

## “THE SONNET.”

### I.

THE solemn hour, and the magnetic swoon  
Of midnight in a poet's lonely hall!  
Grave spirits answer (angels if he call)  
The invocations of his lofty tune.  
Thus in his measures nature craves the boon  
To be reflected; and his rhymes appal  
Or charm mankind as tides that flow or fall,  
Waxes or wanes the tempestival moon.

Her course is measured in the sonnet's tether.  
Waxes the eightfold ecstasy; exceeds  
The minor sestet, where some passion bleeds  
Or truth discourses: or eclipse may end,  
Proof against thought; but if man comprehend  
The stars in all their stations sing together.

### II.

What power or fascination can there lie  
In this fair garden of the straight-kept rows,  
The sonnet? Surely some archangel knows  
Why, having written in mere ecstasy

One sonnet-thought, the metre cannot die  
But urges, but compels me to compose  
More and still more, and still my spirit goes  
Striving up glittering steps of symphony.

There is an angel who is guardian.  
Surely her wings are rosy, and her feet  
Black as the wind of frost; but oh! her face!  
Whoso may know it is no more a man,  
But walks with God, and sees the Lady sweet  
Whose body was the vehicle of grace.

### III.

Eternal beauty in eternal truth,  
Isis! And Thoth, the scribe of destiny,  
And Mary's excellent virginity!  
Ye are the witness of the ageless youth  
That crowns the sonnet. In your wondrous eyes  
Lie hidden all the secrets of the world,  
And as the lightning of your look is hurled  
So glean I something of life's harmonies.

Look then upon me! Let my insight pierce  
The clouds of this material universe  
Unto your splendour that no mortal eye  
May see and live. Even so, how small the price!  
My soul accepts its own sweet sacrifice:  
Let me but strike one perfect chord—and die.