

## Julian and Maddalo: A Conversation

I rode one evening with Count Maddalo  
Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow  
Of Adria towards Venice. A bare strand  
Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,  
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,  
Such as from earth's embrace the salt ooze breeds,  
Is this; an uninhabited sea-side,  
Which the lone fisher, when his nets are dried,  
Abandons; and no other object breaks  
The waste but one dwarf tree and some few stakes 10  
Broken and unrepaired, and the tide makes  
A narrow space of level sand thereon,  
Where 't was our wont to ride while day went down.  
This ride was my delight. I love all waste  
And solitary places; where we taste  
The pleasure of believing what we see  
Is boundless, as we wish our souls to be;  
And such was this wide ocean, and this shore  
More barren than its billows; and yet more  
Than all, with a remembered friend I love 20  
To ride as then I rode;—for the winds drove  
The living spray along the sunny air  
Into our faces; the blue heavens were bare,  
Stripped to their depths by the awakening north;  
And from the waves sound like delight broke forth  
Harmonizing with solitude, and sent  
Into our hearts arial merriment.  
So, as we rode, we talked; and the swift thought,  
Winging itself with laughter, lingered not,  
But flew from brain to brain,—such glee was ours, 30  
Charged with light memories of remembered hours,  
None slow enough for sadness; till we came  
Homeward, which always makes the spirit tame.  
This day had been cheerful but cold, and now  
The sun was sinking, and the wind also.  
Our talk grew somewhat serious, as may be  
Talk interrupted with such raillery  
As mocks itself, because it cannot scorn  
The thoughts it would extinguish. 'T was forlorn,  
Yet pleasing; such as once, so poets tell, 40  
The devils held within the dales of Hell,  
Concerning God, freewill and destiny;  
Of all that earth has been, or yet may be,  
All that vain men imagine or believe,  
Or hope can paint, or suffering may achieve,  
We descanted; and I (for ever still  
Is it not wise to make the best of ill?)  
Argued against despondency, but pride

Made my companion take the darker side. 50  
 The sense that he was greater than his kind  
 Had struck, methinks, his eagle spirit blind  
 By gazing on its own exceeding light.  
 Meanwhile the sun paused ere it should alight,  
 Over the horizon of the mountains. Oh,  
 How beautiful is sunset, when the glow  
 Of Heaven descends upon a land like thee,  
 Thou Paradise of exiles, Italy!  
 Thy mountains, seas and vineyards and the towers  
 Of cities they encircle!—It was ours 60  
 To stand on thee, beholding it; and then,  
 Just where we had dismounted, the Count's men  
 Were waiting for us with the gondola.  
 As those who pause on some delightful way  
 Though bent on pleasant pilgrimage, we stood  
 Looking upon the evening, and the flood,  
 Which lay between the city and the shore,  
 Paved with the image of the sky. The hoar  
 And ary Alps towards the north appeared,  
 Through mist, an heaven-sustaining bulwark reared 70  
 Between the east and west; and half the sky  
 Was roofed with clouds of rich emblazonry,  
 Dark purple at the zenith, which still grew  
 Down the steep west into a wondrous hue  
 Brighter than burning gold, even to the rent  
 Where the swift sun yet paused in his descent  
 Among the many-folded hills. They were  
 Those famous Euganean hills, which bear,  
 As seen from Lido through the harbor piles,  
 The likeness of a clump of peakd isles;  
 And then, as if the earth and sea had been 80  
 Dissolved into one lake of fire, were seen  
 Those mountains towering as from waves of flame  
 Around the vaporous sun, from which there came  
 The inmost purple spirit of light, and made  
 Their very peaks transparent. 'Ere it fade,'  
 Said my companion, 'I will show you soon  
 A better station.' So, o'er the lagune  
 We glided; and from that funereal bark  
 I leaned, and saw the city, and could mark 90  
 How from their many isles, in evening's gleam,  
 Its temples and its palaces did seem  
 Like fabrics of enchantment piled to Heaven.  
 I was about to speak, when— 'We are even  
 Now at the point I meant,' said Maddalo,  
 And bade the gondolieri cease to row.  
 'Look, Julian, on the west, and listen well  
 If you hear not a deep and heavy bell.'  
 I looked, and saw between us and the sun

A building on an island,—such a one  
 As age to age might add, for uses vile, 100  
 A windowless, deformed and dreary pile;  
 And on the top an open tower, where hung  
 A bell, which in the radiance swayed and swung;  
 We could just hear its hoarse and iron tongue;  
 The broad sun sunk behind it, and it tolled  
 In strong and black relief. ‘What we behold  
 Shall be the madhouse and its belfry tower,’  
 Said Maddalo; ‘and ever at this hour  
 Those who may cross the water hear that bell,  
 Which calls the maniacs each one from his cell 110  
 To vespers.’—‘As much skill as need to pray  
 In thanks or hope for their dark lot have they  
 To their stern Maker,’ I replied. ‘O ho!  
 You talk as in years past,’ said Maddalo.  
 ‘T is strange men change not. You were ever still  
 Among Christ’s flock a perilous infidel,  
 A wolf for the meek lambs—if you can’t swim,  
 Beware of Providence.’ I looked on him,  
 But the gay smile had faded in his eye,—  
 ‘And such,’ he cried, ‘is our mortality; 120  
 And this must be the emblem and the sign  
 Of what should be eternal and divine!  
 And, like that black and dreary bell, the soul,  
 Hung in a heaven-illuminated tower, must toll  
 Our thoughts and our desires to meet below  
 Round the rent heart and pray—as madmen do  
 For what? they know not, till the night of death,  
 As sunset that strange vision, severeth  
 Our memory from itself, and us from all  
 We sought, and yet were baffled.’ I recall 130  
 The sense of what he said, although I mar  
 The force of his expressions. The broad star  
 Of day meanwhile had sunk behind the hill,  
 And the black bell became invisible,  
 And the red tower looked gray, and all between,  
 The churches, ships and palaces were seen  
 Huddled in gloom; into the purple sea  
 The orange hues of heaven sunk silently.  
 We hardly spoke, and soon the gondola  
 Conveyed me to my lodgings by the way. 140  
 The following morn was rainy, cold, and dim.  
 Ere Maddalo arose, I called on him,  
 And whilst I waited, with his child I played.  
 A lovelier toy sweet Nature never made;  
 A serious, subtle, wild, yet gentle being,  
 Graceful without design, and unforeseeing,  
 With eyes—oh, speak not of her eyes!—which seem  
 Twin mirrors of Italian heaven, yet gleam

With such deep meaning as we never see  
 But in the human countenance. With me 150  
 She was a special favorite; I had nursed  
 Her fine and feeble limbs when she came first  
 To this bleak world; and she yet seemed to know  
 On second sight her ancient playfellow,  
 Less changed than she was by six months or so;  
 For, after her first shyness was worn out,  
 We sate there, rolling billiard balls about,  
 When the Count entered. Salutations past—  
 ‘The words you spoke last night might well have cast  
 A darkness on my spirit. If man be 160  
 The passive thing you say, I should not see  
 Much harm in the religions and old saws,  
 (Though I may never own such leaden laws)  
 Which break a teachless nature to the yoke.  
 Mine is another faith.’ Thus much I spoke,  
 And noting he replied not, added: ‘See  
 This lovely child, blithe, innocent and free;  
 She spends a happy time with little care,  
 While we to such sick thoughts subjected are  
 As came on you last night. It is our will 170  
 That thus enchains us to permitted ill.  
 We might be otherwise, we might be all  
 We dream of happy, high, majestic.  
 Where is the love, beauty and truth we seek,  
 But in our mind? and if we were not weak,  
 Should we be less in deed than in desire?’  
 ‘Ay, if we were not weak—and we aspire  
 How vainly to be strong!’ said Maddalo;  
 ‘You talk Utopia.’ ‘It remains to know,’  
 I then rejoined, ‘and those who try may find 180  
 How strong the chains are which our spirit bind;  
 Brittle perchance as straw. We are assured  
 Much may be conquered, much may be endured  
 Of what degrades and crushes us. We know  
 That we have power over ourselves to do  
 And suffer—what, we know not till we try;  
 But something nobler than to live and die.  
 So taught those kings of old philosophy,  
 Who reigned before religion made men blind;  
 And those who suffer with their suffering kind 190  
 Yet feel this faith religion.’ ‘My dear friend,’  
 Said Maddalo, ‘my judgment will not bend  
 To your opinion, though I think you might  
 Make such a system refutation-tight  
 As far as words go. I knew one like you,  
 Who to this city came some months ago,  
 With whom I argued in this sort, and he  
 Is now gone mad,—and so he answered me,—

Poor fellow! but if you would like to go,  
 We'll visit him, and his wild talk will show 200  
 How vain are such aspiring theories.'  
 'I hope to prove the induction otherwise,  
 And that a want of that true theory still,  
 Which seeks "a soul of goodness" in things ill,  
 Or in himself or others, has thus bowed  
 His being. There are some by nature proud,  
 Who patient in all else demand but this—  
 To love and be beloved with gentleness;  
 And, being scorned, what wonder if they die  
 Some living death? this is not destiny 210  
 But man's own wilful ill.'

As thus I spoke,  
 Servants announced the gondola, and we  
 Through the fast-falling rain and high-wrought sea  
 Sailed to the island where the madhouse stands.  
 We disembarked. The clap of tortured hands,  
 Fierce yells and howlings and lamentings keen,  
 And laughter where complaint had merrier been,  
 Moans, shrieks, and curses, and blaspheming prayers,  
 Accosted us. We climbed the oozy stairs 220  
 Into an old courtyard. I heard on high,  
 Then, fragments of most touching melody,  
 But looking up saw not the singer there.  
 Through the black bars in the tempestuous air  
 I saw, like weeds on a wrecked palace growing,  
 Long tangled locks flung wildly forth, and flowing,  
 Of those who on a sudden were beguiled  
 Into strange silence, and looked forth and smiled  
 Hearing sweet sounds. Then I: 'Methinks there were  
 A cure of these with patience and kind care, 230  
 If music can thus move. But what is he,  
 Whom we seek here?' 'Of his sad history  
 I know but this,' said Maddalo: 'he came  
 To Venice a dejected man, and fame  
 Said he was wealthy, or he had been so.  
 Some thought the loss of fortune wrought him woe;  
 But he was ever talking in such sort  
 As you do—far more sadly; he seemed hurt,  
 Even as a man with his peculiar wrong,  
 To hear but of the oppression of the strong, 240  
 Or those absurd deceits (I think with you  
 In some respects, you know) which carry through  
 The excellent impostors of this earth  
 When they outface detection. He had worth,  
 Poor fellow! but a humorist in his way.'  
 'Alas, what drove him mad?' 'I cannot say;  
 A lady came with him from France, and when

She left him and returned, he wandered then  
 About yon lonely isles of desert sand  
 Till he grew wild. He had no cash or land 250  
 Remaining; the police had brought him here;  
 Some fancy took him and he would not bear  
 Removal; so I fitted up for him  
 Those rooms beside the sea, to please his whim,  
 And sent him busts and books and urns for flowers,  
 Which had adorned his life in happier hours,  
 And instruments of music. You may guess  
 A stranger could do little more or less  
 For one so gentle and unfortunate;  
 And those are his sweet strains which charm the weight 260  
 From madmen's chains, and make this Hell appear  
 A heaven of sacred silence, hushed to hear.'  
 'Nay, this was kind of you; he had no claim,  
 As the world says.' 'None—but the very same  
 Which I on all mankind, were I as he  
 Fallen to such deep reverse. His melody  
 Is interrupted; now we hear the din  
 Of madmen, shriek on shriek, again begin.  
 Let us now visit him; after this strain  
 He ever communes with himself again, 270  
 And sees nor hears not any.' Having said  
 These words, we called the keeper, and he led  
 To an apartment opening on the sea.  
 There the poor wretch was sitting mournfully  
 Near a piano, his pale fingers twined  
 One with the other, and the ooze and wind  
 Rushed through an open casement, and did sway  
 His hair, and starred it with the brackish spray;  
 His head was leaning on a music-book,  
 And he was muttering, and his lean limbs shook; 280  
 His lips were pressed against a folded leaf,  
 In hue too beautiful for health, and grief  
 Smiled in their motions as they lay apart.  
 As one who wrought from his own fervid heart  
 The eloquence of passion, soon he raised  
 His sad meek face, and eyes lustrous and glazed,  
 And spoke—sometimes as one who wrote, and thought  
 His words might move some heart that heeded not,  
 If sent to distant lands; and then as one  
 Reproaching deeds never to be undone 290  
 With wondering self-compassion; then his speech  
 Was lost in grief, and then his words came each  
 Unmodulated, cold, expressionless,  
 But that from one jarred accent you might guess  
 It was despair made them so uniform;  
 And all the while the loud and gusty storm  
 Hissed through the window, and we stood behind

Stealing his accents from the envious wind  
Unseen. I yet remember what he said  
Distinctly; such impression his words made. 300

‘Month after month,’ he cried, ‘to bear this load,  
And, as a jade urged by the whip and goad,  
To drag life on—which like a heavy chain  
Lengthens behind with many a link of pain!—  
And not to speak my grief—oh, not to dare  
To give a human voice to my despair,  
But live, and move, and, wretched thing! smile on  
As if I never went aside to groan;

And wear this mask of falsehood even to those  
Who are most dear—not for my own repose— 310  
Alas, no scorn or pain or hate could be  
So heavy as that falsehood is to me!  
But that I cannot bear more altered faces  
Than needs must be, more changed and cold embraces,  
More misery, disappointment and mistrust  
To own me for their father. Would the dust  
Were covered in upon my body now!  
That the life ceased to toil within my brow!  
And then these thoughts would at the least be fled;  
Let us not fear such pain can vex the dead. 320

‘What Power delights to torture us? I know  
That to myself I do not wholly owe  
What now I suffer, though in part I may.  
Alas! none strewed sweet flowers upon the way  
Where, wandering heedlessly, I met pale Pain,  
My shadow, which will leave me not again.  
If I have erred, there was no joy in error,  
But pain and insult and unrest and terror;  
I have not, as some do, bought penitence  
With pleasure, and a dark yet sweet offence; 330  
For then—if love and tenderness and truth  
Had overlived hope’s momentary youth,  
My creed should have redeemed me from repenting;  
But loathed scorn and outrage unrelenting  
Met love excited by far other seeming  
Until the end was gained; as one from dreaming  
Of sweetest peace, I woke, and found my state  
Such as it is—

‘O Thou my spirit’s mate!  
Who, for thou art compassionate and wise, 340  
Wouldst pity me from thy most gentle eyes  
If this sad writing thou shouldst ever see—  
My secret groans must be unheard by thee;  
Thou wouldst weep tears bitter as blood to know

Thy lost friend's incommunicable woe.  
 'Ye few by whom my nature has been weighed  
 In friendship, let me not that name degrade  
 By placing on your hearts the secret load  
 Which crushes mine to dust. There is one road  
 To peace, and that is truth, which follow ye! 350  
 Love sometimes leads astray to misery.  
 Yet think not, though subdued—and I may well  
 Say that I am subdued—that the full hell  
 Within me would infect the untainted breast  
 Of sacred Nature with its own unrest;  
 As some perverted beings think to find  
 In scorn or hate a medicine for the mind  
 Which scorn or hate have wounded—oh, how vain!  
 The dagger heals not, but may rend again!  
 Believe that I am ever still the same 360  
 In creed as in resolve; and what may tame  
 My heart must leave the understanding free,  
 Or all would sink in this keen agony;  
 Nor dream that I will join the vulgar cry;  
 Or with my silence sanction tyranny;  
 Or seek a moment's shelter from my pain  
 In any madness which the world calls gain,  
 Ambition or revenge or thoughts as stern  
 As those which make me what I am; or turn  
 To avarice or misanthropy or lust. 370  
 Heap on me soon, O grave, thy welcome dust!  
 Till then the dungeon may demand its prey,  
 And Poverty and Shame may meet and say,  
 Halting beside me on the public way,  
 "That love-devoted youth is ours; let's sit  
 Beside him; he may live some six months yet."  
 Or the red scaffold, as our country bends,  
 May ask some willing victim; or ye, friends,  
 May fall under some sorrow, which this heart  
 Or hand may share or vanquish or avert; 380  
 I am prepared—in truth, with no proud joy,  
 To do or suffer aught, as when a boy  
 I did devote to justice and to love  
 My nature, worthless now!—

'I must remove  
 A veil from my pent mind. 'T is torn aside!  
 O pallid as Death's dedicated bride,  
 Thou mockery which art sitting by my side,  
 Am I not wan like thee? at the grave's call  
 I haste, invited to thy wedding-ball, 390  
 To greet the ghastly paramour for whom  
 Thou hast deserted me—and made the tomb  
 Thy bridal bed—but I beside your feet

Will lie and watch ye from my winding-sheet—  
Thus—wide-awake though dead—yet stay, oh, stay!  
Go not so soon—know not what I say—  
Hear but my reasons—I am mad, I fear,  
My fancy is o'erwrought—thou art not here;  
Pale art thou, 't is most true—but thou art gone,  
Thy work is finished—I am left alone. 400

'Nay, was it I who wooed thee to this breast,  
Which like a serpent thou envenomest  
As in repayment of the warmth it lent?  
Didst thou not seek me for thine own content?  
Did not thy love awaken mine? I thought  
That thou wert she who said "You kiss me not  
Ever; I fear you do not love me now"—  
In truth I loved even to my overthrow  
Her who would fain forget these words; but they 410  
Cling to her mind, and cannot pass away.

'You say that I am proud—that when I speak  
My lip is tortured with the wrongs which break  
The spirit it expresses.—Never one  
Humbled himself before, as I have done!  
Even the instinctive worm on which we tread  
Turns, though it wound not—then with prostrate head  
Sinks in the dust and writhes like me—and dies?  
No: wears a living death of agonies! 420  
As the slow shadows of the pointed grass  
Mark the eternal periods, his pangs pass,  
Slow, ever-moving, making moments be  
As mine seem,—each an immortality!

'That you had never seen me—never heard  
My voice, and more than all had ne'er endured  
The deep pollution of my loathed embrace—  
That your eyes ne'er had lied love in my face—  
That, like some maniac monk, I had torn out 430  
The nerves of manhood by their bleeding root  
With mine own quivering fingers, so that ne'er  
Our hearts had for a moment mingled there  
To disunite in horror—these were not  
With thee like some suppressed and hideous thought  
Which flits athwart our musings but can find  
No rest within a pure and gentle mind;  
Thou sealedst them with many a bare broad word,  
And sear'dst my memory o'er them,—for I heard  
And can forget not;—they were ministered 440  
One after one, those curses. Mix them up  
Like self-destroying poisons in one cup,  
And they will make one blessing, which thou ne'er

Didst imprecate for on me,—death.

‘It were  
A cruel punishment for one most cruel,  
If such can love, to make that love the fuel  
Of the mind’s hell—hate, scorn, remorse, despair;  
But me, whose heart a stranger’s tear might wear 450  
As water-drops the sandy fountain-stone,  
Who loved and pitied all things, and could moan  
For woes which others hear not, and could see  
The absent with the glance of fantasy,  
And with the poor and trampled sit and weep,  
Following the captive to his dungeon deep;  
Me—who am as a nerve o’er which do creep  
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth,  
And was to thee the flame upon thy hearth, 460  
When all beside was cold:—that thou on me  
Shouldst rain these plagues of blistering agony!  
Such curses are from lips once eloquent  
With love’s too partial praise! Let none relent  
Who intend deeds too dreadful for a name  
Henceforth, if an example for the same  
They seek:—for thou on me look’dst so, and so—  
And didst speak thus—and thus. I live to show  
How much men bear and die not!

‘Thou wilt tell 470  
With the grimace of hate how horrible  
It was to meet my love when thine grew less;  
Thou wilt admire how I could e’er address  
Such features to love’s work. This taunt, though true,  
(For indeed Nature nor in form nor hue  
Bestowed on me her choicest workmanship)  
Shall not be thy defence; for since thy lip  
Met mine first, years long past,—since thine eye kindled  
With soft fire under mine,—I have not dwindled,  
Nor changed in mind or body, or in aught 480  
But as love changes what it loveth not  
After long years and many trials.

‘How vain  
Are words! I thought never to speak again,  
Not even in secret, not to mine own heart;  
But from my lips the unwilling accents start,  
And from my pen the words flow as I write,  
Dazzling my eyes with scalding tears; my sight  
Is dim to see that charactered in vain  
On this unfeeling leaf, which burns the brain 490  
And eats into it, blotting all things fair  
And wise and good which time had written there.

Those who inflict must suffer, for they see  
The work of their own hearts, and this must be  
Our chastisement or recompense.—O child!  
I would that thine were like to be more mild  
For both our wretched sakes,—for thine the most  
Who feelest already all that thou hast lost  
Without the power to wish it thine again;  
And as slow years pass, a funereal train, 500  
Each with the ghost of some lost hope or friend  
Following it like its shadow, wilt thou bend  
No thought on my dead memory?

‘Alas, love!  
Fear me not—against thee I would not move  
A finger in despite. Do I not live  
That thou mayst have less bitter cause to grieve?  
I give thee tears for scorn, and love for hate;  
And that thy lot may be less desolate 510  
Than his on whom thou tramplest, I refrain  
From that sweet sleep which medicines all pain.  
Then, when thou speakest of me, never say  
”He could forgive not.” Here I cast away  
All human passions, all revenge, all pride;  
I think, speak, act no ill; I do but hide  
Under these words, like embers, every spark  
Of that which has consumed me. Quick and dark  
The grave is yawning—as its roof shall cover  
My limbs with dust and worms under and over, 520  
So let Oblivion hide this grief—the air  
Closes upon my accents as despair  
Upon my heart—let death upon despair!’

He ceased, and overcome leant back awhile;  
Then rising, with a melancholy smile,  
Went to a sofa, and lay down, and slept  
A heavy sleep, and in his dreams he wept,  
And muttered some familiar name, and we  
Wept without shame in his society.  
I think I never was impressed so much; 530  
The man who were not must have lacked a touch  
Of human nature.—Then we lingered not,  
Although our argument was quite forgot;  
But, calling the attendants, went to dine  
At Maddalo’s; yet neither cheer nor wine  
Could give us spirits, for we talked of him  
And nothing else, till daylight made stars dim;  
And we agreed his was some dreadful ill  
Wrought on him boldly, yet unspeakable,  
By a dear friend; some deadly change in love 540  
Of one vowed deeply, which he dreamed not of;

For whose sake he, it seemed, had fixed a blot  
 Of falsehood on his mind which flourished not  
 But in the light of all-beholding truth;  
 And having stamped this canker on his youth  
 She had abandoned him—and how much more  
 Might be his woe, we guessed not; he had store  
 Of friends and fortune once, as we could guess  
 From his nice habits and his gentleness;  
 These were now lost—it were a grief indeed 550  
 If he had changed one unsustaining reed  
 For all that such a man might else adorn.  
 The colors of his mind seemed yet unworn;  
 For the wild language of his grief was high—  
 Such as in measure were called poetry.  
 And I remember one remark which then  
 Maddalo made. He said—'Most wretched men  
 Are cradled into poetry by wrong;  
 They learn in suffering what they teach in song.'

If I had been an unconnected man, 560  
 I, from this moment, should have formed some plan  
 Never to leave sweet Venice,—for to me  
 It was delight to ride by the lone sea;  
 And then the town is silent—one may write  
 Or read in gondolas by day or night,  
 Having the little brazen lamp alight,  
 Unseen, uninterrupted; books are there,  
 Pictures, and casts from all those statues fair  
 Which were twin-born with poetry, and all  
 We seek in towns, with little to recall 570  
 Regrets for the green country. I might sit  
 In Maddalo's great palace, and his wit  
 And subtle talk would cheer the winter night  
 And make me know myself, and the firelight  
 Would flash upon our faces, till the day  
 Might dawn and make me wonder at my stay.  
 But I had friends in London too. The chief  
 Attraction here was that I sought relief  
 From the deep tenderness that maniac wrought  
 Within me—'t was perhaps an idle thought, 580  
 But I imagined that if day by day  
 I watched him, and but seldom went away,  
 And studied all the beatings of his heart  
 With zeal, as men study some stubborn art  
 For their own good, and could by patience find  
 An entrance to the caverns of his mind,  
 I might reclaim him from this dark estate.  
 In friendships I had been most fortunate,  
 Yet never saw I one whom I would call  
 More willingly my friend; and this was all 590

Accomplished not; such dreams of baseless good  
Oft come and go in crowds and solitude  
And leave no trace,—but what I now designed  
Made, for long years, impression on my mind.  
The following morning, urged by my affairs,  
I left bright Venice.

After many years,  
And many changes, I returned; the name  
Of Venice, and its aspect, was the same;  
But Maddalo was travelling far away 600  
Among the mountains of Armenia.  
His dog was dead. His child had now become  
A woman; such as it has been my doom  
To meet with few, a wonder of this earth,  
Where there is little of transcendent worth,  
Like one of Shakespeare's women. Kindly she,  
And with a manner beyond courtesy,  
Received her father's friend; and, when I asked  
Of the lorn maniac, she her memory tasked,  
And told, as she had heard, the mournful tale: 610  
'That the poor sufferer's health began to fail  
Two years from my departure, but that then  
The lady, who had left him, came again.  
Her mien had been imperious, but she now  
Looked meek—perhaps remorse had brought her low.  
Her coming made him better, and they stayed  
Together at my father's—for I played  
As I remember with the lady's shawl;  
I might be six years old—but after all  
She left him.' 'Why, her heart must have been tough. 620  
How did it end?' 'And was not this enough?  
They met—they parted.' 'Child, is there no more?'  
'Something within that interval which bore  
The stamp of why they parted, how they met;  
Yet if thine aged eyes disdain to wet  
Those wrinkled cheeks with youth's remembered tears,  
Ask me no more, but let the silent years  
Be closed and cered over their memory,  
As yon mute marble where their corpses lie.'  
I urged and questioned still; she told me how 630  
All happened—but the cold world shall not know.