

## THE PRIEST SPEAKS.

*(Boccacio. Day IV. Tale VIII.)*

LAY them together for the sake of Love  
Within a little plot of piteous earth,  
When life's last flower is faded in the sun.  
Lay them together in the tender ground  
That summer showers may shed a trembling tear.  
And summer breezes whisper melodies  
Of pity. Lay them there, and when the sky  
Opens a lingering eyelash of deep cloud,  
And the sea sparkles out from under it  
To kiss the earth into awakening  
From the dream-slumbers that its fancies weave—  
Fancies of starlight on the lucent sea  
Gleaming from wide horizon to the feet  
Of Cynthia's bow, all silver-shot with fire,  
That virgin flame that lingers evermore  
In the sweet phantasies of subtle sleep—  
Fancies of lonely shadows darkly strewn  
About the leaves of autumn in the woods,  
Where the small floweret, hidden by the maze  
O' th' dying children o' the copper-beech,  
Lifts a blue forehead to the sun to kiss—  
Fancies of old romance too pitiful  
For any delicate quill to light upon—

Yes, when the sky from stainless ebony  
Merges in azure, like as if the light  
Of stars had melted into all the black  
To gladden it, O then the solemn hush  
Of morning shall behold the silent grave,  
And wait a moment in rich worshipping  
Of Love, creator of the world's delight,  
Till the full chorus of the spirits of fire  
Whose mighty shoulders and wide-flashing wings  
Bear the proud sun from his luxurious bed  
Of rosy fleeces in the West low lying  
Into the staircase of the jealous day,  
Burst on the silence of the world beyond  
And bid the listening poet catch the strain  
Of their half-echoed hymn. But come, my friends,  
Lay them together, breast to maiden breast,  
Limb linked with limb, and lips to pallid lips,  
So beautiful in death—the moth o' th' mind  
Tells the grief-numbed senses 'Tis but sleep—  
See! the pale glimmer of a ghostly arm  
Flashes a spot of light!—Ah! weary day!  
'Tis but the flickering of the candle-light  
And the unmanning sorrow of the heart  
That lends the reins to fancy's charioteer.  
Lay them together, let us leave them there!  
There comes a vision to my mortal eyes  
Of things immortal. Hark! the growing swell  
Of some wild clarion through the dazzling night,  
Whose fairy aether suddenly illumines  
With silver meteors innumerable

And golden showers of stars—lost worlds of  
thought

And poets' dreams, and jewels of virgin sighs.

Hark! the broad rings of sound go wavering on

Eddying and rippling through the desert sky

That now is peopled with the diamond wings

That float through all the palaces of God.

O now to join them rise the armies vast

Of the lone spirits of the empty tomb,

And there I see the lovers piteous

Splendidly flash within the silver sphere

Of light, and there I lose them at the last

Most wonderfully passed within the veil

Of Time ; caught up into the Infinite.

Lay them together. And the hollow hill

Shall echo me "together," and the sky,

And the wide sea, and all the fragrant air,

Shall linger in the tumult of the dawn.

Lay them together. And the still small voice

Shall whisper "Peace," and in the evening

"Peace."