

NIGHT IN THE VALLEY.

Written at the foot of Citlaltepetl.

I LAY within the forest's virgin womb
Tranced in the sweetness, nuptial, indolent,
Of the faint breeze and tropical perfume,
And all the music far lone waters lent
Unto the masses of magnolia bloom,
Tall scarlet lilies, and the golden scent
Shed by strange clusters of more pallid flowers,
And purple lustre strewn amid the twilight bowers.

Far, far the pastureless, the unquiet sea
Moaned; far the stately pyramid of cold
Shrouding the stars, arose: sweet witchery
That brought them in the drowsing eye, to fold
The picture in: with winged imagery
That Hermes gathers with that floral gold
Whose triple flower or flame or pinioned light
Lends life to death, and love and colour unto light.

How flames that scarlet stronger than Apollo,
Too swift and warm to know itself a bird!
How the light winds and waves of moonlight follow,
Shot from the West, cadence of Daylight's word!
How flock the tribes of wings within the hollow,
Even as darkness summons home the herd!
The still slow water slackens into sleep.
The rose-glow dies, leaves cold Citlaltepetl's steep.

The chattering voices of the day depart.
Earth folds her limbs and leans her loving breast
Even to all her children: the great heart

Beats solemnly the requiem of rest.
The sea keeps tune ; the silent stars upstart
Seeming to sentinel that sombre crest
Where of old time burst out the vulture fire
Cyclopean, that is dead, now, as a man's desire.

The drowsy cries of night birds, then the song
Lovely and lovelorn in the listening vale,
So wild and tender, swooping down in long
Notes of despair, then lifting the low tale
In golden notes to skyward in one throng
Of clustered silver, so the nightingale
Tunes the wild flute, as dryads he would gather
To roof with music in the palace of the weather,

With love despairing, dying as music dies ;
With lost souls' weeping, and the bitter muse
Of such as lift their hearts in sacrifice
On some strange cross, or shed Sicillian dew
Over a sadder lake than Sicily's—
Hark! they are leaping from the valley views
Into the light and laughter and deep grief
Of that immortal heart that sings beyond belief.

How pitiful, how beautiful, the faces!
The long hair shed on shoulders ivory white!
Each note shoots down the dim arboreal spaces
Like amber or like hyaline lit with light.
Each spirit glimmers in the shadowy places
Like hyacinths or emeralds: or the night
Shows them as shadows of some antique gem
Where moonlight fills its cup and flashes into them.

So, in the moony twilight and the splendour
Of music's light, the desolate nightingale
Fills all the interlunar air with tender
Kisses like song, or shrills upon the scale,
Till quivering moonrays shake again, to send her
Luminous tunes through every sleepy vale,

While the slow dancers rhythmically reap
The fairy amaranth, and silver wheat of sleep.

Now over all that scythe of sleep impending
Mows the pale flowers of vision following;
Dryad and bird and fount and valley blending
Into one dreamy consciousness of spring;
And all the night and all the world is ending,
And all the souls that weep and hearts that sing!
So, as the dew hides in the lotus blossom,
Sleep draws me with her kiss into her bridal bosom.