

**ARIEL AND
CALIBAN,
WITH OTHER POEMS**

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Ariel and Caliban, with other poems by Christopher Pearse Cranch

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ARIEL AND CALIBAN.¹

I.

Before PROSPERO'S cell. Moonlight.

ARIEL.

So — Prospero is gone — and I am free —
Free, free at last. His latest charge have I
Performed with dutious care ; have sent the breeze
To blow behind the ship whose rounded sails
Now bear him homeward ; and I am alone.
Yet I, who pined for freedom — I, who served
This lordly mind, not of my own free choice,
Though somewhat out of gratitude, — for he
By his strong sorcery did release me once
From durance horrible, — now, since the touch

¹ To forestall suspicion of my having borrowed even any suggestion of the idea on which this poem is founded from M. Renan's "*Caliban*" — though this has a totally different conception from my theme — I may say that I had written the greater part of my poem long before I had heard of or seen the brilliant and audacious satire of that distinguished French author.

And sympathy of human souls have warmed
My cold electric blood, and I have known
How sweet it were to love and be beloved
Within the circle of the elements
Whose soulless life is death to human hearts, —
I, here alone, now grieve to be alone,
No longer linked with mortal loves and cares.
For as I flit about the ocean caves,
Or thread the mazes of the whispering pines,
Or in the flower-bells dream long sunny days,
Or run upon the crested waves, or flash
At no one's bidding, but in wild caprice,
A trailing meteor or a thunderbolt, —
Or sing along the breeze that hath no sense
Or soul of hearing, melodies I framed
For Prospero and his child. — I have no will
To work as once, when serving earned this boon
Of liberty, long sought, now tame and cheap.
For what to me are all these air-fed sprites
I marshalled, by his potent art constrained?
Their bloodless cold companionship can give
No joy to me, now half estranged from them.
There 's Caliban, 't is true — a human beast —
Uncouth enough to laugh at — not so vile
Perhaps as he appears — rather misshaped
And thwarted in his growth. And yet he seems
In this fair Isle, where noble souls have lived,
Like a dull worm that trails its slime along

The full heart of a rose ; and now at last
Free from the foot of Prospero, all the more
Slave to himself, crawls feeding where he lists.

Enter CALIBAN in the distance.

Lo, here he creeps, and looks as if he meant
To enter his old master's cell. But no!
I'll enter first, and there assume the voice
Of Prospero. He some sport at least shall yield.
Ah, sometimes I must be a merry sprite,
If only to beguile these lonesome hours.

[Vanishes into the cell.]

CALIBAN.

So — so — the island's mine now. I may make
My dwelling where I choose. Methinks this cell
Might serve ; though somewhat I suspect
Its walls are steeped in magic. And besides,
Too well my bones remember how that lord
Let fly his spirits at me. How he cramped
My limbs ! The devil-fish o'ertake his ship !
He's far away — and I can curse him now,
And no more aches shall follow. As for him,
You drunken fellow — and his mate — good Lord,
How I was fooled to gulp his bragging lies !
The man in the moon, forsooth ! And yet he bore
Brave liquor, though it set my wits agog.
Would there were more of it. Well, I'll make my bed

E'en here, where Prosper slept. King of the isle —
 King Caliban! But I've no subjects yet,
 Save beasts of the wood, and even over them
 I lack those strong old charms of Sycorax.

[*Enters the cell.*]

ARIEL (*within*).

Halt there! What man art thou? Slave — Caliban!

CALIBAN.

Ah, ah! 'T is Prospero back again — Ah me!

ARIEL.

How dar'st thou here intrude upon my rest?

CALIBAN.

Nay now — I cannot tell — I thought thee gone —
 I saw thee go.

ARIEL.

Think'st thou I cannot leap
 Across the seas? Think'st thou I cannot ride
 Upon the wind? Know'st thou not Prosper's might?

CALIBAN.

Do not torment me! Alas, alas, I thought
 His book and staff were buried — he at sea!
 Ah, here 's a coil — here 's slavery again.
 I'll run, before the cramp gets to my legs.

[*Exit.*]

ARIEL (*advancing*).

Good riddance! He'll not venture here again,
This grot is sacred to remembered forms
'T were base ingratitude could I forget.
Their names make fragrant all the place. They fill
The void of life within me more and more,
And draw me closer to all human-kind.
Much have ye taught me. Thou, O Prospero,
Whom all too grudgingly I served, dost seem
Now not a master, but a gracious friend.
And she — Miranda, peerless in her bloom
Of maidenhood — had I but human been,
What tenderer germs — but no — too late, too late
Those virtues, graces — this proud intellect
That made a sport of magic, and renounced
The sceptre of Wonderland as though it were
The bauble of a child. Too late I see
The topmost glory of the Duke, who shone
Grandest abjuring supernatural gifts —
Most godlike in forgiving his base foes.

(*Pauses in deep thought.*)

There is no life worth living but that life
I missed, the sympathetic interchange
Of mind with mind and heart with heart. This world
Of air and fire and water, where I dwell,
Is but a realm of phantasms — spectral flames
Like the pale streamers of the frozen North;

Is less than half of life — motion without
 Life's warm reality — a trance, a dream.
 Nay, even this slave — this son of Sycorax
 Hath something human in him. Might I now
 But find some passage to his heart, but breathe
 Into his sluggish brain some finer breath,
 But lift him to companionship of thought —
 'T were worth the trial. At least I 'll follow him
 And wind about him with an airy song.
 He 's fond of music, for whene'er I sing
 He listens open-mouthed. He 's not so bad
 But some ethereal trap may snare him yet.

(Sings.)

I, a spirit of the air,
 Now may wander anywhere
 All about the enchanted Isle.
 But no more the master's smile
 Greets me as his door I pass ;
 I shall hear no more, alas !
 Hear no more the magic word
 Of the seer who was my lord —
 Nevermore !

Nevermore my flying feet
 Bring him music strange and sweet,
 Run for him upon the wind,
 While the cloven air behind
 Meets with roar and thunder-crack