

ZARA, THE BATHER

("Sara, belle d'indolence.")

[XIX., August, 1828.]

In a swinging hammock lying,  
    Lightly flying,  
Zara, lovely indolent,  
    O'er a fountain's crystal wave  
    There to lave  
Her young beauty--see her bent.

As she leans, so sweet and soft,  
    Flitting oft,  
O'er the mirror to and fro,  
    Seems that airy floating bat,  
    Like a feather  
From some sea-gull's wing of snow.

Every time the frail boat laden  
    With the maiden  
Skims the water in its flight,  
    Starting from its trembling sheen,  
    Swift are seen

A white foot and neck so white.

As that lithe foot's timid tips

Quick she dips,

Passing, in the rippling pool,

(Blush, oh! snowiest ivory!)

Frolic, she

Laughs to feel the pleasant cool.

Here displayed, but half concealed--

Half revealed,

Each bright charm shall you behold,

In her innocence emerging,

As a-verging

On the wave her hands grow cold.

For no star howe'er divine

Has the shine

Of a maid's pure loveliness,

Frightened if a leaf but quivers

As she shivers,

Veiled with naught but dripping trees.

By the happy breezes fanned

See her stand,--

Blushing like a living rose,

On her bosom swelling high  
If a fly  
Dare to seek a sweet repose.

In those eyes which maiden pride  
Fain would hide,  
Mark how passion's lightnings sleep!  
And their glance is brighter far  
Than the star  
Brightest in heaven's bluest deep.

O'er her limbs the glittering current  
In soft torrent  
Rains adown the gentle girl,  
As if, drop by drop, should fall,  
One and all  
From her necklace every pearl.

Lengthening still the reckless pleasure  
At her leisure,  
Care-free Zara ever slow  
As the hammock floats and swings  
Smiles and sings,  
To herself, so sweet and low.

"Oh, were I a capitana,

Or sultana,  
Amber should be always mixt  
In my bath of jewelled stone,  
Near my throne,  
Griffins twain of gold betwixt.

"Then my hammock should be silk,  
White as milk;  
And, more soft than down of dove,  
Velvet cushions where I sit  
Should emit  
Perfumes that inspire love.

"Then should I, no danger near,  
Free from fear,  
Revel in my garden's stream;  
Nor amid the shadows deep  
Dread the peep,  
Of two dark eyes' kindling gleam.

"He who thus would play the spy,  
On the die  
For such sight his head must throw;  
In his blood the sabre naked  
Would be slakèd,  
Of my slaves of ebon brow.

"Then my rich robes trailing show

As I go,

None to chide should be so bold;

And upon my sandals fine

How should shine

Rubies worked in cloth-of-gold!"

Fancying herself a queen,

All unseen,

Thus vibrating in delight;

In her indolent coquetting

Quite forgetting

How the hours wing their flight.

As she lists the showery tinkling

Of the sprinkling

By her wanton curvets made;

Never pauses she to think

Of the brink

Where her wrapper white is laid.

To the harvest-fields the while,

In long file,

Speed her sisters' lively band,

Like a flock of birds in flight

Streaming light,  
Dancing onward hand in hand.

And they're singing, every one,

As they run

This the burden of their lay:

"Fie upon such idleness!

Not to dress

Earlier on harvest-day!"

JOHN L. O'SULLIVAN.