

## THE PHANTOM OCEAN;

*(Beheld. in a vision of the night, while the author lay with two French novels under his pillow.)*

BY G. MARTIN.

I saw a shadowy world—  
 A phantom ocean,  
 With human shapes above it hurled  
 In strange commotion;  
 Far from the utmost verge  
 Of earth and solar light  
 It lay and heaved,  
 As if it grieved,  
 With an incessant dirge,  
 And an unearthly surge,  
 And most unnatural night.

And evermore,  
 From those grim shapes above it frowning,  
 I saw upon it pour  
 Innumerable books, thick! thick!  
 As Autumn leaves, jaundiced, shrunk and  
 sick,  
 All tossed about and drowning.  
 Thousands with gold adorned,  
 Sank down at once;  
 Some rose, and leaped as if they scorned  
 That sub-marine, inglorious trance;  
 But soon all disappeared, and far away,  
 Faint and muffled voices seemed to say,  
 France! France! O, France!

Hugo heaps of lighter form,  
 Making a sort of storm  
 Over that mystic ocean vast,  
 Floated longer than the stronger,  
 And some on little isles were cast,  
 And shoals of creatures fair  
 Rose from the deep, and did devour  
 Their leaves with hunger rare.

In one satanic hour,  
 As greedily they ate,  
 They turned to monstrous shapes,  
 Half-serpents and half apes,  
 And scowled with deadly hate,  
 Or rolled in blank despair;  
 And some with hellish chatter  
 Spat bloody froth upon the water,  
 And madly mouthed the air.

Some to cinders burned;  
 Some, ferocious, spurned  
 Their dying fellows,  
 And like inflated bellows  
 Blew to the clouds a poisonous breath,  
 Then fell and flounced in death!  
 Some in torture hung  
 Their heads towards a wave,  
 And stretched the livid tongue,  
 As if to crave,  
 A little draught to keep them from the grave!

And still the man-shapes dwelt above,  
 Raining their books,  
 Instinct with ghastly life, but not with love;  
 And stormy were their looks,  
 And void of truth's expanding heat,  
 And void of virtue's crown of stars,  
 And deeply ploughed with passion-scars,  
 And wounds unlawful to repeat;  
 Oh, they did dwell  
 To my sad vision in an upper hell,  
 With nothing to support their flaming feet.

Trembling I stood upon a mountain hoar,  
 And hid my eyes,  
 And thought to turn away, and never more  
 Behold such sea and skies;  
 But sudden there did rise  
 A whirlwind black and strong,  
 Which like a serpent round me coiled its  
 strength,  
 And bore me swift along  
 Over the phantom ocean's cold expanse,  
 And dashed me down, at length,  
 And bade the ghostly waves around me dance.

Their bubbling yeast,  
 Smote on my lips and agonized my brain;  
 I felt an iron pain  
 Wrench at my heart,  
 And as the storm of books increased  
 I struggled to depart,  
 And taste no more of the unhallowed feast,  
 While jeers demoniac in the upper air,  
 And hisses everywhere,  
 Mocked at my strong desire to be released.

No touch of beauty met my view;  
 The air was noxious, of a swarthy hue,  
 And horrible to breathe.  
 I saw no more—a darkling wreath  
 Of suffocating foam, corrupt and cold,  
 Bandaged my eyes;  
 My senses floated from me, and I rolled  
 With drowsy motion  
 Beneath those joyless skies,  
 And through that phantom-ocean.

Such was my vision, sage and seer,  
 Ye whose mental eyes are clear,  
 Truth's apostles! to the nation  
 Give it fair interpretation.

Montreal.