

BABYLON—Belshazzar's Feast.

[The following was written by a pupil of Mr. and Mrs. VanNorman's school, before its removal to Hamilton, and read at the Review of 1844.—Ed.]

'Twas a night of mirth
And revelry. The gay and festive lamps
Were streaming from each turret—a thousand lords
Sat round the sumptuous board. Belshazzar rose—
"Now let the red wine foam!" There should be mirth
When conqueror's revel! Bablon's immortal gods
Have triumphed over Israel! and by their might
We soon shall trample down our latest foe
And tame their stubborn necks to slavery's yoke,
As my brave father did Jehovah's saints.
Bring forth the vessels which my father took
From Judah's fallen temple—now "drink and praise
Gods of gold, silver, iron, wood, and stone."

O mad Belshazzar! is there not
Enough of sin upon thy guilty soul?
Are not the visions of the midnight couch
Now wild and dark enough, but thou must add
Insult to sacrilege.

If justice reigns on high—for deeds like these
There must be fearful chastening! Such awful guilt
Rising above thee to the judgment seat,
Shall call a burst of gathering vengeance down
To sweep such crime from earth! Ah, proud man!
Prince, ruler, conqueror, dost thou deem heaven sleeps?
Or that the unseen immortal ministers,
Ranging the world to mark even purposed crime
In burning characters, have laid aside
Their everlasting attributes for thee?
But know, vain worm! that *that* almighty power,
Whose interdict is laid on seas and orbs
To chain them from their wanderings, hath assigned
A limit to thy triumph! Ho, in whose hands
The lightnings vibrate, holds them back, until
The trampler on this godly earth hath reached
His pyramid-height of guilt, that so his fall
May, with more fearful oracles, make pale
Presumptuous mortals!

How weak thy boasted strength! Know heaven doth work
By many agencies; and in its hour,
There is no insect, which the summer breeze
From the green leaf shakes trembling, but may serve
Its deep unsearchable purposes as well
As the great ocean, or the eternal fires
Pent in earth's caves. 'Twas by His power
That suns were stayed at noonday—stormy seas,
As a rill parted—mild'd archangels, sent
To wither up the strength of kings with death,
And punish human pride. *How false thy peace!*
How like a slumberer, crowned with flowers, and smiling
As in delighted visions, on the brink
Of a dread chasm! Or, how it seems, as when
In beauty bright, the blue transparent skies,
And brilliant sunbeams pour a buoyant life
Through each glad thrilling vein, and brightly chase
All thoughts of evil. When the very air
Breathes of delight; and scarcely heralded
By one deep moan, forth from his cavern depth
The earthquake bursts, and the whole splendid scene
Becomes one chaos of all dreadful things.

So, on that festive scene
Fell fearfulness and woe.
In that same hour, upon the palace wall,
"In unknown characters, God's messenger
Doth write thy doom." That God whom thou hast mock'd—
Whose temple thou hast rob'd—whose name blasphemed—
Whose people murdered and oppress'd—*that God!*

The God of Jacob—now in vengeance comes
To scourge thee for thy sin! Upon his gods
Of gold and silver, now the trembling king
Calls vainly, in his agony of fear,
To cover him from wrath.
Fear falls on all—tames the proud tyrant's heart—
Melts down stern spirits—pours terror and dismay
Through all the fiery blood—as when an icy dart
Hath touch'd the veins—unnerves the trembling knee,
And fetters the strong arm.

'Tis an awful hour!
Upon its heavy steps deep horrors crowd
With such dark presage, there is left no room
For one pang more! Where now is fled the hope,
The strength of this proud city? Imagination now
Paints all in gloomy terror. Even the skies
O'erhang the desolate splendor of her domes
With an ill-omened aspect—and the winds
Swell with the voice of danger—and heavily
The fearfulness and might of guilty dread
Presses the fainting heart. The angry heavens
Presage dark ruin! The pallid sky puts forth
No clear bright star, but ever and anon
A deep, dark, dismal mantle shadows all;
As when the billows of the deep engulfed
The Egyptian armament. Now the dread hour,
For which stern justice ne'er kept watch in vain,
Is come. Cyrus, the man Jehovah had ordained,
Even now prepares the dark and solemn rites
Of retribution. On their disordered sense
The vision bursts!—it maddens! 'Tis the flash,
The lightning shock of lances, and the cloud
Of rushing arrows, and the fearful blaze
Of gleaming sabres!

On! on they come!—
The heavy tread of mail-clad multitudes,
Like thunder showers upon the forest paths.
Aye! guilt knows well the omen of that sound,
And she hath voices like a sepulchre's,
In all her seared hollows, to respond
Unto the step of death!

The conquering foe
Crowds on to dreadful combat. Now the hosts
Rush on the revellers, in their blind debauch,
In mighty vengeance! Oh, there is now
A crash, a mingling of all things awful,
Far, far more dreadful than the open field—
When battle's voice doth shake the ancient hills,
And peals through heaven's great arch; and rushing steeds
Trample the life from out the mighty hearts
Of fallen heroes.

The morning light breaks on the scene, and shows
The dreadful harvest death hath reaped. Those halls,
Where songs of revelry arose so late, now smoke
With red libations, poured profusely out
To heaven's insulted justice. The wrath of God
Hath made a blasted void, where once the sun
Looked upon lovely dwellings—and from earth
Razing all record, that on such a spot
Heaven was insulted, or dumb idols praised!

O, Babylon!
How art thou fallen? Where now is she who sat
As queen, and said, "I never shall see sorrow."
Thy ponderous walls, which rose in massive strength,
Are crumbled into dust. Thy brazen gates are fallen.
Thy stately forests, midway in the air,
Are withered down to earth—and Belus' temple
Whose sculptured top did reach high heaven's arch,
Is mingled in the wreck.

Proud Babylon!
Thy "cry was in thy ships." But now nor ships,