

POEMS OF JAMES RYDER RANDALL

THE CAMEO BRACELET

Eva sits on the ottoman there,
Sits by a Psyche carved in stone,
With just such a face and just such an air,
As Esther upon her throne.

She's sifting lint for the brave who bled,
And I watch her fingers float and flow
Over the linen, as thread by thread,
It flakes to her lap like snow.

A bracelet clinks on her delicate wrist,
Wrought, as Cellini's were at Rome,
Out of the tears of the amethyst
And the wan Vesuvian foam.

THE CAMEO BRACELET

And fall on the bauble-crest alway—
A cameo image keen and fine—
Glares thy impetuous knife, Corday,
And the Lara-locks are thine.

I thought of the wehr-wolves on our trail,
Their gaunt fangs sluiced with goutts of blood;
'Til the Past, in a dead, mesmeric veil,
Drooped with a wizard flood.

'Til the surly blaze, through the iron bars,
Shot to the hearth, with a pang and cry—
And a lank howl plunged from the Champ de Mars
To the Column of July.

'Til Corday sprang from the gem, I swear,
And the dove-eyed damsel I knew had flown—
For Eva was not on the ottoman there,
By Psyche carved in stone.

She grew like a Pythoness, flushed with fate,
With the incantation in her gaze—
A lip of scorn, an arm of hate,
And a dirge of the Marseillaise!

Eva, the vision was not wild,
When wreaked on the tyrants of the land—
For you were transfigured to Nemesis, child,
With the dagger in your hand!