

For years—I cannot count them o'er,
I lost their long and heavy score,
When my last brother droop'd and died,
And I lay living by his side.

III.

They chain'd us each to a column stone,
And we were three—yet, each alone;
We could not move a single pace,
We could not see each other's face,
But with that pale and livid light
That made us strangers in our sight:
And thus together—yet apart,
Fetter'd in hand, but join'd in heart,
'T was still some solace, in the dearth
Of the pure elements of earth,
To hearken to each other's speech,
And each turn comforter to each
With some new hope, or legend old,
Or song heroically bold;
But even these at length grew cold.
Our voices took a dreary tone,
An echo of the dungeon stone,
 A grating sound, not full and free,
 As they of yore were wont to be:
 It might be fancy, but to me
They never sounded like our own.

IV.

I was the eldest of the three,
 And to uphold and cheer the rest
 I ought to do—and did my best—
And each did well in his degree.
 The youngest, whom my father loved,
Because our mother's brow was given
To him, with eyes as blue as heaven—
 For him my soul was sorely moved;
And truly might it be distress'd
To see such bird in such a nest;
For he was beautiful as day—
 (When day was beautiful to me
 As to young eagles, being free)—
 A polar day, which will not see
A sunset till its summer's gone,
 Its sleepless summer of long light,
The snow-clad offspring of the sun:
 And thus he was as pure and bright,
And in his natural spirit gay,
With tears for nought but others' ills,
And then they flow'd like mountain rills,
Unless he could assuage the woe
Which he abhorr'd to view below.

V.

The other was as pure of mind,
But form'd to combat with his kind;
Strong in his frame, and of a mood
Which 'gainst the world in war had stood,
And perish'd in the foremost rank
 With joy:—but not in chains to pine:
His spirit wither'd with their clank,
 I saw it silently decline—
 And so perchance in sooth did mine:
But yet I forced it on to cheer
Those relics of a home so dear.

He was a hunter of the hills,
 Had follow'd there the deer and wolf;
 To him his dungeon was a gulf,
And fetter'd feet the worst of ills.

VI.

Lake Lemán lies by Chillon's walls:
A thousand feet in depth below
Its massy waters meet and flow;
Thus much the fathom-line was sent
From Chillon's snow-white battlement,
 Which round about the wave inthrals:
A double dungeon wall and wave
Have made—and like a living grave
Below the surface of the lake
The dark vault lies wherein we lay,
We heard it ripple night and day;
 Sounding o'er our heads it knock'd;
And I have felt the winter's spray
Wash through the bars when winds were high
And wanton in the happy sky;
 And then the very rock hath rock'd,
 And I have felt it shake, unshock'd,
Because I could have smiled to see
The death that would have set me free.

VII.

I said my nearer brother pined,
I said his mighty heart declined,
He loathed and put away his food;
It was not that 't was coarse and rude,
For we were used to hunter's fare,
And for the like had little care:
The milk drawn from the mountain goat
Was changed for water from the moat,
Our bread was such as captives' tears
Have moisten'd many a thousand years,
Since man first pent his fellow men
Like brutes within an iron den;
But what were these to us or him?
These wasted not his heart or limb;
My brother's soul was of that mould
Which in a palace had grown cold,
Had his free breathing been denied
The range of the steep mountain's side;
But why delay the truth?—he died.
I saw, and could not hold his head,
Nor reach his dying hand—nor dead,—
Though hard I strove, but strove in vain,
To rend and gnash my bonds in twain.
He died, and they unlock'd his chain,
And scoop'd for him a shallow grave
Even from the cold earth of our cave,
I begg'd them as a boon to lay
His corse in dust whereon the day
Might shine—it was a foolish thought,
But then within my brain it wrought,
That even in death his freeborn breast
In such a dungeon could not rest.
I might have spared my idle prayer—
They coldly laugh'd, and laid him there:
The flat and turfless earth above
The being we so much did love;
His empty chain above it leant,
Such murder's fitting monument!

VIII.

But he, the favourite and the flower,
 Most cherish'd since his natal hour,
 His mother's image in fair face,
 The infant love of all his race,
 His martyr'd father's dearest thought,
 My latest care, for whom I sought
 To hoard my life, that his might be
 Less wretched now, and one day free ;
 He, too, who yet had held untired
 A spirit natural or inspired—
 He, too, was struck, and day by day
 Was wither'd on the stalk away.
 Oh, God! it is a fearful thing
 To see the human soul take wing
 In any shape, in any mood :
 I've seen it rushing forth in blood,
 I've seen it on the breaking ocean
 Strive with a swoln convulsive motion,
 I've seen the sick and ghastly bed
 Of Sin delirious with its dread ;
 But these were horrors—this was woe
 Unmix'd with such—but sure and slow :
 He faded, and so calm and meek,
 So softly worn, so sweetly weak,
 So tearless, yet so tender, kind,
 And grieved for those he left behind ;
 With all the while a cheek whose bloom
 Was as a mockery of the tomb,
 Whose tints as gently sunk away
 As a departing rainbow's ray ;
 An eye of most transparent light,
 That almost made the dungeon bright,
 And not a word of murmur, not
 A groan o'er his untimely lot,—
 A little talk of better days,
 A little hope my own to raise,
 For I was sunk in silence—lost
 In this last loss, of all the most ;
 And then the sighs he would suppress
 Of fainting nature's feebleness,
 More slowly drawn, grew less and less :
 I listen'd, but I could not hear ;
 I call'd, for I was wild with fear ;
 I knew 't was hopeless, but my dread
 Would not be thus admonished ;
 I call'd, and thought I heard a sound—
 I burst my chain with one strong bound,
 And rush'd to him :—I found him not,
 I only stirr'd in this black spot,
 I only lived, I only drew
 The accursed breath of dungeon-dew ;
 The last, the sole, the dearest link
 Between me and the eternal brink,
 Which bound me to my failing race,
 Was broken in this fatal place.
 One on the earth, and one beneath—
 My brothers—both had ceased to breathe :
 I took that hand which lay so still,
 Alas! my own was full as chill ;
 I had not strength to stir, or strive,
 But felt that I was still alive—

A frantic feeling, when we know
 That what we love shall ne'er be so.

I know not why
 I could not die,
 I had no earthly hope but faith,
 And that forbade a selfish death.

IX.

What next befell me then and there
 I know not well—I never knew—
 First came the loss of light, and air,
 And then of darkness too :
 I had no thought, no feeling—none—
 Among the stones I stood a stone,
 And was, scarce conscious what I wist,
 As shrubless crags within the mist ;
 For all was blank, and bleak, and grey ;
 It was not night, it was not day ;
 It was not even the dungeon-light,
 So hateful to my heavy sight,
 But vacancy absorbing space,
 And fixedness without a place ;
 There were no stars, no earth, no time,
 No check, no change, no good, no crime,
 But silence, and a stirless breath
 Which neither was of life nor death ;
 A sea of stagnant idleness,
 Blind, boundless, mute, and motionless !

X.

A light broke in upon my brain,—
 It was the carol of a bird ;
 It ceased, and then it came again,
 The sweetest song ear ever heard,
 And mine was thankful till my eyes
 Ran over with the glad surprise,
 And they that moment could not see
 I was the mate of misery ;
 But then by dull degrees came back
 My senses to their wonted track ;
 I saw the dungeon walls and floor
 Close slowly round me as before,
 I saw the glimmer of the sun
 Creeping as it before had done,
 But through the crevice where it came
 That bird was perch'd, as fond and tame,
 And tamer than upon the tree ;
 A lovely bird, with azure wings,
 And song that said a thousand things,
 And seem'd to say them all for me !
 I never saw its like before,
 I ne'er shall see its likeness more :
 It seem'd like me to want a mate,
 But was not half so desolate,
 And it was come to love me when
 None lived to love me so again,
 And cheering from my dungeon's brink,
 Had brought me back to feel and think.
 I know not if it late were free,
 Or broke its cage to perch on mine,
 But knowing well captivity,
 Sweet bird! I could not wish for thine !
 Or if it were, in winged guise,
 A visitant from Paradise ;

For—Heaven forgive that thought! the while
Which made me both to weep and smile—
I sometimes deem'd that it might be
My brother's soul come down to me;
But then at last away it flew,
And then 't was mortal well I knew,
For he would never thus have flown,
And left me twice so doubly lone,
Lone as the corse within its shroud,
Lone as a solitary cloud,—

A single cloud on a sunny day,
While all the rest of heaven is clear,
A frown upon the atmosphere,
That hath no business to appear

When skies are blue, and earth is gay.

XI.

A kind of change came in my fate,
My keepers grew compassionate;
I know not what had made them so,
They were inured to sights of woe,
But so it was:—my broken chain
With links unfasten'd did remain,
And it was liberty to stride
Along my cell from side to side,
And up and down, and then athwart,
And tread it over every part;
And round the pillars one by one,
Returning where my walk begun,
Avoiding only, as I trod,
My brothers' graves without a sod;
For if I thought with heedless tread
My step profaned their lowly bed,
My breath came gaspingly and thick,
And my crush'd heart fell blind and sick.

XII.

I made a footing in the wall,
It was not therefrom to escape,
For I had buried one and all
Who loved me in a human shape;
And the whole earth would henceforth be
A wider prison unto me:
No child, no sire, no kin had I,
No partner in my misery;
I thought of this, and I was glad,
For thought of them had made me mad;
But I was curious to ascend
To my barr'd windows, and to bend
Once more, upon the mountains high,
The quiet of a loving eye.

XIII.

I saw them, and they were the same,
They were not changed like me in frame;
I saw their thousand years of snow
On high—their wide long lake below,
And the blue Rhone in fullest flow;

I heard the torrents leap and gush
O'er channell'd rock and broken bush;
I saw the white-wall'd distant town,
And whiter sails go skimming down;
And then there was a little isle,
Which in my very face did smile,
The only one in view;
A small green isle, it seem'd no more,
Scarce broader than my dungeon floor,
But in it there were three tall trees,
And o'er it blew the mountain breeze,
And by it there were waters flowing,
And on it there were young flowers growing,
Of gentle breath and hue.

The fish swam by the castle wall,
And they seem'd joyous each and all;
The eagle rode the rising blast,
Methought he never flew so fast,
As then to me he seem'd to fly;
And then new tears came in my eye,
And I felt troubled—and would fain
I had not left my recent chain;
And when I did descend again,
The darkness of my dim abode
Fell on me as a heavy load;
It was as is a new-dug grave,
Closing o'er one we sought to save,—
And yet my glance, too much opprest,
Had almost need of such a rest.

XIV.

It might be months, or years, or days,
I kept no count, I took no note,
I had no hope my eyes to raise,
And clear them of their dreary mote;
At last men came to set me free;
I ask'd not why, and reck'd not where;
It was at length the same to me,
Fetter'd or fetterless to be,
I learn'd to love despair.
And thus when they appear'd at last,
And all my bonds aside were cast,
These heavy walls to me had grown
A hermitage—and all my own!
And half I felt as they were come
To tear me from a second home:
With spiders I had friendship made,
And watch'd them in their sullen trade,
Had seen the mice by moonlight play,
And why should I feel less than they?
We were all inmates of one place,
And I, the monarch of each race,
Had power to kill—yet, strange to tell!
In quiet we had learn'd to dwell;
My very chains and I grew friends,
So much a long communion tends
To make us what we are:—even I
Regain'd my freedom with a sigh.

MAZEPPA.

ADVERTISEMENT.

"CELUI qui remplissait alors cette place était un gentilhomme Polonais, nommé Mazeppa, né dans le palatinat de Podolie : il avait été élevé page de Jean Casimir, et avait pris à sa cour quelque teinture des belles-lettres. Une intrigue qu'il eut dans sa jeunesse avec la femme d'un gentilhomme Polonais ayant été découverte, le mari le fit lier tout nu sur un cheval farouche, et le laissa aller en cet état. Le cheval, qui était du pays de l'Ukraine, y retourna, et y porta Mazeppa, demi-mort de fatigue et de faim. Quelques paysans le secoururent : il resta longtems parmi eux, et se signala dans plusieurs courses contre les Tartares. La supériorité de ses lumières lui donna une grande considération parmi les Cosaques : sa réputation s'augmentant de jour en jour obligea le Czar à le faire Prince de l'Ukraine."—VOLTAIRE, *Hist. de Charles XII.* p. 196.

"Le roi fuyant, et poursuivi, eut son cheval tué sous lui ; le Colonel Gieta, blessé, et perdant tout son sang, lui donna le sien. Ainsi on remit deux fois à cheval, dans sa fuite, ce conquérant qui n'avait pu y monter pendant la bataille."—P. 216.

"Le roi alla par un autre chemin avec quelques cavaliers. Le carrosse, où il était, rompit dans la marche ; on le remit à cheval. Pour comble de disgrâce, il s'égara pendant la nuit dans un bois ; là, son courage ne pouvant plus suppléer à ses forces épuisées, les douleurs de sa blessure devenues plus insupportables par la fatigue, son cheval étant tombé de lassitude, il se coucha quelques heures au pied d'un arbre, en danger d'être surpris à tout moment par les vainqueurs, qui le cherchaient de tous côtés."—P. 218.

I.

'T WAS after dread Pultowa's day,
When fortune left the royal Swede,
Around a slaughter'd army lay,
No more to combat and to bleed.
The power and glory of the war,
Faithless as their vain votaries, men,
Had pass'd to the triumphant Czar,
And Moscow's walls were safe again,
Until a day more dark and drear,
And a more memorable year,
Should give to slaughter and to shame
A mightier host and haughtier name ;
A greater wreck, a deeper fall,
A shock to one—a thunderbolt to all.

II.

Such was the hazard of the die ;
The wounded Charles was taught to fly
By day and night through field and flood,
Stain'd with his own and subjects' blood ;
For thousands fell that flight to aid :
And not a voice was heard t' upbraid
Ambition in his humbled hour,
When truth had nought to dread from power.
His horse was slain, and Gieta gave
His own—and died the Russians' slave.
This too sinks after many a league
Of well sustain'd but vain fatigue ;
And in the depth of forests, darkling—
The watch-fires in the distance sparkling—
The beacons of surrounding foes—
A king must lay his limbs at length.
Are these the laurels and repose
For which the nations strain their strength?

They laid him by a savage tree,
In outworn nature's agony ;
His wounds were stiff, his limbs were stark ;
The heavy hour was chill and dark ;
The fever in his blood forbade
A transient slumber's fitful aid :
And thus it was ; but yet through all,
Kinglike the monarch bore his fall,
And made, in this extreme of ill,
His pangs the vassals of his will :
All silent and subdued were they,
As once the nations round him lay.

III.

A band of chiefs !—alas ! how few,
Since but the fleeting of a day
Had thinn'd it ; but this wreck was true
And chivalrous : upon the clay
Each sate him down, all sad and mute,
Beside his monarch and his steed ;
For danger levels man and brute,
And all are fellows in their need.
Among the rest, Mazeppa made
His pillow in an old oak's shade—
Himself as rough, and scarce less old,
The Ukraine's Hetman, calm and bold ;
But first, outspent with this long course,
The Cossack prince rubb'd down his horse,
And made for him a leafy bed,
And smooth'd his fetlocks and his mane,
And slack'd his girth, and stripp'd his rein,
And joy'd to see how well he fed ;
For until now he had the dread
His wearied courser might refuse
To browse beneath the midnight dews :

But he was hardy as his lord,
 And little cared for bed and board ;
 But spirited and docile too,
 Whate'er was to be done, would do.
 Shaggy and swift, and strong of limb,
 All Tartar-like he carried him ;
 Obey'd his voice, and came to call,
 And knew him in the midst of all :
 Though thousands were around,—and Night,
 Without a star, pursued her flight,—
 That steed from sunset until dawn
 His chief would follow like a fawn.

IV.

This done, Mazeppa spread his cloak,
 And laid his lance beneath his oak,
 Felt if his arms in order good
 The long day's march had well withstood—
 If still the powder fill'd the pan,
 And flints unloosen'd kept their lock—
 His sabre's hilt and scabbard felt,
 And whether they had chafed his belt ;
 And next the venerable man,
 From out his havresack and can,
 Prepared and spread his slender stock ;
 And to the monarch and his men
 The whole or portion offer'd then
 With far less of inquietude
 Than courtiers at a banquet would.
 And Charles of this his slender share
 With smiles partook a moment there,
 To force of cheer a greater show,
 And seem above both wounds and woe ;
 And then he said—" Of all our band,
 Though firm of heart and strong of hand,
 In skirmish, march, or forage, none
 Can less have said or more have done
 Than thee, Mazeppa ! on the earth
 So fit a pair had never birth,
 Since Alexander's days till now,
 As thy Bucephalus and thou :
 All Scythia's fame to thine should yield
 For pricking on o'er flood and field."
 Mazeppa answer'd—" Ill betide
 The school wherein I learn'd to ride !"
 Quoth Charles—" Old Hetman, wherefore so,
 Since thou hast learn'd the art so well ?"
 Mazeppa said—" 'T were long to tell ;
 And we have many a league to go,
 With every now and then a blow,
 And ten to one at least the foe,
 Before our steeds may graze at ease
 Beyond the swift Borysthenes :
 And, Sire, your limbs have need of rest,
 And I will be the sentinel
 Of this your troop."—" But I request,"
 Said Sweden's monarch, " thou wilt tell
 This tale of thine, and I may reap,
 Perchance, from this the boon of sleep ;
 For at this moment from my eyes
 The hope of present slumber flies."

" Well, Sire, with such a hope, I'll track
 My seventy years of memory back :

I think 't was in my twentieth spring,—
 Ay, 't was,—when Casimir was king—
 John Casimir,—I was his page
 Six summers, in my earlier age :
 A learned monarch, faith ! was he,
 And most unlike your majesty ;
 He made no wars, and did not gain
 New realms to lose them back again ;
 And (save debates in Warsaw's diet)
 He reign'd in most unseemly quiet ;
 Not that he had no cares to vex ;
 He loved the muses and the sex ;
 And sometimes these so froward are,
 They made him wish himself at war ;
 But soon his wrath being o'er, he took
 Another mistress, or new book :
 And then he gave prodigious fêtes—
 All Warsaw gather'd round his gates
 To gaze upon his splendid court,
 And dames, and chiefs, of princely port
 He was the Polish Solomon,
 So sung his poets, all but one,
 Who, being unpension'd, made a satire,
 And boasted that he could not flatter.
 It was a court of jousts and mimes,
 Where every courtier tried at rhymes ;
 Even I for once produced some verses,
 And sign'd my odes ' Despairing Thyrsis.'
 There was a certain Palatine,
 A count of far and high descent,
 Rich as a salt or silver mine ;
 And he was proud, ye may divine,
 As if from heaven he had been sent :
 He had such wealth in blood and ore
 As few could match beneath the throne ;
 And he would gaze upon his store,
 And o'er his pedigree would pore, ;
 Until by some confusion led,
 Which almost look'd like want of head,
 He thought their merits were his own.
 His wife was not of his opinion ;
 His junior she by thirty years,
 Grew daily tired of his dominion ;
 And, after wishes, hopes, and fears,
 To virtue a few farewell tears,
 A restless dream or two, some glances
 At Warsaw's youth, some songs, and dances,
 Awaited but the usual chances,
 Those happy accidents which render
 The coldest dames so very tender,
 To deck her Count with titles given,
 'T is said, as passports into heaven ;
 But, strange to say, they rarely boast
 Of these, who have deserved them most.

V.

" I was a goodly stripling then ;
 At seventy years I so may say,
 That there were few, or boys or men,
 Who, in my dawning time of day,
 Of vassal or of knight's degree,
 Could vie in vanities with me ;
 For I had strength, youth, gaiety,
 A port, not like to this ye see,

But smooth, as all is rugged now ;
 For time, and care, and war, have plough'd
 My very soul from out my brow ;
 And thus I should be disavow'd
 By all my kind and kin, could they
 Compare my day and yesterday ;
 This change was wrought, too, long ere age
 Had ta'en my features for his page ;
 With years, ye know, have not declined
 My strength, my courage, or my mind,
 Or at this hour I should not be
 Telling old tales beneath a tree,
 With starless skies my canopy.

But let me on : Theresa's form—
 Methinks it glides before me now,
 Between me and yon chestnut's bough,
 The memory is so quick and warm ;
 And yet I find no words to tell
 The shape of her I loved so well :
 She had the Asiatic eye,
 Such as our Turkish neighbourhood
 Hath mingled with our Polish blood,
 Dark as above us is the sky ;
 But through it stole a tender light,
 Like the first moonrise of midnight ;
 Large, dark, and swimming in the stream,
 Which seem'd to melt to its own beam ;
 All love, half languor, and half fire,
 Like saints that at the stake expire,
 And lift their raptured looks on high,
 As though it were a joy to die.

A brow like a midsummer lake,
 Transparent with the sun therein,
 When waves no murmur dare to make,
 And heaven beholds her face within.
 A cheek and lip—but why proceed ?
 I loved her then, I love her still ;
 And such as I am, love indeed
 In fierce extremes—in good and ill.
 But still we love even in our rage,
 And haunted to our very age
 With the vain shadow of the past,
 As is Mazeppa to the last.

VI.

" We met—we gazed—I saw, and sigh'd,
 She did not speak, and yet replied ;
 There are ten thousand tones and signs
 We hear and see, but none defines—
 Involuntary sparks of thought,
 Which strike from out the heart o'erwrought,
 And form a strange intelligence,
 Alike mysterious and intense,
 Which link the burning chain that binds,
 Without their will, young hearts and minds :
 Conveying, as the electric wire,
 We know not how, the absorbing fire.
 I saw, and sigh'd—in silence wept,
 And still reluctant distance kept,
 Until I was made known to her,
 And we might then and there confer
 Without suspicion—then, even then,
 I long'd, and was resolved to speak ;

8

But on my lips they died again,
 The accents tremulous and weak,
 Until one hour.—There is a game,
 A frivolous and foolish play,
 Wherewith we while away the day ;
 It is—I have forgot the name—
 And we to this, it seems, were set,
 By some strange chance, which I forget :
 I reck'd not if I won or lost,
 It was enough for me to be
 So near to hear, and oh ! to see
 The being whom I loved the most.
 I watch'd her as a sentinel,
 (May ours this dark night watch as well !)

Until I saw, and thus it was,
 That she was pensive, nor perceived
 Her occupation, nor was grieved
 Nor glad to lose or gain ; but still
 Play'd on for hours, as if her will
 Yet bound her to the place, though not
 That hers might be the winning lot.
 Then through my brain the thought did pass
 Even as a flash of lightning there,
 That there was something in her air
 Which would not doom me to despair ;
 And on the thought my words broke forth,
 All incoherent as they were ;
 Their eloquence was little worth,
 But yet she listen'd—'t is enough—
 Who listens once will listen twice ;
 Her heart, be sure, is not of ice,
 And one refusal no rebuff.

VII.

" I loved, and was beloved again—
 They tell me, Sire, you never knew
 Those gentle frailties ; if 't is true,
 I shorten all my joy or pain ;
 To you 't would seem absurd as vain ;
 But all men are not born to reign,
 Or o'er their passions, or as you
 Thus o'er themselves and nations too.
 I am—or rather *was*—a prince,
 A chief of thousands, and could lead
 Them on where each would foremost bleed ;
 But could not o'er myself evince
 The like control—But to resume :
 I loved, and was beloved again ;
 In sooth, it is a happy doom,
 But yet where happiest ends in pain.
 We met in secret, and the hour
 Which led me to that lady's bower
 Was fiery Expectation's dower.
 My days and nights were nothing—all
 Except that hour, which doth recall,
 In the long lapse from youth to age,
 No other like itself : I'd give
 The Ukraine back again to live
 It o'er once more, and be a page,
 The happy page, who was the lord
 Of one soft heart, and his own sword,
 And had no other gem nor wealth
 Save nature's gift of youth and health.
 We met in secret—doubly sweet,
 Some say, they find it so to meet ;

I know not that—I would have given
 My life but to have call'd her mine
 In the full view of earth and heaven;
 For I did oft and long repine
 That we could only meet by stealth.

VIII.

“ For lovers there are many eyes,
 And such there were on us; the devil
 On such occasions should be civil—
 The devil!—I'm loth to do him wrong,
 It might be some untoward saint,
 Who would not be at rest too long,
 But to his pious bile gave vent—
 But one fair night, some lurking spies
 Surprised and seized us both.
 The Count was something more than wroth—
 I was unarm'd; but if in steel,
 All cap-à-pie from head to heel,
 What 'gainst their numbers could I do?
 'T was near his castle, far away
 From city or from succour near,
 And almost on the break of day;
 I did not think to see another,
 My moments seem'd reduced to few;
 And with one prayer to Mary Mother,
 And, it may be, a saint or two,
 As I resign'd me to my fate,
 They led me to the castle gate:
 Theresa's doom I never knew,
 Our lot was henceforth separate.
 An angry man, ye may opine,
 Was he, the proud Count Palatine;
 And he had reason good to be,
 But he was most enraged lest such
 An accident should chance to touch
 Upon his future pedigree;
 Nor less amazed, that such a blot
 His noble 'scutcheon should have got,
 While he was highest of his line;
 Because unto himself he seem'd
 The first of men, nor less he deem'd
 In others' eyes, and most in mine.
 'Sdeath! with a *page*—perchance a king
 Had reconciled him to the thing;
 But with a stripling of a page—
 I felt, but cannot paint his rage.

IX.

“ ‘Bring forth the horse!’—the horse was
 brought;
 In truth, he was a noble steed,
 A Tartar of the Ukraine breed,
 Who look'd as though the speed of thought
 Were in his limbs; but he was wild,
 Wild as the wild deer, and untaught,
 With spur and bridle undefiled—
 'T was but a day he had been caught;
 And snorting, with erected mane,
 And struggling fiercely, but in vain,
 In the full foam of wrath and dread
 To me the desert-born was led:
 They bound me on, that menial throng;
 Upon his back with many a thong;
 Then loosed him with a sudden lash—

Away!—away!—and on we dash!
 Torrents less rapid and less rash.

X.

“ Away!—away!—My breath was gone,
 I saw not where he hurried on:
 'T was scarcely yet the break of day,
 And on he foam'd—away!—away!
 The last of human sounds which rose,
 As I was darted from my foes,
 Was the wild shout of savage laughter,
 Which on the wind came roaring after
 A moment from that rabble rout:
 With sudden wrath I wrench'd my head,
 And snapp'd the cord, which to the mane
 Had bound my neck in lieu of rein,
 And, writhing half my form about,
 Howl'd back my curse; but 'midst the tread,
 The thunder of my courser's speed,
 Perchance they did not hear nor heed:
 It vexes me—for I would fain
 Have paid their insult back again.
 I paid it well in after days:
 There is not of that castle gate,
 Its drawbridge and portcullis' weight,
 Stone, bar, moat, bridge, or barrier left,
 Nor of its fields a blade of grass,
 Save what grows on a ridge of wall,
 Where stood the hearth-stone of the hall;
 And many a time ye there might pass,
 Nor dream that e'er that fortress was.
 I saw its turrets in a blaze,
 Their crackling battlements all cleft,
 And the hot lead pour down like rain
 From off the scorch'd and blackening roof,
 Whose thickness was not vengeance-proof.
 They little thought that day of pain,
 When launch'd, as on the lightning's flash,
 They bade me to destruction dash,
 That one day I should come again,
 With twice five thousand horse, to thank
 The Count for his uncourteous ride.
 They play'd me then a bitter prank,
 When, with the wild horse for my guide,
 They bound me to his foaming flank:
 At length I play'd them one as frank—
 For time at last sets all things even—
 And if we do but watch the hour,
 There never yet was human power
 Which could evade, if unforgiven,
 The patient search and vigil long
 Of him who treasures up a wrong.

XI.

“ Away, away, my steed and I,
 Upon the pinions of the wind,
 All human dwellings left behind;
 We sped like meteors through the sky,
 When with its crackling sound the night
 Is chequer'd with the northern light:
 Town—village—none were on our track,
 But a wild plain of far extent,
 And bounded by a forest black;
 And, save the scarce seen battlement
 On distant heights of some strong hold,
 Against the Tartars built of old,

No trace of man. The year before
 A Turkish army had march'd o'er ;
 And where the Spahi's hoof hath trod,
 The verdure flies the bloody sod :
 The sky was dull, and dim, and gray,
 And a low breeze crept moaning by—
 I could have answer'd with a sigh—
 But fast we fled, away, away,
 And I could neither sigh nor pray ;
 And my cold sweat-drops fell like rain
 Upon the courser's bristling mane ;
 But, snorting still with rage and fear,
 He flew upon his far career :
 At times I almost thought, indeed,
 He must have slacken'd in his speed ;
 But no—my bound and slender frame
 Was nothing to his angry might,
 And merely like a spur became :
 Each motion which I made to free
 My swoln limbs from their agony
 Increased his fury and affright :
 I tried my voice,—'t was faint and low,
 But yet he swerved as from a blow ;
 And, starting to each accent, sprang
 As from a sudden trumpet's clang :
 Meantime my cords were wet with gore,
 Which, oozing through my limbs, ran o'er ;
 And in my tongue the thirst became
 A something fierier far than flame.

XII.

" We near'd the wild wood—'t was so wide,
 I saw no bounds on either side ;
 'T was studded with old sturdy trees,
 That bent not to the roughest breeze
 Which howls down from Siberia's waste,
 And strips the forest in its haste,—
 But these were few and far between,
 Set thick with shrubs more young and green,
 Luxuriant with their annual leaves,
 Ere strown by those autumnal eves
 That nip the forest's foliage dead,
 Discolour'd with a lifeless red,
 Which stands thereon like stiffen'd gore
 Upon the slain when battle's o'er,
 And some long winter's night hath shed
 Its frost o'er every tombless head,
 So cold and stark the raven's beak
 May peck unpierced each frozen cheek :
 'T was a wild waste of underwood,
 And here and there a chestnut stood,
 The strong oak, and the hardy pine ;
 But far apart—and well it were,
 Or else a different lot were mine—
 The boughs gave way, and did not tear
 My limbs ; and I found strength to bear
 My wounds, already scarr'd with cold ;
 My bonds forbade to loose my hold.
 We rustled through the leaves like wind,
 Left shrubs, and trees, and wolves behind ;
 By night I heard them on the track,
 Their troop came hard upon our back,
 With their long gallop, which can tire
 The hound's deep hate, and hunter's fire :

Where'er we flew they follow'd on,
 Nor left us with the morning sun ;
 Behind I saw them, scarce a rood,
 At day-break winding through the wood,
 And through the night had heard their feet
 Their stealing, rustling step repeat.
 Oh ! how I wish'd for spear or sword,
 At least to die amidst the horde,
 And perish—if it must be so—
 At bay, destroying many a foe !
 When first my courser's race begun,
 I wish'd the goal already won ;
 But now I doubted strength and speed.
 Vain doubt ! his swift and savage breed
 Had nerved him like the mountain-roe ;
 Nor faster falls the blinding snow
 Which whelms the peasant near the door
 Whose threshold he shall cross no more,
 Bewilder'd with the dazzling blast,
 Than through the forest-paths he pass'd—
 Untired, untamed, and worse than wild ;
 All furious as a favour'd child
 Balk'd of its wish ; or fiercer still—
 A woman piqued—who has her will.

XIII.

" The wood was past ; 't was more than noon,
 But chill the air, although in June ;
 Or it might be my veins ran cold—
 Prolong'd endurance tames the bold ;
 And I was then not what I seem,
 But headlong as a wintry stream,
 And wore my feelings out before
 I well could count their causes o'er :
 And what with fury, fear, and wrath,
 The tortures which beset my path,
 Cold, hunger, sorrow, shame, distress,
 Thus bound in nature's nakedness ;
 Sprung from a race whose rising blood,
 When stirr'd beyond its calmer mood,
 And trodden hard upon, is like
 The rattle-snake's, in act to strike,
 What marvel if this worn-out trunk
 Beneath its woes a moment sunk ?
 The earth gave way, the skies roll'd round,
 I seem'd to sink upon the ground ;
 But err'd, for I was fastly bound.
 My heart turn'd sick, my brain grew sore,
 And throbb'd awhile, then beat no more :
 The skies spun like a mighty wheel ;
 I saw the trees like drunkards reel,
 And a slight flash sprang o'er my eyes,
 Which saw no farther : he who dies
 Can die no more than then I died.
 O'ertortured by that ghastly ride,
 I felt the blackness come and go,
 And strove to wake ; but could not make
 My senses climb up from below :
 I felt as on a plank at sea,
 When all the waves that dash o'er thee,
 At the same time upheave and whelm,
 And hurl thee towards a desert realm.
 My undulating life was as
 The fancied lights that fitting pass

Our shut eyes in deep midnight, when
Fever begins upon the brain ;
But soon it pass'd, with little pain,
But a confusion worse than such :
I own that I should deem it much,
Dying, to feel the same again ;
And yet I do suppose we must
Feel far more ere we turn to dust .
No matter ; I have bared my brow
Full in Death's face—before—and now.

XIV.

“ My thoughts came back ; where was I ? Cold,
And numb, and giddy : pulse by pulse
Life reassumed its lingering hold,
And throb by throb,—till grown a pang
Which for a moment would convulse,
My blood reflow'd, though thick and chill ;
My ear with uncouth noises rang,
My heart began once more to thrill ;
My sight return'd, though dim ; alas !
And thicken'd, as it were, with glass.
Methought the dash of waves was nigh ;
There was a gleam too of the sky,
Studded with stars ;—it is no dream ;
The wild horse swims the wilder stream !
The bright broad river's gushing tide
Sweeps, winding onward, far and wide,
And we are half-way, struggling o'er
To yon unknown and silent shore.
The waters broke my hollow trance,
And with a temporary strength
My stiffen'd limbs were rebaptized.
My courser's broad breast proudly braves,
And dashes off the ascending waves,
And onward we advance !
We reach the slippery shore at length,
A haven I but little prized,
For all behind was dark and drear,
And all before was night and fear.
How many hours of night or day
In those suspended pangs I lay,
I could not tell ; I scarcely knew
If this were human breath I drew.

XV.

“ With glossy skin, and dripping mane,
And reeling limbs, and reeking flank,
The wild steed's sinewy nerves still strain
Up the repelling bank.
We gain the top : a boundless plain
Spreads through the shadow of the night,
And onward, onward, onward, seems,
Like precipices in our dreams,
To stretch beyond the sight ;
And here and there a speck of white,
Or scatter'd spot of dusky green,
In masses broke into the light,
As rose the moon upon my right :
But nought distinctly seen
In the dim waste would indicate
The omen of a cottage gate ;
No twinkling taper from afar
Stood like a hospitable star ;
Not even an ignis-fatuus rose
To make him merry with my woes :

That very cheat had cheer'd me then !
Although detected, welcome still,
Reminding me, through every ill,
Of the abodes of men.

XVI.

“ Onward we went—but slack and slow ;
His savage force at length o'erspent,
The drooping courser, faint and low,
All feebly foaming went.
A sickly infant had had power
To guide him forward in that hour ;
But useless all to me :
His new-born tameness nought avail'd—
My limbs were bound ; my force had fail'd,
Perchance, had they been free.
With feeble effort still I tried
To rend the bonds so starkly tied,
But still it was in vain ;
My limbs were only wrung the more,
And soon the idle strife gave o'er,
Which but prolong'd their pain :
The dizzy race seem'd almost done,
Although no goal was nearly won :
Some streaks announced the coming sun—
How slow, alas ! he came !
Methought that mist of dawning gray
Would never dapple into day ;
How heavily it roll'd away—
Before the eastern flame
Rose crimson, and deposed the stars,
And call'd the radiance from their cars,
And fill'd the earth, from his deep throne,
With lonely lustre, all his own.

XVII.

“ Up rose the sun ; the mists were curl'd
Back from the solitary world
Which lay around, behind, before.
What boot'd it to traverse o'er
Plain, forest, river ? Man nor brute,
Nor dint of hoof, nor print of foot,
Lay in the wild luxuriant soil ;
No sign of travel, none of toil ;
The very air was mute ;
And not an insect's shrill small horn,
Nor matin bird's new voice was borne
From herb nor thicket. Many a werst,
Panting as if his heart would burst,
The weary brute still stagger'd on ;
And still we were—or seem'd—alone.
At length, while reeling on our way,
Methought I heard a courser neigh,
From out yon tuft of blackening firs.
Is it the wind those branches stirs ?
No, no ! from out the forest prance
A trampling troop ; I see them come !
In one vast squadron they advance !
I strove to cry—my lips were dumb.
The steeds rush on in plunging pride ;
But where are they the reins to guide ?
A thousand horse, and none to ride !
With flowing tail, and flying mane,
Wide nostrils never stretch'd by pain,
Mouths bloodless to the bit or rein,

And feet that iron never shod,
 And flanks unscarr'd by spur or rod,
 A thousand horse, the wild, the free,
 Like waves that follow o'er the sea,
 Came thickly thundering on,
 As if our faint approach to meet;
 The sight re-nerved my courser's feet,
 A moment staggering, feebly fleet,
 A moment, with a faint low neigh,
 He answer'd, and then fell;
 With gasps and glazing eyes he lay,
 And reeking limbs immoveable,
 His first and last career is done!
 On came the troop—they saw him stoop,
 They saw me strangely bound along
 His back with many a bloody thong:
 They stop, they start, they snuff the air,
 Gallop a moment here and there,
 Approach, retire, wheel round and round,
 Then plunging back with sudden bound,
 Headed by one black mighty steed,
 Who seem'd the patriarch of his breed,
 Without a single speck or hair
 Of white upon his shaggy hide;
 They snort, they foam, neigh, swerve aside,
 And backward to the forest fly,
 By instinct, from a human eye.
 They left me there to my despair,
 Link'd to the dead and stiffening wretch,
 Whose lifeless limbs beneath me stretch,
 Relieved from that unwonted weight,
 From whence I could not extricate
 Nor him nor me—and there we lay,
 The dying on the dead!
 I little deem'd another day
 Would see my houseless, helpless head.

“ And there from morn to twilight bound,
 I felt the heavy hours toil round,
 With just enough of life to see
 My last of suns go down on me,
 In hopeless certainty of mind,
 That makes us feel at length resign'd
 To that which our foreboding years
 Present the worst and last of fears:
 Inevitable—even a boon,
 Nor more unkind for coming soon,
 Yet shunn'd and dreaded with such care,
 As if it only were a snare
 That prudence might escape:
 At times both wish'd for and implored,
 At times sought with self-pointed sword,
 Yet still a dark and hideous close
 To even intolerable woes,
 And welcome in no shape.
 And, strange to say, the sons of pleasure,
 They who have revell'd beyond measure
 In beauty, wassail, wine, and treasure,
 Die calm, or calmer, oft than he
 Whose heritage was misery:
 For he who hath in turn run through
 All that was beautiful and new,
 Hath nought to hope, and nought to leave;
 And, save the future, (which is view'd

Not quite as men are base or good,
 But as their nerves may be endued,)
 With nought perhaps to grieve:
 The wretch still hopes his woes must end,
 And Death, whom he should deem his friend,
 Appears, to his distemper'd eyes,
 Arrived to rob him of his prize,
 The tree of his new Paradise.
 To-morrow would have given him all
 Repaid his pangs, repair'd his fall;
 To-morrow would have been the first
 Of days no more deplored or curst,
 But bright, and long, and beckoning years,
 Seen dazzling through the mist of tears,
 Guerdon of many a painful hour;
 To-morrow would have given him power
 To rule, to shine, to smite, to save—
 And must it dawn upon his grave?

XVIII.

“ The sun was sinking—still I lay
 Chain'd to the chill and stiffening steed;
 I thought to mingle there our clay,
 And my dim eyes of death had need;
 No hope arose of being freed:
 I cast my last looks up the sky,
 And there between me and the sun
 I saw the expecting raven fly,
 Who scarce would wait till both should die,
 Ere his repast begun;
 He flew, and perch'd, then flew once more,
 And each time nearer than before;
 I saw his wing through twilight flit,
 And once so near me he alit
 I could have smote, but lack'd the strength;
 But the slight motion of my hand,
 And feeble scratching of the sand,
 The exerted throat's faint struggling noise,
 Which scarcely could be called a voice,
 Together scared him off at length.
 I know no more—my latest dream
 Is something of a lovely star
 Which fix'd my dull eyes from afar,
 And went and came with wandering beam,
 And of the cold, dull, swimming, dense
 Sensation of recurring sense,
 And then subsiding back to death,
 And then again a little breath,
 A little thrill, a short suspense,
 An icy sickness curdling o'er
 My heart, and sparks that cross'd my brain—
 A gasp, a throb, a start of pain,
 A sigh, and nothing more.

XIX.

“ I woke—where was I?—Do I see
 A human face look down on me?
 And doth a roof above me close?
 Do these limbs on a couch repose?
 Is this a chamber where I lie?
 And is it mortal yon bright eye,
 That watches me with gentle glance?
 I closed my own again once more,
 As doubtful that my former trance
 Could not as yet be o'er.

A slender girl, long-hair'd, and tall,
 Sate watching by the cottage wall;
 The sparkle of her eye I caught,
 Even with my first return of thought;
 For ever and anon she threw
 A prying, pitying glance on me
 With her black eyes so wild and free:
 I gazed, and gazed, until I knew
 No vision it could be,—
 But that I lived, and was released
 From adding to the vulture's feast:
 And when the Cossack maid beheld
 My heavy eyes at length unseal'd,
 She smiled—and I essay'd to speak,
 But fail'd—and she approach'd, and made
 With lip and finger signs that said,
 I must not strive as yet to break
 The silence, till my strength should be
 Enough to leave my accents free;
 And then her hand on mine she laid,
 And smooth'd the pillow for my head,
 And stole along on tiptoe tread,
 And gently oped the door, and spake
 In whispers—ne'er was voice so sweet!
 Even music follow'd her light feet:
 But those she call'd were not awake,
 And she went forth; but, ere she pass'd,
 Another look on me she cast,
 Another sign she made, to say,
 That I had nought to fear, that all
 Were near, at my command or call,
 And she would not delay

Her due return:—while she was gone,
 Methought I felt too much alone.

XX.

“She came with mother and with sire—
 What need of more?—I will not tire
 With long recital of the rest,
 Since I became the Cossack's guest.
 They found me senseless on the plain,
 They bore me to the nearest hut,
 They brought me into life again—
 Me—one day o'er their realm to reign!
 Thus the vain fool who strove to glut
 His rage, refining on my pain,
 Sent me forth to the wilderness,
 Bound, naked, bleeding, and alone,
 To pass the desert to a throne,—
 What mortal his own doom may guess?
 Let none despond, let none despair!
 To-morrow the Borysthenes
 May see our coursers graze at ease
 Upon his Turkish bank, and never
 Had I such welcome for a river
 As I shall yield when safely there.”
 Comrades, good night!—The Hetman threw
 His length beneath the oak-tree shade,
 With leafy couch already made,
 A bed nor comfortless nor new
 To him, who took his rest whene'er
 The hour arrived, no matter where:
 His eyes the hastening slumbers steep.
 And if ye marvel Charles forgot
 To thank his tale, *he* wonder'd not,—
 The king had been an hour asleep.

THE ISLAND;

OR,

CHRISTIAN AND HIS COMRADES.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE foundation of the following story will be found partly in Lieutenant Bligh's "Narrative of the Mutiny and Seizure of the *Bounty*, in the South

Seas, in 1789;" and partly in "Mariner's Account of the *Tonga Islands*."

Genoa, 1823.

CANTO THE FIRST.

I.

THE morning watch was come; the vessel lay
 Her course, and gently made her liquid way;
 The cloven billow flash'd from off her prow
 In furrows form'd by that majestic plough;
 The waters with their world were all before;
 Behind, the South Sea's many an islet shore.
 The quiet night, now dappling, 'gan to wane,
 Dividing darkness from the dawning main;

The dolphins, not unconscious of the day,
 Swam high, as eager of the coming ray;
 The stars from broader beams began to creep,
 And lift their shining eyelids from the deep;
 The sail resumed its lately shadow'd white,
 And the wind flutter'd with a freshening flight;
 The purpling ocean owns the coming sun,
 But ere he break—a deed is to be done.

II.

The gallant chief within his cabin slept,
 Secure in those by whom the watch was kept:

His dreams were of Old England's welcome shore,
 Of toils rewarded, and of dangers o'er;
 His name was added to the glorious roll
 Of those who search the storm-surrounded Pole.
 The worst was over, and the rest seem'd sure,
 And why should not his slumber be secure?
 Alas! his deck was trod by unwilling feet,
 And wilder hands would hold the vessel's sheet;
 Young hearts, which languish'd for some sunny isle,
 Where summer years and summer women smile;
 Men without country, who, too long estranged,
 Had found no native home, or found it changed,
 And, half uncivilised, preferr'd the cave
 Of some soft savage to the uncertain wave—
 The gushing fruits that nature gave untill'd;
 The wood without a path but where they will'd;
 The field o'er which promiscuous Plenty pour'd
 Her horn; the equal land without a lord;
 The wish—which ages have not yet subdued
 In man—to have no master save his mood;
 The earth, whose mine was on its face, unsold,
 The glowing sun and produce all its gold;
 The freedom which can call each grot a home;
 The general garden, where all steps may roam,
 Where Nature owns a nation as her child,
 Exulting in the enjoyment of the wild;
 Their shells, their fruits, the only wealth they
 Their unexploring navy, the canoe; [know,
 Their sport, the dashing breakers and the chase;
 Their strangest sight, an European face:—
 Such was the country which these strangers yearn'd
 To see again; a sight they dearly earn'd.

III.

Awake, bold Bligh! the foe is at the gate!
 Awake! awake!—Alas! it is too late!
 Fiercely beside thy cot the mutineer
 Stands, and proclaims the reign of rage and fear.
 Thy limbs are bound, the bayonet at thy breast;
 The hands, which trembled at thy voice, arrest;
 Dragg'd o'er the deck, no more at thy command
 The obedient helm shall veer, the sail expand;
 That savage spirit, which would lull by wrath
 Its desperate escape from duty's path,
 Glares round thee, in the scarce believing eyes
 Of those who fear the chief they sacrifice:
 For ne'er can man his conscience all assuage,
 Unless he drain the wine of passion—rage.

IV.

In vain, not silenced by the eye of death,
 Thou call'st the loyal with thy menaced breath:—
 They come not; they are few, and, overawed,
 Must acquiesce, while sterner hearts applaud.
 In vain thou dost demand the cause: a curse
 Is all the answer, with the threat of worse.
 Full in thine eyes is waved the glittering blade,
 Close to thy throat the pointed bayonet laid.
 The levell'd muskets circle round thy breast
 In hands as steel'd to do the deadly rest. ["Fire!"
 Thou dar'st them to their worst, exclaiming—
 But they who pitied not could yet admire;
 Some lurking remnant of their former awe
 Restrain'd them longer than their broken law;
 They would not dip their souls at once in blood,
 But left thee to the mercies of the flood.

V.

"Hoist out the boat!" was now the leader's cry;
 And who dare answer "No!" to Mutiny,
 In the first dawning of the drunken hour,
 The Saturnalia of unhop'd-for power?
 The boat is lower'd with all the haste of hate,
 With its slight plank between thee and thy fate;
 Her only cargo such a scant supply
 As promises the death their hands deny;
 And just enough of water and of bread
 To keep, some days, the dying from the dead:
 Some cordage, canvas, sails, and lines, and twine,
 But treasures all to hermits of the brine,
 Were added after, to the earnest prayer
 Of those who saw no hope, save sea and air;
 And last, that trembling vassal of the Pole—
 The feeling compass—Navigation's soul.

VI.

And now the self-elected chief finds time:
 To stun the first sensation of his crime,
 And raise it in his followers—"Ho! the bowl!"
 Lest passion should return to reason's shoal.
 "Brandy for heroes!" Burke could once exclaim—
 No doubt a liquid path to epic fame;
 And such the new-born heroes found it here,
 And drain'd the draught with an applauding cheer.
 "Huzza! for Otaheite!" was the cry.
 How strange such shouts from sons of Mutiny!
 The gentle island, and the genial soil,
 The friendly hearts, the feasts without a toil,
 The courteous manners but from nature caught,
 The wealth unhoarded, and the love unbought;
 Could these have charms for rudest sea-boys, driven
 Before the mast by every wind of heaven?
 And now, even now prepared with others' woes
 To earn mild Virtue's vain desire, repose?
 Alas! such is our nature! all but aim
 At the same end by pathways not the same;
 Our means, our birth, our nation, and our name,
 Our fortune, temper, even our outward frame,
 Are far more potent o'er our yielding clay
 Than aught we know beyond our little day.
 Yet still there whispers the small voice within,
 Heard through Gain's silence, and o'er Glory's din:
 Whatever creed be taught, or land be trod,
 Man's conscience is the oracle of God.

VII.

The launch is crowded with the faithful few
 Who wait their chief, a melancholy crew:
 But some remain'd reluctant on the deck
 Of that proud vessel—now a moral wreck—
 And view'd their captain's fate with piteous eyes:
 While others scoff'd his augur'd miseries,
 Sneer'd at the prospect of his pigmy sail,
 And the slight bark so laden and so frail.
 The tender nautilus, who steers his prow,
 The sea-born sailor of his shell canoe,
 The ocean Mab, the fairy of the sea,
 Seems far less fragile, and, alas! more free.
 He, when the lightning-wing'd tornados sweep
 The surge, is safe—his port is in the deep—
 And triumphs o'er the armadas of mankind,
 Which shake the world, yet crumble in the wind.