

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,
 Unknowing 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-bound 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,
 Awe-stricken thoughts and over-rushing sins,
 My hopes, my loves, my struggles, and my straits

Are theirs to bear, to know, to carry out,
 To sift, to learn, to war and wrestle through:
 Ah 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 alone: 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:
 Hide me from thine irradiated stars,
 And the far sadder light, untraceable
 Of human eyes, — for strangers are they all.
 A wandering thought on the resistless air;
 A questioning wail, o'er the unlistening sea.
 Recall, Eternal Source! and reassume
 In thine own essence, peace unutterable!

II.

A NIGHT 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;

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

Athwart the gilded dome,
Sudden the meteor glides,
The gazer starts, lest doom
Of chance 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 smileth 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 weep,
Where the still lakelets sleep,
Gleams back each star,
Like torches from the deep.

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

Borne on the mighty sway
Of thought, his spirit ran
O'er the resplendent way,
Leaping from ray to ray,
To uncreated day;
Then — 'what is man?'
He sang — 'the child of clay.'

A spirit answered,
Midst 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.