

## ON A DREAM

*After reading the Fifth Canto of Dante's "Inferno"*

AS Hermes once took to his feathers light,  
 When lulled Argus, baffled, swoon'd and slept,  
 So on a Delphic reed, my idle spright,  
 So play'd, so charm'd, so conquer'd, so bereft  
 The dragon-world of all its hundred eyes,  
 And seeing it asleep, so fled away,  
 Not to pure Ida with its snow-cold skies,  
 Nor unto Tempe, where Jove grieved a day,  
 But to that second circle of sad Hell,  
 Where in the gust, the whirlwind, and the flaw  
 Of rain and hail-stones, lovers need not tell  
 Their sorrows,—pale were the sweet lips I saw,  
 Pale were the lips I kiss'd, and fair the form  
 I floated with, about that melancholy storm.

IF by dull rhymes our English must be chain'd,  
 And, like Andromeda, the Sonnet sweet  
 Fetter'd, in spite of pained loveliness ;  
 Let us find out, if we must be constrain'd,  
 Sandals more interwoven and complete  
 To fit the naked foot of poesy ;  
 Let us inspect the lyre, and weigh the stress  
 Of every chord, and see what may be gain'd  
 By ear industrious, and attention meet ;  
 Misers of sound and syllable, no less  
 Than Midas of his coinage, let us be  
 Jealous of dead leaves in the bay wreath crown ;  
 So, if we may not let the Muse be free,  
 She will be bound with garlands of her own.