

LA BEATRICE.

AS I one day to nature made lament
In burnt-up lands, calcined of nutriment,
As in my musing thought's vague random dart
I slowly poised my dagger o'er my heart,
I saw in full noon o'er my forehead form
A deathly cloud far pregnant with the storm,
That bore a flock of devils vicious
Most like to dwarfs cruel and curious.
Coldly they set themselves to gaze on me,
Like passers-by a madman that they see—
I heard them laugh and chuckle, as I think,
Now interchange a signal, now a wink.
“Let us at leisure view this caricature,
This shade of Hamlet mimicking his posture,
The doubting look and hair flung wide to wind!
A pity, eh? to see this merry hind,
This beggar, actor out of work, this droll,
Because he plays artistically his role,
Wishing to interest in his chanted woes
Brooks, eagles, crickets, every flower that blows,
And even to us the rubric old who made
To howl out publicly his wild tirade?”
I could have (for my pride is mountains high,
And dominates cloud tops or demon's cry)—
I could have simply turned my sovereign head,
Had I not seen, 'mid their obscene herd led,
Crime, that the sun has not yet brought to book,
Queen of my spirit with the peerless look.
And she laughed with them at my dark distress,
And turned them oft some dirtiest caress.