

THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA.

A POEM.

BY THE LATE DR. HASKINS.

Quotenus hoc simile est quod mente videmus.

LECTURES, IV. 751.

PART I.

I.

I sing the Sea whose tideless waters lave
The loveliest lands that beauteous earth can boast;
I sing the Sea whose ever tuneful wave
Murmurs sweet music round each blissful coast;
The Roman, Greek, the Carthaginian brave,
The navies of the proud Phœnician host,
Alike to dark oblivion's realms have gone,
Yet still in lust'rous pride its stream rolls on.

II.

Thou glorious mirror of a sunlit sky,
How doth the heav'n's look down o'er thy blue deep,
Emmour'd of its peerless purity!—
In thy cerulean caves what treasures sleep,—
What forms, once beauteous, 'neath thy billows lie,—
How many for whom true hearts once did weep!—
I gaze upon thy broad extension vast,
And ponder o'er the unreturning Past.

III.

Transcendant Deep!—in the World's history
Thy name and fame recorded live for aye;
Still in the storied page we read of thee!—
Emblaz'd with glory's never dying ray
Thy name inwoven with each deed we see;
Remembrancer of a far distant day,—
Of by-gone eras, trophied years of old,
By thee the wond'rous tale is sweetly told.

IV.

Magnificently spread!—o'er-canopied
By yon ethereal dome of cloudless blue,
Translucently thy purpling waters glide,
Ouvrilling the heav'n's elysian hue.
Matchless, majestic, on in pomp and pride
Thy billows roll, upon the shore to strew
Their sparkling spray, and kiss the narrow strand
Border'd by blooming flow'rs—a lovely band.

V.

Romantic Tide!—while Poesy hath pow'r
To charm my thrilling soul, her voice shall sing
Thy praise and glory; still with many a flow'r,
Fresh gather'd from the fragrant breast of spring,
And buds sweet breathing of the vernal show'r,
Shall twine a garland o'er thy flood to fling:
Aloft by fancy borne my soul looks down
O'er thine expanse, and wreathes a votive crown.

VI.

Sea of all seas!—it is no idle thought
To deem—as yonder gorgeous glowing sky
From thy still bosom gentler hues hath caught,—
Thus may thy mirror to our souls supply
A glimpse of Eden elsewhere vainly sought;
So tranquilly the pictur'd heavens high,
Reflected, on thine azure bosom sleep,
As storms no more could break that slumber deep.

VII.

From Calpe's height to Syria's palmy shore
In majesty thy waters sweep along;
While, like a spirit, the south wind breathes o'er
Their graceful swell, with gently plaintive song.
Still soallest thou as in the days of yore;—
Thou changest not, thy billows are as strong,
As glad, as free, as when Alcides rode
O'er their blue backs, stern Vigour's dauntless god.

VIII.

And gentle too, as when young Aphrodite
Rose from the deep, with dark dishevell'd tress;
Her dripping form with pearly lustre bright,
Her bosom swelling in its loveliness;
O'er her soft snowy limbs a rosy light,
That made beholders blind, yet not the less
Entranced each heart; so that none turn'd away,—
But fascinate, spell-bound, drank in that dazzling ray.

IX.

Thy classic legends—wild and rich romance
Of ancient days—soul-stirring histories—
Thy storied gulphs—far-reaching wide expanse,
Where navies rode that knew none other seas—
Thy beauteous bays, peopled in Poesy's trance
With beings bright, fabled divinities,—
Th' enthusiastic dream of fancy's pride—
Still haunt my heart, while gazing o'er thy tide.

X.

And mid the imag'ry whose heavenly hues
Enchant my soul, in bright reality
Proud forms arise, the theme of many a muse;
Of glorious days the pomp and pageantry
Before me pass; while that my thought pursues
The tale of former years revealed by thee;—
And as thy stream rolls on by scenes sublime,
Thus o'er my spirit rolls the flood of time.