

Classic Poetry Series

Charles Harpur
- poems -

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Charles Harpur(23 January 1813 – 10 June 1868)

Charles Harpur was an Australian poet.

Early Life

Harpur was born at Windsor, New South Wales, the third child of Joseph Harpur — originally from Kinsale, County Cork, Ireland, parish clerk and master of the Windsor district school — and Sarah, née Chidley (from Somerset; both had been transported.) Harpur received his elementary education in Windsor. This was probably largely supplemented by private study; he was an eager reader of William Shakespeare. Harpur followed various avocations in the bush and for some years in his twenties held a clerical position at the post office in Sydney.

The Poet

In Sydney, he met Henry Parkes, Daniel Deniehy, Robert Lowe and W. A. Duncan, who in 1845 published Harpur's first little volume, *Thoughts, A Series of Sonnets*, which has since become very rare. Harpur had left Sydney two years before and was farming with a brother on the Hunter River. In 1850, he married Mary Doyle and engaged in sheep farming for some years with varying success. In 1853, he published *The Bushrangers: a Play in Five Acts, and other Poems*. The play is a failure and contains some of Harpur's worst writing, but the volume included some of his best poems. In 1858, he was appointed gold commissioner at Araluen with a good salary. He held the position for eight years and also had a farm at Eurobodalla. Harpur found, however, that his duties prevented him from supervising the work on the farm and it became a bad investment.

Two verse pamphlets, *A Poets Home* and *The Tower of a Dream*, appeared in 1862 and 1865 respectively.

Demise

In 1866, Harpur's position was abolished at a time of retrenchment, and in March 1867 he had a great sorrow when his second son was killed by the accidental discharge of his own gun. Harpur never recovered from the blow. He contracted tuberculosis in the hard winter of 1867, and died on 10 June 1868. He was survived by his wife, two sons and two daughters. One of his daughters, writing many years later, mentioned that he had left his family an unencumbered farm and a well-furnished comfortable home.

Poetry Evaluation

A collected edition of Harpur's poems was not published until 1883. The unknown editor stated that he had "had to supply those final revisions which the author had been obliged to leave unmade". This work does not appear to have been well done, and several already published poems which needed no revision were not included. The manuscripts of Harpur's poems are at the Mitchell Library, Sydney, and a portrait is in the council chamber at Windsor.

Harpur was the first Australian poet worthy of the name. He is little read today and the tendency has been to under-rate him in comparison with other writers of the nineteenth century. He may have been slightly influenced by <a href="

A Poet's Home

HERE in this lonely rill-engirdled spot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot,
With one vowed to me with beloved lips
How sweet to draw, as hiddenly from time,
As from its rocks yon shaded fountain slips,
My yet remaining prime.

Here early rising from a sinless bed
How sweet it were to view Aurora shed
Her first white glances o'er the dusky wood,
When powdered as with pearls the sprays all gleam
Through the grey dawn, like prophecies of good
Or like some fairy dream.

And while the clouds imbibed a golden hue,
And purple streaks grained yon ethereal blue,
By the glad voice of every early bird
(As some full lake by breezes in their glee
Is rippled into smiles) how sweetly stirred
My spirit then should be!

And as like burning bullion brightened still
The cloud-hung East, over yon misty hill
I'd watch the sun's ethereal chariot come,
Filling the glades with flakes of chrystal fire
And the green spaces round my rural home,
Where slept mine Heart's Desire.

When, if sweet memories of her sleeping smile
Should my devotion thitherward beguile,
Cheating the morn of its observance due,
My happy voice should not be wanting long
To wile her forth with loving transport true
Or wake her with a song.

"Awake, my fair one! for the glowing skies
Desire thee, and a thousand flowery eyes
Look for thy coming from each pathway side;
With all things fresh and beautiful and bright

The earth's adorned like an Eastern bride,—
Arise, my best delight!

What can be deeper than the heavens o'erbending,
Or what be richer than the colours blending
Amid the green cones of the misty hill!
What gladder than the runnel's silvery fall!
And yet my spirit asketh something still—
'Tis thee, the crown of all!"

Joined by the Angel of my life, behold
The day's unfolded gates of heavenly gold
How lovelier now for her dear loveliness!
The birds, the stream, the forest's leafy stir
Catch from her voice a double power to bless,
And the flowers breathe of her!

The dews are brighter for her love-bright eyes
And the air sweeter for the soul that lies
In every gesture of her gentle face!
So widely Love's invisible spirit flings
The visible enrichment of its grace
O'er all regarded things.

Filled with the fresh keen life that so sublimates
Both mind and body, we should then betimes
Repair us to our cheerful morning meal,
Not more attuned by thankfulness of heart
Well to enjoy, than willing in our weal
To spare a stranger part.

Sufficed and grateful, to her household care
Should she betake her then,—I fieldward fare
To till the thriving maize or guide the plough
Through the rich loam, or while the slant sunshine
Carress'd them, to remark the melons, how
They lumped from out their vine.

Thence to the well kept orchard to behold
The orange trees o'erhung with globes of gold
Or thin the peachy tribes all ruddy cheeked
And clumping from the branches, and with these

The nectarine's fragrant swarms so lushly streaked,
That flavour even the breeze:

To pluck the fig, that in its broad-leafed shade
Secretes its ripeness—even like a maid
Mature for love, who yet through bashfulness
Doth shun or seem to shun each wooer's sight—
Or stay the drooping vine whose every tress
Is bunch'd with clusters bright.

So should the noon draw on: when in yon shade
Beside the rill, on the green herbage laid
In careless luxury my faint limbs should be,
And hearing but the splash of feathered things
Then fluttering downward from some neighbouring tree
To dip their shining wings,

Or the slow-rising and most summery hum
Of gorgeous insects that at times might come
Over the runnel and so voyage by,
Or the light footfall on the farther brink
Of some wild creature, from its covert nigh
Just venturing forth to drink:

I'd calmly think of all my wandering youth
Had suffered, with a heart so dear to Truth
That she at length had portioned it with love,
And then of her who to my very soul
Was what the vitalising Sun above
Is to the natural whole.

Thus rested, when the fiery-winged hours
Were quenching in the west, with freshened powers
The field again in honorable toil
Should hear me ending what the morn begun,
Till I might say, scanning the well-dressed soil,
A good day's work is done.

Then whilst I woodward drove the unharnessed steer
Or for the kine was searching somewhere near
Grouping full-fed in ruminating mood,
The sun should 'light upon yon western hill

Slanting his last beams through the shadowing wood
And up the gleaming rill,

To sink at length and make the clouds above
Golden idealisms of the love
My heart poured out on Nature, and on her
Now waiting me at our peace-hallowed board:
Thus placed, who'd care amongst the great to stir
Or with the rich to hoard?

The pens secured, the final meal in haste
Despatch'd though savoury, both should forth to taste
Eve's odorous breath and with renewed surprise
To find Elysiums painted in the west,
And looking then into each other's eyes,
Should feel that we were blest.

And when the gloaming followed Evening's flight,
Whilst yet o'er yonder hills a skiey light
Keeps mellowing upward, near to where, first seen,
The glowing Leader of the starry quire
Comes wingedly from out the blue serene,
Even like a bird of fire,

The hushing bounties of those twilight hours
Falling into our souls, as in the flowers'
Balm-breathing bosoms melt the silent dews,
Should freshen every feeling mild and wise
And thence o'er all our charities diffuse
The quiet of the skies.

Thus should the night come on, in solemn guise
To look with all her far ethereal eyes
Upon my happy life, and draw my soul
To wander like a star the stars among
And homeward point from the resplendent pole
Uranian beams of song.

Or whilst the moon, the world's apparent queen,
Came whitening up in majesty serene,
Reminding us of some dear long-past night,
I'd chronicle in rhyme the many things

Of lovely thought that from her mystic light
Had woven them their wings.

Charles Harpur

A Basket Of Summer Fruit

First see those ample melons-brindled o'er
With mingled green and brown is all the rind;
For they are ripe, and mealy at the core,
And saturate with the nectar of their kind.

And here their fellows of the marsh are set,
Covering their sweetness with a crumpled skin;
Pomegranates next, flame-red without, and yet
With vegetable crystals stored within.

Then mark these brilliant oranges, of which
A by-gone Poet fancifully said,
Their unplucked globes the orchard did enrich
Like Lolden lamps in a green nilht of shade.

With these are lemons that are even more
Golden than they, and which adorn our Rhyme,
As did rough pendants of barbaric ore
Some pillared temple of the olden time.

And here are peaches with their ruddy cheeks
And ripe transparency. Here nectarines bloom,
All mottled as with discontinuous streaks.
And spread a fruity fragrance through the room.

With these are cherries mellow to the stone;
Into such ripeness bath the summer nursed them,
The velvet pressure of the tongue alone
Against the palate were enough to burst them.

Here too are plums, like edible rubies glowing -
The language of lush summer's Eden theme:
Even through the skin how temptingly keeps showing
Their juicy comfort, a rich-clouded gleam!

Here too are figs, pears, apples (plucked in haste
Our summer treat judiciously to vary)
With apricots, so exquisite in taste,
And yellow as the breast of a canary.

And luscious strawberries all faceted
With glittering lobes-and all the lovelier seen
In contrast with the loquat's duller red,
And vulgar gooseberry's unlustrous green.

And lastly, bunches of rich blooded grapes
Whose vineyard bloom even yet about them clings.
Though ever in the handling it escapes
Like the fine down upon a moth's bright wings.

Each kind is piled in order in the Basket,
Which we might well imagine now to be
Transmuted into a great golden casket
Entreasuring Pomona's jewelry.

Charles Harpur

A Coast View

High 'mid the shelves of a grey cliff, that yet
Riseth in Babylonian mass above,
In a benched cleft, as in the mouldered chair
Of grey-beard Time himself, I sit alone,
And gaze with a keen wondering happiness
Out o'er the sea. Unto the circling bend
That verges Heaven, a vast luminous plain
It stretches, changeful as a lover's dream—
Into great spaces mapped by light and shade
In constant interchange—either 'neath clouds
The billows darken, or they shimmer bright
In sunny scopes of measureless expanse.
'Tis Ocean dreamless of a stormy hour,
Calm, or but gently heaving;—yet, O God!
What a blind fate-like mightiness lies coiled
In slumber, under that wide-shining face!
While o'er the watery gleam—there where its edge
Banks the dim vacancy, the topmost sails
Of some tall ship, whose hull is yet unseen,
Hang as if clinging to a cloud that still
Comes rising with them from the void beyond,
Like to a heavenly net, drawn from the deep
And carried upward by ethereal hands

Charles Harpur

A Dream Of The Orient

With a resplendent Eastern bride,
Like a houri at my side,
 And music round us swelling,
'Mid odours of so rare a steam
That like a breath of love they seem,
Dwell I through a radiant dream
 In an orient dwelling.
Near a fair fountain flashing high
In the pleasure court we lie,
 Each on a gorgeous pillow;
The columned water mounting breaks
In outward curves and falling flakes,
Till the whole a picture makes
 Of a crystal willow.

Wide round us galleried walls extend,
Pierced with arcs and aisles that bend
 On wreathen pillars slender;
While hung in every vista—lo!
Such clouds of blazoned banners glow
As in very semblance show
 A constant sunset splendour.

And virgin faces, darkly bright
Like the countenance of night
 Seen in its starry glory,
All ministrant, around us throng,
And breathe their pathos into song,
Or in tones as rich prolong
 Some wild melodious story.

Till, hark! Through many voices, one
Like a gush of gold doth run—
 “Why, why should kindred sever?
Our life is this perpetual feast
Of being, from all care released—
Sunny souls are for the East;
 Then dwell with us for ever.”

Charles Harpur

A Flight Of Wild Ducks

Far up the River-hark! 'tis the loud shock
Deadened by distance, of some Fowler's gun:
And as into the stillness of the scene
It wastes now with a dull vibratory boom,
Look where, fast widening up at either end
Out of the sinuous valley of the waters,
And o'er the intervenient forest, - up
Against the open heaven, a long dark line
Comes hitherward stretching-a vast Flight of Ducks!
Following the windings of the vale, and still
Enlarging lengthwise, and in places too
Oft breaking into solitary dots,
How swiftly onwards comes it - till at length,
The River, reaching through a group of hills,
Off leads it, - out of sight. But not for long:
For, wheeling ever with the water's course,
Here into sudden view it comes again
Sweeping and swarming round the nearest point!
And first now, a swift airy rush is heard
Approaching momentarily; - then all at once
There passes a keen-cutting, gusty tumult
Of strenuous pinions, with a streaming mass
Of instantaneous skiey streaks; each streak
Evolving with a lateral flirt, and thence
Entangling as it were, - so rapidly
A thousand wings outpointingly dispread
In passing tiers, seem, looked at from beneath,
With rushing intermixtures to involve
Each other as they beat. Thus seen o'erhead
Even while we speak-ere we have spoken, - lo!
The living cloud is onward many a rood.
Tracking as 'twere in the smooth stream below
The multifarious shadow of itself
Far coming-present-and far gone at once!
The senses vainly struggle to retain
The impression of an Image (as the same)
So swift and manifold: For now again
A long dark line upon the utmost verge
Of the horizon, steeping still, it sinks

At length into the landscape; where yet seen
Though dimly, with a wide and scattering sweep
It fetches eastward, and in column so
Dapples along the steep face of the ridge
There banking the turned River. Now it drops
Below the fringing oaks - but to arise
Once more, with a quick circling gleam, as touched
By the slant sunshine, and then disappear
As instantaneously, - there settling down
Upon the reedy bosom of the water.

Charles Harpur

A Hunter's Indian Dove

DARK is her cheek, but her blood's rich blush
Comes through its dusk with a sunset flush,
While joy, like a prairie-bee, slaketh its drouth
At the red honey-cup of her smiling mouth,
And her wild eyes glow, like meteors, there
'Neath the streaming storm of her night-black hair.
And ever I pride in my forest choice,
The more while I list to her bird-like voice,
Warbling old songs in her own wild speech,
But with this new burden still added to each;
"Who'll pity, who'll comfort the dark wood-dove
When the white hawk leaves her to die of love?"

O then, by the artless tears that rise
'Neath the downcast lids of her gleaming eyes—
By the truthfully tender and touching grace
That boding passion then lends to her face—
I swear, in the very wild spirit of love,
Never to leave her, my Indian dove!

Charles Harpur

A Lament

Flowers in their freshness are flushing the earth,
And the voice-peopled forest is loud in its mirth,
And streams in their fulness are laughing at dearth—

Yet my bosom is aching.

There's shadow on all things—the shadow of woe—
It falls from my spirit wherever I go,
As from a dark cloud drifting heavy and slow,
For my spirit is weary.

Ah! what can be flowers in their gladness to me,
Or the voices that people the green forest tree,
Or the full joy of streams—since my soul sighs, ah me!

O'er the grave of my Mary.

Under the glad face of nature, her face
Hath carried down with it all beauty and grace;
Pale is it there in that dark silent place—

Mary! oh Mary!

Children are by me—her children; oh God!
To see where their feet have unwittingly trod,
Tiny tracks in the loam of the new broken sod
Betwixt them and their mother!

Betwixt them and the true one who loved us in truth,
Who bore them, and died 'mid the hopes of her youth!
Who would live in a world where nor anguish nor ruth
May avail the bereaved ones.

Yet must I live, lest her spirit should say,
Meeting mine in its flight from this vesture of clay,
"Where are our little ones? Where do they stay?
And why did you leave them?"

If for them only, then, so must it be,
See, I remain with them, Mary! but see
How lonely we stand in a world without thee!
Mary! oh Mary!

I live, but death's shadow is over me cast;
And even when wearied woe sleepeth at last,
Some dream of the dead, sighing out of the past,
 Is alive in the darkness!

Could I but weep, it were comfort, though brief;
But the fountain of tears by the fire of my grief
Hath been dried to its dregs, and can shed no relief
 On the thirst of my eyelids.

As music that wasteth away on the blast,
As the last ray by the sunken sun cast,
All my heart's gladness hath died in the past,—
 Mary! oh Mary!

Charles Harpur

A Love Fancy

Night was new-throned in heaven, and we did rove
 Together in the cool and shadowless haze
 That thickened round, at the wild stars to gaze
Ere yet the moon's red rim had showed above
The pine-trees. For in both our souls did move
 The same fond lover-fancy,—that their rays
 Were richer for all those who from the ways
Of man's long past had looked at them in love;
And when our glances through their midst did run
 From orb to orb of all that seemed most fair,
To fix at last with mutual heed on one
 That gloried in the West beyond compare,
It seemed to us that when the day was done,
 The spirit of our joy was mansioned there

Charles Harpur

A Midsummer Noon In The Australian Forest

A MIDSUMMER NOON IN THE AUSTRALIAN FOREST

Not a bird disturbs the air!
There is quiet everywhere;
Over plains and over woods
What a mighty stillness broods.

Even the grasshoppers keep
[All the birds and insects keep]
Where the coolest shadows sleep;
Even the busy ants are found
Resting in their pebbled mound;
Even the locust clingeth now
In silence to the barky bough:
And over hills and over plains
Quiet, vast and slumbrous, reigns.

Only there's a drowsy humming
From yon warm lagoon slow coming:
'Tis the dragon-hornet - see!
All bedaubed resplendently
With yellow on a tawny ground -
Each rich spot nor square nor round,
But rudely heart-shaped, as it were
The blurred and hasty impress there,
Of vermeil-cruled seal
Dusted o'er with golden meal:
Only there's a droning where
Yon bright beetle gleams the air -
Gleams it in its droning flight
[Tracks it in its gleaming flight]
With a slanting track of light,
Till rising in the sunshine higher,
[Rising in the sunshine higher,]
Its shards flame out like gems on fire.
[Till its shards flame out like fire.]

Every other thing is still,
Save the ever wakeful rill,

Whose cool murmur only throws
A cooler comfort round Repose;
Or some ripple in the sea
Of leafy boughs, where, lazily,
Tired Summer, in her forest bower
Turning with the noontide hour,
Heaves a slumbrous breath, ere she
Once more slumbers peacefully.

O 'tis easeful here to lie
Hidden from Noon's scorching eye,
In this grassy cool recess
Musing thus of Quietness.

two versions of this poem have been located. The relevant changes are included in the text in square brackets, i.e. "[...]".

Charles Harpur

A Poet To...

Long ere I knew thee—years of loveless days,
A shape would gather from my dreams, and pour
The soul-sweet influence of its gentle gaze
Into my heart, to thrill it to the core:
Then would I wake, with lonely heart to pine
For the nocturnal image—it was thine.
Thine—for though long with a fond moody heed
I sought to find it in the beauteous creatures
I met in the world's ways, twas but to bleed
With disappointment, for all forms, all features,
Yet left it void of living counterpart—
The shadowy mistress of my yearning heart.

Thine—when I saw thee first thou seem'dst to me
A being known, yet beautifully new!
As when, to crown some sage's theory,
Amid heaven's sisterhoods, into shining view
Comes the conjectured star!—his lucky name
To halo thenceforth with its virgin flame.

But I forget! Far from thy rural home,
Behold I wander mid primeval woods,
In which but savage things are wont to roam,
Mixing fond questionings with solitude's
Wild voices, where amid her glades and dells
Enwrapt in twilight trance her shadowy presence dwells.

And now the Hunter, with a swollen speed,
Rushes in thunder at my side, but wears
A softened mien whene'er its reaches lead
My vision westward—where pale fancy rears
Thy wood—next by that brook whose murmurs first,
As with a flattering heed, my love's new gladness nurst.

And with the river's murmur, oft a tone
Of that far brook seems blending; accents, too,
Of the dear voice there heard—that voice alone
To me unequalled,—like a silvery dew
Honeyed with manna, dropping near me seems,

As oft I listen, lost in rich memorial dreams.

But vain these musings! Though my spirit's bride,
Thou knewest not of my love! Though all my days
Must henceforth be inevitably dyed
Or bright, or dark, through thee,—this missive says
Thy lot is cast, and thou a wife wilt be
Ere I again may look (if e'er again) on thee!

The poet's doom is on me! Poets make
Beauty immortal, and yet luckless miss
The charms they sing; martyrs at fortune's stake,
As if their soul's capacity for bliss
Might else mix earth with heaven, and so annul
That want which makes man seek the world-wide beautiful!

Yet, ye wild woods and waters of the earth,
How changed (with all things) shall ye grow to me!
And even the spirit of your summer mirth
Moan pine-like in the woods of memory;
Still, shorn of nearer joy, my heart alone
Out in the mother-whole may henceforth seek its own.

Charles Harpur

A Similitude

FAIR as the night—when all the astral fires
Of heaven are burning in the clear expanse,
My love is; and her eyes like star-depths glance
Lustrous with glowing thoughts and pure desires,
And that mysterious pathos which inspires
All moods divine in mortal passion's trance—
All that its earthly music doth enhance
As with the rapture of seraphic lyres!
I gaze upon her till the atmosphere
Sweetens intensely, and to my charmed sight
All fair associated forms appear
Swimming in joy, as swim yon orbs in light—
And all sweet sounds, though common to mine ear,
Chime up like silver-wingèd dreams in flight.

Charles Harpur

A Sonnet Dedicated To Sir George Gipps

My country! I am sore at heart for thee!
An in mine ear, like a storm-heralding breeze,
A voice against thee gathers warningly!
Lo, in what hands seem now thy destinies!
Hands grasping all, through party means, to seize
Some private benefit: and what should be
Thy Freedom's dawn, but gives ascendancy
To lawless Squatters, and the Hacks of these!
Woe waits a land, where men are wise and brave
For naught but self! When even the best aside
Are thrusting honesty to don the knave!
Where worth is trampled on by vulgar pride!
And where all beauty of the mind, decried,
Hangs dying o'er a Mammon-delved grave.

Charles Harpur

A Storm In The Mountains

A lonely boy, far venturing from home
Out on the half-wild herd's faint tracks I roam;
Mid rock-browed mountains, which with stony frown
Glare into haggard chasms deep adown;
A rude and craggy world, the prospect lies
Bounded in circuit by the bending skies.
Now at some clear pool scooped out by the shocks
Of rain-floods plunging from the upper rocks
Whose liquid disc in its undimpled rest
Glow like a mighty gem brooching the mountain's breast,
I drink and must, or mark the wide-spread herd,
Or list the thinking of the dingle-bird;
And now towards some wild-hanging shade I stray,
To shun the bright oppression of the day;
For round each crag, and o'er each bosky swell,
The fierce refracted heat flares visible,
Lambently restless, like the dazzling hem
Of some else viewless veil held trembling over them.
Why congregate the swallows in the air,
And northward then in rapid flight repair?
With sudden swelling din, remote yet harsh,
Why roar the bull-frogs in the tea-tree marsh?
Why cease the locusts to throng up in flight
And clap their gay wings in the fervent light?
Why climb they, bodingly demure, instead
The tallest spear-grass to the bending head?
Instinctively, along the sultry sky,
I turn a listless, yet inquiring, eye;
And mark that now with a slow gradual pace
A solemn trance creams northward o'er its face;
Yon clouds that late were labouring past the sun,
Reached by its sure arrest, one after one,
Come to a heavy halt; the airs that played
About the rugged mountains all are laid:
While drawing nearer far-off heights appear,
As in a dream's wild prospect, strangely near!
Till into wood resolves their robe of blue,
And the grey crags rise bluffly on the view.
Such are the signs and tokens that presage

A summer hurricane's forthcoming rage.

At length the south sends out her cloudy heaps
And up the glens at noontide dimness creeps;
The birds, late warbling in the hanging green
Off steep-set brakes, seek now some safer screen;
The herd, in doubt, no longer wanders wide,
But fast ingathering throngs yon mountain's side,
Whose echoes, surging to its tramp, might seem
The muttered troubles of some Titan's dream.

Fast the dim legions of the muttering storm
Throng denser, or protruding columns form;
While splashing forward from their cloudy lair,
Convolving flames, like scouting dragons, glare:
Low thunders follow, labouring up the sky;
And as fore-running blasts go blaring by,
At once the forest, with a mighty stir,
Bows, as in homage to the thunderer!

Hark! From the dingoes blood-polluted dens
In the gloom-hidden chasms of the glens,
Long fitful howls wail up; and in the blast
Strange hissing whispers seem to huddle past;
As if the dread stir had aroused from sleep
Weird spirits, cloistered in yon cavy steep
(On which, in the grim past, some Cain's offence
Hath haply outraged heaven!) Who rising thence
Wrapped in the boding vapours, laughed again
To wanton in the wild-willed hurricane.
See in the storm's front, sailing dark and dread,
A wide-winged eagle like a black flag spread!
The clouds aloft flash doom! Short stops his flight!
He seems to shrivel in the blasting light!
The air is shattered with a crashing sound,
And he falls stonelike, lifeless, to the ground.

Now, like a shadow at great nature's heart,
The turmoil grows. Now wonder, with a start,
Marks where right overhead the storm careers,
Girt with black horrors and wide-flaming fears!
Arriving thunders, mustering on his path,

Swell more and more the roarings of his wrath,
As out in widening circles they extend,
And then—at once—in utter silence end.

Portentous silence! Time keeps breathing past,
Yet it continues! May this marvel last?
This wild weird silence in the midst of gloom
So manifestly big with coming doom?
Tingles the boding ear; and up the glens
Instinctive dread comes howling from the wild-dogs dens.

Terrific vision! Heaven's great ceiling splits,
And a vast globe of writhing fire emits,
Which pouring down in one continuous stream,
Spans the black concave like a burning beam,
A moment;—then from end to end it shakes
With a quick motion—and in thunder breaks!
Peal rolled on peal! While heralding the sound,
As each concussion thrills the solid ground,
Fierce glares coil, snake-like, round the rocky wens
Of the red hills, or hiss into the glens,
Or thick through heaven like flaming falchions swarm,
Cleaving the teeming cisterns of the storm,
From which rain-torrents, searching every gash,
Split by the blast come sheeting with a dash.

On yon grey peak, from rock-encrusted roots,
The mighty patriarch of the wood upshoots,
In whose proud-spreading top's imperial height,
The mountain-eagle loveth most to light:
Now dimly seen through the tempestuous air,
His form seems harrowed by a mad despair,
As with his ponderous arms uplifted high,
He wrestles with the storm and threshes at the sky!
A swift bolt hurtles through the lurid air,
Another thundering crash! The peak is bare!
Huge hurrying fragments all around are cast,
The wild-winged, mad-limbed monsters of the blast.

The darkness thickens! With despairing cry
From shattering boughs the rain-drenched parrots fly;
Loose rocks roll rumbling from the mountains round,

And half the forest strews the smoking ground;
To the bared crags the blasts now wilder moan,
And the caves labour with a ghostlier groan.
Wide raging torrents down the gorges flow
Swift bearing with them to the vale below
Those sylvan wrecks that littered late the path
Of the loud hurricane's all-trampling wrath.

The storm is past. Yet booming on afar
Is heard the rattling of the thunder-car,
And that low muffled moaning, as of grief,
Which follows with a wood-sigh wide and brief.
The clouds break up; the sun's forth-bursting rays
Clothe the wet landscape with a dazzling blaze;
The birds begin to sing a lively strain,
And merry echoes ring it o'er again;
The clustered herd is spreading out to graze,
Though lessening torrents still a hundred ways
Flash downward, and from many a rock ledge
A mantling gush comes quick and shining o'er the edge.

'Tis evening; and the torrent's furious flow
Runs gentler now into the lake below,
O'er all the freshened scene no sound is heard,
Save the short twitter of some busied bird,
Or a faint rustle made amongst the trees
By wasting fragments of a broken breeze.
Along the wild and wreck-strewed paths I wind,
Watching earth's happiness with quiet mind,
And see a beauty all unmarked till now
Flushing each flowery nook and sunny brow;
Wished peace returning like a bird of calm,
Brings to the wounded world its blessed healing balm.

On nerveless, tuneless lines how sadly
Ringing rhymes may wasted be,
While blank verse oft is mere prose madly
Striving to be poetry:
While prose that's craggy as a mountain
May Apollo's sun-robe don,
Or hold the well-spring of a fountain
Bright as that in Helicon.

Charles Harpur

Absence

NIGHTLY I watch the moon with silvery sheen
Flaking the city house-tops, till I feel
Thy memory, Rosa, like a presence, steal
Down in her light: for ever in her mien
Thy soul's similitude my soul hath seen!
And as she seemeth now a guardian seal
On Heaven's far bliss, upon my future weal
Even such thy truth is—radiantly serene!
But long my fancy may not entertain
These bright resemblances—for, lo, a cloud
Blots her away, and in my breast the pain
Of absent love, recurring, pines aloud!
When shall I look in thy sweet eyes again,—
Rosa, when cheer thee with like sadness bowed?

Wherever in some wildwood bower
There blooms a honey-yielding flower,
There too dwells a bird to sup
Out of its delicious cup,
And sing betimes, lest it should be
O'erfed into satiety:
So wherever Loveliness
Dwells retired—dwells to bless,
Not dazzle: there some destin'd spirit,
Feeding on its luscious merit,
Can at peace with Passion be
Only through sweet Poesy.

Charles Harpur

An Aboriginal Mothers's Lament

An Aboriginal Mother's Lament
Charles Harpur

[About the year 1842 a party of stockmen, several of whom were afterwards hanged for the crime, made a wholesale slaughter of a small tribe of defenceless blacks; one woman only, with her infant, escaped from the murderers.]

Still farther would I fly, my child,
To make thee safer yet,
From the unsparing white man,
With his dread hand murder-wet!
I'll bear thee on as I have borne
With stealthy steps wind-fleet,
But the dark night shrouds the forest,
And thorns are in my feet.
O moan not! I would give this braid—
Thy father's gift to me—
But for a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

Ah! Spring not to his name—no more
To glad us may he come!
He is smouldering into ashes
Beneath the blasted gum!
All charred and blasted by the fire
The white man kindled there,
And fed with our slaughtered kindred
Till heaven-high went its glare!

O moan not! I would give this braid—
Thy father's gift to me—
For but a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

And but for thee, I would their fire
Had eaten me as fast!

Hark! Hark! I hear his death-cry
Yet lengthening up the blast!
But no—when that we should fly,
On the roaring pyre flung bleeding—
I saw thy father die!

O moan not! I would give this braid—
Thy father's gift to me—
For but a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

No more shall his loud tomahawk
Be plied to win our cheer,
Or the shining fish-pools darken
Beneath his shadowing spear;
The fading tracks of his fleet foot
Shall guide not as before,
And the mountain-spirits mimic
His hunting call no more!

O moan not! I would give this braid—
Thy father's gift to me—
For but a single palmful
Of water now for thee.

Charles Harpur

An Anthem For The Australasian League

SHALL we sing of Loyalty
To the far South's fiery youth?
Yea—but let the pæan be
Of loyalty to God and Truth:
To Man, to progress, and to all
The free things, nobly free,
Of which their loved Australia shall
The golden cradle be.

Hark! her star-eyed Destinies
Pour their voices o'er the seas—
Hither, to the Land of Gold,
All who would be free!
Here a diadem behold
For immortal Liberty!
Not for Old World queens and kings,
Villain Slavery's outworn things!

Shall we sing of Loyalty
In this new and genial Land?
Yea—but let the pæan be
Of loyalty to Love's command,
To Thought, to Beauty, and to all
The glorious Arts that yet
In golden Australasia shall
Like chrysolites be set.

Charles Harpur

Andrew Marvell

Spirit, that lookest from the starry fold
Of truth's white flock, next to thy Milton there
Accept my reverence though but feebly told.
And oh! My heart from thy example rare
Henceforth its being for worthiest ends would bear.
Thy deeds, though plain, were towering all and bold,
And like the stedfast columns that uphold
Some awful temple, to thy duty were.
How much thy story has enlarged my ken
Of real greatness! Of mere conquerors I
Read but with anger, or with shame; but when
Of thee, uplifted into virtue's sky,
I glory in my brotherhood with men,
And feel how nobly all may live and die.

Charles Harpur

Asking In Vain

Still his little grave she seeketh
In her mother-sorrow wild,
Hush! While in her heart she speaketh
To the spirit of her child:
"Were we not to one another
Once the sum of all sweet gain?
Say then—say unto thy mother,
Shall we ever meet again?
Darling, shall we meet again,
Knowing, loving one another?
"Ah! What weary, weary sorrows
Have I known through loss of thee,
And what comfortless to-morrows
Wait me in this misery!
Were we not to one another
Once the sum of all sweet gain?
Say then—say unto thy mother,
Shall we ever meet again?
Darling, shall we meet again,
Knowing, loving one another?"

But the wind alone is heard
Sighing in reply,
Where the long grave-grass is stirred
As it floweth by.

Charles Harpur

Australia's First Great Poet

HIS lot how glorious whom the must shall name
Her first high-priest in this bright southern clime!
Aglow with light from her aspiring flame,
Catching the raptures of her Grecian prime,
Lifting these later days to heights sublime,
So shall he walk the glorious path of fame;
He boldly quarryeth from nature's frame
The sculptured marble of his lofty thyme
Enbreathed with beauty; o'er his splendid page
Shall glow his country-women's lustrous eyes,
And many a future hero's noble rage
His flame shall kindle; all the brave and wise,
Breathing his influence from age to age,
Shall sound his glory to his native skies.

Charles Harpur

Burns

MY OWN WILD BURNS! these rude-wrought rhymes of thine
In golden worth are like the unshapely coin
Of some new realm, yet pure as from the mine—
And Art may well be spared with such alloy
As dims the bullion to improve the die!

I love the truths of Art but more indeed
The simplest truths of Nature; and I read
To find her visibly enthroned on all
His muse hath builded like a fiery wall
Round national faith and patriotic pride
And Love and Valour both at Beauty's side.
Yea, more his outward rudeness, doth impress
Upon me still his innate strengthiness 1
Even as imperfect features oft enhance
Th' intrinsic power of some fine countenance.

How various too the spirit of his lyre—
How many-hued his soul's poetic fire!
In his one Muse such qualities we find
Mingled, as most are several in their kind:
Mirth like a billow brightening up before
The blasts of Grief—to die on Misery's shore,
Humour and Scorn and Pathos, with a reach
Above all effort, each exalting each!
Yea, Terror wedding its own sense of evil
To mother Pity—even for the Devil!

But best he moves to tears, or wakes such sighs
As fan the vital fire in Beauty's lustrous eyes.
Hark! when the winding Nith, the Afton, Clyde,
Rave downward or in gleaming quiet glide,
How Passion's very soul keeps burning by
In his wild verse from every covert nigh!
Or by the "bonnie Doon" or "gurgling Ayr,"
What heart-sweet memories like perfumes there
Re-breathe of bloomy joys untimely shed
And Love that followed the belov'ed dead
To Heaven!—and then while Pity weeps aloud

Clad in the pale ideal of a shroud,
Who would exchange the luxury of her woe
For all the pleasures that the heartless know!

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But should we need relief—another page
Shall blow the trumpet of his warlike rage!
And vilest of the villain herd is he
Who to his battle-dirge can listener be
Nor feel that he could die for Liberty!
Or who, while volleys forth the charging lay
Revoicing Bannockburn's all-glorious day,
From his exalted manhood then not spurns
Whate'er is traitorous, with a shout for Burns!

And now in thought I track with steps of fear
The noble peasant in his wild career.
The haven of his youth is left: the sea
Of Life is loudening all around; and she,
Who 'mid its perilous breakers might have stood
His first sweet love—she is not! Heaven looks bright
Still, and the hills laugh round him for delight,
But, ah! beneath the sun he finds no more
The Eden where his genius dwelt before!
And does he wander by his native Ayr?
The spirit of gladness hath gone up even there—
Up like the blithe notes of the lark when they
Have faded heavenward utterly away.
The more he mixes with his kind in mirth
The more he feels the homelessness of earth,
Till Life's lost charm seems beckoning him afar
In the white beauty of each lovely star!
She is not!—only sweeter is the tone
Of his wild lyre for the wild loss thus known.

But storying thus with love his native streams,
Thus by the life of his poetic dreams
Breathing suggestions that exalt and thrill
Into the spirit of each warrior hill;
Yea lighting Scotia's universal face
With mental beauty and affectionate grace,
Yet, did he die the victim of excess?
Alas! even Poesy by her mute distress

Admits the blot, nor could she save her son,
Her star-bright Rob, her love-anointed one!

Whilst yet the bard by Fortune unsubdued
Had only like a wild bird of the wood
Sung his own simple joys, then happy being good—
Ere he had sounded the world's heart and spurned
The soulless tone its hollowness returned,
His habitudes how temperate we find
From a self-pleasing tunefulness of mind.

But afterwards, that such a being so
Alive to joy and sensitive to woe,
With all in sympathy of rich and rare
Flushing his soul, as in the evening air
A western cloud grows grateful to the sense
With all the sun's unspeakable affluence
Of golden glory—mightily endowed
By genius too, with motives nobly proud
And full-summ'd wings of spiritual flame
Wherewith to mount against the burning eye of Fame;
Yet "bounded in a nutshell," or but wooed
By Fortune from a barren solitude,
Just to be stared at by her minions vain—
A sort of mental monster newly ta'en!
That such a being should resort at length
To whatsoever might repair the strength
Of ruined Joy a moment or inspire
The heart of dying Hope though with fallacious fire,
Was I believe, howe'er the truth appal,
Almost inevitably natural.

Ah, Scotia! it behoved thee then to guard
The worldly welfare of thy peasant bard!
But no, thou wouldst not—and thy gifted son
So placed, again the like career should run—
Again be naked left to Fortune's slurs,
A hound-like spirit in a land of curs!

But ah! if such may always be the fate
Of Genius native to a low estate,
For mercy's sake, nay for the sake of Burns,

Whose spirit methinks tow'rds each poor brother yearns,
Away the mask of kindred let us fling
At once, and brand it as an outcast thing!
Above communion with the rude, by mind
Exalted, and yet shunned by the refined!
Yea, let this warning in its face be hurl'd
As the collective verdict of the world:—

“Enrich the age with beauty if you will,
But you must do so at your peril still!
The sole reward's a life-long lack of bread,
And lastly a most desolate death-bed,
And then some century after, when the loss
And agony of Genius on the cross
Of Passion, shall have spread into a tale
Wherewith to spice the tavern lounge's ale,
Then shall your lowly grave, long grass o'ergrown,
Become a national sentiment in stone!
Yes, then a costly monument shall grace
And guard it in the land, a sacred place!”

Oh, must not Scorn have reeled with laughter—yes,
Even until shocked at her own bitterness,
To see by Scotland such a work up-piled
In honour of its so neglected child
Of grace and glory beautifully wild?
But there it stands—a type (at least to me)
Of intellectual hypocrisy!
Sad Poesy beholding, from it turns
And murmurs—What, a monument to Burns?
No: 'tis a sordid scoff perpetual made—
A final insult to his injured Shade!
The thankless country that denied him bread,
Now gives this stone—for he is safely dead!

Charles Harpur

Bush Justice

A Dealer, bewitched by gain-promising dreams
Settled down near my Station, to trade with my Teams,
And to sell to, my men too! from whom, through the nose,
Until then, I had screw'd just what prices I chose;
And for this, to be sure, I so hated the man,
That I swore ne'er to rest till I'd settled some plan
Whereby in the Lockup to cleverly cram him!
And so to my Super the matter I put,
Who thereupon 'found' a sheep's head near his hut,
And the 'how came it there?' was sufficient to damn him,
The Beak before who I then lugg'd him, as you
May suppose, being neck-deep in Squattery too.

'Twas a beautiful Hearing, as noted at large
By the Clerk (who was bonuss'd)-sheep-stealing the charge;
'Twould make your hearts laugh in the Records to see
How we bullied him out of his wits! -I say we,
Because while on this side against him 1 banged,
On the other the Beak said he ought to be hanged,
For a gallows-grained, scandalous son of transgression!
And committing him then-the case being so plain,
We sent him three hundred miles 'down on the chain'
To his Trial-and eke to his 'acquittal', at Session!
For what care we Squatters for Law on a push?
And for Justice! what has she to do with the Bush?

Charles Harpur

Change And Death

We build but for change and for death,
To whom a like homage pay glory and shame;
For something must pass to give being to both.
All things are rounded by change, and are perishing—
Even the God-built frame of the world.
The glories of life, as they shine,
But illumine a path to the gloom of the grave,
And the winter of shame is soon over and gone!
Of all we inherit, behold the inheritors!
Throned on the endless successions of Time.

Charles Harpur

Coleridge's Cristabel

Mark yon runnel, how 'tis flowing,
Like a sylvan spirit dreaming
Of the spring-blooms near it blowing,
And the sunlight o'er it beaming—
Bright from bank to bank, or growing
Darkly inter-freaked, when streaming
Where some willowy shade hangs bending
O'er it in green mingled masses—
Lights and shades and blossoms glowing,
All for greater beauty blending
In its vision as it passes.

Where that shelving rock is spied,
There, with a smooth warbling slide,
It lapses down into a cool
And brimming, not o'erflowing, pool
Then between its narrowed banks,
Playing merry gurgling pranks,
It gushes, till a channel'd stone
Gives it a more strenuous tone.

Then its bright curves flashing are,
Like a mighty scimitar
Dropt by some Jove-vanquished god,
And sunk into the yielding sod;
Or betwixt thick-reeded beaches
It whispers low mysterious speeches;
Or, with an underswirling spread
Over a wide pebbled bed,
It bubbles with a gentle pleasure
Ere some new mood change the measure.

Such a runnel typeth well
The sweet wild verse of Christabel.
And if, all suddenly, at length,
It sank, a broken end to make
In some subterranean lake,
A further type we might behold
Of the story, half untold.

But what might picture to our view
The wonder-world it warbles through!

Charles Harpur

Collins

A Genius caged in niceties of art;
A full-souled Bard that should have thought apart,
Creatively peculiar—not as taught
By models which (though rare and richly wrought,
As polished jewels set in chastened gold)
Have lost at length their birth-fire, and are cold.

Yet how shot through with beauty are the Lays
His nice hand fashioned for the after days!
Painting and Sculpture in his verse combine
With Poesy; and breathing through each line
In harmonised transfusion, they dispense
The spirit of a triune excellence.

Charles Harpur

Consolation

MINE heart is heavy with an ancient sorrow,
My brain is aching with a clinging grief,
And if I seek to smooth away the furrow
It plougheth in my soul, in the relief
And balminess of Song, the cheat is brief!
One feeling still from which the Past did borrow
Exceeding light, reminds me that the morrow
Must drag me farther from its lost belief.
For solace therefore would I dive with Truth
Into the depths of her remotest lore:
Somewhere in Nature's motherly breast there's ruth
Yet for her child though wounded to the core,
Though Life's first objects may beguile no more
And Misery clothe her with the dreams of youth!

Charles Harpur

Cora

Of Cora, once so dearly ours,
 Would mournful memory sing;
Of how she came when came the flowers,
 To leave us with the spring.
That day (returned) which gave her breath
 Was that whereon she died,
And o'er the pangs of birth and death
 Passed blooming as a bride.

The spring it came, with never a storm,
 And nine times came and went,
Till its whole spirit with her form
 In budding beauty blent.

Yea, till its sentiment was wreathed
 About her eye it came,
And all its foregone influence breathed
 At mention of her name.

And aye her soul, her inward worth,
 Flushed out in subtle glows,
As from its heart come mantling forth
 The ardours of a rose.

It was a glory from within
 That made her face so fair,
A radiant spirit void of sin
 Was working outward there.

Her locks as they were burnished shone
 In many a massy fold,
Or fell in their profusion down
 Like bursting sheaves of gold.

Bright garments of a spirit bright,
 That even in the shroud
Were like the sunset's aureate light
 Within a lifeless cloud.

When she, our angel of the sun,
Had spread her wings in flight,
Ah, still would mournful memory sing
Of her, our lost delight!

Child with full orbs of heaven-deep blue
Illumined violet,
So richly gentle—touched with dew,
Befringed with glossy jet.

When with the spring we saw depart
Those eyes, those tresses curled,
Then summer dying in love's heart,
To winger left the world.

Ah, soul that wore the snowy brow,
And gentle shining eyes,
Our song hath aye this burden now
Beneath the vernal skies.

In vain the dews of heaven are shed
Where blight hath been before;
So vainly weep we o'er the dead,
But only weep the more.

Yet from the bright time of her birth
And death, does faith construe
How, like the spring, though not on earth,
Our joy shall bloom anew.

Charles Harpur

Could We As Mortals

Could we as mortals but our end foresee,
How little in our minds the world would be;
Could we as spirits but this life renew,
And be again incarnate as we were,
How little might be done like what we do,
How little cared for that which now is most our care

Charles Harpur

Dawn In The Mountains

It is the morning star, arising slow
Out of yon hill's dark bulk, as she were born
Of its desire for day; then glides she forth
And into the dim sky, there leaving still
A whiteness in her wake that whitens more
As she ascends, till all the gloomy woods
Are touched along their multifarious lines
By a faint gleaming azure, creeping on:
A few thin stripes of fleecy clouds lie long
And motionless above the eastern steeps,
Like threads of silver lace; till suddenly,
Out from the flushing centre to the ends
On either hand, their lustrous layers become
Dipt all in crimson streaked with pink and gold;
And then at last are edged as with a band
Of crystal all on fire. Meanwhile the stars,
Those golden children of eternity,
Have all withdrawn within the Invisible;
That skiey gleam and azure prevalence
Which first bespoke the dawn works out and down
Ev'n to the grassy ground; till all the trees,
Clearly defined to their minutest sprays,
Stand in unspeakable beauty. Long before
The sun himself is seen, off towards the west
A range of mighty summits more and more
Blaze each like a huge cresset in the keen
Clear atmosphere. As if the spirit of light
Advancing swiftly thence, and eastward still,
Kept kindling them in quick succession, till
The universal company of cones
And peaks pyramidal stand burning all
With rosy fires like a wide-ranging circ
Of mighty altars, where the spirit of man
Can feel the presence of that greater soul
Which makes all nature, and of which itself
Is but an effluence, however far
Projected, or detached by tract of time;
Even as a sunbeam's fountain in the sun,
Whether it hit the earth or glance away

Into infinitude—shooting on for ever.

Charles Harpur

Description Of A Tropical Island

Behold an Indian isle, reposed
Upon the deep's enamoured breast,
Even like a royal bride, be-rosed
With passion in her happy rest.
Or, when the morn is there disclosed,
Or eve is robing in the west,
The deep, as by that isle embossed
With central gauds of sumless cost,
And else outspread in circuit—wide
And round as heaven from side to side—
Might figure to a fancy bold
A wide vast shield of fretted gold,
Dropped by some conquer'd elder god,
When on his track, where'er he trod,
Jove's chasing thunders rolled.
Or in the broad noon domed with heaven,
A world-wide temple's marble floor
It seemeth, with one alter graven
From the rude mass of things terrene,
By Time inspired with Eden lore;—
An isle-like alter, sculptured o'er
With craggy hills and valleys green,
And heaping forests hung between:
By Time, with an old love enthralled,
Wrought thus in living emerald;—
And after nature's earliest style
Is shaped that wondrous Indian isle.
Or circling out beneath the moon,
Or sowed with all the stars of night,
And by the lamp-like planets strewn
With long and flame-like tracks of light,
Might seem it to a watcher fond,
Grey Time's broad seal of diamond,
Enchased by nature, memory-taught,
With one most rich and rare device,
A haunting isolated thought
Of her sin-ruined Paradise.

A summer island! There the trees,

Of glorious forms, unseen elsewhere,
Hang forth in golden congeries
Their fruit through all the purple year;
And flowers of every sunset hue,
And peerless plants of stateliest stem,
Fresh-showered each morn with honey-dew,
Voluptuously impave and gem
The pillary aisles of primal groves
That skirt the sunny sea-board coves,
Or hang in their umbrageous crowds
From coasting slopes like verdant clouds:
While from the craggy midland hills,
Out of their gelid springs, the rills
Leap, as exulting to be free,
And thence in their bright liberty
Through glades and cultured valleys vast,
And many a wide pasture lea,
Come murmurously winding, fast
And flashing to the sea.

There, too, what birds on plain and mountain,
The fairest creatures of the earth,
The deepest dipt in beauty's fountain,
(The summer's loveliest birth),
Flock round, and vividly unfold
Their fulgent wings of feathery gold;
Bedropt with gem-like lustres, which
All interbeaming in their flight
Break, as they pass, into a rich
Flame-vision on the sight.
Thus fly they, and with splendours rare
Emblaze the warm and genial air.

Such is the summer wealth and worth
Of that bright isle I'd picture forth:
Nor wants it fields that well afford
The yellow grain and mellow gourd;
With many a cultivated plain
Prolific of the luscious cane
And mealy root: for all things there
Are bounteous in their kind, and fair
And genial; all but the bad mind

Of recreant man! And this hath made
Its very beauty seem designed
To deepen Evil's deadly shade,
And given its repute to be
Borne far abroad by every wind
That wafts a white sail o'er the sea,
Even like the savour, damp with doom,
Of some o'ergorged though costly tomb.
O learn how, like a Upas-tree,
(Not fabled) his dread cruelty
Can make a scene that else might tell
Of Paradise, a type of hell!

Charles Harpur

Dora

It was, I well remember, the merry springtime when
Young Dora in the eventide came singing up the glen,
And the song came up the glen, till one oft-repeated part
In a subtle stream of melody ran glowing through my heart.
A fond desire, long cherished, till then I might control,
Till then—but oh! That witching strain swift drew it from my soul;
Swift drew it from my soul, and she did not say me nay,
And the world of love was all the world to us that happy day.

I'm happy now in thinking how happy I was then,
When towards the glowing west my love went homeward down the glen;
Went homeward down the glen, while my comfort surer grew,
Till methought the old-faced hills at looked as they were happy too.

All happy, for that Dora and I so happy were!
All happy, for that human love had breathed its spirit there!
Had breathed its spirit there, and had made them conscious grow
Of the part they bore in that sweet time, that happy long ago.

Charles Harpur

Downward, Through The Blooming Roofage

Downward, through the blooming roofage
Of a lonely forest bower,
Come the yellow sunbeams,—falling
Like a burning shower:
So through heaven's starry ceiling
To the hermit soul's abode,
Comes the Holy Spirit,—earthward
Raying down from God.

Charles Harpur

Dreams Of The Beloved

HER IMAGE haunts me. Lo! I muse at even,
And straight it gathers from the gloom to make
My soul its mirror, which (as some deep lake
Impictures the cerulean smiles of heaven)
Through the hushed night retains it, when 'tis given
To take a warmer presence and incline
A glowing cheek all blushfully to mine,
Saying, "The heart for which thou long hast striven
With pale looks, fancy pale, I grant thee now,
And if for pity, yet more for Love's sweet sake,
My lips shall seal this promise on thy brow."
Thus blest in sleep, who would not weep to wake
When the cold truth from his belief must shake
Such vows, like blossoms from a shatter'd bough?

Charles Harpur

Early Summer

'Tis the early summer season, when the skies are clear and blue;
When wide warm fields are glad with corn as green as ever grew,
And upland growths of wattles engolden all the view.
Oh! Is there conscious joyance in that heven so clearly blue?
And is it a felt happiness that thus comes beating through
Great nature's mother heart, when the golden year is new?

When the woods are whitened over by the jolly cockatoo,
And swarm with birds as beautiful as ever gladdened through
The shining hours of time when the golden year was new?

Charles Harpur

Ecce Homo

A man of sorrows and with grief acquainted,
 He bowed His beauteous head to the rude hands
 Of Pilate's hireling bands;
And while beneath their cruel scourge He fainted,
 Forgave them, yearning through His shameful smart
 Even with a brother's heart.
And when upon their Roman cross they nailed Him,
 With mocking hatred and scorn's bitter smile,
 Hark! How He prayed, the while
Nature's extremest agony assailed Him—
 "Father, Thy mercy unto these renew,
 They know not what they do."

For the great precept of His Christianity
 Was always, "Live in charity; yea, live
 To love and to forgive,
That so My spirit may through all humanity
 Pass ever downward with a widening birth,
 Till peace possess the earth."

Charles Harpur

Emblems

A STREAMLET is a bright and beauteous creature
In some wide desert, where it keeps apart
Of each wayfarer's heart:
The Star of Evening is a gracious feature,
Instinct as 'twere with all the love that eyes
Have looked through at the skies.

And hence one emblems in its beauteous being
The memory of a Joy that in my heart
Flowed gratefully apart;
The other, to my spiritual seeing,
The perpetuity of Love's white grace
Yet in some heavenly place.

Charles Harpur

Eva Gray

PALER, paler, day by day,
Waxeth wordless Eva Gray,
Wasting through the heart away!

How shall those who wish her well,
Lift the shadow erst that fell
Round her from Love's darken'd spell?

Would they have her feast with Song?
Ah! its voices but prolong
Like far echoes Memory's wrong.

Would they to beguile her leisure
Sweet reliefs in music measure?
Music dreams of foregone pleasure.

Would they lure her where the spring
Gives the unshadow'd heart to wing
Upward like a bird and sing?

Still paler, paler, day by day,
Waxeth gentle Eva Gray,—
Wasting like a cloud away.

Charles Harpur

Finality

A HEAVY and desolate sense of life
Is all the Past makes mine—and still
A cold contempt of Fortune's strife,
Despite the dread
Of want of bread,
'Numbs, clogs like ice, my weary will.

How little is there on the earth
That I at length can venerate?
I see at most one world-wide dearth
Of wisdom free,
True piety,
Of noble love, of honest hate.

With little hope of higher good
For Man, for me, of earthly bliss,
Yet I withstand as I've withstood,
The evil plan
Man teaches man
Of valuing all things amiss.

There's nothing under the godlike sun
Worth loving to be bought or sold!—
The only wealth by labour won
Besides the food
Supplying blood,
Is human excellence—not gold!

All other things designed or done
Their only real value miss,
But in so far as this—each one
And all sustain,
Adorn, explain,
Secure and enter into this.

Beauty itself were nothing—no,
But for Love's golden heart and eye;
Nay Truth were dead but for the glow
Around its shrine

Of minds divine,
Of martyr minds that may not die.

Why pile we stone on stone to raise
Jail, fane, or public hall—why plan
Fortress or tower for future days,
Yet leave unbuilt
To wrong or guilt
That nobler pile—the Mind of Man?

With finer wool the land to dower,
Behold how strongly we are moved—
Even while a Nation's thinking power
Unvalued, yet
Unnamed, we let
All bestial grow, being unimprov'd!

Can then the seed in God's right hand
Of Happiness, when shed below,
Find fitting nurture in a land
Of wilding soil
And selfish toil?
I tell ye Time shall answer, No!

I tell ye that all public good,
All individual worth and peace,
All youthful nobleness of mood,
Like rose-leaves thin
Must wither in
The sordid breath of days like these.

O for a prophet's tongue to teach
The truths I cannot else reveal,
O for a conqueror's power to reach
The holy aim
That doth inflame
And nerve me with a martyr's zeal!

'Tis vain—the sacred wish is vain!
Men but renew the strifes of old:
But value with a greed insane
All devilish skill,

All splendid ill
That fetters Truth with chains of gold!

Charles Harpur

Forward Ho!

Forward ho! Forward ho! Soldiers of liberty,
Hope on; fight on; till man's whole race shall be
Free of all good under heaven's wide dome.
And doubt not, the earth that has grown old in sorrow
Shall grow young again in the light of that morrow
Predestined to make her fraternity's home.
Forward ho! Forward ho! Lovers of truth and good!
Think on; write on; till earth's whole herohood
Stand in one faith under heaven's wide dome;
And shout to behold all the hilltops adorning
With sunflowers of glory the glow of that morning
Predestined to mark her fraternity's home.

Charles Harpur

Fragments From 'Genius Lost'

Prelude

I SEE the boy-bard neath life's morning skies,
While hope's bright cohorts guess not of defeat,
And ardour lightens from his earnest eyes,
And faith's cherubic wings around his being beat.

Loudly the echo of his soul repeats
Those deathless strains that witch'd the world of old;
While to the deeds, his high heart proudly beats,
Of names within them, treasured like heroic gold.

To love he lights the ode of vocal fire,
And yearns in song o'er freedom's sacred throes,
Or pours a pious incense from his lyre,
Wherever o'er the grave a martyre-glory glows.

Or as he wanders waking dreams arise,
And paint new Edens on the future's scroll,
While on the wings of rapture he outflies
The faltering mood that warns in his prophetic soul.

"All doubt away!" he cries in trustful mood;
"From Time's unknown the perfect yet shall rise;
And this full heart attests how much of God
Might dwell with man beneath these purple-clouded skies!"

Thus holiest shapes inhabit his desire,
And love's dream-turtles sing along his way;
Thus faith keeps mounting, like a skylark, higher,
As hope engoldens more the morning of his day.

But ah! Too high that harp-like heart is strung,
To bear the jar of this harsh world's estate;
And 'tis betrayed by that too fervent tongue
How burns the fire within, that bodes a wayward fate.

Soon on the morning's wings shall fancy flee,
And world-damps quench love's spiritual flame,
And his wild powers, now as the wild waves free,

Be reef-bound by low wants and beaten down by shame.

Now mark him in the city's weltering crowd
Haggard and pale; and yet, in his distress,
How quick to scorn the vile—defy the proud—
Grim, cold, and distant now—then seized with recklessness.
Yet oft what agony his pride assails,
When life's first morning faith to thought appears
Lost in the shadowy past, and nought avails
Her calling to the lost—then blood is in his tears.

Henceforth must his sole comrade be despair,
Sole wanderer by his side in ways forlorn;
And as a root-wrenched vine no more may bear,
No more by this dry wood shall fruit be borne.

No more! And every care of life, in woe
And desperation, to the wind is hurled!
He thanks dull wondering pity with a blow,
And leaps, though into hell, out of the cruel world.

First Love

I, even when a child,
Had fondly brooded, with a glowing cheek
And asking heart, with lips apart, and breath
Hushed to such silence as the matron dove
Preserves while warming into life her young,
Over the secretly-disclosing hope
Of finding in the fulness of my youth
Some sweet, congenial one to love, to call
My own. And one has been whose soul
Felt to its depth the influence of mine,
Albeit between us the sweet name of Love
Passed never, to bring blooming to the cheek
Those rosy shames that burn it on the heart—
Symbol of heaven, sole synonym of God!—
Yet not the less a sympathy that heard,
Through many a whisper, Love's sweet spirit-self,
Low breathing in the silence of our souls,
Knit us together with a still consent.

And she was beautiful in outward shape,
As lovely in her mind. Such eyes she had
As burn in the far depths of passionate thought,
While yet the visionary heart of youth
Is lonely in its hope! Cherries were ne'er
More ruby-rich, more delicately full,
Than were her lips; and, when her young heart would,
A smile, ineffably enchanting, played
The unwitting conqueress there.

Her light, round form
Had grace in every impulse, motions fair
As her life's purity; her being all
Was as harmonious to the mind, as are
Most perfect strains of purest tones prolonged,
To music-loving ears.

But full of dole
Her mortal fate to me! Ere sixteen springs
Had bloomed about her being, a most fell
And secret malady did feel amid
The roses of her cheeks, her lips—but still,
Felon-like, shunned the lustre of her eyes,
That more replendent grew. And so, before
Those glowing orbs had turned their starry light
Upon one human face with other troth
Than a meek daughter or fond sister yields;
Ere her white arms and heaving bosom held
A nestling other than the weary head
Of sickness or a stranger babe, the grass
That whistled dry in the autumnal wind,
Was billowing round her grave.

And yet I live
Within a world that knoweth her no more.

.
'Tis well when misery's harassed son
For shelter to the grave doth go,
As to his mountain-hold may run
The hunted roe.

Yet when, beneath benignant skies,
The angle Grace herself appears
But Death's born bride, the stoniest eyes
Might break in tears.

Chorus of the Hours

Ah! That Death

Should ever, like a drear, untimely night,
Descent upon the loved, in Love's despite!

Ah! That a little breath

Expiring from the world, should leave each scene,
Where its warm influence before hath been,
So empty to the heart in its despair
Of all but misery—misery everywhere!

Thus in the morning of my life have I
No happiness rooted in the earth, to hold
My spirit to the actual. All my hopes
Are blown away by adverse chilling winds,
Blown sheer away, out of the world, to seek
Such solace as may be derived from far
And lonely flights of faith. Yet even these
Only divert, not satisfy, my soul;
Still, when her wings refuse them, wearied out
By so wild-will'd an aeronaut as I,
Having no nearer comfort, even as now,
Their foregone influence do I meditate,
Tracing them upward in their heavenward track.
As through an ocean of uprolling mist
Amid the morning Alps, a morning bird
Keeps soaring, trustful of the risen sun—
Who then is turning all the mountain tops
To diamond islets washed by waves of gold,
That shatter as they surge—keeps soaring, till
It shoots at length into the cloudless light,
And gleams a bird of fire; so faith upmounts
Through the earth's misty tribulations, up
Into the clear of the eternal world,
Unfainting, fervent, till, with happy wings
Outspreading full amid the rays of God

It glories, gleaming like the Alpine bird.
But wearying in her flight, even faith returns,
As does the bird—returns into the mist
That shutteth down all less adventurous life,
But stronger for the mighty vision left
And for the heavenly warmth upon her wings.

Once,—did I only stand in thought beside
The grave of one who had for freedom died,
Or on some spot made holy by the vow
Of tuneful love, though of an ancient day,—
My very life would thrill—and am I now
 Journeying away
From that fraternal interest which cast
Around me then the feeling of the past?
I know not; but my heart no more will leap
Even to the trump of some Homeric lay:
Bad progress is it, if from that I keep
 Journeying away!

Misery

As the moaning wild waves ever
 Fret around some lonely isle,
There are griefs that no endeavour
 Stilleth even for a while,
Beating at my heart for ever,
 Beating at it now,
Beating at my heart—and aching
 Upward to my brow.

Like the wild clouds flying over
 High above all human reach,
There are joys that I their lover
 Cannot even scale in speech;
Flying o'er my head for ever
 Flying o'er it now;
Flying o'er my head—and shading
 With despair my brow.

Chorus of the Hours

Alas! The veriest human clod
Is happier than he,
On whom the majesty,
And the mystery

Of thought, had fallen like the fire of God!

Ah! Those by nature gifted to pursue
The beautiful and true
Have chiefly in dishonour trod
The regions they redeemed—as even yet they do!

And where are they, to gods upgrown,
Shall drive this darksome doom?
Ye suffering sons of Genius, you
Must dissipate the gloom
That clouds you even as of old
In its mist so deadly cold!
With your own injuries, let stern thought
Of the most desolate deathless of those
Who with the power of darkness fought,
(Each in his age, whereon his spirit rose,
As rises some peculiar star of night
To burn eternally apart,)
Yea, let stern thought of those
Now nerve you to re-urge the lengthened fight;
And for those others,
Your future brothers,
Now follow victory with unflinching heart!

Looking Beyond

Yes, it is well, in this our cold grim earth
To steal an hour for meditation free;
To die in body, and with all the mind
Thus freed, to bridge with might beams of thought
The depth of the Eternal. Even on me
Such mood sometimes descends, the precious gift
Of pitying Urania, then I fly,
Even as a stork mid evening's purple clouds
In mid-Elysiums—Paradises fair

Perhaps in stars consummated, whereon
The once earth-treading votaries of Truth
In soul reside, until a period when
Knowledge, advancing them from height to height,
And Love, grown perfect, shall have nurtured forth
Angelic wings for heaven.

But by these

I mean not such as with sour faces boast;
Blind moles of fear, who deem thy honour God
By offering up on outraged human hearts,
As upon blood-stained altars, every gay
And happy feeling, every rose wish
That sweetens human souls: and who, convened
In their dull tabernacles, all at once
Behowl the Diety as dogs the moon,
Or deprecate his wrath with grovelling rites,
And boisterous groans, that from stentorian lungs
Are grunted, swine-like, forth! Oh no! For such
The paradise of fools full wide extends
Her dismal gates!

I speak not thus in scorn;

Scorn is not sweet to me; but when the rights
Of man are trampled on; when villains sit
In the high places of the land, and sport
With what the just hold sacred; when mere wealth
Can win its Nestor's favour, and the sleek
Regard even of its saints, and when religion
Itself is ever in a bad extreme—
A bloated pomp of mystery and show,
Or a most crude and coarse perversity,
Vile as a beggar's raiment—then the scorn
Of indignation, then the brave disgust
Of righteous shame and honest hate, put forth
In tones like God's own thunder burst aboard,
Are things the thin-souled scoundrel never feels.

Enough. The good I deem leave vain disputes
On things that are, and must be from their kind,
Mainly unknown, and still with faithful heed
Have care of those God gave them light to see

Strewn round their daily being: and of such
Rightfully choosing, and to fitting ends
Well shaping all, upbuild with honest hands
A true and simple life; and in the jars
Of national factions they alway, despite
Of frowning kings and banning priests afford
Their aid to freedom.

Yet will there come a day, though not to me,
When excellence of being shall be sought
Not only thus in vision, but within
The actual round of this diurnal world,—
A day whose light shall chase the clouds that veil
Upon the mountain tops of old repute
The imaginary gods of wrongful power,
And pierce thence downward to the vales of toil,
Healing and blessing all men—the great day
Of knowledge. Then the accident of birth—
That empty imposition! Or the claim
Of wealth—that earthly and most gnomish cheat!
Shall neither arrogate to any, proud
Distinctions as of right, nor qualify
Any by its sole influence for power
Over his fellows, but all men shall stand
Proudly beneath the fair wide roof of heaven,
As God-created equals, each the sire
Of his own worth, and the joint sanctioner
Of all political pertainment, all
Moral and social honour.

Yea, for such
Is Freedom's charter traced upon the heart
Of our humanity, whene'er 'tis rid
Of the foul scroff of vice, and on the brain
Built godlike, when disclouded by God's light
Of a too old distemper's fatal rout,
Of boastful hell-suggested superstitions
And customs born of Error. And let none
Despair of such an advent; for, as when
Some solemn wood's familiar cadences,
Deepening and deepening all around, portend
The salutary storm, even so the wide

Pervading instinct of a sure revolt
Against the ancient tyrannies of the earth
Roams on before it in the living stress
Of knowledge, omening the unborn change
By harshening still to the fine ear of thought
The daily jar of customary wrongs.

And let none fear that earthly power, or aught
Less than Omnipotence, can still or stay
The solemn prelude that for ever thus
Keeps deepening round and onward in the front
Of that great victory over wrong, which time
Shall witness—wrong and its abettors, all
Whom lust of sway unsanctioned by the truth
Shall to the last disnature; for the spirit
It first evokes—a mighty will to think—
Doth thenceforth charge it with oracular tones
That may not be mistaken.

Yea, great thoughts
With great thoughts coalescing through the world,
Into the future of all progress pour
Sun-prophecies, there quickening what were else
Nascent too long.

Chorus of the Hours

O why is not this beauteous earth
The Eden men imagine—the fair seat
Of fruitful peace, pure love, and sunny mirth?
And why are its prime souls, though so complete
In apprehension of a Godlike state,
The subjects ever of fraternal hate—
Oppressing or oppressed,
That so the portion is of all, deceit
And fear, and anger, sorrow, and unrest?

There's not one bright enduring thing
In this great round of nature that appears—
No shining stars, no river murmuring,
No morn-crowned hill, no golden evening scene,
That hath not glimmered and distorted been
Through the dim mist of tears—

Tears not as blood from some wrung human brain,
Throbbing and aching with unpitied pain!

There is not one green mound, existent long
In any region, nor old wayside stone,
On which some weary child of social wrong
Hath sat not—there, alone,
To bite his pallid lip and heave the unheeded groan!

And such hath been the state of man
Since first the race's recreancy began;
And thus his piety is scared away
From earth, its proper home,
To seek vague heavens above the source of day;
Or out beyond the gorgeous gloom
Wherewith dusk evening curtains up the west;
There flying, like the psalmist's dove, to rest
In sinless gardens of perpetual bloom
And islands of the blest.

Ah! My heart

Is like a core of fire within my breast,
And by this agony is all my mind
Shaken away from its tenacious hold
Of time and sensuous things. Now come, thou meek
Religious trust, that sometime to my soul
Fliest friendly, like a heaven-descended dove,
With wings that whisper of the peace of God!
Come, and assure it now, that all thus seen
Of evil, by the patience of the One
Almighty Master of the Universe,
Is but allowed, to dash our vain repose
On Time's foundations, and all mad belief
In human consequence; that, finally,
Amid the death of expectations fond,—
Discoveries diurnal that the pomps
And pleasures of the world are but bright mists
Concealing, mid its heights of pomp and shame,
Its depths of degradation,—that all weal,
Beauty, and peace, even in their permanence,
Are but the florid riches of a soil

That crusts the cone of some yet masked volcano,
Whose darling fires but wait the dread command:
"Up, to the work appointed!"—we at length,
Even thus admonished, thus in hope and heart
Subdued and chastened, might be so constrained
To look between the thunder-bearing clouds
That darken over this mysterious ball
Blind face, for surer, better things beyond
Its flying scenes of doubtful good, commixed
With evident evil: yea, conclude at last
That wereso in the universe of God
Our better home may be, it is not here;
Then here why build we?

O! Then, farewell,
Fancy and Hope, twin angels of the past!
Thee, Fancy, chiefly of my younger life
The spiritual spouse, farewell! With all
Thy pictured equipage: the shapes sublime
Of universal liberty and right,
Dethroning tyrants and investing worth
Alone with power and honour; and with these
Fair visions that come shining to the heart
Like evening stars from a serener air
Of generosity, in rapture high
At rival excellence; of charity
Living in secret for her own sweet sake;
Of mercy lifting up a fallen foe;
Of pity yearning o'er the child of shame;
Unselfish love, and resolute friendship—all,
Even to common trust—farewell! These lights
May never burn in the grey dome of time
or constellate for me the world again!
No more! No, never more.

The Cemetery

Here, only here
In the dark dwellings of this silent city
Is rest for the world-weary. Slander here,
Disease and poverty, forego their victim;

The fox of envy and the wolf of scorn
Snarl not within these gates. The enemy
Who comes to triumph o'er the powerless bones
That once he feared, still hates—even as he comes,
By the dismaying silence smitten, stops,
Listening for some far reproachful voice
Heard only through the mystery of his soul,
And, shuddering, asks forgiveness. Slept I here,
And should an enemy so plead, and might
My injured spirit, hovering over, hear—
The boon were granted. O that here, even now,
The sense were frozen to forgetfulness
That I, upon this populous star of God,
This earth that I was born to, and have loved,
Am utterly uncared-for and alone!

Whither?

Alas! These thoughts are storming all my soul
With madness—yea, the madness of despair!
And though my reason lifting up its strength
As desperately confronts them, just as well
Might the poor castaway, who helpless stands
On some bleak rock in the mid ocean, preach
Obedience to the breakers surging round
That perilous point, as I (in this wild gloom)
Strive to o'ercome them—And why should I strive?
No, rather let them howl like midnight wolves
Within my failing brain, and gnaw and tug
At my sick heart, their bitter food, for they
Will help me to my one desire—death.

Be his rest who sleeps below,
Done to death by toil and woe,
 Sound and sweet.
So much in fortune did he lack,
 So little meet
Of kindness, as with bleeding feet
He journeyed life's most barren track,
That only hate in its deceit,
Not love, not pity, would entreat

To have him back.
But he sleeps well where many a bloom
That might not grace his living home
Pranks the raised sod:
Tokening, perhaps, that one who here
Missed the world's smile, hath met elsewhere
The smile of God.

Charles Harpur

Freedom In Faith

HIS MIND alone is kingly who (though one)
But venerates of present things or past
What he believeth good, kneeling to none
Save God and Truth! Who awed not by this vast
And shadowy scheme of Life, but anchored fast
In Love and sitting central like the sun
So gives his mental beams to pierce and run
Through all its secrets while his days may last;
And thus progressive, little faith hath he
For mysteries, till sounding them he hear
The gathered tones of their stirr'd depths agree
With that religious harmony severe
Which anthems to his spiritual ear
The invisible Presence of the Deity.

Charles Harpur

Gray

The loud, apt epithet, applying sure;
The dim-drawn image, artfully obscure;
The perfect stanza, framed of words as choice
And round as pearls, yet liquid to the voice;
A pith of phrase, and musical array
Of numbers;—these are the prime charms of Gray.

The naked majesty and open wonder
Of true sublimity heaped in lines of thunder;
That artless grace wherewith the olden time
Dandled the happy infancy of Rhyme;
That negligent melody which shames the trick
Of wire-drawn verse, and verse-drawn rhetoric:
These in our rich old Bards abound; but these
To Gray were literary heresies.

Charles Harpur

Greatness

That man is truly great, and he alone
 Who venerates, of present things or past
The absolute only,—is the liege of none
 Save God and truth; who, awed not by this vast
 And shadowy scheme of life, but anchored fast
In love, and sitting central like the sun,
So gives his mental beams to pierce and run
 Through all its secrets while his days may last.
While thus progressive, little faith has he
 For mysteries, till, sounding them, he hear
The gathered tones of their stirred depths agree
 With that religious harmony severe,
 Which ever anthems to his spirit's ear
The hallowing presence of the Deity.

Charles Harpur

Hope On

Power's a cheat, success but trying,
Even pleasure bears a sting;
Still 'tis useless, useless sighing,
Rather list to Hope replying—
 "The flowers must come again with spring;
And in the trampled way we re going
Streams of comfort yet are flowing—
 Hark! I hear them murmuring."
Fame's a liar in the nation!
Love hath oft a wayward wing;
Still, hence seek not for occasion
To impugn Hope's sweet persuasion—
 "The flowers will come again with spring;
And in the world-wide way we re going
Streams of pure good yet are flowing—
 Hark! I hear them murmuring."

Friendship turns, itself denying
Even Truth the heart may wring;
Still, though trust be daily dying,
Listen still to Hope replying—
 "The flowers will come again with spring:
And in the blasted way we re going
There's yet one healing current flowing—
 Hark! I hear it murmuring."

Charles Harpur

How Full Of God

How full of God those evening skies,
 Arrayed in calmest loveliness;
But ah! To think how many eyes
 Are wet with weeping none the less.
Nay, hearts are aching, eyes are wet
 The more that they so richly glow,
Since in the past some glory set,
 To leave them in the dark of woe.

To leave them dark, and such a tinge
 O'er every aftersunset throw,
That it should only seem to fringe
 The pall of a dead long ago.

Ah well-a-day! But so it is,
 Pale sorrow groaneth everywhere,
And pain and loss we cannot miss;
 To think is almost to despair.

Charles Harpur

Humanity

I dreamed I was a sculptor, and had wrought
Out of a towering adamantine crag
A mighty figure, stately, giant-limbed,
And with the face of a Homeric god.
Planted aloft upon the levelled cone
Of a vast tumulus, that seemed to swell
Above the sinking outline of the view
As up from the dusk past, firm fixed it stood,
Full in the face of the resplendent morn
Against the deep of heaven all flecked with clouds;
And I methought was glorying in my work
One large arm lay upon the powerful breast,
The other held a scroll. The ample head,
Majestic in its dome-like curvatures,
Looked heedful out with full expectant eyes
Over the brightening world, and in the lines
And gracious curves of nostrils and of lips
You traced the use of smiles. But on the brows
There pained a weight and weariness of thought,
And furrows spake of care. Much, too, of doubt
Shadowed the meaning of the mighty face;
Much was there also in its cast, that seemed
Significant of a striving to believe,
To be the liege of an ancestral faith
In things remote, unsecular, more the birth
Of mystic than sciential lore, and thence
But half assured itself.

Such was my work:

A formal type, though dream-designed, it seemed
Of that great ultimate of manhood, which
By daring, hoping, doing, and enduring,
Doubting, divining,—still from age to age
Doth mould the world, and lead it truthward on,
Even through its seers, its heroes, and its kings:
For all who saw it were constrained, methought,
To sigh, as they looked up—"Humanity."

Charles Harpur

John Heki

Should Switzerland's rude rocks be held the throne
Of freedom (sanctioned there by God to quell
All proud invaders, Gessler-like o'erthrown!)
Because the echoes in their caves that dwell
Once leaped exultant at the shout of Tell?
And thine, New Zealand, yet be left unknown
To glory, now that thy dark chief hath sown
Broad over them a like memorial spell?
Should Wallace be a word time ne'er may lose?
And Hofer (he who for his mountains died
Rather than see the spoiler there abuse
Freedom's rock-alter!) Be a sound of pride
Yet Heki's name remain unglorified
In the grand lore of the heroic muse

Charles Harpur

Joshua

When Joshua in the days of old
 Stood forth upon old Jordan's bank,
 And past the flood that backward rolled
 His host came dryshod, rank on rank;
 The warrior angel of the Lord,
 A glorious shining creature, bared
 Before him there a flaming sword,
 And thus the mind of God declared—
 "Lo, I am with you! Here shall dwell
My chosen people; here I plant thee, Israel!"
 The walls of Jericho are strong,
 And ribbed throughout with many a tower,
 And yet her monarch's armed throng
 Stand trembling round his throne of power;
 For circling still those walls about,
 Behold the Ark of God is borne!
 Blow, trumpets, blow! Shout, Israel, shout!
 'Tis done, and from the earth upturn
 At once they scatter and disform
Like the grey, cloud-built bastions of a bursting storm.

 Five kings at Gibeon are met,
 Five mighty kings of ancient name,
 And they are boasting they will set
 A blood-red bound to Joshua's fame.
 But the sun stands fast on Gibeon's hill,
 And the moon is fixed o'er Ajalon,
 That Israel's host in vengeance still
 Floodlike may spread God's victory on!
 And where are now those kings? Yon cave
Hides them in vain, or hides them only as their grave.

Thus Israel, in the days of old
Led by that prophet of the Lord,
Like a devouring tempest rolled
Destructive o'er each race abhorred;
And all their war, how little worth
To work 'gainst that prevailing sword
In Israel's front far flaming forth,

For what are numbers to the Lord?
That multitudinous array
Broke, melting as it rolled like morning mist away

Charles Harpur

Life And Death

A little light, heat, motion, breath;
Then silence, darkness, and decay;
This is the change from life to death
 In him the weareth clay.
But Time's one drop 'twixt that and this,
Ah! What a gulf of doom it is.
The cheek is fair, the eye is bold,
The ripe lip like a berry red;
Then the shroud clothes them;—thus behold
 The living and the dead!
And how time's last cold drop serence
Swells to eternity between.

Yet not for horror, nor to weep;
But through the solemn dark to see
That life, though swift, is wonder-deep,
 And death the only key
That lets to that mysterious height
Where earth and heaven in God unite.

Charles Harpur

Like Him Who Great Reports Of Tilth Rejects

Like him who great reports of tilth rejects,
Because his own is a most barren field,
Is he who man's divinity suspects,
Because his own soul doth so little yield.
Better is one who through himself can see
How good, how lovely, all mankind might be,
Though mere experience give his faith the lie,
And all his hopes breathe the world's breath—to die!

Charles Harpur

Love

My soul; is raying like a star,
My heart is happier than a bird,
And all because, through fortune's jar,
I hear one little word.
I feel as if all life and might
Had started on a loftier course,
As if all passion and delight
Were deepened at the source.

I feel as if the very air
Was breathed from out the heart of love,
And in my heart, still rapture rare,
Sat brooding like a dove.

O beauty! Even through a word
What powers are thine to raise and bless!
O love! A seraph's voice is heard
In thy confiding Yes!

Love is God's messenger divine,
And nature, tending up to God,
Shall breathe His clear air pure and fine
Whatever love hath trod.

Charles Harpur

Love Sonnets

I.

HOW beautiful doth the morning rise

O'er the hills, as from her bower a bride

Comes brightened—blushing with the shame-faced pride

Of love that now consummated supplies

All her full heart can wish, and to the eyes

Dear are the flowers then, in their green haunts spied,

Glist'ning with dew: pleasant at noon the side

Of shadowy mountains ridging to the skies:

At eve 'tis sweet to hear the breeze advance

Through the responding forest dense and tall;

And sweeter in the moonlight is the dance

And natural music of the waterfall:

And yet we feel not the full charm of all,

Till love be near us with his magic glance.

II.

WHY tower my spirits, and what means this wild

Commotion at my heart—this dreamy chase

Of possible joys that glow like stars in space?

Now feel I even to all things reconciled,

As all were one in spirit. Rudely up-piled

Brown hills grow beautiful; a novel grace

Exalts the moorland's once unmeaning face;

The river that, like a pure mind beguiled,

Grows purer for its errors, and the trees

That fringe its margin with a dusky shade,

Seem robed in fairy wonder; and are these

Exalted thus because with me surveyed

By one sweet soul whom well they seem to please

Here at my side—an almost stranger maid?

III.

NOW sunny, as the noontide heavens, are
 The eyes of my sweet friend, and now serene
 And chastely shadowy in their maiden mien;
Or dream-power, sparkling like a brilliant star
Fills all their blue depths, taking me afar
 To where, in the rich past, through song is seen
 Some sovereign beauty, knighthood's mystic queen,
Pluming with love the iron brows of war!
Bright eyes before, with subtle lightning glance
 Have kindled all my being into one
Wild tumult; but a charm thus to enhance
 My heart's love-loyalty till now had none!
And can this witchery be the work of chance?
 I know not—I but know my rest is gone.

IV.

A VAST and shadowy hope breaks up my rest
 Unspoken; nor dares even my pen to write
 How my pent spirit pineth day and night
For one fair love with whom I might be blest!
And ever with vague jealousies possessed
 The more I languish, feeling these may so
 Oppress affection that for very woe
She longs at last to die deep buried in my breast!
O for a beaker of the wine of love,
 Or a deep draught of the Lethèan wave!
The power a mutual passion to emove,
 Or that repose which sealet up the grave!
Yet these my bonds are blameless; one more wise
Had dreamt away his freedom, dreaming of her eyes.

V.

HER image haunts me! Lo! I muse at even,
And straight it gathers from the gloom, to make
My soul its mirror; which (as some still lake
Holds pictured in its depths the face of heaven)
Through the hushed night retains it: when 'tis given
To take a warmer presence and incline
A glowing cheek burning with love to mine,
Saying—"The heart for which thou long hast stiven
With looks so fancy-pale, I grant thee now;
And if for ruth, yet more for love's sweet sake,
My lips shall seal this promise on thy brow. "
Thus blest in sleep—oh! Who would care to wake,
When the cold real from his belief must shake
Such vows, like blossoms from a shattered bough?

VI.

SHE loves me! From her own bliss-breathing lips
The live confession came, like rich perfume
From crimson petals bursting into bloom!
And still my heart at the remembrance skips
Like a young lion, and my tongue too trips
As drunk with joy! While very object seen
In life's diurnal round wears in its mien
A clear assurance that no doubts eclipse.
And if the common things of nature now
Are like old faces flushed with new delight,
Much more the consciousness of that rich vow
Deepens the beauteous, and refines the bright,
While throned I seem on love's divinest height
Mid all the glories glowing round its brow.

VII.

FAIR as the day—a genial day serene
Of early summer, when the vital air

Breathes as 'twere God's own breath, and blossoms rare
Fill many a bush, or nestle in between
The heapy folds of nature's mantle green,
 As they were happier for the joint joy there
 Of birds and bees;—so genial, and so fair
And rich in pleasure, is my life's sole queen.
My spirit in the sunshine of her grace
 Glow with intenser being, and my veins
Fill as with nectar! In your pride of place
Ye mighty, boast! Ye rich, heap gold space!
 I envy nor your grandeur nor your gains,
Thus gazing at the heaven of her face!

VIII.

FAIR as the night—when all the astral fires
 Of heaven are burning in the clear expanse,
 My love is, and her eyes like star-depths glance
Lustrous with glowing thoughts and pure desires,
And that mysterious pathos which inspires
 All moods divine in mortal passion's trance—
 All that its earthly music doth enhance
As with the rapture of seraphic lyres!
I gaze upon her till the atmosphere
 Sweetens intensely, and to my charmed sight
All fair associated forms appear
 Swimming in joy, as swim yon orbs in light—
And all sweet sounds, though common, to mine ear
 Chime up like silver-winged dreams in flight.

IX.

TO-DAY we part! I far away to dwell
 From this the scene that saw our bud of love
 Bloom into rosehood. The blue heavens above—
These hills and valleys, with each rocky dell,

Echo's dim hold,—shall these retain no spell
Of foregone passion? Shall they speak no tale
Of grief they shrouded in this shaded vale?
Shall they of all our joy the story tell?
To-morrow—and the sun shall climb yon hill
Bright as before; all winged things shall wake
To song as glad as if we listened still;
The stream as mirthfully its wild way make.
But I, pursuing fortune's wandering star,
Shall see and hear them not—from thee and them afar.

X.

ABSENCE

NIGHTLY I watch the moon with silvery sheen
Flaking the city house-tops—till I feel
Thy memory, dear one, like a presence steal
Down in her light; for always in her mien
Thy soul's similitude my soul hath seen!
And as she seemeth now—a guardian seal
On heaven's far bliss, upon my future weal
Even such thy truth is—radiantly serene.
But long my fancy may not entertain
These bright resemblances—for lo! A cloud
Blots her away! And in my breast the pain
Of absent love recurring pines aloud!
When shall I look in thy bright eyes again?
O my beloved with like sadness bowed!

XI.

THERE is a trying spirit in the drift
Of human life, apportioning the prize
(In that true quality wherein it lies)
That each one seeketh, to that seeker's gift.
Hence must he suffer many a perilous shift

Who unto fame by martial deeds would rise;
Hence look at liberty with lion-eyes
Must he who'd make the march of man more swift:
Hence heaven's best crown, more glorious than the sun,
Is only gained by dying for our kind;
And hence, too, true love's highest meed is won
Only through agonies of heart and mind.
Such, dear one, is the fate (and therefore ours)
Of all whom love would crown with faith's divinest flowers.

XII.

THE VOYAGE to that haven of true love
Was ever stormy since the world began,
Or story from its earliest fountain ran;
Teaching us truly that the gods approve,
In the superior destinies of man,
Only what most the noblest hearts shall move:
Hence was Leander's life so brief a span,
Who, weltering a mortal while above
The bursting wave, sent on his soul to where
The Maid of Sestos from her watch-tower's height
Looked for his coming through the troubled air,
Nor knew that he had died for her that night!
Hence Sappho's fatal leap! (The cause the same)
Hence too was Petrarch's heart the martyr of his flame!

XIII.

LOSS follows gain, and sadness waits on mirth,
And much is wasted where too much is given;
We cannot fully have our joy on earth
Without diminishing our joy in heaven.
Envy dogs merit; madness neighbours wit;
Stale is their gladness who were never sad;
And Dives in this fleshly life, 'tis writ,

Received his good things, Lazarus his bad.
Thus, dearest, o'er the waves of many things
My troubled mind, even like a ship, is tossed,
And from the quest this only inference brings:
That true love in its earthly course is crossed,
Lest by dull worldly usage it should be
Too worldly cramped to soar in large eternity.

Charles Harpur

Love, Dreaming Of Death

I dreamt my little boys were dead
And I was sitting wild and lone;
On closed unmoving knees my head
Lay rigid as a stone.
And thus I sat without a tear,
And though I drew life's painful breath,
All life to me seemed cold and drear,
And comfortless as death:

Sat on the earth as on a bier,
Where loss and ruin lived alone,
Without the comfort of a tear—
Without a passing groan.

And there was stillness everywhere,
Ensphering one wide sense of woe;
The stillness of a world's despair,
Whose tides had ceased to flow.

Yea, so eternal seemed my grief,
Time moved out, neither slow nor fast,
Nor recked I whether periods brief
Or centuries had passed.

It was as if to marble cold
My loss had petrified the air,
And I was shut within its hold,
Made deathless by despair.

Made deathless in a world of death,
There ever sitting wild and lone,
With all but one pent painful breath
Transmuted into stone.

And more the gorgon horror crushed
With dry petrific pressure in,
Till forth my waking spirit rushed
With agonizing din!

And oh! What joy it was to wake—
To cast that haggard dream away,
And from its stony influence break
Into the living day!

I sought the objects of my care,
And felt, while I embraced the twain,
How much even from a dream's despair
A father's love may gain.

When this dream-record long ago
I penned, how little did I deem
That yet a distant coming woe
Was shadowed in its theme.

For ah! Of that beloved twain,
The lips of one, then warm with breath,
I since have kissed unkissed again,
For they were cold in death.

A swift wild death! And when I think
Of all that I have lost thereby,
My heart hath pangs that seem to drink
All Mara's waters dry;

Yea, pangs that would my life destroy,
Did faith not whisper oft between:
"Peace! Sire of an immortal boy
Beyond this mortal scene."

Charles Harpur

Marvellous Martin

Who sees him walk the street, can scarce forbear
To question thus his friend, What prig goes there?
So much hath Nature, as 'tis oft her plan,
Stamped inward trickery on the outward man!
And yet, with her great interdiction deep
Impressed thus on his being, see him creep
Into our Parliament, and dare to prate
About the god-like principles of State;
With this sole claim address him to the work,
That he has read that prince of sophists, Burke!
And though a dreary Plunkett's glad to praise
His talent, seeing that their feeble rays
Have just that kindred with his own pinched mind
Which (says the proverb) makes us wond'rous kind.
No more could such a creature feel or think
Beyond Expediency's most beaten brink,
Or sum the onward pressure of our race,
Than I could heave a mountain from its base!
Nay, even the dogmas of his vaunted Burke
Work in him to no end, or backward work,
Or dwindle in his view, like heaven's wide cope
Seen through the wrong end of a telescope.

How then might such a 'thing', with all the gang
That yet like vermin about Wentworth hang,
Rear-ranked with hirelings,-how might he and these,
(Any-thing snobs and no-thing Nominees!)
Devise a Government intoned and twined
With all that's true and fetterless in mind
And free in body-one, in short, designed
Not for the pigmies of the passing hour,
But for Australia's future sons of Power?
No! they can spin but feudal cobwebs, soon
By Freedom to be blown into the moon,
Or back to Norfolk Island, whence, 'tis plain,
Their slimy embryos came in youthful Lottery's brain.

Charles Harpur

Mary Arden

When a simple English maiden,
Nestled warm in Wilmicote,
Sang forth like a lark uprising
Heavenward with its morning note,
Did no English ear that listened,
Even then, foretouched by fame,
Tremble to the prophet-music
Fountain-headed in thy name,
Mary Arden?
And to thee thyself, O tell me!
Shade of Shakespeare's mother, tell me!
Did no dazzling vision come,
Banishing all thoughts of gloom,
Of the bardic grandeurs waiting
On thy matron fate, when He
Who in time should call thee mother
Should all time's subjector be,
Mary Arden?

Then a mother we behold thee,
With that babe upon thy breast,
That great nascent soul, so bird-like,
Babbling in its fragrant nest:
O what spirit sweetly human,
O what instincts mildly wise,
Sucked he from those mother-fountains,
Drew he from those mother-eyes,
Mary Arden?

But shall we, now spirit-basking
In the noonblaze of his fame,
Fail to read a sign prophetic
In thy lovely maiden name?
No; it is the star that trembled
O'er a royal poet's birth;
And amongst immortal Maries,
Second to but one on earth,
Mary Arden!
Glory to thee! Mary Arden!

Shakespeare's mother! England's Mary!

Charles Harpur

Memory's Genesis

HOW few through Memory's dreamy scope,
However resolute of hope,
Can view the backward scene where first
Their youth rejoiced—for ever crost—
And not bewail as Adam erst
The Eden they have lost!
Nor feel, alas! with it compared,
The Present but a lengthening wild
Whereon young Passion never fared,
Young Beauty never smiled!
Yet 'tis a melancholy pleasure
To sit by moon-struck Memory's side,
And hear her wild lyre oft remeasure
The story of our youthful pride!
Hours recalling, ah! how rife
With emotions lavished wide
Through the Garden of our Life
Ere all its spring-time roses died,
And (like day's splendours when the sun
Remits in his decline from weaving
A robe of beauty for the Ev'ning)
Fancy's Elysiums, one by one,
Had paled away as the long night came on!

Yes! 'tis a melancholy sweet,
And thus let Memory oft repeat
Life's first tale, that to the core
Retempered by such generous lore,
Our hard'ning spirits, as 'tis meet,
May pity the cold world—the world we trust no more!

Charles Harpur

Modern Poetry

How I hate those modern Poems
Vaguer, looser than a dream!
Pointless things that look like poems
Only, to some held-back theme!
Wild unequal, agitated,
As by steam ill-regulated -
Balder-dashie steam!
And if (in fine) not super-lyrical,
Then vapid, almost to a miracle.

Charles Harpur

Monodies

I.

I stand in thought beside my father's grave:
The grave of one who, in his old age, died
Too late perhaps, since he endured so much
Of corporal anguish, sweating bloody sweat;
But not an hour too soon—no, not an hour!
Even if through all his many years, he ne'er
Had known another ailment than decay,
Or felt one bodily pang. For his bruised heart
And wounded goodwill, wounded through its once
Samsonian vigour and too credulous trust
In that great Delilah, the harlot world,
Had done with fortune;—nay, his very tastes,
Even the lowliest, had by blast on blast
Of sorrow and mischance, been blown like leaves
Deciduous, when the year is withering out,
From every living hold on what we here
Call nature; he but followed in their wake.
Nor was there in the lives of those he loved,
Even had he been susceptible of cheer,
Enough of fortune to warm into peace
A little longer ere he passed away
The remnant of his chilled humanity.
Wet are mine eyes, and my heart aches, to think
How much of evil ridged his course of time
And earthly pilgrimage. Alas! Enough
(However bravely struggled with throughout,
Or passively accepted) to have slain
In almost any other human heart,
All comforting reliance on the sure
Though still reserved supremecy of good!
For few are they, who, on this stormy ball,
Can live a long life full of loss and pain,
And yet through doubts, dull clouds, uplooking, see
In that wide dome which roofs the apparent whole
Without or seam or flaw, a visible type
Of heaven's intact infinitude of love.
Yet died he a believer in the truth
And fatherhood of the Holy One—a God

Help-mighty, nor unmindful of mankind;
Yea, in the heavenward reaching light of faith
His soul went forth, as in a sunbeam's track
Some close-caged bird, from a long bondage freed,
Goes winging up—up through the open sky,
Rejoicing in the widening glow that paths
The final victory of its native wings!
And whether all was triumph as it went
Piercing eternity, or whether clouds
Of penal terror gathered in the way,
Not less must death the great inductor be
To much that far transcends time's highest lore,
Must be at worst a grimly grateful thing,
If only through deliverance from doubt,
The clinging curse of mortals. In the flesh
What own we but the present, with its scant
Assurance of a secular permanence
Even in the fact of being? While all that lies
Beyond it, lies or in the casual drifts
Of embryo needs that, lurking dark, project
To-morrow's world,—or worse, at the wild will
Of a demoniac fortune! But the dead
Have this immunity at least—a lot
Final and fixed, as evermore within
The gates of the Eternal! For the past
Is wholly God's, and therefore, like himself,
Knows no reverse, no change,—but lies for eye
Stretched in the sabbath of its vast repose.

II.

My dear, dear Charley! Can it be that thou
Art gone from us for ever! Whilst I sit
Amid these forest shadows that now fall
In sombre masses mixed with sunny gleams
Upon thy early grave, and think of all
The household love that was our mutual lot
So late, and during all thy little life—
Thy thirteen years of sonhood,—it is hard

(So dreamlike wild it seems) to realize
The shuddering certainty, that thou art now
In the eternal world, and reft away
In one dread moment from thy father's heart!
Thy young intelligence from his lonely side
So reft for ever, leaving him, alas!
Thus sitting here forlorn—here by thy grave
New-made and bare, as upon life's bleak brink,
To stare out deathward through his blinding tears.
And they, thy brothers and thy sisters, Charley,
They miss their vanished playmate so beloved,
And so endeared by years of happy help,
And many a pleasant old-faced memory!
I see them often when thy name is breathed
Look away askingly out into space,
As if they thought thy spirit might be there,
Still yearning towards them with a saddened love
Like that in their own hearts. And an! To him
Who at thy side, when death came swift upon thee,
Sent out through the wild forest such a shriek
As never until then might break the peace
That nestles in its lairs—ah! When to him
Shall the drear haggard memory of that day
Be other than a horror—such as, clothed
In terrible mystery, for ever keeps
Stalking beside us in some ghastly dream.
But most I pity her who bore thee, Charley,
Whose mother-bosom was at once the next
And fountain of thy infant life, and who,
Through all thy after years, was ever wont
To shield thee with her love, and doat the while
(Though with some fear) upon those spirited ways
And nascent self-reliance, that seemed
The promise of a manhood strong and brave;
Loving thee more perhaps than ever I—
If that be possible; and to whom 'tis plain
All things are changed now through the loss of thee!
All home consuetudes, and household wonts,
And motherly providences, which before
Did fill the passing hour so pleasantly,
Changed now and irksome, as if life itself
With all its motives suddenly had grown

Delusive as a dream. Then will she come,
And gaze out hitherward, and up to heaven,
With eyes so asking that they seem to say,
Where is my darling, and why was he torn
Away so rudely from a love like mine?
In vain! In vain! Art thou so vacant then,
O thou wide heaven! That no pitying star
May seem to breathe down through the forest trees,
With mystical assurance that the past
Is living and not dead? That no refrain
Of lingering spirit-sympathy may for once
Intone the melancholy wind, as thus
Its waves surge overhead, with what might seem
Some intimation from beyond the grave
That love can never cease?

We ask in vain!

Voiceless is that dread gulf twixt life and death!
And is it wholly well it should be so?
That even love (though in the morning glow
Of human faith once visioned to have moved
The inexorable profound of hell itself)
May stare tear-blinded from its hither shore
And shriek to it in vain? That from beyond
No quieting whisper may across it breathe
Of peace from the immortals? Not a glimpse
Of that Elysian beauty which enrobes,
As with the garment of the Deity,
Its heavenward coast, e'er reach us? While we here
Sit groaning—full of wild misgivings—full
Of mournful memories and embittered wonts,
And so engloomed, so overcast by dark
Disquieting doubts, that we are often fain
To leap from them at once, though out of life,
Madly desirous to have done with time?

Ah! Whither has emotion, wild with loss,
Carried me doubtward? Broken as I am,
Let me strive rather to believe that God
Has ordered nothing otherwise than well;
And thereby strengthened, let me teach my heart
That he who now in this bleak world to us

Is lost for ever—the bright boy we loved—
The Charley of our memory, whose death
Came down amongst us in a guise so fierce,
Was taken yet in mercy, and is now
At home with Him.

III.

Since thou art dead—since thou art dead,
Though to look up is still to see
The blue heaven bending o'er my head
So big with good, showered bounteously;
Though scenes of love he round me spread,
And o'er the hills, as once with thee,
My brother, still with venturous tread
I wander where broad rivers fret
And lighten onward to the sea,
As erst unchanged, unchanging; yet
How different is the world to me.
The light, a with a living robe,
Doth clothe all nature as of yore;
The sun with his great golden globe
Doth crown yon hill when night is o'er;
The moon and stars o'erwatch the earth
As I have seen them from my birth;
But O! Thou light, and sun, and moon,
And O! Ye stars so bright and boon,
Though I as fervently may feel
All the great glories you reveal
As ever I have felt before—
Your genial warmth, your mystic sheen—
Yet all to me that you have been
You never can be more.

Morning

HOW beautiful that earliest burst of light
Which floodeth from the opening eyes of morn,
When like a fairy palace dew-bedight
Bough storying over bough upspreads the thorn,
And sweet the melodies which tow'rd the corn
In tassel, or the orchard these invite,
And that most love-like ever fresh delight
Which breathes of many a bloomy thing new born—
Breathes from vine clumps in the moist dells appearing,
Rich meads and river banks. And cheering then
The voice of cattle to their pasture steering,
And the full speech of fieldward hastening men!—
My very boyhood seems renew'd again
'Mid these delights like a delight careering!

Charles Harpur

Music

In vain, when music's seraph-fire
Runs kindling through the air,
Making it such as gods respire,
(And gods perhaps are there!)
In vain would words of subtlest wit
Reveal, as on they roll,
The clouds of glory it hath lit
Like sunrise in the soul!

Like sunrise when its conquering glow
Smites through the vapours cold,
Till all their ragged inlets flow
With floods of burning gold.

Like him who great reports of tilth rejects,
Because his own is a most barren field,
Is he who man's divinity suspects,
Because his own soul doth so little yield.
Better is one who through himself can see
How good, how lovely, all mankind might be,
Though mere experience give his faith the lie,
And all his hopes breathe the world's breath—to die!

Charles Harpur

My Political Belief

O LIBERTY, yet build thee an august
And best abode in this most virgin clime;
The Old World yet, power-trampled to the dust,
Hath never known thee in thy perfect prime!
Seeing all Rule which at a given time
Expires not, as reposed in Public Trust,
And thence renewable but by Suffrage, must
Against thee in its nature be a crime!
Seeing that all not privileged to name
Their governors—and more, to govern too,
Choosing or chosen, but live unto thy blame!
That all are slaves in act who may not do
Whate'er is virtuous and in spirit who
Believing aught dare not avow the same!

Charles Harpur

Ned Connor

'Twas night—and where a watery sound
Came moaning up the Flat,
Six rude and bearded stockmen round
Their blazing hut-fire sat,
And laughed as on some starting hound
The cracking fuel spat.

And merrier still the log-fire cracks
As night the darker falls,
While not a noisy tongue there lacks
To tell of drunken brawls,
But most of battle with the Blacks
Some bloody tale appals.

Amongst them then Ned Connor spoke,
And up his form he drew:—
What is there in an open stroke
To boast of? You but slew
Those who'd have done, each hell-black one,
The same or worse to you.

But lost among the hills, one day,
Which then was well nigh shut,
I met a Black upon my way,
And thus the matter put
Unto him:—"See! this knife's for thee,
Come, guide me to my hut."

His savage eyes grew huge with joy
As on the prize they bent,
And leading, even like a boy
He capered as he went:
But think you, men, to give the toy
Ned Connor ever meant?

An hour had brought us many a mile
And then, as closed the day,
The savage pointed with a smile,
To where my Station lay:

"There! give to me the knife," said he,
"And let me go my way."

I never meant that he should touch
The thing, as I have said,
And when he stretched his hand to clutch,
A thought came in my head:
I raised my gun, as though in fun—
I fired — and he was dead!

The ruffian laughed in his pitiless mood
When ended thus his tale,
But all the rest though men of blood,
With horror seemed to quail,
And saw though he stood boastfully
That Connor too was pale:

For through the moaning of the trees
He seemed to hear the sound
Of his own laughter in the breeze
Keep roaming out till drowned
In wild and bitter mockeries
Up-answering from the ground.

Now what to hear had made them fear,
Had also made them dry:
But strange! the water-pail that late
Brimm'd in the corner nigh
Was empty! In amazement great
There's not a drop, they cry!

Their thirst grew bitter and they said
Come, this will never do!
It is your turn for water, Ned,
Then why not go? He drew
Full hard his breath and from his head
There dripped a sudden dew.

But shaming to be taxed with fear,
He seized the pail and said
What care I? Though the night be drear,
Who ever saw the dead?

And if I fail to fill this pail,
The devil shall, instead.

He sallied forth. A sudden blast
Went sobbing by the door,
Through which they heard his footsteps fast
Recede—and when no more
They heard them, round the fire aghast
They gathered as before.

“I would not go alone to-night
The way that he is gone,”
Said one, “for all the gold my sight
Hath ever fallen upon:
To slay that creature was not right,
I’d say’t were he my son!”

And now impatient all and wild
They wondered at his stay,
Till one outspake: “A weanling child
Could not make more delay:
If longer slack in coming back,
He’ll bring with him the day.”

But while they thus were wondering—hark!
They hear a frantic shriek,
Then nearing footsteps through the dark,
Come waywardly and weak:
And as the dogs did howl and bark,
They stared but feared to speak.

Against the door, that to had swung,
One rushed then and ’twas split;
’Twas Connor! who amid them sprung
And fell into a fit:
And long that night in ghastly plight,
He struggled there in it.

And when his sense returned—again
The sun was rising bright,
But shuddering as in mental pain
He turned him from the light,

And pointing, said—"To bed! to bed!
For Death is in my sight!"

They bore him to his bed straightway,
Those horror-stricken men,
And questioned him as there he lay,
Of what had met his ken:
Within himself he seemed to pray,
And thus bespake them then:—

"I went (you heard), with impious boast
For water to the brook,
But when the threshold I had crost,
All strength my heart forsook;
Each forward step seemed fate—but most
I feared behind to look.

Long murky clouds were hurrying fast
Across the starless sky,
Strange sounds came drowning up the blast
That piped by fits so high:
A winding gleam, and lo! the stream
Went wildly moaning by.

I knew not why, but it struck mine eye
With a dull damp sense of awe,
And bankward densely crawling by,
Crude Shapes methought I saw!
But I must not back, I said, alack!
But down at once and draw.

Now standing at the water's edge,
Mine eyes thereon I threw,
And, lo! distinctly through the sedge,
What is it there I view?—
Not mine own shadow from the ledge,
But him!—the Black I slew!

'Twas no delusion! There he stood
Within the gleaming brook,
The same as when I shed his blood,
His stature and his look,

Even to the dread accusing shade
His dying aspect took!

With backward bound I started round
And up the bank did flee,
But, ah! as swiftly in my track
Bare footfalls seemed to be!
Step, step, for mine, close at my back
I heard, but nought could see!

It was a horrible thing to hear
Behind me still the sound
I could not bear to have it there,
And desperate, faced me round,
When through the dark a sudden spark
Shot upward from the ground!

Staggered as with a stunning stroke
I could not turn again,
But saw whence came the spark, a smoke
Arise—I saw it plain,
And from it an earthy odour broke
That bit me to the brain!

At first I saw it bloating out
In size not o'er a span,
Then as it slowly wreathed about
To heighten it began,
Until it took in bulk and look
The stature of a man!

No stir was near—I might but hear
The beating of my blood
And there within my reach almost,
The horrid Phantom stood!
I stared till fear in fear was lost
So awful was my mood.

I spoke—I know not what—and lo!
The diabolic birth
'Gan wildly writhing to and fro
As if in ghostly mirth

And then against me rushing so,
It dashed me to the earth!

Mine eyes flashed out with sputtering flame—
The ground kept swimming fast—
And roaming round about there came
Wild laughter in the blast!
A moment—and then all was tame,
Forgotten, painless, past.

At length my brain began to swim
As consciousness regrew,
But when with eyeballs strained and dim,
I looked again—I knew
A form stood o'er me, it was him,—
The savage that I slew!

I shrieked, and bounding to my feet,
I fled, but as before,
Bare footsteps tracked me beat for beat
With mine, even to the door:
What then befel I cannot tell—
I know of nothing more!"

He ceased and turning in his bed,
Aloud for mercy cried,
And for three days and nights, 'tis said,
He uttered nought beside;
When raving out with sudden dread,
The haunted Murderer died.

The fearful men around him then,
Each one of them did say,
It was a damn'ed wrong in Ned,
The savage so to slay,
And where he said he saw the dead,
They buried him next day.

Charles Harpur

Never Mind

My Country, though rude yet, and wild, be thy nature,
This alone our proud love should beget and command:
There's noon in thy broad breast for Manhood's full stature,
And honest Endeavour's a lord in the land.

And though much of thy bounty, by aliens in feeling
Has been made upon heads the least worthy to fall,
Their reign is nigh past, and the wrong is fast healing,
And they wide arms encircle a home for us all.

And though pygmies high placed in our councils yet fool us,
In our woods there's a Giant upgrowing the while -
The Spirit of Liberty destined to rule us,
And cheer on the world from the great Austral Isle!

Charles Harpur

Onward

Have the blasts of sorrow worn thee,
Have the rocks of danger torn thee,
And thus shifted, wreck-like drifted,
Wouldst thou find a port in time?

Vain the quest! That word sublime—

God's great one word,

Silent never, pealeth ever,

Onward!

Hast thou done all loving duty,
Hast thou clothed thy soul with beauty,
And wouldst rest then, wholly blest then,
In some sunny lapse of time?

Vain the hope! The word sublime—

God's great one word,

Silent never, pealeth ever,

Onward!

Hast thou won the heart of glory,
Hast thou charmed the tongue of story,
And wouldst pause then for applause then,
Underneath the stars of time?

Vain the lure! That word sublime—

God's great one word,

Silent never, pealeth ever,

Onward!

Truth and virtue hast thou wrought for,
Faith and freedom hast thou fought for,
And then shrinkest for thou thinkest
Paid is all thy debt in time?

Vain the thought! That word sublime—

God's great one word,

Silent never, pealeth ever,

Onward!

From endeavour to endeavour,
Journeying with hours for ever,
Or aspiring, or acquiring
This, O man, is life in time,

Urged by that primal word sublime—
 God's great one word,
Silent never, pealeth ever,
 Onward!

Charles Harpur

Outward Bound

Away, away she plunges,
With her white sails o'er her spread,
Like the sheety clouds that gather
On some great hill's piny head.
Still away she plunges rampant,
Like a lion roused to wrath,
And the late proud wave lies humbled
In the foam-track of her path.
"Yet ho! My gallant sailors,
Wear her head from off the land!
As his steed obeys the Arab,
How she feels the steering hand!
And the deep in her wide dwelling,
Her wild spouse the gipsy wind;
Like a soul from earth departing,
So she leaves the coast behind.

Charles Harpur

Poetry

RISING and setting suns of Liberty—
Mountainous exploits and the wrecks thick strewn
By stormy Passion o'er Life's treacherous sea,
Relieved with shores of green delight, and boon
And starry dreams and the serene pale moon
Of Pathos,—these with all of which they be
Idealisms, are of Poesy
The bodily temple into fitness hewn,
And for its Soul, all that the mind can seize
Of beauty harmonising with the might
Of natural ties and social sympathies
And that deep spirit of Piety whose flight
Is strongest and most heavenward 'mid the blight
Of mortal misery—its Soul are these.

Charles Harpur

Poetry And Prose

What is the true difference 'twixt Prose and Rhyme,
Since both may be beautiful, both be sublime?
Nor in subject, nor treatment, nor passion it 'bides—
But breathes through a certain rich something besides.

Charles Harpur

Records Of Romantic Passion

THERE'S a rare Soul of Poesy which may be
But concentrated by the chastened dreams
Of constant hearts. Where'er the ministry
Of beautiful Nature hath enhanced the themes
Of some Petrarchian mind whose story gleams
Within the Past like a moon-silvered sea,
Or where grey Interest the spirit free
Of faithful Love hath caged in iron schemes,
Or round it stirr'd such dangers as o'erdrove
Long Ruin's storm at last—there evermore
The very airs that whisper to the grove,
The echo's mystery and the streamlet's lore
Savour of Passion and transfusive pour
Abroad suggestions to heroic Love.

Charles Harpur

Regret

There's a regret that from my bosom aye
 Wrings forth a dirgy sweetness, like a rain
 Of deathward love; that ever in my brain
Uttereth such tones as in some foregone way
Seem gathered from the harmonies that start
 Into the dayspring, when some rarest view
 Unveileth its Tempèan grace anew
To meet the sun—the great world's fervent heart.
'Tis that, though living in his tuneful day,
 My boyhood might not see the gentle smile,
Nor hear the voice of Shelley; that away
 His soul had journeyed, ere I might beguile
In my warm youth, by some fraternal lay,
 One thought of his towards this may native isle.

Charles Harpur

Shakespeare

Standing alone, a study in itself,
How Shakespeare's volume glorifies my shelf!
For thence his spirit forth on mine has shined,
Like a great morning on the hills of mind.
Sphered in the light of his creative powers,
A wonder-world, inorbing this of ours,
Gathers around us, like the peopled haze
That wraps some roamer in a dream's wild ways.

Lean fatal hags ride in the troubled air,
And wing'd immortals meet us everywhere;
These of a silken loveliness that shows
Like the dim beauty of a moonlit rose;
Lined rigidly as sculptured iron those.
Lo! Now futurity uplifts her veil,
And pours her phantom kings before the tyrant pale.
Now in the moon's quick glimpses gleaming cold,
A mail-clad monarch's spectral form behold;
Whilst, like to echoes from oblivion's coast,
Comes the dread speech of the unquiet ghost!
Turn we a page—oh! For some charm to save
That meek mad maiden from her early grave!
"Sweets to the sweet," with the sad queen we groan;
As o'er her shroud the votive flowers are thrown,
We see how wild a death the best may die,
And dash the sacred teardrops from our eye.

But seek we surer matter,—knowledge hard
With ethics such as time-schooled minds regard;
Or such as, breathing the soul's fervour, primes
Our piety, or our moral faith sublimes;
How many a noble page is shared between
Wit, fancy, prudence in her sagest mien,
And that high wisdom which informs us still
Heaven "shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will;"
And shows, though vain and erring, human nature
Is yet a pile of half-angelic stature:
Material, yet ethereal, both, though each;—
Soul quickening matter as thought quickens speech—

A body built of clay—a mind of godlike reach!

And constantly some vital moral shines,
Like sunlight, in the current of his lines.
Ambition's worshipper, in Casar's death,
May see how mortal is mere glory's breath,
And learn from Richard's spectre-haunted hour
To loathe the ghastriness of godless power.
The princely spendthrift, seeing Timon's end,
May grow to doubt the too too flattering friend;
And if he hate, when he with anger starts,
The heartlessness of fashionable hearts,
Hence let him learn to be, though rich, the sure
And generous helper of the struggling poor.
Even Shylock's bond must show how, soon or late,
Contempt imperils, in begetting hate;
The sire may learn to curb that rival scorn,
Whose blasting rage let Juliet die forlorn:
The child be chastened by the filial tear
Shed for the wrongs that maddened royal Lear,
When in the scenic agony we find
Distempered matter and distempered mind,
Nature's wild roar, and the yet wilder speech
Of mightiest human woe, each storming into each.

But if, to loftier teaching disinclined,
We would (as sometimes) mirth in all things find,
Let Falstaff then be our companion fit,
And wrap us in the mad delight of wit;
Or let Malvolio, cross-gartered, show
To what strange lengths man's vanity may go;
Or learn we once for all in Touchstone's school,
How shrewd that knave is who can play the fool.
Or does our mirth was scornful? Pistol then
Shall prove what scarecrows often rank as men,
By dint of a big martialness of tone,
Loud, like a drum s, from hollowness alone!
Is our mood fierce? Another leaf shall yield
Meet matter, storying some old battle-field;
With all its wrack of passion let at large,
The gathering huddle, the close thundering charge,
The death-shrieks drowning in the exultant shout

Of victory, flooding like a deluge out!

But, hating scenes of violence and crime,
Would we to Innocence devote the time?
Behold how spotless from this world of guile
Is she who waves us to yon magic isle,—
Miranda, lovely e'en to Caliban,
That hag-born, lump-faced, mockery of man!
With injured virtue would we mingle tears?
Lo! Katherine, or Hermione, appears.
Would we condole with lonely Love? O then,
Behold that mortal angel, Imogen!
With joyous goodness thirst we to rejoice?
Belmont is vocal with its Portia's voice!
Would we be spiced with lady-wit? One kiss,
In fancy, from the bee-like Beatrice,
Stingingly sweet, have we the grace to snatch it,
Shall make us Benedicts, and lo! We catch it.
In woody Arden let us wander wild,
With buoyant Rosalind and Celia mild;
Or, with the melancholy Jaques, 'plain
How blind is fortune, yet how worthless gain,—
Gain or of gold or glory, both a jest,
Merely a solemn mockery at best.
Then roam we on, in thought to join afar
Those princely revellers in green Navarre;
Taking, for joy's completeness, in our round
The shepherd-feast that glads Bohemian ground,
To talk with Perdita of flowers,—from whose
Soft-dropping words, as from a shower of dews,
They borrow fresher scents, and still diviner hues!
Would we be solaced with a song? Sweet lays
That breathe the innocence of olden days,
Like drops of liquid gold, all through and through
the glorious volume sparkle into view!

How oft, in Austral woods, the parting day
Has gone through western golden gates away
While "sweetest Shakespeare, fancy's darling child,
Warbled for me his native woodnotes wild."

Charles Harpur

Song

THE world's heart is kindless and grey and unholy,
As the head of the wandering Jew,
And can never be won from the cause of its folly
Till man to Humanity's true;
There's a path to redemption—but that we shall miss
While we seek in the old warring manner;
Till we re ready to fight a new battle for this—
The motto inscribed on our banner,—
To principles let us by loyal always,
And true to all good in man's story;
Not to that mockery, royal display,
Nor that Juggernaut, national glory!
And though ever someone, to be doughty and noted,
Like Nimrod, should aim at a throne,
It were easy to leave him a wight unpromoted,
To brood o'er his project alone!
Or to meet him at once with a withering hiss,
For we love not ambition's old manner,
We are fired for a new race of glory with this—
The motto inscribed on our banner—
To principles let us by loyal always,
And true to all good in man's story;
Not to that mockery, royal display,
Nor that Juggernaut, national glory!

Charles Harpur

Song!

A thousand million souls arise
Out of the cradle of to-day,
And, like a living storm, beneath the skies
Go thundering on their fatal way!
But ere to-morrow's sun
His ancient round hath run,
That storm is past—and Where are they?
Is asked of Faith by pale Dismay:
"Where—where are they?"
And Faith—even Faith herself—hath not a word to say.
With her serene assurance thrown
Like moonlight into the Unknown
And all her clasping tendrils curled
About the steadfast pillars of the never-failing world,
To that wild question of Dismay
Yet hath she not a word to say,
And only lifts her patient eyes
Up from the earth's change-trampled sod,
To fix them, out in the eternal skies,
On all she knoweth—God.

Charles Harpur

Sonnet

SHE loves me! From her own bliss-breathing lips
The live confession came, like rich perfume
From crimson petals bursting into bloom!
And still my heart at the remembrance skips
Like a young lion, and my tongue too trips
As drunk with joy! while every object seen
In life's diurnal round wears in its mien
A clear assurance that no doubts eclipse.
And if the common things of nature now
Are like old faces flushed with new delight,
Much more the consciousness of that rich vow
Deepens the beauteous, and refines the bright,
While throned I seem on love's divinest height
'Mid all the glories glowing round its brow.

Charles Harpur

The Anchor

Firm trust of the bold sailor on the shores of sudden storm,
What strength is in its structure and the fitness of its form!
Old ocean's bed-rock gripping, with the hurricane's tug 'twill cope,
And therefore 'tis the emblem held of man's eternal hope.
Through the billows ceaseless raging, by the bleak and stormy steep,
Like a thunderbolt down-rushing it is shot into the deep;
Down where some mute sea-monster its so hideous bulk uprears,
And mightiest silence drowned hath lain for many a thousand years.

In some famed bay of battle when 'tis plunged with sullen roar,
In the Nile, In Navarino, or by Danish Elsinore,
How deep there shall its slumbers be beneath the sounding waves,
Amid the bones of gallant tars in glory's watery graves.

In the bright and landlocked harbour, the weary voyage o'er,
When only pleasant breezes breathe sweet welcome from the shore,
Its massive form down-dropping to its quiet bed below
Gives signal to the first glad boat that beachward pants to go.

In the calm thou firm-fixed surety, thou strong helper in the storm,
Even a child when first beholding all the fitness of thy form,
Might well divine the dangers wherewithal 'tis thine to cope,
And take thee as the emblem meet of man's eternal hope

Charles Harpur

The Babylonian Captivity

By far Euphrates' stream we state,
A weary band of herded slaves,
And over Judah's fallen estate
We wept into the passing waves.

On willow-boughs that o'er us bent
Our once glad-sounding harps were hung,
That but the wild wind, as it went,
Might grieve their wailful chords among.

But they who spoiled us—even they
Who wasted us with daily wrongs,
To make them mirth did asking say:
"Come sing us one of Zion's songs!"

How can with us the will remain
To strike the harp with fettered hand?
How can we sing a joyful strain
As captives in a foreign land?

And when, Jerusalem! We let
Thy memory pass on Time's grey wing,
May our right hands at once forget
Their mastery o'er the sounding string!

Yea, let our tongues to song be dumb,
As in a dull and voiceless dream,
Till to thy courts again we come
And thy redemption be the theme!

Then, Edom, thou shalt get thy wound!
For thou, on Zion's evil day,
Saidst—"Raze her beauty to the ground,
And captive drive her sons away!"

And lo! Yet fiercer visions rise,
The day is fixed, the hour is known,
When, Babylon! Thy fateful skies
Shall raid red wrath and ruin down!

Till by thy towers all overthrown,
Thy daughters, desolate as we,
Each with her shame shall sit alone,
With shame and wild-faced misery!

And then may the avenger dash
Thy children's heads against stones;
For so, 'mid Zion's falling crash,
Didst thou with all our little ones.

Charles Harpur

The Battle Of Life

Never give up, though life be a battle
Wherein true men may fail, and true causes be sold;
Yet, on the whole, however may rattle
The thunders of chance, scaring cowards like cattle—
Clear victory's always the bride of the bold.
Armed in your right-though friendship deny you,
And love fall away when the storm's at the worst,
Count not your loss, Was destined to try you—
Bear the brunt like a man, and your deeds shall ally you
To natures more noble and true than the first.

Rail not at Fate: if rightly you scan her,
There's none loves more strongly the heart that endures:
On, in the hero's calm resolute manner,
Still bear aloft your hope's long-trusted banner,
And the day, if you do but live through it, is yours.

Be this your faith; and if killing strokes clatter
On your harness where true men before you have died,
Fight on, let your life-blood be poured out like water—
Fight on, make at least a brave end of the matter,
Brave end of the struggle if nothing beside

Charles Harpur

The Bush Fire

"'TIS nine o'clock:—to bed!" cried Egremont,
Who with his youthful household (for 'tis now
Long since) inhabited a lonely home
In the Australian wilderness, that then
As with an unshorn fleece of gloomy wood
Robed the vast bulk of all the mighty Isle.
But ere retiring finally, he went
Forth as his wont was, to survey the night.

'Twas clear and silent: and the stirless woods
Seemed dreaming in the witch-light of the moon
As like a boat of stained pearl, she hung
Amid the ridges of a wavy cloud—
The only cloud in heaven. While Egremont
Looked thus abroad observingly, he marked
All around him, listing the horizon's verge,
A broad unusual upward glaring gleam,
Such a drear radiance as the setting sun
Effuses when the atmosphere is stormy.

What this might be he wondered—but not long;
Divining soon the cause—a vast Bush Fire!
But deeming it too distant yet for harm,
During the night betiding, to repose
With his bed-faring household he retired.

Sound was their sleep: for honesty of life
Is somewhat lumpish when 'tis once a-bed.
And now the darkness of the night was past,
When with the dreams of Egremont, a strange
And momentarily approaching roar began
To mingle and insinuate through them more
And more of its own import, till a Fire
Huge as the world was their sole theme: and then
He started from his sleep to find the type
A warning! for what else however terrible,
Might breathe with a vitality so fierce
As that which reigned without?

Scarce did he wait
To clothe himself ere forth he rushed; and lo,
Within the circling forest he beheld
A vast and billowy belt of writhing fire,
That shed a wild and lurid splendour up
Against the whitening dawn, come raging on!
Raging and roaring as with ten thousand tongues
That prophesied destruction. On it came,
A dreadful apparition—such as Fear
Conceives when dreaming of the front of hell!

No time was there to lose. "Up—up!" he cried
To all the house. Instantly all within
Was haste and wonder, and in briefest space
The whole-roused family were staring out
In speechless admiration, such as kept
Even Terror dormant;—till more urgently
The voice of Egremont again was heard:—
"Lose not a moment! Follow me at once,
Each with whatever he can grasp of use
And carry unincumbered!"

Right before,
A narrow strip of clearing 1 like a glade
Stretched out tow'rds a bald summit. Thitherward
The perilled people now were hurrying all,
While in their front, beneath the ridge, a dense
Extent of brushwood into which the Fire's
Bright teeth were eating hungrily, still brought
The danger nearer! Shall they reach that hill
Unscathed, their only refuge? Will they speed
Past the red-rushing peril? Onward yet!
And onward!—till at length the summit's gained,
And halting, they look back—in safety all,
Though breathless.

But no sooner had they past
That fearful brush, than a vast swathe of flame
Lifted and hurried forward by the wind
Over their very passage track, was pitched
With a loud thud like thunder into it—
With such a thud as the sea-swell gives up

From under the ledges of some hanging cliff!
And in an instant all its depth of shade
Was as a lake of hell! And hark! as then,
Even like a ghastly pyramid its mass
Of flames went surging up—up with them still
A cry of mortal agony was heard
Ascending, all so terrible, indeed,
That they who heard it, never, until then,
Might deem a voice so earnest in its fear,
So strenuous in its anguish could have being
In the live bosom of the suffering Earth!
But soon did they divine, even to their loss,
Its import:—there a giant steed, their best,
Had taken refuge, there to die!

All grouped
In safety now upon that hill's bare top—
Egremont and his household looked abroad,
Astonished at the terrors of the time!
Soon sunk their rooftree in the fiery surge,
Which entering next a high-grassed bottom, thick
With bark-ringed trees all standing bleak and leafless,
Tenfold more terrible in its ravage grew,
Upclimbing to their very tops! As when
Upon some day of national festival,
From the tall spars of the ship-crowded port
Innumerable flags in one direction all
Tongue outward, writhing in the wind: even so,
From those dry boles where still the dead bark clings
And from their multifarious mass above
Of leafless boughs, myriads of flaming tongues
Lick upward, or aloft in narrowing flakes
Stream out,—and thence upon the tortured blast
Bicker and flap in one inconstant blaze!

Scared forward by the roaring of the Fire,
A flight of parrots o'er the upper ridge
Comes whizzing, and then sweeping down, alights
Amid the oaks that fringe the base of yon
Precipitous terrace, being deterred from still
Proceeding by the smoke uprolled in front
Like a dim-moving range of spectral mountains.

There they abide, and listen in their fear
To the tremendous riot of the flames
Beyond the ridge line, that keep nearing fast
Though yet unseen from thence—unseen, till now
Furiously seizing on the withered grove
That tops the terrace, all whose spiry shafts
Rush upward, and then culminating, bend
Sheer o'er the oaks wherein the birds are lodged.
All are in flight at once, but from above
As suddenly, a mightier burst of flame
Outsheeteth o'er them!—Down they dip, but it
Keeps swooping with them even to the ground—
Where, in a moment after, all are seen
To writhe convulsed—blasted and plumeless all!

Thus through the day the conflagration raged:
And when the wings of night o'erspread the scene,
Not even their starry blazonry wore such
An aggregated glory to the eye,
As did the blazing dead wood of the forest—
On all hands blazing! Mighty sapless gums
Amid their living kindred, stood all fire—
Boles, branches, all!—like flaming ghosts of trees,
Come from the past within the whiteman's pale
To typify a doom. Such was the prospect:
Illuminated cities were but jests
Compared to it for splendor. But enough!
Where are the words to paint the million shapes
And unimaginable freaks of Fire,
When holding thus its monster carnival
In the primeval forest all night long?

Charles Harpur

The Cloud

One summer morn, out of the sea-waves wild,
A speck-like Cloud, the season's fated child,
Came softly floating up the boundless sky,
And o'er the sun-parched hills all brown and dry.
Onward she glided through the azure air,
Borne by its motion without toil or care,
When looking down in her ethereal joy,
She marked earth's moilers at their hard employ;

"And oh!" she said, "that by some act of grace
'Twere mine to succour yon fierce-toiling race,
To give the hungry meat, the thirsty drink—
The thought of good is very sweet to think."

The day advanced, and the cloud greater grew,
And greater; likewise her desire to do
Some charity to men had more and more,
As the long sultry summer day on wore,
Greatened and warmed within her fleecy breast,
Like a dove fledging in its downy nest.

The heat waxed fiercer, until all the land
Clared in the sun as 'twere a monstrous brand
And the shrunk rivers, few and far between,
Like molten metal lightened in the scene.
Ill could Earth's sons endure their toilsome state,
Though still they laboured, for their need was great,
And many a long beseeching look they sped
Towards that fair cloud, with many a sigh that said:
"We famish for thy bounty! For our sake
O break thou! in a showery blessing, break!"

"I feel, and fain would help you, " said the cloud,
And towards the earth her bounteous being bowed;
But then remem'bring a tradition she
Had in her youth learned from her native sea,
That when a cloud adventures from the skies
Too near the altar of the hills, it dies!
Awhile she wavered and was blown about

Hither and thither by the winds of doubt;
But in the midst of heaven at length all still
She stood; then suddenly, with a keen thrill
Of light, she said within herself, "I will!
Yea, in the glad strength of devotion, I Will help
you, though in helping you I die."

Filled with this thought's divinity, the cloud
Grew worldlike vast, as earthward more she bowed!
Oh, never erewhile had she dreamed her state
So great might be, beneficently great!
O'er the parched fields in her angelic love
She spread her wide wings like a brooding dove
Till as her purpose deepened, drawing near,
Divinely awful did her front appear,
And men and beasts all trembled at the view,
And the woods bowed, though well all creatures knew
That near in her, to every kind the same,
A great predestined benefactress came.

And then wide-flashed throughout her full-grown form
The glory of her will! the pain and storm
Of life's dire dread of death, whose mortal threat
From Christ himself drew agonizing sweat,
Flashed seething out of rents amid her heaps
Of lowering gloom, and thence with arrowy leaps
Hissed jaggling downward, till a sheety glare
Illumined all the illimitable air;
The thunder followed, a tremendous sound,
Loud doubling and reverberating round;
Strong was her will, but stronger yet the power
Of love, that now dissolved her in a shower,
Dropping in blessings to enrich the earth
With health and plenty at one blooming birth.

Far as the rain extended o'er the land,
A splendid bow the freshened landscape spanned
Like a celestial arc, hung in the air
By angel artists, to illumine there
The parting triumph of that spirit fair.
The rainbow vanished, but the blessing craved
Rested upon the land the cloud had saved.

Charles Harpur

The Creek Of The Four Graves

I

I verse a Settler's tale of olden times
One told me by our sage friend, Egremont;
Who then went forth, meetly equipt, with four
Of his most trusty and adventurous men
Into the wilderness - went forth to seek
New streams and wider pastures for his fast
Augmenting flocks and herds. On foot were all
For horses then were beast of too great price
To be much ventured on mountain routes,
And over wild wolds clouded up with brush,
And cut with marshes, perilously deep.

So went they forth at dawn: and now the sun
That rose behind them as they journeyed out,
Was firing with his nether rim a range
Of unknown mountains that, like ramparts, towered
Full in their front, and his last glances fell
Into the gloomy forest's eastern glades
In golden masses, transiently, or flashed
Down to the windings of a nameless Creek,
That noiseless ran betwixt the pioneers
And those new Apennines - ran, shaded up
With boughs of the wild willow, hanging mixed
From either bank, or duskily befringed
With upward tapering feathery swamp-oaks -
The sylvan eyelash always of remote
Australian waters, whether gleaming still
In lake or pool, or bickering along
Between the marges of some eager stream.

Before then, thus extended, wilder grew
The scene each moment - and more beautiful!
For when the sun was all but sunk below
Those barrier mountains, - in the breeze that o'er
Their rough enormous backs deep-fleeced with wood
Came whispering down, the wide up-slanting sea
Of fanning leaves in the descending rays
Danced interdazzingly, as if the trees

That bore them, were all thrilling, - tingling all
Even to the roots for very happiness:
So prompted from within, so sentient seemed
The bright quick motion - wildly beautiful.

But when the sun had wholly disappeared
Behind those mountains - O what words, what hues
Might paint the wild magnificence of view
That opened westward! Out extending, lo,
The heights rose crowding, with their summits all
Dissolving, as it seemed, and partly lost
In the exceeding radiancy aloft;
And thus transfigured, for awhile they stood
Like a great company of Archæons, crowned
With burning diadems, and tented o'er
With canopies of purple and of gold!

Here halting wearied, now the sun was set,
Our travellers kindled for their first night's camp
The brisk and crackling fire, which also looked
A wilder creature than 'twas elsewhere wont,
Because of the surrounding savageness.
And soon in cannikins the tea was made,
Fragrant and stong; long fresh-sliced rashers then
Impaled on whittled skewers, were deftly broiled
On the live embers, and when done, transferred
To quadrants from an ample damper cut,
Their only trenchers - soon to be dispatched
With all the savoury morsels they sustained,
By the keen tooth of healthful appetite.

And as they supped, birds of new shape and plume
And wild strange voice came by, nestward repairing by,
Oft too their wonder; or betwixt the gaps
In the ascending forest growths they saw
Perched on the bare abutments of the hills,
Where haply yet some lingering gleam fell through,
The wallaroo look forth: till eastward all
The view had wasted into formless gloom,
Night's front; and westward, the high massing woods
Steeped in a swart but mellowed Indian hue -
A deep dusk loveliness, lay ridged and heaped

Only the more distinctly for their shade
Against the twilight heaven - a cloudless depth
Yet luminous with the sunset's fading glow;
And thus awhile, in the lit dusk, they seemed
To hang like mighty pictures of themselves
In the still chambers of some vaster world.

The silent business of their supper done,
The Echoes of the solitary place,
Came as in sylvan wonder wide about
To hear, and imitate tentatively,
Strange voice moulding a strange speech, as then
Within the pleasant purlieus of the fire
Lifted in glee - but to be hushed ere long,
As with the night in kindred darkness came
O'er the adventurers, each and all, some sense -
Some vague-felt intimation from without,
Of danger lurking in its forest lairs.

But nerved by habit, and all settled soon
About the well-built fire, whose nimble tongues
Sent up continually a strenuous roar
Of fierce delight, and from their fuming pipes
Fueled and fragrant with the Indian weed,
Drawing rude comfort, - typed without, as 'twere,
By tiny clouds over their several heads
Quietly curling upward; - thus disposed
Within the pleasant firelight, grave discourse
of their peculiar business brought to each
A steadier mood, that reached into the night.

The simple subject to their minds at length
Fully discussed, their couches they prepared
Of rushes, and the long green tresses pulled
Down from the boughs of the wild willows near.
The four, as prearranged, stretched out their limbs
Under the dark arms of the forest trees
That mixed aloft, high in the starry air,
In arcs and leafy domes whose crossing curves
And roof-like features, - blurring as they ran
Into some denser intergrowth of sprays, -
Were seen in mass traced out against the clear

Wide gaze of heaven; and trustful of the watch
Kept near them by their thoughtful Master, soon
Drowsing away, forgetful of their toil,
And of the perilous vast wilderness
That lay around them like a spectral world,
Slept, breathing deep; - whilst all things there as well
Showed slumbrous, - yea, the circling forest trees,
Their foremost holes carved from a crowded mass
Less visible, by the watchfire's bladed gleams,
As quick and spicular, from the broad red ring
Of its more constant light they ran in spurts
Far out and under the umbrageous dark;
And even the shaded and enormous mounts,
Their bluff brows grooming through the stirless air,
Looked in their quiet solemnly asleep:
Yea, thence surveyed, the Universe might have seemed
Coiled in vast rest, - only that one dim cloud,
Diffused and shapen like a huge spider,
Crept as with scrawling legs along the sky;
And that the stars, in their bright orders, still
Cluster by cluster glowingly revealed
As this slow cloud moved on, - high over all, -
Looked wakeful - yea, looked thoughtful in their peace.

II

Meanwhile the cloudless eastern heaven had grown
More and more luminous - and now the Moon
Up from behind a giant hill was seen
Conglobing, till - a mighty mass - she brought
Her under border level with its cone,
As thereon it were resting: when, behold
A wonder! Instantly that cone's whole bulk
Erewhile so dark, seemed inwardly a-glow
With her instilled irradiance; while the trees
That fringed its outline, - their huge statures dwarfed,
By distance into brambles, and yet all
Clearly defined against her ample orb, -
Out of its very disc appeared to swell
In shadowy relief, as they had been
All sculptured from its substance as she rose.

Thus o'er that dark height her great orb arose,
Till her full light, in silvery sequence still
Cascading forth from ridgy slope to slope,
Like the dropt foldings of a lucent veil,
Chased mass by mass the broken darkness down
Into the dense-brushtd valleys, where it crouched,
And shrank, and struggled, like a dragon doubt
Glooming some lonely spirit that doth still
Resist the Truth with obstinate shifts and shows,
Though shining out of heaven, and from defect
Winning a triumph that might else not be.

There standing in his lone watch, Egremont
On all this solemn beauty of the world,
Looked out, yet wakeful; for sweet thoughts of home
And all the sacred charities it held,
Ingathered to his heart, as by some nice
And subtle interfusion that connects
The loved and cherished (then the most, perhaps,
When absent, or when passed, or even when lost)
With all serene and beautiful and bright
And lasting things of Nature. So then thought
The musing Egremont: when sudden - hark!
A bough crackt loudly in a neighboring brake,
And drew at once, as with alarum, all
His spirits thitherward in wild surmise.

But summoning caution, and back stepping close
Against the shade-side of a bending gum,
With a strange horror gathering to his heart,
As if his blood were charged with insect life
And writhed along in clots, he stilled himself,
Listening long and heedfully, with head
Bent forward sideways, till his held breath grew
A pang, and his ears rung. But Silence there
Had recomposed her ruffled wings, and now
Brooded it seemed even stillier than before,
Deep nested in the darkness: so that he
Unmasking from the cold shade, grew erelong
More reassured from wishing to be so,
And to muse, Memory's suspended mood,
Though with an effort, quietly recurred.

But there again - crack upon crack! And hark!
O Heaven! have Hell's worst fiends burst howling up
Into the death-doom'd world? Or whence, if not
From diabolic rage, could surge a yell
So horrible as that which now affrights
The shuddering dark! Beings as fell are near!
Yea, Beings, in their dread inherited hate
And deadly enmity, as vengeful, come
In vengeance! For behold, from the long grass
And nearer brakes, a semi-belt of stript
And painted Savages divulge at once
Their bounding forms! - full in the flaring light
Thrown outward by the fire, that roused and lapped
The rounding darkness with its ruddy tongues
More fiercely than before, - as though even it
Had felt the sudden shock the air received
From those dire cries, so terrible to hear!

A moment in wild agitation seen
Thus, as they bounded up, on then they came
Closing, with weapons brandished high, and so
Rushed in upon the sleepers! three of whom
But started, and then weltered prone beneath
The first fell blow dealt down on each by three
Of the most stalwart of their pitiless foes!
But One again, and yet again, heaved up -
Up to his knees, under the crushing strokes
Of huge-clubbed nulla-nullas, till his own
Warm blood was blinding him! For he was one
Who had with Misery nearly all his days
Lived lonely, and who therefore, in his soul
Did hunger after hope, and thirst for what
Hope still had promised him, - some taste at least
Of human good however long deferred,
And now he could not, even in dying, loose
His hold on life's poor chances of tomorrow -
Could not but so dispute the terrible fact
Of death, e'en in Death's presence! Strange it is:
Yet oft 'tis seen that Fortune's pampered child
Consents to his untimely power with less
Reluctance, less despair, than does the wretch

Who hath been ever blown about the world
The straw-like sport of Fate's most bitter blasts,
Vagrant and tieless; - ever still in him
The craving spirit thus grieves to itself:

'I never yet was happy - never yet
Tasted unmixed enjoyment, and I would
Yet pass on the bright Earth that I have loved
Some season, though most brief, of happiness;
So should I walk thenceforward to my grave,
Wherever in her green maternal breast
It might await me, more than now prepared
To house me in its gloom, - resigned at heart,
Subjected to its certainty and soothed
Even by the consciousness of having shaped
Some personal good in being; - strong myself,
And strengthening others. But to have lived long years
Of wasted breath, because of woe and want,
And disappointed hope, - and now, at last,
To die thus desolate, is horrible!'

And feeling thus through many foregone moods
Whose lives had in the temper of his soul
All mixed, and formed one habit, - that poor man,
Though the black shadows of untimely death,
Inevitably, under every stroke,
But thickened more and more, - against them still
Upstruggled, nor would cease: until one last
Tremendous blow, dealt down upon his head
As if in mercy, gave him to the dust
With all his many woes and frustrate hope.

Struck through with a cold horror, Egremont,
Standing apart, - yea, standing as it were
In marble effigy, saw this, saw all!
And when outthawing from his frozen heart
His blood again rushed tingling - with a leap
Awaking from the ghastly trance which there
Had bound him, as with chill petrific bonds,
He raised from instinct more than conscious thought
His death-charged tube, and at that murderous crew
Firing! saw one fall ox-like to the earth; -

Then turned and fled. Fast fled he, but as fast
His deadly foes went thronging on his track!
Fast! for in full pursuit, behind him yelled
Wild men whose wild speech had no word for mercy!
And as he fled, the forest beasts as well,
In general terror, through the brakes a-head
Crashed scattering, or with maddening speed athwart
His course came frequent. On - still on he flies -
Flies for dear life! and still behind him hears
Nearer and nearer, the so rapid dig
Of many feet, - nearer and nearer still.

III

So went the chase! And now what should he do?
Abruptly turning, the wild Creek lay right
Before him! But no time was there for thought:
So on he kept, and from a bulging rock
That beaked the bank like a bare promontory,
Plunging right forth and shooting feet-first down,
Sunk to his middle in the flashing stream -
In which the imaged stars seemed all at once
To burst like rockets into one wide blaze
Of intewrithing light. Then wading through
The ruffled waters, forth he sprang and seized
A snake-like root that from the opponent bank
Protruded, and round which his earnest fear
Did clench his cold hand like a clamp of steel,
A moment, - till as swiftly thence he swung
His dripping form aloft, and up the dark
O'erjutting ledge, went clambering in the blind
And breathless haste of one who flies for life:
When its face - O verily our God
Hath those in his peculiar care for whom
The daily prayers of spotless Womanhood
And helpless Infancy, are offered up! -
When in its face a cavity he felt,
The upper earth of which in one rude mass
Was held fast bound by the enwoven roots
Of two old trees, - and which, beneath the mould,
Just o'er the clammy vacancy below,
Twisted and lapped like knotted snakes, and made

A natural loft-work. Under this he crept,
Just as the dark forms of his hunters thronged
The bulging rock whence he before had plunged.

Duskily visible, thereon a space
They paused to mark what bent his course might take
Over the farther bank, thereby intent
To hold upon the chase, which way soe'er
It might incline, more surely. But no form
Amongst the moveless fringe of fern was seen
To shoot up from its outline, - up and forth
Into the moonlight that lay bright beyond
In torn and shapless blocks, amid the boles
And mixing shadows of the taller trees,
All standing now in the keen radiance there
So ghostly still, as in a solemn trance,
But nothing in the silent prospect stirred -
No fugitive apparition in the view
Rose, as they stared in fierce expectancy:
Wherefore they augured that their prey was yet
Somewhere between, - and the whole group with that
Plunged forward, till the fretted current boiled
Amongst their crowd'ing trunks from bank to bank;
And searching thus the stream across, and then
Lengthwise, along the ledges, - combing down
Still, as they went, with dripping fingers, cold
And cruel as inquisitive, each clump
Of long-flagged swamp-grass where it flourished high, -
The whole dark line passed slowly, man by man,
Athwart the cavity - so fearfully near,
That as they waded by the Fugitive
Felt the strong odour of their wetted skins
Pass with them, trailing as their bodies moved
Stealthily on, coming with each, and going.

But their keen search was keen in vain. And now
Those wild men marvelled, - till, in consultation,
There grouped in dark knots standing in the stream
That glimmered past them, moaning as it went,
His Banishment, so passing strange it seemed,
They coupled with the mystery of some crude
Old fable of their race; and fear-struck all,

And silent, then withdrew. And when the sound
Of their receding steps had from his ear
Died off, as back to the stormed Camp again
They hurried to despoil the yet warm dead,
Our Friend slid forth, and springing up the bank.
Renewed his flight, nor rested from it, till
He gained the welcoming shelter of his Home.

Return we for a moment to the scene
Of recent death. There the late flaring fire
Now smouldered, for its brands were strewn about,
And four stark corpses plundered to the skin
And brutally mutilated, seemed to stare
With frozen eyeballs up into the pale
Round visage of the Moon, who, high in heaven,
With all her stars, in golden bebies, gazed
As peacefully down as on a bridal there
Of the warm Living - not, alas! on them
Who kept in ghastly silence through the night
Untimely spouses with a desert death.

O God! and thus this lovely world hath been
Accursed forever by the bloody deeds
Of its prime Creature - Man. Erring or wise,
Savage or civilised, still hath he made
This glorious residence, the Earth, a Hell
Of wrong and robbery and untimely death!
Some dread Intelligence opposed to Good
Did, of a surety, over all the earth
Spread out from Eden - or it were not so!
For see the bright beholding Moon, and all
The radiant Host of Heaven, evince no touch
Of sympathy with Man's wild violence; -
Only evince in their calm course, their part
In that original unity of Love,
Which, like the soul that dwelleth in a harp,
Under God's hand, in the beginning, chimed
The sabbath concord of the Universe;
And look on a gay clique of maidens, met
In village tryst, and interwhirling all
In glad Arcadian dances on the green -
Or on a hermit, in his vigils long,

Seen kneeling at the doorway, of his cell -
Or on a monster battlefield where lie
In swelterin heaps, the dead and dying both,
On the cold gory grounds - as they that night
Looked in bright peace, down on the doomful Wild.

Afterwards there, for many changeful years,
Within a glade that sloped into the bank
Of that wild mountain Creek - midway within,
In partial record of a terrible hour
Of human agony and loss extreme,
Four grassy mounds stretched lengthwise side by side,
Startled the wanderer; - four long grassy mounds
Bestrewn with leaves, and withered spraylets, stript
By the loud wintry wing gales that roamed
Those solitudes, from the old trees which there
Moaned the same leafy dirges that had caught
The heed of dying Ages: these were all;
And thence the place was long by travellers called
The Creek of the Four Graves. Such was the Tale
Egremont told us of the wild old times.

Charles Harpur

The Creek Of The Four Graves [late Version]

A settler in the olden times went forth
With four of his most bold and trusted men
Into the wilderness—went forth to seek
New streams and wider pastures for his fast
Increasing flocks and herds. O'er mountain routes
And over wild wolds clouded up with brush,
And cut with marshes perilously deep,—
So went they forth at dawn; at eve the sun,
That rose behind them as they journeyed out,
Was firing with his nether rim a range
Of unknown mountains, that like ramparts towered
Full in their front. and his last glances fell
Into the gloomy forest's eastern glades
In golden gleams, like to the Angel's sword,
And flashed upon the windings of a creek
That noiseless ran betwixt the pioneers
And those new Apennines—ran, shaded o'er
With boughs of the wild willow, hanging mixed
From either-bank, or duskily befringed
With upward tapering feathery swamp-oaks,
The sylvan eyelash always of remote
Australian waters, whether gleaming still
In lake or pool, or bickering along,
Between the marges of some eager stream.
Before them, thus extended, wilder grew
The scene each moment and more beautiful;
For when the sun was all but sunk below
Those barrier mountains, in the breeze that o'er
Their rough enormous backs deep-fleeced with wood
Came whispering down, the wide up-slanting sea
Of fanning leaves in the descending rays
Danced dazzlingly, tingling as if the trees
Thrilled to the roots for very happiness.

But when the sun had wholly disappeared
Behind those mountains—O what words, what hues
Might paint the wild magnificence of view
That opened westward! Out extending, lo!
The heights rose crowding, with their summits all

Dissolving as it seemed, and partly lost
In the exceeding radiancy aloft;
And thus transfigured, for awhile they stood
Like a great company of archaeons, crowned
With burning diadems, and tented o'er
With canopies of purple and of gold.

Here halting wearied now the sun was set,
Our travellers kindled for their first night's camp
A brisk and crackling fire, which seemed to them,
A wilder creature than 'twas elsewhere wont,
Because of the surrounding savageness.
And as they supped, birds of new shape and plume
And wild strange voice came by; and up the steep
Between the climbing forest growths they saw
Perched on the bare abutments of the hills,
Where haply yet some lingering gleam fell through,
The wallaroo¹ look forth. Eastward at last
The glow was wasted into formless gloom,
Night's front; then westward the high massing woods
Steeped in a swart but mellow Indian hue,
A deep dusk loveliness, lay ridged and heaped,
Only the more distinctly for their shade,
Against the twilight hearen—a cloudless depth,
Yet luminous with sunset's fading glow;
And thus awhile in the lit dusk they seemed
To hang like mighty pictures of themselves
In the still chambers of some vaster world.

At last, the business of the supper done,
The echoes of the solitary place
Came as in sylvan wonder wide about
To hear and imitate the voices strange,
Within the pleasant purlieus of the fire
Lifted in glee; but to be hushed erelong,
As with the darkness of the night there came
O'er the adventurers, each and all, some sense
Of danger lurking in its forest lairs.

But, nerved by habit, they all gathered round
About the well-built fire, whose nimble tongues
Sent up continually a strenuous roar

Of fierce delight, and from their fuming pipes
Drawing rude comfort, round the pleasant light
With grave discourse they planned their next day's deeds.
Wearied at length, their couches they prepared
Of rushes, and the long green tresses pulled
From the bent boughs of the wild willows near;
Then the four men stretched out their tired limbs
Under the dark arms of the forest trees
That mixed aloft, high in the starry air,
In arcs and leafy domes whose crossing curves,
Blended with denser intergrowth of sprays,
Were seen, in mass traced out against the clear
Wide gaze of heaven; and trustful of the watch
Kept near them by their master, soon they slept,
Forgetful of the perilous wilderness
That lay around them like a spectral world;
And all things slept; the circling forest trees,
Their foremost boles carved from a crowded mass
Less visible by the watch-fire's bladed gleams
That ran far out in the umbrageous dark
Beyond the broad red ring of constant light;
And, even the shaded mountains darkly seen,
Their bluff brows looming through the stirless air,
Looked in their stillness solemnly asleep:
Yea, thence surveyed, the universe might have seemed
Coiled in vast rest;—only that one dark cloud,
Diffused and shapen like a spider huge,
Crept as with scrawling legs along the sky
And that the stars in their bright orders, still
Cluster by cluster glowingly revealed,
As this slow cloud moved on, high over all,
Peaceful and wakeful, watched the world below.

Part II.

Meanwhile the cloudless eastern heaven had grown
More luminous, and now the moon arose
Above the hill, when lo! that giant cone
Erewhile so dark, seemed inwardly aglow
With her instilled irradiance, while the trees
That fringed its outline, their huge statures dwarfed
By distance into brambles and yet all

Clearly defined against her ample orb,
Out of its very disc appeared to swell
In shadowy relief, as they had been
All sculptured from its surface as she rose.
Then her full light in silvery sequence still
Cascading forth from ridgy slope to slope,
Chased mass by mass the broken darkness down
Into the dense-brushed valleys, where it crouched,
And shrank, and struggled, like a dragon-doubt
Glooming a lonely spirit.

His lone watch
The master kept, and wakeful looked abroad
On all the solemn beauty of the world;
And by some sweet and subtle tie that joins
The loved and cherished, absent from our side,
With all that is serene and beautiful
In Nature, thoughts of home began to steal
Into his musings—when, on a sudden, hark!
A bough cracks loudly in a neighbouring brake!
Against the shade-side of a bending gum.
With a strange horror gathering to his heart,
As if his blood were charged with insect life
And writhed along in clots, he stilled himself
And listened heedfully, till his held breath
Became a pang. Nought heard he: silence there
Had recomposed her ruffled wings, and now
Deep brooded in the darkness; so that he
Again mused on, quiet and reassured.

But there again—crack upon crack! Awake!
O heaven! have hell's worst fiends burst howling up
Into the death-doomed world? Or whence, if not
From diabolic rage, could surge a yell
So horrible as that which now affrights
The shuddering dark! Beings as fell are near!
Yea, beings in their dread inherited hate
Awful, vengeful as hell's worst fiends, are come
In vengeance! For behold from the long grass
And nearer brakes arise the bounding forms
Of painted savages, full in the light
Thrown outward by the fire, that roused and lapped.

The rounding darkness with its ruddy tongues
More fiercely than before, as though even it
Had felt the sudden shock the air received
From those terrific cries.

On then they came
And rushed upon the sleepers, three of whom
But started, and then weltered prone beneath
The first fell blow dealt down on each by three
Of the most stalwart of their pitiless foes
But one again, and yet again, rose up,
Rose to his knees, under the crushing strokes
Of huge clubbed nulla-nullas, till his own
Warm blood was blinding him. For he was one
Who had with misery nearly all his days
Lived lonely, and who therefore in his soul
Did hunger after hope, and thirst for what
Hope still had promised him, some taste at least
Of human good however long deferred.
And now he could not, even in dying, loose
His hold on life's poor chances still to come,
Could not but so dispute the terrible fact
Of death, e'en in death's presence. Strange it is,
Yet oft 'tis seen, that fortune's pampered child
Consents to death's untimely power with less
Reluctance, less despair, than does the wretch
Who hath been ever blown about the world,
The straw-like sport of fate's most bitter blasts
So though the shadows of untimely death,
Inevitably under every stroke
But thickened more and more, against them still
The poor wretch struggled, nor would cease until
One last great blow, dealt down upon his head
As if in mercy, gave him to the dust,
With all his many woes and frustrate hopes.

The master, chilled with horror, saw it all;
From instinct more than conscious thought he raised
His death-charged tube, and at that murderous crew
Firing, saw one fall ox-like to the earth,
Then turned and fled. Fast fled he, but as fast
His deadly foes went thronging on his track.

Fast! for in full pursuit behind him yelled
Men whose wild speech no word for mercy hath!
And as he fled the forest beasts as well
In general terror through the brakes ahead
Crashed scattering, or with maddening speed athwart
His course came frequent. On, still on, he flies—
Flies for dear life, and still behind him hears
Nearer and nearer, the light rapid dig ,
Of many feet—nearer and nearer still.

Part III

So went the chase. Now at a sudden turn
Before him lay the steep-banked mountain creek;
Still on he kept perforce, and from a rock
That beaked the bank, a promontory bare,
Plunging right forth and shooting feet-first down,
Sunk to his middle in the flashing stream,
In which the imaged stars seemed all at once
To burst like rockets into one wide blaze.
Then wading through the ruffled waters, forth
He sprang, and seized a snake-like root that from
The opponent bank protruded, clenching there
His cold hand like a clamp of steel; and thence
He swung his dripping form aloft, the blind
And breathless haste of one who flies for life
Urging him on; up the dark ledge he climbed,
When in its face—O verily our God
Hath those in His peculiar care, for whom
The daily prayers of spotless womanhood
And helpless infancy are offered up!
There in its face a cavity he felt,
The upper earth of which in one rude mass
Was held fast bound by the enwoven roots
Of two old trees, and which, beneath the mould,
Over the dark and clammy cave below,
Twisted like knotted snakes.
'Neath these he crept,
Just as the dark forms of his hunters thronged
The steep bold rock whence he before had plunged.

Duskily visible beneath the moon

They paused a space, to mark what bent his course
Might take beyond the stream. But now no form
Amongst the moveless fringe of fern was seen
To shoot up from its outline, 'mid the boles
And mixing shadows of the taller trees,
All standing now in the keen radiance there
So ghostly still as in a solemn trance;
But nothing in the silent prospect stirred
Therefore they augured that their prey was yet
Within the nearer distance, and they all
Plunged forward till the fretted current boiled
Amongst their crowding forms from bank to bank
And searching thus the stream across, and then
Along the ledges, combing down each clump
Of long-flagged swamp-grass where it flourished high,
The whole dark line passed slowly, man by man,
Athwart the cave!

Keen was their search but vain,
There grouped in dark knots standing in the stream
That glimmered past them moaning as it went,
They marvelled; passing strange to them it seemed
Some old mysterious fable of their race,
That brooded o'er the valley and the creek,
Returned upon their minds, and fear-struck all
And silent, they withdrew. And when the sound
Of their retreating steps had died away,
As back they hurried to despoil the dead
In the stormed camp, then rose the fugitive,
Renewed his flight, nor rested from it, till
He gained the shelter of his longed-for home.
And in that glade, far in the doomful wild,
In sorrowing record of an awful hour
Of human agony and loss extreme,
Untimely spousals with a desert death,
Four grassy mounds are there beside the creek,
Bestrewn with sprays and leaves from the old trees
Which moan the ancient dirges that have caught
The heed of dying ages, and for long
The traveller passing then in safety there
Would call the place—The Creek of the Four Graves.

The Death Of Shelley

Fit winding-sheet for thee
Was the upheaving eternal sea,
Fit dirge the tempest's slave-alarming roll
For yokeless as the waves always
Thy thoughts went sounding forth, as they
Were marshalling to the trumpet of the universal soul.
Yet tell me, spirit bright,
Did nature sorrow not for thee?
That day, veiled not the sun his light
When rolling over Italy?
Paled not the stricken moon, that night,
When gazing down upon the doomful sea?

Yet tell me, for from under them
Was never reft away before a richer, purer gem
Than was thy being, wherein love did dwell
With joy and natural piety as well,—
Inraving it with a deep life,
So sweetly deep, so wildly bright,
Such as no words may tell!
And never in their day and night
Did ruin, with the beautiful at strife,
Compass before so horrible a spite!
Never trod down at once so much of musical delight.

.
Whom the gods love die young;
Flowers wither where rank weeds still thrive apace;
Nor is the battle always to the strong,
Nor to the swift for ever sure the race.
Yet if the odours of the flowers remain,
Are they not, even to regret,
A sweet consolatory gain?
Nor vainly forth was the lost battle set,
Nor the race urged in vain,
Whence flow inspiriting examples yet.
Yet, poetry and passion's darling son!
Though thou didst walk the world as one
Proscribed by stars inimical to mankind,

While mitred persecution, dread
And deadly, raged in mortal hate behind,
With ignorance, her dull slave abhorred;
 And these, in mercy as they said,
With many a madly mystic word,
And vengeful, hot, God-wounding glance upthrown,
Implored the heavens to thunder down
 Their Christian wrath on thy devoted head;

 And yet, O good and kind!
This was for thee the meet memorial crown
By the great Spirit of all good designed,
That men, to nobler motions born,
And more to a large charity inclined,
Should well reverse their bigot fathers' scorn,
 And, yearning o'er thy story,
Shall learn therefrom how gnomelike are spirits freedom-blind,
 And live glorying in the glory
 Of thy love-illumined mind.

All then was well—yea, very well;
Though brief, too brief, here on the earth thy stay.
Thy name is with us for a strengthening spell
To all who, banding against wrong's bad brood,
Would do the unwilling world some good,
 Nor idly pass away,
 A vapour, nothing more—a cloudlet grey
By every wind transformed and driven
A dull and wasting stain in the blue dome of heaven!
 And though the heart and brain be food
 For hungry death, where erst the sisterhood
Of thy bright dreams (a seraph choir) did dwell,
What light around us these remaining fling!
 For lovelier splendours never fell
 In star-showers from Urania's wing,
 And freedom in her golden age
Shall constellate her spheres with glories from thy page.

 But hark! Yet from her ghostly cell
Built on the dubious brink of the Unknown,
 Cowled Superstition's sullen bell
 Tolls thee to her deepest hell!

Blind Fury! She alone
Can darkly dare to think
A soul like thine, though in its earthly shell
Bedimmed by error,
Should at her bidding sink
Lossward-down, in penal terror!
Enough! Wherever love may soar
Beyond that mound which mortals blench to see—
That last low mound on time's change-beaten shore—
There is thy spirit now, fire-wing'd and free,
And there a shining dweller shall it be
For evermore

Charles Harpur

The Death Of Sisera

When Deborah the prophetess ruled in God's land,
And Sisera died under Jael's fierce hand,
His mother looked forth at the close of the day,
When the roar of the war died in silence away:
And she cried, "Still his chariot tarries afar!
Are its wheels clogged about with the slaughter of war?"
And her damsels made answer, "Awhile yet they stay
To trample the fallen, dividing the prey."
Day shut, and the stars that had doomed him to death
Rushed out, while to listen she pent in her breath;
But the sound of his chariot over the plain
Like a far roll of thunder, came never again

Charles Harpur

The Dream By The Fountain

Thought-weary and sad, I reclined by a fountain
At the head of a white-cedar-shaded ravine,
And the breeze that fell over the high glooming mountain
Sang a lullaby low as I gazed o'er the scene.
Long I'd reclined not till slumber came o'er me,
Grateful as balm to a suffering child:
When a glorious maiden seemed standing before me
With a lyre in her hand—O so sounding and wild!

Bright was her brow, not the morning's brow brighter,
But her eyes were two midnights of passionate thought;
Light was her motion, the breeze's not lighter,
And her looks were like sunshine and shadow in-wrought.

Never before did my bosom inherit
Emotion so thrilling, such exquisite awe!
Never such wonder exalted my spirit
Before, as did now, through the vision I saw.

Robed for the chase like a nymph of Diana,
Her ivory limbs were half given below—
Bare, that the pure breath of heaven might fan her,
Bare was her bosom of roseate snow.

Then lifting the lyre, and with every feeling
Sublimed as with love, she awakened the strings,
And the while, as it seemed, into being came stealing
The motion and light of angelical wings.

Divine were the measure! Each voice of the wold-wood
Seemed gathering power in their musical thrills—
The loud joy of streams in their strong mountain childhood,
The shouting of echoes that break from the hills;

The moaning of trees all at midnight in motion,
When the breezes seem lost in the dark, with a rare
And sweet soaring spirit of human devotion
All blended and woven together were there.

Then she smiled with a look like the radiance of morning,
When flushing the crystal of heaven's serene,
Blent with that darkness of beauty, adorning
The world, when the moon just arising is seen.

And repressing, it seemed, many fonder suggestions,
Calmly she spake;—I arose to my knees,
Expectantly glad, while, to quiet my questions,
The wild warbled words that she uttered were these:

"I am the muse of the evergreen forest,
I am the spouse of thy spirit, lone bard!
Ev'n in the days when thy boyhood thou worest,
Thy pastimes drew on thee my dearest regard.

"For I knew thee, ev'n then, in thy ecstasy musing
Of glory and grace by old Hawkesbury's side—
Scenes that spread recordless round thee, suffusing
With the purple of love—I beheld thee, and sighed.

"Sighed—for the fire-robe of thought had enwound thee,
Betokening how much that the happy most dread,
And whence there should follow, howe'er it renowned thee,
What sorrows of heart, and what labours of head!

"Signed—though thy dreams did the more but endear thee.
It seemed of the breeze, or a sigh of thine own,
When I swept o'er this lyre, still unseen gliding near thee,
To give thy emotions full measure and tone.

"Since have I tracked thee through less lovely places,
And seen thee with sorrow long herd with the vain,
Lured into error by false-smiling faces,
Chained by dull fashion though scorning her chain.

"Then would I prompt, in the still hour of dreaming,
Some thought of thy beautiful country again,
Of her yet to be famed streams, through dark woods far-gleaming
Of her bold shores that throb to the beat of the main.

"Till at last I beheld thee arise in devotion,
To shake from thy heart the vile bondage it bore,

And my joy gloried out like a morning-lit ocean,
When thy footfall I heard in the mountains once more!

“Listen, belov’d one! I promise thee glory
Such as shall rise like the day-star apart,
To brighten the source of Australia’s broad story,
But for this thou must give to the future thy heart!—

“Be then the bard of thy country! O rather
Should such be thy choice than a monarchy wide!
Lo! ’Tis the land of the grave of thy father!
’Tis the cradle of liberty! Think and decide.”

Joy glowed in my heart as she ceased. Unreplying,
I gazed, mute with love, on her soul-moulded charms.
Deeper they glowed, her lips trembled, and sighing,
She rushed to my heart and dissolved in my arms!

Charles Harpur

The Drowned Alive

I was one so deeply drowned,
That when the drag my body found,
Twas void of motion, void of breath,
And to sensation dead as death.
In a languid summer mood
I had plunged into a flood,
That to the low sun's slanting beams
Gleamed with only quiet gleams,
Each with a wide flicker sheeting
From its still floor, fast and fleeting,
E'en such a flood as, one would say,
Could never, or by night or day,
Have drenched a man's warm life away.

But what are these down in its bed
That trail so long and look so red,
Moving as in conscious sport?
Are they weeds of curious sort?
But I'll drive to them and see
Into all their mystery.

Down I dive. A plentious crop!
Some shall with me to the top,
For here there is too dim a light
To show their character aright.
I wind them in my arms, intent
To root them up in my ascent;
But they resist me, and again
I tug them with a stronger strain.
Full well, I trow, they hold their own,
Gripping fast each bedded stone
With their tuby roots, that go
Down through the stiff slime below.
Well at last I find that I
Must leave them.—But in vain I try!
Fierce as lightning on my brain
Smites the dread truth—I try in vain!
Yea, more and more, in coils and flakes
Like long blood-red watersnakes,

The deadly things around me clasp—
The more I tug the more they grasp!
My pent breath, growing hot and thin,
Explodes with a dull booming din;
While through my unclenched teeth the wave
Comes drenching! Is there none to save?
None near to see, to guess, to trace
Under the water's gleaming face
The dread extremity of one
Thus fastened down? Ah! Is there none?
Wild as vain my struggles grow—
Horror, horror, life must go!

Hope gives up her ghost, despair;
I am dying; round me here
The long weeds erst so deeply red,
Look, even where nearest, grey as lead,
As mid them, settling down, I sway
To and fro, and fast away
Life keeps bubbling—bubbling, aye
Through my cold lips wide agape,
White, and stiffening to that shape
They take at last when done with breath
In the rigid face of death.

And now, while sullen drummings make
My spirit through mine ears to ache,
Life-long memories interwrought
With all I ever felt or thought,
Sacred fancies hidden long
Lest the world should do them wrong,
Pent-back feelings that for years
Just below the source of tears
Folded close their glowing wings,
With a million other things,
All thick interthronging press
Through my drowning consciousness;
Then comes the thought of how my doom
Must wrap my mother in its gloom;
And give my sire to hold his breath
For anguish, hearing of my death,
And wound one fond heart to the core

In the wide world evermore.
All in the same instant so
Do these quick thoughts come and go,
Life within my failing brain
Full of pity, full of pain.

Lastly a drear stupor blent
With a comfortless content,
Into one mass of clammy clay
Kneads mind and body. Drenched away
With one faint shudder, one last throe,
Life stagnates and its shell lies low,
Swaying weed-bound to and fro,
Void of feeling and of breath,
How die we, if this be not death?

Ah! What thrilling, thrilling pain
Kindles through my heart and brain!
Ah! What horrors o'er me wave,
Shadowing forth as from the grave;
Ah! Those sudden gleams of light,
They fall like firebrands on my sight!
Ah! What vast and heavy world
Is all at once upon me hurled,
Massing into one immense
Oppression, every tortured sense.

.
Yes; I now remember well
How my sudden fate befell;
And are we, then, in death's grim thrall,
Thus consciousness of our funeral?
But where are they who most should mourn
When by bier is graveward borne?
With her whose face I yearn to see—
Where are they? And where is she?
Where the crape-trimm'd followers all?
Where the coffin and the pall?
Or do death and nature strive
Within me? Is the drowned alive?

Charles Harpur

The Drunkard

Disease was lurking in the cup!
Disastrous folly mantling there!
For promised joys he quaffed it up—
And his were ruin and despair!
Yes—so deceived he tasted first,
And fashion the delusion nurst,
Till with the texture of his life
It wove a warp of madness, agony, and strife.

The festive bowl!—to that he owes
Those drops of shame which now bedew
His burning brows—the hell of woes
His haggard spirit rushing through!
Young, innocent, he took the road
That leads to honor's bright abode;
But joined, unwarned, upon the way
A bacchanalian troop—there stationed to betray.

Oh, could he but recall the past!
Oh, could he be what he had been!
The pearls of mental promise, cast
Away for riot's joys obscene,
Could he reclaim! and knew his soul
To execrate, as now, the bowl—
That voice which sang to his brave youth
High hopes, and glorious aims, were still a voice of truth.

Oh what like self contempt can blast
The lofty hope, the wish refined?
In bitter mockery, at the "last
Infirmity of noble mind"
It laughs—a laugh in which despair
And wild defiance mingled are:
And not even madness can exempt
The votary of the bowl from grinning self-contempt.

Yet, could he but forbear to raise
The hellward-hastening draught again,
Time yet might quench the lurid blaze,

The fiery serpent in his brain!
Friendship might take his hand once more,
Fond love caress him as before;
And gentle peace, and comfort mild,
Smile on his future years, as on his youth they smiled.

Charles Harpur

The Emigrant's Vision

As his bark dashed away on the night-shrouded deep,
And out towards the South he was gazing,
First there passed o'er his spirit a darkness like sleep,
Then the light of a vision amazing!
As rises the moon, from the white waves afar
Came a goddess, it seemed, of love, wisdom, and war,
And on her bright helmet, encircling a star,
Behold there was graven "Australia."
Her robes were of green, like the mantle of spring
Newly spread by the streams that so mildly
Flow on through yon flock-dappled plains, or that sing
'Mid those blue ranging mountains so wildly:
Her locks were as bright as the lustre that lies
At morn on the seas of the South, and her eyes
Were as deep in their joy as the clear sunny skies—
The clear sunny skies of Australia.

"O stranger!" she said, "hast thou fled from the home
Which they forefathers bled for so vainly?
Does shame for its past thus induce thee to roam,
Or despair of its future constrain thee?
In the far sunny South there's a refuge from wrong,
'Tis the Shiloh of freedom expected so long;
There genius and glory shall shout forth their song—
'Tis the evergreen land of Australia.

"There Truth her abode on the forest-clad hills
Shall establish, a dweller for ever,
And Plenty rejoice by the gold-pebbled rills,
Well mated to honest endeavour,
Till the future a numberless people shall see,
Eager, and noble, and equal, and free,
And the God they adore their sole monarch shall be—
Then come, build thy home in Australia!"

She said. Towards the South she passed brightly away,
And at once, as from slumber, he started;
But the cadences sweet of the welcoming lay
Yet breathed of the vision departed;

And when o'er the deep these had fadingly spread,
The swell of his heart, as he rose from his bed,
Broke loud into words on his tongue, and he said—
"Be the home of my hope, then, Australia!"

Charles Harpur

The End Of The Book

My work is finished that has been to me
 My only solace for this many a day.
But whether it in other company
 May so beguile the time and hue the ray
 Of loneliness and thought, I dare not say;
Nor whether with the future it shall be
A thing of note, nor whether presently
 'Tis doomed to waste like a thin mist away.
Yet whatsoever be its worldly lot,
 I know that, hive-like, it with love is stored,
And that through all its pages I have not
 Written one wilfully misleading word,
 Or traced one feeling that my heart ignored—
One line that truth has counselled me to blot.

Charles Harpur

The Flight Of Peace

TRUST and Treachery, Wisdom, Folly,
Madness, Mirth and Melancholy,
Love and Hatred, Thrift and Pillage,
All are housed in one small village.

And if such be Life's mix'd being,
Where may Peace from ruin fleeing,
Find a shelter and inherit
All the calm of her own merit?

In a bark of gentle motion
Sailing on the summer ocean?
There worst war the tempest wages
And the whirlpool's hunger rages.

In some lonely new-world bower,
Hidden like a forest flower?
There too, there, to irk the stranger,
Stalks the wild-eyed spirit Danger!

Vainly would she build by roving
Or in hoping or in loving,
Or in solitary spaces,
Having in all times and places,
Or in none a home of beauty
In the fearless heart of Duty,
Dwelling there and seeing
God's right hand all things decreeing.

Charles Harpur

The Forgotten

He shone in the senate, the camp, and the grove,
The mirror of manhood, the darling of love.
He fought for his country, the star of the brave,
And died for it's weal when to die was to save.

And Wisdom and Valour long over him wept,
And Beauty, for ages, strewed flowers where he slept.

And the bards of the people inwrought with their lays
The light of his glory, the sound of his praise.

But afar in the foreworld have faded their strains,
And now of his being what record remains?

Within a lone valley a tomb crumbles fast,
And the name of the Sleeper is lost in the past

Charles Harpur

The Home Of Peace

Trust and treachery, wisdom, folly,
Madness, mirth and melancholy,
Love and hatred, thrift and pillage,
All are housed in every village.
And in such a world's mixed being,
Where may peace, from ruin fleeing,
Find fit shelter and inherit
All the calm of her own merit?

In a bark of gentle motion
Sailing on the summer ocean?
There worst war the tempest wages,
And the hungry whirlpool rages.

In some lonely new-world bower
Hidden like a forest flower?
There, too, there, to fray the stranger
Stalks the wild-eyed savage, danger!

In some Alpine cot, by fountains
Flowing from snow-shining mountains?
There the avalanches thunder,
Crushing all that lieth under!

In some hermit-tent, pitched lowly
Mid the tombs of prophets holy?
There to harry and annoy her
Roams the infidel destroyer.

In palatial chambers gilded,
Guarded round with towers high-builed?
Change may enter these to-morrow,
And with change may enter sorrow.

Find, O peace, thy home of beauty
In the steadfast heart of duty,
Dwelling ever there, and seeing
God through every phase of being

Charles Harpur

The Hunter's Indian Dove

DARK is her cheek, but her blood's rich blush
Comes through its dusk with a sunset flush,
While joy, like a prairie-bee, slaketh its drouth
At the red honey-cup of her smiling mouth,
And her wild eyes glow, like meteors, there
'Neath the streaming storm of her night-black hair.
And ever I pride in my forest choice,
The more while I list to her bird-like voice,
Warbling old songs in her own wild speech,
But with this new burden still added to each;
"Who'll pity, who'll comfort the dark wood-dove
When the white hawk leaves her to die of love?"

O then, by the artless tears that rise
'Neath the downcast lids of her gleaming eyes—
By the truthfully tender and touching grace
That boding passion then lends to her face—
I swear, in the very wild spirit of love,
Never to leave her, my Indian dove!

Charles Harpur

The Ideal

Spirit of Dreams! When many a toilsome height
Shut paradise from exiled Adam's sight,
Two wedded powers were given thenceforth to stray
On either hand, companions of his way;
This Hope was named in heaven, whence he came,
And that of Melancholy bore the name;
Thy parents these—who clothed thee with a ray
Snatched from Perfection as she passed away,
And to their gentle child bequeathed the grace
Wherewith they once adorned unfallen nature's face.
Queen-mother of Elysiums, and all fair
Hesperian gardens, hear thy suppliant's prayer!
Lend me the hues with which the mortal eyes
Thou dost bring back the tints of paradise—
Hues drawn from all the splendours that there be
In this new world, from earth and sky and sea;
From nameless flowers, that wild in forests run,
Up to the glories of the setting sun—
From those white flickers that round fountains leap,
From the phosphoric lightnings of the deep,
From wave-wet sands that glisten on the shore,
From blazing diamonds and rich-beaming ore;
From these by thee with native art combined,
And interblended with the light of mind;
These hues now lend thy suppliant, for he
The brilliant steps would trace of thy whole ministry.

O for a golden lyre while first I sing
How thou dost lovelier make the loveliest thing!
Woman is beautiful!—no more—unless
Thou touch her beauty with thy soft caress;
Then sweeter sweets her form at once invest
Than breathe in gales of Araby the blest!
A thousand charms from thy fair soul are given,
And she outshines the very moon of heaven.
Lovely this prospect! Yet thy presence here
Doubles each glory of the golden year!
Breathes but thy influence o'er a pasture plain,
And lo! 'tis flushed with Eden-glows again.

This light, how glorious! A sun-woven robe
Wrapping in living warmth the fruitful globe:
But if thy touch lend vision to our eyes,
We see celestial radiance flood the skies;
The common light burns with diviner flame,
"It is the light of God!" Our awestruck souls exclaim.

O he whose wild heart leaps to thy wild call,
Hath yet some joy whatever may befall!
Hath yet some wealth where destitution reigns—
Nay, even some high inviolable gains
Where rapine sits enthroned, and slavery clanks her chains!
Still his possessions compass whatsoever
Of good and beautiful nature treasures there!
Still the lone hill, wild vale, and pathless grove
Are his by the great solemn right of love;
For him what gold is in the morning's hues!
What unbought jewels are the lucent dews!
What regal mansions are the brookside bowers!
What gay assemblies the balm-breathing flowers!
Then every bird that pipes a matin lay
Doth unto him unconscious tribute pay;
Yea, every grace of stream and wood and sky
Is vassal to his sovereign ear and eye.

And when the busy coils of Mammon's brood
Fail like the voices of an ebbing flood,
And from the scenes that glared with her display
Pride-drunken fashion rolls fatigued away;
When from mild evening's shadowy robe the breeze
Shakes cool delight and odorous messages;
And when no longer the sun's beams fire-crest
The dusky hills, but round him in the west
Are gathered, even like a summoned host,
In gorgeous tents on the horizon's coast,
Ere to the regions of a separate day
He rolls at length in purple pomp away;
Whilst yet—some moments yet—withdrawing gleams
Travel the air, and die along the streams;
A sumptuous festival that hour shall prove
To bathe his chosen soul with harmony and love!

When up the unclouded heaven in starry sheen
Night walks like a gem-sprangled Ethiop queen,
And from her solemn curtains wide unfurled
Falls dense repose upon the drowsy world,
No sordid appetite, no passion mean,
Chains down thy votary to this mere terrene;
But following thee he freely soars afar
From moon to planet, and from star to star!
Yea, onward still he venturous may trace
Thy distant course through dimmest depths of space,
Till waxing bolder from the boundless flight,
He claim his kinship with the infinite.

And now, though mournful he thy servant's theme,
A tale of hapless love, or faded dream
Of worth, of men, whose spirits once so bright
Like halcyons gemmed the rivers of delight,
But fled misfortune's wintry floods before,
Never to show their shining plumage more;
Still thou, thy hope-tired follower ever near,
Sublim'st each sigh and hallowest every tear,
Till even despair thy handmaid grows to be,
Sending a lurid light by its intensity
Through awful spirit depths thy foes can never see.
Doth danger threaten, and doth terror scream?
O'er their wild fronts a reconciling gleam
Thy wings reflect! The storm that rends the sky
And ploughs the ocean can, if thou art nigh,
Give to the heart stern strength and lift the soul on high!
Thou throw'st fierce loveliness o'er ruin's face,
And over death's calm brow a mild entrancing grace.
Nay, be thy glance but turned where devils dwell,
And a sad glory lightens out of hell!

Spirit of dreams! Oh, let me grateful say
How thou hast brightened my lone earthly way!
When most beset by troubles stern and new,
When foes must triumphed, friends were most untrue,
My soul's distractions thou hast all subdued
Through visions high of Love, and Liberty and Good.
Or stood I like a wizard, wild and lone,
On some great mountain's cloud-frequented cone,

Meet altar of a universal fane,
Where no fiend-rites had left their murder-strain,
Thou gav'st me faith's prophetic power, to seize
High consolation out of mysteries—
Those mystic terrors that low-muttering roll
Through life's dim tract, the storm-clouds of the soul.
O spirit! Thus attend me to the last!
Brighten the future as thou didst the past!
May never aught thy splendid dreams dispel,
Till the hard Real earn the heart's applause as well.

Charles Harpur

The Master Mariner's Song

(Outward Bound)

AWAY, away she plunges
With her white sails o'er her spread,
Like the summer clouds that gather
On some hill's piny head;
Still away she plunges rampant
Like a lion roused to wrath,
And the proud wave lies humbled
I' the track of her path.

Ye ho! my gallant sailors
Wear her head from off the land:
As his steed obeys the Arab
How she gives to the hand!
And now like a soul the world forsaking,
She leaves the coast behind,
And the main is her wide dwelling
And her spouse is the wind.

Then pledge we a full measure
To the friends we left to-day,
Whose kind wishes hover o'er us
On our watery way:
Where diurnally remind us
Shall the same bright-brimming rite
Of the eyes that yearned blessings
When last we knew their light!

.

The leaf-glancing boughs of the o'erdoming trees
Now seem in wild dance to the pipe of the breeze
As clashing and clasping in merry despite
They mass into shadow or quiver in light,
When cut by their motion the slanting moonbeam
Falls sifted like coin on the floor of the stream
That murmurs thereby like a voice in a dream,
Save when the breeze straining in lengthen'd escape
Holds open their sprays for a steadier escape,
Then too bright fragment of Night's ripest blue
Relieving the leaf-work come transiently through,

And broad stars seem glowing as seen amid these
Like apples of fire in the tops of the trees!

Charles Harpur

The Nevers Of Poetry

Never say aught in verse, or grave or gay,
That you in prose would hesitate to say.
Never in rhyme pretend to tears, unless
True feeling sheds them in unfeigned distress;
Or some dream-grief, with such a mournful strain
As night winds make in pine tops, stirs your brain,
To shake them, dew-like, o'er the flowers that bloom
In the wild dark, round Joy's imagined tomb;
Or save when doubts that over Love may lower,
Like summer clouds, break in a sunny shower
Out of your gladdened eyes, to freshen all
The bowers of memory with their grateful fall.
Never too much affect that polished thing—
Once belauded—known as point, or sting.
The highest and the noblest growths of wit
Are never, or but seldom, touched with it.
For of the muse it is not truly born
Unless the apex of some burst of scorn,
Or irony, or hate all torture-torn!
Not to increase the passion, but to make
The wave, full surging, on its object break.

Never, if you'd be readable at all,
Aim overmuch at being ethical.
Though she should be a teacher, still the Muse
To be a mere schoolmistress should refuse.
She should instruct us, but her methods never
Be academic ones, however clever.
Her morals, like great nature's morals, aye
Should work themselves out in an unforced way,
And not so patly as to hint the while
At cryptic ingenuities of style.
Whate'er the theme, her ethic lights should shine
Full forth, as from a central heat divine,
Or heat inherent to the passion, wrought
Into the chastened harmony of thought;
And not be mere extraneous coals of fire
Blown for the nonce into factitious ire.

Though some has oft some beauty most divine,
Which well we feel, yet cannot well define—
Some yearning excellence, intense and far,
Coming and going like a clouded star—
Some awful glory we but half descry,
Like a strong sunset in a stormy sky—
Yet ne'er be murky of set purpose, since
You only thereby shall the more evince
That even the Sublime's but then made sure
When, like a morning alp, it breaks from the obscure.

Never heed whether a line strictly goes
By learned rule, if, brook-like, it warble as it flows,
Or if, in concord with the thought, it fills
Fast forward, like a torrent fast flooding from the hills.

Never say aught is "fading like a star"
Because receding in the past afar,
Since stars do not fade, but shine on no less,
Thought lost in light to our weaksightedness;
And no true trope should ever rest on fancy,
But claim a universal relevancy;
Nor think a line is racy to the core,
And bold, and bravely eloquent, the more
It striving seems to tear itself asunder,
Like this—"Down there i' the deep heart o' the thunder,"
But for which, surely (out of chaos), none
Might feign to find a sanction, save in fun.

Never think harshness the best foil to raise
And relish sweetness; for love craggy lays.
Yet never be you glib, when passion's force
Should ridge your style, as by a tempest hoarse
The deep is roughened into waves that roar
At heaven—upheaving, huddling, more and more,
To burst at last in booming thunder on the shore.

Never be such a pagan as to deem
That truth or beauty must diviner seem
For some abnormal set-off, hunched and rude,
Prowling for evil in the neighbourhood,
If such strange opposite breathe not the air

Of nature—being found, not conjured there;
And never to be graceless be you fain,
Till to be graceful you have tried in vain.

Never be cheated—never may you be!—
Into the cramp belief that poesy
Must of necessity in soul be one
With the mere form of verse if it but deftly run;
Or pour, as with a mill-wheel's vigorous cheer,
A rhyming clatter hard upon the ear.

Never believe that verse a license knows
For aught that would be balderdash in prose,
Or that all reason may at any time
Find a sufficient substitute in rhyme;
Or that because with many words you re fraught,
There must be under them some flood of thought.

Never compel a simile that wont
Take service without forcing; if it don t,
As of itself, into your verses flow,
But true to liberty—and let it go.

Never reject a homely-sounding phrase,
That your whole meaning easily conveys,
For one made current by some courtly wit
Which barely indicates a shade of it,
Or which—for probably it so may fall—
Does not express what you would mean at all.

Never suppose that you in song are free
To strain all praise, and make it flattery.
To sing of the heroic is to raise
One value by another—but to praise
Mere clowns, in verse, or natures lean and cold,
Is like to setting gravel stones in gold.

Never exalt vagaries to a station
But due to flights of the imagination—
Gas-charged balloons, put vainly all a-bloat,
For clouds of God that in the orient float;
Theatric thunders, all set brattling for

The dread all-shaking tempest-trumps of Thor;
For in the end all charlatanry must,
The more it startle, but the more disgust.

And lastly, never take for gospel all
Your friends say of your genius, when they call
Its merits o'er; but at the same time see
That you do never take yourself to be
So great an ass as your known foes declare
They do most solemnly believe you are.

[Each embryo poet, profit by my strain!
Then shall men say, "He has not lived in vain! "]

Charles Harpur

The Past

The Past is flowing through my thoughts—
 Flowing like a sea;
With all its billows dancing bright
Over what?—an undermight
 Of darkling loss and destiny.
Still it floweth through my thoughts—
 Floweth like a sea;
While of worn hope I ask alway,
Like an unsought cast-astray—
 What can the future bring to me?

And hope herself admits: To thee
 But a darkening scene—
Only slow days of care and doubt,
Only a dreary lengthening out,
 Of what this later past hath been.

Charles Harpur

The Tear

IT WAS a tale of passion that we read—
 Of two who loved, not happily, but well!
 And evermore her gentle breast did swell
Like a twin-billow,—for her feelings fed
Upon its rhythmic grief—and brimming shed
 Such dews of pity as can only fall
 From natures full of sweetness, when the pall
Of tragedy o’ershadows them with dread.
Then, as I looked, in her raised eye there stood
 A gem more excellent that ever shined
Within my spirit’s transcendental sphere,
And so embalmed its love with an immortal tear.

Charles Harpur

The Temperance Movement

A POWER is stirring—a broad light has shone
Amid the nation's—in the wilderness
Of the world's social horror and distress,
Heralding temperance as the Baptist John
Announced the Christ. Amazed upon her throne,
Built up of skulls that were in life not less
Than temples of great souls—behold Excess
Blinks in its rays, and feels her empire gone!
And Ignorance and Crime—each brutal vice
That brands the brow with shame and steels the heart,
Are starting from their lairs in human sties,
Like felons scared, and gathering to depart:
Even as the fiend-gods of the pagan earth
Trooped hell-ward at the Babe of Bethlehem's birth.

Charles Harpur

The Tower Of The Dream

Part I

HOW wonderful are dreams! If they but be
As some have said, the thin disjoining shades
Of thoughts or feelings, long foregone or late,
All interweaving, set in ghostly act
And strange procession, fair, grotesque, or grim,
By mimic fancy; wonderful no less
Are they though this be true and wondrous more
Is she, who in the dark, and stript of sense,
Can wield such sovereignty—the Queen of Art!
For what a cunning painter is she then,
Who hurriedly embodying, from the waste
Of things memorial littering life's dim floor,
The forms and features, manifold and quaint,
That crowd the timeless vistas of a dream,
Fails in no stroke, but breathes Pygmalion-like
A soul of motion into all her work;
And doth full oft in magic mood inspire
Her phantom creatures with more eloquent tones
Than ever broke upon a waking ear.

But are they more? True glimpses oft, though vague,
Over that far unnavigable sea
Of mystic being, where the impatient soul
Is sometimes wont to stray and roam at large?
No answer comes. Yet are they wonderful
However we may rank them in our lore,
And worthy some fond record are these dreams
That with so capable a wand can bring
Back to the faded heart the rosy flush
And sweetness of a long-fled love, or touch
The eyes of an old enmity with tears
Of a yet older friendship; or restore
A world-lost mate, or reunite in joy
The living and the dead!—can, when so wills
Their wand's weird wielder, whatso'er it be,
Lift up the fallen—fallen however low!
Give youth unto the worn, enrich the poor;
Build in the future higher than the hope

Of power, when boldest, ever dared to soar;
Annul the bars of space, the dens of time,
Giving the rigid and cold-clanking chain
Which force, that grey iniquity, hath clenched
About its captive, to relent,—yea, stretch
Forth into fairy-land, or melt like wax
In that fierce life whose spirit lightens wide
Round freedom, seated on her mountain throne.

But not thus always are our dreams benign;
Oft are they miscreations—gloomier worlds,
Crowded tempestuously with wrongs and fears,
More ghastly than the actual ever knew,
And rent with racking noises, such as should
Go thundering only through the wastes of hell.

Yes, wonderful are dreams: and I have known
Many most wild and strange. And once, long since,
As in the death-like mystery of sleep
My body lay impaled, my soul arose
And journeyed outward in a wondrous dream.
In the mid-hour of a dark night, methought
I roamed the margin of a waveless lake,
That in the knotted forehead of the land
Deep sunken, like a huge Cyclopean eye,
Lidless and void of speculation, stared
Glassily up—for ever sleepless—up
At the wide vault of heaven; and vaguely came
Into my mind a mystic consciousness
That over against me, on the farther shore
Which yet I might not see, there stood a tower.

The darkness darkened, until overhead
Solidly black the starless heaven domed,
And earth was one wide blot;—when, as I looked,
A light swung blazing from the tower (as yet
Prophesied only in my inner thought),
And brought at once its rounded structure forth
Massive and tall out of the mighty gloom.
On the broad lake that streaming radiance fell,
Through the lit fluid like a shaft of fire,
Burning its sullen depths with one red blaze.

Long at that wild light was I gazing held
In speechless wonder, till I thence could feel
A strange and thrillingly attractive power;
My bodily weight seemed witched away, aloft
I mounted, poised within the passive air,
Then felt I through my veins a branching warmth,
The herald of some yet unseen content,
The nearness of some yet inaudible joy,
As if some spell of golden destiny
Lifted me onwards to the fateful tower.

Part II

High up the tower, a circling balcony
Emporched a brazen door. The silver roof
Rested on shafts of jet, and ivory work
Made a light fence against the deep abyss.
Before that portal huge a lady stood
In radiant loveliness, serene and bright,
Yet as it seemed expectant; for as still
She witched me towards her, soft she beckon'd me
With tiny hand more splendid than a star;
And then she smiled, not as a mortal smiles
With visible throes, to the mere face confined,
But with her whole bright influence all at once
In gracious act, as the Immortals might,
God-happy, or as smiles the morning, when
Its subtle lips in rosy beauty part
Under a pearly cloud, and breathe the while
A golden prevalence of power abroad,
That taketh all the orient heaven and earth
Into the glory of its own delight.
Then in a voice, keen, sweet, and silvery clear,
And intimately tender as the first
Fine feeling of a love-born bliss, she spoke,
"Where hast thou stayed so long? Oh, tell me where?"

With thrilling ears and heart I heard, but felt
Pass from me forth a cry of sudden fear,
As swooning through the wildness of my joy,
Methought I drifted,—whither? All was now
One wide cold blank; the lady and the tower,
The gleaming lake, with all around it, one
Wide dreary blank;—the drearier for that still
A dizzy, clinging, ghostly consciousness
Kept flickering from mine inmost pulse of life,
Like a far meteor in some dismal marsh;
How long I knew not, but the thrilling warmth
That, like the new birth of a passionate bliss,
Erewhile had searched me to the quick, again
Shuddered within me, more and more, until
Mine eyes had opened under two that made
All else like darkness; and upon my cheek
A breath that seemed the final spirit of health
And floral sweetness, harbingered once more
The silver accents of that wondrous voice,
Which to have heard was never to forget;
And with her tones came, warbled as it seemed,
In mystical respondence to her voice,
Still music, such as Eolus gives forth,
But purer, deeper;—warbled as from some
Unsearchable recess of soul supreme,
Some depth of the Eternal! echoing thence
Through the sweet meanings of its spirit speech.

I answered not, but followed in mute love
The beamy glances of her eyes; methought
Close at her side I lay upon a couch
Of purple, blazoned all with stars of gold
Tremblingly rayed with spiculated gems;
Thus sat we, looking forth; nor seemed it strange
That the broad lake, with its green shelving shores,
And all the hills and woods and winding vales,
Were basking in the beauty of a day
So goldenly serene, that never yet
The perfect power of life-essential light
Had so enrobed, since paradise was lost,
The common world inhabited by man.

I saw this rare surpassing beauty;—yea,
But saw it all through her superior life,
Orbing mine own in love; I felt her life,
The source of holiest and truth-loving thoughts,
Breathing abroad like odours from a flower,
Enriched with rosy passion, and pure joy
And earnest tenderness. Nor ever might
The glassy lake below more quickly give
Nimble impressions of the coming wind's
Invisible footsteps, dimpling swift along,
Than instant tokens of communion sweet
With outward beauty's subtle spirit, passed
Forth from her eyes, and thence in lambent waves
Suffused and lightened o'er her visage bright.

But as upon the wonder of her face
My soul now feasted, even till it seemed
Instinct with kindred lustre, lo! her eyes
Suddenly saddened; then abstractedly
Outfixing them as on some far wild thought
That darkened up like a portentous cloud
Over the morning of our peace, she flung
Her silver voice into a mystic song
Of many measures, which, as forth they went,
Slid all into a sweet abundant flood
Of metric melody! And to her voice
As still she sung, invisible singers joined
A choral burden that prolonged the strain's
Rich concords, till the echoes of the hills
Came forth in tidal flow, and backward then
Subsiding like a refluent wave, died down
In one rich harmony. It strangely seemed
As though the song were ware that I but slept,
And that its utterer was but a dream;
'Tis traced upon the tablet of my soul
In shining lines that intonate themselves—
Not sounding to the ear but to the thought—
Out of the vague vast of the wonderful,
And might, when hardened into mortal speech,
And narrowed from its wide and various sweep
Into such flows as make our waking rhymes
Most wildly musical, be written thus:—

The Song

Wide apart, wide apart,
In old Time's dim heart

One terrible Fiend doth his stern watch keep
Over the mystery
Lovely and deep,
Locked in thy history,
Beautiful Sleep!

Could we disarm him,
Could we but charm him,
The soul of the sleeper might happily leap,
Through the dark of the dim waste so deathly and deep
That shroudeeth the triple divinity,
The three of thy mystical Trinity:
Gratitude, Liberty,
Joy from all trammels free,
Beautiful Spirit of Sleep!

Beautiful Spirit!
Could we confound him
Who darkens thy throne,
Could we surround him
With spells like thine own
For the divinity
Then of thy Trinity,
Oh, what a blessed reign were begun!
For then it were evermore one,
With all that soul, freed from the body's strait scheme,
Inherits of seer-light and mystical dream.

And to sleep were to die
Into life in the Infinite,
Holy and high,
Spotless and bright,
Calmly, peacefully deep
Ah then! that dread gulf should be crossed by a mortal,
Ah then! to what life were thy bright arch the portal,
Beautiful Spirit of Sleep.

Part III

She ceased, and a deep tingling silence fell
Instantly round,—silence complete, and yet
Instinct as with a breathing sweetness, left
By the rare spirit of her voice foregone;
Even as the fragrance of a flower were felt
Pervading the mute air through which erewhile,
It had been borne by the delighted hand
Of some sweet-thoughted maiden. Turning then
Her bright face towards me, as I stood entranced,
Yet with keen wonder stung, she said, "I love thee
As first love loveth—utterly! But ah
This love itself—this purple-wingéd love—
This life-enriching spirit of delight
Is but a honey-bee of paradise,
That only in the morning glory dares
To range abroad, only in vagrant mood,
Adventures out into the common world
Of man and woman, thither lured by sight
Of some sweet human soul that blooms apart,
Untainted by a rank soil's weedy growths
Lured thither thus, yet being even then
A wilful wanderer from its birthplace pure,
Whereto it sadly must return again,
Or forfeit else its natal passport, ere
The dread night cometh. Yet of how great worth
Is love within the world! By the fair spring
Of even the lowliest love, how many rich
And gracious things that could not else have been,
Grow up like flowers, and breathe a perfume forth
That never leaves again the quickened sense
It once hath hit, as with a fairy's wand!"
She spoke in mournful accents wild and sweet,
And lustrous tears brimmed over from the eyes
That met my own now melancholy gaze.

But not all comfortless is grief that sees
Itself reflected in another's eyes,
And love again grew glad: alas, not long
For with a short low gasp of sudden fear
She started back, and hark! within the tower
A sound of strenuous steps approaching fast
Rang upwards, as it seemed, from the hard slabs
Of a steep winding stair; and soon the huge
And brazen portal, that behind us shut,
Burst open with a clang of loosened bolts—
A clang like thunder, that went rattling out
Against the echoes of the distant hills.

With deafened ears and looks aghast I turned
Towards the harsh noise, there to behold, between
The mighty jambs in the strong wall from which
The door swung inward, a tremendous form!
A horrid gloomy form that shapeless seemed,
And yet, in all its monstrous bulk, to man
A hideous likeness bare! Still more and more
Deformed it grew, as forth it swelled, and then
Its outlines melted in a grizzly haze,
That hung about them, even as grey clouds
Beskirt a coming tempest's denser mass,
That thickens still internally, and shows
The murkiest in the midst—yea, murkiest there,
Where big with fate, and hid in solid gloom,
The yet still spirit of the thunder broods,
And menaces the world.

Beholding that dread form, the lady of light
Had rushed to my extended arms, and hid
Her beamy face, fright-harrowed, in my breast!
And thus we stood, made one in fear; while still
That terrible vision out upon us glared
With horny eyeballs—horrible the more
For that no evidence of conscious will,
No touch of passion, vitalized their fixed
Eumenidèan, stone-cold stare, as towards
Some surely destined task they seemed to guide
Its shapeless bulk and awful ruthless strength.

Then with a motion as of one dark stride
Shadowing forward, and outstretching straight
One vague-seen arm, from my reluctant grasp
It tore the radiant lady, saying "This
Is love forbidden!" in a voice whose tones
Were like low guttural thunders heard afar,
Outgrowling from the clouded gorges wild
Of steep-cragged mountains, when a sultry storm
Is pondering in its dark pavilions there.
Me then he seized, and threw me strongly back
Within the brazen door; its massive beam
Dropped with a wall-quake, and the bolts were shot
Into their sockets with a shattering jar.

I may not paint the horrible despair
That froze me now; more horrible than aught
In actual destiny, in waking life,
Could give the self -possession of my soul.
Within, without,—all silent, stirless, cold
Whither was she, my lady of delight
Reft terribly away? Time—every drip of which
Was as an age—kept trickling on and on,
Brought no release, no hope; brought not a breath
That spake of fellowship, or even of life
Out of myself. Utterly blank I stood
In marble-cold astonishment of heart!
And when at length I cast despairing eyes—
Eyes so despairing that the common gift
Of vision stung me like a deadly curse—
The dungeon round, pure pity of myself
So warmed and loosened from my brain, the pent
And icy anguish, that its load at once
Came like an Alp-thaw streaming through my eyes;
Till resignation, that balm-fragrant flower
Of meek pale grief that hath its root in tears,
Grew out of mine, and dewed my soul with peace.
My dungeon was a half-round lofty cell,
Massively set within the crossing wall
That seemed to cut the tower's whole round in twain;
A door with iron studs and brazen clamps
Shut off the inner stairway of the tower;
And by this door a strange and mystic thing,

A bat-winged steed on scaly dragon claws,
Stood mute and rigid in the darkening cell.

The night came on; I saw the bat-winged steed
Fade, melt and die into the gathering gloom,
Then in the blackness hour by hour I paced,
And heard my step—the only sound to me
In all the wide world—throb with a dull blow
Down through the hollow tower that seemed to yawn.
A monstrous well beneath, with wide waste mouth
Bridged only by the quaking strip of floor
On which I darkling strode. Then hour on hour
Paused as if clotting at the heart of time,
And yet no other sound had being there
And still that strange, mute, mystic, bat-winged steed
Stood waiting near me by the inner door.

Part IV

At last, all suddenly, in the air aloft
Over the tower a wild wailful song
Woke, flying many-voiced, then sweeping off
Far o'er the echoing hills, so passed away
In dying murmurs through the hollow dark.

Song

In vain was the charm sought
In vain was our spell wrought
Which that dread watcher's eyes drowsy might keep;
In vain was the dragon-steed
There at the hour of need
Out with his double freight blissward to sweep.

Lost—lost—lost—lost!
In vain were our spells of an infinite cost
Lost—lost—lost—lost!
Yon gulf by a mortal may never be crossed

Never, ah never!
The doom holds for ever
For ever! for ever!

Away, come away!
For see, wide uprolling, the white front of day!
Away to the mystic mid-regions of sleep,
Of the beautiful Spirit of sleep.
Lost—lost—lost—lost!

The gulf we are crossing may never be crossed
By a mortal, ah, never!
The doom holds for ever!
For ever! for ever!

So passed that song (of which the drift alone
Is here reached after in such leaden speech
As uncharmed mortals use). And when its tones
Out towards the mountains in the dark afar

Had wasted, light began to pierce the gloom,
Marbling the dusk with grey; and then the steed,
With his strange dragon-claws and half-spread wings,
Grew slowly back into the day again.

The sunrise! Oh, it was a desolate pass
Immured in that relentless keep, to feel
How o'er the purple hills came the bright sun,
Rejoicing in his strength; and then to know
That he was wheeling up the heaven, and o'er
My prison roof, tracking his midway course
With step of fire, loud rolling through the world
The thunder of its universal life!
Thus seven times wore weary day and night
Wearily on, and still I could not sleep.
And still through this drear time the wintry tooth
Of hunger never gnawed my corporal frame;
No thirst inflamed me; while by the grim door
That strange, unmoving, dragon-footed steed
Stood as at first. Mere wonder at my doom
Relieved the else-fixed darkness of despair!
But on the seventh night at midnight—hark!

What might I hear? A step?—a small light step,
That by the stair ascending, swiftly came
Straight to the inner door—then stopped. Alas!
The black leaf opened not; and yet, the while,
A rainbow radiance through its solid breadth
Came flushing bright, in subtle wave on wave,
As sunset glow in swift rich curves wells forth
Through some dense cloud upon the verge of heaven:
So came it, filling all the cell at length
With rosy lights; and then the mystic steed
Moved, and spread wide his glimmering bat-like wings.
When hark! deep down in the mysterious tower
Another step! Yea, the same strenuous tramp
That once before I heard, big beating up—
A cry, a struggle, and retreating steps!
And that fair light had faded from the air.

Again the hateful tramp came booming up;
The great door opened, and the monster-fiend
Filled all the space between the mighty jambs.
My heart glowed hot with rage and hate at once;
Fiercely I charged him, but his horrible glooms
Enwrapped me closer, in yet denser coils
Every dread moment! But my anguish now,
My pain, and hate, and loathing, all had grown
Into so vast a horror that methought
I burst with irresistible strength away—
Rushed through the door and down the stairway—down
An endless depth—till a portcullis, hinged
In the tower's basement, opened to my flight
It fell behind me, and my passage lay
By the long ripples of the rock-edged lake.

Then, breathless, pausing in my giddy flight,
I saw the lustrous lady upward pass
Through the lit air, with steadfast downward look
Of parting recognition—full of love,
But painless, passionless. Above the tower
And o'er the clouds her radiance passed away,
And melted into heaven's marble dome!
Then fell there on my soul a sense of loss
So bleak, so desolate, that with a wild

Sleep-startling outcry, sudden I awoke
Awoke to find it but a wondrous dream;
Yet ever since to feel as if some pure
And guardian soul, out of the day and night,
Had passed for ever from the reach of love!

Charles Harpur

The Tree Of Liberty

WE'LL PLANT a Tree of Liberty
In the centre of the land,
And round it ranged as guardians be,
A vowed and trusty band;
And sages bold and mighty soul'd
Shall dress it day by day:
But woe unto the traitor who
Would break one branch away.

Then sing the Tree of Liberty
For the vow that we have made;
May it so flourish that when we
Are buried in its shade,
Fair Womanhood and Love and Good,
All pilgrims pure shall go
Its growth to bless for happiness—
O may it flourish so!

Till felled by gold as bards have told,
In the Old World once it grew,
But there its fruits were ever sold
And only to the Few:
But here at last, uncurs'd by caste,
Each man at Nature's call
Shall pluck as well what none may sell,
The fruit that blooms for All.

By gold 'twas felled as bards have held
In the Old World where it grew,
But here the power that there dispelled
Its life shall be its dew:
The evil bout of Time is out,
And gold no more a thrall,
Shall here but build for Truth and gild
The fruit that blooms for All.

Then sing the Tree of Liberty,
And the men who shall defend
Its glorious future righteously

For this all-glorious end—
That happiness all men to bless
Out with its growth may grow—
Our Southern Tree of Liberty
Shall flourish even so!

Charles Harpur

The Verse Of Coleridge's 'christobel'

MARK yon runnel how 'tis flowing,
Like a sylvan spirit dreaming
Of the Spring-blooms near it blowing
And the sunlight in it gleaming!
Where that shelving rock is spied,
There with a smooth warbling slide
It lapses down into a cool
And brimming, not o'erflowing pool.
Then between its narrow'd banks
Playing mellow gurgling pranks,
It gushes till a channel'd stone
Gives it a more strenuous tone;
Or with an under-swirling spread
Over a wide pebbled bed
It bubbles with a gentle pleasure,
Ere some new mood change the measure:
Such a runnel typeth well
The sweet wild verse of 'Christabel';
But what
The Wonder-World it warbles through?

Charles Harpur

The Vision Of The Rock

I SATE upon a lonely peak,
A backwood river's course to view,
And watched the changing shadows freak
Its liquid length of gleaming blue,
Streaked by the crane slow gliding o'er,
Or chequering to the leafy roar
Of woods that 'neath me grew,
Or curdling dark, as high o'erhead
The gathering clouds before the sounding breezes fled.
Straight I bethought how once the scene
Spread in its primal horror there,
When, but some lone bird's weary threne
Or howlings from the wild dog's lair,
Or rush of startled kangaroo,
As near some stealthy savage drew
With hunger in his air,
Or, from the stream some murmur'd sound
Broke the dread slumbrous calm of solitude profound.

A change came o'er my thoughts—behind
A length of coming time I threw,
Till round me, on that rock reclined,
Its folds prophetic vision drew;
And purpling, like the morning, gave
Mine eyes of freedom's births to have
A seeming ante-view;
As haply in brave promise stole
His country's purer weal o'er youthful Hampden's soul.

All round me villages upgrew
At once, with orchards clumped about,
And oft between, tall pine-rows through,
Some mansion's pillard porch looked out,
And thickening up from alleys green,
Where rustic groups in dance were seen,
Came merry cry and shout;
While from tall groves beyond, the cheer
Of maiden's laughter soft, broke in rich wavelets near.

And in the gusts that overpassed
The stir of neighbouring cities came,
Whose structures in the distance massed
Proclaimed their opulence and fame,
O'er fields of ripening plenty viewed,
Or hills with white flocks fleeced, and strewed
With herds that grazed the same;
While on the paven roads between
The crowding chariots came with rapid-rolling din.

Now gaining depth, the vision lay
Around my being like a law,
So that my spirit might not say
But all was real that I saw:
I mark a youth and maiden, pressed
By love's sweet power, elude the rest,
And as they nearer draw
I list the vow that each imparts
Folded within the spells of harmonizing hearts.

But suddenly a grim-faced sire
Strides like a fatal wraith between
With that cold whiteness is his ire
Which in the bad alone is seen!
Alas! This world can never be
A poet's Eden utterly—
Twill be what it hath been!
So long as love's rich heart is red,
And beauty's eyes are bright—so long shall tears be shed.

They pass; and lo, a lonely boy
With wandering step goes musing by;
Glory is in his air, and joy,
And all the poet in his eye!
And now, whilst rich emotions flush
His happy face, as cloud-hues blush
In morning's radiant sky,
He sings—and to the charming sound
Troops of angelic shapes throng into being round.

But 'neath a sombre cypress tree,
And clad in garbs of kindred gloom,

A mother and her child I see
Both mourning o'er a lowly tomb!
Ah! Life hath ever been a brief
Mixed dream of glory and grief—
Its earliest, latest doom!
That heart in which love's tides first ran
Descends with all its risks to every child of man.

Now turning see, with locks all grey,
A form majestic; wisdom true
Illumes his brow—the power to weigh
All worth, and look all semblance through;
And stately youths of studious mien,
Children of light, with him are seen,
His auditory—who
Attend the speaking sage along
And hearken to the wisdom of his manna-dropping tongue.

And now doth his large utterance throw
A sacred solemnizing spell
O'er scenes that yet no record know,
Round names that now I may not tell;
But there was one—too long unknown!
Whereat, as with a household tone
Upon the ear it fell,
Each listener's speaking eyes were given
To glisten with a tear and turn awhile to heaven.

Thus night came on; for hours had flown,
And yet its hold the vision kept,
Till lulled by many a dying tone,
I laid me on the rock and slept!
And now the moon hung big between
Two neighbouring summits sheath'd with sheen—
When all with dews dewept,
And roused by a loud coming gale,
I sought our camp-fire's glow, deep in the darkening vale.

The Voice Of The Swamp Oak

Who hath lain him underneath
A lone oak by a lonely stream;
He hath heard an utterance breathe
Sadder than all else may seen.
Up in its dusk boughs out-tressing,
Like the hair of a giant's head,
Mournful things beyond our guessing
Day and night are uttered.

Even when the waveless air
May only stir the lightest leaf,
A lowly voice keeps moaning there
Wordless oracles of grief.

But when nightly blasts are roaming,
Lowly is that voice no more;
From the streaming branches coming
Elfin shrieks are heard to pour.

While between the blast on-passing,
And the blast that comes as oft,
Mid those boughs, dark intermassing,
One long low wail pines aloft.

Till the listener surely deems
That some weird spirit of the air
Hath made those boughs the lute of themes
Wilder, darker than despair.

Darker than a woe whose morrow
Must be travelling to an end—
Wilder than the wildest sorrow
That in death hath still a friend;

Some lonely spirit that hath dwelt
For ages in one lonely tree—
Some weary spirit that hath felt
The burthen of eternity.

Charles Harpur

The Witch Of Hebron

A Rabbinical Legend

Part I.

From morn until the setting of the sun
The rabbi Joseph on his knees had prayed,
And, as he rose with spirit meek and strong,
An Indian page his presence sought, and bowed
Before him, saying that a lady lay
Sick unto death, tormented grievously,
Who begged the comfort of his holy prayers.
The rabbi, ever to the call of grief
Open as day, arose; and girding straight
His robe about him, with the page went forth;
Who swiftly led him deep into the woods
That hung, heap over heap, like broken clouds
On Hebron's southern terraces; when lo!
Across a glade a stately pile he saw,
With gleaming front, and many-pillared porch
Fretted with sculptured vinage, flowers and fruit,
And carven figures wrought with wondrous art
As by some Phidian hand.

But interposed

For a wide space in front, and belting all
The splendid structure with a finer grace,
A glowing garden smiled; its breezes bore
Airs as from paradise, so rich the scent
That breathed from shrubs and flowers; and fair the growths
Of higher verdure, gemm'd with silver blooms,
Which glassed themselves in fountains gleaming light
Each like a shield of pearl.

Within the halls

Strange splendour met the rabbi's careless eyes,
Halls wonderful in their magnificance,
With pictured walls, and columns gleaming white
Like Carmel's snow, or blue-veined as with life;

Through corridors he passed with tissues hung
Inwrought with threaded gold by Sidon's art,
Or rich as sunset clouds with Tyrian dye;
Past lofty chambers, where the gorgeous gleam
Of jewels, and the stained radiance

Of golden lamps, showed many a treasure rare
Of Indian and Armenian workmanship
Which might have seemed a wonder of the world:
And trains of servitors of every clime,
Greeks, Persians, Indians, Ethiopians,
In richest raiment thronged the spacious halls.

The page led on, the rabbi following close,
And reached a still and distant chamber, where
In more than orient pomp, and dazzling all
The else-unrivalled splendour of the rest,
A queenly woman lay; so beautiful,
That though upon her moon-bright visage, pain
And langour like eclipsing shadows gloomed,
The rabbi's aged heart with tremor thrilled;
Then o'er her face a hectic colour passed,
Only to leave that pallor which portends
The nearness of the tomb.

From youth to age

The rabbi Joseph still had sought in herbs
And minerals the virtues they possess,
And now of his medicaments he chose
What seemed most needful in her sore estate;
"Alas, not these," the dying woman said,
"A malady like mine thou canst not cure,
'Tis fatal as the funeral march of Time!
But that I might at length discharge my mind
Of a dread secret, that hath been to me
An ever-haunting and most ghostly fear,
Darkening my whole life like an ominous cloud
And which must end it ere the morning come,
Therefore did I entreat thy presence here."

The rabbi answered, "If indeed it stand
Within my power to serve thee, speak at once

All that thy heart would say. But if 'tis vain,
If this thy sin hath any mortal taint,
Forbear, O woman, to acquaint my soul
With aught that could thenceforth with horror chase
The memory of a man of Israel."

"I am," she said "the daughter of thy friend
Rabbi Ben Bachai—be his memory blest!
Once at thy side a laughing child I played;
I married with an Arab Prince, a man
Of lofty lineage, one of Ishmael's race;
Not great in gear. Behold'st thou this abode?
Did ever yet the tent-born Arab build
Thus for his pride or pleasure? See'st thou
These riches? An no! Such were ne'er amassed
By the grey desert's wild and wandering son;
Deadly the game by which I won them all!
And with a burning bitterness at best
Have I enjoyed them! And how gladly now
Would I, too late, forego them all, to mend
My broken peace with a repentant heed
In abject poverty!"

She ceased, and lay
Calm in her loveliness, with dreamy looks
Roaming, perhaps, in thought the fateful past;
Then suddenly her beauteous countenance grew
Bedimm'd and drear, then dark with mortal pangs,
While fierce convulsions shook her tortured frame,
And from her foaming lips such words o'erran,
That rabbi Joseph sank upon his knees,
And bowed his head a space in horror down
While ardent, pitying prayers for her great woe
Rose from his soul; when, lo! The woman's face
Was cloudless as a summer heaven! The late
Dark brow was bright, the late pale cheek suffused
With roseate bloom; and, wondrous more than all,
Here weary eyes were changed to splendours now
That shot electric influence, and her lips
Were full and crimson, curled with stormy pride.
The doubting rabbi stood in wild amaze
To see the dying woman bold and fierce

In bright audacity of passion's power.
"These are the common changes," then she said,
"Of the fell ailment, that with torments strange,
Which search my deepest life, is tearing up
The dark foundations of my mortal state,
And sinking all its structures, hour by hour,
Into the dust of death. For nothing now
Is left me but to meet my nearing doom
As best I may in silent suffering."

Then as he heard her words and saw her face,
The rabbi in his wisdom knew some strong
Indwelling evil spirit troubled her,
And straightway for an unction sent, wherewith
The famous ancestor whose name he bore,
Herod the Great's chief hakim, had expelled
The daemon haunter of the dying king.
With this he touched her forehead and her eyes
And all her finger-tips. Forthwith he made
Within a consecrated crucible
A fire of citron-wood and cinnamon;
Then splashed the flames with incense, mingling all
With the strong influence of fervent prayer;
And, as the smoke arose, he bowed her head
Into its coils, that so she might inhale
Its salutary odour—till the fiend
That dwelt within her should be exorcised.

Her face once more grew pale with pain; she writhed
In burning torment, uttering many words
Of most unhallowed meaning! Yet her eyes
Were fixed the while, and motionless her lips!
Whereby the rabbi certainly perceived
'Twas not the woman of herself that spake,
But the dread spirit that possessed her soul,
And thus it cried aloud.

Part II.

“WHY am I here, in this my last resort,
Perturbed with incense and anointings? Why
Compelled to listen to the sound of prayers
That smite me through as with the fire of God?
O pain, pain, pain! Is not this chamber full
Of the implacable stern punishers?
Full of avenging angels, holding each
A scourge of thunder in his potent hand,
Ready to lighten forth! And then, thus armed,
For ever chase and wound us as we fly!
Nor end with this—but, in each wound they make,
Pour venom sweltered from that tree As-gard,
Whose deadly shadow in its blackness falls
Over the lake of everlasting doom!
“Five hundred years ago, I, who thus speak,
Was an Egyptian of the splendid court
Of Ptolemy Philadelphus. To the top
Of mountainous power, though roughened with unrest,
And girt with dangers as with thunder-clouds,
Had I resolved by all resorts to climb;
By truth and falsehood, right and wrong alike;
And I did climb! Then firmly built in power
Second alone to my imperial lord’s,
I crowned with its impunity my lust
Of beauty, sowing broadcast everywhere
Such sensual baits wide round me, as should lure
Through pleasure, or through interest entrap,
The fairest daughters of the land, and lo!
Their lustrous eyes surcharged with passionate light
The chambers of my harem! But at length
Wearied of these, though sweet, I set my heart
On riches, heaped to such a fabulous sum
As never one man’s hoard in all the world
Might match; and to acquire them, steeped my life
In every public, every private wrong,
In lies, frauds, secret murders; till at last
A favoured minion I had trusted most,
And highest raised, unveiled before the king
The dark abysmal badness of my life;
But dearly did he rue it; nor till then
Guessed I how deadly grateful was revenge!

I stole into his chamber as he slept,
And with a sword, whose double edge for hours
I had whetted for the purpose of the deed,
There staked him through the midriff to his bed.
I fled; but first I sent, as oft before,
A present to the household of the man
Who had in secret my betrayer bribed.
Twas scented wine, and rich Damascus cakes;
On these he feasted, and fell sudden down,
Rolling and panting in his dying pangs,
A poisoned desert dog!

“But I had fled.

A swift ship bore me, which my forecast long
Had kept prepared against such need as this.
Over the waves three days she proudly rode;
Then came a mighty storm, and trampled all
Her masted bravery flat, and still drove on
The wave-swept ruin towards a reefy shore!
Meanwhile amongst the terror-stricken crew
An ominous murmur went from mouth to mouth;
They grouped themselves in councils, and, ere long,
Grew loud and furious with surmises wild,
And maniac menaces, all aimed at me!
My fugitive head it was at which so loud
The thunder bellowed! The wild-shrieking winds
And roaring waters held in vengeful chase
Me only! Me! Whose signal crimes alone
Had brought on us this anger of the gods!
And thus reproaching me with glaring eyes,
They would have seized and slain me, but I sprang
Back from amongst them, and, outstriking, stabbed
With sudden blow their leader to the heart;
Then, with my poniard scaring off the rest,
Leaped from the deck, and swimming reached the shore,
From which, in savage triumph, I beheld
The battered ship, with all her howling crew,
Heel, and go down, amid the whelming waves.

“Inland my course now lay for many days,
O’er barren hills and glens, whose herbless scopes
Never grew luminous with a water gleam,

Or heard the pleasant bubble of a brook,
For vast around the Afric desert stretched.
Starving and sun-scorched and afire with thirst,
I wandered ever on, until I came
To where, amid the dun and level waste,
In frightful loneliness, a mouldered group
Of ancient tombs stood ghostly. Here at last,
Utterly spent, in my despair I lay
Down on the burning sand, to gasp and die!
When from among the stones a withered man,
Old-seeming as the desert where he lived,
Came and stood by me, saying 'get thee up!
Not much have I to give, but these at least
I offer to thy need, water and bread.'

"Then I arose and followed to his cell,—
A dismal cell, that seemed itself a tomb,
So lightless was it, and so foul with damp,
And at its entrance there were skulls and bones.
Long and deep drank I of the hermit's draught,
And munched full greedily the hermit's bread;
But with the strength which thence my frame derived,
Fierce rage devoured me, and I cursed my fate!
Whereat the withered creature laughed in scorn,
And mocked me with the malice of his eyes,
That sometimes, like a snake's, shrank small, and then
Enlarging blazed as with infernal fire!
Then, on a sudden, with an oath that seemed
To wake a stir in the grey musty tombs,
As if their silence shuddered, he averred
That he could life me once more to the height
Of all my wishes—nay, even higher, but
On one condition only. Dared I swear,
By the dread angel of the second death,
I would be wholly his, both body and soul,
After a hundred years?

"Why should I not?

I answered, quivering with a stormy haste,
A rampart unreluctance! For so great
Was still my fury against all mankind,
And my desire of pomp and riches yet

So monstrous, that I felt I could have drunk
Blood, fire, or worse, to wear again the power
That fortune, working through my enemies' hands,
Had stript away from me. So, word by word,
I swore the oath as he repeated it;
Nor much it moved me, in my eagerness,
To feel a damp and earthy odour break
Out of each tomb, from which there darkling rose
At every word a hissing as of snakes;
And yet the fell of hair upon my scalp
Rose bristling under a cold creeping thrill:
But I failed not, I swore the dread oath through,
And then the tombs grew silent as their dead.
But through my veins a feeling of strong youth
Coursed bold along, and summered in my heart,
Till there before him in my pride I stood
In stately strength, and swift as is the wind,
Magnificent as a desert-nurtured steed
Of princeliest pedigree, with nostrils wide
Dilated, and with eyes effusing flame.
'Begone,' he said, 'and live thy hundred years
Of splendour, power, pleasure, ease.' His voice
Sighed off into the distance. He was gone:
Only a single raven, far aloft,
Was beating outwards with its sable wings;
The tombs had vanished, and the desert grey
Merged its whole circle with the bending sky.

Part III.

"OUT of these wilds to Egypt I returned:
Men thought that I had perished with the ship,
And no one knew me now, because my face
And form were greatly changed,—from passing fair
To fairer yet; from manly, to a pile
So nobly built, that in all eyes I seemed
Beauteous as Thammuz! And my heart was changed;
Ambition wilder than a leopard's thirst

For blood of roe, or flying hart, possessed
My spirit, like the madness of a god!
But this I yet even in its fiercest strain
Could curb and guide with sovereign strength of will.
From small beginnings onward still I worked,
Stepping as up a stair from rival head
To rival head,—from high to higher still,
Unto the loftiest post that might be held
Under the Ptolemies; and meantime paid
Each old unsettled score, defeating those
Who erst had worked against me, sweeping them
Out of all posts, all places; for though time
And change had wide dispersed them through the land,
The sleuth-hounds of my vengeance found them out!
Which things not being in a corner done,
What wonder was it that all Egypt now,
From end to end, even like a shaken hive,
Buzzed as disturbed with my portentous fame?
“And what to me were secret enemies?
Had I not also spies, who could pin down
A whisper in the dark and keep it there?
Could dash a covert frown by the same means
An open charge had challenged? Hence my name
Became a sound that struck through every heart
Ineffable dismay! And yet behold
There more I trampled on mankind, the more
Did fawning flatterers praise me as I swept
Like a magnificent meteor through the land!
The more I hurled the mighty from their seats,
And triumphed o’er them prostrate in the dust,
The human hounds that licked my master hand
But multiplied the more! And still I strode
From bad to worse, corrupting as I went,
Making the lowly ones more abject yet;
Awing as with a thunder-bearing hand
The high and affluent; while I bound the strong
To basest service, even with chains of gold.
All hated, cursed and feared me, for in vain
Daggers were levelled at my brazen heart—
They glanced, and slew some minion at my side
Poison was harmless as a heifer’s milk
When I had sipped it with my lips of scorn;

All that paraded pomp and smiling power
Could draw against me from the envious hearts
Of men in will as wicked as myself
I challenged, I encountered, and o'erthrew!

"But, after many years, exhaustion sere
Spread through the branches of my tree of life;
My forces flagged, my senses more and more
Were blunted, and incapable of joy;
The splendours of my rank availed me not;
A poverty as naked as a slave's
Peered from them mockingly. The pride of power
That glowed so strong within me in my youth
Was now like something dying at my heart.
To cheat or stimulate my jaded taste,
Feasts, choice or sumptuous, were devised in vain;
there was disfavour, there was fraud within,
Like that which filled the fair-appearing rind
Of those delusive apples that of old
Grew on the Dead Sea shore.

"And yet, though thus
All that gave pleasure to my younger life
Was withering from my path like summer grass,
I still had one intense sensation, which
Grew ever keener as my years increased—
A hatred of mankind; to pamper which
I gloated, with a burning in my soul,
Over their degradation; and like one
Merry with wine, I revelled day by day
In scattering baits that should corrupt them more:
The covetous I sharpened into thieves,
Urged the vindictive, hardened the malign,
Whetted the ruffian with self-interest,
And flung him then, a burning brand, abroad.
And the decadence of the state in which
My fortunes had recast me, served me well.
Excess reeled shameless in the court itself,
Or, staggering thence, was rivalled by the wild
Mad looseness of the crowd. Down to its death
The old Greek dynasty was sinking fast;
Waste and pale want, extortion, meanness, fraud—

These, welling outwards from the throne itself,
Spread through the land.

“But now there seized my soul
A new ambition—from his feeble throne
To hurl the king, and mount thereon myself!
To this end still I lured him into ill,
And daily wove around him cunning snares,
That reached and trammelled too his fawning court;
And all went well, the end at last was near,
But in my triumph one thing I forgot—
My name was measured. At a banquet held
In the king’s chamber, lo! A guest appeared,
Chief of a Bactrian tribe, who tendered gold
To pay for some great wrong his desert horde
Had done our caravans; his age, men said,
Was wonderful; his craft more wondrous still;
For this his fame had spread through many lands,
And the dark seekers of forbidden lore
Knew his decrepit wretch to be their lord.

“The first glance that I met of his weird eye
Had sent into my soul a fearful doubt
That I had seen that cramp-shrunk withered form
And strange bright eye in some forgotten past.
But at the dry croak of his raven voice
Remembrance woked; I knew that I beheld
The old man of the tombs: I saw, and fell
Into the outer darkness of despair.
The day that was to close my dread account
Was come at last. The long triumphant feast
Of life had ended in a funeral treat.
I was to die—to suffer with the damned
The hideous torments of the second death!
The days, weeks, months of a whole hundred years
Seemed crushed into a thought, and burning out
In that brief period which was left me now.

“Stung with fierce horror, shame, and hate I fled;
I seized my sword, to plunge its ready point
Into my maddened heart, but on my arm
I felt a strong forbidding grasp! I turned;

The withered visage of the Bactrian met
My loathing eyes; I struggled to be free
From the shrunk wretch in vain; his spidery hands
Were strong as fetters of Ephesian brass,
And all my strength, though now with madness strung,
Was as a child's to his. He calmly smiled:
'Forbear, thou fool! Am I not Sammael?
Whom to resist is vain, and from whom yet
Has never mercy flowed; for what to me
Are feelings which thou knowest even in men
Are found the most in fools. But wide around
A prince of lies I reign. 'Tis I that fill
the Persian palaces with lust and wrong,
Till like the darkling heads of sewers they flow
With a corruption that in fretting thence
Taints all the region round with rankest ill;
'Tis I that clot the Bactrian sand with blood;
And now I come to fling the brands of war
Through all this people, this most ill-mixed mob,
Where Afric's savage hordes meet treacherous Greeks,
And swarming Asia's luxury-wasted sons.
This land throughout shall be a deluge soon
Of blood and fire, till ruin stalk alone,
A grisly spectre, in its grass-grown marts.'

The fiery eyes within his withered face
Glowed like live coals, as he triumphant spake,
And his strange voice, erewhile so thin and dry,
Came as if bellowed from the vaults of doom.
Prone fell I, powerless to move or speak;
And now he was about to plunge me down
Ten thousand times ten thousand fathoms deep
Through the earth's crust, and through the slimy beds
Of nether ocean—down! Still down, below
The darkling roots of all this upper world
Into the regions of the courts of hell!

"To stamp me downward to the convict dead
His heel was raised, when suddenly I heard
Him heave a groan of superhuman pain,
So deep twas drawn! And as he groaned, I saw
A mighty downburst of celestial light

Enwrap his shrivelled form from head to foot,
As with a robe within whose venomous folds
He writhed in torment. Then above him stood
A shining shape, unspeakably sublime,
And gazed upon him! One of the high sons
Of Paradise, who still keep watch and ward
O'er Israel's progeny, where'er dispersed;
And now they fought for me with arms that filled
The air wide round with flashes and swift gleams
Of dazzling light; full soon the Evil One
Fell conquered. Then forth sprang he from the ground
And with dark curses wrapped him in a cloud
That moved aloft, low thundering as it went.

"And then the shining son of paradise
Came where I lay and spoke, his glorious face
Severe with wrath, and yet divinely fair—
'O Child of Guilt! Should vengeance not be wrought
On thee as well? On Sammael's willing slave?'
I clasped his radiant knees—I wept—I groaned—
I beat my bosom in my wild distress.
At last the sacred Presence, who had held
The blow suspended still, spoke thus: 'Thou'rt spared;
From no weak pity, but because thou art
Descended from the line of Israel:
For that cause spared;—yet must thou at my hand
Find some meet punishment.' And as he spake,
He laid his hand with a life-crushing weight
Upon my forehead—and I fell, as dead!

Part IV.

"AWAKING as from sleep, I bounded up,
Stung with a feeling of enormous strength,
Though yet half wild with horror. Onward then
Ramping I went, out through the palace gates,
Down the long streets, and into the highways,
Forth to the wilds, amazed at my own speed!

And now afar, in long-drawn line appeared
A caravan upon its outward way
Over the desert of Pentapolis.
And strange the instinct seemed that urged me then
to rush amongst them—and devour: for I
Was fierce with hunger, and inflamed with thirst.
“Amidst a laggard company I leaped
That rested yet beside a cooling spring;
One of those clear springs that, like giant pearls,
Inlay the burning borders of the grey
Enormous desert. All at once they rose!
Some fled, some threw themselves amongst the brakes,
Some seized their swords and lances; this to see
Filled me at once with a mysterious rage
And savage joy! The sternness of their looks,
Their fearful cries, the gleaming of their spears
Seemed to insult me, and I rushed on them.
Then sudden spasms of pain searched deep my side,
Wherein a fell lance quivered. On I rushed;
I roared a roar that startled e’en myself,
So loud and hoarse and terrible its tone,
Then bounding, irresistible it seemed
As some huge fragment from a crag dislodged,
Against the puny wretch that sent the lance,
Instantly tore him, as he were a kid,
All into gory shreds! The others fled
At sight of this, nor would I chase them then,
All wearied by my flight. Besides, the well
Was gleaming in its coolness by me there.

“And as I stooped to quench my parching thirst,
Behold, reversed within the water clear,
The semblance of a monstrous lion stood!
I saw his shaggy mane, I saw his red
And glaring eyeballs rolling in amaze,
His rough and grinning lips, his long sharp fangs
All foul with gore and hung with strings of flesh!
I shrank away in horrible dismay.
But as the sun each moment fiercer grew,
I soon returned to stoop and slake my thirst.
Again was that tremendous presence there
Standing reversed, as erewhile, in the clear

And gleaming mirror of the smiling well!
The horrid truth smote like a rush of fire
Upon my brain! The dreadful thing I saw
Was my own shadow! I was a wild beast.”

“They did not fable, then, who held that oft
The guilty dead are punished in the shapes
Of beasts, if brutal were their lives as men.”

“Long lapped I the cool lymph, while still my tongue
Made drip for drip against the monstrous one,
Which, as in ugly mockery, from below
Seemed to lap up against it. But though thirst
Was quenched at length, what was there might appease
The baffled misery of my fated soul?
The thought that I no more was human, ran
Like scorpion venom through my mighty frame;
Fiercely I bounded, tearing up the sands,
That, like a drab mist, coursed me as I went
Out on my homeless track. I made my fangs
Meet in my flesh, trusting to find in pain
Some respite from the anguish of regret.
From morn to night, from night to morn, I fled,
Chased by the memory of my lost estate;
Then, worn and bleeding, in the burning sands
I lay down, as to die. In vain!—in vain!
The savage vigour of my lion-life
Might yield alone to the long tract of time.

“From hill to valley rushing after prey,
With whirlwind speed, was now my daily wont,
For all things fled before me—all things shrank
In mortal terror at my shaggy front.
Sometimes I sought those close-fenced villages,
Wherein the desert-dwellers hide their swart
And naked bodies from the scorching heats,
Hoping that I might perish by their shafts.
And often was I wounded—often bore
Their poisoned arrows in my burning flesh—
But still I lived.

“The tenor of my life

Was always this—the solitary state
Of a wild beast of prey, that hunted down
The antelope, the boar, the goat, the gorged
Their quivering flesh, and lapped their steaming blood;
Then slept till hunger, or the hunter's cry,
Roused him again to battle or to slay,
To flight, pursuit, blood, stratagem, and wounds.
And to make this rude life more hideous yet,
I still retained a consciousness of all
The nobler habits of my eariler time,
And had a keen sense of what most had moved
My nature as a man, and knew besides
That this my punishment was fixed by One
Too mighty to be questioned, and too just
One tittle of its measure to remit.

“How long this haggard course of life went on
I might not even guess, for I had lost
The human faculty that measures time.
But still from night to night I found myself
Roaming the desert, howling at the moon,
Whose cold light always, as she poured it down,
Awoke a drear distemper in my brain:
But much I shunned the sunblaze, which at once
Inflamed me, and revealed my dread approach.

“Homelessly roaming thus for evermore,
The tempests beat on my unsheltered bulk,
In those bleak seasons when the drenching rains
Drove into covert all those gentler beasts
That were my natural prey. I swinkt beneath
The furnace heats of the midsummer sun,
When even the palm of the oasis stood
All withered, like a weed: and for how long,
Yet knew not.

“Thus the sun and moon arose
Through an interminable tract of time,
And yet though sense was dim, the view of all
My human life was ever at my beck,
Nay, opened out before me of itself
Plain as the pictures in a wizard's glass!

I saw again the trains that round my car
Streamed countless, saw its pageants and its poms,
Its faces fair and passionate, and felt
Lie's eager pleasures, even its noble pangs!
Then in the anguish of my goaded heart
Would I roll howling in the burning sand.

"At length this life of horror seemed to near
Its fated bourn. The slow but sure approach
Of old decay was felt in every limb
And every function of my lion frame.
My massive strength seemed spent, my speed was gone,
The antelope escaped me! Wearily
I sought a mountain cavern, shut from day
By savage draperies of tangled briars,
And only dragged my tardy bulk abroad
When hunger urged. It chanced on such a day
I sprang amid a herd of buffaloes
And tore their leader down, who bellowing fell.
When, lo! The chief of those that drove them came
Against me, and I turned my rage on him:
But though the long lapse of so many years
Of ever-grinding wretchedness had dulled
My memory, I felt that I had seen
His withered visage twice before; and straight
A shuddering awe subdued me, and I crouched
Beneath him in the dust. My lust of blood,
My ruthless joy at sight of mortal pain,
Within me died, and if in human speech
I might have told the wild desire that filled
My being, I had prayed him once for all
To crush me out of life, and to consign
My misery to the pit of final death!
But when, all hopeless, I again looked up,
The tawney presence of the desert chief
Was gone, and I beheld the shining son
Of paradise, from whose majestic brow
There flashed the lightings of a wrath divine.
Yea, 'twas the angel that with Sammael
Had fought for me in Egypt; and once more
He laid his crushing hand upon my front;
And earth and sky, and all that in them is,

Became to me a darkness, swimming blank
In the Eternal, round that point where now
My body lay, stretched dead upon the sand.

Part V.

"AGAIN I lived—again I felt. But now
The winds of heaven seemed under me, and I
Was sweeping, like the spirit of a storm
That bellowed round me, in its murky glooms,
All heaving with a motion wide and swift
That seemed yet mightier than the darkling swells
Of ocean, wrestling with a midnight gale!
The wild winds tossed me; I was drenched throughout
With heavy moisture, and at intervals
Amid the ragged gaps of moving cloud,
Methought I caught dim glimpses of the sun
Hanging aloft, as if in drear eclipse;
But as my senses cleared, I saw my limbs
Were clothed with plumage; and long-taloned claws
Were closing eagerly with fierce desire
And sudden hunger after blood and prey!
An impulse to pursue and to destroy
Both on the earth and in the air, ran quick
Out from my heart and shivered in my wings;
And as a thing more central yet, I felt
Pregnant within me, throned o'er all, a lone
And sullen, yet majestic, glow of pride.
"Twas plain that I, who had aforetime been
Crushed out of human being into that
Of a wild beast, had thence again passed on
Into the nature of some mighty thing
That now swept sailing on wide van-like wings,
Amid the whirls of an aërial gloom,
That out extending in one mighty cope
Hung heaving, like a black tent-roof, o'er all
The floor of Africa.

“Still on I swept,
And still as far as my keen vision went,
That now was gifted with a power that seemed
To pierce all space, I saw the vapours roll
In dreadful continuous of black
And shapeless masses, by the winds convulsed;
But soon in the remotest distance came
A change: the clouds were touched with sunny light,
And, as I nearer drew, I saw them dash,
Like the wild surges of an uproused sea
Of molten gold, against the marble sides
Of lofty mountains, which, though far below
My flight, yet pierced up through them all, and stood
With splintered cones and monster-snouted crags,
Immovable as fate. Beneath me, lo!
The grandeur of the kingdom of the air
Was circling in its magnitude! It was
A dread magnificence of which before
I might not even dream. I saw its quick
And subtle interchange of forms and hues,
Saw its black reservoirs of densest rain,
Its awful forges of the thunderstorm.

“At last, as onward still I swept, above
A milky mass of vapour far outspread,
Behold, reflected in its quiet gleam,
I saw an image that swept on with me,
Reversed as was the lion’s in the well,
With van-like wings, with eyeballs seething fire,
With taloned claws, and cruel down-bent beak,—
The mightiest eagle that had ever sailed
The seas of space since Adam named the first!

“My fated soul had passed into the form
Of that huge eagle which swept shadowed there.
Cold horror thrilled me! I was once again
Imprisoned in the being of a brute,
In the base being of a nature yet
Inferior by what infinite descent
To that poor remnant of intelligence
Which still kept with me,—like a put-back soul
Burningly conscious of its powers foregone,

Its inborn sovereignty of kind, and yet
So latent, self-less; once again to live
A life of carnage, and to sail abroad
A terror to all birds and gentle beasts
That heard the stormy rushings of my wings!
A royal bird indeed, who lived alone
In the great stillness of the mighty hills,
Or in the highest heavens.

“But in truth

Not much for many seasons had I need
To search for prey, for countless hosts of men,
Forth mustering over all the face of earth,
Cast the quick gleam of arms o’er trampled leagues
Of golden corn, and as they onward marched
They left behind them seas of raging fire,
In whose red surges cities thronged with men
And happy hamlets, homes of health and peace,
That rang erewhile with rural thankfulness,
Were whelmed in one wide doom; or in their strength
Confronted upon some set field of fight,
Their sullen masses charged with dreadful roar
That far out-yelled the fiercest yells of beasts,
And with brute madness rushed on wounds and death;
Or else about fenced cities they would pitch
Their crowded camps, and leaguer them for years,
Sowing the fields about them with a slime
Of carnage, till their growths were plagues alone.
What is the ravage made by brutes on brutes
To that man makes on man?

“With mingled pain

And joy I saw the wondrous ways of men,
(For ever when I hungered, close at hand,
Some fresh slain man lay smoking in his gore)
And though the instincts of the eagle’s life
Were fierce within me, yet I felt myself
Cast in a lot more capable of joy;
Safe from pursuit, from famine, and from wounds.
Some solaces, though few and far between,
Were added to me; and I argued thence,
In the dark musings of my eagle heart,

That not for ever was my soul condemned
To suffer in the body of a brute;
For though remembrance of the towering crimes
And matchless lusts, that filled my whole career
Of human life, worked in me evermore,
No longer did they shed about my life
So venomous a blight. Nay, I could think
How often I had looked with longing eyes
Up at the clear Egyptian heavens, and watched
The wings that cleft them, envying every bird
That, soaring in the sunshine, seemed to be
Exempt from all the grovelling cares of men.
I thought how once, when with my hunting train
I pierced that region round the cataracts,
I watched an eagle as it rose aloft
Into the lovely blue, and wished to change
My being with it as it floated on,
So inaccessible to hate or hurt,
So peaceful, at a height in heaven so safe;
And then it passed away through gorgeous clouds
Against the sunset, through the feathered flags
Of royal purple edged with burning gold.

"These fields of space were my dominion now;
Motion alone within a world so rich
Was something noble: but to move at will,
Upward or forward, or in circles vast,
Through boundless spaces with a rushing speed
No living thing might rival, and to see
The glory of the everlasting hills
Beneath me, and the myriad-peopled plains,
Broad rivers, and the towery towns that sate
Beside their spacious mouths, with out beyond
The lonely strength of the resounding seas—
This liberty began to move my sense
As something godlike; and in moving made
A sure impression that kept graining still
Into the texture of my brute estate—
Yea, graining in through all its fleshy lusts
And savage wonts.

"Hence ever more and more

The temper of a better spirit grew
Within me, as from inking roots, and moved
E'en like an embryo in its moist recess:
A sensibility to beauteous things
As now I saw them in the heavens displayed,
And in the bright luxuriance of the earth;
Some power of just comparison, some sense
Of how a man would rank them, could he see
Those earthly grandeurs from the sov'reign height
Whence I beheld them. And with this a wish
To commune even with the human race,
And pour the loftier wonders of my life
Into their ears, through a rich-worded song
Whose golden periods in mellow flow
Should witch all ears that heard them—ev'n old men s,
Ev'n jaded monarchs; not to speak of theirs,
Those spirit-lovely ones—yea, moons of love,
That rise at first in the Circassian hills—
And they should tingle all like tiny shells
Of roseate whiteness to its perfect chords.

“One day amid the mountains of the moon,
Behold a sudden storm had gathered up
Out of my view, hid by a neighbouring height,
But which, thence wheeling with terrific force,
Wide tossed me with its gusts—aloft, and then
Downward as far; then whirlingly about,
Ev'n like a withered leaf. My strength of wing
Availed me nought, so mightily it raged;
Then suddenly, in the dim distance, lo!
I saw, as from the storm's Plutonian heart,
A mass of white-hot light come writing forth,
And then the figure of a withered man
Seemed dropping headlong through the lurid clouds;
While full within the radiant light, again
The conquering son of paradise appeared,
Upon whose brow divine I yet might trace
Some sign of wrath. Onward the vision rushed,
Orbed in white light. I felt a stifling heat,
One cruel blasting pang, and headlong then
Fell earthward—dead; a plumb descending mass.

Part VI.

"WITHIN a rustic chamber, dark and low,
Thronged with wild-looking men and women strange,
I seemed to waken. Inwardly I felt
No briskness of existence, but a sense
Of languor rather, or revival slow:
And evermore the men and women came
And gazed upon me, shouting in amaze,
Then would they whirl about the room in dance,
Abandoned to their barbarous delight.

"I turned mine eyes about the low-roofed room,
Half fearing and half hoping I might see
The mighty angel that now ruled my life;
They thought I needed air, and I was borne
to a low casement. Like a picture lay
The world without. On all sides wide around
Nothing but mountains, feathered to their tops
With a dense growth of pines, and valleys filled
With a cold darkness that was lit alone
By the broad flashes of the furious streams
That leaped in thunder out of marble gaps!
Dull vapours, like a canopy of smoke,
Did so obscure the sun, that I had thought
The scene that now I saw was not of earth,
But for a golden flush that now and then
Would touch the highest ranges. What I was
I knew not, but I felt my former wants,
And oft I made vain efforts to expand
The wings I had no longer, and sail off,
And through those sullen vapours—up, and up—
Into the mighty silence of the blue.

"The day was fading, and a blare of horns,
With many voices and much trampling noise,
Heard from without, aroused me; and, ere long,
Women rushed in, each bearing some rich robe
Or some gay bauble, wherewithal they next

Arrayed me to their taste; and then they held
A mirror up before me, and I saw
My soul had this time passed into the form
Of a fair damsel. She, whose form I now
Re-animated, was—so learned I soon—
The only child of a Circassian chief,
Who had been long regarded by her house
As its chief treasure, for her beauty rare;
Reserved for him, no matter whence he came,
Whose hand could dip into the longest purse.
But envy lurks in the Circassian hills
As elsewhere, and a dose of opium,
Administered by one who had been long
The rival beauty of a neighbouring tribe,
Had served to quash a bargain quite complete
Save in the final payment of the gold,
Which had been even offered and told down,
And only not accepted, through some old
Delaying ceremony of the tribe;
And in this luckless circumstances, twas plain
That both my admirable parents saw
The unkindest turn of all.

“On all hands forth
Had scouts been sent to summon the whole tribe
To attend my obsequies, and then forthwith
Exterminate our ancient enemies
Through all their tents—such was the fierce resolve.
But while these things were pending, lo! The light
Had broken like a new morn from the eyes
Of the dead beauty; on her cheeks had dawned
A roseate colour; from her moistening lips
Low murmurs, too, had broken; whereupon
My parents in exulting hope transformed
The funeral to a general tribal feast,
And loaded me with all the ancient gauds
And ornaments they held. The Persian, too,
Had been invited to renew his suit,
And carry me at once beyond the reach
Of future opium doses.

“Soon he came

Galloping back to bear me to the arms
Of his long-bearded lord. He paid the price;
My worthy parents took a fond farewell
Of me, with tears declaring me to be
The life-light of their eyes, their rose of joy,—
Then stretched their palms out for the stranger's gold,
And hurried off to count it o'er again—
The dear recovered treasure they so late
Had mourned as lost for ever. On that night
I was packed neatly on a camel's back
Beside a precious case of porcelain pipes,
And carried Persia-ward, by stages safe,
From the Circassian mountains.

“At the court

I soon became the favourite of the king;
Lived sumptuously, but in perpetual fear:
For all my luxury and gold and gems,
I envied the poor slaves who swept the floors.
I was the favourite of my Persian lord
For one whole month, perhaps a little more,
And then I learned my place was to be filled;
And though I loathed him, as we loathe some cold
And reptile creature, yet I could not bear
To see a newer rival take my place,
For I was beautiful, and therefore vain:
So, that I might regain his favour past,
I now arrayed myself in airy robes,
While scarfs of purple like an orient queen's
Barred them with brilliant tints, and gold and pearls
Confined the wavelets of my sunny hair.

“The harem all applauded, and there seemed
Even in his own dull eyes almost a flash
As of extorted joy, but this became
At the next moment a malignant scowl,
Which had its dark cause in such thoughts as these:
'What! Did so soft and ignorant a thing
Hope to enchant again a man so wise
As he was—he! The paragon of kings!
By floating in before him like a swan,
A little better feathered than before?'

And then he waded the harem ladies forth,
And with him kept only a Nubian girl,
Whom he thought dull, and altogether his:
A conclave of those strange demoniac dwarfs
Who from their secret dens and crypts would come
On given signals forth, was summoned in:
Wizard-like beings, with enormous heads,
Splay-feet, and monstrous spider-fingered hands.
Nor was the council long; I on that night
Was to be poisoned with a pomegranate.
Then stole the Nubian girl away, and brought
Me word of all; yet her news moved me not,
So sure I felt that this was not my doom;
Or moved me only to prepare for flight
With the poor Nubian girl. Unseen I came
To my own chamber, where I packed my goods;
And whence, unseen by all, we swiftly fled.

'Twas plain and patent to my inmost self
That in this last change I had always been
Regenerating more and more; for though
I had a love of mischief in my head,
At heart I was not bad, and they who knew
Me closely, or at least the woman sort,
Loved me,—nay, served me, as the Nubian did.
And now, as no one else might sell me,—lo!
I sold myself, and found myself installed
Queen of a rude baboon-like Afric king.

“Then I was captive to a Bedouin sheik,
Was sold in the slave-mart of Astrachan,
And carried thence to India, to be crowned
A rajahpoot’s sultana; from which state
Flying at length, I fell into a worse,
Being pounced on by a Turkoman horse-stealer.
At Alexandra I became the slave
Of a harsh Roman matron, who was wont
To flog and famish me to make me good,
And when I owned myself converted, then
She flogged and famished me the more, to make
My goodness lasting; and I finally
Fell stabbed in Cairo—slaughtered by a slave.

Part VII.

"AFTER some short and intermediate terms
Of transmigration, all in female forms,
In which, through kindly offices performed,
It seemed the temper of my spirit much
Had humanized, and in the last of which
Twas mine to die for once a natural death,
Again I had some deep-down hold on being,
Dim as an oyster's in its ocean-bed;
Then came a sense of light and air, of space,
Of hunger, comfort, warmth, of sight and sound
I caught at length the drift of speech, and knew
That all who came to see me and admire
Called me Ben Bachai's daughter.

 "Dark indeed,
But lovely as a starry night I grew,
A maid, the glory of her father's house,
Her mother's dovelet, filling all her wonts
With tenderness and joy. Still as I grew,
By strange degrees the memory of all
That I had been came back upon my mind
To fill it with wild sorrow and dismay;
To know I was a cheat, nor wholly what
I seemed to my fond parents—that I was
But half their daughter, and the rest a fiend,
With a fiend's destiny,—ah! This, I say,
Would smite me even in dreams with icy pangs
Or wordless woe, yea, even while I slept
So innocently as it seemed, and so
Securely happy in the arms of love!"

As this was said, the Rabbi looked, and saw
That now again the woman seemed to speak
As of herself, and not as heretofore
With moveless lips, and prisoned voice, that came
As from some dark duality within.

Her looks had changed, too, with the voice, and now
Again she lay, a queen-like creature, racked
With mortal sufferings, who, when these grew less,
Or for a time remitted, even thus
Took up her tale again.

“At length upgrown
To womanhood, by some mysterious pact
Existing twixt my father’s house and that
Of an Arabian prince time out of mind,
I was now wedded ere I wished, and he,
My husband, finally had come to claim
And bear me from my home, that happiest home
Which I should know no more: a man most fair
To look upon, but void of force, in truth
The weakling of a worn-out line, who yet
(What merit in a prince!) Was not depraved,
Not wicked, not the mendicant of lust,
But mild, and even affectionate and just.
My dowry was immense, and flushed with this
The prince had summoned from his vassal tribe
Five hundred horse, all spearmen, to escort
And guard us desert-ward. And as we went
These ever and anon, at signal given,
Would whirl around us like a thunder-cloud
Wind-torn, and shooting instant shafts of fire!
And thus we roamed about the Arabian wastes,
Pitching our camp amid the fairest spots.
Beneath an awning oft I lay, and gazed
Out at the cloudless ether, where it wrapt
The silent hills, like to a conscious power
Big with the soul of an eternal past.

“But long this life might last not, for the prince
Sickened and died;—died poor, his wealth and mine
Having been squandered on the hungry horde
That wont to prance about us; who ere long,
Divining my extremity, grew loud
And urgent for rewards, till on a day,
By concert as it seemed, the tribe entire
Came fiercely round me, all demanding gifts,
Gifts that I had not; as they nearer pressed,

Wearing his way among them, lo! I saw
The old man of the tombs! The Bactrian sage!
With signs of awe they made him room to pass;
He fixed me with his shrunk and serpent eyes,
Waved off the abject Arabs, and then asked
'Why art thou poor? With needs so great upon thee?
I offer thee long life and wealth and power.'

"I turned to him and said: 'Should I not know,
By all the past, the nature of thy gifts?
Shows and delusions, evil, sin-stained all,
And terminating in eternal loss.'
'Well, take it as thou wilt,' he said; 'my gifts
Are not so weighed by all.' And saying this
He went his way, while I retired within
My lonely tent to weep.

 "Next day the tribes
Again assembled, and with threats and cries,
And insults loud, they raised a passion in me.
My blood arose: I chid them angrily,
Called them all things but men, till they, alarmed,
Fell back in sullen silence for a while,
Crouching like tigers ready for a spring.
Humbled, perplexed, and frightened, I returned
Into my tent, and there within its folds
Stood the weird Bactrian with his snaky eyes,
And wiry voice that questioned as before:
'Why art thou poor? Why dost thou suffer wrong,
With all this petty baseness brattling round?
Am I not here to help thee? I, thy one
Sole friend—not empty, but with ample means.
Behold the secrets of the inner earth!
There, down among the rock-roots of the hills,
What seest thou there? Look, as I point, even those
Strange miscreations, as they seem to thee,
Are demoniac moilers that obey
Such arts as I possess; the gnomish brood
Of Demogorgon. See them how they moil
Amid those diamonds shafts and reefs of gold
Embedded in the oldest drifts of time,
And in the mire that was the first crude floor

And blind extension of the infant earth:
Why art thou poor, then, when such slaves as they
Might work for thee, and glut thy need with all
The matchless values which are there enwombed,
Serving thee always as they now serve me?
Nor these alone: turn thou thy looks aloft,
And watch the stars as they go swimming past.
Behold their vastness, each a world,' he said;
'The secrets of all these, too, thou shalt know,
The spirits of all these shall be thy slaves,
If thou wilt swear as erst amid the tombs.'

"The woe of desolation wrapped me round,
The joy to know all mysteries tempted me,
And with a shudder that shook me to the soul
I swore, as erst I swore amid the tombs.

"As on my hand he placed a signet-ring,
Suddenly loud the desert winds arose,
And blew with mighty stress among the tents;
And instantly aloft the thunder ran,
A mighty issue of miraculous light
Burst shaft-like forward, smiting him in twain,
Or so it seemed, down through the solid earth.
In vain I shrunk into a dim recess;
Before me stood the son of paradise.
Then leapt the soul to life within my heart—
Leapt into life with fear, and pain, and woe—
Anger and sadness both were on his brow.

"'Could'st thou no trial bear—all but redeemed;
Could'st thou not rest content? A rabbi's child!
Enjoy as best thou may this ill-won power
Over the darker agencies of time,
And bide the end, which end is punishment
But the more terrible, the more delayed;
Yet know this also, thou shalt thus no more
Be punished in a body built of clay.'
He vanished, leaving me to sharp remorse,
And harrowed with the thought of his grieved look.
'And yet no power in heaven or hell,' I said,
'May now annul my deed.'

“And not one day
Of joy has brought to me my ‘ill-won power.’
I built vast palaces in quiet view
Of ancient cities, or by famous streams;
I filled my halls with men and women fair,
And with these pages of a beauty rare
Like striplings kidnapped from some skirt of heaven;
Yet sorrowful of countenance withal,
As knowing that their mortal doom is joined
With mine irrevocably, that with me
’Tis theirs to own these shows of time, with me
To live—with me to die. And as, ’tis said,
A hunted roe will evermore beat round
Towards whence he started first, I felt at length
An ardent longing for my native place;
That spot in all the earth where only I,
In tasting of it, had divined the worth
And Sabbath quality of household peace.
Then coming hither, thus constrained, I pitched
My dwelling here, even this thou seest; built fair,
And filled with splendours such as never yet
Under one roof-tree on this earth were stored.
See yon surpassing lustres! Could this orb
Show such? From Mars came that; from Venus this;
And yonder mass of sun-bright glory, that
From Mercury came, whence came these viols, too,
Instinct with fervent music such as ne’er
From earthly instruments might thrill abroad.”

Then seizing one of them, even as she spake,
Over its chords she moved her ivory hand,
And instantly the palace domes throughout
Rang resonant, as every hall and crypt
Were pulsing music from a thousand shells
That still ran confluent with a mellow slide
And intercourse of cadence: sweet, and yet
Most mournful and most weird, and oft intoned
With a wild wilfulness of power that worked
For madness more than joy. “Even such, ” she said
“Are the delights with which I most converse
In the dark loneliness of my fated soul,

For all is show, not substance. All I hold
But darkens more the certainty I have
Of wrath to come, from which no change of place,
No earthly power, no power of heaven nor hell,
May shield me now. I see it shadowing forth
Even like a coming night, in whose dark folds
My soul would ask to hide itself in vain.
And now I go to meet the angel's face;
I will not claim my hundred years of pride,
I trample underneath my feet the gift
For which I sold my soul; I will not touch
The ring of Sammael, nor use his power
To stay the torments that devour my life;
Misery, shame, remorse, and dread are mine;
Yet shall the angel see repentent eyes,
And know at last I could one trial bear;
Too late, too late."

As thus the woman spake,
Her brow grew dark, and suddenly she shrieked
In her great agony. "Oh pray for me!
Pray, rabbi! For the daughter of thy friend!
The hour is coming, nay, the hour is come!"

There was a rustle as of wings aloft,
A sudden flicker in the lights below,
And she, who until now seemed speaking, sank
Back on her pillow and in silence lay
Beautiful in the marble calm of death.
The rabbi gazed on her, and thought the while
Of those far times, when, as a child, her grace
Had filled with pleasantness her father's house.
Then to her servants gave in charge the corpse,
And forth he paced, much musing as he went.
At length he turned to gaze once more upon
The silent house of death. Can such things be?
All had vanished like a morning mist!
Only the woods that hung like clouds about
The steps of Hebron, in the whitening dawn
Lay dark against the sky! Only a pool
Gleamed flat before him, where it seemed erewhile
The splendid palace had adorned the view!

Perplexed in mind, the rabbi turned again
And hurried homeward, muttering as he went:
Was it a vision? Can such marvels be?
But what in truth are all things, even those
That seem most solid—dust and air at last

Charles Harpur

This Southern Land Of Ours

With alien hearts to frame our laws
And cheat us as of old,
In vain our soil is rich, in vain
'Tis seamed with virgin gold:
But the present only yields us nought,
The future only lours
Till we dare to be a people
In this Southern Land of Ours.

What would pygmean statesmen but
Our new-world prospects blast,
By chaining native enterprise
To Europe's pauper past,
With all its misery for the mass,
And fraud-upholden powers;
But we'll yet have men, - like Cromwell,
In this Southern Land of Ours.

And lo, the unploughed future, boys,
May yet be all our own,
If hearts that love their Native Land
Determine this alone:
To sow its years with crops of truth,
And border these with flowers,
Till we have a birth of heroes
In this Southern Land of Ours.

Charles Harpur

To -

“Who would not be a poet?” thus I read
In thy proud sonnet, my poetic friend;
And unto this my full assent was given:
“There is not, cannot be, under all heaven,
Aught happier in itself than the witch, poetry.”
But “Who’d not be a poet?” here I pause
Forebodingly, my poet-friend,—because
“To see all beauty with his gifted sight,”
To love, like him, with all the soul,
To be, when life is morning-bright
The very creature of delight,—
 Delight beyond control,—
Is still to be, in like degree,
 Too sensible of misery
And loss and slight, and all the weeping shapes of dole.

And this is truth too, that with saddened heart
Oft must he from his fellows live apart;
For how can men whose every breath of life
Is drawn in the hot air, and mid the strife
Of pettiest interest, have a kindred heart
With him who hath built heavenward and apart
The structures of his mind, and looking thence
Over this world-thronged universe immense,
Is wont all such embroilments to deplore
As light-obscuring vapours—nothing more?
What ladder of experience can they build,
To mount with—up, into a nature filled
With beauty, or by mighty truths inspired,
Or one even with a bold ambition fired?
But least of all in such men can there be
Devotions chiming into sympathy
With some pure soul, unsuccoured and alone,
Struggled in weariness unwearied on—
Unwearied, day and night, and night and day,
Towards the far Mecca of its faith always.

Yet thus the poet, armed only with the right,
To life’s dishonest battle oft must come,

To front instead of valour, mean despite,
 With envy eye in emulation's room,
Blotting heaven's sacred light!
To see unblushing fortune's minions doom
To obloguy, through some repute unholy,
Or to some vile and miserable estate,
All such as would not trample on the lowly,
And basely glorify the falsely great.

Yet if a thought like this
Should mar at times they tuneful bliss,
Stronger within thine earnest will
Be the spirit of sone, that still
Thou mayest sing of eloquent eyes
That are of sunny thoughts the every sunny skies;
Sweet dreams that swarm round honeyed lips,
Like honey-loving bees;
Glad birds, fresh flowers, clear streams, and trees
All starry bright with golden pips;
Or with a loud bold chime,
Sing of that braver time,
When world-wide justice from her Alpine chair
Shall read at length in the rich reddening skies
The gospel of her advent, and declare
The sacred sign of her epiphany there,
Amid the purple dyes;
While all true men, the bravely wise,
Shall seek her there with fearless feet and free
Where the prophet-peaks arise
Out of the shattering mist, the phantom sea
Of old iniquity!
Through dense and rare, shall seek her there,
Breathing with lion-lungs the clear keen mountain air
Of a supreme up-climbing, God-great liberty.
Then envy not the splendid wretchedness
Of Mammon's dupes! Sing thy great rhymes
For those diviner spiritual times
Our country yet shall know, and, wisely knowing, bless.

Downward, through the blooming roofage
 Of a lonely forest bower,
 Come the yellow sunbeams,—falling

Like a burning shower:
So through heaven's starry ceiling
To the hermit soul's abode,
Comes the Holy Spirit,—earthward
Raying down from God.

Charles Harpur

To —

LONG ere I knew thee—years of loveless days—
A Shape would gather from my dreams and pour
The soul-sweet influence of its gentle gaze
Into my being, thrilling it to the core,
Then would I wake, with lonely heart to pine
For that nocturnal image:—it was thine!

Thine—for though long with a fond moody heed
I sought to match it with the beauteous creatures
I met in the world's ways, 'twas but to bleed
With disappointment; for all forms, all features,
Yet left it void of living counterpart—
The shadowy Mistress of my yearning heart.

Thine—for when first seen thou didst seem to me
A being known yet beautifully new!
Thus, warranting some sage's theory,
Amid Heaven's sisterhoods, into shining view
Is drawn a long-conjectured star, his name
To fold forever in its virgin flame!

But I forget! Far, far away from thee
Behold, I wander 'mid primeval woods
Where but all savage things are wont to be,
Mixing fond questionings with Solitude's
Wild cadences, as through dim glades by fits
Yet dreaming her ancient dream, illusively she flits.

And now the HUNTER, with a swollen speed
Rushes in thunder at my feet, but wears
A softened charm in that it seems to lead
My willing vision whether Memory rears
Thy rural bower by the stream that erst
With murmurous heed my infant passion nurst.

And with the river's torture, oft a tone
Of that far brook seems blending, accents too
Of the dear voice there heard—that voice alone
Unparagoned of mortal sound, like dew

Honeyed with manna, dropping near me seems,
As oft I listen—lost in Memory's dreams!

But vain these musings! Though my spirit's bride
Thou knew'st not of my love! Though all my days
To come must be inevitably dyed
Or bright or dark through thee—this missive says
Thy lot in life is cast, that thou wilt be
Another's ere I look again on thee!

The bardic doom is on me! Poets make
Beauty immortal and yet luckless miss
The charms they sing,—martyrs at Fortune's stake!
As though their soul's capacity for bliss
Might else give Earth too much of Heaven and kill
The want that strengthens them for prowess still.

Wreath then the Poet's brows with blossoms bright!
Let waters ever, and the sway of trees
Sound through his thoughts, as the renewed delight
Of Even flows around him in a breeze
Laden with dying voices—till the night
Enroof him with her starry mysteries!
For Nature only (fated at his birth!)
May minister unto his love on Earth.

Charles Harpur

To An Echo On The Banks Of The Hunter

I hear thee, echo! And I start to hear thee
With a strange shock, as from among the hills
Thy voice, reverbering in swift murmurs near me,
Dies down the stream, or with its gurgle low
Blends whisperingly, until my bosom thrills
With gentle tribulations that endear thee,
But speak not of the present. Twas as though
Some spirit of the past were then a-near thee,
Bringing back days of life's regretted spring,
Waking wild recollections, to evince
How strong the ties that bind me to each thing
Loved, though long since.
It seems but yesterday that last I stood
Beside the Hawksbury, even as now I stand
By the swift Hunter, challenging o'er the flood
An echo thus; but with a glorious brood
Of hopes then glowing round me, and a band
Of schoolmates and young creatures of my blood,
All quick with joyousness beyond command,
And now, with that delightful time, O! Where
Are those quick joys, glad mates, and hopes of good?
Echo, declare!

Thy voice comes o'er the waters in reply,
To fail as soon! And all those young delights
Decayed (as thy peculiar accents die)
In the dusk valleys of past days and nights
To be renewed not, like thy ghostly chide;
And one to the other of those joyous creatures,
Now burthened with their manhoods, in the wide
World's separations, have the names and features
Thus wasted out of mind. And so, at last,
Those glorious hopes are all become but lonely
And dying echoes of the hollow past,
All but one only.

E'en that around my being only strays
Like a recurring sound. In lonesome ways'
Like these it moves me still; not as of yore

In clear, strong tones, though yet its spirit plays
Upon the same old promise: that, when o'er
My country's homes shine fair those riper days,
Her better sons shall learn to prize
My lonely voice upon the past,
And so, there may at last
From time's dim void, an echo, thence arise,
Responsive to the swell
Of their full souls beneath these Austral skies.

Charles Harpur

To Doctor Lang

Little, perhaps, thou valuest verse of mine—
 Little hast read of what my hand has wrought,
Yet I with thy brave memory would entwine
 The muse's amaranths. For thou well hast fought
 For freedom; well her sacred lessons taught;
Well baffled wrong; and delved with far design
Into those elements where treasures shine
 Excelling those wherewith our hills are fraught.
And when thy glorious grey head shall make
 One spot all-hallowed for the coming days—
Tombed in the golden land for whose sole sake
 With labour thou hast furrowed all thy ways,—
 Well a young nation shall thy worth appraise
Even through the grief which then shall o'er thee break

Charles Harpur

To James Norton Esq.

Think you I have not skill to gather gold,
 If I could love it as some others do?
Or that I lack the spirit of a bold
 And resolute man in any cause that's true,
 Because I scorn to juggle with yon crew
Of politics schemers? Let the truth be told:
Whatever I can value, I can mould
 Right deftly to my ends, and boldly too.
"But fame he sought not through a gainful hand"
 (This of my being let future tell),
"Nor through the arts of popular command;
 But in retirement, where the muses dwell,
 That his life's legacy might be—a well
Pierian, in a wide and thirsty land. "

Charles Harpur

To Mary

WHERE Beauty is smiling
With Love undenied,
Where Gladness is flowing
From Pleasure's hill-side,
Whatever of charming
I elsewhere may see,
I can turn from it, Mary,
To think upon thee.

When winds of affliction
Blow cold on my rest,
And the pang that will sleep not
Is loud in my breast,
Still however clinging
These troubles may be,
I can turn from them, Mary,
To think upon thee.

When Weariness sleepeth
And Care is at rest,
When Happiness dreameth
Of all it loves best,
Then as the moon gazes
Upon the broad sea,
My soul o'er thy dwelling
Looks down upon thee!

Charles Harpur

To My First Born

MY beautiful! For beautiful thou art
To me thy father, as the morning light
Which makes all common objects fresh and bright,
Yea gives them out of the dun void to start
As they were newly fashion'd from the Night!
For long there was a darkness round my heart,
Until thy mother made her life a part
Of mine, to pierce it with Love's genial might—
The Aurora she and the young Morning thou
Of a new era in my worldly way!
Whence it behoves me heedfully to plough
The future for thy sake and for the vow
That I have made, to make thee (if I may)
A Man right worthy of our Australia.

Charles Harpur

To My Young Countryman D.H.D.

Who doubteth, when the morning star doth light
Her lamp of beauty, that the day is coming?
Or, where prime odours track the breezes' flight,
That rare flowers in the vicinage are blooming?
Or, where the wild bees all about are humming,
That honey's stored in some near cedar's height?
Or, that the sea is heaving into sight
When more and more long surgy rolls come booming?
And surely, as the observer understands
What each of these foretokens in its kind,
Thy manhood's mental amplitude expands
Before me in its omens, when I find
Something of promise fashioned by thy hands,
Some blossom breathing of thy forming mind.

Charles Harpur

To Poesy

Yet do not thou forsake me now,
Poesy, with Peace-together!
Ere this last disastrous blow
Did lay my struggling fortunes low,
In love unworn have we not borne
Much wintry weather?
The storm is past, perhaps the last,
Its rainy skirts are wearing over
But though yet a sunnier glow
Should give my ice-bound hopes to flow,
Forlorn of thee, 'twere nought to me
A lonely rover!

Ah, misery! what were then my lot
Amongst a race of unbelievers
Sordid men who all declare
That earthly gain alone is fair,
And they who pore on bardic lore
Deceived deceivers.

That all the love I've felt to move
Round beauty in thy fountain laving,
Move in music through the air,
Gathering increase everywhere,
The more to bless her loveliness,
Was Folly raving!

That to believe thought yet shall weave,—
Although with arm'd oppression coping,
Truth-bright banners which, unfurled,
Shall herald freedom through the world,
And give to man her kindly plan,
Is Folly hoping!

On thy breast in sabbath rest
How often have I lain, deep musing
In the golden eventide,
Till all the dead, for truth that died,
Looked from the skies with starry eyes,

Great thoughts infusing!

But can it be life's mystery
Is but a baseless panorama,
Peopled thick with passing dreams,
Wild writhing glooms, and wandering gleams,
And soul a breath exhaled by death,
Which ends the drama?

Then is the scope of this world's hope
No more than worldlings deem it ever,
Earth and sky, with nought between
Of spiritual truth serene:
And if so, fly! for thou and I
At once should sever.

But if there lives, as love believes,
All underneath this silent heaven,
In yon shades, and by yon streams,
As we have seen them in our dreams,
A deathless race; still let thy grace
My being leaven!

Thy mystic grace! that face to face
Full converse I may hold with nature,
Seeing published everywhere
In forms, the soul that makes her fair,
And grow the while to her large style
In mental stature.

Charles Harpur

To The Comet Of 1843

Thy purpose, heavenly stranger, who may tell
But Him, who linked thee to the starry whole?
Wherefore, in this our darkness, be it ours
To must upon thee in thy high career,
As of some wandering symphony from amidst
Those highest stellar harmonies that track
Through infinite space and the great rounds of time
The mighty marches of creation.

Behold, how high thou travellest in heaven!
Myriads of wondering human spirits here,
Duly each night with upturned looks seek out
The mystery of thy advent.

In thy last
Bright visitation, even thus thou saw'st
The young, the lovely, and the wise of earth—
A buried generation—crowding out,
With looks upturned, to see thee passing forth
Beyond the signs of time—and then to know,
In all the awful vastness of the heaven,
Thy place no more! And when the flaming steps
Of thy unspeakable speed, which of itself
Blows back the long strands of thy burning hair
Through half the arch of night, shall lead thee forth
Into the dim of the inane, beyond
Our utmost vision; all the eloquent eyes
Now opened wide with welcome and with wonder—
Eyes tender as the turtle's, or that speak
The fervent soul and the majestic mind;
All these, alas!—all these, ere thou once more
Shalt drive thus fulgently around the sun
Thy chariot of fire, fast closed in dust
And mortal darkness, shall have given for aye
Their lustre to the grave.

But human eyes
As many and beautiful—yea, more sublime
And radiant in their passion, from a more
Enlarged communion with the spirit of truth,—
Shall welcome thee instead, mysterious stranger,

When thou return'st anew.

And thus to think
Consoles us, even while we watch thee pass
Out of our times for ever; yea, although
Some selfish entertainment of a truth
At all times mournful, whisper us the while:
So shall it be indeed, for God abides,
And nature, born of His eternal power,
Must share its dateless energy as well.
Yea, all that flows from the Eternal must,
If from divine necessity alone,
Work with its cause for ever—still, alas!
Though thence derived, how fugitive and swift,
How vague and shadow-like, this life of Man!

Charles Harpur

To The Moon

With musing mind I watch thee steal
 Above those envious clouds that hid
Till now thy face; thou dost reveal
 More than the glaring sunlight did;
So round me would I have thy light
 In one broad sea of beauty lie,
And who, while thou dost rule the night,
 For day would sigh,
Nor long for wings that he might flee
To find thy hidden face and ride the dark with thee?
And hence it was that ever forth
 My fancy doated more and more
Upon the wild poetic worth
 Of that old tale in Grecian lore,
Which to the head of Latmos gave
 Supernal glories, passion-won
By him who, in the mystic cave—
 Endymion—
Was wont to meet thee night by night,
And drink into his soul the spirit of thy light.

Not thus it was thy beauty shone
 In these drear summers lately past;
Disheartened, world-distrusting, lone,
 I shuddered in misfortune's blast!
Many that loved me, once were nigh
 Of whom now these I may not trust,
And those forget me—or they lie
 Dark in the dust!
And never can we meet again,
Loving and loved as then, beneath thy friendly reign.

O Cynthia! It would even seem
 That portions from our spirits fell,
Like scent from flowers, throughout life's dream;
 And by that clue invisible,
A gathered after-scene of all
 Affection builded high in vain,
Is drawn thus in dim funeral

Past us again;
The which, where shadowed most with gloom,
Uncertain thought is fain to map with spells of doom.

Let me this night the past forget,
For though its dying voices be
At times like tones from Eden, yet
The years have brought such change for me
That when but now my thoughts were given
To all I'd suffered, loved, and lost,
Turning my eyes again to heaven,
Tear-quenched almost,
I started with impatience strange,
To find thee, even thee, smiling untouched by change!

O vain display of secret pride!
My human heart, what irks thee so?
What, in the scale of being tried,
Should weigh thy happiness or woe?
Pale millions, so by fortune curst,
Have loved for sorrow in the light
Of this yet youthful morn, since first
She claimed the night,
And thus mature even from her birth,
With pale beam chased the glooms that swathed the infant earth.

And be it humbling, too, to know
That when this pile of haughty clay
For ages shall have ceased to glow—
Shrunk to a line of ashes grey,
Which, as the invasive ploughshare drills
The unremembered burial sward,
The wild winds o'er a hundred hills
May whirl abroad—
That in the midnight heavens thou
Shalt hang thy unfaded lamp, and smile serene as now.

Nay, more than this: could even those,
The Edenites, who sorrowed here
Ere Noah's tilted ark arose,
Or Nimrod chased the bounding deer—
Wherever sepulchred, could they

The rigid bonds of death and doom
Now for a moment shake away—
From out their tomb
They watchful face they still might see,
Just as they dying left it, gazing solemnly.

I sadden! Ah! Why bringest thou
Yet later memories to my mind?
I would but gaze upon thee now
A wiser counsel thence to find!
Shall I not even henceforth aim
To shun in act, in thought control,
Whatever dims the heaven-born flame—
The essential soul
I feel within, and which must be
A living light when thine is quenched eternally?

Charles Harpur

To The Moon [earlier Version]

WITH silent step behold her steal
Over those envious clouds that hid
Till now her face, then stand—a seal
Of silver on heaven's mighty lid!
So round me would I have her light
In one broad burst of beauty play,
And who whilst thus she rules the night
Would wish the day,
Nor feel his yearning spirit fraught
With sweetly solemn strains of visionary thought?

Love of my childhood! for but when
A child I loved thee of all things—
Yea, with what ecstasies I then
Did hail thee, what dear visionings!
And when between us up the sky
Obscuring glooms have wildly thronged,
With shortened breath and searching eye
How have I longed
For wings that I away might flee
To kiss thy hidden face and dwell awhile with thee.

I sadden! Ah, why bringest thou
Yet later memories to my mind?
I would but gaze upon thee now,
As erst for wonder;—not to find
Dim phantoms of each faded dream
That fanned my heart with pinions dyed
In passion, by old HAWKESBURY'S stream,
Before me glide,
With shades of days all figured o'er
By feelings lost, and hopes that know their place no more!

Nor was it thus thy beauty shone
Upon me fewer summers past—
Thus hopeless, world-distrusting, lone,
And withering in Misfortune's blast!
Many that loved me then were nigh,
Of whom now these I may not trust,

And those forget—are far—or lie
Cold in the dust!
And never may we meet again
Loving and loved as then 'neath thy nocturnal reign!

O Cynthia! it would seem as though
A something from our spirits fell,
Like scents from flowers, Life's eras through
And by which web invisible,
A gathered after-scene of all
Affection builded to our loss,
Is drawn thus in dim funeral
The heart across:
And which where stained the most with gloom
Uncertain Thought is prone to map with spells of doom.

But sober Reason sagelie sings
These visioned mysteries are but
The semblances which former things
Imbued our being with, as put
In act by memory, when is seen
Again some marked associate sight;
And thence it happens, Orb serene,
Why thou to-night
Look'st on me from thy native sky
Like an old friend too fond to talk of things gone by.

Let me this night the Past forget!
For though its dying voices be
At times like tones from Eden, yet
It bosoms too much change for me,—
That when but now my thoughts were given
To all I had suffered—loved and lost!
Turning mine eyes again to heaven,
Tear-quenched almost,
I started with a strange despair,
To find thee—even thee smiling unaltered there!

Hence vain regrets of secret pride!
My human heart, what irks thee so,
What in the scale of Nature tried
Should weigh thy happiness or wo?

Pale millions, so by Fortune cursed,
Have loved for sorrow in the light
Of this yet youthful Moon, since first
She claimed the night,
And thus mature even from her birth,
Chased with pale beam the glooms that swathed the infant Earth.

And be it humbling too, to know
That when this pile of haughty clay
For ages shall have ceased to glow,
Shall be a heap of ashes grey—
Which as the invading ploughshare drills
The unremembered burial ground,
The winds may o'er a hundred hills
Scatter around—
That in the midnight heavens thou
Shalt hang thy unfaded lamp and smile serene as now.

Nay, more than this: could even those,
The Edenites, who sorrow'd here
Ere Noah's tilted ark arose
Or Nimrod chased the bounding deer,
Wherever sepulchered, could they
Shake the cold bonds of death and doom
But for a moment now away,—
Into each tomb
Solemnly gazing, thee they'd find
Even as they dying left thee, watchful Moon, behind!

But shall my thoughts thus widely range
And I no profit therein know?
Seeing that wither, waste and change
Must all that lives thine Orb below;
Shall I not turn with this sole aim,
In act to shun, in heart control,
Whatever dims the heavenward flame,
The essential soul
I feel within, and which must be
A living thing when thou art quenched eternally?

Charles Harpur

To The Rev. John Saunders On His Departure For England

If a large love of the whole human race,
 With charity that hopeth a meet cure
For life's worst evils, indicates the grace
 Of goodness, thine is such as will endure.
 And if pure prayers to stablish what is pure
Waste not away in the dim voids of space,
But, Godward rising, pierce heaven's starry face,
 Thine have been heard and thy reward is sure.
Farewell! This people might be well content
 To part with much beside, if so it might
Keep burning through its mortal glooms, unblent
 With earthlier ardours, perilous, though bright,
Thy eloquent fervour, kindling wise intent—
 Thy steady flame of purpose in the right.

Charles Harpur

Trust In God

Deep trust in God—for that I still have sought
 Through all the grim doubts that bemock the soul,
When in the amazement of far-reaching thought,
 We list the labourings that for ever roll
Like dubious thunders through those clouded regions
 Where night and destiny the counsels keep
Of Time developing his shadowy legions.
And when I ve stood upon some hazardous steep
 Of speculation—heaving up its bare
 And rugged ridge high in the nebulous air
Of endless change, and thence tremendously
 Throwing its shadow, like a blind man's stare,
Out through the dread unknown—deep trust in Thee,
O God! Hath likewise been my refuge there.

Charles Harpur

Virginal Love

I LOVE him so,
That though his face I ne'er might see,
In the assurance that he so loved me
This heart of mine would glow
With pulses sweeter than the sweetest be
That colder ones can know.

I love him so,
That to my thought 'twere sweet to sleep
Even in death, believing he would keep
With solemn step and slow,
In Sabbath memory my grave and weep
For her who slept below.

I love him so,
That all desires when he is by
Shrink even from the import of a sigh:
As flowers unseen that grow,
Being mute must so remain, as in the sky
Are stars that none may know!

Charles Harpur

Wellington

Great captain if you will! great Duke! great Slave!
Great minion of the crown! - but a great man
He was not! He? the iron instrument
Of mere authority! the atheist
Of a conventional and most earthy duty!
To whom the powers that be were simply not
Of God-but in His stead! Shall we belie
All righteous instinct and profane all truth,
By calling great a man without a soul?
One who, apart from the despotic wills
Of crowned oppressors, knew no right, no wrong.
No faith, no country, and no brotherhood?
If such a man were great, may God most High
Spare henceforth to our universal race
All greatness, seeing it may sometimes be
A rigid, kindless battlement of Power
Self throned and sanctioned only by the sword.
And if' as Englishmen are proud to boast,
He was their greatest countryman-alas!
For England's national sterility!
But they who thus belaud him, lie, as all
True patriots most feelingly perceive.
Besides, he was not England's son at all:
He was an Irishman, with whom the name
Of Ireland was a scoff! An Irishman,
Who for a hireling's meed and ministry,
Could tear away from his inhuman heart
The pleading image of his native land.

Charles Harpur

Words

Words are deeds. The words we hear
May revolutionize or rear
A mighty state. The words we read
May be a spiritual deed
Excelling any fleshly one,
As much as the celestial sun
Transcends a bonfire, made to throw
A light upon some raree-show.
A simple proverb tagged with rhyme
May colour half the course of time;
The pregnant saying of a sage
May influence every coming age;
A song in its effects may be
More glorious than Thermopylae,
And many a lay that schoolboys scan
A nobler feat than Inkerman.

Charles Harpur

Wordsworth

LOFTY and strenuous of sentiment
But narrow and partial in its scope and bent,
And thence the bigot of a local set
Of habitudes, meshed round him like a net.
Hence too his intellect, though large it be
By nature, hath one prime deficiency,—
Of moral difference that broad view which leads
The steps of thought beyond the snares of creeds
And circles of opinion, whether they
Be of the Old Time or of yesterday.
Hence too his narrow bias, I suspect,
Even in poesy to attempt a sect.

Still as a Poet he is great and rare,
A King of Thought upon the peak of bare
And rigid majesty, for power immense
Enthroned for ever! And in spirit thence,—
Thence let him waft us on a white-wing'd dream
Within the murmur of some profluent stream,
And there, just whither a dim line of brakes
In the remotest haze of distance shakes,
On his lone rounds let Peter Bell be seen,—
Seen o'er the White Doe on the herbage green
Heard breathing where she lies, and near her there
"The oldest seeming man that ever wore grey hair."
Then shall we find him verily a Seer
Of Nature's myst'ries, simple and severe.

With what a plenitude of pure delight
He triumphs on the mountain's cloudy height,
With what a gleeful harmony of joy
He wanders down the vale "as happy as a boy!"

How in his verse, each picture-pregnant phrase
Full to the eye some given shape conveys,
And thus though in the jarring city pent
Through him we reach the country and content.
Fond Memory apprehends with gladdened eyes
All that is richest in each wilding's dyes

As blending with the beauty and the grace
Of some bright advent of our happier days—
Hears through the sway of greenest boughs, as heard
Even then, the far voice of some favourite bird,
The murmurous industry of bees, the low
Responsive throbs of Echo throbbing slow
Out of some lonely dell, as to the tread
Of our own feet in days for ever fled!
Then of some brook that gushes in his lines
Glad Fancy drinks or on the bank reclines,
While of far cloud, grey rock and ancient tree
The dusky shadows on the page we see:
Yea, the air sweetens as the spells prevail
And our locks seem to wave as in a mountain gale!

Still there remains to tell the charm serene
Wherewith this Bard most sanctifies the scene:
'Tis that with eyes of love he's quick to find
In all its forms meet ministers of Mind
And that with the rare wealth of his own heart
As with a golden chain he interlinks each part.

But vainly the fond spirit of youth may look
For its peculiar food in Wordsworth's book,
Where Passion is but introduced to wear
A vestal's tenderness, demure as fair:
Not as to see it the new soul desires,
In all the splendour of its tragic fires,
Or, at the least, in all the bright distress
And rosy beauty of its wilfulness!

Charles Harpur

Yes

MY SOUL is raying like a star,
My heart is happier than a bird,
And all to hear through fortune's jar
One promissory word.

A sound as simple as the low
Quick sliding gurgle of a rill,
And yet with power to overflow
A world with blissful will!

I feel as though the very air
Was breathe from the heart of Love,
As Pleasure in the sun's bright lair
Sat brooding like a dove!

A billow of the sunny sea,
A cloudlet of the summer sky,
How wide is their felicity—
So widely blest am I!

O Beauty, through one little word
What boundless power is thine to bless!
O Love, a seraph's voice is heard
In thy confiding "Yes!"

Charles Harpur