Pagan World, The.

By Arnold, Matthew .

In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,

The Roman noble lay;

He drove abroad, in furious guise,

Along the Appian way.

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,

And crowned his hair with flowers -

No easier nor no quicker passed

The impracticable hours.

The brooding East with awe beheld

Her impious younger world.

The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,

And on her head was hurled.

The East bowed low before the blast

In patient, deep disdain;

She let the legions thunder past,

And plunged in thought again.

So well she mused, a morning broke

Across her spirit grey;

A conquering, new-born joy awoke,

And filled her life with day.

"Poor world," she cried, "so deep accurst

That runn'st from pole to pole

To seek a draught to slake thy thirst -

Go, seek it in thy soul!"

She heard it, the victorious West,

In crown and sword arrayed!

She felt the void which mined her breast,

She shivered and obeyed.

She veiled her eagles, snapped her sword,

And laid her sceptre down;

Her stately purple she abhorred,

And her imperial crown.

She broke her flutes, she stopped her sports,

Her artists could not please;

She tore her books, she shut her courts,

She fled her palaces;

Lust of the eye and pride of life

She left it all behind,

And hurried, torn with inward strife,

The wilderness to find.

Tears washed the trouble from her face!

She changed into a child!

Mid weeds and wrecks she stood -a place

Of ruin -but she smiled!