

To climb the mountain-summit through the broad
Autumnal forest, dropping leaves of gold
And scarlet on our heads as we go on !”

His fevered thoughts strayed back to autumn days
When he had wooed his lovely bride ; the flower
Of Shenandoah—all gentleness and grace,
When, blushing with the consciousness of love,
She gave her willing hand and pledged her troth
One day beneath the spreading maple trees ;
Whose leaves were flushed with crimson, like her cheek,
And life, that day for them, seemed first begun !

“ O, Minne mine ! my beautiful and true !”
She listened to the unforgotten words,
While grief and terror mingled with the joy
That used to greet their memory in her heart.
“ Loving and loved, each one in other blest,
To-morrow is our happy wedding-day !
The orioles and blackbirds gaily sing,
Mad with delight, upon the golden boughs,
Their song of songs. To-morrow is the day !
To-morrow ! O, my love ! I hear a chime
Of silver bells in heaven, ringing clear ;
To-morrow is their happy wedding-day !”

His words shot straight as arrows, through and through ;
The sweetest recollection of the past
That nestled in her heart and, fed with love,
Lived there encaged, her bosom's bird ; now rent,
Displumed and bleeding, 'neath the shaft of death
Her tears fell hot and thick, and oft she kissed
The pallid cheek and pressed the hand upled
Her to the mountain-top, and held her there
In dalliance sweet and fond affection's thrall ;
While the broad world beneath them opened wide
Its fairest treasures to their raptured eyes.

Soft Indian summer floated in the air,
Like smoke of incense, o'er the dreamy woods ;
So still, one only heard the dropping leaves
Of forests turned to crimson, brown, and gold,
In myriad tints, to craze a painter's eye.
For Nature's alchemy, transmuting all,
Gilded the earth with glamour, rich and rare,
As if to give the eye, weary of this,
A transient glimpse of fairer worlds to be.

She wept and listened as he still spake on :
“ Thank God for autumn days ! O, Minne mine !