

1849

The Spartan Youth

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Recommended Citation

"The Spartan Youth." *The Collegian* 1, no. 1 (1849).

Available at: <http://scholar.dickinson.edu/collegian/vol1/iss1/8>

The Collegian is a literary magazine published by the Belles Lettres and Union Philosophical Societies at Dickinson College in 1849. For more information, please contact scholar@dickinson.edu.

But thou, Oh Sire, of every gift dispenser,
 Lord of the thunder, cloud-pavilioned Zeus,
 Save us from stupid ignorance and folly;
 Disperse the brooding darkness from our souls;
 And grant us to approximate the wisdom,
 With justice joined, by which thou guidest all;
 That honored thus, to thee we may repay
 The honor due, and hymn thy works, as fits
 The mortal race, in never-ending strains.
 For neither gods nor men, who own thy sway,
 Can higher glory gain, than in fit songs
 To celebrate thy Universal Law.

THE SPARTAN YOUTH.

At evening, when the sun had sunk to rest
 Behind the western hills of Attica,
 Skirting the clouds with tints of golden hue,
 A youth, of talents rare, from Sparta came
 To sip the cooling draught that flowed from Athens,
 Its purest fount. He came to learn the lessons
 Of wisdom, taught by Socrates "The Wise,"
 Whose fame was heralded in every land.
 His heart was full of laudable ambition,
 And much he longed for skill in mystic lore.
 As he came near the city's gates, and saw
 The temples of the Gods, and the green groves,
 Where Socrates the youths of Athens met,
 To train them for their country's use, his thoughts
 Ran wild for joy. With eager haste he asked
 For Socrates; and when 'twas told him, that
 By the decree of his own countrymen,
 He had been forced to drain the poisonous cup
 Of hemlock to its dregs, his sorrow knew
 No bound, his heart with grief was broken up,
 And as he went, he wept aloud. The tear,
 That dared not find a course upon his face,
 Because 'twas thought too woman-like,
 Stole forth from his dark eye, and glistened bright
 Upon his burning cheek. His earnest eye
 Shot forth the flashes of the fire within,

And then again diffused itself in tears.
With indignation just, he turned his back
Upon the place that, in an evil hour,
Decreed the death of her own wisest son.
He sought the spot where Socrates was laid.
As on he sped, the soft rays of the moon
Stole through the trees, revealing a new grave,
And simple stone, with "Socrates" thereon.
His feelings once again burst forth in tears;
And wailings loud, that echoed through the wood
And vale, declared the sorrow deep that smote
His inmost soul. O'ercome with toil and grief,
He sat beside the grave, and bent him o'er it.
He slept—and as the daydawn streaked the east,
He woke not. The world pursued its daily work,
And all around were seen the signs of life.
The herdsman drove his cattle out to feed
Upon the mountain glades; the shout and laugh
Of merry youth upon the morning air
Rang joyously; the notes of little birds,
That seek a genial clime like that of Greece,
Were wafted on the gentle breeze: but still
He slept—nor did his slumbers cease, until
The sun had risen high in heaven, and thrown
His scorching beams upon his careworn face.
He rose, and though 'twas hard to leave the grave
Of him, the idol of his heart, and thus
The many bright hopes of his youth give up,
With heart depressed, and eyes cast down to earth,
He sighed the sad farewell, and took his leave
For his own home in Lacedæmon's land.

THE FORTUNES OF NIGEL.

A FRAGMENT FROM MY COMMON-PLACE BOOK.

"It is now some weeks since I read this novel, and at this distance of time I consider my mind and feelings in a better condition to express my opinion of it as a work than immediately after its perusal.

"Sir Walter Scott's Romance manifests one characteristic by which it will always be distinguished from the fiction of any other author: *an unyielding attachment to feudalism*. Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, in his