

# **Endymion: A Poetic Romance**

John Keats

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# Endymion: A Poetic Romance

John Keats

by

PREFACE

"The stretched metre of an antique song"

INSCRIBED TO THE MEMORY OF THOMAS CHATTERTON

PREFACE

KNOWING within myself the manner in which this Poem has been produced, it is not without a feeling of regret that I make it public.

What manner I mean, will be quite clear to the reader, who must soon perceive great inexperience, immaturity, and every error denoting a feverish attempt, rather than a deed accomplished. The two first books, and indeed the two last, I feel sensible are not of such completion as to warrant their passing the press; nor should they if I thought a year's castigation would do them any good;— it will not: the foundations are too sandy. It is just that this youngster should die away: a sad thought for me, if I had not some hope that while it is dwindling I may be plotting, and fitting myself for verses fit to live.

This may be speaking too presumptuously, and may deserve a punishment: but no feeling man will be forward to inflict it: he will leave me alone, with the conviction that there is not fiercer hell than the failure in a great object. This is not written with the least atom of purpose to forestall criticisms of course, but from the desire I have to conciliate men who are competent to look, and who do look with a zealous eye, to the honour of English literature.

The imagination of a boy is healthy, and the mature imagination of a man is healthy; but there is a space of life between, in which the soul is in a ferment, the character undecided, the way of life uncertain, the ambition thick-sighted: thence proceeds mawkishness, and all the thousand bitters which those men I speak of must necessarily taste in going over the following pages.

I hope I have not in too late a day touched the beautiful mythology of Greece and dulled its brightness: for I wish to try once more, before I bid it farewell.

TEIGNMOUTH,  
April 10, 1818

## *BOOK I.*

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever:  
Its loveliness increases; it will never  
Pass into nothingness; but still will keep  
A bower quiet for us, and a sleep  
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing.  
Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing  
A flowery band to bind us to the earth,  
Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth  
Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,  
Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways

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Made for our searching: yes, in spite of all,  
Some shape of beauty moves away the pall  
From our dark spirits. Such the sun, the moon,  
Trees old, and young, sprouting a shady boon  
For simple sheep; and such are daffodils  
With the green world they live in; and clear rills  
That for themselves a cooling covert make  
'Gainst the hot season; the mid forest brake,  
Rich with a sprinkling of fair musk-rose blooms:  
And such too is the grandeur of the dooms  
We have imagined for the mighty dead;  
All lovely tales that we have heard or read:  
An endless fountain of immortal drink,  
Pouring unto us from the heaven's brink.

Nor do we merely feel these essences  
For one short hour; no, even as the trees  
That whisper round a temple become soon  
Dear as the temple's self, so does the moon,  
The passion poesy, glories infinite,  
Haunt us till they become a cheering light  
Unto our souls, and bound to us so fast,  
That, whether there be shine, or gloom o'er-cast,  
They always must be with us, or we die.

Therefore, 'tis with full happiness that I  
Will trace the story of Endymion.  
The very music of the name has gone  
Into my being, and each pleasant scene  
Is growing fresh before me as the green  
Of our own vallies: so I will begin  
Now while I cannot hear the city's din;  
Now while the early budders are just new,  
And run in mazes of the youngest hue  
About old forests; while the willow trails  
Its delicate amber; and the dairy pails  
Bring home increase of milk. And, as the year  
Grows lush in juicy stalks, I'll smoothly steer  
My little boat, for many quiet hours,  
With streams that deepen freshly into bowers.  
Many and many a verse I hope to write,  
Before the daisies, vermeil rimm'd and white,  
Hide in deep herbage; and ere yet the bees  
Hum about globes of clover and sweet peas,  
I must be near the middle of my story.  
O may no wintry season, bare and hoary,  
See it half finish'd: but let Autumn bold,  
With universal tinge of sober gold,  
Be all about me when I make an end.  
And now at once, adventuresome, I send  
My herald thought into a wilderness:  
There let its trumpet blow, and quickly dress  
My uncertain path with green, that I may speed  
Easily onward, thorough flowers and weed.

Upon the sides of Latmos was outspread  
A mighty forest; for the moist earth fed  
So plenteously all weed-hidden roots  
Into o'er-hanging boughs, and precious fruits.  
And it had gloomy shades, sequestered deep,  
Where no man went; and if from shepherd's keep  
A lamb stray'd far a-down those inmost glens,

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Never again saw he the happy pens  
Whither his brethren, bleating with content,  
Over the hills at every nightfall went.  
Among the shepherds, 'twas believed ever,  
That not one fleecy lamb which thus did sever  
From the white flock, but pass'd unworried  
By angry wolf, or pard with prying head,  
Until it came to some unfooted plains  
Where fed the herds of Pan: aye great his gains  
Who thus one lamb did lose. Paths there were many,  
Winding through palmy fern, and rushes fenny,  
And ivy banks; all leading pleasantly  
To a wide lawn, whence one could only see  
Stems thronging all around between the swell  
Of turf and slanting branches: who could tell  
The freshness of the space of heaven above,  
Edg'd round with dark tree tops? through which a dove  
Would often beat its wings, and often too  
A little cloud would move across the blue.

Full in the middle of this pleasantness  
There stood a marble altar, with a tress  
Of flowers budded newly; and the dew  
Had taken fairy phantasies to strew  
Daisies upon the sacred sward last eve,  
And so the dawned light in pomp receive.  
For 'twas the morn: Apollo's upward fire  
Made every eastern cloud a silvery pyre  
Of brightness so unsullied, that therein  
A melancholy spirit well might win  
Oblivion, and melt out his essence fine  
Into the winds: rain-scented eglantine  
Gave temperate sweets to that well-wooing sun;  
The lark was lost in him; cold springs had run  
To warm their chilliest bubbles in the grass;  
Man's voice was on the mountains; and the mass  
Of nature's lives and wonders puls'd tenfold,  
To feel this sun-rise and its glories old.

Now while the silent workings of the dawn  
Were busiest, into that self-same lawn  
All suddenly, with joyful cries, there sped  
A troop of little children garlanded;  
Who gathering round the altar, seem'd to pry  
Earnestly round as wishing to espy  
Some folk of holiday: nor had they waited  
For many moments, ere their ears were sated  
With a faint breath of music, which ev'n then  
Fill'd out its voice, and died away again.  
Within a little space again it gave  
Its airy swellings, with a gentle wave,  
To light-hung leaves, in smoothest echoes breaking  
Through copse-clad vallies,— ere their death, o'ertaking  
The surgy murmurs of the lonely sea.

And now, as deep into the wood as we  
Might mark a lynx's eye, there glimmered light  
Fair faces and a rush of garments white,  
Plainer and plainer showing, till at last  
Into the widest alley they all past,  
Making directly for the woodland altar.  
O kindly muse! let not my weak tongue falter

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In telling of this goodly company,  
Of their old piety, and of their glee:  
But let a portion of ethereal dew  
Fall on my head, and presently unmew  
My soul; that I may dare, in wayfaring,  
To stammer where old Chaucer us'd to sing.

Leading the way, young damsels danced along,  
Bearing the burden of a shepherd song;  
Each having a white wicker over brimm'd  
With April's tender younglings: next, well trimm'd,  
A crowd of shepherds with as sunburnt looks  
As may be read of in Arcadian books;  
Such as sat listening round Apollo's pipe,  
When the great deity, for earth too ripe,  
Let his divinity o'erflowing die  
In music, through the vales of Thessaly:  
Some idly trail'd their sheep-hooks on the ground,  
And some kept up a shrilly mellow sound  
With ebon-tipped flutes: close after these,  
Now coming from beneath the forest trees,  
A venerable priest full soberly,  
Begirt with ministring looks: always his eye  
Stedfast upon the matted turf he kept,  
And after him his sacred vestments swept.  
From his right hand there swung a vase, milk-white,  
Of mingled wine, out-sparkling generous light;  
And in his left he held a basket full  
Of all sweet herbs that searching eye could cull:  
Wild thyme, and valley-lillies whiter still  
Than Leda's love, and cresses from the rill.  
His aged head, crowned with beechen wreath,  
Seem'd like a poll of ivy in the teeth  
Of winter hoar. Then came another crowd  
Of shepherds, lifting in due time aloud  
Their share of the ditty. After them appear'd,  
Up-followed by a multitude that rear'd  
Their voices to the clouds, a fair wrought car,  
Easily rolling so as scarce to mar  
The freedom of three steeds of dapple brown:  
Who stood therein did seem of great renown  
Among the throng. His youth was fully blown,  
Showing like Ganymede to manhood grown;  
And, for those simple times, his garments were  
A chieftain king's: beneath his breast, half bare,  
Was hung a silver bugle, and between  
His nery knees there lay a boar-spear keen.  
A smile was on his countenance; he seem'd,  
To common lookers on, like one who dream'd  
Of idleness in groves Elysian:  
But there were some who feelingly could scan  
A lurking trouble in his nether lip,  
And see that oftentimes the reins would slip  
Through his forgotten hands: then would they sigh,  
And think of yellow leaves, of owlets' cry,  
Of logs piled solemnly.— Ah, well—a-day,  
Why should our young Endymion pine away!

Soon the assembly, in a circle rang'd,  
Stood silent round the shrine: each look was chang'd  
To sudden veneration: women meek  
Beckon'd their sons to silence; while each cheek

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Of virgin bloom paled gently for slight fear.  
Endymion too, without a forest peer,  
Stood, wan, and pale, and with an awed face,  
Among his brothers of the mountain chace.  
In midst of all, the venerable priest  
Eyed them with joy from greatest to the least,  
And, after lifting up his aged hands,  
Thus spake he: "Men of Latmos! shepherd bands!  
Whose care it is to guard a thousand flocks:  
Whether descended from beneath the rocks  
That overtop your mountains; whether come  
From vallies where the pipe is never dumb;  
Or from your swelling downs, where sweet air stirs  
Blue hare-bells lightly, and where prickly furze  
Buds lavish gold; or ye, whose precious charge  
Nibble their fill at ocean's very marge,  
Whose mellow reeds are touch'd with sounds forlorn  
By the dim echoes of old Triton's horn:  
Mothers and wives! who day by day prepare  
The srip, with needments, for the mountain air;  
And all ye gentle girls who foster up  
Udderless lambs, and in a little cup  
Will put choice honey for a favoured youth:  
Yea, every one attend! for in good truth  
Our vows are wanting to our great god Pan.  
Are not our lowing heifers sleeker than  
Night-swollen mushrooms? Are not our wide plains  
Speckled with countless fleeces? Have not rains  
Green'd over April's lap? No howling sad  
Sickens our fearful ewes; and we have had  
Great bounty from Endymion our lord.  
The earth is glad: the merry lark has pour'd  
His early song against yon breezy sky,  
That spreads so clear o'er our solemnity."

Thus ending, on the shrine he heap'd a spire  
Of teeming sweets, enkindling sacred fire;  
Anon he stain'd the thick and spongy sod  
With wine, in honour of the shepherd-god.  
Now while the earth was drinking it, and while  
Bay leaves were crackling in the fragrant pile,  
And gummy frankincense was sparkling bright  
'Neath smothering parsley, and a hazy light  
Spread greyly eastward, thus a chorus sang:

"O thou, whose mighty palace roof doth hang  
From jagged trunks, and overshadoweth  
Eternal whispers, glooms, the birth, life, death  
Of unseen flowers in heavy peacefulness;  
Who lov'st to see the hamadryads dress  
Their ruffled locks where meeting hazels darken;  
And through whole solemn hours dost sit, and hearken  
The dreary melody of bedded reeds—  
In desolate places, where dank moisture breeds  
The pipy hemlock to strange overgrowth;  
Bethinking thee, how melancholy loth  
Thou wast to lose fair Syrinx— do thou now,  
By thy love's milky brow!  
By all the trembling mazes that she ran,  
Hear us, great Pan!

"O thou, for whose soul-soothing quiet, turtles

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Passion their voices cooingly 'mong myrtles,  
What time thou wanderest at eventide  
Through sunny meadows, that outskirt the side  
Of thine enmossed realms: O thou, to whom  
Broad leaved fig trees even now foredoom  
Their ripen'd fruitage; yellow girted bees  
Their golden honeycombs; our village leas  
Their fairest blossom'd beans and poppi'd corn;  
The chuckling linnet its five young unborn,  
To sing for thee; low creeping strawberries  
Their summer coolness; pent up butterflies  
Their freckled wings; yea, the fresh budding year  
All its completions— be quickly near,  
By every wind that nods the mountain pine,  
O forester divine!

"Thou, to whom every faun and satyr flies  
For willing service; whether to surprise  
The squatted hare while in half sleeping fit;  
Or upward ragged precipices flit  
To save poor lambkins from the eagle's maw;  
Or by mysterious enticement draw  
Bewildered shepherds to their path again;  
Or to tread breathless round the frothy main,  
And gather up all fancifullest shells  
For thee to tumble into Naiads' cells,  
And, being hidden, laugh at their out-peeping;  
Or to delight thee with fantastic leaping,  
The while they pelt each other on the crown  
With silvery oak apples, and fir cones brown—  
By all the echoes that about thee ring,  
Hear us, O satyr king!

"O Hearer to the loud clapping shears  
While ever and anon to his shorn peers  
A ram goes bleating: Winder of the horn,  
When snouted wild-boars routing tender corn  
Anger our huntsmen: Breather round our farms,  
To keep off mildews, and all weather harms:  
Strange ministrant of undescribed sounds,  
That come a swooning over hollow grounds,  
And wither drearily on barren moors:  
Dread opener of the mysterious doors  
Leading to universal knowledge— see,  
Great son of Dryope,  
The many that are come to pay their vows  
With leaves about their brows!

"Be still the unimaginable lodge  
For solitary thinkings; such as dodge  
Conception to the very bourne of heaven,  
Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,  
That spreading in this dull and clodded earth  
Gives it a touch ethereal— a new birth:  
Be still a symbol of immensity;  
A firmament reflected in a sea;  
An element filling the space between;  
An unknown— but no more: we humbly screen  
With uplift hands our foreheads, lowly bending,  
And giving out a shout most heaven rending,  
Conjure thee to receive our humble Paeon,  
Upon thy Mount Lycean!"



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Even while they brought the burden to a close,  
A shout from the whole multitude arose,  
That lingered in the air like dying rolls  
Of abrupt thunder, when Ionian shoals  
Of dolphins bob their noses through the brine.  
Meantime, on shady levels, mossy fine,  
Young companies nimbly began dancing  
To the swift treble pipe, and humming string.  
Aye, those fair living forms swam heavenly  
To tunes forgotten— out of memory:  
Fair creatures! whose young children's children bred  
Thermopylae its heroes— not yet dead,  
But in old marbles ever beautiful.  
High genitors, unconscious did they cull  
Time's sweet first-fruits— they danc'd to weariness,  
And then in quiet circles did they press  
The hillock turf, and caught the latter end  
Of some strange history, potent to send  
A young mind from its bodily tenement.  
Or they might watch the quoit-pitchers, intent  
On either side; pitying the sad death  
Of Hyacinthus, when the cruel breath  
Of Zephyr slew him,— Zephyr penitent,  
Who now, ere Phoebus mounts the firmament,  
Fondles the flower amid the sobbing rain.  
The archers too, upon a wider plain,  
Beside the feathery whizzing of the shaft,  
And the dull twanging bowstring, and the raft  
Branch down sweeping from a tall ash top,  
Call'd up a thousand thoughts to envelope  
Those who would watch. Perhaps, the trembling knee  
And frantic gape of lonely Niobe,  
Poor, lonely Niobe! when her lovely young  
Were dead and gone, and her caressing tongue  
Lay a lost thing upon her paly lip,  
And very, very deadliness did nip  
Her motherly cheeks. Arous'd from this sad mood  
By one, who at a distance loud halloo'd,  
Uplifting his strong bow into the air,  
Many might after brighter visions stare:  
After the Argonauts, in blind amaze  
Tossing about on Neptune's restless ways,  
Until, from the horizon's vaulted side,  
There shot a golden splendour far and wide,  
Spangling those million poutings of the brine  
With quivering ore: 'twas even an awful shine  
From the exaltation of Apollo's bow;  
A heavenly beacon in their dreary woe.  
Who thus were ripe for high contemplating,  
Might turn their steps towards the sober ring  
Where sat Endymion and the aged priest  
'Mong shepherds gone in eld, whose looks increas'd  
The silvery setting of their mortal star.  
There they discours'd upon the fragile bar  
That keeps us from our homes ethereal;  
And what our duties there: to nightly call  
Vesper, the beauty-crest of summer weather;  
To summon all the downiest clouds together  
For the sun's purple couch; to emulate  
In ministring the potent rule of fate  
With speed of fire—tail'd exhalations;

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To tint her pallid cheek with bloom, who cons  
Sweet poesy by moonlight: besides these,  
A world of other unguess'd offices.  
Anon they wander'd, by divine converse,  
Into Elysium; vying to rehearse  
Each one his own anticipated bliss.  
One felt heart—certain that he could not miss  
His quick gone love, among fair blossom'd boughs,  
Where every zephyr—sigh pouts, and endows  
Her lips with music for the welcoming.  
Another wish'd, mid that eternal spring,  
To meet his rosy child, with feathery sails,  
Sweeping, eye—earnestly, through almond vales:  
Who, suddenly, should stoop through the smooth wind,  
And with the balmiest leaves his temples bind;  
And, ever after, through those regions be  
His messenger, his little Mercury.  
Some were athirst in soul to see again  
Their fellow huntsmen o'er the wide champaign  
In times long past; to sit with them, and talk  
Of all the chances in their earthly walk;  
Comparing, joyfully, their plenteous stores  
Of happiness, to when upon the moors,  
Benighted, close they huddled from the cold,  
And shar'd their famish'd scrips. Thus all out—told  
Their fond imaginations,— saving him  
Whose eyelids curtain'd up their jewels dim,  
Endymion: yet hourly had he striven  
To hide the cankering venom, that had riven  
His fainting recollections. Now indeed  
His senses had swoon'd off: he did not heed  
The sudden silence, or the whispers low,  
Or the old eyes dissolving at his woe,  
Or anxious calls, or close of trembling palms,  
Or maiden's sigh, that grief itself embalms:  
But in the self—same fixed trance he kept,  
Like one who on the earth had never stept.  
Aye, even as dead still as a marble man,  
Frozen in that old tale Arabian.

Who whispers him so pantingly and close?  
Peona, his sweet sister: of all those,  
His friends, the dearest. Hushing signs she made,  
And breath'd a sister's sorrow to persuade  
A yielding up, a cradling on her care.  
Her eloquence did breathe away the curse:  
She led him, like some midnight spirit nurse  
Of happy changes in emphatic dreams,  
Along a path between two little streams,—  
Guarding his forehead, with her round elbow,  
From low—grown branches, and his footsteps slow  
From stumbling over stumps and hillocks small;  
Until they came to where these streamlets fall,  
With mingled bubblings and a gentle rush,  
Into a river, clear, brimful, and flush  
With crystal mocking of the trees and sky.  
A little shallop, floating there hard by,  
Pointed its beak over the fringed bank;  
And soon it lightly dipt, and rose, and sank,  
And dipt again, with the young couple's weight,—  
Peona guiding, through the water straight,  
Towards a bowery island opposite;

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Which gaining presently, she steered light  
Into a shady, fresh, and ripply cove,  
Where nested was an arbour, overwove  
By many a summer's silent fingering;  
To whose cool bosom she was used to bring  
Her playmates, with their needle broidery,  
And minstrel memories of times gone by.

So she was gently glad to see him laid  
Under her favourite bower's quiet shade,  
On her own couch, new made of flower leaves,  
Dried carefully on the cooler side of sheaves  
When last the sun his autumn tresses shook,  
And the tann'd harvesters rich armfuls took.  
Soon was he quieted to slumbrous rest:  
But, ere it crept upon him, he had prest  
Peona's busy hand against his lips,  
And still, a sleeping, held her finger-tips  
In tender pressure. And as a willow keeps  
A patient watch over the stream that creeps  
Windingly by it, so the quiet maid  
Held her in peace: so that a whispering blade  
Of grass, a wailful gnat, a bee bustling  
Down in the blue-bells, or a wren light rustling  
Among sere leaves and twigs, might all be heard.

O magic sleep! O comfortable bird,  
That broodest o'er the troubled sea of the mind  
Till it is hush'd and smooth! O unconfin'd  
Restraint! imprisoned liberty! great key  
To golden palaces, strange minstrelsy,  
Fountains grotesque, new trees, bespangled caves,  
Echoing grottos, full of tumbling waves  
And moonlight; aye, to all the mazy world  
Of silvery enchantment!— who, upfurl'd  
Beneath thy drowsy wing a triple hour,  
But renovates and lives?— Thus, in the bower,  
Endymion was calm'd to life again.  
Opening his eyelids with a healthier brain,  
He said: "I feel this thine endearing love  
All through my bosom: thou art as a dove  
Trembling its closed eyes and sleeked wings  
About me; and the pearliest dew not brings  
Such morning incense from the fields of May,  
As do those brighter drops that twinkling stray  
From those kind eyes,— the very home and haunt  
Of sisterly affection. Can I want  
Aught else, aught nearer heaven, than such tears?  
Yet dry them up, in bidding hence all fears  
That, any longer, I will pass my days  
Alone and sad. No, I will once more raise  
My voice upon the mountain-heights; once more  
Make my horn parley from their foreheads hoar:  
Again my trooping hounds their tongues shall loll  
Around the breathed boar: again I'll poll  
The fair-grown yew tree, for a chosen bow:  
And, when the pleasant sun is setting low,  
Again I'll linger in a sloping mead  
To hear the speckled thrushes, and see feed  
Our idle sheep. So be thou cheered, sweet,  
And, if thy lute is here, softly intreat  
My soul to keep in its resolved course."

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Hereat Peona, in their silver source,  
Shut her pure sorrow drops with glad exclaim,  
And took a lute, from which there pulsing came  
A lively prelude, fashioning the way  
In which her voice should wander. 'Twas a lay  
More subtle cadenced, more forest wild  
Than Dryope's lone lulling of her child;  
And nothing since has floated in the air  
So mournful strange. Surely some influence rare  
Went, spiritual, through the damsel's hand;  
For still, with Delphic emphasis, she spann'd  
The quick invisible strings, even though she saw  
Endymion's spirit melt away and thaw  
Before the deep intoxication.  
But soon she came, with sudden burst, upon  
Her self-possession— swung the lute aside,  
And earnestly said: "Brother, 'tis vain to hide  
That thou dost know of things mysterious,  
Immortal, starry; such alone could thus  
Weigh down thy nature. Hast thou sinn'd in aught  
Offensive to the heavenly power? Caught  
A Paphian dove upon a message sent?  
Thy deathful bow against some deer—herd bent  
Sacred to Dian? Haply, thou hast seen  
Her naked limbs among the alders green;  
And that, alas! is death. No, I can trace  
Something more high perplexing in thy face!"

Endymion look'd at her, and press'd her hand,  
And said, "Art thou so pale, who wast so bland  
And merry in our meadows? How is this?  
Tell me thine ailment: tell me all amiss!—  
Ah! thou hast been unhappy at the change  
Wrought suddenly in me. What indeed more strange?  
Or more complete to overwhelm surmise?  
Ambition is so sluggard; 'tis no prize,  
That toiling years would put within my grasp,  
That I have sighed for: with so deadly gasp  
No man e'er panted for a mortal love.  
So all have set my heavier grief above  
These things which happen. Rightly have they done:  
I, who still saw the horizontal sun  
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,  
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd  
My spear aloft, as signal for the chace—  
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race  
With my own steed from Araby; pluck down  
A vulture from his towery perching; frown  
A lion into growling, loth retire—  
To lose, at once, all my toil—breeding fire,  
And sink thus low! but I will ease my breast  
Of secret grief, here in this bowery nest.

"This river does not see the naked sky,  
Till it begins to progress silverly  
Around the western border of the wood,  
Whence, from a certain spot, its winding flood  
Seems at the distance like a crescent moon:  
And in that nook, the very pride of June,  
Had I been used to pass my weary eyes;  
The rather for the sun unwilling leaves

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So dear a picture of his sovereign power,  
And I could witness his most kingly hour,  
When he doth tighten up the golden reins,  
And paces leisurely down amber plains  
His snorting four. Now when his chariot last  
Its beams against the zodiac-lion cast,  
There blossom'd suddenly a magic bed  
Of sacred ditamy, and poppies red:  
At which I wondered greatly, knowing well  
That but one night had wrought this flowery spell;  
And, sitting down close by, began to muse  
What it might mean. Perhaps, thought I, Morpheus,  
In passing here, his owlet pinions shook;  
Or, it may be, ere matron Night uptook  
Her ebon urn, young Mercury, by stealth,  
Had dipt his rod in it: such garland wealth  
Came not by common growth. Thus on I thought,  
Until my head was dizzy and distraught.  
Moreover, through the dancing poppies stole  
A breeze, most softly lulling to my soul;  
And shaping visions all about my sight  
Of colours, wings, and bursts of spangly light;  
The which became more strange, and strange, and dim,  
And then were gulph'd in a tumultuous swim:  
And then I fell asleep. Ah, can I tell  
The enchantment that afterwards befel?  
Yet it was but a dream: yet such a dream  
That never tongue, although it overteem  
With mellow utterance, like a cavern spring,  
Could figure out and to conception bring  
All I beheld and felt. Methought I lay  
Watching the zenith, where the milky way  
Among the stars in virgin splendour pours;  
And travelling my eye, until the doors  
Of heaven appear'd to open for my flight,  
I became loth and fearful to alight  
From such high soaring by a downward glance:  
So kept me stedfast in that airy trance,  
Spreading imaginary pinions wide.  
When, presently, the stars began to glide,  
And faint away, before my eager view:  
At which I sigh'd that I could not pursue,  
And dropt my vision to the horizon's verge;  
And lo! from opening clouds, I saw emerge  
The loveliest moon, that ever silver'd o'er  
A shell for Neptune's goblet: she did soar  
So passionately bright, my dazzled soul  
Commingling with her argent spheres did roll  
Through clear and cloudy, even when she went  
At last into a dark and vapoury tent—  
Whereat, methought, the lidless-eyed train  
Of planets all were in the blue again.  
To commune with those orbs, once more I rais'd  
My sight right upward: but it was quite dazed  
By a bright something, sailing down apace,  
Making me quickly veil my eyes and face:  
Again I look'd, and, O ye deities,  
Who from Olympus watch our destinies!  
Whence that completed form of all completeness?  
Whence came that high perfection of all sweetness?  
Speak, stubborn earth, and tell me where, O where  
Hast thou a symbol of her golden hair?

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Not oat-sheaves drooping in the western sun;  
Not- thy soft hand, fair sister! let me shun  
Such folly before thee- yet she had,  
Indeed, locks bright enough to make me mad;  
And they were simply gordian'd up and braided,  
Leaving, in naked comeliness, unshaded,  
Her pearl round ears, white neck, and orb'd brow;  
The which were blended in, I know not how,  
With such a paradise of lips and eyes,  
Blush-tinted cheeks, half smiles, and faintest sighs,  
That, when I think thereon, my spirit clings  
And plays about its fancy, till the stings  
Of human neighbourhood envenom all.  
Unto what awful power shall I call?  
To what high fane?- Ah! see her hovering feet,  
More bluely vein'd, more soft, more whitely sweet  
Than those of sea-born Venus, when she rose  
From out her cradle shell. The wind out-blows  
Her scarf into a fluttering pavillion;  
'Tis blue, and over-spangled with a million  
Of little eyes, as though thou wert to shed,  
Over the darkest, lushest blue-bell bed,  
Handfuls of daisies."- "Endymion, how strange!  
Dream within dream!"- "She took an airy range,  
And then, towards me, like a very maid,  
Came blushing, waning, willing, and afraid,  
And press'd me by the hand: Ah! 'twas too much;  
Methought I fainted at the charmed touch,  
Yet held my recollections, even as one  
Who dives three fathoms where the waters run  
Gurgling in beds of coral: for anon,  
I felt upmounted in that region  
Where falling stars dart their artillery forth,  
And eagles struggle with the buffeting north  
That balances the heavy meteor-stone;-  
Felt too, I was not fearful, nor alone,  
But lapp'd and lull'd along the dangerous sky.  
Soon, as it seem'd, we left our journeying high,  
And straightway into frightful eddies swoop'd;  
Such as aye muster where grey time has scoop'd  
Huge dens and caverns in a mountain's side;  
There hollow sounds arous'd me, and I sigh'd  
To faint once more by looking on my bliss-  
I was distracted; madly did I kiss  
The wooing arms which held me, and did give  
My eyes at once to death: but 'twas to live,  
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount  
Of kind and passionate looks; to count, and count  
The moments, by some greedy help that seem'd  
A second self, that each might be redeem'd  
And plunder'd of its load of blessedness.  
Ah, desperate mortal! I e'en dar'd to press  
Her very cheek against my crown'd lip,  
And, at that moment, felt my body dip  
Into a warmer air: a moment more,  
Our feet were soft in flowers. There was store  
Of newest joys upon that alp. Sometimes  
A scent of violets, and blossoming limes,  
Loiter'd around us; then of honey cells,  
Made delicate from all white-flower bells;  
And once, above the edges of our nest,  
An arch face peep'd,- an Oread as I guess'd.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

"Why did I dream that sleep o'er-power'd me  
In midst of all this heaven? Why not see,  
Far off, the shadows of his pinions dark,  
And stare them from me? But no, like a spark  
That needs must die, although its little beam  
Reflects upon a diamond, my sweet dream  
Fell into nothing— into stupid sleep.  
And so it was, until a gentle creep,  
A careful moving caught my waking ears,  
And up I started: Ah! my sighs, my tears,  
My clenched hands:— for lo! the poppies hung  
Dew-dabbled on their stalks, the ouzel sung  
A heavy ditty, and the sullen day  
Had chidden herald Hesperus away,  
With leaden looks: the solitary breeze  
Bluster'd, and slept, and its wild self did tease  
With wayward melancholy; and I thought,  
Mark me, Peona! that sometimes it brought  
Faint fare—thee—wells, and sigh—shrilled adieus!—  
Away I wander'd— all the pleasant hues  
Of heaven and earth had faded: deepest shades  
Were deepest dungeons; heaths and sunny glades  
Were full of pestilent light; our taintless rills  
Seem'd sooty, and o'er—spread with upturn'd gills  
Of dying fish; the vermeil rose had blown  
In frightful scarlet, and its thorns out—grown  
Like spiked aloe. If an innocent bird  
Before my heedless footsteps stirr'd, and stirr'd  
In little journeys, I beheld in it  
A disguis'd demon, missioned to knit  
My soul with under darkness; to entice  
My stumblings down some monstrous precipice:  
Therefore I eager followed, and did curse  
The disappointment. Time, that aged nurse,  
Rock'd me to patience. Now, thank gentle heaven!  
These things, with all their comfortings, are given  
To my down—sunken hours, and with thee,  
Sweet sister, help to stem the ebbing sea  
Of weary life."

Thus ended he, and both  
Sat silent: for the maid was very loth  
To answer; feeling well that breathed words  
Would all be lost, unheard, and vain as swords  
Against the enchased crocodile, or leaps  
Of grasshoppers against the sun. She weeps  
And wonders; struggles to devise some blame;  
To put on such a look as would say, Shame  
On this poor weakness! but, for all her strife,  
She could as soon have crush'd away the life  
From a sick dove. At length, to break the pause,  
She said with trembling chance: "Is this the cause?  
This all? Yet it is strange, and sad, alas!  
That one who through this middle earth should pass  
Most like a sojourning demi—god, and leave  
His name upon the harp—string, should achieve  
No higher bard than simple maidenhood,  
Singing alone, and fearfully,— how the blood  
Left his young cheek; and how he used to stray  
He knew not where; and how he would say, nay,  
If any said 'twas love: and yet 'twas love;

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

What could it be but love? How a ring-dove  
Let fall a sprig of yew tree in his path;  
And how he died: and then, that love doth scathe  
The gentle heart, as northern blasts do roses;  
And then the ballad of his sad life closes  
With sighs, and an alas!— Endymion!  
Be rather in the trumpet's mouth,— anon  
Among the winds at large— that all may hearken!  
Although, before the crystal heavens darken,  
I watch and dote upon the silver lakes  
Pictur'd in western cloudiness, that takes  
The semblance of gold rocks and bright gold sands,  
Islands, and creeks, and amber-fretted strands  
With horses prancing o'er them, palaces  
And towers of amethyst,— would I so tease  
My pleasant days, because I could not mount  
Into those regions? The Morphean fount  
Of that fine element that visions, dreams,  
And fitful whims of sleep are made of, streams  
Into its airy channels with so subtle,  
So thin a breathing, not the spider's shuttle,  
Circl'd a million times within the space  
Of a swallow's nest-door, could delay a trace,  
A tinting of its quality: how light  
Must dreams themselves be; seeing they're more slight  
Than the mere nothing that engenders them!  
Then wherefore sully the entrusted gem  
Of high and noble life with thoughts so sick?  
Why pierce high-fronted honour to the quick  
For nothing but a dream?" Hereat the youth  
Look'd up: a conflicting of shame and ruth  
Was in his plaited brow: yet, his eyelids  
Widened a little, as when Zephyr bids  
A little breeze to creep between the fans  
Of careless butterflies: amid his pains  
He seem'd to taste a drop of manna-dew,  
Full palatable; and a colour grew  
Upon his cheek, while thus he lifeful spake.

"Peona! ever have I long'd to slake  
My thirst for the world's praises: nothing base,  
No merely slumberous phantasm, could unlace  
The stubborn canvas for my voyage prepar'd—  
Though now 'tis tatter'd; leaving my bark bar'd  
And sullenly drifting: yet my higher hope  
Is of too wide, too rainbow-large a scope,  
To fret at myriads of earthly wrecks.  
Wherein lies happiness? In that which beck  
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,  
A fellowship with essence; till we shine,  
Full alchemiz'd, and free of space. Behold  
The clear religion of heaven! Fold  
A rose leaf round thy finger's taperness,  
And soothe thy lips: hist, when the airy stress  
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,  
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds  
AEolian magic from their lucid wombs:  
Then old songs waken from enclouded tombs;  
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave;  
Ghosts of melodious prophecyings rave  
Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot;  
Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Where long ago a giant battle was;  
And, from the turf, a lullaby doth pass  
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.  
Feel we these things?— that moment have we stept  
Into a sort of oneness, and our state  
Is like a floating spirit's. But there are  
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far  
More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,  
To the chief intensity: the crown of these  
Is made of love and friendship, and sits high  
Upon the forehead of humanity.  
All its more ponderous and bulky worth  
Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth  
A steady splendour; but at the tip-top,  
There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop  
Of light, and that is love: its influence,  
Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,  
At which we start and fret; till in the end,  
Melting into its radiance, we blend,  
Mingle, and so become a part of it,—  
Nor with aught else can our souls interknit  
So wingedly: when we combine therewith,  
Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,  
And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.  
Aye, so delicious is the unsating food,  
That men, who might have tower'd in the van  
Of all the congregated world, to fan  
And winnow from the coming step of time  
All chaff of custom, wipe away all slime  
Left by men-slugs and human serpentry,  
Have been content to let occasion die,  
Whilst they did sleep in love's elysium.  
And, truly, I would rather be struck dumb,  
Than speak against this ardent listlessness:  
For I have ever thought that it might bless  
The world with benefits unknowingly;  
As does the nightingale, upperched high,  
And cloister'd among cool and bunched leaves—  
She sings but to her love, nor e'er conceives  
How tiptoe Night holds back her dark-grey hood.  
Just so may love, although 'tis understood  
The mere commingling of passionate breath,  
Produce more than our searching witnesseth:  
What I know not: but who, of men, can tell  
That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would swell  
To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,  
The earth its dower of river, wood, and vale,  
The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,  
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,  
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet,  
If human souls did never kiss and greet?

"Now, if this earthly love has power to make  
Men's being mortal, immortal; to shake  
Ambition from their memories, and brim  
Their measure of content: what merest whim,  
Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,  
To one, who keeps within his stedfast aim  
A love immortal, an immortal too.  
Look not so wilder'd; for these things are true,  
And never can be born of atomies  
That buzz about our slumbers, like brain-flies,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Leaving us fancy-sick. No, no, I'm sure,  
My restless spirit never could endure  
To brood so long upon one luxury,  
Unless it did, though fearfully, espy  
A hope beyond the shadow of a dream.  
My sayings will the less obscured seem,  
When I have told thee how my waking sight  
Has made me scruple whether that same night  
Was pass'd in dreaming. Harken, sweet Peona!  
Beyond the matron-temple of Latona,  
Which we should see but for these darkening boughs,  
Lies a deep hollow, from whose ragged brows  
Bushes and trees do lean all round athwart  
And meet so nearly, that with wings outraught,  
And spreaded tail, a vulture could not glide  
Past them, but he must brush on every side.  
Some moulder'd steps lead into this cool cell,  
Far as the slabbed margin of a well,  
Whose patient level peeps its crystal eye  
Right upward, through the bushes, to the sky.  
Oft have I brought thee flowers, on their stalks set  
Like vestal primroses, but dark velvet  
Edges them round, and they have golden pits:  
'Twas there I got them, from the gaps and slits  
In a mossy stone, that sometimes was my seat,  
When all above was faint with mid-day heat.  
And there in strife no burning thoughts to heed,  
I'd bubble up the water through a reed;  
So reaching back to boy-hood: make me ships  
Of moulted feathers, touchwood, alder chips,  
With leaves stuck in them; and the Neptune be  
Of their petty ocean. Oftener, heavily,  
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,  
I sat contemplating the figures wild  
Of o'er-head clouds melting the mirror through.  
Upon a day, while thus I watch'd, by flew  
A cloudy Cupid, with his bow and quiver;  
So plainly character'd, no breeze would shiver  
The happy chance: so happy, I was fain  
To follow it upon the open plain,  
And, therefore, was just going; when, behold!  
A wonder, fair as any I have told-  
The same bright face I tasted in my sleep,  
Smiling in the clear well. My heart did leap  
Through the cool depth.- It moved as if to flee-  
I started up, when lo! refreshfully  
There came upon my face in plenteous showers  
Dew-drops, and dewy buds, and leaves, and flowers,  
Wrapping all objects from my smothered sight,  
Bathing my spirit in a new delight.  
Aye, such a breathless honey-feel of bliss  
Alone preserved me from the drear abyss  
Of death, for the fair form had gone again.  
Pleasure is oft a visitant; but pain  
Clings cruelly to us, like the gnawing sloth  
On the deer's tender haunches: late, and loth,  
'Tis scar'd away by slow returning pleasure.  
How sickening, how dark the dreadful leisure  
Of weary days, made deeper exquisite,  
By a fore-knowledge of unslumbrous night!  
Like sorrow came upon me, heavier still,  
Than when I wander'd from the poppy hill:

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And a whole age of lingering moments crept  
Sluggishly by, ere more contentment swept  
Away at once the deadly yellow spleen.  
Yes, thrice have I this fair enchantment seen;  
Once more been tortured with renewed life.  
When last the wintry gusts gave over strife  
With the conquering sun of spring, and left the skies  
Warm and serene, but yet with moistened eyes  
In pity of the shatter'd infant buds,—  
That time thou didst adorn, with amber studs,  
My hunting cap, because I laugh'd and smil'd,  
Chatted with thee, and many days exil'd  
All torment from my breast;— 'twas even then,  
Straying about, yet, coop'd up in the den  
Of helpless discontent,— hurling my lance  
From place to place, and following at chance,  
At last, by hap, through some young trees it struck,  
And, plashing among bedded pebbles, stuck  
In the middle of a brook,— whose silver ramble  
Down twenty little falls, through reeds and bramble,  
Tracing along, it brought me to a cave,  
Whence it ran brightly forth, and white did lave  
The nether sides of mossy stones and rock,—  
'Mong which it gurgled blythe adieus, to mock  
Its own sweet grief at parting. Overhead,  
Hung a lush screen of drooping weeds, and spread  
Thick, as to curtain up some wood-nymph's home.  
'Ah! impious mortal, whither do I roam?'  
Said I, low voic'd: 'Ah, whither! 'Tis the grot  
'Of Proserpine, when Hell, obscure and hot,  
'Doth her resign; and where her tender hands  
'She dabbles, on the cool and sluicy sands:  
'Or 'tis the cell of Echo, where she sits,  
'And babbles thorough silence, till her wits  
'Are gone in tender madness, and anon,  
'Faints into sleep, with many a dying tone  
'Of sadness. O that she would take my vows,  
'And breathe them sighingly among the boughs,  
'To sue her gentle ears for whose fair head,  
'Daily, I pluck sweet flowerets from their bed,  
'And weave them dyingly— send honey—whispers  
'Round every leaf, that all those gentle lispers  
'May sigh my love unto her pitying!  
'O charitable Echo! hear, and sing  
'This ditty to her!— tell her!— so I stay'd  
My foolish tongue, and listening, half afraid,  
Stood stupefied with my own empty folly,  
And blushing for the freaks of melancholy.  
Salt tears were coming, when I heard my name  
Most fondly lipp'd, and then these accents came:  
'Endymion! the cave is secreter  
'Than the Isle of Delos. Echo hence shall stir  
'No sighs but sigh—warm kisses, or light noise  
'Of thy combing hand, the while it travelling cloys  
'And trembles through my labyrinthine hair.'  
At that oppress'd I hurried in.— Ah! where  
Are those swift moments? Whither are they fled?  
I'll smile no more, Peona; nor will wed  
Sorrow the way to death; but patiently  
Bear up against it: so farewell, sad sigh;  
And come instead demurest meditation,  
To occupy me wholly, and to fashion

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

My pilgrimage for the world's dusky brink.  
No more will I count over, link by link,  
My chain of grief: no longer strive to find  
A half-forgetfulness in mountain wind  
Blustering about my ears: aye, thou shalt see,  
Dearest of sisters, what my life shall be;  
What a calm round of hours shall make my days.  
There is a paly flame of hope that plays  
Where'er I look: but yet, I'll say 'tis naught—  
And here I bid it die. Have not I caught,  
Already, a more healthy countenance?  
By this the sun is setting; we may chance  
Meet some of our near-dwellers with my car."

This said, he rose, faint-smiling like a star  
Through autumn mists, and took Peona's hand:  
They stept into the boat, and launch'd from land.

### *BOOK II.*

O sovereign power of love! O grief! O balm!  
All records, saving thine, come cool, and calm,  
And shadowy, through the mist of passed years:  
For others, good or bad, hatred and tears  
Have become indolent; but touching thine,  
One sigh doth echo, one poor sob doth pine,  
One kiss brings honey-dew from buried days.  
The woes of Troy, towers smothering o'er their blaze,  
Stiff-holden shields, far-piercing spears, keen blades,  
Struggling, and blood, and shrieks— all dimly fades  
Into some backward corner of the brain:  
Yet, in our very souls, we feel amain  
The close of Troilus and Cressid sweet.  
Hence, pageant history! hence, gilded cheat!  
Swart planet in the universe of deeds!  
Wide sea, that one continuous murmur breeds  
Along the pebbled shore of memory!  
Many old rotten-timber'd boats there be  
Upon thy vaporous bosom, magnified  
To goodly vessels; many a sail of pride,  
And golden keel'd, is left unlaunch'd and dry.  
But wherefore this? What care, though owl did fly  
About the great Athenian admiral's mast?  
What care, though striding Alexander past  
The Indus with his Macedonian numbers?  
Though old Ulysses tortured from his slumbers  
The gluttoned Cyclops, what care?— Juliet leaning  
Amid her window-flowers,— sighing,— weaning  
Tenderly her fancy from its maiden snow,  
Doth more avail than these: the silver flow  
Of Hero's tears, the swoon of Imogen,  
Fair Pastorella in the bandit's den,  
Are things to brood on with more ardency  
Than the death-day of empires. Fearfully  
Must such conviction come upon his head,  
Who, thus far, discontent, has dared to tread,  
Without one muse's smile, or kind behest,  
The path of love and poesy. But rest,  
In chaffing restlessness, is yet more drear  
Than to be crush'd, in striving to uprear  
Love's standard on the battlements of song.  
So once more days and nights aid me along,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Like legion'd soldiers.

Brain-sick shepherd prince,  
What promise hast thou faithful guarded since  
The day of sacrifice? Or, have new sorrows  
Come with the constant dawn upon thy morrows?  
Alas! 'tis his old grief. For many days,  
Has he been wandering in uncertain ways:  
Through wilderness, and woods of mossed oaks;  
Counting his woe-worn minutes, by the strokes  
Of the lone woodcutter; and listening still,  
Hour after hour, to each lush-leav'd rill.  
Now he is sitting by a shady spring,  
And elbow-deep with feverous fingering  
Stems the upbursting cold: a wild rose tree  
Pavillions him in bloom, and he doth see  
A bud which snares his fancy: lo! but now  
He plucks it, dips its stalk in the water: how!  
It swells, it buds, it flowers beneath his sight;  
And, in the middle, there is softly pight  
A golden butterfly; upon whose wings  
There must be surely character'd strange things,  
For with wide eye he wonders, and smiles oft.

Lightly this little herald flew aloft,  
Follow'd by glad Endymion's clasped hands:  
Onward it flies. From languor's sullen bands  
His limbs are loos'd, and eager, on he hies  
Dazzled to trace it in the sunny skies.  
It seem'd he flew, the way so easy was;  
And like a new-born spirit did he pass  
Through the green evening quiet in the sun,  
O'er many a heath, through many a woodland dun,  
Through buried paths, where sleepy twilight dreams  
The summer time away. One track unseams  
A wooded cleft, and, far away, the blue  
Of ocean fades upon him; then, anew,  
He sinks adown a solitary glen,  
Where there was never sound of mortal men,  
Saving, perhaps, some snow-light cadences  
Melting to silence, when upon the breeze  
Some holy bark let forth an anthem sweet,  
To cheer itself to Delphi. Still his feet  
Went swift beneath the merry-winged guide,  
Until it reach'd a splashing fountain's side  
That, near a cavern's mouth, for ever pour'd  
Unto the temperate air: then high it soar'd,  
And, downward, suddenly began to dip,  
As if, athirst with so much toil, 'twould sip  
The crystal spout-head: so it did, with touch  
Most delicate, as though afraid to smutch  
Even with mealy gold the waters clear.  
But, at that very touch, to disappear  
So fairy-quick, was strange! Bewildered,  
Endymion sought around, and shook each bed  
Of covert flowers in vain; and then he flung  
Himself along the grass. What gentle tongue,  
What whisperer disturb'd his gloomy rest?  
It was a nymph uprisen to the breast  
In the fountain's pebbly margin, and she stood  
'Mong lillies, like the youngest of the brood.  
To him her dripping hand she softly kist,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And anxiously began to plait and twist  
Her ringlets round her fingers, saying: "Youth!  
Too long, alas, hast thou starv'd on the ruth,  
The bitterness of love: too long indeed,  
Seeing thou art so gentle. Could I weed  
Thy soul of care, by heavens, I would offer  
All the bright riches of my crystal coffer  
To Amphitrite; all my clear-eyed fish,  
Golden, or rainbow-sided, or purplish,  
Vermilion-tail'd, or finn'd with silvery gauze;  
Yea, or my veined pebble-floor, that draws  
A virgin light to the deep; my grotto-sands  
Tawny and gold, ooz'd slowly from far lands  
By my diligent springs; my level lillies, shells,  
My charming rod, my potent river spells;  
Yes, every thing, even to the pearly cup  
Meander gave me,-- for I bubbled up  
To fainting creatures in a desert wild.  
But woe is me, I am but as a child  
To gladden thee; and all I dare to say,  
Is, that I pity thee; that on this day  
I've been thy guide; that thou must wander far  
In other regions, past the scanty bar  
To mortal steps, before thou canst be ta'en  
From every wasting sigh, from every pain,  
Into the gentle bosom of thy love.  
Why it is thus, one knows in heaven above:  
But, a poor Naiad, I guess not. Farewell!  
I have a ditty for my hollow cell."

Hereat, she vanished from Endymion's gaze,  
Who brooded o'er the water in amaze:  
The dashing fount pour'd on, and where its pool  
Lay, half asleep, in grass and rushes cool,  
Quick waterflies and gnats were sporting still,  
And fish were dimpling, as if good nor ill  
Had fallen out that hour. The wanderer,  
Holding his forehead, to keep off the bur  
Of smothering fancies, patiently sat down;  
And, while beneath the evening's sleepy frown  
Glow-worms began to trim their starry lamps,  
Thus breath'd he to himself: "Whoso encamps  
To take a fancied city of delight,  
O what a wretch is he! and when 'tis his,  
After long toil and travelling, to miss  
The kernel of his hopes, how more than vile:  
Yet, for him there's refreshment even in toil;  
Another city doth he set about,  
Free from the smallest pebble-head of doubt  
That he will seize on trickling honey-combs;  
Alas, he finds them dry; and then he foams,  
And onward to another city speeds.  
But this is human life: the war, the deeds,  
The disappointment, the anxiety,  
Imagination's struggles, far and nigh,  
All human; bearing in themselves this good,  
That they are still the air, the subtle food,  
To make us feel existence, and to show  
How quiet death is. Where soil is men grow,  
Whether to weeds or flowers; but for me,  
There is no depth to strike in: I can see  
Naught earthly worth my compassing; so stand

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Upon a misty, jutting head of land—  
Alone? No, no; and by the Orphean lute,  
When mad Eurydice is listening to't;  
I'd rather stand upon this misty peak,  
With not a thing to sigh for, or to seek,  
But the soft shadow of my thrice—seen love,  
Than be— I care not what. O meekest dove  
Of heaven! O Cynthia, ten—times bright and fair!  
From thy blue throne, now filling all the air,  
Glance but one little beam of temper'd light  
Into my bosom, that the dreadful might  
And tyranny of love be somewhat scar'd!  
Yet do not so, sweet queen; one torment spar'd,  
Would give a pang to jealous misery,  
Worse than the torment's self: but rather tie  
Large wings upon my shoulders, and point out  
My love's far dwelling. Though the playful rout  
Of Cupids shun thee, too divine art thou,  
Too keen in beauty, for thy silver prow  
Not to have dipp'd in love's most gentle stream.  
O be propitious, nor severely deem  
My madness impious; for, by all the stars  
That tend thy bidding, I do think the bars  
That kept my spirit in are burst— that I  
Am sailing with thee through the dizzy sky!  
How beautiful thou art! The world how deep!  
How tremulous—dazzlingly the wheels sweep  
Around their axle! Then these gleaming reins,  
How lithe! When this thy chariot attains  
Its airy goal, haply some bower veils  
Those twilight eyes? Those eyes!— my spirit fails—  
Dear goddess, help! or the wide—gaping air  
Will gulph me— help!"— At this with madden'd stare,  
And lifted hands, and trembling lips he stood;  
Like old Deucalion mountain'd o'er the flood,  
Or blind Orion hungry for the morn.  
And, but from the deep cavern there was borne  
A voice, he had been froze to senseless stone;  
Nor sigh of his, nor plaint, nor passion'd moan  
Had more been heard. Thus swell'd it forth: "Descend,  
Young mountaineer! descend where alleys bend  
Into the sparry hollows of the world!  
Oft hast thou seen bolts of the thunder hurl'd  
As from thy threshold; day by day hast been  
A little lower than the chilly sheen  
Of icy pinnacles, and dipp'dst thine arms  
Into the deadening ether that still charms  
Their marble being: now, as deep profound  
As those are high, descend! He ne'er is crown'd  
With immortality, who fears to follow  
Where airy voices lead: so through the hollow,  
The silent mysteries of earth, descend!"

He heard but the last words, nor could contend  
One moment in reflection: for he fled  
Into the fearful deep, to hide his head  
From the clear moon, the trees, and coming madness.

'Twas far too strange, and wonderful for sadness;  
Sharpening, by degrees, his appetite  
To dive into the deepest. Dark, nor light,  
The region; nor bright, nor sombre wholly,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

But mingled up; a gleaming melancholy;  
A dusky empire and its diadems;  
One faint eternal eventide of gems.  
Aye, millions sparkled on a vein of gold,  
Along whose track the prince quick footsteps told,  
With all its lines abrupt and angular:  
Out-shooting sometimes, like a meteor-star,  
Through a vast antre; then the metal woof,  
Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof  
Curves hugely: now, far in the deep abyss,  
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss  
Fancy into belief: anon it leads  
Through winding passages, where sameness breeds  
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change;  
Whether to silver grots, or giant range  
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge  
Athwart a flood of crystal. On a ridge  
Now fareth he, that o'er the vast beneath  
Towers like an ocean-cliff, and whence he seeth  
A hundred waterfalls, whose voices come  
But as the murmuring surge. Chilly and numb  
His bosom grew, when first he, far away  
Descried an orb'd diamond, set to fray  
Old darkness from his throne: 'twas like the sun  
Uprisen o'er chaos: and with such a stun  
Came the amazement, that, absorb'd in it,  
He saw not fiercer wonders— past the wit  
Of any spirit to tell, but one of those  
Who, when this planet's sphering time doth close,  
Will be its high remembrancers: who they?  
The mighty ones who have made eternal day  
For Greece and England. While astonishment  
With deep-drawn sighs was quieting, he went  
Into a marble gallery, passing through  
A mimic temple, so complete and true  
In sacred custom, that he well nigh fear'd  
To search it inwards; whence far off appear'd,  
Through a long pillar'd vista, a fair shrine,  
And just beyond, on light tiptoe divine,  
A quiver'd Dian. Stepping awfully,  
The youth approach'd; oft turning his veil'd eye  
Down sidelong aisles, and into niches old.  
And when, more near against the marble cold  
He had touch'd his forehead, he began to thread  
All courts and passages, where silence dead  
Rous'd by his whispering footsteps murmured faint:  
And long he travers'd to and fro, to acquaint  
Himself with every mystery, and awe;  
Till, weary, he sat down before the maw  
Of a wide outlet, fathomless and dim,  
To wild uncertainty and shadows grim.  
There, when new wonders ceas'd to float before,  
And thoughts of self came on, how crude and sore  
The journey homeward to habitual self  
A mad-pursuing of the fog-born elf,  
Whose flitting lantern, through rude nettle-briar,  
Cheats us into a swamp, into a fire,  
Into the bosom of a hated thing.

What misery most drowningly doth sing  
In lone Endymion's ear, now he has raught  
The goal of consciousness? Ah, 'tis the thought,



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

The deadly feel of solitude: for lo!  
He cannot see the heavens, nor the flow  
Of rivers, nor hill-flowers running wild  
In pink and purple chequer, nor, up-pil'd,  
The cloudy rack slow journeying in the west,  
Like herded elephants; nor felt, nor prest  
Cool grass, nor tasted the fresh slumberous air;  
But far from such companionship to wear  
An unknown time, surcharg'd with grief, away,  
Was now his lot. And must he patient stay,  
Tracing fantastic figures with his spear?  
"No!" exclaim'd he, "why should I tarry here?"  
No! loudly echoed times innumerable.  
At which he straightway started, and 'gan tell  
His paces back into the temple's chief;  
Warming and glowing strong in the belief  
Of help from Dian: so that when again  
He caught her airy form, thus did he plain,  
Moving more near the while: "O Haunter chaste  
Of river sides, and woods, and heathy waste,  
Where with thy silver bow and arrows keen  
Art thou now forested? O woodland Queen,  
What smoothest air thy smoother forehead woos?  
Where dost thou listen to the wide halloos  
Of thy departed nymphs? Through what dark tree  
Glimmers thy crescent? Wheresoe'er it be,  
'Tis in the breath of heaven: thou dost taste  
Freedom as none can taste it, nor dost waste  
Thy loveliness in dismal elements;  
But, finding in our green earth sweet contents,  
There livest blissfully. Ah, if to thee  
It feels Elysian, how rich to me,  
An exil'd mortal, sounds its pleasant name!  
Within my breast there lives a choking flame—  
O let me cool't the zephyr-boughs among!  
A homeward fever parches up my tongue—  
O let me slake it at the running springs!  
Upon my ear a noisy nothing rings—  
O let me once more hear the linnet's note!  
Before mine eyes thick films and shadows float—  
O let me 'noint them with the heaven's light!  
Dost thou now lave thy feet and ankles white?  
O think how sweet to me the freshening sluice!  
Dost thou now please thy thirst with berry-juice?  
O think how this dry palate would rejoice!  
If in soft slumber thou dost hear my voice,  
O think how I should love a bed of flowers!—  
Young goddess! let me see my native bowers!  
Deliver me from this rapacious deep!"

Thus ending loudly, as he would o'erleap  
His destiny, alert he stood: but when  
Obstinate silence came heavily again,  
Feeling about for its old couch of space  
And airy cradle, lowly bow'd his face  
Desponding, o'er the marble floor's cold thrill.  
But 'twas not long; for, sweeter than the rill  
To its old channel, or a swollen tide  
To margin shallows, were the leaves he spied,  
And flowers, and wreaths, and ready myrtle crowns  
Up heaping through the slab: refreshment drowns  
Itself, and strives its own delights to hide—

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Nor in one spot alone; the floral pride  
In a long whispering birth enchanted grew  
Before his footsteps; as when heav'd anew  
Old ocean rolls a lengthened wave to the shore,  
Down whose green back the short-liv'd foam, all hoar,  
Bursts gradual, with a wayward indolence.

Increasing still in heart, and pleasant sense,  
Upon his fairy journey on he hastes;  
So anxious for the end, he scarcely wastes  
One moment with his hand among the sweets:  
Onward he goes— he stops— his bosom beats  
As plainly in his ear, as the faint charm  
Of which the throbs were born. This still alarm,  
This sleepy music, forc'd him walk tiptoe:  
For it came more softly than the east could blow  
Arion's magic to the Atlantic isles;  
Or than the west, made jealous by the smiles  
Of thron'd Apollo, could breathe back the lyre  
To seas Ionian and Tyrian.

O did he ever live, that lonely man,  
Who lov'd— and music slew not? 'Tis the pest  
Of love, that fairest joys give most unrest;  
That things of delicate and tenderest worth  
Are swallow'd all, and made a seared dearth,  
By one consuming flame: it doth immerse  
And suffocate true blessings in a curse.  
Half-happy, by comparison of bliss,  
Is miserable. 'Twas even so with this  
Dew-dropping melody, in the Carian's ear;  
First heaven, then hell, and then forgotten clear,  
Vanish'd in elemental passion.

And down some swart abysm he had gone,  
Had not a heavenly guide benignant led  
To where thick myrtle branches, 'gainst his head  
Brushing, awakened: then the sounds again  
Went noiseless as a passing noontide rain  
Over a bower, where little space he stood;  
For as the sunset peeps into a wood  
So saw he panting light, and towards it went  
Through winding alleys; and lo, wonderment!  
Upon soft verdure saw, one here, one there,  
Cupids a slumbering on their pinions fair.

After a thousand mazes overgone,  
At last, with sudden step, he came upon  
A chamber, myrtle wall'd, embowered high,  
Full of light, incense, tender minstrelsy,  
And more of beautiful and strange beside:  
For on a silken couch of rosy pride,  
In midst of all, there lay a sleeping youth  
Of fondest beauty; fonder, in fair sooth,  
Than sighs could fathom, or contentment reach:  
And coverlids gold-tinted like the peach,  
Or ripe October's faded marigolds,  
Fell sleek about him in a thousand folds—  
Not hiding up an Apollonian curve  
Of neck and shoulder, nor the tenting swerve  
Of knee from knee, nor ankles pointing light;  
But rather, giving them to the filled sight

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Officiously. Sideway his face repos'd  
On one white arm, and tenderly unclos'd,  
By tenderest pressure, a faint damask mouth  
To slumbery pout; just as the morning south  
Disparts a dew-lipp'd rose. Above his head,  
Four lilly stalks did their white honours wed  
To make a coronal; and round him grew  
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,  
Together intertwin'd and trammel'd fresh:  
The vine of glossy sprout; the ivy mesh,  
Shading its Ethiop berries; and woodbine,  
Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine;  
Convolvulus in streaked vases flush;  
The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush;  
And virgin's bower, trailing airily;  
With others of the sisterhood. Hard by,  
Stood serene Cupids watching silently.  
One, kneeling to a lyre, touch'd the strings,  
Muffling to death the pathos with his wings;  
And, ever and anon, uprose to look  
At the youth's slumber; while another took  
A willow-bough, distilling odorous dew,  
And shook it on his hair; another flew  
In through the woven roof, and fluttering-wise  
Rain'd violets upon his sleeping eyes.

At these enchantments, and yet many more,  
The breathless Latmian wonder'd o'er and o'er;  
Until, impatient in embarrassment,  
He forthright pass'd, and lightly treading went  
To that same feather'd lyrist, who straightway,  
Smiling, thus whisper'd: "Though from upper day  
Thou art a wanderer, and thy presence here  
Might seem unholy, be of happy cheer!  
For 'tis the nicest touch of human honour,  
When some ethereal and high-favouring donor  
Presents immortal bowers to mortal sense;  
As now 'tis done to thee, Endymion. Hence  
Was I in no wise startled. So recline  
Upon these living flowers. Here is wine,  
Alive with sparkles- never, I aver,  
Since Ariadne was a vintager,  
So cool a purple: taste these juicy pears,  
Sent me by sad Vertumnus, when his fears  
Were high about Pomona: here is cream,  
Deepening to richness from a snowy gleam;  
Sweeter than that nurse Amalthea skimm'd  
For the boy Jupiter: and here, undimm'd  
By any touch, a bunch of blooming plums  
Ready to melt between an infant's gums:  
And here is manna pick'd from Syrian trees,  
In starlight, by the three Hesperides.  
Feast on, and meanwhile I will let thee know  
Of all these things around us." He did so,  
Still brooding o'er the cadence of his lyre;  
And thus: "I need not any hearing tire  
By telling how the sea-born goddess pin'd  
For a mortal youth, and how she strove to bind  
Him all in all unto her doting self.  
Who would not be so prison'd? but, fond elf,  
He was content to let her amorous plea  
Faint through his careless arms; content to see

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

An unseiz'd heaven dying at his feet;  
Content, O fool! to make a cold retreat,  
When on the pleasant grass such love, lovelorn,  
Lay sorrowing; when every tear was born  
Of diverse passion; when her lips and eyes  
Were clos'd in sullen moisture, and quick sighs  
Came vex'd and pettish through her nostrils small.  
Hush! no exclaim— yet, justly mightst thou call  
Curses upon his head.— I was half glad,  
But my poor mistress went distract and mad,  
When the boar tusk'd him: so away she flew  
To Jove's high throne, and by her plainings drew  
Immortal tear—drops down the thunderer's beard;  
Whereon, it was decreed he should be rear'd  
Each summer time to life. Lo! this is he,  
That same Adonis, safe in the privacy  
Of this still region all his winter—sleep.  
Aye, sleep; for when our love—sick queen did weep  
Over his waned corse, the tremulous shower  
Heal'd up the wound, and, with a balmy power,  
Medicined death to a lengthened drowsiness:  
The which she fills with visions, and doth dress  
In all this quiet luxury; and hath set  
Us young immortals, without any let,  
To watch his slumber through. 'Tis well nigh pass'd,  
Even to a moment's filling up, and fast  
She scuds with summer breezes, to pant through  
The first long kiss, warm firstling, to renew  
Embower'd sports in Cytherea's isle.  
Look! how those winged listeners all this while  
Stand anxious: see! behold!"— This clamant word  
Broke through the careful silence; for they heard  
A rustling noise of leaves, and out there flutter'd  
Pigeons and doves: Adonis something mutter'd  
The while one hand, that erst upon his thigh  
Lay dormant, mov'd convuls'd and gradually  
Up to his forehead. Then there was a hum  
Of sudden voices, echoing, "Come! come!  
Arise! awake! Clear summer has forth walk'd  
Unto the clover—sward, and she has talk'd  
Full soothingly to every nested finch:  
Rise, Cupids! or we'll give the blue—bell pinch  
To your dimpled arms. Once more sweet life begin!"  
At this, from every side they hurried in,  
Rubbing their sleepy eyes with lazy wrists,  
And doubling over head their little fists  
In backward yawns. But all were soon alive:  
For as delicious wine doth, sparkling, dive  
In nectar'd clouds and curls through water fair,  
So from the arbour roof down swell'd an air  
Odorous and enlivening; making all  
To laugh, and play, and sing, and loudly call  
For their sweet queen: when lo! the wreathed green  
Disparted, and far upward could be seen  
Blue heaven, and a silver car, air—borne,  
Whose silent wheels, fresh wet from clouds of morn,  
Spun off a drizzling dew,— which falling chill  
On soft Adonis' shoulders, made him still  
Nestle and turn uneasily about.  
Soon were the white doves plain, with neck stretch'd out,  
And silken traces lighten'd in descent;  
And soon, returning from love's banishment,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Queen Venus leaning downward open arm'd:  
Her shadow fell upon his breast, and charm'd  
A tumult to his heart, and a new life  
Into his eyes. Ah, miserable strife,  
But for her comforting! unhappy sight,  
But meeting her blue orbs! Who, who can write  
Of these first minutes? The unchariest muse  
To embracements warm as theirs makes coy excuse.

O it has ruffled every spirit there,  
Saving Love's self, who stands superb to share  
The general gladness: awfully he stands;  
A sovereign quell is in his waving hands;  
No sight can bear the lightning of his bow;  
His quiver is mysterious, none can know  
What themselves think of it; from forth his eyes  
There darts strange light of varied hues and dyes:  
A scowl is sometimes on his brow, but who  
Look full upon it feel anon the blue  
Of his fair eyes run liquid through their souls.  
Endymion feels it, and no more controls  
The burning prayer within him; so, bent low,  
He had begun a plaining of his woe.  
But Venus, bending forward, said: "My child,  
Favour this gentle youth; his days are wild  
With love— he— but alas! too well I see  
Thou know'st the deepness of his misery.  
Ah, smile not so, my son: I tell thee true,  
That when through heavy hours I used to rue  
The endless sleep of this new-born Adon',  
This stranger eye I pitied. For upon  
A dreary morning once I fled away  
Into the breezy clouds, to weep and pray  
For this my love: for vexing Mars had teas'd  
Me even to tears: thence, when a little eas'd,  
Down-looking, vacant, through a hazy wood,  
I saw this youth as he despairing stood:  
Those same dark curls blown vagrant in the wind;  
Those same full fringed lids a constant blind  
Over his sullen eyes: I saw him throw  
Himself on wither'd leaves, even as though  
Death had come sudden; for no jot he mov'd,  
Yet mutter'd wildly. I could hear he lov'd  
Some fair immortal, and that his embrace  
Had zoned her through the night. There is no trace  
Of this in heaven: I have mark'd each cheek,  
And find it is the vainest thing to seek;  
And that of all things 'tis kept secretest.  
Endymion! one day thou wilt be blest:  
So still obey the guiding hand that fends  
Thee safely through these wonders for sweet ends.  
'Tis a concealment needful in extreme;  
And if I guess'd not so, the sunny beam  
Thou shouldst mount up to with me. Now adieu!  
Here must we leave thee."— At these words upflew  
The impatient doves, uprose the floating car,  
Up went the hum celestial. High afar  
The Latmian saw them minish into naught;  
And, when all were clear vanish'd, still he caught  
A vivid lightning from that dreadful bow.  
When all was darkened, with AEtnean throe  
The earth clos'd— gave a solitary moan—

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And left him once again in twilight lone.

He did not rave, he did not stare aghast,  
For all those visions were o'ergone, and past,  
And he in loneliness: he felt assur'd  
Of happy times, when all he had endur'd  
Would seem a feather to the mighty prize.  
So, with unusual gladness, on he hies  
Through caves, and palaces of mottled ore,  
Gold dome, and crystal wall, and turquoise floor,  
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,  
And, at the last, a diamond balustrade,  
Leading afar past wild magnificence,  
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence  
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er  
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,  
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds;  
Then heighten'd just above the silvery heads  
Of a thousand fountains, so that he could dash  
The waters with his spear; but at the splash,  
Done heedlessly, those spouting columns rose  
Sudden a poplar's height, and 'gan to enclose  
His diamond path with fretwork, streaming round  
Alive, and dazzling cool, and with a sound,  
Haply, like dolphin tumults, when sweet shells  
Welcome the float of Thetis. Long he dwells  
On this delight; for, every minute's space,  
The streams with changed magic interlace:  
Sometimes like delicatest lattices,  
Cover'd with crystal vines; then weeping trees.  
Moving about as in a gentle wind,  
Which, in a wink, to watery gauze refin'd,  
Pour'd into shapes of curtain'd canopies,  
Spangled, and rich with liquid broideries  
Of flowers, peacocks, swans, and naiads fair.  
Swifter than lightning went these wonders rare;  
And then the water, into stubborn streams  
Collecting, mimick'd the wrought oaken beams,  
Pillars, and frieze, and high fantastic roof,  
Of those dusk places in times far aloof  
Cathedrals call'd. He bade a loth farewell  
To these founts Protean, passing gulph, and dell,  
And torrent, and ten thousand jutting shapes,  
Half seen through deepest gloom, and griesly gapes,  
Blackening on every side, and overhead  
A vaulted dome like Heaven's, far bespread  
With starlight gems: aye, all so huge and strange,  
The solitary felt a hurried change  
Working within him into something dreary,—  
Vex'd like a morning eagle, lost, and weary,  
And purblind amid foggy, midnight wolds.  
But he revives at once: for who beholds  
New sudden things, nor casts his mental slough?  
Forth from a rugged arch, in the dusk below,  
Came mother Cybele! alone— alone—  
In sombre chariot; dark foldings thrown  
About her majesty, and front death—pale,  
With turrets crown'd. Four maned lions hale  
The sluggish wheels; solemn their toothed maws,  
Their surly eyes brow—hidden, heavy paws  
Uplifted drowsily, and nervy tails  
Cowering their tawny brushes. Silent sails

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

This shadowy queen athwart, and faints away  
In another gloomy arch.

Wherefore delay,  
Young traveller, in such a mournful place?  
Art thou wayworn, or canst not further trace  
The diamond path? And does it indeed end  
Abrupt in middle air? Yet earthward bend  
Thy forehead, and to Jupiter cloud-borne  
Call ardently! He was indeed wayworn;  
Abrupt, in middle air, his way was lost;  
To cloud-borne Jove he bowed, and there crost  
Towards him a large eagle, 'twixt whose wings,  
Without one impious word, himself he flings,  
Committed to the darkness and the gloom:  
Down, down, uncertain to what pleasant doom,  
Swift as a fathoming plummet down he fell  
Through unknown things; till exhaled asphodel,  
And rose, with spicy fannings interbreath'd,  
Came swelling forth where little caves were wreath'd  
So thick with leaves and mosses, that they seem'd  
Large honey-combs of green, and freshly teem'd  
With airs delicious. In the greenest nook  
The eagle landed him, and farewell took.

It was a jasmine bower, all bestrown  
With golden moss. His every sense had grown  
Ethereal for pleasure; 'bove his head  
Flew a delight half-graspable; his tread  
Was Hesperean; to his capable ears  
Silence was music from the holy spheres;  
A dewy luxury was in his eyes;  
The little flowers felt his pleasant sighs  
And stirr'd them faintly. Verdant cave and cell  
He wander'd through, oft wondering at such swell  
Of sudden exaltation: but, "Alas!"  
Said he, "will all this gush of feeling pass  
Away in solitude? And must they wane,  
Like melodies upon a sandy plain,  
Without an echo? Then shall I be left  
So sad, so melancholy, so bereft!  
Yet still I feel immortal! O my love,  
My breath of life, where art thou? High above,  
Dancing before the morning gates of heaven?  
Or keeping watch among those starry seven,  
Old Atlas' children? Art a maid of the waters,  
One of shell-winding Triton's bright-hair'd daughters?  
Or art, impossible! a nymph of Dian's,  
Weaving a coronal of tender scions  
For very idleness? Where'er thou art,  
Methinks it now is at my will to start  
Into thine arms; to scare Aurora's train,  
And snatch thee from the morning; o'er the main  
To scud like a wild bird, and take thee off  
From thy sea-foamy cradle; or to doff  
Thy shepherd vest, and woo thee mid fresh leaves.  
No, no, too eagerly my soul deceives  
Its powerless self: I know this cannot be.  
O let me then by some sweet dreaming flee  
To her entrancements: hither, Sleep, awhile!  
Hither, most gentle Sleep! and soothing foil  
For some few hours the coming solitude."

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Thus spake he, and that moment felt endued  
With power to dream deliciously; so wound  
Through a dim passage, searching till he found  
The smoothest mossy bed and deepest, where  
He threw himself, and just into the air  
Stretching his indolent arms, he took, O bliss!  
A naked waist: "Fair Cupid, whence is this?"  
A well-known voice sigh'd, "Sweetest, here am I!"  
At which soft ravishment, with dotting cry  
They trembled to each other.– Helicon!  
O fountain'd hill! Old Homer's Helicon!  
That thou wouldst spout a little streamlet o'er  
These sorry pages; then the verse would soar  
And sing above this gentle pair, like lark  
Over his nested young: but all is dark  
Around thine aged top, and thy clear fount  
Exhales in mists to heaven. Aye, the count  
Of mighty Poets is made up; the scroll  
Is folded by the Muses; the bright roll  
Is in Apollo's hand: our dazed eyes  
Have seen a new tinge in the western skies:  
The world has done its duty. Yet, oh yet,  
Although the sun of poesy is set,  
These lovers did embrace, and we must weep  
That there is no old power left to steep  
A quill immortal in their joyous tears.  
Long time in silence did their anxious fears  
Question that thus it was; long time they lay  
Fondling and kissing every doubt away;  
Long time ere soft caressing sobs began  
To mellow into words, and then there ran  
Two bubbling springs of talk from their sweet lips.  
"O known Unknown! from whom my being sips  
Such darling essence, wherefore may I not  
Be ever in these arms? in this sweet spot  
Pillow my chin for ever? ever press  
These toying hands and kiss their smooth excess?  
Why not for ever and for ever feel  
That breath about my eyes? Ah, thou wilt steal  
Away from me again, indeed, indeed–  
Thou wilt be gone away, and wilt not heed  
My lonely madness. Speak, delicious fair!  
Is– is it to be so? No! Who will dare  
To pluck thee from me? And, of thine own will,  
Full well I feel thou wouldst not leave me. Still  
Let me entwine thee surer, surer– now  
How can we part? Elysium! who art thou?  
Who, that thou canst not be for ever here,  
Or lift me with thee to some starry sphere?  
Enchantress! tell me by this soft embrace,  
By the most soft completion of thy face,  
Those lips, O slippery blisses, twinkling eyes  
And by these tenderest, milky sovereignties–  
These tenderest, and by the nectar–wine,  
The passion"– "O dov'd Ida the divine!  
Endymion! dearest! Ah, unhappy me!  
His soul will 'scape us– O felicity!  
How he does love me! His poor temples beat  
To the very tune of love– how sweet, sweet, sweet.  
Revive, dear youth, or I shall faint and die;  
Revive, or these soft hours will hurry by



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

In tranced dulness; speak, and let that spell  
Affright this lethargy! I cannot quell  
Its heavy pressure, and will press at least  
My lips to thine, that they may richly feast  
Until we taste the life of love again.  
What! dost thou move? dost kiss? O bliss! O pain!  
I love thee, youth, more than I can conceive;  
And so long absence from thee doth bereave  
My soul of any rest: yet must I hence:  
Yet, can I not to starry eminence  
Uplift thee; nor for very shame can own  
Myself to thee: Ah, dearest, do not groan  
Or thou wilt force me from this secrecy,  
And I must blush in heaven. O that I  
Had done't already; that the dreadful smiles  
At my lost brightness, my impassion'd wiles,  
Had waned from Olympus' solemn height,  
And from all serious Gods; that our delight  
Was quite forgotten, save of us alone!  
And wherefore so ashamed? 'Tis but to atone  
For endless pleasure, by some coward blushes:  
Yet must I be a coward!— Horror rushes  
Too palpable before me— the sad look  
Of Jove— Minerva's start— no bosom shook  
With awe of purity— no Cupid pinion  
In reverence veiled— my crystalline dominion  
Half lost, and all old hymns made nullity!  
But what is this to love? O I could fly  
With thee into the ken of heavenly powers,  
So thou wouldst thus, for many sequent hours,  
Press me so sweetly. Now I swear at once  
That I am wise, that Pallas is a dunce—  
Perhaps her love like mine is but unknown—  
O I do think that I have been alone  
In chastity: yes, Pallas has been sighing,  
While every eve saw me my hair uptying  
With fingers cool as aspen leaves. Sweet love,  
I was as vague as solitary dove,  
Nor knew that nests were built. Now a soft kiss—  
Aye, by that kiss, I vow an endless bliss,  
An immortality of passion's thine:  
Ere long I will exalt thee to the shine  
Of heaven ambrosial; and we will shade  
Ourselves whole summers by a river glade;  
And I will tell thee stories of the sky,  
And breathe thee whispers of its minstrelsy.  
My happy love will overwing all bounds!  
O let me melt into thee; let the sounds  
Of our close voices marry at their birth;  
Let us entwine hoveringly— O dearth  
Of human words! roughness of mortal speech!  
Lispings empyrean will I sometime teach  
Thine honied tongue— lute—breathings, which I gasp  
To have thee understand, now while I clasp  
Thee thus, and weep for fondness— I am pain'd,  
Endymion: woe! woe! is grief contain'd  
In the very deeps of pleasure, my sole life?"—  
Hereat, with many sobs, her gentle strife  
Melted into a languor. He return'd  
Entranced vows and tears.

Ye who have yearn'd

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

With too much passion, will here stay and pity,  
For the mere sake of truth; as 'tis a ditty  
Not of these days, but long ago 'twas told  
By a cavern wind unto a forest old;  
And then the forest told it in a dream  
To a sleeping lake, whose cool and level gleam  
A poet caught as he was journeying  
To Phoebus' shrine; and in it he did fling  
His weary limbs, bathing an hour's space,  
And after, straight in that inspired place  
He sang the story up into the air,  
Giving it universal freedom. There  
Has it been ever sounding for those ears  
Whose tips are glowing hot. The legend cheers  
Yon sentinel stars; and he who listens to it  
Must surely be self-doom'd or he will rue it:  
For quenchless burnings come upon the heart,  
Made fiercer by a fear lest any part  
Should be engulfed in the eddying wind.  
As much as here is penn'd doth always find  
A resting place, thus much comes clear and plain;  
Anon the strange voice is upon the wane—  
And 'tis but echo'd from departing sound,  
That the fair visitant at last unwound  
Her gentle limbs, and left the youth asleep.—  
Thus the tradition of the gusty deep.

Now turn we to our former chroniclers.—  
Endymion awoke, that grief of hers  
Sweet paining on his ear: he sickly guess'd  
How lone he was once more, and sadly press'd  
His empty arms together, hung his head,  
And most forlorn upon that widow'd bed  
Sat silently. Love's madness he had known:  
Often with more than tortured lion's groan  
Moanings had burst from him; but now that rage  
Had pass'd away: no longer did he wage  
A rough-voic'd war against the dooming stars.  
No, he had felt too much for such harsh jars:  
The lyre of his soul AEolian tun'd  
Forgot all violence, and but commun'd  
With melancholy thought: O he had swoon'd  
Drunken from pleasure's nipple; and his love  
Henceforth was dove-like.—Loth was he to move  
From the imprinted couch, and when he did,  
'Twas with slow, languid paces, and face hid  
In muffling hands. So temper'd, out he stray'd  
Half seeing visions that might have dismay'd  
Alecto's serpents; ravishments more keen  
Than Hermes' pipe, when anxious he did lean  
Over eclipsing eyes: and at the last  
It was a sounding grotto, vaulted, vast,  
O'er studded with a thousand, thousand pearls,  
And crimson mouthed shells with stubborn curls,  
Of every shape and size, even to the bulk  
In which whales arbour close, to brood and sulk  
Against an endless storm. Moreover too,  
Fish-semblances, of green and azure hue,  
Ready to snort their streams. In this cool wonder  
Endymion sat down, and 'gan to ponder  
On all his life: his youth, up to the day  
When 'mid acclaim, and feasts, and garlands gay,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

He stept upon his shepherd throne: the look  
Of his white palace in wild forest nook,  
And all the revels he had lorded there:  
Each tender maiden whom he once thought fair,  
With every friend and fellow-woodlander-  
Pass'd like a dream before him. Then the spur  
Of the old bards to mighty deeds: his plans  
To nurse the golden age 'mong shepherd clans:  
That wondrous night: the great Pan-festival:  
His sister's sorrow; and his wanderings all,  
Until into the earth's deep maw he rush'd:  
Then all its buried magic, till it flush'd  
High with excessive love. "And now," thought he,  
"How long must I remain in jeopardy  
Of blank amazements that amaze no more?  
Now I have tasted her sweet soul to the core  
All other depths are shallow: essences,  
Once spiritual, are like muddy lees,  
Meant but to fertilize my earthly root,  
And make my branches lift a golden fruit  
Into the bloom of heaven: other light,  
Though it be quick and sharp enough to blight  
The Olympian eagle's vision, is dark,  
Dark as the parentage of chaos. Hark!  
My silent thoughts are echoing from these shells;  
Or they are but the ghosts, the dying swells  
Of noises far away?— list!"— Hereupon  
He kept an anxious ear. The humming tone  
Came louder, and behold, there as he lay,  
On either side outgush'd, with misty spray,  
A copious spring; and both together dash'd  
Swift, mad, fantastic round the rocks and lash'd  
Among the conchs and shells of the lofty grot,  
Leaving a trickling dew. At last they shot  
Down from the ceiling's height, pouring a noise  
As of some breathless racers whose hopes poize  
Upon the last few steps, and with spent force  
Along the ground they took a winding course.  
Endymion follow'd— for it seem'd that one  
Ever pursued, the other strove to shun—  
Follow'd their languid mazes, till well nigh  
He had left thinking of the mystery,—  
And was now rapt in tender hoverings  
Over the vanish'd bliss. Ah! what is it sings  
His dream away? What melodies are these?  
They sound as through the whispering of trees,  
Not native in such barren vaults. Give ear!

"O Arethusa, peerless nymph! why fear  
Such tenderness as mine? Great Dian, why,  
Why didst thou hear her prayer? O that I  
Were rippling round her dainty fairness now,  
Circling about her waist, and striving how  
To entice her to a dive! then stealing in  
Between her luscious lips and eyelids thin.  
O that her shining hair was in the sun,  
And I distilling from it thence to run  
In amorous rillets down her shrinking form!  
To linger on her lilly shoulders, warm  
Between her kissing breasts, and every charm  
Touch raptur'd!— See how painfully I flow:  
Fair maid, be pitiful to my great woe.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Stay, stay thy weary course, and let me lead,  
A happy wooer, to the flowery mead  
Where all that beauty snar'd me."– "Cruel god,  
Desist! or my offended mistress' nod  
Will stagnate all thy fountains:– tease me not  
With syren words– Ah, have I really got  
Such power to madden thee? And is it true–  
Away, away, or I shall dearly rue  
My very thoughts: in mercy then away,  
Kindest Alpheus, for should I obey  
My own dear will, 'twould be a deadly bane.  
O, Oread–Queen! would that thou hadst a pain  
Like this of mine, then would I fearless turn  
And be a criminal. Alas, I burn,  
I shudder– gentle river, get thee hence.  
Alpheus! thou enchanter! every sense  
Of mine was once made perfect in these woods.  
Fresh breezes, bowery lawns, and innocent floods,  
Ripe fruits, and lonely couch, contentment gave;  
But ever since I heedlessly did lave  
In thy deceitful stream, a panting glow  
Grew strong within me: wherefore serve me so,  
And call it love? Alas, 'twas cruelty.  
Not once more did I close my happy eye  
Amid the thrushes' song. Away! Avaunt!  
O 'twas a cruel thing."– "Now thou dost taunt  
So softly, Arethusa, that I think  
If thou wast playing on my shady brink,  
Thou wouldst bathe once again. Innocent maid!  
Stifle thine heart no more; nor be afraid  
Of angry powers: there are deities  
Will shade us with their wings. Those fitful sighs  
'Tis almost death to hear: O let me pour  
A dewy balm upon them!– fear no more,  
Sweet Arethusa! Dian's self must feel  
Sometime these very pangs. Dear maiden, steal  
Blushing into my soul, and let us fly  
These dreary caverns for the open sky.  
I will delight thee all my winding course,  
From the green sea up to my hidden source  
About Arcadian forests; and will show  
The channels where my coolest waters flow  
Through mossy rocks; where, 'mid exuberant green,  
I roam in pleasant darkness, more unseen  
Than Saturn in his exile; where I brim  
Round flowery islands, and take thence a skim  
Of mealy sweets, which myriads of bees  
Buzz from their honey'd wings: and thou shouldst please  
Thyself to choose the richest, where we might  
Be incense–pillow'd every summer night.  
Doff all sad fears, thou white deliciousness,  
And let us be thus comforted; unless  
Thou couldst rejoice to see my hopeless stream  
Hurry distracted from Sol's temperate beam,  
And pour to death along some hungry sands."–  
"What can I do, Alpheus? Dian stands  
Severe before me: persecuting fate!  
Unhappy Arethusa! thou wast late  
A huntress free in"– At this, sudden fell  
Those two sad streams adown a fearful dell.  
The Latmian listen'd, but he heard no more,  
Save echo, faint repeating o'er and o'er

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

The name of Arethusa. On the verge  
Of that dark gulph he wept, and said: "I urge  
Thee, gentle Goddess of my pilgrimage,  
By our eternal hopes, to soothe, to assuage,  
If thou art powerful, these lovers' pains;  
And make them happy in some happy plains."

He turn'd— there was a whelming sound— he stept,  
There was a cooler light; and so he kept  
Towards it by a sandy path, and lo!  
More suddenly than doth a moment go,  
The visions of the earth were gone and fled—  
He saw the giant sea above his head.

### *BOOK III.*

There are who lord it o'er their fellow—men  
With most prevailing tinsel: who unpen  
Their baaing vanities, to browse away  
The comfortable green and juicy hay  
From human pastures; or, O torturing fact!  
Who, through an idiot blink, will see unpack'd  
Fire—branded foxes to sear up and singe  
Our gold and ripe—ear'd hopes. With not one tinge  
Of sanctuary splendour, not a sight  
Able to face an owl's, they still are dight  
By the blear—eyed nations in empurpled vests,  
And crowns, and turbans. With unladen breasts,  
Save of blown self—applause, they proudly mount  
To their spirit's perch, their being's high account,  
Their tiptop nothings, their dull skies, their thrones—  
Amid the fierce intoxicating tones  
Of trumpets, shoutings, and belabour'd drums,  
And sudden cannon. Ah! how all this hums,  
In wakeful ears, like uproar past and gone—  
Like thunder clouds that spake to Babylon,  
And set those old Chaldeans to their tasks.—  
Are then regalities all gilded masks?  
No, there are throned seats unscalable  
But by a patient wing, a constant spell,  
Or by ethereal things that, unconfin'd,  
Can make a ladder of the eternal wind,  
And poize about in cloudy thunder—tents  
To watch the abysm—birth of elements.  
Aye, 'bove the withering of old—lipp'd Fate  
A thousand Powers keep religious state,  
In water, fiery realm, and airy bourne;  
And, silent as a consecrated urn,  
Hold sphery sessions for a season due.  
Yet few of these far majesties, ah, few!  
Have bared their operations to this globe—  
Few, who with gorgeous pageantry enrobe  
Our piece of heaven— whose benevolence  
Shakes hand with our own Ceres; every sense  
Filling with spiritual sweets to plenitude,  
As bees gorge full their cells. And, by the feud  
'Twixt Nothing and Creation, I here swear,  
Eterne Apollo! that thy Sister fair  
Is of all these the gentlier— mightiest.  
When thy gold breath is misting in the west,  
She unobserved steals unto her throne,  
And there she sits most meek and most alone;

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

As if she had not pomp subservient;  
As if thine eye, high Poet! was not bent  
Towards her with the Muses in thine heart;  
As if the ministring stars kept not apart,  
Waiting for silver-footed messages.  
O Moon! the oldest shades 'mong oldest trees  
Feel palpitations when thou lookest in:  
O Moon! old boughs lisp forth a holier din  
The while they feel thine airy fellowship.  
Thou dost bless every where, with silver lip  
Kissing dead things to life. The sleeping kine,  
Couch'd in thy brightness, dream of fields divine:  
Innumerable mountains rise, and rise,  
Ambitious for the hallowing of thine eyes;  
And yet thy benediction passeth not  
One obscure hiding-place, one little spot  
Where pleasure may be sent: the nested wren  
Has thy fair face within its tranquil ken,  
And from beneath a sheltering ivy leaf  
Takes glimpses of thee; thou art a relief  
To the poor patient oyster, where it sleeps  
Within its pearly house.— The mighty deeps,  
The monstrous sea is thine— the myriad sea!  
O Moon! far—spooming Ocean bows to thee,  
And Tellus feels his forehead's cumbrous load.

Cynthia! where art thou now? What far abode  
Of green or silvery bower doth enshrine  
Such utmost beauty? Alas, thou dost pine  
For one as sorrowful: thy cheek is pale  
For one whose cheek is pale: thou dost bewail  
His tears, who weeps for thee. Where dost thou sigh?  
Ah! surely that light peeps from Vesper's eye,  
Or what a thing is love! 'Tis She, but lo!  
How chang'd, how full of ache, how gone in woe!  
She dies at the thinnest cloud; her loveliness  
Is wan on Neptune's blue: yet there's a stress  
Of love—spangles, just off yon cape of trees,  
Dancing upon the waves, as if to please  
The curly foam with amorous influence.  
O, not so idle: for down—glancing thence  
She fathoms eddies, and runs wild about  
O'erwhelming water—courses; scaring out  
The thorny sharks from hiding—holes, and fright'ning  
Their savage eyes with unaccustom'd lightning.  
Where will the splendour be content to reach?  
O love! how potent hast thou been to teach  
Strange journeyings! Wherever beauty dwells,  
In gulph or aerie, mountains or deep dells,  
In light, in gloom, in star or blazing sun,  
Thou pointest out the way, and straight 'tis won.  
Amid his toil thou gav'st Leander breath;  
Thou leddest Orpheus through the gleams of death;  
Thou madest Pluto bear thin element;  
And now, O winged Chieftain! thou hast sent  
A moon—beam to the deep, deep water—world,  
To find Endymion.

On gold sand impearl'd  
With lilly shells, and pebbles milky white,  
Poor Cynthia greeted him, and sooth'd her light  
Against his pallid face: he felt the charm

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

To breathlessness, and suddenly a warm  
Of his heart's blood: 'twas very sweet; he stay'd  
His wandering steps, and half-entranced laid  
His head upon a tuft of straggling weeds,  
To taste the gentle moon, and freshening beads,  
Lash'd from the crystal roof by fishes' tails.  
And so he kept, until the rosy veils  
Mantling the east, by Aurora's peering hand  
Were lifted from the water's breast, and fann'd  
Into sweet air; and sober'd morning came  
Meekly through billows:— when like taper-flame  
Left sudden by a dallying breath of air,  
He rose in silence, and once more 'gan fare  
Along his fated way.

Far had he roam'd,  
With nothing save the hollow vast, that foam'd,  
Above, around, and at his feet; save things  
More dead than Morpheus' imaginings:  
Old rusted anchors, helmets, breast-plates large  
Of gone sea-warriors; brazen beaks and targe;  
Rudders that for a hundred years had lost  
The sway of human hand; gold vase emboss'd  
With long-forgotten story, and wherein  
No reveller had ever dipp'd a chin  
But those of Saturn's vintage; mouldering scrolls,  
Writ in the tongue of heaven, by those souls  
Who first were on the earth; and sculptures rude  
In ponderous stone, developing the mood  
Of ancient Nox;— then skeletons of man,  
Of beast, behemoth, and leviathan,  
And elephant, and eagle, and huge jaw  
Of nameless monster. A cold leaden awe  
These secrets struck into him; and unless  
Dian had chaced away that heaviness,  
He might have died: but now, with cheered feel,  
He onward kept; wooing these thoughts to steal  
About the labyrinth in his soul of love.

"What is there in thee, Moon! that thou shouldst move  
My heart so potently? When yet a child  
I oft have dried my tears when thou hast smil'd.  
Thou seem'dst my sister: hand in hand we went  
From eve to morn across the firmament.  
No apples would I gather from the tree,  
Till thou hadst cool'd their cheeks deliciously:  
No tumbling water ever spake romance,  
But when my eyes with thine thereon could dance:  
No woods were green enough, no bower divine,  
Until thou liftedst up thine eyelids fine:  
In sowing time ne'er would I dibble take,  
Or drop a seed, till thou wast wide awake;  
And, in the summer tide of blossoming,  
No one but thee hath heard me blithly sing  
And mesh my dewy flowers all the night.  
No melody was like a passing spright  
If it went not to solemnize thy reign.  
Yes, in my boyhood, every joy and pain  
By thee were fashion'd to the self-same end;  
And as I grew in years, still didst thou blend  
With all my ardours: thou wast the deep glen;  
Thou wast the mountain-top— the sage's pen—

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

The poet's harp— the voice of friends— the sun;  
Thou wast the river— thou wast glory won;  
Thou wast my clarion's blast— thou wast my steed—  
My goblet full of wine— my topmost deed:—  
Thou wast the charm of women, lovely Moon!  
O what a wild and harmonized tune  
My spirit struck from all the beautiful!  
On some bright essence could I lean, and lull  
Myself to immortality: I prest  
Nature's soft pillow in a wakeful rest.  
But, gentle Orb! there came a nearer bliss—  
My strange love came— Felicity's abyss!  
She came, and thou didst fade, and fade away—  
Yet not entirely; no, thy starry sway  
Has been an under—passion to this hour.  
Now I begin to feel thine orby power  
Is coming fresh upon me: O be kind,  
Keep back thine influence, and do not blind  
My sovereign vision.— Dearest love, forgive  
That I can think away from thee and live!—  
Pardon me, airy planet, that I prize  
One thought beyond thine argent luxuries!  
How far beyond!" At this a surpris'd start  
Frosted the springing verdure of his heart;  
For as he lifted up his eyes to swear  
How his own goddess was past all things fair,  
He saw far in the concave green of the sea  
An old man sitting calm and peacefully.  
Upon a weeded rock this old man sat,  
And his white hair was awful, and a mat  
Of weeds were cold beneath his cold thin feet;  
And, ample as the largest winding—sheet,  
A cloak of blue wrapp'd up his aged bones,  
O'erwrought with symbols by the deepest groans  
Of ambitious magic: every ocean—form  
Was woven in with black distinctness; storm,  
And calm, and whispering, and hideous roar,  
Quicksand, and whirlpool, and deserted shore,  
Were emblem'd in the woof; with every shape  
That skims, or dives, or sleeps, 'twixt cape and cape.  
The gulphing whale was like a dot in the spell,  
Yet look upon it, and 'twould size and swell  
To its huge self; and the minutest fish  
Would pass the very hardest gazer's wish,  
And show his little eye's anatomy.  
Then there was pictur'd the regality  
Of Neptune; and the sea nymphs round his state,  
In beauteous vassalage, look up and wait.  
Beside this old man lay a pearly wand,  
And in his lap a book, the which he conn'd  
So stedfastly, that the new denizen  
Had time to keep him in amazed ken,  
To mark these shadowings, and stand in awe.

The old man rais'd his hoary head and saw  
The wilder'd stranger— seeming not to see,  
His features were so lifeless. Suddenly  
He woke as from a trance; his snow—white brows  
Went arching up, and like two magic ploughs  
Furrow'd deep wrinkles in his forehead large,  
Which kept as fixedly as rocky marge,  
Till round his wither'd lips had gone a smile.



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Then up he rose, like one whose tedious toil  
Had watch'd for years in forlorn hermitage,  
Who had not from mid-life to utmost age  
Eas'd in one accent his o'er-burden'd soul,  
Even to the trees. He rose: he grasp'd his stole,  
With convuls'd clenches waving it abroad,  
And in a voice of solemn joy, that aw'd  
Echo into oblivion, he said:—

"Thou art the man! Now shall I lay my head  
In peace upon my watery pillow: now  
Sleep will come smoothly to my weary brow.  
O Jove! I shall be young again, be young!  
O shell-borne Neptune, I am pierc'd and stung  
With new-born life! What shall I do? Where go,  
When I have cast this serpent-skin of woe?—  
I'll swim to the syrens, and one moment listen  
Their melodies, and see their long hair glisten;  
Anon upon that giant's arm I'll be,  
That writhes about the roots of Sicily:  
To northern seas I'll in a twinkling sail,  
And mount upon the snortings of a whale  
To some black cloud; thence down I'll madly sweep  
On forked lightning, to the deepest deep,  
Where through some sucking pool I will be hurl'd  
With rapture to the other side of the world!  
O, I am full of gladness! Sisters three,  
I bow full hearted to your old decree!  
Yes, every god be thank'd, and power benign,  
For I no more shall wither, droop, and pine.  
Thou art the man!" Endymion started back  
Dismay'd; and, like a wretch from whom the rack  
Tortures hot breath, and speech of agony,  
Mutter'd: "What lonely death am I to die  
In this cold region? Will he let me freeze,  
And float my brittle limbs o'er polar seas?  
Or will he touch me with his searing hand,  
And leave a black memorial on the sand?  
Or tear me piece-meal with a bony saw,  
And keep me as a chosen food to draw  
His magian fish through hated fire and flame?  
O misery of hell! resistless, tame,  
Am I to be burnt up? No, I will shout,  
Until the gods through heaven's blue look out!—  
O Tartarus! but some few days ago  
Her soft arms were entwining me, and on  
Her voice I hung like fruit among green leaves:  
Her lips were all my own, and— ah, ripe sheaves  
Of happiness! ye on the stubble droop,  
But never may be garner'd. I must stoop  
My head, and kiss death's foot. Love! love, farewell!  
Is there no hope from thee? This horrid spell  
Would melt at thy sweet breath.— By Dian's hind  
Feeding from her white fingers, on the wind  
I see thy streaming hair! and now, by Pan,  
I care not for this old mysterious man!"

He spake, and walking to that aged form,  
Look'd high defiance. Lo! his heart 'gan warm  
With pity, for the grey-hair'd creature wept.  
Had he then wrong'd a heart where sorrow kept?  
Had he, though blindly contumelious, brought

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Rheum to kind eyes, a sting to humane thought,  
Convulsion to a mouth of many years?  
He had in truth; and he was ripe for tears.  
The penitent shower fell, as down he knelt  
Before that care-worn sage, who trembling felt  
About his large dark locks, and faltering spake:

"Arise, good youth, for sacred Phoebus' sake!  
I know thine inmost bosom, and I feel  
A very brother's yearning for thee steal  
Into mine own: for why? thou openest  
The prison gates that have so long opprest  
My weary watching. Though thou know'st it not,  
Thou art commission'd to this fated spot  
For great enfranchisement. O weep no more;  
I am a friend to love, to loves of yore:  
Aye, hadst thou never lov'd an unknown power,  
I had been grieving at this joyous hour.  
But even now most miserable old,  
I saw thee, and my blood no longer cold  
Gave mighty pulses: in this tottering case  
Grew a new heart, which at this moment plays  
As dancingly as thine. Be not afraid,  
For thou shalt hear this secret all display'd,  
Now as we speed towards our joyous task."

So saying, this young soul in age's mask  
Went forward with the Carian side by side:  
Resuming quickly thus: while ocean's tide  
Hung swollen at their backs, and jewel'd sands  
Took silently their foot-prints.

"My soul stands  
Now past the midway from mortality,  
And so I can prepare without a sigh  
To tell thee briefly all my joy and pain.  
I was a fisher once, upon this main,  
And my boat danc'd in every creek and bay;  
Rough billows were my home by night and day,—  
The sea-gulls not more constant; for I had  
No housing from the storm and tempests mad,  
But hollow rocks,— and they were palaces  
Of silent happiness, of slumberous ease:  
Long years of misery have told me so.  
Aye, thus it was one thousand years ago.  
One thousand years!— Is it then possible  
To look so plainly through them? to dispel  
A thousand years with backward glance sublime?  
To breathe away as 'twere all scummy slime  
From off a crystal pool, to see its deep,  
And one's own image from the bottom peep?  
Yes: now I am no longer wretched thrall,  
My long captivity and moanings all  
Are but a slime, a thin-pervading scum,  
The which I breathe away, and thronging come  
Like things of yesterday my youthful pleasures.

"I touch'd no lute, I sang not, trod no measures:  
I was a lonely youth on desert shores.  
My sports were lonely, 'mid continuous roars,  
And craggy isles, and sea-mew's plaintive cry  
Plaining discrepant between sea and sky.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Dolphins were still my playmates; shapes unseen  
Would let me feel their scales of gold and green,  
Nor be my desolation; and, full oft,  
When a dread waterspout had rear'd aloft  
Its hungry hugeness, seeming ready ripe  
To burst with hoarsest thunderings, and wipe  
My life away like a vast sponge of fate,  
Some friendly monster, pitying my sad state,  
Has dived to its foundations, gulph'd it down,  
And left me tossing safely. But the crown  
Of all my life was utmost quietude:  
More did I love to lie in cavern rude,  
Keeping in wait whole days for Neptune's voice,  
And if it came at last, hark, and rejoice!  
There blush'd no summer eve but I would steer  
My skiff along green shelving coasts, to hear  
The shepherd's pipe come clear from aery steep,  
Mingled with ceaseless bleatings of his sheep:  
And never was a day of summer shine,  
But I beheld its birth upon the brine:  
For I would watch all night to see unfold  
Heaven's gates, and Aethon snort his morning gold  
Wide o'er the swelling streams: and constantly  
At brim of day-tide, on some grassy lea,  
My nets would be spread out, and I at rest.  
The poor folk of the sea-country I blest  
With daily boon of fish most delicate:  
They knew not whence this bounty, and elate  
Would strew sweet flowers on a sterile beach.

"Why was I not contented? Wherefore reach  
At things which, but for thee, O Latmian!  
Had been my dreary death? Fool! I began  
To feel distemper'd longings: to desire  
The utmost privilege that ocean's sire  
Could grant in benediction: to be free  
Of all his kingdom. Long in misery  
I wasted, ere in one extremest fit  
I plung'd for life or death. To interknit  
One's senses with so dense a breathing stuff  
Might seem a work of pain; so not enough  
Can I admire how crystal-smooth it felt,  
And buoyant round my limbs. At first I dwelt  
Whole days and days in sheer astonishment;  
Forgetful utterly of self-intent;  
Moving but with the mighty ebb and flow.  
Then, like a new fledg'd bird that first doth show  
His spreaded feathers to the morrow chill,  
I tried in fear the pinions of my will.  
'Twas freedom! and at once I visited  
The ceaseless wonders of this ocean-bed.  
No need to tell thee of them, for I see  
That thou hast been a witness- it must be-  
For these I know thou canst not feel a drouth,  
By the melancholy corners of that mouth.  
So I will in my story straightway pass  
To more immediate matter. Woe, alas!  
That love should be my bane! Ah, Scylla fair!  
Why did poor Glaucus ever- ever dare  
To sue thee to his heart? Kind stranger- youth!  
I lov'd her to the very white of truth,  
And she would not conceive it. Timid thing!

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

She fled me swift as sea-bird on the wing,  
Round every isle, and point, and promontory,  
From where large Hercules wound up his story  
Far as Egyptian Nile. My passion grew  
The more, the more I saw her dainty hue  
Gleam delicately through the azure clear:  
Until 'twas too fierce agony to bear;  
And in that agony, across my grief  
It flash'd, that Circe might find some relief—  
Cruel enchantress! So above the water  
I rear'd my head, and look'd for Phoebus' daughter,  
AEaea's isle was wondering at the moon:—  
It seem'd to whirl around me, and a swoon  
Left me dead—drifting to that fatal power.

"When I awoke, 'twas in a twilight bower;  
Just when the light of morn, with hum of bees,  
Stole through its verdurous matting of fresh trees.  
How sweet, and sweeter! for I heard a lyre,  
And over it a sighing voice expire.  
It ceased— I caught light footsteps; and anon  
The fairest face that morn e'er look'd upon  
Push'd through a screen of roses. Starry Jove!  
With tears, and smiles, and honey-words she wove  
A net whose thraldom was more bliss than all  
The range of flower'd Elysium. Thus did fall  
The dew of her rich speech: 'Ah! Art awake?  
'O let me hear thee speak, for Cupid's sake!  
'I am so oppress'd with joy! Why, I have shed  
'An urn of tears, as though thou wert cold dead;  
'And now I find thee living, I will pour  
'From these devoted eyes their silver store,  
'Until exhausted of the latest drop,  
'So it will pleasure thee, and force thee stop  
'Here, that I too may live: but if beyond  
'Such cool and sorrowful offerings, thou art fond  
'Of soothing warmth, of dalliance supreme;  
'If thou art ripe to taste a long love dream;  
'If smiles, if dimples, tongues for ardour mute,  
'Hang in thy vision like a tempting fruit,  
'O let me pluck it for thee.' Thus she link'd  
Her charming syllables, till indistinct  
Their music came to my o'er-sweeten'd soul;  
And then she hover'd over me, and stole  
So near, that if no nearer it had been  
This furrow'd visage thou hadst never seen.

"Young man of Latmos! thus particular  
Am I, that thou may'st plainly see how far  
This fierce temptation went: and thou may'st not  
Exclaim, How then, was Scylla quite forgot?

"Who could resist? Who in this universe?  
She did so breathe ambrosia; so immerse  
My fine existence in a golden clime.  
She took me like a child of suckling time,  
And cradled me in roses. Thus condemn'd,  
The current of my former life was stemm'd,  
And to this arbitrary queen of sense  
I bow'd a tranced vassal: nor would thence  
Have mov'd, even though Amphion's harp had woo'd  
Me back to Scylla o'er the billows rude.

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For as Apollo each eve doth devise  
A new appareling for western skies;  
So every eve, nay every spendthrift hour  
Shed balmy consciousness within that bower.  
And I was free of haunts umbrageous;  
Could wander in the mazy forest-house  
Of squirrels, foxes shy, and antler'd deer,  
And birds from coverts innermost and drear  
Warbling for very joy mellifluous sorrow—  
To me new born delights!

"Now let me borrow,  
For moments few, a temperament as stern  
As Pluto's sceptre, that my words not burn  
These uttering lips, while I in calm speech tell  
How specious heaven was changed to real hell.

"One morn she left me sleeping: half awake  
I sought for her smooth arms and lips, to slake  
My greedy thirst with nectarous camel-draughts;  
But she was gone. Whereat the barbed shafts  
Of disappointment stuck in me so sore,  
That out I ran and search'd the forest o'er.  
Wandering about in pine and cedar gloom  
Damp awe assail'd me; for there 'gan to boom  
A sound of moan, an agony of sound,  
Sepulchral from the distance all around.  
Then came a conquering earth-thunder, and rumbled  
That fierce complain to silence: while I stumbled  
Down a precipitous path, as if impell'd.  
I came to a dark valley.— Groanings swell'd  
Poisonous about my ears, and louder grew,  
The nearer I approach'd a flame's gaunt blue,  
That glar'd before me through a thorny brake.  
This fire, like the eye of gordian snake,  
Bewitch'd me towards; and I soon was near  
A sight too fearful for the feel of fear:  
In thicket hid I curs'd the haggard scene—  
The banquet of my arms, my arbour queen,  
Seated upon an uptorn forest root;  
And all around her shapes, wizard and brute,  
Laughing, and wailing, groveling, serpentine,  
Showing tooth, tusk, and venom-bag, and sting!  
O such deformities! Old Charon's self,  
Should he give up awhile his penny pelf,  
And take a dream 'mong rushes Stygian,  
It could not be so phantasied. Fierce, wan,  
And tyrannizing was the lady's look,  
As over them a gnarled staff she shook.  
Of times upon the sudden she laugh'd out,  
And from a basket emptied to the rout  
Clusters of grapes, the which they raven'd quick  
And roar'd for more; with many a hungry lick  
About their shaggy jaws. Avenging, slow,  
Anon she took a branch of mistletoe,  
And emptied on't a black dull-gurgling phial:  
Groan'd one and all, as if some piercing trial  
Was sharpening for their pitiable bones.  
She lifted up the charm: appealing groans  
From their poor breasts went sueing to her ear  
In vain; remorseless as an infant's bier  
She whisk'd against their eyes the sooty oil.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Whereat was heard a noise of painful toil,  
Increasing gradual to a tempest rage,  
Shrieks, yells, and groans of torture–pilgrimage;  
Until their grieved bodies 'gan to bloat  
And puff from the tail's end to stifled throat:  
Then was appalling silence: then a sight  
More wildering than all that hoarse affright;  
For the whole herd, as by a whirlwind writhen,  
Went through the dismal air like one huge Python  
Antagonizing Boreas,– and so vanish'd.  
Yet there was not a breath of wind: she banish'd  
These phantoms with a nod. Lo! from the dark  
Came waggish fauns, and nymphs, and satyrs stark,  
With dancing and loud revelry,– and went  
Swifter than centaurs after rapine bent.–  
Sighing an elephant appear'd and bow'd  
Before the fierce witch, speaking thus aloud  
In human accent: 'Potent goddess! chief  
'Of pains resistless! make my being brief,  
'Or let me from this heavy prison fly:  
'Or give me to the air, or let me die!  
'I sue not for my happy crown again;  
'I sue not for my phalanx on the plain;  
'I sue not for my lone, my widow'd wife;  
'I sue not for my ruddy drops of life,  
'My children fair, my lovely girls and boys!  
'I will forget them; I will pass these joys;  
'Ask nought so heavenward, so too– too high:  
'Only I pray, as fairest boon, to die,  
'Or be deliver'd from this cumbrous flesh,  
'From this gross, detestable, filthy mesh,  
'And merely given to the cold bleak air.  
'Have mercy, Goddess! Circe, feel my prayer!'

"That curst magician's name fell icy numb  
Upon my wild conjecturing: truth had come  
Naked and sabre–like against my heart.  
I saw a fury whetting a death–dart;  
And my slain spirit, overwrought with fright,  
Fainted away in that dark lair of night.  
Think, my deliverer, how desolate  
My waking must have been! disgust, and hate,  
And terrors manifold divided me  
A spoil amongst them. I prepar'd to flee  
Into the dungeon core of that wild wood:  
I fled three days– when lo! before me stood  
Glaring the angry witch. O Dis, even now,  
A clammy dew is beading on my brow,  
At mere remembering her pale laugh, and curse.  
'Ha! ha! Sir Dainty! there must be a nurse  
'Made of rose leaves and thistledown, express,  
'To cradle thee my sweet, and lull thee: yes,  
'I am too flinty–hard for thy nice touch:  
'My tenderest squeeze is but a giant's clutch.  
'So, fairy–thing, it shall have lullabies  
'Unheard of yet: and it shall still its cries  
'Upon some breast more lilly–feminine.  
'Oh, no– it shall not pine, and pine, and pine  
'More than one pretty, trifling thousand years;  
'And then 'twere pity, but fate's gentle shears  
'Cut short its immortality. Sea–flirt!  
'Young dove of the waters! truly I'll not hurt

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

'One hair of thine: see how I weep and sigh,  
'That our heart-broken parting is so nigh.  
'And must we part? Ah, yes, it must be so.  
'Yet ere thou leavest me in utter woe,  
'Let me sob over thee my last adieus,  
'And speak a blessing: Mark me! Thou hast thews  
'Immortal, for thou art of heavenly race:  
'But such a love is mine, that here I chace  
'Eternally away from thee all bloom  
'Of youth, and destine thee towards a tomb.  
'Hence shalt thou quickly to the watery vast;  
'And there, ere many days be overpast,  
'Disabled age shall seize thee; and even then  
'Thou shalt not go the way of aged men;  
'But live and wither, cripple and still breathe  
'Ten hundred years: which gone, I then bequeath  
'Thy fragile bones to unknown burial.  
'Adieu, sweet love, adieu!'— As shot stars fall,  
She fled ere I could groan for mercy. Stung  
And poison'd was my spirit: despair sung  
A war-song of defiance 'gainst all hell.  
A hand was at my shoulder to compel  
My sullen steps; another 'fore my eyes  
Moved on with pointed finger. In this guise  
Enforced, at the last by ocean's foam  
I found me; by my fresh, my native home.  
Its tempering coolness, to my life akin,  
Came salutary as I waded in;  
And, with a blind voluptuous rage, I gave  
Battle to the swollen billow-ridge, and drave  
Large froth before me, while there yet remain'd  
Hale strength, nor from my bones all marrow drain'd.

"Young lover, I must weep— such hellish spite  
With dry cheek who can tell? While thus my might  
Proving upon this element, dismay'd,  
Upon a dead thing's face my hand I laid;  
I look'd— 'twas Scylla! Cursed, cursed Circe!  
O vulture-witch, hast never heard of mercy?  
Could not thy harshest vengeance be content,  
But thou must nip this tender innocent  
Because I lov'd her?— Cold, O cold indeed  
Were her fair limbs, and like a common weed  
The sea-swell took her hair. Dead as she was  
I clung about her waist, nor ceas'd to pass  
Fleet as an arrow through unfathom'd brine,  
Until there shone a fabric crystalline,  
Ribb'd and inlaid with coral, pebble, and pearl.  
Headlong I darted; at one eager swirl  
Gain'd its bright portal, enter'd, and behold!  
'Twas vast, and desolate, and icy-cold;  
And all around— But wherefore this to thee  
Who in few minutes more thyself shalt see?—  
I left poor Scylla in a niche and fled.  
My fever'd parchings up, my scathing dread  
Met palsy half way: soon these limbs became  
Gaunt, wither'd, sapless, feeble, cramp'd, and lame.

"Now let me pass a cruel, cruel space,  
Without one hope, without one faintest trace  
Of mitigation, or redeeming bubble  
Of colour'd phantasy; for I fear 'twould trouble

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Thy brain to loss of reason: and next tell  
How a restoring chance came down to quell  
One half of the witch in me.

"On a day,  
Sitting upon a rock above the spray,  
I saw grow up from the horizon's brink  
A gallant vessel: soon she seem'd to sink  
Away from me again, as though her course  
Had been resum'd in spite of hindering force—  
So vanish'd: and not long, before arose  
Dark clouds, and muttering of winds morose.  
Old AEolus would stifle his mad spleen,  
But could not: therefore all the billows green  
Toss'd up the silver spume against the clouds.  
The tempest came: I saw that vessel's shrouds  
In perilous bustle; while upon the deck  
Stood trembling creatures. I beheld the wreck;  
The final gulphing; the poor struggling souls:  
I heard their cries amid loud thunder-rolls.  
O they had all been sav'd but crazed eld  
Annull'd my vigorous cravings: and thus quell'd  
And curb'd, think on't, O Latmian! did I sit  
Writhing with pity, and a cursing fit  
Against that hell-born Circe. The crew had gone,  
By one and one, to pale oblivion;  
And I was gazing on the surges prone,  
With many a scalding tear and many a groan,  
When at my feet emerg'd an old man's hand,  
Grasping this scroll, and this same slender wand.  
I knelt with pain— reach'd out my hand— had grasp'd  
These treasures— touch'd the knuckles— they unclasp'd—  
I caught a finger: but the downward weight  
O'erpowered me— it sank. Then 'gan abate  
The storm, and through chill aguish gloom outburst  
The comfortable sun. I was athirst  
To search the book, and in the warming air  
Parted its dripping leaves with eager care.  
Strange matters did it treat of, and drew on  
My soul page after page, till well-nigh won  
Into forgetfulness; when, stupefied,  
I read these words, and read again, and tried  
My eyes against the heavens, and read again.  
O what a load of misery and pain  
Each Atlas-line bore off!— a shine of hope  
Came gold around me, cheering me to cope  
Strenuous with hellish tyranny. Attend!  
For thou hast brought their promise to an end.

"In the wide sea there lives a forlorn wretch,  
Doom'd with enfeebled carcase to outstretch  
His loath'd existence through ten centuries,  
And then to die alone. Who can devise  
A total opposition? No one. So  
One million times ocean must ebb and flow,  
And he oppressed. Yet he shall not die,  
These things accomplish'd:— If he utterly  
Scans all the depths of magic, and expounds  
The meanings of all motions, shapes and sounds;  
If he explores all forms and substances  
Straight homeward to their symbol-essences;  
He shall not die. Moreover, and in chief,



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

He must pursue this task of joy and grief  
Most piously;— all lovers tempest—tost,  
And in the savage overwhelming lost,  
He shall deposit side by side, until  
Time's creeping shall the dreary space fulfil:  
Which done, and all these labours ripened,  
A youth, by heavenly power lov'd and led,  
Shall stand before him; whom he shall direct  
How to consummate all. The youth elect  
Must do the thing, or both will be destroy'd."—

"Then," cried the young Endymion, overjoy'd,  
"We are twin brothers in this destiny!  
Say, I intreat thee, what achievement high  
Is, in this restless world, for me reserv'd.  
What! if from thee my wandering feet had swerv'd,  
Had we both perish'd?"— "Look!" the sage replied,  
"Dost thou not mark a gleaming through the tide,  
Of diverse brilliances? 'tis the edifice  
I told thee of, where lovely Scylla lies;  
And where I have enshrined piously  
All lovers, whom fell storms have doom'd to die  
Throughout my bondage." Thus discoursing, on  
They went till unobscur'd the porches shone;  
Which hurryingly they gain'd, and enter'd straight.  
Sure never since king Neptune held his state  
Was seen such wonder underneath the stars.  
Turn to some level plain where haughty Mars  
Has legion'd all his battle; and behold  
How every soldier, with firm foot, doth hold  
His even breast: see, many steeled squares,  
And rigid ranks of iron—whence who dares  
One step? Imagine further, line by line,  
These warrior thousands on the field supine:—  
So in that crystal place, in silent rows,  
Poor lovers lay at rest from joys and woes.—  
The stranger from the mountains, breathless, trac'd  
Such thousands of shut eyes in order plac'd;  
Such ranges of white feet, and patient lips  
All ruddy,— for here death no blossom nips.  
He mark'd their brows and foreheads; saw their hair  
Put sleekly on one side with nicest care;  
And each one's gentle wrists, with reverence,  
Put cross—wise to its heart.

"Let us commence,"  
Whisper'd the guide, stuttering with joy, "even now."  
He spake, and, trembling like an aspen—bough,  
Began to tear his scroll in pieces small,  
Uttering the while some mumblings funeral.  
He tore it into pieces small as snow  
That drifts unfeather'd when bleak northerns blow;  
And having done it, took his dark blue cloak  
And bound it round Endymion: then struck  
His wand against the empty air times nine.—  
"What more there is to do, young man, is thine:  
But first a little patience; first undo  
This tangled thread, and wind it to a clue.  
Ah, gentle! 'tis as weak as spider's skein;  
And shouldst thou break it— What, is it done so clean?  
A power overshadows thee! O, brave!  
The spite of hell is tumbling to its grave.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Here is a shell; 'tis pearly blank to me,  
Nor mark'd with any sign or charactery—  
Canst thou read aught? O read for pity's sake!  
Olympus! we are safe! Now, Carian, break  
This wand against yon lyre on the pedestal."

'Twas done: and straight with sudden swell and fall  
Sweet music breath'd her soul away, and sigh'd  
A lullaby to silence.— "Youth! now strew  
These minced leaves on me, and passing through  
Those files of dead, scatter the same around,  
And thou wilt see the issue."— 'Mid the sound  
Of flutes and viols, ravishing his heart,  
Endymion from Glaucus stood apart,  
And scatter'd in his face some fragments light.  
How lightning—swift the change! a youthful wight  
Smiling beneath a coral diadem,  
Out—sparkling sudden like an upturn'd gem,  
Appear'd, and, stepping to a beauteous corse,  
Kneel'd down beside it, and with tenderest force  
Press'd its cold hand, and wept,— and Scylla sigh'd!  
Endymion, with quick hand, the charm applied—  
The nymph arose: he left them to their joy,  
And onward went upon his high employ,  
Showering those powerful fragments on the dead.  
And, as he pass'd, each lifted up its head,  
As doth a flower at Apollo's touch.  
Death felt it to his inwards: 'twas too much:  
Death fell a weeping in his charnel—house.  
The Latmian persever'd along, and thus  
All were re—animated. There arose  
A noise of harmony, pulses and throes  
Of gladness in the air— while many, who  
Had died in mutual arms devout and true,  
Sprang to each other madly; and the rest  
Felt a high certainty of being blest.  
They gaz'd upon Endymion. Enchantment  
Grew drunken, and would have its head and bent.  
Delicious symphonies, like airy flowers,  
Budded, and swell'd, and, full—blown, shed full showers  
Of light, soft, unseen leaves of sounds divine.  
The two deliverers tasted a pure wine  
Of happiness, from fairy—press ooz'd out.  
Speechless they eyed each other, and about  
The fair assembly wander'd to and fro,  
Distracted with the richest overflow  
Of joy that ever pour'd from heaven.

—"Away!"

Shouted the new born god; "Follow, and pay  
Our piety to Neptunus supreme!"—  
Then Scylla, blushing sweetly from her dream,  
They led on first, bent to her meek surprise,  
Through portal columns of a giant size,  
Into the vaulted, boundless emerald.  
Joyous all follow'd as the leader call'd,  
Down marble steps; pouring as easily  
As hour—glass sand,— and fast, as you might see  
Swallows obeying the south summer's call,  
Or swans upon a gentle waterfall.

Thus went that beautiful multitude, nor far,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Ere from among some rocks of glittering spar,  
Just within ken, they saw descending thick  
Another multitude. Whereat more quick  
Moved either host. On a wide sand they met,  
And of those numbers every eye was wet;  
For each their old love found. A murmuring rose,  
Like what was never heard in all the throes  
Of wind and waters: 'tis past human wit  
To tell; 'tis dizziness to think of it.

This mighty consummation made, the host  
Mov'd on for many a league; and gain'd, and lost  
Huge sea-marks; vanward swelling in array,  
And from the rear diminishing away,—  
Till a faint dawn surpris'd them. Glaucus cried,  
"Behold! behold, the palace of his pride!  
God Neptune's palaces!" With noise increas'd,  
They shoulder'd on towards that brightening east.  
At every onward step proud domes arose  
In prospect,— diamond gleams, and golden glows  
Of amber 'gainst their faces levelling.  
Joyous, and many as the leaves in spring,  
Still onward; still the splendour gradual swell'd.  
Rich opal domes were seen, on high upheld  
By jasper pillars, letting through their shafts  
A blush of coral. Copious wonder-draughts  
Each gazer drank; and deeper drank more near.  
For what poor mortals fragment up, as mere  
As marble was there lavish, to the vast  
Of one fair palace, that far far surpass'd,  
Even for common bulk, those olden three,  
Memphis, and Babylon, and Nineveh.

As large, as bright, as colour'd as the bow  
Of Iris, when unfading it doth show  
Beyond a silvery shower, was the arch  
Through which this Paphian army took its march,  
Into the outer courts of Neptune's state:  
Whence could be seen, direct, a golden gate,  
To which the leaders sped; but not half raught  
Ere it burst open swift as fairy thought,  
And made those dazzled thousands veil their eyes  
Like callow eagles at the first sunrise.  
Soon with an eagle nativeness their gaze  
Ripe from hue-golden swoons took all the blaze,  
And then, behold! large Neptune on his throne  
Of emerald deep: yet not exalt alone;  
At his right hand stood winged Love, and on  
His left sat smiling Beauty's paragon.

Far as the mariner on highest mast  
Can see all round upon the calmed vast,  
So wide was Neptune's hall: and as the blue  
Doth vault the waters, so the waters drew  
Their doming curtains, high, magnificent,  
Aw'd from the throne aloof;— and when storm-rent  
Disclos'd the thunder-gloomings in Jove's air;  
But sooth'd as now, flash'd sudden everywhere,  
Noiseless, sub-marine cloudlets, glittering  
Death to a human eye: for there did spring  
From natural west, and east, and south, and north,  
A light as of four sunsets, blazing forth

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

A gold-green zenith 'bove the Sea-God's head.  
Of lucid depth the floor, and far outspread  
As breezeless lake, on which the slim canoe  
Of feather'd Indian darts about, as through  
The delicatest air: air verily,  
But for the portraiture of clouds and sky:  
This palace floor breath-air,– but for the amaze  
Of deep-seen wonders motionless,– and blaze  
Of the dome pomp, reflected in extremes,  
Globing a golden sphere.

They stood in dreams  
Till Triton blew his horn. The palace rang;  
The Nereids danc'd; the Syrens faintly sang;  
And the great Sea-King bow'd his dripping head.  
Then Love took wing, and from his pinions shed  
On all the multitude a nectarous dew.  
The ooze-born Goddess beckoned and drew  
Fair Scylla and her guides to conference;  
And when they reach'd the throned eminence  
She kist the sea-nymph's cheek,– who sat her down  
A toying with the doves. Then,– "Mighty crown  
And sceptre of this kingdom!" Venus said,  
"Thy vows were on a time to Nais paid:  
Behold!"– Two copious tear-drops instant fell  
From the God's large eyes; he smil'd delectable,  
And over Glaucus held his blessing hands.–  
"Endymion! Ah! still wandering in the bands  
Of love? Now this is cruel. Since the hour  
I met thee in earth's bosom, all my power  
Have I put forth to serve thee. What, not yet  
Escap'd from dull mortality's harsh net?  
A little patience, youth! 'twill not be long,  
Or I am skillless quite: an idle tongue,  
A humid eye, and steps luxurious,  
Where these are new and strange, are ominous.  
Aye, I have seen these signs in one of heaven,  
When others were all blind: and were I given  
To utter secrets, haply I might say  
Some pleasant words:– but Love will have his day.  
So wait awhile expectant. Pr'ythee soon,  
Even in the passing of thine honey-moon,  
Visit thou my Cythera: thou wilt find  
Cupid well-natured, my Adonis kind;  
And pray persuade with thee– Ah, I have done,  
All blisses be upon thee, my sweet son!"–  
Thus the fair goddess: While Endymion  
Knelt to receive those accents halcyon.

Meantime a glorious revelry began  
Before the Water-Monarch. Nectar ran  
In courteous fountains to all cups outreach'd;  
And plunder'd vines, teeming exhaustless, pleach'd  
New growth about each shell and pendent lyre;  
The which, in disentangling for their fire,  
Pull'd down fresh foliage and coverture  
For dainty toying. Cupid, empire-sure,  
Flutter'd and laugh'd, and oft-times through the throng  
Made a delightful way. Then dance, and song,  
And garlanding grew wild; and pleasure reign'd.  
In harmless tendril they each other chain'd,  
And strove who should be smother'd deepest in

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Fresh crush of leaves.

O 'tis a very sin  
For one so weak to venture his poor verse  
In such a place as this. O do not curse,  
High Muses! let him hurry to the ending.

All suddenly were silent. A soft blending  
Of dulcet instruments came charmingly;  
And then a hymn.

"King of the stormy sea!  
Brother of Jove, and co-inheritor  
Of elements! Eternally before  
Thee the waves awful bow. Fast, stubborn rock,  
At thy fear'd trident shrinking, doth unlock  
Its deep foundations, hissing into foam.  
All mountain-rivers, lost in the wide home  
Of thy capacious bosom, ever flow.  
Thou frownest, and old AEeolus thy foe  
Skulks to his cavern, 'mid the gruff complaint  
Of all his rebel tempests. Dark clouds faint  
When, from thy diadem, a silver gleam  
Slants over blue dominion. Thy bright team  
Gulphs in the morning light, and scuds along  
To bring thee nearer to that golden song  
Apollo singeth, while his chariot  
Waits at the doors of heaven. Thou art not  
For scenes like this: an empire stern hast thou;  
And it hath furrow'd that large front: yet now,  
As newly come of heaven, dost thou sit  
To blend and interknit  
Subdued majesty with this glad time.  
O shell-borne King sublime!  
We lay our hearts before thee evermore—  
We sing, and we adore!

"Breathe softly, flutes;  
Be tender of your strings, ye soothing lutes;  
Nor be the trumpet heard! O vain, O vain;  
Not flowers budding in an April rain,  
Nor breath of sleeping dove, nor river's flow,—  
No, nor the AEolian twang of Love's own bow,  
Can mingle music fit for the soft ear  
Of goddess Cytherea!  
Yet deign, white Queen of Beauty, thy fair eyes  
On our souls' sacrifice.

"Bright-winged Child!  
Who has another care when thou hast smil'd?  
Unfortunates on earth, we see at last  
All death-shadows, and glooms that overcast  
Our spirits, fann'd away by thy light pinions.  
O sweetest essence! sweetest of all minions!  
God of warm pulses, and dishevell'd hair,  
And panting bosoms bare!  
Dear unseen light in darkness! eclipser  
Of light in light! delicious poisoner!  
Thy venom'd goblet will we quaff until  
We fill— we fill!  
And by thy Mother's lips—"

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Was heard no more  
For clamour, when the golden palace door  
Opened again, and from without, in shone  
A new magnificence. On oozy throne  
Smooth-moving came Oceanus the old,  
To take a latest glimpse at his sheep-fold,  
Before he went into his quiet cave  
To muse for ever— Then a lucid wave,  
Scoop'd from its trembling sisters of mid-sea,  
Afloat, and pillowing up the majesty  
Of Doris, and the AEgean seer, her spouse—  
Next, on a dolphin, clad in laurel boughs,  
Theban Amphion leaning on his lute:  
His fingers went across it— All were mute  
To gaze on Amphitrite, queen of pearls,  
And Thetis pearly too.—

The palace whirls  
Around giddy Endymion; seeing he  
Was there far strayed from mortality.  
He could not bear it— shut his eyes in vain;  
Imagination gave a dizzier pain.  
"O I shall die! sweet Venus, be my stay!  
Where is my lovely mistress? Well-away!  
I die— I hear her voice— I feel my wing—"  
At Neptune's feet he sank. A sudden ring  
Of Nereids were about him, in kind strife  
To usher back his spirit into life:  
But still he slept. At last they interwove  
Their cradling arms, and purpos'd to convey  
Towards a crystal bower far away.

Lo! while slow carried through the pitying crowd,  
To his inward senses these words spake aloud;  
Written in star-light on the dark above:  
Dearest Endymion! my entire love!  
How have I dwelt in fear of fate: 'tis done—  
Immortal bliss for me too hast thou won.  
Arise then! for the hen-dove shall not hatch  
Her ready eggs, before I'll kissing snatch  
Thee into endless heaven. Awake! awake!

The youth at once arose: a placid lake  
Came quiet to his eyes; and forest green,  
Cooler than all the wonders he had seen,  
Lull'd with its simple song his fluttering breast.  
How happy once again in grassy nest!

### **BOOK IV.**

Muse of my native land! loftiest Muse!  
O first-born on the mountains! by the hues  
Of heaven on the spiritual air begot:  
Long didst thou sit alone in northern grot,  
While yet our England was a wolfish den;  
Before our forests heard the talk of men;  
Before the first of Druids was a child;—  
Long didst thou sit amid our regions wild  
Rapt in a deep prophetic solitude.  
There came an eastern voice of solemn mood  
Yet wast thou patient. Then sang forth the Nine,  
Apollo's garland:— yet didst thou divine

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Such home-bred glory, that they cry'd in vain,  
"Come hither, Sister of the Island!" Plain  
Spake fair Ausonia; and once more she spake  
A higher summons:— still didst thou betake  
Thee to thy native hopes. O thou hast won  
A full accomplishment! The thing is done,  
Which undone, these our latter days had risen  
On barren souls. Great Muse, thou know'st what prison,  
Of flesh and bone, curbs, and confines, and frets  
Our spirit's wings: despondency besets  
Our pillows; and the fresh to-morrow morn  
Seems to give forth its light in very scorn  
Of our dull, uninspired, snail-paced lives.  
Long have I said, how happy he who shrives  
To thee! But then I thought on poets gone,  
And could not pray:— nor could I now— so on  
I move to the end in lowliness of heart.—

"Ah, woe is me! that I should fondly part  
From my dear native land! Ah, foolish maid!  
Glad was the hour, when, with thee, myriads bade  
Adieu to Ganges and their pleasant fields!  
To one so friendless the clear freshet yields  
A bitter coolness; the ripe grape is sour:  
Yet I would have, great gods! but one short hour  
Of native air— let me but die at home."

Endymion to heaven's airy dome  
Was offering up a hecatomb of vows,  
When these words reach'd him. Whereupon he bows  
His head through thorny-green entanglement  
Of underwood, and to the sound is bent,  
Anxious as hind towards her hidden fawn.

"Is no one near to help me? No fair dawn  
Of life from charitable voice? No sweet saying  
To set my dull and sadden'd spirit playing?  
No hand to toy with mine? No lips so sweet  
That I may worship them? No eyelids meet  
To twinkle on my bosom? No one dies  
Before me, till from these enslaving eyes  
Redemption sparkles!— I am sad and lost."

Thou, Carian lord, hadst better have been tost  
Into a whirlpool. Vanish into air,  
Warm mountaineer! for canst thou only bear  
A woman's sigh alone and in distress?  
See not her charms! Is Phoebe passionless?  
Phoebe is fairer far— O gaze no more:—  
Yet if thou wilt behold all beauty's store,  
Behold her panting in the forest grass!  
Do not those curls of glossy jet surpass  
For tenderness the arms so idly lain  
Amongst them? Feelest not a kindred pain,  
To see such lovely eyes in swimming search  
After some warm delight, that seems to perch  
Dovelike in the dim cell lying beyond  
Their upper lids?— Hist!

"O for Hermes' wand,  
To touch this flower into human shape!  
That woodland Hyacinthus could escape

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

From his green prison, and here kneeling down  
Call me his queen, his second life's fair crown!  
Ah me, how I could love!— My soul doth melt  
For the unhappy youth— Love! I have felt  
So faint a kindness, such a meek surrender  
To what my own full thoughts had made too tender,  
That but for tears my life had fled away!—  
Ye deaf and senseless minutes of the day,  
And thou, old forest, hold ye this for true,  
There is no lightning, no authentic dew  
But in the eye of love: there's not a sound,  
Melodious howsoever, can confound  
The heavens and earth in one to such a death  
As doth the voice of love: there's not a breath  
Will mingle kindly with the meadow air,  
Till it has panted round, and stolen a share  
Of passion from the heart!"—

Upon a bough

He leant, wretched. He surely cannot now  
Thirst for another love: O impious,  
That he can ever dream upon it thus!—  
Thought he, "Why am I not as are the dead,  
Since to a woe like this I have been led  
Through the dark earth, and through the wondrous sea?  
Goddess! I love thee not the less: from thee  
By Juno's smile I turn not— no, no, no—  
While the great waters are at ebb and flow.—  
I have a triple soul! O fond pretence—  
For both, for both my love is so immense,  
I feel my heart is cut for them in twain."

And so he groan'd, as one by beauty slain.  
The lady's heart beat quick, and he could see  
Her gentle bosom heave tumultuously.  
He sprang from his green covert: there she lay,  
Sweet as a muskrose upon new-made hay;  
With all her limbs on tremble, and her eyes  
Shut softly up alive. To speak he tries.  
"Fair damsel, pity me! forgive that I  
Thus violate thy bower's sanctity!  
O pardon me, for I am full of grief—  
Grief born of thee, young angel! fairest thief!  
Who stolen hast away the wings wherewith  
I was to top the heavens. Dear maid, sith  
Thou art my executioner, and I feel  
Loving and hatred, misery and weal,  
Will in a few short hours be nothing to me,  
And all my story that much passion slew me;  
Do smile upon the evening of my days:  
And, for my tortur'd brain begins to craze,  
Be thou my nurse; and let me understand  
How dying I shall kiss that lilly hand.—  
Dost weep for me? Then should I be content.  
Scowl on, ye fates! until the firmament  
Outblackens Erebus, and the full-cavern'd earth  
Crumbles into itself. By the cloud girth  
Of Jove, those tears have given me a thirst  
To meet oblivion."— As her heart would burst  
The maiden sobb'd awhile, and then replied:  
"Why must such desolation betide  
As that thou speak'st of? Are not these green nooks



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Empty of all misfortune? Do the brooks  
Utter a gorgon voice? Does yonder thrush,  
Schooling its half-fledg'd little ones to brush  
About the dewy forest, whisper tales?—  
Speak not of grief, young stranger, or cold snails  
Will slime the rose to night. Though if thou wilt,  
Methinks 'twould be a guilt— a very guilt—  
Not to companion thee, and sigh away  
The light— the dusk— the dark— till break of day!"  
"Dear lady," said Endymion, "'tis past:  
I love thee! and my days can never last.  
That I may pass in patience still speak:  
Let me have music dying, and I seek  
No more delight— I bid adieu to all.  
Didst thou not after other climates call,  
And murmur about Indian streams?"— Then she,  
Sitting beneath the midmost forest tree,  
For pity sang this roundelay—

"O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
The natural hue of health, from vermeil lips?—  
To give maiden blushes  
To the white rose bushes?  
Or is't thy dewy hand the daisy tips?

"O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
The lustrous passion from a falcon—eye?—  
To give the glow—worm light?  
Or, on a moonless night,  
To tinge, on syren shores, the salt sea—spry

"O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
The mellow ditties from a mourning tongue?—  
To give at evening pale  
Unto the nightingale,  
That thou mayst listen the cold dews among?

"O Sorrow,  
Why dost borrow  
Heart's lightness from the merriment of May?—  
A lover would not tread  
A cowslip on the head,  
Though he should dance from eve till peep of day—  
Nor any drooping flower  
Held sacred for thy bower,  
Wherever he may sport himself and play.

"To Sorrow,  
I bade good—morrow,  
And thought to leave her far away behind;  
But cheerly, cheerly,  
She loves me dearly;  
She is so constant to me, and so kind:  
I would deceive her  
And so leave her,  
But ah! she is so constant and so kind.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: in the whole world wide

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

There was no one to ask me why I wept,—  
And so I kept  
Brimming the water—lilly cups with tears  
Cold as my fears.

"Beneath my palm trees, by the river side,  
I sat a weeping: what enamour'd bride,  
Cheated by shadowy wooer from the clouds,  
But hides and shrouds  
Beneath dark palm trees by a river side?

"And as I sat, over the light blue hills  
There came a noise of revellers: the rills  
Into the wide stream came of purple hue—  
'Twas Bacchus and his crew!  
The earnest trumpet spake, and silver thrills  
From kissing cymbals made a merry din—  
'Twas Bacchus and his kin!  
Like to a moving vintage down they came,  
Crown'd with green leaves, and faces all on flame;  
All madly dancing through the pleasant valley,  
To scare thee, Melancholy!  
O then, O then, thou wast a simple name!  
And I forgot thee, as the berried holly  
By shepherds is forgotten, when, in June,  
Tall chesnuts keep away the sun and moon:—  
I rush'd into the folly!

"Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,  
Trifling his ivy—dart, in dancing mood,  
With sidelong laughing;  
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued  
His plump white arms, and shoulders, enough white  
For Venus' pearly bite:  
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,  
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass  
Tipsily quaffing.

"Whence came ye, merry Damsels! whence came ye!  
So many, and so many, and such glee?  
Why have ye left your bowers desolate,  
Your lutes and gentler fate?—  
'We follow Bacchus! Bacchus on the wing,  
A conquering!  
Bacchus, young Bacchus! good or ill betide,  
We dance before him thorough kingdoms wide  
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our wild minstrelsy!

"Whence came ye, jolly Satyrs! whence came ye!  
So many, and so many, and such glee?  
Why have ye left your forest haunts, why left  
Your nuts in oak—tree cleft?—  
'For wine, for wine we left our kernel tree;  
For wine we left our heath, and yellow brooms,  
And cold mushrooms;  
For wine we follow Bacchus through the earth;  
Great God of breathless cups and chirping mirth!—  
Come hither, lady fair, and joined be  
To our mad minstrelsy!

"Over wide streams and mountains great we went,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And, save when Bacchus kept his ivy tent,  
Onward the tiger and the leopard pants,  
    With Asian elephants:  
Onward these myriads– with song and dance,  
With zebras striped, and sleek Arabians' prance,  
Web-footed alligators, crocodiles,  
Bearing upon their scaly backs, in files,  
Plump infant laughers mimicking the coil  
Of seamen, and stout galley–rowers' toil:  
With toying oars and silken sails they glide,  
    Nor care for wind and tide.

"Mounted on panthers' furs and lions' manes,  
From rear to van they scour about the plains;  
A three days' journey in a moment done:  
And always, at the rising of the sun,  
About the wilds they hunt with spear and horn,  
    On spleenful unicorn.

"I saw Osirian Egypt kneel adown  
    Before the vine–wreath crown!  
I saw parch'd Abyssinia rouse and sing  
    To the silver cymbals' ring!  
I saw the whelming vintage hotly pierce  
    Old Tartary the fierce!  
The kings of Inde their jewel–sceptres veil,  
And from their treasures scatter pearled hail;  
Great Brahma from his mystic heaven groans,  
    And all his priesthood moans;  
Before young Bacchus' eye–wink turning pale.–  
Into these regions came I following him,  
Sick hearted, weary– so I took a whim  
To stray away into these forests drear  
    Alone, without a peer:  
And I have told thee all thou mayest hear.

"Young stranger!  
I've been a ranger  
In search of pleasure throughout every clime:  
    Alas, 'tis not for me!  
    Bewitch'd I sure must be,  
To lose in grieving all my maiden prime.

"Come then, Sorrow!  
    Sweetest Sorrow!  
Like an own babe I nurse thee on my breast:  
    I thought to leave thee  
    And deceive thee,  
But now of all the world I love thee best.

"There is not one,  
    No, no, not one  
But thee to comfort a poor lonely maid;  
    Thou art her mother,  
    And her brother,  
Her playmate, and her wooer in the shade."

O what a sigh she gave in finishing,  
And look, quite dead to every worldly thing!  
Endymion could not speak, but gazed on her;  
And listened to the wind that now did stir  
About the crisped oaks full drearily,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Yet with as sweet a softness as might be  
Remember'd from its velvet summer song.  
At last he said: "Poor lady, how thus long  
Have I been able to endure that voice?  
Fair Melody! kind Syren! I've no choice;  
I must be thy sad servant evermore:  
I cannot choose but kneel here and adore.  
Alas, I must not think— by Phoebe, no!  
Let me not think, soft Angel! shall it be so?  
Say, beautifullest, shall I never think?  
O thou could'st foster me beyond the brink  
Of recollection! make my watchful care  
Close up its bloodshot eyes, nor see despair!  
Do gently murder half my soul, and  
Shall feel the other half so utterly!—  
I'm giddy at that cheek so fair and smooth;  
O let it blush so ever! let it soothe  
My madness! let it mantle rosy—warm  
With the tinge of love, panting in safe alarm.—  
This cannot be thy hand, and yet it is;  
And this is sure thine other softling— this  
Thine own fair bosom, and I am so near!  
Wilt fall asleep? O let me sip that tear!  
And whisper one sweet word that I may know  
This is this world— sweet dewy blossom!"— Woe!  
Woe! Woe to that Endymion! Where is he?—  
Even these words went echoing dismally  
Through the wide forest— a most fearful tone,  
Like one repenting in his latest moan;  
And while it died away a shade pass'd by,  
As of a thunder cloud. When arrows fly  
Through the thick branches, poor ring—doves sleek forth  
Their timid necks and tremble; so these both  
Leant to each other trembling, and sat so  
Waiting for some destruction— when lo,  
Foot—feather'd Mercury appear'd sublime  
Beyond the tall tree tops; and in less time  
Than shoots the slanted hail—storm, down he dropt  
Towards the ground; but rested not, nor stopt  
One moment from his home: only the sword  
He with his wand light touch'd, and heavenward  
Swifter than sight was gone— even before  
The teeming earth a sudden witness bore  
Of his swift magic. Diving swans appear  
Above the crystal circlings white and clear;  
And catch the cheated eye in wide surprise,  
How they can dive in sight and unseen rise—  
So from the turf outsprang two steeds jet—black,  
Each with large dark blue wings upon his back.  
The youth of Caria plac'd the lovely dame  
On one, and felt himself in spleen to tame  
The other's fierceness. Through the air they flew,  
High as the eagles. Like two drops of dew  
Exhal'd to Phoebus' lips, away they are gone,  
Far from the earth away— unseen, alone,  
Among cool clouds and winds, but that the free,  
The buoyant life of song can floating be  
Above their heads, and follow them untir'd.—  
Muse of my native land, am I inspir'd?  
This is the giddy air, and I must spread  
Wide pinions to keep here; nor do I dread  
Or height, or depth, or width, or any chance

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Precipitous: I have beneath my glance  
Those towering horses and their mournful freight.  
Could I thus sail, and see, and thus await  
Fearless for power of thought, without thine aid?—

There is a sleepy dusk, an odorous shade  
From some approaching wonder, and behold  
Those winged steeds, with snorting nostrils bold  
Snuff at its faint extreme, and seem to tire,  
Dying to embers from their native fire!

There curl'd a purple mist around them; soon,  
It seem'd as when around the pale new moon  
Sad Zephyr droops the clouds like weeping willow:  
'Twas Sleep slow journeying with head on pillow.  
For the first time, since he came nigh dead born  
From the old womb of night, his cave forlorn  
Had he left more forlorn; for the first time,  
He felt aloof the day and morning's prime—  
Because into his depth Cimmerian  
There came a dream, showing how a young man,  
Ere a lean bat could plump its wintery skin,  
Would at high Jove's empyreal footstool win  
An immortality, and how espouse  
Jove's daughter, and be reckon'd of his house.  
Now was he slumbering towards heaven's gate,  
That he might at the threshold one hour wait  
To hear the marriage melodies, and then  
Sink downward to his dusky cave again.  
His litter of smooth semiluculent mist,  
Diversely ting'd with rose and amethyst,  
Puzzled those eyes that for the centre sought;  
And scarcely for one moment could be caught  
His sluggish form reposing motionless.  
Those two on winged steeds, with all the stress  
Of vision search'd for him, as one would look  
Athwart the shallows of a river nook  
To catch a glance at silver-throated eels,—  
Or from old Skiddaw's top, when fog conceals  
His rugged forehead in a mantle pale,  
With an eye-guess towards some pleasant vale  
Descry a favourite hamlet faint and far.

These raven horses, though they foster'd are  
Of earth's splenetic fire, dully drop  
Their full-vein'd ears, nostrils blood wide, and stop;  
Upon the spiritless mist have they outspread  
Their ample feathers, are in slumber dead,—  
And on those pinions, level in mid air,  
Endymion sleepeth and the lady fair.  
Slowly they sail, slowly as icy isle  
Upon a calm sea drifting: and meanwhile  
The mournful wanderer dreams. Behold! he walks  
On heaven's pavement; brotherly he talks  
To divine powers: from his hand full fain  
Juno's proud birds are pecking pearly grain:  
He tries the nerve of Phoebus' golden bow,  
And asketh where the golden apples grow:  
Upon his arm he braces Pallas' shield,  
And strives in vain to unsettle and wield  
A Jovian thunderbolt: arch Hebe brings  
A full-brimm'd goblet, dances lightly, sings

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And tantalizes long; at last he drinks,  
And lost in pleasure at her feet he sinks,  
Touching with dazzled lips her starlight hand.  
He blows a bugle,— an ethereal band  
Are visible above: the Seasons four,—  
Green—kyrtled Spring, flush Summer, golden store  
In Autumn's sickle, Winter frosty hoar,  
Join dance with shadowy Hours; while still the blast  
In swells unmitigated, still doth last  
To sway their floating morris. "Whose is this?  
Whose bugle?" he inquires; they smile— "O Dis!  
Why is this mortal here? Dost thou not know  
Its mistress' lips? Not thou?— 'Tis Dian's: lo!  
She rises crescented!" He looks, 'tis she,  
His very goddess; good—bye earth, and sea,  
And air, and pains, and care, and suffering;  
Good—bye to all but love! Then doth he spring  
Towards her, and awakes— and, strange, o'erhead,  
Of those same fragrant exhalations bred,  
Beheld awake his very dream: the gods  
Stood smiling; merry Hebe laughs and nods;  
And Phoebe bends towards him crescented.  
O state perplexing! On the pinion bed,  
Too well awake, he feels the panting side  
Of his delicious lady. He who died  
For soaring too audacious in the sun,  
When that same treacherous wax began to run,  
Felt not more tongue—tied than Endymion.  
His heart leapt up as to its rightful throne,  
To that fair shadow'd passion puls'd its way—  
Ah, what perplexity! Ah, well a day!  
So fond, so beauteous was his bed—fellow,  
He could not help but kiss her: then he grew  
Awhile forgetful of all beauty save  
Young Phoebe's, golden hair'd; and so 'gan crave  
Forgiveness: yet he turn'd once more to look  
At the sweet sleeper,— all his soul was shook,—  
She press'd his hand in slumber; so once more  
He could not help but kiss her and adore.  
At this the shadow wept, melting away.  
The Latmian started up: "Bright goddess, stay!  
Search my most hidden breast! By truth's own tongue,  
I have no daedale heart: why is it wrung  
To desperation? Is there nought for me,  
Upon the bourne of bliss, but misery?"

These words awoke the stranger of dark tresses:  
Her dawning love—look rapt Endymion blesses  
With 'haviour soft. Sleep yawn'd from underneath.  
"Thou swan of Ganges, let us no more breathe  
This murky phantasm! thou contented seem'st  
Pillow'd in lovely idleness, nor dream'st  
What horrors may discomfort thee and me.  
Ah, shouldst thou die from my heart—treachery!—  
Yet did she merely weep— her gentle soul  
Hath no revenge in it: as it is whole  
In tenderness, would I were whole in love!  
Can I prize thee, fair maid, all price above,  
Even when I feel as true as innocence?  
I do, I do.— What is this soul then? Whence  
Came it? It does not seem my own, and I  
Have no self—passion or identity.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Some fearful end must be: where, where is it?  
By Nemesis, I see my spirit flit  
Alone about the dark— Forgive me, sweet:  
Shall we away?" He rous'd the steeds: they beat  
Their wings chivalrous into the clear air,  
Leaving old Sleep within his vapoury lair.

The good—night blush of eve was waning slow,  
And Vesper, risen star, began to throe  
In the dusk heavens silverly, when they  
Thus sprang direct towards the Galaxy.  
Nor did speed hinder converse soft and strange—  
Eternal oaths and vows they interchange,  
In such wise, in such temper, so aloof  
Up in the winds, beneath a starry roof,  
So witless of their doom, that verily  
'Tis well nigh past man's search their hearts to see;  
Whether they wept, or laugh'd, or griev'd, or toy'd—  
Most like with joy gone mad, with sorrow cloy'd.

Full facing their swift flight, from ebon streak,  
The moon put forth a little diamond peak,  
No bigger than an unobserved star,  
Or tiny point of fairy scymetar;  
Bright signal that she only stoop'd to tie  
Her silver sandals, ere deliciously  
She bow'd into the heavens her timid head.  
Slowly she rose, as though she would have fled,  
While to his lady meek the Carian turn'd,  
To mark if her dark eyes had yet discern'd  
This beauty in its birth— Despair! despair!  
He saw her body fading gaunt and spare  
In the cold moonshine. Straight he seiz'd her wrist;  
It melted from his grasp: her hand he kiss'd,  
And, horror! kiss'd his own— he was alone.  
Her steed a little higher soar'd, and then  
Dropt hawkwise to the earth.

There lies a den,  
Beyond the seeming confines of the space  
Made for the soul to wander in and trace  
Its own existence, of remotest glooms.  
Dark regions are around it, where the tombs  
Of buried griefs the spirit sees, but scarce  
One hour doth linger weeping, for the pierce  
Of new—born woe it feels more inly smart:  
And in these regions many a venom'd dart  
At random flies; they are the proper home  
Of every ill: the man is yet to come  
Who hath not journeyed in this native hell.  
But few have ever felt how calm and well  
Sleep may be had in that deep den of all.  
There anguish does not sting; nor pleasure pall:  
Woe—hurricanes beat ever at the gate,  
Yet all is still within and desolate.  
Beset with painful gusts, within ye hear  
No sound so loud as when on curtain'd bier  
The death—watch tick is stifled. Enter none  
Who strive therefore: on the sudden it is won.  
Just when the sufferer begins to burn,  
Then it is free to him; and from an urn,  
Still fed by melting ice, he takes a draught—

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Young Semele such richness never quaff  
In her maternal longing! Happy gloom!  
Dark Paradise! where pale becomes the bloom  
Of health by due; where silence dreariest  
Is most articulate; where hopes infest;  
Where those eyes are the brightest far that keep  
Their lids shut longest in a dreamless sleep.  
O happy spirit— home! O wondrous soul!  
Pregnant with such a den to save the whole  
In thine own depth. Hail, gentle Carian!  
For, never since thy griefs and woes began,  
Hast thou felt so content: a grievous feud  
Hath led thee to this Cave of Quietude.  
Aye, his lull'd soul was there, although upborne  
With dangerous speed: and so he did not mourn  
Because he knew not whither he was going.  
So happy was he, not the aerial blowing  
Of trumpets at clear parley from the east  
Could rouse from that fine relish, that high feast.  
They stung the feather'd horse: with fierce alarm  
He flapp'd towards the sound. Alas, no charm  
Could lift Endymion's head, or he had view'd  
A skyey mask, a pinion'd multitude,—  
And silvery was its passing: voices sweet  
Warbling the while as if to lull and greet  
The wanderer in his path. Thus warbled they,  
While past the vision went in bright array.

"Who, who from Dian's feast would be away?  
For all the golden bowers of the day  
Are empty left? Who, who away would be  
From Cynthia's wedding and festivity?  
Not Hesperus: lo! upon his silver wings  
He leans away for highest heaven and sings,  
Snapping his lucid fingers merrily!—  
Ah, Zephyrus! art here, and Flora too!  
Ye tender bibbers of the rain and dew,  
Young playmates of the rose and daffodil,  
Be careful, ere ye enter in, to fill  
    Your baskets high  
With fennel green, and balm, and golden pines,  
Savory, latter-mint, and columbines,  
Cool parsley, basil sweet, and sunny thyme;  
Yea, every flower and leaf of every clime,  
All gather'd in the dewy morning: hie  
    Away! fly, fly!—  
Crystalline brother of the belt of heaven,  
Aquarius! to whom king Jove has given  
Two liquid pulse streams 'stead of feather'd wings,  
Two fan-like fountains,— thine illuminings  
    For Dian play:  
Dissolve the frozen purity of air;  
Let thy white shoulders silvery and bare  
Show cold through water pinions; make more bright  
The Star-Queen's crescent on her marriage night:  
    Haste, haste away!—  
Castor has tamed the planet Lion, see!  
And of the Bear has Pollux mastery:  
A third is in the race! who is the third  
Speeding away swift as the eagle bird?  
    The ramping Centaur!  
The Lion's mane's on end: the Bear how fierce!



## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

The Centaur's arrow ready seems to pierce  
Some enemy: far forth his bow is bent  
Into the blue of heaven. He'll be shent,  
Pale unrelentor,  
When he shall hear the wedding lutes a playing.—  
Andromeda! sweet woman! why delaying  
So timidly among the stars: come hither!  
Join this bright throng, and nimbly follow whither  
They all are going.  
Danae's Son, before Jove newly bow'd,  
Has wept for thee, calling to Jove aloud.  
Thee, gentle lady, did he disenthral:  
Ye shall for ever live and love, for all  
Thy tears are flowing.—  
By Daphne's fright, behold Apollo!—"

More

Endymion heard not: down his steed him bore,  
Prone to the green head of a misty hill.

His first touch of the earth went nigh to kill.  
"Alas!" said he, "were I but always borne  
Through dangerous winds, had but my footsteps worn  
A path in hell, for ever would I bless  
Horrors which nourish an uneasiness  
For my own sullen conquering: to him  
Who lives beyond earth's boundary, grief is dim,  
Sorrow is but a shadow: now I see  
The grass; I feel the solid ground— Ah, me!  
It is thy voice— divinest! Where?— who? who  
Left thee so quiet on this bed of dew?  
Behold upon this happy earth we are;  
Let us aye love each other; let us fare  
On forest—fruits, and never, never go  
Among the abodes of mortals here below,  
Or be by phantoms duped. O destiny!  
Into a labyrinth now my soul would fly,  
But with thy beauty will I deaden it.  
Where didst thou melt to? By thee will I sit  
For ever: let our fate stop here— a kid  
I on this spot will offer: Pan will bid  
Us live in peace, in love and peace among  
His forest wildernesses. I have clung  
To nothing, lov'd a nothing, nothing seen  
Or felt but a great dream! O I have been  
Presumptuous against love, against the sky,  
Against all elements, against the tie  
Of mortals each to each, against the blooms  
Of flowers, rush of rivers, and the tombs  
Of heroes gone! Against his proper glory  
Has my own soul conspired: so my story  
Will I to children utter, and repent.  
There never liv'd a mortal man, who bent  
His appetite beyond his natural sphere,  
But starv'd and died. My sweetest Indian, here,  
Here will I kneel, for thou redeemed hast  
My life from too thin breathing: gone and past  
Are cloudy phantasms. Caverns lone, farewell!  
And air of visions, and the monstrous swell  
Of visionary seas! No, never more  
Shall airy voices cheat me to the shore  
Of tangled wonder, breathless and aghast.

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Adieu, my daintiest Dream! although so vast  
My love is still for thee. The hour may come  
When we shall meet in pure elysium.  
On earth I may not love thee; and therefore  
Doves will I offer up, and sweetest store  
All through the teeming year: so thou wilt shine  
On me, and on this damsel fair of mine,  
And bless our silver lives. My Indian bliss!  
My river—lilly bud! one human kiss!  
One sigh of real breath— one gentle squeeze,  
Warm as a dove's nest among summer trees,  
And warm with dew at ooze from living blood!  
Whither didst melt? Ah, what of that!— all good  
We'll talk about— no more of dreaming.— Now,  
Where shall our dwelling be? Under the brow  
Of some steep mossy hill, where ivy dun  
Would hide us up, although spring leaves were none;  
And where dark yew trees, as we rustle through,  
Will drop their scarlet berry cups of dew?  
O thou wouldst joy to live in such a place;  
Dusk for our loves, yet light enough to grace  
Those gentle limbs on mossy bed reclin'd:  
For by one step the blue sky shouldst thou find,  
And by another, in deep dell below,  
See, through the trees, a little river go  
All in its mid—day gold and glimmering.  
Honey from out the gnarled hive I'll bring,  
And apples, wan with sweetness, gather thee,—  
Cresses that grow where no man may them see,  
And sorrel untorn by the dew—claw'd stag:  
Pipes will I fashion of the syrinx flag,  
That thou mayst always know whither I roam,  
When it shall please thee in our quiet home  
To listen and think of love. Still let me speak;  
Still let me dive into the joy I seek,—  
For yet the past doth prison me. The rill,  
Thou haply mayst delight in, will I fill  
With fairy fishes from the mountain tarn,  
And thou shalt feed them from the squirrel's barn.  
Its bottom will I strew with amber shells,  
And pebbles blue from deep enchanted wells.  
Its sides I'll plant with dew—sweet eglantine,  
And honeysuckles full of clear bee—wine.  
I will entice this crystal rill to trace  
Love's silver name upon the meadow's face.  
I'll kneel to Vesta, for a flame of fire;  
And to god Phoebus, for a golden lyre;  
To Empress Dian, for a hunting spear;  
To Vesper, for a taper silver—clear,  
That I may see thy beauty through the night;  
To Flora, and a nightingale shall light  
Tame on thy finger; to the River—gods,  
And they shall bring thee taper fishing—rods  
Of gold, and lines of Naiads' long bright tress.  
Heaven shield thee for thine utter loveliness!  
Thy mossy footstool shall the altar be  
'Fore which I'll bend, bending, dear love, to thee:  
Those lips shall be my Delphos, and shall speak  
Laws to my footsteps, colour to my cheek,  
Trembling or steadfastness to this same voice,  
And of three sweetest pleasurings the choice:  
And that affectionate light, those diamond things,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

Those eyes, those passions, those supreme pearl springs,  
Shall be my grief, or twinkle me to pleasure.  
Say, is not bliss within our perfect seisure?  
O that I could not doubt!"

### The mountaineer

Thus strove by fancies vain and crude to clear  
His briar'd path to some tranquillity.  
It gave bright gladness to his lady's eye,  
And yet the tears she wept were tears of sorrow;  
Answering thus, just as the golden morrow  
Beam'd upward from the vallies of the east:  
"O that the flutter of this heart had ceas'd,  
Or the sweet name of love had pass'd away.  
Young feather'd tyrant! by a swift decay  
Wilt thou devote this body to the earth:  
And I do think that at my very birth  
I lisp'd thy blooming titles inwardly;  
For at the first, first dawn and thought of thee,  
With uplift hands I blest the stars of heaven.  
Art thou not cruel? Ever have I striven  
To think thee kind, but ah, it will not do!  
When yet a child, I heard that kisses drew  
Favour from thee, and so I kisses gave  
To the void air, bidding them find out love:  
But when I came to feel how far above  
All fancy, pride, and fickle maidenhood,  
All earthly pleasure, all imagin'd good,  
Was the warm tremble of a devout kiss,—  
Even then, that moment, at the thought of this,  
Fainting I fell into a bed of flowers,  
And languish'd there three days. Ye milder powers,  
Am I not cruelly wrong'd? Believe, believe  
Me, dear Endymion, were I to weave  
With my own fancies garlands of sweet life,  
Thou shouldst be one of all. Ah, bitter strife!  
I may not be thy love: I am forbidden—  
Indeed I am— thwarted, affrighted, chidden,  
By things I trembled at, and gorgon wrath.  
Twice hast thou ask'd whither I went: henceforth  
Ask me no more! I may not utter it,  
Nor may I be thy love. We might commit  
Ourselves at once to vengeance; we might die;  
We might embrace and die: voluptuous thought!  
Enlarge not to my hunger, or I'm caught  
In trammels of perverse deliciousness.  
No, no, that shall not be: thee will I bless,  
And bid a long adieu."

### The Carian

No word return'd: both lovelorn, silent, wan,  
Into the vallies green together went.  
Far wandering, they were perforce content  
To sit beneath a fair lone beechen tree;  
Nor at each other gaz'd, but heavily  
Por'd on its hazle cirque of shedded leaves.

Endymion! unhappy! it nigh grieves  
Me to behold thee thus in last extreme:  
Ensky'd ere this, but truly that I deem  
Truth the best music in a first-born song.  
Thy lute-voic'd brother will I sing ere long,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

And thou shalt aid— hast thou not aided me?  
Yes, moonlight Emperor! felicity  
Has been thy meed for many thousand years;  
Yet often have I, on the brink of tears,  
Mourn'd as if yet thou wert a forester;—  
Forgetting the old tale.

He did not stir  
His eyes from the dead leaves, or one small pulse  
Of joy he might have felt. The spirit culls  
Unfaded amaranth, when wild it strays  
Through the old garden—ground of boyish days.  
A little onward ran the very stream  
By which he took his first soft poppy dream;  
And on the very bark 'gainst which he leant  
A crescent he had carv'd, and round it spent  
His skill in little stars. The teeming tree  
Had swollen and green'd the pious charactery,  
But not ta'en out. Why, there was not a slope  
Up which he had not fear'd the antelope;  
And not a tree, beneath whose rooty shade  
He had not with his tamed leopards play'd:  
Nor could an arrow light, or javelin,  
Fly in the air where his had never been—  
And yet he knew it not.

O treachery!  
Why does his lady smile, pleasing her eye  
With all his sorrowing? He sees her not.  
But who so stares on him? His sister sure!  
Peona of the woods!— Can she endure—  
Impossible— how dearly they embrace!  
His lady smiles; delight is in her face;  
It is no treachery.

"Dear brother mine!  
Endymion, weep not so! Why shouldst thou pine  
When all great Latmos so exalt will be?  
Thank the great gods, and look not bitterly;  
And speak not one pale word, and sigh no more.  
Sure I will not believe thou hast such store  
Of grief, to last thee to my kiss again.  
Thou surely canst not bear a mind in pain,  
Come hand in hand with one so beautiful.  
Be happy both of you! for I will pull  
The flowers of autumn for your coronals.  
Pan's holy priest for young Endymion calls;  
And when he is restor'd, thou, fairest dame,  
Shalt be our queen. Now, is it not a shame  
To see ye thus,— not very, very sad?  
Perhaps ye are too happy to be glad:  
O feel as if it were a common day;  
Free—voic'd as one who never was away.  
No tongue shall ask, whence come ye? but ye shall  
Be gods of your own rest imperial.  
Not even I, for one whole month, will pry  
Into the hours that have pass'd us by,  
Since in my arbour I did sing to thee.  
O Hermes! on this very night will be  
A hymning up to Cynthia, queen of light;  
For the soothsayers old saw yesternight  
Good visions in the air,— whence will befall,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

As say these sages, health perpetual  
To shepherds and their flocks; and furthermore,  
In Dian's face they read the gentle lore:  
Therefore for her these vesper-carols are.  
Our friends will all be there from nigh and far.  
Many upon thy death have ditties made;  
And many, even now, their foreheads shade  
With cypress, on a day of sacrifice.  
New singing for our maids shalt thou devise,  
And pluck the sorrow from our huntsmen's brows.  
Tell me, my lady-queen, how to espouse  
This wayward brother to his rightful joys!  
His eyes are on thee bent, as thou didst poize  
His fate most goddess-like. Help me, I pray,  
To lure- Endymion, dear brother, say  
What ails thee?" He could bear no more, and so  
Bent his soul fiercely like a spiritual bow,  
And twang'd it inwardly, and calmly said:  
"I would have thee my only friend, sweet maid!  
My only visitor! not ignorant though,  
That those deceptions which for pleasure go  
'Mong men, are pleasures real as real may be:  
But there are higher ones I may not see,  
If impiously an earthly realm I take.  
Since I saw thee, I have been wide awake  
Night after night, and day by day, until  
Of the empyrean I have drunk my fill.  
Let it content thee, Sister, seeing me  
More happy than betides mortality.  
A hermit young, I'll live in mossy cave,  
Where thou alone shalt come to me, and lave  
Thy spirit in the wonders I shall tell.  
Through me the shepherd realm shall prosper well;  
For to thy tongue will I all health confide.  
And, for my sake, let this young maid abide  
With thee as a dear sister. Thou alone,  
Peona, mayst return to me. I own  
This may sound strangely: but when, dearest girl,  
Thou seest it for my happiness, no pearl  
Will trespass down those cheeks. Companion fair!  
Wilt be content to dwell with her, to share  
This sister's love with me?" Like one resign'd  
And bent by circumstance, and thereby blind  
In self-commitment, thus that meek unknown:  
"Aye, but a buzzing by my ears has flown,  
Of jubilee to Dian:- truth I heard?  
Well then, I see there is no little bird,  
Tender soever, but is Jove's own care,  
Long have I sought for rest, and, unaware,  
Behold I find it! so exalted too!  
So after my own heart! I knew, I knew  
There was a place untenanted in it:  
In that same void white Chastity shall sit,  
And monitor me nightly to lone slumber.  
With sanest lips I vow me to the number  
Of Dian's sisterhood; and, kind lady,  
With thy good help, this very night shall see  
My future days to her fane consecrate."

As feels a dreamer what doth most create  
His own particular fright, so these three felt:  
Or like one who, in after ages, knelt

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

To Lucifer or Baal, when he'd pine  
After a little sleep: or when in mine  
Far under-ground, a sleeper meets his friends  
Who know him not. Each diligently bends  
Towards common thoughts and things for very fear;  
Striving their ghastly malady to cheer,  
By thinking it a thing of yes and no,  
That housewives talk of. But the spirit-blow  
Was struck, and all were dreamers. At the last  
Endymion said: "Are not our fates all cast?  
Why stand we here? Adieu, ye tender pair!  
Adieu!" Whereat those maidens, with wild stare,  
Walk'd dizzily away. Pained and hot  
His eyes went after them, until they got  
Near to a cypress grove, whose deadly maw,  
In one swift moment, would what then he saw  
Engulph for ever. "Stay!" he cried, "ah, stay!  
Turn, damsels! hist! one word I have to say.  
Sweet Indian, I would see thee once again.  
It is a thing I dote on: so I'd fain,  
Peona, ye should hand in hand repair  
Into those holy groves, that silent are  
Behind great Dian's temple. I'll be yon,  
At Vesper's earliest twinkle- they are gone-  
But once, once, once again-" At this he press'd  
His hands against his face, and then did rest  
His head upon a mossy hillock green,  
And so remain'd as he a corpse had been  
All the long day; save when he scantily lifted  
His eyes abroad, to see how shadows shifted  
With the slow move of time,- sluggish and weary  
Until the poplar tops, in journey dreary,  
Had reach'd the river's brim. Then up he rose,  
And, slowly as that very river flows,  
Walk'd towards the temple grove with this lament:  
"Why such a golden eve? The breeze is sent  
Careful and soft, that not a leaf may fall  
Before the serene father of them all  
Bows down his summer head below the west.  
Now am I of breath, speech, and speed possest,  
But at the setting I must bid adieu  
To her for the last time. Night will strew  
On the damp grass myriads of lingering leaves,  
And with them shall I die; nor much it grieves  
To die, when summer dies on the cold sward.  
Why, I have been a butterfly, a lord  
Of flowers, garlands, love-knots, silly posies,  
Groves, meadows, melodies, and arbour roses;  
My kingdom's at its death, and just it is  
That I should die with it: so in all this  
We miscall grief, bale, sorrow, heartbreak, woe,  
What is there to plain of? By Titan's foe  
I am but rightly serv'd." So saying, he  
Tripp'd lightly on, in sort of deathful glee;  
Laughing at the clear stream and setting sun,  
As though they jests had been: nor had he done  
His laugh at nature's holy countenance,  
Until that grove appear'd, as if perchance,  
And then his tongue with sober seemlihed  
Gave utterance as he enter'd: "Ha! I said,  
King of the butterflies; but by this gloom,  
And by old Rhadamanthus' tongue of doom,

## Endymion: A Poetic Romance

This dusk religion, pomp of solitude,  
And the Promethean clay by thief endued,  
By old Saturnus' forelock, by his head  
Shook with eternal palsy, I did wed  
Myself to things of light from infancy;  
And thus to be cast out, thus lorn to die,  
Is sure enough to make a mortal man  
Grow impious." So he inwardly began  
On things for which no wording can be found;  
Deeper and deeper sinking, until drown'd  
Beyond the reach of music: for the choir  
Of Cynthia he heard not, though rough briar  
Nor muffling thicket interpos'd to dull  
The vesper hymn, far swollen, soft and full,  
Through the dark pillars of those sylvan aisles.  
He saw not the two maidens, nor their smiles,  
Wan as primroses gather'd at midnight  
By chilly finger'd spring. "Unhappy wight!  
Endymion!" said Peona, "we are here!  
What wouldst thou ere we all are laid on bier?"  
Then he embrac'd her, and his lady's hand  
Press'd, saying: "Sister, I would have command,  
If it were heaven's will, on our sad fate."  
At which that dark-eyed stranger stood elate  
And said, in a new voice, but sweet as love,  
To Endymion's amaze: "By Cupid's dove,  
And so thou shalt! and by the lilly truth  
Of my own breast thou shalt, beloved youth!"  
And as she spake, into her face there came  
Light, as reflected from a silver flame:  
Her long black hair swell'd ampler, in display  
Full golden; in her eyes a brighter day  
Dawn'd blue and full of love. Aye, he beheld  
Phoebe, his passion! joyous she upheld  
Her lucid bow, continuing thus: "Drear, drear  
Has our delaying been; but foolish fear  
Withheld me first; and then decrees of fate;  
And then 'twas fit that from this mortal state  
Thou shouldst, my love, by some unlook'd for change  
Be spiritualiz'd. Peona, we shall range  
These forests, and to thee they safe shall be  
As was thy cradle; hither shalt thou flee  
To meet us many a time." Next Cynthia bright  
Peona kiss'd, and bless'd with fair good night:  
Her brother kiss'd her too, and knelt adown  
Before his goddess, in a blissful swoon.  
She gave her fair hands to him, and behold,  
Before three swiftest kisses he had told,  
They vanish'd far away!— Peona went  
Home through the gloomy wood in wonderment.

THE END