

A Dream of Fear

By George Sterling

Unseen the ghostly hand that led,
I walked where all was darkness, save
What light the moon, half-wasted, gave
Above a city of the dead.

So lone it was, so grey, I deemed
That death itself was scarce so old;
The moonlight fell forlorn and cold
On tombs where Time lay dead, it seemed.

Within its gates I heard the sound
Of winds in cypress-caverns caught
Of huddling trees that moaned, and sought
To whisper what their roots had found.

Within its gates my soul was led,
Down nettle-choked and haunted way—
An atom of the Dark's dismay,
In deaf immensities of dread.

In broken crypts where ghouls had slept
I saw how muttering devils sate
(Knowing the final grasp of Fate)
And told grim auguries, and wept.

The night was mad with nameless fear.
The Powers of Darkness feared the gloom.
From sentried sky to anxious tomb
Ran messages I bent to hear.

Mine ears were sealed, nor heard I save
The secret known to Endor's witch—
Whispered to lemur and to lich
From lips made wiser by the grave.

O'er tarns where spectral vapors flowed
Antares shook with bloody light,
And guarded on its haughty flight
The offended fire of Alphard glowed.

The menace of infinity
 Constrained the cavern of the skies.
 I felt the gaze of solemn eyes
In hostile gulfs intent to see;

Gage of whose imminent designs,
 Satanic Armageddon broke,
 Where monstrous vans in blackness spoke
The flight of Evil on the Signs—

Abysmal occultation cast
 By kingdoms of the sunken noon,
 And shadow-shafts that smote the moon
At altars of the cloven Vast!

To worlds that faltered on their way
 Python's intolerable hiss
 Told from the jaws of his abyss
Malign amazement and dismay.

By god or demon undestroyed,
 In malediction sate the stars,
 Concentered from Titanic wars
To cry the judgments of the Void.

Assigned, implacable, supreme,
 The heralds of the Curse came down:
 I felt the eternal bastions' frown;
I saw colossal cerements gleam.

Convoking trumpets shook the gloom.
 Their incommunicable word
 Announced o'er Time's foundations, stirred,
All vasts and covenants of doom.

I saw the light of dreadful fanes,
 I heard enormous valves resound,
 For aeons sealed in crypts profound,
And clangor of ascending chains.