TWO HYMNS.

I.

God of those splendid stars! I need
Thy presence, need to know
That thou art God, my God indeed,—
Cold and far off they shine, they glow.
In their strange brightness, like to spirit's eyes,
Awful intensely on my naked soul:
Beautiful are they,—but so strange,—so cold,
I know them not:—I shrink, I cling
Like a scared insect to this whirling ball,
Upon whose swelling lines, I woke, one morn,
Unknowning who I was, or whence I came:
And still I know not—fastened to its verge
By a resistless power,—with it, I speed
On its eternal way, and those strange eyes,
Those starry eyes look ever on me thus,—
I wake, I sleep, but still they look on me,
Mild yet reproachful, beautiful but strange.

Visions are round me,—many moving things,
In clothing beautiful, soft and colored forms
With drooping heads caressing,—eyes, so meek,
And loving and appealing,—but they hold
A nature strange and different,—each enwrapt
In its own mortal mystery,—near they are,
And yet how distant! familiar, fond,
Yet strangers all. I know not what they are.

And higher forms, from out whose mystic eyes,
Gracefully curved and vestal-like, obscured
By shading lashes,—looks a being out,
That seems myself and is not:—kindred linked
Yet most communionless,—I know them not,
Nor they know me:—nearest, yet most apart,
Moving in saddest mystery each to each,
Like spell-bounds souls, that coldly meet in dreams,
Which in some waking hour had intertwined.

Yet some too, woven with me, in a veil,
Viewless, but all-enduring,—kindred love:—
Their eyes are on me, like awakening light:
They touch my forehead, press my given hand,
Smile rare or oft, or sit most silently:—
Yet all is understood,—the watchful care,
The sympathetic joy, and the unutterable wealth
Of helping tears: all, all is understood:
Sure these are me: sure my affections, theirs,
Two-stricken thoughts and over-cushioning sighs,
My hopes, my loves, my struggles, and my straits

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Are theirs to bear, to know, to carry out,
To sift, to learn, to war and wrestle through:
A night no, oh no, for every spirit round
There is a circle, where no other comes.
Even when we lay our head upon the breast
And pour our thoughts, as liquid jewels, out,
And feel the strength, that comes from soul beloved
Steal through our own as steals the living heat,
Nurture, and bloom, into the opening leaves.
Yet is the spirit lone,—its problem deep,
No other may work out,—its mystic way,
No other wing may try: passionate hopes,
Mighty yet powerless, and most awful fears,
Its strength, ne'er equal to the burden laid,
Longings to stop, yet eagerness to go,
Is its own: a wall unscalable
Circuits the soul,—its fellows cannot pass;
The mother may not spare the child, to take
Its youthful burden on her willing heart,
Nor friend enfranchise friend. Alone, alone
The soul must do its own immortal work;
The best beloved most distant are; the near
Far severed wide. Soul knows not soul;
Not more, than those unanswering stars divine.

God of these splendid stars, I need
Thy presence, need to know
That thou art God, my God indeed.
Shield me, mid thine innumerable worlds;
Give me some point, where I may rest,
While thy unceasing ages flow:
While thy unceasing ages flow:
Hide me from thine irradiated stars,
And the far darker light, untraceable
Of human eyes,—for strangers they are all.
A wandering thought on the restless air;
A questionning wave, over the unlistening sea.
Recal, Eternal Source! and reassume
In thine own essence, peace unutterable!

II.

A vast of stars!
Thick-studded o'er the sky
From line of vision, vanishing high,
Into the far immensity,
To where the dark horizon bars
The earth-restricted eye.
Brilliantly serene,
In the near firmament,
The brighter planets beam;
Two Hymns.

While from the void supreme
The paler glories stream,
Making each radiant,
As an angelic dream!

Athwart the gilded dome,
Stood at the meteor glides,
The gazer starts, lest dream
Of change or change had come,
On that eternal home,
Whose still sublimity abides
Through ages come and gone.

The moon is fondly near,
Pale, watchful, mother-like,
She smiles on our cheer,
She husheth up the tear;
But with a holy fear,
These starry splendors strike
The distant worshipper.

Where mighty oceans sweep,
They shine afar,
Where softer rivers leap,
Where trickling fountains sweep,
Where the still lakelets sleep,
Gleams back each star,
Like torches from the deep.

In rapturous mood,
Silent with clasping hands,
And earnest brows subdued,
The ancient Shepherd stood,
As night to night he viewed
Those glory-clustered bands
In Heaven's vast solitude.

Borne on the mighty sway
Of thought, his spirit ran
Yer the resplendent way,
Leaping from ray to ray,
To one red day:
Then — 'What is man?'
He sang — 'the child of clay.'

A spirit answered,
Mighty bursts of wavy light.
Meekly and glad he heard,—
Man is the Son, the Word,
The best beloved of God,
With glory crowned and might,
And stars are his abode.

NIGHT AND DAY.

"Why finish it," exclaimed the sculptor, as he flung from him into a corner of the studio, his large chisel and heavy hammer; "why attempt to finish this figure of Day? The Day of Manhood has not yet broke."

And standing back, with folded arms, he gazed at the monstrous block, half hewn, upon which he had been dealing his prodigious strokes, splintering and chipping the marble, with an eye that never wavered, and a hand that never missed, the whole night through.

The lamp, hung in the roof of his studio, glared down upon the artist, and with broad light and shadow brought out in bold relief the expression of his grand head and face.

Half a century of noble passions and stern will, of meditation and disappointment, of glorious plans, and constant toil, and rich experience, had inspired with lines of feeling his massive countenance. It had the firmness of a mountain, the depth of a sea, and was eloquent in every feature with calm strength. As the light fell on the matted hair thrown backward, the wrinkled forehead, the banging brow, beneath which shone liquid and bright the profoundly thoughtful eye, the wide-dilated nostril, the compressed mouth, half-hidden in the beard, that hung heavily beneath the chin,—on the broad chest, across which were grasped the arms, with tense and swelling muscles, and on the whole figure, that, pliant at once and sturdy, rose like a bronzed statue from the floor, he seemed an incarnation of Force.

It was Michael Angelo; and the form which he had been softening from stiff rock into vigorous life, was the famous Day, that now leans his colossal, half-wrought trunk and limbs upon the sarcophagus in the chapel of the Medici.

"Ay!" continued the sculptor, in his deep-muttered tone, "why finish it? Is it not now the fit symbol of humanity in this age of savage crime? Let it lie three, brawny and stiff with life's unmeaning drudgery, unsmoothed and rough. It were mockery to give it roundness and polish. Let the head, with its air of stubborn resolution, mutely look out upon the slaving field of time, with half-masked features, like a morning in the mist. Ready, though hopeless art thou, thou Samson! ready for care, and toil,