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ENDYMION:

A Story of the Lake.



BY C. RUSSELL CHRISTIAN.



CANTO FIRST.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

HUNTINGTON:
ARGUS BOOK AND JOB OFFICE.
1885.

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CHARLES RUSSELL CHRISTIAN.

1885.

TO THE PEOPLE OF WEST VA.

—:0:—

Again I appear before you with a poem in my hands.—
In presenting this story of the Lake, I have no excuse to
offer but the love of Song; and no favors to ask but the one
you will kindly confer,—a humble place in the memory of
my countrymen.

This story is presented by one whose highest ambition is
to be the pioneer of Song in his native land. C. R. C.

Huntington, October 20, 1885.

ENDYMION.

I.

LONG had I thought to lay aside my pen,
 And try the scenes that charmed my youth again ;
 The rocky fountains, and the bubbling rills,
 The flowing meadows, and the wooded hills,
 The waving corn, the Soul's supreme delight,
 The wealth that grows with each successive night,
 The friendly chat, the neighbors on the way,
 And every Sunday shines a Sabbath day !
 And still at times, when pondering o'er the scene
 Of what I am as yet, and what have been,
 My soul expands, and makes me young again,
 And paints the differing scenes of Now and Then !
 Again I dwell among the hills of yore ;
 The jagged hills with forests covered o'er ;
 The soil I till, the bleating flocks I rear,
 And store the wealth of each revolving year !

II

But love of Song increases still with years,
 The goal of all my joys and all my fears ;
 The scenes of youth again are cast aside ;
 Again I throw me on the dangerous tide,
 And spite of failure, and in spite of loss,
 In spite of those who count my lays but dross,
 I seize my Harp, my soul's supreme delight,
 And sweep the echoing chords with all my might !

III

And now, ye Muses ! from your still abodes,
 Where long ye held companionship with Gods,
 If mortal cares may tempt ye forth again,
 Inspire my theme and consecrate my pen !
 And grant that though Oblivion blot my name
 And all its record from the page of Fame ;

Though Time shall wear my very bones to dust,
 And ev'n my tomb contain no honored bust—
 Endymion's story still shall charm the ear,
 And strike responsive chords of Hope and Fear!

IV

But how shall I expect unscathed to go,
 Who tread the field, unarmed to meet the foe?
 No classic Greek adorns my humble page,
 To charm the critics of this polished age;
 Like simple Brutus, gifted not in words,
 Like modest Pope, dependent not on lords,
 A simple tale I have assayed to tell;
 Forbid who shall?—not critics though they swell
 Themselves with rage, and call me what they may!
 Still will I rhyme by night and sleep by day!
 And monarch of myself, though not of lands,
 And knowing well to labor with my hands,
 Their noisome howl shall pass away unheard,
 Or serve for topic at my frugal board!
 Why should it else?—are critics not as bold
 And shameless now as in the days of old?
 And knowing well themselves condemned to praise
 The older Bards of these productive days,
 They wreak their vengeance on the youthful throng
 Who dare to tread the dangerous paths of Song!
 Ev'n at the risk of being chained in time
 Fast to the wheel of Satire's crushing rhyme;
 And whirled aloft, in endless giddy maze,
 To sing the Dunciads of the future days!

V

As some proud monarch who aspires to rule
 O'er conquered nations—mad Ambition's fool—
 And whom he would with royal art he slew!
 With royal power what may not monarchs do?
 But now ensnared and trampled on by Fate!
 An empty Nothing now his robe of State!
 Adjudged to exile for the Long Ago!
 With crimes confronted none but kings should know!
 His great examples all alike forgot!
 His shame surviving till his name shall rot!
 And time shall wear his very bones to dust!
 And ev'n his tomb contain no honored bust!

So foiled, so wildered, so forgot in woe,
 So mocked, so jeered for crimes of Long Ago,
 The critics' Fiend still gazes on the Past,
 And none to do him reverence found at last !

VI

Take one example from the page of Time ;
 There lived a Bard who sung a song sublime ;
 Whose stern ambition viewed no second place,
 Nor owned an equal in the tuneful race !
 He touched his Harp, and on the tuneful chords
 The fiery Muses flung the deathless words,
 And shook, exultant, all the arts of rhyme—
 But critics howled, and vengeance fixed her time !
 Again the Bard surveys the Mount of Song ;
 Again resolves to publish—"right or wrong !"
 At once we see his mangled Muse arrayed,
 A gleaming Pallas, armed with Satire's blade,
 And through the ranks of his bewildered foes
 She stalks a terror—conquering as she goes !

VII

But to my theme, long laid aside to sing
 The praise of him who is of Song the king !
 Soon as the day's laborious task is done,
 Endymion flies to view the setting Sun ;
 O'er many a field he strays, and many a brook,
 Grief in his heart, and sadness in his look,
 Till at his favorite hill arrived, he stops,
 To view the scene along the mountain-tops,
 And gaze with not the less of love than awe,
 On Nature's evening face—ere Day withdraw !
 And why has young Endymion climbed the steep,
 To view the *setting* Sun—if not to weep ?
 This none may know,—but with the approach of eve,
 He climbs his usual hill, nor will he leave
 Till twilight melts in softest tints away,
 And Night usurps the seat of falling Day !
 Perchance 'tis here that Memory bids him gaze
 On scenes that charmed when youth was all ablaze ;
 The rocky fountains, and the bubbling rills,
 The flowing meadows, and the wooded hills,
 The song of birds, the cow's melodious bell,
 As home returning from the wooded dell,

The *setting* Sun, with grandeur unalloyed,
 And in his soul an ever aching void !
 Or this, or that, his secret was his own,
 Known to himself—to others all unknown !

VIII

Long had he strayed amid the silent woods,
 And mourned his sorrows to the rushing floods ;
 The Sun was set,—the latest streaks of light
 Were fast dissolving in the mists of night—
 When lo ! a fiend of horrid shape appears,
 And high in air a massive weapon rears !
 A thing unearthly stood beside the road,
 In form tremendous, and in shape a God !
 With fiery brow, and high-uplifted hand,
 As threatening ruin to a thriving land,
 Sublime it stood, tremendous to behold,
 And from its eyes the forky lightnings rolled !

IX

Ev'n as the swain who lives in wooded dells,
 Where roams the bear, and where the panther dwells,
 Belated, wanders at the dead of night,
 Armed with a club to aid the dangerous fight,
 Descries a shadow in the moon-lit glen,
 And halts, affrighted at its ugly mien ;
 So fixed, so wildered, young Endymion stood,
 And gazed the monster of that silent wood !
 Ev'n as the fish, in shallow waters found,
 When dives the osprey, with tremendous bound,
 Awaits his doom, the flying robber's prize,
 And feels already lifted to the skies !
 So stood Endymion, deeming flight too late,
 Unmoved, unflinching, on the brink of Fate !

X

When Danger rears aloft his horrid lash,
 A solid front is worth the solid cash !
 So thought the boy, and soon the silence broke,
 And to the grisly terror thus bespoke—
 “ O horrid form, whom Demons might admire,
 A stony Gorgon—armed with sheeted fire !
 If Fate, relentless, hath decreed my death,
 I yield, obedient, with my parting breath—

But this defiance take, and learn in time,
 I'll never yield to one so stained with crime!"
 He said, and paused,—the grisly form was gone!
 He stood, complaining to himself alone!
 A horrid shade was all that now remained
 Where ev'n so late the grisly terror reigned!
 Now horror seized, he spread his wings for flight,
 Swift as a meteor rushes through the night!
 Nor paused, till at his genial sire's abode,
 A lordly mansion near the ancient road,
 Arrived, he rushes through the folded door,
 And falls outstretched along the fretted floor!

XI

"What and whence come?" the astonished father cries;
 "So much for wandering 'neath the moon-lit skies!
 But tell me, truly, what thy cause of fright,
 And what so dangerous lurks amid the night?"
 He said. The obedient son his sire obeys,
 And tells his story without more delays.
 "Ev'n as I wandered near my usual hill,
 And full in hearing distance of the mill,
 Where oft my sire beguiles the lonely hours,
 And friendly games adorn those genial bowers,
 I straight espied beside the dusky road
 A form tremendous as a fallen God!
 With fiery brow, and high uplifted hand,
 As threatening ruin to a thriving land,
 Sublime it stood, tremendous to the view,
 And from its eyes the forky lightnings flew!
 Long time I stood, and gazed the horrid sight,
 That cast a terror on the shades of night;
 Then all my courage calling to the test,
 I gazed the monster, and the fiend addressed—
 For oft when Danger rears his horrid lash,
 A solid front is worth the solid cash!
 I spoke, and lo! the horrid form was fled!
 I seemed alone, and talking to the dead!
 A horrid shade alone could now be seen,
 Where ev'n so late the grisly form had been!
 Now horror-seized, I spread my wings for flight,
 Swift as a meteor rushes through the night!
 Nor paused, till rushing through the folded door,
 I fell outstretched along the fretted floor!"

XII

"Alas, my son!" the genial father cries;
 And tears are started from his aged eyes;
 "Ill suits it thee to roam the silent woods,
 And mourn thy sorrows to the rushing floods;
 Thy far career marked out for other years,
 I gaze in sorrows, and approach with fears;
 Retire to rest, nor further seek to find
 This gory phantom of a sinking mind!"
 Thus spake the sire. The son obedient heard,
 Retired to rest, nor further spoke a word;
 Stretched on his couch the young Endymion lies;
 The god of Slumber seals his weeping eyes,
 And happy visions lift him to the skies!

XIII

Now shift the chords, and change the tuneful song;
 From private sorrows turn to public Wrong;
 Invert the Lyre, and sing the hoary sage,
 Whose giant wisdom saved the sinking age!
 Yea, strike the notes throughout the realm of Time,
 And shake, exultant, all the arts of rhyme,
 Till every freeman hears the mighty song,
 And pours the avenging doom on ancient Wrong!

XIV

The freemen heard, and pealed the mighty song;
 In every strain was heard the doom of Wrong;
 Long was the struggle, fierce and dread the fight,
 And torches burned on every mountain height,
 And this the song the avenging freemen sung,
 When on one day the fate of ages hung.

The Song of 1884.

[1]

All hail to the sages of seventy-six!
 To them be the tribute of ages unrolled!
 And the peace that they gave us forever shall fix
 Their names and their fame on the records of old!

[2]
 But chiefly the pioneer lights of the age,
 Who held up the torch through derision and scorn,
 Frowning backward at Robbery, trembling with rage,
 And forward at Bribery, pale and forlorn!

[3]
 Sam Tilden, Tom Hendricks—yea blest be their names!
 To them be the holiest wreaths ever twin'd!
 One yields to his fortune, the other now claims
 His rights which eight years shall enable to find!

[4]
 The whirlwind is coming! prepare for the storm!
 Sound the notes of alarm from the lakes to the sea!
 Inscribe on your banners, "Revenge and Reform!"
 And success is as sure as the cause of the free!

[5]
 For Time has awakened the clans of the brave,
 And the freemen have marshalled from mountain to shore;
 And the memory of Tilden and Hendricks shall save
 The great battle of Polls when the struggle is o'er!

[6]
 And Tilden, since Time has o'ershadowed his brow,
 And bade the reformer lay down his bold pen,
 Refuses the call of his countrymen now,
 To lead their victorious armies again!

[7]
 But the caused has raised armies;—the armies have found
 A leader illustrious as Tilden of yore!
 To the front, every man! at the first bugle sound,
 Nor think for a truce till the struggle is o'er!

[8]
 The whirlwind is coming! prepare for the storm!
 Sound the notes of alarm from the lakes to the sea!
 Shout "Cleveland and Hendricks! Revenge and Reform!"
 And success is as sure as the cause of the free!

XV

Now had the night her middle watch begun ;
 The yellow moon-beams trembled as they run !
 A lake there is amid the silent woods,
 Fed by the waters of unnumbered floods,
 A spacious sheet ! in circuit several miles !
 O'erhung by cliffs, and interspersed with isles !
 High o'er the flood the Moon appears in light ;
 The yellow Moon that rules the joyous night ;
 Far up the lake, the sound of splashing oars
 Is heard re-echoed 'gainst the rocky shores ;
 The fair Medora glides along the wave,
 With all the grandeur of the free and brave !
 The moon-beams struggle as they kiss her face ;
 The breezy zephyr lingers in its race ;
 While he, the youth who bends above the oars,
 In silence gazes and his hap deplores.
 Full on his face she casts her witching smiles,
 Her dark-blue eyes still gazing toward the isles ;
 For he who skiffs—the lesson doubt no more—
 Must travel backward if he leave the shore !
 Ev'n as the swallow skims along the wave,
 So flies the vessel—toward the leafy cave !
 Ev'n as a meteor darts along the skies,
 So flies the bark—majestic as it flies !
 At length the oars inside the vessel turn ;
 The youth arises, climbs the lofty stern,
 And takes his seat beside his beauteous mate,
 And thus bespeaks his oracle of Fate.
 “ O say, Medora !” cries the impatient youth ;
 “ Why longer thus withhold me from the truth ?
 Your beauty such, your slave I must remain,—
 But tell me truly, do I love in vain ?
 On such a night, on such a lake as this,
 Why longer hold me from my greatest bliss ?
 Yet if your heart is not to be own,
 Reveal the secret—and I'll sigh alone !”
 Thus spake the boy. Medora answered mild,
 With all the candor of an artless child,
 “ Why should I love ?” she said ; “ I've loved so long,
 I fain would hear the notes of other song ;
 And what to me were all the world beside,
 While I remain a widow and a bride ?
 To young Endymion have I paid my vows,

Who, spite of Fortune, still remains my spouse!
 To him my heart remains forever true;
 For him I perish,—what remains for you?”
 She said in sorrow. The rebellious boy
 Made yet another grasp for sudden joy.
 “If then you live in widowhood of soul
 For him who quits you for the brimming bowl,
 Ill suits it me to lavish my delights
 On you and yours, and wast the genial nights!
 Nor yet this all,—for with to-morrow’s morn,
 Endymion flies the scene of all his scorn;
 In distant lands, Oblivion and the bowl
 May heal the stings that now offend his soul!”
 Thus spoke he, scornful, to the blue-eyed girl;
 His proud mustaches felt a secret twirl!
 While she, the abandoned, shook her head in vain,
 And asked the boy to dip his oars again!

XVI

Ev’n as the fisher, when he casts his hook
 To artful perch that glisten in the brook,
 Leans from his seat, and winks his knowing eyes,
 And ready stands to lift him to the skies;
 But finding all his subtle arts refused,
 Turns from himself, abusing and abused!
 So stood the boy who sought to snare the girl—
 His proud mustaches felt a second twirl!
 Yet o’er and o’er he plies his subtle art,
 Whose game is plunder, and whose spoil the heart!

XVII

Meanwhile, Endymion, in the realm of Sleep,
 Threw down his sorrows, and forgot to weep.
 Before his mind a pleasing vision lies;
 Upon his sleep the Grecian hills arise;
 The land by centuries and by ages trod,
 Where still the footsteps of each burning God
 Is proudly visible,—where each proud rock
 Stands in defiance of the earthquake’s shock!
 Above him shine the everlasting snows;
 Full on his head the sun of Glory glows!
 Still on he moves, with half unconscious tread,
 O’er falling ruins and the mighty dead,

Ascends the hill, and looks along the plain
 Where ancient Freedom fought and bled in vain ;
 Recalls the scenes of childhood's happy days,
 When life was sweet, and youth was all ablaze,
 The rocky fountains, and the bubbling rills,
 The flowing meadows, and the wooded hills—
 When lo ! a horrid scene appeared in sight,
 And froze his soul that trembled with affright !
 A thing unearthly stood beside the road,
 In form tremendous, and in shape a God !
 With fiery brow, and high uplifted hand,
 As threatening ruin to a thriving land,
 Sublime it stood, tremendous to the view,
 And from its eyes the forky lightnings flew !
 Long time he stood, and gazed the horrid sight ;
 A form tremendous as the fiends of Night !
 Then roused himself, threw down his useless fear,
 And broke the silence—"Why dost follow here?"
 Remembering still, when Danger rears his lash,
 A solid front is worth the solid cash !
 He said, and paused,—the horrid sight was gone !
 He stood, complaining to himself alone ;
 A horrid shade was all that now remained
 Where ev'n so late the grisly terror reigned !
 Now horror seized, he spread his wings for flight,
 Swift as a meteor rushes through the night ;
 Along the highway beat the ancient road,
 Tremendous stamping, like a fallen God !
 He leaps, he springs, when lo ! the sleeper wakes,
 And knows himself at home amid the lakes !
 His eyes once more the usual scene survey,
 And saddened Life begins another day.

XVIII

Now rose the Morn upon her throne of light,
 And rolled her chariot through the realm of Night ;
 The blazing banner of the Day, unfurled,
 Refulgent shone, and Light awakes the world !
 The roasted pig is taken from the fire,
 The roasted pig that sets the soul on fire !
 The meal is spread, the best the times afford,
 The puddings fairly smoked upon the board !
 The prayers were said, the feasting had begun,
 When thus the genial sire addressed his son—

“To day we part! and while the sea you roam,
Be mine the task, not misapplied, at home,
To till the soil, the bleating flocks to rear,
And store the wealth of each revolving year!
Yea, now we part! and if your would retain
A father’s prayers to waft you o’er the main,
Receive this book, nor further make delay,
This sacred book that guards the Sabbath day!”
He said, and led Endymion to the chest,
Where lay the book, his grandsire’s last bequest;
A massive volume of the days of old,
With lids of leather, and with leaves of gold!
Two golden clasps the massive lids unite.
Whose yellow grandeur cast a gleaming light!
“Behold the gift!” the o’erlabored father cries;
And tears are started from his aged eyes;
“The only gift a parent’s love commends,
A royal boon from sire to son descends;
This ancient book was wrecked along the shore
Of rocky Albion in the days of yore;
The hungry Ocean howled for human food!
The mountain billows churned the angry flood!
The vessel sunk.—but ere each hope expire,
Safe to the shore it bore my¹ panting sire!
High on the deck he stood, and faced the lands,
His massive Bible holding in his hands;
He sunk—he rose—and gained a jutting rock.
Composed himself, and stored away his book—
For like a cork, it bore him ’bove the wave,
And thus redeemed him from the watery grave!
This goodly book he gave in trust to me
On one condition—*that I give it thee!*
Receive the gift a grandsire’s love bestows,
’Twill soothe thy grief, and calm away thy woes!”
Thus spake the sire. The son received the book;
He said no word, but cast a thoughtful look;
Too much he felt to trust his thoughts to words;
The tongue’s a ferrule—but the eyes are swords!
His father’s hand Endymion clasps again,
Then on his mother bends his eyes amain;
He gazes—sighs—and takes his silent way,
His massive Bible glistening in the ray—
And is he gone? and will he dare to stay?

XIX.

Along the shore the pilgrim halts to take
 A long farewell to his beloved lake;
 That lake, surrounded by the silent woods,
 And fed by waters of unnumbered floods;
 A spacious sheet! in circuit several miles!
 O'erhung by cliffs, and interspersed with isles!
 Full on the flood the rising Sun appears;
 The blazing Sun that rules the seasoned years;
 Far up the lake the sound of splashing oars
 Is heard re-echoed 'gainst the rocky shores;
 The haughty Roderick glides along the wave
 But lacks the grandeur of the free and brave!
 He looks a coward from the shades of Night;
 To him the Sun now sheds a hateful light!
 To him the shadows of the pine trees stand
 Like living sentinels along the land!
 A nameless feeling chills his very soul,
 As fast and far the frothy billows roll!
 He gains the rocks, and hauls his skiff ashore;
 A voice, unheard, is on each billow's roar!
 Then climbs the beach, and fades along the sight—
 Why walked he thus apart, and shunned the light?

XX.

Now shift the chords, and change the song again!
 The wars of truth again demand my pen!
 Thrown down the Lyre, and lift the Drum, to sing
 The praise of him who hates both priest and king!

The Sword of Chiniquy.

All hail to the sage of the ^[1]Catholic wars!
 May he gather his trophies from mountain and plain!
 Where he strikes, ye may know by the withering scars,
 For the sword of old Luther smites never in vain!

In the armory long had been hoarded that sword,
 To the honor of him who delivered it there;
 For of those who had fought for the cause of the Lord,
 Not an arm could be found the huge weapon to bear!

[3]

And the giant of evil was great among men;
 And the multitudes praised the pontifical Fool;
 And the Catholics threatened to conquer again
 Uncles Sam and his powerful father, John Bull!

[4]

And the loftiest thoughts of the mind were the prey
 Of the lawless and reasonless despots of Rome;
 And the freedom of Conscience then flickered away,
 And religious intolerance saddened each home!

[5]

No longer the wife to the ear of her lord
 Her sorrows revealed in the hope of redress;
 To the father-confessor her griefs must be poured—
 Though unable to *succor* he surely could *bless*!

[6]

The confessional box was the seat of the "God!"
 But the devotees lisped their confessions in vain!
 And while civilized nations lay kissing the rod,
 The people took refuge in Reason and Paine!!

[7]

O where was Kankakee's deliverer then?
 Was there none to make fight for the cause of the Lord?
 He was training his powerful engines ev'n then,
 And whetting for war his o'ermastering sword!

[8]

At none but the greatest the giant will aim!
 And none may evade his tremendous advance!
 And his triumphs are carved on the temples of Fame
 For the sages of History to read at a glance!

[9]

With the reason of Paine he encounters the foe;
 With the might of old Luther he charges the van;
 With the skill of an Ingersoll strikes he the blow;
 And his watchword is "God and the freedom of man!"

[10]

Through the ages long past, in the progress of Time,
 There are millions of relics mankind have adored,
 But none e'er so dear in the countries of Crime,
 To the warriors of Truth, as old Chiniquy's sword!

[11]

And while the long ages record his career,
 Let us sing to the hero of numberless scars,
 And the children of freemen shall smile when they hear
 Of the chivalrous sage of the Catholic wars!

XXI

Now shift the chords along the quivering Lyre,
 And strike, exultant, all her notes of fire.—
 Awake, McComas! friend of youthful days!
 To thee I turn, amid the tuneful lays,—
 For thee suspend the lover's tale of woe,
 And strike the shadows from the Long Ago!
 On many an evening, when the blazing Sun
 The daily circle of the skies had run,
 With thee, my friend! I've watched the day's decline,
 And it its early doom foreshadowed mine!
 Yes, seated round upon the grassy yard,
 The ripened Lawyer and the budding Bard
 To thread the mysteries of old Time began,
 And pondered boldly on the doom of Man!
 The destiny that thwarts the youthful sage,
 And mocks the wisdom of expiring Age,
 Which now appears, now disappears from sight,
 Now gleams in fable, now dissolves in Night!
 This fired the prophets of Judean lore,
 And burned, exultant, all the bosom's core;
 This in old Plato kindled heavenly fire,
 This poured its charms on Alighieri's Lyre,
 This still the theme we hail as most divine,
 When Suns, descending, bring the day's decline;
 And seated round upon the grassy yard,
 The ripened Lawyer and the budding Bard
 Tear back the veil that shades the doom of Man,—
 A mighty problem—but a hidden plan!

XXII

But what the sequel? what has either learned?
 Each swayed to other, then to self returned;
 With Paine your Bible, ignorance your rod,
 The age of Reason is the reign of God!
 There in the midst of all their pomp and power,
 Old Superstitions hail their dying hour;
 Their sinking Myths, with all their Demons dire,
 Shrink from the sight—and in a blaze expire!
 And Faith, unseated from her shining Rock,
 No longer able to withstand the shock,
 Drops from her nerveless hand the shattered fires,
 And in a moment trembles—and expires!

XXIII

But I have found all humankind the same,
 In every land, and called by every name;
 In every age prophetic souls will dare
 The walls of Time—and gaze the empty air!
 A burning thought by Jewish Seer engraved,
 The cry for Liberty in lands enslaved,
 The voice of Right, the impudence of Wrong,—
 All, all to me the same inspiring song!
 Isaiah's visions lie beside my Paine,
 And him, the sage, who cried—" 'Tis all in vain!"
 Uzzean Job, the proverb of all Time,
 And blind old Milton of the eternal rhyme,
 And Volney's Ruins—each a glorious name!
 Their means are various—but their end the same!

XXIV

Shall I proscribe whole nations at a blow,
 Whose honest reasoning failed so long ago?
 I, who have cherished as a heavenly guest
 A Faith that whispers—"All is for the best!"
 'Tis this that nerved the bard of Man to write
 The eternal truth—"Whatever is, is right!"
 This harmonizes God's eternal plan;
 This "justifies the ways of God to Man;"
 This the proud Rock whose highest summit bears
 The light of ages to the future years!
 The new philosophy that nerves the brain,
 And teaches man to bear his load of pain,

And reconciles immortal Man to doom,—
And hails his God—or here, or in the tomb!

XXV

But what remains, you ask, when life is o'er,
And Man beholds his kindred Man no more?
See budding Nature at the approach of spring!
See thousand birds attest the fledging wing!
The ox, now weary of his winter stall,
Ascends the hill, and climbs the mountains tall;
Unbound Life in myriad forms appears,
And tepid music steals along the spheres—
And lo! the Sun, from out his wintry bed,
Arises, kingly, like the mighty dead!
See him advance along the stairs of Time!
Unusual vigor marks his path sumlime!
Unchecked, he holds his proud career along,
And Persians hail him with delightful song,
Pleased to be lashed beneath his firey rod,—
The burning scepter of the beamy God!

XXVI

But lo! the monarch of the summer's powers
Descends the South—and fades along the hours!
The Equinox in regal splendor passed.
The Winter Solstice is his home at last;—
See Nature now, in yellow robes attired!
See now the birds all scattered and retired!
No more the ground with teeming life appears,
Or tepid music steals along the spheres!
The band of Death appears—a horrid sight—
And Life, affrighted, yields - and all is Night!
The lamp is out, the fire no longer burns,
And vegetation now to dust returns,—
And ebon darkness overhangs the plan
Of dying Nature and surviving Man!

XXVII

As Nature kindles 'neath the God of Day,
So Man, while youthful vigor holds its sway;
But youth declines, and withering Age can trace
A horrid picture on a smiling face!
The Sun of Life, with all its dazzling light,
Too soon will darken in the shades of Night!

It sets—and all that once was warm with fires
 Of heavenly birth now trembles and expires!
 Back to its God returns the “vital spark!”
 The wheel of Being breaks—and all is dark!

XXVIII

To you, my friend! who can recall the scenes
 Of sixty years, and all that intervenes,
 This certain change which time is sure to bring
 Has lost the terror of its burning sting!
 But when the vigor of our youthful lives
 Expires at noon, and not a spark survives,
 'Tis then the soul in all its fountains stirs,
 And all the lore of all the sages errs!
 'Tis then we sit upon the grassy yard,
 The ripened Lawyer and the budding Bard,
 Amid the mazes of this wondrous plan,
 And ponder *feebly* on the doom of Man!
 The destiny that thwarts the youthful sage,
 And mocks the wisdom of expiring Age,
 Which now appears, now disappears from sight,
 Now gleams in fable, now dissolves in Night!
 'Tis now we halt amid the proud careers
 Of sophists, sages and philosophers,
 And hail the truth with Athens' wisest son—
 “*All that we know is nothing can be known!*”

XXIX

But to my theme, long laid aside to scan
 The misty mazes of the doom of Man!
 Now fell the shades of evening from the West;
 Another Sun is sinking now to rest;
 The Fair Medora stalks along the sands,
 Bewails her fate, and wrings her clenched hands.
 “Is that his love?” she said, and paused to sigh;
 The big tears glistening in her dark-blue eye;
 “To day my sire would have me Roderick's bride,—
 The subtle fiend that cast me on the tide!
 And long ere now the bridal feast is spread,
 The which to taste had made me worse than dead!
 But whose you boat that flies along the wave,
 And holds its course toward this detested cave?
 'Tis not the fiend who cast me here ashore,—
 Too proudly foam the waves along the oar!

Ev'n as the swallow skims along the skies,
 So flies the bark—majestic as it flies;
 Ev'n as a meteor rushes through the night,
 So flies the skiff—well-pleasing to the sight;
 Ev'n as a young Niagara to the soul,
 So far behind, the frothy billows roll!"
 She said, and sank. Endymion made reply,
 The fires of vengeance kindling in his eye—
 "Haste to the boat! Our lives are now at stake!
 A bloody omen darkens o'er the lake!"
 He said in haste. The maid began to say,
 "My sire would have me Roderick's bride to-day!"
 He pressed her hand, and felt the electric spell,
 And broke the silence—"Roderick's now in Hell!
 A burning conscience hurled him o'er the road—
 His soul went quivering to its long abode!"
 On board the vessel now, they climb the stern;
 The flying oars the frothy billows churn;
 Around the cape, then fade along the sight,
 As swiftest meteors rushing through the night!
 Meanwhile the dread pursuers bend their course,
 And crying, "Life for life, and force for force!"
 And Fate is big with deeds of daring might,
 Along that lake that glistens in the night,—
 That lake, surrounded by the silent woods,
 And fed by waters of unnumbered floods,
 A spacious sheet! in circuit several miles!
 O'erhung by cliffs, and interspersed with isles!

XXX

And now, ye Muses! from your still abodes,
 Where long ye held companionship with Gods,
 If mortal songs may claim your gifts again,
 Receive this verse and consecrate the strain!
 And grant that though Oblivion blot my name,
 And all its record from the page of Fame;
 Though Time shall wear my very bones to dust,
 And ev'n my tomb contain no honored bust—
 Endymion's story still shall charm the ear,
 And strike responsive chords of Hope and Fear!

XXXI

And though I hope not hence unscathed to go,
 Who tread the field, unarmed to meet the foe,

A simple tale I have assayed to tell ;
Forbid who shall?—not critics though they swell
Themselves with rage, and call me what they will !
Their breath is poison, but it turns the mill !
And far in future, if the love of Song,
That balance-wheel betwixt the Right and Wrong,
If love, or hunger, bid me write again,
And trace Endymion o'er the watery plain—
To Nature's self—not critics--shall I bow,
And lift the cares I bid farewell to now !
But now we pause,—farewell ye fields of Song !
On other fields I trace my paths along !
The rocky fountains call me forth again,
The flowing meadows, and the wooded plain,
The waving corn, the Sou's supreme delight,
The wealth that grows with each successive night,
The friendly chat, the neighbors on the way,
And every Sunday shines a Sabbath day !

[TO BE CONTINUED.]





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