

Classic Poetry Series

Percy Bysshe Shelley
- poems -

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Percy Bysshe Shelley(1792-1822)

Shelley, born the heir to rich estates and the son of an Member of Parliament, went to University College, Oxford in 1810, but in March of the following year he and a friend, Thomas Jefferson Hogg, were both expelled for the suspected authorship of a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*.

In 1811 he met and eloped to Edinburgh with Harriet Westbrook and, one year later, went with her and her older sister first to Dublin, then to Devon and North Wales, where they stayed for six months into 1813. However, by 1814, and with the birth of two children, their marriage had collapsed and Shelley eloped once again, this time with Mary Godwin.

Along with Mary's step-sister, the couple travelled to France, Switzerland and Germany before returning to London where he took a house with Mary on the edge of Great Windsor Park and wrote *Alastor* (1816), the poem that first brought him fame.

In 1816 Shelley spent the summer on Lake Geneva with Byron and Mary who had begun work on her *Frankenstein*. In the autumn of that year Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine in Hyde Park and Shelley then married Mary and settled with her, in 1817, at Great Marlow, on the Thames. They later travelled to Italy, where Shelley wrote the sonnet *Ozymandias* (written 1818) and translated Plato's *Symposium* from the Greek. Shelley himself drowned in a sailing accident in 1822.

A Bridal Song

I.

The golden gates of Sleep unbar
Where Strength and Beauty, met together,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather!
Night, with all thy stars look down,--
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew,--
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight;--
Haste, swift Hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

II.

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her!
Holy stars, permit no wrong!
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn,—ere it be long!
O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun!
Come along!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Dialogue

DEATH:

For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave,
I come, care-worn tenant of life, from the grave,
Where Innocence sleeps 'neath the peace-giving sod,
And the good cease to tremble at Tyranny's nod;
I offer a calm habitation to thee,--
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?
My mansion is damp, cold silence is there,
But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of despair;
Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath,
Dares dispute with grim Silence the empire of Death.
I offer a calm habitation to thee,--
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL:

Mine eyelids are heavy; my soul seeks repose,
It longs in thy cells to embosom its woes,
It longs in thy cells to deposit its load,
Where no longer the scorpions of Perfidy goad,--
Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away,
And Bigotry's bloodhounds lose scent of their prey.
Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine empire is o'er,
What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore?

DEATH:

Cease, cease, wayward Mortal! I dare not unveil
The shadows that float o'er Eternity's vale;
Nought waits for the good but a spirit of Love,
That will hail their blest advent to regions above.
For Love, Mortal, gleams through the gloom of my sway,
And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray.
Hast thou loved?--Then depart from these regions of hate,
And in slumber with me blunt the arrows of fate.
I offer a calm habitation to thee.--
Say, victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

MORTAL:

Oh! sweet is thy slumber! oh! sweet is the ray
Which after thy night introduces the day;

How concealed, how persuasive, self-interest's breath,
Though it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death!
I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,
Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall,
And duty forbids, though I languish to die,
When departure might heave Virtue's breast with a sigh.
O Death! O my friend! snatch this form to thy shrine,
And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Dirge

Rough wind, that moanest loud
Grief too sad for song;
Wild wind, when sullen cloud
Knells all the night long;
Sad storm whose tears are vain,
Bare woods, whose branches strain,
Deep caves and dreary main,--
Wail, for the world's wrong!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Fragment: To Music

Silver key of the fountain of tears,
Where the spirit drinks till the brain is wild;
Softest grave of a thousand fears,
Where their mother, Care, like a drowsy child,
Is laid asleep in flowers.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Hate-Song

A hater he came and sat by a ditch,
And he took an old cracked lute;
And he sang a song which was more of a screech
'Gainst a woman that was a brute.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Lament

O World! O Life! O Time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more -Oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight:
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more -Oh, never more!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A New National Anthem

I.

God prosper, speed, and save,
God raise from England's grave
Her murdered Queen!
Pave with swift victory
The steps of Liberty,
Whom Britons own to be
Immortal Queen.

II.

See, she comes throned on high,
On swift Eternity!
God save the Queen!
Millions on millions wait,
Firm, rapid, and elate,
On her majestic state!
God save the Queen!

III.

She is Thine own pure soul
Moulding the mighty whole,--
God save the Queen!
She is Thine own deep love
Rained down from Heaven above,--
Wherever she rest or move,
God save our Queen!

IV.

'Wilder her enemies
In their own dark disguise,--
God save our Queen!
All earthly things that dare
Her sacred name to bear,
Strip them, as kings are, bare;
God save the Queen!

V.

Be her eternal throne
Built in our hearts alone--

God save the Queen!
Let the oppressor hold
Canopied seats of gold;
She sits enthroned of old
O'er our hearts Queen.

VI.

Lips touched by seraphim
Breathe out the choral hymn
'God save the Queen!'
Sweet as if angels sang,
Loud as that trumpet's clang
Wakening the world's dead gang,--
God save the Queen!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Roman's Chamber

I.

In the cave which wild weeds cover
Wait for thine aethereal lover;
For the pallid moon is waning,
O'er the spiral cypress hanging
And the moon no cloud is staining.

II.

It was once a Roman's chamber,
Where he kept his darkest revels,
And the wild weeds twine and clamber;
It was then a chasm for devils.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Serpent-Face

His face was like a snake's -- wrinkled and loose
And withered--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Summer Evening Churchyard, Lechlade, Gloucestershire

THE wind has swept from the wide atmosphere
 Each vapour that obscured the sunset's ray,
 And pallid Evening twines its beaming hair
In duskier braids around the languid eyes of Day:
 Silence and Twilight, unbeloved of men,
 Creep hand in hand from yon obscurest glen.

They breathe their spells towards the departing day,
 Encompassing the earth, air, stars, and sea;
 Light, sound, and motion, own the potent sway,
Responding to the charm with its own mystery.
 The winds are still, or the dry church-tower grass
 Knows not their gentle motions as they pass.

Thou too, aerial pile, whose pinnacles
 Point from one shrine like pyramids of fire,
 Obey'st I in silence their sweet solemn spells,
Clothing in hues of heaven thy dim and distant spire,
 Around whose lessening and invisible height
 Gather among the stars the clouds of night.

The dead are sleeping in their sepulchres:
 And, mouldering as they sleep, a thrilling sound,
 Half sense half thought, among the darkness stirs,
Breathed from their wormy beds all living things around,
 And, mingling with the still night and mute sky,
 Its awful hush is felt inaudibly.

Thus solemnized and softened, death is mild
 And terrorless as this serenest night.
 Here could I hope, like some enquiring child
Sporting on graves, that death did hide from human sight
 Sweet secrets, or beside its breathless sleep
 That loveliest dreams perpetual watch did keep.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

A Tale Of Society As It Is: From Facts, 1811

I.

She was an aged woman; and the years
Which she had numbered on her toilsome way
Had bowed her natural powers to decay.
She was an aged woman; yet the ray
Which faintly glimmered through her starting tears,
Pressed into light by silent misery,
Hath soul's imperishable energy.
She was a cripple, and incapable
To add one mite to gold-fed luxury:
And therefore did her spirit dimly feel
That poverty, the crime of tainting stain,
Would merge her in its depths, never to rise again.

II.

One only son's love had supported her.
She long had struggled with infirmity,
Lingering to human life-scenes; for to die,
When fate has spared to rend some mental tie,
Would many wish, and surely fewer dare.
But, when the tyrant's bloodhounds forced the child
For his cursed power unhallowed arms to wield--
Bend to another's will--become a thing
More senseless than the sword of battlefield--
Then did she feel keen sorrow's keenest sting;
And many years had passed ere comfort they would bring.

III.

For seven years did this poor woman live
In unparticipated solitude.
Thou mightst have seen her in the forest rude
Picking the scattered remnants of its wood.
If human, thou mightst then have learned to grieve.
The gleanings of precarious charity
Her scantiness of food did scarce supply.
The proofs of an unspeaking sorrow dwelt
Within her ghastly hollowness of eye:
Each arrow of the season's change she felt.
Yet still she groans, ere yet her race were run,

One only hope: it was—once more to see her son.

IV.

It was an eve of June, when every star
Spoke peace from Heaven to those on earth that live.
She rested on the moor. 'Twas such an eve
When first her soul began indeed to grieve:
Then he was here; now he is very far.
The sweetness of the balmy evening
A sorrow o'er her aged soul did fling,
Yet not devoid of rapture's mingled tear:
A balm was in the poison of the sting.
This aged sufferer for many a year
Had never felt such comfort. She suppressed
A sigh--and turning round, clasped William to her breast!

V.

And, though his form was wasted by the woe
Which tyrants on their victims love to wreak,
Though his sunk eyeballs and his faded cheek
Of slavery's violence and scorn did speak,
Yet did the aged woman's bosom glow.
The vital fire seemed re-illumed within
By this sweet unexpected welcoming.
Oh, consummation of the fondest hope
That ever soared on Fancy's wildest wing!
Oh, tenderness that foundst so sweet a scope!
Prince who dost pride thee on thy mighty sway,
When THOU canst feel such love, thou shalt be great as they!

VI.

Her son, compelled, the country's foes had fought,
Had bled in battle; and the stern control
Which ruled his sinews and coerced his soul
Utterly poisoned life's unmingled bowl,
And unsubduable evils on him brought.
He was the shadow of the lusty child
Who, when the time of summer season smiled,
Did earn for her a meal of honesty,
And with affectionate discourse beguiled
The keen attacks of pain and poverty;
Till Power, as envying her this only joy,

From her maternal bosom tore the unhappy boy.

VII.

And now cold charity's unwelcome dole
Was insufficient to support the pair;
And they would perish rather than would bear
The law's stern slavery, and the insolent stare
With which law loves to rend the poor man's soul--
The bitter scorn, the spirit-sinking noise
Of heartless mirth which women, men, and boys
Wake in this scene of legal misery.

...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Adonais

I weep for Adonais -he is dead!
O, weep for Adonais! though our tears
Thaw not the frost which binds so dear a head!
And thou, sad Hour, selected from all years
To mourn our loss, rouse thy obscure compeers,
And teach them thine own sorrow, say: "With me
Died Adonais; till the Future dares
Forget the Past, his fate and fame shall be
An echo and a light unto eternity!"

Where wert thou, mighty Mother, when he lay,
When thy Son lay, pierced by the shaft which flies
In darkness? where was Iorn Urania
When Adonais died? With veiled eyes,
Mid listening Echoes, in her Paradise
She sate, while one, with soft enamoured breath,
Rekindled all the fading melodies
With which, like flowers that mock the corpse beneath,
He had adorned and hid the coming bulk of death.

O, weep for Adonais -he is dead!
Wake, melancholy Mother, wake and weep!
Yet wherefore? Quench within their burning bed
Thy fiery tears, and let thy loud heart keep
Like his, a mute and uncomplaining sleep;
For he is gone, where all things wise and fair
Descend; -oh, dream not that the amorous Deep
Will yet restore him to the vital air;
Death feeds on his mute voice, and laughs at our despair.

Most musical of mourners, weep again!
Lament anew, Urania! -He died,
Who was the Sire of an immortal strain,
Blind, old, and lonely, when his country's pride,
The priest, the slave, and the liberticide
Trampled and mocked with many a loathed rite
Of lust and blood; he went, unterrified,
Into the gulf of death; but his clear Sprite
Yet reigns o'er earth; the third among the sons of light.

Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Not all to that bright station dared to climb;
And happier they their happiness who knew,
Whose tapers yet burn through that night of time
In which suns perished; others more sublime,
Struck by the envious wrath of man or god,
Have sunk, extinct in their refulgent prime;
And some yet live, treading the thorny road
Which leads, through toil and hate, to Fame's serene abode.

But now, thy youngest, dearest one, has perished -
The nursling of thy widowhood, who grew,
Like a pale flower by some sad maiden cherished,
And fed with true-love tears, instead of dew;
Most musical of mourners, weep anew!
Thy extreme hope, the loveliest and the last,
The bloom, whose petals nipped before they blew
Died on the promise of the fruit, is waste;
The broken lily lies -the storm is overpast.

To that high Capital, where kingly Death
Keeps his pale court in beauty and decay,
He came; and bought, with price of purest breath,
A grave among the eternal. -Come away!
Haste, while the vault of blue Italian day
Is yet his fitting charnel-roof! while still
He lies, as if in dewy sleep he lay;
Awake him not! surely he takes his fill
Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.

He will awake no more, oh, never more! -
Within the twilight chamber spreads apace
The shadow of white Death, and at the door
Invisible Corruption waits to trace
His extreme way to her dim dwelling-place;
The eternal Hunger sits, but pity and awe
Soothe her pale rage, nor dares she to deface
So fair a prey, till darkness, and the law
Of change, shall o'er his sleep the mortal curtain draw.

O, weep for Adonais! -The quick Dreams,

The passion-winged Ministers of thought,
Who were his flocks, whom near the living streams
Of his young spirit he fed, and whom he taught
The love which was its music, wander not, -
Wander no more, from kindling brain to brain,
But droop there, whence they sprung; and mourn their lot
Round the cold heart, where, after their sweet pain,
They ne'er will gather strength, or find a home again.

And one with trembling hands clasps his cold head,
And fans him with her moonlight wings, and cries,
"Our love, our hope, our sorrow, is not dead;
See, on the silken fringe of his faint eyes,
Like dew upon a sleeping flower, there lies
A tear some Dream has loosened from his brain."
Lost Angel of a ruined Paradise!
She knew not 'twas her own; as with no stain
She faded, like a cloud which had outwept its rain.

One from a lucid urn of starry dew
Washed his light limbs as if embalming them;
Another clipped her profuse locks, and threw
The wreath upon him, like an anadem,
Which frozen tears instead of pearls begem;
Another in her wilful grief would break
Her bow and winged reeds, as if to stem
A greater loss with one which was more weak;
And dull the barbed fire against his frozen cheek.

Another Splendour on his mouth alit,
That mouth, whence it was wont to draw the breath
Which gave it strength to pierce the guarded wit,
And pass into the panting heart beneath
With lightning and with music: the damp death
Quenched its caress upon his icy lips;
And, as a dying meteor stains a wreath
Of moonlight vapour, which the cold night clips,
It flushed through his pale limbs, and passed to its eclipse.

And others came... Desires and Adorations,
Winged Persuasions and veiled Destinies,
Splendours, and Glooms, and glimmering Incarnations

Of hopes and fears, and twilight Phantasies;
And Sorrow, with her family of Sighs,
And Pleasure, blind with tears, led by the gleam
Of her own dying smile instead of eyes,
Came in slow pomp; -the moving pomp might seem
Like pageantry of mist on an autumnal stream.

All he had loved, and moulded into thought,
From shape, and hue, and odour, and sweet sound,
Lamented Adonais. Morning sought
Her eastern watch-tower, and her hair unbound,
Wet with the tears which should adorn the ground,
Dimmed the aerial eyes that kindle day;
Afar the melancholy thunder moaned,
Pale Ocean in unquiet slumber lay,
And the wild Winds flew round, sobbing in their dismay.

Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains,
And feeds her grief with his remembered lay,
And will no more reply to winds or fountains,
Or amorous birds perched on the young green spray,
Or herdsman's horn, or bell at closing day;
Since she can mimic not his lips, more dear
Than those for whose disdain she pined away
Into a shadow of all sounds: -a drear
Murmur, between their songs, is all the woodmen hear.

Grief made the young Spring wild, and she threw down
Her kindling buds, as if she Autumn were,
Or they dead leaves; since her delight is flown,
For whom should she have waked the sullen year?
To Phoebus was not Hyacinth so dear
Nor to himself Narcissus, as to both
Thou, Adonais: wan they stand and sere
Amid the faint companions of their youth,
With dew all turned to tears; odour, to sighing ruth.

Thy spirit's sister, the lorn nightingale
Mourns not her mate with such melodious pain;
Not so the eagle, who like thee could scale
Heaven, and could nourish in the sun's domain
Her mighty youth with morning, doth complain,

Soaring and screaming round her empty nest,
As Albion wails for thee: the curse of Cain
Light on his head who pierced thy innocent breast,
And scared the angel soul that was its earthly guest!

Ah, woe is me! Winter is come and gone,
But grief returns with the revolving year;
The airs and streams renew their joyous tone;
The ants, the bees, the swallows reappear;
Fresh leaves and flowers deck the dead Season's bier;
The amorous birds now pair in every brake,
And build their mossy homes in field and brere;
And the green lizard, and the golden snake,
Like unimprisoned flames, out of their trance awake.

Through wood and stream and field and hill and Ocean
A quickening life from the Earth's heart has burst
As it has ever done, with change and motion,
From the great morning of the world when first
God dawned on Chaos; in its stream immersed,
The lamps of Heaven flash with a softer light;
All baser things pant with life's sacred thirst;
Diffuse themselves; and spend in love's delight
The beauty and the joy of their renewed might.

The leprous corpse, touched by this spirit tender,
Exhales itself in flowers of gentle breath;
Like incarnations of the stars, when splendour
Is changed to fragrance, they illumine death
And mock the merry worm that wakes beneath;
Nought we know, dies. Shall that alone which knows
Be as a sword consumed before the sheath
By sightless lightning? -the intense atom glows
A moment, then is quenched in a most cold repose.

Alas! that all we loved of him should be,
But for our grief, as if it had not been,
And grief itself be mortal! Woe is me!
Whence are we, and why are we? of what scene
The actors or spectators? Great and mean
Meet massed in death, who lends what life must borrow.
As long as skies are blue, and fields are green,

Evening must usher night, night urge the morrow,
Month follow month with woe, and year wake year to sorrow.

He will awake no more, oh, never more!
"Wake thou," cried Misery, "childless Mother, rise
Out of thy sleep, and slake, in thy heart's core,
A wound more fierce than his with tears and sighs."
And all the Dreams that watched Urania's eyes,
And all the Echoes whom their sister's song
Had held in holy silence, cried: "Arise!"
Swift as a Thought by the snake Memory stung,
From her ambrosial rest the fading Splendour sprung.

She rose like an autumnal Night, that springs
Our of the East, and follows wild and drear
The golden Day, which, on eternal wings,
Even as a ghost abandoning a bier,
Had left the Earth a corpse. Sorrow and fear
So struck, so roused, so rapt Urania;
So saddened round her like an atmosphere
Of stormy mist; so swept her on her way
Even to the mournful place where Adonais lay.

Our of her secret Paradise she sped,
Through camps and cities rough with stone, and steel,
And human hearts, which to her aery tread
Yielding not, wounded the invisible
Palms of her tender feet where'er they fell:
And barbed tongues, and thoughts more sharp than they,
Rent the soft Form they never could repel,
Whose sacred blood, like the young tears of May,
Paved with eternal flowers that undeserving way.

In the death-chamber for a moment Death,
Shamed by the presence of that living Might,
Blushed to annihilation, and the breath
Revisited those lips, and Life's pale light
Flashed through those limbs, so late her dear delight.
"Leave me not wild and drear and comfortless,
As silent lightning leaves the starless night!
Leave me not!" cried Urania: her distress
Roused Death: Death rose and smiled, and met her vain caress.

"Stay yet awhile! speak to me once again;
Kiss me, so long but as a kiss may live;
And in my heartless breast and burning brain
That word, that kiss, shall all thoughts else survive,
With food of saddest memory kept alive,
Now thou art dead, as if it were a part
Of thee, my Adonais! I would give
All that I am to be as thou now art!
But I am chained to Time, and cannot thence depart!

"O gentle child, beautiful as thou wert,
Why didst thou leave the trodden paths of men
Too soon, and with weak hands though mighty heart
Dare the unpastured dragon in his den?
Defenceless as thou wert, oh, where was then
Wisdom the mirrored shield, or scorn the spear?
Or hadst thou waited the full cycle, when
Thy spirit should have filled its crescent sphere,
The monsters of life's waste had fled from thee like deer.

"The herded wolves, bold only to pursue;
The obscene ravens, clamorous o'er the dead;
The vultures to the conqueror's banner true
Who feed where Desolation first has fed,
And whose wings rain contagion; -how they fled,
When, like Apollo, from his golden bow
The Pythian of the age one arrow sped
And smiled! -The spoilers tempt no second blow,
They fawn on the proud feet that spurn them lying low.

"The sun comes forth, and many reptiles spawn;
He sets, and each ephemeral insect then
Is gathered into death without a dawn,
And the immortal stars awake again;
So is it in the world of living men:
A godlike mind soars forth, in its delight
Making earth bare and veiling heaven, and when
It sinks, the swarms that dimmed or shared its light
Leave to its kindred lamps the spirit's awful night."

Thus ceased she: and the mountain shepherds came,

Their garlands sere, their magic mantles rent;
The Pilgrim of Eternity, whose fame
Over his living head like Heaven is bent,
An early but enduring monument,
Came, veiling all the lightnings of his song
In sorrow; from her wilds Irene sent
The sweetest lyrist of her saddest wrong,
And Love taught Grief to fall like music from his tongue.

Midst others of less note, came one frail Form,
A phantom among men; companionless
As the last cloud of an expiring storm
Whose thunder is its knell; he, as I guess,
Had gazed on Nature's naked loveliness,
Actaeon-like, and now he fled astray
With feeble steps o'er the world's wilderness,
And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

A pardlike Spirit beautiful and swift -
A Love in desolation masked; -a Power
Girt round with weakness; -it can scarce uplift
The weight of the superincumbent hour;
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,
A breaking billow; -even whilst we speak
Is it not broken? On the withering flower
The killing sun smiles brightly: on a cheek
The life can burn in blood, even while the heart may break.

His head was bound with pansies overblown,
And faded violets, white, and pied, and blue;
And a light spear topped with a cypress cone,
Round whose rude shaft dark ivy-tresses grew
Yet dripping with the forest's noonday dew,
Vibrated, as the ever-beating heart
Shook the weak hand that grasped it; of that crew
He came the last, neglected and apart;
A herd-abandoned deer struck by the hunter's dart.

All stood aloof, and at his partial moan
Smiled through their tears; well knew that gentle band
Who in another's fate now wept his own,

As in the accents of an unknown land
He sung new sorrow; sad Urania scanned
The Stranger's mien, and murmured: "Who art thou?"
He answered not, but with a sudden hand
Made bare his branded and ensanguined brow,
Which was like Cain's or Christ's -oh! that it should be so!

What softer voice is hushed over the dead?
Athwart what brow is that dark mantle thrown?
What form leans sadly o'er the white death-bed,
In mockery of monumental stone,
The heavy heart heaving without a moan?
If it be He, who, gentlest of the wise,
Taught, soothed, loved, honoured the departed one,
Let me not vex, with inharmonious sighs,
The silence of that heart's accepted sacrifice.

Our Adonais has drunk poison -oh!
What deaf and viperous murderer could crown
Life's early cup with such a draught of woe?
The nameless worm would now itself disown:
It felt, yet could escape, the magic tone
Whose prelude held all envy, hate, and wrong,
But what was howling in one breast alone,
Silent with expectation of the song,
Whose master's hand is cold, whose silver lyre unstrung.

Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame!
Live! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
Thou noteless blot on a remembered name!
But be thyself, and know thyself to be!
And ever at thy season be thou free
To spill the venom when thy fangs o'erflow:
Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee;
Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt -as now.

Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
Far from these carrion kites that scream below;
He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead;
Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now -
Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow

Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.

Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep -
He hath awakened from the dream of life -
'Tis we, who lost in stormy visions, keep
With phantoms an unprofitable strife,
And in mad trance, strike with our spirit's knife
Invulnerable nothings. -We decay
Like corpses in a charnel; fear and grief
Convulse us and consume us day by day,
And cold hopes swarm like worms within our living clay.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, and now can never mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain;
Nor, when the spirit's self has ceased to burn,
With sparkless ashes load an unlamented urn.

He lives, he wakes -'tis Death is dead, not he;
Mourn not for Adonais. -Thou young Dawn,
Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee
The spirit thou lamentest is not gone;
Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!
Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains, and thou Air
Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown
O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare
Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

He is made one with Nature: there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder, to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;

Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

He is a portion of the loveliness
Which once he made more lovely: he doth bear
His part, while the one Spirit's plastic stress
Sweeps through the dull dense world, compelling there
All new successions to the forms they wear;
Torturing th' unwilling dross that checks its flight
To its own likeness, as each mass may bear;
And bursting in its beauty and its might
From trees and beasts and men into the Heavens' light.

The splendours of the firmament of time
May be eclipsed, but are extinguished not;
Like stars to their appointed height they climb,
And death is a low mist which cannot blot
The brightness it may veil. When lofty thought
Lifts a young heart above its mortal lair,
And love and life contend in it, for what
Shall be its earthly doom, the dead live there
And move like winds of light on dark and stormy air.

The inheritors of unfulfilled renown
Rose from their thrones, built beyond mortal thought,
Far in the Unapparent. Chatterton
Rose pale, -his solemn agony had not
Yet faded from him; Sidney, as he fought
And as he fell and as he lived and loved
Sublimely mild, a Spirit without spot,
Arose; and Lucan, by his death approved:
Oblivion as they rose shrank like a thing reprov'd.

And many more, whose names on Earth are dark,
But whose transmitted effluence cannot die
So long as fire outlives the parent spark,
Rose, robed in dazzling immortality.
"Thou art become as one of us," they cry,
"It was for thee yon kingless sphere has long
Swung blind in unascended majesty,
Silent alone amid an Heaven of Song.
Assume thy winged throne, thou Vesper of our throng!"

Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth,
Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.
Clasp with thy panting soul the pendulous Earth;
As from a centre, dart thy spirit's light
Beyond all worlds, until its spacious might
Sate the void circumference: then shrink
Even to a point within our day and night;
And keep thy heart light lest it make thee sink
When hope has kindled hope, and lured thee to the brink.

Or go to Rome, which is the sepulchre,
Oh, not of him, but of our joy: 'tis nought
That ages, empires, and religions there
Lie buried in the ravage they have wrought;
For such as he can lend, -they borrow not
Glory from those who made the world their prey;
And he is gathered to the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,
And of the past are all that cannot pass away.

Go thou to Rome, -at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

And grey walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet

To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

The One remains, the many change and pass;
Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments. -Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled! -Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my Heart?
Thy hopes are gone before: from all things here
They have departed; thou shouldst now depart!
A light is passed from the revolving year,
And man, and woman; and what still is dear
Attracts to crush, repels to make thee wither.
The soft sky smiles, -the low wind whispers near:
'Tis Adonais calls! oh, hasten thither,
No more let Life divide what Death can join together.

That Light whose smile kindles the Universe,
That Beauty in which all things work and move,
That Benediction which the eclipsing Curse
Of birth can quench not, that sustaining Love
Which through the web of being blindly wove
By man and beast and earth and air and sea,
Burns bright or dim, as each are mirrors of
The fire for which all thirst, now beams on me,
Consuming the last clouds of cold mortality.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song
Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng

Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of Heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Alas! This Is Not What I Thought Life Was

Alas! this is not what I thought life was.
I knew that there were crimes and evil men,
Misery and hate; nor did I hope to pass
Untouched by suffering, through the rugged glen.
In mine own heart I saw as in a glass
The hearts of others ... And when
I went among my kind, with triple brass
Of calm endurance my weak breast I armed,
To bear scorn, fear, and hate, a woful mass!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Alastor: Or, The Spirit Of Solitude

Earth, Ocean, Air, beloved brotherhood!
If our great Mother has imbued my soul
With aught of natural piety to feel
Your love, and recompense the boon with mine;
If dewy morn, and odorous noon, and even,
With sunset and its gorgeous ministers,
And solemn midnight's tingling silentness;
If Autumn's hollow sighs in the sere wood,
And Winter robing with pure snow and crowns
Of starry ice the gray grass and bare boughs;
If Spring's voluptuous pantings when she breathes
Her first sweet kisses,--have been dear to me;
If no bright bird, insect, or gentle beast
I consciously have injured, but still loved
And cherished these my kindred; then forgive
This boast, beloved brethren, and withdraw
No portion of your wonted favor now!

Mother of this unfathomable world!
Favor my solemn song, for I have loved
Thee ever, and thee only; I have watched
Thy shadow, and the darkness of thy steps,
And my heart ever gazes on the depth
Of thy deep mysteries. I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost,
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are. In lone and silent hours,
When night makes a weird sound of its own stillness,
Like an inspired and desperate alchemist
Staking his very life on some dark hope,
Have I mixed awful talk and asking looks
With my most innocent love, until strange tears,
Uniting with those breathless kisses, made
Such magic as compels the charmed night
To render up thy charge; and, though ne'er yet
Thou hast unveiled thy inmost sanctuary,

Enough from incommunicable dream,
And twilight phantasms, and deep noonday thought,
Has shone within me, that serenely now
And moveless, as a long-forgotten lyre
Suspended in the solitary dome
Of some mysterious and deserted fane,
I wait thy breath, Great Parent, that my strain
May modulate with murmurs of the air,
And motions of the forests and the sea,
And voice of living beings, and woven hymns
Of night and day, and the deep heart of man.

There was a Poet whose untimely tomb
No human hands with pious reverence reared,
But the charmed eddies of autumnal winds
Built o'er his mouldering bones a pyramid
Of mouldering leaves in the waste wilderness:
A lovely youth,--no mourning maiden decked
With weeping flowers, or votive cypress wreath,
The lone couch of his everlasting sleep:
Gentle, and brave, and generous,--no lorn bard
Breathed o'er his dark fate one melodious sigh:
He lived, he died, he sung in solitude.
Strangers have wept to hear his passionate notes,
And virgins, as unknown he passed, have pined
And wasted for fond love of his wild eyes.
The fire of those soft orbs has ceased to burn,
And Silence, too enamoured of that voice,
Locks its mute music in her rugged cell.

By solemn vision and bright silver dream
His infancy was nurtured. Every sight
And sound from the vast earth and ambient air
Sent to his heart its choicest impulses.
The fountains of divine philosophy
Fled not his thirsting lips, and all of great,
Or good, or lovely, which the sacred past
In truth or fable consecrates, he felt
And knew. When early youth had passed, he left
His cold fireside and alienated home
To seek strange truths in undiscovered lands.
Many a wide waste and tangled wilderness

Has lured his fearless steps; and he has bought
With his sweet voice and eyes, from savage men,
His rest and food. Nature's most secret steps
He like her shadow has pursued, where'er
The red volcano overcanopies
Its fields of snow and pinnacles of ice
With burning smoke, or where bitumen lakes
On black bare pointed islets ever beat
With sluggish surge, or where the secret caves,
Rugged and dark, winding among the springs
Of fire and poison, inaccessible
To avarice or pride, their starry domes
Of diamond and of gold expand above
Numberless and immeasurable halls,
Frequent with crystal column, and clear shrines
Of pearl, and thrones radiant with chrysolite.
Nor had that scene of ampler majesty
Than gems or gold, the varying roof of heaven
And the green earth, lost in his heart its claims
To love and wonder; he would linger long
In lonesome vales, making the wild his home,
Until the doves and squirrels would partake
From his innocuous band his bloodless food,
Lured by the gentle meaning of his looks,
And the wild antelope, that starts whene'er
The dry leaf rustles in the brake, suspend
Her timid steps, to gaze upon a form
More graceful than her own.

His wandering step,
Obedient to high thoughts, has visited
The awful ruins of the days of old:
Athens, and Tyre, and Balbec, and the waste
Where stood Jerusalem, the fallen towers
Of Babylon, the eternal pyramids,
Memphis and Thebes, and whatsoe'er of strange,
Sculptured on alabaster obelisk
Or jasper tomb or mutilated sphinx,
Dark Æthiopia in her desert hills
Conceals. Among the ruined temples there,
Stupendous columns, and wild images
Of more than man, where marble daemons watch

The Zodiac's brazen mystery, and dead men
Hang their mute thoughts on the mute walls around,
He lingered, poring on memorials
Of the world's youth: through the long burning day
Gazed on those speechless shapes; nor, when the moon
Filled the mysterious halls with floating shades
Suspended he that task, but ever gazed
And gazed, till meaning on his vacant mind
Flashed like strong inspiration, and he saw
The thrilling secrets of the birth of time.

Meanwhile an Arab maiden brought his food,
Her daily portion, from her father's tent,
And spread her matting for his couch, and stole
From duties and repose to tend his steps,
Enamoured, yet not daring for deep awe
To speak her love, and watched his nightly sleep,
Sleepless herself, to gaze upon his lips
Parted in slumber, whence the regular breath
Of innocent dreams arose; then, when red morn
Made paler the pale moon, to her cold home
Wildered, and wan, and panting, she returned.

The Poet, wandering on, through Arabie,
And Persia, and the wild Carmanian waste,
And o'er the aërial mountains which pour down
Indus and Oxus from their icy caves,
In joy and exultation held his way;
Till in the vale of Cashmire, far within
Its loneliest dell, where odorous plants entwine
Beneath the hollow rocks a natural bower,
Beside a sparkling rivulet he stretched
His languid limbs. A vision on his sleep
There came, a dream of hopes that never yet
Had flushed his cheek. He dreamed a veiled maid
Sate near him, talking in low solemn tones.
Her voice was like the voice of his own soul
Heard in the calm of thought; its music long,
Like woven sounds of streams and breezes, held
His inmost sense suspended in its web
Of many-colored woof and shifting hues.
Knowledge and truth and virtue were her theme,

And lofty hopes of divine liberty,
Thoughts the most dear to him, and poesy,
Herself a poet. Soon the solemn mood
Of her pure mind kindled through all her frame
A permeating fire; wild numbers then
She raised, with voice stifled in tremulous sobs
Subdued by its own pathos; her fair hands
Were bare alone, sweeping from some strange harp
Strange symphony, and in their branching veins
The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale.
The beating of her heart was heard to fill
The pauses of her music, and her breath
Tumultuously accorded with those fits
Of intermitted song. Sudden she rose,
As if her heart impatiently endured
Its bursting burden; at the sound he turned,
And saw by the warm light of their own life
Her glowing limbs beneath the sinuous veil
Of woven wind, her outspread arms now bare,
Her dark locks floating in the breath of night,
Her beamy bending eyes, her parted lips
Outstretched, and pale, and quivering eagerly.
His strong heart sunk and sickened with excess
Of love. He reared his shuddering limbs, and quelled
His gasping breath, and spread his arms to meet
Her panting bosom:--she drew back awhile,
Then, yielding to the irresistible joy,
With frantic gesture and short breathless cry
Folded his frame in her dissolving arms.
Now blackness veiled his dizzy eyes, and night
Involved and swallowed up the vision; sleep,
Like a dark flood suspended in its course,
Rolled back its impulse on his vacant brain.

Roused by the shock, he started from his trance--
The cold white light of morning, the blue moon
Low in the west, the clear and garish hills,
The distinct valley and the vacant woods,
Spread round him where he stood. Whither have fled
The hues of heaven that canopied his bower
Of yesternight? The sounds that soothed his sleep,
The mystery and the majesty of Earth,

The joy, the exultation? His wan eyes
Gaze on the empty scene as vacantly
As ocean's moon looks on the moon in heaven.
The spirit of sweet human love has sent
A vision to the sleep of him who spurned
Her choicest gifts. He eagerly pursues
Beyond the realms of dream that fleeting shade;
He overleaps the bounds. Alas! alas!
Were limbs and breath and being intertwined
Thus treacherously? Lost, lost, forever lost
In the wide pathless desert of dim sleep,
That beautiful shape! Does the dark gate of death
Conduct to thy mysterious paradise,
O Sleep? Does the bright arch of rainbow clouds
And pendent mountains seen in the calm lake
Lead only to a black and watery depth,
While death's blue vault with loathliest vapors hung,
Where every shade which the foul grave exhales
Hides its dead eye from the detested day,
Conducts, O Sleep, to thy delightful realms?
This doubt with sudden tide flowed on his heart;
The insatiate hope which it awakened stung
His brain even like despair.

While daylight held
The sky, the Poet kept mute conference
With his still soul. At night the passion came,
Like the fierce fiend of a distempered dream,
And shook him from his rest, and led him forth
Into the darkness. As an eagle, grasped
In folds of the green serpent, feels her breast
Burn with the poison, and precipitates
Through night and day, tempest, and calm, and cloud,
Frantic with dizzying anguish, her blind flight
O'er the wide aëry wilderness: thus driven
By the bright shadow of that lovely dream,
Beneath the cold glare of the desolate night,
Through tangled swamps and deep precipitous dells,
Startling with careless step the moon-light snake,
He fled. Red morning dawned upon his flight,
Shedding the mockery of its vital hues
Upon his cheek of death. He wandered on

Till vast Aornos seen from Petra's steep
Hung o'er the low horizon like a cloud;
Through Balk, and where the desolated tombs
Of Parthian kings scatter to every wind
Their wasting dust, wildly he wandered on,
Day after day, a weary waste of hours,
Bearing within his life the brooding care
That ever fed on its decaying flame.
And now his limbs were lean; his scattered hair,
Sered by the autumn of strange suffering,
Sung dirges in the wind; his listless hand
Hung like dead bone within its withered skin;
Life, and the lustre that consumed it, shone,
As in a furnace burning secretly,
From his dark eyes alone. The cottagers,
Who ministered with human charity
His human wants, beheld with wondering awe
Their fleeting visitant. The mountaineer,
Encountering on some dizzy precipice
That spectral form, deemed that the Spirit of Wind,
With lightning eyes, and eager breath, and feet
Disturbing not the drifted snow, had paused
In its career; the infant would conceal
His troubled visage in his mother's robe
In terror at the glare of those wild eyes,
To remember their strange light in many a dream
Of after times; but youthful maidens, taught
By nature, would interpret half the woe
That wasted him, would call him with false names
Brother and friend, would press his pallid hand
At parting, and watch, dim through tears, the path
Of his departure from their father's door.

At length upon the lone Chorasman shore
He paused, a wide and melancholy waste
Of putrid marshes. A strong impulse urged
His steps to the sea-shore. A swan was there,
Beside a sluggish stream among the reeds.
It rose as he approached, and, with strong wings
Scaling the upward sky, bent its bright course
High over the immeasurable main.
His eyes pursued its flight:--'Thou hast a home,

Beautiful bird! thou voyagest to thine home,
Where thy sweet mate will twine her downy neck
With thine, and welcome thy return with eyes
Bright in the lustre of their own fond joy.
And what am I that I should linger here,
With voice far sweeter than thy dying notes,
Spirit more vast than thine, frame more attuned
To beauty, wasting these surpassing powers
In the deaf air, to the blind earth, and heaven
That echoes not my thoughts?' A gloomy smile
Of desperate hope wrinkled his quivering lips.
For sleep, he knew, kept most relentlessly
Its precious charge, and silent death exposed,
Faithless perhaps as sleep, a shadowy lure,
With doubtful smile mocking its own strange charms.

Startled by his own thoughts, he looked around.
There was no fair fiend near him, not a sight
Or sound of awe but in his own deep mind.
A little shallop floating near the shore
Caught the impatient wandering of his gaze.
It had been long abandoned, for its sides
Gaped wide with many a rift, and its frail joints
Swayed with the undulations of the tide.
A restless impulse urged him to embark
And meet lone Death on the drear ocean's waste;
For well he knew that mighty Shadow loves
The slimy caverns of the populous deep.

The day was fair and sunny; sea and sky
Drank its inspiring radiance, and the wind
Swept strongly from the shore, blackening the waves.
Following his eager soul, the wanderer
Leaped in the boat; he spread his cloak aloft
On the bare mast, and took his lonely seat,
And felt the boat speed o'er the tranquil sea
Like a torn cloud before the hurricane.

As one that in a silver vision floats
Obedient to the sweep of odorous winds
Upon resplendent clouds, so rapidly
Along the dark and ruffled waters fled

The straining boat. A whirlwind swept it on,
With fierce gusts and precipitating force,
Through the white ridges of the chafèd sea.
The waves arose. Higher and higher still
Their fierce necks writhed beneath the tempest's scourge
Like serpents struggling in a vulture's grasp.
Calm and rejoicing in the fearful war
Of wave ruining on wave, and blast on blast
Descending, and black flood on whirlpool driven
With dark obliterating course, he sate:
As if their genii were the ministers
Appointed to conduct him to the light
Of those beloved eyes, the Poet sate,
Holding the steady helm. Evening came on;
The beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues
High 'mid the shifting domes of sheeted spray
That canopied his path o'er the waste deep;
Twilight, ascending slowly from the east,
Entwined in dusker wreaths her braided locks
O'er the fair front and radiant eyes of Day;
Night followed, clad with stars. On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky. The little boat
Still fled before the storm; still fled, like foam
Down the steep cataract of a wintry river;
Now pausing on the edge of the riven wave;
Now leaving far behind the bursting mass
That fell, convulsing ocean; safely fled--
As if that frail and wasted human form
Had been an elemental god.

At midnight
The moon arose; and lo! the ethereal cliffs
Of Caucasus, whose icy summits shone
Among the stars like sunlight, and around
Whose caverned base the whirlpools and the waves
Bursting and eddying irresistibly
Rage and resound forever.--Who shall save?--
The boat fled on,--the boiling torrent drove,--
The crags closed round with black and jagged arms,

The shattered mountain overhung the sea,
And faster still, beyond all human speed,
Suspended on the sweep of the smooth wave,
The little boat was driven. A cavern there
Yawned, and amid its slant and winding depths
Ingulfed the rushing sea. The boat fled on
With unrelaxing speed.--'Vision and Love!'
The Poet cried aloud, 'I have beheld
The path of thy departure. Sleep and death
Shall not divide us long.'

The boat pursued
The windings of the cavern. Daylight shone
At length upon that gloomy river's flow;
Now, where the fiercest war among the waves
Is calm, on the unfathomable stream
The boat moved slowly. Where the mountain, riven,
Exposed those black depths to the azure sky,
Ere yet the flood's enormous volume fell
Even to the base of Caucasus, with sound
That shook the everlasting rocks, the mass
Filled with one whirlpool all that ample chasm;
Stair above stair the eddying waters rose,
Circling immeasurably fast, and laved
With alternating dash the gnarlèd roots
Of mighty trees, that stretched their giant arms
In darkness over it. In the midst was left,
Reflecting yet distorting every cloud,
A pool of treacherous and tremendous calm.
Seized by the sway of the ascending stream,
With dizzy swiftness, round and round and round,
Ridge after ridge the straining boat arose,
Till on the verge of the extremest curve,
Where through an opening of the rocky bank
The waters overflow, and a smooth spot
Of glassy quiet 'mid those battling tides
Is left, the boat paused shuddering.--Shall it sink
Down the abyss? Shall the reverting stress
Of that resistless gulf embosom it?
Now shall it fall?--A wandering stream of wind
Breathed from the west, has caught the expanded sail,
And, lo! with gentle motion between banks

Of mossy slope, and on a placid stream,
Beneath a woven grove, it sails, and, hark!
The ghastly torrent mingles its far roar
With the breeze murmuring in the musical woods.
Where the embowering trees recede, and leave
A little space of green expanse, the cove
Is closed by meeting banks, whose yellow flowers
Forever gaze on their own drooping eyes,
Reflected in the crystal calm. The wave
Of the boat's motion marred their pensive task,
Which naught but vagrant bird, or wanton wind,
Or falling spear-grass, or their own decay
Had e'er disturbed before. The Poet longed
To deck with their bright hues his withered hair,
But on his heart its solitude returned,
And he forbore. Not the strong impulse hid
In those flushed cheeks, bent eyes, and shadowy frame,
Had yet performed its ministry; it hung
Upon his life, as lightning in a cloud
Gleams, hovering ere it vanish, ere the floods
Of night close over it.

The noonday sun
Now shone upon the forest, one vast mass
Of mingling shade, whose brown magnificence
A narrow vale embosoms. There, huge caves,
Scooped in the dark base of their aëry rocks,
Mocking its moans, respond and roar forever.
The meeting boughs and implicated leaves
Wove twilight o'er the Poet's path, as, led
By love, or dream, or god, or mightier Death,
He sought in Nature's dearest haunt some bank,
Her cradle and his sepulchre. More dark
And dark the shades accumulate. The oak,
Expanding its immense and knotty arms,
Embraces the light beech. The pyramids
Of the tall cedar overarching frame
Most solemn domes within, and far below,
Like clouds suspended in an emerald sky,
The ash and the acacia floating hang
Tremulous and pale. Like restless serpents, clothed
In rainbow and in fire, the parasites,

Starred with ten thousand blossoms, flow around
The gray trunks, and, as gamesome infants' eyes,
With gentle meanings, and most innocent wiles,
Fold their beams round the hearts of those that love,
These twine their tendrils with the wedded boughs,
Uniting their close union; the woven leaves
Make network of the dark blue light of day
And the night's noontide clearness, mutable
As shapes in the weird clouds. Soft mossy lawns
Beneath these canopies extend their swells,
Fragrant with perfumed herbs, and eyed with blooms
Minute yet beautiful. One darkest glen
Sends from its woods of musk-rose twined with jasmine
A soul-dissolving odor to invite
To some more lovely mystery. Through the dell
Silence and Twilight here, twin-sisters, keep
Their noonday watch, and sail among the shades,
Like vaporous shapes half-seen; beyond, a well,
Dark, gleaming, and of most translucent wave,
Images all the woven boughs above,
And each depending leaf, and every speck
Of azure sky darting between their chasms;
Nor aught else in the liquid mirror laves
Its portraiture, but some inconstant star,
Between one foliated lattice twinkling fair,
Or painted bird, sleeping beneath the moon,
Or gorgeous insect floating motionless,
Unconscious of the day, ere yet his wings
Have spread their glories to the gaze of noon.

Hither the Poet came. His eyes beheld
Their own wan light through the reflected lines
Of his thin hair, distinct in the dark depth
Of that still fountain; as the human heart,
Gazing in dreams over the gloomy grave,
Sees its own treacherous likeness there. He heard
The motion of the leaves--the grass that sprung
Startled and glanced and trembled even to feel
An unaccustomed presence--and the sound
Of the sweet brook that from the secret springs
Of that dark fountain rose. A Spirit seemed
To stand beside him--clothed in no bright robes

Of shadowy silver or enshrining light,
Borrowed from aught the visible world affords
Of grace, or majesty, or mystery;
But undulating woods, and silent well,
And leaping rivulet, and evening gloom
Now deepening the dark shades, for speech assuming,
Held commune with him, as if he and it
Were all that was; only--when his regard
Was raised by intense pensiveness--two eyes,
Two starry eyes, hung in the gloom of thought,
And seemed with their serene and azure smiles
To beckon him.

Obedient to the light
That shone within his soul, he went, pursuing
The windings of the dell. The rivulet,
Wanton and wild, through many a green ravine
Beneath the forest flowed. Sometimes it fell
Among the moss with hollow harmony
Dark and profound. Now on the polished stones
It danced, like childhood laughing as it went;
Then, through the plain in tranquil wanderings crept,
Reflecting every herb and drooping bud
That overhung its quietness.--'O stream!
Whose source is inaccessibly profound,
Whither do thy mysterious waters tend?
Thou imagest my life. Thy darksome stillness,
Thy dazzling waves, thy loud and hollow gulfs,
Thy searchless fountain and invisible course,
Have each their type in me; and the wide sky
And measureless ocean may declare as soon
What oozy cavern or what wandering cloud
Contains thy waters, as the universe
Tell where these living thoughts reside, when stretched
Upon thy flowers my bloodless limbs shall waste
I' the passing wind!'

Beside the grassy shore
Of the small stream he went; he did impress
On the green moss his tremulous step, that caught
Strong shuddering from his burning limbs. As one
Roused by some joyous madness from the couch

Of fever, he did move; yet not like him
Forgetful of the grave, where, when the flame
Of his frail exultation shall be spent,
He must descend. With rapid steps he went
Beneath the shade of trees, beside the flow
Of the wild babbling rivulet; and now
The forest's solemn canopies were changed
For the uniform and lightsome evening sky.
Gray rocks did peep from the spare moss, and stemmed
The struggling brook; tall spires of windlestrae
Threw their thin shadows down the rugged slope,
And nought but gnarlèd roots of ancient pines
Branchless and blasted, clenched with grasping roots
The unwilling soil. A gradual change was here
Yet ghastly. For, as fast years flow away,
The smooth brow gathers, and the hair grows thin
And white, and where irradiate dewy eyes
Had shone, gleam stony orbs:--so from his steps
Bright flowers departed, and the beautiful shade
Of the green groves, with all their odorous winds
And musical motions. Calm he still pursued
The stream, that with a larger volume now
Rolled through the labyrinthine dell; and there
Fretted a path through its descending curves
With its wintry speed. On every side now rose
Rocks, which, in unimaginable forms,
Lifted their black and barren pinnacles
In the light of evening, and its precipice
Obscuring the ravine, disclosed above,
'Mid toppling stones, black gulfs and yawning caves,
Whose windings gave ten thousand various tongues
To the loud stream. Lo! where the pass expands
Its stony jaws, the abrupt mountain breaks,
And seems with its accumulated crags
To overhang the world; for wide expand
Beneath the wan stars and descending moon
Islanded seas, blue mountains, mighty streams,
Dim tracts and vast, robed in the lustrous gloom
Of leaden-colored even, and fiery hills
Mingling their flames with twilight, on the verge
Of the remote horizon. The near scene,
In naked and severe simplicity,

Made contrast with the universe. A pine,
Rock-rooted, stretched athwart the vacancy
Its swinging boughs, to each inconstant blast
Yielding one only response at each pause
In most familiar cadence, with the howl,
The thunder and the hiss of homeless streams
Mingling its solemn song, whilst the broad river
Foaming and hurrying o'er its rugged path,
Fell into that immeasurable void,
Scattering its waters to the passing winds.

Yet the gray precipice and solemn pine
And torrent were not all;--one silent nook
Was there. Even on the edge of that vast mountain,
Upheld by knotty roots and fallen rocks,
It overlooked in its serenity
The dark earth and the bending vault of stars.
It was a tranquil spot that seemed to smile
Even in the lap of horror. Ivy clasped
The fissured stones with its entwining arms,
And did embower with leaves forever green
And berries dark the smooth and even space
Of its inviolated floor; and here
The children of the autumnal whirlwind bore
In wanton sport those bright leaves whose decay,
Red, yellow, or ethereally pale,
Rivals the pride of summer. 'T is the haunt
Of every gentle wind whose breath can teach
The wilds to love tranquillity. One step,
One human step alone, has ever broken
The stillness of its solitude; one voice
Alone inspired its echoes;--even that voice
Which hither came, floating among the winds,
And led the loveliest among human forms
To make their wild haunts the depository
Of all the grace and beauty that endued
Its motions, render up its majesty,
Scatter its music on the unfeeling storm,
And to the damp leaves and blue cavern mould,
Nurses of rainbow flowers and branching moss,
Commit the colors of that varying cheek,
That snowy breast, those dark and drooping eyes.

The dim and hornèd moon hung low, and poured
A sea of lustre on the horizon's verge
That overflowed its mountains. Yellow mist
Filled the unbounded atmosphere, and drank
Wan moonlight even to fulness; not a star
Shone, not a sound was heard; the very winds,
Danger's grim playmates, on that precipice
Slept, clasped in his embrace.--O storm of death,
Whose sightless speed divides this sullen night!
And thou, colossal Skeleton, that, still
Guiding its irresistible career
In thy devastating omnipotence,
Art king of this frail world! from the red field
Of slaughter, from the reeking hospital,
The patriot's sacred couch, the snowy bed
Of innocence, the scaffold and the throne,
A mighty voice invokes thee! Ruin calls
His brother Death! A rare and regal prey
He hath prepared, prowling around the world;
Glutted with which thou mayst repose, and men
Go to their graves like flowers or creeping worms,
Nor ever more offer at thy dark shrine
The unheeded tribute of a broken heart.

When on the threshold of the green recess
The wanderer's footsteps fell, he knew that death
Was on him. Yet a little, ere it fled,
Did he resign his high and holy soul
To images of the majestic past,
That paused within his passive being now,
Like winds that bear sweet music, when they breathe
Through some dim latticed chamber. He did place
His pale lean hand upon the rugged trunk
Of the old pine; upon an ivied stone
Reclined his languid head; his limbs did rest,
Diffused and motionless, on the smooth brink
Of that obscurest chasm;--and thus he lay,
Surrendering to their final impulses
The hovering powers of life. Hope and Despair,
The torturers, slept; no mortal pain or fear
Marred his repose; the influxes of sense

And his own being, unalloyed by pain,
Yet feebler and more feeble, calmly fed
The stream of thought, till he lay breathing there
At peace, and faintly smiling. His last sight
Was the great moon, which o'er the western line
Of the wide world her mighty horn suspended,
With whose dun beams inwoven darkness seemed
To mingle. Now upon the jagged hills
It rests; and still as the divided frame
Of the vast meteor sunk, the Poet's blood,
That ever beat in mystic sympathy
With Nature's ebb and flow, grew feebler still;
And when two lessening points of light alone
Gleamed through the darkness, the alternate gasp
Of his faint respiration scarce did stir
The stagnate night:--till the minutest ray
Was quenched, the pulse yet lingered in his heart.
It paused--it fluttered. But when heaven remained
Utterly black, the murky shades involved
An image silent, cold, and motionless,
As their own voiceless earth and vacant air.
Even as a vapor fed with golden beams
That ministered on sunlight, ere the west
Eclipses it, was now that wondrous frame--
No sense, no motion, no divinity--
A fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings
The breath of heaven did wander--a bright stream
Once fed with many-voicèd waves--a dream
Of youth, which night and time have quenched forever--
Still, dark, and dry, and unremembered now.

Oh, for Medea's wondrous alchemy,
Which wheresoe'er it fell made the earth gleam
With bright flowers, and the wintry boughs exhale
From vernal blooms fresh fragrance! Oh, that God,
Profuse of poisons, would concede the chalice
Which but one living man has drained, who now,
Vessel of deathless wrath, a slave that feels
No proud exemption in the blighting curse
He bears, over the world wanders forever,
Lone as incarnate death! Oh, that the dream
Of dark magician in his visioned cave,

Raking the cinders of a crucible
For life and power, even when his feeble hand
Shakes in its last decay, were the true law
Of this so lovely world! But thou art fled,
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn
Robes in its golden beams,--ah! thou hast fled!
The brave, the gentle and the beautiful,
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things
Are done and said i' the world, and many worms
And beasts and men live on, and mighty Earth
From sea and mountain, city and wilderness,
In vesper low or joyous orison,
Lifts still its solemn voice:--but thou art fled--
Thou canst no longer know or love the shapes
Of this phantasmal scene, who have to thee
Been purest ministers, who are, alas!
Now thou art not! Upon those pallid lips
So sweet even in their silence, on those eyes
That image sleep in death, upon that form
Yet safe from the worm's outrage, let no tear
Be shed--not even in thought. Nor, when those hues
Are gone, and those divinest lineaments,
Worn by the senseless wind, shall live alone
In the frail pauses of this simple strain,
Let not high verse, mourning the memory
Of that which is no more, or painting's woe
Or sculpture, speak in feeble imagery
Their own cold powers. Art and eloquence,
And all the shows o' the world, are frail and vain
To weep a loss that turns their lights to shade.
It is a woe "too deep for tears," when all
Is left at once, when some surpassing Spirit,
Whose light adorned the world around it, leaves
Those who remain behind, not sobs or groans,
The passionate tumult of a clinging hope;
But pale despair and cold tranquillity,
Nature's vast frame, the web of human things,
Birth and the grave, that are not as they were.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Allegory

I.

A portal as of shadowy adamant
Stands yawning on the highway of the life
Which we all tread, a cavern huge and gaunt;
Around it rages an unceasing strife
Of shadows, like the restless clouds that haunt
The gap of some cleft mountain, lifted high
Into the whirlwinds of the upper sky.

II.

And many pass it by with careless tread,
Not knowing that a shadowy...
Tracks every traveller even to where the dead
Wait peacefully for their companion new;
But others, by more curious humour led,
Pause to examine;—these are very few,
And they learn little there, except to know
That shadows follow them where'er they go.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Exhortation

Chameleons feed on light and air:
Poets' food is love and fame:
If in this wide world of care
Poets could but find the same
With as little toil as they,
Would they ever change their hue
As the light chameleons do,
Suiting it to every ray
Twenty times a day?

Poets are on this cold earth,
As chameleons might be,
Hidden from their early birth
In a cave beneath the sea;
Where light is, chameleons change:
Where love is not, poets do:
Fame is love disguised: if few
Find either, never think it strange
That poets range.

Yet dare not stain with wealth or power
A poet's free and heavenly mind:
If bright chameleons should devour
Any food but beams and wind,
They would grow as earthly soon
As their brother lizards are.
Children of a sunnier star,
Spirits from beyond the moon,
O, refuse the boon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

An Ode, Written October, 1819, Before The Spaniards Had Recovered Their Liberty

Arise, arise, arise!

There is blood on the earth that denies ye bread;
Be your wounds like eyes
To weep for the dead, the dead, the dead.
What other grief were it just to pay?
Your sons, your wives, your brethren, were they;
Who said they were slain on the battle day?

Awaken, awaken, awaken!

The slave and the tyrant are twin-born foes;
Be the cold chains shaken
To the dust where your kindred repose, repose:
Their bones in the grave will start and move,
When they hear the voices of those they love,
Most loud in the holy combat above.

Wave, wave high the banner!

When Freedom is riding to conquest by:
Though the slaves that fan her
Be Famine and Toil, giving sigh for sigh.
And ye who attend her imperial car,
Lift not your hands in the banded war,
But in her defence whose children ye are.

Glory, glory, glory,

To those who have greatly suffered and done!
Never name in story
Was greater than that which ye shall have won.
Conquerors have conquered their foes alone,
Whose revenge, pride, and power they have overthrown
Ride ye, more victorious, over your own.

Bind, bind every brow

With crownals of violet, ivy, and pine:
Hide the blood-stains now
With hues which sweet Nature has made divine:
Green strength, azure hope, and eternity:

But let not the pansy among them be;
Ye were injured, and that means memory.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

And Like A Dying Lady, Lean And Pale

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapp'd in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky East,

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Percy Bysshe Shelley

And That I Walk Thus Proudly Crowned Withal

And that I walk thus proudly crowned withal
Is that 'tis my distinction; if I fall,
I shall not weep out of the vital day,
To-morrow dust, nor wear a dull decay.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Another Fragment To Music

No, Music, thou art not the 'food of Love.'
Unless Love feeds upon its own sweet self,
Till it becomes all Music murmurs of.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Archy's Song From Charles The First (A Widow Bird Sate Mourning For Her Love)

Heigho! the lark and the owl!

One flies the morning, and one lulls the night:
Only the nightingale, poor fond soul,
Sings like the fool through darkness and light.

'A widow bird sate mourning for her love
Upon a wintry bough;
The frozen wind crept on above,
The freezing stream below.

'There was no leaf upon the forest bare,
No flower upon the ground,
And little motion in the air
Except the mill-wheel's sound.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Arethusa

I.

Arethusa arose
From her couch of snows
In the Acroceraunian mountains,--
From cloud and from crag,
With many a jag,
Shepherding her bright fountains.
She leapt down the rocks,
With her rainbow locks
Streaming among the streams;--
Her steps paved with green
The downward ravine
Which slopes to the western gleams;
And gliding and springing
She went, ever singing,
In murmurs as soft as sleep;
The Earth seemed to love her,
And Heaven smiled above her,
As she lingered towards the deep.

II.

Then Alpheus bold,
On his glacier cold,
With his trident the mountains strook;
And opened a chasm
In the rocks—with the spasm
All Erymanthus shook.
And the black south wind
It unsealed behind
The urns of the silent snow,
And earthquake and thunder
Did rend in sunder
The bars of the springs below.
And the beard and the hair
Of the River-god were
Seen through the torrent's sweep,
As he followed the light
Of the fleet nymph's flight
To the brink of the Dorian deep.

III.

'Oh, save me! Oh, guide me!
And bid the deep hide me,
For he grasps me now by the hair!'
The loud Ocean heard,
To its blue depth stirred,
And divided at her prayer;
And under the water
The Earth's white daughter
Fled like a sunny beam;
Behind her descended
Her billows, unblended
With the brackish Dorian stream:—
Like a gloomy stain
On the emerald main
Alpheus rushed behind,--
As an eagle pursuing
A dove to its ruin
Down the streams of the cloudy wind.

IV.

Under the bowers
Where the Ocean Powers
Sit on their pearled thrones;
Through the coral woods
Of the weltering floods,
Over heaps of unvalued stones;
Through the dim beams
Which amid the streams
Weave a network of coloured light;
And under the caves,
Where the shadowy waves
Are as green as the forest's night:--
Outspeeding the shark,
And the sword-fish dark,
Under the Ocean's foam,
And up through the rifts
Of the mountain clifts
They passed to their Dorian home.

V.

And now from their fountains
In Enna's mountains,
Down one vale where the morning basks,
Like friends once parted
Grown single-hearted,
They ply their watery tasks.
At sunrise they leap
From their cradles steep
In the cave of the shelving hill;
At noontide they flow
Through the woods below
And the meadows of asphodel;
And at night they sleep
In the rocking deep
Beneath the Ortygian shore;--
Like spirits that lie
In the azure sky
When they love but live no more.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Art Thou Pale For Weariness

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Asia: From Prometheus Unbound

My soul is an enchanted boat,
Which, like a sleeping swan, doth float
Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing;
And thine doth like an angel sit
Beside a helm conducting it,
Whilst all the winds with melody are ringing.
It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon that many-winding river,
Between mountains, woods, abysses,
A paradise of wildernesses!
Till, like one in slumber bound,
Borne to the ocean, I float down, around,
Into a sea profound, of ever-spreading sound:

Meanwhile thy spirit lifts its pinions
In music's most serene dominions;
Catching the winds that fan that happy heaven.
And we sail on, away, afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But, by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Till through Elysian garden islets
By thee, most beautiful of pilots,
Where never mortal pinnacle glided,
The boat of my desire is guided:
Realms where the air we breathe is love,
Which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonizing this earth with what we feel above.

We have past Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling to betray:
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth, to a diviner day;
A paradise of vaulted bowers,
Lit by downward-gazing flowers,
And watery paths that wind between
Wildernesses calm and green,
Peopled by shapes too bright to see,

And rest, having beheld; somewhat like thee;
Which walk upon the sea, and chant melodiously!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Autumn: A Dirge

The warm sun is falling, the bleak wind is wailing,
The bare boughs are sighing, the pale flowers are dying,
And the Year
On the earth is her death-bed, in a shroud of leaves dead,
Is lying.
Come, Months, come away,
From November to May,
In your saddest array;
Follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year,
And like dim shadows watch by her sepulchre.

The chill rain is falling, the nipped worm is crawling,
The rivers are swelling, the thunder is knelling
For the Year;
The blithe swallows are flown, and the lizards each gone
To his dwelling.
Come, Months, come away;
Put on white, black and gray;
Let your light sisters play--
Ye, follow the bier
Of the dead cold Year,
And make her grave green with tear on tear.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Beauty's Halo

Thy beauty hangs around thee like
Splendour around the moon--
Thy voice, as silver bells that strike
Upon...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Bereavement

How stern are the woes of the desolate mourner
As he bends in still grief o'er the hallowed bier,
As enanguished he turns from the laugh of the scorner,
And drops to perfection's remembrance a tear;
When floods of despair down his pale cheeks are streaming,
When no blissful hope on his bosom is beaming,
Or, if lulled for a while, soon he starts from his dreaming,
And finds torn the soft ties to affection so dear.
Ah, when shall day dawn on the night of the grave,
Or summer succeed to the winter of death?
Rest awhile, hapless victim! and Heaven will save
The spirit that hath faded away with the breath.
Eternity points, in its amaranth bower
Where no clouds of fate o'er the sweet prospect lour,
Unspeakable pleasure, of goodness the dower,
When woe fades away like the mist of the heath.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Bigotry's Victim

I.

Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the wind,
The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair?
When the tiger approaches can the fast-fleeting hind
Repose trust in his footsteps of air?
No! Abandoned he sinks in a trance of despair,
The monster transfixes his prey,
On the sand flows his life-blood away;
Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
Protracting the horrible harmony.

II.

Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger encroaches,
Dares fearless to perish defending her brood,
Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches
Thirsting--ay, thirsting for blood;
And demands, like mankind, his brother for food;
Yet more lenient, more gentle than they;
For hunger, not glory, the prey
Must perish. Revenge does not howl in the dead.
Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's head.

III.

Though weak as the lama that bounds on the mountains,
And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air,
Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,
Though a fiercer than tiger is there.
Though, more dreadful than death, it scatters despair,
Though its shadow eclipses the day,
And the darkness of deepest dismay
Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around,
And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the ground.

IV.

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream
Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to see;
They bathed for awhile in its silvery beam,
Then perished, and perished like me.
For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee;

The most tenderly loved of my soul
Are slaves to his hated control.
He pursues me, he blasts me! 'Tis in vain that I fly:--
What remains, but to curse him,--to curse him and die?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Buona Notte

I.

'Buona notte, buona notte!'--Come mai
La notte sarà buona senza te?
Non dirmi buona notte,--che tu sai,
La notte sa star buona da per se.

II.

Solinga, scura, cupa, senza speme,
La notte quando Lilla m'abbandona;
Pei cuori chi si batton insieme
Ogni notte, senza dirla, sarà buona.

III.

Come male buona notte ci suona
Con sospiri e parole interrotte!--
Il modo di aver la notte buona
E mai non di dir la buona notte.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Chorus From Hellas

The world`s great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faith and empires gleam,
Like a wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning star.
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Dark Spirit of the Desert Rude

Dark Spirit of the desert rude
That o'er this awful solitude,
Each tangled and untrodden wood,
Each dark and silent glen below,
Where sunlight's gleamings never glow,
Whilst jetty, musical and still,
In darkness speeds the mountain rill;
That o'er yon broken peaks sublime,
Wild shapes that mock the scythe of time,
And the pure Eilan's foamy course,□
Wavest thy wand of magic force;
Art thou yon sooty and fearful fowl
That flaps its wing o'er the leafless oak
That o'er the dismal scene doth scowl
And mocketh music with its croak?

I've sought thee where day's beams decay
On the peak of the lonely hill,
I've sought thee where they melt away
By the wave of the pebbly rill;
I've strained to catch thy murky form□
Bestride the rapid and gloomy storm;
Thy red and sullen eyeball's glare
Has shot, in a dream, thro' the midnight air
But never did thy shape express
Such an emphatic gloominess.

And where art thou, O thing of gloom? ...
On Nature's unreviving tomb
Where sapless, blasted and alone
She mourns her blooming centuries gone!-
From the fresh sod the Violets peep,□
The buds have burst their frozen sleep,
Whilst every green and peopled tree
Is alive with Earth's sweet melody.
But thou alone art here,
Thou desolate Oak, whose scathed head
For ages has never trembled,
Whose giant trunk dead lichens bind

Moaningly sighing in the wind,
With huge loose rocks beneath thee spread,
Thou, Thou alone art here!□
Remote from every living thing,
Tree, shrub or grass or flower,
Thou seemest of this spot the King
And with a regal power
Suck like that race all sap away
And yet upon the spoil decay.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Death

I.

They die--the dead return not--Misery
Sits near an open grave and calls them over,
A Youth with hoary hair and haggard eye--
They are the names of kindred, friend and lover,
Which he so feebly calls—they all are gone--
Fond wretch, all dead! those vacant names alone,
This most familiar scene, my pain--
These tombs—alone remain.

II.

Misery, my sweetest friend—oh, weep no more!
Thou wilt not be consoled—I wonder not!
For I have seen thee from thy dwelling's door
Watch the calm sunset with them, and this spot
Was even as bright and calm, but transitory,
And now thy hopes are gone, thy hair is hoary;
This most familiar scene, my pain--
These tombs—alone remain.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Death In Life

My head is heavy, my limbs are weary,
And it is not life that makes me move.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Death Is Here And Death Is There

I.

Death is here and death is there,
Death is busy everywhere,
All around, within, beneath,
Above is death—and we are death.

II.

Death has set his mark and seal
On all we are and all we feel,
On all we know and all we fear,

...

III.

First our pleasures die—and then
Our hopes, and then our fears—and when
These are dead, the debt is due,
Dust claims dust—and we die too.

IV.

All things that we love and cherish,
Like ourselves must fade and perish;
Such is our rude mortal lot--
Love itself would, did they not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Despair

And canst thou mock mine agony, thus calm
In cloudless radiance, Queen of silver night?
Can you, ye flow'rets, spread your perfumed balm
Mid pearly gems of dew that shine so bright?
And you wild winds, thus can you sleep so still
Whilst throbs the tempest of my breast so high?
Can the fierce night-fiends rest on yonder hill,
And, in the eternal mansions of the sky,
Can the directors of the storm in powerless silence lie?

Hark! I hear music on the zephyr's wing,
Louder it floats along the unruffled sky;
Some fairy sure has touched the viewless string--
Now faint in distant air the murmurs die.
Awhile it stills the tide of agony.
Now--now it loftier swells--again stern woe
Arises with the awakening melody.
Again fierce torments, such as demons know,
In bitterer, feller tide, on this torn bosom flow.

Arise ye sightless spirits of the storm,
Ye unseen minstrels of the aerial song,
Pour the fierce tide around this lonely form,
And roll the tempest's wildest swell along.
Dart the red lightning, wing the forked flash,
Pour from thy cloud-formed hills the thunder's roar;
Arouse the whirlwind--and let ocean dash
In fiercest tumult on the rocking shore,--
Destroy this life or let earth's fabric be no more.

Yes! every tie that links me here is dead;
Mysterious Fate, thy mandate I obey,
Since hope and peace, and joy, for aye are fled,
I come, terrific power, I come away.
Then o'er this ruined soul let spirits of Hell,
In triumph, laughing wildly, mock its pain;
And though with direst pangs mine heart-strings swell,
I'll echo back their deadly yells again,
Cursing the power that ne'er made aught in vain.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Dirge For The Year

I.

Orphan Hours, the Year is dead,
Come and sigh, come and weep!
Merry Hours, smile instead,
For the Year is but asleep.
See, it smiles as it is sleeping,
Mocking your untimely weeping.

II.

As an earthquake rocks a corpse
In its coffin in the clay,
So White Winter, that rough nurse,
Rocks the death-cold Year to-day;
Solemn Hours! wail aloud
For your mother in her shroud.

III.

As the wild air stirs and sways
The tree-swung cradle of a child,
So the breath of these rude days
Rocks the Year:—be calm and mild,
Trembling Hours, she will arise
With new love within her eyes.

IV.

January gray is here,
Like a sexton by her grave;
February bears the bier,
March with grief doth howl and rave,
And April weeps--but, O ye Hours!
Follow with May's fairest flowers.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

England In 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,--
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,--mud from a muddy spring,--
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,--
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,--
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,--
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless--a book sealed;
A Senate,--Time's worst statute unrepealed,--
Are graves, from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestous day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epigram I: To Stella

From the Greek of Plato.

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled;--
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epigram II: Kissing Helena

From the Greek of Plato.

Kissing Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it,--
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh, cruel I, to intercept it!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epigram Iii: Spirit Of Plato

From the Greek.

Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-ypaven home
Floatest thou?--
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epigram Iv: Circumstance

From the Greek.

A man who was about to hang himself,
Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner, coming to reclaim his pelf,
The halter found; and used it. So is Hope
Changed for Despair--one laid upon the shelf,
We take the other. Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epipsychidion (Excerpt)

Emily,

A ship is floating in the harbour now,
A wind is hovering o'er the mountain's brow;
There is a path on the sea's azure floor,
No keel has ever plough'd that path before;
The halcyons brood around the foamless isles;
The treacherous Ocean has forsworn its wiles;
The merry mariners are bold and free:
Say, my heart's sister, wilt thou sail with me?
Our bark is as an albatross, whose nest
Is a far Eden of the purple East;
And we between her wings will sit, while Night,
And Day, and Storm, and Calm, pursue their flight,
Our ministers, along the boundless Sea,
Treading each other's heels, unheededly.
It is an isle under Ionian skies,
Beautiful as a wreck of Paradise,
And, for the harbours are not safe and good,
This land would have remain'd a solitude
But for some pastoral people native there,
Who from the Elysian, clear, and golden air
Draw the last spirit of the age of gold,
Simple and spirited; innocent and bold.
The blue Aegean girds this chosen home,
With ever-changing sound and light and foam,
Kissing the sifted sands, and caverns hoar;
And all the winds wandering along the shore
Undulate with the undulating tide:
There are thick woods where sylvan forms abide;
And many a fountain, rivulet and pond,
As clear as elemental diamond,
Or serene morning air; and far beyond,
The mossy tracks made by the goats and deer
(Which the rough shepherd treads but once a year)
Pierce into glades, caverns and bowers, and halls
Built round with ivy, which the waterfalls
Illumining, with sound that never fails
Accompany the noonday nightingales;
And all the place is peopled with sweet airs;

The light clear element which the isle wears
 Is heavy with the scent of lemon-flowers,
 Which floats like mist laden with unseen showers,
 And falls upon the eyelids like faint sleep;
 And from the moss violets and jonquils peep
 And dart their arrowy odour through the brain
 Till you might faint with that delicious pain.
 And every motion, odour, beam and tone,
 With that deep music is in unison:
 Which is a soul within the soul--they seem
 Like echoes of an antenatal dream.
 It is an isle 'twixt Heaven, Air, Earth and Sea,
 Cradled and hung in clear tranquillity;
 Bright as that wandering Eden Lucifer,
 Wash'd by the soft blue Oceans of young air.
 It is a favour'd place. Famine or Blight,
 Pestilence, War and Earthquake, never light
 Upon its mountain-peaks; blind vultures, they
 Sail onward far upon their fatal way:
 The wing'd storms, chanting their thunder-psalm
 To other lands, leave azure chasms of calm
 Over this isle, or weep themselves in dew,
 From which its fields and woods ever renew
 Their green and golden immortality.
 And from the sea there rise, and from the sky
 There fall, clear exhalations, soft and bright,
 Veil after veil, each hiding some delight,
 Which Sun or Moon or zephyr draw aside,
 Till the isle's beauty, like a naked bride
 Glowing at once with love and loveliness,
 Blushes and trembles at its own excess:
 Yet, like a buried lamp, a Soul no less
 Burns in the heart of this delicious isle,
 An atom of th' Eternal, whose own smile
 Unfolds itself, and may be felt not seen
 O'er the gray rocks, blue waves and forests green,
 Filling their bare and void interstices.
 But the chief marvel of the wilderness
 Is a lone dwelling, built by whom or how
 None of the rustic island-people know:
 'Tis not a tower of strength, though with its height
 It overtops the woods; but, for delight,

Some wise and tender Ocean-King, ere crime
Had been invented, in the world's young prime,
Rear'd it, a wonder of that simple time,
An envy of the isles, a pleasure-house
Made sacred to his sister and his spouse.
It scarce seems now a wreck of human art,
But, as it were, Titanic; in the heart
Of Earth having assum'd its form, then grown
Out of the mountains, from the living stone,
Lifting itself in caverns light and high:
For all the antique and learned imagery
Has been eras'd, and in the place of it
The ivy and the wild-vine interknit
The volumes of their many-twining stems;
Parasite flowers illumine with dewy gems
The lampless halls, and when they fade, the sky
Peeps through their winter-woof of tracery
With moonlight patches, or star atoms keen,
Or fragments of the day's intense serene;
Working mosaic on their Parian floors.
And, day and night, aloof, from the high towers
And terraces, the Earth and Ocean seem
To sleep in one another's arms, and dream
Of waves, flowers, clouds, woods, rocks, and all that we
Read in their smiles, and call reality.

This isle and house are mine, and I have vow'd
Thee to be lady of the solitude.
And I have fitted up some chambers there
Looking towards the golden Eastern air,
And level with the living winds, which flow
Like waves above the living waves below.
I have sent books and music there, and all
Those instruments with which high Spirits call
The future from its cradle, and the past
Out of its grave, and make the present last
In thoughts and joys which sleep, but cannot die,
Folded within their own eternity.
Our simple life wants little, and true taste
Hires not the pale drudge Luxury to waste
The scene it would adorn, and therefore still,
Nature with all her children haunts the hill.

The ring-dove, in the embowering ivy, yet
Keeps up her love-lament, and the owls flit
Round the evening tower, and the young stars glance
Between the quick bats in their twilight dance;
The spotted deer bask in the fresh moonlight
Before our gate, and the slow, silent night
Is measur'd by the pants of their calm sleep.
Be this our home in life, and when years heap
Their wither'd hours, like leaves, on our decay,
Let us become the overhanging day,
The living soul of this Elysian isle,
Conscious, inseparable, one. Meanwhile
We two will rise, and sit, and walk together,
Under the roof of blue Ionian weather,
And wander in the meadows, or ascend
The mossy mountains, where the blue heavens bend
With lightest winds, to touch their paramour;
Or linger, where the pebble-paven shore,
Under the quick, faint kisses of the sea,
Trembles and sparkles as with ecstasy--
Possessing and possess'd by all that is
Within that calm circumference of bliss,
And by each other, till to love and live
Be one: or, at the noontide hour, arrive
Where some old cavern hoar seems yet to keep
The moonlight of the expir'd night asleep,
Through which the awaken'd day can never peep;
A veil for our seclusion, close as night's,
Where secure sleep may kill thine innocent lights;
Sleep, the fresh dew of languid love, the rain
Whose drops quench kisses till they burn again.
And we will talk, until thought's melody
Become too sweet for utterance, and it die
In words, to live again in looks, which dart
With thrilling tone into the voiceless heart,
Harmonizing silence without a sound.
Our breath shall intermix, our bosoms bound,
And our veins beat together; and our lips
With other eloquence than words, eclipse
The soul that burns between them, and the wells
Which boil under our being's inmost cells,
The fountains of our deepest life, shall be

Confus'd in Passion's golden purity,
As mountain-springs under the morning sun.
We shall become the same, we shall be one
Spirit within two frames, oh! wherefore two?
One passion in twin-hearts, which grows and grew,
Till like two meteors of expanding flame,
Those spheres instinct with it become the same,
Touch, mingle, are transfigur'd; ever still
Burning, yet ever unconsumable:
In one another's substance finding food,
Like flames too pure and light and unimbu'd
To nourish their bright lives with baser prey,
Which point to Heaven and cannot pass away:
One hope within two wills, one will beneath
Two overshadowing minds, one life, one death,
One Heaven, one Hell, one immortality,
And one annihilation. Woe is me!
The winged words on which my soul would pierce
Into the height of Love's rare Universe,
Are chains of lead around its flight of fire--
I pant, I sink, I tremble, I expire!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epipsychidion: Passages Of The Poem, Or Connected Therewith

Here, my dear friend, is a new book for you;
I have already dedicated two
To other friends, one female and one male,--
What you are, is a thing that I must veil;
What can this be to those who praise or rail?
I never was attached to that great sect
Whose doctrine is that each one should select
Out of the world a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion-though 'tis in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world-and so
With one sad friend, and many a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

Free love has this, different from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Like ocean, which the general north wind breaks
Into ten thousand waves, and each one makes
A mirror of the moon -- like some great glass,
Which did distort whatever form might pass,
Dashed into fragments by a playful child,
Which then reflects its eyes and forehead mild;
Giving for one, which it could ne'er express,
A thousand images of loveliness.

If I were one whom the loud world held wise,
I should disdain to quote authorities
In commendation of this kind of love:--
Why there is first the God in heaven above,
Who wrote a book called Nature, 'tis to be
Reviewed, I hear, in the next Quarterly;
And Socrates, the Jesus Christ of Greece,

And Jesus Christ Himself, did never cease
To urge all living things to love each other,
And to forgive their mutual faults, and smother
The Devil of disunion in their souls.

. . .

I love you!-- Listen, O embodied Ray
Of the great Brightness; I must pass away
While you remain, and these light words must be
Tokens by which you may remember me.
Start not-the thing you are is unbetrayed,
If you are human, and if but the shade
Of some sublimer spirit . . .

. . .

And as to friend or mistress, 'tis a form;
Perhaps I wish you were one. Some declare
You a familiar spirit, as you are;
Others with a . . . more inhuman
Hint that, though not my wife, you are a woman;
What is the colour of your eyes and hair?
Why, if you were a lady, it were fair
The world should know-but, as I am afraid,
The Quarterly would bait you if betrayed;
And if, as it will be sport to see them stumble
Over all sorts of scandals, hear them mumble
Their litany of curses-some guess right,
And others swear you're a Hermaphrodite;
Like that sweet marble monster of both sexes,
Which looks so sweet and gentle that it vexes
The very soul that the soul is gone
Which lifted from her limbs the veil of stone.

. . .

It is a sweet thing, friendship, a dear balm,
A happy and auspicious bird of calm,

Which rides o'er life's ever tumultuous Ocean;
A God that broods o'er chaos in commotion;
A flower which fresh as Lapland roses are,
Lifts its bold head into the world's frore air,
And blooms most radiantly when others die,
Health, hope, and youth, and brief prosperity;
And with the light and odour of its bloom,
Shining within the dungeon and the tomb;
Whose coming is as light and music are
'Mid dissonance and gloom -- a star
Which moves not 'mid the moving heavens alone--
A smile among dark frowns--a gentle tone
Among rude voices, a beloved light,
A solitude, a refuge, a delight.
If I had but a friend! Why, I have three
Even by my own confession; there may be
Some more, for what I know, for 'tis my mind
To call my friends all who are wise and kind,--
And these, Heaven knows, at best are very few;
But none can ever be more dear than you.
Why should they be? My muse has lost her wings,
Or like a dying swan who soars and sings,
I should describe you in heroic style,
But as it is, are you not void of guile?
A lovely soul, formed to be blessed and bless:
A well of sealed and secret happiness;
A lute which those whom Love has taught to play
Make music on to cheer the roughest day,
And enchant sadness till it sleeps? . . .

. . .

To the oblivion whither I and thou,
All loving and all lovely, hasten now
With steps, ah, too unequal! may we meet
In one Elysium or one winding-sheet!

If any should be curious to discover
Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
Let them read Shakespeare's sonnets, taking thence

A whetstone for their dull intelligence
That tears and will not cut, or let them guess
How Diotima, the wise prophetess,
Instructed the instructor, and why he
Rebuked the infant spirit of melody
On Agathon's sweet lips, which as he spoke
Was as the lovely star when morn has broke
The roof of darkness, in the golden dawn,
Half-hidden, and yet beautiful.

I'll pawn
My hopes of Heaven-you know what they are worth--
That the presumptuous pedagogues of Earth,
If they could tell the riddle offered here
Would scorn to be, or being to appear
What now they seem and are -- but let them chide,
They have few pleasures in the world beside;
Perhaps we should be dull were we not chidden,
Paradise fruits are sweetest when forbidden.
Folly can season Wisdom, Hatred Love.

. . .

Farewell, if it can be to say farewell
To those who . . .

. . .

I will not, as most dedicators do,
Assure myself and all the world and you,
That you are faultless -- would to God they were
Who taunt me with your love! I then should wear
These heavy chains of life with a light spirit,
And would to God I were, or even as near it
As you, dear heart. Alas! what are we? Clouds
Driven by the wind in warring multitudes,
Which rain into the bosom of the earth,
And rise again, and in our death and birth,
And through our restless life, take as from heaven

Hues which are not our own, but which are given,
And then withdrawn, and with inconstant glance
Flash from the spirit to the countenance.
There is a Power, a Love, a Joy, a God
Which makes in mortal hearts its brief abode,
A Pythian exhalation, which inspires
Love, only love -- a wind which o'er the wires
Of the soul's giant harp
There is a mood which language faints beneath;
You feel it striding, as Almighty Death
His bloodless steed . . .

. . .

And what is that most brief and bright delight
Which rushes through the touch and through the sight,
And stands before the spirit's inmost throne,
A naked Seraph? None hath ever known.
Its birth is darkness, and its growth desire;
Untameable and fleet and fierce as fire,
Not to be touched but to be felt alone,
It fills the world with glory -- and is gone.

. . .

It floats with rainbow pinions o'er the stream
Of life, which flows, like a . . . dream
Into the light of morning, to the grave
As to an ocean . . .

. . .

What is that joy which serene infancy
Perceives not, as the hours content them by,
Each in a chain of blossoms, yet enjoys
The shapes of this new world, in giant toys
Wrought by the busy . . . ever new?
Remembrance borrows Fancy's glass, to show
These forms more . . . sincere

Than now they are, than then, perhaps, they were.
When everything familiar seemed to be
Wonderful, and the immortality
Of this great world, which all things must inherit,
Was felt as one with the awakening spirit,
Unconscious of itself, and of the strange
Distinctions which in its proceeding change
It feels and knows, and mourns as if each were
A desolation . . .

. . .

Were it not a sweet refuge, Emily,
For all those exiles from the dull insane
Who vex this pleasant world with pride and pain,
For all that band of sister-spirits known
To one another by a voiceless tone?

. . .

If day should part us night will mend division
And if sleep parts us -- we will meet in vision
And if life parts us -- we will mix in death
Yielding our mite [?] of unreluctant breath
Death cannot part us -- we must meet again
In all in nothing in delight in pain:
How, why or when or where-it matters not
So that we share an undivided lot . . .

. . .

And we will move possessing and possessed
Wherever beauty on the earth's bare [?] breast
Lies like the shadow of thy soul -- till we
Become one being with the world we see . . .

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epitaph

These are two friends whose lives were undivided;
So let their memory be, now they have glided
Under the grave; let not their bones be parted,
For their two hearts in life were single-hearted.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epithalamium

Another Version Of 'A Bridal Song'.

Night, with all thine eyes look down!
Darkness shed its holiest dew!
When ever smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true?
Hence, coy hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

BOYS:

O joy! O fear! what may be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!
The golden gates of sleep unbar!
When strength and beauty meet together,
Kindles their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather.
Hence, coy hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, swift hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

GIRLS:

O joy! O fear! what may be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!
Fairies! sprites! and angels, keep her!
Holiest powers, permit no wrong!
And return, to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, ere it be long.
Hence, swift hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, coy hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

BOYS AND GIRLS:

O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Epithalamium : Another Version

Night, with all thine eyes look down!
Darkness shed its holiest dew!
When ever smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true?
Hence, coy hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
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Dawn, ere it be long.
Hence, swift hour! and quench thy light,
Lest eyes see their own delight!
Hence, coy hour! and thy loved flight
Oft renew.

BOYS AND GIRLS:

O joy! O fear! what will be done
In the absence of the sun?
Come along!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Evening. To Harriet

O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line
Of western distance that sublime descendest,
And, gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,
Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,
And, over cobweb lawn and grove and stream
Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,
Till calm Earth, with the parting splendour bright,
Shows like the vision of a beauteous dream;
What gazer now with astronomic eye
Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere?
Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly
The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,
And, turning senseless from thy warm caress,--
Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Evening: Ponte Al Mare, Pisa

I.

The sun is set; the swallows are asleep;
The bats are flitting fast in the gray air;
The slow soft toads out of damp corners creep,
And evening's breath, wandering here and there
Over the quivering surface of the stream,
Wakes not one ripple from its summer dream.

II.

There is no dew on the dry grass to-night,
Nor damp within the shadow of the trees;
The wind is intermitting, dry, and light;
And in the inconstant motion of the breeze
The dust and straws are driven up and down,
And whirled about the pavement of the town.

III.

Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immovably unquiet, and forever
It trembles, but it never fades away;
Go to the...
You, being changed, will find it then as now.

IV.

The chasm in which the sun has sunk is shut
By darkest barriers of cinereous cloud,
Like mountain over mountain huddled--but
Growing and moving upwards in a crowd,
And over it a space of watery blue,
Which the keen evening star is shining through.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Eyes : A Fragment

How eloquent are eyes!
Not the rapt poet's frenzied lay
When the soul's wildest feelings stray
Can speak so well as they.
How eloquent are eyes!
Not music's most impassioned note
On which Love's warmest fervours float
Like them bids rapture rise.

Love, look thus again,--
That your look may light a waste of years,
Darting the beam that conquers cares
Through the cold shower of tears.
Love, look thus again!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Faint With Love, The Lady Of The South

Faint with love, the Lady of the South
Lay in the paradise of Lebanon
Under a heaven of cedar boughs: the drouth
Of love was on her lips; the light was gone
Out of her eyes--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Feelings Of A Republican On The Fall Of Bonaparte

I hated thee, fallen tyrant! I did groan
To think that a most unambitious slave,
Like thou, shouldst dance and revel on the grave
Of Liberty. Thou mightst have built thy throne
Where it had stood even now: thou didst prefer
A frail and bloody pomp which Time has swept
In fragments towards Oblivion. Massacre,
For this I prayed, would on thy sleep have crept,
Treason and Slavery, Rapine, Fear, and Lust,
And stifled thee, their minister. I know
Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, legal Crime,
And bloody Faith the foulest birth of Time.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fiordispina

The season was the childhood of sweet June,
Whose sunny hours from morning until noon
Went creeping through the day with silent feet,
Each with its load of pleasure; slow yet sweet;
Like the long years of blest Eternity
Never to be developed. Joy to thee,
Fiordispina and thy Cosimo,
For thou the wonders of the depth canst know
Of this unfathomable flood of hours,
Sparkling beneath the heaven which embowers--

...

They were two cousins, almost like to twins,
Except that from the catalogue of sins
Nature had rased their love—which could not be
But by dissevering their nativity.
And so they grew together like two flowers
Upon one stem, which the same beams and showers
Lull or awaken in their purple prime,
Which the same hand will gather—the same clime
Shake with decay. This fair day smiles to see
All those who love—and who e'er loved like thee,
Fiordispina? Scarcely Cosimo,
Within whose bosom and whose brain now glow
The ardours of a vision which obscure
The very idol of its portraiture.
He faints, dissolved into a sea of love;
But thou art as a planet sphered above;
But thou art Love itself—ruling the motion
Of his subjected spirit: such emotion
Must end in sin and sorrow, if sweet May
Had not brought forth this morn—your wedding-day.

...

'Lie there; sleep awhile in your own dew,
Ye faint-eyed children of the ... Hours,'
Fiordispina said, and threw the flowers

Which she had from the breathing--

...

A table near of polished porphyry.
They seemed to wear a beauty from the eye
That looked on them—a fragrance from the touch
Whose warmth ... checked their life; a light such
As sleepers wear, lulled by the voice they love, which did reprove
The childish pity that she felt for them,
And a ... remorse that from their stem
She had divided such fair shapes ... made
A feeling in the ... which was a shade
Of gentle beauty on the flowers: there lay
All gems that make the earth's dark bosom gay.
... rods of myrtle-buds and lemon-blooms,
And that leaf tinted lightly which assumes
The livery of unremembered snow--
Violets whose eyes have drunk--

...

Fiordispina and her nurse are now
Upon the steps of the high portico,
Under the withered arm of Media
She flings her glowing arm

...

... step by step and stair by stair,
That withered woman, gray and white and brown--
More like a trunk by lichens overgrown
Than anything which once could have been human.
And ever as she goes the palsied woman

...

'How slow and painfully you seem to walk,
Poor Media! you tire yourself with talk.'
'And well it may,
Fiordispina, dearest—well-a-day!
You are hastening to a marriage-bed;

I to the grave!'—'And if my love were dead,
Unless my heart deceives me, I would lie
Beside him in my shroud as willingly
As now in the gay night-dress Lilla wrought.'
'Fie, child! Let that unseasonable thought
Not be remembered till it snows in June;
Such fancies are a music out of tune
With the sweet dance your heart must keep to-night.
What! would you take all beauty and delight
Back to the Paradise from which you sprung,
And leave to grosser mortals?--
And say, sweet lamb, would you not learn the sweet
And subtle mystery by which spirits meet?
Who knows whether the loving game is played,
When, once of mortal [vesture] disarrayed,
The naked soul goes wandering here and there
Through the wide deserts of Elysian air?
The violet dies not till it'--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment : What Mary Is When She A Little Smiles

Adapted From The Vita Nuova Of Dante.

What Mary is when she a little smiles
I cannot even tell or call to mind,
It is a miracle so new, so rare.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment From The Wandering Jew

The Elements respect their Maker's seal!
Still Like the scathed pine tree's height,
Braving the tempests of the night
Have I 'scaped the flickering flame.
Like the scathed pine, which a monument stands
Of faded grandeur, which the brands
Of the tempest-shaken air
Have riven on the desolate heath;
Yet it stands majestic even in death,
And rears its wild form there.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment Of A Ghost Story

A shovel of his ashes took
From the hearth's obscurest nook,
Muttering mysteries as she went.
Helen and Henry knew that Granny
Was as much afraid of Ghosts as any,
And so they followed hard-
But Helen clung to her brother's arm,
And her own spasm made her shake.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment Of A Satire On Satire

If gibbets, axes, confiscations, chains,
And racks of subtle torture, if the pains
Of shame, of fiery Hell's tempestuous wave,
Seen through the caverns of the shadowy grave,
Hurling the damned into the murky air
While the meek blest sit smiling; if Despair
And Hate, the rapid bloodhounds with which Terror
Hunts through the world the homeless steps of Error,
Are the true secrets of the commonweal
To make men wise and just;...
And not the sophisms of revenge and fear,
Bloodier than is revenge...
Then send the priests to every hearth and home
To preach the burning wrath which is to come,
In words like flakes of sulphur, such as thaw
The frozen tears...
If Satire's scourge could wake the slumbering hounds
Of Conscience, or erase the deeper wounds,
The leprous scars of callous Infamy;
If it could make the present not to be,
Or charm the dark past never to have been,
Or turn regret to hope; who that has seen
What Southey is and was, would not exclaim,
'Lash on!' ... be the keen verse dipped in flame;
Follow his flight with winged words, and urge
The strokes of the inexorable scourge
Until the heart be naked, till his soul
See the contagion's spots ... foul;
And from the mirror of Truth's sunlike shield,
From which his Parthian arrow...
Flash on his sight the spectres of the past,
Until his mind's eye paint thereon--
Let scorn like ... yawn below,
And rain on him like flakes of fiery snow.
This cannot be, it ought not, evil still--
Suffering makes suffering, ill must follow ill.
Rough words beget sad thoughts, ... and, beside,
Men take a sullen and a stupid pride
In being all they hate in others' shame,

By a perverse antipathy of fame.
'Tis not worth while to prove, as I could, how
From the sweet fountains of our Nature flow
These bitter waters; I will only say,
If any friend would take Southey some day,
And tell him, in a country walk alone,
Softening harsh words with friendship's gentle tone,
How incorrect his public conduct is,
And what men think of it, 'twere not amiss.
Far better than to make innocent ink--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment Of A Sonnet : To Harriet

Ever as now with Love and Virtue's glow
May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn,
Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o'erflow
Which force from mine such quick and warm return.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment Of A Sonnet. Farewell To North Devon

Where man's profane and tainting hand
Nature's primaeval loveliness has marred,
And some few souls of the high bliss debarred
Which else obey her powerful command;
...mountain piles
That load in grandeur Cambria's emerald vales.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment Of The Elegy On The Death Of Bion

From the Greek of Moschus.

Ye Dorian woods and waves, lament aloud,--
Augment your tide, O streams, with fruitless tears,
For the beloved Bion is no more.
Let every tender herb and plant and flower,
From each dejected bud and drooping bloom,
Shed dews of liquid sorrow, and with breath
Of melancholy sweetness on the wind
Diffuse its languid love; let roses blush,
Anemones grow paler for the loss
Their dells have known; and thou, O hyacinth,
Utter thy legend now--yet more, dumb flower,
Than 'Ah! alas!--thine is no common grief--
Bion the [sweetest singer] is no more.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment, Or The Triumph Of Conscience

'Twas dead of the night when I sate in my dwelling,
One glimmering lamp was expiring and low,--
Around the dark tide of the tempest was swelling,
Along the wild mountains night-ravens were yelling,
They bodingly presaged destruction and woe!

'Twas then that I started, the wild storm was howling,
Nought was seen, save the lightning that danced on the sky,
Above me the crash of the thunder was rolling,
And low, chilling murmurs the blast wafted by.--

My heart sank within me, unheeded the jar
Of the battling clouds on the mountain-tops broke,
Unheeded the thunder-peal crashed in mine ear,
This heart hard as iron was stranger to fear,
But conscience in low noiseless whispering spoke.
'Twas then that her form on the whirlwind uprearing,
The dark ghost of the murdered Victoria strode,
Her right hand a blood reeking dagger was bearing,
She swiftly advanced to my lonesome abode.--
I wildly then called on the tempest to bear me!

...
...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: "To The Moon"

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing Heaven, and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth,--
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: A Gentle Story Of Two Lovers Young

A gentle story of two lovers young,
Who met in innocence and died in sorrow,
And of one selfish heart, whose rancour clung
Like curses on them; are ye slow to borrow
The lore of truth from such a tale?
Or in this world's deserted vale,
Do ye not see a star of gladness
Pierce the shadows of its sadness,--
When ye are cold, that love is a light sent
From Heaven, which none shall quench, to cheer the innocent?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: A Wanderer

He wanders, like a day-appearing dream,
Through the dim wildernesses of the mind;
Through desert woods and tracts, which seem
Like ocean, homeless, boundless, unconfined.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Amor Aeternus

Wealth and dominion fade into the mass
Of the great sea of human right and wrong,
When once from our possession they must pass;
But love, though misdirected, is among
The things which are immortal, and surpass
All that frail stuff which will be--or which was.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Apostrophe To Silence

Silence! Oh, well are Death and Sleep and Thou
Three brethren named, the guardians gloomy-winged
Of one abyss, where life, and truth, and joy
Are swallowed up—yet spare me, Spirit, pity me,
Until the sounds I hear become my soul,
And it has left these faint and weary limbs,
To track along the lapses of the air
This wandering melody until it rests
Among lone mountains in some...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Follow To The Deep Wood's Weeds

Follow to the deep wood's weeds,
Follow to the wild-briar dingle,
Where we seek to intermingle,
And the violet tells her tale
To the odour-scented gale,
For they two have enough to do
Of such work as I and you.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Great Spirit

Great Spirit whom the sea of boundless thought
Nurtures within its unimagined caves,
In which thou sittest sole, as in my mind,
Giving a voice to its mysterious waves--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Home

Dear home, thou scene of earliest hopes and joys,
The least of which wronged Memory ever makes
Bitterer than all thine unremembered tears.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Igniculus Desiderii

To thirst and find no fill—to wail and wander
With short unsteady steps—to pause and ponder--
To feel the blood run through the veins and tingle
Where busy thought and blind sensation mingle;
To nurse the image of unfelt caresses
Till dim imagination just possesses
The half-created shadow, then all the night
Sick...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Is It That In Some Brighter Sphere

Is it that in some brighter sphere
We part from friends we meet with here?
Or do we see the Future pass
Over the Present's dusky glass?
Or what is that that makes us seem
To patch up fragments of a dream,
Part of which comes true, and part
Beats and trembles in the heart?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Love The Universe To-Day

And who feels discord now or sorrow?
Love is the universe to-day--
These are the slaves of dim to-morrow,
Darkening Life's labyrinthine way.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Milton's Spirit

I dreamed that Milton's spirit rose, and took
From life's green tree his Uranian lute;
And from his touch sweet thunder flowed, and shook
All human things built in contempt of man,--
And sanguine thrones and impious altars quaked,
Prisons and citadels...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: My Head Is Wild With Weeping

My head is wild with weeping for a grief
Which is the shadow of a gentle mind.
I walk into the air (but no relief
To seek,--or haply, if I sought, to find;
It came unsought);--to wonder that a chief
Among men's spirits should be cold and blind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Omens

Hark! the owlet flaps his wings
In the pathless dell beneath;
Hark! 'tis the night-raven sings
Tidings of approaching death.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Satan Broken Loose

A golden-winged Angel stood
Before the Eternal Judgement-seat:
His looks were wild, and Devils' blood
Stained his dainty hands and feet.
The Father and the Son
Knew that strife was now begun.
They knew that Satan had broken his chain,
And with millions of daemons in his train,
Was ranging over the world again.
Before the Angel had told his tale,
A sweet and a creeping sound
Like the rushing of wings was heard around;
And suddenly the lamps grew pale--
The lamps, before the Archangels seven,
That burn continually in Heaven.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Such Hope, As Is The Sick Despair Of Good

Such hope, as is the sick despair of good,
Such fear, as is the certainty of ill,
Such doubt, as is pale Expectation's food
Turned while she tastes to poison, when the will
Is powerless, and the spirit...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Sufficient Unto The Day

Is not to-day enough? Why do I peer
Into the darkness of the day to come?
Is not to-morrow even as yesterday?
And will the day that follows change thy doom?
Few flowers grow upon thy wintry way;
And who waits for thee in that cheerless home
Whence thou hast fled, whither thou must return
Charged with the load that makes thee faint and mourn?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: The Lake's Margin

The fierce beasts of the woods and wildernesses
Track not the steps of him who drinks of it;
For the light breezes, which for ever fleet
Around its margin, heap the sand thereon.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: The Vine-Shroud

Flourishing vine, whose kindling clusters glow
Beneath the autumnal sun, none taste of thee;
For thou dost shroud a ruin, and below
The rotting bones of dead antiquity.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: There Is A Warm And Gentle Atmosphere

There is a warm and gentle atmosphere
About the form of one we love, and thus
As in a tender mist our spirits are
Wrapped in the of that which is to us
The health of life's own life--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Thoughts Come And Go In Solitude

My thoughts arise and fade in solitude,
The verse that would invest them melts away
Like moonlight in the heaven of spreading day:
How beautiful they were, how firm they stood,
Flecking the starry sky like woven pearl!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: To A Friend Released From Prison

For me, my friend, if not that tears did tremble
In my faint eyes, and that my heart beat fast
With feelings which make rapture pain resemble,
Yet, from thy voice that falsehood starts aghast,
I thank thee--let the tyrant keep
His chains and tears, yea, let him weep
With rage to see thee freshly risen,
Like strength from slumber, from the prison,
In which he vainly hoped the soul to bind
Which on the chains must prey that fetter humankind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: To Byron

O mighty mind, in whose deep stream this age
Shakes like a reed in the unheeding storm,
Why dost thou curb not thine own sacred rage?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: To One Singing

My spirit like a charmed bark doth swim
Upon the liquid waves of thy sweet singing,
Far far away into the regions dim

Of rapture—as a boat, with swift sails winging
Its way adown some many-winding river,
Speeds through dark forests o'er the waters swinging...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: To The People Of England

PEOPLE of England, ye who toil and groan,
Who reap the harvests which are not your own,
Who weave the clothes which your oppressors wear,
And for your own take the inclement air;
Who build warm houses . . .
And are like gods who give them all they have,
And nurse them from the cradle to the grave . . .

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Wedded Souls

I am as a spirit who has dwelt
Within his heart of hearts, and I have felt
His feelings, and have thought his thoughts, and known
The inmost converse of his soul, the tone
Unheard but in the silence of his blood,
When all the pulses in their multitude
Image the trembling calm of summer seas.
I have unlocked the golden melodies
Of his deep soul, as with a master-key,
And loosened them and bathed myself therein--
Even as an eagle in a thunder-mist
Clothing his wings with lightning.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: What Men Gain Fairly

What men gain fairly -- that they should possess,
And children may inherit idleness,
From him who earns it—This is understood;
Private injustice may be general good.
But he who gains by base and armed wrong,
Or guilty fraud, or base compliances,
May be despoiled; even as a stolen dress
Is stripped from a convicted thief; and he
Left in the nakedness of infamy.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Ye Gentle Visitations Of Calm Thought

Ye gentle visitations of calm thought--
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth,
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought,--
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragment: Yes! All Is Past

Yes! all is past--swift time has fled away,
Yet its swell pauses on my sickening mind;
How long will horror nerve this frame of clay?
I'm dead, and lingers yet my soul behind.
Oh! powerful Fate, revoke thy deadly spell,
And yet that may not ever, ever be,
Heaven will not smile upon the work of Hell;
Ah! no, for Heaven cannot smile on me;
Fate, envious Fate, has sealed my wayward destiny.

I sought the cold brink of the midnight surge,
I sighed beneath its wave to hide my woes,
The rising tempest sung a funeral dirge,
And on the blast a frightful yell arose.
Wild flew the meteors o'er the maddened main,
Wilder did grief athwart my bosom glare;
Stilled was the unearthly howling, and a strain,
Swelled mid the tumult of the battling air,
'Twas like a spirit's song, but yet more soft and fair.

I met a maniac—like he was to me,
I said--'Poor victim, wherefore dost thou roam?
And canst thou not contend with agony,
That thus at midnight thou dost quit thine home?'
'Ah there she sleeps: cold is her bloodless form,
And I will go to slumber in her grave;
And then our ghosts, whilst raves the maddened storm,
Will sweep at midnight o'er the wildered wave;
Wilt thou our lowly beds with tears of pity lave?'

'Ah! no, I cannot shed the pitying tear,
This breast is cold, this heart can feel no more--
But I can rest me on thy chilling bier,
Can shriek in horror to the tempest's roar.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragments Of An Unfinished Drama

Scene.--Before the Cavern of the Indian Enchantress.

The Enchantress comes forth.

Enchantress.

He came like a dream in the dawn of life,
He fled like a shadow before its noon;
He is gone, and my peace is turned to strife,
And I wander and wane like the weary moon.
O, sweet Echo, wake,
And for my sake
Make answer the while my heart shall break!

But my heart has a music which Echo's lips,
Though tender and true, yet can answer not,
And the shadow that moves in the soul's eclipse
Can return not the kiss by his now forgot;
Sweet lips! he who hath
On my desolate path
Cast the darkness of absence, worse than death!

The Enchantress makes her spell: she is answered by a Spirit.

Spirit.

Within the silent centre of the earth
My mansion is; where I have lived insphered
From the beginning, and around my sleep
Have woven all the wondrous imagery
Of this dim spot, which mortals call the world;
Infinite depths of unknown elements
Massed into one impenetrable mask;
Sheets of immeasurable fire, and veins
Of gold and stone, and adamant iron.
And as a veil in which I walk through Heaven
I have wrought mountains, seas, and waves, and clouds,
And lastly light, whose interfusion dawns
In the dark space of interstellar air.

ANOTHER SCENE

Indian Youth and Lady.

Indian.

And, if my grief should still be dearer to me
Than all the pleasures in the world beside,
Why would you lighten it?-

Lady.

I offer only
That which I seek, some human sympathy
In this mysterious island.

Indian.

Oh! my friend,
My sister, my beloved!-What do I say?
My brain is dizzy, and I scarce know whether
I speak to thee or her.

Lady.

Peace, perturbed heart!
I am to thee only as thou to mine,
The passing wind which heals the brow at noon,
And may strike cold into the breast at night,
Yet cannot linger where it soothes the most,
Or long soothe could it linger.

Indian.

But you said
You also loved?

Lady.

Loved! Oh, I love. Methinks
This word of love is fit for all the world,
And that for gentle hearts another name
Would speak of gentler thoughts than the world owns.
I have loved.

Indian.

And thou lovest not? if so,
Young as thou art thou canst afford to weep.

Lady.

Oh! would that I could claim exemption
From all the bitterness of that sweet name.
I loved, I love, and when I love no more
Let joys and grief perish, and leave despair
To ring the knell of youth. He stood beside me,
The embodied vision of the brightest dream,
Which like a dawn heralds the day of life;
The shadow of his presence made my world
A Paradise. All familiar things he touched,
All common words he spoke, became to me
Like forms and sounds of a diviner world.
He was as is the sun in his fierce youth,
As terrible and lovely as a tempest;
He came, and went, and left me what I am.
Alas! Why must I think how oft we two
Have sate together near the river springs,
Under the green pavilion which the willow
Spreads on the floor of the unbroken fountain,
Strewn, by the nurslings that linger there,
Over that islet paved with flowers and moss,
While the musk-rose leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Showered on us, and the dove mourned in the pine,
Sad prophetess of sorrows not her own?
The crane returned to her unfrozen haunt,
And the false cuckoo bade the spray good morn;
And on a wintry bough the widowed bird,
Hid in the deepest night of ivy-leaves,
Renewed the vigils of a sleepless sorrow.
I, left like her, and leaving one like her,
Alike abandoned and abandoning
(Oh! unlike her in this!) the gentlest youth,
Whose love had made my sorrows dear to him,
Even as my sorrow made his love to me!

Indian.

One curse of Nature stamps in the same mould
The features of the wretched; and they are
As like as violet to violet,
When memory, the ghost, their odours keeps
Mid the cold relics of abandoned joy.-

Proceed.

Lady.

He was a simple innocent boy.
I loved him well, but not as he desired;
Yet even thus he was content to be:-
A short content, for I was-

Indian

[aside].

God of Heaven!

From such an islet, such a river-spring-!
I dare not ask her if there stood upon it
A pleasure-dome surmounted by a crescent,
With steps to the blue water. [Aloud.]
It may be
That Nature masks in life several copies
Of the same lot, so that the sufferers
May feel another's sorrow as their own,
And find in friendship what they lost in love.
That cannot be: yet it is strange that we,
From the same scene, by the same path to this
Realm of abandonment -- But speak! your breath-
Your breath is like soft music, your words are
The echoes of a voice which on my heart
Sleeps like a melody of early days.
But as you said--

Lady.

He was so awful, yet
So beautiful in mystery and terror,
Calming me as the loveliness of heaven
Soothes the unquiet sea:-and yet not so,
For he seemed stormy, and would often seem
A quenchless sun masked in portentous clouds;
For such his thoughts, and even his actions were;
But he was not of them, nor they of him,
But as they hid his splendour from the earth.
Some said he was a man of blood and peril,
And steeped in bitter infamy to the lips.
More need was there I should be innocent,
More need that I should be most true and kind,

And much more need that there should be found one
To share remorse and scorn and solitude,
And all the ills that wait on those who do
The tasks of ruin in the world of life.
He fled, and I have followed him.

Indian.

Such a one
Is he who was the winter of my peace.
But, fairest stranger, when didst thou depart
From the far hills where rise the springs of India?
How didst thou pass the intervening sea?

Lady.

If I be sure I am not dreaming now,
I should not doubt to say it was a dream.
Methought a star came down from heaven,
And rested mid the plants of India,
Which I had given a shelter from the frost
Within my chamber. There the meteor lay,
Panting forth light among the leaves and flowers,
As if it lived, and was outworn with speed;
Or that it loved, and passion made the pulse
Of its bright life throb like an anxious heart,
Till it diffused itself, and all the chamber
And walls seemed melted into emerald fire
That burned not; in the midst of which appeared
A spirit like a child, and laughed aloud
A thrilling peal of such sweet merriment
As made the blood tingle in my warm feet:
Then bent over a vase, and murmuring
Low, unintelligible melodies,
Placed something in the mould like melon-seeds,
And slowly faded, and in place of it
A soft hand issued from the veil of fire,
Holding a cup like a magnolia flower,
And poured upon the earth within the vase
The element with which it overflowed,
Brighter than morning light, and purer than
The water of the springs of Himalah.

Indian.

You waked not?

Lady.

Not until my dream became
Like a child's legend on the tideless sand,
Which the first foam erases half, and half
Leaves legible. At length I rose, and went,
Visiting my flowers from pot to pot, and thought
To set new cuttings in the empty urns,
And when I came to that beside the lattice,
I saw two little dark-green leaves
Lifting the light mould at their birth, and then
I half-remembered my forgotten dream.
And day by day, green as a gourd in June,
The plant grew fresh and thick, yet no one knew
What plant it was; its stem and tendrils seemed
Like emerald snakes, mottled and diamonded
With azure mail and streaks of woven silver;
And all the sheaths that folded the dark buds
Rose like the crest of cobra-di-capel,
Until the golden eye of the bright flower,
Through the dark lashes of those veined lids,
....disencumbered of their silent sleep,
Gazed like a star into the morning light.
Its leaves were delicate, you almost saw
The pulses
With which the purple velvet flower was fed
To overflow, and like a poet's heart
Changing bright fancy to sweet sentiment,
Changed half the light to fragrance. It soon fell,
And to a green and dewy embryo-fruit
Left all its treasured beauty. Day by day
I nursed the plant, and on the double flute
Played to it on the sunny winter days
Soft melodies, as sweet as April rain
On silent leaves, and sang those words in which
Passion makes Echo taunt the sleeping strings;
And I would send tales of forgotten love
Late into the lone night, and sing wild songs
Of maids deserted in the olden time,
And weep like a soft cloud in April's bosom
Upon the sleeping eyelids of the plant,

So that perhaps it dreamed that Spring was come,
And crept abroad into the moonlight air,
And loosened all its limbs, as, noon by noon,
The sun averted less his oblique beam.

Indian.

And the plant died not in the frost?

Lady.

It grew;

And went out of the lattice which I left
Half open for it, trailing its quaint spires
Along the garden and across the lawn,
And down the slope of moss and through the tufts
Of wild-flower roots, and stumps of trees o'ergrown
With simple lichens, and old hoary stones,
On to the margin of the glassy pool,
Even to a nook of unblown violets
And lilies-of-the-valley yet unborn,
Under a pine with ivy overgrown.
And there its fruit lay like a sleeping lizard
Under the shadows; but when Spring indeed
Came to unswathe her infants, and the lilies
Peeped from their bright green masks to wonder at
This shape of autumn couched in their recess,
Then it dilated, and it grew until
One half lay floating on the fountain wave,
Whose pulse, elapsed in unlike sympathies,
Kept time
Among the snowy water-lily buds.
Its shape was such as summer melody
Of the south wind in spicy vales might give
To some light cloud bound from the golden dawn
To fairy isles of evening, and it seemed
In hue and form that it had been a mirror
Of all the hues and forms around it and
Upon it pictured by the sunny beams
Which, from the bright vibrations of the pool,
Were thrown upon the rafters and the roof
Of boughs and leaves, and on the pillared stems
Of the dark sylvan temple, and reflections
Of every infant flower and star of moss

And veined leaf in the azure odorous air.
And thus it lay in the Elysian calm
Of its own beauty, floating on the line
Which, like a film in purest space, divided
The heaven beneath the water from the heaven
Above the clouds; and every day I went
Watching its growth and wondering;
And as the day grew hot, methought I saw
A glassy vapour dancing on the pool,
And on it little quaint and filmy shapes,
With dizzy motion, wheel and rise and fall,
Like clouds of gnats with perfect lineaments...
O friend, sleep was a veil uplift from Heaven--
As if Heaven dawned upon the world of dream--
When darkness rose on the extinguished day
Out of the eastern wilderness.

Indian.

I too

Have found a moment's paradise in sleep
Half compensate a hell of waking sorrow.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragments Supposed To Be Parts Of Otho

I.

Those whom nor power, nor lying faith, nor toil,
Nor custom, queen of many slaves, makes blind,
Have ever grieved that man should be the spoil
Of his own weakness, and with earnest mind
Fed hopes of its redemption; these recur
Chastened by deathful victory now, and find
Foundations in this foulest age, and stir
Me whom they cheer to be their minister.

II.

Dark is the realm of grief: but human things
Those may not know who cannot weep for them.

...

III.

Once more descend
The shadows of my soul upon mankind,
For to those hearts with which they never blend,
Thoughts are but shadows which the flashing mind
From the swift clouds which track its flight of fire,
Casts on the gloomy world it leaves behind.

...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Fragments Written For Hellas

I.

Fairest of the Destinies,
Disarray thy dazzling eyes:
Keener far thy lightnings are
Than the winged [bolts] thou bearest,
And the smile thou wearest
Wraps thee as a star
Is wrapped in light.

II.

Could Arethuse to her forsaken urn
From Alpheus and the bitter Doris run,
Or could the morning shafts of purest light
Again into the quivers of the Sun
Be gathered—could one thought from its wild flight
Return into the temple of the brain
Without a change, without a stain,--
Could aught that is, ever again
Be what it once has ceased to be,
Greece might again be free!

III.

A star has fallen upon the earth
Mid the benighted nations,
A quenchless atom of immortal light,
A living spark of Night,
A cresset shaken from the constellations.
Swifter than the thunder fell
To the heart of Earth, the well
Where its pulses flow and beat,
And unextinct in that cold source
Burns, and on ... course
Guides the sphere which is its prison,
Like an angelic spirit pent
In a form of mortal birth,
Till, as a spirit half-arisen
Shatters its charnel, it has rent,
In the rapture of its mirth,
The thin and painted garment of the Earth,

Ruining its chaos—a fierce breath
Consuming all its forms of living death.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From "Adonais," 49-52

49

Go thou to Rome,--at once the Paradise,
The grave, the city, and the wilderness;
And where its wrecks like shattered mountains rise,
And flowering weeds, and fragrant copses dress
The bones of Desolation's nakedness
Pass, till the spirit of the spot shall lead
Thy footsteps to a slope of green access
Where, like an infant's smile, over the dead
A light of laughing flowers along the grass is spread;

50

□
And gray walls moulder round, on which dull Time
Feeds, like slow fire upon a hoary brand;
And one keen pyramid with wedge sublime,
Pavilioning the dust of him who planned
This refuge for his memory, doth stand
Like flame transformed to marble; and beneath,
A field is spread, on which a newer band
Have pitched in Heaven's smile their camp of death,
Welcoming him we lose with scarce extinguished breath.

51

□
Here pause: these graves are all too young as yet
To have outgrown the sorrow which consigned
Its charge to each; and if the seal is set,
Here, on one fountain of a mourning mind,
Break it not thou! too surely shalt thou find
Thine own well full, if thou returnest home,
Of tears and gall. From the world's bitter wind
Seek shelter in the shadow of the tomb.
What Adonais is, why fear we to become?

52

□
The One remains, the many change and pass;

Heaven's light forever shines, Earth's shadows fly;
Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
Until Death tramples it to fragments.--Die,
If thou wouldst be with that which thou dost seek!
Follow where all is fled!--Rome's azure sky,
Flowers, ruins, statues, music, words, are weak
The glory they transfuse with fitting truth to speak.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

from Laon and Cythna; or The Revolution of the Golden City

To Mary — —

1.

So now my summer task is ended, Mary,
And I return to thee, mine own heart's home;
As to his Queen some victor Knight of Faëry,
Earning bright spoils for her enchanted dome;
Nor thou disdain, that ere my fame become
A star among the stars of mortal night,
If it indeed may cleave its natal gloom,
Its doubtful promise thus I would unite
With thy beloved name, thou Child of love and light.

2.

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour
Is ended,—and the fruit is at thy feet!
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlaced branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Water-falls leap among wild islands green,
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
Of moss-grown trees and weeds, shall I be seen:
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

3.

Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear Friend, when first
The clouds which wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-dawn it was,
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room, voices, that, alas!
Were but one echo from a world of woes—
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes.

4.

And then I clasped my hands and looked around—
—But none was near to mock my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground—
So without shame, I spake:—'I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power, for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannise
Without reproach or check.' I then controuled
My tears, my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

5.

And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore,
Yet nothing that my tyrants knew or taught
I cared to learn, but from that secret store
Wrought linked armour for my soul, before
It might walk forth to war among mankind;
Thus power and hope were strengthened more and more
Within me, till there came upon my mind
A sense of loneliness, a thirst with which I pined.

6.

Alas, that love should be a blight and snare
To those who seek all sympathies in one!—
Such once I sought in vain; then black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the world in which I moved alone:—
Yet never found I one not false to me,
Hard hearts, and cold, like weights of icy stone
Which crushed and withered mine, that could not be
Aught but a lifeless clog, until revived by thee.

7.

Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart
Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless plain;
How beautiful and calm and free thou wert

In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain
Of Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain,
And walked as free as light the clouds among,
Which many an envious slave then breathed in vain
From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung
To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long.

8.

No more alone through the world's wilderness,
Although I trod the paths of high intent,
I journeyed now: no more companionless,
Where solitude is like despair, I went.—
There is the wisdom of a stern content
When Poverty can blight the just and good,
When Infamy dares mock the innocent,
And cherished friends turn with the multitude
To trample: this was ours, and we unshaken stood!

9.

Now has descended a serener hour,
And with inconstant fortune, friends return;
Though suffering leaves the knowledge and the power
Which says:—Let scorn be not repaid with scorn.
And from thy side two gentle babes are born
To fill our home with smiles, and thus are we
Most fortunate beneath life's beaming morn;
And these delights, and thou, have been to me
The parents of the Song I consecrate to thee.

10.

Is it, that now my inexperienced fingers
But strike the prelude of a loftier strain?
Or, must the lyre on which my spirit lingers
Soon pause in silence, ne'er to sound again,
Though it might shake the Anarch Custom's reign,
And charm the minds of men to Truth's own sway
Holier than was Amphion's? I would fain
Reply in hope—but I am worn away,
And Death and Love are yet contending for their prey.

11.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak:
Time may interpret to his silent years.
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles, and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech, a prophecy
Is whispered, to subdue my fondest fears:
And through thine eyes, even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.

12.

They say that thou wert lovely from thy birth,
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring Child.
I wonder not—for One then left this earth
Whose life was like a setting planet mild
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory; still her fame
Shines on thee, through the tempests dark and wild
Which shake these latter days; and thou canst claim
The shelter, from thy Sire, of an immortal name.

13.

One voice came forth from many a mighty spirit,
Which was the echo of three thousand years;
And the tumultuous world stood mute to hear it,
As some lone man who in a desert hears
The music of his home:—unwonted fears
Fell on the pale oppressors of our race,
And Faith, and Custom, and low-thoughted cares,
Like thunder-stricken dragons, for a space
Left the torn human heart, their food and dwelling-place.

14.

Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind!
If there must be no response to my cry—
If men must rise and stamp with fury blind

On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I,
Sweet Friend! can look from our tranquillity
Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,—
Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by
Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight,
That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From The Greek Of Moschus

Tan ala tan glaukan otan onemos atrema Balle--k.t.l.

When winds that move not its calm surface sweep
The azure sea, I love the land no more;
The smiles of the serene and tranquil deep
Tempt my unquiet mind.—But when the roar
Of Ocean's gray abyss resounds, and foam
Gathers upon the sea, and vast waves burst,
I turn from the drear aspect to the home
Of Earth and its deep woods, where, interspersed,
When winds blow loud, pines make sweet melody.
Whose house is some lone bark, whose toil the sea,
Whose prey the wandering fish, an evil lot
Has chosen.--But I my languid limbs will fling
Beneath the plane, where the brook's murmuring
Moves the calm spirit, but disturbs it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From The Greek Of Moschus : Pan Loved His Neighbour Echo

Pan loved his neighbour Echo--but that child
Of Earth and Air pined for the Satyr leaping;
The Satyr loved with wasting madness wild
The bright nymph Lyda,--and so three went weeping.
As Pan loved Echo, Echo loved the Satyr,
The Satyr, Lyda; and so love consumed them.--
And thus to each--which was a woful matter--
To bear what they inflicted Justice doomed them;
For, inasmuch as each might hate the lover,
Each, loving, so was hated.--Ye that love not
Be warned-in thought turn this example over,
That when ye love, the like return ye prove not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From The Original Draft Of The Poem To William Shelley

I.

The world is now our dwelling-place;
Where'er the earth one fading trace
Of what was great and free does keep,
That is our home!...
Mild thoughts of man's ungentle race
Shall our contented exile reap;
For who that in some happy place
His own free thoughts can freely chase
By woods and waves can clothe his face
In cynic smiles? Child! we shall weep.

II.

This lament,
The memory of thy grievous wrong
Will fade...
But genius is omnipotent
To hallow...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From Vergil's Fourth Georgic

And the cloven waters like a chasm of mountains
Stood, and received him in its mighty portal
And led him through the deep's untrampled fountains

He went in wonder through the path immortal
Of his great Mother and her humid reign
And groves profaned not by the step of mortal

Which sounded as he passed, and lakes which rain
Replenished not girt round by marble caves
'Wildered by the watery motion of the main

Half 'wildered he beheld the bursting waves
Of every stream beneath the mighty earth
Phasis and Lycus which the ... sand paves,

[And] The chasm where old Enipeus has its birth
And father Tyber and Anienas[?] glow
And whence Caicus, Mysian stream, comes forth

And rock-resounding Hypanis, and thou
Eridanus who bearest like empire's sign
Two golden horns upon thy taurine brow

Thou than whom none of the streams divine
Through garden-fields and meads with fiercer power,
Burst in their tumult on the purple brine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From Vergil's Tenth Eclogue

Melodious Arethusa, o'er my verse
Shed thou once more the spirit of thy stream:
Who denies verse to Gallus? So, when thou
Glidest beneath the green and purple gleam
Of Syracusan waters, mayst thou flow
Unmingled with the bitter Doric dew!
Begin, and, whilst the goats are browsing now
The soft leaves, in our way let us pursue
The melancholy loves of Gallus. List!
We sing not to the dead: the wild woods knew
His sufferings, and their echoes...
Young Naiads,...in what far woodlands wild
Wandered ye when unworthy love possessed
Your Gallus? Not where Pindus is up-piled,
Nor where Parnassus' sacred mount, nor where
Aonian Aganippe expands...
The laurels and the myrtle-copses dim.
The pine-encircled mountain, Maenalus,
The cold crags of Lycaeus, weep for him;
And Sylvan, crowned with rustic coronals,
Came shaking in his speed the budding wands
And heavy lilies which he bore: we knew
Pan the Arcadian.
...
'What madness is this, Gallus? Thy heart's care
With willing steps pursues another there.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

From the Arabic: An Imitation

I.

My faint spirit was sitting in the light
Of thy looks, my love;
It panted for thee like the hind at noon
For the brooks, my love.
Thy barb whose hoofs outspeed the tempest's flight
Bore thee far from me;
My heart, for my weak feet were weary soon,
Did companion thee.

II.

Ah! fleeter far than fleetest storm or steed
Or the death they bear,
The heart which tender thought clothes like a dove
With the wings of care;
In the battle, in the darkness, in the need,
Shall mine cling to thee,
Nor claim one smile for all the comfort, love,
It may bring to thee.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ghasta Or, The Avenging Demon!!!

Hark! the owlet flaps her wing,
In the pathless dell beneath,
Hark! night ravens loudly sing,
Tidings of despair and death.--

Horror covers all the sky,
Clouds of darkness blot the moon,
Prepare! for mortal thou must die,
Prepare to yield thy soul up soon--

Fierce the tempest raves around,
Fierce the volleyed lightnings fly,
Crashing thunder shakes the ground,
Fire and tumult fill the sky.—

Hark! the tolling village bell,
Tells the hour of midnight come,
Now can blast the powers of Hell,
Fiend-like goblins now can roam--

See! his crest all stained with rain,
A warrior hastening speeds his way,
He starts, looks round him, starts again,
And sighs for the approach of day.

See! his frantic steed he reins,
See! he lifts his hands on high,
Implores a respite to his pains,
From the powers of the sky.--

He seeks an Inn, for faint from toil,
Fatigue had bent his lofty form,
To rest his wearied limbs awhile,
Fatigued with wandering and the storm.

...
...

Slow the door is opened wide--

With trackless tread a stranger came,
His form Majestic, slow his stride,
He sate, nor spake,--nor told his name--

Terror blanched the warrior's cheek,
Cold sweat from his forehead ran,
In vain his tongue essayed to speak,--
At last the stranger thus began:

'Mortal! thou that saw'st the sprite,
Tell me what I wish to know,
Or come with me before 'tis light,
Where cypress trees and mandrakes grow.

'Fierce the avenging Demon's ire,
Fiercer than the wintry blast,
Fiercer than the lightning's fire,
When the hour of twilight's past'--

The warrior raised his sunken eye.
It met the stranger's sullen scowl,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die,'
In burning letters chilled his soul.

WARRIOR:

Stranger! whoso'er you are,
I feel impelled my tale to tell--
Horrors stranger shalt thou hear,
Horrors drear as those of Hell.

O'er my Castle silence reigned,
Late the night and drear the hour,
When on the terrace I observed,
A fleeting shadowy mist to lower.--

Light the cloud as summer fog,
Which transient shuns the morning beam;
Fleeting as the cloud on bog,
That hangs or on the mountain stream.--

Horror seized my shuddering brain,
Horror dimmed my starting eye.

In vain I tried to speak,--In vain
My limbs essayed the spot to fly--

At last the thin and shadowy form,
With noiseless, trackless footsteps came,--
Its light robe floated on the storm,
Its head was bound with lambent flame.

In chilling voice drear as the breeze
Which sweeps along th' autumnal ground,
Which wanders through the leafless trees,
Or the mandrake's groan which floats around.

'Thou art mine and I am thine,
'Till the sinking of the world,
I am thine and thou art mine,
'Till in ruin death is hurled--

'Strong the power and dire the fate,
Which drags me from the depths of Hell,
Breaks the tomb's eternal gate,
Where fiendish shapes and dead men yell,

'Haply I might ne'er have shrank
From flames that rack the guilty dead,
Haply I might ne'er have sank
On pleasure's flowery, thorny bed--

--'But stay! no more I dare disclose,
Of the tale I wish to tell,
On Earth relentless were my woes,
But fiercer are my pangs in Hell--

'Now I claim thee as my love,
Lay aside all chilling fear,
My affection will I prove,
Where sheeted ghosts and spectres are!

'For thou art mine, and I am thine,
'Till the dreaded judgement day,
I am thine, and thou art mine--
Night is past--I must away.'

Still I gazed, and still the form
Pressed upon my aching sight,
Still I braved the howling storm,
When the ghost dissolved in night.--

Restless, sleepless fled the night,
Sleepless as a sick man's bed,
When he sighs for morning light,
When he turns his aching head,--

Slow and painful passed the day.
Melancholy seized my brain,
Lingering fled the hours away,
Lingering to a wretch in pain.--

At last came night, ah! horrid hour,
Ah! chilling time that wakes the dead,
When demons ride the clouds that lower,
--The phantom sat upon my bed.

In hollow voice, low as the sound
Which in some charnel makes its moan,
What floats along the burying ground,
The phantom claimed me as her own.

Her chilling finger on my head,
With coldest touch congealed my soul--
Cold as the finger of the dead,
Or damps which round a tombstone roll--

Months are passed in lingering round,
Every night the spectre comes,
With thrilling step it shakes the ground,
With thrilling step it round me roams--

Stranger! I have told to thee,
All the tale I have to tell--
Stranger! canst thou tell to me,
How to 'scape the powers of Hell?--

STRANGER:

Warrior! I can ease thy woes,
Wilt thou, wilt thou, come with me--
Warrior! I can all disclose,
Follow, follow, follow me.

Yet the tempest's duskiest wing,
Its mantle stretches o'er the sky,
Yet the midnight ravens sing,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.'

At last they saw a river clear,
That crossed the heathy path they trod,
The Stranger's look was wild and drear,
The firm Earth shook beneath his nod--

He raised a wand above his head,
He traced a circle on the plain,
In a wild verse he called the dead,
The dead with silent footsteps came.

A burning brilliance on his head,
Flaming filled the stormy air,
In a wild verse he called the dead,
The dead in motley crowd were there.--

'Ghast! Ghast! come along,
Bring thy fiendish crowd with thee,
Quickly raise th' avenging Song,
Ghast! Ghast! come to me.'

Horrid shapes in mantles gray,
Flit athwart the stormy night,
'Ghast! Ghast! come away,
Come away before 'tis light.'

See! the sheeted Ghost they bring,
Yelling dreadful o'er the heath,
Hark! the deadly verse they sing,
Tidings of despair and death!

The yelling Ghost before him stands,
See! she rolls her eyes around,

Now she lifts her bony hands,
Now her footsteps shake the ground.

STRANGER:

Phantom of Theresa say,
Why to earth again you came,
Quickly speak, I must away!
Or you must bleach for aye in flame,--

PHANTOM:

Mighty one I know thee now,
Mightiest power of the sky,
Know thee by thy flaming brow,
Know thee by thy sparkling eye.

That fire is scorching! Oh! I came,
From the caverned depth of Hell,
My fleeting false Rodolph to claim,
Mighty one! I know thee well.--

STRANGER:

Ghast! seize yon wandering sprite,
Drag her to the depth beneath,
Take her swift, before 'tis light,
Take her to the cells of death!

Thou that heardst the trackless dead,
In the mouldering tomb must lie,
Mortal! look upon my head,
Mortal! Mortal! thou must die.

Of glowing flame a cross was there,
Which threw a light around his form,
Whilst his lank and raven hair,
Floated wild upon the storm.--

The warrior upwards turned his eyes,
Gazed upon the cross of fire,
There sat horror and surprise,
There sat God's eternal ire.--

A shivering through the Warrior flew,

Colder than the nightly blast,
Colder than the evening dew,
When the hour of twilight's past.--

Thunder shakes th' expansive sky,
Shakes the bosom of the heath,
'Mortal! Mortal! thou must die'--
The warrior sank convulsed in death.

JANUARY, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ginevra

Wild, pale, and wonder-stricken, even as one
Who staggers forth into the air and sun
From the dark chamber of a mortal fever,
Bewildered, and incapable, and ever
Fancying strange comments in her dizzy brain
Of usual shapes, till the familiar train
Of objects and of persons passed like things
Strange as a dreamer's mad imaginings,
Ginevra from the nuptial altar went;
The vows to which her lips had sworn assent
Rung in her brain still with a jarring din,
Deafening the lost intelligence within.

And so she moved under the bridal veil,
Which made the paleness of her cheek more pale,
And deepened the faint crimson of her mouth,
And darkened her dark locks, as moonlight doth,--
And of the gold and jewels glittering there
She scarce felt conscious,--but the weary glare
Lay like a chaos of unwelcome light,
Vexing the sense with gorgeous undelight,
A moonbeam in the shadow of a cloud
Was less heavenly fair--her face was bowed,
And as she passed, the diamonds in her hair
Were mirrored in the polished marble stair
Which led from the cathedral to the street;
And ever as she went her light fair feet
Erased these images.

The bride-maidens who round her thronging came,
Some with a sense of self-rebuke and shame,
Envyng the unenviable; and others
Making the joy which should have been another's
Their own by gentle sympathy; and some
Sighing to think of an unhappy home:
Some few admiring what can ever lure
Maidens to leave the heaven serene and pure
Of parents' smiles for life's great cheat; a thing
Bitter to taste, sweet in imagining.

But they are all dispersed--and, lo! she stands
Looking in idle grief on her white hands,
Alone within the garden now her own;
And through the sunny air, with jangling tone,
The music of the merry marriage-bells,
Killing the azure silence, sinks and swells;--
Absorbed like one within a dream who dreams
That he is dreaming, until slumber seems
A mockery of itself--when suddenly
Antonio stood before her, pale as she.
With agony, with sorrow, and with pride,
He lifted his wan eyes upon the bride,
And said--'Is this thy faith?' and then as one
Whose sleeping face is stricken by the sun
With light like a harsh voice, which bids him rise
And look upon his day of life with eyes
Which weep in vain that they can dream no more,
Ginevra saw her lover, and forbore
To shriek or faint, and checked the stifling blood
Rushing upon her heart, and unsubdued
Said--'Friend, if earthly violence or ill,
Suspicion, doubt, or the tyrannic will
Of parents, chance or custom, time or change,
Or circumstance, or terror, or revenge,
Or wildered looks, or words, or evil speech,
With all their stings and venom can impeach
Our love,--we love not:--if the grave which hides
The victim from the tyrant, and divides
The cheek that whitens from the eyes that dart
Imperious inquisition to the heart
That is another's, could dissever ours,
We love not.'--'What! do not the silent hours
Beckon thee to Gherardi's bridal bed?
Is not that ring'--a pledge, he would have said,
Of broken vows, but she with patient look
The golden circle from her finger took,
And said--'Accept this token of my faith,
The pledge of vows to be absolved by death;
And I am dead or shall be soon--my knell
Will mix its music with that merry bell,
Does it not sound as if they sweetly said

“We toll a corpse out of the marriage-bed”?
The flowers upon my bridal chamber strewn
Will serve unfaded for my bier—so soon
That even the dying violet will not die
Before Ginevra.’ The strong fantasy
Had made her accents weaker and more weak,
And quenched the crimson life upon her cheek,
And glazed her eyes, and spread an atmosphere
Round her, which chilled the burning noon with fear,
Making her but an image of the thought
Which, like a prophet or a shadow, brought
News of the terrors of the coming time.
Like an accuser branded with the crime
He would have cast on a beloved friend,
Whose dying eyes reproach not to the end
The pale betrayer—he then with vain repentance
Would share, he cannot now avert, the sentence--
Antonio stood and would have spoken, when
The compound voice of women and of men
Was heard approaching; he retired, while she
Was led amid the admiring company
Back to the palace,--and her maidens soon
Changed her attire for the afternoon,
And left her at her own request to keep
An hour of quiet rest:--like one asleep
With open eyes and folded hands she lay,
Pale in the light of the declining day.

Meanwhile the day sinks fast, the sun is set,
And in the lighted hall the guests are met;
The beautiful looked lovelier in the light
Of love, and admiration, and delight
Reflected from a thousand hearts and eyes,
Kindling a momentary Paradise.
This crowd is safer than the silent wood,
Where love’s own doubts disturb the solitude;
On frozen hearts the fiery rain of wine
Falls, and the dew of music more divine
Tempers the deep emotions of the time
To spirits cradled in a sunny clime:--
How many meet, who never yet have met,
To part too soon, but never to forget.

How many saw the beauty, power and wit
Of looks and words which ne'er enchanted yet;
But life's familiar veil was now withdrawn,
As the world leaps before an earthquake's dawn,
And unprophetic of the coming hours,
The matin winds from the expanded flowers
Scatter their hoarded incense, and awaken
The earth, until the dewy sleep is shaken
From every living heart which it possesses,
Through seas and winds, cities and wildernesses,
As if the future and the past were all
Treasured in the instant;--so Gherardi's hall
Laughed in the mirth of its lord's festival,
Till some one asked--'Where is the Bride?' And then
A bridesmaid went,--and ere she came again
A silence fell upon the guests--a pause
Of expectation, as when beauty awes
All hearts with its approach, though unbeheld;
Then wonder, and then fear that wonder quelled;--
For whispers passed from mouth to ear which drew
The colour from the hearer's cheeks, and flew
Louder and swifter round the company;
And then Gherardi entered with an eye
Of ostentatious trouble, and a crowd
Surrounded him, and some were weeping loud.

They found Ginevra dead! if it be death
To lie without motion, or pulse, or breath,
With waxen cheeks, and limbs cold, stiff, and white,
And open eyes, whose fixed and glassy light
Mocked at the speculation they had owned.
If it be death, when there is felt around
A smell of clay, a pale and icy glare,
And silence, and a sense that lifts the hair
From the scalp to the ankles, as it were
Corruption from the spirit passing forth,
And giving all it shrouded to the earth,
And leaving as swift lightning in its flight
Ashes, and smoke, and darkness: in our night
Of thought we know thus much of death,—no more
Than the unborn dream of our life before
Their barks are wrecked on its inhospitable shore.

The marriage feast and its solemnity
Was turned to funeral pomp--the company,
With heavy hearts and looks, broke up; nor they
Who loved the dead went weeping on their way
Alone, but sorrow mixed with sad surprise
Loosened the springs of pity in all eyes,
On which that form, whose fate they weep in vain,
Will never, thought they, kindle smiles again.
The lamps which, half extinguished in their haste,
Gleamed few and faint o'er the abandoned feast,
Showed as it were within the vaulted room
A cloud of sorrow hanging, as if gloom
Had passed out of men's minds into the air.
Some few yet stood around Gherardi there,
Friends and relations of the dead,--and he,
A loveless man, accepted torpidly
The consolation that he wanted not;
Awe in the place of grief within him wrought.
Their whispers made the solemn silence seem
More still--some wept, ...
Some melted into tears without a sob,
And some with hearts that might be heard to throb
Leaned on the table and at intervals
Shuddered to hear through the deserted halls
And corridors the thrilling shrieks which came
Upon the breeze of night, that shook the flame
Of every torch and taper as it swept
From out the chamber where the women kept;--
Their tears fell on the dear companion cold
Of pleasures now departed; then was knolled
The bell of death, and soon the priests arrived,
And finding Death their penitent had shrived,
Returned like ravens from a corpse whereon
A vulture has just feasted to the bone.
And then the mourning women came.--

...

THE DIRGE.

Old winter was gone
In his weakness back to the mountains hoar,
And the spring came down

From the planet that hovers upon the shore

Where the sea of sunlight encroaches
On the limits of wintry night;--
If the land, and the air, and the sea,
Rejoice not when spring approaches,
We did not rejoice in thee,
Ginevra!

She is still, she is cold
On the bridal couch,
One step to the white deathbed,
And one to the bier,
And one to the charnel--and one, oh where?
The dark arrow fled
In the noon.

Ere the sun through heaven once more has rolled,
The rats in her heart
Will have made their nest,
And the worms be alive in her golden hair,
While the Spirit that guides the sun,
Sits throned in his flaming chair,
She shall sleep.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Good-Night

Good-night? ah! no; the hour is ill
Which severs those it should unite;
Let us remain together still,
Then it will be good night.

How can I call the lone night good,
Though thy sweet wishes wing its flight?
Be it not said, thought, understood --
Then it will be -- good night.

To hearts which near each other move
From evening close to morning light,
The night is good; because, my love,
They never say good-night.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Here I Sit With My Paper...

Here I sit with my paper, my pen my ink,
First of this thing, and that thing,
and t'other thing think ;
I Then my thoughts come so pell and
I mell all into my mind,
That the sense or the subject I never can find :
This word is wrong placed, no
regard to the sense,
The present and future, instead of
past tense,
Then my grammar I want; O dear!
what a bore,
I think I shall never attempt to
write more,
With patience I then my thoughts
must arraign,
Have them all in due order like
mutes in a train,
Like them too must wait in due
patience and thought,
Or else my fine works will all come
to nought.
My wit too 's so copious, it flows
like a river,
But disperses its waters on black
and white never ;
Like smoke it appears independent
and free,
But ah luckless smoke! it all passes
like thee
Then at length all my patience entirely
lost,
My paper and pens in the fire are
tossed ;
But come, try again you must
never despair,
Our Murray's or Entick's are not
all so rare,
Implore their assistance they'll

come to your aid,
Perform all your business without
being paid,
They'll tell you the present tense,
future and past,
Which should come first, and which
should come last,
This Murray will do then to Entick
repair,
To find out the meaning of any
word rare.
This they friendly will tell, and
ne'er make you blush,
With a jeering look, taunt, or an
O fie! tush!
Then straight all your thoughts in
black and white put,
Not minding the if's, the be's, and
the but,
Then read it all over, see how it
will run,
How answers the wit, the retort,
and the pun,
Your writings may then with old
Socrates vie,
May on the same shelf with Demosthenes
lie,
May as Junius be sharp, or as Plato
be sage,
The pattern or satire to all of the
age;
But stop a mad author I mean not
to turn,
Nor with thirst of applause does my
heated brain burn,
Sufficient that sense, wit, and grammar
combined,
My letters may make some slight
food for the mind ;
That my thoughts to my friends I
may freely impart,
In all the warm language that flows

from the heart.
Hark! futurity calls! it loudly
complains,
It bids me step forward and just
hold the reins,
My excuse shall be humble, and
faithful, and true,
Such as I fear can be made but by
few
Of writers this age has abundance
and plenty,
Three score and a thousand, two
millions and twenty,
Three score of them wits who all
sharply vie,
To try what odd creature they best
can belie,
A thousand are prudes who for
Charity write,
And fill up their sheets with spleen,
envy, and spite,
One million are bards, who to
Heaven aspire,
And stuff their works full of bombast,
rant, and fire,
T'other million are wags who in
Grub-street attend,
And just like a cobbler the old writings
mend,
The twenty are those who for pulpits
indite,
And pore over sermons all Saturday
night.
And now my good friends who
come after I mean,
As I ne'er wore a cassock, or dined
with a dean,
Or like cobblers at mending I never
did try,
Nor with poets in lyrics attempted
to vie;
As for prudes these good souls I

both hate and detest,
So here I believe the matter must
rest.
I've heard your complaint my
answer I've made,
And since to your calls all the
tribute I've paid,
Adieu my good friend ; pray never
despair,
But grammar and sense and everything dare,
Attempt but to write dashing, easy,
and free,
Then take out your grammar and
pay him his fee,
Be not a coward, shrink not to a
tense,
But read it all over and make it
out sense.
What a tiresome girl! pray soon
make an end,
Else my limited patience you'll
quickly expend.
Well adieu, I no longer your patience
will try
So swift to the post now the letter
shall fly.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To Castor And Pollux

Ye wild-eyed Muses, sing the Twins of Jove,
Whom the fair-ankled Leda, mixed in love
With mighty Saturn's Heaven-obscuring Child,
On Taygetus, that lofty mountain wild,
Brought forth in joy: mild Pollux, void of blame,
And steed-subduing Castor, heirs of fame.
These are the Powers who earth-born mortals save
And ships, whose flight is swift along the wave.
When wintry tempests o'er the savage sea
Are raging, and the sailors tremblingly
Call on the Twins of Jove with prayer and vow,
Gathered in fear upon the lofty prow,
And sacrifice with snow-white lambs,--the wind
And the huge billow bursting close behind,
Even then beneath the weltering waters bear
The staggering ship--they suddenly appear,
On yellow wings rushing athwart the sky,
And lull the blasts in mute tranquillity,
And strew the waves on the white Ocean's bed,
Fair omen of the voyage; from toil and dread
The sailors rest, rejoicing in the sight,
And plough the quiet sea in safe delight.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To Minerva

I sing the glorious Power with azure eyes,
Athenian Pallas! tameless, chaste, and wise,
Tritogenia, town-preserving Maid,
Revered and mighty; from his awful head
Whom Jove brought forth, in warlike armour dressed,
Golden, all radiant! wonder strange possessed
The everlasting Gods that Shape to see,
Shaking a javelin keen, impetuously
Rush from the crest of Aegis-bearing Jove;
Fearfully Heaven was shaken, and did move
Beneath the might of the Cerulean-eyed;
Earth dreadfully resounded, far and wide;
And, lifted from its depths, the sea swelled high
In purple billows, the tide suddenly
Stood still, and great Hyperion's son long time
Checked his swift steeds, till, where she stood sublime,
Pallas from her immortal shoulders threw
The arms divine; wise Jove rejoiced to view.
Child of the Aegis-bearer, hail to thee,
Nor thine nor others' praise shall unremembered be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To The Earth: Mother Of All

O universal Mother, who dost keep
From everlasting thy foundations deep,
Eldest of things, Great Earth, I sing of thee!
All shapes that have their dwelling in the sea,
All things that fly, or on the ground divine
Live, move, and there are nourished—these are thine;
These from thy wealth thou dost sustain; from thee
Fair babes are born, and fruits on every tree
Hang ripe and large, revered Divinity!

The life of mortal men beneath thy sway
Is held; thy power both gives and takes away!
Happy are they whom thy mild favours nourish;
All things unstinted round them grow and flourish.
For them, endures the life-sustaining field
Its load of harvest, and their cattle yield
Large increase, and their house with wealth is filled.
Such honoured dwell in cities fair and free,
The homes of lovely women, prosperously;
Their sons exult in youth's new budding gladness,
And their fresh daughters free from care or sadness,
With bloom-inwoven dance and happy song,
On the soft flowers the meadow-grass among,
Leap round them sporting--such delights by thee
Are given, rich Power, revered Divinity.

Mother of gods, thou Wife of starry Heaven,
Farewell! be thou propitious, and be given
A happy life for this brief melody,
Nor thou nor other songs shall unremembered be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To The Moon

Daughters of Jove, whose voice is melody,
Muses, who know and rule all minstrelsy
Sing the wide-winged Moon! Around the earth,
From her immortal head in Heaven shot forth,
Far light is scattered—boundless glory springs;
Where'er she spreads her many-beaming wings
The lampless air glows round her golden crown.

But when the Moon divine from Heaven is gone
Under the sea, her beams within abide,
Till, bathing her bright limbs in Ocean's tide,
Clothing her form in garments glittering far,
And having yoked to her immortal car
The beam-invested steeds whose necks on high
Curve back, she drives to a remoter sky
A western Crescent, borne impetuously.
Then is made full the circle of her light,
And as she grows, her beams more bright and bright
Are poured from Heaven, where she is hovering then,
A wonder and a sign to mortal men.

The Son of Saturn with this glorious Power
Mingled in love and sleep--to whom she bore
Pandeia, a bright maid of beauty rare
Among the Gods, whose lives eternal are.

Hail Queen, great Moon, white-armed Divinity,
Fair-haired and favourable! thus with thee
My song beginning, by its music sweet
Shall make immortal many a glorious feat
Of demigods, with lovely lips, so well
Which minstrels, servants of the Muses, tell.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To The Sun

Offspring of Jove, Calliope, once more
To the bright Sun, thy hymn of music pour;
Whom to the child of star-clad Heaven and Earth
Euryphaessa, large-eyed nymph, brought forth;
Euryphaessa, the famed sister fair
Of great Hyperion, who to him did bear
A race of loveliest children; the young Morn,
Whose arms are like twin roses newly born,
The fair-haired Moon, and the immortal Sun,
Who borne by heavenly steeds his race doth run
Unconquerably, illuming the abodes
Of mortal Men and the eternal Gods.

Fiercely look forth his awe-inspiring eyes,
Beneath his golden helmet, whence arise
And are shot forth afar, clear beams of light;
His countenance, with radiant glory bright,
Beneath his graceful locks far shines around,
And the light vest with which his limbs are bound,
Of woof aethereal delicately twined,
Glow in the stream of the uplifting wind.
His rapid steeds soon bear him to the West;
Where their steep flight his hands divine arrest,
And the fleet car with yoke of gold, which he
Sends from bright Heaven beneath the shadowy sea.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Homer's Hymn To Venus

Muse, sing the deeds of golden Aphrodite,
Who wakens with her smile the lulled delight
Of sweet desire, taming the eternal kings
Of Heaven, and men, and all the living things
That fleet along the air, or whom the sea,
Or earth, with her maternal ministry,
Nourish innumerable, thy delight
All seek ... O crowned Aphrodite!
Three spirits canst thou not deceive or quell:--
Minerva, child of Jove, who loves too well
Fierce war and mingling combat, and the fame
Of glorious deeds, to heed thy gentle flame.
Diana ... golden-shafted queen,
Is tamed not by thy smiles; the shadows green
Of the wild woods, the bow, the...
And piercing cries amid the swift pursuit
Of beasts among waste mountains,--such delight
Is hers, and men who know and do the right.
Nor Saturn's first-born daughter, Vesta chaste,
Whom Neptune and Apollo wooed the last,
Such was the will of aegis-bearing Jove;
But sternly she refused the ills of Love,
And by her mighty Father's head she swore
An oath not unperformed, that evermore
A virgin she would live mid deities
Divine: her father, for such gentle ties
Renounced, gave glorious gifts--thus in his hall
She sits and feeds luxuriously. O'er all
In every fane, her honours first arise
From men--the eldest of Divinities.

These spirits she persuades not, nor deceives,
But none beside escape, so well she weaves
Her unseen toils; nor mortal men, nor gods
Who live secure in their unseen abodes.
She won the soul of him whose fierce delight
Is thunder--first in glory and in might.
And, as she willed, his mighty mind deceiving,
With mortal limbs his deathless limbs inweaving,

Concealed him from his spouse and sister fair,
Whom to wise Saturn ancient Rhea bare.
but in return,
In Venus Jove did soft desire awaken,
That by her own enchantments overtaken,
She might, no more from human union free,
Burn for a nursling of mortality.
For once amid the assembled Deities,
The laughter-loving Venus from her eyes

Shot forth the light of a soft starlight smile,
And boasting said, that she, secure the while,
Could bring at Will to the assembled Gods
The mortal tenants of earth's dark abodes,
And mortal offspring from a deathless stem
She could produce in scorn and spite of them.
Therefore he poured desire into her breast
Of young Anchises,
Feeding his herds among the mossy fountains
Of the wide Ida's many-folded mountains,--
Whom Venus saw, and loved, and the love clung
Like wasting fire her senses wild among.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Hymn Of Apollo

I.

The sleepless Hours who watch me as I lie,
Curtained with star-inwoven tapestries,
From the broad moonlight of the sky,
Fanning the busy dreams from my dim eyes,--
Waken me when their Mother, the gray Dawn,
Tells them that dreams and that the moon is gone.

II.

Then I arise, and climbing Heaven's blue dome,
I walk over the mountains and the waves,
Leaving my robe upon the ocean foam;
My footsteps pave the clouds with fire; the caves
Are filled with my bright presence, and the air
Leaves the green Earth to my embraces bare.

III.

The sunbeams are my shafts, with which I kill
Deceit, that loves the night and fears the day;
All men who do or even imagine ill
Fly me, and from the glory of my ray
Good minds and open actions take new might,
Until diminished by the reign of Night.

IV.

I feed the clouds, the rainbows, and the flowers,
With their ethereal colors; the Moon's globe,
And the pure stars in their eternal bowers,
Are cinctured with my power as with a robe;
Whatever lamps on Earth or Heaven may shine,
Are portions of one power, which is mine.

V.

I stand at noon upon the peak of Heaven;
Then with unwilling steps I wander down
Into the clouds of the Atlantic even;
For grief that I depart they weep and frown:
What look is more delightful than the smile
With which I soothe them from the western isle?

VI.

I am the eye with which the Universe
Beholds itself, and knows it is divine;
All harmony of instrument or verse,
All prophecy, all medicine, is mine,
All light of art or nature; - to my song
Victory and praise in its own right belong.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Hymn Of Pan

FROM the forests and highlands
 We come, we come;
 From the river-girt islands,
 Where loud waves are dumb
Listening to my sweet pipings.
 The wind in the reeds and the rushes,
 The bees on the bells of thyme,
 The birds on the myrtle-bushes,
 The cicale above in the lime,
 And the lizards below in the grass,
Were as silent as ever old Tmolus was,
 Listening to my sweet pipings.

Liquid Peneus was flowing,
 And all dark Temple lay
In Pelion's shadow, outgrowing
 The light of the dying day,
Speeded by my sweet pipings.
 The Sileni and Sylvans and fauns,
 And the Nymphs of the woods and wave
 To the edge of the moist river-lawns,
 And the brink of the dewy caves,
And all that did then attend and follow,
Were silent with love,--as you now, Apollo,
 With envy of my sweet pipings.

I sang of the dancing stars,
 I sang of the dedal earth,
And of heaven, and the Giant wars,
 And love, and death, and birth.
And then I changed my pipings,--
Singing how down the vale of Maenalus
 I pursued a maiden, and clasped a reed:
Gods and men, we are all deluded thus;
 It breaks in our bosom, and then we bleed.
All wept--as I think both ye now would,
If envy or age had not frozen your blood--
 At the sorrow of my sweet pipings.

Hymn To Intellectual Beauty

The awful shadow of some unseen Power
Floats through unseen among us, -- visiting
This various world with as inconstant wing
As summer winds that creep from flower to flower, --
Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
It visits with inconstant glance
Each human heart and countenance;
Like hues and harmonies of evening, --
Like clouds in starlight widely spread, --
Like memory of music fled, --
Like aught that for its grace may be
Dear, and yet dearer for its mystery.

Spirit of Beauty, that dost consecrate
With thine own hues all thou dost shine upon
Of human thought or form, -- where art thou gone?
Why dost thou pass away and leave our state,
This dim vast vale of tears, vacant and desolate?
Ask why the sunlight not for ever
Weaves rainbows o'er yon mountain-river,
Why aught should fail and fade that once is shown,
Why fear and dream and death and birth
Cast on the daylight of this earth
Such gloom, -- why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope?

No voice from some sublimer world hath ever
To sage or poet these responses given --
Therefore the names of Demon, Ghost, and Heaven,
Remain the records of their vain endeavour,
Frail spells -- whose uttered charm might not avail to sever,
From all we hear and all we see,
Doubt, chance, and mutability.
Thy light alone -- like mist o'er the mountains driven,
Or music by the night-wind sent
Through strings of some still instrument,
Or moonlight on a midnight stream,
Gives grace and truth to life's unquiet dream.

Love, Hope, and Self-esteem, like clouds depart
And come, for some uncertain moments lent.
Man were immortal, and omnipotent,
Didst thou, unknown and awful as thou art,
Keep with thy glorious train firm state within his heart.
Thou messenger of sympathies,
That wax and wane in lovers' eyes --
Thou -- that to human thought art nourishment,
Like darkness to a dying flame!
Depart not as thy shadow came,
Depart not -- lest the grave should be,
Like life and fear, a dark reality.

While yet a boy I sought for ghosts, and sped
Through many a listening chamber, cave and ruin,
And starlight wood, with fearful steps pursuing
Hopes of high talk with the departed dead.
I called on poisonous names with which our youth is fed;
I was not heard -- I saw them not --
When musing deeply on the lot
Of life, at that sweet time when winds are wooing
All vital things that wake to bring
News of birds and blossoming, --
Sudden, thy shadow fell on me;
I shrieked, and clasped my hands in ecstasy!

I vowed that I would dedicate my powers
To thee and thine -- have I not kept the vow?
With beating heart and streaming eyes, even now
I call the phantoms of a thousand hours
Each from his voiceless grave: they have in visioned bowers
Of studious zeal or love's delight
Outwatched with me the envious night --
They know that never joy illumed my brow
Unlinked with hope that thou wouldst free
This world from its dark slavery,
That thou - O awful Loveliness,
Wouldst give whate'er these words cannot express.

The day becomes more solemn and serene
When noon is past -- there is a harmony
In autumn, and a lustre in its sky,

Which through the summer is not heard or seen,
As if it could not be, as if it had not been!
Thus let thy power, which like the truth
Of nature on my passive youth
Descended, to my onward life supply
Its calm -- to one who worships thee,
And every form containing thee,
Whom, Spirit fair, thy spells did bind
To fear himself, and love all human kind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Arise From Dreams Of Thee

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me - who knows how? -
To thy chamber-window, sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream, -
The champak odors fall
Like sweet thoughts in a dream,
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart,
As I must die on thine,
O, beloved as thou art!

O, lift me from the grass!
I die, I faint, I fall!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale,
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My Heart beats loud and fast
Oh! press it close to thine again,
Where it will break at last!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Faint, I Perish With My Love!

I faint, I perish with my love! I grow
Frail as a cloud whose [splendours] pale
Under the evening's ever-changing glow:
I die like mist upon the gale,
And like a wave under the calm I fail

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Stood Upon A Heaven-Cleaving Turret

I stood upon a heaven-cleaving turret
Which overlooked a wide Metropolis--
And in the temple of my heart my Spirit
Lay prostrate, and with parted lips did kiss
The dust of Desolations [altar] hearth--
And with a voice too faint to falter
It shook that trembling fane with its weak prayer
'Twas noon,--the sleeping skies were blue
The city...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

I Would Not Be A King

I would not be a king--enough
Of woe it is to love;
The path to power is steep and rough,
And tempests reign above.
I would not climb the imperial throne;
'Tis built on ice which fortune's sun
Thaws in the height of noon.
Then farewell, king, yet were I one,
Care would not come so soon.
Would he and I were far away
Keeping flocks on Himalay!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

In Horologium

Inter marmoreas Leonorae pendula colles
Fortunata mmis Machina dicit horas.
Quas manibus premit ilia duas insensa papillas
Cur mihi sit digito tangere, amata, nefas?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Invocation

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure;
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure; -
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost

Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good: -
Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love -though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee -
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Invocation To Misery

I.

Come, be happy!—sit near me,
Shadow-vested Misery:
Coy, unwilling, silent bride,
Mourning in thy robe of pride,
Desolation—deified!

II.

Come, be happy!—sit near me:
Sad as I may seem to thee,
I am happier far than thou,
Lady, whose imperial brow
Is endiademed with woe.

III.

Misery! we have known each other,
Like a sister and a brother
Living in the same lone home,
Many years—we must live some
Hours or ages yet to come.

IV.

'Tis an evil lot, and yet
Let us make the best of it;
If love can live when pleasure dies,
We two will love, till in our eyes
This heart's Hell seem Paradise.

V.

Come, be happy!—lie thee down
On the fresh grass newly mown,
Where the Grasshopper doth sing
Merrily—one joyous thing
In a world of sorrowing!

VI.

There our tent shall be the willow,
And mine arm shall be thy pillow;
Sounds and odours, sorrowful

Because they once were sweet, shall lull
Us to slumber, deep and dull.

VII.

Ha! thy frozen pulses flutter
With a love thou darest not utter.
Thou art murmuring—thou art weeping—
Is thine icy bosom leaping
While my burning heart lies sleeping?

VIII.

Kiss me;—oh! thy lips are cold:
Round my neck thine arms enfold—
They are soft, but chill and dead;
And thy tears upon my head
Burn like points of frozen lead.

IX.

Hasten to the bridal bed—
Underneath the grave 'tis spread:
In darkness may our love be hid,
Oblivion be our coverlid—
We may rest, and none forbid.

X.

Clasp me till our hearts be grown
Like two shadows into one;
Till this dreadful transport may
Like a vapour fade away,
In the sleep that lasts away.

XI.

We may dream, in that long sleep,
That we are not those who weep;
E'en as Pleasure dreams of thee,
Life-deserting Misery,
Thou mayst dream of her with me.

XII.

Let us laugh, and make our mirth,
At the shadows of the earth,
As dogs bay the moonlight clouds,

Which, like spectres wrapped in shrouds,
Pass o'er night in multitudes.

XIII.

All the wide world, beside us,
Show like multitudinous
Puppets passing from a scene;
What but mockery can they mean,
Where I am—where thou hast been?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Julian And Maddalo (Excerpt)

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
Of Adria towards Venice: a bare strand
Of hillocks, heap'd from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,
Abandons; and no other object breaks
The waste, but one dwarf tree and some few stakes
Broken and unrepair'd, and the tide makes
A narrow space of level sand thereon,
Where 'twas our wont to ride while day went down.
This ride was my delight. I love all waste
And solitary places; where we taste
The pleasure of believing what we see
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be:
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore
More barren than its billows; and yet more
Than all, with a remember'd friend I love
To ride as then I rode; for the winds drove
The living spray along the sunny air
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,
Stripp'd to their depths by the awakening north;
And, from the waves, sound like delight broke forth
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent
Into our hearts a real merriment.
So, as we rode, we talk'd; and the swift thought,
Winging itself with laughter, linger'd not,
But flew from brain to brain--such glee was ours,
Charg'd with light memories of remember'd hours,
None slow enough for sadness: till we came
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be
Talk interrupted with such raillery
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn
The thoughts it would extinguish: 'twas forlorn,

Yet pleasing, such as once, so poets tell,
 The devils held within the dales of Hell
 Concerning God, freewill and destiny:
 Of all that earth has been or yet may be,
 All that vain men imagine or believe,
 Or hope can paint or suffering may achieve,
 We descanted, and I (for ever still
 Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)
 Argu'd against despondency, but pride
 Made my companion take the darker side.
 The sense that he was greater than his kind
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.
 Meanwhile the sun paus'd ere it should alight,
 Over the horizon of the mountains--Oh,
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!
 Thy mountains, seas, and vineyards, and the towers
 Of cities they encircle! It was ours
 To stand on thee, beholding it: and then,
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.
 As those who pause on some delightful way
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood
 Looking upon the evening, and the flood
 Which lay between the city and the shore,
 Pav'd with the image of the sky.... The hoar
 And airy Alps towards the North appear'd
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark rear'd
 Between the East and West; and half the sky
 Was roof'd with clouds of rich emblazonry
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew
 Down the steep West into a wondrous hue
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent
 Where the swift sun yet paus'd in his descent
 Among the many-folded hills: they were
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,
 As seen from Lido thro' the harbour piles,
 The likeness of a clump of peaked isles--
 And then--as if the Earth and Sea had been
 Dissolv'd into one lake of fire, were seen

Those mountains towering as from waves of flame
Around the vaporous sun, from which there came
The inmost purple spirit of light, and made
Their very peaks transparent. "Ere it fade,"
Said my companion, "I will show you soon
A better station"--so, o'er the lagune
We glided; and from that funereal bark
I lean'd, and saw the city, and could mark
How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,
Its temples and its palaces did seem
Like fabrics of enchantment pil'd to Heaven.
I was about to speak, when--"We are even
Now at the point I meant," said Maddalo,
And bade the gondolieri cease to row.
"Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well
If you hear not a deep and heavy bell."
I look'd, and saw between us and the sun
A building on an island; such a one
As age to age might add, for uses vile,
A windowless, deform'd and dreary pile;
And on the top an open tower, where hung
A bell, which in the radiance sway'd and swung;
We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue:
The broad sun sunk behind it, and it toll'd
In strong and black relief. "What we behold
Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,"
Said Maddalo, "and ever at this hour
Those who may cross the water, hear that bell
Which calls the maniacs, each one from his cell,
To vespers." "As much skill as need to pray
In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they
To their stern Maker," I replied. "O ho!
You talk as in years past," said Maddalo.
" 'Tis strange men change not. You were ever still
Among Christ's flock a perilous infidel,
A wolf for the meek lambs--if you can't swim
Beware of Providence." I look'd on him,
But the gay smile had faded in his eye.
"And such," he cried, "is our mortality,
And this must be the emblem and the sign
Of what should be eternal and divine!
And like that black and dreary bell, the soul,

Hung in a heaven-illumin'd tower, must toll
Our thoughts and our desires to meet below
Round the rent heart and pray--as madmen do
For what? they know not--till the night of death,
As sunset that strange vision, severeth
Our memory from itself, and us from all
We sought and yet were baffled." I recall
The sense of what he said, although I mar
The force of his expressions. The broad star
Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,
And the black bell became invisible,
And the red tower look'd gray, and all between
The churches, ships and palaces were seen
Huddled in gloom;--into the purple sea
The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.
We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola
Convey'd me to my lodgings by the way.

The following morn was rainy, cold and dim:
Ere Maddalo arose, I call'd on him,
And whilst I waited with his child I play'd;
A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made,
A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,
Graceful without design and unforeseeing,
With eyes--Oh speak not of her eyes!--which seem
Twin mirrors of Italian Heaven, yet gleam
With such deep meaning, as we never see
But in the human countenance: with me
She was a special favourite: I had nurs'd
Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first
To this bleak world; and she yet seem'd to know
On second sight her ancient playfellow,
Less chang'd than she was by six months or so;
For after her first shyness was worn out
We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,
When the Count enter'd. Salutations past--
"The word you spoke last night might well have cast
A darkness on my spirit--if man be
The passive thing you say, I should not see
Much harm in the religions and old saws
(Though I may never own such leaden laws)
Which break a teachless nature to the yoke:

Mine is another faith"--thus much I spoke
 And noting he replied not, added: "See
 This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;
 She spends a happy time with little care,
 While we to such sick thoughts subjected are
 As came on you last night. It is our will
 That thus enchains us to permitted ill.
 We might be otherwise. We might be all
 We dream of happy, high, majestic.
 Where is the love, beauty, and truth we seek
 But in our mind? and if we were not weak
 Should we be less in deed than in desire?"
 "Ay, if we were not weak--and we aspire
 How vainly to be strong!" said Maddalo:
 "You talk Utopia." "It remains to know,"
 I then rejoined, "and those who try may find
 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind;
 Brittle perchance as straw.... We are assured
 Much may be conquer'd, much may be endur'd,
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know
 That we have power over ourselves to do
 And suffer--what, we know not till we try;
 But something nobler than to live and die:
 So taught those kings of old philosophy
 Who reign'd, before Religion made men blind;
 And those who suffer with their suffering kind
 Yet feel their faith, religion." "My dear friend,"
 Said Maddalo, "my judgement will not bend
 To your opinion, though I think you might
 Make such a system refutation-tight
 As far as words go. I knew one like you
 Who to this city came some months ago,
 With whom I argu'd in this sort, and he
 Is now gone mad--and so he answer'd me--
 Poor fellow! but if you would like to go
 We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show
 How vain are such aspiring theories."
 "I hope to prove the induction otherwise,
 And that a want of that true theory, still,
 Which seeks a 'soul of goodness' in things ill
 Or in himself or others, has thus bow'd
 His being. There are some by nature proud,

Who patient in all else demand but this--
To love and be belov'd with gentleness;
And being scorn'd, what wonder if they die
Some living death? this is not destiny
But man's own wilful ill."

As thus I spoke
Servants announc'd the gondola, and we
Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea
Sail'd to the island where the madhouse stands.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Letter To Maria Gisborne

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought-
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day-
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan:-or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk, or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed to Jesus Christ for their salvation,
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser, and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire:-
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and jag,
Which fishers found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,

Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn,
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,
As panthers sleep;-and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread,-
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood;
And forms of unimagined wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks,
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time.-Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine:-
A pretty bowl of wood-not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava-cry halloo!
And call out to the cities o'er their head,-
Roofs, towers, and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth-and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk-within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of its white fire-the breeze
Is still-blue Heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl of quicksilver-for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood-I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat:-
A hollow screw with cogs-Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me,-if so
He fears not I should do more mischief.-Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,

With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical;
A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
With ink in it;-a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,-
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink
The liquor doctors rail at-and which I
Will quaff in spite of them-and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out,-'Heads or tails?' where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint-box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures,-disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle-I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand; but no-
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content;-
I sit-and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them-Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them-the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
The ripe corn under the undulating air

Undulates like an ocean;-and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines-
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast;-the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of Heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world;-while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?

You are not here! the quaint witch Memory sees,
In vacant chairs, your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not.-I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met;-and she replies,
Veiling in awe her second-sighted eyes;
'I know the past alone-but summon home
My sister Hope,-she speaks of all to come.'
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion-how on the sea-shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek-and how we often made
Feasts for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be;-and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not:-or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame

Of this wrong world:-and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years;-or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are-
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not;-or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme,-in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps;-or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed!
Or how I, wisest lady! then endued
The language of a land which now is free,
And, winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
'My name is Legion!'-that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion;-thou wert then to me
As is a nurse-when inarticulately
A child would talk as its grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aethereal way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see
That which was Godwin,-greater none than he
Though fallen-and fallen on evil times-to stand

Among the spirits of our age and land,
Before the dread tribunal of to come
The foremost,-while Rebuke cowers pale and dumb.
You will see Coleridge-he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair-
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.-
You will see Hunt-one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is-a tomb;
Who is, what others seem; his room no doubt
Is still adorned with many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learned among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law, and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, 'I'm poor!'
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,
Except in Shakespeare's wisest tenderness.-
You will see Hogg,-and I cannot express
His virtues,-though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit;-of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep;-and there
Is English Peacock, with his mountain Fair,
Turned into a Flamingo;-that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air-have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him?-but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with this cameleopard-his fine wit

Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; let his page,
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation.-Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge; all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in Horace Smith.-And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on,-are all
You and I know in London.

I recall

My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air-
What see you?-unpavilioned Heaven is fair,
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast:-
All this is beautiful in every land.-
But what see you beside?-a shabby stand
Of Hackney coaches-a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics;-or worse-
A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade-
Or yellow-haired Pollonia murmuring
To Henry, some unutterable thing.
I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them-in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne

In circles quaint, and ever-changing dance,
Like wingèd stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
Pale in the open moonshine, but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way;-
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance-and a bird
Which cannot be the Nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour;-and then all is still-
Now-Italy or London, which you will!

Next winter you must pass with me; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are;
Oh! that Hunt, Hogg, Peacock, and Smith were there,
With everything belonging to them fair!-
We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek;
And ask one week to make another week
As like his father, as I'm unlike mine,
Which is not his fault, as you may divine.
Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry: we'll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,-
Feasting on which we will philosophize!
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk;-what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant;-as to nerves-
With cones and parallelograms and curves
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me-when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum,
From Helicon or Himeros[1];-well, come,
And in despite of God and of the devil,
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel

Outlast the leafless time; till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew;-
'To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Liberty

I.

The fiery mountains answer each other;
Their thunderings are echoed from zone to zone;
The tempestuous oceans awake one another,
And the ice-rocks are shaken round Winter's throne,
When the clarion of the Typhoon is blown.

II.

From a single cloud the lightening flashes,
Whilst a thousand isles are illumined around,
Earthquake is trampling one city to ashes,
An hundred are shuddering and tottering; the sound
Is bellowing underground.

III.

But keener thy gaze than the lightening's glare,
And swifter thy step than the earthquake's tramp;
Thou deafenest the rage of the ocean; thy stare
Makes blind the volcanoes; the sun's bright lamp
To thine is a fen-fire damp.

IV.

From billow and mountain and exhalation
The sunlight is darted through vapour and blast;
From spirit to spirit, from nation to nation,
From city to hamlet thy dawning is cast,--
And tyrants and slaves are like shadows of night
In the van of the morning light.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Life Rounded With Sleep

The babe is at peace within the womb;
The corpse is at rest within the tomb:
We begin in what we end.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lift Not The Painted Veil Which Those Who Live

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,--behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it--he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines -- Far, Far Away, O Ye

I.

Far, far away, O ye
Halcyons of Memory,
Seek some far calmer nest
Than this abandoned breast!
No news of your false spring
To my heart's winter bring,
Once having gone, in vain
Ye come again.

II.

Vultures, who build your bowers
High in the Future's towers,
Withered hopes on hopes are spread!
Dying joys, choked by the dead,
Will serve your beaks for prey
Many a day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines To A Critic

I.

Honey from silkworms who can gather,
Or silk from the yellow bee?
The grass may grow in winter weather
As soon as hate in me.

II.

Hate men who cant, and men who pray,
And men who rail like thee;
An equal passion to repay
They are not coy like me.

III.

Or seek some slave of power and gold
To be thy dear heart's mate;
Thy love will move that bigot cold
Sooner than me, thy hate.

IV.

A passion like the one I prove
Cannot divided be;
I hate thy want of truth and love--
How should I then hate thee?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines To A Reviewer

Alas, good friend, what profit can you see
In hating such a hateless thing as me?
There is no sport in hate where all the rage
Is on one side: in vain would you assuage
Your frowns upon an unresisting smile,
In which not even contempt lurks to beguile
Your heart, by some faint sympathy of hate.
Oh, conquer what you cannot satiate!
For to your passion I am far more coy
Than ever yet was coldest maid or boy
In winter noon. Of your antipathy
If I am the Narcissus, you are free
To pine into a sound with hating me.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written Among The Euganean Hills

Many a green isle needs must be
In the deep wide sea of Misery,
Or the mariner, worn and wan,
Never thus could voyage on -
Day and night, and night and day,
Drifting on his dreary way,
With the solid darkness black
Closing round his vessel's track:
Whilst above the sunless sky,
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,
And behind the tempest fleet
Hurries on with lightning feet,

He is ever drifted on
O'er the unreposing wave
To the haven of the grave.
What, if there no friends will greet;
What, if there no heart will meet
His with love's impatient beat;
Wander wheresoe'er he may,
Can he dream before that day
To find refuge from distress
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?
Then 'twill wreak him little woe
Whether such there be or no:
Senseless is the breast, and cold,
Which relenting love would fold;
Bloodless are the veins and chill
Which the pulse of pain did fill;
Every little living nerve
That from bitter words did swerve
Round the tortured lips and brow,
Are like sapless leaflets now
Frozen upon December's bough.

On the beach of a northern sea
Which tempests shake eternally,
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,
Lies a solitary heap,

One white skull and seven dry bones,
On the margin of the stones,
Where a few grey rushes stand,
Boundaries of the sea and land:
Nor is heard one voice of wail
But the sea-mews, as they sail
O'er the billows of the gale;
Or the whirlwind up and down
Howling, like a slaughtered town,
When a king in glory rides
Through the pomp and fratricides:
Those unburied bones around
There is many a mournful sound;
There is no lament for him,
Like a sunless vapour, dim,
Who once clothed with life and thought
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie
In the waters of wide Agony:
To such a one this morn was led,
My bark by soft winds piloted:
'Mid the mountains Euganean
I stood listening to the paeon
With which the legioned rooks did hail
The sun's uprise majestic;
Gathering round with wings all hoar,
Through the dewy mist they soar
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,
Flecked with fire and azure, lie
In the unfathomable sky,
So their plumes of purple grain,
Starred with drops of golden rain,
Gleam above the sunlight woods,
As in silent multitudes
On the morning's fitful gale
Through the broken mist they sail,
And the vapours cloven and gleaming
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,
Round the solitary hill.

Beneath is spread like a green sea
The waveless plain of Lombardy,
Bounded by the vaporous air,
Islanded by cities fair;
Underneath Day's azure eyes
Ocean's nursling, Venice, lies,
A peopled labyrinth of walls,
Amphitrite's destined halls,
Which her hoary sire now paves
With his blue and beaming waves.
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined
On the level quivering line
Of the waters crystalline;
And before that chasm of light,
As within a furnace bright,
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,
Shine like obelisks of fire,
Pointing with inconstant motion
From the altar of dark ocean
To the sapphire-tinted skies;
As the flames of sacrifice
From the marble shrines did rise,
As to pierce the dome of gold
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sea-girt City, thou hast been
Ocean's child, and then his queen;
Now is come a darker day,
And thou soon must be his prey,
If the power that raised thee here
Hallow so thy watery bier.
A less drear ruin than than now,
With thy conquest-branded brow
Stooping to the slave of slaves
From thy throne, among the waves
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew
Flies, as once before it flew,
O'er thine isles depopulate,
And all is in its ancient state,
Save where many a palace gate

With green sea-flowers overgrown
Like a rock of Ocean's own,
Topples o'er the abandoned sea
As the tides change sullenly.
The fisher on his watery way,
Wandering at the close of day,
Will spread his sail and seize his oar
Till he pass the gloomy shore,
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep
Bursting o'er the starlight deep,
Lead a rapid masque of death
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold
Quivering through aerial gold,
As I now behold them here,
Would imagine not they were
Sepulchres, where human forms,
Like pollution-nourished worms,
To the corpse of greatness cling,
Murdered, and now mouldering:
But if Freedom should awake
In her omnipotence and shake
From the Celtic Anarch's hold
All the keys of dungeons cold,
Where a hundred cities lie
Chained like thee, ingloriously,
Thou and all thy sister band
Might adorn this sunny land,
Twining memories of old time
With new virtues more sublime;
If not, perish thou and they! -
Clouds which stain truth's rising day
By her sun consumed away -
Earth can spare ye; while like flowers,
In the waste of years and hours,
From your dust new nations spring
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish -let there only be
Floating o'er thy heartless sea
As the garment of thy sky

Clothes the world immortally,
One remembrance, more sublime
Than the tattered pall of time,
Which scarce hides thy visage wan; -
That a tempest-cleaving Swan
Of the sons of Albion,
Driven from his ancestral streams
By the might of evil dreams,
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean
Welcomed him with such emotion
That its joy grew his, and sprung
From his lips like music flung
O'er a mighty thunder-fit,
Chastening terror: -what though yet
Poesy's unfailing River,
Which through Albion winds forever
Lashing with melodious wave
Many a sacred Poet's grave,
Mourn its latest nursling fled?
What though thou with all thy dead
Scarce can for this fame repay
Aught thine own? oh, rather say
Though thy sins and slaveries foul
Overcloud a sunlike soul?
As the ghost of Homer clings
Round Scamander's wasting springs;
As divinest Shakespeare's might
Fills Avon and the world with light
Like omniscient power which he
Imaged 'mid mortality;
As the love from Petrarch's urn,
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,
A quenchless lamp by which the heart
Sees things unearthly; -so thou art,
Mighty spirit -so shall be
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky
Like thought-winged Liberty,
Till the universal light
Seems to level plain and height;
From the sea a mist has spread,

And the beams of morn lie dead
On the towers of Venice now,
Like its glory long ago.
By the skirts of that gray cloud
Many-domed Padua proud
Stands, a peopled solitude,
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,
Where the peasant heaps his grain
In the garner of his foe,
And the milk-white oxen slow
With the purple vintage strain,
Heaped upon the creaking wain,
That the brutal Celt may swill
Drunken sleep with savage will;
And the sickle to the sword
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,
Like a weed whose shade is poison,
Overgrows this region's foison,
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come
To destruction's harvest-home:
Men must reap the things they sow,
Force from force must ever flow,
Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe
That love or reason cannot change
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls
Those mute guests at festivals,
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,
Played at dice for Ezzelin,
Till Death cried, 'I win, I win!'
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,
But Death promised, to assuage her,
That he would petition for
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,
When the destined years were o'er,
Over all between the Po
And the eastern Alpine snow,
Under the mighty Austrian.
She smiled so as Sin only can,
And since that time, ay, long before,
Both have ruled from shore to shore, -

That incestuous pair, who follow
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,
As Repentance follows Crime,
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,
Padua, now no more is burning;
Like a meteor, whose wild way
Is lost over the grave of day,
It gleams betrayed and to betray:
Once remotest nations came
To adore that sacred flame,
When it lit not many a hearth
On this cold and gloomy earth:
Now new fires from antique light
Spring beneath the wide world's might;
But their spark lies dead in thee,
Trampled out by Tyranny.
As the Norway woodman quells,
In the depth of piny dells,
One light flame among the brakes,
While the boundless forest shakes,
And its mighty trunks are torn
By the fire thus lowly born:
The spark beneath his feet is dead,
He starts to see the flames it fed
Howling through the darkened sky
With a myriad tongues victoriously,
And sinks down in fear: so thou,
O Tyranny, beholdest now
Light around thee, and thou hearest
The loud flames ascend, and fearest:
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide
In the dust thy purple pride!

Noon descends around me now:
'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,
When a soft and purple mist
Like a vapourous amethyst,
Or an air-dissolved star
Mingling light and fragrance, far
From the curved horizon's bound

To the point of Heaven's profound,
Fills the overflowing sky;
And the plains that silent lie
Underneath the leaves unsodden
Where the infant Frost has trodden
With his morning-winged feet,
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;
And the red and golden vines,
Piercing with their trellised lines
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;
The dun and bladed grass no less,
Pointing from this hoary tower
In the windless air; the flower
Glimmering at my feet; the line
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine
In the south dimly islanded;
And the Alps, whose snows are spread
High between the clouds and sun;
And of living things each one;
And my spirit which so long
Darkened this swift stream of song, -
Interpenetrated lie
By the glory of the sky:
Be it love, light, harmony,
Odour, or the soul of all
Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,
Or the mind which feeds this verse
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon
Autumn's evening meets me soon,
Leading the infantine moon,
And that one star, which to her
Almost seems to minister
Half the crimson light she brings
From the sunset's radiant springs:
And the soft dreams of the morn
(Which like winged winds had borne
To that silent isle, which lies
Mid remembered agonies,
The frail bark of this lone being)
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,

And its ancient pilot, Pain,
Sits beside the helm again.

Other flowering isles must be
In the sea of Life and Agony:
Other spirits float and flee
O'er that gulf: even now, perhaps,
On some rock the wild wave wraps,
With folded wings they waiting sit
For my bark, to pilot it
To some calm and blooming cove,
Where for me, and those I love,
May a windless bower be built,
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,
In a dell mid lawny hills,
Which the wild sea-murmur fills,
And soft sunshine, and the sound
Of old forests echoing round,
And the light and smell divine
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:
We may live so happy there,
That the Spirits of the Air,
Envyng us, may even entice
To our healing Paradise
The polluting multitude;
But their rage would be subdued
By that clime divine and calm,
And the winds whose wings rain balm
On the uplifted soul, and leaves
Under which the bright sea heaves;
While each breathless interval
In their whisperings musical
The inspired soul supplies
With its own deep melodies;
And the love which heals all strife
Circling, like the breath of life,
All things in that sweet abode
With its own mild brotherhood:
They, not it, would change; and soon
Every sprite beneath the moon
Would repent its envy vain,
And the earth grow young again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written During The Castlereagh Administration

I.

Corpses are cold in the tomb;
Stones on the pavement are dumb;
Abortions are dead in the womb,
And their mothers look pale—like the death-white shore
Of Albion, free no more.

II.

Her sons are as stones in the way--
They are masses of senseless clay--
They are trodden, and move not away,--
The abortion with which SHE travailleth
Is Liberty, smitten to death.

III.

Then trample and dance, thou Oppressor!
For thy victim is no redresser;
Thou art sole lord and possessor
Of her corpses, and clods, and abortions—they pave
Thy path to the grave.

IV.

Hearest thou the festival din
Of Death, and Destruction, and Sin,
And Wealth crying 'Havoc!' within?
'Tis the bacchanal triumph that makes Truth dumb,
Thine Epithalamium.

V.

Ay, marry thy ghastly wife!
Let Fear and Disquiet and Strife
Spread thy couch in the chamber of Life!
Marry Ruin, thou Tyrant! and Hell be thy guide
To the bed of the bride!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written In The Bay Of Lerici

She left me at the silent time
When the moon had ceas'd to climb
The azure path of Heaven's steep,
And like an albatross asleep,
Balanc'd on her wings of light,
Hover'd in the purple night,
Ere she sought her ocean nest
In the chambers of the West.
She left me, and I stay'd alone
Thinking over every tone
Which, though silent to the ear,
The enchanted heart could hear,
Like notes which die when born, but still
Haunt the echoes of the hill;
And feeling ever--oh, too much!--
The soft vibration of her touch,
As if her gentle hand, even now,
Lightly trembled on my brow;
And thus, although she absent were,
Memory gave me all of her
That even Fancy dares to claim:
Her presence had made weak and tame
All passions, and I lived alone
In the time which is our own;
The past and future were forgot,
As they had been, and would be, not.
But soon, the guardian angel gone,
The daemon reassum'd his throne
In my faint heart. I dare not speak
My thoughts, but thus disturb'd and weak
I sat and saw the vessels glide
Over the ocean bright and wide,
Like spirit-winged chariots sent
O'er some serenest element
For ministrations strange and far,
As if to some Elysian star
Sailed for drink to medicine
Such sweet and bitter pain as mine.
And the wind that wing'd their flight

From the land came fresh and light,
And the scent of winged flowers,
And the coolness of the hours
Of dew, and sweet warmth left by day,
Were scatter'd o'er the twinkling bay.
And the fisher with his lamp
And spear about the low rocks damp
Crept, and struck the fish which came
To worship the delusive flame.
Too happy they, whose pleasure sought
Extinguishes all sense and thought
Of the regret that pleasure leaves,
Destroying life alone, not peace!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines Written On Hearing The News Of The Death Of Napoleon

What! alive and so bold, O Earth?
Art thou not overbold?
What! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold?
Ha! leapest thou forth as of old?
Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead?

How! is not thy quick heart cold?
What spark is alive on thy hearth?
How! is not HIS death-knell knolled?
And livest THOU still, Mother Earth?
Thou wert warming thy fingers old
O'er the embers covered and cold
Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled--
What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead?

'Who has known me of old,' replied Earth,
'Or who has my story told?
It is thou who art overbold.'
And the lightning of scorn laughed forth
As she sung, 'To my bosom I fold
All my sons when their knell is knolled,
And so with living motion all are fed,
And the quick spring like weeds out of the dead.

'Still alive and still bold,' shouted Earth,
'I grow bolder and still more bold.
The dead fill me ten thousandfold
Fuller of speed, and splendour, and mirth.
I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,
Like a frozen chaos uprolled,
Till by the spirit of the mighty dead
My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

'Ay, alive and still bold.' muttered Earth,

'Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled,
In terror and blood and gold,
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.
Leave the millions who follow to mould
The metal before it be cold;
And weave into his shame, which like the dead
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory fled.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines: That Time Is Dead For Ever, Child!

I.

That time is dead for ever, child!
Drowned, frozen, dead for ever!
We look on the past
And stare aghast
At the spectres wailing, pale and ghastr,
Of hopes which thou and I beguiled
To death on life's dark river.

II.

The stream we gazed on then rolled by;
Its waves are unreturning;
But we yet stand
In a lone land,
Like tombs to mark the memory
Of hopes and fears, which fade and flee
In the light of life's dim morning.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines: The Cold Earth Slept Below

The cold earth slept below;
Above the cold sky shone;
And all around,
With a chilling sound,
From caves of ice and fields of snow
The breath of night like death did flow
Beneath the sinking moon.

The wintry hedge was black;
The green grass was not seen;
The birds did rest
On the bare thorn's breast,
Whose roots, beside the pathway track,
Had bound their folds o'er many a crack
Which the frost had made between.

Thine eyes glow'd in the glare
Of the moon's dying light;
As a fen-fire's beam
On a sluggish stream
Gleams dimly--so the moon shone there,
And it yellow'd the strings of thy tangled hair,
That shook in the wind of night.

The moon made thy lips pale, beloved;
The wind made thy bosom chill;
The night did shed
On thy dear head
Its frozen dew, and thou didst lie
Where the bitter breath of the naked sky
Might visit thee at will.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Lines: We Meet Not As We Parted

I.

We meet not as we parted,
We feel more than all may see;
My bosom is heavy-hearted,
And thine full of doubt for me:--
One moment has bound the free.

II.

That moment is gone for ever,
Like lightning that flashed and died--
Like a snowflake upon the river--
Like a sunbeam upon the tide,
Which the dark shadows hide.

III.

That moment from time was singled
As the first of a life of pain;
The cup of its joy was mingled
—Delusion too sweet though vain!
Too sweet to be mine again.

IV.

Sweet lips, could my heart have hidden
That its life was crushed by you,
Ye would not have then forbidden
The death which a heart so true
Sought in your briny dew.

V.

...
...
...
Methinks too little cost
For a moment so found, so lost!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Love

Why is it said thou canst not live
In a youthful breast and fair,
Since thou eternal life canst give,
Canst bloom for ever there?
Since withering pain no power possessed,
Nor age, to blanch thy vermeil hue,
Nor time's dread victor, death, confessed,
Though bathed with his poison dew,
Still thou retain'st unchanging bloom,
Fixed tranquil, even in the tomb.
And oh! when on the blest, reviving,
The day-star dawns of love,
Each energy of soul surviving
More vivid, soars above,
Hast thou ne'er felt a rapturous thrill,
Like June's warm breath, athwart thee fly,
O'er each idea then to steal,
When other passions die?
Felt it in some wild noonday dream,
When sitting by the lonely stream,
Where Silence says, 'Mine is the dell';
And not a murmur from the plain,
And not an echo from the fell,
Disputes her silent reign.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Love, Hope, Desire, And Fear

...

And many there were hurt by that strong boy,
His name, they said, was Pleasure,
And near him stood, glorious beyond measure
Four Ladies who possess all empery
In earth and air and sea,
Nothing that lives from their award is free.
Their names will I declare to thee,
Love, Hope, Desire, and Fear,
And they the regents are
Of the four elements that frame the heart,
And each diversely exercised her art
By force or circumstance or sleight
To prove her dreadful might
Upon that poor domain.
Desire presented her [false] glass, and then
The spirit dwelling there
Was spellbound to embrace what seemed so fair
Within that magic mirror,
And dazed by that bright error,
It would have scorned the [shafts] of the avenger
And death, and penitence, and danger,
Had not then silent Fear
Touched with her palsyng spear,
So that as if a frozen torrent
The blood was curdled in its current;
It dared not speak, even in look or motion,
But chained within itself its proud devotion.
Between Desire and Fear thou wert
A wretched thing, poor heart!
Sad was his life who bore thee in his breast,
Wild bird for that weak nest.
Till Love even from fierce Desire it bought,
And from the very wound of tender thought
Drew solace, and the pity of sweet eyes
Gave strength to bear those gentle agonies,
Surmount the loss, the terror, and the sorrow.
Then Hope approached, she who can borrow
For poor to-day, from rich tomorrow,

And Fear withdrew, as night when day
Descends upon the orient ray,
And after long and vain endurance
The poor heart woke to her assurance.

—At one birth these four were born
With the world's forgotten morn,
And from Pleasure still they hold
All it circles, as of old.

When, as summer lures the swallow,
Pleasure lures the heart to follow--

O weak heart of little wit!

The fair hand that wounded it,
Seeking, like a panting hare,
Refuge in the lynx's lair,
Love, Desire, Hope, and Fear,
Ever will be near.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Love's Philosophy

The fountains mingle with the river,
And the rivers with the ocean;
The winds of heaven mix forever
With a sweet emotion;
Nothing in the world is single;
All things by a law divine
In another's being mingle--
Why not I with thine?

See, the mountains kiss high heaven,
And the waves clasp one another;
No sister flower could be forgiven
If it disdained its brother;
And the sunlight clasps the earth,
And the moonbeams kiss the sea;--
What are all these kissings worth,
If thou kiss not me?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Love's Rose

I.

Hopes, that swell in youthful breasts,
Live not through the waste of time!
Love's rose a host of thorns invests;
Cold, ungenial is the clime,
Where its honours blow.
Youth says, 'The purple flowers are mine,'
Which die the while they glow.

II.

Dear the boon to Fancy given,
Retracted whilst it's granted:
Sweet the rose which lives in Heaven,
Although on earth 'tis planted,
Where its honours blow,
While by earth's slaves the leaves are riven
Which die the while they glow.

III.

Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can blast the flower,
Even when in most unwary hour
It blooms in Fancy's bower.
Age cannot Love destroy,
But perfidy can rend the shrine
In which its vermeil splendours shine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Marenghi

I.

Let those who pine in pride or in revenge,
Or think that ill for ill should be repaid,
Who barter wrong for wrong, until the exchange
Ruins the merchants of such thriftless trade,
Visit the tower of Vado, and unlearn
Such bitter faith beside Marenghi's urn.

II.

A massy tower yet overhangs the town,
A scattered group of ruined dwellings now...

...

III.

Another scene are wise Etruria knew
Its second ruin through internal strife
And tyrants through the breach of discord threw
The chain which binds and kills. As death to life,
As winter to fair flowers (though some be poison)
So Monarchy succeeds to Freedom's foison.

IV.

In Pisa's church a cup of sculptured gold
Was brimming with the blood of feuds forsworn:
A Sacrament more holy ne'er of old
Etrurians mingled mid the shades forlorn
Of moon-illumined forests, when...

V.

And reconciling factions wet their lips
With that dread wine, and swear to keep each spirit
Undarkened by their country's last eclipse...

...

VI.

Was Florence the liberticide? that band
Of free and glorious brothers who had planted,

Like a green isle mid Aethiopian sand,
A nation amid slaveries, disenchanting
Of many impious faiths—wise, just—do they,
Does Florence, gorge the sated tyrants' prey?

VII.

O foster-nurse of man's abandoned glory,
Since Athens, its great mother, sunk in splendour;
Thou shadowest forth that mighty shape in story,
As ocean its wrecked fanes, severe yet tender:—
The light-invested angel Poesy
Was drawn from the dim world to welcome thee.

VIII.

And thou in painting didst transcribe all taught
By loftiest meditations; marble knew
The sculptor's fearless soul—and as he wrought,
The grace of his own power and freedom grew.
And more than all, heroic, just, sublime,
Thou wart among the false...was this thy crime?

IX.

Yes; and on Pisa's marble walls the twine
Of direst weeds hangs garlanded—the snake
Inhabits its wrecked palaces;—in thine
A beast of subtler venom now doth make
Its lair, and sits amid their glories overthrown,
And thus thy victim's fate is as thine own.

X.

The sweetest flowers are ever frail and rare,
And love and freedom blossom but to wither;
And good and ill like vines entangled are,
So that their grapes may oft be plucked together;--
Divide the vintage ere thou drink, then make
Thy heart rejoice for dead Marenghi's sake.

Xa.

[Albert] Marenghi was a Florentine;
If he had wealth, or children, or a wife
Or friends, [or farm] or cherished thoughts which twine

The sights and sounds of home with life's own life
Of these he was despoiled and Florence sent...

...

XI.

No record of his crime remains in story,
But if the morning bright as evening shone,
It was some high and holy deed, by glory
Pursued into forgetfulness, which won
From the blind crowd he made secure and free
The patriot's meed, toil, death, and infamy.

XII.

For when by sound of trumpet was declared
A price upon his life, and there was set
A penalty of blood on all who shared
So much of water with him as might wet
His lips, which speech divided not—he went
Alone, as you may guess, to banishment.

XIII.

Amid the mountains, like a hunted beast,
He hid himself, and hunger, toil, and cold,
Month after month endured; it was a feast
Whene'er he found those globes of deep-red gold
Which in the woods the strawberry-tree doth bear,
Suspended in their emerald atmosphere.

XIV.

And in the roofless huts of vast morasses,
Deserted by the fever-stricken serf,
All overgrown with reeds and long rank grasses,
And hillocks heaped of moss-inwoven turf,
And where the huge and speckled aloe made,
Rooted in stones, a broad and pointed shade,--

XV.

He housed himself. There is a point of strand
Near Vado's tower and town; and on one side
The treacherous marsh divides it from the land,
Shadowed by pine and ilex forests wide,

And on the other, creeps eternally,
Through muddy weeds, the shallow sullen sea.

XVI.

Here the earth's breath is pestilence, and few
But things whose nature is at war with life--
Snakes and ill worms—endure its mortal dew.
The trophies of the clime's victorious strife--
And ringed horns which the buffalo did wear,
And the wolf's dark gray scalp who tracked him there.

XVII.

And at the utmost point...stood there
The relics of a reed-inwoven cot, 95
Thatched with broad flags. An outlawed murderer
Had lived seven days there: the pursuit was hot
When he was cold. The birds that were his grave
Fell dead after their feast in Vado's wave.

XVIII.

There must have burned within Marengi's breast
That fire, more warm and bright than life and hope,
(Which to the martyr makes his dungeon...
More joyous than free heaven's majestic cope
To his oppressor), warring with decay,--
Or he could ne'er have lived years, day by day.

XIX.

Nor was his state so lone as you might think.
He had tamed every newt and snake and toad,
And every seagull which sailed down to drink
Those freshes ere the death-mist went abroad.
And each one, with peculiar talk and play,
Wiled, not untaught, his silent time away.

XX.

And the marsh-meteors, like tame beasts, at night
Came licking with blue tongues his veined feet;
And he would watch them, as, like spirits bright,
In many entangled figures quaint and sweet
To some enchanted music they would dance--
Until they vanished at the first moon-glance.

XXI.

He mocked the stars by grouping on each weed
The summer dew-globes in the golden dawn;
And, ere the hoar-frost languished, he could read
Its pictured path, as on bare spots of lawn
Its delicate brief touch in silver weaves
The likeness of the wood's remembered leaves.

XXII.

And many a fresh Spring morn would he awaken--
While yet the unrisen sun made glow, like iron
Quivering in crimson fire, the peaks unshaken
Of mountains and blue isles which did environ
With air-clad crags that plain of land and sea,--
And feel ... liberty.

XXIII.

And in the moonless nights when the dun ocean
Heaved underneath wide heaven, star-impearled,
Starting from dreams...
Communed with the immeasurable world;
And felt his life beyond his limbs dilated,
Till his mind grew like that it contemplated.

XXIV.

His food was the wild fig and strawberry;
The milky pine-nuts which the autumn-blast
Shakes into the tall grass; or such small fry
As from the sea by winter-storms are cast;
And the coarse bulbs of iris-flowers he found
Knotted in clumps under the spongy ground.

XXV.

And so were kindled powers and thoughts which made
His solitude less dark. When memory came
(For years gone by leave each a deepening shade),
His spirit basked in its internal flame,--
As, when the black storm hurries round at night,
The fisher basks beside his red firelight.

XXVI.

Yet human hopes and cares and faiths and errors,
Like billows unawakened by the wind,
Slept in Marenghi still; but that all terrors,
Weakness, and doubt, had withered in his mind.
His couch...

...

XXVII.

And, when he saw beneath the sunset's planet
A black ship walk over the crimson ocean,--
Its pennon streaming on the blasts that fan it,
Its sails and ropes all tense and without motion,
Like the dark ghost of the unburied even
Striding athwart the orange-coloured heaven,--

XXVIII.

The thought of his own kind who made the soul
Which sped that winged shape through night and day,--
The thought of his own country...

...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Marianne's Dream

1.

A pale Dream came to a Lady fair,
And said, A boon, a boon, I pray!
I know the secrets of the air,
And things are lost in the glare of day,
Which I can make the sleeping see,
If they will put their trust in me.

2.

And thou shalt know of things unknown,
If thou wilt let me rest between
The veiny lids, whose fringe is thrown
Over thine eyes so dark and sheen:
And half in hope, and half in fright,
The Lady closed her eyes so bright.

3.

At first all deadly shapes were driven
Tumultuously across her sleep,
And o'er the vast cope of bending heaven
All ghastly-visaged clouds did sweep;
And the Lady ever looked to spy
If the golden sun shone forth on high.

4.

And as towards the east she turned,
She saw aloft in the morning air,
Which now with hues of sunrise burned,
A great black Anchor rising there;
And wherever the Lady turned her eyes,
It hung before her in the skies.

5.

The sky was blue as the summer sea,
The depths were cloudless overhead,
The air was calm as it could be,
There was no sight or sound of dread,
But that black Anchor floating still
Over the piny eastern hill.

6.

The Lady grew sick with a weight of fear
To see that Anchor ever hanging,
And veiled her eyes; she then did hear
The sound as of a dim low clanging,
And looked abroad if she might know
Was it aught else, or but the flow
Of the blood in her own veins, to and fro.

7.

There was a mist in the sunless air,
Which shook as it were with an earthquake's shock,
But the very weeds that blossomed there
Were moveless, and each mighty rock
Stood on its basis steadfastly;
The Anchor was seen no more on high.

8.

But piled around, with summits hid
In lines of cloud at intervals,
Stood many a mountain pyramid
Among whose everlasting walls
Two mighty cities shone, and ever
Through the red mist their domes did quiver.

9.

On two dread mountains, from whose crest,
Might seem, the eagle, for her brood,
Would ne'er have hung her dizzy nest,
Those tower-encircled cities stood.
A vision strange such towers to see,
Sculptured and wrought so gorgeously,
Where human art could never be.

10.

And columns framed of marble white,
And giant fanes, dome over dome
Piled, and triumphant gates, all bright
With workmanship, which could not come
From touch of mortal instrument,
Shot o'er the vales, or lustre lent

From its own shapes magnificent.

11.

But still the Lady heard that clang
Filling the wide air far away;
And still the mist whose light did hang
Among the mountains shook away,
So that the Lady's heart beat fast,
As half in joy, and half aghast,
On those high domes her look she cast.

12.

Sudden, from out that city sprung
A light that made the earth grow red;
Two flames that each with quivering tongue
Licked its high domes, and overhead
Among those mighty towers and fanes
Dropped fire, as a volcano rains
Its sulphurous ruin on the plains.

13.

And hark! a rush as if the deep
Had burst its bonds; she looked behind
And saw over the western steep
A raging flood descend, and wind
Through that wide vale; she felt no fear,
But said within herself, 'Tis clear
These towers are Nature's own, and she
To save them has sent forth the sea.

14.

And now those raging billows came
Where that fair Lady sate, and she
Was borne towards the showering flame
By the wild waves heaped tumultuously.
And, on a little plank, the flow
Of the whirlpool bore her to and fro.

15.

The flames were fiercely vomited
From every tower and every dome,
And dreary light did widely shed

O'er that vast flood's suspended foam,
Beneath the smoke which hung its night
On the stained cope of heaven's light.

16.

The plank whereon that Lady sate
Was driven through the chasms, about and about,
Between the peaks so desolate
Of the drowning mountains, in and out,
As the thistle-beard on a whirlwind sails—
While the flood was filling those hollow vales.

17.

At last her plank an eddy crossed,
And bore her to the city's wall,
Which now the flood had reached almost;
It might the stoutest heart appal
To hear the fire roar and hiss
Through the domes of those mighty palaces.

18.

The eddy whirled her round and round
Before a gorgeous gate, which stood
Piercing the clouds of smoke which bound
Its aery arch with light like blood;
She looked on that gate of marble clear,
With wonder that extinguished fear.

19.

For it was filled with sculptures rarest,
Of forms most beautiful and strange,
Like nothing human, but the fairest
Of winged shapes, whose legions range
Throughout the sleep of those that are,
Like this same Lady, good and fair.

20.

And as she looked, still lovelier grew
Those marble forms;—the sculptor sure
Was a strong spirit, and the hue
Of his own mind did there endure
After the touch, whose power had braided

Such grace, was in some sad change faded.

21.

She looked, the flames were dim, the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude;
Those marble shapes then seemed to quiver,
And their fair limbs to float in motion,
Like weeds unfolding in the ocean.

22.

And their lips moved; one seemed to speak,
When suddenly the mountains cracked,
And through the chasm the flood did break
With an earth-uplifting cataract:
The statues gave a joyous scream,
And on its wings the pale thin Dream
Lifted the Lady from the stream.

23.

The dizzy flight of that phantom pale
Waked the fair Lady from her sleep,
And she arose, while from the veil
Of her dark eyes the Dream did creep,
And she walked about as one who knew
That sleep has sights as clear and true
As any waking eyes can view.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Matilda Gathering Flowers

And earnest to explore within--around--
The divine wood, whose thick green living woof
Tempered the young day to the sight--I wound

Up the green slope, beneath the forest's roof,
With slow, soft steps leaving the mountain's steep,
And sought those inmost labyrinths, motion-proof

Against the air, that in that stillness deep
And solemn, struck upon my forehead bare,
The slow, soft stroke of a continuous...

In which the ... leaves tremblingly were
All bent towards that part where earliest
The sacred hill obscures the morning air.

Yet were they not so shaken from the rest,
But that the birds, perched on the utmost spray,
Incessantly renewing their blithe quest,

With perfect joy received the early day,
Singing within the glancing leaves, whose sound
Kept a low burden to their roundelay,

Such as from bough to bough gathers around
The pine forest on bleak Chiassi's shore,
When Aeolus Sirocco has unbound.

My slow steps had already borne me o'er
Such space within the antique wood, that I
Perceived not where I entered any more,--

When, lo! a stream whose little waves went by,
Bending towards the left through grass that grew
Upon its bank, impeded suddenly

My going on. Water of purest hue
On earth, would appear turbid and impure
Compared with this, whose unconcealing dew,

Dark, dark, yet clear, moved under the obscure
Eternal shades, whose interwoven looms
The rays of moon or sunlight ne'er endure.

I moved not with my feet, but mid the glooms
Pierced with my charmed eye, contemplating
The mighty multitude of fresh May blooms

Which starred that night, when, even as a thing
That suddenly, for blank astonishment,
Charms every sense, and makes all thought take wing,--

A solitary woman! and she went
Singing and gathering flower after flower,
With which her way was painted and besprent.

'Bright lady, who, if looks had ever power
To bear true witness of the heart within,
Dost bask under the beams of love, come lower

Towards this bank. I prithee let me win
This much of thee, to come, that I may hear
Thy song: like Proserpine, in Enna's glen,

Thou seemest to my fancy, singing here
And gathering flowers, as that fair maiden when
She lost the Spring, and Ceres her, more dear.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

May The Limner

When May is painting with her colours gay
The landscape sketched by April her sweet twin...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Melody To A Scene Of Former Times

Art thou indeed forever gone,
Forever, ever, lost to me?
Must this poor bosom beat alone,
Or beat at all, if not for thee?
Ah! why was love to mortals given,
To lift them to the height of Heaven,
Or dash them to the depths of Hell?
Yet I do not reproach thee, dear!
Ah, no! the agonies that swell
This panting breast, this frenzied brain,
Might wake my --'s slumb'ring tear.
Oh! Heaven is witness I did love,
And Heaven does know I love thee still,
Does know the fruitless sick'ning thrill,
When reason's judgement vainly strove
To blot thee from my memory;
But which might never, never be.
Oh! I appeal to that blest day
When passion's wildest ecstasy
Was coldness to the joys I knew,
When every sorrow sunk away.
Oh! I had never lived before,
But now those blisses are no more.
And now I cease to live again,
I do not blame thee, love; ah, no!
The breast that feels this anguished woe.
Throbs for thy happiness alone.
Two years of speechless bliss are gone,
I thank thee, dearest, for the dream.
'Tis night--what faint and distant scream
Comes on the wild and fitful blast?
It moans for pleasures that are past,
It moans for days that are gone by.
Oh! lagging hours, how slow you fly!
I see a dark and lengthened vale,
The black view closes with the tomb;
But darker is the lowering gloom
That shades the intervening dale.
In visioned slumber for awhile

I seem again to share thy smile,
I seem to hang upon thy tone.
Again you say, 'Confide in me,
For I am thine, and thine alone,
And thine must ever, ever be.'
But oh! awak'ning still anew,
Athwart my enanguished senses flew
A fiercer, deadlier agony!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Methought I Was A Billow In The Crowd

Methought I was a billow in the crowd
Of common men, that stream without a shore,
That ocean which at once is deaf and loud;
That I, a man, stood amid many more
By a wayside..., which the aspect bore
Of some imperial metropolis,
Where mighty shapes—pyramid, dome, and tower--
Gleamed like a pile of crags--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mighty Eagle

Mighty eagle! thou that soarest
O'er the misty mountain forest,
And amid the light of morning
Like a cloud of glory hiest,
And when night descends defiest
The embattled tempests' warning!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mont Blanc: Lines Written In The Vale Of Chamouni

I

The everlasting universe of things
Flows through the mind, and rolls its rapid waves,
Now dark--now glittering--now reflecting gloom--
Now lending splendour, where from secret springs
The source of human thought its tribute brings
Of waters--with a sound but half its own,
Such as a feeble brook will oft assume,
In the wild woods, among the mountains lone,
Where waterfalls around it leap for ever,
Where woods and winds contend, and a vast river
Over its rocks ceaselessly bursts and raves.

II

Thus thou, Ravine of Arve--dark, deep Ravine--
Thou many-colour'd, many-voiced vale,
Over whose pines, and crags, and caverns sail
Fast cloud-shadows and sunbeams: awful scene,
Where Power in likeness of the Arve comes down
From the ice-gulfs that gird his secret throne,
Bursting through these dark mountains like the flame
Of lightning through the tempest;--thou dost lie,
Thy giant brood of pines around thee clinging,
Children of elder time, in whose devotion
The chainless winds still come and ever came
To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
To hear--an old and solemn harmony;
Thine earthly rainbows stretch'd across the sweep
Of the aethereal waterfall, whose veil
Robes some unsculptur'd image; the strange sleep
Which when the voices of the desert fail
Wraps all in its own deep eternity;
Thy caverns echoing to the Arve's commotion,
A loud, lone sound no other sound can tame;
Thou art pervaded with that ceaseless motion,
Thou art the path of that unresting sound--
Dizzy Ravine! and when I gaze on thee
I seem as in a trance sublime and strange
To muse on my own separate fantasy,

My own, my human mind, which passively
Now renders and receives fast influencings,
Holding an unremitting interchange
With the clear universe of things around;
One legion of wild thoughts, whose wandering wings
Now float above thy darkness, and now rest
Where that or thou art no unbidden guest,
In the still cave of the witch Poesy,
Seeking among the shadows that pass by
Ghosts of all things that are, some shade of thee,
Some phantom, some faint image; till the breast
From which they fled recalls them, thou art there!

III

Some say that gleams of a remoter world
Visit the soul in sleep, that death is slumber,
And that its shapes the busy thoughts outnumber
Of those who wake and live.--I look on high;
Has some unknown omnipotence unfurl'd
The veil of life and death? or do I lie
In dream, and does the mightier world of sleep
Spread far around and inaccessibly
Its circles? For the very spirit fails,
Driven like a homeless cloud from steep to steep
That vanishes among the viewless gales!
Far, far above, piercing the infinite sky,
Mont Blanc appears--still, snowy, and serene;
Its subject mountains their unearthly forms
Pile around it, ice and rock; broad vales between
Of frozen floods, unfathomable deeps,
Blue as the overhanging heaven, that spread
And wind among the accumulated steeps;
A desert peopled by the storms alone,
Save when the eagle brings some hunter's bone,
And the wolf tracks her there--how hideously
Its shapes are heap'd around! rude, bare, and high,
Ghastly, and scarr'd, and riven.--Is this the scene
Where the old Earthquake-daemon taught her young
Ruin? Were these their toys? or did a sea
Of fire envelop once this silent snow?
None can reply--all seems eternal now.
The wilderness has a mysterious tongue

Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild,
So solemn, so serene, that man may be,
But for such faith, with Nature reconcil'd;
Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.

IV

The fields, the lakes, the forests, and the streams,
Ocean, and all the living things that dwell
Within the daedal earth; lightning, and rain,
Earthquake, and fiery flood, and hurricane,
The torpor of the year when feeble dreams
Visit the hidden buds, or dreamless sleep
Holds every future leaf and flower; the bound
With which from that detested trance they leap;
The works and ways of man, their death and birth,
And that of him and all that his may be;
All things that move and breathe with toil and sound
Are born and die; revolve, subside, and swell.
Power dwells apart in its tranquillity,
Remote, serene, and inaccessible:
And this, the naked countenance of earth,
On which I gaze, even these primeval mountains
Teach the adverting mind. The glaciers creep
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power
Have pil'd: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,
A city of death, distinct with many a tower
And wall impregnable of beaming ice.
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are strewing
Its destin'd path, or in the mangled soil
Branchless and shatter'd stand; the rocks, drawn down
From yon remotest waste, have overthrown
The limits of the dead and living world,
Never to be reclaim'd. The dwelling-place
Of insects, beasts, and birds, becomes its spoil;
Their food and their retreat for ever gone,

So much of life and joy is lost. The race
Of man flies far in dread; his work and dwelling
Vanish, like smoke before the tempest's stream,
And their place is not known. Below, vast caves
Shine in the rushing torrents' restless gleam,
Which from those secret chasms in tumult welling
Meet in the vale, and one majestic River,
The breath and blood of distant lands, for ever
Rolls its loud waters to the ocean-waves,
Breathes its swift vapours to the circling air.

V

Mont Blanc yet gleams on high:--the power is there,
The still and solemn power of many sights,
And many sounds, and much of life and death.
In the calm darkness of the moonless nights,
In the lone glare of day, the snows descend
Upon that Mountain; none beholds them there,
Nor when the flakes burn in the sinking sun,
Or the star-beams dart through them. Winds contend
Silently there, and heap the snow with breath
Rapid and strong, but silently! Its home
The voiceless lightning in these solitudes
Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods
Over the snow. The secret Strength of things
Which governs thought, and to the infinite dome
Of Heaven is as a law, inhabits thee!
And what were thou, and earth, and stars, and sea,
If to the human mind's imaginings
Silence and solitude were vacancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music And Sweet Poetry

How sweet it is to sit and read the tales
Of mighty poets and to hear the while
Sweet music, which when the attention fails
Fills the dim pause--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Music, When Soft Voices Die

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory;
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,
Are heaped for the beloved's bed;
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,
Love itself shall slumber on.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mutability

We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon;
How restlessly they speed, and gleam, and quiver,
Streaking the darkness radiantly!--yet soon
Night closes round, and they are lost forever:

Or like forgotten lyres, whose dissonant strings
Give various response to each varying blast,
To whose frail frame no second motion brings
One mood or modulation like the last.

We rest.--A dream has power to poison sleep;
We rise.--One wandering thought pollutes the day;
We feel, conceive or reason, laugh or weep;
Embrace fond woe, or cast our cares away:

It is the same!--For, be it joy or sorrow,
The path of its departure still is free:
Man's yesterday may ne'er be like his morrow;
Nought may endure but Mutability.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Mutability - Ii.

I.

The flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow dies;
All that we wish to stay
Tempt and then flies.
What is this world's delight?
Lightning that mocks the night,
Brief even as bright.

II.

Virtue, how frail it is!
Friendship how rare!
Love, how it sells poor bliss
For proud despair!
But we, though soon they fall,
Survive their joy, and all
Which ours we call.

III.

Whilst skies are blue and bright,
Whilst flowers are gay,
Whilst eyes that change ere night
Make glad the day;
Whilst yet the calm hours creep,
Dream thou—and from thy sleep
Then wake to weep.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Bysshe Shelley

O That A Chariot Of Cloud Were Mine!

O that a chariot of cloud were mine!
Of cloud which the wild tempest weaves in air,
When the moon over the ocean's line
Is spreading the locks of her bright gray hair.
O that a chariot of cloud were mine! 5
I would sail on the waves of the billowy wind
To the mountain peak and the rocky lake,
And the...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

O Thou Immortal Deity

O thou immortal deity
Whose throne is in the depth of human thought,
I do adjure thy power and thee
By all that man may be, by all that he is not,
By all that he has been and yet must be!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ode To Heaven

CHORUS OF SPIRITS:

FIRST SPIRIT:

Palace-roof of cloudless nights!
Paradise of golden lights!
Deep, immeasurable, vast,
Which art now, and which wert then
Of the Present and the Past,
Of the eternal Where and When,
Presence-chamber, temple, home,
Ever-canopying dome,
Of acts and ages yet to come!

Glorious shapes have life in thee,
Earth, and all earth's company;
Living globes which ever throng
Thy deep chasms and wildernesses;
And green worlds that glide along;
And swift stars with flashing tresses;
And icy moons most cold and bright,
And mighty suns beyond the night,
Atoms of intensest light.

Even thy name is as a god,
Heaven! for thou art the abode
Of that Power which is the glass
Wherein man his nature sees.
Generations as they pass
Worship thee with bended knees.
Their unremaining gods and they
Like a river roll away:
Thou remainest such—alway!—

SECOND SPIRIT:

Thou art but the mind's first chamber,
Round which its young fancies clamber,
Like weak insects in a cave,
Lighted up by stalactites;
But the portal of the grave,

Where a world of new delights
Will make thy best glories seem
But a dim and noontday gleam
From the shadow of a dream!

THIRD SPIRIT:

Peace! the abyss is wreathed with scorn
At your presumption, atom-born!
What is Heaven? and what are ye
Who its brief expanse inherit?
What are suns and spheres which flee
With the instinct of that Spirit
Of which ye are but a part?
Drops which Nature's mighty heart
Drives through thinnest veins! Depart!

What is Heaven? a globe of dew,
Filling in the morning new
Some eyed flower whose young leaves waken
On an unimagined world:
Constellated suns unshaken,
Orbits measureless, are furled
In that frail and fading sphere,
With ten millions gathered there,
To tremble, gleam, and disappear.

CANCELLED FRAGMENTS OF THE ODE TO HEAVEN.

[Published by Mr. C.D. Locock, "Examination", etc., 1903.]

The [living frame which sustains my soul]
Is [sinking beneath the fierce control]
Down through the lampless deep of song
I am drawn and driven along—

When a Nation screams aloud
Like an eagle from the cloud
When a...

...

When the night...

...

Watch the look askance and old—
See neglect, and falsehood fold...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ode To Liberty

Yet, Freedom, yet, thy banner, torn but flying,
Streams like a thunder-storm against the wind.--BYRON.

I.

A glorious people vibrated again
The lightning of the nations: Liberty
From heart to heart, from tower to tower, o'er Spain,
Scattering contagious fire into the sky,
Gleamed. My soul spurned the chains of its dismay,
And in the rapid plumes of song
Clothed itself, sublime and strong;
As a young eagle soars the morning clouds among,
Hovering inverse o'er its accustomed prey;
Till from its station in the Heaven of fame
The Spirit's whirlwind rapped it, and the ray
Of the remotest sphere of living flame
Which paves the void was from behind it flung,
As foam from a ship's swiftness, when there came
A voice out of the deep: I will record the same.

II.

The Sun and the serenest Moon sprang forth:
The burning stars of the abyss were hurled
Into the depths of Heaven. The daedal earth,
That island in the ocean of the world,
Hung in its cloud of all-sustaining air:
But this divinest universe
Was yet a chaos and a curse,
For thou wert not: but, power from worst producing worse,
The spirit of the beasts was kindled there,
And of the birds, and of the watery forms,
And there was war among them, and despair
Within them, raging without truce or terms:
The bosom of their violated nurse
Groaned, for beasts warred on beasts, and worms on worms,
And men on men; each heart was as a hell of storms.

III.

Man, the imperial shape, then multiplied

His generations under the pavilion
Of the Sun's throne: palace and pyramid,
Temple and prison, to many a swarming million
Were, as to mountain-wolves their ragged caves.
This human living multitude
Was savage, cunning, blind, and rude,
For thou wert not; but o'er the populous solitude,
Like one fierce cloud over a waste of waves,
Hung Tyranny; beneath, sate deified
The sister-pest, congregator of slaves;
Into the shadow of her pinions wide
Anarchs and priests, who feed on gold and blood
Till with the stain their inmost souls are dyed,
Drove the astonished herds of men from every side.

IV.

The nodding promontories, and blue isles,
And cloud-like mountains, and dividuous waves
Of Greece, basked glorious in the open smiles
Of favouring Heaven: from their enchanted caves
Prophetic echoes flung dim melody.
On the unapprehensive wild
The vine, the corn, the olive mild,
Grew savage yet, to human use unreconciled;
And, like unfolded flowers beneath the sea,
Like the man's thought dark in the infant's brain,
Like aught that is which wraps what is to be,
Art's deathless dreams lay veiled by many a vein
Of Parian stone; and, yet a speechless child,
Verse murmured, and Philosophy did strain
Her lidless eyes for thee; when o'er the Aegean main.

V.

Athens arose: a city such as vision
Builds from the purple crags and silver towers
Of battlemented cloud, as in derision
Of kingliest masonry: the ocean-floors
Pave it; the evening sky pavilions it;
Its portals are inhabited
By thunder-zoned winds, each head
Within its cloudy wings with sun-fire garlanded,--
A divine work! Athens, diviner yet,

Gleamed with its crest of columns, on the will
Of man, as on a mount of diamond, set;
For thou wert, and thine all-creative skill
Peopled, with forms that mock the eternal dead
In marble immortality, that hill
Which was thine earliest throne and latest oracle.

VI.

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
Its wrinkled image lies, as then it lay
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it cannot pass away!
The voices of thy bards and sages thunder
With an earth-awakening blast
Through the caverns of the past:
(Religion veils her eyes; Oppression shrinks aghast):
A winged sound of joy, and love, and wonder,
Which soars where Expectation never flew,
Rending the veil of space and time asunder!
One ocean feeds the clouds, and streams, and dew;
One Sun illumines Heaven; one Spirit vast
With life and love makes chaos ever new,
As Athens doth the world with thy delight renew.

VII.

Then Rome was, and from thy deep bosom fairest,
Like a wolf-cub from a Cadmaean Maenad,
She drew the milk of greatness, though thy dearest
From that Elysian food was yet unweaned;
And many a deed of terrible uprightiness
By thy sweet love was sanctified;
And in thy smile, and by thy side,
Saintly Camillus lived, and firm Atilius died.
But when tears stained thy robe of vestal-whiteness,
And gold profaned thy Capitolian throne, 100
Thou didst desert, with spirit-winged lightness,
The senate of the tyrants: they sunk prone
Slaves of one tyrant: Palatinus sighed
Faint echoes of Ionian song; that tone
Thou didst delay to hear, lamenting to disown

VIII.

From what Hyrcanian glen or frozen hill,
Or piny promontory of the Arctic main,
Or utmost islet inaccessible,
Didst thou lament the ruin of thy reign,
Teaching the woods and waves, and desert rocks,
And every Naiad's ice-cold urn,
To talk in echoes sad and stern
Of that sublimest lore which man had dared unlearn?
For neither didst thou watch the wizard flocks
Of the Scald's dreams, nor haunt the Druid's sleep.
What if the tears rained through thy shattered locks
Were quickly dried? for thou didst groan, not weep,
When from its sea of death, to kill and burn,
The Galilean serpent forth did creep,
And made thy world an undistinguishable heap.

IX.

A thousand years the Earth cried, 'Where art thou?'
And then the shadow of thy coming fell
On Saxon Alfred's olive-cinctured brow:
And many a warrior-peopled citadel.
Like rocks which fire lifts out of the flat deep,
Arose in sacred Italy,
Frowning o'er the tempestuous sea
Of kings, and priests, and slaves, in tower-crowned majesty;
That multitudinous anarchy did sweep
And burst around their walls, like idle foam,
Whilst from the human spirit's deepest deep
Strange melody with love and awe struck dumb
Dissonant arms; and Art, which cannot die,
With divine wand traced on our earthly home
Fit imagery to pave Heaven's everlasting dome.

X.

Thou huntress swifter than the Moon! thou terror
Of the world's wolves! thou bearer of the quiver,
Whose sunlike shafts pierce tempest-winged Error,
As light may pierce the clouds when they dis sever
In the calm regions of the orient day!
Luther caught thy wakening glance;
Like lightning, from his leaden lance
Reflected, it dissolved the visions of the trance

In which, as in a tomb, the nations lay;
And England's prophets hailed thee as their queen,
In songs whose music cannot pass away,
Though it must flow forever: not unseen
Before the spirit-sighted countenance
Of Milton didst thou pass, from the sad scene
Beyond whose night he saw, with a dejected mien.

XI.

The eager hours and unreluctant years
As on a dawn-illuminated mountain stood.
Trampling to silence their loud hopes and fears,
Darkening each other with their multitude,
And cried aloud, 'Liberty!' Indignation
Answered Pity from her cave;
Death grew pale within the grave,
And Desolation howled to the destroyer, Save!
When like Heaven's Sun girt by the exhalation
Of its own glorious light, thou didst arise.
Chasing thy foes from nation unto nation
Like shadows: as if day had cloven the skies
At dreaming midnight o'er the western wave,
Men started, staggering with a glad surprise,
Under the lightnings of thine unfamiliar eyes.

XII.

Thou Heaven of earth! what spells could pall thee then
In ominous eclipse? a thousand years
Bred from the slime of deep Oppression's den.
Dyed all thy liquid light with blood and tears.
Till thy sweet stars could weep the stain away;
How like Bacchanals of blood
Round France, the ghastly vintage, stood
Destruction's sceptred slaves, and Folly's mitred brood!
When one, like them, but mightier far than they,
The Anarch of thine own bewildered powers,
Rose: armies mingled in obscure array,
Like clouds with clouds, darkening the sacred bowers
Of serene Heaven. He, by the past pursued,
Rests with those dead, but unforgotten hours,
Whose ghosts scare victor kings in their ancestral towers.

XIII.

England yet sleeps: was she not called of old?
Spain calls her now, as with its thrilling thunder
Vesuvius wakens Aetna, and the cold
Snow-craggs by its reply are cloven in sunder:
O'er the lit waves every Aeolian isle 185
From Pithecusa to Pelorus
Howls, and leaps, and glares in chorus:
They cry, 'Be dim; ye lamps of Heaven suspended o'er us!'
Her chains are threads of gold, she need but smile
And they dissolve; but Spain's were links of steel,
Till bit to dust by virtue's keenest file.
Twins of a single destiny! appeal
To the eternal years enthroned before us
In the dim West; impress us from a seal,
All ye have thought and done! Time cannot dare conceal.

XIV.

Tomb of Arminius! render up thy dead
Till, like a standard from a watch-tower's staff,
His soul may stream over the tyrant's head;
Thy victory shall be his epitaph,
Wild Bacchanal of truth's mysterious wine,
King-deluded Germany,
His dead spirit lives in thee.
Why do we fear or hope? thou art already free!
And thou, lost Paradise of this divine
And glorious world! thou flowery wilderness!
Thou island of eternity! thou shrine
Where Desolation, clothed with loveliness,
Worships the thing thou wert! O Italy,
Gather thy blood into thy heart; repress
The beasts who make their dens thy sacred palaces.

XV.

Oh, that the free would stamp the impious name
Of KING into the dust! or write it there,
So that this blot upon the page of fame
Were as a serpent's path, which the light air
Erases, and the flat sands close behind!
Ye the oracle have heard:
Lift the victory-flashing sword.

And cut the snaky knots of this foul gordian word,
Which, weak itself as stubble, yet can bind
Into a mass, irrefragably firm,
The axes and the rods which awe mankind;
The sound has poison in it, 'tis the sperm
Of what makes life foul, cankerous, and abhorred;
Disdain not thou, at thine appointed term,
To set thine armed heel on this reluctant worm.

XVI.

Oh, that the wise from their bright minds would kindle
Such lamps within the dome of this dim world,
That the pale name of PRIEST might shrink and dwindle
Into the hell from which it first was hurled,
A scoff of impious pride from fiends impure;
Till human thoughts might kneel alone,
Each before the judgement-throne
Of its own aweless soul, or of the Power unknown!
Oh, that the words which make the thoughts obscure
From which they spring, as clouds of glimmering dew
From a white lake blot Heaven's blue portraiture,
Were stripped of their thin masks and various hue
And frowns and smiles and splendours not their own,
Till in the nakedness of false and true
They stand before their Lord, each to receive its due!

XVII.

He who taught man to vanquish whatsoever
Can be between the cradle and the grave
Crowned him the King of Life. Oh, vain endeavour!
If on his own high will, a willing slave,
He has enthroned the oppression and the oppressor
What if earth can clothe and feed
Amplest millions at their need,
And power in thought be as the tree within the seed?
Or what if Art, an ardent intercessor,
Driving on fiery wings to Nature's throne,
Checks the great mother stooping to caress her,
And cries: 'Give me, thy child, dominion
Over all height and depth'? if Life can breed
New wants, and wealth from those who toil and groan,
Rend of thy gifts and hers a thousandfold for one!

XVIII.

Come thou, but lead out of the inmost cave
Of man's deep spirit, as the morning-star
Beckons the Sun from the Eoan wave,
Wisdom. I hear the pennons of her car
Self-moving, like cloud charioted by flame;
Comes she not, and come ye not,
Rulers of eternal thought,
To judge, with solemn truth, life's ill-apportioned lot?
Blind Love, and equal Justice, and the Fame
Of what has been, the Hope of what will be?
O Liberty! if such could be thy name
Wert thou disjoined from these, or they from thee:
If thine or theirs were treasures to be bought
By blood or tears, have not the wise and free
Wept tears, and blood like tears?—The solemn harmony

XIX.

Paused, and the Spirit of that mighty singing
To its abyss was suddenly withdrawn;
Then, as a wild swan, when sublimely winging
Its path athwart the thunder-smoke of dawn,
Sinks headlong through the aerial golden light
On the heavy-sounding plain,
When the bolt has pierced its brain;
As summer clouds dissolve, unburthened of their rain;
As a far taper fades with fading night,
As a brief insect dies with dying day,—
My song, its pinions disarrayed of might,
Drooped; o'er it closed the echoes far away
Of the great voice which did its flight sustain,
As waves which lately paved his watery way
Hiss round a drowner's head in their tempestuous play.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ode To Naples

EPODE 1a.

I stood within the City disinterred;
And heard the autumnal leaves like light footfalls
Of spirits passing through the streets; and heard
The Mountain's slumberous voice at intervals
Thrill through those roofless halls;
The oracular thunder penetrating shook
The listening soul in my suspended blood;
I felt that Earth out of her deep heart spoke--
I felt, but heard not:—through white columns glowed
The isle-sustaining ocean-flood,
A plane of light between two heavens of azure!
Around me gleamed many a bright sepulchre
Of whose pure beauty, Time, as if his pleasure
Were to spare Death, had never made erasure;
But every living lineament was clear
As in the sculptor's thought; and there
The wreaths of stony myrtle, ivy, and pine,
Like winter leaves o'ergrown by moulded snow,
Seemed only not to move and grow
Because the crystal silence of the air
Weighed on their life; even as the Power divine
Which then lulled all things, brooded upon mine.

EPODE 2a.

Then gentle winds arose
With many a mingled close
Of wild Aeolian sound, and mountain-odours keen;
And where the Baian ocean
Welters with airlike motion,
Within, above, around its bowers of starry green,
Moving the sea-flowers in those purple caves,
Even as the ever stormless atmosphere
Floats o'er the Elysian realm,
It bore me, like an Angel, o'er the waves
Of sunlight, whose swift pinnacle of dewy air
No storm can overwhelm.

I sailed, where ever flows
Under the calm Serene
A spirit of deep emotion
From the unknown graves
Of the dead Kings of Melody.
Shadowy Aornos darkened o'er the helm
The horizontal aether; Heaven stripped bare
Its depth over Elysium, where the prow
Made the invisible water white as snow;
From that Typhaean mount, Inarime,
There streamed a sunbright vapour, like the standard
Of some aethereal host;
Whilst from all the coast,
Louder and louder, gathering round, there wandered
Over the oracular woods and divine sea
Propheysings which grew articulate--
They seize me—I must speak them!—be they fate!

STROPHE 1.

Naples! thou Heart of men which ever pantest
Naked, beneath the lidless eye of Heaven!
Elysian City, which to calm enchantest
The mutinous air and sea! they round thee, even
As sleep round Love, are driven!
Metropolis of a ruined Paradise
Long lost, late won, and yet but half regained!
Bright Altar of the bloodless sacrifice
Which armed Victory offers up unstained
To Love, the flower-enchained!
Thou which wert once, and then didst cease to be,
Now art, and henceforth ever shalt be, free,
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice can avail,--
Hail, hail, all hail!

STROPHE 2.

Thou youngest giant birth
Which from the groaning earth
Leap'st, clothed in armour of impenetrable scale!
Last of the Intercessors!
Who 'gainst the Crowned Transgressors

Pleaded before God's love! Arrayed in Wisdom's mail,
Wave thy lightning lance in mirth
Nor let thy high heart fail,
Though from their hundred gates the leagued Oppressors
With hurried legions move!
Hail, hail, all hail!

ANTISTROPHE 1a.

What though Cimmerian Anarchs dare blaspheme
Freedom and thee? thy shield is as a mirror
To make their blind slaves see, and with fierce gleam
To turn his hungry sword upon the wearer;
A new Actaeon's error
Shall theirs have been—devoured by their own hounds!
Be thou like the imperial Basilisk
Killing thy foe with unapparent wounds!
Gaze on Oppression, till at that dread risk
Aghast she pass from the Earth's disk:
Fear not, but gaze—for freemen mightier grow,
And slaves more feeble, gazing on their foe:--
If Hope, and Truth, and Justice may avail,
Thou shalt be great—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE 2a.

From Freedom's form divine,
From Nature's inmost shrine,
Strip every impious gawd, rend
Error veil by veil;
O'er Ruin desolate,
O'er Falsehood's fallen state,
Sit thou sublime, unawed; be the Destroyer pale!
And equal laws be thine,
And winged words let sail,
Freighted with truth even from the throne of God:
That wealth, surviving fate,
Be thine.—All hail!

ANTISTROPHE 1b.

Didst thou not start to hear Spain's thrilling paean

From land to land re-echoed solemnly,
Till silence became music? From the Aeaeon
To the cold Alps, eternal Italy
Starts to hear thine! The Sea
Which paves the desert streets of Venice laughs
In light, and music; widowed Genoa wan
By moonlight spells ancestral epitaphs,
Murmuring, 'Where is Doria?' fair Milan,
Within whose veins long ran
The viper's palsyng venom, lifts her heel
To bruise his head. The signal and the seal
(If Hope and Truth and Justice can avail)
Art thou of all these hopes.--O hail!

ANTISTROPHE 2b.

Florence! beneath the sun,
Of cities fairest one,
Blushes within her bower for Freedom's expectation:
From eyes of quenchless hope
Rome tears the priestly cope,
As ruling once by power, so now by admiration,--
An athlete stripped to run
From a remoter station
For the high prize lost on Philippi's shore:--
As then Hope, Truth, and Justice did avail,
So now may Fraud and Wrong! O hail!

EPODE 1b.

Hear ye the march as of the Earth-born Forms
Arrayed against the ever-living Gods?
The crash and darkness of a thousand storms
Bursting their inaccessible abodes
Of crags and thunder-clouds?
See ye the banners blazoned to the day,
Inwrought with emblems of barbaric pride?
Dissonant threats kill Silence far away,
The serene Heaven which wraps our Eden wide
With iron light is dyed;
The Anarchs of the North lead forth their legions
Like Chaos o'er creation, uncreating;

An hundred tribes nourished on strange religions
And lawless slaveries,—down the aerial regions
Of the white Alps, desolating,
Famished wolves that bide no waiting,
Blotting the glowing footsteps of old glory,
Trampling our columned cities into dust,
Their dull and savage lust
On Beauty's corse to sickness satiating--
They come! The fields they tread look black and hoary
With fire—from their red feet the streams run gory!

EPODE 2b.

Great Spirit, deepest Love!
Which rulest and dost move
All things which live and are, within the Italian shore;
Who spreadest Heaven around it,
Whose woods, rocks, waves, surround it;
Who sittest in thy star, o'er Ocean's western floor;
Spirit of beauty! at whose soft command
The sunbeams and the showers distil its foison
From the Earth's bosom chill;
Oh, bid those beams be each a blinding brand
Of lightning! bid those showers be dews of poison!
Bid the Earth's plenty kill!
Bid thy bright Heaven above,
Whilst light and darkness bound it,
Be their tomb who planned
To make it ours and thine!
Or, with thine harmonizing ardours fill
And raise thy sons, as o'er the prone horizon
Thy lamp feeds every twilight wave with fire--
Be man's high hope and unextinct desire
The instrument to work thy will divine!
Then clouds from sunbeams, antelopes from leopards,
And frowns and fears from thee,
Would not more swiftly flee
Than Celtic wolves from the Ausonian shepherds.--
Whatever, Spirit, from thy starry shrine
Thou yieldest or withholdest, oh, let be
This city of thy worship ever free!

(Composed at San Juliano di Pisa, August 17-25, 1820; published in *Posthumous Poems*, 1824. There is a copy, 'for the most part neat and legible,' amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian Library)

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ode To The West Wind

I

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being,
Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou,
Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave, until
Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill
(Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air)
With living hues and odors plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere;
Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh, hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, 'mid the steep sky's commotion,
Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed,
Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread
On the blue surface of thine aery surge,
Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge
Of the horizon to the zenith's height,
The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night
Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre,
Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapors, from whose solid atmosphere
Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh, hear!

III

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams
The blue Mediterranean, where he lay,
Lulled by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay,
And saw in sleep old palaces and towers
Quivering within the wave's intenser day,

All overgrown with azure moss and flowers
So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou
For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below
The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear
The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear,
And tremble and despoil themselves: oh, hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear;
If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee;
A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free
Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.
Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chained and bowed
One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce,
My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!
And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguished hearth
Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind!
Be through my lips to unawakened earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On A Faded Violet

I.

The odour from the flower is gone
Which like thy kisses breathed on me;
The colour from the flower is flown
Which glowed of thee and only thee!

II.

A shrivelled, lifeless, vacant form,
It lies on my abandoned breast,
And mocks the heart which yet is warm,
With cold and silent rest.

III.

I weep,--my tears revive it not!
I sigh,--it breathes no more on me;
Its mute and uncomplaining lot
Is such as mine should be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On A Fete At Carlton House: Fragment

By the mossy brink,
With me the Prince shall sit and think;
Shall muse in visioned Regency,
Rapt in bright dreams of dawning Royalty.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On An Icicle That Clung To The Grass Of A Grave

I.

Oh! take the pure gem to where southerly breezes,
Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair,
In which the warm current of love never freezes,
As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,
Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icedrop, might bid it arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

II.

Or where the stern warrior, his country defending,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bending,
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore
Plants Liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore,
With victory's cry, with the shout of the free,
Let it fly, taintless Spirit, to mingle with thee.

III.

For I found the pure gem, when the daybeam returning,
Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain,
When to others the wished-for arrival of morning
Brings relief to long visions of soul-racking pain;
But regret is an insult—to grieve is in vain:
And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair
Seeks Heaven to mix with its own kindred there?

IV.

But still 'twas some Spirit of kindness descending
To share in the load of mortality's woe,
Who over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending
Bade sympathy's tenderest teardrop to flow.
Not for THEE soft compassion celestials did know,
But if ANGELS can weep, sure MAN may repine,
May weep in mute grief o'er thy low-laid shrine.

V.

And did I then say, for the altar of glory,
That the earliest, the loveliest of flowers I'd entwine,

Though with millions of blood-reeking victims 'twas gory,
Though the tears of the widow polluted its shrine,
Though around it the orphans, the fatherless pine?
Oh! Fame, all thy glories I'd yield for a tear
To shed on the grave of a heart so sincere.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Death

The pale, the cold, and the moony smile
Which the meteor beam of a starless night
Sheds on a lonely and sea-girt isle,
Ere the dawning of morn's undoubted light,
Is the flame of life so fickle and wan
That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

O man! hold thee on in courage of soul
Through the stormy shades of thy wordly way,
And the billows of clouds that around thee roll
Shall sleep in the light of a wondrous day,
Where hell and heaven shall leave thee free
To the universe of destiny.

This world is the nurse of all we know,
This world is the mother of all we feel,
And the coming of death is a fearful blow
To a brain unencompass'd by nerves of steel:
When all that we know, or feel, or see,
Shall pass like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there,
Where all but this frame must surely be,
Though the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear
No longer will live, to hear or to see
All that is great and all that is strange
In the boundless realm of unending change.

Who telleth a tale of unspeaking death?
Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?
Who painteth the shadows that are beneath
The wide-winding caves of the peopled tomb?
Or uniteth the hopes of what shall be
With the fears and the love for that which we see?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Fanny Godwin

Her voice did quiver as we parted,
Yet knew I not that heart was broken
From which it came, and I departed
Heeding not the words then spoken.
Misery--O Misery,
This world is all too wide for thee.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Keats, Who Desired That On His Tomb Should Be Inscribed--

'Here lieth One whose name was writ on water.
But, ere the breath that could erase it blew,
Death, in remorse for that fell slaughter,
Death, the immortalizing winter, flew
Athwart the stream,--and time's printless torrent grew
A scroll of crystal, blazoning the name
Of Adonais!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Leaving London For Wales

Hail to thee, Cambria! for the unfettered wind
Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel,
Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind,
And tightening the soul's laxest nerves to steel;
True mountain Liberty alone may heal
The pain which Custom's obduracies bring,
And he who dares in fancy even to steal
One draught from Snowdon's ever sacred spring
Blots out the unholyest rede of worldly witnessing.

And shall that soul, to selfish peace resigned,
So soon forget the woe its fellows share?
Can Snowdon's Lethe from the free-born mind
So soon the page of injured penury tear?
Does this fine mass of human passion dare
To sleep, unhonouring the patriot's fall,
Or life's sweet load in quietude to bear
While millions famish even in Luxury's hall,
And Tyranny, high raised, stern lowers on all?

No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales
A heart so false to hope and virtue shield;
Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales
Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.
For me!...the weapon that I burn to wield
I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,
That Reason's flag may over Freedom's field,
Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled,
A meteor-sign of love effulgent o'er the world.

...

Do thou, wild Cambria, calm each struggling thought;
Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,
That by the soul to indignation wrought
Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene;
Let me forever be what I have been,
But not forever at my needy door
Let Misery linger speechless, pale and lean;
I am the friend of the unfriended poor,--

Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On Robert Emmet's Grave

VI.

No trump tells thy virtues—the grave where they rest
With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame,
Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune caressed,
Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

VII.

When the storm-cloud that lowers o'er the day-beam is gone,
Unchanged, unextinguished its life-spring will shine;
When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,
She will smile through the tears of revival on thine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On The Dark Height Of Jura

I.

Ghosts of the dead! have I not heard your yelling
Rise on the night-rolling breath of the blast,
When o'er the dark aether the tempest is swelling,
And on eddy whirlwind the thunder-peal passed?

II.

For oft have I stood on the dark height of Jura
Which frowns on the valley that opens beneath;
Oft have I braved the chill night-tempest's fury,
Whilst around me, I thought, echoed murmurs of death.

III.

And now, whilst the winds of the mountain are howling,
O father! thy voice seems to strike on mine ear;
In air whilst the tide of the night-storm is rolling,
It breaks on the pause of the elements' jar.

IV.

On the wing of the whirlwind which roars o'er the mountain
Perhaps rides the ghost of my sire who is dead:
On the mist of the tempest which hangs o'er the fountain,
Whilst a wreath of dark vapour encircles his head.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

On The Medusa Of Leonardo Da Vinci In The Florentine Gallery

I.

It lieth, gazing on the midnight sky,
Upon the cloudy mountain-peak supine;
Below, far lands are seen tremblingly;
Its horror and its beauty are divine.
Upon its lips and eyelids seems to lie
Loveliness like a shadow, from which shine,
Fiery and lurid, struggling underneath,
The agonies of anguish and of death.

II.

Yet it is less the horror than the grace
Which turns the gazer's spirit into stone,
Whereon the lineaments of that dead face
Are graven, till the characters be grown
Into itself, and thought no more can trace;
'Tis the melodious hue of beauty thrown
Athwart the darkness and the glare of pain,
Which humanize and harmonize the strain.

III.

And from its head as from one body grow,
As grass out of a watery rock,
Hairs which are vipers, and they curl and flow
And their long tangles in each other lock,
And with unending involutions show
Their mailed radiance, as it were to mock
The torture and the death within, and saw
The solid air with many a ragged jaw.

IV.

And, from a stone beside, a poisonous eft
Peeps idly into those Gorgonian eyes;
Whilst in the air a ghastly bat, bereft
Of sense, has flitted with a mad surprise
Out of the cave this hideous light had cleft,
And he comes hastening like a moth that hies

After a taper; and the midnight sky
Flares, a light more dread than obscurity.

V.

'Tis the tempestuous loveliness of terror;
For from the serpents gleams a brazen glare
Kindled by that inextricable error,
Which makes a thrilling vapour of the air
Become a and ever-shifting mirror
Of all the beauty and the terror there--
A woman's countenance, with serpent-locks,
Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

One Sung Of Thee Who Left The Tale Untold

One sung of thee who left the tale untold,
Like the false dawns which perish in the bursting;
Like empty cups of wrought and daedal gold,
Which mock the lips with air, when they are thirsting.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

One Word Is Too Often Profaned

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it;
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother;
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

I can give not what men call love;
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the heavens reject not, --
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Orpheus

A:

Not far from hence. From yonder pointed hill,
Crowned with a ring of oaks, you may behold
A dark and barren field, through which there flows,
Sluggish and black, a deep but narrow stream,
Which the wind ripples not, and the fair moon
Gazes in vain, and finds no mirror there.
Follow the herbless banks of that strange brook
Until you pause beside a darksome pond,
The fountain of this rivulet, whose gush
Cannot be seen, hid by a rayless night
That lives beneath the overhanging rock
That shades the pool—an endless spring of gloom,
Upon whose edge hovers the tender light,
Trembling to mingle with its paramour,--
But, as Syrinx fled Pan, so night flies day,
Or, with most sullen and regardless hate,
Refuses stern her heaven-born embrace.
On one side of this jagged and shapeless hill
There is a cave, from which there eddies up
A pale mist, like aerial gossamer,
Whose breath destroys all life--awhile it veils
The rock—then, scattered by the wind, it flies
Along the stream, or lingers on the clefts,
Killing the sleepy worms, if aught bide there.
Upon the beetling edge of that dark rock
There stands a group of cypresses; not such
As, with a graceful spire and stirring life,
Pierce the pure heaven of your native vale,
Whose branches the air plays among, but not
Disturbs, fearing to spoil their solemn grace;
But blasted and all wearily they stand,
One to another clinging; their weak boughs
Sigh as the wind buffets them, and they shake
Beneath its blasts—a weatherbeaten crew!

CHORUS:

What wondrous sound is that, mournful and faint,

But more melodious than the murmuring wind
Which through the columns of a temple glides?

A:

It is the wandering voice of Orpheus' lyre,
Borne by the winds, who sigh that their rude king
Hurries them fast from these air-feeding notes;
But in their speed they bear along with them
The waning sound, scattering it like dew
Upon the startled sense.

CHORUS:

Does he still sing?
Methought he rashly cast away his harp
When he had lost Eurydice.

A:

Ah, no!
Awhile he paused. As a poor hunted stag
A moment shudders on the fearful brink
Of a swift stream—the cruel hounds press on
With deafening yell, the arrows glance and wound,—
He plunges in: so Orpheus, seized and torn
By the sharp fangs of an insatiate grief,
Maenad-like waved his lyre in the bright air,
And wildly shrieked 'Where she is, it is dark!'—
And then he struck from forth the strings a sound
Of deep and fearful melody. Alas!
In times long past, when fair Eurydice
With her bright eyes sat listening by his side,
He gently sang of high and heavenly themes.
As in a brook, fretted with little waves
By the light airs of spring—each riplet makes
A many-sided mirror for the sun,
While it flows musically through green banks,
Ceaseless and pauseless, ever clear and fresh,
So flowed his song, reflecting the deep joy
And tender love that fed those sweetest notes,
The heavenly offspring of ambrosial food.

But that is past. Returning from drear Hell,
He chose a lonely seat of unhewn stone,
Blackened with lichens, on a herbless plain.
Then from the deep and overflowing spring
Of his eternal ever-moving grief
There rose to Heaven a sound of angry song.
'Tis as a mighty cataract that parts
Two sister rocks with waters swift and strong,
And casts itself with horrid roar and din
Adown a steep; from a perennial source
It ever flows and falls, and breaks the air
With loud and fierce, but most harmonious roar,
And as it falls casts up a vaporous spray
Which the sun clothes in hues of Iris light.
Thus the tempestuous torrent of his grief
Is clothed in sweetest sounds and varying words
Of poesy. Unlike all human works,
It never slackens, and through every change
Wisdom and beauty and the power divine
Of mighty poesy together dwell,
Mingling in sweet accord. As I have seen
A fierce south blast tear through the darkened sky,
Driving along a rack of winged clouds,
Which may not pause, but ever hurry on,
As their wild shepherd wills them, while the stars,
Twinkling and dim, peep from between the plumes.
Anon the sky is cleared, and the high dome
Of serene Heaven, starred with fiery flowers,
Shuts in the shaken earth; or the still moon
Swiftly, yet gracefully, begins her walk,
Rising all bright behind the eastern hills.
I talk of moon, and wind, and stars, and not
Of song; but, would I echo his high song,
Nature must lend me words ne'er used before,
Or I must borrow from her perfect works,
To picture forth his perfect attributes.
He does no longer sit upon his throne
Of rock upon a desert herbless plain,
For the evergreen and knotted ilexes,
And cypresses that seldom wave their boughs,
And sea-green olives with their grateful fruit,
And elms dragging along the twisted vines,

Which drop their berries as they follow fast,
And blackthorn bushes with their infant race
Of blushing rose-blooms; beeches, to lovers dear,
And weeping willow trees; all swift or slow,
As their huge boughs or lighter dress permit,
Have circled in his throne, and Earth herself
Has sent from her maternal breast a growth
Of starlike flowers and herbs of odour sweet,
To pave the temple that his poesy
Has framed, while near his feet grim lions couch,
And kids, fearless from love, creep near his lair.
Even the blind worms seem to feel the sound.
The birds are silent, hanging down their heads,
Perched on the lowest branches of the trees;
Not even the nightingale intrudes a note
In rivalry, but all entranced she listens.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Otho

I.

Thou wert not, Cassius, and thou couldst not be,
Last of the Romans, though thy memory claim
From Brutus his own glory--and on thee
Rests the full splendour of his sacred fame:
Nor he who dared make the foul tyrant quail
Amid his cowering senate with thy name,
Though thou and he were great--it will avail
To thine own fame that Otho's should not fail.

II.

'Twill wrong thee not--thou wouldst, if thou couldst feel,
Abjure such envious fame--great Otho died
Like thee--he sanctified his country's steel,
At once the tyrant and tyrannicide,
In his own blood--a deed it was to bring
Tears from all men--though full of gentle pride,
Such pride as from impetuous love may spring,
That will not be refused its offering.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ozymandias

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: `Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear --
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Passage Of The Apennines

Listen, listen, Mary mine,
To the whisper of the Apennine,
It bursts on the roof like the thunder's roar,
Or like the sea on a northern shore,
Heard in its raging ebb and flow
By the captives pent in the cave below.
The Apennine in the light of day
Is a mighty mountain dim and gray,
Which between the earth and sky doth lay;
But when night comes, a chaos dread
On the dim starlight then is spread,
And the Apennine walks abroad with the storm,
Shrouding...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Pater Omnipotens

Serene in his unconquerable might
Endued[,] the Almighty King, his steadfast throne
Encompassed unapproachably with power
And darkness and deep solitude an awe
Stood like a black cloud on some aery cliff
Embosoming its lightning—in his sight
Unnumbered glorious spirits trembling stood
Like slaves before their Lord—prostrate around
Heaven's multitudes hymned everlasting praise.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Peter Bell The Third

BY MICHING MALLECHO, Esq.

Is it a party in a parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed,
Some sipping punch-some sipping tea;
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent, and all-damned!

Peter Bell, by W. Wordsworth.

Ophelia.-What means this, my lord?
Hamlet.-Marry, this is Miching Mallecho; it means mischief.
~Shakespeare.

PROLOGUE

Peter Bells, one, two and three,
O'er the wide world wandering be.-
First, the antenatal Peter,
Wrapped in weeds of the same metre,
The so-long-predestined raiment
Clothed in which to walk his way meant
The second Peter; whose ambition
Is to link the proposition,
As the mean of two extremes-
(This was learned from Aldric's themes)
Shielding from the guilt of schism
The orthodoxal syllogism;
The First Peter-he who was
Like the shadow in the glass
Of the second, yet unripe,
His substantial antitype.-
Then came Peter Bell the Second,
Who henceforward must be reckoned
The body of a double soul,
And that portion of the whole
Without which the rest would seem
Ends of a disjointed dream.-
And the Third is he who has

O'er the grave been forced to pass
To the other side, which is,-
Go and try else,-just like this.
Peter Bell the First was Peter
Smugger, milder, softer, neater,
Like the soul before it is
Born from that world into this.
The next Peter Bell was he,
Predevote, like you and me,
To good or evil as may come;
His was the severer doom,-
For he was an evil Cotter,
And a polygamic Potter.
And the last is Peter Bell,
Damned since our first parents fell,
Damned eternally to Hell-
Surely he deserves it well!

PART THE FIRST

DEATH

And Peter Bell, when he had been
With fresh-imported Hell-fire warmed,
Grew serious-from his dress and mien
'Twas very plainly to be seen
Peter was quite reformed.

His eyes turned up, his mouth turned down;
His accent caught a nasal twang;
He oiled his hair; there might be heard
The grace of God in every word
Which Peter said or sang.

But Peter now grew old, and had
An ill no doctor could unravel;
His torments almost drove him mad;-
Some said it was a fever bad-
Some swore it was the gravel.

His holy friends then came about,
And with long preaching and persuasion
Convinced the patient that, without
The smallest shadow of a doubt,
He was predestined to damnation.

They said-'Thy name is Peter Bell;
Thy skin is of a brimstone hue;
Alive or dead-ay, sick or well-
The one God made to rhyme with hell;
The other, I think, rhymes with you.'

Then Peter set up such a yell!-
The nurse, who with some water gruel
Was climbing up the stairs, as well
As her old legs could climb them-fell,
And broke them both-the fall was cruel.

The Parson from the casement leapt
Into the lake of Windermere-
And many an eel-though no adept
In God's right reason for it-kept
Gnawing his kidneys half a year.

And all the rest rushed through the door,
And tumbled over one another,
And broke their skulls.-Upon the floor
Meanwhile sat Peter Bell, and swore,
And cursed his father and his mother;

And raved of God, and sin, and death,
Blaspheming like an infidel;
And said, that with his clenched teeth
He'd seize the earth from underneath,
And drag it with him down to hell.

As he was speaking came a spasm,
And wrenched his gnashing teeth asunder;
Like one who sees a strange phantasm
He lay,-there was a silent chasm
Between his upper jaw and under.

And yellow death lay on his face;
And a fixed smile that was not human
Told, as I understand the case,
That he was gone to the wrong place:-
I heard all this from the old woman.

Then there came down from Langdale Pike
A cloud, with lightning, wind and hail;
It swept over the mountains like
An ocean,-and I heard it strike
The woods and crags of Grasmere vale.

And I saw the black storm come
Nearer, minute after minute;
Its thunder made the cataracts dumb;
With hiss, and clash, and hollow hum,
It neared as if the Devil was in it.

The Devil was in it:-he had bought
Peter for half-a-crown; and when
The storm which bore him vanished, nought
That in the house that storm had caught
Was ever seen again.

The gaping neighbours came next day-
They found all vanished from the shore:
The Bible, whence he used to pray,
Half scorched under a hen-coop lay;
Smashed glass-and nothing more!

PART THE SECOND

THE DEVIL

The Devil, I safely can aver,
Has neither hoof, nor tail, nor sting;
Nor is he, as some sages swear,
A spirit, neither here nor there,
In nothing-yet in everything.

He is-what we are; for sometimes
The Devil is a gentleman;
At others a bard bartering rhymes
For sack; a statesman spinning crimes;
A swindler, living as he can;

A thief, who cometh in the night,
With whole boots and net pantaloons,
Like some one whom it were not right
To mention;-or the luckless wight
From whom he steals nine silver spoons.

But in this case he did appear
Like a slop-merchant from Wapping,
And with smug face, and eye severe,
On every side did perk and peer
Till he saw Peter dead or napping.

He had on an upper Benjamin
(For he was of the driving schism)
In the which he wrapped his skin
From the storm he travelled in,
For fear of rheumatism.

He called the ghost out of the corse;-
It was exceedingly like Peter,-
Only its voice was hollow and hoarse-
It had a queerish look of course-
Its dress too was a little neater.

The Devil knew not his name and lot;
Peter knew not that he was Bell:
Each had an upper stream of thought,
Which made all seem as it was not;
Fitting itself to all things well.

Peter thought he had parents dear,
Brothers, sisters, cousins, cronies,
In the fens of Lincolnshire;
He perhaps had found them there
Had he gone and boldly shown his

Solemn phiz in his own village;
Where he thought oft when a boy
He'd clomb the orchard walls to pillage
The produce of his neighbour's tillage,
With marvellous pride and joy.

And the Devil thought he had,
'Mid the misery and confusion
Of an unjust war, just made
A fortune by the gainful trade
Of giving soldiers rations bad-
The world is full of strange delusion-

That he had a mansion planned
In a square like Grosvenor Square,
That he was aping fashion, and
That he now came to Westmoreland
To see what was romantic there.

And all this, though quite ideal,-
Ready at a breath to vanish,-
Was a state not more unreal
Than the peace he could not feel,

Or the care he could not banish.

After a little conversation,
The Devil told Peter, if he chose,
He'd bring him to the world of fashion
By giving him a situation
In his own service-and new clothes.

And Peter bowed, quite pleased and proud,
And after waiting some few days
For a new livery-dirty yellow
Turned up with black-the wretched fellow
Was bowled to Hell in the Devil's chaise.

PART THE THIRD

HELL

Hell is a city much like London-
A populous and a smoky city;
There are all sorts of people undone,
And there is little or no fun done;
Small justice shown, and still less pity.

There is a Castles, and a Canning,
A Cobbett, and a Castlereagh;
All sorts of caitiff corpses planning
All sorts of cozening for trepanning
Corpses less corrupt than they.

There is a --, who has lost
His wits, or sold them, none knows which;
He walks about a double ghost,
And though as thin as Fraud almost-
Ever grows more grim and rich.

There is a Chancery Court; a King;
A manufacturing mob; a set

Of thieves who by themselves are sent
Similar thieves to represent;
An army; and a public debt.

Which last is a scheme of paper money,
And means-being interpreted-
'Bees, keep your wax-give us the honey,
And we will plant, while skies are sunny,
Flowers, which in winter serve instead.'

There is a great talk of revolution-
And a great chance of despotism-
German soldiers-camps-confusion-
Tumults-lotteries-rage-delusion-
Gin-suicide-and methodism;

Taxes too, on wine and bread,
And meat, and beer, and tea, and cheese,
From which those patriots pure are fed,
Who gorge before they reel to bed
The tenfold essence of all these.

There are mincing women, mewing,
(Like cats, who amant miserè,)
Of their own virtue, and pursuing
Their gentler sisters to that ruin,
Without which-what were chastity?

Lawyers-judges-old hobnobbers
Are there-bailiffs-chancellors-
Bishops-great and little robbers-
Rhymesters-pamphleteers-stock-jobbers-
Men of glory in the wars,-

Things whose trade is, over ladies
To lean, and flirt, and stare, and simper,

Till all that is divine in woman
Grows cruel, courteous, smooth, inhuman,
Crucified 'twixt a smile and whimper.

Thrusting, toiling, wailing, moiling,
Frowning, preaching-such a riot!
Each with never-ceasing labour,
Whilst he thinks he cheats his neighbour,
Cheating his own heart of quiet.

And all these meet at levees;-
Dinners convivial and political;-
Suppers of epic poets;-teas,
Where small talk dies in agonies;-
Breakfasts professional and critical;

Lunches and snacks so aldermanic
That one would furnish forth ten dinners,
Where reigns a Cretan-tonguèd panic,
Lest news Russ, Dutch, or Alemannic
Should make some losers, and some winners;-

At conversazioni-balls-
Conventicles-and drawing-rooms-
Courts of law-committees-calls
Of a morning-clubs-book-stalls-
Churches-masquerades-and tombs.

And this is Hell-and in this smother
All are damnable and damned;
Each one damning, damns the other
They are damned by one another,
By none other are they damned.

'Tis a lie to say, 'God damns!'
Where was Heaven's Attorney General

When they first gave out such flams?
Let there be an end of shams,
They are mines of poisonous mineral.

Statesmen damn themselves to be
Cursed; and lawyers damn their souls
To the auction of a fee;
Churchmen damn themselves to see
God's sweet love in burning coals.

The rich are damned, beyond all cure,
To taunt, and starve, and trample on
The weak and wretched; and the poor
Damn their broken hearts to endure
Stripe on stripe, with groan on groan.

Sometimes the poor are damned indeed
To take,-not means for being blessed,-
But Cobbett's snuff, revenge; that weed
From which the worms that it doth feed
Squeeze less than they before possessed.

And some few, like we know who,
Damned-but God alone knows why-
To believe their minds are given
To make this ugly Hell a Heaven;
In which faith they live and die.

Thus, as in a town, plague-stricken,
Each man be he sound or no
Must indifferently sicken;
As when day begins to thicken,
None knows a pigeon from a crow,-

So good and bad, sane and mad,
The oppressor and the oppressed;

Those who weep to see what others
Smile to inflict upon their brothers;
Lovers, haters, worst and best;

All are damned-they breathe an air,
Thick, infected, joy-dispelling:
Each pursues what seems most fair,
Mining like moles, through mind, and there
Scoop palace-caverns vast, where Care
In thronèd state is ever dwelling.

PART THE FOURTH

SIN

Lo, Peter in Hell's Grosvenor Square,
A footman in the Devil's service!
And the misjudging world would swear
That every man in service there
To virtue would prefer vice.

But Peter, though now damned, was not
What Peter was before damnation.
Men oftentimes prepare a lot
Which ere it finds them, is not what
Suits with their genuine station.

All things that Peter saw and felt
Had a peculiar aspect to him;
And when they came within the belt
Of his own nature, seemed to melt,
Like cloud to cloud, into him.

And so the outward world uniting
To that within him, he became
Considerably uninviting
To those who, meditation slighting,
Were moulded in a different frame.

And he scorned them, and they scorned him;
And he scorned all they did; and they
Did all that men of their own trim
Are wont to do to please their whim,
Drinking, lying, swearing, play.

Such were his fellow-servants; thus
His virtue, like our own, was built
Too much on that indignant fuss
Hypocrite Pride stirs up in us
To bully one another's guilt.

He had a mind which was somehow
At once circumference and centre
Of all he might or feel or know;
Nothing went ever out, although
Something did ever enter.

He had as much imagination
As a pint-pot;-he never could
Fancy another situation,
From which to dart his contemplation,
Than that wherein he stood.

Yet his was individual mind,
And new created all he saw
In a new manner, and refined
Those new creations, and combined
Them, by a master-spirit's law.

Thus-though unimaginative-
An apprehension clear, intense,
Of his mind's work, had made alive
The things it wrought on; I believe
Wakening a sort of thought in sense.

But from the first 'twas Peter's drift
To be a kind of moral eunuch,
He touched the hem of Nature's shift,
Felt faint-and never dared uplift
The closest, all-concealing tunic.

She laughed the while, with an arch smile,
And kissed him with a sister's kiss,
And said-'My best Diogenes,
I love you well-but, if you please,
Tempt not again my deepest bliss.

"Tis you are cold-for I, not coy,
Yield love for love, frank, warm, and true;
And Burns, a Scottish peasant boy-
His errors prove it-knew my joy
More, learnèd friend, than you.

'Bocca bacciata non perde ventura,
Anzi rinnuova come fa la luna:-
So thought Boccaccio, whose sweet words might cure a
Male prude, like you, from what you now endure, a
Low-tide in soul, like a stagnant laguna.'

Then Peter rubbed his eyes severe,
And smoothed his spacious forehead down
With his broad palm;- 'twixt love and fear,
He looked, as he no doubt felt, queer,
And in his dream sate down.

The Devil was no uncommon creature;
A leaden-witted thief-just huddled
Out of the dross and scum of nature;
A toad-like lump of limb and feature,
With mind, and heart, and fancy muddled.

He was that heavy, dull, cold thing,
The spirit of evil well may be:
A drone too base to have a sting;
Who gluts, and grimes his lazy wing,
And calls lust, luxury.

Now he was quite the kind of wight
Round whom collect, at a fixed aera,
Venison, turtle, hock, and claret,-
Good cheer-and those who come to share it-
And best East Indian madeira!

It was his fancy to invite
Men of science, wit, and learning,
Who came to lend each other light;
He proudly thought that his gold's might
Had set those spirits burning.

And men of learning, science, wit,
Considered him as you and I
Think of some rotten tree, and sit
Lounging and dining under it,
Exposed to the wide sky.

And all the while, with loose fat smile,
The willing wretch sat winking there,
Believing 'twas his power that made
That jovial scene-and that all paid
Homage to his unnoticed chair.

Though to be sure this place was Hell;
He was the Devil-and all they-
What though the claret circled well,
And wit, like ocean, rose and fell?-
Were damned eternally.

PART THE FIFTH

GRACE

Among the guests who often stayed
Till the Devil's petits-soupers,
A man there came, fair as a maid,
And Peter noted what he said,
Standing behind his master's chair.

He was a mighty poet-and
A subtle-souled psychologist;
All things he seemed to understand,
Of old or new-of sea or land-
But his own mind-which was a mist.

This was a man who might have turned
Hell into Heaven-and so in gladness
A Heaven unto himself have earned;
But he in shadows undiscerned
Trusted,-and damned himself to madness.

He spoke of poetry, and how
'Divine it was-a light-a love-
A spirit which like wind doth blow
As it listeth, to and fro;
A dew rained down from God above;

'A power which comes and goes like dream,
And which none can ever trace-
Heaven's light on earth-Truth's brightest beam.'
And when he ceased there lay the gleam
Of those words upon his face.

Now Peter, when he heard such talk,
Would, heedless of a broken pate,
Stand like a man asleep, or balk
Some wishing guest of knife or fork,

Or drop and break his master's plate.

At night he oft would start and wake
Like a lover, and began
In a wild measure songs to make
On moor, and glen, and rocky lake,
And on the heart of man-

And on the universal sky-
And the wide earth's bosom green,-
And the sweet, strange mystery
Of what beyond these things may lie,
And yet remain unseen.

For in his thought he visited
The spots in which, ere dead and damned,
He his wayward life had led;
Yet knew not whence the thoughts were fed
Which thus his fancy crammed.

And these obscure remembrances
Stirred such harmony in Peter,
That, whensoever he should please,
He could speak of rocks and trees
In poetic metre.

For though it was without a sense
Of memory, yet he remembered well
Many a ditch and quick-set fence;
Of lakes he had intelligence,
He knew something of heath and fell.

He had also dim recollections
Of pedlars tramping on their rounds;
Milk-pans and pails; and odd collections
Of saws, and proverbs; and reflections

Old parsons make in burying-grounds.

But Peter's verse was clear, and came
Announcing from the frozen hearth
Of a cold age, that none might tame
The soul of that diviner flame
It augured to the Earth:

Like gentle rains, on the dry plains,
Making that green which late was gray,
Or like the sudden moon, that stains
Some gloomy chamber's window-panes
With a broad light like day.

For language was in Peter's hand
Like clay while he was yet a potter;
And he made songs for all the land,
Sweet both to feel and understand,
As pipkins late to mountain Cotter.

And Mr. --, the bookseller,
Gave twenty pounds for some;-then scorning
A footman's yellow coat to wear,
Peter, too proud of heart, I fear,
Instantly gave the Devil warning.

Whereat the Devil took offence,
And swore in his soul a great oath then,
'That for his damned impertinence
He'd bring him to a proper sense
Of what was due to gentlemen!'

PART THE SIXTH

DAMNATION

'O that mine enemy had written
A book!'-cried Job:-a fearful curse,

If to the Arab, as the Briton,
'Twas galling to be critic-bitten:-
The Devil to Peter wished no worse.

When Peter's next new book found vent,
The Devil to all the first Reviews
A copy of it slyly sent,
With five-pound note as compliment,
And this short notice-'Pray abuse.'

Then seriatim, month and quarter,
Appeared such mad tirades.-One said-
'Peter seduced Mrs. Foy's daughter,
Then drowned the mother in Ullswater,
The last thing as he went to bed.'

Another-'Let him shave his head!
Where's Dr. Willis?-Or is he joking?
What does the rascal mean or hope,
No longer imitating Pope,
In that barbarian Shakespeare poking?'

One more, 'Is incest not enough?
And must there be adultery too?
Grace after meat? Miscreant and Liar!
Thief! Blackguard! Scoundrel! Fool! Hell-fire
Is twenty times too good for you.

'By that last book of yours we think
You've double damned yourself to scorn;
We warned you whilst yet on the brink
You stood. From your black name will shrink
The babe that is unborn.'

All these Reviews the Devil made
Up in a parcel, which he had

Safely to Peter's house conveyed.
For carriage, tenpence Peter paid-
Untied them-read them-went half mad.

'What!' cried he, 'this is my reward
For nights of thought, and days of toil?
Do poets, but to be abhorred
By men of whom they never heard,
Consume their spirits' oil?

'What have I done to them?-and who
Is Mrs. Foy? 'Tis very cruel
To speak of me and Betty so!
Adultery! God defend me! Oh!
I've half a mind to fight a duel.

'Or,' cried he, a grave look collecting,
'Is it my genius, like the moon,
Sets those who stand her face inspecting,
That face within their brain reflecting,
Like a crazed bell-chime, out of tune?'

For Peter did not know the town,
But thought, as country readers do,
For half a guinea or a crown,
He bought oblivion or renown
From God's own voice in a review.

All Peter did on this occasion
Was, writing some sad stuff in prose.
It is a dangerous invasion
When poets criticize; their station
Is to delight, not pose.

The Devil then sent to Leipsic fair
For Born's translation of Kant's book;

A world of words, tail foremost, where
Right-wrong-false-true-and foul-and fair
As in a lottery-wheel are shook.

Five thousand crammed octavo pages
Of German psychologies,-he
Who his furor verborum assuages
Thereon, deserves just seven months' wages
More than will e'er be due to me.

I looked on them nine several days,
And then I saw that they were bad;
A friend, too, spoke in their dispraise,-
He never read them;-with amaze
I found Sir William Drummond had.

When the book came, the Devil sent
It to P. Verbovale, Esquire,
With a brief note of compliment,
By that night's Carlisle mail. It went,
And set his soul on fire.

Fire, which ex luce praebens fumum,
Made him beyond the bottom see
Of truth's clear well-when I and you, Ma'am,
Go, as we shall do, subter humum,
We may know more than he.

Now Peter ran to seed in soul
Into a walking paradox;
For he was neither part nor whole,
Nor good, nor bad-nor knave nor fool;
-Among the woods and rocks

Furious he rode, where late he ran,
Lashing and spurring his tame hobby;

Turned to a formal puritan,
A solemn and unsexual man,-
He half believed White Obi.

This steed in vision he would ride,
High trotting over nine-inch bridges,
With Flibbertigibbet, imp of pride,
Mocking and mowing by his side-
A mad-brained goblin for a guide-
Over corn-fields, gates, and hedges.

After these ghastly rides, he came
Home to his heart, and found from thence
Much stolen of its accustomed flame;
His thoughts grew weak, drowsy, and lame
Of their intelligence.

To Peter's view, all seemed one hue;
He was no Whig, he was no Tory;
No Deist and no Christian he;-
He got so subtle, that to be
Nothing, was all his glory.

One single point in his belief
From his organization sprung,
The heart-enrooted faith, the chief
Ear in his doctrines' blighted sheaf,
That 'Happiness is wrong';

So thought Calvin and Dominic;
So think their fierce successors, who
Even now would neither stint nor stick
Our flesh from off our bones to pick,
If they might 'do their do.'

His morals thus were undermined:-

The old Peter-the hard, old Potter-
Was born anew within his mind;
He grew dull, harsh, sly, unrefined,
As when he tramped beside the Otter.

In the death hues of agony
Lambently flashing from a fish,
Now Peter felt amused to see
Shades like a rainbow's rise and flee,
Mixed with a certain hungry wish.

So in his Country's dying face
He looked-and, lovely as she lay,
Seeking in vain his last embrace,
Wailing her own abandoned case,
With hardened sneer he turned away:

And coolly to his own soul said;-
'Do you not think that we might make
A poem on her when she's dead:-
Or, no-a thought is in my head-
Her shroud for a new sheet I'll take:

'My wife wants one.-Let who will bury
This mangled corpse! And I and you,
My dearest Soul, will then make merry,
As the Prince Regent did with Sherry,-'
'Ay-and at last desert me too.'

And so his Soul would not be gay,
But moaned within him; like a fawn
Moaning within a cave, it lay
Wounded and wasting, day by day,
Till all its life of life was gone.

As troubled skies stain waters clear,

The storm in Peter's heart and mind
Now made his verses dark and queer:
They were the ghosts of what they were,
Shaking dim grave-clothes in the wind.

For he now raved enormous folly,
Of Baptisms, Sunday-schools, and Graves,
'Twould make George Colman melancholy
To have heard him, like a male Molly,
Chanting those stupid staves.

Yet the Reviews, who heaped abuse
On Peter while he wrote for freedom,
So soon as in his song they spy
The folly which soothes tyranny,
Praise him, for those who feed 'em.

'He was a man, too great to scan;-
A planet lost in truth's keen rays:-
His virtue, awful and prodigious;-
He was the most sublime, religious,
Pure-minded Poet of these days.'

As soon as he read that, cried Peter,
'Eureka! I have found the way
To make a better thing of metre
Than e'er was made by living creature
Up to this blessed day.'

Then Peter wrote odes to the Devil;-
In one of which he meekly said:
'May Carnage and Slaughter,
Thy niece and thy daughter,
May Rapine and Famine,
Thy gorge ever cramming,
Glut thee with living and dead!

'May Death and Damnation,
And Consternation,
Flit up from Hell with pure intent!
Slash them at Manchester,
Glasgow, Leeds, and Chester;
Drench all with blood from Avon to Trent.

'Let thy body-guard yeomen
Hew down babes and women,
And laugh with bold triumph till Heaven be rent!
When Moloch in Jewry
Munched children with fury,
It was thou, Devil, dining with pure intent.'

PART THE SEVENTH
DOUBLE DAMNATION

The Devil now knew his proper cue.-
Soon as he read the ode, he drove
To his friend Lord MacMurderhouse's,
A man of interest in both houses,
And said:-'For money or for love,

'Pray find some cure or sinecure;
To feed from the superfluous taxes
A friend of ours-a poet-fewer
Have fluttered tamer to the lure
Than he.' His lordship stands and racks his

Stupid brains, while one might count
As many beads as he had boroughs,-
At length replies; from his mean front,
Like one who rubs out an account,
Smoothing away the unmeaning furrows:

'It happens fortunately, dear Sir,
I can. I hope I need require

No pledge from you, that he will stir
In our affairs;-like Oliver,
That he'll be worthy of his hire.'

These words exchanged, the news sent off
To Peter, home the Devil hied,-
Took to his bed; he had no cough,
No doctor,-meat and drink enough,-
Yet that same night he died.

The Devil's corpse was leaded down;
His decent heirs enjoyed his pelf,
Mourning-coaches, many a one,
Followed his hearse along the town:-
Where was the Devil himself?

When Peter heard of his promotion,
His eyes grew like two stars for bliss:
There was a bow of sleek devotion
Engendering in his back; each motion
Seemed a Lord's shoe to kiss.

He hired a house, bought plate, and made
A genteel drive up to his door,
With sifted gravel neatly laid,-
As if defying all who said,
Peter was ever poor.

But a disease soon struck into
The very life and soul of Peter-
He walked about-slept-had the hue
Of health upon his cheeks-and few
Dug better-none a heartier eater.

And yet a strange and horrid curse
Clung upon Peter, night and day;

Month after month the thing grew worse,
And deadlier than in this my verse
I can find strength to say.

Peter was dull-he was at first
Dull-oh, so dull-so very dull!
Whether he talked, wrote, or rehearsed-
Still with this dulness was he cursed-
Dull-beyond all conception-dull.

No one could read his books-no mortal,
But a few natural friends, would hear him;
The parson came not near his portal;
His state was like that of the immortal
Described by Swift-no man could bear him.

His sister, wife, and children yawned,
With a long, slow, and drear ennui,
All human patience far beyond;
Their hopes of Heaven each would have pawned,
Anywhere else to be.

But in his verse, and in his prose,
The essence of his dulness was
Concentred and compressed so close,
'Twould have made Guatimozin doze
On his red gridiron of brass.

A printer's boy, folding those pages,
Fell slumbrously upon one side;
Like those famed Seven who slept three ages.
To wakeful frenzy's vigil-rages,
As opiates, were the same applied.

Even the Reviewers who were hired
To do the work of his reviewing,

With adamantine nerves, grew tired;-
Gaping and torpid they retired,
To dream of what they should be doing.

And worse and worse, the drowsy curse
Yawned in him, till it grew a pest-
A wide contagious atmosphere,
Creeping like cold through all things near;
A power to infect and to infest.

His servant-maids and dogs grew dull;
His kitten, late a sportive elf;
The woods and lakes, so beautiful,
Of dim stupidity were full,
All grew dull as Peter's self.

The earth under his feet-the springs,
Which lived within it a quick life,
The air, the winds of many wings,
That fan it with new murmurings,
Were dead to their harmonious strife.

The birds and beasts within the wood,
The insects, and each creeping thing,
Were now a silent multitude;
Love's work was left unwrought-no brood
Near Peter's house took wing.

And every neighbouring cottager
Stupidly yawned upon the other:
No jackass brayed; no little cur
Cocked up his ears;-no man would stir
To save a dying mother.

Yet all from that charmed district went
But some half-idiot and half-knave,

Who rather than pay any rent,
Would live with marvellous content,
Over his father's grave.

No bailiff dared within that space,
For fear of the dull charm, to enter;
A man would bear upon his face,
For fifteen months in any case,
The yawn of such a venture.

Seven miles above-below-around-
This pest of dulness holds its sway;
A ghastly life without a sound;
To Peter's soul the spell is bound-
How should it ever pass away?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Poetical Essay

Extract from Poetical Essay

Millions to fight compell'd, to fight or die
In mangled heaps on War's red altar lie . . .
When the legal murders swell the lists of pride;
When glory's views the titled idiot guide

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Prince Athanase

A Fragment

PART I

There was a youth, who, as with toil and travel,
Had grown quite weak and gray before his time;
Nor any could the restless griefs unravel

Which burned within him, withering up his prime
And goading him, like fiends, from land to land.
Not his the load of any secret crime,

For nought of ill his heart could understand,
But pity and wild sorrow for the same;-
Not his the thirst for glory or command,

Baffled with blast of hope-consuming shame;
Nor evil joys which fire the vulgar breast,
And quench in speedy smoke its feeble flame,

Had left within his soul their dark unrest:
Nor what religion fables of the grave
Feared he,-Philosophy's accepted guest.

For none than he a purer heart could have,
Or that loved good more for itself alone;
Of nought in heaven or earth was he the slave.

What sorrow, strange, and shadowy, and unknown,
Sent him, a hopeless wanderer, through mankind?-
If with a human sadness he did groan,

He had a gentle yet aspiring mind;
Just, innocent, with varied learning fed;
And such a glorious consolation find

In others' joy, when all their own is dead:
He loved, and laboured for his kind in grief,
And yet, unlike all others, it is said

That from such toil he never found relief.
Although a child of fortune and of power,
Of an ancestral name the orphan chief,

His soul had wedded Wisdom, and her dower
Is love and justice, clothed in which he sate
Apart from men, as in a lonely tower,

Pitying the tumult of their dark estate.-
Yet even in youth did he not e'er abuse
The strength of wealth or thought, to consecrate

Those false opinions which the harsh rich use
To blind the world they famish for their pride;
Nor did he hold from any man his dues,

But, like a steward in honest dealings tried,
With those who toiled and wept, the poor and wise,
His riches and his cares he did divide.

Fearless he was, and scorning all disguise,
What he dared do or think, though men might start,
He spoke with mild yet unaverted eyes;

Liberal he was of soul, and frank of heart,
And to his many friends-all loved him well-
Whate'er he knew or felt he would impart,

If words he found those inmost thoughts to tell;
If not, he smiled or wept; and his weak foes
He neither spurned nor hated-though with fell

And mortal hate their thousand voices rose,
They passed like aimless arrows from his ear-
Nor did his heart or mind its portal close

To those, or them, or any, whom life's sphere
May comprehend within its wide array.
What sadness made that vernal spirit sere?-

He knew not. Though his life, day after day,
Was failing like an unreplenished stream,

Though in his eyes a cloud and burthen lay,

Through which his soul, like Vesper's serene beam
Piercing the chasms of ever rising clouds,
Shone, softly burning; though his lips did seem

Like reeds which quiver in impetuous floods;
And through his sleep, and o'er each waking hour,
Thoughts after thoughts, unresting multitudes,

Were driven within him by some secret power,
Which bade them blaze, and live, and roll afar,
Like lights and sounds, from haunted tower to tower

O'er castled mountains borne, when tempest's war
Is levied by the night-contending winds,
And the pale dalesmen watch with eager ear;-

Though such were in his spirit, as the fiends
Which wake and feed an everliving woe,-
What was this grief, which ne'er in other minds

A mirror found,-he knew not-none could know;
But on whoe'er might question him he turned
The light of his frank eyes, as if to show

He knew not of the grief within that burned,
But asked forbearance with a mournful look;
Or spoke in words from which none ever learned

The cause of his disquietude; or shook
With spasms of silent passion; or turned pale:
So that his friends soon rarely undertook

To stir his secret pain without avail;-
For all who knew and loved him then perceived
That there was drawn an adamantine veil

Between his heart and mind,-both unrelieved
Wrought in his brain and bosom separate strife.
Some said that he was mad, others believed

That memories of an antenatal life
Made this, where now he dwelt, a penal hell;
And others said that such mysterious grief

From God's displeasure, like a darkness, fell
On souls like his, which owned no higher law
Than love; love calm, steadfast, invincible

By mortal fear or supernatural awe;
And others, -'Tis the shadow of a dream
Which the veiled eye of Memory never saw,

'But through the soul's abyss, like some dark stream
Through shattered mines and caverns underground,
Rolls, shaking its foundations; and no beam

'Of joy may rise, but it is quenched and drowned
In the dim whirlpools of this dream obscure;
Soon its exhausted waters will have found

'A lair of rest beneath thy spirit pure,
O Athanase!-in one so good and great,
Evil or tumult cannot long endure.'

So spake they: idly of another's state
Babbling vain words and fond philosophy;
This was their consolation; such debate

Men held with one another; nor did he,
Like one who labours with a human woe,
Decline this talk: as if its theme might be

Another, not himself, he to and fro
Questioned and canvassed it with subtlest wit;
And none but those who loved him best could know

That which he knew not, how it galled and bit
His weary mind, this converse vain and cold;
For like an eyeless nightmare grief did sit

Upon his being; a snake which fold by fold
Pressed out the life of life, a clinging fiend

Which clenched him if he stirred with deadlier hold;-
And so his grief remained-let it remain-untold.

PART II

FRAGMENT I

Prince Athanase had one beloved friend,
An old, old man, with hair of silver white,
And lips where heavenly smiles would hang and blend

With his wise words; and eyes whose arrowy light
Shone like the reflex of a thousand minds.
He was the last whom superstition's blight

Had spared in Greece-the blight that cramps and blinds,-
And in his olive bower at OEnoe
Had sate from earliest youth. Like one who finds

A fertile island in the barren sea,
One mariner who has survived his mates
Many a drear month in a great ship-so he

With soul-sustaining songs, and sweet debates
Of ancient lore, there fed his lonely being:-
'The mind becomes that which it contemplates,'-

And thus Zonoras, by forever seeing
Their bright creations, grew like wisest men;
And when he heard the crash of nations fleeing

A bloodier power than ruled thy ruins then,
O sacred Hellas! many weary years
He wandered, till the path of Laian's glen

Was grass-grown-and the unremembered tears
Were dry in Laian for their honoured chief,
Who fell in Byzant, pierced by Moslem spears:-

And as the lady looked with faithful grief
From her high lattice o'er the rugged path,
Where she once saw that horseman toil, with brief

And blighting hope, who with the news of death
Struck body and soul as with a mortal blight,
She saw between the chestnuts, far beneath,

An old man toiling up, a weary wight;
And soon within her hospitable hall
She saw his white hairs glittering in the light

Of the wood fire, and round his shoulders fall;
And his wan visage and his withered mien,
Yet calm and gentle and majestic.

And Athanase, her child, who must have been
Then three years old, sate opposite and gazed
In patient silence.

FRAGMENT II

Such was Zonoras; and as daylight finds
One amaranth glittering on the path of frost,
When autumn nights have nipped all weaker kinds,

Thus through his age, dark, cold, and tempest-tossed,
Shone truth upon Zonoras; and he filled
From fountains pure, nigh overgrown and lost,

The spirit of Prince Athanase, a child,
With soul-sustaining songs of ancient lore
And philosophic wisdom, clear and mild.

And sweet and subtle talk they evermore,
The pupil and the master, shared; until,
Sharing that undiminishable store,

The youth, as shadows on a grassy hill
Outran the winds that chase them, soon outran
His teacher, and did teach with native skill

Strange truths and new to that experienced man;
Still they were friends, as few have ever been
Who mark the extremes of life's discordant span.

So in the caverns of the forest green,
Or on the rocks of echoing ocean hoar,
Zonoras and Prince Athanase were seen

By summer woodmen; and when winter's roar
Sounded o'er earth and sea its blast of war,
The Balearic fisher, driven from shore,

Hanging upon the peaked wave afar,
Then saw their lamp from Laian's turret gleam,
Piercing the stormy darkness, like a star

Which pours beyond the sea one steadfast beam,
Whilst all the constellations of the sky
Seemed reeling through the storm . . . They did but seem-

For, lo! the wintry clouds are all gone by,
And bright Arcturus through yon pines is glowing,
And far o'er southern waves, immovably

Belted Orion hangs-warm light is flowing
From the young moon into the sunset's chasm.-
'O, summer eve! with power divine, bestowing

'On thine own bird the sweet enthusiasm
Which overflows in notes of liquid gladness,
Filling the sky like light! How many a spasm

'Of fevered brains, oppressed with grief and madness,
Were lulled by thee, delightful nightingale,-
And these soft waves, murmuring a gentle sadness,-

'And the far sighings of yon piny dale
Made vocal by some wind we feel not here.-
I bear alone what nothing may avail

'To lighten-a strange load!'-No human ear
Heard this lament; but o'er the visage wan
Of Athanase, a ruffling atmosphere

Of dark emotion, a swift shadow, ran,

Like wind upon some forest-bosomed lake,
Glassy and dark.-And that divine old man

Beheld his mystic friend's whole being shake,
Even where its inmost depths were gloomiest-
And with a calm and measured voice he spake,

And, with a soft and equal pressure, pressed
That cold lean hand:-'Dost thou remember yet
When the curved moon then lingering in the west

'Paused, in yon waves her mighty horns to wet,
How in those beams we walked, half resting on the sea?
'Tis just one year-sure thou dost not forget-

'Then Plato's words of light in thee and me
Lingered like moonlight in the moonless east,
For we had just then read-thy memory

'Is faithful now-the story of the feast;
And Agathon and Diotima seemed
From death and dark forgetfulness released '

. . .

FRAGMENT III

And when the old man saw that on the green
Leaves of his opening . . . a blight had lighted
He said: 'My friend, one grief alone can wean

A gentle mind from all that once delighted:-
Thou lovest, and thy secret heart is laden
With feelings which should not be unrequited.'

And Athanase . . . then smiled, as one o'erladen
With iron chains might smile to talk(?) of bands
Twined round her lover's neck by some blithe maiden,
And said . . .

FRAGMENT IV

'Twas at the season when the Earth upsprings

From slumber, as a spherèd angel's child,
Shadowing its eyes with green and golden wings,

Stands up before its mother bright and mild,
Of whose soft voice the air expectant seems-
So stood before the sun, which shone and smiled

To see it rise thus joyous from its dreams,
The fresh and radiant Earth. The hoary grove
Waxed green-and flowers burst forth like starry beams;-

The grass in the warm sun did start and move,
And sea-buds burst under the waves serene:-
How many a one, though none be near to love,

Loves then the shade of his own soul, half seen
In any mirror-or the spring's young minions,
The wingèd leaves amid the copses green;-

How many a spirit then puts on the pinions
Of fancy, and outstrips the lagging blast,
And his own steps-and over wide dominions

Sweeps in his dream-drawn chariot, far and fast,
More fleet than storms-the wide world shrinks below,
When winter and despondency are past.

FRAGMENT V

'Twas at this season that Prince Athanase
Passed the white Alps-those eagle-baffling mountains
Slept in their shrouds of snow;-beside the ways

The waterfalls were voiceless-for their fountains
Were changed to mines of sunless crystal now,
Or by the curdling winds-like brazen wings

Which clanged along the mountain's marble brow-
Warped into adamantine fretwork, hung
And filled with frozen light the chasms below.

Vexed by the blast, the great pines groaned and swung

Under their load of [snow]-. . .

. . .
. . .

Such as the eagle sees, when he dives down
From the gray deserts of wide air, [beheld]
[Prince] Athanase; and o'er his mien(?) was thrown

The shadow of that scene, field after field,
Purple and dim and wide . . .

FRAGMENT VI

Thou art the wine whose drunkenness is all
We can desire, O Love! and happy souls,
Ere from thy vine the leaves of autumn fall,

Catch thee, and feed from their o'erflowing bowls
Thousands who thirst for thine ambrosial dew;-
Thou art the radiance which where ocean rolls

Investeth it; and when the heavens are blue
Thou fillest them; and when the earth is fair
The shadow of thy moving wings imbue

Its deserts and its mountains, till they wear
Beauty like some light robe;-thou ever soarest
Among the towers of men, and as soft air

In spring, which moves the unawakened forest,
Clothing with leaves its branches bare and bleak,
Thou floatest among men; and aye implorest

That which from thee they should implore:-the weak
Alone kneel to thee, offering up the hearts
The strong have broken-yet where shall any seek

A garment whom thou clothest not? the darts
Of the keen winter storm, barbèd with frost,
Which, from the everlasting snow that parts

The Alps from Heaven, pierce some traveller lost

In the wide waved interminable snow
Ungarmented, . . .

ANOTHER FRAGMENT (A)

Yes, often when the eyes are cold and dry,
And the lips calm, the Spirit weeps within
Tears bitterer than the blood of agony

Trembling in drops on the discoloured skin
Of those who love their kind and therefore perish
In ghastly torture-a sweet medicine

Of peace and sleep are tears, and quietly
Them soothe from whose uplifted eyes they fall
But . . .

ANOTHER FRAGMENT

Her hair was brown, her spherèd eyes were brown,
And in their dark and liquid moisture swam,
Like the dim orb of the eclipsèd moon;

Yet when the spirit flashed beneath, there came
The light from them, as when tears of delight
Double the western planet's serene flame.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Prometheus Unbound: Act I (Excerpt)

SCENE.--A Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus. Prometheus is discovered bound to the Precipice. Panthea and Ione are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the Scene, morning slowly breaks.

Prometheus.

Monarch of Gods and Demons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,--these are mine empire:--
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing crystals, the bright chains
Eat with their burning cold into my bones.

Heaven's wing`d hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throug
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
--As some dark Priest hailes the reluctant victim--
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended through wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,
Whose many-voic`d Echoes, through the mist
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept
Shuddering through India! Thou serenest Air,
Through which the Sun walks burning without beams!
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on pois`d wings
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock
The orb`d world! If then my words had power,
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish
Is dead within; although no memory be
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak....

Queen Mab: Part I.

HOW wonderful is Death,
Death, and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world;
Yet both so passing wonderful!

Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture, from her smile?

Yes! she will wake again,
Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
And silent those sweet lips,
Once breathing eloquence
That might have soothed a tiger's rage
Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
Her dewy eyes are closed,

And on their lids, whose texture fine
Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
The baby Sleep is pillowed;
Her golden tresses shade
The bosom's stainless pride,
Curling like tendrils of the parasite
Around a marble column.

Hark! whence that rushing sound?
'T is like the wondrous strain
That round a lonely ruin swells,
Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
The enthusiast hears at evening;
'T is softer than the west wind's sigh;
'T is wilder than the unmeasured notes
Of that strange lyre whose strings
The genii of the breezes sweep;
Those lines of rainbow light
Are like the moonbeams when they fall
Through some cathedral window, but the tints
Are such as may not find
Comparison on earth.

Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
And stop obedient to the reins of light;
These the Queen of Spells drew in;
She spread a charm around the spot,
And, leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
Long did she gaze, and silently,
Upon the slumbering maid.

Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
When every sight of lovely, wild and grand
Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
When fancy at a glance combines
The wondrous and the beautiful,--
So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
Hath ever yet beheld,
As that which reined the coursers of the air

And poured the magic of her gaze
Upon the maiden's sleep.

The broad and yellow moon
Shone dimly through her form--
That form of faultless symmetry;
The pearly and pellucid car
Moved not the moonlight's line.
'T was not an earthly pageant.
Those, who had looked upon the sight
Passing all human glory,
Saw not the yellow moon,
Saw not the mortal scene,
Heard not the night-wind's rush,
Heard not an earthly sound,
Saw but the fairy pageant,
Heard but the heavenly strains
That filled the lonely dwelling.

The Fairy's frame was slight--yon fibrous cloud,
That catches but the palest tinge of even,
And which the straining eye can hardly seize
When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star
That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
Yet with an undulating motion,
Swayed to her outline gracefully.

From her celestial car
The Fairy Queen descended,
And thrice she waved her wand
Circled with wreaths of amaranth;
Her thin and misty form
Moved with the moving air,
And the clear silver tones,
As thus she spoke, were such
As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY

'Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
Elements! your wrath suspend!
Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
That circle thy domain!
Let not a breath be seen to stir
Around yon grass-grown ruin's height!
Let even the restless gossamer
Sleep on the moveless air!
Soul of Ianthe! thou,
Judged alone worthy of the envied boon
That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
The icy chains of custom, and have shone
The day-stars of their age;--Soul of
Ianthe!
Awake! arise!'

Sudden arose
Ianthe's Soul; it stood
All beautiful in naked purity,
The perfect semblance of its bodily frame;
Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace--
Each stain of earthliness
Had passed away--it reassumed
Its native dignity and stood
Immortal amid ruin.

Upon the couch the body lay,
Wrapt in the depth of slumber;
Its features were fixed and meaningless,
Yet animal life was there,
And every organ yet performed
Its natural functions; 'twas a sight
Of wonder to behold the body and the soul.
The self-same lineaments, the same
Marks of identity were there;
Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
And, ever changing, ever rising still,
Wantons in endless being:
The other, for a time the unwilling sport

Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;
Then like an useless and worn-out machine,
Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY

'Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
Spirit! who hast soared so high;
Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,
Ascend the car with me!'

SPIRIT

'Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.'

FAIRY

'I am the Fairy MAB: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep;
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find;
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather; not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man,
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me;
And it is yet permitted me to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!'

The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.
She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round;
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.
The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds departed;
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
Shaking the beamy reins,
Bade them pursue their way.

The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault;
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peeped the first faint smile of morn.
The magic car moved on-
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.

Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,
The chariot's fiery track,

And the gray light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.

Seemed it that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite color,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.

The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal,
The coursers seemed to gather speed;
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.

The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were horned like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;
Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.

Spirit of Nature! here-
In this interminable wilderness

Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple!
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee;
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
Less shares thy eternal breath!
Spirit of Nature! thou,
Imperishable as this scene--
Here is thy fitting temple!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part II.

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
And thou hast lingered there,
Until the sun's broad orb
Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
Thou must have marked the lines
Of purple gold that motionless
Hung o'er the sinking sphere;
Thou must have marked the billowy clouds,
Edged with intolerable radiancy,
Towering like rocks of jet
Crowned with a diamond wreath;
And yet there is a moment,
When the sun's highest point
Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
When those far clouds of feathery gold,
Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
Like islands on a dark blue sea;
Then has thy fancy soared above the earth
And furled its wearied wing
Within the Fairy's fane.

Yet not the golden islands
Gleaming in yon flood of light,
Nor the feathery curtains
Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
Nor the burnished ocean-waves
Paving that gorgeous dome,
So fair, so wonderful a sight
As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that faëry Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around

Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.

The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Entered the Hall of Spells.
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not;
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will;
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.

'Spirit!' the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
'This is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur;
But, were it virtue's only meed to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.
Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
This is thine high reward:-the past shall rise;
Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
The secrets of the future.'

The Fairy and the Spirit
Approached the overhanging battlement.
Below lay stretched the universe!
There, far as the remotest line
That bounds imagination's flight,
Countless and unending orbs
In mazy motion intermingled,
Yet still fulfilled immutably
Eternal Nature's law.
Above, below, around,

The circling systems formed
A wilderness of harmony;
Each with undeviating aim,
In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
Pursued its wondrous way.

There was a little light
That twinkled in the misty distance.
None but a spirit's eye
Might ken that rolling orb.
None but a spirit's eye,
And in no other place
But that celestial dwelling, might behold
Each action of this earth's inhabitants.
But matter, space, and time,
In those ærial mansions cease to act;
And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
The harvest of its excellence, o'erbounds
Those obstacles of which an earthly soul
Fears to attempt the conquest.

The Fairy pointed to the earth.
The Spirit's intellectual eye
Its kindred beings recognized.
The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.
How wonderful! that even
The passions, prejudices, interests,
That sway the meanest being-the weak touch
That moves the finest nerve
And in one human brain
Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
In the great chain of Nature!

'Behold,' the Fairy cried,
'Palmyra's ruined palaces!
Behold where grandeur frowned!
Behold where pleasure smiled!
What now remains?-the memory
Of senselessness and shame.
What is immortal there?
Nothing-it stands to tell

A melancholy tale, to give
An awful warning; soon
Oblivion will steal silently
The remnant of its fame.
Monarchs and conquerors there
Proud o'er prostrate millions trod-
The earthquakes of the human race;
Like them, forgotten when the ruin
That marks their shock is past.

'Beside the eternal Nile
The Pyramids have risen.
Nile shall pursue his changeless way;
Those Pyramids shall fall.
Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
The spot whereon they stood;
Their very site shall be forgotten,
As is their builder's name!

'Behold yon sterile spot,
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert blast!
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.
Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone and poisoning
The choicest days of life
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child-old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends!
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of Nature and benevolence had given

A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.

'Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now.
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes
Now crumbling to oblivion,-
The long and lonely colonnades
Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks,-
Seem like a well-known tune,
Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
Remembered now in sadness.
But, oh! how much more changed,
How gloomier is the contrast
Of human nature there!
Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
A coward and a fool, spreads death around-
Then, shuddering, meets his own.
Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
A cowed and hypocritical monk
Prays, curses and deceives.

'Spirit! ten thousand years
Have scarcely passed away,
Since in the waste, where now the savage drinks
His enemy's blood, and, aping Europe's sons,
Wakes the unholy song of war,
Arose a stately city,
Metropolis of the western continent.
There, now, the mossy column-stone,
Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
Which once appeared to brave
All, save its country's ruin,-
There the wide forest scene,
Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
Of gardens long run wild,-
Seems, to the unwilling sojourner whose steps

Chance in that desert has delayed,
Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
Strangers, and ships, and merchandise;
Once peace and freedom blest
The cultivated plain;
But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity;
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.

'There 's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins;
And from the burning plains
Where Libyan monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.

'How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel and live like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws

Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb
That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.'

The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view;
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part Iii.

'Fairy!' the Spirit said,
And on the Queen of Spells
Fixed her ethereal eyes,
'I thank thee. Thou hast given
A boon which I will not resign, and taught
A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
The past, and thence I will essay to glean
A warning for the future, so that man
May profit by his errors and derive
Experience from his folly;
For, when the power of imparting joy
Is equal to the will, the human soul
Requires no other heaven.'

MAB

'Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
Much yet remains unscanned.
Thou knowest how great is man,
Thou knowest his imbecility;
Yet learn thou what he is;
Yet learn the lofty destiny
Which restless Time prepares
For every living soul.

'Behold a gorgeous palace that amid
Yon populous city rears its thousand towers
And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
Of sentinels in stern and silent ranks
Encompass it around; the dweller there
Cannot be free and happy; hearest thou not
The curses of the fatherless, the groans
Of those who have no friend? He passes on-
The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
Even to the basest appetites-that man
Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
At the deep curses which the destitute
Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy

Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
But for those morsels which his wantonness
Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
All that they love from famine; when he hears
The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
Of hypocritical assent he turns,
Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
Flushes his bloated cheek.

Now to the meal
Of silence, grandeur and excess he drags
His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
From every clime could force the loathing sense
To overcome satiety,-if wealth
The spring it draws from poisons not,-or vice,
Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
His unforced task, when he returns at even
And by the blazing fagot meets again
Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
Tastes not a sweeter meal.

Behold him now
Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain
Reels dizzily awhile; but ah! too soon
The slumber of intemperance subsides,
And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye-
Oh! mark that deadly visage!

KING

'No cessation!
Oh! must this last forever! Awful death,
I wish, yet fear to clasp thee!-Not one moment
Of dreamless sleep! O dear and bless'd Peace,
Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
In penury and dungeons? Wherefore lurkest
With danger, death, and solitude; yet shun'st
The palace I have built thee? Sacred Peace!

Oh, visit me but once,-but pitying shed
One drop of balm upon my withered soul!

THE FAIRY

'Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
His slumbers are but varied agonies;
They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
To punish those who err; earth in itself
Contains at once the evil and the cure;
And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
Those who transgress her law; she only knows
How justly to proportion to the fault
The punishment it merits.

Is it strange
That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ? No-'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts, and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not Nature nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being, not one wretch,
Whose children famish and whose nuptial bed
Is earth's unpitying bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!

Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,

Fatten on its corruption! what are they?-
The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labor; the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labor a protracted death
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.

Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones who heap
Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces and bring
Their daily bread?-From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder.-And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war and misery; that virtue
Is peace and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood;-kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle, its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.

Where is the fame
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!

That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed; and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.

The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads
Invincibly a life of resolute good
And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
More free and fearless than the trembling judge
Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
To bind the impassive spirit;-when he falls,
His mild eye beams benevolence no more;
Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
Sunk reason's simple eloquence that rolled
But to appall the guilty. Yes! the grave
Hath quenched that eye and death's relentless frost
Withered that arm; but the unfading fame
Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb,
The deathless memory of that man whom kings
Call to their minds and tremble, the remembrance
With which the happy spirit contemplates
Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
Shall never pass away.

'Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
The subject, not the citizen; for kings
And subjects, mutual foes, forever play
A losing game into each other's hands,
Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
Power, like a desolating pestilence,
Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
A mechanized automaton.

When Nero
High over flaming Rome with savage joy
Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld

The frightful desolation spread, and felt
A new-created sense within his soul
Thrill to the sight and vibrate to the sound,-
Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome
The force of human kindness? And when Rome
With one stern blow hurled not the tyrant down,
Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
Nature's suggestions?

Look on yonder earth:
The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
Arise in due succession; all things speak
Peace, harmony and love. The universe,
In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
That all fulfil the works of love and joy,-
All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
The tyrant whose delight is in his woe,
Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
Than on the dome of kings? Is mother earth
A step-dame to her numerous sons who earn
Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
A mother only to those puling babes
Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
The playthings of their babyhood and mar
In self-important childishness that peace
Which men alone appreciate?

'Spirit of Nature, no!
The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
Alike in every human heart.
Thou aye erectest there
Thy throne of power unappealable;
Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
Man's brief and frail authority
Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by;

Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice
As God surpasses man!

'Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through Heaven's deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam;-
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfillleth;
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely, come;
And the unbounded frame which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part Iv.

'How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
Were discord to the speaking quietude
That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
Studded with stars unutterably bright,
Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
Seems like a canopy which love had spread
To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills.
Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend
So stainless that their white and glittering spires
Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep
Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
So idly that rapt fancy deemeth it
A metaphor of peace;-all form a scene
Where musing solitude might love to lift
Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
Where silence undisturbed might watch alone-
So cold, so bright, so still.

The orb of day
In southern climes o'er ocean's waveless field
Sinks sweetly smiling; not the faintest breath
Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
And Vesper's image on the western main
Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar
Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
The torn deep yawns,-the vessel finds a grave
Beneath its jagged gulf.

Ah! whence yon glare
That fires the arch of heaven? that dark red smoke
Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched

In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round.
Hark to that roar whose swift and deafening peals
In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
Startling pale Midnight on her starry throne!
Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
Inebriate with rage:-loud and more loud
The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene
And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
His cold and bloody shroud.-Of all the men
Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there
In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
How few survive, how few are beating now!
All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
Wrapt round its struggling powers.

The gray morn
Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
Before the icy wind slow rolls away,
And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors; far behind
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen-
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.

I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit!-wert thou human else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features; yet fear not;

This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings and priests and statesmen war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.

Hath Nature's soul,-
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,
That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
With spirit, thought and love,-on Man alone,
Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
But serving on the frightful gulf to glare
Rent wide beneath his footsteps?

Nature!-no!
Kings, priests and statesmen blast the human flower
Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
Of desolate society. The child,
Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge

Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
Bright reason's ray and sanctifies the sword
Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
Inherits vice and misery, when force
And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.

'Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
From its new tenement and looks abroad
For happiness and sympathy, how stern
And desolate a tract is this wide world!
How withered all the buds of natural good!
No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame
Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
By morals, law and custom, the pure winds
Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
May breathe not. The untainting light of day
May visit not its longings. It is bound
Ere it has life; yea, all the chains are forged
Long ere its being; all liberty and love
And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
To abjectness and bondage!

'Throughout this varied and eternal world
Soul is the only element, the block
That for uncounted ages has remained.
The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
Is active living spirit. Every grain
Is sentient both in unity and part,
And the minutest atom comprehends
A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
Evil and good; hence truth and falsehood spring;
Hence will and thought and action, all the germs
Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
That variegate the eternal universe.
Soul is not more polluted than the beams

Of heaven's pure orb ere round their rapid lines
The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.

'Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
Of high resolve; on fancy's boldest wing
To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield;
Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
Of natural love in sensualism, to know
That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.

'War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And to those royal murderers whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends and from a nation's rage
Secures the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne-the bullies of his fear;
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile; their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villainous with rage
Which hopelessness of good and self-contempt
Alone might kindle; they are decked in wealth,
Honor and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold
And promises of fame the thoughtless youth

Already crushed with servitude; he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood!
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,
Stand ready to oppress the weaker still,
And right or wrong will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled where
Honor sits smiling at the sale of truth.

'Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion or a love,
Who through a life of luxury and lies
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honors flow.
They have three words-well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan with usury
Torn from a bleeding world!-God, Hell and Heaven:
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood;
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes;
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.

'These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness; the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.
They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms; yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.

He has invented lying words and modes,
Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
To lure the heedless victim to the toils
Spread round the valley of its paradise.

'Look to thyself, priest, conqueror or prince!
Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
With whom thy master was; or thou delight'st
In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
All misery weighing nothing in the scale
Against thy short-lived fame; or thou dost load
With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
Crawled on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
'When will the morning come?' Is not thy youth
A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
Are not thy views of unregretted death
Drear, comfortless and horrible? Thy mind,
Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
Incapable of judgment, hope or love?
And dost thou wish the errors to survive,
That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
After the miserable interest
Thou hold'st in their protraction? When the grave
Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
To twine its roots around thy coffined clay,
Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part IX.

'O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!
To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
Throng through the human universe, aspire!
Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
Thou glorious prize of blindly working will,
Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
Verge to one point and blend forever there!
Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place
Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
Languor, disease and ignorance dare not come!
O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!

'Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams;
And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss,
Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
Thou art the end of all desire and will,
The product of all action; and the souls,
That by the paths of an aspiring change
Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
There rest from the eternity of toil
That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.

'Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
That hoary giant, who in lonely pride
So long had ruled the world that nations fell
Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
That for millenniums had withstood the tide
Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand
Across that desert where their stones survived
The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
That his light-wing'd footstep pressed to dust;
Time was the king of earth; all things gave way
Before him but the fixed and virtuous will,
The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.

'Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
Till from its native heaven they rolled away:
First, crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong,
Whilst falsehood, tricked in virtue's attributes,
Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
Till, done by her own venomous sting to death,
She left the moral world without a law,
No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,
Nor searing reason with the brand of God.
Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
Reason was free; and wild though passion went
Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
Yet, like the bee returning to her queen,
She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child,
No longer trembling at the broken rod.

'Mild was the slow necessity of death.
The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
Without a groan, almost without a fear,
Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
The deadly germs of languor and disease
Died in the human frame, and purity
Blessed with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
Where neither avarice, cunning, pride or care
Had stamped the seal of gray deformity
On all the mingling lineaments of time.
How lovely the intrepid front of youth,
Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace;
Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
And elevated will, that journeyed on
Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
With virtue, love and pleasure, hand in hand!

'Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,

And rivets with sensation's softest tie
The kindred sympathies of human souls,
Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.
Those delicate and timid impulses
In Nature's primal modesty arose,
And with undoubting confidence disclosed
The growing longings of its dawning love,
Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
Poisoned the springs of happiness and life;
Woman and man, in confidence and love,
Equal and free and pure together trod
The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.

'Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear,
A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
Year after year their stones upon the field,
Wakening a lonely echo; and the leaves
Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower,
And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.

'Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung.
It were a sight of awfulness to see
The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal,
Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall!
A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
To-day, the breathing marble glows above
To decorate its memory, and tongues
Are busy of its life; to-morrow, worms
In silence and in darkness seize their prey.

'Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
Fearless and free the ruddy children played,

Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
With the green ivy and the red wall-flower
That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
The ponderous chains and gratings of strong iron
There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
That mingled slowly with their native earth;
There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
On the pure smiles of infant playfulness;
No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
And merriment were resonant around.

'These ruins soon left not a wreck behind;
Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,
To happier shapes were moulded, and became
Ministrant to all blissful impulses;
Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.

'Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charm'd sight. My task is done;
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are passed; the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.

'Yet, human Spirit! bravely hold thy course;
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change;
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal;

For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on.
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth
To feed with kindest dews its favorite flower,
That blooms in mossy bank and darksome glens,
Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.

'Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
'T is but the voyage of a darksome hour,
The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
Death is no foe to virtue; earth has seen
Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,
When, to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
Is destined an eternal war to wage
With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
The germs of misery from the human heart.
Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,

Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease;
Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
When fenced by power and master of the world.
Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,
And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received; virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy,
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile!

The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked;
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew;
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.

Earth floated then below;
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended;
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.

The Body and the Soul united then.
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame;
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;

Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained.
She looked around in wonder, and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,
And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part V.

'Thus do the generations of the earth
Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
Surviving still the imperishable change
That renovates the world; even as the leaves
Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
Has scattered on the forest-soil and heaped
For many seasons there-though long they choke,
Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
All germs of promise, yet when the tall trees
From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
They fertilize the land they long deformed;
Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
Of youth, integrity and loveliness,
Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
With passion's unsubduable array.
Twin-sister of Religion, Selfishness!
Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
The wanton horrors of her bloody play;
Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
Compelled by its deformity to screen
With flimsy veil of justice and of right
Its unattractive lineaments that scare
All save the brood of ignorance; at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual and vile;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness;
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.

'Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange

Of all that human art or Nature yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
Forever stifled, drained and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But poverty and wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which, poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.

'Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold;
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

'Since tyrants by the sale of human life
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery;-
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!

'The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys,-
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.

And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe;
Can turn the worship of the servile mob
To their corrupt and glaring idol, fame,
From virtue, trampled by its iron tread,-
Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
With desolated dwellings smoking round.
The man of ease, who, by his warm fireside,
To deeds of charitable intercourse
And bare fulfilment of the common laws
Of decency and prejudice confines
The struggling nature of his human heart,
Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
The frightful waves are driven,-when his son
Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man
Whose life is misery, and fear and care;
Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream;
Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze

Forever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
Of thousands like himself;-he little heeds
The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
The vain and bitter mockery of words,
Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
That knows and dreads his enmity.

'The iron rod of penury still compels
Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
And poison, with unprofitable toil,
A life too void of solace to confirm
The very chains that bind him to his doom.
Nature, impartial in munificence,
Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
In unremitting drudgery and care!
How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
His energies, no longer tameless then,
To mould a pin or fabricate a nail!
How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
Were only specks of tinsel fixed in heaven
To light the midnights of his native town!

'Yet every heart contains perfection's germ.
The wisest of the sages of the earth,
That ever from the stores of reason drew
Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
With pure desire and universal love,
Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
Untainted passion, elevated will,
Which death (who even would linger long in awe
Within his noble presence and beneath

His changeless eye-beam) might alone subdue.
Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
Of some corrupted city his sad life,
Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
Or madly rushing through all violent crime
To move the deep stagnation of his soul,-
Might imitate and equal.

But mean lust
Has bound its chains so tight about the earth
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal; gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by Selfishness to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.

'All things are sold: the very light of heaven
Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising Selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.

'Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith;
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain
Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed.
Without a shudder the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of the patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word,-viler still!

'There is a nobler glory which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And in the precincts of the palace guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when from power's avenging hand he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title-death;
-The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.
'This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No meditative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,

And one, the good man's heart.

How vainly seek
The selfish for that happiness denied
To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they,
Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
Who covet power they know not how to use,
And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give,-
Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
Disease, disgust and lassitude pervade
Their valueless and miserable lives.

'But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
Its death-blow and is tottering to the grave;
A brighter morn awaits the human day,
When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
War with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
Shall live but in the memory of time,
Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
Look back, and shudder at his younger years.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part Vi (Excerpts)

"Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light,
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffus'd
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation, or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguish'd in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractis'd sense:
But, active, steadfast and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords,
Whilst, to the eye of shipwreck'd mariner,
Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
All seems unlink'd contingency and chance,
No atom of this turbulence fulfils
A vague and unnecessitated task,
Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
Even the minutest molecule of light,
That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
Fulfils its destin'd, though invisible work,
The universal Spirit guides; nor less,
When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
Has led two hosts of dupes to battlefield,
That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves,
And call the sad work glory, does it rule
All passions: not a thought, a will, an act,
No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast

Their servitude to hide the shame they feel,
Nor the events enchaining every will,
That from the depths of unrecorded time
Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
Unrecogniz'd or unforeseen by thee,
Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison,
Whose chains and massy walls
We feel, but cannot see.

"Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
Necessity! thou mother of the world!
Unlike the God of human error, thou
Requir'st no prayers or praises; the caprice
Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
Than do the changeful passions of his breast
To thy unvarying harmony: the slave,
Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
And the good man, who lifts with virtuous pride
His being in the sight of happiness
That springs from his own works; the poison-tree,
Beneath whose shade all life is wither'd up,
And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
A temple where the vows of happy love
Are register'd, are equal in thy sight:
No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
And favouritism, and worst desire of fame
Thou know'st not: all that the wide world contains
Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
Because thou hast not human sense,
Because thou art not human mind.

"Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruin'd fanes
And broken altars of the almighty Fiend

Whose name usurps thy honours, and the blood
Through centuries clotted there has floated down
The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
Unchangeable! A shrine is rais'd to thee,
 Which, nor the tempest-breath of time,
 Nor the interminable flood
 Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
 Availeth to destroy--
The sensitive extension of the world.
 That wondrous and eternal fane,
Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
To do the will of strong necessity,
 And life, in multitudinous shapes,
Still pressing forward where no term can be,
 Like hungry and unresting flame
Curls round the eternal columns of its strength."

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Queen Mab: Part VII.

Spirit

'I was an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there.
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth;
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
'Weep not, child!' cried my mother, 'for that man
Has said, There is no God.'

FAIRY

'There is no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed.
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations, tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! Let every seed that falls
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument; infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains
Is Nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.
'The name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of his worshippers,
Whose names and attributes and passions change,
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watchword; whether hosts
Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on

Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of his power divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honor of his name; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!

'O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions
Have left a record there
To testify of earth.

'These are my empire, for to me is given
The wonders of the human world to keep,
And fancy's thin creations to endow
With manner, being and reality;
Therefore a wondrous phantom from the dreams
Of human error's dense and purblind faith
I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
Ahasuerus, rise!'

A strange and woe-worn wight
Arose beside the battlement,
And stood unmoving there.
His inessential figure cast no shade
Upon the golden floor;
His port and mien bore mark of many years,

And chronicles of untold ancientness
Were legible within his beamless eye;
Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
Freshness and vigor knit his manly frame;
The wisdom of old age was mingled there
With youth's primeval dauntlessness;
And inexpressible woe,
Chastened by fearless resignation, gave
An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT

'Is there a God?'

AHASUERUS

'Is there a God!-ay, an almighty God,
And vengeful as almighty! Once his voice
Was heard on earth; earth shuddered at the sound;
The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
Abhorrence, and the grave of Nature yawned
To swallow all the dauntless and the good
That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,
Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
Survived,-cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
No honest indignation ever urged
To elevated daring, to one deed
Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
These slaves built temples for the omnipotent fiend,
Gorgeous and vast; the costly altars smoked
With human blood, and hideous pã|ans rung
Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
Had raised him to his eminence in power,
Accomplice of omnipotence in crime
And confidant of the all-knowing one.
These were Jehovah's words.

"From an eternity of idleness
I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
From nothing; rested, and created man;
I placed him in a paradise, and there
Planted the tree of evil, so that he

Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
Wherewith to sate its malice and to turn,
Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
All misery to my fame. The race of men,
Chosen to my honor, with impunity
May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
Until with hardened feet their conquering troops
Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
And make my name be dreaded through the land.
Yet ever-burning flame and ceaseless woe
Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong,-even all
Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
(Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.'

'The murderer's brow
Quivered with horror.

"God omnipotent,
Is there no mercy? must our punishment
Be endless? will long ages roll away,
And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou made
In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
Mercy becomes the powerful-be but just!
O God! repent and save!'

"One way remains:
I will beget a son and he shall bear
The sins of all the world; he shall arise
In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
The universal crime; so that the few
On whom my grace descends, those who are marked
As vessels to the honor of their God,
May credit this strange sacrifice and save
Their souls alive. Millions shall live and die,
Who ne'er shall call upon their Saviour's name,
But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave,
Thousands shall deem it an old woman's tale,
Such as the nurses frighten babes withal;

These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
Even on their beds of torment where they howl,
My honor and the justice of their doom.
What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
Of purity, with radiant genius bright
Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses!

'Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly uttered-'O almighty one,
I tremble and obey!'

'O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came; humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth and peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blessed the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul
At length his mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside him; on the torturing cross
No pain assailed his untrerestrial sense;
And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed
The massacres and miseries which his name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
'Go! go!' in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice reillumined
His fading lineaments. 'I go,' he cried,
'But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally.' The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charm'd soil.
When I awoke hell burned within my brain

Which staggered on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,
Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,
And in their various attitudes of death
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastly upon me.

But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
Resolved to wage unweariable war
With my almighty tyrant and to hurl
Defiance at his impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand,
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave,
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.
These I have seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable and precarious power,
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war;
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught, waged,
Drunk from the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,
With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.

'Yes! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe

The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,
Confirming all unnatural impulses,
To sanctify their desolating deeds;
And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
O'er the unhappy earth; then shone the sun
On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
Of safe assassination, and all crime
Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.

'Spirit! no year of my eventful being
Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
Which flows from God's own faith. I 've marked his slaves
With tongues, whose lies are venomous, beguile
The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red
With murder, feign to stretch the other out
For brotherhood and peace; and that they now
Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise,
Reason may claim our gratitude, who now,
Establishing the imperishable throne
Of truth and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
The unprevailing malice of my foe,
Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
Adds impotent eternities to pain,
Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
To see the smiles of peace around them play,
To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.

'Thus have I stood,-through a wild waste of years
Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse
With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
Had scath'd in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
Its worn and withered arms on high

To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.'

The Fairy waved her wand;
Ahasuerus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,
Flee from the morning beam;-
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Remembrance

I.

Swifter far than summer's flight--
Swifter far than youth's delight--
Swifter far than happy night,
Art thou come and gone--
As the earth when leaves are dead,
As the night when sleep is sped,
As the heart when joy is fled,
I am left lone, alone.

II.

The swallow summer comes again--
The owlet night resumes her reign--
But the wild-swan youth is fain
To fly with thee, false as thou.--
My heart each day desires the morrow;
Sleep itself is turned to sorrow;
Vainly would my winter borrow
Sunny leaves from any bough.

III.

Lilies for a bridal bed--
Roses for a matron's head--
Violets for a maiden dead--
Pansies let MY flowers be:
On the living grave I bear
Scatter them without a tear--
Let no friend, however dear,
Waste one hope, one fear for me.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Revenge

'Ah! quit me not yet, for the wind whistles shrill,
Its blast wanders mournfully over the hill,
The thunder's wild voice rattles madly above,
You will not then, cannot then, leave me my love.'--

I must dearest Agnes, the night is far gone--
I must wander this evening to Strasburg alone,
I must seek the drear tomb of my ancestors' bones,
And must dig their remains from beneath the cold stones.

'For the spirit of Conrad there meets me this night,
And we quit not the tomb 'till dawn of the light,
And Conrad's been dead just a month and a day!
So farewell dearest Agnes for I must away,—

'He bid me bring with me what most I held dear,
Or a month from that time should I lie on my bier,
And I'd sooner resign this false fluttering breath,
Than my Agnes should dread either danger or death,

'And I love you to madness my Agnes I love,
My constant affection this night will I prove,
This night will I go to the sepulchre's jaw
Alone will I glut its all conquering maw'--

'No! no loved Adolphus thy Agnes will share,
In the tomb all the dangers that wait for you there,
I fear not the spirit,--I fear not the grave,
My dearest Adolphus I'd perish to save'--

'Nay seek not to say that thy love shall not go,
But spare me those ages of horror and woe,
For I swear to thee here that I'll perish ere day,
If you go unattended by Agnes away'--

The night it was bleak the fierce storm raged around,
The lightning's blue fire-light flashed on the ground,
Strange forms seemed to flit,--and howl tidings of fate,
As Agnes advanced to the sepulchre gate.--

The youth struck the portal,--the echoing sound
Was fearfully rolled midst the tombstones around,
The blue lightning gleamed o'er the dark chapel spire,
And tinged were the storm clouds with sulphurous fire.

Still they gazed on the tombstone where Conrad reclined,
Yet they shrank at the cold chilling blast of the wind,
When a strange silver brilliance pervaded the scene,
And a figure advanced—tall in form—fierce in mien.

A mantle encircled his shadowy form,
As light as a gossamer borne on the storm,
Celestial terror sat throned in his gaze,
Like the midnight pestiferous meteor's blaze.—

SPIRIT:

Thy father, Adolphus! was false, false as hell,
And Conrad has cause to remember it well,
He ruined my Mother, despised me his son,
I quitted the world ere my vengeance was done.

I was nearly expiring--'twas close of the day,--
A demon advanced to the bed where I lay,
He gave me the power from whence I was hurled,
To return to revenge, to return to the world,--

Now Adolphus I'll seize thy best loved in my arms,
I'll drag her to Hades all blooming in charms,
On the black whirlwind's thundering pinion I'll ride,
And fierce yelling fiends shall exult o'er thy bride--

He spoke, and extending his ghastly arms wide,
Majestic advanced with a swift noiseless stride,
He clasped the fair Agnes—he raised her on high,
And cleaving the roof sped his way to the sky--

All was now silent,--and over the tomb,
Thicker, deeper, was swiftly extended a gloom,
Adolphus in horror sank down on the stone,
And his fleeting soul fled with a harrowing groan.

DECEMBER, 1809

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Rome And Nature

Rome has fallen, ye see it lying
Heaped in undistinguished ruin:
Nature is alone undying.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Rosalind And Helen: A Modern Eclogue

ROSALIND, HELEN, and her Child.

SCENE. The Shore of the Lake of Como.

HELEN

Come hither, my sweet Rosalind.
'T is long since thou and I have met;
And yet methinks it were unkind
Those moments to forget.
Come, sit by me. I see thee stand
By this lone lake, in this far land,
Thy loose hair in the light wind flying,
Thy sweet voice to each tone of even
United, and thine eyes replying
To the hues of yon fair heaven.
Come, gentle friend! wilt sit by me?
And be as thou wert wont to be
Ere we were disunited?
None doth behold us now; the power
That led us forth at this lone hour
Will be but ill requited
If thou depart in scorn. Oh, come,
And talk of our abandoned home!
Remember, this is Italy,
And we are exiles. Talk with me
Of that our land, whose wilds and floods,
Barren and dark although they be,
Were dearer than these chestnut woods;
Those heathy paths, that inland stream,
And the blue mountains, shapes which seem
Like wrecks of childhood's sunny dream;
Which that we have abandoned now,
Weighs on the heart like that remorse
Which altered friendship leaves. I seek
No more our youthful intercourse.
That cannot be! Rosalind, speak,
Speak to me! Leave me not! When morn did come,
When evening fell upon our common home,
When for one hour we parted,--do not frown;

I would not chide thee, though thy faith is broken;
But turn to me. Oh! by this cherished token
Of woven hair, which thou wilt not disown,
Turn, as 't were but the memory of me,
And not my scornèd self who prayed to thee!

ROSALIND

Is it a dream, or do I see
And hear frail Helen? I would flee
Thy tainting touch; but former years
Arise, and bring forbidden tears;
And my o'erburdened memory
Seeks yet its lost repose in thee.
I share thy crime. I cannot choose
But weep for thee; mine own strange grief
But seldom stoops to such relief;
Nor ever did I love thee less,
Though mourning o'er thy wickedness
Even with a sister's woe. I knew
What to the evil world is due,
And therefore sternly did refuse
To link me with the infamy
Of one so lost as Helen. Now,
Bewildered by my dire despair,
Wondering I blush, and weep that thou
Shouldst love me still--thou only!--There,
Let us sit on that gray stone
Till our mournful talk be done.

HELEN

Alas! not there; I cannot bear
The murmur of this lake to hear.
A sound from there, Rosalind dear,
Which never yet I heard elsewhere
But in our native land, recurs,
Even here where now we meet. It stirs
Too much of suffocating sorrow!
In the dell of yon dark chestnut wood
Is a stone seat, a solitude
Less like our own. The ghost of peace
Will not desert this spot. To-morrow,
If thy kind feelings should not cease,

We may sit here.

ROSALIND

Thou lead, my sweet,
And I will follow.

HENRY

'T is Fenici's seat
Where you are going? This is not the way,
Mamma; it leads behind those trees that grow
Close to the little river.

HELEN

Yes, I know;
I was bewildered. Kiss me and be gay,
Dear boy; why do you sob?

HENRY

I do not know;
But it might break any one's heart to see
You and the lady cry so bitterly.

HELEN

It is a gentle child, my friend. Go home,
Henry, and play with Lilla till I come.
We only cried with joy to see each other;
We are quite merry now. Good night.

The boy

Lifted a sudden look upon his mother,
And, in the gleam of forced and hollow joy
Which lightened o'er her face, laughed with the glee
Of light and unsuspecting infancy,
And whispered in her ear, 'Bring home with you
That sweet strange lady-friend.' Then off he flew,
But stopped, and beckoned with a meaning smile,
Where the road turned. Pale Rosalind the while,
Hiding her face, stood weeping silently.

In silence then they took the way
Beneath the forest's solitude.
It was a vast and antique wood,

Through which they took their way;
And the gray shades of evening
O'er that green wilderness did fling
Still deeper solitude.
Pursuing still the path that wound
The vast and knotted trees around,
Through which slow shades were wandering,
To a deep lawny dell they came,
To a stone seat beside a spring,
O'er which the columned wood did frame
A roofless temple, like the fane
Where, ere new creeds could faith obtain,
Man's early race once knelt beneath
The overhanging deity.
O'er this fair fountain hung the sky,
Now spangled with rare stars. The snake,
The pale snake, that with eager breath
Creeps here his noontide thirst to slake,
Is beaming with many a mingled hue,
Shed from yon dome's eternal blue,
When he floats on that dark and lucid flood
In the light of his own loveliness;
And the birds, that in the fountain dip
Their plumes, with fearless fellowship
Above and round him wheel and hover.
The fitful wind is heard to stir
One solitary leaf on high;
The chirping of the grasshopper
Fills every pause. There is emotion
In all that dwells at noontide here;
Then through the intricate wild wood
A maze of life and light and motion
Is woven. But there is stillness now--
Gloom, and the trance of Nature now.
The snake is in his cave asleep;
The birds are on the branches dreaming;
Only the shadows creep;
Only the glow-worm is gleaming;
Only the owls and the nightingales
Wake in this dell when daylight fails,
And gray shades gather in the woods;
And the owls have all fled far away

In a merrier glen to hoot and play,
For the moon is veiled and sleeping now.
The accustomed nightingale still broods
On her accustomed bough,
But she is mute; for her false mate
Has fled and left her desolate.

This silent spot tradition old
Had peopled with the spectral dead.
For the roots of the speaker's hair felt cold
And stiff, as with tremulous lips he told
That a hellish shape at midnight led
The ghost of a youth with hoary hair,
And sate on the seat beside him there,
Till a naked child came wandering by,
When the fiend would change to a lady fair!
A fearful tale! the truth was worse;
For here a sister and a brother
Had solemnized a monstrous curse,
Meeting in this fair solitude;
For beneath yon very sky,
Had they resigned to one another
Body and soul. The multitude,
Tracking them to the secret wood,
Tore limb from limb their innocent child,
And stabbed and trampled on its mother;
But the youth, for God's most holy grace,
A priest saved to burn in the market-place.

Duly at evening Helen came
To this lone silent spot,
From the wrecks of a tale of wilder sorrow
So much of sympathy to borrow
As soothed her own dark lot.
Duly each evening from her home,
With her fair child would Helen come
To sit upon that antique seat,
While the hues of day were pale;
And the bright boy beside her feet
Now lay, lifting at intervals
His broad blue eyes on her;
Now, where some sudden impulse calls,

Following. He was a gentle boy
And in all gentle sorts took joy.
Oft in a dry leaf for a boat,
With a small feather for a sail,
His fancy on that spring would float,
If some invisible breeze might stir
Its marble calm; and Helen smiled
Through tears of awe on the gay child,
To think that a boy as fair as he,
In years which never more may be,
By that same fount, in that same wood,
The like sweet fancies had pursued;
And that a mother, lost like her,
Had mournfully sate watching him.
Then all the scene was wont to swim
Through the mist of a burning tear.
For many months had Helen known
This scene; and now she thither turned
Her footsteps, not alone.
The friend whose falsehood she had mourned
Sate with her on that seat of stone.
Silent they sate; for evening,
And the power its glimpses bring,
Had with one awful shadow quelled
The passion of their grief. They sate
With linkèd hands, for unrepelled
Had Helen taken Rosalind's.
Like the autumn wind, when it unbinds
The tangled locks of the nightshade's hair
Which is twined in the sultry summer air
Round the walls of an outworn sepulchre,
Did the voice of Helen, sad and sweet,
And the sound of her heart that ever beat
As with sighs and words she breathed on her,
Unbind the knots of her friend's despair,
Till her thoughts were free to float and flow;
And from her laboring bosom now,
Like the bursting of a prisoned flame,
The voice of a long-pent sorrow came.

ROSALIND

I saw the dark earth fall upon

The coffin; and I saw the stone
Laid over him whom this cold breast
Had pillowed to his nightly rest!
Thou knowest not, thou canst not know
My agony. Oh! I could not weep.
The sources whence such blessings flow
Were not to be approached by me!
But I could smile, and I could sleep,
Though with a self-accusing heart.
In morning's light, in evening's gloom,
I watched--and would not thence depart--
My husband's unlamented tomb.
My children knew their sire was gone;
But when I told them, 'He is dead,'
They laughed aloud in frantic glee,
They clapped their hands and leaped about,
Answering each other's ecstasy
With many a prank and merry shout.
But I sate silent and alone,
Wrapped in the mock of mourning weed.

They laughed, for he was dead; but I
Sate with a hard and tearless eye,
And with a heart which would deny
The secret joy it could not quell,
Low muttering o'er his loathèd name;
Till from that self-contention came
Remorse where sin was none; a hell
Which in pure spirits should not dwell.

I 'll tell thee truth. He was a man
Hard, selfish, loving only gold,
Yet full of guile; his pale eyes ran
With tears which each some falsehood told,
And oft his smooth and bridled tongue
Would give the lie to his flushing cheek;
He was a coward to the strong;
He was a tyrant to the weak,
On whom his vengeance he would wreak;
For scorn, whose arrows search the heart,
From many a stranger's eye would dart,
And on his memory cling, and follow

His soul to its home so cold and hollow.
He was a tyrant to the weak,
And we were such, alas the day!
Oft, when my little ones at play
Were in youth's natural lightness gay,
Or if they listened to some tale
Of travellers, or of fairyland,
When the light from the wood-fire's dying brand
Flashed on their faces,--if they heard
Or thought they heard upon the stair
His footstep, the suspended word
Died on my lips; we all grew pale;
The babe at my bosom was hushed with fear
If it thought it heard its father near;
And my two wild boys would near my knee
Cling, cowed and cowering fearfully.

I 'll tell thee truth: I loved another.
His name in my ear was ever ringing,
His form to my brain was ever clinging;
Yet, if some stranger breathed that name,
My lips turned white, and my heart beat fast.
My nights were once haunted by dreams of flame,
My days were dim in the shadow cast
By the memory of the same!
Day and night, day and night,
He was my breath and life and light,
For three short years, which soon were passed.
On the fourth, my gentle mother
Led me to the shrine, to be
His sworn bride eternally.
And now we stood on the altar stair,
When my father came from a distant land,
And with a loud and fearful cry
Rushed between us suddenly.
I saw the stream of his thin gray hair,
I saw his lean and lifted hand,
And heard his words--and live! O God!
Wherefore do I live?--'Hold, hold!'
He cried, 'I tell thee 't is her brother!
Thy mother, boy, beneath the sod
Of yon churchyard rests in her shroud so cold;

I am now weak, and pale, and old;
We were once dear to one another,
I and that corpse! Thou art our child!
Then with a laugh both long and wild
The youth upon the pavement fell.
They found him dead! All looked on me,
The spasms of my despair to see;
But I was calm. I went away;
I was clammy-cold like clay.
I did not weep; I did not speak;
But day by day, week after week,
I walked about like a corpse alive.
Alas! sweet friend, you must believe
This heart is stone--it did not break.

My father lived a little while,
But all might see that he was dying,
He smiled with such a woful smile.
When he was in the churchyard lying
Among the worms, we grew quite poor,
So that no one would give us bread;
My mother looked at me, and said
Faint words of cheer, which only meant
That she could die and be content;
So I went forth from the same church door
To another husband's bed.
And this was he who died at last,
When weeks and months and years had passed,
Through which I firmly did fulfil
My duties, a devoted wife,
With the stern step of vanquished will
Walking beneath the night of life,
Whose hours extinguished, like slow rain
Falling forever, pain by pain,
The very hope of death's dear rest;
Which, since the heart within my breast
Of natural life was dispossessed,
Its strange sustainer there had been.

When flowers were dead, and grass was green
Upon my mother's grave--that mother
Whom to outlive, and cheer, and make

My wan eyes glitter for her sake,
Was my vowed task, the single care
Which once gave life to my despair--
When she was a thing that did not stir,
And the crawling worms were cradling her
To a sleep more deep and so more sweet
Than a baby's rocked on its nurse's knee,
I lived; a living pulse then beat
Beneath my heart that awakened me.
What was this pulse so warm and free?
Alas! I knew it could not be
My own dull blood. 'T was like a thought
Of liquid love, that spread and wrought
Under my bosom and in my brain,
And crept with the blood through every vein,
And hour by hour, day after day,
The wonder could not charm away
But laid in sleep my wakeful pain,
Until I knew it was a child,
And then I wept. For long, long years
These frozen eyes had shed no tears;
But now--'t was the season fair and mild
When April has wept itself to May;
I sate through the sweet sunny day
By my window bowered round with leaves,
And down my cheeks the quick tears ran
Like twinkling rain-drops from the eaves,
When warm spring showers are passing o'er.
O Helen, none can ever tell
The joy it was to weep once more!

I wept to think how hard it were
To kill my babe, and take from it
The sense of light, and the warm air,
And my own fond and tender care,
And love and smiles; ere I knew yet
That these for it might, as for me,
Be the masks of a grinning mockery.
And haply, I would dream, 't were sweet
To feed it from my faded breast,
Or mark my own heart's restless beat
And watch the growing soul beneath

Dawn in faint smiles; and hear its breath,
Half interrupted by calm sighs,
And search the depth of its fair eyes
For long departed memories!
And so I lived till that sweet load
Was lightened. Darkly forward flowed
The stream of years, and on it bore
Two shapes of gladness to my sight;
Two other babes, delightful more,
In my lost soul's abandoned night,
Than their own country ships may be
Sailing towards wrecked mariners
Who cling to the rock of a wintry sea.
For each, as it came, brought soothing tears;
And a loosening warmth, as each one lay
Sucking the sullen milk away,
About my frozen heart did play,
And weaned it, oh, how painfully--
As they themselves were weaned each one
From that sweet food--even from the thirst
Of death, and nothingness, and rest,
Strange inmate of a living breast,
Which all that I had undergone
Of grief and shame, since she who first
The gates of that dark refuge closed
Came to my sight, and almost burst
The seal of that Lethean spring--
But these fair shadows interposed.
For all delights are shadows now!
And from my brain to my dull brow
The heavy tears gather and flow.
I cannot speak--oh, let me weep!

The tears which fell from her wan eyes
Glimmered among the moonlight dew.
Her deep hard sobs and heavy sighs
Their echoes in the darkness threw.
When she grew calm, she thus did keep
The tenor of her tale:--

He died;
I know not how; he was not old,

If age be numbered by its years;
But he was bowed and bent with fears,
Pale with the quenchless thirst of gold,
Which, like fierce fever, left him weak;
And his strait lip and bloated cheek
Were warped in spasms by hollow sneers;
And selfish cares with barren plough,
Not age, had lined his narrow brow,
And foul and cruel thoughts, which feed
Upon the withering life within,
Like vipers on some poisonous weed.
Whether his ill were death or sin
None knew, until he died indeed,
And then men owned they were the same.

Seven days within my chamber lay
That corse, and my babes made holiday.
At last, I told them what is death.
The eldest, with a kind of shame,
Came to my knees with silent breath,
And sate awe-stricken at my feet;
And soon the others left their play,
And sate there too. It is unmeet
To shed on the brief flower of youth
The withering knowledge of the grave.
From me remorse then wrung that truth.
I could not bear the joy which gave
Too just a response to mine own.
In vain. I dared not feign a groan;
And in their artless looks I saw,
Between the mists of fear and awe,
That my own thought was theirs; and they
Expressed it not in words, but said,
Each in its heart, how every day
Will pass in happy work and play,
Now he is dead and gone away!

After the funeral all our kin
Assembled, and the will was read.
My friend, I tell thee, even the dead
Have strength, their putrid shrouds within,
To blast and torture. Those who live

Still fear the living, but a corpse
Is merciless, and Power doth give
To such pale tyrants half the spoil
He rends from those who groan and toil,
Because they blush not with remorse
Among their crawling worms. Behold,
I have no child! my tale grows old
With grief, and staggers; let it reach
The limits of my feeble speech,
And languidly at length recline
On the brink of its own grave and mine.

Thou knowest what a thing is Poverty
Among the fallen on evil days.
'T is Crime, and Fear, and Infamy,
And houseless Want in frozen ways
Wandering ungarmented, and Pain,
And, worse than all, that inward stain,
Foul Self-contempt, which drowns in sneers
Youth's starlight smile, and makes its tears
First like hot gall, then dry forever!
And well thou knowest a mother never
Could doom her children to this ill,
And well he knew the same. The will
Imported that, if e'er again
I sought my children to behold,
Or in my birthplace did remain
Beyond three days, whose hours were told,
They should inherit nought; and he,
To whom next came their patrimony,
A sallow lawyer, cruel and cold,
Aye watched me, as the will was read,
With eyes askance, which sought to see
The secrets of my agony;
And with close lips and anxious brow
Stood canvassing still to and fro
The chance of my resolve, and all
The dead man's caution just did call;
For in that killing lie 't was said--
'She is adulterous, and doth hold
In secret that the Christian creed
Is false, and therefore is much need

That I should have a care to save
My children from eternal fire.'
Friend, he was sheltered by the grave,
And therefore dared to be a liar!
In truth, the Indian on the pyre
Of her dead husband, half consumed,
As well might there be false as I
To those abhorred embraces doomed,
Far worse than fire's brief agony.
As to the Christian creed, if true
Or false, I never questioned it;
I took it as the vulgar do;
Nor my vexed soul had leisure yet
To doubt the things men say, or deem
That they are other than they seem.

All present who those crimes did hear,
In feigned or actual scorn and fear,
Men, women, children, slunk away,
Whispering with self-contented pride
Which half suspects its own base lie.
I spoke to none, nor did abide,
But silently I went my way,
Nor noticed I where joyously
Sate my two younger babes at play
In the courtyard through which I passed;
But went with footsteps firm and fast
Till I came to the brink of the ocean green,
And there, a woman with gray hairs,
Who had my mother's servant been,
Kneeling, with many tears and prayers,
Made me accept a purse of gold,
Half of the earnings she had kept
To refuge her when weak and old.
With woe, which never sleeps or slept,
I wander now. 'T is a vain thought--
But on yon Alp, whose snowy head
'Mid the azure air is islanded,
(We see it--o'er the flood of cloud,
Which sunrise from its eastern caves
Drives, wrinkling into golden waves,
Hung with its precipices proud--

From that gray stone where first we met)
There--now who knows the dead feel nought?--
Should be my grave; for he who yet
Is my soul's soul once said: 'T were sweet
'Mid stars and lightnings to abide,
And winds, and lulling snows that beat
With their soft flakes the mountain wide,
Where weary meteor lamps repose,
And languid storms their pinions close,
And all things strong and bright and pure,
And ever during, aye endure.
Who knows, if one were buried there,
But these things might our spirits make,
Amid the all-surrounding air,
Their own eternity partake?'
Then 't was a wild and playful saying
At which I laughed or seemed to laugh.
They were his words--now heed my praying,
And let them be my epitaph.
Thy memory for a term may be
My monument. Wilt remember me?
I know thou wilt; and canst forgive,
Whilst in this erring world to live
My soul disdained not, that I thought
Its lying forms were worthy aught,
And much less thee.

HELEN

Oh, speak not so!
But come to me and pour thy woe
Into this heart, full though it be,
Aye overflowing with its own.
I thought that grief had severed me
From all beside who weep and groan,
Its likeness upon earth to be--
Its express image; but thou art
More wretched. Sweet, we will not part
Henceforth, if death be not division;
If so, the dead feel no contrition.
But wilt thou hear, since last we parted,
All that has left me broken-hearted?

ROSALIND

Yes, speak. The faintest stars are scarcely shorn
Of their thin beams by that delusive morn
Which sinks again in darkness, like the light
Of early love, soon lost in total night.

HELEN

Alas! Italian winds are mild,
But my bosom is cold--wintry cold;
When the warm air weaves, among the fresh leaves,
Soft music, my poor brain is wild,
And I am weak like a nursling child,
Though my soul with grief is gray and old.

ROSALIND

Weep not at thine own words, though they must make
Me weep. What is thy tale?

HELEN

I fear 't will shake
Thy gentle heart with tears. Thou well
Rememberest when we met no more;
And, though I dwelt with Lionel,
That friendless caution pierced me sore
With grief; a wound my spirit bore
Indignantly--but when he died,
With him lay dead both hope and pride.

Alas! all hope is buried now.
But then men dreamed the aged earth
Was laboring in that mighty birth
Which many a poet and a sage
Has aye foreseen--the happy age
When truth and love shall dwell below
Among the works and ways of men;
Which on this world not power but will
Even now is wanting to fulfil.

Among mankind what thence befell
Of strife, how vain, is known too well;
When Liberty's dear pæan fell
'Mid murderous howls. To Lionel,

Though of great wealth and lineage high,
Yet through those dungeon walls there came
Thy thrilling light, O Liberty!
And as the meteor's midnight flame
Startles the dreamer, sun-like truth
Flashed on his visionary youth,
And filled him, not with love, but faith,
And hope, and courage mute in death;
For love and life in him were twins,
Born at one birth. In every other
First life, then love, its course begins,
Though they be children of one mother;
And so through this dark world they fleet
Divided, till in death they meet;
But he loved all things ever. Then
He passed amid the strife of men,
And stood at the throne of armèd power
Pleading for a world of woe.
Secure as one on a rock-built tower
O'er the wrecks which the surge trails to and fro,
'Mid the passions wild of humankind
He stood, like a spirit calming them;
For, it was said, his words could bind
Like music the lulled crowd, and stem
That torrent of unquiet dream
Which mortals truth and reason deem,
But is revenge and fear and pride.
Joyous he was; and hope and peace
On all who heard him did abide,
Raining like dew from his sweet talk,
As where the evening star may walk
Along the brink of the gloomy seas,
Liquid mists of splendor quiver.
His very gestures touched to tears
The unpersuaded tyrant, never
So moved before; his presence stung
The torturers with their victim's pain,
And none knew how; and through their ears
The subtle witchcraft of his tongue
Unlocked the hearts of those who keep
Gold, the world's bond of slavery.
Men wondered, and some sneered to see

One sow what he could never reap;
For he is rich, they said, and young,
And might drink from the depths of luxury.
If he seeks fame, fame never crowned
The champion of a trampled creed;
If he seeks power, power is enthroned
'Mid ancient rights and wrongs, to feed
Which hungry wolves with praise and spoil
Those who would sit near power must toil;
And such, there sitting, all may see.
What seeks he? All that others seek
He casts away, like a vile weed
Which the sea casts unreturningly.
That poor and hungry men should break
The laws which wreak them toil and scorn
We understand; but Lionel,
We know, is rich and nobly born.
So wondered they; yet all men loved
Young Lionel, though few approved;
All but the priests, whose hatred fell
Like the unseen blight of a smiling day,
The withering honey-dew which clings
Under the bright green buds of May
Whilst they unfold their emerald wings;
For he made verses wild and queer
On the strange creeds priests hold so dear
Because they bring them land and gold.
Of devils and saints and all such gear
He made tales which whoso heard or read
Would laugh till he were almost dead.
So this grew a proverb: 'Don't get old
Till Lionel's Banquet in Hell you hear,
And then you will laugh yourself young again.'
So the priests hated him, and he
Repaid their hate with cheerful glee.

Ah, smiles and joyance quickly died,
For public hope grew pale and dim
In an altered time and tide,
And in its wasting withered him,
As a summer flower that blows too soon
Droops in the smile of the waning moon,

When it scatters through an April night
The frozen dews of wrinkling blight.
None now hoped more. Gray Power was seated
Safely on her ancestral throne;
And Faith, the Python, undefeated
Even to its blood-stained steps dragged on
Her foul and wounded train; and men
Were trampled and deceived again,
And words and shows again could bind
The wailing tribes of humankind
In scorn and famine. Fire and blood
Raged round the raging multitude,
To fields remote by tyrants sent
To be the scornèd instrument
With which they drag from mines of gore
The chains their slaves yet ever wore;
And in the streets men met each other,
And by old altars and in halls,
And smiled again at festivals.
But each man found in his heart's brother
Cold cheer; for all, though half deceived,
The outworn creeds again believed,
And the same round anew began
Which the weary world yet ever ran.

Many then wept, not tears, but gall,
Within their hearts, like drops which fall
Wasting the fountain-stone away.
And in that dark and evil day
Did all desires and thoughts that claim
Men's care--ambition, friendship, fame,
Love, hope, though hope was now despair--
Indue the colors of this change,
As from the all-surrounding air
The earth takes hues obscure and strange,
When storm and earthquake linger there.

And so, my friend, it then befell
To many,--most to Lionel,
Whose hope was like the life of youth
Within him, and when dead became
A spirit of unresting flame,

Which goaded him in his distress
Over the world's vast wilderness.
Three years he left his native land,
And on the fourth, when he returned,
None knew him; he was stricken deep
With some disease of mind, and turned
Into aught unlike Lionel.
On him--on whom, did he pause in sleep,
Serenest smiles were wont to keep,
And, did he wake, a wingèd band
Of bright Persuasions, which had fed
On his sweet lips and liquid eyes,
Kept their swift pinions half outspread
To do on men his least command--
On him, whom once 't was paradise
Even to behold, now misery lay.
In his own heart 't was merciless--
To all things else none may express
Its innocence and tenderness.

'T was said that he had refuge sought
In love from his unquiet thought
In distant lands, and been deceived
By some strange show; for there were found,
Blotted with tears--as those relieved
By their own words are wont to do--
These mournful verses on the ground,
By all who read them blotted too.

'How am I changed! my hopes were once like fire;
I loved, and I believed that life was love.
How am I lost! on wings of swift desire
Among Heaven's winds my spirit once did move.
I slept, and silver dreams did aye inspire
My liquid sleep; I woke, and did approve
All Nature to my heart, and thought to make
A paradise of earth for one sweet sake.

'I love, but I believe in love no more.
I feel desire, but hope not. Oh, from sleep
Most vainly must my weary brain implore
Its long lost flattery now! I wake to weep,

And sit through the long day gnawing the core
Of my bitter heart, and, like a miser, keep--
Since none in what I feel take pain or pleasure--
To my own soul its self-consuming treasure.'

He dwelt beside me near the sea;
And oft in evening did we meet,
When the waves, beneath the starlight, flee
O'er the yellow sands with silver feet,
And talked. Our talk was sad and sweet,
Till slowly from his mien there passed
The desolation which it spoke;
And smiles--as when the lightning's blast
Has parched some heaven-delighting oak,
The next spring shows leaves pale and rare,
But like flowers delicate and fair,
On its rent boughs--again arrayed
His countenance in tender light;
His words grew subtle fire, which made
The air his hearers breathed delight;
His motions, like the winds, were free,
Which bend the bright grass gracefully,
Then fade away in circlets faint;
And wingèd Hope--on which upborne
His soul seemed hovering in his eyes,
Like some bright spirit newly born
Floating amid the sunny skies--
Sprang forth from his rent heart anew.
Yet o'er his talk, and looks, and mien,
Tempering their loveliness too keen,
Past woe its shadow backward threw;
Till, like an exhalation spread
From flowers half drunk with evening dew,
They did become infectious--sweet
And subtle mists of sense and thought,
Which wrapped us soon, when we might meet,
Almost from our own looks and aught
The wild world holds. And so his mind
Was healed, while mine grew sick with fear;
For ever now his health declined,
Like some frail bark which cannot bear
The impulse of an altered wind,

Though prosperous; and my heart grew full,
'Mid its new joy, of a new care;
For his cheek became, not pale, but fair,
As rose-o'ershadowed lilies are;
And soon his deep and sunny hair,
In this alone less beautiful,
Like grass in tombs grew wild and rare.
The blood in his translucent veins
Beat, not like animal life, but love
Seemed now its sullen springs to move,
When life had failed, and all its pains;
And sudden sleep would seize him oft
Like death, so calm,--but that a tear,
His pointed eye-lashes between,
Would gather in the light serene
Of smiles whose lustre bright and soft
Beneath lay undulating there.
His breath was like inconstant flame
As eagerly it went and came;
And I hung o'er him in his sleep,
Till, like an image in the lake
Which rains disturb, my tears would break
The shadow of that slumber deep.
Then he would bid me not to weep,
And say, with flattery false yet sweet,
That death and he could never meet,
If I would never part with him.
And so we loved, and did unite
All that in us was yet divided;
For when he said, that many a rite,
By men to bind but once provided,
Could not be shared by him and me,
Or they would kill him in their glee,
I shuddered, and then laughing said--
'We will have rites our faith to bind,
But our church shall be the starry night,
Our altar the grassy earth outspread,
And our priest the muttering wind.'

'T was sunset as I spoke. One star
Had scarce burst forth, when from afar
The ministers of misrule sent

Seized upon Lionel, and bore
His chained limbs to a dreary tower,
In the midst of a city vast and wide.
For he, they said, from his mind had bent
Against their gods keen blasphemy,
For which, though his soul must roasted be
In hell's red lakes immortally,
Yet even on earth must he abide
The vengeance of their slaves: a trial,
I think, men call it. What avail
Are prayers and tears, which chase denial
From the fierce savage nursed in hate?
What the knit soul that pleading and pale
Makes wan the quivering cheek which late
It painted with its own delight?
We were divided. As I could,
I stilled the tingling of my blood,
And followed him in their despite,
As a widow follows, pale and wild,
The murderers and corpse of her only child;
And when we came to the prison door,
And I prayed to share his dungeon floor
With prayers which rarely have been spurned,
And when men drove me forth, and I
Stared with blank frenzy on the sky,--
A farewell look of love he turned,
Half calming me; then gazed awhile,
As if through that black and massy pile,
And through the crowd around him there,
And through the dense and murky air,
And the thronged streets, he did espy
What poets know and prophesy;
And said, with voice that made them shiver
And clung like music in my brain,
And which the mute walls spoke again
Prolonging it with deepened strain--
'Fear not the tyrants shall rule forever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death;
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells,

And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks, in the surge of eternity.'

I dwelt beside the prison gate;
And the strange crowd that out and in
Passed, some, no doubt, with mine own fate,
Might have fretted me with its ceaseless din,
But the fever of care was louder within.
Soon but too late, in penitence
Or fear, his foes released him thence.
I saw his thin and languid form,
As leaning on the jailor's arm,
Whose hardened eyes grew moist the while
To meet his mute and faded smile
And hear his words of kind farewell,
He tottered forth from his damp cell.
Many had never wept before,
From whom fast tears then gushed and fell;
Many will relent no more,
Who sobbed like infants then; ay, all
Who thronged the prison's stony hall,
The rulers or the slaves of law,
Felt with a new surprise and awe
That they were human, till strong shame
Made them again become the same.
The prison bloodhounds, huge and grim,
From human looks the infection caught,
And fondly crouched and fawned on him;
And men have heard the prisoners say,
Who in their rotting dungeons lay,
That from that hour, throughout one day,
The fierce despair and hate which kept
Their trampled bosoms almost slept,
Where, like twin vultures, they hung feeding
On each heart's wound, wide torn and bleeding,--
Because their jailors' rule, they thought,
Grew merciful, like a parent's sway.

I know not how, but we were free;
And Lionel sate alone with me,
As the carriage drove through the streets apace;
And we looked upon each other's face;

And the blood in our fingers intertwined
Ran like the thoughts of a single mind,
As the swift emotions went and came
Through the veins of each united frame.
So through the long, long streets we passed
Of the million-peopled City vast;
Which is that desert, where each one
Seeks his mate yet is alone,
Beloved and sought and mourned of none;
Until the clear blue sky was seen,
And the grassy meadows bright and green.
And then I sunk in his embrace
Enclosing there a mighty space
Of love; and so we travelled on
By woods, and fields of yellow flowers,
And towns, and villages, and towers,
Day after day of happy hours.
It was the azure time of June,
When the skies are deep in the stainless noon,
And the warm and fitful breezes shake
The fresh green leaves of the hedge-row briar;
And there were odors then to make
The very breath we did respire
A liquid element, whereon
Our spirits, like delighted things
That walk the air on subtle wings,
Floated and mingled far away
'Mid the warm winds of the sunny day.
And when the evening star came forth
Above the curve of the new bent moon,
And light and sound ebbed from the earth,
Like the tide of the full and the weary sea
To the depths of its own tranquillity,
Our natures to its own repose
Did the earth's breathless sleep attune;
Like flowers, which on each other close
Their languid leaves when daylight's gone,
We lay, till new emotions came,
Which seemed to make each mortal frame
One soul of interwoven flame,
A life in life, a second birth
In worlds diviner far than earth;--

Which, like two strains of harmony
That mingle in the silent sky,
Then slowly disunite, passed by
And left the tenderness of tears,
A soft oblivion of all fears,
A sweet sleep:--so we travelled on
Till we came to the home of Lionel,
Among the mountains wild and lone,
Beside the hoary western sea,
Which near the verge of the echoing shore
The massy forest shadowed o'er.

The ancient steward with hair all hoar,
As we alighted, wept to see
His master changed so fearfully;
And the old man's sobs did waken me
From my dream of unremitting gladness;
The truth flashed o'er me like quick madness
When I looked, and saw that there was death
On Lionel. Yet day by day
He lived, till fear grew hope and faith,
And in my soul I dared to say,
Nothing so bright can pass away;
Death is dark, and foul, and dull,
But he is--oh, how beautiful!
Yet day by day he grew more weak,
And his sweet voice, when he might speak,
Which ne'er was loud, became more low;
And the light which flashed through his waxen cheek
Grew faint, as the rose-like hues which flow
From sunset o'er the Alpine snow;
And death seemed not like death in him,
For the spirit of life o'er every limb
Lingered, a mist of sense and thought.
When the summer wind faint odors brought
From mountain flowers, even as it passed,
His cheek would change, as the noontide sea
Which the dying breeze sweeps fitfully.
If but a cloud the sky o'ercast,
You might see his color come and go,
And the softest strain of music made
Sweet smiles, yet sad, arise and fade

Amid the dew of his tender eyes;
And the breath, with intermitting flow,
Made his pale lips quiver and part.
You might hear the beatings of his heart,
Quick but not strong; and with my tresses
When oft he playfully would bind
In the bowers of mossy lonelinesses
His neck, and win me so to mingle
In the sweet depth of woven caresses,
And our faint limbs were intertwined,--
Alas! the unquiet life did tingle
From mine own heart through every vein,
Like a captive in dreams of liberty,
Who beats the walls of his stony cell.
But his, it seemed already free,
Like the shadow of fire surrounding me!
On my faint eyes and limbs did dwell
That spirit as it passed, till soon--
As a frail cloud wandering o'er the moon,
Beneath its light invisible,
Is seen when it folds its gray wings again
To alight on midnight's dusky plain--
I lived and saw, and the gathering soul
Passed from beneath that strong control,
And I fell on a life which was sick with fear
Of all the woe that now I bear.

Amid a bloomless myrtle wood,
On a green and sea-girt promontory
Not far from where we dwelt, there stood,
In record of a sweet sad story,
An altar and a temple bright
Circed by steps, and o'er the gate
Was sculptured, 'To Fidelity;'
And in the shrine an image sate
All veiled; but there was seen the light
Of smiles which faintly could express
A mingled pain and tenderness
Through that ethereal drapery.
The left hand held the head, the right--
Beyond the veil, beneath the skin,
You might see the nerves quivering within--

Was forcing the point of a barbèd dart
Into its side-convulsing heart.
An unskilled hand, yet one informed
With genius, had the marble warmed
With that pathetic life. This tale
It told: A dog had from the sea,
When the tide was raging fearfully,
Dragged Lionel's mother, weak and pale,
Then died beside her on the sand,
And she that temple thence had planned;
But it was Lionel's own hand
Had wrought the image. Each new moon
That lady did, in this lone fane,
The rites of a religion sweet
Whose god was in her heart and brain.
The seasons' loveliest flowers were strewn
On the marble floor beneath her feet,
And she brought crowns of sea-buds white
Whose odor is so sweet and faint,
And weeds, like branching chrysolite,
Woven in devices fine and quaint;
And tears from her brown eyes did stain
The altar; need but look upon
That dying statue, fair and wan,
If tears should cease, to weep again;
And rare Arabian odors came,
Through the myrtle copses, steaming thence
From the hissing frankincense,
Whose smoke, wool-white as ocean foam,
Hung in dense flocks beneath the dome--
That ivory dome, whose azure night
With golden stars, like heaven, was bright
O'er the split cedar's pointed flame;
And the lady's harp would kindle there
The melody of an old air,
Softer than sleep; the villagers
Mixed their religion up with hers,
And, as they listened round, shed tears.

One eve he led me to this fane.
Daylight on its last purple cloud
Was lingering gray, and soon her strain

The nightingale began; now loud,
Climbing in circles the windless sky,
Now dying music; suddenly
'T is scattered in a thousand notes;
And now to the hushed ear it floats
Like field-smells known in infancy,
Then, failing, soothes the air again.
We sate within that temple lone,
Pavilioned round with Parian stone;
His mother's harp stood near, and oft
I had awakened music soft
Amid its wires; the nightingale
Was pausing in her heaven-taught tale.
'Now drain the cup,' said Lionel,
'Which the poet-bird has crowned so well
With the wine of her bright and liquid song!
Heard'st thou not sweet words among
That heaven-resounding minstrelsy?
Heard'st thou not that those who die
Awake in a world of ecstasy?
That love, when limbs are interwoven,
And sleep, when the night of life is cloven,
And thought, to the world's dim boundaries clinging,
And music, when one beloved is singing,
Is death? Let us drain right joyously
The cup which the sweet bird fills for me.'
He paused, and to my lips he bent
His own; like spirit his words went
Through all my limbs with the speed of fire;
And his keen eyes, glittering through mine,
Filled me with the flame divine
Which in their orbs was burning far,
Like the light of an unmeasured star
In the sky of midnight dark and deep;
Yes, 't was his soul that did inspire
Sounds which my skill could ne'er awaken;
And first, I felt my fingers sweep
The harp, and a long quivering cry
Burst from my lips in symphony;
The dusk and solid air was shaken,
As swift and swifter the notes came
From my touch, that wandered like quick flame,

And from my bosom, laboring
With some unutterable thing.
The awful sound of my own voice made
My faint lips tremble; in some mood
Of wordless thought Lionel stood
So pale, that even beside his cheek
The snowy column from its shade
Caught whiteness; yet his countenance,
Raised upward, burned with radiance
Of spirit-piercing joy whose light,
Like the moon struggling through the night
Of whirlwind-rifted clouds, did break
With beams that might not be confined.
I paused, but soon his gestures kindled
New power, as by the moving wind
The waves are lifted; and my song
To low soft notes now changed and dwindled,
And, from the twinkling wires among,
My languid fingers drew and flung
Circles of life-dissolving sound,
Yet faint; in aëry rings they bound
My Lionel, who, as every strain
Grew fainter but more sweet, his mien
Sunk with the sound relaxedly;
And slowly now he turned to me,
As slowly faded from his face
That awful joy; with look serene
He was soon drawn to my embrace,
And my wild song then died away
In murmurs; words I dare not say
We mixed, and on his lips mine fed
Till they methought felt still and cold.
'What is it with thee, love?' I said;
No word, no look, no motion! yes,
There was a change, but spare to guess,
Nor let that moment's hope be told.
I looked,--and knew that he was dead;
And fell, as the eagle on the plain
Falls when life deserts her brain,
And the mortal lightning is veiled again.

Oh, that I were now dead! but such--

Did they not, love, demand too much,
Those dying murmurs?--he forbade.
Oh, that I once again were mad!
And yet, dear Rosalind, not so,
For I would live to share thy woe.
Sweet boy! did I forget thee too?
Alas, we know not what we do
When we speak words.

No memory more
Is in my mind of that sea-shore.
Madness came on me, and a troop
Of misty shapes did seem to sit
Beside me, on a vessel's poop,
And the clear north wind was driving it.
Then I heard strange tongues, and saw strange flowers,
And the stars methought grew unlike ours,
And the azure sky and the stormless sea
Made me believe that I had died
And waked in a world which was to me
Drear hell, though heaven to all beside.
Then a dead sleep fell on my mind,
Whilst animal life many long years
Had rescued from a chasm of tears;
And, when I woke, I wept to find
That the same lady, bright and wise,
With silver locks and quick brown eyes,
The mother of my Lionel,
Had tended me in my distress,
And died some months before. Nor less
Wonder, but far more peace and joy,
Brought in that hour my lovely boy.
For through that trance my soul had well
The impress of thy being kept;
And if I waked or if I slept,
No doubt, though memory faithless be,
Thy image ever dwelt on me;
And thus, O Lionel, like thee
Is our sweet child. 'T is sure most strange
I knew not of so great a change
As that which gave him birth, who now
Is all the solace of my woe.

That Lionel great wealth had left
By will to me, and that of all
The ready lies of law bereft
My child and me,--might well befall.
But let me think not of the scorn
Which from the meanest I have borne,
When, for my child's beloved sake,
I mixed with slaves, to vindicate
The very laws themselves do make;
Let me not say scorn is my fate,
Lest I be proud, suffering the same
With those who live in deathless fame.

She ceased.--'Lo, where red morning through the woods
Is burning o'er the dew!' said Rosalind.
And with these words they rose, and towards the flood
Of the blue lake, beneath the leaves, now wind
With equal steps and fingers intertwined.
Thence to a lonely dwelling, where the shore
Is shadowed with steep rocks, and cypresses
Cleave with their dark green cones the silent skies
And with their shadows the clear depths below,

And where a little terrace from its bowers
Of blooming myrtle and faint lemon flowers
Scatters its sense-dissolving fragrance o'er
The liquid marble of the windless lake;
And where the aged forest's limbs look hoar
Under the leaves which their green garments make,
They come. 'T is Helen's home, and clean and white,
Like one which tyrants spare on our own land
In some such solitude; its casements bright
Shone through their vine-leaves in the morning sun,
And even within 't was scarce like Italy.
And when she saw how all things there were planned
As in an English home, dim memory
Disturbed poor Rosalind; she stood as one
Whose mind is where his body cannot be,
Till Helen led her where her child yet slept,
And said, 'Observe, that brow was Lionel's,
Those lips were his, and so he ever kept

One arm in sleep, pillowing his head with it.
You cannot see his eyes--they are two wells
Of liquid love. Let us not wake him yet.'
But Rosalind could bear no more, and wept
A shower of burning tears which fell upon
His face, and so his opening lashes shone
With tears unlike his own, as he did leap
In sudden wonder from his innocent sleep.

So Rosalind and Helen lived together
Thenceforth--changed in all else, yet friends again,
Such as they were, when o'er the mountain heather
They wandered in their youth through sun and rain.
And after many years, for human things
Change even like the ocean and the wind,
Her daughter was restored to Rosalind,
And in their circle thence some visitings
Of joy 'mid their new calm would intervene.
A lovely child she was, of looks serene,
And motions which o'er things indifferent shed
The grace and gentleness from whence they came.
And Helen's boy grew with her, and they fed
From the same flowers of thought, until each mind
Like springs which mingle in one flood became;
And in their union soon their parents saw
The shadow of the peace denied to them.
And Rosalind--for when the living stem
Is cankered in its heart, the tree must fall--
Died ere her time; and with deep grief and awe
The pale survivors followed her remains
Beyond the region of dissolving rains,
Up the cold mountain she was wont to call
Her tomb; and on Chiavenna's precipice
They raised a pyramid of lasting ice,
Whose polished sides, ere day had yet begun,
Caught the first glow of the unrisen sun,
The last, when it had sunk; and through the night
The charioteers of Arctos wheelèd round
Its glittering point, as seen from Helen's home,
Whose sad inhabitants each year would come,
With willing steps climbing that rugged height,
And hang long locks of hair, and garlands bound

With amaranth flowers, which, in the clime's despite,
Filled the frore air with unaccustomed light;
Such flowers as in the wintry memory bloom
Of one friend left adorned that frozen tomb.

Helen, whose spirit was of softer mould,
Whose sufferings too were less, death slower led
Into the peace of his dominion cold.
She died among her kindred, being old.
And know, that if love die not in the dead
As in the living, none of mortal kind
Are blessed as now Helen and Rosalind.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Saint Edmond's Eve

Oh! did you observe the Black Canon pass,
And did you observe his frown?
He goeth to say the midnight mass,
In holy St. Edmond's town.

He goeth to sing the burial chaunt,
And to lay the wandering sprite,
Whose shadowy, restless form doth haunt,
The Abbey's drear aisle this night.

It saith it will not its wailing cease,
'Till that holy man come near,
'Till he pour o'er its grave the prayer of peace,
And sprinkle the hallowed tear.

The Canon's horse is stout and strong
The road is plain and fair,
But the Canon slowly wends along,
And his brow is gloomed with care.

Who is it thus late at the Abbey-gate?
Sullen echoes the portal bell,
It sounds like the whispering voice of fate,
It sounds like a funeral knell.

The Canon his faltering knee thrice bowed,
And his frame was convulsed with fear,
When a voice was heard distinct and loud,
'Prepare! for thy hour is near.'

He crosses his breast, he mutters a prayer,
To Heaven he lifts his eye,
He heeds not the Abbot's gazing stare,
Nor the dark Monks who murmured by.

Bare-headed he worships the sculptured saints
That frown on the sacred walls,
His face it grows pale,--he trembles, he faints,
At the Abbot's feet he falls.

And straight the father's robe he kissed,
Who cried, 'Grace dwells with thee,
The spirit will fade like the morning mist,
At your benedicite.

'Now haste within! the board is spread,
Keen blows the air, and cold,
The spectre sleeps in its earthy bed,
'Till St. Edmond's bell hath tolled,--

'Yet rest your wearied limbs to-night,
You've journeyed many a mile,
To-morrow lay the wailing sprite,
That shrieks in the moonlight aisle.

'Oh! faint are my limbs and my bosom is cold,
Yet to-night must the sprite be laid,
Yet to-night when the hour of horror's told,
Must I meet the wandering shade.

'Nor food, nor rest may now delay,--
For hark! the echoing pile,
A bell loud shakes!—Oh haste away,
O lead to the haunted aisle.'

The torches slowly move before,
The cross is raised on high,
A smile of peace the Canon wore,
But horror dimmed his eye--

And now they climb the footworn stair,
The chapel gates unclose,
Now each breathed low a fervent prayer,
And fear each bosom froze--

Now paused awhile the doubtful band
And viewed the solemn scene,--
Full dark the clustered columns stand,
The moon gleams pale between--

'Say father, say, what cloisters' gloom

Conceals the unquiet shade,
Within what dark unhallowed tomb,
The corse unblessed was laid.'

'Through yonder drear aisle alone it walks,
And murmurs a mournful plaint,
Of thee! Black Canon, it wildly talks,
And call on thy patron saint--

The pilgrim this night with wondering eyes,
As he prayed at St. Edmond's shrine,
From a black marble tomb hath seen it rise,
And under yon arch recline.'--

'Oh! say upon that black marble tomb,
What memorial sad appears.'--
'Undistinguished it lies in the chancel's gloom,
No memorial sad it bears'--

The Canon his paternoster reads,
His rosary hung by his side,
Now swift to the chancel doors he leads,
And untouched they open wide,

Resistless, strange sounds his steps impel,
To approach to the black marble tomb,
'Oh! enter, Black Canon,' a whisper fell,
'Oh! enter, thy hour is come.'

He paused, told his beads, and the threshold passed.
Oh! horror, the chancel doors close,
A loud yell was borne on the rising blast,
And a deep, dying groan arose.

The Monks in amazement shuddering stand,
They burst through the chancel's gloom,
From St. Edmond's shrine, lo! a skeleton's hand,
Points to the black marble tomb.

Lo! deeply engraved, an inscription blood red,
In characters fresh and clear--
'The guilty Black Canon of Elmham's dead,

And his wife lies buried here!

In Elmham's tower he wedded a Nun,
To St. Edmond's his bride he bore,
On this eve her noviciate here was begun,
And a Monk's gray weeds she wore;--

O! deep was her conscience dyed with guilt,
Remorse she full oft revealed,
Her blood by the ruthless Black Canon was spilt,
And in death her lips he sealed;

Her spirit to penance this night was doomed,
'Till the Canon atoned the deed,
Here together they now shall rest entombed,
'Till their bodies from dust are freed--

Hark! a loud peal of thunder shakes the roof,
Round the altar bright lightnings play,
Speechless with horror the Monks stand aloof,
And the storm dies sudden away--

The inscription was gone! a cross on the ground,
And a rosary shone through the gloom,
But never again was the Canon there found,
Or the Ghost on the black marble tomb.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Similes For Two Political Characters Of 1819

I.

As from an ancestral oak
Two empty ravens sound their clarion,
Yell by yell, and croak by croak,
When they scent the noonday smoke
Of fresh human carrion:--

II.

As two gibbering night-birds flit
From their bowers of deadly yew
Through the night to frighten it,
When the moon is in a fit,
And the stars are none, or few:--

III.

As a shark and dog-fish wait
Under an Atlantic isle,
For the negro-ship, whose freight
Is the theme of their debate,
Wrinkling their red gills the while--

IV.

Are ye, two vultures sick for battle,
Two scorpions under one wet stone,
Two bloodless wolves whose dry throats rattle,
Two crows perched on the murrained cattle,
Two vipers tangled into one.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sister Rosa: A Ballad

I.

The death-bell beats!--
The mountain repeats
The echoing sound of the knell;
And the dark Monk now
Wraps the cowl round his brow,
As he sits in his lonely cell.

II.

And the cold hand of death
Chills his shuddering breath,
As he lists to the fearful lay
Which the ghosts of the sky,
As they sweep wildly by,
Sing to departed day.
And they sing of the hour
When the stern fates had power
To resolve Rosa's form to its clay.

III.

But that hour is past;
And that hour was the last
Of peace to the dark Monk's brain.
Bitter tears, from his eyes, gushed silent and fast;
And he strove to suppress them in vain.

IV.

Then his fair cross of gold he dashed on the floor,
When the death-knell struck on his ear.--
'Delight is in store
For her evermore;
But for me is fate, horror, and fear.'

V.

Then his eyes wildly rolled,
When the death-bell tolled,
And he raged in terrific woe.
And he stamped on the ground,--
But when ceased the sound,

Tears again began to flow.

VI.

And the ice of despair
Chilled the wild throb of care,
And he sate in mute agony still;
Till the night-stars shone through the cloudless air,
And the pale moonbeam slept on the hill.

VII.

Then he knelt in his cell:--
And the horrors of hell
Were delights to his agonized pain,
And he prayed to God to dissolve the spell,
Which else must for ever remain.

VIII.

And in fervent pray'r he knelt on the ground,
Till the abbey bell struck One:
His feverish blood ran chill at the sound:
A voice hollow and horrible murmured around--
'The term of thy penance is done!'

IX.

Grew dark the night;
The moonbeam bright
Waxed faint on the mountain high;
And, from the black hill,
Went a voice cold and still,--
'Monk! thou art free to die.'

X.

Then he rose on his feet,
And his heart loud did beat,
And his limbs they were palsied with dread;
Whilst the grave's clammy dew
O'er his pale forehead grew;
And he shuddered to sleep with the dead.

XI.

And the wild midnight storm
Raved around his tall form,

As he sought the chapel's gloom:
And the sunk grass did sigh
To the wind, bleak and high,
As he searched for the new-made tomb.

XII.

And forms, dark and high,
Seemed around him to fly,
And mingle their yells with the blast:
And on the dark wall
Half-seen shadows did fall,
As enhorrored he onward passed.

XIII.

And the storm-fiends wild rave
O'er the new-made grave,
And dread shadows linger around.
The Monk called on God his soul to save,
And, in horror, sank on the ground.

XIV.

Then despair nerved his arm
To dispel the charm,
And he burst Rosa's coffin asunder.
And the fierce storm did swell
More terrific and fell,
And louder pealed the thunder.

XV.

And laughed, in joy, the fiendish throng,
Mixed with ghosts of the mouldering dead:
And their grisly wings, as they floated along,
Whistled in murmurs dread.

XVI.

And her skeleton form the dead Nun reared
Which dripped with the chill dew of hell.
In her half-eaten eyeballs two pale flames appeared,
And triumphant their gleam on the dark Monk glared,
As he stood within the cell.

XVII.

And her lank hand lay on his shuddering brain;
But each power was nerved by fear.--
'I never, henceforth, may breathe again;
Death now ends mine anguished pain.--
The grave yawns,--we meet there.'

XVIII.

And her skeleton lungs did utter the sound,
So deadly, so lone, and so fell,
That in long vibrations shuddered the ground;
And as the stern notes floated around,
A deep groan was answered from hell.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song

Rarely, rarely comest thou,
 Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
 Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou art fled away.

How shall ever one like me
 Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
 Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
 Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismayed;
 Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not her.

Let me set my mournful ditty
 To a merry measure;--
Thou wilt never come for pity,
 Thou wilt come for pleasure;
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
 Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dressed,
 And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow and all the forms
 Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
 Everything almost

Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good;
Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love--though he has wings,
And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
Spirit, I love thee--
Thou art love and life! O come!
Make once more my heart thy home!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song For 'Tasso'

I.

I loved—alas! our life is love;
But when we cease to breathe and move
I do suppose love ceases too.
I thought, but not as now I do,
Keen thoughts and bright of linked lore,
Of all that men had thought before.
And all that Nature shows, and more.

II.

And still I love and still I think,
But strangely, for my heart can drink
The dregs of such despair, and live,
And love;...
And if I think, my thoughts come fast,
I mix the present with the past,
And each seems uglier than the last.

III.

Sometimes I see before me flee
A silver spirit's form, like thee,
O Leonora, and I sit
...still watching it,
Till by the grated casement's ledge
It fades, with such a sigh, as sedge
Breathes o'er the breezy streamlet's edge.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song From The Wandering Jew

See yon opening flower
Spreads its fragrance to the blast;
It fades within an hour,
Its decay is pale--is fast.
Paler is yon maiden;
Faster is her heart's decay;
Deep with sorrow laden,
She sinks in death away.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song Of Proserpine While Gathering Flowers On The Plain Of Enna

Sacred Goddess, Mother Earth,
 Thou from whose immortal bosom
Gods and men and beasts have birth,
 Leaf and blade, and bud and blossom,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

If with mists of evening dew
 Thou dost nourish these young flowers
Till they grow in scent and hue
 Fairest children of the Hours,
Breathe thine influence most divine
On thine own child, Proserpine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Cold, Cold Is The Blast When December Is Howling

Cold, cold is the blast when December is howling,
Cold are the damps on a dying man's brow,--
Stern are the seas when the wild waves are rolling,
And sad is the grave where a loved one lies low;
But colder is scorn from the being who loved thee,
More stern is the sneer from the friend who has proved thee,
More sad are the tears when their sorrows have moved thee,
Which mixed with groans anguish and wild madness flow--

And ah! poor — has felt all this horror,
Full long the fallen victim contended with fate:
'Till a destitute outcast abandoned to sorrow,
She sought her babe's food at her ruiner's gate--
Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer,
He turned laughing aside from her moans and her prayer,
She said nothing, but wringing the wet from her hair,
Crossed the dark mountain side, though the hour it was late.
'Twas on the wild height of the dark Penmanmawr,
That the form of the wasted -- reclined;
She shrieked to the ravens that croaked from afar,
And she sighed to the gusts of the wild sweeping wind.--
I call not yon rocks where the thunder peals rattle,
I call not yon clouds where the elements battle,
But thee, cruel -- I call thee unkind!!--

Then she wreathed in her hair the wild flowers of the mountain,
And deliriously laughing, a garland entwined,
She bedewed it with tears, then she hung o'er the fountain,
And leaving it, cast it a prey to the wind.
'Ah! go,' she exclaimed, 'when the tempest is yelling,
'Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling,
But I left, a pitiless outcast, my dwelling,
My garments are torn, so they say is my mind--'

Not long lived --, but over her grave
Waved the desolate form of a storm-blasted yew,
Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave,

But spirits of peace steep her slumbers in dew.
Then stay thy swift steps mid the dark mountain heather,
Though chill blow the wind and severe is the weather,
For perfidy, traveller! cannot bereave her,
Of the tears, to the tombs of the innocent due.--

JULY, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Come Harriet! Sweet Is The Hour

Come Harriet! sweet is the hour,
Soft Zephyrs breathe gently around,
The anemone's night-boding flower,
Has sunk its pale head on the ground.

'Tis thus the world's keenness hath torn,
Some mild heart that expands to its blast,
'Tis thus that the wretched forlorn,
Sinks poor and neglected at last.--

The world with its keenness and woe,
Has no charms or attraction for me,
Its unkindness with grief has laid low,
The heart which is faithful to thee.
The high trees that wave past the moon,
As I walk in their umbrage with you,
All declare I must part with you soon,
All bid you a tender adieu!--

Then Harriet! dearest farewell,
You and I love, may ne'er meet again;
These woods and these meadows can tell
How soft and how sweet was the strain.--

APRIL, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. -- Fierce Roars The Midnight Storm

Fierce roars the midnight storm
O'er the wild mountain,
Dark clouds the night deform,
Swift rolls the fountain--

See! o'er yon rocky height,
Dim mists are flying--
See by the moon's pale light,
Poor Laura's dying!

Shame and remorse shall howl,
By her false pillow--
Fiercer than storms that roll,
O'er the white billow;

No hand her eyes to close,
When life is flying,
But she will find repose,
For Laura's dying!

Then will I seek my love,
Then will I cheer her,
Then my esteem will prove,
When no friend is near her.

On her grave I will lie,
When life is parted,
On her grave I will die,
For the false hearted.

DECEMBER, 1809.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. To -- [harriet]

Stern, stern is the voice of fate's fearful command,
When accents of horror it breathes in our ear,
Or compels us for aye bid adieu to the land,
Where exists that loved friend to our bosom so dear,

'Tis sterner than death o'er the shuddering wretch bending,
And in skeleton grasp his fell sceptre extending,
Like the heart-stricken deer to that loved covert wending,
Which never again to his eyes may appear--

And ah! he may envy the heart-stricken quarry,
Who bids to the friend of affection farewell,
He may envy the bosom so bleeding and gory,
He may envy the sound of the drear passing knell,

Not so deep is his grief on his death couch reposing,
When on the last vision his dim eyes are closing!
As the outcast whose love-raptured senses are losing,
The last tones of thy voice on the wild breeze that swell!

Those tones were so soft, and so sad, that ah! never,
Can the sound cease to vibrate on Memory's ear,
In the stern wreck of Nature for ever and ever,
The remembrance must live of a friend so sincere.

AUGUST, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Despair

Ask not the pallid stranger's woe,
With beating heart and throbbing breast,
Whose step is faltering, weak, and slow,
As though the body needed rest.--

Whose 'wildered eye no object meets,
Nor cares to ken a friendly glance,
With silent grief his bosom beats,--
Now fixed, as in a deathlike trance.

Who looks around with fearful eye,
And shuns all converse with man kind,
As though some one his griefs might spy,
And soothe them with a kindred mind.

A friend or foe to him the same,
He looks on each with equal eye;
The difference lies but in the name,
To none for comfort can he fly.--

'Twas deep despair, and sorrow's trace,
To him too keenly given,
Whose memory, time could not efface--
His peace was lodged in Heaven.--

He looks on all this world bestows,
The pride and pomp of power,
As trifles best for pageant shows
Which vanish in an hour.

When torn is dear affection's tie,
Sinks the soft heart full low;
It leaves without a parting sigh,
All that these realms bestow.

JUNE, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Hope

And said I that all hope was fled,
That sorrow and despair were mine,
That each enthusiast wish was dead,
Had sank beneath pale Misery's shrine.--

Seest thou the sunbeam's yellow glow,
That robes with liquid streams of light;
Yon distant Mountain's craggy brow.
And shows the rocks so fair,--so bright--

Tis thus sweet expectation's ray,
In softer view shows distant hours,
And portrays each succeeding day,
As dressed in fairer, brighter flowers,--

The vermeil tinted flowers that blossom;
Are frozen but to bud anew,
Then sweet deceiver calm my bosom,
Although thy visions be not true,--

Yet true they are,—and I'll believe,
Thy whisperings soft of love and peace,
God never made thee to deceive,
'Tis sin that bade thy empire cease.

Yet though despair my life should gloom,
Though horror should around me close,
With those I love, beyond the tomb,
Hope shows a balm for all my woes.

AUGUST, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Sorrow

To me this world's a dreary blank,
All hopes in life are gone and fled,
My high strung energies are sank,
And all my blissful hopes lie dead.--

The world once smiling to my view,
Showed scenes of endless bliss and joy;
The world I then but little knew,
Ah! little knew how pleasures cloy;

All then was jocund, all was gay,
No thought beyond the present hour,
I danced in pleasure's fading ray,
Fading alas! as drooping flower.

Nor do the heedless in the throng,
One thought beyond the morrow give,
They court the feast, the dance, the song,
Nor think how short their time to live.

The heart that bears deep sorrow's trace,
What earthly comfort can console,
It drags a dull and lengthened pace,
'Till friendly death its woes enroll.--

The sunken cheek, the humid eyes,
E'en better than the tongue can tell;
In whose sad breast deep sorrow lies,
Where memory's rankling traces dwell.--

The rising tear, the stifled sigh,
A mind but ill at ease display,
Like blackening clouds in stormy sky,
Where fiercely vivid lightnings play.

Thus when souls' energy is dead,
When sorrow dims each earthly view,
When every fairy hope is fled,
We bid ungrateful world adieu.

AUGUST, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. To [harriet]

Ah! sweet is the moonbeam that sleeps on yon fountain,
And sweet the mild rush of the soft-sighing breeze,
And sweet is the glimpse of yon dimly-seen mountain,
'Neath the verdant arcades of yon shadowy trees.

But sweeter than all was thy tone of affection,
Which scarce seemed to break on the stillness of eve,
Though the time it is past!--yet the dear recollection,
For aye in the heart of thy [Percy] must live.

Yet he hears thy dear voice in the summer winds sighing,
Mild accents of happiness lisp in his ear,
When the hope-winged moments athwart him are flying,
And he thinks of the friend to his bosom so dear.--

And thou dearest friend in his bosom for ever
Must reign unalloyed by the fast rolling year,
He loves thee, and dearest one never, Oh! never
Canst thou cease to be loved by a heart so sincere.

AUGUST, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Translated From The German

Ah! grasp the dire dagger and couch the fell spear,
If vengeance and death to thy bosom be dear,
The dastard shall perish, death's torment shall prove,
For fate and revenge are decreed from above.

Ah! where is the hero, whose nerves strung by youth,
Will defend the firm cause of justice and truth;
With insatiate desire whose bosom shall swell,
To give up the oppressor to judgement and Hell--

For him shall the fair one twine chaplets of bays,
To him shall each warrior give merited praise,
And triumphant returned from the clangour of arms,
He shall find his reward in his loved maiden's charms.

In ecstatic confusion the warrior shall sip,
The kisses that glow on his love's dewy lip,
And mutual, eternal, embraces shall prove,
The rewards of the brave are the transports of love.

OCTOBER, 1809.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song. Translated From The Italian

Oh! what is the gain of restless care,
And what is ambitious treasure?
And what are the joys that the modish share,
In their sickly haunts of pleasure?

My husband's repast with delight I spread,
What though 'tis but rustic fare,
May each guardian angel protect his shed,
May contentment and quiet be there.

And may I support my husband's years,
May I soothe his dying pain,
And then may I dry my fast falling tears,
And meet him in Heaven again.

JULY, 1810.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Song: Rarely, Rarely, Comest Thou

Rarely, rarely, comest thou,
Spirit of Delight!
Wherefore hast thou left me now
Many a day and night?
Many a weary night and day
'Tis since thou are fled away.

How shall ever one like me
Win thee back again?
With the joyous and the free
Thou wilt scoff at pain.
Spirit false! thou hast forgot
All but those who need thee not.

As a lizard with the shade
Of a trembling leaf,
Thou with sorrow art dismay'd;
Even the sighs of grief
Reproach thee, that thou art not near,
And reproach thou wilt not hear.

Let me set my mournful ditty
To a merry measure;
Thou wilt never come for pity,
Thou wilt come for pleasure;
Pity then will cut away
Those cruel wings, and thou wilt stay.

I love all that thou lovest,
Spirit of Delight!
The fresh Earth in new leaves dress'd,
And the starry night;
Autumn evening, and the morn
When the golden mists are born.

I love snow, and all the forms
Of the radiant frost;
I love waves, and winds, and storms,
Everything almost

Which is Nature's, and may be
Untainted by man's misery.

I love tranquil solitude,
 And such society
As is quiet, wise, and good;
 Between thee and me
What difference? but thou dost possess
The things I seek, not love them less.

I love Love--though he has wings,
 And like light can flee,
But above all other things,
 Spirit, I love thee--
Thou art love and life! Oh come,
Make once more my heart thy home.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet -- Ye Hasten To The Grave!

Ye hasten to the grave! What seek ye there,
Ye restless thoughts and busy purposes
Of the idle brain, which the world's livery wear?
O thou quick heart, which pantest to possess
All that pale Expectation feigneth fair!
Thou vainly curious mind which wouldest guess
Whence thou didst come, and whither thou must go,
And all that never yet was known would know--
Oh, whither hasten ye, that thus ye press,
With such swift feet life's green and pleasant path,
Seeking, alike from happiness and woe,
A refuge in the cavern of gray death?
O heart, and mind, and thoughts! what thing do you
Hope to inherit in the grave below?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet : From The Italian Of Cavalcanti

Returning from its daily quest, my Spirit
Changed thoughts and vile in thee doth weep to find:
It grieves me that thy mild and gentle mind
Those ample virtues which it did inherit
Has lost. Once thou didst loathe the multitude
Of blind and madding men--I then loved thee--
I loved thy lofty songs and that sweet mood
When thou wert faithful to thyself and me
I dare not now through thy degraded state
Own the delight thy strains inspire--in vain
I seek what once thou wert--we cannot meet
And we were wont. Again and yet again
Ponder my words: so the false Spirit shall fly
And leave to thee thy true integrity.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet : From The Italian Of Dante

Guido, I would that Lapo, thou, and I,
Led by some strong enchantment, might ascend
A magic ship, whose charmed sails should fly
With winds at will where'er our thoughts might wend,
So that no change, nor any evil chance
Should mar our joyous voyage; but it might be,
That even satiety should still enhance
Between our hearts their strict community:
And that the bounteous wizard then would place
Vanna and Bice and my gentle love,
Companions of our wandering, and would grace
With passionate talk, wherever we might rove,
Our time, and each were as content and free
As I believe that thou and I should be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet : On Launching Some Bottles Filled With Knowledge Into The Bristol Channel

Vessels of heavenly medicine! may the breeze
Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore;
Safe may ye stem the wide surrounding roar
Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas;
And oh! if Liberty e'er deigned to stoop
From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,
Sure she will breathe around your emerald group
The fairest breezes of her West that blow.
Yes! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul
Whose eye-beam, kindling as it meets your freight,
Her heaven-born flame in suffering Earth will light,
Until its radiance gleams from pole to pole,
And tyrant-hearts with powerless envy burst
To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet : To A Balloon Laden With Knowledge

Bright ball of flame that through the gloom of even
Silently takest thine aethereal way,
And with surpassing glory dimm'st each ray
Twinkling amid the dark blue depths of Heaven,--
Unlike the fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou
Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,
Whilst that, unquenchable, is doomed to glow
A watch-light by the patriot's lonely tomb;
A ray of courage to the oppressed and poor;
A spark, though gleaming on the hovel's hearth,
Which through the tyrant's gilded domes shall roar;
A beacon in the darkness of the Earth;
A sun which, o'er the renovated scene,
Shall dart like Truth where Falsehood yet has been.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet To Byron

[I am afraid these verses will not please you, but]

If I esteemed you less, Envy would kill
Pleasure, and leave to Wonder and Despair
The ministrations of the thoughts that fill
The mind which, like a worm whose life may share
A portion of the unapproachable,
Marks your creations rise as fast and fair
As perfect worlds at the Creator's will.

But such is my regard that nor your power
To soar above the heights where others [climb],
Nor fame, that shadow of the unborn hour
Cast from the envious future on the time,
Move one regret for his unhonoured name
Who dares these words:--the worm beneath the sod
May lift itself in homage of the God.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet: England In 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying king,--
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,--mud from a muddy spring,--
Rulers who neither see, nor feel, nor know,
But leech-like to their fainting country cling,
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow,--
A people starved and stabbed in the untilled field,--
An army, which liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield,--
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless—a book sealed;
A Senate,--Time's worst statute, unrepealed,--
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet: Lift Not The Painted Veil Which Those Who Live

Lift not the painted veil which those who live
Call Life: though unreal shapes be pictured there,
And it but mimic all we would believe
With colours idly spread,-behind, lurk Fear
And Hope, twin Destinies; who ever weave
Their shadows, o'er the chasm, sightless and drear.
I knew one who had lifted it-he sought,
For his lost heart was tender, things to love,
But found them not, alas! nor was there aught
The world contains, the which he could approve.
Through the unheeding many he did move,
A splendour among shadows, a bright blot
Upon this gloomy scene, a Spirit that strove
For truth, and like the Preacher found it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Sonnet: Political Greatness

Nor happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame,
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom? Man who man would be,
Must rule the empire of himself; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

St. Irvyne's Tower

I.

How swiftly through Heaven's wide expanse
Bright day's resplendent colours fade!
How sweetly does the moonbeam's glance
With silver tint St. Irvyne's glade!

II.

No cloud along the spangled air,
Is borne upon the evening breeze;
How solemn is the scene! how fair
The moonbeams rest upon the trees!

III.

Yon dark gray turret glimmers white,
Upon it sits the mournful owl;
Along the stillness of the night,
Her melancholy shriekings roll.

IV.

But not alone on Irvyne's tower,
The silver moonbeam pours her ray;
It gleams upon the ivied bower,
It dances in the cascade's spray.

V.

'Ah! why do dark'ning shades conceal
The hour, when man must cease to be?
Why may not human minds unveil
The dim mists of futurity?--

VI.

'The keenness of the world hath torn
The heart which opens to its blast;
Despised, neglected, and forlorn,
Sinks the wretch in death at last.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanza

If I walk in Autumn's even
While the dead leaves pass,
If I look on Spring's soft heaven,--
Something is not there which was
Winter's wondrous frost and snow,
Summer's clouds, where are they now?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanza From A Translation Of The Marseillaise Hymn

Tremble, Kings despised of man!
Ye traitors to your Country,
Tremble! Your parricidal plan
At length shall meet its destiny...
We all are soldiers fit to fight,
But if we sink in glory's night
Our mother Earth will give ye new
The brilliant pathway to pursue
Which leads to Death or Victory...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanza, Written At Bracknell

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;
Thy gentle words stir poison there;
Thou hast disturbed the only rest
That was the portion of despair!
Subdued to Duty's hard control,
I could have borne my wayward lot:
The chains that bind this ruined soul
Had cankered then—but crushed it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanzas Written In Dejection, Near Naples

I.

The sun is warm, the sky is clear,
The waves are dancing fast and bright,
Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
The purple noon's transparent might,
The breath of the moist earth is light,
Around its unexpanded buds;
Like many a voice of one delight
The winds, the birds, the ocean floods,
The city's voice itself, is soft like Solitude's.

II.

I see the deep's untrampled floor
With green and purple seaweeds strown;
I see the waves upon the shore,
Like light dissolved in star-showers, thrown:
I sit upon the sands alone,--
The lightning of the noontide ocean
Is flashing round me, and a tone
Arises from its measured motion,
How sweet! did any heart now share in my emotion.

III.

Alas! I have nor hope nor health,
Nor peace within nor calm around,
Nor that content surpassing wealth
The sage in meditation found,
And walked with inward glory crowned--
Nor fame nor power, nor love, nor leisure,
Others I see whom these surround--
Smiling they live, and call life pleasure;--
To me that cup has been dealt in another measure.

IV.

Yet now despair itself is mild,
Even as the winds and waters are;
I could lie down like a tired child,
And weep away the life of care
Which I have born and yet must bear,

Till death like sleep might steal on me,
And I might feel in the warm air
My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.

V.

Some might lament that I were cold,
As I, when this sweet day is gone,
Which my lost heart, too soon grown old,
Insults with this untimely moan;
They might lament -- for I am one
Whom men love not,-- and yet regret,
Unlike this day, which, when the sun
Shall on its stainless glory set,
Will linger, though enjoyed, like joy in memory yet.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Stanzas. -- April, 1814

Away! the moor is dark beneath the moon,
Rapid clouds have drank the last pale beam of even:
Away! the gathering winds will call the darkness soon,
And profoundest midnight shroud the serene lights of heaven.

Pause not! The time is past! Every voice cries, Away!
Tempt not with one last tear thy friend's ungentle mood:
Thy lover's eye, so glazed and cold, dares not entreat thy stay:
Duty and dereliction guide thee back to solitude.

Away, away! to thy sad and silent home;
Pour bitter tears on its desolated hearth;
Watch the dim shades as like ghosts they go and come,
And complicate strange webs of melancholy mirth.

The leaves of wasted autumn woods shall float around thine head:
The blooms of dewy spring shall gleam beneath thy feet:
But thy soul or this world must fade in the frost that binds the dead,
Ere midnight's frown and morning's smile, ere thou and peace may meet.

The cloud shadows of midnight possess their own repose,
For the weary winds are silent, or the moon is in the deep:
Some respite to its turbulence unresting ocean knows;
Whatever moves, or toils, or grieves, hath its appointed sleep.

Thou in the grave shalt rest—yet till the phantoms flee
Which that house and heath and garden made dear to thee erewhile,
Thy remembrance, and repentance, and deep musings are not free
From the music of two voices and the light of one sweet smile.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Summer And Winter

It was a bright and cheerful afternoon,
Towards the end of the sunny month of June,
When the north wind congregates in crowds
The floating mountains of the silver clouds
From the horizon—and the stainless sky
Opens beyond them like eternity.
All things rejoiced beneath the sun; the weeds,
The river, and the corn-fields, and the reeds;
The willow leaves that glanced in the light breeze,
And the firm foliage of the larger trees.

It was a winter such as when birds die
In the deep forests; and the fishes lie
Stiffened in the translucent ice, which makes
Even the mud and slime of the warm lakes
A wrinkled clod as hard as brick; and when,
Among their children, comfortable men
Gather about great fires, and yet feel cold:
Alas, then, for the homeless beggar old!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Aziola

I.

'Do you not hear the Aziola cry?
Methinks she must be nigh,'
Said Mary, as we sate
In dusk, ere stars were lit, or candles brought;
And I, who thought
This Aziola was some tedious woman,
Asked, 'Who is Aziola?' How elate
I felt to know that it was nothing human,
No mockery of myself to fear or hate:
And Mary saw my soul,
And laughed, and said, 'Disquiet yourself not;
'Tis nothing but a little downy owl.'

II.

Sad Aziola! many an eventide
Thy music I had heard
By wood and stream, meadow and mountain-side,
And fields and marshes wide,--
Such as nor voice, nor lute, nor wind, nor bird,
The soul ever stirred;
Unlike and far sweeter than them all.
Sad Aziola! from that moment I
Loved thee and thy sad cry.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Birth Place Of Pleasure

At the creation of the Earth
Pleasure, that divinest birth,
From the soil of Heaven did rise,
Wrapped in sweet wild melodies--
Like an exhalation wreathing
To the sound of air low-breathing
Through Aeolian pines, which make
A shade and shelter to the lake
Whence it rises soft and slow;
Her life-breathing [limbs] did flow
In the harmony divine
Of an ever-lengthening line
Which enwrapped her perfect form
With a beauty clear and warm.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Boat On The Serchio

Our boat is asleep on Serchio's stream,
Its sails are folded like thoughts in a dream,
The helm sways idly, hither and thither;
Dominic, the boatman, has brought the mast,
And the oars, and the sails; but 'tis sleeping fast,
Like a beast, unconscious of its tether.

The stars burnt out in the pale blue air,
And the thin white moon lay withering there;
To tower, and cavern, and rift, and tree,
The owl and the bat fled drowsily.
Day had kindled the dewy woods,
And the rocks above and the stream below,
And the vapours in their multitudes,
And the Apennine's shroud of summer snow,
And clothed with light of aery gold
The mists in their eastern caves uprolled.

Day had awakened all things that be,
The lark and the thrush and the swallow free,
And the milkmaid's song and the mower's scythe
And the matin-bell and the mountain bee:
Fireflies were quenched on the dewy corn,
Glow-worms went out on the river's brim,
Like lamps which a student forgets to trim:
The beetle forgot to wind his horn,
The crickets were still in the meadow and hill:
Like a flock of rooks at a farmer's gun
Night's dreams and terrors, every one,
Fled from the brains which are their prey
From the lamp's death to the morning ray.

All rose to do the task He set to each,
Who shaped us to His ends and not our own;
The million rose to learn, and one to teach
What none yet ever knew or can be known.
And many rose
Whose woe was such that fear became desire;--
Melchior and Lionel were not among those;

They from the throng of men had stepped aside,
And made their home under the green hill-side.
It was that hill, whose intervening brow
Screens Lucca from the Pisan's envious eye,
Which the circumfluous plain waving below,
Like a wide lake of green fertility,
With streams and fields and marshes bare,
Divides from the far Apennines—which lie
Islanded in the immeasurable air.

'What think you, as she lies in her green cove,
Our little sleeping boat is dreaming of?'
'If morning dreams are true, why I should guess
That she was dreaming of our idleness,
And of the miles of watery way
We should have led her by this time of day.'--

'Never mind,' said Lionel,
'Give care to the winds, they can bear it well
About yon poplar-tops; and see
The white clouds are driving merrily,
And the stars we miss this morn will light
More willingly our return to-night.--
How it whistles, Dominic's long black hair!
List, my dear fellow; the breeze blows fair:
Hear how it sings into the air--'

--'Of us and of our lazy motions,'
Impatiently said Melchior,
'If I can guess a boat's emotions;
And how we ought, two hours before,
To have been the devil knows where.'
And then, in such transalpine Tuscan
As would have killed a Della-Cruscan,

...

So, Lionel according to his art
Weaving his idle words, Melchior said:
'She dreams that we are not yet out of bed;
We'll put a soul into her, and a heart
Which like a dove chased by a dove shall beat.'

...

'Ay, heave the ballast overboard,
And stow the eatables in the aft locker.'
'Would not this keg be best a little lowered?'
'No, now all's right.' 'Those bottles of warm tea--
(Give me some straw)—must be stowed tenderly;
Such as we used, in summer after six,
To cram in greatcoat pockets, and to mix
Hard eggs and radishes and rolls at Eton,
And, couched on stolen hay in those green harbours
Farmers called gaps, and we schoolboys called arbours,
Would feast till eight.'

...

With a bottle in one hand,
As if his very soul were at a stand
Lionel stood—when Melchior brought him steady:--
'Sit at the helm—fasten this sheet--all ready!'

The chain is loosed, the sails are spread,
The living breath is fresh behind,
As with dews and sunrise fed,
Comes the laughing morning wind;--
The sails are full, the boat makes head
Against the Serchio's torrent fierce,
Then flags with intermitting course,
And hangs upon the wave, and stems
The tempest of the...
Which fervid from its mountain source
Shallow, smooth and strong doth come,--
Swift as fire, tempestuously
It sweeps into the affrighted sea;
In morning's smile its eddies coil,
Its billows sparkle, toss and boil,
Torturing all its quiet light
Into columns fierce and bright.

The Serchio, twisting forth
Between the marble barriers which it clove

At Ripafratta, leads through the dread chasm
The wave that died the death which lovers love,
Living in what it sought; as if this spasm
Had not yet passed, the toppling mountains cling,
But the clear stream in full enthusiasm
Pours itself on the plain, then wandering
Down one clear path of effluence crystalline
Sends its superfluous waves, that they may fling
At Arno's feet tribute of corn and wine;
Then, through the pestilential deserts wild
Of tangled marsh and woods of stunted pine,
It rushes to the Ocean.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Cenci : A Tragedy In Five Acts

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Count Francesco Cenci.

Giacomo, his Son.

Bernardo, his Son.

Cardinal Camillo.

Orsino, a Prelate.

Savella, the Pope's Legate.

Olimpio, Assassin.

Marzio, Assassin.

Andrea, Servant to Cenci.

Nobles, Judges, Guards, Servants.

Lucretia, Wife of Cenci, and Step-mother of his children.

Beatrice, his Daughter.

The Scene lies principally in Rome, but changes during the Fourth Act to Petrella, a castle among the Apulian Apennines.

Time. During the Pontificate of Clement VIII.

ACT I

Scene I.

-An Apartment in the Cenci Palace.

Enter Count Cenci, and Cardinal Camillo.

Camillo.

That matter of the murder is hushed up

If you consent to yield his Holiness

Your fief that lies beyond the Pincian gate.-

It needed all my interest in the conclave

To bend him to this point: he said that you

Bought perilous impunity with your gold;

That crimes like yours if once or twice compounded

Enriched the Church, and respited from hell

An erring soul which might repent and live:-

But that the glory and the interest

Of the high throne he fills, little consist

With making it a daily mart of guilt
As manifold and hideous as the deeds
Which you scarce hide from men's revolted eyes.

Cenci.

The third of my possessions-let it go!
Ay, I once heard the nephew of the Pope
Had sent his architect to view the ground,
Meaning to build a villa on my vines
The next time I compounded with his uncle:
I little thought he should outwit me so!
Henceforth no witness-not the lamp-shall see
That which the vassal threatened to divulge
Whose throat is choked with dust for his reward.
The deed he saw could not have rated higher
Than his most worthless life:-it angers me!
Respited me from Hell!-So may the Devil
Respite their souls from Heaven. No doubt Pope Clement,
And his most charitable nephews, pray
That the Apostle Peter and the Saints
Will grant for their sake that I long enjoy
Strength, wealth, and pride, and lust, and length of days
Wherein to act the deeds which are the stewards
Of their revenue.-But much yet remains
To which they show no title.

Camillo.

Oh, Count Cenci!
So much that thou mightst honourably live
And reconcile thyself with thine own heart
And with thy God, and with the offended world.
How hideously look deeds of lust and blood
Through those snow white and venerable hairs!-
Your children should be sitting round you now,
But that you fear to read upon their looks
The shame and misery you have written there.
Where is your wife? Where is your gentle daughter?
Methinks her sweet looks, which make all things else
Beauteous and glad, might kill the fiend within you.
Why is she barred from all society

But her own strange and uncomplaining wrongs?
Talk with me, Count,-you know I mean you well
I stood beside your dark and fiery youth
Watching its bold and bad career, as men
Watch meteors, but it vanished not-I marked
Your desperate and remorseless manhood; now
Do I behold you in dishonoured age
Charged with a thousand unrepented crimes.
Yet I have ever hoped you would amend,
And in that hope have saved your life three times.

Cenci.

For which Aldobrandino owes you now
My fief beyond the Pincian.-Cardinal,
One thing, I pray you, recollect henceforth,
And so we shall converse with less restraint.
A man you knew spoke of my wife and daughter-
He was accustomed to frequent my house;
So the next day his wife and daughter came
And asked if I had seen him; and I smiled:
I think they never saw him any more.

Camillo.

Thou execrable man, beware!-

Cenci.

Of thee?

Nay this is idle:-We should know each other.
As to my character for what men call crime
Seeing I please my senses as I list,
And vindicate that right with force or guile,
It is a public matter, and I care not
If I discuss it with you. I may speak
Alike to you and my own conscious heart-
For you give out that you have half reformed me,
Therefore strong vanity will keep you silent
If fear should not; both will, I do not doubt.
All men delight in sensual luxury,
All men enjoy revenge; and most exult

Over the tortures they can never feel-
Flattering their secret peace with others' pain.
But I delight in nothing else. I love
The sight of agony, and the sense of joy,
When this shall be another's, and that mine.
And I have no remorse and little fear,
Which are, I think, the checks of other men.
This mood has grown upon me, until now
Any design my captious fancy makes
The picture of its wish, and it forms none
But such as men like you would start to know,
Is as my natural food and rest debarred
Until it be accomplished.

Camillo.

Art thou not
Most miserable?

Cenci.

Why, miserable?-

No.-I am what your theologians call
Hardened;-which they must be in impudence,
So to revile a man's peculiar taste.
True, I was happier than I am, while yet
Manhood remained to act the thing I thought;
While lust was sweeter than revenge; and now
Invention palls:-Ay, we must all grow old-
And but that there yet remains a deed to act
Whose horror might make sharp an appetite
Duller than mine-I'd do-I know not what.
When I was young I thought of nothing else
But pleasure; and I fed on honey sweets:
Men, by St. Thomas! cannot live like bees,
And I grew tired:-yet, till I killed a foe,
And heard his groans, and heard his children's groans,
Knew I not what delight was else on earth,
Which now delights me little. I the rather
Look on such pangs as terror ill conceals,
The dry fixed eyeball; the pale quivering lip,
Which tell me that the spirit weeps within

Tears bitterer than the bloody sweat of Christ.
I rarely kill the body, which preserves,
Like a strong prison, the soul within my power,
Wherein I feed it with the breath of fear
For hourly pain.

Camillo.
Hell's most abandoned fiend
Did never, in the drunkenness of guilt,
Speak to his heart as now you speak to me;
I thank my God that I believe you not.

Enter Andrea.

Andrea.
My Lord, a gentleman from Salamanca
Would speak with you.

Cenci.
Bid him attend me in
The grand saloon.

[Exit Andrea.

Camillo.
Farewell; and I will pray
Almighty God that thy false, impious words
Tempt not his spirit to abandon thee.

[Exit Camillo.

Cenci.
The third of my possessions! I must use
Close husbandry, or gold, the old man's sword,

Falls from my withered hand. But yesterday
There came an order from the Pope to make
Fourfold provision for my cursèd sons;
Whom I had sent from Rome to Salamanca,
Hoping some accident might cut them off;
And meaning if I could to starve them there.
I pray thee, God, send some quick death upon them!
Bernardo and my wife could not be worse
If dead and damned:-then, as to Beatrice- [Looking around him suspiciously.

I think they cannot hear me at that door;
What if they should? And yet I need not speak
Though the heart triumphs with itself in words.
O, thou most silent air, that shalt not hear
What now I think! Thou, pavement, which I tread
Towards her chamber,-let your echoes talk
Of my imperious step scorning surprise,
But not of my intent!-Andrea!

[Enter Andrea.

Andrea.
My lord?

Cenci.
Bid Beatrice attend me in her chamber
This evening:-no, at midnight and alone.

[Exeunt.

Scene II.

-A Garden of the Cenci Palace. Enter Beatrice and Orsino, as in conversation.

Beatrice.
Pervert not truth,
Orsino. You remember where we held

That conversation;-nay, we see the spot
Even from this cypress;-two long years are past
Since, on an April midnight, underneath
The moonlight ruins of mount Palatine,
I did confess to you my secret mind.

Orsino.

You said you loved me then.

Beatrice.

You are a Priest,
Speak to me not of love.

Orsino.

I may obtain
The dispensation of the Pope to marry.
Because I am a Priest do you believe
Your image, as the hunter some struck deer,
Follows me not whether I wake or sleep?

Beatrice.

As I have said, speak to me not of love;
Had you a dispensation I have not;
Nor will I leave this home of misery
Whilst my poor Bernard, and that gentle lady
To whom I owe life, and these virtuous thoughts,
Must suffer what I still have strength to share.
Alas, Orsino! All the love that once
I felt for you, is turned to bitter pain.
Ours was a youthful contract, which you first
Broke, by assuming vows no Pope will loose.
And thus I love you still, but holily,
Even as a sister or a spirit might;
And so I swear a cold fidelity.
And it is well perhaps we shall not marry.
You have a sly, equivocating vein
That suits me not.-Ah, wretched that I am!
Where shall I turn? Even now you look on me

As you were not my friend, and as if you
Discovered that I thought so, with false smiles
Making my true suspicion seem your wrong.
Ah, no! forgive me; sorrow makes me seem
Stern than else my nature might have been;
I have a weight of melancholy thoughts,
And they forbode,-but what can they forbode
Worse than I now endure?

Orsino.

All will be well.

Is the petition yet prepared? You know
My zeal for all you wish, sweet Beatrice;
Doubt not but I will use my utmost skill
So that the Pope attend to your complaint.

Beatrice.

Your zeal for all I wish;-Ah me, you are cold!
Your utmost skill . . . speak but one word . . . (aside)
Alas!
Weak and deserted creature that I am,
Here I stand bickering with my only friend! [To Orsino.

This night my father gives a sumptuous feast,
Orsino; he has heard some happy news
From Salamanca, from my brothers there,
And with this outward show of love he mocks
His inward hate. 'Tis bold hypocrisy,
For he would gladlier celebrate their deaths,
Which I have heard him pray for on his knees:
Great God! that such a father should be mine!
But there is mighty preparation made,
And all our kin, the Cenci, will be there,
And all the chief nobility of Rome.
And he has bidden me and my pale Mother
Attire ourselves in festival array.
Poor lady! She expects some happy change
In his dark spirit from this act; I none.
At supper I will give you the petition:
Till when-farewell.

Orsino.

Farewell.

(Exit Beatrice.)

I know the Pope

Will ne'er absolve me from my priestly vow

But by absolving me from the revenue

Of many a wealthy see; and, Beatrice,

I think to win thee at an easier rate.

Nor shall he read her eloquent petition:

He might bestow her on some poor relation

Of his sixth cousin, as he did her sister,

And I should be debarred from all access.

Then as to what she suffers from her father,

In all this there is much exaggeration:-

Old men are testy and will have their way;

A man may stab his enemy, or his vassal,

And live a free life as to wine or women,

And with a peevish temper may return

To a dull home, and rate his wife and children;

Daughters and wives call this foul tyranny.

I shall be well content if on my conscience

There rest no heavier sin than what they suffer

From the devices of my love-a net

From which she shall escape not. Yet I fear

Her subtle mind, her awe-inspiring gaze,

Whose beams anatomize me nerve by nerve

And lay me bare, and make me blush to see

My hidden thoughts.-Ah, no! A friendless girl

Who clings to me, as to her only hope:-

I were a fool, not less than if a panther

Were panic-stricken by the antelope's eye,

If she escape me.

[Exit.

Scene III.

-A Magnificent Hall in the Cenci Palace. A Banquet. Enter Cenci, Lucretia, Beatrice, Orsino, Camillo, Nobles.

Cenci.

Welcome, my friends and kinsmen; welcome ye,
Princes and Cardinals, pillars of the church,
Whose presence honours our festivity.
I have too long lived like an anchorite,
And in my absence from your merry meetings
An evil word is gone abroad of me;
But I do hope that you, my noble friends,
When you have shared the entertainment here,
And heard the pious cause for which 'tis given,
And we have pledged a health or two together,
Will think me flesh and blood as well as you;
Sinful indeed, for Adam made all so,
But tender-hearted, meek and pitiful.

First Guest.

In truth, my Lord, you seem too light of heart,
Too sprightly and companionable a man,
To act the deeds that rumour pins on you. (To his Companion.)

I never saw such blithe and open cheer
In any eye!

Second Guest.

Some most desired event,
In which we all demand a common joy,
Has brought us hither; let us hear it, Count.

Cenci.

It is indeed a most desired event.
If, when a parent from a parent's heart
Lifts from this earth to the great Father of all
A prayer, both when he lays him down to sleep,
And when he rises up from dreaming it;
One supplication, one desire, one hope,
That he would grant a wish for his two sons,
Even all that he demands in their regard-

And suddenly beyond his dearest hope
It is accomplished, he should then rejoice,
And call his friends and kinsmen to a feast,
And task their love to grace his merriment,-
Then honour me thus far-for I am he.

Beatrice

(to Lucretia).

Great God! How horrible! Some dreadful ill
Must have befallen my brothers.

Lucretia.

Fear not, Child,
He speaks too frankly.

Beatrice.

Ah! My blood runs cold.
I fear that wicked laughter round his eye,
Which wrinkles up the skin even to the hair.

Cenci.

Here are the letters brought from Salamanca;
Beatrice, read them to your mother. God!
I thank thee! In one night didst thou perform,
By ways inscrutable, the thing I sought.
My disobedient and rebellious sons
Are dead!-Why, dead!-What means this change of cheer?
You hear me not, I tell you they are dead;
And they will need no food or raiment more:
The tapers that did light them the dark way
Are their last cost. The Pope, I think, will not
Expect I should maintain them in their coffins.
Rejoice with me-my heart is wondrous glad.

[Lucretia sinks, half fainting; Beatrice supports her.]

Beatrice.

It is not true!-Dear lady, pray look up.
Had it been true, there is a God in Heaven,
He would not live to boast of such a boon.
Unnatural man, thou knowest that it is false.

Cenci.

Ay, as the word of God; whom here I call
To witness that I speak the sober truth;-
And whose most favouring Providence was shown
Even in the manner of their deaths. For Rocco
Was kneeling at the mass, with sixteen others,
When the church fell and crushed him to a mummy,
The rest escaped unhurt. Cristofano
Was stabbed in error by a jealous man,
Whilst she he loved was sleeping with his rival;
All in the self-same hour of the same night;
Which shows that Heaven has special care of me.
I beg those friends who love me, that they mark
The day a feast upon their calendars.
It was the twenty-seventh of December:
Ay, read the letters if you doubt my oath.

[The Assembly appears confused; several of the guests rise.

First Guest.

Oh, horrible! I will depart-

Second Guest.

And I.-

Third Guest.

No, stay!
I do believe it is some jest; though faith!
'Tis mocking us somewhat too solemnly.
I think his son has married the Infanta,
Or found a mine of gold in El Dorado;

'Tis but to season some such news; stay, stay!
I see 'tis only raillery by his smile.

Cenci

(filling a bowl of wine, and lifting it up).
Oh, thou bright wine whose purple splendour leaps
And bubbles gaily in this golden bowl
Under the lamplight, as my spirits do,
To hear the death of my accursèd sons!
Could I believe thou wert their mingled blood,
Then would I taste thee like a sacrament,
And pledge with thee the mighty Devil in Hell,
Who, if a father's curses, as men say,
Climb with swift wings after their children's souls,
And drag them from the very throne of Heaven,
Now triumphs in my triumph!-But thou art
Superfluous; I have drunken deep of joy,
And I will taste no other wine to-night.
Here, Andrea! Bear the bowl around.

A Guest

(rising).
Thou wretch!
Will none among this noble company
Check the abandoned villain?

Camillo.

For God's sake
Let me dismiss the guests! You are insane,
Some ill will come of this.

Second Guest.

Seize, silence him!

First Guest.

I will!

Third Guest.
And I!

Cenci
(addressing those who rise with a threatening gesture).
Who moves? Who speaks?

(turning to the Company)

'tis nothing
Enjoy yourselves.-Beware! For my revenge
Is as the sealed commission of a king
That kills, and none dare name the murderer.

[The Banquet is broken up; several of the Guests are departing.]

Beatrice.
I do entreat you, go not, noble guests;
What, although tyranny and impious hate
Stand sheltered by a father's hoary hair?
What, if 'tis he who clothed us in these limbs
Who tortures them, and triumphs? What, if we,
The desolate and the dead, were his own flesh,
His children and his wife, whom he is bound
To love and shelter? Shall we therefore find
No refuge in this merciless wide world?
O think what deep wrongs must have blotted out
First love, then reverence in a child's prone mind,
Till it thus vanquish shame and fear! O think!
I have borne much, and kissed the sacred hand
Which crushed us to the earth, and thought its stroke
Was perhaps some paternal chastisement!
Have excused much, doubted; and when no doubt
Remained, have sought by patience, love, and tears
To soften him, and when this could not be
I have knelt down through the long sleepless nights

And lifted up to God, the Father of all,
Passionate prayers: and when these were not heard
I have still borne,-until I meet you here,
Princes and kinsmen, at this hideous feast
Given at my brothers' deaths. Two yet remain,
His wife remains and I, whom if ye save not,
Ye may soon share such merriment again
As fathers make over their children's graves.
O Prince Colonna, thou art our near kinsman,
Cardinal, thou art the Pope's chamberlain,
Camillo, thou art chief justiciary,
Take us away!

Cenci.

(He has been conversing with Camillo during the first part of Beatrice's speech;
he hears the conclusion, and now advances.)

I hope my good friends here
Will think of their own daughters-or perhaps
Of their own throats-before they lend an ear
To this wild girl.

Beatrice

(not noticing the words of Cenci).
Dare no one look on me?
None answer? Can one tyrant overbear
The sense of many best and wisest men?
Or is it that I sue not in some form
Of scrupulous law, that ye deny my suit?
O God! That I were buried with my brothers!
And that the flowers of this departed spring
Were fading on my grave! And that my father
Were celebrating now one feast for all!

Camillo.

A bitter wish for one so young and gentle;
Can we do nothing?

Colonna.

Nothing that I see.
Count Cenci were a dangerous enemy:
Yet I would second any one.

A Cardinal.
And I.

Cenci.
Retire to your chamber, insolent girl!

Beatrice.
Retire thou, impious man! Ay, hide thyself
Where never eye can look upon thee more!
Wouldst thou have honour and obedience
Who art a torturer? Father, never dream
Though thou mayst overbear this company,
But ill must come of ill.-Frown not on me!
Haste, hide thyself, lest with avenging looks
My brothers' ghosts should hunt thee from thy seat!
Cover thy face from every living eye,
And start if thou but hear a human step:
Seek out some dark and silent corner, there,
Bow thy white head before offended God,
And we will kneel around, and fervently
Pray that he pity both ourselves and thee.

Cenci.

My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity.
Good night, farewell; I will not make you longer
Spectators of our dull domestic quarrels.
Another time.-

[Exeunt all but Cenci and Beatrice.]

My brain is swimming round;
Give me a bowl of wine!

[To Beatrice.

Thou painted viper!
Beast that thou art! Fair and yet terrible!
I know a charm shall make thee meek and tame,
Now get thee from my sight!

[Exit Beatrice.

Here, Andrea,
Fill up this goblet with Greek wine. I said
I would not drink this evening; but I must;
For, strange to say, I feel my spirits fail
With thinking what I have decreed to do.- [Drinking the wine.

Be thou the resolution of quick youth
Within my veins, and manhood's purpose stern,
And age's firm, cold, subtle villainy;
As if thou wert indeed my children's blood
Which I did thirst to drink! The charm works well;
It must be done; it shall be done, I swear!

[Exit.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II

Scene I.

-An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Enter Lucretia and Bernardo.

Lucretia.

Weep not, my gentle boy; he struck but me
Who have borne deeper wrongs. In truth, if he
Had killed me, he had done a kinder deed.
O God, Almighty, do Thou look upon us,
We have no other friend but only Thee!
Yet weep not; though I love you as my own,
I am not your true mother.

Bernardo.

O more, more,
Than ever mother was to any child,
That have you been to me! Had he not been
My father, do you think that I should weep!

Lucretia.

Alas! Poor boy, what else couldst thou have done?

Enter Beatrice.

Beatrice

(in a hurried voice).

Did he pass this way? Have you seen him, brother?
Ah, no! that is his step upon the stairs;
'Tis nearer now; his hand is on the door;
Mother, if I to thee have ever been
A duteous child, now save me! Thou, great God,
Whose image upon earth a father is,
Dost Thou indeed abandon me? He comes;
The door is opening now; I see his face;
He frowns on others, but he smiles on me,
Even as he did after the feast last night. Enter a Servant.

Almighty God, how merciful Thou art!

'Tis but Orsino's servant.-Well, what news?

Servant.

My master bids me say, the Holy Father

Has sent back your petition thus unopened. [Giving a paper.

And he demands at what hour 'twere secure
To visit you again?

Lucretia.

At the Ave Mary.[Exit Servant.

So, daughter, our last hope has failed; Ah me!
How pale you look; you tremble, and you stand
Wrapped in some fixed and fearful meditation,
As if one thought were over strong for you:
Your eyes have a chill glare; O, dearest child!
Are you gone mad? If not, pray speak to me.

Beatrice.

You see I am not mad: I speak to you.

Lucretia.

You talked of something that your father did
After that dreadful feast? Could it be worse
Than when he smiled, and cried, 'My sons are dead!'
And every one looked in his neighbour's face
To see if others were as white as he?
At the first word he spoke I felt the blood
Rush to my heart, and fell into a trance;
And when it passed I sat all weak and wild;
Whilst you alone stood up, and with strong words
Checked his unnatural pride; and I could see
The devil was rebuked that lives in him.
Until this hour thus have you ever stood
Between us and your father's moody wrath
Like a protecting presence: your firm mind
Has been our only refuge and defence:
What can have thus subdued it? What can now
Have given you that cold melancholy look,
Succeeding to your unaccustomed fear?

Beatrice.

What is it that you say? I was just thinking
'Twere better not to struggle any more.
Men, like my father, have been dark and bloody,
Yet never-Oh! Before worse comes of it
'Twere wise to die: it ends in that at last.

Lucretia.

Oh, talk not so, dear child! Tell me at once
What did your father do or say to you?
He stayed not after that accursèd feast
One moment in your chamber.-Speak to me.

Bernardo.

Oh, sister, sister, prithee, speak to us!

Beatrice

(speaking very slowly with a forced calmness).

It was one word, Mother, one little word;
One look, one smile. (Wildly.)
Oh! He has trampled me
Under his feet, and made the blood stream down
My pallid cheeks. And he has given us all
Ditch-water, and the fever-stricken flesh
Of buffaloes, and bade us eat or starve,
And we have eaten.-He has made me look
On my beloved Bernardo, when the rust
Of heavy chains has gangrened his sweet limbs,
And I have never yet despaired-but now!
What could I say?

[Recovering herself.

Ah, no! 'tis nothing new.
The sufferings we all share have made me wild:

He only struck and cursed me as he passed;
He said, he looked, he did;-nothing at all
Beyond his wont, yet it disordered me.
Alas! I am forgetful of my duty,
I should preserve my senses for your sake.

Lucretia.

Nay, Beatrice; have courage, my sweet girl,
If any one despairs it should be I
Who loved him once, and now must live with him
Till God in pity call for him or me.
For you may, like your sister, find some husband,
And smile, years hence, with children round your knees;
Whilst I, then dead, and all this hideous coil
Shall be remembered only as a dream.

Beatrice.

Talk not to me, dear lady, of a husband.
Did you not nurse me when my mother died?
Did you not shield me and that dearest boy?
And had we any other friend but you
In infancy, with gentle words and looks,
To win our father not to murder us?
And shall I now desert you? May the ghost
Of my dead Mother plead against my soul
If I abandon her who filled the place
She left, with more, even, than a mother's love!

Bernardo.

And I am of my sister's mind. Indeed
I would not leave you in this wretchedness,
Even though the Pope should make me free to live
In some blithe place, like others of my age,
With sports, and delicate food, and the fresh air.
Oh, never think that I will leave you, Mother!

Lucretia.

My dear, dear children!

Enter Cenci, suddenly.

Cenci.

What, Beatrice here!
Come hither!

[She shrinks back, and covers her face.

Nay, hide not your face, 'tis fair;
Look up! Why, yesternight you dared to look
With disobedient insolence upon me,
Bending a stern and an inquiring brow
On what I meant; whilst I then sought to hide
That which I came to tell you-but in vain.

Beatrice
(wildly, staggering towards the door).
O that the earth would gape! Hide me, O God!

Cenci.
Then it was I whose inarticulate words
Fell from my lips, and who with tottering steps
Fled from your presence, as you now from mine.
Stay, I command you-from this day and hour
Never again, I think, with fearless eye,
And brow superior, and unaltered cheek,
And that lip made for tenderness or scorn,
Shalt thou strike dumb the meanest of mankind;
Me least of all. Now get thee to thy chamber!
Thou too, loathed image of thy cursèd mother, [To Bernardo.

Thy milky, meek face makes me sick with hate! [Exeunt Beatrice and Bernardo.
(Aside.)

So much has passed between us as must make
Me bold, her fearful.-'Tis an awful thing
To touch such mischief as I now conceive:
So men sit shivering on the dewy bank,
And try the chill stream with their feet; once in . . .
How the delighted spirit pants for joy!

Lucretia

(advancing timidly towards him).

O husband! Pray forgive poor Beatrice.

She meant not any ill.

Cenci.

Nor you perhaps?

Nor that young imp, whom you have taught by rote

Parricide with his alphabet? Nor Giacomo?

Nor those two most unnatural sons, who stirred

Enmity up against me with the Pope?

Whom in one night merciful God cut off:

Innocent lambs! They thought not any ill.

You were not here conspiring? You said nothing

Of how I might be dungeoned as a madman;

Or be condemned to death for some offence,

And you would be the witnesses?-This failing,

How just it were to hire assassins, or

Put sudden poison in my evening drink?

Or smother me when overcome by wine?

Seeing we had no other judge but God,

And He had sentenced me, and there were none

But you to be the executioners

Of His decree enregistered in Heaven?

Oh, no! You said not this?

Lucretia.

So help me God,

I never thought the things you charge me with!

Cenci.

If you dare speak that wicked lie again
I'll kill you. What! It was not by your counsel
That Beatrice disturbed the feast last night?
You did not hope to stir some enemies
Against me, and escape, and laugh to scorn
What every nerve of you now trembles at?
You judged that men were bolder than they are;
Few dare to stand between their grave and me.

Lucretia.

Look not so dreadfully! By my salvation
I knew not aught that Beatrice designed;
Nor do I think she designed any thing
Until she heard you talk of her dead brothers.

Cenci.

Blaspheming liar! You are damned for this!
But I will take you where you may persuade
The stones you tread on to deliver you:
For men shall there be none but those who dare
All things-not question that which I command.
On Wednesday next I shall set out: you know
That savage rock, the Castle of Petrella:
'Tis safely walled, and moated round about:
Its dungeons underground, and its thick towers
Never told tales; though they have heard and seen
What might make dumb things speak.-Why do you linger?
Make speediest preparation for the journey! [Exit Lucretia.]

The all-beholding sun yet shines; I hear
A busy stir of men about the streets;
I see the bright sky through the window panes:
It is a garish, broad, and peering day;
Loud, light, suspicious, full of eyes and ears,
And every little corner, nook, and hole
Is penetrated with the insolent light.
Come darkness! Yet, what is the day to me?
And wherefore should I wish for night, who do
A deed which shall confound both night and day?

'Tis she shall grope through a bewildering mist
Of horror: if there be a sun in heaven
She shall not dare to look upon its beams;
Nor feel its warmth. Let her then wish for night;
The act I think shall soon extinguish all
For me: I bear a darker deadlier gloom
Than the earth's shade, or interlunar air,
Or constellations quenched in murkiest cloud,
In which I walk secure and unbeheld
Towards my purpose.-Would that it were done!

[Exit.

Scene II.

-A Chamber in the Vatican. Enter Camillo and Giacomo, in conversation.

Camillo.

There is an obsolete and doubtful law
By which you might obtain a bare provision
Of food and clothing-

Giacomo.

Nothing more? Alas!
Bare must be the provision which strict law
Awards, and agèd, sullen avarice pays.
Why did my father not apprentice me
To some mechanic trade? I should have then
Been trained in no highborn necessities
Which I could meet not by my daily toil.
The eldest son of a rich nobleman
Is heir to all his incapacities;
He has wide wants, and narrow powers. If you,
Cardinal Camillo, were reduced at once
From thrice-driven beds of down, and delicate food,
An hundred servants, and six palaces,
To that which nature doth indeed require?-

Camillo.

Nay, there is reason in your plea; 'twere hard.

Giacomo.

'Tis hard for a firm man to bear: but I
Have a dear wife, a lady of high birth,
Whose dowry in ill hour I lent my father
Without a bond or witness to the deed:
And children, who inherit her fine senses,
The fairest creatures in this breathing world;
And she and they reproach me not. Cardinal,
Do you not think the Pope would interpose
And stretch authority beyond the law?

Camillo.

Though your peculiar case is hard, I know
The Pope will not divert the course of law.
After that impious feast the other night
I spoke with him, and urged him then to check
Your father's cruel hand; he frowned and said,
'Children are disobedient, and they sting
Their fathers' hearts to madness and despair,
Requiting years of care with contumely.
I pity the Count Cenci from my heart;
His outraged love perhaps awakened hate,
And thus he is exasperated to ill.
In the great war between the old and young
I, who have white hairs and a tottering body,
Will keep at least blameless neutrality.' Enter Orsino.

You, my good Lord Orsino, heard those words.

Orsino.

What words?

Giacomo.

Alas, repeat them not again!
There then is no redress for me, at least

None but that which I may achieve myself,
Since I am driven to the brink.-But, say,
My innocent sister and my only brother
Are dying underneath my father's eye.
The memorable torturers of this land,
Galeaz Visconti, Borgia, Ezzelin,
Never inflicted on the meanest slave
What these endure; shall they have no protection?

Camillo.

Why, if they would petition to the Pope
I see not how he could refuse it-yet
He holds it of most dangerous example
In aught to weaken the paternal power,
Being, as 'twere, the shadow of his own.
I pray you now excuse me. I have business
That will not bear delay.

[Exit Camillo.

Giacomo.

But you, Orsino,
Have the petition: wherefore not present it?

Orsino.

I have presented it, and backed it with
My earnest prayers, and urgent interest;
It was returned unanswered. I doubt not
But that the strange and execrable deeds
Alleged in it-in truth they might well baffle
Any belief-have turned the Pope's displeasure
Upon the accusers from the criminal:
So I should guess from what Camillo said.

Giacomo.

My friend, that palace-walking devil Gold
Has whispered silence to his Holiness:

And we are left, as scorpions ringed with fire.
What should we do but strike ourselves to death?
For he who is our murderous persecutor
Is shielded by a father's holy name,
Or I would-

[Stops abruptly.]

Orsino.
What? Fear not to speak your thought.
Words are but holy as the deeds they cover:
A priest who has forsworn the God he serves;
A judge who makes Truth weep at his decree;
A friend who should weave counsel, as I now,
But as the mantle of some selfish guile;
A father who is all a tyrant seems,
Were the profaner for his sacred name.

Giacomo.
Ask me not what I think; the unwilling brain
Feigns often what it would not; and we trust
Imagination with such phantasies
As the tongue dares not fashion into words,
Which have no words, their horror makes them dim
To the mind's eye.-My heart denies itself
To think what you demand.

Orsino.
But a friend's bosom
Is as the inmost cave of our own mind
Where we sit shut from the wide gaze of day,
And from the all-communicating air.
You look what I suspected-

Giacomo.
Spare me now!
I am as one lost in a midnight wood,

Who dares not ask some harmless passenger
The path across the wilderness, lest he,
As my thoughts are, should be-a murderer.
I know you are my friend, and all I dare
Speak to my soul that will I trust with thee.
But now my heart is heavy, and would take
Lone counsel from a night of sleepless care.
Pardon me, that I say farewell-farewell!
I would that to my own suspected self
I could address a word so full of peace.

Orsino.

Farewell!-Be your thoughts better or more bold. [Exit Giacomo.

I had disposed the Cardinal Camillo
To feed his hope with cold encouragement:
It fortunately serves my close designs
That 'tis a trick of this same family
To analyse their own and other minds.
Such self-anatomy shall teach the will
Dangerous secrets: for it tempts our powers,
Knowing what must be thought, and may be done,
Into the depth of darkest purposes:
So Cenci fell into the pit; even I,
Since Beatrice unveiled me to myself,
And made me shrink from what I cannot shun,
Show a poor figure to my own esteem,
To which I grow half reconciled. I'll do
As little mischief as I can; that thought
Shall fee the accuser conscience.

(After a pause.)

Now what harm
If Cenci should be murdered?-Yet, if murdered,
Wherefore by me? And what if I could take
The profit, yet omit the sin and peril

In such an action? Of all earthly things
I fear a man whose blows outspeed his words;
And such is Cenci: and while Cenci lives
His daughter's dowry were a secret grave
If a priest wins her.-Oh, fair Beatrice!
Would that I loved thee not, or loving thee
Could but despise danger and gold and all
That frowns between my wish and its effect,
Or smiles beyond it! There is no escape . . .
Her bright form kneels beside me at the altar,
And follows me to the resort of men,
And fills my slumber with tumultuous dreams,
So when I wake my blood seems liquid fire;
And if I strike my damp and dizzy head
My hot palm scorches it: her very name,
But spoken by a stranger, makes my heart
Sicken and pant; and thus unprofitably
I clasp the phantom of unfelt delights
Till weak imagination half possesses
The self-created shadow. Yet much longer
Will I not nurse this life of feverous hours:
From the unravelled hopes of Giacomo
I must work out my own dear purposes.
I see, as from a tower, the end of all:
Her father dead; her brother bound to me
By a dark secret, surer than the grave;
Her mother scared and unexpostulating
From the dread manner of her wish achieved:
And she!-Once more take courage, my faint heart;
What dares a friendless maiden matched with thee?
I have such foresight as assures success:
Some unbeheld divinity doth ever,
When dread events are near, stir up men's minds
To black suggestions; and he prospers best,
Not who becomes the instrument of ill,
But who can flatter the dark spirit, that makes
Its empire and its prey of other hearts
Till it become his slave . . . as I will do.

[Exit.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III

Scene I.

-An Apartment in the Cenci Palace. Lucretia, to her enter Beatrice.

Beatrice.

(She enters staggering, and speaks wildly.)

Reach me that handkerchief!-My brain is hurt;

My eyes are full of blood; just wipe them for me . . .

I see but indistinctly . . .

Lucretia.

My sweet child,

You have no wound; 'tis only a cold dew

That starts from your dear brow . . . Alas! Alas!

What has befallen?

Beatrice.

How comes this hair undone?

Its wandering strings must be what blind me so,

And yet I tied it fast.-O, horrible!

The pavement sinks under my feet! The walls

Spin round! I see a woman weeping there,

And standing calm and motionless, whilst I

Slide giddily as the world reels. . . . My God!

The beautiful blue heaven is flecked with blood!

The sunshine on the floor is black! The air

Is changed to vapours such as the dead breathe

In charnel pits! Pah! I am choked! There creeps

A clinging, black, contaminating mist

About me . . . 'tis substantial, heavy, thick,

I cannot pluck it from me, for it glues

My fingers and my limbs to one another,

And eats into my sinews, and dissolves

My flesh to a pollution, poisoning

The subtle, pure, and inmost spirit of life!

My God! I never knew what the mad felt

Before; for I am mad beyond all doubt!
(More wildly.)
No, I am dead! These putrefying limbs
Shut round and sepulchre the panting soul
Which would burst forth into the wandering air! (A pause.)

What hideous thought was that I had even now?
'Tis gone; and yet its burthen remains here
O'er these dull eyes . . . upon this weary heart!
O, world! O, life! O, day! O, misery!

Lucretia.
What ails thee, my poor child? She answers not:
Her spirit apprehends the sense of pain,
But not its cause; suffering has dried away
The source from which it sprung . . .

Beatrice
(frantically).
Like Parricide . . .
Misery has killed its father: yet its father
Never like mine . . . O, God! What thing am I?

Lucretia.
My dearest child, what has your father done?

Beatrice
(doubtfully).

Who art thou, questioner? I have no father.
(Aside.)
She is the madhouse nurse who tends on me,
It is a piteous office.

[To Lucretia, in a slow, subdued voice.

Do you know
I thought I was that wretched Beatrice
Men speak of, whom her father sometimes hales
From hall to hall by the entangled hair;
At others, pens up naked in damp cells
Where scaly reptiles crawl, and starves her there,
Till she will eat strange flesh. This woful story
So did I overact in my sick dreams,
That I imagined . . . no, it cannot be!
Horrible things have been in this wide world,
Prodigious mixtures, and confusions strange
Of good and ill; and worse have been conceived
Than ever there was found a heart to do.
But never fancy imaged such a deed
As . . .

[Pauses, suddenly recollecting herself.

Who art thou? Swear to me, ere I die
With fearful expectation, that indeed
Thou art not what thou seemest . . . Mother!

Lucretia.
Oh!
My sweet child, know you . . .

Beatrice.
Yet speak it not:
For then if this be truth, that other too
Must be a truth, a firm enduring truth,
Linked with each lasting circumstance of life,
Never to change, never to pass away.
Why so it is. This is the Cenci Palace;
Thou art Lucretia; I am Beatrice.
I have talked some wild words, but will no more.
Mother, come near me: from this point of time,
I am . . .

[Her voice dies away faintly.]

Lucretia.

Alas! What has befallen thee, child?

What has thy father done?

Beatrice.

What have I done?

Am I not innocent? Is it my crime

That one with white hair, and imperious brow,

Who tortured me from my forgotten years,

As parents only dare, should call himself

My father, yet should be!-Oh, what am I?

What name, what place, what memory shall be mine?

What retrospects, outliving even despair?

Lucretia.

He is a violent tyrant, surely, child:

We know that death alone can make us free;

His death or ours. But what can he have done

Of deadlier outrage or worse injury?

Thou art unlike thyself; thine eyes shoot forth

A wandering and strange spirit. Speak to me,

Unlock those pallid hands whose fingers twine

With one another.

Beatrice.

'Tis the restless life

Tortured within them. If I try to speak

I shall go mad. Ay, something must be done;

What, yet I know not . . . something which shall make

The thing that I have suffered but a shadow

In the dread lightning which avenges it;

Brief, rapid, irreversible, destroying

The consequence of what it cannot cure.

Some such thing is to be endured or done:

When I know what, I shall be still and calm,
And never anything will move me more.
But now!-O blood, which art my father's blood,
Circling through these contaminated veins,
If thou, poured forth on the polluted earth,
Could wash away the crime, and punishment
By which I suffer . . . no, that cannot be!
Many might doubt there were a God above
Who sees and permits evil, and so die:
That faith no agony shall obscure in me.

Lucretia.

It must indeed have been some bitter wrong;
Yet what, I dare not guess. Oh, my lost child,
Hide not in proud impenetrable grief
Thy sufferings from my fear.

Beatrice.

I hide them not.
What are the words which you would have me speak?
I, who can feign no image in my mind
Of that which has transformed me: I, whose thought
Is like a ghost shrouded and folded up
In its own formless horror: of all words,
That minister to mortal intercourse,
Which wouldst thou hear? For there is none to tell
My misery: if another ever knew
Aught like to it, she died as I will die,
And left it, as I must, without a name.
Death! Death! Our law and our religion call thee
A punishment and a reward . . . Oh, which
Have I deserved?

Lucretia.

The peace of innocence;
Till in your season you be called to heaven.
Whate'er you may have suffered, you have done
No evil. Death must be the punishment
Of crime, or the reward of trampling down

The thorns which God has strewed upon the path
Which leads to immortality.

Beatrice.

Ay; death . . .
The punishment of crime. I pray thee, God,
Let me not be bewildered while I judge.
If I must live day after day, and keep
These limbs, the unworthy temple of Thy spirit,
As a foul den from which what Thou abhorrest
May mock Thee, unavenged . . . it shall not be!
Self-murder . . . no, that might be no escape,
For Thy decree yawns like a Hell between
Our will and it:-O! In this mortal world
There is no vindication and no law
Which can adjudge and execute the doom
Of that through which I suffer.

Enter Orsino.

(She approaches him solemnly.)

Welcome, Friend!
I have to tell you that, since last we met,
I have endured a wrong so great and strange,
That neither life nor death can give me rest.
Ask me not what it is, for there are deeds
Which have no form, sufferings which have no tongue.

Orsino.

And what is he who has thus injured you?

Beatrice.

The man they call my father: a dread name.

Orsino.
It cannot be . . .

Beatrice.
What it can be, or not,
Forbear to think. It is, and it has been;
Advise me how it shall not be again.
I thought to die; but a religious awe
Restrains me, and the dread lest death itself
Might be no refuge from the consciousness
Of what is yet unexpiated. Oh, speak!

Orsino.
Accuse him of the deed, and let the law
Avenge thee.

Beatrice.
Oh, ice-hearted counsellor!
If I could find a word that might make known
The crime of my destroyer; and that done,
My tongue should like a knife tear out the secret
Which cankers my heart's core; ay, lay all bare
So that my unpolluted fame should be
With vilest gossips a stale mouthèd story;
A mock, a byword, an astonishment:-
If this were done, which never shall be done,
Think of the offender's gold, his dreaded hate,
And the strange horror of the accuser's tale,
Baffling belief, and overpowering speech;
Scarce whispered, unimaginable, wrapped
In hideous hints . . . Oh, most assured redress!

Orsino.
You will endure it then?

Beatrice.

Endure?-Orsino,
It seems your counsel is small profit.

[Turns from him, and speaks half to herself.

Ay,
All must be suddenly resolved and done.
What is this undistinguishable mist
Of thoughts, which rise, like shadow after shadow,
Darkening each other?

Orsino.
Should the offender live?
Triumph in his misdeed? and make, by use,
His crime, whate'er it is, dreadful no doubt,
Thine element; until thou mayst become
Utterly lost; subdued even to the hue
Of that which thou permittest?

Beatrice
(to herself).
Mighty death!
Thou double-visaged shadow? Only judge!
Rightfullest arbiter!

[She retires absorbed in thought.

Lucretia.
If the lightning
Of God has e'er descended to avenge . . .

Orsino.
Blaspheme not! His high Providence commits
Its glory on this earth, and their own wrongs

Into the hands of men; if they neglect
To punish crime . . .

Lucretia.

But if one, like this wretch,
Should mock, with gold, opinion, law, and power?
If there be no appeal to that which makes
The guiltiest tremble? If because our wrongs,
For that they are unnatural, strange, and monstrous,
Exceed all measure of belief? O God!
If, for the very reasons which should make
Redress most swift and sure, our injurer triumphs?
And we, the victims, bear worse punishment
Than that appointed for their torturer?

Orsino.

Think not
But that there is redress where there is wrong,
So we be bold enough to seize it.

Lucretia.

How?
If there were any way to make all sure,
I know not . . . but I think it might be good
To . . .

Orsino.

Why, his late outrage to Beatrice;
For it is such, as I but faintly guess,
As makes remorse dishonour, and leaves her
Only one duty, how she may avenge:
You, but one refuge from ills ill endured;
Me, but one counsel . . .

Lucretia.

For we cannot hope
That aid, or retribution, or resource

Will arise thence, where every other one
Might find them with less need.

[Beatrice advances.

Orsino.
Then . . .

Beatrice.
Peace, Orsino!
And, honoured Lady, while I speak, I pray,
That you put off, as garments overworn,
Forbearance and respect, remorse and fear,
And all the fit restraints of daily life,
Which have been borne from childhood, but which now
Would be a mockery to my holier plea.
As I have said, I have endured a wrong,
Which, though it be expressionless, is such
As asks atonement; both for what is past,
And lest I be reserved, day after day,
To load with crimes an overburthened soul,
And be . . . what ye can dream not. I have prayed
To God, and I have talked with my own heart,
And have unravelled my entangled will,
And have at length determined what is right.
Art thou my friend, Orsino? False or true?
Pledge thy salvation ere I speak.

Orsino.
I swear
To dedicate my cunning, and my strength,
My silence, and whatever else is mine,
To thy commands.

Lucretia.
You think we should devise
His death?

Beatrice.
And execute what is devised,
And suddenly. We must be brief and bold.

Orsino.
And yet most cautious.

Lucretia.
For the jealous laws
Would punish us with death and infamy
For that which it became themselves to do.

Beatrice.
Be cautious as ye may, but prompt. Orsino,
What are the means?

Orsino.
I know two dull, fierce outlaws,
Who think man's spirit as a worm's, and they
Would trample out, for any slight caprice,
The meanest or the noblest life. This mood
Is marketable here in Rome. They sell
What we now want.

Lucretia.
To-morrow before dawn,
Cenci will take us to that lonely rock,
Petrella, in the Apulian Apennines.
If he arrive there . . .

Beatrice.
He must not arrive.

Orsino.

Will it be dark before you reach the tower?

Lucretia.

The sun will scarce be set.

Beatrice.

But I remember

Two miles on this side of the fort, the road
Crosses a deep ravine; 'tis rough and narrow,
And winds with short turns down the precipice;
And in its depth there is a mighty rock,
Which has, from unimaginable years,
Sustained itself with terror and with toil
Over a gulf, and with the agony
With which it clings seems slowly coming down;
Even as a wretched soul hour after hour,
Clings to the mass of life; yet clinging, leans;
And leaning, makes more dark the dread abyss
In which it fears to fall: beneath this crag
Huge as despair, as if in weariness,
The melancholy mountain yawns . . . below,
You hear but see not an impetuous torrent
Raging among the caverns, and a bridge
Crosses the chasm; and high above there grow,
With intersecting trunks, from crag to crag,
Cedars, and yews, and pines; whose tangled hair
Is matted in one solid roof of shade
By the dark ivy's twine. At noonday here
'Tis twilight, and at sunset blackest night.

Orsino.

Before you reach that bridge make some excuse
For spurring on your mules, or loitering
Until . . .

Beatrice.

What sound is that?

Lucretia.

Hark! No, it cannot be a servant's step
It must be Cenci, unexpectedly
Returned . . . Make some excuse for being here.

Beatrice.

(To Orsino, as she goes out.)
That step we hear approach must never pass
The bridge of which we spoke.

[Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice.]

Orsino.

What shall I do?
Cenci must find me here, and I must bear
The imperious inquisition of his looks
As to what brought me hither: let me mask
Mine own in some inane and vacant smile. Enter Giacomo, in a hurried manner.

How! Have you ventured hither? Know you then
That Cenci is from home?

Giacomo.

I sought him here;
And now must wait till he returns.

Orsino.

Great God!
Weigh you the danger of this rashness?

Giacomo.

Ay!
Does my destroyer know his danger? We
Are now no more, as once, parent and child,

But man to man; the oppressor to the oppressed;
The slanderer to the slandered; foe to foe:
He has cast Nature off, which was his shield,
And Nature casts him off, who is her shame;
And I spurn both. Is it a father's throat
Which I will shake, and say, I ask not gold;
I ask not happy years; nor memories
Of tranquil childhood; nor home-sheltered love;
Though all these hast thou torn from me, and more;
But only my fair fame; only one hoard
Of peace, which I thought hidden from thy hate,
Under the penury heaped on me by thee,
Or I will . . . God can understand and pardon,
Why should I speak with man?

Orsino.

Be calm, dear friend.

Giacomo.

Well, I will calmly tell you what he did.
This old Francesco Cenci, as you know,
Borrowed the dowry of my wife from me,
And then denied the loan; and left me so
In poverty, the which I sought to mend
By holding a poor office in the state.
It had been promised to me, and already
I bought new clothing for my raggèd babes,
And my wife smiled; and my heart knew repose.
When Cenci's intercession, as I found,
Conferred this office on a wretch, whom thus
He paid for vilest service. I returned
With this ill news, and we sate sad together
Solacing our despondency with tears
Of such affection and unbroken faith
As temper life's worst bitterness; when he,
As he is wont, came to upbraid and curse,
Mocking our poverty, and telling us
Such was God's scourge for disobedient sons.
And then, that I might strike him dumb with shame,
I spoke of my wife's dowry; but he coined

A brief yet specious tale, how I had wasted
The sum in secret riot; and he saw
My wife was touched, and he went smiling forth.
And when I knew the impression he had made,
And felt my wife insult with silent scorn
My ardent truth, and look averse and cold,
I went forth too: but soon returned again;
Yet not so soon but that my wife had taught
My children her harsh thoughts, and they all cried,
'Give us clothes, father! Give us better food!
What you in one night squander were enough
For months!' I looked, and saw that home was hell.
And to that hell will I return no more
Until mine enemy has rendered up
Atonement, or, as he gave life to me
I will, reversing Nature's law . . .

Orsino.
Trust me,
The compensation which thou seekest here
Will be denied.

Giacomo.
Then . . . Are you not my friend?
Did you not hint at the alternative,
Upon the brink of which you see I stand,
The other day when we conversed together?
My wrongs were then less. That word parricide,
Although I am resolved, haunts me like fear.

Orsino.
It must be fear itself, for the bare word
Is hollow mockery. Mark, how wisest God
Draws to one point the threads of a just doom,
So sanctifying it: what you devise
Is, as it were, accomplished.

Giacomo.

Is he dead?

Orsino.

His grave is ready. Know that since we met
Cenci has done an outrage to his daughter.

Giacomo.

What outrage?

Orsino.

That she speaks not, but you may
Conceive such half conjectures as I do,
From her fixed paleness, and the lofty grief
Of her stern brow bent on the idle air,
And her severe unmodulated voice,
Drowning both tenderness and dread; and last
From this; that whilst her step-mother and I,
Bewildered in our horror, talked together
With obscure hints; both self-misunderstood
And darkly guessing, stumbling, in our talk,
Over the truth, and yet to its revenge,
She interrupted us, and with a look
Which told before she spoke it, he must die: . . .

Giacomo.

It is enough. My doubts are well appeased;
There is a higher reason for the act
Than mine; there is a holier judge than me,
A more unblamed avenger. Beatrice,
Who in the gentleness of thy sweet youth
Hast never trodden on a worm, or bruised
A living flower, but thou hast pitied it
With needless tears! Fair sister, thou in whom
Men wondered how such loveliness and wisdom
Did not destroy each other! Is there made
Ravage of thee? O, heart, I ask no more
Justification! Shall I wait, Orsino,
Till he return, and stab him at the door?

Orsino.

Not so; some accident might interpose
To rescue him from what is now most sure;
And you are unprovided where to fly,
How to excuse or to conceal. Nay, listen:
All is contrived; success is so assured
That . . .

Enter Beatrice.

Beatrice.

'Tis my brother's voice! You know me not?

Giacomo.

My sister, my lost sister!

Beatrice.

Lost indeed!

I see Orsino has talked with you, and
That you conjecture things too horrible
To speak, yet far less than the truth. Now, stay not,
He might return: yet kiss me; I shall know
That then thou hast consented to his death.
Farewell, farewell! Let piety to God,
Brotherly love, justice and clemency,
And all things that make tender hardest hearts
Make thine hard, brother. Answer not . . . farewell.

[Exeunt severally.]

Scene II.

-A mean Apartment in Giacomo's House. Giacomo alone.

Giacomo.

'Tis midnight, and Orsino comes not yet. [Thunder, and the sound of a storm.

What! can the everlasting elements
Feel with a worm like man? If so, the shaft
Of mercy-wingèd lightning would not fall
On stones and trees. My wife and children sleep:
They are now living in unmeaning dreams:
But I must wake, still doubting if that deed
Be just which is most necessary. O,
Thou unreplenished lamp! whose narrow fire
Is shaken by the wind, and on whose edge
Devouring darkness hovers! Thou small flame,
Which, as a dying pulse rises and falls,
Still flickerest up and down, how very soon,
Did I not feed thee, wouldst thou fail and be
As thou hadst never been! So wastes and sinks
Even now, perhaps, the life that kindled mine:
But that no power can fill with vital oil
That broken lamp of flesh. Ha! 'tis the blood
Which fed these veins that ebbs till all is cold:
It is the form that moulded mine that sinks
Into the white and yellow spasms of death:
It is the soul by which mine was arrayed
In God's immortal likeness which now stands
Naked before Heaven's judgement seat!

[A bell strikes.

One! Two!
The hours crawl on; and when my hairs are white,
My son will then perhaps be waiting thus,
Tortured between just hate and vain remorse;
Chiding the tardy messenger of news
Like those which I expect. I almost wish
He be not dead, although my wrongs are great;
Yet . . . 'tis Orsino's step . . .

Enter Orsino.

Speak!

Orsino.

I am come

To say he has escaped.

Giacomo.

Escaped!

Orsino.

And safe

Within Petrella. He passed by the spot

Appointed for the deed an hour too soon.

Giacomo.

Are we the fools of such contingencies?

And do we waste in blind misgivings thus

The hours when we should act? Then wind and thunder,

Which seemed to howl his knell, is the loud laughter

With which Heaven mocks our weakness! I henceforth

Will ne'er repent of aught designed or done

But my repentance.

Orsino.

See, the lamp is out.

Giacomo.

If no remorse is ours when the dim air

Has drunk this innocent flame, why should we quail

When Cenci's life, that light by which ill spirits

See the worst deeds they prompt, shall sink for ever?

No, I am hardened.

Orsino.

Why, what need of this?

Who feared the pale intrusion of remorse
In a just deed? Although our first plan failed,
Doubt not but he will soon be laid to rest.
But light the lamp; let us not talk i' the dark.

Giacomo

(lighting the lamp).

And yet once quenched I cannot thus relume
My father's life: do you not think his ghost
Might plead that argument with God?

Orsino.

Once gone

You cannot now recall your sister's peace;
Your own extinguished years of youth and hope;
Nor your wife's bitter words; nor all the taunts
Which, from the prosperous, weak misfortune takes;
Nor your dead mother; nor . . .

Giacomo.

O, speak no more!

I am resolved, although this very hand
Must quench the life that animated it.

Orsino.

There is no need of that. Listen: you know
Olimpio, the castellan of Petrella
In old Colonna's time; him whom your father
Degraded from his post? And Marzio,
That desperate wretch, whom he deprived last year
Of a reward of blood, well earned and due?

Giacomo.

I knew Olimpio; and they say he hated
Old Cenci so, that in his silent rage
His lips grew white only to see him pass.
Of Marzio I know nothing.

Orsino.
Marzio's hate
Matches Olimpio's. I have sent these men,
But in your name, and as at your request,
To talk with Beatrice and Lucretia.

Giacomo.
Only to talk?

Orsino.
The moments which even now
Pass onward to to-morrow's midnight hour
May memorize their flight with death: ere then
They must have talked, and may perhaps have done,
And made an end . . .

Giacomo.
Listen! What sound is that?

Orsino.
The house-dog moans, and the beams crack: nought else.

Giacomo.
It is my wife complaining in her sleep:
I doubt not she is saying bitter things
Of me; and all my children round her dreaming
That I deny them sustenance.

Orsino.
Whilst he

Who truly took it from them, and who fills
Their hungry rest with bitterness, now sleeps
Lapped in bad pleasures, and triumphantly
Mocks thee in visions of successful hate
Too like the truth of day.

Giacomo.

If e'er he wakes

Again, I will not trust to hireling hands . . .

Orsino.

Why, that were well. I must be gone; good-night.

When next we meet-may all be done!

Giacomo.

And all

Forgotten: Oh, that I had never been!

[Exeunt.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV

Scene I.

-An Apartment in the Castle of Petrella. Enter Cenci.

Cenci.

She comes not; yet I left her even now
Vanquished and faint. She knows the penalty
Of her delay: yet what if threats are vain?
Am I not now within Petrella's moat?
Or fear I still the eyes and ears of Rome?
Might I not drag her by the golden hair?
Stamp on her? Keep her sleepless till her brain

Be overworn? Tame her with chains and famine?
Less would suffice. Yet so to leave undone
What I most seek! No, 'tis her stubborn will
Which by its own consent shall stoop as low
As that which drags it down.

Enter Lucretia.

Thou loathèd wretch!
Hide thee from my abhorrence: fly, begone!
Yet stay! Bid Beatrice come hither.

Lucretia.

Oh,
Husband! I pray for thine own wretched sake
Heed what thou dost. A man who walks like thee
Through crimes, and through the danger of his crimes,
Each hour may stumble o'er a sudden grave.
And thou art old; thy hairs are hoary gray;
As thou wouldst save thyself from death and hell,
Pity thy daughter; give her to some friend
In marriage: so that she may tempt thee not
To hatred, or worse thoughts, if worse there be.

Cenci.

What! like her sister who has found a home
To mock my hate from with prosperity?
Strange ruin shall destroy both her and thee
And all that yet remain. My death may be
Rapid, her destiny outspeeds it. Go,
Bid her come hither, and before my mood
Be changed, lest I should drag her by the hair.

Lucretia.

She sent me to thee, husband. At thy presence
She fell, as thou dost know, into a trance;
And in that trance she heard a voice which said,

'Cenci must die! Let him confess himself!
Even now the accusing Angel waits to hear
If God, to punish his enormous crimes,
Harden his dying heart!'

Cenci.

Why-such things are . . .
No doubt divine revealings may be made.
'Tis plain I have been favoured from above,
For when I cursed my sons they died.-Ay . . . so . . .
As to the right or wrong, that's talk . . . repentance . . .
Repentance is an easy moment's work
And more depends on God than me. Well . . . well . . .
I must give up the greater point, which was
To poison and corrupt her soul.

[A pause; Lucretia approaches anxiously, and then shrinks back as he speaks.]

One, two;
Ay . . . Rocco and Cristofano my curse
Strangled: and Giacomo, I think, will find
Life a worse Hell than that beyond the grave:
Beatrice shall, if there be skill in hate,
Die in despair, blaspheming: to Bernardo,
He is so innocent, I will bequeath
The memory of these deeds, and make his youth
The sepulchre of hope, where evil thoughts
Shall grow like weeds on a neglected tomb.
When all is done, out in the wide Campagna,
I will pile up my silver and my gold;
My costly robes, paintings and tapestries;
My parchments and all records of my wealth,
And make a bonfire in my joy, and leave
Of my possessions nothing but my name;
Which shall be an inheritance to strip
Its wearer bare as infamy. That done,
My soul, which is a scourge, will I resign

Into the hands of him who wielded it;
Be it for its own punishment or theirs,
He will not ask it of me till the lash
Be broken in its last and deepest wound;
Until its hate be all inflicted. Yet,
Lest death outspeed my purpose, let me make
Short work and sure . . .

[Going.

Lucretia.
(Stops him.)
Oh, stay! It was a feint:
She had no vision, and she heard no voice.
I said it but to awe thee.

Cenci.
That is well.
Vile palterer with the sacred truth of God,
Be thy soul choked with that blaspheming lie!
For Beatrice worse terrors are in store
To bend her to my will.

Lucretia.
Oh! to what will?
What cruel sufferings more than she has known
Canst thou inflict?

Cenci.
Andrea! Go call my daughter,
And if she comes not tell her that I come.
What sufferings? I will drag her, step by step,
Through infamies unheard of among men:
She shall stand shelterless in the broad noon
Of public scorn, for acts blazoned abroad,
One among which shall be . . . What? Canst thou guess?
She shall become (for what she most abhors

Shall have a fascination to entrap
Her loathing will) to her own conscious self
All she appears to others; and when dead,
As she shall die unshrived and unforgiven,
A rebel to her father and her God,
Her corpse shall be abandoned to the hounds;
Her name shall be the terror of the earth;
Her spirit shall approach the throne of God
Plague-spotted with my curses. I will make
Body and soul a monstrous lump of ruin.

Enter Andrea.

Andrea.
The Lady Beatrice . . .

Cenci.
Speak, pale slave! What
Said she?

Andrea.
My Lord, 'twas what she looked; she said:
'Go tell my father that I see the gulf
Of Hell between us two, which he may pass,
I will not.'

[Exit Andrea.

Cenci.

Go thou quick, Lucretia,
Tell her to come; yet let her understand
Her coming is consent: and say, moreover,
That if she come not I will curse her.

[Exit Lucretia.

Ha!

With what but with a father's curse doth God
Panic-strike armèd victory, and make pale
Cities in their prosperity? The world's Father
Must grant a parent's prayer against his child,
Be he who asks even what men call me.
Will not the deaths of her rebellious brothers
Awe her before I speak? For I on them
Did imprecate quick ruin, and it came. Enter Lucretia.

Well; what? Speak, wretch!

Lucretia.

She said, 'I cannot come;
Go tell my father that I see a torrent
Of his own blood raging between us.'

Cenci

(kneeling).

God!

Hear me! If this most specious mass of flesh,
Which Thou hast made my daughter; this my blood,
This particle of my divided being;
Or rather, this my bane and my disease,
Whose sight infects and poisons me; this devil
Which sprung from me as from a hell, was meant
To aught good use; if her bright loveliness
Was kindled to illumine this dark world;
If nursed by Thy selectest dew of love
Such virtues blossom in her as should make
The peace of life, I pray Thee for my sake,
As Thou the common God and Father art
Of her, and me, and all; reverse that doom!
Earth, in the name of God, let her food be
Poison, until she be encrusted round
With leprous stains! Heaven, rain upon her head

The blistering drops of the Maremma's dew,
Till she be speckled like a toad; parch up
Those love-enkindled lips, warp those fine limbs
To loathèd lameness! All-beholding sun,
Strike in thine envy those life-darting eyes
With thine own blinding beams!

Lucretia.

Peace! Peace!

For thine own sake unsay those dreadful words.
When high God grants He punishes such prayers.

Cenci

(leaping up, and throwing his right hand towards Heaven).

He does His will, I mine! This in addition,
That if she have a child . . .

Lucretia.

Horrible thought!

Cenci.

That if she ever have a child; and thou,
Quick Nature! I adjure thee by thy God,
That thou be fruitful in her, and increase
And multiply, fulfilling his command,
And my deep imprecation! May it be
A hideous likeness of herself, that as
From a distorting mirror, she may see
Her image mixed with what she most abhors,
Smiling upon her from her nursing breast.
And that the child may from its infancy
Grow, day by day, more wicked and deformed,
Turning her mother's love to misery:
And that both she and it may live until
It shall repay her care and pain with hate,
Or what may else be more unnatural.

So he may hunt her through the clamorous scoffs
Of the loud world to a dishonoured grave.
Shall I revoke this curse? Go, bid her come,
Before my words are chronicled in Heaven. [Exit Lucretia.]

I do not feel as if I were a man,
But like a fiend appointed to chastise
The offences of some unremembered world.
My blood is running up and down my veins;
A fearful pleasure makes it prick and tingle:
I feel a giddy sickness of strange awe;
My heart is beating with an expectation
Of horrid joy.

Enter Lucretia.

What? Speak!

Lucretia.
She bids thee curse;
And if thy curses, as they cannot do,
Could kill her soul . . .

Cenci.
She would not come. 'Tis well,
I can do both: first take what I demand,
And then extort concession. To thy chamber!
Fly ere I spurn thee: and beware this night
That thou cross not my footsteps. It were safer
To come between the tiger and his prey.[Exit Lucretia.]

It must be late; mine eyes grow weary dim
With unaccustomed heaviness of sleep.
Conscience! Oh, thou most insolent of lies!
They say that sleep, that healing dew of Heaven,
Steeps not in balm the foldings of the brain
Which thinks thee an impostor. I will go
First to belie thee with an hour of rest,

Which will be deep and calm, I feel: and then . . .
O, multitudinous Hell, the fiends will shake.
Thine arches with the laughter of their joy!
There shall be lamentation heard in Heaven
As o'er an angel fallen; and upon Earth
All good shall droop and sicken, and ill things
Shall with a spirit of unnatural life
Stir and be quickened . . . even as I am now.

[Exit.

Scene II.

-Before the Castle of Petrella. Enter Beatrice and Lucretia above on the Ramparts.

Beatrice.

They come not yet.

Lucretia.

'Tis scarce midnight.

Beatrice.

How slow

Behind the course of thought, even sick with speed,
Lags leaden-footed time!

Lucretia.

The minutes pass . . .

If he should wake before the deed is done?

Beatrice.

O, mother! He must never wake again.

What thou hast said persuades me that our act
Will but dislodge a spirit of deep hell

Out of a human form.

Lucretia.

'Tis true he spoke
Of death and judgement with strange confidence
For one so wicked; as a man believing
In God, yet recking not of good or ill.
And yet to die without confession! . . .

Beatrice.

Oh!
Believe that Heaven is merciful and just,
And will not add our dread necessity
To the amount of his offences.

Enter Olimpio and Marzio, below.

Lucretia.

See,
They come.

Beatrice.

All mortal things must hasten thus
To their dark end. Let us go down.

[Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice from above.]

Olimpio.

How feel you to this work?

Marzio.

As one who thinks
A thousand crowns excellent market price
For an old murderer's life. Your cheeks are pale.

Olimpio.

It is the white reflection of your own,
Which you call pale.

Marzio.

Is that their natural hue?

Olimpio.

Or 'tis my hate and the deferred desire
To wreak it, which extinguishes their blood.

Marzio.

You are inclined then to this business?

Olimpio.

Ay.

If one should bribe me with a thousand crowns
To kill a serpent which had stung my child,
I could not be more willing.

Enter Beatrice and Lucretia, below.

Noble ladies!

Beatrice.

Are ye resolved?

Olimpio.

Is he asleep?

Marzio.

Is all
Quiet?

Lucretia.
I mixed an opiate with his drink:
He sleeps so soundly . . .

Beatrice.
That his death will be
But as a change of sin-chastising dreams,
A dark continuance of the Hell within him,
Which God extinguish! But ye are resolved?
Ye know it is a high and holy deed?

Olimpio.
We are resolved.

Marzio.
As to the how this act
Be warranted, it rests with you.

Beatrice.
Well, follow!

Olimpio.
Hush! Hark! What noise is that?

Marzio.
Ha! some one comes!

Beatrice.
Ye conscience-stricken cravens, rock to rest
Your baby hearts. It is the iron gate,
Which ye left open, swinging to the wind,

That enters whistling as in scorn. Come, follow!
And be your steps like mine, light, quick and bold.

[Exeunt.

Scene III.

-An Apartment in the Castle. Enter Beatrice and Lucretia.

Lucretia.

They are about it now.

Beatrice.

Nay, it is done.

Lucretia.

I have not heard him groan.

Beatrice.

He will not groan.

Lucretia.

What sound is that?

Beatrice.

List! 'tis the tread of feet
About his bed.

Lucretia.

My God!

If he be now a cold stiff corpse . . .

Beatrice.

O, fear not
What may be done, but what is left undone:
The act seals all.

Enter Olimpio and Marzio.

Is it accomplished?

Marzio.
What?

Olimpio.
Did you not call?

Beatrice.
When?

Olimpio.
Now.

Beatrice.
I ask if all is over?

Olimpio.
We dare not kill an old and sleeping man;
His thin gray hair, his stern and reverend brow,
His veined hands crossed on his heaving breast,
And the calm innocent sleep in which he lay,
Quelled me. Indeed, indeed, I cannot do it.

Marzio.

But I was bolder; for I chid Olimpio,
And bade him bear his wrongs to his own grave
And leave me the reward. And now my knife
Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man
Stirred in his sleep, and said, 'God! hear, O, hear,
A father's curse! What, art Thou not our Father?'
And then he laughed. I knew it was the ghost
Of my dead father speaking through his lips,
And could not kill him.

Beatrice.

Miserable slaves!
Where, if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
Found ye the boldness to return to me
With such a deed undone? Base palterers!
Cowards and traitors! Why, the very conscience
Which ye would sell for gold and for revenge
Is an equivocation: it sleeps over
A thousand daily acts disgracing men;
And when a deed where mercy insults Heaven . . .
Why do I talk?

[Snatching a dagger from one of them and raising it.

Hadst thou a tongue to say,
'She murdered her own father!'-I must do it!
But never dream ye shall outlive him long!

Olimpio.
Stop, for God's sake!

Marzio.
I will go back and kill him.

Olimpio.
Give me the weapon. we must do thy will.

Beatrice.

Take it! Depart! Return!

[Exeunt Olimpio and Marzio.

How pale thou art!
We do but that which 'twere a deadly crime
To leave undone.

Lucretia.
Would it were done!

Beatrice.

Even whilst
That doubt is passing through your mind, the world
Is conscious of a change. Darkness and Hell
Have swallowed up the vapour they sent forth
To blacken the sweet light of life. My breath
Comes, methinks, lighter, and the jellied blood
Runs freely through my veins. Hark!

Enter Olimpio and Marzio.

He is . . .

Olimpio.
Dead!

Marzio.

We strangled him that there might be no blood;
And then we threw his heavy corpse i' the garden
Under the balcony; 'twill seem it fell.

Beatrice

(giving them a bag of coin).

Here, take this gold, and hasten to your homes.

And, Marzio, because thou wast only awed

By that which made me tremble, wear thou this! [Clothes him in a rich mantle.

It was the mantle which my grandfather
Wore in his high prosperity, and men
Envied his state: so may they envy thine.
Thou wert a weapon in the hand of God
To a just use. Live long and thrive! And, mark,
If thou hast crimes, repent: this deed is none.

[A horn is sounded.

Lucretia.

Hark, 'tis the castle horn; my God! it sounds
Like the last trump.

Beatrice

Some tedious guest is coming.

Lucretia.

The drawbridge is let down; there is a tramp
Of horses in the court; fly, hide yourselves!

[Exeunt Olimpio and Marzio.

Beatrice.

Let us retire to counterfeit deep rest;
I scarcely need to counterfeit it now:
The spirit which doth reign within these limbs
Seems strangely undisturbed. I could even sleep
Fearless and calm: all ill is surely past.

[Exeunt.

Scene IV.

-Another Apartment in the Castle. Enter on one side the Legate Savella,
introduced by a Servant, and on the other Lucretia and Bernardo.

Savella.

Lady, my duty to his Holiness
Be my excuse that thus unseasonably
I break upon your rest. I must speak with
Count Cenci; doth he sleep?

Lucretia

(in a hurried and confused manner).
I think he sleeps;
Yet wake him not, I pray, spare me awhile,
He is a wicked and a wrathful man;
Should he be roused out of his sleep to-night,
Which is, I know, a hell of angry dreams,
It were not well; indeed it were not well.
Wait till day break . . . (aside)
O, I am deadly sick!

Savella.

I grieve thus to distress you, but the Count
Must answer charges of the gravest import,
And suddenly; such my commission is.

Lucretia

(with increased agitation).

I dare not rouse him: I know none who dare . . .
'Twere perilous; . . . you might as safely waken
A serpent; or a corpse in which some fiend
Were laid to sleep.

Savella.

Lady, my moments here
Are counted. I must rouse him from his sleep,
Since none else dare.

Lucretia

(aside).

O, terror! O, despair!

(To Bernardo.)

Bernardo, conduct you the Lord Legate to
Your father's chamber.

[Exeunt Savella and Bernardo.

Enter Beatrice.

Beatrice.

'Tis a messenger

Come to arrest the culprit who now stands
Before the throne of unappealable God.
Both Earth and Heaven, consenting arbiters,
Acquit our deed.

Lucretia.

Oh, agony of fear!

Would that he yet might live! Even now I heard
The Legate's followers whisper as they passed
They had a warrant for his instant death.
All was prepared by unforbidden means
Which we must pay so dearly, having done.
Even now they search the tower, and find the body;
Now they suspect the truth; now they consult

Before they come to tax us with the fact;
O, horrible, 'tis all discovered!

Beatrice.

Mother,

What is done wisely, is done well. Be bold
As thou art just. 'Tis like a truant child
To fear that others know what thou hast done,
Even from thine own strong consciousness, and thus
Write on unsteady eyes and altered cheeks
All thou wouldst hide. Be faithful to thyself,
And fear no other witness but thy fear.
For if, as cannot be, some circumstance
Should rise in accusation, we can blind
Suspicion with such cheap astonishment,
Or overbear it with such guiltless pride,
As murderers cannot feign. The deed is done,
And what may follow now regards not me.
I am as universal as the light;
Free as the earth-surrounding air; as firm
As the world's centre. Consequence, to me,
Is as the wind which strikes the solid rock
But shakes it not.

[A cry within and tumult.

Voices.

Murder! Murder! Murder!

Enter Bernardo and Savella.

Savella

(to his followers).

Go search the castle round; sound the alarm;
Look to the gates that none escape!

Beatrice.
What now?

Bernardo.
I know not what to say . . . my father's dead.

Beatrice.
How; dead! he only sleeps; you mistake, brother.
His sleep is very calm, very like death;
'Tis wonderful how well a tyrant sleeps.
He is not dead?

Bernardo.
Dead; murdered.

Lucretia
(with extreme agitation).
Oh no, no
He is not murdered though he may be dead;
I have alone the keys of those apartments.

Savella.
Ha! Is it so?

Beatrice.
My Lord, I pray excuse us;
We will retire; my mother is not well:
She seems quite overcome with this strange horror.

[Exeunt Lucretia and Beatrice.]

Savella.
Can you suspect who may have murdered him?

Bernardo.

I know not what to think.

Savella.

Can you name any

Who had an interest in his death?

Bernardo.

Alas!

I can name none who had not, and those most

Who most lament that such a deed is done;

My mother, and my sister, and myself.

Savella.

'Tis strange! There were clear marks of violence.

I found the old man's body in the moonlight

Hanging beneath the window of his chamber,

Among the branches of a pine: he could not

Have fallen there, for all his limbs lay heaped

And effortless; 'tis true there was no blood . . .

Favour me, Sir; it much imports your house

That all should be made clear; to tell the ladies

That I request their presence.

[Exit Bernardo.

Enter Guards bringing in Marzio.

Guard.

We have one.

Officer.

My Lord, we found this ruffian and another

Lurking among the rocks; there is no doubt

But that they are the murderers of Count Cenci:

Each had a bag of coin; this fellow wore

A gold-inwoven robe, which shining bright
Under the dark rocks to the glimmering moon
Betrayed them to our notice: the other fell
Desperately fighting.

Savella.

What does he confess?

Officer.

He keeps firm silence; but these lines found on him
May speak.

Savella.

Their language is at least sincere.

[Reads.

'To the Lady Beatrice.

'That the atonement of what my nature sickens to conjecture may soon arrive, I
send thee, at thy brother's desire, those who will speak and do more than I dare
write. . .

'Thy devoted servant, Orsino.'

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, and Bernardo.

Knowest thou this writing, Lady?

Beatrice.

No.

Savella.
Nor thou?

Lucretia.
(Her conduct throughout the scene is marked by extreme agitation.)
Where was it found? What is it? It should be
Orsino's hand! It speaks of that strange horror
Which never yet found utterance, but which made
Between that hapless child and her dead father
A gulf of obscure hatred.

Savella.
Is it so?
Is it true, Lady, that thy father did
Such outrages as to awaken in thee
Unfilial hate?

Beatrice.
Not hate, 'twas more than hate:
This is most true, yet wherefore question me?

Savella.
There is a deed demanding question done;
Thou hast a secret which will answer not.

Beatrice.
What sayest? My Lord, your words are bold and rash.

Savella.
I do arrest all present in the name
Of the Pope's Holiness. You must to Rome.

Lucretia.
O, not to Rome! Indeed we are not guilty.

Beatrice.

Guilty! Who dares talk of guilt? My Lord,
I am more innocent of parricide
Than is a child born fatherless . . . Dear mother,
Your gentleness and patience are no shield
For this keen-judging world, this two-edged lie,
Which seems, but is not. What! will human laws,
Rather will ye who are their ministers,
Bar all access to retribution first,
And then, when Heaven doth interpose to do
What ye neglect, arming familiar things
To the redress of an unwonted crime,
Make ye the victims who demanded it
Culprits? 'Tis ye are culprits! That poor wretch
Who stands so pale, and trembling, and amazed,
If it be true he murdered Cenci, was
A sword in the right hand of justest God.
Wherefore should I have wielded it? Unless
The crimes which mortal tongue dare never name
God therefore scruples to avenge.

Savella.

You own
That you desired his death?

Beatrice.

It would have been
A crime no less than his, if for one moment
That fierce desire had faded in my heart.
'Tis true I did believe, and hope, and pray,
Ay, I even knew . . . for God is wise and just,
That some strange sudden death hung over him.
'Tis true that this did happen, and most true
There was no other rest for me on earth,
No other hope in Heaven . . . now what of this?

Savella.

Strange thoughts beget strange deeds; and here are both:

I judge thee not.

Beatrice.

And yet, if you arrest me,
You are the judge and executioner
Of that which is the life of life: the breath
Of accusation kills an innocent name,
And leaves for lame acquittal the poor life
Which is a mask without it. 'Tis most false
That I am guilty of foul parricide;
Although I must rejoice, for justest cause,
That other hands have sent my father's soul
To ask the mercy he denied to me.
Now leave us free; stain not a noble house
With vague surmises of rejected crime;
Add to our sufferings and your own neglect
No heavier sum: let them have been enough:
Leave us the wreck we have.

Savella.

I dare not, Lady.
I pray that you prepare yourselves for Rome:
There the Pope's further pleasure will be known.

Lucretia.

O, not to Rome! O, take us not to Rome!

Beatrice.

Why not to Rome, dear mother? There as here
Our innocence is as an armèd heel
To trample accusation. God is there
As here, and with His shadow ever clothes
The innocent, the injured and the weak;
And such are we. Cheer up, dear Lady, lean
On me; collect your wandering thoughts. My Lord,
As soon as you have taken some refreshment,
And had all such examinations made
Upon the spot, as may be necessary

To the full understanding of this matter,
We shall be ready. Mother; will you come?

Lucretia.

Ha! they will bind us to the rack, and wrest
Self-accusation from our agony!
Will Giacomo be there? Orsino? Marzio?
All present; all confronted; all demanding
Each from the other's countenance the thing
Which is in every heart! O, misery!

[She faints, and is borne out.

Savella.

She faints: an ill appearance this.

Beatrice.

My Lord,
She knows not yet the uses of the world.
She fears that power is as a beast which grasps
And loosens not: a snake whose look transmutes
All things to guilt which is its nutriment.
She cannot know how well the supine slaves
Of blind authority read the truth of things
When written on a brow of guilelessness:
She sees not yet triumphant Innocence
Stand at the judgement-seat of mortal man,
A judge and an accuser of the wrong
Which drags it there. Prepare yourself, my Lord;
Our suite will join yours in the court below.

[Exeunt.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V

Scene I.

-An Apartment in Orsino's Palace. Enter Orsino and Giacomo.

Giacomo.

Do evil deeds thus quickly come to end?
O, that the vain remorse which must chastise
Crimes done, had but as loud a voice to warn
As its keen sting is mortal to avenge!
O, that the hour when present had cast off
The mantle of its mystery, and shown
The ghastly form with which it now returns
When its scared game is roused, cheering the hounds
Of conscience to their prey! Alas! Alas!
It was a wicked thought, a piteous deed,
To kill an old and hoary-headed father.

Orsino.

It has turned out unluckily, in truth.

Giacomo.

To violate the sacred doors of sleep;
To cheat kind Nature of the placid death
Which she prepares for overworn age;
To drag from Heaven an unrepentant soul
Which might have quenched in reconciling prayers
A life of burning crimes . . .

Orsino.

You cannot say
I urged you to the deed.

Giacomo.

O, had I never
Found in thy smooth and ready countenance
The mirror of my darkest thoughts; hadst thou
Never with hints and questions made me look
Upon the monster of my thought, until

It grew familiar to desire . . .

Orsino.

'Tis thus

Men cast the blame of their unprosperous acts
Upon the abettors of their own resolve;
Or anything but their weak, guilty selves.
And yet, confess the truth, it is the peril
In which you stand that gives you this pale sickness
Of penitence; confess 'tis fear disguised
From its own shame that takes the mantle now
Of thin remorse. What if we yet were safe?

Giacomo.

How can that be? Already Beatrice,
Lucretia and the murderer are in prison.
I doubt not officers are, whilst we speak,
Sent to arrest us.

Orsino.

I have all prepared
For instant flight. We can escape even now,
So we take fleet occasion by the hair.

Giacomo.

Rather expire in tortures, as I may.
What! will you cast by self-accusing flight
Assured conviction upon Beatrice?
She, who alone in this unnatural work,
Stands like God's angel ministered upon
By fiends; avenging such a nameless wrong
As turns black parricide to piety;
Whilst we for basest ends . . . I fear, Orsino,
While I consider all your words and looks,
Comparing them with your proposal now,
That you must be a villain. For what end
Could you engage in such a perilous crime,
Training me on with hints, and signs, and smiles,

Even to this gulf? Thou art no liar? No,
Thou art a lie! Traitor and murderer!
Coward and slave! But, no, defend thyself; [Drawing.

Let the sword speak what the indignant tongue
Disdains to brand thee with.

Orsino.

Put up your weapon.

Is it the desperation of your fear
Makes you thus rash and sudden with a friend,
Now ruined for your sake? If honest anger
Have moved you, know, that what I just proposed
Was but to try you. As for me, I think,
Thankless affection led me to this point,
From which, if my firm temper could repent,
I cannot now recede. Even whilst we speak
The ministers of justice wait below:
They grant me these brief moments. Now if you
Have any word of melancholy comfort
To speak to your pale wife, 'twere best to pass
Out at the postern, and avoid them so.

Giacomo.

O, generous friend! How canst thou pardon me?
Would that my life could purchase thine!

Orsino.

That wish

Now comes a day too late. Haste; fare thee well!
Hear'st thou not steps along the corridor? [Exit Giacomo.

I'm sorry for it; but the guards are waiting
At his own gate, and such was my contrivance
That I might rid me both of him and them.
I thought to act a solemn comedy
Upon the painted scene of this new world,
And to attain my own peculiar ends
By some such plot of mingled good and ill

As others weave; but there arose a Power
Which grasped and snapped the threads of my device
And turned it to a net of ruin . . . Ha! [A shout is heard.

Is that my name I hear proclaimed abroad?
But I will pass, wrapped in a vile disguise;
Rags on my back, and a false innocence
Upon my face, through the misdeeming crowd
Which judges by what seems. 'Tis easy then
For a new name and for a country new,
And a new life, fashioned on old desires,
To change the honours of abandoned Rome.
And these must be the masks of that within,
Which must remain unaltered . . . Oh, I fear
That what is past will never let me rest!
Why, when none else is conscious, but myself,
Of my misdeeds, should my own heart's contempt
Trouble me? Have I not the power to fly
My own reproaches? Shall I be the slave
Of . . . what? A word? which those of this false world
Employ against each other, not themselves;
As men wear daggers not for self-offence.
But if I am mistaken, where shall I
Find the disguise to hide me from myself,
As now I skulk from every other eye?

[Exit.

Scene II.

-A Hall of Justice. Camillo, Judges, &c., are discovered seated; Marzio is led in.

First Judge.

Accused, do you persist in your denial?
I ask you, are you innocent, or guilty?
I demand who were the participators
In your offence? Speak truth and the whole truth.

Marzio.

My God! I did not kill him; I know nothing;
Olimpio sold the robe to me from which
You would infer my guilt.

Second Judge.
Away with him!

First Judge.
Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss
Speak false? Is it so soft a questioner,
That you would bandy lover's talk with it
Till it wind out your life and soul? Away!

Marzio.
Spare me! O, spare! I will confess.

First Judge.
Then speak.

Marzio.
I strangled him in his sleep.

First Judge.
Who urged you to it?

Marzio.
His own son Giacomo, and the young prelate
Orsino sent me to Petrella; there
The ladies Beatrice and Lucretia
Tempted me with a thousand crowns, and I
And my companion forthwith murdered him.
Now let me die.

First Judge.

This sounds as bad as truth. Guards, there,
Lead forth the prisoner!

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, and Giacomo, guarded.

Look upon this man;
When did you see him last?

Beatrice.
We never saw him.

Marzio.
You know me too well, Lady Beatrice.

Beatrice.
I know thee! How? where? when?

Marzio.

You know 'twas I
Whom you did urge with menaces and bribes
To kill your father. When the thing was done
You clothed me in a robe of woven gold
And bade me thrive: how I have thriven, you see.
You, my Lord Giacomo, Lady Lucretia,
You know that what I speak is true.

[Beatrice advances towards him; he covers his face, and shrinks back.

Oh, dart
The terrible resentment of those eyes

On the dead earth! Turn them away from me!
They wound: 'twas torture forced the truth. My Lords,
Having said this let me be led to death.

Beatrice.

Poor wretch, I pity thee: yet stay awhile.

Camillo.

Guards, lead him not away.

Beatrice.

Cardinal Camillo,

You have a good repute for gentleness
And wisdom: can it be that you sit here
To countenance a wicked farce like this?
When some obscure and trembling slave is dragged
From sufferings which might shake the sternest heart
And bade to answer, not as he believes,
But as those may suspect or do desire
Whose questions thence suggest their own reply:
And that in peril of such hideous torments
As merciful God spares even the damned. Speak now
The thing you surely know, which is that you,
If your fine frame were stretched upon that wheel,
And you were told: 'Confess that you did poison
Your little nephew; that fair blue-eyed child
Who was the lodestar of your life:'-and though
All see, since his most swift and piteous death,
That day and night, and heaven and earth, and time,
And all the things hoped for or done therein
Are changed to you, through your exceeding grief,
Yet you would say, 'I confess anything:'
And beg from your tormentors, like that slave,
The refuge of dishonourable death.
I pray thee, Cardinal, that thou assert
My innocence.

Camillo.

(much moved).

What shall we think, my Lords?

Shame on these tears! I thought the heart was frozen

Which is their fountain. I would pledge my soul

That she is guiltless.

Judge.

Yet she must be tortured.

Camillo.

I would as soon have tortured mine own nephew

(If he now lived he would be just her age;

His hair, too, was her colour, and his eyes

Like hers in shape, but blue and not so deep)

As that most perfect image of God's love

That ever came sorrowing upon the earth.

She is as pure as speechless infancy!

Judge.

Well, be her purity on your head, my Lord,

If you forbid the rack. His Holiness

Enjoined us to pursue this monstrous crime

By the severest forms of law; nay even

To stretch a point against the criminals.

The prisoners stand accused of parricide

Upon such evidence as justifies

Torture.

Beatrice.

What evidence? This man's?

Judge.

Even so.

Beatrice

(to Marzio).

Come near. And who art thou thus chosen forth
Out of the multitude of living men
To kill the innocent?

Marzio.
I am Marzio,
Thy father's vassal.

Beatrice.

Fix thine eyes on mine;
Answer to what I ask.

[Turning to the Judges.

I prithee mark
His countenance: unlike bold calumny
Which sometimes dares not speak the thing it looks,
He dares not look the thing he speaks, but bends
His gaze on the blind earth.

(To Marzio.)

What! wilt thou say
That I did murder my own father?

Marzio.
Oh!
Spare me! My brain swims round . . . I cannot speak . . .
It was that horrid torture forced the truth.
Take me away! Let her not look on me!
I am a guilty miserable wretch;
I have said all I know; now, let me die!

Beatrice.

My Lords, if by my nature I had been
So stern, as to have planned the crime alleged,
Which your suspicions dictate to this slave,
And the rack makes him utter, do you think
I should have left this two-edged instrument
Of my misdeed; this man, this bloody knife
With my own name engraven on the heft,
Lying unsheathed amid a world of foes,
For my own death? That with such horrible need
For deepest silence, I should have neglected
So trivial a precaution, as the making
His tomb the keeper of a secret written
On a thief's memory? What is his poor life?
What are a thousand lives? A parricide
Had trampled them like dust; and, see, he lives! (Turning to Marzio.)

And thou . . .

Marzio.

Oh, spare me! Speak to me no more!
That stern yet piteous look, those solemn tones,
Wound worse than torture.

(To the Judges.

I have told it all;
For pity's sake lead me away to death.

Camillo.

Guards, lead him nearer the Lady Beatrice,
He shrinks from her regard like autumn's leaf
From the keen breath of the serenest north.

Beatrice.

O thou who tremblest on the giddy verge
Of life and death, pause ere thou answerest me;
So mayst thou answer God with less dismay:
What evil have we done thee? I, alas!
Have lived but on this earth a few sad years,
And so my lot was ordered, that a father
First turned the moments of awakening life
To drops, each poisoning youth's sweet hope; and then
Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul;
And my untainted fame; and even that peace
Which sleeps within the core of the heart's heart;
But the wound was not mortal; so my hate
Became the only worship I could lift
To our great father, who in pity and love,
Armed thee, as thou dost say, to cut him off;
And thus his wrong becomes my accusation;
And art thou the accuser? If thou hopest
Mercy in heaven, show justice upon earth:
Worse than a bloody hand is a hard heart.
If thou hast done murders, made thy life's path
Over the trampled laws of God and man,
Rush not before thy Judge, and say: 'My maker,
I have done this and more; for there was one
Who was most pure and innocent on earth;
And because she endured what never any
Guilty or innocent endured before:
Because her wrongs could not be told, not thought;
Because thy hand at length did rescue her;
I with my words killed her and all her kin.'
Think, I adjure you, what it is to slay
The reverence living in the minds of men
Towards our ancient house, and stainless fame!
Think what it is to strangle infant pity,
Cradled in the belief of guileless looks,
Till it become a crime to suffer. Think
What 'tis to blot with infamy and blood
All that which shows like innocence, and is,
Hear me, great God! I swear, most innocent,
So that the world lose all discrimination
Between the sly, fierce, wild regard of guilt,
And that which now compels thee to reply

To what I ask: Am I, or am I not
A parricide?

Marzio.
Thou art not!

Judge.
What is this?

Marzio.
I here declare those whom I did accuse
Are innocent. 'Tis I alone am guilty.

Judge.
Drag him away to torments; let them be
Subtle and long drawn out, to tear the folds
Of the heart's inmost cell. Unbind him not
Till he confess.

Marzio.
Torture me as ye will:
A keener pang has wrung a higher truth
From my last breath. She is most innocent!
Bloodhounds, not men, glut yourselves well with me;
I will not give you that fine piece of nature
To rend and ruin.

[Exit Marzio, guarded.]

Camillo.
What say ye now, my Lords?

Judge.
Let tortures strain the truth till it be white

As snow thrice sifted by the frozen wind.

Camillo.

Yet stained with blood.

Judge

(to Beatrice).

Know you this paper, Lady?

Beatrice.

Entrap me not with questions. Who stands here

As my accuser? Ha! wilt thou be he,

Who art my judge? Accuser, witness, judge,

What, all in one? Here is Orsino's name;

Where is Orsino? Let his eye meet mine.

What means this scrawl? Alas! ye know not what,

And therefore on the chance that it may be

Some evil, will ye kill us?

Enter an Officer.

Officer.

Marzio's dead.

Judge.

What did he say?

Officer.

Nothing. As soon as we

Had bound him on the wheel, he smiled on us,

As one who baffles a deep adversary;

And holding his breath, died.

Judge.

There remains nothing
But to apply the question to those prisoners,
Who yet remain stubborn.

Camillo.

I overrule
Further proceedings, and in the behalf
Of these most innocent and noble persons
Will use my interest with the Holy Father.

Judge.

Let the Pope's pleasure then be done. Meanwhile
Conduct these culprits each to separate cells;
And be the engines ready: for this night
If the Pope's resolution be as grave,
Pious, and just as once, I'll wring the truth
Out of those nerves and sinews, groan by groan.

[Exeunt.

Scene III.

-The Cell of a Prison. Beatrice is discovered asleep on a couch. Enter Bernardo.

Bernardo.

How gently slumber rests upon her face,
Like the last thoughts of some day sweetly spent
Closing in night and dreams, and so prolonged.
After such torments as she bore last night,
How light and soft her breathing comes. Ay me!
Methinks that I shall never sleep again.
But I must shake the heavenly dew of rest
From this sweet folded flower, thus . . . wake! awake!
What, sister, canst thou sleep?

Beatrice
(awaking).

I was just dreaming
That we were all in Paradise. Thou knowest
This cell seems like a kind of Paradise
After our father's presence.

Bernardo.
Dear, dear sister,
Would that thy dream were not a dream! O God!
How shall I tell?

Beatrice.
What wouldst thou tell, sweet brother?

Bernardo.
Look not so calm and happy, or even whilst
I stand considering what I have to say
My heart will break.

Beatrice.
See now, thou mak'st me weep:
How very friendless thou wouldst be, dear child,
If I were dead. Say what thou hast to say.

Bernardo.
They have confessed; they could endure no more
The tortures . . .

Beatrice.

Ha! What was there to confess?
They must have told some weak and wicked lie
To flatter their tormentors. Have they said
That they were guilty? O white innocence,
That thou shouldst wear the mask of guilt to hide
Thine awful and serenest countenance

From those who know thee not!

Enter Judge with Lucretia and Giacomo, guarded.

Ignoble hearts!

For some brief spasms of pain, which are at least
As mortal as the limbs through which they pass,
Are centuries of high splendour laid in dust?
And that eternal honour which should live
Sunlike, above the reek of mortal fame,
Changed to a mockery and a byword? What!
Will you give up these bodies to be dragged
At horses' heels, so that our hair should sweep
The footsteps of the vain and senseless crowd,
Who, that they may make our calamity
Their worship and their spectacle, will leave
The churches and the theatres as void
As their own hearts? Shall the light multitude
Fling, at their choice, curses or faded pity,
Sad funeral flowers to deck a living corpse,
Upon us as we pass to pass away,
And leave . . . what memory of our having been?
Infamy, blood, terror, despair? O thou,
Who wert a mother to the parentless,
Kill not thy child! Let not her wrongs kill thee!
Brother, lie down with me upon the rack,
And let us each be silent as a corpse;
It soon will be as soft as any grave.
'Tis but the falsehood it can wring from fear
Makes the rack cruel.

Giacomo.

They will tear the truth
Even from thee at last, those cruel pains:
For pity's sake say thou art guilty now.

Lucretia.

Oh, speak the truth! Let us all quickly die;

And after death, God is our judge, not they;
He will have mercy on us.

Bernardo.

If indeed

It can be true, say so, dear sister mine;
And then the Pope will surely pardon you,
And all be well.

Judge.

Confess, or I will warp
Your limbs with such keen tortures . . .

Beatrice.

Tortures! Turn

The rack henceforth into a spinning-wheel!
Torture your dog, that he may tell when last
He lapped the blood his master shed . . . not me!
My pangs are of the mind, and of the heart,
And of the soul; ay, of the inmost soul,
Which weeps within tears as of burning gall
To see, in this ill world where none are true,
My kindred false to their deserted selves.
And with considering all the wretched life
Which I have lived, and its now wretched end,
And the small justice shown by Heaven and Earth
To me or mine; and what a tyrant thou art,
And what slaves these; and what a world we make,
The oppressor and the oppressed . . . such pangs compel
My answer. What is it thou wouldst with me?

Judge.

Art thou not guilty of thy father's death?

Beatrice.

Or wilt thou rather tax high-judging God
That He permitted such an act as that

Which I have suffered, and which He beheld;
Made it unutterable, and took from it
All refuge, all revenge, all consequence,
But that which thou hast called my father's death?
Which is or is not what men call a crime,
Which either I have done, or have not done;
Say what ye will. I shall deny no more.
If ye desire it thus, thus let it be,
And so an end of all. Now do your will;
No other pains shall force another word.

Judge.

She is convicted, but has not confessed.
Be it enough. Until their final sentence
Let none have converse with them. You, young Lord,
Linger not here!

Beatrice.

Oh, tear him not away!

Judge.

Guards, do your duty.

Bernardo

(embracing Beatrice).

Oh! would ye divide

Body from soul?

Officer.

That is the headsman's business.

[Exeunt all but Lucretia, Beatrice, and Giacomo.]

Giacomo.

Have I confessed? Is it all over now?

No hope! No refuge! O weak, wicked tongue
Which hast destroyed me, would that thou hadst been
Cut out and thrown to dogs first! To have killed
My father first, and then betrayed my sister;
Ay, thee! the one thing innocent and pure
In this black guilty world, to that which I
So well deserve! My wife! my little ones!
Destitute, helpless, and I . . . Father! God!
Canst Thou forgive even the unforgiving,
When their full hearts break thus, thus! . . .

[Covers his face and weeps.

Lucretia.

O my child!
To what a dreadful end are we all come!
Why did I yield? Why did I not sustain
Those torments? Oh, that I were all dissolved
Into these fast and unavailing tears,
Which flow and feel not!

Beatrice.

What 'twas weak to do,
'Tis weaker to lament, once being done;
Take cheer! The God who knew my wrong, and made
Our speedy act the angel of His wrath,
Seems, and but seems, to have abandoned us.
Let us not think that we shall die for this.
Brother, sit near me; give me your firm hand,
You had a manly heart. Bear up! Bear up!
O dearest Lady, put your gentle head
Upon my lap, and try to sleep awhile:
Your eyes look pale, hollow and overworn,
With heaviness of watching and slow grief.
Come, I will sing you some low, sleepy tune,
Not cheerful, nor yet sad; some dull old thing,
Some outworn and unused monotony,
Such as our country gossips sing and spin,
Till they almost forget they live: lie down!

So, that will do. Have I forgot the words?
Faith! They are sadder than I thought they were.

SONG

False friend, wilt thou smile or weep
When my life is laid asleep?
Little cares for a smile or a tear,
The clay-cold corpse upon the bier!
Farewell! Heigho!
What is this whispers low?
There is a snake in thy smile, my dear;
And bitter poison within thy tear.

Sweet sleep, were death like to thee,
Or if thou couldst mortal be,
I would close these eyes of pain;
When to wake? Never again.
O World! Farewell!
Listen to the passing bell!
It says, thou and I must part,
With a light and a heavy heart.

[The scene closes.]

Scene IV.

-A Hall of the Prison. Enter Camillo and Bernardo.

Camillo.

The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom: not a man.
He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice:

'Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?' Then to another: 'Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well.'
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words, coldly: 'They must die.'

Bernardo.

And yet you left him not?

Camillo.

I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: 'Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled.'

Bernardo.

O God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return!

[Rushes out.

Camillo.

Alas! poor boy!

A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter Lucretia, Beatrice, and Giacomo, guarded.

Beatrice.

I hardly dare to fear

That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.

Camillo.

May God in heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
Here is the sentence and the warrant.

Beatrice

(wildly).

O

My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost-
How fearful! to be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, gray, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;

The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in gray hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On Earth, and ever present? Even though dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?

Lucretia.

Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ: ere night,
Think, we shall be in Paradise.

Beatrice.

'Tis past!
Whatever comes my heart shall sink no more.
And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
How tedious, false and cold seem all things. I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God,
I hope I do trust in Him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

[During the latter speeches Giacomo has retired conversing with Camillo, who now goes out; Giacomo advances.

Giacomo.

Know you not, Mother . . . Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

Lucretia.

Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

Beatrice.

Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair, and free;
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives;
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk through a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep; 'twere just the grave
Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now . . .

Bernardo rushes in.

Bernardo.

Oh, horrible!

That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one . . . What if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark! while I say, sister,
To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead! The sweet bond broken!

Enter Camillo and Guards.

They come! Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted . . . white . . . cold. Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

Beatrice.

Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child:

For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,
Though wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And though
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

Bernardo.

I cannot say, farewell!

Camillo.

Oh, Lady Beatrice!

Beatrice.

Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours I see is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

THE END

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Cloud

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.
From my wings are shaken the dews that waken
The sweet buds every one,
When rocked to rest on their mother's breast,
As she dances about the sun.
I wield the flail of the lashing hail,
And whiten the green plains under,
And then again I dissolve it in rain,
And laugh as I pass in thunder.

I sift the snow on the mountains below,
And their great pines groan aghast;
And all the night 'tis my pillow white,
While I sleep in the arms of the blast.
Sublime on the towers of my skiey bowers,
Lightning, my pilot, sits;
In a cavern under is fettered the thunder,
It struggles and howls at fits;

Over earth and ocean, with gentle motion,
This pilot is guiding me,
Lured by the love of the genii that move
In the depths of the purple sea;
Over the rills, and the crags, and the hills,
Over the lakes and the plains,
Wherever he dream, under mountain or stream,
The Spirit he loves remains;
And I all the while bask in Heaven's blue smile,
Whilst he is dissolving in rains.

The sanguine Sunrise, with his meteor eyes,
And his burning plumes outspread,
Leaps on the back of my sailing rack,
When the morning star shines dead;
As on the jag of a mountain crag,
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,

An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of its golden wings.
And when Sunset may breathe, from the lit sea beneath,
Its ardors of rest and of love,

And the crimson pall of eve may fall
From the depth of Heaven above,
With wings folded I rest, on mine aery nest,
As still as a brooding dove.
That orb'd maiden with white fire laden,
Whom mortals call the Moon,
Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
By the midnight breezes strewn;
And wherever the beat of her unseen feet,
Which only the angels hear,
May have broken the woof of my tent's thin roof,
The stars peep behind her and peer;
And I laugh to see them whirl and flee,
Like a swarm of golden bees,
When I widen the rent in my wind-built tent,
Till the calm rivers, lakes, and seas,
Like strips of the sky fallen through me on high,
Are each paved with the moon and these.

I bind the Sun's throne with a burning zone,
And the Moon's with a girdle of pearl;
The volcanoes are dim, and the stars reel and swim
When the whirlwinds my banner unfurl.
From cape to cape, with a bridge-like shape,
Over a torrent sea,
Sunbeam-proof, I hang like a roof,--
The mountains its columns be.
The triumphal arch through which I march
With hurricane, fire, and snow,
When the Powers of the air are chained to my chair,
Is the million-colored bow;
The sphere-fire above its soft colors wove,
While the moist Earth was laughing below.

I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;

I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Cyclops

SILENUS:

O Bacchus, what a world of toil, both now
And ere these limbs were overworn with age,
Have I endured for thee! First, when thou fled'st
The mountain-nymphs who nursed thee, driven afar
By the strange madness Juno sent upon thee;
Then in the battle of the Sons of Earth,
When I stood foot by foot close to thy side,
No unpropitious fellow-combatant,
And, driving through his shield my winged spear,
Slew vast Enceladus. Consider now,
Is it a dream of which I speak to thee?
By Jove it is not, for you have the trophies!
And now I suffer more than all before.
For when I heard that Juno had devised
A tedious voyage for you, I put to sea
With all my children quaint in search of you,
And I myself stood on the beaked prow
And fixed the naked mast; and all my boys
Leaning upon their oars, with splash and strain
Made white with foam the green and purple sea,--
And so we sought you, king. We were sailing
Near Malea, when an eastern wind arose,
And drove us to this waste Aetnean rock;
The one-eyed children of the Ocean God,
The man-destroying Cyclopes, inhabit,
On this wild shore, their solitary caves,
And one of these, named Polypheme. has caught us
To be his slaves; and so, for all delight
Of Bacchic sports, sweet dance and melody,
We keep this lawless giant's wandering flocks.
My sons indeed on far declivities,
Young things themselves, tend on the youngling sheep,
But I remain to fill the water-casks,
Or sweeping the hard floor, or ministering
Some impious and abominable meal
To the fell Cyclops. I am wearied of it!
And now I must scrape up the littered floor
With this great iron rake, so to receive

My absent master and his evening sheep
In a cave neat and clean. Even now I see
My children tending the flocks hitherward.
Ha! what is this? are your Sicinnian measures
Even now the same, as when with dance and song
You brought young Bacchus to Althaea's halls?

CHORUS OF SATYRS:

STROPHE:

Where has he of race divine
Wandered in the winding rocks?
Here the air is calm and fine
For the father of the flocks;--
Here the grass is soft and sweet,
And the river-eddies meet
In the trough beside the cave,
Bright as in their fountain wave.--
Neither here, nor on the dew
Of the lawny uplands feeding?
Oh, you come!—a stone at you
Will I throw to mend your breeding;--
Get along, you horned thing,
Wild, seditious, rambling!

EPODE:

An Iacchic melody
To the golden Aphrodite
Will I lift, as erst did I
Seeking her and her delight
With the Maenads, whose white feet
To the music glance and fleet.
Bacchus, O beloved, where,
Shaking wide thy yellow hair,
Wanderest thou alone, afar?
To the one-eyed Cyclops, we,
Who by right thy servants are,
Minister in misery,
In these wretched goat-skins clad,
Far from thy delights and thee.

SILENUS:

Be silent, sons; command the slaves to drive
The gathered flocks into the rock-roofed cave.

CHORUS:

Go! But what needs this serious haste, O father?

SILENUS:

I see a Grecian vessel on the coast,
And thence the rowers with some general
Approaching to this cave.—About their necks
Hang empty vessels, as they wanted food,
And water-flasks.—Oh, miserable strangers!
Whence come they, that they know not what and who
My master is, approaching in ill hour
The inhospitable roof of Polypheme,
And the Cyclopan jaw-bone, man-destroying?
Be silent, Satyrs, while I ask and hear 85
Whence coming, they arrive the Aetnean hill.

ULYSSES:

Friends, can you show me some clear water-spring,
The remedy of our thirst? Will any one
Furnish with food seamen in want of it?
Ha! what is this? We seem to be arrived
At the blithe court of Bacchus. I observe
This sportive band of Satyrs near the caves.
First let me greet the elder.--Hail!

SILENUS:

Hail thou,
O Stranger! tell thy country and thy race.

ULYSSES:

The Ithacan Ulysses and the king
Of Cephalonia.

SILENUS:

Oh! I know the man,
Wordy and shrewd, the son of Sisyphus.

ULYSSES:

I am the same, but do not rail upon me.--

SILENUS:

Whence sailing do you come to Sicily?

ULYSSES:

From Ilion, and from the Trojan toils.

SILENUS:

How, touched you not at your paternal shore?

ULYSSES:

The strength of tempests bore me here by force.

SILENUS:

The self-same accident occurred to me.

ULYSSES:

Were you then driven here by stress of weather?

SILENUS:

Following the Pirates who had kidnapped Bacchus.

ULYSSES:

What land is this, and who inhabit it?--

SILENUS:

Aetna, the loftiest peak in Sicily.

ULYSSES:

And are there walls, and tower-surrounded towns?

SILENUS:

There are not.--These lone rocks are bare of men.

ULYSSES:

And who possess the land? the race of beasts?

SILENUS:

Cyclops, who live in caverns, not in houses.

ULYSSES:

Obeying whom? Or is the state popular?

SILENUS:

Shepherds: no one obeys any in aught.

ULYSSES:

How live they? do they sow the corn of Ceres?

SILENUS:

On milk and cheese, and on the flesh of sheep.

ULYSSES:

Have they the Bromian drink from the vine's stream?

SILENUS:

Ah! no; they live in an ungracious land.

ULYSSES:

And are they just to strangers?—hospitable?

SILENUS:

They think the sweetest thing a stranger brings
Is his own flesh.

ULYSSES:

What! do they eat man's flesh?

SILENUS:

No one comes here who is not eaten up.

ULYSSES:

The Cyclops now--where is he? Not at home?

SILENUS:

Absent on Aetna, hunting with his dogs.

ULYSSES:

Know'st thou what thou must do to aid us hence?

SILENUS:

I know not: we will help you all we can.

ULYSSES:

Provide us food, of which we are in want.

SILENUS:

Here is not anything, as I said, but meat.

ULYSSES:

But meat is a sweet remedy for hunger.

SILENUS:

Cow's milk there is, and store of curdled cheese.

ULYSSES:

Bring out:--I would see all before I bargain.

SILENUS:

But how much gold will you engage to give?

ULYSSES:

I bring no gold, but Bacchic juice.

SILENUS:

Oh, joy!

Tis long since these dry lips were wet with wine.

ULYSSES:

Maron, the son of the God, gave it me.

SILENUS:

Whom I have nursed a baby in my arms.

ULYSSES:

The son of Bacchus, for your clearer knowledge.

SILENUS:

Have you it now?—or is it in the ship?

ULYSSES:

Old man, this skin contains it, which you see.

SILENUS:

Why, this would hardly be a mouthful for me.

ULYSSES:

Nay, twice as much as you can draw from thence.

SILENUS:

You speak of a fair fountain, sweet to me.

ULYSSES:

Would you first taste of the unmingled wine?

SILENUS:

'Tis just—tasting invites the purchaser.

ULYSSES:

Here is the cup, together with the skin.

SILENUS:

Pour: that the draught may fillip my remembrance.

ULYSSES:

See!

SILENUS:

Papaiapax! what a sweet smell it has!

ULYSSES:

You see it then?--

SILENUS:

By Jove, no! but I smell it.

ULYSSES:

Taste, that you may not praise it in words only.

SILENUS:

Babai! Great Bacchus calls me forth to dance!

Joy! joy!

ULYSSES:

Did it flow sweetly down your throat?

SILENUS:

So that it tingled to my very nails.

ULYSSES:

And in addition I will give you gold.

SILENUS:

Let gold alone! only unlock the cask.

ULYSSES:

Bring out some cheeses now, or a young goat.

SILENUS:

That will I do, despising any master.

Yes, let me drink one cup, and I will give

All that the Cyclops feed upon their mountains.

...

CHORUS:

Ye have taken Troy and laid your hands on Helen?

ULYSSES:

And utterly destroyed the race of Priam.

...

SILENUS:

The wanton wretch! she was bewitched to see

The many-coloured anklets and the chain

Of woven gold which girt the neck of Paris,

And so she left that good man Menelaus.

There should be no more women in the world

But such as are reserved for me alone.--

See, here are sheep, and here are goats, Ulysses,

Here are unsparing cheeses of pressed milk;

Take them; depart with what good speed ye may;

First leaving my reward, the Bacchic dew

Of joy-inspiring grapes.

ULYSSES:

Ah me! Alas!

What shall we do? the Cyclops is at hand!

Old man, we perish! whither can we fly?

SILENUS:

Hide yourselves quick within that hollow rock.

ULYSSES:

'Twere perilous to fly into the net.

SILENUS:

The cavern has recesses numberless;
Hide yourselves quick.

ULYSSES:

That will I never do!
The mighty Troy would be indeed disgraced
If I should fly one man. How many times
Have I withstood, with shield immovable.
Ten thousand Phrygians!—if I needs must die,
Yet will I die with glory;--if I live,
The praise which I have gained will yet remain.

SILENUS:

What, ho! assistance, comrades, haste, assistance!

[THE CYCLOPS, SILENUS, ULYSSES; CHORUS.]

CYCLOPS:

What is this tumult? Bacchus is not here,
Nor tympanies nor brazen castanets.
How are my young lambs in the cavern? Milking
Their dams or playing by their sides? And is
The new cheese pressed into the bulrush baskets?
Speak! I'll beat some of you till you rain tears--
Look up, not downwards when I speak to you.

SILENUS:

See! I now gape at Jupiter himself;
I stare upon Orion and the stars.

CYCLOPS:

Well, is the dinner fitly cooked and laid?

SILENUS:

All ready, if your throat is ready too.

CYCLOPS:

Are the bowls full of milk besides?

SILENUS:

O'er-brimming;

So you may drink a tunful if you will.

CYCLOPS:

Is it ewe's milk or cow's milk, or both mixed?--

SILENUS:

Both, either; only pray don't swallow me.

CYCLOPS:

By no means.--

...

What is this crowd I see beside the stalls?

Outlaws or thieves? for near my cavern-home

I see my young lambs coupled two by two

With willow bands; mixed with my cheeses lie

Their implements; and this old fellow here

Has his bald head broken with stripes.

SILENUS:

Ah me!

I have been beaten till I burn with fever.

CYCLOPS:

By whom? Who laid his fist upon your head?

SILENUS:

Those men, because I would not suffer them

To steal your goods.

CYCLOPS:

Did not the rascals know

I am a God, sprung from the race of Heaven?

SILENUS:

I told them so, but they bore off your things,

And ate the cheese in spite of all I said,

And carried out the lambs—and said, moreover,

They'd pin you down with a three-cubit collar,
And pull your vitals out through your one eye,
Furrow your back with stripes, then, binding you,
Throw you as ballast into the ship's hold,
And then deliver you, a slave, to move
Enormous rocks, or found a vestibule.

CYCLOPS:

In truth? Nay, haste, and place in order quickly
The cooking-knives, and heap upon the hearth,
And kindle it, a great faggot of wood.--
As soon as they are slaughtered, they shall fill
My belly, broiling warm from the live coals,
Or boiled and seethed within the bubbling caldron.
I am quite sick of the wild mountain game;
Of stags and lions I have gorged enough,
And I grow hungry for the flesh of men.

SILENUS:

Nay, master, something new is very pleasant
After one thing forever, and of late
Very few strangers have approached our cave.

ULYSSES:

Hear, Cyclops, a plain tale on the other side.
We, wanting to buy food, came from our ship
Into the neighbourhood of your cave, and here
This old Silenus gave us in exchange
These lambs for wine, the which he took and drank,
And all by mutual compact, without force.
There is no word of truth in what he says,
For slyly he was selling all your store.

SILENUS:

I? May you perish, wretch--

ULYSSES:

If I speak false!

SILENUS:

Cyclops, I swear by Neptune who begot thee,
By mighty Triton and by Nereus old,

Calypso and the glaucous Ocean Nymphs,
The sacred waves and all the race of fishes--
Be these the witnesses, my dear sweet master,
My darling little Cyclops, that I never
Gave any of your stores to these false strangers;--
If I speak false may those whom most I love,
My children, perish wretchedly!

CHORUS:

There stop!
I saw him giving these things to the strangers.
If I speak false, then may my father perish,
But do not thou wrong hospitality.

CYCLOPS:

You lie! I swear that he is juster far
Than Rhadamanthus--I trust more in him.
But let me ask, whence have ye sailed, O strangers?
Who are you? And what city nourished ye?

ULYSSES:

Our race is Ithacan--having destroyed
The town of Troy, the tempests of the sea
Have driven us on thy land, O Polypheme.

CYCLOPS:

What, have ye shared in the unenvied spoil
Of the false Helen, near Scamander's stream?

ULYSSES:

The same, having endured a woful toil.

CYCLOPS:

Oh, basest expedition! sailed ye not
From Greece to Phrygia for one woman's sake?

ULYSSES:

'Twas the Gods' work--no mortal was in fault.
But, O great Offspring of the Ocean-King,
We pray thee and admonish thee with freedom,
That thou dost spare thy friends who visit thee,
And place no impious food within thy jaws.

For in the depths of Greece we have upreared
Temples to thy great Father, which are all
His homes. The sacred bay of Taenarus
Remains inviolate, and each dim recess
Scooped high on the Malean promontory,
And aery Sunium's silver-veined crag,
Which divine Pallas keeps unprofaned ever,
The Gerastian asylums, and whate'er
Within wide Greece our enterprise has kept
From Phrygian contumely; and in which
You have a common care, for you inhabit
The skirts of Grecian land, under the roots
Of Aetna and its crags, spotted with fire.
Turn then to converse under human laws,
Receive us shipwrecked suppliants, and provide
Food, clothes, and fire, and hospitable gifts;
Nor fixing upon oxen-piercing spits
Our limbs, so fill your belly and your jaws.
Priam's wide land has widowed Greece enough;
And weapon-winged murder leaped together
Enough of dead, and wives are husbandless,
And ancient women and gray fathers wail
Their childless age;—if you should roast the rest--
And 'tis a bitter feast that you prepare--
Where then would any turn? Yet be persuaded;
Forgo the lust of your jaw-bone; prefer
Pious humanity to wicked will:
Many have bought too dear their evil joys.

SILENUS:

Let me advise you, do not spare a morsel
Of all his flesh. If you should eat his tongue
You would become most eloquent, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:

Wealth, my good fellow, is the wise man's God,
All other things are a pretence and boast.
What are my father's ocean promontories,
The sacred rocks whereon he dwells, to me?
Stranger, I laugh to scorn Jove's thunderbolt,
I know not that his strength is more than mine.
As to the rest I care not.—When he pours

Rain from above, I have a close pavilion
Under this rock, in which I lie supine,
Feasting on a roast calf or some wild beast,
And drinking pans of milk, and gloriously
Emulating the thunder of high Heaven.
And when the Thracian wind pours down the snow,
I wrap my body in the skins of beasts,
Kindle a fire, and bid the snow whirl on.
The earth, by force, whether it will or no,
Bringing forth grass, fattens my flocks and herds,
Which, to what other God but to myself
And this great belly, first of deities,
Should I be bound to sacrifice? I well know
The wise man's only Jupiter is this,
To eat and drink during his little day,
And give himself no care. And as for those
Who complicate with laws the life of man,
I freely give them tears for their reward.
I will not cheat my soul of its delight,
Or hesitate in dining upon you:--
And that I may be quit of all demands,
These are my hospitable gifts;—fierce fire
And yon ancestral caldron, which o'er-bubbling
Shall finely cook your miserable flesh.
Creep in!--

...

ULYSSES:

Ai! ai! I have escaped the Trojan toils,
I have escaped the sea, and now I fall
Under the cruel grasp of one impious man.
O Pallas, Mistress, Goddess, sprung from Jove,
Now, now, assist me! Mightier toils than Troy
Are these;—I totter on the chasms of peril;--
And thou who inhabitest the thrones
Of the bright stars, look, hospitable Jove,
Upon this outrage of thy deity,
Otherwise be considered as no God!

CHORUS (ALONE):

For your gaping gulf and your gullet wide,
The ravin is ready on every side,

The limbs of the strangers are cooked and done;
There is boiled meat, and roast meat, and meat from the coal,
You may chop it, and tear it, and gnash it for fun,
An hairy goat's-skin contains the whole.
Let me but escape, and ferry me o'er
The stream of your wrath to a safer shore.
The Cyclops Aetnean is cruel and bold,
He murders the strangers
That sit on his hearth,
And dreads no avengers
To rise from the earth.
He roasts the men before they are cold,
He snatches them broiling from the coal,
And from the caldron pulls them whole,
And minces their flesh and gnaws their bone
With his cursed teeth, till all be gone.
Farewell, foul pavilion:
Farewell, rites of dread!
The Cyclops vermilion,
With slaughter uncloying,
Now feasts on the dead,
In the flesh of strangers joying!

ULYSSES:

O Jupiter! I saw within the cave
Horrible things; deeds to be feigned in words,
But not to be believed as being done.

CHORUS:

What! sawest thou the impious Polypheme
Feasting upon your loved companions now?

ULYSSES:

Selecting two, the plumpest of the crowd,
He grasped them in his hands.--

CHORUS:

Unhappy man!

...

ULYSSES:

Soon as we came into this craggy place,

Kindling a fire, he cast on the broad hearth
The knotty limbs of an enormous oak,
Three waggon-loads at least, and then he strewed
Upon the ground, beside the red firelight,
His couch of pine-leaves; and he milked the cows,
And pouring forth the white milk, filled a bowl
Three cubits wide and four in depth, as much
As would contain ten amphorae, and bound it
With ivy wreaths; then placed upon the fire
A brazen pot to boil, and made red hot
The points of spits, not sharpened with the sickle
But with a fruit tree bough, and with the jaws
Of axes for Aetnean slaughterings.
And when this God-abandoned Cook of Hell
Had made all ready, he seized two of us
And killed them in a kind of measured manner;
For he flung one against the brazen rivets
Of the huge caldron, and seized the other
By the foot's tendon, and knocked out his brains
Upon the sharp edge of the craggy stone:
Then peeled his flesh with a great cooking-knife
And put him down to roast. The other's limbs
He chopped into the caldron to be boiled.
And I, with the tears raining from my eyes,
Stood near the Cyclops, ministering to him;
The rest, in the recesses of the cave,
Clung to the rock like bats, bloodless with fear.
When he was filled with my companions' flesh,
He threw himself upon the ground and sent
A loathsome exhalation from his maw.
Then a divine thought came to me. I filled
The cup of Maron, and I offered him
To taste, and said:—'Child of the Ocean God,
Behold what drink the vines of Greece produce,
The exultation and the joy of Bacchus.'
He, satiated with his unnatural food,
Received it, and at one draught drank it off,
And taking my hand, praised me:—'Thou hast given
A sweet draught after a sweet meal, dear guest.'
And I, perceiving that it pleased him, filled
Another cup, well knowing that the wine
Would wound him soon and take a sure revenge.

And the charm fascinated him, and I
Plied him cup after cup, until the drink
Had warmed his entrails, and he sang aloud
In concert with my wailing fellow-seamen
A hideous discord—and the cavern rung.
I have stolen out, so that if you will
You may achieve my safety and your own.
But say, do you desire, or not, to fly
This uncompanionable man, and dwell
As was your wont among the Grecian Nymphs
Within the fanes of your beloved God?
Your father there within agrees to it,
But he is weak and overcome with wine,
And caught as if with bird-lime by the cup,
He claps his wings and crows in doting joy.
You who are young escape with me, and find
Bacchus your ancient friend; unsuited he
To this rude Cyclops.

CHORUS:

Oh my dearest friend,
That I could see that day, and leave for ever
The impious Cyclops.

...

ULYSSES:

Listen then what a punishment I have
For this fell monster, how secure a flight
From your hard servitude.

CHORUS:

O sweeter far
Than is the music of an Asian lyre
Would be the news of Polypheme destroyed.

ULYSSES:

Delighted with the Bacchic drink he goes
To call his brother Cyclops--who inhabit
A village upon Aetna not far off.

CHORUS:

I understand, catching him when alone

You think by some measure to dispatch him,
Or thrust him from the precipice.

ULYSSES:

Oh no;
Nothing of that kind; my device is subtle.

CHORUS:

How then? I heard of old that thou wert wise.

ULYSSES:

I will dissuade him from this plan, by saying
It were unwise to give the Cyclopes
This precious drink, which if enjoyed alone
Would make life sweeter for a longer time.
When, vanquished by the Bacchic power, he sleeps,
There is a trunk of olive wood within,
Whose point having made sharp with this good sword
I will conceal in fire, and when I see
It is alight, will fix it, burning yet,
Within the socket of the Cyclops' eye
And melt it out with fire—as when a man
Turns by its handle a great auger round,
Fitting the framework of a ship with beams,
So will I, in the Cyclops' fiery eye
Turn round the brand and dry the pupil up.

CHORUS:

Joy! I am mad with joy at your device.

ULYSSES:

And then with you, my friends, and the old man,
We'll load the hollow depth of our black ship,
And row with double strokes from this dread shore.

CHORUS:

May I, as in libations to a God,
Share in the blinding him with the red brand?
I would have some communion in his death.

ULYSSES:

Doubtless: the brand is a great brand to hold.

CHORUS:

Oh! I would lift an hundred waggon-loads,
If like a wasp's nest I could scoop the eye out
Of the detested Cyclops.

ULYSSES:

Silence now!
Ye know the close device—and when I call,
Look ye obey the masters of the craft.
I will not save myself and leave behind
My comrades in the cave: I might escape,
Having got clear from that obscure recess,
But 'twere unjust to leave in jeopardy
The dear companions who sailed here with me.

CHORUS:

Come! who is first, that with his hand
Will urge down the burning brand
Through the lids, and quench and pierce
The Cyclops' eye so fiery fierce?

SEMICHORUS 1 [SONG WITHIN]:

Listen! listen! he is coming,
A most hideous discord humming.
Drunken, museless, awkward, yelling,
Far along his rocky dwelling;
Let us with some comic spell
Teach the yet unteachable.
By all means he must be blinded,
If my counsel be but minded.

SEMICHORUS 2:

Happy thou made odorous
With the dew which sweet grapes weep,
To the village hastening thus,
Seek the vines that soothe to sleep;
Having first embraced thy friend,
Thou in luxury without end,
With the strings of yellow hair,
Of thy voluptuous leman fair,
Shalt sit playing on a bed!--

Speak! what door is opened?

CYCLOPS:

Ha! ha! ha! I'm full of wine,
Heavy with the joy divine,
With the young feast oversated;
Like a merchant's vessel freighted
To the water's edge, my crop
Is laden to the gullet's top.
The fresh meadow grass of spring
Tempt me forth thus wandering
To my brothers on the mountains,
Who shall share the wine's sweet fountains.
Bring the cask, O stranger, bring!

CHORUS:

One with eyes the fairest
Cometh from his dwelling;
Some one loves thee, rarest
Bright beyond my telling.
In thy grace thou shinest
Like some nymph divinest
In her caverns dewy:--
All delights pursue thee,
Soon pied flowers, sweet-breathing,
Shall thy head be wreathing.

ULYSSES:

Listen, O Cyclops, for I am well skilled
In Bacchus, whom I gave thee of to drink.

CYCLOPS:

What sort of God is Bacchus then accounted?

ULYSSES:

The greatest among men for joy of life.

CYCLOPS:

I gulped him down with very great delight.

ULYSSES:

This is a God who never injures men.

CYCLOPS:

How does the God like living in a skin?

ULYSSES:

He is content wherever he is put.

CYCLOPS:

Gods should not have their body in a skin.

ULYSSES:

If he gives joy, what is his skin to you?

CYCLOPS:

I hate the skin, but love the wine within.

ULYSSES:

Stay here now: drink, and make your spirit glad.

CYCLOPS:

Should I not share this liquor with my brothers?

ULYSSES:

Keep it yourself, and be more honoured so.

CYCLOPS:

I were more useful, giving to my friends.

ULYSSES:

But village mirth breeds contests, broils, and blows.

CYCLOPS:

When I am drunk none shall lay hands on me.--

ULYSSES:

A drunken man is better within doors.

CYCLOPS:

He is a fool, who drinking, loves not mirth.

ULYSSES:

But he is wise, who drunk, remains at home.

CYCLOPS:

What shall I do, Silenus? Shall I stay?

SILENUS:

Stay—for what need have you of pot companions?

CYCLOPS:

Indeed this place is closely carpeted
With flowers and grass.

SILENUS:

And in the sun-warm noon
'Tis sweet to drink. Lie down beside me now,
Placing your mighty sides upon the ground.

CYCLOPS:

What do you put the cup behind me for?

SILENUS:

That no one here may touch it.

CYCLOPS:

Thievish One!
You want to drink;--here place it in the midst.
And thou, O stranger, tell how art thou called?

ULYSSES:

My name is Nobody. What favour now
Shall I receive to praise you at your hands?

CYCLOPS:

I'll feast on you the last of your companions.

ULYSSES:

You grant your guest a fair reward, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:

Ha! what is this? Stealing the wine, you rogue!

SILENUS:

It was this stranger kissing me because
I looked so beautiful.

CYCLOPS:

You shall repent
For kissing the coy wine that loves you not.

SILENUS:

By Jupiter! you said that I am fair.

CYCLOPS:

Pour out, and only give me the cup full.

SILENUS:

How is it mixed? let me observe.

CYCLOPS:

Curse you!
Give it me so.

SILENUS:

Not till I see you wear
That coronal, and taste the cup to you.

CYCLOPS:

Thou wily traitor!

SILENUS:

But the wine is sweet.
Ay, you will roar if you are caught in drinking.

CYCLOPS:

See now, my lip is clean and all my beard.

SILENUS:

Now put your elbow right and drink again.
As you see me drink--....

CYCLOPS:

How now?

SILENUS:

Ye Gods, what a delicious gulp!

CYCLOPS:

Guest, take it;--you pour out the wine for me.

ULYSSES:

The wine is well accustomed to my hand.

CYCLOPS:

Pour out the wine!

ULYSSES:

I pour; only be silent.

CYCLOPS:

Silence is a hard task to him who drinks.

ULYSSES:

Take it and drink it off; leave not a dreg.
Oh that the drinker died with his own draught!

CYCLOPS:

Papai! the vine must be a sapient plant.

ULYSSES:

If you drink much after a mighty feast,
Moistening your thirsty maw, you will sleep well;
If you leave aught, Bacchus will dry you up.

CYCLOPS:

Ho! ho! I can scarce rise. What pure delight!
The heavens and earth appear to whirl about
Confusedly. I see the throne of Jove
And the clear congregation of the Gods.
Now if the Graces tempted me to kiss
I would not—for the loveliest of them all
I would not leave this Ganymede.

SILENUS:

Polypheme,
I am the Ganymede of Jupiter.

CYCLOPS:

By Jove, you are; I bore you off from Dardanus.

...

[ULYSSES AND THE CHORUS.]

ULYSSES:

Come, boys of Bacchus, children of high race,
This man within is folded up in sleep,
And soon will vomit flesh from his fell maw;
The brand under the shed thrusts out its smoke,
No preparation needs, but to burn out
The monster's eye;—but bear yourselves like men.

CHORUS:

We will have courage like the adamant rock,
All things are ready for you here; go in,
Before our father shall perceive the noise.

ULYSSES:

Vulcan, Aetnean king! burn out with fire
The shining eye of this thy neighbouring monster!
And thou, O Sleep, nursling of gloomy Night,
Descend unmixed on this God-hated beast,
And suffer not Ulysses and his comrades,
Returning from their famous Trojan toils,
To perish by this man, who cares not either
For God or mortal; or I needs must think
That Chance is a supreme divinity,
And things divine are subject to her power.

CHORUS:

Soon a crab the throat will seize
Of him who feeds upon his guest,
Fire will burn his lamp-like eyes
In revenge of such a feast!
A great oak stump now is lying
In the ashes yet undying.

Come, Maron, come!
Raging let him fix the doom,
Let him tear the eyelid up
Of the Cyclops—that his cup
May be evil!
Oh! I long to dance and revel
With sweet Bromian, long desired,
In loved ivy wreaths attired;
Leaving this abandoned home--
Will the moment ever come?

ULYSSES:

Be silent, ye wild things! Nay, hold your peace,
And keep your lips quite close; dare not to breathe,
Or spit, or e'en wink, lest ye wake the monster,
Until his eye be tortured out with fire.

CHORUS:

Nay, we are silent, and we chaw the air.

ULYSSES:

Come now, and lend a hand to the great stake
Within—it is delightfully red hot.

CHORUS:

You then command who first should seize the stake
To burn the Cyclops' eye, that all may share
In the great enterprise.

SEMICHORUS 1:

We are too far;
We cannot at this distance from the door
Thrust fire into his eye.

SEMICHORUS 2:

And we just now
Have become lame! cannot move hand or foot.

CHORUS:

The same thing has occurred to us,--our ankles
Are sprained with standing here, I know not how.

ULYSSES:

What, sprained with standing still?

CHORUS:

And there is dust
Or ashes in our eyes, I know not whence.

ULYSSES:

Cowardly dogs! ye will not aid me then?

CHORUS:

With pitying my own back and my back-bone,
And with not wishing all my teeth knocked out,
This cowardice comes of itself—but stay,
I know a famous Orphic incantation
To make the brand stick of its own accord
Into the skull of this one-eyed son of Earth.

ULYSSES:

Of old I knew ye thus by nature; now
I know ye better.—I will use the aid
Of my own comrades. Yet though weak of hand
Speak cheerfully, that so ye may awaken
The courage of my friends with your blithe words.

CHORUS:

This I will do with peril of my life,
And blind you with my exhortations, Cyclops.
Hasten and thrust,
And parch up to dust,
The eye of the beast
Who feeds on his guest.
Burn and blind
The Aetnean hind!
Scoop and draw,
But beware lest he claw
Your limbs near his maw.

CYCLOPS:

Ah me! my eyesight is parched up to cinders.

CHORUS:

What a sweet paeon! sing me that again!

CYCLOPS:

Ah me! indeed, what woe has fallen upon me!
But, wretched nothings, think ye not to flee
Out of this rock; I, standing at the outlet,
Will bar the way and catch you as you pass.

CHORUS:

What are you roaring out, Cyclops?

CYCLOPS:

I perish!

CHORUS:

For you are wicked.

CYCLOPS:

And besides miserable.

CHORUS:

What, did you fall into the fire when drunk?

CYCLOPS:

'Twas Nobody destroyed me.

CHORUS:

Why then no one
Can be to blame.

CYCLOPS:

I say 'twas Nobody
Who blinded me.

CHORUS:

Why then you are not blind.

CYCLOPS:

I wish you were as blind as I am.

CHORUS:

Nay,

It cannot be that no one made you blind.

CYCLOPS:

You jeer me; where, I ask, is Nobody?

CHORUS:

Nowhere, O Cyclops.

CYCLOPS:

It was that stranger ruined me:--the wretch
First gave me wine and then burned out my eye,
For wine is strong and hard to struggle with.
Have they escaped, or are they yet within?

CHORUS:

They stand under the darkness of the rock
And cling to it.

CYCLOPS:

At my right hand or left?

CHORUS:

Close on your right.

CYCLOPS:

Where?

CHORUS:

Near the rock itself.
You have them.

CYCLOPS:

Oh, misfortune on misfortune!
I've cracked my skull.

CHORUS:

Now they escape you--there.

CYCLOPS:

Not there, although you say so.

CHORUS:

Not on that side.

CYCLOPS:

Where then?

CHORUS:

They creep about you on your left.

CYCLOPS:

Ah! I am mocked! They jeer me in my ills.

CHORUS:

Not there! he is a little there beyond you.

CYCLOPS:

Detested wretch! where are you?

ULYSSES:

Far from you

I keep with care this body of Ulysses.

CYCLOPS:

What do you say? You proffer a new name.

ULYSSES:

My father named me so; and I have taken

A full revenge for your unnatural feast;

I should have done ill to have burned down Troy

And not revenged the murder of my comrades.

CYCLOPS:

Ai! ai! the ancient oracle is accomplished;

It said that I should have my eyesight blinded

By your coming from Troy, yet it foretold

That you should pay the penalty for this

By wandering long over the homeless sea.

ULYSSES:

I bid thee weep—consider what I say;

I go towards the shore to drive my ship

To mine own land, o'er the Sicilian wave.

CYCLOPS:

Not so, if, whelming you with this huge stone,
I can crush you and all your men together;
I will descend upon the shore, though blind,
Groping my way adown the steep ravine.

CHORUS:

And we, the shipmates of Ulysses now,
Will serve our Bacchus all our happy lives.

(A SATYRIC DRAMA TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK OF EURIPIDES./Published by Mrs. Shelley, "Posthumous Poems", 1824; dated 1819. Amongst the Shelley manuscripts at the Bodleian there is a copy, 'practically complete,' which has been collated by Mr. C.D. Locock. See "Examination", etc., 1903, pages 64-70. 'Though legible throughout, and comparatively free from corrections, it has the appearance of being a first draft' (Locock).)

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Death Knell Is Ringing

The death knell is ringing
The raven is singing
The earth worm is creeping
The mourners are weeping
Ding dong, bell--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Deserts Of Dim Sleep

I went into the deserts of dim sleep--
That world which, like an unknown wilderness,
Bounds this with its recesses wide and deep--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Devil's Walk. A Ballad

I.

Once, early in the morning, Beelzebub arose,
With care his sweet person adorning,
He put on his Sunday clothes.

II.

He drew on a boot to hide his hoof,
He drew on a glove to hide his claw,
His horns were concealed by a Bras Chapeau,
And the Devil went forth as natty a Beau
As Bond-street ever saw.

III.

He sate him down, in London town,
Before earth's morning ray;
With a favourite imp he began to chat,
On religion, and scandal, this and that,
Until the dawn of day.

IV.

And then to St. James's Court he went,
And St. Paul's Church he took on his way;
He was mighty thick with every Saint,
Though they were formal and he was gay.

V.

The Devil was an agriculturist,
And as bad weeds quickly grow,
In looking over his farm, I wist,
He wouldn't find cause for woe.

VI.

He peeped in each hole, to each chamber stole,
His promising live-stock to view;
Grinning applause, he just showed them his claws,
And they shrunk with affright from his ugly sight,
Whose work they delighted to do.

VII.

Satan poked his red nose into crannies so small
One would think that the innocents fair,
Poor lambkins! were just doing nothing at all
But settling some dress or arranging some ball,
But the Devil saw deeper there.

VIII.

A Priest, at whose elbow the Devil during prayer
Sate familiarly, side by side,
Declared that, if the Tempter were there,
His presence he would not abide.
Ah! ah! thought Old Nick, that's a very stale trick,
For without the Devil, O favourite of Evil,
In your carriage you would not ride.

IX.

Satan next saw a brainless King,
Whose house was as hot as his own;
Many Imps in attendance were there on the wing,
They flapped the pennon and twisted the sting,
Close by the very Throne.

X.

Ah! ah! thought Satan, the pasture is good,
My Cattle will here thrive better than others;
They dine on news of human blood,
They sup on the groans of the dying and dead,
And supperless never will go to bed;
Which will make them fat as their brothers.

XI.

Fat as the Fiends that feed on blood,
Fresh and warm from the fields of Spain,
Where Ruin ploughs her gory way,
Where the shoots of earth are nipped in the bud,
Where Hell is the Victor's prey,
Its glory the meed of the slain.

XII.

Fat--as the Death-birds on Erin's shore,
That glutted themselves in her dearest gore,
And flitted round Castlereagh,

When they snatched the Patriot's heart, that HIS grasp
Had torn from its widow's maniac clasp,
--And fled at the dawn of day.

XIII.

Fat--as the Reptiles of the tomb,
That riot in corruption's spoil,
That fret their little hour in gloom,
And creep, and live the while.

XIV.

Fat as that Prince's maudlin brain,
Which, addled by some gilded toy,
Tired, gives his sweetmeat, and again
Cries for it, like a humoured boy.

XV.

For he is fat,--his waistcoat gay,
When strained upon a levee day,
Scarce meets across his princely paunch;
And pantaloons are like half-moons
Upon each brawny haunch.

XVI.

How vast his stock of calf! when plenty
Had filled his empty head and heart,
Enough to satiate foplings twenty,
Could make his pantaloons seams start.

XVII.

The Devil (who sometimes is called Nature),
For men of power provides thus well,
Whilst every change and every feature,
Their great original can tell.

XVIII.

Satan saw a lawyer a viper slay,
That crawled up the leg of his table,
It reminded him most marvellously
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

IXX.

The wealthy yeoman, as he wanders
His fertile fields among,
And on his thriving cattle ponders,
Counts his sure gains, and hums a song;
Thus did the Devil, through earth walking,
Hum low a hellish song.

XX.

For they thrive well whose garb of gore
Is Satan's choicest livery,
And they thrive well who from the poor
Have snatched the bread of penury,
And heap the houseless wanderer's store
On the rank pile of luxury.

XXI.

The Bishops thrive, though they are big;
The Lawyers thrive, though they are thin;
For every gown, and every wig,
Hides the safe thrift of Hell within.

XXII.

Thus pigs were never counted clean,
Although they dine on finest corn;
And cormorants are sin-like lean,
Although they eat from night to morn.

XXIII.

Oh! why is the Father of Hell in such glee,
As he grins from ear to ear?
Why does he doff his clothes joyfully,
As he skips, and prances, and flaps his wing,
As he sidles, leers, and twirls his sting,
And dares, as he is, to appear?

XXIV.

A statesman passed--alone to him,
The Devil dare his whole shape uncover,
To show each feature, every limb,
Secure of an unchanging lover.

XXV.

At this known sign, a welcome sight,
The watchful demons sought their King,
And every Fiend of the Stygian night,
Was in an instant on the wing.

XXVI.

Pale Loyalty, his guilt-steeled brow,
With wreaths of gory laurel crowned:
The hell-hounds, Murder, Want and Woe,
Forever hungering, flocked around;
From Spain had Satan sought their food,
'Twas human woe and human blood!

XXVII.

Hark! the earthquake's crash I hear,--
Kings turn pale, and Conquerors start,
Ruffians tremble in their fear,
For their Satan doth depart.

XXVIII.

This day Fiends give to revelry
To celebrate their King's return,
And with delight its Sire to see
Hell's adamantine limits burn.

XXIX.

But were the Devil's sight as keen
As Reason's penetrating eye,
His sulphurous Majesty I ween,
Would find but little cause for joy.

XXX.

For the sons of Reason see
That, ere fate consume the Pole,
The false Tyrant's cheek shall be
Bloodless as his coward soul.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Drowned Lover

I.

Ah! faint are her limbs, and her footstep is weary,
Yet far must the desolate wanderer roam;
Though the tempest is stern, and the mountain is dreary,
She must quit at deep midnight her pitiless home.
I see her swift foot dash the dew from the whortle,
As she rapidly hastes to the green grove of myrtle;
And I hear, as she wraps round her figure the kirtle,
'Stay thy boat on the lake,--dearest Henry, I come.'

II.

High swelled in her bosom the throb of affection,
As lightly her form bounded over the lea,
And arose in her mind every dear recollection;
'I come, dearest Henry, and wait but for thee.'
How sad, when dear hope every sorrow is soothing,
When sympathy's swell the soft bosom is moving,
And the mind the mild joys of affection is proving,
Is the stern voice of fate that bids happiness flee!

III.

Oh! dark lowered the clouds on that horrible eve,
And the moon dimly gleamed through the tempested air;
Oh! how could fond visions such softness deceive?
Oh! how could false hope rend, a bosom so fair?
Thy love's pallid corse the wild surges are laving,
O'er his form the fierce swell of the tempest is raving;
But, fear not, parting spirit; thy goodness is saving,
In eternity's bowers, a seat for thee there.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The False Laurel And The True

'What art thou, Presumptuous, who profanest
The wreath to mighty poets only due,
Even whilst like a forgotten moon thou wanest?
Touch not those leaves which for the eternal few
Who wander o'er the Paradise of fame,
In sacred dedication ever grew:
One of the crowd thou art without a name.'
'Ah, friend, 'tis the false laurel that I wear;
Bright though it seem, it is not the same
As that which bound Milton's immortal hair;
Its dew is poison; and the hopes that quicken
Under its chilling shade, though seeming fair,
Are flowers which die almost before they sicken.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The First Canzone Of The Convito

From The Italian Of Dante

I.

Ye who intelligent the Third Heaven move,
Hear the discourse which is within my heart,
Which cannot be declared, it seems so new.
The Heaven whose course follows your power and art,
Oh, gentle creatures that ye are! me drew,
And therefore may I dare to speak to you,
Even of the life which now I live--and yet
I pray that ye will hear me when I cry,
And tell of mine own heart this novelty;
How the lamenting Spirit moans in it, 10
And how a voice there murmurs against her
Who came on the refulgence of your sphere.

II.

A sweet Thought, which was once the life within
This heavy heart, man a time and oft
Went up before our Father's feet, and there
It saw a glorious Lady throned aloft;
And its sweet talk of her my soul did win,
So that I said, 'Thither I too will fare.'
That Thought is fled, and one doth now appear
Which tyrannizes me with such fierce stress,
That my heart trembles--ye may see it leap--
And on another Lady bids me keep
Mine eyes, and says--Who would have blessedness
Let him but look upon that Lady's eyes,
Let him not fear the agony of sighs.

III.

This lowly Thought, which once would talk with me
Of a bright seraph sitting crowned on high,
Found such a cruel foe it died, and so
My Spirit wept, the grief is hot even now--
And said, Alas for me! how swift could flee
That piteous Thought which did my life console!
And the afflicted one ... questioning

Mine eyes, if such a Lady saw they never,
And why they would...
I said: 'Beneath those eyes might stand for ever
He whom ... regards must kill with...
To have known their power stood me in little stead,
Those eyes have looked on me, and I am dead.'

IV.

'Thou art not dead, but thou hast wandered,
Thou Soul of ours, who thyself dost fret,'
A Spirit of gentle Love beside me said;
For that fair Lady, whom thou dost regret,
Hath so transformed the life which thou hast led,
Thou scornest it, so worthless art thou made.
And see how meek, how pitiful, how staid,
Yet courteous, in her majesty she is.
And still call thou her Woman in thy thought;
Her whom, if thou thyself deceivest not,
Thou wilt behold decked with such loveliness,
That thou wilt cry [Love] only Lord, lo! here
Thy handmaiden, do what thou wilt with her.

V.

My song, I fear that thou wilt find but few
Who fitly shall conceive thy reasoning
Of such hard matter dost thou entertain.
Whence, if by misadventure chance should bring
Thee to base company, as chance may do,
Quite unaware of what thou dost contain,
I prithee comfort thy sweet self again,
My last delight; tell them that they are dull,
And bid them own that thou art beautiful.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Fitful Alternations Of The Rain

The fitful alternations of the rain,
When the chill wind, languid as with pain
Of its own heavy moisture, here and there
Drives through the gray and beamless atmosphere

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Fugitives

I.

The waters are flashing,
The white hail is dashing,
The lightnings are glancing,
The hoar-spray is dancing—
Away!

The whirlwind is rolling,
The thunder is tolling,
The forest is swinging,
The minster bells ringing--
Come away!

The Earth is like Ocean,
Wreck-strewn and in motion:
Bird, beast, man and worm
Have crept out of the storm--
Come away!

II.

'Our boat has one sail
And the helmsman is pale;--
A bold pilot I trow,
Who should follow us now,'--
Shouted he--

And she cried: 'Ply the oar!
Put off gaily from shore!'--
As she spoke, bolts of death
Mixed with hail, specked their path
O'er the sea.

And from isle, tower and rock,
The blue beacon-cloud broke,
And though dumb in the blast,
The red cannon flashed fast
From the lee.

III.

And 'Fear'st thou?' and 'Fear'st thou?'
And 'Seest thou?' and 'Hear'st thou?'
And 'Drive we not free
O'er the terrible sea,
I and thou?'

One boat-cloak did cover
The loved and the lover--
Their blood beats one measure,
They murmur proud pleasure
Soft and low;--

While around the lashed Ocean,
Like mountains in motion,
Is withdrawn and uplifted,
Sunk, shattered and shifted
To and fro.

IV.

In the court of the fortress
Beside the pale portress,
Like a bloodhound well beaten
The bridegroom stands, eaten
By shame;

On the topmost watch-turret,
As a death-boding spirit
Stands the gray tyrant father,
To his voice the mad weather
Seems tame;

And with curses as wild
As e'er clung to child,
He devotes to the blast,
The best, loveliest and last
Of his name!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Indian Serenade

I arise from dreams of thee
In the first sweet sleep of night,
When the winds are breathing low,
And the stars are shining bright
I arise from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Hath led me--who knows how?
To thy chamber window, Sweet!

The wandering airs they faint
On the dark, the silent stream--
The champak odors fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream;
The nightingale's complaint,
It dies upon her heart;
As I must on thine,
Oh, beloved as thou art!

O lift me from the grass!
die! I faint! I fail!
Let thy love in kisses rain
On my lips and eyelids pale.
My cheek is cold and white, alas!
My heart beats loud and fast;--
Oh! press it to thine own again,
Where it will break at last.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Invitation

BEST and brightest, come away!
Fairer far than this fair Day,
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle on the brake.
The brightest hour of unborn Spring,
Through the winter wandering,
Found, it seems, the halcyon Morn
To hoar February born.
Bending from heaven, in azure mirth,
It kiss'd the forehead of the Earth;
And smiled upon the silent sea;
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all their fountains;
And breathed upon the frozen mountains;
And like a prophetess of May
Strew'd flowers upon the barren way,
Making the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, dear.

Away, away, from men and towns,
To the wild wood and the downs--
To the silent wilderness
Where the soul need not repress
Its music lest it should not find
An echo in another's mind,
While the touch of Nature's art
Harmonizes heart to heart.
I leave this notice on my door
For each accustom'd visitor:--
'I am gone into the fields
To take what this sweet hour yields.
Reflection, you may come to-morrow;
Sit by the fireside with Sorrow.
You with the unpaid bill, Despair,--
You, tiresome verse-reciter, Care,--
I will pay you in the grave,--
Death will listen to your stave.

Expectation too, be off!
To-day is for itself enough.
Hope, in pity mock not Woe
With smiles, nor follow where I go;
Long having lived on your sweet food,
At length I find one moment's good
After long pain: with all your love,
This you never told me of.'

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains;
And the pools where winter rains
Image all their roof of leaves;
Where the pine its garland weaves
Of sapless green and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun;
Where the lawns and pastures be,
And the sandhills of the sea;
Where the melting hoar-frost wets
The daisy-star that never sets,
And wind-flowers, and violets
Which yet join not scent to hue,
Crown the pale year weak and new;
When the night is left behind
In the deep east, dun and blind,
And the blue noon is over us,
And the multitudinous
Billows murmur at our feet
Where the earth and ocean meet,
And all things seem only one
In the universal sun.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Irishman's Song

The stars may dissolve, and the fountain of light
May sink into ne'er ending chaos and night,
Our mansions must fall, and earth vanish away,
But thy courage O Erin! may never decay.

See! the wide wasting ruin extends all around,
Our ancestors' dwellings lie sunk on the ground,
Our foes ride in triumph throughout our domains,
And our mightiest heroes lie stretched on the plains.

Ah! dead is the harp which was wont to give pleasure,
Ah! sunk is our sweet country's rapturous measure,
But the war note is waked, and the clangour of spears,
The dread yell of Sloghan yet sounds in our ears.

Ah! where are the heroes! triumphant in death,
Convulsed they recline on the blood sprinkled heath,
Or the yelling ghosts ride on the blast that sweeps by,
And 'my countrymen! vengeance!' incessantly cry.

OCTOBER, 1809

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Isle

There was a little lawny islet
By anemone and violet,
Like mosaic, paven:
And its roof was flowers and leaves
Which the summer's breath enweaves,
Where nor sun nor showers nor breeze
Pierce the pines and tallest trees,
Each a gem engraven;--
Girt by many an azure wave
With which the clouds and mountains pave
A lake's blue chasm.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Magnetic Lady To Her Patient

I.

'Sleep, sleep on! forget thy pain;
My hand is on thy brow,
My spirit on thy brain;
My pity on thy heart, poor friend;
And from my fingers flow
The powers of life, and like a sign,
Seal thee from thine hour of woe;
And brood on thee, but may not blend
With thine.

II.

'Sleep, sleep on! I love thee not;
But when I think that he
Who made and makes my lot
As full of flowers as thine of weeds,
Might have been lost like thee;
And that a hand which was not mine
Might then have charmed his agony
As I another's--my heart bleeds
For thine.

III.

'Sleep, sleep, and with the slumber of
The dead and the unborn
Forget thy life and love;
Forget that thou must wake forever;
Forget the world's dull scorn;
Forget lost health, and the divine
Feelings which died in youth's brief morn;
And forget me, for I can never
Be thine.

IV.

'Like a cloud big with a May shower,
My soul weeps healing rain
On thee, thou withered flower!
It breathes mute music on thy sleep
Its odour calms thy brain!

Its light within thy gloomy breast
Spreads like a second youth again.
By mine thy being is to its deep
Possessed.

V.

'The spell is done. How feel you now?'
'Better—Quite well,' replied
The sleeper.--'What would do
You good when suffering and awake?
What cure your head and side?--'
'What would cure, that would kill me, Jane:
And as I must on earth abide
Awhile, yet tempt me not to break
My chain.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Mask Of Anarchy

I.

As I lay asleep in Italy
There came a voice from over the Sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II.

I met Murder on the way-
He had a mask like Castlereagh-
Very smooth he looked, yet grim;
Seven blood-hounds followed him:

III.

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

IV.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Eldon, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell.

V.

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

VI.

Clothed with the Bible, as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like Sidmouth, next, Hypocrisy
On a crocodile rode by.

VII.

And many more Destructions played

In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like Bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

VIII.

Last came Anarchy: he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX.

And he wore a kingly crown;
And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw-
'I am God, and King, and Law!'

X.

With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he passed,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

XI.

And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of their Lord.

XII.

And with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

XIII.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the Pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down;
Till they came to London town.

XIV.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,

Felt his heart with terror sicken
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV.

For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers, who did sing
'Thou art God, and Law, and King.

XVI.

'We have waited, weak and lone
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold.'

XVII.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering-'Thou art Law and God.'

XVIII.

Then all cried with one accord,
'Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!'

XIX.

And Anarchy, the Skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX.

For he knew the Palaces
Of our Kings were rightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-inwoven robe.

XXI.

So he sent his slaves before

To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned Parliament

XXII.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair,
And she cried out in the air:

XXIII.

'My father Time is weak and gray
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

XXIV.

'He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me-
Misery, oh, Misery!'

XXV.

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting, with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

XXVI.

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak, and frail
Like the vapour of a vale:

XXVII.

Till as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

XXVIII.

It grew-a Shape arrayed in mail

Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX.

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the Morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX.

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men-so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked,-but all was empty air.

XXXI.

As flowers beneath May's footstep waken,
As stars from Night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

XXXII.

And the prostrate multitude
Looked-and ankle-deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien:

XXXIII.

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

XXXIV.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense awakening and yet tender
Was heard and felt-and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose

XXXV.

As if their own indignant Earth
Which gave the sons of England birth
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother's throe

XXXVI.

Had turned every drop of blood
By which her face had been bedewed
To an accent unwithstood,-
As if her heart had cried aloud:

XXXVII.

'Men of England, heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty Mother,
Hopes of her, and one another;

XXXVIII.

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many-they are few.

XXXIX.

'What is Freedom?-ye can tell
That which slavery is, too well-
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

XL.

"Tis to work and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell,

XLI.

'So that ye for them are made
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade,
With or without your own will bent
To their defence and nourishment.

XLII.

"Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak,-
They are dying whilst I speak.

XLIII.

"Tis to hunger for such diet
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye;

XLIV.

"Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from Toil a thousandfold
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old.

XLV.

'Paper coin-that forgery
Of the title-deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

XLVI.

"Tis to be a slave in soul
And to hold no strong control
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII.

'And at length when ye complain
With a murmur weak and vain
'Tis to see the Tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you-
Blood is on the grass like dew.

XLVIII.

'Then it is to feel revenge
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood-and wrong for wrong-
Do not thus when ye are strong.

XLIX.

'Birds find rest, in narrow nest
When weary of their wingèd quest;
Beasts find fare, in woody lair
When storm and snow are in the air[1].

L.

'Asses, swine, have litter spread
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one-
Thou, Oh, Englishman, hast none!

LI.

'This is Slavery-savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den
Would endure not as ye do-
But such ills they never knew.

LII.

'What art thou Freedom? O! could slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand-tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery:

LIII.

'Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

LIV.

'For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread
From his daily labour come
In a neat and happy home.

LV.

'Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude-
No-in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be

As in England now we see.

LVI.

'To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim, thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

LVII.

'Thou art Justice-ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold
As laws are in England-thou
Shield'st alike the high and low.

LVIII.

'Thou art Wisdom-Freemen never
Dream that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue
Of which Priests make such ado.

LIX.

'Thou art Peace-never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

LX.

'What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood?
It availed, Oh, Liberty,
To dim, but not extinguish thee.

LXI.

'Thou art Love-the rich have kissed
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free
And through the rough world follow thee,

LXII.

'Or turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy beloved sake
On wealth, and war, and fraud-whence they

Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIII.

'Science, Poetry, and Thought
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

LXIV.

'Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless
Art thou-let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

LXV.

'Let a great Assembly be
Of the fearless and the free
On some spot of English ground
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVI.

'Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be
Witness the solemnity.

LXVII.

'From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town
Where those who live and suffer moan
For others' misery or their own[2],

LXVIII.

'From the workhouse and the prison
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young and old
Groan for pain, and weep for cold-

LXIX.

'From the haunts of daily life
Where is waged the daily strife

With common wants and common cares
Which sows the human heart with tares-

LXX.

'Lastly from the palaces
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around

LXXI.

'Those prison halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail
As must make their brethren pale-

LXXII.

'Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold-

LXXIII.

'Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free-

LXXIV.

'Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

LXXV.

'Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

LXXVI.

'Let the charged artillery drive
Till the dead air seems alive

With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVII.

'Let the fixèd bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood
Looking keen as one for food.

LXXVIII.

'Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXIX.

'Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,

LXXX.

'And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armèd steeds
Pass, a disregarded shade
Through your phalanx undismayed.

LXXXI.

'Let the laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute,

LXXXII.

'The old laws of England-they
Whose reverend heads with age are gray,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo-Liberty!

LXXXIII.

'On those who first should violate

Such sacred heralds in their state
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXIV.

'And if then the tyrants dare
Let them ride among you there,
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew,-
What they like, that let them do.

LXXXV.

'With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear, and less surprise,
Look upon them as they slay
Till their rage has died away.

LXXXVI.

'Then they will return with shame
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek.

LXXXVII.

'Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand-
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street.

LXXXVIII.

'And the bold, true warriors
Who have hugged Danger in wars
Will turn to those who would be free,
Ashamed of such base company.

'And that slaughter to the Nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular;
A volcano heard afar.

LXXXIX.

'And these words shall then become

Like Oppression's thundered doom
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again-again-again-

XC.

'Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number-
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Which in sleep had fallen on you-
Ye are many-they are few.'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Past

I.

Wilt thou forget the happy hours
Which we buried in Love's sweet bowers,
Heaping over their corpses cold
Blossoms and leaves, instead of mould?
Blossoms which were the joys that fell,
And leaves, the hopes that yet remain.

II.

Forget the dead, the past? Oh, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it,
Memories that make the heart a tomb,
Regrets which glide through the spirit's gloom,
And with ghastly whispers tell
That joy, once lost, is pain.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Pine Forest Of The Cascine Near Pisa

Dearest, best and brightest,
Come away,
To the woods and to the fields!
Dearer than this fairest day
Which, like thee to those in sorrow,
Comes to bid a sweet good-morrow
To the rough Year just awake
In its cradle in the brake.
The eldest of the Hours of Spring,
Into the Winter wandering,
Looks upon the leafless wood,
And the banks all bare and rude;
Found, it seems, this halcyon Morn
In February's bosom born,
Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
Kissed the cold forehead of the Earth,
And smiled upon the silent sea,
And bade the frozen streams be free;
And waked to music all the fountains,
And breathed upon the rigid mountains,
And made the wintry world appear
Like one on whom thou smilest, Dear.

Radiant Sister of the Day,
Awake! arise! and come away!
To the wild woods and the plains,
To the pools where winter rains
Image all the roof of leaves,
Where the pine its garland weaves
Sapless, gray, and ivy dun
Round stems that never kiss the sun--
To the sandhills of the sea,
Where the earliest violets be.

Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
And do thy wonted work and trace

The epitaph of glory fled;
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.

The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the woods, and on the deep
The smile of Heaven lay.

It seemed as if the day were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which shed to earth above the sun
A light of Paradise.

We paused amid the pines that stood,
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
With stems like serpents interlaced.

How calm it was--the silence there
By such a chain was bound,
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound

The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.

It seemed that from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain's waste
To the bright flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced;--

A spirit interfused around,
A thinking, silent life;
To momentary peace it bound

Our mortal nature's strife;--

And still, it seemed, the centre of
The magic circle there,
Was one whose being filled with love
The breathless atmosphere.

Were not the crocuses that grew
Under that ilex-tree
As beautiful in scent and hue
As ever fed the bee?

We stood beneath the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,
And each seemed like a sky
Gulfed in a world below;

A purple firmament of light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And clearer than the day—

In which the massy forests grew
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any waving there.

Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast
Its every leaf and lineament
With that clear truth expressed;

There lay far glades and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green crowd
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Under a speckled cloud.

Sweet views, which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian air,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there.

Until a wandering wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from my mind's too faithful eye
Blots thy bright image out.

For thou art good and dear and kind,
The forest ever green,
But less of peace in S---'s mind,
Than calm in waters, seen.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Question

I dreamed that, as I wandered by the way,
Bare Winter suddenly was changed to Spring,
And gentle odours led my steps astray,
Mixed with a sound of waters murmuring
Along a shelving bank of turf, which lay
Under a copse, and hardly dared to fling
Its green arms round the bosom of the stream,
But kissed it and then fled, as thou mightest in dream.

There grew pied wind-flowers and violets,
Daisies, those pearled Arcturi of the earth,
The constellated flower that never sets;
Faint oxlips; tender bluebells, at whose birth
The sod scarce heaved; and that tall flower that wets--
Like a child, half in tenderness and mirth--
Its mother's face with Heaven's collected tears,
When the low wind, its playmate's voice, it hears.

And in the warm hedge grew lush eglantine,
Green cowbind and the moonlight-coloured may,
And cherry-blossoms, and white cups, whose wine
Was the bright dew, yet drained not by the day;
And wild roses, and ivy serpentine,
With its dark buds and leaves, wandering astray;
And flowers azure, black, and streaked with gold,
Fairer than any wakened eyes behold.

And nearer to the river's trembling edge
There grew broad flag-flowers, purple pranked with white,
And starry river buds among the sedge,
And floating water-lilies, broad and bright,
Which lit the oak that overhung the hedge
With moonlight beams of their own watery light;
And bulrushes, and reeds of such deep green
As soothed the dazzled eye with sober sheen.

Methought that of these visionary flowers
I made a nosegay, bound in such a way
That the same hues, which in their natural bowers

Were mingled or opposed, the like array
Kept these imprisoned children of the Hours
Within my hand,--and then, elate and gay,
I hastened to the spot whence I had come,
That I might there present it!--Oh! to whom?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Retrospect: Cwm Elan, 1812

A scene, which 'wildered fancy viewed
In the soul's coldest solitude,
With that same scene when peaceful love
Flings rapture's colour o'er the grove,
When mountain, meadow, wood and stream
With unalloying glory gleam,
And to the spirit's ear and eye
Are unison and harmony.
The moonlight was my dearer day;
Then would I wander far away,
And, lingering on the wild brook's shore
To hear its unremitting roar,
Would lose in the ideal flow
All sense of overwhelming woe;
Or at the noiseless noon of night
Would climb some heathy mountain's height,
And listen to the mystic sound
That stole in fitful gasps around.
I joyed to see the streaks of day
Above the purple peaks decay,
And watch the latest line of light
Just mingling with the shades of night;
For day with me was time of woe
When even tears refused to flow;
Then would I stretch my languid frame
Beneath the wild woods' gloomiest shade,
And try to quench the ceaseless flame
That on my withered vitals preyed;
Would close mine eyes and dream I were
On some remote and friendless plain,
And long to leave existence there,
If with it I might leave the pain
That with a finger cold and lean
Wrote madness on my withering mien.

It was not unrequited love
That bade my 'wildered spirit rove;
'Twas not the pride disdainng life,
That with this mortal world at strife

Would yield to the soul's inward sense,
Then groan in human impotence,
And weep because it is not given
To taste on Earth the peace of Heaven.
'Twas not that in the narrow sphere
Where Nature fixed my wayward fate
There was no friend or kindred dear
Formed to become that spirit's mate,
Which, searching on tired pinion, found
Barren and cold repulse around;
Oh, no! yet each one sorrow gave
New graces to the narrow grave.
For broken vows had early quelled
The stainless spirit's vestal flame;
Yes! whilst the faithful bosom swelled,
Then the envenomed arrow came,
And Apathy's unaltering eye
Beamed coldness on the misery;
And early I had learned to scorn
The chains of clay that bound a soul
Panting to seize the wings of morn,
And where its vital fires were born
To soar, and spur the cold control
Which the vile slaves of earthly night
Would twine around its struggling flight.

Oh, many were the friends whom fame
Had linked with the unmeaning name,
Whose magic marked among mankind
The casket of my unknown mind,
Which hidden from the vulgar glare
Imbided no fleeting radiance there.
My darksome spirit sought--it found
A friendless solitude around.
For who that might undaunted stand,
The saviour of a sinking land,
Would crawl, its ruthless tyrant's slave,
And fatten upon Freedom's grave,
Though doomed with her to perish, where
The captive clasps abhorred despair.

They could not share the bosom's feeling,

Which, passion's every throb revealing,
Dared force on the world's notice cold
Thoughts of unprofitable mould,
Who bask in Custom's fickle ray,
Fit sunshine of such wintry day!
They could not in a twilight walk
Weave an impassioned web of talk,
Till mysteries the spirits press
In wild yet tender awfulness,
Then feel within our narrow sphere
How little yet how great we are!
But they might shine in courtly glare,
Attract the rabble's cheapest stare,
And might command where'er they move
A thing that bears the name of love;
They might be learned, witty, gay,
Foremost in fashion's gilt array,
On Fame's emblazoned pages shine,
Be princes' friends, but never mine!

Ye jagged peaks that frown sublime,
Mocking the blunted scythe of Time,
Whence I would watch its lustre pale
Steal from the moon o'er yonder vale
Thou rock, whose bosom black and vast,
Bared to the stream's unceasing flow,
Ever its giant shade doth cast
On the tumultuous surge below:

Woods, to whose depths retires to die
The wounded Echo's melody,
And whither this lone spirit bent
The footstep of a wild intent:

Meadows! whose green and spangled breast
These fevered limbs have often pressed,
Until the watchful fiend Despair
Slept in the soothing coolness there!
Have not your varied beauties seen
The sunken eye, the withering mien,
Sad traces of the unuttered pain
That froze my heart and burned my brain.

How changed since Nature's summer form
Had last the power my grief to charm,
Since last ye soothed my spirit's sadness,
Strange chaos of a mingled madness!
Changed!--not the loathsome worm that fed
In the dark mansions of the dead,
Now soaring through the fields of air,
And gathering purest nectar there,
A butterfly, whose million hues
The dazzled eye of wonder views,
Long lingering on a work so strange,
Has undergone so bright a change.
How do I feel my happiness?
I cannot tell, but they may guess
Whose every gloomy feeling gone,
Friendship and passion feel alone;
Who see mortality's dull clouds
Before affection's murmur fly,
Whilst the mild glances of her eye
Pierce the thin veil of flesh that shrouds
The spirit's inmost sanctuary.
O thou! whose virtues latest known,
First in this heart yet claim'st a throne;
Whose downy sceptre still shall share
The gentle sway with virtue there;
Thou fair in form, and pure in mind,
Whose ardent friendship rivets fast
The flowery band our fates that bind,
Which incorruptible shall last
When duty's hard and cold control
Has thawed around the burning soul,--
The gloomiest retrospects that bind
With crowns of thorn the bleeding mind,
The prospects of most doubtful hue
That rise on Fancy's shuddering view,--
Are gilt by the reviving ray
Which thou hast flung upon my day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Rude Wind Is Singing

The rude wind is singing
The dirge of the music dead;
The cold worms are clinging
Where kisses were lately fed.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Sensitive Plant

PART 1.

A Sensitive Plant in a garden grew,
And the young winds fed it with silver dew,
And it opened its fan-like leaves to the light.
And closed them beneath the kisses of Night.

And the Spring arose on the garden fair,
Like the Spirit of Love felt everywhere;
And each flower and herb on Earth's dark breast
Rose from the dreams of its wintry rest.

But none ever trembled and panted with bliss
In the garden, the field, or the wilderness,
Like a doe in the noontide with love's sweet want,
As the companionless Sensitive Plant.

The snowdrop, and then the violet,
Arose from the ground with warm rain wet,
And their breath was mixed with fresh odour, sent
From the turf, like the voice and the instrument.

Then the pied wind-flowers and the tulip tall,
And narcissi, the fairest among them all,
Who gaze on their eyes in the stream's recess,
Till they die of their own dear loveliness;

And the Naiad-like lily of the vale,
Whom youth makes so fair and passion so pale
That the light of its tremulous bells is seen
Through their pavilions of tender green;

And the hyacinth purple, and white, and blue,
Which flung from its bells a sweet peal anew
Of music so delicate, soft, and intense,
It was felt like an odour within the sense;

And the rose like a nymph to the bath addressed,
Which unveiled the depth of her glowing breast,
Till, fold after fold, to the fainting air

The soul of her beauty and love lay bare:

And the wand-like lily, which lifted up,
As a Maenad, its moonlight-coloured cup,
Till the fiery star, which is its eye,
Gazed through clear dew on the tender sky;

And the jessamine faint, and the sweet tuberose,
The sweetest flower for scent that blows;
And all rare blossoms from every clime
Grew in that garden in perfect prime.

And on the stream whose inconstant bosom
Was pranked, under boughs of embowering blossom,
With golden and green light, slanting through
Their heaven of many a tangled hue,

Broad water-lilies lay tremulously,
And starry river-buds glimmered by,
And around them the soft stream did glide and dance
With a motion of sweet sound and radiance.

And the sinuous paths of lawn and of moss,
Which led through the garden along and across,
Some open at once to the sun and the breeze,
Some lost among bowers of blossoming trees,

Were all paved with daisies and delicate bells
As fair as the fabulous asphodels,
And flow'rets which, drooping as day drooped too,
Fell into pavilions, white, purple, and blue,
To roof the glow-worm from the evening dew.

And from this undefiled Paradise
The flowers (as an infant's awakening eyes
Smile on its mother, whose singing sweet
Can first lull, and at last must awaken it),

When Heaven's blithe winds had unfolded them,
As mine-lamps enkindle a hidden gem,
Shone smiling to Heaven, and every one
Shared joy in the light of the gentle sun;

For each one was interpenetrated
With the light and the odour its neighbour shed,
Like young lovers whom youth and love make dear
Wrapped and filled by their mutual atmosphere.

But the Sensitive Plant which could give small fruit
Of the love which it felt from the leaf to the root,
Received more than all, it loved more than ever,
Where none wanted but it, could belong to the giver,—

For the Sensitive Plant has no bright flower;
Radiance and odour are not its dower;
It loves, even like Love, its deep heart is full,
It desires what it has not, the Beautiful!

The light winds which from unsustaining wings
Shed the music of many murmurings;
The beams which dart from many a star
Of the flowers whose hues they bear afar;

The plumed insects swift and free,
Like golden boats on a sunny sea,
Laden with light and odour, which pass
Over the gleam of the living grass;

The unseen clouds of the dew, which lie
Like fire in the flowers till the sun rides high,
Then wander like spirits among the spheres,
Each cloud faint with the fragrance it bears;

The quivering vapours of dim noontide,
Which like a sea o'er the warm earth glide,
In which every sound, and odour, and beam,
Move, as reeds in a single stream;

Each and all like ministering angels were
For the Sensitive Plant sweet joy to bear,
Whilst the lagging hours of the day went by
Like windless clouds o'er a tender sky.

And when evening descended from Heaven above,

And the Earth was all rest, and the air was all love,
And delight, though less bright, was far more deep,
And the day's veil fell from the world of sleep,

And the beasts, and the birds, and the insects were drowned
In an ocean of dreams without a sound;
Whose waves never mark, though they ever impress
The light sand which paves it, consciousness;

(Only overhead the sweet nightingale
Ever sang more sweet as the day might fail,
And snatches of its Elysian chant
Were mixed with the dreams of the Sensitive Plant);--

The Sensitive Plant was the earliest
Ungathered into the bosom of rest;
A sweet child weary of its delight,
The feeblest and yet the favourite,
Cradled within the embrace of Night.

PART 2.

There was a Power in this sweet place,
An Eve in this Eden; a ruling Grace
Which to the flowers, did they waken or dream,
Was as God is to the starry scheme.

A Lady, the wonder of her kind,
Whose form was upborne by a lovely mind
Which, dilating, had moulded her mien and motion
Like a sea-flower unfolded beneath the ocean,

Tended the garden from morn to even:
And the meteors of that sublunar Heaven,
Like the lamps of the air when Night walks forth,
Laughed round her footsteps up from the Earth!

She had no companion of mortal race,
But her tremulous breath and her flushing face
Told, whilst the morn kissed the sleep from her eyes,
That her dreams were less slumber than Paradise:

As if some bright Spirit for her sweet sake
Had deserted Heaven while the stars were awake,
As if yet around her he lingering were,
Though the veil of daylight concealed him from her.

Her step seemed to pity the grass it pressed;
You might hear by the heaving of her breast,
That the coming and going of the wind
Brought pleasure there and left passion behind.

And wherever her aery footstep trod,
Her trailing hair from the grassy sod
Erased its light vestige, with shadowy sweep,
Like a sunny storm o'er the dark green deep.

I doubt not the flowers of that garden sweet
Rejoiced in the sound of her gentle feet;
I doubt not they felt the spirit that came
From her glowing fingers through all their frame.

She sprinkled bright water from the stream
On those that were faint with the sunny beam;
And out of the cups of the heavy flowers
She emptied the rain of the thunder-showers.

She lifted their heads with her tender hands,
And sustained them with rods and osier-bands;
If the flowers had been her own infants, she
Could never have nursed them more tenderly.

And all killing insects and gnawing worms,
And things of obscene and unlovely forms,
She bore, in a basket of Indian woof,
Into the rough woods far aloof,--

In a basket, of grasses and wild-flowers full,
The freshest her gentle hands could pull
For the poor banished insects, whose intent,
Although they did ill, was innocent.

But the bee and the beamlike ephemeris
Whose path is the lightning's, and soft moths that kiss

The sweet lips of the flowers, and harm not, did she
Make her attendant angels be.

And many an antenatal tomb,
Where butterflies dream of the life to come,
She left clinging round the smooth and dark
Edge of the odorous cedar bark.

This fairest creature from earliest Spring
Thus moved through the garden ministering
In the sweet season of Summertime,
And ere the first leaf looked brown—she died!

PART 3.

Three days the flowers of the garden fair,
Like stars when the moon is awakened, were,
Or the waves of Baiae, ere luminous
She floats up through the smoke of Vesuvius.

And on the fourth, the Sensitive Plant
Felt the sound of the funeral chant,
And the steps of the bearers, heavy and slow,
And the sobs of the mourners, deep and low;

The weary sound and the heavy breath,
And the silent motions of passing death,
And the smell, cold, oppressive, and dank,
Sent through the pores of the coffin-plank;

The dark grass, and the flowers among the grass,
Were bright with tears as the crowd did pass;
From their sighs the wind caught a mournful tone,
And sate in the pines, and gave groan for groan.

The garden, once fair, became cold and foul,
Like the corpse of her who had been its soul,
Which at first was lovely as if in sleep,
Then slowly changed, till it grew a heap
To make men tremble who never weep.

Swift Summer into the Autumn flowed,

And frost in the mist of the morning rode,
Though the noonday sun looked clear and bright,
Mocking the spoil of the secret night.

The rose-leaves, like flakes of crimson snow,
Paved the turf and the moss below.
The lilies were drooping, and white, and wan,
Like the head and the skin of a dying man.

And Indian plants, of scent and hue
The sweetest that ever were fed on dew,
Leaf by leaf, day after day,
Were massed into the common clay.

And the leaves, brown, yellow, and gray, and red,
And white with the whiteness of what is dead,
Like troops of ghosts on the dry wind passed;
Their whistling noise made the birds aghast.

And the gusty winds waked the winged seeds,
Out of their birthplace of ugly weeds,
Till they clung round many a sweet flower's stem,
Which rotted into the earth with them.

The water-blooms under the rivulet
Fell from the stalks on which they were set;
And the eddies drove them here and there,
As the winds did those of the upper air.

Then the rain came down, and the broken stalks
Were bent and tangled across the walks;
And the leafless network of parasite bowers
Massed into ruin; and all sweet flowers.

Between the time of the wind and the snow
All loathliest weeds began to grow,
Whose coarse leaves were splashed with many a speck,
Like the water-snake's belly and the toad's back.

And thistles, and nettles, and darnels rank,
And the dock, and henbane, and hemlock dank,
Stretched out its long and hollow shank,

And stifled the air till the dead wind stank.

And plants, at whose names the verse feels loath,
Filled the place with a monstrous undergrowth,
Prickly, and pulpous, and blistering, and blue,
Livid, and starred with a lurid dew.

And agarics, and fungi, with mildew and mould
Started like mist from the wet ground cold;
Pale, fleshy, as if the decaying dead
With a spirit of growth had been animated!

Spawn, weeds, and filth, a leprous scum,
Made the running rivulet thick and dumb,
And at its outlet flags huge as stakes
Dammed it up with roots knotted like water-snakes.

And hour by hour, when the air was still,
The vapours arose which have strength to kill;
At morn they were seen, at noon they were felt,
At night they were darkness no star could melt.

And unctuous meteors from spray to spray
Crept and flitted in broad noonday
Unseen; every branch on which they alit
By a venomous blight was burned and bit.

The Sensitive Plant, like one forbid,
Wept, and the tears within each lid
Of its folded leaves, which together grew,
Were changed to a blight of frozen glue.

For the leaves soon fell, and the branches soon
By the heavy axe of the blast were hewn;
The sap shrank to the root through every pore
As blood to a heart that will beat no more.

For Winter came: the wind was his whip:
One choppy finger was on his lip:
He had torn the cataracts from the hills
And they clanked at his girdle like manacles;

His breath was a chain which without a sound
The earth, and the air, and the water bound;
He came, fiercely driven, in his chariot-throne
By the tenfold blasts of the Arctic zone.

Then the weeds which were forms of living death
Fled from the frost to the earth beneath.
Their decay and sudden flight from frost
Was but like the vanishing of a ghost!

And under the roots of the Sensitive Plant
The moles and the dormice died for want:
The birds dropped stiff from the frozen air
And were caught in the branches naked and bare.

First there came down a thawing rain
And its dull drops froze on the boughs again;
Then there steamed up a freezing dew
Which to the drops of the thaw-rain grew;

And a northern whirlwind, wandering about
Like a wolf that had smelt a dead child out,
Shook the boughs thus laden, and heavy, and stiff,
And snapped them off with his rigid griff.

When Winter had gone and Spring came back
The Sensitive Plant was a leafless wreck;
But the mandrakes, and toadstools, and docks, and darnels,
Rose like the dead from their ruined charnels.

CONCLUSION.

Whether the Sensitive Plant, or that
Which within its boughs like a Spirit sat,
Ere its outward form had known decay,
Now felt this change, I cannot say.

Whether that Lady's gentle mind,
No longer with the form combined
Which scattered love, as stars do light,
Found sadness, where it left delight,

I dare not guess; but in this life

Of error, ignorance, and strife,
Where nothing is, but all things seem,
And we the shadows of the dream,

It is a modest creed, and yet
Pleasant if one considers it,
To own that death itself must be,
Like all the rest, a mockery.

That garden sweet, that lady fair,
And all sweet shapes and odours there,
In truth have never passed away:
'Tis we, 'tis ours, are changed; not they.

For love, and beauty, and delight,
There is no death nor change: their might
Exceeds our organs, which endure
No light, being themselves obscure.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Sepulchre Of Memory

And where is truth? On tombs? for such to thee
Has been my heart—and thy dead memory
Has lain from childhood, many a changeful year,
Unchangingly preserved and buried there.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Solitary

I.

Dar'st thou amid the varied multitude
To live alone, an isolated thing?
To see the busy beings round thee spring,
And care for none; in thy calm solitude,
A flower that scarce breathes in the desert rude
To Zephyr's passing wing?

II.

Not the swart Pariah in some Indian grove,
Lone, lean, and hunted by his brother's hate,
Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate
As that poor wretch who cannot, cannot love:
He bears a load which nothing can remove,
A killing, withering weight.

III.

He smiles--'tis sorrow's deadliest mockery;
He speaks--the cold words flow not from his soul;
He acts like others, drains the genial bowl,--
Yet, yet he longs--although he fears--to die;
He pants to reach what yet he seems to fly,
Dull life's extremest goal.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Spectral Horseman

What was the shriek that struck Fancy's ear
As it sate on the ruins of time that is past?
Hark! it floats on the fitful blast of the wind,
And breathes to the pale moon a funeral sigh.
It is the Benshie's moan on the storm,
Or a shivering fiend that thirsting for sin,
Seeks murder and guilt when virtue sleeps,
Winged with the power of some ruthless king,
And sweeps o'er the breast of the prostrate plain.
It was not a fiend from the regions of Hell
That poured its low moan on the stillness of night:
It was not a ghost of the guilty dead,
Nor a yelling vampire reeking with gore;
But aye at the close of seven years' end,
That voice is mixed with the swell of the storm,
And aye at the close of seven years' end,
A shapeless shadow that sleeps on the hill
Awakens and floats on the mist of the heath.
It is not the shade of a murdered man,
Who has rushed uncalled to the throne of his God,
And howls in the pause of the eddying storm.
This voice is low, cold, hollow, and chill,
'Tis not heard by the ear, but is felt in the soul.
'Tis more frightful far than the death-daemon's scream,
Or the laughter of fiends when they howl o'er the corpse
Of a man who has sold his soul to Hell.
It tells the approach of a mystic form,
A white courser bears the shadowy sprite;
More thin they are than the mists of the mountain,
When the clear moonlight sleeps on the waveless lake.
More pale HIS cheek than the snows of Nithona,
When winter rides on the northern blast,
And howls in the midst of the leafless wood.
Yet when the fierce swell of the tempest is raving,
And the whirlwinds howl in the caves of Inisfallen,
Still secure mid the wildest war of the sky,
The phantom courser scours the waste,
And his rider howls in the thunder's roar.
O'er him the fierce bolts of avenging Heaven

Pause, as in fear, to strike his head.
The meteors of midnight recoil from his figure,
Yet the 'wilderer peasant, that oft passes by,
With wonder beholds the blue flash through his form:
And his voice, though faint as the sighs of the dead,
The startled passenger shudders to hear,
More distinct than the thunder's wildest roar.
Then does the dragon, who, chained in the caverns
To eternity, curses the champion of Erin,
Moan and yell loud at the lone hour of midnight,
And twine his vast wreaths round the forms of the daemons;
Then in agony roll his death-swimming eyeballs,
Though 'wilderer by death, yet never to die!
Then he shakes from his skeleton folds the nightmares,
Who, shrieking in agony, seek the couch
Of some fevered wretch who courts sleep in vain;
Then the tombless ghosts of the guilty dead
In horror pause on the fitful gale.
They float on the swell of the eddying tempest,
And scared seek the caves of gigantic...
Where their thin forms pour unearthly sounds
On the blast that sweets the breast of the lake,
And mingles its swell with the moonlight air.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Sunset

There late was One within whose subtle being,
As light and wind within some delicate cloud
That fades amid the blue noon's burning sky,
Genius and death contended. None may know
The sweetness of the joy which made his breath
Fail, like the trances of the summer air,
When, with the Lady of his love, who then
First knew the unreserve of mingled being,
He walked along the pathway of a field
Which to the east a hoar wood shadowed o'er,
But to the west was open to the sky.
There now the sun had sunk, but lines of gold
Hung on the ashen clouds, and on the points
Of the far level grass and nodding flowers
And the old dandelion's hoary beard,
And, mingled with the shades of twilight, lay
On the brown massy woods -- and in the east
The broad and burning moon lingeringly rose
Between the black trunks of the crowded trees,
While the faint stars were gathering overhead--
'Is it not strange, Isabel,' said the youth,
'I never saw the sun? We will walk here
To-morrow; thou shalt look on it with me.'

That night the youth and lady mingled lay
In love and sleep--but when the morning came
The lady found her lover dead and cold.
Let none believe that God in mercy gave
That stroke. The lady died not, nor grew wild,
But year by year lived on--in truth I think
Her gentleness and patience and sad smiles,
And that she did not die, but lived to tend
Her aged father, were a kind of madness,
If madness 'tis to be unlike the world.
For but to see her were to read the tale
Woven by some subtlest bard, to make hard hearts
Dissolve away in wisdom-working grief;--
Her eyes were black and lustreless and wan:
Her eyelashes were worn away with tears,

Her lips and cheeks were like things dead--so pale;
Her hands were thin, and through their wandering veins
And weak articulations might be seen
Day's ruddy light. The tomb of thy dead self
Which one vexed ghost inhabits, night and day,
Is all, lost child, that now remains of thee!

'Inheritor of more than earth can give,
Passionless calm and silence unreproved,
Whether the dead find, oh, not sleep! but rest,
And are the uncomplaining things they seem,
Or live, or drop in the deep sea of Love;
Oh, that like thine, mine epitaph were-- Peace!'
This was the only moan she ever made.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Tower Of Famine

Amid the desolation of a city,
Which was the cradle, and is now the grave
Of an extinguished people,—so that Pity

Weeps o'er the shipwrecks of Oblivion's wave,
There stands the Tower of Famine. It is built
Upon some prison-homes, whose dwellers rave

For bread, and gold, and blood: Pain, linked to Guilt,
Agitates the light flame of their hours,
Until its vital oil is spent or spilt.

There stands the pile, a tower amid the towers
And sacred domes; each marble-ribbed roof,
The brazen-gated temples, and the bowers

Of solitary wealth,—the tempest-proof
Pavilions of the dark Italian air,—
Are by its presence dimmed—they stand aloof,

And are withdrawn—so that the world is bare;
As if a spectre wrapped in shapeless terror
Amid a company of ladies fair

Should glide and glow, till it became a mirror
Of all their beauty, and their hair and hue,
The life of their sweet eyes, with all its error,
Should be absorbed, till they to marble grew.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Triumph Of Life

Swift as a spirit hastening to his task
Of glory & of good, the Sun sprang forth
Rejoicing in his splendour, & the mask
Of darkness fell from the awakened Earth.
The smokeless altars of the mountain snows
Flamed above crimson clouds, & at the birth
Of light, the Ocean's orison arose
To which the birds tempered their matin lay,
All flowers in field or forest which unclosed
Their trembling eyelids to the kiss of day,
Swinging their censers in the element,
With orient incense lit by the new ray
Burned slow & inconsumably, & sent
Their odorous sighs up to the smiling air,
And in succession due, did Continent,
Isle, Ocean, & all things that in them wear
The form & character of mortal mould
Rise as the Sun their father rose, to bear
Their portion of the toil which he of old
Took as his own & then imposed on them;
But I, whom thoughts which must remain untold
Had kept as wakeful as the stars that gem
The cone of night, now they were laid asleep,
Stretched my faint limbs beneath the hoary stem
Which an old chestnut flung athwart the steep
Of a green Apennine: before me fled
The night; behind me rose the day; the Deep
Was at my feet, & Heaven above my head
When a strange trance over my fancy grew
Which was not slumber, for the shade it spread
Was so transparent that the scene came through
As clear as when a veil of light is drawn
O'er evening hills they glimmer; and I knew
That I had felt the freshness of that dawn,
Bathed in the same cold dew my brow & hair
And sate as thus upon that slope of lawn
Under the self same bough, & heard as there
The birds, the fountains & the Ocean hold
Sweet talk in music through the enamoured air.

And then a Vision on my brain was rolled.

As in that trance of wondrous thought I lay
This was the tenour of my waking dream.
Methought I sate beside a public way
Thick strewn with summer dust, & a great stream
Of people there was hurrying to & fro
Numerous as gnats upon the evening gleam,
All hastening onward, yet none seemed to know
Whither he went, or whence he came, or why
He made one of the multitude, yet so
Was borne amid the crowd as through the sky
One of the million leaves of summer's bier.--
Old age & youth, manhood & infancy,
Mixed in one mighty torrent did appear,
Some flying from the thing they feared & some
Seeking the object of another's fear,
And others as with steps towards the tomb
Pored on the trodden worms that crawled beneath,
And others mournfully within the gloom
Of their own shadow walked, and called it death ...

And some fled from it as it were a ghost,
Half fainting in the affliction of vain breath.
But more with motions which each other crost
Pursued or shunned the shadows the clouds threw
Or birds within the noonday ether lost,
Upon that path where flowers never grew;
And weary with vain toil & faint for thirst
Heard not the fountains whose melodious dew
Out of their mossy cells forever burst
Nor felt the breeze which from the forest told
Of grassy paths, & wood lawns interspersed
With overarching elms & caverns cold,
And violet banks where sweet dreams brood, but they
Pursued their serious folly as of old
And as I gazed methought that in the way
The throng grew wilder, as the woods of June
When the South wind shakes the extinguished day.--
And a cold glare, intenser than the noon
But icy cold, obscured with [[blank]] light
The Sun as he the stars. Like the young moon
When on the sunlit limits of the night

Her white shell trembles amid crimson air
And whilst the sleeping tempest gathers might
Doth, as a herald of its coming, bear
The ghost of her dead Mother, whose dim form
Bends in dark ether from her infant's chair,
So came a chariot on the silent storm
Of its own rushing splendour, and a Shape
So sate within as one whom years deform
Beneath a dusky hood & double cape
Crouching within the shadow of a tomb,
And o'er what seemed the head, a cloud like crape,
Was bent a dun & faint ethereal gloom
Tempering the light; upon the chariot's beam
A Janus-visaged Shadow did assume
The guidance of that wonder-winged team.
The Shapes which drew it in thick lightnings
Were lost: I heard alone on the air's soft stream
The music of their ever moving wings.
All the four faces of that charioteer
Had their eyes banded . . . little profit brings
Speed in the van & blindness in the rear,
Nor then avail the beams that quench the Sun
Or that his banded eyes could pierce the sphere
Of all that is, has been, or will be done.--
So ill was the car guided, but it past
With solemn speed majestically on . . .
The crowd gave way, & I arose aghast,
Or seemed to rise, so mighty was the trance,
And saw like clouds upon the thunder blast
The million with fierce song and maniac dance
Raging around; such seemed the jubilee
As when to greet some conqueror's advance
Imperial Rome poured forth her living sea
From senatehouse & prison & theatre
When Freedom left those who upon the free
Had bound a yoke which soon they stooped to bear.
Nor wanted here the true similitude
Of a triumphal pageant, for where'er
The chariot rolled a captive multitude
Was driven; althose who had grown old in power
Or misery,--all who have their age subdued,
By action or by suffering, and whose hour

Was drained to its last sand in weal or woe,
So that the trunk survived both fruit & flower;
All those whose fame or infamy must grow
Till the great winter lay the form & name
Of their own earth with them forever low,
All but the sacred few who could not tame
Their spirits to the Conqueror, but as soon
As they had touched the world with living flame
Fled back like eagles to their native noon,
Of those who put aside the diadem
Of earthly thrones or gems, till the last one
Were there;--for they of Athens & Jerusalem
Were neither mid the mighty captives seen
Nor mid the ribald crowd that followed them
Or fled before . . . Now swift, fierce & obscene
The wild dance maddens in the van, & those
Who lead it, fleet as shadows on the green,
Outspeed the chariot & without repose
Mix with each other in tempestuous measure
To savage music Wilder as it grows,
They, tortured by the agonizing pleasure,
Convulsed & on the rapid whirlwinds spun
Of that fierce spirit, whose unholy leisure
Was soothed by mischief since the world begun,
Throw back their heads & loose their streaming hair,
And in their dance round her who dims the Sun
Maidens & youths fling their wild arms in air
As their feet twinkle; they recede, and now
Bending within each other's atmosphere
Kindle invisibly; and as they glow
Like moths by light attracted & repelled,
Oft to new bright destruction come & go.
Till like two clouds into one vale impelled
That shake the mountains when their lightnings mingle
And die in rain,--the fiery band which held
Their natures, snaps . . . ere the shock cease to tingle
One falls and then another in the path
Senseless, nor is the desolation single,
Yet ere I can say where the chariot hath
Past over them; nor other trace I find
But as of foam after the Ocean's wrath
Is spent upon the desert shore.--Behind,

Old men, and women foully disarrayed
 Shake their grey hair in the insulting wind,
 Limp in the dance & strain, with limbs decayed,
 Seeking to reach the light which leaves them still
 Farther behind & deeper in the shade.
 But not the less with impotence of will
 They wheel, though ghastly shadows interpose
 Round them & round each other, and fulfill
 Their work and to the dust whence they arose
 Sink & corruption veils them as they lie
 And frost in these performs what fire in those.
 Struck to the heart by this sad pageantry,
 Half to myself I said, "And what is this?
 Whose shape is that within the car? & why"-
 I would have added--"is all here amiss?"
 But a voice answered . . . "Life" . . . I turned & knew
 (O Heaven have mercy on such wretchedness!)
 That what I thought was an old root which grew
 To strange distortion out of the hill side
 Was indeed one of that deluded crew,
 And that the grass which methought hung so wide
 And white, was but his thin discoloured hair,
 And that the holes it vainly sought to hide
 Were or had been eyes.--"If thou canst forbear
 To join the dance, which I had well forborne,"
 Said the grim Feature, of my thought aware,
 "I will now tell that which to this deep scorn
 Led me & my companions, and relate
 The progress of the pageant since the morn;
 "If thirst of knowledge doth not thus abate,
 Follow it even to the night, but I
 Am weary" . . . Then like one who with the weight
 Of his own words is staggered, wearily
 He paused, and ere he could resume, I cried,
 "First who art thou?" . . . "Before thy memory
 "I feared, loved, hated, suffered, did, & died,
 And if the spark with which Heaven lit my spirit
 Earth had with purer nutriment supplied
 "Corruption would not now thus much inherit
 Of what was once Rousseau--nor this disguise
 Stained that within which still disdains to wear it.--
 "If I have been extinguished, yet there rise

A thousand beacons from the spark I bore."--
 "And who are those chained to the car?" "The Wise,
 "The great, the unforgotten: they who wore
 Mitres & helms & crowns, or wreathes of light,
 Signs of thought's empire over thought; their lore
 "Taught them not this--to know themselves; their might
 Could not repress the mutiny within,
 And for the morn of truth they feigned, deep night
 "Caught them ere evening." "Who is he with chin
 Upon his breast and hands crost on his chain?"
 "The Child of a fierce hour; he sought to win
 "The world, and lost all it did contain
 Of greatness, in its hope destroyed; & more
 Of fame & peace than Virtue's self can gain
 "Without the opportunity which bore
 Him on its eagle's pinion to the peak
 From which a thousand climbers have before
 "Fall'n as Napoleon fell."--I felt my cheek
 Alter to see the great form pass away
 Whose grasp had left the giant world so weak
 That every pigmy kicked it as it lay--
 And much I grieved to think how power & will
 In opposition rule our mortal day--
 And why God made irreconcilable
 Good & the means of good; and for despair
 I half disdained mine eye's desire to fill
 With the spent vision of the times that were
 And scarce have ceased to be . . . "Dost thou behold,"
 Said then my guide, "those spoilers spoiled, Voltaire,
 "Frederic, & Kant, Catherine, & Leopold,
 Chained hoary anarch, demagogue & sage
 Whose name the fresh world thinks already old--
 "For in the battle Life & they did wage
 She remained conqueror--I was overcome
 By my own heart alone, which neither age
 "Nor tears nor infamy nor now the tomb
 Could temper to its object."--"Let them pass"--
 I cried--"the world & its mysterious doom
 "Is not so much more glorious than it was
 That I desire to worship those who drew
 New figures on its false & fragile glass
 "As the old faded."--"Figures ever new

Rise on the bubble, paint them how you may;
 We have but thrown, as those before us threw,
 "Our shadows on it as it past away.
 But mark, how chained to the triumphal chair
 The mighty phantoms of an elder day--
 "All that is mortal of great Plato there
 Expiates the joy & woe his master knew not;
 That star that ruled his doom was far too fair--
 "And Life, where long that flower of Heaven grew not,
 Conquered the heart by love which gold or pain
 Or age or sloth or slavery could subdue not--
 "And near [[blank]] walk the [[blank]] twain,
 The tutor & his pupil, whom Dominion
 Followed as tame as vulture in a chain.--
 "The world was darkened beneath either pinion
 Of him whom from the flock of conquerors
 Fame singled as her thunderbearing minion;
 "The other long outlived both woes & wars,
 Throned in new thoughts of men, and still had kept
 The jealous keys of truth's eternal doors
 "If Bacon's spirit [[blank]] had not leapt
 Like lightning out of darkness; he compelled
 The Proteus shape of Nature's as it slept
 "To wake & to unbar the caves that held
 The treasure of the secrets of its reign--
 See the great bards of old who inly quelled
 "The passions which they sung, as by their strain
 May well be known: their living melody
 Tempers its own contagion to the vein
 "Of those who are infected with it--I
 Have suffered what I wrote, or viler pain!--
 "And so my words were seeds of misery--
 Even as the deeds of others."--"Not as theirs,"
 I said--he pointed to a company
 In which I recognized amid the heirs
 Of Caesar's crime from him to Constantine,
 The Anarchs old whose force & murderous snares
 Had founded many a sceptre bearing line
 And spread the plague of blood & gold abroad,
 And Gregory & John and men divine
 Who rose like shadows between Man & god
 Till that eclipse, still hanging under Heaven,

Was worshipped by the world o'er which they strode
 For the true Sun it quenched.--"Their power was given
 But to destroy," replied the leader--"I
 Am one of those who have created, even
 "If it be but a world of agony."--
 "Whence camest thou & whither goest thou?
 How did thy course begin," I said, "& why?
 "Mine eyes are sick of this perpetual flow
 Of people, & my heart of one sad thought.--
 Speak."--"Whence I came, partly I seem to know,
 "And how & by what paths I have been brought
 To this dread pass, methinks even thou mayst guess;
 Why this should be my mind can compass not;
 "Whither the conqueror hurries me still less.
 But follow thou, & from spectator turn
 Actor or victim in this wretchedness,
 "And what thou wouldst be taught I then may learn
 From thee.--Now listen . . . In the April prime
 When all the forest tops began to burn
 "With kindling green, touched by the azure clime
 Of the young year, I found myself asleep
 Under a mountain which from unknown time
 "Had yawned into a cavern high & deep,
 And from it came a gentle rivulet
 Whose water like clear air in its calm sweep
 "Bent the soft grass & kept for ever wet
 The stems of the sweet flowers, and filled the grove
 With sound which all who hear must needs forget
 "All pleasure & all pain, all hate & love,
 Which they had known before that hour of rest:
 A sleeping mother then would dream not of
 "The only child who died upon her breast
 At eventide, a king would mourn no more
 The crown of which his brow was dispossessed
 "When the sun lingered o'er the Ocean floor
 To gild his rival's new prosperity.--
 Thou wouldst forget thus vainly to deplore
 "Ills, which if ill, can find no cure from thee,
 The thought of which no other sleep will quell
 Nor other music blot from memory--
 "So sweet & deep is the oblivious spell.--
 Whether my life had been before that sleep

The Heaven which I imagine, or a Hell
"Like this harsh world in which I wake to weep,
I know not. I arose & for a space
The scene of woods & waters seemed to keep,
"Though it was now broad day, a gentle trace
Of light diviner than the common Sun
Sheds on the common Earth, but all the place
"Was filled with many sounds woven into one
Oblivious melody, confusing sense
Amid the gliding waves & shadows dun;
"And as I looked the bright omnipresence
Of morning through the orient cavern flowed,
And the Sun's image radiantly intense
"Burned on the waters of the well that glowed
Like gold, and threaded all the forest maze
With winding paths of emerald fire--there stood
"Amid the sun, as he amid the blaze
Of his own glory, on the vibrating
Floor of the fountain, paved with flashing rays,
"A shape all light, which with one hand did fling
Dew on the earth, as if she were the Dawn
Whose invisible rain forever seemed to sing
"A silver music on the mossy lawn,
And still before her on the dusky grass
Iris her many coloured scarf had drawn.--
"In her right hand she bore a crystal glass
Mantling with bright Nepenthe;--the fierce splendour
Fell from her as she moved under the mass
"Of the deep cavern, & with palms so tender
Their tread broke not the mirror of its billow,
Glided along the river, and did bend her
"Head under the dark boughs, till like a willow
Her fair hair swept the bosom of the stream
That whispered with delight to be their pillow.--
"As one enamoured is upborne in dream
O'er lily-paven lakes mid silver mist
To wondrous music, so this shape might seem
"Partly to tread the waves with feet which kist
The dancing foam, partly to glide along
The airs that roughened the moist amethyst,
"Or the slant morning beams that fell among
The trees, or the soft shadows of the trees;

And her feet ever to the ceaseless song
"Of leaves & winds & waves & birds & bees
And falling drops moved in a measure new
Yet sweet, as on the summer evening breeze
"Up from the lake a shape of golden dew
Between two rocks, athwart the rising moon,
Moves up the east, where eagle never flew.--
"And still her feet, no less than the sweet tune
To which they moved, seemed as they moved, to blot
The thoughts of him who gazed on them, & soon
"All that was seemed as if it had been not,
As if the gazer's mind was strewn beneath
Her feet like embers, & she, thought by thought,
"Trampled its fires into the dust of death,
As Day upon the threshold of the east
Treads out the lamps of night, until the breath
"Of darkness reilluminates even the least
Of heaven's living eyes--like day she came,
Making the night a dream; and ere she ceased
"To move, as one between desire and shame
Suspended, I said--'If, as it doth seem,
Thou comest from the realm without a name,
" 'Into this valley of perpetual dream,
Shew whence I came, and where I am, and why--
Pass not away upon the passing stream.'
" 'Arise and quench thy thirst,' was her reply,
And as a shut lily, stricken by the wand
Of dewy morning's vital alchemy,
"I rose; and, bending at her sweet command,
Touched with faint lips the cup she raised,
And suddenly my brain became as sand
"Where the first wave had more than half erased
The track of deer on desert Labrador,
Whilst the fierce wolf from which they fled amazed
"Leaves his stamp visibly upon the shore
Until the second bursts--so on my sight
Burst a new Vision never seen before.--
"And the fair shape waned in the coming light
As veil by veil the silent splendour drops
From Lucifer, amid the chrysolite
"Of sunrise ere it strike the mountain tops--
And as the presence of that fairest planet

Although unseen is felt by one who hopes
"That his day's path may end as he began it
In that star's smile, whose light is like the scent
Of a jonquil when evening breezes fan it,
"Or the soft note in which his dear lament
The Brescian shepherd breathes, or the caress
That turned his weary slumber to content.--
"So knew I in that light's severe excess
The presence of that shape which on the stream
Moved, as I moved along the wilderness,
"More dimly than a day appearing dream,
The ghost of a forgotten form of sleep
A light from Heaven whose half extinguished beam
"Through the sick day in which we wake to weep
Glimmers, forever sought, forever lost.--
So did that shape its obscure tenour keep
"Beside my path, as silent as a ghost;
But the new Vision, and its cold bright car,
With savage music, stunning music, crost
"The forest, and as if from some dread war
Triumphantly returning, the loud million
Fiercely extolled the fortune of her star.--
"A moving arch of victory the vermilion
And green & azure plumes of Iris had
Built high over her wind-winged pavilion,
"And underneath aetherial glory clad
The wilderness, and far before her flew
The tempest of the splendour which forbade
Shadow to fall from leaf or stone;--the crew
Seemed in that light like atomies that dance
Within a sunbeam.--Some upon the new
"Embroidery of flowers that did enhance
The grassy vesture of the desert, played,
Forgetful of the chariot's swift advance;
"Others stood gazing till within the shade
Of the great mountain its light left them dim.--
Others outspeeded it, and others made
"Circles around it like the clouds that swim
Round the high moon in a bright sea of air,
And more did follow, with exulting hymn,
"The chariot & the captives fettered there,
But all like bubbles on an eddying flood

Fell into the same track at last & were
 "Borne onward.--I among the multitude
 Was swept; me sweetest flowers delayed not long,
 Me not the shadow nor the solitude,
 "Me not the falling stream's Lethean song,
 Me, not the phantom of that early form
 Which moved upon its motion,--but among
 "The thickest billows of the living storm
 I plunged, and bared my bosom to the clime
 Of that cold light, whose airs too soon deform.--
 "Before the chariot had begun to climb
 The opposing steep of that mysterious dell,
 Behold a wonder worthy of the rhyme
 "Of him whom from the lowest depths of Hell
 Through every Paradise & through all glory
 Love led serene, & who returned to tell
 "In words of hate & awe the wondrous story
 How all things are transfigured, except Love;
 For deaf as is a sea which wrath makes hoary
 "The world can hear not the sweet notes that move
 The sphere whose light is melody to lovers---
 A wonder worthy of his rhyme--the grove
 "Grew dense with shadows to its inmost covers,
 The earth was grey with phantoms, & the air
 Was peopled with dim forms, as when there hovers
 "A flock of vampire-bats before the glare
 Of the tropic sun, bring ere evening
 Strange night upon some Indian isle,--thus were
 "Phantoms diffused around, & some did fling
 Shadows of shadows, yet unlike themselves,
 Behind them, some like eaglets on the wing
 "Were lost in the white blaze, others like elves
 Danced in a thousand unimagined shapes
 Upon the sunny streams & grassy shelves;
 "And others sate chattering like restless apes
 On vulgar paws and voluble like fire.
 Some made a cradle of the ermined capes
 "Of kingly mantles, some upon the tiar
 Of pontiffs sate like vultures, others played
 Within the crown which girt with empire
 "A baby's or an idiot's brow, & made
 Their nests in it; the old anatomies

Sate hatching their bare brood under the shade
"Of demon wings, and laughed from their dead eyes
To reassume the delegated power
Arrayed in which these worms did monarchize
"Who make this earth their charnel.--Others more
Humble, like falcons sate upon the fist
Of common men, and round their heads did soar,
"Or like small gnats & flies, as thick as mist
On evening marshes, thronged about the brow
Of lawyer, statesman, priest & theorist,
"And others like discoloured flakes of snow
On fairest bosoms & the sunniest hair
Fell, and were melted by the youthful glow
"Which they extinguished; for like tears, they were
A veil to those from whose faint lids they rained
In drops of sorrow.--I became aware
"Of whence those forms proceeded which thus stained
The track in which we moved; after brief space
From every form the beauty slowly waned,
"From every firmest limb & fairest face
The strength & freshness fell like dust, & left
The action & the shape without the grace
"Of life; the marble brow of youth was cleft
With care, and in the eyes where once hope shone
Desire like a lioness bereft
"Of its last cub, glared ere it died; each one
Of that great crowd sent forth incessantly
These shadows, numerous as the dead leaves blown
"In Autumn evening from a popular tree--
Each, like himself & like each other were,
At first, but soon distorted, seemed to be
"Obscure clouds moulded by the casual air;
And of this stuff the car's creative ray
Wrought all the busy phantoms that were there
"As the sun shapes the clouds--thus, on the way
Mask after mask fell from the countenance
And form of all, and long before the day
"Was old, the joy which waked like Heaven's glance
The sleepers in the oblivious valley, died,
And some grew weary of the ghastly dance
"And fell, as I have fallen by the way side,
Those soonest from whose forms most shadows past

And least of strength & beauty did abide."--
"Then, what is Life?" I said . . . the cripple cast
His eye upon the car which now had rolled
Onward, as if that look must be the last,
And answered "Happy those for whom the fold
Of ...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Two Spirits: An Allegory

FIRST SPIRIT

O thou, who plum'd with strong desire
Wouldst float above the earth, beware!

A Shadow tracks thy flight of fire--

Night is coming!

Bright are the regions of the air,
And among the winds and beams

It were delight to wander there--

Night is coming!SECOND SPIRIT

The deathless stars are bright above;

If I would cross the shade of night,

Within my heart is the lamp of love,

And that is day!

And the moon will smile with gentle light

On my golden plumes where'er they move;

The meteors will linger round my flight,

And make night day.FIRST SPIRIT

But if the whirlwinds of darkness waken

Hail, and lightning, and stormy rain;

See, the bounds of the air are shaken--

Night is coming!

The red swift clouds of the hurricane

Yon declining sun have overtaken,

The clash of the hail sweeps over the plain--

Night is coming!SECOND SPIRIT

I see the light, and I hear the sound;

I'll sail on the flood of the tempest dark,

With the calm within and the light around

Which makes night day:

And thou, when the gloom is deep and stark,

Look from thy dull earth, slumber-bound,

My moon-like flight thou then mayst mark

On high, far away.-----

Some say there is a precipice

Where one vast pine is frozen to ruin

O'er piles of snow and chasms of ice

Mid Alpine mountains;
And that the languid storm pursuing
That winged shape, for ever flies
Round those hoar branches, aye renewing
Its airy fountains.

Some say when nights are dry and dear,
And the death-dews sleep on the morass,
Sweet whispers are heard by the traveller,
Which make night day:
And a silver shape like his early love doth pass
Upborne by her wild and glittering hair,
And when he awakes on the fragrant grass,
He finds night day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Viewless And Invisible Consequence

The viewless and invisible Consequence
Watches thy goings-out, and comings-in,
And...hovers o'er thy guilty sleep,
Unveiling every new-born deed, and thoughts
More ghastly than those deeds--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Wandering Jew's Soliloquy

Is it the Eternal Triune, is it He
Who dares arrest the wheels of destiny
And plunge me in the lowest Hell of Hells?
Will not the lightning's blast destroy my frame?
Will not steel drink the blood-life where it swells?
No—let me hie where dark Destruction dwells,
To rouse her from her deeply caverned lair,
And, taunting her cursed sluggishness to ire,
Light long Oblivion's death-torch at its flame
And calmly mount Annihilation's pyre.
Tyrant of Earth! pale Misery's jackal Thou!
Are there no stores of vengeful violent fate
Within the magazines of Thy fierce hate?
No poison in the clouds to bathe a brow
That lowers on Thee with desperate contempt?
Where is the noonday Pestilence that slew
The myriad sons of Israel's favoured nation?
Where the destroying Minister that flew
Pouring the fiery tide of desolation
Upon the leagued Assyrian's attempt?
Where the dark Earthquake-daemon who engorged
At the dread word Korah's unconscious crew?
Or the Angel's two-edged sword of fire that urged
Our primal parents from their bower of bliss
(Reared by Thine hand) for errors not their own
By Thine omniscient mind foredoomed, foreknown?
Yes! I would court a ruin such as this,
Almighty Tyrant! and give thanks to Thee--
Drink deeply—drain the cup of hate; remit this--I may die.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Waning Moon

And like a dying lady, lean and pale,
Who totters forth, wrapped in a gauzy veil,
Out of her chamber, led by the insane
And feeble wanderings of her fading brain,
The moon arose up in the murky east,
A white and shapeless mass.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Witch Of Atlas

Before those cruel twins whom at one birth
Incestuous Change bore to her father Time,
Error and Truth, had hunted from the earth
All those bright natures which adorned its prime,
And left us nothing to believe in, worth
The pains of putting into learned rhyme,
A Lady Witch there lived on Atlas mountain
Within a cavern by a secret fountain.

Her mother was one of the Atlantides.
The all-beholding Sun had ne'er beholden
In his wide voyage o'er continents and seas
So fair a creature, as she lay enfolden
In the warm shadow of her loveliness;
He kissed her with his beams, and made all golden
The chamber of gray rock in which she lay.
She, in that dream of joy, dissolved away.

'Tis said she first was changed into a vapor;
And then into a cloud,--such clouds as flit
(Like splendor-winged moths about a taper)
Round the red west when the Sun dies in it;
And then into a meteor, such as caper
On hill-tops when the Moon is in a fit;
Then into one of those mysterious stars
Which hide themselves between the Earth and Mars.

Ten times the Mother of the Months had ben
Her bow beside the folding-star, and bidden
With that bright sign the billows to indent
The sea-deserted sand--(like children chidden,
At her command they ever came and went)--
Since in that cave a dewy splendor hidden
Took shape and motion. With the living form
Of this embodied Power the cave grew warm.

A lovely Lady garmented in light
From her own beauty: deep her eyes as are
Two openings of unfathomable night

Seen through a temple's cloven roof; her hair
Dark; the dim brain whirls dizzy with delight,
 Picturing her form. Her soft smiles shone afar;
And her low voice was heard like love, and drew
All living things towards this wonder new.

And first the spotted cameleopard came;
 And then the wise and fearless elephant;
Then the sly serpent, in the golden flame
 Of his own volumes intervolved. All gaunt
And sanguine beasts her gentle looks made tame,--
 They drank before her at her sacred fount;
And every beast of beating heart grew bold,
Such gentleness and power even to behold.

The brinded lioness led forth her young,
 That she might teach them how they should forego
Their inborn thirst of death; the pard unstrung
 His sinews at her feet, and sought to know,
With looks whose motions spoke without a tongue,
 How he might be as gentle as the doe.
The magic circle of her voice and eyes
All savage natures did imparadise.

And old Silenus, shaking a green stick
 Of lilies, and the Wood-gods in a crew,
Came blithe as in the olive-copses thick
 Cicade are, drunk with the noonday dew;
And Dryope and Faunus followed quick,
 Teazing the God to sing them something new;
Till in this cave they found the Lady lone,
Sitting upon a seat of emerald stone.

And universal Pan, 'tis said, was there.
 And, though none saw him,--through the adamant
Of the deep mountains, through the trackless air,
 And through those living spirits like a want,--
He passed out of his everlasting lair
 Where the quick heart of the great world doth pant,
And felt that wondrous Lady all alone,--
And she felt him upon her emerald throne.

And every Nymph of stream and spreading tree,
And every Shepherdess of Ocean's flocks
Who drives her white waves over the green sea,
And Ocean with the brine on his grey locks,
And quaint Priapus with his company,--
All came, much wondering how the enwombed rocks
Could have brought forth so beautiful a birth:
Her love subdued their wonder and their mirth.

The herdsmen and the mountain-maidens came,
And the rude kings of pastoral Garamant--
Their spirits shook within them, as a flame
Stirred by the air under a cavern gaunt:
Pygmies and Polyphemes, by many a name,
Centaur and Satyr, and such shapes as haunt
Wet clefts,--and lumps neither alive nor dead,
Dog-headed, bosom-eyed, and bird-footed.

For she was beautiful. Her beauty made
The bright world dim, and everything beside
Seemed like the fleeting image of a shade.
No thought of living spirit could abide
(Which to her looks had ever been betrayed)
On any object in the world so wide,
On any hope within the circling skies,--
But on her form, and in her inmost eyes.

Which when the Lady knew; she took her spindle,
And twined three threads of fleecy mist, and three
Long lines of light, such as the dawn may kindle
The clouds and waves and mountains with, and she
As many starbeams, ere their lamps could dwindle
In the belated moon, wound skilfully;
And with these threads a subtle veil she wove--
A shadow for the splendour of her love.

The deep recesses of her odorous dwelling
Were stored with magic treasures:--sounds of air
Which had the power all spirits of compelling,
Folded in cells of crystal silence there;
Such as we hear in youth, and think the feeling
will never die--yet, ere we are aware,

The feeling and the sound are fled and gone
And the regret they leave remains alone.

And there lay Visions swift and sweet and quaint,
Each in its thin sheath like a chrysalis;--
Some eager to burst forth; some weak and faint
With the soft burden of intensest bliss
It is their work to bear to many a saint
Whose heart adores the shrine which holiest is,
Even Love's; and others, white, green, grey, and black,
And of all shapes:--and each was at her beck.

And odours in a kind of aviary
Of ever-blooming Eden-trees she kept,
Clipped in a floating net a love-sick Fairy
Had woven from dew-beams while the moon yet slept.
As bats at the wired window of a dairy,
They beat their vans; and each was an adept--
When loosed and missioned, making wings of winds--
To stir sweet thoughts or sad in destined minds.

And liquors clear and sweet, whose healthful might
Could medicine the sick soul to happy sleep,
And change eternal death into a night
Of glorious dreams--or, if eyes needs must weep,
Could make their tears all wonder and delight--
She in her crystal phials did closely keep:
If men could drink of those clear phials, 'tis said
The living were not envied of the dead.

Her cave was stored with scrolls of strange device,
The works of some Saturnian Archimage,
Which taught the expiations at whose price
Men from the Gods might win that happy age
Too lightly lost, redeeming native vice,--
And which might quench the earth-consuming rage
Of gold and blood, till men should live and move
Harmonious as the sacred stars above:--

And how all things that seem untameable,
Not to be checked and not to be confined,
Obey the spells of Wisdom's wizard skill;

Time, earth, and fire, the ocean and the wind,
And all their shapes, and man's imperial will;--
And other scrolls whose writings did unbind
The inmost lore of love--let the profane
Tremble to ask what secrets they contain.

And wondrous works of substances unknown,
To which the enchantment of her Father's power
Had changed those ragged blocks of savage stone,
Were heaped in the recesses of her bower;
Carved lamps and chalices, and phials which shone
In their own golden beams--each like a flower
Out of whose depth a firefly shakes his light
Under a cypress in a starless night.

At first she lived alone in this wild home,
And her own thoughts were each a minister,
Clothing themselves or with the ocean-foam,
Or with the wind, or with the speed of fire,
To work whatever purposes might come
Into her mind: such power her mighty Sire
Had girt them with, whether to fly or run
Through all the regions which he shines upon.

The Ocean-nymphs and Hamadryades,
Oreads, and Naiads with long weedy locks,
Offered to do her bidding through the seas,
Under the earth, and in the hollow rocks,
And far beneath the matted roots of trees,
And in the gnarled heart of stubborn oaks;
So they might live for ever in the light
Of her sweet presence--each a satellite.

"This may not be," the Wizard Maid replied.
"The fountains where the Naiades bedew
Their shining hair at length are drained and dried;
The solid oaks forget their strength, and strew
Their latest leaf upon the mountains wide;
The boundless ocean like a drop of dew
Will be consumed; the stubborn centre must
Be scattered like a cloud of summer dust.

"And ye, with them, will perish one by one.
If I must sigh to think that this shall be,
If I must weep when the surviving Sun
Shall smile on your decay--oh ask not me
To love you till your little race is run;
I cannot die as ye must.--Over me
Your leaves shall glance--the streams in which ye dwell
Shall be my paths henceforth; and so farewell."

She spoke and wept. The dark and azure well
Sparkled beneath the shower of her bright tears,
And every little circlet where they fell
Flung to the cavern-roof inconstant spheres
And intertangled lines of light. A knell
Of sobbing voices came upon her ears
From those departing forms, o'er the serene
Of the white streams and of the forest green.

All day the Wizard Lady sat aloof;
Spelling out scrolls of dread antiquity
Under the cavern's fountain-lighted roof;
Or broidering the pictured poesy
Of some high tale upon her growing woof,
Which the sweet splendor of her smiles could dye
In hues outshining heaven--and ever she
Added some grace to the wrought poesy:--

While on her hearth lay blazing many a piece
Of sandal-wood, rare gums, and cinnamon.
Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is;
Each flame of it is as a precious stone
Dissolved in ever-moving light, and this
Belongs to each and all who gaze thereon.'
The Witch beheld it not, for in her hand
She held a woof that dimmed the burning brand.

This Lady never slept, but lay in trance
All night within the fountain--as in sleep.
Its emerald crags glowed in her beauty's glance:
Through the green splendour of the water deep
She saw the constellations reel and dance
Like fireflies--and withal did ever keep

The tenor of her contemplations calm,
With open eyes, closed feet, and folded palm.

And, when the whirlwinds and the clouds descended
From the white pinnacles of that cold hill,
She passed at dewfall to a space extended,
Where, in a lawn of flowering asphodel
Amid a wood of pines and cedars blended,
There yawned an inextinguishable well
Of crimson fire, full even to the brim,
And overflowing all the margin trim:--

Within the which she lay when the fierce war
Of wintry winds shook that innocuous liquor,
In many a mimic moon and bearded star,
O'er woods and lawns. The serpent heard it flicker
In sleep, and, dreaming still, he crept afar.
And, when the windless snow descended thicker
Than autumn-leaves, she watched it as it came
Melt on the surface of the level flame.

She had a boat which some say Vulcan wrought
For Venus, as the chariot of her star;
But it was found too feeble to be fraught
With all the ardours in that sphere which are,
And so she sold it, and Apollo bought
And gave it to this daughter: from a car,
Changed to the fairest and the lightest boat
Which ever upon mortal stream did float.

And others say that, when but three hours old,
The firstborn Love out of his cradle leapt,
And clove dun chaos with his wings of gold,
And, like a horticultural adept,
Stole a strange seed, and wrapped it up in mould,
And sowed it in his mother's star, and kept
Watering it all the summer with sweet dew,
And with his wings fanning it as it grew.

The plant grew strong and green--the snowy flower
Fell, and the long and gourd-like fruit began
To turn the light and dew by inward power

To its own substance: woven tracery ran
Of light firm texture, ribbed and branching, o'er
The solid rind, like a leaf's veined fan,--
Of which Love scooped this boat, and with soft motion
Piloted it round the circumfluous ocean.

This boat she moored upon her fount, and lit
A living spirit within all its frame,
Breathing the soul of swiftness into it.
Couched on the fountain--like a panther tame
(One of the twain at Evan's feet that sit,
Or as on Vesta's sceptre a swift flame,
Or on blind Homer's heart a winged thought--
In joyous expectation lay the boat.

Then by strange art she kneaded fire and snow
Together, tempering the repugnant mass
With liquid love--all things together grow
Through which the harmony of love can pass;
And a fair Shape out of her hands did flow--
A living image which did far surpass
In beauty that bright shape of vital stone
Which drew the heart out of Pygmalion.

A sexless thing it was, and in its growth
It seemed to have developed no defect
Of either sex, yet all the grace of both.
In gentleness and strength its limbs were decked;
The bosom lightly swelled with its full youth;
The countenance was such as might select
Some artist that his skill should never die,
Imaging forth such perfect purity.

From its smooth shoulders hung two rapid wings
Fit to have borne it to the seventh sphere,
Tipped with the speed of liquid lightnings,
Dyed in the ardours of the atmosphere.
She led her creature to the boiling springs
Where the light boat was moored, and said "Sit here,"
And pointed to the prow, and took her seat
Beside the rudder with opposing feet.

And down the streams which clove those mountains vast,
 Around their inland islets, and amid
The panther-peopled forests (whose shade cast
 Darkness and odors, and a pleasure hid
In melancholy gloom) the pinnace passed;
 By many a star-surrounded pyramid
Of icy crag cleaving the purple sky,
And caverns yawning round unfathomably.

The silver noon into that winding dell,
 With slanted gleam athwart the forest-tops,
Tempered like golden evening, feebly fell;
 A green and glowing light, like that which drops
From folded lilies in which glow-worms dwell
 When Earth over her face Night's mantle wraps;
Between the severed mountains lay on high,
Over the stream, a narrow rift of sky.

And, ever as she went, the Image lay
 With folded wings and unawakened eyes;
And o'er its gentle countenance did play
 The busy dreams, as thick as summer flies,
Chasing the rapid smiles that would not stay,
 And drinking the warm tears, and the sweet sighs
Inhaling, which with busy murmur vain
They has aroused from that full heart and brain.

And ever down the prone vale, like a cloud
 Upon a stream of wind, the pinnace went:
Now lingering on the pools, in which abode
 The calm and darkness of the deep content
In which they paused; now o'er the shallow road
 Of white and dancing waters, all besprent
With sand and polished pebbles:--mortal boat
In such a shallow rapid could not float.

And down the earthquaking cataracts, which shivcr
 Their snow-like waters into golden air,
Or under chasms unfathomable ever
 Sepulchre them, till in their rage they tear
A subterranean portal for the river,
 It fled. The circling sunbows did upbear

Its fall down the hoar precipice of spray,
Lighting it far upon its lampless way.

And, when the Wizard Lady would ascend
The labyrinths of some many-winding vale
Which to the inmost mountain upward tend,
She called "Hermaphroditus!"--and the pale
And heavy hue which slumber could extend
Over its lips and eyes, as on the gale
A rapid shadow from a slope of grass,
Into the darkness of the stream did pass

And it unfurled its heaven-coloured pinions;
With stars of fire spotting the stream below,
And from above into the Sun's dominions
Flinging a glory like the golden glow
In which Spring clothes her emerald-winged minions,
All interwoven with fine feathery snow,
And moonlight splendour of intensest rime
With which frost paints the pines in winter-time.

And then it winnowed the elysian air
Which ever hung about that Lady bright,
With its ethereal vans: and, speeding there,
Like a star up the torrent of the night,
Or a swift eagle in the morning glare
Breasting the whirlwind with impetuous flight,
The pinnacle, oared by those enchanted wings,
Clove the fierce streams towards their upper springs.

The water flashed,--like sunlight, by the prow
Of a noon-wandering meteor flung to heaven;
The still air seemed as if its waves did flow
In tempest down the mountains; loosely driven,
The Lady's radiant hair streamed to and fro;
Beneath, the billows, having vainly striven
Indignant and impetuous, roared to feel
The swift and steady motion of the keel.

Or, when the weary moon was in the wane,
Or in the noon of interlunar night,
The Lady Witch in visions could not chain

Her spirit; but sailed forth under the light
Of shooting stars, and bade extend amain
Its storm-outspeeding wings the Hermaphrodite;
She to the austral waters took her way,
Beyond the fabulous Thamondocana.

Where, like a meadow which no scythe has shaven,
Which rain could never bend or whirlblast shake,
With the antarctic constellations paven,
Canopus and his crew, lay the austral lake--
There she would build herself a windless haven
Out of the clouds whose moving turrets make
The bastions of the storm, when through the sky
The spirits of the tempest thundered by:--

A haven beneath whose translucent floor
The tremulous stars sparkled unfathomably;
And around which the solid vapours hoar,
Based on the level waters, to the sky
Lifted their dreadful crags, and, like a shore
Of wintry mountains, inaccessibly
Hemmed-in with rifts and precipices grey,
And hanging crags, many a cove and bay.

And, whilst the outer lake beneath the lash
Of the wind's scourge foamed like a wounded thing
And the incessant hail with stony clash
Ploughed up the waters, and the flagging wing
Of the roused cormorant in the lightningflash
Looked like the wreck of some wind-wandering
Fragment of inky thunder-smoke--this haven
Was as a gem to copy heaven engraven.

On which that Lady played her many pranks,
Circling the image of a shooting star
(Even as a tiger on Hydaspes' banks
Outspeeds the antelopes which speediest are)
In her light boat; and many quips and cranks
She played upon the water; till the car
Of the late moon, like a sick matron wan,
To journey from the misty east began.

And then she called out of the hollow turrets
Of those high clouds, white, golden, and vermilion,
The armies of her ministering spirits.
In mighty legions million after million
They came, each troop emblazoning its merits
On meteor flags; and many a proud pavilion
Of the intertexture of the atmosphere
They pitched upon the plain of the calm mere.

They framed the imperial tent of their great Queen
Of woven exhalations, underlaid
With lambent lightning-fire, as may be seen
A dome of thin and open ivory inlaid
With crimson silk. Cressets from the serene
Hung there, and on the water for her tread
A tapestry of fleece-like mist was strewn,
Dyed in the beams of the ascending moon.

And on a throne o'erlaid with starlight, caught
Upon those wandering isles of aery dew
Which highest shoals of mountain shipwreck not,
She sate, and heard all that had happened new
Between the earth and moon since they had brought
The last intelligence: and now she grew
Pale as that moon lost in the watery night,
And now she wept, and now she laughed outright.

These were tame pleasures.--She would often climb
The steepest ladder of the crudded rack
Up to some beaked cape of cloud sublime,
And like Arion on the dolphin's back
Ride singing through the shoreless air. Oft-time,
Following the serpent lightning's winding track,
She ran upon the platforms of the wind,
And laughed to hear the fireballs roar behind.

And sometimes to those streams of upper air
Which whirl the earth in its diurnal round
She would ascend, and win the Spirits there
To let her join their chorus. Mortals found
That on those days the sky was calm and fair,
And mystic snatches of harmonious sound

Wandered upon the earth where'er she passed,
And happy thoughts of hope, too sweet to last.

But her choice sport was, in the hours of sleep,
To glide adown old Nilus, where he threads
Egypt and Ethiopia from the steep
Of utmost Axume until he spreads,
Like a calm flock of silver-fleeced sheep,
His waters on the plain,--and crested heads
Of cities and proud temples gleam amid,
And many a vapour-belted pyramid:--

By Mīris and the Mareotid lakes,
Strewn with faint blooms like bridal-chamber floors,
Where naked boys bridling tame water-snakes,
Or charioteering ghastly alligators,
Had left on the sweet waters mighty wakes
Of those huge forms;--within the brazen doors
Of the Great Labyrinth slept both boy and beast,
Tired with the pomp of their Osirian feast.

And where within the surface of the river
The shadows of the massy temples lie,
And never are erased, but tremble ever
Like things which every cloud can doom to die,--
Through lotus-paven canals, and wheresoever
The works of man pierced that serenest sky
With tombs and towers and fanes,--'twas her delight
To wander in the shadow of the night.

With motion like the spirit of that wind
Whose soft step deepens slumber, her light feet
Passed through the peopled haunts of humankind,
Scattering sweet visions from her presence sweet,--
Through fane and palace-court, and labyrinth mined
With many a dark and subterranean street
Under the Nile; through chambers high and deep
She passed, observing mortals in their sleep.

A pleasure sweet doubtless it was to see
Mortals subdued in all the shapes of sleep.
Here lay two sister-twins in infancy;

There a lone youth who in his dreams did weep;
Within, two lovers linked innocently
In their loose locks which over both did creep
Like ivy from one stem; and there lay calm
Old age with snow-bright hair and folded palm.

But other troubled forms of sleep she saw,
Not to be mirrored in a holy song,--
Distortions foul of supernatural awe,
And pale imaginings of visioned wrong,
And all the code of Custom's lawless law
Written upon the brows of old and young.
"This," said the Wizard Maiden, "is the strife
Which stirs the liquid surface of man's life."

And little did the sight disturb her soul.
We, the weak mariners of that wide lake,
Where'er its shores extend or billows roll,
Our course unpiloted and starless make
O'er its wild surface to an unknown goal;
But she in the calm depths her way could take,
Where in bright bowers immortal forms abide
Beneath the weltering of the restless tide.

And she saw princes couched under the glow
Of sunlike gems; and round each temple-court
In dormitories ranged, row after row,
She saw the priests asleep,--all of one sort,
For all were educated to be so.
The peasants in their huts, and in the port
The sailors she saw cradled on the waves,
And the dead lulled within their dreamless graves.

And all the forms in which those spirits lay
Were to her sight like the diaphanous
Veils in which those sweet ladies oft array
Their delicate limbs who would conceal from us
Only their scorn of all concealment: they
Move in the light of their own beauty thus.
But these and all now lay with sleep upon them,
And little thought a Witch was looking on them.

She all those human figures breathing there
Beheld as living spirits. To her eyes
The naked beauty of the soul lay bare,
And often through a rude and worn disguise
She saw the inner form most bright and fair:
And then she had a charm of strange device,
Which, murmured on mute lips with tender tone,
Could make that spirit mingle with her own.

Alas! Aurora, what wouldst thou have given
For such a charm, when Tithon became grey--
Or how much, Venus, of thy silver heaven
Wouldst thou have yielded, ere Proserpina
Had half (oh why not all?) the debt forgiven
Which dear Adonis had been doomed to pay--
To any witch who would have taught you it
The Heliad doth not know its value yet.

'Tis said in after times her spirit free
Knew what love was, and felt itself alone.
But holy Dian could not chaster be
Before she stooped to kiss Endymion
Than now this Lady,--like a sexless bee,
Tasting all blossoms and confined to none:
Among those mortal forms the Wizard Maiden
Passed with an eye serene and heart unladen.

To those she saw most beautiful she gave
Strange panacea in a crystal bowl.
They drank in their deep sleep of that sweet wave,
And lived thenceforward as if some control,
Mightier than life, were in them; and the grave
Of such, when death oppressed the weary soul,
Was as a green and overarching bower
Lit by the gems of many a starry flower.

For, on the night when they were buried, she
Restored the embalmer's ruining, and shook
The light out of the funeral-lamps, to be
A mimic day within that deathly nook;
And she unwound the woven imagery
Of second childhood's swaddling-bands, and took

The coffin, its last cradle, from its niche,
And threw it with contempt into a ditch,

And there the body lay, age after age,
Mute, breathing, beating, warm, and undecaying,
Like one asleep in a green hermitage,--
With gentle smiles about its eyelids playing,
And living in its dreams beyond the rage
Of death or life; while they were still arraying
In liveries ever new the rapid, blind,
And fleeting generations of mankind.

And she would write strange dreams upon the brain
Of those who were less beautiful, and make
All harsh and crooked purposes more vain
Than in the desert is the serpent's wake
Which the sand covers. All his evil gain
The miser, in such dreams, would rise and shake
Into a beggar's lap; the lying scribe
Would his own lies betray without a bribe.

The priests would write an explanation full,
Translating hieroglyphics into Greek,
How the God Apis really was a bull,
And nothing more; and bid the herald stick
The same against the temple-doors, and pull
The old cant down: they licensed all to speak
Whate'er they thought of hawks and cats and geese,
By pastoral letters to each diocese.

The king would dress an ape up in his crown
And robes, and seat him on his glorious seat,
And on the right hand of the sunlike throne
Would place a gaudy mock-bird to repeat
The chatterings of the monkey. Every one
Of the prone courtiers crawled to kiss the feet
Of their great emperor when the morning came;
And kissed--alas, how many kiss the same!

The soldiers dreamed that they were blacksmiths, and
Walked out of quarters in somnambulism;
Round the red anvils you might see them stand

Like Cyclopes in Vulcan's sooty abysm,
Beating their swords to ploughshares:--in a band
The jailors sent those of the liberal schism
Free through the streets of Memphis--much, I wis,
To the annoyance of king Amasis.

And timid lovers, who had been so coy
They hardly knew whether they loved or not,
Would rise out of their rest, and take sweet joy,
To the fulfilment of their inmost thought;
And, when next day the maiden and the boy
Met one another, both, like sinners caught,
Blushed at the thing which each believed was done
Only in fancy--till the tenth moon shone;

And then the Witch would let them take no ill;
Of many thousand schemes which lovers find,
The Witch found one,--and so they took their fill
Of happiness in marriage warm and kind.
Friends who, by practice of some envious skill,
Were torn apart (a wide wound, mind from mind)
She did unite again with visions clear
Of deep affection and of truth sincere.

These were the pranks she played among the cities
Of mortal men. And what she did to Sprites
And Gods, entangling them in her sweet ditties,
To do her will, and show their subtle sleights,
I will declare another time; for it is
A tale more fit for the weird winter-nights
Than for these garish summer-days, when we
Scarcely believe much more than we can see.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Woodman And The Nightingale

A woodman whose rough heart was out of tune
(I think such hearts yet never came to good)
Hated to hear, under the stars or moon,

One nightingale in an interfluous wood
Satiated the hungry dark with melody;--
And as a vale is watered by a flood,

Or as the moonlight fills the open sky
Struggling with darkness—as a tuberose
Peopled some Indian dell with scents which lie

Like clouds above the flower from which they rose,
The singing of that happy nightingale
In this sweet forest, from the golden close

Of evening till the star of dawn may fail,
Was interfused upon the silentness;
The folded roses and the violets pale

Heard her within their slumbers, the abyss
Of heaven with all its planets; the dull ear
Of the night-cradled earth; the loneliness

Of the circumfluous waters,—every sphere
And every flower and beam and cloud and wave,
And every wind of the mute atmosphere,

And every beast stretched in its rugged cave,
And every bird lulled on its mossy bough,
And every silver moth fresh from the grave

Which is its cradle—ever from below
Aspiring like one who loves too fair, too far,
To be consumed within the purest glow

Of one serene and unapproached star,
As if it were a lamp of earthly light,
Unconscious, as some human lovers are,

Itself how low, how high beyond all height
The heaven where it would perish!—and every form
That worshipped in the temple of the night

Was awed into delight, and by the charm
Girt as with an interminable zone,
Whilst that sweet bird, whose music was a storm

Of sound, shook forth the dull oblivion
Out of their dreams; harmony became love
In every soul but one.

...

And so this man returned with axe and saw
At evening close from killing the tall tree,
The soul of whom by Nature's gentle law

Was each a wood-nymph, and kept ever green
The pavement and the roof of the wild copse,
Chequering the sunlight of the blue serene

With jagged leaves,—and from the forest tops
Singing the winds to sleep—or weeping oft
Fast showers of aerial water-drops

Into their mother's bosom, sweet and soft,
Nature's pure tears which have no bitterness;--
Around the cradles of the birds aloft

They spread themselves into the loveliness
Of fan-like leaves, and over pallid flowers
Hang like moist clouds:—or, where high branches kiss,

Make a green space among the silent bowers,
Like a vast fane in a metropolis,
Surrounded by the columns and the towers

All overwrought with branch-like traceries
In which there is religion—and the mute
Persuasion of unkindled melodies,

Odours and gleams and murmurs, which the lute
Of the blind pilot-spirit of the blast
Stirs as it sails, now grave and now acute,

Wakening the leaves and waves, ere it has passed
To such brief unison as on the brain
One tone, which never can recur, has cast,
One accent never to return again.

...

The world is full of Woodmen who expel
Love's gentle Dryads from the haunts of life,
And vex the nightingales in every dell.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The World's Wanderers

I.

Tell me, thou Star, whose wings of light
Speed thee in thy fiery flight,
In what cavern of the night
Will thy pinions close now?

II.

Tell me, Moon, thou pale and gray
Pilgrim of Heaven's homeless way,
In what depth of night or day
Seekest thou repose now?

III.

Weary Wind, who wanderest
Like the world's rejected guest,
Hast thou still some secret nest
On the tree or billow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

The Zucca

I.

Summer was dead and Autumn was expiring,
And infant Winter laughed upon the land
All cloudlessly and cold;--when I, desiring
More in this world than any understand,
Wept o'er the beauty, which, like sea retiring,
Had left the earth bare as the wave-worn sand
Of my lorn heart, and o'er the grass and flowers
Pale for the falsehood of the flattering Hours.

II.

Summer was dead, but I yet lived to weep
The instability of all but weeping;
And on the Earth lulled in her winter sleep
I woke, and envied her as she was sleeping.
Too happy Earth! over thy face shall creep
The wakening vernal airs, until thou, leaping
From unremembered dreams, shalt ... see
No death divide thy immortality.

III.

I loved--oh, no, I mean not one of ye,
Or any earthly one, though ye are dear
As human heart to human heart may be;--
I loved, I know not what--but this low sphere
And all that it contains, contains not thee,
Thou, whom, seen nowhere, I feel everywhere.
From Heaven and Earth, and all that in them are,
Veiled art thou, like a ... star.

IV.

By Heaven and Earth, from all whose shapes thou flowest,
Neither to be contained, delayed, nor hidden;
Making divine the loftiest and the lowest,
When for a moment thou art not forbidden
To live within the life which thou bestowest;
And leaving noblest things vacant and chidden,
Cold as a corpse after the spirit's flight
Blank as the sun after the birth of night.

V.

In winds, and trees, and streams, and all things common,
In music and the sweet unconscious tone
Of animals, and voices which are human,
Meant to express some feelings of their own;
In the soft motions and rare smile of woman,
In flowers and leaves, and in the grass fresh-shown,
Or dying in the autumn, I the most
Adore thee present or lament thee lost.

VI.

And thus I went lamenting, when I saw
A plant upon the river's margin lie
Like one who loved beyond his nature's law,
And in despair had cast him down to die;
Its leaves, which had outlived the frost, the thaw
Had blighted; like a heart which hatred's eye
Can blast not, but which pity kills; the dew
Lay on its spotted leaves like tears too true.

VII.

The Heavens had wept upon it, but the Earth
Had crushed it on her maternal breast

...

VIII.

I bore it to my chamber, and I planted
It in a vase full of the lightest mould;
The winter beams which out of Heaven slanted
Fell through the window-panes, disrobed of cold,
Upon its leaves and flowers; the stars which panted
In evening for the Day, whose car has rolled
Over the horizon's wave, with looks of light
Smiled on it from the threshold of the night.

IX.

The mitigated influences of air
And light revived the plant, and from it grew
Strong leaves and tendrils, and its flowers fair,
Full as a cup with the vine's burning dew,

O'erflowed with golden colours; an atmosphere
Of vital warmth enfolded it anew,
And every impulse sent to every part
The unbeheld pulsations of its heart.

X.

Well might the plant grow beautiful and strong,
Even if the air and sun had smiled not on it;
For one wept o'er it all the winter long
Tears pure as Heaven's rain, which fell upon it
Hour after hour; for sounds of softest song
Mixed with the stringed melodies that won it
To leave the gentle lips on which it slept,
Had loosed the heart of him who sat and wept.

XI.

Had loosed his heart, and shook the leaves and flowers 75
On which he wept, the while the savage storm
Waked by the darkest of December's hours
Was raving round the chamber hushed and warm;
The birds were shivering in their leafless bowers,
The fish were frozen in the pools, the form
Of every summer plant was dead
Whilst this....

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Time

Unfathomable Sea! whose waves are years,
Ocean of Time, whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears!
Thou shoreless flood, which in thy ebb and flow
Claspest the limits of mortality,
And sick of prey, yet howling on for more,
Vomitest thy wrecks on its inhospitable shore;
Traucherous in calm, and terrible in storm,
Who shall put forth on thee,
Unfathomable Sea?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Time Long Past

Like the ghost of a dear friend dead
Is Time long past.
A tone which is now forever fled,
A hope which is now forever past,
A love so sweet it could not last,
Was Time long past.

There were sweet dreams in the night
Of Time long past:
And, was it sadness or delight,
Each day a shadow onward cast
Which made us wish it yet might last--
That Time long past.

There is regret, almost remorse,
For Time long past.
'Tis like a child's beloved corse
A father watches, till at last
Beauty is like remembrance, cast
From Time long past.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To A Skylark

Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!
 Bird thou never wert,
 That from Heaven, or near it,
 Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

 Higher still and higher
 From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire;
 The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

 In the golden lightning
 Of the sunken sun
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
 Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

 The pale purple even
 Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of Heaven
 In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight:

 Keen as are the arrows
 Of that silver sphere,
Whose intense lamp narrows
 In the white dawn clear
Until we hardly see--we feel that it is there.

 All the earth and air
 With thy voice is loud.
As, when night is bare,
 From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

 What thou art we know not;
 What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not

Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love, which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass, which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-winged thieves.

Sound of vernal showers
On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
All that ever was
Joyous, and clear, and fresh, thy music doth surpass.

Teach us, sprite or bird,
What sweet thoughts are thine:
I have never heard
Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal
Or triumphal chaunt
Matched with thine, would be all

But an empty vaunt--
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
Languor cannot be:
Shadow of annoyance
Never came near thee:
Thou lovest, but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet if we could scorn
Hate, and pride, and fear;
If we were things born
Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near.

Better than all measures
Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness

From my lips would flow
The world should listen then, as I am listening now!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To A Star

Sweet star, which gleaming o'er the darksome scene
Through fleecy clouds of silvery radiance fliest,
Spanglet of light on evening's shadowy veil,
Which shrouds the day-beam from the waveless lake,
Lighting the hour of sacred love; more sweet
Than the expiring morn-star's paly fires:--
Sweet star! When wearied Nature sinks to sleep,
And all is hushed,--all, save the voice of Love,
Whose broken murmurings swell the balmy blast
Of soft Favonius, which at intervals
Sighs in the ear of stillness, art thou aught but
Lulling the slaves of interest to repose
With that mild, pitying gaze? Oh, I would look
In thy dear beam till every bond of sense
Became enamoured--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Coleridge

Oh! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees:
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou dost hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee, but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth: tame sacrifice
To a fond faith ! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,
Dream not to chase: the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.

Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Constantia

I.

The rose that drinks the fountain dew
In the pleasant air of noon,
Grows pale and blue with altered hue—
In the gaze of the nightly moon;
For the planet of frost, so cold and bright
Makes it wan with her borrowed light.

II.

Such is my heart—roses are fair,
And that at best a withered blossom;
But thy false care did idly wear
Its withered leaves in a faithless bosom;
And fed with love, like air and dew,
Its growth----

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Constantia, Singing

I.

Thus to be lost and thus to sink and die,
Perchance were death indeed!—Constantia, turn!
In thy dark eyes a power like light doth lie,
Even though the sounds which were thy voice, which burn
Between thy lips, are laid to sleep;
Within thy breath, and on thy hair, like odour, it is yet,
And from thy touch like fire doth leap.
Even while I write, my burning cheeks are wet.
Alas, that the torn heart can bleed, but not forget!

II.

A breathless awe, like the swift change
Unseen, but felt in youthful slumbers,
Wild, sweet, but uncommunicably strange,
Thou breathest now in fast ascending numbers.
The cope of heaven seems rent and cloven
By the enchantment of thy strain,
And on my shoulders wings are woven,
To follow its sublime career
Beyond the mighty moons that wane
Upon the verge of Nature's utmost sphere,
Till the world's shadowy walls are past and disappear.

III.

Her voice is hovering o'er my soul—it lingers
O'ershadowing it with soft and lulling wings,
The blood and life within those snowy fingers
Teach witchcraft to the instrumental strings.
My brain is wild, my breath comes quick--
The blood is listening in my frame,
And thronging shadows, fast and thick,
Fall on my overflowing eyes;
My heart is quivering like a flame;
As morning dew, that in the sunbeam dies,
I am dissolved in these consuming ecstasies.

IV.

I have no life, Constantia, now, but thee,

Whilst, like the world-surrounding air, thy song
Flows on, and fills all things with melody.--
Now is thy voice a tempest swift and strong,
On which, like one in trance upborne,
Secure o'er rocks and waves I sweep,
Rejoicing like a cloud of morn.
Now 'tis the breath of summer night,
Which when the starry waters sleep,
Round western isles, with incense-blossoms bright,
Lingering, suspends my soul in its voluptuous flight.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Death

Death! where is thy victory?
To triumph whilst I die,
To triumph whilst thine ebon wing
Enfolds my shuddering soul?
O Death! where is thy sting?
Not when the tides of murder roll,
When nations groan, that kings may bask in bliss,
Death! canst thou boast a victory such as this--
When in his hour of pomp and power
His blow the mightiest murderer gave,
Mid Nature's cries the sacrifice
Of millions to glut the grave;
When sunk the Tyrant Desolation's slave;
Or Freedom's life-blood streamed upon thy shrine;
Stern Tyrant, couldst thou boast a victory such as mine?

To know in dissolution's void
That mortals' baubles sunk decay;
That everything, but Love, destroyed
Must perish with its kindred clay,--
Perish Ambition's crown,
Perish her sceptred sway:
From Death's pale front fades Pride's fastidious frown.
In Death's damp vault the lurid fires decay,
That Envy lights at heaven-born Virtue's beam--
That all the cares subside,
Which lurk beneath the tide
Of life's unquiet stream;--
Yes! this is victory!
And on yon rock, whose dark form glooms the sky,
To stretch these pale limbs, when the soul is fled;
To baffle the lean passions of their prey,
To sleep within the palace of the dead!
Oh! not the King, around whose dazzling throne
His countless courtiers mock the words they say,
Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown,
As I in this cold bed, and faint expiring groan!

Tremble, ye proud, whose grandeur mocks the woe

Which props the column of unnatural state!
You the plainings, faint and low,
From Misery's tortured soul that flow,
Shall usher to your fate.

Tremble, ye conquerors, at whose fell command
The war-fiend riots o'er a peaceful land!
You Desolation's gory throng
Shall bear from Victory along
To that mysterious strand.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Edward Williams

I.

The serpent is shut out from Paradise.
The wounded deer must seek the herb no more
In which its heart-cure lies:
The widowed dove must cease to haunt a bower
Like that from which its mate with feigned sighs
Fled in the April hour.
I too must seldom seek again
Near happy friends a mitigated pain.

II.

Of hatred I am proud,--with scorn content;
Indifference, that once hurt me, now is grown
Itself indifferent;
But, not to speak of love, pity alone
Can break a spirit already more than bent.
The miserable one
Turns the mind's poison into food,--
Its medicine is tears,--its evil good.

III.

Therefore, if now I see you seldomer,
Dear friends, dear FRIEND! know that I only fly
Your looks, because they stir
Griefs that should sleep, and hopes that cannot die:
The very comfort that they minister
I scarce can bear, yet I,
So deeply is the arrow gone,
Should quickly perish if it were withdrawn.

IV.

When I return to my cold home, you ask
Why I am not as I have ever been.
YOU spoil me for the task
Of acting a forced part in life's dull scene,--
Of wearing on my brow the idle mask
Of author, great or mean,
In the world's carnival. I sought
Peace thus, and but in you I found it not.

V.

Full half an hour, to-day, I tried my lot
With various flowers, and every one still said,
'She loves me--loves me not.'
And if this meant a vision long since fled--
If it meant fortune, fame, or peace of thought--
If it meant,--but I dread
To speak what you may know too well:
Still there was truth in the sad oracle.

VI.

The crane o'er seas and forests seeks her home;
No bird so wild but has its quiet nest,
When it no more would roam;
The sleepless billows on the ocean's breast
Break like a bursting heart, and die in foam,
And thus at length find rest:
Doubtless there is a place of peace
Where MY weak heart and all its throbs will cease.

VII.

I asked her, yesterday, if she believed
That I had resolution. One who HAD
Would ne'er have thus relieved
His heart with words,—but what his judgement bade
Would do, and leave the scorner unrelieved.
These verses are too sad
To send to you, but that I know,
Happy yourself, you feel another's woe.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Emilia Viviani

I.

Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me
Sweet-basil and mignonette?
Embleming love and health, which never yet
In the same wreath might be.
Alas, and they are wet!
Is it with thy kisses or thy tears?
For never rain or dew
Such fragrance drew
From plant or flower—the very doubt endears
My sadness ever new,
The sighs I breathe, the tears I shed for thee.

II.

Send the stars light, but send not love to me,
In whom love ever made
Health like a heap of embers soon to fade--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Harriet

Thy look of love has power to calm
The stormiest passion of my soul;
Thy gentle words are drops of balm
In life's too bitter bowl;
No grief is mine, but that alone
These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriet! if all who long to live
In the warm sunshine of thine eye,
That price beyond all pain must give,-
Beneath thy scorn to die;
Then hear thy chosen own too late
His heart most worthy of thy hate.

Be thou, then, one among mankind
Whose heart is harder not for state,
Thou only virtuous, gentle, kind,
Amid a world of hate;
And by a slight endurance seal
A fellow-being's lasting weal.

For pale with anguish is his cheek,
His breath comes fast, his eyes are dim,
Thy name is struggling ere he speak,
Weak is each trembling limb;
In mercy let him not endure
The misery of a fatal cure.

Oh, trust for once no erring guide!
Bid the remorseless feeling flee;
'Tis malice, 'tis revenge, 'tis pride,
'Tis anything but thee;
Oh, deign a nobler pride to prove,
And pity if thou canst not love.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Harriet -- It Is Not Blasphemy To Hope That Heaven

It is not blasphemy to hope that Heaven
More perfectly will give those nameless joys
Which throb within the pulses of the blood
And sweeten all that bitterness which Earth
Infuses in the heaven-born soul. O thou
Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path
Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,
Yet swiftly leading to those awful limits
Which mark the bounds of Time and of the space
When Time shall be no more; wilt thou not turn
Those spirit-beaming eyes and look on me,
Until I be assured that Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven is Earth?--will not thy glowing cheek,
Glowing with soft suffusion, rest on mine,
And breathe magnetic sweetness through the frame
Of my corporeal nature, through the soul
Now knit with these fine fibres? I would give
The longest and the happiest day that fate
Has marked on my existence but to feel
ONE soul-reviving kiss...O thou most dear,
'Tis an assurance that this Earth is Heaven,
And Heaven the flower of that untainted seed
Which springeth here beneath such love as ours.
Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve,
But ours shall not be mortal! The cold hand
Of Time may chill the love of earthly minds
Half frozen now; the frigid intercourse
Of common souls lives but a summer's day;
It dies, where it arose, upon this earth.
But ours! oh, 'tis the stretch of Fancy's hope
To portray its continuance as now,
Warm, tranquil, spirit-healing; nor when age
Has tempered these wild ecstasies, and given
A soberer tinge to the luxurious glow
Which blazing on devotion's pinnacle
Makes virtuous passion supersede the power
Of reason; nor when life's aestival sun

To deeper manhood shall have ripened me;
Nor when some years have added judgement's store
To all thy woman sweetness, all the fire
Which throbs in thine enthusiast heart; not then
Shall holy friendship (for what other name
May love like ours assume?), not even then
Shall Custom so corrupt, or the cold forms
Of this desolate world so harden us,
As when we think of the dear love that binds
Our souls in soft communion, while we know
Each other's thoughts and feelings, can we say
Unblushingly a heartless compliment,
Praise, hate, or love with the unthinking world,
Or dare to cut the unrelaxing nerve
That knits our love to virtue. Can those eyes,
Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart
To purify its purity, e'er bend
To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears?
Never, thou second Self! Is confidence
So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt
The mirror even of Truth? Dark flood of Time,
Roll as it listeth thee; I measure not
By month or moments thy ambiguous course.
Another may stand by me on thy brink,
And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken,
Which pauses at my feet. The sense of love,
The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought
Prolong my being; if I wake no more,
My life more actual living will contain
Than some gray veteran's of the world's cold school,
Whose listless hours unprofitably roll
By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed,
Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude,
Freedom, Devotedness and Purity!
That life my Spirit consecrates to you.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To-- I Fear Thy Kisses, Gentle Maiden

I.

I fear thy kisses, gentle maiden,
Thou needest not fear mine;
My spirit is too deeply laden
Ever to burthen thine.

II.

I fear thy mien, thy tones, thy motion,
Thou needest not fear mine;
Innocent is the heart's devotion
With which I worship thine.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Ianthe

I love thee, Baby! for thine own sweet sake;
Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,
Thy tender frame, so eloquently weak,
Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;
But more when o'er thy fitful slumber bending
Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,
Whilst love and pity, in her glances blending,
All that thy passive eyes can feel impart:
More, when some feeble lineaments of her,
Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom,
As with deep love I read thy face, recur,--
More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom;
Dearest when most thy tender traits express
The image of thy mother's loveliness.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Ireland

I.

Bear witness, Erin! when thine injured isle
Sees summer on its verdant pastures smile,
Its cornfields waving in the winds that sweep
The billowy surface of thy circling deep!
Thou tree whose shadow o'er the Atlantic gave
Peace, wealth and beauty, to its friendly wave, its blossoms fade,
And blighted are the leaves that cast its shade;
Whilst the cold hand gathers its scanty fruit,
Whose chillness struck a canker to its root.

II.

I could stand
Upon thy shores, O Erin, and could count
The billows that, in their unceasing swell,
Dash on thy beach, and every wave might seem
An instrument in Time the giant's grasp,
To burst the barriers of Eternity.
Proceed, thou giant, conquering and to conquer;
March on thy lonely way! The nations fall
Beneath thy noiseless footstep; pyramids
That for millenniums have defied the blast,
And laughed at lightnings, thou dost crush to nought.
Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
Is but the fungus of a winter day
That thy light footstep presses into dust.
Thou art a conqueror, Time; all things give way
Before thee but the 'fixed and virtuous will';
The sacred sympathy of soul which was
When thou wert not, which shall be when thou perishest.

...

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Italy

As the sunrise to the night,
As the north wind to the clouds,
As the earthquake's fiery flight,
Ruining mountain solitudes,
Everlasting Italy,
Be those hopes and fears on thee.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Jane: The Keen Stars Were Twinkling

I.

The keen stars were twinkling,
And the fair moon was rising among them,
Dear Jane.
The guitar was tinkling,
But the notes were not sweet till you sung them
Again.

II.

As the moon's soft splendour
O'er the faint cold starlight of Heaven
Is thrown,
So your voice most tender
To the strings without soul had then given
Its own.

III.

The stars will awaken,
Though the moon sleep a full hour later
To-night;
No leaf will be shaken
Whilst the dews of your melody scatter
Delight.

IV.

Though the sound overpowers,
Sing again, with your dear voice revealing
A tone
Of some world far from ours,
Where music and moonlight and feeling
Are one.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Jane: The Recollection

I.

Now the last day of many days,
All beautiful and bright as thou,
The loveliest and the last, is dead,
Rise, Memory, and write its praise!
Up,--to thy wonted work! come, trace
The epitaph of glory fled,--
For now the Earth has changed its face,
A frown is on the Heaven's brow.

II.

We wandered to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam,
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep,
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
The smile of Heaven lay;
It seemed as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies,
Which scattered from above the sun
A light of Paradise.

III.

We paused amid the pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude
As serpents interlaced;
And, soothed by every azure breath,
That under Heaven is blown,
To harmonies and hues beneath,
As tender as its own,
Now all the tree-tops lay asleep,
Like green waves on the sea,
As still as in the silent deep
The ocean woods may be.

IV.

How calm it was!—the silence there
By such a chain was bound
That even the busy woodpecker
Made stiller by her sound
The inviolable quietness;
The breath of peace we drew
With its soft motion made not less
The calm that round us grew.
There seemed from the remotest seat
Of the white mountain waste,
To the soft flower beneath our feet,
A magic circle traced,--
A spirit interfused around
A thrilling, silent life,--
To momentary peace it bound
Our mortal nature's strife;
And still I felt the centre of
The magic circle there
Was one fair form that filled with love
The lifeless atmosphere.

V.

We paused beside the pools that lie
Under the forest bough,--
Each seemed as 'twere a little sky
Gulfed in a world below;
A firmament of purple light
Which in the dark earth lay,
More boundless than the depth of night,
And purer than the day--
In which the lovely forests grew,
As in the upper air,
More perfect both in shape and hue
Than any spreading there.
There lay the glade and neighbouring lawn,
And through the dark green wood
The white sun twinkling like the dawn
Out of a speckled cloud.
Sweet views which in our world above
Can never well be seen,
Were imaged by the water's love
Of that fair forest green.

And all was interfused beneath
With an Elysian glow,
An atmosphere without a breath,
A softer day below.
Like one beloved the scene had lent
To the dark water's breast,
Its every leaf and lineament
With more than truth expressed;
Until an envious wind crept by,
Like an unwelcome thought,
Which from the mind's too faithful eye
Blots one dear image out.
Though thou art ever fair and kind,
The forests ever green,
Less oft is peace in Shelley's mind,
Than calm in waters, seen.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Mary

I.

How, my dear Mary, -- are you critic-bitten
(For vipers kill, though dead) by some review,
That you condemn these verses I have written,
Because they tell no story, false or true?
What, though no mice are caught by a young kitten,
May it not leap and play as grown cats do,
Till its claws come? Prithee, for this one time,
Content thee with a visionary rhyme.

II.

What hand would crush the silken-wingèd fly,
The youngest of inconstant April's minions,
Because it cannot climb the purest sky,
Where the swan sings, amid the sun's dominions?
Not thine. Thou knowest 'tis its doom to die,
When Day shall hide within her twilight pinions
The lucent eyes, and the eternal smile,
Serene as thine, which lent it life awhile.

III.

To thy fair feet a wingèd Vision came,
Whose date should have been longer than a day,
And o'er thy head did beat its wings for fame,
And in thy sight its fading plumes display;
The watery bow burned in the evening flame,
But the shower fell, the swift Sun went his way-
And that is dead.-O, let me not believe
That anything of mine is fit to live!

IV.

Wordsworth informs us he was nineteen years
Considering and retouching Peter Bell;
Watering his laurels with the killing tears
Of slow, dull care, so that their roots to Hell
Might pierce, and their wide branches blot the spheres
Of Heaven, with dewy leaves and flowers; this well
May be, for Heaven and Earth conspire to foil
The over-busy gardener's blundering toil.

V.

My Witch indeed is not so sweet a creature
As Ruth or Lucy, whom his graceful praise
Clothes for our grandsons-but she matches Peter,
Though he took nineteen years, and she three days
In dressing. Light the vest of flowing metre
She wears; he, proud as dandy with his stays,
Has hung upon his wiry limbs a dress
Like King Lear's 'looped and windowed raggedness.'

VI.

If you strip Peter, you will see a fellow
Scorched by Hell's hyperequatorial climate
Into a kind of a sulphureous yellow:
A lean mark, hardly fit to fling a rhyme at;
In shape a Scaramouch, in hue Othello.
If you unveil my Witch, no priest nor primate
Can shrive you of that sin, -- if sin there be
In love, when it becomes idolatry.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Mary -----

O Mary dear, that you were here
With your brown eyes bright and clear.
And your sweet voice, like a bird
Singing love to its lone mate
In the ivy bower disconsolate;
Voice the sweetest ever heard!
And your brow more...
Than the sky
Of this azure Italy.
Mary dear, come to me soon,
I am not well whilst thou art far;
As sunset to the sphered moon,
As twilight to the western star,
Thou, beloved, art to me.

O Mary dear, that you were here;
The Castle echo whispers 'Here!'

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Mary Shelley

THE world is dreary,
And I'm weary
Of wandering on without thee, Mary;
A joy was erewhile
In thy voice and thy smile,
And 'tis gone, when I should be gone too, Mary.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Mary Who Died In This Opinion

I.

Maiden, quench the glare of sorrow
Struggling in thine haggard eye:
Firmness dare to borrow
From the wreck of destiny;
For the ray morn's bloom revealing
Can never boast so bright an hue
As that which mocks concealing,
And sheds its loveliest light on you.

II.

Yet is the tie departed
Which bound thy lovely soul to bliss?
Has it left thee broken-hearted
In a world so cold as this?
Yet, though, fainting fair one,
Sorrow's self thy cup has given,
Dream thou'lt meet thy dear one,
Never more to part, in Heaven.

III.

Existence would I barter
For a dream so dear as thine,
And smile to die a martyr
On affection's bloodless shrine.
Nor would I change for pleasure
That withered hand and ashy cheek,
If my heart enshrined a treasure
Such as forces thine to break.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin

I.

Mine eyes were dim with tears unshed;
Yes, I was firm -- thus wert not thou;--
My baffled looks did fear yet dread
To meet thy looks -- I could not know
How anxiously they sought to shine
With soothing pity upon mine.

II.

To sit and curb the soul's mute rage
Which preys upon itself alone;
To curse the life which is the cage
Of fettered grief that dares not groan,
Hiding from many a careless eye
The scornèd load of agony.

III.

Whilst thou alone, then not regarded,
The thou alone should be,
To spend years thus, and be rewarded,
As thou, sweet love, requited me
When none were near -- Oh! I did wake
From torture for that moment's sake.

IV.

Upon my heart thy accents sweet
Of peace and pity fell like dew
On flowers half dead;-- thy lips did meet
Mine tremblingly; thy dark eyes threw
Their soft persuasion on my brain,
Charming away its dream of pain.

V.

We are not happy, sweet! our state
Is strange and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate;--
Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, lest there be
No solace left for thee and me.

VI.

Gentle and good and mild thou art,
Nor can I live if thou appear
Aught but thyself, or turn thine heart
Away from me, or stoop to wear
The mask of scorn, although it be
To hide the love thou feel'st for me.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Night

Swiftly walk o'er the western wave,
 Spirit of Night!
Out of the misty eastern cave,
Where, all the long and lone daylight,
Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear,
Which make thee terrible and dear--
 Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray,
 Star-inwrought!
Blind with thine hair the eyes of day;
Kiss her until she be wearied out,
Then wander o'er city, and sea, and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand--
 Come, long-sought!

When I arose and saw the dawn,
 I sighed for thee;
When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary day turned to his rest,
Lingering like an unloved guest,
 I sighed for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried,
 Wouldst thou me?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmured like a noontide bee,
Shall I nestle near thy side?
Wouldst thou me?--And I replied,
 No, not thee!

Death will come when thou art dead,
 Soon, too soon--
Sleep will come when thou art fled;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night--
Swift be thine approaching flight,
 Come soon, soon!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To-- Oh! There Are Spirits Of The Air

Dakrysi Dioisw Potmon Apotmon

Oh! there are spirits of the air,
And genii of the evening breeze,
And gentle ghosts, with eyes as fair
As star-beams among twilight trees:—
Such lovely ministers to meet
Oft hast thou turned from men thy lonely feet.

With mountain winds, and babbling springs,
And moonlight seas, that are the voice
Of these inexplicable things,
Thou didst hold commune, and rejoice
When they did answer thee; but they
Cast, like a worthless boon, thy love away.

And thou hast sought in starry eyes
Beams that were never meant for thine,
Another's wealth:—tame sacrifice
To a fond faith! still dost thou pine?
Still dost thou hope that greeting hands,
Voice, looks, or lips, may answer thy demands?

Ah! wherefore didst thou build thine hope
On the false earth's inconstancy?
Did thine own mind afford no scope
Of love, or moving thoughts to thee?
That natural scenes or human smiles
Could steal the power to wind thee in their wiles?

Yes, all the faithless smiles are fled
Whose falsehood left thee broken-hearted;
The glory of the moon is dead;
Night's ghosts and dreams have now departed;
Thine own soul still is true to thee,
But changed to a foul fiend through misery.

This fiend, whose ghastly presence ever
Beside thee like thy shadow hangs,

Dream not to chase;—the mad endeavour
Would scourge thee to severer pangs.
Be as thou art. Thy settled fate,
Dark as it is, all change would aggravate.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To-- One Word Is Too Often Profaned

I.

One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,
One feeling too falsely disdained
For thee to disdain it;
One hope is too like despair
For prudence to smother,
And pity from thee more dear
Than that from another.

II.

I can give not what men call love,
But wilt thou accept not
The worship the heart lifts above
And the Heavens reject not,--
The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow,
The devotion to something afar
From the sphere of our sorrow?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Sophia (Miss Stacey)

I.

Thou art fair, and few are fairer
Of the Nymphs of earth or ocean;
They are robes that fit the wearer--
Those soft limbs of thine, whose motion
Ever falls and shifts and glances
As the life within them dances.

II.

Thy deep eyes, a double Planet,
Gaze the wisest into madness
With soft clear fire,--the winds that fan it
Are those thoughts of tender gladness
Which, like zephyrs on the billow,
Make thy gentle soul their pillow.

III.

If, whatever face thou paintest
In those eyes, grows pale with pleasure,
If the fainting soul is faintest
When it hears thy harp's wild measure,
Wonder not that when thou speakest
Of the weak my heart is weakest.

IV.

As dew beneath the wind of morning,
As the sea which whirlwinds waken,
As the birds at thunder's warning,
As aught mute yet deeply shaken,
As one who feels an unseen spirit
Is my heart when thine is near it.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Lord Chancellor

I.

Thy country's curse is on thee, darkest crest
Of that foul, knotted, many-headed worm
Which rends our Mother's bosom—Priestly Pest!
Masked Resurrection of a buried Form!

II.

Thy country's curse is on thee! Justice sold,
Truth trampled, Nature's landmarks overthrown,
And heaps of fraud-accumulated gold,
Plead, loud as thunder, at Destruction's throne.

III.

And whilst that sure slow Angel which aye stands
Watching the beck of Mutability
Delays to execute her high commands,
And, though a nation weeps, spares thine and thee,

IV.

Oh, let a father's curse be on thy soul,
And let a daughter's hope be on thy tomb;
Be both, on thy gray head, a leaden cowl
To weigh thee down to thine approaching doom.

V.

I curse thee by a parent's outraged love,
By hopes long cherished and too lately lost,
By gentle feelings thou couldst never prove,
By griefs which thy stern nature never crossed;

VI.

By those infantine smiles of happy light,
Which were a fire within a stranger's hearth,
Quenched even when kindled, in untimely night
Hiding the promise of a lovely birth:

VII.

By those unpractised accents of young speech,
Which he who is a father thought to frame

To gentlest lore, such as the wisest teach--
THOU strike the lyre of mind!--oh, grief and shame!

VIII.

By all the happy see in children's growth--
That undeveloped flower of budding years--
Sweetness and sadness interwoven both,
Source of the sweetest hopes and saddest fears--

IX.

By all the days, under an hireling's care,
Of dull constraint and bitter heaviness,--
O wretched ye if ever any were,--
Sadder than orphans, yet not fatherless!

X.

By the false cant which on their innocent lips
Must hang like poison on an opening bloom,
By the dark creeds which cover with eclipse
Their pathway from the cradle to the tomb--

XI.

By thy most impious Hell, and all its terror;
By all the grief, the madness, and the guilt
Of thine impostures, which must be their error--
That sand on which thy crumbling power is built--

XII.

By thy complicity with lust and hate--
Thy thirst for tears—thy hunger after gold--
The ready frauds which ever on thee wait--
The servile arts in which thou hast grown old--

XIII.

By thy most killing sneer, and by thy smile--
By all the arts and snares of thy black den,
And—for thou canst outweep the crocodile--
By thy false tears—those millstones braining men--

XIV.

By all the hate which checks a father's love--
By all the scorn which kills a father's care--

By those most impious hands which dared remove
Nature's high bounds--by thee--and by despair--

XV.

Yes, the despair which bids a father groan,
And cry, 'My children are no longer mine--
The blood within those veins may be mine own,
But--Tyrant--their polluted souls are thine;— 60

XVI.

I curse thee--though I hate thee not.--O slave!
If thou couldst quench the earth-consuming Hell
Of which thou art a daemon, on thy grave
This curse should be a blessing. Fare thee well!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Men Of England

Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

Wherefore feed and clothe and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat -- nay, drink your blood?

Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

The seed ye sow another reaps;
The wealth ye find another keeps;
The robes ye weave another wears;
The arms ye forge another bears.

Sow seed, -- but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth, -- let no imposter heap;
Weave robes, -- let not the idle wear;
Forge arms, in your defence to bear.

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

With plough and spade and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Mind Of Man

Thou living light that in thy rainbow hues
Clothest this naked world; and over Sea
And Earth and air, and all the shapes that be
In peopled darkness of this wondrous world
The Spirit of thy glory dost diffuse
... truth ... thou Vital Flame
Mysterious thought that in this mortal frame
Of things, with unextinguished lustre burnest
Now pale and faint now high to Heaven upcurled
That eer as thou dost languish still returnest
And ever
Before the ... before the Pyramids

So soon as from the Earth formless and rude
One living step had chased drear Solitude
Thou wert, Thought; thy brightness charmed the lids
Of the vast snake Eternity, who kept
The tree of good and evil.--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Moon

Art thou pale for weariness
Of climbing heaven and gazing on the earth,
Wandering companionless
Among the stars that have a different birth, -
And ever changing, like a joyless eye
That finds no object worth its constancy?

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Moonbeam

I.

Moonbeam, leave the shadowy vale,
To bathe this burning brow.
Moonbeam, why art thou so pale,
As thou walkest o'er the dewy dale,
Where humble wild-flowers grow?
Is it to mimic me?
But that can never be;
For thine orb is bright,
And the clouds are light,
That at intervals shadow the star-studded night.

II.

Now all is deathly still on earth;
Nature's tired frame reposes;
And, ere the golden morning's birth
Its radiant hues discloses,
Flies forth its balmy breath.
But mine is the midnight of Death,
And Nature's morn
To my bosom forlorn
Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn.

III.

Wretch! Suppress the glare of madness
Struggling in thine haggard eye,
For the keenest throb of sadness,
Pale Despair's most sickening sigh,
Is but to mimic me;
And this must ever be,
When the twilight of care,
And the night of despair,
Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs that rankle there.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Nile

Month after month the gathered rains descend
Drenching yon secret Aethiopian dells,
And from the desert's ice-girt pinnacles
Where Frost and Heat in strange embraces blend
On Atlas, fields of moist snow half depend.
Girt there with blasts and meteors Tempest dwells
By Nile's aerial urn, with rapid spells
Urging those waters to their mighty end.
O'er Egypt's land of Memory floods are level
And they are thine, O Nile--and well thou knowest
That soul-sustaining airs and blasts of evil
And fruits and poisons spring where'er thou flowest.
Beware, O Man--for knowledge must to thee,
Like the great flood to Egypt, ever be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Queen Of My Heart

I.

Shall we roam, my love,
To the twilight grove,
When the moon is rising bright;
Oh, I'll whisper there,
In the cool night-air,
What I dare not in broad daylight!

II.

I'll tell thee a part
Of the thoughts that start
To being when thou art nigh;
And thy beauty, more bright
Than the stars' soft light,
Shall seem as a weft from the sky.

III.

When the pale moonbeam
On tower and stream
Sheds a flood of silver sheen,
How I love to gaze
As the cold ray strays
O'er thy face, my heart's throned queen!

IV.

Wilt thou roam with me
To the restless sea,
And linger upon the steep,
And list to the flow
Of the waves below
How they toss and roar and leap?

V.

Those boiling waves,
And the storm that raves
At night o'er their foaming crest,
Resemble the strife
That, from earliest life,
The passions have waged in my breast.

VI.

Oh, come then, and rove
To the sea or the grove,
When the moon is rising bright;
And I'll whisper there,
In the cool night-air,
What I dare not in broad daylight.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To The Republicans Of North America

I.

Brothers! between you and me
Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar:
Yet in spirit oft I see
On thy wild and winding shore
Freedom's bloodless banners wave,--
Feel the pulses of the brave
Unextinguished in the grave,--
See them drenched in sacred gore,--
Catch the warrior's gasping breath
Murmuring 'Liberty or death!'

II.

Shout aloud! Let every slave,
Crouching at Corruption's throne,
Start into a man, and brave
Racks and chains without a groan:
And the castle's heartless glow,
And the hovel's vice and woe,
Fade like gaudy flowers that blow--
Weeds that peep, and then are gone
Whilst, from misery's ashes risen,
Love shall burst the captive's prison.

III.

Cotopaxi! bid the sound
Through thy sister mountains ring,
Till each valley smile around
At the blissful welcoming!
And, O thou stern Ocean deep,
Thou whose foamy billows sweep
Shores where thousands wake to weep
Whilst they curse a villain king,
On the winds that fan thy breast
Bear thou news of Freedom's rest!

IV.

Can the daystar dawn of love,
Where the flag of war unfurled

Floats with crimson stain above
The fabric of a ruined world?
Never but to vengeance driven
When the patriot's spirit shriven
Seeks in death its native Heaven!
There, to desolation hurled,
Widowed love may watch thy bier,
Balm thee with its dying tear.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To William Shelley

I.

The billows on the beach are leaping around it,
The bark is weak and frail,
The sea looks black, and the clouds that bound it
Darkly strew the gale.
Come with me, thou delightful child,
Come with me, though the wave is wild,
And the winds are loose, we must not stay,
Or the slaves of the law may rend thee away.

II.

They have taken thy brother and sister dear,
They have made them unfit for thee;
They have withered the smile and dried the tear
Which should have been sacred to me.
To a blighting faith and a cause of crime
They have bound them slaves in youthly prime,
And they will curse my name and thee
Because we fearless are and free.

III.

Come thou, beloved as thou art;
Another sleepeth still
Near thy sweet mother's anxious heart,
Which thou with joy shalt fill,
With fairest smiles of wonder thrown
On that which is indeed our own,
And which in distant lands will be
The dearest playmate unto thee.

IV.

Fear not the tyrants will rule for ever,
Or the priests of the evil faith;
They stand on the brink of that raging river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death.
It is fed from the depth of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams and rages and swells;
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks on the surge of eternity.

V.

Rest, rest, and shriek not, thou gentle child!
The rocking of the boat thou fearest,
And the cold spray and the clamour wild?--
There, sit between us two, thou dearest--
Me and thy mother--well we know
The storm at which thou tremblest so,
With all its dark and hungry graves,
Less cruel than the savage slaves
Who hunt us o'er these sheltering waves.

VI.

This hour will in thy memory
Be a dream of days forgotten long.
We soon shall dwell by the azure sea
Of serene and golden Italy,
Or Greece, the Mother of the free;
And I will teach thine infant tongue
To call upon those heroes old
In their own language, and will mould
Thy growing spirit in the flame
Of Grecian lore, that by such name
A patriot's birthright thou mayst claim!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To William Shelley.

(With what truth may I say--
Roma! Roma! Roma!
Non e piu come era prima!)

I.

My lost William, thou in whom
Some bright spirit lived, and did
That decaying robe consume
Which its lustre faintly hid,--
Here its ashes find a tomb,
But beneath this pyramid
Thou art not—if a thing divine
Like thee can die, thy funeral shrine
Is thy mother's grief and mine.

II.

Where art thou, my gentle child?
Let me think thy spirit feeds,
With its life intense and mild,
The love of living leaves and weeds
Among these tombs and ruins wild;--
Let me think that through low seeds
Of sweet flowers and sunny grass
Into their hues and scents may pass
A portion--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To William Shelley. Thy Little Footsteps On The Sands

Thy little footsteps on the sands
Of a remote and lonely shore;
The twinkling of thine infant hands,
Where now the worm will feed no more;
Thy mingled look of love and glee
When we returned to gaze on thee--

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To Wordsworth

Poet of Nature, thou hast wept to know
That things depart which never may return:
Childhood and youth, friendship and love's first glow,
Have fled like sweet dreams, leaving thee to mourn.
These common woes I feel. One loss is mine
Which thou too feel'st, yet I alone deplore.
Thou wert as a lone star, whose light did shine
On some frail bark in winter's midnight roar:
Thou hast like to a rock-built refuge stood
Above the blind and battling multitude:
In honoured poverty thy voice did weave
Songs consecrate to truth and liberty,--
Deserting these, thou leavest me to grieve,
Thus having been, that thou shouldst cease to be.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To-- Yet Look On Me

Yet look on me -- take not thine eyes away,
Which feed upon the love within mine own,
Which is indeed but the reflected ray
Of thine own beauty from my spirit thrown.
Yet speak to me -- thy voice is as the tone
Of my heart's echo, and I think I hear
That thou yet lovest me; yet thou alone
Like one before a mirror, without care
Of aught but thine own features, imaged there;
And yet I wear out life in watching thee;
A toil so sweet at times, and thou indeed
Art kind when I am sick, and pity me.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

To-Morrow

Where art thou, beloved To-morrow?
When young and old, and strong and weak,
Rich and poor, through joy and sorrow,
Thy sweet smiles we ever seek,--
In thy place--ah! well-a-day!
We find the thing we fled--To-day.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Ugolino

INFERNO 33, 22-75.

Now had the loophole of that dungeon, still
Which bears the name of Famine's Tower from me,
And where 'tis fit that many another will

Be doomed to linger in captivity,
Shown through its narrow opening in my cell
'Moon after moon slow waning', when a sleep,

'That of the future burst the veil, in dream
Visited me. It was a slumber deep
And evil; for I saw, or I did seem'

To see, 'that' tyrant Lord his revels keep
The leader of the cruel hunt to them,
Chasing the wolf and wolf-cubs up the steep

Ascent, that from 'the Pisan is the screen'
Of 'Lucca'; with him Gualandi came,
Sismondi, and Lanfranchi, 'bloodhounds lean,

Trained to the sport and eager for the game
Wide ranging in his front;' but soon were seen
Though by so short a course, with 'spirits tame,'

The father and 'his whelps' to flag at once,
And then the sharp fangs gored their bosoms deep.
Ere morn I roused myself, and heard my sons,

For they were with me, moaning in their sleep,
And begging bread. Ah, for those darling ones!
Right cruel art thou, if thou dost not weep

In thinking of my soul's sad augury;
And if thou weapest not now, weep never more!
They were already waked, as wont drew nigh

The allotted hour for food, and in that hour

Each drew a presage from his dream. When I
'Heard locked beneath me of that horrible tower

The outlet; then into their eyes alone
I looked to read myself,' without a sign
Or word. I wept not—turned within to stone.

They wept aloud, and little Anselm mine,
Said—'twas my youngest, dearest little one,--
"What ails thee, father? Why look so at thine?"

In all that day, and all the following night,
I wept not, nor replied; but when to shine
Upon the world, not us, came forth the light

Of the new sun, and thwart my prison thrown
Gleamed through its narrow chink, a doleful sight,
'Three faces, each the reflex of my own,

Were imaged by its faint and ghastly ray;'
Then I, of either hand unto the bone,
Gnawed, in my agony; and thinking they

Tw'as done from sudden pangs, in their excess,
All of a sudden raise themselves, and say,
"Father! our woes, so great, were yet the less

Would you but eat of us,—twas 'you who clad
Our bodies in these weeds of wretchedness;
Despoil them'." Not to make their hearts more sad,

I 'hushed' myself. That day is at its close,--
Another—still we were all mute. Oh, had
The obdurate earth opened to end our woes!

The fourth day dawned, and when the new sun shone,
Outstretched himself before me as it rose
My Gaddo, saying, "Help, father! hast thou none

For thine own child—is there no help from thee?"
He died—there at my feet—and one by one,
I saw them fall, plainly as you see me.

Between the fifth and sixth day, ere twas dawn,
I found 'myself blind-groping o'er the three.'
Three days I called them after they were gone.

Famine of grief can get the mastery.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Unrisen Splendour Of The Brightest Sun

Unrisen splendour of the brightest sun,
To rise upon our darkness, if the star
Now beckoning thee out of thy misty throne
Could thaw the clouds which wage an obscure war
With thy young brightness!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Verses On A Cat

I.

A cat in distress,
Nothing more, nor less;
Good folks, I must faithfully tell ye,
As I am a sinner,
It waits for some dinner
To stuff out its own little belly.

II.

You would not easily guess
All the modes of distress
Which torture the tenants of earth;
And the various evils,
Which like so many devils,
Attend the poor souls from their birth.

III.

Some a living require,
And others desire
An old fellow out of the way;
And which is the best
I leave to be guessed,
For I cannot pretend to say.

IV.

One wants society,
Another variety,
Others a tranquil life;
Some want food,
Others, as good,
Only want a wife.

V.

But this poor little cat
Only wanted a rat,
To stuff out its own little maw;
And it were as good
SOME people had such food,
To make them HOLD THEIR JAW!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Wake The Serpent Not

Wake the serpent not—lest he
Should not know the way to go,--
Let him crawl which yet lies sleeping
Through the deep grass of the meadow!
Not a bee shall hear him creeping,
Not a may-fly shall awaken
From its cradling blue-bell shaken,
Not the starlight as he's sliding
Through the grass with silent gliding.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

War

Ambition, power, and avarice, now have hurled
Death, fate, and ruin, on a bleeding world.
See! on yon heath what countless victims lie,
Hark! what loud shrieks ascend through yonder sky;
Tell then the cause, 'tis sure the avenger's rage
Has swept these myriads from life's crowded stage:
Hark to that groan, an anguished hero dies,
He shudders in death's latest agonies;
Yet does a fleeting hectic flush his cheek,
Yet does his parting breath essay to speak--
'Oh God! my wife, my children--Monarch thou
For whose support this fainting frame lies low;
For whose support in distant lands I bleed,
Let his friends' welfare be the warrior's meed.
He hears me not--ah! no--kings cannot hear,
For passion's voice has dulled their listless ear.
To thee, then, mighty God, I lift my moan,
Thou wilt not scorn a suppliant's anguished groan.
Oh! now I die--but still is death's fierce pain--
God hears my prayer--we meet, we meet again.'
He spake, reclined him on death's bloody bed,
And with a parting groan his spirit fled.
Oppressors of mankind to YOU we owe
The baleful streams from whence these miseries flow;
For you how many a mother weeps her son,
Snatched from life's course ere half his race was run!
For you how many a widow drops a tear,
In silent anguish, on her husband's bier!
'Is it then Thine, Almighty Power,' she cries,
'Whence tears of endless sorrow dim these eyes?
Is this the system which Thy powerful sway,
Which else in shapeless chaos sleeping lay,
Formed and approved?--it cannot be--but oh!
Forgive me, Heaven, my brain is warped by woe.'
'Tis not--He never bade the war-note swell,
He never triumphed in the work of hell--
Monarchs of earth! thine is the baleful deed,
Thine are the crimes for which thy subjects bleed.
Ah! when will come the sacred fated time,

When man unsullied by his leaders' crime,
Despising wealth, ambition, pomp, and pride,
Will stretch him fearless by his foe-men's side?
Ah! when will come the time, when o'er the plain
No more shall death and desolation reign?
When will the sun smile on the bloodless field,
And the stern warrior's arm the sickle wield?
Not whilst some King, in cold ambition's dreams,
Plans for the field of death his plodding schemes;
Not whilst for private pique the public fall,
And one frail mortal's mandate governs all.
Swelled with command and mad with dizzying sway;
Who sees unmoved his myriads fade away.
Careless who lives or dies--so that he gains
Some trivial point for which he took the pains.
What then are Kings?--I see the trembling crowd,
I hear their fulsome clamours echoed loud;
Their stern oppressor pleased appears awhile,
But April's sunshine is a Monarch's smile--
Kings are but dust--the last eventful day
Will level all and make them lose their sway;
Will dash the sceptre from the Monarch's hand,
And from the warrior's grasp wrest the ensanguined brand.
Oh! Peace, soft Peace, art thou for ever gone,
Is thy fair form indeed for ever flown?
And love and concord hast thou swept away,
As if incongruous with thy parted sway?
Alas, I fear thou hast, for none appear.
Now o'er the palsied earth stalks giant Fear,
With War, and Woe, and Terror, in his train;--
List'ning he pauses on the embattled plain,
Then speeding swiftly o'er the ensanguined heath,
Has left the frightful work to Hell and Death.
See! gory Ruin yokes his blood-stained car,
He scents the battle's carnage from afar;
Hell and Destruction mark his mad career,
He tracks the rapid step of hurrying Fear;
Whilst ruined towns and smoking cities tell,
That thy work, Monarch, is the work of Hell.
'It is thy work!' I hear a voice repeat,
Shakes the broad basis of thy bloodstained seat;
And at the orphan's sigh, the widow's moan,

Totters the fabric of thy guilt-stained throne--
'It is thy work, O Monarch;' now the sound
Fainter and fainter, yet is borne around,
Yet to enthusiast ears the murmurs tell
That Heaven, indignant at the work of Hell,
Will soon the cause, the hated cause remove,
Which tears from earth peace, innocence, and love.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

When A Lover Clasps His Fairest

I.

When a lover clasps his fairest,
Then be our dread sport the rarest.
Their caresses were like the chaff
In the tempest, and be our laugh
His despair—her epitaph!

II.

When a mother clasps her child,
Watch till dusty Death has piled
His cold ashes on the clay;
She has loved it many a day--
She remains,—it fades away.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

When Soft Winds And Sunny Skies

When soft winds and sunny skies
With the green earth harmonize,
And the young and dewy dawn,
Bold as an unhunted fawn,
Up the windless heaven is gone,--
Laugh—for ambushed in the day,--
Clouds and whirlwinds watch their prey.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

When The Lamp Is Shattered

When the lamp is shattered,
The light in the dust lies dead;
 When the cloud is scattered,
The rainbow's glory is shed;
 When the lute is broken,
Sweet tones are remembered not;
 When the lips have spoken,
Loved accents are soon forgot.

 As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
 The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute:--
 No song but sad dirges,
Like the wind through a ruined cell,
 Or the mournful surges
That ring the dead seaman's knell.

 When hearts have once mingled,
Love first leaves the well-built nest;
 The weak one is singled
To endure what it once possessed.
 O Love! who bewailest
The frailty of all things here,
 Why choose you the frailest
For your cradle, your home, and your bier?

 Its passions will rock thee,
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
 Bright reason will mock thee,
Like the sun from a wintry sky.
 From thy nest every rafter
Will rot, and thine eagle home
 Leave thee naked to laughter,
When leaves fall and cold winds come.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Wine Of The Fairies

I am drunk with the honey wine
Of the moon-unfolded eglantine,
Which fairies catch in hyacinth bowls.
The bats, the dormice, and the moles
Sleep in the walls or under the sward
Of the desolate castle yard;
And when 'tis spilt on the summer earth
Or its fumes arise among the dew,
Their jocund dreams are full of mirth,
They gibber their joy in sleep; for few
Of the fairies bear those bowls so new!

Percy Bysshe Shelley

With A Guitar, To Jane

Ariel to Miranda:-- Take
This slave of music, for the sake
Of him who is the slave of thee;
And teach it all the harmony
In which thou canst, and only thou,
Make the delighted spirit glow,
Till joy denies itself again
And, too intense, is turned to pain.
For by permission and command
Of thine own Prince Ferdinand,
Poor Ariel sends this silent token
Of more than ever can be spoken;
Your guardian spirit, Ariel, who
From life to life must still pursue
Your happiness,-- for thus alone
Can Ariel ever find his own.
From Prospero's enchanted cell,
As the mighty verses tell,
To the throne of Naples he
Lit you o'er the trackless sea,
Flitting on, your prow before,
Like a living meteor.
When you die, the silent Moon
In her interlunar swoon
Is not sadder in her cell
Than deserted Ariel.
When you live again on earth,
Like an unseen Star of birth
Ariel guides you o'er the sea
Of life from your nativity.
Many changes have been run
Since Ferdinand and you begun
Your course of love, and Ariel still
Has tracked your steps and served your will.
Now in humbler, happier lot,
This is all remembered not;
And now, alas! the poor sprite is
Imprisoned for some fault of his
In a body like a grave -

From you he only dares to crave,
For his service and his sorrow,
A smile today, a song tomorrow.

The artist who this idol wrought
To echo all harmonious thought,
Felled a tree, while on the steep
The woods were in their winter sleep,
Rocked in that repose divine
On the wind-swept Apennine;
And dreaming, some of Autumn past,
And some of Spring approaching fast,
And some of April buds and showers,
And some of songs in July bowers,
And all of love; and so this tree,--
O that such our death may be!--
Died in sleep, and felt no pain,
To live in happier form again:
From which, beneath Heaven's fairest star,
The artist wrought this loved Guitar;
And taught it justly to reply
To all who question skilfully
In language gentle as thine own;
Whispering in enamoured tone
Sweet oracles of woods and dells,
And summer winds in sylvan cells;
- For it had learnt all harmonies
Of the plains and of the skies,
Of the forests and the mountains,
And the many-voiced fountains;
The clearest echoes of the hills,
The softest notes of falling rills,
The melodies of birds and bees,
The murmuring of summer seas,
And pattering rain, and breathing dew,
And airs of evening; and it knew
That seldom-heard mysterious sound
Which, driven on its diurnal round,
As it floats through boundless day,
Our world enkindles on its way:
- All this it knows, but will not tell
To those who cannot question well

The Spirit that inhabits it;
It talks according to the wit
Of its companions; and no more
Is heard than has been felt before
By those who tempt it to betray
These secrets of an elder day.
But, sweetly as its answers will
Flatter hands of perfect skill,
It keeps its highest holiest tone
For one beloved Friend alone.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Written At Bracknell

Thy dewy looks sink in my breast;
Thy gentle words stir poison there;
Thou hast disturbed the only rest
That was the portion of despair!
Subdued to Duty's hard control,
I could have borne my wayward lot:
The chains that bind this ruined soul
Had cankered then-but crushed it not.

Percy Bysshe Shelley

Zephyrus The Awakener

Come, thou awakener of the spirit's ocean,
Zephyr, whom to thy cloud or cave
No thought can trace! speed with thy gentle motion!

Percy Bysshe Shelley