

## P O M P E I I .

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FROM where luxurious Naples throws  
Its shadow, when the waves repose,  
Upon the graceful, curving sea,  
That smiles with glad serenity,  
And mingles with the varied view  
About us its delightful blue,  
We go where oft the traveller strays,  
To send the mind to long past days,  
When sweet Italia's verdant plains  
The Romans swayed, and conquered gains  
Enriched a land by nature graced,  
Though since by tyrants long debased.

The way presents us joy intense ;  
 Pleased and surprised is every sense.  
 The sight is charmed, for every side  
 Displays its radiant glories wide ;—  
 The mountains, that on high look down  
 Upon the castle, tower, and town,  
 The islands that adorn the bay,  
 The rocky shore, the silvery spray,  
 Gardens, resplendent in the day  
 With flowers that show the vernal sway.  
 The soft and gently-breathing air  
 May fragrance of the orange bear,  
 And comes to the rapt, listening ear  
 The waves' low murmur, sad to hear,  
 Which pleasing thoughtfulness inspires.  
 And thus with calm, yet strong, desires  
 To muse, the mind is all awake,  
 And fancy's spell it cannot break.

But, though above most fair the scene,  
 Decked with bright hills and vineyards green,  
 And, marked by nature's sweet device,  
 It looks a perfect paradise,  
 Beneath, as in a close-kept cage,  
 Volcanic fires fret and rage ;  
 As oft the face of beauty seems  
 To glow with lovelier, brighter beams,  
 While slow-consuming hectic dries  
 The fount within, that life supplies.

Behind, the busy hum of life  
 We leave, with all its passion, strife, —  
 The gay and splendid city, where  
 Wealth, gladness, poverty, despair, —  
 The ill, the good, the wrong, the right, —  
 At every turn invade the sight.

Thoughtful the silent streets we tread  
 Of this wide city of the dead,

And gaze on the now quiet scene,  
 Calling to mind what once hath been,  
 When not the curious stranger here  
 Alone was walking, moved with fear  
 Of God, who can his power employ  
 Both to create and to destroy, —  
 Who can a world from darkness call,  
 Or hide one 'neath a darker pall ;  
 But when, through each close, crowded street,  
 Was heard the sound of hurried feet,  
 As quicker, nearer, hither came  
 The cloud of ashes, whilst the flame  
 Of the high, burning, quaking mount,  
 Bursting from out the fiery fount,  
 From whose wide sources, far below,  
 The flaming surges constant flow,  
 Cast all abroad a dreadful blaze.  
 And now and then the piercing rays  
 The heavy, ashen cloud illumed,  
 And upward still the mountain fumed.

The dusky air then lost the light,  
 And thicker growing, dark as night,  
 Resisted the volcanic beam,  
 Till not a solitary gleam  
 Relieved its awful gloominess,  
 In this dark hour of deep distress.  
 With what dismay and dread alarms,  
 Close pressed within affection's arms,  
 Are held the dearest, fondest ones, —  
 Fathers and mothers, daughters, sons, —  
 While stifled cries and shortened breath  
 Proclaim the approach of strangling death  
 To all, who in this hour of gloom  
 Await their sad, terrific doom.  
 The multitude, with eager haste,  
 Leave their fond homes to be a waste.  
 Their choicest treasures they desert  
 For life's dear sake, nor dare revert

Their faces, as away they flee,  
 Far from the margin of the sea,  
 Which then Pompeii's walls beside  
 Swept its blue, sunny, foaming tide.

Yet some, who sought — a dread delay —  
 Their gems and gold to take away,  
 Felt the o'erwhelming, ashen shower,  
 That stopped their way with fatal power,  
 And left to perish sadly there  
 Those who so showed the miser's care.

The columns of the Forum stand,  
 Where oft full many an earnest band,  
 Assembling, talked with zeal and might,  
 Of freedom, victory, glory, right ;  
 Or here, beneath the cloudless day,  
 Lauded proud Rome's imperial sway.  
 Here many a long procession turned  
 To many an altar, that high burned

With sacrificial gifts to Jove,  
 Whose aid was nigh, when Romans strove  
 To make the name of Roman great  
 And wide extend their conquering state.  
 To Juno, Mars, and all the train  
 Of deities, full many a stain  
 Of blood fell on each temple's floor,  
 Where worshippers were wont to adore.  
 Here, in the sacred song and dance,  
 The choirs of youth were used to advance,  
 And make the lofty walls around  
 With their sweet voices far resound.

About us broken pillars lie,  
 Whose massive forms, in days gone by,  
 Supported the majestic fane,  
 Or stately arch ; but now in vain  
 Their chiselled grandeur meets the sight,  
 And graceful architecture light

Only the traveller's wonder gains,  
 How much around us yet retains  
 Some portion of its ancient grace,  
 Which years on years cannot efface !

When one upon the road-side turns,  
 He sees the old, sepulchral urns,  
 On which inscriptions to secure  
 The memory of the dead endure.  
 And here, alas ! how vain we see  
 The hope to save one's memory !  
 For these memorials of the great,  
 Meeting with them an equal fate,  
 Were hidden from the light of day,  
 While centuries slowly passed away.

Mosaic fountains, whence of yore  
 Issued the pure and sparkling store,  
 Still, by their beauty strange and clear,  
 Delight the eye, though now the ear

No longer may the murmur sweet  
 Of the slow-dripping water greet.

Among the structures we survey,  
 As farther on we bend our way,  
 Stands, in its rude and ruined state,  
 Partaking of the general fate,  
 The theatre, whose tragic spell  
 Around the heart entrancing fell,  
 As here before the enchanted eye  
 Passed the majestic figures by,  
 That personated men o'ercome  
 By wrong and grief most wearisome,  
 Whose days, in glory nearly passed,  
 Were spent in sorrow at the last.  
 Here Fate, relentless to pursue  
 Her startled victim, to the view  
 Her fierce, avenging power displayed.  
 Here many a scene of fear was laid,

Where enemies in fury meet,  
 And with high words and daring greet  
 Each other, and in conflict fierce  
 Seeks each the other's heart to pierce.  
 Here private malice sought its end ;  
 Here secret grief long mourned a friend ;  
 Here many a broken heart hath been  
 By dread, afflictive arrows keen  
 Struck, till all happiness away  
 Departed, and the cheerful day  
 No longer pleased the enjoying sight,  
 But, in its stead, came sorrow's night.

While may the actor's wondrous skill  
 Observing eyes with pity fill,  
 And the sweet, plaintive, choral song,  
 Its low, subduing notes prolong,  
 Reigns stillness, broken but by sighs  
 That from o'erburdened hearts arise,

Until at last, when all is o'er,  
 The spirit can restrain no more  
 Its sobs of agony, that prove  
 How deeply may the drama move  
 The eager, listening soul, that lies  
 Rapt in its tearful symphonies.

Those who then saw the acted play  
 Were actors, on an after day,  
 In scenes most tragical and dread,  
 When called to flee and leave their dead,  
 Whose funeral rites could not be paid,  
 And thus the mournful doom was laid  
 On these unhallowed souls, to be  
 For ages of eternity  
 The deep, dark river wandering by,  
 And heaving oft the bitter sigh,  
 As far they saw the blissful field,  
 From their despairing entrance sealed.

How sad, distressing, was the thought,  
 To leave one's friends to such a lot !  
 To be of one's dear home bereft  
 Causes deep woe, and when are left  
 Behind the most beloved and near,  
 To feel that one will never hear  
 Again the sweet, accustomed voice,  
 That bade the welcome heart rejoice,  
 Fills the departing one with grief  
 At first, despairing of relief ;  
 If, then, in those yet darkened days,  
 When Truth had not far thrown her rays,  
 All thought that they should ne'er behold,  
 On the Elysian shore of gold,  
 Those whose remains were left unblessed,  
 Deprived of their sepulchral rest,  
 What wonder that keen anguish sore  
 The bursting heart asunder tore, —  
 That floods of speechless woe were poured  
 By those who fled, while high up soared

The direful smoke, with mingled flame,  
 That from the bursting mountain came ?

For though the dusty, rolling tide  
 That soon destroyed the city's pride  
 Buried beneath its load of earth  
 The dear forms of departed worth,  
 And though they thus most peaceful slept,  
 Yet not thus could be rightly kept,  
 With all the elements at strife,  
 The duty that death claims from life, —  
 That high, religious, just demand,  
 That by affection's careful hand,  
 And not by Nature's fiery zest,  
 Should the dead meet their final rest.

How many in suspense await  
 Their absent ones, who, separate,  
 Escaped the ruined city's crash,  
 The waves of fire, the lightning's flash !

How many an anxious heart is pained !  
 How many an eager eye is strained,  
 Amid the dense, advancing crowds,  
 Half-hidden by the lurid clouds,  
 Affection's object to discern,  
 Or a kind friend, from whom to learn  
 If fortune good or ill betide  
 One from one's own protecting side  
 Parted, — a father, spouse, or child, —  
 And all exertion proves in vain,  
 The loved and lost one to regain !

Upon some temple's pavement stand,  
 And far observe the beauteous land,  
 Diversified with every charm  
 That can the heart of grief disarm ;  
 And when thou hast well satisfied  
 Thine eye with the green prospect wide,  
 Then turn thy gaze beneath thy feet,  
 Where runs each ancient, narrow street,

And think how full of life and care  
 Were multitudes once walking there.

Behold the dwellings standing yet  
 As then, before their doom they met,  
 Which was with startling haste fulfilled,  
 And the great city's voice was stilled.

Thou seest not all Pompeii's size.  
 Yonder, a part yet covered lies ;  
 And where was once the sun to shine,  
 All, all is dark. The running vine  
 Now sports, in mazy windings green,  
 Above where once were glittering seen  
 Structures of various use and grace,  
 Whose columns high and marble face  
 Looked forth in beauty, when the moon  
 Shone out as with soft-tempered noon,  
 Set off the sky's transparent blue,  
 And made the earth of lovelier hue.



Fewer, yet fewer, in each street  
Echoed the sound of homeward feet ;  
The city's busy din was still.  
Deep shadows fell from every hill ;  
The vineyards' mingled green and red  
Waved gently, as the night-breeze sped,  
Fragrant with odors rich and choice.  
At intervals, the silvery voice  
Of some lone minstrel filled the air,  
That seemed to be all music there.  
And, as he lay in moonlit grove,  
Where light and shadow graceful strove,  
With his accordant voice his lute  
Remained but for a moment mute.  
With love's soft strain he first began,  
And thus the tender burden ran : —