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ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA.

An Anecdote from Plutarch.

GLORIOUS was the marble hall
 With the sight and sound of festival,
 For autumn had sent its golden hoard,
 And summer its flowers, to grace the board.
 Inside and out the goblets shine,
 Outside with gems, inside with wine ;
 And silver lamps shed round their light
 Like the moonrise on an eastern night.
 Gay laughs were heard ; when these were mute
 Came a voluptuous song and lute ;
 And fair nymphs floated round, whose feet
 Were light as the air on which they beat ;
 Their steps had no sound, they moved along
 Like spirits that lived in the breath of song.

Beneath the canopy's purple sweep,
 Like a sunset cloud on the twilight deep,
 Sate the king of the feast, stately and tall,
 Who look'd what he was, the lord of all.
 A glorious scar was upon his brow,
 And furrows that time and care will plough.
 His battle-suns had left their soil,
 And traces of tempest and traces of toil ;
 Yet was he one for whom woman's sigh
 Breathes its deepest idolatry.
 His that soft and worshipping air
 She loves so well her lover should wear ;
 His that low and pleading tone
 That makes the yielding heart its own ;
 And, more than all, his was the fame
 That victory flings on the soldier's name.

Yet those meanings high that speak,
 Scorn on the lip, fire on the cheek,
 Tell of somewhat above such scenes as these,
 With their wasting and midnight revelries.
 Albeit he drain'd the purple bowl,
 And heard the song till they madden'd his soul ;
 Yet his forehead grew pale, and then it burn'd,
 As if in disdain from the feast he turn'd ;
 And his inward thoughts sought out a home
 And dwelt on thy stately memory, Rome.
 But his glance met hers beside, and again
 His spirit clung to its precious chain.

With haughty brow, and regal hand,
 As born but for worship and command,
 Yet with smiles that told she knew full well
 The power of woman's softest spell,
 Leant that Egyptian queen : a braid
 Of jewels shone 'mid her dark hair's shade ;
 One pearl on her forehead hung, whose gem
 Was worth a monarch's diadem,
 And an emerald cestus bound the fold
 Of her robe that shone with purple and gold.
 All spoke of pomp, all spoke of pride,
 And yet they were as nothing beside
 Her radiant cheek, her flashing eye,
 For their's was beauty's regality.

Antony and Cleopatra.

It was not that every feature apart,
 Seem'd as if carved by the sculptor's art.
 It was not the marble brow, nor the hair
 That lay in its jewel-starr'd midnight there ;
 Nor her neck, like the swan's, for grace and whiteness,
 Nor her step, like the wind of the south for lightness ;
 But it was a nameless spell, like the one
 That makes the Opal so fair a stone,
 'The spell of change:—for a little while
 Her red lip shone with its summer smile—
 You look'd again, and that smile was fled,
 Sadness and softness were there instead.
 This moment all bounding gaiety,
 With a laugh that seem'd the heart's echo to be ;
 Now it was grace and mirth, and now
 It was princely step and lofty brow ;
 By turns the woman and the queen,
 And each as the other had never been.

—But on her lip, and cheek, and brow,
 Were traces that wildest passions avow,
 All that a southern sun and sky
 Could light in the heart, and flash from the eye ;
 A spirit that might by turns be led
 To all we love, and all we dread.
 And in that eye darkness and light
 Mingled, like her own climate's night,
 Till even he on her bosom leaning,
 Shrank at times from its fiery meaning.

There was a cloud on that warrior's face,
 That wine, music, smiles, could not quite erase :
 He sat on a rich and royal throne,
 But a fear would pass that he sat there alone.
 He stood not now on his native land,
 With kinsman and friends at his red right hand ;
 And the goblet pass'd unkiss'd, till the brim
 Had been touch'd by another as surety for him.

She, his enchantress, mark'd his fear,
 But she let not her secret thought appear.
 Wreath'd with her hair were crimson flowers,
 The brightest that form the lotus bowers ;—
 She pluck'd two buds, and fill'd them with wine,
 And, laughing said, “ this pledge be mine !”

Her smile shone over their bloom like a charm,
 He raised them up, but she caught his arm,
 And bade them bring to the festive hall
 One doom'd to death, a criminal.

He drank of the wine, he gasped for breath,
 For those bright, but poison'd flowers, held death ;
 And turn'd she to Antony with the wreath,
 While her haughty smile hid the sigh beneath,
 “ Where had thy life been at this hour,
 Had not my Love been more than my Power ?
 —Away, if thou fearest,—love never must,
 Never can live with one shade of distrust.”

L. E. L.

SONG.

Oh breathe not of love,
Or breathe not to me,
If constant for aye
Must your love-motto be.
Where are the things
The fairest on earth ;
Is it not in their change
That their beauty has birth ?
The neck of the peacock,
The iris's dyes,
The light in the opal,
The April-day skies :—
Would they be lovely,
As all of them are,
But for the chance
And the change that are there ?
Breathe no vow to me,
I will give none of mine ;
Love must light in an instant,
As quickly decline.
His blushes, his sighs,
Are bewildering things ;
Then away with his fetters,
And give me his wings.

L. E. L.

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- IDEAL LIKENESSES.

Ariadne.

A SWEET but happy looking face, the mouth
 Seem'd a rose opening to the pleasant south,
 Giving sweets, stealing sunshine; it was gay
 As it could smile e'en sorrow's self away;
 The curls were all thrown back as not allow'd
 To shed o'er that young brow, the slightest cloud;
 From the fair forehead's height, they downward roll'd
 A sunny stream, floating with waves of gold;
 A wreath of vine-leaves bound it, but the wind
 Kiss'd the stray ringlets it had not confined.
 Too beautiful for earth, the sky had given
 Her eye and cheek the colouring of heaven,
 Blue, the clear blue upon an April sky,
 Red, the first red the morning blushes dye:
 Her downcast look at times wore pensiveness,
 But tender more than sorrowful, as less
 She had known than dreamed woe, as her chief grief
 Had been a fading flower, a falling leaf.
 Her song was as the red wine sparkling up,
 Gaily o'erflowing from a festal cup.
 Her step was light as wont to move along
 To the gay cymbal and the choral song;
 Her laugh was glad as one who rather chose
 To dwell upon life's pleasures, than life's woes.
 And this was she whom Theseus left to pine,
 And mingle with her salt tears the salt brine;
 Her face was all too bright for tears, she gave
 Sighs to the wind, and weeping to the wave,
 And left a lesson unto after-times,
 Too little dwelt upon in minstrel rhymes,
 A lesson how inconstancy should be
 Repaid again by like inconstancy.

IDEAL LIKENESSES.

Sappho.

Dark, passionate, though beautiful, the eye
 Was as the lightning of the stormy sky
 Flashing through darkness ; light and shadow blent
 Workings of the mind's troubled element :
 You did not mark the features, could not trace
 What hue, what outline, was upon that face ;
 Even while present, indistinct it seem'd,
 Like that of which we have but only dream'd.
 You saw a hurried hand fling back the hair
 Like tempest clouds roll'd back upon the air.
 Still midnight was beneath, that haughty brow
 Darken'd with thoughts to which it would not bow—
 Midnight, albeit a starry one, the light
 Meteor or planet still was that of night.
 She had a dangerous gift, though genius be
 All this earth boasts of immortality.
 It is too heavenly to suit that earth,
 The spirit perishes with its fatal birth ;
 This mingling fire and water, soul and clay,
 The one must make the other one its prey.
 Her heart sufficed not to itself, such mind
 Will shrink such utter loneliness to find,
 As it must in its range of burning thought,
 Will sigh above the ruins it has wrought,
 False fancies, prejudice, affections vain,
 Until it seeks to wear again the chain

Ideal Likenesses.

Itself has broken, so that it could be
Less desolate, although no longer free.
She loved! again her ardent soul was buoy'd
On Hope's bright wings, above life's dreary void
Again its fond illusions were received,
Centred in one the dearest yet believed ;
It ended as illusions ever must,
The shining temple prostrate dust to dust.
Look on that brow, is it not stamp'd with pride?
How might it brook the grief it could not hide!
Look on that lip, it has a sad sweet smile,
How may it brook to feel alone the while!
Overhead was the storm, beneath the sea,
And Love and Genius found their destiny—
Despair and Death.

IDEAL LIKENESSES.

Erinna.

Fashion'd by Nature in her gentlest mood,
Almost for human brow too fair, too good ;
'Twas a sweet face, a face of smiles, of tears,
Of all that soothes and softens, wins, endears ;
Bearing the omen of its early fate :—
The rose upon her lip was delicate,
Her youthful cheek was pale, and all too plain
Was seen the azure wandering of the vein,
That shone in the clear temple, as if care,
Wasting to sickness, had been working there.
Erinna, she who died like her own song,
Passing away soon, yet remember'd long ;
Her heart and lip were music, albeit one
Who marvell'd at what her sweet self had done ;
Who breathed for Love, and pined to find that **Fame**
In answer to her lute's soft summons came ;
See, the eye droops in sadness, as to shun
That which it dared not gaze on, **Glory's sun.**

IDEAL LIKENESSES.

Corinna.

There is an antique gem on which her brow
 Retains its graven beauty, even now:
 Her hair is braided, but one curl behind
 Floats as enamour'd of the summer wind;
 The dress is simple, as she were too fair
 To even think of beauty's own sweet care;
 The lip and brow are contrasts, one so fraught
 With pride, the melancholy pride of thought,
 Conscious of its own power, yet forced to know
 How very little way that power will go;
 Regretting while too proud of the fine mind,
 Which raises but to part it from its kind.—
 But the sweet mouth had nothing of all this—
 It was a mouth the bee had learnt to kiss,
 For her young sister, telling though now mute,
 How soft an echo it was to the lute.
 The one spoke genius in its high revealing,
 The other smiled a woman's gentler feeling.
 It was a lovely face, the Greek outline
 Flowing yet delicate and feminine.
 The glorious lightning of the kindled eye,
 Raised as it communed with its native sky;
 A lovely face, the spirit's fitting shrine,
 The one almost, the other quite divine.

L. E. I.

SONG.

Oh say not that my heart is dead,
 For that my lip has learn'd
 A lesson from the lapse of time,
 Which it would once have spurn'd.

I must live with the false, the cold,
 And I must seem like them ;
 And thought and feeling wear the mask
 That yet they most condemn.

Oh ! say not that my words are false ;
 They may not dare be true :
 What am I, that I should forsake
 The path which all pursue ?

'Tis sad to see how all around
 To gilded idols kneel ;
 And strive to be like one of those
 Who cannot think or feel.

Alas ! alas ! to pass in peace
 Through a world so chill, so lone,
 The throbbing pulses should be steel,
 And the heart should be stone !

L. E. L.

(528)

THE CHARMED FOUNTAIN.

O'ER the stream a willow tree
 Leant, as if foredoom'd to be
 Sign of sorrow, meant to wave
 O'er some love-lorn maiden's grave.
 Yet bowed branch, and pallid leaf,
 Here are not the sign of grief.
 Underneath, the bank is set
 With the azure violet,
 Each one bending like a bride,
 Sweet and secret sigh to hide.
 In a chestnut tree's green rest
 Has the nightingale a nest,
 Whence his richest tones come sweeping,
 Like a lute's delicious weeping,
 What time the pale moon discloses
 His seraglio of wild roses,
 While the falling dewdrops gem
 Each sultana's diadem.
 But 'tis not for its fair flowers,
 Though they breathe of June's first hours,
 Not for its blue violet wreath,
 For its gale's Arabian breath,
 For its sunshine, for its shade,
 Not for the sweet music made
 By the song its tenants sing,
 Would you seek that grove-hid spring.

But a curious sprite, whose dwelling
 Is in the rich numbers swelling
 From the bosom of some shell
 Treasured in an ocean cell;
 Or in the rich breathing sent
 On the sunny element,
 From the rose, as to complain
 Of the April's sudden rain;
 Or in the red lights that streak
 Maiden's lip or burning cheek:—
 Some such sprite has laid a spell
 On the waters of this well.
 Lover, if thy heart has known
 One pure faith, and one alone,
 Part the boughs aside, nor fear
 That thy step should enter here;
 For the fond and for the true
 Spreads the fount its mirror blue.
 But if thy false heart has changed,
 Or thy fickle eye has ranged,
 Take thy falsehood hence and flee,
 It will yield no wave for thee.

L. E. L.



SONG.

I vow'd a vow of faith to thee,
By the red rose of June ;
I vow'd it by the rainbow,
And by the silver moon.
The red rose is departed,
Fresh ones are blooming there ;
The rainbow has not left a shade
Upon the azure air.
And the crescent moon has swell'd
Into a golden round,
And a sign of chance and change
On each and all are found.
Then say not I have broken
The faith I vow'd to thee ;
Change was made for all on earth,—
Was it not made for me?

L. E. L.