

**AN EPIC OF WOMEN  
AND  
OTHER POEMS.**

**I Dedicate this Book**

TO MY FRIEND,

**JOHN PAYNE.**

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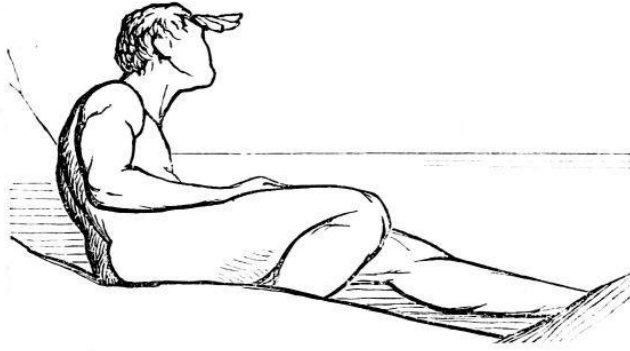
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## EXILE.

Des voluptés intérieures  
Le sourire mystérieux.  
VICTOR HUGO.

A COMMON folk I walk among;  
I speak dull things in their own tongue:  
But all the while within I hear  
A song I do not sing for fear—  
How sweet, how different a thing!  
And when I come where none are near  
I open all my heart and sing.

I am made one with these indeed,  
And give them all the love they need—  
Such love as they would have of me:

But in my heart—ah, let it be!—  
I think of it when none is nigh—  
There is a love they shall not see;  
For it I live—for it will die.

And oft-times, though I share their joys,  
And seem to praise them with my voice,  
Do I not celebrate my own,  
Ay, down in some far inward zone  
Of thoughts in which they have no part?  
Do I not feel—ah, quite alone  
With all the secret of my heart?

O when the shroud of night is spread  
On these, as Death is on the dead,  
So that no sight of them shall mar  
The blessèd rapture of a star—  
Then I draw forth those thoughts at will;  
And like the stars those bright thoughts are;  
And boundless seems the heart they fill:

For every one is as a link;  
And I enchain them as I think;  
Till present, and remembered bliss,  
And better, worlds on after this,  
I have—led on from each to each  
Athwart the limitless abyss—  
In some surpassing sphere I reach.

I draw a veil across my face  
Before I come back to the place

And dull obscurity of these;  
I hide my face, and no man sees;  
I learn to smile a lighter smile,  
And change, and look just what they please.  
It is but for a little while.

I go with them; and in their sight  
I would not scorn their little light,  
Nor mock the things they hold divine;  
But when I kneel before the shrine  
Of some base deity of theirs,  
I pray all inwardly to mine,  
And send my soul up with my prayers:

For I—ah, to myself I say—  
I have a heaven though far away;  
And there my Love went long ago,  
With all the things my heart loves so;  
And there my songs fly, every one:  
And I shall find them there I know  
When this sad pilgrimage is done.

## A NEGLECTED HARP.

O HUSHED and shrouded room!  
O silence that enchains!  
O me—of many melodies  
The cold and voiceless tomb;  
What sweet impassioned strains,  
What fair unearthly things,  
Sealed up in frozen cadences,  
Are aching in my strings!

Each time the setting sun,  
At eve when all is still,  
Doth reach a pale faint finger in  
To touch them one by one;  
O what an inward thrill  
Of music makes them swell!  
The prisoned song-pulse beats within  
And almost breaks the spell.

Each time the ghostly moon  
Among the shadows gleams,  
And leads them in a mournful dance  
To some mysterious tune;  
O then, indeed, it seems  
Strange muffled tones repeat  
The wail within me, and perchance  
The measure of the feet.

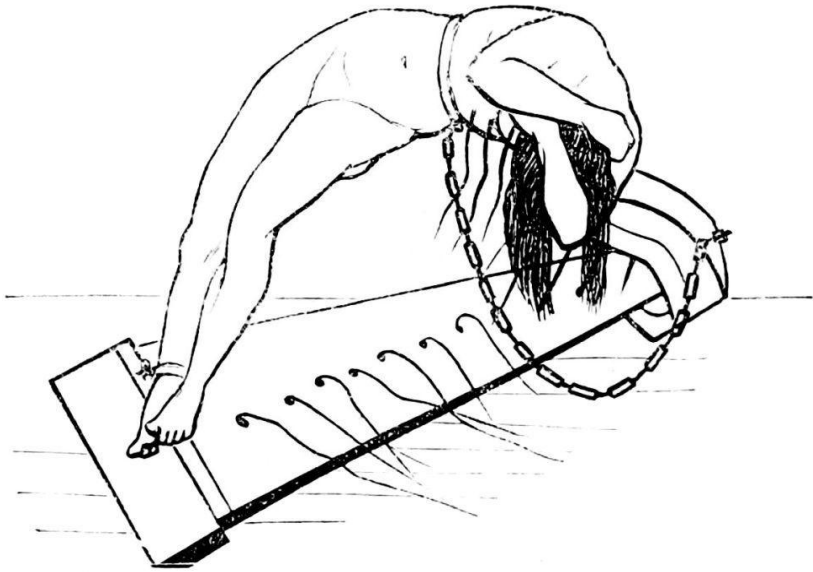


But often when the ring  
Of some sweet voice is near,  
Or past me the light garments brush  
Soft as a spirit's wing,—  
O, more than I can bear,  
I feel, intense, the throb  
Of some rich inward music gush  
That comes out in a sob.

For am I not—alas,  
The quick days come and go—  
A weak and songless instrument  
Through which the song-breaths pass?  
I would a heart might know,  
I would a hand might free  
These wondrous melodies up-pent  
And languishing in me.

\* \* \*

A sharp strange music smote  
The night.—In yon recess  
The shrouded harp from all its strings  
Gave forth a piercing note:  
With that long bitterness  
The stricken air still aches;  
'Twas like the one true word that sings  
Some poet whose heart breaks.



# THREE FLOWERS OF MODERN GREECE.

## I.

### IANOULA.

O SISTERS! fairly have ye to rejoice,  
Who of your weakness wed  
With lordly might: yea, now I praise your choice.  
As the vine clingeth with fair fingers spread  
Over some dark tree-stem,  
So on your goodly husbands with no dread  
Ye cling, and your fair fingers hold on them.

For godlike stature, and unchanging brow  
Broad as the heaven above,  
Yea, for fair mighty looks ye chose, I trow;  
And prided you to see, in strivings rough,  
Dauntless, their strong arms raised;  
And little loth were ye to give your love  
To husbands such as these whom all men praised.

But I, indeed, of many wooers, took  
None such for boast or stay,  
But a pale lover with a sweet sad look:

The smile he wed me with was like some ray  
Shining on dust of death;  
And Death stood near him on my wedding day,  
And blanched his forehead with a fatal breath.

I loved to feel his weak arm lean on mine,  
Yea, and to give him rest,  
Bidding his pale and languid face recline  
Softly upon my shoulder or my breast,—  
Thinking, alas, how sweet  
To hold his spirit in my arms so press'd,  
That even Death's hard omens I might cheat.

I found his drooping hand the warmest place  
Here where my warm heart is;  
I said, "Dear love, what thoughts are in thy face?  
Has Death as fair a bosom, then, as this?"  
—O sisters, do not start!  
His cold lips answered with a fainting kiss,  
And his hand struck its death chill to my heart.

## II.

### THE FAIR MAID AND THE SUN.

O SONS of men, that toil, and love with tears!

Know ye, O sons of men, the maid who dwells  
Between the two seas at the Dardanelles?  
Her face hath charmed away the change of years,  
And all the world is fillèd with her spells.

No task is hers for ever, but the play  
Of setting forth her beauty day by day:  
There in your midst, O sons of men that toil,  
She laughs the long eternity away.

The chains about her neck are many-pearled,  
Rare gems are those round which her hair is curled;  
She hath all flesh for captive, and for spoil,  
The fruit of all the labour of the world.

She getteth up and maketh herself bare,  
And letteth down the wonder of her hair  
Before the sun; the heavy golden locks  
Fall in the hollow of her shoulders fair.

She taketh from the lands, as she may please,

All jewels, and all corals from the seas;  
She layeth them in rows upon the rocks;  
Laugheth, and bringeth fairer ones than these.

Five are the goodly necklaces that deck  
The place between her bosom and her neck;  
She passeth many a bracelet o'er her hands;  
And, seeing she is white without a fleck,

And, seeing she is fairer than the tide,  
And of a beauty no man can abide—  
Proudly she standeth as a goddess stands,  
And mocketh at the sun and sea for pride:

And to the sea she saith: "O silver sea,  
Fair art thou, but thou art not fair like me;  
Open thy white-toothed dimpled mouths and try;  
They laugh not the soft way I laugh at thee."

And to the sun she saith: "O golden sun,  
Fierce is thy burning till the day is done;  
But thou shalt burn mere grass and leaves, while I  
Shall burn the hearts of men up everyone."

O fair and dreadful is the maid who dwells  
Between the two seas at the Dardanelles:  
As fair and dread as in the ancient years;  
And still the world is fillèd with her spells,

O sons of men, that toil, and love with tears!

### III.

## THE CYPRESS.

O IVORY bird, that shakest thy wan plumes,  
And dost forget the sweetness of thy throat  
For a most strange and melancholy note—  
That wilt forsake the summer and the blooms  
And go to winter in a place remote!

The country where thou goest, Ivory bird!  
It hath no pleasant nesting-place for thee;  
There are no skies nor flowers fair to see,  
Nor any shade at noon—as I have heard—  
But the black shadow of the Cypress tree.

Cypress tree, it groweth on a mound;  
And sickly are the flowers it hath of May,  
Full of a false and subtle spell are they;  
For whoso breathes the scent of them around,  
He shall not see the happy Summer day.

In June, it bringeth forth, O Ivory bird!  
A winter berry, bitter as the sea;  
And whoso eateth of it, woe is he—  
He shall fall pale, and sleep—as I have heard—  
Long in the shadow of the Cypress tree.

## A PRECIOUS URN.

THE great effulgence of the early days  
Of one first summer, whose bright joys, it seems,  
Have been to all my songs their golden themes;  
The rose leaves gathered from the faded ways  
I wandered in when they were all a-blaze  
With living flowers and flame of the sunbeams;  
And, more than all, that ending of my dreams  
Divinely, in a dream-like thing,—the face  
Of one beloved lady once possess  
In one long kiss that made my whole life burn:  
What of all these remains to me?—At best,  
A heap of fragrant ashes now, that turn  
My heavy heart into a funeral urn  
Which I have buried deep within my breast.



## SERAPHITUS.

ALAS! that we should not have known,  
For all his strange ethereal calm,  
And thoughts so little like our own  
And presence like a shed-forth balm,  
He was some Spirit from a zone  
Of light, and ecstasy, and psalm,  
Radiant and near about God's throne:  
Now he hath flown!

The heaven did cleave on him away;  
And for what thing he chose to dwell  
In a mere tenement of clay  
With mortal seeming—who can tell?  
But there in some unearthly way  
He wrought, and, with an inner spell,  
Miraculously did array  
That house of clay.

The very walls were in some sort  
Made beautiful, with many a fresque  
Or carven filigree of Thought,  
Now seen a clear and statuesque  
Accomplishment of dreams—now sought  
Through many a lovely arabesque  
And metaphor, that seemed to sport  
With what it taught.

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