Choruses from *Hellas*

*Worlds on worlds*

Worlds on worlds are rolling ever  
From creation to decay,  
Like the bubbles on a river  
Sparkling, bursting, borne away.  
But *they* are still immortal  
Who through Birth’s orient portal  
And Death’s dark chasm hurrying to and fro  
Clothe their unceasing flight  
In the brief dust and light  
Gathered around their chariots as they go;  
New shapes they still may weave,  
New Gods, new Laws receive,  
Bright or dim are they as the robes they last  
On Death’s bare ribs had cast.

A Power from the unknown God,  
A Promethean Conqueror, came;  
Like a triumphal path he trod  
The thorns of death and shame.  
A mortal shape to him  
Was like the vapour dim  
Which the orient planet animates with light;  
Hell, Sin, and Slavery came  
Like bloodhounds mild and tame,  
Nor preyed, until their Lord had taken flight;  
The moon of Mahomet;  
Arose, and it shall set,  
While blazoned as on Heaven’s immortal noon  
The cross leads generations on.

Swift as the radiant shapes of sleep  
From one whose dreams are Paradise  
Fly, when the fond wretch wakes to weep,  
And Day peers forth with her blank eyes;  
So fleet, so faint, so fair,  
The Powers of earth and air  
Fled from the folding star of Bethlehem:  
Apollo, Pan, and Love,  
And even Olympian Jove  
Grew weak, for killing Truth had glared on them;
Our hills and seas and streams,
Dispeopled of their dreams,
Their waters turned to blood, their dew to tears,
Wailed for the golden years.

*The world’s great age*

The world’s great age begins anew,
The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
Her winter weeds outworn;
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
From waves serener far,
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
Against the morning-star,
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
And loves, and weeps, and dies;
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

O, write no more the tale of Troy,
If earth Death’s scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
Which dawns upon the free;
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise,
And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
The splendour of its prime,
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or Heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood their altar dowers
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

O cease! must hate and death return?
    Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
    Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
O might it die or rest at last!