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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ENDYMION: A POETIC ROMANCE ***

ENDYMION:

A Poetic Romance.

BY JOHN KEATS.

“THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG.”

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR TAYLOR AND HESSEY,
93, FLEET STREET.
1818.

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON.

PREFACE.

Knowing within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;—it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not a fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece, and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

*Teignmouth,
April 10, 1818.*

ERRATUM.

[Page 108, line 4 from the bottom, for "her" read "his."](#)

ENDYMION.

BOOK I.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet
breathing.
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways 10
Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils
With the green world they live in; and clear
rills
That for themselves a cooling covert make
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose
blooms:
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms 20
We have imagined for the mighty dead;
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:
An endless fountain of immortal drink,
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences
For one short hour; no, even as the trees
That whisper round a temple become soon
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,
The passion poesy, glories infinite,
Haunt us till they become a cheering light 30
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,
That, whether there be shine, or gloom
o'er-cast,
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I
Will trace the story of Endymion.
The very music of the name has gone
Into my being, and each pleasant scene
Is growing fresh before me as the green
Of our own vallies: so I will begin
Now while I cannot hear the city's din; 40
Now while the early budders are just new,
And run in mazes of the youngest hue
About old forests; while the willow trails
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer
My little boat, for many quiet hours,
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.
Many and many a verse I hope to write,
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white, 50
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,
I must be near the middle of my story.
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,
See it half finished: but let Autumn bold,
With universal tinge of sober gold,
Be all about me when I make an end.
And now at once, adventuresome, I send
My herald thought into a wilderness:

There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress 60
My uncertain path with green, that I may
speed
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's
keep
A lamb strayed far a-down those inmost glens,
Never again saw he the happy pens 70
Whither his brethren, bleating with content,
Over the hills at every nightfall went.
Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever
From the white flock, but pass'd unworried
By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,
Until it came to some unfooted plains
Where fed the herds of Pan: ay great his gains
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were
many,
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes
fenny, 80
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see
Stems thronging all around between the swell
Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell
The freshness of the space of heaven above,
Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through
which a dove
Would often beat its wings, and often too
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness
There stood a marble altar, with a tress 90
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein
A melancholy spirit well might win
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine
Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine 100
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing
sun;
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the
mass
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped 110
A troop of little children garlanded;
Who gathering round the altar, seemed to pry
Earnestly round as wishing to espy
Some folk of holiday: nor had they waited
For many moments, ere their ears were sated
With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then
Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.
Within a little space again it gave
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes
breaking
Through copse-clad vallies,-ere their death,
o'ertaking
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea. 121

And now, as deep into the wood as we

Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,
Plainer and plainer shewing, till at last
Into the widest alley they all past,
Making directly for the woodland altar.
O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee: 130
But let a portion of ethereal dew
Fall on my head, and presently unmew
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced
along,
Bearing the burden of a shepherd song;
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd
With April's tender younglings: next, well
trimm'd,
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks
As may be read of in Arcadian books; 140
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,
Let his divinity o'er-flowing die
In music, through the vales of Thessaly:
Some idly trailed their sheep-hooks on the
ground,
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,
A venerable priest full soberly,
Begirt with ministring looks: alway his eye 150
Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,
And after him his sacred vestments swept.
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-
white,
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;
And in his left he held a basket full
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could
cull:
Wild thyme, and valley-lilies whiter still
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth 160
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:
Who stood therein did seem of great renown
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,
Shewing like Ganymede to manhood grown; 170
And, for those simple times, his garments were
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half
bare,
Was hung a silver bugle, and between
His nery knees there lay a boar-spear keen.
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd,
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd
Of idleness in groves Elysian:
But there were some who feelingly could scan
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip 180
Through his forgotten hands: then would they
sigh,
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets cry,
Of logs piled solemnly.-Ah, well-a-day,
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was
chang'd
To sudden veneration: women meek

Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each
cheek
Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.
Endymion too, without a forest peer, 190
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,
Among his brothers of the mountain chase.
In midst of all, the venerable priest
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,
And, after lifting up his aged hands,
Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd
bands!

Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:
Whether descended from beneath the rocks
That overtop your mountains; whether come
From vallies where the pipe is never dumb; 200
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air
stirs

Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds
forlorn

By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare
The scrip, with needments, for the mountain
air;

And all ye gentle girls who foster up
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup 210
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth:
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide
plains
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not
rains

Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd 220
His early song against yon breezy sky,
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a
spire
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod
With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light 230
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

"O THOU, whose mighty palace roof doth
hang
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels
darken;
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and
hearken
The dreary melody of bedded reeds-
In desolate places, where dank moisture
breeds 240

The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx-do thou now,
By thy love's milky brow!
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,
Hear us, great Pan!

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet,
turtles

Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,
What time thou wanderest at eventide
Through sunny meadows, that outskirts the side 250
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas
Their fairest blossom'd beans and poppi'd
corn;
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding
year
All its completions—be quickly near, 260
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,
O forester divine!

"Thou, to whom every fawn and satyr flies
For willing service; whether to surprise
The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit;
Or upward ragged precipices flit
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;
Or by mysterious enticement draw
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main, 270
And gather up all fancifullest shells
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,
The while they pelt each other on the crown
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—
By all the echoes that about thee ring,
Hear us, O satyr king!

"O Harkener to the loud clapping shears,
While ever and anon to his shorn peers 280
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn
Anger our huntsman: Breather round our
farms,
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,
And wither drearily on barren moors:
Dread opener of the mysterious doors
Leading to universal knowledge—see,
Great son of Dryope, 290
The many that are come to pay their vows
With leaves about their brows!

Be still the unimaginable lodge
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth
Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth:
Be still a symbol of immensity;
A firmament reflected in a sea; 300
An element filling the space between;
An unknown—but no more: we humbly screen
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly
bending,
And giving out a shout most heaven rending,
Conjure thee to receive our humble Pæan,
Upon thy Mount Lycean!

Even while they brought the burden to a
close,
A shout from the whole multitude arose,
That lingered in the air like dying rolls
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals 310
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,
Young companies nimbly began dancing
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.

Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly
 To tunes forgotten-out of memory:
 Fair creatures! whose young childrens'
 children bred
 Thermopylæ its heroes-not yet dead,
 But in old marbles ever beautiful.
 High genitors, unconscious did they cull 320
 Time's sweet first-fruits-they danc'd to
 weariness,
 And then in quiet circles did they press
 The hillock turf, and caught the latter end
 Of some strange history, potent to send
 A young mind from its bodily tenement.
 Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent
 On either side; pitying the sad death
 Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath
 Of Zephyr slew him,-Zephyr penitent,
 Who now, ere Phœbus mounts the firmament, 330
 Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.
 The archers too, upon a wider plain,
 Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,
 And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft
 Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,
 Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope
 Those who would watch. Perhaps, the
 trembling knee
 And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,
 Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young
 Were dead and gone, and her caressing
 tongue 340
 Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,
 And very, very deadliness did nip
 Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad
 mood
 By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,
 Uplifting his strong bow into the air,
 Many might after brighter visions stare:
 After the Argonauts, in blind amaze
 Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,
 Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,
 There shot a golden splendour far and wide, 350
 Spangling those million poutings of the brine
 With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine
 From the exaltation of Apollo's bow;
 A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.
 Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,
 Might turn their steps towards the sober ring
 Where sat Endymion and the aged priest
 'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks
 increas'd
 The silvery setting of their mortal star.
 There they discours'd upon the fragile bar 360
 That keeps us from our homes ethereal;
 And what our duties there: to nightly call
 Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather;
 To summon all the downiest clouds together
 For the sun's purple couch; to emulate
 In ministring the potent rule of fate
 With speed of fire-tailed exhalations;
 To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons
 Sweet poesy by moonlight: besides these,
 A world of other unguess'd offices. 370
 Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,
 Into Elysium; vieing to rehearse
 Each one his own anticipated bliss.
 One felt heart-certain that he could not miss
 His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd
 boughs,
 Where every zephyr-sigh pouts, and endows
 Her lips with music for the welcoming.
 Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,
 To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,
 Sweeping, eye-earnestly, through almond
 vales: 380
 Who, suddenly, should stoop through the

smooth wind,
 And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind;
 And, ever after, through those regions be
 His messenger, his little Mercury,
 Some were athirst in soul to see again
 Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide
 champaign
 In times long past; to sit with them, and talk
 Of all the chances in their earthly walk;
 Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores
 Of happiness, to when upon the moors, 390
 Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,
 And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all out-
 told
 Their fond imaginations,—saving him
 Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,
 Endymion: yet hourly had he striven
 To hide the cankering venom, that had riven
 His fainting recollections. Now indeed
 His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed
 The sudden silence, or the whispers low,
 Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe, 400
 Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,
 Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms:
 But in the self-same fixed trance he kept,
 Like one who on the earth had never slept.
 Aye, even as dead-still as a marble man,
 Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close?
 Peona, his sweet sister: of all those,
 His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she
 made,
 And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade 410
 A yielding up, a cradling on her care.
 Her eloquence did breathe away the curse:
 She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse
 Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,
 Along a path between two little streams,—
 Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,
 From low-grown branches, and his footsteps
 slow
 From stumbling over stumps and hillocks
 small;
 Until they came to where these streamlets fall,
 With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush, 420
 Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush
 With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.
 A little shallop, floating there hard by,
 Pointed its beak over the fringed bank;
 And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,
 And dipt again, with the young couple's
 weight,—
 Peona guiding, through the water straight,
 Towards a bowery island opposite;
 Which gaining presently, she steered light
 Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove, 430
 Where nested was an harbour, overwove
 By many a summer's silent fingering;
 To whose cool bosom she was used to bring
 Her playmates, with their needle broidery,
 And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid
 Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,
 On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,
 Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves
 When last the sun his autumn tresses shook, 440
 And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.
 Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest:
 But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest
 Peona's busy hand against his lips,
 And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips
 In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps
 A patient watch over the stream that creeps

Windingly by it, so the quiet maid
Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling 450
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be
heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the
mind
Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled
caves,
Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves
And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world 460
Of silvery enchantment!-who, upfurl'd
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,
But renovates and lives?-Thus, in the bower,
Endymion was calm'd to life again.
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,
He said: "I feel this thine endearing love
All through my bosom: thou art as a dove
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings
About me; and the pearliest dew not brings
Such morning incense from the fields of May, 470
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray
From those kind eyes,-the very home and
haunt
Of sisterly affection. Can I want
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such
tears?
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears
That, any longer, I will pass my days
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once
more
Make my horn parley from their foreheads
hoar:
Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall
loll 480
Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll
The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow:
And, when the pleasant sun is getting low,
Again I'll linger in a sloping mead
To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered sweet,
And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat
My soul to keep in its resolved course."

Hereat Peona, in their silver source,
Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim, 490
And took a lute, from which there pulsing
came
A lively prelude, fashioning the way
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay
More subtle cadenced, more forest wild
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;
And nothing since has floated in the air
So mournful strange. Surely some influence
rare
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd
The quick invisible strings, even though she
saw 500
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw
Before the deep intoxication.
But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon
Her self-possession-swung the lute aside,
And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide
That thou dost know of things mysterious,
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in
aught

Offensive to the heavenly powers? Caught
A Paphian dove upon a message sent? 510
Thy deathful bow against some deer-herd
bent,
Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen
Her naked limbs among the alders green;
And that, alas! is death. No, I can trace
Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her
hand,
And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland
And merry in our meadows? How is this?
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!-
Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change 520
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more
strange?
Or more complete to overwhelm surmise?
Ambition is no sluggard: 'tis no prize,
That toiling years would put within my grasp,
That I have sigh'd for: with so deadly gasp
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.
So all have set my heavier grief above
These things which happen. Rightly have they
done:
I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the
world, 530
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd
My spear aloft, as signal for the chace-
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
With my own steed from Araby; pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching; frown
A lion into growling, loth retire-
To lose, at once, all my toil breeding fire,
And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

"This river does not see the naked sky, 540
Till it begins to progress silverly
Around the western border of the wood,
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:
And in that nook, the very pride of June,
Had I been used to pass my weary eves;
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves
So dear a picture of his sovereign power,
And I could witness his most kingly hour,
When he doth lighten up the golden reins, 550
And paces leisurely down amber plains
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red:
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well
That but one night had wrought this flowery
spell;
And, sitting down close by, began to muse
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I,
Morpheus,
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook; 560
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,
Had dipt his rod in it: such garland wealth
Came not by common growth. Thus on I
thought,
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;
And shaping visions all about my sight
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;
The which became more strange, and strange,
and dim,
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim: 571
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell

The enchantment that afterwards befel?
Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream
That never tongue, although it overteem
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,
Could figure out and to conception bring
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay
Watching the zenith, where the milky way
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours; 580
And travelling my eye, until the doors
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,
I became loth and fearful to alight
From such high soaring by a downward
glance:

So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.
When, presently, the stars began to glide,
And faint away, before my eager view:
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge; 590
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er
A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went
At last into a dark and vapoury tent-
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train
Of planets all were in the blue again.

To commune with those orbs, once more I
rais'd 600
My sight right upward: but it was quite dazed
By a bright something, sailing down apace,
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face:
Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,
Who from Olympus watch our destinies!
Whence that completed form of all
completeness?
Whence came that high perfection of all
sweetness?

Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O
where
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?
Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun; 610
Not-thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun
Such follying before thee-yet she had,
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad;
And they were simply gordian'd up and
braided,
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orb'd
brow;

The which were blended in, I know not how,
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest
sighs,

That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings 620
And plays about its fancy, till the stings
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.
Unto what awful power shall I call?
To what high fane?-Ah! see her hovering feet,
More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely
sweet

Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows
Her scarf into a fluttering pavilion;
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed, 630
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,
Handfuls of daisies."-"Endymion, how strange!
Dream within dream!"-"She took an airy
range,

And then, towards me, like a very maid,
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,
And press'd me by the hand: Ah! 'twas too
much;

Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,
 Yet held my recollection, even as one
 Who dives three fathoms where the waters run
 Gurgling in beds of coral: for anon, 640
 I felt upmounted in that region
 Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,
 And eagles struggle with the buffeting north
 That balances the heavy meteor-stone;-
 Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,
 But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.
 Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,
 And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd;
 Such as ay muster where grey time has
 scoop'd
 Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side: 650
 There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd
 To faint once more by looking on my bliss-
 I was distracted; madly did I kiss
 The wooing arms which held me, and did give
 My eyes at once to death: but 'twas to live,
 To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
 Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and
 count
 The moments, by some greedy help that
 seem'd
 A second self, that each might be redeem'd
 And plunder'd of its load of blessedness. 660
 Ah, desperate mortal! I ev'n dar'd to press
 Her very cheek against my crowned lip,
 And, at that moment, felt my body dip
 Into a warmer air: a moment more,
 Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store
 Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes
 A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,
 Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells,
 Made delicate from all white-flower bells;
 And once, above the edges of our nest, 670
 An arch face peep'd,-an Oread as I guess'd.

"Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd
 me
 In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,
 Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,
 And stare them from me? But no, like a spark
 That needs must die, although its little beam
 Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream
 Fell into nothing-into stupid sleep.
 And so it was, until a gentle creep,
 A careful moving caught my waking ears, 680
 And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears,
 My clenched hands;-for lo! the poppies hung
 Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung
 A heavy ditty, and the sullen day
 Had chidden herald Hesperus away,
 With leaden looks: the solitary breeze
 Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did tease
 With wayward melancholy; and I thought,
 Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought
 Faint fare-thee-wells, and sigh-shrilled
 adieus!- 690
 Away I wander'd-all the pleasant hues
 Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest
 shades
 Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny
 glades
 Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills
 Seem'd sooty, and o'er-spread with upturn'd
 gills
 Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown
 In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out-grown
 Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird
 Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and
 stirr'd
 In little journeys, I beheld in it 700
 A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit

My soul with under darkness; to entice
My stumblings down some monstrous
precipice:
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle
heaven!
These things, with all their comfortings, are
given
To my down-sunken hours, and with thee,
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea

Of weary life."

710

Thus ended he, and both
Sat silent: for the maid was very loth
To answer; feeling well that breathed words
Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords
Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps,
And wonders; struggles to devise some blame;
To put on such a look as would say, *Shame*
On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife,
She could as soon have crush'd away the life 720
From a sick dove. At length, to break the
pause,
She said with trembling chance: "Is this the
cause?
This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!
That one who through this middle earth should
pass
Most like a sojourning demi-god, and leave
His name upon the harp-string, should achieve
No higher bard than simple maidenhood,
Singing alone, and fearfully,-how the blood
Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray
He knew not where; and how he would say,
nay, 730
If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;
What could it be but love? How a ring-dove
Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path;
And how he died: and then, that love doth
scathe,
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses;
And then the ballad of his sad life closes
With sighs, and an alas!-Endymion!
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,-anon
Among the winds at large-that all may
hearken!
Although, before the crystal heavens darken, 740
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes
Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold
sands,
Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces
And towers of amethyst,-would I so tease
My pleasant days, because I could not mount
Into those regions? The Morphean fount
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,
And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams 750
Into its airy channels with so subtle,
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,
Circl'd a million times within the space
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,
A tinting of its quality: how light
Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're
more slight
Than the mere nothing that engenders them!
Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick 760
For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth
Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth

Was in his plaited brow: yet, his eyelids
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids
A little breeze to creep between the fans
Of careless butterflies: amid his pains
He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew,
Full palatable; and a colour grew
Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

"Peona! ever have I long'd to slake 770
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd-
Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bar'd
And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.

Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence; till we shine, 780
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold
The clear religion of heaven! Fold

A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,
And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Eolian magic from their lucid wombs:

Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;
Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave 790
Round every spot were trod Apollo's foot;
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was;
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.
Feel we these things?-that moment have we
stept

Into a sort of oneness, and our state
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far 800
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
To the chief intensity: the crown of these
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.

All its more ponderous and bulky worth
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
Of light, and that is love: its influence,
Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
At which we start and fret; till in the end, 810
Melting into its radiance, we blend,
Mingle, and so become a part of it,-

Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
So wingedly: when we combine therewith,
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.
Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,
That men, who might have tower'd in the van
Of all the congregated world, to fan

And winnow from the coming step of time 820
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,
Have been content to let occasion die,
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.

And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,
Than speak against this ardent listlessness:
For I have ever thought that it might bless
The world with benefits unknowingly;
As does the nightingale, upperched high,
And cloister'd among cool and bunched
leaves- 830

She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives
How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey
hood.
Just so may love, although 'tis understood

The mere commingling of passionate breath,
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit
would swell
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright
mail,
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones, 840
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,
If human souls did never kiss and greet?

"Now, if this earthly love has power to
make
Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake
Ambition from their memories, and brim
Their measure of content; what merest whim,
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim
A love immortal, an immortal too. 850
Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true,
And never can be born of atomies
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,
Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,
My restless spirit never could endure
To brood so long upon one luxury,
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.
My sayings will the less obscured seem,
When I have told thee how my waking sight 860
Has made me scruple whether that same night
Was pass'd in dreaming. Hearken, sweet
Peona!
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,
Which we should see but for these darkening
boughs,
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart,
And meet so nearly, that with wings outtraught,
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide
Past them, but he must brush on every side.
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell, 870
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks
set
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet
Edges them round, and they have golden pits:
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.
And there in strife no burning thoughts to
heed, 880
I'd bubble up the water through a reed;
So reaching back to boy-hood: make me ships
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,
With leaves stuck in them; and the Neptune be
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror
through.
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver; 890
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver
The happy chance: so happy, I was fain
To follow it upon the open plain,
And, therefore, was just going; when, behold!
A wonder, fair as any I have told-
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap
Through the cool depth.-It moved as if to flee-
I started up, when lo! refreshfully,

There came upon my face, in plenteous
 showers, 900
 Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and
 flowers,
 Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,
 Bathing my spirit in a new delight.
 Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss
 Alone preserved me from the drear abyss
 Of death, for the fair form had gone again.
 Pleasure is oft a visitant; but pain
 Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth
 On the deer's tender haunches: late, and loth,
 'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure. 910
 How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure
 Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,
 By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night!
 Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,
 Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill:
 And a whole age of lingering moments crept
 Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept
 Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.
 Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen;
 Once more been tortured with renewed life. 920
 When last the wintry gusts gave over strife
 With the conquering sun of spring, and left the
 skies
 Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes
 In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,-
 That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,
 My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd,
 Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd
 All torment from my breast;- 'twas even then,
 Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den
 Of helpless discontent,-hurling my lance 930
 From place to place, and following at chance,
 At last, by hap, through some young trees it
 struck,
 And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck
 In the middle of a brook,-whose silver ramble
 Down twenty little falls, through reeds and
 bramble,
 Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,
 Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did
 lave
 The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,-
 'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock
 Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead, 940
 Hung a lush scene of drooping weeds, and
 spread
 Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's
 home.
 "Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam?"
 Said I, low voic'd: "Ah, whither! 'Tis the grot
 Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,
 Doth her resign; and where her tender hands
 She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands:
 Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,
 And babbles thorough silence, till her wits
 Are gone in tender madness, and anon, 950
 Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone
 Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,
 And breathe them sighingly among the
 boughs,
 To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,
 Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,
 And weave them dyingly-send honey-whispers
 Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers
 May sigh my love unto her pitying!
 O charitable echo! hear, and sing
 This ditty to her!-tell her"-so I stay'd 960
 My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,
 Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,
 And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.
 Salt tears were coming, when I heard my
 name

Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents
came:

"Endymion! the cave is secreter
Than the isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir
No sighs but sigh-warm kisses, or light noise
Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling
cloys
And trembles through my labyrinthine hair." 970
At that oppress'd I hurried in.-Ah! where
Are those swift moments? Whither are they
fled?

I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed
Sorrow the way to death; but patiently
Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;
And come instead demurest meditation,
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion
My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.
No more will I count over, link by link,
My chain of grief: no longer strive to find 980
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind
Blustering about my ears: aye, thou shalt see,
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be;
What a calm round of hours shall make my
days.
There is a paly flame of hope that plays
Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis naught-
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,
Already, a more healthy countenance?
By this the sun is setting; we may chance
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car." 990

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand:
They stept into the boat, and launch'd from
land.

ENDYMION.

BOOK II.

O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm!
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,
And shadowy, through the mist of passed
years:
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears
Have become indolent; but touching thine,
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their
blaze,
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen
blades,
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks-all dimly
fades 10
Into some backward corner of the brain;
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.
Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat!
Swart planet in the universe of deeds!
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds
Along the pebbled shore of memory!
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified 20
To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,
And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.
But wherefore this? What care, though owl did
fly
About the great Athenian admiral's mast?
What care, though striding Alexander past
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers
The gluttoned Cyclops, what care?-Juliet leaning
Amid her window-flowers, -sighing, -weaning
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,

Doth more avail than these: the silver flow 30
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,
Are things to brood on with more ardency
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully
Must such conviction come upon his head,
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,
The path of love and poesy. But rest,
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear 40
Love's standard on the battlements of song.
So once more days and nights aid me along,

Like legion'd
soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd
prince,

What promise hast thou faithful guarded since
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows
Come with the constant dawn upon thy
morrrows?
Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days,
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed
oaks; 50
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes
Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still,
Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill.
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,
And elbow-deep with feverous fingering
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree
Pavilions him in bloom, and he doth see
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight; 60
And, in the middle, there is softly pight
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings
There must be surely character'd strange
things,
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,
Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands
His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was; 70
And like a new-born spirit did he pass
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland
dun,
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight
dreams
The summer time away. One track unseams
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,
He sinks adown a solitary glen,
Where there was never sound of mortal men,
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences 80
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,
Until it reached a splashing fountain's side
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd
Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd,
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip
The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch 90
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.
But, at that very touch, to disappear
So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered,

Endymion sought around, and shook each bed
 Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung
 Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,
 What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest?
 It was a nymph uprisen to the breast
 In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood 100
 'Mong lilies, like the youngest of the brood.
 To him her dripping hand she softly kist,
 And anxiously began to plait and twist
 Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: "Youth!
 Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,
 The bitterness of love: too long indeed,
 Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed
 Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer
 All the bright riches of my crystal coffer
 To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish, 110
 Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,
 Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze;
 Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws
 A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands
 Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands
 By my diligent springs; my level lilies, shells,
 My charming rod, my potent river spells;
 Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup
 Meander gave me,-for I bubbled up
 To fainting creatures in a desert wild. 120
 But woe is me, I am but as a child
 To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,
 Is, that I pity thee; that on this day
 I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far
 In other regions, past the scanty bar
 To mortal steps, before thou cans't be ta'en
 From every wasting sigh, from every pain,
 Into the gentle bosom of thy love.
 Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:
 But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewel! 130
 I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's
 gaze,
 Who brooded o'er the water in amaze:
 The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its
 pool
 Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,
 Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,
 And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill
 Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,
 Holding his forehead, to keep off the burr
 Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down; 140
 And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown
 Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,
 Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whoso encamps
 To take a fancied city of delight,
 O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,
 After long toil and travelling, to miss
 The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:
 Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;
 Another city doth he set about,
 Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt 150
 That he will seize on trickling honey-combs:
 Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams,
 And onward to another city speeds.
 But this is human life: the war, the deeds,
 The disappointment, the anxiety,
 Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,
 All human; bearing in themselves this good,
 That they are still the air, the subtle food,
 To make us feel existence, and to shew
 How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow, 160
 Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,
 There is no depth to strike in: I can see
 Nought earthly worth my compassing; so
 stand
 Upon a misty, jutting head of land-
 Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute,

When mad Eurydice is listening to't;
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,
But the soft shadow of my thrice-seen love,
Than be-I care not what. O meekest dove 170
Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten-times bright and
fair!

From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might
And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd!
Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment
spar'd,
Would give a pang to jealous misery,
Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout 180
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow
Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle
stream.

O be propitious, nor severely deem
My madness impious; for, by all the stars
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars
That kept my spirit in are burst-that I
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!
How beautiful thou art! The world how deep!
How tremulous-dazzlingly the wheels sweep 190
Around their axle! Then these gleaming reins,
How lithe! When this thy chariot attains
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils
Those twilight eyes?-Those eyes!-my spirit
fails-

Dear goddess, help! or the wide-gaping air
Will gulph me-help!"-At this with madden'd
stare,
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood;
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.
And, but from the deep cavern there was
borne 200

A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan
Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth:
"Descend,
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys
bend
Into the sparry hollows of the world!
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been
A little lower than the chilly sheen
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms 210
Into the deadening ether that still charms
Their marble being: now, as deep profound
As those are high, descend! He ne'er is
crown'd
With immortality, who fears to follow
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"

He heard but the last words, nor could
contend
One moment in reflection: for he fled
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming
madness.

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for
sadness;
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite 221
To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,
The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,
But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;
A dusky empire and its diadems;
One faint eternal eventide of gems.

Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,
 Along whose track the prince quick footsteps
 told,
 With all its lines abrupt and angular:
 Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star, 230
 Through a vast antre; then the metal woof,
 Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous
 roof
 Curves hugely: now, far in the deep abyss,
 It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
 Fancy into belief: anon it leads
 Through winding passages, where sameness
 breeds
 Vexing conceptions of some sudden change;
 Whether to silver grotts, or giant range
 Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
 Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge 240
 Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath
 Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he
 seeth
 A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come
 But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb
 His bosom grew, when first he, far away,
 Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray
 Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the
 sun
 Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun
 Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,
 He saw not fiercer wonders—past the wit 250
 Of any spirit to tell, but one of those
 Who, when this planet's sphering time doth
 close,
 Will be its high remembrancers: who they?
 The mighty ones who have made eternal day
 For Greece and England. While astonishment
 With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went
 Into a marble gallery, passing through
 A mimic temple, so complete and true
 In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd
 To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd, 260
 Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,
 And, just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,
 A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,
 The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd
 eye
 Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.
 And when, more near against the marble cold
 He had touch'd his forehead, he began to
 thread
 All courts and passages, where silence dead
 Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured
 faint:
 And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint 270
 Himself with every mystery, and awe;
 Till, weary, he sat down before the maw
 Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim
 To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.
 There, when new wonders ceas'd to float
 before,
 And thoughts of self came on, how crude and
 sore
 The journey homeward to habitual self!
 A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,
 Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-
 briar,
 Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire, 280
 Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing
 In lone Endymion's ear, now he has caught
 The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the
 thought,
 The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!
 He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow
 Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild

In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,
Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest 290
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous
air;

But far from such companionship to wear
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear?
"No!" exclaimed he, "why should I tarry here?"
No! loudly echoed times innumerable.
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell
His paces back into the temple's chief;
Warming and growing strong in the belief 300
Of help from Dian: so that when again
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,
Moving more near the while. "O Haunter
chaste

Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead
woos?

Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos
Of thy departed nymphs? Through what dark
tree
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be, 310
'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste
Thy loveliness in dismal elements;
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name!
Within my breast there lives a choking flame-
O let me cool it among the zephyr-boughs!
A homeward fever parches up my tongue- 320
O let me slake it at the running springs!
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings-
O let me once more hear the linnet's note!
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows
float-
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light!
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white?
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-
juice?
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice, 330
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!-
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap
His destiny, alert he stood: but when
Obstinate silence came heavily again,
Feeling about for its old couch of space
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.
But 'twas not long; for, sweeter than the rill 340
To its old channel, or a swollen tide
To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle
crowns
Up heaping through the slab: refreshment
drowns
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide-
Nor in one spot alone; the floral pride
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew
Before his footsteps; as when heav'd anew
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the
shore,
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam,
all hoar,
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence. 351

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes;
So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes
One moment with his hand among the sweets:
Onward he goes—he stops—his bosom beats
As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm
Of which the throbs were born. This still
alarm,
This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe:
For it came more softly than the east could
blow 360
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles;
Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles
Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,
Who lov'd—and music slew not? 'Tis the pest
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;
That things of delicate and tenderest worth
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,
By one consuming flame: it doth immerse 370
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear;
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten
clear,
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his
head
Brushing, awakened: then the sounds again 380
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain
Over a bower, where little space he stood;
For as the sunset peeps into a wood
So saw he panting light, and towards it went
Through winding alleys; and lo, wonderment!
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,
Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,
At last, with sudden step, he came upon
A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high, 390
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,
And more of beautiful and strange beside:
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth
Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth,
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment
reach:
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve 400
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light;
But rather, giving them to the filled sight
Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd
On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth
To slumbery pout; just as the morning south
Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,
Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal; and round him grew 410
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,
Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh:
The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh,
Shading its Ethiop berries; and woodbine,
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;
Convolvulus in streaked vases flush;
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush;
And virgin's bower, trailing airily;
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,

Stood serene Cupids watching silently. 420
One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings,
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings;
And, ever and anon, uprose to look
At the youth's slumber; while another took
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,
And shook it on his hair; another flew
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,
The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and
o'er; 430

Until, impatient in embarrassment,
He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went
To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,
Smiling, thus whisper'd: "Though from upper
day
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer!
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense;
As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence 440

Was I in no wise startled. So recline
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,
Alive with sparkles—never, I aver,
Since Ariadne was a vintager,
So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears
Were high about Pomona: here is cream,
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam;
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd 450

For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm'd
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums
Ready to melt between an infant's gums:
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know
Of all these things around us." He did so,
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre;
And thus: "I need not any hearing tire
By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind 460
Him all in all unto her dotting self.

Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf,
He was content to let her amorous plea
Faint through his careless arms; content to see
An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet;
Content, O fool! to make a cold retreat,
When on the pleasant grass such love,
lovelorn,
Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born
Of diverse passion; when her lips and eyes
Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs 470
Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils
small.

Hush! no exclaim—yet, justly mightst thou call
Curses upon his head.—I was half glad,
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,
When the boar tusk'd him: so away she flew
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings
drew

Immortal tear-drops down the thunderer's
beard;
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd
Each summer time to life. Lo! this is he,
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy 480
Of this still region all his winter-sleep.

Aye, sleep; for when our love-sick queen did
weep
Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower
Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy
power,
Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness:

The which she fills with visions, and doth dress
 In all this quiet luxury; and hath set
 Us young immortals, without any let,
 To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh
 pass'd,
 Even to a moment's filling up, and fast 490
 She scuds with summer breezes, to pant
 through
 The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew
 Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.
 Look! how those winged listeners all this while
 Stand anxious: see! behold!"-This clamant
 word
 Broke through the careful silence; for they
 heard
 A rustling noise of leaves, and out there
 flutter'd
 Pigeons and doves: Adonis something
 mutter'd,
 The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh
 Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually 500
 Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum
 Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come! come!
 Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walk'd
 Unto the clover-sward, and she has talk'd
 Full soothingly to every nested finch:
 Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue-bell pinch
 To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life
 begin!"
 At this, from every side they hurried in,
 Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,
 And doubling over head their little fists 510
 In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:
 For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive
 In nectar'd clouds and curls through water
 fair,
 So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air
 Odorous and enlivening; making all
 To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call
 For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreathed
 green
 Disparted, and far upward could be seen
 Blue heaven, and a silver car, air-borne,
 Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of
 morn,
 Spun off a drizzling dew,-which falling chill 521
 On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still
 Nestle and turn uneasily about.
 Soon were the white doves plain, with necks
 stretch'd out,
 And silken traces lighten'd in descent;
 And soon, returning from love's banishment,
 Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd:
 Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd
 A tumult to his heart, and a new life
 Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife, 530
 But for her comforting! unhappy sight,
 But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can
 write
 Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse
 To embracements warm as theirs makes coy
 excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,
 Saving love's self, who stands superb to share
 The general gladness: awfully he stands;
 A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;
 No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;
 His quiver is mysterious, none can know 540
 What themselves think of it; from forth his
 eyes
 There darts strange light of varied hues and
 dyes:
 A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who
 Look full upon it feel anon the blue

Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.
Endymion feels it, and no more controls
The burning prayer within him; so, bent low,
He had begun a plaining of his woe.
But Venus, bending forward, said: "My child,
Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild 550
With love-he-but alas! too well I see
Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.
Ah, smile not so, my son: I tell thee true,
That when through heavy hours I used to rue
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',
This stranger ay I pitied. For upon
A dreary morning once I fled away
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray
For this my love: for vexing Mars had teaz'd
Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas'd, 560
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,
I saw this youth as he despairing stood:
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the
wind;
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind
Over his sullen eyes: I saw him throw
Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though
Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov'd,
Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace
Had zoned her through the night. There is no
trace 570
Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,
And find it is the vainest thing to seek;
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.
Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest:
So still obey the guiding hand that fends
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet
ends.
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme;
And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now
adieu!
Here must we leave thee."-At these words up
flew 580
The impatient doves, up rose the floating car,
Up went the hum celestial. High afar
The Latmian saw them minish into nought;
And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he
caught
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.
When all was darkened, with Etnean throe
The earth clos'd-gave a solitary moan-
And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past, 590
And he in loneliness: he felt assur'd
Of happy times, when all he had endur'd
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise
floor,
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,
And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,
Leading afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and
thence 600
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean tease their granite
beds;
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash
The waters with his spear; but at the splash,
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming

round
Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound, 610
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells
On this delight; for, every minute's space,
The streams with changed magic interlace:
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees,
Moving about as in a gentle wind,
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries 620
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.
Swifter than lightning went these wonders
rare;
And then the water, into stubborn streams
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken
beams,
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,
Of those dusk places in times far aloof
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewell
To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and
dell,
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,
Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly
gapes, 630
Blackening on every side, and overhead
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread
With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and
strange,
The solitary felt a hurried change
Working within him into something dreary,-
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,
And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds.
But he revives at once: for who beholds
New sudden things, nor casts his mental
slough?
Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below, 640
Came mother Cybele! alone-alone-
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown
About her majesty, and front death-pale,
With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed
maws,
Their surly eyes brow-hidden, heavy paws
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails
Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails
This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away

In another gloomy arch. 650

Wherefore delay,
Young traveller, in such a mournful place?
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace
The diamond path? And does it indeed end
Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne
Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost
Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose
wings, 660
Without one impious word, himself he flings,
Committed to the darkness and the gloom:
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell
Through unknown things; till exhaled
asphodel,
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,
Came swelling forth where little caves were
wreath'd
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they
seem'd
Large honey-combs of green, and freshly

teem'd
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook 670
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown
With golden moss. His every sense had grown
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head
Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread
Was Hesperean; to his capable ears
Silence was music from the holy spheres;
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs
And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell 680
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such
swell

Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas!
Said he, "will all this gush of feeling pass
Away in solitude? And must they wane,
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,
Without an echo? Then shall I be left
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!
Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,
My breath of life, where art thou? High above,
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven? 690
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd
daughters?

Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,
Weaving a coronal of tender scions
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,
Methinks it now is at my will to start
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the
main
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off 700
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh
leaves.

No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee
To her entrancements: hither sleep awhile!
Hither most gentle sleep! and soothing foil
For some few hours the coming solitude."

Thus spake he, and that moment felt
endued
With power to dream deliciously; so wound 710
Through a dim passage, searching till he found
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where
He threw himself, and just into the air
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!
A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?"
A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am
I!"

At which soft ravishment, with doating cry
They trembled to each other.-Helicon!
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er 720
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark
Over his nested young: but all is dark
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll
Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies:

The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet, 730
Although the sun of poesy is set,
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep
That there is no old power left to steep
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.
Long time in silence did their anxious fears

Question that thus it was; long time they lay
Fondling and kissing every doubt away;
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began
To mellow into words, and then there ran
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet
lips. 740

"O known Unknown! from whom my being sips
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not
Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot
Pillow my chin for ever? ever press
These toying hands and kiss their smooth
excess?

Why not for ever and for ever feel
That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal
Away from me again, indeed, indeed—
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed
My lonely madness. Speak, my kindest fair! 750

Is-is it to be so? No! Who will dare
To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will,
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still
Let me entwine thee surer, surer—now
How can we part? Elysium! who art thou?
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,
By the most soft completion of thy face,
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes, 760
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties—
These tenderest, and by the nectar-wine,
The passion"—"O lov'd Ida the divine!
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!
His soul will 'scape us—O felicity!
How he does love me! His poor temples beat
To the very tune of love—how sweet, sweet,
sweet.

Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by
In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell 770
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast
Until we taste the life of love again.
What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss! O
pain!

I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;
And so long absence from thee doth bereave
My soul of any rest: yet must I hence:
Yet, can I not to starry eminence

Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own 780
Myself to thee. Ah, dearest, do not groan
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,
And I must blush in heaven. O that I
Had done it already; that the dreadful smiles
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,
And from all serious Gods; that our delight
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone!

And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes: 790
Yet must I be a coward!—Honour rushes
Too palpable before me—the sad look

Of Jove—Minerva's start—no bosom shook
With awe of purity—no Cupid pinion
In reverence veiled—my crystalline dominion
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!
But what is this to love? O I could fly
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once 800

That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—
O I do think that I have been alone
In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing,
While every eye saw me my hair uptying
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,

I was as vague as solitary dove,
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft
kiss-
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,
An immortality of passion's thine: 810
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine
Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade;
And I will tell thee stories of the sky,
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.
My happy love will overwing all bounds!
O let me melt into thee; let the sounds
Of our close voices marry at their birth;
Let us entwine hoveringly-O dearth
Of human words! roughness of mortal speech! 820
Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach
Thine honied tongue-lute-breathings, which I
gasp
To have thee understand, now while I clasp
Thee thus, and weep for fondness-I am pain'd,
Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd
In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"-
Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife
Melted into a languor. He return'd

Entranced vows and
tears.

Ye who have
yearn'd 830

With too much passion, will here stay and pity,
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;
And then the forest told it in a dream
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam
A poet caught as he was journeying
To Phœbus' shrine; and in it he did fling
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,
And after, straight in that inspired place 840
He sang the story up into the air,
Giving it universal freedom. There
Has it been ever sounding for those ears
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers
Yon centinel stars; and he who listens to it
Must surely be self-doomed or he will rue it:
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.
As much as here is penn'd doth always find 850
A resting place, thus much comes clear and
plain;
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane-
And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound,
That the fair visitant at last unwound
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.-
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.-
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers
Sweet paining on his ear: he sickly guess'd
How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd 860
His empty arms together, hung his head,
And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known:
Often with more than tortured lion's groan
Moanings had burst from him; but now that
rage
Had pass'd away: no longer did he wage
A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars.
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars:
The lyre of his soul Eolian tun'd
Forgot all violence, and but commun'd 870
With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd
Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love

Henceforth was dove-like.-Loth was he to
 move
 From the imprinted couch, and when he did,
 'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid
 In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd
 Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd
 Alecto's serpents; ravishments more keen
 Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean
 Over eclipsing eyes: and at the last 880
 It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,
 O'er studded with a thousand, thousand
 pearls,
 And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn
 curls,
 Of every shape and size, even to the bulk
 In which whales arbour close, to brood and
 sulk
 Against an endless storm. Moreover too,
 Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,
 Ready to snort their streams. In this cool
 wonder
 Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder
 On all his life: his youth, up to the day 890
 When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands
 gay,
 He stept upon his shepherd throne: the look
 Of his white palace in wild forest nook,
 And all the revels he had lorded there:
 Each tender maiden whom he once thought
 fair,
 With every friend and fellow-woodlander-
 Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur
 Of the old bards to mighty deeds: his plans
 To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd
 clans:
 That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival: 900
 His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all,
 Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd:
 Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd
 High with excessive love. "And now," thought
 he,
 "How long must I remain in jeopardy
 Of blank amazements that amaze no more?
 Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core
 All other depths are shallow: essences,
 Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,
 Meant but to fertilize my earthly root, 910
 And make my branches lift a golden fruit
 Into the bloom of heaven: other light,
 Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight
 The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,
 Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark!
 My silent thoughts are echoing from these
 shells;
 Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells
 Of noises far away?-list!"-Hereupon
 He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone
 Came louder, and behold, there as he lay, 920
 On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,
 A copious spring; and both together dash'd
 Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks, and
 lash'd
 Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,
 Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot
 Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a
 noise
 As of some breathless racers whose hopes
 poize
 Upon the last few steps, and with spent force
 Along the ground they took a winding course.
 Endymion follow'd-for it seem'd that one 930
 Ever pursued, the other strove to shun-
 Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh
 He had left thinking of the mystery,-
 And was now rapt in tender hoverings

Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings
His dream away? What melodies are these?
They sound as through the whispering of
trees,
Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why, 940
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,
Circling about her waist, and striving how
To entice her to a dive! then stealing in
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.
O that her shining hair was in the sun,
And I distilling from it thence to run
In amorous rillets down her shrinking form!
To linger on her lily shoulders, warm
Between her kissing breasts, and every charm 950
Touch raptur'd!-See how painfully I flow:
Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.
Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,
A happy wooer, to the flowery mead
Where all that beauty snar'd me."-"Cruel god,
Desist! or my offended mistress' nod
Will stagnate all thy fountains:-tease me not
With syren words-Ah, have I really got
Such power to madden thee? And is it true-
Away, away, or I shall dearly rue 960
My very thoughts: in mercy then away,
Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey
My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane."-
"O, Oread-Queen! would that thou hadst a pain
Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn
And be a criminal."-"Alas, I burn,
I shudder-gentle river, get thee hence.
Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense
Of mine was once made perfect in these
woods.
Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent
floods, 970
Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment
gave;
But ever since I heedlessly did lave
In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow
Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me
so,
And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty.
Not once more did I close my happy eyes
Amid the thrush's song. Away! Avaunt!
O 'twas a cruel thing."-"Now thou dost taunt
So softly, Arethusa, that I think
If thou wast playing on my shady brink, 980
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent
maid!
Stifle thine heart no more:-nor be afraid
Of angry powers: there are deities
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful
sighs
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour
A dewy balm upon them!-fear no more,
Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel
Sometimes these very pangs. Dear maiden,
steal
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly
These dreary caverns for the open sky. 990
I will delight thee all my winding course,
From the green sea up to my hidden source
About Arcadian forests; and will shew
The channels where my coolest waters flow
Through mossy rocks; where, 'mid exuberant
green,
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen
Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim
Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim
Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees

Buzz from their honied wings: and thou
 shouldst please
 Thyself to choose the richest, where we might 1001
 Be incense-pillow'd every summer night.
 Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,
 And let us be thus comforted; unless
 Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless
 stream
 Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,
 And pour to death along some hungry sands."-
 "What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands
 Severe before me: persecuting fate!
 Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late 1010
 A huntress free in"-At this, sudden fell
 Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.
 The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more,
 Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er
 The name of Arethusa. On the verge
 Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge
 Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,
 By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,
 If thou art powerful, these lovers pains;
 And make them happy in some happy plains. 1020

He turn'd-there was a whelming sound-he
 stept,
 There was a cooler light; and so he kept
 Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!
 More suddenly than doth a moment go,
 The visions of the earth were gone and fled-
 He saw the giant sea above his head.

ENDYMION.

BOOK III.

There are who lord it o'er their fellow-men
 With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen
 Their baaing vanities, to browse away
 The comfortable green and juicy hay
 From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!
 Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd
 Fire-branded foxes to sear up and singe
 Our gold and ripe-ear'd hopes. With not one
 tinge
 Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight
 Able to face an owl's, they still are dight 10
 By the blear-eyed nations in empurpled vests,
 And crowns, and turbans. With unladen
 breasts,
 Save of blown self-applause, they proudly
 mount
 To their spirit's perch, their being's high
 account,
 Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their
 thrones-
 Amid the fierce intoxicating tones
 Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,
 And sudden cannon. All! how all this hums,
 In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone-
 Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon, 20
 And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.-
 Are then regalities all gilded masks?
 No, there are throned seats unscalable
 But by a patient wing, a constant spell,
 Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,
 Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,
 And poise about in cloudy thunder-tents
 To watch the abysm-birth of elements.
 Aye, 'bove the withering of old-lipp'd Fate
 A thousand Powers keep religious state, 30
 In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;
 And, silent as a consecrated urn,
 Hold sphery sessions for a season due.

Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few!
 Have bared their operations to this globe-
 Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe
 Our piece of heaven-whose benevolence
 Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense
 Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,
 As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud 40
 'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,
 Eterne Apollo! that thy Sister fair
 Is of all these the gentlier-mightiest.
 When thy gold breath is misting in the west,
 She unobserved steals unto her throne,
 And there she sits most meek and most alone;
 As if she had not pomp subservient;
 As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent
 Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;
 As if the ministring stars kept not apart, 50
 Waiting for silver-footed messages.
 O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees
 Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:
 O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din
 The while they feel thine airy fellowship.
 Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip
 Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,
 Couched in thy brightness, dream of fields
 divine:
 Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,
 Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes; 60
 And yet thy benediction passeth not
 One obscure hiding-place, one little spot
 Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren
 Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,
 And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf
 Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief
 To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps
 Within its pearly house.-The mighty deeps,
 The monstrous sea is thine-the myriad sea!
 O Moon! far-spooming Ocean bows to thee, 70
 And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far
 abode
 Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine
 Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine
 For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale
 For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail
 His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost
 thou sigh?
 Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,
 Or what a thing is love! 'Tis She, but lo!
 How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in
 woe! 80
 She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness
 Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress
 Of love-spangles, just off yon cape of trees,
 Dancing upon the waves, as if to please
 The curly foam with amorous influence.
 O, not so idle: for down-glancing thence
 She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about
 O'erwhelming water-courses; scaring out
 The thorny sharks from hiding-holes, and
 fright'ning
 Their savage eyes with unaccustomed
 lightning. 90
 Where will the splendor be content to reach?
 O love! how potent hast thou been to teach
 Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,
 In gulf or aerie, mountains or deep dells,
 In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,
 Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis
 won.
 Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;
 Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of
 death;
 Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;

And now, O winged Chieftain! them hast sent 100
A moon-beam to the deep, deep water-world,

To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd
With lily shells, and pebbles milky white,
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her
light
Against his pallid face: he felt the charm
To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm
Of his heart's blood: 'twas very sweet; he
stay'd
His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid
His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds, 110
To taste the gentle moon, and freshening
beads,
Lashed from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.
And so he kept, until the rosy veils
Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand
Were lifted from the water's breast, and faun'd
Into sweet air; and sober'd morning came
Meekly through billows:-when like taper-flame
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare
Along his fated way. 120

Far had he roam'd,
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd
Above, around, and at his feet; save things
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates
large
Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost
The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd
With long-forgotten story, and wherein 130
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin
But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering
scrolls,
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls
Who first were on the earth; and sculptures
rude
In ponderous stone, developing the mood
Of ancient Nox;-then skeletons of man,
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe
These secrets struck into him; and unless 140
Dian had chaced away that heaviness,
He might have died: but now, with cheered
feel,
He onward kept; wooing these thoughts to
steal
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

"What is there in thee, Moon! that thou
shouldst move
My heart so potently? When yet a child
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast
smil'd.
Thou seem'dst my sister: hand in hand we
went
From eve to morn across the firmament.
No apples would I gather from the tree,
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously: 150
No tumbling water ever spake romance,
But when my eyes with thine thereon could
dance:
No woods were green enough, no bower
divine,
Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine:
In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,
Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake;

And, in the summer tide of blossoming,
 No one but thee hath heard me blithly sing
 And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.
 No melody was like a passing spright 160
 If it went not to solemnize thy reign.
 Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain
 By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end;
 And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend
 With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;
 Thou wast the mountain-top—the sage's pen—
 The poet's harp—the voice of friends—the sun;
 Thou wast the river—thou wast glory won;
 Thou wast my clarion's blast—thou wast my
 steed—
 My goblet full of wine—my topmost deed:— 170
 Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!
 O what a wild and harmonized tune
 My spirit struck from all the beautiful!
 On some bright essence could I lean, and lull
 Myself to immortality: I prest
 Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.
 But, gentle Orb! there came a nearer bliss—
 My strange love came—Felicity's abyss!
 She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—
 Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway 180
 Has been an under-passion to this hour.
 Now I begin to feel thine orby power
 Is coming fresh upon me: O be kind,
 Keep back thine influence, and do not blind
 My sovereign vision.—Dearest love, forgive
 That I can think away from thee and live!—
 Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize
 One thought beyond thine argent luxuries!
 How far beyond!" At this a surpris'd start
 Frosted the springing verdure of his heart; 190
 For as he lifted up his eyes to swear
 How his own goddess was past all things fair,
 He saw far in the concave green of the sea
 An old man sitting calm and peacefully.
 Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,
 And his white hair was awful, and a mat
 Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet;
 And, ample as the largest winding-sheet,
 A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones,
 O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest
 groans 200
 Of ambitious magic: every ocean-form
 Was woven in with black distinctness; storm,
 And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar
 Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape
 That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and
 cape.
 The gulping whale was like a dot in the spell,
 Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell
 To its huge self; and the minutest fish
 Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,
 And shew his little eye's anatomy. 210
 Then there was pictur'd the regality
 Of Neptune; and the sea nymphs round his
 state,
 In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.
 Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,
 And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd
 So stedfastly, that the new denizen
 Had time to keep him in amazed ken,
 To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw
 The wilder'd stranger—seeming not to see, 220
 His features were so lifeless. Suddenly
 He woke as from a trance; his snow-white
 brows
 Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs
 Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,
 Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,

Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.
Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil
Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age
Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul, 230
Even to the trees. He rose: he grasp'd his
stole,
With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,
And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd
Echo into oblivion, he said:-

"Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my head
In peace upon my watery pillow: now
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.
O Jove! I shall be young again, be young!
O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung
With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go, 240
When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe?-
I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen
Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten;
Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,
That writhes about the roots of Sicily:
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,
And mount upon the snortings of a whale
To some black cloud; thence down I'll madly
sweep
On forked lightning, to the deepest deep,
Where through some sucking pool I will be
hurl'd 250
With rapture to the other side of the world!
O, I am full of gladness! Sisters three,
I bow full hearted to your old decree!
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.
Thou art the man!" Endymion started back
Dismay'd; and, like a wretch from whom the
rack
Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,
Mutter'd: "What lonely death am I to die
In this cold region? Will he let me freeze, 260
And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas?
Or will he touch me with his searing hand,
And leave a black memorial on the sand?
Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw,
And keep me as a chosen food to draw
His magian fish through hated fire and flame?
O misery of hell! resistless, tame,
Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout,
Until the gods through heaven's blue look
out!-
O Tartarus! but some few days ago 270
Her soft arms were entwining me, and on
Her voice I hung like fruit among green
leaves:
Her lips were all my own, and-ah, ripe sheaves
Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop,
But never may be garner'd. I must stoop
My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love,
farewel!
Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell
Would melt at thy sweet breath.-By Dian's
hind
Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind
I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan, 280
I care not for this old mysterious man!"

He spake, and walking to that aged form,
Look'd high defiance. Lo! his heart 'gan warm
With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept.
Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow
kept?
Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought
Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to human thought,
Convulsion to a mouth of many years?
He had in truth; and he was ripe for tears.

The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt 290
Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt
About his large dark locks, and faltering
spake:

"Arise, good youth, for sacred Phœbus'
sake!
I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel
A very brother's yearning for thee steal
Into mine own: for why? thou openest
The prison gates that have so long opprest
My weary watching. Though thou know'st it
not,
Thou art commission'd to this fated spot
For great enfranchisement. O weep no more; 300
I am a friend to love, to loves of yore:
Aye, hadst thou never lov'd an unknown
power,
I had been grieving at this joyous hour.
But even now most miserable old,
I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold
Gave mighty pulses: in this tottering case
Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays
As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,
For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd,
Now as we speed towards our joyous task." 310

So saying, this young soul in age's mask
Went forward with the Carian side by side:
Resuming quickly thus; while ocean's tide
Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands

Took silently their foot-prints.

"My soul stands

Now past the midway from mortality,
And so I can prepare without a sigh
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.
I was a fisher once, upon this main, 320
And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay;
Rough billows were my home by night and
day,-
The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,
But hollow rocks,-and they were palaces
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease:
Long years of misery have told me so.
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago.
One thousand years!-Is it then possible
To look so plainly through them? to dispel 330
A thousand years with backward glance
sublime?
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,
And one's own image from the bottom peep?
Yes: now I am no longer wretched thrall,
My long captivity and moanings all
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,
The which I breathe away, and thronging come
Like things of yesterday my youthful
pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no
measures:
I was a lonely youth on desert shores. 341
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.
Dolphins were still my playmates; shapes
unseen
Would let me feel their scales of gold and
green,
Nor be my desolation; and, full oft,
When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe

To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe 350
 My life away like a vast sponge of fate,
 Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,
 Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down,
 And left me tossing safely. But the crown
 Of all my life was utmost quietude:
 More did I love to lie in cavern rude,
 Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's
 voice,
 And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice!
 There blush'd no summer eve but I would
 steer
 My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear 360
 The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery
 steep,
 Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep:
 And never was a day of summer shine,
 But I beheld its birth upon the brine:
 For I would watch all night to see unfold
 Heaven's gates, and Æthon snort his morning
 gold
 Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly
 At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,
 My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.
 The poor folk of the sea-country I blest 370
 With daily boon of fish most delicate:
 They knew not whence this bounty, and elate
 Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach
 At things which, but for thee, O Latmian!
 Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began
 To feel distemper'd longings: to desire
 The utmost privilege that ocean's sire
 Could grant in benediction: to be free
 Of all his kingdom. Long in misery 380
 I wasted, ere in one extremest fit
 I plung'd for life or death. To interknit
 One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff
 Might seem a work of pain; so not enough
 Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,
 And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt
 Whole days and days in sheer astonishment;
 Forgetful utterly of self-intent;
 Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.
 Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth 390
 shew
 His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,
 I tried in fear the pinions of my will.
 'Twas freedom! and at once I visited
 The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.
 No need to tell thee of them, for I see
 That thou hast been a witness—it must be—
 For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,
 By the melancholy corners of that mouth.
 So I will in my story straightway pass
 To more immediate matter. Woe, alas! 400
 That love should be my bane! Ah, Scylla fair!
 Why did poor Glaucus ever-ever dare
 To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger-youth!
 I lov'd her to the very white of truth,
 And she would not conceive it. Timid thing!
 She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,
 Round every isle, and point, and promontory,
 From where large Hercules wound up his story
 Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew
 The more, the more I saw her dainty hue 410
 Gleam delicately through the azure clear:
 Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear;
 And in that agony, across my grief
 It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—
 Cruel enchantress! So above the water
 I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phœbus'
 daughter.
 Ææa's isle was wondering at the moon:—

It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon
Left me dead-drifting to that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower; 420
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh
trees.

How sweet, and sweeter! for I heard a lyre,
And over it a sighing voice expire.
It ceased-I caught light footsteps; and anon
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove!
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she
wove

A net whose thralldom was more bliss than all
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall 430
The dew of her rich speech: "Ah! Art awake?
O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake!
I am so oppress'd with joy! Why, I have shed
An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold
dead;

And now I find thee living, I will pour
From these devoted eyes their silver store,
Until exhausted of the latest drop,
So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop
Here, that I too may live: but if beyond
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art
fond 440

Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme;
If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream;
If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,
Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,
O let me pluck it for thee." Thus she link'd
Her charming syllables, till indistinct
Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul;
And then she hover'd over me, and stole
So near, that if no nearer it had been
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen. 450

"Young man of Latmos! thus particular
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far
This fierce temptation went: and thou may'st
not
Exclaim, How then, was Scylla quite forgot?

"Who could resist? Who in this universe?
She did so breathe ambrosia; so immerse
My fine existence in a golden clime.
She took me like a child of suckling time,
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,
The current of my former life was stemm'd, 460
And to this arbitrary queen of sense
I bow'd a tranced vassal: nor would thence
Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had
woo'd

Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.
For as Apollo each eve doth devise
A new appareling for western skies;
So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.
And I was free of haunts umbrageous;
Could wander in the mazy forest-house 470
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,
And birds from coverts innermost and drear
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow-

To me new born
delights!

"Now let me
borrow,

For moments few, a temperament as stern
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn
These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell
How specious heaven was changed to real

hell.

"One morn she left me sleeping: half awake 480
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-
draughts;
But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,
That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er.
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom
Damp awe assail'd me; for there 'gan to boom
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,
Sepulchral from the distance all around.
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and
rumbled 490
That fierce complain to silence: while I
stumbled
Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.
I came to a dark valley.-Groanings swell'd
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,
That glar'd before me through a thorny brake.
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,
Bewitch'd me towards; and I soon was near
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear:
In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene- 500
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,
Seated upon an uptorn forest root;
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,
Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine,
Shewing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and
sting!
O such deformities! Old Charon's self,
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,
And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian,
It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan,
And tyrannizing was the lady's look, 510
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.
Oft-times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,
And from a basket emptied to the rout
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd
quick
And roar'd for more; with many a hungry lick
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,
And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial:
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones. 520
She lifted up the charm: appealing groans
From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear
In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.
Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture-
pilgrimage;
Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat:
Then was appalling silence: then a sight 530
More wildering than all that hoarse affright;
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen,
Went through the dismal air like one huge
Python
Antagonizing Boreas,-and so vanish'd.
Yet there was not a breath of wind: she
banish'd
These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs
stark,
With dancing and loud revelry,-and went
Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.-
Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd 540
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud
In human accent: "Potent goddess! chief
Of pains resistless! make my being brief,

Or let me from this heavy prison fly:
Or give me to the air, or let me die!
I sue not for my happy crown again;
I sue not for my phalanx on the plain;
I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife;
I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,
My children fair, my lovely girls and boys! 550
I will forget them; I will pass these joys;
Ask nought so heavenward, so too-too high:
Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,
Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,
From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,
And merely given to the cold bleak air.
Have mercy, Goddess! Circe, feel my prayer!"

That curst magician's name fell icy numb
Upon my wild conjecturing: truth had come
Naked and sabre-like against my heart. 560
I saw a fury whetting a death-dart;
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.
Think, my deliverer, how desolate
My waking must have been! disgust, and hate,
And terrors manifold divided me
A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood:
I fled three days-when lo! before me stood
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now, 570
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and
curse.

"Ha! ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse
Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,
To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee: yes,
I am too flinty-hard for thy nice touch:
My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.
So, fairy-thing, it shall have lullabies
Unheard of yet; and it shall still its cries
Upon some breast more lily-feminine. 580
Oh, no-it shall not pine, and pine, and pine
More than one pretty, trifling thousand years;
And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears
Cut short its immortality. Sea-flirt!
Young dove of the waters! truly I'll not hurt
One hair of thine: see how I weep and sigh,
That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.
And must we part? Ah, yes, it must be so.
Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,
Let me sob over thee my last adieus, 590
And speak a blessing: Mark me! Thou hast
thews

Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race:
But such a love is mine, that here I chase
Eternally away from thee all bloom
Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.
Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast;
And there, ere many days be overpast,
Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then
Thou shalt not go the way of aged men;
But live and wither, cripple and still breathe 600
Ten hundred years: which gone, I then
bequeath

Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.
Adieu, sweet love, adieu!"-As shot stars fall,
She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung
And poisoned was my spirit: despair sung
A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.
A hand was at my shoulder to compel
My sullen steps; another 'fore my eyes
Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise
Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam 610
I found me; by my fresh, my native home.
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,
Came salutary as I waded in;
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave

Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave
Large froth before me, while there yet
remain'd
Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow
drain'd.

"Young lover, I must weep-such hellish
spite
With dry cheek who can tell? While thus my
might
Proving upon this element, dismay'd, 620
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid;
I look'd-'twas Scylla! Cursed, cursed Circe!
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy?
Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,
But thou must nip this tender innocent
Because I lov'd her?-Cold, O cold indeed
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed
The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was
I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass
Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine, 630
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.
Headlong I darted; at one eager swirl
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold!
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold;
And all around-But wherefore this to thee
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?-
I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread
Met palsy half way: soon these limbs became 640
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and
lame.

"Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,
Without one hope, without one faintest trace
Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble
Of colour'd phantasy; for I fear 'twould trouble
Thy brain to loss of reason: and next tell
How a restoring chance came down to quell

One half of the witch in me.

"On a day,
Sitting upon a rock above the spray, 650
I saw grow up from the horizon's brink
A gallant vessel: soon she seem'd to sink
Away from me again, as though her course
Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force-
So vanish'd: and not long, before arose
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.
Old Eolus would stifle his mad spleen,
But could not: therefore all the billows green
Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.
The tempest came: I saw that vessel's shrouds 660
In perilous bustle; while upon the deck
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck;
The final gulphing; the poor struggling souls:
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.
O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld
Annull'd my vigorous cravings: and thus
quell'd
And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian! did I sit
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had
gone,
By one and one, to pale oblivion; 670
And I was gazing on the surges prone,
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,
When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand,
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender
wand.
I knelt with pain-reached out my hand-had
grasp'd
These treasures-touch'd the knuckles-they

unclasp'd-
I caught a finger: but the downward weight
O'erpowered me-it sank. Then 'gan abate
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom
outburst
The comfortable sun. I was athirst 680
To search the book, and in the warming air
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won
Into forgetfulness; when, stupefied,
I read these words, and read again, and tried
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.
O what a load of misery and pain
Each Atlas-line bore off!-a shine of hope
Came gold around me, cheering me to cope 690
Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend!
For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

*"In the wide sea there lives a forlorn
wretch,
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,
And then to die alone. Who can devise
A total opposition? No one. So
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,
And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,
These things accomplish'd:-If he utterly 700
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds
The meanings of all motions, shapes, and
sounds;
If he explores all forms and substances
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,
He must pursue this task of joy and grief
Most piously;-all lovers tempest-tost,
And in the savage overwhelming lost,
He shall deposit side by side, until
Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil: 710
Which done, and all these labours ripened,
A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,
Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct
How to consummate all. The youth elect
Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."-*

"Then," cried the young Endymion,
overjoy'd,
"We are twin brothers in this destiny!
Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high
Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.
What! if from thee my wandering feet had
swerv'd, 720
Had we both perish'd?"-"Look!" the sage
replied,
"Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the
tide,
Of divers brilliances? 'tis the edifice
I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies;
And where I have enshrined piously
All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to
die
Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing,
on
They went till unobscur'd the porches shone;
Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd
straight.
Sure never since king Neptune held his state 730
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars
Has legion'd all his battle; and behold
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold
His even breast: see, many steeled squares,
And rigid ranks of iron-whence who dares
One step? Imagine further, line by line,
These warrior thousands on the field supine:-

So in that crystal place, in silent rows,
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.- 740
The stranger from the mountains, breathless,
trac'd
Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd;
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips
All ruddy,-for here death no blossom nips.
He mark'd their brows and foreheads; saw
their hair
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care;
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,

Put cross-wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,
Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, even
now." 750
He spake, and, trembling like an aspen-bough,
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,
Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.
He tore it into pieces small as snow
That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns
blow;
And having done it, took his dark blue cloak
And bound it round Endymion: then struck
His wand against the empty air times nine.-
"What more there is to do, young man, is
thine:
But first a little patience; first undo 760
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.
Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein;
And shouldst thou break it-What, is it done so
clean?
A power overshadows thee! Oh, brave!
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.
Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,
Nor mark'd with any sign or charactery-
Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake!
Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal." 770

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell
and fall
Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and
sigh'd
A lullaby to silence.-"Youth! now strew
These minced leaves on me, and passing
through
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,
And thou wilt see the issue."-'Mid the sound
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.
How lightning-swift the change! a youthful
wight 780
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,
Out-sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest
force
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,-and Scylla
sigh'd!
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm
applied-
The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,
And onward went upon his high employ,
Showering those powerful fragments on the
dead.
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head, 790
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.
Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:
Death fell a weeping in his charnel-house.
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus
All were re-animated. There arose
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes

Of gladness in the air-while many, who
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest
Felt a high certainty of being blest. 800

They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment
Grew drunken, and would have its head and
bent.

Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,
Budded, and swell'd, and, full-blown, shed full
showers

Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine
Of happiness, from fairy-press ooz'd out.
Speechless they eyed each other, and about
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,
Distracted with the richest overflow 810

Of joy that ever pour'd from
heaven.

—"Away!"

Shouted the new born god; "Follow, and pay
Our piety to Neptunus supreme!"-
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,
Though portal columns of a giant size,
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.
Joyous all follow'd, as the leader call'd,
Down marble steps; pouring as easily 820
As hour-glass sand,-and fast, as you might see
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,
Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,
Just within ken, they saw descending thick
Another multitude. Whereat more quick
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,
And of those numbers every eye was wet;
For each their old love found. A murmuring
rose, 830
Like what was never heard in all the throes
Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit
To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host
Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and
lost
Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array,
And from the rear diminishing away,-
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,
"Behold! behold, the palace of his pride!
God Neptune's palaces!" With noise increas'd, 840
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening
cast.

At every onward step proud domes arose
In prospect,-diamond gleams, and golden
glows
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,
Still onward; still the splendour gradual
swell'd.
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts
Each gazer drank; and deeper drank more
near: 850

For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere
As marble was there lavish, to the vast
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,
Even for common bulk, those olden three,
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow
Of Iris, when unfading it doth shew

Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch
Through which this Paphian army took its
march,
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state: 860
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,
To which the leaders sped; but not half raught
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,
And made those dazzled thousands veil their
eyes
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the
blaze,
And then, behold! large Neptune on his throne
Of emerald deep: yet not exalt alone;
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on 870
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,
So wide was Neptune's hall: and as the blue
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,
Aw'd from the throne aloof;-and when storm-
rent
Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air;
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden
everywhere,
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering 880
Death to a human eye: for there did spring
From natural west, and east, and south, and
north,
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth
A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through
The delicatest air: air verily,
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky:
This palace floor breath-air,-but for the amaze 890
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,-and blaze
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,

Globing a golden
sphere.

They stood in
dreams

Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang;
The Nereids danc'd; the Syrens faintly sang;
And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping
head.
Then Love took wing, and from his pinions
shed
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.
The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew 900
Fair Scylla and her guides to conference;
And when they reach'd the throned eminence
She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,-who sat her
down
A toying with the doves. Then,-"Mighty crown
And sceptre of this kingdom!" Venus said,
"Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid:
Behold!"-Two copious tear-drops instant fell
From the God's large eyes; he smil'd
delectable,
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.-
"Endymion! Ah! still wandering in the bands 910
Of love? Now this is cruel. Since the hour
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet
Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net?
A little patience, youth! 'twill not be long,
Or I am skillless quite: an idle tongue,
A humid eye, and steps luxurious,

Where these are new and strange, are
ominous.
Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,
When others were all blind; and were I given 920
To utter secrets, haply I might say
Some pleasant words:-but Love will have his
day.
So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,
Visit my Cytherea: thou wilt find
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind;
And pray persuade with thee-Ah, I have done,
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!"-
Thus the fair goddess: while Endymion
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon. 930

Meantime a glorious revelry began
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd;
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless,
pleach'd
New growth about each shell and pendent
lyre;
The which, in disentangling for their fire,
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture
For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,
Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through
the throng
Made a delighted way. Then dance, and song, 940
And garlanding grew wild; and pleasure
reign'd.
In harmless tendrils they each other chain'd,
And strove who should be smother'd deepest
in

Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin
For one so weak to venture his poor verse
In such a place as this. O do not curse,
High Muses! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly; 950
And then a hymn.

"KING of the stormy sea!
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor
Of elements! Eternally before
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn
rock,
At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.
All mountain-rivers lost, in the wide home
Of thy capacious bosom ever flow.
Thou frownest, and old Eolus thy foe 960
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team
Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along
To bring thee nearer to that golden song
Apollo singeth, while his chariot
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not
For scenes like this: an empire stern hast thou;
And it hath furrow'd that large front: yet now, 970
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit
To blend and interknit
Subdued majesty with this glad time.
O shell-borne King sublime!
We lay our hearts before thee evermore-
We sing, and we adore!

"Breathe softly, flutes;

Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes;
Nor be the trumpet heard! O vain, O vain;
Not flowers budding in an April rain, 980
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,-
No, nor the Eolian twang of Love's own bow,
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear
Of goddess Cytherea!
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes
On our souls' sacrifice.

"Bright-winged Child!
Who has another care when thou hast smil'd?
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last
All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast 990
Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.
O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions!
God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,
And panting bosoms bare!
Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipser
Of light in light! delicious poisoner!
Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until
We fill-we fill!

And by thy Mother's lips
—"

Was heard no 1000
more

For clamour, when the golden palace door
Opened again, and from without, in shone
A new magnificence. On oozy throne
Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,
To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,
Before he went into his quiet cave
To muse for ever—Then a lucid wave,
Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,
Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty 1010
Of Doris, and the Egean seer, her spouse—
Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,
Theban Amphion leaning on his lute:
His fingers went across it—All were mute
To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,
And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls
Around giddy Endymion; seeing he
Was there far strayed from mortality.
He could not bear it—shut his eyes in vain;
Imagination gave a dizzier pain. 1020
"O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!
Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!
I die—I hear her voice—I feel my wing—"
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife
To usher back his spirit into life:
But still he slept. At last they interwove
Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying
crowd,
To his inward senses these words spake aloud; 1031
Written in star-light on the dark above:
Dearest Endymion! my entire love!
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—
Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.
Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

The youth at once arose: a placid lake
Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green, 1040
Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering
breast.

How happy once again in grassy nest!

ENDYMION.

BOOK IV.

Muse of my native land! loftiest Muse!
O first-born on the mountains! by the hues
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot:
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,
While yet our England was a wolfish den;
Before our forests heard the talk of men;
Before the first of Druids was a child;-
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.
There came an eastern voice of solemn mood:- 10
Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the
Nine,
Apollo's garland:-yet didst thou divine
Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,
"Come hither, Sister of the Island!" Plain
Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake
A higher summons:-still didst thou betake
Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won
A full accomplishment! The thing is done,
Which undone, these our latter days had risen
On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st
what prison,
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and
frets 21
Our spirit's wings: despondency besets
Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn
Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.
Long have I said, how happy he who shrives
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,
And could not pray:-nor can I now-so on
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.-

"Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part 30
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads
bade
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields!
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour:
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short
hour
Of native air-let me but die at home."

Endymion to heaven's airy dome
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,
When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he
bows
His head through thorny-green entanglement 41
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

"Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing?
No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes 50
Redemption sparkles!-I am sad and lost."

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been
tost
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear
A woman's sigh alone and in distress?
See not her charms! Is Phœbe passionless?
Phœbe is fairer far-O gaze no more:-
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,

Behold her panting in the forest grass!
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass 60
For tenderness the arms so idly lain
Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search
After some warm delight, that seems to perch
Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond

Their upper lids?—Hist!

 "O for Hermes' wand,
To touch this flower into human shape!
That woodland Hyacinthus could escape
From his green prison, and here kneeling
down 70
Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown!
Ah me, how I could love!—My soul doth melt
For the unhappy youth—Love! I have felt
So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender
To what my own full thoughts had made too
tender,
That but for tears my life had fled away!—
Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,
And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,
There is no lightning, no authentic dew
But in the eye of love: there's not a sound, 80
Melodious howsoever, can confound
The heavens and earth in one to such a death
As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath
Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share
Of passion from the heart!"—

 Upon a bough
He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now
Thirst for another love: O impious,
That he can even dream upon it thus!— 90
Thought he, "Why am I not as are the dead,
Since to a woe like this I have been led
Through the dark earth, and through the
wondrous sea?
Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee
By Juno's smile I turn not—no, no, no—
While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—
I have a triple soul! O fond pretence—
For both, for both my love is so immense,
I feel my heart is cut in twain for them."

 And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain. 100
The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see
Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.
He sprang from his green covert: there she
lay,
Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay;
With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes
Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.
"Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I
Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!
O pardon me, for I am full of grief—
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief! 110
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith
Thou art my executioner, and I feel
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,
And all my story that much passion slew me;
Do smile upon the evening of my days:
And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze,
Be thou my nurse; and let me understand
How dying I shall kiss that lily hand.— 120
Dost weep for me? Then should I be content.
Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament
Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd
earth

Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth
 Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst
 To meet oblivion."-As her heart would burst
 The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied:
 "Why must such desolation betide
 As that thou speakest of? Are not these green
 nooks
 Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks 130
 Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,
 Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush
 About the dewy forest, whisper tales?-
 Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold
 snails
 Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou
 wilt,
 Methinks 'twould be a guilt-a very guilt-
 Not to companion thee, and sigh away
 The light-the dusk-the dark-till break of day!"
 "Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past:
 I love thee! and my days can never last. 140
 That I may pass in patience still speak:
 Let me have music dying, and I seek
 No more delight-I bid adieu to all.
 Didst thou not after other climates call,
 And murmur about Indian streams?"-Then she,
 Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,
 For pity sang this roundelay—

 "O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?- 150
 To give maiden blushes
 To the white rose bushes?
 Or is it thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

 "O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 The lustrous passion from a falcon-eye?-
 To give the glow-worm light?
 Or, on a moonless night,
 To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea-spry?

 "O Sorrow, 160
 Why dost borrow
 The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?-
 To give at evening pale
 Unto the nightingale,
 That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

 "O Sorrow,
 Why dost borrow
 Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?-
 A lover would not tread
 A cowslip on the head, 170
 Though he should dance from eve till peep of
 day-
 Nor any drooping flower
 Held sacred for thy bower,
 Wherever he may sport himself and play.

 "To Sorrow,
 I bade good-morrow,
 And thought to leave her far away behind;
 But cheerly, cheerly,
 She loves me dearly;
 She is so constant to me, and so kind: 180
 I would deceive her
 And so leave her,
 But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,
 I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide
 There was no one to ask me why I wept,-
 And so I kept
 Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
 Cold as my fears.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side, 190
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,
 But hides and shrouds
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?
"And as I sat, over the light blue hills
There came a noise of revellers: the rills
Into the wide stream came of purple hue-
 'Twas Bacchus and his crew!
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills
From kissing cymbals made a merry din- 200
 'Twas Bacchus and his kin!
Like to a moving vintage down they came,
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on
flame;
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,
 To scare thee, Melancholy!
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,
Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon:-
 I rush'd into the folly! 210

"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in dancing mood,
 With sidelong laughing;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough
white
 For Venus' pearly bite:
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
 Tipsily quaffing.

"Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence
came ye!
So many, and so many, and such glee? 221
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,
 Your lutes, and gentler fate?--
'We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,
 A conquering!
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,
We dance before him thorough kingdoms
wide:-
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
 To our wild minstrelsy!'

"Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came
ye! 230
So many, and so many, and such glee?
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left
 Your nuts in oak-tree cleft?--
'For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,
 And cold mushrooms;
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;
Great God of breathless cups and chirping
mirth!-
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be
To our mad minstrelsy! 240

"Over wide streams and mountains great we
went,
And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,
 With Asian elephants:
Onward these myriads-with song and dance,
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians'
prance,
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil
Of seamen, and stout galley-rowers' toil: 250
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,
 Nor care for wind and tide.

"Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,
From rear to van they scour about the plains;
A three days' journey in a moment done:
And always, at the rising of the sun,
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,
On spleenful unicorn.

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown
 Before the vine-wreath crown! 260
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing
 To the silver cymbals' ring!
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce
 Old Tartary the fierce!
The kings of Inde their jewel-sceptres veil,
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,
 And all his priesthood moans;
Before young Bacchus' eye-wink turning pale.-
Into these regions came I following him, 270
Sick hearted, weary-so I took a whim
To stray away into these forests drear
 Alone, without a peer:
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

 "Young stranger!
 I've been a ranger
In search of pleasure throughout every clime:
 Alas, 'tis not for me!
 Bewitch'd I sure must be,
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime. 280

 "Come then, Sorrow!
 Sweetest Sorrow!
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:
 I thought to leave thee
 And deceive thee,
But now of all the world I love thee best.

 "There is not one,
 No, no, not one
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;
 Thou art her mother, 290
 And her brother,
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her;
And listened to the wind that now did stir
About the crisped oaks full drearily,
Yet with as sweet a softness as might be
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.
At last he said: "Poor lady, how thus long 300
Have I been able to endure that voice?
Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;
I must be thy sad servant evermore:
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.
Alas, I must not think-by Phœbe, no!
Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so?
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?
O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink
Of recollection! make my watchful care 310
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!
Do gently murder half my soul, and I
Shall feel the other half so utterly!-
I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;
O let it blush so ever! let it soothe
My madness! let it mantle rosy-warm
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.-
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;
And this is sure thine other softling-this
Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!
Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear! 320
And whisper one sweet word that I may know
This is this world-sweet dewy blossom!"- *Woe!*
Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?-

Even these words went echoing dismally
Through the wide forest—a most fearful tone,
Like one repenting in his latest moan;
And while it died away a shade pass'd by,
As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly
Through the thick branches, poor ring-doves
sleek forth
Their timid necks and tremble; so these both 330
Leant to each other trembling, and sat so
Waiting for some destruction—when lo,
Foot-feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime
Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time
Than shoots the slanted hail-storm, down he
dropt
Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt
One moment from his home: only the sword
He with his wand light touch'd, and
heavenward

Swifter than sight was gone—even before
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore 340
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear
Above the crystal circlings white and clear;
And catch the cheated eye in wild surprise,
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet-
black,
Each with large dark blue wings upon his
back.

The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame
The other's fierceness. Through the air they
flew,
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew 350
Exhal'd to Phœbus' lips, away they are gone,
Far from the earth away—unseen, alone,
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the
free,

The buoyant life of song can floating be
Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—
Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd?
This is the giddy air, and I must spread
Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance
Precipitous: I have beneath my glance 360
Those towering horses and their mournful
freight.

Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await
Fearless for power of thought, without thine
aid?—

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade
From some approaching wonder, and behold
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils
bold
Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,
Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them;
soon,
It seem'd as when around the pale new moon 370
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping
willow:
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on
pillow.
For the first time, since he came nigh dead
born

From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn
Had he left more forlorn; for the first time,
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—
Because into his depth Cimmerian
There came a dream, shewing how a young
man,
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin,
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win 380
An immortality, and how espouse
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.

Now was he slumbering towards heaven's
gate,
That he might at the threshold one hour wait
To hear the marriage melodies, and then
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,
Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst,
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought;
And scarcely for one moment could be caught 390
His sluggish form reposing motionless.
Those two on winged steeds, with all the
stress
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look
Athwart the shallows of a river nook
To catch a glance at silver throated eels,-
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd
are 400
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop
Their full-veined ears, nostrils blood wide, and
stop;
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,-
And on those pinions, level in mid air,
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he
walks
On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks 410
To divine powers: from his hand full fain
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:
He tries the nerve of Phoebus' golden bow,
And asketh where the golden apples grow:
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings
And tantalizes long; at last he drinks, 420
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,
Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.
He blows a bugle,-an ethereal band
Are visible above: the Seasons four,-
Green-kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden
store
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,
Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the
blast,
In swells unmitigated, still doth last
To sway their floating morris. "Whose is this?
Whose bugle?" he inquires: they smile-"O Dis!
Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know 430
Its mistress' lips? Not thou?-'Tis Dian's: lo!
She rises crescented!" He looks, 'tis she,
His very goddess: good-bye earth, and sea,
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;
Good-bye to all but love! Then doth he spring
Towards her, and awakes-and, strange,
o'erhead,
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;
And Phoebe bends towards him crescented. 440
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,
Too well awake, he feels the panting side
Of his delicious lady. He who died
For soaring too audacious in the sun,
Where that same treacherous wax began to
run,
Felt not more tongue-tied than Endymion.
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,

To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way-
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!
So fond, so beauteous was his bed-fellow, 450
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save
Young Phœbe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan
crave
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look
At the sweet sleeper,-all his soul was shook,-
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more
He could not help but kiss her and adore.
At this the shadow wept, melting away.
The Latmian started up: "Bright goddess, stay!
Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own
tongue,
I have no dædale heart: why is it wrung 461
To desperation? Is there nought for me,
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

These words awoke the stranger of dark
tresses:
Her dawning love-look rapt Endymion blesses
With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawned from
underneath.
"Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe
This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st
Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st
What horrors may discomfort thee and me. 470
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart-
treachery!-
Yet did she merely weep-her gentle soul
Hath no revenge in it: as it is whole
In tenderness, would I were whole in love!
Can I prize thee, fair maid, till price above,
Even when I feel as true as innocence?
I do, I do.-What is this soul then? Whence
Came it? It does not seem my own, and I
Have no self-passion or identity.
Some fearful end must be: where, where is it? 480
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit
Alone about the dark-Forgive me, sweet:
Shall we away?" He rous'd the steeds: they
beat
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good-night blush of eve was waning
slow,
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe
In the dusk heavens silvery, when they
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and
strange- 490
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,
So witless of their doom, that verily
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to
see;
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or
toy'd-
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow
cloy'd.

Fell facing their swift flight, from ebon
streak,
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,
No bigger than an unobserved star, 500
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.
Slowly she rose, as though she would have
fled,
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd

This beauty in its birth-Despair! despair!
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her
wrist;
It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd, 511
And, horror! kiss'd his own-he was alone.
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then

Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,
Beyond the seeming confines of the space
Made for the soul to wander in and trace
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs 520
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce
Of new-born woe it feels more inly smart:
And in these regions many a venom'd dart
At random flies; they are the proper home
Of every ill: the man is yet to come
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.
But few have ever felt how calm and well
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure
pall:
Woe-hurricanes beat ever at the gate, 530
Yet all is still within and desolate.
Beset with plainful gusts, within ye hear
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier
The death-watch tick is stifled. Enter none
Who strive therefore: on the sudden it is won.
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,
Then it is free to him; and from an urn,
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught-
Young Semele such richness never quaft 540
In her maternal longing. Happy gloom!
Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom
Of health by due; where silence dreariest
Is most articulate; where hopes infest;
Where those eyes are the brightest far that
keep
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.
O happy spirit-home! O wondrous soul!
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud 550
Hath let thee to this Cave of Quietude.
Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although
upborne
With dangerous speed: and so he did not
mourn
Because he knew not whither he was going.
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high
feast.
They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce
alarm
He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd 560
A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,-
And silvery was its passing: voices sweet
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,
While past the vision went in bright array.

"Who, who from Dian's feast would be
away?
For all the golden bowers of the day
Are empty left? Who, who away would be
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?
Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings 570
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,

Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!-
Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill
 Your baskets high
With fennel green, and balm, and golden
pines,
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme; 580
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,
All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie

 Away! fly, fly!-
Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,
Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd
wings,
Two fan-like fountains,-thine illuminings
 For Dian play:
Dissolve the frozen purity of air;
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare 590
Shew cold through watery pinions; make more
bright
The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage
night:

 Haste, haste away!-
Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see!
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery:
A third is in the race! who is the third,
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?
 The ramping Centaur!

The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!
The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce 600
Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,

 Pale unrelentor,
When he shall hear the wedding lutes a
playing.-
Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying
So timidly among the stars: come hither!
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow
whither

 They all are going.
Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud. 610
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral:
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all
 Thy tears are flowing.-

By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!-"

More

Endymion heard not: down his steed him bore,
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

 His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.
"Alas!" said he, "were I but always borne
Through dangerous winds, had but my
footsteps worn
A path in hell, for ever would I bless 621
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness
For my own sullen conquering: to him
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is
dim,
Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see
The grass; I feel the solid ground-Ah, me!
It is thy voice-divinest! Where?-who? who
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?
Behold upon this happy earth we are;
Let us ay love each other; let us fare 630
On forest-fruits, and never, never go
Among the abodes of mortals here below,
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.

Where didst thou melt too? By thee will I sit
 For ever: let our fate stop here—a kid
 I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid
 Us live in peace, in love and peace among
 His forest wildernesses. I have clung 640
 To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen
 Or felt but a great dream! O I have been
 Presumptuous against love, against the sky,
 Against all elements, against the tie
 Of mortals each to each, against the blooms
 Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs
 Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory
 Has my own soul conspired: so my story
 Will I to children utter, and repent.
 There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent 650
 His appetite beyond his natural sphere,
 But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian,
 here,
 Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast
 My life from too thin breathing: gone and past
 Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!
 And air of visions, and the monstrous swell
 Of visionary seas! No, never more
 Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore
 Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.
 Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast 660
 My love is still for thee. The hour may come
 When we shall meet in pure elysium.
 On earth I may not love thee; and therefore
 Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store
 All through the teeming year: so thou wilt
 shine
 On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,
 And bless our simple lives. My Indian bliss!
 My river-lily bud! one human kiss!
 One sigh of real breath—one gentle squeeze,
 Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees, 670
 And warm with dew at ooze from living blood!
 Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that!—all good
 We'll talk about—no more of dreaming.—Now,
 Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow
 Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun
 Would hide us up, although spring leaves were
 none;
 And where dark yew trees, as we rustle
 through,
 Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?
 O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;
 Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace 680
 Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:
 For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou
 find,
 And by another, in deep dell below,
 See, through the trees, a little river go
 All in its mid-day gold and glimmering.
 Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,
 And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—
 Cresses that grow where no man may them
 see,
 And sorrel untorn by the dew-claw'd stag:
 Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag, 690
 That thou mayst always know whither I roam,
 When it shall please thee in our quiet home
 To listen and think of love. Still let me speak;
 Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—
 For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,
 Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill
 With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,
 And thou shall feed them from the squirrel's
 barn.
 Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,
 And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells. 700
 Its sides I'll plant with dew-sweet eglantine,
 And honeysuckles full of clear bee-wine.
 I will entice this crystal rill to trace

Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.
 I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire;
 And to god Phœbus, for a golden lyre;
 To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear;
 To Vesper, for a taper silver-clear,
 That I may see thy beauty through the night;
 To Flora, and a nightingale shall light 710
 Tame on thy finger; to the River-gods,
 And they shall bring thee taper fishing-rods
 Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.
 Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness!
 Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be
 'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to
 thee:
 Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall
 speak
 Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,
 Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,
 And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice: 720
 And that affectionate light, those diamond
 things,
 Those eyes, those passions, those supreme
 pearl springs,
 Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.
 Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?

O that I could not doubt?"

The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear
 His briar'd path to some tranquillity.
 It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,
 And yet the tears she wept were tears of
 sorrow; 730
 Answering thus, just as the golden morrow
 Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east:
 "O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd,
 Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.
 Young feathor'd tyrant! by a swift decay
 Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:
 And I do think that at my very birth
 I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly;
 For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,
 With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven. 740
 Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven
 To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!
 When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew
 Favour from thee, and so I gave and gave
 To the void air, bidding them find out love:
 But when I came to feel how far above
 All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,
 All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,
 Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,-
 Even then, that moment, at the thought of this, 750
 Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,
 And languish'd there three days. Ye milder
 powers,
 Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe
 Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave
 With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,
 Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!
 I may not be thy love: I am forbidden-
 Indeed I am-thwarted, affrighted, chidden,
 By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.
 Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went:
 henceforth 760
 Ask me no more! I may not utter it,
 Nor may I be thy love. We might commit
 Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;
 We might embrace and die: voluptuous
 thought!
 Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught
 In trammels of perverse deliciousness.
 No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,

And bid a long adieu."

The Carian

No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan, 770
Into the vallies green together went.
Far wandering, they were perforce content
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;
Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily
Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves
Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:
Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem
Truth the best music in a first-born song.
Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long, 780
And thou shall aid-hast thou not aided me?
Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity
Has been thy meed for many thousand years;
Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,
Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;-

Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir

His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small
pulse
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays 790
Through the old garden-ground of boyish days.
A little onward ran the very stream
By which he took his first soft poppy dream;
And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant
A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree
Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,
But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope
Up which he had not fear'd the antelope;
And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade 800
He had not with his tamed leopards play'd;
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,
Fly in the air where his had never been-
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery!

Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye
With all his sorrowing? He sees her not.
But who so stares on him? His sister sure!
Peona of the woods!-Can she endure-
Impossible-how dearly they embrace! 810
His lady smiles; delight is in her face;
It is no treachery.

"Dear brother mine!

Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou
pine
When all great Latmos so exalt will be?
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly;
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no
more.
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain, 820
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.
Be happy both of you! for I will pull
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls;
And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame
To see ye thus,-not very, very sad?
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad:
O feel as if it were a common day;
Free-voic'd as one who never was away. 830
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye

shall
 Be gods of your own rest imperial.
 Not even I, for one whole month, will pry
 Into the hours that have pass'd us by,
 Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.
 O Hermes! on this very night will be
 A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light;
 For the soothsayers old saw yesternight
 Good visions in the air,-whence will befall,
 As say these sages, health perpetual 840
 To shepherds and their flocks; and
 furthermore,
 In Dian's face they read the gentle lore:
 Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.
 Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.
 Many upon thy death have ditties made;
 And many, even now, their foreheads shade
 With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.
 New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,
 And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's
 brows.
 Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse 850
 This wayward brother to his rightful joys!
 His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poise
 His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,
 To lure-Endymion, dear brother, say
 What ails thee?" He could bear no more, and
 so
 Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,
 And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said:
 "I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid!
 My only visitor! not ignorant though,
 That those deceptions which for pleasure go 860
 'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:
 But there are higher ones I may not see,
 If impiously an earthly realm I take.
 Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake
 Night after night, and day by day, until
 Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.
 Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me
 More happy than betides mortality.
 A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,
 Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave 870
 Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.
 Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper
 well;
 For to thy tongue will I all health confide.
 And, for my sake, let this young maid abide
 With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,
 Peona, mayst return to me. I own
 This may sound strangely: but when, dearest
 girl,
 Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl
 Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion
 fair!
 Will be content to dwell with her, to share 880
 This sister's love with me?" Like one resign'd
 And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind
 In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:
 "Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,
 Of jubilee to Dian:-truth I heard!
 Well then, I see there is no little bird,
 Tender soever, but is Jove's own care.
 Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,
 Behold I find it! so exalted too!
 So after my own heart! I knew, I knew 890
 There was a place untenanted in it:
 In that same void white Chastity shall sit,
 And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.
 With sanest lips I vow me to the number
 Of Dian's sisterhood; and, kind lady,
 With thy good help, this very night shall see
 My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create

His own particular fright, so these three felt:
 Or like one who, in after ages, knelt 900
 To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine
 After a little sleep: or when in mine
 Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends
 Who know him not. Each diligently bends
 Towards common thoughts and things for very
 fear;
 Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,
 By thinking it a thing of yes and no,
 That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow
 Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last
 Endymion said: "Are not our fates all cast? 910
 Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair!
 Adieu!" Whereat those maidens, with wild
 stare,
 Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot
 His eyes went after them, until they got
 Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,
 In one swift moment, would what then he saw
 Engulph for ever. "Stay!" he cried, "ah, stay!
 Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say.
 Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.
 It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain, 920
 Peona, ye should hand in hand repair
 Into those holy groves, that silent are
 Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,
 At vesper's earliest twinkle—they are gone—
 But once, once, once again—" At this he press'd
 His hands against his face, and then did rest
 His head upon a mossy hillock green,
 And so remain'd as he a corpse had been
 All the long day; save when he scanty lifted
 His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted 930
 With the slow move of time,—sluggish and
 weary
 Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,
 Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,
 And, slowly as that very river flows,
 Walk'd towards the temple grove with this
 lament:
 "Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent
 Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall
 Before the serene father of them all
 Bows down his summer head below the west.
 Now am I of breath, speech, and speed
 possest, 940
 But at the setting I must bid adieu
 To her for the last time. Night will strew
 On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,
 And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves
 To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.
 Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord
 Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,
 Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses;
 My kingdom's at its death, and just it is
 That I should die with it: so in all this 950
 We miscal grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak,
 woe,
 What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe
 I am but rightly serv'd." So saying, he
 Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee;
 Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,
 As though they jests had been: nor had he
 done
 His laugh at nature's holy countenance,
 Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,
 And then his tongue with sober seemlihed
 Gave utterance as he entered: "Ha!" I said, 960
 "King of the butterflies; but by this gloom,
 And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,
 This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,
 And the Promethean clay by thief endued,
 By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head
 Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed

Myself to things of light from infancy;
 And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,
 Is sure enough to make a mortal man
 Grow impious." So he inwardly began 970
 On things for which no wording can be found;
 Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd
 Beyond the reach of music: for the choir
 Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar
 Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull
 The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,
 Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.
 He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,
 Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight
 By chilly finger'd spring. "Unhappy wight! 980
 Endymion!" said Peona, "we are here!
 What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?"
 Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand
 Press'd, saying: "Sister, I would have
 command,
 If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."
 At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate
 And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,
 To Endymion's amaze: "By Cupid's dove,
 And so thou shalt! and by the lily truth
 Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!" 990
 And as she spake, into her face there came
 Light, as reflected from a silver flame:
 Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display
 Full golden; in her eyes a brighter day
 Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld
 Phœbe, his passion! joyous she upheld
 Her lucid bow, continuing thus: "Drear, drear
 Has our delaying been; but foolish fear
 Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;
 And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state 1000
 Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for
 change
 Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range
 These forests, and to thee they safe shall be
 As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee
 To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright
 Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night:
 Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown
 Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.
 She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,
 Before three swiftest kisses he had told, 1010
 They vanish'd far away!—Peona went
 Home through the gloomy wood in
 wonderment.

THE END.

T. Miller, Printer, Noble Street, Cheapside.

Transcriber's Notes

[Book II, line 795](#): "crystaline" corrected to "crystalline".

[Book III, line 71](#): "her" corrected to "his".

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK ENDYMION: A POETIC ROMANCE ***

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