PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.
DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Prometheus.

Demogorgon.

Jupiter.

The Earth.

Ocean.

Apollo.

Mercury.

Hercules.

Asia

Panthea, Oceanides.

Ione

The Phantasm of Jupiter.

The Spirit of the Earth.

Spirits of the Hours.


Furies.
PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

ACT I.

Scene, a Ravine of Icy Rocks in the Indian Caucasus.

Prometheus is discovered bound to the precipice.

Panthéa and Ione are seated at his feet. Time, night. During the scene, morning slowly breaks.

Pro. Monarch of Gods and Daemons, and all Spirits
But One, who throng those bright and rolling worlds
Which Thou and I alone of living things
Behold with sleepless eyes! regard this Earth
Made multitudinous with thy slaves, whom thou
Requitest for knee-worship, prayer, and praise,
And toil, and hecatombs of broken hearts,
With fear and self-contempt and barren hope.
Whilst me, who am thy foe, eyeless in hate,
Hast thou made reign and triumph, to thy scorn,
O'er mine own misery and thy vain revenge.
Three thousand years of sleep-unsheltered hours,
And moments aye divided by keen pangs
Till they seemed years, torture and solitude,
Scorn and despair,—these are mine empire.
More glorious far than that which thou surveyest
From thine unenvied throne, O, Mighty God!
Almighty, had I deigned to share the shame
Of thine ill tyranny, and hung not here
Nailed to this wall of eagle-baffling mountain,
Black, wintry, dead, unmeasured; without herb,
Insect, or beast, or shape or sound of life.
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

No change, no pause, no hope! Yet I endure.
I ask the Earth, have not the mountains felt?
I ask yon Heaven, the all-beholding Sun,
Has it not seen? The Sea, in storm or calm,
Heaven's ever-changing Shadow, spread below,
Have its deaf waves not heard my agony?
Ah me! alas, pain, pain ever, for ever!

The crawling glaciers pierce me with the spears
Of their moon-freezing chrystals, the bright chains
SCENE I. PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.

Eat with their burning cold into my bones,
Heaven’s winged hound, polluting from thy lips
His beak in poison not his own, tears up
My heart; and shapeless sights come wandering by,
The ghastly people of the realm of dream,
Mocking me: and the Earthquake-fiends are charged
To wrench the rivets from my quivering wounds
When the rocks split and close again behind:
While from their loud abysses howling throng
The genii of the storm, urging the rage
Of whirlwind, and afflict me with keen hail.
And yet to me welcome is day and night,
Whether one breaks the hoar frost of the morn,
Or starry, dim, and slow, the other climbs
The leaden-coloured east; for then they lead
The wingless, crawling hours, one among whom
—As some dark Priest hales the reluctant victim—
Shall drag thee, cruel King, to kiss the blood
From these pale feet, which then might trample thee
If they disdained not such a prostrate slave.
Disdain! Ah no! I pity thee. What ruin
Will hunt thee undefended thro’ the wide Heaven!
How will thy soul, cloven to its depth with terror,
Gape like a hell within! I speak in grief,
Not exultation, for I hate no more,  
As then ere misery made me wise. The curse  
Once breathed on thee I would recall. Ye Mountains,  
Whose many-voiced Echoes, through the mist  
Of cataracts, flung the thunder of that spell!  
Ye icy Springs, stagnant with wrinkling frost,  
Which vibrated to hear me, and then crept  
Shuddering thro' India! Thou serenest Air,  
Thro' which the Sun walks burning without beams!  
And ye swift Whirlwinds, who on poised wings  
Hung mute and moveless o'er yon hushed abyss,  
As thunder, louder than your own, made rock  
The orbed world! If then my words had power,  
Though I am changed so that aught evil wish  
Is dead within; although no memory be  
Of what is hate, let them not lose it now!  
What was that curse? for ye all heard me speak.

FIRST VOICE: FROM THE MOUNTAINS.

Thrice three hundred thousand years  
O'er the Earthquake's couch we stood:

Oft, as men convulsed with fears,  
We trembled in our multitude.
SCENE I. 

SECOND VOICE: from the springs.
Thunder-bolts had parched our water,
We had been stained with bitter blood,
And had run mute, 'mid shrieks of slaughter,
Thro' a city and a solitude.

THIRD VOICE: from the air.
I had clothed, since Earth uprose,
Its wastes in colours not their own,
And oft had my serene repose
Been cloven by many a rending groan.

FOURTH VOICE: from the whirlwinds.
We had soared beneath these mountains
Unresting ages; nor had thunder,
Nor yon volcano's flaming fountains,
Nor any power above or under
Ever made us mute with wonder.

FIRST VOICE.
But never bowed our snowy crest
As at the voice of thine unrest.
SECOND VOICE.
Never such a sound before
To the Indian waves we bore.
A pilot asleep on the howling sea
Leaped up from the deck in agony,
And heard, and cried, "Ah, woe is me!"
And died as mad as the wild waves be.

THIRD VOICE.
By such dread words from Earth to Heaven
My still realm was never riven:
When its wound was closed, there stood
Darkness o’er the day like blood.

FOURTH VOICE.
And we shrank back: for dreams of ruin
To frozen caves our flight pursuing
Made us keep silence—thus—and thus—
Though silence is a hell to us.

THE EARTH. The tongueless Caverns of the craggy hills
Cried, ‘Misery!’ then; the hollow Heaven replied,
SCENE 1.  PROMETHEUS UNBOUND.  25

‘Misery!’ And the Ocean’s purple waves,
Climbing the land, howled to the lashing winds,
And the pale nations heard it, ‘Misery!’

PRO. I hear a sound of voices: not the voice
Which I gave forth. Mother, thy sons and thou
Scorn him, without whose all-enduring will
Beneath the fierce omnipotence of Jove,
Both they and thou had vanished, like thin mist
Unrolled on the morning wind. Know ye not me,
The Titan? He who made his agony
The barrier to your else all-conquering foe?
Oh, rock-embosomed lawns, and snow-fed streams,
Now seen athwart frore vapours, deep below,
Thro’ whose o’ershadowing woods I wandered once
With Asia, drinking life from her loved eyes;
Why scorns the spirit which informs ye, now
To commune with me? me alone, who check’d,
As one who checks a fiend-drawn charioteer,
The falsehood and the force of him who reigns
Supreme, and with the groans of pining slaves
Fills your dim glens and liquid wildemesses:
Why answer ye not, still? Brethren!

THE EARTH. They dare not.

PRO. Who dares? for I would hear that curse again.
Ha, what an awful whisper rises up!
ACT I.

'Tis scarce like sound: it tinges thro' the frame
As lightning tinges, hovering ere it strike.
Speak, Spirit! from thine inorganic voice
I only know that thou art moving near
And love. How cursed I him?

The Earth. How canst thou hear
Who knowest not the language of the dead?

Pro. Thou art a living spirit; speak as they.

The Earth. I dare not speak like life, lest Heaven's fell King
Should hear, and link me to some wheel of pain
More torturing than the one whereon I roll.
Subtle thou art and good, and tho' the Gods
Hear not this voice, yet thou art more than God
Being wise and kind: earnestly hearken now.

Pro. Obscurely thro' my brain, like shadows dim,
Sweep awful thoughts, rapid and thick. I feel
Faint, like one mingled in entwining love;
Yet 'tis not pleasure.

The Earth. No, thou canst not hear:
Thou art immortal, and this tongue is known
Only to those who die.

Pro. And what art thou,
O, melancholy Voice?

The Earth. I am the Earth,