forth her Torthil flew.
XXVII.
Swift with his blade away has Swarno shorn
His black gripped curls; upspringing with a bound,
He sets the maid behind him; high his scorn,
Dark was his hate, his enemy thus found.
Steel they to steel now face each other round;
At Swarno's back his vassals crowd anew,
Anew the fearful virgin they surround.
But stern the doings of those warriors two,
As aye on them the links their smoky flarings threw.

XXVIII.
Behind their pausing bands respective kept,
Their single deeds not daring to alloy.
Dread to the murmurs of Roscrana swept
The sword of Torthil, greedy to destroy;
With wounds and wounds it gluts its savage joy.
Dark Swarno staggers, yet opposing well;
Bold Torthil whels him with his swift annoy;
That stroke shall hew him down—ha! stumbling fell
The youth, and o'er him rose fierce Swarno's sword and yell.

XXIX.
Down—ne'er he smote; behind him Erc has crept,
And pulled him backwards from his lifted blow,
Struggling to earth; then on his breast he leapt,
And choked with grappling hands the throttled foe;
Recovered Torthil guards old Erc below;
Dread dins the mingled conflict of the rest;
But Swarno slain, his men soon vanquished go.
With danger past, and present joy oppressed,
Roscrana, left unhurt, faints on her husband's breast.

XXX.
With oaken boughs fresh dripping from the rain
Her brow he sprinkles, and she soon revives:—
"Joy! joy!" she said, "my hero is not slain!
But where is Erc, the saviour of our lives?"
Near borne he comes; if dying, he derives
Solace from friends so many and so dear:
Each gallant youth to share the burden strives
Of him who trained them to the bow and spear,
They carry him like sons, the brave old man they cheer.

XXXI.

"Heroic creature! To the cave away,"
Roscrana murmurèd, "of the Culdee John;"
There rests my Torthil's mother, since to-day
She saw the great acts of her son unknown:
Sweetly she sleeps upon the rushes strewn;
But sweeter far shall her awaking be.
My Torthil come!—Soft bear the old man on,
The hermit's rocky fastness soon we'll see;
There with good herbs, brave Erc, shalt thou be healed by me.

XXXII.

"With cold delicious oils thy fire-scathed head
Shall I anoint, and come to thee each day;
Fresh rushes green for thee my hand shall spread—
He hears me not, he heeds not what I say:
Ha! then, young warriors down the hero lay,
That I may know if, still his wounds undressed,
"Tis safe to move him farther on his way."
'Twas done: for him she tore her silken vest,
And tenderly she stanched, and bound his bleeding breast.

XXXIII.

Nor in her thankful joy did she refrain,
But stooping down the old Barbarian kissed;
His heart's best fire, unquenched by fear or pain,
Sprung to his eye, now dimmed with grateful mist;
With clapping hands her love he mutely blessed:
"Now swiftly, gently on with him," she said,
"Deep though his hurt, though greatly needing rest,
His frame's yet full of life; and watchful aid
Shall heal him soon in John's still sanctuary laid."

XXXIV.

"Come then, my Syrian, to our mother fast,"
Her Torthil said, "and fear for me no more;
Here am I with you all your own at last,
My limbs unfettered, and my exile o'er:
Nor I dishonoured left the Italian shore;
Aurelian slain, my friend just Tacitus
Imperial sate, and loosed my bondage sore,
Ennobling freedom has he given to us.
I came; our battle fled, and I restored it thus.

XXXV.

"A grateful vassal of that Swarno slain,
Whose only daughter was to health restored,
And taught God's Word by thee, and who again
Was taught by her the heart-renewing Word,
Heard of this plot against thee by his lord,
And helped from Swarno's dungeon Ere the brave,
Then left for aye that master now abhorred,
And sought me when the fight was o'er, and gave
Hints how to mar the plot—my own dear wife to save.

XXXVI.

"Nor deem thy lofty lessons have been vain:
Blessed be my dungeon's leisure to retrace
Thy words of life again and yet again,
For ever blest with the remembered grace
That breathed the while from thy celestial face.
Thy faith exalted thus I've loved and tried."
But now they reached the Culdee's dwelling-place.
A mother's heart, a son's was satisfied.
Then turned their mingled love to Torthil's Christian Bride.
THE DEMONIAC.
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER I.

MIRIAM'S INTERVIEW WITH CHRIST.

I.

In the green month of Zif, beneath an aged palm-tree sate,
In the wide plain of Jericho, a mother desolate:
Her lips were covered with her robe, upon her head she cast
The dust of earth; and over her the hours unheeded passed.
Forth from the neighbouring trees came Christ, and stood at Miriam's
feet;
His face with peace and ardour blent, unutterably sweet.

II.

She raised her head, she saw him stand, kneeling she clasped his knee:—
"Help me, great Man of Nazareth! give back my son to me!
Take pity on a mother's loins, broken with weary pain!
Over the cloudy hills I go—I seek him still in vain!
Sorrow my only portion is; sleep flees from me; for food,
Thy handmaid oft is fain to pick harsh berries from the wood.

III.

"My heart breaks: Tell me, where is he?"—"Daughter of Judah, how
Should I thy son know?"—"I have seen thy might—a prophet thou!
And I have heard thee speak great things, like arrows dipped in gall, shot from a bow, against the proud; have seen before them fall the brows of haughty men: but aye, like honey-drops, distil thy words, the spirits of the grieved with healing balm to fill.

IV.

"Tell me, where is my Herman wild? At first I staid at home, till it was cruel so to rest, whilst he was forced to roam. At morn I looked for him, from noon on to the twilight dim; and when in the uncertain light the evening shadows swim, I shaped him thence. He came not—God from love has cast him forth; but he is dear to me, and I will hunt him o'er the earth.

V.

"Hear me, thou Man of Nazareth! O! then thy handmaid bless! pride dares not in thy presence live: the tale of my distress I hide not from thee:—God had given, to glad my widowhood, two children fair exceedingly, but not more fair than good. Peace to my Judith in the grave! she died in her young days: God took her to himself; and I blessed the Almighty's ways.

VI.

"And Herman yet was left to me, my hope! my more than joy! bright as a mother's restless heart would fashion forth her boy! With power, like an anointed child's, with glory his brow was clad, his cheek with virgin health; how bloomed the beauty of his head! his young eye was as when the sun shines in an eagle's eye; a life within a life was there, burnished, and bold, and shy.

VII.

"And scarce the silky blossom of his yellow beard was seen, when he the ancient forests traced with slings and arrows keen; heroic daring from each limb breathed; as the posting winds fleet, o'er the hills so high and bright he chased the dappled hinds. then with the men of Naphthali, a lion-hunter bold, he tossed his golden head afar on their snowy mountains cold.
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VIII.

"His boyhood with just joys enlarged, no guilt had spoilt, no fear; Nor painted women lured his youth,—hence was his spirit clear. And I had taught him the great acts of old embattled kings, Champions, and sainted sages, priests, judges, all mighty things, Till, from deep thought, his eye was like a prophet's burdened eye: And he was now a man indeed, built for a purpose high.

IX.

"God of my fathers! if my hopes in him presumptuous were, From him to me the punishment, tempered with love, transfer! Help us, thou Man of God! Perhaps by hopeless passions bound And rendered weak, the mastery a Demon o'er him found: Reason and duty all, all life, his being all became Subservience to the wild strange law that overbears his frame.

X.

"Dark as the blue piled thunderlofts then grew his forehead high; And gleamed like their veined lightnings, rash and passionate, his eye; For he was sorely vexed and fierce. Anon, in gentle fits, Like idle hermit looking at the clouds, all day he sits. At length he fled far from my care, he felt his life disgraced: Pride took him to the wilderness, shame keeps him in the waste.

XI.

"Strong as the eagle's wings of quest, on aimless errands runs The beauteous savage of my love; but still his mother shuns. Along the dizzy hills that reel up in the cloudy rack, O'er tumbling chasms, by desert wells, he speeds his boundless track; And in the dead hours of the night, when happier children lie In slumber sealed, he journeys far the flowing rivers by.

XII.

"And oft he haunts the sepulchres, where the thin shoals of ghosts Flit shivering from Death's chilling dews; to their unbodied hosts,
That churm through night their feeble plaint, he yells; at the red morn
Meets the great armies of the winds, high o'er the mountains borne,
Leaping against their viewless rage, tossing his arms on high,
And hanging balanced o'er sheer steeps against the morning sky.

XIII.

"His food from honey of the rocks and old cleft trees is drawn,
From wild-fowl caught in weedy pools by the raw light of dawn,
From berries, all spontaneous fruits. In winter, in the caves
Of hills he sleeps; the summer tree above his slumber waves;
Nature's wild commoner, my child! on the blear autumn eves,
When small birds shriek adown the wind, he lies among the leaves.

XIV.

"By day the sun, the frost by night, weariness, want, and pain,
Sorely his young eyes must have spoilt; and dried his wasted brain.
Gone are his youth's fine hopes; and mine, what are they? My poor child,
Sweet Patience for thy minister, go with thee to the wild!
What shalt thou do when sickness comes? How much it grieveth me,
That from thy mother's love thou should'st, as from an enemy, flee!

XV.

"For him these chastened bones of mine have stood the winter's shock;
I've crept to reach him as he sate on the bald top of the rock;
When summer has enlarged the year upon the pleasant mountains,
I've seen him sit long hours afar beside their spangled fountains;
But the coy lightning of his eye ne'er sleeps: my art is vain;
Swift as a roe-buck he is gone, and I must weep again.

XVI.

"Charmers, exorcists of old skill, wizards that muttering go,
All that deal subtly, I have tried: I add but sin to woe.
The Expiation-feast I've kept; I've prayed by many a tomb
Of prophets, fervid men of old, that God would change his doom;—
All's vain! No, no, it shall not be; for I will track the earth,
O'ertake him, hold him with strong love, and drive the Demon forth!"
A cry rung in the distant woods: up Miriam rose and ran;
But turned, came back, and kneeling kissed the garment of that Man,—
For anxious hope is dutiful. With beating heart again
She turned away, ere Jesus spake, and sought the woody plain;
And through the rustling alleys, through the mild glades, one by one,
She wandered half the summer day, but could not see her son.
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER II.

MIRIAM'S INTERVIEW WITH HER SON, HERMAN THE DEMONIAC.

I.
By Jordan's waters, Miriam sate beneath a tree and wept.
She heard a groan: a man from out the shrubs before her crept;
And, like the Serpent damned of God—as if to crush the worm
Of hunger that within him gnawed, and ground his writhing form—
He trailed his belly in the dust; his eye, that keenly burned
With famine's purging fire, to her—his mother—was upturned.

II.
"Bread! bread! Oh bread!" feebly he cried. Her little store she took,
And gave it to his trembling clutch; and brought him from the brook
Water in hollow leaves; then down beside him sitting she
Soft drew to her his yellow head, and laid it on her knee;
With kiss long as an exile's kiss, she clung unto him there;
Bedewed his face with many tears, and wiped it with her hair.

III.
He slept, like an o'erwearied babe: she held her sobbing breast
To stir him not; and hid his eyes, that he might longer rest;
And smoothed his far-descending locks, dishonoured with the dust;
And long and calmly did he sleep beneath her sacred trust.
At length he started with a groan, he knelt upon his knee:—
"Thou mother! why hast thou not sought the Son of God for me?
THE DEMONIAC.

IV.

"Ha! this is harsh: O! pardon me! I know thy love, well tried,
Has me by the tall forests sought, and by the pastures wide,
Rocks, and dim sepulchres: dear one! O! think me not unkind;
The Fiend has kept me from you so, wild as the wintry wind:
He takes me far, he brings me near; athisart your path I fleet,
Driven, that each other we may see, but ne'er each other meet.

V.

"Blest are the dead! what though their face no more beholds the sun,
Though filled with barren ashes be the breast of each loved one,
With dusty motes confused and dull the jewel of the eye;
Yet are they gone, and are at rest: how peacefully they lie!
Would I were dead, smit thorough with blue plagues, and each sore ill;
So were I not a vessel filled with an infernal will!

VI.

"I am thy quarry of the wild! my faithful huntress thou!
And think'st thou not-thy toils for me my spirit down must bow?
The Fiend will come again; leave me ere I leave thee: Away!
Spend not thy sweet limbs, so shall I less truly be thy prey."—
"Speak not to me, I will not go; think'st thou thy youth's first prime
Was half so dear to me as thou, now old before thy time?

VII.

"But come with me: fear not; 'tis past; we'll hear soft waters flow;
The stock-dove in the twilight woods shall soothe us as we go,
Which aye so well thou lovedst to hear; the stars, that softly burn
O'er the green pasture-hills, shall light our homeward glad return;
And then the holy moon shall rise, and lead us all the way;
And the very God of peace and love will guard our home for aye!"

VIII.

"Ha! this is vain: why art thou here? haste, haste, there's but one hope;
The Man of Nazareth alone can with the Demon cope:
Man? Nay, the Son of God; for oft have I, in midnight hours,
Heard in Engaddi's howling caves the whisperings of Dark Powers
Speak of Messiah, and declare this Jesus him to be.
And, from some great event at hand, this pause is given to me."

IX.

"To-day, O! had I him constrained! With my own thoughts oppressed,
Even I can see him more than man: from house to house distressed
He breathes his noiseless peace; by shores of lakes, on the dim hills,
He teaches men; the lazarus-house his gracious presence stills;
A new spirit whispers through the woods of him to me at eve;
All nature seems with conscious hopes of some great change to heave."

X.

"The Fiend! the Fiend! hark!" Herman cried, "he left me here at noon,
Hungry and sick among the brakes; and comes he then so soon?"
Up from the shores of the Dead Sea came a dull booming sound;
The leaves shook on the trees; thin winds went wailing all around;
Then laughter shook the sullen air. To reach his mother's hand,
The young man grasped; but back was thrown convulsed upon the sand.

XI.

No time was there for Miriam's love; he rose, a smothered gleam
Was on his brow, with fierce motes rolled his eye's distempered beam;
He smiled—'twas as the lightning of a hope about to die
For ever from the furrowed brows of Hell's eternity;
Like sun-warmed snakes, rose on his head a storm of golden hair,
Tangled; and thus on Miriam fell hot breathings of despair:—

XII.

"Perish the breasts that gave me milk! yea, in thy mouldering heart,
Good thrifty roots I'll plant, to stay, next time, my hunger's smart;
Red-veined derived apples I shall eat with savage haste,
And see thy life-blood blushing through, and glory in the taste!"—
"Peace!" Miriam cried, "thou bitter Fiend! 'tis thou, and not my son,
That speaks: I know thee, Demon cursed! I scorn thee, thou dark One!
THE DEMONIAC.

XIII.
“Glory beyond thy power, dark One! him in the end of days—
My son redeemed from thee—to Heaven my fathers’ God will raise;
Whilst thou—ha! outcast from that God!—forth shalt be driven to
dwell
With horned flames and Blasphemy, in the red range of Hell.
There prey the old Cares, the Furies there whirl their salt whips for aye,
And faces faded in the fire look upward with dismay.

XIV.
“And sighs are there, and doleful cries, and tongues with anguish dumb;
And through that glaring fierce abyss of years, no hope can come.
Fiend! leave my child—God’s child!—avaunt! down to thy cham-
bers blue
Of sulphur go! the palaces of Sodom yawn for you.”
“Amen, Amen, Amen!” the Fiend with yelling laughter cried;
And like an arrow from the bow, her Herman left her side.

XV.
“Stay!” she exclaimed; “hear me, my son; I spake not thus to you!”
Swift o’er the desert shore he ran, she hasted to pursue;
Crushing the salt-surf sapphire weeds, and many a crusted cake
Of salt, stumbling o’er pits, she went: she saw Gomorrah’s lake,
She saw her son plunge in the waves; but fast-descending night,
Mingled with storms, fell on the deep, and bid him from her sight.

XVI.
And she by the dark waters of great confusion stood,
Called on her son, prayed to her God, to save him from the flood;
She beat her breast, she cursed her tongue which to the Demon gave
Suggestion thus to drown her boy; she met the lashing wave;
And, bending forward, listened in each pause of the storm’s sweep,
And thought she heard her Herman cry for help from out the deep.

XVII.
And O! for him, for him, into the wasteful night she gazed;
And seemed to see his arms above the flashing waters raised.
She felt at length that she was mocked; along the barren shore
Far did she wander, and sate down when she could go no more.
The storm was now o'erblown, the moon rose o'er the lulled sea;
She looked behind her—murky crags rose beetling awfully.

XVIII.
Strange heads came stretching from the clefts of people sheltered there,
Wild tenants of the rock, waked by the cries of her despair,
Or by the tempest roused; with threats they bade her thence be gone,
Nor vex their drowsy caves of night with her untimely moan.
What creature of the shore art thou?” they cried, “Thee hence betake!
A woman? and hast dared to meet the storm-blast of the Lake?

XIX.
“To hear the smothered voices rack the Sodomitish sea,
Of Spirits pent in the whelmed rooms? Whence may thy sorrows be?
Seek'th thou the apples fair and false?” Thence back did Miriam run,
Less from her dread of violence, than haste to seek her son.
She could not find him; homeward then she turned at break of day,
And, with a sore bereaved heart, went weeping all the way.
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER III.

MIRIAMfollows HERMAN TO THE SEPULCHRES.

I.

Deep in the hollow night, a voice to Miriam's slumbering ear
Seemed thus to say, "Sleep'st thou, when I can sleep not, mother dear?"
She started, listened; all was still:—"'Tis but a dream's wild freak:
These haggard fancies vex me so, since grief has made me weak!
Yet, Demon-borne, in that dark storm, from out the watery waste,
Unseen by me, he might have come." She rose with trembling haste;

II.

Quickly attired, she looked abroad: The clouds away were gone;
Blue ether, as if newly washed, with dewy gleams wide shone;
The stars were very lustrous; and in the abyss of night
The moon was set, severely pure, a well of living light;
Deep peace lay in the shadowy vales; the solemn woods were still;
And nought was heard, save oft the bark of fox upon the hill.

III.

Again upon her bed she lay, sleep hovered o'er her eyes;
Again unto her lattice came that voice, and called her thrice.
"'Tis but the Tempter-fiend!" she said, and wept unto her God;
Yet still from hope and changeless love again she looked abroad;
She heard a cry—she knew that voice! with beating heart she ran,
And followed through the glimmering trees the figure of a man.
IV.
His form was hid:—"Heaven help," she prayed, "a mother's weary side!
No farther can I go!" Again his shadow she espied;
Again forgot her weariness; and ran with all her speed
To have him now, to have him now—it is her son indeed!
At length she came unto the place of the white sepulchres;
And paused—shall she pursue him there? For now deep fear is hers;

V.
For heavy clouds came o'er the moon; darkness fell all around;
A shuddering wind grieved in the trees, skirting the charnel ground;
Then clamoured birds obscene; and yells as from lean hounds of blood,
Mixed with careering laughter, rose; choked shrieks as from the flood,
And gallowing cries, like grappled fiends' clinched with the last despair,
And hurried through Hell's fire-wrought gates, thickened the midnight air.

VI.
And Miriam saw white wispy fires dance, warped with vapours close,
Like exhalations kindled from the rotten churchyard gross.
She feared the vexed Fiend, feared the ghosts of milky babes to brave,
And fretted age that cannot rest within the wormy grave.
Yet there oft heard she Herman's voice: and morning soon shall rise:
Beneath a tree she sate to watch; but sleep o'ertook her eyes.
THE DEMONIAK.

CHAPTER IV.

HERMAN'S SICKNESS.

I.
'Twas now the time, when stepping down from her ethereal bowers,
The touch of Spring's dew-sandalled feet kindles the earth with flowers.
Fair rose the morn on Judah's hills: as Miriam waked, a band
Of earnest men drew nigh; there Christ led Herman by the hand.
"Woman, thy son's restored to thee," the blessed Jesus said;
And with a shriek of joy she clasped, she kissed her Herman's head.

II.
And he, too, wept, like one in whom pride is o'ermastered last.
Meanwhile, with modesty divine, Jesus away had passed.
Then Miriam took her Herman's hand, and led him to her home.
Came quiet days: he lived like one by some strange blight o'ercome:
Noon was to him as twilight; with austere serenity
He bowed his doomed head, and prepared himself in haste to die.

III.
His spirit pined, his days declined; his mother watched the while
With silent grief, as if herself and him she could beguile,
From morn to evening; if he sighed, she rose at midnight oft,
Stooped o'er his head, and touched his cheek with hers so kind and soft;
And brought him food, true as the bird, that plies its little quest
Around the hedges all day long, to still its yearning nest.
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER V.

Herman's Blessing.

I.

'Twas now the golden autumn-tide: Herman lay on his bed; Through a small lattice on his face the yellow light was shed:— "Is it the matin hour, mother?"—for she was near at hand. "No, my dear boy; the setting sun shines sweetly o'er our land; With songs unto the fountains go the maids in a long train; Why loiterest thou, dear idle one? Up, list to them again:

II.

"Loved wert thou by them all. I see the illumined hills of oak; Valleys, where bow the cumbered trees 'neath autumn's mellow yoke; The glittering streams; and the wide heavens of glory o'er our head; The barley-harvest days are come—I see the reapers spread. Be up, my boy! be up, fair boy! thy look is all too sad. Nay, health is dawning on thy face: Up, make thy mother glad."

III.

He raised his head with fearful haste, but drooping nature failed, Feebly he groaned; yet, yet with might his filial heart prevailed, Again he rose, he took her hand:—"Eternal God above, Keep this tried mother when I die, and recompense her love! Her very love has almost been my cursing minister, So solemn has it made my life, so full of cares for her.
IV.

"Keen as the wild wolf's following o'er the glazed wintry waste,
Biting the blast, whetting his fangs, upon the prey to haste,
She hunted my distempered life—her heart could ne'er stand still!—
Even where the sun unseals the snows, high on the perilous hill.
Of whom but thee? of none but thee, thou mother, dearest, best!
Speak I: Beneath thy weight of love my spirit lies oppressed.

V.

"I die from thee, I soon must go; my days are a swift stream;
Thy fond hopes must be shattered like the frailty of a dream.
Yet fear not; He that freed thy son, will help thee when I die,
And, when thy days of flesh are done, will lift thee up on high;
And, with salvation very glad, to thee it shall be given
To walk, with the redeemed of God, the starry floor of Heaven.

VI.

"What shall I say, that when I die my mother may not weep?
My blood, my life, would they were fused into one blessing deep!
Spring, and dew-dropping heaven, each star of goodliest influence,
Trees weeping balms, all precious things—O! I would not go hence,
Till I could bless thee with all things! Nay, hear me yet—"

"Cease, cease!

I love thee so! I love thee so! I cannot be at peace!

VII.

"But to the Holy City I this night, this hour, will haste;
Jesus is there, mercy I'll have." Beside his bed she placed
Food—would not hear his kind reproof—swift went—yet, pausing,
turned—
Again bent o'er him, and with love unutterable burned—
Prayed leave to go—staid not to hear denial or assent;
And all the night, led by the moon, wide o'er the hills she went.
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER VI.

MIRIAM AT THE HILL OF CALVARY.

I.
The Holy City Miriam reached; but Jesus was not there,
For he was gone to Galilee. She turned with mute despair,
And wearily retraced her path. Months slowly rolled away;
Her son still pining down through each gradation of decay.
At length she was assured that Christ was in Jerusalem,
And through the silent night again she went in quest of him.

II.
As broke the spotted dawn, she heard the sound of camel bells,
Soft tinkling far; before her now a tented valley swells:
For from wide lands, and distant isles, the Passover could still
Bring up the scattered tribes of God unto his Holy Hill.
Their whitening tents the valley filled; but all deserted stood,
Save that some slaves went here and there to give the camels food.

III.
To Miriam's question they replied, their lords were gone to see
A strange impostor crucified with thieves on Calvary.
Then went she on until she saw, above the City fair,
The Temple like a snowy mount far up in the clear air;
Around its upward-circling courts, she saw the forms of men,
That bending westward looked as if some distant thing to ken.
THE DEMONIAC.

IV.

Still was the sky. At once on them a mighty whirlwind fell,
And tossed their garments seen afar; and brought with many a swell
The City's din tumultuous. A blind and smothering fear
On Miriam came; with breathless haste she to the gates drew near,
Passed through the hurrying streets, and gained the foot of Calvary.
She turned—a pomp processional, and shouting crowds were nigh.

V.

She saw—blind to all else—she saw Him whom she came to seek,
Bearing his cross; and thorns were crushed around that brow so meek!
Immortal anguish held his face; yet tempered with a look
That seemed prepared no shame, no pain, from mortal man to brook;
Prepared to burst all bands, to flash, put indignation on,
To shake—to thunder-strike—to quell his foes as from a throne.

VI.

O! Son of God! Yet still his face majestic patience bound.
How can she ask, in such an hour, his help? He turned half round;
She felt that he read all her heart, when on her face was stayed
That eye, like an abyss of love. With clasped hands she prayed,
With silent lips and reverent eyes. He turned from her again;
Yet left her to believe, with joy, her prayer had not been vain.

VII.

How can she go and leave Him thus? O! how her bosom burned
With holy gratitude to Christ, as up she slowly turned!
She saw the throngs go closing up; the winding pomp before
A lustre all unnatural upon its ensigns bore,
Beneath a burning sun that smote the summit of the hill.
An ominous cloud, behind, o'erhung the City dark and still.

VIII.

Softly she joined a company of women; and they stood
Afar, and oft with quick short look the glancing summit viewed.
They saw not what was done,—from this the greater was their fear. Mute, trembling, pale, forward they bent as if some shriek to hear. Horror on Miriam fell; she thought of Herman, and was glad That in his sickness a just cause to haste away she had.

IX.
She went, yet oft looked back; she saw the uplifted cross at last, And shrieked, and faster went till she the gates of Zion passed. She passed the silent vale of tents, the camels grazing wide; The glittering streams shone in the sun, and shone the mountain side; A forest near, when she its first outstanding trees had won, A horror of great darkness fell: the quenched day was done.

X.
She went into the night-locked wood; 'twas silent as the sleep That watched the hoary secrets of the uncreated deep. Then a sound shook the mountain bars, as when some fallen pile Of ages sends a dull far voice o'er sea and sounding isle. Without a breath the forest shook; and then the earth was rocked; And trees fell crashing all around; and birds of night were shocked

XI.
Screaming from out their rifted nests: with helpless wings they beat The ground, and came and fiercely pecked, fluttering o'er Miriam's feet. Steps, as if shod with thunder, ran. Through the infested wood, Slowly had Miriam groped her way, and in its skirts she stood, When all at once burst forth the day from out the folds of night, And with rebounding glory flashed along the heavens of light.

XII.
Wedges of terror clove her heart; stumbling she hasted on With dazzled eyes, and reached her home—her Herman's life was gone! Reeling she turned, she knew not why; all blindly forth she burst; But back she flew, and kissed his lips; O! wildly then she cursed Her journey, cursed that darkness strange, and beat her breast, and cried, "Had I not gone—had I been here, my Herman had not died!"
THE DEMONIAC.

CHAPTER VII.

MIRIAM’S INTERVIEW WITH HER SAINTED DAUGHTER, JUDITH.

I.
The mourners from the house of woe, the minstrels* forth were gone; 
Deep in the middle watch of night sate Miriam all alone, 
Sleepless, in silent sorrow rocked, with fixed gaze intense 
On him dressed for the grave, her last, still dear, inheritance. -
“Peace!” said a voice, like the far-off soft murmur of a wave; 
She started, turned, she saw—“My child! my Judith from the grave!”

II.
With lips apart, with heaving heart, gazed Miriam on a form, 
Lovely beyond the power of death, the grave’s polluting worm. 
A lucid air enswathed her head: How excellent are they, 
Dear God, thy ransomed ones! On her consummate forehead lay 
The moonlight of eternal peace, solemn and very sweet; 
A snowy vesture beautiful came flowing o’er her feet.

III.
“I see! I do! methinks I see my dear immortal child! 
Come near me, God-given! Be not these the garments undefiled? 
Those eyes, the spirit’s sainted wells, o’erflowing still with love, 
I know them! Ever look on me, my own celestial dove! 
Art thou not come to take me hence, the awful worlds to see? 
I long to go—I long to go, to dwell in Heaven with thee!

* Matthew, ix. 23.
IV.

"Ah! no, 'tis but a dream!"—"Fear not, for I am ever thine!"
With beautiful tranquillity, with majesty divine,
Forth stepped the unblemished child of life, and, with a meek embrace,
Folded her mother's crowding heart, and kissed her breathing face:—
"Fear not: trust thou in Christ, who died this day mankind to save,
By whose dear leave I come to thee, redeemed from out the grave.

V.

"Many have been, greatly beloved! thy days of trial sore,
Bereavement, sorrow, wandering, pain; but these shall soon be o'er:
And loss, woe, weariness, all pain, each want, each earthly load,
Are in the many-linked chain that draws earth up to God.
But look to Christ, the assured One, and thou for aye shalt stand
In the Lord's palaces of life, in the uncorrupted land.

VI.

"O! it is well with me, mother! No sin is there, no night;
There be the bliss-enamelled flowers, bathed with the dews of light;
Rivers of crystal, shaded with the nations' healing trees,
Whose fadeless leaves, life-spangled, shake in the eternal breeze;
The shining, shining host of saints; the angels' burning tiers;
And there God's face ineffable lights the perpetual years!"

VII.

"Speak of thy father, holy child! my youth's spouse, where is he?
Thy brother—he has left me too: O! are they saved like thee?
Then with great joy would I rejoice, and calmly wait the time
To join you all in Heaven. But speak, child of the unfailing prime!
Thy mother's yet on earth—how lone! shall they not also rise,
And come this night anew to bless these old o'erwearied eyes?"

VIII.

"Fear not; rest thou in hope and peace; to thee, on earth below,
More of the Spirits' hidden world 'tis not allowed to know.
THE DEMONIAE. 85

Now let me see my brother's face; night's mid watch passes fleet,
And in the Holy City I the risen saints must meet,
To pass with them into the Heavens." With slow and trembling hands,
In silence Miriam from his face undid the linen bands:—

IX.

"Judith, draw near and see his face; upon thy brother look."
And she drew near: her glistening stole one moment ruffled shook;
Like light in tremulous water gleamed her eyes divine, as they
Gazed on her brother as he in his bloodless beauty lay;
With earth's dear frailty tempered still—Heaven's great and perfect
years
Not yet attained—her lustrous eyes ran o'er with many tears.

X.

She parted on his lofty brow his locks of yellow hair,
And kissed his forehead and his lips; then, with a sister's care,
Around his dead composed face the grave's white folds she tied;
She took her mother by the hand, and led her from his side;
Then stood the ethereal creature clothed with peace serene:—"Thy leave,
Sweet mother! let me go; and say, dear one! thou wilt not grieve."

XI.

"I shall not grieve, I will not grieve. But come, through the dark
woods
Thy mortal mother shall thee guide, and o'er the crossing floods.
O! I am greatly glad for thee, my young lamb of the fold!
Come near, and let me lead thee thus; thy mother gently hold!
For thou art washed in our Christ's blood! for thou art passing fair!
The very Spirit of God's Heavens has breathed upon thy hair!

XII.

"Now let me guide thee forth. Nay, nay, the thought is foolish all,
That thou canst wandering err, that aught of ill can thee befall.
Young dweller of the Heavens! mine own! the angels pure that be,
Primæval creatures of God's hand, in light excel not thee!
Those vivid eyes can look through night! No monster of the wild, 
Demon, or bandit of the cave, dares harm my sealed child!

XIII.

"In dazzling globes those angels wait, to bear thee with swift might
O'er the bowed tops of tufted woods to Zion's holy height.
Go then—ah! thou must go indeed!" She smiled, she turned to go;
But Miriam caught her shining skirts with a mother's parting woe,
And knelt, and clasped her hands. Then turned the daughter of the
skies,
Raised, led the mourner to a couch, and breathed upon her eyes.

XIV.

Deep sleep on Miriam fell. With face meek as the moon of night,
Far down in waveless water seen, a sleeping pearl of light,
A moment gazed that child on her; then brightening went. At morn,
With hope through sorrow, Miriam saw to dust her Herman borne.
Her faith was perfect, now in Him whose blood for men had flowed.
Calm shone her evening life, and set in the bosom of her God.
A FATHER'S CURSE:

A DREAM,

IN FOUR VISIONS.

VISION FIRST.
A widowed father from the holy fount
Of Christian sprinkling, bore his first-born babe
Through the autumnal noon, whose rich warmth lay
With fervid glistering on the glossy leaves
Of the young oaks through which he homeward passed.
   And aye his restless hand
Arranged the garment in a lighter fold,
To overshade that breathing face upturned,
Yet let it freely drink the vital air.
And oft scarce walked he in his gaze intent,
   That fed on his boy's face,
   Come out of his own loins,
Formed in the painful side
Of a dear mother—gone to barren dust.
O! the wet violets of those sleeping eyes,
That glisten through their silky-fringed lids!
Look to that dimpled smile! Look to those gums
That sweetly laugh! His little features change,
To fear now fashioned in his baby dreams:
With many a kiss and many a murmured word,
Fain would that father chase away the shadow!

THE VISION CONTINUED.

The Sabbath sun,
   Golden, went down the western afternoon.
His sloping beam, mingled with coloured motes,
Came through the leafy checkered lattice in,
Passing into a little bed of peace,
Where lay, in vestments white of innocence,
That child of many vows; no ruder sound
Than chirp of lonely sparrow in the thatch,
Or fluttering wing of butterfly that beat
The sunny pane, to break his slumber calm.
Before him knelt, in that mild solemn light,
The guardian parent praying for his boy,—
That God would give a trusting father power
To feed his young heart with the bread of life,
To bind his bold and flushing blood of youth
Within the sealed clasps of strict example,
With honour fenced, whose keen prismatic sense
Resolves the slightest borders of offence;
That he might be a man midst men;
His Christian being swelling still through all,
Wrestling with evil powers, prevailing still,
Through Him our wondrous Captain from above,
Whose shield was patience, and whose spear was love;
That, when earth’s days are done,
Escaped that doleful House whose dark foundations
Lie in the wrath of the Lord God of Hosts,
His life might pass into the Heavens of Christ,
Where crowns He puts upon his sainted ones,
And with salvation beautifies the meek:
Amen! So let it be!

VISION SECOND.

The warm and rainy sunshine
Flushed o’er the green earth with its dewy light.
A rainbow coloured on the watery east;
One horn descending on a snow-white flock
Of lambs at rest upon a sleek hill-side,
The other showered its saffron and its blue
Down on a band of young girls in the vale,
A FATHER'S CURSE.

Tossing their ringlets in their linked dance,
Laughing and winking to the glimmering sheen:
Through them and over them the glory fell,
Into the emerald meadow bending inwards.

Beneath its arch,
Of beauty built, of promise, and of safety,
I saw that father as a woodman go.
Behind him widely ran his little son,
A misty line pursuing him on through
The valley that lay glistening fresh and broad.
They reached a woody gallery of hills,
And there that father felled the lofty trees,
Whose rustling leaves shook down their twinkling drops,
Wetting his clear axe, glittering in the sun.
Perversely sate aloof, and turned away,
Nor gratified his parent with attention
To what he did, with questions all between,
That boy among the ferns, intently fixed,
His bright locks sleeping on his bloomy head,
Plaiting a crown of rushes white and green.

He tore it with fierce glee;
And tore a nosegay gathered as he came,
Plucked with destructive hand, but ne'er to please
An eye that wondered at the coloured freaks
Within the spotted cups of wilding flowers.
The young outglancing arrows of his eye
Were tipped with cruel pleasure, as he sprung
With froward shoutings leaping through the wood,
O'er shadows lying on the dewy grass,
Hunting a dragon-fly with shivering wings.
The wild bees swinging in the bells of flowers,
Sucking the honeyed seeds with murmurs hoarse,
Were crushed to please him, for that fly escaped.
The callow hedgelings chirping through the brier
He caught, and tore their little fluttering wings;
Then hied to where came down a sunless glade,
Cold tinkling waters through the soft worn earth,
Never sun-visited, but when was seen
His green and yellow hair from out the west
Through thinner trees, spun 'twixt the fresh broad leaves——
But ne'er it warmed the ground, bare save where tufts
Of trailing plants for ever wet and cold,
And tender stools of slippery fungi grew:
There in a sweet pellucid pool, that boy
Drowned the young birds of summer one by one.

Back came he near his father,
Yet to him turned not; whistling, looking round
To see what farther mischief he could do,
All petulant as if fear, no more than pity,
Could drain the light from out that saucy eye;
Then laid him down and dug into the ground.

Oft turned to him the while
His father fondly looked: O! growing thoughts
Of boyhood's growing wants, and coming youth,
Strengthened a parent's loins: faint shall they not,
Strong for his son shall be: his careful eyes
Shall wake, before the golden day's begun
On the high mountain tops; forth shall he tread
The summer slope, the winter's dun green hill,
Where melting hail is mingled with the grass,
To strike the gnarled elbows of the oaks.
Now, as he turned renewed unto his toil,
His bosom swelled into the heaved stroke.

The self-willed boy,
Perversely angry that his father spake not,
And holding in his heart a contest with him,
Formed by himself, of coldness best sustained,
Refrained no longer, but looked round in spite.
He saw the sunbeam through the pillared trees
Fall on his father's bald and polished head,
Bowing and rising to the labouring axe;
Mouth, eye, and finger mocked that parent's head!
A FATHER'S CURSE.

VISION THIRD.

There stood a ruined house!
In days of other years, perchance within
Were beds of slumber, and the sacred hearth,
Children, and joy, and sanctifying grief,
A mother's lessons, and a father's prayers.
Where's now that good economy of life?
     Scattered throughout the earth?
     Or has it burst its bounds,
And left this broken outer shell,
Swelling away into the eternal worlds?
The pathway to the mantled well grows green;
The swallow builds among the sooty rafters,
Low flying out and in through the dashed window:
     Throughout the livelong day
     No form of life comes here,
Save now and then a beggar sauntering by
The stumps, wool-tufted, of the old worn hedge,
That scarcely marks where once a garden was:
He, as he turns the crazy gate, and stops,
Seeing all desolate, then comes away
     Muttering, seems cheerless sad
     Beyond his daily wants.
     No sound of feet
Over that threshold now is heard,
Save when on bleak October eve,
The cold and cutting wind, that blows all through
The hawthorn-bush, ruffling the blue hedge-sparrow,
Shivers the little neat-herd boy beneath,
     Nestling to shun the rain
That hits his flushed cheek with sore-driving drops,
And forces him to seek those sheltering walls,
Low running with bent head: But soon the awe
Of things gone by, and the wood-eating worm—
To him the death-tick—drives him forth again
     Beneath the scudding blast.
There came an old man leaning on his staff,
And bowing went into that ruined house:
It was that father!
This was the home to which he brought his bride:
This was the home where his young wife had died:
This was the home where he had reared his boy.
Forth soon he came;
And many tears fell from his aged eyes
Down to the borders of his trembling garment.
He saw a man of stately form approach,
And slunk away, that he might meet him not;
That man his son! He, from his early years,
Had wandered o'er the world in quest of gain.
Much had he seen,—the smoky blaze of war;
The tents of peace; the courts of ancient kings;
Vast fleets; and caravans of merchandise;
And chariots of returning emperors,
That come as the swift eagles; forests wide;
Famous old rivers; high cloud-bearing mountains;
Hills of grim thirst; and dry-consumed lands;
Valleys of sheep and men-sustaining corn;
Cities; and peoples strange. Yet back he came
Untouched by views of wide humanity,
Narrow, and cold, and inconsiderate.
Of wealth he had enough to build a hall
Of pomp, not distant from his native place,
Awe to command, to have a vain dominion
In the same eyes that once looked on him poor.
Common but cold regard had made him thither
Take his old father from that native cot,
Allowed to work no more—on him dependent.
That cot's appearance mean, as now he neared it,
Alarmed his conscious pride that there it stood,
What but memorial of his poor descent?
He saw his father tottering round its walls:
Ha! shall the world behold it,
A FATHER’S CURSE.

And be thus more reminded of his birth?
O! how he loathed that father’s hankering spirit
After old places! How he loathed those walls!
Down shall they go, though half his wealth should buy them—
There shall they not be seen—razed shall they be!
With high and haughty hand he swept away
That token of his boyhood’s poor estate.

THE VISION CONTINUED.

An old old man sate with abased eyes
Beside a path that led to a gay dwelling,
Trembling, not daring once to lift his glance
Even to the speckled limnet on the bush:
'Twas he—that father!
Came sweeping silks, a haughty pair went past:
That proud disdainful fellow is his son;
And she that leans upon his arm, attired
With impudence, his wife, whose wealth has made
Him higher still, both heedless of their father.

VISION FOURTH.

That father died neglected, and in death
With struggling love were mingled bitter thoughts—
A Father’s Curse.
This, ere his head went down into the grave,
Dug in a corner where meek strangers lie,
Had upwards sprung, a messenger succinct,
To trouble all the crystal range of Heaven,
To call on Hell, to post o’er seas and lands,
Nature to challenge in her last domain,
Not to let pass the accursed.
There came a Voice—it cried,
“ The Storms are ready.”
Forth flew into mid air that father’s form,
No longer mean, a potentate of wrath,
To rule the elements and set them on;
Severe his brow, dark waxing; fierce his eye
As the starved she-wolf's, when the night hail beats,
And her cubs bite her yellow milkless teats;
His feet with brightness burned; flew all abroad
His hoary hair, as from a prophet's head;
And the great winds were in his carried wings.
    He called the Storms—they came;
    He pointed to his Son:
There stood that son—no wife was with him now,
No children pleaded for his naked head—
Upon a broken hill, abrupt and strange,
Under a sky that darkened to a twilight;
A huddled world of woods and waters crushed,
Hung tumbling round him, earthquake-torn and jammed
From Nature's difficult throes: cut off he stood
From ways of men, from mercy and from help,
With chasms and ramparts inaccessible.
The tree-tops streaming towards his outcast head,
Shewed that the levelled winds smote sore on him;
Gaunt rampant monsters, half drawn from the woods,
Roared at him glaring; downward on his eyes
The haggard vulture was in act to swoop;
Rains beat on him, snows fell on him, hail struck him;
The forkj jags of lightning from the cloud
Played keen and quivering round him, faintly blue;
And many thunders lifted up their voice:
    All nature was against him.
    Out leapt a bolt,
And split the mount beneath his sinking feet.
O'er him his father's form burned fiercely red,
    Nearer and nearer still,
Dislimned and fused into one sheeted blaze.
From out it fell a bloody drizzled shower,
Rained on that bad son's head descending fast,
Terror thereon aghast—he's down! he's gone!
Darkness has swallowed up the scene convulsed.
A MOTHER'S BLESSING:

A DRAMATIC POEM.
PERSONS OF THE DRAMATIC POEM.

Rothmond.
Edgar.
Arthur.
Friar Clement.

Orpah.
Edith.
A Shepherdess.

Robbers; A Mad Woman.

Scenes laid in Scotland, before the Reformation.
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

FRIAR CLEMENT'S CELL.

FRIAR CLEMENT. If I were young; if thus I sought to train
My youth to duty, shielding it from cares,
And from their possible blight, 'twere all unwise;
For comes exposure, then the tender-reared
Is like the lithe dull sickly grass that grows
'Midst thorns, without the knots and the short joints
Of strength; its shelter reft, livid it curls
And dies if once the wrinkled east-wind blow.
But I am old: I owe the world alone
The example of a putting-off of cares.
Yet not austerely all, it may be done
With soothing foretastes won from present joy;
The soul allowed with unimpaired sense
To feel the beauty of heaven-lighted earth.
The rocks of the wild goats; the simple flowers,
Spilling the clear dew o'er their delicate brims;
The silver drops of rain; the twinkling woods
That dry their green wings in the glossy breeze;
The snowy cygnet by the borders dwelling
Of lucid waters; to the sight upheaving
Aye, the fresh swelling sea; the sunny hills
Dappled with shadows, as the cloudy heavens
Go bowing over them; bold cataracts
With weeping trees fringed, glorified in one
Tumult of glory by the setting sun,—
These all are mine; then hushed and decent eve,
Spirit-tempering stillness, or the sound of winds
Going among the high tops of the trees.
Then with her moon forth comes the old solemn Night,
Or starry-studded in her dark apparel;
Then, blame unknown, and fear, stern soul-compellers,
Sweet is my sleep within unquestioned doors.
And thus the old man of God—such peace is won
From the dear healing of Christ's wounded side—
Keeping the eternal Sabbath of the heart,
Creeps up the quiet unmolested hill
Of Contemplation to the high pure climes,
Where the cleansed creatures in white vestments walk,
With unimagined beauty on their faces,—
O! tenderly my duty let me do.

(He advances to Arthur, lying asleep in a corner, and
wipes his brow.)

Christ ease the trouble that lies very heavy
On the distressed hinges of that heart!

Arthur (awaking). Thou man of God, where is she?
Fr. Cl. Who?
Arth. My sister.
Ha! dreams and mockery all! My dear young sister!
That lovely head, that sweetly-moulded form
Lying among the weeds till fishes gnaw thee!

Fr. Cl. Your wounds wax well: a little farther rest,
And you shall rise repaired.

Arth. Aye; and cast off
The withered slough of my remembered being,
And forth come fresh and lubric as the spots
And slippery rings of the unsheathed tender serpent?
Shall sleep do this? Were I a thousand times
Dipped in the wholesome waters of the sea,
Could it do this? Or do you mean to give
The dull black wine of death, if that may do't?
Had I no sister had; were not my mother
A beggar going o'er the windy hills,
Fain for a piece of bread to stumble through
The sightless dark, or wandering by the stars,
I might be well perhaps. But—mock me not,
My soul is very sorrowful to death.
Eternal blessings on thy reverend head
That thou hast healed me—though I should have died!

Fr. Cl. My dear young stranger—

Arth. Ha! that name upbraids me;
'Tis just that thou shouldst know me, and thou shalt.

(Arthur rises up, and clothes himself with his mantle.)

Fr. Cl. Nay then, what do you mean? Sure, not to go?

Arth. My hour is come: I must not loiter here,
Cowering and pineing like the little bird
That pecks its limed wing in some lonely quarry;
Duties have I to do of sad amount.

Fr. Cl. Thy wounds?

Arth. Pasha! I am well; thanks to thy care.

But hear me now:—
Rothmond perhaps you know, who dwells hard by
In the stern pride of his ancestral towers?
My father Edgar was his eldest son.
He wed my mother of a gentle line,
But now come down to humblest poverty;
Yet richer in her fair good womanhood
Than dowried queens. Fierce was my grandsire's wrath,
And forth he kept them from his house and love;
Adopting as his heir his second son,
Last of his issue, to uphold his name.
Then be it so! My father was a man
To make a noble house unto himself,
Building it up with honour's lustrous rafters.
Steady and bold forth went he to achieve
His fortune on the seas, leaving his wife
With his twin children, Edith and myself,
To the provision of a decent life.
Years came and went; but ne'er my father came,
Nor of his ship were tidings ever heard,
And sore we mourned him whelmed beneath the deep.
Scant grew our means; but in my earliest years
I laid my mother's cause upon my heart,
And gave my youth to honourable toils
The more that Edith might be well accomplished,
Might be a crown above our poor estate.
And was she not? O! yes, thou wert, young sister,
Fashioned in beauty and attired with grace.
The mighty West was found with its new worlds;
To these all young imaginations turned;
Thither I'll go, gold and renown I'll win.
Thither I went. I saw high snowy mountains,
The boundless forests summer-swathed, vast rivers
With painted people on their idle shores.
From land to land we fought; our souls were up;
I and my fellows all like fresh-bathed eagles,
That feed their bold eyes on the morning sun.
Yearning for fame, I gained it; high rewards
Were mine, with these I helped my mother's house.
But now, but now where shall I hide my head?
O! if to lie in penitential caves
Might but absolve me! Well then, in my whirl
Of spirit mad with proud toils and with honour,
Caught by a love not wise, but yet not worthless,
My whole soul was possessed, and I grew reckless.
My duties were forgot; mother and sister
To these I sent no tidings and no aid:
Nor—this I since have learned—had they received
What in my just days I had sent to them.
Loosened from love by a heart-wrenching shock,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

I hastened home; our home was desolate:
My sister had been sick; my mother forth
From poverty had been obliged to roam,
Standing in narrow lanes to ask an alms,
Weeping for me, and driven from haughty gates.
Well then she is a vagrant—that is settled;
Begging for my sick sister—all's right there.
But where's that sister then? Forth by the river
She's gone to seek new health: I sought her there.
Far through the woody glade I saw her met
By a dark youth: I knew him to be Hulin
The kinsman, far removed, of Rothmond's house;
But who, since Rothmond's second son was dead,
And that son's son, had been by him adopted.
I saw him turn and walk by Edith's side—
Help, man of God! she's gone! the sudden fiend
Has pushed her o'er the near precipitous bank!
The interval was as a flashing dream
Till down the river's rock-tormented gulfs
Whirling I wrestled with their strangling strength,
In vain; the flood had swept her to the sea
Ne'er to be found by me, though day and night
I sought her body on the barren shore.

Fr. Cl. Can this be real? or is it but a thing
Shaped from the surf of thy young brain o'erwrought?
Edith, dear virgin, hast thou perished so?

Arth. My eyes, and head, and heart, grew cool and clear,
Sheer onwards bent. The villain fled away
From swift instinctive terror of my quest;
But it was deadly, deadly! Not high hills
Dividing kingdoms, blistered worlds of sand,
Rivers, nor fens, nor ocean many-voiced
Betwixt us, shall divide us; through the pangs
Of earthquake, through the twilight of eclipse,
Wading through blood, through fire, shall I o'ertake him,
Throughout the spinning reck of the high storms.
Back to this region came he—I came back.
Glory at last! we met: You know the rest?

Fr. Cl. Abroad one afternoon, I saw the winds
Fall on the vexed forest of old pines,
Oft tearing up with all their cracking roots
The enormous trees; the cloak-wrapped traveller
Dismounting, scudded down the blowing steep
With his oft-rearing horse, and hastened on;
A tear rose in the wild wind's eye; rains fell
Flooding the world; I sought a sheltering tower
Shattered with years and ruin; there I sate
From its lorn windows looking far and wide.
I saw two enemies meet; their swords are crossed;
Starkly one falls; the other reels above him,
Staggering recovers, plants his foot, stoops, lifts
His fallen adversary, bears him on,
Stands on the rock that overhangs the river,
And from his breast dashes him over—down.
Ha! no, he has not followed; but he lies,
Where he has fainted, o'er the cliff half-drawn.
Thence I recovered you.

Arth. But not so him,
Destroyer of my sister! From these hands
Heaved, the great waters whelmed him, they devoured him.
His head, his feet are away to the deep sea,
Rolling commingled: Ne'er his bones shall rest;
Just Nature ne'er will let his little bones
Rest in the sad clefts of the sea-caves:
Them shall the under eddies hunt about,
And bleach to nothing the mean relics.

Fr. Cl. Nay,
This vengeful pride—

Arth. My pride is at an end.
Yea, from this night, this hour, I swear to you,
In foul attire—my punishment and penance—
Laying upon me what my mother bore,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

To wander forth in life's distressful ways,
As she has wandered, till I find her out
Living, or learn on what dull bed she died.
I owe thee this, my mother; I have been
Needless of thee too long, avenging Edith.

Fr. C1. Fain would I bid thee fear not for thy mother,
Fain say it cannot be she begs her bread;
But since we dare not mark with bounds precise
The chastening discipline of Heavenly love,
I will but say I have at least a hope
Of good reserved for her, even in this world,
Whate'er her present lot,—a hope derived
From the consummate beauty of her life,
But more especially from her filial youth
Which won with such solemnities of awe,
So laid, so pressed, so sealed upon her head,

A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Yea, be she now the earth's most desolate outcast,
I have a faith that she shall rise and shine,
Even yet before she die, in glad clear peace.
And is it not a warrant for my faith,
That thou art come, that thou wilt find her out,
And lift her gracious head?

Arth. You knew her youth?

Fr. C1. Be but composed: Nay, lean thee on thy bed,
And so be fitter for thy steady quest;
And I will let thee forth when thou art healed.
Well then, I saw thy mother Orpah first
Within an eastern vale, where then I dwelt.
'Twas on an eve of the sweet summer-tide,
After the falling of a gentle shower.
Forth flushed from out the west the yellow sun,
With watery lustre o'er the glistening earth;
Before him blushing on the cloudy east,
The rainy bow on the green faces fell
Of the still woods below; hedges and trees
Twinkled with drops of light; again abroad,
The noisy children waded in the gilt
And shallow pools; the birds sang in the leaves;
And cocks crowed lightly from the reeking farms.
Forth from her cottage came an old blind woman
Whose hoary hair, smooth parted on her brow,
Was like the blossom of the almond tree.
Her right hand leant upon a staff, her left
Was held by a fair girl: with measured steps
She led her mother to her wonted seat
Beside the small white dial on the green;
There as she sate in the illumined eve,
With delicate freaks of fancy and of love
Round her she played, aye coming to her knee,
And putting violets in her dear white hair.
Trembled that blind old mother with the weight
Of a full heart, o’erburdened with its blessing;
She laid her hand upon her daughter’s head,
And praying to the shining light of God,
That lighted all her face:—"My own true child!
Orpah, my last! child of my blood and heart!
I’ll bless thee now: Our good Lord Christ uphold thee,
All thy dear life! And, past the grave’s deep sleep,
Wake in his careful everlasting arms!"
Such was A Mother’s Blessing on thy mother.

Art. That gracious child! dear fountain of my life!

Fr. Cl. How could I fail to mark her from that hour?
The light steps, the meek grace, the watchful love
With which she went about her mother’s house,
Feeding, sustaining, cheering that old parent,
Reft of her husband, and twelve other children,
And having only this ewe lamb of love
To lie within her bosom, was to me
A glory more than all the stars of heaven.
Up lightly rose she, ere the lark arose
O’er the wide frosty meadows of the spring,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

To do her careful work. The summer eve
Shone sweetly on her, as she sate and knit
By her old mother on the lowly bed
Of camomile, or neighbouring woodland seat,
Loving the green society of trees.
Still was the autumn day: that mother lone
Sate in her house, that now was dark to her;
But in her busy fancy aye she heard
The laughing voices and the running feet
Of children, filling all the house with life,
As in the days gone by; till came anew
The aching sense of present desolation,
And up she rose and felt with trembling hands
The old familiar things, to be assured
She still was dwelling in her early home;
Then, groping forth upon her staff she stood
Long hours beneath the humming sycamore,
Listening the far-off shouts of happy children,
Gleaning by fits, but oftener idly climbing
The mountain ashes round the harvest field,
Gathering wild hips, and running here and there
To drink from shaded wells with pipes of straw.
Alas! she saw them not, but there she listened,
Till came her little gleaner home at eve,—
Orpah, still working for her mother's bread.
Nor less when winter came that daughter wrought,
Spinning into the watches of the night,
So dutiful, that I have often deemed
Light fairy hands took up the weary thread
From her still fingers, overtaken by sleep,
After the careful day and busy eve,
And spun for her who spun for her old mother.
Thus dignified by duty she upgrew
A stately, beautiful, and deep-souled woman.
But mark again THE BLESSING:—
Forth as I walked one sultry summer noon,
A cloud came sailing up against the wind,
Smothering the day; a grim and breathless silence
Sunk on the moors; creatures of earth and air
Seemed all withdrawn, save where the shifting wings
Of stormy sea-birds in the dun light, seen
Close coming o’er the mountains in their gloom,
Relieved the startled cloud with twinkling glimpses;
Moaned the wild caves; down all at once a wind
Came whewing from the hollow of the hill,
Lashing as with a whip the dreary rushes;
Big drops of rain fell scattered; forthwith burst
The flagrant lightnings and deep-bellied thunder.
But Orpah’s cot was near, and gave me shelter.
There sate the virgin in her darkened house
Scarce seen, and sewed with many solemn tears
Her dying mother’s shroud. The aged Christian
Sate up within her bed, and called her daughter;
And o’er her bowing low, “God’s storms,” she said,
“Are in the wide heavens, but his peace is here.
Bless thee, my child! thy love to me has been
Above the love of women, very great.
I go from thee, my lamb; but grieve not, fear not,
I leave thee on the fatherhood of God:
Through thunders loud, and many mighty waters,
He’ll bear thee up: Our good Lord Christ uphold thee,
All thy dear life; and, past the grave’s deep sleep,
Wake in his careful everlasting arms!”
She said, and died. That moment from the cloud,
Wide rifted, came a glory of the sun,
Filling with sudden light that saintly bed,
Illumining that head serene in death,
And that young mourner, and her glistening tears,
As with a radiance from the face of God,
Bearing the assurance of his love divine.

_Arth._ Go on: O! tell me all her precious life.

_Fr. Cl._ Thy father, hunting in those eastern dales,
Saw her and, learning all her virtues, loved her,
And wed her in his passion calm but deep.
I joyed to make them one. His sire, he said,
Had spurned the union, and had cast him out;
But, such the honour of his chosen bride,
He would not hide her from his haughtiest peers,
Retiring from his place as if ashamed:
No; he would dwell near to his father's towers,
Not in defiance, but in proof that he
Was prouder of his wife than of wide lands.
I saw not then thy mother for long years;
Till, when I changed my place, and hither came
Gladly to rest within my native vale,
I sought her honoured dwelling: Near it sate
A virgin, on the cold autumnal eve,
By a small fountain in its rocky shell,
Fed from the crystal veins of a huge cliff
All moist and black above; a ruffled redbreast,
His jetty eye turned to the yellow west,
Trilled on the bare top of a small near tree,
By her unheard; nor when her urn o'erbubbled
With sweet clear water did she go away,
But sat looking afar to the wide west,
While many a tear fell from her glazed eyes,
Aye mingling with the cold blue drops that, slipping
From the green fringes of the rock, were blown
Against her cheek by the wind, as steadfastly
She looked for one that came not—Will he come?
Nay, will they come? for thou wert also gone:
This was thy sister Edith, looking far
For thee and for thy father—so I learned
While, as I questioned her, she led me to
Her mother's humble house, who told me all
The varied changes of her later life.
Happy was I, as in the former days,
Oft visiting, to see her and to bless her,
For she to me was as a daughter aye.
Though much she mourned her husband and her son,
Deeming them lost, all else seemed well with her,
Till some few months ago Edith, her solace,
Grace of her life and stay, began to pine.
Myself grew sick, and failed a while to see them;
Nor have I seen them since. Young Edith's fate
I cannot speak, I dare not think of it.
What shall be done? Were I to go to Rothmond,
To have those perilous things severely probed,
His vengeance might be drawn upon thy head.
I must weigh well what course 'twere best to follow.
Meanwhile thy mother, let us think of her:
Fear not, we'll find her out; I trust The Blessing
Will help her yet. I knew her modest pride,
Complaining ne'er; yet dreamt not of such want,
That she must beg her bread.

Arth. Ah! me, the while!

Why am I here and she in such sore straits?
Where is she then, if she is not a beggar
Roaming the country? Has she perished too?
For she was not at home; and the poor peasants
Who dwell hard by, said she was out for alms.

Fr. Cl. Rest till the morrow come, and we together—

Arth. I go: farewell! (Exit Arthur.)

Fr. Cl. The help of Christ go with him!

Too weak is he to rush into the night.
And much I fear no rest is now for him,
Chased by the dogs of thought, escaping not.
But let me see that he has fainted not
Even at my threshold.

(Friar Clement stands a while looking out from his door.)

Yonder far he goes.
But now I've lost him in the thickening eve.
Would he were back; we'll have a night of storms,
Worse than the watery day, so warm and heavy,
Closing now down on the fat oozing earth,
Lazily stretching from the foul dank weeds,
Forth comes the toad; the drowned flowers are faint;
Up the low channels of the rivers lie
Rank mists, or creep into the shuddering woods.
From his dull cot the peasant looking forth,
Starts as the rushing of sonorous rain
Comes o'er the border falls; the thunder growls
Far in the south, and rolls its burden round
On the black heavy chambers of the west:
Blind smothering fears come o'er him; shrinking half,
Half looking still throughout the struggling twilight,
He sees, or fancies in the low-hung clouds,
A thousand shapes that blast the unwholesome night
By cave, blue forest, or wide moorish fen;
And hastens to bolt his door, and bless his peaceful bed.
Peace shall not lie with me on mine this night!
Orphah, my daughter, I am hurt for thee
And for thy children! what can I do for you?
Shall I not try to touch the heart of Rothmond?
Would I could reconcile him to his children,
And them to him! Age may have made him mild.
It must be tried: Heaven guide and bless the attempt!

(Friar Clement returns into the interior of his cell.)

(Arthur re-enters.)

Arth. I fear at parting I was somewhat harsh;
I would not be so, would not be ungrateful.
Thy kindness I have garnered in my heart;
And, ever while I live, will I come back
From time to time and tell thee of my life.
Ere long I'll come and be responsible,
Lest blame be thine to have helped the homicide.
Farewell, good father!

Fr. Cl. Then if you must go,
My blessing go with you! (Exit Arthur.)
(Friar Clemen takes the Scriptures.)

Immortal Word!
More to my spirit than her trembling joy
Of young espousals to the virgin bride!
Without thee all this mighty course of things,
With the bright glimmer of the life of man
In the dull twist, was but a rueful thread
Up-gathered, ravened up, feeding the great
Aye-whirling spindle of stupendous Fate,—
Prodigious Power, unmeasured, featureless,
Incalculable, awful, and remorseless,
Vast Idol-Terror crushing down man's heart!
God gave his Word; this world of ours grew light;
All things came out in beautiful arrangements
Of order, and proportion, and degree,
And glad relation to a Father's love:
For now the promise of immortal life
Filled all the vessels of our hearts with joy.
Thus fearing nought, we now can laugh at Toil
And Pain, and Death himself, at whose pale back
Lie the decayed nations of the grave;
And spurn dread Hell as up we spring to Heaven.
So let me now in my most hallowed place
Compose my spirit with this healing Word.

(Friar Clemen retires into his inner cell to read the Scriptures.)
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

A Moor, with sheep feeding on it.

Enter a Shepherdess.

Shep. (singing)

The sun went down the afternoon,
The heights were clear, and the winds were laid;
I wandered with her on the ferny hills,
And won the heart o' my mountain maid.

Yonder comes Colin, the dear ballad-maker.
Mercy be near us! 'tis that strange fast walker.
They say he is a great man in disguise.
I must not look as if I were afraid.

Enter Arthur.

Arth. My pretty Shepherdess, happy are you,
So far and clear came your song o'er the wild!
Come, tell me now how you
Can be so happy in these listless places,
Where nought is to be seen the live-long day,
But peevish stone-chats bobbing on the stone,
And solitary men in far-off mosses?

Shep. But that nice heather, and these thriving sheep,
Are not these something? And glad summer days?

Arth. And health? And innocence? And those young eyes,
With going through the light and through the air,
As ether pure that feeds the vivid stars,
So beautifully sharp? And peace and love
A MOTHER’S BLESSING.

Found in the wilderness? I stand reproved.
Forth come you singing through the morning gleam,
Over the purple acres of the moorlands.
Nor know you grief, save when a lost lamb makes
Pity’s sweet drops slide from your crystal eyes.
Nor fear is yours, save when at noontide you
Hear the loud thunders rattle on the hills;—
Short-lived, for you are innocent: Up you spring,
Your mind serenely brightening as the day.
If slow to you lingers the golden eve,
You sit you down and watch your desert clock,
Counting the clear beads of the glassy wells,
Peace still producing peace; until what time,
Their glittering breasts suffused with rosy air,
The high doves homeward to their windows shoot,
You seek your cottage by some flowery shaw,
And night’s deep sleep receives you from the day.
Thrice fortunate shepherdess! did you but know
What he before you is; how wretched she,
He wanders seeking!—Is not yonder figure
A woman’s? I must to her.

Shrop. Sir, I know her:
A poor lorn creature, somewhat crazed in mind,
That all the day follows the silly sheep,
O’er the green border falls, gathering the locks
Of wool, to work in the low winter nights.

Arth. God help her! I must see her: has she been
Beautiful in her youth?—but that’s long past!

Shrop. O no, Sir, plain; but that she cannot help.

Arth. ’Tis not my mother. Maiden, I seek my mother.
Cities I’ve searched for her, the wild sea-shores,
Rough quarries idle, dreary fens of rushes,
Forests, and wide unprofitable moors;
Oft looking for her into pools of rivers.
But last night, when the rains fell heavily,
I saw a form on the dun plashy wild
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.
Wearily, wearily going; fast I ran,
But in a moment she had disappeared,
And there was nothing on the wide flat waste.
I cannot find her.
My senses are bewildered; yet I'll seek her,
Though I should light a candle and go search.
Damsel, her name is Orpah; if you see
A woman low and sorrowful beneath
Ruin and years, yet bearing the waste marks
Of passing beauty, wander by this way,
That's she—my mother—O! speak kindly to her,
Tell her her son has sought her very long.
I've bid the people of a thousand hills
Do this for me; travellers before the sun,
Wayfaring men that in the twilight haste,
Unquestioned pass not: surely at last I'll find her.
Again, ere long, I shall be here; keep watch,
And I will bless you.

_Shop._ Sir, I'll do it for you,
Were't but for my own mother's sake.

_Arth._ O yes. (Exit A)

_Shop._ I'll not forget, indeed. Poor gentleman,
Would he were happier, and far better dressed!
I never saw a finer-favoured man,
Except—no, Colin only looks more freshy.
And then he said such grand things of our life,
Almost persuading me I never weary!
He's a true gentleman: I'll not forget. (Exit SHEPHERD)

SCENE II.

A Pathway through the Corn-fields, by a River's side.

FRIAR CLEMENT.

Fr. Cl. How each division of the plastic soil
Wears the true livery of its master's nature!
Were then the lords of earth but wise and gentle,
Our land might be a watered garden, full
Of blameless people and of all good fruits,
As in the glad days of the Golden Age.
Here dwells the owner of a wide domain,
'Mong his own people, as his fathers dwelt,
Remote from strife, in patriarchal ease,
Living and letting live; and so his farms,
Lusty and rough with bearded crops of bread,
As in earth's virgin and spontaneous years,
Swarm with free life and health and happiness.
For, look and see it; aye, and bless the sight!
Now are the days of wheat and barley harvest.
  The reapers' books glisten on the yellow uplands.
Whoop little gleaners; many barking dogs,
And the rough jingling of the farmer's wain
Hurrying afield adown the loosened slope,
Or homeward creaking through the sandy lane
Of dwarf elms feathered to the very heels,
Make up the cheerful din: nor wants the hum
Of mealy beggar eating by the hedge.
The stack-yard rises. Here the sturdy swain,
His pitchfork o'er his shoulder, with his sleeve
Wipes from his brow the honourable sweat,
As burns the glistening sun, rather than shines,
Through a white gummy vail, say of thick air,
Rather than clouds, filling with sweltering heat
The day, as from an oven. There his boys,
Fair-haired and glowing, shake the orchard meek,
Showering the pattering apples on the ground:
Wild laughing girls gather them up in baskets.
But look across that narrow-running river,
And see another and contrasted scene:—
The grange, untenanted, sinks to decay.
Low comes the swallow through the shattered pane,
Where not of wood, or stuffed with an old hat.
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

The sheds are littered with the mingled straw
And rags of haunting gipsies: on the handle
Of the dismantled pump-well fluttering stripes
Of blankets hang. Ye cowering sheep diseased
In its dull corner, rank with nettle-wands
And seeded docks, has barked with tooth unwholesome.
The scurfy stunted fruit-trees in the place
Where once a garden was, and left its tufts
Of cankering wool upon the red peeled stumps.
O'er the wide thistly lands no form of life
Is seen, save where some solitary man,
Feeble and old, goes sauntering, filling up
With stakes the gaps of the unthriving hedges.
The barrenness of these unsightly lands,
Neglected so, betrays an owner harah,
Or ill at ease: They are the lands of Rothmond.
May sickness soften him, since he is sick!

Enter ARTHUR.

ARTHUR. If blame for me have fallen upon you, father.
Let it be laid on me.

FR. CL. No man has brought
A charge against you; be at ease for this.

ARTHUR. At ease! O! hermit, coming through last evening,
I saw the lovely daughters of the land
Walking on terraces and on balconies
In the rich light, with stringed instruments,
Oft looking o'er the meads delectable,
At the fair children wading in the grass,
Pulling the wild flowers' spotted bells. Down fluttered
The airy creatures through the mellow orchards,
Gathering the golden apples in the sunset,
Beautiful, walking in the prosperous trees.
How I wept for my sister and my mother!
Why were they not in this glad light of day
All-happy too? That dear young sister lies
Whelmed in sad waters, wo is unto me!
And where's my mother? I have found her not,
Though I have sought her from the simple hills,
Even to the city's places of dishonour,
Hung'ry's pale dens, and scurrilous thievish haunts.
The very lazar-house I have not missed;
Nor the strait mad-house, searching it throughout
The groans and blasphemies of disjointed spirits,
Laughter unbounded, strokes, and many cries.
Shade of my mother, if thou'rt dead, hear this!
If living, weary creature, where art thou?
Oh! all the hoards of thy exhaustless heart,
Heaped on my boyhood, turned to fruitless ashes!
Thou lived'st to think thy one son did forsake thee!
O'er melancholy hills, by moonlit hedges
Wandering, the thought filled thy astonished heart;
And tears for this did moisten thy frail bread.
Then lying low on thy strange bed of death,
Oft didst thou raise thy head—it ne'er was I;
Day or night never came I unto thee.
Be mine the punishment to wander still,
Hunting the secret of thy sorrowful life.—
Help me, good father, say that you have found her!

Fr. Cl. Would I could help you! But I have not found her.
Then, when my quest was vain, it but remained
To wait on Rothmond, and to claim his aid
To seek and raise the widow of his son;
But he's been half within the gates of death,
And I've not seen him.

Arth. Ha! what creature's that?

(Mad Martha runs shrieking down the River's side,
looking into it.)

Fr. Cl. The Woman of the River, poor mad Martha,
The huntress of a shadow and a dream.
Forth from the outcast chambers of the rocks,
Where windy mists whistle through their forced rifts,
Issues the haggard creature with a scream,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Wringing her hands down to the river's brink.
Her eyes intently fixed upon its flow,
Fast she outruns the current, bending oft
To scan the black depths of the wheeling pool;
Nor seldom plunging in she wades the stream.
What looks she for? Six years ago, or seven,
She nursed the grandson-heir of Rothmond's house
His parents' only hope; too near the bank
Of that same river on a sultry day.

Heedless she slept; awakened by a cry,
There was her young charge rolling down the wave.
She shrieked, she sprung, she plunged, she snatched
In vain; he perished, and she scarce was saved
From death, to be the maniac that you see.
Vain was forgiveness, pity, care; by day
Resting, nor yet by night, with piercing prayers
She sought her nuraling from the fatal flood.
Nor when the love of friends removed her far,
That she might rest from the forgotten scene,
Was she at peace; back to her yearning haunt
O'er wilds she ran, and solitary hills,
As with the instinct of a thing bereaved.
Nor when her lost one's parents died, was she
Soothed; her remorse outlives all thought of them.
Hers the wild benefit of the cave, she sleeps
Her fitful sleep, then hurries to that bank
Through all the seasons of the changeful year.
If down the current pass a floating rag,
Her heart absorbed o'erfills her dazzled eyes,
Blind from their very eagerness of gaze;
Stumbling she runs adown the unequal shore,
Screaming:—"'tis he! 'tis he!" God pity her!
She would not give his little bleached cheek
For all the living things of this great world.
And Rothmond thus is childless now, and heirless;
Unless his present sickness touch his heart,
And make him just to thee: Nay, even his pride
Should do the work of love, and raise thee to
Transmit the light of his ancestral house
Down into time.

Arth. What is his house to me?
Let me but find my mother, I will take her
Far to the virgin islands of the West;
There I have won, and yet can win her honours,
To make her greater far than Rothmond's house.
If she is dead, let me but find her grave,
And weep some tears on it; and then I'll be
So much the readier for that boundless World.
But, gentle father, take me to thy place;
There where clear thoughts and quiet pleasures are,
I'll rest one night, and haply rise prepared
With strength renewed to follow out my quest.

Fr. Cl. Come then, my son.

Arth. Would that this heart were old,
And all these restless faculties and longings
Tamed down to meek content; anchored, like thee,
At peace within some little hermitage,
Pleased with my maple dish and leathern bottle,
Happy from morning till the white sheep wind
In pearly strings around the twilight hills!
O! blessed they who thus by contemplation
And self-reflection turn to sweetest uses
Of knowledge, faith, and hope, all forms of nature,
Disturbed or beautiful, abrupt or mild;
Whether young Spring, the leafy architect,
Is in the woods and builds her green device;
Or genial Summer melts her gracious cloud,
Dropping down fatness on the earth's glad furrows,
Swelling the young wheat with the milk of bread,
With sweet warm liquor cleaving the moist hoods
Of bursting flowers that live i' the purfled meadows;
Or costly Autumn shears her yellow crofts;
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Or Winter, slinging his fierce hail about,
Thrashes as with a flail the forests bare.
War, Famine, Pestilence, tell them their design;
The Earthquake shews the secrets of her mine;
To them the Comet his wan hair unbinds;
They know the errands of the mighty winds;
The thunder-stone; and meteors of the storms,
That plough the dark night with their fiery forms.

SCENE III.

FRIAR CLEMENT'S Cell.

FRIAR CLEMENT is discovered reading by the light of his
Arthur (awaking from his bed in a corner).
pleasing vision in my sleep:
The quiet boy beholds a slanting beam
Of yellow light, where many atoms stream,
Slide through his lattice, by maternal care
Darkened, to shield him from the sunny glare.
Without he hears the rustling of the leaves,
And sound of swallows twittering from the eaves,
As in sweet matin hours; and far away
The din of children at their laughing play.
But where is she that wiped his forehead damp,
And watched him, patient as a midnight lamp,
His mother, ever dear? Oft to his bed
She comes, to kiss him, or to pat his head.
Hark! tripping feet: that ray of morning shews
A young face looking in on his repose,
His little sister! Much has she to tell
Of true and wondrous since he grew unwell;
And much to shew, her frock so white and new,
Her pictures—this for him, and that one too!
Nodding she shakes the curled clouds of hair,
That darkly break upon her brow so fair;
And, o'er him bowing, lets his fingers oft
Pass o'er her tresses with their pressure soft.—
But slowly now along the pathway green
She leads him, dazzled by the sunny sheen.
The light wind lifts his sadly-smoothed hair
Deliciously; he drinks the fluid air.
The world is new, is fresh to him: he sees
Each little fly, each bird upon the trees.
How many children through yon meadow pass,
Where lies the golden sunlight on the grass!
Yon hill how clear where shepherds sun themselves,
For ever piping on its flowery shelves!
Here glossy trees, there wheaten uplands lie
Beneath the harvest sun's broad yellow eye.
Blithe the reapers there beside the stools are set;
Here little gleaners at the gate are met;
Spilling rich laughter from their thriftless eyes,
Dark with the glory of the sultry skies.
Proudly his sweet young sister leads him on,
As if to shew him like a conquest won;
Then turns with him: The appointed walk is o'er;
Their mother, smiling, meets them at the door.—
O! for that sister! for that mother now!
Thus did they love me when I was a boy!
Thus did they care for me when I was sick!
Thus did they heal me! In my sleep I knew
That boy to be myself—how innocent
Compared with me his dreaming counterpart!
I loved to look upon his little face.—
What hour is't, holy Sir?

Fr. Cl. The curdled dawn
Is not yet broke. Rest thee a little while;
Sleep is for Youth, while old Age rises up
At the voice of the bird. I'll waken thee,
When the day comes upon the mountain-tops.

Arth. Say rather that this mortal state of ours
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Has nothing better than this soothing rest,
And I'll believe thee and lie still. How stale
To me this moment seems the life of man!
Why should I rise and go those weary rounds,
When I methinks could sleep long days and night
In sweet oblivion of a world without?
Even there where dwell the old simplicities
In country places, heaviness of heart
Dwells with them. Try we boyhood: is it happy
Over the tufted common yonder comes
A rural thing, and as he comes he sings.
Springing upon his staff, he overleaps
The blossomed whins, light as the morning lark.
Along the glistening herbage audibly eat
His cows, nor wander yet; so with his dog
Wide running he can leave them at their will.
The grasshoppers that from his brushing shoon
Start all around away like jointed sparks,
He heeds not; climbing to the hermit well,
That with its clear eye and green floating beard
Looks from the eastern-sided hill unto
The early sun: slipping in crystal drops,
The beautiful water trickles sliding down
The polished rushes, freshening with cold bubbles
The vivid grass below. Down on his knee,
That feels the chillness of the oozing moisture,
Bending he drinks; then to the velvet turf
Of Sabbath path-way leading o'er the hills
Hastes; sitting there he carves the lettered sod,
Till fancy has her fill. But now o'ercast,
The changeful autumn day brings o'er his heart
An equal gloom, so vacant are his hours.
His task so slight to turn the wandering kine,
Running behind his dog that barks against
The blowing wind. What time the shepherd comes
Down from the hill, he sucks his gurgling bottle,
Draining the milk. What next shall be his play?
The wild bees flying high and straight away
Alight not to be caught on the dry moor;
The year's last butterflies sit dull and tarnished
On dewless flowers, not worthy to be ta'en;
Oft has he made the urchin swim the pool,
But now before him laid the prickly clew
Unheeded stirs, and shews his cautious nose;
The rushes white and green are pulled and platted;
His knife lies idle by the listless branch;
His crammed dog gambols not; there are no more
Rabbits to snare; and he is tired of hunting
The slender weasels in the mossy dikes;—
Then is he wretched: to the distant road
He runs to ask the traveller what's the hour;
He sees the far-off children, from the tree
He shouts to them—they hear or heed him not.
Long hours till evening! then he loses heart;
The tears are in his eyes; he lays him down
Wrapped in his plaid, and sobs beneath the hedge
To the cold shuddering sigh that creeps through it,
And the shrill shrew-mouse running through the grass.
And yet he's happier than the boy at school
Conning from day to day his weary task.
So much for boyhood.

Try we next the swain,
Whose life be-praised palls through each rhyming ballad:—
The world is going wrong: The clouds of air
Fantastical can bring him aught but ill;
Hail, snow, and windy flaws all strike at him.
If dry the summer, heaven is bound with brass,
Ne'er to be loosened by the slipping rains;
His pastures languish; crops! you might as well
Upbind a torch in every harvest sheaf.
Fat showers have fallen: he on his upland crofts
With knowing stride steps through his bearded rye,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

His crops of silky barley waving green,
His wheaten hollows with their blessed spikes,
His beans, his vetches, his pea-blossomed leas;
Yet, standing in a sea of corn, he talks
Of darnel, thistles, poppies, corn-rose, charlock,
With rueful stories of the slaverin spring
Rotting his seed—is thankless and unpleased.
Canker, and care, and vanity, all, all!
Come then, 'twere best to sleep.

Fr. Cl. Twill draw from sleep
A fresher dew to bear upon thy heart
The picture, counter to thy peevish swain,
Of happy labour in the moonlit farm-yard,
We saw last eve, as on we sauntered through
The rustling harvest night. The loaded wain,
Subduedly creaking, pressed with many sheaves,
Shadowy came on along the glittering road,
Whose ruts with sable silver were all polished.
The low-hung moon upon the southern fell,
Skirting the doddered trees, poured her wide light.
The shepherd lad home coming from the hill,
With his clear whistle, overleapt the dike,
And tumbling, rose laughing from the crushed turf.
Through the pure bracing night, to join the maide;
That with their gleeosome laughter at his cost
Made all the barn-yard echo. Round his stack
Half-built, with keen eye went the husbandman,
And with his pitchfork nicely fashioned it.
Forth from it came he, and stood widely off
As came his rustling wain: heavily swayed,
Turning it cast a sheaf; this, from the door
His chubby boy forth sallying seized and raised
With toil unfeigned, and mimic pantings loud;
Half bearing it, half trailing it, he drew
The wheaten burden, bigger than himself,
And fell upon it at his father's feet.
Is not this nature? Is't not rural life,
Truer than aught you've drawn? No state of man
But has its fair degree of happiness.

ArtFa. Come now, the beggar, can you speak for him,
Or rather her? Nay, let us draw a veil
Over poor outcast mothers—we'll say him.
I've seen the old man in his corner eat
Allotted food, who many ways has seen,
And many changes of man's mortal life,
Sounding the depths of strange society.
He in far lands has fought his country's battles;
Where bare red suns on sandy mountains beat,
Midst fiery dust has braved the strokes of heat,
Fighting for her, has braved the stubborn frosts;
And his reward is—leave to beg his bread
Throughout that country which he helped to save!
On stormy hills, on thunder-darkened heaths,
Pushed by the winds, met by the thwart blue lightning,
By moorland farms, wandering, and lonely mills,
He finds his shelter, and his dole of food,
In some permitted nook. There now he sits,
With many a stealthy glance at the big dame
Who ranges through the house, and scolds her maids
The louder for her hospitality:
This feels the old man, as demure he sits,
Eating his little portion noiselessly.*
Nor loses he the chance when, thanks repaid,
Her mitigated voice comes from the pantry;
Forth steals he modestly, still farther glad
To pass unroused the mastiff's half-shut eye;
The gate behind him clanks not; nor he stops,
Nor turns to look till he has gained the road.
This is the best the beggar's life can boast of,
The very best; for we have given him bread,

* 'Tis a beggarly thing to eat without noise.

Abyssinian Proverb.
Where many starve: Ah! wo is me for them!
And thou, the mother of my blood and heart,
Forgive this sorry idleness of speech!
Why am I here? There goes the morning gleam,
And I must work.

(Arthur springs up, prepared to set out.)

Fr. Cl. Nay then, here's a small basket
Of honey, bread, and fruit, I'll bear it forth,
And we shall eat in the sweet-breathing air;
And I'll go on with you a little way. (Exeunt.)
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Outskirts of a Forest.

Enter Arthur.

Arth. Boreas, bleak chamberlain, that mak'st my bed,
Robbing the elms, thou art the kindest fellow
In all the north!

(He lies down, and sleeps among leaves at the root of
a tree.)

Enter Edgar.

Ed. How oft I've hunted in these forest paths,
In days gone by—thirty long years ago!
And here I'm still a hunter; but now hunting
The tender quarry of my family.
Orpah, and ye twin children of my loins,
Am I not near you now? O! are they living,
Or are they dead? Would they came forth to meet me!
I almost fear to go and ask of them.
Yonder's the church-yard, let me turn and see
What graves are there where I and they should lie.
But soft, what's this? (discovering Arthur) a man among
the leaves?
Wet, and asleep on such an eve as this?
I must awake him ere cold death strike through him.
Ho! Sir, pray who are you thus lying low?

Arth. (starting up). One, Sir, who but in trivial penance
threads
The foul and cankered walks of beggary;—
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

With thieves consorting; and with freckled child
The brood o' the wild hedge-nurse; with swarm'd
Strollers; infesting gipsies; roaring sailors;
With blind, gnarled, sun-bronzed minstrels; sly, lat
Tender of foot as is the borrowed horse,
But swift before the beggar-compelling baton;
With remnant soldiers of old wars; with jugglers
Lunatics; wandering boys; all homeless things;
All furious outcasts; all degraded bastards;—
With these oft sheltered 'neath the howling bridge
In barns wind-visited, or in dull vaults,
Where drop upon your sleepless eyes rank sweats
From leathern wings of filthy fitter-mice,
Half-formed, and clustering in a blistered stew
About the roof. Faugh! all the while my gorge
Swells at the meanness; yet must I endure it.
Then far and out of sight beyond all this,
I have an ill that beggars all base penance.

Ed. Your words are wild as is your bed.

Arth. Nay then,
My bed is all too good: I'll sleep no more
In such dry luxury: I'm on my way
Down to the low damp forest, where the peeled,
Fat, clammy ground for ever reeks; the rill
Scarce soaks its way through the dead choking leav
Where the toad, gross and lazy, squatted sits
Amidst the soapy fungi, and distends
The spotted leather of his wrinkled throat
With minute puffs from his asthmatic lungs.
There let me sleep, or in the marish-pool!
What right have I
To the fee-simple of these good dry leaves,
When those I love, my manly father first,
Are lying in the bottom of the seas,
And in the rivers, and—I know not where?
Stranger, farewell, and pardon me! Grave care,
The dignity of sorrow and of patience
Sit on thy brow considerate: God go with thee,
And make thee happy—happier far than I am!

(Exit Arthur.)

Ed. There is a savage riot in his words,
From some great stress of mind: The stings of madness
Leap in his eye: I fear he may grow desperate,
And do himself some harm. Still all I see
Beneath each sign and circle of the heavens,
Bids me be humble, patient, and contented;
And, if to-day I know my heart aright,
I'm hopeful too. Now, then, for one bold plunge
Into the very heart of certainty,
Be it of joy or sorrow. (Exit Edgar.)

SCENE II.

FRIAR CLEMENT'S CELL.

FRIAR CLEMENT—Enter Rothmond.

Roth. I come to thee, thou holy man of God,
With other thoughts than in my days of pride.
Rumours have reached me that my grandson Arthur
Is in these parts, and that you know of him.
Would I could find him!

Fr. Cl. Wandering round, he seeks
His mother still in filial hope, in penance,
In the wild luxury of self-abasement;
By old-world trees about the low grey dikes
Sleeping, in caves, or in the homeless woods.
Oft even at hollow midnight does he dare
Church-yards; the doleful yews; the infested air;
The shuddering ground; the ghosts uprising through
In hoary, bloodless, thin-compounded dew,
With baleful blots, whose shivering lips emit
A feeble whistling as around they flit.
Madness is in all this. Would he could find
At least his mother's grave, if she is dead!

Roth. She dwells with me. You wonder. But she found me
Struck down by palsy in the forest walk,
As forth she wandered in her poverty,
And brought me help: Forgetting my injustice,
She held my head herself, as home they bore me;
And ministered unto me as a daughter.
Reason and sense came back to me that night;
And, more than both, there came humility
From sickness and the loss of all my heirs:
My heart grew as a father's, and I prayed her
To leave me not, but live with me for aye.
Her decent pride, for outcast Edgar's sake,
Could ill endure the place denied to him.
But Edith came; and ere her child and I,
Sore-smitten both, could be restored to strength,
Allowing her to go, my prayers had won
Pardon for all the past, and filial love;
And now they dwell with me, my own dear children.

Fr. Cl. Did you say Edith? This is passing strange!
But know you aught of Hulin?

Roth. Whither gone,
And why, unless he thought a certain crime
Discovered, I can't guess.

Fr. Cl. He's in the waters.
Thy grandson saw his deed, and with fell quest
Hunted and smote him down, and to the river
Gave his dead body.

Roth. Let him perish so,
And those who loved him seek him and avenge him!
Edith has told me all. You know it too?

Fr. Cl. But how was Edith saved?

Roth. The o'erboiling flood
Bore her light-whirled into a sandy creek,
And laid her high and clear upon the beach,
Behind a rock.
There the poor woman, whom you doubtless know,
Martha, who lost my heir, and by the flood
Still wanders, found her on that very night
When I recovered from my dismal shock.
Whether the maniac-creature saw in her
Some kindred features of her long-lost charge,
Or from whatever instinct wild but true,
Bearing the half-drowned damsel in her arms,
With desperate might, she dashed into my chamber,
And madly laughing laid her at my feet.
"Is she not thine? God help me, I can find
No other child!" she cried, and burst away.
Sore bruised was Edith, but she soon recovered.
Her health is now restored, and with her mother
She dwells in peace, the solace of my age.

_ Fr. Cl._ But Hulin’s motive for his dark attempt
On Edith’s life? Methinks it may be guessed.

_Roth._ He saw that I relented, for I deemed
Edgar and Arthur lost, and wished to take
Orpah and Edith to my house and heart;
And so he feared to lose the inheritance
To which I had adopted him, and strove
To keep them still shut out. A wrinkled witch,
Bowed on her haggard death-bed, sent for me
To ease her struggling spirit by confession,
And told me all:—Set on by Hulin’s gold,
The hag had practised on young Edith’s life
With deadly herbs: The while, the master fiend
By every wicked art was cutting off
The means of Orpah’s life, to drive her far
Beggared and hopeless from the neighbourhood.
Edith still lived, and meeting her by chance,
With guilt compendious to secure his purpose,
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

He pushed her o'er the cliff. Meantime, my grie
And indignation at his crimes revealed,
So staggered me that on my homeward way
I fell by palsy stricken. Orpah found me;
And Edith came to me, and all's well now.
I joy to tell thee all, for thou hast been
Their friend unchanging through the change of da
And they lament that Edith's ail and mine,
And Orpah's next, brought on by watchfulness,
So long have kept from thee their fate untold.
I said all's well; 'tis scarcely so until
We find our Arthur. I was glad to hear
His gallant bearing in the new-found West.

Fr. Cl. He loved the daughter of his enemy,
A Spanish lady in that western world,
Who gave him all her heart. He hoped to win her
When Death stepped in, and took his love from hi
His Oriana. From his loss, methinks,
Mingled with filial anguish for his mother,
And wo for what he deems his sister's fate,
At times a vein of madness strikes throughout him.
Hence he is rash and wayward. But his soul
Is honour's mould ethereal. I do hope
He'll soon be here; and gladly, O how gladly
I'll bring him to his own true home at last!

Roth. When Edgar married, in my father's halls
That seemed dishonoured, daily did I seem
To meet the faded ghosts of old renown
Angrily flitting to and fro, as if
Thence to depart for aye. But in my eyes
The dignity of Orpah's widowed life
Is fairer now than rolls of blazoned deeds.
And Edith's beauty and her love for me
Fill all my house with light. O! find me Arthur:
Take not his first denial: Bring him home.
And so, adieu, good father!
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Fr. Cl. Fare-thee-well!
(Exit Rothmond. Friar Clement retires into his inner Cell.)

SCENE III.

An open place in the Forest.

Enter Arthur.

Arth. The hour is very still. I've seen the time
I joyed to wander in these glimpaing woods.
This had been then a night of finest beauty.
As I came by, the white herds on the banks
Looked large i' the moonlight, ruminating calmly.
The shallow rivers were all strewn with glass.
On such a night might Oberon and his train,
Seeking or shunning Queen Titania,
On the green parks or solitary sands
Glance trippingly; or from these shadowy rifts
Of tusky-rooted trees peep quaintly forth.
Ay, ay, all this is beautiful; and yet
Who, knowing man, knows not this lovely hour
Is stained by him? Forth come the things of guilt
To affront the holy beauty of the moon:
There hangs Despair, and gasps away his life;
Here glaring Murder hides his dropping knife;
To Theft, to Lust, the shadowy hour is dear;
And Treason's eyes throughout the night are clear.

(Cries of help are heard, and the clashing of swords.)

Ha! there they go! yet I must help the weak.

(Arthur runs out.)

SCENE IV.

Another part of the Forest.

Rothmond is seen fighting with two Robbers—Arthur comes in armed with a stick.

Arth. Two upon one! Foul play I fear me then.
A MOTHER'S BLESSING.

Masters stand back, or have me too a foe.
Nay then; it must be thus! there! that! and th
(The Robbers are driven back by ARTH
strokes, and at last make off.)

Roth. (advancing to ARTHUR). My brave delive
hurt for me?

Arth. Ha! Rodimond? Well! my hand at le
Nature's just instrument: then be it so!
No, Sir, I'm safe: I trust you are so too?

Roth. Can it be he? Are you my grandson A

Arth. I am the son of Edgar: for his sake,
I'll guard you to your gates, and leave you there.
Nay then, so many changes have I seen
Of mortal life, that I'm no longer proud
Or vengeful: Let me say then, honoured Sir,
(For are you not the spring-head of my life?)
My soul rejoices to have saved you thus.
God keep thy age! Lean on me very much.
But no more explanations: Let us go
In silence, saying nothing of the past.

Roth. Come then, my son. But ere we reach o
I humbly hope to win thee to go in.

SCENE V.

An Apartment in ROTHMOND'S Castle.

Orpah is seen seated on a couch, and EDITH near a w

Orp. The moon is shining clear.
Look out, my child, into the woodland path,
And see if you can see him. Blessed day,
That I have heard my Arthur's still alive,
Son of my honoured lord! So near us too!
I only dread that our seclusion here,
Unknown of Father Clement, and our neighbours,
Has made the dear boy miss us, and has driven him
Despairing at our loss, again afar.
Would Rothmond were but come! I cannot brook
This silence and suspense! He scarce can fail
To bring us news of Arthur. See you aught?

_{Edith (looking out from the window).}_ Two men are coming
from the moonlit wood.
The one is Rothmond, and he leans upon
The other: Oh! my soul, should it be Hulin!

_{Orp._ Nay, fear not there, our father Rothmond's heart
Is wholly right, and he will keep us safe:
Hulin no more shall come within his gates.

_{Edith._ The one he leans upon is like a beggar.
But they are here. O be my heart a prophet!
I think I know him—O! it must be he!

_{Enter Rothmond and Arthur._

_{Arth._ My honoured mother! I have sought thee long.

_{(Embracing her.)_}

_{Orp._ My lost! my gladly found! But what is this?

_{(Looking at his garb.)_}

Have you so suffered?

_{Arth._ Nay, I'm well and happy.
Heed not this wild attire: I've sought thee thus
In many ways of men.

My Edith, too!
I've found thee, lass, divider of my life!
Half of myself! dear sister! come to me! (Embracing Edith.)

_{Roth._ Now give him farther welcome that he's been
This night my brave deliverer in the woods
From ruffian men.

_{Enter a Servant._

_{Serv._ My lord, the man of God,
Who dwells hard by, craves entrance with a stranger.

_{Roth._ Welcome his blessed feet! Let him come in.

_{Enter Friar Clement and Edgar._

_{Fr. Cl._ I come thus late to bring you one friend more,
Won from the far lands of lost men to you.

_{Roth._ Is this a vision? Am I sick again?
Orpah, is this not he?
A MOTHER’S BLESSING.

Orp. Lord of my life!
O wondrous night! my husband!
(She falls into his arms. When she recovers, almost fainting, to a couch.)

Edg. Fear not, my wife, I’ll leave thee never:
Ta’en by the Moors, twice ten long weary years
I wore away in my captivity;
But patience won me liberty at last,
And I am here. I missed thee in thy place;
But by the hints and guidance of thy neighbours
I sought this holy man, our dear old friend,
As one who best could tell me of thy fortunes.
From him I learned enough to make me come
With filial confidence within these gates.
My honoured father, let me kneel to thee
And crave thy blessing! (Kneels to 1)

Roth. Be it on thy head!
Rise up my son: all’s well: dear children all!
My house is now complete, and whole, and round.
Edg. These are my twins? My Arthur! dear,
Come to your father’s heart! (he embraces them)
How much I love you both! Ha! but I’ve lost
My pair of little ones I left behind;
Yet who have lived in my remembering heart
All these long years, and never grown an inch.
Well, well, I let them go, and take you for them;
Though I have missed the joys of your sweet spin
A much-defrauded father: O! my children!

Fr. Cl. I go, but, ere I go, let me remind thee,
My daughter Orpah, of thy Mother’s Blessing,
Which still is mighty, fighting on thy side.
Nay, I do bless this house with that good blessing:
I bless you all:—“Our good Lord Christ uphold you;
All your dear lives; and, past the grave’s deep sleep,
Wake in his careful everlasting arms!”

(Exit Friar Clement, and the See)
A CHURCH-YARD ECLOGUE.

The day was gone, the night was come,
When weary mortals sleep;
Uprose a grieved ghost from out
The hollow church-yard deep.
With a quick, imperfect shriek,
Rose the thin embodied reek;
Like a thing pursued, it fled
From the kingdoms of the dead,
Through the green and silent vales,
(As the moon unclouded sails)
O'er the dewy-hazed hill,
Through the forest deep and still,
By the river's sandy shore,
By the grey cliffs gleaming hoar,
And the silvered lips of caves
That o'erhang the higher waves,
Through the fens, and through the floods
Of the fruitless solitudes,
Far to flee through night away
To the healthful coasts of day.
With a struggling start,
Like a fettered bird whose wing
Feels the quick withdrawing string,
At once did it dart
Through the nearest moonlight track,
To its church-yard back.
Lingering and brooding o'er its grave it sate;
Another ghost was near, and thus they mourned their fate:—
A CHURCH-YARD ECLOGUE.

FIRST GHOST.
Oh heavy time! Oh dim unbodied land!
Joy dwells not there, even pain is at a stand.
A smothering presence fills the air around
Of patience dumb, and fears without a sound.
God comes not there, no angel comes to cheer,
Bringing the tidings of the Heavenly year.

SECOND GHOST.
Lord God! how long? Thy seraph Watchers w.
That deigned for man to cleave the morning air,
And stooping closed, glad message to fulfil,
Their golden wings on many a glorious hill?
And in earth’s green and patriarchal days
With converse joyed our fathers’ hearts to raise,
Beneath broad tented trees, blessing their state
With great approval, interdiction great?

FIRST GHOST.
Far other state is ours! No simple grace
Of life primeval, no green dwelling-place!
Sun there, nor moon, nor ether molten blue,
Valley, nor tufted hill divides the view,
Nor lucid river, on whose borders blow
Flowers many-hued, and trees of stature grow:
Nor leafy summer, nor the stormy glee
Of winds, when winter falls upon the sea,
With change delights us: nor returning morn,
Nor face of man relieves that sad sojourn.

SECOND GHOST.
Yet seems at times, throughout that stagnant dream
About to burst some quick distressful gleam,
As if the Almighty were about to burst
The struggling cloud, and flash on the accurst.
O! tell me, tell me, is this boding doubt
A proof that Heaven is far, and we without?
What shall we do? How shall we flee away
Unto the climes of everlasting day?

FIRST GHOST.
Be done, O Earth! O! Day of Judgment, burst!
Let all be known—let us but know the worst!
O! rather let us, rising from the dust,
See the white habitations of the just!

SECOND GHOST.
Sorrow is in man's world, but what of this?
There sorrow lends an attribute to bliss.
God send me back, let sorrow come amain,
And all the crooked family of pain!
Were men but wise! Did but Ambition know
The flat endurance of our listless wo,
How to his soul would triumph be denied,
How slackd the spasms of his o'ertorturing pride,
Spun from the baffled heart! O! how would fail
The stroke of Hate, the tooth of Envy pale,
Scorn with her sting, and Glory with her star,
Lewdness, and Avarice; and bigot War,
With sternest zeal encrusted, weather-stained
With old grim cruelties, and blood-engrained,
Whose crimes, from crimes descended, ever grew
A new necessity, a prurience new,
His brow still blistering with the hot quick lust
Of blood that glories trampling men to dust!

FIRST GHOST.
Behold the immortal pattern of yon heaven!
Beneath yon moon becalmed the woodlands lie.
By dogs of chase the desert creature driven,
Climbs up the rocky stairs of mountains high;
A CHURCH-YARD ECLOGUE.

With sealing light she touches his wild eye,
And all the bliss of slumber is for him.
But not to earth so sweet yon moon and sky,
As were to me man's life with tears though din
'Twould fill my heart with joy up to the trembl

SECOND GHOST.
What though the church-yard, by the glimmeri
Pours forth the empty children of the night;
O'er seas and lands we flit, but back are fain
To troop dishonour'd to our place again.
Vain privilege! it serves us but to show
The joy that we for ever must forego.
Sweet life is lost: we must not see the day:
Our bodies rise not from the wormy clay.

FIRST GHOST.
No more, ah! never more shall we behold
Dawn's early purple yellowing into gold.
Then when the sun his arrowy levelled lines
Shoots through the high heads of the crowning
The hunter rustles through the morning wind;
The forest waves, the river flows behind.
Sad hunters we! Oh! rather we the prey,
Chased by pale dogs of sorrow and dismay.

SECOND GHOST.
O! the glad earth! no more, ah! never, there
With chaste clear eyes we'll drink the morning!
Breathed through the sweet green saplings of the
Fresh by the water-courses flourishing!
No more from cooling shades, at noon of day,
We'll watch the crystal waters slide away;
Till come still evening with her drops of dew,
And her large melting moon hung in the souther
Dear hours of love! O love! gone, glimpsing th
Like ship on the far sea vanishing!
FIRST GHOST.

From out the west a haze of thick fine rain
Comes o'er green height, high rock, and smoking plain,
Flies lightly drifted o'er the dimmed floods,
And shakes its sifted vail upon the woods.
Forth looks the sun, the impearled valley fills
With seeds of light, and slicks the slippery hills.
Nor yet the showery drops away have ceased
To fall, clear glancing on the darkened east,
When o'er them cast, with saffron horns the Bow
Of Beauty melts the fluid woods below.
With glittering heads, down in the grassy plain
The milk-white herds feed onward in a train;
Sheep nibbling up, goats on the higher slopes,
The shepherds stand upon the mountain-tops.
O beauty! O! the glory of the hour!
What living spirit could resist your power?
Not mine; far less it could when rustling through
The crimped translucent cups of leaves, with dew
And sunshine overflown, my love first stood in view.
What tranquil might upon that forehead lies!
How pure the spirit that refines those eyes!
Joy dwelt in her, as light dwells in the stone,
Dear to my heart, but now for ever gone.
God, do but clear her from the grave's foul stains,
Pour back the branching blood along her veins,
Build up that lovely head! O! let her rise,
Let youth's fine light revive within her eyes!

SECOND GHOST.

Outclap the bolted fires, the rains were poured,
Abrupt and crushed and jammed the thunders roared.
Horror! Oh horror! by my sheltering side
I turned, and, lo! my lightning-blasted bride.
Sweet rest possess her! lowly lies that form,
Once fair as is the bow upon the storm;
More bland her eyes, more beautiful than this,
Her cheek was painted with the hues of bliss.
Nay, rise, my ghosted love, and testify
Against the harsh decree that such must die.
What means this death? O God! upon thy throne,
Give us the day; we'll let thee not alone!
From floods, and fields, and ways, arise, ye ghosts,
Tribes of dusk time! kingdoms! unnumbered hosts!
From all the grave's dim blotted realms upspring,
Swift as a people willing for their king!
No more of sufferance! upwards let us flee
To God's own gates, and pray the end to be.
Why fear the light? Why fear the morning air?
Fill we his skies with shrieks, and He must hear our prayer.

FIRST GHOST.
Strong is His arm; it o'er that Power prevailed
Who rose with darkness and his Heavens assailed,
And drove him out, far kindling, as he fell,
Around his head the virgin fires of Hell.
His very eye could clear us all away,
Chase us into the grave, and seal us with the clay.
Hush! breathe not of it, lest for aye He change
To barren darkness this our nightly range.

SECOND GHOST.
Lo! through the church-yard comes a company sweet
Of ghosted infants—who has loosed their feet?
Linked hand in hand, this way they glide along;
But list their softly-modulated song:

SONG OF THE CHURCH-YARD CHILDREN.

I.

Our good Lord Christ on high
Has let us forth a space,
To see the moonlit place
Where our little bodies lie.
Back he will call us; at his dear command
We'll run again unto the happy land.

II.
O'er each unblemished head
No thunder-cloud unsheathes its terrors red;
Mild, touching gleams those beauteous fields invest,
Won from the kingdoms of perpetual rest.
  Stony Enchantment there,
  Nor Divination frights;
  Nor hoary witch with her blue lights,
  And cauldron's swarming glare.
There are no muttered spells,
  Envy, nor Clamour loud;
Nor Hatred, on whose head for ever dwells
  A sullen cloud.
There is no fiend's dissembling,
  Nor the deep-furrowed garment of trembling,
  But the robes of lucid air.
  O! all is good and fair!

III.
Unto the Lamb we'll sing,
  Who gives us each glad thing:
For Mercy sits with him upon his throne;
  For there his gentle keeping is revealed,
O'er each young head select a glory and a shield.
  Wide be his praises known!

IV.
And in the last of days,
Our little heads he'll raise
Unto himself, unto his bosom dear,
  Far from the outcast fear
A CHURCH-YARD ECLOGUE.

Of them, oh wo! who make their beds in
Sons shall we be of the celestial prime,
Breathing the air of Heaven's delicious clir
Walking in white attire,
With God himself sublime.

FIRST GHOST.
Wo! wo for us! that land is not our land:
We feel no keeping of a gentle hand;
No gleams revealed to us of happier days
Have drawn our hearts the Saviour-Lamb to pra
O happy children! happier, happiest he
Who keeps life's purpose through each tried deg
Beseeming well, unto his mortal end,
The name of brother, son, of husband, father, fri
Earth's duties done, faith kept, he bows to die;
Then dwells with God—communion great and h

SECOND GHOST.
Would we had bowed submissive to the Lord!

FIRST GHOST.
Would we in days of flesh had listened to his wo

SECOND GHOST.
Oh! if that awful thing should us befall,
Of wrath, more wrath, and darkness over all!

FIRST GHOST.
Remorse's searching worms, oh! who shall tame,
Quivering and keen as penetrative flame?
But let us question those dim babes of death—
Away, away! I scent the morning's breath.

SECOND GHOST.
They vanish, too: Oh, dire constraint! away,
We must not look upon the light of day!
THE DEVIL'S DREAM.

I.

Beyond the north where Urals hills from polar tempests run,
A glow went forth at midnight hour as from some awful sun;
Far in the north, and round the north, a mighty noise was heard,
As if with all his trampling waves the Ocean were unbarred;
And high a grizzly Terror hung, upstarting from below,
Like to an arrow shot aloft from some unmeasured bow.

II.

'Twas not the obedient seraph's form that burns before the Throne,
Whose feathers are the pointed flames that tremble to be gone.
With twists of faded glory mixed, grim shadows wove his wing;
An aspect like the hurrying storm proclaimed the Infernal King;
And up he went, from native might, or holy sufferance given,
As if to strike the starry boss of God's wide-shielding heaven.

III.

Again he hung, and hovered like a falcon for his prey,
And bowed to all the winds of heaven as if to flee away.
But lo! a phantom army, like the glimpses of a dream,
Sowing the Arab wilderness with many a restless gleam,
Down in the south! Sheer down he flew; he knew the dazzling train,
That far had pushed the Moslem faith, and peopled well his reign.

IV.

Proud through the deserts he outflew the Prophet's winged horse;
O'er many cloudy lands he led the visionary force.
THE DEVIL'S DREAM.

With prouder scorn back sprung he dark, and stood on Tabor hill,
As if that host in living days had done not half his will.
"Perish the semblance, then!" he said; and, darkening with his eye,
Far in the blotted night away the grizzly squadrons die.

V.

What hill is like to Tabor hill in beauty and in fame?
There in the sad days of his flesh o'er Christ a glory came;
And light o'erflowed him like a sea, and raised his shining brow;
And the Voice went forth that bade all worlds to God's Beloved bow.
One thought of this came o'er the Fiend, and raised his startled form,
Upswellling high as if to meet the coming of some storm.

VI.

Wide went his wings; stripping the dews from off the boughs of night,
Down over Tabor's trees he whirled his fierce distempered flight;
And westward o'er the shadowy earth he tracked his earnest way,
Till o'er him shone the utmost stars that hem the skirts of day;
Then higher to the light he flew above all mortal ken,
Yet looking down to see his power among the sons of men.

VII.

He saw a form of Africa low sitting in the dust;
The feet were chained, and sorrow thrilled throughout the sable bust.
The idol, and the idol's priest he hailed upon the earth,
And every slavery that brings wild passions to the birth.
All forms of human wickedness were pillars of his fame;
All sounds of human misery his kingdom's loud acclaim.

VIII.

Exulting, leaving Day behind, again he rode with Night,
Till, sailing o'er the untrodden top of Taurus snowy white,
Stooping he closed his weary wings, and touched the shining hill;
For less his flight was easy strength than proud unconquered will:
For sin had marred his native strength, spoiling the holy law
Of impulse whence the Archangels their ethereal being draw.
IX.
And sin had drained his brightness, since his Heavenly days went by:
Shadows of care and sorrow dwelt in his immortal eye;
Like little sparry pools that glimpse midst murk and haggard rocks,
Quick fitful gleams came o'er his cheek black with the thunder-strokes;
Like coasts of lurid darkness were his forehead's shade and light,
Lit by some far volcanic fire, and strewed with wrecks of night.

X.
Like hovering bird that fears the snare, or like the startled sleep
That ne'er its couch on eyelids of blood-guilty men will keep,
His ruffled form that trembled much, his swarthy soles unblest,
As if impatient to be gone, still hovering could not rest;
Still looking up unto the moon clear set above his head,
Like mineral hill where gold grows ripe, sore gleams his forehead shed.

XI.
Winds rose: from 'neath his settling feet were driven great drifts of snow;
Like hoary hair from off his head did white clouds streaming go;
The gulpy pinewoods far beneath roared surging like a sea;
From out their lairs the striding wolves came howling awfully.
But now upon an ice-glazed rock, severely blue, he leant,
His spirit by the storm composed that round about him went.

XII.
He felt fresh night deliciously blow on his fiery scars;
Half soothed and drowsed, the memory of his early hapless wars
Forgot to gnaw; down o'er his breast bowing his forehead deep,
O'er all his drossy being came a thick oppressive sleep,
Like noon's grim breathless thunder-cloud with sultry smothered gleam;
And God was still against his soul to plague him with a dream.

XIII.
In vision he was borne away, where Lethe's slippery wave
Creeps like a black and shining snake into a silent cave,—
THE DEVIL’s DREAM.

A place of still and pictured life: its roof was ebon air; Blasted as if with dim eclipse the sun and moon were set. It seemed the grave of man’s lost world—of beauty caught. The Dreamer knew the things he marred, and felt a fiend.

XIV.

The lofty cedar on the hills by viewless storms was swum. And high the thunder-fires of heaven among its branches. In drowsy heaps of feathers sunk, all fowls that fly were there. Their heads for ever ’neath their wings, no more to rise. From woods the forms of lions glared, and hasty tigers bore. The harnessed steed lay in his pains, the heifer ’neath the tree.

XV.

All creatures once of earth are there, all sealed with Death. On Lethe’s shores: dull sliding by her sleepy waters steep. O’er cities of imperial name, and styled of endless sway. The silent river slowly creeps, and licks them all away. This is the place of God’s First Wrath—the mute creation. Earth marred—the woes of lower life—oblivion over all.

XVI.

Small joy to him that spoilt our world! for he is hurried. Made, even in dreams, to dread that place where yet his throne. Through portals driven of hollow bars ranged round, where: Bright tinctures like man’s suffering blood that up and down. Down on the Second Lake he goes: There is Jehovah’s. There sinners dwell for ever with the roaring pains of fire.

XVII.

A giant rock, like mineral stone, instinct with dull red gleam. Its summit hid in darkness, rose from out the gulf below. Whose fretted surf of gleaming waves still broke against it. All serpents, as if spun from out the lashings of those tide. Sprung disengaged, and darted up that damned cliff again. Their bellies skinned with glossy fire: But none came down.
XVIII.
These be the cares, still coming cares, that hang upon Hell's throne,
And live with him, nor leave him, who has reared it on that stone.
Clouds round it are, that he at will may hide his haughty wo;
But ah! no fence has it to stay those comers from below.
The Dreamer heard a kingly groan: his own voice ill suppressed
He knew; but could not see himself on his high seat distressed.

XIX.
Far off, upon the fire-burnt coast, some naked beings stood;
Down o'er them, like a stream of mist, the Wrath was seen to brood.
At half-way distance stood, his head beneath his trembling wing,
An Angel shape, intent to shield his special suffering.
And nearer, as if overhead, were voices heard to break;
Yet were they cries of souls that lived beneath the weltering Lake.

XX.
And ever, as with grizzly gleam the crested waves came on,
Up rose a melancholy form with short impatient moan,
Whose eyes like living jewels shone, clear-purged by the flame;
And sore the salted fires had washed the thin immortal frame;
And backward, in sore agony, the Being stripped its hair,
As a virgin in the days of earth smooths back her tresses fair.

XXI.
High tumbling hills of scurvy ore reeled in the yellow smoke,
As shaded round the uneasy land their sultry summits broke.
Above them lightnings to and fro ran crossing evermore,
Till, like a red bewildered map, the skies were scribbled o'er.
Rattlings came down from worlds unseen, and hisings as of rain
Streaming through fire: there Wrath prepared its coming forms amain.

XXII.
Wo, wo to him whose wickedness first dug this glaring pit!
For this new terrors in his soul by God shall yet be lit.
In vision still to plague his heart, the Fiend is stormed away,
In dreadful emblem to behold what waits his future day,
THE DEVIL'S DREAM.

Away beyond the thundering bounds of that tremendous
Through dim bewildered shadows that no living sembl

XXIII.

Through kingdoms of forlorn repose went on the hurry;
Till far in unsubstantial night was seen a ruddy gleam.
Down where the feet of hills might be, he by a Lake w
Of still red fire—a molten plate of terror unallayed—
A mirror where Jehovah’s Wrath, in majesty alone,
Comes in the night of worlds to see its armour girded o

XXIV.

The awful walls of shadows round might dusky mount;
But never holy light has touched an outline with its glea;
’Tis but the eye’s bewildered sense that fain on form wo
And night’s thick brooding presence with created shapes
No stone is moved on mountain here by creeping creatu
No lonely harper comes to harp upon this fiery coast.

XXV.

Here all is solemn idleness: no music here, no jars,
Where Silence guards the Lake, e’er thrill her everlastin;
The Last Lake of God’s Wrath. Therein the Fiend was:
Till, as it seemed, ten thousand years had o’er him rolled
In dreams he had extended life to feel the long long spat
But all was passive, dull, and stern within his dwelling–

XXVI.

O! for a blast of tenfold ire to rouse the giant surge,
Him from that flat fixed lethargy impetuously to urge!
Let him but rise, but ride upon the tempest-crested wave
Of fire enirged tumultuously, each angry thing he’d brav
The strokes of Wrath, thick let them fall! a speed so glo
Would bear him through, the clinging pains would strip
head.
At last, from out the barren womb of many thousand years,
A sound as of the leafy earth his sultry spirit cheers;
And O! a presence soft and cool came o'er his burning dream,
A form of beauty clad about with fair creation's beam;
A low sweet voice was in his ear, and through his inmost frame
Trembling he sighed with pleasure as these words upon him came:—

"No sister e'er has been to thee with pearly eyes of love;
No mother e'er has wept for thee, an outcast from above;
No hand has come from out the cloud to wash thy scarred face;
No voice to bid thee lie in peace, the noblest of thy race:
But bow thee to the God of Love, and all shall yet be well,
And yet in days of holy rest and gladness thou shalt dwell.

"And thou shalt dwell 'midst leaves and rills far from this torrid heat,
And I with streams of cooling milk will bathe thy blistered feet;
And when the troubled tears shall start to think of all the past,
My lips shall haste to kiss them off, and chase thy sorrows fast;
And thou shalt walk in soft white light with kings and priests abroad,
And thou shalt summer high in bliss upon the hills of God."

So spake the unknown cherub's voice, of sweet affection full,
And dewy lips the Dreamer kissed till his lava breast was cool.
In dread revulsion woke the Fiend, as from a mighty blow,
And sprung a moment on his wing his wonted strength to know;
Like ghosts that bend and glare away upon the shores of night,
So turned he to each point of heaven to know his dream aright.

The vision of this Last Stern Lake, oh! how it plagued his soul,
Type of that dull eternity that on him soon must roll,
THE DEVIL'S DREAM.

When plans and issues all must cease that earlier care
And never era more shall be a landmark on the wild :
Nor failure nor success are there, nor busy hope nor f
But passive fixed endurance, all eternal and the same.

XXXII.

So knew the Fiend, and fain would he down to oblivic
But soon from fear his spirit proud, recoiling like a bot
Sprung back. Dark looked he to the heavens upstay
high;
The planets, undisturbed by him, were shining in the sl
The silent magnuminity of Nature and her God
Sore troubled him, and all the Hell within him fiercely

XXXIII.

His pride would have the works of God to shew the sig
With flying Angels to and fro to watch his dread career
But all was calm :  He felt night's dews upon his sultry
And gnashed at the impartial laws of Nature's mighty Y
Too great for scorn or hate of him, they no exception m.
But gave him dews, like aged thorn, or little grassy blac

XXXIV.

Thick breaking like the mustering manes of the cold an
His eye casts out its angry gleams : all fears of danger fl
Steady to the mid firmament he lifts his front amain,
Dark, thunder-scathed, and looks for God, to meet him
Nay, he'll not wait, he'll up, he'll pluck the windows of
And stir their calm insulting peace, though tenfold Hell

XXXV.

Quick as the levin, whose blue forks sear up the life of :
Aloft he sprung, and through his wings the piercing nor
Till, like a glimmering lamp that's lit in lazar-house by n
To see what mean the sick man's cries, and set his bed t
Which in the damp and sickly air the sputtering shadows mar,
So gathered darkness high the Fiend, till swallowed like a star.

XXXVI.
What judgment from the tempted Heavens shall on his head go forth?
Down headlong through the firmament he fell upon the north.
The stars are up untroubled in the lofty fields of air;
The will of God's enough, without his red right arm made bare.
'Twas He that gave the Fiend a space, to prove him still the same,
Then hurled him down to Tophet whence permitted up he came.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO I.

CYRA'S INTERVIEW WITH THE PROPHET EZEKIEL.

Behold! Ezekiel to the mountains turns,
To meet the visions of his God he burns.
And well the shattered wilderness becomes
The vehement Prophet that athwart it roams,
Where rooted trees half hide, but not compose
To grace the births of Nature's rudest throes,
Imperfect, difficult, unreconciled:
Blind moaning caverns, rocks abruptly piled
Below, and herbless black peaks split asunder
Aloft, the awful gateways of the thunder,
Accord they not with him whose burdened eye
Sees, through the rent of kingdoms great and big
Thick gleams of wrath divine, whose visions rang
Throughout the obstructed solitudes of change,
Whose spirit stumbles midst the corner-stones
Of realms disjointed and of broken thrones?

II.

As on Ezekiel strode, he saw a maid
Sit in the vale, and on a harp she played.
Before her knelt a savage form, beside
A milk-white horse was rearing in his pride.
Near went the Prophet; up that savage man
Sprung, tossed his hair, and to the mountains ran;
O'er rocks and bushes bounding with him went,
With startled mane, that steed magnificent.
The minstrel rose; when she Ezekiel saw,
Aside her harp she laid with modest awe,
In haste she came to meet him, named his name,
And prayed his blessing with a reverent claim.
"Say who are thou?"
"Cyra, of Judah I."
"Why dwelling here? And who yon form on high,
Chased by the mighty horse?"
"Great man of God!
Austere thy visions, so is thy abode:
The stony mountains, where old lions live,
Dread paths to thee; to thee a dwelling give:
Not in soft city, not in kingly dome
Thy jealous soul will deign to make thy home;
So art thou seldom within Babylon's gate,
And so hast heard not of her Monarch's fate,
Forth driven by God to wander from his throne,
Till seven appointed times be o'er him gone!
Behold that King—him followed by yon steed,
Doomed on the hills and in the wilds to feed!
His head forlorn, in nature's naked eye,
Is beat by all the changes of the sky;
He sees the morning star, and the wide noon,
He sees the nightly ordinance of the moon,
Sleep seldom his: The wild beast 's in its den;
But through the night must roam the King of men!
Such were the far bounds of his fate, till I"—
"So be abased—be stricken—more than die,
Who scorn Jehovah and his sacred trust,
Who bow the gates of Zion to the dust!
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

So shall they be: Amazement shall lay bare
Her enemies' souls, and terror, and despair.
So has it been: Scarce Edom's name remains.
Soft Syria's loins are wrapped about with pains.
Tyre, where is she? The old haughty crocodile,
Is he not bridled on the shores of Nile?
On Ammon's head, on Moab's, Jehovah's doom
Has poured a midnight of unmelted gloom.
God is gone forth! Abroad his swift storms fly,
And strike the mystic birds from out the sky:
Soar proudly, burnished birds of Nineveh,
Home to the windows of your glory flee—
Ha! broke your wings, your trodden plumage rots!
The doves of Ashur lie among the pots!
For him! for yonder outcast—Wo! and wo
Yet more to him who thus has brought her low!—
Beneath her branchless palm must Judah sit,
Her widowed face with pens of sorrow writ,
And round her feet the fetters! But has he
Reaped glory hence? Earth's proud men, come and see!
At best a royal brute, he even without
The majesty of mischief roams about!
So let him"

"Whelmed beneath Jehovah's ban,
'Tis ours to spare the much-enduring man.
Sore laid on us, his hand crushed down our state;
And great the blame, as our oppression great:
Yea, curse his pride of warlike youth; O! then
Still let me name him midst earth's noblest men.
But he was bowed, and, prostrate in his change,
Followed the wild ox in his boundless range,
And ate the grass; his head was wet with dew;
Like claws his nails, his hair like feathers grew.
But I have helped him through his years of ill,
And ne'er will leave him, but will love him still.
Bless him, and curse him not!"
With anger shook
The son of Buzi; tragic waxed his look;
With vehement force, as if to meet the storm,
He wrapped his rugged mantle round his form.
"Look to me, damsel," cried he; "are not we
Carried away by our iniquity?
Shall then the soft desires of women rule
Thy spirit still, and make thee play the fool?
Because within his silken palaces
He made thee dwell in love's delicious ease,
Thou thought'st it good, and chased him to the hill
In caves of rocks to play the harlot still?
Lord God of Israel! shall we count it light
So to be driven from Zion's holy height,
Our princes captives made, our stately men
Hewn down in battle, thy dread courts a den;
And scorning types without, and rites within
Of penitence, conform to Heathen sin;
No thought of our estate, no sigh for it,
Degrading even the dust wherein we sit?
Happy the slain ones of our people! blest
Who fell in Zion's wars, and are at rest!
Yea, happy they whose shoulders labour sore,
With burdens peeled, or weary with the ear;
For so their manly bodies are not broke
With idle dalliance—slavery's heaviest yoke!
Ye tall and goodly youths, your fate is worse,
Your beauty more than burning is a curse;
For ye must stand in palaces, soft slaves
Of kings—your brethren lie in noble graves!—
Until your base shame for your origin,
Beyond your wanton masters make you sin;
For ye upon the mountains, with desire
Unholy, looking towards the Persian fire,
Eat, not Jehovah-wards, forgetting him,
Forgot the gates of old Jerusalem!
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

Thou, too, thou maid of Judah, wo! that thou
Hast lived to be what I must deem thee now!"

He ceased. Like flames that burn the sacrifice
With darting points, shone out the virgin's eyes;
Shook her black locks of youth; drawn back she
Dilating high in her indignant mood.
She seized her harp, she swept the chords along,
Forth burst a troubled and tumultuous song;
Till, purified from anger and from shame,
Austere, severely solemn it became;
Yet dashed with leaping notes, as if to tell
Jehovah mighty for his Israel.
Soft gleamed the Prophet's eyes; he knew that she
Heard in the days of Salem's glorious reign,
When Judah's maids in sacred bands advanced,
With garlands crowned, and to the timbrel danced
And shone through glazing tears young Cyra's eyes
Her forehead now uplifted to the skies.
Her harp she dropped; her bosom greatly heaved
Till words burst forth and thus her heart relieved
"Perish the song, the harp, the hand for aye;
Die the remembrance of our land away;
Ne'er be revived the praises of the Lord
In the glad days of Zion's courts restored,
If I"—— again she sobbed and hid her face,—
"If I have been the child of such disgrace!
But, ah! forgive me great Ezekiel,
Thus to be angry I have done not well;
For thine the spirit that for Israel's weal
Burns with the fires of jealousy and zeal.
O! hear thy handmaid now! for I shall sleep
In death, ere cease I for yon King to weep.
In that dread night—his wars be judged by God!—
When o'er our walls victoriously he rode,
He saw me lie amidst the trampled mire,
That bloody glittered to the midnight fire;
Sprung, snatched me from my mother's dead embrace,
Ere the fierce war-steeds trode my infant face;
Smiled on me, to his large mailed bosom pressed;
Home took me with him, with his love caressed,
There made me dwell, there gave to me a name,
And to me there a father all became.

"Then—for my sacred origin I knew—
Me, yet a child, Jehovah taught to view
With scorn the Gentiles' sins; my opening days
Taught, more than theirs, to love our people's ways.
The Monarch smiled; nor sought he to subdue
The spirit honoured whence my choice I drew;
He gave me teachers of our people, charged
To see my childhood with their lore enlarged,
To compromise not in their captive place,
But tell Jehovah's doings for our race,
The ancient glories of our people tell;
And in his Court like princes made them dwell.

"Nor heavier task was mine, than that the King
A gladsome song oft made me to him sing;
For he was moody, by Jehovah vexed
With nightly visions, and with dreams perplexed.
My harp I touched; when he was cheered, then I
The mournful hymns of our captivity
Did ne'er forget: magnanimous he smiled,
And named me playfully an artful child;
Then was I bold, my prayer he heard with grace,
And gravely promised to restore our race.
God cast him out; I followed to the hills
My more than father, to divide his ills:
On summits high, and in the wastes his lair,
I found him strange and brutish in despair;
But tried my harp, less savage soon he grew,
And softly followed through the falling dew.
Caves in yon rock, our mountain people there
Had helped me first his dwelling to prepare;
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

There, now less wild, the food of men he finds,  
And lies through night unstricken by the wilds  
" In yonder hut, a shepherd of our race  
For years has given me an abiding-place.  
His daughters love me as their sister; they  
My simple service share with me by day,  
To feed the flocks; when men their labour leave  
And past is now the milking-time of eve,  
I harp before his cave, and from the steep  
Comes the wild King and couches down to sleep  
O! not to sleep; with self-accusing blame,  
With madness wrestling, and with fitful shame.  
Sweet psalms I play him then, till in calm wo  
Lies his large heart; then to our cot I go.  
" By Daniel's wise advice, his battle-steed  
Was brought, with him upon the hills to feed;  
Within his inner cavern as he lies,  
His armour nightly gleams before his eyes;  
Memorials these of his heroic days,  
To deeds of men again his soul to raise.  
Remembering hence his glory, more because  
The appointed season to a period draws,  
His heart with reason swells; his ancient men  
Of counsel come to seek him in his den.  
Taught by affliction, by our God restored,  
Then will he raise the people of the Lord.  
'Joy! joy for Zion!' let the captives sing.  
Come thou with me, O! come and bless the wand  
" True child of Judah! by the Spirit's might  
Drawn to these hills, I wait the visioned night.  
Just is thy gratitude. The God of peace  
Raise up the King, and make our bondage cease  
My thought injurious turns to solemn praise;  
And if thou keep thy sweet unblemished days  
In heathen courts, and if thy gentle power  
May for our people haste redemption's hour,
High shall thy name in Israel be renowned,
With praise amidst her loftiest women crowned;
Yea, more, be praised—thy just and awful pride—
In Heaven, where the great Sanctities abide."

So spake the Seer. Low bowing to be blessed,
The Jewess knelt; stooping her head he kissed,
Then turned away; with sobbing joy o’ercome,
Thus well approved, the virgin sought her home.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO II.

THE PLOT OF MERDAN AND NARSES.

High rides the summer moon: Away, how slow,
The lordly waters of Euphrates go!
But see! a shadowy form from yonder rank
Of glimmering trees, comes o'er the open bank.
Here Narses meets him:—"Merdan, you are late."
"Admit the toils that on my office wait,
And say your purpose."
"Nay, 'tis mine to hear
What first you promised to my midnight ear."
Then Merdan spake:—"Our mutual hearts are known,
Why pause we then? Our theme be now the throne.
Meet we not here on our appointed way,
To learn from Chardes what the planets say,
Who, nightly standing on his glimpsing towers,
With piercing ken looks through the starry hours?
Not rivals, twins are we in present sway;
What then? 'tis based upon the passing day.
Can we maintain it? Merodach is weak:
His father now those ancient servants seek:
Reason returns: again he'll sit on high:
With ours, the Prince his own mean life will buy."
"Ha! yes; he knows his feebleness has failed
To back our counsels: these shall be assailed:
The blame of his misrule must we exhaust;
And if we live, our power at least is past."
"His faith, nor might, to us can safety bring:
Who trusts him, hides his jewel in a sling."
In heart he is a parricide; but still
His weakness fears to justify his will.
May such be trusted? Not his innocence;
He must be guilty, for our hope is thence.
'Tis ours to goad him on to such a length,
That farthest crime alone may seem his strength."

"Say we at once the outcast Monarch slew,
And crushed our fears?"

"Nay, that his son must do;
So shall our knowledge of his guilt ensure
Bribes for our silence, and our rule endure.
Well then at once, he must insult his sire,
That fears for life may perfect his desire,
And thus complete the parricide. On high,
Where vales embosomed in the mountains lie,
I know a haunt, where comes the desert King
Each noon his limbs beneath the shade to fling.
Beside him feeds his battle-horse, that bore
His youth triumphant on from shore to shore,
A prince's gift, much loved: Near couched each night,
Upsprings he neighing with the morning light,
Awakes his lord, again goes forth with him
To range the pastures till the twilight dim.

"Now Parthian Chud, who rules the royal hounds,
By me advanced, in gratitude abounds.
His tiger-dogs, from India's northern woods,
Fell mountain-climbers, glorying in the floods,
Three previous days shall hunger, till arise
Their bristly necks, and burn their lamping eyes;
Then shall our Monarch hunt; they, famine-clung,
Shall sweep the barren hills with lolling tongue,
Where no prey is, led thither on pretence
That there 'twas seen—it since has wandered thence.
Then Chud, instructed, shall his Sovereign lure
To nearer hills, as if it there were sure;
NEBUCADNEZZAR.

And in the noon shall he his beagles lead
To where the wild King loiters with his steed.
Behold them started! Rush the kindled pack;
Not even unfeigned restraint could keep them:
So fiercely hunger pricks their headlong way,
Against their instinct, on the unwonted prey.
Onward they drive: At once, perhaps—'tis well.
The Ox-King falls before their crowding yell;
Nor bone, nor scalp, the bloody grass alone
Next moment tells our fears with him are gone.
If Chud from royal game can them restrain,
At least on Zublon shall they go amain;
Or falls the horse, or flees but soon to fall.
The mad King sees his son—has seen it all.
That son away pursues the storm of chase,
And ne'er again dares see his father's face.
What must he do? The rest has been explained.
His sire must die: Our place is thus maintained.

"This more: Our King, when Prince, with
Loved Cyra, heedless of his angry sire.
When Heaven's decree against the latter sped,
The Hebrew damsel from the palace fled.
But I have learned her haunt; far in the wild
She dwells, a Jewish hind's adopted child,
The embroiled Monarch near; for her's the praise
To love, to tend him through his humbled days.
So let this maid be carried from her place,
Say on the night of our appointed chase;
Then, for I know our Monarch loves her still,
Shall she become the creature of his will.
Then in his hours of hope unfulfil
And mingled fear, shall we declare her thrall—
Thus from the service of his father gained
By force, and in his palace thus detained.
So shall he feel again that father wronged;
And dare be bold, to have his life prolonged."
"Our scheme is doubly one, how wisely blent!
It but remains to push it to the event.
This be in haste; for Persia's menaced war
Against us hangs upon the east afar.
The issue? Good our plan in any case.
But now our King has leisure for the chase."

"Behold the first faint shoots of morning light
Breathe upward through the shadowy cone of night,
Sickening the eastern stars: 'Tis now the time,
Old Charades waits us on his watch sublime;
From him the signs celestial shall we know,
Shape farther plans, and onward safely go."
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO III.

THE HUNT.

Before her cavern stands at eventide
Cyra, her harp clear glittering by her side;
Now for the King she looks far east away,
And now she turns unto the setting day;
She vails her dazzled face, her garments shine
With molten gold, like angel robes divine,
Touched by the sun, as large he stoops to rest
Beyond the Assyrian kingdoms in the west.
Eastward again she looked; she cleared her eye—
Ha! yes, she sees come o'er yon mountain high
A courser white; swift dogs are on his rear;
Upcoming hunters on the hill appear.
Can that be Zublon? From the mountain fails
The chase now swallowed by the nearer vales,
Perplexed and wide; again it comes in sight,
And lo! 'tis Zublon sure that leads the flight.
He takes the river, stems it with disdain,
Paws the near shore, forth springs, comes on amain.
The yielding dogs float down athwart the flood,
Swarm on the bank, renew their yells for blood,
Regain their track; inextricable, dense,
With crowding heads they wedge their way intense.
In fear majestic on the charger drew;
White clouds of smoke his seething nostrils blew;
Now streamed his tail on high, now swept the plain:
Abroad were driven the terrors of his mace.
He toiled, he strained, he neared the well-known maid,
He saw his rock, turning he proudly neighed,
Went reeking past, and rushed into his cave;
And Cyra ran the gallant horse to save.
Quick dipped in oil, and lit, in either hand
Of gummy pine she bore a waving brand,
Forth held them, hasted to the entrance back,
There met the brindled leaders of the pack,
Scorched their dry tongues, and blinded them with fire,
And still she kept them back, still forced them to retire.
One minute more! impelled by crowding power
And hungry rage, the damsel they'll devour.
Great God of love! that moment to the den
With axes came a company of men
Who on the mountains fell the stately trees:
Homeward returning, on the evening breeze
They heard the tumult, ran, and joyed to bring
Swift aid to her, the handmaid of their King.
Close banded now within the entrance, they.
With brands and axes kept the hounds at bay,
Smote down the foremost that with tuskly ire,
High fretted necks and boiling eyes of fire,
Came leaping headlong in their lust of food,
And parched desire to dip their mouths in blood;
Till Chud the hunter came with smarting thong,
And down the mountain lashed the yelling throng.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO IV.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S CAVE.

The lovely moon came up the east, and shone
Sweetly above the hills of Babylon;
And forth young Cyra wandered by her light,
And wet her sandals in the dews of night;
Oft pausing she to strike her harp's clear string,
Through the still vales to lure the homeward K.
Long hours she roamed, but ne'er her wild lord
The keener heavens breathed chilly through her
Then back she slowly went, and, to divide
The lonely hours, her scented fire supplied.
Nor yet, her hope though fainting, did she leave
Undone the filial duty of each eve;
But mixed his bowls of milk and tempered wine
With drops infused, the pith of flowers divine,
In gentle wisdom that their healing dew
In nightly sleep his spirit might renew.

II.

A foot, a shadow came, uprose the maid;
'Tis he!—forward she springs—is she afraid?—
Awed she draws back, she stands in mute surpr.
To see that solemn light within his eyes—
The strict concentrated check—the lucid reins
Of reason, ruler o'er ecstatic pains.
With silent love on Cyra long he gazed,
Till came some quick sense of his life abased;
Gleamed his proud tears; into his cave's recess
He strode away in his sublime distress,
As in pale Hades midst dim-visioned things
Stalk the proud shadows of forgotten kings.

III.
Her lamp the maid replenished with the oils
Of fragrant trees, to work her lovely toils.
Too newly, deeply glad for this, she stood
Entranced, till startled by a groan subdued.
Noiseless her footsteps as the falling snows,
With shaded lamp unto the King she goes;
Let's fall the shifting light by mild degrees,
Till now the features of her lord she sees.
He sleeps, yet brokenly; those sultry gleams
Betray a spirit toiling in his dreams.
Forth Cyra hastens, but soon she reappears
With mingled balms; with these, and with her tears
That dropped the while, she washed those dews away
From off his forehead, till refreshed he lay;
Then kissed his cheek, and with a daughter's care
Arranged the wild heaps of his raven hair;
And strewed the opiate herbs around his head,
Their healing virtue on his soul to shed;
And oft withdrew, yet oft came back again,
Till clear he lay from every print of pain.

IV.
Then sate the maid, unrolling, white as milk,
Down from her knee a web of Persian silk,
Flowered by her needle, as her shaping mind
Thereon the King's young conquests had designed,—
From Nile victorious to the glimmering North,
Whose pictured form with keys of ice came forth;
O'er Tyre triumphant, o'er Damascus, o'er
Great kingdoms eastward to the Indian shore:
NEBUCADNEZZAR.

All here portrayed in glory and in gloom,
Rich as the work of an enchanted loom.
Her heart a silent covenant had made,
The finished gift before him should be laid
That solemn day, when he should leave that den
Raised up by God again to govern men;
That to his heart, his humbled sense, his awe
Of Him who ruled him with a wondrous law—
His fear from this—his joy, redeemed—his thought
Of her who loved him, and that picture wrought
A lasting great memorial it might be,
That he for all should Zion's captives free.
His reason comes; her half-wrought cloth demands
The sleepless haste of her unwearied hands.

V.

Forth came the King; his worn and awful face,
On Cyrus bent, began to melt apace
To gleams—how tender! farther still subdued
To mingled tears of more than gratitude.
Stung by some fierce remembrance, fiercely change
With sudden strides throughout the cave he range
Like toil-caught lion of his prey bereaved,
The mighty buckles of his bosom heaved;
Wild flew his locks; and darkness o'er his face
Settled, like night upon the desert place.
But trembling came: he knelt with humbled brow
Solemn as when the ancient forests bow,
Smote by the cardinal winds:—"I know thee well,
Uprising, said he, "God of Israel!
The bright stars are the dust beneath thy feet!
Vast ages dim not thine essential seat!
Yet these permitted eyes, did they not see
Thy Glory in the furnace with the Three?
An effluence, like a globe of crystal air,
Was round about them: scatheless was their hair.
Beyond, the red and roaring haze but shewed
More beautiful these children of their God.
A Fourth was with them: glowing were his feet
As iron drawn from out the boiling heat!
Was it not Thou? Brightness was thy attire,
Walking with them upon the stones of fire!
Under thy dread permission, in thy sight
I rise a King; but I will reign aright.
Though greatly wronged, to-day though galled my pride,
Yet to my heart shall vengeance be denied.
Yea, by their insults of this day extreme,
My foes have chased my madness like a dream.
Their's no excuse; yet, by thy grace upraised,
To me thy mercy shall by mine be praised:
For I am humbled; ne'er shall be forgot
Thy power, that curbed me down to such a lot.
O! hear me now for her, this precious child,
More than my daughter on the mountains wild!
For me her dear eyes faint: Great God of Heaven,
Be health, be gladness to my Cyra given!
Let her but live, that I to her may prove
At least a father for her boundless love!"

He ceased. Young reverence her eyes abased;
With trembling joy a cup to him she raised.
He took the cup, with murmured love he blessed
The virgin, drank, retired, and lay at rest;
For she had spiced it with the sovereign flowers
Of sleep, to soothe him through the midnight hours.

VI.

There sits young Cyra! As her work is sped,
Waves the redundant glory of her head,
Her dark and heavy locks. O! more than wife!
O! bold and lavish of thy generous life
For him, thy lord! What though, by cares subdued,
Pale is thy cheek, O! virgin greatly good,
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

All fair art thou as the accomplished eve,
Whose finished glories not a wish can leave;
Yea, more than eve consummate, as her skies
Where lurk the cognate morrow's glorious dyes
So wears thy youth still promise, still when woe
The perfect grace of every duty done!
Yea, who can see thee in this holy hour,
Nor deem thee guarded by supernal power?
Nor deem he sees, of Watchers here divine,
Incessant gleams around this cavern shine?
Light speed thy task, young Cyra; happy be,
Here angel wings are visitant for thee!
But hush! but hark! ha! see—a stealthy shap
A second, third!—O! how may she escape?
She starts—is seized—she struggles—shrieks fo
In vain; the King in charmed sleep is laid.
Masked forms around her throng, with many a
The emblazoned web of beauty they pollute.
Even Zublon's help she craves in her dismay;
But yielding, fainting, quick is borne away.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO V.

THE BATTLE.
Up springs the sun on his unwearyed way,
And from his forehead gives the flaming day.
Long eastward looks from off his terrace high,
The King Chaldean with an anxious eye,
Troubled his brow, for lo! afar descried
Comes on the Persian war sun-glorified.
His shortened gaze in nearer view commands
The embattled might of Babylonian lands,
In gorgeous ferment. From the city pour
Fresh hosts continuous through the impatient hour:
There jostling chariots leap; the tide runs high
With all the pomp of flowing chivalry,
Arabian camels, and Nisian steeds
Bearing a province of auxiliar Medes.
Onward they scour; for westward o'er the plain
The flower of Persian kingdoms draws its train,—
From where its world of waters Indus brings
To Ocean, upwards by his hoary springs,
To where the Tartar's winking hordes look forth
Over the snowy bastions of the North,—
An army great and terrible: Earth seems
To be on fire beneath their brazen gleams.

II.
Near waxed the fronting lines; intensely keen
They paused, and sternest silence was between.
Loud blew the Persian trumpets; wide the heaven
By one great shout from all their hosts was riven.
Chaldea answered on the west. At once
The Immortal Band of Persia's youth advance,
Flanked by a cloudy stir on either side,
Of swarming horse and archers opening wide.
Came o'er each army, darkening like a shroud,
The crossing texture of the arrowy cloud.
Beneath, the vans were locked together grim,
Were interfused the battle's ridges dim,
There opening, closing here, till form gave way,
Forgot the imposing beauty of array.
   How gazed the King, intensely forward bowed,
As thick and thicker grew the battle-cloud,
Still darker waxed, now broke in lightened seams,
Again devoured the momentary gleams!
Forth rushed a western wind, backwards it rolled
The heavy battle's slow uplifted fold.
O! beauty terrible! he saw afar
The sultry ridges of the heaving war;
Saw down long avenues of disarray
The harsh-scythed chariots mow their levelled way.
'Twas doubtful long, but now the struggle pressed
With weight slow-whelming, gaining on the west;
Far back are swayed the wide Chaldean swarms,
They bow, they faint before the Persian arms.
But hark! a mighty trumpet in the west!
But lo! a warrior for the combat dressed
In mail refulgent, on a milk-white steed,
Comes dashing east with earth-devouring speed!
Started the Prince, pale grew his forehead, shook
His knees, as stood he still constrained to look;
For, ha! his father's form that champion shewed,
And plunging deep into the battle rode.
Far waved his sway, stemmed the Chaldean rout,
And changed their terror to a mighty shout,
By thousand thousands on the turrets thronged,
And lofty walls of Babylon prolonged.
A sultrier ferment stirred the field: a band
Thickened behind that arm of high command,
As onward, eastward, with the whirlpool's might,
It sucked the reflux of the scattered fight;
Till, with its full concentrated attack,
It bore the centre of the Persians back.
Nor this alone: in shouldered masses wide
Their van was cleared away on either side.
And deep was pushed that column unwithstood;
And aye that waste collateral was renewed,
Till eastward far the Babylonian host
More than regained the ground which they had lost.
Then reeled the Persian power; it wavered, broke,
Was forced, was driven in one commingled shock.
Their camels fled, their Indian archers ceased,
Their chariots rolled away into the east;
Far chased their host, consumed, like stubble sere
Wide fired when withering east winds close the year.

III.
The Prince his chamber sought; and bade with speed
Nurses and Merdan come, his counsellors of need.
They came:—"We task you not," he cried, "to say,
Not even to guess that Victor of this day.
Slaves! slaves! we'll hear you not. This night at least,
This one night more, we'll be a king and feast.
Our palace guards be doubled. Then when we
Are flown with cups, and filled with midnight glee,
Be Cyra brought; we'll make her drink old wine,
Her heart to warm, to make her beauty shine:
Long have we loved her; and, by Bel above!
Ere morn shall we be happy in her love."
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO VI.

THE BANQUET.
Come to the banquet! Lift your dazzled eyes,
Survey the glory that before you lies!
Far down yon avenue of fainting light,
The dim dance swims away upon the sight.
Behold the central feast! Behold the wine
Around in brimming undulations shine,
As shakes the joyous board! There Beauty sips
The purple glimmer with her murmuring lips;
For there the rose-crowned concubines are set,
For there the nymphs of Babylon are met,
Each one a princess! Their illumined eyes
Glitter with laughter, glance with coy surprise.
And aye the love-sick dulcimer is played,
Till faintly languishes each melting maid.
Here peaceful satraps quaff; with lofty breast
Built out with gladness, sits each courtly guest:
Has not this day secured to them the right
From victory to extend the festive night?
And then their King is near! But mark him the
Scarce seems that downcast eye the bliss to share
Fear quells his heart: Each bowl, each golden cup
With blood, for wine, to him seems welling up,
Smote by the light of that branched candlestick:
These Holy Vessels well may make him sick,
Torn from Jehovah's Courts with impious hands,
To light the unhallowed feasts of Heathen lands.
Hark! heard ye nought? Restless the Monarch sate,
And seemed to listen to some coming fate,
Some sound abrupt; as if that steed of white
Should burst upon them, stamping in his might.

II.

But see young Cyra brought by eunuch slaves,
Pale, pale as are the dead within their graves,
Yet beautiful, in vestments flowered and fair,
With hasty garlands in her raven hair.
Pleased are the nobles of the banquet, round
Soft murmurs tell the favour she has found.
'Gainst scorn and wrong her heart had high defence;
Approval quelled her glowing innocence,
And Cyra tore the roses from her head,
In trembling haste her Jewish vail to shed.
It was not there; but nature there supplied
More than the wimple of a regal bride,
How lovelier far! her eager hand unbound
Her hair dishevelled; far it fell around
Her comely form, black as the ancient night,
And vailed the virgin from that insolent light.

Entranced in love, forgetting every fear,
And flushed with wine, the reeling Prince drew near.
"Thou chosen flower of Jewry, why so pale?"
He cried, "Nay, look from out that envious vail.
Give me thy soft hand, come drink wine with me,
Cling to my love, my bosom's jewel be!"

Back Cyra stepped, her tresses back she threw;
Their wavy beauty o'er her shoulders flew.
But burned her eye intense, as far it looked,
Nor check of terror intermediate brooked;
For in a moment the prophetic might,
God-given, was hers, the seer's awful sight.
Pale, fixedly rapt, concentrated, entranced
She stood, one arm outstretched, one foot advanced;
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

Nor moved that foot, nor fell that arm disturb'd,
Not for a moment was her far glance curbed,
As from her lips, o'erruled with Heavenly flame,
The impetuous words that told the vision came
"Cling to thy love? I see a haughtier bride
Sent down from Heaven to clasp thy wedded side.
O! more than power, than majesty she brings,
Drawn from the loins of old anointed Kings,
To be her dower! Destruction is her name,
With terror crowned, with sorrow and with shame.
Her eyes of ravishment shall burn thee up!
And Babylon shall drink her mingled cup!
Weary thine idol-gods, old Babylon;
Yet tremble, tremble for thy glory gone!
City of waters! not o'erflowing thee,
Thy boasted streams shall yet thy ruin be!
Look to thy rivers! Shod with crusted blood,
The Persian mule—I see him on thy flood
Walk with dry hoof! Ha! in thy hour of trust
He stamps thy golden palaces to dust,
Which dims the bold winds of the wilderness
One hour—Then, where art thou? And who saith
Thy pomp? its place, even? Let the bittern hear
Give quaking answer from her sullen marsh;
From drier haunts, where desolate creatures dwelt,
Let tell the satyr, let the dragon tell!"

She ceased, she clasped her hands, nor yet with
Her eye concentrated in its piercing view.
"Nay," said the King, "it ill befits those lips
To talk of kingdoms', and of thrones' eclipse!
Rein now the lovely madness of those eyes,
And see the bliss that near before thee lies.
Thy harp? 'Twas brought with thee from out the
—The Monarch nodded to a waiting slave;
The harp was brought—"Now, strike one nuptial
Of those that graced thy wisest Sovereign's rein
Sing a glad song of Solomon." She took
Her harp inviolate, as with scorn she shook;
Forth in fierce bursts her holy quarrel leapt
'Gainst Zion's mockers, as the chords she swept.
"Nay," cried the Prince, and interposed his hand,
"Sweet Fury, stay; thy harp must be more bland.
Give us—we'll teach thee." Back in sacred pride
The Jewess shrunk. "It shall not be!" she cried.
"Our people's woes—Oh! Jacob's God, how long?—
Have filled these chords with many a mournful song,
Have sanctified them. For thy mighty King,
Thy father, too, how oft has thrilled each string,
To soothe him in the lonely wilderness,
By thee forgotten in his sore distress!
But I did ne'er forget him! Thou bad son,
My harp were tainted, touched by such a one,
Ungrateful, daring in voluptuous rest,
In the flowered garments of thy women dressed,
To shame the throne of such a father; yea,
With dogs of chase to vex him in thy play!
Ne'er shall thy finger touch one hallowed wire!"
Mighty beyond herself, in holy ire
She burst the chords, her harp asunder tore,
And wildly strewed the fragments on the floor.
In fast revulsion kneeling down she prayed
With trembling fervour to her God for aid.
Loud blew a trump: Up quickly did she spring.
"Hence to my chamber with her!" cried the King.
Slaves seized the maid; she shrieked; with effort strong,
O! minutes, moments could she but prolong!
Hark! shouts and clashing swords!—"Help, God, ere I
Must"—is she saved? The doors wide bursting fly;
He comes sublime—'tis he! the King restored!
Faces and forms of war dread thronging guard their lord.
III.

Dark stood the Warrior-King; his head was bare;
His nostril quivered, scorn and wrath were there;
Hot was his glancing brow; his eyes below
Were like the lightnings running to and fro.

But ha! to meet him, Merdan, Narses spring:—

"Those guards are faithless: Shall this madman King
Destroy us all?" With simultaneous start,
Each aimed a poniard at his Sovereign's heart.
But wary, he forestalled the double thrust;
Shrank; wheeling round, hewed Narses to the dust,
Who missed his aim: Nor Merdan’s took effect,
But glanced from off him, by his coralet checked;
And, ere the traitor could his blow repeat,
With severed neck he lay at Narses’ feet,
With gnashing teeth the bloody carpet tore,
His hands convulsive beating on the floor.

IV.

Dread paused the Potentate, and waved his hand;
He looked around, he saw his Cyra stand;
The grasp of slaves is on her shoulder still,
As yet they wait their office to fulfil.

"Off, menial dogs!" he cried with vehemence,
And withered up their spirits with his glance;
Down drop their hands, half stumbling they retreat.
But Cyra rushed and fainted at his feet.

He raised her, called his eunuchs, bade them bring
In haste sweet scents and water from the spring;
Till, soon revived, she leant upon his hand,
As sternly sad those revellers he scanned.
From the far halls the pomp had shrunk away,
A dreary silence there affrighted lay.
Here sullen stood the superseded King,
With prostrate heads around him in a ring.
The Sovereign turned, he called with brief command
His guards; they come, submissively they stand:—
"Guards, seize that slave imperial—yee, my son;
To ward with him till justice strict be done,
His reign be tried and purified! Away!
Wait further orders at the dawn of day."
Then came the ancient servants of their lord,
And faithful watch was to the Court restored.
Forth leading Cyra slow, the Monarch stayed
With arm paternal the much-trembling maid.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO VII.

THE DEATH OF CYRA.

"Majestic child of gratitude! this hour
I bid thee ask not half my realm for dower:
I dare not mock thy pure young soul; but say
How shall I honour—nought can thee repay?"
Thus spake the King to Cyra, as she stood
Before him trembling and with eyes subdued.
"Why tremble, child? Uplift to me the face
That met me first with smiles of infant grace,
Then when I saw it lie, a priceless gem
Shining in blood, all pleased, upturned to them
That trode around thee, and had scorned to bow
To save from crushing hoofs thy radiant brow.
I saw, O God! thy bloody hands in play
Grasp at the fetlocks in their perilous way;
I seized thee up, around my neck were thrown
Thy little arms, and thou becam'st mine own.
With pride I reigned in youth: In those high days
Thy harp was filled with Zion's sorrowing lays:
Yea, yet a child, sweet wisdom was thy dower;
Thou saw'st my pride, and sang'st Jehovah's power,
Who for his people stretched his darkened hand,
And drove down wonders o'er the Egyptian land:
The green curled heaps of the curbed sea, for them
The swift pursuing hosts of Pharaoh stem,
Heaved on them, whelming them; his Israel
O'er lands of drought and deserts terrible
He bore; before them went his cloud by day,
By night his fiery pillar led the way:
Such was thy anthem, such the argument,
That I might fear, for Judah might relent.
Dark dreams came o'er me; thy sweet soul refrained
From plaintive hymns, that I might not be pained:
O! more than generous, delicately just
To sorrow wert thou when I lay in dust!
But I am raised to reason's awful peace;
And ne'er to tell thy glory shall I cease.
With songs the gifted bards of Babylon,
With harps peculiar, shall thy praise make known.
Aloft a golden tablet shall declare,
In grateful lines, for me thy wondrous care,
Reared on those mountains: Thee all lands shall know;
And in thy presence queens shall softly go."

With tears of gratitude the virgin kissed
The Monarch's hand, low kneeling to be blessed.
"Be just," she rising said, "be more than kind.
To me; let Zion's sufferings touch thy mind!
Build up her walls, her Temple! Let thy hand
Shield back our people to their ancient land!
Would that the days were come, O! would they were,
When old, old men again shall be in her,
Again forth leaning on their staves shall meet.
With cheerful voices in each sunny street,
Shall count her towers, her later glories shew,
Shall tell the praise of one exalted foe!
Think not of me, my young life's waning fast,
I feel it here: I've loved thee through the past;
And now my King, dear father! in my hour
Of death I'll claim of thee a daughter's dower:
Thou shalt not then evade my last command,
To take my young bones to my own far land.
Thy love alone from tears has kept me free,
When oft I've longed my mother's home to see:
Ne'er shall I see it; but I'll make thee swear
To take my body hence, and lay it there.
And wilt thou not, as in thy days of need
I've loved thee much? Thou wilt, thou wilt indeed!"
"I will not look; I'll hear thee not; nor speak,
As if my Cyra were so faint and sick!
Cold winds indeed have hurt thee in that den;
But fear not, God will make thee well again.
I'll talk of hope: 'Twere more to me than power,
To have thee near me to my latest hour;
Yet thee to honour, to myself severe,
I'll haste to set thee in a loftier sphere.
The prophet Daniel shares my council-board,
Young, beauteous, wise, accepted of the Lord;
Say, couldst thou love him? 'Twere a joy to me,
In raising him esteemed, to honour thee.
Then for his sake, for thine, would I restore
Thy people, make Jerusalem as before,
Make Daniel king; his spousal queen be thou,
And round to thee I'll make the kingdoms bow."
"No, no!" she cried, and pressed her face, to hide
Her tears; but still they through betwixt her fingers slide.
One hand the Monarch took—he felt her start—
With gentle force he drew it to his heart:
"Come then, sweet child"—
"Restore, restore our race;
But let me die beholdimg still thy face!
O! send me not away! I will not go!
I cannot leave thee, for I love thee so!
Forgive me, Abraham's God!" His knees she grasped,
And to her bosom passionately clasped;
Low bowed her head: One quick convulsive thrill
Throughout her body passed, and all was still.

II.

He raised her up—Oh! terror! Oh! despair!
He pressed her heart—no pulse is stirring there.
Borne to a couch, he held that lovely head,
And gazed upon her in his silent dread;
By her unheeded now: No more she sees
Her father, king—O! more to her than these!
He started, called his slaves; but vain the aid
Of man, he closed the eyelids of the maid,
Then seized her lifeless hand: low bowing there,
He hid his face among her long black hair;
There lay through night, all silent in his woes,
And rose not up until the sun arose.
NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

CANTO VIII.

THE END OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR.

At morn the King arose: He bade be sought
Embalmers taught in Egypt; they were brought
With linen pure and costly gums they dressed
That virgin body for the grave's long rest.

II.

Within an ivory coffin Cyra lay,
With odorous lamps around her night and day,
That shone upon her with a sweet dim light;
And there the Monarch fed his sorrowing sight.
Yet oft retired he, as he gave his leave
To Salem's princes o'er the maid to grieve.
Ezekiel heard and came; by Daniel's side,
With them the Brethren in the furnace tried,
He walked; they stood around their daughter d
And lowly bowed was each majestic head.
Then communed they of Judah's earlier day,
Her prophet's vision, and her poet's lay,
Her judges, priests, her awful men who fought
Jehovah's battles, and deliverance wrought;
Forgetting not those women famed of old,
For deeds beyond a woman's blood made bold.
And much they spake of Cyra; great their prais
Of her whose zeal was Zion to upraise.
Then first, as ceased those mighty men to speak,
Ezekiel bowing kissed the virgin's cheek.
With lingering sorrow from the place they go.
Back comes the King in his peculiar wo.

Long years—even till his death—his heart would there
Have kept her; but he rose from his despair;
Recalled her wish; and, greatly self-denied,
Ordained her body should not there abide,
But to Judea—such her last command—
Should go, should lie within her father's land.

Just to the dear departed one, he bade
Be chariots yoked, and horsemen swift arrayed
At morn, a goodly escort, to convey
The honoured dead from Babylon away.
And in the tombs of Judah's princely race
Shall gentle Cyra have her burial-place:
Whate'er her birth, a praise with her she brings
More than the blood of many throned kings.

They come! they take her hence! He glared aloof;
Then, hasting forth, high stood upon his roof,
And saw that convoy darkly rush away
Towards Judah's land, beneath the western day:
Wild music with them mourned. On turrets stood,
On terraced roofs, the city's multitude,
All westward looking: thousand thousands laid
Their foreheads low for Cyra, honoured maid.
As for the King, he tore his straitened vest,
To ease the swelling trouble of his breast;
And watched that sable troop, till from his eyes,
Far fused to mist, the swimming vision dies.

III.

Down walked the grief-struck King; but yet put on
A governed wo, and sate upon his throne:
His laws renewed, the glories of his State
Arranged, with god-like majesty he sate.
IV.
Remembering then his pledge by Cyra won,
To raise her people up, the King bade this be done.
But grief for her already had subdued
His heart, relapsing to its mournful mood.
Quick drooped his life: the same revolving year
Saw Cyra die, and him upon his bier.
And captive Zion was forgot, and wept
The father's promise by the son unkept.