

## THE SPHINX.

THE Sphinx is drowsy,  
Her wings are furled,  
Her ear is heavy,  
She broods on the world.  
"Who 'll tell me my secret  
The ages have kept?  
I awaited the seer  
While they slumbered and slept."

"The fate of the manchild, —  
The meaning of man, —  
Known fruit of the unknown, —  
Dædalian plan.  
Out of sleeping a waking,  
Out of waking a sleep,  
Life death overtaking,  
Deep underneath deep.

"Erect as a sunbeam  
Upspringeth the palm;  
The elephant browses  
Undaunted and calm;  
In beautiful motion  
The thrush plies his wings,  
Kind leaves of his covert!  
Your silence he sings.

"The waves unashamed  
In difference sweet,  
Play glad with the breezes,  
Old playfellows meet.  
The journeying atoms,  
Primordial wholes,  
Firmly draw, firmly drive,  
By their animate poles.

"Sea, earth, air, sound, silence,  
Plant, quadruped, bird,  
By one music enchanted,  
One deity stirred,  
Each the other adorning,  
Accompany still,  
Night veileth the morning,  
The vapor the hill.

"The babe, by its mother  
Lies bathed in joy,  
Glide its hours uncounted,  
The sun is its toy;

Shines the peace of all being  
Without cloud in its eyes,  
And the sum of the world  
In soft miniature lies.

"But man crouches and blushes,  
Absconds and conceals;  
He creepeth and peepeth,  
He palters and steals;  
Infirm, melancholy,  
Jealous glancing around,  
An oaf, an accomplice,  
He poisons the ground.

"Outspoke the great mother  
Beholding his fear; —  
At the sound of her accents  
Cold shuddered the sphere; —  
'Who has drugged my boy's cup  
Who has mixed my boy's bread?  
Who, with sadness and madness,  
Has turned the manchild's head?'"

I heard a poet answer  
Aloud and cheerfully,  
"Say on, sweet Sphinx! — thy dirges  
Are pleasant songs to me.  
Deep love lieth under  
These pictures of time,  
They fade in the light of  
Their meaning sublime.

"The fiend that man harries  
Is love of the best,  
Yawns the Pit of the Dragon  
Lit by rays from the Blest;  
The Lethe of Nature  
Can't trance him again,  
Whose soul sees the Perfect  
Which his eyes seek in vain.

"Profounder, profounder  
Man's spirit must dive:  
To his aye-rolling orbit  
No goal will arrive.  
The heavens that now draw him  
With sweetness untold,  
Once found, — for new heavens  
He spurneth the old.

"Pride ruined the angels,  
Their shame them restores:  
And the joy that is sweetest  
Lurks in stings of remorse.

Have I a lover  
 Who is noble and free, —  
 I would he were nobler  
 Than to love me.

“ Eterne alternation  
 Now follows, now flies,  
 And under pain, pleasure, —  
 Under pleasure, pain lies.  
 Love works at the centre  
 Heart heaving alway,  
 Forth speed the strong pulses  
 To the borders of day.

“ Dull Sphinx, Jove keep thy five wits !  
 Thy sight is growing blear ;  
 Hemlock and vitriol for the Sphinx  
 Her muddy eyes to clear.”  
 The old Sphinx bit her thick lip, —  
 Said, “ Who taught thee me to name  
 Manchild ! I am thy spirit ;  
 Of thine eye I am eyebeam.

“ Thou art the unanswered question :  
 Couldst see thy proper eye,  
 Alway it asketh, asketh,  
 And each answer is a lie.  
 So take thy quest through nature,  
 It through thousand natures ply,  
 Ask on, thou clothed eternity,  
 Time is the false reply.”

Uprose the merry Sphinx,  
 And crouched no more in stone,  
 She hopped into the baby's eyes,  
 She hopped into the moon,  
 She spired into a yellow flame,  
 She flowered in blossoms red,  
 She flowed into a foaming wave,  
 She stood Monadnoc's head.

Thorough a thousand voices  
 Spoke the universal dame,  
 “ Who telleth one of my meanings  
 Is master of all I am.”