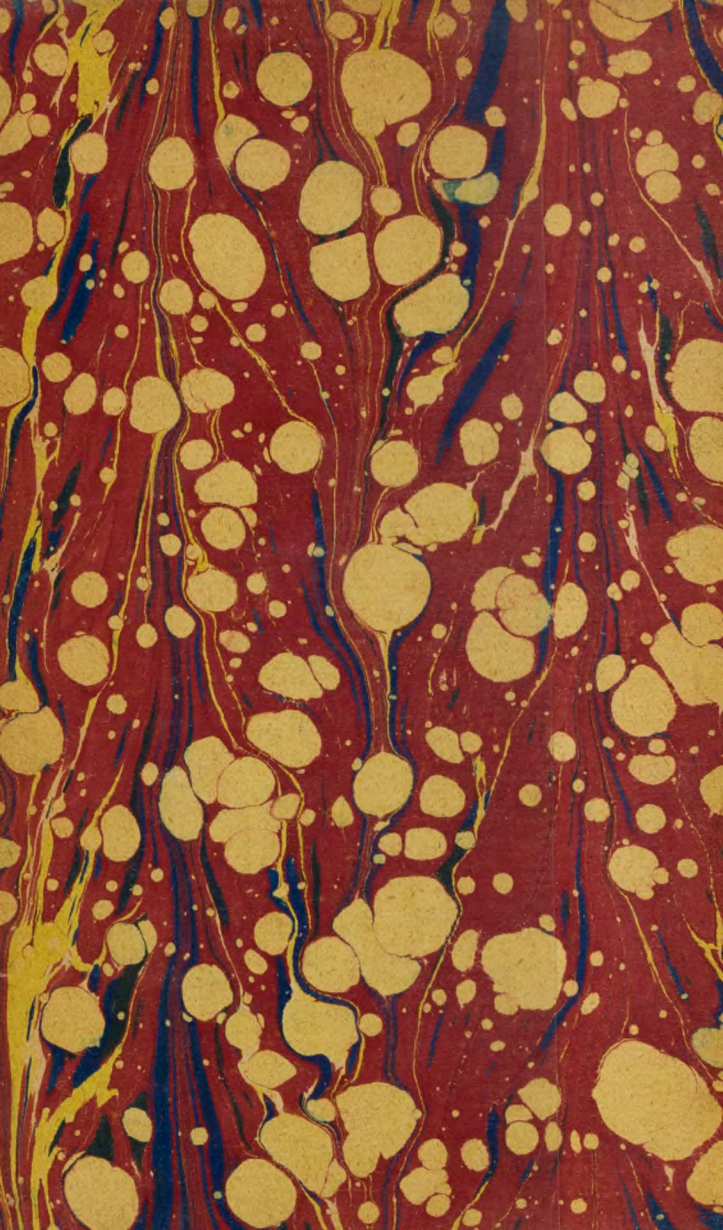
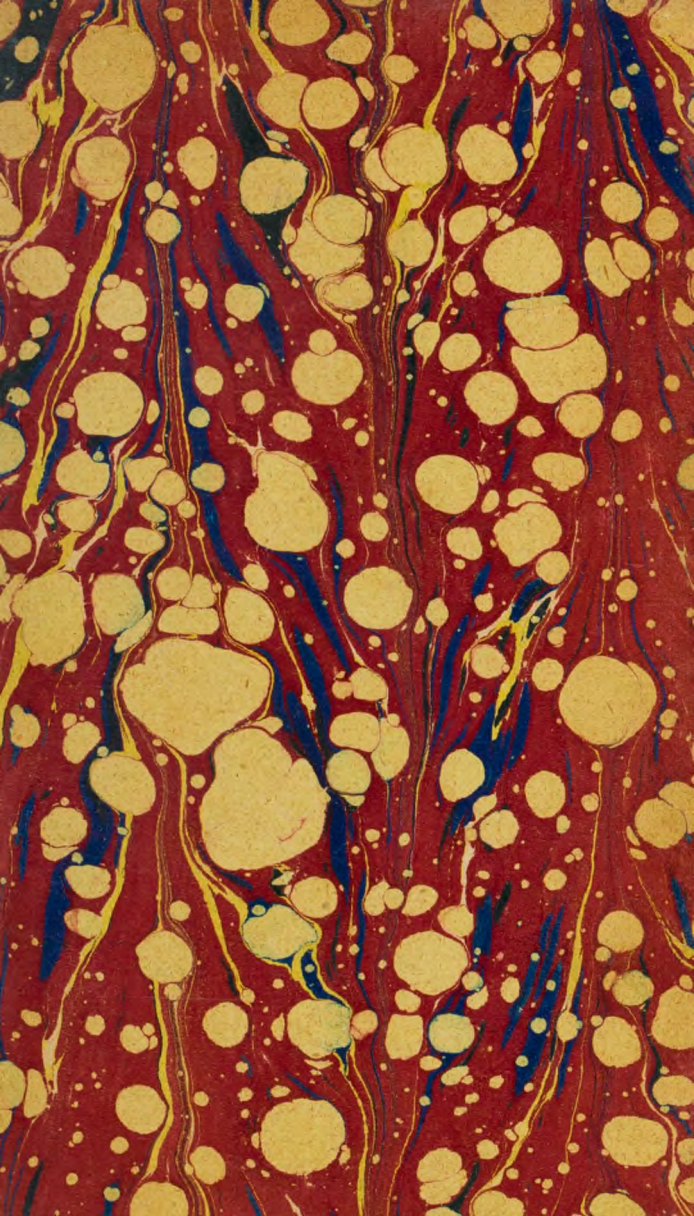
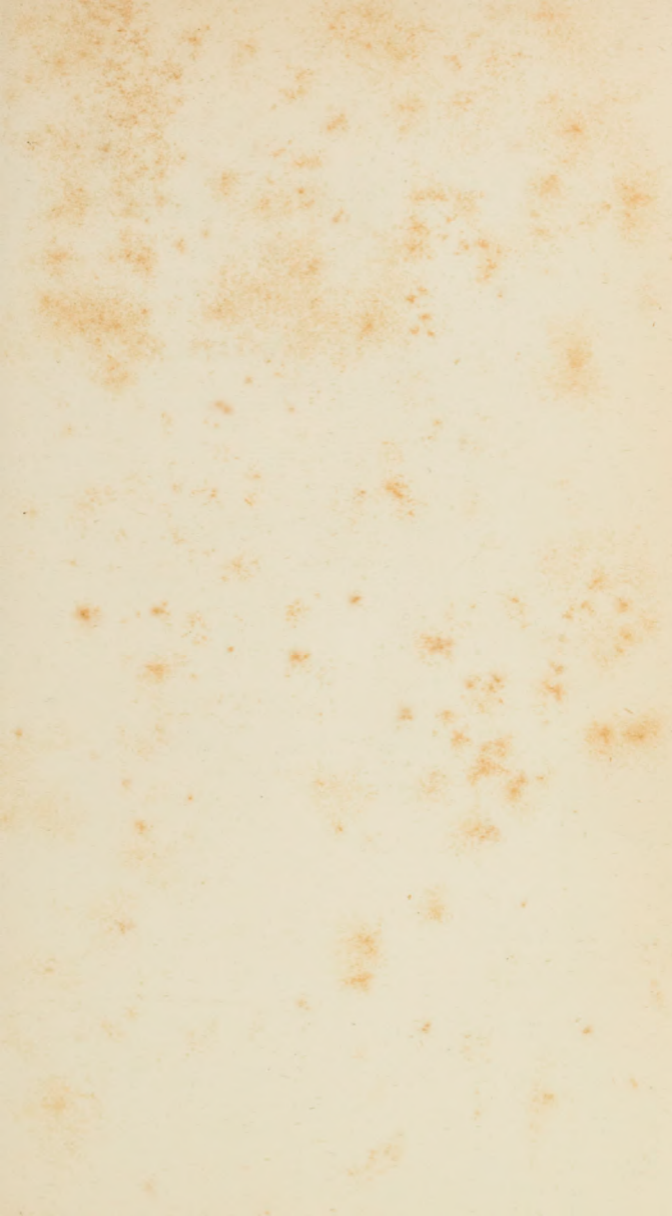


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J. J. Mitchell

The Godolphin Arabian:



THE STORY OF A HORSE.

MANIPULATED FROM THE FRENCH PROSE TALE
OF EUGENE SUE

BY

J. BRUNTON STEPHENS,

AUTHOR OF "CONVICT ONCE."

Brisbane :

WATSON & CO., QUEEN STREET.

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“More than twenty years after the Darley Arabian, and when the value of the Arabian blood was fully established, Lord Godolphin possessed a beautiful but singularly-shaped horse, which he called an Arabian, but which was really a Barb. His crest, lofty and arched, almost to a fault, will distinguish him from every other horse. He had a sinking behind his shoulders almost as peculiar, and a corresponding elevation of the spine towards the loins. His muzzle was uncommonly fine, his head beautifully set on, his shoulders capacious, and his quarters well spread out. He was bought in France, where he was actually employed in drawing a cart He was in [Lord Godolphin's] stud a considerable time before his value was discovered. It was not until the birth of Lath, one of the first horses of that period, that his excellence began to be appreciated. He was then styled an Arabian, and became, in even a greater degree than the Darley, the founder of the modern thorough-bred horses. He died in 1753, at the age of twenty-nine.

“An intimate friendship subsisted between him and a cat, which either sat on his back when he was in the stable, or nestled as closely to him as she could. At his death, she began to refuse her food, and pined away, and died.”

THE HORSE, by Youatt.

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The Godolphin Arabian:

THE STORY OF A HORSE.

MANIPULATED FROM THE FRENCH PROSE TALE OF
EUGENE SUE.

PART FIRST.—THE QUAKER.

I.

TIME—dead of winter, Seventeen-thirty-two.

Scene—Paris, ere petrolean conflagration.

A crowd had gathered on the Bridge called
“New”—

“Pont Neuf” in French—but this is a
translation.

(Betwixt you, me, the Post, and Eugene Sue,

It's rather what I'd call an adaptation ;

For while I own the source—not being knavish—

I've not the least intention to be slavish.)

B

II.

Now, by the way, it is an evil practice

To call things *New* which must remain the same
 Long years—whose newness in the very act is
 Of growing old while you bestow the name.

Take as an instance this “Pont Neuf;” the fact is
 ’Twas still called *New* when it was *Old* to *Fame*.
 These were the days of Louis Bien Aimé,
 Whose corpse, historians tell us, smelt so gamy.

III.

Well, in the days when yet his flesh was pure,
 Long ere he knew the finish of his tether,

This crowd was gathered; and you may be sure
 That in such nipping, pinching, biting weather,
 No crowd without an object could endure

To hang on a cold bridge for long together:
 It was a horse—though some might seem to doubt it;
 It *was* an *object*, no mistake about it.

IV.

Yoked to a heavy waggon piled with wood,
 The struggling creature did his level best
 To move the weight. ’Twas more, though, than he could,
 What with the ice, and snow, and all the rest.
 He dragged and slid, and slid and dragged, then stood
 Trembling in every limb like all-possessed:—
 Possessed he was, and by a devil too,
 A swearing demon in a blouse of blue.

V.

His very hands betrayed the cloven foot,
His tongue the Pandemoniums he frequented ;—
A furious, foul-mouthed, ill-conditioned brute,
In grade beneath the victim he tormented,
On which he showered his blows, and oaths to boot
In every form that Frenchmen have invented :
And truly, in that highly polished region
The oaths are multiform—their name is Legion.

VI.

Down came the strokes on body, head, and limb,
In indiscriminating distribution :—
So that they told, *where* mattered not to him,
His aim as lawless as his elocution ;
While the poor brute, in sweat and foam a-swim,
Wasted in vain his strength and resolution ;—
For horses can resolve, sum up, determine,
As well as any judge in wig and ermine.

VII.

For instance, this one, like a thing of sense,
Would ever and anon retire a space,
Compare his forces with the exigence,
Gazing with wistfully judicial face ;
Then with a sudden rush, and strain intense,
Find himself baffled in the self-same place :
And all this stress amid a rain of blows
From a whip-handle on his guiltless nose.

VIII.

Twice he went down beneath the heavy weight,
And twice his knees just touched the slippery earth;
And twice the carter, cursing heaven and fate,
Damning his horse's dam, sire, day of birth,
And all his ancestors remote and late—
Much to the pitiless spectators' mirth—
Caught him up fiercely, while the blood flowed out,
So savagely he shook the bit about.

IX.

At length a final effort, one charge more,
Wrung from the last extremity of pain,
With only sadder sequence than before.
The last of nature's force consumed in vain,
Down dropped the brute, and, bathed in sweat and gore,
He looked as if he ne'er could rise again.
Trembling he lay, his meek eye on his master,
Upbraiding not the cause of his disaster.

X.

You should have seen that drayman then and there
Fracture his whip-shaft on the horse's head;
You should have seen him dance, and heard him swear
At the dumb thing that lay three-quarters dead;
You should have seen him back his foot in air,
Then kick it in the nostrils till they bled;
You should have seen—on second thoughts you *shouldn't*.
Could you have looked on it? I know *I* couldn't.

XI.

And what of those who *did*? Some seemed quite gay,
But most looked on completely apathetic;
A few appeared half-sickened, as if they
Had just partaken of a mild emetic;
Some whispered to unyoke it where it lay,
But the advice was purely theoretic—
For dence a one would lend a hand to do it,
Each fearing this mad fiend would make him rue it.

XII.

Blows, kicks, and oaths alike inefficacious
(The horse still *hors de combat*, reft of motion),
The wretch, revolving something more vexatious,
Was seized with an incendiary notion;
Even the hardened crowd cried "Goodness gracious!"
Or some French interjectional explosion
Equally forcible, when, scared, they saw
A torch constructed from a wisp of straw.

XIII.

The monster smiled a grim and bitter smile,
As who should say, Let no man dare to hinder;—
Twisting his torch, and heaping chips the while,
Enough to turn the horse into a cinder:
And, when he deemed that he had "made his pile,"
Took from his pocket flint and steel and tinder,
And striking the initiatory stroke,
"By Jove!" he cried, "I'll frizzle this here moke!"

XIV.

Just then came up a foreign-looking man,
Attracted by the crowd and by the shout ;
And while he stands we'll sketch him if we can :—
Of middle size, past middle age, and stout ;
A great-coat, on a rather ancient plan,
Of colour grey, enveloped him about ;
A hat, three-cornered, that had seen its day,
Scarce covered his unpowdered locks of grey.

XV.

The face was good, the expression kind and wise,
With jolly smile peculiar to the fat—
A smile not only in his lips and eyes,
But from his chin right up into his hat,
And bounded on the south by many plies
And windings of a most immense cravat ;
And but for which we might have traced the rest
Of that extensive smile all down his chest.

XVI.

But while we measure it, the smile has ceased.
No sooner did the stranger understand
The case before him—the poor fallen beast,
The fiendish master, now with flaming brand
(Caught *in flagrante*)—than, like lightning greased,
He clove the callous crowd on either hand—
Right through, without a single By-your-leave,
And tugged the ruffian roughly by the sleeve.

XVII.

A tiger, scared in act to seize his prey,
Is understood to be supremely riled ;
But, in the drayman's case, a tiger's way
Compared with his is chastened like and mild,
Round wheeled the savage on the man in grey,
And voided his abuse "in accents wild,"
Adorned with many a *Sacré* and *Parbleu*,
And winding up with "Who the h—ll are *you*?"

XVIII.

He waved his brand—then all at once stood still,
And o'er his wrath there came a wondrous calm ;
Sudden he found himself a child in will,
As 'neath the potency of some magic balm.
The fact was, he, with unaccustomed thrill,
Saw fifteen louis in the Quaker's palm.
(For such the stranger's sect, I should have mentioned
Of sects decidedly the best-intentioned.)

XIX.

A magic balm is gold, of virtue rare,
A wondrous warmer, and a wondrous cooler :
But that, you'll say, is neither here nor there.
(True as to *here*!—I've known my pocket fuller.)
The drayman gazed with flabbergasted air ;
'Twas plain enough that he had found his ruler.
Of such as he, the number very few is
Who would not bow the knee to fifteen louis.

XX.

“Friend,” said the Quaker, “if thou wilt give o’er
 Thy right to this poor beast, and sell him me,
 “I’ll give thee for him fifteen louis d’or—
 No credit—ready cash, as thou dost see.”
 The wretch was dumb for half a minute more ;
 Then, chuckling with a kind of fiendish glee,
 “Look here, old boy,” he said, “I guess you’re laughin’.
 Upon my soul, I think you’re only chaffin’.”

XXI.

“I’ll give thee fifteen louis—wilt thou trade ?”
 The man of peace repeated, cool as steel.
 “The coin is good, my friend ; be not afraid—
 Take one at hazard in thy hand and feel.”
 The churl, perplexed, a backward movement made,
 And stamped the fire out with his wooden heel ;
 With puzzled air continuing to eye him—
 “And why the devil do you want to buy him ?”

XXII.

“No matter. Wilt thou sell him ? Yes, or No ?
 If so, unyoke him. Help him to his feet
 Gently. Let some one watch the wood. We’ll go
 Directly to his stable. Where’s thy street ?
 Borrow another horse, and let me know
 What is the damage.—Now, friend, I repeat,
 Wilt sell him ?”.....“Sell him ! Sacré ! Tope ! and
 Zounds !
 Just tip us over them ’ere fifteen pounds !”

XXIII.

‘Done?’—“Done.”—“Then take the gold, and loose him quick ;

He suffers while we parley.”...Nothing loath,
(And, in his glee at having “done the trick,”

Almost forgetting to let off an oath),
He did the bidding of the heretic,

Assisted by the gaping crowd, whose sloth,
Impenetrable to the call of pain,
Gave way before the sight of golden gain.

XXIV.

At length they raised the horse ; a piteous sight !

Sprawling and staggering like a new-born calf ;
Bruises and bleeding wounds to left and right ;

His staring ribs too countable by half ;—
All which most sad and lamentable plight

But served the sweet barbarian for a laugh,
That almost choked him as he cried “You’re caught !
Just see the thing you’ve been an’ gone an’ bought !

XXV.

“Well, now the bargain’s struck, and can’t be *undone*,

Perhaps you’ll tell me why the deuce you struck it.
Is there a bet ? Or was it just for fun done ?...

A brute too feeble ev’n to kick the bucket !
D’ye mean to make a show of him in London ?

You might as well just take your cash and chuck it
Into the Seine, for all the good you’ll get of him,
Unless your brats make a domestic pet of him.”

XXVI.

“I paid the gold,” the Quaker said, “to ransom
God’s creature, which thy cruelty would slay.
It was not that I thought him strong, or handsome,
Or with the view to make the bargain pay
Myself or mine.”.....The carter here began some
Expressive dumb-show in the shrugging way ;
Then gave a whistle that said plain enough,
“Good Lord, but you’re a sanguinary muff!”

XXVII.

“Now to the stable,” said the man of peace.
So on the trio moved—horse, Quaker, carter ;
The horse scarce conscious yet of his release ;
The ruffian chuckling o’er his recent barter ;
The good man pondering when wrong would cease,
And neither man nor beast be made a martyr.
The crowd...ah me, the crowd ! How *shall* I tell it ?...
It went away, and nothing more befel it.



PART SECOND.—THE RECITAL.

I.

NOTHER reason, which I can't refuse
To give you, (though it's delicate, and
rather
Out of the beaten pathway of the Muse)
Had stirred the Quaker's bounty, as I
gather

From Eugene's tale: the Post had brought him news
His daughter had just made him a grandfather;
And feeling extra-blest, he thought, by parity,
That he was called on for some extra-charity.

II.

We left them on their way. The Quaker turned
From time to time to fondle and caress
His purchase, and his soul within him burned
To avenge perforce the bleeding brute's distress.
I do believe he would have fained adjourned,
Despite his Quaker principles and dress,
To some quiet country corner where the lout
And he might cosily have "had it out."

III.

The thrifty drayman, sadly grieved to see
 Such awful waste of undeserved affection,
 At length broke out. "Aha, good man," said he,
 Things soon will take a different direction !
 I've got your cash...you don't come over me...
 That nag's no longer under my *protection*...
 Well then...look here...I'll speak...that crittur, darn it,
 You've been an' bought the very devil incarnate !

IV.

"The surliest and most vicious brute in France,
 The most cantankerous and the ugliest thief.
 There's malice in his very countenance.
 His treachery is miles beyond belief.
 Pummel him well : it is your only chance.
 Keep from his heels, or else you'll come to grief.
 That horse, Sir, is the biggest rogue that lives.
 Besides, he ne'er forgets, and ne'er forgives.

V.

"At first the knavish trickster took his licking
 So meekly that I gave him all the more,
 And sometimes varied it, you know, by pricking
 His hide where'er I'd chanced to raise a sore.
 The vicious knave had just reserved his kicking
 Till once he got me to the stable-door,
 When just as I had finished to unyoke—
 By Jove !—Talk of a paralytic stroke !

VI.

“Well, thinking how to stop that little game,
I hit at length upon a sweet design,
One that I thought could hardly fail to tame
The scamp, and scare him from the kicking line.
(I’d recommend you just to do the same.
You’re welcome to the plan, although it’s mine.)
I took him to his waggon, yoked him tight,
And *kept* him yoked from that time, day and night.”

VII.

“What! Day and night!”—“Ay, old’un, night and day.
Yet, no. I don’t quite lay it on so thick.
I’m soft at heart, d’ye see: it wouldn’t pay
To have the sorry crittur falling sick.
Hein! Keep a nag for ever in a dray!
I ain’t exactly just a lunatic.
The Blackamoor unyokes him of a Sunday,
And so he gets the benefit of one day.”

VIII.

“The Blackamoor?”—“Just so; the Blackamoor—
The dingy Saracen, the mute, the dummy.
Lord, you should see him! He is *such* a cure!
Colour of box-wood, or Egyptian mummy.
This horse here owned him—owns him yet, I’m sure.
You look astonished. Well, it’s rather rummy:
But what is rummier still by far than that,
Is what I’ve got to tell you of his cat.

IX.

“The scrubbiest thing in cats that ever purred,—
 Yet with your horse she’s over head and ears
 In love.”...“In love?”...“Oh, *love* ain’t half the word!
 You’d think they had been man and wife for years.
 She flies upon the waggon like a bird
 Whene’er her lord and master here appears,
 Then on his back with such a bound of welcome
 You’d think she was some devil’s imp from hell come.

X.

And even that is not the best of it.
 The nag’s as sweet on *her*. The beggar dotes
 On *her*. He’ll whinny, and she’ll come and sit
 Upon the barrel where I keep his oats.
 Oh sacré! Mille tonnerres! ’Twould make you split
 To see them lick each other’s lips and throats!
 Mort de ma vie! Horse, cat and Black; why, man,
 I’ve seen a worse show in a caravan!”

XI.

“How came you by him?”...“Oh, that’s short to tell.
 I bought him, as a bargain, of a cook
 In the King’s kitchen, who professed to sell
 The brute because he didn’t like his look:
 (I knew the scoundrel’s reason jolly well;)
 I offered twenty dollars, which he took.
 Now, do your best, you’d never have been able
 To guess this moke came from a royal stable.”

XII.

“How came—?”...“Hold hard. That’s what I’m coming to.

I’ll tell you who he is, and whence he hails.
This horse was in the victual line, and drew
Provisions between Paris and Versailles
In the King’s service: but ere long he grew
So vicious and malignant that the tales
They tell of him would make your hair, my friend,
Unless it is a wig, stand right on end.

XIII.

“He’d seize the other horses by the mane,
Tear out a bushel and a few odd pecks,
Then by the tail, and do the same again,
Or bite a savoury morsel from their necks;
Then of a sudden he would go insane
Over some crittur of the other sex:—
For—would you credit it?—among the mares
That duffer gives himself no end of airs.

XIV.

“Well, weary of his rows, the King’s purveyor,
Tried in his temper to the utmost stretch,
Ordered at last to give the brute away, or
Sell him for whatsoever he would fetch.
But not a man, from huckster to Lord Mayor,
Would speculate on such a vicious wretch;
So to the cook they gave my noble steed,
On the condition simply of his feed.

XV.

“ And proud he was to have him at the price,
 And well he kept his contract as to feed,
 With everything a horse considers nice,
 And twice as much as any horse could need ;—
 Till one fine day his charger took a slice
 Out of his nether garment in his greed :
 It was a sort of sandwich that he took
 Composed of partly canvas, partly cook.

XVI.

“ Touched *to the quick*, my royal cook no more
 Would give the hound his shelter or his food.
 His honour hurt, d’ye see, his feelin’s sore
 At such an act of *base* ingratitude,
 He turned him on the instant to the door,
 And told his mate to sell him if he could.
 He wanted thirty crowns ; I offered twenty ;
 And, faith, it was a trifle more than plenty.”

XVII.

“ But, know’st thou, friend, from whence he came, and
 how
 He entered first the service of the King ? ”
 “ Let’s see. I *do* remember something now
 The cook’s mate told me of that very thing.
 This horse, that you’d think fitter for the plough
 Than for a mount, arrived in France last spring,
 Along with others, about half-a-dozen,
 Sent by some Sultan, or some Sultan’s cousin,—

XVIII.

“ A present for the King—a fine gift truly !
 Each, like his lordship here, a fiery dragon,—
 (Brought by as many niggers, rather coolly
 Got up in dress—in fact, with scarce a rag on).
 The King just looked at them a bit, then duly
 Consigned them each unto a victual waggon.
 A few still live, but most are gone to glory ;
 And that is all I know about the story.”

XIX.

The Quaker looked upon the horse, amazed
 To think that he had been a royal gift—
 Born in far lands, in ease and comfort raised,
 Swiftest perhaps of all, where all are swift,
 By Princes petted, by Sultanas praised,
 And now reduced to such a sorry shift,
 With not a trace left on his whole formation
 Of more than ordinary generation.

XX.

“ And what of him who tended him ?”—“ That’s he
 I spoke about, the Blackamoor, the mute.—
 The horses sold or dead, his comrades, free,
 And finding neither clothes nor climate suit
 Their skins, set off again for Barbarie ;
 But this one, like a leech, stuck to his brute.
 He anchored at Versailles, nor slipped his cable
 Till this cook-eater left the royal stable,—

XXI.

“Thence followed him to mine, where day and night
He hangs about. A corner of the shed
Does for his house; and when his appetite
Is keen, he goes and begs a bit of bread,—
But never wandering far out of sight;
For, blow me, if he wouldn't lose his head,
Be broken on the wheel, or burnt alive,
Rather than not be here when we arrive.”

XXII.

“This man, then, to my horse is much attached?”...
“Attached!... Attached, indeed, like whip to handle—
Like chicken to the egg before it's hatched—
Like wheel to waggon, or like wick to candle.
The cursèd sluggards, too, are nicely matched,
Their laziness is grown a public scandal.
Except his grooming, deuce a stroke of work
Suits the complexion of that heathen Turk.”

XXIII.

“He comes to me at first, as smooth as butter,
Making the rummiest gestures and grimaces,—
(For not a word his blessèd lips can mutter;
His language is all signs and funny faces);—
And signifies, as plain as tongue could utter,
That where the horse may be, there, too, his place is,
And if I'd let him, he would groom him gratis—
Which truly at the very lowest rate is.”

XXIV.

“ Well, figure to yourself the life they lead.

At sunrise there's my Blackamoor awake,
Giving the all-night-harnessed horse his feed,
Moaning as if his very heart would break,
Or else his back—(and serve him right, indeed),—
And doing all a nigger can to make
The dray sit light on him. Then, when in sight
I come, down drops he in the rarest fright.

XXV.

“ And there the varlet kneels till off we drive,
And leave him to himself, and to his cat:
But if you'll guess how these two chums contrive
To gain a livelihood, I'll eat my hat.
What *he* gets, begging, wouldn't keep alive
The cat herself—and *she* gets most of that.
Well...it's a mystery...but this is clear,
When we get back, the two are always here.

XXVI.

“ But Sunday is the day! By Jove, it's fun
To see the scrimmage when I give the wink
To unharness!...Presto—and the thing is done.
You'd fancy man and horse were mad with drink
Before the weekly farce is well begun.
This very horse of yours, that you would think
So meek in spirit, and so weak in frame,
Will play with *him* at any mortal game.

XXVII.

“Such larks! Such jumping up and sliding down!
 Such rearing, lipping, patting and caressing!
 You’ve seen a circus horse, and circus clown,
 But these to those ain’t worth a tinker’s blessing.
 There’s not a thing to match it in the town—
 Such pawing, whinnying, fondling, smoothing,
 pressing!
 Such caracoling, ramping, stamping, snorting,
 And all the while that impish cat cavorting.

XXVIII.

“That done, the nigger eyes him o’er and o’er,
 As if he were some treasure for a stud,
 (And fain were he his sleekness to restore,
 Would I permit him to remove the mud)—
 Blowing warm breath on every little sore,
 And blubbering at every spot of blood.
 Mon Dieu! you’d scare believe it that a man
 Could sink so low as this Mohammedan.

XXIX.

“I have a daughter, now... Oh, yes, believe me,
 I *have* a daughter, and she’s grown up quite
 My image—(if the neighbours don’t deceive me)—
 And though the two of us have many a fight,
 I’d go the length of saying it would grieve me
 To miss her from the fireside of a night.
 We’ll say I *like* her, if you will—but clearly
 That pagan loves this horse here far more dearly.”

XXX.

“Did it not touch thee, then? Did it not soften
Thy nature to behold their loving ways?”
“Touch me! It touched me once a week too often.
Dieu merci! there’s an end to their displays!
Each Sunday put a nail into my coffin:
Such laughing was enough to end my days.
‘Soften my nature,’ say you?...Fiend and Furies!
I’ll show you what a beast this Blackamoor is.

XXXI.

“One day I chanced to give the nag a combing—
(The stick, you know),—he’d been uncommon lazy,—
When up my murky rascal rushes, foaming,
Wheeling his arms about like all gone crazy,
Rolling his eyes as if his wits were roaming,
And dancing round me in a sort of mazy
Jig of his own,—then, letting out at *me*,
Gives—fairly for a nigger—one, two, three.

XXXII.

“Look at this fist...I gave him a back-hander,
And down he went, like shot, upon the floor;
And seizing then my gallant Turkeylander,
I cuffed him till I couldn’t cuff him more:—
You see it only helped to raise my dander
That, being dumb, I couldn’t make him roar.
I left my marks, though, on his whole appearance,
To impress him with the risk of interference.

XXXIII.

So, to complete the lesson, I bestowed
Upon the horse the balance of his cobbing,
The while the nigger's eyes with tears o'erflowed—
(Oh Lord, you'd laugh to see a dummy sobbing !)
But ere I'd paid the half of what I owed,
On his bare knees he came, ducking and bobbing,
And making me the humblest signs to lace
Himself instead!... Now, ain't he a disgrace ?”

XXXIV.

With partly pity, partly wrath excited,
The Quaker heard, and set himself to plan
How these three loving creatures reunited
Should spend their days in ease, cat, horse, and man,
Their wants forgotten, and their wrongs all righted—
Such days as were, before their woes began.
Meantime, to clear off any little mystery,
Let us fall back upon their previous history.





PART THIRD.—SCHAM AND AGBA.

I.

HE carter's tale was not so far from true ;
A little out, but genuine of its kind ;
Though Turks, and Moors, and all of
swarthy hue
Were jumbled up in his "untutored
mind ;"

And Sultans, you may guess, were rifer, too,
With him than modern travellers would find.—
(So, you remember, when ourselves were young,
Sultans and such were never off our tongue.)

II.

A Bey, and not a Sultan, 'twill be seen,
Headed this curious train of circumstance.
In '31, a Captain of Marine
In Louis' service, thinking to advance
Their mutual trade, got up a league between
The Bey of Tunis and the King of France :
And though the records of the time are scanty,
His name remains to us, the Viscount Manty.

III.

Now, History is impotent to show

Whether the said commercial league availed
To give a fillip to their trade or no ;—

(I rather fancy it entirely failed,
And left the potentates *in statu quo*) :

But this I know, when Captain Manty sailed,
The Bey, by way of making all things pleasant,
Despatched eight Barbs to Louis as a present.

IV.

At this time Louis had a special whim

For horses of a kind in Suffolk bred—
Thick in the withers, long-backed, round in limb,
Deep-chested, full in flank, and large in head :
No wonder, then, these Barbs appeared to him,

With their sharp outlines, savage air and tread,
Their slender forehead, and ill-furnished mane,
Scarce worth the trouble of a King's disdain.

V.

Of eight Tunisian slaves, sent by the Bey,

Agba, our friend the mute, remained alone :
The others, turned adrift, had found their way
To Africa : their further fate unknown :

The mute had stricter notions, though, than they—

He thought himself the horse's very own ;
The aim of his original creation
Subservient to that creature's delectation.

VI.

And so, he stuck to him—still hanging on
From weary day to day about the King's
Out-houses, after all the rest were gone,
Connived at by the easeful underlings,
Fed on the scraps that Marianne and John
Vouchsafed to leave—crusts, chicken-bones and
things,—
A curiosity, a theme for sport,
To all the imps who hung about the court.

VII.

In those dark days there was the one bright spot—
The stable-boys permitted him to groom
The Barb, his master. Agba thus had got
All he desired on this side of the tomb,—
Until that dish of *cook à la culotte*
Hastened the culmination of his doom,
And cast him forth, to duty still a martyr,
Upon the tender mercies of the carter.

VIII.

And yet, this horse, degraded and despised,
Could boast itself of blood and noble race—
The race in Barbary most highly prized,
Which far into antiquity could trace
From sire to sire a lineage idolized
For union rare of swiftness, strength and grace.
The one thing queer about them was their name ;—
As the "Thigh-Kings" the breed was known to fame.

IX.

I've hitherto neglected something vital,
 Or what may seem so in the reader's eye:
 I've called him (horse, not reader) by such title
 As came to hand, till titles have run dry.
 'Tis advantageous in a long recital
 To have a name to know your hero by.
 Let me, then, introduce him... 'Sir, or Ma'am,
 Scham, Monsieur Reader. * * * Madame Reader,
 Scham.'

X.

The Bey of Tunis doubtless thought that he
 Had done the handsome in thus sending o'er
 Unto his royal friend across the sea
 This priceless gift, his favourite steed,—who bore
 Along with him his glorious pedigree,
 Which in a scrip of camel's hair he wore,
 Cunningly wrought, and to his neck suspended
 By a rich cord of gold and scarlet blended.

XI.

But on the day when first he occupied
 A humble stall within the royal mews,
 This scrip, and several amulets beside,
 Which it was ruin to destroy or lose,
 (As Agba thought) were ruthlessly untied,
 And cast away by ignorant Yahoos
 Of grooms, to whom their mystic signs and figures
 Were just "some bosh of them 'ere blessèd niggers."

XII.

But Agba, horror-stricken at the deed,
 And knowing of their power to save or damn,
 Watching their whereabouts, had taken heed
 To gather up the amulets of Scham,
 And kept them hid against the time of need,
 And likewise hid against his diaphragm.
 Agba, though mute, was 'cute, and very few men
 Could equal him in natural acumen.

XIII.

But while the watchful Moor thus tried to cope
 With destiny, his spirit long had been
 A sport alternately to fear and hope.
 Two marks on Scham's own proper person seen,
 Two opposites, disturbed his horoscope ;—
 No middle fate for him, no golden mean :
 A brilliant life in store, if *this* were true ;
 If *that*, why, Scham's look-out was very 'blue.'

XIV.

As "every schoolboy knows"—at least, Macaulay's—
 A Moor has skill to bring within his ken,
 By certain marks, whatever will befall his
 Belovèd steed. They say three score and ten
 Infallible prognostics tell him all his
 Impending fortunes.—Well, they're clever men,
 No doubt, and lick our most experienced Vets
 With their prognostics and their amulets.

XV.

Now, of the seventy, our hero's share
 Was two,—the very worst, and very best.
 First—(this was what drove Agba to despair)—
 A little tuft, same color as the rest,
 By special disposition of the hair
 Was pencilled on the middle of his chest :
 And this by Saracen interpretation
 Meant nothing short of downright ruination.

XVI.

The second, which laid claim to equal verity,
 And was the very worship of the mute,
 Betokened length of days crowned with prosperity,
 Honour at home, abroad unstained repute,
 Not only for himself but his posterity ;—
 This was a white flake on the off hind foot :—
 (And, apropos of this, I here note down,
 Scham's color was half-way 'twixt bay and brown).

XVII.

Poor Agba, since from Tunis he had sailed
 Had ample scope to see how good and ill,
 The flake and tuft, alternately prevailed
 In Scham's career, each struggling to fulfil
 The ends of fate, in turn bewailed or hailed.
 At first, the white flake seemed to have its will :—
 Scham, to be favourite of the King of France,
 Seemed to the mute a huge step in advance.

XVIII.

But Scham—(Great Scham !)—rejected and rebuffed,
And relegated to a victual dray—
Then by a brutal carter kicked and cuffed,
And cruelly kept harnessed night and day !—
What was it but that diabolic tuft,
Determined in its turn to have its say ?
So Agba thought, and pondering what he saw,
Concluded “ God is great. His law is law.”

XIX.

Yet often o'er this fatalistic mood
Regrets and visions of the past would glide :
Again upon the golden sands he stood,
Or in the palace-court his lord beside :—
Again in dreams the old days were renewed,
The beauty, and the glory, and the pride ;
For this was what he saw—no vision vain—
But the old cherished past come back again ;—

XX.

He saw a steed—all in the golden haze
Wherewith fond memory wraps dear visions round—
Of elegance and beauty passing praise,
For fleetness and for vigour peerless found :
He saw him proudly shake his reins ablaze
With jewelry : he heard the tinkling sound
Of golden chainlets, as in fiery sport
He champed the bit, and pawed the marble court.

XXI.

Anon he saw him from his master's hand
With mingled millet-seed and barley fed :
And then he saw the lord of all the land
Holding a silver basin to his head,
Of milk and maize. Behind them silent stand
The choice of Tunis, noble, courtly-bred,
And yet postponing their high-born virility
To that same steed's superior nobility.

XXII.

He saw him, eyes a-fire, and lips a-foam,
First in the martial game of "blunt jereed ;"
He saw him from the desert race led home,
Unquestioned victor, with the prize of speed ;
Or unattended through the city roam,
Welcomed by young and old, a People's steed ;
Or in the palace-gardens wander free,
By fragrant citron-grove and roserie.

XXIII.

The tents are pitched ; the long day's march is o'er ;
The odorous Orient night is breathing balm ;
Hard by the camp, upon the golden shore
Slumbers the silver sea in tideless calm ;
The moonlight steals through each half-curtained door ;
And in the midst, beneath a stately palm,
A gleaming crescent marks with borrowed ray
The red and green pavilion of the Bey.

XXIV.

He sees, subdued, soft-gliding, and demure,
His wakeful charger, like a ghostly thing,
Steal noiseless through the shadowy obscure,
Past the swart sentinels unchallenging,
And push aside the gold-fringed coverture,
Then move familiar through the inner ring
Of armed guards, till by the bed he stands,
And gently licks his slumbering master's hands.

XXV.

And sadly from his dreams would Agba wake
To see poor Scham where adverse Fate had thrown him,
And mourn the lost puissance of the flake,
And by-gone glories but in vision shown him.
Could *this* be Scham? Or was it some mistake?—
Not even his own mother would have known him!
And then would he, with Moorish folk-lore stuffed,
Curse in dumb language that infernal tuft.

XXVI.

But, *revenons á nos moutons*—or, at least,
Unto our motley trio. We had just
Left off at where the carter's story ceased.
(And, by the way, I think we really *must*
Make this next canto rid us of that beast).
Meantime, dear reader, I sincerely trust—
If you have read thus far, and find it suit—
That you've a white flake on your off hind foot.





PART FOURTH.—THE MAN, THE HORSE, AND
THE CAT.



I.

THE carter's street was named Rue Guéné-
gaud,
A wretched street, and his the worst
house in it—
A miserable dwelling, mean and low,
And scarcely large enough to house a
linnet.

The sombre court seemed the abode of woe ;
So did the shed...and such it was that minute.
Agba was there, and, always in extremes,
Had just awakened from Tunisian dreams.

II.

“Ah, there! I told you!” cried the waggoner,
Arriving with the Quaker at his den.
“That's how they sit for hours and never stir,
Except to go a-begging now and then.
Of all the lazy hounds that ever were
I'll back that dismal-looking Saracen!
I wish you joy of him! for I suppose
He'll go where'er that raw-boned devil goes.”

III.

The Quaker looked. At first the gloom defied him ;
But, getting used to it, at length he spotted
The dusky stranger, and his cat beside him,
And both upon a heap of litter squatted.
His face, how'er the carter might deride him,
Most favourably compared with *his* besotted
And brutal look : the features were refined ;
The whole expression sorrowfully kind.

IV.

His dignity was as a Spanish Don's :
His eye was keen ; mouth small ; beard crisp ; nose
straight :
But his sharp cheek-bones, like a skeleton's,
And hollow cheeks evinced his famished state :
A snow-white turban 'twined his brow of bronze ;
A ragged tunic of an ancient date,
The scant remains of Orient costume,
For play of light and air left ample room.

V.

Midwinter as it was, his feet were bare.
His hands he held within his bosom prest ;
Yet not for shelter did he keep them there,
But hugged the amulets closer to his breast,
Which, racked by unaccustomed winter air,
Was thus at once his cougher and his chest.
Sorrow and cold had made him old, yet he
Not more than thirty years of age might be:

VI.

The cat beside him was an ashen grey one,
With lucid intervals of silvery white—
By cats in general considered A1,
For every sort of feline lark at night.
Well, hearing Scham approach, . . . ere you could say 'one,'
Much less 'Jack Robinson' (that mythic wight
Whose name—I can't think *why*—so short is counted),
The cat upon the horse's back was mounted.

VII.

The movement roused the Moor from his reflections,
And turned his late despair into surprise.
This licked the strangest of his recollections !
Poor Agba scarcely could believe his eyes.
He could not vent himself in interjections,
And so he simply looked up to the skies,
And made this statement—with the words skimmed
off it—
"Allah is great ; Mohammed is his prophet."

VIII.

It was not the unwonted time of day ;
It was not the appearance of the Quaker ;
It was not seeing the horse *without* the dray,
That made him cite his Prophet and his Maker.
He had not slept his senses all away—
He was awake, and couldn't be awaker ;
And yet—there was the waggoner, NOT swearing,
And positively lamblike in his bearing.

IX.

His brutal manner for the time was gone :
 He *guided* Scham along the slippery court ;
 And, still more wonderful phenomenon,
 He winked at Agba as in kindly sport ;
 A genial smile upon his visage shone—
 What *could* such metamorphosis impart ?
 A hope in Agba's breast began to swell—
 [Translated]—"Flakes is riz, and Tufts is fell."

X.

Roused by the thought, upon his feet he sprung,
 To give to Scham his customary greeting ;
 And first around his neck his arms he flung,
 And dumbly signified the joy of meeting,
 With welcome everywhere but on his tongue—
 The cat and he apparently competing
 Which of the two would show the most invention
 In every sort of delicate attention.

XI.

Sudden his gaze fell on the horse's knees,
 And he upon his own in mad despair.
 His cup is full. The crowning woe he sees.
 Scham broken-kneed ! Fate's final stroke was there !
 The fire of all the three Eumenides
 Converging in a single furious glare
 Flashed daggers at the carter from his eyes,
 And sharp-edged tools of every sort and size !

XII.

Scham broken-kneed ! To Oriental view
Such depth of infamy no thought can plumb it !
Such length of outrage, breadth of havoc, too !
The height of misery, the burning summit !
The fatal tuft had nothing left to do !
A host of flakes could never overcome it !
Down dropt his head, his very anger squashed out.
You never saw a nigger look so washed out.

XIII.

The Quaker saw that in his deep emotion
The doleful tear-drops from his eyes were welling,
And, moved at heart with such sublime devotion,
No longer could restrain himself from telling
How he had planned for them across the ocean
A life of peaceful ease—bed, board, and dwelling.
(‘The ocean,’ said I ?...Come,...that’s rather over.
I should have said ‘across the Straits of Dover’).

XIV.

“ Friend,” said the Quaker, in an accent sweet,
And with his saccharinest intonation,
“ Take off the harness ; give the horse to eat ; ”
But so absorbed was he in contemplation,
The good man found it needful to repeat
The order ;—without further intimation
Of Agba waking from the gloom that wrapt him,
Till powerfully upon the skull he tapped him.

XV.

Aroused at length to hearing what was said,
 Poor Agba made a complicated bow,
 Looked at the Quaker, shook his solemn head,
 And put his hand upon his breast and brow,
 Then eyed the carter with a look of dread,
 As if he durstn't do it anyhow—
 A look of dread which, to the Quaker's finding,
 Spoke volumes—*guilt*-edged—dark Morocco binding.

XVI.

“Don't look at *me!* I've nothing more to say to
 him!”—

(Thank heav'n, this waggoner no more shall weary us).
 “I've got three times his price, and said Good-day to him,
 Don't shake your head, Beelzebub...I'm serious.
 You never more shall yoke that blessed dray to him”—
 (The cart before the horse, but rhyme's imperious).
 “*This* is your master. Il est bien bon.
 I'm off to seek another nag...*So long!*”

XVII.

The Moor at first seemed not to understand
 Anything further than a brutal joke ;
 But when he saw the carter wave his hand,
 And leave the premises to honest folk,
 And heard once more the gently urged command,
 All of a sudden down poor Agba broke,
 Bowed to the ground, upon his head threw dirt.
 And caught and kissed the Quaker's great-coat skirt.

XVIII.

“ Rise ! ” cried the Quaker, deeply scandalized.

“ ’Tis God alone the creature may adore.”

(Here Agba dropt the great-coat skirt surprised ;
He never had been checked in this before).

“ Look at the horse ; and be thou well-advised

From henceforth thou shalt never quit him more.
Show thyself faithful ; follow my directions ;
But drop, oh drop, these impious genuflexions ’ ”

XIX.

But habit’s second nature ; and the mute

Learning such prospects for himself and steed,
In Oriental custom resolute,

Paid small attention to the Quaker’s creed.
In lowlier transports still, he seized his foot,

And pressed it to his brow ; which servile deed,
By way of showing how he idolized him,
Far from exalting, very near capsized him.

XX.

To whom the Quaker, catching at a post :—

“ Arise !... We are the children of one mother.
Kneel not to mortal man ;—no man can boast

A higher name than simply that of brother.
We are but sorry creatures at the most.

Arise, my friend ! One man’s as good’s another.
Be thou but faithful ; that is all I ask.
Look to the horse—henceforth thy only task.”

XXI.

And Agba rose, tucked up his sleeves, and showed
 A pair of sinewy arms, though very thin :
 And first on Scham a knowing look bestowed,
 That said as plain as print, "The Flake will win."
 Soon in his eye the ancient ardour glowed,
 As with his wiry arms he wirèd in, (!)
 And stripped his harness—trampling in disgust
 On that unsightly load of dirt and rust.

XXII.

And taking then (heav'n only knows from where—
 Evolved perhaps from native intuition)—
 A pair of gloves composed of twisted hair,
 The mute began to groom à la Tunisian :
 (The Moors of Tunis use just such a pair,
 As best conducive to a sleek condition.
 As for the curry-comb—they simply shelve it,—
 Use gloves of hair instead, and then, of velvet).

XXIII.

Scham being thus denuded front and rear,
 The kindly Quaker better could examine
 His bargain. Truly did he seem a mere
 Abstract of horse—a diagram of Famine,
 Cross-hatched with impress of the clumsy gear
 Which day and night the fiend had kept poor
 Scham in :
 Such peaks of bone, such cavities of skin,
 You scarce could tell his outside from his in.

XXIV.

And then there were the dust and grime and mud,
Which to delineate the pen refuses,—
And then there were the sweat and foam and blood,
And then there were the sores and cuts and bruises:—
There never was before or since the Flood
A horse whose picture so revolts the Muses :
Its mane (like this description) gapped and scattered,—
Tangled and twisted, tarnished, torn and tattered.

XXV.

And yet, despite the marks of outrage past,
A connoisseur would justly have admired
His noble scaffolding. A chest so vast
Left nothing more in chests to be desired—
With room, you'd say, for wind enough to last
For any mortal length of race required.
Besides—the dust, the mud, the blood, the foam
Couldn't conceal that Scham was well ribbed home.

XXVI.

And then to judge him from his make of limb,
In cleanness and in symmetry unique—
(For though the two knee-stigmas might bedim
His mere prestige, these were but Fortune's freak),—
And from his thighs, exceptional in *him*,
Long, well-attached, and splendidly oblique,—
One had been tempted, if the turf he got on,
With Scham most heavily to "put the pot on."

XXVII.

Crest lofty almost to a fault ; the head
 Well set ; eyes large and lustrous ; muzzle fine ;
 Shoulders capacious ; quarters well out-spread ;
 Behind the shoulders an abrupt decline—
 (One special mark of Thigh-King thorough-bred)—
 Matched with a hindward rising of the spine :—
 He was a horse, take him for more or less,
 We ne'er shall look upon his like, I guess.

XXVIII.

The fuming Agba rubbed till not a hint
 Of dust or mud was left from top to toe—
 (I mean, from stem to stern)—until by dint
 Of brushing Scham's dark pelt began to show ;
 And here and there, throughout the dark, a glint
 Of fiery lustre shot—a golden glow,
 With the main hue so intimately blended
 You couldn't say where it began or ended.

XXIX.

And then did Agba from the hair stage pass,
 And donned the velvet gloves (evolved likewise),
 Eager to give his steed the *coup de grace*,
 And glorify him in the Quaker's eyes ;
 And very soon he shone as smooth as glass,
 And altogether seemed to swell in size :—
 His tail a plume of silk, a rain of jet ;
 His mane...well,...time would make it better yet.

XXX.

Not that his wounds were any way effaced ;
 Hair-gloves are salves of very scant availment.
 Can velvet minister to knees disgraced ?—
 Pluck from the ligaments a rooted ailment ?
 Much time and tenderness did Agba waste ;
 Like Lady Mac, he *wouldn't* know what "Fail" meant :
 Still, all his smoothings were but shallow glozes,
 That simply simplified their diagnosis.

XXXI.

But even the simple Quaker, who was not
 A horsey subject, needed but a look
 At Scham to make him guess at what was what,
 And laugh to scorn King, waggoner and cook.
 Nor was he discontented he had got
 The value of his money—by a fluke.
 "When he is fattened up a bit," thought he,
 "He'll suit my daughter's husband to a T."

XXXII.

There yet remained the final operation,
 That proved Scham's lucky star in perigee,
 To Agba's mind the cope and culmination
 Whereby the world in general might see
 Flakes *in excelsis*, Tufts in degradation—
 To tie the amulets and pedigree
 Around his neck : which solemn rite gone through,
 He waited further orders what to do.

XXXIII.

His orders were to follow ; which he did,—

Where gratitude and duty both inclined him ;
Scham next, not even waiting to be bid,

Head up, as conscious of the lot assigned him ;
Grimalkin, seated on the barrel-lid,

Jumped down at once, and followed close behind him.
So passed they on, three barefoot, one in shoes,
Two on all fours, and two upon both two's.





PART FIFTH.—HURRY HALL.

I.



OW such a name as "Hurry Hall" was
given

To such a place, deponent sayeth not.

You'd think that its baptizer must have
striven

To find a paradox to suit the spot.

It was as dreamy as a Moslem heaven.

In such a place the Lady of Shalott
Might have died old, by no Sir Lancelots pestered,
It was so very private and sequestered.

II.

'Twas fifteen miles from London, and it stood

By Thames ;—once mansion of an English lord :
Behind, green contiguity of wood ;

Before, green continuity of sward ;
The very place, appropriately hued,

For *green* old age to live in quiet accord
With outward nature. Here the Quaker dwelt,
And miles around it, made his kindness felt.

III.

Yet, by no means to worldly profit dead,
 The Quaker had utilitarian views :—
 Through his green woods a winding pathway led
 Unto his model farms and cheerful mews,
 That showed in rose and ivy overspread
 How use and beauty fitly interfuse—
 (And were it not too difficult to buckle
 To rhyme, I'd also mention honey-suckle).

IV.

Unto this calm and smiling Paradise
 The stars that ruled our hero had conveyed him ;
 'Twas time indeed for him to get a slice
 Of luck, after the tricks those stars had played him.
 He had a stall, white-washed, brick-paved...*so nice* !
 And on the softest, cleanest litter laid him,
 Windows, with blinds no less, the kind called Persian,
 Served *him* for light, his playmate for diversion.

V.

Well burnished and well furnished was his rack,
 Well furnished and well burnished was his manger ;
 No equine comfort did that hero lack,
 Unto no equine pleasure was a stranger.
 My lad grew snobbish, and put up his back,
 At all but Agba, till the only danger
 Was lest his pride should wake the wrath of Nemesis,—
 He was the cockiest horse on all the premises.

VI.

The cat (baptized Grimalkin now) possessed
A comfortable wooden domicile,
Painted in green, a perfect little nest,
Its architecture of hypaethral style—
(Roofless, that means—as you perhaps have guessed ;
I've seen the like, as temples, up the Nile).
Here she'd retreat when tired of doing festive,
Or when her playmate Scham became too restive.

VII.

Nor ended here the Quaker's anxious care
For Scham and Co. in this hypaethral way :
Beside the stall a little winding stair
Led to a room, for Agba made *exprès*,
Into the floor whereof was let a square
Of glass through which his idol to survey.
At sunrise he was at it, sometimes sooner,
For if the moon was up, he took a lunar.

VIII.

Undoubtedly the three had undergone
A transformation of a blissful sort.
Grimalkin's skin with silken lustre shone,
The sleek result of many a creamy quart :
And though she still made deadly war upon
Her natural foes, 'twas not that she was short
Of butchermeat—she had it 'at discretion'—
But purely from the love of her profession.

IX.

Agba had quitted his Tunisian rags,
 His turban too ; and even his chin had cleared ;
 Had donned a decent pair of moleskin bags,
 And in the regulation vest appeared.
 The days of naked feet on naked flags
 Had vanished as completely as his beard :
 He looked quite English—save his hue of bronze,—
 What with his bags, vest, hat and Wellingtons.

X.

(Excuse the anachronism. I quite forgot
 That when last century was thirty-two,
 The Duke of Wellington as yet was not,
 And hadn't stood in either boot or shoe.
 But what's the odds about so slight a blot ?
 It doesn't hurt *me*—if it don't hurt *you*).—
 Well, what with bags, and boots, and vest, and hat,
 He looked quite English, and besides—was fat.

XI.

Scham hadn't fattened up so very much ;
 Yet he was changed—no mortal could deny it.
 His outlines still were sharp—(his nature such)—
 But what with long repose and generous diet,
 The hair-glove process and the velvet touch,
 His coat so shone you could have shaven by it :
 His whole integument from crop to crupper
 Was that of one who never missed his supper.

XII.

Now was he something like what he had been ;
Now might he have been known to his mama.
Now gleamed as bright as erst in Tunis seen
 His preterperfect beauty and *eclat*,
 The glints of lustre and the tawny sheen
 On shoulder, neck, haunch, croup, *et cetera* ;
 While the white flake, the star of Agba's hope,
 Fairer than ever glistened—thanks to soap.

XIII.

But still to vulgar eyes those knees *would* tarnish
 His high prestige, his bright *eclat* bedim :
 In vain did Agba try with paint and varnish
 To take the tell-tale white from each fore-limb,—
 The Quaker's creed opposed all outside garnish,
 Went for the *natural* (*plus* breadth of brim),
 And, to *his* view, such meretricious dye
 Appeared, though black, a sanguinary lie.

XIV.

And thus had six Elysian months been spent
 Within the still demesne mischristened "Hurry ;"
 "Now was the winter of their discontent
 Made glorious summer by the sun of"—Surrey ;
 Each favoured to the tip-top of his bent,
 No trials, no disquietude, no worry :
 All three, since they had crossed the Straits of Dover,
 Had metaphorically lived in clover.

XV.

And yet though Fate had put this peaceful guise on,
 The cud of bitter projects she was chewing ;
 Upon the edge of their tri-une horizon,
 All unperceived by them, a storm was brewing :
 The blackest cloud that they had yet set eyes on
 Was hurrying onward, big with their undoing.
 Scham's pride had roused the gods, who, poets tell us,
 Are, like ourselves, inordinately jealous.

XVI.

(Now, *why should* they be jealous up above ?
 They've all they want, and not a rap to pay—
 Ambrosia, nectar, free house, and Free Love,
 And larks, too—in a big Olympian way ;
 Wish and fruition going hand-and-glove ;—
 Nothing to do but revel night and day !
 By Jove, I only wish that I were one of them :—
 They'd sack me though, I fear, for making fun of them).

XVII.

Scham's ways, I own, had grown most reprehensible ;
 Victuals *ad lib.* had rendered him unbearable ;
 He had a fashion simply indefensible
 Of making nether-garments quite unwearable,
 More than one servant had he knocked insensible,
 Bit were most biteable, torn were most tearable ;—
 (To *Agba*, these mishaps, however numerous,
 But showed Scham's keen perception of the humorous).

XVIII.

Even the Quaker couldn't stand it more ;
Complaints grew louder ; casualties thickened ;
And bottomless destruction at his door
Yawned breached and breechless, till his spirit sickened.
At length the murmurs of the halt and sore
Roused him to act ; but though his wrath was
quicken'd,
It was a sort of indignation holy
That ' took proceedings ' legally and slowly.

XIX.

Neither as " Friend," nor Briton did it suit
To put him unexamined under ban ;
He would no more proceed against a brute
Without inquiry, than against a man ;
And so, with Agba as Scham's substitute
And counsel, he decreed a Grand Divan,
A great collective family Court-Martial,
With legal forms, and arbiters impartial.

XX.

In the great parlour—Quaker in the chair—
The officers of this civilian garrison,
Said Quaker, and his daughter (*la jeune mère*),
His son-in-law, the Reverend Doctor Harrison,
And Harold Rogers (on a visit there),
In solemn silence waited for the Saracen,
Whom Mistress Kokborn (that is Eugene's spelling),
Was sent to summon to the family dwelling.

XXI.

The physiognomy, austere and grave,
 Of all the actors in that sombre scene
 Would have appalled "the bravest of the brave."
 The Quaker's daughter, stern as Tragic Queen,
 Was just within the very closest shave
 Of being a beauty; in fact, would have been,
 But for the hardness that her sect had wrought on her,
 And the worn look that doing nurse had brought on her.

XXII.

She wore a dress of grey, sleeves very tight;
 Crossed on her neck, a snowy Cambric *fichu*,
 The only thing about her white or light,—
 Costly material—very finest tissue—
 Whose two ends, in default of teeth to bite,
 Served succulently for her female issue—
 A pretty child, eyes lustrous, nose *retroussé*,
 Mouth small, clothes long and loose, name short and
 Lucy.

XXIII.

Beside her sat her solemn spouse, the minister,
 A dismal shade, as ghostly as could be;—
 You'd fancy she had chosen the very thinnest her
 Secluded life permitted her to see.
 His eye, unprepossessing, stern and sinister
 Was fixed upon a Bible on his knee,
 At Deuteronomy—(appropriate reckoned)—
 The Fifteenth Verse of Chapter Thirty-second.

XXIV.

Last, Rogers, who completed the Divan,—
 The species ‘horsey,’ of the genus ‘swell’—
 Was not a Quaker, but a publican,
 Kept the Crown-Lion, Royal Mail Hotel :
 A beetle-browed and cruel-looking man ;
 But whether old or young you couldn’t tell :
 As a horse-tamer far and wide renowned ;
 The boldest rider in the country round.

XXV.

The housekeeper, the Kokborn who was mentioned,—
 (With Eugene doubtless chantikleers were *koks*)—
 Unto the mute by no means well-intentioned,
 With pleasure bore the summons to his boks :
 She kouldn’t bear to see a nigger pensioned,
 Bekaese, forsooth, he wasn’t orthodox ;
 So Mistress Kokborn—(mind pronounce her *two k’s*)
 Most gladly karried out the Quaker’s Ukase.

XXVI.

Poor Agba, “nourishing a faith sublime”
 In Scham and that white augury of his,
 Was revelling just at this very time
 In the untold potentialities.
 ‘Of course this wasn’t nearly Fortune’s prime,
 And Hurry Hall was but a step to bliss ;
 The next ’...Here Mistress Kokborn’s accents grating
 Roused him ; “Hey ! Blackamoor ! The master’s
 waiting !”

XXVII.

In spite of Agba's faith, sublime, robust,
 There was a something in the Kokborn smile,
 A sniggering mockery, that shook his trust
 In his late visions. Still, he donned his tile,
 And from his modest jerkin flicked the dust,
 Most tearfully regarding Scham the while :
 Then, praying to his Prophet for assistance,
 Followed the Kokborn at respectful distance.

XXVIII.

Arriving at the parlour door, he knocked,
 Entered, and made a most profound salaam,
 Whereat the Reverend Doctor greatly shocked,
 Recoiling, nearly overset Madame.
 Meantime, the various domestics flocked
 Into the room to hear the case of Scham ;
 And more than one presumed to bring a neighbour
 To watch the progress of this '*cause célèbre*.'

XXIX.

The timid Moor was fairly paralysed :
 Alas, *they* were so many, *he* but one !
 They all so white, and he so black-a-vised !
 Besides, he knew not what on earth he'd done !
 Rogers alone, the brute, would have sufficed
 To crush him with his look of half-a-ton
 To the square inch,—a look as black as thunder—
 (How is it that *noise* proved to be *black*, I wonder ?)

XXX.

The only gentle look he met was that
 Of him who sat, we'll say, ' upon the bench ;'
 He saw his terror and was grieved thereat ;
 He loved this mute : the others, man and wench,
 Turned up their Christian noses sharp or flat,
 As if his very presence brought a stench :
 Some loathed him because black, some as Scham's proxy,
 And Mistress Kokborn for his heterodoxy.

XXXI.

At length the Quaker signed him to advance,
 And in a voice as sweet as honey-(dew),
 Said, " Friend, I found thee destitute in France,
 And straightway I relieved thee. Is it true ?"
 One saw from Agba's twitching countenance
 How strong desire to speak would fain break through
 Nature's defect : but failing this, he pressed
 One hand upon his brow, one on his breast.

XXXII.

The Quaker understood the pantomime.
 " Yes ; I believe thy gratitude is great ;
 Nor hast thou shown me that the lapse of time
 Numbs the remembrance of thy former state.
 Thou dost not stand here charged with any crime :
 It is the *horse* that is the reprobate !"
 Here Agba, jumping, kicked a cloud of dust up :—
 Scham the accused !—The universe was ' bust up ' !

XXXIII.

“This horse was hungry, and I gave him food ;
 He was a stranger, and I took him in ;
 This horse was naked...h'm...well, very good—
 Thou knowest he had hardly even skin.
 Now he is sleek ;—but where’s his gratitude ?”

He paused, and Agba, puzzled, stroked his chin.
 ’Twas very well in *servants* to be grateful ;—
 But *Scham* ! The Absolute ! The thought was hateful !

XXXIV.

“So long as he remembered the sad past,
 His morals showed an edifying awe,
 And deeming that this frame of mind would last,
 I gave him to my reverend son-in-law.
 How both he and my hopes were overcast
 Thou knowest,—the calamity is raw.”
 Here Agba typified, as plain as words,
 His arms thrown out, a rapid flight of birds.

XXXV.

“True ; he ran fast ; the *doctor* knows he did ;
 So fast indeed, and with such frantic spite,
 That if his worthy rider had not slid
 Into a bog that stopped his further flight,
 My daughter might have wept uncomforted,
 And this small suckling been a widow’s mite !”
 Here Agba joined his two forefinger-tips,
 And put them both, thus joined, between his lips.

XXXVI.

“ Oh yes...I know...it is thy old defence :

The bit was badly chosen, it would appear :”—
(Just here the bit was put in evidence) :

“ The second time, thyself chose all the gear ;
And then, my friend, what was the consequence ? ”

(His daughter hadn't nerve to stay to hear.
But rose, and glided from the parlour meekly :—
(Strange fact—the last six months had left her weakly),

XXXVII.

After a little pause, the Crown resumed :—

“ The second trial quite eclipsed the first.
Thou knowest how he reared and kicked and fumed,
And showed a temper like a fiend accursed—
How all who saw pronounced the doctor doomed,
Till sliding off he just escaped the worst ! ”
Here Agba clenched his left hand like a vice,
And jerked it sharply backward twice or thrice.

XXXVIII.

“ He pulled too hard ?...Perhaps ;...well, we agreed
To try Tom Stag, the jockey, ere deciding
The horse incorrigible. All concede
Tom hasn't his superior in riding.
This time would test if vice were in the breed ;
This time at least there would be no misguiding.
Thou knowest, friend, the dolorous result—
He shot Tom from him like a catapult.

XXXIX.

“ Tom tried again, not liking to be beat,
 Although, in fact, scarce even fit to crawl,
 And this time resolutely kept his seat.
 The creature balked in giving him a fall,
 Would not advance a step, still less retreat,
 But moved obliquely to the nearest wall,
 And crushed his leg against the brick and mortar
 Until he absolutely roared for quarter.

XL.

“ And add to this, Tom Stag is still in bed,
 Worn to a shade, the merest *simulācrum*,—
 So bruised, the wonder is he isn't dead,
 And sleepless with the pain in the *os sācrum*,—
 So paralysed, he cannot lift his head,
 Nor even ope his lips, except to take rum :—
 How now ? ”—Here Agba, not a bit abashed,
 Bestrode a chair, the which he spurred and thrashed.

XLI.

“ Of course he whipped him, and of course he spurred !
 But not before he had been made a goose of—
 Not till the coaxing pat and soothing word,
 And every gentle means had been made use of :
 Nor had the least severity occurred
 Till he had kicked enough to kick his shoes off.
 Shall I, then, keep a horse no man dare ride on ?—
 As useless as the chair thou wert astride on ! ”

XLII.

Here Agba raised his head, and tapped his chest,
And proudly looked at his interrogator :
A wider Agba seemed to swell his vest ;
His stature seemed at least a cubit greater.
“ I know, I know, my friend ; *thou* masterest
The spirit of this European-hater :
But friend, be just : must I consent to own
And keep and feed this horse for thee alone ? ”

XLIII.

Here Agba's head went down upon his chest,
And his eye shrunk from his interrogator :
A thinner Agba shrivelled in his vest ;
He seemed a smaller man to each spectator.
“ I see ; to Reason's voice thou listenest ; ”
Sadly resumed his scrupulous translator ;
“ But hear the worst. This horse, with men so vicious,
With his own kind is even more malicious.

XLIV.

“ Thou knowest well my pony Little-Bryan,
A pony that the King has not the peer of—
Well, this sweet innocent thy horse must fly on,
Quite unprovoked—take special notice hereof.
He came upon him like a raging lion,
And nearly tore his unoffending ear off!
What *canst* thou urge, my friend, that will not treble
The summed-up guilt of this ungodly rebel ? ”

XLV.

The mute looked up and down, and all around,
 As if his code of signals had run dry ;
 At length when fairly wind-and-weather-bound,
 A sheet of letter-paper caught his eye.
 To this he pointed, while he fiercely ground
 His teeth.—“ I see. Thou thus wouldst signify
 Bryan did not find favour in his sight
 Because, forsooth, he happens to be *white* !

XLVI.

“ Well, there’s the other pony, Tamerlane,
 Dark enough surely—black as raven’s wing :
 Did he not set on *him*, and strip his mane,
 Seize on his ear,—in fact, repeat the thing ?”
 The mute held up his hat....“ Oh, that again !
 He hates him on the score of colouring !
 This inoffensive brute he must attack
 Because, forsooth, he happens to be *black* !

XLVII.

“ Then he ill-used the mare—*she* was a *bay*—
 That brought the Irish minister Fitzpatrick,—
 Pounced on her like a tiger on his prey,—
 Was it her colour made him play her *that* trick ?”
 Just here the virtuous Kokborn ran away,
 Agba becoming somewhat *too* theatric,
 Putting his arms in amorous position,
 And kissing some delightful apparition.

XLVIII.

“ Ah, that was love ! A most peculiar fashion—
 A very wondrous method of proceeding
 For him to testify the tender passion
 By leaving the poor creature’s shoulders bleeding !
 Nay, friend, I cannot thus forgive so rash an
 Attack, despite thy most ingenious pleading.”
 Here Agba shrank to a still smaller size,
 Grew shaky at the knees, moist at the eyes.

XLIX.

And then the Quaker, for a little space,
 Conversed with Harold Rogers in low tone ;
 Then turning, said, with grief writ on his face,
 “ Friend, I pass sentence on the horse alone.
 Thou, if thou wilt, retain thy present place.
The Horse is sold ” Here Agba, with a groan,
 Collapsed—his hopes destroyed, his pleas rebuffed—
 Inwardly murmuring, “ The Tuft ! The Tuft ! ”

L.

To whom the Quaker, beaming with goodwill,
 Leave him, my friend ; that demon is thy curse.
 But if thou think it thy vocation still
 To follow him through better and through worse,
 To meet the possibility of ill
 Thou shalt at least have money in thy purse.
 And now, God keep thee, friend, from all disaster....
 He—Harold Rogers—is the horse’s master.”

LI.

“ And, by this whip, a master he will find?”
Cried Rogers, brandishing a huge affair
Whose weight and liveness artfully combined
Made it a fearful thing whereby to swear.
“ Two lessons and I’ll have him to my mind !
He’ll find he’s caught a Tartar if he dare
His hanky-panky tricks with *me* to try on !
You, nigger, take him off to the Crown-Lion !”

LII.

And on the afternoon of that same day,
In overwhelming bitterness of soul,
The poor heart-broken Agba led away
From Hurry Hall that rampant rantipole,
Who, thinking it a sort of holiday,
With many a bound and graceful capriole
Sped on Crown-Lion-wards,—the cat beside him,
Though condescending now and then to ride him.





PART SIXTH.—THE CROWN-LION.

I.

MORE than a month had passed since
Scham and Co.

Had quitted Hurry Hall, and gone to
town :

Poor Agba's soul was all agee with woe—
(See Hood):—this blackamoor was now
done brown ;

Perhaps one rather should say indigo,

He looked so very blue when fairly down.

He hadn't seen Scham for a month and more !

Counting by days, exactly thirty-four.

II.

Through all that irksome, darksome, gruesome space,

Dragging on weary day by weary day,

He had not looked on the belovèd face,

Nor heard the winning voice affirm a neigh !

No Coal Hole then to cheer his piteous case,

No Zoo to wile the tedious hours away ;

Nor could he seek relief from dark despair

In the Alhambra Palace, Leicester Square !

III.

It fell on this wise. By the Quaker told
 To lead the horse to London, to the sign
 Of the Crown-Lion—Crown in flaming gold,
 And Lion snout to tail incarnadine—
 (Something to do with *Or* and *Gules*, I'm told ;
 Alas, in Heraldry I do not shine !)
 He, chancing on a rampant thing in red,
 Right to the Lion's mouth his charger led.

IV.

Mouth here is poetry for *stable-door* :
 Well, just as *Agba* was about to go in,
 An old grey-headed groom stood right before
 His path, and stopped him ere he set a toe in.
 "Not if I knows it," quoth the groom, and swore
 He wouldn't let a dee-dee black scarecrow in !
 (Leather and *gules* distinguished this old varlet,—
 His breeches leather, and his waistcoat scarlet).

V.

But though to *Agba*, ingress he denied
 With language strong and gestures bellicose,
 He took the *horse*, and disappeared inside,
 Slamming the stable-door on *Agba's* nose,
 Which organ, by the blow disqualified
 For being blown, to thrice its size arose,
 Assuming angry hues of various sorts,
 And venting curses in egregious snorts.

VI.

In London then, forlorn, the mute remained,
 Without a friend, the cat his only pal ;
 By hope and gingerbread alone sustained,—
 Unknown to man or woman, boy or gal ;
 The ‘Siller’ that his service hadn’t gained,
 The Quaker’s largesse all his capital ;—
 A life, to say the least of it, precarious,
 And very far from what you’d call gregarious.

VII.

’Twas something, truly, in the dearth of cheer,
 Though just enough to whet his appetite,
 That through the medium of a pot of beer
 Nightly supplied, he had secured the right
 Unto a corner in a stable near
 To that wherein was mewed his soul’s delight :
 And here the livelong day he watched his chance,
 Nor slacked the deadlong night his vigilance.

VIII.

And as for puss, provisions being scanty,—
 Cream *nil*, and mutton-scrap no longer rife—
 She had laid down the swell *poco curante*,
 And taken up her trade for barest life,—
 No more the pastime of a dilettante,
 But business tactics, predatory strife ;
 Till the whole Genus Mus was like to run done,
 And rats became extremely scarce in London.

IX.

The mute had got the notion in his brain,
 That a few coins judiciously laid out
 On any liquefied result of grain
 Would turn an English conscience round about,
 And that to see the Barb now and again
 His sole and whole requirement was "*to shout ;*"
 And so, the morning after his rebuff,
 Had speculated in some potent "*stuff.*"

X.

On spiritual help his hope he pegged—
 (Alas, that the event should only mock it!)—
 Wherewith forearmed (or shall I say four-legged—
 A bottle thrust down either breeches' pocket?)—
 And with a noggin that he stole or begged,
 (No matter which—the wherewithal to stock it
 Was the main point)—he strutted through the crowd,
 As stately as the bottled grog allowed.

XI.

This time he found the stable-entry shut,
 Rubbed his swoln nose a bit, then knocked, and waited ;
 No sign : a second time, a little cut :
 A third time, furiously irritated :
 The fourth, he would have caved the door in, but.....
 The groom upon his eye had operated,
 And Agba suddenly became aware
 Of thousand meteoric signs in air.

XII.

He heard the words "Mahound" and "Heathen dog,"
Prefixed with...well, a pretty rhyme to *jammed*,
And through the motions of a starry fog
He saw his friend who had so neatly slammed
The door: whereat he fumbled out the grog,
Then—with the very eye so lately dammed,
Trying, and not in vain, to look *o'erflowingly*—
Turned up his little finger very knowingly.

XIII.

But much to his surprise his friend in gules
Waxed redder still, and louder yet harangued;
Fumed furious things about ensanguined fools,
And fixed a date when Agba would be hanged;
And, in the lofty language of the schools,
Adduced the fact that Banagher was banged:—
Which last perplexed the Moslem beyond bearing—
Was it geography, or was it swearing?

XIV.

"D'ye see this house?" he said; "D'ye see the sign?
Take a good look at this here stable door:
If you mistake it *now*, the fault aint mine.
Well, just you come a-knockin' as before,
And by the"—(an ellipsis in this line)—
I'll put you past the wish to see it more!"
Herewith, on Agba's head he broke the noggin,
And vanished inside.—(But he took the grog in).

XV.

Once more poor Agba found himself alone,
 Shaken in faith, and in his nervous system,—
 His hopes defeated, and his spirits flown,
 And all ill Fates united to resist him !
 Yet there he stood as obstinate as stone,
 And though the street boys twitched his clothes and
 hissed him,
 Cried “ Blackamoor ”...“ Beelzebub ”...and “ Sooty,”
 He stuck to what he deemed his post of duty.

XVI.

And while he pondered what was best to do,
 Remain, or come again at season fitter,
 Behold, the stable door unclosed anew,
 And two men issued carrying a litter,
 Whereon was something covered up from view,
 But *audible*, in maledictions bitter :
 And Agba heard one bearer murmur “ Booked ! ”
 To whom the other, *sotto voce*, “ Cooked ! ”

XVII.

Following these, he made out “ fiendish brute,”
 With various epithets best left unspoken ;
 And something next about an “ off hind foot,”
 And something more concerning “ three ribs broken ”:—
 “ Aha, my good and tender Scham ! ” the mute
 In heart exclaimed, “ I recognise thy token !
 These are credentials, Scham, that tell no fibs !
 Thy hoof-print signature is broken ribs ! ”

XVIII.

Dim sparks of some such meaning lit his mind.

And temporary triumph lit his eyes,—
(Lit up at least the one that wasn't blind ;
The *other* was affected *otherwise*).

Back now he traced his steps, and stood behind
A post whence he could safely supervise
The stable-entry ; and there stood till dark :
But nothing happened worthy of remark.

XIX.

At dawn, a storm : yet he was there again,

Too sad for weather further to afflict him—
When lo, the opened door and bearers twain !
A second litter, and a second victim !

And though he nothing heard for wind and rain,
He joyfully divined that Scham had kicked him :—
The more these luckless 'jocks' were bruised and battered,
The more, of course, the Mussulman felt flattered.

XX.

But in the midst of triumph came the dread

That for these little foibles of his treasure,
Rogers might take into his brutal head
To break his spirit by some cruel measure :

He thought of what the publican had said

Would come to pass if Scham should thwart his
pleasure ;

And pictured that ferocious look of his,
Prophetic of the worst extremities.

XXI.

No other litter that day : nor the next :

He wished, yet wished not ; trembled in suspense.

Another day, no sign ; then, sorely vexed,

His thirst for litter-ature grew intense.

A week still found him utterly perplexed,

Defeated of the slightest evidence :—

'Tis true the door was opened day by day,

But that red vest was *always* in the way !

XXII.

Another week ! A month !! A few odd days !!!

Could Scham be *ill*?... He tried to crush the thought out.

Could Scham be *dead* !... Oh Heav'n ! his pretty ways

All ended, and his gentle spirit wrought out !

He couldn't credit so extreme a case

Unless he saw the lordly carcase brought out !

Or—worse than death !—could Scham have *given in*—

Forgot his Agba and his origin ???

XXIII.

Could he but look on him ?... This one respect

Swayed all his soul ; it was his whole heart's story !

His moral sentiments, his intellect,

Digestive functions and respīratōry,

Were all converged to this supreme effect,

This sovran dictate, “ Vedi Scham e muori ! ”—

Which—lest you should suppose you've missed a joke—

Doth simply signify—“ See Scham and croak ! ”

XXIV.

And then, he had a mission to fulfil :—

When Scham changed hands he slyly had untied
The all-powerful amulets, and had them still,—

Which little blunder must be rectified.

Besides, if it should be that Scham *was* ill,

He had receipts, by magic lore supplied,
For every horse distemper, from phrenitis,
Down to spasmodic choleric and bronchitis.

XXV.

Well, to return. By hoping against hope

He had gained nought—not ev'n a single look ;
But now he gave invention fuller scope ;

And as a rudimental step he “shook”
(Which is colonial for *stole*) a rope,

And then, grown bold in shaking, shook a hook ;
By hook, or crook, or else by both combined,
The means of entry he was bound to find.

XXVI.

Thus armed against opposing stone and mortar ;

Having so *helped himself*, heaven helped him too—
(Though much that we attribute to that quarter

Presumes that heaven is *green* instead of blue ;
And there's another place, whose name is shorter,

That sometimes helps, I guess, both me and you :—
We're just too apt to think our every whim
Discussed on high by eager Seraphim).

XXVII.

But, for the sake of argument, say heaven.

Heaven had supplied him with a fearful night,
As inky as this Stanza Twenty-seven,

With rain enough to wash an Ethiop white :
And by the time the clock had struck eleven,
The darkness was the only thing in sight :—
The very sort of night that he had prayed for,
And which his rope-and-hook affair was made for.

XXVIII.

The clock was striking the aforesaid hour,

When Agba's ear was at the stable-door ;
The watchman's ululation made him cower
And shake—(but not as he had “shook ” before)—
Without occasion, for the blinding shower
Had made the mope-eyed tipstaff blink the more,
Who, what with darkness, and this forced *connivance*,
Saw neither Agba nor his rope contrivance.

XXIX.

This danger over, once again he falls .

To listening with door-adapted ear,
But nothing that transpired within the walls
Of brute or human import could he hear,
Except a rolling sound at intervals

That struck the Saracen as rather queer ;
It was not thunder, yet a muffled rumbling
That sounded like a baby-earthquake grumbling :—

XXX.

A lengthened peal—then it would change from that,
 And sound as if a big bass drum were hit,
 A rub-a-dub, and then a rat-a-tat,
 By fit and start, and next by start and fit,
 That made poor Agba's heart go pit-a-pat,
 And then, for variation, pat-a-pit,—
 Said heart demanding betwixt fear and wonder,
 “What *is* that racket, in the name of thunder !”

XXXI.

He waited moveless till the midnight chime,
 And still the sound pealed through his ear and brain :
 The clock strikes one ; he taketh note of time,
 Not by its *loss*, but by its rapid gain,
 Braces his flagging energies to climb,
 Stands back, and gazes up the walls in vain,
 The darkness left no “sticking-place” in view
 To fix his hook and screw his courage to.

XXXII.

From either side the door, a wall extended,
 Impregnable as Danae's walls of brass,
 Not merely high, but direfully defended
 By bristling lines of broken bottle-glass,
 A standing threat, which Agba apprehended
 Might haply bring him to a pretty pass ;—
 If *pass* at all, a pass extremely narrow
 Through those *chevaux de frise* that froze his marrow.

XXXIII.

So, gaining nothing by his upward glance,
Except a drop too much in either eye,
He threw his iron hook aloft on chance,
Once, twice, and three times, never saying Die :
At length it caught on some protuberance,
Whereon, he clutched his rope, and swung thereby :
“ Excelsior ” he would have said, no doubt,
Only Longfellow’s poems weren’t out.

XXXIV.

Excelsior he *went*, however, slowly,—
Excelsed until he reached the topmost station,
Where, though his eyes, indeed, “ were darkened
wholly,”
Most keenly did he *feel* his situation,
And very nearly tumbled roly-poly
Attempting broken-bottle-incubation ;
Then, like a wriggling insect needle-spitted,
Turned *every* way, but *no*-way benefited.

XXXV.

As quickly as he could, upon the cope
He turned his apparatus fairly round,
And gliding softly down his knotted rope,
Alit in safety on the inner ground ;
Listened and heard ; and blindly tried to grope
His way along the wall, and tow’rd the sound,
Which, waxing louder with the lessening distance,
Now rub-a-dubbed with maddening persistence.

XXXVI.

Tracing the wall, he came at length upon
A sort of passage, at whose further end
Through a cracked door a hint of tallow shone.
The feeble glimmer that it served to lend
“Made darkness visible,”—see Milton (John)—
And thither he resolved his steps to bend,
Seeing that thence the sound appeared to come,
Which now he knew for certain as a drum.

XXXVII.

Reaching the door, and gazing through a chink,
He saw—and scarce believed it when he saw—
He saw—what made his corporation shrink
To half its size, and froze his soul with awe—
He saw, oh gentle reader...what d’ye think?—
Tears from a stone it was enough to draw
Forgive this trifle of extravaganza ;
You’ll find the reason in the following stanza.

XXXVIII.

Scham !...head dragged up close-fastened to the rack,
Bleeding at mouth and quivering all o’er ;
Straps on his legs and chains across his back,
The ends by iron rings fixed to the floor ;
His skin tattooed with many a brutal whack
Betrayed in swollen wale and open sore ;
And O, so lean !...the Saracen almost
Believed that he was looking at his ghost.

XXXIX.

He saw he had been bled ; the pins were there,
 Fixed in the neck and also in the foot
 With little knots of what seemed Scham's own hair,
 A style of cure which scandalized the mute ;
 And round the walls he saw enough to scare
 The stoutest heart that beat in man or brute,—
 Strange gear, as cavezons, barnacles and twitches,
 That made poor Agba shiver in his breeches.

XL.

But worst of all, that demon with the drum,—
 His friend of scarlet-vested interest,
 Whose rôle it was when Scham was overcome
 With sleep, and closed his weary eyes for rest,
 To agonize his weary tympanum
 By raising an uproarious protest—
 A cruel aggravation of the case,
 Most diabolical, and thorough-bass.

XLI.

Oh never yet since childhood's hour, so low
 Had Scham been stricken by the hand of Fate !
 Even the life of the Rue Guénégaud
 Was Paradise compared with such a state !
 The mute grew fairly paralysed with woe,
 His very tears refused to percolate,—
 Never in all his life had he succumbed so,
 The muscles of this Mussulman were numbed so.

XLII.

When suddenly the sound of footsteps broke
Upon him in the interval of drumming,
And, startled, from his stupor he awoke
To realize the fact of some one coming—
Not *one*, but at the least a brace of folk,
As he conjectured from the mingled humming
Of various voices ; and, what scared him more,
A lamp flared right along the corridor.

XLIII.

Impossible to flee ! The groom ahead—
The swift advancing-foemen in the rear !
Counting himself as one already dead,
He saw the light and heard the steps draw near ;
His belt he tightened, and his prayers he said,
And took a long draught of the atmosphere,
Gave one thought to his mother, one to Scham,
Wheeled, stooped...then, forward like a battering-ram !

XLIV.

The coming men were Rogers and a valet,
The first new ris'n from late protracted wine,
Who, just as Agba made his sudden sally,
Was ramping like the Lion on his sign :—
“ I'll tame this devil's colt eventually,
Or else, by all that's human and Divine,
I'll have him ”—he was *going* to say “ skinned,”
When Agba's head deprived him of his wind,—

XLV.

And of his balance, whereupon, he fell,
 And swiftly o'er his form the Moslem stepped,
 Then on the startled satellite pell-mell,
 Dashed him aside, and through the issue swept.
 Alas, the whole proceeding was a sell!
 For just as Agba on his tackle leapt,
 The hook gave way, his ladder downward sped
 With all *its* imperfections on *his* head.

XLVI.

And ere he had recovered his surprise,
 Two hostile hands were clutching at his throat,
 Two more were battering his nose and eyes,
 And two besides promiscuously smote:
 And when he *did* begin to realize,
 He found that he was minus hat and coat,
 And that his wrists in some mysterious way
 Adhered behind him to his vertebrae.

XLVII.

They knocked him down, and kicked him o'er and o'er;
 His ears were dinned with cries of Robber! Thief!
 His nose and eyes were filled with mud and gore,
 His mouth was filled with pocket-handkerchief!—
 (But since no *dummy* e'er was gagged before,
 And this may be a pull on your belief,
 We'll slide that handkerchief, and substitute
 Some more appropriate mouthful for a mute).

XLVIII.

His mouth was full of *teeth*, knocked in somehow,
Two molars, three incisors, and an eye one—
(A much more serious damage then than now,
When, if you lose a tooth, you've just to buy one):—
But to cut short the story of the row,
Agba, although a sly one and a spry one,
Was fairly snared; and so they cooked his goose
Under a running fire of foul abuse.

XLIX.

They flung him in a shed till dawn of morn,
His wrists with his own tackle bound across;
And there he spent the weary hours forlorn,
None to ask after him, no friend, no boss;
Cursing the day and hour when he was born,
And ev'n his Prophet as a downright loss:
Restless he lay on insect-swarmling litter,
His body bit, his meditation bitter.

L.

At morn they dragged him forth, but staggering-weak,
Too weak to walk, and therefore, through the city,
They bore him on a shutter to the beak,
Who heard the case without a spark of pity,—
Called Agba thief, marauder, midnight sneak,
And other names more forcible than pretty—
Took down the charge, and hearing no denial,
Committed him to Newgate for his trial.





PART SEVENTH.—THE PRISON.



I.



O sadder sun on Agba's life had risen
Than showed him in the clutches of the
law.

The Crime?—His ignorance made hell of
prison;—

He hadn't understood their legal jaw;—
He hadn't taken aught that "wasn't his'n,"

(Expression sanctioned by a well-known saw),
Attacked no watchman, taken no one's life,
Nor run away with any-body's wife.

II.

Nor had the question been much clearer made

By terms like "burglary," and "with intent:"
And, worst of all, "nocturnal escalade"

Had floored him, though he knew not what it meant:
Doubtless some fearful crime such phrase conveyed;

He would have liked extremely to repent,
But, posed about the nature of the sin,
He knew not where precisely to begin.

III.

Let's leave his sorrow for a season brief,
 To light upon some less lugubrious feature.
 It gives me a sensation of relief
 To turn a moment to some female creature.
 Oh woman, in our hours of ease, or grief,
 How very—oh how very *very* sweet your
 Caresses, or your sympathising sniffs,—
 Your nightcap naggings, and your “little tiffs”!

IV.

Chance had it that the Kokborn loved a jailor—
 Well, who finds fault with her on such a score?
 I don't mean for a moment to assail her—
 A woman must have *some* one to adore,
 Let him be soldier, sailor, tinker, tailor,
 Apothecary, ploughboy, less, or more!...
 The first commandment must bear rather hard on
 The womenkind: dear souls, they have *my* pardon.

V.

The Kokborn, then, though nineteen-twentieths sour,
 Had her one hidden demi-tithe of sweet,
 And sometimes came to air it for an hour
 Beside her lover—(nothing indiscreet):
 To one under the glamour and the power
 Of love, ev'n Newgate seemed a fair retreat:
 He found it pleasant, too, when not on duty,
 To bask beneath her (anything but) beauty.

VI.

And he would stir her heart, as did Othello
With Desdemona's, telling moving tales,—
Not of himself—(he was an easy fellow),
But about “hairbreadth 'scapes” from London jails;
Stories that turned the maid's complexion yellow,
Most of them very much resembling whales :—
But what the Kokborn most appeared to care for,
Was, who was last put into quod, and wherefore.

VII.

And making coaxing use of his own keys
To open this her favourite conversation,
She'd spread them out on her redundant knees,
And take up each with an interrogation—
Who's this...and this...and oh, who's that one, please?
And what's his name, and what's his condemnation?
And he, obedient to the sweet co-ercion,
Would legendize each key for her diversion.

VIII.

And so it fell that holding up one day
Key number one upon her dainty thumb,
He, as his wont, began to blaze away...
This was a blackamoor...a vagrant...dumb...
Been caught in the Crown-Lion Inn, they say...
Poor nigger...just as well in kingdom come...
Would very likely prove a hanging job...
Felonious entry with intent to rob.

IX.

The Kokborn heart, I've shown, was not all leather—
She had a little milk of human feeling ;
You could have knocked her over with a feather ;
She felt the floor go up and meet the ceiling :—
Oh it was too atrocious altogether !
A harmless wretch—incapable of stealing !
Doubtless he was a pagan, and would burn,
But meantime wouldn't do an evil turn !

X.

No doubt to see his horse he scaled the Inn—
A case of love without a parallel ;
And many a yarn the maid went on to spin,
That showed he loved not wisely but too well :
He was a man without " a moral sin ;"
And since he certainly would go to hell,
It was a thousand shames this innocent
Should not enjoy his day before he went !

XI.

And so she won his jailor to his side :
And though she held her peace at Hurry Hall,
Lest, as she thought, the Quaker, horrified,
The unbelieving heathen should recall,
Each week she sent him dainties baked or fried—
(We'll find out presently who got them all ;
And that her favour for the captive mute,
Small though it was, was not without its fruit).

XII.

The emissaries of police, meanwhile,
Had made a domiciliary descent,
(If that could be yecept a domicile
Where's Agba's weary vigils had been spent),
To seize his goods, by which unworthy wile
To fish out sign of criminal intent—
A wicked custom that the law directs,
To spoil your *cause* by sacking your *effects*.

XIII.

In the fulfilment of this lofty function
They found the gloves, a comb, a broken rein ;
And next, a curious-looking sort of unction
The mute had used upon his horse's mane ;
All which they pocketed without compunction,
Nor deemed their visit altogether vain—
The comb and ointment “ clearly showed,” they said,
“ The man must have had *something in his head*.”

XIV.

But not without a fight had his estate
Passed into the possession of the law ;
The cat, invaded and infuriate,
Had vainly given battle, tooth and claw...
Oh, bloodiest picture in the Book of Fate—
Grimalkin fell, unwept, upon the straw !
Not lifeless, though,—they merely knocked her down,
And bagged her, as a forfeit to the Crown.

XV.

The Crown, however, never saw a foot of her :
 The Kokborn jailor, kindest of men,
 Through that loved channel hearing the repute of her—
 A wondrous animal, worth any ten—
 Watching his chance, had made unlawful loot of her,
 And carried her forthwith to Agba's den ;
 Who straight, to liquidate his debt of thanks
 With current medium, overflowed his banks.

XVI.

'Twas but a momentary gleam of light
 Upon the utter darkness of his lot :
 Night merged in day, and weary day in night,
 And still the door of freedom opened not ;
 And by and by he lost his appetite—
 Grimalkin all the Kokborn dainties got ;
 And needless want his melancholy helped,
 " Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight " whelped.

XVII.

His new abode was nicely calculated
 To generate and fructify the blues ;
 A narrow window, high up, iron-grated,
 Threw little light upon his present views ;
 A shapeless sack of chaff, much corrugated,
 (You needn't call it *bed* unless you choose),
 Served him at night to lie awake upon ;—
 His chair, a biped with the bottom gone.

XVIII.

Upon the dismal floor, his legs crosswise,
Unmindful of the cold unwholesome damp,
His head between his knees, hands on his eyes,
(A *pose* that would give any *Christian* cramp)—
There he would sit and Orientalize,
Recalling those old days of court and camp,
And conjuring bright scenes of wealth and ease
From the obscurity between his knees.

XIX.

One day a sudden notion filled his head—
Rang like a voice from some unearthly sphere
With dire re-iteration,—“Scham is dead!”...
And though he thrust a thumb in either ear,
And hid his head beneath his so-called bed,
It sounded ever nearer and more near :
It could not be the mere romance of fancy ?—
He would have risked his neck 'twas nec-romancy.

XX.

His reason told him, too, it stood to reason
That Scham by this time couldn't be alive ;
Such brutal rigour for so long a season
It was impossible he should survive.
Which being so, 'twas nothing short of treason
To scruple for a moment to deprive
Himself of paltry breath, and in a trice
Rejoin his sainted barb, in Paradise.

XXI.

Why should he linger in this place of woe,
When Scham, great Scham, had crossed the cloudy
strand ?

He saw him rushing proudly to and fro,

Taking the bearings of the Happy Land,
And his transfigured loves of long ago

Now whinnying round their lord on every hand !
No whips to scourge him *now*, no drums to scare him—
Proud sultan of an equine Houri-harem !

XXII.

So dreaming, he produced from round his waist

The cord of silk and gold that once had hung
Around the neck of Scham. In feverish haste

One end around a window bar he flung :
And when he thought his gallows firmly braced,
The other end around his neck he strung.—

Once, twice and...lo, before he could make more way,
A blaze of light—a lady in the doorway !





PART EIGHTH.—THE VISIT.

I.



WAS almost night ; and she, or rather,
they,
Who flashed upon the erring infidel,
What with the torchlight and their brave
array,
Made up a picture that contrasted well
With the dark prison, and this castaway
Acting a *tableau mourant* in his cell :—
(I don't suppose *he* would have cared a whit
For this æsthetic way of putting it).

II.

First—*place aux dames*—the torchlight showed him
there
An ancient matron clad in lustrous green ;
Threescore and ten had silvered o'er her hair,
But had not bowed her majesty of mien ;
Her noble features, skin still smooth and fair,
Told eloquently what her youth had been,
And yet not sadly, for her age, in truth,
Seemed but the due fulfilment of her youth.

III.

On her left arm and gathered to her breast,
 A spaniel of the precious Blenheim race,
 Soft-cradled lay familiarly at rest,
 Unwitting who had held that envied place.
 Her right hand heavily begemmed was prest
 Upon the arm of one whose knightly grace,
 Symmetric elegance, and handsome head
 Proclaimed the noble and the thorough-bred.

IV.

His coat was of blue velvet faced with gold,
 His peruke was besprinkled with rose powder,—
 (The fashions of the gallant days of old
 Were more *outré* than those of ours, and louder)—
 And in his white silk tights, the dearest sold,
 He looked as proud as anything, and prouder ;
 Lace cuffs, red heels, a hat with snowy plume,
 Formed the extremities of his costume.

V.

The lady had been John of Marlbro's wife,—
 Been Sarah Jennings—Lady Churchill—then
 Duchess of Marlbro ;—been the pride of life
 Unto the pride of England's greatest men—
 His shield and stay in days of party strife—
 Unshaken still at threescore years and ten,
 Now bent on making her salvation sure
 By bounty to the captive and the poor.

VI.

He was her son-in-law on whom she leant,
Earl of Godolphin, son of that great man,
Sidney Godolphin, star of Parliament,
High Treasurer in the palmy days of Anne :
Nor did the son belie his fair descent,
Although a different sort of race he ran,
And sought to gain a reputation rather
More *stable* than the honours of his father :—

VII.

A swell of the first water—"real grit"—
To use the phraseology of Slick ;
Given to racing from the love of it,
And never stooping to a turfy trick :
Now, kindly helping Sarah through a fit
Of jail-inspection,—though it turned him sick
To linger in their Newgates, Fleets, and Benches,
'Mid penal sorrows and plebeian stench.

VIII.

The Governor of Newgate came behind,—
Their Most Obedient, as you may suppose ;
Next a dark figure of the chaplain kind ;
And next three jailors bearing three flambeaux.—
Enough—let us humanely bear in mind
That all this while poor Agba undergoes
The anguish of a halter tightly knotted
Adjacent to his windpipe and carotid.

IX.

He hadn't time, he was so petrified,
 To drop upon his knees as he intended,
 And thus, his deadly project turned aside,
 His fate, and not himself, remained suspended :
 He merely stood and stared, wide-mouthed, wide-eyed,
 And would have done so till the chapter ended,
 But that his jailor, charging with his knife,
 Severed the cord, and shook him back to life.

X.

Out spake the Duchess then :—there are some words
 As difficult to represent in ink
 As to notate the warbling of the birds,
 Or syllogize what infusoria think,—
 As senselesslike as algebraic surds,
 And yet 'twixt thought and speech a useful link :—
 She said “ Dtcht ! Dtcht ! ” and then, as sore perplext,
 Again she said “ Dtcht ! Dtcht ! What next ! What
 next ! ”

XI.

(If, as is more than probable, you can't
 Pronounce the above, I'll put you on the track :
 Open your teeth a little way, and plant
 Your tongue-tip 'twixt the rows, then jerk it back,
 Mixing the dental with the sibilant ;
 It's very easy when you've got the knack,
 And stands for almost any mood of mind ;
 Here 'twas the shocked and pitiful combined).

XII.

Out spake *the* jailor—though he risked his place—
In plainer words, and easier to spell,
“Savin’ your presence, Marm, an’ please your Grace”...
And so on to the tale we know so well ;
Each jot and tittle of the piteous case
He told, from Hurry Hall to Newgate cell ;
Then, as a symphony to what he stated,
He pulled his forelock, and expectorated.

XIII.

Her Grace drank in the tale with eager ear,
Bent forward as a lily in a storm ;
Her face was very pale ; the scalding tear
Bedewed...(Ah, no ; for dew is never warm)...
Furrowed...(that’s worse ; no weeping so severe
As to scoop out its progress furrowform)...
Ran down her cheek, the natural course of grief,
And gravitated to her handkerchief.

XIV.

And Lord Godolphin was in jubilee—
Took the poor mute at once into his favour :
The story hit his lordship’s taste, you see,
It had all through it such a horsey savour :
They must move heaven and earth to get him free !
There never was a better nor a braver !
So swore the gallant, waved his hat and feather,
And clicked his little crimson heels together.

XV.

He called him jolly cock, and brick, and buck,
 Or what endearing names were then in vogue ;
 Admired his faithfulness, and praised his pluck
 In battering-ramming that scorbutic rogue :
 Rejoiced him with the hope of better luck,
 And added then, by way of epilogue,
 He'd have that horse out of that publican
 At any price—or any other man.

XVI.

By this time Sarah had regained her speech,
 And from her cheek had wiped the scalding water,
 And deemed it only duty first to preach
 A closely reasoned sermon on self-slaughter—
 (It had been more within poor Agba's reach
 If she had simply said he "shouldn't oughter")—
 She proved the guilt, she proved the ignominy,
 And clenched the proof by giving him a guinea.

XVII.

"And count on my support," she said ;—"And mine,"
 Cried Lord Godolphin, trebling Sarah's boon :
 "Take that, eat, drink, be merry, sup and dine !
 The barb is mine before another noon !
 But no more throttling, mind—that's all moonshine :
 We'll have you out, my hero, very soon ;
 Then, at your leisure, you and he may jog
 Down to my place in Cambridge, Gog-Magog."

XVIII.

Then, Sarah beckoning, he took her on

His arm again, and led her from the room ;
Next moment lord and lady both were gone,
And nothing left of them but their perfume ;
A flash of torchlight through the keyhole shone,
Then things in general were wrapt in gloom ;
Save where the phosphorescence of surprise
Made two exceptions of Grimalkin's eyes.

XIX.

Was it reality ? Or was it merely

Some foolish dream, some fanciful deceit ?
Surely the noble's voice still echoed cheerly !
Surely the lady's voice still sounded sweet !
He shook himself, and pinched his legs severely,
When something dropped, and tinkled at his feet...
Aha ! The vision-theory was o'er,—
Dream-guineas do not tinkle on the floor !

XX.

He stooped, and groped, and found them one by one,
The cold gold proof of better things to be—
No unsubstantial trick of phantom fun—
The *earnest* of a future fair and free !
But just to make the thing as sure's a gun,
He chinked them thrice for final guarantee,
And when probation could no further go,
Concluded " Though 'tis *odd*, 'tis *even* so !

XXI.

His pleasure didn't strike him of a heap,

But came in small detachments, single file :

So long it had been Agba's wont to weep,

He still would parley with his joy a while :—

Was the barb's death, then, but a dream in sleep !

The whole affair a bad attack of bile ?

The mares ? The blissful plain he had seen Scham on ?

Oh, these were *nightmares*, and the plain plain
gammon !

XXII.

How those fair promises were realized,

And that without miraculous ado—

How the good Quaker, tardily advised,

Rushed to the rescue, and his daughter too—

How all the city heard and sympathised—

How Rogers at the last his charge withdrew—

And how for twenty pounds the horse was sold

To Lord Godolphin—let's suppose it told.

XXIII.

It was a sight to see that horse and mute

Once more together at their games of yore ;

But first the ignoble bonds from head to foot

In scornful indignation Agba tore ;

And since he neighed with fresh affright, he put

His hands in some peculiar way before

His eyes, which meant " 'Tis I ; you needn't neigh so ! "

To which a whinny answered " You don't say so ! "

XXIV.

Then Agba whispered him, or seemed to do so,
(Some mutual tongue no doubt this couple spake)—
Whereat the barb pricked up his ears, and grew so
Familiar, Agba knelt and kissed the flake,
(For all the world like Friday greeting Crusoe)—
Which last convinced the horse beyond mistake;—
Then all was recognition—“Thou?... No other!...
Aha!... It is!... It is... my sable brother!...

XXV.

That Scham was guilty of these terms verbatim,
’Tis not for the historian to say;
But Agba understood him literatim,
And led him forth into the light of day.
The Quaker waiting to congratulate him,—
The baffled Rogers to repudiate him,—
Two victims of his hoofs to execrate him,—
And last the groom in gules to Billingsgate him,—
All found their persons rather in the way;—
Fled northward, southward and sou’west’ard, fearing
Such boundless bounding, rearing and careering.





PART NINTH.—GOG-MAGOG.



I.

HIS is the little pony bay that bore
The Moor that led the Barb that bore the
Cat,—

All on the jog to Gog-Magog, all four
Way-sore, and dust galore on top of
that,—

A-trot, till o'er three-score rough miles and more

A-trot they've got, and spot their habitat...

(I hope the critics will find this to be a

Fine specimen of Onomatopēia).

II.

And not alone the Moor pursued his route,

His but the rôle of second violin ;—

Where Chiffney was, the whole world followed suit ;

A great man Chiffney, though but small and thin ;

A dwarfish, and an ugly man to boot,

With all his teeth knocked out (or else knocked in)—

Shining in silver lace on Lincoln green—

Dressed to the nines—whatever that may mean.

III.

A great man Chiffney ; that was clear as mud ;
 His ugly body one embodied boast ;
 Godolphin's self was nowhere (barring blood) ;
 Chiffney, and not Godolphin, ruled the roast ;
 For, bless you, he was Master of the Stud,—
 An unapproachably momentous post,
 Whereof the kingdom couldn't show the match,
 Whereon the Premiership was not a patch.

IV.

The Moor rode near him, but between the two
 No jot of love was lost, and this is why :—
 When first the mute passed Scham in proud review
 Before Godolphin, Chiffney, standing by,
 Being referred to, ceased a while to chew
 His customary straw, half-closed one eye,
 Giving his hat the regulation touch,
 And said, “ Your lordship, he ain't up to much.”

V.

And Agba caught, his hearing being smart,
 The “ tottle of the whole,” like Joseph Hume ;
 And those eight syllables raged in his heart
 Like the eight devils in the garnished room ;
 And rankled like the rankly poisoned dart
 Stuck in the breast of—I forget of whom ;—
 My memory will drive me to despair ;
 Besides, I've gone and lost my Lemprière.

VI.

He heard him mutter also, "Devil's limb...
Carcase not bad...legs fair...but not *our* style :"
He plainly thought all this some lordly whim,
Just to be humoured for a little while.
The Moor observed, too, that he looked on *him*
With evil eye and supercilious smile,
The sort of smile from which no good e'er comes,
A toothless smile, all cavities and gums.

VII.

Yet looking on him in a proxy light,
And as the master of Scham's future home,
He sought to gain him honour in his sight
By antics worthy of a hippodrome,
Groomed Chiffney's hack where'er they would alight,
And curried favour with a curry-comb,
Used all his mettle to macadamize
Scham's future pathway, and his own likewise :

VIII.

With scant reward ; for Chiffney missed no chance
Of firing off his store of stable-wit ;
Scham's knees, Scham's ribs, Scham's mane, Scham's
countenance,
Scham's ev'ry blessèd point in turn was hit :
All which the Moor with well-feigned nonchalance
Bore, though his inmost heart resented it,
And longed to drown his insults in the blood
Of the facetious Master of the Stud.

IX.

One theme of his the Mute could ill-digest,
 It rubbed his nature sore against the grain ;
 The Earl a rare and precious horse possessed,
 About which Chiffney blew a hurricane ;
 Hobgoblin was his name ; and East and West
 To furnish such another vied in vain...
 " Wait till we're home," would say this stable-boss,
 " And then you'll see an 'oss as *is* an 'oss ! "

X.

The upshot was that ere the journey's end,
 The Moor was this Hobgoblin's mortal foe,
 And gladly would have lent a hand to send
 Him down amongst his goblin kin below :—
 A nobler horse than Scham ! The heavens forfend !
 Who were his parents he would like to know !
 Some distant drop of Arab blood, no doubt,
 Was all they made this wondrous blow about ;—

XI.

Some distant drop, and very much diluted,
 Defiled and bastardised ;—but here was one
 Choke full of the pure fluid undisputed,
 And ready to supply it by the tun,
 His royal genealogy deep-rooted
 Among the very offspring of the Sun—
 A Thigh-King father, and a Thigh-Queen dam !...
 Good heavens ! Hobgoblin to be named with Scham !

XII.

So Agba mused and comforted his pride ;
Perhaps he also yet might look to see
The progeny of both run side by side,
And test the force of purer pedigree ;
If only Scham could find some worthy bride,—
(The rascal had already two or three)...
Well—he would leave that matter to the Flake ;
Its turn had come round *now*, and no mistake.

XIII.

Gog-Magog reached at last, the Master showed
A large and lovely box, to Scham assigned
By Lord Godolphin's order—an abode
That seemed the *trim perfection* of its kind ;
And Agba's self was cosily bestowed
Within a little chamber close behind ;
Exalted both once more to Fortune's pinnacle :
Health at the prow, and Ease behind the binnacle.

XIV.

Their cup at length was full ; it will be seen
The Moor's was fuller than it well could hold ;
It held a drop too much—a drop of spleen—
A drop that griped him, gave him fits untold :
Hob—oh the very tittle turned him green !—
The most infernal goblin ever foaled !
How oft that night he prayed this horse might go
To Pot or Putney, Bath or Jericho !

XV.

The next day, Chiffney, as had been agreed,
Took him to see him. Pausing at the door
He uttered gravely, “*Now* you’ll say you’ve seed
The like of what you’ve never seed before,—
A hanimal as is an ’oss indeed !

Your Barb ! You’ll never look at *him* no more !”
The bitter outrage Agba meekly swallowed—
Put in an acquiescing bow, and followed.

XVI.

Hobgoblin’s stable—palace rather—stood
Apart from all the others, spacious, grand :—
A furlong from plebeian neighbourhood ;
A court, closed in, and laid with finest sand,
Secured him in his lordly quietude
From commerce casual and contraband ;
And in his days of otiose inaction
Served him for recreation and distraction.

XVII.

This portion of the sacred precincts crossed,
One reached a lovely pillared vestibule,—
The triglyphs rich, and skilfully embossed
With centaur-forms of purest Grecian school :
Bronze hippogriffs of fabulous shape and cost
Upheld a tablet rare and beautiful,
That showed in flaming gold the designation,
“Hobgoblin !!!”—with three points of admiration.

XVIII.

The vestibule, in fact the whole abode,
Was paved with brick so very fine in grain,
And of a crimson that so brightly glowed,
You would have thought the floor of porcelain :
The walls in snow-white stucco chastely showed
In bas-relief King Theseus and his train—
Horses and horsey heroes from the Greek,
Wrought with a skill that rivalled the antique.

XIX.

One entered next a large and lofty hall
That threw the vestibule into the shade ;
Dark carved oak lined it half way up the wall ;
On which white wreaths of holly-wood were laid,
That shone like silver on the black, and all
Encircling mimic race and cavalcade—
The carved work of Keller's skilful knife,—
Wrought in each ' motive ' to the very life.

XX.

Eight feet the oak ascended, while the rest
Was spread with finest cloth of Lincoln green,
On which was blazoned the Godolphin crest,
Repeated oft, with paintings hung between,
Wherein the theme of all this interest
In every phase of horse's life was seen—
Hobgoblin stalled, Hobgoblin at the race,
In every posture, and at every pace.

XXI.

On either side the door, ranged manifold
On oaken stands with crimson velvet lined,
His lustrous trophies glorious to behold
In storied order glittered, glass-enshrined,
His cups of silver and his cups of gold,
With emblems of the turf of every kind,
Scrolls lettered with his deeds in dazzling hues,
His racing-saddle, bridle, bit, and shoes.

XXII.

Two spacious windows fenced with netted wire
Commanded the adȳtum where he lay ;
Two vassals in the usual green attire
At these kept watch and ward both night and day.
Long time did Agba ponder and admire ;
One single thought within his soul found play,
The while his wildered brain with wonder swam—
This was a palace fit alone for Scham !

XXIII.

While thus he mused, half envy and half pride,
A heavy curtain, richly blazoned o'er,
Divided in the midst and swung aside,
And showed beyond a massive oaken door,
Bronze-studded, and made midway to divide
To right and left on grooves in wall and floor,
Obedient to a spring ;—which being pressed,
Behold, the Temple-Genius stood confest.

XXIV.

Or rather, *lay* :—couched idly on his bed
He heard the hangings move along the rod,
The door within the grooves, and turned his head
With the supreme indiff'rence of a god ;
Gave a *nil admirari* look which said
That things in general were as long as broad,
And he, Hobgoblin, didn't care a pin
Whether you staid outside or entered in.

XXV.

But catching sight of Agba's sable face,
And puzzled by the unaccustomed hue,
He rose majestically in his place,
And turned him round to get a nearer view ;
Then from disdainful height surveyed the case,
Dumbly remarking, who the deuce are you ?
Thus Agba saw his foe at last, full length,
In all his vaunted stateliness and strength.

XXVI.

Hobgoblin was a grey ; his mane and tail
(In proletarian phrase) "as black's your hat ;"
The mute, who weighed him in Tunisian scale,
Pronounced him inwardly a lump of fat—
Pronounced his legs by contrast rather frail—
Good gracious ! Scham to be compared to *that* !
Yet all his envy couldn't well deny
He had a lovely head and glorious eye.

XXVII.

His racing, carried to triumphant close,
His new vocation did not bar obesity ;
In fact, a deal of tissue adipose
Was deemed a charm, and even a necessity ;
And so Hobgoblin's outlines swelled and rose
From day to day, until, I must confess it, he
Had gone beyond the said desideratum,
And threatened to degenerate to pomatum.

XXVIII.

His whole surroundings told minutest care,
Where Ease with Elegance was duly matched ;
Cushions of Spanish leather stuffed with hair
Extended half-way up the wall, attached
With studs of silver, lest by timbers bare
His precious epidermis might be scratched :
The cushions topped his height ; green cloth the rest—
The usual Lincoln, with the usual crest.

XXIX.

Two racks—gilt bronze—at either angle placed,
Two mangers underneath of polished oak,
That shone with silver platings richly chased,
Suggestions of Caligula awoke.
And last, through spacious windows wire-enlaced,
Upon the eye a glorious champaign broke,
Mid-threaded by a brook, and chequered o'er
With shade of beech and elm and sycamore.

XXX.

Throughout this most veracious narrative
I've sympathised most keenly with the mute,
But find it quite a labour to forgive
His furious hatred of this favored brute ;
It was a wonder that the horse could live,
The Moslem cast on him from head to foot
An eye so evil ; but it passed him by,
Just for the reason that 'twas all his eye.

XXXI.

But, this apart, poor Agba recognised
With thankfulness the blessings of his lot ;
His idol-Barb he fed and exercised
At will, their days of sorrow all forgot ;
Strung on the amulets, and neutralised
By dint of stolen paint each tell-tale spot,
And thus withdrew from public observation
The knee-plus-ultra of horse-degradation.

XXXII.

And so they lived—so might have died content,
The Barb, the Cat, and last, not least, the Moor,
In all the odour (—it's a frouzy scent !)
Of sanctity, lamented though obscure,
But for the one significant event
That makes or mars the life of rich and poor,
And which did each in turn to all the three ;—
Now for the usual question, “ Who was *she* ? ”





PART TENTH.—ROXANA.

I.

SPRING came ; so did Godolphin, bringing,
too,
A choice of sporting friends, his most
select ;
Impatient to display a certain new
Possession, and to witness the effect ;
The time was up, the beauteous stranger due,
Whose absence seemed to turn his intellect :
“She cometh not,” he said from day to day,
And all but chafed his lordly soul away.

II.

She came at length ; but closely veiled, that none
Might gaze upon her beauty unpermitted :
And here I warn you not to deem her one
For such a moral history unfitted :
You'll hold, I think, before this stanza's done,
Godolphin and his sporting guests acquitted
Of lawless disregard of social duty—
She was a mare, she was, this famous beauty.

III.

Thrice victrix at Newmarket, her renown
 Had fired Godolphin, liver, heart, and brain ;
 Hobgoblin's strength, her swiftness, this would crown
 Whatever horse-affiance could attain ;
 And so the double virtue handed down
 Converge supremely from the matchless twain :—
 This Sultan great must have a great Sultana !
 He bought her for him, the far-famed Roxana.

IV.

She came at length ; by Master Chiffney led ;
 Coquettishly got up in cloak and hood ;
 With just enough discovered of the head
 And shapely frame to pique the curious mood ;
 Two bright black eyes a tender lustre shed,
 Full of a wondering solicitude,
 Intelligent, seraphically clear,
 Yet softened by a winning touch of fear.

V.

Two nostrils, bluish, with a dash of rose,
 Were likewise visible, whose graceful play
 And pretty mutiny knew no repose,
 And seemed to gauge creation every way.
 'Tis hard to rhapsodise upon a nose,
 But hers was non-pareil, I'm bound to say ;
 And not a damsel living could eclipse
 The soft carnation of her (*parted*) lips.

VI.

Nor did her garniture forbid to see
Her stately tread, the play of limb that made
The folds to undulate so royally,
The queenly gait beneath the masquerade.
Godolphin was beside himself with glee,—
Decreed the hidden beauty be displayed—
Recalled his order—thought it not so good
To show her *gradually* in the nude.

VII.

He wished to flash her on his friends' surprise
In naked majesty, serene and mighty,
And drink laudation from their dazzled eyes,
(The Earl you see was just a trifle flighty);
He wished her in imperial buff to rise
Before them like a Venus Aphrodité :
And so, the dinner-gong just sounding then,
He said, "To-morrow, Chiffney—half-past ten."

VIII.

And, more than any, Agba had admired
As much as he had witnessed or divined ;
His ancient sense of beauty woke, and fired
His soul with envy and delight combined ;
This was the very bride he had desired
For Scham—the peerless jewel of her kind !
And all this beauty to be thrown away
Upon that lumpy mass of soulless clay !

IX.

A fear took hold on him—no cowardice,
 But formless dread of what himself might do ;
 For gloomily he recognised in this,
 With something verging on prophetic view,
 The nick of final woe or final bliss—
 In sheer affright of rash misdeed withdrew
 From public observation, spirit-heavy,
 Nor even dared attend Roxana's levée.

X.

'Tis half-past ten : the morning sun shines bright
 Upon the meadow where the guests are met :
 Roxana bursts upon their eager sight—
 No garments now, not even a chemisette—
 A pearl of price—"one perfect chrysolite"—
 (I wish I knew some jewel apter yet ;
 For chrysolites are generally green,
 Of which same hue no mare has yet been seen).

XI.

The *débutante* her graceful part rehearsed
 With a reception there was no mistaking :
 Silence significant and long at first,
 And then a murmur gradually waking,
 That moved along *crescendo* till it burst
 Into a cry from soul and larynx breaking !
 Praise shook the Earl's, dilated Chiffney's, soul—
 The Earl took all, but Chiffney took the whole.

XII.

Roxana was milkwhite ; but, bathed in splendour
Of morning sunbeams, showed all shades and tints,
Where argent counterflashed with vermeil tender,
And, round the eye and nostrils, subtle hints
Of delicatest azure ; while the slender
Network of veins gleamed silver in the glints
Of April morn—(but if my readers think
“Silver” too strong, we’ll alter it to *zinc*).

XIII.

Her mane of sombre grey, with just a brush
Of sanguine, scarce enough to call a shade,
The merest faint beginning of a blush—
(The only blush about this artless maid,
Who cocked her head, and didn’t care a rush
Though all mankind beheld her disarrayed)—
This sombre mane, with happy countercheck,
Enhanced the snowy brightness of her neck.

XIV.

Which snowy neck, she, arching, as a swan
About to put her head beneath her wing,
And moving with such dainty grace upon
The young and tender verdure of the Spring
That scarce it curved beneath—this paragon
Wishing to show how she enjoyed the thing,
The open meadow and the glorious day,
Opened her mouth and neighed a furious neigh.

xv.

A high-pitched and a long-protracted blast,
 Expressing 'lusty life,' and joyous pride ;
 And ere the echoes of her cry were past,
 Behold, another, shriller yet, replied—
 A neigh that made the hearers stand aghast,
 And startled all the peaceful country-side :
 The first was proud, but this was three times prouder,
 And, at the lowest figure, four times louder.

xvi.

'Twas *not* Hobgoblin ; such a neigh as that,
 So shrill, so trumpet-like, so long-sustained,
 Was wholly incompatible with fat ;
 Besides, that galliard rather grossly-grained
 Was at this very moment lying flat,
 His silver plated manger fairly drained
 Of its last oat—at which full stage this glutton
 For gallant converse didn't care a button.

xvii.

'Twas Scham, of course ; who, moderate in diet,
 Was ever on the prick of jubilee ;
 Who, always *qui-vivacious* and unquiet,
 And always on the outlook for a spree,
 Hearing the joy-note, and reminded by it
 Of some one he had left beyond the sea,
 Let loose the music of his thorax brazen,
 And sounded a responsive diapason.

XVIII.

Whereat Roxana suddenly became
Most admirable in her attitude,
Most human in expression ; all aflame,
From out the pearly orb the iris stood,
Or seemed to stand ; while the earth-rooted frame,
And velvet ear perked toward the neighbourhood
Whence the high-sounding challenge had been sent,
Betrayed her listening astonishment.

XIX.

She waited for a while, but nothing heard,
Except the rustle of the morning breeze ;
Then by the silence more profoundly stirred,
Grew nervously perplexed, and ill at ease—
(Woman all over—rather the rough word
Than the ignoring silence of the he's)—
Till weary of suspended respiration,
She neighed a short note of interrogation.

XX.

Then rose from earth to sky the wildest yell
That e'er from chest of desert-horse proceeded ;
And those who understood the language well
Might know the stormy passion that he pleaded ;
Roxana evidently did—nor fell
His fierce romance upon her ear unheeded,—
She sighed—she shook—grew restless—pawed the
clover—
Then she per...(oh Roxana !)...spired all over !

XXI.

Confused, suffused, long time she waited thus,
And clearly seemed to hesitate betwixt
The maiden-modest and the amorous,
In counterpoise most delicately fixed ;
'Twas hard to say which had the overplus,
So very equally the two were mixed :
Twice swelled she out her chest in act to cry out,—
Twice through decorum let the effort die out.

XXII.

Sudden another neigh, a different voice,
Half-stifled, heavy, laboured, insolent ;
It was the sluggard Sultan, whom the noise
Had wakened, now demanding what it meant.
Too late : the fair Roxana was too choice
To waste emotion through a double vent ;
She curled her nostril, tossed her pretty head,
But not a single part of speech she said.

XXIII.

But when the jealous Scham, now madly riled
At the intruder, shrilled his trumpet note,
The fiercest, most immitigably wild
Defiance ever flung from mortal throat,
She, fairly "spoons" upon the desert-child,
No longer modestly withheld her vote,
But loudly, in the most unblushing way,
With neigh for neigh announced her loving yea.

XXIV.

In vain, and all in vain, Hobgoblin tried
To put his tongue in ; 'twas but idle folly ;
Either Roxana not a word replied,
Or Scham would overwhelm him with a volley ;
Till tired of useless strife he let them slide,
And held his peace in moody melancholy ;
While they continued swearing vow and vow,
Till Chiffney led her off, and stopped the row.

XXV.

The Earl and his companions standing by
Had much enjoyed the piquant conversation,
Nor in the beauty's conduct could descry
More than a little innocent flirtation.
That night, when each flushed guest had wet his eye,
Godolphin called for one supreme libation,
One toast to close and crown the night's carousals—
“Hobgoblin and Roxana—their Espousals !”





PART ELEVENTH.—THE TUFT.

I.

THREE weary years had all but passed
away

Since Master Chiffney stopped that *nasal*
wooning.

It was “a nipping and an eager” day,
With wintry winds the wintry clouds
pursuing ;

The whole effect was raw and bleak and grey—

The sort of day when suicide is brewing.

The scene, a lonely heath : in midst of that,

Three shiverers,—a man, a horse, a cat.

II.

Our three old friends; but oh, how changed ! how thin !

How altered in appearance and in lot !

The Ethiopian had not changed his skin,

But all the three of them had changed their spot !

The man had raised a wretched hut wherein

To hide his head ; chair, table, bed were not ;

Mud, moss and heath, it was the barest biggin—

Scarce civilized enough to put a pig in.

III.

And here he crouched, and chewed the cud of woe,
Wrapt in the merest remnant of a cloak ;
“ Remote, unfriended, melancholy, slow,”
But braving ruin with a heart of oak.
The winter frosts had brought him very low,
Yet not a single fretful word he spoke,
In part from fortitude, in part from numbness,
And partly also, by the way, from dumbness.

IV.

Couched at his feet, Grimalkin vainly tried
With friction of a leathery tongue to slime
Fictitious lustre on her fretted hide—
Alas, 'twas fruitless, juiceless pantomime !
And Scham ! The regal Scham ! The desert pride !
Ah, he had fallen on an evil time !
And passed his days in polishing his teeth
On several varieties of heath.

V.

His coat, now dull and tarnished, long and rough,
Bore rugged token of the winter's rage ;
His scanty provender was scarce enough
To bear him on his earthly pilgrimage ;
But, like the Major, Scham was “ tough, sir, tough,”
Nor meant to die of anything but age ;
And only sorrowed o'er the lot assigned him
When thinking of the girl he left behind him.

VI.

Sometimes the Moor would clap his hands together,
And Scham, obedient to the well-known sound,
Would sacrifice his prospects in the heather,
And reach him with the old familiar bound ;
Then, all their sufferings from want and weather
In long regards and fond caresses drowned,
The Moor would share with him his oaten cake,
With the luxurious option of "hard bake."

VII.

Then off, and onward like a hurricane,
With savage air magnificent to see,
The Barb refreshed would *sweep* and *scour* the plain,—
A regular *cheval de l'industrie* ;
In narrowing circles wheeling back again,
Until by Agba's side he bent the knee ;
Then, rubbing his soft chin on Agba's crown,
Would beg him not to let his pecker down.

VIII.

And sometimes—chiefly as the sun was set—
Upon the bounding ridge he would arrest
His course, and seem to question space if yet
A living bride his longing soul possessed :
And at such times the noble silhouette,
All black and grand against the flaming west,
Stood out fantastic—seemed to swell in size ;
(Which certainly it did, spelt otherwise).

IX.

And whence the change? Ah whence?... Go back a bit:—

Our hero was in love three years ago ;

Love at first hearing—but as badly hit

As if he'd known her for an age or so :

And Agba seeing *she* encouraged it,

Resolved, though all Gog-Magog should say no,

That the Hobgoblin should be thrust aloof,

And Scham obtain Roxana's hand—or hoof.

X.

It was the height of madness, to be sure,

That Scham, a pensioned pauper, so to speak,
Should cut across this most august *amour*,

And for himself the Sultan's Destined seek :

It was Aladdin and Boudroubadour,

Without the gems to justify his cheek :

It was the height of madness, and he knew it,

And yet resolved to see his hero through it.

XI.

And at this very time a rumour spread

That made the frantic Moor more frantic still ;
The destined bride, objecting to be wed,

Refused to see Hobgoblin, and fell ill,—

Had resolutely taken to her bed,

And wouldn't be removed against her will ;

Nor yet show sign of life except when Scham.

Across the yard would neigh some telegram.

XII.

Godolphin, bound to bring the match about,
Fixed on a day at last, and would not alter ;
And at his lordly beck three yeomen stout
Laid ruthless hands upon the fair defaulter ;
And poor Roxana, from her bed pulled out,
Was led, not *to*, but *by*, the marriage halter (!) ;
And while Gog-Magog thronged the yard to greet her,
The portly laggard was brought forth to meet her.

XIII.

And Agba knew the fateful hour had come,
And crunched his teeth with purpose fell and grim ;
Now for the maximum, or minimum ;
The prize, or else—all up with Barb and him !
There was a gate...But History is dumb...
Who opened it ? .. *Who* burst its fastenings slim ?...
Who stole the donkey, eh ?... *Who* spoiled the sport ?...
One lion-bound, and Scham was in the court !

XIV.

One lion-leap—one yell like Trump of Doom—
And at the sudden phantom of affright
Fled Earl, fled friend, fled yeoman, jockey, groom,
Till not a wedding-guest was left in sight ;
And the whole court was cleared for fighting-room,
Save where Roxana, all in virgin white,
Tied to a post, stood tremblingly apart,
And watched the rival claimants for her—heart.

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And watched the rival claimants for her—heart.

XV.

In vain Godolphin, at a window placed
 That overlooked the swift impending fray,
 Issued his ordinance in wrathful haste
 To "take that devil of a brute away"—
 Shouted, gesticulated, and grimaced,—
 The Moor could neither see nor hear that day ;
 For all reply, he blocked *both gates inside*,
 And then, forsooth, rushed up and kissed the bride.

XVI.

Meanwhile the champions eyed each other o'er :
 (I've half a mind here to invoke the Muse ;
 And since I've never troubled her before,
 Deeming myself and theme beneath her views,
 She ought to help me just so much the more ;
 Here goes—and let her take it or refuse—)
 Hobgoblin's wrath at Scham, that direful Spring,
 And vice versa, Heavenly Goddess, sing !

XVII.

Awake Æolian liar !—That's enough.
 I'm all unused unto Parnassian ways ;
 Nor for the Muses do I care a snuff—
 Old maids to whom old fogies quaver praise ;
 And " Helicon's harmonious Springs " are stuff
 I never drank a drop of, all my days :
 Which brings me back just where I was before—
 Meanwhile the champions eyed each other o'er.

XVIII.

The mutual impression seemed to be
That each was worthy of his foeman's steel,
Though Scham with his imperial pedigree
Felt all the noble scorn that princes feel
(In women's novels) ; had his heart been free,
He might perhaps have turned upon his heel :—
But then his love ! his leman, or lehorse !...
His foe should reach her only o'er his corse !

XIX.

Each fiercely measured each ; which survey made,
The signs of instant fight began to show,
The nostrils upward drawn, the teeth displayed,
The bloodshot eyes with fiery wrath aglow,
Veins swoln to bursting-point, ears backward laid,
Hair bristling with defiance of the foe :—
Thus, seeming each to twice his size enlarged,
“They gave their horse-tails to the wind,” and charged !

XX.

By Jove ! it was a splendid sight to see,
For one who had no cash in either vested !
(Godolphin gazing from his snuggerly
Felt just a little *too* much interested) :—
With what a *flop* the tumid debauchee
Came up against his rival, brazen-chested !
They charged like Christians ! Lord ! you should have
seen them !
My ! what a cloud of dust they raised between them !

XXI.

So fierce the shock, both steeds recoiled a space,
And paused a moment to recover wind ;
Another charge, and, locked in close embrace,
They held each other mutually pinned ;
Then, neither seeing how to mend his case,
They parted, chest and shoulders badly skinned :
'Twas difficult to say which had the worst—
At all events, here ended Round the First.

XXII.

Time up ; both came up smiling ; the attack
Was opened by Hobgoblin ; rearing high
He threw his bulk along his rival's back,
And bit him in the reins, and held thereby ;
When, writhing like a racked demoniac,
Scham wrung himself apart with awful cry !...
That was the end of it Godolphin reckoned.
It wasn't : it was only Round the Second.

XXIII.

Recovering, Scham faced his foe again,
And seized him by the throat—so fierce a bite,
The blood came spouting from a severed vein,
And, maddened by the sanguinary sight,
With hoof and fang the infuriated twain
Now revelled in a most chaotic fight,—
Such knocks and shocks, such bounds and such *re-*
bounds,
It got impossible to count the rounds !

XXIV.

From time to time a cry of anguish rose,
From time to time a shrill triumphant blast ;
Then with redoubled fury they would close,
And once more hold each other hard and fast :
Till the grey steed, for reasons adipose,
Gave panting signs of giving in at last ;—
Ah, had that champion's wind but matched his pluck,
His veteran flag he never would have struck !

XXV.

Yet still he fought, with many a labouring wheeze,
And, while he had his stock of breath, fought well :
Twice on his haunches, lastly on his knees,
Beneath the onslaught of his foe he fell.....
Thenceforth, his conduct wasn't quite the cheese—
He rose and fled with agonizing yell,
Right through a gate which Agba opened then,
And which he just as quickly closed again.

XXVI.

And Scham, great Scham, too noble to pursue,
Proud, radiant, triumphant, raised his head,
Shook out his bloody mane and dripping queue,
And crowed a neigh enough to wake the dead ;
Whereat, a little note that thrilled him through,
The sweetest that e'er came from quadruped,
Responded in a plaintive minor key.
It was Roxana—prize of victory !

XXVII.

Before another day our three old friends
Were sent upon their travels—got the sack :
This dire frustration of his cherished ends
Provoked the Earl to banish all the pack ;
And Agba, powerless now to make amends,
Beheld his sin in all its guilty black,
Pronounced himself the basest of mankind,
And humped his swag, repentant, but resigned.

XXVIII.

Ev'n yet Godolphin showed himself humane ;
He could not turn them utterly adrift :
He owned a messuage and heathy plain
Somewhere up north, where they might make a shift ;
And there he sent them with the brand of Cain—
A written order that no man should lift
His hand against them :—they were just to wander
At will, in peace, until they went—down yonder !

XXIX.

And further it was written that the Moor
Might claim his shelter and his daily food ;
He took the last, ('twas miserably poor),
But stuck in preference to his solitude :
He found the farmer an ignoble boor,
He found his imps insufferably rude ;
The servants for his lack of speech made fun of him ;
The farmer's wife, to crown it all, would none of him.

XXX.

And what of her whose boldness was the snare
Wherein the fortunes of the three were caught—
(For had Roxana been as shy as fair,
The Moor had not presumed, Scham had not fought)—
Left widowed, pining at Gog-Magog there?
The baffled Earl now held her dearly bought,
Beholding how persistently she loathed
And kicked (when chance permitted) her betrothed.

XXXI.

Like daughter from paternal mansion turned,
To live in ignominious lane or alley,
Whose vicious tastes and froward heart have spurned
The noble, to decline upon the valet—
In shabby box, Gog-Magog unconcerned,
Despised, and unattended medically,
Poor Mademoiselle Roxana, now Madame,
Obscurely brought to light the son of Scham.

XXXII.

Two years from that unheeded episode,
We find our heathens *heathenly* located,
As per above; the Moor frost-bitten-toed,
And universally refrigerated,
Reaping, alas, the harvest he had sowed,
And staring at the Flake_g invalidated;
Scham going through the empty form of grazing,
And puss, as usual, varnishing and glazing.

XXXIII.

With sudden start the Moslem turned his ear
 Toward the South, as if he heard a sound—
 Seemed first to doubt, and then, to make it clear,
 Knelt down, and placed his ear against the ground ;
 Then Scham grew restless, neighed as if in fear,
 Ran East, ran West, ran all the compass round ;
 And even the cat left off her lubrication,
 And pricked her ears in nervous agitation.

XXXIV.

Near, and more near...the tramp of horse's feet...
 And from the Southward!...What might this
 portend ?
 How the poor stricken Moslem's heart did beat!—
 For who could tell if it were foe or friend ?
 Oh, was the expiation now complete ?
 Or this the advent of the bitter end ?
 Was it for Scham the turning of the tide ?
 Or was it some one coming for his hide ?

XXXV.

Soon on the bleak horizon's verge appeared
 A cavalier ; and soon, a couple more ;
 And Agba as they gradually neared
 Bethought him he had seen their like before ;
 The first...Yes?...No!...Yes, by the Prophet's beard !
 'Twas Chiffney, his determined foe of yore !
 Chiffney, who, by his latest recollection,
 Had kicked him in a northerly direction !

XXXVI.

Then came two grooms in the familiar green,
One with spare hackney led ; and, further yet,
Some yards behind the verdant grooms were seen
Another man, a horse and waggonette.
What, in the name of Islam, could it mean !
What came so great a host to give or get !
Poor Agba bowed his head, and hid his face,
And saw the darkest aspect of the case.

XXXVII.

And in his terror he had just begun
To pray to heav'n, when a familiar slap
Aroused him, and a " How d'ye do, my son ?"
And " How d'ye find yourself to-day, old chap ?
There's news for *you*, my boy !... The Barb's the one !
Eh ? Not believe me ? Look in that 'ere trap !"
And Chiffney slapped his shoulder, caught his fist,
And shook it like to dislocate his wrist !

XXXVIII.

And like one startled ere the fortieth wink,
While yet the cobwebs hang about the eyes,
The flabbergasted Moor with owlish blink
Sat motionless in nebulous surprise,
Powerless to act, as impotent to think,
In equilibrium 'twixt truth and lies !...
Chiffney seemed *really* enthusiastic—
But, Chiffney had a turn for the sarcastic !

XXXIX.

And then he saw, but still as in a trance,
From out the tumbril by the vassals borne,
The coverings—he knew them at a glance—
The blazoned garb Roxana once had worn!—
'Twas bile!...'Twas want!...'Twas cold!...'Twas all
romance!—
And yet they were the same he could have sworn!
There was her plaited halter white as milk!
There, too, her slender trappings soft as silk!

XL.

Then, still as in a vision, he arose,
And clapped his hands, and Scham was by his side;
Unbidden, automatic, comatose,
He clothed him in the clothing of his bride;
Then suddenly awaking from his doze,
He gazed on him with all the ancient pride,
Bowed to the Flake, just touched it with his mouth,
Mounted the hack, and pointed to the South.





PART TWELFTH.—THE FLAKE.

I.



ROXANA had a son—an only son ;
She never told the name she knew him
by ;
You see, she knew not the paternal one ;
Gog-Magog called him Lath, and so shall
I ;

The sweetest babe in all the world, bar none ;
Was always pleased ; was never known to cry ;
The liveliest, jolliest wretch you ever saw,
Was little Lath,—a true *enfant de joie*.

II.

Roxana loved her son with all her soul ;
Was proud of him, he was so sound and hale ;
He was a very model of a foal ;
He had his mother's eyes, his father's tail ;
In build he 'favoured' Scham upon the whole ;
He took his vigour likewise from the male ;
He had Roxana's air, Roxana's grace,
Her stately stride, her captivating face.

III.

She brought him up to do as he was bid,
From love, and never through intimidation ;
And if she licked him, as she sometimes did,
'Twas with her tongue in way of salivation ;
No pleasure was denied, no game forbid—
The 'beau ideal' of *free* education :—
Such exercise ! no wonder he got strong,
The couple "played at horses" all day long.

IV.

Alas, besides his father's tail and frame,
He heired another part of his estate ;
The fatal heritage of evil fame
Pronounced him from his birth degenerate ;
And all men scorned him as the child of shame,
A born mistake, a thing to execrate :—
Roxana saw it, grieved but uncomplaining,
And paid the more attention to his training.

V.

But ere two years, what with his comeliness,
His noble action and his gallant bearing,
His wondrous crest arched almost to excess,
His union of docility and daring,
The wicked prejudice grew less and less,
Till Chiffney's self pronounced him past comparing ;
And, swelling with importance beyond measure,
Whispered his lord that they had found—"a treasure !"

VI.

A month from that, upon Newmarket course
He beat all two-year-olds ; and need I say
Gog-Magog roared itself completely hoarse,
Godolphin loudest in the loud hooray !
Lath justified the virtue of his source—
From all competitors ran right away ;—
As Chiffney phrased it o'er his evening ale,
“ Not one on 'em could blow wind on his tail.”

VII.

'Twas then the Earl, with sudden-clouded brow,—
With sharp compunctious visiting distrest,
In commune with himself bethought him how
The banished sire of Lath with want opprest
On barren heath was wandering even now,
And vowed and swore the wrong should be redest.
Re-dressed it was, and in Roxana's clothes :
And now, for good and all, Scham's star arose.

VIII.

Time, height of summer, seventeen-thirty-nine ;
The scene, Newmarket, in full festal fuss ,
Three steeds, already famed, arrive in line,
Three sons of Scham—Lath, Cade, and Regulus ;
All Chiffney's training—paragons, in fine ;
Hailed everywhere with shouts idolatrous.
Godolphin hears the praises of the crowd,—
Was never man so pleased, or Earl so proud !

IX.

It was the noble's whim that Scham should see
 The triumph of his sons : (for well he knew
 That nothing stood 'twixt them and victory) ;
 And when the famous stranger came in view
 The welkin rang again with three times three,
 And then, for Agba's turn, with two times two ;
 Who, richly drest, upon his Barb astride
 Sat glowing like a nigger glorified.

X.

Scham, too, was in full fig, as when of old
 He lived at court, a prince's favourite—
 His purple housings studded o'er with gold,
 His golden chainlets and his silver bit.
 This was his crowning day. The Flake foretold
 Great glory : now he had his fill of it.
 Lath, Cade, and Regulus were all victorious,
 And, drunk with triumph, Scham was led home
 glorious !

XI.

Straight to the palace where his foe still reigned
 They led him with enthusiastic shout.
 Hobgoblin not a notion entertained
 Of what the deuce the row was all about,
 Until Godolphin, rushing in, ordained
 To turn the unproductive burden out.
 ('Twas not so cruel as at first appears,—
 He hadn't earned a crust for years and years).

XII.

And thereupon, amid tumultuous din,
And loud expenditure of servile breath,
They led Hobgoblin out, they led Scham in,
To flourish there lord paramount—till death.
They drank his health, drank all his kith and kin,
“Potations pottle deep.” Tradition saith,
(But, mind, I’m not prepared to prove the point),
Hobgoblin’s nose was thenceforth out of joint!

XIII.

And where was Agba while the toast went round?
He was *beside himself*—in sunshine wrapt.
His idol-hero honoured and renowned,
His humble self in ease and comfort lapt,
His loftiest ambition more than crowned,
His most presumptuous wishes more than capped—
What other hope remained? What further prayer—
Save that the Tuft might go—you all know where?

XIV.

Next day, when Agba came to gaze upon
The temple where his idol was enshrined,
Hobgoblin’s name was from the tablet gone,
And in its place, with laurel-leaves entwined,
“Godolphin Arab” in gold letters shone,
And Agba, though he couldn’t read—divined:
Thus Sidney’s son, and Marlbro’s son-in-law,
Shared with the Barb his name and his *éclat*.

XV.

What boots it more to tell ? and wherefore trace
The gradual advent of the common doom ?
Gog-Magog was their life-long resting-place,
And in due time supplied them with a tomb :
In full maturity of years and grace,
In all the—let me say for once—*perfume*
Of sanctity, by all men wept, they died ;
And there the trio slumber side by side.

XVI.

But though so long ago Scham's race was run,
And though Gog-Magog holds his honoured clay,—
While Sweeps are made, while Maiden Plates are won,
While "fortunes hang upon the Derby day,"
While handicaps endure beneath the sun,
While odds are given on chesnut, brown, or bay,
Long after Time is done with you and me,
His single name shall make a pedigree !

XVII.

And poor Roxana ? Did she share his lot ?
And did he end with her as he began ?
I very much regret it—he did *not* :
I cannot hide the fact, do all I can.
Yet think it not so very foul a blot,—
Remember, Scham was a Mahometan ;
Besides, his heart was vast and many-sided,
And could enclose whate'er the gods provided.

XVIII.

Why linger longer? Oh, why longer linger?

Why stretch the theme when nothing more befel?

Were it not better now to stay the finger

Upon the quivering lyre?—(though, truth to tell,
My lyre's a slate).....Grimalkin, I, your singer,

Now say Good-bye!...My noble Moor, Farewell!

Adieu, Roxana, dear!...Adieu, old Scham!

I'm loth to part with you. Indeed I am.

TAMROOKAM STATION, LOGAN RIVER,

30th May, 1872.

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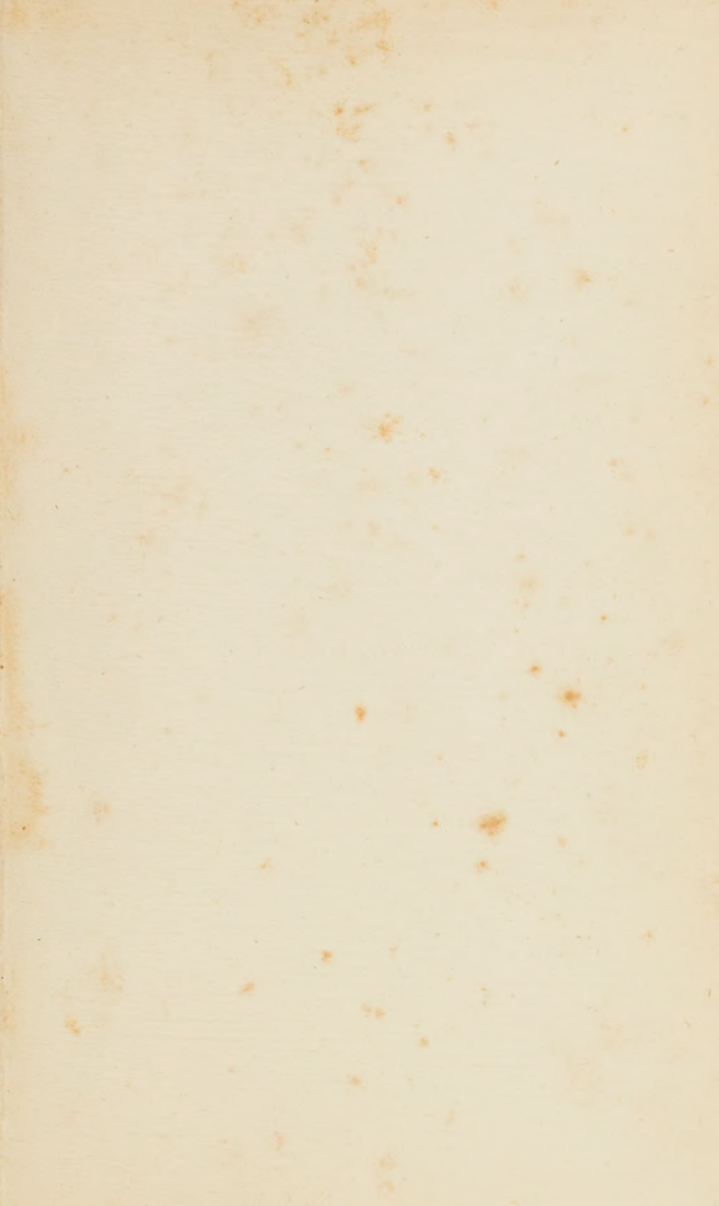
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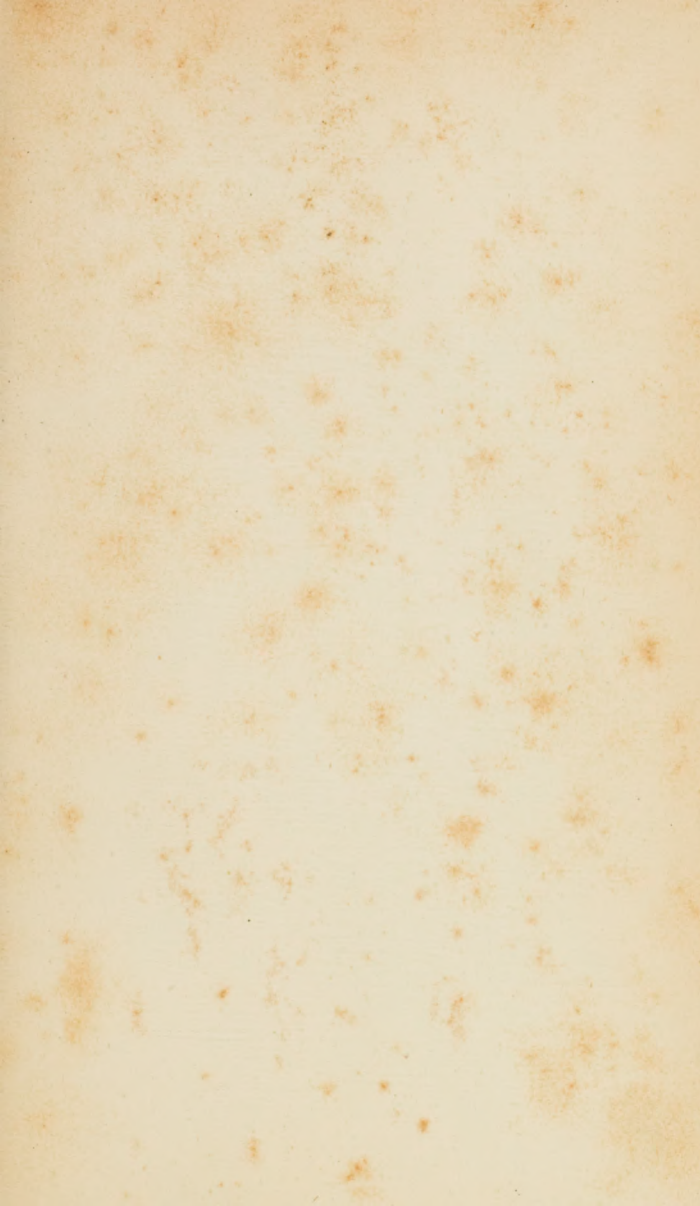
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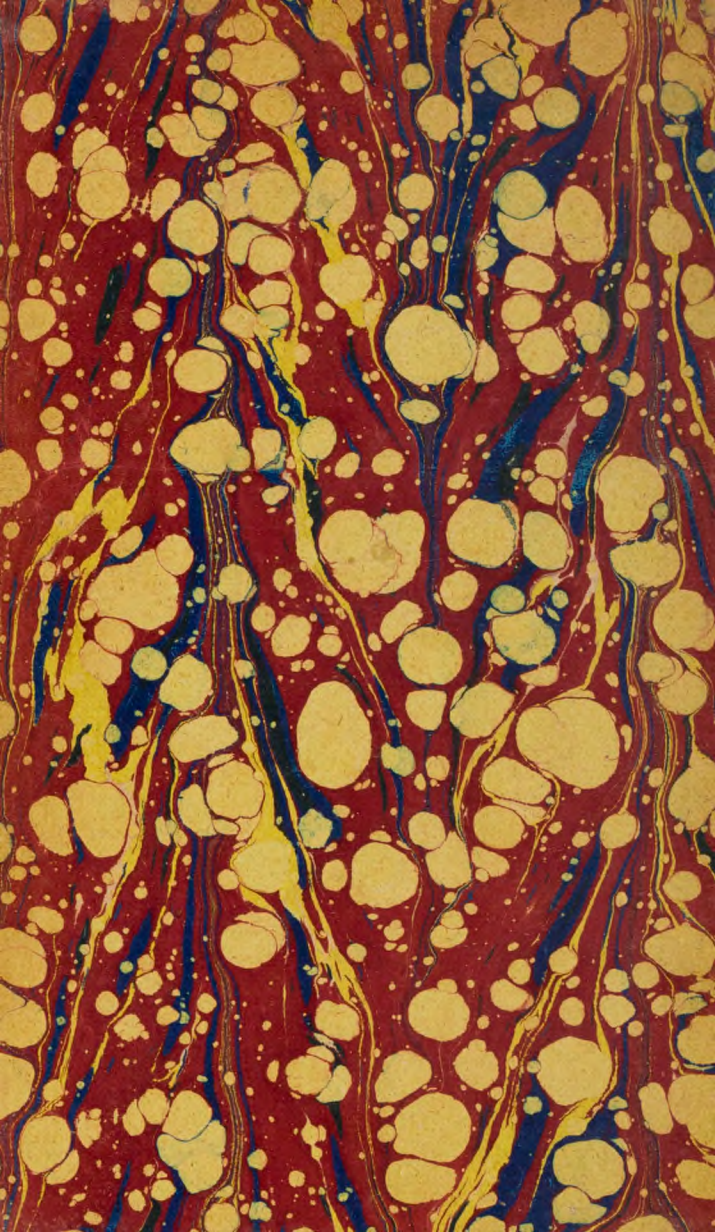
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