

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD

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The book of the dead by George H. Boker

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GEORGE H. BOKER

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BY

GEORGE H. BOKER.

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1892

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Beside the spreading Nile of old,
They buried with their worthy dead
A scrolled papyrus, to unfold
His virtues and the life he led.

And all the gods, in council grave,
Asked nothing but this written scroll,
As evidence, to doom or save
The bearer's arbitrated soul.

Grand thought! enlarging on the view;
This winnowed record of the pen
Made truth a right, and upward drew
The moral sympathies of men.

M738283

Man leaned on man for judgment just,
The grave became truth's inner shrine,
And every heap of mortal dust
Was revered as a thing divine.

So I within thy hallowed tomb
Enclose this book, most loved of men!
There, till the dreadful day of doom,
May it repose, but open then!

Book of the Dead, if any see
False judgments in thy earnest page,
Be all thy gathered sins on me,—
Man's vengeance and God's juster rage!

I.

'Tis not my purpose to explain
The truths here dimly set in view;
These hieroglyphics of the brain
Are meant for others to undo.

I hang my painted pictures high,
I paint them ill, or paint them well;
If they say nothing to the eye,
Then I have nothing more to tell.

Thus much, howe'er, to all be known:
The man, of men most loved by me,
Raised up a ruin till it shone
Before men's eyes a prodigy.

And all men praised the wondrous spot,
And marvelled daily more and more;
The only fault was he forgot
To drive the vermin from the door.