

POEMS OF YOUTH

INTRODUCTION TO POEMS--1831

LETTER TO MR. B--.

"WEST POINT, 1831.

"DEAR B..... Believing only a portion of my former volume to be worthy a second edition-that small portion I thought it as well to include in the present book as to republish by itself. I have therefore herein combined 'Al Aaraaf' and 'Tamerlane' with other poems hitherto unprinted. Nor have I hesitated to insert from the 'Minor Poems,' now omitted, whole lines, and even passages, to the end that being placed in a fairer light, and the trash shaken from them in which they were imbedded, they may have some chance of being seen by posterity.

"It has been said that a good critique on a poem may be written by one who is no poet himself. This, according to your idea and mine of poetry, I feel to be false-the less poetical the critic, the less just

the critique, and the converse. On this account, and because there are but few B-'s in the world, I would be as much ashamed of the world's good opinion as proud of your own. Another than yourself might here observe, 'Shakespeare is in possession of the world's good opinion, and yet Shakespeare is the greatest of poets. It appears then that the world judge correctly, why should you be ashamed of their favorable judgment?' The difficulty lies in the interpretation of the word 'judgment' or 'opinion.' The opinion is the world's, truly, but it may be called theirs as a man would call a book his, having bought it; he did not write the book, but it is his; they did not originate the opinion, but it is theirs. A fool, for example, thinks Shakespeare a great poet-yet the fool has never read Shakespeare. But the fool's neighbor, who is a step higher on the Andes of the mind, whose head (that is to say, his more exalted thought) is too far above the fool to be seen or understood, but whose feet (by which I mean his everyday actions) are sufficiently near to be discerned, and by means of which that superiority is ascertained, which but for them would never have been discovered--this neighbor asserts that Shakespeare is a great poet--the fool believes him, and it is henceforward his opinion. This neighbor's own opinion has, in like manner, been adopted from one above him, and so, ascendingly, to a few gifted individuals who kneel around the summit, beholding, face to face, the master spirit who stands upon the pinnacle.

"You are aware of the great barrier in the path of an American writer. He is read, if at all, in preference to the combined and established wit

of the world. I say established; for it is with literature as with law or empire-an established name is an estate in tenure, or a throne in possession. Besides, one might suppose that books, like their authors, improve by travel-their having crossed the sea is, with us, so great a distinction. Our antiquaries abandon time for distance; our very fops glance from the binding to the bottom of the title-page, where the mystic characters which spell London, Paris, or Genoa, are precisely so many letters of recommendation.

"I mentioned just now a vulgar error as regards criticism. I think the notion that no poet can form a correct estimate of his own writings is another. I remarked before that in proportion to the poetical talent would be the justice of a critique upon poetry. Therefore a bad poet would, I grant, make a false critique, and his self-love would infallibly bias his little judgment in his favor; but a poet, who is indeed a poet, could not, I think, fail of making-a just critique; whatever should be deducted on the score of self-love might be replaced on account of his intimate acquaintance with the subject; in short, we have more instances of false criticism than of just where one's own writings are the test, simply because we have more bad poets than good. There are, of course, many objections to what I say: Milton is a great example of the contrary; but his opinion with respect to the 'Paradise Regained' is by no means fairly ascertained. By what trivial circumstances men are often led to assert what they do not really believe! Perhaps an inadvertent word has descended to posterity. But, in fact, the 'Paradise Regained' is little, if at all, inferior to the

'Paradise Lost,' and is only supposed so to be because men do not like epics, whatever they may say to the contrary, and, reading those of Milton in their natural order, are too much wearied with the first to derive any pleasure from the second.

"I dare say Milton preferred 'Comus' to either-. if so-justly.

"As I am speaking of poetry, it will not be amiss to touch slightly upon the most singular heresy in its modern history-the heresy of what is called, very foolishly, the Lake School. Some years ago I might have been induced, by an occasion like the present, to attempt a formal refutation of their doctrine; at present it would be a work of supererogation. The wise must bow to the wisdom of such men as Coleridge and Southey, but, being wise, have laughed at poetical theories so prosaically exemplified.

"Aristotle, with singular assurance, has declared poetry the most philosophical of all writings*-but it required a Wordsworth to pronounce it the most metaphysical. He seems to think that the end of poetry is, or should be, instruction; yet it is a truism that the end of our existence is happiness; if so, the end of every separate part of our existence, everything connected with our existence, should be still happiness. Therefore the end of instruction should be happiness; and happiness is another name for pleasure;-therefore the end of instruction should be pleasure: yet we see the above-mentioned opinion implies precisely the reverse.

"To proceed: *ceteris paribus*, he who pleases is of more importance to his fellow-men than he who instructs, since utility is happiness, and pleasure is the end already obtained which instruction is merely the means of obtaining.

"I see no reason, then, why our metaphysical poets should plume themselves so much on the utility of their works, unless indeed they refer to instruction with eternity in view; in which case, sincere respect for their piety would not allow me to express my contempt for their judgment; contempt which it would be difficult to conceal, since their writings are professedly to be understood by the few, and it is the many who stand in need of salvation. In such case I should no doubt be tempted to think of the devil in 'Melmoth.' who labors indefatigably, through three octavo volumes, to accomplish the destruction of one or two souls, while any common devil would have demolished one or two thousand.

"Against the subtleties which would make poetry a study-not a passion-it becomes the metaphysician to reason-but the poet to protest. Yet Wordsworth and Coleridge are men in years; the one imbued in contemplation from his childhood; the other a giant in intellect and learning. The diffidence, then, with which I venture to dispute their authority would be overwhelming did I not feel, from the bottom of my heart, that learning has little to do with the imagination-intellect with the passions-or age with poetry.

"Trifles, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below,'

are lines which have done much mischief. As regards the greater truths, men oftener err by seeking them at the bottom than at the top; Truth lies in the huge abysses where wisdom is sought-not in the palpable palaces where she is found. The ancients were not always right in hiding--the goddess in a well; witness the light which Bacon has thrown upon philosophy; witness the principles of our divine faith--that moral mechanism by which the simplicity of a child may overbalance the wisdom of a man.

"We see an instance of Coleridge's liability to err, in his 'Biographia Literaria'--professedly his literary life and opinions, but, in fact, a treatise de omni scibili et quibusdam aliis. He goes wrong by reason of his very profundity, and of his error we have a natural type in the contemplation of a star. He who regards it directly and intensely sees, it is true, the star, but it is the star without a ray--while he who surveys it less inquisitively is conscious of all for which the star is useful to us below--its brilliancy and its beauty.

"As to Wordsworth, I have no faith in him. That he had in youth the feelings of a poet I believe--for there are glimpses of extreme delicacy in his writings--(and delicacy is the poet's own kingdom--his El Dorado)--but they have the appearance of a better day recollected; and

glimpses, at best, are little evidence of present poetic fire; we know that a few straggling flowers spring up daily in the crevices of the glacier.

"He was to blame in wearing away his youth in contemplation with the end of poetizing in his manhood. With the increase of his judgment the light which should make it apparent has faded away. His judgment consequently is too correct. This may not be understood-but the old Goths of Germany would have understood it, who used to debate matters of importance to their State twice, once when drunk, and once when sober-sober that they might not be deficient in formality--drunk lest they should be destitute of vigor.

"The long wordy discussions by which he tries to reason us into admiration of his poetry, speak very little in his favor: they are full of such assertions as this (I have opened one of his volumes at random)--'Of genius the only proof is the act of doing well what is worthy to be done, and what was never done before;'-indeed? then it follows that in doing what is unworthy to be done, or what has been done before, no genius can be evinced; yet the picking of pockets is an unworthy act, pockets have been picked time immemorial, and Barrington, the pickpocket, in point of genius, would have thought hard of a comparison with William Wordsworth, the poet.

"Again, in estimating the merit of certain poems, whether they be Ossian's or Macpherson's can surely be of little consequence, yet, in

order to prove their worthlessness, Mr. W. has expended many pages in the controversy. Tantaene animis? Can great minds descend to such absurdity? But worse still: that he may bear down every argument in favor of these poems, he triumphantly drags forward a passage, in his abomination with which he expects the reader to sympathize. It is the beginning of the epic poem 'Temora.' 'The blue waves of Ullin roll in light; the green hills are covered with day; trees shake their dusty heads in the breeze.' And this this gorgeous, yet simple imagery, where all is alive and panting with immortality-this, William Wordsworth, the author of 'Peter Bell,' has selected for his contempt. We shall see what better he, in his own person, has to offer. Imprimis:

"And now she's at the pony's tail,
And now she's at the pony's head,
On that side now, and now on this;
And, almost stifled with her bliss,

A few sad tears does Betty shed....
She pats the pony, where or when
She knows not.... happy Betty Foy!
Oh, Johnny, never mind the doctor!

Secondly:

"The dew was falling fast, the-stars began to blink;
I heard a voice: it said-"Drink, pretty creature, drink!"

And, looking o'er the hedge, be-fore me I espied
A snow-white mountain lamb, with a-maiden at its side.
No other sheep was near,--the lamb was all alone,
And by a slender cord was-tether'd to a stone.'

"Now, we have no doubt this is all true: we will believe it, indeed we will, Mr. W. Is it sympathy for the sheep you wish to excite? I love a sheep from the bottom of my heart.

"But there are occasions, dear B-, there are occasions when even Wordsworth is reasonable. Even Stamboul, it is said, shall have an end, and the most unlucky blunders must come to a conclusion. Here is an extract from his preface:-

"Those who have been accustomed to the phraseology of modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to a conclusion (impossible!) will, no doubt, have to struggle with feelings of awkwardness; (ha! ha! ha!) they will look round for poetry (ha! ha! ha! ha!), and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts have been permitted to assume that title.' Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!

"Yet, let not Mr. W. despair; he has given immortality to a wagon, and the bee Sophocles has transmitted to eternity a sore toe, and dignified a tragedy with a chorus of turkeys.

"Of Coleridge, I can not speak but with reverence. His towering

intellect! his gigantic power! To use an author quoted by himself, 'Tai trouvé souvent que la plupart des sectes ont raison dans une bonne partie de ce qu'elles avancent, mais non pas en ce qu'elles nient,' and to employ his own language, he has imprisoned his own conceptions by the barrier he has erected against those of others. It is lamentable to think that such a mind should be buried in metaphysics, and, like the Nyctanthes, waste its perfume upon the night alone. In reading that man's poetry, I tremble like one who stands upon a volcano, conscious from the very darkness bursting from the crater, of the fire and the light that are weltering below.

"What is poetry?--Poetry! that Proteus-like idea, with as many appellations as the nine-titled Corcyra! 'Give me,' I demanded of a scholar some time ago, 'give me a definition of poetry.' 'Trèsvolontiers;' and he proceeded to his library, brought me a Dr. Johnson, and overwhelmed me with a definition. Shade of the immortal Shakespeare! I imagine to myself the scowl of your spiritual eye upon the profanity of that scurrilous Ursa Major. Think of poetry, dear B-, think of poetry, and then think of Dr. Samuel Johnson! Think of all that is airy and fairy-like, and then of all that is hideous and unwieldy; think of his huge bulk, the Elephant! and then-and then think of the 'Tempest'--the 'Midsummer-Night's Dream'--Prospero Oberon--and Titania!

"A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having, for its object, an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being

a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music, without the idea, is simply music; the idea, without the music, is prose, from its very definitiveness.

"What was meant by the invective against him who had no music in his soul?

"To sum up this long rigmarole, I have, dear B--, what you, no doubt, perceive, for the metaphysical poets as poets, the most sovereign contempt. That they have followers proves nothing-

"No Indian prince has to his palace
More followers than a thief to the gallows.

SONNET--TO SCIENCE

SCIENCE! true daughter of Old Time thou art!

Who alterest all things with thy peering eyes.

Why preyest thou thus upon the poet's heart,

Vulture, whose wings are dull realities?

How should he love thee? or how deem thee wise,

Who wouldst not leave him in his wandering

To seek for treasure in the jewelled skies

Albeit he soared with an undaunted wing?

Hast thou not dragged Diana from her car?

And driven the Hamadryad from the wood

To seek a shelter in some happier star?

Hast thou not torn the Naiad from her flood,

The Elfin from the green grass, and from me

The summer dream beneath the tamarind tree?

AL AARAAF (*)

PART I.

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

'Twas a sweet time for Nesace--for there
Her world lay lolling on the golden air,
Near four bright suns--a temporary rest--
An oasis in desert of the blest.

* A star was discovered by Tycho Brahe which appeared

suddenly in the heavens--attained, in a few days, a
brilliancy surpassing that of Jupiter--then as suddenly
disappeared, and has never been seen since.

Away--away--'mid seas of rays that roll
Empyrean splendor o'er th' unchained soul--
The soul that scarce (the billows are so dense)
Can struggle to its destin'd eminence--
To distant spheres, from time to time, she rode,
And late to ours, the favour'd one of God--
But, now, the ruler of an anchor'd realm,
She throws aside the sceptre--leaves the helm,
And, amid incense and high spiritual hymns,
Laves in quadruple light her angel limbs.

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

And all the opal'd air in color bound.

All hurriedly she knelt upon a bed
Of flowers: of lilies such as rear'd the head
*On the fair Capo Deucato, and sprang
So eagerly around about to hang
Upon the flying footsteps of--deep pride--
†Of her who lov'd a mortal--and so died.
The Sephalica, budding with young bees,
Uprear'd its purple stem around her knees:

* On Santa Maura--olim Deucadia.

*And gemmy flower, of Trebizond misnam'd--
Inmate of highest stars, where erst it sham'd
All other loveliness: its honied dew
(The fabled nectar that the heathen knew)
Deliriously sweet, was dropp'd from Heaven,
And fell on gardens of the unforgiven
In Trebizond--and on a sunny flower
So like its own above that, to this hour,
It still remaineth, torturing the bee
With madness, and unwonted reverie:
In Heaven, and all its environs, the leaf
And blossom of the fairy plant, in grief
Disconsolate linger--grief that hangs her head,

Repenting follies that full long have fled,
Heaving her white breast to the balmy air,
Like guilty beauty, chasten'd, and more fair:
Nyctanthes too, as sacred as the light
She fears to perfume, perfuming the night:
**And Clytia pondering between many a sun,
While pettish tears adown her petals run:
***And that aspiring flower that sprang on Earth--
And died, ere scarce exalted into birth,
Bursting its odorous heart in spirit to wing
Its way to Heaven, from garden of a king:

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

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

*** There is cultivated in the king's garden at Paris, a species of serpentine aloes without prickles, whose large and beautiful flower exhales a strong odour of the vanilla, during the time of its expansion, which is very short. It

does not blow till towards the month of July--you then
perceive it gradually open its petals--expand them--fade
and die.--St. Pierre.

*And Valisnerian lotus thither flown

From struggling with the waters of the Rhone:

**And thy most lovely purple perfume, Zante!

Isola d'oro!--Fior di Levante!

***And the Nelumbo bud that floats for ever

With Indian Cupid down the holy river--

Fair flowers, and fairy! to whose care is given

****To bear the Goddess' song, in odors, up to Heaven:

"Spirit! that dwellest where,

In the deep sky,

The terrible and fair,

In beauty vie!

Beyond the line of blue--

The boundary of the star

Which turneth at the view

Of thy barrier and thy bar--

Of the barrier overgone

By the comets who were cast

From their pride, and from their throne

To be drudges till the last--

To be carriers of fire

(The red fire of their heart)
With speed that may not tire
And with pain that shall not part--

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

** The Hyacinth.

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

**** And golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints.
--Rev. St. John.

Who livest--that we know--
In Eternity--we feel--
But the shadow of whose brow
What spirit shall reveal?
Tho' the beings whom thy Nesace,
Thy messenger hath known
Have dream'd for thy Infinity
*A model of their own--

Thy will is done, Oh, God!
The star hath ridden high
Thro' many a tempest, but she rode
Beneath thy burning eye;
And here, in thought, to thee--
In thought that can alone
Ascend thy empire and so be
A partner of thy throne--

* The Humanitarians held that God was to be understood as having a really human form.--Vide Clarke's Sermons, vol. 1, page 26, fol. edit.

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

This opinion, in spite of many testimonies to the contrary, could never have been very general. Andeus, a Syrian of Mesopotamia, was condemned for the opinion, as heretical. He lived in the beginning of the fourth century. His disciples were called Anthropmorphites.--Vide Du Pin.

Among Milton's poems are these lines:--

Dicite sacrorum præsidēs nemorum Deæ, &c.
Quis ille primus cujus ex imagine
Natura solers finxit humanum genus?
Eternus, incorruptus, æquævus polo,
Unusque et universus exemplar Dei.--And afterwards,
Non cui profundum Cæcitas lumen dedit
Dircæus augur vidit hunc alto sinu, &c.

*By winged Fantasy,
My embassy is given,
Till secrecy shall knowledge be
In the environs of Heaven."

She ceas'd--and buried then her burning cheek
Abash'd, amid the lilies there, to seek
A shelter from the fervour of His eye;
For the stars trembled at the Deity.
She stirr'd not--breath'd not--for a voice was there
How solemnly pervading the calm air!
A sound of silence on the startled ear
Which dreamy poets name "the music of the sphere."
Ours is a world of words: Quiet we call
"Silence"--which is the merest word of all.
All Nature speaks, and ev'n ideal things
Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings--

But ah! not so when, thus, in realms on high
The eternal voice of God is passing by,
And the red winds are withering in the sky!

**"What tho' in worlds which sightless cycles run,
Link'd to a little system, and one sun--
Where all my love is folly and the crowd
Still think my terrors but the thunder cloud,
The storm, the earthquake, and the ocean-wrath--
(Ah! will they cross me in my angrier path?)
What tho' in worlds which own a single sun
The sands of Time grow dimmer as they run,

* Seltsamen Tochter Jovis
Seinem Schosskinde
Der Phantasie.--Göethe.

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

Yet thine is my resplendency, so given
To bear my secrets thro' the upper Heaven.
Leave tenantless thy crystal home, and fly,
With all thy train, athwart the moony sky--
*Apart--like fire-flies in Sicilian night,
And wing to other worlds another light!
Divulge the secrets of thy embassy

To the proud orbs that twinkle--and so be
To ev'ry heart a barrier and a ban
Lest the stars totter in the guilt of man!"

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

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

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

Part II.

HIGH on a mountain of enamell'd head--
Such as the drowsy shepherd on his bed

Of giant pasturage lying at his ease,
Raising his heavy eyelid, starts and sees
With many a mutter'd "hope to be forgiven"
What time the moon is quadrated in Heaven--
Of rosy head, that towering far away
Into the sunlit ether, caught the ray
Of sunken suns at eve--at noon of night,
While the moon danc'd with the fair stranger light--
Uprear'd upon such height arose a pile
Of gorgeous columns on th' unburthen'd air,
Flashing from Parian marble that twin smile
Far down upon the wave that sparkled there,
And nursled the young mountain in its lair.
*Of molten stars their pavement, such as fall
Thro' the ebon air, besilvering the pall
Of their own dissolution, while they die--
Adorning then the dwellings of the sky.
A dome, by linked light from Heaven let down,
Sat gently on these columns as a crown--
A window of one circular diamond, there,
Look'd out above into the purple air,

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

And rays from God shot down that meteor chain

And hallow'd all the beauty twice again,
Save when, between th' Empyrean and that ring,
Some eager spirit flapp'd his dusky wing.
But on the pillars Seraph eyes have seen
The dimness of this world: that greyish green
That Nature loves the best for Beauty's grave
Lurk'd in each cornice, round each architrave--
And every sculptur'd cherub thereabout
That from his marble dwelling peeréd out
Seem'd earthly in the shadow of his niche--
Achaian statues in a world so rich?
*Friezes from Tadmor and Persepolis--
From Balbec, and the stilly, clear abyss
**Of beautiful Gomorrah! O, the wave
Is now upon thee--but too late to save!

Sound loves to revel in a summer night:
Witness the murmur of the grey twilight

* Voltaire, in speaking of Persepolis, says, "Je connois bien l'admiration qu'inspirent ces ruines--mais un palais erigé au pied d'une chaine des rochers sterils--peut il être un chef d'œuvre des arts!" [Voila les arguments de M. Voltaire.]

† "Oh! the wave"--Ula Degusi is the Turkish appellation;

but, on its own shores, it is called Bahar Loth, or Almotanah. There were undoubtedly more than two cities engulfed in the "dead sea." In the valley of Siddim were five--Adrah, Zeboin, Zoar, Sodom and Gomorrah. Stephen of Byzantium mentions eight, and Strabo thirteen, (engulphed)--but the last is out of all reason.

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

*That stole upon the ear, in Eyraco,
Of many a wild star-gazer long ago--
That stealeth ever on the ear of him
Who, musing, gazeth on the distance dim.
And sees the darkness coming as a cloud--
***Is not its form--its voice--most palpable and loud?

But what is this?--it cometh--and it brings
A music with it--'tis the rush of wings--
A pause--and then a sweeping, falling strain
And Nesace is in her halls again.
From the wild energy of wanton haste

Her cheeks were flushing, and her lips apart;
And zone that clung around her gentle waist
Had burst beneath the heaving of her heart.
Within the centre of that hall to breathe
She paus'd and panted, Zanthel! all beneath,
The fairy light that kiss'd her golden hair
And long'd to rest, yet could but sparkle there!

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

* Eyraco--Chaldea.

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

*** Fairies use flowers for their charactery.--Merry Wives
of Windsor. [William Shakespeare]

"Neath blue-bell or streamer--

Or tufted wild spray
That keeps, from the dreamer,
 *The moonbeam away--
Bright beings! that ponder,
 With half closing eyes,
On the stars which your wonder
 Hath drawn from the skies,
Till they glance thro' the shade, and
 Come down to your brow
Like--eyes of the maiden
 Who calls on you now--
Arise! from your dreaming
 In violet bowers,
To duty beseeming
 These star-litten hours--
And shake from your tresses
 Encumber'd with dew
The breath of those kisses
 That cumber them too--
(O! how, without you, Love!
 Could angels be blest?)
Those kisses of true love
 That lull'd ye to rest!
Up!--shake from your wing
 Each hindering thing:
The dew of the night--

It would weigh down your flight;
And true love caresses--
O! leave them apart!

* In Scripture is this passage--"The sun shall not harm thee by day, nor the moon by night." It is perhaps not generally known that the moon, in Egypt, has the effect of producing blindness to those who sleep with the face exposed to its rays, to which circumstance the passage evidently alludes.

They are light on the tresses,
But lead on the heart.

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

Ligeia! whatever
 Thy image may be,
No magic shall sever
 Thy music from thee.
Thou hast bound many eyes
 In a dreamy sleep--
But the strains still arise
 Which thy vigilance keep--
The sound of the rain
 Which leaps down to the flower,
And dances again
 In the rhythm of the shower--
†The murmur that springs
 From the growing of grass

* The Albatross is said to sleep on the wing.

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

Are the music of things--
 But are modell'd, alas!--

Away, then my dearest,
 O! hie thee away
To springs that lie clearest
 Beneath the moon-ray--
To lone lake that smiles,
 In its dream of deep rest,
At the many star-isles
 That enjewel its breast--
Where wild flowers, creeping,
 Have mingled their shade,
On its margin is sleeping
 Full many a maid--
Some have left the cool glade, and
 * Have slept with the bee--
Arouse them my maiden,
 On moorland and lea--
Go! breathe on their slumber,
 All softly in ear,
The musical number
 They slumber'd to hear--
For what can awaken
 An angel so soon

* The wild bee will not sleep in the shade if there be moonlight. The rhyme in this verse, as in one about sixty lines before, has an appearance of affectation. It is,

however, imitated from Sir W. Scott, or rather from Claud
Halcro--in whose mouth I admired its effect:

O! were there an island,
Tho' ever so wild
Where woman might smile, and
No man be beguil'd, &c.

Whose sleep hath been taken
Beneath the cold moon,
As the spell which no slumber
Of witchery may test,
The rythmical number
Which lull'd him to rest?"

Spirits in wing, and angels to the view,
A thousand seraphs burst th' Empyrean thro',
Young dreams still hovering on their drowsy flight--
Seraphs in all but "Knowledge," the keen light
That fell, refracted, thro' thy bounds, afar
O Death! from eye of God upon that star:
Sweet was that error--sweeter still that death--
Sweet was that error--ev'n with us the breath
Of science dims the mirror of our joy--
To them 'twere the Simoom, and would destroy--
For what (to them) availeth it to know

That Truth is Falsehood--or that Bliss is Woe?
Sweet was their death--with them to die was rife
With the last ecstasy of satiate life--
Beyond that death no immortality--
But sleep that pondereth and is not "to be"--
And there--oh! may my weary spirit dwell--
*Apart from Heaven's Eternity--and yet how far from Hell!

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

Un no rompido sueno--
Un dia puro--allegre--libre
Quiera--
Libre de amor--de zelo--
De odio--de esperanza--de rezelo.---Luis Ponce de Leon.

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

annihilation.

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

*Unguided Love hath fallen--'mid "tears of perfect moan."

He was a goodly spirit--he who fell:
A wanderer by moss-y-mantled well--
A gazer on the lights that shine above--
A dreamer in the moonbeam by his love:
What wonder? For each star is eye-like there,
And looks so sweetly down on Beauty's hair--
And they, and ev'ry mossy spring were holy
To his love-haunted heart and melancholy.
The night had found (to him a night of wo)
Upon a mountain crag, young Angelo--
Beetling it bends athwart the solemn sky,
And scowls on starry worlds that down beneath it lie.
Here sate he with his love--his dark eye bent
With eagle gaze along the firmament:

Now turn'd it upon her--but ever then
It trembled to the orb of EARTH again.

"Tante, dearest, see! how dim that ray!
How lovely 'tis to look so far away!

* There be tears of perfect moan

Wept for thee in Helicon.--Milton.

She seem'd not thus upon that autumn eve
I left her gorgeous halls--nor mourn'd to leave.
That eve--that eve--I should remember well--
The sun-ray dropp'd, in Lemnos, with a spell
On th'Arabesque carving of a gilded hall
Wherein I sate, and on the draperied wall--
And on my eye-lids--O the heavy light!
How drowsily it weigh'd them into night!
On flowers, before, and mist, and love they ran
With Persian Saadi in his Gulistan:
But O that light!--I slumber'd--Death, the while,
Stole o'er my senses in that lovely isle
So softly that no single silken hair
Awoke that slept--or knew that it was there.

The last spot of Earth's orb I trod upon

*Was a proud temple call'd the Parthenon--

More beauty clung around her column'd wall
**Than ev'n thy glowing bosom beats withal,
And when old Time my wing did disenthral
Thence sprang I--as the eagle from his tower,
And years I left behind me in an hour.
What time upon her airy bounds I hung
One half the garden of her globe was flung
Unrolling as a chart unto my view--
Tenantless cities of the desert too!
Ianthe, beauty crowded on me then,
And half I wish'd to be again of men."

"My Angelo! and why of them to be?
A brighter dwelling-place is here for thee--

* It was entire in 1687--the most elevated spot in Athens.

** Shadowing more beauty in their airy brows
Than have the white breasts of the Queen of Love.--Marlowe.

And greener fields than in yon world above,
And women's loveliness--and passionate love."

"But, list, Ianthe! when the air so soft
*Fail'd, as my pennon'd spirit leapt aloft,
Perhaps my brain grew dizzy--but the world

I left so late was into chaos hurl'd--
Sprang from her station, on the winds apart,
And roll'd, a flame, the fiery Heaven athwart.
Methought, my sweet one, then I ceased to soar
And fell--not swiftly as I rose before,
But with a downward, tremulous motion thro'
Light, brazen rays, this golden star unto!
Nor long the measure of my falling hours,
For nearest of all stars was thine to ours--
Dread star! that came, amid a night of mirth,
A red Dædalion on the timid Earth.

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

* Pennon--for pinion.--Milton.

We paus'd before the heritage of men,
And thy star trembled--as doth Beauty then!"

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

TAMERLANE

KIND solace in a dying hour!

Such, father, is not (now) my theme--

I will not madly deem that power

Of Earth may shrive me of the sin

Unearthly pride hath revell'd in--

I have no time to dote or dream:

You call it hope--that fire of fire!

It is but agony of desire:

If I can hope--Oh God! I can--

Its fount is holier--more divine--

I would not call thee fool, old man,

But such is not a gift of thine.

Know thou the secret of a spirit

Bow'd from its wild pride into shame.

O! yearning heart! I did inherit

Thy withering portion with the fame,

The searing glory which hath shone

Amid the jewels of my throne,

Halo of Hell! and with a pain

Not Hell shall make me fear again--

O! craving heart, for the lost flowers

And sunshine of my summer hours!

Th' undying voice of that dead time,

With its interminable chime,
Rings, in the spirit of a spell,
Upon thy emptiness--a knell.

I have not always been as now:
The fever'd diadem on my brow
 I claim'd and won usurpingly--
Hath not the same fierce heirdom given
 Rome to the Caesar--this to me?
 The heritage of a kingly mind,
And a proud spirit which hath striven
 Triumphantly with human kind.

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

So late from Heaven--that dew--it fell
 (Mid dreams of an unholy night)
Upon me--with the touch of Hell,
 While the red flashing of the light
From clouds that hung, like banners, o'er,
 Appeared to my half-closing eye

The pageantry of monarchy,
And the deep trumpet-thunder's roar
Came hurriedly upon me, telling
Of human battle, where my voice,
My own voice, silly child!--was swelling
(O! how my spirit would rejoice,
And leap within me at the cry)
The battle-cry of Victory!

The rain came down upon my head
Unshelter'd--and the heavy wind
Was giantlike--so thou, my mind!--
It was but man, I thought, who shed
Laurels upon me: and the rush--
The torrent of the chilly air
Gurgled within my ear the crush
Of empires--with the captive's prayer--
The hum of suiters--and the tone
Of flattery 'round a sovereign's throne.

My passions, from that hapless hour,
Usurp'd a tyranny which men
Have deem'd, since I have reach'd to power;
My innate nature--be it so:
But, father, there liv'd one who, then,
Then--in my boyhood--when their fire

Burn'd with a still intenser glow,
(For passion must, with youth, expire)
E'en then who knew this iron heart
In woman's weakness had a part.

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

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

Trust to the fire within, for light?

We grew in age--and love--together,

Roaming the forest, and the wild;

My breast her shield in wintry weather--

And, when the friendly sunshine smil'd,

And she would mark the opening skies,

I saw no Heaven--but in her eyes.

Young Love's first lesson is--the heart:

For 'mid that sunshine, and those smiles,

When, from our little cares apart,

And laughing at her girlish wiles,

I'd throw me on her throbbing breast,

And pour my spirit out in tears--

There was no need to speak the rest--

No need to quiet any fears

Of her--who ask'd no reason why,

But turn'd on me her quiet eye!

Yet more than worthy of the love

My spirit struggled with, and strove,

When, on the mountain peak, alone,

Ambition lent it a new tone--

I had no being--but in thee:

The world, and all it did contain

In the earth--the air--the sea--
 Its joy--its little lot of pain
That was new pleasure--the ideal,
 Dim, vanities of dreams by night--
And dimmer nothings which were real--
 (Shadows--and a more shadowy light!)
Parted upon their misty wings,
 And, so, confusedly, became
 Thine image, and--a name--a name!
Two separate--yet most intimate things.

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

We walk'd together on the crown
Of a high mountain which look'd down
Afar from its proud natural towers

Of rock and forest, on the hills--
The dwindled hills! begirt with bowers
And shouting with a thousand rills.

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

I wrapp'd myself in grandeur then,
And donn'd a visionary crown--
Yet it was not that Fantasy
Had thrown her mantle over me--
But that, among the rabble--men,
Lion ambition is chain'd down--
And crouches to a keeper's hand--
Not so in deserts where the grand
The wild--the terrible conspire
With their own breath to fan his fire.

Look 'round thee now on Samarcand!--

Is not she queen of Earth? her pride
Above all cities? in her hand

Their destinies? in all beside
Of glory which the world hath known
Stands she not nobly and alone?
Falling--her veriest stepping-stone
Shall form the pedestal of a throne--
And who her sovereign? Timour--he

Whom the astonished people saw
Striding o'er empires haughtily
A diadem'd outlaw--

O! human love! thou spirit given,
On Earth, of all we hope in Heaven!
Which fall'st into the soul like rain
Upon the Siroc wither'd plain,
And failing in thy power to bless
But leav'st the heart a wilderness!
Idea! which bindest life around
With music of so strange a sound
And beauty of so wild a birth--
Farewell! for I have won the Earth!

When Hope, the eagle that tower'd, could see

No cliff beyond him in the sky,

His pinions were bent droopingly--
And homeward turn'd his soften'd eye.
'Twas sunset: when the sun will part
There comes a sullenness of heart
To him who still would look upon
The glory of the summer sun.
That soul will hate the ev'ning mist,
So often lovely, and will list
To the sound of the coming darkness (known
To those whose spirits hearken) as one
Who, in a dream of night, would fly
But cannot from a danger nigh.

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

I reach'd my home--my home no more--

For all had flown who made it so--

I pass'd from out its mossy door,

And, tho' my tread was soft and low,

A voice came from the threshold stone

Of one whom I had earlier known--

O! I defy thee, Hell, to show

On beds of fire that burn below,

A humbler heart--a deeper wo--

Father, I firmly do believe--

I know--for Death, who comes for me

From regions of the blest afar,

Where there is nothing to deceive,

Hath left his iron gate ajar,

And rays of truth you cannot see

Are flashing thro' Eternity--

I do believe that Eblis hath

A snare in ev'ry human path--

Else how, when in the holy grove

I wandered of the idol, Love,

Who daily scents his snowy wings

With incense of burnt offerings

From the most unpolluted things,

Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven

Above with trelliced rays from Heaven

No mote may shun--no tiniest fly
The light'ning of his eagle eye--
How was it that Ambition crept,
 Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt
 In the tangles of Love's very hair?

1829.

TO HELEN

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

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

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

1831.

THE VALLEY OF UNREST

Once it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars,
Nightly, from their azure towers,
To keep watch above the flowers,
In the midst of which all day
The red sun-light lazily lay.
Now each visiter shall confess
The sad valley's restlessness.
Nothing there is motionless--
Nothing save the airs that brood
Over the magic solitude.
Ah, by no wind are stirred those trees
That palpitate like the chill seas
Around the misty Hebrides!
Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
That rustle through the unquiet Heaven
Uneasily, from morn till even,
Over the violets there that lie
In myriad types of the human eye--
Over the lilies there that wave
And weep above a nameless grave!
They wave:--from out their fragrant tops
Eternal dews come down in drops.

They weep:--from off their delicate stems
Perennial tears descend in gems.

1831.

ISRAFEL*

IN Heaven a spirit doth dwell
"Whose heart-strings are a lute;"
None sing so wildly well
As the angel Israfel,
And the giddy stars (so legends tell)
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
Of his voice, all mute.

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

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

* And the angel Israfeel, whose heart-strings are a lut, and
who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.--KORAN.

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

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
Israfeeli, who despisest
An unimpassion'd song:
To thee the laurels belong
Best bard, because the wisest!
Merrily live, and long!

The extacies above

 With thy burning measures suit--
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
 With the fervor of thy lute--
 Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this

 Is a world of sweets and sour;
 Our flowers are merely--flowers,
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
 Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell

Where Israfel

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

1836.

TO ----

1

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

2

Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrin'd
Then desolately fall,
O! God! on my funereal mind
Like starlight on a pall--

3

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

1829.

TO ----

I HEED not that my earthly lot

Hath-little of Earth in it--

That years of love have been forgot

In the hatred of a minute:--

I mourn not that the desolate

Are happier, sweet, than I,

But that you sorrow for my fate

Who am a passer-by.

1829.

TO THE RIVER----

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

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

1829.

SONG

I SAW thee on thy bridal day--

When a burning blush came o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee:

And in thine eye a kindling light

(Whatever it might be)
Was all on Earth my aching sight
Of Loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame--

As such it well may pass--
Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
In the breast of him, alas!

Who saw thee on that bridal day,

When that deep blush would come o'er thee,
Though happiness around thee lay,
The world all love before thee.

1827.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

1

Thy soul shall find itself alone
'Mid dark thoughts of the grey tomb-stone--
Not one, of all the crowd, to pry
Into thine hour of secrecy:

2

Be silent in that solitude
Which is not loneliness--for then
The spirits of the dead who stood
In life before thee are again
In death around thee--and their will
Shall then overshadow thee: be still.

3

For the night--tho' clear--shall frown--
And the stars shall look not down,
From their high thrones in the Heaven,
With light like Hope to mortals given--
But their red orbs, without beam,

To thy weariness shall seem
As a burning and a fever
Which would cling to thee for ever:

4

Now are thoughts thou shalt not banish--
Now are visions ne'er to vanish--
From thy spirit shall they pass
No more--like dew-drop from the grass:

5

The breeze--the breath of God--is still--
And the mist upon the hill
Shadowy--shadowy--yet unbroken,
Is a symbol and a token--
How it hangs upon the trees,
A mystery of mysteries!--

1827.

A DREAM

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

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

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

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

1827.

ROMANCE

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

Of late, eternal Condor years
So shake the very Heaven on high
With tumult as they thunder by,
I have no time for idle cares
Through gazing on the unquiet sky.
And when an hour with calmer wings
Its down upon thy spirit flings--
That little time with lyre and rhyme
To while away--forbidden things!
My heart would feel to be a crime
Unless it trembled with the strings.

1829.

FAIRY-LAND

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

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

1831.

THE LAKE ---- TO----

IN spring of youth it was my lot
To haunt of the wide earth a spot
The which I could not love the less--
So lovely was the loneliness
Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
And the tall pines that tower'd around.

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

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

Death was in that poisonous wave,
And in its gulf a fitting grave
For him who thence could solace bring
To his lone imagining--

Whose solitary soul could make
An Eden of that dim lake.

1827.

EVENING STAR

'Twas noontide of summer,
And midtime of night,
And stars, in their orbits,
Shone pale, through the light
Of the brighter, cold moon.
'Mid planets her slaves,
Herself in the Heavens,
Her beam on the waves.

I gazed awhile
On her cold smile;
Too cold-too cold for me--
There passed, as a shroud,
A fleecy cloud,
And I turned away to thee,

Proud Evening Star,
In thy glory afar
And dearer thy beam shall be;
For joy to my heart
Is the proud part
Thou bearest in Heaven at night.,
And more I admire
Thy distant fire,

Than that colder, lowly light.

1827.

"THE HAPPIEST DAY."

I

THE happiest day-the happiest hour
My seared and blighted heart hath known,
The highest hope of pride and power,
I feel hath flown.

Of power! said I? Yes! such I ween
But they have vanished long, alas!
The visions of my youth have been
But let them pass.

III

And pride, what have I now with thee?
Another brow may ev'n inherit
The venom thou hast poured on me
Be still my spirit!

IV

The happiest day-the happiest hour
Mine eyes shall see-have ever seen
The brightest glance of pride and power

I feet have been:

V

But were that hope of pride and power
Now offered with the pain
Ev'n then I felt-that brightest hour
I would not live again:

VI

For on its wing was dark alloy
And as it fluttered-fell
An essence-powerful to destroy
A soul that knew it well.

1827.

IMITATION

A dark unfathom'd tide
Of interminable pride--
A mystery, and a dream,
Should my early life seem;
I say that dream was fraught
With a wild, and waking thought
Of beings that have been,
Which my spirit hath not seen,
Had I let them pass me by,
With a dreaming eye!
Let none of earth inherit
That vision on my spirit;
Those thoughts I would control
As a spell upon his soul:
For that bright hope at last
And that light time have past,
And my worldly rest hath gone
With a sigh as it pass'd on
I care not tho' it perish
With a thought I then did cherish.
1827.

HYMN TO ARISTOGEITON AND HARMODIUS

Translation from the Greek

I

WREATHED in myrtle, my sword I'll conceal
Like those champions devoted and brave,
When they plunged in the tyrant their steel,
And to Athens deliverance gave.

II

Beloved heroes! your deathless souls roam
In the joy breathing isles of the blest;
Where the mighty of old have their home
Where Achilles and Diomed rest

III

In fresh myrtle my blade I'll entwine,
Like Harmodius, the gallant and good,
When he made at the tutelary shrine

A libation of Tyranny's blood.

IV

Ye deliverers of Athens from shame!
Ye avengers of Liberty's wrongs!
Endless ages shall cherish your fame,
Embalmed in their echoing songs!

1827.

DREAMS

Oh! that my young life were a lasting dream!
My spirit not awak'ning, till the beam
Of an Eternity should bring the morrow:
Yes! tho' that long dream were of hopeless sorrow,
'Twere better than the dull reality
Of waking life to him whose heart shall be,
And hath been ever, on the chilly earth,
A chaos of deep passion from his birth!

But should it be--that dream eternally

Continuing--as dreams have been to me
In my young boyhood--should it thus be given,
'Twere folly still to hope for higher Heaven!
For I have revell'd, when the sun was bright
In the summer sky; in dreamy fields of light,
And left unheeding my very heart
In climes of mine imagining--apart
From mine own home, with beings that have been
Of mine own thought--what more could I have seen?

'Twas once & only once & the wild hour
From my remembrance shall not pass--some power
Or spell had bound me--'twas the chilly wind
Came o'er me in the night & left behind
Its image on my spirit, or the moon
Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
Too coldly--or the stars--howe'er it was
That dream was as that night wind--let it pass.

I have been happy--tho' but in a dream
I have been happy--& I love the theme--
Dreams! in their vivid colouring of life--
As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife
Of semblance with reality which brings
To the delirious eye more lovely things
Of Paradise & Love--& all our own!

Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known.

{From an earlier MS. Than in the book--ED.}

"IN YOUTH I HAVE KNOWN ONE"

How often we forget all time, when lone
Admiring Nature's universal throne;
Her woods--her wilds--her mountains-the intense
Reply of Hers to Our intelligence!

I

IN youth I have known one with whom the Earth
In secret communing held-as he with it,
In daylight, and in beauty, from his birth:
Whose fervid, flickering torch of life was lit
From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
A passionate light such for his spirit was fit
And yet that spirit knew-not in the hour
Of its own fervor-what had o'er it power.

II

Perhaps it may be that my mind is wrought
To a fever* by the moonbeam that hangs o'er,
But I will half believe that wild light fraught
With more of sovereignty than ancient lore
Hath ever told-or is it of a thought
The unembodied essence, and no more

That with a quickening spell doth o'er us pass
As dew of the night-time, o'er the summer grass?

III

Doth o'er us pass, when, as th' expanding eye
To the loved object--so the tear to the lid
Will start, which lately slept in apathy?
And yet it need not be--(that object) hid
From us in life--but common--which doth lie
Each hour before us--but then only bid
With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken
T' awake us--'Tis a symbol and a token

IV

Of what in other worlds shall be--and given
In beauty by our God, to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven
Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
That high tone of the spirit which hath striven
Though not with Faith--with godliness--whose throne
With desperate energy 't hath beaten down;
Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown.

* Query "fervor"?--ED.

A PÆAN.

I.

How shall the burial rite be read?
The solemn song be sung?
The requiem for the loveliest dead,
That ever died so young?

II.

Her friends are gazing on her,
And on her gaudy bier,
And weep!--oh! to dishonor
Dead beauty with a tear!

III.

They loved her for her wealth--
And they hated her for her pride--
But she grew in feeble health,
And they love her--that she died.

IV.

They tell me (while they speak
Of her "costly broider'd pall")
That my voice is growing weak--
That I should not sing at all--

V.

Or that my tone should be
Tun'd to such solemn song
So mournfully--so mournfully,
That the dead may feel no wrong.

VI.

But she is gone above,
With young Hope at her side,
And I am drunk with love
Of the dead, who is my bride.--

VII.

Of the dead--dead who lies
All perfum'd there,
With the death upon her eyes,

And the life upon her hair.

VIII.

Thus on the coffin loud and long
I strike--the murmur sent
Through the grey chambers to my song,
Shall be the accompaniment.

IX.

Thou died'st in thy life's June--
But thou did'st not die too fair:
Thou did'st not die too soon,
Nor with too calm an air.

X.

From more than fiends on earth,
Thy life and love are riven,
To join the untainted mirth
Of more than thrones in heaven--

XII.

Therefore, to thee this night

I will no requiem raise,
But waft thee on thy flight,
With a Pæan of old days.