

PART III.

FROM THE SPANISH OF
GUSTAVO BECQUER
1836—1870.

I.

LIKE the breeze that dries the blood
Upon the darkening battle-field,
Laden with perfumes and sweet sounds,
In the vague silence of the night;—

Symbol of tenderness and grief,
The English bard in awful verse
The sweet Ophelia paints, who, mad,
Passes with flowers and with song.

II.

Sometimes I meet her in "the world,"
She passes close to me:
She passes smiling and I say:
How can she laugh?

Then to my lips rises another smile,—
It is the mask of pain,—
And then I think;—Perhaps she only laughs
As I do now!

III.

I ventured to the deepest depths
Of earth and of the heavens,
And saw their bounds; or with my eyes,
Or with my spirit's eye.

But ah! a heart's abyss I reached,
And over bent to see,
But both my soul and eyes recoiled,
So deep it was, so black!

IV.

Why, my child, are thine eyes green?
Green as the sea, thou complainest.
Green are the eyes of the Naiads,
Green are those of Minerva,
And green, too, are the eyes
Of the houris of the prophet.

Green is the gala garment
Of the groves in Springtime;
Among its seven colors,
Brilliant, the rainbow shows it.
Green are emeralds also;
Who hopes has green for his color;
And green are the waves of Ocean,
And the laurel of the poets.

V.

I am dark and I am ardent,
The symbol of passion am I;
Filled is my soul with desire of joy,
Me art thou calling? Oh! no, not thee.

My brow is pale, my tresses are golden,
I can pour out on thee endless delight;
I keep a treasure of tenderness,
Me art thou calling? Oh! no, not thee.

I am a dream, I am the Impossible,
Vain phantasm of mist and light;
Bodiless am I, I am intangible,
I cannot love thee,—Oh! come, come, thou!

VI.

Her hand between my hands,
Her eyes upon my eyes,
Her head so amorously
Resting upon my shoulder,
God knows how many times
With lagging footsteps,
We have wandered together
Beneath the lofty elm-trees
That to her dwelling's entrance
Lent mystery and shade.
And yesterday—hardly
A year passed like a breath,
With what exquisite grace,
With what admirable *aplomb*
She said, when an officious
Friend had presented us:
“It seems to me that somewhere
I have seen you.” Oh! ye fools,
Gossips of drawing-rooms,
Who go about in search
Of gallant *embroglios*,
What a story you have lost!

How savory were this food,
To be devoured in chorus,
Sotto voce behind the fan
Of feathers and of gold!

Oh! moon discreet and chaste!
Leafy and lofty elm-trees!
Walls of her dwelling,
Threshold of her portal,
Be silent! let the secret
Go not forth from you!
Be silent, since for my part,
I have forgotten all.
And she—she—there is no mask
Equal to her face.

VII.

When o'er thy breast thou bendest
Thy melancholy brow,
A bruised and broken lily
Thou seem'st to me.

For giving thee the purity
Whose symbol the lily is,
As He made *it*, so God made thee
Of gold and snow.

VIII.

Know, if at times thy ruby lips
An unseen fire doth burn—
The soul that with the eyes can speak,
Can just as well kiss with a look.

IX.

First Voice.

Waves have a gentle harmony,
Violets have an odor sweet,
And silver mists the cool night has,
Light and gold the day.
Better still have I—
For I have *Love!*

Second Voice.

Applauding voices, radiant clouds,
Breath envious, though the foot it kiss,
An isle of dreams where lies repose
For anxious souls,
Sweet drunkenness
This—*Glory* is.

Third Voice.

A burning coal all glory is,
Vanity a shadow that flies,
All is falsehood, glory, gold;
What I adore
Alone is truth—
'Tis Liberty!

Thus the mariners passed by singing
The eternal song:
And the foam the oars threw upwards
Fell, and smote the shore.

Wilt thou come? they cried; and, smiling,
Past I let them go.
Once I went; still, I am certain
My clothes are drying on the sands.

X.

As from a wound one tears the steel,
I tore my love out of my heart,
Although I felt that life itself
I tore away with it.

And from the altar I had raised
Within my soul, her image cast.
The lamp of faith that in it burned,
Went out before the empty shrine.

Though firm to fight I undertake,
Visions of her still fill my mind;
When shall I sleep and dream the dream
In which all dreaming ends!

XI.

In the *salon's* dark corner,
Forgotten, sometimes, by its master,
Covered with dust, and silent,
 The harp is seen.

In its chords, how many notes slumber,
As the birds sleep in the branches,
Expecting the hand of snow
 That may awake them!

Ah! I thought, how often does genius
Sleep thus in the depths of the soul,
And, like Lazarus, waits for a voice
That shall bid it: "Arise and walk!"

XII.

She passed along enveloped in her beauty,
I let her pass me by;
I did not even turn to look at her, and yet
At my ear something murmured: "*It is she.*"

Who was 't who joined the evening to the morn-
ing?

I know not, but I knew
That in a brief and fleeting summer night
Two twilights were united, and—"it was."

XIII.

Why do you tell me? I know she is changeable,
Haughty and vain and capricious, too.
Rather than feeling from her soul,
Water will flow from the sterile rock.

I know that her heart is a nest of serpents,
That no fibre it owns that responds to love.
She's an inanimate statue, but ah!
She's so beautiful!

XIV.

She wounded me from a dark hiding place,
And with a kiss she sealed her treachery;
She put her arms around my neck, and thro'
My shoulder, in cold blood she pierced my heart.

And joyously she goes upon her way,
Undaunted, happy, smiling; why? you ask?
Because no blood is flowing from the wound,
Because the dead man stands erect.

XV.

As the miser guards his treasure,
Guarded I my grief;
I would prove that something is eternal
To her who swore to me eternal love.

But to-day I seek it vainly, hearing
Time who slew it, say:
Oh! miserable clay, eternally
Thou canst not even suffer.

XVI.

The invisible atoms of the air
Palpitate 'round me, all on fire;
The heavens break up in rays of gold,
And the earth trembles with delight.
There floats on waves of harmony
The sound of kisses and beating wings.
My eyelids close—oh! what is happening?
 'Tis love that passes.

XVII.

Whene'er the fleeting moments of the past
My love and I recall,
Trembling there shines upon her lashes dark
A tear about to fall.

At last it falls, and like a dewdrop rolls,
As we think, she and I,
That as to-day for yesterday, to-morrow
We for to-day shall sigh.

XVIII.

Sighs are air and go to the air.
Tears are water and go to the sea.
Tell me, woman, when love is forgotten,
 Knowest thou whither it goes?

XIX.

Thine eye is blue, and when thou laugh'st,
Its gentle light recalls to me
The morning's tremulous brilliancy
Reflected in the sea.

Thine eye is blue and when thou weep'st
The shining tears thine eye that wet
Seem to me like the drops of dew
Upon a violet.

Thine eye is blue, and when a thought
Illuming in its depths doth lie,
It sees a lost and wandering star
Within the evening sky.

XX.

Dost thou wish that of this nectar delicious
The dregs shall not be bitter?
Oh, breathe it in, close to thy lips approach it,
And leave it then.

Dost thou wish we may ever keep a gentle
Memory of this love?
Let us love much to-day and then to-morrow
Let us say: "Farewell."

XXI.

In the shining of a lightning flash our birth is,
And still endures its brilliance when we die;
 So short is living!

The glory and the love that we run after
Are shadows of a dream that we pursue,
 To wake is dying!

XXII.

How lives this rose, I pray that thou hast gathered,
Thus resting on thy heart?
Never before on earth did I contemplate
On the volcano the flower.

XXIII.

To-day the earth and the heavens smile on me;
To-day the sun strikes to my inmost soul;
To-day I saw her—saw her—she looked at me—
To-day I believe in God!

XXIV.

The night came on, no refuge did I find;
I was athirst; my tears I drank;
I was an-hungered and my swollen eyes
I closed, that I might die.

I stood within a desert! Yet my ear
Was wounded by hoarse clamor of the crowds.
I was an orphan, poor,—the world around
A desert was for me.

XXV.

For a look, a world;
For a smile, a heaven;
For a kiss—I know not
What I would give thee for a kiss!

XXVI.

What is poetry? thou say'st, and meanwhile fixest
On my eye thine eye of deepest blue;
What is poetry? And canst thou ask it?
Why,—poetry—is—thou!

XXVII.

A tear was trembling in her eyes,
And on my lips a pardoning word;
Pride spoke—straightway her tear was dried,
And on my lips the word expired.

I go one way, another she;
But thinking on our mutual love,
I say: Why was I silent then?
And she will say: Why wept not I?

XXVIII.

Gigantic waves that thundering break
Upon remote and desert shores,—
Wrapped in the sheet of hurrying foam,
 Bear me away with you!

Tempestuous gusts that sweep away
From the tall grove the withered leaves,—
In the blind whirlwind dragged along,
 Bear me away with you!

Storm-clouds that break the ray of light
And blind with fire its loosened fringe,—
Snatched swiftly in the darkening mist,
 Bear me away with you!

Bear me away in pity, where
Madness effaces memory.
Bear me away! I fear to stay
 Here with my grief alone.

XXIX.

As in an open book I read
Within the depths of thy dear eyes;
Why should the lips attempt to feign
Smiles that the eyes refute?

Weep! to confess be not ashamed
That thou a little loved me once,
Weep! for now no one looks at us,
See, I am a man and yet I weep.

XXX.

I put the light aside, and on the edge
Of the disordered bed I sat me down,
Mute, sombre, with my eyes immovably
Fastened upon the wall.

How long did I stay thus? I know not: passed
The dread intoxication of my grief,
The light was going out, and lo! the sun
Laughed on my balcony.

Nor do I know, during those awful hours,
Of what I thought or what took place in me;
I but remember that I wept and cursed,
And that within that night-time I grew old.

XXXI.

A question 'tis of words, and notwithstanding
Never shall you and I
Agree together after what has happened
With whom the fault may lie.

Pity love has no dictionary
Wherein one might see
When pride is nothing else than pride alone,
And when 'tis dignity!

XXXII.

Thou wast the hurricane and I the tower,
Lofty, defiant of thy power o'er me;
Thou must have spent thyself or overturned
me;—

It could not be!

Thou wast the ocean, I the rock erect
That firm awaits the great sea's ebb and flow;
Thou must have broken thyself or overwhelmed
me—

It could not be!

Thou beautiful, I haughty; and accustomed,
One to sweep all away, one not to yield;
Narrow the path, the shock inevitable—

It could not be!