

**APOLLO AND  
MARSYAS**

*AND OTHER POEMS.*

BY  
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To  
ARABELLADUFFY.

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## INTRODUCTION.

THE contest of the Satyr with the God,  
Oh who shall end it? Who shall end the strife  
That fills all Art, all Nature and all Life,  
And give the right of flaying with a nod?

Oh who when radiant noontide's last note dies,  
And darkness with its mystery draws near,  
Shall bid the strains of twilight not arise  
That fill the soul with wistfulness or fear?

Man gives his love in turn, he knows not why,  
To sun or gloom according to his mood;  
His ear, his heart, alternately is woo'd  
By Nature's carol or by Nature's sigh.

And Marsyas' reed-pipe and Apollo's lyre  
Make endless competition upon earth,  
As men prefer the charm of vague desire,  
Or charm of bright serenity and mirth.

But not alone the wistful strains of eve  
Mean unseen Marsyas speaking to the heart;  
Nor is he near, in Nature and in Art,  
Alone where yearning makes the bosom heave.

Often in tones more passionate he wails,  
Pensive no more but fiercely wild and shrill,  
And fills the soul with rapture as it quails,

And charms us with the very fear of ill.

Wherever lonely Nature claims her right  
Upon man's love, and her wild fitful voice  
With flute-like wailings makes his ear rejoice  
In the wild music of a stormy night;

Wherever haunting Fancy fills the gloom  
With ghostly sounds, with evil spirits' sobs,  
And exiled souls seem to bewail their doom,  
And, half seduced, the heart with vague fear throbs;

Wherever Poetry with magic word  
Lets Passion's loosened elements fly free,  
And hiss and thunder like a storm-churned sea,  
And rave and howl—there Marsyas' note is heard.

Oh, I have felt his music in my soul  
Outwail the wailing wind when every tone  
Has made my fancy, bursting all control,  
Create new realms as wild as are his own,

With shapes of fear, with dread fantastic spells,  
And sights more wondrous than the restless stream  
Of visions in a Haschish-eater's dream,  
Where whirl and eddy countless heavens and hells.

And yet I love the light, nor am I one  
Bred in the darkness of Cimmerian caves,  
Who shrinks with blinking eyelids from the sun,  
When with the dawn he leaps on laughing waves,

The sounds which that great Dorian God, whose glance  
Kindles the blushes of the pale sea foam,  
Draws from his beam-stringed lyre come thrilling home,  
And make the ripples of my spirit dance.

Outside, beyond my threshold, I can hear  
The hum of sun-ripe Nature's million strings,  
The song of man's frail happiness rise clear  
Above the mutability of things;

And though I think, if you but listen well,  
That here, upon this many voiced earth  
There be less sounds of carol and of mirth  
Than sounds of sigh and moan and dirge and knell;

And though what here I offer echoes less  
Apollo's lyre than Marsyas' reedy fife,  
Whose fitful wailing in the wilderness  
Sounds through the chinks and crannies of my life,

Apollo's name is sweet, and I were loth  
To let the name of Marsyas stand alone  
Engraven on this book, while I can own  
Allegiance to both lords and love them both.

## **APOLLO AND MARSYAS.**

MARSYAS.

Low, but far heard,  
Across the Phrygian forest goes a sound  
That seems to hush the pines that moan all round.  
Is it the weird  
Wail of a she-wolf plundered of her own?  
Or some maimed Satyr left to die alone?  
Or has great Pan, in lonely places feared,  
To some belated wretch his wild face shown?

Oh strong rough Pan,  
God of lone spots where sudden awe o'erwhelms  
Weak souls, but never mine—I love thy realms!  
I love the wan  
Half-leafless glens, which Autumn's plaint repeat  
From tree to tree; I love the shy fawn's bleat;  
The cry of lynx and wood-cat safe from man;  
The fox's short sharp bark from sure retreat.

The deep lone woods  
Which men call silent teem with voice: I hear  
Vague wails, low calls, weird notes, now far, now near.  
The storm-born floods  
That sweep the glens, the gurgling hurrying springs  
Impart dim secrets, vague prophetic things;  
The whispering winds awake strange wistful moods.  
But hush, my flute! Apollo, strike thy strings!

APOLLO.

The harvest-hymns  
Rise from the fields, where, in the setting sun,



The reapers stretch by sheaves of golden dun  
    Their weary limbs;  
While many a sunburnt lad or maiden weaves  
With every corn-flower that the sickle leaves  
Demeter's harvest-crowns, or binds and trims  
    For the Great Mother her allotted sheaves.

    The whole west glows  
    Like a vast sea of rosy molten ore  
Where, here and there, great tracks of pearly shore  
    Or gleaming rows  
    Of crimson reefs and isles of amber blaze;  
And through the whole a mighty fan of rays  
Spreads as the sun approaches earth and throws  
    A farewell glance before he goes his ways.

    A rich warm scent  
    Of summer ripeness fills the fertile plain;  
The ox, unyoked, kneels chewing near the wain;  
    In one sound blent  
    The voices of the insect-swarms that fill  
    Each furrow, indefatigably trill  
And chirp and hum; until the bright day spent,  
Invokes the dusk to make the lone fields still.

#### MARSYAS.

    What voice-like sounds  
Off the Trinacrian coast, low, plaintive, sweet,  
Blend with the breeze? or is it Fancy's cheat?  
    There seem no grounds

For watch or fear: the waves have sunk to sleep  
In twilight on the bosom of the deep.  
The ship seems half becalmed, and eve surrounds  
The crew with dolphins in perpetual leap.

But hark again!  
Now here, now there, now all around the ship  
The voices sound each from an unseen lip!  
Dost hear the strain?  
It charms, it lulls, it lures, yet seems to fill  
The soul with something ominous of ill,  
A strange vague song with which man strives in vain,  
Which melts the heart while it benumbs the will.

The weird sounds float  
Across the waters from the rocky shore;  
The listless crew grow drowsy more and more.  
No signs denote  
A coming storm; but something slow and strong  
Sucks unperceived those spell-bound men along:  
Awake, awake! the whirlpool grasps the boat!  
It seethes, it roars, it drowns the Sirens' song!

APOLLO.

Out on thy strife  
Of winds and birds!—See, see the golden spears  
Gleam through the dust, and desperate charioteers  
And Death and Life  
Sweep by all wildly blent!—See, see how flash  
The helmets in the sun, as onward dash

The waves of war! The very air seems rife  
With goading Gods who wield an unseen lash!

O Sun, shine down  
On Freedom's ranks; pour strength into their hearts,  
And blind the foe with thy resistless darts!  
On, on! the crown  
Is for you all, both those who live and die!  
See, see, they waver! now they turn and fly  
In wild mad rout and trample down their own,  
While thick as autumn leaves their strewn dead lie.

And as decrease  
The rattle and the roar, the crash and cries,  
Triumphant hymns from all the vast plain rise,  
And never cease  
To shake the stars.—Sound high, sound high, my strings!  
For from the bloodstained dust the laurel springs;  
Ay, and the olive with its fruit of peace,  
And freedom's garnered grain and earth's best things!

### MARSYAS.

Right sweetly played!  
But oh, I love the caves where all is mute  
Save unseen dropping waters, or my flute,  
Whose tones are made  
So strange by echo, that, transformed, increased,  
They ape the voice of some wild wounded beast  
Or eager hounds; or wail in cavernous shade

Like souls in Hades wailing unreleased.

And not less well

I love deep gorges, whether, in the spring,  
With crash of slipping snow their echoes ring;

Or they compel

A summer storm's pent thunder, peal on peal,  
To roll along them; or their rent flanks feel  
Autumnal waters roar; or fierce howls tell  
Of captive wintry winds in wild appeal.

Hark, hark! a scream

Of battling eagles o'er a sheer abyss,  
And wind of wings above a torrent's hiss.

The rock-pent stream

Catches the drops of blood, and whirls away  
The slow rotating feathers from the fray;  
While from the sky the smaller falcons seem  
To watch their kings and circle without stay.

APOLLO.

The noon creeps slow,

And wraps the windless world in heat and glare,  
And droning beetles stir alone the air;

While, soft and low,

A chant of women weaving at the loom  
Falls on the ear from some cool darkened room,  
Where flits the restless shuttle to and fro  
Beneath bare arms that glimmer in the gloom.

A fresh clear chant  
About frail clouds that sea-sprites weave in vain,  
And woven rainbows, harbingers of rain  
For things that pant;  
About Arachne and her wondrous woof;  
About grim Time who weaves white hairs in proof  
That men grow old, and that life's thread grows scant,  
Weave, women, weave! still Hesperus holds aloof;  
Still shoots the sun  
His random shafts through leafy shade to rouse  
The shepherd up, who seeks yet thicker boughs;  
Still peep and run  
The bright green lizard on the heated stones;  
Still through the glare the whirling beetle drones;  
Still noontide sleep may end sweet dreams begun.  
Marsyas, resume thy flute. What say its tones?

### MARSYAS.

Small lurid clouds  
Veil and unveil the moon; while, through the lone  
Wild Phrygian woods, hot gusts of storm-wind moan.  
Each shadow shrouds  
Some unknown conscious harm; and all around  
Glide unseen rustling things upon the ground.  
The air seems full of grabbing hands, and crowds  
Of evil fancies wake at every sound.

Now in the night  
The sorceress prowls, while others slumber deep,  
Cursing the God who robs her of her sleep.

The moon's vague light  
Makes her knife gleam, as, muttering low,  
She seeks the thrice-curst mandrake which uprooted shrieks,  
Such shrieks as drive the unexpected wight  
Who hears them, mad, and blanch her own white cheeks.

Now sound strange sighs,  
If it be true that evil spirits love,  
And seek each other when the moon above  
Half veils her eyes;  
The woods repeat unhallowed coos and calls,  
Kisses and sobs of love whose sound appals  
Beyond all shrieks, all moanings and all cries,  
While passion grows as deeper shadow falls.

#### APOLLO.

A golden haze  
Has made the bright sea dreamy; and near coasts  
Look far, and faint as sunshine-faded ghosts.  
From neighbouring bays  
A mingled sense of odoriferous wood  
And fallen blossoms floats upon the flood  
That scarcely heaves, save where the dolphins play;  
While some few sea-gulls motionlessly brood.

And o'er that sea,  
Bright, tepid, calm, the sunset breezes waft  
A chant of sailors from a home-bound craft;  
The white gulls flee  
At its approach; while from the beach, where run

The tidings of return and riches won,  
Come other chants to welcome distantly  
The ship that seems to sail from out the sun.

Oh ply the oar,  
Ye sun-tanned youths! does patient love not wait  
With tight-strained heart, intent upon your fate?  
The old loved shore  
Is close, close, close! ye hear the lyre's loud strings—  
Ye almost hear the words that gladness sings.  
Oh ply the oar with might, and each shall pour  
Into Love's lap the treasures that he brings!

#### MARSYAS.

Give ear—give ear!  
From yonder grove in sudden gusts there comes  
A sound of flutes, of cymbals and of drums;  
And now I hear  
Wild cries of Mænads who, with ivy crowned,  
Toss their mad heads and whirl and leap and bound,  
Brandishing snakes; while, in voluptuous fear,  
The pale ecstatic votaries press around.

Whirl faster still,  
Ye fierce flushed Mænads, lither than the asp,  
Or gleaming adder writhing in your grasp!  
The wild flutes fill  
The air with madness! Let the hot shift slip,  
And show the panting breast, the glistening hip!  
Dance ever faster, though the dance should kill!

Whirl on, with flaming eye and quivering lip!

I come, I come,  
O Cybele, great Cybele, that hast  
Thy chief throne here, I come to thee at last!  
From my far home  
I bring at last to thy deep rustling grove  
The wild pent fire that in my bosom strove;  
I come to lift thy praise to heaven's dome;  
Perchance to die, on tasting thy dread love.

#### APOLLO.

Where sunshine clings  
To Parian columns, what chaste marshalled throng  
Brings thee, Athena, wreaths of flowers and song?  
Thy pure fane rings  
With measured chants; on horses small and fleet  
Come stalwart youths; while with restrained feet  
The troop of virgins climb the steps, that brings  
The sacred olive and the sacred wheat.

Hark, never cease  
The pure chaste hymns to hail the mighty child  
Of the cleft brows of Zeus, all undefiled;  
Armed friend of peace  
From whose strong breastplate streams transcendent light,  
Whose spear makes dim the meteors of the night;  
Pure Patroness of plenty and increase,  
Mistress of sunny cities walled and white!



And, oh, to-day,  
Thou armed and placid Pallas, deadly foe  
Of all things lewd and wild who once didst throw  
In scorn away  
The lewd wild flute, too base for thy pure breath,  
And doom whoe'er should find it to slow death,  
Come to my aid, and let my pure lyre play  
Such bright chaste sounds as shall deserve the wreath!

## **SISTER MARY OF THE PLAGUE.**

### **I.**

IN her work there is no flagging,  
And her slight frame seems of steel;  
And her face and eyes and motions,  
Tried by countless nights of watching,  
Nor fatigue nor pain reveal.

Yet the Sisters say she eats not,  
Spurning food as ne'er did saint,  
And they murmur: "She is nourished  
By a miracle of Heaven;  
God allows not she should faint."

Through the darkened wards she passes  
On her round from bed to bed;  
And the sick who wait her coming

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