

THE NEW SANGREAL.

"Show me the Sangreal, Lord! Show me Thy blood!
Thy body and Thy blood! Give me the Quest!
Lord, I am faint and tired; my soul is sick
Of all the falseness, all the little aims,
The weary vanities, the gasping joys,
The slow procession of this satiate world!
Dear Lord, I burn for Thee! Give me Thy Quest!
Down through the old reverberating time,
I see Thy knights in wonderful array
Go out to victory, like the solemn stars
Fighting in courses, with their conquering swords,
Their sad, fixed lips of purity and strength,
Their living glory, their majestic death.
Give me Thy Quest! Show me the Sangreal, Lord!"

He lay upon a mountain's rocky crest,
So high, that all the glittering, misty world,
All summer's splendid tempests, lay below,
And sudden lightnings quivered at his feet;
So still, not any sound of silentness
Expressed the silence, nor the pallid sun
Burned on his eyelids; all alone and still,
Save for the prayer that struggled from his lips,
Broken with eager stress. Then he arose.
But always, down the hoary mountain-side,
Through whispering forests, by soft-rippled streams,
In clattering streets, or the great city's roar,
Still from his never sated soul went up,
"Give me Thy Quest! Show me the Sangreal, Lord!"

Through all the land there poured a trumpet's clang,
And when its silvery anger smote the air,
Men sprang to arms from every true man's home,
And followed to the field. He followed, too, —
All the mad blood of manhood in his veins,
All the fierce instincts of a warring race
Kindled like flame in every tingling limb,
And raging in his soul on fire with war.
He heard a thousand voices call him on:
Lips hot with anguish, shrieking their despair
From swamps and forests and the still bayous
That hide the wanderer, nor bewray his lair;
From fields and marshes where the tropic sun
Scorches a million laborers scourged to work;
From homes that are not homes; from mother-hearts
Torn from the infants lingering at their breasts;
From parted lovers, and from shuddering wives;
From men grown mad with whips and tyranny;

From all a country groaning in its chains.
Nor sleep, nor dream beguiled him any more ;
He leaped to manhood in one torrid hour,
And armed, and sped to battle. Now no more
He cried or prayed, — “ Show me the Sangreal, Lord ! ”

So in the front of deadly strife he stood ;
The glorious thunder of the roaring guns,
The restless hurricane of screaming shells,
The quick, sharp singing of the rifle-balls,
The sudden clash of sabres, and the beat
Of rapid horse-hoofs galloping at charge,
Made a great chorus to his valorous soul,
The dreadful music of a grappling world,
That hurried him to fight. He turned the tide,
But fell upon its turning. Over him
Fluttered the starry flag, and fluttered on,
While he lay helpless on the trampled sward,
His hot life running scarlet from its source,
And all his soul in sudden quiet spent,
As still as on the silent mountain-top ;
So still that from his quick-remembering heart
Burst that old cry, — “ Show me the Sangreal, Lord ! ”

Then a bright mist descended over him,
And in its central glory stood a shape,
Wounded, yet smiling. With His bleeding hands
Stretched toward that bleeding side, His eyes divine
Like a new dawn, thus softly spake the Lord : —
“ The blood poured out for brothers is my blood ;
The flesh for brothers broken is my flesh ;
No more in golden chalices I dwell,
No longer in a vision, angel-borne :
Here is the Sangreal, here the Holy Quest.
Thy prayer is heard, thy soul is satisfied :
Come, my beloved ! I am come for thee.
As first I broke the bread and poured the wine,
So have I broken thee and poured thy life,
So do I bless thee and give thanks for thee,
So do I bear thee in my wounded hands.”
Smiling, He stooped, and kissed the tortured brow,
And over all its anguish stole a smile ;
The blood-sealed lips unclosed ; the dying breath
Sighed, like the rain-sound in a summer wind,
Sobbing, but sweet, — “ I see the Sangreal, Lord ! ”

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

IN the notice of so memorable a man, even the briefest prelude flourish seems uncalled for; and so indeed it would be, if by such means it were meant simply to justify the undertaking. In regard to any of the great powers in literature there exists already a prevailing interest, which cannot be presumed to slumber for one moment in any thinking mind.* By

* "In any thinking mind." Yet it must be confessed that there *does* exist a woful ignorance or negligence concerning De Quincey in quarters from which better things might be expected. Misappreciation it cannot be called, where no trouble has been taken to estimate claims that needed only to be weighed to be truly valued. Up to this time, there has never been published in England a single essay on the life or the genius of De Quincey that indicated even a good acquaintance, on the part of the writer, with that author's works; and in such a case, of course, not much could be looked for in the way of just interpretation. Gilfillan did him gross injustice: indeed, from what he condescended to say of the man, it would be difficult to conjecture that a greater than Gilfillan was there. And, will the reader believe it? in Professor Craik's "English Literature"—a work of great excellence—the name of De Quincey is not mentioned! "Sam Johnson," says Craik, "was the last king that sat upon the throne of English prose literature." Let it be that Sam was a proper king; yet it is just as true that De Quincey was legitimately his successor. First, in the matter of time: Sam died in 1784, and De Quincey was born in 1785, just in time to continue the regal line. What was it, again, that entitled Johnson to kingly honors? Was it learning? De Quincey was as erudite. Was it his style? There is no writer in the language who in that matter may look down on De Quincey.

If there ever was a writer "damned with faint praise," it was De Quincey. Some stupid writer for the London "Athenæum," for instance, dared to compliment the poor "opium-chewer" after the following style:—"He possessed taste, but he lacked creative energy; and his subtle and highly refined intellect was ingenious and acute rather than powerful." This reminds me of a criticism once passed upon Shakspeare by a mere pedagogue, to the effect that the great poet had considerable genius, but very little taste!

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way of notification, there is no need of prelude. Yet there are occasions, as, for example, the entrances of kings, which absolutely demand the inaugural flourish of arms,—which, like the rosy flood of dawn, require to be ushered in by a train of twilight glories. And there are lives which proceed as by the movements of music,—which must therefore be heralded by overtures: majestic step-pings, heard in the background, compel us, through mere sympathy with their pomp of procession, to sound the note of preparation.

Else I should plunge in *medias res* upon a sketch of De Quincey's life; were it not a rudeness amounting to downright profanity to omit the important ceremony of prelibation, and that at a banquet to which, implicitly, gods are invited. The reader will assuredly unite with me in all such courtesies,—

"Neu desint epulis rosæ";

particularly as the shade we deal with can be evoked only by peculiar incantations,—only the heralding of certain precise claims will this monarch listen to as the just *inferiæ*, the fitting sacrifice or hecatomb of our homage.

The key-note of preparation, the claim which preëminently should be set forth in advance, is this: that De Quincey was the prince of hierophants, or of pontifical hierarchs, as regards all those profound mysteries which from the beginning have swayed the human heart, sometimes through the light of angelic smiles lifting it upwards to an altitude just beneath the heavens, and sometimes shattering it, with the shock of quaking anguish, down to earth. As it was the function of the hierophant, in the Grecian mysteries, to show the sacred symbols as concrete incarnations of faith, so was it De Quincey's to reveal in open light the everlasting symbols, universally intelligible when once disclosed, which