

GEMS OF POLISH POETRY

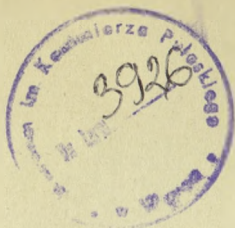
SELECTIONS FROM

MICKIEWICZ



TRANSLATED BY

FRANK H. FORTEY



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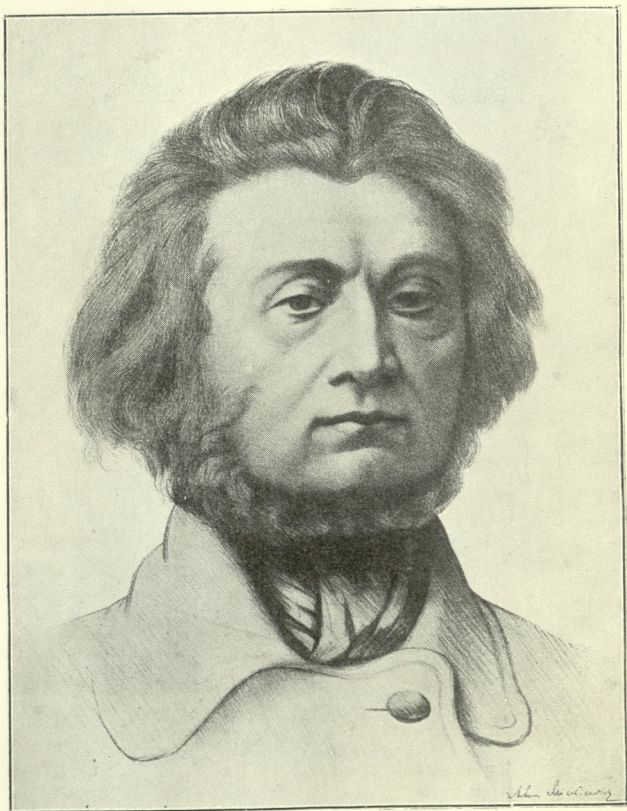
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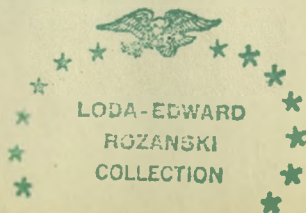
DEDICATED
BY PERMISSION

TO
WŁADYSŁAW MICKIEWICZ
SON OF
ADAM MICKIEWICZ
THE NATIONAL POET OF POLAND

I DEDICATE
WITH PROFOUND RESPECT AND GRATITUDE
THIS BOOK OF TRANSLATIONS
OF
SOME OF HIS FATHER'S MASTERPIECES

F. H. FORTEY
Bristol, England.
January 29, 1923.

136158



MICKIEWICZ AS A NATIONAL POET.

„For the men of my generation“ — thus the great poet Krasinski wrote on the death of Mickiewicz — „he was milk and honey, gall and blood of the spirit: we are all of his making“.

It was not for Krasinski's generation only, but for all succeeding generations of Poles to the present day that Mickiewicz's poetry was the very life-blood of their joint existence. It is a national Bible now, and like a true Bible, will remain a source of wisdom and comfort in all the frequent critical moments which are still in store for the nation under the new conditions of restored independence.

It was not at once, from the very beginning of his career, that Mickiewicz rose into his towering eminence of poet-prophet and national leader.

He was, indeed, recognised as facile princeps among his fellow-students in the University of Wilna, which was the most active intellectual centre in early nineteenth-century Poland. But that brilliant band of noble-minded young men, organis-

ing, with Mickiewicz' fervent concurrence, in the name of common ideals, as *Philomaths* or „Lovers of Learning“, and again as *Philarets*, or „Lovers of Virtue“, saw and admired in Mickiewicz the gifted poet chiefly and only: in their convivial song, his health is proposed because of the „blissful moments“ which „the divine sound of his lute“ gives them, „healing all sorrows“.

Nor did Mickiewicz himself go beyond the sphere of poetry as such when, as a young school teacher at Kowno, he made his first public appearance in the literary field with his memorable volume of *Ballads and Romances* in 1822. These poems, with their native folklore themes, simple strength of feeling, vivid imagery, and fresh riches of diction, victoriously accomplished the great Romantic Revolution in Polish Literature. But that was just what it was: a literary revolution. When Mickiewicz soars into the sphere of general ideals, they are somewhat abstract ideals of all humanity — creative reform, universal brotherhood — as in the powerful *Ode to Youth*, which is not without its national merit, but by implication only, in that its glowing lines have never failed to inspire the vanguard of the nation with a confident sense of its strength. However, immeasurably more definite work remained to be done by Mickiewicz for the political and moral salvation of his people.

Three steps in his life led up to this mission. They were: imprisonment by the foe for the noblest spiritual effort of youth, banishment into the

enemy's country, and finally, lifelong exile abroad, with its deep and fruitful meditations on the mystery of national calamity. The result was a national religion, proclaimed in word and deed — illusory in dogma, but healing and uplifting in moral power. And the monuments into which these growing national and religious beliefs of Mickiewicz shaped themselves, now stand for ever before the eyes of the nation and the world, in the series of his great poetic works. Like Goethe's, they all mark stages of his personal evolution — milestones on the road toward national leadership and prophetic dignity.

Mickiewicz has told us himself, in his dramatic poem *The Feast of the Ancestors*, how the Russian prison in which he found himself with the noblest youth of Wilna University, transformed him morally from a singer of the personal woes of unhappy first love, into one „whose name was Million, because he loved and suffered for millions“ of his countrymen, and put into inspired song the very essence of that phase of national history of which he was a great part.

The consciousness now awakens in him of a mission, of the vocation to sing the nation's martyrdom and form its souls for endurance by the might of his Word, — and the first rush of this inspiration carries him to heights of tragic „hybris“ in the *Improvisation*: Conrad, who is Mickiewicz, faces God himself and asks him, with the boldness of genius, for a revelation of the divine meaning and aim of national disaster and suffering. The answer,

denied to the blasphemous pride of a poet, is vouchsafed to the Christian humility of a friar. In his vision, the patriotic religion which fills Mickiewicz' later life, first assumes definite shape: the ideal conception of a Christ-like, redeeming dignity and world-wide import of the agonies of down-trodden Poland has dawned upon him and will haunt him, or rather lead him, and after him the nation like a pillar of fire, through the night of Poland's cruellest persecution.

But the dramatic poem which thus tells the story of Mickiewicz' growth into a national singer, does not tell that personal story alone: from beginning to end, it is full of the fate of the nation: from the prison-cell talk of the noble-minded young friends of Mickiewicz on Christmas Eve, to the ball at the Russian Senator's, disturbed by echoes of the great national drama, the scenes are a pageant of Polish struggle and suffering as it went on in those days, and for nearly a hundred years after them, both in the poet's town of Wilna, and in Warsaw, and indeed, throughout that large expanse of Polish country which all the brutish power of oppression did not succeed, then or later, in making Russian.

Years of wandering in Russia are the next period of Mickiewicz' life. They taught him to fathom the depths of the gulf between the oppressor and the oppressed, between Byzantine orthodoxy and Western Christianity, between age-long despotism, — grown, alas, but all too powerful — and age-long freedom — misused, alas, too often, and strangled by violence at last. The Pole, atire with all the

liberal enthusiasms of a Europe maturing for revolution, wonderingly admires the "slave's heroism" of the Russian peasant, blindly and patiently bearing the yoke of an Empire whose strength he is. Both for the vast masses of the silent, toiling, suffering people, and for the gallant fervour of the Decabrists who took the torch of liberty for Russia from Western hands and perished in raising it, Mickiewicz has words of sympathy warm and deep in his *Poems on Russia*.

But however profound a human understanding moves him for all he sees around him in Russia, his heart again and again goes out to the distant homeland. In the Crimea, his eyes, dazzled by the splendours of rock and sea and sky, of mosque and minaret and palace, yet strain themselves to search the haze of distance for the humbler sights of his native country-side; amidst the "dry ocean" of silent Akermanian steppe his ear is intent to catch a voice from far-off Lithuania: and the *Crimean Sonnets*, embodying such moments, hide under gaudy Oriental colours an intense and lasting homesickness which was never, unfortunately, to be assuaged by return to the land of his birth.

Absorbed together with his Russian friend, the great poet Pushkin, in the wave of Byronism passing over European poetry, Mickiewicz again cannot forget the cause of his country. Himself compelled to work for a time in a Russian Government office, and to conceal the inmost stirrings of his Polish soul, he chooses for the hero of a Byronic romance from mediaeval days the person of a Li-

thuanian who insidiously enters the ranks of his country's enemies, the German knights of the Cross, and leads them, as their Grand Master, to defeat and destruction (*Konrad Wallenrod*). Similarly, Mickiewicz had, in an earlier epic from Lithuanian history, celebrated the heroic deceit of a woman who, disguised in her husband's armour, leads his people to victory over the same age-long foe (*Grażyna*).

Thoughts of craft as the „only weapon of the enslaved“ were suggested by the helplessness of an oppressed people, and by the atmosphere of conspiracy which the Russian police régime had produced all over Poland. Even later, in his homage to Polish mothers (*Do Matki Polki*), Mickiewicz eloquently pictures the situation—so often renewed and so long continued in Russian Poland—of a people whose supreme political art must be that of silence and the calm of deep-hidden resolution, whose martyrs die on gibbets, inglorious and unsung, and lie in graves unmarked and unknown.

Conspiracy under continued pressure at last burst forth into the desperate outbreak of an insurrection. The national war, valiantly waged for a year from 1830 into 1831 against the giant army of Imperial Russia, was bound to end in new disaster. Mickiewicz did not take part in the war, but he became the foremost singer of its brave soldiers. In the verse story of *Ordon's Redoubt* he celebrates a glorious episode in the final fight for Warsaw; in *A Night in Camp* he pays well-deserved tribute to the obscure heroes of partisan warfare in Li-

thuania; in *Emily Plater* we witness the soldier's death of one of them, who was a noble young woman. Into the few affecting stanzas of *The Soldier's Song*, finally, Mickiewicz breathed all the pathos of the exile of thousands of Polish soldiers into foreign lands after the defeat.

He was himself an exile for life in Western Europe now, and the sight of Paris, surging with crowds of restlessly unhappy and helplessly quarrelsome Polish refugees, suggested new themes for patriotic reflexion. The need of definite patriotic teaching was apparent. This was offered in the *Pilgrims' Books*, the highest literary achievement of Mickiewicz in the sphere of citizenship. In simple Biblical prose, in parables after the fashion of the *New Testament*, the book unfolds even to the humblest of Mickiewicz' exiled brethren his lofty conception of suffering Poland's historical function and dignity, and it exhorts them to personal and civic virtue, to unity and to love, which is the highest wisdom and the most unconquerable power. No Pole, in the Babylonian century of the nation, could read this little book in exile — and many thousands read it again and again, down to these last years of war and wandering — without becoming strengthened and ennobled. It will remain the purest source of national morality amid the new tasks and problems of free and united Poland, and accompany the nation on its path, as Christ's Word accompanies the Christian .

*The thirties of the 19th century are the noonday of Mickiewicz' poetical genius. The heroic combats of the insurgents of 1831 having been glorified by him in a number of shorter poems, the catastrophe of the insurrection having suggested sublime patriotic thought in *The Ancestors* and in *The Pilgrims' Books*, we might expect that this grandiose if tragic national event would inspire some great work dealing with it directly and exclusively. But that did not happen: for his great epic, which became the national epic of Poland, for *Mr. Thaddeus*, Mickiewicz turned back to the idyllic scenes of his childhood. Why he did so, he tells us, in most affecting words, in the epilogue to the work. The cloud of misfortune, hanging over the nation and darkening men's minds, was too heavy with fresh and terrible sufferings for poetic imagination to soar into it. Nothing but despair was there; and comfort was needed: it was sought in recollections of older days. From homesick exiles' fireside talk on the Dreamland of early youth the epic was born; there only a shadow of untroubled happiness lingered still for Poles.*

The outcome of such humble longings and familiar chats is modestly called "a story from the life of country gentlemen". Its narrow social sphere is the sphere of Mickiewicz' own boyhood: it surrounds with the glamour of cherished memories the petty incidents of a family feud between neighbouring landowners; the landscape, the customs, are essentially provincial, and they are those of an outlying province too, little known to the centre of Po-

land: it is not Poland but Lithuania which is invoked at the beginning of the poem with all the power of heart's desire, and Lithuania was the North-Eastern borderland of the old Polish State.

And yet this unpretending verse chronicle of provincial life has become the only great national epic the modern world possesses. How can this be? we ask with amazement. And the answer can only be the same which Scripture gives to a similar amazed question: "the Holy Ghost", indeed, „came upon" Mickiewicz, and "the power of the Most High overshadowed him". The mystery of genius bears no explanation: the same reason which made ever-living realities of the simple allegories of a Bedford tinker, and of the popular plays dashed off by an actor from Stratford, has transformed into perennial types of Polish life the characters of obscure country squires, and it has made Lithuanian forests and fields as familiar as their own native town or village to millions of Poles who never saw them.

But if this "is all we know and all we need to know" when reverently acknowledging the presence of creative force, yet something more can be adduced as a contributory factor to account for the extreme popularity of Mickiewicz' particular native nook of Poland with all recent Polish generations. It was not Mickiewicz only that this province gave to Poland, and it is not the poetical magic of *Pan Tadeusz* only which makes Lithuania so "near and dear" to every Pole. As the exposed outpost of Polish national civilisation it has been animated by particularly intense devotion to the national cause!



in the century of oppression, and particularly productive of great personalities embodying the nation's unquenched vitality. The ranks of the same class of Lithuanian country gentlemen from which Mickiewicz came, produced also Kościuszko, the immortal hero of Polish democracy, the leader of Poland's last fight for independence before the final partition. They also produced the noble figure of Traugutt, head of the National Government during the last insurrection of 1863; and it is certainly characteristic that the first organiser of an armed movement in Poland on the eve of the Great War, afterwards Chief of the Polish State, Joseph Piłsudski, is also a native of that fame-crowned region. In the light of these facts we admire in *Pan Tadeusz* not a creation of stupendous imaginative genius only, but the masterly representation of that particular element in Polish national life which concentrates in it the very life-force of Polish history during the age of captivity.

Mickiewicz himself has made the organic connection between his modest subject and the great things of national history clear enough: the simple story is accompanied throughout by echoes of the thunders of Napoleon's wars, and the hopes and fears of the Poles who took part in them, live in the heart of every person of the poem. It ends with the arrival of Napoleon's Great Army in Lithuania on its way to Moscow. A country Jew's music on the cymbals is rendered in one of the finest passages of the poem, as summing up in it all the nation lived through and felt, from the fall of the old Po-

lish State to what was greeted as its resurrection through Napoleon's conquests.

Alas, the hope had been baffled by Napoleon's defeat, and Mickiewicz woke up from the recollected ecstasy of those hopeful days of *Pan Tadeusz* to the reality of an enslaved Poland and a helpless emigrant community in Paris. And it was by victorious opposition of the indomitable Spirit to the cruel facts of material existence that the saving national power of his genius henceforward chiefly manifested itself. *Contra spem spero* — "I hope against all hope", may well be said to be the motto of the mystic belief in Poland's immortality which to Mickiewicz, as to the other two great poets, Słowacki and Krasiński, becomes the religion of his later days. It is not all the actual suffering and slavery that matters: what matters alone is the miraculous power of the human spirit over the fetters of worldly existence; and this power is again and again proclaimed by Mickiewicz, almost with the determination of Indian Yoga preachers, to the devoted small circle of his disciples, in letters, speeches, articles and gnomic epigrams, which are like a quintessence of the driving force of life's work.

In this system of ideas, Poland itself became an idea, — "no more", as Krasiński said, "a country — a place, a home, a tradition, a State perishing or re-
arising—but a Faith and a Law", a spiritual entity enthroned, intact and invulnerable, in the ideal sphere, above the welter of contemporary Europe's

brutish international "struggle for life" and „survival of the fittest“.

This spiritual conception of Poland as an imperishable ideal force received a broad and substantial basis of historical generalisation in the one great literary achievement of Mickiewicz' later days — no more a poem, and no more in Polish. The herald of Poland spoke to the whole civilised world from the chair of Professor of Slavonic at the Collège de France in Paris, and in his Lectures on the Slavs he dwelt again and again on the historical mission fulfilled by Poland as the outpost of Latin Christianity and the bulwark of European civilisation in the East, and he put it in strong relief by emphasising its contrast to the Russian Empire, with its Byzantine creed, Oriental despotism, and barbarian radicalism of destruction in every new phase of existence.

Believing in the invisible ascendance of spiritual powers and intellectual values, sacrificing poetry itself to mystic and idealist propaganda, Mickiewicz yet never became passively contemplative, as Oriental Mystics do. He never ceased to feel strongly the need for action in the living present. With eagle eyes he watched from the heights of his ideas the political development of European affairs, and waited for his opportunity. The revolutionary storm of 1848 burst over the Continent, and Mickiewicz became an ardent liberal journalist in the French revolutionary organ *La Tribune des Peuples*. But he became more than that. Italy, that "second native land" of every civilised man, was rising aga-

inst the Austrian invasion, and Austria was one of Poland's three foes. Mickiewicz rushed to Italy to organise an auxiliary corps of Polish volunteers there. It is difficult for a Pole to speak with calm of this truly heroic, though fruitless, attempt. The glorious episode is enshrined for ever in the poetic homage done to it by a modern great national poet. Stanislas Wyspiański, in his drama *The Legion*.

And even a greater opportunity rose before the poet's eyes a few years later, when the Crimean war aimed a deadly blow at Russia, then the chief oppressor of Poland. Mickiewicz flew to the Eastern theatre of war, and there disease struck him down, as it had struck down Byron when about to fight for liberty. Mickiewicz died of cholera in Constantinople, on Nov. 26, 1855, while organising a body of Polish troops who were to fight against Russia.

The two military moments of the great poet's last years, and his honourable death in the forefront of an armed enterprise complete the picture of One whose ashes have justly been laid to rest in the tombs of Poland's kings at Cracow, because he was more than a singer and a prophet — he was, and for ever is in his immortality, a ruler and a leader of his people.

London, Oct. 6, 1922.

R. Dyboski.

NOTE. This Preface having since been embodied, with some alterations and additions, in my *Ilchester Lectures on Polish Literature* at Oxford, I am under obligation to the Curators of the Taylorian Institution (who are the owners of the copyright of the lectures) for their kind permission to publish it here.

BALLADS AND ROMANCES

ROMANTICISM.

Methinks I see...

— *Where?...*

In my mind's eye. (Shakespeare).

Listen, maiden, listen!

— She doth not hear —

It is broad daylight! yonder lies the town!

There's no one by thee—no one draweth near:

On whom then dost thou call a blessing
[down?

What phantom clasp'st thou? why do thine eyes

— She doth not hear — [glisten?

She, like a lifeless stone,

Doth not remove her gaze,

Her eyes are fixed, dilated, in amaze;

Then bursting into tears with tender moan,

Someone she seems to draw with saddest

She weeps and smiles. [wiles,

“Art thou here, Jasio!—here in this dark night?
My lover—even after death?
O hither, hither! but with footsteps light,
There’s step-mother! — so speak with bated
[breath...

“And if she hears us?... no!—she is no more!
Already in the tomb.
Is she already dead? I’m sore afraid!...
O why, my Jasio, should I feel such gloom?
’Tis thou! — thy lips, thine eyes — so why
[dismayed?
And thy white robe which thou didst wear of
[yore!

“As wan and pallid as thy shroud art thou,
And O how cold—thy hands how icy cold!
O warm them here—my bosom warm enfold,
And press thy lips to mine — as thou dost now.

“How cold the tomb is!—yet its rest I crave:
Thou hast been dead two years, and lo! we
[meet!
O take me! for with thee e’en death were
[sweet;
The world I love not; let me share thy grave.

“’Tis ill for me to dwell mid vile mankind:
I weep, and they but jeer—the heartless band!
I speak—and nobody doth understand;
I see—and O my God! their eyes are blind!

"O must thou leave me, Jasio?... do we dream
Ah, no! we're close embraced, with heart on
[heart;

And yet this very moment we must part:
Our greatest joys are fleetest—they but gleam!

"O God! the cock crows and the day's begun,
Yet it is early, Jasio, — stay awhile;
O stay, Beloved!—cheer me with thy smile,
O stay and bless thy most unhappy one!"

'Tis thus the maiden for her lover wails,
She runs to meet him,—lo! she shrieks!... she
[falls!

And at her sudden cries, her love's wild calls,
The people weep, and utmost grief prevails.

"O say thy prayers!"—the simple people cried—
"The soul of Jasio surely should be here,
Jasio should be with his Karusia dear,
On earth he loved,—he loves though he has died!"

And I — I listen humbly and obey,
I weep, and then I kneel and, silent, pray.

— "Hearken, young maiden!" — then an old man
[said,
— "And you as well!" — then to the crowd he
[cried:

"O in my eyes and spectacles confide,
I see not anything around this maid!

— Spirits are the gaping crowd's invention,
Chimeras formed and forged by doting fools;
And gaping crowds like these their fitting tools,
The people hear her nonsense with attention!—“

“This girl feels deeply!” — humbly I reply,
“And full of Faith is all this gaping crowd:
And to me, Faith and Feeling speak more loud
Than doctor's glasses or the doctor's eye.

“Thou knowest dead truths — hid from common
[men,
Thou seest the Earth in atoms, atoms—Earth:
But living truths and miracles rouse thy mirth!
O have a heart, and to it turn thy ken!”

THE LEGEND OF LAKE ŚWITEŻ.

Whosoe'er thou art that trav'lest
By the town of Nowogródek,
In the pleasant land of Litwa;
At the forest of Plużyny,
Stop and rest awhile thy horses,
Stop and view the Lake of Świteż.

O the lovely Lake of Świteż! —
With its surface clear and shining,
Like a mighty disc of crystal,
Polished like a great ice-mirror;
And its setting of dark forest.

O the lovely Lake of Świteż! —
Lovelier still when day has vanished
And the veil of night has fallen,
Part revealing, part concealing.
In a strange and mystic splendour.
If thou goest there at night time,

Gazing through and through the crystal, —
Stars below thee, stars above thee,
And twin moons thy sight bewilder:
Ah! so wonderful the likeness,
Ah! so perfect the illusion,
That thou askest in amazement: —
Which is Earth and which is Heaven?
Has Lake Świtez' magic mirror
Risen to the skies above thee?
Or the skies themselves have lowered
'Neath thy feet their dome transparent?
For thou canst not see the margin,
Nor distinguish Earth from bot Heaven tom;
Lo! thou art in space suspended,
In illimitable ether,
In a vast abyss of sapphire!

Thus at nightfall, in fine weather,
How the lovely lake allures thee;
Still to stop there in the darkness,
One must be the chief of heroes!
For what horrid feasts and revels
Satan holds there with his subjects; —
Goblins, ghouls and human vampires,
Spectres, hags and howling wer-wolves,
And all other evil spirits.
At the people's tales and stories
Of these sights and sounds of darkness.
How I dread when night approaches,
How I shake with fear and terror.
Ah! how often 'neath the waters

Comes the sound of city tumult,
Followed by a conflagration,
Ringing clash of arms and armour
And the tocsin's dreadful clamour
And the piercing shrieks of women.
Suddenly the smoke-clouds vanish
And the tumult is appeasēd:
Only on the viewless margin,
Faint and fainter sounds the fighting;
From the depths of crystal waters
Comes a gentle, prayerful murmur,
As of women at the altar,
With their plaintive supplications:
Then they cease... and all is silent.

Whence this awful sudden conflict? —
People ask each other... vainly;
For no human being ever
Saw the bottom of Lake Świtez:
And though legends and traditions
Linger long among the people,
Who can tell us truth from error?
Take the tangled skein of History
And unravel fact from fable?

He the Baron of Plużyny —
He whose fathers held Lake Świtez,
Handing down their princely glory
For so many generations —
The serene, great, mighty noble —
Called together chiefs and sages

And in many a warlike council
Planned to overcome this mystery.

After endless preparation,
Lavish use of men and money,
He has bought two hundred dredgers
And assembled boats and vessels.
Then I warned the mighty noble
That so great an undertaking
Must receive God's benediction:
Straight he ordered frequent Masses
To be said in all the churches
Of Plużyny and of Świtez
And to crown his pious efforts
Came the holy priest from Cyryn.
Standing by the Lake of Świtez
In his chasuble so gorgeous,
He has given us his blessing,
Made the Sign of our Salvation,
Hallowed all our undertaking. —

After this, the work commences:
Lo! the master gives the signal:
Onward sweep the boats and vessels,
Roaring sink two hundred dredgers!
With a roaring and a plunging,
Sinking deeper, deeper, deeper,
Speeding faster, faster faster,
In a wild acceleration,
And the corks are sinking quickly! —
Such the unfathomable waters.

Now begins the work of hauling:
How the rope-lines stretch and quiver!
See! the dredger comes in silence;
Surely there is nothing caught there?
On the crowded banks of Świtez
Have both wings been hauled already
And the bow-net quickly follows.
Shall I say what awful monster
Lies imprisoned in the meshes?
If I do, ah! who'll believe me?
Yet I must describe the creature. —
Not by any means a scare-crow; —
A Live Woman in a Dredger!!
Rosy cheeks and lips of coral,
Flaxen hair aflow with water.

When they saw her drawing nearer,
Some were paralysed with terror,
Some began to flee for safety,
Then I heard her gentle message:
"Young men! listen to my warning!
Hitherto has retribution
Swiftly followed boat or vessel
Launched on my domain of Świtez
And unfathomable waters
Cover ev'ry rash dare-devil!
Thou — rash fool! — and ye his comrades
Should be straightway dragged beneath them,
But because thy great-grandfather
Owned the lovely Lake of Świtez
And our blood in thine is flowing;

Therefore though your foolish prying
(Which disturbed me in my slumbers)
Has deserved the direst vengeance!
Yet as you commenced with Heaven —
Asking God to bless your labour,
God, through me, will give His answer
And I'll tell you and interpret
All the meaning of the vision,
All the mystery of the waters.

"In these lands encroached by sand-hills,
Where in wild, luxuriant splendour
Grow the reeds and water-lilies
(Which beneath your oars are bending)
Long ago there stood a city.
Świtez — once so celebrated
For the valour of its soldiers,
For the beauty of its women —
Flourished long, contented, peaceful,
Neath the princely house of Tuhan..
(There across some fruitful meadows
Are the walls of Nowogródek,
Then the capital of Litwa! *)
Once the Czar of Russia came there,
With a great and powerful army,
To besiege and take King Mendog;
And throughout the whole of Litwa
Spread a loud and awful rumour
That King Mendog must surrender!
But before he drew his army,

*) Litwa — the Polish name of Lithuania.

Called up from a distant frontier,
Wrote the King unto my father: —
'Tuhan! hasten to defend us,
Come with speed to save the City,
Summon all thy valiant warriors!'
Swift and welcome was the answer
Tuhan gave King Mendog's letter;
Straight he gave the sign for battle
And five thousand knights came forward,
Fully armed, superbly mounted.
Hardly had the trumpet sounded
Ere the royal troops spurred onward
And before them in the vanguard
Gaily floated Tuhan's banner.
Then, without a word of warning,
Tuhan wrung his hands in anguish,
Halted in some deep emotion
And returned to town and castle.

"Then he spoke to me in this wise: —
'Shall I sacrifice our city
To relieve besieged strangers,
Leaving my beloved subjects
Helpless to the Wolf of Nations? —
(Worse than wolf its fell destruction,
Wolves but kill... the Czar dishonours!)
Tell me — O my daughter tell me!
For thou knowest well that Świtez
Has no strength to hold the Russian; —
No defences save our weapons,
Than our breasts no other ramparts.

If I halve my little army
Can I save my threatened kinsmen?
And if all should march together
To the town of Nowogródek,
What will happen to our loved ones?
Who will guard our wives and daughters?
"Father! cried I, "cease your anguish!
Go where fame and glory wait thee! —
To the town of Nowogródek:
God will save us from the foemen.
For to-day I had a Vision
And I saw a glorious Angel
Hovering o'er the town of Switez.
Swift he flashed the sword of lightning,
Till it made a mighty circle
Like a halo round the city.
Then he spread his golden pinions,
As a symbol of protection
Unto all their glory brightened;
Paused a while in perfect stillness,
And the Golden Guardian Angel
(Ere the Blessèd Vision faded)
Breathed these words of hope and comfort:—
While the troops are absent fighting,
I will guard their wives and daughters'

"When the night fell with its darkness,
Came the quick 'tentent!' of horses
And the clattering of sabres,
Till there rose from ev'ry quarter,
One terrific, frenzied outburst,

One appalling shout of 'VICTORY!'
Battering-rams cause heaps of slaughter
With their crashing and their crushing,
And the gates give way — in splinters.
Then from everywhere — from heaven,
From the earth and all around us
Comes the whirring of the arrows! —
Comes the cloud of death and darkness! —
To the Castle rush the old men
With the helpless wives and daughters
And they innocent young children,
And they cry in frenzied anguish —
Outrage! Shut the gates, ah! quickly!
For the Russians fall upon us —
Fiends that never spare a woman!
O 'tis better far to perish,
Let us therefore slay each other,
Death shall come, but not dishonour!"
In these helpless, noble beings
Terror changes into fury: —
Rage of zeal for self-destruction,
So by death they'll 'scape the Russian,
And live on in deathless glory.
Lo! they pile their household treasures,
Bringing firebrands to light them,
And then shout in wild distraction: —
'May our curses deep and lasting
Fall on those who fear to perish!'
I protest — but vain resistance;
Some upon their knees already
On the block their necks are stretching,

Others bring the fatal axes.
Lo! the deed — the crime is imminent;
'Must we trust to hordes of Russians,
In an abject, vile surrender,
Bound in chains both soul and body?
Or by impious death escape them,
Break thy canon 'gainst self-slaughter,
Lord of lords?' — I cry in anguish.
If we may not 'scape the Russian.
Do thou slay us, we beseech Thee!
O destroy us with Thy thunder,
Or — in sudden, wild convulsion —
Cause an earthquake to receive us,
Swallowing us alive — but stainless!

"Then some whiteness quickly folds me!
Darkness changes into splendour!
To my terror and amazement
Nothing meets my downward glances,
I can see the Earth no longer!
Lo! it slips away beneath me
In a fleeting, fading vision.

"Thus unspotted and uninjured
Did we 'scape the sword and rapine —
Unfiled! Unfaced!
And those plants that crowd the margin
Of the lovely Lake of Świtez
Are our city's wives and daughters,
Changed by God to water-lilies!

Like white butterflies they hover,
With their delicate white petals,
O'er the deep abyss of sapphire;
And their leaves are like pine-needles
Which the winter snows have whitened:
During life so full of virtue,
Pretty images of whiteness,
After death they keep their colour —
White flower of a life so blameless.
Dwelling now in safe seclusion,
They no longer fear defilement,
Mortal hands can never touch them.
This the Russians soon discovered,
When, these lovely flow'rs perceiving,
Some desired to deck their helmets,
Others to adorn their foreheads: —
Then, whoever tried to grasp them,
Stretching hands towards the water,
(Such, so terrible and mighty
Is the power of the lilies!)
Straightway fell in grievous sickness,
Died by some mysterious death-stroke!

“And though 'Time's effacing fingers“
Have removed the recollections
Of so many myths and legends
Of the bygone distant ages,
Still this tale of Retribution
Is preserved among the people.
Still — in memory of Virtue,

And of Chastity's sweet triumph,
And of God's unfailing guidance
Unto all that trust and love Him —
Do the people call these lilies: —
'CZARS!' — the plants that foiled the Russians!

THE NYMPH OF LAKE SWITEZ.

O who is he—so handsome, young and smiling?
And who is she—so beautiful and gay?
They wander in the moonlight round Lake Świtez,
And like a dream the fond hours glide away.

She, smiling, gives him raspberries from her basket;
His gift, as sweet, the flowers in her hair:
Surely he is her true, accepted lover?
And she his dear betrothed, as fond as fair?...

And every night, their hour of bliss returning,
They meet, in rapture, 'neath the larches green:
He is a hunter of the forest round them...
But where *she* dwelleth none have heard or
[seen!

So sudden and capricious are her movements
And her strange shapes,—she mocks our search
[or sight:
She rises from the lake — a water-lily!
And as a will-o'-the-wisp escapes at night!

“O tell me, O my sweet and lovely maiden!
Why dost thou let these mysteries grieve me so?
Where is thy home or haunt? and who thy parents?
Why, when day comes, dost thou leave me in
[woe?

“Summer has gone, and Autumn leaves are yellow,
And Winter soon will come with flood and
[storm.

O shall I always seek thee by Lake Świtez?
And find thee in thy lovely, fairy form?

“Why dost thou always wander through the forest,
Now as a ghost, now as a shy gazelle?
'Tis better to remain with him who loves thee,
O maiden, stay with me! — I love thee well.

“O stay!—for in these woods I have a cottage,
In a dear hazel-nut wood all my own;
And I have other fruit—and milk—in plenty,
And game the finest that our land has known“.

—“Cease, cease, rash youth! to offer me tempta-
[tion;

For once my aged father said to me:—
'Men's tongues, my dear! than nightingales are
[sweeter,
But in their hearts there is vile treachery

—“I fear thy flatteries and 'honied nothings'
More than I trust thy promises of bliss:
If trusted, — thou wouldst prove a gay deceiver,
And, Judas-like, betray me with a kiss.—”

The youth has sworn by all the powers infernal
His love for her is lasting, true and deep;
And then he swears by the bright moon as
[witness:
Ah! but his oath so fearful will he keep?

—“O hearken to me, hunter!” cries the maiden.
—“And mark my words — the warning words
[I say: —
He who swears false; — ill to him! — here! — here!
[after!
And never shall he see Eternal Day!—“

And saying this, the maiden leaves her lover,
Placing his garland on her shapely head;
She will not stay for all his tender pleading,
But runs to her accustomed fields instead.

So rapid are her airy, fairy footsteps
That the poor hunter chases her in vain;
Lo! she has vanished from him like a zephyr,
And he is left in solitude again.

He is alone!—by the wild trail returning
Alone! — without her he would make his
[bride;—
Forsook! — in twofold night! — and dreadful si-
[lence! —
And in a bog!... He would that he had died!

Still some hope lingers: he regains Lake Świteż
And seeks for her so anxiously around;
Sudden the wind moans through the virgin forest,
The water roars! — he startles at the sound.

It heaves, roars, rages — riven to the bottom!
And then out of the depths—O peerless sight!
Above the silvery abyss of Świteż
A lovely maiden beautifies the night!

Like a white rose steeped in the dew of morning,
Her little face so round and bright and fair;
And like a film of mist her veil-robe foldeth
Her dainty limbs and heavenly shape so rare.

—"O youth so full of beauty! O young lover!—"
Said the fair maiden in her silvery tone;
—"For whom around the moonlit Lake of Świteż
Seek'st thou so mournful — making saddest
[moan?

—"O why lament for one so vain and heartless,
Who, having lured thee here—to my domain,—
Now leaves thee lonely in the lonely forest,
And doubtless laughs at all thy grief and pain?

—"O come to me! quit sighing and quit sorrow,
And be thou sweetly led by words of love;
So come, come to me here!—we'll dance together
On crystal waters, or in the air above.

—“Or, light of heart and wing, be thou a swallow
Skimming the surface in thy pretty play;
Or, nimble as a roach, dart through the water
With me—thy little wife, the nymph—all day:

—“And then at night;—a liquid couch of silver!
The rapture through our crystal tent to peep!
And on the soft, white, fragrant water-lilies,
The bliss of Heaven will mingle with our
[sleep!—“

Thus ended her sweet music; and as sweetly
From her veil-robe flashes a swan-white breast:
The maiden glides towards the youth and mur-
[murs,—
“O come with me and share my crystal rest“...

Then, leaping in the air with feet a-flying,
She makes a rainbow-arch against the sky;
And swift rejoining her beloved water
She scatters it in brilliant drops so high.

The hunter runs to leap!... and stops as sudden!
Now he is brave... and now he is not brave..
Till from across the calm and moonlit waters
Falls softly at his feet — an azure wave!

And now she runs off smiling, now caresses,
And who such pretty pleading may withstand?
As when a chaste and sweetly-loving maiden
Secretly presses her dear lover's hand.

The hunter has forgotten his betrothed,
And he has broken his betrothal vow,
And, charmed by the new allurement, straight is
[hurled
Headlong into destruction,—even now

He's carried down! down! through a world of
[waters,
Already he has left the light of day,
And, in the still and silvery depths of Švitež,
Sports where the water-nymphs in secret play;

And now his hand is pressed by snowy fingers,
And lovely features meet his tender gaze,
And his fond lip kisses a lip of coral,
And sweet they dance along enchanting ways.

Sudden!—a whirlwind whistles through the forest
And a dark cloud is emptied of its rain.
Gone his illusion, and he recognises
(Standing beside him) his betrothed again!

—“What of thy solemn oath, O perjured lover?
Hast thou forgot the words I said—and say?—
’He who swears false; ill to him! — here! — here—
[after!
And never shall he see Eternal Day!”

—“O not for thee! to roam through moonlit waters,
Not for the sinner — Crystal Paradise:
The frozen earth shall soon devour thy body
And sharp flints pierce thy falsely-smiling eyes;

FATHER'S RETURN.

"Go, dear children, beyond the town,
To the post on the little hill;
And there by the image of Christ kneel down
And pray for His mercy still.

"Father returns not: day and night
We await him, alas! in vain;
The rivers o'erflow, and a wilder sight —
The robber band round here again!

"And dreadful storms roar in the wood."
So the little ones go and pray
In a sweet appeal unto Christ the Good
To drive all the evil away:

And they kiss the earth and a prayer they raise
To the Three-in-One they adore, —
"To the Father, Son, Holy Ghost, be praise,
Both now and for evermore:"

Then say, — Our Father, Hail Mary, the Creed,
Commandments and Rosary too,
And for further blessing — for great the need! —
From their prayer-books they pray anew:

The Virgin's Litany one of them sings,
And then all together they cry. —
"To Thee, Holy Mother! each sad child clings,
Save Father! O let him not die!"...

O hark! — a rattle! — a carriage is seen!
'Tis one that is well-known and dear,
"And better known, dearer, the form within, —
There's Father!! sweet Father is here!"

O heavenly ending to sighs and tears!
Yet in tears he leaps to the ground,
They flow from joy at the joy of his dears, —
"So you're glad 'sweet Father' is found!

"Say, my pets!—how are Mother, Aunt, Servants
[and all?"

O his greetings! — they shower like rain,
And the dear little children rejoice at the fall,
Like flowers reviving again.

"Drive us home!" — the merchant cries to his men,
And the little ones shout with glee;
He starts... and a robber band springs on him
[then —
Twelve robbers! O horror to see —

Beards long, curled whiskers (symbol of pride),
Clothes filthy, hair matted and long,
And with knives in belt and swords at the side,
And huge clubs in their hands so strong.

The children shriek at the terrible sight,
Hide in Father's cloak for relief,
His men look aghast and he — pale with fright,
And with trembling hands — pleads in grief:

"Ah! take the carriage! take all I possess!
Only let us go safe and free;
Why make children orphans in dire distress,
And a young wife a widow be?"

They heed not: the horses unloose they straight,
And "Money!" shout — with one accord,
Then with weapons raised ('tis not long they
[wait]:—
"Put him and his men to the sword!"

"Hold! Hold!" cries the robber chieftain then,
And he drives all the band away:
„Merchant, you're free! — both yourselves and
[men
And your goods — both now and for aye!"

The merchant gives thanks: "Thank the children
[instead!"
Cries the robber, — "the thanks are theirs;

I would be the first to knock you down dead,
Were it not for the children's prayers.

"For the children's sake you go away sound,
They have given you life, health, strength,
Thank them for the mercy that you have found.
How it happened, hear now — at length.

"For some time,—hearing a merchant passed by,
My comrades and I every day
Lay hid near the pillar to hear and spy
And to rob him upon his way.

"To-day, 'mong the bushes hiding once more,
I heard children praying to God;
At first, heartless laughter shook me all o'er,
Then, in pity and fear I trod

"Nearer to listen!... Home comes to my mind—
And then my club falls from my hand;
Ah! I have a Wife so loving and kind,
And one Child, — the best in the land!...

.....
"Children dear, we must part — never more to
[meet;
Yet though Time like a stream doth roll,
Think of him that for you once spared 'Father
Say a prayer for the robber's soul.'"* [sweet':

* Note by the Translator. In the original, the metre of the last verse does not change. The above rendering is an attempt to reproduce the exquisite 'wavering rhythm' of Irish Poetry, — so in keeping with the tender conclusion of this sweetest of Polish Ballads.

THE LITTLE FISH

(Based on a popular song)

Out of the manor-house, wood and village
Rushes a maiden forlorn;
With hair all loose in the wind wild-flowing,
Wet cheeks that great grief hath worn.

She rushes to the end of the meadow,
Where a stream enters the lake,
And wringing her small, white hands so pretty,
The touching lament doth make.

"O ye who dwell in the lake of Świtez,
My sisters, hear me, — O hear!
And I will tell you the sad, sad story
Of one who has loved too dear.

"Dearly, ah dearly I loved my master,
He promised to marry me;
But now to-day a Princess he marries,
And Krysha — lost is she!

"Let them live by themselves—the young couple,
Let him caress her — alone;
Ah! do not let the false lord come hither,
To mock at my sad, sad moan.

"For the betrayed and abandoned sweetheart
What in the world doth remain?
Receive me back, ye nymphs of Lake Świtez...
But the child!... what grief! what pain!"

Her sad tale ended, — she bursts out weeping,
(Her little hands covering her eyes)
Then springs from the bank into the water
And caught in the current she lies.

.

Now from the wood where the manor-house glows
And a thousand lamps shine bright,
With music and mirth trip the wedding-guests,—
Light feet, and hearts as light.

But for all the mirth of the wedding-guests,
One can hear in the neighbouring wood
A crying child, — who is caught and soothed
In the arms of a servant good.

He inclines his steps to a lonely spot, —
Where the willows form a screen,
'Neath whose arched bower, and so close concealed,
Flow the waters swift between.

In this lonely spot he but broods and weeps, —
He can only cry — “Ah! now
Who will give the breast to the poor, wee babe?
Ah, Krysha! — where art thou?”

“I am here in the river down below!”
Then a soft, sweet voice replies,
“Where I am shivering so from the cold,
And the gravel hurts my eyes.

“O sharp is the gravel, the pebbles sharp,
The stream rolls me o'er and o'er,
And corals and mussels — my only food!
My drink, the cold dew — no more!”

But the servant still only broods and weeps,
He can only cry: — “Ah! now
Who will give the breast to the poor, wee babe?
Ah, Krysha! — Where art thou!”

Then of a sudden the crystal mirror
Is lightly, prettily stirred
By a dear little fish with its nimble jumps
And its swish! swish! swish! scarce heard.

And just like a flint which is smooth and flat
Is flung by the hand of a boy,
Our little fish skims o'er the water's breast,
In kisses both arch and coy;

And how lovely it is — with golden spots
And beautiful fins at the sides
And a tiny head like a thimble small
And two eyes like beads besides.

Then sudden unfolding her fish's skin,
She gazes with Krysha's eyes
And Krysha's fair head and swan-like neck — — —
All hid in the strange disguise.

Like a sweet red rose is her joy-flushed cheek,
Like milky apples her breast;
She is but a fish from below the waist,
A Woman in all the rest!

She swims to the shore, by the dear willow-grove,
And taking the child in her arm;
With "Luli, maleňki" — "now darling, hush!"
She gives it the breast white and warm;

And when the baby has ceased to cry,
The cradle she hangs on a bough,
Her body she folds and her head contracts —
To a fish re-changing now;

Again she is covered with shining scales,
Again fins grow at the side;
She dives — a few bubbles, quick come! quick go!
Is her only trace on the tide.

Thus morn and eve when the servant appears,
In that nook picturesque and wild,
The nymph of Lake Świtez comes swimming forth,
To give the breast to her child.

But why one evening doth nobody come? —
Her joy — it is turned to despair;
Already the hour is long, long passed...
And he with the child is not there:

He is not able to come to the tryst,
He is afraid he must wait,
For now the lord and his lady start
For their river walk — so late.

The servant turns back and looks from afar
And rests in the thick laurel-grove,
And he waits and waits, but alas! in vain,
For nobody this way doth rove.

Then he stands up and, peering through his hand,
Looks long his fingers between;
But only the day drags wearily past
And nought but the dusk is seen:

And the sun has set — like the sun of Hope,
But still, when the stars shine bright,
He cautiously creeps to the water's edge
And peers far into the night.

Is it wrought by God? or the Evil Fiend? —
For a new scene meets his eye;
And where the river so rapidly flowed
Are sands and a furrow — all dry!

And wild, chaotic, flung far on the bank,
Are clothes, — and no people are here,
And of the false lord and his princess-bride
Not a single trace doth appear!

And lo! greatest marvel! — amid the creek
There juts a great piece of rock, —
Its wonderful structure and life-like shape
The forms of two people doth mock!

Amazed and dazed is the servant good, —
Thoughts scattered and eyesight blurred,
And one hour has gone, and two hours have gone,
Before he, at last, says a word:

Then "Krysha! Krysha! O Krysha!" — he calls,
And "Krysha!" — the echo replies,
And he looks round wildly... but all in vain —
In the furrow nobody lies!

He looks in the furrow, then at the rock,
And wipes the sweat from his pale brow;
Then nodding his head three times seems to say—
“Ah, now I am wise — I see now!”

He takes the poor little babe in his arms;
O wild is his laugh — and his smile;
Then, mumbling prayers for the souls of the dead,
Turns hastily homewards the while.

OTHER POEMS

FARYS.

(In honour of the Emir Tadj'Ul-Fekhr,
the 'Glorious').

Gaily as a boat
Starting from the shore
Rolls upon the waves,
Speeding more and more,
With its swan-like neck
How it drinks the brine,
How, when dip the oars,
Azure crystals shine;
So the Bedouin

Note. This poem on the Bedouin horseman in the desert (Farys) was inspired by Mickiewicz' acquaintance with an eccentric Polish nobleman, Count Wacław Rzewuski who had travelled in the East, and was known among the Arabs as the "Golden-bearded Ameer". He perished after a heroic attack on the Russians at the head of his followers, during the insurrection of 1831, and this last heroic exploit, as well as his mysterious death, in the steppes, is the subject of a ballad by another great Polish poet, Słowacki.

In Mickiewicz, poem, the bold rider is a symbol of the mighty flight of genius — the poet's own genius, — soaring towards its creative aims over all earthly obstacles. (R. D.).

Rushing from a rock
Into desert seas,
Loves the surge's shock —
Loves the hollow roar,
Which his bounding steed,
Hurled at massive mounds,
Thunders forth indeed;
And it cleaves the waves
With its dolphin's breast,
In a ceaseless shower,
Shatters every crest,
Flying faster still
Skims the loose-wave land
And then rising speeds
In a cloud of sand!

.

My steed is beautiful, fleet and strong,
The star on his forehead is bright as dawn,
With limbs outstretched how he bounds along,
His mane by the wind of his speed upborne,
Like an ostrich—his neck meets the air like a lance,
And his white feet flash with a lightning glance.

On! gallant Whitefoot, race for aye!
Mountains and Forests, out of the way!

In vain a green palm offers rest, fruit and shade,
To make me abandon the challenge I made;
I stop not a moment — I brush off the leaves,

And the palm in its shame, runs away, hides and
[grieves;
Then, with its leaves rustling, it laughs at my pride
In crossing so heedless a desert so wide.

The rocks that are guarding that desert so wide
How fiercely they frown at the Bedouin's ride,
And, mimicking Whitefoot, each echoing rock
Seems to shout at the Arab, his rashness to
[mock: —

"O Bedouin fool! to the desert wilt run
To meet unprotected the darts of the sun?
No sheltering palm-tree (though that thou dost
[scorn!),
No white-bosomed tent for the trav'ler forlorn;
Only stars there are trav'lers and boulders there
[lie,
And only one tent there — the pitiless sky!"

In vain the rocks threaten,
They threaten in vain,
The Bedouin's freedom
They cannot restrain;
I rush like a whirlwind,
I double my blows,
How steady is Whitefoot!
How swiftly she goes!
And O as I watch them,
The insolent rocks
Grow more and more distant
And feebler their mocks,

And quicker their flight too,
Their boasting is past,
They hide 'hind each other —
Are silent at last!

But a vulture has heard their threats and menacing
[cries
And fondly believes he can seize me as swiftly he
[flies,
And he darts after me and, suddenly swooping
[down,
Three times he encircles my head with a horrid,
[black crown.

And horridly croaks:—“I smell a feast dainty
[and rare, —
The scent, dear to me, of a corpse, perfuming
[the air,
O senseless rider and steed! (to be soon my prey)
The steed in the desert seeks—pasture! the rider—
[a way!
In vain thou strugglest, O steed! through the sands
[that burn,
And he who comes here, O rider! will never return
These ways are for winds alone and their foot-
[prints light,
This pasture — it feeds but snakes and their
[poisonous bite,
And only the dead sleep here, — to be picked to
[the bone!
For know that this region belongs to the vulture
[alone!”

For it flies so fast,
With wings all widely spread,
And it seems to say,
In its whistling way,
This threat just o'er my head: —
"Why dost thou rush on?
O thou senseless one!
For there thou wilt die of thirst,
And no cloud with rain
From thy burning brain
Will wash off the dust accursed;
In the field so drear
No river will cheer
With silvery tone and gay;
And no dew at all
On the earth can fall, —
The wind seizes it on the way!"

The menaces cease!
I am left in peace;
I drive and double my blows,
And the cloud on high,
Too tired to fly,
Sinks down to a shameful close;
It inclines its head,
Then — as if half-dead —
Leans heavily on a rock,
And so when I gaze
With scorn and amaze
It now is my turn to mock;
For between us lies

The width of the skies —
So far it has lagged behind,
Yet even from here
From its face is clear
All that it has in its mind:
It is red with rage,
And then — the next stage —
Envy makes yellow its face;
Then — last stage of all —
Black with death doth fall,
Hid 'mong the rocks in disgrace...

On, gallant Whitefoot, race for aye!
Deserts and Clouds, out of the way!

.

Now, my eyes like the light
Radiating from the sun
Have gazed around me afar,
And, on the earth, in the sky,
Already there's none in pursuit!...
Here, how deep is the calm:
Nature, fallen asleep,
Never by human steps
Has been awakened and roused;
The elements tranquilly rest, —
Even like unscared beasts
That flee not away in a herd
At the first appearance of man..

Allah! I am not the first to enter the land!
Lo! far ahead of me lies a glittering band;

Are they merchants... or brigands... trav'ling these
[ways?

Will it be peace or war?... I gaze and I gaze...

There are horsemen in white... and horses of hor-
[rible white,

And I rush on to see why they're so pale to the
[sight;

I hasten — they do not move! I shout — they
[are mute!...

That only the dead sleep there! — who can now
[dispute?...

'Tis an ancient caravan disinterred by the wind:

On skeleton horses skeleton Arabs I find

Seated as if in life, — save the ghastly stare

Of the eyeless sockets and jaws that are picked
[so bare;

And now trough the eyelless sockets and fleshless
[jaws

The sand of the desert in bitter mockery pours,

And with its threat'ning murmur it seems to say:—

"O devil-possess'd! yond are sand-storms! —

[so out of the way!"

But I swerve not nor falter — the Bedouin knows

[not fear! —

And the corpses are left vainly threat'ning far in
[the rear.

On! gallant Whitefoot, race for aye!

Corpses! Hurricanes! — out of the way!

A hurricane, fiercest of all African agitators,

Is wand'ring alone over the ocean of sand;

He sees me! — and wishing to join my would-be
[flagellators
Bounds with the whip of the whirlwind across
[the land!

But first of all, he halts! — in surprise and
[astonishment keen,

Then turning round on the spot he blusters with
[rage. —

"Who! — here alone of the winds, — my young
[brothers common and mean —

Has dared to tread these lands left as my
[heritage?"

Then he roars and he rushes at me in a pyramid
[form,

When, seeing I am a mere man — yet unafraid!
In fury, — he shakes the earth with his feet in an
[awful storm

And the whole realm in a deluge of dust is laid!

And he clutches me in his claws, as though he a
[griffin were

And I his prey, and he flames with a breath of
[fire,

And he sinks his wings in the dust and then with
[a horrid whirr!

He springs at the sky! — he strikes at the
[earth! — in his ire.

Allah! what volleys of sand!... then I spring up
[and boldly fight,

Seize him... and lo! he is vanquished — torn in
[twain!
And more! — since I quarter his body and rend
[his limbs of might,
And gnaw them in my rage — again and again!

He tries to escape from me and a column form
[in the skies,
But in vain, — for half of his flesh is broken
and tumbles down,
And it pours in streams of sand till at last the
[hurricane dies!—
Succumbing at my feet, and as huge as the
walls of a town!

.
.

I breathe once more!... and at the stars I gaze
Proudly; and all the stars with golden eyes
Now gaze at me, because save me alone
There is no living creature in these wilds.
How sweet it is to breathe with all my lungs!
I breathe deep breaths! I breathe broad breaths!
[and all

The dear, delicious air of Araby
May not suffice to fill my swelling breast!
How sweet it is to gaze with all my eyes!
They now can see so clear and far and wide,
E'en 'yond the boundary of the earth and sky.
How sweet to stretch my arms with all their
[strength!

Great, friendly arms I stretch out to the world,—
Arms of affection to the whole, whole world,
Embracing from the East unto the West.
My keen-edged thought flies to the blue abyss,
Higher and higher and e'en higher still,
Until it gains the summit of the skies;
And even as a bee fastens its sting
And with it leaves its heart, so with my thought
I fasten now my soul — in highest heaven!

THE CRIMEAN SONNETS.

(A Selection)

1.

THE STEPPES OF AKERMAN.

I flow into a dry and boundless sea,
My wain dips in the verdure like a boat;
'Midst meadow waves and floods of flow'rs
[I note
Sharp corals which I pass by silently.

Night falls: for road or mound I vainly scan,
I search the sky, the stars—the sailor's guide;
There gleams a cloud, the day-star glitters
[wide,
There shines the Dniester! there shines Akerman!

O halt!... how still!... I hear the beating wing
Of far-off storks beyond my straining sight,
I hear a butterfly slow balancing,

I hear a snake through grasses gliding light.
O halt!... I yearning listen... God may bring
Home sounds from Litwa!... Onward!... All is
[n i g h t!

11.

THE SEA IN A CALM.
(From the Rock of Tarkankut)

The flag scarce stirs; the bosom of the main
Rises and falls in silence, like a bride
Who dreams her life of rapture will abide,
Then, sighing, wakes and, smiling, dreams again.

The sails are furled (so calm the watery plain)
As when war's ended flags are furled and tied;
The sailing-vessels all so stilly ride
As if they anchored were with iron chain.

O Ocean! In the midst of thy bright homes
A polyp lives: it sleeps deep down in storm,
In calm, its arms gigantic up w a r d start!

O Mind! Deep, deep in thy abyss there roams
The hydra of the Past — a sleeping form,
In strife; in rest — its talons reach the
[h e a r t!

V.

VIEW OF THE MOUNTAINS FROM THE
STEPPE OF KOZŁOW.

PILGRIM.

Has Allah built a wall of frozen sea?
Or for his angels throned a frozen cloud?
Or has this wall been built by Divy proud
That caravans of stars might captured be?

Lo! on its summits *Tsarograd* burns free!
Has Allah, while the *chylat* Night doth shroud,
For worlds that sail the sea of space, allowed
This lamp from Heav'n's blue dome hung centrally?

MIRZA.

I've been there: Winter reigns; there throats of
[streams
And mouths of rivers quaff from his great
[fount,
I breathed and from my lips fell snowflakes
[fine.

I rose through clouds where eagles cannot mount,
Where o'er my turban only one star gleams;
That is Tchatyrdah Mountain!

PILGRIM.

How divine!

Note. *Diwy* — genii.
Tsarograd — the old Slavonic name of Constantinople.
Chylat — an Oriental garment.

VI.

BACCHISARAY.

O noble but deserted are these halls:

These courts and galleries where pashas stayed;

These sofas where the queens of love were laid;

The snake frequents, the cricket shrill here calls.

The creepers cover windows, roof and walls,

They seize in Nature's name what Man has

[made;

As in Balshazzar's reign — the Court invade

And "RUIN" write mysterious ere it falls.

A marble fountain in the harem lies:

Time spares it and with pitying tear-drop laves,

Then on the breast of Solitude, in woe:

"O Power! Fame! Wealth! where have ye gone?"

[it cries,

"Ye should have stayed—survived my fleeting

[waves!

O shame! ye've fled and my sad tears still

[flow".

X.

BACCHISARAY — AT NIGHT

The pious from their mosques shave scattered wide;
The izan's echo dies in evening's hush;
The sky-line's ruby like a maiden's blush;
The king of Silver sleeps with Night—his bride.

In the sky's harem brightest stars abide;
Some clouds sail where the heav'ns with sap-
[phire flush,
Like dreaming swans who scarce the blue lake
[brush,

With breast argented, plumage aurified.
Great shadows fall down mosque and cypress-tree;
The granite figures darker, darker grow,
Like *Divy* in Divan of Eblis great,

Under the tent of darkness; then, clate,
His flaming warriors swift as Pharis go,
And dart across Heav'n's silent, sapphire
[sea.

Nota. *Eblis* — the Lord of darkness.
Pharis — the Bedouin horseman.

XI.

ALUSHTA — BY DAY.

The mountain now has doffed the *chylat* Night;
The golden cornfields breathe the *namaz*
[pray'r;

The forest bows and scatters ev'rywhere,
Like Caliph's beads, rubies and garnets bright.

On meadow flow'rs aerial flow'rs alight;
The butterflies with colours rich and rare
Like rainbow streaks illumine and arch the air;
Beyond, the locust spreads its shroud of blight.

There on the shore a rock o'erhangs the sea,
Which boils, and, hurled back, rushes to the
[fray,
And in its rage flashes like tiger's eyes:
A war of elements — the shore the prize;
But out at sea the waves sleep peacefully
And fishing-boats and swans together play.

XIII.

TCHATYRDAH MOUNTAIN.

MIRZA

O PADISHAH of Mountains! who dost reign
In clouds above the hillocks of the plain;
Thou who at the entrance-gate of Heaven
Like the Archangel Gabriel guardest Eden; —
Dark is thy robe of forests and the fleet
Torrents of lightning — thy dread janissaries,
On thy cloud turban cast their silver sheen;
There, whether suns may broil or mists may
[freeze,
Or locusts plague our fields, or Giaurs us ban,
Tchatyrdah! thou art silent and serene:
Thou stand'st twixt Earth and Heav'n a dragoman
Of the Creation, placing at thy feet
The Earth, Mankind and noisy thunder ways
And only hear'st — what God to Nature
[says!

“THE IMPROVISATION”.

From the Mystic Drama “The Ancestors”.

Part III, Scene 2.

(A free and amplified paraphrase).

CONRAD

(A Polish Prisoner in a Russian Dungeon,—speaks:
after a long silence)

Solitude? — and is it Solitude,
Now I have noblest thoughts for company?
For now I rouse me, — I who long have lain
Both dead unto the world... and to myself;
Yea, now I rouse me — rise within myself,
Through secret might! through unconsuming fire!
That burns and glows within my inmost being;
O not like burning fever that destroys,
But grand, creative glow, — renewing strength
More than in days when walls confined me not!

Why yearn for man,—who hath no fellow man;
Free or in prison, or in weal or woe,
Alone! unequalled! in my thoughts — alone?
O wherefore should I long to sing for man,
When from the populace I may escape,
Borne on the golden wings of Poesy?
For now my Muse outsoars their earthly ken,
And none may fetter — none pursue her flight,
Free! radiant! glorious! mounting swift to Hea-
[ven,...

Now in the empyrean! Then what wrong, —
To weary for the people tongue and voice,
The God in man reveal to man the foe,
And chain on Earth the glory meant for Heaven!

O in the world of man — this dark, dark world,
Nor tongue with voice, nor voice with thought
[agree;

So hard the source and offices of speech!
Thought flows within the soul, and breaks... in
[speech;

And speech but swallows thought and shakes,
[‘bove thought,

As doth the earth a subterranean stream;
From this earth-shaking may the world divine
The torrent’s depth — or whence — or where—
[it flows?

So none may know the source — depth — trend—
[of thought!

As blood to body — feeling is to soul;
It circulates the soul; it glows and kindles

(Like blood) its inner depths, its secret cells:
But man — vain man — knows nought of blood...
[or feeling!]

And, only looking superficially,
Finds but as little feeling in my songs,
As there is blood within my countenance!

My song, thou art a star and dwell'st apart,
Far, far beyond the boundaries of the world!
And earthly vision vainly following thee,
Though girt with wings of crystal, may not reach
The sacred sphere wherein thou art enshrined:
It will but strike against thy Milky Way;
Not piercing the beyond; returning void;
Empty of thought and feeling... as it came;
Save vaguest memory of sun and star,
Inextricable confusion of the mind!
Number—size—system—hopeless mixed and lost!

I have my song; and people's eyes and ears
Are as they were not: to myself I sing;
Myself sole singer and sole audience!
O thou grand song — as lofty as thy theme,
Flow in my inmost depths! shine on the heights!
A hidden stream! A star beyond the sky!
Thou universal light-emitting song,
Radiating with thy glory! O thou knowest
I am the Master, for I called thee forth:
O God! O Nature! hearken to my voice!
Worthy of God and Nature is my song!
I sing... MYSELF... and cause the stars to sing

Beneath my awful and miraculous touch;
Playing my own divine accompaniment —
The music of the spheres! I stretch my hands
Into the Heavens and place them on the stars,
As on a tuneful organ's mighty stops,
And as I bid, my soul will make them play.
Millions of sounds rush forth and of these millions
I draw out every note, I know each tone:
I harmonize — divide — blend — know them all!
And some I weave in rainbow harmonies! —
Sweet archèd concords charming eye and ear;
And some I crash in lightning audible!

I take away my hands; I raise them high,
Above the world, above the countless stars:
The organ-stops I touch no more but still
The music I have made rolls grandly on;
And ever echoing through the sea of space,
Until it strikes the ocean of mankind,
Rousing the innumerable multitude,
As earthly storm the multitudinous sea.
The music roars with storm... and moans with grief,
Like long, long wail of tempest, ere it bursts
In its full fury, churning the seas in wrath;
And human deep re-echoes starry deep,
In lesser imitation faintly grand
(How else may finite voice infinity?)
And Time denies himself and slow replies
In time-less, low, reverberating tone.
I rest... and listen to my deathless singing:
And every note together plays and flames,

Being both audible and visible;
As, when the tempest plays upon the waves,
I hear it in its shrieking water-wraith,
I see it in its threat'ning thunder-cloud.

Lo, it is very good — my Song-Creation!
'Tis Vigour! Might! and Immortality!
I feel — create — sing — Immortality!
What greater couldst Thou do, Almighty God?...
Worthy of God and Nature is my song!

And every thought I fashion from itself:
I give it flesh and blood; endow with life;
And send it forth in likeness of a bird!
O sweet creation! feathered songsters mine!
Rejoicing in your life and liberty,
How swiftly do ye scatter through the sky,
Wheel, dart and play, bathing in heavenly blue,
Already far away: I feel you still!
I love your charms, my beautiful song-birds!

(Bird-lilt.)

I feel your glossy wings and silky breast,
So soft and smooth beneath my tender touch,
And oh! however fast or far you fly,
I know your every movement — with my thought!

I feel your glossy wings and silky breast,
So soft and smooth beneath my tender touch,
And oh! however fast or far you fly,
I know your every movement with my thought!

I love you so — poetic children mine!
My thoughts! my stars! my feelings! and my storms!

I stand 'mongst you — a father 'mongst his children!
Mine! mine! all mine! for ever, ever mine!

.
.

I SCORN YOU! — all ye Poets, Prophets, Seers,
That the wide world has honoured: were it true!
That which ye cast on credulous mankind,
And could ye meet the children of your souls
And did not know them idle phantasy!
Were all of admiration, praise, applause,
Received by you; and garlands fresh and fair,
O not like those of earth that fade and die,
But nourished with the daily rays of fame,
And deathless as immortal amaranth! —
Were all of Music, Loveliness and Worth
United in your honour; and ye felt,
It had not been unworthily bestowed —
This mighty, everlasting paean of praise
Swelling from every race and every age! —
O could such praise be yours! or were it yours! —
Ye could not know the joy! the strength! the power!
Which now I feel... alone in dungeon dark!
As now I sing — myself within myself,
As now I sing — unto myself alone!
To-night I feel unrivalled ecstasy!
To-night my power surpasses that Kings!
To-night I reach the zenith of my power!
To-night ordaining Providence will show
Whether I am the greatest of mankind
Or but the proudest, — proudest.. but to fall!

To-night is the predestined moment grand;
To-night to their far, uttermost extent
I stretch the mighty pinions of my soul;
For lo! the hour has come — the hour of Samson!
When blind and fettered he inly prayed to God,
Then rocked and threw the massive columns

[down!... —

I will throw down my body! as spirit
I will take pinions only!... Now I soar
Beyond the orbits of the planets, stars,
And all that else informs the heavenly deep,
Outsoaring the bounds of Nature and Creation!
I have them! — yea, I have them — these two
[wings;

I was already spirit, and did want
But wings to soar on high: I spread them o'er.
Remotest regions of the East and West;
Strike with the right the Future, left the Past;
And now I come on rays of love to Thee,
Of Whom men say Thou lovest in the heavens,
And with my love I gaze upon Thy love!
Lo! I am here — even beside Thy Throne;
Thou see'st my power, my might, and that my
[wings

Reach even here! — reach even unto Thee.
But I am Man, though spirit, and on Earth
Doth lie my body; and on Earth I loved,
And in my Country hath remained my heart.
O this my love — my deep love in the world,
It hath not rested on a single being,
Like insect on the flower of a rose

Whether Thy gift or that, through Grace Divine,
I took it whence Thou didst, — I have a Power,
Which in the grandest moments of my soul
"O'erleaps all fence"... and knows nor Time nor
[Space!

O when in fancied security on high,
There stretch long lines of migratory birds
Swift seeking warmth and rest in other lands;
And I upgaze with absolute command
And will to straightway stop them in their flight,
Lo! they are held as in a sudden snare!
They utter cries of fear, bewilderment,
But till I let them go Thy wind from Heaven
Will not release, disperse them. When I gaze
With all my soul upon a comet's flight,
Tis ended — quicker than the comet's flash!...
Only depraved man, unbelieving man,
Useless and yet immortal, doth not serve
Or know me: doth not serve or know us both!
Both Thee and me, yea, he denies us both —
Doubt serves not Faith... and laughs at miracles,
Being itself the sole thing miracle-proof.
No miracle, without first: — "I believe!"

.

Grant me, O God! dominion over souls.
I who erstwhile did rule the birds and stars.
And straightway held them 'mid their swiftest
[flight,
Now ask dominion over all mankind.
O not through weapons — sword repulses sword;

Unmindful of God's wondrous Universe,
Creation grand that filleth Time and Space,
Of which the Earth's so insignificant
In size, duration, worth, that I have scorned
To use my strength and straight demolish it.
Grant me, O God! the empire of the soul,
Extending boundless, — boundless as itself,
The unseen power that rulest over all
And fillest all with its divine excess
And overflow of soul. Informing spirit!
True Insight to the very heart of things! —
To which appearance is not reality,
Reality unreal, — the spirit real,
And all that is but symbols of our God; —
Without whom, Life were lifeless, Earth were

[Chaos,

The Universe in vain, and Heaven a myth,
And mind and soul and body — all a blank!
Lost in the void of unessential Night!
O Father! save me from this dreadful fate, —
Existence non-existence! Death-in-Life!
O grant me quickening, superhuman power
And life were life indeed! Then would I soar
And swiftly mounting to the empyrean
Straightway extinguish full a thousand stars
And kindle thousands man hath never seen: —
Prometheus from the Earth with fire... to Hea-
[ven!

For with my fire I light celestial fires —
The stars; and those already dim or low,
Burn brighter or extinguish — as I will.

I am immortal: in Creation round
 Are other immortals, but yet none so great:
 Thou art supreme in Heaven; I seek Thee there;
 I — greatest of all those that walk on Earth.
 I have not seen Thee; that Thou art... I know;
 O let me feel thou art pre-eminent, —
 O let me feel how true those words sublime —
 "The hand of the Lord hath the pre-eminence!"
 I would have power, — O Father, grant it me!
 O King of Glory, show me the way to Glory!
 I know that there were prophets and wise men,
 Rulers of souls! — which, Father! I believe;
 Likewise believe that what they could I can:
 May I have Power — even as Thou hast Power;
 And reign o'er souls — even as Thou dost reign!

(Long Silence)

(With Irony)

.
 Silent? — art Thou still silent?... Now I know
 All that Thou art, — the secret of Thy power.
 How wise was he who found that Thou art —
 [Love!
 I only find that Thou art — Intellect!
 With mind, not heart, shall people know Thy ways;
 With mind, not heart, Thy weapons understand;
 And only he who delveth deep in books,
 Metals and figures, corpses, skeletons,

Shall through a kindred spirit know Thy power!
In usurpation of all this Thy power!
Poison and dust and steam, glare, smoke and noise
He will discover; and arbitrary rule,
Imposed on just and unjust, wise and simple; —
These are Thy precious gifts bestowed on man!...
For thou, O Lord! hast handed the world to
[thought
And left the heart to penance without end,
And, having given me the shortest life,
Leav'st me, in mockery, love most powerful!...

(Silence)

.

Woe! Woe! — for what to me is Love or Life?...
A spark! a moment!
And will the lightning and the thunder cease? —
A spark! a moment!
Of all the ages what may I record —
A moment!
O whence comes Man — this little, little world?—
A spark!
And what is Death that scatters all my mind?—
A moment!
And who is God, whose arms enfold the world?—
A spark!
And how long lasts the world when He has gone?
A moment!

.

EVIL SPIRIT

(Voice on the Left)

I must mount — on his soul — as on a steed!
Race! Race! at a gallop! at a gallop!

GOOD SPIRIT

(Voice on the Right)

Hark! — how he raves in his delirium!
O let me save him... from himself... and demons,
And cover him defenceless — with my wings!

CONRAD

Ha! ha! moments and sparks expand! inflame!
Create or else destroy. O courage then!
This moment let us cherish and prolong
And let us kindle and revive this spark!...
'Tis done already!... now I challenge Thee,
And as a friend unbare my soul to Thee,
Answer, O answer me!... What — silent still?...
'Gainst Satan Thou wert not contemptuous;
Thou led'st in Person all the hosts of Heaven,
'Gainst third of Heaven rebelling. Ah, once more
I challenge Thee — and this time as Thy foe!
O scorn me not! — for I am not alone,
Though raised alone to this high eminence;!
For I have armies, princes, thrones and powers
In my just quarrel, and true brotherhood
With a great Nation; so if I rebel
I'll wage with Thee a bloodier war than Satan! —
He for the intellect, I for the heart!...

(Silence)

(With emotion)

.
.

Am I not right to answer for the heart,
Through which I fell so deeply, love so much?
How I have loved and suffered in the world,
Both love and suffering one continual pain,
For such sad love is pain and adds to pain.
I have grown old in torments and affection
For my dear stricken land, — bowed down with
[grief;

Yet would I suffer all her many wrongs
Than wrong her with the greatest wrong of all —
A moment's thought of selfish happiness!
Were Paradise the test of my great love,
And I, like Elijah, might be caught to Heaven,
Still would I share, dear land! thy misery.
O Heav'n would not be Heav'n,—with thee in woe,
Poland belov'd!... or only Heaven: —
To plead thy cause before the Eternal Throne,
Until through prayer thy woe be changed to bliss.
When Thou didst tear from me my personal joy
(If such deep sadness could be called a joy)
Of home and sweet home country all bereft,
Early delivered to our cruel foes;
I did not raise my hands against high Heaven,
But reddened them, O God! in mine own breast,
To turn the hard hearts of our enemies,
For my dear Land — a lifelong sacrifice!

Delivered to grief, shame... and this Agony!...
O Father! Thou hast ne'er removed this Cup!...
Lord, if Thou wilt, remove it far from me!

.
.

EVIL SPIRIT

He falls! — repents! O soar! with curses — soar!
For lo! I change the steed into a bird!
Soar as an eagle! let thy prey be... Heaven!

GOOD SPIRIT

O fallen spirit! fallen Shooting-Star!
O how thy sad tears drop like thee from Heaven!

CONRAD

Now is my soul incarnate with my country,
My body is all spirit with her soul;
For I and my dear fatherland are one;
My name is Million: for the sake of millions
I love and suffer torments without end.
O my beloved country, tried and true!
I gaze at thee,—matchless 'mid matchless wrongs!
Even as a son gazeth upon his father
Broken on the wheel; I feel thy suffering,
As a mother the suffering of her child!
I suffer and rave — maddened by Poland's wrongs!
And Thou, O God! art wise and calm and bright,
Thou smil'st serene with azure skies serene,
(The azure heavens are the smile of God!)
Thou seest — rulest — judgest — everything,
And the world says Thou art infallible!...

Father! if true — which with a son's fond faith
I heard when first I came into the world —
That Thou art Love and that Thou chief dost love
'Bove all Thine other work Thine Image — Man,
(Man made in God's own image — a living soul);
O if the feeling heart was in the act
When Thou didst save the faithful of mankind,
Noah and all his household, from the flood,
Besides the few of every living thing
He brought into the ark at Thy command;
O if Thy heart be verily a heart,
And not like some strange monster which has
Into the world by accident (or fate), [come
Which but remains in immaturity,
Abortion unreliable in its ways,
Horribly tearing all it once adored;
If with Thee sentiment's not anarchy;
If in a million people crying "help!"
Thou see'st a problem in arithmetic,
If "Love" is necessary for the sum
And is not merely Thy mistake in reck'ning..

EVIL SPIRIT

O let the eagle now a hydra be!
But with blind eyes, to help his frenzy blind,
And bring him all the quicker to perdition;
On, on to the assault! Smoke! Burn! Roar! Strike!

GOOD SPIRIT

A wand'ring comet in the light of day!
O what will be the end of its wild course
Alas! no end but endless misery!

CONRAD

Lord, Thou, art ever silent!... I have bared
To Thee the bottom of my heart — in vain;
Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee,
Yet found no Heavenly Friend to still my grief.
I adjure Thee, grant me power — a little power,
A part of that which pride has won on earth,
And with that little, O what happiness
I would create!... Thou'rt silent? Thou wilt not?
Then grant it to the mind, if not the heart!
Thou see'st me first of men and, also first
Of the angelic host and that I know
Thee better than Thine own archangels do;
Worthy that Thou shouldst halve Thy power with
O if I err, reply!... I do not err!... [me...
Thou — silent — trustest in Thy powerful arms...
Yet wherefore should I fear! — feeling will burn,
That which the powerfulest mind may not break;
Thou knowest that my burning-glass is love!
I focus and contract it, concentrate
To increase the intensity of heat,
Like burning fuse that will explode the shell!...

EVIL SPIRIT

GOOD SPIRIT

Load! Fire!

Pity! Remorse!

CONRAD

Answer!! — for the last time I challenge Thee;
Answer! — or I will shoot against Thy realm,
Which if it be not straightway laid in ruins,
Will be so shattered that it scarce may stand, —
Tottering suspense worse than immediate fall;

For I will send my voice through all the world,
Strong with the righteous wrath of the oppressed,
Reaching the generations yet unborn,
Piercing like a tremendous trump of doom,
And rocking all Thy palaces in Heaven,
And everywhere proclaiming that Thou art
Not the Father of the world, but...

THE VOICE OF THE DEMON.

"THE CZAR!"

(Conrad stops a moment, staggers and falls).

THE VISION OF FATHER PETER.
FROM THE MYSTIC DRAMA „THE ANCESTORS”, PART III,
SCENE 5).

The tyrant comes!... 'tis Herod!... 'tis the Czar!
And all the children of Sarmatia
Left in the hands of Herod, Lord, by Thee!
And hast Thou yet an ill more dread to come?
For lo! what long, white cross-roads stretch away
Through the snow wilderness, as ghastly white
As the pale cheeks of our sad countrymen
That suffer there the road to Calvary.
These Cross-like roads extend... more... and still
[more...

Reaching the far-off land beyond my ken,
There in the North — where dwells our ruthless
They flow like rivers; this one runs direct [foe.
To iron portals, and that winds and falls,
'Neath rocks into a cavern deep and dark,
And yon track ends abruptly in the sea.
They flow like rivers... like?... O how unlike!
For to no prosperous towns and ports they flow,
Nor bear rich merchandise; but only bring

Convoys of woe to penal colonies.
 E'en as I speak the woeful convoys come.
 Long lines of carriages driven as by the wind,
 And following each upon the self-same course,
 Are tossing with their ghastly human load;
 O God! O God! those are our children dear,
 And their fell doom — the exile's agony!
 O wilt thou leave Thy little ones to perish
 And all our generation come to nought,
 O Heavenly Father? May not one be saved
 To raise again our country from the dead?...
 Lo! the Word made Flesh!... for unto us
 A child is born!... he 'scapes the massacre,
 He lives — to be the Saviour of our land:
 Born of a foreign mother, and his blood
 Derived from godlike heroes of the past,
 And his name shall be called FORTY=AND=
 [FOUR!

O Heavenly Father! wilt Thou not vouchsafe
 To quicken his coming and turn grief to bliss,
 By granting us our great Deliverer?
 Lord! we are very sad and lonely now:
 We, once so free and happy, mourn in bonds;
 Our burden heavier than we can bear;
 Still heavier — compared with freedom — gone;
 Heaviest is this: being fastened and imposed
 By nations we have rendered lasting good.
 We once did save all Europe from the Turk:
 Behold our country now! its meed of thanks; —
 Tyrants! murderers! assassins! robbers! thieves!
 That seize Sarmatia and dismember it.

Our suffering fatherland is laughed to scorn,
And hark! again that bitter mockery: —
"Others he saved, himself he cannot save!"...
"Bring him to judgment, and away with him!" —
So shout the rabble, dragging the innocent
To judgment without conscience, heart or shame.
(Ingrate! to turn against their gracious Lord
And worse than beasts that bite the hand that
[feeds].

Their judgment this: „Let Gallus be his judge“.
And Gallus, when he straight had questioned him,
Told them. "I find no fault in him at all"...
Then, having washed his hands before them, said:
"I am not guilty of this just man's blood.
"See ye to it;" — to which the Kings replied: —
"His blood, be it on us and on our children;
"Crucify him! — he saith he is our King,
"Therein he hath reviled great Caesar's throne;
"Crucify him! — or thou art Caesar's foe;
"Crucify him! — and release Barabbas;
"Crucify Mary's son!"... And Gallus yields!...
They seize their Lord and carry him away;
Clothe him with purple, put a crown of thorns
Upon that innocent brow that streams with blood,
For sceptre put a reed in his right hand;
And next they lift him before all the world,
And Gallus cries, to nations gathering round: —
"Behold! — A Nation!... independent! free!"

I see the Cross and Passion of our land!...
How long, Lord, must we bear it, — Lord, how
[long?...

Have pity on Thy servant, give him strength;
Or he will fall and perish on the way,
With his divine self-offering unfulfilled!...
The Cross is huge, with arms extending wide
Over the whole of Europe; it is formed
Of three afflicted peoples wasted sore;
Like three pieces of wood, hard, dried up, shrunk.
My nation in the Atonement cries: "I thirst!"
And Racus gives him vinegar, Borus — gall;
(But he when he has tasted will not drink),
And Mother Freedom weeps beside the Cross.
Behold! — one of the soldiers rushes forth
(He is a Muscovite) and with a lance
Pierces the side of him they crucified,
Drawing yet once again the innocent blood
What hast thou done — — O cruellest of men?...
Man in God's image... torturing Man!... and God!!...
And yet he only will amend his ways
And the All-Merciful will pardon him.
O my Beloved!... see! he lowers his head
In the death agony; and his last words: —
"My God, my God, why hast Thou me forsook?"...
He is dead!...

*Atar off, choirs of Angels are heard singing hymns
[of the
Resurrection and ending with Hallelujah!! Hal-
lelujah!]*

He soars! he soars to Heaven! to highest Heaven!
(From Hell to the serenity of Heaven)

And the white splendour of his heavenly robe
(That veils the world) is whiter than driven snow;
And whiter, lovelier, flowing from his feet, — —
Those hallowed feet that trod the way of Life,
Through Death! the feet that gained Life
[Everlasting,

As ever following faithful in His steps.
Lo! my Belovèd has not passed away.
Though passed from Earth yet he is with me still,
In this dear vision of him glorified.
His eyes that number three are like three suns,
And (proof of his Ascent from death of shame)
He shows to all the world his pierced right hand.
Who is this martyred saint upraised to heaven?
Out Lord's lieutenant in the vale of Earth:
And when I knew him first — a simple child;
Then, fully grown in body and in soul;
Now great indeed, — transfigured in the skies!
And yet with all his glory he is blind! —
Though (for such such guidance needs no mortal
[sight)

What nations hath he brought to Light Divine! —
Himself true light (though dark!); and being dark,
A beautiful child-angel leads him on.

Man terrible! — for he has faces three,
With three huge foreheads and three eyes like
Like a great canopy the Book of Fate [suns.
Wide open veils the splendour of his face
And at his feet three noble cities rise,
Three ends of the world tremble at his voice,

Which rolling down from Heaven sounds like
[thunder!

He is the Lieutenant of Freedom seen on Earth:
And he will build on glory, for all time,
The immensity of His Temple; and upraised
High above kings and peoples, lo! he stands
On three imperial crowns — himself uncrowned:
His life—the pain of pains; his claim—The Nation:
Born of a foreign mother, and his blood
Derived from godlike heroes of the past,
And his name shall be called FORTY=AND
[FOUR.

Now glory! glory! glory! to his Name:
Glory and Heaven=on=Earth for evermore!

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