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POETIC ROMANCE \*\*\*

## **ENDYMION:**

**A Poetic Romance.**

BY JOHN KEATS.

“THE STRETCHED METRE OF AN ANTIQUE SONG.”

LONDON:  
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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

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  
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  
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'ercast,  
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  
 A troop of little children garlanded; 110  
 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 nervy 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 200  
 From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;  
 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 outskirt 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 310  
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals  
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 campaign  
 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 arbour, 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 steadfast 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 blue-ly 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 teaze  
 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,

Circled 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: hush, 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  
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees, 800  
 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. Harken, 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 outraught,  
 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 glutt'd 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 morrows?  
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. 70  
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;  
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, 170  
 Than be—I care not what. O meekest dove  
 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 180  
 My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout  
 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  
 Into the deadening ether that still charms 210

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 car 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  
 For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm'd 450  
 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 doting 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 teas'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 turquois 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 harbour 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 980  
 If thou wast playing on my shady brink,  
 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 990  
 These dreary caverns for the open sky.  
 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  
 No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin 130  
 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  
Dian had chaced away that heaviness, 140  
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, farewell!  
 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 380  
 Of all his kingdom. Long in misery  
 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 shew 390  
 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 440  
Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond  
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 character—  
 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. 900  
 The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew  
 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  
 Kneelt 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,  
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,  
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  
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 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  
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.



"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 thrives  
 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 41  
His head through thorny-green entanglement  
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 50  
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes  
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 70  
From his green prison, and here kneeling down  
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 vail,  
And from their treasures scatter pearly 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 sward  
 He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward  
 Swifter than sight was gone—even before 340  
 The teeming earth a sudden witness bore  
 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 sallows 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 Phœbus' 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,  
 And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks, 420  
 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 Phœbe 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  
 Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce 520  
 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 quaff  
 In her maternal longing. Happy gloom! 540  
 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 621  
A path in hell, for ever would I bless  
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 syrx 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 shalt 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 stedfastness 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!  
 Wilt 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 scantily lifted 930  
 His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted  
 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 misal 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 990  
 Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!"  
 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](#): "crystalline" corrected to "crystalline".

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