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NIGHT AND THE DESERTER.  
BY SALLIE M. BRYAN.

"I might forget her melting prayer  
When wild'ring pleasures madly fly;  
But in the still unbroken air  
Her gentle tones come stealing by."+

The stars again, the scornful stars! Oh, Heaven,  
Why let thy cold lights mock a mourner so?  
See how they smile—and I am not forgiven—  
They smile, *they smile*—and *she* is sleeping low!

In gloom, in dust—the dark, dark eye's glad splendor,  
Dim, dim—the lip's warm crimson chill and pale,  
The young, pure *heart*—so tried, so true and tender,  
In gloom? in dust? it is a fearful tale!

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I, the world's idol, I whose praise is ringing  
In princely halls above the banquet-wine,  
I, on whose shrine young hearts their loves are flinging—  
Hearts? *Hers* is dust—and what is earth to mine?

What chills me thus? Ay, this magnolia blossom,  
Given by a fair hand in yon bower's dim light—  
Like one she prest to her impassioned bosom,  
Pledge of the faith—I broke! that fatal night.

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I, the world's idol—wherefore do I shiver?  
Is not the flush of praises burning yet?  
Why gaze I wildly on this lovely river?  
They won *her* from its wave—why not forget?

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Sweet air of night, why is your calmness fearful?  
Far skies, why should your silence madden me?  
Most splendid stars, how can your spell be tearful?  
Winds, do ye truly whisper:—Where is she?

Loved one and lost forever, ay, *forever*—  
Years, years ye will not bring her love again—  
In time—oh, in—eternity I'll never  
Gaze on her once—I know my tears are vain.

Is there no peace? Father, heart-broken, lonely,  
Bowed with remorse I ask Thee to forgive—  
Yes, there is peace—and thou, my God, thou only  
Canst bid the dying to look up and live.

+ A variant of this stanza appears in the poem “Better Moments,” in *Sketches* by N. P. Willis (Boston: S.G. Goodrich, 1827, p. 61). Willis’ poem was widely reprinted in multiple variants, none of which exactly matches this epigraph.