

MARRIAGE AND FEASTS.

("La salle est magnifique.")

[IV. Aug. 23, 1839.]

The hall is gay with limpid lustre bright--  
The feast to pampered palate gives delight--  
The sated guests pick at the spicy food,  
And drink profusely, for the cheer is good;  
And at that table--where the wise are few--  
Both sexes and all ages meet the view;  
The sturdy warrior with a thoughtful face--  
The am'rous youth, the maid replete with grace,  
The prattling infant, and the hoary hair  
Of second childhood's proselytes--are there;--  
And the most gaudy in that spacious hall,  
Are e'er the young, or oldest of them all  
Helmet and banner, ornament and crest,  
The lion rampant, and the jewelled vest,  
The silver star that glitters fair and white,  
The arms that tell of many a nation's might--  
Heraldic blazonry, ancestral pride,  
And all mankind invents for pomp beside,  
The wingèd leopard, and the eagle wild--

All these encircle woman, chief and child;  
Shine on the carpet burying their feet,  
Adorn the dishes that contain their meat;  
And hang upon the drapery, which around  
Falls from the lofty ceiling to the ground,  
Till on the floor its waving fringe is spread,  
As the bird's wing may sweep the roses' bed.--

Thus is the banquet ruled by Noise and Light,  
Since Light and Noise are foremost on the site.

The chamber echoes to the joy of them  
Who throng around, each with his diadem--  
Each seated on proud throne--but, lesson vain!  
Each sceptre holds its master with a chain!  
Thus hope of flight were futile from that hall,  
Where chiefest guest was most enslaved of all!  
The godlike-making draught that fires the soul  
The Love--sweet poison-honey--past control,  
(Formed of the sexual breath--an idle name,  
Offspring of Fancy and a nervous frame)--  
Pleasure, mad daughter of the darksome Night,  
Whose languid eye flames when is fading light--  
The gallant chases where a man is borne  
By stalwart charger, to the sounding horn--  
The sheeny silk, the bed of leaves of rose,

Made more to soothe the sight than court repose;  
The mighty palaces that raise the sneer  
Of jealous mendicants and wretches near--  
The spacious parks, from which horizon blue  
Arches o'er alabaster statues new;  
Where Superstition still her walk will take,  
Unto soft music stealing o'er the lake--  
The innocent modesty by gems undone--  
The qualms of judges by small brib'ry won--  
The dread of children, trembling while they play--  
The bliss of monarchs, potent in their sway--  
The note of war struck by the culverin,  
That snakes its brazen neck through battle din--  
The military millipede  
That tramples out the guilty seed--  
The capital all pleasure and delight--  
And all that like a town or army chokes  
The gazer with foul dust or sulphur smokes.  
The budget, prize for which ten thousand bait  
A subtle hook, that ever, as they wait  
Catches a weed, and drags them to their fate,  
While gleamingly its golden scales still spread--  
Such were the meats by which these guests were fed.

A hundred slaves for lazy master cared,  
And served each one with what was e'er prepared

By him, who in a sombre vault below,  
Peppered the royal pig with peoples' woe,  
And grimly glad went laboring till late--  
The morose alchemist we know as Fate!  
That ev'ry guest might learn to suit his taste,  
Behind had Conscience, real or mock'ry, placed;  
Conscience a guide who every evil spies,  
But royal nurses early pluck out both his eyes!

Oh! at the table there be all the great,  
Whose lives are bubbles that best joys inflate!  
Superb, magnificent of revels--doubt  
That sagest lose their heads in such a rout!  
In the long laughter, ceaseless roaming round,  
Joy, mirth and glee give out a maelström's sound;  
And the astonished gazer casts his care,  
Where ev'ry eyeball glistens in the flare.

But oh! while yet the singing Hebes pour  
Forgetfulness of those without the door--  
At very hour when all are most in joy,  
And the hid orchestra annuls annoy,  
Woe--woe! with jollity a-top the heights,  
With further tapers adding to the lights,  
And gleaming 'tween the curtains on the street,  
Where poor folks stare--hark to the heavy feet!

Some one smites roundly on the gilded grate,  
Some one below will be admitted straight,  
Some one, though not invited, who'll not wait!  
Close not the door! Your orders are vain breath--  
That stranger enters to be known as Death--  
Or merely Exile--clothed in alien guise--  
Death drags away--with his prey Exile flies!

Death is that sight. He promenades the hall,  
And casts a gloomy shadow on them all,  
'Neath which they bend like willows soft,  
Ere seizing one--the dumbest monarch oft,  
And bears him to eternal heat and drouth,  
While still the toothsome morsel's in his mouth.

G.W.M. REYNOLDS.