



# **THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS**

**FARID UD-DIN ATTAR**

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**THE CONFERENCE  
OF  
THE BIRDS**

**BY  
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The Conference of the Birds by Farid Ud-Din Attar.

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Said he, 'Good Fortune will not be controll'd:  
And, since Today yours seems to turn from you,

170

Suppose we try for once what mine will do,  
And we will share alike in all I win.'  
So the Shah took, and flung his Fortune in,  
The Net; which, cast by the Great Mahmud's Hand,  
A hundred glittering Fishes brought to Land.  
The Lad look'd up in Wonder—Mahmud smiled  
And vaulted into Saddle. But the Child  
Ran after—'Nay, Amir, but half the Haul  
Is yours by Bargain'—'Nay, Today take all,'  
The Sultan cried, and shook his Bridle free—

180

'But mind—Tomorrow All belongs to Me—'  
And so rode off. Next morning at Divan  
The Sultan's Mind upon his Bargain ran,  
And being somewhat in a mind for sport  
Sent for the Lad: who, carried up to Court,  
And marching into Royalty's full Blaze  
With such a Catch of Fish as yesterday's,  
The Sultan call'd and set him by his side,  
And asking him, 'What Luck?' The Boy replied,  
'*This* is the Luck that follows every Cast,

190

Since o'er my Net the Sultan's Shadow pass'd.'

Then came *The Nightingale*, from such a Draught  
Of Ecstasy that from the Rose he quaff'd  
Reeling as drunk, and ever did distil  
In exquisite divisions from his Bill  
To inflame the Hearts of Men—and thus sang He—

'To me alone, alone, is giv'n the Key  
 Of Love; of whose whole Mystery possesst,  
 When I reveal a little to the Rest,  
 Forthwith Creation listening forsakes

200

The Reins of Reason, and my Frenzy takes:  
 Yea, whosoever once has quaint this wine  
 He leaves unlisten'd David's Song for mine.  
 In vain do Men for my Divisions strive,  
 And die themselves making dead Lutes alive:  
 I hang the Stars with Meshes for Men's Souls:  
 The Garden underneath my Music rolls.  
 The long, long Morns that mourn the Rose away  
 I sit in silence, and on Anguish prey:  
 But the first Air which the New Year shall breathe

210

Up to my Boughs of Message from beneath  
 That in her green Harim my Bride unveils,  
 My Throat bursts silence and *her* Advent hails,  
 Who in her crimson Volume registers  
 The Notes of Him whose Life is lost in hers.  
 The Rose I love and worship now is here;  
 If dying, yet reviving, Year by Year;  
 But that you tell of, all my Life why waste  
 In vainly searching; or, if found, not taste?'

So with Division infinite and Trill

220

On would the Nightingale have warbled still,  
 And all the World have listen'd; but a Note  
 Of sterner Import check'd the lovesick Throat.

'O watering with thy melodious Tears  
 Love's Garden, and who dost indeed the Ears

Of men with thy melodious Fingers mould  
 As David's Finger Iron did of old:  
 Why not, like David, dedicate thy Dower  
 Of Song to something better than a Flower?  
 Empress indeed of Beauty, so they say,

230

But one whose Empire hardly lasts a Day,  
 By Insurrection of the Morning's Breath  
 That made her hurried to Decay and Death:  
 And while she lasts contented to be seen,  
 And worshipt, for the Garden's only Queen,  
 Leaving thee singing on thy Bough forlorn,  
 Or if she smile on Thee, perhaps in Scorn.'

Like that fond Dervish waiting in the throng  
 When some World-famous Beauty went along,  
 Who smiling on the Antic as she pass'd—

240

Forthwith Staff, Bead and Scrip away he cast,  
 And grovelling in the Kennel, took to whine  
 Before her Door among the Dogs and Swine.  
 Which when she often went unheeding by,  
 But one day quite as heedless ask'd him—'Why?'—  
 He told of that one Smile, which, all the Rest  
 Passing, had kindled Hope within his Breast—  
 Again she smiled and said, 'O self-beguiled  
 Poor Wretch, at whom and not on whom I smiled.'

Then came the subtle *Parrot* in a coat

250

Greener than Greensward, and about his Throat  
 A Collar ran of sub-sulphureous Gold;

And in his Beak a Sugar-plum he troll'd,  
 That all his Words with luscious Lispering ran,  
 And to this Tune—'O cruel Cage, and Man  
 More iron still who did confine me there,  
 Who else with him whose Livery I wear  
 Ere this to his Eternal Fount had been,  
 And drunk what should have kept me ever-green.  
 But now I know the Place, and I am free

260

To go, and all the Wise will follow Me.  
 Some'—and upon the Nightingale one Eye  
 He leer'd—'for nothing but the Blossom sigh:  
 But I am for the luscious Pulp that grows  
 Where, and for which the Blossom only blows:  
 And which so long as the Green Tree provides  
 What better grows along Kaf's dreary Sides?  
 And what more needful Prophet *there* than He  
 Who gives me Life to nip it from the Tree?'

To whom the Tajidar—'O thou whose Best

270

In the green leaf of Paradise is drest,  
 But whose Neck kindles with a lower Fire—  
 O slip the collar off of base Desire,  
 And stand apparell'd in Heav'n's Woof entire!  
*This* Life that hangs so sweet about your Lips  
 But, spite of all your Khizar, slips and slips,  
 What is it but itself the coarser Rind  
 Of the True Life withinside and behind,  
 Which he shall never never reach unto  
 Till the gross Shell of Carcase he break through?'

280

For what said He, that dying Hermit, whom  
 Your Prophet came to, trailing through the Gloom  
 His Emerald Vest, and tempted—'Come with Me,  
 And Live.' The Hermit answered—'Not with Thee.  
 Two Worlds there are, and *This* was thy Design,  
 And thou hast got it; but The *Next* is mine;  
 Whose Fount is *this* life's Death, and to whose Side  
 Ev'n now I find my Way without a Guide.'

Then like a Sultan glittering in all Rays  
 Of Jewelry, and deckt with his own Blaze,

290

The glorious Peacock swept into the Ring:  
 And, turning slowly that the glorious Thing  
 Might fill all Eyes with wonder, thus said He.  
 'Behold, the Secret Artist, making me,  
 With no one Colour of the skies bedeckt,  
 But from its Angel's Feathers did select  
 To make up mine withal, the Gabriel  
 Of all the Birds: though from my Place I fell  
 In Eden, when Acquaintance I did make  
 In those blest days with that Sev'n-headed Snake,

300

And thence with him, my perfect Beauty marr'd  
 With these ill Feet, was thrust out and debarr'd.  
 Little I care for Worldly Fruit or Flower,  
 Would you restore me to lost Eden's Bower,  
 But first my Beauty making all complete  
 With reparation of these ugly Feet.'

'Were it,' 'twas answer'd, 'only to return  
 To that lost Eden, better far to burn  
 In Self-abasement up thy pluméd Pride,  
 And ev'n with lamer feet to creep inside—

310

But all mistaken you and all like you  
 That long for that lost Eden as the true;  
 Fair as it was, still nothing but the shade  
 And Out-court of the Majesty that made.  
 That which I point you tow'rd, and which the King  
 I tell you of broods over with his Wing,  
 With no deciduous leaf, but with the Rose  
 Of Spiritual Beauty, smells and glows:  
 No plot of Earthly Pleasance, but the whole  
 True Garden of the Universal Soul.'

320

For so Creation's Master-Jewel fell  
 From that same Eden: loving which too well,  
 The Work before the Artist did prefer,  
 And in the Garden lost the Gardener.  
 Wherefore one Day about the Garden went  
 A voice that found him in his false Content,  
 And like a bitter Sarsar of the North  
 Shrivell'd the Garden up, and drove him forth  
 Into the Wilderness: and so the Eye  
 Of Eden closed on him till by and by.

330

Then from a Ruin where conceal'd he lay  
 Watching his buried Gold, and hating Day,  
 Hooted *The Owl*.—'I tell you, my Delight  
 Is in the Ruin and the Dead of Night  
 Where I was born, and where I love to wone  
 All my Life long, sitting on some cold stone  
 Away from all your roustering Companies,  
 In some dark Corner where a Treasure lies;  
 That, buried by some Miser in the Dark,  
 Speaks up to me at Midnight like a Spark;

340

And o'er it like a Talisman I brood,  
 Companion of the Serpent and the Toad.  
 What need of other Sovereign, having found,  
 And keeping as in Prison underground,  
 One before whom all other Kings bow down,  
 And with his glittering Heel their Foreheads crown?'

'He that a Miser lives and Miser dies,  
 At the Last Day what Figure shall he rise?'

A Fellow all his life lived hoarding Gold,  
 And, dying, hoarded left it. And behold,

350

One Night his Son saw peering through the House  
 A Man, with yet the semblance of a Mouse,  
 Watching a crevice in the Wall—and cried  
 'My Father?'—'Yes,' the Musulman replied,  
 'Thy Father!'—'But why watching thus?'—'For fear  
 Lest any smell my Treasure buried here.'  
 'But wherefore, Sir, so metamousified?'  
 'Because, my Son, such is the true outside  
 Of the inner Soul by which I lived and died.'

'Aye,' said *The Partridge*, with his Foot and Bill

360

Crimson with raking Rubies from the Hill,  
 And clattering his Spurs—'Wherewith the Ground  
 I stab,' said he, 'for Rubies, that, when found  
 I swallow; which, as soon as swallow'd, turn  
 To Sparks which though my beak and eyes do burn.  
 Gold, as you say, is but dull Metal dead,  
 And hanging on the Hoarder's Soul like Lead:



But Rubies that have Blood within, and grown  
 And nourisht in the Mountain Heart of Stone,  
 Burn with an inward Light, which they inspire,

370

And make their Owners Lords of their Desire.'

To whom the Tajidar—'As idly sold  
 To the quick Pebble as the drowsy Gold,  
 As dead when sleeping in their mountain mine  
 As dangerous to Him who makes them shine:  
 Slavish indeed to do their Lord's Commands,  
 And slave-like aptest to escape his Hands,  
 And serve a second Master like the first,  
 And working all their wonders for the worst.'

Never was Jewel after or before

380

Like that Sulayman for a Signet wore:  
 Whereby one Ruby, weighing scarce a grain  
 Did Sea and Land and all therein constrain,  
 Yea, ev'n the Winds of Heav'n—made the fierce East  
 Bear his League-wide Pavillion like a Beast,  
 Whither he would: yea, the Good Angel held  
 His subject, and the lower Fiend compell'd.  
 Till, looking round about him in his pride,  
 He overtax'd the Fountain that supplied,  
 Praying that after him no Son of Clay

390

Should ever touch his Glory. And one Day  
 Almighty God his Jewel stole away,  
 And gave it to the Div, who with the Ring  
 Wore also the Resemblance of the King,

And so for forty days play'd such a Game  
As blots Sulayman's forty years with Shame.

Then *The Shah-Falcon*, tossing up his Head  
Blink-hooded as it was—'Behold,' he said,  
'I am the chosen Comrade of the King,  
And perch upon the Fist that wears the Ring;

400

Born, bred, and nourisht, in the Royal Court,  
I take the Royal Name and make the Sport.  
And if strict Discipline I undergo  
And half my Life am blinded—be it so;  
Because the Shah's Companion ill may brook  
On aught save Royal Company to look.  
And why am I to leave my King, and fare  
With all these Rabble Wings I know not where?'—

'O blind indeed'—the Answer was, 'and dark  
To any but a vulgar Mortal Mark,

410

And drunk with Pride of Vassalage to those  
Whose Humour like their Kingdom comes and goes;  
All Mutability: who one Day please  
To give: and next Day what they gave not seize:  
Like to the Fire: a dangerous Friend at best,  
Which who keeps farthest from does wiseliest.

A certain Shah there was in Days foregone  
Who had a lovely Slave he doted on,  
And cherish'd as the Apple of his Eye,  
Clad gloriously, fed sumptuously, set high,

420

And never was at Ease were *He* not by,  
 Who yet, for all this Sunshine, Day by Day  
 Was seen to wither like a Flower away.  
 Which, when observing, one without the Veil  
 Of Favour ask'd the Favourite—'Why so pale  
 And sad?' thus sadly answer'd the poor Thing—  
 'No Sun that rises sets until the King,  
 Whose Archery is famous among Men,  
 Aims at an Apple on my Head. and when  
 The stricken Apple splits. and those who stand

430

Around cry "Lo! the Shah's unerring Hand!"  
 Then He too laughing asks me "Why so pale  
 And sorrow-some? as could the Sultan fail,  
 Who such a master of the Bow confest,  
 And aiming by the Head that he loves best."

Then on a sudden swoop'd *The Phoenix* down  
 As though he wore as well as gave The Crown:  
 And cried—'I care not, I, to wait on Kings,  
 Whose crowns are but the Shadow of my Wings!'

'Aye,' was the Answer—'And, pray, how has sped,

440

On which it lighted, many a mortal Head?'

A certain Sultan dying, his Vizier  
 In Dream beheld him, and in mortal Fear  
 Began—'O mighty Shah of Shahs! Thrice-blest'—  
 But loud the Vision shriek'd and struck its Breast,  
 And 'Stab me not with empty Title!' cried—  
 'One only Shah there is, and none beside,  
 Who from his Throne above for certain Ends  
 Awhile some Spangle of his Glory lends  
 To Men on Earth; but calling in again

450

Exacts a strict account of every Grain.  
 Sultan I lived, and held the World in scorn:  
 O better had I glean'd the Field of Corn!  
 O better had I been a Beggar born,  
 And for my Throne and Crown, down in the Dust  
 My living Head had laid where Dead I must!  
 O wither'd, wither'd, wither'd, be the Wing  
 Whose overcasting Shadow made me King!'

Then from a Pond, where all day long he kept,  
 Waddled the dapper *Duck* demure, adept

460

At infinite Ablution, and precise  
 In keeping of his Raiment clean and nice.  
 And 'Sure of all the Race of Birds,' said He,  
 'None for Religious Purity like Me,  
 Beyond what strictest Rituals prescribe—  
 Methinks I am the Saint of all our Tribe,  
 To whom, by Miracle, the Water, that  
 I wash in, also makes my Praying-Mat.'

To whom, more angrily than all, replied  
 The Leader, lashing that religious Pride,

470

That under ritual Obedience  
 To outer Law with inner might dispense:  
 For, fair as all the Feather to be seen,  
 Could one see *through*, the Maw was not so clean:  
 But He that made both Maw and Feather too  
 Would take account of, seeing through and through.











590

Subject, still vary through their lower Range:  
 To which the higher even shall decay,  
 That, letting ooze their better Part away  
 For Things of Sense and Matter, in the End  
 Shall merge into the Clay to which they tend.  
 Unlike to him, who straining through the Bond  
 Of outward Being for a Life beyond,  
 While the gross Worldling to *his* Centre clings,  
 That draws him deeper in, exulting springs  
 To merge him in the central *Soul* of Things.

600

And shall not he pass home with other Zest  
 Who, with full Knowledge, yearns for such a Rest,  
 Than he, who with his better self at strife,  
 Drags on the weary Exile call'd *This* Life?—  
 One, like a child with outstretcht Arms and Face  
 Upturn'd, anticipates his Sire's Embrace;  
 The other crouching like a guilty Slave  
 Till flogg'd to Punishment across the Grave.  
 And, knowing that *His* glory ill can bear  
 The unpurged Eye; do thou Thy Breast prepare:

610

And the mysterious Mirror He set there,  
 To temper his reflected Image in,  
 Clear of Distortion, Doubleness, and Sin:  
 And in thy Conscience understanding *this*,  
 The *Double* only seems, but The *One is*,  
*Thyself* to Self-annihilation give  
 That this false Two in that true One may live.  
 For this I say: if, looking in thy Heart,

Thou for *Self-whole* mistake thy *Shadow-part*,  
That Shadow-part indeed into The Sun

620

Shall melt, but senseless of its Union:  
But in that Mirror if with purged eyes  
Thy Shadow Thou *for* Shadow recognise,  
Then shalt Thou back into thy Centre fall  
A conscious Ray of that eternal *All*.'

He ceased, and for awhile Amazement quell'd  
The Host, and in the Chain of Silence held:  
A Mystery so awful who would dare—  
So glorious who would not wish—to share?  
So Silence brooded on the feather'd Folk,

630

Till here and there a timid Murmur broke  
From some too poor in honest Confidence,  
And then from others of too much Pretence;  
Whom both, as each unduly hoped or fear'd,  
The Tajidar in answer check'd or cheer'd.

Some said their Hearts were good indeed to go  
The Way he pointed out: but they were slow  
Of Comprehension, and scarce understood  
Their present Evil or the promised Good:  
And so, tho' willing to do all they could,

640

Must not they fall short, or go wholly wrong,  
On such mysterious Errand, and so long?  
Whom the wise Leader bid but Do their Best  
In Hope and Faith, and leave to Him the rest,

For He who fix'd the Race, and knew its Length  
And Danger, also knew the Runner's Strength.

Shah Mahmud, absent on an Enterprise,  
Ayas, the very Darling of his eyes,  
At home under an Evil Eye fell sick,  
Then cried the Sultan to a soldier 'Quick!

650

To Horse! to Horse! without a Moment's Stay,—  
The shortest Road with all the Speed you may,—  
Or, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it!—  
Off went the Soldier, plying Spur and Bit—  
Over the sandy Desert, over green  
Valley, and Mountain, and the Stream between,  
Without a Moment's Stop for rest or bait,  
Up to the City—to the Palace Gate—  
Up to the Presence-Chamber at a Stride—  
And Lo! The Sultan at his Darling's side!—

660

Then thought the Soldier—'I have done my Best,  
And yet shall die for it.' The Sultan guess'd  
His Thought and smiled. 'Indeed your Best you did,  
The nearest Road you knew, and well you rid:  
And if *I* knew a shorter, my Excess  
Of Knowledge does but justify thy Less.'

And then, with drooping Crest and Feather, came  
Others, bow'd down with Penitence and Shame.  
They long'd indeed to go; 'but how begin,  
Mesh'd and entangled as they were in Sin

670

Which often-times Repentance of past Wrong  
 As often broken had but knit more strong?'  
 Whom the wise Leader bid be of good cheer,  
 And, conscious of the Fault, dismiss the Fear,  
 Nor at the very Entrance of the Fray  
 Their Weapon, ev'n if broken, fling away:  
 Since Mercy on the broken Branch anew  
 Would blossom were but each Repentance true.

For did not God his Prophet take to Task?  
 'Sev'n-times of Thee did Karun Pardon ask;

680

Which, hadst thou been like Me his Maker—yea,  
 But present at the Kneading of his Clay  
 With those twain Elements of Hell and Heav'n,—  
 One prayer had won what Thou deny'st to Sev'n.'

For like a Child sent with a fluttering Light  
 To feel his way along a gusty Night  
 Man walks the World: again and yet again  
 The Lamp shall be by Fits of Passion slain:  
 But shall not He who sent him from the Door  
 Relight the Lamp once more, and yet once more?

690

When the rebellious Host from Death shall wake  
 Black with Despair of Judgment, God shall take  
 Ages of holy Merit from the Count  
 Of Angels to make up Man's short Amount,  
 And bid the murmuring Angel gladly spare  
 Of that which, undiminishing his Share,  
 Of Bliss, shall rescue Thousands from the Cost  
 Of Bankruptcy within the Prison lost.

Another Story told how in the Scale  
 Good Will beyond mere Knowledge would prevail.

700

In Paradise the Angel Gabriel heard  
 The Lips of Allah trembling with the Word  
 Of perfect Acceptation: and he thought  
 'Some perfect Faith such perfect Answer wrought,  
 But whose?'—And therewith slipping from the Crypt  
 Of Sidra, through the Angel-ranks he slipt  
 Watching what Lip yet trembled with the Shot  
 That so had hit the Mark—but found it not.  
 Then, in a Glance to Earth, he threaded through  
 Mosque, Palace, Cell and Cottage of the True

710

Belief—in vain; so back to Heaven went  
 And—Allah's Lips still trembling with assent!  
 Then the tenacious Angel once again  
 Threaded the Ranks of Heav'n and Earth—in vain—  
 Till, once again return'd to Paradise,  
 There, looking into God's, the Angel's Eyes  
 Beheld the Prayer that brought that Benison  
 Rising like Incense from the Lips of one  
 Who to an Idol bowed—as best he knew  
 Under that False God worshipping the True.

720

And then came others whom the summons found  
 Not wholly sick indeed, but far from sound:  
 Whose light inconstant Soul alternate flew  
 From Saint to Sinner, and to both untrue;  
 Who like a niggard Tailor, tried to match  
 Truth's single Garment with a worldly Patch.  
 A dangerous Game; for, striving to adjust  
 The hesitating Scale of either Lust,  
 That which had least within it upward flew,  
 And still the weightier to the Earth down drew,

730

And, while suspended between Rise and Fall,  
Apt with a shaking Hand to forfeit all.

There was a Queen of Egypt like the Bride  
Of Night, Full-moon-faced and Canopus-eyed,  
Whom one among the meanest of her Crowd  
Loved—and she knew it (for he loved aloud),  
And sent for him, and said 'Thou lov'st thy Queen:  
Now therefore Thou hast this to choose between:  
Fly for thy Life: or for this one night Wed  
Thy Queen, and with the Sunrise lose thy Head.'

740

He paused—he turn'd to fly—she struck him dead.  
'For had he truly loved his Queen,' said She,  
'He would at once have giv'n his Life for me,  
And Life and Wife had carried: but he lied;  
And loving only Life, has justly died.'

And then came one who having clear'd his Throat  
With sanctimonious Sweetness in his Note  
Thus lisp'd—'Behold I languish from the first  
With passionate and unrequited Thirst  
Of Love for more than any mortal Bird.

750

Therefore have I withdrawn me from the Herd  
To pine in Solitude. But Thou at last  
Hast drawn a line across the dreary Past,  
And sure I am by Foretaste that the Wine  
I long'd for, and Thou tell'st of, shall be mine.'

But he was sternly checkt. 'I tell thee this:  
Such Boast is no Assurance of such Bliss:

Thou canst not even fill the sail of Prayer  
 Unless from *Him* breathe that authentic Air  
 That shall lift up the Curtain that divides

760

His Lover from the Harim where *He* hides—  
 And the Fulfilment of thy Vows must be,  
 Not from thy Love for Him, but His for Thee.'

The third night after Bajazyd had died,  
 One saw him, in a dream, at his Bedside,  
 And said, 'Thou Bajazyd? Tell me O Pyr,  
 How fared it there with Munkar and Nakyr?'  
 And Bajazyd replied, 'When from the Grave  
 They met me rising, and "If Allah's slave"  
 Ask'd me, "or collar'd with the Chain of Hell?"

770

I said "Not I but God alone can tell:  
 My Passion for his service were but fond  
 Ambition had not He approved the Bond:  
 Had He not round my neck the Collar thrown  
 And told me in the Number of his own;  
 And that He only knew. What signifies  
 A hundred Years of Prayer if none replies?"

'But,' said Another, 'then shall none the Seal  
 Of Acceptation on his Forehead feel  
 Ere the Grave yield them on the other Side

780

Where all is settled?'

But the Chief replied—  
 'Enough for us to know that who is meet  
 Shall enter, and with unprovéd Feet,

(Ev'n as he might upon the Waters walk)  
 The Presence-room, and in the Presence talk  
 With such unbridled Licence as shall seem  
 To the Uninitiated to blaspheme.'

Just as another Holy Spirit fled,  
 The Skies above him burst into a Bed  
 Of Angels looking down and singing clear

790

'Nightingale! Nightingale! thy Rose is here!  
 And yet, the Door wide open to that Bliss,  
 As some hot Lover slights a scanty Kiss,  
 The Saint cried 'All I sigh'd for come to *this*?  
 I who lifelong have struggled, Lord, to be  
 Not of thy Angels one, but one with Thee!'

Others were sure that all he said was true:  
 They were extremely wicked, that they knew:  
 And much they long'd to go at once—but some,  
 They said, so unexpectedly had come

800

Leaving their Nests half-built—in bad Repair—  
 With Children in—Themselves about to pair—  
 'Might he not choose a better Season—nay,  
 Better perhaps a Year or Two's Delay,  
 Till all was settled, and themselves more stout  
 And strong to carry their Repentance out—  
 And then'—

'And then, the same or like Excuse,  
 With harden'd Heart and Resolution loose  
 With dallying: and old Age itself engaged  
 Still to shirk that which shirking we have aged:



810

And so with Self-delusion, till, too late,  
 Death upon all Repentance shuts the Gate;  
 Or some fierce blow compels the Way to choose,  
 And forced Repentance half its Virtue lose.'

As of an aged Indian King they tell  
 Who, when his Empire with his Army fell  
 Under young Mahmud's Sword of Wrath, was sent  
 At sunset to the Conqueror in his Tent;  
 But, ere the old King's silver head could reach  
 The Ground, was lifted up—with kindly Speech,

820

And with so holy Mercy reassured,  
 That, after due Persuasion, he abjured  
 His idols, sate upon Mahmud's Divan,  
 And took the Name and Faith of Musulman.  
 But when the Night fell, in his Tent alone  
 The poor old King was heard to weep and groan  
 And smite his Bosom; which, when Mahmud knew,  
 He went to him and said 'Lo, if Thou rue  
 Thy lost Dominion, Thou shalt wear the Ring  
 Of thrice as large a Realm.' But the dark King

830

Still wept, and Ashes on his Forehead threw  
 And cried 'Not for my Kingdom lost I rue:  
 But thinking how at the Last Day, will stand  
*The Prophet with The Volume* in his Hand,  
 And ask of me "How was't that, in thy Day  
 Of Glory, Thou didst turn from Me and slay  
 My People; but soon as thy Infidel  
 Before my True Believers' Army fell

Like Corn before the Reaper—thou didst own  
His Sword who scoutedst *Me.*" Of seed so sown

840

What profitable Harvest should be grown?'

Then after cheering others who delay'd,  
Not of the Road but of Themselves afraid,  
The Tajidar the Troop of those address'd,  
Whose uncomplying Attitude confess'd  
Their Souls entangled in the old Deceit,  
And hankering still after forbidden Meat—

'O ye who so long feeding on the Husk  
Forgo the Fruit, and doting on the Dusk  
Of the false Dawn, are blinded to the True:

850

That in the Maidan of this World pursue  
The Golden Ball which, driven to the Goal,  
Wins the World's Game but loses your own Soul:  
Or like to Children after Bubbles run  
That still elude your Fingers; or, if won,  
Burst in Derision at your Touch; all thin  
Glitter without, and empty Wind within.  
So as a prosperous Worldling on the Bed  
Of Death—"Behold, I am as one," he said,  
"Who all my Life long have been measuring Wind,

860

And, dying, now leave even that behind"—  
This World's a Nest in which the Cockatrice  
Is warm'd and hatcht of Vanity and Vice:  
A false Bazaar whose Wares are all a lie,  
Or never worth the Price at which you buy:  
A many-headed Monster that, supplied

The faster, faster is unsatisfied;  
 So as one, hearing a rich Fool one day  
 To God for yet one other Blessing pray,  
 Bid him no longer bounteous Heaven tire

870

For Life to feed, but Death to quench, the Fire.  
 And what are all the Vanities and Wiles  
 In which the false World decks herself and smiles  
 To draw Men down into her harlot Lap?  
 Lusts of the Flesh that Soul and Body sap,  
 And, melting Soul down into carnal Lust,  
 Ev'n that for which 'tis sacrificed disgust:  
 Or Lust of worldly Glory—hollow more  
 Than the Drum beaten at the Sultan's Door,  
 And fluctuating with the Breath of Man

880

As the Vain Banner flapping in the Van.  
 And Lust of Gold—perhaps of Lusts the worst;  
 The mis-created Idol most accurst  
 That between Man and Him who made him stands:  
 The Felon that with suicidal hands  
 He sweats to dig and rescue from his Grave,  
 And sets at large to make Himself its Slave.

'For lo, to what worse than oblivion gone  
 Are some the cozening World most doted on.  
 Pharaoh tried *Glory*: and his Chariots drown'd:

890

Karun with all his Gold went underground:  
 Down toppled Nembroth with his airy Stair:  
 Schedad among his Roses lived—but *where?*

'And as the World upon her victims feeds  
 So She herself goes down the Way she leads.  
 For all her false allurements are the Threads  
 The Spider from her Entrail spins, and spreads  
 For Home and hunting-ground: And by and by  
 Darts at due Signal on the tangled Fly,  
 Seizes, dis-wings, and drains the Life, and leaves

900

The swinging Carcase, and forthwith re-weaves  
 Her Web: each Victim adding to the store  
 Of poison'd Entrail to entangle more.  
 And so She bloats in Glory: till one Day  
 The Master of the House, passing that way,  
 Perceives, and with one flourish of his Broom  
 Of Web and Fly and Spider clears the Room.

'Behold, dropt through the Gate of Mortal Birth,  
 The Knightly Soul alights from Heav'n on Earth;  
 Begins his Race, but scarce the Saddle feels,

910

When a foul Imp up from the distance steals,  
 And, double as he will, about his Heels  
 Closer and ever closer circling creeps,  
 Then, half-invited, on the Saddle leaps,  
 Clings round the Rider, and, once there, in vain  
 The strongest strives to thrust him off again.  
 In Childhood just peeps up the Blade of Ill,  
 That Youth to Lust rears, Fury, and Self-will:  
 And, as Man cools to sensual Desire,  
 Ambition catches with as fierce a Fire;

920

Until Old Age sends him with one last Lust  
 Of Gold, to keep it where he found—in Dust.  
 Life at both ends so feeble and constrain'd  
 How should that Imp of Sin be slain or chain'd?

'And woe to him who feeds the hateful Beast  
 That of his Feeder makes an after-feast!  
 We know the Wolf: by Strategem and Force  
 Can hunt the Tiger down: but what Resource  
 Against the Plague we heedless hatch within,  
 Then, growing, pamper into full-blown Sin

930

With the Soul's self: ev'n, as the wise man said,  
 Feeding the very Devil with God's own Bread;  
 Until the Lord his Largess misapplied  
 Resent, and drive us wholly from his Side?

'For should the Greyhound whom a Sultan fed,  
 And by a jewell'd String a-hunting led,  
 Turned by the Way to gnaw some nasty Thing  
 And snarl at Him who twitch'd the silken String,  
 Would not his Lord soon weary of Dispute,  
 And turn adrift the incorrigible Brute?

940

'Nay, would one follow, and without a Chain,  
 The only Master truly worth the Pain,  
 One must beware lest, growing over-fond  
 Of even Life's more consecrated Bond,  
 We clog our Footsteps to the World beyond.  
 Like that old Arab Chieftain, who confess'd  
 His soul by two too Darling Things possess'd—  
 That only Son of his: and that one Colt  
 Descended from the Prophet's Thunderbolt.  
 "And I might well bestow the last," he said,

950

"On him who brought me Word the Boy was dead."  
 'And if so vain the glittering Fish we get,  
 How doubly vain to dote upon the Net,  
 Call'd Life, that draws them, patching up this thin  
 Tissue of Breathing out and Breathing in,  
 And so by husbanding each wretched Thread  
 Spin out Death's very terror that we dread—  
 For as the Raindrop from the sphere of God  
 Dropt for a while into the Mortal Clod  
 So little makes of its allotted Time

960

Back to its Heav'n itself to re-sublime,  
 That it but serves to saturate its Clay  
 With Bitterness that will not pass away.'

One day the Prophet on a River Bank,  
 Dipping his Lips into the Channel, drank  
 A Draught as sweet as Honey. Then there came  
 One who an earthen Pitcher from the same  
 Drew up, and drank: and after some short stay  
 Under the Shadow, rose and went his Way.  
 Leaving his earthen Bowl. In which, anew

970

Thirsting, the Prophet from the River drew,  
 And drank from: but the Water that came up  
 Sweet from the Stream. drank bitter from the Cup.  
 At which the Prophet in a still Surprise  
 For Answer turning up to Heav'n his Eyes,  
 The Vessel's Earthen Lips with Answer ran—  
 'The Clay that I am made of once was Man,  
 Who dying, and resolved into the same

Obliterated Earth from which he came  
Was for the Potter dug, and chased in turn

980

Through long Vicissitude of Bowl and Urn:  
But howsoever moulded, still the Pain  
Of that first mortal Anguish would retain,  
And cast, and re-cast, for a Thousand years  
Would turn the sweetest Water into Tears.'

And after Death?—that, shirk it as we may,  
*Will* come, and with it bring its After-Day—

For ev'n as Yusuf (when his Brotherhood  
Came up from Egypt to buy Corn, and stood  
Before their Brother in his lofty Place,

990

Nor knew him, for a Veil before his Face)  
Struck on his Mystic Cup, which straightway then  
Rung out their Story to those guilty Ten:—  
Not to *them* only, but to every one;  
Whatever he have said and thought and done,  
Unburied with the Body shall fly up,  
And gather into Heav'n's inverted Cup,  
Which, stricken by God's Finger, shall tell all  
The Story whereby we must stand or fall.  
And though we walk this World as if behind

1000

There were no Judgement, or the Judge half-blind,  
Beware, for He with whom we have to do  
Outsees the Lynx, outlives the Phoenix too—

So Sultan Mahmud, coming Face to Face  
With mightier numbrs of the swarthy Race,

Vow'd that if God to him the battle gave,  
 God's Dervish People all the Spoil should have.  
 And God the Battle gave him; and the Fruit  
 Of a great Conquest coming to compute,  
 A Murmur through the Sultan's Army stirr'd

1010

Lest, ill committed to one hasty Word,  
 The Shah should squander on an idle Brood  
 What should be theirs who earn'd it with their Blood,  
 Or go to fill the Coffers of the State.  
 So Mahmud's Soul began to hesitate:  
 Till looking round in Doubt from side to side  
 A raving Zealot in the Press he spied,  
 And call'd and had him brought before his Face,  
 And, telling, bid him arbitrate the case.  
 Who, having listen'd, said—'The Thing is plain:

1020

If Thou and God should never have again  
 To deal together, rob him of his share:  
 But if perchance you should—why then Beware!'

So spake the Tajidar: but Fear and Doubt  
 Among the Birds in Whispers went about:  
 Great was their Need: and Succour to be sought  
 At any Risk: at any Ransom bought:  
 But such a Monarch—greater than Mahmud  
 The Great Himself! Why how should he be woo'd  
 To listen to them? they too have come

1030

O So suddenly, and unprepared from home  
 With any Gold, or Jewel, or rich Thing  
 To carry with them to so great a King—



Poor Creatures! with the old and carnal Blind,  
 Spite of all said, so thick upon the Mind,  
 Devising how they might ingratiate  
 Access, as to some earthly Potentate.

'Let him that with this Monarch would engage  
 Bring the Gold Dust of a long Pilgrimage:  
 The Ruby of a bleeding Heart, whose Sighs

1040

Breathe more than Amber-incense as it dies;  
 And while in naked Beggary he stands  
 Hope for the Robe of Honour from his Hands.'  
 And, as no gift this Sovereign receives  
 Save the mere Soul and Self of him who gives,  
 So let that Soul for other none Reward  
 Look than the Presence of its Sovereign Lord.'  
 And as his Hearers seem'd to estimate  
 Their Scale of Glory from Mahmud the Great,  
 A simple Story of the Sultan told

1050

How best a subject with his Shah made bold—  
 One night Shah Mahmud who had been of late  
 Somewhat distemper'd with Affairs of State  
 Stroll'd through the Streets disguised, as wont to do—  
 And, coming to the Baths, there on the Flue  
 Saw the poor Fellow who the Furnace fed  
 Sitting beside his Water-jug and Bread.  
 Mahmud stept in—sat down—unask'd took up  
 And tasted of the untasted Loaf and Cup,  
 Saying within himself, 'Grudge but a bit,

1060

And, by the Lord, your Head shall pay for it!  
 So having rested, warm'd and satisfied  
 Himself without a Word on either side,  
 At last the wayward Sultan rose to go.  
 And then at last his Host broke silence—'So?—  
 Art satisfied? Well, Brother, any Day  
 Or Night, remember, when you come this Way  
 And want a bit of Provender—why, you  
 Are welcome, and if not—why, welcome too.'—  
 The Sultan was so tickled with the whim

1070

Of this quaint Entertainment and of him  
 Who offer'd it, that many a Night again  
 Stoker and Shah forgather'd in that Vein—  
 Till, the poor Fellow having stood the Test  
 Of true Good-fellowship, Mahmud confess'd  
 One Night the Sultan that had been his Guest:  
 And in requital of the scanty Dole  
 The Poor Man offer'd with so large a soul,  
 Bid him ask any Largess that he would  
 A Throne—if he *would* have it, so he *should*.

1080

The Poor Man kiss'd the Dust, and 'All,' said he,  
 'I ask is what and where I am to be;  
 If but the Shah from time to time will come  
 As now and see me in the lowly Home  
 His presence makes a palace, and my own  
 Poor Flue more royal than another's Throne.'

So said the cheery Tale: and, as they heard,  
 Again the Heart beneath the Feather stirr'd:  
 Again forgot the Danger and the Woes  
 Of the long Travel in its glorious Close:—

1090

'Here truly all was Poverty, Despair  
 And miserable Banishment—but there  
 That more than Mahmud, for no more than Prayer  
 Who would restore them to their ancient Place,  
 And round their Shoulders fling his Robe of Grace.'  
 They clapp'd their Wings, on Fire to be assay'd  
 And prove of what true Metal they were made,  
 Although defaced, and wanting the true Ring  
 And Superscription of their rightful King.

'The Road! The Road!' in countless voices cried

1100

The Host—'The Road! and who shall be our Guide?'  
 And they themselves 'The Tajidar!' replied:  
 Yet to make doubly certain that the Voice  
 Of Heav'n according with the People's Choice,  
 Lots should be drawn; and He on whom should light  
 Heav'n's Hand—they swore to follow him outright.  
 This settled, and once more the Hubbub quell'd,  
 Once more Suspense the Host in Silence held,  
 While, Tribe by Tribe, the Birds their fortune drew;  
 And Lo! upon the Tajidar it flew.

1110

Then rising up again in wide and high  
 Circumference of wings that mesh'd the sky  
 'The Tajidar! The Tajidar!' they cry—  
 'The Tajidar! The Tajidar!' with Him  
 Was Heav'n, and They would follow Life and Limb!  
 Then, once more fluttering to their Places down,  
 Upon his Head they set the Royal Crown  
 As Khalif of their Khalif so long lost,

And Captain of his now repentant Host;  
 And setting him on high, and Silence call'd,

1120

The Tajidar, in Pulpit-throne install'd,  
 His Voice into a Trumpet-tongue so clear  
 As all the winged Multitude should hear  
 Raised, to proclaim the Order and Array  
 Of March; which, many as it frighten'd—yea,  
 The Heart of Multitudes at outset broke,  
 Yet for due Preparation must be spoke.

—A Road indeed that never Wing before  
 Flew, nor Foot trod, nor Heart imagined—o'er  
 Waterless Deserts—Waters where no Shore—

1130

Valleys comprising cloud-high Mountains: these  
 Again their Valleys deeper than the Seas:  
 Whose Dust all Adders, and whose vapour Fire:  
 Where all once hostile Elements conspire  
 To set the Soul against herself, and tear  
 Courage to Terror—Hope into Despair,  
 And Madness; Terrors, Trials, to make stray  
 Or Stop where Death to wander or delay:  
 Where when half dead with Famine, Toil, and Heat,  
 'Twas Death indeed to rest, or drink, or eat.

1140

A Road still waxing in Self-sacrifice  
 As it went on: still ringing with the Cries  
 And Groans of Those who had not yet prevail'd,  
 And bleaching with the Bones of those who fail'd:  
 Where, almost all withstood, perhaps to earn  
 Nothing: and, earning, never to return.—

And first the *VALE OF SEARCH*: an endless Maze,  
 Branching into innumerable Ways  
 All courting Entrance: but one right: and this  
 Beset with Pitfall, Gulf, and Precipice,

1150

Where Dust is Embers, Air a fiery Sleet,  
 Through which with blinded Eyes and bleeding Feet  
 The Pilgrim stumbles, with Hyena's Howl  
 Around, and hissing Snake, and deadly Ghoul,  
 Whose Prey he falls if tempted but to droop,  
 Or if to wander famish'd from the Troop  
 For fruit that falls to ashes in the Hand,  
 Water that reacht recedes into the Sand.  
 The only word is 'Forward!' Guide in sight,  
 After him, swerving neither left nor right,

1160

Thyself for thine own Victual by Day,  
 At night thine own Self's Caravanserai.  
 Till suddenly, perhaps when most subdued  
 And desperate, the Heart shall be renew'd  
 When deep in utter Darkness, by one Gleam  
 Of Glory from the far remote *Harim*,  
 That, with a scarcely conscious Shock of Change,  
 Shall light the Pilgrim toward the Mountain Range  
 Of KNOWLEDGE: where, if stronger and more pure  
 The Light and Air, yet harder to endure;

1170

And if, perhaps, the Footing more secure,  
 Harder to keep up with a nimble Guide,  
 Less from lost Road than insufficient Stride—  
 Yet tempted still by false Shows from the Track,  
 And by false Voices call'd aside or back,

Which echo from the Bosom, as if won  
 The Journey's End when only just begun,  
 And not a Mountain Peak with Toil attain'd  
 But shows a top yet higher to be gain'd.  
 Wherefore still Forward, Forward! Love that fired

1180

Thee first to search, by Search so re-inspired  
 As that the Spirit shall the carnal Load  
 Burn up, and double wing Thee on the Road;  
 That wert thou knocking at the very Door  
 Of Heav'n, thou still would'st cry for More, More, More!

Till loom in sight Kaf's Mountain Peak ashroud  
 In Mist—uncertain yet Mountain or Cloud,  
 But where the Pilgrim 'gins to hear the Tide  
 Of that one Sea in which the Sev'n subside;  
 And not the Sev'n Seas only: but the sev'n

1190

And self-enfolded Spheres of Earth and Heav'n—  
 Yea, the Two Worlds, that now as Pictures sleep  
 Upon its Surface—but when once the Deep  
 From its long Slumber 'gins to heave and sway—  
 Under the Tempest shall be swept away  
 With all their Phases and Phenomena:  
 Not senseless Matter only, but combined  
 With Life in all Varieties of Kind;  
 Yea, ev'n the abstract Forms that Space and Time  
 Men call, and Weal and Woe, Virtue and Crime,

1200

And all the several Creeds like those who fell  
 Before them, Musulman and Infidel  
 Shall from the Face of Being melt away,

Cancell'd and swept as Dreams before the Day.  
 So hast thou seen the Astrologer prepare  
 His mystic Table smooth of sand, and there  
 Inscribe his mystic figures, Square, and Trine,  
 Circle and Pentagram, and heavenly Sign  
 Of Star and Planet: from whose Set and Rise,  
 Meeting and Difference, he prophesies;

1210

And, having done it, with his Finger clean  
 Obliterates as never they had been.

Such is when reacht the Table Land of One  
 And *Wonder*: blazing with so fierce a Sun  
 Of Unity that blinds while it reveals  
 The Universe that to a Point congeals,  
 So, stunn'd with utter Revelation, reels  
 The Pilgrim, when that *Double*-seeming House,  
 Against whose Beams he long had chafed his Brows,  
 Crumbles and cracks before that Sea, whose near

1220

And nearer Voice now overwhelms his Ear.  
 Till blinded, deafen'd, madden'd, drunk with doubt  
 Of all within Himself as all without,  
 Nay, whether a *Without* there be, or not,  
 Or a *Within* that doubts: and if, then what?—  
 Ev'n so shall the bewilder'd Pilgrim seem  
 When nearest waking deepliest in Dream,  
 And darkest next to Dawn; and lost what had  
 When *All* is found: and just when sane quite Mad—  
 As one that having found the Key once more

1230

Returns, and Lo! he cannot find the Door  
 He stumbles over—So the Pilgrim stands  
 A moment on the Threshold—with raised Hands  
 Calls to the eternal Saki for one Draught  
 Of Light from the One Essence: which when quaff'd,  
 He plunges headlong in: and all is well  
 With him who never more returns to tell.  
 Such being then the Race and such the Goal,  
 Judge if you must not Body both and Soul  
 With Meditation, Watch and Fast prepare.

1240

For he that wastes his body to a Hair  
 Shall seize the Locks of Truth: and He that prays  
 Good Angels in their Ministry waylays:  
 And the Midnightly Watcher in the Folds  
 Of his own Darkness God Almighty holds.  
 He that would prosper here must from him strip  
 The World, and take the Dervish Gown and Scrip:  
 And as he goes must gather from all Sides  
 Irrelevant Ambitions, Lusts and Prides,  
 Glory and Gold, and sensual Desire,

1250

Whereof to build the fundamental Pyre  
 Of Self-annihilation: and cast in  
 All old Relations and Regards of Kin  
 And Country: and, the Pile with this perplex  
 World platform'd, from the Fables of the Next  
 Raise it tow'rd Culmination, with the torn  
 Rags and Integuments of Creeds out-worn;  
 And top the giddy Summit with the Scroll  
 Of *Reason* that in dingy Smoke shall roll  
 Over the true Self-sacrifice of Soul:



1260

(For such a Prayer was his—'O God, do Thou  
 With all my Wealth in the other World endow  
 My Friends: and with my Wealth in *this* my Foes,  
 Till bankrupt in *thy* Riches I repose!')

Then, all the Pile completed of the Pelf  
 Of either World—at last throw on *Thyself*,  
 And with the torch of Self-negation fire;  
 And ever as the Flames rise high and higher,  
 With Cries of agonising Glory still  
 All of that *Self* burn up that burn up will,

1270

Leaving the Phoenix that no Fire can slay  
 To spring from its own Ashes kindled—nay,  
 Itself an inextinguishable Spark  
 Of Being, *now* beneath Earth-ashes dark,  
 Transcending these, at last *Itself* transcends  
 And with the One Eternal Essence blends.

The Moths had long been exiled from the Flame  
 They worship: so to solemn Council came,  
 And voted *One* of them by Lot be sent  
 To find their Idol. One was chosen: went.

1280

And after a long Circuit in sheer Gloom,  
 Seeing, he thought, the TAPER in a Room  
 Flew back at once to say so. But the chief  
 Of *Mothistan* slighted so slight Belief,  
 And sent another Messenger, who flew  
 Up to the House, in at the window, through  
 The Flame itself; and back the Message brings,  
 With yet no sign of Conflict on his wings.

Then went a Third, and spurr'd with true Desire,  
Plunging at once into the sacred Fire,

1290

Folded his Wings within, till he became  
One Colour and one Substance with the Flame.  
He only knew the Flame who in it burn'd;  
And only He could tell who ne'er to tell return'd.

After declaring what of this declared  
Must be, that all who went should be prepared,  
From his high Station ceased the Tajidar—  
And lo! the Terrors that, when told afar,  
Seem'd but as Shadows of a Noonday Sun,  
Now that the talkt-of Thing was to be *done*,

1300

Lengthening into those of closing Day  
Strode into utter Darkness: and Dismay  
Like Night on the husht Sea of Feathers lay,  
Late so elate—'So terrible a Track!  
Endless—or, ending, never to come back!—  
Never to Country, Family, or Friend!'—  
In sooth no easy Bow for Birds to bend!—  
Even while he spoke, how many Wings and Crests  
Had slunk away to distant Woods and Nests;  
Others again in Preparation spent

1310

What little Strength they had, and never went:  
And others, after preparation due—  
When up the Veil of that first Valley drew  
From whose waste Wilderness of Darkness blew  
A Sarsar, whether edged of Flames or Snows,  
That through from Root to Tip their Feathers froze—

Up went a Multitude that overhead  
 A moment darken'd, then on all sides fled,  
 Dwindling the World-assembled Caravan  
 To less than half the Number that began.

1320

Of those who fled not, some in Dread and Doubt  
 Sat without stirring: others who set out  
 With frothy Force, or stupidly resign'd,  
 Before a League, flew off or fell behind.  
 And howsoever the more Brave and Strong  
 In Courage, Wing, or Wisdom push'd along,  
 Yet League by League the Road was thicklier spread  
 By the fast falling Foliage of the Dead:  
 Some spent with Travel over Wave and Ground;  
 Scorcht, frozen, dead for Drought, or drinking drown'd.

1330

Famisht, or poison'd with the Food when found:  
 By Weariness, or Hunger, or Affright  
 Seduced to stop or stray, become the Bite  
 Of Tiger howling round or hissing Snake,  
 Or Crocodile that eyed them from the Lake:  
 Or raving Mad, or in despair Self-slain:  
 Or slaying one another for a Grain:—

Till of the mighty Host that fledged the Dome  
 Of Heav'n and Floor of Earth on leaving Home,  
 A Handful reach'd and scrambled up the Knees

1340

Of Kaf whose Feet dip in the Seven Seas;  
 And of the few that up his Forest-sides  
 Of Light and Darkness where *The Presence* hides,  
 But *Thirty*—thirty desperate draggled Things,



Before the Majesty that sat thereon,  
 But wrapt in so insufferable a Blaze  
 Of Glory as beat down their baffled Gaze.  
 Which, downward dropping, fell upon a Scroll  
 That, Lightning-like, flash'd back on each the whole  
 Past half-forgotten Story of his Soul:  
 Like that which Yusuf in his Glory gave  
 His Brethren as some Writing he would have  
 Interpreted; and at a Glance, behold  
 Their own Indenture for their Brother sold!

1380

And so with these poor Thirty: who, abasht  
 In Memory all laid bare and Conscience lasht,  
 By full Confession and Self-loathing flung  
 The Rags of carnal Self that round them clung;  
 And, their old selves self-knowledged and self-loathed,  
 And in the Soul's Integrity re-clothed,  
 Once more they ventured from the Dust to raise  
 Their Eyes—up to the Throne—into the Blaze,  
 And in the Centre of the Glory there  
 Beheld the Figure of—*Themselves*—as 'twere

1390

Transfigured—looking to Themselves, beheld  
 The Figure on the Throne en-miracled,  
 Until their Eyes themselves and That between  
 Did hesitate which *Sëer* was, which *Seen*;  
 They That, That They: Another, yet the Same:  
 Dividual, yet One: from whom there came  
 A Voice of awful Answer, scarce discern'd  
 From *which* to Aspiration *whose* return'd  
 They scarcely knew; as when some Man apart  
 Answers aloud the Question in his Heart—

1400

'The Sun of my Perfection is a Glass  
 Wherein from *Seeing* into *Being* pass  
 All who, reflecting as reflected see  
 Themselves in Me, and Me in Them: not Me,  
 But all of Me that a contracted Eye  
 Is comprehensive of Infinity:  
 Nor yet *Themselves*: no Selves, but of The All  
 Fractions, from which they split and whither fall.  
 As Water lifted from the Deep, again  
 Falls back in individual Drops of Rain

1410

Then melts into the Universal Main.  
 All you have been, and seen, and done, and thought,  
 Not *You* but *I*, have seen and been and wrought:  
 I was the Sin that from Myself rebell'd:  
 I the Remorse that tow'rd Myself compell'd:  
 I was the Tajidar who led the Track:  
 I was the little Briar that pull'd you back:  
 Sin and Contrition—Retribution owed,  
 And cancell'd—Pilgrim, Pilgrimage, and Road,  
 Was but Myself toward Myself: and Your

1420

Arrival but *Myself* at my own Door:  
 Who in your Fraction of Myself behold  
 Myself within the Mirror Myself hold  
 To see Myself in, and each part of Me  
 That sees himself, though drown'd, shall ever see.  
 Come you lost Atoms to your Centre draw,  
 And *be* the Eternal Mirror that you saw:  
 Rays that have wander'd into Darkness wide  
 Return, and back into your Sun subside.'—

This was the Parliament of Birds: and this

1430

The Story of the Host who went amiss,  
And of the Few that better Upshot found;  
Which being now recounted, Lo, the Ground  
Of Speech fails underfoot: But this to tell—  
Their Road is thine—Follow—and Fare thee well.

1435

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