

Steeped in the smell of corruption, wrapped in a pall of horror, cold, featureless, dumb, Death stares Man in the face, a black austere enigma, while Thought—creative and resplendent as the sun, filled with audacity and haughty consciousness of eternal life, studies it zealously. . . . So rebellious Man passes forward through the dread gloom and mysteries of our existence—forwards! and—higher! ever forwards and ever higher!

II

But in the end Man gets exhausted, he groans and staggers; his frightened soul seeks Faith and loudly calls to Love for sweet caresses. Weakness gives birth to three ominous birds—Weariness, Despondency, and Despair—black, monstrous birds, that hover o'er his soul and sing a doleful song: "What art thou but the frailest insect, with conscience limited and Thought impotent? thy saintly pride a thing to laugh at—and for aught thou doest, thou shalt die."

His heart, wrung by this lying cruel song, quivers within his breast; the thorns of doubt pierce his brain, and in his eyes there shine the tears of outraged humanity.

And if the pride in him does not rebel, the fear of Death drives Man into the prison of Superstition, Love smiles triumphantly and lures him to herself, veiling in specious promises of happiness the hopelessness of his thralldom and the cruel despotism of sensuality. . . .

Hope's timid voice joins Falsehood and sings about the sweets of rest, the tranquil joy of acquiescence, and with soft pleasing words lulls his dormant soul, urging him on into the mire of pleasant Idleness and the dread clutches of Weariness of Flesh and Spirit.

Obedient to the allurements of his short-sighted senses, Man quickly satiates his brain and heart with the sweet venom of cynic Falsehood, that constantly repeats: "There is no other path that Man can tread but to the mire of peaceful self-content."