PAN AND AEOLUS: POEMS

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Pan and Aeolus: Poems by Charles Hamilton Musgrove

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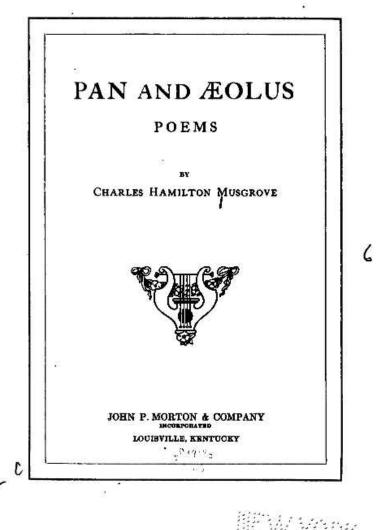
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A FUGUE OF HELL.

I.

I dreamed a mighty dream. It seemed mine eyes Sealed for the moment were to things terrene. And then there came a strange, great wind that blew From undiscovered lands, and took my soul And set it on an uttermost peak of Hell Amid the gloom and fearful silences. Slowly the darkness paled, and a weird dawn Broke on my wondering vision, and there grew Uncanny phosphorescence in the air Which seemed to throb with some great vital spell Of mystery and doom. With aching eyes I gazed, and lol the dreadful scene evolved. Black and chaotic, like an awful birth To Desolation, of a lifeless world! My soul in agony cried out to God, When of a sudden all the place grew calm, Save for the trembling of the mountain peaks And the low moaning of the billowy winds Among the abysses. Dull lights here and there Kindled, like wreckage of a city razed

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By vandals, and the inky sky cupped up Into a black, impenetrable roof. But now from out the chaos there arose Another sound more fearful than the wail Of tempest, or the quake of mighty hills— A mortal cry, a human voice in Hell!

11.

The infernal glare grew brighter, and there came Unto mine ears the sound of many tongues, Mingling discordant curse with bitter cry Of lamentation. On the outer marge Of Hell's domains, set one at each of four Far sundered corners, four volcanoes grim Spewed up their flaming bowels into a sea Of blackness whence no light could issue forth. Beyond this fierce horizon, farther yet Than vision's wing could bear my gaze, I knew Hell's desolate kingdoms stretched their iron wastes, Hell's burning mountains waved their brands of flame, Hell's lava rivers plunged in fury down Their adamantine beds.

The human cry Deepened,—the stunning babel shrieked and roared As though some mighty revolution swept The flying hosts along—some pang too keen For the immortal and transcendent pains Of Hell to quench, was burning in their souls.

III.

Slowly mine eyes pierced through the pallid light That crowned the awful place, and then I saw That which shall not be seen of mortal eye Until the final day. I saw the vast Black concourse of Inferno pouring in From Hell's four sides, and gathering at the base Of a stupendous mountain whose great crest Towered high above the glare, and lost itself In blackness. Never met such throng before In Hell or Heaven. Flowing round the mount Like a huge deluge, from afar they came, And near. A dreadful sound was on mine ears. As when the first great call of deep to deep Broke on the natal silence, or as when The wailing cry of universal death Shall shake the pillars of eternity!

Still came the multitudes, and still the sea Of human souls surged round the iron base Of that mysterious mountain, while afar The dim circumference was added to With newer legions. Conquerors of old, Armored and visored in resplendent steel, Galloped on Hell-steeds, that with one great bound Cleared bottomless cañons; then the kings and queens Of Babylon, shorn of their lofty state, Came abject, and with terror in those eyes

J.

That once outshone the world; and after them, Myriads who reveled at the feast of life, And when the reeling stupor of their wine Had loosened, woke and found their souls in Hell.

IV.

What horrid crisis, then, I thought, can bring The infernal minions to assemble here Within the shadow of this gloomy peak That seems to thrust aloft its fearful head Even to God's footstool? Then as if there came Answer direct to my soul's questioning, A great voice lifted from the throng, which seemed To bear up heaven-high its might of words, Crying: "Thou wan inheritors of pain, Angels and princes, ministers of Hell, Hearken! The day of all great days is come, Commemorative of that legend old Whose prophecy is that when the time has run A million zons out, if God relent, A symbol shall be set upon the top Of yonder mount-a blazing star-to tell That hope is not yet dead. O powers of night, Children of woe and darkness! not again Shall Hell know such a gathering as this Until, if hope be not forever fled, The day of our redemption shall arrive!" The voice ceased and a murmur ran through Hell, A fearful whisper, scarcely breathing, "Hope!"