

· TREAD LIGHTLY O'ER US. ·

At evening's still and starry hour
 When not a breath stirred leaf or flower,
 When Luna's lengthened shadows sought the west,
 And Nature's drowsy eyes in sleep were pressed,
 Through grave-yard walks among the tombs I strayed
 Where weeping mothers oft had knelt and prayed,
 When round me myriad voices still and dead,
 With accents tender,
 Cried 'Remember,
 Tread lightly o'er us—us the sleeping dead.'

At midnight hour, I turned my feet
 To pace the city's lonely street;
 Now hushed the bustling din that ruled the day,
 Faint voices from the pavement seemed to say—
 'When Earth was young and fair, long ere the flood
 Our flinty shapeless forms were flesh and blood,
 And when her sentence from the throne is read,
 Our plea so tender,
 You'll remember,
 'Tread lightly o'er us—us the sleeping dead.'

Again I roamed the grassy plain
 Beside a stream whose murmuring strain
 Still chanted dirges for the slaughtered brave
 Whose blood in ages past had stained its wave:
 And whispering echoes from the hills around
 Still faintly poured the battles thund'ring sound,
 While 'neath my feet where patriot-hearts had bled
 A voice so tender
 Cried 'Remember
 Tread lightly o'er us—us the sleeping dead.'

I made my couch beneath a tree
 And dreamt of things beyond the sea;
 In dreams I traversed Afric's arid sand
 And shuddering stood on Ganges' bloody strand
 I mounted Alps, saw Atlas's hoary peak,
 Saw cities ruined, caverns dark and deep,
 But where'er I roamed, beneath my quivering tread,
 That voice so tender
 Cried 'Remember,
 Tread lightly o'er us—us the sleeping dead.'

Aroused and trembling with my fright
 At dawn I sought a mountain height,
 But round me whispering spirits in the breeze,
 Soft murm'ring through the trem'ulous aspen leaves,
 Exclaimed with rocks and birds and op'ning flowers—
 'Earth's weary sons are sleeping 'neath your tread,'
 Then man, remember,
 Their words so tender,
 'Tread lightly o'er us—us the sleeping dead.'

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