

## THE MASQUE OF ANARCHY.

i.

As I lay asleep in Italy,  
There came a voice from over the sea,  
And with great power it forth led me  
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

ii.

I met Murder on the way—  
He had a mask like Castlereagh—  
Very smooth he looked, yet grim ;  
Seven bloodhounds followed him :

iii.

All were fat ; and well they might  
Be in admirable plight,  
For one by one, and two by two,  
He tossed them human hearts to chew,  
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

## IV.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,  
Like Lord E——, an ermine gown ;  
His big tears, for he wept well,  
Turned to mill-stones as they fell ;

## V.

And the little children, who  
Round his feet played to and fro,  
Thinking every tear a gem,  
Had their brains knocked out by them.

## VI.

Clothed with the \* \* as with light,  
And the shadow of the night,  
Like \* \* \* next, Hypocrisy,  
On a crocodile came by.

## VII.

And many more Destructions played  
In this ghastly masquerade,  
All disguised, even to the eyes,  
Like bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

## VIII.

Last came Anarchy ; he rode  
On a white horse, splashed with blood ;  
He was pale even to the lips,  
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

## IX.

And he wore a kingly crown ;  
In his hand a sceptre shone ;  
On his brow this mark I saw—  
“ I am God, and King, and Law !”

## X.

With a pace stately and fast,  
Over English land he past,  
Trampling to a mire of blood  
The adoring multitude.

## XI.

And a mighty troop around,  
With their trampling shook the ground,  
Waving each a bloody sword,  
For the service of their Lord.

## XII.

And with glorious triumph, they  
Rode through England, proud and gay,  
Drunk as with intoxication  
Of the wine of desolation.

## XIII.

O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,  
Passed the pageant swift and free,  
Tearing up, and trampling down,  
Till they came to London town.

## XIV.

And each dweller, panic-stricken,  
Felt his heart with terror sicken,  
Hearing the tremendous cry  
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

## XV.

For with pomp to meet him came,  
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,  
The hired murderers who did sing,  
"Thou art God, and Law, and King.

## XVI.

"We have waited, weak and lone,  
For thy coming, Mighty One!  
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,  
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

## XVII.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,  
To the earth their pale brows bowed,  
Like a bad prayer not over loud,  
Whispering—"Thou art Law and God!"

## XVIII.

Then all cried with one accord,  
"Thou art King, and Law, and Lord;  
Anarchy, to thee we bow,  
Be thy name made holy now!"

## XIX.

And Anarchy, the skeleton,  
Bowed and grinned to every one,  
As well as if his education  
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

## XX.

For he knew the palaces  
Of our kings were nightly his;  
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,  
And the gold-inwoven robe.

## XXI.

So he sent his slaves before  
To seize upon the bank and tower,  
And was proceeding with intent  
To meet his pensioned parliament,

## XXII.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,  
And her name was Hope, she said:  
But she looked more like Despair;  
And she cried out in the air:

## XXIII.

"My father, Time is weak and grey  
With waiting for a better day;  
See how idiot-like he stands,  
Trembling with his palsied hands!

## XXIV.

“ He has had child after child,  
And the dust of death is piled  
Over every one but me—  
Misery ! oh, Misery ! ”

## XXV.

Then she lay down in the street,  
Right before the horses' feet,  
Expecting with a patient eye,  
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

## XXVI.

When between her and her foes  
A mist, a light, an image rose,  
Small at first, and weak and frail  
Like the vapour of the vale :

## XXVII.

Till as clouds grow on the blast,  
Like tower-crowned giants striding fast,  
And glare with lightnings as they fly,  
And speak in thunder to the sky,

## XXVIII.

It grew—a shape arrayed in mail  
Brighter than the viper's scale,  
And upborne on wings whose grain  
Was like the light of sunny rain.

## XXIX.

On its helm, seen far away,  
A planet, like the morning's, lay ;  
And those plumes it light rained through,  
Like a shower of crimson dew.

## XXX.

With step as soft as wind it passed  
O'er the heads of men—so fast  
That they knew the presence there,  
And looked—and all was empty air.

## XXXI.

As flowers beneath May's footsteps waken,  
As stars from night's loose hair are shaken,  
As waves arise when loud winds call,  
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

## XXXII.

And the prostrate multitude  
Looked—and ankle-deep in blood,  
Hope, that maiden most serene,  
Was walking with a quiet mien :

## XXXIII.

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,  
Lay dead earth upon the earth ;  
The Horse of Death, tameless as wind,  
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind  
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

## XXXIV.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,  
A sense, awakening and yet tender,  
Was heard and felt—and at its close  
These words of joy and fear arose :

## XXXV.

As if their own indignant earth,  
Which gave the sons of England birth,  
Had felt their blood upon her brow,  
And shuddering with a mother's throe,

## XXXVI.

Had turned every drop of blood,  
By which her face had been bedewed,  
To an accent unwithstood,  
As if her heart had cried aloud :

## XXXVII.

“ Men of England, Heirs of Glory,  
Heroes of unwritten story,  
Nurslings of one mighty mother,  
Hopes of her, and one another !

## XXXVIII.

“ Rise, like lions after slumber,  
In unvanquishable number,  
Shake your chains to earth like dew,  
Which in sleep had fall'n on you.  
Ye are many, they are few.

## XXXIX.

“ What is Freedom ? Ye can tell  
That which Slavery is too well,  
For its very name has grown  
To an echo of your own.

## XL.

“ 'Tis to work, and have such pay  
As just keeps life from day to day  
In your limbs, as in a cell  
For the tyrants' use to dwell :

## XLI.

“ So that ye for them are made,  
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade ;  
With or without your own will, bent  
To their defence and nourishment.

## XLII.

“ 'Tis to see your children weak  
With their mothers pine and peak,  
When the winter winds are bleak :—  
They are dying whilst I speak.

## XLIII.

“ 'Tis to hunger for such diet,  
As the rich man in his riot  
Casts to the fat dogs that lie  
Surfeiting beneath his eye.

## XLIV.

" 'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold  
Take from toil a thousand-fold  
More than e'er its substance could  
In the tyrannies of old :

## XLV.

" Paper coin—that forgery  
Of the title deeds, which ye  
Hold to something of the worth  
Of the inheritance of Earth.

## XLVI.

" 'Tis to be a slave in soul,  
And to hold no strong controul  
Over your own wills, but be  
All that others make of ye.

## XLVII.

" And at length when ye complain,  
With a murmur weak and vain,  
'Tis to see the tyrant's crew  
Ride over your wives and you :—  
Blood is on the grass like dew !

## XLVIII.

" Then it is to feel revenge,  
Fiercely thirsting to exchange  
Blood for blood—and wrong for wrong :  
Do not thus, when ye are strong !

## XLIX.

" Birds find rest in narrow nest,  
When weary of their winged quest ;  
Beasts find fare in woody lair,  
When storm and snow are in the air.

## L.

" Horses, oxen, have a home,  
When from daily toil they come ;  
Household dogs, when the wind roars,  
Find a home within warm doors.

## LI.

" Asses, swine, have litter spread,  
And with fitting food are fed ;  
All things have a home but one :  
Thou, oh Englishman, hast none !

## LII.

" This is slavery—savage men,  
Or wild beasts within a den,  
Would endure not as ye do :  
But such ills they never knew.

## LIII.

" What art thou, Freedom ? Oh ! could slaves  
Answer from their living graves  
This demand, tyrants would flee  
Like a dream's dim imagery.

## LIV.

“Thou art not, as impostors say,  
A shadow soon to pass away,  
A superstition, and a name  
Echoing from the cave of Fame.

## LV.

“For the labourer thou art bread  
And a comely table spread,  
From his daily labour come,  
In a neat and happy home.

## LVI.

“Thou art clothes, and fire, and food  
For the trampled multitude:  
No—in countries that are free  
Such starvation cannot be,  
As in England now we see.

## LVII.

“To the rich thou art a check;  
When his foot is on the neck  
Of his victim, thou dost make  
That he treads upon a snake.

## LVIII.

“Thou art Justice—ne'er for gold  
May thy righteous laws be sold,  
As laws are in England:—thou  
Shieldest alike the high and low.

## LIX.

“Thou art Wisdom—freemen never  
Dream that God will doom for ever  
All who think those things untrue,  
Of which priests make such ado.

## LX.

“Thou art Peace—never by thee  
Would blood and treasure wasted be,  
As tyrants wasted them, when all  
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

## LXI.

“What if English toil and blood  
Was poured forth, even as a flood?  
It availed,—oh Liberty!  
To dim—but not extinguish thee.

## LXII.

“Thou art Love—the rich have kist  
Thy feet; and like him following Christ,  
Given their substance to the free,  
And through the rough world followed thee.

## LXIII.

“Oh turn their wealth to arms, and make  
War for thy beloved sake,  
On wealth and war and fraud; whence they  
Drew the power which is their prey.

## LXIV.

“ Science, and Poetry, and Thought,  
Are thy lamps ; they make the lot  
Of the dwellers in a cot  
Such, they curse their maker not.

## LXV.

“ Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,  
All that can adorn and bless,  
Art thou : let deeds, not words, express  
Thine exceeding loveliness.

## LXVI.

“ Let a great assembly be  
Of the fearless and the free,  
On some spot of English ground,  
Where the plains stretch wide around.

## LXVII.

“ Let the blue sky overhead,  
The green earth, on which ye tread,  
All that must eternal be,  
Witness the solemnity.

## LXVIII.

“ From the corners uttermost  
Of the bounds of English coast ;  
From every hut, village, and town,  
Where those who live and suffer, moan  
For others' misery, or their own :

## LXIX.

“ From the workhouse and the prison,  
Where pale as corpses newly risen,  
Women, children, young, and old,  
Groan for pain, and weep for cold ;

## LXX.

“ From the haunts of daily life,  
Where is waged the daily strife  
With common wants and common cares,  
Which sow the human heart with tares.

## LXXI.

“ Lastly, from the palaces,  
Where the murmur of distress  
Echoes, like the distant sound  
Of a wind, alive around ;

## LXXII.

“ Those prison-halls of wealth and fashion,  
Where some few feel such compassion  
For those who groan, and toil, and wail,  
As must make their brethren pale ;

## LXXIII.

“ Ye who suffer woes untold,  
Or to feel, or to behold  
Your lost country bought and sold  
With a price of blood and gold.



## LXXIV.

“ Let a vast assembly be,  
 And with great solemnity  
 Declare with ne'er said words, that ye  
 Are, as God has made ye, free.

## LXXV.

“ Be your strong and simple words  
 Keen to wound as sharpened swords,  
 And wide as targes let them be,  
 With their shade to cover ye.

## LXXVI.

“ Let the tyrants pour around  
 With a quick and startling sound,  
 Like the loosening of a sea,  
 Troops of armed emblazonry.

## LXXVII.

“ Let the charged artillery drive,  
 Till the dead air seems alive  
 With the clash of clanging wheels,  
 And the tramp of horses' heels.

## LXXVIII.

“ Let the fixed bayonet  
 Gleam with sharp desire to wet  
 Its bright point in English blood,  
 Looking keen as one for food.

## LXXIX.

“ Let the horseman's scimitars  
 Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars,  
 Thirsting to eclipse their burning  
 In a sea of death and mourning.

## LXXX.

“ Stand ye calm and resolute,  
 Like a forest close and mute,  
 With folded arms, and looks which are  
 Weapons of an unvanquished war.

## LXXXI.

“ And let Panic, who outspeeds  
 The career of armed steeds,  
 Pass, a disregarded shade,  
 Through your phalanx undismayed.

## LXXXII.

“ Let the laws of your own land,  
 Good or ill, between ye stand,  
 Hand to hand, and foot to foot,  
 Arbiters of the dispute.

## LXXXIII.

“ The old laws of England—they  
 Whose reverend heads with age are grey,  
 Children of a wiser day ;  
 And whose solemn voice must be  
 Thine own echo—Liberty !

## LXXXIV.

“ On those who first should violate  
Such sacred heralds in their state,  
Rest the blood that must ensue ;  
And it will not rest on you.

## LXXXV.

“ And if then the tyrants dare,  
Let them ride among you there ;  
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew ;  
What they like, that let them do.

## LXXXVI.

“ With folded arms and steady eyes,  
And little fear, and less surprise,  
Look upon them as they slay,  
Till their rage has died away :

## LXXXVII.

“ Then they will return with shame,  
To the place from which they came,  
And the blood thus shed will speak  
In hot blushes on their cheek :

## LXXXVIII.

“ Every woman in the land  
Will point at them as they stand—  
They will hardly dare to greet  
Their acquaintance in the street :

## LXXXIX.

“ And the bold, true warriors,  
Who have hugged danger in the wars,  
Will turn to those who would be free,  
Ashamed of such base company :

## XC.

“ And that slaughter to the nation  
Shall steam up like inspiration,  
Eloquent, oracular,  
A volcano heard afar :

## XCI.

“ And these words shall then become  
Like Oppression's thundered doom,  
Ringing through each heart and brain,  
Heard again—again—again !

## XCII.

“ Rise like lions after slumber  
In unvanquishable number !  
Shake your chains to earth, like dew  
Which in sleep had fallen on you :  
Ye are many—they are few !”