

THE VALLEY NIS
[THE VALLEY OF UNREST]

Far away—far away—
Far away—as far at least
Lies that valley as the day
Down within the golden east—
All things lovely—are not they
Far away—far away?

It is called the valley Nis.
And a Syriac tale there is
Thereabout which Time hath said
Shall not be interpreted.
Something about Satan's dart—
Something about angel wings—
Much about a broken heart—
All about unhappy things:
But "the valley Nis" at best
Means "the valley of unrest."

Once it smiled a silent dell
Where the people did not dwell,
Having gone unto the wars—
And the sly mysterious stars,
With a visage full of meaning,
O'er the unguarded flowers were leaning:
Or the sun ray dripp'd all red
Thro' the tulips overhead,
Then grew paler as it fell
On the quiet Asphodel.

Now the *unhappy* shall confess
Nothing there is motionless:
Helen, like thy human eye
There th' uneasy violets lie—
There the reedy grass doth wave
Over the old forgotten grave—
One by one from the tree top
There the eternal dews do drop—
There the vague and dreamy trees
Do roll like seas in northern breeze
Around the stormy Hebrides—
There the gorgeous clouds do fly,
Rustling everlastingly,

Through the terror-stricken sky,
Rolling like a waterfall
O'er th' horizon's fiery wall—
There the moon doth shine by night
With a most unsteady light—
There the sun doth reel by day
"Over the hills and far away."

And Helen, like thy human eye,
Low crouched on Earth, some violets lie,
And, nearer Heaven, some lilies wave
All banner-like, above *a grave*.
And one by one, from out their tops
Eternal dews come down in drops,
Ah, one by one, from off their stems
Eternal dews come down in gems!

[1831]