

ANDRÉ CHENIER'S DEATH-SONG. *

[Translated from the French by John Reade.]

* André Chenier, for having dared to write against the excesses of his countrymen, was summoned before the Revolutionary Tribunal, condemned and executed, in the year 1794. The first eight stanzas (in the translation) he composed in prison, after his condemnation; the two last he wrote at the very foot of the scaffold, while waiting to be dragged to execution. He had just finished the line, "*Le sommeil du tombeau pressera ma paupière*," when his turn came, and the words had their fulfilment. In the translation, the spirit, not the letter has been regarded.

I.

When one lone lamb is bleating in the sham-
bles,
And gleams the ruthless knife,
His yester playmates pause not in their
gambols,
Their wild, free joy of life,

II.

To think of him; the little ones that played,
With him in sunny hours,
In bright, green fields, and his fair form ar-
rayed,
With ribbons gay and flowers,

III.

Mark not his absence from the fleecy throng;
Unwept he sheds his blood;
And this sad destiny is mine. Ere long
From this grim solitude

IV.

I pass to death. But let me bear my fate,
And calmly be forgot;
A thousand others in the self-same state,
Await the self-same lot.

V.

And what were friends to me? Oh! one kind
voice,
Heard through those prison bars;
Did it not make my drooping heart rejoice,
Though from my murderers

VI.

'Twas bought, perhaps. Alas! all, all is
lost!
And yet why should my death
Make any one unhappy? Live, my friends,
Nor think my fleeting breath

VII.

Calls you to come. Mayhap, in days gone
by,
I, too, from sight of sorrow
Turned, careless, with self-wrapt un pitying
eve,
Not dreaming of to-morrow.

VIII.

And now, misfortune presses on my heart,
Erewhile so strong and free,
'Twere craven to ask you to bear its smart;—
Farewell, nor think of me!

* * * * *

IX.

As a faint ray or zephyr's latest breath
Revives the dying day;
Beneath the scaffold, that stern throne of
death,
I sing my parting lay.

X.

Before an hour, with wakeful foot and loud,
Has marked its journey's close
On yon bright disk, the sleep of death shall
shroud
Mine eyes from worldly woes.