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Queen Mab

A Philosophical Poem

Percy Bysshe Shelley

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1813

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And the bright beaming stars
That through the casement shone.

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And therefore art thou worthy of the boon
Which thou hast now received; virtue shall keep
Thy footsteps in the path that thou hast trod,
And many days of beaming hope shall bless
Thy spotless life of sweet and sacred love.
Go, happy one, and give that bosom joy,
Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
Light, life and rapture from thy smile!
The Fairy waves her wand of charm.
Speechless with bliss the Spirit mounts the car,
That rolled beside the battlement,
Bending her beamy eyes in thankfulness.
Again the enchanted steeds were yoked;
Again the burning wheels inflame
The steep descent of heaven's untrodden way.
Fast and far the chariot flew;
The vast and fiery globes that rolled
Around the Fairy's palace-gate
Lessened by slow degrees, and soon appeared
Such tiny twinklers as the planet orbs
That there attendant on the solar power
With borrowed light pursued their narrower way.
Earth floated then below;
The chariot paused a moment there;
The Spirit then descended;
The restless coursers pawed the ungenial soil,
Snuffed the gross air, and then, their errand done,
Unfurled their pinions to the winds of heaven.
The Body and the Soul united then.
A gentle start convulsed Ianthe's frame;
Her veiny eyelids quietly unclosed;
Moveless awhile the dark blue orbs remained.
She looked around in wonder, and beheld
Henry, who kneeled in silence by her couch,
Watching her sleep with looks of speechless love,

That blooms in mossy bank and darksome glens,
 Lighting the greenwood with its sunny smile.
 'Fear not then, Spirit, death's disrobing hand,
 So welcome when the tyrant is awake,
 So welcome when the bigot's hell-torch burns;
 't is but the voyage of a darksome hour,
 The transient gulf-dream of a startling sleep.
 Death is no foe to virtue; earth has seen
 Love's brightest roses on the scaffold bloom,
 Mingling with freedom's fadeless laurels there,
 And presaging the truth of visioned bliss.
 Are there not hopes within thee, which this scene
 Of linked and gradual being has confirmed?
 Whose stings bade thy heart look further still,
 When, to the moonlight walk by Henry led,
 Sweetly and sadly thou didst talk of death?
 And wilt thou rudely tear them from thy breast,
 Listening supinely to a bigot's creed,
 Or tamely crouching to the tyrant's rod,
 Whose iron thongs are red with human gore?
 Never: but bravely bearing on, thy will
 Is destined an eternal war to wage
 With tyranny and falsehood, and uproot
 The germs of misery from the human heart.
 Thine is the hand whose piety would soothe
 The thorny pillow of unhappy crime,
 Whose impotence an easy pardon gains,
 Watching its wanderings as a friend's disease;
 Thine is the brow whose mildness would defy
 Its fiercest rage, and brave its sternest will,
 When fenced by power and master of the world.
 Thou art sincere and good; of resolute mind,
 Free from heart-withering custom's cold control,
 Of passion lofty, pure and unsubdued.
 Earth's pride and meanness could not vanquish thee,

To Harriet

Whose is the love that, gleaming through the world,
 Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?
 Whose is the warm and partial praise,
 Virtue's most sweet reward?
 Beneath whose looks did my reviving soul
 Riper in truth and virtuous daring grow?
 Whose eyes have I gazed fondly on,
 And loved mankind the more?
 Harriet! on thine: – thou wert my purer mind;
 Thou wert the inspiration of my song;
 Thine are these early wilding flowers,
 Though garlanded by me.
 Then press into thy breast this pledge of love;
 And know, though time may change and years may roll,
 Each floweret gathered in my heart
 It consecrates to thine.

I

How wonderful is Death,
Death, and his brother Sleep!
One, pale as yonder waning moon
With lips of lurid blue;
The other, rosy as the morn
When throned on ocean's wave
It blushes o'er the world;
Yet both so passing wonderful!
Hath then the gloomy Power
Whose reign is in the tainted sepulchres
Seized on her sinless soul?
Must then that peerless form
Which love and admiration cannot view
Without a beating heart, those azure veins
Which steal like streams along a field of snow,
That lovely outline which is fair
As breathing marble, perish?
Must putrefaction's breath
Leave nothing of this heavenly sight
But loathsomeness and ruin?
Spare nothing but a gloomy theme,
On which the lightest heart might moralize?
Or is it only a sweet slumber
Stealing o'er sensation,
Which the breath of roseate morning
Chaseth into darkness?
Will Ianthe wake again,
And give that faithful bosom joy

Thus human things were perfected, and earth,
Even as a child beneath its mother's love,
Was strengthened in all excellence, and grew
Fairer and nobler with each passing year.
'Now Time his dusky pennons o'er the scene
Closes in steadfast darkness, and the past
Fades from our charmed sight. My task is done;
Thy lore is learned. Earth's wonders are thine own
With all the fear and all the hope they bring.
My spells are passed; the present now recurs.
Ah me! a pathless wilderness remains
Yet unsubdued by man's reclaiming hand.
'Yet, human Spirit! bravely hold thy course;
Let virtue teach thee firmly to pursue
The gradual paths of an aspiring change;
For birth and life and death, and that strange state
Before the naked soul has found its home,
All tend to perfect happiness, and urge
The restless wheels of being on their way,
Whose flashing spokes, instinct with infinite life,
Bicker and burn to gain their destined goal;
For birth but wakes the spirit to the sense
Of outward shows, whose unexperienced shape
New modes of passion to its frame may lend;
Life is its state of action, and the store
Of all events is aggregated there
That variegate the eternal universe;
Death is a gate of dreariness and gloom,
That leads to azure isles and beaming skies
And happy regions of eternal hope.
Therefore, O Spirit! fearlessly bear on.
Though storms may break the primrose on its stalk,
Though frosts may blight the freshness of its bloom,
Yet spring's awakening breath will woo the earth
To feed with kindest dews its favorite flower,

Of the old thorn, that on the topmost tower
 Usurped the royal ensign's grandeur, shook
 In the stern storm that swayed the topmost tower,
 And whispered strange tales in the whirlwind's ear.
 'Low through the lone cathedral's roofless aisles
 The melancholy winds a death-dirge sung.
 It were a sight of awfulness to see
 The works of faith and slavery, so vast,
 So sumptuous, yet so perishing withal,
 Even as the corpse that rests beneath its wall!
 A thousand mourners deck the pomp of death
 To-day, the breathing marble glows above
 To decorate its memory, and tongues
 Are busy of its life; to-morrow, worms
 In silence and in darkness seize their prey.
 'Within the massy prison's mouldering courts,
 Fearless and free the ruddy children played,
 Weaving gay chaplets for their innocent brows
 With the green ivy and the red wall-flower
 That mock the dungeon's unavailing gloom;
 The ponderous chains and gratings of strong iron
 There rusted amid heaps of broken stone
 That mingled slowly with their native earth;
 There the broad beam of day, which feebly once
 Lighted the cheek of lean captivity
 With a pale and sickly glare, then freely shone
 On the pure smiles of infant playfulness;
 No more the shuddering voice of hoarse despair
 Pealed through the echoing vaults, but soothing notes
 Of ivy-fingered winds and gladsome birds
 And merriment were resonant around.
 'These ruins soon left not a wreck behind;
 Their elements, wide-scattered o'er the globe,
 To happier shapes were moulded, and became
 Ministrant to all blissful impulses;

Whose sleepless spirit waits to catch
 Light, life and rapture, from her smile?
 Yes! she will wake again,
 Although her glowing limbs are motionless,
 And silent those sweet lips,
 Once breathing eloquence
 That might have soothed a tiger's rage
 Or thawed the cold heart of a conqueror.
 Her dewy eyes are closed,
 And on their lids, whose texture fine
 Scarce hides the dark blue orbs beneath,
 The baby Sleep is pillowed;
 Her golden tresses shade
 The bosom's stainless pride,
 Curling like tendrils of the parasite
 Around a marble column.
 Hark! whence that rushing sound?
 't is like the wondrous strain
 That round a lonely ruin swells,
 Which, wandering on the echoing shore,
 The enthusiast hears at evening;
 't is softer than the west wind's sigh;
 't is wilder than the unmeasured notes
 Of that strange lyre whose strings
 The genii of the breezes sweep;
 Those lines of rainbow light
 Are like the moonbeams when they fall
 Through some cathedral window, but the tints
 Are such as may not find
 Comparison on earth.
 Behold the chariot of the Fairy Queen!
 Celestial coursers paw the unyielding air;
 Their filmy pennons at her word they furl,
 And stop obedient to the reins of light;
 These the Queen of Spells drew in;

She spread a charm around the spot,
 And, leaning graceful from the ethereal car,
 Long did she gaze, and silently,
 Upon the slumbering maid.
 Oh! not the visioned poet in his dreams,
 When silvery clouds float through the wildered brain,
 When every sight of lovely, wild and grand
 Astonishes, enraptures, elevates,
 When fancy at a glance combines
 The wondrous and the beautiful,-
 So bright, so fair, so wild a shape
 Hath ever yet beheld,
 As that which reined the coursers of the air
 And poured the magic of her gaze
 Upon the maiden's sleep.
 The broad and yellow moon
 Shone dimly through her form -
 That form of faultless symmetry;
 The pearly and pellucid car
 Moved not the moonlight's line.
 't was not an earthly pageant.
 Those, who had looked upon the sight
 Passing all human glory,
 Saw not the yellow moon,
 Saw not the mortal scene,
 Heard not the night-wind's rush,
 Heard not an earthly sound,
 Saw but the fairy pageant,
 Heard but the heavenly strains
 That filled the lonely dwelling.
 The Fairy's frame was slight -yon fibrous cloud,
 That catches but the palest tinge of even,
 And which the straining eye can hardly seize
 When melting into eastern twilight's shadow,
 Were scarce so thin, so slight; but the fair star

Blessed with all gifts her earthly worshippers.
 How vigorous then the athletic form of age!
 How clear its open and unwrinkled brow!
 Where neither avarice, cunning, pride or care
 Had stamped the seal of gray deformity
 On all the mingling lineaments of time.
 How lovely the intrepid front of youth,
 Which meek-eyed courage decked with freshest grace;
 Courage of soul, that dreaded not a name,
 And elevated will, that journeyed on
 Through life's phantasmal scene in fearlessness,
 With virtue, love and pleasure, hand in hand!
 'Then, that sweet bondage which is freedom's self,
 And rivets with sensation's softest tie
 The kindred sympathies of human souls,
 Needed no fetters of tyrannic law.
 Those delicate and timid impulses
 In Nature's primal modesty arose,
 And with undoubting confidence disclosed
 The growing longings of its dawning love,
 Unchecked by dull and selfish chastity,
 That virtue of the cheaply virtuous,
 Who pride themselves in senselessness and frost.
 No longer prostitution's venom'd bane
 Poisoned the springs of happiness and life;
 Woman and man, in confidence and love,
 Equal and free and pure together trod
 The mountain-paths of virtue, which no more
 Were stained with blood from many a pilgrim's feet.
 'Then, where, through distant ages, long in pride
 The palace of the monarch-slave had mocked
 Famine's faint groan and penury's silent tear,
 A heap of crumbling ruins stood, and threw
 Year after year their stones upon the field,
 Wakening a lonely echo; and the leaves

Across that desert where their stones survived
 The name of him whose pride had heaped them there.
 Yon monarch, in his solitary pomp,
 Was but the mushroom of a summer day,
 That his light-wingèd footstep pressed to dust;
 Time was the king of earth; all things gave way
 Before him but the fixed and virtuous will,
 The sacred sympathies of soul and sense,
 That mocked his fury and prepared his fall.
 'Yet slow and gradual dawned the morn of love;
 Long lay the clouds of darkness o'er the scene,
 Till from its native heaven they rolled away:
 First, crime triumphant o'er all hope careered
 Unblushing, undisguising, bold and strong,
 Whilst falsehood, tricked in virtue's attributes,
 Long sanctified all deeds of vice and woe,
 Till, done by her own venomous sting to death,
 She left the moral world without a law,
 No longer fettering passion's fearless wing,
 Nor searing reason with the brand of God.
 Then steadily the happy ferment worked;
 Reason was free; and wild though passion went
 Through tangled glens and wood-embosomed meads,
 Gathering a garland of the strangest flowers,
 Yet, like the bee returning to her queen,
 She bound the sweetest on her sister's brow,
 Who meek and sober kissed the sportive child,
 No longer trembling at the broken rod.
 'Mild was the slow necessity of death.
 The tranquil spirit failed beneath its grasp,
 Without a groan, almost without a fear,
 Calm as a voyager to some distant land,
 And full of wonder, full of hope as he.
 The deadly germs of languor and disease
 Died in the human frame, and purity

That gems the glittering coronet of morn,
 Sheds not a light so mild, so powerful,
 As that which, bursting from the Fairy's form,
 Spread a purpureal halo round the scene,
 Yet with an undulating motion,
 Swayed to her outline gracefully.
 From her celestial car
 The Fairy Queen descended,
 And thrice she waved her wand
 Circled with wreaths of amaranth;
 Her thin and misty form
 Moved with the moving air,
 And the clear silver tones,
 As thus she spoke, were such
 As are unheard by all but gifted ear.

FAIRY

'Stars! your balmiest influence shed!
 Elements! your wrath suspend!
 Sleep, Ocean, in the rocky bounds
 That circle thy domain!
 Let not a breath be seen to stir
 Around yon grass-grown ruin's height!
 Let even the restless gossamer
 Sleep on the moveless air!
 Soul of Ianthe! thou,
 Judged alone worthy of the envied boon
 That waits the good and the sincere; that waits
 Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
 Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, burst the chains,
 The icy chains of custom, and have shone
 The day-stars of their age; -Soul of
 Ianthe!
 Awake! arise!'

Sudden arose
 Ianthe's Soul; it stood
 All beautiful in naked purity,
 The perfect semblance of its bodily frame;
 Instinct with inexpressible beauty and grace -
 Each stain of earthliness
 Had passed away -it reassumed
 Its native dignity and stood
 Immortal amid ruin.
 Upon the couch the body lay,
 Wrapt in the depth of slumber;
 Its features were fixed and meaningless,
 Yet animal life was there,
 And every organ yet performed
 Its natural functions; 'twas a sight
 Of wonder to behold the body and the soul.
 The self-same lineaments, the same
 Marks of identity were there;
 Yet, oh, how different! One aspires to Heaven,
 Pants for its sempiternal heritage,
 And, ever changing, ever rising still,
 Wantons in endless being:
 The other, for a time the unwilling sport
 Of circumstance and passion, struggles on;
 Fleets through its sad duration rapidly;
 Then like an useless and worn-out machine,
 Rots, perishes, and passes.

FAIRY

'Spirit! who hast dived so deep;
 Spirit! who hast soared so high;
 Thou the fearless, thou the mild,
 Accept the boon thy worth hath earned,
 Ascend the car with me!'

IX

'O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!
 To which those restless souls that ceaselessly
 Throng through the human universe, aspire!
 Thou consummation of all mortal hope!
 Thou glorious prize of blindly working will,
 Whose rays, diffused throughout all space and time,
 Verge to one point and blend forever there!
 Of purest spirits thou pure dwelling-place
 Where care and sorrow, impotence and crime,
 Languor, disease and ignorance dare not come!
 O happy Earth, reality of Heaven!
 'Genius has seen thee in her passionate dreams;
 And dim forebodings of thy loveliness,
 Haunting the human heart, have there entwined
 Those rooted hopes of some sweet place of bliss,
 Where friends and lovers meet to part no more.
 Thou art the end of all desire and will,
 The product of all action; and the souls,
 That by the paths of an aspiring change
 Have reached thy haven of perpetual peace,
 There rest from the eternity of toil
 That framed the fabric of thy perfectness.
 'Even Time, the conqueror, fled thee in his fear;
 That hoary giant, who in lonely pride
 So long had ruled the world that nations fell
 Beneath his silent footstep. Pyramids,
 That for millenniums had withstood the tide
 Of human things, his storm-breath drove in sand

Which from its dark mine drags the gem of truth
To decorate its paradise of peace.'

SPIRIT

'Do I dream? Is this new feeling
But a visioned ghost of slumber?
If indeed I am a soul,
A free, a disembodied soul,
Speak again to me.'

FAIRY

'I am the Fairy Mab: to me 'tis given
The wonders of the human world to keep;
The secrets of the immeasurable past,
In the unfailing consciences of men,
Those stern, unflattering chroniclers, I find;
The future, from the causes which arise
In each event, I gather; not the sting
Which retributive memory implants
In the hard bosom of the selfish man,
Nor that ecstatic and exulting throb
Which virtue's votary feels when he sums up
The thoughts and actions of a well-spent day,
Are unforeseen, unregistered by me;
And it is yet permitted me to rend
The veil of mortal frailty, that the spirit,
Clothed in its changeless purity, may know
How soonest to accomplish the great end
For which it hath its being, and may taste
That peace which in the end all life will share.
This is the meed of virtue; happy Soul,
Ascend the car with me!
The chains of earth's immurement
Fell from Ianthe's spirit;
They shrank and brake like bandages of straw
Beneath a wakened giant's strength.

She knew her glorious change,
And felt in apprehension uncontrolled
New raptures opening round;
Each day-dream of her mortal life,
Each frenzied vision of the slumbers
That closed each well-spent day,
Seemed now to meet reality.
The Fairy and the Soul proceeded;
The silver clouds parted;
And as the car of magic they ascended,
Again the speechless music swelled,
Again the coursers of the air
Unfurled their azure pennons, and the Queen,
Shaking the beamy reins,
Bade them pursue their way.
The magic car moved on.
The night was fair, and countless stars
Studded heaven's dark blue vault;
Just o'er the eastern wave
Peeped the first faint smile of morn.
The magic car moved on -
From the celestial hoofs
The atmosphere in flaming sparkles flew,
And where the burning wheels
Eddied above the mountain's loftiest peak,
Was traced a line of lightning.
Now it flew far above a rock,
The utmost verge of earth,
The rival of the Andes, whose dark brow
Lowered o'er the silver sea.
Far, far below the chariot's path,
Calm as a slumbering babe,
Tremendous Ocean lay.
The mirror of its stillness showed
The pale and waning stars,

All kindly passions and all pure desires.
Him, still from hope to hope the bliss pursuing
Which from the exhaustless store of human weal
Draws on the virtuous mind, the thoughts that rise
In time-destroying infiniteness gift
With self-enshrined eternity, that mocks
The unprevailing hoariness of age;
And man, once fleeting o'er the transient scene
Swift as an unremembered vision, stands
Immortal upon earth; no longer now
He slays the lamb that looks him in the face,
And horribly devours his mangled flesh,
Which, still avenging Nature's broken law,
Kindled all putrid humors in his frame,
All evil passions and all vain belief,
Hatred, despair and loathing in his mind,
The germs of misery, death, disease and crime.
No longer now the wingèd habitants,
That in the woods their sweet lives sing away,
Flee from the form of man; but gather round,
And prune their sunny feathers on the hands
Which little children stretch in friendly sport
Towards these dreadless partners of their play.
All things are void of terror; man has lost
His terrible prerogative, and stands
An equal amidst equals; happiness
And science dawn, though late, upon the earth;
Peace cheers the mind, health renovates the frame;
Disease and pleasure cease to mingle here,
Reason and passion cease to combat there;
Whilst each unfettered o'er the earth extend
Their all-subduing energies, and wield
The sceptre of a vast dominion there;
Whilst every shape and mode of matter lends
Its force to the omnipotence of mind,

With a broad belt of mingling cloud and flame,
Where blue mists through the unmoving atmosphere
Scattered the seeds of pestilence and fed
Unnatural vegetation, where the land
Teemed with all earthquake, tempest and disease,
Was man a nobler being; slavery
Had crushed him to his country's blood-stained dust;
Or he was bartered for the fame of power,
Which, all internal impulses destroying,
Makes human will an article of trade;
Or he was changed with Christians for their gold
And dragged to distant isles, where to the sound
Of the flesh-mangling scourge he does the work
Of all-polluting luxury and wealth,
Which doubly visits on the tyrants' heads
The long-protracted fulness of their woe;
Or he was led to legal butchery,
To turn to worms beneath that burning sun
Where kings first leagued against the rights of men
And priests first traded with the name of God.
'Even where the milder zone afforded man
A seeming shelter, yet contagion there,
Blighting his being with unnumbered ills,
Spread like a quenchless fire; nor truth till late
Availed to arrest its progress or create
That peace which first in bloodless victory waved
Her snowy standard o'er this favored clime;
There man was long the train-bearer of slaves,
The mimic of surrounding misery,
The jackal of ambition's lion-rage,
The bloodhound of religion's hungry zeal.
'Here now the human being stands adorning
This loveliest earth with taintless body and mind;
Blest from his birth with all bland impulses,
Which gently in his noble bosom wake

The chariot's fiery track,
And the gray light of morn
Tinging those fleecy clouds
That canopied the dawn.
Seemed it that the chariot's way
Lay through the midst of an immense concave
Radiant with million constellations, tinged
With shades of infinite color,
And semicircled with a belt
Flashing incessant meteors.
The magic car moved on.
As they approached their goal,
The coursers seemed to gather speed;
The sea no longer was distinguished; earth
Appeared a vast and shadowy sphere;
The sun's unclouded orb
Rolled through the black concave;
Its rays of rapid light
Parted around the chariot's swifter course,
And fell, like ocean's feathery spray
Dashed from the boiling surge
Before a vessel's prow.
The magic car moved on.
Earth's distant orb appeared
The smallest light that twinkles in the heaven;
Whilst round the chariot's way
Innumerable systems rolled
And countless spheres diffused
An ever-varying glory.
It was a sight of wonder: some
Were hornèd like the crescent moon;
Some shed a mild and silver beam
Like Hesperus o'er the western sea;
Some dashed athwart with trains of flame,
Like worlds to death and ruin driven;

Some shone like suns, and as the chariot passed,
Eclipsed all other light.
Spirit of Nature! here -
In this interminable wilderness
Of worlds, at whose immensity
Even soaring fancy staggers,
Here is thy fitting temple!
Yet not the lightest leaf
That quivers to the passing breeze
Is less instinct with thee;
Yet not the meanest worm
That lurks in graves and fattens on the dead,
Less shares thy eternal breath!
Spirit of Nature! thou,
Imperishable as this scene -
Here is thy fitting temple!

Unmingled mantles to the goblet's brim
And courts the thirsty lips it fled before.
But chief, ambiguous man, he that can know
More misery, and dream more joy than all;
Whose keen sensations thrill within his breast
To mingle with a loftier instinct there,
Lending their power to pleasure and to pain,
Yet raising, sharpening, and refining each;
Who stands amid the ever-varying world,
The burden or the glory of the earth;
He chief perceives the change; his being notes
The gradual renovation and defines
Each movement of its progress on his mind.
'Man, where the gloom of the long polar night
Lowers o'er the snow-clad rocks and frozen soil,
Where scarce the hardiest herb that braves the frost
Basks in the moonlight's ineffectual glow,
Shrank with the plants, and darkened with the night;
His chilled and narrow energies, his heart
Insensible to courage, truth or love,
His stunted stature and imbecile frame,
Marked him for some abortion of the earth,
Fit compeer of the bears that roamed around,
Whose habits and enjoyments were his own;
His life a feverish dream of stagnant woe,
Whose meagre wants, but scantily fulfilled,
Apprised him ever of the joyless length
Which his short being's wretchedness had reached;
His death a pang which famine, cold and toil
Long on the mind, whilst yet the vital spark
Clung to the body stubbornly, had brought:
All was inflicted here that earth's revenge
Could wreak on the infringers of her law;
One curse alone was spared -the name of God.
'Nor, where the tropics bound the realms of day

But vocal to the sea-bird's harrowing shriek,
 The bellowing monster, and the rushing storm;
 Now to the sweet and many-mingling sounds
 Of kindest human impulses respond.
 Those lonely realms bright garden-isles begem,
 With lightsome clouds and shining seas between,
 And fertile valleys, resonant with bliss,
 Whilst green woods overcanopy the wave,
 Which like a toil-worn laborer leaps to shore
 To meet the kisses of the flowrets there.
 'All things are recreated, and the flame
 Of consentaneous love inspires all life.
 The fertile bosom of the earth gives suck
 To myriads, who still grow beneath her care,
 Rewarding her with their pure perfectness;
 The balmy breathings of the wind inhale
 Her virtues and diffuse them all abroad;
 Health floats amid the gentle atmosphere,
 Glows in the fruits and mantles on the stream;
 No storms deform the beaming brow of heaven,
 Nor scatter in the freshness of its pride
 The foliage of the ever-verdant trees;
 But fruits are ever ripe, flowers ever fair,
 And autumn proudly bears her matron grace,
 Kindling a flush on the fair cheek of spring,
 Whose virgin bloom beneath the ruddy fruit
 Reflects its tint and blushes into love.
 'The lion now forgets to thirst for blood;
 There might you see him sporting in the sun
 Beside the dreadless kid; his claws are sheathed,
 His teeth are harmless, custom's force has made
 His nature as the nature of a lamb.
 Like passion's fruit, the nightshade's tempting bane
 Poisons no more the pleasure it bestows;
 All bitterness is past; the cup of joy

II

If solitude hath ever led thy steps
 To the wild ocean's echoing shore,
 And thou hast lingered there,
 Until the sun's broad orb
 Seemed resting on the burnished wave,
 Thou must have marked the lines
 Of purple gold that motionless
 Hung o'er the sinking sphere;
 Thou must have marked the billowy clouds,
 Edged with intolerable radiancy,
 Towering like rocks of jet
 Crowned with a diamond wreath;
 And yet there is a moment,
 When the sun's highest point
 Peeps like a star o'er ocean's western edge,
 When those far clouds of feathery gold,
 Shaded with deepest purple, gleam
 Like islands on a dark blue sea;
 Then has thy fancy soared above the earth
 And furled its wearied wing
 Within the Fairy's fane.
 Yet not the golden islands
 Gleaming in yon flood of light,
 Nor the feathery curtains
 Stretching o'er the sun's bright couch,
 Nor the burnished ocean-waves
 Paving that gorgeous dome,
 So fair, so wonderful a sight

As Mab's ethereal palace could afford.
Yet likest evening's vault, that faëry Hall!
As Heaven, low resting on the wave, it spread
Its floors of flashing light,
Its vast and azure dome,
Its fertile golden islands
Floating on a silver sea;
Whilst suns their mingling beamings darted
Through clouds of circumambient darkness,
And pearly battlements around
Looked o'er the immense of Heaven.
The magic car no longer moved.
The Fairy and the Spirit
Entered the Hall of Spells.
Those golden clouds
That rolled in glittering billows
Beneath the azure canopy,
With the ethereal footsteps trembled not;
The light and crimson mists,
Floating to strains of thrilling melody
Through that unearthly dwelling,
Yielded to every movement of the will;
Upon their passive swell the Spirit leaned,
And, for the varied bliss that pressed around,
Used not the glorious privilege
Of virtue and of wisdom.
'Spirit!' the Fairy said,
And pointed to the gorgeous dome,
'this is a wondrous sight
And mocks all human grandeur;
But, were it virtue's only need to dwell
In a celestial palace, all resigned
To pleasurable impulses, immured
Within the prison of itself, the will
Of changeless Nature would be unfulfilled.

But ceaseless frost round the vast solitude
Bound its broad zone of stillness, are unloosed;
And fragrant zephyrs there from spicy isles
Ruffle the placid ocean-deep, that rolls
Its broad, bright surges to the sloping sand,
Whose roar is wakened into echoings sweet
To murmur through the heaven-breathing groves
And melodize with man's blest nature there.
'Those deserts of immeasurable sand,
Whose age-collected fervors scarce allowed
A bird to live, a blade of grass to spring,
Where the shrill chirp of the green lizard's love
Broke on the sultry silentness alone,
Now teem with countless rills and shady woods,
Cornfields and pastures and white cottages;
And where the startled wilderness beheld
A savage conqueror stained in kindred blood,
A tigress satiating with the flesh of lambs
The unnatural famine of her toothless cubs,
Whilst shouts and howlings through the desert rang, -
Sloping and smooth the daisy-spangled lawn,
Offering sweet incense to the sunrise, smiles
To see a babe before his mother's door,
Sharing his morning's meal
With the green and golden basilisk
That comes to lick his feet.
'Those trackless deeps, where many a weary sail
Has seen above the illimitable plain
Morning on night and night on morning rise,
Whilst still no land to greet the wanderer spread
Its shadowy mountains on the sun-bright sea,
Where the loud roarings of the tempest-waves
So long have mingled with the gusty wind
In melancholy loneliness, and swept
The desert of those ocean solitudes

Was the pure stream of feeling
 That sprung from these sweet notes,
 And o'er the Spirit's human sympathies
 With mild and gentle motion calmly flowed.
 Joy to the Spirit came, -
 Such joy as when a lover sees
 The chosen of his soul in happiness
 And witnesses her peace
 Whose woe to him were bitterer than death;
 Sees her unfaded cheek
 Glow mantling in first luxury of health,
 Thrills with her lovely eyes,
 Which like two stars amid the heaving main
 Sparkle through liquid bliss.
 Then in her triumph spoke the Fairy Queen:
 'I will not call the ghost of ages gone
 To unfold the frightful secrets of its lore;
 The present now is past,
 And those events that desolate the earth
 Have faded from the memory of Time,
 Who dares not give reality to that
 Whose being I annul. To me is given
 The wonders of the human world to keep,
 Space, matter, time and mind. Futurity
 Exposes now its treasure; let the sight
 Renew and strengthen all thy failing hope.
 O human Spirit! spur thee to the goal
 Where virtue fixes universal peace,
 And, 'midst the ebb and flow of human things,
 Show somewhat stable, somewhat certain still,
 A light-house o'er the wild of dreary waves.
 'The habitable earth is full of bliss;
 Those wastes of frozen billows that were hurled
 By everlasting snow-storms round the poles,
 Where matter dared not vegetate or live,

Learn to make others happy. Spirit, come!
 This is thine high reward: -the past shall rise;
 Thou shalt behold the present; I will teach
 The secrets of the future.'
 The Fairy and the Spirit
 Approached the overhanging battlement.
 Below lay stretched the universe!
 There, far as the remotest line
 That bounds imagination's flight,
 Countless and unending orbs
 In mazy motion intermingled,
 Yet still fulfilled immutably
 Eternal Nature's law.
 Above, below, around,
 The circling systems formed
 A wilderness of harmony;
 Each with undeviating aim,
 In eloquent silence, through the depths of space
 Pursued its wondrous way.
 There was a little light
 That twinkled in the misty distance.
 None but a spirit's eye
 Might ken that rolling orb.
 None but a spirit's eye,
 And in no other place
 But that celestial dwelling, might behold
 Each action of this earth's inhabitants.
 But matter, space, and time,
 In those aërial mansions cease to act;
 And all-prevailing wisdom, when it reaps
 The harvest of its excellence, o'erbonds
 Those obstacles of which an earthly soul
 Fears to attempt the conquest.
 The Fairy pointed to the earth.
 The Spirit's intellectual eye

Its kindred beings recognized.
 The thronging thousands, to a passing view,
 Seemed like an ant-hill's citizens.
 How wonderful! that even
 The passions, prejudices, interests,
 That sway the meanest being -the weak touch
 That moves the finest nerve
 And in one human brain
 Causes the faintest thought, becomes a link
 In the great chain of Nature!
 'Behold,' the Fairy cried,
 'Palmyra's ruined palaces!
 Behold where grandeur frowned!
 Behold where pleasure smiled!
 What now remains? -the memory
 Of senselessness and shame.
 What is immortal there?
 Nothing -it stands to tell
 A melancholy tale, to give
 An awful warning; soon
 Oblivion will steal silently
 The remnant of its fame.
 Monarchs and conquerors there
 Proud o'er prostrate millions trod -
 The earthquakes of the human race;
 Like them, forgotten when the ruin
 That marks their shock is past.
 'Beside the eternal Nile
 The Pyramids have risen.
 Nile shall pursue his changeless way;
 Those Pyramids shall fall.
 Yea! not a stone shall stand to tell
 The spot whereon they stood;
 Their very site shall be forgotten,
 As is their builder's name!

VIII

THE FAIRY

'The present and the past thou hast beheld.
 It was a desolate sight. Now, Spirit, learn,
 The secrets of the future. -Time!
 Unfold the brooding pinion of thy gloom,
 Render thou up thy half-devoured babes,
 And from the cradles of eternity,
 Where millions lie lulled to their portioned sleep
 By the deep murmuring stream of passing things,
 Tear thou that gloomy shroud. -Spirit, behold
 Thy glorious destiny!'

Joy to the Spirit came.
 Through the wide rent in Time's eternal veil,
 Hope was seen beaming through the mists of fear;
 Earth was no longer hell;
 Love, freedom, health had given
 Their ripeness to the manhood of its prime,
 And all its pulses beat
 Symphonious to the planetary spheres;
 Then dulcet music swelled
 Concordant with the life-strings of the soul;
 It throbbed in sweet and languid beatings there,
 Catching new life from transitory death;
 Like the vague sighings of a wind at even
 That wakes the wavelets of the slumbering sea
 And dies on the creation of its breath,
 And sinks and rises, falls and swells by fits,

With stubborn and unalterable will,
Even as a giant oak, which heaven's fierce flame
Had scathèd in the wilderness, to stand
A monument of fadeless ruin there;
Yet peacefully and movelessly it braves
The midnight conflict of the wintry storm,
As in the sunlight's calm it spreads
Its worn and withered arms on high
To meet the quiet of a summer's noon.'
The Fairy waved her wand;
Ahasuerus fled
Fast as the shapes of mingled shade and mist,
That lurk in the glens of a twilight grove,
Flee from the morning beam; -
The matter of which dreams are made
Not more endowed with actual life
Than this phantasmal portraiture
Of wandering human thought.

'Behold yon sterile spot,
Where now the wandering Arab's tent
Flaps in the desert blast!
There once old Salem's haughty fane
Reared high to heaven its thousand golden domes,
And in the blushing face of day
Exposed its shameful glory.
Oh! many a widow, many an orphan cursed
The building of that fane; and many a father,
Worn out with toil and slavery, implored
The poor man's God to sweep it from the earth
And spare his children the detested task
Of piling stone on stone and poisoning
The choicest days of life
To soothe a dotard's vanity.
There an inhuman and uncultured race
Howled hideous praises to their Demon-God;
They rushed to war, tore from the mother's womb
The unborn child -old age and infancy
Promiscuous perished; their victorious arms
Left not a soul to breathe. Oh! they were fiends!
But what was he who taught them that the God
Of Nature and benevolence had given
A special sanction to the trade of blood?
His name and theirs are fading, and the tales
Of this barbarian nation, which imposture
Recites till terror credits, are pursuing
Itself into forgetfulness.
'Where Athens, Rome, and Sparta stood,
There is a moral desert now.
The mean and miserable huts,
The yet more wretched palaces,
Contrasted with those ancient fanes
Now crumbling to oblivion, -
The long and lonely colonnades

Through which the ghost of Freedom stalks, -
 Seem like a well-known tune,
 Which in some dear scene we have loved to hear,
 Remembered now in sadness.
 But, oh! how much more changed,
 How gloomier is the contrast
 Of human nature there!
 Where Socrates expired, a tyrant's slave,
 A coward and a fool, spreads death around -
 Then, shuddering, meets his own.
 Where Cicero and Antoninus lived,
 A cowed and hypocritical monk
 Prays, curses and deceives.
 'Spirit! ten thousand years
 Have scarcely passed away,
 Since in the waste, where now the savage drinks
 His enemy's blood, and, aping Europe's sons,
 Wakes the unholy song of war,
 Arose a stately city,
 Metropolis of the western continent.
 There, now, the mossy column-stone,
 Indented by time's unrelaxing grasp,
 Which once appeared to brave
 All, save its country's ruin, -
 There the wide forest scene,
 Rude in the uncultivated loveliness
 Of gardens long run wild, -
 Seems, to the unwilling sojourner whose steps
 Chance in that desert has delayed,
 Thus to have stood since earth was what it is.
 Yet once it was the busiest haunt,
 Whither, as to a common centre, flocked
 Strangers, and ships, and merchandise;
 Once peace and freedom blest
 The cultivated plain;

With putrid smoke poisoning the atmosphere,
 That rotted on the half-extinguished pile.
 'Yes! I have seen God's worshippers unsheathe
 The sword of his revenge, when grace descended,
 Confirming all unnatural impulses,
 To sanctify their desolating deeds;
 And frantic priests waved the ill-omened cross
 O'er the unhappy earth; then shone the sun
 On showers of gore from the upflashing steel
 Of safe assassination, and all crime
 Made stingless by the spirits of the Lord,
 And blood-red rainbows canopied the land.
 'Spirit! no year of my eventful being
 Has passed unstained by crime and misery,
 Which flows from God's own faith. I 've marked his slaves
 With tongues, whose lies are venomous, beguile
 The insensate mob, and, whilst one hand was red
 With murder, feign to stretch the other out
 For brotherhood and peace; and that they now
 Babble of love and mercy, whilst their deeds
 Are marked with all the narrowness and crime
 That freedom's young arm dare not yet chastise,
 Reason may claim our gratitude, who now,
 Establishing the imperishable throne
 Of truth and stubborn virtue, maketh vain
 The unprevailing malice of my foe,
 Whose bootless rage heaps torments for the brave,
 Adds impotent eternities to pain,
 Whilst keenest disappointment racks his breast
 To see the smiles of peace around them play,
 To frustrate or to sanctify their doom.
 'Thus have I stood, -through a wild waste of years
 Struggling with whirlwinds of mad agony,
 Yet peaceful, and serene, and self-enshrined,
 Mocking my powerless tyrant's horrible curse

Even as the Almighty's ire arrested them,
And in their various attitudes of death
My murdered children's mute and eyeless skulls
Glared ghastly upon me.
But my soul,
From sight and sense of the polluting woe
Of tyranny, had long learned to prefer
Hell's freedom to the servitude of heaven.
Therefore I rose, and dauntlessly began
My lonely and unending pilgrimage,
Resolved to wage unweariable war
With my almighty tyrant and to hurl
Defiance at his impotence to harm
Beyond the curse I bore. The very hand,
That barred my passage to the peaceful grave,
Has crushed the earth to misery, and given
Its empire to the chosen of his slaves.
These I have seen, even from the earliest dawn
Of weak, unstable and precarious power,
Then preaching peace, as now they practise war;
So, when they turned but from the massacre
Of unoffending infidels to quench
Their thirst for ruin in the very blood
That flowed in their own veins, and pitiless zeal
Froze every human feeling as the wife
Sheathed in her husband's heart the sacred steel,
Even whilst its hopes were dreaming of her love;
And friends to friends, brothers to brothers stood
Opposed in bloodiest battle-field, and war,
Scarce satiable by fate's last death-draught, waged,
Drunk from the wine-press of the Almighty's wrath;
Whilst the red cross, in mockery of peace,
Pointed to victory! When the fray was done,
No remnant of the exterminated faith
Survived to tell its ruin, but the flesh,

But wealth, that curse of man,
Blighted the bud of its prosperity;
Virtue and wisdom, truth and liberty,
Fled, to return not, until man shall know
That they alone can give the bliss
Worthy a soul that claims
Its kindred with eternity.
'There 's not one atom of yon earth
But once was living man;
Nor the minutest drop of rain,
That hangeth in its thinnest cloud,
But flowed in human veins;
And from the burning plains
Where Libyan monsters yell,
From the most gloomy glens
Of Greenland's sunless clime,
To where the golden fields
Of fertile England spread
Their harvest to the day,
Thou canst not find one spot
Whereon no city stood.
'How strange is human pride!
I tell thee that those living things,
To whom the fragile blade of grass
That springeth in the morn
And perisheth ere noon,
Is an unbounded world;
I tell thee that those viewless beings,
Whose mansion is the smallest particle
Of the impassive atmosphere,
Think, feel and live like man;
That their affections and antipathies,
Like his, produce the laws
Ruling their moral state;
And the minutest throb

That through their frame diffuses
The slightest, faintest motion,
Is fixed and indispensable
As the majestic laws
That rule yon rolling orbs.
The Fairy paused. The Spirit,
In ecstasy of admiration, felt
All knowledge of the past revived; the events
Of old and wondrous times,
Which dim tradition interruptedly
Teaches the credulous vulgar, were unfolded
In just perspective to the view;
Yet dim from their infinitude.
The Spirit seemed to stand
High on an isolated pinnacle;
The flood of ages combating below,
The depth of the unbounded universe
Above, and all around
Nature's unchanging harmony.

Or lit with human reason's earthly ray?
Many are called, but few will I elect.
Do thou my bidding, Moses!"
'Even the murderer's cheek
Was blanched with horror, and his quivering lips
Scarce faintly uttered -"O almighty one,
I tremble and obey!"
'O Spirit! centuries have set their seal
On this heart of many wounds, and loaded brain,
Since the Incarnate came; humbly he came,
Veiling his horrible Godhead in the shape
Of man, scorned by the world, his name unheard
Save by the rabble of his native town,
Even as a parish demagogue. He led
The crowd; he taught them justice, truth and peace,
In semblance; but he lit within their souls
The quenchless flames of zeal, and blessed the sword
He brought on earth to satiate with the blood
Of truth and freedom his malignant soul
At length his mortal frame was led to death.
I stood beside him; on the torturing cross
No pain assailed his unterrestrial sense;
And yet he groaned. Indignantly I summed
The massacres and miseries which his name
Had sanctioned in my country, and I cried,
"Go! go!" in mockery.
A smile of godlike malice reilluminated
His fading lineaments. "I go," he cried,
"But thou shalt wander o'er the unquiet earth
Eternally." The dampness of the grave
Bathed my imperishable front. I fell,
And long lay tranced upon the charmed soil.
When I awoke hell burned within my brain
Which staggered on its seat; for all around
The mouldering relics of my kindred lay,

Shall be the doom of their eternal souls,
 With every soul on this ungrateful earth,
 Virtuous or vicious, weak or strong, -even all
 Shall perish, to fulfil the blind revenge
 (Which you, to men, call justice) of their God.”
 ‘The murderer’s brow
 Quivered with horror.
 “God omnipotent,
 Is there no mercy? must our punishment
 Be endless? will long ages roll away,
 And see no term? Oh! wherefore hast thou made
 In mockery and wrath this evil earth?
 Mercy becomes the powerful -be but just!
 O God! repent and save!”
 “One way remains:
 I will beget a son and he shall bear
 The sins of all the world; he shall arise
 In an unnoticed corner of the earth,
 And there shall die upon a cross, and purge
 The universal crime; so that the few
 On whom my grace descends, those who are marked
 As vessels to the honor of their God,
 May credit this strange sacrifice and save
 Their souls alive. Millions shall live and die,
 Who ne’er shall call upon their Saviour’s name,
 But, unredeemed, go to the gaping grave,
 Thousands shall deem it an old woman’s tale,
 Such as the nurses frighten babes withal;
 These in a gulf of anguish and of flame
 Shall curse their reprobation endlessly,
 Yet tenfold pangs shall force them to avow,
 Even on their beds of torment where they howl,
 My honor and the justice of their doom.
 What then avail their virtuous deeds, their thoughts
 Of purity, with radiant genius bright

III

‘Fairy!’ the Spirit said,
 And on the Queen of Spells
 Fixed her ethereal eyes,
 ‘I thank thee. Thou hast given
 A boon which I will not resign, and taught
 A lesson not to be unlearned. I know
 The past, and thence I will essay to glean
 A warning for the future, so that man
 May profit by his errors and derive
 Experience from his folly;
 For, when the power of imparting joy
 Is equal to the will, the human soul
 Requires no other heaven.’

MAB

‘Turn thee, surpassing Spirit!
 Much yet remains unscanned.
 Thou knowest how great is man,
 Thou knowest his imbecility;
 Yet learn thou what he is;
 Yet learn the lofty destiny
 Which restless Time prepares
 For every living soul.
 ‘Behold a gorgeous palace that amid
 Yon populous city rears its thousand towers
 And seems itself a city. Gloomy troops
 Of sentinels in stern and silent ranks

Encompass it around; the dweller there
 Cannot be free and happy; hearest thou not
 The curses of the fatherless, the groans
 Of those who have no friend? He passes on -
 The King, the wearer of a gilded chain
 That binds his soul to abjectness, the fool
 Whom courtiers nickname monarch, whilst a slave
 Even to the basest appetites -that man
 Heeds not the shriek of penury; he smiles
 At the deep curses which the destitute
 Mutter in secret, and a sullen joy
 Pervades his bloodless heart when thousands groan
 But for those morsels which his wantonness
 Wastes in unjoyous revelry, to save
 All that they love from famine; when he hears
 The tale of horror, to some ready-made face
 Of hypocritical assent he turns,
 Smothering the glow of shame, that, spite of him,
 Flushes his bloated cheek.
 Now to the meal
 Of silence, grandeur and excess he drags
 His palled unwilling appetite. If gold,
 Gleaming around, and numerous viands culled
 From every clime could force the loathing sense
 To overcome satiety, -if wealth
 The spring it draws from poisons not, -or vice,
 Unfeeling, stubborn vice, converteth not
 Its food to deadliest venom; then that king
 Is happy; and the peasant who fulfils
 His unforced task, when he returns at even
 And by the blazing fagot meets again
 Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,
 Tastes not a sweeter meal.
 Behold him now
 Stretched on the gorgeous couch; his fevered brain

The fiery-visaged firmament expressed
 Abhorrence, and the grave of Nature yawned
 To swallow all the dauntless and the good
 That dared to hurl defiance at his throne,
 Girt as it was with power. None but slaves
 Survived, -cold-blooded slaves, who did the work
 Of tyrannous omnipotence; whose souls
 No honest indignation ever urged
 To elevated daring, to one deed
 Which gross and sensual self did not pollute.
 These slaves built temples for the omnipotent fiend,
 Gorgeous and vast; the costly altars smoked
 With human blood, and hideous pæans rung
 Through all the long-drawn aisles. A murderer heard
 His voice in Egypt, one whose gifts and arts
 Had raised him to his eminence in power,
 Accomplice of omnipotence in crime
 And confidant of the all-knowing one.
 These were Jehovah's words.
 "From an eternity of idleness
 I, God, awoke; in seven days' toil made earth
 From nothing; rested, and created man;
 I placed him in a paradise, and there
 Planted the tree of evil, so that he
 Might eat and perish, and my soul procure
 Wherewith to sate its malice and to turn,
 Even like a heartless conqueror of the earth,
 All misery to my fame. The race of men,
 Chosen to my honor, with impunity
 May sate the lusts I planted in their heart.
 Here I command thee hence to lead them on,
 Until with hardened feet their conquering troops
 Wade on the promised soil through woman's blood,
 And make my name be dreaded through the land.
 Yet ever-burning flame and ceaseless woe

Have left a record there
 To testify of earth.
 'These are my empire, for to me is given
 The wonders of the human world to keep,
 And fancy's thin creations to endow
 With manner, being and reality;
 Therefore a wondrous phantom from the dreams
 Of human error's dense and purblind faith
 I will evoke, to meet thy questioning.
 Ahasuerus, rise!'
 A strange and woe-worn wight
 Arose beside the battlement,
 And stood unmoving there.
 His inessential figure cast no shade
 Upon the golden floor;
 His port and mien bore mark of many years,
 And chronicles of untold ancientness
 Were legible within his beamless eye;
 Yet his cheek bore the mark of youth;
 Freshness and vigor knit his manly frame;
 The wisdom of old age was mingled there
 With youth's primeval dauntlessness;
 And inexpressible woe,
 Chastened by fearless resignation, gave
 An awful grace to his all-speaking brow.

SPIRIT

'Is there a God?'

AHASUERUS

'Is there a God! -ay, an almighty God,
 And vengeful as almighty! Once his voice
 Was heard on earth; earth shuddered at the sound;

Reels dizzily awhile; but ah! too soon
 The slumber of intemperance subsides,
 And conscience, that undying serpent, calls
 Her venomous brood to their nocturnal task.
 Listen! he speaks! oh! mark that frenzied eye -
 Oh! mark that deadly visage!'

KING

'No cessation!
 Oh! must this last forever! Awful death,
 I wish, yet fear to clasp thee! -Not one moment
 Of dreamless sleep! O dear and blessed Peace,
 Why dost thou shroud thy vestal purity
 In penury and dungeons? Wherefore lurkest
 With danger, death, and solitude; yet shun'st
 The palace I have built thee? Sacred Peace!
 Oh, visit me but once, -but pitying shed
 One drop of balm upon my withered soul!'

THE FAIRY

'Vain man! that palace is the virtuous heart,
 And Peace defileth not her snowy robes
 In such a shed as thine. Hark! yet he mutters;
 His slumbers are but varied agonies;
 They prey like scorpions on the springs of life.
 There needeth not the hell that bigots frame
 To punish those who err; earth in itself
 Contains at once the evil and the cure;
 And all-sufficing Nature can chastise
 Those who transgress her law; she only knows
 How justly to proportion to the fault
 The punishment it merits.
 Is it strange

That this poor wretch should pride him in his woe?
Take pleasure in his abjectness, and hug
The scorpion that consumes him? Is it strange
That, placed on a conspicuous throne of thorns,
Grasping an iron sceptre, and immured
Within a splendid prison whose stern bounds
Shut him from all that's good or dear on earth,
His soul asserts not its humanity?
That man's mild nature rises not in war
Against a king's employ? No - 'tis not strange.
He, like the vulgar, thinks, feels, acts, and lives
Just as his father did; the unconquered powers
Of precedent and custom interpose
Between a king and virtue. Stranger yet,
To those who know not Nature nor deduce
The future from the present, it may seem,
That not one slave, who suffers from the crimes
Of this unnatural being, not one wretch,
Whose children famish and whose nuptial bed
Is earth's unpitied bosom, rears an arm
To dash him from his throne!
Those gilded flies
That, basking in the sunshine of a court,
Fatten on its corruption! what are they? -
The drones of the community; they feed
On the mechanic's labor; the starved hind
For them compels the stubborn glebe to yield
Its unshared harvests; and yon squalid form,
Leaner than fleshless misery, that wastes
A sunless life in the unwholesome mine,
Drags out in labor a protracted death
To glut their grandeur; many faint with toil
That few may know the cares and woe of sloth.
Whence, thinkest thou, kings and parasites arose?
Whence that unnatural line of drones who heap

Is Nature's only God; but human pride
Is skilful to invent most serious names
To hide its ignorance.
'the name of God
Has fenced about all crime with holiness,
Himself the creature of his worshippers,
Whose names and attributes and passions change,
Seeva, Buddh, Foh, Jehovah, God, or Lord,
Even with the human dupes who build his shrines,
Still serving o'er the war-polluted world
For desolation's watchword; whether hosts
Stain his death-blushing chariot-wheels, as on
Triumphantly they roll, whilst Brahmins raise
A sacred hymn to mingle with the groans;
Or countless partners of his power divide
His tyranny to weakness; or the smoke
Of burning towns, the cries of female helplessness,
Unarmed old age, and youth, and infancy,
Horribly massacred, ascend to heaven
In honor of his name; or, last and worst,
Earth groans beneath religion's iron age,
And priests dare babble of a God of peace,
Even whilst their hands are red with guiltless blood,
Murdering the while, uprooting every germ
Of truth, exterminating, spoiling all,
Making the earth a slaughter-house!
'O Spirit! through the sense
By which thy inner nature was apprised
Of outward shows, vague dreams have rolled,
And varied reminiscences have waked
Tablets that never fade;
All things have been imprinted there,
The stars, the sea, the earth, the sky,
Even the unshapeliest lineaments
Of wild and fleeting visions

VII

SPIRIT

'I was an infant when my mother went
To see an atheist burned. She took me there.
The dark-robed priests were met around the pile;
The multitude was gazing silently;
And as the culprit passed with dauntless mien,
Tempered disdain in his unaltering eye,
Mixed with a quiet smile, shone calmly forth;
The thirsty fire crept round his manly limbs;
His resolute eyes were scorched to blindness soon;
His death-pang rent my heart! the insensate mob
Uttered a cry of triumph, and I wept.
"Weep not, child!" cried my mother, "for that man
Has said, There is no God."

FAIRY

'There is no God!
Nature confirms the faith his death-groan sealed.
Let heaven and earth, let man's revolving race,
His ceaseless generations, tell their tale;
Let every part depending on the chain
That links it to the whole, point to the hand
That grasps its term! Let every seed that falls
In silent eloquence unfold its store
Of argument; infinity within,
Infinity without, belie creation;
The exterminable spirit it contains

Toil and unvanquishable penury
On those who build their palaces and bring
Their daily bread? -From vice, black loathsome vice;
From rapine, madness, treachery, and wrong;
From all that genders misery, and makes
Of earth this thorny wilderness; from lust,
Revenge, and murder. -And when reason's voice,
Loud as the voice of Nature, shall have waked
The nations; and mankind perceive that vice
Is discord, war and misery; that virtue
Is peace and happiness and harmony;
When man's maturer nature shall disdain
The playthings of its childhood; -kingly glare
Will lose its power to dazzle, its authority
Will silently pass by; the gorgeous throne
Shall stand unnoticed in the regal hall,
Fast falling to decay; whilst falsehood's trade
Shall be as hateful and unprofitable
As that of truth is now.
Where is the fame
Which the vain-glorious mighty of the earth
Seek to eternize? Oh! the faintest sound
From time's light footfall, the minutest wave
That swells the flood of ages, whelms in nothing
The unsubstantial bubble. Ay! to-day
Stern is the tyrant's mandate, red the gaze
That flashes desolation, strong the arm
That scatters multitudes. To-morrow comes!
That mandate is a thunder-peal that died
In ages past; that gaze, a transient flash
On which the midnight closed; and on that arm
The worm has made his meal.
The virtuous man,
Who, great in his humility as kings
Are little in their grandeur; he who leads

Invincibly a life of resolute good
 And stands amid the silent dungeon-depths
 More free and fearless than the trembling judge
 Who, clothed in venal power, vainly strove
 To bind the impassive spirit; -when he falls,
 His mild eye beams benevolence no more;
 Withered the hand outstretched but to relieve;
 Sunk reason's simple eloquence that rolled
 But to appall the guilty. Yes! the grave
 Hath quenched that eye and death's relentless frost
 Withered that arm; but the unfading fame
 Which virtue hangs upon its votary's tomb,
 The deathless memory of that man whom kings
 Call to their minds and tremble, the remembrance
 With which the happy spirit contemplates
 Its well-spent pilgrimage on earth,
 Shall never pass away.
 'Nature rejects the monarch, not the man;
 The subject, not the citizen; for kings
 And subjects, mutual foes, forever play
 A losing game into each other's hands,
 Whose stakes are vice and misery. The man
 Of virtuous soul commands not, nor obeys.
 Power, like a desolating pestilence,
 Pollutes whate'er it touches; and obedience,
 Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
 Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame
 A mechanized automaton.
 When Nero
 High over flaming Rome with savage joy
 Lowered like a fiend, drank with enraptured ear
 The shrieks of agonizing death, beheld
 The frightful desolation spread, and felt
 A new-created sense within his soul
 Thrill to the sight and vibrate to the sound, -

Whose horrible lusts spread misery o'er the world,
 And the good man, who lifts with virtuous pride
 His being in the sight of happiness
 That springs from his own works; the poison-tree,
 Beneath whose shade all life is withered up,
 And the fair oak, whose leafy dome affords
 A temple where the vows of happy love
 Are registered, are equal in thy sight;
 No love, no hate thou cherishest; revenge
 And favoritism, and worst desire of fame
 Thou knowest not; all that the wide world contains
 Are but thy passive instruments, and thou
 Regard'st them all with an impartial eye,
 Whose joy or pain thy nature cannot feel,
 Because thou hast not human sense,
 Because thou art not human mind.
 'Yes! when the sweeping storm of time
 Has sung its death-dirge o'er the ruined fanes
 And broken altars of the almighty fiend,
 Whose name usurps thy honors, and the blood
 Through centuries clotted there has floated down
 The tainted flood of ages, shalt thou live
 Unchangeable! A shrine is raised to thee,
 Which nor the tempest breath of time,
 Nor the interminable flood
 Over earth's slight pageant rolling,
 Availeth to destroy, -
 The sensitive extension of the world;
 That wondrous and eternal fane,
 Where pain and pleasure, good and evil join,
 To do the will of strong necessity,
 And life, in multitudinous shapes,
 Still pressing forward where no term can be,
 Like hungry and unresting flame
 Curles round the eternal columns of its strength.'

Lone sitting on the bare and shuddering rock,
 All seems unlinked contingency and chance –
 No atom of this turbulence fulfils
 A vague and unnecessitated task
 Or acts but as it must and ought to act.
 Even the minutest molecule of light,
 That in an April sunbeam's fleeting glow
 Fulfils its destined though invisible work,
 The universal Spirit guides; nor less
 When merciless ambition, or mad zeal,
 Has led two hosts of dupes to battle-field,
 That, blind, they there may dig each other's graves
 And call the sad work glory, does it rule
 All passions; not a thought, a will, an act,
 No working of the tyrant's moody mind,
 Nor one misgiving of the slaves who boast
 Their servitude to hide the shame they feel,
 Nor the events enchaining every will,
 That from the depths of unrecorded time
 Have drawn all-influencing virtue, pass
 Unrecognized or unforeseen by thee,
 Soul of the Universe! eternal spring
 Of life and death, of happiness and woe,
 Of all that chequers the phantasmal scene
 That floats before our eyes in wavering light,
 Which gleams but on the darkness of our prison
 Whose chains and massy walls
 We feel but cannot see.
 'Spirit of Nature! all-sufficing Power,
 Necessity! thou mother of the world!
 Unlike the God of human error, thou
 Requirest no prayers or praises; the caprice
 Of man's weak will belongs no more to thee
 Than do the changeful passions of his breast
 To thy unvarying harmony; the slave,

Thinkest thou his grandeur had not overcome
 The force of human kindness? And when Rome
 With one stern blow hurled not the tyrant down,
 Crushed not the arm red with her dearest blood,
 Had not submissive abjectness destroyed
 Nature's suggestions?
 Look on yonder earth:
 The golden harvests spring; the unfailing sun
 Sheds light and life; the fruits, the flowers, the trees,
 Arise in due succession; all things speak
 Peace, harmony and love. The universe,
 In Nature's silent eloquence, declares
 That all fulfil the works of love and joy, -
 All but the outcast, Man. He fabricates
 The sword which stabs his peace; he cherisheth
 The snakes that gnaw his heart; he raiseth up
 The tyrant whose delight is in his woe,
 Whose sport is in his agony. Yon sun,
 Lights it the great alone? Yon silver beams,
 Sleep they less sweetly on the cottage thatch
 Than on the dome of kings? Is mother earth
 A step-dame to her numerous sons who earn
 Her unshared gifts with unremitting toil;
 A mother only to those puling babes
 Who, nursed in ease and luxury, make men
 The playthings of their babyhood and mar
 In self-important childishness that peace
 Which men alone appreciate?
 'Spirit of Nature, no!
 The pure diffusion of thy essence throbs
 Alike in every human heart.
 Thou aye erectest there
 Thy throne of power unappealable;
 Thou art the judge beneath whose nod
 Man's brief and frail authority

Is powerless as the wind
That passeth idly by;
Thine the tribunal which surpasseth
The show of human justice
As God surpasses man!
'Spirit of Nature! thou
Life of interminable multitudes;
Soul of those mighty spheres
Whose changeless paths through Heaven's deep silence lie;
Soul of that smallest being,
The dwelling of whose life
Is one faint April sun-gleam; -
Man, like these passive things,
Thy will unconsciously fulfilleth;
Like theirs, his age of endless peace,
Which time is fast maturing,
Will swiftly, surely, come;
And the unbounded frame which thou pervadest,
Will be without a flaw
Marring its perfect symmetry!

To light their children to thy paths, the roar
Of the encircling flames, the exulting cries
Of thine apostles loud commingling there,
Might sate thine hungry ear
Even on the bed of death!
'But now contempt is mocking thy gray hairs;
Thou art descending to the darksome grave,
Unhonored and unpitied but by those
Whose pride is passing by like thine, and sheds,
Like thine, a glare that fades before the sun
Of truth, and shines but in the dreadful night
That long has lowered above the ruined world.
'Throughout these infinite orbs of mingling light
Of which yon earth is one, is wide diffused
A Spirit of activity and life,
That knows no term, cessation or decay;
That fades not when the lamp of earthly life,
Extinguished in the dampness of the grave,
Awhile there slumbers, more than when the babe
In the dim newness of its being feels
The impulses of sublunary things,
And all is wonder to unpractised sense;
But, active, steadfast and eternal, still
Guides the fierce whirlwind, in the tempest roars,
Cheers in the day, breathes in the balmy groves,
Strengthens in health, and poisons in disease;
And in the storm of change, that ceaselessly
Rolls round the eternal universe and shakes
Its undecaying battlement, presides,
Apportioning with irresistible law
The place each spring of its machine shall fill;
So that, when waves on waves tumultuous heap
Confusion to the clouds, and fiercely driven
Heaven's lightnings scorch the uprooted ocean-fords -
Whilst, to the eye of shipwrecked mariner,

The sunrise, and the setting of the moon,
 Earthquakes and wars, and poisons and disease,
 And all their causes, to an abstract point
 Converging thou didst bend, and called it God!
 The self-sufficing, the omnipotent,
 The merciful, and the avenging God!
 Who, prototype of human misrule, sits
 High in heaven's realm, upon a golden throne,
 Even like an earthly king; and whose dread work,
 Hell, gapes forever for the unhappy slaves
 Of fate, whom he created in his sport
 To triumph in their torments when they fell!
 Earth heard the name; earth trembled as the smoke
 Of his revenge ascended up to heaven,
 Blotting the constellations; and the cries
 Of millions butchered in sweet confidence
 And unsuspecting peace, even when the bonds
 Of safety were confirmed by wordy oaths
 Sworn in his dreadful name, rung through the land;
 Whilst innocent babes writhed on thy stubborn spear,
 And thou didst laugh to hear the mother's shriek
 Of maniac gladness, as the sacred steel
 Felt cold in her torn entrails!
 'Religion! thou wert then in manhood's prime;
 But age crept on; one God would not suffice
 For senile puerility; thou framedst
 A tale to suit thy dotage and to glut
 Thy misery-thirsting soul, that the mad fiend
 Thy wickedness had pictured might afford
 A plea for sating the unnatural thirst
 For murder, rapine, violence and crime,
 That still consumed thy being, even when
 Thou heard'st the step of fate; that flames might light
 Thy funeral scene; and the shrill horrent shrieks
 Of parents dying on the pile that burned

IV

'How beautiful this night! the balmiest sigh,
 Which vernal zephyrs breathe in evening's ear,
 Were discord to the speaking quietude
 That wraps this moveless scene. Heaven's ebon vault,
 Studded with stars unutterably bright,
 Through which the moon's unclouded grandeur rolls,
 Seems like a canopy which love had spread
 To curtain her sleeping world. Yon gentle hills.
 Robed in a garment of untrodden snow;
 Yon darksome rocks, whence icicles depend
 So stainless that their white and glittering spires
 Tinge not the moon's pure beam; yon castled steep
 Whose banner hangeth o'er the time-worn tower
 So idly that rapt fancy deemeth it
 A metaphor of peace; -all form a scene
 Where musing solitude might love to lift
 Her soul above this sphere of earthliness;
 Where silence undisturbed might watch alone -
 So cold, so bright, so still.
 The orb of day
 In southern climes o'er ocean's waveless field
 Sinks sweetly smiling; not the faintest breath
 Steals o'er the unruffled deep; the clouds of eve
 Reflect unmoved the lingering beam of day;
 And Vesper's image on the western main
 Is beautifully still. To-morrow comes:
 Cloud upon cloud, in dark and deepening mass,
 Roll o'er the blackened waters; the deep roar

Of distant thunder mutters awfully;
 Tempest unfolds its pinion o'er the gloom
 That shrouds the boiling surge; the pitiless fiend,
 With all his winds and lightnings, tracks his prey;
 The torn deep yawns, -the vessel finds a grave
 Beneath its jagged gulf.
 Ah! whence yon glare
 That fires the arch of heaven? that dark red smoke
 Blotting the silver moon? The stars are quenched
 In darkness, and the pure and spangling snow
 Gleams faintly through the gloom that gathers round.
 Hark to that roar whose swift and deafening peals
 In countless echoes through the mountains ring,
 Startling pale Midnight on her starry throne!
 Now swells the intermingling din; the jar
 Frequent and frightful of the bursting bomb;
 The falling beam, the shriek, the groan, the shout,
 The ceaseless clangor, and the rush of men
 Inebriate with rage: -loud and more loud
 The discord grows; till pale Death shuts the scene
 And o'er the conqueror and the conquered draws
 His cold and bloody shroud. -Of all the men
 Whom day's departing beam saw blooming there
 In proud and vigorous health; of all the hearts
 That beat with anxious life at sunset there;
 How few survive, how few are beating now!
 All is deep silence, like the fearful calm
 That slumbers in the storm's portentous pause;
 Save when the frantic wail of widowed love
 Comes shuddering on the blast, or the faint moan
 With which some soul bursts from the frame of clay
 Wrapt round its struggling powers.
 The gray morn
 Dawns on the mournful scene; the sulphurous smoke
 Before the icy wind slow rolls away,

How ludicrous the priest's dogmatic roar!
 The weight of his exterminating curse
 How light! and his affected charity,
 To suit the pressure of the changing times,
 What palpable deceit! -but for thy aid,
 Religion! but for thee, prolific fiend,
 Who peopled earth with demons, hell with men,
 And heaven with slaves!
 'Thou taintest all thou lookest upon! -the stars,
 Which on thy cradle beamed so brightly sweet,
 Were gods to the distempered playfulness
 Of thy untutored infancy; the trees,
 The grass, the clouds, the mountains and the sea,
 All living things that walk, swim, creep or fly,
 Were gods; the sun had homage, and the moon
 Her worshipper. Then thou becamest, a boy,
 More daring in thy frenzies; every shape,
 Monstrous or vast, or beautifully wild,
 Which from sensation's relics fancy culls;
 The spirits of the air, the shuddering ghost,
 The genii of the elements, the powers
 That give a shape to Nature's varied works,
 Had life and place in the corrupt belief
 Of thy blind heart; yet still thy youthful hands
 Were pure of human blood. Then manhood gave
 Its strength and ardor to thy frenzied brain;
 Thine eager gaze scanned the stupendous scene,
 Whose wonders mocked the knowledge of thy pride;
 Their everlasting and unchanging laws
 Reproached thine ignorance. Awhile thou stood'st
 Baffled and gloomy; then thou didst sum up
 The elements of all that thou didst know;
 The changing seasons, winter's leafless reign,
 The budding of the heaven-breathing trees,
 The eternal orbs that beautify the night,

Yes! crime and misery are in yonder earth,
Falsehood, mistake and lust;
But the eternal world
Contains at once the evil and the cure.
Some eminent in virtue shall start up,
Even in perversest time;
The truths of their pure lips, that never die,
Shall bind the scorpion falsehood with a wreath
Of ever-living flame,
Until the monster sting itself to death.
'How sweet a scene will earth become!
Of purest spirits a pure dwelling-place,
Symphonious with the planetary spheres;
When man, with changeless Nature coalescing,
Will undertake regeneration's work,
When its ungenial poles no longer point
To the red and baleful sun
That faintly twinkles there!
'Spirit, on yonder earth,
Falsehood now triumphs; deadly power
Has fixed its seal upon the lip of truth!
Madness and misery are there!
The happiest is most wretched! Yet confide
Until pure health-drops from the cup of joy
Fall like a dew of balm upon the world.
Now, to the scene I show, in silence turn,
And read the blood-stained charter of all woe,
Which Nature soon with recreating hand
Will blot in mercy from the book of earth.
How bold the flight of passion's wandering wing,
How swift the step of reason's firmer tread,
How calm and sweet the victories of life,
How terrorless the triumph of the grave!
How powerless were the mightiest monarch's arm,
Vain his loud threat, and impotent his frown!

And the bright beams of frosty morning dance
Along the spangling snow. There tracks of blood
Even to the forest's depth, and scattered arms,
And lifeless warriors, whose hard lineaments
Death's self could change not, mark the dreadful path
Of the outsallying victors; far behind
Black ashes note where their proud city stood.
Within yon forest is a gloomy glen -
Each tree which guards its darkness from the day,
Waves o'er a warrior's tomb.
I see thee shrink,
Surpassing Spirit! -wert thou human else?
I see a shade of doubt and horror fleet
Across thy stainless features; yet fear not;
This is no unconnected misery,
Nor stands uncaused and irretrievable.
Man's evil nature, that apology
Which kings who rule, and cowards who crouch, set up
For their unnumbered crimes, sheds not the blood
Which desolates the discord-wasted land.
From kings and priests and statesmen war arose,
Whose safety is man's deep unbettered woe,
Whose grandeur his debasement. Let the axe
Strike at the root, the poison-tree will fall;
And where its venom'd exhalations spread
Ruin, and death, and woe, where millions lay
Quenching the serpent's famine, and their bones
Bleaching unburied in the putrid blast,
A garden shall arise, in loveliness
Surpassing fabled Eden.
Hath Nature's soul, -
That formed this world so beautiful, that spread
Earth's lap with plenty, and life's smallest chord
Strung to unchanging unison, that gave
The happy birds their dwelling in the grove,

That yielded to the wanderers of the deep
 The lovely silence of the unfathomed main,
 And filled the meanest worm that crawls in dust
 With spirit, thought and love, -on Man alone,
 Partial in causeless malice, wantonly
 Heaped ruin, vice, and slavery; his soul
 Blasted with withering curses; placed afar
 The meteor-happiness, that shuns his grasp,
 But serving on the frightful gulf to glare
 Rent wide beneath his footsteps?
 Nature! -no!
 Kings, priests and statesmen blast the human flower
 Even in its tender bud; their influence darts
 Like subtle poison through the bloodless veins
 Of desolate society. The child,
 Ere he can lisp his mother's sacred name,
 Swells with the unnatural pride of crime, and lifts
 His baby-sword even in a hero's mood.
 This infant arm becomes the bloodiest scourge
 Of devastated earth; whilst specious names,
 Learnt in soft childhood's unsuspecting hour,
 Serve as the sophisms with which manhood dims
 Bright reason's ray and sanctifies the sword
 Upraised to shed a brother's innocent blood.
 Let priest-led slaves cease to proclaim that man
 Inherits vice and misery, when force
 And falsehood hang even o'er the cradled babe,
 Stifling with rudest grasp all natural good.
 'Ah! to the stranger-soul, when first it peeps
 From its new tenement and looks abroad
 For happiness and sympathy, how stern
 And desolate a tract is this wide world!
 How withered all the buds of natural good!
 No shade, no shelter from the sweeping storms
 Of pitiless power! On its wretched frame

VI

All touch, all eye, all ear,
 The Spirit felt the Fairy's burning speech.
 O'er the thin texture of its frame
 The varying periods painted changing glows,
 As on a summer even,
 When soul-enfolding music floats around,
 The stainless mirror of the lake
 Re-images the eastern gloom,
 Mingling convulsively its purple hues
 With sunset's burnished gold.
 Then thus the Spirit spoke:
 'It is a wild and miserable world!
 Thorny, and full of care,
 Which every fiend can make his prey at will!
 O Fairy! in the lapse of years,
 Is there no hope in store?
 Will yon vast suns roll on
 Interminably, still illuming
 The night of so many wretched souls,
 And see no hope for them?
 Will not the universal Spirit e'er
 Revivify this withered limb of Heaven?'
 The Fairy calmly smiled
 In comfort, and a kindling gleam of hope
 Suffused the Spirit's lineaments.
 'Oh! rest thee tranquil; chase those fearful doubts
 Which ne'er could rack an everlasting soul
 That sees the chains which bind it to its doom.

And one, the good man's heart.
 How vainly seek
 The selfish for that happiness denied
 To aught but virtue! Blind and hardened, they,
 Who hope for peace amid the storms of care,
 Who covet power they know not how to use,
 And sigh for pleasure they refuse to give, -
 Madly they frustrate still their own designs;
 And, where they hope that quiet to enjoy
 Which virtue pictures, bitterness of soul,
 Pining regrets, and vain repentances,
 Disease, disgust and lassitude pervade
 Their valueless and miserable lives.
 'But hoary-headed selfishness has felt
 Its death-blow and is tottering to the grave;
 A brighter morn awaits the human day,
 When every transfer of earth's natural gifts
 Shall be a commerce of good words and works;
 When poverty and wealth, the thirst of fame,
 The fear of infamy, disease and woe,
 War with its million horrors, and fierce hell,
 Shall live but in the memory of time,
 Who, like a penitent libertine, shall start,
 Look back, and shudder at his younger years.'

Poisoned, perchance, by the disease and woe
 Heaped on the wretched parent whence it sprung
 By morals, law and custom, the pure winds
 Of heaven, that renovate the insect tribes,
 May breathe not. The untainting light of day
 May visit not its longings. It is bound
 Ere it has life; yea, all the chains are forged
 Long ere its being; all liberty and love
 And peace is torn from its defencelessness;
 Cursed from its birth, even from its cradle doomed
 To abjectness and bondage!
 'Throughout this varied and eternal world
 Soul is the only element, the block
 That for uncounted ages has remained.
 The moveless pillar of a mountain's weight
 Is active living spirit. Every grain
 Is sentient both in unity and part,
 And the minutest atom comprehends
 A world of loves and hatreds; these beget
 Evil and good; hence truth and falsehood spring;
 Hence will and thought and action, all the germs
 Of pain or pleasure, sympathy or hate,
 That variegate the eternal universe.
 Soul is not more polluted than the beams
 Of heaven's pure orb ere round their rapid lines
 The taint of earth-born atmospheres arise.
 'Man is of soul and body, formed for deeds
 Of high resolve; on fancy's boldest wing
 To soar unwearied, fearlessly to turn
 The keenest pangs to peacefulness, and taste
 The joys which mingled sense and spirit yield;
 Or he is formed for abjectness and woe,
 To grovel on the dunghill of his fears,
 To shrink at every sound, to quench the flame
 Of natural love in sensualism, to know

That hour as blest when on his worthless days
The frozen hand of death shall set its seal,
Yet fear the cure, though hating the disease.
The one is man that shall hereafter be;
The other, man as vice has made him now.
'War is the statesman's game, the priest's delight,
The lawyer's jest, the hired assassin's trade,
And to those royal murderers whose mean thrones
Are bought by crimes of treachery and gore,
The bread they eat, the staff on which they lean.
Guards, garbed in blood-red livery, surround
Their palaces, participate the crimes
That force defends and from a nation's rage
Secures the crown, which all the curses reach
That famine, frenzy, woe and penury breathe.
These are the hired bravos who defend
The tyrant's throne -the bullies of his fear;
These are the sinks and channels of worst vice,
The refuse of society, the dregs
Of all that is most vile; their cold hearts blend
Deceit with sternness, ignorance with pride,
All that is mean and villainous with rage
Which hopelessness of good and self-contempt
Alone might kindle; they are decked in wealth,
Honor and power, then are sent abroad
To do their work. The pestilence that stalks
In gloomy triumph through some eastern land
Is less destroying. They cajole with gold
And promises of fame the thoughtless youth
Already crushed with servitude; he knows
His wretchedness too late, and cherishes
Repentance for his ruin, when his doom
Is sealed in gold and blood!
Those too the tyrant serve, who, skilled to snare
The feet of justice in the toils of law,

Or the spare mite of avarice could bribe
To deck the triumph of their languid zeal,
Can make him minister to tyranny.
More daring crime requires a loftier meed.
Without a shudder the slave-soldier lends
His arm to murderous deeds, and steels his heart,
When the dread eloquence of dying men,
Low mingling on the lonely field of fame,
Assails that nature whose applause he sells
For the gross blessings of the patriot mob,
For the vile gratitude of heartless kings,
And for a cold world's good word, -viler still!
'There is a nobler glory which survives
Until our being fades, and, solacing
All human care, accompanies its change;
Deserts not virtue in the dungeon's gloom,
And in the precincts of the palace guides
Its footsteps through that labyrinth of crime;
Imbues his lineaments with dauntlessness,
Even when from power's avenging hand he takes
Its sweetest, last and noblest title -death;
-The consciousness of good, which neither gold,
Nor sordid fame, nor hope of heavenly bliss,
Can purchase; but a life of resolute good,
Unalterable will, quenchless desire
Of universal happiness, the heart
That beats with it in unison, the brain
Whose ever-wakeful wisdom toils to change
Reason's rich stores for its eternal weal.
'This commerce of sincerest virtue needs
No meditative signs of selfishness,
No jealous intercourse of wretched gain,
No balancings of prudence, cold and long;
In just and equal measure all is weighed,
One scale contains the sum of human weal,

Has bound its chains so tight about the earth
That all within it but the virtuous man
Is venal; gold or fame will surely reach
The price prefixed by Selfishness to all
But him of resolute and unchanging will;
Whom nor the plaudits of a servile crowd,
Nor the vile joys of tainting luxury,
Can bribe to yield his elevated soul
To Tyranny or Falsehood, though they wield
With blood-red hand the sceptre of the world.
'All things are sold: the very light of heaven
Is venal; earth's unsparing gifts of love,
The smallest and most despicable things
That lurk in the abysses of the deep,
All objects of our life, even life itself,
And the poor pittance which the laws allow
Of liberty, the fellowship of man,
Those duties which his heart of human love
Should urge him to perform instinctively,
Are bought and sold as in a public mart
Of undisguising Selfishness, that sets
On each its price, the stamp-mark of her reign.
Even love is sold; the solace of all woe
Is turned to deadliest agony, old age
Shivers in selfish beauty's loathing arms,
And youth's corrupted impulses prepare
A life of horror from the blighting bane
Of commerce; whilst the pestilence that springs
From unenjoying sensualism, has filled
All human life with hydra-headed woes.
'Falsehood demands but gold to pay the pangs
Of outraged conscience; for the slavish priest
Sets no great value on his hireling faith;
A little passing pomp, some servile souls,
Whom cowardice itself might safely chain

Stand ready to oppress the weaker still,
And right or wrong will vindicate for gold,
Sneering at public virtue, which beneath
Their pitiless tread lies torn and trampled where
Honor sits smiling at the sale of truth.
'Then grave and hoary-headed hypocrites,
Without a hope, a passion or a love,
Who through a life of luxury and lies
Have crept by flattery to the seats of power,
Support the system whence their honors flow.
They have three words -well tyrants know their use,
Well pay them for the loan with usury
Torn from a bleeding world! -God, Hell and Heaven:
A vengeful, pitiless, and almighty fiend,
Whose mercy is a nickname for the rage
Of tameless tigers hungering for blood;
Hell, a red gulf of everlasting fire,
Where poisonous and undying worms prolong
Eternal misery to those hapless slaves
Whose life has been a penance for its crimes;
And Heaven, a meed for those who dare belie
Their human nature, quake, believe and cringe
Before the mockeries of earthly power.
'These tools the tyrant tempers to his work,
Wields in his wrath, and as he wills destroys,
Omnipotent in wickedness; the while
Youth springs, age moulders, manhood tamely does
His bidding, bribed by short-lived joys to lend
Force to the weakness of his trembling arm.
They rise, they fall; one generation comes
Yielding its harvest to destruction's scythe.
It fades, another blossoms; yet behold!
Red glows the tyrant's stamp-mark on its bloom,
Withering and cankering deep its passive prime.
He has invented lying words and modes,

Empty and vain as his own coreless heart;
 Evasive meanings, nothings of much sound,
 To lure the heedless victim to the toils
 Spread round the valley of its paradise.
 'Look to thyself, priest, conqueror or prince!
 Whether thy trade is falsehood, and thy lusts
 Deep wallow in the earnings of the poor,
 With whom thy master was; or thou delight'st
 In numbering o'er the myriads of thy slain,
 All misery weighing nothing in the scale
 Against thy short-lived fame; or thou dost load
 With cowardice and crime the groaning land,
 A pomp-fed king. Look to thy wretched self!
 Ay, art thou not the veriest slave that e'er
 Crawled on the loathing earth? Are not thy days
 Days of unsatisfying listlessness?
 Dost thou not cry, ere night's long rack is o'er,
 "When will the morning come?" Is not thy youth
 A vain and feverish dream of sensualism?
 Thy manhood blighted with unripe disease?
 Are not thy views of unregretted death
 Drear, comfortless and horrible? Thy mind,
 Is it not morbid as thy nerveless frame,
 Incapable of judgment, hope or love?
 And dost thou wish the errors to survive,
 That bar thee from all sympathies of good,
 After the miserable interest
 Thou hold'st in their protraction? When the grave
 Has swallowed up thy memory and thyself,
 Dost thou desire the bane that poisons earth
 To twine its roots around thy confined clay,
 Spring from thy bones, and blossom on thy tomb,
 That of its fruit thy babes may eat and die?

Has gifted man with all-subduing will.
 Matter, with all its transitory shapes,
 Lies subjected and plastic at his feet,
 That, weak from bondage, tremble as they tread.
 How many a rustic Milton has passed by,
 Stifling the speechless longings of his heart,
 In unremitting drudgery and care!
 How many a vulgar Cato has compelled
 His energies, no longer tameless then,
 To mould a pin or fabricate a nail!
 How many a Newton, to whose passive ken
 Those mighty spheres that gem infinity
 Were only specks of tinsel fixed in heaven
 To light the midnights of his native town!
 'Yet every heart contains perfection's germ.
 The wisest of the sages of the earth,
 That ever from the stores of reason drew
 Science and truth, and virtue's dreadless tone,
 Were but a weak and inexperienced boy,
 Proud, sensual, unimpassioned, unimbued
 With pure desire and universal love,
 Compared to that high being, of cloudless brain,
 Untainted passion, elevated will,
 Which death (who even would linger long in awe
 Within his noble presence and beneath
 His changeless eye-beam) might alone subdue.
 Him, every slave now dragging through the filth
 Of some corrupted city his sad life,
 Pining with famine, swoln with luxury,
 Blunting the keenness of his spiritual sense
 With narrow schemings and unworthy cares,
 Or madly rushing through all violent crime
 To move the deep stagnation of his soul, -
 Might imitate and equal.
 But mean lust

To their corrupt and glaring idol, fame,
 From virtue, trampled by its iron tread, -
 Although its dazzling pedestal be raised
 Amid the horrors of a limb-strewn field,
 With desolated dwellings smoking round.
 The man of ease, who, by his warm fireside,
 To deeds of charitable intercourse
 And bare fulfilment of the common laws
 Of decency and prejudice confines
 The struggling nature of his human heart,
 Is duped by their cold sophistry; he sheds
 A passing tear perchance upon the wreck
 Of earthly peace, when near his dwelling's door
 The frightful waves are driven, -when his son
 Is murdered by the tyrant, or religion
 Drives his wife raving mad. But the poor man
 Whose life is misery, and fear and care;
 Whom the morn wakens but to fruitless toil;
 Who ever hears his famished offspring's scream;
 Whom their pale mother's uncomplaining gaze
 Forever meets, and the proud rich man's eye
 Flashing command, and the heart-breaking scene
 Of thousands like himself; -he little heeds
 The rhetoric of tyranny; his hate
 Is quenchless as his wrongs; he laughs to scorn
 The vain and bitter mockery of words,
 Feeling the horror of the tyrant's deeds,
 And unrestrained but by the arm of power,
 That knows and dreads his enmity.
 'The iron rod of penury still compels
 Her wretched slave to bow the knee to wealth,
 And poison, with unprofitable toil,
 A life too void of solace to confirm
 The very chains that bind him to his doom.
 Nature, impartial in munificence,

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'Thus do the generations of the earth
 Go to the grave and issue from the womb,
 Surviving still the imperishable change
 That renovates the world; even as the leaves
 Which the keen frost-wind of the waning year
 Has scattered on the forest-soil and heaped
 For many seasons there -though long they choke,
 Loading with loathsome rottenness the land,
 All germs of promise, yet when the tall trees
 From which they fell, shorn of their lovely shapes,
 Lie level with the earth to moulder there,
 They fertilize the land they long deformed;
 Till from the breathing lawn a forest springs
 Of youth, integrity and loveliness,
 Like that which gave it life, to spring and die.
 Thus suicidal selfishness, that blights
 The fairest feelings of the opening heart,
 Is destined to decay, whilst from the soil
 Shall spring all virtue, all delight, all love,
 And judgment cease to wage unnatural war
 With passion's unsubduable array.
 Twin-sister of Religion, Selfishness!
 Rival in crime and falsehood, aping all
 The wanton horrors of her bloody play;
 Yet frozen, unimpassioned, spiritless,
 Shunning the light, and owning not its name,
 Compelled by its deformity to screen
 With flimsy veil of justice and of right

Its unattractive lineaments that scare
All save the brood of ignorance; at once
The cause and the effect of tyranny;
Unblushing, hardened, sensual and vile;
Dead to all love but of its abjectness;
With heart impassive by more noble powers
Than unshared pleasure, sordid gain, or fame;
Despising its own miserable being,
Which still it longs, yet fears, to disenthral.
'Hence commerce springs, the venal interchange
Of all that human art or Nature yield;
Which wealth should purchase not, but want demand,
And natural kindness hasten to supply
From the full fountain of its boundless love,
Forever stifled, drained and tainted now.
Commerce! beneath whose poison-breathing shade
No solitary virtue dares to spring,
But poverty and wealth with equal hand
Scatter their withering curses, and unfold
The doors of premature and violent death
To pining famine and full-fed disease,
To all that shares the lot of human life,
Which, poisoned body and soul, scarce drags the chain
That lengthens as it goes and clanks behind.
'Commerce has set the mark of selfishness,
The signet of its all-enslaving power,
Upon a shining ore, and called it gold;
Before whose image bow the vulgar great,
The vainly rich, the miserable proud,
The mob of peasants, nobles, priests and kings,
And with blind feelings reverence the power
That grinds them to the dust of misery.
But in the temple of their hireling hearts
Gold is a living god and rules in scorn
All earthly things but virtue.

'Since tyrants by the sale of human life
Heap luxuries to their sensualism, and fame
To their wide-wasting and insatiate pride,
Success has sanctioned to a credulous world
The ruin, the disgrace, the woe of war.
His hosts of blind and unresisting dupes
The despot numbers; from his cabinet
These puppets of his schemes he moves at will,
Even as the slaves by force or famine driven,
Beneath a vulgar master, to perform
A task of cold and brutal drudgery; -
Hardened to hope, insensible to fear,
Scarce living pulleys of a dead machine,
Mere wheels of work and articles of trade,
That grace the proud and noisy pomp of wealth!
'The harmony and happiness of man
Yields to the wealth of nations; that which lifts
His nature to the heaven of its pride,
Is bartered for the poison of his soul;
The weight that drags to earth his towering hopes,
Blighting all prospect but of selfish gain,
Withering all passion but of slavish fear,
Extinguishing all free and generous love
Of enterprise and daring, even the pulse
That fancy kindles in the beating heart
To mingle with sensation, it destroys, -
Leaves nothing but the sordid lust of self,
The grovelling hope of interest and gold,
Unqualified, unmingled, unredeemed
Even by hypocrisy.
And statesmen boast
Of wealth! The wordy eloquence that lives
After the ruin of their hearts, can gild
The bitter poison of a nation's woe;
Can turn the worship of the servile mob