

THE DOOMED CITY [THE CITY IN THE SEA]

Lo! Death hath rear'd himself a throne
In a strange city, all alone,
Far down within the dim west—
And the good, and the bad, and the worst, and the best,
Have gone to their eternal rest.

There shrines, and palaces, and towers
Are—not like any thing of ours—
O! no—O! no—*ours* never loom
To heaven with that ungodly gloom!
Time-eaten towers that tremble not!
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

A heaven that God doth not contemn
With stars is like a diadem—
We liken our ladies' eyes to them—
But there! that everlasting pall!
It would be mockery to call
Such dreariness a heaven at all.

Yet tho' no holy rays come down
On the long night-time of that town,
Light from the lurid, deep sea
Streams up the turrets silently—
Up thrones—up long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptur'd ivy and stone flowers—
Up domes—up spires—up kingly halls—
Up fanes—up Babylon-like walls—
Up many a melancholy shrine
Whose entablatures intertwine
The mast—the viol—and the vine.

There open temples—open graves
Are on a level with the waves—
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye,

Not the gaily-jewell'd dead
Tempt the waters from their bed:
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass—
No swellings hint that winds may be
Upon a far-off happier sea:
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from the high towers of the town
Death looks gigantically down.

But lo! a stir is in the air!
The wave! there is a ripple there!
As if the towers had thrown aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide—
As if the turret-tops had given
A vacuum in the filmy heaven:
The waves have now a redder glow—
The very hours are breathing low—
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell rising from a thousand thrones
Shall do it reverence,
And Death to some more happy clime
Shall give his undivided time.

[1831]