

And children at her knees — (then what remain!)
 He claimeth and will gather for His own.
 Now, therefore, it were good by guile to work,
 Princes, and suffer not the doom to fall.
 There is no evil like to love. I heard
 Him whisper it. Have I put on this flesh
 To ruin His two children beautiful,
 And shall my deed confound me in the end,
 Through awful imitation? Love of God,
 I cry against thee; thou art worst of all."

BOOK IV.

Now while these evil ones took counsel strange,
 The son of Lamech journeyed home; and, lo!
 A company came down, and struck the track
 As he did enter it. There rode in front
 Two horsemen, young and noble, and behind
 Were following slaves with tent gear; others led
 Strong horses, others bare the instruments
 O' the chase, and in the rear dull camels lagged,
 Sighing, for they were burdened, and they loved
 The desert sands above that grassy vale.

And as they met, those horsemen drew the rein,
 And fixed on him their grave untroubled eyes;
 He in his regal grandeur walked alone,
 And had nor steed nor follower, and his mien
 Was grave and like to theirs. He said to them,
 "Fair sirs, whose are ye?" They made answer cold,
 "The beautiful woman, sir, our mother dear,
 Niloiya, bare us to great Lamech's son."
 And he, replying, "I am he." They said,
 "We know it, sir. We have remembered you
 Through many seasons. Pray you let us not;
 We fain would greet our mother." And they made
 Obeisance and passed on; then all their train,

Which while they spoke had halted, moved apace,
 And, while the silent father stood, went by,
 He gazing after, as a man that dreams;
 For he was sick with their cold, quiet scorn,
 That seemed to say, "Father, we own you not,
 We love you not, for you have left us long, —
 So long, we care not that you come again."

And while the sullen camels moved, he spake
 To him that led the last, "There are but two
 Of these my sons; but where doth Japhet ride?
 For I would see him." And the leader said,
 "Sir, ye shall find him, if ye follow up
 Along the track. Afore the noonday meal
 The young men, even our masters, bathed; (there
 grows

A clump of cedars by the bend of yon
 Clear river) — there did Japhet, after meat,
 Being right weary, lay him down and sleep.
 There, with a company of slaves and some
 Few camels, ye shall find him."

And the man,
 The father of these three, did let him pass,
 And struggle and give battle to his heart,
 Standing as motionless as pillar set
 To guide a wanderer in a pathless waste;
 But all his strength went from him, and he strove
 Vainly to trample out and trample down
 The misery of his love unsatisfied, —
 Unutterable love flung in his face.
 Then he broke out in passionate words, that cried
 Against his lot: "I have lost my own, and won
 None other; no, not one! Alas, my sons!
 That I have looked to for my solacing,
 In the bitterness to come. My children dear!"

And when from his own lips he heard those words.
With passionate stirring of the heart, he wept.

And none came near to comfort him. His face
Was on the ground; but having wept, he rose
Full hastily, and urged his way to find
The river; and in hollow of his hand
Raised up the water to his brow: "This son,
This other son of mine," he said, "shall see
No tears upon my face." And he looked on,
Beheld the camels, and a group of slaves
Sitting apart from some one fast asleep,
Where they had spread out webs of broidery work
Under a cedar-tree; and he came on,
And when they made obeisance, he declared
His name, and said, "I will beside my son
Sit till he wakeneth." So Japhet lay
A-dreaming, and his father drew to him.
He said, "This cannot scorn me yet;" and paused,
Right angry with himself, because the youth,
Albeit of stately growth, so languidly
Lay with a listless smile upon his mouth,
That was full sweet and pure; and as he looked
He half forgot his trouble in his pride.
"And is this mine?" said he, "my son! my own!
(God, thou art good!) O, if this turn away,
That pang shall be past bearing. I must think
That all the sweetness of his goodly face
Is copied from his soul. How beautiful
Are children to their fathers! Son, my heart
Is greatly glad because of thee; my life
Shall lack of no completeness in the days
To come. If I forget the joy of youth,
In thee shall I be comforted; ay, see
My youth, a dearer than my own again."

And when he ceased, the youth, with sleep content,
Murmured a little, turned himself, and woke.

He woke, and opened on his father's face
The darkness of his eyes; but not a word
The Master-shipwright said,—his lips were sealed;
He was not ready, for he feared to see
This mouth curled up with scorn. And Japhet
spoke,

Full of the calm that cometh after sleep:
"Sir, I have dreamed of you. I pray you, sir,
What is your name?" and even with his words
His countenance changed. The son of Lamech said,
"Why art thou sad? What have I done to thee?"
And Japhet answered, "O, methought I fled
In the wilderness before a maddened beast,
And you came up and slew it; and I thought
You were my father; but I fear me, sir,
My thoughts were vain." With that his father said,
"Whate'er of blessing Thou reserv'st for me,
God! if Thou wilt not give to both, give here:
Bless him with both Thy hands;" and laid his own
On Japhet's head.

Then Japhet looked on him,
Made quiet by content, and answered low,
With faltering laughter, glad and reverent: "Sir,
You are my father?" "Ay," quoth he, "I am!
Kiss me, my son; and let me hear my name,
My much desired name, from your dear lips."

Then after, rested, they betook them home:
And Japhet, walking by the Master, thought,
"I did not will to love this sire of mine;
But now I feel as if I had always known
And loved him well; truly, I see not why,
But I would rather serve him than go free
With my two brethren." And he said to him,
"Father!"—who answered, "I am here, my son."
And Japhet said, "I pray you, sir, attend

To this my answer: let me go with you,
 For, now I think on it, I do not love
 The chase, nor managing the steed, nor yet
 The arrows and the bow; but rather you,
 For all you do and say, and you yourself,
 Are goodly and delightsome in mine eyes.
 I pray you, sir, when you go forth again,
 That I may also go." And he replied,
 "I will tell thy speech unto the Highest; He
 Shall answer it. But I would speak to thee
 Now of the days to come. Know thou, most dear,
 To this thy father, that the drenchèd world,
 When risen clean washed from water, shall receive
 From thee her lordliest governors, from thee
 Daughters of noblest soul."

So Japhet said,

"Sir, I am young, but of my mother straight
 I will go ask a wife, that this may be.
 I pray you, therefore, as the manner is
 Of fathers, give me land that I may reap
 Corn for sustaining of my wife, and bruise
 The fruit of the vine to cheer her." But he said,
 "Dost thou forget? or dost thou not believe,
 My son?" He answered, "I did ne'er believe,
 My father, ere to-day; but now, methinks,
 Whatever thou believest I believe,
 For thy belovèd sake. If this then be
 As thou (I hear) hast said, and earth doth bear
 The last of her wheat harvests, and make ripe
 The latest of her grapes; yet hear me, sir,
 None of the daughters shall be given to me
 If I be landless." Then his father said,
 "Lift up thine eyes towards the north, my son:"
 And so he did. "Behold thy heritage!"
 Quoth the world's prince and master, "far away

Upon the side o' the north, where green the field
 Lies every season through, and where the dews
 Of heaven are wholesome, shall thy children reign;
 I part it to them, for the earth is mine;
 The Highest gave it me: I make it theirs.
 Moreover for thy marriage gift, behold
 The cedars where thou sleepest! There are vines;
 And up the rise is growing wheat. I give
 (For all, alas! is mine), — I give thee both
 For dowry, and my blessing."

And he said,

"Sir, you are good, and therefore the Most High
 Shall bless me also. Sir, I love you well."

BOOK V.

AND when two days were over, Japhet said,
 "Mother, so please you, get a wife for me."
 The mother answered, "Dost thou mock me, son?
 'Tis not the manner of our kin to wed
 So young. Thou knowest it; art thou not ashamed?
 Thou carest not for a wife." And the youth blushed,
 And made for answer: "This, my father, saith
 The doom is nigh; now, therefore, find a maid,
 Or else shall I be wifeless all my days.
 And as for me, I care not; but the lands
 Are parted, and the goodliest share is mine.
 And lo! my brethren are betrothed; their maids
 Are with thee in the house. Then why not mine?
 Didst thou not diligently search for these
 Among the noblest born of all the earth,
 And bring them up? My sisters, dwell they not
 With women that bespeak them for their sons?
 Now, therefore, let a wife be found for me,
 Fair as the day, and gentle to my will
 As thou art to my father's." When she heard,

Niloiya sighed, and answered, "It is well."
And Japhet went out from her presence.

Then

Quoth the great Master: "Wherefore sought ye not,
Woman, these many days, nor tired at all,
Till ye had found, a maiden for thy son?
In this ye have done ill." Niloiya said:
"Let not my lord be angry. All my soul
Is sad: my lord hath walked afar so long,
That some despise thee; yea, our servants fail
Lately to bring their stint of corn and wood.
And, sir, thy household slaves do steal away
To thy great father, and our lands lie waste, —
None till them: therefore think the women scorn
To give me — whatsoever gems I send,
And goodly raiment (yea, I seek afar,
And sue with all desire and humbleness
Through every master's house, but no one gives) —
A daughter for my son." With that she ceased.

Then said the Master: "Some thou hast with thee,
Brought up among thy children, dutiful
And fair; thy father gave them for my slaves, —
Children of them whom he brought captive forth
From their own heritage." And she replied,
Right scornfully: "Shall Japhet wed a slave?"
Then said the Master: "He shall wed: look thou
To that. I say not he shall wed a slave;
But, by the might of One that made him mine,
I will not quit thee for my doomed way
Until thou wilt betroth him. Therefore, haste,
Beautiful woman, loved of me and mine,
To bring a maiden, and to say, 'Behold
A wife for Japhet.'" Then she answered, "Sir,
It shall be done."

And forth Niloiya sped.
She gathered all her jewels, — all she held

Of costly or of rich, — and went and spake
With some few slaves that yet abode with her,
For daily they were fewer; and went forth,
With fair and flattering words, among her feres,
And fain had wrought with them: and she had hope
That made her sick, it was so faint; and then
She had fear, and after she had certainty,
For all did scorn her. "Nay," they cried, "O fool!
If this be so, and on a watery world
Ye think to rock, what matters if a wife
Be free or bond? There shall be none to rule,
If she have freedom: if she have it not,
None shall there be to serve."

And she alit,
The time being done, desponding at her door.
And went behind a screen, where should have
wrought
The daughters of the captives; but there wrought
One only, and this rose from off the floor,
Where she the river rush full deftly wove,
And made obeisance. Then Niloiya said,
"Where are thy fellows?" And the maid replied,
"Let not Niloiya, this my lady loved,
Be angry; they are fled since yesternight."
Then said Niloiya, "Amarant, my slave,
When have I called thee by thy name before?"
She answered, "Lady, never;" and she took
And spread her broidered robe before her face.
Niloiya spoke thus: "I am come to woe,
And thou to honor." Saying this she wept
Passionate tears; and all the damsel's soul
Was full of yearning wonder, and her robe
Slipped from her hand, and her right innocent face
Was seen betwixt her locks of tawny hair
That dropped about her knees, and her two eyes,
Blue as the much-loved flower that rims the beck

Looked sweetly on Niloiya ; but she knew
 No meaning in her words ; and she drew nigh,
 And kneeled and said, " Will this my lady speak ?
 Her damsel is desirous of her words."
 Then said Niloiya, " I, thy mistress, sought
 A wife for Japhet, and no wife is found."
 And yet again she wept with grief of heart,
 Saying, " Ah me, miserable ! I must give
 A wife, — the Master willeth it, — a wife,
 Ah me ! unto the high-born. He will scorn
 His mother and reproach me. I must give —
 None else have I to give — a slave — even thee."
 This further spake Niloiya : " I was good, —
 Had rue on thee, a tender sucking child,
 When they did tear thee from thy mother's breast
 I fed thee, gave thee shelter, and I taught
 Thy hands all cunning arts that women prize.
 But out on me ! my good is turned to ill.
 O Japhet, well beloved !" And she rose up,
 And did restrain herself, saying, " Dost thou know ?
 Behold, this thing shall be." The damsel sighed,
 " Lady, I do." Then went Niloiya forth.

And Amarant murmured in her deep amaze,
 " Shall Japhet's little children kiss my mouth ?
 And will he sometimes take them from my arms,
 And almost care for me for their sweet sake ?
 I have not dared to think I loved him, — now
 I know it well : but O, the bitterness
 For him !" And ending thus, the damsel rose,
 For Japhet entered. And she bowed herself
 Meekly and made obeisance, but her blood
 Ran cold about her heart, for all his face
 Was colored with his passion.

Japhet spoke :

He said, " My father's slave ;" and she replied,
 Low drooping her fair head, " My master's son."

And after that a silence fell on them,
 With trembling at her heart, and rage at his.
 And Japhet, mastered of his passion, sat
 And could not speak. O, cruel seemed his fate, —
 So cruel he that told it, so unkind.
 His breast was full of wounded love and wrath
 Wrestling together ; and his eyes flashed out
 Indignant lights, as all amazed he took
 The insult home that she had offered him,
 Who should have held his honor dear.

And, lo,

The misery choked him, and he cried in pain,
 " Go, get thee forth ;" but she, all white and still,
 Parted her lips to speak, and yet spake not,
 Nor moved. And Japhet rose up passionate,
 With lifted arm as one about to strike ;
 But she cried out and met him, and she held
 With desperate might his hand, and prayed to him,
 " Strike not, or else shall men from henceforth say,
 ' Japhet is like to us.' " And he shook off
 The damsel, and he said, " I thank thee, slave ;
 For never have I stricken yet or child
 Or woman. Not for thy sake am I glad,
 Nay, but for mine. Get hence. Obey my words."
 Then Japhet lifted up his voice, and wept.

And no more he restrained himself, but cried,
 With heavings of the heart, " O hateful day !
 O day that shuts the door upon delight !
 A slave ! to wed a slave ! O loathed wife,
 Hated of Japhet's soul." And after, long,
 With face between his hands, he sat, his thoughts
 Sullen and sore ; then scorned himself, and saying,
 " I will not take her, I will die unwed,
 It is but that ;" lift up his eyes and saw
 The slave, and she was sitting at his feet.

And he, so greatly wondering that she dared
The disobedience, looked her in the face
Less angry than afraid, for pale she was
As lily yet unsmiled on by the sun ;
And he, his passion being spent, sighed out,
"Low am I fallen indeed. Hast thou no fear,
That thou dost flout me?" but she gave to him
The sighing echo of his sigh, and mourned,
"No."

And he wondered, and he looked again,
For in her heart there was a new-born pang,
That cried ; but she, as mothers with their young,
Suffered, yet loved it ; and there shone a strange
Grave sweetness in her blue unsullied eyes.
And Japhet, leaning from the settle, thought,
"What is it? I will call her by her name,
To comfort her, for also she is naught
To blame ; and since I will not her to wife,
She falls back from the freedom she had hoped."
Then he said "Amarant ;" and the damsel drew
Her eyes down slowly from the shaded sky
Of even, and she said, "My master's son,
Japhet ;" and Japhet said, "I am not wroth
With thee, but wretched for my mother's deed,
Because she shamed me."

And the maiden said,
"Doth not thy father love thee well, sweet sir?"
"Ay," quoth he, "well." She answered, "Let
the heart
Of Japhet, then, be merry. Go to him
And say, 'The damsel whom my mother chose
Sits by her in the house ; but as for me,
Sire, ere I take her, let me go with you
To that same outland country. Also, sir,
My damsel hath not worked as yet the robe

Of her betrothal ;' now, then, sith he loves,
He will not say thee nay. Herein for awhile
Is respite, and thy mother far and near
Will seek again : it may be she will find
A fair, free maiden."

Japhet said, "O maid,
Sweet are thy words ; but what if I return,
And all again be as it is to-day?"
Then Amarant answered, "Some have died in youth ;
But yet, I think not, sir, that I shall die.
Though ye shall find it even as I had died, —
Silent for any words I might have said ;
Empty, for any space I might have filled.
Sir, I will steal away, and hide afar ;
But if a wife be found, then will I bide
And serve." He answered, "O, thy speech is good ;
Now, therefore (since my mother gave me thee),
I will reward it ; I will find for thee
A goodly husband, and will make him free ;
Thee also."

Then she started from his feet,
And, red with shame and anger, flashed on him
The passion of her eyes ; and put her hands
With catching of the breath to her fair throat,
And stood in her defiance lost to fear,
Like some fair hind in desperate danger turned
And brought to bay, and wild in her despair.
But shortly, "I remember," quoth she, low,
With raining down of tears and broken sighs,
"That I am Japhet's slave ; beseech you, sir,
As ye were ever gentle, ay, and sweet
Of language to me, be not harder now.
Sir, I was yours to take ; I knew not, sir,
That also ye might give me. Pray you, sir,
Be pitiful, — be merciful to me,
A slave." He said, "I thought to do thee good,

For good hath been thy counsel ;" but she cried,
 " Good master, be you therefore pitiful
 To me, a slave." And Japhet wondered much
 At her, and at her beauty, for he thought,
 " None of the daughters are so fair as this,
 Nor stand with such a grace majestic ;
 She in her locks is like the travelling sun,
 Setting, all clad in coifing clouds of gold.
 And would she die unmatched?" He said to her,
 " What! wilt thou sail alone in yonder ship,
 And dwell alone hereafter?" " Ay," she said,
 " And serve my mistress."

" It is well," quoth he,
 And held his hand to her, as is the way
 Of masters. Then she kissed it, and she said,
 " Thanks for benevolence," and turned herself,
 Adding, " I rest, sir, on your gracious words ;"
 Then stepped into the twilight and was gone.

And Japhet, having found his father, said,
 " Sir, let me also journey when ye go."
 Who answered, " Hath thy mother done her part?"
 He said, " Yea, truly, and my damsel sits
 Before her in the house : and also, sir,
 She said to me, ' I have not worked, as yet,
 The garment of betrothal.'" And he said,
 "'Tis not the manner of our kin to speak
 Concerning matters that a woman rules ;
 But hath thy mother brought a damsel home,
 And let her see thy face, then all is one
 As ye were wed." He answered, " Even so,
 It matters nothing ; therefore hear me, sir :
 The damsel being mine, I am content
 To let her do according to her will ;
 And when we shall return, so surely, sir,
 As I shall find her by my mother's side,

Then will I take her : " and he left to speak ;
 His father answering, " Son, thy words are good."

BOOK VI.

NIGHT. Now a tent was pitched, and Japhet sat
 In the door and watched, for on a litter lay
 The father of his love. And he was sick
 To death ; but daily he would rouse him up,
 And stare upon the light, and ever say,
 " On, let us journey ;" but it came to pass
 That night, across their path a river ran,
 And they who served the father and the son
 Had pitched the tents beside it, and had made
 A fire to scare away the savagery
 That roamed in that great forest, for their way
 Had led among the trees of God.

The moon

Shone on the river, like a silver road
 To lead them over ; but when Japhet looked,
 He said, " We shall not cross it. I shall lay
 This well-belovèd head low in the leaves, —
 Not on the farther side." From time to time,
 The water-snakes would stir its glassy flow
 With curling undulations, and would lay
 Their heads along the banks, and, subtle-eyed,
 Consider those long spirting flames, that danced,
 When some red log would break and crumble down,
 And show his dark despondent eyes, that watched,
 Wearily, even Japhet's. But he cared
 Little ; and in the dark, that was not dark,
 But dimness of confused incertitude,
 Would move a-near all silently, and gaze
 And breathe, and shape itself, a manèd thing
 With eyes ; and still he cared not, and the form
 Would falter, then recede, and melt again

Into the farther shade. And Japhet said :
 " How long ? The moon hath grown again in heaven,
 After her caving twice, since we did leave
 The threshold of our home ; and now what 'vails
 That far on tumbled mountain snow we toiled,
 Hungry, and weary, all the day ; by night
 Waked with a dreadful trembling underneath,
 To look, while every cone smoked, and there ran
 Red brooks adown, that licked the forest up,
 While in the pale white ashes wading on
 We saw no stars ? — what 'vails if afterward,
 Astonished with great silence, we did move
 Over the measureless, unknown desert mead ;
 While all the day, in rents and crevices,
 Would lie the lizard and the serpent kind,
 Drowsy ; and in the night take fearsome shapes,
 And oftentimes woman-faced and woman-haired
 Would trail their snaky length, and curse and mourn ;
 Or there would wander up, when we were tired.
 Dark troops of evil ones, with eyes morose,
 Withstanding us, and staring ; — O, what 'vails
 That in the dread deep forest we have fought
 With following packs of wolves ? These men of might,
 Even the giants, shall not hear the doom
 My father came to tell them of. Ah me !
 If God indeed had sent him, would he lie
 (For he is stricken with a sore disease)
 Helpless outside their city ? "

Then he rose,
 And put aside the curtains of the tent,
 To look upon his father's face ; and lo !
 The tent being dark, he thought that somewhat sat
 Beside the litter ; and he set his eyes
 To see it, and saw not ; but only marked
 Where, fallen away from manhood and from power,
 His father lay. Then he came forth again,

Trembling, and crouched beside the dull red fire.
 And murmured, " Now it is the second time :
 An old man, as I think (but scarcely saw),
 Dreadful of might. Its hair was white as wool :
 I dared not look ; perhaps I saw not aught,
 But only knew that it was there ; the same
 Which walked beside us once when he did pray."
 And Japhet hid his face between his hands
 For fear, and grief of heart, and weariness
 Of watching ; and he slumbered not, but mourned
 To himself, a little moment, as it seemed,
 For sake of his loved father ; then he lift
 His eyes, and day had dawned. Right suddenly
 The moon withheld her silver, and she hung
 Frail as a cloud. The ruddy flame that played
 By night on dim, dusk trees, and on the flood,
 Crept red amongst the logs, and all the world
 And all the water blushed and bloomed. The stars
 Were gone, and golden shafts came up, and touched
 The feathered heads of palms, and green was born
 Under the rosy cloud, and purples flew
 Like veils across the mountains ; and he saw,
 Winding athwart them, bathed in blissful peace,
 And the sacredness of morn, the battlements
 And outposts of the giants ; and there ran
 On the other side the river, as it were,
 White mounds of marble, tabernacles fair,
 And towers below a line of inland cliff :
 These were their fastnesses, and here their homes.

In valleys and the forest, all that night,
 There had been woe ; in every hollow place,
 And under walls, like drifted flowers, or snow,
 Women lay mourning ; for the serpent lodged
 That night within the gates, and had decreed,
 " I will (or ever I come) that ye drive out
 The women, the abhorred of my soul."

Therefore, more beauteous than all climbing bloom,
 Purple and scarlet, cumbering of the boughs,
 Or flights of azure doves that lit to drink
 The water of the river; or, new born,
 The quivering butterflies in companies,
 That slowly crept adown the sandy marge,
 Like living crocus beds, and also drank,
 And rose an orange cloud; their hollowed hands
 They dipped between the lilies, or with robes
 Full of ripe fruitage, sat and peeled and ate,
 Weeping; or comforting their little ones,
 And lulling them with sorrowful long hymns
 Among the palms.

So went the earlier morn.

Then came a messenger, while Japhet sat
 Mournfully, and he said, "The men of might
 Are willing; let thy master, youth, appear."
 And Japhet said, "So be it;" and he thought,
 "Now will I trust in God;" and he went in
 And stood before his father, and he said,
 "My father;" but the Master answered not,
 But gazed upon the curtains of his tent,
 Nor knew that one had called him. He was clad
 As ready for the journey, and his feet
 Were sandalled, and his staff was at his side;
 And Japhet took the gown of sacrifice
 And spread it on him, and he laid his crown
 Upon his knees, and he went forth, and lift
 His hand to heaven, and cried, "My father's God!"
 But neither whisper came nor echo fell
 When he did listen. Therefore he went on:
 "Behold, I have a thing to say to thee.
 My father charged thy servant, 'Let not ruth
 Prevail with thee to turn and bear me hence,
 For God appointed me my task, to preach
 Before the mighty.' I must do my part

(O, let it not displease thee), for he said
 But yesternight, 'When they shall send for me,
 Take me before them.' And I sware to him.
 I pray thee, therefore, count his life and mine
 Precious: for I that sware, I will perform."

Then cried he to his people, "Let us hence;
 Take up the litter." And they set their feet
 Toward the raft whereby men crossed that flood.

And while they journeyed, lo, the giants sat
 Within the fairest hall where all were fair,
 Each on his carven throne, o'er-canopied
 With work of women. And the dragon lay
 In a place of honor; and with subtlety
 He counselled them, for they did speak by turns;
 And they, being proud, might nothing master them
 But guile alone: and he did fawn on them;
 And when the younger one taunted him, submissive
 He testified great humbleness, and cried,
 "A cruel God, forsooth! but nay, O nay,
 I will not think it of Him, that He meant
 To threaten these. O, when I look on them,
 How doth my soul admire."

And one stood forth,
 The youngest; of his brethren named "the Rock,"
 "Speak out," quoth he, "thou toothless, slaving
 thing,
 What is it? thinkest thou that such as we
 Should be afraid? What is this goodly doom!
 And Satan laughed upon him. "Lo," said he,
 "Thou art not fully grown, and every one
 I look on standeth higher by the head,
 Yea, and the shoulders, than do other men;
 Forsooth, thy servant thought not thou wouldst
 fear,

Thou and thy fellows." Then with one accord,
 "Speak," cried they; and with mild, persuasive
 eyes,
 And flattering tongue, he spoke.

"Ye mighty ones—
 It hath been known to you these many days
 How that for piety I am much famed.
 I am exceeding pious; if I lie,
 As hath been whispered, it is but for sake
 Of God, and that ye should not think Him hard,
 For I am all for God. Now some have thought
 That He hath also (and it may be so
 Or yet may not be so) on me been hard;
 Be not ye therefore wroth for my poor sake;
 I am contented to have earned your weal,
 Though I must therefore suffer.

"Now to-day
 One cometh, yea, an harmless man, a fool,
 Who boasts he hath a message from our God,
 And lest that you, for bravery of heart
 And stoutness, being angered with his prate,
 Should lift a hand, and kill him, I am here."

Then spoke the Leader, "How now, snake? Thy
 words
 Ring false. Why ever liest thou, snake, to us?
 Thou coward! none of us will see thee harmed.
 I say thou liest. The land is strewed with slain;
 Myself have hewn down companies, and blood
 Makes fertile all the field. Thou knowest it well;
 And hast thou, driveller, panting sore for age,
 Come with a force to bid us spare one fool?"

And Satan answered, "Nay you! be not wroth;
 Yet true it is, and yet not all the truth.
 Your servant would have told the rest, if now

(For fulness of your life being fretted sore
 At mine infirmities, which God in vain
 I supplicate to heal) ye had not caused
 My speech to stop." And he they called "the Oak"
 Made answer, "'Tis a good snake; let him be.
 Why would ye fright the poor old craven beast?
 Look how his lolling tongue doth foam for fear.
 Ye should have mercy, brethren, on the weak.
 Speak, dragon, thou hast leave; make stout thy
 heart.

What! hast thou lied to this great company?
 It was, we know it was, for humbleness;
 Thou wert not willing to offend with truth."
 "Yea, majesties," quoth Satan, "thus it was,"
 And lifted up appealing eyes, and groaned;
 "O, can it be, compassionate as brave,
 And housed in cunning works themselves have
 reared,
 And served in gold, and warmed with minivere,
 And ruling nobly, that He, not content
 Unless alone He reigneth, looks to bend
 Or break them in, like slaves to cry to Him,
 'What is Thy will with us, O Master dear?'
 Or else to eat of death?"

"For my part, lords,
 I cannot think it: for my piety
 And reason, which I also share with you,
 Are my best lights, and ever counsel me,
 'Believe not aught against thy God; believe,
 Since thou canst never reach to do Him wrong,
 That He will never stoop to do thee wrong.
 Is He not just and equal, yea, and kind?'
 Therefore, O majesties, it is my mind,
 Concerning him ye wot of, thus to think
 The message is not like what I have learned.
 By reason and experience, of the God.