



**the
Raven**

and other poems

The
RAVEN



and other poems

compiled and edited by

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In the time-honored tradition
of European and American gothic poetry..

*"Listen to them, children of the night
What music they make."*

Bram Stoker 1897

*"Even a man who is pure in heart
and says his prayers by night
may become a wolf when the wolfsbane blooms
and the autumn moon is bright."*

Curt Siodmak 1940

I. THE RAVEN

Once upon a midnight dreary,
while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious
volume of forgotten lore--
While I nodded, nearly napping,
suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping,
rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visiter," I muttered,
"tapping at my chamber door--
Only this and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember
it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember
wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;
--vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow
--sorrow for the lost Lenore--

For the rare and radiant maiden
whom the angels name Lenore--
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain
rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me--filled me with
fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating
of my heart, I stood repeating
"Tis some visiter entreating
entrance at my chamber door--
Some late visiter entreating
entrance at my chamber door;
This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger;
hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly
your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping,
and so gently you came rapping,

And so faintly you came tapping,
tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"
--here I opened wide the door--
Darkness there and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering,
long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals
ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken,
and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken
was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo
murmured back the word, "Lenore!"--
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning,
all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping
something louder than before.

“Surely:” said I, “surely that is
something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is
and this mystery explore--
Let my heart be still a moment
and this mystery explore;--
’Tis the wind and nothing more.

Open here I flung the shutter,
when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately Raven
of the saintly days of yore.
Not the least obeisance made he;
not a minute stopped or stayed he,
But, with mien of lord or lady,
perched above my chamber door--
Perched upon a bust of Pallas
just above my chamber door--
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then the ebony bird beguiling
my sad fancy into smiling,

By the grave and stern decorum
of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven,
thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven
wandering from the Nightly shore--
Tell me what thy lordly name is
on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly
fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning--
little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing
that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing
bird above his chamber door--
Bird or beast upon the sculptured
bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely
on that placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if its soul
in that one word he did outpour
Nothing farther then he uttered;
not a feather then he fluttered--
Till I scarcely more than muttered:
"Other friends have flown before--
On the morrow he will leave me,
as my Hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken
by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters
is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master
whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster
till his songs one burden bore--
Till the dirges of his Hope
that melancholy burden bore

Of 'Never--nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling
all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat
in front of bird and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking,
I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking
what this ominous bird of yore--
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly,
gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing,
but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes
now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining,
with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining
that the lamp-light gloated o'er,

But whose velvet violet lining
with the lamp-light gloating o'er
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser,
perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls
tinkled on the tufted floor.

“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee--
by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite--respite and nepenthe
from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe
and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!--
prophet still, if bird or devil!--
Whether Tempter sent, or whether
tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate, yet all undaunted,
on this desert land enchanted--

On this home by Horror haunted--
tell me truly, I implore--
Is there--is there balm in Gilead?--
tell me--tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!--
prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us--
by that God we both adore--
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if,
within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden
whom the angels name Lenore--
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden
whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that our sign of parting,
bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting--
"Get thee back into the tempest
and the Night's Plutonian shore!

Leave no black plume as a token
of that lie thy soul has spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!--
quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart,
and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting,
still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas
just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming
of a demon's that is dreaming
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming
throws his shadows on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow
that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted--nevermore!

II. THE CONQUEROR WORM

Lo! 't is a gala night

Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng bewinged bedight

In veils and drowned in tears
Sit in a theatre to see

A play of hopes and fears
While the orchestra breathes fitfully

The music of the spheres.

Mimes in the form of God on high

Mutter and mumble low
And hither and thither fly —

Mere puppets they who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things

That shift the scenery to and fro
Flapping from out their Condor wings

Invisible Woe!
That motley drama! — oh be sure

It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore

By a crowd that seize it not
Through a circle that ever returneth in

To the self-same spot
And much of Madness and more of

Sin And Horror the soul of the plot.

But see amid the mimic rout

A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out

The scenic solitude!
It writhes! - it writhes! - with mortal pangs

The mimes become its food
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs

In human gore imbued.

Out - out are the lights - out all!

And over each quivering form
The curtain a funeral pall

Comes down with the rush of a storm
And the angels all pallid and wan

Uprising unveiling affirm
That the play is the tragedy "Man"

And its hero the Conqueror Worm.

III. FESTIVAL

There is snow on the ground,
And the valleys are cold,
And a midnight profound
Blackly squats o'er the wold;
But a light on the hilltops half-seen hints of
feastings unhallowed and old.

There is death in the clouds,
There is fear in the night,
For the dead in their shrouds
Hail the sun's turning flight.
And chant wild in the woods as they dance
round a Yule-altar fungous and white.

To no gale of Earth's kind
Sways the forest of oak,
Where the thick boughs entwined
By mad mistletoes choke,
For these pow'rs are the pow'rs of the dark,
from the graves of the lost Druid-folk.

And mayst thou to such deeds
Be an abbot and priest,
Singing cannibal greeds
At each devil-wrought feast,
And to all the incredulous world
shewing dimly the sign of the beast.

IV. THE WOOD

They cut it down, and where the pitch-black aisles
Of forest night had hid eternal things,
They scaled the sky with towers and marble piles
To make a city for their revellings.

White and amazing to the lands around
That wondrous wealth of domes and turrets rose;
Crystal and ivory, sublimely crowned
With pinnacles that bore unmelting snows.

And through its halls the pipe and sistrum rang,

While wine and riot brought their scarlet stains;
 Never a voice of elder marvels sang,
 Nor any eye called up the hills and plains.

Thus down the years, till on one purple night
 A drunken minstrel in his careless verse
Spoke the vile words that should not see the light,
 And stirred the shadows of an ancient curse.

Forests may fall, but not the dusk they shield;
 So on the spot where that proud city stood,
The shuddering dawn no single stone revealed,
 But fled the blackness of a primal wood.

V. A POISON TREE

I was angry with my friend:
I told my wrath, my wrath did end.
 I was angry with my foe:
I told it not, my wrath did grow.

And I watered it in fears
Night and morning with my tears,
And I sunn'd it with smiles
And with soft deceitful wiles.

And it grew both day and night,
Till it bore an apple bright,
And my foe beheld it shine,
And he knew that it was mine--

And into my garden stole
When the night had veiled the pole;
In the morning, glad, I see
My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

VI. LYCAON'S FEAST

Jove sigh'd; nor longer with his pity strove;
But kindled to a wrath becoming Jove:

Then call'd a general council of the Gods;
Who summon'd, issue from their blest abodes,

And fill th' assembly with a shining train.
A way there is, in Heav'n's expanded plain,
Which, when the skies are clear, is seen below,
And mortals, by the name of Milky, know.

The ground-work is of stars; through which the road
Lyes open to the Thunderer's abode:
The Gods of greater nations dwell around,
And, on the right and left, the palace bound;

The commons where they can: the nobler sort
With winding-doors wide open, front the court.
This place, as far as Earth with Heav'n may vie,
I dare to call the Louvre of the skie.

When all were plac'd, in seats distinctly known,
And he, their father, had assum'd the throne,
Upon his iv'ry sceptre first he leant,
Then shook his head, that shook the firmament:

Air, Earth, and seas, obey'd th' almighty nod;
And, with a gen'ral fear, confess'd the God.
At length, with indignation, thus he broke
His awful silence, and the Pow'rs bespoke.

I was not more concern'd in that debate
Of empire, when our universal state
Was put to hazard, and the giant race
Our captive skies were ready to imbrace:

For tho' the foe was fierce, the seeds of all
Rebellion, sprung from one original;
Now, wheresoever ambient waters glide,
All are corrupt, and all must be destroy'd

Let me this holy protestation make,
By Hell, and Hell's inviolable lake,

I try'd whatever in the godhead lay:
But gangren'd members must be lopt away,
Before the nobler parts are tainted to decay.

There dwells below, a race of demi-gods,
Of nymphs in waters, and of fawns in woods:
Who, tho' not worthy yet, in Heav'n to live,
Let 'em, at least, enjoy that Earth we give.
Can these be thought securely lodg'd below,
When I my self, who no superior know,
I, who have Heav'n and Earth at my command,
Have been attempted by Lycaon's hand?

At this a murmur through the synod went,
And with one voice they vote his punishment.
Thus, when conspiring traitors dar'd to doom
The fall of Caesar, and in him of Rome,

The nations trembled with a pious fear;
All anxious for their earthly Thunderer:
Nor was their care, o Caesar, less esteem'd
By thee, than that of Heav'n for Jove was deem'd:

Who with his hand, and voice, did first restrain
Their murmurs, then resum'd his speech again.

The Gods to silence were compos'd, and sate
With reverence, due to his superior state.

Cancel your pious cares; already he
Has paid his debt to justice, and to me.

Yet what his crimes, and what my judgments were,
Remains for me thus briefly to declare.

The clamours of this vile degenerate age,
The cries of orphans, and th' oppressor's rage,
Had reach'd the stars: I will descend, said I,
In hope to prove this loud complaint a lye.

Disguis'd in humane shape, I travell'd round
The world, and more than what I heard, I found.
O'er Maenalus I took my steepy way,
By caverns infamous for beasts of prey:

Then cross'd Cyllene, and the piny shade
More infamous, by curst Lycaon made:
Dark night had cover'd Heaven, and Earth, before

I enter'd his unhospitable door.

Just at my entrance, I display'd the sign
That somewhat was approaching of divine.
The prostrate people pray; the tyrant grins;
And, adding prophanation to his sins,

I'll try, said he, and if a God appear,
To prove his deity shall cost him dear.
'Twas late; the graceless wretch my death prepares,
When I shou'd soundly sleep, opprest with cares:

This dire experiment he chose, to prove
If I were mortal, or undoubted Jove:
But first he had resolv'd to taste my pow'r;
Not long before, but in a luckless hour,

Some legates, sent from the Molossian state,
Were on a peaceful errand come to treat:

Of these he murders one, he boils the flesh;
And lays the mangled morsels in a dish:

Some part he roasts; then serves it up, so drest,
And bids me welcome to this humane feast.

Mov'd with disdain, the table I o'er-turn'd;
And with avenging flames, the palace burn'd.
The tyrant in a fright, for shelter gains
The neighb'ring fields, and scours along the plains.

Howling he fled, and fain he wou'd have spoke;
But humane voice his brutal tongue forsook.

About his lips the gather'd foam he churns,
And, breathing slaughters, still with rage he burns,
But on the bleating flock his fury turns.

His mantle, now his hide, with rugged hairs
Cleaves to his back; a famish'd face he bears;
His arms descend, his shoulders sink away
To multiply his legs for chase of prey.

He grows a wolf, his hoariness remains,

And the same rage in other members reigns.
His eyes still sparkle in a narr'wer space:
His jaws retain the grin, and violence of his face

This was a single ruin, but not one
Deserves so just a punishment alone.
Mankind's a monster, and th' ungodly times
Confed'rate into guilt, are sworn to crimes.

All are alike involv'd in ill, and all
Must by the same relentless fury fall.

VII. DER ERLKÖNIG

Who rides so late through the windy night?
The father holding his young son so tight.
The boy is cradled safe in his arm,
He holds him sure and he holds him warm.

Why is your face so frightened my son?
The Erlkönig, father, see him yon?

The Elfin King with his tail and crown?
It is the fog, my son, streaming down.

Yes, you my dear child, come go with me!
The games I play, you'll like them, come see.
The shore is coloured with flow'rs in bloom,
My mother's gold gowns, you will see soon.

Oh father, father, can you not hear
What the Erlkönig promises? I fear!
Be calm, stay quiet my dearest son,
The wind blows the dry leaves of autumn.

My darling boy, won't you come with me?
I have daughters in whose care you'll be.
My daughters dance round the fairy ring.
Each night they'll cradle you, dance and sing.

Father, dear father, can you not see
The Erlkönig's daughter staring at me?
My son, my son, I see it so well:
Gray meadows on which the moonlight fell.

I love you for your beauty of course,
If free you'll not come, I will use force.
Father, dear father, he's touching me.
From Erlkönig's hurt, father please, free me.

Dread grips the father, he spurs the roan,
In loving arms he feels the boy moan.
At last, the courtyard, with fear and dread,
He looks at the child; the boy is dead.

VII. TAM LIN

O I forbid you, maidens a',
That wear gowd on your hair,
To come or gae by Carterhaugh,
For young Tam Lin is there.

There's nane that gaes by Carterhaugh
But they leave him a wed,

Either their rings, or green mantles,
Or else their maidenhead.

Janet tied her kirtle green
A bit aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A bit aboon her bree,
And she's awa to Carterhaugh
As fast as she can hie.

When she came to Carterhaugh
Tam Lin was at the well,
And there she fand his steed standing,
But away was himsel.

She'd na pu'd a double rose,
A rose but only twa,
Till upon then starts young Tam Lin,
Says, Lady, thou's pu nae mae.

Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,
And why breaks thou the wand?

Or why comes thou to Carterhaugh
Withoutten my command?

“Carterhaugh, it is my own,
My daddy gave it me,
I’ll come and gang by Carterhaugh,
And ask nae leave at thee.”

Janet has kilted her kirtle green
A bit aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A bit aboon her bree,
And she is to her father’s,
As fast as go can she.

Four and twenty ladies fair
Were playing at the ba,
And out then came the fair Janet,
The flower among them a’.

Four and twenty ladies fair
Were playing at the chess,

And out then came the fair Janet,
As green as onie glass.

Up then spake an auld grey knight,
Lay o'er the castle wa,
And says, Alas, fair Janet, for thee,
But we'll be blamed a'.

“Haud your tongue, ye auld fac'd knight,
Some ill death may ye die!
Father my bairn on whom I will,
I'll father none on thee.”

Up then spak her father dear,
And he spak meek and mild,
“And ever alas, sweet Janet,” he says,
“I think thou gaest wi' child.”

“If that I gae wi' child, father,
Mysel maun bear the blame,
There's ne'er a laird about your ha',
Shall get the bairn's name.

“If my love were an earthly knight,
As he’s an elfin grey,
I wad na gi’e my ain true-love
For nae lord that ye hae.

“The steed that my true love rides on
Is lighter than the wind,
Wi’ siller he is shod before,
Wi’ burning gowd behind.”

Janet has kilted her kirtle green
A bit aboon her knee,
And she has broded her yellow hair
A bit aboon her bree,
And she’s awa to Carterhaugh
As fast as go can she.

When she came to Carterhaugh,
Tam Lin was at the well,
And there she fand his steed standing,
But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,
A rose but only twa,
Till up then started young Tam Lin,
Says, Lady, thou pu's nae mae.

“Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,
Amang the groves sae green,
And a' to kill the bonny babe
That we gat us between?”

“O tell me, tell me, Tam Lin,” she says,
“For's sake that died on tree,
If eer ye was in holy chapel,
Or christendom did see?”

“Roxbrugh he was my grandfather,
Took me with him to bide
And ance it fell upon a day
That wae did me betide.

“And ance it fell upon a day

A cauld day and a snell,
When we were frae the hunting come,
That frae my horse I fell,
The Queen o' Fairies she caught me,
In yon green hill do dwell.

“And pleasant is the fairy land,
But, an eerie tale to tell,
At at the end of seven years,
We pay a tithe to hell,
I so fair and fu' o' flesh,
I'm fear'd it be mysel'.

“But the night is Halloween, lady,
The morn is Hallowday,
Then win me, win me, an ye will,
For weel I wat ye may.

“Just at the mirk and midnight hour
The fairy folk will ride,
And they that wad their true-love win,
At Miles Cross they maun bide.”

“But how shall I thee ken, Tam Lin,
Or how my true-love know,
Amang sa mony unco knights,
The like I never saw?”

“O first let pass the black, lady,
And syne let pass the brown,
But quickly run to the milk-white steed,
Pu ye his rider down.

“For I’ll ride on the milk-white steed,
And ay nearest the town,
Because I was an earthly knight
They gie me that renown.

“My right hand will be gloved, lady,
My left hand will be bare,
Cockt up shall my bonnet be,
And kaimed down shall my hair,
And thae’s the takens I gie thee,
Nae doubt I will be there.

“They’ll turn me in your arms, lady,
 Into an esk and adder,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
 I am your bairn’s father.

“They’ll turn me to a bear sae grim,
 And then a lion bold,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
 And ye shall love your child.

“Again they’ll turn me in your arms
 To a red het gand of airn,
But hold me fast, and fear me not,
 I’ll do you nae harm.

“And last they’ll turn me in your arms
 Into the burning gleed,
Then throw me into well water,
 O throw me in with speed

“And then I’ll be your ain true-love,

I'll turn a naked knight,
Then cover me wi your green mantle,
And hide me out o sight."

Gloomy, gloomy was the night,
And eerie was the way,
As fair Jenny in her green mantle
To Miles Cross she did gae.

At the mirk and midnight hour
She heard the bridles sing,
She was as glad at that
As any earthly thing.

First she let the black pass by,
And syne she let the brown,
But quickly she ran to the milk-white steed,
And pu'd the rider down.

Sae weel she minded what he did say,
And young Tam Lin did win,
Syne covered him wi her green mantle,

As blythe's a bird in spring

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
Out of a bush o broom,
"Them that has gotten young Tam Lin
Has gotten a stately-groom."

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,
And an angry woman was she,
"Shame betide her ill-far'd face,
And an ill death may she die,
For she's taen awa the bonniest knight
In a' my companie.

"But had I kend, Tam Lin," said she,
"What now this night I see,
I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een,
And put in twa een o tree."

XIII. THE TWINS

Have pity ! show no pity !
Those eyes that send such shivers
Into my brain and spine : oh let them
Flame like the ancient city
Swallowed up by the sulphurous rivers
When men let angels fret them !

Yea ! let the south wind blow,
And the Turkish banner advance,
And the word go out : No quarter !
But I shall hod thee -so !
While the boys and maidens dance
About the shambles of slaughter !

I know thee who thou art,
The inmost fiend that curlest
Thy vampire tounge about
Earth's corybantic heart,
Hell's warrior that whirllest
The darts of horror and doubt !

Thou knowest me who I am
The inmost soul and saviour
Of man ; what hieroglyph
Of the dragon and the lamb
Shall thou and I engrave here
On Time's inscandescable cliff ?

Look ! in the plished granite,
Black as thy cartouche is with sins,
I read the searing sentence
That blasts the eyes that scan it :
"HOOR and SET be TWINS."
A fico for repentance !

Ay ! O Son of my mother
That snarled and clawed in her womb
As now we rave in our rapture,
I know thee, I love thee, brother !
Incestuous males that consumes
The light and the life that we capture.

Starve thou the soul of the world,
Brother, as I the body !
Shall we not glut our lust
On these wretches whom Fate hath hurled
To a hell of jesu and shoddy,
Dung and ethics and dust ?

Thou as I art Fate.
Coe then, conquer and kiss me !
Come ! what hinders? Believe me :
This is the thought we await.
The mark is fair ; can you miss me ?

See, how subtly I writhe !
Strange runes and unknown sigils
I trace in the trance that thrills us.
Death ! how lithe, how blithe
Are these male incestuous vigils !
Ah ! this is the spasm that kills us !

Wherefore I solemnly affirm
This twofold Oneness at the term.

Asar on Asi did beget
Horus twin brother unto Set.
Now Set and Horus kiss, to call
The Soul of the Unnatural
Forth from the dusk ; then nature slain
Lets the Beyond be born again.

This weird is of the tongue of Khem,
The Conjunction used of them.
Whoso shall speak it, let him die,
His bowels rotting inwardly,
Save he uncover and caress
The God that lighteth his liesse.

X. THE BRIDE OF CORINTH

Once a stranger youth to Corinth came,
Who in Athens lived, but hoped that he
From a certain townsman there might claim,
As his father's friend, kind courtesy.
Son and daughter, they

Had been wont to say
Should thereafter bride and bridegroom be.

But can he that boon so highly prized,
Save 'tis dearly bought, now hope to get?
They are Christians and have been baptized,
He and all of his are heathens yet.
For a newborn creed,
Like some loathsome weed,
Love and truth to root out oft will threat.

Father, daughter, all had gone to rest,
And the mother only watches late;
She receives with courtesy the guest,
And conducts him to the room of state.
Wine and food are brought,
Ere by him besought;
Bidding him good night. she leaves him straight.

But he feels no relish now, in truth,
For the dainties so profusely spread;
eat and drink forgets the wearied youth,

And, still dress'd, he lays him on the bed.
Scarce are closed his eyes,
When a form in-hies
Through the open door with silent tread.

By his glimmering lamp discerns he now
How, in veil and garment white array'd,
With a black and gold band round her brow,
Glides into the room a bashful maid.
But she, at his sight,
Lifts her hand so white,
And appears as though full sore afraid.

"Am I," cries she, "such a stranger here,
That the guest's approach they could not name?
Ah, they keep me in my cloister drear,
Well nigh feel I vanquish'd by my shame.
On thy soft couch now
Slumber calmly thou!
I'll return as swiftly as I came."

"Stay, thou fairest maiden!" cries the boy,

Starting from his couch with eager haste:
"Here are Ceres', Bacchus' gifts of joy;
Amor bringest thou, with beauty grac'd!
Thou art pale with fear!
Loved one let us here
Prove the raptures the Immortals taste."

"Draw not nigh, O Youth! afar remain!
Rapture now can never smile on me;
For the fatal step, alas! is ta'en,
Through my mother's sick-bed phantasy.
Cured, she made this oath:
'Youth and nature both
Shall henceforth to Heav'n devoted be.'

"From the house, so silent now, are driven
All the gods who reign'd supreme of yore;
One Invisible now rules in heaven,
On the cross a Saviour they adore.
Victims slay they here,
Neither lamb nor steer,
But the altars reek with human gore."

And he lists, and ev'ry word he weighs,
While his eager soul drinks in each sound:
"Can it be that now before my gaze
Stands my loved one on this silent ground?
Pledge to me thy troth!
Through our father's oath:
With Heav'ns blessing will our love be crown'd."

"Kindly youth, I never can be thine!
'Tis my sister they intend for thee.
When I in the silent cloister pine,
Ah, within her arms remember me!
Thee alone I love,
While love's pangs I prove;
Soon the earth will veil my misery."

"No! for by this glowing flame I swear,
Hymen hath himself propitious shown:
Let us to my fathers house repair,
And thoult find that joy is not yet flown,
Sweetest, here then stay,

And without delay
Hold we now our wedding feast alone!"

Then exchange they tokens of their truth;
She gives him a golden chain to wear,
And a silver chalice would the youth
Give her in return of beauty rare.

"That is not for me;
Yet I beg of thee,
One lock only give me of thy hair."

Now the ghostly hour of midnight knell'd,
And she seem'd right joyous at the sign;
To her pallid lips the cup she held,
But she drank of nought but blood-red wine.
For to taste the bread
There before them spread,
Nought he spoke could make the maid incline.

To the youth the goblet then she brought,--
He too quaff'd with eager joy the bowl.
Love to crown the silent feast he sought,

Ah! full love-sick was the stripling's soul.
From his prayer she shrinks,
Till at length he sinks
On the bed and weeps without control.

And she comes, and lays her near the boy:
"How I grieve to see thee sorrowing so!
If thou think'st to clasp my form with joy,
Thou must learn this secret sad to know;
Yes! the maid, whom thou
Call'st thy loved one now,
Is as cold as ice, though white as snow."

Then he clasps her madly in his arm,
While love's youthful might pervades his frame:
"Thou might'st hope, when with me, to grow warm,
E'en if from the grave thy spirit came!
Breath for breath, and kiss!
Overflow of bliss!
Dost not thou, like me, feel passion's flame?"

Love still closer rivets now their lips,

Tears they mingle with their rapture blest,
From his mouth the flame she wildly sips,
Each is with the other's thought possess'd.

His hot ardour's flood
Warms her chilly blood,
But no heart is beating in her breast.

In her care to see that nought went wrong,
Now the mother happen'd to draw near;
At the door long hearkens she, full long,
Wond'ring at the sounds that greet her ear.

Tones of joy and sadness,
And love's blissful madness,
As of bride and bridegroom they appear,

From the door she will not now remove
'Till she gains full certainty of this;
And with anger hears she vows of love,
Soft caressing words of mutual bliss.

"Hush! the cock's loud strain!
But thout come again,
When the night returns!"--then kiss on kiss.

Then her wrath the mother cannot hold,
But unfastens straight the lock with ease
"In this house are girls become so bold,
As to seek e'en strangers' lusts to please?"
By her lamp's clear glow
Looks she in,--and oh!
Sight of horror!--'tis her child she sees.

Fain the youth would, in his first alarm,
With the veil that o'er her had been spread,
With the carpet, shield his love from harm;
But she casts them from her, void of dread,
And with spirit's strength,
In its spectre length,
Lifts her figure slowly from the bed.

"Mother! mother!"--Thus her wan lips say:
"May not I one night of rapture share?
From the warm couch am I chased away?
Do I waken only to despair?
It contents not thee

To have driven me
An untimely shroud of death to wear?

"But from out my coffin's prison-bounds
By a wond'rous fate I'm forced to rove,
While the blessings and the chaunting sounds
That your priests delight in, useless prove.

Water, salt, are vain
Fervent youth to chain,
Ah, e'en Earth can never cool down love!

"When that infant vow of love was spoken,
Venus' radiant temple smiled on both.
Mother! thou that promise since hast broken,
Fetter'd by a strange, deceitful oath.

Gods, though, hearken ne'er,
Should a mother swear
To deny her daughter's plighted troth.

From my grave to wander I am forc'd,
Still to seek The Good's long-sever'd link,
Still to love the bridegroom I have lost,

And the life-blood of his heart to drink;
When his race is run,
I must hasten on,
And the young must 'neath my vengeance sink,

"Beauteous youth! no longer mayst thou live;
Here must shrivel up thy form so fair;
Did not I to thee a token give,
Taking in return this lock of hair?
View it to thy sorrow!
Grey thould be to-morrow,
Only to grow brown again when there.

"Mother, to this final prayer give ear!
Let a funeral pile be straightway dress'd;
Open then my cell so sad and drear,
That the flames may give the lovers rest!
When ascends the fire
From the glowing pyre,
To the gods of old we'll hasten, blest."

XI. THE DANCE OF DEATH

Carrying bouquet, and handkerchief, and gloves,
Proud of her height as when she lived, she moves
With all the careless and high-stepping grace,
And the extravagant courtesan's thin face.

Was slimmer waist e'er in a ball-room wooed?
Her floating robe, in royal amplitude,
Falls in deep folds around a dry foot, shod
With a bright flower-like shoe that gems the sod.

The swarms that hum about her collar-bones
As the lascivious streams caress the stones,
Conceal from every scornful jest that flies,
Her gloomy beauty; and her fathomless eyes

Are made of shade and void; with flowery sprays
Her skull is wreathed artistically, and sways,
Feeble and weak, on her frail vertebrae.
O charm of nothing decked in folly! they

Who laugh and name you a Caricature,
They see not, they whom flesh and blood allure,
The nameless grace of every bleached, bare bone,
That is most dear to me, tall skeleton!

Come you to trouble with your potent sneer
The feast of Life! or are you driven here,
To Pleasure's Sabbath, by dead lusts that stir
And goad your moving corpse on with a spur?

Or do you hope, when sing the violins,
And the pale candle-flame lights up our sins,
To drive some mocking nightmare far apart,
And cool the flame hell lighted in your heart?

Fathomless well of fault and foolishness!
Eternal alembic of antique distress!
Still o'er the curved, white trellis of your sides
The sateless, wandering serpent curls and glides.

And truth to tell, I fear lest you should find,
Among us here, no lover to your mind;

Which of these hearts beat for the smile you gave?
The charms of horror please none but the brave.

Your eyes' black gulf, where awful broodings stir,
Brings giddiness; the prudent reveller
Sees, while a horror grips him from beneath,
The eternal smile of thirty-two white teeth.

For he who has not folded in his arms
A skeleton, nor fed on graveyard charms,
Recks not of furbelow, or paint, or scent,
When Horror comes the way that Beauty went.

O irresistible, with fleshless face,
Say to these dancers in their dazzled race:
"Proud lovers with the paint above your bones,
Ye shall taste death, musk scented skeletons!

Withered Antinoüs, dandies with plump faces,
Ye varnished cadavers, and grey Lovelaces,
Ye go to lands unknown and void of breath,
Drawn by the rumour of the Dance of Death.

From Seine's cold quays to Ganges' burning stream,
The mortal troupes dance onward in a dream;
They do not see, within the opened sky,
The Angel's sinister trumpet raised on high.

In every clime and under every sun,
Death laughs at ye, mad mortals, as ye run;
And oft perfumes herself with myrrh, like ye
And mingles with your madness, irony!"

XII. THE VAMPIRE

She rose among us where we lay.
She wept, we put our work away.
She chilled our laughter, stilled our play;
And spread a silence there.
And darkness shot across the sky,
And once, and twice, we heard her cry;
And saw her lift white hands on high

And toss her troubled hair.

What shape was this who came to us,
With basilisk eyes so ominous,
With mouth so sweet, so poisonous,
And tortured hands so pale?
We saw her wavering to and fro,
Through dark and wind we saw her go;
Yet what her name was did not know;
And felt our spirits fail.

We tried to turn away; but still
Above we heard her sorrow thrill;
And those that slept, they dreamed of ill
And dreadful things:
Of skies grown red with rending flames
And shuddering hills that cracked their frames;
Of twilights foul with wings;

And skeletons dancing to a tune;
And cries of children stifled soon;
And over all a blood-red moon

A dull and nightmare size.
They woke, and sought to go their ways,
Yet everywhere they met her gaze,
Her fixed and burning eyes.

Who are you now, —we cried to her—
Spirit so strange, so sinister?
We felt dead winds above us stir;
And in the darkness heard
A voice fall, singing, cloying sweet,
Heavily dropping, though that heat,
Heavy as honeyed pulses beat,
Slow word by anguished word.

And through the night strange music went
With voice and cry so darkly blent
We could not fathom what they meant;
Save only that they seemed
To thin the blood along our veins,
Foretelling vile, delirious pains,
And clouds divulging blood-red rains
Upon a hill undreamed.

And this we heard: "Who dies for me,
He shall possess me secretly,
My terrible beauty he shall see,
And slake my body's flame.
But who denies me cursed shall be,
And slain, and buried loathsomely,
And slimed upon with shame."

And darkness fell. And like a sea
Of stumbling deaths we followed, we
Who dared not stay behind.
There all night long beneath a cloud
We rose and fell, we struck and bowed,
We were the ploughman and the ploughed,
Our eyes were red and blind.

And some, they said, had touched her side,
Before she fled us there;
And some had taken her to bride;
And some lain down for her and died;
Who had not touched her hair,

Ran to and fro and cursed and cried
And sought her everywhere.

“Her eyes have feasted on the dead,
And small and shapely is her head,
And dark and small her mouth,” they said,
“And beautiful to kiss;
Her mouth is sinister and red
As blood in moonlight is.”

Then poets forgot their jeweled words
And cut the sky with glittering swords;
And innocent souls turned carrion birds
To perch upon the dead.
Sweet daisy fields were drenched with death,
The air became a charnel breath,
Pale stones were splashed with red.

Green leaves were dappled bright with blood
And fruit trees murdered in the bud;
And when at length the dawn
Came green as twilight from the east,

And all that heaving horror ceased,
Silent was every bird and beast,
And that dark voice was gone.

No word was there, no song, no bell,
No furious tongue that dream to tell;
Only the dead, who rose and fell
Above the wounded men;
And whisperings and wails of pain
Blown slowly from the wounded grain,
Blown slowly from the smoking plain;
And silence fallen again.

Until at dusk, from God knows where,
Beneath dark birds that filled the air,
Like one who did not hear or care,
Under a blood-red cloud,
An aged ploughman came alone
And drove his share through flesh and bone,
And turned them under to mould and stone;
All night long he ploughed.

XIV. ME AND THE DEVIL

Early this morning, when you knocked upon my door
Early this morning, *oooh*, when you knocked upon my door
And I said "hello Satan,
I believe it's time to go"

Me and the Devil was walkin' side-by-side
Me and the Devil, *oooh*, was walking side-by-side
I'm going to beat my woman
until I get satisfied

She said "you don't see why that I will dog her 'round"
She say "you don't see why, *hoo* that I would dog her 'round"
Now baby you know you ain't doin' me right, now
It *must-a been* that old evil spirits *a* deep down in the ground

You may bury my body down by the highway side
Baby, I don't care where you
bury my body when I'm dead and gone
You may bury my body, *hoo*, down by the highway side
So my old evil spirit can get a Greyhound bus and ride

XIII. DARKNESS

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.

The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went — and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:

And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:

A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour

They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.

The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest

Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd;
And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twin'd themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.

And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;

All earth was but one thought—and that was death
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,

Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.

The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,
And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath

Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—

Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—
A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.

The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—

The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

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