

THE
BRIDEGROOM OF THE FAY;

A Rosicrucian Tale,

IN RHYME:

BY

A DESCENDANT OF THE COUNT DE GABALIS.

Warmed by such themes, well may we then,
Though dwindled sons of little men,
Essay to break a feeble lance
In the fair fields of old romance.—SCOTT.

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P R E F A C E.

Scribimus indocti, doctique poemata passim. . . .
Ridentur, mala qui componunt carmina ; verum
Gaudent scribentes, et se venerantur, et ultro,
Si taceas, laudant, quicquid scripsere beati.

FROM these lines, the reader, if I have any, may learn, if he understand them, why I have written verses. The passage has its honey and its gall ; it assures the scribbler, that, although he be covered with ridicule, there are precedents old enough, and numerous enough, for the consolations of self-complacency.

The foundation of the following tale will be found in a collection of ghost-stories and dreams, entitled *Magica de Spectris et Apparitionibus*

5

Spiritum," by Hennengius Grosius, printed at Leyden, 1656. Although the story is not strictly Rosicrucian, the best illustration of its most remarkable personage will be found in the memoir of my ancestor, the Count de Gabalis; which, although consulted as a text-book, was also condemned by the disciples of the Rose Croix, and was composed by the Abbé Villars, at the expense of his life*.

In that agreeable piece of Biography is the following passage:—" Ces mers si vastes ont bien d'autres Hôtes que les dauphins, et les baleines; sçachez que les mers et les fleuves sont habités de même que l'air; les anciens sages ont nommés Ondiens ou Nymphes cette espèce de peuple. Ils font peu de mâles, et les femmes y sont en grand nombre; leur beauté

* He was assassinated by a Rosicrucian fanatic, for betraying the secrets of the society.

est extrême, et les filles des hommes n'ont rien de comparable." It is necessary to add, in further explanation, that the whole race of beings, Sylphs, Nymphs, Gnomes, &c., with which the Rosicrucians peopled the elements, although certain of many ages of existence, were equally certain of final annihilation, unless they could form a marriage, or some less respectable connexion, with a descendant of Adam. Hence they took extraordinary pains to win the boon of immortality, plotted and conspired, tempted and deceived, and seemed to think that the means were well justified by the end.

The scene of the events is laid partly at Constantinople, but chiefly at Reggio, on the Calabrian shore of the straits of Messina. The period is the end of the fourteenth century, when Charles III. of Durazzo, who died in

1386, was invited to the throne of Naples by the Pope, and John V., Paleologus, was re-seated on the throne of the Eastern Empire by means of the Genoese. I have claimed more credit for the exertions of Genoa than is her due, but the allusion to history is so slight, that its inaccuracy scarcely needs an apology.

It should not be forgotten, that whenever the Greek emperors, or any pretender to the empire, sought assistance from the Latins, a Crusade for the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre was the watch-word, which misled the chivalry of Europe, long after the last attempt made in Palestine.

If the story shall dispose of an idle hour for the reader, with as much success as it used to do for the writer, it will be more than he has any right to expect.

Gaudent scribentes !

L' ENVOI.

MUSING I strolled along the echoing shore,
While to each mountain rock and hollow cave
The ocean-spirit spoke, in measured roar,
From Hadria's blue, but dark and sullen, wave ;
Beside me paced a damsel passing fair,
Nor blush I still to own myself her slave,
Though cold her heart, and soiled her golden hair,
Sealed in a distant and unhallowed grave,
Which blithely I would seek, and blither still would
share.

Oh, how that thought renews each gushing throb,
A joy for ever lost that haunts my brain ;
Love's luscious sigh soon bursts into a sob,—
His hot embrace soon chills into a chain !

But if my secret grief I wake once more,
 'Tis not to writhe in wantonness of pain ;
But restless memory from her antient store
 Draws a fit tale for bolder minstrel's strain,
My gifted maiden told of legendary lore.

What time we lingered on the shingly beach,
 Italian from her sweeter lips I caught,
Till echo, faithful shadow of my speech,
 Told me how well my darling mistress taught ;
Tuning with gentle skill my northern tongue,
 She lent me language for each burning thought,
While I impassioned on her accents hung,
 Listening the while to tales I vainly sought,
As ye who read may guess, to sing as they were sung.

ERRATA.

Page

20, last line (of text), *for fell read fall.*

97, line 5, *for old read eld.*

111, line 9, *for these read those.*

CANTO I.

B

• CANTO 1.

**THE Monti Chiefs in Reggio stood,
The first and noblest of the good,
And held a vast and antient pile,
Of feudal strength and gorgeous style,
Which towered aloft in marble pride,
And frowned above the peopled side
Of broad descents ; where ledge on ledge
Streets, shelving to the water's edge,
Far stretched in orderly array,
Like giant steps their fronts display.
The wave is dashed in harmless roar
Against the jutting points of shore ;
The coast, with snowy surge embost,
Sweeps curving 'till the eye is lost ;**

The sun there shines on hills and dales
Fair as the dreams of Eastern tales ;
Sweet shrubs, and Idumæan balm,
The citron grove, and waving palm,
Nod on the heights, and paint the vales,
Enbower the springs, and scent the gales :
Smoother the moist meadow and the lawn
O'er shadowy dell and slope are drawn,
Where the coy naiad lurks unseen,
Glistening the tangled flowers between,
As tells the greenness of the grass,
The plashing as you heedless pass ;
And pacing through the twilight still
Grey evening listens to the rill,
Which whispers freshness o'er the plain,
Nor shrinks with summer suns, nor floods with winter's
rain.

But yet the spirit of the scene,
The boast, the splendour, and the queen,
Her crescent form the city rears,
As full of beauty as of years ;

And high above her marble walls
Hang Monti's towers and princely halls.

Though he has overstepped the span
Allotted to the days of man,
The castle's lord can stoutly wield
The weapons of the battle-field,
Bring down at bay the antlered deer;
And brain the wild boar with his spear ;
Firm are his aged limbs, nor yet
Their might and manliness forget,

An heir to Monti's youthful morn,
Unmothered as he breathed, was born,
Who grew in beauty, strength, and fame,
And promised to adorn his name.
He culled the flower and fruit of life,
With ardour loved, and won a wife,
Fleshed his young battle blade, and died,
And left a mother's hope to soothe his widowed bride,
The widow drooped, but lived to glow
With rapture none but mothers know ;

Then sank, and gave her child to bless
A grandsire's age and loneliness.

In age our sympathies are still,—
Few passions can survive its chill ;
Hope, mocked in youth, then strains her sight
To pierce the future's veil of night,
Nor heeds the scene, whose narrow lines
The verge of human life confines :
Yet then an orphan can beguile

A grandsire's heart to tender cares,
Unbend the brow, revive the smile,

And breathe a glow of youth o'er silver hairs.
Such tenderness a silken flower
May win perchance from winter's power ;
So can it cheer the winter's gloom,
So scent December with its bloom.

How Monti nursed the gentle child,
Since first with consciousness she smil'd,
'Twas sweet to hear the old man tell,
And fondly on her prattling dwell :

Each quaint reply and stinted word
Were safely in his memory stored ;
And he would softly sigh and say,
As now he watched then shared her play,
“ The girl so like her sire appears,
“ She bears me back to early years ;
“ Life seems to me again begun,
“ Myself a youth, and this my son !”
Then would he catch her to his arms,
And gaze upon her infant charms,
And, through his tears of fondness, trace
His lady’s likeness in her face.

And with her grew a gallant boy,
The creed his task, the sword his toy ;
A boy whom Monti hoped to see
The flower of Reggio’s chivalry.
Sprung was the youth of antient race,
Whose line the herald’s skill could trace
To times, when infant history strove
To burst the swathe, that fable wove,

*

To heroes who first drew their blood
From demigods of field and flood,
As rivers by old bards are sung
From pregnant clouds divinely sprung.
Of D'Accioli's stem was he,
The last fair blossom of the tree ;
His sire and Monti's darling heir
(Such friends as brothers seldom are)
Had fought with serried hearts and shields
Through Moslem hosts, in bloody fields,
Together lived, together died,
And sank in conquest side by side.
D'Accioli with his parting prayer
Left his lone child to Monti's care.
Fit guardian for the orphan boy,
His star of hope, and spring of joy,—
The dearer, since man's antient foe
(Whose kindest is the double blow
He aims at those he dare not part)
Struck the wife chosen of his heart.

Each parentless, and each alone,
The orphans, like their sires, were known
As born, but by a softer tie,
As one to live, perchance to die.
Ubold the damsel's champion stood
In serious hour, or sportive mood,
Would hide his own to soothe her fears,
And laugh or kiss away her tears.
In childhood they together past,
Each as the loveliest and the last,
The hope, too, of the noblest names
Which Reggio for her children claims.

Away, behold, the urchins bound
In frolic mirth their daily round,
Now blithely urge their infant race,
Now hold the butterfly in chace !
At times, the autumn leaves behind,
They press upon the scudding wind,
Or snatch the thistle down that clings
And speeds upon his viewless wings.

Bright are the days of infancy,
While sinless laughs the beaming eye,
Ere mist of doubt, or cloud of fear,
Hath stained life's morning atmosphere ;
When into words our feelings rush,
Our love itself, without a blush ;
Ere yet the mind hath learned to dress,
Or mask, the naked loveliness,
In which the spirit at her birth
First walks a stranger on the earth ;
Spotless as man before he fell,
Or sin had groped her way from hell,
Ere nakedness had found a name,
Or, life's worst leprosy, degrading shame !
Unnumbered like their pleasures fly
Those days, unvalued 'till gone by,
The guiltless days of infancy !

They laughing go, and next advance
The days of youth in frantick dance ;
The newly-wakened passions raise
Their swimming eyes with modest gaze,

}

As cherubs beautiful, and meek
As love upon a virgin's cheek ;
On they come, with equal measure,
To harmony they shape their pace,
Each leading on a rosy pleasure,
Each led by temperance and grace ;
Nor mark we, as they dance along,
Each would be foremost of the throng.

Then first the faltering youth would speak
With trembling lip, and burning cheek—
Then first the damsel sigh'd, and sought
To check, or hide, the rising thought.
The insect chase, and infant play,
No longer sped the morn away,
But deeper joy, and graver care,
Round both diffused a pensive air ;
And Adela and Ubald wore
A bashfulness unknown before :
Now, when the maiden met his eyes,
The stripling felt a doubt arise,

A wish that Adela might claim
Some dearer than a sister's name ;
But 'twas a half-formed thought, and dim
As forms in sleep before us swim.
The good Duke Monti smiling saw
That knighthood's code contained no law
Its votaries learn so soon, or bear
So well, as fealty to the fair.
With gentle craft the grandsire caught,
Unmarked, the damsel's hoarded thought ;
And from her sighs and blushes stole
The treasured secret of her soul.

In knighthood's games and exercise
D'Accioli bravely won the prize ;
In all the softer arts the maid
Her skill and curious taste display'd.
At eve the youthful pair would meet
In gay saloon, or rustick seat,
And, kindling over Petrarch's page,
Catch the pure ardour of the sage,

Till on each other's lips they hung,
And breathed the passion Petrarch sung.

'Twere pity to disturb the joy
Of that sweet girl and guileless boy;
But man for glory or for gain
Must toil, and barter peace for pain,
The hard-earned wealth no longer prized,
The fame but won to be despised.

Charged to unloose an emperor's chains,
But sworn to conquer Salem's plains,
Now bold and zealous o'er the sea
Sails Europe's choicest chivalry,
Where, like the tombs of empire, shine
The golden towers of Constantine.
Duke Monti, in that sacred cause
His galley mans, and faulchion draws,
And summons vassal, squire, and knight,
For heaven and loyalty to fight.
D'Accioli binds, with grief and pride,
His sire's good blade upon his side ;

While blushing and confused he stands,
His spurs are fixed by dearer hands,
To Adela his side-glance steals,
As humbly to the Duke he kneels,
And from his sword receives with prayer
The only blow a man may bear,
Which seals his faith to God, to Honour, and the Fair. }

'Twas on a jocund morn of May,
When at his outpost fades away,
Just in the rosy skirts of light,
The last pale sentinel of night,
That Adela and Ubald met
To part—as they had never yet—
To bid a long or last farewell;
And few can feel, and none can tell,
What doubts oppressed, what anguish wrung,
Those close-knit hearts, so fond, so young.
The saddest parting they had known
Was at that somewhat solemn hour,
When the dulled sense is weary grown,
And night asserts her drowsy power,—

Then would they smile farewell, and bless
Sleep's mystical forgetfulness.

Before the wind the ocean curling,
The signal given, the sails unfurling,
The pennon straightened as it flies,
And pointing to his enterprize,
Summon the lingering youth away,
And gaily chide his fond delay :
Soon as he heard the signal sound,
His arm had softly stolen around,
And closer drawn the weeping maid,
Whose eyes still spoke, when words refused their aid.
In Ubald's arms she sobbed aloud,
His quivering lips the lover bow'd,
'Till with her sighs his own were mixed—
'Till his own lips on her's were fixed.
Despair may lose—no pangs destroy
The deep full ecstasy of joy,
That thrills, when we engross alone
A love intense, impassioned as our own :

And while around those lovers play
The first fresh sunbeams of the day,
Their thoughts, their very fears, were bright
With passion, tender as the light.
Lo ! at their feet a shade is flung,
As, rapt in sweet distress, they clung ;
Starting they turned, and at their side
Rose Monti's form of reverend pride.
They kept unmoved their linked embrace—
They gazed upon the old knight's face ;
Less than his frown their hearts could brook
The solemn sadness of his look—
Tears trickling down his furrowed cheek,
Sighs bursting, as he strove to speak ;
“ Alas, my girl, I play the child !”
And Monti hid his eyes, and smiled;
“ Deemed ye, my children, that the blight
Of years could dim affection's sight—
Would ye the holy passion hide—
I come to bless, and not to chide ?
Rash were the hand that would divide—

So intertwined the hopes of both—
Two hearts thus wedded in their growth!
Kneel!" cried the Duke, "my children, kneel!
True as this hallowed blade of steel—
Strong as your fondness, be your faith—
Blest be your life, and blest your death!"
Betrothed they rose; a hallowed kiss
Sealed the full pledge of promised bliss.
D'Accioli left the maiden's charms
And thoughts, locked in her grandsire's arms;
The pitying lover would not view
The anguish of their last adieu,
But slow and sad, with silent steps, withdrew.

I.

A mass was sung at our Lady's shrine,
There knelt the brave, the fair,
And shrived and blest with holy sign,
Went forth each knightly pair.

C

The ladies with a gallant train
Rode to the busy shore,
Where, loose and eager for the main,
The barks their canvas bore,
Where damsels blushing, striplings glowing
Looked more than dared the tongue,
Where hearts were throbbing, tears were flowing,
And parting hands were wrung.

II.

The Cavaliers paced two abreast,
With rattling pennoncelle* and crest ;
The hood-winked war-horse pawing near
Snorted and sprang aside with fear,
Pricked 'till they met each pointed ear,
But bore him by his master's side
To toss and tremble on the tide.

* "Rattled his golden pennoncelle."—

ELLIS'S *English Romances*.

III.

As the ripple in the sunbeams played
The waters shone like a rich brocade,
Wimpling in many a sheeny fold,
Furrowed with liquid azure and gold,
Or sunlit clouds, when the clouds on high
Like the curling ocean crisp the sky :
The galleys were dressed, on either side,
 With bucklers for bulwark and for show,
By each shield a knight in warlike pride
 Brandished his lance in a bristling row.

IV.

High on a jutting point of rock
The mitred pastor of the flock,
With priests around, the fleet below,
No sound but of the water's flow,

Stretched out his hands, as they could shed
Rich blessings on each warrior's head,
And forth to win salvation sent
That valour-freighted armament.
How fervent, how devout we kneel,
When burst in prayer the pangs we feel,—
When earth's affections fire and fan
The vows we breathe to heaven for man!

V.

Uprose, as slowly heaved, the anchor's weight,
Loose to the tide each stately galley swung,
Deep in the sails the laughing zephyrs sate,
Sighed in the shrouds, and in the canvas sung;
Chaunted, from sea and shore in solemn close,
"VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS!"* arose:
Forth fly the vessels from the wave and wind,
Fainter the cheers and blessings fell behind,

* Joinville relates, that when he embarked at Marseilles for the *Outre mer*, the priests and crew chaunted *Veni Creator Spiritus* as they weighed anchor.—See his *Life of St. Louis*.

A few fond stragglers on the heights are spied,
The clustering headlands gather close and hide
Loved forms from loving eyes, and sight and sound }
divide.

VI.

But the being we bear, which is not of this earth,
Has its sights and its sounds independent of place ;
These within we command, from within is their birth,
The soul is their source, and the mind is their space :
In these live the sigh and the tear of farewell
Warm, as if it now breathed, bright, as if it now fell ;
On Adela's look Ubald still hung entranced,
Nor heeded the billow that checked or advanced,
And Monti still visioned the form of his child,
And frowned as he feared, and hoped as he smiled.
Dull strikes on the ear the rush of blue water,
As onward they bound to battle and slaughter ;
Drear spreads the horizon of ocean and sky,
Encircles their fleet, ever flies as they fly,

Themselves still the centre unmarked is their flight,
While the eye meets at dawn what it closed on with
night.

By the present encircled, man thus speeds his way,
Nor heeds how the present glides into the past ;
Unmarked as the wave, day breaks after day,
Till he drops on his grave with the ebb of the last.

CANTO II.

CANTO II.

I.

'TWERE long to tell how the Latin sword
Won a realmless throne for the rightful lord ;
How the merchant spouse of Adria's wave
Relaxed his hold on the Grecian slave,
When Genoa's duke bound the Cæsar's crown,
Unheeded now as the wearer's frown,
On a feeble youth : but the sceptred boy
Fettered his soul with the jewelled toy,
For the tyrant traders taught his brow
To own their sway with a vassal's bow ;
The steel-clad knight and the baron proud
Brandished his spear and murmured aloud,

When Genoa's craft mocked the wild crusade,—
Her holy land was the mart of trade.
She triumphed and laughed; her brave allies
But fought the field, while she snatched the prize;
They saw with rage that their doughty swords
Had toiled to double her merchants' hoards;
That she sheathed her blade, and sealed her purse,
Scorned the dread tomb, and the bitter curse
That the bold crusaders hurled on high
At the false Republick's treachery.
They bent their sails with sullen pride,—
Each turned his prow with the homeward tide;
A bark and a message Ubaldo sped—
Love filled the sails as the galley fled,
And soon in the harbour of Reggio swells
The canvas stretched in the Dardanelles.
The watchful maiden the pennon knew,—
Fast fluttered her heart as the pennon flew;
In the blithe overflow of the soul
Lady Adela wept as she scanned the scroll;

For Monti's host and Ubaldo's train
Have rigged their galleys to cross the main,
And sheathed their swords which so stoutly won
Byzantium's throne for her Emperor's son.

* * *

Oh ! how sweet is the hour, when the soft vesper bell,
Adds the sadness of sound to the dimness of light !
Oh ! that hour for the eye and the ear has a spell,
With the past and the absent possesses the sight—
Possesses the ear, and around us in thought
Calls the friends we love best, whether dead or afar ;
With the last word and look, that at parting we caught,
Sad as now tolls the bell, pale as glistens the star !

As softly on Ubaldo fell,
That gentle ray, and solemn knell,
The light and sound his fancy bore
To Reggio's dear but distant shore ;
With tender thoughts his bosom swelled—
The loved, the lost, his eyes beheld

On Adela's sweet lips he hung,—
Now round his mother's neck he clung,
Now all a lover's rapture felt,
Now for a mother's blessing knelt.
But vainly breathes the favouring gale,
He may not loose the idle sail,
Nor from the Levant steer his way
Till the fourth morn unbars the day.
Lost in his own ideal world,
He marked not, where, beneath him curl'd,
A dim speck glimmered in the light,
And fixed not, if it met, his sight :
Nor waked his ear, nor turned his eyes,
As, stalking on of giant size,
A shadowy form in Moorish guise,
A sabre gleaming in his hand,
Behind him took his silent stand ;
With foot advanced, and arm on high—
It sweeps the air!—the knight must die!

No voice to warn !—no hand to check !—
Then up that dim and dusky speck
Sprang as a tiger-cat from sleep—
Light as a greyhound in his leap—
Caught the raised arm (that backward bent
Collected sway for swift descent,)
Checked the recoil, and closely clung,
While dropped the sword aslant, and aimless swung.

In silk or steel arrayed, the knight
Bears hand and heart prepared for fight :
The murderer's throat D'Accioli grasps ;
In vain the traitor writhes and gasps ;
Strangled, the wretch will yield his breath
Ere the knight's dagger deal his death :
But as the glitter of the knife,
Quivering with the thirst of life,
Flashed as it flew from Ubald's belt,
The brawny Moor, as if he felt
The death-point planted in his breast,
Burst like a bolt from Arbalest,

And shook off Ubald's hold ;
Fast fled he toward the beetling steep,
Whence the keen ear scarce hears the deep
In stormy fury roll'd.
Fast followed on his heels the knight,
Close clung the dwarf, and clogged his flight ;
The cornice of the cliff so near,
In panick bends his mad career,
Another step, and 'tis the last
Betwixt the future and the past,—
The rocks twice fifty fathoms sink,
And dart to meet the water's brink ;
Their dizzy tops in horrid pride
Fling out a roof above the tide ;
Aghast the knight in terror stood,
Checked was his speed, and chilled his blood,—
The Moor, in madness or despair,
Plunged headlong into air !
The dwarf, that reptile-like around,
The giant's better arm had wound,

As thence the frantick wretch was hurled,
Himself unloosed, or backward whirled,—
A stone, so slipped the slinger's thong,
Behind him whizzing spins along,—
Tossed through the air with laugh or yell,
The ear could not distinguish well,
Scatheless before Ubaldo fell.

}

Deep wonder, which did something wear,
If such a knight may own, of fear,
Seized d'Accioli as he viewed,
With strength and symmetry indued,
His limbs with more than Nature's skill
The comely servants of his will,
His height of scarce two cubits span,—
So strangely saved that pigmy man.
His hue bespoke his Eastern birth,
Where the sun fiercest woos the earth,
And his eye flashed with lightnings won
From soul of fire and torrid sun ;
Few sought to fix, if met by chance,
The subtle spirit of his glance :

*

Bare were his arms and legs ; a vest
Flowed folded down his back and breast,

And scanty reached his knee ;
A golden girdle clipped his waist,
His brow a jewelled band embraced,
And the knight's gaze he boldly faced,

With elfin bravery.

Ubalde, in that mixed speech, which then
Passed between Frank and Saracen,

His thanks in gentle phrase addressed,
And courteously his questions pressed :

“ Say, stranger, if my ear may know
A friend unlooked for as my foe ;
What unknown land thy birth may claim—
How my preserver shall I name?”

“ I come from the land where, vast as the main,
And as barren and flat, spreads a measureless plain,
Where the storm in his rage lifts the billows to heaven,
As if in wild flight the firm mountains were driven,

Waves that keel never ploughed, that no ship can with-
stand,

Each a gulf for a host, the billows of sand.

I come from the land, where the chain or the yoke

The moor or his steed never fettered or broke ;

My sires have led free men with bosoms as brave

As the Frank ever owned, or as God ever gave ;

But ask me not now where those bosoms are laid,

Prince and people are low, unsubdued but betray'd.

By light dim as this did I climb over Kâff,

Heard the spirits of air howl their revels and laugh,

Stole hither in exile, and lay down in woe,

And perchance saved a friend when I sprang on thy foe.

Let Avar, a page, lend such service as few

Though as willing to serve are as able to do !”

In Galata with princely cost

Ubold maintained his gallant host ;

Thither, as thickened fast the shade,

His stranger page the knight convey'd.

D

In Monti's ear the tale was told,
The Moor how base, the dwarf how bold.
"Great souls," he said, "will often dwell,
Like pearls, within a narrow shell,"

And bade the page appear.

The old knight marked him with distrust
When Avar's forehead touched the dust,
In act, as Eastern nobles must

Their haughty lords revere.


The Duke apart Ubaldo led,
Bent his rough brow, and shook his head:
"Beshrew me! but I hate the hound
That thus will crouch and kiss the ground:
The worm, whose venom'd fang distils
A drop into the wound and kills,
Thus licks the dust; but, while he creeps,
His hidden fang in poison steeps;
And such an adder was the foe
That worked our first sire's overthrow,

Humbler and less than yonder span
Of human shape, that seems a man.
Men worship not another's nod,
While yet they own and serve their God,
Nor thus degrade the form they wear,
But more to compass than they dare.
The shepherd knows the flock he folds,
Know'st thou what faith the stranger holds?—
No !—see, then, ere he break thy bread,
Or rest beneath thy roof his head,
Before he claim thee for his lord,
He kiss the cross upon thy sword !”

Ne'er checked the youth by word or thought
What Monti's old experience taught ;
Him had his infant years obey'd,
By him his course was shaped and sway'd ;
But noble, rich, and young, with none
To aid a good resolve 'till done,
He bade to-morrow ease to-day
Of that which little brooked delay.

With vassal, squire, and brother knight,
His goblet full, his bosom light,
He passed the hours in merry cheer,
A frank and joyous cavalier.
The page produced was praised aloud ;
Of page so praised the knight grew proud ;
Unquestioned, Avar broke his bread,—
Unquestioned, slept beside his bed.

The stars glow faintly in the west,
And labour wakes from scanty rest :
His carol chaunting on the strand,
The fisher hauls his net to land,
And birds in twilight groves are singing,
And convent bells to matins ringing :
The sea of Marmora asleep
Lies hushed and pale ; the slumbering deep,
Smooth as a polished marble floor,
Leans motionless against the shore :
The dawn upon her eastern height
Espies, and speeds her silent flight,
The brow of day and skirts of night ;





When Ubald to a sheltered bay,
His fancies brightening with the day,
The dwarf forgotten, bent his way ;
And thus his murmured accents told
How one dear thought the rest controled :
“ What waking rapture will be mine,
When through my curtained casement shine
The first fresh sunbeams on my bride,
Fresh as the day-spring, by my side ;
Her lips so near that I may feel
Their balmy breathing round me steal ;
While love, if well her dreams be guess'd,
Times the soft heaving of her breast !
See! how each silken eyelid lies
Like a white mist upon her eyes,
Each only waiting to be kiss'd
To part, as sunlit parts the mist !
Still, Adela, my arms shall keep
The link in which we dropped asleep—

Away ! too fond, too lovely dream ;
One plunge in yonder ocean stream
Will spoil thy hues too highly wrought.
Oh ! that these limbs were swift as thought !
Soon, darling girl, o'er long, long leagues of sea,
Soon my good arms should cleave their way to thee !”

Awhile upon a rock he stood,
That barely overtopped the flood,
Then cast his cloak and vest aside,
And stripped to dive beneath the tide.
Ye, who have seen what Grecian art
To bronze or marble can impart
Of beauty, life, and strength, have seen
The manliest form, the noblest mien :
The shoulders broad, the well-squared chest
Open and full, the loins comprest,
The leg of light and vigorous shape,
All men could wish, or fops would ape ;
The swelling muscles in repose,
Whose outline undulating flows,

Or rigid starts like knotted oak
If aught their sleeping strength provoke ;
Think that such limbs with life were warm,—
And, while you animate the form,
Young—with the stamp of heavenly birth
Still fresh upon the child of earth—
Fling all the soul into the face,
Add gesture to the statue's grace,
Picture the cheek through sunny brown
Blushing, and feathered with the down
Of opening manhood, light the eye
With laughing love, and breathe the sigh
Of rapture from the lip, that quivering tells
How high with boiling youth the bosom shakes and
 swells.

Far from the rock Ubaldo sprung,
Far dashed the spray in diamonds flung,
Long where he dived the eddies whirl'd,
Then slowly into dimples curl'd ;

But smooth again the waters spread,
Ere rose to light his dewy head.
The long and level morning beam,
Shooting athwart the briny stream,
Burnished his brow, and dazed his sight,
And tipped each tiny wave with light
So vivid, that their curves between
Were sunk in deeper shades of green.
D'Accioli on the glittering sea
Writhes his lithe limbs in buoyant glee,
Or lapped upon the rocking deep
Floats like a cradled child asleep :
Hark ! now the lively breeze is speaking,
The ocean's sullen silence breaking,
The ripple sighs a soft reply,
And swelling sails are scudding by.
Ubaldo, tilting o'er the foam,
Strikes boldly for the shore and home :
No sound, but where the breaker dashes,
Nor speck, but where the sea-weed washes,

As his broad bosom cleaves the brine,
Of bark or swimmer gives a sign :
A touch,—but 'tis the playful spray
Of billows chasing him away,—
Ah no ! it falls again, and warm
A hand rests softly on his arm.
Beside him on the surface glances,
As wild-fire on the moist fen dances,
A female form so light and pale,
The weltering seas a thing so frail
Must soon destroy ! unless she be
A sister of Cymodoce,
Some nereid strayed from coral caves
Lost in the multitude of waves.
Her vest seemed spun of hazy light,
And baffled but provoked the sight,
Or, as if fairy hands had caught
 The mists which veil the hills at eve,
And into filmy folds had wrought
 A woof no human hands could weave :

Her eyes were large and deeply blue,
Her floating locks of chestnut hue ;
Her face though pale was yet so clear,—
Thoughts there would speak which shunned the ear ;
Lips wreathed with smiles her teeth display'd

Like pearls of India's rifled waters :
Heaved on a wave her cheek was laid ;
So pillowed sleep the ocean's daughters :
She shone there like a beam of light
That streaks a tempest-cloud with white,
But mild as when the vesper star
Wheels to the western wave her car,
And trembles, as if loth to steep
Her shining tresses in the deep.

Heedless of the maiden's blushes,
Onward the ardent swimmer rushes ;
Far, far away she floats or flies,
And sinks or melts before his eyes :
With straining eye and listening ear,
He pants between suspense and fear,

Half chides his senses with the cheat,
And half regrets a fraud so sweet ;
When, lowly sighing by his side,
She lifts her brow above the tide,
Then, laughing, meets his finger tip,
And flings the water o'er his lip.
Now round his beating bosom twine
Her snow-white arms, as swans incline
Their stately necks, and curving clasp
Their mates within the downy grasp ;
Now kiss they on the billow's brim,
And blithely wanton as they swim.
When toward the bay and rock they turn'd,
His elfin page the knight discern'd—
His arm the maid upheld and prest ;
White crisped the foam about his breast :
Thus soon they gained the secret shore ;
D'Accioli thence the damsel bore,
Wrapped in his dark and ample cloak ;
Nor sign she gave, nor word she spoke.

No wonder did the page betray,
But swift and silent led the way ;
Unmarked they reached a postern gate,
Where the knight held his martial state.

CANTO III.

CANTO III

FAIR sets the sun on Reggio's shore,
And Monti's towers are crimsoned o'er
With ruby light, in all the pride
Of bannered roofs and eventide.
A sadness from the season caught
At evening overcasts the thought ;
And Adela confessed the power,
The soft enchantment of the hour.
The fading forms of Barons tall
Frowned on her chamber's tap'stried wall,
And rudely sketched in chase or fight
Tell Monti's child of Monti's might.
Gold from the land of the Simoom,
And webs from India's ancient loom,


All treasures of the Levant trade,
In that rich chamber were display'd.
The lady at her casement sate,
 A pictured missal near her lying ;
Before her glowed Messina's strait
 As sunbeams in the west were dying ;
Her forehead leaned upon her hands,
 And close were pressed her slender fingers :
She watched the purple clouds as lands
 Where something she had lost still lingers :
And while the mountain shadows fell
 A shade of sorrow chilled each feeling,
Though cause was none, she felt a spell
 Of coming evil round her stealing.
Yet rosy shines the laughing tide,
And sails with rosy tints are dyed,
And wafted by the zephyr—hark !
Loud music swells from many a bark ;
The waves, as sweep the notes along,
Are heaved in cadence to the song,

As if the breeze in passing by
Were tuned into a melody.
Then from the sea, the shore, the hills
One general shout the welkin fills—
“The fleet ! the Monti comes !—rejoice !”
Bursts in a multitude of voice.

Clamours the swarming harbour's side,
The ensign known, the fleet espied,
Full hearts, fond faces line the quay,
And chafe at time and tide's delay :
Eager and strait to port, the sail
Swells with the homeward-breathing gale ;
Each prow impatient cuts its way,
And flings aside the dashing spray.
"Twixt hope and fear fast forward borne,
A friend to welcome or to mourn,
The gentler sad, the fiercer stern,
Rush on to hail the fleet's return.
Amid the crowd, that cheered or wept,
Forth, firm and stately, Monti stept ;

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And, bowing low, paced slowly by
As caps and kerchiefs waved on high.
Grave thankfulness his features wore
Again to tread his native shore,
While younger, blither hearts afar
Lay withered by the blast of war.
Freed from the throng and thickest press
The Duke strode on with eagerness
His grandchild to embrace and bless.
Two ladies clad in grave attire,
Each followed by a page and squire,
Each wrapped in ample veil and hood,
Dismounted from their palfreys stood,
Where a broad beech its branches flung,
And darkly in the twilight swung.
Lord Monti sidelong thither glanced
One piercing look as he advanced,
And cried, as to his arms he caught her,
“My child, my Adela, my more than daughter !”



Blessings he poured and tears he shed
In joy upon that damsel's head.
She laughed, she wept, with fond excess
Of love and long-checked happiness ;
Assured that safe the veteran knight
Had borne his toils and braved the fight,
Frankly, and while her bosom beat
With less of fear than wish to meet,
She asked, as plighted maiden may,
Why Ubald tarried on his way ?—
—The day is gone, and with it went,
 'Twould seem, the gladness of their greeting ;
'Their steps in silence homeward bent,
 As if in sorrow closed their meeting.
The pilgrim in his thirsty dream
Scoops with his hands the brimming stream,
Close to his lip his eyes behold
Deep, clear, and chill, the fountain roll'd,
His ear too from the shady hill
Drinks the fresh bubble of the rill ;—

So blessed in thought, and like that wretch,
Baffled where wastes around him stretch,
Waked to despair the shuddering maid—
A waste of woe around her spread—
But still her bursting grief restrained,
’Till Monti’s secret halls they gained,
Then loud in phrenzied accents cried
“Ah! tell me when, and how he died!”
“Peace, Adela!” duke Monti said,
“We trust our Ubald is not dead—”
He paused, for in his bosom met
Mixed wrath, suspicion, and regret;
But when he caught her glancing eye
He dared not pause in his reply;
He kissed her, and with voice subdued
And outward calm his speech renewed:
“Ubald, my child, less frank and free
Bore him, than was his wont to be;
Apart he passed the livelong day,
Or if we met would turn away,

With courtesy, but stiff and cold,
Not fond and filial as of old.
Three mornings ere we loosed our sail,
It chanced—so ran the publick tale—
Reckless of life, a Grecian maid,
Her brain disturbed, her heart betrayed,
Rushed by the boy, and headlong gave
Her shame and sorrows to the wave :
On Ubald's glance her figure flashed
And passed ; fearless and far he dashed
Into the sea,—the envious tide
Twice swept her struggling from his side :
She sank,—he marked before him rise
The bubbles of her dying sighs,
Then desperately dived, and grasped
The bandlet that her kirtle clasped ;
But tracked so long the nether flood
All trembling for the diver stood,
Lest by some oozy fetter bound,
The youth a sea-weed shroud had found ;

Shouts cheered his rising as he bore
The soul-sick maiden to the shore :
Rejected, friendless, and forlorn,
Haunted yet spurned by cold-eyed scorn,
When Ubald loosed his parting sail,
She stole on board, and blessed the gale
That springing from her fatherland
Breathed on a far and foreign strand.
Fair as our hopes the zephyr sprung,
Our vessels from their moorings swung,
And swiftly as unfettered slaves
In freedom fled across the waves.

Still fresh and fair the breezes blew,
When Candia cheered the dull sea view ;
Ida flung up her rocks on high
Full in the middle arch of sky ;
Her crest, as once in fables wrapped,
With sunny vapours then was capped ;
A cloud, there checked in rapid flight,
Wide waving like a flag in light,

As if entangled on the peak,
Floated a long and bloody streak.
D'Accioli's galley far behind
Shortened her sail, or lost the wind ;
I marked her, when from Ida's top
That mountain streamer seemed to drop ;
Then, as if all the winds of heaven
Into one narrow gully driven,
Whirled by a wild resistless blast,
That left the neighbouring seas aghast
Or spell-bound in a deadly sleep,
It ploughed a line along the deep,
As if some hand it's fury wheel'd
Like the first furrow through a field.
Short-lived as mighty was its force,
Soon spent as speedy was its course,
In feeble swell came heaving by
The sea, as faint with agony ;
I marked the whirlwind with dismay
Right on the galley hold its way ;

I stood transfixed—the bark, the blast
Swept on, and like a vision, past !—”

Then up there rose an elfin man,
His height, of scarce two cubits’ span,
And boldly thus he spake ;
Small was his voice, but clear and shrill,
To hear him martial hearts would thrill,
And feebler bosoms quake :—

“ Such instinct as the bee compels
To gather honey for his cells
Compels the heart to love ;
But, drive the insect from his bowers,
Sweets will he suck from foreign flowers,
O’er foreign fields will rove.

“ Lord Ubald, safe from wind and tide,
Clasps in his arms a stranger bride,

In Candia's shady isle ;
They lead the bridal song and dance,
Love riots in their wedded glance,
And rapture in their smile."

"Base messenger of lies!"—thus first
The head of passion wildly burst
From Adela; 'till then no word
Of question, hope, or fear was heard ;
Unmoved 'till then her grandsire's tale
With wannish* eyes, and features pale,
Fixed attitude, and thoughtful air,
She seemed to mark but not to share :
More had she said, but scarce-heard sobs
Gushed forth in short convulsive throbs,—
Thus when a troubled sleeper dreams
His bosom heaves with fancied screams ;—

* Shall I be accused of affectation for borrowing such an expressive epithet from Chaucer ?

And palsied by a horrid thought
Her sinking frame Duke Monti caught.
The damsel lay without a breath
Like chiselled marble's mimick death,
As white, as beautiful, as still,
And e'en to touch as marble chill ;
The maids around, like shapes that start,
Woody from the stubborn stone by art,
Anxious and weeping o'er her stoop,
A model for a funeral group,
The lamp's pale light brought out so well
The female forms on which it fell.
But ah ! no sculptor's skill could teach
The stone to breathe that silent speech,
So plain, that none may miss its sense,
Nor shun its voiceless eloquence,
Which in old Monti's furrowed face
Sketched with more force than words could trace
His stern distress, one glance will show
The stunning anguish of his woe.

Sense dawned on Adela at last,
Though long she lay as half aghast,
Her shrinking gaze she slowly flung
Where first the elfin shape upsprung,
Then shuddering, closed her eyes, as one
Who when some form he fain would shun
(He fain would shun, but cannot fly)
In all its loathsomeness is nigh,
Still thither turns his haunted eyes,
Elsewhere to fix them, vainly tries,
As if some secret magick drew
Against the will his spell-bound view.

But Avar stood not, lurked not there,
The lady's sight to vex or scare:
Duke Monti soothed her, but his eye
Flashed thoughts, that soothing words belie :
She had not marked his lip grow pale,
His bosom swell at Avar's tale :
The damsel to his heart he prest,
Kissed the cold brow he fondly blest,

And something more of softness show'd
Than suited with his usual mood ;
He whispered, that he knew before
The dwarf upon a foreign shore,
And from his wayward will might guess,
He forged the tale in wantonness ;
Then added " That Ubaldo lives
Sure hope the urchin's presence gives ;
From my own deck I oft beheld,
When Ubald's sails behind us swell'd,
From rope to rope the pigmy spring,
As if each limb had been a wing."
Again he strained her to his breast,
And bade her court the hours of rest.

Aloft like Reggio's warder rise,
Between the hill top and the skies,
The Monti towers, but far below,
Fearless amidst the water's flow,
D'Accioli's massive walls withstand
The sea-borne threateners of the land,

Deep fixed each huge foundation stone,
Where the sloped shores abruptly sink,
As if in battlements had grown

The rock above the water's brink.

Ubald his old ancestral walls
Had left, a boy, for Monti's halls ;
But, when he sailed for foreign fight,
To battle for the Cæsar's right,
'Twas judged, if fate should safe restore
The young chief to his native shore,
Wide should be flung his palace gate,
With fitting festival and state,
And, round his antient banquet board,
Who held his land should hail him lord.

Here Monti met a pomp between
A festal and a funeral scene ;
The Seneschal, though dull his ear,
Soon caught and understood the cheer,
Shouting the fleet's return ;
He bade the flask and barrel flow,

The table groan, the scutcheons glow,
 And hearth and taper burn.
The sconces kindled round the wall,
And busy menials thronged the hall ;
Far out into the dusky night
From the high portal streamed the light,
Viewed from without the eye might deem
A furnace breathed the glowing stream,
Within, the entrance of the hall
Seemed curtained by a sable hall ;
There breaking through the veil of gloom
Dashing the sea-spray from his plume,
A sad but youthful knight appear'd,
And silent paused, as one who fear'd,
With tidings big that must be told,
His woe-fraught message to unfold ;
At length, while each inclined his ear,
And checked his task, and changed his cheer,
He told them with a manly grief
The sudden shipwreck of their chief.

Unheeded by the mourning throng,
His squire and Monti passed along,
Unheeded, 'till his voice was heard,
Resistless as a wizard's word,
Holding in mute attention bound
The multitude that pressed around ;
Once more he changed their cheer again,
They listened and forgot their pain.
Ubaldo's ship and crew, he said,
In Candia's bay were safely laid ;
Avar, who with his master stood
When phrenzy seized the waterflood,
Appeared, yet how escaped or spared
Told not, but safe the ship declared.
But none had seen the page—none knew,
Though some of every galley's crew
Were here, what vessel Avar bore,
Nor how, nor when, he reached the shore.

Deeply to think, and yet to wear
An open brow and thoughtless air,

Deeply to feel, and yet to show
A surface smooth and bright as snow,
Crusted above the torrent's flow,
Mildly to speak, while every word
Was sharp, but polished as his sword,
Duke Monti's powerful spirit knew
And practised 'till all eyes withdrew ;
For Ubald's bark, he said aloud,
He feared not, and dismissed the crowd.

But heed him now in Monti's halls
Pale as the marble on his walls,
More gloomy than his sombre towers,
And comfortless as dungeon hours ;
Night to his frame has brought no rest,
No couch his weary limbs have prest,
Fevered and fierce ere dawn of day,
To a vast hall he bends his way,
And dreams of vengeance brooding o'er,
There lonely walks the polished floor:
It well might make a stranger start
To view his visage grim and swart,

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With grizzled beard, and lowering brow,
Spread thinly with his locks of snow,
As from the casement high and small
The scanty beams of twilight fall,
And show his figure spare but strong,
Pacing with troubled step along,
Like some gaunt ghost, that from the tombs
Had stolen to those familiar rooms,
Where in grave state or wassail free,
He once had held his revelry.
No common wrong his wrath could wake,
His step disturb, and bosom shake,
As one there knew, who watched his rage,—
Cardenio, his Castilian page ;
He knew one passion yet was young,
That chafed the heart it chilled and wrung ;
For what can bend, or sooth to rest
That high cold passion of the breast,
Which flames with wrath, though never warm,
As Alps are blasted by the storm,

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And gather for their gloomy shroud
The mildewed mist, and thunder-cloud,—
Or like some scathed old mountain peak,
Stands in the noon-day bare and bleak,
Where summers shine, but never glow,
And the cold sunbeam sleeps on snow,—
That hopeless, fearless, passion—pride,
Which most we cherish when we hide.

Now Monti strode not through the room,
But stood the centre of its gloom,
And turned where, in the dimness sunk,
Cardenio from his glances shrunk ;
Then thus in accents deep and hoarse
He gave his smothered anger course :
“ Boy ! thou hast rashly dared to scan
The sorrows of a secret man,
Who shunned with other men to share
His throb of pain, and load of care ;
Boy ! ” and he smiled, “ ’tis dearly earned,—
Twere best unseen, but seen unlearned :

Full victualled for a distant shore,
Well rigged and manned my galley moor,
Where deep the rocks, and dark the grove,
Bend round the wave a secret cove ;
Far eastward must we meet the day,
And woe and vengeance track our way !
No lover's pledge, nor friend's farewell,—
Mark me !—our sudden flight must tell.”
What Monti's purpose may be guest,
From muttered breaks of thought suppress,
Which, ere he sped, Cardenio's ear
Unwilling caught, and heard with fear :
“ D'Accioli ! that accurséd name
Kindles my heart and lip to flame ;
Die, wretch ! if justice guide the blow,
And this old arm can reach a foe !”

CANTO IV. .

CANTO IV.

BROAD beamed the day on Monti's towers,
Wide waved the flags and wreaths of flowers,
Some broached the cask, some heaped the board
To welcome home the castle's lord.
Knights, squires, and pages paced before
A thick-ribbed arch and curtained door,
Within whose guarded portals lie,
Safe from rash foot and curious eye,
Rich chambers, where in stillness shine,
And bless the precincts as their shrine,
The household virtues, and control
With female hand man's sterner soul.
Hence, as a queen, De Monti's maid
Bold knights and lordly vassals sway'd,

Hence issued now, with silver wand

And silver hair, an usher grave,

And thus the lady's high command

In measured words the elder gave :

“ Blithe festival in hall and bower

Had sped to day the laughing hour

Through Monti's wide domain ;

But Monti's lord is far away,—

Chilled is the heart, and checked the lay,

That hailed him home again.

“ But blither still the feast must flow,

More blithe the brow and bosom glow,

Through Reggio's joyous throng ;

For royal Charles the pomp must swell,

With peal of drum, and chime of bell,

And courtly dance and song.

“ Our lady prays with service due

Each loyal knight and kinsman true

To dignify her state,
With fair and fitting train to bring
Girt with his court the gallant king
To Monti's palace gate."

High waved their caps the pluméd crowd,
And knees were bent, and necks were bow'd,
Banner and buckler, lance and sword,
Through Monti's guarded gateway pour'd ;
From Monti's towers, in warlike pride,
To where the sea-beach chafes the tide,
Down the long mountain slope are seen
The men-at-arms, and horse between.
In waiting wastes the weary day,
From noontide blaze 'till evening ray,
When burgonet of knight and squire
Beat back the sunset's ruddy fire.
But lo ! yon beacon hill afar
Shoots through the purpled sky a star !
Hark ! the trumpet-blast and drum !
The triple-sceptred king is come !

He was a king of martial race,
For prowess famed, and courtly grace ;
Both Sicilies his nod obey,
And Salem swells his titled sway ;
So strongly shaped the form he wore,
He looked as if his arm had won the crown he bore.

It was a gay and goodly sight,
As the trim squire and belted knight,
With shining arms and lordly port,
Pressed through the corridors and court,
To saddle bounding, lowly bending,
Clang of horn and cymbal blending,
When on their ambling palfreys came
Fair Adela, and many a stately dame.

The noble maid in form and face
Looked fairer than man's sin-born race ;
So looked the first and fatal bride,
Creation's last and loveliest pride,
Springing to life without a birth,
Mother and mistress of the earth ;

Her realm the world, and man her slave,
She rose on time's first swelling wave ;
Pure thought of the Eternal Mind,
Sweet curse and blessing of mankind ;
The charm of Nature's mighty spell
That pleased the earth's great sire too well ;
Charm more than life without it worth,
Which, losing heaven, made heaven of earth !
In Adela, the bard might deem
He saw that heaven-descended dream,
Spotless as Eve, before she fell,
Sad as her fall, and look of last farewell
To scenes where sin was born, but good alone could
dwell.

" A Monti !" in one thundering cheer
Broke on the evening's startled ear ;
And as the last deep murmur sank,
With frothy bit, and foamy flank
Spurred through the castle court his steed
A gallant knight, reined up his speed,

Leap'd from his seat, and stood beside
The lady's palfrey, as he cried—
“ Lady ! forgive a stranger knight,
Rushing unbidden on thy sight,
But he had ill become his name,
And counted it for ruder shame,
If maid or matron forth had gone
To seek him as he wandered on
Through woodland fell or upland lawn !”
With eye severe, the noble maid
Coldly the stranger knight survey'd,
Deigned no reply to speech so free,
Nor marked the sires of chivalry
Bare their high brows, and bend the knee.
Unchecked by the repulse she glanced,
The stranger courteously advanced,
And nearer drew to touch her hand ;
Aloof the lady bade him stand ;
With wrath she blushed, and turned to draw
A champion to her side, but saw

Ensign and lance bent towards the ground,
Proud peers with humble looks around,
She saw—unchecked the knight embraced
With gentle force her yielding waist,
And lightly to the marble floor
The damsel from her saddle bore,
While through the courts and castle ring
“ God save king Charles! long live the king !”

 The monarch, as it fell by chance,
Far as stout arm may hurl a lance,
Alone and way-soiled in advance
 Of knight and noble rode :
The sweet breath of that southern land
Freshly the heated helmet fanned

 That round his forehead glowed.
Him pricking on a scout address,
Questioned of Reggio's royal guest,
How long, and where he tarried last,
What page or pursuivant had past ;
And then, for ignorance loves to show
The little it may chance to know,

He told how Monti yesternight
His castle reached, and, ere the light
Had waked ~~the~~ voice of matin bell,
Departed whither none could tell.

With solemn mirth the king replied,
That, soothly, he was sworn to ride
'Twixt early morn and eventide,
Fast as the goad and spur might speed
A full-grown knight on sorry steed,
And to lord Monti swiftly bring
Godspeed and tablets from the king.
But he had loitered, he confest,
And close the royal troop now prest ;
Much would he wish, and largely pay
To win on time by shorter way :
Still moving on the monarch spoke ;
The scout turned towards a giant oak ;
“ Yon tree, Sir Knight, thine eye will guide ;
A path thence climbs the mountain side ;

Press up the slope, and pause awhile
Where pacing near a ruined pile
Thou seest a warder on the steep ;
He watches from the beacon-keep,
When the red signal I shall rear
To warn him that the king is here :
Thence will he point thee Monti's gate,
Though rough the path, 'tis short and strait."
They parted, for the thickening beat
Of trampling hoofs, and marshalled feet
Informed the ear, and soon the eye
Saw that the royal troop drew nigh.
The oak tree flung a verdant screen
The monarch and his train between,
As now the foremost knight around
A headland shagged with myrtle wound.

The warder marked the signal fly,
And shot a fire-ball through the sky ;
Aside the scout sprang off at speed
To catch the wanderer's gallant steed.

The courtiers missed the royal knight,
Unseen as far as stretched the sight,
Then slacked their reins, nor checked their course,
'Till each leaped from his jaded horse,
And found the monarch where he sate
In Monti's hall and chair of state,
And Adela, the king beside,
In royal pomp and maiden pride.

Those knights the noble damsel gave
A welcome somewhat brief and grave,
Yet not uncourteous, but her eye,
Though her lip welcomed, passed them by,
And on some distant object fell,
Fixed by a fascinating spell.
She waved her hand, and frowning sign'd
For pass to some who stood behind ;
All backward stepped, and forward prest
Avar in minstrel fashion drest ;
Clad in a green and golden suit,
His hand upon a cendale lute,

Fearless he faced the princely throng,
And poured the rapid tide of song.

I.

Sea-born Reggio, awake thy wild song of delight!
In thy beautiful garments apparel thee now!
'Tis thy king, 'tis thy king, bids thee gladden his sight,
And with festival garland encircle thy brow!

II.

Tó thy feet, lovely child of the wind and the wave,
Every billow that swells bears thee splendour and
wealth,
Every breeze of the hill, and the far ocean-cave
Lends thee sinews of strength, and the blushes of
health.

III.

Call thy sons, fresh and tall as the groves of thy hills,
True and tender in peace, firm and fearless in fight!

*

G

Call thy daughters, as pure as thy clear mountain rills;—
These thy beauty and boast—those thy glory and
might !

IV.

Pour the voice of thy minstrelsy, beautiful queen !
Bring thy garlands and gifts, with loud melody
bring!

Ye woods, wave your arms ! and ye valleys between,
Echo back from your bosoms, "All hail to the king!"

The guests applauded loud and long ;
The monarch smiled upon the song,
And bade the minstrel dwarf once more
His rude and rapid numbers pour ;
But called them smooth—they might appear
Smooth to a martial monarch's ear.
Avar drew near the noble maid,
Among the strings his fingers stray'd,

Then from the chords a prelude drew
Soft as the twilight fall of dew.

I.

My heart is awake, though mine eyes are asleep :—
Hark ! the voice of my love returning from fight !
He comes to my arms from his path on the deep,
And drenched are his locks with the drops of the
night.

II.

I hear, my beloved ! I rush to receive thee !
Oh ! chill blows the wind and my bosom is bare ;
Oh ! hast thou, oh couldst thou, beloved, deceive me ?
I call thee—I hear thee—but thou art not there !

III.

Hush ! daughters of Reggio ! hush ! breathe not the tale !
Ah ! said ye another reposed by his side ?
Away ! ye false maidens ! his faith cannot fail :
He plighted his troth—bid him come to his bride !

IV.

Oh! burst, swelling heart! he has wedded another!—

Yet still as a sister, oh! let me be thine;

And be, thou false-hearted! my friend and my brother;—

For thee all my love,—all my anguish be mine!



Ere the last plaintive cadence died

In tuneful sadness on the ear,

Silent as wandering shadows glide,

Unheeded as they disappear,

The minstrel left the breathless throng

Wrapped in the sweetness of his song;

He stayed not for the minstrel's fee,

Large as became a monarch's hand,—

He stayed not, though bards love to see

Their skill the rugged soul command:

On all a solemn stillness fell,

As softly ceased the vocal spell,

Like midnight listening to a close
In Philomel's melodious woes.
Her brow the castle's lady bore
Prouder but paler than before,
Nor minstrel, nor the song approved,
But heard in wrath, or heard unmoved ;
Then, as some modest blossoms fold
Their arms across their eyes of gold,
And hide them from the burning day,
While others in the noontide play,
The damsel, now the feast runs high,
And flasks in quicker circles fly,
Led by the king, who claimed his right
And kissed her cheek with fair good night,
Departing waved her hand and bowed,
While hushed and reverent stood the gazing crowd.

The feast renewed, 'till midnight hour
The revel shook the castle tower ;
But, at the herald's solemn call,
Silence subdued the festal hall :

His clear and tuneful voice proclaim'd,
(The royal titles duly named)
That when the moon had spent the light
Rolling full-orbed along the night,
And filled again her crescent horn,
At sunrise on St. Michael's morn,
The king, in honour of the saint,
Would hold a royal tournament.
The Lady Adela will bear
The Queen of Beauty's state and care,
And bind his brows with myrtle crown
Who boldest rides the tilters down.
If the Lord Monti, whom high cause
On secret expedition draws,
Homeward the wind with kinder wing
And D'Accioli's Earl shall bring,
The monarch pledged his knightly word
To grace this hall and banquet board,
When priest shall bind with holy sign
D'Accioli's house with Monti's line.

There was din, and there was cry,
Loud cheers, and boasts of chivalry !
The way-worn king arose, and sought
Sleep's sweet relief from toil and thought.
Sleep, when his wizard spells begin,
Makes the whole weary world akin,
And, softly, levels like the grave
Man with his brute, the Cæsar with his slave :
But the still grave alone can tame
The fever of the soul and frame ;
The drowsy god unkindly turns
From eyes that weep, and pulse that burns.

Dark were those halls, and hushed each sound,
Save where the warders paced their round ;
Save where a taper broke the gloom
That deepened round the lady's room :
For Adela with faltering tread
And feverish cheek now shunned her bed ;
Her fancy wandered up and down
From woes that weep to fears that frown,

As the weaned lamb in sorrow strays,
And restless climbs the mountain braes ;
One while she mourned Ubaldo's death,
Then doubting feared his broken faith,
Till sinking desolate and lone,
Her guardian fled, her ills unknown,
Closely she drew her mantle's fold,
As if her sickening heart grew cold ;—
Oh, that her ermine could impart
Warmth to the chillness of the heart !—
Then threw her latticed window wide,
And bared the ringlets from her brow,
As if she thus could strip aside

The thoughts that seared her senses now,
As if her throbbing temples glowed
Less fiercely with their burning load,
As if the night wind's dewy sigh
Could soothe her pulse in passing by ;
Alas! the night wind fanned in vain
To cool the fever of her brain :—

Lo ! now she starts,—her eyes intent
Far through the moon-lit night are bent
On red lights in the distance dancing,
The wave tops in their splendour glancing,
Where step the walls into the deep,
Like mermaid's cave, or Triton's keep,
And D'Accioli's windows fling
Over the moonlight's silver wing
A crimson flood of festal blaze,
That, tossed upon the ripple, plays.

Ah ! is he come ? the perjured youth !
And did the Moorish dwarf sing sooth ?
No, no ! the wind that fans her brow
Shall upward waft his warbled vow,
Soon will he wake beneath her bower
Songs sweetest heard at midnight hour,
When the still moon and blushing maid
Bend to the lover's serenade.

The lady listened, but the breeze ;
Raised a dumb whispering in the trees ;

It syllabled no words, but bore
Such sighings as it heaved of yore.
Fixed to the spot, she listening stood,
Till coldly ran her curdled blood,
When the chill glances of the morn
Beheld her fainting and forlorn ;
Then feebly to her couch she crept,
And lay unmoved, and some might deem she slept.

CANTO V.

CANTO V.

ALL Reggio with the tale was rife
Of Ubald and his stranger wife,
Of him their chivalry's disgrace,
Of her a stain upon his race.
All Reggio to De Monti's maid
A fond and deep devotion paid,
And Reggio's noblest knighthood strove
With better faith to win her love.
The monarch blotted Ubald's name
From those who sought a tilter's fame,
And from its height cast down his shield,
Hung where the knights who join the field
Must fix their bucklers, or declare
Uncharged the maiden shield they bear.

If costly was his state before,
His splendour daily dazzled more,
And badged retainers, troops of horse
Displayed his wealth and feudal force :
The vulgar flock to see him pass
As pompously he wends to mass,
For, though much hating book and bead,
D'Accioli still believes his creed,
And inly at his lady grieves,
Whom private priest in secret shrieves ;
For when does woman look so fair
As when she breathes and looks her prayer ?
Or when does prayer more lovely rise
Than when it springs from woman's eyes ?
Ubaldo never saw his bride
Thus loveliest, when stripped of pride,
Nor heard at morn, nor twilight dim,
Her matin song or vesper hymn.
'Tis true her form—if we may guess
What *is* an angel's loveliness,

Or men such beings ere have seen—
Is such as angels *must* have been.
And though her lips to sounds gave birth
Which seldom bless the sons of earth,
Her voice unsyllabled, unshaped,
In wordless melody escaped ;
Yet such the eloquence divine
Of look, and blush, and graceful sign,
Each wish to tell, each meaning suit,
That men could scarcely call her mute,
Though language on her tongue was dead,
And what she thought her features said.

In interchange of looks now sate
The peerless pair in secret state ;
She drank the glancing of his eyes,
She drank the panting of his sighs,
And on his lips her answer seal'd
Sweeter than any words could yield.
From lamps in silken lanthorns hung,
Whose perfumed oil rich odour flung,

A light stole through the vast saloon
Still, soft, and soothing as the moon ;
And like the source of that soft light
Francesca sat arrayed in white,
As once Cythera's goddess queen
Shrined in her marble fane was seen ;
Beside her, like the Cyprian boy,
Radiant with purple love and joy,
Ubaldo, wound in her embrace,
Looked back the passion of her face.

See where she stands, her head inclining,
Round his large neck her white arm twining,
And, as she stoops a kiss to seek,
Her bosom meets his burning cheek ;
Breathless, and still he lies to feel
The blushing charmer round him steal,—
Too much—he starts—and all her charms
Are closely clasped within his arms.

Give heed now to that blithesome knight !
Strange, dread, and awful is the sight !

His eyes in glassy wildness glare,
And stiffly stands his bristling hair ;
In knots his tortured sinews start,
And life heaves struggling to depart.
Ah ! if the tales of old be sooth,
If ever sprite with mortal youth
Hold dalliance of unlawful love,
Such signs the monstrous passion prove ;
When imp or fay of sea or air
Nursles with fond but fatal care
Some child of clay, and pants to know
Those joys that sweeten human woe,
Perchance the luckless wight is left
Of health, and strength, and sense bereft,
So dire, so strong, the strict embrace
Of that unknown, unearthly race.

Francesca's look betrays no fear ;
The changing cheek, the sigh, the tear,
No sign of anxious love afford
To those strange sufferings of her lord.

H

She breathes intently on his lips,
The tunick from his bosom strips,
As if to read the feelings there,
Fixed in a dull but haggard stare.
Her ear is at his lips—they move—
The words, full-shaped, are “Adela,” and “love”!
She is all changed—her eye of blue
Has turned to red its melting hue;
That mystick maid like steady flame
Stands raging; anger is no name
For each fierce-breathing, unmoved feature,
The rage of that unearthly creature;
As if one passion could put on
 A shadowy form and human face;
And, sketched in all its force, that one
 Allowed no other passion place:
Thus hath the Tuscan* bard so well
Placed souls of mighty fraud in hell

* See the Inferno, Canto 26.

“Et ogni fiamma un peccatore invola

Wrapped in a wandering flame—like those
 The furious damsel burns and glows.
 For 'tis our human weakness gives
 That noise to passion while it lives :
 Rage wrestles with contempt or pride,
 Contending thoughts its strength divide,
 Such struggles lend it outward form,
 As battling winds create the storm ;
 Could rage unmixed the bosom fill,
 Its perfect fury would be still.
 Francesca's wrath was still ;—but quick
 As flush of feeling from the sick,
 As flash of anger from the eye,
 As lightning from the summer sky,
 Fled the fierce fit ; her fury fades,
 Her shape assumes its softest shades,

. Là entro si martira
 Ulisse e Diomede
 Poi che la fiamma fu venuta quivi
 Lo maggior corno della fiamma antica
 Cominciò a crollarsi, mormorando.”

Her eye again is blue and cold,
And he, I ween, were worse than bold,
Who deemed unkindness could disgrace
The radiant beauty of her face.
Mark how her eager fingers press
Those clustering grapes, whose purpleness
So richly on the salver lies,—
Like heaps of gems the bunches rise :
The vine that owned the matchless fruit
By old Hydaspes winds its root,
And when the sun went down still bore
The burthen of that juicy store ;
The silken rinds so clear and thin
Scarce hold the laughing wine-flood in ;
Bursts at a touch the generous must,
The goblet froths, in liquid dust
The joyous spirits of the wine
Around the surface dance and shine.
Then, quickly as a maiden's glance,
As rose the chalice, passed the trance ;

His lips the brewed enchantment quaff,
And life lay sparkling in the draft.

The moon, when doubtful dimness shrouds
Her labouring disk with filmy clouds,
Too feebly gleams athwart the night
To shape or sharpen shade with light ;
But if, awaked, the northern breeze,
From where he sleeps on leafless trees,
Stretch his broad pinions for the sky,
The scudding clouds in panick fly,
Away the downy veil is rent,
And freshly from the firmament
The silver orb salutes our eyes,
More dazzling from her short disguise.

With double strength, and double life,
Up sprang the knight ; his mystick wife
Smiled witchingly, and gazing stood,
As if she laid up ample food,
When he was gone, for lone reflection
On his last look of fond affection.

He held her by the slender waist,
Which nature formed to be embraced,—
For sure its soft and curving charms
Were turned to fit a lover's arms !—
He kissed her on the silken lid,
Which modestly the blue eye hid,
And on his lip, he thought, he felt
A love-tear from the eye-lash melt.
“ See, love,” he said, “ the day is breaking,
And light the eastern sky is streaking :
How short with thee the hours appear !
Ere day-spring must I meet the seer,
(The mountain seer, who takes his flight
With the last shadows of the night,)
To learn what arms may best disguise
My person from the monarch's spies,
Whose court thou know'st is closed to me,
And now disowns my chivalry,
Because I broke a boyish vow,
And kissed thy lips—as I do now !”

He's gone ;—his squire and steed await
His coming at the palace gate.
He's gone: and where he smiled, before
Francesca, frowns the elfin Moor ;
They spake not, but their meaning past
(As there a page beheld aghast)
By glances poured like subtle flame,
That swift between them went and came ;
As if two elves for aught but good
In mystical communion stood ;
Eastward the dwarf and damsel turned,
Where dim the morning planet burned ;
Francesca towards a mountain head
Pointed her hand, and Avar fled.

D'Accioli vaults into his seat :
Now clatter loud his courser's feet ;
Still through the halls their echoes wind,
When half a league is left behind.

Speed ! speed upon thy weary way,
Thou bonny Bridegroom of the Fay !

If sunbeam o'er the mountain peer,
Thou shalt not meet the mountain seer !
The lark's aloft in middle sky,
The peasant props his loaded vines,
And quicker now the shadows fly,
And fainter now the fire-fly shines.

“ Over brake and over brae,”
Swift and straight as sunny ray, '
The goodly steed of ardent bay
Bears the gallant knight away !
Now bravely up the rough hill sides
They toil and sweat; the wild boar hides
His bristly back in covers deep,
As strains the courser up the steep.
The fawn looked back and fled; the flocks
Bounded away to distant rocks ;
The rattling rush of sliding stones
Startled the wolf from half-picked bones ;
The falcon on her lofty nest
More closely to her young ones prest,

As glanced like lightning on her eye
The knight and courser sweeping by.
Speed ! speed away, thou jolly knight !
Outstrip the beams of morning light !
Press on the shadows in their flight !

}

One bound the gallant courser made,—

One bound has served his master's will ;

Prostrate the panting steed is laid,

His rider stands upon the hill.

The knight perforce must leave him there

Reeking in the keen, cold air !

For good or ill *he* cannot wait,

Who seeks the secret words of fate.

Still on the top of Apennine

He marked the morning planet shine,

Then, half with gladness, half with fear,

He turned to meet the mountain seer ;

He turned—and full before him saw

That wondrous wizard's form of awe.

The being of prophetick might
Stands far exceeding human height;
The folds of Dominick's white stole
Down from his ample shoulders roll;
A mantle and a cowl of black
Are loosely hung upon his back;
The heart, tho' made of stoutest stuff,
If mortal, had not strength enough
To scan unmoved in that lone place
The features of his fearful face;—
They are not rough—they are not dark;
Nor frowns he; nor can Ubald mark
One shade of feeling; but the sage
Towers calm and passionless in age.
His head—as 'twere a dreary cell
Where some dim spirit loved to dwell,
Stolen from the charnel-house and worms,
Where demons fit themselves with forms,—
Is bald, and, what few long can bear
To look on, such as dead men wear;

No trace of silver beard appears,
That beauty of a man in years;
His small sunk eyes are cold and grey,
His lips are cold and sunk as they,—
His cheeks are lank and ghastly pale:
Well might Ubaldo's courage fail,
As stands the shape before his sight,
As marble still, as marble white,
Whose hue more deadly and forlorn
Gleams in the glimmer of the morn;
Whose garments in the chill wind wave
Like shadow started from the grave.
Dumb was the knight;—the mountain seer
Thus roused him from his stony fear:

“ Speak, child of clay!
And quickly tell
What would'st thou here?—
The beams of day
Up woodland fell
Rushing I hear.”

He felt the spell upon his soul,
And, had he willed, could not control
The words, which seemed as not his own
To come unbid in solemn tone.

“ List, list, dread wizard of the lonely hill !
My spirit waxes sick of life ;
Fain would I seek the iron strife,—
There end my weary trifling, and be still.

“ Life, as erewhile, presents each tempting bliss,
But when I pluck, its sweets to taste,
Like shadows in my grasp they waste,
Or bitter turn, like lost love’s dreamed-of kiss.

“ I move, but live not;—over years gone by
Forms dimly flit I ought to know,
But baffled memory lets them go
As things which fancy moulds to cheat her eye.

“ Darkness involves me ; if I look before,
Hope never gilds the dark to-be ;
The past is worse than dark to me,—
Its mangled images distract me more.

“ It was not so when first to life I woke,
And snatched the fruit from every joy,
And pleasure drew from every toy,
When boyhood bounded by, a colt unbroke.

“ Tell me, whence comes this weariness of soul ?
Tell me, whence comes my mystick bride,
Unknown, though ever by my side,
Whose love is less like love than secret spell’s control ?”

“ List ! child of clay !
Thy mystick bride,
Too pure for thee,
Shall shape thy way,
Shall be thy guide,
Shall set thee free !”

*

Feeble and fresh as new-born rill,
A sun-beam, on the topmost hill,
 Shoots from the kindling east ;
The wizard's form like wreath of snow
Dissolves or fades—'tis hard to know—

 When scarce the voice had ceased.
D'Accioli, lost, unmoved, amazed,
On vacancy, still listening, gazed,
When near him rose a pleasant sound
Of grazing herds ; he looked around,
And saw beside a herd his steed
Untended and untethered feed ;
Loose on the turf his bridle trained,
The silver bit with wild herbs stained ;
Scarcely his trappings could he brook,
Which rattled as he swelled and shook.

 The knight much wondered, as he viewed
His courser in that solitude,

As shining, bright, and sleek withal,
As if new harnessed from his stall :
He wondered, as his eye passed o'er
The ample prospect, that now wore,
To suit the morning's joyousness,
Its blithest and its freshest dress,
How aught to raise a fear had power
In mountain air at morning hour.

In these thin climes the hours conceal
The purest pleasures man can feel ;
To those high spots a bliss is given
As if in truth they reached to heaven :
The breeze just born in upper sky,

By mountain spirits nursled there,
In spotlessness of infancy

Frolicks through the buxom air,
Nor dares, till grown a giant gale,
To breathe along the tainted vale.

How have I joyed on Alpine height,
Where the mere breathing is delight,

Nor shrub, nor reed is near to sigh,*
To feel the silent wind sweep by ;
To feel the wind, but not to hear,
Raises a sort of blissful fear ;
So far from earthly sights and sounds,
The soul's dull partner proudly bounds,
Forgetting there its humble birth,
And seems just lighted on the earth,
Or with the sunlit vapours driven
To burst away from earth to heaven.
Enraptured thus, who has not felt
That speech is thought but rudely spelt,
That richest language ill affords
Fit breathings for the soul in words !

* On the granite heights of the Alps, it impresses a stranger with awe to feel the strength of the wind, where, from the absence of trees, shrubs, and grass, nothing withstands its current or gives it any sound. *My* readers must be aware that rhyme is not poetry ; I therefore refer them for a poetical account of this Alpine feeling to the French translation of *Coxe's Switzerland*,

The knight in such pure climes forgot
The vision and his mystick lot,
Then leaped upon his steed in haste,
Headlong the rugged slope retraced,
So rapt, the bustle, as he neared
The waking town, passed by unheard ;
Deep-pondering on the words of fate,
D'Accioli reached his palace gate.

CANTO VI.

CANTO VI.

Two bow-shots from the city gate,
A mouldering pile of ancient date
Reared high a vast and sombre mass
O'ergrown with wild flowers, moss, and grass.
Too smoothly swept the curving line
For nature's great but rough design ;
Yet were its sides so masked with green,
The close-knit stones were scarcely seen,
And strangers doubted as they gazed
What power the ample circle raised,
If giant race or earthquake shock
Scooped out or sunk the mountain rock.
At times the wanton wind will waft
The evergreen from frieze and shaft,

And show the eye how Dorick art
Shaped to one whole each various part.
But storms have loosed with wild assault,
And time has rifted wall and vault;
Yet he, the silent spoiler, shed
Some kindly weeds to hide his tread,
And where he plundered left behind
Tints for the eye, thoughts for the mind.
Here the stern gladiator stood,
And faced the prowlers of the wood,
The peasant now within these walls
His weary team at twilight stalls,
And listless lies or starts to hear
The skulking fox that rustles near,
Or raven on the topmost verge
Croaking hoarse answer to the surge.
Now where the gladiator bled
The secret ruffian strews his bed;
Where lions roared in dungeons murk,
The silent race of reptiles lurk;

Earth clogs the passages where prest
Crowds long with by-gone years at rest;
The ivy creeps, the wall-flower blows,
On steps where throngs of gazers rose.

The morrow is St. Michael's morn,—
That pile, so ruined and forlorn,
Disguised with curious art, displays
The freshness of its Roman days,
That knights may shadow forth the games
Of bloodier war to please their dames:
O'er moss-grown seats the tapestries spread,
The smooth arena tempts the tread,
Levelled with care and cast with sand
For softer fall, or firmer stand.

From many a booth the livelong night,
The smithy sends a changeful light,
And blacker darkness deepens round
The shooting beam's uncertain bound.
Stripped to the waist the armourers ply,
And heave their brawny arms on high,

Nor give the anvil rest ;
The well-breathed forge now flames and roars,
And lividly its gleaming pours
O'er swarthy brow and breast.

So bright, each rugged feature glows,
So sharp each straining muscle shows,
Like sculptured bronze they look ;
The eye, that gazes while they beat
And twist the ore in softening heat,
The flash can scarcely brook.

The drowsy god in Reggio's town
No couch can find to lay him down,
But rests his cheek upon his hand,
And nods, and vainly waves his wand
To still the clamour long and loud,
The riot of the restless crowd,
Then draws his shadowy court aloof
To doze beneath some convent roof.

Now eager groups in Reggio's streets
Impatient chide the tardy dawn,
Each youth his chosen damsel meets,
And turns to seek the tilting lawn.
The squire tricks out his master's crest,
The managed steed is duly drest,
And loudly from his neighbouring stall
Neighs to his fellow's friendly call.

Fresh sweets to roses give the hours,
To thorns fresh points, the hours of morn,
And sweeten pleasure like the flowers,
And sharpen sorrow like the thorn :
Then palpitate with keener smart
The burning wound, and bleeding heart,
The soul wakes just refreshed to feel
The new-set edge of sorrow's steel.
For Adela the morning light
Breaks sad and sickly on the sight,
And gladly she would sink again
To dull forgetfulness of pain.

*

“ Ah! why, fond grandsire, hast thou left
Thine Adela of thee bereft,
Unhappy amid pomp and sport,
Scenes shunned of grief, a royal court?
Thy parting sudden and untold;
And though its round the month has roll'd,
No tidings of thy course we learn,
No promised hope of thy return!”
A flood of tears relieved the thought
With sickening hope and sorrow fraught;
Weep on! weep on! for drily glare
The hollow eyes of pale despair.
But she must up, and lead to-day
The chorus of the glad and gay,
And choke the sigh, and dry the tear,
And jocund looks on anguish wear.

 The sun came dancing forth so fair,
The landscape laughed before his blithesome rays,
 And, while he shook his dewy hair,
The groves sent up their matin hymn of praise.

He rose upon a busy scene,
On crowds of every rank, and sex and age,
Thronging the road and sloping green,
Young heat inspired the old, and folly seized the sage.
The morning saw yon ruin drest
In festal pomp, its living crest,
Peopled with thousands through the night,
Hailed with a shout the rising light,
So loud, that valleys west away
Knew ere they caught the dawn of day :
And many a hill, and many a dale
Sent answer to that cheering hail,
As rustick hinds, who sought the show,
Flocked down the slopes or gained the brow.

A bright and silken suburb round
The ancient city's southern bound
Rich as a bed of tulips glow'd,
So thickly pressed the tented crowd ;
For, there displayed in due degree,
Each knight of foreign chivalry

His banner raised, and pitched his tent,
Close to the lists of tournament.

Now winds the mellow horn,
Now rolls the hollow drum,

The tortured air is torn

With one loud shout, "They come !"

Through the tents, through the plain,

On sweeps the solemn train ;

Clad as a simple knight, unarmed,

All eyes the courteous monarch charmed;

High in the midst with easy grace

The lady shaped her palfrey's pace ;

The steed looked proud of hands so fair

Which checked him lightly as the air :

So generous souls by choice obey

The hand that rules with gentle sway.

The vulgar on the damsel's face

No passing shade of woe could trace ;

But to a keen observer's eye,

That scanned each feature steadily,

There was, beneath a careless air,
Much that the heart would dread to share.

High-born dames and barons wait
Glittering round her chair of state ;
A curtained canopy o'erhung
Her lofty throne, and widely flung
Its ample drapery to display
The idol of that holiday :
High at the back the throne was graced
With emblems on the velvet traced,
Of Cupid and his motley court
In rosy pomp and wanton sport.

Weary the close-wedged crowd had grown
Of gazing on that vacant throne ;
But when the drum, the horn, the shout,
Swelled from the train and throng without,
There rose a deep but deafening roar,
So rolls the wind round Etna's side,
So where the wild waves scoop the shore
Hoarse echo answers to the tide :

Then on the throne again intent,
Their looks the circling thousands bent.

The peopled hollow, huge and round,
Heard as it fell each footfall sound,
When, gathering near the chair of state,
The brave, the beautiful, the great,
Came crowding on the eager sight,
Till, leaning on her royal knight,
The queen of beauty stood confest
In name and excellence above the rest.

Fairer than fairest forms which beam
On vulgar minds when best they dream,
Her youth, her charms, and something gained

Of solemn and sublime from woe,
The mighty multitude restrained

In feeling's full, but silent flow.
They rose, and stood in breathless gaze
One moment of devoted praise,
Then like a crash of thunder burst the cheers,
And exquisitely sweet burst forth the lady's tears.

Hark ! hark ! the trumpet sounds—

The eager war-horse bounds ;

Lance with shivered lance has crost—

Shield with shield has met and clashed—

Far from his reeling steed a knight is dashed ;

The course is won and lost—

For Count De Baldi swells the herald's voice,

“ Shout for De Baldi's lance, give largess and rejoice !”

The minstrels with melodious song console

The young St. Pol, whose fortune laid him low,

Soothe his bruised spirit, raise his drooping soul,

And sing of conquests o'er a fairer foe.

The courteous victor bows and backs his horse,

Fair hands applaud, bright eyes admire his force ;

Again the lists are cleared,

Again the challenge heard,

Two knights of rival fame are rushing to the course.

.

Now twenty times had strength or skill prevailed,
And twenty times a victor had been hailed ;
Ten times the victor was a knight unknown,
And all who met him were unhelmed or thrown.
Green are his surcoat and his velvet vest,
And green the nodding plume that shades his crest ;

Green is his shield,

And in the field

A naked boy upon a lion rides ;

For reins the gayest flowers are knit,

An arrow serves him for a bit —

With these the urchin child the monster guides :

A bow unstrung and dangling cord

A sounding whip afford ;

The shaggy king grows mad,

The infant laughs and whirls his thong,

As if in mischief glad,

And laughs and lashes as he rides along.

The knight bade the herald his title proclaim,
As a woe-stricken wight, who was winning a name ;

And as oft as the green cavalier was the cry,
And the thousands exalted his deeds to the sky,
A shrill trilling voice so melodiously cheer'd
That amidst the wild uproar its musick was heard,
And the queen of the Jousts with the rest turned her eyes
Towards the spot whence that exquisite sound seemed
to rise.

Her eyes were soon fixed in a motionless stare
On a maid fresh as morn, and as chastity fair ;
But Adela trembled, yet gazing the while,
Fast quivered her lip, though still curled in a smile ;
Yet the face which she looked on was scarce of this earth,
And was turned up to heaven as the place of its birth—
Such a face e'en the eyes of a savage had fixed,
There the child with the woman so sweetly was mixed ;
A few Arabick letters in diamonds were traced,
And shone round her forehead, and girdled her waist,
And she clapped her small hands, and seemed wild
with delight,

As down went the jousts before the green knight.

K

Plumes of a hundred hues are dancing,
A hundred gallant steeds are prancing,
To the *mélée* knights are rushing —

Hark ! the benison and ban !

Riders falling, horses crushing,

Horse on horse, and man on man !

Bear the vanquished knights aloof,

Save them from the rattling hoof !

A scarf, a bracelet, or a crest

With jewels decked from beauty's breast,

A slender slipper, silken glove,

All sacred signs of ladies' love,

About the lists are tost,

Are won, replaced, and lost,

Dear gifts, that guide the anxious fair one's eyes,

What most the vanquished mourn, and most the victors
prize.

Of all who had the *mélée* run,

Still horsed and helmed remains but one ;

There silent stands the knight in green,
With vizor closed, before the queen,
And silently is kneeling down,
As if to claim the myrtle crown,—
When in loud wrath a trumpet sounds,—
To saddle quick as thought he bounds,
And mounted meets with lance in rest
A comely squire in sable drest,
Who cries, “ ’Fore God, Sir Verdant Knight,
My lord, the sable cavalier,
With sword and lance defies thee here,
To deeds of dangerous fame, and deadly fight.

“ With life and limb he will maintain
That thou art knighthood’s foul disgrace,
A blot upon thy name and race,
And blood must wipe away or fix the stain.

“ That name and noble race he knows,
They served thy falsehood for disguise

*

K 2

Better than quaint device supplies :

He asks not thee thy style, nor will his own disclose.

The squire an iron gauntlet flings
That hoarsely through the silence rings,
So hushed the multitude gave ear
And wondered at those words of fear.
Sir Verdant casts a furious glance
Through his barred helm, and lowers his lance
To lift the glove ; a fresher steed
His stirrup-squire and henchman lead ;
His rocket-spear* he throws away,
And waits with arms of war the deadly fray.

The king, as well became a knight,
With nod and smile approves the fight,
And gentler bosoms own the charms
Which danger lends to Deeds of Arms ;

* Muffled—or lance of courtesy, as opposed to the lance used in the challenge à l'outrance.—See *Curne de la St. Palaye, Essai sur la Chevalerie*.

All save the queen, she sat aghast
At that disastrous trumpet-blast,
And trembled, though she knew not why,
Whene'er the Green Knight caught her eye.

A whisper buzzes through the crowd,
As, pricking forward bold and proud,
A form displays the Sable Knight
Of lordly port, and loftiest height ;
His war-horse is of size and bone
To ride an army down alone ;
The trappings of the tomb-black steed
Are sable like the rider's weed ;
The drear device upon his shield
Shadows, perhaps, some grief conceal'd—
A branchless oak with one green spray,
Falling, as if just torn away :
Like different seasons of the year
The knights within the lists appear,—
Sir Verdant as the year's young prime,
Sir Sable as sad winter time.

*

Each champion now is shrieved and blest,
And takes his stand with lance in rest :
“ On ! on ! ” the herald cries, “ and use your might :
God and his cause defend the better knight ! ”

Slower is the whirlwind's sweep,
Gentler is the madding deep,
Storm-confounded vessels crash,
When helmless side to side they dash,
With lesser ruin, less dismay,
Than meet the rushing knights midway.
Their steeds are on their haunches driven,
Lances shivered fly to heaven ;
Some close their shrinking eyes in dread,
Some catch the fury and with rage grow red :
Each snatches up another spear ;
The deep-drawn breath of rival hate
Startles the hushed beholder's ear,
And rouses all his soul to watch the battle's fate.

They close again ;
Shields split in twain,
And coursers reeling o'er the sanded plain
Display the knights so matched, their bloody toil is vain.
Falling like a shooting star
Faulchions deal the dented scar ;
Blows circling, whizzing, gleaming glance,
As foot to foot the foes advance.

Our spirits so exhaust the frame,
So weak our limbs to passion's flame,
Though cast in giant mould, they vex
The baffled rage, their weakness checks :
Thus wearied strength and failing breath
Now doubtful hold the lot of death,
And face to face the champions stand,
Each resting on his reeking brand.
At last Sir Verdant with two-handed might,
At one fell blow to end the fight,
His sabre swung in air,
That sighed as in despair ;

Each face turned pale,
As twisted mail,
And plate of proof,
Like silken woof,
Gaped wide beneath the biting blade,
That with a hideous crash the shuddering throng dis-
may'd.

The rush and ruin of that stroke
Latchet and helm and vizor broke;
Away the iron ventail flew,
Then burst upon the publick view,
Death smiling proudly from his face,
The last good lord of Monti's race.

Is there a wretch of all who press
Round that dread pageant of distress,
So weary of the gibes and taunts
Flung on his sordid garb and wants,
Would dare for princely hall and train
The withered heart and whirling brain,

So great, so worshipped, to be seen,
But blasted, as that pageant's Queen?
See! rushing from her gorgeous throne,
She staggers through the lists alone,
And kneeling on her bosom bears
Her grandsire's brow and gory hairs.
He towards his foe stretched forth his hand,
Who,—fixed as statue on his stand,
Still hanging from his wrist the blade
Sloped, as its lighting down was stayed,
His bucklered arm half backward flung
Where with the last fell blow it swung,—
Beheld unmoved and motionless
That hand a generous foe would bless.

Lord Monti strove, but sank too weak,
The secret of his soul to speak;
His voice expiring in a sigh,
He turned to look on Adela, and die.
Uprose the lady Adela, and taught
Submission to each rebel thought;

With hands and bosom stained with blood,
But bloodless lip and cheek, she stood ;
In accents hollow, hoarse and deep,
And faltering as she toiled to keep

 The rising anguish down,
She bade the king, who at her side
Frowned on the nameless victor's pride,

 That nameless victor crown :
He humbly from the royal hand
In silence bore the myrtle band,
Then with a groan that burst so loud
It thrilled through all the countless crowd,
He dropped the chaplet on the dead,
And clasped his hands, and kneeling said,
“ 'Tis thine, good knight ! one dealt the blow,
Who learned from thee to meet a foe.”
He vaulted on his steed of bay,
And, ere a hand could check his way,
With a vast leap the barrier cleared,
And like a phantom disappeared.

Was it the voice that could control
With a dark spell the lady's soul ?
Or rather that she bravely bore
Pangs, that surpass the martyr's wheel,
Till the racked sense could bear no more,
And suffered, till it ceased to feel?
Howbeit she sank amidst the train,
Who scarcely could the throng restrain,
Where thus from anguish stolen away,
A seeming sister of the dead she lay.

There is a wild excess of grief,
Whose wildness works its own relief ;
The soul or mind, whate'er that be
Which marshals sense in just degree,
Gives way, and all perception dies,
Crushed by o'erwhelming agonies :
As if, when miseries crowd so thick,
The weary soul of life grew sick,
And slipped awhile her feeble chains,
A fugitive from earthly pains.

Still as the corpse the damsel lay,
And, closed around in sad array,
Her troops and banners homeward drooped their way. }

CANTO VII.

CANTO VII.

THERE are to whom each breathing hour is pain,
Life but a growing load of lengthened chain,
On whom the mornings dawn, the evenings close,
Dead to all thought, but of remembered woes ;
Who shun with scorn the common cares of earth,
Its griefs held childish, and abhorred its mirth ;
Blest by such spirits, frown the convent's walls,
Stretch its dim cloisters, and its silent halls,
Where speech is all forsworn, except to sigh,
At each rare meeting, " Man is born to die !"

Since the king held his tournament
In honour of the angel saint,
Changing the earth's deep tints, the sun
Through all his ancient signs has run,

And, rolling round the measured year,
Again St. Michael's feast draws near.
The sky is clad in silvery grey,
And chilly falls the light to day ;
The long leaves of the willow trees
Turn their white linings to the breeze ;
Low sighs the wind among the reeds,
And melancholy musing breeds;
Now darkly steal, now dashing gleam
The foam and eddies of the stream ;
And like the day, all sad and pale,
Droops the lorn lady of my tale.
To live where those we loved have died
 In bless'd calm and full of years,
Where still their cherished forms abide,
 Is a pure joy, though steeped in tears ;
We worship each familiar token,
 Stamped sacred by their touch or sign,
A relick each, though soiled or broken,—
 Each spot they haunted, now a shrine ;—

But if, struck down before their time,
Unblest and troubled is their death,
And stained with blood, or dark with crime,
They mangled sob their dying breath,—
Fly, then, the loved one's dear abode,
There the dread scene will scare thine eyes,
With horror every object load,
And rack remembrance till it dies!

The wailing of the funeral song,
That hymned Lord Monti to his grave,
Had scarcely breathed its close along
St. Bride's rich choir, and vaulted nave,
When Adela her princely halls
Fled, as if hung with pestilence,
And sought the convent's hallowed walls
To drug despair with penitence:
For her the convent, next the tomb,
Had least of pain as most of gloom;

L .

In sooth it is the grave of time,
Its vows mere suicide without the crime.

The nerveless mind, though borne away
By sorrow's swell, and passion's sway,
Drifts with the tide before the blast,
And rides unharmed, the danger past :
But if on fate the dauntless soul
Turn a stout rebel to controul,
The soul may conquer, but the heart,
Strained in the struggle, bursts apart.

The novice, since she shone the queen
Of Reggio's jousts, was never seen
A tear to shed, a smile to wear,
Nor heard to speak except in prayer.
She prayed aloud at midnight hour
For help against some evil power,
That coiled around a youth its spell,
And gently won his soul to hell ;
Though none she named, the sainted maid,
'Twas held, for D'Accioli prayed.

At twilight she was surely found
Pacing the convent garden round,
Then starting, if by name addrest,
Her head would sink upon her breast,
And drooping thus the maid would sit
For hours in that desponding fit.
Some hopes there are, though long since lost,
Which haunt us like a friendly ghost,
Still form our waking dreams by day,
And seem *just* lost, if scared away.
If such might be, should a lone wretch
For months, though safe from danger, stretch
His sight upon a sky that stood
Arched on a waste of ocean flood,
Both calm and breathless, clear and bright,
Beneath a never-setting light,
No earthly language could express
His crushing sense of loneliness;
Far less can earthly tongue declare
The hideous calm of deep despair,

When, wrung to death, the heart is sear'd,
No blessings hoped, no evils fear'd :
The minstrel from his song would start,
And sicken o'er his dreadful art,
That the dark veil would rashly tear
From griefs that none may live and bear ;
Nor knows my harp a frantick strain
For those fierce agonies of pain,
Which gnawed the heart, and fired the brain,
Since Adela her hopes entombed
With all she dared to love, and in despair consumed.

Whose thrilling notes so richly swell
The evening choir at vesper bell,
Where breathless round the convent screen
At vesper hour the crowd are seen ?
'Twas Adela, who swept along
The kindling spirits with her song,
While to the deep-toned organ's chord
Her soul the loud hosanna pour'd ;

High on the rolling flood of sound
Her voice its liquid progress wound,
And bore the melody so clear,
Its softest cadence filled the ear,
Then like a downy cygnet died
Expiring on her funeral tide.
Still, lady, on fond fancy's ear
Thy vesper hymn falls rich and clear ;
Still, lady, to fond fancy's eye
The next day's pomp is trooping by ;
When mourning vassals round thee hung,
And vestal vows were rising on thy tongue !

The bell upon the convent tower
Has loudly chimed the matin hour,
And, hurrying through the cloisters, glide
The high-born sisters of St. Bride.
Old ancestry of gentle blood
Sheds lustre on that sisterhood ;—
A sainted soul of lowly name
A home with them would vainly claim ;

For pride of birth still swells the breast,
Though bent the knee, and coarse the vest.
But the last child of Monti's race
With festival the nuns embrace ;
And Adela for veil and cell
To-day will bid the world farewell.
Hark ! the blended voices rise !
Thus the hymn ascends the skies.

MATIN SONG*.

Maker of heaven and earth !
Ruler of night and day !
Joy draws from sweet vicissitude his birth ;
For him, at thy command, with light the shadows play,
The seasons dance their ever-varying round,
And, changing as they pass, away the moments bound.
Hark ! the herald of the dawn
The slumbering sun-beam wakes ;

* This matin song is a loose translation of part of a Latin hymn which will be found in the *Horæ Diurnæ* of the Romish Church.

Aside the curtains of the dark are drawn!

Behold how Lucifer his dewy tresses shakes!
While monstrous sins, and shapes that shun the eye,
And error's countless throng "after the night-steeds fly!"

Fresh hopes now dawn on life,
Health breathes now on the sick,
Creeps to it's sheath at morn the murderer's knife;
The hills are cleared from mist, the mind from doubt
as thick,

Oh! Faith, unveil thy never-setting sun—
Support us if we faint—direct the race we run,
And teach our lips to praise the Holy Three in One!

Since chimed the bell at early dawn,
Towards dim St. Bride's the crowd had drawn,
And closely wedged, the aisles along,
Still onward pressed the patient throng,
Tho' now the sun from noon-day tower
By shortened shadow marks the hour.

The young, the old, the brave, the fair,
And childhood's laughing eyes are there :
A troop of vassals fond and true
Now flock to look their last adieu,
As she, their guardian and their pride,
Vows life and riches to St. Bride.

This is the blest, the solemn day
When witch and wizard lose their sway,
And curses miss, and spells unbind
All whom the holy cross hath signed ;
That day which once in every seven
Shows a world reconciled to heaven ;
That day on which the Almighty Son
For man his Maker's mercy won,
The cross to endless time unfurl'd,
And poured his blood to save a world.

Aloft, within her secret bower
In D'Accioli's sea-girt tower,
Francesca mute, in lowly state,
With streaming eyes and tresses sate :

Loose were her locks—their diamond band,
Unclasped and dim, hung o'er her hand ;
Loose was her vest—its diamond zone
Flung at her feet obscurely shone ;
Stretched near her without sign or sound
Ubaldo D'Accioli frowned—
So still, that to a careless eye,
Save when he chanced to heave a sigh,
 A thing of stone he seemed ;
Severe, yet vacant, was his stare,
As if the mind could scarcely dare
 To grasp the shapes it dreamed.

E'en then how many passed his gate
In envy of his wealth and state,
 And at their lot repined ;
How many, could they see him there,
And all, could they his musing share,
 Would own their envy blind !

While on the valley far below
The vernal zephyrs gently blow,
And still the sunbeam lies,
Who hears the rushing eagle's course
Battling the viewless whirlwind's force,
Which rends the upper skies ?

Nor heard the dull and distant crowd
On Ubald break the woe-charged cloud :
But now upon their sight he burst
So haggard, that few spirits durst
Aspire to own his pomp and power,
And share the secrets of his lonely hour.
Whither the people shaped their course,
And borne by their on-pressing force,
He followed, and was fixed beside
The jewelled altar of St. Bride.

The whispered murmur, that so long
Had circled round the weary throng,
Sank suddenly, and, still as death,
Each bent his eyes, and held his breath.

Lo ! issuing forth with solemn train,
The novice guides her steps with pain ;
On either side three sisters stay
Her feeble frame, and win her way.
Her cheek, so delicately bright,
Blushed, like the fading skirts of light
Dying away, or at its birth
Kindling the ancient snows of earth :
A tint life's soft destroyer threw,
So little human in its hue,
Men deemed that, bodiless as air,
The soul itself a blush could wear,
And thus, ere quitting earth for heaven,
One moment to their sight were given.

Behold the genius of the place,
His form adorning pomp with grace !
While curling clouds of incense spread
Their perfumed folds around his head,
And purple priests before him bow,
The Bishop lifts his mitred brow :

Hark ! now the mellow voices raise
In varied chaunt the song of praise ;
Now forth the organ's raptures break,
As if to bid the dead awake,
And, answering from their tombs around,
Join chorus in the lofty sound.

While tapers blaze, and censers smoke,
And hymns the present God invoke,
The fainting Adela is led
With mystick vow that God to wed.
Mark with what sudden strength she stands,
And now throws off the sisters' hands :
All shrink her staggering steps before,
As toward the altar's marble floor
She darts, and sinks on Ubald's neck,
Ere eye perceived or arm could check ;
He clasps her while her upturned face
Shows the saint's triumph with the woman's grace.

“ Pause ! my impatient soul, and stay thy speed ;—
Wearily, wearily, wears my mortal weed,—

Heaven, my beloved, hath sent me to unbind
The secret spells which round thy spirit wind.”
She spake, and inborn agonies
Push from their hollow cells D’Accioli’s eyes.
Wildly he stares around, as one
Awaked to find himself undone ;
The spell is burst—each thought that rose
In nature’s wonted channel flows ;
His recollections of the past
Ere first he met Francesca are the last—
Each incident, as just gone by,
Starts full upon his memory ;
So freshly, with such present power,
The sights, sounds, feelings of that hour
Before his tortured mind are drawn,
They scarce seem shades of what is gone :
His tongue could syllable each word
He then had uttered, then had heard ;
Each thought returns, when stripped he stood
By Marmora’s bright, laughing flood,

And pictured Adela's fair form
Beside him palpable and warm,
When half bewildered with delight,
He fancied she there blessed his sight.
And hush ! she speaks—the vision flies,
Here, dying on his breast, she lies :
“ Francesca's wand, and potent spell
Are broken—now I feel it well ;—
Thy soul unfettered shall not fear
The fated maid, or mountain seer !—
Groan not, my love, but let me rest
One moment calmly on thy breast :
The brow of death, love, is not stern
To those on whom his features turn ;
His shadowy wings are clad with fears
To friends who stand behind in tears :
When ebbing life grows cold and dark,
Virtue unveils her beaming spark,
As stars, which, viewless all the day,
Through the dim night their lamps display.

Hence, hence, away ! with priest and prayer,
From earth the wailing phantom scare :
Ah !—cherub shapes my spirit steal—
Thy lips, dear youth, once let me feel !
Yes ! now I touch them,—and resign
My soul to God—my heart is—thine !”

Looking her latest prayer for him,
As speechless in his arms she lay,
On his her eyes grew fixed and dim,
And thus her spirit passed away.
Death, as she sank in Ubald’s arms,
Fell like a slumber on her charms :
Of all unconscious, but the face
That faintly smiled in his embrace,
The youth ne’er moved, till some more bold
Would loose the body from his hold ;
Then with one arm he bore them back,
And while all eyes his progress track,
Clasping the corpse he slowly turned,
And knelt where Monti’s ashes slept inurned.

*

Uproar now clamoured round the dead,
Passion rushed in, devotion fled,
And knights and squires pressed in to claim
The last cold relick of the Monti name.

In vain the sisters of St. Bride
Against the holy outrage cried ;
The faithful vassals seized and bore
The corpse from Ubald, and the convent door.
Stout hearts ! I love ye, for ye stood
To vindicate the rights of blood ;
The name is gone, but still we boast
That yet the spirit is not lost ;
Stout hearts ! I love ye, for the line
And all, except the name, are mine*.

The lessening crowd D'Accioli watched,
When from his arms the corpse was snatched ;
And long, as if possessed or crazed,
Wildly about the chapel gazed.

* The reader may perhaps have forgotten that the tale which he has been reading is received from the lips of an Italian lady.

Forth then was borne the mystick host
To exorcise the phantom ghost ;
Softly the priests lord Ubald pray'd
To seek and seize the fated maid.
Ubald, as if again he heard
His Adela in every word,
In wrath and anguish burst away
Strong to avenge, and zealous to obey.

The sun now blithely looked abroad,
As homeward D'Accioli strode,
Insensible to sun or storm,
To all, except one shadowy form,
That smiling hovered at his side,
And led him onward as a guide.

D'Accioli rather flew than stopt,
And through his marble mansion swept,
And thus companioned stood where sate
Francesca in her wonted state.
With drooping head she wailed and wept,
As if some holy fast she kept ;

M

Forward he sprang, and firm in thought
With iron grasp the damsel caught ;
But where so palpably to sight
Francesca, in the noon-day light,
Was weeping o'er her broken spell,
On vacancy the sunbeam fell ;
Nor sign, nor sound, to eye or ear
Told how her form could disappear ;
But though unfilled, yet still the chair
To prove his senses right was there :
His empty palm so fiercely strained
With blood the hard-locked fingers stained ;
Unmoved he stood with foot advanced,
Hand closely clenched, and soul entranced ;
And, almost audibly, his heart
Beat high, as if 'twould burst apart.
Thus fixed, thus lost in wondering stare,
He started at the sound of prayer,
Which echoing through the chambers came ;
Midst censer's smoke, and taper's flame,

The priests their mystick wafer bore,
And evil shrunk behind, or fled before.

* * * *

How many years have rolled along
Since holy hymn or sportive song
The echoes of those chambers woke,
Or sound the deadly silence broke ;
Since man last trod the marble floor,
Or darkened with his form the door !
Unopened rusts the palace gate,
And still unknown the master's fate ;
Ere sunset of that fatal day
(But how or whither none can say)
He turned his back on home, and wandered on his
way.

THE END.



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