

*ISRAFEL.\**

IN Heaven a spirit doth dwell

“ Whose heart-strings are a lute ; ”

None sing so wildly well

As the angel Israfel,

\* “ And the angel Israfel, whose heart-strings are a lute, and who has the sweetest voice of all God's creatures.”—KORAN.

And the giddy stars (so legends tell)  
Ceasing their hymns, attend the spell  
Of his voice, all mute.

Tottering above  
In her highest noon,  
The enamoured moon  
Blushes with love,  
While, to listen, the red levin  
(With the rapid Pleiads, even,  
Which were seven,)  
Pauses in Heaven.

And they say (the starry choir  
And the other listening things)  
That Israfeli's fire  
Is owing to that lyre  
By which he sits and sings—  
The trembling living wire  
Of those unusual strings.

But the skies that angel trod,  
Where deep thoughts are a duty—  
Where Love's a grown-up God—  
Where the Houri glances are

Imbued with all the beauty  
Which we worship in a star.

Therefore thou art not wrong,  
Israfeli, who despisest  
An unimpassioned song ;  
To thee the laurels belong,  
Best bard, because the wisest !  
Merrily live, and long !

The ecstasies above  
With thy burning measures suit—  
Thy grief, thy joy, thy hate, thy love,  
With the fervour of thy lute—  
Well may the stars be mute.

Yes, Heaven is thine ; but this  
Is a world of sweets and sour ;  
Our flowers are merely—flowers,  
And the shadow of thy perfect bliss  
Is the sunshine of ours.

If I could dwell  
Where Israfel  
Hath dwelt, and he where I,

He might not sing so wildly well  
A mortal melody,  
While a bolder note than this might swell  
From my lyre within the sky.