

**ASHTAROTH, A  
DRAMATIC LYRIC**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649418404

Ashtaroth, a Dramatic Lyric by Adam Lindsay Gordon

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Cover @ 2017

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**ADAM LINDSAY GORDON**

**ASHTAROTH, A  
DRAMATIC LYRIC**



**ASHTAROTH; A DRAMATIC LYRIC.**

# ASHTAROTH;

A DRAMATIC LYRIC.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "SEA SPRAY AND SMOKE DRIFT."

MELBOURNE :

OLARSON, MASSINA, & CO., PRINTERS AND PUBLISHERS.

SYDNEY : GIBBS, SHALLARD, & CO.

1867.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HUGO, a Norman Baron and a scholar.

ERIC, a friend of Hugo's.

THURSTON,  
EUSTACE,  
RALPH,

} Followers of Hugo.

HENRY, a Page.

LUKE,  
HUBERT,

} Monks living in a Norman Chapel.

BASIL, Abbot of a Convent on the Rhine.

CYRIL, a Monk of the same Convent.

OSRIC, a Norwegian Adventurer, and formerly a Corsair.

RUDOLPH, an Outlawed Count, and the Captain of a Band of Robbers.

DAGOBERT, the Captain of some predatory Soldiers called "Free Lances."

HAROLD, a Danish Knight.

ORION.

THORA,

AGATHA,

ELSPETH, a Nurse of Thora's,

URSULA, Abbess of the Convent on the Rhine,

NUNS, ETC.,

} WOMEN.

*Men-at-Arms, Soldiers, and Robbers; Monks, Friars, and Churchmen;  
Spirits, etc.*

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## ASHTAROTH.

SCENE—A CASTLE IN NORMANDY. *A Study in a Tower; HUGO seated at a table covered with maps and charts of the heavens, astronomical instruments, books, manuscripts, etc.*

*Enter HENRY, a Page.*

HUGO :

Well, boy, what is it ?

HENRY :                   The feast is spread.

HUGO :

Why tarry the guests for me ?

Let Eric sit at the table's head ;

Alone I desire to be.           [*HENRY goes out.*]

What share have I at their festive board,

Their mirth I can only mar ;

To me no pleasure their cups afford,

Their songs on my silence jar.

With an aching eye and a throbbing brain,

And yet with a hopeful heart,

I must toil and strain with the planets again

When the rays of the sun depart ;

He who must needs with the toppers tope,

And the feasters feast in the hall,

How can he hope with a matter to cope

That is immaterial !

ORION :

He who his appetite stints and curbs

Shut up in the northern wing,

With his rye-bread flavoured with bitter herbs,  
 And his draught from the tasteless spring,  
 Good sooth, he is but a sorry clown.  
 There are some good things upon earth—  
 Pleasure and power and fair renown,  
 And wisdom of worldly worth ;  
 There is wisdom in follies that charm the sense,  
 In follies that light the eyes,  
 But the folly to wisdom that makes pretence  
 Is alone by the fool termed wise.

HUGO :

Thy speech, Orion, is somewhat rude ;  
 Perchance having jeer'd and scoff'd  
 To thy fill, thou wilt curb thy jeering mood ;  
 I wot thou hast served me oft.  
 This plan of the skies seems fairly traced ;  
 What errors canst thou detect ?

ORION :

Nay, the constellations are all misplaced  
 And the satellites incorrect ;  
 Leave the plan to me ; you have time to seek  
 An hour of needful rest,  
 The night is young, and the planets are weak :  
 See, the sun still reddens the west.

HUGO :

I fear I shall sleep too long.

ORION :

If you do

It matters not much ; the sky  
 Is cloudy, the stars will be faint and few ;  
 Now, list to my lullaby.

*(Sings.)*

*[HUGO reclines on a couch.]*

Still the darkling skies are red,  
 Though the day-god's course is run ;  
 Heavenly night lamps overhead  
 Flash and twinkle one by one.

Idle dreamer, earth-born elf !

Vainly grasping heavenly things,  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

From the tree of knowledge first,  
Since his parents pluck'd the fruit,  
Man, with partial knowledge cur'd,  
Of the tree still seeks the root ;  
Musty volumes crowd thy shelf—  
Which of these true knowledge brings ?  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

Will the stars from heaven descend ?  
Can the earth-worm soar and rise ?  
Can the mortal comprehend  
Heaven's own hallow'd mysteries ?  
Greed and glory, power and pelf—  
These are won by clowns and kings ;  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

Sow and reap, and toil and spin ;  
Eat and drink, and dream and die ;  
Man may strive, yet never win,  
And I laugh the while and cry—  
Idle dreamer—earth-born elf !  
Vainly grasping heavenly things,  
Wherefore weariest thou thyself  
With thy vain imaginings ?

He sleeps, and his sleep appears serene,  
Whatever dreams it has brought him—

*[Looks at the plans.]*

If he knows what those hieroglyphics mean,  
He's wiser than one who taught him.  
Why does he number the Pole-star thus,  
Or the Pleiades why combine ?  
And what is he doing with Sirius !  
In the devil's name or in mine ?  
Man thinks discarding the beaten track,  
That the sins of his youth are slain,  
When he seeks fresh sins, but he soon comes back  
To his old pet sins again.