

On beds of fire that burn below,
An humbler heart—a deeper woe.

Father, I firmly do believe—
I *know*—for Death who comes for me
From regions of the blest afar,
Where there is nothing to deceive,
Hath left his iron gate ajar,
And rays of truth you can not see
Are flashing thro' Eternity—
I do believe that Eblis hath
A snare in every human path—
Else how, when in the holy grove
I wandered of the idol, Love—
Who daily scents his snowy wings
With incense of burnt-offerings
From the most unpolluted things,
Whose pleasant bowers are yet so riven
Above with trellised rays from Heaven
No note may shun—no tiniest fly—
The light'ning of his eagle eye—
How was it that Ambition crept,
Unseen, amid the revels there,
Till growing bold, he laughed and leapt
In the tangles of Love's very hair?

1829.

TO HELEN

HELEN, thy beauty is to me
Like those Nicean barks of yore,
That gently, o'er a perfumed sea,
The weary, wayworn wanderer bore
To his own native shore.

On desperate seas long wont to roam,
Thy hyacinth hair, thy classic face,
Thy Naiad airs have brought me home
To the glory that was Greece,
To the grandeur that was Rome.

Lo! in yon brilliant window niche,
How statue-like I see thee stand,
The agate lamp within thy hand!
Ah, Psyche, from the regions which
Are Holy Land!

1831.

THE VALLEY OF UNREST

Once it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell;
They had gone unto the wars,
Trusting to the mild-eyed stars

15—Poe—V

Nightly, from their azure towers,
 To keep watch above the flowers,
 In the midst of which all day
 The red sun-light lazily lay.
Now each visitor shall confess
 The sad valley's restlessness.
 Nothing there is motionless—
 Nothing save the airs that brood
 Over the magic solitude.
 Ah, by no wind are stirred those trees
 That palpitate like the chill seas
 Around the misty Hebrides!
 Ah, by no wind those clouds are driven
 That rustle through the unquiet Heaven
 Unceasingly, from morn till even,
 Over the violets there that lie
 In myriad types of the human eye—
 Over the lilies there that wave
 And weep above a nameless grave!
 They wave:—from out their fragrant tops
 Eternal dews come down in drops.
 They weep:—from off their delicate stems
 Perennial tears descend in gems.

1831.

ISRAFEL *

IN Heaven a spirit doth dwell
 "Whose heart-strings are a lute";
 None sing so wildly well
 As the angel Israfel,
 And the giddy Stars (so legends tell)
 Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell
 Of his voice, all mute
 Tottering above
 In her highest noon,
 The enamored Moon
 Blushes with love,
 While, to listen, the red levin
 (With the rapid Pleiads, even,
 Which were seven),
 Pauses in Heaven.
 And they say (the starry choir
 And the other listening things)
 That Israfeli's fire
 Is owing to that lyre
 By which he sits and sings—
 The trembling living wire
 Of those unusual strings.

*And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.—*Koran*.

But the skies that angels trod,
 Where deep thoughts are a duty—
 Where Love's a grown-up God—
 Where the Houri glances are
 Imbued with all the beauty
 Which we worship in a star.

Therefore, thou art not wrong,
 Israfeli, who despisest
 An unimpassioned song;
 To thee the laurels belong,
 Best bard, because the wisest!
 Merrily live and long!

The ecstasies above
 With thy burning measures suit—
 Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,
 With the fervor of thy lute—
 Well may the stars be mute!

Yes, Heaven is thine; but this
 Is a world of sweets and sour;
 Our flowers are merely—flowers,
 And the shadow of thy perfect bliss
 Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell
 Where Israfel
 Hath dwelt, and he where I,

He might not sing so wildly well
 A mortal melody,
 While a bolder note than this might swell
 From my lyre within the sky.

1836.

TO —

THE bowers whereat, in dreams, I see
 The wantonest singing birds,
 Are lips—and all thy melody
 Of lip-begotten words—

Thine eyes, in Heaven of heart enshrined
 Then desolately fall,
 O God! on my funereal mind
 Like starlight on a pall—

Thy heart—*thy* heart!—I wake and sigh,
 And sleep to dream till day
 Of the truth that gold can never buy—
 Of the bawbles that it may.

1829.

TO —

I HEED not that my earthly lot
 Hath—little of Earth in it—
 That years of love have been forgot
 In the hatred of a minute:—
 I mourn not that the desolate
 Are happier, sweet, than I,
 But that *you* sorrow for *my* fate
 Who am a passer-by.

1829.

TO THE RIVER —

FAIR river! in thy bright, clear flow
 Of crystal, wandering water,
 Thou art an emblem of the glow
 Of beauty—the unhidden heart
 The playful mazziness of art
 In old Alberto's daughter;

But when within thy wave she looks—
 Which glistens then, and trembles—
 Why, then, the prettiest of brooks
 Her worshipper resembles;
 For in his heart, as in thy stream,
 Her image deeply lies
 His heart which trembles at the beam
 Of her soul-searching eyes.

1829.

SONG

I SAW thee on thy bridal day—
 When a burning blush came o'er thee,
 Though happiness around thee lay,
 The world all love before thee:

And in thine eye a kindling light
 (Whatever it might be)
 Was all on Earth my aching sight
 Of Loveliness could see.

That blush, perhaps, was maiden shame—
 As such it well may pass—
 Though its glow hath raised a fiercer flame
 In the breast of him, alas!

Who saw thee on that bridal day,
 When that deep blush *would* come o'er thee,
 Though happiness around thee lay,
 The world all love before thee.

1827.

SPIRITS OF THE DEAD

THY soul shall find itself alone
 'Mid dark thoughts of the gray tombstone—
 Not one, of all the crowd, to pry
 Into thine hour of secrecy.

Be silent in that solitude
 Which is not loneliness—for then
 The spirits of the dead who stood
 In life before thee are again
 In death around thee—and their will
 Shall overshadow thee: be still.
 The night—tho' clear—shall frown—
 And the stars shall not look down
 From their high thrones in the Heaven,
 With light like Hope to mortals given—
 But their red orbs, without beam,
 To thy weariness shall seem
 As a buring and a fever
 Which would cling to thee forever.
 Now are thoughts thou shalt not banish—
 Now are visions ne'er to vanish—
 From thy spirit shall they pass
 No more—like dew-drops from the grass.
 The breeze—the breath of God—is still—
 And the mist upon the hill
 Shadowy—shadowy—yet unbroken,
 Is a symbol and a token—
 How it hangs upon the trees,
 A mystery of mysteries!

1827.

A DREAM

IN visions of the dark night
 I have dreamed of joy departed—
 But a waking dream of life and light
 Hath left me broken-hearted.

Ah! what is not a dream by day
 To him whose eyes are cast
 On things around him with a ray
 Turned back upon the past?

That holy dream—that holy dream,
 While all the world were chiding,
 Hath cheered me as a lovely beam,
 A lonely spirit guiding.

What though that light, thro' storm and night,
 So trembled from afar—
 What could there be more purely bright
 In Truth's day-star?

1827.

ROMANCE

ROMANCE, who loves to nod and sing,
 With drowsy head and folded wing,
 Among the green leaves as they shake
 Far down within some shadowy lake,
 To me a painted paroquet
 Hath been—a most familiar bird—
 Taught me my alphabet to say—
 To lisp my very earliest word
 While in the wild wood I did lie,
 A child—with a most knowing eye.

Of late, eternal Condor years
 So shake the very Heaven on high
 With tumult as they thunder by,
 I have no time for idle cares
 Though gazing on the unquiet sky.
 And when an hour with calmer wings
 Its down upon my spirit flings—
 That little time with lyre and rhyme
 To while away—forbidden things!
 My heart would feel to be a crime
 Unless it trembled with the strings.

1829.

FAIRYLAND

DIM vales—and shadowy floods—
 And cloudy-looking woods,
 Whose forms we can't discover
 For the tears that drip all over.
 Huge moons there wax and wane—
 Again—again—again—
 Every moment of the night—
 Forever changing places—
 And they put out the star-light
 With the breath from their pale faces.
 About twelve by the moon-dial
 One more filmy than the rest
 (A kind which, upon trial,
 They have found to be the best)
 Comes down—still down—and down
 With its centre on the crown
 Of a mountain's eminence,
 While its wide circumference
 In easy drapery falls
 Over hamlets, over halls,
 Wherever they may be—
 O'er the strange woods—o'er the sea—
 Over spirits on the wing—
 Over every drowsy thing—
 And buries them up quite
 In a labyrinth of light—

And then, how deep!—O, deep!
 Is the passion of their sleep.
 In the morning they arise,
 And their moony covering
 Is soaring in the skies,
 With the tempests as they toss,
 Like—almost anything—
 Or a yellow Albatross.
 They use that moon no more
 For the same end as before—
 Videlicet a tent—
 Which I think extravagant:
 Its atomies, however,
 Into a shower dissever,
 Of which those butterflies,
 Of Earth, who seek the skies,
 And so come down again
 (Never-contented things!)
 Have brought a specimen
 Upon their quivering wings.

1831.

THE LAKE. TO ———

IN spring of youth it was my lot
 To haunt of the wide world a spot
 The which I could not love the less—
 So lovely was the loneliness
 Of a wild lake, with black rock bound,
 And the tall pines that towered around.

But when the Night had thrown her pall
 Upon that spot, as upon all,
 And the mystic wind went by
 Murmuring in melody—
 Then—ah, then, I would awake
 To the terror of the lone lake.

Yet that terror was not fright,
 But a tremulous delight—
 A feeling not the jewelled mine
 Could teach or bribe me to define—
 Nor Love—although the Love were thine.

Death was in that poisonous wave,
 And in its gulf a fitting grave
 For him who thence could solace bring
 To his lone imagining—
 Whose solitary soul could make
 An Eden of that dim lake.

1827.

EVENING STAR

'Twas noontide of summer,
 And midtime of night,
 And stars, in their orbits,
 Shone pale, through the light
 Of the brighter, cold moon.
 'Mid planets her slaves,
 Herself in the Heavens,
 Her beam on the waves.

I gazed awhile
 On her cold smile;
 Too cold—too cold for me—
 There passed, as a shroud,
 A fleecy cloud,
 And I turned away to thee,
 Proud Evening Star,
 In thy glory afar
 And dearer thy beam shall be;
 For joy to my heart
 Is the proud part
 Thou bearest in Heaven at night,
 And more I admire
 Thy distant fire,
 Than that colder, lowly light.

"THE HAPPIEST DAY."

I

THE happiest day—the happiest hour
 My seared and blighted heart hath known,
 The highest hope of pride and power,
 I feel hath flown.

II

Of power! said I? Yes! such I ween
 But they have vanished long, alas!
 The visions of my youth have been—
 But let them pass.

III

And pride, what have I now with thee?
 Another brow may ev'n inherit
 The venom thou hast poured on me—
 Be still my spirit!

IV

The happiest day—the happiest hour
 Mine eyes shall see—have ever seen
 The brightest glance of pride and power
 I feel have been:

V

But were that hope of pride and power
 Now offered with the pain
 Ev'n *then* I felt—that brightest hour
 I would not live again:

VI

For on its wing was dark alloy
 And as it fluttered—fell
 An essence—powerful to destroy
 A soul that knew it well.

1827.

IMITATION

A DARK unfathomed tide
 Of interminable pride—
 A mystery, and a dream,
 Should my early life seem;
 I say that dream was fraught
 With a wild and waking thought
 Of beings that have been,
 Which my spirit hath not seen,
 Had I let them pass me by,
 With a dreaming eye!
 Let none of earth inherit
 That vision on my spirit;
 Those thoughts I would control,
 As a spell upon his soul:
 For that bright hope at last
 And that light time have past,
 And my worldly rest hath gone
 With a sigh as it passed on:
 I care not though it perish
 With a thought I then did cherish.

1827.

*Translation from the Greek*HYMN TO ARISTOGEITON AND HARMO-
DIUS

I

WREATHED in myrtle, my sword I'll conceal
 Like those champions devoted and brave,
 When they plunged in the tyrant their steel,
 And to Athens deliverance gave.

II

Beloved heroes! your deathless souls roam
 In the joy breathing isles of the blest;
 Where the mighty of old have their home—
 Where Achilles and Diomed rest.

III

In fresh myrtle my blade I'll entwine,
 Like Harmodius, the gallant and good,
 When he made at the tutelar shrine
 A libation of Tyranny's blood.

IV

Ye deliverers of Athens from shame!
 Ye avengers of Liberty's wrongs!
 Endless ages shall cherish your fame,
 Embalmed in their echoing songs!

1827.

DREAMS

OH! that my young life were a lasting dream!
 My spirit not awakening, till the beam
 Of an Eternity should bring the morrow.
 Yes! though that long dream were of hopeless sor-
 row,
 'Twere better than the cold reality
 Of waking life, to him whose heart must be,
 And hath been still, upon the lovely earth,
 A chaos of deep passion, from his birth.
 But should it be—that dream eternally
 Continuing—as dreams have been to me
 In my young boyhood—should it thus be given,
 'Twere folly still to hope for higher Heaven.
 For I have revelled when the sun was bright
 I' the summer sky, in dreams of living light
 And loveliness—have left my very heart
 Inclines of my imaginary apart*
 From mine own home, with beings that have been
 Of mine own thought—what more could I have
 seen?
 'Twas once—and only once—and the wild hour
 From my remembrance shall not pass—some power
 Or spell had bound me—'twas the chilly wind
 Came o'er me in the night, and left behind

* In climes of mine imagining apart?—Ed.

Its image on my spirit—or the moon
 Shone on my slumbers in her lofty noon
 Too coldly—or the stars—howe'er it was
 That dream was as that night-wind—let it pass.
I have been happy, though in a dream.
 I have been happy—and I love the theme:
 Dreams! in their vivid coloring of life
 As in that fleeting, shadowy, misty strife
 Of semblance with reality which brings
 To the delirious eye, more lovely things
 Of Paradise and Love—and all my own!—
 Than young Hope in his sunniest hour hath known.

"IN YOUTH I HAVE KNOWN ONE"

*How often we forget all time, when lone
Admiring Nature's universal throne;
Her woods—her wilds—her mountains—the intense
Reply of Hers to Our intelligence!*

I

IN youth I have known one with whom the Earth
In secret communing held—as he with it,
In daylight, and in beauty, from his birth:
Whose fervid, flickering torch of life was lit
From the sun and stars, whence he had drawn forth
A passionate light such for his spirit was fit—
And yet that spirit knew—not in the hour
Of its own fervor—what had o'er it power.

II

Perhaps it may be that my mind is wrought
To a fever* by the moonbeam that hangs o'er,
But I will half believe that wild light fraught
With more of sovereignty than ancient lore
Hath ever told—or is it of a thought
The unembodied essence, and no more
That with a quickening spell doth o'er us pass
As dew of the night-time, o'er the summer grass?

* Query "fever"?—Ed.

III

Doth o'er us pass, when, as th' expanding eye
To the loved object—so the tear to the lid
Will start, which lately slept in apathy?
And yet it need not be—(that object) hid
From us in life—but common—which doth lie
Each hour before us—but then only bid
With a strange sound, as of a harp-string broken
T' awake us—'Tis a symbol and a token—

IV

Of what in other worlds shall be—and given
In beauty by our God, to those alone
Who otherwise would fall from life and Heaven
Drawn by their heart's passion, and that tone,
That high tone of the spirit which hath striven
Though not with Faith—with godliness—whose
throne
With desperate energy 't hath beaten down;
Wearing its own deep feeling as a crown.

A PÆAN

I

How shall the burial rite be read?
 The solemn song be sung?
 The requiem for the loveliest dead,
 That ever died so young?

II

Her friends are gazing on her,
 And on her gaudy bier,
 And weep!—oh! to dishonor
 Dead beauty with a tear!

III

They loved her for her wealth—
 And they hated her for her pride—
 But she grew in feeble health,
 And they *love* her—that she died.

IV

They tell me (while they speak
 Of her “costly broider’d pall”)
 That my voice is growing weak—
 That I should not sing at all—

V

Or that my tone should be
 Tun’d to such solemn song
 So mournfully—so mournfully,
 That the dead may feel no wrong.

VI

But she is gone above,
 With young Hope at her side,
 And I am drunk with love
 Of the dead, who is my bride.—

VII

Of the dead—dead who lies
 All perfum’d there,
 With the death upon her eyes,
 And the life upon her hair.

VIII

Thus on the coffin loud and long
 I strike—the murmur sent
 Through the gray chambers to my song
 Shall be the accompaniment.

IX

Thou diedst in thy life’s June—
 But thou didst not die too fair:
 Thou didst not die too soon,
 Nor with too calm an air.

X

From more than friends on earth,
 Thy life and love are riven,
 To join the untainted mirth
 Of more than thrones in heaven.—

XI

Therefore, to thee this night
 I will no requiem raise,
 But waft thee on thy flight,
 With a Paean of old days.

NOTES

30. On the "Poems written in Youth" little comment is needed. This section includes the pieces printed for first volume of 1827 (which was subsequently suppressed), such poems from the first and second published volumes of 1829 and 1831 as have not already been given in their revised versions, and a few others collected from various sources. "Al Aaraaf" first appeared, with the sonnet "To Silence" prefixed to it, in 1829, and is, substantially, as originally issued. In the edition for 1831, however, this poem, its author's longest, was introduced by the following twenty-nine lines, which have been omitted in all subsequent collections:—

AL AARAAF

Mysterious star!
 Thou wert my dream
 All a long summer night—
 Be now my theme!
 By this clear stream,
 Of thee will I write;
 Meantime from afar
 Bathe me in light!

Thy world has not the dross of ours,
 Yet all the beauty—all the flowers
 That list our love or deck our bowers
 In dreamy gardens, where do lie
 Dreamy maidens all the day;
 While the silver winds of Circassy
 On violet couches faint away.
 Little—oh! little dwells in thee
 Like unto what on earth we see:
 Beauty's eye is here the bluest
 In the falsest and untruest—
 On the sweetest air doth float
 The most sad and solemn note—

If with thee be broken hearts,
 Joy so peacefully departs,
 That its echo still doth dwell,
 Like the murmur in the shell.
 Thou! thy truest type of grief
 Is the gently falling leaf—
 Thou! thy framing is so holy
 Sorrow is not melancholy.

31. The earliest version of "Tamerlane" was included in the suppressed volume of 1827, but differs very considerably from the poem as now published. The present draft, besides innumerable verbal alterations and improvements upon the original, is more carefully punctuated, and, the lines being indented, presents a more pleasing appearance, to the eye at least.

32. "To Helen" first appeared in the 1831 volume, as did also "The Valley of Unrest" (as "The Valley Nis"), "Israfel," and one or two others of the youthful pieces. The poem styled "Romance," constituted the Preface of the 1829 volume, but with the addition of the following lines:—

Succeeding years, too wild for song,
 Then rolled like tropic storms along,
 Where, through the garish lights that fly
 Dying along the troubled sky,
 Lay bare, through vistas thunder-riven,
 The blackness of the general Heaven,
 That very blackness yet doth fling
 Light on the lightning's silver wing.

For being an idle boy lang syne,
 Who read Anacreon and drank wine,
 I early found Anacreon rhymes
 Were almost passionate sometimes—
 And by strange alchemy of brain
 His pleasures always turned to pain—
 His naïveté to wild desire—
 His wit to love—his wine to fire—
 And so, being young and dipt in folly,
 I fell in love with melancholy,

And used to throw my earthly rest
 And quiet all away in jest—
 I could not love except where Death
 Was mingling his with Beauty's breath—
 Or Hymen, Time, and Destiny,
 Were stalking between her and me.

But *now* my soul hath too much room—
 Gone are the glory and the gloom—
 The black hath mellow'd into gray,
 And all the fires are fading away.

My draught of passion hath been deep—
 I revell'd, and I now would sleep—
 And after drunkenness of soul
 Succeeds the glories of the bowl—
 An idle longing night and day
 To dream my very life away.

But dreams—of those who dream as I,
 Aspiringly, are damned, and die:
 Yet should I swear I mean alone,
 By notes so very shrilly blown,
 To break upon Time's monotone,
 While yet my vapid joy and grief
 Are tintless of the yellow leaf—
 Why not an imp the graybeard hath,
 Will shake his shadow in my path—
 And e'en the graybeard will o'erlook
 Connivingly my dreaming-book.