

Nor had I grieved, but that he pined
For the sweet light of day. 200

“At length, when many weeks were gone,
And his complainings chafed my blood —
How shall I tell thee! — day by day
Went on, and yet they brought no food.

“I knew man’s heart was hard and cold; 205
I knew that Ugolin was slain
With pangs like these: the sudden thought
Kindled a frenzy in my brain!

“I raved for help; I clasped the child;
I smote my breast, and fiercely cursed; 210
And, in my madness of despair,
I strove my prison walls to burst.

“My pangs they were not for myself;
I bared my arm, and bade him eat:
Life was a boon I did not prize, 215
Save for the weak thing at my feet.

“Many days went on, many dreadful days,
And on the dungeon floor at length
I lay, as in a deadly dream;
My rage had spent my strength. 220

“My utterest, hopeless misery
I knew not for a little space,
Until I felt his trembling hand
Passed lightly o’er my face:

“Then in a changed and feeble tone 225
I heard him whispering; and he said
A little prayer, ‘Father in heaven,
Give us our daily bread!’

“‘Where got you, child, that prayer?’ I cried;
And he answered with a tranquil air, 230
‘From a little child that went to school,
Oh! father dear, I got that prayer.’

“This was the one pang that I lacked,
The crowning to my misery given;
Wretch that I was! for one so pure 235
Could only have a place in heaven.

“I thought of all the priest had taught,
And at that time I tried to pray;
But I was not a sinless child,
I could not find a word to say. 240

“Another frenzy seized my brain,
A twofold madness in me burned;
And which died first I never knew,
For memory ne’er in life returned.

“My doom is not accomplished yet; 245
But still one thought consoles my heart,
Where’er my blessed child abides,
With me he hath no longer part.

“But, hark! the second cock doth crow;
I feel the freshness of the day; 250
I hear a call I dare not shun;
Farewell, farewell! I must not stay.”

With this the widow clasped her hands,
And “Woe’s me!” in her grief she said,
“Woe’s me, that I have been a mother! 255
That I have looked upon the dead!

“My sons! my pride, my sinful boast,
My earliest thought each coming morn,
My latest joy each parting eve,
Would God that ye had ne’er been born! 260

“Was it for this ye grew in strength?
For this to comely manhood grew?
My loved, my lost! — *my lost!* woe’s me!
Oh that I could have died for you!”

“Peace! peace!” the youngest spake, “mother, 265

And let thy wailing ended be;
If the third cock crow, I must away,
And I am come from heaven for thee.

“They sinned, alas! they darkly sinned,
The angels of bliss shed tears for them; 270
Their place in heaven is empty yet,
And they have dimmed their diadem.

“But of the end I may not speak,
The purpose of God is never ill;
And though thou mourn, yet murmur not; 275
Confide in the all-righteous will.

“For me, when I left my pleasant home,
To the city I too sped,
And with the young, for many a year,
An idle life I led. 280

“We lived with the world’s most beautiful;
We raised the wine-cup high;
We crowned ourselves with the summer’s rose,
And let no flower pass by.

“We lived in sumptuous palaces, 285
Death seemed an idle tale;
And to a sweet philosophy
We spread our silken sail.

“I thought not that the loved could die,
Nor that the fair could fade; 290
And I bound myself with a holy vow
To a young Athenian maid.

“We loved, we lived for seven short years
In a dream of gay delight;
And beautiful young creatures grew, 295
Like sweet flowers, in our sight.

“I dreamed not that the fair could fade,
Nor that the loved could die;
But the whirlwind came when day was calm,

And swept in fury by. 300

“My children, those fair, tender things,
Faded like summer snow;
I buried them 'neath a flowery sod,
In a wild amaze of woe.

“I had not seen the pallid face 305
Of awful death before,
And back I went to my stately house
With new and solemn lore.

“The pestilence had done its work,
The glory of my life was gone, 310
And my young, sweet Athenian wife
Lay dead before the set of sun.

“I was a man and so I mourned;
And, when they preached philosophy
In my great grief, I drove them forth; 315
And, tired of life, lay down to die.

“Body and soul they both were weak;
And it was in the city said,
That, like a madman or a fool,
I made my mourning for the dead. 320

“The young, the happy shunned my door;
I sate alone from morn till night;
And at my lean and drooping form
Men gazed as at a fearful sight.

“At length, by chance, I met a man, 325
Old and despised, and very poor;
A man of most religious life,
Who yet asked alms from door to door.

“He was my comforter: from him
I learned a faith that saved my soul; 330
The blessings of the Christian's hope
He gave me, and my mind grew whole.

“I saw that in God’s righteous will
I had been smitten, and I bent
My knee at length, and even gave thanks 335
To him for that great chastisement.

“From that good time I spent my days
Among the afflicted of men’s race;
To dungeons and to battle-fields
I passed, a minister of grace. 340

“The blessings of the Holy One
Went with me to each distant land;
And amid shipwrecks, strife, and foes,
My soul was strengthened by his hand.

“But ere my noon of life was o’er, 345
The Merciful saw meet to bless
His servant with a peaceful death,
In the far Syrian wilderness.

“Near a small church, that from the days
Of the apostles had stood pure; 350
Among their dead they laid my bones,
With all old rites of sepulture.

“But, hark! the third cock crows aloud;
Mother, thy race is well nigh run,
The palm in heaven grows green for thee, 355
Farewell! we meet at set of sun.”

1830

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