

Who has not read, erewhile, some wizard tale,
 Such as in youthful hours doth paint all pale
 The ruddy cheek with heart-delighting fear
 Of terrors grown artistically dear—
 Who has not read some legend, wild and weird
 Of the Hartz mountains, in whose bosom seared,
 'Mid sunless glens far sunk from noonday-shine,
 Or on sheer steepes, whose shaggy fell of pine
 Bristles a horror, demon dwellers haunt
 In varied semblances of were-wolf gaunt,
 Or mountain hunter, gloomed with stormy stain,
 Or (deadlier thus) o'erfeathered with the grain
 Of earth's fair angelhood, in form of her,
 Man's complemental being, apt to stir
 The pulse of evil as of good in him,
 Since, erst in Eden, grown of glory dim,
 She dwindled from her primal loveliness?

Yet, well I ween, the Maker—who did dress
 With veiling love her beauty, when of shame
 The breath inclement, breathing on the same,
 Made shrink her blossomed sweetness, 'ware of flaw—
 Did also add thereto a robing awe
 Of virgin holiness, and left her still
 So excellent a beauty as may thrill
 With image of His own the heart of man.

So thought the bridegroom, as he turned to scan
 His blushing bride, where on the village green
 She sate beside him, with her virgin mien
 All blown in roses, and her heart at strife,
 Being all maiden yet, though wedded wife,
 And wavering 'twixt a maiden's lovely shame,
 (To which the open heart seems open blame),
 And the new freedom of a love wherein
 God re-creates an Eden free from sin.

Where the Hartz mountains from their heights descend,
 Till, close below, their rugged billows blend
 With woodlands flowing southward—in a nest
 Rimmed by the circling steepes behind, whose crest
 Of nodding pine shook voices down below,
 Caught from the spirits of the wind, that blow
 The organ forests to a music such
 As elemental hands of demon touch
 Draw from the stops of nature—sheltered well,
 The quiet village lay. In front, down fell
 The shelving mountain to the plains below,
 Leaving a portal whence the eye might go
 On quest through murmurous woodlands rolling far,
 With bosky lawns between, unto the bar