

ANGEL OR DEMON.

("Tu domines notre âge; ange ou démon, qu'importe!")

[I. vii.]

Angel or demon! thou,--whether of light
The minister, or darkness--still dost sway
This age of ours; thine eagle's soaring flight
Bears us, all breathless, after it away.
The eye that from thy presence fain would stray,
Shuns thee in vain; thy mighty shadow thrown
Rests on all pictures of the living day,
And on the threshold of our time alone,
Dazzling, yet sombre, stands thy form, Napoleon!

Thus, when the admiring stranger's steps explore
The subject-lands that 'neath Vesuvius be,
Whether he wind along the enchanting shore
To Portici from fair Parthenope,
Or, lingering long in dreamy reverie,
O'er loveliest Ischia's od'rous isle he stray,
Wooed by whose breath the soft and am'rous sea
Seems like some languishing sultana's lay,
A voice for very sweets that scarce can win its way.

Him, whether Paestum's solemn fane detain,
Shrouding his soul with meditation's power;
Or at Pozzuoli, to the sprightly strain
Of tarantella danced 'neath Tuscan tower,
Listening, he while away the evening hour;
Or wake the echoes, mournful, lone and deep,
Of that sad city, in its dreaming bower
By the volcano seized, where mansions keep
The likeness which they wore at that last fatal sleep;

Or be his bark at Posillippo laid,
While as the swarthy boatman at his side
Chants Tasso's lays to Virgil's pleased shade,
Ever he sees, throughout that circuit wide,
From shaded nook or sunny lawn espied,
From rocky headland viewed, or flow'ry shore,
From sea, and spreading mead alike descried,
The Giant Mount, tow'ring all objects o'er,
And black'ning with its breath th' horizon evermore!

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