

**THE SERPENT
ROUND
THE SOUL: A POEM**

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The Serpent Round the Soul: A Poem by John W. Wood

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BY
JOHN W. WOOD.

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THE SERPENT

ROUND

THE SOUL.



Up from the waves the Sun rose red,
To gild the Sabbath day ;
The Winds came o'er old Ocean's bed,
Low wailing on their way ;
The Silvery Groves rang sweet and clear,
With notes that angels well might hear.

Yet lonely o'er the hills I trod,
Long ere the chapel-bell,
With fervent spirit to my God,
The ills of Life to tell—
When, as if God had leaned to hear,
The gentle breeze wiped off the tear.

Within that year my sailor-child
Was lost, where icebergs roll ;
Upon my ear his cries rose wild,
That pierced my shattered soul ;
While Memory would his form restore,
To leave me sadder than before.

To cheer the morn a stalwart swain,
Came pressing through the broom—
With beaming face that well might gain,
Dark mourners from the tomb—
And praised the Summer scene that lay,
So sweetly round our rural way.

Then come, he said, and spend the hours,
Beside the tinkling rills ;
Or list the music of the bowers ;
Or walk the heath-clad hills ;
For Man may woo fair Nature there,
And find a balm for every care.

This heart was grieved, and pained this head,
Within my native halls,
By a strange grief that daily spread,
Like briars o'er fruit-tree walls—
I heard me of your Highland-side,
Where Liberty and Health reside.

And left the World's deceitful fanes,
Where whining Priests may bow,
For Life now dances in my veins,
Peace mantles on my brow—
And why should creatures of a day,
Not revel in yon glorious ray ?

The Christian.

Nay, nay, I dare not spend the hours,
A holy God has given,
In plucking Earth's poor fading flowers,
Upon the way to Heaven—
And soon yon Sun so round and bright,
Will set in everlasting night !

(Thus checked in sin, a flash of scorn
Lit up his piercing eye,
As lightning, from the black cloud borne,
Darts o'er the troubled sky ;
While mutterings presaged the storm,
That raged within the trembling form.)

The Stranger.

A God! away no one knows where,
 Watchful, and sad, and lone,
 High-seated, in the realms of air,
 Upon a golden Throne,—
 Go call thy wandering thoughts again,
 From wildest fancy of the brain.

Than Nature! there is none beside,—
 In vain you bow the knee,—
 No Adam fell,—no Saviour died,
 For Sinners *such as thee!*
 And where's the use your Christ should die?
 And why God's mercy-price so high?

For if a Being good and wise,
 Would raise your fallen race,—
 He had not claimed such sacrifice,
 The channel of His grace,—
 Nor ever made you trembling slaves,
 Hemmed in by gloomy loathsome graves.

Besides, it were too deep a bend,
 For such a lofty God,—
 Too far remote,—too vile the end,
 Seen from a God's abode,—
 Degrading for One throned so high,
 So erranded to leave the sky.

But ah! the Mind of wily Man,
In search of Fame and Place,
Framed and enthroned with wondrous plan,
A Godhead o'er the race,—
A Being with entire control,
Who moulds a World or breathes a Soul.

When, as they could not shew their God,
They placed Him far away,
In realms where mortal never trod,
Or Nature found her way,—
Conceived the spheres of Fire and Grace,
And ours a fallen rebellious race.

The one wrapped in eternal night,
Where tortured spirits roll,—
And one where unsurpassed delight,
Surrounds the ravished soul,—
One yawning with wide hideous jaws,
The other closed with stringent laws.

Set o'er the Earth a monstrous Chief,
Wily in vice and strong,—
To bring Mankind to direst grief,
To drive fair Nature wrong,—
His only study that of fraud ;
His only joy, at war with God.