

THE VISIONS OF THE ORDEAL.

THE mind with visions clouded,
 (Asleep? Awake?)
By bloodless shades enshrouded,
 (By whom, and for whose sake?)
With visions dimly lighted,
By its own shade affrighted,
In its own light benighted,
 The doors of hell may shake.

Unbidden spring the spectres
 (Whence come, where bound?)
To baffle those protectors
 Whose wings are broad around.
Uprise they and upbraid,
Till life shrinks back afraid,
And death itself dismayed
 Sinks back to the profound.

Unholy phantom faces
 (Of self, Of sin?)
Grin wild in all the places
 Where blood is trodden in :
The ground of night enchanted
With deadly blooms is planted,

Where evil beasts have panted
And snakes have shed their skin.

With poison steams the air,
And evil scent
Is potent everywhere ;
Creation waits th' event :
In silence, without sighing,
The living and the dying,
Oppressed and putrefying,
Curse earth and firmament.

What dreams disturb my slumber,
Or what sights seen ?
Foul orgies without number
In dens and caves obscene,
Accurst, detestable,
In which I laugh with hell,
And furies chant the knell
Of all things clean.

Ah God! the shapes that throng!
Ah God! what eyes!
The souls grown sharp and strong
That my lips made their prize,
The ruined souls, the wrecks
Of bodies fair of flecks
Long since, ere God did vex
My soul with sacrifice.

Pale youth and bloodless maiden
Whose breasts have bled,
With wrath or mercy laden,
By love or terror led,
Reproachful or reviling,
Some pure and some defiling,
Some fearful and some smiling,
Some living and some dead.

These press upon my lips
What lips of flame
To burn me, unless slips
Some cooler kiss, from shame
Washed clean by God's desire,
To save me from their fire—
Those kiss me and respire
The perfume of the Name.

Remorse and terror banished
By pitying lovers,
Who from my eyes have vanished,
(The Lidless Eye discovers),
Repenting souls that turn,
Whose hearts with pity burn
For me, who now discern
Their love around me hovers.

Their love wards from my head
The furious hate
Of those loves doubly dead

That may not pass the gate :
By their entreating prayer
The angels fill the air
To guard my steps, to bare
The veil inviolate.

The visions leave me now ;
I sink to sleep ;
Calm and content my brow ;
My eyes are large and deep.
The morning shall behold
On feet and plumes of gold
My spirit soon enfold
The flocks on heaven's steep.

Refreshed, encouraged, lightened,
Sent on the Way
Whose Sun and Star have brightened
From dawning into day,
I set my face, a flint,
Toward where the holy glint
Of lamps affords the hint
That leads me—where it may.