

POEMS OF THE FIRST PERIOD

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HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE.

[This and the following poem are, with some alterations, introduced in the Play of "The Robbers."]

ANDROMACHE.

Will Hector leave me for the fatal plain,
Where, fierce with vengeance for Patroclus slain,
Stalks Peleus' ruthless son?
Who, when thou glid'st amid the dark abodes,
To hurl the spear and to revere the gods,

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Shall teach thine orphan one?

HECTOR.

Woman and wife beloved—cease thy tears;
My soul is nerved—the war-clang in my ears!
Be mine in life to stand
Troy's bulwark!—fighting for our hearths, to go
In death, exulting to the streams below,
Slain for my fatherland!

ANDROMACHE.

No more I hear thy martial footsteps fall—
Thine arms shall hang, dull trophies, on the wall—
Fallen the stem of Troy!
Thou goest where slow Cocytus wanders—where
Love sinks in Lethe, and the sunless air
Is dark to light and joy!

HECTOR.

Longing and thought—yes, all I feel and think
May in the silent sloth of Lethe sink,
But my love not!
Hark, the wild swarm is at the walls!—I hear!
Gird on my sword—Beloved one, dry the tear—
Lethe for love is not!

AMALIA.

Angel-fair, Walhalla's charms displaying,
Fairer than all mortal youths was he;
Mild his look, as May-day sunbeams straying
Gently o'er the blue and glassy sea.

And his kisses!—what ecstatic feeling!
Like two flames that lovingly entwine,
Like the harp's soft tones together stealing
Into one sweet harmony divine,—

Soul and soul embraced, commingled, blended,
Lips and cheeks with trembling passion burned,
Heaven and earth, in pristine chaos ended,
Round the blissful lovers madly turn'd.

He is gone—and, ah! with bitter anguish
Vainly now I breathe my mournful sighs;
He is gone—in hopeless grief I languish
Earthly joys I ne'er again can prize!

A FUNERAL FANTASIE.

Pale, at its ghastly noon,
Pauses above the death-still wood—the moon;
The night-sprite, sighing, through the dim air stirs;
The clouds descend in rain;
Mourning, the wan stars wane,
Flickering like dying lamps in sepulchres!
Haggard as spectres—vision-like and dumb,
Dark with the pomp of death, and moving slow,
Towards that sad lair the pale procession come
Where the grave closes on the night below.

With dim, deep-sunken eye,
Crutched on his staff, who trembles tottering by?
As wrung from out the shattered heart, one groan
Breaks the deep hush alone!
Crushed by the iron fate, he seems to gather
All life's last strength to stagger to the bier,
And hearken—Do these cold lips murmur "Father?"
The sharp rain, drizzling through that place of fear,
Pierces the bones gnawed fleshless by despair,
And the heart's horror stirs the silver hair.

Fresh bleed the fiery wounds
Through all that agonizing heart undone—
Still on the voiceless lips "my Father" sounds,
And still the childless Father murmurs "Son!"
Ice-cold—ice-cold, in that white shroud he lies—
Thy sweet and golden dreams all vanished there—
The sweet and golden name of "Father" dies
Into thy curse,—ice-cold—ice-cold—he lies!
Dead, what thy life's delight and Eden were!

Mild, as when, fresh from the arms of Aurora,
While the air like Elysium is smiling above,
Steeped in rose-breathing odors, the darling of Flora
Wantons over the blooms on his winglets of love.
So gay, o'er the meads, went his footsteps in bliss,
The silver wave mirrored the smile of his face;
Delight, like a flame, kindled up at his kiss,
And the heart of the maid was the prey of his chase.

Boldly he sprang to the strife of the world,
As a deer to the mountain-top carelessly springs;
As an eagle whose plumes to the sun are unfurled,
Swept his hope round the heaven on its limitless wings.
Proud as a war-horse that chafes at the rein,
That, kingly, exults in the storm of the brave;
That throws to the wind the wild stream of its mane,
Strode he forth by the prince and the slave!

Life like a spring day, serene and divine,
In the star of the morning went by as a trance;
His murmurs he drowned in the gold of the wine,
And his sorrows were borne on the wave of the dance.

Worlds lay concealed in the hopes of his youth!—
When once he shall ripen to manhood and fame!
Fond father exult!—In the germs of his youth
What harvests are destined for manhood and fame!

Not to be was that manhood!—The death-bell is knelling,
The hinge of the death-vault creaks harsh on the ears—
How dismal, O Death, is the place of thy dwelling!
Not to be was that manhood!—Flow on, bitter tears!
Go, beloved, thy path to the sun,
Rise, world upon world, with the perfect to rest;
Go—quaff the delight which thy spirit has won,
And escape from our grief in the Halls of the Blest.

Again (in that thought what a healing is found!)
To meet in the Eden to which thou art fled!—
Hark, the coffin sinks down with a dull, sullen sound,
And the ropes rattle over the sleep of the dead.
And we cling to each other!—O Grave, he is thine!
The eye tells the woe that is mute to the ears—
And we dare to resent what we grudge to resign,
Till the heart's sinful murmur is choked in its tears.
Pale at its ghastly noon,
Pauses above the death-still wood—the moon!
The night-sprite, sighing, through the dim air stirs:
The clouds descend in rain;
Mourning, the wan stars wane,
Flickering like dying lamps in sepulchres.
The dull clods swell into the sullen mound;
Earth, one look yet upon the prey we gave!
The grave locks up the treasure it has found;
Higher and higher swells the sullen mound—
Never gives back the grave!

FANTASIE—TO LAURA.

Name, my Laura, name the whirl-compelling
Bodies to unite in one blest whole—
Name, my Laura, name the wondrous magic
By which soul rejoins its kindred soul!

See! it teaches yonder roving planets
Round the sun to fly in endless race;
And as children play around their mother,
Checkered circles round the orb to trace.

Every rolling star, by thirst tormented,
Drinks with joy its bright and golden rain—
Drinks refreshment from its fiery chalice,
As the limbs are nourished by the brain.

'Tis through Love that atom pairs with atom,
In a harmony eternal, sure;
And 'tis Love that links the spheres together—
Through her only, systems can endure.

Were she but effaced from Nature's clockwork,
Into dust would fly the mighty world;
O'er thy systems thou wouldst weep, great Newton,
When with giant force to chaos hurled!

Blot the goddess from the spirit order,
It would sink in death, and ne'er arise.
Were love absent, spring would glad us never;
Were love absent, none their God would prize!

What is that, which, when my Laura kisses,
Dyes my cheek with flames of purple hue,
Bids my bosom bound with swifter motion,
Like a fever wild my veins runs through?

Every nerve from out its barriers rises,
O'er its banks, the blood begins to flow;
Body seeks to join itself to body,
Spirits kindle in one blissful glow.

Powerful as in the dead creations
That eternal impulses obey,
O'er the web Arachne-like of Nature,—
Living Nature,—Love exerts her sway.

Laura, see how joyousness embraces
E'en the overflow of sorrows wild!
How e'en rigid desperation kindles
On the loving breast of Hope so mild.

Sisterly and blissful rapture softens
Gloomy Melancholy's fearful night,
And, deliver'd of its golden children,
Lo, the eye pours forth its radiance bright!

Does not awful Sympathy rule over
E'en the realms that Evil calls its own?
For 'tis Hell our crimes are ever wooing,
While they bear a grudge 'gainst Heaven alone!

Shame, Repentance, pair Eumenides-like,
Weave round sin their fearful serpent-coils:
While around the eagle-wings of Greatness
Treach'rous danger winds its dreaded toils.

Ruin oft with Pride is wont to trifle,
Envy upon Fortune loves to cling;
On her brother, Death, with arms extended,
Lust, his sister, oft is wont to spring.

On the wings of Love the future hastens
In the arms of ages past to lie;
And Saturnus, as he onward speeds him,
Long hath sought his bride—Eternity!

Soon Saturnus will his bride discover,—
So the mighty oracle hath said;
Blazing worlds will turn to marriage torches
When Eternity with Time shall wed!

Then a fairer, far more beauteous morning,
Laura, on our love shall also shine,
Long as their blest bridal-night enduring:—
So rejoice thee, Laura—Laura mine!

TO LAURA AT THE HARPSICORD.

When o'er the chords thy fingers stray,
My spirit leaves its mortal clay,
A statue there I stand;
Thy spell controls e'en life and death,
As when the nerves a living breath
Receive by Love's command! [1]

More gently zephyr sighs along
To listen to thy magic song;
The systems formed by heavenly love
To sing forever as they move,
Pause in their endless-whirling round
To catch the rapture-teeming sound;
'Tis for thy strains they worship thee,—
Thy look, enchantress, fetters me!

From yonder chords fast-thronging come
Soul-breathing notes with rapturous speed,
As when from out their heavenly home
The new-born seraphim proceed;
The strains pour forth their magic might,
As glittering suns burst through the night,

When, by Creation's storm awoke,
From chaos' giant-arm they broke.

Now sweet, as when the silv'ry wave
Delights the pebbly beach to lave;
And now majestic as the sound
Of rolling thunder gathering round;
Now pealing more loudly, as when from yon height
Descends the mad mountain-stream, foaming and bright;
Now in a song of love
Dying away,
As through the aspen grove
Soft zephyrs play:
Now heavier and more mournful seems the strain,
As when across the desert, death-like plain,
Whence whispers dread and yells despairing rise,
Cocytus' sluggish, wailing current sighs.

Maiden fair, oh, answer me!
Are not spirits leagued with thee?
Speak they in the realms of bliss
Other language e'er than this?

GROUP FROM TARTARUS.

Hark! like the sea in wrath the heavens assailing,
Or like a brook through rocky basin wailing,
Comes from below, in groaning agony,
A heavy, vacant torment-breathing sigh!
Their faces marks of bitter torture wear,
While from their lips burst curses of despair;
Their eyes are hollow, and full of woe,
And their looks with heartfelt anguish
Seek Cocytus' stream that runs wailing below,
For the bridge o'er its waters they languish.

And they say to each other in accents of fear,
"Oh, when will the time of fulfilment appear?"
High over them boundless eternity quivers,
And the scythe of Saturnus all-ruthlessly, shivers!

RAPTURE-TO LAURA.

From earth I seem to wing my flight,
And sun myself in Heaven's pure light,
When thy sweet gaze meets mine
I dream I quaff ethereal dew,
When my own form I mirrored view
In those blue eyes divine!

Blest notes from Paradise afar,
Or strains from some benignant star
Enchant my ravished ear:
My Muse feels then the shepherd's hour
When silvery tones of magic power
Escape those lips so dear!

Young Loves around thee fan their wings—
Behind, the maddened fir-tree springs,
As when by Orpheus fired:
The poles whirl round with swifter motion,
When in the dance, like waves o'er Ocean,
Thy footsteps float untired!

Thy look, if it but beam with love,
Could make the lifeless marble move,
And hearts in rocks enshrine:
My visions to reality
Will turn, if, Laura, in thine eye
I read—that thou art mine!

TO LAURA. (THE MYSTERY OF REMINISCENCE.) [2]

Who and what gave to me the wish to woo thee—
Still, lip to lip, to cling for aye unto thee?
Who made thy glances to my soul the link—
Who bade me burn thy very breath to drink—
My life in thine to sink?
As from the conqueror's unresisted glaive,
Flies, without strife subdued, the ready slave—
So, when to life's unguarded fort, I see
Thy gaze draw near and near triumphantly—
Yields not my soul to thee?
Why from its lord doth thus my soul depart?—
Is it because its native home thou art?
Or were they brothers in the days of yore,
Twin-bound both souls, and in the link they bore
Sigh to be bound once more?
Were once our beings blent and intertwining,
And therefore still my heart for thine is pining?
Knew we the light of some extinguished sun—
The joys remote of some bright realm undone,
Where once our souls were ONE?
Yes, it is so!—And thou wert bound to me
In the long-vanish'd Eld eternally!
In the dark troubled tablets which enroll
The Past—my Muse beheld this blessed scroll—
"One with thy love my soul!"
Oh yes, I learned in awe, when gazing there,
How once one bright inseparate life we were,

How once, one glorious essence as a God,
 Unmeasured space our chainless footsteps trod—
 All Nature our abode!
 Round us, in waters of delight, forever
 Voluptuous flowed the heavenly Nectar river;
 We were the master of the seal of things,
 And where the sunshine bathed Truth's mountain-springs
 Quivered our glancing wings.
 Weep for the godlike life we lost afar—
 Weep!—thou and I its scattered fragments are;
 And still the unconquered yearning we retain—
 Sigh to restore the rapture and the reign,
 And grow divine again.
 And therefore came to me the wish to woo thee—
 Still, lip to lip, to cling for aye unto thee;
 This made thy glances to my soul the link—
 This made me burn thy very breath to drink—
 My life in thine to sink;
 And therefore, as before the conqueror's glaive,
 Flies, without strife subdued, the ready slave,
 So, when to life's unguarded fort, I see
 Thy gaze draw near and near triumphantly—
 Yieldeth my soul to thee!
 Therefore my soul doth from its lord depart,
 Because, beloved, its native home thou art;
 Because the twins recall the links they bore,
 And soul with soul, in the sweet kiss of yore,
 Meets and unites once more!
 Thou, too—Ah, there thy gaze upon me dwells,
 And thy young blush the tender answer tells;
 Yes! with the dear relation still we thrill,
 Both lives—though exiles from the homeward hill—
 One life—all glowing still!

MELANCHOLY—TO LAURA.

Laura! a sunrise seems to break
 Where'er thy happy looks may glow.
 Joy sheds its roses o'er thy cheek,
 Thy tears themselves do but bespeak
 The rapture whence they flow;
 Blest youth to whom those tears are given—
 The tears that change his earth to heaven;
 His best reward those melting eyes—
 For him new suns are in the skies!

Thy soul—a crystal river passing,
 Silver-clear, and sunbeam-glassing,
 Mays into bloom sad Autumn by thee;
 Night and desert, if they spy thee,

To gardens laugh—with daylight shine,
Lit by those happy smiles of thine!
Dark with cloud the future far
Goldens itself beneath thy star.
Smilest thou to see the harmony
Of charm the laws of Nature keep?
Alas! to me the harmony
Brings only cause to weep!

 Holds not Hades its domain
Underneath this earth of ours?
Under palace, under fame,
Underneath the cloud-capped towers?
Stately cities soar and spread
O'er your mouldering bones, ye dead!
From corruption, from decay,
Springs yon clove-pink's fragrant bloom;
Yon gay waters wind their way
From the hollows of a tomb.

 From the planets thou mayest know
All the change that shifts below,
Fled—beneath that zone of rays,
Fled to night a thousand Mays;
Thrones a thousand—rising—sinking,
Earth from thousand slaughters drinking
Blood profusely poured as water;—
Of the sceptre—of the slaughter—
Wouldst thou know what trace remaineth?
Seek them where the dark king reigneth!

 Scarce thine eye can ope and close
Ere life's dying sunset glows;
Sinking sudden from its pride
Into death—the Lethe tide.
Ask'st thou whence thy beauties rise?
Boastest thou those radiant eyes?—
Or that cheek in roses dyed?
All their beauty (thought of sorrow!)
From the brittle mould they borrow.
Heavy interest in the tomb
For the brief loan of the bloom,
For the beauty of the day,
Death the usurer, thou must pay,
In the long to-morrow!

 Maiden!—Death's too strong for scorn;
In the cheek the fairest, He
But the fairest throne doth see
Though the roses of the morn

Weave the veil by beauty worn—
Aye, beneath that brodered curtain,
Stands the Archer stern and certain!
Maid—thy Visionary hear—
Trust the wild one as the sear,
When he tells thee that thine eye,
While it beckons to the wooer,
Only lureth yet more nigh
Death, the dark undoer!

Every ray shed from thy beauty
Wastes the life-lamp while it beams,
And the pulse's playful duty,
And the blue veins' merry streams,
Sport and run into the pall—
Creatures of the Tyrant, all!
As the wind the rainbow shatters,
Death thy bright smiles rends and scatters,
Smile and rainbow leave no traces;—
From the spring-time's laughing graces,
From all life, as from its germ,
Grows the revel of the worm!

Woe, I see the wild wind wreak
Its wrath upon thy rosy bloom,
Winter plough thy rounded cheek,
Cloud and darkness close in gloom;
Blackening over, and forever,
Youth's serene and silver river!
Love alike and beauty o'er,
Lovely and beloved no more!

Maiden, an oak that soars on high,
And scorns the whirlwind's breath
Behold thy Poet's youth defy
The blunted dart of Death!
His gaze as ardent as the light
That shoots athwart the heaven,
His soul yet fiercer than the light
In the eternal heaven,
Of Him, in whom as in an ocean-surge
Creation ebbs and flows—and worlds arise and merge!
Through Nature steers the poet's thought to find
No fear but this—one barrier to the mind?

And dost thou glory so to think?
And heaves thy bosom?—Woe!
This cup, which lures him to the brink,
As if divinity to drink—
Has poison in its flow!

Wretched, oh, wretched, they who trust
 To strike the God-spark from the dust!
 The mightiest tone the music knows,
 But breaks the harp-string with the sound;
 And genius, still the more it glows,
 But wastes the lamp whose life bestows
 The light it sheds around.
 Soon from existence dragged away,
 The watchful jailer grasps his prey:
 Vowed on the altar of the abused fire,
 The spirits I raised against myself conspire!
 Let—yes, I feel it two short springs away
 Pass on their rapid flight;
 And life's faint spark shall, fleeting from the clay,
 Merge in the Fount of Light!

And weep'st thou, Laura?—be thy tears forbid;
 Would'st thou my lot, life's dreariest years amid,
 Protract and doom?—No: sinner, dry thy tears:
 Would'st thou, whose eyes beheld the eagle wing
 Of my bold youth through air's dominion spring,
 Mark my sad age (life's tale of glory done)—
 Crawl on the sod and tremble in the sun?
 Hear the dull frozen heart condemn the flame
 That as from heaven to youth's blithe bosom came;
 And see the blind eyes loathing turn from all
 The lovely sins age curses to recall?
 Let me die young!—sweet sinner, dry thy tears!
 Yes, let the flower be gathered in its bloom!
 And thou, young genius, with the brows of gloom,
 Quench thou life's torch, while yet the flame is strong!
 Even as the curtain falls; while still the scene
 Most thrills the hearts which have its audience been;
 As fleet the shadows from the stage—and long
 When all is o'er, lingers the breathless throng!

THE INFANTICIDE.

Hark where the bells toll, chiming, dull and steady,
 The clock's slow hand hath reached the appointed time.
 Well, be it so—prepare, my soul is ready,
 Companions of the grave—the rest for crime!
 Now take, O world! my last farewell—receiving
 My parting kisses—in these tears they dwell!
 Sweet are thy poisons while we taste believing,
 Now we are quits—heart-poisoner, fare-thee-well!

Farewell, ye suns that once to joy invited,
 Changed for the mould beneath the funeral shade;
 Farewell, farewell, thou rosy time delighted,

Luring to soft desire the careless maid,
Pale gossamers of gold, farewell, sweet dreaming
Fancies—the children that an Eden bore!
Blossoms that died while dawn itself was gleaming,
Opening in happy sunlight never more.

Swanlike the robe which innocence bestowing,
Decked with the virgin favors, rosy fair,
In the gay time when many a young rose glowing,
Blushed through the loose train of the amber hair.
Woe, woe! as white the robe that decks me now—
The shroud-like robe hell's destined victim wears;
Still shall the fillet bind this burning brow—
That sable braid the Doomsman's hand prepares!

Weep ye, who never fell—for whom, unerring,
The soul's white lilies keep their virgin hue,
Ye who when thoughts so danger-sweet are stirring,
Take the stern strength that Nature gives the few!
Woe, for too human was this fond heart's feeling—
Feeling!—my sin's avenger [3] doomed to be;
Woe—for the false man's arm around me stealing,
Stole the lulled virtue, charmed to sleep, from me.

Ah, he perhaps shall, round another sighing
(Forgot the serpents stinging at my breast),
Gayly, when I in the dumb grave am lying,
Pour the warm wish or speed the wanton jest,
Or play, perchance, with his new maiden's tresses,
Answer the kiss her lip enamored brings,
When the dread block the head he cradled presses,
And high the blood his kiss once fevered springs.

Thee, Francis, Francis [4], league on league, shall follow
The death-dirge of the Lucy once so dear;
From yonder steeple dismal, dull, and hollow,
Shall knell the warning horror on thy ear.
On thy fresh leman's lips when love is dawning,
And the lisped music glides from that sweet well—
Lo, in that breast a red wound shall be yawning,
And, in the midst of rapture, warn of hell!

Betrayer, what! thy soul relentless closing
To grief—the woman-shame no art can heal—
To that small life beneath my heart reposing!
Man, man, the wild beast for its young can feel!
Proud flew the sails—receding from the land,
I watched them waning from the wistful eye,
Round the gay maids on Seine's voluptuous strand,
Breathes the false incense of his fatal sigh.

And there the babe! there, on the mother's bosom,
Lulled in its sweet and golden rest it lay,
Fresh in life's morning as a rosy blossom,
It smiled, poor harmless one, my tears away.
Deathlike yet lovely, every feature speaking
In such dear calm and beauty to my sadness,
And cradled still the mother's heart, in breaking,
The softening love and the despairing madness.

"Woman, where is my father?" freezing through me,
Lisp'd the mute innocence with thunder-sound;
"Woman, where is thy husband?"—called unto me,
In every look, word, whisper, busying round!
Alas, for thee, there is no father's kiss;—
He fondleth other children on his knee.
How thou wilt curse our momentary bliss,
When bastard on thy name shall branded be!

Thy mother—oh, a hell her heart concealeth,
Lone-sitting, lone in social nature's all!
Thirsting for that glad fount thy love revealeth,
While still thy look the glad fount turns to gall.
In every infant cry my soul is hearkening,
The haunting happiness forever o'er,
And all the bitterness of death is darkening
The heavenly looks that smiled mine eyes before.

Hell, if my sight those looks a moment misses—
Hell, when my sight upon those looks is turned—
The avenging furies madden in thy kisses,
That slept in his what time my lips they burned.
Out from their graves his oaths spoke back in thunder!
The perjury stalked like murder in the sun—
Forever—God!—sense, reason, soul, sunk under—
The deed was done!

Francis, O Francis! league on league shall chase thee
The shadows hurrying grimly on thy flight—
Still with their icy arms they shall embrace thee,
And mutter thunder in thy dream's delight!

Down from the soft stars, in their tranquil glory,
Shall look thy dead child with a ghastly stare;
That shape shall haunt thee in its cerements gory,
And scourge thee back from heaven—its home is there!

Lifeless—how lifeless!—see, oh see, before me
It lies cold—stiff—O God!—and with that blood
I feel, as swoops the dizzy darkness o'er me

Mine own life mingled—ebbing in the flood—

Hark, at the door they knock—more loud within me—
More awful still—its sound the dread heart gave!
Gladly I welcome the cold arms that win me—
Fire, quench thy tortures in the icy grave!

Francis—a God that pardons dwells in heaven—
Francis, the sinner—yes—she pardons thee—
So let my wrongs unto the earth be given
Flame seize the wood!—it burns—it kindles—see!
There—there his letters cast—behold are ashes—
His vows—the conquering fire consumes them here
His kisses—see—see—all are only ashes—
All, all—the all that once on earth were dear!

Trust not the roses which your youth enjoyeth,
Sisters, to man's faith, changeful as the moon!
Beauty to me brought guilt—its bloom destroyeth
Lo, in the judgment court I curse the boon
Tears in the headsman's gaze—what tears?—'tis spoken!
Quick, bind mine eyes—all soon shall be forgot—
Doomsman—the lily hast thou never broken?
Pale Doomsman—tremble not!

THE GREATNESS OF THE WORLD.

Through the world which the Spirit creative and kind
First formed out of chaos, I fly like the wind,
Until on the strand
Of its billows I land,
My anchor cast forth where the breeze blows no more,
And Creation's last boundary stands on the shore.
I saw infant stars into being arise,
For thousands of years to roll on through the skies;
I saw them in play
Seek their goal far away,—
For a moment my fugitive gaze wandered on,—
I looked round me, and lo!—all those bright stars had flown!

Madly yearning to reach the dark kingdom of night.
I boldly steer on with the speed of the light;
All misty and drear
The dim heavens appear,
While embryo systems and seas at their source
Are whirling around the sun-wanderer's course.

When sudden a pilgrim I see drawing near
Along the lone path,—”Stay! What seekest thou here?”
”My bark, tempest-tossed,

I sail toward the land where the breeze blows no more,
And Creation's last boundary stands on the shore."

"Stay, thou sailest in vain! 'Tis INFINITY yonder!"—
"'Tis INFINITY, too, where thou, pilgrim, wouldst wander!
Eagle-thoughts that aspire,
Let your proud pinions tire!
For 'tis here that sweet phantasy, bold to the last,
Her anchor in hopeless dejection must cast!"

FORTUNE AND WISDOM.

Enraged against a quondam friend,
To Wisdom once proud Fortune said
"I'll give thee treasures without end,
If thou wilt be my friend instead."

"My choicest gifts to him I gave,
And ever blest him with my smile;
And yet he ceases not to crave,
And calls me niggard all the while."

"Come, sister, let us friendship vow!
So take the money, nothing loth;
Why always labor at the plough?
Here is enough I'm sure for both!"

Sage wisdom laughed,—the prudent elf!—
And wiped her brow, with moisture hot:
"There runs thy friend to hang himself,—
Be reconciled—I need thee not!"

ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF A YOUNG MAN. [5]

Mournful groans, as when a tempest lowers,
Echo from the dreary house of woe;
Death-notes rise from yonder minster's towers!
Bearing out a youth, they slowly go;
Yes! a youth—unripe yet for the bier,
Gathered in the spring-time of his days,
Thrilling yet with pulses strong and clear,
With the flame that in his bright eye plays—
Yes, a son—the idol of his mother,
(Oh, her mournful sigh shows that too well!)
Yes! my bosom-friend,—alas my brother!—
Up! each man the sad procession swell!

Do ye boast, ye pines, so gray and old,
Storms to brave, with thunderbolts to sport?
And, ye hills, that ye the heavens uphold?

And, ye heavens, that ye the suns support!
Boasts the graybeard, who on haughty deeds
As on billows, seeks perfection's height?
Boasts the hero, whom his prowess leads
Up to future glory's temple bright!
If the gnawing worms the floweret blast,
Who can madly think he'll ne'er decay?
Who above, below, can hope to last,
If the young man's life thus fleets away?

Joyously his days of youth so glad
Danced along, in rosy garb beclad,
And the world, the world was then so sweet!
And how kindly, how enchantingly
Smiled the future,—with what golden eye
Did life's paradise his moments greet!
While the tear his mother's eye escaped,
Under him the realm of shadows gaped
And the fates his thread began to sever,—
Earth and Heaven then vanished from his sight.
From the grave-thought shrank he in affright—
Sweet the world is to the dying ever!

Dumb and deaf 'tis in that narrow place,
Deep the slumbers of the buried one!
Brother! Ah, in ever-slackening race
All thy hopes their circuit cease to run!
Sunbeams oft thy native hill still lave,
But their glow thou never more canst feel;
O'er its flowers the zephyr's pinions wave,
O'er thine ear its murmur ne'er can steal;
Love will never tinge thine eye with gold,
Never wilt thou embrace thy blooming bride,
Not e'en though our tears in torrents rolled—
Death must now thine eye forever hide!

Yet 'tis well!—for precious is the rest,
In that narrow house the sleep is calm;
There, with rapture sorrow leaves the breast,—
Man's afflictions there no longer harm.
Slander now may wildly rave o'er thee,
And temptation vomit poison fell,
O'er the wrangle on the Pharisee,
Murderous bigots banish thee to hell!
Rogues beneath apostle-masks may leer,
And the bastard child of justice play,
As it were with dice, with mankind here,
And so on, until the judgment day!

O'er thee fortune still may juggle on,

For her minions blindly look around,—
Man now totter on his staggering throne,
And in dreary puddles now be found!
Blest art thou, within thy narrow cell!
To this stir of tragi-comedy,
To these fortune-waves that madly swell,
To this vain and childish lottery,
To this busy crowd effecting naught,
To this rest with labor teeming o'er,
Brother!—to this heaven with devils—fraught,
Now thine eyes have closed forevermore.

Fare thee well, oh, thou to memory dear,
By our blessings lulled to slumbers sweet!
Sleep on calmly in thy prison drear,—
Sleep on calmly till again we meet!
Till the loud Almighty trumpet sounds,
Echoing through these corpse-encumbered hills,
Till God's storm-wind, bursting through the bounds
Placed by death, with life those corpses fills—
Till, impregnate with Jehovah's blast,
Graves bring forth, and at His menace dread,
In the smoke of planets melting fast,
Once again the tombs give up their dead!

Not in worlds, as dreamed of by the wise,
Not in heavens, as sung in poet's song,
Not in e'en the people's paradise—
Yet we shall o'ertake thee, and ere long.
Is that true which cheered the pilgrim's gloom?
Is it true that thoughts can yonder be
True, that virtue guides us o'er the tomb?
That 'tis more than empty phantasy?
All these riddles are to thee unveiled!
Truth thy soul ecstatic now drinks up,
Truth in radiance thousandfold exhaled
From the mighty Father's blissful cup.

Dark and silent bearers draw, then, nigh!
To the slayer serve the feast the while!
Cease, ye mourners, cease your wailing cry!
Dust on dust upon the body pile!
Where's the man who God to tempt presumes?
Where the eye that through the gulf can see?
Holy, holy, holy art thou, God of tombs!
We, with awful trembling, worship Thee!
Dust may back to native dust be ground,
From its crumbling house the spirit fly,
And the storm its ashes strew around,—
But its love, its love shall never die!

THE BATTLE.

Heavy and solemn,
A cloudy column,
Through the green plain they marching came!
Measure less spread, like a table dread,
For the wild grim dice of the iron game.
The looks are bent on the shaking ground,
And the heart beats loud with a knelling sound;
Swift by the breasts that must bear the brunt,
Gallops the major along the front—
"Halt!"
And fettered they stand at the stark command,
And the warriors, silent, halt!

Proud in the blush of morning glowing,
What on the hill-top shines in flowing,
"See you the foeman's banners waving?"
"We see the foeman's banners waving!"
"God be with ye—children and wife!"
Hark to the music—the trump and the fife,
How they ring through the ranks which they rouse to the strife!
Thrilling they sound with their glorious tone,
Thrilling they go through the marrow and bone!
Brothers, God grant when this life is o'er,
In the life to come that we meet once more!

See the smoke how the lightning is cleaving asunder!
Hark the guns, peal on peal, how they boom in their thunder!
From host to host, with kindling sound,
The shouting signal circles round,
Ay, shout it forth to life or death—
Freer already breathes the breath!
The war is waging, slaughter raging,
And heavy through the reeking pall,
The iron death-dice fall!
Nearer they close—foes upon foes
"Ready!"—From square to square it goes,
Down on the knee they sank,
And fire comes sharp from the foremost rank.
Many a man to the earth it sent,
Many a gap by the balls is rent—
O'er the corpse before springs the hinder man,
That the line may not fail to the fearless van,
To the right, to the left, and around and around,
Death whirls in its dance on the bloody ground.
God's sunlight is quenched in the fiery fight,
Over the hosts falls a brooding night!
Brothers, God grant when this life is o'er

In the life to come that we meet once more!

The dead men lie bathed in the weltering blood
And the living are blent in the slippery flood,
And the feet, as they reeling and sliding go,
Stumble still on the corpses that sleep below.
"What, Francis!" "Give Charlotte my last farewell."
As the dying man murmurs, the thunders swell—
"I'll give—Oh God! are their guns so near?
Ho! comrades!—yon volley!—look sharp to the rear!—
I'll give thy Charlotte thy last farewell,
Sleep soft! where death thickest descendeth in rain,
The friend thou forsakest thy side shall regain!"
Hitherward—thitherward reels the fight,
Dark and more darkly day glooms into night—
Brothers, God grant when this life is o'er
In the life to come that we meet once more!

Hark to the hoofs that galloping go!
The adjutant flying,—
The horsemen press hard on the panting foe,
Their thunder booms in dying—
Victory!
The terror has seized on the dastards all,
And their colors fall!
Victory!
Closed is the brunt of the glorious fight
And the day, like a conqueror, bursts on the night,
Trumpet and fife swelling choral along,
The triumph already sweeps marching in song.
Farewell, fallen brothers, though this life be o'er,
There's another, in which we shall meet you once more!

ROUSSEAU.

Monument of our own age's shame,
On thy country casting endless blame,
Rousseau's grave, how dear thou art to me
Calm repose be to thy ashes blest!
In thy life thou vainly sought'st for rest,
But at length 'twas here obtained by thee!

When will ancient wounds be covered o'er?
Wise men died in heathen days of yore;
Now 'tis lighter—yet they die again.
Socrates was killed by sophists vile,
Rousseau meets his death through Christians' wile,—
Rousseau—who would fain make Christians men!

FRIENDSHIP.

[From "Letters of Julius to Raphael," an unpublished Novel.]

Friend!—the Great Ruler, easily content,
Needs not the laws it has laborious been
The task of small professors to invent;
A single wheel impels the whole machine
Matter and spirit;—yea, that simple law,
Pervading nature, which our Newton saw.

This taught the spheres, slaves to one golden rein,
Their radiant labyrinths to weave around
Creation's mighty hearts: this made the chain,
Which into interwoven systems bound
All spirits streaming to the spiritual sun
As brooks that ever into ocean run!

Did not the same strong mainspring urge and guide
Our hearts to meet in love's eternal bond?
Linked to thine arm, O Raphael, by thy side
Might I aspire to reach to souls beyond
Our earth, and bid the bright ambition go
To that perfection which the angels know!

Happy, O happy—I have found thee—I
Have out of millions found thee, and embraced;
Thou, out of millions, mine!—Let earth and sky
Return to darkness, and the antique waste—
To chaos shocked, let warring atoms be,
Still shall each heart unto the other flee!

Do I not find within thy radiant eyes
Fairer reflections of all joys most fair?
In thee I marvel at myself—the dyes
Of lovely earth seem lovelier painted there,
And in the bright looks of the friend is given
A heavenlier mirror even of the heaven!

Sadness casts off its load, and gayly goes
From the intolerant storm to rest awhile,
In love's true heart, sure haven of repose;
Does not pain's veriest transports learn to smile
From that bright eloquence affection gave
To friendly looks?—there, finds not pain a grave?

In all creation did I stand alone,
Still to the rocks my dreams a soul should find,
Mine arms should wreath themselves around the stone,
My griefs should feel a listener in the wind;
My joy—its echo in the caves should be!

Fool, if ye will—Fool, for sweet sympathy!

We are dead groups of matter when we hate;
But when we love we are as gods!—Unto
The gentle fetters yearning, through each state
And shade of being multiform, and through
All countless spirits (save of all the sire)—
Moves, breathes, and blends, the one divine desire.

Lo! arm in arm, through every upward grade,
From the rude mongrel to the starry Greek,
Who the fine link between the mortal made,
And heaven's last seraph—everywhere we seek
Union and bond—till in one sea sublime
Of love be merged all measure and all time!

Friendless ruled God His solitary sky;
He felt the want, and therefore souls were made,
The blessed mirrors of his bliss!—His eye
No equal in His loftiest works surveyed;
And from the source whence souls are quickened, He
Called His companion forth—ETERNITY!

ELYSIUM.

Past the despairing wail—
And the bright banquets of the Elysian vale
Melt every care away!
Delight, that breathes and moves forever,
Glides through sweet fields like some sweet river!
Elysian life survey!
There, fresh with youth, o'er jocund meads,
His merry west-winds blithely leads
The ever-blooming May!
Through gold-woven dreams goes the dance of the hours,
In space without bounds swell the soul and its powers,
And truth, with no veil, gives her face to the day.
And joy to-day and joy to-morrow,
But wafts the airy soul aloft;
The very name is lost to sorrow,
And pain is rapture tuned more exquisitely soft.

Here the pilgrim reposes the world-weary limb,
And forgets in the shadow, cool-breathing and dim,
The load he shall bear never more;
Here the mower, his sickle at rest, by the streams,
Lulled with harp-strings, reviews, in the calm of his dreams,
The fields, when the harvest is o'er.
Here, he, whose ears drank in the battle roar,
Whose banners streamed upon the startled wind

A thunder-storm,—before whose thunder tread
The mountains trembled,—in soft sleep reclined,
By the sweet brook that o'er its pebbly bed
In silver plays, and murmurs to the shore,
Hears the stern clangor of wild spears no more!
Here the true spouse the lost-beloved regains,
And on the enamelled couch of summer-plains
Mingles sweet kisses with the zephyr's breath.
Here, crowned at last, love never knows decay,
Living through ages its one bridal day,
Safe from the stroke of death!

THE FUGITIVE.

The air is perfumed with the morning's fresh breeze,
From the bush peer the sunbeams all purple and bright,
While they gleam through the clefts of the dark-waving trees,
And the cloud-crested mountains are golden with light.

With joyful, melodious, ravishing, strain,
The lark, as he wakens, salutes the glad sun,
Who glows in the arms of Aurora again,
And blissfully smiling, his race 'gins to run.

All hail, light of day!
Thy sweet gushing ray
Pours down its soft warmth over pasture and field;
With hues silver-tinged
The meadows are fringed,
And numberless suns in the dewdrop revealed.

Young Nature invades
The whispering shades,
Displaying each ravishing charm;
The soft zephyr blows,
And kisses the rose,
The plain is sweet-scented with balm.

How high from yon city the smoke-clouds ascend!
Their neighing, and snorting, and bellowing blend
The horses and cattle;
The chariot-wheels rattle,
As down to the valley they take their mad way;
And even the forest where life seems to move,
The eagle, and falcon, and hawk soar above,
And flutter their pinions, in heaven's bright ray.

In search of repose
From my heart-rending woes,
Oh, where shall my sad spirit flee?

The earth's smiling face,
With its sweet youthful grace,
A tomb must, alas, be for me!

Arise, then, thou sunlight of morning, and fling
O'er plain and o'er forest thy purple-dyed beams!
Thou twilight of evening, all noiselessly sing
In melody soft to the world as it dreams!

Ah, sunlight of morning, to me thou but flingest
Thy purple-dyed beams o'er the grave of the past!
Ah, twilight of evening, thy strains thou but singest
To one whose deep slumbers forever must last!

TO MINNA.

Do I dream? can I trust to my eye?
My sight sure some vapor must cover?
Or, there, did my Minna pass by—
My Minna—and knew not her lover?
On the arm of the coxcomb she crossed,
Well the fan might its zephyr bestow;
Herself in her vanity lost,
That wanton my Minna?—Ah, no!

In the gifts of my love she was dressed,
My plumes o'er her summer hat quiver;
The ribbons that flaunt in her breast
Might bid her—remember the giver!
And still do they bloom on thy bosom,
The flowerets I gathered for thee!
Still as fresh is the leaf of each blossom,
'Tis the heart that has faded from me!

Go and take, then, the incense they tender;
Go, the one that adored thee forget!
Go, thy charms to the feigner surrender,
In my scorn is my comforter yet!
Go, for thee with what trust and belief
There beat not ignobly a heart
That has strength yet to strive with the grief
To have worshipped the trifler thou art!

Thy beauty thy heart hath betrayed—
Thy beauty—shame, Minna, to thee!
To-morrow its glory will fade,
And its roses all withered will be!
The swallows that swarm in the sun
Will fly when the north winds awaken,
The false ones thine autumn will shun,

For whom thou the true hast forsaken!

'Mid the wrecks of the charms in December,
I see thee alone in decay,
And each spring shall but bid thee remember
How brief for thyself was the May!
Then they who so wantonly flock
To the rapture thy kiss can impart,
Shall scoff at thy winter, and mock
Thy beauty as wrecked as thy heart!

Thy beauty thy heart hath betrayed—
Thy beauty—shame, Minna, to thee
To-morrow its glory will fade—
And its roses all withered will be!
O, what scorn for thy desolate years
Shall I feel!—God forbid it in me!
How bitter will then be the tears
Shed, Minna, O Minna, for thee!

THE FLOWERS.

Ye offspring of the morning sun,
Ye flowers that deck the smiling plain,
Your lives, in joy and bliss begun,
In Nature's love unchanged remain.
With hues of bright and godlike splendor
Sweet Flora graced your forms so tender,
And clothed ye in a garb of light;
Spring's lovely children weep forever,
For living souls she gave ye never,
And ye must dwell in endless night?

The nightingale and lark still sing
In your tranced ears the bliss of love;
The toying sylphs, on airy wing,
Around your fragrant bosoms rove,
Of yore, Dione's daughter [6] twining
In garlands sweet your cup-so shining,
A pillow formed where love might rest!
Spring's gentle children, mourn forever,
The joys of love she gave ye never,
Ne'er let ye know that feeling blest!

But when ye're gathered by my hand,
A token of my love to be,
Now that her mother's harsh command
From Nanny's [7] sight has banished me—
E'en from that passing touch ye borrow
Those heralds mute of pleasing sorrow,

Life, language, hearts and souls divine;
And to your silent leaves 'tis given,
By Him who mightiest is in heaven,
His glorious Godhead to enshrine.

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

A HYMN.

By love are blest the gods on high,
Frail man becomes a deity
When love to him is given;
'Tis love that makes the heavens shine
With hues more radiant, more divine,
And turns dull earth to heaven!

In Pyrrha's rear (so poets sang
In ages past and gone),
The world from rocky fragments sprang—
Mankind from lifeless stone.

Their soul was but a thing of night,
Like stone and rock their heart;
The flaming torch of heaven so bright
Its glow could ne'er impart.

Young loves, all gently hovering round,
Their souls as yet had never bound
In soft and rosy chains;
No feeling muse had sought to raise
Their bosoms with ennobling lays,
Or sweet, harmonious strains.

Around each other lovingly
No garlands then entwined;
The sorrowing springs fled toward the sky,
And left the earth behind.

From out the sea Aurora rose
With none to hail her then;
The sun unhailed, at daylight's close,
In ocean sank again.

In forests wild, man went astray,
Miled by Luna's cloudy ray—
He bore an iron yoke;
He pined not for the stars on high,
With yearning for a deity
No tears in torrents broke.

.

But see! from out the deep-blue ocean
Fair Venus springs with gentle motion
The graceful Naiad's smiling band
Conveys her to the gladdened strand,

A May-like, youthful, magic power
Entwines, like morning's twilight hour,
Around that form of godlike birth,
The charms of air, sea, heaven, and earth.

The day's sweet eye begins to bloom
Across the forest's midnight gloom;
Narcissuses, their balm distilling,
The path her footstep treads are filling.

A song of love, sweet Philomel,
Soon carolled through the grove;
The streamlet, as it murmuring fell,
Discoursed of naught but love,

Pygmalion! Happy one! Behold!
Life's glow pervades thy marble cold!
Oh, LOVE, thou conqueror all-divine,
Embrace each happy child of thine!

.

By love are blest the gods on high,—
Frail man becomes a deity
When love to him is given;
'Tis love that makes the heavens shine
With hues more radiant, more divine,
And turns dull earth to heaven!

.

The gods their days forever spend
In banquets bright that have no end,
In one voluptuous morning-dream,
And quaff the nectar's golden stream.

Enthroned in awful majesty
Kronion wields the bolt on high:
In abject fear Olympus rocks
When wrathfully he shakes his locks.

To other gods he leaves his throne,
And fills, disguised as earth's frail son,

The grove with mournful numbers;
The thunders rest beneath his feet,
And lulled by Leda's kisses sweet,
The Giant-Slayer slumbers.

Through the boundless realms of light
Phoebus' golden reins, so bright,
Guide his horses white as snow,
While his darts lay nations low.
But when love and harmony
Fill his breast, how willingly
Ceases Phoebus then to heed
Rattling dart and snow-white steed!

See! Before Kronion's spouse
Every great immortal bows;
Proudly soar the peacock pair
As her chariot throne they bear,
While she decks with crown of might
Her ambrosial tresses bright,

Beauteous princess, ah! with fear
Quakes before thy splendor, love,
Seeking, as he ventures near,
With his power thy breast to move!
Soon from her immortal throne
Heaven's great queen must fain descend,
And in prayer for beauty's zone,
To the heart-enchainer bend!

.

By love are blest the gods on high,
Frail man becomes a deity
When love to him is given;
'Tis love that makes the heavens shine
With hues more radiant, more divine,
And turns dull earth to heaven!

.

'Tis love illumines the realms of night,
For Orcus dark obeys his might,
And bows before his magic spell
All-kindly looks the king of hell
At Ceres' daughter's smile so bright,—
Yes—love illumines the realms of night!

In hell were heard, with heavenly sound,
Holding in chains its warder bound,

Thy lays, O Thracian one!
A gentler doom dread Minos passed,
While down his cheeks the tears coursed fast
And e'en around Megaera's face
The serpents twined in fond embrace,
The lashes' work seemed done.

Driven by Orpheus' lyre away,
The vulture left his giant-prey [8];
With gentler motion rolled along
Dark Lethe and Cocytus' river,
Enraptured Thracian, by thy song,–
And love its burden was forever!

By love are blest the gods on high,
Frail man becomes a deity
When love to him is given;
'Tis love that makes the heavens shine
With hues more radiant, more divine,
And turns dull earth to heaven!

.

Wherever Nature's sway extends,
The fragrant balm of love descends,
His golden pinions quiver;
If 'twere not Venus' eye that gleams
Upon me in the moon's soft beams,
In sunlit hill or river,–
If 'twere not Venus smiles on me
From yonder bright and starry sea,

Not stars, not sun, not moonbeams sweet,
Could make my heart with rapture beat.
'Tis love alone that smilingly
Peers forth from Nature's blissful eye,
As from a mirror ever!

Love bids the silvery streamlet roll
More gently as it sighs along,
And breathes a living, feeling soul
In Philomel's sweet plaintive song;
'Tis love alone that fills the air
With streams from Nature's lute so fair.

Thou wisdom with the glance of fire,
Thou mighty goddess, now retire,
Love's power thou now must feel!
To victor proud, to monarch high,
Thou ne'er hast knelt in slavery,–

To love thou now must kneel!

Who taught thee boldly how to climb
The steep, but starry path sublime,
And reach the seats immortal?
Who rent the mystic veil in twain,
And showed thee the Elysian plain
Beyond death's gloomy portal?
If love had beckoned not from high,
Had we gained immortality?
If love had not inflamed each thought,
Had we the master spirit sought?
'Tis love that guides the soul along
To Nature's Father's heavenly throne

By love are blest the gods on high,
Frail man becomes a deity
When love to him is given;
'Tis love that makes the heavens shine
With hues more radiant, more divine,
And turns dull earth to heaven!

TO A MORALIST.

Are the sports of our youth so displeasing?
Is love but the folly you say?
Benumbed with the winter, and freezing,
You scold at the revels of May.

For you once a nymph had her charms,
And Oh! when the waltz you were wreathing,
All Olympus embraced in your arms—
All its nectar in Julia's breathing.

If Jove at that moment had hurled
The earth in some other rotation,
Along with your Julia whirled,
You had felt not the shock of creation.

Learn this—that philosophy beats
Sure time with the pulse,—quick or slow
As the blood from the heyday retreats,—
But it cannot make gods of us—No!

It is well icy reason should thaw
In the warm blood of mirth now and then,
The gods for themselves have a law
Which they never intended for men.

The spirit is bound by the ties

Of its gaoler, the flesh;—if I can
Not reach as an angel the skies,
Let me feel on the earth as a man!

COUNT EBERHARD, THE GROANER OF WURTEMBERG.

A WAR SONG.

Now hearken, ye who take delight
In boasting of your worth!
To many a man, to many a knight,
Beloved in peace and brave in fight,
The Swabian land gives birth.

Of Charles and Edward, Louis, Guy,
And Frederick, ye may boast;
Charles, Edward, Louis, Frederick, Guy—
None with Sir Eberhard can vie—
Himself a mighty host!

And then young Ulerick, his son,
Ha! how he loved the fray!
Young Ulerick, the Count's bold son,
When once the battle had begun,
No foot's-breadth e'er gave way.

The Reutlingers, with gnashing teeth,
Saw our bright ranks revealed
And, panting for the victor's wreath,
They drew the sword from out the sheath,
And sought the battle-field.

He charged the foe,—but fruitlessly,—
Then, mail-clad, homeward sped;
Stern anger filled his father's eye,
And made the youthful warrior fly,
And tears of anguish shed.

Now, rascals, quake!—This grieved him sore,
And rankled in his brain;
And by his father's beard he swore,
With many a craven townsman's gore
To wash out this foul stain.

Ere long the feud raged fierce and loud,—
Then hastened steed and man
To Doeffingen in thronging crowd,
While joy inspired the youngster proud,—
And soon the strife began.

Our army's signal-word that day
Was the disastrous fight;
It spurred us on like lightning's ray,
And plunged us deep in bloody fray,
And in the spears' black night.

The youthful Count his ponderous mace
With lion's rage swung round;
Destruction stalked before his face,
While groans and howlings filled the place
And hundreds bit the ground.

Woe! Woe! A heavy sabre-stroke
Upon his neck descended;
The sight each warrior's pity woke—
In vain! In vain! No word he spoke—
His course on earth was ended.

Loud wept both friend and foeman then,
Checked was the victor's glow;
The count cheered thus his knights again—
"My son is like all other men,—
March, children, 'gainst the foe!"

With greater fury whizzed each lance,
Revenge inflamed the blood;
O'er corpses moved the fearful dance
The townsmen fled in random chance
O'er mountain, vale, and flood.

Then back to camp, with trumpet's bray,
We hied in joyful haste;
And wife and child, with roundelay,
With clanging cup and waltzes gay,
Our glorious triumph graced.

And our old Count,—what now does he?
His son lies dead before him;
Within his tent all woefully
He sits alone in agony,
And drops one hot tear o'er him.

And so, with true affection warm,
The Count our lord we love;
Himself a mighty hero-swarm—
The thunders rest within his arm—
He shines like star above!

Farewell, then, ye who take delight
In boasting of your worth!

To many a man, to many a knight,
Beloved in peace, and brave in fight,
The Swabian land gives birth!

TO THE SPRING.

Welcome, gentle Stripling,
Nature's darling thou!
With thy basket full of blossoms,
A happy welcome now!
Aha!—and thou returnest,
Heartily we greet thee—
The loving and the fair one,
Merrily we meet thee!
Think'st thou of my maiden
In thy heart of glee?

I love her yet, the maiden—
And the maiden yet loves me!
For the maiden, many a blossom
I begged—and not in vain!
I came again a-begging,
And thou—thou givest again:
Welcome, gentle Stripling,
Nature's darling thou—
With thy basket full of blossoms,
A happy welcome now!

SEMELE:

IN TWO SCENES.

Dramatis Personae.

JUNO.

SEMELE, Princess of Thebes.

JUPITER.

MERCURY.

SCENE—The Palace of Cadmus at Thebes.

SCENE I.

JUNO. (Descending from her chariot, enveloped in a cloud.)
Away, ye peacocks, with my winged car!
Upon Cithaeron's cloud-capped summit wait!
[The chariot and cloud vanish.
Hail, hail, thou house of my undying anger!
A fearful hail to thee, thou hostile roof,
Ye hated walls!—This, this, then, is the place

Where Jupiter pollutes his marriage-bed
Even before the face of modest day!
'Tis here, then, that a woman, a frail mortal,
A dust-created being, dares to lure
The mighty Thunderer from out mine arms,
And hold him prisoner against her lips!

Juno! Juno! thought of madness!
Thou all lonely and in sadness,
Standest now on heaven's bright throne!
Though the votive smoke ascendeth,
Though each knee in homage bendeth,
What are they when love has flown?

To humble, alas, each too-haughty emotion
That swelled my proud breast, from the foam of the ocean
Fair Venus arose, to enchant gods and men!
And the Fates my still deeper abasement decreeing,
Her offspring Hermione brought into being,
And the bliss once mine own can ne'er glad me again!

Amongst the gods do I not reign the queen?
Am I not sister of the Thunderer?
Am I not wife of Zeus, the lord of all?
Groans not the mighty axis of the heavens
At my command? Gleams not Olympus' crown
Upon my head? Ha! now I feel myself!
In my immortal veins is Kronos' blood,
Right royally now swells my godlike heart.
Revenge! revenge!
Shall she unpunished ridicule my might?
Unpunished, discord roll amongst the gods,
Inviting Eris to invade the courts,
The joyous courts of heaven? Vain, thoughtless one!
Perish, and learn upon the Stygian stream
The difference 'twixt divine and earthly dust!
The giant-armor, may it weigh thee down—
Thy passion for a god to atoms crush thee!
Armed with revenge, as with a coat of mail,
I have descended from Olympus' heights,
Devising sweet, ensnaring, flattering words;
But in those words, death and destruction lurk.
Hark! 'tis her footstep! she approaches now—
Approaches ruin and a certain death!
Veil thyself, goddess, in a mortal form! [Exit.

SEMELE. (Calling behind the scenes.)
The sun is fast declining! Maidens, haste,
Scatter ambrosial fragrance through the hall,
Strew roses and narcissus flowers around,

Forgetting not the gold-embroidered pillow.
He comes not yet—the sun is fast declining—

JUNO. (hastily entering in the form of an old woman.)
Praised be the deities, my dearest daughter!

SEMELE.
Ha! Do I dream? Am I awake? Gods! Beroe!

JUNO.
Is't possible that Semele can e'er
Forget her nurse?

SEMELE. 'Tis Beroe! By Zeus!
Oh, let thy daughter clasp thee to her heart!
Thou livest still? What can have brought thee here
From Epidaurus? Tell me all thy tale!
Thou art my mother as of old?

JUNO. Thy mother!
Time was thou call'dst me so.

SEMELE. Thou art so still,
And wilt remain so, till I drink full deep
Of Lethe's maddening draught.
JUNO. Soon Beroe
Will drink oblivion from the waves of Lethe;
But Cadmus' daughter ne'er will taste that draught.

SEMELE.
How, my good nurse? Thy language ne'er was wont
To be mysterious or of hidden meaning;
The spirit of gray hairs 'tis speaks in thee;
Thou sayest I ne'er shall taste of Lethe's draught?

JUNO.
I said so, yes! But wherefore ridicule
Gray hairs? 'Tis true that they, unlike fair tresses,
Have ne'er been able to ensnare a god!

SEMELE.
Pardon poor thoughtless me! What cause have I
To ridicule gray hairs? Can I suppose
That mine forever fair will grace my neck?
But what was that I heard thee muttering
Between thy teeth? A god?

JUNO. Said I a god?
The deities in truth dwell everywhere!
'Tis good for earth's frail children to implore them.

The gods are found where thou art—Semele!
What wouldst thou ask?

SEMELE. Malicious heart! But say
What brings thee to this spot from Epidaurus?
'Tis not because the gods delight to dwell
near Semele?

JUNO. By Jupiter, naught else!—
What fire was that which mounted to thy cheeks
When I pronounced the name of Jupiter?
Naught else, my daughter! Fearfully the plague
At Epidaurus rages; every blast
Is deadly poison, every breath destroys;
The son his mother burns, his bride the bridegroom;
The funeral piles rear up their flaming heads,
Converting even midnight to bright day,
While howls of anguish ceaseless rend the air;
Full to overflowing is the cup of woe!—
In anger, Zeus looks down on our poor nation;
In vain the victim's blood is shed, in vain
Before the altar bows the priest his knee;
Deaf is his ear to all our supplications—
Therefore my sorrow-stricken country now
Has sent me here to Cadmus' regal daughter,
In hopes that I may move her to avert
His anger from us—"Beroe, the nurse,
Has influence," thus they said, "with Semele,
And Semele with Zeus"—I know no more,
And understand still less what means the saying,
That Semele such influence has with Zeus.

SEMELE. (Eagerly and thoughtlessly.)
The plague shall cease to-morrow! Tell them so
Zeus loves me! Say so! It shall cease to-day!

JUNO. (Starting up in astonishment.)
Ha! Is it true what fame with thousand tongues
Has spread abroad from Ida to Mount Haemus?
Zeus loves thee? Zeus salutes thee in the glory
Wherein the denizens of heaven regard him,
When in Saturnia's arms he sinks to rest?
Let, O ye gods, my gray hairs now descend
To Orcus' shades, for I have lived enough!
In godlike splendor Kronos' mighty son
Comes down to her,—to her, who on this breast
Once suckled—yes! to her—

SEMELE. Oh, Beroe!
In youthful form he came, in lovelier guise

Than they who from Aurora's lap arise;
Fairer than Hesper, breathing incense dim,—
In floods of ether steeped appeared each limb;
He moved with graceful and majestic motion,
Like silvery billows heaving o'er the ocean,
Or as Hyperion, whose bright shoulders ever
His bow and arrow bear, and clanging quiver;
His robe of light behind him gracefully
Danced in the breeze, his voice breathed melody,
Like crystal streams with silvery murmur falling,
More ravishing than Orpheus' strains enthralling.

JUNO.

My daughter! Inspiration spurs thee on,
Raising thy heart to flights of Helicon!
If thus in strains of Delphic ecstasy
Ascends the short-lived blissful memory
Of his bright charms,—Oh, how divine must be
His own sweet voice,—his look how heavenly!
But why of that great attribute
Kronion joys in most, be mute,—
The majesty that hurls the thunder,
And tears the fleeting clouds asunder?
Wilt thou say naught of that alone?
Prometheus and Deucalion
May lend the fairest charms of love,
But none can wield the bolt save Jove!
The thunderbolt it is alone
Which he before thy feet laid down
That proves thy right to beauty's crown.

SEMELE.

What sayest thou? What are thunder-bolts to me?

JUNO. (Smiling.)

Ah, Semele! A jest becomes thee well!

SEMELE.

Deucalion has no offspring so divine
As is my Zeus—of thunder naught I know.

JUNO.

Mere envy! Fie!

SEMELE. No, Beroe! By Zeus!

JUNO.

Thou swearest?

SEMELE. By Zeus! by mine own Zeus!

JUNO. (Shrieking.) Thou swearest?
Unhappy one!

SEMELE. (In alarm.) What meanest thou, Beroe?

JUNO.
Repeat the word that dooms thee to become
the wretchedest of all on earth's wide face!—
Alas, lost creature! 'Twas not Zeus!

SEMELE. Not Zeus?
Oh, fearful thought!

JUNO. A cunning traitor 'twas
From Attica, who 'neath a godlike form,
Robbed thee of honor, shame, and innocence!—
[SEMELE sinks to the ground.
Well mayest thou fall! Ne'er mayest thou rise again!
May endless night enshroud thine eyes in darkness,
May endless silence round thine ears encamp!
Remain forever here a lifeless mass!
Oh, infamy! Enough to hurl chaste day
Back into Hecate's gloomy arms once more!
Ye gods! And is it thus that Beroe
Finds Cadmus' daughter, after sixteen years
Of bitter separation! Full of joy
I came from Epidaurus; but with shame
To Epidaurus must retrace my steps.—
Despair I take with me. Alas, my people!
E'en to the second Deluge now the plague
May rage at will, may pile mount Oeta high
With corpses upon corpses, and may turn
All Greece into one mighty charnel-house,
Ere Semele can bend the angry gods.
I, thou, and Greece, and all, have been betrayed!

SEMELE. (Trembling as she rises, and extending an arm towards her.)
Oh, Beroe!

JUNO. Take courage, my dear heart!
Perchance 'tis Zeus! although it scarce can be!
Perchance 'tis really Zeus! This we must learn!
He must disclose himself to thee, or thou
Must fly his sight forever, and devote
The monster to the death-revenge of Thebes.
Look up, dear daughter—look upon the face
Of thine own Beroe, who looks on thee
With sympathizing eyes—my Semele,
Were it not well to try him?

SEMELE. No, by heaven!
I should not find him then—

JUNO. What! Wilt thou be
Perchance less wretched, if thou pinest on
In mournful doubt?—and if 'tis really he,—

SEMELE. (Hiding her face in Juno's lap.)
Ah! 'tis not he!

JUNO. And if he came to thee
Arrayed in all the majesty wherein
Olympus sees him? Semele! What then?
Wouldst thou repent thee then of having tried him?

SEMELE. (Springing up.)
Ha! be it so! He must unveil himself!

JUNO. (Hastily.)
Thou must not let him sink into thine arms.
Till he unveils himself—so hearken, child,
To what thy faithful nurse now counsels thee,—
To what affection whispers in mine ear,
And will accomplish!—Say! will he soon come?

SEMELE.
Before Hyperion sinks in Thetis' bed,
He promised to appear.

JUNO. (Forgetting herself hastily.) Is't so, indeed?
He promised? Ha! To-day? (Recovering herself.) Let him approach,
And when he would attempt, inflamed with love,
To clasp his arms around thee, then do thou,—
Observe me well,—as if by lightning struck,
Start back in haste. Ha! picture his surprise!
Leave him not long in wonderment, my child;
Continue to repulse him with a look
As cold as ice—more wildly, with more ardor
He'll press thee then—the coyness of the fair
Is but a dam, that for awhile keeps back
The torrent, only to increase the flood
With greater fury. Then begin to weep
'Gainst giants he might stand,—look calmly on
When Typhoeus, hundred-armed, in fury hurled
Mount Ossa and Olympus 'gainst his throne:
But Zeus is soon subdued by beauty's tears.
Thou smilest?—Be it so! Is, then, the scholar
Wiser, perchance, than she who teaches her?—
Then thou must pray the god one little, little

Most innocent request to grant to thee—
One that may seal his love and godhead too.
He'll swear by Styx. The Styx he must obey!
That oath he dares not break! Then speak these words:
"Thou shalt not touch this body, till thou comest
To Cadmus' daughter clothed in all the might
Wherein thou art embraced by Kronos' daughter!"
Be not thou terrified, my Semele,
If he, in order to escape thy wish,
As bugbears paints the horrors of his presence—
Describes the flames that round about him roar,
The thunder round him rolling when he comes:
These, Semele, are naught but empty fears—
The gods dislike to show to us frail mortals
These the most glorious of their attributes;
Be thou but obstinate in thy request,
And Juno's self will gaze on thee with envy.

SEMELE.

The frightful ox-eyed one! How often he
Complains, in the blest moments of our love,
Of her tormenting him with her black gall—

JUNO. (Aside, furiously, but with embarrassment.)
Ha! creature! Thou shalt die for this contempt!

SEMELE.

My Beroe! What art thou murmuring there?

JUNO. (In confusion.)

Nothing, my Semele! Black gall torments
Me also—Yes! a sharp, reproachful look
With lovers often passes as black gall—
Yet ox-eyes, after all, are not so ugly.

SEMELE.

Oh, Beroe, for shame! they're quite the worst
That any head can possibly contain!
And then her cheeks of green and yellow hues,
The obvious penalty of poisonous envy—
Zeus oft complains to me that that same shrew
Each night torments him with her nauseous love,
And with her jealous whims,—enough, I'm sure,
Into Ixion's wheel to turn all heaven.

JUNO. (Raving up and down in extreme confusion.)
No more of this!

SEMELE. What, Beroe! So angry?
Have I said more than what is true? Said more

Than what is wise?

JUNO. Thou hast said more, young woman,
Than what is true—said more than what is wise!
Deem thyself truly blest, if thy blue eyes
Smile thee not into Charon's bark too soon!
Saturnia has her altars and her temples,
And wanders amongst mortals—that great goddess
Averages naught so bitterly as scorn

SEMELE.
Here let her wander, and give birth to scorn!
What is't to me?—My Jupiter protects
My every hair,—what harm can Juno do?
But now, enough of this, my Beroe!
Zeus must appear to-day in all his glory;
And if Saturnia should on that account
Find out the path to Orcus—

JUNO. (Aside.) That same path
Another probably will find before her,
If but Kronion's lightning hits the mark!—
(To Semele.)
Yes, Semele, she well may burst with envy
When Cadmus' daughter, in the sight of Greece,
Ascends in triumph to Olympus' heights!—

SEMELE. (Smiling gently.)
Thinkest thou they'll hear in Greece of Cadmus' daughter?

JUNO. From Sidon to Athens the trumpet of fame
Shall ring with no other but Semele's name!
The gods from the heavens shall even descend,
And before thee their knees in deep homage shall bend,
While mortals in silent submission abide
The will of the giant-destroyer's loved bride;
And when distant years shall see
Thy last hour—

SEMELE. (Springing up, and falling on her neck.)
Oh, Beroe!

JUNO. Then a tablet white shall bear
This inscription graven there:
Here is worshipped Semele!
Who on earth so fair as she?
She who from Olympus' throne
Lured the thunder-hurler down!
She who, with her kisses sweet,
Laid him prostrate at her feet!

And when fame on her thousand wings bears it around,
The echo from valley and hill shall resound.

SEMELE. (Beside herself.)
Pythia! Apollo! Hear!
When, oh when will he appear?

JUNO. And on smoking altars they
Rites divine to thee shall pay—

SEMELE. (Inspired.)
I will harken to their prayer,
And will drive away their care,—
Quench with my tears the lightning of great Jove,
His breast to pity with entreaty move!

JUNO. (Aside.)
Poor thing! that wilt thou ne'er have power to do. (Meditating.)
Ere long will melt . . . yet—yet—she called me ugly!—
No pity only when in Tartarus!
(To Semele.)
Fly now, my love! Make haste to leave this spot,
That Zeus may not observe thee—Let him wait
Long for thy coming, that he with more fire
May languish for thee—

SEMELE. Beroe! The heavens
Have chosen thee their mouthpiece! Happy I!
The gods from Olympus shall even descend,
And before me their knees in deep homage shall bend,
While mortals in silent submission abide—
But hold!—'tis time for me to haste away!
[Exit hurriedly.]

JUNO. (Looking after her with exultation.)
Weak, proud, and easily-deluded woman!
His tender looks shall be consuming fire—
His kiss, annihilation—his embrace,
A raging tempest to thee! Human frames
Are powerless to endure the dreaded presence
Of him who wields the thunderbolt on high!
(With raving ecstasy.)
Ha! when her waxen mortal body melts
Within the arms of him, the fire-distilling,
As melts the fleecy snow before the heat
Of the bright sun—and when the perjured one
In place of his soft tender bride, embraces
A form of terror—with what ecstasy
Shall I gaze downwards from Cithaeron's height,
Exclaiming, so that in his hand the bolt

Shall quake: "For shame, Saturnius! Fie, for shame!
What need is there for thee to clasp so roughly?"
[Exit hastily.
(A, Symphony.)

SCENE II.

The Hall as before.—Sudden brightness.
ZEUS in the shape of a youth.—MERCURY in the distance.

ZEUS.
Thou son of Maia!

MERCURY. (Kneeling, with his head bowed reverentially.)
Zeus!

ZEUS. Up! Hasten! Turn
Thy pinions' flight toward far Scamander's bank!
A shepherd there is weeping o'er the grave
Of his loved shepherdess. No one shall weep
When Zeus is loving: Call the dead to life!

MERCURY. (Rising.)
Let but thy head a nod almighty give,
And in an instant I am there,—am back
In the same instant—

ZEUS. Stay! As I o'er Argos
Was flying, from my temples curling rose
The sacrificial smoke: it gave me joy
That thus the people worship me—so fly
To Ceres, to my sister,—thus speaks Zeus:
"Ten-thousandfold for fifty years to come
Let her reward the Argive husbandmen!"—

MERCURY.
With trembling haste I execute thy wrath,—
With joyous speed thy messages of grace,
Father of all! For to the deities
'Tis bliss to make man happy; to destroy him
Is anguish to the gods. Thy will be done!
Where shall I pour into thine ears their thanks,—
Below in dust, or at thy throne on high?

ZEUS.
Here at my throne on earth—within the palace,
Of Semele! Away! [Exit Mercury.
Does she not come,
As is her wont, Olympus' mighty king
To clasp against her rapture-swelling breast?

Why hastens not my Semele to meet me?
 A vacant, deathlike, fearful silence reigns
 On every side around the lonely palace,
 So wont to ring with wild bacchantic shouts—
 No breath is stirring—on Cithaeron's height
 Exulting Juno stands. Will Semele
 Never again make haste to meet her Zeus?
 (A pause, after which he continues.)
 Ha! Can yon impious one perchance have dared
 To set her foot in my love's sanctuary?—
 Saturnia—Mount Cithaeron—her rejoicings
 Fearful foreboding!—Semele—yet peace!—
 Take courage!—I'm thy Zeus! the scattered heavens
 Shall learn, my Semele, that I'm thy Zeus!
 Where is the breath of air that dares presume
 Roughly to blow on her whom Zeus calls His?
 I scoff at all her malice.—Where art thou,
 O Semele? I long have pined to rest
 My world-tormented head upon thy breast,—
 To lull my wearied senses to repose
 From the wild storm of earthly joys and woes,—
 To dream away the emblems of my might,
 My reins, my tiller, and my chariot bright,
 And live for naught beyond the joys of love!
 Oh heavenly inspiration, that can move
 Even the Gods divine! What is the blood
 Of mighty Uranus—what all the flood
 Of nectar and ambrosia—what the throne
 Of high Olympus—what the power I own,
 The golden sceptre of the starry skies—
 What the omnipotence that never dies,
 What might eternal, immortality—
 What e'en a god, oh love, if reft of thee?
 The shepherd who, beside the murmuring brooks,
 Leans on his true love's breast, nor cares to look
 After his straying lambs, in that sweet hour
 Envy me not my thunderbolt of power!
 She comes—she hastens nigh! Pearl of my works,
 Woman! the artist who created thee
 Should be adored. 'Twas I—myself I worship
 Zeus worships Zeus, for Zeus created thee.
 Ha! Who will now, in all the being-realm,
 Condemn me? How unseen, yes, how despised
 Dwindle away my worlds, my constellations
 So ray-diffusing, all my dancing systems,
 What wise men call the music of my spheres!—
 How dead are all when weighed against a soul!
 (Semele approaches, without looking up.)
 My pride! my throne on earth! Oh Semele!
 (He rushes towards her; she seeks to fly.)

Thou flyest?—art mute?—Ha! Semele! thou flyest?

SEMELE. (Repulsing him.)
Away!

ZEUS. (After a pause of astonishment.)
Is Jupiter asleep? Will Nature
Rush to her fall?—Can Semele speak thus?
What, not an answer? Eagerly mine arms
Toward thee are stretched—my bosom never throbb'd
Responsive to Agenor's daughter,—never
Throbb'd against Leda's breast,—my lips ne'er burn'd
For the sweet kiss of prisoned Danae,
As now—

SEMELE. Peace, traitor! Peace!

ZEUS. (With displeasure, but tenderly.) My Semele!

SEMELE.
Out of my sight!

ZEUS. (Looking at her with majesty.)
Know, I am Zeus!

SEMELE. Thou Zeus?
Tremble, Salmoneus, for he fearfully
Will soon demand again the stolen charms
That thou hast robbed him of—thou art not Zeus!

ZEUS. (With dignity.)
The mighty universe around me whirls,
And calls me so—

SEMELE. Ha! Fearful blasphemy!

ZEUS. (More gently.)
How, my divine one? Wherefore such a tone?
What reptile dares to steal thine heart from me?

SEMELE.
My heart was vowed to him whose ape thou art!
Men oftentimes come beneath a godlike form
To snare a woman. Hence! thou art not Zeus!

ZEUS.
Thou doubtest? What! Can Semele still doubt
My godhead?

SEMELE. (Mournfully.)
Would that thou wert Zeus! No son
Of morrow-nothingness shall touch this mouth;
This heart is vowed to Zeus! Would thou wert he!

ZEUS. Thou weepest? Zeus is here,—weeps Semele?
(Falling down before her.)
Speak! But command! and then shall slavish nature
Lie trembling at the feet of Cadmus' daughter!
Command! and streams shall instantly make halt—
And Helicon, and Caucasus, and Cynthus,
And Athos, Mycale, and Rhodope, and Pindus,
Shall burst their bonds when I order it so,
And kiss the valleys and plains below,
And dance in the breeze like flakes of snow.
Command! and the winds from the east and the north,
And the fierce tornado shall sally forth,
While Poseidon's trident their power shall own,
When they shake to its base his watery throne;
The billows in angry fury shall rise,
And every sea-mark and dam despise;
The lightning shall gleam through the firmament black
While the poles of earth and of heaven shall crack,
The ocean the heights of Olympus explore,
From thousandfold jaws with wild deafening roar
The thunder shall howl, while with mad jubilee
The hurricane fierce sings in triumph to thee.
Command—

SEMELE, I'm but a woman, a frail woman
How can the potter bend before his pot?
How can the artist kneel before his statue?

ZEUS.
Pygmalion bowed before his masterpiece—
And Zeus now worships his own Semele!

SEMELE. (Weeping bitterly.)
Arise—arise! Alas for us poor maidens!
Zeus has my heart, gods only can I love,
The gods deride me, Zeus despises me!

ZEUS. Zeus who is now before thy feet—

SEMELE. Arise!
Zeus reigns on high, above the thunderbolts,
And, clasped in Juno's arms, a reptile scorns.

ZEUS. (Hastily.)
Ha! Semele and Juno!—which the reptile!

SEMELE.

How blessed beyond all utterance would be
Cadmus' daughter—wert thou Zeus! Alas!
Thou art not Zeus!

ZEUS. (Arises.) I am!

(He extends his hand, and a rainbow fills the hall; music
accompanies its appearance.)
Knowest thou me now?

SEMELE.

Strong is that mortal's arm whom gods protect,—
Saturnius loves thee—none can I e'er love
But deities—

ZEUS. What! art thou doubting still

Whether my might is lent me by the gods
And not god-born? The gods, my Semele,
In charity oft lend their strength to man;
Ne'er do the deities their terrors lend—
Death and destruction is the godhead's seal—
Bearer of death to thee were Zeus unveiled!
(He extends his hand. Thunder, fire, smoke, and earthquake.
Music accompanies the spell here and subsequently.)

SEMELE.

Withdraw, withdraw thy hand!—Oh, mercy, mercy,
For the poor nation! Yes, thou art the child
Of great Saturnius—

ZEUS. Ha! thou thoughtless one!

Shall Zeus, to please a woman's stubbornness,
Bid planets whirl, and bid the suns stand still?
Zeus will do so!—oft has a god's descendant
Ripped up the fire-impregnate womb of rocks,
And yet his might's confined to Tellus' bounds
Zeus only can do this!
(He extends his hand—the sun vanishes, and it becomes
suddenly night.)

SEMELE. (Falling down before him.)

Almighty one!
Couldst thou but love! [Day reappears.

ZEUS. Ha! Cadmus' daughter asks

Kronion if Kronion e'er can love!
One word and he throws off divinity—
Is flesh and blood, and dies, and is beloved!

SEMELE.

Would Zeus do that?

ZEUS. Speak, Semele! What more?

Apollo's self confesses that 'tis bliss
To be a man 'mongst men—a sign from thee,
And I'm a man!

SEMELE. (Falling on his neck.)

Oh Jupiter, the Epidaurus women
Thy Semele a foolish maiden call,
Because, though by the Thunderer beloved,
She can obtain naught from him—

ZEUS. (Eagerly.) They shall blush,

Those Epidaurus women! Ask!—but ask!
And by the dreaded Styx—whose boundless might
Binds e'en the gods like slaves—if Zeus deny thee,
Then shall the gods, e'en in that self-same moment,
Hurl me despairing to annihilation!

SEMELE. (Springing up joyfully.)

By this I know that thou'rt my Jupiter!
Thou swearest—and the Styx has heard thine oath!
Let me embrace thee, then, in the same guise
In which—

ZEUS. (Shrieking with alarm.)

Unhappy one! Oh stay! oh stay!

SEMELE. Saturnia—

ZEUS. (Attempting to stop her mouth.)

Be thou dumb!

SEMELE. Embraces thee.

ZEUS. (Pale, and turning away.)

Too late! The sound escaped!—The Styx!—'Tis death
Thou, Semele, hast gained!

SEMELE. Ha! Loves Zeus thus?

ZEUS.

All heaven I would have given, had I only
Loved thee but less! (Gazing at her with cold
horror.) Thou'rt lost—

SEMELE. Oh, Jupiter!

ZEUS. (Speaking furiously to himself,
Ah! Now I mark thine exultation, Juno!
Accursed jealousy! This rose must die!
Too fair—alas! too sweet for Acheron!

SEMELE.
Methinks thou'rt niggard of thy majesty!

ZEUS.
Accursed be my majesty, that now
Has blinded thee! Accursed be my greatness,
That must destroy thee! Cursed be I myself
For having built my bliss on crumbling dust!

SEMELE.
These are but empty terrors, Zeus! In truth
I do not dread thy threats!
ZEUS. Deluded child!
Go! take a last farewell forever more
Of all thy friends beloved—naught, naught has power
To save thee, Semele! I am thy Zeus!
Yet that no more—Go—

SEMELE. Jealous one! the Styx!—
Think not that thou'lt be able to escape me. [Exit.

ZEUS.
No! Juno shall not triumph.—She shall tremble—
Aye, and by virtue of the deadly might
That makes the earth and makes the heavens my footstool,
Upon the sharpest rock in Thracia's land
With adamantine chains I'll bind her fast.
But, oh, this oath—
[Mercury appears in the distance.
What means thy hasty flight?

MERCURY.
I bring the fiery, winged, and weeping thanks
Of those whom thou hast blessed—

ZEUS. Again destroy them!

MERCURY. (In amazement.)
Zeus!

ZEUS. None shall now be blessed! She dies—
[The curtain falls.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] The allusion in the original is to the seemingly magical power possessed by a Jew conjuror, named Philadelphia, which would not be understood in English.

[2] This most exquisite love poem is founded on the platonic notion, that souls were united in a pre-existent state, that love is the yearning of the spirit to reunite with the spirit with which it formerly made one—and which it discovers on earth. The idea has often been made subservient to poetry, but never with so earnest and elaborate a beauty.

[3] "Und Empfindung soll mein Richtschwert seyn." A line of great vigor in the original, but which, if literally translated, would seem extravagant in English.

[4] Joseph, in the original.

[5] The youth's name was John Christian Weckherlin.

[6] Venus.

[7] Originally Laura, this having been one of the "Laura-Poems," as the Germans call them of which so many appeared in the Anthology (see Preface). English readers will probably not think that the change is for the better.

[8] Tityus.