APPENDICES
Appendices

A: Emma Roberts’s Oriental poems

A Scene in the Doaab

In tangled depths the jungles spread

Around the solitary scene,

The lurking panther’s sullen tread

Marks the wild paths of the ravine;

Here too the fierce hyena prowls,

Haunting the dark Jheel’s broad lagoon,

And here, at eve, the wolf-cub howls,

And famished jackalls bay the moon.

Its scorching breath the hot wind pours

Along the arid waste; and loud,

The storm-fiend of the desert roars,

When bursts the sable thunder-cloud,

A crumbling mosque – a ruined fort –

Hastening alike to swift decay,

Where owls and vampire bats resort,

And vultures hide them from the day,

Alone remain to tell the tale

Of Moslem power, and Moslem pride,
When shouts of conquest filled the gale
    and swords in native blood were dyed.

The sleep – the slayer and the slain –
    A lowly grave the victor shares
With the weak slave who wore the chain
    None save a craven spirit wears.

Yet had the deeds which they have done
    Lived in the poet’s deathless song,
These nameless *spahis* would have won
    All that to valour’s hopes belong.

They brought their faith from the distant lands,
    The reared the Moslem badge on high,
And swept away with reeking brands
    The reliques of idolatry.

Where’er the spread their prophet’s creed
    The guilty rites of Brama fled;
No longer shrinking victims bleed,
    Nor sleeps the living with the dead.

The frantic shrieks of widowed brides
    From burning piles resound no more,
Nor Ganges’ desecrated tides
    Bear human offerings from its shore.
Their wreaths have faded – lizards bask
    Upon the marble pavement, where,
‘Twas erst the dark-eyed beauty’s task
    To crown with flowers her raven hair.

Unheeded now the scorpion crawls,
    And snakes unscathed in silence glide,
Where once the bright Zenana’s halls
    To woman’s feet were sanctified.

No trace remains of those gay hours
    When lamps, in golden radiance bright,
Streamed o’er these now deserted towers
    The sunshine of their perfumed light.

The maiden’s song, the anklet’s bells
    So sweetly ringing o’er the floor,
And eyes as soft as the gazelle’s
    Are heard, and seen, and felt no more.

Now all is silent; the wild cry
    Of savage beasts alone is heard,
Or wrathful tempest hurrying by,
    Or moanings of some desert bird.
The Bramin

It is a lovely solitude – the cliff,

Rich with embowering trees, and garlanded

With mantling creepers, towers above the skiff

Moored where the Ganges’ sacred waters spread

Their wastes below – and crowning that green height

In graceful beauty, with its marble dome,

And terraced stairs, descending flight by flight,

Appears the holy Bramin’s gorgeous home –

His temple, and his dwelling place – and there

He ponders o’er the Vedas day by day,

Passing the silent hours in lonely prayer,

Or shading from the sun’s too fervent ray

The flowers he tends to deck the holy shrine,

Or strew the bright pagoda’s granite floor;

And while his skilful hands the chaplets twine,

His thoughts above the world’s dark confines soar.

At eve he trims the lamp, the beacon light

That beams within the Mhut’s rich sculptured cell,

And when the stars announce approaching night,

With silvery sound awakes the vesper bell.

The Bramin’s meals are frugal – some fair tree

Yields him its fruitage, and the precious grain

Springing around in rich fertility,

The few and simple wants of life sustain.

A scanty mat upon the pavement spread
Before the temple's threshold, where the sky
    Above the tranquil sleeper's humble bed
Has flung its star-enamelled canopy,
    Suffices for his resting place - his dress
Betrays not splendour's pomp, nor priestly pride,
    Careless, and free from aught of costliness,
The triple thread across the shoulder tied,
    Around the waist the muslin's ample fold
Reaching with graceful flow below the knee,
    The snow-white turban round the temples rolled
Complete the unpretending drapery.
    He asks nor gold nor gems - to him the lore
The Shaster's venerated page affords,
    Is dearer far than all the glittering store
That worldly men have purchased with their swords.

Yet is he wealthy - the pomegranate droops
    Its ruby blossoms to his gathering hand,
Its richly loaded bough the mango stoops,
    And sheds its living gold at his command.
While sweeping round him are a gorgeous train,
    Herons, and peacocks, doves, and paroquets;
The bulbul breathes to him its sweetest strain,
    And pigeons nestle on the minarets.
While his peculiar care, the mournful bird,
    Who when the sun has left the river's breast,
With restless wing and wailing cry is heard
Calling his mate to her deserted nest,

With the bright tribe around him lives unharmed;

There too the moping ape securely dwells,

For the pagoda’s dome-crowned height is charmed,

And prayers are potent as magicians’ spells.

The Moosaulmaun the Bramin’s law reveres,

Nor dyes his weapon in forbidden blood,

And even the Christian, from his sport forbears,

Within the precincts of the sacred wood.

Courteous to all – the stranger from the west,

Who moors his budgerow on the strand beneath,

Is welcomed as the Bramin’s honoured guest,

And for his hands are twined the brightest wreath.

Oh! who that has approached that holy fane

Can pass unheeding from the blessed spot,

Where peace, and hope, and sweet contentment reign,

Nor sigh with envy at the Bramin’s lot,

Who purified and free from worldly care,

In sacred duties all his life employs,

And in earth’s sorrows bearing little share,

The dearest, brightest bliss of Heaven enjoys?

The Taaje Mahal

Empress of beauty! Must those eyes of light,

Stars of my soul, that o’er life’s paths have thrown

Rays than the sun’s beams more serenely bright,
Be quenched in darkness; has their luster flown
For ever; and the vermeil of thy lips
Sustained a last, immutable eclipse?

Oh! thou wert far more beautiful than those
   Fair forms of genii by poets sung,
More blooming than thine own Cashmerian rose,
   O'er thy soft cheek a crimson tint was flung,
Like morn’s first flushes, or the blush that dyes
The glowing sun-sets of our eastern skies.

Fair as thou wert, thy beauty’s light was dim
   To the more holy radiance of thine heart,
For thou wert pure as heaven-born seraphim,
   Thou wert my blessed one – thou art, thou art –
Still dost thou live and breathe, and I may strain,
Thy form in rapture to my breast again.

It may not be – the faint, the trembling pulse,
   So like the fluttering of a wounded bird,
The painful throes which those pale lips convulse,
   The sighs, like rose leaves in the night breeze stirred,
Tell me thy doom – and I – I see my fate –
Queen of my soul, thou leavest me desolate.

Oh! could the treasures of the world restore
   Thy fading health, beloved one, - Shah Jehan
Countless as yon bright river’s sands would pour
The pearls, and gems, and gold of Hindoostan,
And yield his empire o’er the world to be
Master of one poor straw-thatched hut – with thee.

But since, nor gems, nor pearls, nor gold can save
My peerless beauty, nor my fervent prayer
Avail to snatch thee from an envious grave,
Since Heaven relents not to my deep despair,
And we – (be still, be still my throbbing heart!) We, my life’s desert solace, we must part.

As thy surpassing loveliness has shone
Transcendent over all of mortal birth,
As thy surpassing excellence has own
The tribute homage of admiring earth,
So the world’s wonder, even as thou, divine,
Queen of my soul! shall be thy matchless shrine.

And there in rich and radiant pomp supreme,
Within the circle of each ample dome,
The gems of every Indian mine shall gleam,
And Art’s most gifted sons from Greece and Rome
The splendid fabric rear, whose gorgeous fanes
Hide from these weeping eyes thy loved remains.

And pilgrims there from many a distant clime
Pacing with wondering steps the marble halls,
Shall as they gaze upon the work sublime,
The sculptured splendours of the storied walls.
Dreams of thy beauty, and instinctive pay
The heart's deep homage to thy sainted clay.

A hundred years have winged their flight
O'er princely Agra's lofty towers,
A hundred years of sunshine bright
Have revelled through its summer bowers —
Those circling suns have seen the ray
Of Moslem glory fade away.
And where the crescent reared on high
Its badge of golden blazonry,
And turbaned monarchs proudly gave
Their laws to each obedient slave,
The warriors of the western world
The red cross have unfurled.
Mingled with mosques and minarets,
O'er Christian spires the sun's beam sets,
And strangers from a foreign strand
Rule unopposed the conquered land.
Yet still where Jumna's chrystal tide
In many a breeze-curled wave meanders,
And where its sparkling currents glide
Through clustering tufts of Oleanders,
Where yonder stately garden shews
The crimson beauty of the rose,
The glittering baubool drops its gold,
And baylas perfumed buds unfold
Their crests of snow, o’er the pink bed
With the broad lotus thickly spread.
Untouched by time, Unscathed by war
Lonely and bright as eve’s first star,
The splendid mausoleum greets
   The stranger’s rapt and dazzled eye,
And to his throbbing heart repeats
   A tale of love’s idolatry.
Of precious marbles richly blent
Shines the imperial monument;
A gorgeous fabric spreading wide
   Its glittering pomp of colonnades,
Fit palace for the peerless bride
   Reposing in its hallowed shades.
Too beautiful for mortal hands,
   Its clustering cupolas and towers
Seem the bright work of fairy wands,
   And fashioned out of pearls and flowers.
And as o’er these fair spires and domes
The stranger’s eye enchanted roams,
Lost in delight, he almost deems
   That wrought by some fantastic spell,
‘Twill vanish like his summer dreams,
   Or cloud-encircled citadel,
Floating along the moon-lit sky,
In evanescent pageantry.

Beside the alabaster tomb
    All richly wreathed with glittering gems,
And shining like the jeweled plume
    O’er eastern monarch’s diadems,
Fond lovers kneel – and as they gaze
Upon each ingot’s brilliant blaze,
The bright mosaic of the floor
    Where many coloured agates vie
With onyx thickly scattered o’er
    Turquoise and lapis lazuli:
They dash away the rising tear,
They fear no change nor falsehood here.
Oh! every flower-enamelled gem
Is worth a mine of gold to them;
It tells of love divinely pure –
    The record that a monarch gave,
That strong affection may endure
    In human hearts beyond the grave.

The Dying Hindoo
He lies beside the sacred river,
    His heart has lost life’s ruddy glow,
His sighs are faint, his pulses quiver,
And death’s chill damps are on his brow.
Within yon green and bowery glade
Whose path the smile of sunshine wears,
Beneath the lofty palm tree's shade
His loved though lowly hut appears.

And near him well known sounds arise
With joyous songs and laughter fraught,
And now his glazed and languid eyes
Are turned towards the village-ghaut.

There all is cheerful, as of yore,
When with the sun's declining beam
He too had sought the Ganges' shore,
And bathed within its hallowed stream.

In crowd his early friends repair
To the chabouta's esplanade,
Her graceful ghurrah filling there,
Stoops to the brink his dark-eyed maid.

They heed him not - no fond farewells
Attest their grief, no tears are shed,
No sigh the heart's deep anguish tells;
He to the living world is dead.

One pang has shot across his breast -
One human pang – but it is gone,
And tranquilly he sinks to rest,
    As the eternal wave flows on.

His eye the blushing wreath has caught
    Which floats along the sacred wave,
And to his parting soul has brought
    Hopes of bright lands beyond the grave.

Soon shall the form o’er that pure tide
    Which now to earth so fondly clings,
Freed from each groveling trammel glide,
    And mingle with its holy springs.

The red crown of the lotus wreath
    Upon the molten silver blushes,
And a ark, lifeless form beneath
    With the stream’s headlong current rushes.

The corse, the flower are seen no more,
    For ever lost in yon bright river,
The echoes of the lonely shore
    In mournful tones repeat – for ever!

The North-Wester
Evening approaches, and the tropic sun
The western arch of ruddy heaven has won,
And yielding to the balmy close of day,
Its scorching heat, its most oppressive ray,
Now mid ten thousand swiftly fading dyes
Looks smiling down from yonder roseate skies.
How beautiful, how placid, fair, and bright,
The gorgeous scene that greets its parting light!
The stately river’s calm and waveless tide
In its deep slumber scarce is seen to glide;
So tranquil is the stream, the lotus crown
By some fond maid, or anxious lover thrown –
A bark of hope – unstirred upon its breast
In lingering tenderness appears to rest;
The idle golier from his flower-wreathed prow
With careless eye surveys the flood below;
And all the hundred oars that proudly sweep
The polished surface of the glassy deep,
Mocked by the lazy currents, vainly seek
To urge their shallops round yon woody creek.

Its marble wings up springing from the shade
By the dark peepul’s glossy foliage made,
The waving niem, the willow-like bamboo,
And shrubs of fragrant scent and brilliant hue,
The Nazim’s regal palace proudly gleams
In pearl-like splendour in the evening beams;
While each surrounding crag and sun-kissed slope
Crowned with the bright luxuriant mango tope,
Each vagrant creeper with its starry wreath,
Are softly mirrored in the stream beneath.

Where'er the wandering eyes delighted roam
From groves embowering peeps the graceful dome
Of some small mosque, or holy Bramin's cell,
Where the lamp glances, and the silvery bell
Makes gentle music in the balmy air;
No other sounds the listening echoes bear
On this calm eve, save snatches of sweet song
Which rise at intervals from yonder throng
Assembled on the terraced ghaut, and fling
O'er Ganges' wave each flowery offering.

Sudden the fierce north-west breaks lose – and while
Half the bright landscape still is seen to smile,
The sultry air grows thick, the skies are dark,
The river swells, and now the struggling bark
Along the rushing wave is wildly driven,
And thunder bursts from every gate of heaven;
O'er tower and palace, hut, and holy fane
In frantic madness sweeps the hurricane;
And trees uprooted strew the earth; and air
Is filled with yells, and shrieks of wild despair.

The sun sinks down in splendour to the west,
The skies are in their richest colours drest;
And where a blackened wreck was seen to float,
A lamp within the palm nut's fragile boat
Glides tranquilly – the stars shine forth – the vale
Is vocal with the Bulbul's sweetest tale;
The air is gemmed with fire-flies: and the breeze
Is filled with perfume from the lemon trees:
The storm has passed – and now the sparkling river
Runs calm, and smooth, and beautiful as ever.

The Rajah's Obsequies
A fairer scene to spell-bound eyes
The smiling earth could scarce unfold –
There's not a cloud o'er those blue skies;
And from its founts of living gold
The sun pours down a flood of light
Upon the river's sparkling wave,
Where the swift current speeds its flight,
Or lingers wooingly to lave
Some bright pagoda's jutting walls,
Or ripples on in gentle falls,
Where all of shining granite wrought
Spreads the broad terrace of the ghaut.
And there majestic banians fling
Their green luxuriance beside
The lofty minarets that spring
With upward flight in towering pride;
As though to their bold spires 'twere given
To pierce the azure vaults of heaven.

The boast of India’s sunny land
   Mid fertile plains and waving woods,
In shining pomp sublimely grand,
   Where Ganges spreads its sacred floods –
The holy city’s temples glow
Reflected in the stream below.
A mass of cupolas and towers,
   Arches, and pillared colonnades,
And flat – roofed palaces, where flowers
   Are clust’ring round the balustrades.
And there from the Zenana’s halls,
   Stealing when eve reveals its stars,
The dark-eyed maids hold festivals,
   And listen to the soft sitars,
Hymning those sweet and gentle themes
Which young hearts picture in their dreams.

Oh bright, Benares! are thy domes,
   And beautiful thy sacred groves,
Where ring-doves make their blissful homes
   And the white bull unfettered roves;
Where with his frugal meal content,
And hands of slaughter innocent,
Milk, and some vegetable root,
   The golden *dal*, the silvery *rice*,

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The plantain's, or the mango's fruit,

The Hindoo's simple wants suffice.

Oh! who that sees the meanest thing

Endued with life, the Bramin's care,

Can fancy human suffering,

And human sacrifices, where

'Twould be a crime to crush the snake

That sheds its venom o'er the brake?

Yet here the river's crystal flood

With living victims is prophaned,

And here with streams of human blood

The temple's reeking courts are stained.

While blackening o'er the fair blue skies

The smoke's polluted volumes rise,

From those impure, unhallowed fires,

Where by a living corse's side,

In fierce and torturing pangs expires,

Untimely doomed, the shrinking bride.

The ghurrees chime the evening hour,

O'er the red west the sun-beam glances,

And from each arch-way, gate, and tower,

In countless groups a creed advances,

While upon every pinnacle,

Or temple's roof, or pillared screen,

Each tower-embastioned citadel,

To gaze upon the passing scene
The people throng, like clust'ring bees
Swarming around the abound trees
And all the baths and bazaars
    With many coloured cloths are hung,
And flowers as bright as shooting stars
    Are from the high verandahs flung;
While slowly through the crowding throng
    Which from the streets and temples pour,
A stately pageant moves along,
    And winds its way to Ganges' shore.

Their silver maces waving high,
    The Chobedar band in front appear;
And all around with shout and cry,
    Tulwar, and scimitar, and spear,
Peons and Chuprassies clear the way,
    Swelling the pomp and the parade,
Where shining in their bright array,
    In files a glittering cavalcade
Of mounted nobles lead the van,
The flower and boast of Hindoostan.
Their chargers' tails of scarlet dye,
    Their silver housings ringing clear,
Flash on the gazer's dazzled eye,
    And strike in music on his ear.
Behind them in more humble guise,
    Proud only of the triple thread,
Gracing the Rajah’s obsequies,

The Bramins pace with solemn tread.

And next in mournful pageantry

All guarded by a troop of horse,

Beneath a gilded canopy,

Appears the fast decaying corse.

And there the sultry air is stirred

With silver handled Chowries wrought

With the rich plume of some rare bird,

Or those more precious cow-tails brought

From glad Kathay’s far distant wall,

Or the steep hills of the Nepaul.

Behind, a thick promiscuous troop

Of veiled and turbaned heads is seen,

And in the centre of the group,

Each in an open palanquin

The Rajah’s wives are borne – a pair

Of brighter forms have never blest

The eye of man – both are so fair,

None can say which is loveliest –

She who so stately and so proud

With lofty mien and eyes of light,

Receives the homage of the crowd

As though it were her beauty’s right;

Or the sweet trembler by her side

Shrinking abashed with modest grace,
And striving all in vain to hide
   The blush upon her unveiled face,
Their muslin robes are wrought with gold,
   The Syah's hem beset with spangles,
And bright the Ornee's shining fold,
   And richly gemmed the glittering Bangles.
Benares' far-famed webs have vied
   With Persia's rarest, finest loom;
And for the last time each fair bride
   Has fazed upon her beauty's bloom
In fitting pomp arrayed – too soon
   Their fleet careen of life must fly;
Ere they have reached their summer's noon,
   This lovely pair are doomed to die –
Each soft chime from their anklet's bells
Is ringing out their funeral knells.

The air is musical with song,
   And lotus wreaths are strewed around,
The deep toned dhole, and brazen gong,
   With cittaras and with flutes resound,
Perfumes are burning all the while;
   And they have reached the Ganges flood,
And heaped upon the funeral pile
   Cedar, and rose, and sandal wood.
The last red kisses of the sun
   Are blushing on the river's breast,
And from his amaranthine throne

The flaming orb sinks down to rest.

And all is now accomplished – save

The final and the dismal rite,

Which on the brink of that clear wave

Must be performed, ere the pink light

With all its rainbow coloured dyes

Has faded from the sapphire skies.

First from her maiden’s circling arms

The youngest (and perchance the bride

Preferred for her retiring charms)

Has lightly sprung, and flung aside

Her ornaments – and those rich pearls,

The diamonds, and the ruby studs,

She showers among the weeping girls

Blithely, as when her garden’s buds

She scattered in those blissful hours,

When life itself seemed made of flowers.

The crowd is hushed to silence – now

Her spirit soars on bird-like wings,

A slight flush lights her gentle brow,

And with a voice divine she sings.

I love, I love my native vales!

The sighing of their perfumed gales

To me is sweet, and sweeter still
The music of the bubbling rill.
Few are my years, but they have fled
In joy and sunshine o’er my head,
Happy my transient life has been,
And happier still life’s closing scene.

Lord of my soul! I yield my breath
To snatch thee from the chains of death;
I claim the privilege divine,
Which makes thee more than ever mine!

Yes, to my thrice blessed hands ‘tis given
To ope the saffron gates of heaven;
I bring beloved a boom to thee,
A pure and bright eternity.

Yon dazzling orb has golden courts,
And there the heaven-born loory sports,
And thou with spirits blessed shalt dwell
Mid fragrant fields of asphodel.

My soul shall pass to happy things,
With dainty plumes and glittering wings;
A Peri bird, I’ll build my nest
On the chumayla’s odorous breast.

And that sweet state of my being o’er,
Beside the Ganges’ much loved shore
I’ll spread my shining fins, and glide
A spark of silver on the tide.

The second transmigration past,
I’ll reach my brightest, and my land –
Shoot with my fire-fly lamp on high,
A star along the summer sky.

Then to the palace gleaming bright,
Turquoise, and pearl, and chrysolite,
My heavenly house ascend, and stray
For ever through the realms of day.

She ceased; and round the funeral pile
The seven-fold circuit she has made,
And with a sweet seraphic smile,
She gently droops her radiant head
Beside the ghastly corse – so calm,
So saint-like are those placid eyes,
So softly breathes the lip’s rich balm,
So faint and indistinct her sighs,
In some blest trance she seems to be,
Or day’s delicious reverie.

Darting a scornful glance on all,
And flinging down with conscious pride
(As if her limbs disdained their thrall)

Her costly gems – the elder bride,

Like an offended goddess stands,

With glowing cheeks, and flashing eyes,

And clasping both her out-stretched hands,

Revolting at the sacrifice –

Her troubled spirit nearly wrought

To madness, finds relief in song,

And with her heart’s deep anguish fraught

The lay indignant bursts along.

“Think not, accursed priests, that I will lend

“My sanction to these most unholy rites;

“And though yon funeral pile I may ascend,

“It is not that your stern command affrights

“My lofty soul – it is because these hands

“Are all too weak to break my sex’s bands.

“I, from my earliest infancy, have bowed

‘A helpless slave to lordly man’s controul,

“No hope of liberty, no choice allowed,

“Unheeded all the struggles of my soul;

“Compelled by brutal force to link my fate

“With one who best deserved my scorn and hate.

“Oh! better far it is to mount yon pile,
“And stretch my shuddering form beside the dead,
Than with a torturing effort strive to smile,
And hide the bitter tears in silence shed –
That state of loathed existence now is o’er,
And I shall shrink from his embrace no more.

The tyrant sleeps death’s last and endless sleep,
Yet does his power beyond the grave extend,
And I this most unholy law must keep,
And to the priest’s unrighteous mandate bend,
Or live an outcast – reft of queenly state –
A beggar lost, despised, and desolate.

Daughter and heiress of a princely line,
From my proud birth-right I disdain to stoop;
Better it is to die, than inly pine,
And feel the soul, the towering spirit, droop
Beneath the cruel toil, the years of pain,
The lost, degraded widow must sustain.

But could these weak arms wield a soldier’s brand,
Could these too fragile limbs sustain the fight,
Even to the death, Mitala would withstand
This cruel custom, and uphold the right
Of woman to her share of gold and gems,
Sceptres and sway, and regal diadems.
“Oh! is there none – not one amid the throng

“Pressing to view a dead by Heaven abhorred,

“Whose brave heart, burning to avenge the wrong,

“Will, at my adjuration draw the sword,

“And god-like in an injured woman’s cause

“Crush at a blow foul superstition’s laws?

“Silent and moveless all! – Oh craven race

“Not ling shall this fair land endure your sway;

“Shame and defeat, and capture and disgrace

“Await the closing of a blood-stained day:

“I see, I see the thickly gathering bands

“Crouding in conquering ranks from distant lands!

“The Persian Satrap and the Tartar Khan

“The temples of your gods shall overthrow,

“And all the hundred thrones of Hindostan

“Before the west’s pale warriors shall bow,

“Crouching where’er the banners of the brave

“The silver crescent, and the red cross wave!”

Her song has ceased – but that bright eye

Still with prophetic frenzy glares,

And struggling with her agony

Dries with its fires the springing tears.

She waves away the Bramin band

And mounts the funeral pile alone;
And the Mussaul's enkindling brand

Is on the heaped-up fagots thrown –

One long wild shriek, amid the crash

Of gongs and drums and cymbals, drowned –

One burst of flame, a ruddy flash

Gliding the green hill's distant mound –

One smoky column, whose dark veil

Obscure the fast declining sun –

A cloud of ashes on the gale –

And these unhallowed rites are done!

Night on the Ganges

How calm, how lovely is the soft repose

Of mature sleeping in the summer night;

How sweet, how lullingly the current flows

Beneath the stream of melted chrysolite,

Where Ganges spreads its floods, - reflecting o'er

Its silvery surface, with those countless stars

The ingot gems of Heaven's cerulean floor,

Mosques, groves, and cliffs, and pinnacled minars.

The air is fresh, and yet the evening breeze

Has died away; so hushed, 'tis scarcely heard

To breathe amid the clustering lemon trees,

Whose snowy blossoms, by its faint sighs stirred,

Give out their perfume; and the bulbul's notes

Awake the echoes of the balmy clime;
While from yon marble-domed pagoda floats
    The music of its bell’s soft, silvery chime.

Mildly, yet with resplendent beauty, shines
    The scene around, although the stars alone,
From the bright treasures of their gleaming mines
    A tender radiance o’er the earth have thrown.
Oh! far more lovely are those gentle rays
    With their undazzling luster, than the beam
The sun pours down in his meridian blaze,
    Lighting with diamond pomp the sparkling stream.

Each tint its vivid colouring receives:
    There is the glossy peepul – the bamboo
Flings down its rich redundancy of leaves,
    And trailing plants their wandering course pursue,
In hues as bright as if the sun revealed
    The mantling foliage of the woody glade;
Nor is yon lone sequestered hut concealed
    Sleeping within the green hill’s deepest shade.

With snowy vases crowned, the lily springs
    In queen-like beauty by the river’s brink;
And o’er the wave the broad-leaved lotus flings
    Its roseate flowers in many a knotted link.
Oh! when the sultry sun has sunk to rest,
    When evening’s soft and tender shadows rise,
How sweet the scene upon the river’s breast,
   Beneath the starlight of these tropic skies!

The Moosulman’s Grave

Sweet is the shelter of yon verdant glade,
   Where lofty palms and waving mangos bloom,

Where the tall peepul spreads its grateful shade
   Above the pious Moslem’s lowly tomb.

Severe in chaste simplicity it stands
   Bearing no record of the donor’s name,

To tell the world from whose all-bounteous hands
   The smiling gifts of that fair valley came.

’Twas he who planted all those clustering topes,
   And scooped the basin of the well-filled tank,

The pleasant haunt of playful antelopes,
   Who leap rejoicing o’er the flowery bank;

And there in flocks, beside its ample brim,
   Unnumbered birds wheel round in airy rings;

And o’er its glassy surface wild fowls skim,
   And stately herons plume their shining wings.

There too in crowds the villagers repair,
   And while the cooling stream their temples lave,

From countless lips is breathed the grateful prayer,
   Blessing the hand munificent that gave

To the parched waste the precious element,
Whose gushing waters all their lotas fill;
And many a graceful female form is bent,
Dipping the ghurrah in the crystal rill.

Oh! where the noon-tide sun so fiercely glows,
Scorching the desert with its sultry beam,
How bland, how welcome, is the soft repose,
Invited by the thickly shaded stream!
Beneath the boughs of some o'er-arching palm,
The mossy turf by weary limbs is prest,
And blest by slumbers most delicious balm,
The pilgrim sinks at once to blissful rest.

Beside the lakelet, with its modest dome,
Peeps forth between the trees a pillared mosque;
And there the wandering fakeer finds a home,
And chants the nuzzum from the high kiosk:
He feeds the lamp with palm-nut's fragrant oil,
A lonely star upon the brow of night,
And plucks the fairy offsprings of the soil,
To crown with votive wreaths the altar's height.

Nature's luxuriant and lavish hand,
Forest and hill, steep cliff, and tangled wild,
With rich profusion o'er the sunny land,
A countless tribe of brilliant flowers has piled.
Upon the sandy plain fair lilies spring;
And mid the jungle, buds of rain-bow dyes
To the spiced gale their balmy perfume fling,
Or lift their towering garlands to the skies.

There the warm red of the pomegranate glows
In ruby luster; and acacias twine
Their many-colored wreaths amid the rose,
The yellow champa and the Jessamine;
Its mantling silver the clematis draws
O’er clustering oleanders pink and white;
And the magnolia’s richly scented vase
Droops o’er the Baubool’s bells of golden light.

And India’s dark-browed natives dearly prize
The silken treasures of their forest bowers;
They love to plait their fragrant rosaries,
And heap each holy shrine with wreaths of flowers.
O’er the bright waters snowy chaplets float,
With lotus crowns the pearly river glows,
And each proud shallop and each nut-shell boat
Bear a rich Garland on their dainty prows.

Buds of all scents and every changeful hue,
The gardens beautiful though fragile gems,
Whate’er his creed, or Moslem or Hindoo,
The pilgrim twines in radiant diadems.
With votive offerings of a grateful breast,
Mosque or pagoda by his hands are wreathed,

For where the tank invites the fainting guest,

He asks not who the precious boon bequeathed.

Oh! blessed work of charity – a tree

Planted for love of human-kind – a well –

A mosque or mhut’s o’ershading canopy,

Can make the heart with holy feelings swell.

The wide serai within the city’s gate,

A pool in some green dell beside the plain,

Cheer with their pious gifts the desolate,

And light the fading beams of hope again.

Blessed by the bounties of his fellow man

The way-worn traveller who journeys o’er

The wide and sultry realms of Hindostan,

By deep ravine, parched waste, or river’s shore,

Where’er his wandering footsteps are addrest,

From steep Nepaul to sea-girt Juggunaut,

He finds a frequent place of welcome rest,

In some pagoda, or some mosque-crowned ghaut.

Nour Juffeir Khan

How darkly ‘gainst the crimson sky

Those massy heaps of ruins frown,

Whose domes, in towering majesty,

The crags with mournful splendour crown.
No more upon the lofty walls
    In troops the well-armed vassals stand;
No more within its stately halls
    A gallant chieftain holds command.
But the fierce vulture builds her nest,
    The hungry panther makes his lair,
And noisome beasts the courts infest,
    And poisonous snakes are brooding there.
While o’er the silent strand below
    The lowly river glides – so hushed,
So undisturbed its currents flow,
    Where late a proud flotilla rushed,
That strangers deem the desert rude
In its impervious solitude,
Had ever been the dreary haunt,
Of prowling wolves and tigers gaunt;
And the soft wind had only borne
    Upon its fresh and balmy wings,
Of some lone bird the cry forlorn,
    Or savage creature’s murmurings.
For the bright sands no foot-prints wear,
    Save of the forest’s denizens –
That track of the gigantic bear,
    Pacing its wild and dismal glens;
The fearful alligator’s tread,
    The steep and rugged paths, where shine,
In slender spears profusely shed,
Quills of the fretful porcupine.

Yet, on this now-deserted strand
In fleet career a warlike hand
Flung the jerreed, or galloped o’er
In stately guise the echoing shore.
And round each crag and pinnacle

Unnumbered perfumed flowers were springing,
And from the towers the merry bell

Or cittara’s softer sounds were ringing.

The passing boatman wondering gazed

Where streaming o’er the midnight sky
A thousand lamps and torches blazed,

And bursts of joyous revelry
Came o’er the breeze, from those bright halls
Where, twining their gay coronals,
Mid flowers, and lights, and eye-beams glancing,

Shining in gold and gems and pearls,
To music’s thrilling notes advancing,

A clustering troop of graceful girls
Displayed before a raptured throng
The witcheries of dance and song.

Oh! not alone in festal hours
Pleasure illumed those lofty towers;
For there domestic happiness

In all its holy beauty smiled,
And love with innocent cares

The bright winged sunny day beguiled –
Yet 'twas not might of foreign foe
That laid yon ruined fortress low!
Our slender bark makes little way
    Striving against the current's flight,
And soon the sun's fast fading ray
    Will melt into the shades of night.
Come — I will tell the tale to thee,
While our small pinnace lazily
Glides to its place of destined rest;
And while on Jumna's roseate breast
The beautiful reflection glows
    Of turret tall and arching port,
And on its liquid mirror shows
    The outline of the crumbling fort.
Then winding through yon steep defile
We'll leave these lowly scenes a while,
And wandering o'er the teeming plains
    White with the cotton's bursting pod,
Or through the clustering sugar canes,
    The crested parrot's sweet abode,
Mark where the nut-wreathed castors grow,
Or spreads the vagrant indigo,
Those rich productions of the soil,
Which yield their wealth with little toil.
But to my tale — with gentle hand
    Nour Juffeir Khan the district swayed,
And plenty smiled upon the land
Which the mild Omrah's rule obeyed.
From fierce ambition's paths afar
No cares disturbed the hill-crowned fort,
And only waged in mimic war,
Or flung in some adventurous sport,
'Gainst sylvan enemies alone
The sharp and well-aimed spears were thrown.
And truly 'twas a gallant sight
When issued forth the hunter's train,
Urging their coursers' rapid flight,
Or wheeling round the rugged plain,
Or speeding to the lovely haunts
The *nylghau* loves mid bushy dells,
Upon those trampling elephants,
Who to their silvery sounding bells
Through jungles deep, with stately pace,
And step unerring, lead the chase.
Some are equipped with howdahs, where
The lavish hand has richly wrought
Crimson and gold; while others bear
Encaged the spotted leopards, taught
With the majestic stag to cope,
Or spring upon the antelope.
Nor these alone the chief enlists
To aid his sport; for on the wrists
Of falconers, with pride elate
The regal birds in haughty state
Sit throned like kings; or soaring high
O'er their devoted victims fly,
A single instant hovering,
Then stooping down with steady wing
Upon the quarry's head alight,

Who blinded, and with struggling weak,

Not long sustain the dreadful fight,

But sinks beneath the cruel beak
Of his fierce foe, who drinks the blood,

Ere from the breast life's pulses part,

And rushing in a crimson flood,

From the poor victim's quivering heart.

And all around, the thronging rout

Whose motley groups on foot advance,

Filling the air with cry and shout,

And armed with javelin and lance,

Or simpler spears of the bamboo,

With reckless footsteps rushing through

The dark defiles of the ravine,

Heighten the spirit of the scene;

Where gaily trapped, the fiery horse

With all his native ardour pants,

Outstripping in his rapid course

The more majestic elephants.

And chiefs in regal pomp arrayed,

Silver and silk, and gold brocade,

The crimson shawl across the breast
Above the graceful shoulder hung,
Or rash-wise, round the shining vest,
Or o'er the gem-starred turban flung,
In all their glittering panoply,
The lofty port – the gleaming brand –
Appear like those bright genii
Who erst had riled the sunny land.
'Twas a fair pageant, and might seem
More like a poet's noon-tide dream
Than cold reality – the throng
With whirl-wind speed who rush along
The tangled wild, arousing there
From copse, and dell, and fields of air
The forest's tenants – from the rocks
Uprising with a piercing cry,
The startled pea fowl soar in flocks,
And spread like clouds along the sky.
While the hyena and the wolf,
Jackalls and bears, and bounding deer,
Seek shelter in some caverned gulf,
Or o'er the hill tops disappear.
Through jungle, brake, and brushwood crashing,
Still do the hunter train sweep on –
A dazzling meteor brightly flashing!
A moment's space, and it is gone,
Leaving the forest's deep recess
In all its native loneliness.
When from the jovial chase returned
  His tranquil home the Omrah sought,
For him the perfumed tapers burned,
  And upon glittering trays were brought
To spread the hospitable board,
  The ample feast, whose dainty fare
Invited by their bounteous lord,
  The Zumeendars and vassals share—
Rose water, paan and spices prest
Profusely on each welcomed guest.
The Jumna’s finny tribes appear
With quarters of the haunted deer;
Pigeons and kids, and rich pillaus,
  And kaaries bright with golden glow;
While from each sculptured silver vase
  The many coloured sherbets flow.
Plucked from the river’s sandy bed,
The gushing water melons shed
Their grateful streams; and there in piles,
Heaped up the glossy mango smiles;
Citrons, pomegranates, and the bright
  Pistachio nut from far Thibet;
And grapes that gleam with topaz light,
  And sweetmeats in a glistening net
Of frosted sugar heaped around,
And all with flower-wreathed garlands crowned.
Thus gaily sped the chieftain’s hours,
   Or still more happily, amid
The bright Zenana’s sacred bowers,
   Where in her sweet seclusion hid,
Like some fair lotus bending deep
   Beneath the wave its roseate bells;
Like those pure lily buds that keep
   Their virgin court mid forest-cells;
Or jewel in a lovely mine;
Or image in a hallowed shrine;
Above the Jumna’s sparkling waters,
The flower of Delhi’s radiant daughters,
Blessed the undivided love
Of one who never wished to rove
From the fair creature by his side,
His beautiful imperial bride.
And she – oh! in this earthly sphere,
   Or heaven’s wide realm, no dreams of bliss
Is half so precious and so dear,
   So cherished as her infant’s kiss,
And that loved husband’s fondness shown
For her bright form, and her’s alone!
Her woman’s heart on earth has found
   Its own domestic paradise;
She knows no happiness beyond
   The flowery fields and sunny skies,
Where blessed and blessing she rejoices,
And joins to her’s those cherub voices;
Arising when the crimson flush
Is fading into twilight dim,
Or with the morning’s earliest blush,
In that soul-thrilling choral hymn,
Whose sweet and simple strain imparts
The gratitude of guileless hearts.

Desert! I’ve lingered in my song,
And fain would still the lay prolong,
In fond yet idle pleasure dwelling
On bliss which cheats the listening ear,
With soothing softness only telling
What gentle spirits love to hear.
Yet I must hasten with the tale;
For when we reach yon woody cliff,
Crouding to strike the flimsy sail,
The crew who guide our fairy skiff,
Will leave on deck no quiet spot
Where we may sit, and pensively,
While musing o’er life’s changeful lot,
Complete the Omrah’s history.

Spurned in disgrace from Scindia’s court
To shelter his dishonoured head,
Indignant to his kinsman’s fort
An outcast younger brother fled;
Bringing a fierce marauding crew

    Of Afghaun and Mahratta hordes,

A reckless band, who only knew

    The crimson laws of their own swords.

Eager for bloodshed and for broil,

    And feeding their luxurious tastes,

Insatiate, with the fearful spoil

    Of cities stormed, and burning wastes,

Not long did Meer Jah Asiph view

    Unmoved his brother's blissful state;

Nor was it long ere envy grew,

    And jealousy, and deadly hate,

In the dark soul where pity's beam

    Dwelled not – and soon the miscreant planned

With horrid craft a treacherous scheme;

    And, aided by his lawless band,

He seized upon the ill-watched keep,

And slew its guardians in their sleep;

And then – but let me draw a veil

Before the horrors of the tale.

Nour Juffeir stabbed, disarmed, and bound,

    Beheld with glazed and frenzied eyes

His wife and infants fall around,

    While on his heart the victim's cries

Entered like scorpion stings – o'er wrought,

    That outraged heart could bear no more.

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And now the seeming corse is brought
   With its pale comrades to the shore,
And all the slaughtered find a grave,
Within the Jumna’s blood-stained wave.

Meer Asiph reigned – the revel loud
   Daily resounded from the fort;
And there a fierce and needy crowd
   From the encircling states resort –
A profligate licentious race
   By rapine and by murder fed,
Wretches who bring a foul disgrace
   Upon their ruthless master’s head;
Mocking the Prophet’s holy laws
   With fiend-like oaths and scornful laugh,
The precious vintage of Schirauz
   From golden bowls they deeply quaff,
Spending each night in savage glee,
Wassail, and wine, and minstrelsy.

One balmy eve, with flaming torch
   And crystal lamp, each wide saloon,
Verandah, gallery, and porch,
   Shone with the gorgeous light of noon.
The gayest of their festival –
   The ductile fingered jugglers came,
And featly poised the golden balls,
In sparkling founts and showers of flame;
There too in strange and fitful dance
To the soft breathings of a flute
The many-coloured serpents glance,
And o'er the marble pavement shoot;
And there with necromantic skill
The shrewd magician played his part;
The raptured crowd were gazing still
With wonder on his potent art,
All headless of the murmuring sound
In distant chambers gathering round –
A sudden simultaneous cry
The preconcerted signal gave,
Unarmed – unknowing where to fly,
Each half intoxicated slave
Sank horror stricken from the blaze
Of Juffeir Khan’s indignant gaze!
Deeming the rebel recreant crew
Too worthless for his righteous sword,
Upon his brother’s throat he flew,
And dragged him from the guilty board –
Beneath the stern avenger’s grasp
Meer Asiph for an instant quailed,
But struggling in the deadly clasp
His giant strength at length prevailed;
His powerful hands were disengaged,
And equally the combat raged.
In dumb suspense the vassals viewed
The progress of the mortal feud;
Still in each other’s fierce embrace
Across the wide and slippery hall,
Without a moment’s breathing space
They reached the fort’s surrounding wall.

See’st thou the cleft along the edge
Of yonder overhanging ledge?
Upon that dreadful precipice,
Burning to end the deadly strife,
By one avenging sacrifice,
Careless of safety or of life,
Nour Juffeir still with arms enrolled
Round his foe’s throat in snake-like fold,
A moment gazed upon the deep
With triumph flashing in his eye,
And springing to the fatal leap,
Entwined the mangled bodies lie,
And weltering in each other’s gore
Breathed their last sighs on Jumna’s shore.
B: Anna Maria Jones's Oriental poem

Adieu to India

Ocean, I call thee from the sapphire Deep,
Where the young Billows on their pearl-beds sleep;
And the fair Beauties of the boisterous Main,
Far from the jarring Elements complain:
Where in the coral Grove's transparent Court,
The green-haired Tritons and their Nymphs resort:
Haste and subdue the Turbulence that laves
The long-drawn Shadows of the mountain Waves;
Still the proud Tempest, whose impetuous Sway,
Heaves into monstrous Forms the watery Way.
Maria asks – not thou the Boon refuse,
Urged by the pensive melancholy Muse!
Who oft to Thee, when keen Despair hath spread
Her awful Terrors o'er her timid Head,
Has poured with fervid Lay the suppliant Prayer,
And twined her Sorrows in the sedgy Hair:
While Thou attentive to the weeping Tale,
Dispersed her Fears, and quelled the ruthless Gale.

Adieu to India's fertile Plains,
Where Brahma's holy Doctrine reigns;
Whose virtuous Principles still bind
The Hindu's meek untainted Mind;

Far other Scenes my Thoughts employ,

Source of Anguish, Hope and Joy;

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I hasten to my Native Shore,
Where Art and Science blend their Lore:
There Learning keeps her chosen Seat —
A million Votaries at her Feet,
Ambitious of the Laurel Bough,
To wind about their honoured Brow.
Yet ere I go — a grateful Pain
Involves the Muse’s parting Strain;
The sad Regret my Mind imbues,
And fills with Grief — my last Adieus!
For I have felt the subtle Praise,
That cheered the Minstrel’s doubtful Lays;
That fed the infant lambent Flame,
And bade me hope for Future Fame.
Farewell, ye sacred Haunts, where oft I’ve strayed
With mild Reflection — solitary Maid! —
Ye Streams that swell the winding Hougly’s Tide,
The Seat of Commerce and the Muse’s Pride,
Farewell! — the Mariners unfurl the Sails,
Eager to meet the Pressure of the Gales;
And now the lofty Vessel cleaves the Way,
Dashing the impelling Waves with silver Spray, —
Why springs my Heart with many an aching Sigh,
Why stands imppearled the Trembler on mine eye? —
Alas! — fond Memory weeps the Vision past,
‘For ever fled, like yonder sweeping Blast:’
Those Hours of Bliss, those Scenes of soft Delight,
Vanish like Mists before the Rays of Light;
But still Remembrance holds the Objects dear,
And bathes their Shadows with Regret’s pure Tear;
Nor shall the oblivious Power of Time subdue,
The painful Feelings of the last – Adieu!
C: Felicia Dorothea Hemans’s Oriental Poems

The Indian City

I

Royal in splendour went down the way
On the plain where an Indian city lay,
With its crown of domes o’er the forest high,
Red as if fused in the burning sky,
And its deep groves pierced by the rays which made
A bright stream’s way through each long arcade,
Till the pillared vaults of the banyan stood
Like torch-lit aisles midst the solemn wood,
And the plantain glittered with leaves of gold,
As a tree midst the genii-gardens old,
And the cypress lifted a blazing spire,
And the stems of the cocoas were shafts fire.
Many a white pagoda’s gleam
Slept lovely round upon lake and stream,
Broken alone by the lotus-flowers,
As the caught the glow of the sun’s last hours
Like rosy wine in their cups, and shed
Its glory forth on their crystal bed.
Many a graceful Hindu maid
With the water-vase from the palmy shade
Came gliding light as the desert’s roe,
Down marble steps to the tanks below;
And a cool sweet plashing was ever heard,
As the molten glass of the wave was stirred;
And a murmur, thrilling the scented air,
Told where the Brahmin bowed in prayer.

There wandered a noble Muslim boy
Through the scene of beauty in breathless joy;
He gazed where the stately city rose
Like a pageant of clouds in its red repose;
He turned where birds through the gorgeous gloom
Of the woods went glancing on starry plume;
He tracked the brink of the shining lake
By the tall canes feathered in tuft and brake,
Till the path he chose, in its mazes wound
To the very heart of the holy ground.

And there lay the water, as is enshrined
In a rocky urn from the sun and wind,
Bearing the hues of the grove on high,
Far down through its dark still purity.
The flood beyond, to the fiery west
Sprerad out like a metal mirror’s breast,
But that lone bay, in its dimness deep,
Seemed made for the swimmer’s joyous leap,
For the stag athirst from the noontide chase,
For all free things of the wildwood’s race.

Like a falcon’s glance on the wide blue sky
Was the kindling flash of of the boy’s glad eye,
Like a sea-bird’s flight to the foaming wave
From the shadowy bank was the bound he gave;
Dashing the spray-drops, cold and white,
O'er the glossy leaves in his young delight,
And bowing his locks to the waters clear—
Alas, he dreamt not that fate was near!

His mother looked from her tent the while
O'er heaven and earth with a quiet smile;
She, on her way unto Mecca's fane,
Had stayed the march of her pilgrim-train
Calmly to linger a few brief hours
In the Bramin city's glorious bowers,
For the pomp of the forest, the wave's bright fall,
The red gold of sunset—she loved them all.

II

The moon rose clear in the splendour given
To the deep blue night of an Indian heaven;
The boy from the high-arched woods came back—
Oh, what had he met in his lonely track?
The serpent's glance, through the long reeds bright?
The arrowy spring of the tiger's might?
No! Yet as one by a conflict worn,
With his graceful hair all soiled and torn,
And a gloom on the lids of his darkened eye,
And a gash on his bosom—he came to die!
He looked for the face to his young heart sweet,
And found it, and sank at his mother's feet.

'Speak to me! Whence doth the swift blood run?
What hath befall'n thee, my child, my son?'
The mist of death on his brow lay pale,
But his voice just lingered to breathe the tale,
Murmuring faintly of wrongs and scorn,
And wounds from the children of Brahma born.
This was the doom for a Muslim found
With foot profane on their holy ground;
This was for sullying the pure waves free
Unto them alone – 'twas their God's decree.

A change came o'er his wandering look –
The mother shrieked not then, nor shook;
Breathless she knelt in her son's young blood,
Rending her mantle to staunch its flood,
But it rushed like a river which none may stay,
Bearing a flower to the deep away.
That which our love to the earth would chain,
Fearfully striving with Heaven in vain,
That which feeds from us while yet we hold,
Clasped to our bosoms, its mortal mould,
Was fleeting before her, afar and fast;
One moment – the soul from the face had passed!

Are there no words for that common woe?
Ask of the thousands, its depths that know!
The boy had breathed, in his dreaming rest,
Like a low-voiced dove on her gentle breast;
He had stood, when she sorrowed, beside her knee,
Painfully stilling his quick heart's glee;
He had kissed from her cheek the widow's tears
With the loving lip of his infant years;
He had smiled o’er her path like a bright spring day –
Now in his blood on the earth he lay

_Murdered!_ Alas, and we love so well
In a world where anguish like this can dwell!

She bowed down mutely o’er her dead –
They that stood round her watched in dread;
They watched – she knew not they were by;
Her soul sat veiled in its agony.

On the silent lip she pressed no kiss,
Too stern was the grasp of her pangs for this;
She shed no tear as her face bent low
O’er the shining hair of the lifeless brow;
She looked but into the half-shut eye
With a gaze that found there no reply
And, shrieking, mantled her head from sight
And fell, struck down by her sorrow’s might!

And what deep change, what work of power,
Was wrought on her secret soul that hour?
How rose the lonely one? She rose
Like a prophetess from dark repose,
And proudly flung from her face the veil,
And shook the hair from her forehead pale,
And midst her wondering handmaids stood
With the sudden glance of a dauntless mood.
Aye, lifting up to the midnight sky
A brow in its regal passion high,
With a close and rigid grasp she pressed
The bloodstained robe to her heaving breast,
And said, 'Not yet, not yet I weep,
Not yet my spirit shall sink or sleep,
Not till yon city, in ruins rent,
Be piled for its victim's monument.
Cover his dust, bear it on before –
It shall visit those temple-gates once more!'

And sway in the train of the dead she turned,
The strength of her step was the heart that burned;
And the Brahmin groves in the starlight smiled
As the mother passed with her slaughtered child.

III

Hark, a wild sound of the desert's horn
Through the woods round the Indian city borne!
A peal of the cymbal and tambour afar –
War, 'tis the gathering of Muslim war!
The Brahmin looked from the leaguered towers –
He saw the wild archer amidst his bowers,
And the lake that flashed through the plantain shade
As the light of the lances along it played,
And the canes that shook as if winds were high
When the fiery steed of the waste swept by,
And the camp as it lay, like a billowy sea,
Wide round the sheltering banyan tree.

There stood one tent from the rest apart –
That was the place of a wounded heart.
Oh, deep is a wounded heart, and strong
A voice that cries against mighty wrong,
And full of death as a hot wind’s blight
Doth the ire of a crushed affection light!

Maimuna from realm to realm had passed,
And her tale had rung like a trumpet’s blast;
There had been words from her pale lips poured,
Each one a spell to unsheathe the sword.
The Tartar had sprung from his steed to hear,
And the dark chief of Araby grasped his spear
Till a chain of long lances begirt the wall,
And a vow was recorded that doomed its fall.

Back with the dust of her son she came,
When her voice had kindled that lighting flame;
She came in the might of a queenly foe –
Banner, and javelin, and bended bow;
But a deeper power on her forehead sate –
There sought the warrior his star of fate;
Her eye’s wild flash through the tented line
Was hailed as a spirit and a sign,
And the faintest tone from her lip was caught
As a Sybil’s breath of prophetic thought.

Vain, bitter glory! The gift of grief
That lights up vengeance to find relief,
Transient and faithless – it cannot fill
So the deep void of the heart, nor still
The yearning left by a broken tie,
That haunted fever of which we die!
Sickening she turned from her sad renown,
As a king in death might reject his crown;
Slowly the strength of the walls gave way –
She withered faster from day to day.
All the proud sounds of that bannered plain
To say the flight of her soul were vain;
Like an eagle caged, it had striven, and worn
The frail dust ne’er for such conflicts born,
Till the bars were rent, and the hour was come
For its fearful rushing through darkness home.

The bright sun set in his pomp and pride,
As on that eve when the fair boy died;
She gazed from her couch, and a softness fell
O’er her weary heart with the day’s farewell;
She spoke, and her voice in its dying tone
Had an echo of feelings that long seemed flown.
She murmured a low sweet cradle song,
Strange midst the din of a warrior throng,
A song of the time when her boy’s young cheek
Had glowed on her breast in its slumber meek;
But something which breathed from that mournful strain
Sent a fitful gust o’er her soul again,
And starting as if from a dream, she cried,
‘Give him proud burial at my side!
There, by yon lake, where the palm-boughs wave,
When the temples are fallen, make there our grave.’

And the temples fell, though the spirit passed
That stayed not for victory’s voice at last,
When the day was won for the martyr-dead,
For the broken heart, and the bright blood shed.

Through the gatesw of the vanquished the Tartar steed
Bore in the avenger with foaming speed;
Free swept the flame through the idol-fanes
And the streams flowed red, as from warrior-veins,
And the sword of the Muslim, let loose to slay,
Like the panther leapt on its flying prey,
Till a city of ruin begirt the shade
Where the boy and his mother at rest were laid.

Palace and tower on that plain were left
Like fallen trees by the lighting cleft;
The wild vine mantled the stately square,
The Rajah’s throne was the serpent’s lair,
And the jungle grass o’er the altar sprung –
This was the work of one deep heart wrung!

The Traveller at the Source of the Nile
In sunset’s light, o’er Afric thrown,
A wanderer proudly stood
Beside the well-spring, deep and lone,
Of Egypt’s awful flood;
The cradle of that mighty birth,
So long a hidden thing to earth!

He heard its life’s first murmuring sound,
A low mysterious tone;
A music sought, but never found,
By kings and warriors gone;
He listened -- and his heart beat high --
That was the song of victory!

The rapture of a conqueror's mood
   Rushed burning through his frame, --
The depths of that green solitude
   Its torrents could not tame;
There stillness lay, with eve's last smile,
Round those calm fountains of the Nile.

Night came with stars: -- across his soul
   There swept a sudden change,
E'en at the pilgrim's glorious goal
   A shadow dark and strange
Breathed from the thought, so swift to fall
O'er triumph's hour -- and is this all?

No more than this! What seem'd it now
   First by that spring to stand?
A thousand streams of lovelier flow
   Bathed his own mountain land!
Whence far o'er waste and ocean track,
Their wild sweet voices called him back.
They called him back to many a glade,
   His childhood’s haunt of play,
Where brightly through the beechen shade
   Their waters glanced away:
They called him, with their sounding waves,
Back to his father’s hills and graves.

But darkly mingling with the thought
   Of each familiar scene,
Rose up a fearful vision, fraught
   With all that lay between;
The Arab’s lance, the desert’s gloom,
The whirling sands, the red simoom!

Where was the glow of power and pride?
   The spirit born to roam?
His altered heart within him died
   With yearnings for his home!
All vainly struggling to repress
That gush of painful tenderness.

He wept! – the stars of Afric’s heaven
   Beheld his burning tears,
E’en on that spot where fate had given
   The meed of toiling years! –
Oh, happiness! How far we flee
Thine own sweet paths in search of thee!