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NIGHT SCENES OF OTHER TIMES.

—
A Poem, in Three Parts.
—

PART I.

“ THE night winds bellow o'er my head
Dim grows the fading light;
Where shall I find some friendly shed
To screen me from the night ?

“ Ah ! round me lies a desert vast,
No habitation near ;
And dark and pathless is the waste
And fills my mind with fear.

“ Thou distant tree, whose lonely top
Has bent to many a storm,
No more canst thou deceive my hope
And take my lover's form ;

“ For o'er thy head the dark cloud rolls,
Dark as thy blasted pride ;
How deep the angry tempest growls
Along the mountain's side.

“ Safely within the shaggy brake
Are couched the mountain deer ;
A sound unbroken sleep they take ;
No haunts of men are near.

“ Beneath the fern the moorcock sleeps,
And twisted adders lie ;
Back to his rock the night-bird creeps,
Nor gives his wonted cry.

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“ For angry spirits of the night

Ride on the troubled air,

And to their dens, in strange affright,

The beasts of prey repair.

“ But thou, my love ! where dost thou rest ?

What shelter covers thee ?

O may this cold and wintry blast

But only beat on me !

“ Some friendly dwelling mayst thou find,

Where sleep may banish care

And thou feel not the chilly wind

That scatters Margaret's hair.

“ Ah no ! for thou didst give thy word

To meet me on the way :

Nor friendly roof nor social board

Will tempt a lover's stay.

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“ O raise thy voice if thou art near!
Its weakest sound were bliss ;
What other sound my heart can cheer
In such a gloom as this ?

“ But from the hills with deafening roar
The dashing torrents fall,
And heavy beats the drifted shower,
And mock a lover’s call.

“ Ha ! see, across the dreary waste,
A moving form appears,
It is my love, my cares are past ;
How vain were all my fears !”

The form advanced, but sad and slow,
Not with a lover’s tread ;
And from his cheek the youthful glow
And greeting smile were fled.

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Dim sadness sat upon his brow;
 Fixed was his beamless eye;
 His face was like a moon-light bow
 Upon a wintry sky.

And fixed and ghastly to the sight
 His strengthened features rose,
 And bended was his graceful height,
 And bloody were his clothes.

" My Margaret, calm thy troubled breast;
 Thy sorrow now is vain;
 Thy Edward from his peaceful rest
 Shall ne'er return again.

" A treacherous friend has laid me low,
 Has fixed my early doom,
 And laid my corse with feigned woe
 Beneath a vaulted tomb.

“ To take thee to my home I swear,
 And here we were to meet;
 Wilt thou a narrow coffin share,
 And part my winding sheet?

“ But late the lord of many lands,
 And now a grave is all:
 My blood is warm upon his hands
 Who revels in my hall.

“ Yet think, thy father's hoary hair
 Is watered with his tears;
 He has but thee to soothe his care,
 And prop his load of years.

“ Remember Edward when he's gone!
 He only lived for thee;
 And when thou art pensive and alone
 Dear Margaret, call on me!

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“ Though deep beneath the mouldering clod

I rest my wounded head,

And terrible that call and loud

Which shall awake the dead!”

“ No, Edward; I will follow thee,

And share thy hapless doom;

Companions shall our spirits be,

Though distant is thy tomb.

“ O! never to my father's tower

Will I return again;

A bleeding heart has little power

To ease another's pain.

“ Upon the wing my spirit flies,

I feel my course is run;

Nor shall these dim and weary eyes

Behold to-morrow's sun.”

Like early dew, or hoary frost
Spent with the beaming day,
So shrunk the pale and watery ghost,
And dimly wore away.

No longer Margaret felt the storm,
She bowed her lovely head,
And, with her lover's fleeting form,
Her gentle spirit fled.

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PART II.

“ Loud roars the wind that shakes the wall,
It is no common blast;
Deep hollow sounds pass through my hall:
O would the night were past!

“ Methinks the demons of the air
Upon the turrets growl,
While down the empty winding stair
Their deepening murmurs roll.

“ The glimmering fire cheers not the gloom,
Blue burns the quivering ray,
And, like a taper in a tomb,
But spreads the more dismay.

“ Athwart its melancholy light
The lengthened shadow falls ;
My grandsires to my troubled sight
Lower on me from these walls.

“ Methinks yon angry warrior’s head
Doth in its panel frown,
And dart a look, as if it said,
‘ Where hast thou laid my son ?’

“ But will these fancies never cease ?
O would the night were run !
My troubled soul can find no peace
But with the morning sun.

“ Vain hope ! the guilty never rest ;
Dismay is always near ;
There is a midnight in the breast
No morn shall ever cheer.

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“ Now soundly sleeps the weary hind,
Though lowly lies his head ;
An easy lair the guiltless find
Upon the hardest bed.

“ The beggar, in his wretched haunt,
May now a monarch be ;
Forget his woe, forget his want,
For all can sleep but me.

“ I’ve dared whate’er the boldest can,
Then why this childish dread ?
I never feared a living man,
And shall I fear the dead ?

“ No ; whistling blasts may shake my tower,
And passing spirits scream :
Their shadowy arms are void of power,
And but a gloomy dream.

“ But, lo! a form advancing slow
 Across the dusky hall,
 Art thou a friend? — art thou a foe?
 O answer to my call!”

Still nearer to the glimmering light
 The stately figure strode,
 Till full, and horrid to the sight,
 The murdered Edward stood.

A broken shaft his right hand swayed,
 Like Time's dark, threatening dart,
 And pointed to a rugged blade
 That quivered in his heart.

The blood still trickled from his head,
 And clotted was his hair;
 His severed vesture stained and red;
 His mangled breast was bare.

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His face was like a muddy sky

Before the coming snow;

And dark and dreadful was his eye,

And cloudy was his brow.

Pale Conrad shrunk, but drew his sword—

Fear thrilled in every vein;

His quivering lips gave out no word;

He paused, and shrunk again.

Then utterance came—"At this dread hour

Why dost thou haunt the night?

Has the deep gloomy vault no power

To keep thee from my sight?

"Why dost thou glare and slowly wave

That fatal shaft of strife?

The deed is done, and from the grave

Who can recall to life?

“ Why roll thine eyes beneath thy brow
Dark as the midnight storm ?

What dost thou want? O let me know,
But hide thy dreadful form.

“ I'd give the life-blood from my heart

To wash my crime away :

If thou a spirit art, depart,

Nor haunt a wretch of clay !

“ Say, dost thou with the blessed dwell? —

Return and blessed be !

Or comest thou from the lowest hell? —

I am more cursed than thee.”

The form advanced with solemn steps

As if it meant to speak,

And seemed to move its pallid lips,

But silence did not break.

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Then sternly stalked with heavy pace

Which shook the floor and wall,

And turned away its fearful face,

And vanished from the hall.

Transfixed and powerless, Conrad stood;

Ears ring, and eyeballs swell;

Back to his heart runs the cold blood;

Into a trance he fell.

Night fled, and through the windows 'gan

The early light to play;

But on a more unhappy man

Ne'er shone the dawning day.

The gladsome sun all nature cheers,

But cannot charm his cares;

Still dwells his mind with gloomy fears,

And murdered Edward glares.

PART III.

“ No rest nor comfort can I find:
I watch the midnight hour;
I sit and listen to the wind
That beats upon my tower.

“ Methinks low voices from the ground
Break mournful on my ear,
And through these empty chambers sound
So dismal and so drear!

“ The ghost of some departed friend
Doth in my sorrows share;
Or is it but the rushing wind
That mocketh my despair?

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“ Sad through the hall the pale lamp gleams
 Upon my father's arms ;
 My soul is filled with gloomy dreams,
 I fear unknown alarms.

“ O, I have known this lonely place
 With every blessing stored,
 And many a friend with cheerful face
 Sit smiling at my board !

“ While round the hearth, in early bloom,
 My harmless children played,
 Who now within the narrow tomb
 Are with their mother laid.

“ Now sadly bends my wretched head,
 And those I loved are gone :
 My friends, my family, all are fled,
 And I am left alone.

“ Oft as the cheerless fire declines,
 In it I sadly trace,
 As lone I sit, the half-formed lines
 Of many a much-loved face.

“ But chiefly, Margaret, to my mind,
 Thy lovely features rise ;
 I strive to think thee less unkind,
 And wipe my streaming eyes.

“ For only thee I had to vaunt,
 Thou wert thy mother's pride ;
 She left thee like a shooting plant,
 To screen my widowed side.

“ But thou forsakest me, weak, forlorn,
 And chilled with age's frost,
 To count my weary days and mourn
 The comforts I have lost.

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“ Unkindly child! why didst thou go?

O, had I known the truth!

Though Edward's father was my foe,

I would have blessed the youth.

“ Could I but see that face again,

Whose smile calmed every strife,

And hear that voice which soothed my pain,

And made me wish for life!

“ Thy harp hangs silent by the wall:

My nights are sad and long,

And thou art in a distant hall,

Where strangers raise the song.

“ Ha! some delusion of the mind

My senses doth confound!

It is the harp, and not the wind,

That did so sweetly sound.”

Old Arno rose all wan as death,

And turned his eager ear,

And checked the while his quickened breath

The sound again to hear.

When like a full, but distant choir,

The swelling notes returned ;

And with the softly trembling wire

Surrounding echoes mourned ;

Then softly whispered o'er the song

That Margaret loved to play,

Its well-known measure lingered long,

And faintly died away.

His dim-worn eyes to heaven he cast,

Where all his griefs were known,

And smote upon his troubled breast,

And heaved a heavy groan.

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“ I know it is my daughter’s hand,
 But ’tis no hand of clay;
 And here a lonely wretch I stand,
 All childless, bent, and grey.

“ And art thou low, my lovely child,
 And hast thou met thy doom,
 And has thy flattering morning smiled,
 To lead but to the tomb?

“ O let me see thee ere we part,
 For souls like thine are blest;
 O let me fold thee to my heart,
 If aught of form thou hast!

“ This passing mist conceals thy shape,
 But it is shrunk or flown;
 Why dost thou from mine arms escape,
 Art thou not still mine own?

“Thou’rt fled like the low evening breath,
 That sighs upon the hill:
 O stay! though in thy weeds of death,—
 Thou art my daughter still.”

Loud waked the sound, then fainter grew,
 And long and sadly mourned,
 And softly sighed a long adieu,
 And never more returned.

Old Arno stretched him on the ground;
 Thick as the gloom of night,
 Death’s misty shadows gathered round,
 And swam before his sight.

He heaved a deep and deadly groan,
 That rent his labouring breast,
 And long before the morning shone,
 His spirit was at rest.

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