

“ I saw the living pile ascend,
The mausoleum of its architects,
Still dying upwards as their labours closed ;
Slime the materials, but the slime was turned
To adamant by their petrific touch.
Frail were their frames, ephemeral their lives,
Their masonry imperishable. All
Life’s needful functions, food, exertion, rest,
By nice economy of Providence,
Were overruled, to carry on the process
Which out of water brought forth solid rock.
Atom by atom, thus the mountain grew
A coral island, stretching east and west ;
Steep were the flanks, with precipices sharp,
Descending to their base in ocean gloom.
Chasms few, and narrow, and irregular,
Formed harbours, safe at once and perilous—
Safe for defence, but perilous to enter.
A sea-lake shone amidst the fossil isle,
Reflecting in a ring its cliffs and caverns,
With heaven itself seen like a lake below.
Compared with this amazing edifice,
Raised by the weakest creatures in existence,
What are the works of intellectual man,
His temples, palaces, and sepulchres ?
Dust in the balance, atoms in the gale,
Compared with these achievements in the deep,
Were all the monuments of olden time.
Egypt’s grey piles of hieroglyphic grandeur,
That have survived the language which they speak,
Preserving its dead emblems to the eye,
Yet hiding from the mind what these reveal ;
Her pyramids would be mere pinnacles,
Her giant statues, wrought from rocks of granite,
But puny ornaments for such a pile
As this stupendous mound of catacombs,
Filled with dry mummies of the builder worms.”