

[THE COLISEUM]

Type of the antique Rome! Rich reliquary
Of lofty contemplation left to Time
By buried centuries of pomp and power!
At length—at length—after so many days
Of weary pilgrimage and burning thirst,
(Thirst for the springs of lore that in thee lie,)
I kneel, an altered and an humble man,
Amid thy shadows, and so drink within
My very soul thy grandeur, gloom, and glory!

Vastness! and Age! and Memories of Eld!
 Silence! and Desolation! and dim Night!
 Gaunt vestibules and phantom-peopled aisles
 I feel ye now—I feel ye in your strength—
 O spells more sure than e'er Judæan king
 Taught in the gardens of Gethsemane!
 O charms more potent than the rapt Chaldee
 Ever drew down from out the quiet stars!

Here, where a hero fell, a column falls!
 Here, where the mimic eagle glared in gold,
 A midnight vigil holds the swarthy bat!
 Here, where the dames of Rome their yellow hair
 Wav'd to the wind, now wave the reed and thistle!
 Here, where on ivory couch the Caesar sat
 On bed of moss lies gloating the foul adder.

Here, where on golden throne the monarch lolled,
 Glides, spectre-like, unto his marble home,
 Lit by the wan light of the horned moon,
 The swift and silent lizard of the stones!

These crumbling walls; these tottering arcades
 These mouldering plinths—these sad and blacken'd shafts—
 These vague entablatures—this broken frieze—
 These shattered cornices—this wreck—this ruin—
 These stones—alas! these gray stones—are they all—
 All of the great, and the colossal left
 By the corrosive Hours to Fate and me?

“Not all”—the Echoes answer me—“not all!
 “Prophetic sounds and loud, arise forever
 “From us, and from all Ruin, unto the wise,
 “As in old days from Memnon to the Sun.
 “We rule the hearts of mightiest men—we rule
 “With a despotic sway all giant minds.
 “We are not desolate—we pallid stones.
 “Not all our power is gone—not all our fame—
 “Not all the magic of our high renown—
 “Not all the wonder that encircles us—
 “Not all the mysteries that in us lie—
 “Not all the memories that hang upon
 “And cling around about us now and ever
 “And clothe us in a robe of more than glory.”

[1833]