

THE FEAST OF BELSHAZZAR.

The golden lamps are lit
Upon the Palace wall;
And gathered princes sit
Within Belshazzar's hall,
Each knee prostrate before the throne
Of him, whose word—whose look alone
Hath o'er each spirit thrall;
Alas that man should bow
Before an earthly thing,
And bend his form and veil his brow,
Except to heaven's own king.

And woman too was there,
The silver cup to kiss,
Alas that she could share
In revelry like this,
That she, such splendour drawing nigh,
This scene of dark impurity,
Should recklessly deem bliss.
Then when each heart was light
And mirth's wild reign began,
Belshazzar in that hour of night
Forgot he was but man.

Thy relics, oh Jerusalem,
Which holy hands had wrought,
In pride he ordereth even them
Before him to be brought!
The cup and consecrated vase
Which shone in God's own dwelling place
Ere Israel's power was nought:
Ere prostrated so low
Thy walls Jerusalem,
That man hereafter scarce might know
The spot that once knew them.

Then from the holy cup
Is drank the sparkling wine,
Then homage offered up
To other than God's shrine;
To images of stone and brass
The pledges and libation pass
As these had been divine.
In that same hour, a hand
Upon the wall did trace
The characters of God's command
Against Belshazzar's race.

The king oppressed with fear
And thoughts which o'er him steel,
Bids the astrologers appear
Its meaning to reveal,
In vain—in vain they hope to read,
Trusting a weak—an earthly creed,
What God's own hands conceal.
Their powerless speed is tried,
Their wisdom reckoned o'er,
Yet vanished is the skill—the pride
They trusted in before.

Then Daniel is led in
Before the princes there,
A fearless foe of sin
God's prophet and his care.
Belshazzar saith "I know thou art
Gifted in mind and wise in heart
Its import to declare—
And for thy neck shall be
A chain of gold prepared.
A scarlet robe flung over thee
With thee my kingdom shared."

The prophet answereth—king
Thy gifts with thee remain,
Thy rich-rewards for others bring,
The scarlet robe and chain,

Yet the interpretation now
Of this deep myst'ry I will show,
The secret words explain,
In heart thou hast been proud,
Thy spirit hast not raised,
To him, before whom earth is bowed,
Whose name be ever praised.

The holy vessels thou
Hast in thy palace stained,
Thy wives and princes now
Their sacredness profaned.
To gods of brass, and wood, and stone,
Thou hast ascribed the power alone,
As they in heaven had reigned.
To idols thou hast bent,
Wrought out by man's own hand,
To them thy soul's devotion lent—
Now listen God's command.

Mene—He hath numbered
The moments of thy reign,
In error thou hast slumbered,
And shalt not wake again.
Tekel—in the balance weighed
Thy impotence hath been displayed,
Thy spirit proud and vain.
Peres—thy kingdom now
Divided by God's might,
Before the Persian's power shall bow,
Its glory veiled in night.

'Tis night—the Mede hath rushed
Within Belshazzar's hall,
And he with his vain idols crushed,
Lies buried 'neath its fall:
His kingdom to another given,
His gilded sceptre from him riven,
Now own a strangers thrall,
That men might ever trust
The might of heaven's high king,
Before whom nations are but dust—
This earth a transient thing.

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