

The Revolt of Islam

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

The Poem which I now present to the world is an attempt from which I scarcely dare to expect success, and in which a writer of established fame might fail without disgrace. It is an experiment on the temper of the public mind, as to how far a thirst for a happier condition of moral and political society survives, among the enlightened and refined, the tempests which have shaken the age in which we live. I have sought to enlist the harmony of metrical language, the ethereal combinations of the fancy, the rapid and subtle transitions of human passion, all those elements which essentially compose a Poem, in the cause of a liberal and comprehensive morality; and in the view of kindling within the bosoms of my readers a virtuous enthusiasm for those doctrines of liberty and justice, that faith and hope in something good, which neither violence nor misrepresentation nor prejudice can ever totally extinguish among mankind.

For this purpose I have chosen a story of human passion in its most universal character, diversified with moving and romantic adventures, and appealing, in contempt of all artificial opinions or institutions, to the common sympathies of every human breast. I have made no attempt to recommend the motives which I would substitute for those at present governing mankind, by methodical and systematic argument. I would only awaken the feelings, so that the reader should see the beauty of true virtue, and be incited to those inquiries which have led to my moral and political creed, and that of some of the sublimest intellects in the world. The Poem therefore (with the exception of the first canto, which is purely introductory) is narrative, not didactic. It is a succession of pictures illustrating the growth and progress of individual mind aspiring after excellence, and devoted to the love of mankind; its influence in refining and making pure the most daring and uncommon impulses of the imagination, the understanding, and the senses; its impatience at 'all the oppressions which are done under the sun;' its tendency to awaken public hope, and to enlighten and improve mankind; the rapid effects of the application of that tendency; the awakening of an immense nation from their slavery and degradation to a true sense of moral dignity and freedom; the bloodless dethronement of their oppressors, and the unveiling of the religious frauds by which they had been deluded into submission; the tranquillity of successful patriotism, and the universal toleration and benevolence of true philanthropy; the treachery and barbarity of hired soldiers; vice not the object of punishment and hatred, but kindness and pity; the faithlessness of tyrants; the confederacy of the Rulers of the World and the restoration of the expelled Dynasty by foreign arms; the massacre and extermination of the Patriots, and the victory of established power; the consequences of legitimate despotism,—civil war, famine, plague, superstition, and an utter extinction of the domestic affections; the judicial murder of the advocates of Liberty; the temporary triumph of oppression, that secure earnest of its final and inevitable fall; the transient nature of ignorance and error and the eternity of genius and virtue. Such is the series of delineations of which the Poem consists. And, if the lofty passions with which it has been my scope to distinguish this story shall not excite in the reader a generous impulse, an ardent thirst for excellence, an interest profound and strong such as belongs to no meaner desires, let not the failure be imputed to a natural unfitness for human sympathy

in these sublime and animating themes. It is the business of the Poet to communicate to others the pleasure and the enthusiasm arising out of those images and feelings in the vivid presence of which within his own mind consists at once his inspiration and his reward.

The panic which, like an epidemic transport, seized upon all classes of men during the excesses consequent upon the French Revolution, is gradually giving place to sanity. It has ceased to be believed that whole generations of mankind ought to consign themselves to a hopeless inheritance of ignorance and misery, because a nation of men who had been dupes and slaves for centuries were incapable of conducting themselves with the wisdom and tranquillity of freemen so soon as some of their fetters were partially loosened. That their conduct could not have been marked by any other characters than ferocity and thoughtlessness is the historical fact from which liberty derives all its recommendations, and falsehood the worst features of its deformity. There is a reflux in the tide of human things which bears the shipwrecked hopes of men into a secure haven after the storms are past. Methinks, those who now live have survived an age of despair.

The French Revolution may be considered as one of those manifestations of a general state of feeling among civilised mankind produced by a defect of correspondence between the knowledge existing in society and the improvement or gradual abolition of political institutions. The year 1788 may be assumed as the epoch of one of the most important crises produced by this feeling. The sympathies connected with that event extended to every bosom. The most generous and amiable natures were those which participated the most extensively in these sympathies. But such a degree of unmingled good was expected as it was impossible to realise. If the Revolution had been in every respect prosperous, then misrule and superstition would lose half their claims to our abhorrence, as fetters which the captive can unlock with the slightest motion of his fingers, and which do not eat with poisonous rust into the soul. The revulsion occasioned by the atrocities of the demagogues, and the re-establishment of successive tyrannies in France, was terrible, and felt in the remotest corner of the civilised world. Could they listen to the plea of reason who had groaned under the calamities of a social state according to the provisions of which one man riots in luxury whilst another famishes for want of bread? Can he who the day before was a trampled slave suddenly become liberal-minded, forbearing, and independent? This is the consequence of the habits of a state of society to be produced by resolute perseverance and indefatigable hope, and long-suffering and long-believing courage, and the systematic efforts of generations of men of intellect and virtue. Such is the lesson which experience teaches now. But, on the first reverses of hope in the progress of French liberty, the sanguine eagerness for good overleaped the solution of these questions, and for a time extinguished itself in the unexpectedness of their result. Thus, many of the most ardent and tender-hearted of the worshippers of public good have been morally ruined by what a partial glimpse of the events they deplored appeared to show as the melancholy desolation of all their cherished hopes. Hence gloom and misanthropy have become the characteristics of the age in which we live, the solace of a disappointment that unconsciously finds relief only in the wilful exaggeration of its own despair. This influence has tainted the literature of the age with the hopelessness of the minds from which it flows. Metaphysics (I ought to except sir W. Drummond's "Academical Questions"; a volume of very acute and powerful metaphysical criticism.), and inquiries into moral and political science, have become little else than vain attempts to revive exploded superstitions, or sophisms like those of Mr. Malthus (It is remarkable, as a symptom of the revival of public hope, that Mr. Malthus has assigned, in the later editions of his work, an indefinite dominion to moral restraint over the principle of population. This concession answers all the inferences from his doctrine

unfavourable to human improvement, and reduces the "Essay on Population" to a commentary illustrative of the unanswerableness of "Political Justice".), calculated to lull the oppressors of mankind into a security of everlasting triumph. Our works of fiction and poetry have been overshadowed by the same infectious gloom. But mankind appear to me to be emerging from their trance. I am aware, methinks, of a slow, gradual, silent change. In that belief I have composed the following Poem.

I do not presume to enter into competition with our greatest contemporary Poets. Yet I am unwilling to tread in the footsteps of any who have preceded me. I have sought to avoid the imitation of any style of language or versification peculiar to the original minds of which it is the character; designing that, even if what I have produced be worthless, it should still be properly my own. Nor have I permitted any system relating to mere words to divert the attention of the reader, from whatever interest I may have succeeded in creating, to my own ingenuity in contriving to disgust them according to the rules of criticism. I have simply clothed my thoughts in what appeared to me the most obvious and appropriate language. A person familiar with nature, and with the most celebrated productions of the human mind, can scarcely err in following the instinct, with respect to selection of language, produced by that familiarity.

There is an education peculiarly fitted for a Poet, without which genius and sensibility can hardly fill the circle of their capacities. No education, indeed, can entitle to this appellation a dull and unobservant mind, or one, though neither dull nor unobservant, in which the channels of communication between thought and expression have been obstructed or closed. How far it is my fortune to belong to either of the latter classes I cannot know. I aspire to be something better. The circumstances of my accidental education have been favourable to this ambition. I have been familiar from boyhood with mountains and lakes and the sea, and the solitude of forests: Danger, which sports upon the brink of precipices, has been my playmate. I have trodden the glaciers of the Alps, and lived under the eye of Mont Blanc. I have been a wanderer among distant fields. I have sailed down mighty rivers, and seen the sun rise and set, and the stars come forth, whilst I have sailed night and day down a rapid stream among mountains. I have seen populous cities, and have watched the passions which rise and spread, and sink and change, amongst assembled multitudes of men. I have seen the theatre of the more visible ravages of tyranny and war, cities and villages reduced to scattered groups of black and roofless houses, and the naked inhabitants sitting famished upon their desolated thresholds. I have conversed with living men of genius. The poetry of ancient Greece and Rome, and modern Italy, and our own country, has been to me, like external nature, a passion and an enjoyment. Such are the sources from which the materials for the imagery of my Poem have been drawn. I have considered Poetry in its most comprehensive sense; and have read the Poets and the Historians and the Metaphysicians (In this sense there may be such a thing as perfectibility in works of fiction, notwithstanding the concession often made by the advocates of human improvement, that perfectibility is a term applicable only to science.) whose writings have been accessible to me, and have looked upon the beautiful and majestic scenery of the earth, as common sources of those elements which it is the province of the Poet to embody and combine. Yet the experience and the feelings to which I refer do not in themselves constitute men Poets, but only prepares them to be the auditors of those who are. How far I shall be found to possess that more essential attribute of Poetry, the power of awakening in others sensations like those which animate my own bosom, is that which, to speak sincerely, I know not; and which, with an acquiescent and contented spirit, I expect to be taught by the effect which I shall produce upon those whom I now address.

I have avoided, as I have said before, the imitation of any contemporary style. But there must be a resemblance, which does not depend upon their own will, between all the writers of any particular age. They cannot escape from subjection to a common influence which arises out of an infinite combination of circumstances belonging to the times in which they live; though each is in a degree the author of the very influence by which his being is thus pervaded. Thus, the tragic poets of the age of Pericles; the Italian revivers of ancient learning; those mighty intellects of our own country that succeeded the Reformation, the translators of the Bible, Shakespeare, Spenser, the Dramatists of the reign of Elizabeth, and Lord Bacon (Milton stands alone in the age which he illumined.); the colder spirits of the interval that succeeded;—all resemble each other, and differ from every other in their several classes. In this view of things, Ford can no more be called the imitator of Shakespeare than Shakespeare the imitator of Ford. There were perhaps few other points of resemblance between these two men than that which the universal and inevitable influence of their age produced. And this is an influence which neither the meanest scribbler nor the sublimest genius of any era can escape; and which I have not attempted to escape.

I have adopted the stanza of Spenser (a measure inexpressibly beautiful), not because I consider it a finer model of poetical harmony than the blank verse of Shakespeare and Milton, but because in the latter there is no shelter for mediocrity; you must either succeed or fail. This perhaps an aspiring spirit should desire. But I was enticed also by the brilliancy and magnificence of sound which a mind that has been nourished upon musical thoughts can produce by a just and harmonious arrangement of the pauses of this measure. Yet there will be found some instances where I have completely failed in this attempt, and one, which I here request the reader to consider as an erratum, where there is left, most inadvertently, an alexandrine in the middle of a stanza.

But in this, as in every other respect, I have written fearlessly. It is the misfortune of this age that its Writers, too thoughtless of immortality, are exquisitely sensible to temporary praise or blame. They write with the fear of Reviews before their eyes. This system of criticism sprang up in that torpid interval when Poetry was not. Poetry, and the art which professes to regulate and limit its powers, cannot subsist together. Longinus could not have been the contemporary of Homer, nor Boileau of Horace. Yet this species of criticism never presumed to assert an understanding of its own; it has always, unlike true science, followed, not preceded, the opinion of mankind, and would even now bribe with worthless adulation some of our greatest Poets to impose gratuitous fetters on their own imaginations, and become unconscious accomplices in the daily murder of all genius either not so aspiring or not so fortunate as their own. I have sought therefore to write, as I believe that Homer, Shakespeare, and Milton wrote, with an utter disregard of anonymous censure. I am certain that calumny and misrepresentation, though it may move me to compassion, cannot disturb my peace. I shall understand the expressive silence of those sagacious enemies who dare not trust themselves to speak. I shall endeavour to extract, from the midst of insult and contempt and maledictions, those admonitions which may tend to correct whatever imperfections such censurers may discover in this my first serious appeal to the Public. If certain Critics were as clear-sighted as they are malignant, how great would be the benefit to be derived from their virulent writings! As it is, I fear I shall be malicious enough to be amused with their paltry tricks and lame invectives. Should the Public judge that my composition is worthless, I shall indeed bow before the tribunal from which Milton received his crown of immortality, and shall seek to gather, if I live, strength from that defeat, which may nerve me to some new enterprise of thought which may not be worthless. I cannot conceive that Lucretius, when he meditated that poem whose doctrines are yet the basis of our metaphysical knowledge, and whose eloquence

has been the wonder of mankind, wrote in awe of such censure as the hired sophists of the impure and superstitious noblemen of Rome might affix to what he should produce. It was at the period when Greece was led captive and Asia made tributary to the Republic, fast verging itself to slavery and ruin, that a multitude of Syrian captives, bigoted to the worship of their obscene Ashtaroth, and the unworthy successors of Socrates and Zeno, found there a precarious subsistence by administering, under the name of freedmen, to the vices and vanities of the great. These wretched men were skilled to plead, with a superficial but plausible set of sophisms, in favour of that

contempt for virtue which is the portion of slaves, and that faith in portents, the most fatal substitute for benevolence in the imaginations of men, which, arising from the enslaved communities of the East, then first began to overwhelm the western nations in its stream. Were these the kind of men whose disapprobation the wise and lofty-minded Lucretius should have regarded with a salutary awe? The latest and perhaps the meanest of those who follow in his footsteps would disdain to hold life on such conditions.

The Poem now presented to the Public occupied little more than six months in the composition. That period has been devoted to the task with unremitting ardour and enthusiasm. I have exercised a watchful and earnest criticism on my work as it grew under my hands. I would willingly have sent it forth to the world with that perfection which long labour and revision is said to bestow. But I found that, if I should gain something in exactness by this method, I might lose much of the newness and energy of imagery and language as it flowed fresh from my mind. And, although the mere composition occupied no more than six months, the thoughts thus arranged were slowly gathered in as many years.

I trust that the reader will carefully distinguish between those opinions which have a dramatic propriety in reference to the characters which they are designed to elucidate, and such as are properly my own. The erroneous and degrading idea which men have conceived of a Supreme Being, for instance, is spoken against, but not the Supreme Being itself. The belief which some superstitious persons whom I have brought upon the stage entertain of the Deity, as injurious to the character of his benevolence, is widely different from my own. In recommending also a great and important change in the spirit which animates the social institutions of mankind, I have avoided all flattery to those violent and malignant passions of our nature which are ever on the watch to mingle with and to alloy the most beneficial innovations. There is no quarter given to Revenge, or Envy, or Prejudice. Love is celebrated everywhere as the sole law which should govern the moral world.

DEDICATION.

There is no danger to a man that knows What life and death is: there's not any
law Exceeds his knowledge; neither is it lawful That he should stoop to any other
law.—CHAPMAN.

TO MARY – –.

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Thou Friend, whose presence on my wintry heart Fell, like bright Spring upon some herbless
plain; How beautiful and calm and free thou wert In thy young wisdom, when the mortal chain Of
Custom thou didst burst and rend in twain, And walked as free as light the clouds among, Which

many an envious slave then breathed in vain From his dim dungeon, and my spirit sprung To meet thee from the woes which had begirt it long!

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. Truth's deathless voice pauses among mankind! If there must be no response to my cry— If men must rise and stamp with fury blind On his pure name who loves them,—thou and I, Sweet friend! can look from our tranquillity Like lamps into the world's tempestuous night,— Two tranquil stars, while clouds are passing by Which wrap them from the foundering seaman's sight, That burn from year to year with unextinguished light.

CANTO 1.

1. When the last hope of trampled France had failed Like a brief dream of unremaining glory,
From visions of despair I rose, and scaled The peak of an aerial promontory, Whose caverned
base with the vexed surge was hoary; And saw the golden dawn break forth, and waken Each
cloud, and every wave:—but transitory The calm; for sudden, the firm earth was shaken, As if by
the last wreck its frame were overtaken.

2. So as I stood, one blast of muttering thunder Burst in far peals along the waveless deep,
When, gathering fast, around, above, and under, Long trains of tremulous mist began to creep,
Until their complicating lines did steep The orient sun in shadow:—not a sound Was heard; one
horrible repose did keep The forests and the floods, and all around Darkness more dread than
night was poured upon the ground.

3. Hark! 'tis the rushing of a wind that sweeps Earth and the ocean. See! the lightnings yawn
Deluging Heaven with fire, and the lashed deeps Glitter and boil beneath: it rages on, One mighty
stream, whirlwind and waves upthrown, Lightning, and hail, and darkness eddying by. There is
a pause—the sea-birds, that were gone Into their caves to shriek, come forth, to spy What calm
has fall'n on earth, what light is in the sky.

4. For, where the irresistible storm had cloven That fearful darkness, the blue sky was seen
Fretted with many a fair cloud interwoven Most delicately, and the ocean green, Beneath that
opening spot of blue serene, Quivered like burning emerald; calm was spread On all below; but
far on high, between Earth and the upper air, the vast clouds fled, Countless and swift as leaves
on autumn's tempest shed.

5. For ever, as the war became more fierce Between the whirlwinds and the rack on high, That
spot grew more serene; blue light did pierce The woof of those white clouds, which seem to lie
Far, deep, and motionless; while through the sky The pallid semicircle of the moon Passed on, in
slow and moving majesty; Its upper horn arrayed in mists, which soon But slowly fled, like dew
beneath the beams of noon.

6. I could not choose but gaze; a fascination Dwelt in that moon, and sky, and clouds, which
drew My fancy thither, and in expectation Of what I knew not, I remained:—the hue Of the white
moon, amid that heaven so blue, Suddenly stained with shadow did appear; A speck, a cloud, a
shape, approaching grew, Like a great ship in the sun's sinking sphere Beheld afar at sea, and
swift it came anear.

7. Even like a bark, which from a chasm of mountains, Dark, vast and overhanging, on a river
Which there collects the strength of all its fountains, Comes forth, whilst with the speed its
frame doth quiver, Sails, oars and stream, tending to one endeavour; So, from that chasm of light
a winged Form On all the winds of heaven approaching ever Floated, dilating as it came; the
storm Pursued it with fierce blasts, and lightnings swift and warm.

8. A course precipitous, of dizzy speed, Suspending thought and breath; a monstrous sight! For
in the air do I behold indeed An Eagle and a Serpent wreathed in fight:— And now, relaxing its
impetuous flight, Before the aerial rock on which I stood, The Eagle, hovering, wheeled to left

and right, And hung with lingering wings over the flood, And startled with its yells the wide air's solitude.

9. A shaft of light upon its wings descended, And every golden feather gleamed therein— Feather and scale, inextricably blended. The Serpent's mailed and many-coloured skin Shone through the plumes its coils were twined within By many a swoln and knotted fold, and high And far, the neck, receding lithe and thin, Sustained a crested head, which warily Shifted and glanced before the Eagle's steadfast eye.

10. Around, around, in ceaseless circles wheeling With clang of wings and scream, the Eagle sailed Incessantly—sometimes on high concealing Its lessening orbs, sometimes as if it failed, Drooped through the air; and still it shrieked and wailed, And casting back its eager head, with beak And talon unremittingly assailed The wreathed Serpent, who did ever seek Upon his enemy's heart a mortal wound to wreak.

11. What life, what power, was kindled and arose Within the sphere of that appalling fray! For, from the encounter of those wondrous foes, A vapour like the sea's suspended spray Hung gathered; in the void air, far away, Floated the shattered plumes; bright scales did leap, Where'er the Eagle's talons made their way, Like sparks into the darkness;—as they sweep, Blood stains the snowy foam of the tumultuous deep.

12. Swift chances in that combat—many a check, And many a change, a dark and wild turmoil; Sometimes the Snake around his enemy's neck Locked in stiff rings his adamantine coil, Until the Eagle, faint with pain and toil, Remitted his strong flight, and near the sea Languidly fluttered, hopeless so to foil His adversary, who then reared on high His red and burning crest, radiant with victory.

13. Then on the white edge of the bursting surge, Where they had sunk together, would the Snake Relax his suffocating grasp, and scourge The wind with his wild writhings; for to break That chain of torment, the vast bird would shake The strength of his unconquerable wings As in despair, and with his sinewy neck, Dissolve in sudden shock those linked rings— Then soar, as swift as smoke from a volcano springs.

14. Wile baffled wile, and strength encountered strength, Thus long, but unprevailing:—the event Of that portentous fight appeared at length: Until the lamp of day was almost spent It had endured, when lifeless, stark, and rent, Hung high that mighty Serpent, and at last Fell to the sea, while o'er the continent With clang of wings and scream the Eagle passed, Heavily borne away on the exhausted blast.

15. And with it fled the tempest, so that ocean And earth and sky shone through the atmosphere— Only, 'twas strange to see the red commotion Of waves like mountains o'er the sinking sphere Of sunset sweep, and their fierce roar to hear Amid the calm: down the steep path I wound To the sea-shore—the evening was most clear And beautiful, and there the sea I found Calm as a cradled child in dreamless slumber bound.

16. There was a Woman, beautiful as morning, Sitting beneath the rocks, upon the sand Of the waste sea—fair as one flower adorning An icy wilderness; each delicate hand Lay crossed upon her bosom, and the band Of her dark hair had fall'n, and so she sate Looking upon the waves; on the bare strand Upon the sea-mark a small boat did wait, Fair as herself, like Love by Hope left desolate.

17. It seemed that this fair Shape had looked upon That unimaginable fight, and now That her sweet eyes were weary of the sun, As brightly it illustrated her woe; For in the tears which silently to flow Paused not, its lustre hung: she watching aye The foam-wreaths which the faint

tide wove below Upon the spangled sands, groaned heavily, And after every groan looked up over the sea.

18. And when she saw the wounded Serpent make His path between the waves, her lips grew pale, Parted, and quivered; the tears ceased to break From her immovable eyes; no voice of wail Escaped her; but she rose, and on the gale Loosening her star-bright robe and shadowy hair Poured forth her voice; the caverns of the vale That opened to the ocean, caught it there, And filled with silver sounds the overflowing air.

19. She spake in language whose strange melody Might not belong to earth. I heard alone, What made its music more melodious be, The pity and the love of every tone; But to the Snake those accents sweet were known His native tongue and hers; nor did he beat The hoar spray idly then, but winding on Through the green shadows of the waves that meet Near to the shore, did pause beside her snowy feet.

20. Then on the sands the Woman sate again, And wept and clasped her hands, and all between, Renewed the unintelligible strain Of her melodious voice and eloquent mien; And she unveiled her bosom, and the green And glancing shadows of the sea did play O'er its marmoreal depth:—one moment seen, For ere the next, the Serpent did obey Her voice, and, coiled in rest in her embrace it lay.

21. Then she arose, and smiled on me with eyes Serene yet sorrowing, like that planet fair, While yet the daylight lingereth in the skies Which cleaves with arrowy beams the dark-red air, And said: 'To grieve is wise, but the despair Was weak and vain which led thee here from sleep: This shalt thou know, and more, if thou dost dare

With me and with this Serpent, o'er the deep, A voyage divine and strange, companionship to keep.'

22. Her voice was like the wildest, saddest tone, Yet sweet, of some loved voice heard long ago. I wept. 'Shall this fair woman all alone, Over the sea with that fierce Serpent go? His head is on her heart, and who can know How soon he may devour his feeble prey?'— Such were my thoughts, when the tide gan to flow; And that strange boat like the moon's shade did sway Amid reflected stars that in the waters lay:—

23. A boat of rare device, which had no sail But its own curved prow of thin moonstone, Wrought like a web of texture fine and frail, To catch those gentlest winds which are not known To breathe, but by the steady speed alone With which it cleaves the sparkling sea; and now We are embarked—the mountains hang and frown Over the starry deep that gleams below, A vast and dim expanse, as o'er the waves we go.

24. And as we sailed, a strange and awful tale That Woman told, like such mysterious dream As makes the slumberer's cheek with wonder pale! 'Twas midnight, and around, a shoreless stream, Wide ocean rolled, when that majestic theme Shrined in her heart found utterance, and she bent Her looks on mine; those eyes a kindling beam Of love divine into my spirit sent, And ere her lips could move, made the air eloquent.

25. 'Speak not to me, but hear! Much shalt thou learn, Much must remain unthought, and more untold, In the dark Future's ever-flowing urn: Know then, that from the depth of ages old Two Powers o'er mortal things dominion hold, Ruling the world with a divided lot, Immortal, all-pervading, manifold, Twin Genii, equal Gods—when life and thought Sprang forth, they burst the womb of inessential Nought.

26. 'The earliest dweller of the world, alone, Stood on the verge of chaos. Lo! afar O'er the wide wild abyss two meteors shone, Sprung from the depth of its tempestuous jar: A blood-red Comet

and the Morning Star Mingling their beams in combat—as he stood, All thoughts within his mind waged mutual war, In dreadful sympathy—when to the flood That fair Star fell, he turned and shed his brother’s blood.

27. ’Thus evil triumphed, and the Spirit of evil, One Power of many shapes which none may know, One Shape of many names; the Fiend did revel In victory, reigning o’er a world of woe, For the new race of man went to and fro, Famished and homeless, loathed and loathing, wild, And hating good—for his immortal foe, He changed from starry shape, beauteous and mild, To a dire Snake, with man and beast unreconciled.

28. ’The darkness lingering o’er the dawn of things, Was Evil’s breath and life; this made him strong To soar aloft with overshadowing wings; And the great Spirit of Good did creep among The nations of mankind, and every tongue Cursed and blasphemed him as he passed; for none Knew good from evil, though their names were hung In mockery o’er the fane where many a groan, As King, and Lord, and God, the conquering Fiend did own,—

29. ’The Fiend, whose name was Legion: Death, Decay, Earthquake and Blight, and Want, and Madness pale, Winged and wan diseases, an array Numerous as leaves that strew the autumnal gale; Poison, a snake in flowers, beneath the veil Of food and mirth, hiding his mortal head; And, without whom all these might nought avail, Fear, Hatred, Faith, and Tyranny, who spread Those subtle nets which snare the living and the dead.

30. ’His spirit is their power, and they his slaves In air, and light, and thought, and language, dwell; And keep their state from palaces to graves, In all resorts of men—invisible, But when, in ebon mirror, Nightmare fell To tyrant or impostor bids them rise, Black winged demon forms—whom, from the hell, His reign and dwelling beneath nether skies, He loosens to their dark and blasting ministries.

31. ’In the world’s youth his empire was as firm As its foundations...Soon the Spirit of Good, Though in the likeness of a loathsome worm, Sprang from the billows of the formless flood, Which shrank and fled; and with that Fiend of blood Renewed the doubtful war...Thrones then first shook, And earth’s immense and trampled multitude In hope on their own powers began to look, And Fear, the demon pale, his sanguine shrine forsook.

32. ’Then Greece arose, and to its bards and sages, In dream, the golden-pinioned Genii came, Even where they slept amid the night of ages, Steeping their hearts in the divinest flame Which thy breath kindled, Power of holiest name! And oft in cycles since, when darkness gave New weapons to thy foe, their sunlike fame Upon the combat shone—a light to save, Like Paradise spread forth beyond the shadowy grave.

33. ’Such is this conflict—when mankind doth strive With its oppressors in a strife of blood, Or when free thoughts, like lightnings, are alive, And in each bosom of the multitude Justice and truth with Custom’s hydra brood Wage silent war; when Priests and Kings dissemble In smiles or frowns their fierce disquietude, When round pure hearts a host of hopes assemble, The Snake and Eagle meet—the world’s foundations tremble!

34. ’Thou hast beheld that fight—when to thy home Thou dost return, steep not its hearth in tears; Though thou may’st hear that earth is now become The tyrant’s garbage, which to his compeers, The vile reward of their dishonoured years, He will dividing give.—The victor Fiend, Omnipotent of yore, now quails, and fears His triumph dearly won, which soon will lend An impulse swift and sure to his approaching end.

35. ’List, stranger, list, mine is an human form, Like that thou wearest—touch me—shrink not now! My hand thou feel’st is not a ghost’s, but warm With human blood.—’Twas many years ago,

Since first my thirsting soul aspired to know The secrets of this wondrous world, when deep My heart was pierced with sympathy, for woe Which could not be mine own, and thought did keep, In dream, unnatural watch beside an infant's sleep.

36. 'Woe could not be mine own, since far from men I dwelt, a free and happy orphan child, By the sea-shore, in a deep mountain glen; And near the waves, and through the forests wild, I roamed, to storm and darkness reconciled: For I was calm while tempest shook the sky: But when the breathless heavens in beauty smiled, I wept, sweet tears, yet too tumultuously For peace, and clasped my hands aloft in ecstasy.

37. 'These were forebodings of my fate—before A woman's heart beat in my virgin breast, It had been nurtured in divinest lore: A dying poet gave me books, and blessed With wild but holy talk the sweet unrest In which I watched him as he died away— A youth with hoary hair—a fleeting guest Of our lone mountains: and this lore did sway My spirit like a storm, contending there alway.

38. 'Thus the dark tale which history doth unfold I knew, but not, methinks, as others know, For they weep not; and Wisdom had unrolled The clouds which hide the gulf of mortal woe,— To few can she that warning vision show— For I loved all things with intense devotion; So that when Hope's deep source in fullest flow, Like earthquake did uplift the stagnant ocean Of human thoughts—mine shook beneath the wide emotion.

39. 'When first the living blood through all these veins Kindled a thought in sense, great France sprang forth, And seized, as if to break, the ponderous chains Which bind in woe the nations of the earth. I saw, and started from my cottage-hearth; And to the clouds and waves in tameless gladness Shrieked, till they caught immeasurable mirth— And laughed in light and music: soon, sweet madness Was poured upon my heart, a soft and thrilling sadness.

40. 'Deep slumber fell on me:—my dreams were fire— Soft and delightful thoughts did rest and hover Like shadows o'er my brain; and strange desire, The tempest of a passion, raging over My tranquil soul, its depths with light did cover, Which passed; and calm, and darkness, sweeter far, Came—then I loved; but not a human lover! For when I rose from sleep, the Morning Star Shone through the woodbine-wreaths which round my casement were.

41. 'Twas like an eye which seemed to smile on me. I watched, till by the sun made pale, it sank Under the billows of the heaving sea; But from its beams deep love my spirit drank, And to my brain the boundless world now shrank Into one thought—one image—yes, for ever! Even like the dayspring, poured on vapours dank, The beams of that one Star did shoot and quiver Through my benighted mind—and were extinguished never.

42. 'The day passed thus: at night, methought, in dream A shape of speechless beauty did appear: It stood like light on a careering stream Of golden clouds which shook the atmosphere; A winged youth, his radiant brow did wear The Morning Star: a wild dissolving bliss Over my frame he breathed, approaching near, And bent his eyes of kindling tenderness Near mine, and on my lips impressed a lingering kiss,—

43. 'And said: "A Spirit loves thee, mortal maiden, How wilt thou prove thy worth?" Then joy and sleep Together fled; my soul was deeply laden, And to the shore I went to muse and weep; But as I moved, over my heart did creep A joy less soft, but more profound and strong Than my sweet dream; and it forbade to keep The path of the sea-shore: that Spirit's tongue Seemed whispering in my heart, and bore my steps along.

44. 'How, to that vast and peopled city led, Which was a field of holy warfare then, I walked among the dying and the dead, And shared in fearless deeds with evil men, Calm as an angel in

the dragon's den— How I braved death for liberty and truth, And spurned at peace, and power, and fame—and when Those hopes had lost the glory of their youth, How sadly I returned—might move the hearer's ruth:

45. 'Warm tears throng fast! the tale may not be said— Know then, that when this grief had been subdued, I was not left, like others, cold and dead; The Spirit whom I loved, in solitude Sustained his child: the tempest-shaken wood, The waves, the fountains, and the hush of night— These were his voice, and well I understood His smile divine, when the calm sea was bright With silent stars, and Heaven was breathless with delight.

46. 'In lonely glens, amid the roar of rivers, When the dim nights were moonless, have I known Joys which no tongue can tell; my pale lip quivers When thought revisits them:—know thou alone, That after many wondrous years were flown, I was awakened by a shriek of woe; And over me a mystic robe was thrown, By viewless hands, and a bright Star did glow Before my steps—the Snake then met his mortal foe.'

47. 'Thou fearest not then the Serpent on thy heart?' 'Fear it!' she said, with brief and passionate cry, And spake no more: that silence made me start— I looked, and we were sailing pleasantly, Swift as a cloud between the sea and sky; Beneath the rising moon seen far away, Mountains of ice, like sapphire, piled on high, Hemming the horizon round, in silence lay On the still waters—these we did approach alway.

48. And swift and swifter grew the vessel's motion, So that a dizzy trance fell on my brain— Wild music woke me; we had passed the ocean Which girds the pole, Nature's remotest reign— And we glode fast o'er a pellucid plain Of waters, azure with the noontide day. Ethereal mountains shone around—a Fane Stood in the midst, girt by green isles which lay On the blue sunny deep, resplendent far away.

49. It was a Temple, such as mortal hand Has never built, nor ecstasy, nor dream Reared in the cities of enchanted land: 'Twas likest Heaven, ere yet day's purple stream Ebbs o'er the western forest, while the gleam Of the unrisen moon among the clouds Is gathering—when with many a golden beam The thronging constellations rush in crowds, Paving with fire the sky and the marmoreal floods.

50. Like what may be conceived of this vast dome, When from the depths which thought can seldom pierce Genius beholds it rise, his native home, Girt by the deserts of the Universe; Yet, nor in painting's light, or mightier verse, Or sculpture's marble language, can invest That shape to mortal sense—such glooms immerse That incommunicable sight, and rest Upon the labouring brain and overburdened breast.

51. Winding among the lawny islands fair, Whose blosmy forests starred the shadowy deep, The wingless boat paused where an ivory stair Its fretwork in the crystal sea did steep, Encircling that vast Fane's aerial heap: We disembarked, and through a portal wide We passed—whose roof of moonstone carved, did keep A glimmering o'er the forms on every side, Sculptures like life and thought, immovable, deep-eyed.

52. We came to a vast hall, whose glorious roof Was diamond, which had drunk the lightning's sheen In darkness, and now poured it through the woof

Of spell-inwoven clouds hung there to screen Its blinding splendour—through such veil was seen That work of subtlest power, divine and rare; Orb above orb, with starry shapes between, And horned moons, and meteors strange and fair, On night-black columns poised—one hollow hemisphere!

53. Ten thousand columns in that quivering light Distinct—between whose shafts wound far away The long and labyrinthine aisles—more bright With their own radiance than the Heaven of Day; And on the jasper walls around, there lay Paintings, the poesy of mightiest thought, Which did the Spirit's history display; A tale of passionate change, divinely taught, Which, in their winged dance, unconscious Genii wrought.

54. Beneath, there sate on many a sapphire throne, The Great, who had departed from mankind, A mighty Senate;—some, whose white hair shone Like mountain snow, mild, beautiful, and blind; Some, female forms, whose gestures beamed with mind; And ardent youths, and children bright and fair; And some had lyres whose strings were intertwined With pale and clinging flames, which ever there Waked faint yet thrilling sounds that pierced the crystal air.

55. One seat was vacant in the midst, a throne, Reared on a pyramid like sculptured flame, Distinct with circling steps which rested on Their own deep fire—soon as the Woman came Into that hall, she shrieked the Spirit's name And fell; and vanished slowly from the sight. Darkness arose from her dissolving frame, Which gathering, filled that dome of woven light, Blotting its sphered stars with supernatural night.

56. Then first, two glittering lights were seen to glide In circles on the amethystine floor, Small serpent eyes trailing from side to side, Like meteors on a river's grassy shore, They round each other rolled, dilating more And more—then rose, commingling into one, One clear and mighty planet hanging o'er A cloud of deepest shadow, which was thrown Athwart the glowing steps and the crystalline throne.

57. The cloud which rested on that cone of flame Was cloven; beneath the planet sate a Form, Fairer than tongue can speak or thought may frame, The radiance of whose limbs rose-like and warm Flowed forth, and did with softest light inform The shadowy dome, the sculptures, and the state Of those assembled shapes—with clinging charm Sinking upon their hearts and mine. He sate Majestic, yet most mild—calm, yet compassionate.

58. Wonder and joy a passing faintness threw Over my brow—a hand supported me, Whose touch was magic strength; an eye of blue Looked into mine, like moonlight, soothingly; And a voice said:—'Thou must a listener be This day—two mighty Spirits now return, Like birds of calm, from the world's raging sea, They pour fresh light from Hope's immortal urn; A tale of human power—despair not—list and learn!

59. I looked, and lo! one stood forth eloquently. His eyes were dark and deep, and the clear brow Which shadowed them was like the morning sky, The cloudless Heaven of Spring, when in their flow Through the bright air, the soft winds as they blow Wake the green world—his gestures did obey The oracular mind that made his features glow, And where his curved lips half-open lay, Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous way.

60. Beneath the darkness of his outspread hair He stood thus beautiful; but there was One Who sate beside him like his shadow there, And held his hand—far lovelier; she was known To be thus fair, by the few lines alone Which through her floating locks and gathered cloak, Glances of soul-dissolving glory, shone:— None else beheld her eyes—in him they woke Memories which found a tongue as thus he silence broke.

CANTO 2.

1. The starlight smile of children, the sweet looks Of women, the fair breast from which I fed, The murmur of the unrepenting brooks, And the green light which, shifting overhead, Some tangled bower of vines around me shed, The shells on the sea-sand, and the wild flowers, The lamp-light through the rafters cheerly spread, And on the twining flax—in life's young hours These sights and sounds did nurse my spirit's folded powers.

2. In Argolis, beside the echoing sea, Such impulses within my mortal frame Arose, and they were dear to memory, Like tokens of the dead:—but others came Soon, in another shape: the wondrous fame Of the past world, the vital words and deeds Of minds whom neither time nor change can tame, Traditions dark and old, whence evil creeds Start forth, and whose dim shade a stream of poison feeds.

3. I heard, as all have heard, the various story Of human life, and wept unwilling tears. Feeble historians of its shame and glory, False disputants on all its hopes and fears, Victims who worshipped ruin, chroniclers Of daily scorn, and slaves who loathed their state Yet, flattering power, had given its ministers A throne of judgement in the grave:—'twas fate, That among such as these my youth should seek its mate.

4. The land in which I lived, by a fell bane Was withered up. Tyrants dwelt side by side, And stabled in our homes,—until the chain Stifled the captive's cry, and to abide That blasting curse men had no shame—all vied In evil, slave and despot; fear with lust Strange fellowship through mutual hate had tied, Like two dark serpents tangled in the dust, Which on the paths of men their mingling poison thrust.

5. Earth, our bright home, its mountains and its waters, And the ethereal shapes which are suspended Over its green expanse, and those fair daughters, The clouds, of Sun and Ocean, who have blended The colours of the air since first extended It cradled the young world, none wandered forth To see or feel; a darkness had descended On every heart; the light which shows its worth, Must among gentle thoughts and fearless take its birth.

6. This vital world, this home of happy spirits, Was as a dungeon to my blasted kind; All that despair from murdered hope inherits They sought, and in their helpless misery blind, A deeper prison and heavier chains did find, And stronger tyrants:—a dark gulf before, The realm of a stern Ruler, yawned; behind, Terror and Time conflicting drove, and bore On their tempestuous flood the shrieking wretch from shore.

7. Out of that Ocean's wrecks had Guilt and Woe Framed a dark dwelling for their homeless thought, And, starting at the ghosts which to and fro Glide o'er its dim and gloomy strand, had brought The worship thence which they each other taught. Well might men loathe their life, well might they turn Even to the ills again from which they sought Such refuge after death!—well might they learn To gaze on this fair world with hopeless unconcern!

8. For they all pined in bondage; body and soul, Tyrant and slave, victim and torturer, bent Before one Power, to which supreme control Over their will by their own weakness lent, Made all its many names omnipotent; All symbols of things evil, all divine; And hymns of blood or

mockery, which rent The air from all its fanes, did intertwine Imposture's impious toils round each discordant shrine.

9. I heard, as all have heard, life's various story, And in no careless heart transcribed the tale; But, from the sneers of men who had grown hoary In shame and scorn, from groans of crowds made pale By famine, from a mother's desolate wail O'er her polluted child, from innocent blood Poured on the earth, and brows anxious and pale With the heart's warfare, did I gather food To feed my many thoughts—a tameless multitude!

10. I wandered through the wrecks of days departed Far by the desolated shore, when even O'er the still sea and jagged islets darted The light of moonrise; in the northern Heaven, Among the clouds near the horizon driven, The mountains lay beneath one planet pale; Around me, broken tombs and columns riven Looked vast in twilight, and the sorrowing gale Waked in those ruins gray its everlasting wail!

11. I knew not who had framed these wonders then, Nor had I heard the story of their deeds; But dwellings of a race of mightier men, And monuments of less ungentle creeds Tell their own tale to him who wisely heeds The language which they speak; and now, to me The moonlight making pale the blooming weeds, The bright stars shining in the breathless sea, Interpreted those scrolls of mortal mystery.

12. Such man has been, and such may yet become! Ay, wiser, greater, gentler even than they Who on the fragments of yon shattered dome Have stamped the sign of power—I felt the sway Of the vast stream of ages bear away My floating thoughts—my heart beat loud and fast— Even as a storm let loose beneath the ray Of the still moon, my spirit onward passed Beneath truth's steady beams upon its tumult cast.

13. It shall be thus no more! too long, too long, Sons of the glorious dead, have ye lain bound In darkness and in ruin!—Hope is strong, Justice and Truth their winged child have found— Awake! arise! until the mighty sound Of your career shall scatter in its gust The thrones of the oppressor, and the ground Hide the last altar's unregarded dust, Whose Idol has so long betrayed your impious trust!

14. It must be so—I will arise and waken The multitude, and like a sulphurous hill, Which on a sudden from its snows has shaken The swoon of ages, it shall burst and fill The world with cleansing fire; it must, it will— It may not be restrained!—and who shall stand Amid the rocking earthquake steadfast still, But Laon? on high Freedom's desert land A tower whose marble walls the leagued storms withstand!

15. One summer night, in commune with the hope Thus deeply fed, amid those ruins gray I watched, beneath the dark sky's starry cope; And ever from that hour upon me lay The burden of this hope, and night or day, In vision or in dream, clove to my breast: Among mankind, or when gone far away To the lone shores and mountains, 'twas a guest Which followed where I fled, and watched when I did rest.

16. These hopes found words through which my spirit sought To weave a bondage of such sympathy, As might create some response to the thought Which ruled me now—and as the vapours lie Bright in the outspread morning's radiancy, So were these thoughts invested with the light Of language: and all bosoms made reply On which its lustre streamed, whene'er it might Through darkness wide and deep those tranced spirits smite.

17. Yes, many an eye with dizzy tears was dim, And oft I thought to clasp my own heart's brother, When I could feel the listener's senses swim, And hear his breath its own swift gaspings smother Even as my words evoked them—and another, And yet another, I did fondly deem, Felt

that we all were sons of one great mother; And the cold truth such sad reverse did seem As to awake in grief from some delightful dream.

18. Yes, oft beside the ruined labyrinth Which skirts the hoary caves of the green deep, Did Laon and his friend, on one gray plinth, Round whose worn base the wild waves hiss and leap, Resting at eve, a lofty converse keep: And that this friend was false, may now be said Calmly—that he like other men could weep Tears which are lies, and could betray and spread Snares for that guileless heart which for his own had bled.

19. Then, had no great aim recompensed my sorrow, I must have sought dark respite from its stress In dreamless rest, in sleep that sees no morrow— For to tread life’s dismaying wilderness Without one smile to cheer, one voice to bless, Amid the snares and scoffs of human kind, Is hard—but I betrayed it not, nor less With love that scorned return sought to unbind The interwoven clouds which make its wisdom blind.

20. With deathless minds which leave where they have passed A path of light, my soul communion knew; Till from that glorious intercourse, at last, As from a mine of magic store, I drew Words which were weapons;—round my heart there grew The adamantine armour of their power; And from my fancy wings of golden hue Sprang forth—yet not alone from wisdom’s tower, A minister of truth, these plumes young Laon bore.

21. An orphan with my parents lived, whose eyes Were lodestars of delight, which drew me home When I might wander forth; nor did I prize Aught human thing beneath Heaven’s mighty dome Beyond this child; so when sad hours were come, And baffled hope like ice still clung to me, Since kin were cold, and friends had now become Heartless and false, I turned from all, to be, Cythna, the only source of tears and smiles to thee.

22. What wert thou then? A child most infantine, Yet wandering far beyond that innocent age In all but its sweet looks and mien divine; Even then, methought, with the world’s tyrant rage A patient warfare thy young heart did wage, When those soft eyes of scarcely conscious thought Some tale, or thine own fancies, would engage To overflow with tears, or converse fraught With passion, o’er their depths its fleeting light had wrought.

23. She moved upon this earth a shape of brightness, A power, that from its objects scarcely drew One impulse of her being—in her lightness Most like some radiant cloud of morning dew, Which wanders through the waste air’s pathless blue, To nourish some far desert; she did seem Beside me, gathering beauty as she grew, Like the bright shade of some immortal dream Which walks, when tempest sleeps, the wave of life’s dark stream.

24. As mine own shadow was this child to me, A second self, far dearer and more fair; Which clothed in undissolving radiancy All those steep paths which languor and despair Of human things, had made so dark and bare, But which I trod alone—nor, till bereft Of friends, and overcome by lonely care, Knew I what solace for that loss was left, Though by a bitter wound my trusting heart was cleft.

25. Once she was dear, now she was all I had To love in human life—this playmate sweet, This child of twelve years old—so she was made My sole associate, and her willing feet Wandered with mine where earth and ocean meet, Beyond the aerial mountains whose vast cells The unreposing billows ever beat, Through forests wild and old, and lawny dells Where boughs of incense droop over the emerald wells.

26. And warm and light I felt her clasping hand When twined in mine; she followed where I went, Through the lone paths of our immortal land. It had no waste but some memorial lent Which strung me to my toil—some monument Vital with mind; then Cythna by my side, Until

the bright and beaming day were spent, Would rest, with looks entreating to abide, Too earnest and too sweet ever to be denied.

27. And soon I could not have refused her—thus For ever, day and night, we two were ne’er Parted, but when brief sleep divided us: And when the pauses of the lulling air Of noon beside the sea had made a lair For her soothed senses, in my arms she slept, And I kept watch over her slumbers there, While, as the shifting visions over her swept, Amid her innocent rest by turns she smiled and wept.

28. And, in the murmur of her dreams was heard Sometimes the name of Laon:—suddenly She would arise, and, like the secret bird Whom sunset wakens, fill the shore and sky With her sweet accents, a wild melody! Hymns which my soul had woven to Freedom, strong The source of passion, whence they rose, to be; Triumphant strains, which, like a spirit’s tongue, To the enchanted waves that child of glory sung—

29. Her white arms lifted through the shadowy stream Of her loose hair. Oh, excellently great Seemed to me then my purpose, the vast theme Of those impassioned songs, when Cythna sate Amid the calm which rapture doth create After its tumult, her heart vibrating, Her spirit o’er the Ocean’s floating state From her deep eyes far wandering, on the wing Of visions that were mine, beyond its utmost spring!

30. For, before Cythna loved it, had my song Peopled with thoughts the boundless universe, A mighty congregation, which were strong Where’er they trod the darkness to disperse The cloud of that unutterable curse Which clings upon mankind:—all things became Slaves to my holy and heroic verse, Earth, sea and sky, the planets, life and fame And fate, or whate’er else binds the world’s wondrous frame.

31. And this beloved child thus felt the sway Of my conceptions, gathering like a cloud The very wind on which it rolls away: Hers too were all my thoughts, ere yet, endowed With music and with light, their fountains flowed In poesy; and her still and earnest face, Pallid with feelings which intensely glowed Within, was turned on mine with speechless grace, Watching the hopes which there her heart had learned to trace.

32. In me, communion with this purest being Kindled intenser zeal, and made me wise In knowledge, which, in hers mine own mind seeing, Left in the human world few mysteries: How without fear of evil or disguise Was Cythna!—what a spirit strong and mild, Which death, or pain or peril could despise, Yet melt in tenderness! what genius wild Yet mighty, was enclosed within one simple child!

33. New lore was this—old age with its gray hair, And wrinkled legends of unworthy things, And icy sneers, is nought: it cannot dare To burst the chains which life for ever flings On the entangled soul’s aspiring wings, So is it cold and cruel, and is made The careless slave of that dark power which brings Evil, like blight, on man, who, still betrayed,Laughs o’er the grave in which his living hopes are laid.

34. Nor are the strong and the severe to keep The empire of the world: thus Cythna taught Even in the visions of her eloquent sleep, Unconscious of the power through which she wrought The woof of such intelligible thought, As from the tranquil strength which cradled lay In her smile-peopled rest, my spirit sought Why the deceiver and the slave has sway O’er heralds so divine of truth’s arising day.

35. Within that fairest form, the female mind, Untainted by the poison clouds which rest On the dark world, a sacred home did find: But else, from the wide earth’s maternal breast, Victorious Evil, which had dispossessed All native power, had those fair children torn, And made them slaves

to soothe his vile unrest, And minister to lust its joys forlorn, Till they had learned to breathe the atmosphere of scorn.

36. This misery was but coldly felt, till she Became my only friend, who had endued My purpose with a wider sympathy; Thus, Cythna mourned with me the servitude In which the half of humankind were mewed Victims of lust and hate, the slaves of slaves, She mourned that grace and power were thrown as food To the hyena lust, who, among graves, Over his loathed meal, laughing in agony, raves.

37. And I, still gazing on that glorious child, Even as these thoughts flushed o'er her:—'Cythna sweet, Well with the world art thou unreconciled; Never will peace and human nature meet Till free and equal man and woman greet Domestic peace; and ere this power can make In human hearts its calm and holy seat, This slavery must be broken'—as I spake, From Cythna's eyes a light of exultation brake.

38. She replied earnestly:—'It shall be mine, This task,—mine, Laon!—thou hast much to gain; Nor wilt thou at poor Cythna's pride repine, If she should lead a happy female train To meet thee over the rejoicing plain, When myriads at thy call shall throng around The Golden City.'—Then the child did strain My arm upon her tremulous heart, and wound Her own about my neck, till some reply she found.

39. I smiled, and spake not.—'Wherefore dost thou smile At what I say? Laon, I am not weak, And, though my cheek might become pale the while, With thee, if thou desirest, will I seek Through their array of banded slaves to wreak Ruin upon the tyrants. I had thought It was more hard to turn my unpractised cheek To scorn and shame, and this beloved spot And thee, O dearest friend, to leave and murmur not.

40. 'Whence came I what I am? Thou, Laon, knowest How a young child should thus undaunted be; Methinks, it is a power which thou bestowest, Through which I seek, by most resembling thee, So to become most good and great and free; Yet far beyond this Ocean's utmost roar, In towers and huts are many like to me, Who, could they see thine eyes, or feel such lore As I have learnt from them, like me would fear no more.

41. 'Think'st thou that I shall speak unskilfully, And none will heed me? I remember now, How once, a slave in tortures doomed to die, Was saved, because in accents sweet and low He sung a song his Judge loved long ago, As he was led to death.—All shall relent Who hear me—tears, as mine have flowed, shall flow, Hearts beat as mine now beats, with such intent As renovates the world; a will omnipotent!

42. 'Yes, I will tread Pride's golden palaces, Through Penury's roofless huts and squalid cells Will I descend, where'er in abjectness Woman with some vile slave her tyrant dwells, There with the music of thine own sweet spells Will disenchant the captives, and will pour For the despairing, from the crystal wells Of thy deep spirit, reason's mighty lore, And power shall then abound, and hope arise once more.

43. 'Can man be free if woman be a slave? Chain one who lives, and breathes this boundless air, To the corruption of a closed grave! Can they whose mates are beasts, condemned to bear Scorn, heavier far than toil or anguish, dare To trample their oppressors? in their home Among their babes, thou knowest a curse would wear The shape of woman—hoary Crime would come Behind, and Fraud rebuild religion's tottering dome.

44. 'I am a child:—I would not yet depart. When I go forth alone, bearing the lamp Aloft which thou hast kindled in my heart, Millions of slaves from many a dungeon damp Shall leap in joy, as the benumbing cramp Of ages leaves their limbs—no ill may harm Thy Cythna ever—truth its

radiant stamp Has fixed, as an invulnerable charm, Upon her children's brow, dark Falsehood to disarm.

45. 'Wait yet awhile for the appointed day— Thou wilt depart, and I with tears shall stand Watching thy dim sail skirt the ocean gray; Amid the dwellers of this lonely land I shall remain alone—and thy command Shall then dissolve the world's unquiet trance, And, multitudinous as the desert sand Borne on the storm, its millions shall advance, Thronging round thee, the light of their deliverance.

46. 'Then, like the forests of some pathless mountain, Which from remotest glens two warring winds Involve in fire which not the loosened fountain Of broadest floods might quench, shall all the kinds Of evil, catch from our uniting minds The spark which must consume them;—Cythna then Will have cast off the impotence that binds Her childhood now, and through the paths of men Will pass, as the charmed bird that haunts the serpent's den.

47. 'We part!—O Laon, I must dare nor tremble, To meet those looks no more!—Oh, heavy stroke! Sweet brother of my soul! can I dissemble The agony of this thought?'—As thus she spoke The gathered sobs her quivering accents broke, And in my arms she hid her beating breast. I remained still for tears—sudden she woke As one awakes from sleep, and wildly pressed My bosom, her whole frame impetuously possessed.

48. 'We part to meet again—but yon blue waste, Yon desert wide and deep, holds no recess, Within whose happy silence, thus embraced We might survive all ills in one caress: Nor doth the grave—I fear 'tis passionless— Nor yon cold vacant Heaven:—we meet again Within the minds of men, whose lips shall bless Our memory, and whose hopes its light retain When these dissevered bones are trodden in the plain.'

49. I could not speak, though she had ceased, for now The fountains of her feeling, swift and deep, Seemed to suspend the tumult of their flow; So we arose, and by the starlight steep Went homeward—neither did we speak nor weep, But, pale, were calm with passion—thus subdued Like evening shades that o'er the mountains creep, We moved towards our home; where, in this mood, Each from the other sought refuge in solitude.

CANTO 3.

1. What thoughts had sway o'er Cythna's lonely slumber That night, I know not; but my own did seem As if they might ten thousand years outnumber Of waking life, the visions of a dream Which hid in one dim gulf the troubled stream Of mind; a boundless chaos wild and vast, Whose limits yet were never memory's theme: And I lay struggling as its whirlwinds passed, Sometimes for rapture sick, sometimes for pain aghast.

2. Two hours, whose mighty circle did embrace More time than might make gray the infant world, Rolled thus, a weary and tumultuous space: When the third came, like mist on breezes curled, From my dim sleep a shadow was unfurled: Methought, upon the threshold of a cave I sate with Cythna; drooping briony, pearled With dew from the wild streamlet's shattered wave, Hung, where we sate to taste the joys which Nature gave.

3. We lived a day as we were wont to live, But Nature had a robe of glory on, And the bright air o'er every shape did weave Intenser hues, so that the herbless stone, The leafless bough among the leaves alone, Had being clearer than its own could be, And Cythna's pure and radiant self was shown, In this strange vision, so divine to me, That if I loved before, now love was agony.

4. Morn fled, noon came, evening, then night descended, And we prolonged calm talk beneath the sphere Of the calm moon—when suddenly was blended With our repose a nameless sense of fear; And from the cave behind I seemed to hear Sounds gathering upwards!—accents incomplete, And stifled shrieks,—and now, more near and near, A tumult and a rush of thronging feet The cavern's secret depths beneath the earth did beat.

5. The scene was changed, and away, away, away! Through the air and over the sea we sped, And Cythna in my sheltering bosom lay, And the winds bore me—through the darkness spread Around, the gaping earth then vomited Legions of foul and ghastly shapes, which hung Upon my flight; and ever, as we fled, They plucked at Cythna—soon to me then clung A sense of actual things those monstrous dreams among.

6. And I lay struggling in the impotence Of sleep, while outward life had burst its bound, Though, still deluded, strove the tortured sense To its dire wanderings to adapt the sound Which in the light of morn was poured around Our dwelling; breathless, pale and unaware I rose, and all the cottage crowded found With armed men, whose glittering swords were bare, And whose degraded limbs the tyrant's garb did wear.

7. And, ere with rapid lips and gathered brow I could demand the cause—a feeble shriek— It was a feeble shriek, faint, far and low, Arrested me—my mien grew calm and meek, And grasping a small knife, I went to seek That voice among the crowd—'twas Cythna's cry! Beneath most calm resolve did agony wreak Its whirlwind rage:—so I passed quietly Till I beheld, where bound, that dearest child did lie.

8. I started to behold her, for delight And exultation, and a joyance free, Solemn, serene and lofty, filled the light Of the calm smile with which she looked on me: So that I feared some brainless ecstasy, Wrought from that bitter woe, had wildered her— 'Farewell! farewell!' she said,

as I drew nigh; 'At first my peace was marred by this strange stir, Now I am calm as truth—its chosen minister.

9. 'Look not so, Laon—say farewell in hope, These bloody men are but the slaves who bear Their mistress to her task—it was my scope The slavery where they drag me now, to share, And among captives willing chains to wear Awhile—the rest thou knowest—return, dear friend! Let our first triumph trample the despair Which would ensnare us now, for in the end, In victory or in death our hopes and fears must blend.'

10. These words had fallen on my unheeding ear, Whilst I had watched the motions of the crew With seeming-careless glance; not many were Around her, for their comrades just withdrew To guard some other victim—so I drew My knife, and with one impulse, suddenly All unaware three of their number slew, And grasped a fourth by the throat, and with loud cry My countrymen invoked to death or liberty!

11. What followed then, I know not—for a stroke On my raised arm and naked head, came down, Filling my eyes with blood.—When I awoke, I felt that they had bound me in my swoon, And up a rock which overhangs the town, By the steep path were bearing me; below, The plain was filled with slaughter,—overthrown The vineyards and the harvests, and the glow Of blazing roofs shone far o'er the white Ocean's flow.

12. Upon that rock a mighty column stood, Whose capital seemed sculptured in the sky, Which to the wanderers o'er the solitude Of distant seas, from ages long gone by, Had made a landmark; o'er its height to fly Scarcely the cloud, the vulture, or the blast, Has power—and when the shades of evening lie On Earth and Ocean, its carved summits cast The sunken daylight far through the aerial waste.

13. They bore me to a cavern in the hill Beneath that column, and unbound me there; And one did strip me stark; and one did fill A vessel from the putrid pool; one bare A lighted torch, and four with friendless care Guided my steps the cavern-paths along, Then up a steep and dark and narrow stair We wound, until the torch's fiery tongue Amid the gushing day beamless and pallid hung.

14. They raised me to the platform of the pile, That column's dizzy height:—the grate of brass Through which they thrust me, open stood the while, As to its ponderous and suspended mass, With chains which eat into the flesh, alas! With brazen links, my naked limbs they bound: The grate, as they departed to repass, With horrid clangour fell, and the far sound Of their retiring steps in the dense gloom was drowned.

15. The noon was calm and bright:—around that column The overhanging sky and circling sea Spread forth in silentness profound and solemn The darkness of brief frenzy cast on me, So that I knew not my own misery: The islands and the mountains in the day Like clouds reposed afar; and I could see The town among the woods below that lay, And the dark rocks which bound the bright and glassy bay.

16. It was so calm, that scarce the feathery weed Sown by some eagle on the topmost stone Swayed in the air:—so bright, that noon did breed No shadow in the sky beside mine own— Mine, and the shadow of my chain alone. Below, the smoke of roofs involved in flame Rested like night, all else was clearly shown In that broad glare; yet sound to me none came, But of the living blood that ran within my frame.

17. The peace of madness fled, and ah, too soon! A ship was lying on the sunny main, Its sails were flagging in the breathless noon— Its shadow lay beyond—that sight again Waked, with its presence, in my tranced brain The stings of a known sorrow, keen and cold: I knew that ship bore

Cythna o'er the plain Of waters, to her blighting slavery sold, And watched it with such thoughts as must remain untold.

18. I watched until the shades of evening wrapped Earth like an exhalation—then the bark Moved, for that calm was by the sunset snapped. It moved a speck upon the Ocean dark: Soon the wan stars came forth, and I could mark Its path no more!—I sought to close mine eyes, But like the balls, their lids were stiff and stark; I would have risen, but ere that I could rise, My parched skin was split with piercing agonies.

19. I gnawed my brazen chain, and sought to sever Its adamantine links, that I might die: O Liberty! forgive the base endeavour, Forgive me, if, reserved for victory, The Champion of thy faith e'er sought to fly.— That starry night, with its clear silence, sent Tameless resolve which laughed at misery Into my soul—linked remembrance lent To that such power, to me such a severe content.

20. To breathe, to be, to hope, or to despair And die, I questioned not; nor, though the Sun Its shafts of agony kindling through the air Moved over me, nor though in evening dun, Or when the stars their visible courses run, Or morning, the wide universe was spread In dreary calmness round me, did I shun Its presence, nor seek refuge with the dead From one faint hope whose flower a dropping poison shed.

21. Two days thus passed—I neither raved nor died— Thirst raged within me, like a scorpion's nest Built in mine entrails; I had spurned aside The water-vessel, while despair possessed My thoughts, and now no drop remained! The uprest Of the third sun brought hunger—but the crust Which had been left, was to my craving breast Fuel, not food. I chewed the bitter dust, And bit my bloodless arm, and licked the brazen rust.

22. My brain began to fail when the fourth morn Burst o'er the golden isles—a fearful sleep, Which through the caverns dreary and forlorn Of the riven soul, sent its foul dreams to sweep With whirlwind swiftness—a fall far and deep,— A gulf, a void, a sense of senselessness— These things dwelt in me, even as shadows keep Their watch in some dim charnel's loneliness, A shoreless sea, a sky sunless and planetless!

23. The forms which peopled this terrific trance I well remember—like a choir of devils, Around me they involved a giddy dance; Legions seemed gathering from the misty levels Of Ocean, to supply those ceaseless revels, Foul, ceaseless shadows:—thought could not divide The actual world from these entangling evils, Which so bemocked themselves, that I descried All shapes like mine own self, hideously multiplied.

24. The sense of day and night, of false and true, Was dead within me. Yet two visions burst That darkness—one, as since that hour I knew, Was not a phantom of the realms accursed, Where then my spirit dwelt—but of the first I know not yet, was it a dream or no. But both, though not distincter, were immersed In hues which, when through memory's waste they flow, Make their divided streams more bright and rapid now.

25. Methought that grate was lifted, and the seven Who brought me thither four stiff corpses bare, And from the frieze to the four winds of Heaven Hung them on high by the entangled hair; Swarthy were three—the fourth was very fair; As they retired, the golden moon upsprung, And eagerly, out in the giddy air, Leaning that I might eat, I stretched and clung Over the shapeless depth in which those corpses hung.

26. A woman's shape, now lank and cold and blue, The dwelling of the many-coloured worm, Hung there; the white and hollow cheek I drew To my dry lips—what radiance did inform Those horny eyes? whose was that withered form? Alas, alas! it seemed that Cythna's ghost Laughed

in those looks, and that the flesh was warm Within my teeth!—a whirlwind keen as frost Then in its sinking gulfs my sickening spirit tossed.

27. Then seemed it that a tameless hurricane Arose, and bore me in its dark career Beyond the sun, beyond the stars that wane On the verge of formless space—it languished there, And dying, left a silence lone and drear, More horrible than famine:—in the deep The shape of an old man did then appear, Stately and beautiful; that dreadful sleep His heavenly smiles dispersed, and I could wake and weep.

28. And, when the blinding tears had fallen, I saw That column, and those corpses, and the moon, And felt the poisonous tooth of hunger gnaw My vitals, I rejoiced, as if the boon Of senseless death would be accorded soon;— When from that stony gloom a voice arose, Solemn and sweet as when low winds attune The midnight pines; the grate did then uncloset, And on that reverend form the moonlight did repose.

29. He struck my chains, and gently spake and smiled; As they were loosened by that Hermit old, Mine eyes were of their madness half beguiled, To answer those kind looks; he did enfold His giant arms around me, to uphold My wretched frame; my scorched limbs he wound In linen moist and balmy, and as cold As dew to drooping leaves;—the chain, with sound Like earthquake, through the chasm of that steep stair did bound,

30. As, lifting me, it fell!—What next I heard, Were billows leaping on the harbour-bar, And the shrill sea-wind, whose breath idly stirred My hair;—I looked abroad, and saw a star Shining beside a sail, and distant far That mountain and its column, the known mark Of those who in the wide deep wandering are, So that I feared some Spirit, fell and dark, In trance had lain me thus within a fiendish bark.

31. For now indeed, over the salt sea-billow I sailed: yet dared not look upon the shape Of him who ruled the helm, although the pillow For my light head was hollowed in his lap, And my bare limbs his mantle did enwrap, Fearing it was a fiend: at last, he bent O'er me his aged face; as if to snap Those dreadful thoughts the gentle grandsire bent, And to my inmost soul his soothing looks he sent.

32. A soft and healing potion to my lips At intervals he raised—now looked on high, To mark if yet the starry giant dips His zone in the dim sea—now cheerfully, Though he said little, did he speak to me. 'It is a friend beside thee—take good cheer, Poor victim, thou art now at liberty!' I joyed as those a human tone to hear, Who in cells deep and lone have languished many a year.

33. A dim and feeble joy, whose glimpses oft Were quenched in a relapse of wildering dreams; Yet still methought we sailed, until aloft The stars of night grew pallid, and the beams Of morn descended on the ocean-streams, And still that aged man, so grand and mild, Tended me, even as some sick mother seems To hang in hope over a dying child, Till in the azure East darkness again was piled.

34. And then the night-wind steaming from the shore, Sent odours dying sweet across the sea, And the swift boat the little waves which bore, Were cut by its keen keel, though slantingly; Soon I could hear the leaves sigh, and could see The myrtle-blossoms starring the dim grove, As past the pebbly beach the boat did flee On sidelong wing, into a silent cove, Where ebon pines a shade under the starlight wove.

CANTO 4.

1. The old man took the oars, and soon the bark Smote on the beach beside a tower of stone; It was a crumbling heap, whose portal dark With blooming ivy-trails was overgrown; Upon whose floor the spangling sands were strown, And rarest sea-shells, which the eternal flood, Slave to the mother of the months, had thrown Within the walls of that gray tower, which stood A changeling of man's art nursed amid Nature's brood.

2. When the old man his boat had anchored, He wound me in his arms with tender care, And very few, but kindly words he said, And bore me through the tower adown a stair, Whose smooth descent some ceaseless step to wear For many a year had fallen.—We came at last To a small chamber, which with mosses rare Was tapestried, where me his soft hands placed Upon a couch of grass and oak-leaves interlaced.

3. The moon was darting through the lattices Its yellow light, warm as the beams of day— So warm, that to admit the dewy breeze, The old man opened them; the moonlight lay Upon a lake whose waters wove their play Even to the threshold of that lonely home: Within was seen in the dim wavering ray The antique sculptured roof, and many a tome Whose lore had made that sage all that he had become.

4. The rock-built barrier of the sea was past,— And I was on the margin of a lake, A lonely lake, amid the forests vast And snowy mountains:—did my spirit wake From sleep as many-coloured as the snake That girds eternity? in life and truth, Might not my heart its cravings ever slake? Was Cythna then a dream, and all my youth, And all its hopes and fears, and all its joy and ruth?

5. Thus madness came again,—a milder madness, Which darkened nought but time's unquiet flow With supernatural shades of clinging sadness; That gentle Hermit, in my helpless woe, By my sick couch was busy to and fro, Like a strong spirit ministrant of good: When I was healed, he led me forth to show The wonders of his sylvan solitude, And we together sate by that isle-fretted flood.

6. He knew his soothing words to weave with skill From all my madness told; like mine own heart, Of Cythna would he question me, until That thrilling name had ceased to make me start, From his familiar lips—it was not art, Of wisdom and of justice when he spoke— When mid soft looks of pity, there would dart A glance as keen as is the lightning's stroke When it doth rive the knots of some ancestral oak.

7. Thus slowly from my brain the darkness rolled, My thoughts their due array did re-assume Through the enchantments of that Hermit old; Then I bethought me of the glorious doom Of those who sternly struggle to relume The lamp of Hope o'er man's bewildered lot, And, sitting by the waters, in the gloom Of eve, to that friend's heart I told my thought— That heart which had grown old, but had corrupted not.

8. That hoary man had spent his livelong age In converse with the dead, who leave the stamp Of ever-burning thoughts on many a page, When they are gone into the senseless damp Of graves;— his spirit thus became a lamp Of splendour, like to those on which it fed; Through peopled haunts,

the City and the Camp, Deep thirst for knowledge had his footsteps led, And all the ways of men among mankind he read.

9. But custom maketh blind and obdurate The loftiest hearts;—he had beheld the woe In which mankind was bound, but deemed that fate Which made them abject, would preserve them so; And in such faith, some steadfast joy to know, He sought this cell: but when fame went abroad That one in Argolis did undergo Torture for liberty, and that the crowd High truths from gifted lips had heard and understood;

10. And that the multitude was gathering wide,— His spirit leaped within his aged frame; In lonely peace he could no more abide, But to the land on which the victor's flame Had fed, my native land, the Hermit came: Each heart was there a shield, and every tongue Was as a sword of truth—young Laon's name Rallied their secret hopes, though tyrants sung Hymns of triumphant joy our scattered tribes among.

11. He came to the lone column on the rock, And with his sweet and mighty eloquence The hearts of those who watched it did unlock, And made them melt in tears of penitence. They gave him entrance free to bear me thence. 'Since this,' the old man said, 'seven years are spent, While slowly truth on thy benighted sense Has crept; the hope which wildered it has lent Meanwhile, to me the power of a sublime intent.

12. 'Yes, from the records of my youthful state, And from the lore of bards and sages old, From whatso'er my wakened thoughts create Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold, Have I collected language to unfold Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore Doctrines of human power my words have told, They have been heard, and men aspire to more Than they have ever gained or ever lost of yore.

13. 'In secret chambers parents read, and weep, My writings to their babes, no longer blind; And young men gather when their tyrants sleep, And vows of faith each to the other bind; And marriageable maidens, who have pined With love, till life seemed melting through their look, A warmer zeal, a nobler hope, now find; And every bosom thus is rapt and shook, Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain-brook.

14. 'The tyrants of the Golden City tremble At voices which are heard about the streets; The ministers of fraud can scarce dissemble The lies of their own heart, but when one meets Another at the shrine, he inly weets, Though he says nothing, that the truth is known; Murderers are pale upon the judgement-seats, And gold grows vile even to the wealthy crone, And laughter fills the Fane, and curses shake the Throne.

15. 'Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds Abound, for fearless love, and the pure law Of mild equality and peace, succeeds To faiths which long have held the world in awe, Bloody and false, and cold:—as whirlpools draw All wrecks of Ocean to their chasm, the sway Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw This hope, compels all spirits to obey, Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array.

16. 'For I have been thy passive instrument'— (As thus the old man spake, his countenance Gleamed on me like a spirit's)—'thou hast lent To me, to all, the power to advance Towards this unforeseen deliverance From our ancestral chains—ay, thou didst rear That lamp of hope on high, which time nor chance Nor change may not extinguish, and my share Of good, was o'er the world its gathered beams to bear.

17. 'But I, alas! am both unknown and old, And though the woof of wisdom I know well To dye in hues of language, I am cold In seeming, and the hopes which inly dwell, My manners note that I did long repel; But Laon's name to the tumultuous throng Were like the star whose beams the

waves compel And tempests, and his soul-subduing tongue Were as a lance to quell the mailed crest of wrong.

18. 'Perchance blood need not flow, if thou at length Wouldst rise, perchance the very slaves would spare Their brethren and themselves; great is the strength Of words—for lately did a maiden fair, Who from her childhood has been taught to bear The Tyrant's heaviest yoke, arise, and make Her sex the law of truth and freedom hear, And with these quiet words—"for thine own sake I prithee spare me;"—did with ruth so take

19. 'All hearts, that even the torturer who had bound Her meek calm frame, ere it was yet impaled, Loosened her, weeping then; nor could be found One human hand to harm her—unassailed Therefore she walks through the great City, veiled In virtue's adamant eloquence, 'Gainst scorn, and death and pain thus trebly mailed, And blending, in the smiles of that defence, The Serpent and the Dove, Wisdom and Innocence.

20. 'The wild-eyed women throng around her path: From their luxurious dungeons, from the dust Of meaner thralls, from the oppressor's wrath, Or the caresses of his sated lust They congregate:—in her they put their trust; The tyrants send their armed slaves to quell Her power;—they, even like a thunder-gust Caught by some forest, bend beneath the spell Of that young maiden's speech, and to their chiefs rebel.

21. 'Thus she doth equal laws and justice teach To woman, outraged and polluted long; Gathering the sweetest fruit in human reach For those fair hands now free, while armed wrong Trembles before her look, though it be strong; Thousands thus dwell beside her, virgins bright, And matrons with their babes, a stately throng! Lovers renew the vows which they did plight In early faith, and hearts long parted now unite,

22. 'And homeless orphans find a home near her, And those poor victims of the proud, no less, Fair wrecks, on whom the smiling world with stir, Thrusts the redemption of its wickedness:— In squalid huts, and in its palaces Sits Lust alone, while o'er the land is borne Her voice, whose awful sweetness doth repress All evil, and her foes relenting turn, And cast the vote of love in hope's abandoned urn.

23. 'So in the populous City, a young maiden Has baffled Havoc of the prey which he Marks as his own, whene'er with chains o'erladen Men make them arms to hurl down tyranny,— False arbiter between the bound and free; And o'er the land, in hamlets and in towns The multitudes collect tumultuously, And throng in arms; but tyranny disowns Their claim, and gathers strength around its trembling thrones.

24. 'Blood soon, although unwillingly, to shed The free cannot forbear—the Queen of Slaves, The hoodwinked Angel of the blind and dead, Custom, with iron mace points to the graves Where her own standard desolately waves Over the dust of Prophets and of Kings. Many yet stand in her array—"she paves Her path with human hearts," and o'er it flings The wildering gloom of her immeasurable wings.

25. 'There is a plain beneath the City's wall, Bounded by misty mountains, wide and vast, Millions there lift at Freedom's thrilling call Ten thousand standards wide, they load the blast Which bears one sound of many voices past, And startles on his throne their sceptred foe: He sits amid his idle pomp aghast, And that his power hath passed away, doth know— Why pause the victor swords to seal his overthrow?

26. 'The tyrant's guards resistance yet maintain: Fearless, and fierce, and hard as beasts of blood, They stand a speck amid the peopled plain; Carnage and ruin have been made their food From infancy—ill has become their good, And for its hateful sake their will has wove The chains

which eat their hearts. The multitude Surrounding them, with words of human love, Seek from their own decay their stubborn minds to move.

27. 'Over the land is felt a sudden pause, As night and day those ruthless bands around, The watch of love is kept:—a trance which awes The thoughts of men with hope; as when the sound Of whirlwind, whose fierce blasts the waves and clouds confound, Dies suddenly, the mariner in fear Feels silence sink upon his heart—thus bound, The conquerors pause, and oh! may freemen ne'er Clasp the relentless knees of Dread, the murderer!

28. 'If blood be shed, 'tis but a change and choice Of bonds,—from slavery to cowardice A wretched fall!—Uplift thy charmed voice! Pour on those evil men the love that lies Hovering within those spirit-soothing eyes— Arise, my friend, farewell!'—As thus he spake, From the green earth lightly I did arise, As one out of dim dreams that doth awake, And looked upon the depth of that reposing lake.

29. I saw my countenance reflected there;— And then my youth fell on me like a wind Descending on still waters—my thin hair Was prematurely gray, my face was lined With channels, such as suffering leaves behind, Not age; my brow was pale, but in my cheek And lips a flush of gnawing fire did find Their food and dwelling; though mine eyes might speak A subtle mind and strong within a frame thus weak.

30. And though their lustre now was spent and faded, Yet in my hollow looks and withered mien The likeness of a shape for which was braided The brightest woof of genius, still was seen— One who, methought, had gone from the world's scene, And left it vacant—'twas her lover's face— It might resemble her—it once had been The mirror of her thoughts, and still the grace Which her mind's shadow cast, left there a lingering trace.

31. What then was I? She slumbered with the dead. Glory and joy and peace, had come and gone. Doth the cloud perish, when the beams are fled Which steeped its skirts in gold? or, dark and lone, Doth it not through the paths of night unknown, On outspread wings of its own wind upborne Pour rain upon the earth? The stars are shown, When the cold moon sharpens her silver horn Under the sea, and make the wide night not forlorn.

32. Strengthened in heart, yet sad, that aged man I left, with interchange of looks and tears, And lingering speech, and to the Camp began My war. O'er many a mountain-chain which rears Its hundred crests aloft, my spirit bears My frame; o'er many a dale and many a moor, And gaily now meseems serene earth wears The bosmy spring's star-bright investiture, A vision which aught sad from sadness might allure.

33. My powers revived within me, and I went, As one whom winds waft o'er the bending grass, Through many a vale of that broad continent. At night when I reposed, fair dreams did pass Before my pillow;—my own Cythna was, Not like a child of death, among them ever; When I arose from rest, a woful mass That gentlest sleep seemed from my life to sever, As if the light of youth were not withdrawn for ever.

34. Aye as I went, that maiden who had reared The torch of Truth afar, of whose high deeds The Hermit in his pilgrimage had heard, Haunted my thoughts.—Ah, Hope its sickness feeds With whatso'er it finds, or flowers or weeds! Could she be Cythna?—Was that corpse a shade Such as self-torturing thought from madness breeds? Why was this hope not torture? Yet it made A light around my steps which would not ever fade.

CANTO 5.

1. Over the utmost hill at length I sped, A snowy steep:—the moon was hanging low Over the Asian mountains, and outspread The plain, the City, and the Camp below, Skirted the midnight Ocean's glimmering flow; The City's moonlit spires and myriad lamps, Like stars in a sublunar sky did glow, And fires blazed far amid the scattered camps, Like springs of flame, which burst where'er swift Earthquake stamps.

2. All slept but those in watchful arms who stood, And those who sate tending the beacon's light, And the few sounds from that vast multitude Made silence more profound.—Oh, what a might Of human thought was cradled in that night! How many hearts impenetrably veiled Beat underneath its shade, what secret fight Evil and good, in woven passions mailed, Waged through that silent throng—a war that never failed!

3. And now the Power of Good held victory. So, through the labyrinth of many a tent, Among the silent millions who did lie In innocent sleep, exultingly I went; The moon had left Heaven desert now, but lent From eastern morn the first faint lustre showed An armed youth—over his spear he bent His downward face.—'A friend!' I cried aloud, And quickly common hopes made freemen understood.

4. I sate beside him while the morning beam Crept slowly over Heaven, and talked with him Of those immortal hopes, a glorious theme! Which led us forth, until the stars grew dim: And all the while, methought, his voice did swim As if it drowned in remembrance were Of thoughts which make the moist eyes overbrim: At last, when daylight 'gan to fill the air, He looked on me, and cried in wonder—'Thou art here!'

5. Then, suddenly, I knew it was the youth In whom its earliest hopes my spirit found; But envious tongues had stained his spotless truth, And thoughtless pride his love in silence bound, And shame and sorrow mine in toils had wound, Whilst he was innocent, and I deluded; The truth now came upon me, on the ground Tears of repenting joy, which fast intruded, Fell fast, and o'er its peace our mingling spirits brooded.

6. Thus, while with rapid lips and earnest eyes We talked, a sound of sweeping conflict spread As from the earth did suddenly arise; From every tent roused by that clamour dread, Our bands outsprung and seized their arms—we sped Towards the sound: our tribes were gathering far. Those sanguine slaves amid ten thousand dead Stabbed in their sleep, trampled in treacherous war The gentle hearts whose power their lives had sought to spare.

7. Like rabid snakes, that sting some gentle child Who brings them food, when winter false and fair Allures them forth with its cold smiles, so wild They rage among the camp;—they overbear The patriot hosts—confusion, then despair, Descends like night—when 'Laon!' one did cry; Like a bright ghost from Heaven that shout did scare The slaves, and widening through the vaulted sky, Seemed sent from Earth to Heaven in sign of victory.

8. In sudden panic those false murderers fled, Like insect tribes before the northern gale: But swifter still, our hosts encompassed Their shattered ranks, and in a craggy vale, Where even their fierce despair might nought avail, Hemmed them around!—and then revenge and fear Made the

high virtue of the patriots fail: One pointed on his foe the mortal spear— I rushed before its point, and cried 'Forbear, forbear!'

9. The spear transfixing my arm that was uplifted In swift expostulation, and the blood Gushed round its point: I smiled, and—'Oh! thou gifted With eloquence which shall not be withstood, Flow thus!' I cried in joy, 'thou vital flood, Until my heart be dry, ere thus the cause For which thou wert aught worthy be subdued— Ah, ye are pale,—ye weep,—your passions pause,— 'Tis well! ye feel the truth of love's benignant laws.

10. 'Soldiers, our brethren and our friends are slain. Ye murdered them, I think, as they did sleep! Alas, what have ye done? the slightest pain Which ye might suffer, there were eyes to weep, But ye have quenched them—there were smiles to steep Your hearts in balm, but they are lost in woe; And those whom love did set his watch to keep Around your tents, truth's freedom to bestow, Ye stabbed as they did sleep—but they forgive ye now.

11. 'Oh wherefore should ill ever flow from ill, And pain still keener pain for ever breed? We all are brethren—even the slaves who kill For hire, are men; and to avenge misdeed On the misdoer, doth but Misery feed With her own broken heart! O Earth, O Heaven! And thou, dread Nature, which to every deed And all that lives, or is, to be hath given, Even as to thee have these done ill, and are forgiven!

12. 'Join then your hands and hearts, and let the past Be as a grave which gives not up its dead To evil thoughts.'—A film then overcast My sense with dimness, for the wound, which bled Freshly, swift shadows o'er mine eyes had shed. When I awoke, I lay mid friends and foes, And earnest countenances on me shed The light of questioning looks, whilst one did close My wound with balmiest herbs, and soothed me to repose;

13. And one whose spear had pierced me, leaned beside With quivering lips and humid eyes;— and all Seemed like some brothers on a journey wide Gone forth, whom now strange meeting did befall In a strange land, round one whom they might call Their friend, their chief, their father, for assay Of peril, which had saved them from the thrall Of death, now suffering. Thus the vast array Of those fraternal bands were reconciled that day.

14. Lifting the thunder of their acclamation, Towards the City then the multitude, And I among them, went in joy—a nation Made free by love;—a mighty brotherhood Linked by a jealous interchange of good; A glorious pageant, more magnificent Than kingly slaves arrayed in gold and blood, When they return from carnage, and are sent In triumph bright beneath the populous battlement.

15. Afar, the city-walls were thronged on high, And myriads on each giddy turret clung, And to each spire far lessening in the sky Bright pennons on the idle winds were hung; As we approached, a shout of joyance sprung At once from all the crowd, as if the vast And peopled Earth its boundless skies among The sudden clamour of delight had cast, When from before its face some general wreck had passed.

16. Our armies through the City's hundred gates Were poured, like brooks which to the rocky lair Of some deep lake, whose silence them awaits, Throng from the mountains when the storms are there And, as we passed through the calm sunny air A thousand flower-inwoven crowns were shed, The token flowers of truth and freedom fair, And fairest hands bound them on many a head, Those angels of love's heaven that over all was spread.

17. I trod as one tranced in some rapturous vision: Those bloody bands so lately reconciled, Were, ever as they went, by the contrition Of anger turned to love, from ill beguiled, And every one on them more gently smiled, Because they had done evil:—the sweet awe Of such mild looks

made their own hearts grow mild, And did with soft attraction ever draw Their spirits to the love of freedom's equal law.

18. And they, and all, in one loud symphony My name with Liberty commingling, lifted, 'The friend and the preserver of the free! The parent of this joy!' and fair eyes gifted With feelings, caught from one who had uplifted The light of a great spirit, round me shone; And all the shapes of this grand scenery shifted Like restless clouds before the steadfast sun, – Where was that Maid? I asked, but it was known of none.

19. Laone was the name her love had chosen, For she was nameless, and her birth none knew: Where was Laone now? – The words were frozen Within my lips with fear; but to subdue Such dreadful hope, to my great task was due, And when at length one brought reply, that she Tomorrow would appear, I then withdrew To judge what need for that great throng might be, For now the stars came thick over the twilight sea.

20. Yet need was none for rest or food to care, Even though that multitude was passing great, Since each one for the other did prepare All kindly succour – Therefore to the gate Of the Imperial House, now desolate, I passed, and there was found aghast, alone, The fallen Tyrant! – Silently he sate Upon the footstool of his golden throne, Which, starred with sunny gems, in its own lustre shone.

21. Alone, but for one child, who led before him A graceful dance: the only living thing Of all the crowd, which thither to adore him Flocked yesterday, who solace sought to bring In his abandonment! – She knew the King Had praised her dance of yore, and now she wove Its circles, aye weeping and murmuring Mid her sad task of unregarded love, That to no smiles it might his speechless sadness move.

22. She fled to him, and wildly clasped his feet When human steps were heard: – he moved nor spoke, Nor changed his hue, nor raised his looks to meet The gaze of strangers – our loud entrance woke The echoes of the hall, which circling broke The calm of its recesses, – like a tomb Its sculptured walls vacantly to the stroke Of footfalls answered, and the twilight's gloom Lay like a charnel's mist within the radiant dome.

23. The little child stood up when we came nigh; Her lips and cheeks seemed very pale and wan, But on her forehead, and within her eye Lay beauty, which makes hearts that feed thereon Sick with excess of sweetness; on the throne She leaned; – the King, with gathered brow, and lips Wreathed by long scorn, did inly sneer and frown With hue like that when some great painter dips His pencil in the gloom of earthquake and eclipse.

24. She stood beside him like a rainbow braided Within some storm, when scarce its shadows vast From the blue paths of the swift sun have faded; A sweet and solemn smile, like Cythna's, cast One moment's light, which made my heart beat fast, O'er that child's parted lips – a gleam of bliss, A shade of vanished days, – as the tears passed Which wrapped it, even as with a father's kiss I pressed those softest eyes in trembling tenderness.

25. The sceptred wretch then from that solitude I drew, and, of his change compassionate, With words of sadness soothed his rugged mood. But he, while pride and fear held deep debate, With sullen guile of ill-dissembled hate Glared on me as a toothless snake might glare: Pity, not scorn I felt, though desolate The desolator now, and unaware The curses which he mocked had caught him by the hair.

26. I led him forth from that which now might seem A gorgeous grave: through portals sculptured deep With imagery beautiful as dream We went, and left the shades which tend on sleep Over its unregarded gold to keep Their silent watch. – The child trod faintly, And as she went,

the tears which she did weep Glanced in the starlight; wildered seemed she, And, when I spake, for sobs she could not answer me.

27. At last the tyrant cried, 'She hungers, slave! Stab her, or give her bread!'—It was a tone Such as sick fancies in a new-made grave Might hear. I trembled, for the truth was known; He with this child had thus been left alone, And neither had gone forth for food,—but he In mingled pride and awe cowered near his throne, And she a nursling of captivity Knew nought beyond those walls, nor what such change might be.

28. And he was troubled at a charm withdrawn Thus suddenly; that sceptres ruled no more— That even from gold the dreadful strength was gone, Which once made all things subject to its power— Such wonder seized him, as if hour by hour The past had come again; and the swift fall Of one so great and terrible of yore, To desolateness, in the hearts of all Like wonder stirred, who saw such awful change befall.

29. A mighty crowd, such as the wide land pours Once in a thousand years, now gathered round The fallen tyrant;—like the rush of showers Of hail in spring, pattering along the ground, Their many footsteps fell, else came no sound From the wide multitude: that lonely man Then knew the burden of his change, and found, Concealing in the dust his visage wan, Refuge from the keen looks which through his bosom ran.

30. And he was faint withal: I sate beside him Upon the earth, and took that child so fair From his weak arms, that ill might none betide him Or her;—when food was brought to them, her share To his averted lips the child did bear, But, when she saw he had enough, she ate And wept the while;—the lonely man's despair Hunger then overcame, and of his state Forgetful, on the dust as in a trance he sate.

31. Slowly the silence of the multitudes Passed, as when far is heard in some lone dell The gathering of a wind among the woods— 'And he is fallen!' they cry, 'he who did dwell Like famine or the plague, or aught more fell Among our homes, is fallen! the murderer Who slaked his thirsting soul as from a well Of blood and tears with ruin! he is here! Sunk in a gulf of scorn from which none may him rear!'

32. Then was heard—'He who judged let him be brought To judgement! blood for blood cries from the soil On which his crimes have deep pollution wrought! Shall Othman only unavenged despoil? Shall they who by the stress of grinding toil Wrest from the unwilling earth his luxuries, Perish for crime, while his foul blood may boil, Or creep within his veins at will?—Arise! And to high justice make her chosen sacrifice!'

33. 'What do ye seek? what fear ye,' then I cried, Suddenly starting forth, 'that ye should shed The blood of Othman?—if your hearts are tried In the true love of freedom, cease to dread This one poor lonely man—beneath Heaven spread In purest light above us all, through earth— Maternal earth, who doth her sweet smiles shed For all, let him go free; until the worth Of human nature win from these a second birth.

34. 'What call ye "justice"? Is there one who ne'er In secret thought has wished another's ill?— Are ye all pure? Let those stand forth who hear And tremble not. Shall they insult and kill, If such they be? their mild eyes can they fill With the false anger of the hypocrite? Alas, such were not pure!—the chastened will Of virtue sees that justice is the light Of love, and not revenge, and terror and despite.'

35. The murmur of the people, slowly dying, Paused as I spake, then those who near me were, Cast gentle looks where the lone man was lying Shrouding his head, which now that infant fair Clasped on her lap in silence;—through the air Sobs were then heard, and many kissed my feet In

pity's madness, and to the despair Of him whom late they cursed, a solace sweet His very victims brought—soft looks and speeches meet.

36. Then to a home for his repose assigned, Accompanied by the still throng, he went In silence, where, to soothe his rankling mind, Some likeness of his ancient state was lent; And if his heart could have been innocent As those who pardoned him, he might have ended His days in peace; but his straight lips were bent, Men said, into a smile which guile portended, A sight with which that child like hope with fear was blended.

37. 'Twas midnight now, the eve of that great day Whereon the many nations at whose call The chains of earth like mist melted away, Decreed to hold a sacred Festival, A rite to attest the equality of all Who live. So to their homes, to dream or wake All went. The sleepless silence did recall Laone to my thoughts, with hopes that make The flood recede from which their thirst they seek to slake.

38. The dawn flowed forth, and from its purple fountains I drank those hopes which make the spirit quail, As to the plain between the misty mountains And the great City, with a countenance pale, I went:—it was a sight which might avail To make men weep exulting tears, for whom Now first from human power the reverend veil Was torn, to see Earth from her general womb Pour forth her swarming sons to a fraternal doom:

39. To see, far glancing in the misty morning, The signs of that innumerable host; To hear one sound of many made, the warning Of Earth to Heaven from its free children tossed, While the eternal hills, and the sea lost In wavering light, and, starring the blue sky The city's myriad spires of gold, almost With human joy made mute society— Its witnesses with men who must hereafter be.

40. To see, like some vast island from the Ocean, The Altar of the Federation rear Its pile i' the midst; a work, which the devotion Of millions in one night created there, Sudden as when the moonrise makes appear Strange clouds in the east; a marble pyramid Distinct with steps: that mighty shape did wear The light of genius; its still shadow hid Far ships: to know its height the morning mists forbid!

41. To hear the restless multitudes for ever Around the base of that great Altar flow, As on some mountain-islet burst and shiver Atlantic waves; and solemnly and slow As the wind bore that tumult to and fro, To feel the dreamlike music, which did swim Like beams through floating clouds on waves below Falling in pauses, from that Altar dim, As silver-sounding tongues breathed an aerial hymn.

42. To hear, to see, to live, was on that morn Lethean joy! so that all those assembled Cast off their memories of the past outworn; Two only bosoms with their own life trembled, And mine was one,—and we had both dissembled; So with a beating heart I went, and one, Who having much, covets yet more, resembled; A lost and dear possession, which not won, He walks in lonely gloom beneath the noonday sun.

43. To the great Pyramid I came: its stair With female choirs was thronged: the loveliest Among the free, grouped with its sculptures rare; As I approached, the morning's golden mist, Which now the wonder-stricken breezes kissed With their cold lips, fled, and the summit shone Like Athos seen from Samothracia, dressed In earliest light, by vintagers, and one Sate there, a female Shape upon an ivory throne:

44. A Form most like the imagined habitant Of silver exhalations sprung from dawn, By winds which feed on sunrise woven, to enchant The faiths of men: all mortal eyes were drawn, As famished mariners through strange seas gone Gaze on a burning watch-tower, by the light Of

those divinest lineaments—alone With thoughts which none could share, from that fair sight I turned in sickness, for a veil shrouded her countenance bright.

45. And neither did I hear the acclamations, Which from brief silence bursting, filled the air With her strange name and mine, from all the nations Which we, they said, in strength had gathered there From the sleep of bondage; nor the vision fair Of that bright pageantry beheld,—but blind And silent, as a breathing corpse did fare, Leaning upon my friend, till like a wind To fevered cheeks, a voice flowed o’er my troubled mind.

46. Like music of some minstrel heavenly gifted, To one whom fiends enthral, this voice to me; Scarce did I wish her veil to be uplifted, I was so calm and joyous.—I could see The platform where we stood, the statues three Which kept their marble watch on that high shrine, The multitudes, the mountains, and the sea; As when eclipse hath passed, things sudden shine To men’s astonished eyes most clear and crystalline.

47. At first Laone spoke most tremulously: But soon her voice the calmness which it shed Gathered, and—’Thou art whom I sought to see, And thou art our first votary here,’ she said: ’I had a dear friend once, but he is dead!— And of all those on the wide earth who breathe, Thou dost resemble him alone—I spread This veil between us two that thou beneath Shouldst image one who may have been long lost in death.

48. ’For this wilt thou not henceforth pardon me? Yes, but those joys which silence well requite Forbid reply;—why men have chosen me To be the Priestess of this holiest rite I scarcely know, but that the floods of light Which flow over the world, have borne me hither To meet thee, long most dear; and now unite Thine hand with mine, and may all comfort wither From both the hearts whose pulse in joy now beat together,

49. ’If our own will as others’ law we bind, If the foul worship trampled here we fear; If as ourselves we cease to love our kind!’— She paused, and pointed upwards—sculptured there Three shapes around her ivory throne appear; One was a Giant, like a child asleep On a loose rock, whose grasp crushed, as it were In dream, sceptres and crowns; and one did keep Its watchful eyes in doubt whether to smile or weep;

50. A Woman sitting on the sculptured disk Of the broad earth, and feeding from one breast A human babe and a young basilisk; Her looks were sweet as Heaven’s when loveliest In Autumn eves. The third Image was dressed In white wings swift as clouds in winter skies; Beneath his feet, ’mongst ghastliest forms, repressed Lay Faith, an obscene worm, who sought to rise, While calmly on the Sun he turned his diamond eyes.

51. Beside that Image then I sate, while she Stood, mid the throngs which ever ebbed and flowed, Like light amid the shadows of the sea Cast from one cloudless star, and on the crowd That touch which none who feels forgets, bestowed; And whilst the sun returned the steadfast gaze Of the great Image, as o’er Heaven it glode, That rite had place; it ceased when sunset’s blaze Burned o’er the isles. All stood in joy and deep amaze— —When in the silence of all spirits there Laone’s voice was felt, and through the air Her thrilling gestures spoke, most eloquently fair:—

51.1. ’Calm art thou as yon sunset! swift and strong As new-fledged Eagles, beautiful and young, That float among the blinding beams of morning; And underneath thy feet writhe Faith, and Folly, Custom, and Hell, and mortal Melancholy— Hark! the Earth starts to hear the mighty warning Of thy voice sublime and holy; Its free spirits here assembled See thee, feel thee, know thee now,— To thy voice their hearts have trembled Like ten thousand clouds which flow With one wide wind as it flies!— Wisdom! thy irresistible children rise To hail thee, and the elements they chain And their own will, to swell the glory of thy train.

51.2. 'O Spirit vast and deep as Night and Heaven! Mother and soul of all to which is given
The light of life, the loveliness of being, Lo! thou dost re-ascend the human heart, Thy throne of
power, almighty as thou wert In dreams of Poets old grown pale by seeing The shade of thee;—
now, millions start To feel thy lightnings through them burning: Nature, or God, or Love, or
Pleasure, Or Sympathy the sad tears turning To mutual smiles, a drainless treasure, Descends
amidst us;—Scorn and Hate, Revenge and Selfishness are desolate— A hundred nations swear that
there shall be Pity and Peace and Love, among the good and free!

51.3. 'Eldest of things, divine Equality! Wisdom and Love are but the slaves of thee, The Angels
of thy sway, who pour around thee Treasures from all the cells of human thought, And from the
Stars, and from the Ocean brought, And the last living heart whose beatings bound thee: The
powerful and the wise had sought Thy coming, thou in light descending O'er the wide land
which is thine own Like the Spring whose breath is blending All blasts of fragrance into one,
Comest upon the paths of men!— Earth bares her general bosom to thy ken, And all her children
here in glory meet To feed upon thy smiles, and clasp thy sacred feet.

51.4 'My brethren, we are free! the plains and mountains, The gray sea-shore, the forests and
the fountains, Are haunts of happiest dwellers;—man and woman, Their common bondage burst,
may freely borrow From lawless love a solace for their sorrow; For oft we still must weep, since
we are human. A stormy night's serenest morrow, Whose showers are pity's gentle tears, Whose
clouds are smiles of those that die Like infants without hopes or fears, And whose beams are
joys that lie In blended hearts, now holds dominion; The dawn of mind, which upwards on a
pinion Borne, swift as sunrise, far illumines space, And clasps this barren world in its own bright
embrace!

51.5 'My brethren, we are free! The fruits are glowing Beneath the stars, and the night-winds
are flowing O'er the ripe corn, the birds and beasts are dreaming— Never again may blood of bird
or beast Stain with its venomous stream a human feast, To the pure skies in accusation steaming;
Avenging poisons shall have ceased To feed disease and fear and madness, The dwellers of the
earth and air Shall throng around our steps in gladness, Seeking their food or refuge there. Our
toil from thought all glorious forms shall cull, To make this Earth, our home, more beautiful, And
Science, and her sister Poesy, Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

51.6 'Victory, Victory to the prostrate nations! Bear witness Night, and ye mute Constellations
Who gaze on us from your crystalline cars! Thoughts have gone forth whose powers can sleep no
more! Victory! Victory! Earth's remotest shore, Regions which groan beneath the Antarctic stars,
The green lands cradled in the roar Of western waves, and wildernesses Peopled and vast, which
skirt the oceans Where morning dyes her golden tresses, Shall soon partake our high emotions:
Kings shall turn pale! Almighty Fear, The Fiend-God, when our charmed name he hear, Shall
fade like shadow from his thousand fanes, While Truth with Joy enthroned o'er his lost empire
reigns!'

51.52. Ere she had ceased, the mists of night entwining Their dim woof, floated o'er the infinite
throng; She, like a spirit through the darkness shining, In tones whose sweetness silence did
prolong, As if to lingering winds they did belong, Poured forth her inmost soul: a passionate
speech With wild and thrilling pauses woven among, Which whoso heard was mute, for it could
teach To rapture like her own all listening hearts to reach.

53. Her voice was as a mountain stream which sweeps The withered leaves of Autumn to the
lake, And in some deep and narrow bay then sleeps In the shadow of the shores; as dead leaves
wake, Under the wave, in flowers and herbs which make Those green depths beautiful when skies

are blue, The multitude so moveless did partake Such living change, and kindling murmurs flew
As o'er that speechless calm delight and wonder grew.

54. Over the plain the throngs were scattered then In groups around the fires, which from the
sea Even to the gorge of the first mountain-glen Blazed wide and far: the banquet of the free Was
spread beneath many a dark cypress-tree, Beneath whose spires, which swayed in the red flame,
Reclining, as they ate, of Liberty, And Hope, and Justice, and Laone's name, Earth's children did
a woof of happy converse frame.

55. Their feast was such as Earth, the general mother, Pours from her fairest bosom, when she
smiles In the embrace of Autumn;—to each other As when some parent fondly reconciles Her
warring children, she their wrath beguiles With her own sustenance, they relenting weep: Such
was this Festival, which from their isles And continents, and winds, and oceans deep, All shapes
might throng to share, that fly, or walk or creep,—

56. Might share in peace and innocence, for gore Or poison none this festal did pollute, But,
piled on high, an overflowing store Of pomegranates and citrons, fairest fruit, Melons, and dates,
and figs, and many a root Sweet and sustaining, and bright grapes ere yet Accursed fire their
mild juice could transmute Into a mortal bane, and brown corn set In baskets; with pure streams
their thirsting lips they wet.

57. Laone had descended from the shrine, And every deepest look and holiest mind Fed on her
form, though now those tones divine Were silent as she passed; she did unwind Her veil, as with
the crowds of her own kind She mixed; some impulse made my heart refrain From seeking her
that night, so I reclined Amidst a group, where on the utmost plain A festal watchfire burned
beside the dusky main.

58. And joyous was our feast; pathetic talk, And wit, and harmony of choral strains, While far
Orion o'er the waves did walk That flow among the isles, held us in chains Of sweet captivity
which none disdains Who feels; but when his zone grew dim in mist Which clothes the Ocean's
bosom, o'er the plains The multitudes went homeward, to their rest, Which that delightful day
with its own shadow blessed.

CANTO 6.

1. Beside the dimness of the glimmering sea, Weaving swift language from impassioned themes, With that dear friend I lingered, who to me So late had been restored, beneath the gleams Of the silver stars; and ever in soft dreams Of future love and peace sweet converse lapped Our willing fancies, till the pallid beams Of the last watchfire fell, and darkness wrapped The waves, and each bright chain of floating fire was snapped;

2. And till we came even to the City's wall And the great gate; then, none knew whence or why, Disquiet on the multitudes did fall: And first, one pale and breathless passed us by, And stared and spoke not;—then with piercing cry A troop of wild-eyed women, by the shrieks Of their own terror driven,—tumultuously Hither and thither hurrying with pale cheeks, Each one from fear unknown a sudden refuge seeks—

3. Then, rallying cries of treason and of danger Resounded: and—'They come! to arms! to arms! The Tyrant is amongst us, and the stranger Comes to enslave us in his name! to arms!' In vain: for Panic, the pale fiend who charms Strength to forswear her right, those millions swept Like waves before the tempest—these alarms Came to me, as to know their cause I leapt On the gate's turret, and in rage and grief and scorn I wept!

4. For to the North I saw the town on fire, And its red light made morning pallid now, Which burst over wide Asia;—louder, higher, The yells of victory and the screams of woe I heard approach, and saw the throng below Stream through the gates like foam-wrought waterfalls Fed from a thousand storms—the fearful glow Of bombs flares overhead—at intervals The red artillery's bolt mangling among them falls.

5. And now the horsemen come—and all was done Swifter than I have spoken—I beheld Their red swords flash in the unrisen sun. I rushed among the rout, to have repelled That miserable flight—one moment quelled By voice and looks and eloquent despair, As if reproach from their own hearts withheld Their steps, they stood; but soon came pouring there New multitudes, and did those rallied bands o'erbear.

6. I strove, as, drifted on some cataract By irresistible streams, some wretch might strive Who hears its fatal roar:—the files compact Whelmed me, and from the gate availed to drive With quickening impulse, as each bolt did rive Their ranks with bloodier chasm:—into the plain Disgorged at length the dead and the alive In one dread mass, were parted, and the stain Of blood, from mortal steel fell o'er the fields like rain.

7. For now the despot's bloodhounds with their prey Unarmed and unaware, were gorging deep Their gluttony of death; the loose array Of horsemen o'er the wide fields murdering sweep, And with loud laughter for their tyrant reap A harvest sown with other hopes; the while, Far overhead, ships from Propontis keep A killing rain of fire:—when the waves smile As sudden earthquakes light many a volcano-isle,

8. Thus sudden, unexpected feast was spread For the carrion-fowls of Heaven.—I saw the sight—I moved—I lived—as o'er the heaps of dead, Whose stony eyes glared in the morning light I trod;—to me there came no thought of flight, But with loud cries of scorn, which whoso heard That

dreaded death, felt in his veins the might Of virtuous shame return, the crowd I stirred, And desperation's hope in many hearts recurred.

9. A band of brothers gathering round me, made, Although unarmed, a steadfast front, and still Retreating, with stern looks beneath the shade Of gathered eyebrows, did the victors fill With doubt even in success; deliberate will Inspired our growing troop; not overthrown It gained the shelter of a grassy hill, And ever still our comrades were hewn down, And their defenceless limbs beneath our footsteps strown.

10. Immovably we stood—in joy I found, Beside me then, firm as a giant pine Among the mountain-vapours driven around, The old man whom I loved—his eyes divine With a mild look of courage answered mine, And my young friend was near, and ardently His hand grasped mine a moment—now the line Of war extended, to our rallying cry As myriads flocked in love and brotherhood to die.

11. For ever while the sun was climbing Heaven The horseman hewed our unarmed myriads down Safely, though when by thirst of carnage driven Too near, those slaves were swiftly overthrown By hundreds leaping on them:—flesh and bone Soon made our ghastly ramparts; then the shaft Of the artillery from the sea was thrown More fast and fiery, and the conquerors laughed In pride to hear the wind our screams of torment waft.

12. For on one side alone the hill gave shelter, So vast that phalanx of unconquered men, And there the living in the blood did welter Of the dead and dying, which in that green glen, Like stifled torrents, made a plashy fen Under the feet—thus was the butchery waged While the sun clomb Heaven's eastern steep—but when It 'gan to sink—a fiercer combat raged, For in more doubtful strife the armies were engaged.

13. Within a cave upon the hill were found A bundle of rude pikes, the instrument Of those who war but on their native ground For natural rights: a shout of joyance sent Even from our hearts the wide air pierced and rent, As those few arms the bravest and the best Seized, and each sixth, thus armed, did now present A line which covered and sustained the rest, A confident phalanx, which the foes on every side invest.

14. That onset turned the foes to flight almost; But soon they saw their present strength, and knew That coming night would to our resolute host Bring victory; so dismounting, close they drew Their glittering files, and then the combat grew Unequal but most horrible;—and ever Our myriads, whom the swift bolt overthrew, Or the red sword, failed like a mountain river Which rushes forth in foam to sink in sands for ever.

15. Sorrow and shame, to see with their own kind Our human brethren mix, like beasts of blood, To mutual ruin armed by one behind Who sits and scoffs!—That friend so mild and good, Who like its shadow near my youth had stood, Was stabbed!—my old preserver's hoary hair With the flesh clinging to its roots, was strewed Under my feet!—I lost all sense or care, And like the rest I grew desperate and unaware.

16. The battle became ghastlier—in the midst I paused, and saw, how ugly and how fell O Hate! thou art, even when thy life thou shedd'st For love. The ground in many a little dell Was broken, up and down whose steeps befell Alternate victory and defeat, and there The combatants with rage most horrible Strove, and their eyes started with cracking stare, And impotent their tongues they lolled into the air,

17. Flaccid and foamy, like a mad dog's hanging; Want, and Moon-madness, and the pest's swift Bane When its shafts smite—while yet its bow is twanging— Have each their mark and sign—some ghastly stain; And this was thine, O War! of hate and pain Thou loathed slave! I saw all shapes of

death And ministered to many, o'er the plain While carnage in the sunbeam's warmth did seethe,
Till twilight o'er the east wove her serenest wreath.

18. The few who yet survived, resolute and firm Around me fought. At the decline of day
Winding above the mountain's snowy term New banners shone; they quivered in the ray Of the
sun's unseen orb—ere night the array Of fresh troops hemmed us in—of those brave bands I soon
survived alone—and now I lay Vanquished and faint, the grasp of bloody hands I felt, and saw on
high the glare of falling brands,

19. When on my foes a sudden terror came, And they fled, scattering—lo! with reinless speed A
black Tartarian horse of giant frame Comes trampling over the dead, the living bleed Beneath the
hoofs of that tremendous steed, On which, like to an Angel, robed in white, Sate one waving a
sword;—the hosts recede And fly, as through their ranks with awful might, Sweeps in the shadow
of eve that Phantom swift and bright;

20. And its path made a solitude.—I rose And marked its coming: it relaxed its course As it ap-
proached me, and the wind that flows Through night, bore accents to mine ear whose force Might
create smiles in death—the Tartar horse Paused, and I saw the shape its might which swayed, And
heard her musical pants, like the sweet source Of waters in the desert, as she said, 'Mount with
me, Laon, now'—I rapidly obeyed.

21. Then: 'Away! away!' she cried, and stretched her sword As 'twere a scourge over the
courser's head, And lightly shook the reins.—We spake no word, But like the vapour of the tem-
pest fled Over the plain; her dark hair was dispread Like the pine's locks upon the lingering blast;
Over mine eyes its shadowy strings it spread Fitfully, and the hills and streams fled fast, As o'er
their glimmering forms the steed's broad shadow passed.

22. And his hoofs ground the rocks to fire and dust, His strong sides made the torrents rise in
spray, And turbulence, as of a whirlwind's gust Surrounded us;—and still away! away! Through
the desert night we sped, while she alway Gazed on a mountain which we neared, whose crest,
Crowned with a marble ruin, in the ray Of the obscure stars gleamed;—its rugged breast The steed
strained up, and then his impulse did arrest.

23. A rocky hill which overhung the Ocean:— From that lone ruin, when the steed that panted
Paused, might be heard the murmur of the motion Of waters, as in spots for ever haunted By the
choicest winds of Heaven, which are enchanted To music, by the wand of Solitude, That wizard
wild, and the far tents implanted Upon the plain, be seen by those who stood Thence marking
the dark shore of Ocean's curved flood.

24. One moment these were heard and seen—another Passed; and the two who stood beneath
that night, Each only heard, or saw, or felt the other; As from the lofty steed she did alight, Cythna,
(for, from the eyes whose deepest light Of love and sadness made my lips feel pale With influence
strange of mournfullest delight, My own sweet Cythna looked), with joy did quail, And felt her
strength in tears of human weakness fail.

25. And for a space in my embrace she rested, Her head on my unquiet heart reposing, While
my faint arms her languid frame invested; At length she looked on me, and half unclosing Her
tremulous lips, said, 'Friend, thy bands were losing The battle, as I stood before the King In
bonds.—I burst them then, and swiftly choosing The time, did seize a Tartar's sword, and spring
Upon his horse, and swift, as on the whirlwind's wing,

26. 'Have thou and I been borne beyond pursuer, And we are here.'—Then, turning to the steed,
She pressed the white moon on his front with pure And rose-like lips, and many a fragrant weed
From the green ruin plucked, that he might feed;— But I to a stone seat that Maiden led, And,

kissing her fair eyes, said, 'Thou hast need Of rest,' and I heaped up the courser's bed In a green mossy nook, with mountain flowers disspread.

27. Within that ruin, where a shattered portal Looks to the eastern stars, abandoned now By man, to be the home of things immortal, Memories, like awful ghosts which come and go, And must inherit all he builds below, When he is gone, a hall stood; o'er whose roof Fair clinging weeds with ivy pale did grow, Claspings its gray rents with a verdurous woof, A hanging dome of leaves, a canopy moon-proof.

28. The autumnal winds, as if spell-bound, had made A natural couch of leaves in that recess, Which seasons none disturbed, but, in the shade Of flowering parasites, did Spring love to dress With their sweet blooms the wintry loneliness Of those dead leaves, shedding their stars, when'er The wandering wind her nurslings might caress; Whose intertwining fingers ever there Made music wild and soft that filled the listening air.

29. We know not where we go, or what sweet dream May pilot us through caverns strange and fair Of far and pathless passion, while the stream Of life, our bark doth on its whirlpools bear, Spreading swift wings as sails to the dim air; Nor should we seek to know, so the devotion Of love and gentle thoughts be heard still there Louder and louder from the utmost Ocean Of universal life, attuning its commotion.

30. To the pure all things are pure! Oblivion wrapped Our spirits, and the fearful overthrow Of public hope was from our being snapped, Though linked years had bound it there; for now A power, a thirst, a knowledge, which below All thoughts, like light beyond the atmosphere, Clothing its clouds with grace, doth ever flow, Came on us, as we sate in silence there, Beneath the golden stars of the clear azure air;—

31. In silence which doth follow talk that causes The baffled heart to speak with sighs and tears, When wildering passion swalloweth up the pauses Of inexpressive speech:—the youthful years Which we together passed, their hopes and fears, The blood itself which ran within our frames, That likeness of the features which endears The thoughts expressed by them, our very names, And all the winged hours which speechless memory claims,

32. Had found a voice—and ere that voice did pass, The night grew damp and dim, and, through a rent Of the ruin where we sate, from the morass A wandering Meteor by some wild wind sent, Hung high in the green dome, to which it lent A faint and pallid lustre; while the song Of blasts, in which its blue hair quivering bent, Strewed strangest sounds the moving leaves among; A wondrous light, the sound as of a spirit's tongue.

33. The Meteor showed the leaves on which we sate, And Cythna's glowing arms, and the thick ties Of her soft hair, which bent with gathered weight My neck near hers; her dark and deepening eyes, Which, as twin phantoms of one star that lies O'er a dim well, move, though the star reposes, Swam in our mute and liquid ecstasies, Her marble brow, and eager lips, like roses, With their own fragrance pale, which Spring but half uncloses.

34. The Meteor to its far morass returned: The beating of our veins one interval Made still; and then I felt the blood that burned Within her frame, mingle with mine, and fall Around my heart like fire; and over all A mist was spread, the sickness of a deep And speechless swoon of joy, as might befall Two disunited spirits when they leap In union from this earth's obscure and fading sleep.

35. Was it one moment that confounded thus All thought, all sense, all feeling, into one Unutterable power, which shielded us Even from our own cold looks, when we had gone Into a wide

and wild oblivion Of tumult and of tenderness? or now Had ages, such as make the moon and sun, The seasons, and mankind their changes know, Left fear and time unfelt by us alone below?

36. I know not. What are kisses whose fire clasps The failing heart in languishment, or limb Twined within limb? or the quick dying gasps Of the life meeting, when the faint eyes swim Through tears of a wide mist boundless and dim, In one caress? What is the strong control Which leads the heart that dizzy steep to climb, Where far over the world those vapours roll Which blend two restless frames in one reposing soul? 37. It is the shadow which doth float unseen, But not unfelt, o'er blind mortality, Whose divine darkness fled not from that green And lone recess, where lapped in peace did lie Our linked frames, till, from the changing sky That night and still another day had fled; And then I saw and felt. The moon was high, And clouds, as of a coming storm, were spread Under its orb,—loud winds were gathering overhead.

38. Cythna's sweet lips seemed lurid in the moon, Her fairest limbs with the night wind were chill, And her dark tresses were all loosely strewn O'er her pale bosom:—all within was still, And the sweet peace of joy did almost fill The depth of her unfathomable look;— And we sate calmly, though that rocky hill, The waves contending in its caverns strook, For they foreknew the storm, and the gray ruin shook.

39. There we unheeding sate, in the communion Of interchanged vows, which, with a rite Of faith most sweet and sacred, stamped our union.— Few were the living hearts which could unite Like ours, or celebrate a bridal night With such close sympathies, for they had sprung From linked youth, and from the gentle might Of earliest love, delayed and cherished long, Which common hopes and fears made, like a tempest, strong.

40. And such is Nature's law divine, that those Who grow together cannot choose but love, If faith or custom do not interpose, Or common slavery mar what else might move All gentlest thoughts; as in the sacred grove Which shades the springs of Ethiopian Nile, That living tree which, if the arrowy dove Strike with her shadow, shrinks in fear awhile, But its own kindred leaves clasps while the sunbeams smile;

41. And clings to them, when darkness may dissever The close caresses of all duller plants Which bloom on the wide earth—thus we for ever Were linked, for love had nursed us in the haunts Where knowledge, from its secret source enchants Young hearts with the fresh music of its springing, Ere yet its gathered flood feeds human wants, As the great Nile feeds Egypt; ever flinging Light on the woven boughs which o'er its waves are swinging.

42. The tones of Cythna's voice like echoes were Of those far murmuring streams; they rose and fell, Mixed with mine own in the tempestuous air,— And so we sate, until our talk befell Of the late ruin, swift and horrible, And how those seeds of hope might yet be sown, Whose fruit is evil's mortal poison: well, For us, this ruin made a watch-tower lone, But Cythna's eyes looked faint, and now two days were gone

43. Since she had food:—therefore I did awaken The Tartar steed, who, from his ebon mane Soon as the clinging slumbers he had shaken, Bent his thin head to seek the brazen rein, Following me obediently; with pain Of heart, so deep and dread, that one caress, When lips and heart refuse to part again Till they have told their fill, could scarce express The anguish of her mute and fearful tenderness,

44. Cythna beheld me part, as I bestrode That willing steed—the tempest and the night, Which gave my path its safety as I rode Down the ravine of rocks, did soon unite The darkness and the tumult of their might Borne on all winds.—Far through the streaming rain Floating at intervals

the garments white Of Cythna gleamed, and her voice once again Came to me on the gust, and soon I reached the plain.

45. I dreaded not the tempest, nor did he Who bore me, but his eyeballs wide and red Turned on the lightning's cleft exultingly; And when the earth beneath his tameless tread, Shook with the sullen thunder, he would spread His nostrils to the blast, and joyously Mock the fierce peal with neighings;—thus we sped O'er the lit plain, and soon I could descry Where Death and Fire had gorged the spoil of victory.

46. There was a desolate village in a wood Whose bloom-inwoven leaves now scattering fed The hungry storm; it was a place of blood, A heap of hearthless walls;—the flames were dead Within those dwellings now,—the life had fled From all those corpses now,—but the wide sky Flooded with lightning was ribbed overhead By the black rafters, and around did lie Women, and babes, and men, slaughtered confusedly.

47. Beside the fountain in the market-place Dismounting, I beheld those corpses stare With horny eyes upon each other's face, And on the earth and on the vacant air, And upon me, close to the waters where I stooped to slake my thirst;—I shrank to taste, For the salt bitterness of blood was there; But tied the steed beside, and sought in haste If any yet survived amid that ghastly waste.

48. No living thing was there beside one woman, Whom I found wandering in the streets, and she Was withered from a likeness of aught human Into a fiend, by some strange misery: Soon as she heard my steps she leaped on me, And glued her burning lips to mine, and laughed With a loud, long, and frantic laugh of glee, And cried, 'Now, Mortal, thou hast deeply quaffed The Plague's blue kisses—soon millions shall pledge the draught!

49. 'My name is Pestilence—this bosom dry, Once fed two babes—a sister and a brother— When I came home, one in the blood did lie Of three death-wounds—the flames had ate the other! Since then I have no longer been a mother, But I am Pestilence;—hither and thither I flit about, that I may slay and smother:— All lips which I have kissed must surely wither, But Death's—if thou art he, we'll go to work together!

50. 'What seek'st thou here? The moonlight comes in flashes,— The dew is rising dankly from the dell— 'Twill moisten her! and thou shalt see the gashes In my sweet boy, now full of worms— but tell First what thou seek'st.'—'I seek for food.'—'Tis well, Thou shalt have food. Famine, my paramour, Waits for us at the feast—cruel and fell Is Famine, but he drives not from his door Those whom these lips have kissed, alone. No more, no more!'

51. As thus she spake, she grasped me with the strength Of madness, and by many a ruined hearth She led, and over many a corpse:—at length We came to a lone hut where on the earth Which made its floor, she in her ghastly mirth, Gathering from all those homes now desolate, Had piled three heaps of loaves, making a dearth Among the dead—round which she set in state A ring of cold, stiff babes; silent and stark they sate.

52. She leaped upon a pile, and lifted high Her mad looks to the lightning, and cried: 'Eat! Share the great feast—to-morrow we must die!' And then she spurned the loaves with her pale feet, Towards her bloodless guests;—that sight to meet, Mine eyes and my heart ached, and but that she Who loved me, did with absent looks defeat Despair, I might have raved in sympathy; But now I took the food that woman offered me;

53. And vainly having with her madness striven If I might win her to return with me, Departed. In the eastern beams of Heaven The lightning now grew pallid—rapidly, As by the shore of the tempestuous sea The dark steed bore me; and the mountain gray Soon echoed to his hoofs, and

I could see Cythna among the rocks, where she alway Had sate with anxious eyes fixed on the lingering day.

54. And joy was ours to meet: she was most pale, Famished, and wet and weary, so I cast My arms around her, lest her steps should fail As to our home we went, and thus embraced, Her full heart seemed a deeper joy to taste Than e'er the prosperous know; the steed behind Trod peacefully along the mountain waste; We reached our home ere morning could unbind Night's latest veil, and on our bridal-couch reclined.

55. Her chilled heart having cherished in my bosom, And sweetest kisses past, we two did share Our peaceful meal:—as an autumnal blossom Which spreads its shrunk leaves in the sunny air, After cold showers, like rainbows woven there, Thus in her lips and cheeks the vital spirit Mantled, and in her eyes, an atmosphere Of health, and hope; and sorrow languished near it, And fear, and all that dark despondence doth inherit.

CANTO 7.

1. So we sate joyous as the morning ray Which fed upon the wrecks of night and storm Now lingering on the winds; light airs did play Among the dewy weeds, the sun was warm, And we sate linked in the inwoven charm Of converse and caresses sweet and deep, Speechless caresses, talk that might disarm Time, though he wield the darts of death and sleep, And those thrice mortal barbs in his own poison steep.

2. I told her of my sufferings and my madness, And how, awakened from that dreamy mood By Liberty's uprising, the strength of gladness Came to my spirit in my solitude; And all that now I was--while tears pursued Each other down her fair and listening cheek Fast as the thoughts which fed them, like a flood From sunbright dales; and when I ceased to speak, Her accents soft and sweet the pausing air did wake.

3. She told me a strange tale of strange endurance, Like broken memories of many a heart Woven into one; to which no firm assurance, So wild were they, could her own faith impart. She said that not a tear did dare to start From the swollen brain, and that her thoughts were firm When from all mortal hope she did depart, Borne by those slaves across the Ocean's term, And that she reached the port without one fear infirm.

4. One was she among many there, the thralls Of the cold Tyrant's cruel lust; and they Laughed mournfully in those polluted halls; But she was calm and sad, musing alway On loftiest enterprise, till on a day The Tyrant heard her singing to her lute A wild, and sad, and spirit-thrilling lay, Like winds that die in wastes--one moment mute The evil thoughts it made, which did his breast pollute.

5. Even when he saw her wondrous loveliness, One moment to great Nature's sacred power He bent, and was no longer passionless; But when he bade her to his secret bower Be borne, a loveless victim, and she tore Her locks in agony, and her words of flame And mightier looks availed not; then he bore Again his load of slavery, and became A king, a heartless beast, a pageant and a name.

6. She told me what a loathsome agony Is that when selfishness mocks love's delight, Foul as in dream's most fearful imagery, To dally with the mowing dead--that night All torture, fear, or horror made seem light Which the soul dreams or knows, and when the day Shone on her awful frenzy, from the sight Where like a Spirit in fleshly chains she lay Struggling, aghast and pale the Tyrant fled away.

7. Her madness was a beam of light, a power Which dawned through the rent soul; and words it gave, Gestures and looks, such as in whirlwinds bore Which might not be withstood--whence none could save-- All who approached their sphere,--like some calm wave Vexed into whirlpools by the chasms beneath; And sympathy made each attendant slave Fearless and free, and they began to breathe Deep curses, like the voice of flames far underneath.

8. The King felt pale upon his noonday throne: At night two slaves he to her chamber sent,-- One was a green and wrinkled eunuch, grown From human shape into an instrument Of all things ill--distorted, bowed and bent. The other was a wretch from infancy Made dumb by poison; who

nought knew or meant But to obey: from the fire isles came he, A diver lean and strong, of Oman's coral sea.

9. They bore her to a bark, and the swift stroke Of silent rowers clove the blue moonlight seas, Until upon their path the morning broke; They anchored then, where, be there calm or breeze, The gloomiest of the drear Symplegades Shakes with the sleepless surge;—the Ethiop there Wound his long arms around her, and with knees Like iron clasped her feet, and plunged with her Among the closing waves out of the boundless air.

10. 'Swift as an eagle stooping from the plain Of morning light, into some shadowy wood, He plunged through the green silence of the main, Through many a cavern which the eternal flood Had scooped, as dark lairs for its monster brood; And among mighty shapes which fled in wonder, And among mightier shadows which pursued His heels, he wound: until the dark rocks under He touched a golden chain—a sound arose like thunder.

11. 'A stunning clang of massive bolts redoubling Beneath the deep—a burst of waters driven As from the roots of the sea, raging and bubbling: And in that roof of crags a space was riven Through which there shone the emerald beams of heaven, Shot through the lines of many waves inwoven, Like sunlight through acacia woods at even, Through which, his way the diver having cloven, Passed like a spark sent up out of a burning oven.

12. 'And then,' she said, 'he laid me in a cave Above the waters, by that chasm of sea, A fountain round and vast, in which the wave Imprisoned, boiled and leaped perpetually, Down which, one moment resting, he did flee, Winning the adverse depth; that spacious cell Like an hupaithric temple wide and high, Whose aery dome is inaccessible, Was pierced with one round cleft through which the sunbeams fell.

13. 'Below, the fountain's brink was richly paven With the deep's wealth, coral, and pearl, and sand Like spangling gold, and purple shells engraven With mystic legends by no mortal hand, Left there, when thronging to the moon's command, The gathering waves rent the Hesperian gate Of mountains, and on such bright floor did stand Columns, and shapes like statues, and the state Of kingless thrones, which Earth did in her heart create.

14. 'The fiend of madness which had made its prey Of my poor heart, was lulled to sleep awhile: There was an interval of many a day, And a sea-eagle brought me food the while, Whose nest was built in that untrodden isle, And who, to be the gaoler had been taught Of that strange dungeon; as a friend whose smile Like light and rest at morn and even is sought That wild bird was to me, till madness misery brought.

15. 'The misery of a madness slow and creeping, Which made the earth seem fire, the sea seem air, And the white clouds of noon which oft were sleeping, In the blue heaven so beautiful and fair, Like hosts of ghastly shadows hovering there; And the sea-eagle looked a fiend, who bore Thy mangled limbs for food!—Thus all things were Transformed into the agony which I wore Even as a poisoned robe around my bosom's core.

16. 'Again I knew the day and night fast fleeing, The eagle, and the fountain, and the air; Another frenzy came—there seemed a being Within me—a strange load my heart did bear, As if some living thing had made its lair Even in the fountains of my life:—a long And wondrous vision wrought from my despair, Then grew, like sweet reality among Dim visionary woes, an unreposing throng.

17. 'Methought I was about to be a mother— Month after month went by, and still I dreamed That we should soon be all to one another, I and my child; and still new pulses seemed To beat beside my heart, and still I deemed There was a babe within—and, when the rain Of winter through

the rifted cavern streamed, Methought, after a lapse of lingering pain, I saw that lovely shape, which near my heart had lain.

18. 'It was a babe, beautiful from its birth,– It was like thee, dear love, its eyes were thine, Its brow, its lips, and so upon the earth It laid its fingers, as now rest on mine Thine own, beloved!– 'twas a dream divine; Even to remember how it fled, how swift, How utterly, might make the heart repine,– Though 'twas a dream.'–Then Cythna did uplift Her looks on mine, as if some doubt she sought to shift:

19. A doubt which would not flee, a tenderness Of questioning grief, a source of thronging tears; Which having passed, as one whom sobs oppress She spoke: 'Yes, in the wilderness of years Her memory, aye, like a green home appears; She sucked her fill even at this breast, sweet love, For many months. I had no mortal fears; Methought I felt her lips and breath approve,– It was a human thing which to my bosom clove.

20. 'I watched the dawn of her first smiles; and soon When zenith stars were trembling on the wave, Or when the beams of the invisible moon, Or sun, from many a prism within the cave Their gem-born shadows to the water gave, Her looks would hunt them, and with outspread hand, From the swift lights which might that fountain pave, She would mark one, and laugh, when that command Slighting, it lingered there, and could not understand.

21. 'Methought her looks began to talk with me; And no articulate sounds, but something sweet Her lips would frame,–so sweet it could not be, That it was meaningless; her touch would meet Mine, and our pulses calmly flow and beat In response while we slept; and on a day When I was happiest in that strange retreat, With heaps of golden shells we two did play,– Both infants, weaving wings for time's perpetual way.

22. 'Ere night, methought, her waning eyes were grown Weary with joy, and tired with our delight, We, on the earth, like sister twins lay down On one fair mother's bosom:–from that night She fled,–like those illusions clear and bright, Which dwell in lakes, when the red moon on high Pause ere it wakens tempest;–and her flight, Though 'twas the death of brainless fantasy, Yet smote my lonesome heart more than all misery.

23. 'It seemed that in the dreary night the diver Who brought me thither, came again, and bore My child away. I saw the waters quiver, When he so swiftly sunk, as once before: Then morning came–it shone even as of yore, But I was changed–the very life was gone Out of my heart–I wasted more and more, Day after day, and sitting there alone, Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

24. 'I was no longer mad, and yet methought My breasts were swoln and changed:–in every vein The blood stood still one moment, while that thought Was passing–with a gush of sickening pain It ebbed even to its withered springs again: When my wan eyes in stern resolve I turned From that most strange delusion, which would fain Have waked the dream for which my spirit yearned With more than human love,–then left it unreturned.

25. 'So now my reason was restored to me I struggled with that dream, which, like a beast Most fierce and beauteous, in my memory Had made its lair, and on my heart did feast; But all that cave and all its shapes, possessed By thoughts which could not fade, renewed each one Some smile, some look, some gesture which had blessed Me heretofore: I, sitting there alone, Vexed the inconstant waves with my perpetual moan.

26. 'Time passed, I know not whether months or years; For day, nor night, nor change of seasons made Its note, but thoughts and unavailing tears: And I became at last even as a shade, A smoke, a cloud on which the winds have preyed, Till it be thin as air; until, one even, A Nautilus

upon the fountain played, Spreading his azure sail where breath of Heaven Descended not, among the waves and whirlpools driven.

27. 'And, when the Eagle came, that lovely thing, Oaring with rosy feet its silver boat, Fled near me as for shelter; on slow wing, The Eagle, hovering o'er his prey did float; But when he saw that I with fear did note His purpose, proffering my own food to him, The eager plumes subsided on his throat— He came where that bright child of sea did swim, And o'er it cast in peace his shadow broad and dim.

28. 'This wakened me, it gave me human strength; And hope, I know not whence or wherefore, rose, But I resumed my ancient powers at length; My spirit felt again like one of those Like thine, whose fate it is to make the woes Of humankind their prey—what was this cave? Its deep foundation no firm purpose knows Immutable, resistless, strong to save, Like mind while yet it mocks the all-devouring grave.

29. 'And where was Laon? might my heart be dead, While that far dearer heart could move and be? Or whilst over the earth the pall was spread, Which I had sworn to rend? I might be free, Could I but win that friendly bird to me, To bring me ropes; and long in vain I sought By intercourse of mutual imagery Of objects, if such aid he could be taught; But fruit, and flowers, and boughs, yet never ropes he brought.

30. 'We live in our own world, and mine was made From glorious fantasies of hope departed: Aye we are darkened with their floating shade, Or cast a lustre on them—time imparted Such power to me—I became fearless-hearted, My eye and voice grew firm, calm was my mind, And piercing, like the morn, now it has darted Its lustre on all hidden things, behind Yon dim and fading clouds which load the weary wind.

31. 'My mind became the book through which I grew Wise in all human wisdom, and its cave, Which like a mine I rifled through and through, To me the keeping of its secrets gave— One mind, the type of all, the moveless wave Whose calm reflects all moving things that are, Necessity, and love, and life, the grave, And sympathy, fountains of hope and fear, Justice, and truth, and time, and the world's natural sphere.

32. 'And on the sand would I make signs to range These woofs, as they were woven, of my thought; Clear, elemental shapes, whose smallest change A subtler language within language wrought: The key of truths which once were dimly taught In old Crotona;—and sweet melodies Of love, in that lorn solitude I caught From mine own voice in dream, when thy dear eyes Shone through my sleep, and did that utterance harmonize.

33. 'Thy songs were winds whereon I fled at will, As in a winged chariot, o'er the plain Of crystal youth; and thou wert there to fill My heart with joy, and there we sate again On the gray margin of the glimmering main, Happy as then but wiser far, for we Smiled on the flowery grave in which were lain Fear, Faith and Slavery; and mankind was free, Equal, and pure, and wise, in Wisdom's prophecy.

34. 'For to my will my fancies were as slaves To do their sweet and subtile ministries; And oft from that bright fountain's shadowy waves They would make human throngs gather and rise To combat with my overflowing eyes, And voice made deep with passion—thus I grew Familiar with the shock and the surprise And war of earthly minds, from which I drew The power which has been mine to frame their thoughts anew.

35. 'And thus my prison was the populous earth— Where I saw—even as misery dreams of morn Before the east has given its glory birth— Religion's pomp made desolate by the scorn Of Wisdom's faintest smile, and thrones uptorn, And dwellings of mild people interspersed With

undivided fields of ripening corn, And love made free,—a hope which we have nursed Even with our blood and tears,—until its glory burst.

36. 'All is not lost! There is some recompense For hope whose fountain can be thus profound, Even throned Evil's splendid impotence, Girt by its hell of power, the secret sound Of hymns to truth and freedom—the dread bound Of life and death passed fearlessly and well, Dungeons wherein the high resolve is found, Racks which degraded woman's greatness tell, And what may else be good and irresistible.

37. 'Such are the thoughts which, like the fires that flare In storm-encompassed isles, we cherish yet In this dark ruin—such were mine even there; As in its sleep some odorous violet, While yet its leaves with nightly dews are wet, Breathes in prophetic dreams of day's uprise, Or as, ere Scythian frost in fear has met Spring's messengers descending from the skies, The buds foreknow their life—this hope must ever rise.

38. 'So years had passed, when sudden earthquake rent The depth of ocean, and the cavern cracked With sound, as if the world's wide continent Had fallen in universal ruin wracked: And through the cleft streamed in one cataract The stifling waters—when I woke, the flood Whose banded waves that crystal cave had sacked Was ebbing round me, and my bright abode Before me yawned—a chasm desert, and bare, and broad.

39. 'Above me was the sky, beneath the sea: I stood upon a point of shattered stone, And heard loose rocks rushing tumultuously With splash and shock into the deep—anon All ceased, and there was silence wide and lone. I felt that I was free! The Ocean-spray Quivered beneath my feet, the broad Heaven shone Around, and in my hair the winds did play Lingering as they pursued their unimpeded way.

40. 'My spirit moved upon the sea like wind Which round some thymy cape will lag and hover, Though it can wake the still cloud, and unbind The strength of tempest: day was almost over, When through the fading light I could discover A ship approaching—its white sails were fed With the north wind—its moving shade did cover The twilight deep; the mariners in dread Cast anchor when they saw new rocks around them spread.

41. 'And when they saw one sitting on a crag, They sent a boat to me;—the Sailors rowed In awe through many a new and fearful jag Of overhanging rock, through which there flowed The foam of streams that cannot make abode. They came and questioned me, but when they heard My voice, they became silent, and they stood And moved as men in whom new love had stirred Deep thoughts: so to the ship we passed without a word.

CANTO 8.

1. 'I sate beside the Steersman then, and gazing Upon the west, cried, "Spread the sails! Behold! The sinking moon is like a watch-tower blazing Over the mountains yet;—the City of Gold Yon Cape alone does from the sight withhold; The stream is fleet—the north breathes steadily Beneath the stars; they tremble with the cold! Ye cannot rest upon the dreary sea!— Haste, haste to the warm home of happier destiny!"

2. 'The Mariners obeyed—the Captain stood Aloof, and, whispering to the Pilot, said, "Alas, alas! I fear we are pursued By wicked ghosts; a Phantom of the Dead, The night before we sailed, came to my bed In dream, like that!" The Pilot then replied, "It cannot be—she is a human Maid— Her low voice makes you weep—she is some bride, Or daughter of high birth—she can be nought beside."

3. 'We passed the islets, borne by wind and stream, And as we sailed, the Mariners came near And thronged around to listen;—in the gleam Of the pale moon I stood, as one whom fear May not attain, and my calm voice did rear; "Ye are all human—yon broad moon gives light To millions who the selfsame likeness wear, Even while I speak—beneath this very night, Their thoughts flow on like ours, in sadness or delight.

4. "'What dream ye? Your own hands have built an home, Even for yourselves on a beloved shore: For some, fond eyes are pining till they come, How they will greet him when his toils are o'er, And laughing babes rush from the well-known door! Is this your care? ye toil for your own good— Ye feel and think—has some immortal power Such purposes? or in a human mood, Dream ye some Power thus builds for man in solitude?

5. "'What is that Power? Ye mock yourselves, and give A human heart to what ye cannot know: As if the cause of life could think and live! 'Twere as if man's own works should feel, and show The hopes, and fears, and thoughts from which they flow, And he be like to them! Lo! Plague is free To waste, Blight, Poison, Earthquake, Hail, and Snow, Disease, and Want, and worse Necessity Of hate and ill, and Pride, and Fear, and Tyranny!

6. "'What is that Power? Some moon-struck sophist stood Watching the shade from his own soul upthrown Fill Heaven and darken Earth, and in such mood The Form he saw and worshipped was his own, His likeness in the world's vast mirror shown; And 'twere an innocent dream, but that a faith Nursed by fear's dew of poison, grows thereon, And that men say, that Power has chosen Death On all who scorn its laws, to wreak immortal wrath.

7. "'Men say that they themselves have heard and seen, Or known from others who have known such things, A Shade, a Form, which Earth and Heaven between Wields an invisible rod—that Priests and Kings, Custom, domestic sway, ay, all that brings Man's freeborn soul beneath the oppressor's heel, Are his strong ministers, and that the stings Of death will make the wise his vengeance feel, Though truth and virtue arm their hearts with tenfold steel.

8. "'And it is said, this Power will punish wrong; Yes, add despair to crime, and pain to pain! And deepest hell, and deathless snakes among, Will bind the wretch on whom is fixed a stain, Which, like a plague, a burden, and a bane, Clung to him while he lived; for love and hate, Virtue

and vice, they say are difference vain— The will of strength is right—this human state Tyrants, that they may rule, with lies thus desolate.

9. "Alas, what strength? Opinion is more frail Than yon dim cloud now fading on the moon Even while we gaze, though it awhile avail To hide the orb of truth—and every throne Of Earth or Heaven, though shadow, rests thereon, One shape of many names:—for this ye plough The barren waves of ocean, hence each one Is slave or tyrant; all betray and bow, Command, or kill, or fear, or wreak, or suffer woe.

10. "Its names are each a sign which maketh holy All power—ay, the ghost, the dream, the shade Of power—lust, falsehood, hate, and pride, and folly; The pattern whence all fraud and wrong is made, A law to which mankind has been betrayed; And human love, is as the name well known Of a dear mother, whom the murderer laid In bloody grave, and into darkness thrown, Gathered her wildered babes around him as his own.

11. "O Love, who to the hearts of wandering men Art as the calm to Ocean's weary waves! Justice, or Truth, or Joy! those only can From slavery and religion's labyrinth caves Guide us, as one clear star the seaman saves. To give to all an equal share of good, To track the steps of Freedom, though through graves She pass, to suffer all in patient mood, To weep for crime, though stained with thy friend's dearest blood,—

12. "To feel the peace of self-contentment's lot, To own all sympathies, and outrage none, And in the inmost bowers of sense and thought, Until life's sunny day is quite gone down, To sit and smile with Joy, or, not alone, To kiss salt tears from the worn cheek of Woe; To live, as if to love and live were one,— This is not faith or law, nor those who bow To thrones on Heaven or Earth, such destiny may know.

13. "But children near their parents tremble now, Because they must obey—one rules another, And as one Power rules both high and low, So man is made the captive of his brother, And Hate is throned on high with Fear her mother, Above the Highest—and those fountain-cells, Whence love yet flowed when faith had choked all other, Are darkened—Woman as the bond-slave dwells Of man, a slave; and life is poisoned in its wells.

14. "Man seeks for gold in mines, that he may weave A lasting chain for his own slavery;— In fear and restless care that he may live He toils for others, who must ever be The joyless thralls of like captivity; He murders, for his chiefs delight in ruin; He builds the altar, that its idol's fee May be his very blood; he is pursuing— O, blind and willing wretch!—his own obscure undoing.

15. "Woman!—she is his slave, she has become A thing I weep to speak—the child of scorn, The outcast of a desolated home; Falsehood, and fear, and toil, like waves have worn Channels upon her cheek, which smiles adorn, As calm decks the false Ocean:—well ye know What Woman is, for none of Woman born Can choose but drain the bitter dregs of woe, Which ever from the oppressed to the oppressors flow.

16. "This need not be; ye might arise, and will That gold should lose its power, and thrones their glory; That love, which none may bind, be free to fill The world, like light; and evil faith, grown hoary With crime, be quenched and die.—Yon promontory Even now eclipses the descending moon!— Dungeons and palaces are transitory— High temples fade like vapour—Man alone Remains, whose will has power when all beside is gone.

17. "Let all be free and equal!—From your hearts I feel an echo; through my inmost frame Like sweetest sound, seeking its mate, it darts— Whence come ye, friends? Alas, I cannot name All that I read of sorrow, toil, and shame, On your worn faces; as in legends old Which make immortal

the disastrous fame Of conquerors and impostors false and bold, The discord of your hearts, I in your looks behold.

18. "Whence come ye, friends? from pouring human blood Forth on the earth? Or bring ye steel and gold, That Kings may dupe and slay the multitude? Or from the famished poor, pale, weak and cold, Bear ye the earnings of their toil? Unfold! Speak! Are your hands in slaughter's sanguine hue Stained freshly? have your hearts in guile grown old? Know yourselves thus! ye shall be pure as dew, And I will be a friend and sister unto you.

19. "Disguise it not—we have one human heart— All mortal thoughts confess a common home: Blush not for what may to thyself impart Stains of inevitable crime: the doom Is this, which has, or may, or must become Thine, and all humankind's. Ye are the spoil Which Time thus marks for the devouring tomb— Thou and thy thoughts and they, and all the toil Wherewith ye twine the rings of life's perpetual coil.

20. "Disguise it not—ye blush for what ye hate, And Enmity is sister unto Shame; Look on your mind—it is the book of fate— Ah! it is dark with many a blazoned name Of misery—all are mirrors of the same; But the dark fiend who with his iron pen Dipped in scorn's fiery poison, makes his fame Enduring there, would o'er the heads of men Pass harmless, if they scorned to make their hearts his den.

21. "Yes, it is Hate, that shapeless fiendly thing Of many names, all evil, some divine, Whom self-contempt arms with a mortal sting; Which, when the heart its snaky folds entwine Is wasted quite, and when it doth repine To gorge such bitter prey, on all beside It turns with ninefold rage, as with its twine When Amphisbaena some fair bird has tied, Soon o'er the putrid mass he threats on every side.

22. "Reproach not thine own soul, but know thyself, Nor hate another's crime, nor loathe thine own. It is the dark idolatry of self, Which, when our thoughts and actions once are gone, Demands that man should weep, and bleed, and groan; Oh, vacant expiation! Be at rest.— The past is Death's, the future is thine own; And love and joy can make the foulest breast A paradise of flowers, where peace might build her nest.

23. "Speak thou! whence come ye?"—A Youth made reply: "Wearily, wearily o'er the boundless deep We sail;—thou readest well the misery Told in these faded eyes, but much doth sleep Within, which there the poor heart loves to keep, Or dare not write on the dishonoured brow; Even from our childhood have we learned to steep The bread of slavery in the tears of woe, And never dreamed of hope or refuge until now.

24. "Yes—I must speak—my secret should have perished Even with the heart it wasted, as a brand Fades in the dying flame whose life it cherished, But that no human bosom can withstand Thee, wondrous Lady, and the mild command Of thy keen eyes:—yes, we are wretched slaves, Who from their wonted loves and native land Are reft, and bear o'er the dividing waves The unregarded prey of calm and happy graves.

25. "We drag afar from pastoral vales the fairest Among the daughters of those mountains lone, We drag them there, where all things best and rarest Are stained and trampled:—years have come and gone Since, like the ship which bears me, I have known No thought;—but now the eyes of one dear Maid On mine with light of mutual love have shone— She is my life,—I am but as the shade Of her,—a smoke sent up from ashes, soon to fade.

26. "For she must perish in the Tyrant's hall— Alas, alas!"—He ceased, and by the sail Sate cowering—but his sobs were heard by all, And still before the ocean and the gale The ship fled fast till the stars 'gan to fail; And, round me gathered with mute countenance, The Seamen gazed,

the Pilot, worn and pale With toil, the Captain with gray locks, whose glance Met mine in restless awe—they stood as in a trance.

27. "Recede not! pause not now! Thou art grown old, But Hope will make thee young, for Hope and Youth Are children of one mother, even Love—behold! The eternal stars gaze on us!—is the truth Within your soul? care for your own, or ruth For others' sufferings? do ye thirst to bear A heart which not the serpent Custom's tooth May violate?—Be free! and even here, Swear to be firm till death!" They cried, "We swear! We swear!"

28. 'The very darkness shook, as with a blast Of subterranean thunder, at the cry; The hollow shore its thousand echoes cast Into the night, as if the sea and sky, And earth, rejoiced with new-born liberty, For in that name they swore! Bolts were undrawn, And on the deck, with unaccustomed eye The captives gazing stood, and every one Shrank as the inconstant torch upon her countenance shone.

29. 'They were earth's purest children, young and fair, With eyes the shrines of unawakened thought, And brows as bright as Spring or Morning, ere Dark time had there its evil legend wrought In characters of cloud which wither not.— The change was like a dream to them; but soon They knew the glory of their altered lot, In the bright wisdom of youth's breathless noon, Sweet talk, and smiles, and sighs, all bosoms did attune.

30. 'But one was mute; her cheeks and lips most fair, Changing their hue like lilies newly blown, Beneath a bright acacia's shadowy hair, Waved by the wind amid the sunny noon, Showed that her soul was quivering; and full soon That Youth arose, and breathlessly did look On her and me, as for some speechless boon: I smiled, and both their hands in mine I took, And felt a soft delight from what their spirits shook.

CANTO 9.

1. 'That night we anchored in a woody bay, And sleep no more around us dared to hover Than, when all doubt and fear has passed away, It shades the couch of some unresting lover, Whose heart is now at rest: thus night passed over In mutual joy:—around, a forest grew Of poplars and dark oaks, whose shade did cover The waning stars pranked in the waters blue, And trembled in the wind which from the morning flew.

2. 'The joyous Mariners, and each free Maiden Now brought from the deep forest many a bough, With woodland spoil most innocently laden; Soon wreaths of budding foliage seemed to flow Over the mast and sails, the stern and prow Were canopied with blooming boughs,—the while On the slant sun's path o'er the waves we go Rejoicing, like the dwellers of an isle Doomed to pursue those waves that cannot cease to smile.

3. 'The many ships spotting the dark blue deep With snowy sails, fled fast as ours came nigh, In fear and wonder; and on every steep Thousands did gaze, they heard the startling cry, Like Earth's own voice lifted unconquerably To all her children, the unbounded mirth, The glorious joy of thy name—Liberty! They heard!—As o'er the mountains of the earth From peak to peak leap on the beams of Morning's birth:

4. 'So from that cry over the boundless hills Sudden was caught one universal sound, Like a volcano's voice, whose thunder fills Remotest skies,—such glorious madness found A path through human hearts with stream which drowned Its struggling fears and cares, dark Custom's brood; They knew not whence it came, but felt around A wide contagion poured—they called aloud On Liberty—that name lived on the sunny flood.

5. 'We reached the port.—Alas! from many spirits The wisdom which had waked that cry, was fled, Like the brief glory which dark Heaven inherits From the false dawn, which fades ere it is spread, Upon the night's devouring darkness shed: Yet soon bright day will burst—even like a chasm Of fire, to burn the shrouds outworn and dead, Which wrap the world; a wide enthusiasm, To cleanse the fevered world as with an earthquake's spasm!

6. 'I walked through the great City then, but free From shame or fear; those toil-worn Mariners And happy Maidens did encompass me; And like a subterranean wind that stirs Some forest among caves, the hopes and fears From every human soul, a murmur strange Made as I passed; and many wept, with tears Of joy and awe, and winged thoughts did range, And half-extinguished words, which prophesied of change.

7. 'For, with strong speech I tore the veil that hid Nature, and Truth, and Liberty, and Love,— As one who from some mountain's pyramid Points to the unrisen sun!—the shades approve His truth, and flee from every stream and grove. Thus, gentle thoughts did many a bosom fill,— Wisdom, the mail of tried affections wove For many a heart, and tameless scorn of ill, Thrice steeped in molten steel the unconquerable will.

8. 'Some said I was a maniac wild and lost; Some, that I scarce had risen from the grave, The Prophet's virgin bride, a heavenly ghost:— Some said, I was a fiend from my weird cave, Who had stolen human shape, and o'er the wave, The forest, and the mountain, came;—some said I was the

child of God, sent down to save Woman from bonds and death, and on my head The burden of their sins would frightfully be laid.

9. 'But soon my human words found sympathy In human hearts: the purest and the best, As friend with friend, made common cause with me, And they were few, but resolute;—the rest, Ere yet success the enterprise had blessed, Leagued with me in their hearts;—their meals, their slumber, Their hourly occupations, were possessed By hopes which I had armed to outnumber Those hosts of meaner cares, which life's strong wings encumber.

10. 'But chiefly women, whom my voice did waken From their cold, careless, willing slavery, Sought me: one truth their dreary prison has shaken,— They looked around, and lo! they became free! Their many tyrants sitting desolately In slave-deserted halls, could none restrain; For wrath's red fire had withered in the eye, Whose lightning once was death,—nor fear, nor gain Could tempt one captive now to lock another's chain.

11. 'Those who were sent to bind me, wept, and felt Their minds outsoar the bonds which clasped them round, Even as a waxen shape may waste and melt In the white furnace; and a visioned swound, A pause of hope and awe the City bound, Which, like the silence of a tempest's birth, When in its awful shadow it has wound The sun, the wind, the ocean, and the earth, Hung terrible, ere yet the lightnings have leaped forth.

12. 'Like clouds inwoven in the silent sky, By winds from distant regions meeting there, In the high name of truth and liberty, Around the City millions gathered were, By hopes which sprang from many a hidden lair,— Words which the lore of truth in hues of flame Arrayed, thine own wild songs which in the air Like homeless odours floated, and the name Of thee, and many a tongue which thou hadst dipped in flame.

13. 'The Tyrant knew his power was gone, but Fear, The nurse of Vengeance, bade him wait the event— That perfidy and custom, gold and prayer, And whatsoe'er, when force is impotent, To fraud the sceptre of the world has lent, Might, as he judged, confirm his failing sway. Therefore throughout the streets, the Priests he sent To curse the rebels.—To their gods did they For Earthquake, Plague, and Want, kneel in the public way.

14. 'And grave and hoary men were bribed to tell From seats where law is made the slave of wrong, How glorious Athens in her splendour fell, Because her sons were free,—and that among Mankind, the many to the few belong, By Heaven, and Nature, and Necessity. They said, that age was truth, and that the young Marred with wild hopes the peace of slavery, With which old times and men had quelled the vain and free.

15. 'And with the falsehood of their poisonous lips They breathed on the enduring memory Of sages and of bards a brief eclipse; There was one teacher, who necessity Had armed with strength and wrong against mankind, His slave and his avenger aye to be; That we were weak and sinful, frail and blind, And that the will of one was peace, and we Should seek for nought on earth but toil and misery—

16. "'For thus we might avoid the hell hereafter." So spake the hypocrites, who cursed and lied; Alas, their sway was past, and tears and laughter Clung to their hoary hair, withering the pride Which in their hollow hearts dared still abide; And yet obscener slaves with smoother brow, And sneers on their strait lips, thin, blue and wide, Said that the rule of men was over now, And hence, the subject world to woman's will must bow;

17. 'And gold was scattered through the streets, and wine Flowed at a hundred feasts within the wall. In vain! the steady towers in Heaven did shine As they were wont, nor at the priestly call Left Plague her banquet in the Ethiop's hall, Nor Famine from the rich man's portal came,

Where at her ease she ever preys on all Who throng to kneel for food: nor fear nor shame, Nor faith, nor discord, dimmed hope's newly kindled flame.

18. 'For gold was as a god whose faith began To fade, so that its worshippers were few, And Faith itself, which in the heart of man Gives shape, voice, name, to spectral Terror, knew Its downfall, as the altars lonelier grew, Till the Priests stood alone within the fane; The shafts of falsehood unpolluting flew, And the cold sneers of calumny were vain, The union of the free with discord's brand to stain.

19. 'The rest thou knowest.—Lo! we two are here— We have survived a ruin wide and deep— Strange thoughts are mine.—I cannot grieve or fear, Sitting with thee upon this lonely steep I smile, though human love should make me weep. We have survived a joy that knows no sorrow, And I do feel a mighty calmness creep Over my heart, which can no longer borrow Its hues from chance or change, dark children of to-morrow.

20. 'We know not what will come—yet, Laon, dearest, Cythna shall be the prophetess of Love, Her lips shall rob thee of the grace thou wearest, To hide thy heart, and clothe the shapes which rove Within the homeless Future's wintry grove; For I now, sitting thus beside thee, seem Even with thy breath and blood to live and move, And violence and wrong are as a dream Which rolls from steadfast truth, an unreturning stream.

21. 'The blasts of Autumn drive the winged seeds Over the earth,—next come the snows, and rain, And frosts, and storms, which dreary Winter leads Out of his Scythian cave, a savage train; Behold! Spring sweeps over the world again, Shedding soft dews from her ethereal wings; Flowers on the mountains, fruits over the plain, And music on the waves and woods she flings, And love on all that lives, and calm on lifeless things.

22. 'O Spring, of hope, and love, and youth, and gladness Wind-winged emblem! brightest, best and fairest! Whence comest thou, when, with dark Winter's sadness The tears that fade in sunny smiles thou sharest? Sister of joy, thou art the child who wearest Thy mother's dying smile, tender and sweet; Thy mother Autumn, for whose grave thou bearest Fresh flowers, and beams like flowers, with gentle feet, Disturbing not the leaves which are her winding-sheet.

23. 'Virtue, and Hope, and Love, like light and Heaven, Surround the world.—We are their chosen slaves. Has not the whirlwind of our spirit driven Truth's deathless germs to thought's remotest caves? Lo, Winter comes!—the grief of many graves, The frost of death, the tempest of the sword, The flood of tyranny, whose sanguine waves Stagnate like ice at Faith the enchanter's word, And bind all human hearts in its repose abhorred.

24. 'The seeds are sleeping in the soil: meanwhile The Tyrant peoples dungeons with his prey, Pale victims on the guarded scaffold smile Because they cannot speak; and, day by day, The moon of wasting Science wanes away Among her stars, and in that darkness vast The sons of earth to their foul idols pray, And gray Priests triumph, and like blight or blast A shade of selfish care o'er human looks is cast.

25. 'This is the winter of the world;—and here We die, even as the winds of Autumn fade, Expiring in the frore and foggy air. Behold! Spring comes, though we must pass, who made The promise of its birth,—even as the shade Which from our death, as from a mountain, flings The future, a broad sunrise; thus arrayed As with the plumes of overshadowing wings, From its dark gulf of chains, Earth like an eagle springs.

26. 'O dearest love! we shall be dead and cold Before this morn may on the world arise; Wouldst thou the glory of its dawn behold? Alas! gaze not on me, but turn thine eyes On thine own heart—it is a paradise Which everlasting Spring has made its own, And while drear Winter fills

the naked skies, Sweet streams of sunny thought, and flowers fresh-blown, Are there, and weave their sounds and odours into one.

27. 'In their own hearts the earnest of the hope Which made them great, the good will ever find; And though some envious shade may interlope Between the effect and it, One comes behind, Who aye the future to the past will bind—Necessity, whose sightless strength for ever Evil with evil, good with good must wind In bands of union, which no power may sever: They must bring forth their kind, and be divided never!

28. 'The good and mighty of departed ages Are in their graves, the innocent and free, Heroes, and Poets, and prevailing Sages, Who leave the vesture of their majesty To adorn and clothe this naked world;—and we Are like to them—such perish, but they leave All hope, or love, or truth, or liberty, Whose forms their mighty spirits could conceive, To be a rule and law to ages that survive.

29. 'So be the turf heaped over our remains Even in our happy youth, and that strange lot, Whate'er it be, when in these mingling veins The blood is still, be ours; let sense and thought Pass from our being, or be numbered not Among the things that are; let those who come Behind, for whom our steadfast will has bought A calm inheritance, a glorious doom, Insult with careless tread, our undivided tomb.

30. 'Our many thoughts and deeds, our life and love, Our happiness, and all that we have been, Immortally must live, and burn and move, When we shall be no more;—the world has seen A type of peace; and—as some most serene And lovely spot to a poor maniac's eye, After long years, some sweet and moving scene Of youthful hope, returning suddenly, Quells his long madness—thus man shall remember thee.

31. 'And Calumny meanwhile shall feed on us, As worms devour the dead, and near the throne And at the altar, most accepted thus Shall sneers and curses be;—what we have done None shall dare vouch, though it be truly known; That record shall remain, when they must pass Who built their pride on its oblivion; And fame, in human hope which sculptured was, Survive the perished scrolls of unenduring brass.

32. 'The while we two, beloved, must depart, And Sense and Reason, those enchanters fair, Whose wand of power is hope, would bid the heart That gazed beyond the wormy grave despair: These eyes, these lips, this blood, seems darkly there To fade in hideous ruin; no calm sleep Peopling with golden dreams the stagnant air, Seems our obscure and rotting eyes to steep In joy;—but senseless death—a ruin dark and deep!

33. 'These are blind fancies—reason cannot know What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive; There is delusion in the world—and woe, And fear, and pain—we know not whence we live, Or why, or how, or what mute Power may give Their being to each plant, and star, and beast, Or even these thoughts.—Come near me! I do weave A chain I cannot break—I am possessed With thoughts too swift and strong for one lone human breast.

34. 'Yes, yes—thy kiss is sweet, thy lips are warm— O! willingly, beloved, would these eyes, Might they no more drink being from thy form, Even as to sleep whence we again arise, Close their faint orbs in death: I fear nor prize Aught that can now betide, unshared by thee— Yes, Love when Wisdom fails makes Cythna wise: Darkness and death, if death be true, must be Dearer than life and hope, if unenjoyed with thee.

35. 'Alas, our thoughts flow on with stream, whose waters Return not to their fountain—Earth and Heaven, The Ocean and the Sun, the Clouds their daughters, Winter, and Spring, and Morn, and Noon, and Even, All that we are or know, is darkly driven Towards one gulf.—Lo! what a

change is come Since I first spake—but time shall be forgiven, Though it change all but thee!’—She ceased—night’s gloom Meanwhile had fallen on earth from the sky’s sunless dome.

36. Though she had ceased, her countenance uplifted To Heaven, still spake, with solemn glory bright; Her dark deep eyes, her lips, whose motions gifted The air they breathed with love, her locks undight. ‘Fair star of life and love,’ I cried, ‘my soul’s delight, Why lookest thou on the crystalline skies? O, that my spirit were yon Heaven of night, Which gazes on thee with its thousand eyes!’ She turned to me and smiled—that smile was Paradise!

CANTO 10.

1. Was there a human spirit in the steed, That thus with his proud voice, ere night was gone, He broke our linked rest? or do indeed All living things a common nature own, And thought erect an universal throne, Where many shapes one tribute ever bear? And Earth, their mutual mother, does she groan To see her sons contend? and makes she bare Her breast, that all in peace its drainless stores may share?

2. I have heard friendly sounds from many a tongue Which was not human—the lone nightingale Has answered me with her most soothing song, Out of her ivy bower, when I sate pale With grief, and sighed beneath; from many a dale The antelopes who flocked for food have spoken With happy sounds, and motions, that avail Like man's own speech; and such was now the token Of waning night, whose calm by that proud neigh was broken.

3. Each night, that mighty steed bore me abroad, And I returned with food to our retreat, And dark intelligence; the blood which flowed Over the fields, had stained the courser's feet; Soon the dust drinks that bitter dew,—then meet The vulture, and the wild dog, and the snake, The wolf, and the hyaena gray, and eat The dead in horrid truce: their throngs did make Behind the steed, a chasm like waves in a ship's wake.

4. For, from the utmost realms of earth came pouring The banded slaves whom every despot sent At that throned traitor's summons; like the roaring Of fire, whose floods the wild deer circumvent In the scorched pastures of the South; so bent The armies of the leagued Kings around Their files of steel and flame;—the continent Trembled, as with a zone of ruin bound, Beneath their feet, the sea shook with their Navies' sound.

5. From every nation of the earth they came, The multitude of moving heartless things, Whom slaves call men: obediently they came, Like sheep whom from the fold the shepherd brings To the stall, red with blood; their many kings Led them, thus erring, from their native land; Tartar and Frank, and millions whom the wings Of Indian breezes lull, and many a band The Arctic Anarch sent, and Idumea's sand,

6. Fertile in prodigies and lies;—so there Strange natures made a brotherhood of ill. The desert savage ceased to grasp in fear His Asian shield and bow, when, at the will Of Europe's subtler son, the bolt would kill Some shepherd sitting on a rock secure; But smiles of wondering joy his face would fill, And savage sympathy: those slaves impure, Each one the other thus from ill to ill did lure.

7. For traitorously did that foul Tyrant robe His countenance in lies,—even at the hour When he was snatched from death, then o'er the globe, With secret signs from many a mountain-tower, With smoke by day, and fire by night, the power Of Kings and Priests, those dark conspirators, He called:—they knew his cause their own, and swore Like wolves and serpents to their mutual wars Strange truce, with many a rite which Earth and Heaven abhors.

8. Myriads had come—millions were on their way; The Tyrant passed, surrounded by the steel Of hired assassins, through the public way, Choked with his country's dead:—his footsteps reel On the fresh blood—he smiles. 'Ay, now I feel I am a King in truth!' he said, and took His royal

seat, and bade the torturing wheel Be brought, and fire, and pincers, and the hook, And scorpions, that his soul on its revenge might look.

9. 'But first, go slay the rebels—why return The victor bands?' he said, 'millions yet live, Of whom the weakest with one word might turn The scales of victory yet;—let none survive But those within the walls—each fifth shall give The expiation for his brethren here.— Go forth, and waste and kill!'—'O king, forgive My speech,' a soldier answered—'but we fear The spirits of the night, and morn is drawing near;

10. 'For we were slaying still without remorse, And now that dreadful chief beneath my hand Defenceless lay, when on a hell-black horse, An Angel bright as day, waving a brand Which flashed among the stars, passed.'—'Dost thou stand Parleying with me, thou wretch?' the king replied; 'Slaves, bind him to the wheel; and of this band, Whoso will drag that woman to his side That scared him thus, may burn his dearest foe beside;

11. 'And gold and glory shall be his.—Go forth!' They rushed into the plain.—Loud was the roar Of their career: the horsemen shook the earth; The wheeled artillery's speed the pavement tore; The infantry, file after file, did pour Their clouds on the utmost hills. Five days they slew Among the wasted fields; the sixth saw gore Stream through the city; on the seventh, the dew Of slaughter became stiff, and there was peace anew:

12. Peace in the desert fields and villages, Between the gluttoned beasts and mangled dead! Peace in the silent streets! save when the cries Of victims to their fiery judgement led, Made pale their voiceless lips who seemed to dread Even in their dearest kindred, lest some tongue Be faithless to the fear yet unbetrayed; Peace in the Tyrant's palace, where the throng Waste the triumphal hours in festival and song!

13. Day after day the burning sun rolled on Over the death-polluted land—it came Out of the east like fire, and fiercely shone A lamp of Autumn, ripening with its flame The few lone ears of corn;—the sky became Stagnate with heat, so that each cloud and blast Languished and died,—the thirsting air did claim All moisture, and a rotting vapour passed From the unburied dead, invisible and fast.

14. First Want, then Plague came on the beasts; their food Failed, and they drew the breath of its decay. Millions on millions, whom the scent of blood Had lured, or who, from regions far away, Had tracked the hosts in festival array, From their dark deserts; gaunt and wasting now, Stalked like fell shades among their perished prey; In their green eyes a strange disease did glow, They sank in hideous spasm, or pains severe and slow.

15. The fish were poisoned in the streams; the birds In the green woods perished; the insect race Was withered up; the scattered flocks and herds Who had survived the wild beasts' hungry chase Died moaning, each upon the other's face In helpless agony gazing; round the City All night, the lean hyaenas their sad case Like starving infants wailed; a woeful ditty! And many a mother wept, pierced with unnatural pity.

16. Amid the aerial minarets on high, The Ethiopian vultures fluttering fell From their long line of brethren in the sky, Startling the concourse of mankind.—Too well These signs the coming mischief did foretell:— Strange panic first, a deep and sickening dread Within each heart, like ice, did sink and dwell, A voiceless thought of evil, which did spread With the quick glance of eyes, like withering lightnings shed.

17. Day after day, when the year wanes, the frosts Strip its green crown of leaves, till all is bare; So on those strange and congregated hosts Came Famine, a swift shadow, and the air Groaned with the burden of a new despair; Famine, than whom Misrule no deadlier daughter Feeds from

her thousand breasts, though sleeping there With lidless eyes, lie Faith, and Plague, and Slaughter,
A ghastly brood; conceived of Lethe's sullen water.

18. There was no food, the corn was trampled down, The flocks and herds had perished; on
the shore The dead and putrid fish were ever thrown; The deeps were foodless, and the winds no
more Creaked with the weight of birds, but, as before Those winged things sprang forth, were
void of shade; The vines and orchards, Autumn's golden store, Were burned;—so that the meanest
food was weighed With gold, and Avarice died before the god it made.

19. There was no corn—in the wide market-place All loathliest things, even human flesh, was
sold; They weighed it in small scales—and many a face Was fixed in eager horror then: his gold
The miser brought; the tender maid, grown bold Through hunger, bared her scorned charms in
vain; The mother brought her eldest born, controlled By instinct blind as love, but turned again
And bade her infant suck, and died in silent pain.

20. Then fell blue Plague upon the race of man. 'O, for the sheathed steel, so late which gave
Oblivion to the dead, when the streets ran With brothers' blood! O, that the earthquake's grave
Would gape, or Ocean lift its stifling wave!' Vain cries—throughout the streets thousands pursued
Each by his fiery torture howl and rave, Or sit in frenzy's unimagined mood, Upon fresh heaps
of dead; a ghastly multitude.

21. It was not hunger now, but thirst. Each well Was choked with rotting corpses, and became A
cauldron of green mist made visible At sunrise. Thither still the myriads came, Seeking to quench
the agony of the flame, Which raged like poison through their bursting veins; Naked they were
from torture, without shame, Spotted with nameless scars and lurid blains, Childhood, and youth,
and age, writhing in savage pains.

22. It was not thirst, but madness! Many saw Their own lean image everywhere, it went A
ghastlier self beside them, till the awe Of that dread sight to self-destruction sent Those shrieking
victims; some, ere life was spent, Sought, with a horrid sympathy, to shed Contagion on the sound;
and others rent Their matted hair, and cried aloud, 'We tread On fire! the avenging Power his hell
on earth has spread!'

23. Sometimes the living by the dead were hid. Near the great fountain in the public square,
Where corpses made a crumbling pyramid Under the sun, was heard one stifled prayer For life,
in the hot silence of the air; And strange 'twas, amid that hideous heap to see Some shrouded
in their long and golden hair, As if not dead, but slumbering quietly Like forms which sculptors
carve, then love to agony.

24. Famine had spared the palace of the king:— He rioted in festival the while, He and his
guards and priests; but Plague did fling One shadow upon all. Famine can smile On him who
brings it food, and pass, with guile Of thankful falsehood, like a courtier gray, The house-dog of
the throne; but many a mile Comes Plague, a winged wolf, who loathes alway The garbage and
the scum that strangers make her prey.

25. So, near the throne, amid the gorgeous feast, Sheathed in resplendent arms, or loosely dight
To luxury, ere the mockery yet had ceased That lingered on his lips, the warrior's might Was
loosened, and a new and ghastlier night In dreams of frenzy lapped his eyes; he fell Headlong, or
with stiff eyeballs sate upright Among the guests, or raving mad did tell Strange truths; a dying
seer of dark oppression's hell.

26. The Princes and the Priests were pale with terror; That monstrous faith wherewith they
ruled mankind, Fell, like a shaft loosed by the bowman's error, On their own hearts: they sought
and they could find No refuge—'twas the blind who led the blind! So, through the desolate streets

to the high fane, The many-tongued and endless armies wind In sad procession: each among the train To his own Idol lifts his supplications vain.

27. 'O God!' they cried, 'we know our secret pride Has scorned thee, and thy worship, and thy name; Secure in human power we have defied Thy fearful might; we bend in fear and shame Before thy presence; with the dust we claim Kindred; be merciful, O King of Heaven! Most justly have we suffered for thy fame Made dim, but be at length our sins forgiven, Ere to despair and death thy worshippers be driven.

28. 'O King of Glory! thou alone hast power! Who can resist thy will? who can restrain Thy wrath, when on the guilty thou dost shower The shafts of thy revenge, a blistering rain? Greatest and best, be merciful again! Have we not stabbed thine enemies, and made The Earth an altar, and the Heavens a fane, Where thou wert worshipped with their blood, and laid Those hearts in dust which would thy searchless works have weighed?

29. 'Well didst thou loosen on this impious City Thine angels of revenge: recall them now; Thy worshippers, abased, here kneel for pity, And bind their souls by an immortal vow: We swear by thee! and to our oath do thou Give sanction, from thine hell of fiends and flame, That we will kill with fire and torments slow, The last of those who mocked thy holy name, And scorned the sacred laws thy prophets did proclaim.'

30. Thus they with trembling limbs and pallid lips Worshipped their own hearts' image, dim and vast, Scared by the shade wherewith they would eclipse The light of other minds;—troubled they passed From the great Temple;—fiercely still and fast The arrows of the plague among them fell, And they on one another gazed aghast, And through the hosts contention wild befell, As each of his own god the wondrous works did tell.

31. And Oromaze, Joshua, and Mahomet, Moses, and Buddh, Zerdusht, and Brahm, and Foh, A tumult of strange names, which never met Before, as watchwords of a single woe, Arose; each raging votary 'gan to throw Aloft his armed hands, and each did howl 'Our God alone is God!'—and slaughter now Would have gone forth, when from beneath a cowl A voice came forth, which pierced like ice through every soul.

32. 'Twas an Iberian Priest from whom it came, A zealous man, who led the legioned West, With words which faith and pride had steeped in flame, To quell the unbelievers; a dire guest Even to his friends was he, for in his breast Did hate and guile lie watchful, intertwined, Twin serpents in one deep and winding nest; He loathed all faith beside his own, and pined To wreak his fear of Heaven in vengeance on mankind.

33. But more he loathed and hated the clear light Of wisdom and free thought, and more did fear, Lest, kindled once, its beams might pierce the night, Even where his Idol stood; for, far and near Did many a heart in Europe leap to hear That faith and tyranny were trampled down; Many a pale victim, doomed for truth to share The murderer's cell, or see, with helpless groan, The priests his children drag for slaves to serve their own.

34. He dared not kill the infidels with fire Or steel, in Europe; the slow agonies Of legal torture mocked his keen desire: So he made truce with those who did despise The expiation, and the sacrifice, That, though detested, Islam's kindred creed Might crush for him those deadlier enemies; For fear of God did in his bosom breed A jealous hate of man, an unreposing need.

35. 'Peace! Peace!' he cried, 'when we are dead, the Day Of Judgement comes, and all shall surely know Whose God is God, each fearfully shall pay The errors of his faith in endless woe! But there is sent a mortal vengeance now On earth, because an impious race had spurned Him

whom we all adore,—a subtle foe, By whom for ye this dread reward was earned, And kingly thrones, which rest on faith, nigh overturned.

36. 'Think ye, because ye weep, and kneel, and pray, That God will lull the pestilence? It rose Even from beneath his throne, where, many a day, His mercy soothed it to a dark repose: It walks upon the earth to judge his foes; And what are thou and I, that he should deign To curb his ghastly minister, or close The gates of death, ere they receive the twain Who shook with mortal spells his undefended reign?

37. 'Ay, there is famine in the gulf of hell, Its giant worms of fire for ever yawn.— Their lurid eyes are on us! those who fell By the swift shafts of pestilence ere dawn, Are in their jaws! they hunger for the spawn Of Satan, their own brethren, who were sent To make our souls their spoil. See! see! they fawn Like dogs, and they will sleep with luxury spent, When those detested hearts their iron fangs have rent!

38. 'Our God may then lull Pestilence to sleep:— Pile high the pyre of expiation now, A forest's spoil of boughs, and on the heap Pour venomous gums, which sullenly and slow, When touched by flame, shall burn, and melt, and flow, A stream of clinging fire,—and fix on high A net of iron, and spread forth below A couch of snakes, and scorpions, and the fry Of centipedes and worms, earth's hellish progeny!

39. 'Let Laon and Laone on that pyre, Linked tight with burning brass, perish!—then pray That, with this sacrifice, the withering ire Of Heaven may be appeased.' He ceased, and they A space stood silent, as far, far away The echoes of his voice among them died; And he knelt down upon the dust, alway Muttering the curses of his speechless pride, Whilst shame, and fear, and awe, the armies did divide.

40. His voice was like a blast that burst the portal Of fabled hell; and as he spake, each one Saw gape beneath the chasms of fire immortal, And Heaven above seemed cloven, where, on a throne Girt round with storms and shadows, sate alone Their King and Judge—fear killed in every breast All natural pity then, a fear unknown Before, and with an inward fire possessed, They raged like homeless beasts whom burning woods invest.

41. 'Twas morn.—At noon the public crier went forth, Proclaiming through the living and the dead, 'The Monarch saith, that his great Empire's worth Is set on Laon and Laone's head: He who but one yet living here can lead, Or who the life from both their hearts can wring, Shall be the kingdom's heir—a glorious meed! But he who both alive can hither bring, The Princess shall espouse, and reign an equal King.'

42. Ere night the pyre was piled, the net of iron Was spread above, the fearful couch below; It overtopped the towers that did environ That spacious square; for Fear is never slow To build the thrones of Hate, her mate and foe; So, she scourged forth the maniac multitude To rear this pyramid—tottering and slow, Plague-stricken, foodless, like lean herds pursued By gadflies, they have piled the heath, and gums, and wood.

43. Night came, a starless and a moonless gloom. Until the dawn, those hosts of many a nation Stood round that pile, as near one lover's tomb Two gentle sisters mourn their desolation; And in the silence of that expectation, Was heard on high the reptiles' hiss and crawl— It was so deep—save when the devastation Of the swift pest, with fearful interval, Marking its path with shrieks, among the crowd would fall.

44. Morn came,—among those sleepless multitudes, Madness, and Fear, and Plague, and Famine still Heaped corpse on corpse, as in autumnal woods The frosts of many a wind with dead leaves fill Earth's cold and sullen brooks; in silence, still The pale survivors stood; ere noon, the fear Of

Hell became a panic, which did kill Like hunger or disease, with whispers drear, As 'Hush! hark! Come they yet?—Just Heaven! thine hour is near!'

45. And Priests rushed through their ranks, some counterfeiting The rage they did inspire, some mad indeed With their own lies; they said their god was waiting To see his enemies writhe, and burn, and bleed,— And that, till then, the snakes of Hell had need Of human souls:—three hundred furnaces Soon blazed through the wide City, where, with speed, Men brought their infidel kindred to appease God's wrath, and, while they burned, knelt round on quivering knees.

46. The noontide sun was darkened with that smoke, The winds of eve dispersed those ashes gray. The madness which these rites had lulled, awoke Again at sunset.—Who shall dare to say The deeds which night and fear brought forth, or weigh In balance just the good and evil there? He might man's deep and searchless heart display, And cast a light on those dim labyrinths, where Hope, near imagined chasms, is struggling with despair.

47. 'Tis said, a mother dragged three children then, To those fierce flames which roast the eyes in the head, And laughed, and died; and that unholy men, Feasting like fiends upon the infidel dead, Looked from their meal, and saw an Angel tread The visible floor of Heaven, and it was she! And, on that night, one without doubt or dread Came to the fire, and said, 'Stop, I am he! Kill me!'—They burned them both with hellish mockery.

48. And, one by one, that night, young maidens came, Beauteous and calm, like shapes of living stone Clothed in the light of dreams, and by the flame Which shrank as overgorged, they laid them down, And sung a low sweet song, of which alone One word was heard, and that was Liberty; And that some kissed their marble feet, with moan Like love, and died; and then that they did die With happy smiles, which sunk in white tranquillity.

CANTO 11.

1. She saw me not—she heard me not—alone Upon the mountain's dizzy brink she stood; She spake not, breathed not, moved not—there was thrown Over her look, the shadow of a mood Which only clothes the heart in solitude, A thought of voiceless depth;—she stood alone, Above, the Heavens were spread;—below, the flood Was murmuring in its caves;—the wind had blown Her hair apart, through which her eyes and forehead shone.

2. A cloud was hanging o'er the western mountains; Before its blue and moveless depth were flying Gray mists poured forth from the unresting fountains Of darkness in the North:—the day was dying:— Sudden, the sun shone forth, its beams were lying Like boiling gold on Ocean, strange to see, And on the shattered vapours, which defying The power of light in vain, tossed restlessly In the red Heaven, like wrecks in a tempestuous sea.

3. It was a stream of living beams, whose bank On either side by the cloud's cleft was made; And where its chasms that flood of glory drank, Its waves gushed forth like fire, and as if swayed By some mute tempest, rolled on HER; the shade Of her bright image floated on the river Of liquid light, which then did end and fade— Her radiant shape upon its verge did shiver; Aloft, her flowing hair like strings of flame did quiver.

4. I stood beside her, but she saw me not— She looked upon the sea, and skies, and earth; Rapture, and love, and admiration wrought A passion deeper far than tears, or mirth, Or speech, or gesture, or whate'er has birth From common joy; which with the speechless feeling That led her there united, and shot forth From her far eyes a light of deep revealing, All but her dearest self from my regard concealing.

5. Her lips were parted, and the measured breath Was now heard there;—her dark and intricate eyes Orb within orb, deeper than sleep or death, Absorbed the glories of the burning skies, Which, mingling with her heart's deep ecstasies, Burst from her looks and gestures;—and a light Of liquid tenderness, like love, did rise From her whole frame, an atmosphere which quite Arrayed her in its beams, tremulous and soft and bright.

6. She would have clasped me to her glowing frame; Those warm and odorous lips might soon have shed On mine the fragrance and the invisible flame Which now the cold winds stole;—she would have laid Upon my languid heart her dearest head; I might have heard her voice, tender and sweet; Her eyes, mingling with mine, might soon have fed My soul with their own joy.—One moment yet I gazed—we parted then, never again to meet!

7. Never but once to meet on Earth again! She heard me as I fled—her eager tone Sunk on my heart, and almost wove a chain Around my will to link it with her own, So that my stern resolve was almost gone. 'I cannot reach thee! whither dost thou fly? My steps are faint—Come back, thou dearest one— Return, ah me! return!'—The wind passed by On which those accents died, faint, far, and lingeringly.

8. Woe! Woe! that moonless midnight!—Want and Pest Were horrible, but one more fell doth rear, As in a hydra's swarming lair, its crest Eminent among those victims—even the Fear Of Hell: each girt by the hot atmosphere Of his blind agony, like a scorpion stung By his own rage upon

his burning bier Of circling coals of fire; but still there clung One hope, like a keen sword on starting threads uphung:

9. Not death—death was no more refuge or rest; Not life—it was despair to be!—not sleep, For fiends and chasms of fire had dispossessed All natural dreams: to wake was not to weep, But to gaze mad and pallid, at the leap To which the Future, like a snaky scourge, Or like some tyrant's eye, which aye doth keep Its withering beam upon his slaves, did urge Their steps; they heard the roar of Hell's sulphureous surge.

10. Each of that multitude, alone, and lost To sense of outward things, one hope yet knew; As on a foam-girt crag some seaman tossed Stares at the rising tide, or like the crew Whilst now the ship is splitting through and through; Each, if the tramp of a far steed was heard, Started from sick despair, or if there flew One murmur on the wind, or if some word Which none can gather yet, the distant crowd has stirred.

11. Why became cheeks, wan with the kiss of death, Paler from hope? they had sustained despair. Why watched those myriads with suspended breath Sleepless a second night? they are not here, The victims, and hour by hour, a vision drear, Warm corpses fall upon the clay-cold dead; And even in death their lips are wreathed with fear.— The crowd is mute and moveless—overhead Silent Arcturus shines—'Ha! hear'st thou not the tread

12. 'Of rushing feet? laughter? the shout, the scream, Of triumph not to be contained? See! hark! They come, they come! give way!' Alas, ye deem Falsely—'tis but a crowd of maniacs stark Driven, like a troop of spectres, through the dark, From the choked well, whence a bright death-fire sprung, A lurid earth-star, which dropped many a spark From its blue train, and spreading widely, clung To their wild hair, like mist the topmost pines among.

13. And many, from the crowd collected there, Joined that strange dance in fearful sympathies; There was the silence of a long despair, When the last echo of those terrible cries Came from a distant street, like agonies Stifled afar.—Before the Tyrant's throne All night his aged Senate sate, their eyes In stony expectation fixed; when one Sudden before them stood, a Stranger and alone.

14. Dark Priests and haughty Warriors gazed on him With baffled wonder, for a hermit's vest Concealed his face; but when he spake, his tone, Ere yet the matter did their thoughts arrest,— Earnest, benignant, calm, as from a breast Void of all hate or terror—made them start; For as with gentle accents he addressed His speech to them, on each unwilling heart Unusual awe did fall—a spirit-quelling dart.

15. 'Ye Princes of the Earth, ye sit aghast Amid the ruin which yourselves have made, Yes, Desolation heard your trumpet's blast, And sprang from sleep!—dark Terror has obeyed Your bidding—O, that I whom ye have made Your foe, could set my dearest enemy free From pain and fear! but evil casts a shade, Which cannot pass so soon, and Hate must be The nurse and parent still of an ill progeny.

16. 'Ye turn to Heaven for aid in your distress; Alas, that ye, the mighty and the wise, Who, if ye dared, might not aspire to less Than ye conceive of power, should fear the lies Which thou, and thou, didst frame for mysteries To blind your slaves:—consider your own thought, An empty and a cruel sacrifice Ye now prepare, for a vain idol wrought Out of the fears and hate which vain desires have brought.

17. 'Ye seek for happiness—alas, the day! Ye find it not in luxury nor in gold, Nor in the fame, nor in the envied sway For which, O willing slaves to Custom old, Severe taskmistress! ye your hearts have sold. Ye seek for peace, and when ye die, to dream No evil dreams: all mortal things

are cold And senseless then; if aught survive, I deem It must be love and joy, for they immortal seem.

18. 'Fear not the future, weep not for the past. Oh, could I win your ears to dare be now Glorious, and great, and calm! that ye would cast Into the dust those symbols of your woe, Purple, and gold, and steel! that ye would go Proclaiming to the nations whence ye came, That Want, and Plague, and Fear, from slavery flow; And that mankind is free, and that the shame Of royalty and faith is lost in freedom's fame!

19. 'If thus, 'tis well—if not, I come to say That Laon—' while the Stranger spoke, among The Council sudden tumult and affray Arose, for many of those warriors young, Had on his eloquent accents fed and hung Like bees on mountain-flowers; they knew the truth, And from their thrones in vindication sprung; The men of faith and law then without ruth Drew forth their secret steel, and stabbed each ardent youth.

20. They stabbed them in the back and sneered—a slave Who stood behind the throne, those corpses drew Each to its bloody, dark, and secret grave; And one more daring raised his steel anew To pierce the Stranger. 'What hast thou to do With me, poor wretch?'—Calm, solemn and severe, That voice unstrung his sinews, and he threw His dagger on the ground, and pale with fear, Sate silently—his voice then did the Stranger rear.

21. 'It doth avail not that I weep for ye— Ye cannot change, since ye are old and gray, And ye have chosen your lot—your fame must be A book of blood, whence in a milder day Men shall learn truth, when ye are wrapped in clay: Now ye shall triumph. I am Laon's friend, And him to your revenge will I betray, So ye concede one easy boon. Attend! For now I speak of things which ye can apprehend.

22. 'There is a People mighty in its youth, A land beyond the Oceans of the West, Where, though with rudest rites, Freedom and Truth Are worshipped; from a glorious Mother's breast, Who, since high Athens fell, among the rest Sate like the Queen of Nations, but in woe, By inbred monsters outraged and oppressed, Turns to her chainless child for succour now, It draws the milk of Power in Wisdom's fullest flow.

23. 'That land is like an Eagle, whose young gaze Feeds on the noontide beam, whose golden plume Floats moveless on the storm, and in the blaze Of sunrise gleams when Earth is wrapped in gloom; An epitaph of glory for the tomb Of murdered Europe may thy fame be made, Great People! as the sands shalt thou become; Thy growth is swift as morn, when night must fade; The multitudinous Earth shall sleep beneath thy shade.

24. 'Yes, in the desert there is built a home For Freedom. Genius is made strong to rear The monuments of man beneath the dome Of a new Heaven; myriads assemble there, Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear, Drive from their wasted homes: the boon I pray Is this—that Cythna shall be convoyed there— Nay, start not at the name—America! And then to you this night Laon will I betray.

25. 'With me do what ye will. I am your foe!' The light of such a joy as makes the stare Of hungry snakes like living emeralds glow, Shone in a hundred human eyes—'Where, where Is Laon? Haste! fly! drag him swiftly here! We grant thy boon.'—'I put no trust in ye, Swear by the Power ye dread.'—'We swear, we swear!' The Stranger threw his vest back suddenly, And smiled in gentle pride, and said, 'Lo! I am he!'

CANTO 12.

1. The transport of a fierce and monstrous gladness Spread through the multitudinous streets, fast flying Upon the winds of fear; from his dull madness The starveling waked, and died in joy; the dying, Among the corpses in stark agony lying, Just heard the happy tidings, and in hope Closed their faint eyes; from house to house replying With loud acclaim, the living shook Heaven's cope, And filled the startled Earth with echoes: morn did ope

2. Its pale eyes then; and lo! the long array Of guards in golden arms, and Priests beside, Singing their bloody hymns, whose garbs betray The blackness of the faith it seems to hide; And see, the Tyrant's gem-wrought chariot glide Among the gloomy cowls and glittering spears— A Shape of light is sitting by his side, A child most beautiful. I' the midst appears Laon,—exempt alone from mortal hopes and fears.

3. His head and feet are bare, his hands are bound Behind with heavy chains, yet none do wreak Their scoffs on him, though myriads throng around; There are no sneers upon his lip which speak That scorn or hate has made him bold; his cheek Resolve has not turned pale,—his eyes are mild And calm, and, like the morn about to break, Smile on mankind—his heart seems reconciled To all things and itself, like a reposing child.

4. Tumult was in the soul of all beside, Ill joy, or doubt, or fear; but those who saw Their tranquil victim pass, felt wonder glide Into their brain, and became calm with awe.— See, the slow pageant near the pile doth draw. A thousand torches in the spacious square, Borne by the ready slaves of ruthless law, Await the signal round: the morning fair Is changed to a dim night by that unnatural glare.

5. And see! beneath a sun-bright canopy, Upon a platform level with the pile, The anxious Tyrant sit, enthroned on high, Girt by the chieftains of the host; all smile In expectation, but one child: the while I, Laon, led by mutes, ascend my bier Of fire, and look around: each distant isle Is dark in the bright dawn; towers far and near, Pierce like reposing flames the tremulous atmosphere.

6. There was such silence through the host, as when An earthquake trampling on some populous town, Has crushed ten thousand with one tread, and men Expect the second; all were mute but one, That fairest child, who, bold with love, alone Stood up before the King, without avail, Pleading for Laon's life—her stifled groan Was heard—she trembled like one aspen pale Among the gloomy pines of a Norwegian vale.

7. What were his thoughts linked in the morning sun, Among those reptiles, stingless with delay, Even like a tyrant's wrath?—The signal-gun Roared—hark, again! In that dread pause he lay As in a quiet dream—the slaves obey— A thousand torches drop,—and hark, the last Bursts on that awful silence; far away, Millions, with hearts that beat both loud and fast, Watch for the springing flame expectant and aghast.

8. They fly—the torches fall—a cry of fear Has startled the triumphant!—they recede! For, ere the cannon's roar has died, they hear The tramp of hoofs like earthquake, and a steed Dark and gigantic, with the tempest's speed, Bursts through their ranks: a woman sits thereon, Fairer, it

seems, than aught that earth can breed, Calm, radiant, like the phantom of the dawn, A spirit from the caves of daylight wandering gone.

9. All thought it was God's Angel come to sweep The lingering guilty to their fiery grave; The Tyrant from his throne in dread did leap,– Her innocence his child from fear did save; Scared by the faith they feigned, each priestly slave Knelt for his mercy whom they served with blood, And, like the reflux of a mighty wave Sucked into the loud sea, the multitude With crushing panic, fled in terror's altered mood.

10. They pause, they blush, they gaze,–a gathering shout Bursts like one sound from the ten thousand streams Of a tempestuous sea:–that sudden rout One checked, who, never in his mildest dreams Felt awe from grace or loveliness, the seams Of his rent heart so hard and cold a creed Had seared with blistering ice–but he misdeems That he is wise, whose wounds do only bleed Inly for self,–thus thought the Iberian Priest indeed,

11. And others, too, thought he was wise to see, In pain, and fear, and hate, something divine; In love and beauty, no divinity.– Now with a bitter smile, whose light did shine Like a fiend's hope upon his lips and eyne, He said, and the persuasion of that sneer Rallied his trembling comrades–'Is it mine To stand alone, when kings and soldiers fear A woman? Heaven has sent its other victim here.'

12. 'Were it not impious,' said the King, 'to break Our holy oath?'–'Impious to keep it, say!' Shrieked the exulting Priest:–'Slaves, to the stake Bind her, and on my head the burden lay Of her just torments:–at the Judgement Day Will I stand up before the golden throne Of Heaven, and cry, "To Thee did I betray An infidel; but for me she would have known Another moment's joy! the glory be thine own."'

13. They trembled, but replied not, nor obeyed, Pausing in breathless silence. Cythna sprung From her gigantic steed, who, like a shade Chased by the winds, those vacant streets among Fled tameless, as the brazen rein she flung Upon his neck, and kissed his mooned brow. A piteous sight, that one so fair and young, The clasp of such a fearful death should woo With smiles of tender joy as beamed from Cythna now.

14. The warm tears burst in spite of faith and fear From many a tremulous eye, but like soft dew Which feed Spring's earliest buds, hung gathered there, Frozen by doubt,–alas! they could not choose But weep; for when her faint limbs did refuse To climb the pyre, upon the mutes she smiled; And with her eloquent gestures, and the hues Of her quick lips, even as a weary child Wins sleep from some fond nurse with its caresses mild,

15. She won them, though unwilling, her to bind Near me, among the snakes. When there had fled One soft reproach that was most thrilling kind, She smiled on me, and nothing then we said, But each upon the other's countenance fed Looks of insatiate love; the mighty veil Which doth divide the living and the dead Was almost rent, the world grew dim and pale,– All light in Heaven or Earth beside our love did fail.–

16. Yet–yet–one brief relapse, like the last beam Of dying flames, the stainless air around Hung silent and serene–a blood-red gleam Burst upwards, hurling fiercely from the ground The globed smoke,–I heard the mighty sound Of its uprise, like a tempestuous ocean; And through its chasms I saw, as in a swoon, The tyrant's child fall without life or motion Before his throne, subdued by some unseen emotion.–

17. And is this death?–The pyre has disappeared, The Pestilence, the Tyrant, and the throng; The flames grow silent–slowly there is heard The music of a breath-suspending song, Which, like the kiss of love when life is young, Steeps the faint eyes in darkness sweet and deep; With

ever-changing notes it floats along, Till on my passive soul there seemed to creep A melody, like waves on wrinkled sands that leap.

18. The warm touch of a soft and tremulous hand Wakened me then; lo! Cythna sate reclined Beside me, on the waved and golden sand Of a clear pool, upon a bank o'ertwined With strange and star-bright flowers, which to the wind Breathed divine odour; high above, was spread The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind, Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead A shadow, which was light, upon the waters shed.

19. And round about sloped many a lawny mountain With incense-bearing forests and vast caves Of marble radiance, to that mighty fountain; And where the flood its own bright margin laves, Their echoes talk with its eternal waves, Which, from the depths whose jagged caverns breed Their unreposing strife, it lifts and heaves,— Till through a chasm of hills they roll, and feed A river deep, which flies with smooth but arrowy speed.

20. As we sate gazing in a trance of wonder, A boat approached, borne by the musical air Along the waves which sung and sparkled under Its rapid keel—a winged shape sate there, A child with silver-shining wings, so fair, That as her bark did through the waters glide, The shadow of the lingering waves did wear Light, as from starry beams; from side to side, While veering to the wind her plumes the bark did guide.

21. The boat was one curved shell of hollow pearl, Almost translucent with the light divine Of her within; the prow and stern did curl Horned on high, like the young moon supine, When o'er dim twilight mountains dark with pine, It floats upon the sunset's sea of beams, Whose golden waves in many a purple line Fade fast, till borne on sunlight's ebbing streams, Dilating, on earth's verge the sunken meteor gleams.

22. Its keel has struck the sands beside our feet;— Then Cythna turned to me, and from her eyes Which swam with unshed tears, a look more sweet Than happy love, a wild and glad surprise, Glanced as she spake: 'Ay, this is Paradise And not a dream, and we are all united! Lo, that is mine own child, who in the guise Of madness came, like day to one benighted In lonesome woods: my heart is now too well requited!'

23. And then she wept aloud, and in her arms Clasped that bright Shape, less marvellously fair Than her own human hues and living charms; Which, as she leaned in passion's silence there, Breathed warmth on the cold bosom of the air, Which seemed to blush and tremble with delight; The glossy darkness of her streaming hair Fell o'er that snowy child, and wrapped from sight The fond and long embrace which did their hearts unite.

24. Then the bright child, the plumed Seraph came, And fixed its blue and beaming eyes on mine, And said, 'I was disturbed by tremulous shame When once we met, yet knew that I was thine From the same hour in which thy lips divine Kindled a clinging dream within my brain, Which ever waked when I might sleep, to twine Thine image with HER memory dear—again We meet; exempted now from mortal fear or pain.

25. 'When the consuming flames had wrapped ye round, The hope which I had cherished went away; I fell in agony on the senseless ground, And hid mine eyes in dust, and far astray My mind was gone, when bright, like dawning day, The Spectre of the Plague before me flew, And breathed upon my lips, and seemed to say, "They wait for thee, beloved!"—then I knew The death-mark on my breast, and became calm anew.

26. 'It was the calm of love—for I was dying. I saw the black and half-extinguished pyre In its own gray and shrunken ashes lying; The pitchy smoke of the departed fire Still hung in many a hollow dome and spire Above the towers, like night,—beneath whose shade Awed by the ending

of their own desire The armies stood; a vacancy was made In expectation's depth, and so they stood dismayed.

27. "The frightful silence of that altered mood, The tortures of the dying clove alone, Till one uprose among the multitude, And said—"The flood of time is rolling on; We stand upon its brink, whilst THEY are gone To glide in peace down death's mysterious stream. Have ye done well? They moulder, flesh and bone, Who might have made this life's envenomed dream A sweeter draught than ye will ever taste, I deem.

28. "These perish as the good and great of yore Have perished, and their murderers will repent,— Yes, vain and barren tears shall flow before Yon smoke has faded from the firmament Even for this cause, that ye who must lament The death of those that made this world so fair, Cannot recall them now; but there is lent To man the wisdom of a high despair, When such can die, and he live on and linger here.

29. "Ay, ye may fear not now the Pestilence, From fabled hell as by a charm withdrawn; All power and faith must pass, since calmly hence In pain and fire have unbelievers gone; And ye must sadly turn away, and moan In secret, to his home each one returning; And to long ages shall this hour be known; And slowly shall its memory, ever burning, Fill this dark night of things with an eternal morning.

30. "For me that world is grown too void and cold, Since Hope pursues immortal Destiny With steps thus slow—therefore shall ye behold How those who love, yet fear not, dare to die; Tell to your children this!" Then suddenly He sheathed a dagger in his heart and fell; My brain grew dark in death, and yet to me There came a murmur from the crowd, to tell Of deep and mighty change which suddenly befell.

31. "Then suddenly I stood, a winged Thought, Before the immortal Senate, and the seat Of that star-shining spirit, whence is wrought The strength of its dominion, good and great, The better Genius of this world's estate. His realm around one mighty Fane is spread, Elysian islands bright and fortunate, Calm dwellings of the free and happy dead, Where I am sent to lead!' These winged words she said,

32. And with the silence of her eloquent smile, Bade us embark in her divine canoe; Then at the helm we took our seat, the while Above her head those plumes of dazzling hue Into the winds' invisible stream she threw, Sitting beside the prow: like gossamer On the swift breath of morn, the vessel flew O'er the bright whirlpools of that fountain fair, Whose shores receded fast, while we seemed lingering there;

33. Till down that mighty stream, dark, calm, and fleet, Between a chasm of cedarn mountains riven, Chased by the thronging winds whose viewless feet As swift as twinkling beams, had, under Heaven, From woods and waves wild sounds and odours driven, The boat fled visibly—three nights and days, Borne like a cloud through morn, and noon, and even, We sailed along the winding watery ways Of the vast stream, a long and labyrinthine maze.

34. A scene of joy and wonder to behold That river's shapes and shadows changing ever, Where the broad sunrise filled with deepening gold Its whirlpools, where all hues did spread and quiver; And where melodious falls did burst and shiver Among rocks clad with flowers, the foam and spray Sparkled like stars upon the sunny river, Or when the moonlight poured a holier day, One vast and glittering lake around green islands lay.

35. Morn, noon, and even, that boat of pearl outran The streams which bore it, like the arrowy cloud Of tempest, or the speedier thought of man, Which flieth forth and cannot make abode; Sometimes through forests, deep like night, we glode, Between the walls of mighty mountains

crowned With Cyclopean piles, whose turrets proud, The homes of the departed, dimly frowned
O'er the bright waves which girt their dark foundations round.

36. Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows, Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas
delight To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows Over the grass; sometimes beneath the
night Of wide and vaulted caves, whose roofs were bright With starry gems, we fled, whilst from
their deep And dark-green chasms, shades beautiful and white, Amid sweet sounds across our
path would sweep, Like swift and lovely dreams that walk the waves of sleep.

37. And ever as we sailed, our minds were full Of love and wisdom, which would overflow In
converse wild, and sweet, and wonderful, And in quick smiles whose light would come and go
Like music o'er wide waves, and in the flow Of sudden tears, and in the mute caress— For a deep
shade was cleft, and we did know, That virtue, though obscured on Earth, not less Survives all
mortal change in lasting loveliness.

38. Three days and nights we sailed, as thought and feeling Number delightful hours—for
through the sky The sphered lamps of day and night, revealing New changes and new glories,
rolled on high, Sun, Moon and moonlike lamps, the progeny Of a diviner Heaven, serene and fair:
On the fourth day, wild as a windwrought sea The stream became, and fast and faster bare The
spirit-winged boat, steadily speeding there.

39. Steady and swift, where the waves rolled like mountains Within the vast ravine, whose
rifts did pour Tumultuous floods from their ten thousand fountains, The thunder of whose earth-
uplifting roar Made the air sweep in whirlwinds from the shore, Calm as a shade, the boat of
that fair child Securely fled, that rapid stress before, Amid the topmost spray, and sunbows wild,
Wreathed in the silver mist: in joy and pride we smiled.

40. The torrent of that wide and raging river Is passed, and our aerial speed suspended. We
look behind; a golden mist did quiver When its wild surges with the lake were blended,— Our bark
hung there, as on a line suspended Between two heavens,—that windless waveless lake Which
four great cataracts from four vales, attended By mists, aye feed; from rocks and clouds they
break, And of that azure sea a silent refuge make.

41. Motionless resting on the lake awhile, I saw its marge of snow-bright mountains rear Their
peaks aloft, I saw each radiant isle, And in the midst, afar, even like a sphere Hung in one hollow
sky, did there appear The Temple of the Spirit; on the sound Which issued thence, drawn nearer
and more near, Like the swift moon this glorious earth around, The charmed boat approached,
and there its haven found.

NOTE ON THE "REVOLT OF ISLAM", BY MRS. SHELLEY.

Shelley possessed two remarkable qualities of intellect—a brilliant imagination, and a logical
exactness of reason. His inclinations led him (he fancied) almost alike to poetry and metaphysical
discussions. I say 'he fancied,' because I believe the former to have been paramount, and that it
would have gained the mastery even had he struggled against it. However, he said that he deliber-
ated at one time whether he should dedicate himself to poetry or metaphysics; and, resolving
on the former, he educated himself for it, discarding in a great measure his philosophical pur-
suits, and engaging himself in the study of the poets of Greece, Italy, and England. To these may
be added a constant perusal of portions of the old Testament—the Psalms, the Book of Job, the
Prophet Isaiah, and others, the sublime poetry of which filled him with delight.

As a poet, his intellect and compositions were powerfully influenced by exterior circumstances,
and especially by his place of abode. He was very fond of travelling, and ill-health increased this
restlessness. The sufferings occasioned by a cold English winter made him pine, especially when

our colder spring arrived, for a more genial climate. In 1816 he again visited Switzerland, and rented a house on the banks of the Lake of Geneva; and many a day, in cloud or sunshine, was passed alone in his boat—sailing as the wind listed, or weltering on the calm waters. The majestic aspect of Nature ministered such thoughts as he afterwards enwove in verse. His lines on the Bridge of the Arve, and his "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty", were written at this time. Perhaps during this summer his genius was checked by association with another poet whose nature was utterly dissimilar to his own, yet who, in the poem he wrote at that time, gave tokens that he shared for a period the more abstract and etherealised inspiration of Shelley. The saddest events awaited his return to England; but such was his fear to wound the feelings of others that he never expressed the anguish he felt, and seldom gave vent to the indignation roused by the persecutions he underwent; while the course of deep unexpressed passion, and the sense of injury, engendered the desire to embody themselves in forms defecated of all the weakness and evil which cling to real life.

He chose therefore for his hero a youth nourished in dreams of liberty, some of whose actions are in direct opposition to the opinions of the world; but who is animated throughout by an ardent love of virtue, and a resolution to confer the boons of political and intellectual freedom on his fellow-creatures. He created for this youth a woman such as he delighted to imagine—full of enthusiasm for the same objects; and they both, with will unvanquished, and the deepest sense of the justice of their cause, met adversity and death. There exists in this poem a memorial of a friend of his youth. The character of the old man who liberates Laon from his tower prison, and tends on him in sickness, is founded on that of Doctor Lind, who, when Shelley was at Eton, had often stood by to befriend and support him, and whose name he never mentioned without love and veneration.

During the year 1817 we were established at Marlow in Buckinghamshire. Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighbourhood to the Thames. The poem was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighbouring country, which is distinguished for peculiar beauty. The chalk hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech; the wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation; and the cultivated part is peculiarly fertile. With all this wealth of Nature which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlow was inhabited (I hope it is altered now) by a very poor population. The women are lacemakers, and lose their health by sedentary labour, for which they were very ill paid. The Poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The changes produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In the winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the poor cottages. I mention these things,—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race.

The poem, bold in its opinions and uncompromising in their expression, met with many censurers, not only among those who allow of no virtue but such as supports the cause they espouse, but even among those whose opinions were similar to his own. I extract a portion of a letter written in answer to one of these friends. It best details the impulses of Shelley's mind, and his motives: it was written with entire unreserve; and is therefore a precious monument of his own opinion

of his powers, of the purity of his designs, and the ardour with which he clung, in adversity and through the valley of the shadow of death, to views from which he believed the permanent happiness of mankind must eventually spring.

'Marlowe, December 11, 1817.

'I have read and considered all that you say about my general powers, and the particular instance of the poem in which I have attempted to develop them. Nothing can be more satisfactory to me than the interest which your admonitions express. But I think you are mistaken in some points with regard to the peculiar nature of my powers, whatever be their amount. I listened with deference and self-suspicion to your censures of "The Revolt of Islam"; but the productions of mine which you commend hold a very low place in my own esteem; and this reassures me, in some degree at least. The poem was produced by a series of thoughts which filled my mind with unbounded and sustained enthusiasm. I felt the precariousness of my life, and I engaged in this task, resolved to leave some record of myself. Much of what the volume contains was written with the same feeling—as real, though not so prophetic—as the communications of a dying man. I never presumed indeed to consider it anything approaching to faultless; but, when I consider contemporary productions of the same apparent pretensions, I own I was filled with confidence. I felt that it was in many respects a genuine picture of my own mind. I felt that the sentiments were true, not assumed. And in this have I long believed that my power consists; in sympathy, and that part of the imagination which relates to sentiment and contemplation. I am formed, if for anything not in common with the herd of mankind, to apprehend minute and remote distinctions of feeling, whether relative to external nature or the living beings which surround us, and to communicate the conceptions which result from considering either the moral or the material universe as a whole. Of course, I believe these faculties, which perhaps comprehend all that is sublime in man, to exist very imperfectly in my own mind. But, when you advert to my Chancery-paper, a cold, forced, unimpassioned, insignificant piece of cramped and cautious argument, and to the little scrap about "Mandeville", which expressed my feelings indeed, but cost scarcely two minutes' thought to express, as specimens of my powers more favourable than that which grew as it were from "the agony and bloody sweat" of intellectual travail; surely I must feel that, in some manner, either I am mistaken in believing that I have any talent at all, or you in the selection of the specimens of it. Yet, after all, I cannot but be conscious, in much of what I write, of an absence of that tranquillity which is the attribute and accompaniment of power. This feeling alone would make your most kind and wise admonitions, on the subject of the economy of intellectual force, valuable to me. And, if I live, or if I see any trust in coming years, doubt not but that I shall do something, whatever it may be, which a serious and earnest estimate of my powers will suggest to me, and which will be in every respect accommodated to their utmost limits.

[Shelley to Godwin.]

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