

THE CAVES OF SARK

(The island was visited by Victor Hugo during the first years of his exile.)

FROM the roots of the rocks underlying the gulfs that
engird it around
Was the isle not enkindled with light of him landing,
or thrilled not with sound ?
Yea, surely the sea like a harper laid hand on the shore
as a lyre,
As the lyre in his own for a birthright of old that was
given of his sire,
And the hand of the child was put forth on the chords
yet alive and aflame
From the hand of the God that had wrought it in heaven ;
and the hand was the same.
And the tongue of the child spake, singing ; and never
a note that he sang,
But the strings made answer unstricken, as though for
the God they rang.

And the eyes of the child shone, lightening ; and touched
as by life at his nod,
They shuddered with music, and quickened as though
from the glance of the God.
So trembled the heart of the hills and the rocks to
receive him, and yearned
With desirous delight of his presence and love that
beholding him burned.
Yea, down through the mighty twin hollows where never
the sunlight shall be,
Deep sunk under imminent earth, and subdued to the
stress of the sea,
That feel when the dim week changes by change of their
tides in the dark,
As the wave sinks under within them, reluctant, removed
from its mark,
Even there in the terror of twilight in bloom with its
blossoms ablush,
Did a sense of him touch not the gleam of their flowers
with a fierier flush ?
Though the sun they behold not for ever, yet knew they
not over them One
Whose soul was the soul of the morning, whose song was
the song of the sun ?
But the secrets inviolate of sunlight in hollows untrodden
of day,
Shall he dream what are these who beholds not ? or he
that hath seen, shall he say ?

For the path is for passage of sea-mews ; and he that
hath glided and leapt
Over sea-grass and sea-rock, alighting as one from a
citadel crept
That his foemen beleaguer, descending by darkness and
stealth, at the last
Peers under, and all is as hollow to hellward, agape and
aghast.
But afloat and afar in the darkness a tremulous colour
subsides
From the crimson high crest of the purple-peaked roof
to the soft-coloured sides
That brighten as ever they widen till downward the
level is won
Of the soundless and colourless water that knows not
the sense of the sun :
From the crown of the culminant arch to the floor of
the lakelet abloom,
One infinite blossom of blossoms innumerable aflush
through the gloom.
All under the deeps of the darkness are glimmering ;
all over impends
An immeasurable infinite flower of the dark that dilates
and descends,
That exults and expands in its breathless and blind
efflorescence of heart
As it broadens and bows to the wave-ward, and breathes
not, and hearkens apart.

As a beaker inverse at a feast on Olympus, exhausted of
wine,
But inlaid as with rose from the lips of Dione that left
it divine ;
From the lips everliving of laughter and love everlasting,
that leave
In the cleft of his heart who shall kiss them a snake to
corrode it and cleave :
So glimmers the gloom into glory, the glory recoils into
gloom,
That the eye of the sun could not kindle, the lip not of
Love could relume.
So darkens reverted the cup that the kiss of her mouth
set on fire :
So blackens a brand in his eyeshot asmoulder awhile
from the pyre.
For the beam from beneath and without it refrangent
again from the wave
Strikes up through the portal a ghostly reverse on the
dome of the cave,
On the depth of the dome ever darkling and dim to the
crown of its arc :
That the sun-coloured tapestry, sunless for ever, may
soften the dark.
But within through the side-seen archway aglimmer
again from the right
Is the seal of the sea's tide set on the mouth of the
mystery of night.

And the seal on the seventh day breaks but a little, that
man by its mean
May behold what the sun hath not looked on, the stars
of the night have not seen.