

## *INTRODUCTION*

Romance, who loves to nod and sing,  
With drowsy head and folded wing,  
Among the green leaves as they shake  
Far down within some shadowy lake,  
To me a painted paroquet  
Hath been—a most familiar bird—  
Taught me my alphabet to say—  
To lisp my very earliest word  
While in the wild-wood I did lie

A child—with a most knowing eye.  
Succeeding years, too wild for song,  
Then roll'd like tropic storms along,  
Where, tho' the garish lights that fly  
Dying along the troubled sky,  
Lay bare, thro' vistas thunder-riven,  
The blackness of the general Heaven,  
That very blackness yet doth fling  
Light on the lightning's silver wing.

For, being an idle boy lang syne,  
Who read Anacreon rhymes  
Were almost passionate sometimes—  
And by strange alchemy of brain  
His pleasures always turn'd to pain—  
His naivete to wild desire—  
His wit to love—his wine to fire—  
And so, being young and dipt in folly  
I fell in love with melancholy,  
And used to throw my earthly rest  
And quiet all away in jest—  
I could not love except where Death  
Was mingling his with Beauty's breath—  
Or Hymen, Time, and Destiny  
Were stalking between her and me.

O, then the eternal Condor years  
So shook the very Heavens on high,  
With tumult as they thunder'd by;  
I had no time for idle cares,  
Thro' gazing on the unquiet sky!  
Or if an hour with calmer wing  
Its down did on my spirit fling,  
That little hour with lyre and rhyme  
To while away— forbidden thing!  
My heart half fear'd to be a crime  
Unless it trembled with the string.

But *now* my soul has too much room—  
Gone are the glory and the gloom—

The black hath mellow'd into grey,  
And all the fires are fading away.

My draught of passion hath been deep—  
I revell'd, and I now would sleep—  
And after-drunkenness of soul  
Succeeds the glories of the bowl—  
An idle longing night and day  
To dream my very life away.

But dreams—of those who dream as I,  
Aspiringly, are damned, and die:  
Yet should I swear I mean alone,  
By notes so very shrilly blown,  
To break upon Time's monotone,  
While yet my vapid joy and grief  
Are tintless of the yellow leaf—  
Why not an imp the greybeard hath,  
Will shake his shadow in my path—  
And even the greybeard will o'erlook  
Connivingly my dreaming-book.

[1829-1831]