

Were flush'd with autumn's red and gold,
 I cross'd the rocky solitudes
 Among the cloud-girt mountain chains
 That rise from Arizona's plains,
 By sombre gorges deeply cleft,
 Where Time's denuding hand has left
 Stern record of his patient toil,
 And hurrying streams in wild turmoil
 Leap darkling to the distant sea.
 And there, in those far wilds, did we—
 I, and my silent Indian guide
 And our brave mules—climb patiently,
 Until one sultry eventide,
 Slow toiling up the mountain side,
 Across a miners' camp we came :
 The topmost peaks were still aflame
 With the red sunset's dying glow,
 But all was grey and dark below.

And in the camp there was no sound
 Or stir of life ; but all appear'd
 Lone and deserted, till we near'd
 A distant hut in which we found
 The miners gathered, mute, around
 A dying comrade. As I gazed
 Upon the dying face, its eyes
 Turn'd upon mine with sad surprise
 In their last lingering look. Amazed,
 I stood, till memory found the clue,
 And then the poor dead face I knew—
 Poor Geoffrey ! everybody's friend !
 Who thought that such would be his end ?
 Countess ! I think you knew him, too :
 Young Geoffrey Vernon ! Was it not
 At Deercliffe—at this very spot,
 I met him once, two years ago ?
 With sudden effort she suppress'd
 The wild fierce throb that tore her breast,
 And turn'd, and slowly answer'd—No !
 I do not think it !—all the same,
 I do remember, now, the name—
 I pray you, let us hear the rest.

Her voice was hard, and strange its
 tone ;
 As voice of one that would subdue
 A moan's low cry. A livid hue
 Came o'er her cheek, and then, anew,
 As quickly as it came, was gone—
 Unseen, unheeded. And again,
 With voice that held no touch of pain,
 She said, I pray you, then, say on !

Well, there is little more to say—
 I kept the death-watch till the day
 Came greyly, and the stars were gone.

I

Then follow'd the strange burial :
 The strangest that has ever been
 Before or since, or ever shall
 In all the coming years be seen.
 The hills above the camp, that night,
 Threw back a lurid spectral light :
 And suddenly among them shone
 A solfatara's fiery cone,
 Between the fissured rifts upthrown.
 And with the dawn a seething flood
 Of pitch-like, black, and trailing mud
 Pour'd from its throat, and forced its way
 Far down the narrow gorge that lay
 Darkly beneath it. There they placed
 (Within a few rough boards encased)
 The body of the silent dead.
 And one they call'd "the preacher" there,
 Uncover'd and with low voice said
 A few scant words of hurried prayer.
 Then came the wave : a moving wall,
 It crept around the coffin-lid,
 And rose and rose—and all was hid
 Beneath its black and massive pall
 That froze to solid rock anon !
 And ever as the years roll on
 The secret of that silent stone
 Lock'd darkly in its hidden core—
 The goad that drove its tenant forth
 From home and kin, o'er sea and earth,
 To perish there—remains unknown,
 And so remaineth evermore !

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It seem'd as though the cruel day:
 Would never end—and all the while
 To force upon the face a smile,
 And this and that, O God ! to say
 Whilst all the thought was far away—
 And all the glitter and the gleam,
 The greeting forms that came and went,
 Seem'd but the glamour of a dream
 That work'd to her bewilderment.
 But now at last the day has pass'd,
 The lingering, gleaming, ghastly day—
 The carriages have roll'd away—
 And she is free—at last—at last !

* * * * *

She stands alone within her room—
 The night has come : the moon, on high,
 Sails softly through the summer sky—
 The floor is flecked with light and gloom—
 The glory of her loosen'd hair
 Is all about her—white and bare
 Her shoulders and her white feet shew
 Like marble in the pale moon-glow.