

ON FAME

How fever'd is the man who cannot look
Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his life's book,
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood ;
It is as if the rose should pluck herself,
Or the ripe plum finger its misty bloom,
As if a Naiad, like a meddling elf,
Should darken her pure grot with muddy gloom :
But the rose leaves herself upon the briar,
For winds to kiss and grateful bees to feed,
And the ripe plum still wears its dim attire,
The undisturbed lake has crystal space ;
Why then should man, teasing the world for grace,
Spoil his salvation for a fierce miscreed ?

WHY did I laugh to-night ? No voice will tell :
No God, no Demon of severe response,
Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
Then to my human heart I turn at once.
Heart ! Thou and I are here, sad and alone ;
I say, why did I laugh ? O mortal pain !
O Darkness ! Darkness ! ever must I moan,
To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain.
Why did I laugh ? I know this Being's lease,
My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads ;
Yet would I on this very midnight cease,
And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds ;
Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.