

## DESPAIR.

A DRAMATIC MONOLOGUE

BY THE LATE LORD ALFRED TENNYSON.

A man and his wife, having lost faith in a God and hope of a life to come, and being utterly miserable in this, resolve to end themselves by drowning. The woman is drowned, but the man is rescued by a minister of the sect he had abandoned.

## I.

Is it you, that preached in the chapel there, looking over the sand ?  
Follow'd us, too, that night, and dogg'd us, and drew me to land ?

## II.

What did I feel that night ? You are curious. How should I tell ?  
Does it matter so much what I felt ? You rescued me—yes—was it well  
That you came unwish'd for, uncall'd, between me and the deep and my doom  
Three days since, three more dark days of the Godless gloom  
Of a life without sun, without health, without hope, without any delight  
In anything here upon earth ? But, ah, God ! that night, that night,  
When the rolling eyes of the lighthouse there on the fatal neck  
Of land running out into rock—they had saved many hundreds from wreck—  
Glared on our way toward death, I remember I thought as we passed  
Does it matter how many they saved ? we are all of us wreck'd at last—  
“ Do you fear ? ” and there came thro' the roar of the breaker a whisper, a breath—  
“ Fear ? Am I not with you ? I am frightened at life, not death.”

## III.

And the suns of the limitless Universe sparkled and shone in the sky,  
Flashing with fires as of God, and we knew that their light was a lie—  
Bright as deathless with hope—but, however they sparkled and shone,  
No soul in the heaven above, no soul on the earth below,  
A fiery scroll written over with lamentation and woe.

## IV.

See, we were nursed in the dark night-fold of your fatalist creed,  
And we turn'd to the growing dawn,—we had hoped for a dawn indeed,  
When the light of a Sun that was coming would scatter the ghosts of the Past,  
And the cramping creeds that had madden'd the peoples would vanish at last.  
And we broke away from the Christ, our human brother and friend,  
For he spoke, or it seemed that he spoke, of a Hell without help, without end.

## V.

Hoped for a dawn and it came, but the promise had faded away ;  
We had passed from a cheerless night to the glare of a drearier day ;  
He is only a cloud and a smoke who was once a pillar of fire,  
The guess of a worm in the dust and the shadow of its desire —

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