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FROM  
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[MERYON (CHARLES LEWIS) 1783-1877.]

5142. The Origin of Rome and of the Papacy. A Poem, tr. from the Italian of Giovanni Casti, by Deuterus Whistlecraft, Gent. 12°. *Lond., n.d.*

The flyleaf of the vol. in which this and nos. 5143-6 are bound together (in that order) bears the autograph of C. L. Meryon with the following note: "These translations from Casti, made by me, will probably be found nowhere else: so my daughter is requested not to lose them." All the pamphlets, except no. 5145, are signed or initialed on the title-page and all have his MS. corrections.

These are not mentioned in the D. N. B. among Meryon's works. He is best known as the physician and biographer of the eccentric Lady Hester Stanhope.

5143. The History of Pope Joan. By Gianbattista Casti. A Poem in 3 cantos . . . Tr. from the Italian by Democritus Ridens. 12°. [*n. pl.*, 1860.]

With bibliographical notes. Foot of title-page cut off, and 'Privately printed, 1860' substituted in MS. Bd. with no. 5142 (see note).

5144. 'Tis all My Eye and Betty Martin, or The Folly of Mens' Pursuits. 12°. *n. pl. or d.*

In verse. MS. note: "by C. L. M. Printed Privately—only Five Copies." Over the head-title the derivation (!) has been added in pencil: "Oh! mihi, Beate Martine." Bd. with no. 5142 (see note).

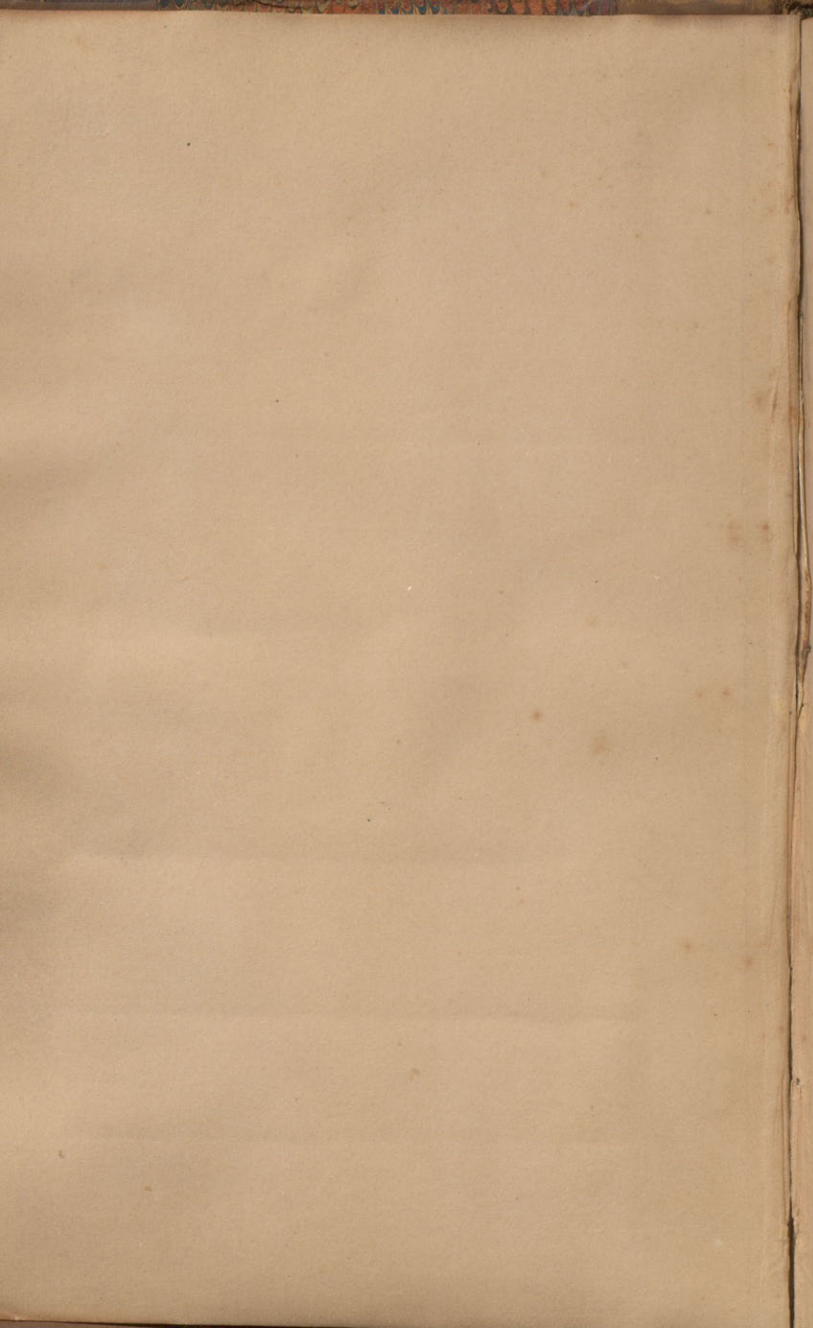
5145. Stanzas on the Turkish Bath, with plain Rules for Cleanliness of the Body, and the Preservation of Health. 2 pts. . . . 12°. *n. pl. or d.*

Anon. Bd. with no. 5142 (see note).

5146. Riding Habits, and Habits of Riding; or, An Enquiry into the most proper Position and the most becoming Dress for Ladies on Horseback. To which is added The Riding School; or, Elementary Instruction in Horsemanship . . . By the Chevalier Calfourchon, Riding Master at Straddleberg . . . 12°. *Lond.*, 1865.

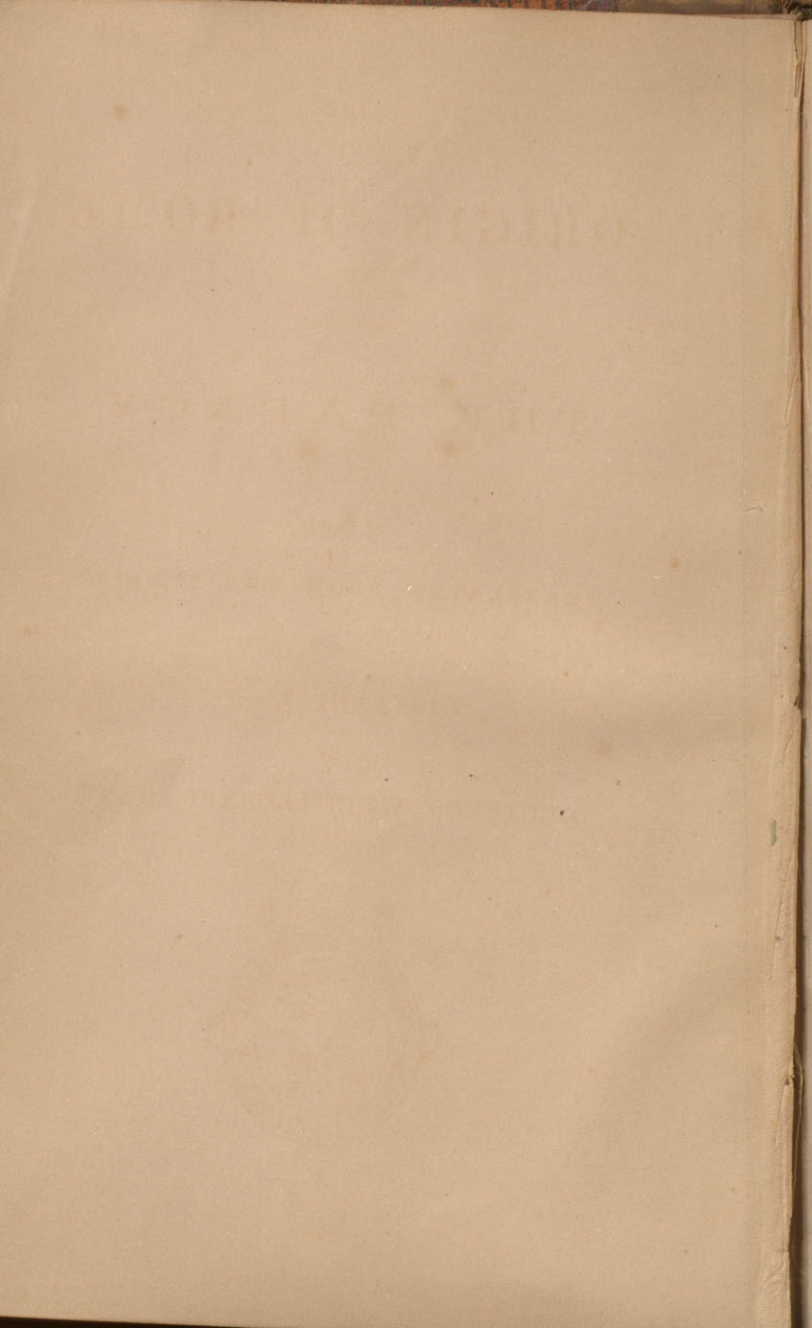
Illustr. Inserted: MS. anecdotes.

Bd. with no. 5142 (see note).



C. L. Merriam

These translations from Casti,  
made by me, will probably  
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THE  
ORIGIN OF ROME

AND OF  
THE PAPACY.

A Poem,  
TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN  
OF  
GIOVANNI CASTI,  
BY  
DEUTEROS WHISTLECRAFT, GENT.

*C. L. Morgan*



THE

ORIGIN OF ROME

THE PAPAIOY

TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

LONDON:

AUSTIN HOLYOAKE, PRINTER, 147, FLEET STREET, E.C.





## TO THE READER.

THE works of Giovanni Casti, an author greatly admired by his own countrymen, and very generally read by those among ourselves who are versed in Italian literature, have never yet, with some few exceptions, been rendered into English, as far as the writer of this notice is aware. He has met with only three exceptions; which are Mr. Wm. Stewart Rose's meagre version of the *Animali Parlanti*, published by Murray, in 1819; the *Giuli Tre*, or *Three Gtroats*, by M. Montague; 2nd Ed.; sold by Henry Starie, 23, Tichborne-street: and one of the Novelle, entitled *L'Ossessa*, or *Belfagor*; sold by the same bookseller. Lastly the *Papessa*, or *Tale of Pope Joan*, which has, it is said, been printed for private circulation, as not sufficiently exempt from those licentious passages which the public here will not tolerate, however common they may be with the novelists of other countries.

So it is, that the principal objection to Casti's writings arises from the unambiguous terms which he uses upon all occasions where human frailties, more especially incontinence, are his subjects. To purge them of such impurities would not be difficult; but then it would be to want in fidelity to the original, and, by yielding to the scrupulous prudery of society, as at present moulded by the cant of the times, to destroy his identity. This is a species of delicacy which the translator may be pardoned for thinking not a bit more commendable than the affected modesty of a late Pope, who placed fig-leaves on the *pudenda* of the statues in the galleries of the Vatican, or the recent attempt of a British senator to banish from our academical schools the delineation of the naked model.

Few persons can pretend to be intimately acquainted with the beauties of expression and style in a language not their own: they ought, therefore, to let their judgment be directed by native critics; upon whose authority, if we take the merits of Casti's poetry, we are bound to believe that it excels in harmonious versification, in his felicitous manner of saying common truisms, in the simplicity yet aptness of his comparisons and illustrations, and in a vein of irony which nowhere cuts very deep, but, like a fly-blow, deteriorates that which it falls on, and ultimately is more destructive than the heavy bruises of the satirist.

In his descriptions of human actions and events, Casti paints mankind just as he finds it. His intentions, whatever some cavillers may insinuate about his licentiousness, are always praiseworthy. He unmasks hypocrisy; successfully demolishes the brazen idols of priestcraft; and pays homage to the conscientious feelings and ingenuous sentiments which nature has implanted in us. He holds up the glitter and pretensions of pomp and vanity to ridicule, raises a laugh at men's follies,

craves a pardon for their weaknesses, and endeavours to emancipate the minds of his fellow creatures from the thralldom of prejudice, superstition, and servitude.

It is about twenty-eight years ago that a near relation of the translator published a short poem\* in the same metrical stanza as that now presented to the reader—a stanza brought into vogue at that date by Lord Byron, who adopted it from the Italians. It is called by them *Rime Ottave*, or octave rhymes, as also *Rime Sciolte*, or loose rhymes, and lends itself very readily to discursive poetry. Some one has thus described it:—

“The rima sciolta’s a delightful measure,  
Where stanza after stanza finds a place;  
Where common things, well said, afford us pleasure;  
Whilst rhyme on rhyme still stares you in the face.  
In culling thus Parnassian flowers at leisure,  
You find for every one a vacant space:  
And, if each line is musically drawn,  
You make your verse like parterres on a lawn.”

Seeing what great success attended the rather whimsical production of his now deceased relative, the writer was tempted to make an essay of his own poor ability; but, not venturing on anything original, he selected from Casti’s *Novelle* the following tale. The manuscript has lain by among his papers for twice the period that Horace prescribes. It was during the present remarkable events, which are taking place in Italy, that it occurred to him whether its publication just now, when his Holiness the Pope is the victim of such unrelenting persecution by the followers of a mad-headed adventurer, might not serve to uphold the triple crown, and bring back its disaffected subjects to a sense of their duty.

This narrative in verse of the origin of Papal domination can pretend to no other merit than the object which is proposed; and it will, beyond a doubt, be welcomed by all good Roman Catholics as a timely record of the ancient and sacred foundation on which the Holy Father builds his power, temporal as well as spiritual. They will learn in it whence are derived the ceremonies and processions of their church, the institutions conventual and monastic, which afford such happy retreats to pious virgins and youths devoted to celibacy; by whose prayers the community at large is led to pay that obedience to sacerdotal authority which tends to the salvation of their souls.

The poem is dedicated by Casti to the ladies: it is, therefore, particularly recommended to the fair sex, whose reverence for priestly guidance so often leads them to the confessional.

DEUTEROS WHISTLECRAFT.

\* By Nahum Whistlecraft: 8vo. London; 1834.

rime sciolte  
are a kind of blank verse.

# THE ORIGIN OF ROME.

## CANTO THE FIRST.

### I.

If I thy aid invoke, my playful muse,  
The Origin of Rome to celebrate,  
Fear not I mean thy goodness to abuse,  
Or load thy shoulders with a heavy weight.  
'Tis not thy lyre heroic thou must use;  
No laurel wreath thy brow must decorate ;  
Thy style facetious, Muse, alone preserve,  
Thy cheerful song, and thy accustomed verve.

### II.

No daring pinions flap against my side,  
O'er Helicon to wing my lofty flight ;  
My lips have drunk not the Castalian tide,  
To sing of heroes, and their deeds recite.  
Mars is my theme—not he who's deified,  
With shield and spear, and deck'd with trophies bright ;  
But one, with love who could a vestal fire,  
And was of Romulus and Remus sire.

### III.

Apollo! thou, to whose immortal touch  
The Greek and Latin bards attuned their strain,  
E'en if thou wouldst inflate my lungs as much,  
I should refuse thy succour with disdain.  
I'll call thee if there's need—my fancy's such—  
To-day a humbler god inspires my brain ;  
So, chaste Apollo, lay thy lyre aside,  
And with the Muses quietly abide.

### IV.

Yes, laughing Momus, thee I now invoke,  
The constant foe of lies and false pretence ;  
Who canst combine with seriousness a joke,  
And ain't thy blows at knavery, not sense.  
One puff of thine dispels the boaster's smoke,  
And oft to fickle minds gives confidence.  
Thy ridicule, on salient folly thrown,  
Some men as useful, all amusing own.

## V.

Most famous cities have contrived to find  
 Some glorious founder, or some great beginning,  
 And, in the ears of credulous mankind,  
 Their origin divine are always ringing.  
 Here 'twas a lyre made brick and mortar bind,  
 And walls arose unto a minstrel's singing.  
 There dragon's teeth were sown in furrows charmed,  
 And up sprung Thebes's burghers ready armed.

## VI.

When Troy was unprotected and unvalled,  
 'Twas Hercules who built its bulwarks high ;  
 Pallas the olive into being called,  
 When she and Neptune strove for victory :  
 And Athens, as her favourite town installed,  
 Enjoyed her name and gained celebrity ;  
 And from beginnings, more or less the same,  
 Sparta, Mycene, Corinth, Argos, came.

## VII.

Rome, mighty Rome ! whose name, august and dread,  
 With splendid recollections fills the mind—  
 Rome ! of the world the mistress and the head,  
 Whose fame leaves other cities far behind—  
 The dark obscurity, by ages spread  
 Upon thy origin, 'tis now designed  
 To clear away, as far as we are able,  
 And substitute reality for fable.

## VIII.

That both Æneas, and Antenor were  
 Betrayers of their native city, Troy,  
 Is an inquiry I my readers spare,  
 And which would less amuse them than annoy.  
 Each man his notions, as he will, may square,  
 Devouring ages everything destroy.  
 For poets fabricate the strangest lies,  
 And simple facts in fancy's dress disguise.

## IX.

Freebooters then their native cities left,  
 Heroes, no better than an errant knight,  
 Some Argonaut—for rapine, or for theft,  
 Set forth with desperate gangs, and put to flight  
 The peaceful citizen, of home bereft,  
 Founding new states, and using force for right.  
 As we have seen in modern countries done  
 By Turk and Tartar, Saracen and Hun.

## X.

And in those epochs, barbarous and rude,  
 The people, brutal and uncivilised,  
 Who by some powerful neighbours were subdued,  
 And saw their flocks and pastures sacrificed,  
 Pinder and rapine in their turn pursued,  
 And with incursions other states surprised.  
 And thus the weakest from the strongest got  
 In every case a homogeneous lot.

## XI.

Domains, in narrow limits comprehended,  
 Appeared the conquests of an Alexander.  
 Thus, when the famous ten years' siege was ended,  
 The pious Trojan left the stream Scamander,  
 And found a petty king, whose realm extended  
 Over a score of acres—poor Evander.  
 And his successors, from Ascanius Julius,  
 Were poor as he, until we reach Amulius.

## XII.

After Ascanius, Alba had for kings  
 Sylvius, Æneas Sylvius, and Latinus ;  
 Then Alba, Atys, Capys—and this brings  
 Capetus next—then follow Tiberinus  
 (From whom the name of Tiber's river springs),  
 Agrippa, Romulus, and Aventinus  
 (Interred upon a hill, which thence obtained  
 The name of Aventine.) Next Procas reigned.(1)

## XIII.

His son, named Numitor, succeeded next ;  
 A brother's treason drove him from the throne.  
 Amulius in his place himself erects.  
 And, as no laws usurpers ever own,  
 When Titus Livy names him in his text  
 (A Paduan writer to my readers known).  
 He says Amulius all his nephews slew,  
 As, in such cases, tyrants always do.

## XIV.

To end the race of Numitor, the stern  
 Amulius most nefarious means employed.  
 He made his brother's daughter vestal turn,  
 And thus all chance of progeny destroyed.  
 Her name was Ilia Rhea ; and we learn  
 Sylvia was that her family enjoyed.  
 For, born in woods, Ascanius took the name  
 Of Sylvius, and his race preferred the same.

## XV.

When by her uncle, the usurping king,  
 Fair Sylvia, for a vestal was designed,  
 In her fourth lustre she was entering :  
 Her face and looks, such beauties rare combined,  
 That from some deity she seemed to spring.  
 Her voice was harmony : in air refined  
 O'er all her mien such dignity was poured,  
 That those who saw her loved her and adored.

## XVI.

But Sylvia was a damsel never made  
 Either to live a virgin or a nun.  
 Among her suitors, constant court who paid,  
 A gallant knight her preference had won.  
 And as her friends her plan of schooling laid  
 Quite on the model of a royal one,  
 I piously believe 'twas only when  
 She vestal turned, that she turned maid again.

## XVII.

When Sylvia saw, irrevocably sealed  
 Her doom, she made no womanish laments,  
 But an undaunted character revealed ;  
 Resolved to overturn, at all events  
 (Spite of the dangers such a course concealed),  
 The bloody tyrant's barbarous intents.  
 When women, such as Sylvia, have a plan  
 To execute, then baulk them, if you can.

## XVIII.

The day on which to Vesta she was vowed,  
 And to the temple through the streets was led,  
 She saw Orontes standing in the crowd  
 (The youth for whom her tender bosom bled) ;  
 There passed a sign between them, dumb not loud,  
 And in each other's eyes their love was read.  
 The eyes sometimes the passions which we feel  
 With stronger language than the tongue reveal.

## XIX.

But, in my story nothing to omit,  
 I must premise th' Etrurians ever were  
 Renowned for talents, ladies, and for wit :  
 As certain proof and testimony bear  
 Their monuments, and annals ably writ.  
 From motives good, of which I'm not aware,  
 Timon of Greece was settled there for life,  
 And had a son by an Etrurian wife.

## XX.

This was Orontes, who possessed a store  
 Of virtues, fit to gain a woman's heart.  
 And as a touch will from the brazen bore  
 Cause igneous flashes instantly to part,  
 So, touch the spring in him, and forth would pour  
 Flashes of talent from his head and heart.  
 Mechanics, optics, alchemy he knew,  
 Which Timon taught him e'er a man he grew.

## XXI.

These things, in Latium then not known the least,  
 Timon, a sojourner in Egypt, learned  
 From one who, as philosopher and priest,  
 His science to imposture's purpose turned.  
 So much in Memphis every day increased  
 The reputation which this priest had earned,  
 That Timon by his father, whilst a lad,  
 Was thither sent, and there instruction had.

## XXII.

These useful sciences, by travel taught,  
 Which in those distant ages ranked so high,  
 And which the superstitious people thought  
 The work of magic or the deity,  
 Seemed to Orontes means, if fitly wrought,  
 To bring his projects to maturity,  
 Which secretly he studied to devise,  
 Aiding his Sylvia in love's enterprise.

## XXIII.

Sacred to Vesta was the holy site,  
 Where spotless virgins ever watchful wait  
 To keep a pure and never-dying light;  
 That augured good or evil to the state,  
 According as its flame burned dull or bright.  
 The maid, that guilty proved within that gate  
 Of sacrilegious incest, though presumed  
 On mere suspicion, was alive entombed.

## XXIV.

The priest alone had ingress to the place,  
 With honours great distinguished for his zeal  
 (Not in his heart, but in his speech and face),  
 'Twas his employ heaven's orders to reveal:  
 And mortal destinies, in every case  
 Hid under Fate's impenetrable seal,  
 He gravely to the people manifested,  
 And taught how Vesta's ire should be arrested.

## XXV.

Of all this poor devoted virgin train  
 At once the guardian, judge, and censor too,  
 He with severest rigour would arraign  
 Their peccadillos, whether false or true.<sup>(2)</sup>  
 Infractions slight could no forgiveness gain,  
 Unless in things himself was privy to :  
 But when the judge was partner in the fault,  
 Then absolution never seemed to halt.<sup>(3)</sup>

## XXVI.

And thus this venerable place supplied  
 An ample field to give their malice vent,  
 To gratify in wickedness and pride  
 Their stifled passions to the full extent.  
 Augurs and flamens, and a host beside  
 Who by the name of priests in common went,  
 Thus kept these simple maidens in submission  
 Beneath the leaden yoke of superstition.

## XXVII.

No sooner Sylvia by her vows was bound  
 Among the Vestal sisterhood to dwell,  
 Than night and day Orontes prowled around  
 The building, seeking where to find her cell.  
 Just as the wolf will near the fold be found  
 Where bleating lamb he hears, or tinkling bell.  
 Whilst Sylvia, anxious for revenge, no less  
 Kept watch, a prey to musing restlessness.

## XXVIII.

The temple's gloomy basement walls he tried ;  
 Its arches hidden, and now long unknown—  
 If entrance there perchance might be descried ;  
 Forgotten passages, or doors o'ergrown,  
 Or subterranean caves that ruins hide,  
 And with the edifice connection own.  
 Seek and you'll find.—So well his search succeeded,  
 He hit upon the very thing he needed.

## XXIX.

A ruined aqueduct, with ivy crowned,  
 Of ancient date, which from a neighbouring hill  
 Bore water to the temple underground,  
 And went beyond a public fount to fill ;  
 But now was standing half, and half a mound,  
 Sylvia, who laboured with no less good will,  
 Discovered first, and thought Orontes could,  
 If clever, make therein his entrance good.



## XXX.

Forthwith she writes a billet to her lover  
 "To seek the hill—amidst some stunted trees  
 "A ruined aqueduct he would discover—  
 "Fearless to enter on his hands and knees,  
 "If he his wretched Sylvia would recover,—  
 "As by that aqueduct he could with ease  
 "Beneath the temple find an issue straight,  
 "Where she his coming faithfully would wait."

## XXXI.

She folds her letter with the greatest care,  
 And near a casement takes her usual seat,  
 Where oft he lingered near with sorrowing air ;  
 And, when he passed, she dropped it at his feet,  
 To make him of her purposes aware.  
 Breathless he forward springs, with action fleet,  
 To snatch it up, just as a cat will spring  
 If on the ground you throw her anything.

## XXXII.

Orontes hastens to peruse the letter,  
 His anxious bosom throbbing with delight ;  
 And though she intimated he had better  
 Defer its execution till the night,  
 His mind's impatience no delay can fetter :  
 And swiftly disappearing from her sight,  
 He searches o'er the ruined heaps that fill  
 The space between the temple and the hill.

## XXXIII.

Above the level of a barren field  
 He marks a mound of stoney fragments lie,  
 With fig-tree stumps and brambles thick concealed :  
 Then broken walls he sees approaching nigh.  
 The stones and brambles to his efforts yield,  
 And in the wall appears a cavity.  
 The youth exerts his strength with double vigour,  
 And soon the narrow orifice grows bigger.

## XXXIV.

Orontes in the fissure thrusts his face,  
 And finds within an arch of channeled stone,  
 Of some old aqueduct the broken trace ;—  
 Abandoned, rubbishy, and quite unknown.  
 Remote and solitary was the place.—  
 Sufficient for his purpose now was shown.  
 Orontes home with satisfaction hies,  
 To execute next night his enterprise.

## XXXV.

Next day when Phœbus had retired to rest,  
 Bearing a pickaxe to break down the wall,  
 And armed with leathern helm and leathern vest  
 (As some defence whatever might befall,  
 Should reptiles venomous his course infest,  
 Forced through such narrow passages to crawl),  
 To guard himself from brambles and from stakes,  
 And from the bite of scorpions and of snakes.

## XXXVI.

On to the ruin, like a pioneer,  
 He marches, and the tangled brambles lops,  
 First with his knife; then with his axe makes clear  
 The rubbish that the conduit's entrance stops.  
 He then puts on his gloves of mail for fear  
 Of scratching, as he crawls, his finger tops.  
 Over his knees strong leathern caps he ties,  
 And lets his vizor down to save his eyes.

## XXXVII.

His body first he through the fissure strains,  
 And at his length along the conduit lay;—  
 Sounds with the pick-axe, as advance he gains;  
 And, if he feels a serpent in his way,  
 He cuts his head off, or knocks out his brains.  
 No reptile can his hand destructive stay—  
 Lizards and vipers manifest submission,  
 And fled his coming with all expedition.

## XXXVIII.

For love how many shapes Jove deigned to take!  
 For love Alcides was with toils oppress'd.  
 Orpheus for love crossed o'er the Stygian lake,  
 And with his lyre set Cerberus to rest,  
 Yet left his wife behind by some mistake.  
 Thus like a reptile, on all fours, in quest  
 Of her he loved, Orontes dared to try  
 To rescue Sylvia by his bravery.

## XXXIX.

'Tis pity, e'er the times of which we write,  
 That Cadmus was transmuted to a snake:  
 For, had the change not happened, then by right,  
 Orontes might that signal honour take.  
 But now it was no more a freak to cite,  
 No more a metamorphosis to make:  
 For when the reptile's part was once essayed,  
 The trick was stale, nor could again be played.

XL.

So, crawling on, he thought he could discern  
 The outlet of the passage, and the rays  
 Of a small light, that seemed far off to burn ;  
 Which served his almost sinking strength to raise.  
 Thus, risking suffocation at each turn,  
 At last he comes where anxious Sylvia stays :  
 As came Leander swimming o'er the tide,  
 When Hero lit her lamp his course to guide.

XLI.

No sooner had the first surprise expired  
 At meeting thus in such a gloomy cell,  
 The handsome pair, with mutual passion fired,  
 Felt in their bosoms mutual transports swell :  
 And eager in that enterprise conspired  
 At once so famous and remarkable,  
 That Rome may trace her grandeur from the spot  
 Where Sylvia and Orontes now were got.

XLII.

In action, feeling, sentiment, or thought,  
 Sylvia and he were of no common cast.  
 And things that were in their conjunction wrought,  
 In all its stages middle, first and last,  
 With portents big set vulgar souls at nought ;  
 And so no questions ask on all that passed.  
 What with expressions fit we can't relate,  
 With awe mysterious we must venerate.

XLIII.

For this immortal deed might, at the time  
 When by the lovers done, and at first sight,  
 Appear a great and sacrilegious crime :  
 But should be named, if designated right,  
 The corner-stone on which the mass sublime  
 Of Rome's vast empire reached it's monstrous height.  
 Besides, with reason, Sylvia I should call  
 Of all our nuns the stern original.(\*)

XLIV.

But whilst the warrior and his beauteous mate  
 In tender intercourse the hours consume,  
 A germ from this their commerce took its date,  
 Not idly dropped in Sylvia's fertile womb.  
 This was the embryo of the Roman state ;  
 Thence sprung the power which haughty Popes assume.  
 As acorns small in little space comprise  
 Oaks that in time spread branches to the skies.

XLV.

When Sylvia and Orontes had completed  
 This very weighty wonderful concern;  
 Home to his household gods the youth retreated—  
 The way that brought him serving to return.  
 And oftentimes his visits he repeated,  
 When use the track had made him better learn :  
 Until there rose upon the maiden's shape  
 Signs, which the eye no longer could escape.

XLVI.

And, recollect, the matter was no joke  
 Within a vault alive to be entomb'd ;  
 For harsh and cruel priests, such scenes to cloak,  
 To certain death their feeble victims doomed.  
 So might have been, by one unlucky stroke,  
 Rome and its forum, yet unbörn, inhumed,  
 With Popes and Emperors, not then begotten,  
 That since were born, have reigned, and now are rotten.

XLVII.

On all accounts, however, 'twas required  
 That some expedient should forthwith be found  
 (And found too ere her pregnancy transpired) ;  
 For Sylvia's size was daily gaining ground.  
 What if the *president* the cause inquired ?  
 How could the flamen's eyes be longer bound ?  
 [For flamen then, and female president,  
 The same as bishop and as abbess meant.]

XLVIII.

So both, without the least precipitation,  
 But from reflection slow, like persons bent  
 To take a prudent sage determination,  
 Together schemed in this predicament  
 How best to save her life and reputation,  
 Or fearless perish in th' experiment.  
 For when the mind in some pursuit is warm,  
 Necessity will miracles perform.

XLIX.

One day Orontes said—"Do'st thou not know  
 "That those who well employ religious craft,  
 "No matter what strange lengths their mummeries go,  
 "Can always meet with feeble minds to graft  
 "Their cunning on?"—"And need'st thou tell me so?"  
 Sylvia replied, "who drink the bitter draught  
 "Of self-experience, as a vestal virgin,  
 "And feel the fatal truth of what you're urging.

L.

“And hast thou not” (resumed the youth) “perceived—  
 “I know thou hast, for 'tis the common way—  
 “That deeds, the foulest villain e'er achieved,  
 “As just and holy priestcraft will display,  
 “If but the author is a god believed?”—  
 “I grant the premises are true: but say,”  
 Cries Sylvia, “wherefore this preamble use?”—  
 When thus Orontes his discourse pursues.

LI.

“Go!—tell the flamen and the prioress—  
 “The God, beneath whose banner warriors fight,  
 To whom their spoils and trophies they address,  
 “In all his glory lay with thee one night.  
 “Tell them thy offspring's destined to possess  
 “His father's intrepidity and might;  
 “And when his great career shall be completed,  
 “Among the gods immortal to be seated.”

LII.

Sylvia was half astounded at his speech.  
 “I grant,” says she, “'tis easy to aver  
 “That I by Mars am big; but can you teach  
 “To whom I may as witnesses refer?  
 “To what can proofs in such a matter reach?  
 “Or what can credibility confer?”  
 “Yes! thou the spouse of Mars shalt be,” he cries,  
 “If thou wilt only act as I advise.”

LIII.

“Proofs will I furnish thee, of such a kind  
 “As shall the most incredulous persuade:  
 “A figure shall they see, so well designed  
 “To make them think 'tis Mars himself pourtrayed.  
 “Nay, our imposture e'en the priest shall find  
 “Fit stuff to work on in their cheating trade.  
 “The part thou hast to play I must explain  
 “When thou and I, my Sylvia, meet again.”

LIV.

Sylvia espoused his stratagem with zeal.  
 Orontes bad adieu.—The following eve,  
 Conscious his measures sure results reveal,  
 He seeks the aqueduct, with helm and greave  
 No more of leather, but of polished steel;  
 And lets no mortal soul his steps perceive.  
 Covered he was all o'er with armour bright,  
 Like one who sallies forth in war to fight.

## LV.

The aqueduct he entered ; and attained  
 The place, where she his looked-for step expects,  
 Then through the vaults, the temple which sustained,  
 Where eye no mortal vestiges detects,  
 (A death-like silence, whilst they both maintained),  
 Her lover's steps the vestal maid directs ;  
 As erst, the sorceress, Cumcean led  
 Eneas through the region of the dead.

## LVI.

From part of this prodigious pile project  
 Arches, which through dark aisles in order ran :  
 A work, that looking on, you might suspect  
 Coeval with the world ; and doubt if man,  
 Or nature's self, had been the architect.  
 No foot had dared investigate the plan.  
 Orontes traversed them with measured pace,  
 Until he grew familiar with the place.

## LVII.

He then committed to the Vestal's hands  
 Some small cartouches, made of Grecian pitch,  
 To use (and so she did) as he commands.  
 A little box he next consigned her, which  
 Contained small tubes of glass ; from these expands  
 A flame, if broken with a sudden twitch,  
 Whereby the powder instantly ignites ;  
 And thus resembles meteoric lights.

## LVIII.

And having tried for Sylvia's information  
 Before her face experiments not few,  
 To show the manner of the preparation,  
 He then described the plan he should pursue ;  
 And indicated, in co-operation,  
 What words and things she ought to say and do,  
 And when he thought she knew her lesson well,  
 She, unobserved, returned unto her cell.

## LIX.

Within the sept most hallowed of the fane,  
 Watching the sacred flame that never dies,  
 Those, whom the vestal laws awake retain,  
 Soon hear a hollow noise, that seems to rise  
 From underground, like swords that clashed amain,  
 As when in battle bloody conflicts rise.  
 This was Orontes, who, below concealed,  
 His naked sword was striking on his shield.

## LX.

With awe and fear the vestal virgins shook,  
 At such a horrid and unusual sound ;  
 Some to their cells their trembling steps betook,  
 And praying, some fell prostrate on the ground,  
 Begging the goddess on her maids would look,  
 And condescend her wishes to expound,  
 And tell what these mysterious warnings meant  
 That they might pacify her discontent.

## LXI.

Meantime (and this unusual apparition  
 Produces greater terror than before)  
 They, through the window, made in the partition  
 From Sylvia's cell upon the corridor,  
 Saw bursting forth bright flashes of ignition.  
 The abbess hastes the reason to explore ;  
 And, with anxiety and fear desires  
 To know the meaning of these vivid fires.

## LXII.

With look at once both earnest and sedate,  
 Sylvia replies, "Most venerable maid !  
 "Attend, whilst I heaven's secret will relate  
 "Without disguise, as 'twas to me conveyed.  
 "Yes, listen to thy handmaid's wondrous fate !  
 "'Tis true, the flames which through my casement played  
 "And which thou saw'st, were lighted near this bed,  
 "And from my cell were through the building spread.

## LXIII.

"One day, whilst on my orisons intent,  
 "In flesh and blood Mars stood before my eyes,  
 "But that a god a mortal should frequent,  
 "Created in my timid breast surprise.  
 "To calm my foolish doubts, he gave consent,  
 "To show himself in that immortal guise  
 "The gods assume—and here just now he stayed  
 "In all his glorious majesty arrayed.

## LXIV.

"Great and portentous matters he revealed ;  
 "But what they were 'tis useless to demand,  
 "Because my lips are by his order sealed.  
 "He bad me only give you this command—  
 "Within the caves, beneath this fane concealed,  
 "When night her shades to-morrow shall expand,  
 "You, the arch-flamen, and myself our station  
 "Must take, to hear his sacred revelation."

## LXV.

Struck with her solemn and mysterious tone,  
 The abbess goes, and to the flamen states,  
 The following day, what she had seen and known,  
 And on the strange phenomenon dilates.  
 The flamen, in a great dilemma thrown,  
 At night on Sylvia with the abbess waits ;  
 And both, by Sylvia to the cavern led,  
 Descend to see if that was true she said.

## LXVI.

The night before, when all the bustle ceased,  
 Orontes left those dark abodes more gay,  
 And felt his inward confidence increased,  
 His bold designs with courage to display.  
 He saw that superstition was a beast,  
 Which to his own advantage he might sway ;  
 And, furnished with each useful implement,  
 Next night he to the usual entrance went.

## LXVII.

Fusees he had, which suddenly ignite ;  
 And in a moment (as I said before)  
 Could, through the building, spread a flash of light ;  
 A magic lantern, and a horn he bore.  
 And previous to the appointed hour that night,  
 He scrambled through the aqueduct once more.  
 Then in the subterranean caves he halts,  
 Hid by the massive piers and gloomy vaults.

## LXVIII.

Soon as the abbess, priest, and nun, were seen—  
 Behold a spectre from afar appear,  
 Small at the first, and with a warrior's mien,  
 Which grows gigantic as it comes more near.  
 His helm and shield illumine all the scene,  
 With gleams of light inspiring awe and fear.  
 His sword, two bladed, in his hands he wields,  
 Which every step a flash of lightning yields.

## LXIX.

His eyes effulgent sparks of fire emit ;  
 He shakes his head and makes his plumage nod,  
 And with his splendour fills the vaulted pit,  
 The priest and nuns fall prostrate to the god.  
 He stops, and stamps—recedes a little bit—  
 Lessens, and walks as though the air he trod.  
 And now he seems to go—now seems to stay—  
 Becomes a point—then vanishes away.



## LXX.

The priest and abess fall upon the floor,  
 Their bosoms beat, their knees together knock,  
 And sweat profuse exudes from every pore.  
 E'en so profound's their terror from the shock,  
 They seem like persons sunk to rise no more,  
 Whilst Sylvia, careful lest they see her mock  
 Their terrors vain, is overjoyed that thus  
 Their schemes and wishes turn out prosperous.

## LXXI.

That, which in Vesta's temple caused such dread,  
 In Paris once I saw exposed to view :  
 Where, for the matter of three francs a-head,  
 Phantasmagoric shades from Styx they drew.  
 The vulgar look at what's exhibited,  
 And think the thing with magic has to do :  
 When 'tis a painted glass, a lens, a focus,  
 With rays refracted, make this hocus-pocus.

## LXXII.

At length, recovering from their swoon, they cry  
 "Great god of war! whose wrath spreads terror round  
 "O'er sea and land: oh! speak that we may fly  
 "To execute thy will, as we are bound."  
 At this a voice they hear, as in reply,  
 With deep and hollow tones from underground,  
 And through the cavern bellowing echoes rose,  
 As when a conch marine a triton blows.

## LXXIII.

This was Orontes, who the horn had blown,  
 There carried previously with that intent,  
 And through the vaulted edifice had thrown,  
 From arch to arch, a sound that echoing went,  
 As loud as was the centaur's dying groan,  
 When through his back a spear Alcides sent :  
 Loud as the Minotaur's, who howled with pain  
 When in his labyrinth by Theseus slain.

## LXXIV.

A voice articulate the roar succeeds.—  
 "Let this, my solemn will, no mortal scorn!  
 "Sylvia's my spouse; who in her bosom breeds  
 "The germ of mighty heroes, yet unborn.  
 "Nations remote shall tremble at their deeds;  
 "And splendid triumphs shall their arms adorn.  
 "In her the chosen spouse of Mars admire,  
 "And woe to him who farther would inquire."

## LXXV.

A man, not meaning to speak oracles,  
 May find by accident his words come true.  
 Unknowing thus the truth Orontes tells,  
 The flamen closer to the abbess drew,  
 And whispering said—"Why, sister, all this smells  
 "Of some deflowering business. What think you?  
 "Heard you the strange antithesis he chaunted?  
 "Perhaps e'en now the vine's already planted."

## LXXVI.

And though, from all he just had seen and heard,  
 His blood from fear had ceased to circulate,  
 The daring priest must needs put in his word  
 (Because he styled himself heaven's delegate);  
 And to a god, who said he had preferred  
 A vestal virgin for his consort, state  
 That, urged by zeal, he must express dissent,  
 From causes known and just impediment.

## LXXVII.

"Most potent Mars, more feared than earthquake is,  
 "More terrible than is the pestilence!"  
 He cries, "Art thou then ignorant of this?  
 "Sylvia has made her vows of continence  
 "To the great goddess Vesta's mysteries.  
 "Who with such sacred vows shall dare dispense?  
 "Thy will august, great Mars, adore I must—  
 "But how wilt thou this knotty point adjust?"

## LXXVIII.

Again a voice came issuing from the caves—  
 "Presumptuous man! in all your judgments vain;  
 "Of vows and oaths though mortals are the slaves,  
 "Think not that they divinity restrain—  
 "Whose touch spoils nothing, but its value saves,  
 "Which can, like ley, wash out the foulest stain.—  
 "For Pallas from his head the Thunderer bore,  
 "And yet as sound his brain is as before."

## LXXIX.

The priest, who open-mouthed his words received,  
 With all this jargon felt himself confounded:  
 And both the prioress and he believed  
 (So puzzling to their ears his gibberish sounded)  
 That, like Jove's noddle, vestal wombs conceived,  
 And in some property distinct abounded:  
 So that, when gods had put the foetus in,  
 They e'en were virgins after lying in.

## LXXX.

Then they recalled the goddess Juno's case,  
 Who had the power and skill to do the same.  
 For Flora taught her, without Jove's embrace,  
 To squat upon a flower of unknown name.  
 The germ was sown, I can't say in what place,  
 And Mars was born with nobody to blame.  
 For Nature's laws, if deities so will,  
 Loose their effect, and stand entirely still.

## LXXXI.

When empty terrors, or a strange tradition,  
 Have set their weight upon the human mind,  
 Loaded with dull habitual superstition,  
 In every thing a mystery 'twill find.  
 Reason, no longer pilot, yields submission,  
 And visions vain man's better judgment blind;  
 Thus errors gross, for want of penetration,  
 Become the objects of his veneration.

## LXXXII.

With inward musing and excess of thought,  
 At this strange apparition, quite oppressed,  
 The flamen and the abbess Sylvia brought  
 Back to the convent, honoured and caressed.  
 A separate room was giv'n her, nor was aught  
 Omitted, that might please their favoured guest.  
 But neither pried how she her time employed;  
 For Mars had said she must not be annoyed.

## LXXXIII.

And well the legend old they recollected,  
 When he and Venus had an assignation,  
 How Vulcan's jealousy the pair detected,  
 And caught them in an awkward situation.  
 Electrion's fate perhaps they both expected,  
 Who, as Love's sentry set, upon his station  
 Fell fast asleep, which cost him very dear;  
 For Mars transformed him to a chanticler.

## LXXXIV.

And oh! on what uncertain grounds are built  
 Man's foolish counsels!—Sylvia's pregnancy,  
 Which should have been an evidence of guilt,  
 And brought her by a cruel death to die,  
 Exalts her now on honour's highest stilt,  
 And makes her reckoned a divinity:  
 Nay more, affords her a pretext and cover  
 To oft'ner see her deified young lover.

## LXXXV.

The abbess sometimes testified her wonder  
 How Sylvia's mortal frame withstood the flashes  
 Of Mars's glory; since, by such a blunder,  
 Said she, poor Semele was burnt to ashes,  
 Consumed by Jupiter's destructive thunder.  
 And then . . . . . she added—but the flamen quashes  
 Her doubts; and all her queries, with the knowledge he  
 Possessed, he solved by orthodox theology.

## LXXXVI.

"If in the marvellous you like to rove,  
 "Peruse our sacred history," said he,  
 "Sylvia from Mars, and Semele from Jove,  
 "Demanded proofs of their divinity.  
 "Vain glory both to risk their being drove:  
 "But, though these gods in all their majesty  
 "Appeared to both their ladies, the event  
 "In either case was very different.

## LXXXVII.

"Jove's splendour is an all-consuming flame,  
 "Which mortal creatures never can resist;  
 "But that of Mars by no means is the same:  
 "The fate of Semele thus Sylvia missed—  
 "And so did we—From Semele there came  
 "A foetus: this some sage anatomist  
 "Placed in the thigh of Jupiter to stay  
 "For its due time, when Bacchus saw the day.

## LXXXVIII.

"The gods, like us, have not a dull existence;  
 "Nor are they subject to the laws of Nature,  
 "Which never justifies in man resistance  
 "To her unvaried steady legislature.  
 "Nor food nor drink have part in their subsistence:  
 "Fevers and colds have these no nomenclature.  
 "Into the path he chooses each one strikes—  
 "Is born and acts precisely as he likes.

## LXXXIX.

"The beauteous Venus issued from the main—  
 "Whilst rosy Bacchus from the Thunderer's thigh  
 "Came out mature—Minerva from his brain—  
 "And gold gave Danæ her pregnancy,  
 "A flower was Mars's father; but 'tis vain  
 "To ask what process Juno did it by."—  
 Thus, whilst the flamen dogmas theologic  
 Explained, the pious abbess thought 'twas logic.

## XC.

But who would credit fables such as this ?

Methinks I hear you one and all repeat,  
Alas ! how great's the force of prejudice !

And those who drink it from their mother's teat,  
Will always reckon such absurdities

Divine, miraculous, sublime, and great.  
And though no man his eyes had on them set,  
They universally with credit met.

## XCI.

But you, dear ladies, constantly who go

Bearing the lamp of reason in your hand—  
You, not seduced by mere external show,

What's true from false will cull, and understand.  
Pleasure and usefulness is all (you know)

We should from fables old or new demand.  
And your sagacity will always find  
Some useful moral to instruct the mind.

## XCII.

Fable ! oh thou, who dost o'er truths too rude

Thy varnished and transparent veil distend,  
Who giv'st to falsehood an alluring mood—

Thou e'en hast dared the altar's steps ascend,  
And taken on thee God's similitude.

Deceiving and deceived, before thee bend  
Cunning and blind credulity alike,  
And at the root of true religion strike.

## XCIII.

Oh ! daughter thou of man's fantastic dreams,

Thou mistress of the marvellous and gay !  
O'er darkest legends thou canst cast thy beams

Where reason's foot would hardly dare to stray.  
And in the tomb's forgetfulness thy gleams

Sprinkle the rust of ages with a ray ;  
And those, who know thee for a lying cheat,  
Yet love thee still, and joy in the deceit.

## XCIV.

\* \* \* \* \*

## CANTO THE SECOND.

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### I.

Glad tidings! I as messenger am sent  
To bring you ~~the~~ the delightful news.

\* \* \* \* \*

. . . . —Why what? a child?—not one, but two.

### II.

Pray, ask not who was Sylvia's accoucheur,  
I could not say, because I was not there;  
And that's the truth; yet this I can aver,  
That something noble in the twins—an air,  
From which their future fame you might infer,  
Was plainly manifest to those who were.  
But, if you ask their names, I'm told, the mother  
Called Remus one and Romulus the other,

### III.

At names like these methinks a glorious scene  
Of Roman heroes past your vision goes,  
With nation's spoils, transalpine, transmarine.  
You see the Trojans, Cæsars, Scipios  
Ascend the capitol their gods between:  
Till a new faith the pagan overthrows,  
And then you see a papal throne arise  
For Clements, Sistuses, and Gregories.

### IV.

Besides, the augurs, flamens, and soothsayers  
Forbad the women and the common folk  
To canvas such miraculous affairs,  
Lest vestal honours should become a joke,  
And rumour bring discredit on their prayers.  
For they could read the God's design, in smoke  
Of victims, flights of birds, or bark of dogs,  
Or in the guts of oxen, sheep, and hogs.

## V.

So, when the flamen heard the night-owl screech,  
 He caught the omen. Anxious to dispel  
 The people's fears, he prophesied in speech  
 As strange as priests of Moloch or of Bel.  
 Possessed with frenzy, and inspired to teach,  
 He told the pious the new miracle,  
 How Mars unto a Vestal had descended,  
 And his immortal seed with her's had blended.

## VI.

Visions appeared, contrived by cunning sleight;  
 Pretended oracles to speak were found:  
 And miracles the credulous affright,  
 Not in the fanes alone, but quarters round.  
 It was believed a Vestal virgin might  
 Be big by Mars, yet keep her virtue sound;  
 And hence this birth miraculous imparted,  
 A holy fear to e'en the stoutest hearted.

## VII.

But know you not what cruelty and pride  
 A sanguinary tyrant's heart devour?  
 Amulius, with suspicions terrified  
 Deep in the dungeons of a gloomy tower,  
 Imprisoned pseudo-Mars's lovely bride  
 (Lest people's zeal should paralyse his power).  
 With plausible but villainous pretence  
 Of guarding such a trust with diligence.

## VIII.

Yet still he feared the mob; and, agitated  
 By various rumours and his bosom's stings,  
 His fury never openly he sated,  
 But set revenge to work by secret springs.  
 And (as in authors of repute is stated),  
 According to the style of despot kings,  
 He strangled her, or closed her in a tomb;  
 Since no one ever knew her final doom.

## IX.

His callous breast was equally the foe  
 Of priest and flamen, prophecy and dream—  
 He gave an order privily to throw  
 The twins into the Tiber's rapid stream.  
 But fool is he, who would presume to go  
 Beyond the limits fate shall wisest deem;  
 For, though his minions execute the deed,  
 The children's safety Providence decreed.

## X.

The cradle, made of vine-twigs neatly banded,  
 Went floating down the river with the tide,  
 And harmless bore the twins, until it stranded  
 Upon some meadows, flooded near the side,  
 By much alluvion into fens expanded,  
 Whose surface osier stumps and branches hide.  
 A female wolf came down by chance to drink,  
 And found the children lying near the brink.

## XI.

Persons, who witnessed all that passed, rehearsed  
 The story thus—The wolf her udder hung  
 Close to the babes, and with her milk she nursed  
 The orphan children, licking with her tongue  
 Their tender limbs. A royal herdsman first,  
 Who listless near his flocks his ditty sung,  
 Discovered them, preserved their wasting life,  
 And took them to be suckled by his wife.

## XII.

The shepherd's wife, a little while before,  
 Had lost an infant only two days old,  
 By sudden death; and when her husband bore  
 The orphans to her, and his story told,  
 She blessed the chance; and with the plenteous store  
 From her full breasts she fed them; from the cold  
 Protected them; and fondly vowed that she  
 Would bring them up as her own progeny.

## XIII.

The shepherd Faustus was named; the wife  
 Laurentia; who, by general repute,  
 Was said to lead a loose and carnal life,  
 And exercise the trade of prostitute.  
 In all the neighbourhood her fame was rife,  
 And profits large she gained from her pursuit.  
 And thus her nick-name, Lupa, got abroad,  
 Which means in Latin she-wolf or a bawd.

## XIV.

Sylvia, from jeopardy herself to free,  
 Makes of her spark a Mars, and, by good luck,  
 Is honoured as his bride; and then we see  
 A wench, become a she-wolf, giving suck.  
 'Tis thus religious frauds, whate'er they be,  
 By falsehood lead us and there leave us stuck.  
 And priests their dark manœuvres to maintain,  
 Presume to take the name of God in vain.



## XV.

If men imbibe their tempers from the breast  
 (On which so many authors have disputed),  
 Since nurse and mother both were frail at best,  
 Heroes to make which aliment is suited,  
 Milk from a greedy wench, or milk exprest  
 From a young harlot's bosom, may be mooted.  
 To give my own opinion I feel loth,  
 Unless allowed to analyse them both.

## XVI.

Tradition says, however, near the den  
 To which the she-wolf suddenly retreated,  
 Affrighted by the gazing countrymen,  
 Who watched the children at her udder seated,  
 Where they were left deserted in the fen,  
 The neighbourhood a temple small completed ;  
 And, in remembrance of the children saved,  
 A suckling wolf in bronze was there engraved.

## XVII.

To that famed brazen statue I allude,  
 Which in the time Augustus Cæsar reigned,  
 With veneration by the Romans viewed,  
 Some damage from a thunderbolt sustained ;  
 And yet, in spite of Goths and Vandals rude,  
 Entire has to the present day remained,  
 And in the Campidoglio is admired  
 By strangers, with the love of art inspired.(1)

## XVIII.

Meanwhile the haughty twins to manhood grew,  
 For strength, for valour, and for skill renowned,  
 And, full of martial enterprise, they slew  
 Wild beasts and robbers all the country round.  
 United with a fierce and daring crew  
 From chains they Numitor released and crowned.  
 The barriers of the royal citadel  
 They forced, and by their hands Amulius fell.

## XIX.

When Faustus such proofs of high descent  
 In brilliant deeds and rich endowments noted,  
 He then made known the wonderful event  
 Which marked their birth and origin denoted.  
 The crowd the air with acclamations rent  
 And grandsons they of Numitor were voted.  
 Proclaiming them as brother twins, alone  
 Legitimate successors to the throne.

## XX.

In little time they saw their bands so filled,  
 And such a multitude to join them come,  
 That 'twas resolved a capital to build,  
 Than Alba Longa, or Lavinium,  
 More spacious, and by artists better skilled.  
 To find a site that might such views become,  
 Mount Aventine was chosen by one brother,  
 And on the Palatine chance took the other.

## XXI.

Both Greek and Latin pens the tale consign  
 Unto the memory of after ages,  
 How six large vultures on the Aventine  
 Appeared to Remus, and how these presages  
 Were construed instantly as marks divine  
 Of favour by the prophesying sages,  
 That, at his pleasure, he might, when and where  
 He liked, the city build and name declare.

## XXII.

But over Romulus soon after flew  
 A double flock of these same birds of prey ;  
 And from their flight and noise the augurs drew  
 Prognostications in another way.  
 Hence strife and rancour 'twixt the brothers grew ;  
 But Romulus, who would no chief obey,  
 Contrived his brother to assassinate,  
 And in this manner finished the debate.

## XXIII.

With measured steps thus Romulus completes  
 His power supreme. First, twelve ferocious knaves,  
 Named lictors, march before him in the streets :  
 The people, stiled his children, were his slaves ;  
 A senate of a hundred members meets,  
 Which executes his will, but never braves.  
 Three hundred body-guards he next decrees  
 For self-security, called *Celeres*.

## XXIV.

On all his famous deeds I hold my tongue,  
 How thieves and murderers asylum found,  
 And how the populace in numbers sprung,  
 How, nor by faith nor rights of friendship bound,  
 He ravished Sabine wives and damsels young,  
 And with the blood of guests bedewed the ground—  
 The neighbouring states of which he got possession  
 By ways unjust and acts of foul aggression.<sup>(2)</sup>

## XXV.

When some new comet o'er our planet goes,  
 And in the sky displays his fiery tail ;  
 Upon the earth a lengthened train of woes,  
 And sad and countless miseries prevail.  
 Just so, unless her barrier reason throws  
 Across their passage, heroes great entail  
 Mischief as much ; and, for their reputation,  
 Cost streams of blood to some surviving nation.

## XXVI.

'Twas written in the registers of fate  
 That one with such rare qualities endowed,  
 Of noble habits, piety so great,  
 Should, by the superstition of the crowd,  
 Of immortality participate.  
 That to his honour temples should be vowed,  
 As tutelary god of Rome ; and fain  
 Must I so old a tale recite again.

## XXVII.

One day when Romulus had reached the plain  
 Descending from his palace to review  
 His troops, there rose a sudden hurricane,  
 Where, mixed with wind, the clattering hailstones flew ;  
 Impetuous rushed the fast descending rain,  
 So dense that objects undistinguished grew ;  
 The thunder rolled around, the lightning played,  
 And every person present was dismayed.

## XXVIII.

Soon as the darkness somewhat was abated,  
 And all the fury of the tempest spent,  
 Their founder's absence much alarm created.  
 And when in vain to find him people went,  
 In whispers low reports were circulated,  
 That many senators, from discontent  
 Both at his insults and tyrannic sway  
 Had taken, in the storm, his life away.

## XXIX.

Let monarchs bear this lesson in their mind.  
 He who exalts some subjects o'er the rest,  
 By title or by privilege, will find  
 Whene'er he would their haughtiness arrest,  
 Or re-assume the honours once consigned,  
 That these, disdaining to be so repress,  
 The insult, like the senate, will repay,  
 And, if they can, will take his life away.

## XXX.

But the arch flamen, in whose face appeared  
 Enthusiastic zeal, proclaimed aloud  
 That veiled in darkness he had disappeared,  
 Clothed in a dense impenetrable cloud ;  
 And from a hero to a god was reared,  
 Amid the lightning's flash and thunder loud.  
 "Lo! he that once was Romulus, installed  
 A god, henceforth Quirinus shall be called."

## XXXI.

"Thou, Rome, shalt be the queen of every nation !  
 "Believe my sacred voice, which never lies.  
 "Mars and Quirinus guard thy reputation,  
 "Father and son, both warlike deities,  
 "And to the earth's remotest termination  
 "Shall guide thy legions and thy victories.  
 "If from a single god thy glories grew  
 "So lasting, fancy what they will with two."

## XXXII.

'Tis somewhat strange that from her infant bed,  
 When nascent Rome was yet without defence,  
 A universal sentiment was spread  
 Of what would one day be her power immense.  
 Yet I have somewhere of an abbé read,  
 Who always cried, "I'll be an Eminence ;"  
 And still repeating this, he after all  
 Finished by getting to be cardinal.

## XXXIII.

But Romulus's journey through the sky  
 Resembles it or not—do tell me, pray—  
 To St. Elijah so mysteriously  
 Borne in a fiery chariot away,  
 And carried (Scripture says) we know not why,  
 To wait the coming of the Judgment Day ?  
 But stop! these Pagan matters are not fit  
 To be compared with things in holy writ.

## XXXIV.

And every one, whose faith is but a grain,  
 Knows one fact's true, the other all a fudge :  
 And that Elijah lives to preach again  
 The gospel's faith, ere God mankind shall judge.  
 The Roman's apotheosis, 'tis plain,  
 Is not by prophets vouched for, but some drudge.  
 No one in books canonic ever read it,  
 And at the most four scurvy priests have said it.

## XXXV.

The Roman people easily believed,  
 As much by nature to belief prepense ;  
 Absurdities religious they received,  
 Most wondrous when most void of common sense.  
 And by the flamen's augury deceived,  
 And from his promises of power immense,  
 In adoration of their founder, all,  
 As to a tutelar protector, fall.

## XXXVI.

The flamen's voice adopting for their guide,  
 By bold vaticination ever led,  
 The ignorant ferocious mob decide  
 Honours divine on Romulus's head ;  
 One guilty of atrocious fratricide,  
 The violator of the Sabine's bed.  
 How many heroes good as he have died,  
 Whom yet their subjects have not deified.

## XXXVII.

Meanwhile the power supreme was delegated,  
 In council, to th' assembled senate's hands,  
 Which *interregnum* they denominated.  
 Beyond the Esquiline a village stands,  
 Or stood, called Curi. In it cultivated  
 Numa Pompilius his paternal lands.  
 Him, as a man for many virtues known,  
 And wise and just, they chose to fill the throne.

## XXXVIII.

'Twas he, who first among this warlike race  
 A priestly service for the gods devised,  
 And gave their rites an honourable place.  
 The people's rude pursuits he humanised,  
 Which peaceful habits by degrees efface.  
 And that this revolution might be prized,  
 The wary king considered craft as fit  
 And necessary to establish it.

## XXXIX.

So, feeling what importance is attached  
 To such a subject, often he retired  
 In converse (if historians have not lied)  
 With one Egeria, a nymph inspired.  
 The vulgar always with impostors side,  
 Let dupes in joke or earnest be required.  
 The knave, who cheats the most, most profits still :  
 It always was so, and it ever will.

## XL.

When twilight drew her curtain o'er the sky,  
 Or by the moon's uncertain feeble beam,  
 Numa would leave his palace quietly,  
 Without a guard, without a taper's gleam,  
 To seek his petticoated deity,  
 Within a forest, close by Tiber's stream ;  
 Where, from a grotto shaded and opaque,  
 Issued a limpid stream, that crossed the brake.

## XLI.

\* \* \* \* \*

## XLII.

Thus sacred to Egeria was the cave,  
 And sacred to the Muses was the bower,  
 Where oft a Grecian or a Latin stave  
 Was sung, to celebrate her secret power.  
 There Numa was supposed in converse grave  
 On mystic lore to pass the midnight hour.  
 None dreamed this legislator of processions,  
 Was passing all his time in love professions.

## XLIII.

Men who believed that Romulus had sprung  
 From Mars, and fancied him to heaven translated,  
 Dared not refuse belief to Numa's tongue ;  
 Who, more astute, was much more estimated.  
 With ready faith they to his doctrines clung,  
 And what they heard the people venerated.  
 Both sexes on him cast a fearful look,  
 And Numa for the Roman Aaron took.

## XLIV.

But you, good ladies, think, I'm sure, with me,  
 That these were nothing but religious traps,  
 To catch the stupid mob's credulity ;  
 And, gentle ladies, you are right perhaps.  
 That right you are I perfectly agree,  
 But think you then, these superstitious chaps,  
 Without these tricks and hypocritic signs,  
 Would e'er have favoured Numa's black designs ?

## XLV.

Temples to great Quirinus were erected,  
 And spectacles and games were introduced,  
 And flamens for his worship were elected,  
 Whose words as oracles were next produced.  
 Then Numa powers miraculous affected,  
 And from the sky Anchylia shields deduced ;  
 And in this manner organised in fine  
 The Roman church's pagan discipline.

## XLVI.

For this a kind of rubric he prepares,  
 Which taught the priests their mode of predication,  
 The liturgies, the common form of prayers,  
 The sacred fillets and the auguration,  
 Religious practices and pious airs,  
 And all the forms of priestly education :  
 And when a writer would its merits sum, he  
 Compares it to the book of Deuteronomy.

## XLVII.

If on these matters I have dwelt awhile,  
 I beg your pardon, and will close them here.  
 For think not I the history would compile  
 Of Roman times :—that, ladies, never fear.  
 Such waste of precious moments would be vile  
 On things well known, of which your memory's clear.  
 'Twere better far we some reflections drew,  
 From all that I've related hitherto.

## XLVIII.

In early Rome, as in a looking glass,  
 I see the traces visibly portrayed,  
 Of what in times succeeding came to pass.  
 Thus in the egg we know the chicken's laid.  
 A single hint will furnish us a mass  
 Of proofs, on this foundation clearly made.  
 When Roman power apparently was dead,  
 Then rose up church authority instead.

## XLIX.

If Romulus in Rome dominion gained,  
 To force and arms alone he owed his right—  
 By force alone was afterwards sustained ;  
 By arms alone, his empire reached its height.  
 Numa a method different maintained,  
 Who kept religious sway alone in sight.  
 One king a warlike zeal in Rome excited ;  
 Religious zeal the other king invited.

## L.

If Romulus his power and city founded,  
 From auspices of vultures, birds of prey,  
 His eagles, with rapacity unbounded,  
 Plundered and robbed as greedily as they.  
 And Rome allies and enemies confounded,  
 Despoiling friends or foes the selfsame way.  
 'Till, on the Roman Emperor's demise,  
 We see the Christian Roman pontiff's rise.

## LI.

And if terrestrial arms fate gave to those,  
 Nor granted these the power which they possessed,  
 Celestial arms they can in turn oppose,  
 Leaving a doubt which weapons are the best,  
 Producing, when a pope would crush his foes,  
 Effects more dreadful, scourges more funest.  
 As, from the Vatican when thunder's hurled,  
 The sounding curse frights half the Christian world.

## LII.

If modern Rome no longer has the means,  
 That had the ancient for rapaciousness,  
 Still to that glorious vice her temper leans  
 With courage than her model little less.  
 By Numa taught, from artifice she gleans ;  
 Unarmed, with not a legion to redress  
 Her wrongs, she makes whole nations bend the knee,  
 By ruling thought and mental liberty.

## LIII.

The early Romans took their manly stamp  
 From Romulus, and from his sire suppeted,  
 Which germinated in the Roman camp.  
 The pudic Sylvia, who, by Heaven deputed  
 To bear their founder, quitted Vesta's lamp ;  
 The unknown nymph, who nightly was reputed  
 With Numa to confer—these set in motion  
 In Rome likewise the spirit of devotion.

## LIV.

What pleasure must Quirinus not have shown !  
 Beholding Brutus with his Roman brand  
 Expel a Tarquin from his regal throne,  
 And found a commonwealth. Then oh ! how grand !  
 Mutius to see, who slays a man unknown,  
 For one a king, and burns his erring hand ;<sup>(3)</sup>  
 Or Clælia swimming—or the single glaive  
 Of Cocles on the bridge his country save.



## LV.

Then Cincinnatus, whom a people seeks  
 For their dictator, furrowing his field ;  
 Furius, distinguished for his hairy cheeks,  
 Who Brennus makes his ill-got booty yield ;—  
 Unbought Fabricius, going to his leeks,  
 His country's triumph over Pyrrhus sealed ;  
 And Regulus, the Carthaginian's rage  
 Who spurns, and seeks himself his iron cage.

## LVI.

And more delighted still, and more content,  
 Rome's founder would in spirit doubtless be,  
 To mark her rival Carthage, bound, and sent,  
 Dragged by the hair, in hopeless slavery ;  
 Beyond the Tigris, Danube, and the Trent,  
 Her laws and arms omnipotent to see ;  
 And, or as empire or republic, spread  
 Her limits farther than was ever read.

## LVII.

Sometimes I picture an auspicious day,  
 Some victory, some triumph, some event  
 When songs and feasts made all the city gay,  
 And Rome resounded to the firmament,  
 How Romulus would make a holiday,  
 And all his colleagues pay him compliment,  
 With " Dear Quirinus, what a splendid *fête!*  
 " I'm come your godship to congratulate."

## LVIII.

But, in another sense, as I surmise,  
 The palm of glory we must Numa grant,  
 Who makes in Rome a school of worship rise  
 On bases firmer e'en than adamant.  
 Who finds her, first, things warlike only prize,  
 Yet bids religion arms, at last, supplant ;  
 On Cæsar's throne then sees the pontiffs mount,  
 And monks than consuls thought of more account.

## LIX.

Who sees the cowl the *dibapha* displace, (\*)  
 The augur's *lituus* to the crosier yield, (°)  
 The friars augurs, nuns the vestas chase ;  
 In paragon of oracles revealed ^ 1/  
 By Sibyl leaves, which occupy such place  
 In pagan annals—who beholds a field  
 More ample still, where revelations shine,  
 Made by St. Bridget or St. Catharine.

## LX.

Oh! might I wings upon my shoulders bear,  
 And be of paradise like Gabriel, free,  
 I'd seize the soul of Numa by the hair,  
 And drag it up to that sublimity,  
 Where only true Elysium is; and where  
 Eternal shines that sun split into three—  
 There would I show him, radiant in glory,  
 The Popes, whose actions famous are in story.

## LXI.

"Raise" (would I say) "your thoughts and looks up there,  
 "To him, whose seat, so luminously clear,  
 "Lords o'er the rest—you see St. Peter!—Bare  
 Your head, incline your knee—his name revere.  
 "He was a fisherman—the first to dare  
 "The little cock-boat of the church to steer.  
 "Cock-boat!—yes, then it might be, I allow;  
 "But 'tis a line-of-battle ship just now.

## LXII.

"See Zachariah, who gives Pepin France.  
 "See Leon of the empire make donation<sup>(6)</sup>  
 "To Charlemagne.<sup>(7)</sup> See Charlemagne advance  
 "For Leon to perform his coronation,  
 "Who thus the Hexarch in his power supplants,  
 "And the Greek emperor in domination.  
 "See Gregory<sup>(8)</sup> make Louis<sup>(9)</sup> quit his throne,  
 "Forgiveness ask and for his fault atone.

## LXIII.

"Look—but look not—for sure you never thought  
 "To cast your eyes on such atrocious deeds!  
 "That's John the Twelfth, who, in adultery caught,  
 "With the faithless wife there lifeless bleeds,  
 "By the ferocious husband's poinard sought:  
 "Such cutting anguish his dishonour breeds.  
 "Think of Marotius!—think of Theodore!  
 "Oh! shame! that Peter's keys such monsters bore.

## LXIV.

"Behold—ah! no—the sight's too horrid grown—  
 "Those lubric courtezans their lovers raise,  
 "And e'en their bastards, to the triple throne!  
 "Behold yon naked Pope's enamoured gaze!  
 "Whose daughter's in his arms? it is his own!  
 "But thorns the rose, the cornfield tares display:  
 "And now and then a mole upon the face  
 "Of pretty women gives their features grace."

## LXV.

- " Although most writers on the Revelations,  
 " Where meaning never on the surface floats,  
 " Have always said in their interpretations,  
 " That, when St. John the scarlet woman quotes,  
 " He had in view Rome's foul abominations,  
 " Which thus he allegorically notes ;  
 " Would you for trifles, such as these, despise  
 " A real woman of rare qualities ?

## LXVI.

- " With popes the Devil dares not interfere ;  
 " God's vicars they, and sacrosanct beside,  
 " There's not a dogma in the church more clear :  
 " And hence it is, whenever one has died,  
 " God dips him in his grace ; and (never fear)  
 " Whate'er his sins have been, he's sanctified.  
 " And that's the reason those thou judgest damned,  
 " However great their vices, here are crammed."

## LXVII.

- " Now cast your eyes on Gregory the Great,<sup>(10)</sup>  
 " Shut in Canossa with Matilda fair,  
 " By whose exertions see the Papal state  
 " More ample made, more dreaded everywhere :  
 " Behold him thence on Henry fulminate,  
 " And finally reduce him to despair.  
 " Already Syria feels his crosier stir  
 " To liberate Christ's Holy Sepulchre.

## LXVIII.

- " See Alexander<sup>(11)</sup> rival kings appease—  
 " A method short to end their quarrels teach—  
 " Cut the great globe itself, like Cheshire cheese,  
 " In two great slices, giving half to each,  
 " Just as a father sets his brats at ease,  
 " By halving them an apple or a peach.  
 " See from the Vatican the English Harry  
 " Paul's chastisement with difficulty parry.

## LXIX.

- " See the Tenth Leon dissipate the gloom  
 " Of ignorance ; and, with a single sign,  
 " Learning and arts in new existence bloom,  
 " And Latin, Greek, and Tuscan studies shine.  
 " See fanes and libraries new pride assume :  
 " See palaces to lodge the Papal line  
 " Of splendid nephews, rich from the donations  
 " Of kings devout and superstitious nations.

## LXX.

"Below there, Pius<sup>(12)</sup> see, who raised his lance  
 " (First badly counselled, then assisted worse)  
 " Against the formidable arms of France ;  
 " And how must he his stupid folly curse  
 " Banished his throne, and left to fortune's chance !  
 " But calm thy fears—the Papal throne's reverse  
 " By Bonaparte's hand shall be defaced,  
 " Who sceptres gives and takes, as suits his taste."

## LXXI.

" Now look at those, who wear upon their head  
 " Red caps, red hats (and have as red a glow  
 " Upon their cheeks), red robes, and stockings red,  
 " And red all over them from top to toe ;  
 " They're cardinals, that mother church has bred  
 " As buttresses to save her overthrow.  
 " They form a body full of skill and sense,  
 " And therefore popes are always chosen thence."

## LXXII.

" Next look at those who go in groups and flocks,  
 " Or sit together on their benches rude,  
 " With straps and cords who gird their woollen frocks,  
 " Of saints and canonised a multitude :  
 " Robed some in white, grey, black, with tonsured locks.  
 " Know'st thou their names ? They're monks, and all imbued  
 " With rules St. Francis or Augustin prized,  
 " Or Loyola or Dominic devised."

## LXXIII.

" These, on the surface of the earth increased,  
 " Imposed on every side respect and fear  
 " Both for the friarhood and tonsured priest.  
 " With zeal intolerant and acts severe  
 " They ruled America, informed the East,  
 " And rendered nations subject far and near :  
 " And at their feet not only prostrate fell  
 " The vulgar herd, but even kings as well."

## LXXIV.

" Oh, Numa ! thou, who didst as pontiff reign,  
 " By whom the pagan rites were first decreed,  
 " Upon thy altars bulls and lambs were slain.  
 " But in the Roman Apostolic creed,  
 " Say who can count the hosts condemned in pain  
 " By Papal executioners to bleed !—  
 " The numbers sent by faggot and by flame,  
 " Against their will, to Heaven in Jesus' name !"

## LXXV.

Methinks that Numa, opening wide his eyes,  
 At all these objects passing in review,  
 Would thus declare his wonder and surprise :—  
 “ Compared with cardinals, and such a crew  
 “ Of these immense monastic families,  
 “ What could my *flamens* and *diales* do ?”  
 Yet some may think he was in talent greater,  
 As first contriver, than his ape, St. Peter.

## LXXVI.

But though the men, who strike out new inventions,  
 Show greater genius than who imitate,  
 Yet praise is due to those, the first intentions  
 Who bring by polish to maturer state.  
 So artists, from a scrawl without pretensions,  
 Great beauties sometimes will eliminate ;  
 And what in arts and sciences we do,  
 May in religion equally be true.

## LXXVII.

Ladies, if reading in some ancient book,  
 You meet with all these circumstances stated,  
 They may, perhaps, assume a different look  
 From that in which you read them here narrated.  
 I in a morning gown the matter took,  
 Others in robes bedecked and variegated ;  
 Judge for yourselves which one deceives you less—  
 The morning dishabille or evening dress.

## NOTES TO THE ORIGIN OF ROME.

## CANTO THE FIRST.

(1) The chronology of Livy is followed.—Vid. Lib. i., Dec. 1.

(2) Besides the crime of sacrilegious violation of a vestal, which it was usual to avenge publicly and solemnly, by burying the delinquent alive, other faults committed in the convent were severely punished in private by the pontifex himself, who flagellated the vestals naked in the sacristy, or in some other secret place, with a leathern strap—a curtain being drawn before the door to prevent profane or lascivious eyes from seeing.—Plut., in Num. Pomp.

(3) The examples in Roman history are not rare of flamens and pontifexes who took advantage of their station to seduce and corrupt the vestals who were under their custody and guardianship. Hence it was that now and then Rome was lavish in its praises and honours on any tribunal that brought one of these venerable sacrilegious fornicators to justice.

(4) Whoever is desirous of fully knowing the analogy which exists between the ancient temples of Vesta and our religious convents, as also between the customs, ceremonies, prayers, habits, cutting the hair, and the manner of life and dresses of the vestal virgins, let him consult DU BOULAY, *Tresor des Antiquités Romaines*, in the 15th and other chapters.

CANTO THE SECOND.

(1) Tactus est ille etiam qui hanc urbem condidit, Romulus, quem induratum in Capitolio parvum atque lactantem uberibus lupinis inhiantem fuisse meministis. *Cicero in Cat. iii., 8.*

Hic silvestris erat Romani nominis altrix  
Marta, quo parvos Mavortis semine natos  
Uberibus gravidis vitali rore rigabat,  
Quæ tum cum pueris flammato fulminis ictu  
Concidit, atque avulsa pedum vestigia liquit.

*De Divinat. i., 12.*

(2) Although Livy (c. xiii., lib. i.) and Dionysius Halicarnassus (c. xxx., l. ii.) speak only of the rape of Sabine virgins, here the poet follows the common opinion, that the violation extended to both married and single. And, in truth, it seems difficult to suppose that, in the midst of tumult and confusion, 683 virgins could be distinguished and picked out, as Dionysius asserts, from those that were not so. But perhaps the imagination of the ancient authors, so full of the greatness of Rome, felt a propensity that way, and inclined readily to what was marvellous.

(3) In this passage likewise the poet adheres to the received opinion, that Mutius burned his hand to punish it for its mistake in having killed the king's secretary instead of Porsenna himself. But Livy (l. ii., cap. xii.) asserts that Mutius did it to give the king a proof of Roman courage. Assuredly (according to Dionysius Halicarnassus) the person who was killed by Scævola, instead of Porsenna—and who by other writers is styled *Scriba Regis*—was not a secretary, but a commissary *militis recensens, et pecuniam, quam ipse pro stipendio numerabat, in tabulis referens.*—Lib. v., cap. xxviii.

(4) The *dibafus* was a purple mantle twice dyed, worn by pontiffs, augurs, and soothsayers. The *suffibulus* was also a sacerdotal vestment, in the shape of a mantle, with a clasp at the breast, and was worn likewise by the vestals.

(5) The *lituus* was a crooked stick which the pontifices maximi carried in their hands, and which was succeeded by the crosier.

(6) Leon III.

(7) Charlemagne.

(8) Gregory IV.

(9) St. Louis.

(10) Gregory VII.

(11) Alexander VI.

(12) Pius VI.