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FRAGMENTS AND POEMS.

“ No grave befits him but the hearts of men.”

BROWNE, *Britannia's Pastorals*, Fifth Song.

“ It was gone

Quite underground ; as flowers depart

To see their mother root when they have blown ;

Where they together

All the hard weather,

Dead to the world, keep house unknown.”

GEORGE HERBERT.

~~LE~~
~~5727F~~

ROBIN HOOD:

A Fragment.

BY

THE LATE ROBERT SOUTHEY,

AND

CAROLINE SOUTHEY.



WITH OTHER FRAGMENTS AND POEMS

By R. S. & C. S.

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS,
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Dedication.

TO

EDITH MAY WARTER.

DAUGHTER and friend ! my husband's daughter dear,—

Thou who hast been a very Ruth to me,—

Accept (to thee inscribed how lovingly)

This wintry coronal ; pale leaves and sere,

My latest—last. Some strewn as o'er a bier,

Inwoven some with his immortal bay

Who loved to think that, with the linkèd lay

Fast linked, our names to many an after-year,

Memorial of our friendship, should go down

Tho' far apart we made our bed in death.—

I gather up the scantlings for that crown

Prepared ; the first and few. A withering breath

Hath scattered all beside.—God's will be done !—

And the *two* names shall live—for they are one.

CAROLINE SOUTHEY.



PREFACE.

NOTHING can be more fitting in the way of preface to the first part of this volume—the only part of it which needs explanation—than a letter of Mr. Southey's, which I shall transcribe accordingly.

It was addressed to me in November, 1823, very shortly after my return home from a long autumn sojourn at Keswick ; Mr. Southey being then on his way southward, accompanied by his eldest daughter and two other ladies.

“ November 4, 1823.

“ WE left home yesterday, and are now at Kirkby Lonsdale waiting for weather which may allow us to see the cave ; for, from the time of our departure till this moment, it has not ceased raining. The same ill fortune which persecuted you at Ambleside, seems fated to attend us. The females, however, are company for each other ; they have taken out their work, and the

opportunity is favourable for performing a part of mine, which is to ask you, whether one of those day-dreams to which you have given birth (a very delightful one it is) shall come to pass ?

“I have put up among my papers the memoranda which were made many years ago, for a poem upon Robin Hood. They are easily shaped into a regular plan, and, in my judgment, a promising one. Will you form an intellectual union with me, that it may be executed ? We will keep our secret as well as Sir Walter Scott has done. Murray shall publish it, and not know the whole of the mystery, that he may make the more of it. The result will be means in abundance for a summer’s residence at Keswick, and an additional motive for it, that we may form other schemes of the same nature. Am I dreaming, when I think that we may derive from this much high enjoyment, and that you may see in the prospect something that is worth living for ?

“The secret itself would be delightful while we thought proper to keep it ; still more the spiritual union which death cannot part.

“Now, on your side, there must be no hesitation from diffidence. You can write as easily and as well as I can plan. You are as well acquainted with forest scenery, and with whatever is required for the landscape part, as I am with the manners of the time. You will comprehend the characters as distinctly as I have conceived them, and when we meet, we will sort the parts, so as each to take the most suitable, and I will add to yours, and you shall add to mine, whatever may improve it.

“Beaumont and Fletcher composed plays together with such

harmony of style, thought, and feeling, that no critic has ever been able to determine what part was written by one, or what by the other. Why should not Robert and Caroline succeed as well in the joint execution of a poem ?

“As there can be no just cause or impediment why these two persons should not thus be joined together, tell me that you consent to the union, and I will send you the rude outline of the story and of the characters.

“Direct to me, at Sir George Beaumont’s, Bart., Coleorton Hall, Ashby-de-la-Zouch, where I expect to arrive on Monday next, and remain till Friday.

“Dear Friend, God bless you !

“ROBERT SOUTHEY.”

I read this letter with conflicting emotions. The proposal was most tempting, but a sense of incapacity withheld the free and full assent to it with which I should otherwise have responded.

I dared not say *yes*, and I could not find in my heart to say *no*. So the memoranda arrived, and the rough sketch followed, and in no long time came the writer. Full of his project, full of kindness, of energy, of hope, he did his utmost to encourage and inspirit me, and his hopeful

spirit was at least contagious for the time being, if not altogether convincing.

We talked over *Robin Hood* by my quiet fireside, suggesting, objecting, altering, *disputing* (as it was *pleasant to dispute*), and when we came to the question of versification, the metre of *Thalaba* (for which, in an evil hour, I had declared my preference) was selected on that account, despite my plea that to *admire* and to *achieve* were two very different things, and that I was sure I should never succeed in it. My protest against having anything to do with *battle scenes, and such like*, was more readily admitted, and “*the women, and children, and forest*” were assigned to my management.

So we parted, with a promise on my part to do my best.

On Mr. Southey's return home he quickly wrote thus:—“I told you that before you received my letter I should have returned to my old habit of writing verse before breakfast (at which time nine-tenths of *Thalaba*, *Madoc*, *Kehama*, and *Roderick* were written). I began

yesterday, and have produced what you see. . . . I have not patience to proceed further with the first canto, before I send you this. Now, dear Caroline, go you to work with the same goodwill, and we shall produce something more durable, if not more beautiful, than the best castle either of us ever built—great architects as we have been in that way.”

“Goodwill” on my part was not wanting, but self-confidence entirely, the more I thought over the plan and the versification. To one of my objections to *the subject*, this was the reply :—

“The resemblance to Scott’s *Ivanhoe*, or, rather, the resemblance there to a plan which had been dreamt of ten years, at least, before Scott wrote any of his tales, may easily be avoided. We may make the restoration of his (Robin’s) estates depend upon the Barons’ war with King John.

“I would also, as the poem begins with the infancy of the chief personage, carry it on till his death. You will feel at once what may be made by describing the autumn

and winter of an irregular life, even in its most unfavourable form.

“Do *you* describe how the boy, like a pet lamb that had lost its mother, was fondled and spoilt.”

So, and much more in the same tone, continued to write “the Master of the Spell,” with a few more verses from time to time; and at last, with dissatisfaction, that was almost despair, I sent—my failure; for such I esteemed it. But I had an indulgent critic, and was exhorted to take heart and persevere.

“You must not be disheartened,” he said, “because you have failed to satisfy yourself in this your first lesson in a new school of art. It is what would happen to you in music or painting. That it *is* difficult to fall into this mode of versification I believe, because you find it so, and because one other person, who, though not, like yourself, a poet in heart and soul, rhymes with sufficient ease and dexterity, made an attempt and failed in it. But that it is of all modes the easiest, when once acquired, I am perfectly certain, and so you will find it. But rather

than break the alliance we would change it into rhyme. This will not be required."

"Soon I shall send you more verses," was the announcement, in a subsequent letter. "You have NOT proved yourself '*a defaulter.*' . . . I have more plans for you; for you will not pretend to deny or doubt that you can write dramatically."

In truth I could have wished that that form of composition had been fixed on for our joint work.

The inequality of the partners would have been less obvious and important; and I should have gone to work with a more free command of my own limited powers, to say nothing of being released from the shackles of that beautiful, but to me, impracticable metre.

The promised contribution arrived; and, at our next meeting, I produced a re-cast of my first attempt (with some additional verses), which found favour beyond its deserts; and that poor fragment it is which will be found appended to the longer one by my husband; not, assuredly, in a spirit of self-complacency, but because it is a

mournful gratification to me to carry out, even thus imperfectly, his dearly-cherished scheme. Some few persons there are, who will take a kindly interest in the double fragment and its little story; and, at any rate, that story will serve "to point a moral" illustrative of the vanity of human wishes and the futility of mortal projects.

Mr. Southey's accumulating engagements, and other hinderances (nay-fever inclusive), now interrupted the progress of "Robin Hood," but he kept it ever in mind, and enjoined me to do likewise. "You have a great deal to do; and I have a great deal to do," he wrote, "which will not be done without you. If I have done nothing of late, it is because I have not risen early enough since I commenced invalid."

"When shall I send you more news from old Sherwood forest?" was one of his latest allusions to the fated scheme;—"when the mornings are lengthened enough to allow me light for an hour's work before breakfast. Alas! the days are all too short for my occupations now."

The "news from old Sherwood" came not, but it was still *to come*. Again and again we met, and the pledge was required of me to keep in mind that the scheme was only in abeyance, "assuredly to be completed *some day*." But the evil days drew near, when he, whose hopeful elasticity of mind was, as I have observed, in some degree contagious, so far succumbed beneath the weight of affliction which it pleased God to lay upon him, as to confess, in writing, to me, that "sufficient unto the day was the *labour* thereof." This acknowledgment was *much*, from one whose self-appropriated device was "In labore quies."

The dark hour passed away—"At eventime there was light;" and with returning cheerfulness, and reviving hope, old pleasurable projects were remembered and resumed, under our altered relative circumstances, with a more confident expectation on *both sides*.

"Robin Hood" was shortly to be taken in hand in good earnest; and in the meantime it was our design to publish, in one volume, my still uncollected poems, with

some of my husband's, to be finished for that purpose from the sketches and beginnings in his note-books and among his papers. The fragment of "The Three Spaniards," which will be found in this volume, was one of those so appropriated; and the shorter one of "March" was to have formed one of a series entitled "The Calendar," of which we were to have written the months alternately.

It was a pleasant dream, but a short one. Clouds were gathering the while; and before the time came that our matured purpose should bear fruit, the fiat had gone forth, and "all was in the dust."

CAROLINE SOUTHEY.

BUCKLAND,

March 6th, 1847.

N.B. The legends of "Archbishop Gerson," and of "Abram and the Fire-worshipper," which will be found among my miscellaneous poems, were written for a work to be entitled, "Colloquies on the Church and Church

Subjects," by the Rev. J. Wood Warter, Author of
"The Teaching of the Prayer-book," &c. &c.

I have Mr. Warter's permission to forestall his
publication of these poems, by including them in this
collection.

C. S.



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P O E M S.

ROBIN HOOD.

“ The richest jewel in all the heavenly treasure,
That ever yet unto the earth was shown,
Is perfect concord,—the only perfect pleasure
That wretched earth-born men have ever known ;
For many hearts it doth confound in one,
That whatso one doth speak, or will, or do,
With one consent they all agree thereto.”

SIR J. DAVIES. *Orchestra.*

PART I.—R.S.

I.

HAPPY, the adage saith, that Bride
Upon whose nuptial day
The sun shines fairly forth ;—
That Corpse upon whose bier
The rains of heaven descend.

O ! Emma ! fairest, loveliest of thy sex !

O ! Lady !—heavenly-minded as high born,

That faith was shaken by thy fate
In Loxley's pleasant bowers,
And throughout Sherwood's groves and greenwood glades,
And all along the winding banks of Trent.

II.

For sure, if ever on a marriage day
Approving angels smiled
Upon their happy charge,
'Twas when her willing hand
Was to Lord William given.

The noble to the noble—blooming youth
To manhood in its comeliness and prime :
Beauty to manliness and worth to worth ;
The gentle to the brave—
The generous to the good.

III.

Yet not a sunbeam that May morning pierced
The dense and heavy canopy of clouds
Which poured their drenching stores continuous down.

Amid the thickest shade
The deer sought shelter—not a vernal song
Rose from the cheerless groves.—
Loxley's loud bells, which should have sent
Their sweet and merry music far and wide
Throughout all Sherwood on that joyful day,
Flung with vain effort then their jubilant peal
To the deaf storm that scatter'd it.

The wind alone was heard,
And in its intervals, the heavy rain
Incessant pattering on the leafy woods.

IV.

Alas! the Lady Emma's passing bell
Was heard when May returned!
And when through Loxley's gate
She on her bier was borne,
The deer were sporting in the sunny glades;
Birds warbled—streams were sparkling—new-born flowers
Diffused their fragrance on the breath of Spring.
There was joy in the air,

ROBIN HOOD.

There was joy in the woods,
There was joy in the waters,
Joy everywhere but in the heart of man.

v.

Doubly was that vain adage thus disproved ;
Doubly to all who knew
The gentle lady, happy in her lord
Even to the height of wedded blessedness :
And then so holy in her life,
So meek of heart—so bountiful of hand,
That oft it had been said,
With sad presageful feeling all too true,
Heaven would not leave that angel long
In this unworthy world.

vi.

A mournful day for Sherwood,—ne'er till then
Had that old forest seen
A grief so general, since the oaks
From immemorial time had shadowed it ;
A mournful day for Loxley's pleasant bowers

Now to be left forlorn !
A mournful day for Lindsey and for Kyme,
For Huntingdon ; for all Fitzhood's domains
A day of evil and abiding woe.

VII.

The cradle had been dressed ;
Alas ! the mother's bier hath been required.—
The gossips who had there
For happiest office met
With busy pride convened in joyful hour.—
The guests who had been bidden there
To glad festivity,
Repass in funeral train,
(True mourners they) the melancholy gate ;
And for the pancakes which officious joy
Made ready, never doubting such event,
The arval bread is doled.

VIII.

Woe for that hospitable hall ;
Woe for the vassals of Fitzhood's domains,

So envied late, as in their lord
Above all vassals blest,—
Their lord, the just, the bountiful, the good,
Is lost to them this day !
Earl William, when the Lady Emma died,
Died to the world :—He buries in her grave
His earthly hopes and fears—
His earthly cares and ties he casts away—
The hour which hath bereaved Fitzhood
Hath widowed many a wife,
And many a child doth it leave fatherless.

IX.

For when Earl William found
That prayers and vows availed not to arrest
The inevitable hour ;
He with a virile effort, self-controlled,
Closed like a miser's treasure, in his heart,
That grief of griefs.—His tears,
As if their springs were dry, forbore to flow—
His countenance was changed :

Its anguish and its agony intense
Had passed away ; nor these alone.—
The wonted radiance which enlightens it,
The sunshine of the soul,
The warm benevolence,
Delighting to diffuse
Its own redundant happiness
Which there for ever shone :—
All were departed thence ; and in their stead
A cold and fixed serenity like death
Had set its stamp severe.

x.

Earl William, when the rites are done,
Sets forth upon his journey to defend
The holy Sepulchre !
Short was the notice which was sent abroad
Throughout the forest—“ follow him who list.”
They who are ready, with their lord
Will from the church begin their pilgrimage.
They who remain to set

Their house in order, at the post
 Will join him with what speed they may.

XI.

With less alacrity
 The summons of their dread liege lord the king
 Would there have been obeyed
 Than that sad invitation was, by Knight,
 And Squire, and Serving-man,
 And simple Forester.
 Oh ! call not men ungrateful, if sometimes
 A monster of ingratitude is found !
 The crime is monstrous—men and beasts
 Bear witness it is so ; for not alone
 Speaking humanity disowns the stain ;
 Even the dumb world doth manifest
 That uncontaminate nature hath no part
 In the abhorred offence.

XII.

This day's example proved
 That grateful love esteems

No sacrifice too painful—none too great.
With prompt, unhesitating faith, not then
Repining, nor hereafter to repent.
Wives in their youth were left,
And parents in their age,
And children who required a father's care :
Last blessings were received,
And last embraces given,
And last adieus were breathed from bleeding hearts.

XIII.

Behold the strange procession move along,
A mix'd and mournful train !
First the cross-bearer comes,
Lifting the standard of our faith on high,—
Memorial of our Lord, in whose dear name,
In sure and certain hope,
The dead are laid to rest.
The white-robed choristers came next,
Singing the funeral psalm,

With solemn intonation sad and sweet.
 How pale and dim a flame
 The yellow wax emits,
Where the tall tapers two and two are borne,
 Less by their light descried
 Than by their transient smoke,
Which, fleeting as the breath of mortal life,
 Melts in the air, and is for ever gone.

xiv.

Then on the bier, in serecloths swathed
 And grave-clothes garmented,
Comes what was late the human tabernacle
Of that immortal spirit, whom perhaps
 A sense of earthly love
 Saddens in heaven that hour ;—
A poor forsaken tenement of clay,
Yet in its ruins to be revered still
With human feelings and religious awe,
 And natural piety.

xv.

A pitiable sight,
Behind the mother's bier,
Weeping, as well she may, the nurse
Bears in his chrysome robe the new-born babe :
Sweetly he sleeps the while,
Insensate as that mother's lifeless clay.
On either hand, in funeral pomp,
The escutcheons of De Vere and Beauchamp spread
Their mournful blazonry ;
Behind, for war displayed,
The banner of Fitzhood !
That banner which when last
Earl William hung in Loxley's hall on high,
His happy heart had breathed
A silent prayer to heaven
It might hang idly there,
Till after many a year had filled
Its inoffensive course ;
Some duteous hand might then
Suspend it o'er his hearse.

xvi.

A pious hope—an honourable pride !
For wheresoever in the field
Those bands engrailed were seen,
Sure token had they given ;
That on that side the rightful cause was found—
Sure confidence that all
Which worth and knightly prowess might achieve,
Would that day there be done.
Fair promise and success
Against all vantages ;
And if such vantage made all valour vain,
Even then a never-failing pledge
Of honour and renown.

xvii.

So Trent had witnessed on that famous day,
When thro' his high-swoln stream
The standard-bearer bore his precious charge,
Exulting in such office ; while his steed
Breasting with ample chest

The rapid waters, eyed the bank in hope,
And with straightforward effort won
Aslant his fearless way.
Quailed at that unexpected sight,
The embattled enemy
Renewed their charge, like men subdued in soul ;
And Lincoln, from its rescued walls,
Beheld the brave Usurper beaten down.

XVIII.

So Test had witnessed in an hour,
When Fortune turned away her face unjust :
And Wilton, when again
To the right cause she gave the meed
Of Victory well deserved :
For whensoever to fields of civil strife,
Gloucester the wise, the prudent, and the good,
Went forth, by fatal circumstance compelled,
There was that banner seen ;
A sure support in need,
Then Huntingdon was found ;

In peace or war, in weal or woe,
 The noble Robert's trust
 In that tried friend was placed :
 Brethren in soul they were, whom kindred worth
 Had heart to heart allied.

xix.

Alas ! that banner heretofore
 Had gone forth cheerfully ;
 Boldly displayed with hope it had gone forth
 With willing hearts, and hands alert,
 And glad fidelity ;
 And thoughts of that dear happiness,
 Which, when the fight was done,
 Awaited its return.

In funeral silence now it passed the gate,
 Where loud hurrahs, with joyful augury,
 Were wont to usher it :

And for the clarion's voice, which should have breathed
 Anticipant of victory,
 Its spirit-stirring note,

The deep-toned dirge was heard before—
The horsemen's pace behind—
With regular foot-fall slow ;
And from the woods around,
The descant blithe of blackbird and of thrush,
And woodlark's louder, livelier, richer strain ;
An unpremeditated concert wild
Of joyous natural sounds ;
Which gave to human grief
A keener edge that hour.

xx.

Full six score spears hath Sherwood sent:
Thirty have joined from Lindsey and from Kyme ;
The rest are on the way,
And with the men of Huntingdon,
Will on the march fall in.
Young Ingelram is there, for whom
Lilias is left to mourn,
And deem her gentle heart
Unhappily bestowed

On one who, at the will of his liege lord,
Hath left it now to break.
High-minded youth ! he bears that grief
As deeply rooted in his own ;
Nor will it cease to rankle there,
Till, yielding to the fatal force
Of fell disease, by Syrian suns induced,
He sinks, his strength subdued ;
And from his dying lips
The name of that beloved maid is heard,
In his last aspirations, breathed to Heaven.

xxi.

Not with less sacrifice
The good Sir Gilbert goes—
Better will he endure the hour,
When, like a lion taken in the toils,
The Saracens will close their victims in,
And from all sides against the Christian dog,
Sure of its stroke, the scimitar descends ;—
Better will he endure

That hour of brave despair,
Of faithful hope and death ;
Than when upon Idonea's lips this morn
 He prest a parting kiss,
 And o'er his only Boy
 (A three years' darling) breathed,
 With anguish ill subdued,
His valediction in a last embrace.

XXII.

Look now at Reginald !
There is no heaviness upon his brow ;
 No sorrow in that reckless eye ;
No trouble in that sensual countenance ;
No bodings in that hard and hollow heart :
He, when he breaks away from natural ties,
 Not more obstruction feels
 Than what, upon a still autumnal day,
The stag perceives upon his antlered crest,
 From threads of gossamer,
 That spread and float along the tangled sky ;
 Even the parental tears that fell for him

Will presently be dried.
 Reginald leaves no loves ;
 Bears with him no regret—
 No fond remembrance, and no sad presage—
 Nor doth one generous hope,
 Nor one religious aspiration, stir
 Within his worthless breast :
 For he unto himself is all in all.
 So he may find his fill
 Of animal content,
 He cares not where or how.
 As little it imports
 How, where, or when the inevitable hour
 May overtake him, nor if worms at home,
 Sea sharks, or Syrian dogs,
 Jackalls and vultures share their fitting prey.

XXIII.

And this too, might of Ulpho have been said ;
 And this too of himself—
 Self-judged—did Ulpho deem.
 Born with an iron frame,

His heart had, in the mould
Of that obdurate age,
Received its impress. War had seemed to him
Man's proper element,
The one sole business not to be disdained—
The only pastime worthy of pursuit.
Nor when, beneath the Leech's hand he lay,
And felt the smart of wine
Within his open wounds,
And saw, for so it seemed, the face of death,
Did that sharp discipline
Abate the fiery fever of his mind.
But cooler years had overtaken him,
And imperceptibly
The example of Earl William's lovely life
Had sunk into his heart,
Like gentle rain upon an herb whose root
Retains the sap of life,—
Green when its leaves have withered with long drought ;
And when he willingly obeyed
This day's unhappy call,
'Twas with a hope that, in the Holy War,

He might atone for deeds,
 Which, when they rose again
 Within his secret soul,
 At every visitation wore
 A bloodier, blacker hue.—

There went not in Earl William's company
 A wiser, nor a sadder man that day.

xxiv.

With what a different mien
 Did Hereward bestride his stately steed !
 The cloud that overcast his countenance
 Is but a passing grief,
 The livery of the hour.
 Tears he hath shed upon his sister's neck,
 Upon his mother's knees,
 When, kneeling, he received
 Her blessing, dutifully felt,
 And from a soul which found
 Support in piety,
 Devoutly, painfully, and firmly given.
 Tears he hath shed when girding on
 His honoured father's sword,

Which on the wall had hung,
A mournful relic, since Test's fatal day,
Whereon his father fell.

And when the old hearth-dog
Fawned round his parting steps,
And lifted an imploring look of love,
Tears had burst forth and freely flown.

Yet in those eyes thus dimmed
Heroic hope was seen,
And youthful aspiration ; for this day
Fulfil his heart's desire.

Soon shall he now behold
Strange countries, and the pomp of glorious war ;
Soon on the misbelievers shall he prove
His spirit not degenerate : in the joy
Of faith shall kiss the Holy Sepulchre,
And offering there the accepted sacrifice
Of his accomplished vow,
Return—so he anticipates—to hang
Once more upon the wall his father's sword,
Thrice-hallowed then, and over it the palm
To Christian merits due and knightly worth.

PART II.—C. S.

I.

MAJESTICALLY slow

The sun goes down in glory—
The full-orbed autumn sun ;
From battlement to basement,
From flanking tower to flanking tower,
The long-ranged windows of a noble hall
Fling back the flamy splendour.
Wave above wave below,
Orange, and green, and gold,
Russet and crimson,
Like an embroidered zone, ancestral woods,
Close round on all sides :
Those again begirt
In wavy undulations of all hues
To the horizon's verge by the deep forest.

II.

The holy stillness of the hour,
The hush of human life,

Lets the low voice be heard—
The low, sweet, solemn voice
Of the deep woods—
Its mystical murmuring
Now swelling into choral harmony—
Rich, full, exultant ;
In tremulous whispers next,
 Sinking away,
 A spiritual undertone,
Till the cooing of the woodpigeon
 Is heard alone ;
And the going in the tree-tops,
 Like the sound of the sea
And the tinkling of many streamlets.

III.

But hark ! what sonorous sound
 Wakens the woodland echoes ?
 Again, and yet again—
 That long, deep, mellow tone
Slow swinging thro' the motionless air.—
 From yonder knoll it comes,

Where the grey gables of an ancient pile
Between the forest waves
(More sombrous there)
Are just discernible.
Again ;—how sweetly solemn !
How soothing sweet the sound !
And hark !—a heavenlier still—a holy chaunt—
Ave Maria ! 'tis the vesper bell.

IV.

From the battlemented height
Of the baronial hall,
Slowly retire the sunbeams :
And where they lingering lie
(As in love loth to depart)
On the fair terrace underneath,
Longer and blacker fall the pointed shadows
Of the dwarfed yews, pyramidally clipt,
Each in its wrought-stone vase,
Along the heavy spiral balusters
At regular distance set.

v.

What a strange stillness reigns !

No sound of life within,

No stir of life without :

The very fountain in that trellis'd flower court

The terrace overlooks,

Sends up from the unfailing source

Its sparkling jet no longer—

The leaden Nereid, with her empty urn

Half-buried in fallen leaves, where she lies low

In her green, slimy basin.

vi.

What a strange stillness reigns !

Grass grows in the vast courts,

Where, if a loosened stone falls,

Hollow reverberations ring around,

Like the voices of Desolation.

No hurrying to and fro of gay retainers,

No jostling claimants at the Buttery-hatch :

Hushed the great stable-yard ;

No hoof-stamp in the stall,

No steed led forth,
No hawk in training,
Not a hound in leash ;
No jingling bridles and sharp sound of spur,
And gibe and jest—loud laugh and snatch of song,
And call and quick command
'Mongst grooms and gallants there.
No sight nor sound
Of life or living thing ;
Only at intervals, a deep-mouthed bay,
And the clanking of chains,
When, from his separate watch,
One mastiff answers another :
Or a cat steals along in the shadow—
Or a handmaiden crosses—just seen, and gone ;
Or a grey-headed Servitor.

VII.

See ! to their lofty eyries
The Martens are coming home :
With a strange boldness, methinks,
As in right of sole possession.

How they sweep round the silent walls !
And over the terrace now
Are wheeling in mad gyrations.
And hark ! to that stir within—
'Tis the ringing laugh of a Baby,
That sweetest of human sounds.
“Wouldst thou follow the Martens, my sweet one ?
My bird ! wouldst thou fly away,
And leave thine old Nurse all alone ?” cries a voice ;
And the sound of a kiss is heard,
And the murmur of infant fondness,
Like the crooning of a dove.

VIII.

And see, where the terrace abuts
That northern flanking tower,
From a side entrance—
Window and portal both—
With musical laugh and scream,
And gibberings unintelligibly sweet,
And pretty passion, scuffling the small feet,
A child comes tottering out,

Eagerly straining on its leading-strings,
 From her upholding hand who follows close—
 That old devoted woman.
 And side by side, and step for step, sedate,
 Serious as with that woman joined in trust,
 Paces a noble wolf-dog,—
 His grave eye
 Incessant glancing at the infant Heir.

IX.

The infant Heir!—E'en so.
 In those blue veins, with delicate tracery
 Marbling the pearly fairness
 Of that large open brow,
 The blood of Beauchamp and Fitzhood
 Flows mingled.
 And this is Loxley—
 His father's hall ancestral,
 His mother's bridal bower.
 And as he stretches out his little hands
 Toward that butterfly,
 Its airy flight,

As if in mockery of the vain pursuit,
 Leads on his eager eye
 (All reckless he,)
To where she slumbers yonder,
In that grey pile, from whence the vesper bell
 Resounded late,
Sleeping the dreamless sleep.

x.

Six months thrice told
Have taught those tottering feet
 The first unstable steps,
And with a double row of pearl complete
 Have lined those rosy lips,
 And tuned that tongue
To stammer "Father!" with its earliest prayer.
 "Of such little ones," God hath said,
 By the mouth of his dear Son,
That their Angels do always behold him.
 In the day of battle, who knows
But the prayer of his child may come
 Between Earl William's head
 And the Moslem scimitar!

XI.

For in the Holy Land he tarries yet—
 The good Earl William :
For the safe rearing of his infant Boy
 Confiding under God—
 (God over all)
Whose servant and whose soldier
 Doubly signed,
He doth avouch himself—
To the fond guardianship
Of his dead Lady's nurse,
 Old faithful Cecily,
And of his venerable almoner,
 Good Father Hugh ;
The same who joined his hand,
 In holy marriage vow,
With the lost Emma ;
Who, at the close of the short bridal year,
 Pronounced beside her grave,
 With tremulous voice,
The sentence on all living,
 “ Dust to Dust : ”

And, e'er the clangour of the closing vault
Through the long echoing arches
Died away,
Had dedicated to the Lord
The motherless innocent,
The infant Robert.

XII.

So in forsaken Loxley's halls
Sole rulers they remained ;—
Of the deserted child
Sole guardians ;—
That grey-haired Man of God,
And faithful woman old.
And with a deep devotedness of love,
And feudal fealty,
Ennobled by affection,
And sense of higher duty,—as of those
Who to a greater than their earthly liege-lord
Must one day give account,—
Did each discharge his trust,
According to the measure of his gifts,

And as befitted each
In his own proper station.

XIII.

And much delighted, he,
That good old man,
(Learned, as good,
And as the unlearned, simple),
To share with Cicely her pious task
Of earliest teaching.
And when the beautiful Babe,
With hands devoutly folded palm to palm,
Held up within his own,
Murmured the first short prayer ;
Or all i' th' midst,
With innocent irreverence broke off
Into contagious mirth ;
Or with grave mimickry
Slipping his fair curled head
Into the rosary at the Father's girdle,
Made show to tell the beads ;
Or to lie hidden

Quite lost, forsooth !
I' th' folds of his dark robe,
Then would the venerable man
 Fall into visions oft,
Prefiguring to himself
A time when on the tablets of that mind,
 So unimpressible now,
He should write precious things ;
And with God's blessing, of one noble scion
 Make a ripe scholar,
Aye—a clerk—(who knows ?)
 Learned as royal Beauclerc !

xiv.

Good Father Hugh !
'Twas a right pleasant dream ;
But as the little Robert throve apace,
 From baby-hood to boy-hood
 Making fast progress,
 And of excellent parts
 Gave promise ;
Quick-witted sense and shrewdness—

Noble nature—
Gentle and generous, as brave and bold—
Loving withal, and truthful ;
Yet, sooth to say,—
And the good Father still
Would muse perplext upon that verity,—
Small aptness shewed the boy,
And liking less
For serious task 'soever :
Neither at sight of horn-book,
Or lettered page so fair
Illuminated—beautiful to see—
With large red capitals,
Sparkled his dark blue eyes.
And evermore he failed
To count aright the numerals, all a-row
Ranged in fair order ;
Whereas, strange to tell,
And true as strange,
Let Hubert the old huntsman but fling down
(Humouring the child)
His arrows all a-heap,

And lo ! as at a glance the tale was told,
True to a feather.

xv.

And at his pastime in the Hall, where now
For warlike trophy scarce a spear was left
Propping the dusty banners,
Of every stag whose antlers branched around
He could tell every story,
True, as taught
By that old Huntsman,
Missing not a tittle.

Whereas, of daintiest legend,
Treating of saint, or martyr holiest,
Or sage profound,
For delectation and improvement both
Culled by the Father, and recounted oft
With persevering patience ;
No single circumstance,
Sentence or syllable, could he retain,
Not for an hour !——
Marvelled the good man much.

“This thing,” thought he, “is hard to understand;”

But strong in faith and hope

He kept his even course,

Casting his bread upon the waters,

To find—God willing—

After many days.

* * * * *

THE THREE SPANIARDS.

R. S.

HEAR in Homeric verse the fateful tale of a shipwreck,
Which, in the Mexican Gulf, the Licentiate Alonzo Zuazo
Suffered long ago. I found the story in Spanish,
Told in that noble tongue by old Oviedo of Valdez,
Who from Zuazo himself received the faithful relation.
Strange and sad the tale, but one to be fitly related ;
For it is good for men to hear of bodily evils
Resolutely met ; and when power hath failed for resistance,
Meekly borne ; it is good to hear of moral endurance,
Hope in extremity held ; and when hope could be held
no longer,
Of resignation then, on fervent piety founded,
And by faith sustained, which, tho' not without super-
stition,
Manifested here its strength, and its truth, and its virtue.

Thus it befell Francesco de Garay, the Adelantado,
Who sought to share in the spoils of the golden Mexican
empire ;

Asked and obtained from the court what then was eagerly
granted

In those early days, the command of the Province Panneo,
To be by him subdued. Forthwith a gallant armada
From Jamaica thitherward bound set sail ; but arriving
In a haven of Cuba, he there heard news that already
Cortes, whose grant was unknown, had taken possession.
Evil news to him, for he in this fleet had expended,
Lavish in confident hope, the fruits of his former plunder.
Should he assert his right in arms ?—The issue was
doubtful,

Certain the loss of lives, ill spent for private ambition,
And by the Emperor great would surely be deemed the
disservice

Done to him and the Christian cause : best therefore he
thought it

That he should treat at once on terms of friendly accord-
ance,

Such as might profit each and save the sinful effusion
Of Spanish blood. Whom now should he charge with
this critical errand ?

Grave must the agent be, and one whose habits were
rather

Those of the gown than the sword, yet who with practical
knowledge

Both of the times and the ways of men, could skilfully
temper

Legal and just demands, so gaining his end by persuasion.

Such a man was at hand—the Licentiate Alonzo Zuazo,
Then unemployed, having just resigned the rule of the
island :

One of high repute for his parts, to the Adelantado

Well known, and to Cortes himself an acceptable person.

He, with Diego Velasquez, the governor, duly perpending

What good haply might here be done, what evil averted,

Not for selfish aim, but for this sole consideration,

Took on himself this weighty charge, as bound by his duty

To God and the King of Spain. It fortun'd then in the
harbour

There was a caravel ready for sea, too little of burden,

Somewhat indeed, too slight for the gulf it would have
to encounter ;

But of late repaired and refitted. This vessel he freighted,

Put himself on board with no small part of his fortune,

And from the port of Zaqua took his final departure,
Himself for the happy success of his mission commending
Unto all Saints, but chiefly to Mary the mother of mercies.
Coasting along they went, till they came to Cape St.
Anton,

Of that long isle the westernmost point, which leaving
behind them,

Into the gulf they launched, and steered their course
eastward across it,—

Miserable men!—little deeming to what they were des-
tined.

Many days with contrary winds they there had contended,
When at length at the midnight hour a terrible tempest
Overtook their slender bark, which was now by the billows
Lifted high upon the swell;—anon, with rapid impulsion,
Hurried precipitate down. Now o'er the mast they im-
pended,

Then o'er the reeling bark they broke with a thundering
downfall,

And the dark depths yawned beneath, as if to engulf
her;

Nothing availed the pilot's art, nor the skill of the helms-
man,

In that madness of sea and sky ; nor the sailors' exertions,
Nor Zuazo's remorseful mind, which, collected in danger,
Placing in Heaven his hope, otherwise hopeless,
Put in use all human means * * * * *

* * * * *

MARCH.

R. S.

ROUGH is thine entrance, March ! the Traveller,
Seated at evening by his inn fireside,
Harks to the hollow blast that heralds thee,
And stirs the blazing fire, and to the hearth
Draws nearer, thinking of to-morrow's road.
Old Ocean labours with the incumbent storm,
And heaves his waves convulsed ; the mariner
Beholds their curling heads and sheeted slope,
And when the wet blast and the heavy spray
Beat on him, weary, stiff and shivering,
He thinks in sorrow of the distant port.
Rough is thine entrance, March ! but welcome thou,
The harbinger of Spring.

The noontide walk
Not undelightful now, though thro' the wood,

The greenwood lingering still, no gentle gale
Around the foliage of o'erhanging boughs
Melodious moves : what though the vernal mead
No rich profusion spreads of golden flowers
That laugh luxuriant in the summer sun,
Yet o'er the sober green the willing eye
Dwells with a tranquil joy : what though the grove
Lifts not its leafy honours now, adorned
With mid-year freshness, or the many hues
Of autumn ; pleasant is it to behold
The grey ash spreading wide its naked arms ;
The beech, beneath whose red, dry, rustling leaves
Bursts the young bud secure, or the broad elm,
Thro' all whose infinite branching the new sap
Flows first revived and brightens the brown bud.
Pleasant the earlier dawn, the warmer ray
Of noon, the evening twilight's lengthening hour.
Rough is thine entrance, March ! yet welcome thou.
We know the better season draweth nigh,
And welcome the rude winds that herald it.

* * * * *

THE EVENING WALK.

“ Those who have laid the harp aside,
And turned to idler things,
From very restlessness have tried
The loose and dusty strings,
And catching back some favourite strain,
Run with it o'er the chords again.”

W. S. LANDOR.

My lonely ramble yester-eve I took,
Along that pleasant path that by the brook
(Skirting its flowery margin) winds away
Through fields all fragrant now with new-mown hay.
I could not choose but linger as I went,
A willing idler ; with a child's content,
Gathering the wild-flowers, on that streamlet's edge,
Spared by the mower's scythe ; a fringing ledge
Of spiky purple ; epilobium tall,
Veronicas, and cuplike coronal

Of golden crowsfoot ; waving meadow-sweet,
And wilding rose, that dipt the stream to meet.

And that small brook, so shallow and so clear !
The mother-ewe, without a mother's fear,
Led her young lamb from off the shelving brink,
Firm in the midway stream to stand and drink.
'Twas pleasant, as it dipp'd and gazed, to see
Its wonder at the wat'ry mimicry ;
As here and there, the ripple glancing by,
Imaged an up-drawn foot—a round black eye,
Wide staring ; and a nose, to meet his own
That seem'd advancing from below. Anon,
From the dark hollow of a little cove,
By an old oak-root, richly groin'd above,
Where lay the gather'd waters still and deep,
A vaulted well : e'en thence there seems to peep
A round white staring face, that starts away
As he himself starts back in quick dismay.—
Again advancing, with a bolder stare,
He butts defiance. Lo ! it meets him there,
And answers threat with threat. He stands at bay,

Perplex'd ; and ripe for warfare or for play.
Who had not loiter'd, gazed, and smiled like me,
Pleased with the pretty wanton's antic glee ?
And cried, " O Nature ! " from a thankful heart,
" How graceful, and how beautiful thou art ! "
But all around me in that pleasant place,
Was rife with beauty, harmony, and grace.
The glow of sunset mantled earth and sky—
The evening breeze came softly shivering by,
Laden with incense. 'Mongst the tedded hay,
The fresh-discover'd carpet, emerald green,
Outspread its velvet softness ; sight, I ween,
Tempting, to wistful gaze of lowing kine,
That in their stale, embrownèd pastures pine,
Loathing and restless ; and impatient wait
The tardy opening of that barrier gate.
The mower's whetstone there abandon'd thrown ;
Silent his whistling scythe—himself was gone ;
But gamesome Echo, as he trudged away,
Caught up the burden of his rustic lay ;—
Then, as the doubled cadence died remote,
From an old thorn-bush near, came dropping out

A sweeter strain ; so tremulously low
At first, as if the very soul of wo
Wail'd in its music : but that dying close
Melted in air, and, on the fall, arose
A burst of rapture, swelling clear and strong,
In all the wild exuberance of song.—
Methought, as all unseen I hearken'd nigh,
The little minstrel sang exultingly,—
“ Man to his home is gone, and leaveth free
The weary world at last, to peace and me.”

Peace ! peace ! but not all peace.—E'en there was heard
The voice of mourning : a bereaved bird
(Ah ! piteous contrast to that minstrel blithe)
Hover'd about the spot, where late the scythe
Wide sweeping, had to prying eyes reveal'd
Her lowly nest—so cunningly conceal'd.
There, by rude hands displaced and scatter'd, lay
The downy cradle of her young ; and they,
The callow nurselings, they with chirpings shrill,
And quivering pinions, from her loaded bill
That late received their portions—where were they ?

Gone—in close wiry cell to pine away,
Where never parent bird's returning strain
Shall wake them up to life and love again.

So—loitering—lingering—musing as I went,
Homeward at last my devious steps I bent,
(Leaving the meadows), by the forest road
That skirts the common. Many a neat abode,
Dwelling of rural industry, I pass'd,
And little fields and gardens, from the waste
Cribb'd, long and narrow. Oh! invidious eye,
That passeth not these poor encroachments by
With look *averted*, if it may not see
In strictness of judicial trust; or free
To gaze unharmed on the poor man's toil
That blesseth not the increase of the soil.

Stirring with life was every cottage door,
The humble owner there (his labour o'er)
Stood in the sunset, watching down the west
The round, red orb descending. To his breast,
One hugg'd a little infant: one, with knife

Of clumsy fashion, for the neat good-wife
Wrought some rude implement ; or made repair,
In the old milking stool, or crazy chair.
One stood intently poring o'er the styer
Where munch'd his pig ; with calculating eye
Measuring its growth, and counting o'er and o'er,
How much the profits of so many score.
And many a one still found some task to do
In his small garden ; and perform'd it too
With cheerful heart, as if such toil were play,
After the heat and burden of the day.
And many a one, as close I pass'd him by,
Bade me " good night " with rustic courtesy.
A homely salutation ! that to me
Endeareth evening : seemeth then to be
(So oft I've thought) a kindlier sympathy
'Twixt all God's creatures. Should I reason WHY,
Vain were the attempt. I only feel 'tis so—
Yet one perhaps of deeper search might show
The source whence those mysterious feelings flow.

Is it perchance, as darkness draweth nigh,

Type of the grave, where soon we all shall lie ;
And sleep, the type of death, comes stealing on,
When, all our strength and all our cunning gone,
The strongest sinews and the wisest head
Shall lie alike defenceless as the dead ?
Is it that *then*, by some mysterious cause,
Man toward man in closer union draws ?
That then, perhaps, as in the dying hour,
Distinctions fade, of rank, and wealth, and power,
And human hearts instinctively confess
The mutual bond of mutual helplessness,
Mutual dependence—ay, of great and small—
On one—the God and Father of us all.

Slowly the straggling cottagers I past,
Still homeward wending, till I reach'd at last
(There was I ever wont to stand and gaze)
A lonely dwelling, that in bygone days,
But two years back, or little more, had been
The neatest tenement on Rushbrook Green.
A better sort of cottage, it contain'd
Two upper rooms, whose windows, lattice-paned,

Peer'd through the thatch, and overhanging leaves
Of a young vine. On one side, from the eaves
Sloped down—addition trim of later date—
A long, low penthouse; oft with heart elate
Eyed by the builder.—“There for sure,” said he,
“When winter comes, how snug our cow will be.”
And the goodwife, like fashionable wives,
Had her own pin-money. Her straw-roof'd hives,
Ranged all a-row against the southern wall,
Yielded in prosperous seasons, at the fall,
Such profits as she spread with honest pride
Before her well-pleased partner. Then, beside,
She had her private treasure, hoarded up
For Christmas holiday; a sparkling cup
Of rich brown mead, a neighbour's heart to cheer
On winter evenings; and throughout the year
For passing guest, a kindly-proffer'd treat
Of mild metheglin—mild, and pale, and sweet.

There was no garden kept like Isaac Rae's.
Soon after sunrise in the longest days,
And in the twilight—his hard taskwork done—

(His long day's labours in the summer sun,)
 There might you see him, toiling, toiling on,
 Till every fading streak of day was gone.
 'Tis true, no garden could with Isaac's vie
 Round all the common ; cramm'd so curiously,
 And yet so neat and fruitful. Then the *wall*—
 For *hedge* it were almost a sin to call
 The living rampart—*that* was Isaac's pride ;
 And there he clipt and clipt, and spied and spied,
 That from the quick-set line, so straight and true,
 No vagrant twig should straggle into view.

There were no children kept like Isaac Rae's,
 And he had seven. “ Well, my Phœbe says,”
 Himself once told me just three years agone,
 Presenting proud his last-born little one—
 “ She says—the Lord sends hungry mouths, 'tis true,
 But then he sends the meat to fill them too,
 For we have never wanted, thanks to him !
 Nor sha'n't, while Isaac Rae has life and limb
 To labour for them ; nor it sha'n't be said
 His children ever broke the parish bread ;

Not while the Lord is good to us, and still
Gives me the strength to labour, with the will."

The will continued,—but the strength,—alas!
There came a painful accident to pass.
His master's team, for many years the same
His voice had guided, every horse by name,
Like household dogs, accustom'd to obey
Its tones familiar, one unlucky day
Startled to sudden madness, broke away
From all command; and struggling to restrain
Their headlong progress—struggling all in vain—
His footing fail'd—he fell—and he was gone—
Right o'er his chest the wheel came crushing on.
And yet he lived and lived. Oh, lingering death!
How terrible thou art, when every breath
Is drawn with painful gasp; and some poor heart
Of mother, child, or wife, for every start
That shakes the sufferer, feels a deadlier throe—
Feels, as I've heard poor Phœbe say, as though
Each time a drop of blood were wrung from thence.
It was the will of All-wise Providence

That Isaac long should linger in his pain,
Yet never known to murmur or complain,
N—onor to wish the tedious time away,
Was he, while helpless on his bed he lay,
Nor one impatient, fretful word to say,
Helpless and hopeless—yet, a little space
Hope faintly dawn'd. In the kind surgeon's face,
(A man of kind and Christian heart was he,)
The ever-watchful wife was quick to see
A changed expression, but she dared not say
“Is there a hope?” lest it should fade away,
That blessed gleam! and leave her dark once more:
So she was mute, but follow'd to the door
With asking eyes.—He (kindly cautious) said—
“There *is* a chance—but——” so unfinished
Leaving the sentence. 'Tis a cruel task
To look discouragement on eyes that ask
Only for leave to hope,—a hard one, too,
Having permitted hope, to keep in view,
Dashing her timid joy, the spectre fear.
At length they whisper'd in the poor man's ear
That *he might live*. He only shook his head.

But when a low consulting reach'd his bed
About the county hospital—how there
Patients were treated with the kindest care—
How all that medicine, all that skill could do
Was done for them—and how they were brought through
The tedious time of slow recovery,
Better than in their own poor homes could be ;
Then lifted he his feeble voice to say,
“ Send me not there—Oh ! send me not away
From my poor home—my true and tender wife,
And loving little ones, to end my life
In a strange place, with all strange faces near :
My father and my mother both died here—
Here in this very room in peace they died,
And sleep in our own churchyard side by side ;
And I shall soon be with them where they lie ;
Send me not hence in a strange place to die !
I shall not linger long—'twill soon be past—
Oh ! let me see my children to the last.”

He had his wish—they sent him not away ;
So there upon his own poor bed he lay

Yet a few weeks, awaiting his release ;
And there at last he closed his eyes in peace.
In *Christian peace* he yielded up his breath,
But oh ! *for him* there *was* a sting in death—
His wife ! his little ones !—and they were seven,
All helpless infants. . . But for trust in heaven,
Trust in *His* word who sayeth—“ Leave to me
Thy fatherless children,” great assuredly
The dying father’s parting pang had been.
I saw the widow ere the closing scene,
The funeral, was over. There she sate
(’Twas on Sabbath morning) calm, sedate,
Composed and neat, as she had ever been
On the Lord’s day, when I so oft had seen
Her and her husband, and their eldest three,
Hastening to church : and now prepared was she
And her seven orphans, all in decent show
Of humble mourning that same path to go,
Following the father’s coffin. They were there,
The little creatures ! huddling round her chair,
Troubled and mute, with eyes upon her face
(Some tearful) fix’d, and all as if to trace

Its meekly mournful meaning : all save he,
The youngest Innocent : upon her knee
He clamber'd up, and crow'd with baby glee,
And stroked her face, and lisp'd his father's name.
Then might be seen, convulsive through her frame,
A universal shudder : nor alone
Struck to *her* heart the call :—a wailing moan
Among the elder orphans rose, and one
(The boy of whom his father was so proud)
Fell on his mother's neck, and wept aloud.
Her eyes were misty—but no tears she shed,
Kissing with quivering lips the boy's fair head,
As on her breast (the face conceal'd) it lay.
And then, to all around, who came to pay
(Neighbours and friends) to the respected dead
Their last sad tribute, some few words she said
Of thankfulness to each, and spoke of *him*
Calmly : while many an eye with tears grew dim.

The funeral moved :—and through the humble door
He pass'd, who left it to return no more.
Against the side part, as 'twas carried by,
They jarr'd the coffin :—then a stifled cry

Escaped the widow, and a sign, as though
From that insensate form, to ward the blow
She felt upon her heart : a moment all
In silence stopt, while one arranged the pall ;
Then sounded slow the bearers' heavy tread,
As to his last long home they bore the dead.
The staff and stay of all the house was gone,
And evil days came darkly hurrying on ;
And yet with all the energy of love
(A widow'd mother's !) that lone woman strove
(The poor have little leisure for their grief)
To feed her little ones without relief
Of parish pittance.—“ He would grieve,” she thought,
“ To know his wife and babes so low were brought.
The hand is cold that toil'd for us, 'tis true ;
But I can still work hard ; and Jemmy too
Grows helpful, and he'll earn a trifle soon
T'ward his own keep. The cottage is our own.
And for the garden . . . I can dig there now,
Tho' not like him indeed ;—and then one cow” . . .
But then she stopt and sigh'd. Alas ! she knew
There was a heavy debt ; contracted, too,

To a hard creditor, of whom 'twas known
That he severely reckoned for his own.
“But then,” thought she, “it may not all be true
Folks tell of him; and when I humbly sue
Only for patience—for a longer day,
He will not take my children’s bread away.”
Thou hadst to learn sad truth, poor simple one!
How ten times harder than the hard flint stone
That human heart may be, whose god is gold.
The prayer was spurn’d—the widow’s cow was sold.

That stroke fell heavy; but it crush’d not quite
The noble spirit that still kept in sight
Its faithful purpose. “All’s not gone,” she said;
“Their father’s words upon his dying bed
Were—‘Phœbe! keep them from the workhouse walls
Whilst thou hast strength. There’s not a sparrow falls
But *One* above takes note thereof; and He
Will not forsake thy little ones and thee.’”

So she strove on. Yea! morning, noon, and night;
For the late traveller oft observed a light,

As o'er the moorland waste he look'd afar,
From Phœbe's cottage, twinkling like a star
Athwart the darkness. And I've heard one tell—
One in her prosperous days who knew her well,
An old wayfaring man, whose lonely road,
Oft after midnight, past her poor abode,
Led to the Village Inn—I've heard him say,
How many a time when he has pass'd that way
At that dead hour, attracted by the ray
Of her small candle, he has look'd within,
And seen her, with a hand all pale and thin,
Plying her needle. "Ay, *so thin*," said he,
"As 'twas held up between the light and me,
Through it the flame with ruddy brightness shone—
And her poor face!—so sharp with care 'twas grown,
The brow so wrinkled, one could scarce have known
'Twas that same face so fair to look upon,
The pleasant comely face of Phœbe Rae.
Once," he continued, "when a deep snow lay
On all the country; one cold winter's night,
I pass'd her cottage casement, whence the light
Shone forth, but with a dull and fitful flare;

And when I look'd within, a dying glare
Flamed from its long, bent wick ; but not a spark
Lived on the hearth, where all was cold and dark.
Yet there beside, in her accustom'd place,
The widow sat ; upon her arms, her face
Fallen forward on the table, where had dropt
Her work, when the relaxing fingers stopt
Benumb'd with cold. She slept the heavy sleep
Of one who desperately has striven to keep
O'erwearied nature from her needful rest,
Then all at once gives way. I did my best
(Gently awaking) to revive, and cheer,
The drooping spirit ; but her pain lay *here,*"
(Striking his breast.) " Nor mine the power to give
A cordial that had made her hope and live—
I could not say—' Poor soul !—thy sorrows cease—
Thy children shall have bread—thy sick heart peace,'—
But *she has peace* at last—and they have bread ;
The parish feeds them, and her weary head
Lies by her husband's."

Honest Adam Bell !

The old man loved those simple peasants well,
Whose chronicler he was ; whose board had fed,
Whose humble roof had shelter'd his grey head,
Whose hearth had warmed him, and whose babes had clung
About his neck, with fondly stammering tongue,
Lisping old Adam's name. Too true he said.—
The cottage now is all untenanted.

The din of childish mirth resounds no more
(Heart-cheering music) from the humble door.
Closed is the door, and closed the casements all ;
There long unanswered may the traveller call.
Creaks the loose vine, down straggling from the wall,
And through the thatch, with vegetation green,
House leek and moss, are the rude rafters seen—
Loose on its hinge, the garden wicket sways ;
The forest colt within th' enclosure strays,
Where never yet, since Isaac fenced it round,
Was hoof-print seen. There idle weeds abound ;
Nettles, and docks, and couch grass, matting o'er
The walks and beds that useful produce bore—
And rambling bindweed, with its flowery rings,
Up the young apple-tree tenacious clings,

Strangling the long wild shoots, and thickly winds
Round currant bush and gooseberry ; her vines
Knotting them fast, and dragging to the ground
Their matted heads, with barren verdure crown'd.
And lo ! poor Isaac's pride, that prickly screen—
What spoiler's hand relentless there hath been ?
Alas ! neglect, by slower means 'tis true,
But not less sure, the spoiler's work will do—
Strong were the vernal shoots ; the shearer's care
Specially needed, but—he was not there.
And while succeeding summer still was young,
High in the straggling sprays the throstle sung,
And through the stems, unsightly bare beneath,
Push'd in the lawless stragglers of the heath.

Such now, so silent and so desolate,
Is Isaac's cottage. At its crazy gate
I linger oft ; and yester-even I staid,
Till tender twilight with her stealthy shade
Veil'd the red sunset. " Here is peace "—said I—
" In man's abode, in earth, in air and sky ;
But the heart shrinketh from this deathlike rest."

I thought upon the skylark's ruin'd nest,
Upon her prison'd young, their captive lay,
And on the orphan babes of Isaac Rae.
Then from the cottage wall depended still,
A broken hoop, that oft with emulous skill
I'd seen the happy creatures urge along :
And in one corner lay a little prong,
Fashioned for childish hand ; a wooden toy,
The father's shaping for his eldest boy.—
I said how the loose vine swung to and fro,
Its long stems creaking with a sound of wo !
But round the little casement still remain'd
A tall blush rose-tree, there by Phœbe train'd,
And loose depending o'er th' interior gloom,
One pale, dew-sprinkled flower, the first to bloom,
Hung down like weeping beauty o'er the tomb.

I look'd and listen'd. All within I knew
Was dark and tenantless ; yet thence stole through
A sound of life and motion ; something stirr'd
The light leaves of the rose, and a small bird
From the dusk chamber, through a broken pane,

Flew forth to light, and the fresh fields again.
“Art thou,” thought I, “sole tenant of the cot?
Innocent creature! Thou profanest not
What once was the abode of innocence
Scarcely less pure than thine.”

As if with sense

Of that whereon I mused, the bird at hand
On an old mossy pear-tree took his stand,
And dropp'd his wings, and tuned his little throat,
To such a tender, soft, complaining note,
So sweet! so sad! so tremulous! I said,
Surely he mourns the absent and the dead.

C.

THE MURDER GLEN.



THIS is a dreary spot as eye shall see ;
Yet a few moments linger here with me,
And let us rest (the air is warm and still)
In the dry shelter of this heathery hill.
Though all about looks barren, bleak, and drear,
Something of pleasantness methinks is here—
This little patch of greensward at our feet ;
This thymy bank our soft empurpled seat ;
This od'rous air, and the low humming sound
(An under-tone of life) that murmurs round—
Yes—*this* is pleasantness ; but all beyond
Seems smitten with a curse.—That sullen pond,
Black as its moory marge ;—that one scathed tree,
And the lone hovel, ruined, roofless, free

To every straggling foot and wandering wind,
In the cold shadow of that hill behind,
That shuts in with its dark, bare, barren swell,
The deathlike stillness of the gloomy dell ;
There *seems* a curse upon the savage scene,
There *is* a curse methinks where guilt hath been,
So deep, so deadly, as hath left the Tale
Connected with this wild sequestered vale.
Not always, as some theorists pretend,
Doth guilt in this life come to fitting end ;
Not often here is God's unerring plan
Made plain to proud, presumptuous, purblind man ;
Enough for him, enough the word which saith
Sin's path is Hellward, and her wages Death.
But now and then the thunderbolt descends,
And strikes e'en here, for wise and gracious ends ;
To rouse, to warn, to strike the scoffers dumb,
Who cry, "Lo ! vengeance tarries—will it come ?"
Some ten years back, whoe'er from hence had viewed,
As we do now, yon cheerless solitude,
Had seen it *then* a drear, unlovely spot,

But not deserted. From the lonely cot
Curled a blue smoke-wreath in the morning air,
And signs and sounds of life were stirring there,
Too oft of strife, of violence, and hate.
There dwelt a wretched man, his wretched mate,
And their one child, a gibbering idiot boy,
“Fruit of th’ adultress”—no fond parent’s joy,
Nor sad one’s comfort ;—sent as for a sign
And fearful foretaste of the wrath divine.

None knew from whence the unsocial strangers came
For a long season, nor their real name,
But guessed them wedded, for the boy was born
Just as they settled in that home forlorn.
Nor doctor, nurse, nor gossip to the birth
Was timely summon’d ; but the man rushed forth
One day in urgent haste (for peril pressed)
To seek assistance. From old Martha Best
I’ve heard the story—(to her dying day
She told it shuddering)—in what fearful way
She found the woman in her travail throes,
Convulsed with spirit pangs more fierce than those,

And how she groaned some name, and to some deed
Wildly alluded, that with startling speed
Brought her dark partner to the pillow near ;
And how he stooped, and whispered in her ear,
Not words of love,—but something that she heard
With a cold shudder ; whispering faint a word
Sounding like “ Mercy ! ”—and the stern man’s brow
Grew sterner as he said—“ Remember now.”
And as he lingered near the wretched bed,
How hard she clench’d her teeth, and drew her head
Beneath the coverlet, lest pain should wring
From her parched lips the interdicted thing.
“ ‘ Old drivelling fool ! ’ he called me,” quoth the dame,
“ When I just hinted at the parson’s name,
And talked of comfort to the troubled breast,
From prayer with him, and evil deeds confest.
‘ Old drivelling fool ! ’ he called me, with a curse
That made my flesh creep, and the look was worse
With which he spoke it. Well !—the babe was born—
Jesu preserve us !—’twas a luckless morn
That saw its birth :—a foul, misshapen thing,
Scarce human :—round the blue swoll’n neck a ring,

Livid and black, and marks like finger prints
Murderously dented : Not before nor since
Such sight beheld I. When the mother saw,
Christ ! what a face was hers !—The lower jaw
Dropt as in death, and with a ghastly stare,
Pointing the tokens, she gasped out—‘ There ! there ! ’
‘ Hell is against us ’—with a savage shout
Yelled the dark, fearful man, and rushing out,
Was seen no more till midnight brought him back,
Silent and sullen. There was neither lack
Of food nor cordials in the house that night,
And the red peat-fire gave a cheerful light,
And a large dip was burning ; yet for all
The very flesh upon my bones did crawl
With fearful thinking ; I could hardly brook
Upon that loathly, helpless thing to look
As on my lap it lay ; and in his sleep,
Through the thin boards, I heard the father keep
A restless muttering :—The King’s crown to gain,
I’d not live over that long night again ! ”

Such was the midwife’s story ; and strange things

Were guessed and rumoured, till low whisperings
Grew louder by degrees, and busy folk
Of information and the Justice spoke.
But from th' accuser's part all kept aloof—
They had no facts to rest on ;—not a proof
Of the foul deed suspected :—The strange pair
Gave no offence to any ; straight and fair
Were their few dealings at the village shop ;
And though the man was never known to stop
A needless minute, or look up the while,
Or speak a needless word, or seen to smile,
His pay was punctual, if th' amount was small—
Time—if they waited—might unravel all :
And so in part it did. There came a man
From a far distant town (an artisan),
To try for health his native country air,
In his own village. While sojourning there,
He heard the *talk* of that mysterious pair,
And as he listened, with impatient tone,
Striking the table, said—“ Two years ago,
I heard a trial in our county court
For a most cruel murder ; in such sort,

And by such hands alleged to have been done,
As made the heart sick. An unnatural son
Sinfully mated with his father's wife
(A youthful stepdame), 'gainst the husband's life
Conspired with her—'twas so the indictment read—
And suddenly the old man in his bed
Was found a blackening corse ;—a livid mark
Circling his throat about, and, purple dark,
Prints of a murd'rous hand. At next assize
They stood their trial, as I said ;—all eyes
Looked loathingly in court. I saw them there,
Just such as you describe this stranger pair.
A tall dark man, with close curled locks like jet,
And overhanging brow, and mouth hard set,
And a down look withal. She slim and fair,
Of a white fairness ; light-blue eyes, and hair
Inclining to be red ; of middle size,
With something of a cast about her eyes,—
Or it might seem so, as she stood that day
With her wild look, that wandered every way
And never fixed. The crime was proven plain
To plain men's judgments, but your lawyers strain

The truth through mill-stones, till it filters out
A puddle of perplexity and doubt.
They were acquitted, but forsook the place,
Pursued by curses.—Could I see the face
Of one but for a moment, I should know,
Had I last seen it twenty years ago,
The features printed on my mind so strong
That fearful trial day.”—

“ ’Twill not be long,”

The eager listeners cried, “ before Black Will
Comes with his empty meal-bag to the mill,
Or to the shop for his few errands there ;
The woman seldom comes, and now ’tis rare
To see her, since that changeling babe was born,
So far from her own door as that old thorn,
Where she would stand and pore as in a book
On the dark pool beneath, with fixed look.”
Not long the sojourner, with patient will,
Haunted the shop, and watched about the mill :
Not long the curious rustics to their friend
Looked for the fateful word, all doubt to end,—

Earlier than wont the dark-browed stranger came,—
The watcher saw—and shuddering, said—“The same.”

The tale ran round through all the country-side ;
“Murder will out” triumphant guessers cried :—
“’Twas not *for nothing*,” said old Martha Best,
“God’s finger on the babe those prints impressed ;
And on the father’s scowling brow so dark,
As on Cain’s forehead, set a fearful mark.
But who could have believed,—so slight, so fair,—
That woman such an awful deed could dare ?
’Tis true—she never looked one in the face ;
Bad sign !—And not a creature in the place
Ever could draw her into social chat,
Nor him to step into the Cricket Bat,
And take his part in cheerful glass or song—
Such strange reserve betokened *something wrong*—
So with a nat’ral horror, and a mind
More *humanly* severe than *Christian* kind,
Each cast his stone, and left the wretched pair
To perish in their sin and their despair.
It is a *wholesome* horror in the main

That shrinks impulsive from the wretch whose stain
Stamps him accurst in blood's own damning dye.
Out on the mawkish, morbid sympathy
That wets white handkerchiefs with maudlin wo
When "*gifted*" murderers to the gallows go,
And "*interesting*" felons to the cord
Bow their heroic necks, and meet the law's award.—
But vulgar minds, with unenlarged view,
Hating the guilt, abhor the guilty too ;
And such "good haters" scarce can comprehend
How He, the Sinless, is the sinner's friend.
Ah ! had some faithful servant of his Lord,
Some pious pastor, with the saving word
Of gospel truth, those branded outcasts sought,
Who knows what blessed change he might have wrought ?
"Despair and die !" hath dragged down many a soul
Christ's blood was shed for, to eternal dole.
"Repent and live !" the Hellward course hath staid
Of many a one for whom that price was paid.
Shepherds, who slumber on your watch, beware !
Ye have account to render of your care ;
Nor will the plea avail ye in that day

That while ye slept, the wolf bore off his prey ;
Nor that the case *was hopeless*—futile plea !
“ Hope against hope ” your battle-cry should be—
Then—if all fail at last—your souls from blood are free.

A wide, wild district, half uncultured moor,
Skirted by sea and forest, thick with poor,
Is the vast parish, on whose utmost verge
Lies this lone valley. The deep booming surge
Full three miles off we hear, but Sabbath bell
Sounds faintly tinkling in this dreary dell
On stillest day, with favouring breeze to boot.
To this far border, gospel-shodden foot
Comes rarely, tidings of great joy to bring.
“ Who needs my ministry has but to ring,”
Cries the good rector, “ at the rectory door—
I always come when called for, and what more
Could fifty curates, if I kept them, do ? ”
Ah, reverend Michael ! fitter far for you
The post you occupied so long and well
In your old college, ere this living fell.
No Sabbath to God’s house those outcasts brought ;

Them, in their dreary dwelling, no man sought,
Nor priest, nor layman, woman, man, nor child ;
And every eye that measured them, reviled.
For household needs still drew them now and then
(Seldom as might be) to the homes of men—
The oftenest he ; but once or twice a-year,
For homely articles of female gear,
With her stern partner to the shop she came,
A shrinking customer without a name,
Served in cold silence, that had insult been
Perchance, but for the man's determined mien
Of dark defiance. Change of look and tone
Early informed him of his secret known ;
And from that moment, with a deadly hate,
He cursed his kind, and dared its worst from Fate ;
Returning loathing looks with dogged stare,
That said, " Ye know me now—'tis well—beware ! "
And they who loathed, by those fierce glances cowed,
Shrinking aside, breathed curses " deep not loud."
And curious children, eager, yet afraid,
Hung on the murderer's steps ;—but if he made
A motion as to turn, quick scowered away,

Like blossoms scattered in a gusty day.
Till once, two braggart boys, with bullying boast,
Dared one another which should venture most ;
And while their awestruck mates in ambush lay,
Fronted the *Ogres* in their homeward way ;
And one squeaked " Murder ! " in his impish note—
And one made mouths, and pointed to his throat,
Then ran ;—but pounced on with a tiger bound,
Both at a blow were levelled with the ground.
Mothers ! who owned those graceless ones, for you
'Twas well that woman was a mother too,
And hung upon the arm upraised to give
A second blow that none might feel and live.

A mother ! ay—how black soe'er in part,
The outcast creature's was a mother's heart
To the poor wailing object, that while nursed
At her sad breast, the father called " accurst."
And now again, who looked might often see
Her crouching form beneath that old scathed tree
By the dark water, to her bosom prest
The hapless babe, that still she lulled to rest

With rocking motion, as of one in pain,
With a low, crooning, melancholy strain.
Oh ! to conceive, as there she sat forlorn,
The thoughts of those long hours of loneliness born ;
The yearning thoughts of happy childish days,
Her father's cottage, and her pleasant plays
With little brothers and young sisters dear ;
And how they grew together many a year,
By pious parents trained in the Lord's love and fear.

Then—the changed after-time ! the contrast dark !
Passion's fierce storm, and Virtue's found'ring bark,
The step by step in Falsehood's blinding lead,
From guilty thought *unchecked* to guilty deed—
The trust abused—the violated vow—
The consummated crime—the hopeless *now*,
And the dread future. Lost, unhappy soul !
Darest thou in fancy fix that fearful goal ?
No ; or Despair had into Madness burst ;
And coldly calm she seemed, like one who knows the worst.
“The grief that's shared is lightened half,” some say ;
Not in all cases—Can it take away

A grain of bitterness from us to know
One dearer than ourselves partakes the wo?
And when a load unblest the double share,
Wretched community of crime and care;
Is either cheered beneath the crushing weight
By mutual suffering of his groaning mate?
And then a band of sin is one of straw—
Count not thereon, contemners of God's law!
None but pure hearts, love-linked, in sorrow closer draw.

Cast out from fellowship of all their kind,
Each other's all—did their forlornness bind
More fast the union of that guilty pair?
Ay, with the *festering* fastness of despair.
No loving little one, with angel smile,
Was sent to win them from themselves a while,
In whose young eyes the eyes that could not brook
Each other's furtive glance might fondly look.
No lispng prattler was in mercy given
To lift its little sinless hands to heaven,
And stammer out the prayer that pardon sought
For one who dared not utter what she taught.

I've said, their first—their only one was sent,
Not as a blessing, but a punishment.
No white-winged messenger, no silvery dove,
Dear welcome pledge of peace, and hope, and love,
But of fierce discord here, and fiercer wrath above.
“’Twould be a mercy if the Lord who gave
Soon took him back”—the midwife muttered grave
“God gave him not,” the abhorring father cried ;
“Would in the birth the hell-marked imp had died !”
But to her heart the mother drew it near,
Whispering—“My wretched infant ! hide thee *here*.”

And year by year (the changeling lived and throve)
More doting fond became that only love
That ever in this woeful world it knew,
More doting for the father's hate it grew,
And to the mother soon that hate extended too.
She had borne meekly many a cutting word,
And many a bitter taunt in silence heard,
Or only, when her sullen partner cried,
“Would, ere I saw thy face, that thou hadst died,”
Bowing her head—“Amen !” she softly sighed.

But when the crawling idiot in its play
Stumbled unconscious in its father's way,
And the foot spurned him, and the savage curs'd—
Then all the mother into fury burst,
And "Have a care!" she shrieked, with gestures wild,
"I have been very patient—but my child!
Harm not my child, or dread what I may dare—
I may yet speak what——Villain! have a care."
Beneath her flashing look the ruffian's eye
Quailed, as he muttered indistinct reply;
"And deadly white he turned," said wandering Wat
The Pedlar, who, to many a lonely spot
Hawking his wares, had found his plodding way
To the drear dwelling in the glen that day.
"I'm an old man," said Walter—"far I've been,
Much of mankind and of their ways I've seen,
And oftentimes folk's secrets in their looks
Can read, as plain as some read printed books.
So now and then, in my own quiet way,
I make a lucky guess, and now should say,
Touching this woman—mind, it's *only* guess—
Sinner she may be, but no murderess."

So spake Sir Oracle, in cosy chat
On the oak settle at the Cricket Bat,
The evening of his visit to the glen—
And Walter's sayings had their weight with men ;
And women listened with relenting heart,
Wondering—" Could one who did a mother's part
So fondly by her idiot child, have done
(Helping the hand of that unnatural son)
A deed it chilled the blood to think upon ?
He who his wretched babe could so abuse—
Would that in *him* the gallows had its dues !"

Year followed year, those dues were owing still,
Satan had work in hand yet for " Black Will."
That he was active in his master's cause
None doubted, though evading still the laws.
No longer from all intercourse with men
He dwelt secluded in that moorland glen ;
Strange faces there were not unfrequent seen
Of men, rough seafarers of reckless mien,
And something wild and lawless in their look—
With those, for days and weeks, he now forsook

His joyless home. The beach convenient lay,
And a snug creek, a little cunning bay,
Where boats and small craft might at anchor lie
For days unnoticed, if exciseman's eye,
Or hated officer's, with sharp survey,
Ranged not the coast. Unorganised that day
The naval guard ; the civil watch I ween
Then kept, *too civil* to be over keen :
The local bearings (sea and forest near)
Favoured more trades than one ; the royal deer
Made not worse venison though the buck was slain
Without a warrant ; and some folks were fain
To fancy tea and Hollands were, to choose,
Best flavoured, when they paid the King no dues.
Then customers who favoured the free trade,
No curious, inconsiderate questions made,
When goods that never had the Channel crost
Were offered at a *reasonable cost*.
What if a smuggler now and then was hung
For worse than smuggling—from their souls they flung
Accusing qualms, for “how could they have thought
Unfairly come by, what they fairly bought ?”

Laws interdict, and parsons preach in vain,
While such (encouraging who might restrain)
Whet with their ready pay the thirst for lawless gain.

Now sometimes, with a timid consciousness
That if none favoured some abhorred her less
Left lonely and unaided, from the dell
The woman ventured forth, when twilight fell
With friendly dimness on her flushing shame,
To seek the village shop; and with her came
A heavy armful long, then, tottering slow,
A dragging weight, that child of sin and woe—
Poor fool, whom she her “precious one!” would call—
Ay—for he loved her, and he was her all.
“Mammam! mammam!” the stammering creature’s cry,
If wandered from its face the only eye
Could read in his, and fondly there detect
A lovelier light than that of intellect.
“Mammam! mammam!”—’twas all resembling speech
To common ears that stammering tongue could reach;
“But oh! my Charlie, in his own dear way,”
Affirmed the mother, “everything can say—

And he has far more sense than some believe—
Could you but see him when he sees me grieve—
And when I'm sick, he'll creep about the house,
Or sit beside me, quiet as a mouse—
And but a baby still, as one may say—
Just eight—and growing handier every day.”
Oh! mother's love, of most mysterious kind!
So strong! so weak! so piercing, and so blind!

“'Twas pitiful, whatever she might be,”
All said, “that mother and her boy to see—
Hanging for *him* would be an end too mild,
That parricide who hated his own child;
A poor afflicted thing, but still *his own*.”
And there were cruel doings, 'twas well known,
At that lone house, whence oftentimes arose
Wild sounds of sharp contention, oaths, and blows,
And the shrill treble of a childish cry,
Heart-piercing in its helpless agony;
And more than once, thrust out into the night,
Mother and child had lain till morning light
Huddled together, the cold earth their bed,

The door-sill pillowing her houseless head—
Happy for them when signal from the bay
Summoned their tyrant from his home away,
With his wild mates to cruise, perhaps for many a day.
But watchful eyes at last were on the glen,
Notorious now the haunt of lawless men ;
Dépôt of contraband, and even, 'twas thought,
Of things worse come by, for concealment brought.
Twice with their warrant the suspected ground
And house men keenly searched, but nothing found ;
While the dark owner carelessly stood by,
And sneering thanked them for their courtesy,
And bade them look again, and more minutely pry.

Thus baffled oft, suspicion never slept,
But quiet watch about the place was kept,
Where everything unusual that befell,
Comings and goings, all were noted well.
There had been jovial doings overnight—
Late from the lattice flashed the ruddy light,
And midnight was at hand, when from the door
Staggered the parting guests with drunken roar—

“At daybreak—mind!”—“At daybreak, there I’ll be”—
And the door closed the parting colloquy.
Then from within proceeded sounds more faint—
A low, sad, sobbing murmur of complaint,
Not long unbroken by a harsher tone—
And then a curse—a scuffling—and a groan—
Something that sounded like a heavy fall;
And then the listeners said—’twas quiet all;
And gladly from that dismal place they came—
Such broils were frequent in that house of shame.

They watched the skiff’s departure from the bay—
“Best lie in wait for her return”—said they,
“Useless to watch about his den to-day,
No—nor to-morrow”—but a shepherd told
On the third morn, how, fancying from his fold
A straggler to the glen its way had found,
He followed in its track: and on the ground,
By the pond-side said he, saw something lie,
A whitish heap—“That’s sure my lamb! said I—
And dead enough if so:—but then I heard
As I came closer—(and methought *it* stirred)—

A feeble plaint—as from a dying lamb—
I stopt and hearkened—'twas—'Mammam ! Mammam !'
Charlie ! said I—for lying all alone,
'Twas simple Charlie made that piteous moan ;
Undressed, as if just taken from his bed,
Cold as a stone, with open eyes like lead
Fixed on the dull black water—when at length
I stooped to lift him, with his little strength
(Little enough—the creature was half dead)
He made resistance, turning still his head
Toward the pond, and murmuring o'er and o'er,
'Mammam ! Mammam !' as to the house I bore ;
And there he lies—not long alive to lie—
Come quickly if you'd help him ere he die ;
The door I found ajar—within—without—
No living soul. Bad work has been I doubt."

Quickly they ran : but when they reached the place,
There lay the idiot with his poor wan face
Close to the water's edge !—although in bed
The shepherd left him, *motionless*—he said—
And still he made the same distressful moan,

Though faint and fainter every faltering tone ;—
And still his eyes were turned with dying ray
To the dark pond, as on its brink he lay.

“ ’Tis not for nothing, idiot though he be,”
All said—“ he gazes there so earnestly—
And one stooped down, and peering closely, thought
He *something* saw :—and poles and hooks were brought,
And grappled a dead weight—upfloated white
A woman’s dress—one heave—and dragged to sight,
On a pale corse looked down the cheerful morning light.

“ Mammam ! Mammam ! ”—with one loud rapturous cry
(Life’s last) the dying idiot bounded high,
And falling forward, sank to quiet rest,
Never to waken, on his mother’s breast.

I’ve told my story—needs it still to tell
How that the double murd’rer in this dell,
And in this country, has no more been seen ?
That *his* dark act that woman’s end had been.
Proceedings at the inquest pointed clear—

There was a bloody fracture by her ear,
Fitting a mallet, that with hair and gore
Stuck on, was found upon the cottage floor—
His own apparel gone, and all of worth
The lonely house contained. Upon this earth
If somewhere still the ruffian roams secure,
God knows ;—*hereafter*, his reward is sure.

One parting look upon the still sad scene,
Where so much misery, so much guilt has been,
And such a tragic act in the *great play*,
Life's melodrame. As calm, as still the day,
As bright the sun was shining over head,
When by that water lay the ghastly dead—
And then perhaps some little bird as now
Perched on that old scathed hawthorn's topmost bough,
Poured forth a strain as joyous and as clear
(Careless of human woes) as now we hear—
Unconscious bird ! no living thing but thee
Stirs the deep stillness with a voice of glee—
The village children, if they venture near,
Sink their loud gladness into whispering fear—

No rustic lovers haunt the unblest ground—
No tenant for the hated house is found—
Our country people call it—“Black Will’s den”—
And this unlovely spot—“The Murder Glen.”

WALTER AND WILLIAM.

“ ’TWILL be a wild rough night upon the Moor :
And hark ! though three miles off, the sullen roar
Of that deep-booming surge. God’s mercy keep
The wayfarer, and wanderer on the deep.
The moon ’s but young—she ’ll give no help to night :
Look out, my boys ! if Beacon-head burns bright ;
And, lads ! take Carter Joe with ye, and see
All snug about the place ; more ’specially
At the new Penfold—and dun Peggy, too,
Give her and her sick foal a passing view—
Old Mark away, I’ve lost my right-hand man ;
You must replace him.”—

Off the striplings ran,
Proud happy boys ! forth rushing in their haste,

Ere well the words their father's lips had pass'd ;
 The elder's arm, with loving roughness, thrown
 Round his young brother's neck—the fair-hair'd one.
 “ God bless the lads ! and keep them ever so,
 Hand in hand brothers, wheresoe'er they go,”
 Eyeing them tenderly, the father said
 As the door closed upon them : then his head,
 Sighing, let fall on his supporting palm,
 And, like the pausing tempest, all was calm.

Facing her husband, sate a Matron fair,
 Plying her sempstress task. A shade of care
 Darken'd her soft blue eyes, as to his face
 (Drawn by that sigh) they wander'd, quick to trace
The unseen, by sympathy's unerring sight—
 Reading *his heart's* thoughts by her *own heart's* light.

Ten years twice told had pass'd since Helen Græme
 For Walter Hay's exchanged her virgin name.
 Of life's vicissitudes they'd had their share,
 Sunshine and shade ; yet in his eyes as fair,
 And dearer far than the young blooming Bride

Was she the long-tried partner ; who espied
No change in him, but such as gave a cast
More tender to the love would time outlast.
They had rejoiced together at the birth
Of six fair infants : sorrowing to the earth
(With mutual sorrow, but submissive heart)
Committed three. Hard trial 'twas to part
(Young parents !) with their first-born bud of bliss ;
And they who follow'd !—with the last cold kiss
Their hearts seem'd breaking, that on each they press'd.
But He so will'd it “ who doth all things best.”
Out of their sight they hid their early dead,
And wept together—and were comforted.
And of their loved ones, now a lovely three
Were left, that well a parent's boast might be.
Those two bold blithesome boys of stature near,
(Their ages differing only by a year,)
Walter and William named in reminiscence dear,
And a small sister, like a green-hill Fay,
Younger by six—a *little Helen Hay*,
The household darling. To her father's ear,
'Twas ever music that sweet name to hear.

And now she sate, as still as still could be,
Her little stool drawn close beside his knee :
Her paly ringlets so profusely shed,
In the warm hearth-glow gleaming golden red,
As o'er the book upon her lap she bent,
On Jack the Giant-killer's feats intent.

Fit subject for some limner's skill had been,
That quiet, tender-toned, heart-soothing scene,
All in fine keeping ! the old spacious room,
Half hall, half kitchen, dark'ning into gloom,
As it receded from that cavern vast—
The open hearth whence blazing oak logs cast
Rich, ruddy beams on rafter, beam, and wall,
'Twixt monstrous shadows that fantastic fall.
And all around, in picturesque array,
Hung rustic implements for use and play,
For manly sport and boyish holiday.
Basket, and net, and rifle, rod, and spear,
Coil'd lines, and weather-season'd fishing gear,
And bills and hedging gloves ; and, modell'd neat,
A little schooner, (Willy's proudest feat,)

Matching a mimic plough, with graver thought
“ *On improved principles,*” by Walter wrought—
Proud folk the parents of those works, I wot !
And tatter’d straw hats, plaited once so white
And neat, in leisurely long winter night,
By the boy brothers, while their father read
From one of those brown volumes overhead,
(No mindless untaught churl was Walter Hay,)
Some pleasant theme, instructive, grave, or gay :
His list’ning household men, and maids, and all,
Assembled round him in his rustic hall ;
Together closing the laborious day,
As in the good old time, the good old way.
There stood a spinning-wheel, whose humming sound
Accompanied the reader’s voice, *not* drown’d.
There hung a half-done cabbage-net ; and there,
Nursing her kitten in the old stuff chair,
Purred a grave Tabby ; while a faithful friend,
A worn-out Sheep-Dog, to his long life’s end
Fast hastening, slumbered at his master’s feet.
It was a pleasant picture !—very sweet
To look upon, its beautiful repose—
One earthly scene, undimm’d by human woes.

Alas! was ever spot on earth so blessed,
Where human hearts in perfect peace might rest?
One bosom sorrow, one corroding thought,
(The dark thread with his woof of life enwrought,)
Helped on the work of time with Walter Hay,
Stole half the brightness of his smile away,
And streaked in manhood's prime his dark curl'd locks
with gray.

A hasty quarrel, an intemperate cup,
A hard word spoken when the blood was up,
A blow as madly dealt, but not in hate,
Repented soon and sorely, but too late—
Too late!—Ah! simple words of solemn sense,
Avenging disregarded Providence!

Remembrance of these things, and what ensued,
It was, that clouded oft his sunniest mood,
Casting a dark cold shadow o'er the life
Perhaps too prosperous else. His gentle wife
Whose wife-like tenderness could scarce descry
A fault in him she honoured, oft would try
To pluck away the thorn he sternly pressed

(Severe in self-infliction) to his breast.
“Not yours alone,” she soothingly would say,
“The blame of what befell that luckless day ;
You had borne much my husband ! well I know,
Much, before anger overcame you so :
And both of you that night had made too free
(Alas ! that youth should so unthinking be !)
With the good ale in careless company.
How could you bear such taunts before them all,
As he—unjust and violent—let fall ?
He knew your heart, to him so warm and kind,
That passion could but for a moment blind ;
Passion, that love as suddenly would check,
And cast you all-repentant on his neck :
But he was gone before a word could pass—
Gone in his furious mood, before the glass
Ceased ringing, where he dash’d it on the floor
With that rash oath—to see thy face no more !”

“But I—but I—that ever it should be
Betwixt us so !—had told him bitterly
I never more desired his face to see.

I prosperous—He, a disappointed man—
Quick tempered, spirit vex'd. Say what you can,
Dear comforter ! you cannot take away
The stinging mem'ry of that fatal day.”
Thus soothingly, a thousand times before
The loving wife had uttered o'er and o'er
Mild consolation ; on his heart that fell
Balmy, though there no settled peace might dwell :
And thus again, that night whereof I tell,
They talked together ; on his long-drawn sigh
Following, their low-voiced, love-toned colloquy.
And all the while, intent upon her book,
The little maid sat still ; an upward look,
(As played her father's hand with her soft hair,)
Now and then glancing at the parent pair,
Her heart's contentment full, assured they both were there.

Loud burst the storm, that fitfully suppress'd,
Had for a moment sobbed itself to rest.
Creaked doors and casements, clattering came the rain,
And the old wall's stout timbers groaned again.
“ Would they were back—that I could hear their tread !”

Listening anxiously, the mother said :

“God help, this fearful night, the houseless poor !
One would not turn a dog out from one’s door.”

“No—not a dog.—And yet I had the heart,
To let *him* homeless from my home depart
On such another night. Full well I mind,
As the door opened, how the rain and wind
Flashed in his face, and wellnigh beat him back.
Then—had I stretched a hand out !——What lone track,
Unfriended since, hath he been doomed to tread ?
Where hath he found a shelter for his head ?
In this hard world, or with the happy dead ?”

“Nay, doubt it not, my husband !” said the wife,
“He hath been long at rest, where care and strife,
And pain and sorrow enter not. We know
That when he left us, nineteen years ago,
He went a-shipboard straight, and crossed the seas
To that far fatal coast, where fell disease
Strikes down its thousands,—that he went ashore,
And up the country, and was seen no more.

Had he not perished early, we had heard
Tidings ere long by letter or by word ;
For he too had a loving heart, that bore
No malice when the angry fit was o'er.
Be comforted, dear husband ! he's at rest,
And let us humbly hope, for Christ's sake—blessed."

"Hark, mother, hark! I'm sure they're coming back!"
Cried little Helen—who with Valiant Jack
Had parted for the night—"That's Willy's call
To Hector, as they turn the garden wall.
Lizzy! come quick and help me let them in—
They must be wet, poor brothers, to the skin."
The rosy maid, already at the door,
Lifted the latch; and bounding on before,
(His rough coat scattering wide a plenteous shower,)
Hector sprang in, his master close behind,
Half spent with buffeting the rain and wind;
Gasping for breath and words a moment's space,
His eager soul all glowing in his face.

"Where's Walter?" cried the mother, pale as death—
"What's happened?" ask'd both parents in a breath.

“ Safe, Mother dear ! and sound—I tell you true—
But, Father ! we can’t manage without you ;
Walter and Joe are waiting there down-bye,
At the old cart-house by the granary.
As we came back that way, a man we found
(Some shipwrecked seaman) stretch’d upon the ground
In that cold shelter. Very worn and weak
He seem’d, poor soul ! at first could hardly speak ;
And, as we held the lantern where he lay,
Moaned heavily, and turned his face away.
But we spoke kindly—bade him be of cheer,
And rise and come with us—our home was near,
Whence our dear father never from his door
Sent weary traveller—worn, sick, or poor.
He listened, turned, and lifting up his head,
Looked in our faces wistfully, and said—
‘ Ye are but lads—(kind lads—God bless you both !)
And I, a friendless stranger, should be loth,
Unbidden by himself, to make so free
As cross the rich man’s threshold : this for me
Is shelter good enough ; for worse I’ve known—
What fitter bed than earth to die upon ?’

He spoke so sad, we almost wept ; and fain
Would have persuaded him, but all in vain ;—
He will not move—I think he wants to die,
And so he will, if there all night he lie.”

“ That shall he not,” the hearty yeoman said,
Donning his rough great-coat ; “ a warmer bed
Shall pillow here to-night his weary head.
Off with us, Willy ! our joint luck we’ll try,
And bring him home, or know the reason why.”

Warm hearts make willing hands ; and Helen Hay
Bestirred her, while those dear ones were away,
Among her maidens, comforts to provide
’Gainst their return : still bustling by her side
Her little daughter, with officious care,
(Sweet mimicry !) and many a matron air
Of serious purpose, helping to spread forth
Warm hose and vestments by the glowing hearth.
From the old walnut press, with kindly thought,
Stout home-spun linen, white and sweet, was brought
In a small decent chamber overhead,

To make what still was call'd "The Stranger's bed."
For many a lone wayfarer, old and poor,
Sick or sore wearied, on the dreary moor
Belated, at the hospitable door
Of the Old Farm ask'd shelter for the night,
Attracted by the far-seen, ruddy light
Of the piled hearth within.—"A bit of bread
And a night's shelter," was the prayer oft said,
Seldom in vain;—for Walter would repeat,
With lowly reverence, that assurance sweet—
"How he the stranger's heart with food and rest
Who cheers, may entertain an angel guest;"
Or, giving in Christ's name, for his dear sake be blessed.

Oft they look'd out into the murky night
Tempestuous, for the streaming lantern light;
And hearkened (facing bold the driving sleet)
For sound of nearing voices—coming feet.
And there it gleams—and there they come at last—
Fitfully sinking, swelling on the blast;
Till clustering forms from out the darkness grow,
Supporting one, with dragging steps and slow,
Feebly approaching.—

" Hold the lantern low—
 Courage, my friend ! we've but a step to go,"
 The yeoman's cheerful voice was heard to say.
 " Hillo ! good folks there—here, my Helen Hay,
 Little and great—I've brought you home a guest
 Needs your good tending,—most of all needs rest ;
 Which he shall find this blessed night, please God,
 On softer pallet than the cold bare sod."

As they the threshold passed, the cheerful light
 Flash'd from within ; and shading quick his sight,
 (Pained by the sudden glare,) upon his brow
 The wayworn man his ragged hat pulled low ;
 Bowed down his head, and sighed in such a tone
 Deep drawn and heavy, 'twas almost a groan.
 They helped him on, (for he could hardly stand,)
 And little Helen drew him by the hand,
 Whispering—" Poor man !" —At that, a moment's
 space
 Halting, he fix'd his eyes on the young face
 Of her who spoke those pitying words so mild,
 And tremulously said—" God bless thee, child ! "

The strong supporting arm—'twas Walter Hay's—
Tighten'd its clasp, and with a searching gaze
Quick turned, he peered in those strange features ;—then
(For they were strange) drew back his head again,
Shaking it gently with a sorrowful smile.
The matron and her maids came round the while,
Toward the high-back'd Settle's warmest nook
To lead the weary man ; but with a look
Still downcast and aside, he shrunk away,
Articulating faintly, " Not to-day—
Not *there* to-night. Rest only ! only rest !"
So to the allotted room they brought their guest,
And laid him kindly down on the good bed,
With a soft pillow for his old grey head.
The long, thin, straggling locks, that hung adown
His hollow cheeks, had scarce a tinge of brown
Streaking their wintry white ; and sorely marr'd
Was all his face : thick seamed, and deeply scarred,
As if in many battles he had fought
Among the foremost.—

" From the first, I thought,"

Said the young Walter, as he came below,
“The fine old fellow had dealt many a blow
For England’s glory, on her wooden walls.”
The father smiled. “Not every one who falls
In fight, my son ! may fall in a good cause—
As fiercely in resistance to the laws
Men strive, as in upholding them ”—

“ But here

I’m sure we’ve a true sailor, father dear !
No lawless, wicked man. When you were gone,
Willy and I some little time stay’d on—
(Mother had sent us up with some warm drink,
Made comforting)—and then you cannot think
How pleasantly, though sadly, he look’d up,
And ask’d our names as he gave back the cup ;
And when we told them, took a hand of each,
While his lips moved as if in prayer—not speech,
With eyes so fixed on us, and full of tears.”
“ Perhaps,” said William, “ lads about our years
He might be thinking of—far, far away,
Or dead ;—his own dear children. Who can say ! ”

“ Ay, who indeed can say, boys?—who can tell
The deep, deep thoughts, in human hearts that dwell
Long buried, that some word of little weight
Will call up sudden from their slumbering state,
So quickened into life, that past things seem
Present again—the present but a dream.
Boys ! in a book was lent me long ago,
I read what since I’ve often thought upon
With deepest awe. At the great Judgment-Day
Some learned scholars—wise and holy—say
That in a moment all our whole life past
Shall be spread out as in a picture vast—
Re-acted as it were, in open sight
Of God, and men, and angels ; the strong light,
Indwelling conscience—serving to illumine
The changeful All, complete from birth to doom.
Methinks—with humble reverence I speak—
I’ve been led sometimes to conception weak
Of that deep meaning, when a sudden ray
Has called, as ’twere from darkness into day,
Long past, forgotten things.—Oh ! children dear !
Lay it to heart, and keep the record clear
That all unveiled, *that day*, must certainly appear.”

Thus, as was oft his wont, religious truth
The pious father taught their tender youth,
As apposite occasion led the way ;
No formal teacher stern. Nor only they,
The filial listeners, fixed attention gave
To his wise talk ; with earnest looks and grave
His rustic household, at the supper board
Assembled all, gave heed to every word
Uttered instructive ; and when down he took
And opened reverently the blessed Book ;
With hearts prepared, on its great message dwelt :
And when around, in after prayer they knelt,
Forgot not, e'er they rose, for him to pray
Master and Teacher,—*Father*, they might say,
Who led them like his own, the happy, heavenward way.

“ Did you take notice, wife ”—the husband said,
The busy well-spent day thus finished,
When all except themselves were gone to rest—
“ Did you take notice, when our stranger guest
Spoke those few words to Helen, of his tone ?
It thrilled my very heart through : so like one
These nineteen years unheard.”

“I scarce gave heed
To anything,” she said, “but his great need
Of help, poor soul! so faint he seemed and low.”
“Well, well,” rejoined her husband, “even now
I seem to hear it:—*Then*, into my brain,
Wild thoughts came crowding; quickly gone again,
When I looked hard, but not a line could trace
Familiar in that weatherbeaten face.
That lost one, were he living now, would be
Younger a year and many months than me—
Than this time-stricken man, by many a year,
But, oh! these thoughts will haunt me, Helen, dear!
These sudden fancies, though so oft before
I’ve proved them vain, and felt all hope was o’er.”

“Only for *this* world, husband mine!” she said,
“They live in Heaven, whom *here* we count as dead,
And there we all shall meet, when all is finished.”

“God grant it!” fervently he said; “and so
To bed, good wife! I must be up, you know,
And off by daybreak, on my townward way,

Where, business done, be sure I shall not stay
A needless minute. Yet I guess 'twill be
Dark night before my own snug home I see,
Mind a low chair and cushion in the cart
Be set for Mark. God bless his poor old heart !
Though from the hospital they send him back
Blind and incurable, he shall not lack
Comfort or kindness here ; his service done
Of sixty years wellnigh, to sire and son.
I miss him every where ; but most of all
Methinks at prayer-time, the deep solemn fall,
Tremblingly fervent, of his long ' Amen !'
'Twill glad my heart to hear that sound again."

The Supper-board was spread—the hearth piled high—
All at the Farm look'd bright expectancy
Of him who ever seemed too long away,
If absent from his dear ones but a day :
Old Mark, too, coming home ! what joy to all !—
Ye know not, worldlings, what glad festival
Pure hearts of simplest elements can make—
Ye, whose palled sense, poor pleasure scarce can take
At feasts, where lips may smile, but hearts so often ache.

There was a sudden rush from the old hall,
Children, and men, and maids, and dogs, and all
Save her, who, with a deeper gladness, stayed
Quietly busied; and far back in shade
(Forgotten there awhile) the stranger guest.
But quiet though she seemeth, with the rest
Be sure her heart went forth those wheels to meet;
And now they stop: and loving voices greet,
Mingling confusedly; yet every one
She hears distinct: as harmonist each tone
Of his full chord,—distinct as if alone.

And there he comes, (sight gladdening every eye,)
The darling young one in his arms throned high,
Her warm cheek to his cold one closely pressed.
And there those two blithe boys, and all the rest,
So crowd about old Mark with loving zeal.
The blind man weeps, and fondly tries to *feel*
Those fair young faces he no more must see.
“Give us warm welcome, Dame!” cried cheerily
Her husband, as their greeting glances met;
“We’re cold enough, I warrant, and sharp set—

But here's a sight would warm the dead to life,
Clean hearth, bright blaze, heaped board, and smiling
wife !”

Lightly he spake,—but with a loving look
Went to her heart, who all its meaning took :
And briskly she bestirr'd herself about,
And with her merry maids, heaped smoking out
The savoury messes. With unneeded care
Set nearer still, the goodman's ready chair :
Then helped uncase him from his rough great-coat,
Then gave a glance that all was right to note :
Welcomed old Mark to his accustomed seat
With that *heart-welcoming*, so silver sweet ;
And, all at last completed to her mind,
Call'd to the board with cheerful bidding kind ;
Where all stood round in serious quietness,
Till God's good gifts the master's voice should bless.
But, with a sudden thought, as glancing round,
“ I thought,” he said, “ another to have found
Among us here to-night.” “ And he *is* here,”
Exclaim'd the wife—“ forgotten though so near !”

Then turning where the stranger sat far back,
She said—"Forgive us friend! our seeming lack
Of Christian courtesy: Draw near, and share
With hearty welcome, of our wholesome fare."
Silent and slow, the bashful guest obeyed,
Still shrinkingly, as to presume afraid;
And when his host with kindly greeting pressed,
Bowed down his head—deep down upon his breast,
Answering in words so low you scarce could hear—
But the quick sense of blindness caught them clear;
And in a tone which thrill'd through every heart,
The sightless man, with a convulsive start,
Called out—"As God's in heaven, (His will be done,)
That was the voice of my dead master's son!"

"Mark! Mark! what say'st, old man?" cried sharply
out

His Master, as he rose and turned about
(Trembling exceedingly) his guest to face;
Who at that outcry, staggering back a pace,
(He also trembled, and look'd like to fall,)
Leant back—a heavy weight—against the wall.

One might have heard a pin fall on the ground,
There was such deep and sudden silence round :
Except that two or three breathed audibly,
(Those wondering boys, whose eager hearts beat high,)
And little Helen sobbed, she knew not why.

There fixèd, foot to foot, and breast to breast,
And face to face, stood Walter and his Guest—
And neither stirr'd a limb, nor wink'd an eye,
(The stranger's sought the ground still droopingly,)
Nor spoke, till many minutes had gone by ;
Then, as if life upon his utterance hung,
In low, deep accents, loosened first *his* tongue,
Upon the other's shoulder as he laid
His right hand slowly, Walter softly said—
“ Dear brother William ! ” An electric start
Answer'd that touch, deep-thrilling to the heart,
And that soft whisper'd word. Their meeting eyes,
Full of fond yearnings, tender memories,
All in a moment told—explain'd—confessed—
Absolved.—And Walter fell on William's breast.

THE YOUNG GREY HEAD.

GRIEF hath been known to turn the young head grey—
To silver over in a single day
The bright locks of the beautiful, their prime
Scarcely o'erpast : as in the fearful time
Of Gallia's madness, that discrownèd head
Serene, that on the accursed altar bled
Miscalled of Liberty. Oh! martyred Queen!
What must the sufferings of that night have been—
That one—that sprinkled thy fair tresses o'er
With time's untimely snow! But now no more
Lovely, august, unhappy one! of thee—
I have to tell an humbler history ;
A village tale, whose only charm, in sooth,
(If any) will be sad and simple truth.

“Mother,” quoth Ambrose to his thrifty dame—
So oft our peasant’s use his wife to name,
“Father” and “Master” to himself applied,
As life’s grave duties matronise the bride—
“Mother,” quoth Ambrose, as he faced the north,
With hard-set teeth, before he issued forth
To his day labour, from the cottage door—
“I’m thinking that, to-night, if not before,
There’ll be wild work. Dost hear old Chewton* roar?
It’s brewing up down westward; and look there,
One of those sea-gulls! ay, there goes a pair;
And such a sudden thaw! If rain comes on,
As threats, the waters will be out anon.
That path by th’ ford’s a nasty bit of way—
Best let the young ones bide from school to-day.”

“Do, mother, do!” the quick-car’d urchins cried;
Two little lasses to the father’s side
Close clinging, as they looked from him, to spy
The answering language of the mother’s eye.

* A fresh-water spring rushing into the sea called Chewton Bunny.

There was denial, and she shook her head :
“Nay, nay—no harm will come to them,” she said,
“The mistress lets them off these short dark days
An hour the earlier ; and our Liz, she says,
May quite be trusted—and I know ’tis true—
To take care of herself and Jenny too.
And so she ought—*she* seven come first of May—
Two years the oldest : and they give away
The Christmas bounty at the school to-day.”

The mother’s will was law, (alas for her
That hapless day, poor soul !) *She* could not err,
Thought Ambrose ; and his little fair-hair’d Jane
(Her namesake) to his heart he hugged again,
When each had had her turn ; she clinging so
As if that day she could not let him go.
But Labour’s sons must snatch a hasty bliss
In nature’s tend’rest mood. One last fond kiss,
“God bless my little maids !” the father said,
And cheerly went his way to win their bread.
Then might be seen, the playmate parent gone,
What looks demure the sister pair put on—

Not of the mother as afraid, or shy,
Or questioning the love that could deny ;
But simply, as their simple training taught,
In quiet, plain straightforwardness of thought,
(Submissively resigned the hope of play,)
Towards the serious business of the day.

To me there 's something touching, I confess,
In the grave look of early thoughtfulness,
Seen often in some little childish face
Among the poor. Not that wherein we trace
(Shame to our land, our rulers, and our race !)
The unnatural sufferings of the factory child,
But a staid quietness, reflective, mild,
Betokening, in the depths of those young eyes,
Sense of life's cares, without its miseries.

So to the mother's charge, with thoughtful brow,
The docile Lizzy stood attentive now ;
Proud of her years and of imputed sense,
And prudence justifying confidence—
And little Jenny, more *demurely* still,

Beside her waited the maternal will.
So standing hand in hand, a lovelier twain
Gainsb'rough ne'er painted : no—nor he of Spain,
Glorious Murillo !—and by contrast shown
More beautiful. The younger little one,
With large blue eyes, and silken ringlets fair,
By nut-brown Lizzy, with smooth parted hair,
Sable and glossy as the raven's wing,
And lustrous eyes as dark.

“ Now, mind and bring
Jenny safe home,” the mother said—“ don't stay
To pull a bough or berry by the way :
And when you come to cross the ford, hold fast
Your little sister's hand, till you 're quite past—
That plank's so crazy, and so slippery
(If not o'erflowed) the stepping-stones will be.
But you 're good children—steady as old folk,
I'd trust ye any where.” Then Lizzy's cloak,
(A good grey duffle,) lovingly she tied,
And amply little Jenny's lack supplied
With her own warmest shawl. “ Be sure,” said she,

“To wrap it round and knot it carefully
(Like this) when you come home ; just leaving free
One hand to hold by. Now, make haste away—
Good will to school, and then good right to play.”

Was there no sinking at the mother's heart,
When all equipt, they turned them to depart ?
When down the lane, she watched them as they went
Till out of sight, was no forefeeling sent
Of coming ill ? In truth I cannot tell :
Such warnings *have been sent*, we know full well,
And must believe—believing that they are—
In mercy then—to rouse—restrain—prepare.

And, now I mind me, something of the kind
Did surely haunt that day the mother's mind,
Making it irksome to bide all alone
By her own quiet hearth. Tho' never known
For idle gossipry was Jenny Gray,
Yet so it was, that morn she could not stay
At home with her own thoughts, but took her way
To her next neighbour's, half a loaf to borrow—

Yet might her store have lasted out the morrow.
—And with the loan obtained, she lingered still—
Said she—“ My master, if he ’d had his will,
Would have kept back our little ones from school
This dreadful morning ; and I ’m such a fool,
Since they ’ve been gone, I ’ve wished them back. But then
It won’t do in such things to humour men—
Our Ambrose specially. If let alone
He ’d spoil those wenches. But it ’s coming on,
That storm he said was brewing, sure enough—
Well ! what of that ?—To think what idle stuff
Will come into one’s head ! and here with you
I stop, as if I ’d nothing else to do—
And they ’ll come home drowned rats. I must be gone
To get dry things, and set the kettle on.”

His day’s work done, three mortal miles and more
Lay between Ambrose and his cottage door.
A weary way, God wot ! for weary wight !
But yet far off, the curling smoke’s in sight
From his own chimney, and his heart feels light.
How pleasantly the humble homestead stood,

Down the green lane by sheltering Shirley Wood !
How sweet the wafting of the evening breeze
In spring-time, from his two old cherry-trees
Sheeted with blossom ! And in hot July,
From the brown moor-track, shadowless and dry,
How grateful the cool covert to regain
Of his own *avenue*—that shady lane,
With the white cottage, in a slanting glow
Of sunset glory, gleaming bright below,
And jasmine porch, his rustic portico !

With what a thankful gladness in his face,
(Silent heart-homage—plant of special grace !)
At the lane's entrance, slackening off his pace,
Would Ambrose send a loving look before ;
Conceiting the caged blackbird at the door,
The very blackbird, strained its little throat
In welcome, with a more rejoicing note ;
And honest Tinker ! dog of doubtful breed,
All bristle, back, and tail, but “ good at need, ”
Pleasant *his* greeting to the accustomed ear ;
But of all welcomes pleasantest, most dear,

The ringing voices, like sweet silver bells,
Of his two little ones. How fondly swells
The father's heart, as, dancing up the lane,
Each clasps a hand in her small hand again ;
And each must tell her tale, and " say her say,"
Impeding as she leads, with sweet delay,
(Childhood's blest thoughtlessness !) his ownward way.

And when the winter day closed in so fast,
Scarce for his task would dreary daylight last ;
And in all weathers—driving sleet and snow—
Home by that bare, bleak moor-track must he go,
Darkling and lonely. Oh ! the blessed sight
(His pole-star) of that little twinkling light
From one small window, thro' the leafless trees,
Glimmering so fitfully, no eye but his
Had spied it so far off. And sure was he,
Entering the lane, a steadier beam to see,
Ruddy and broad as peat-fed hearth could pour,
Streaming to meet him from the open door.
Then, tho' the blackbird's welcome was unheard—
Silenced by winter—note of summer bird

Still hailed him ;—from no mortal fowl alive,
But from the cuckoo-clock just striking five—
And Tinker's ear and Tinker's nose were keen—
Off started he, and then a form was seen
Dark'ning the doorway ; and a smaller sprite,
And then another, peered into the night,
Ready to follow free on Tinker's track,
But for the mother's hand that held her back ;
And yet a moment—a few steps—and there,
Pulled o'er the threshold by that eager pair,
He sits by his own hearth, in his own chair ;
Tinker takes post beside, with eyes that say,
“ Master ! we 've done our business for the day.”
The kettle sings, the cat in chorus purrs,
The busy housewife with her tea-things stirs ;
The door's made fast, the old stuff curtain drawn,
How the hail clatters ! Let it clatter on.
How the wind raves and rattles ! What cares he ?
Safe housed, and warm beneath his own roof-tree,
With a wee lassie prattling on each knee.

Such was the hour—hour sacred and apart—

Warmed in expectancy the poor man's heart.
Summer and winter, as his toil he plied,
To him and his the literal doom applied,
Pronounced on Adam. But the bread was sweet
So earned, for such dear mouths. The weary feet
Hope-shod, stept lightly on the homeward way.
So specially it fared with Ambrose Gray
That time I tell of. He had worked all day
At a great clearing : vig'rous stroke on stroke
Striking, till, when he stopt, his back seem'd broke,
And the strong arm dropt nerveless. What of that ?
There was a treasure hidden in his hat—
A plaything for the young ones. He had found
A dormouse nest ; the living ball coiled round
For its long winter sleep ; and all his thought
As he trudged stoutly homeward, was of nought
But the glad wonderment in Jenny's eyes,
And graver Lizzy's quieter surprise,
When he should yield, by guess, and kiss, and prayer,
Hard won, the frozen captive to their care.

'Twas a wild evening—wild and rough. "I knew,"

Thought Ambrose, "those unlucky gulls spoke true—
And Gaffer Chewton never growls for nought—
I should be mortal 'mazed now, if I thought
My little maids were not safe housed before
That blinding hail-storm—ay, this hour and more.—
Unless, by that old crazy bit of board,
They've not passed dry-foot over Shallow-ford,
That I'll be bound for—swollen as it must be . . .
Well! if my mistress had been ruled by me . . ."
But, checking the half-thought as heresy,
He look'd out for the Home-Star. There it shone,
And with a gladdened heart he hastened on.

He's in the lane again—and there below,
Streams from the open doorway that red glow,
Which warms him but to look at. For his prize
Cautious he feels—all safe and snug it lies—
"Down Tinker!—down, old boy!—not quite so free—
The thing thou sniffest is no game for thee.—
But what's the meaning?—no look-out to-night!
No living soul astir!—Pray God all's right!
Who's flittering round the peat-stack in such weather?"

Mother!" you might have felled him with a feather
When the short answer to his loud—"Hillo!"
And hurried question—"Are they come?"—was—
"No."

To throw his tools down—hastily unhook
The old cracked lantern from its dusty nook,
And while he lit it, speak a cheering word,
That almost choked him, and was scarcely heard,
Was but a moment's act, and he was gone
To where a fearful foresight led him on.
Passing a neighbour's cottage in his way—
Mark Fenton's—him he took with short delay
To bear him company—for who could say
What need might be? They struck into the track
The children should have taken coming back
From school that day; and many a call and shout
Into the pitchy darkness they sent out,
And, by the lantern light, peer'd all about,
In every road-side thicket, hole, and nook,
Till suddenly—as nearing now the brook—
Something brushed past them. That was Tinker's bark—

Unheeded, he had follow'd in the dark,
Close at his master's heels, but, swift as light,
Darted before them now. "Be sure he's right—
He's on the track," cried Ambrose. "Hold the light
Low down—he's making for the water. Hark!
I know that whine—the old dog's found them, Mark."
So speaking, breathlessly he hurried on
Toward the old crazy foot-bridge. It was gone!
And all his dull contracted light could show
Was the black void and dark swollen stream below.
"Yet there's life somewhere—more than Tinker's whine—
That's sure," said Mark. "So, let the lantern shine
Down yonder. There's the dog—and, hark!"

"Oh dear!"

And a low sob came faintly on the ear,
Mock'd by the sobbing gust. Down, quick as thought,
Into the stream leapt Ambrose, where he caught
Fast hold of something—a dark huddled heap—
Half in the water, where 'twas scarce knee-deep,
For a tall man; and half above it, propp'd
By some old ragged side-piles, that had stopt
Endways the broken plank, when it gave way

With the two little ones that luckless day !

“ My babes !—my lambkins ! ” was the father’s cry.

One little voice made answer—“ Here am I ! ”

’Twas Lizzy’s. There she crouch’d, with face as white,

More ghastly, by the flickering lantern-light,

Than sheeted corpse. The pale blue lips, drawn tight,

Wide parted, showing all the pearly teeth,

And eyes on some dark object underneath,

Washed by the turbid water, fixed like stone—

One arm and hand stretched out, and rigid grown,

Grasping, as in the death-gripe—Jenny’s frock.

There she lay drowned. Could *he* sustain that shock,

The doating father ? Where ’s the unriven rock

Can bide such blasting in its flintiest part

As that soft sentient thing—the human heart ?

They lifted her from out her wat’ry bed—

Its covering gone, the lovely little head

Hung like a broken snowdrop all aside,

And one small hand. The mother’s shawl was tied,

Leaving *that* free, about the child’s small form,

As was her last injunction—“ *fast* and warm ”—

Too well obeyed—too fast! A fatal hold
Affording to the scrag by a thick fold
That caught and pinn'd her in the river's bed,
While through the reckless water over head
Her life-breath bubbled up.

“She might have lived
Struggling like Lizzy,” was the thought that rived
The wretched mother's heart when she knew all.
“But for my foolishness about that shawl—
And Master would have kept them back the day;
But I was wilful—driving them away
In such wild weather!”

Thus the tortured heart
Unnaturally against itself takes part,
Driving the sharp edge deeper of a woe
Too deep already. They had raised her now,
And parting the wet ringlets from her brow,
To that, and the cold cheek, and lips as cold,
The father glued his warm ones, ere they roll'd
Once more the fatal shawl—her winding-sheet—
About the precious clay. One heart still beat,
Warm'd by *his heart's* blood. To his *only child*

He turn'd him, but her piteous moaning mild
 Pierced him afresh—and now she knew him not.—
 “Mother!”—she murmur'd—“who says I forgot?
 Mother! indeed, indeed, I kept fast hold,
 And tied the shawl quite close—she can't be cold—
 But she won't move—we slipt—I don't know how—
 But I held on—and I'm so weary now—
 And it's so dark and cold! oh dear! oh dear!—
 And she won't move—if daddy was but here!”

* * * * * *

Poor lamb—she wander'd in her mind, 'twas clear—
 But soon the piteous murmur died away,
 And quiet in her father's arms she lay—
They their dead burthen had resign'd, to take
 The living so near lost. For her dear sake,
 And one at home, he arm'd himself to bear
 His misery like a man—with tender care,
 Doffing his coat her shivering form to fold—
 (His neighbour bearing *that* which felt no cold,)
 He clasp'd her close—and so, with little said,
 Homeward they bore the living and the dead.

From Ambrose Gray's poor cottage, all that night,
Shone fitfully a little shifting light,
Above—below :—for all were watchers there,
Save one sound sleeper.—*Her*, parental care,
Parental watchfulness, avail'd not now.
But in the young survivor's throbbing brow,
And wandering eyes, delirious fever burn'd ;
And all night long from side to side she turn'd,
Piteously plaining like a wounded dove,
With now and then the murmur—"She won't move"—
And lo ! when morning, as in mockery, bright
Shone on that pillow, passing strange the sight—
That young head's raven hair was streak'd with white !
No idle fiction this. Such things have been
We know. And *now I tell what I have seen.*

Life struggled long with death in that small frame,
But it was strong, and conquer'd. All became
As it had been with the poor family—
All—saving that which never more might be—
There was an empty place—they were but three.

THE LEGEND OF THE LIDO.



I.

HE stood before the Signori
With a truthful look and bold ;
A look of calm simplicity,
That Fisherman poor and old :
Though every face, with a gathering frown
And a searching glance, look'd darkly down
While his wonderful tale he told :

II.

And, though a voice from—he knew not where—
(For none beside him stood),
Breathed in his very ear “Beware !”
In a tone might have froze his blood ;
He but cross'd himself as he glanced around,
But faltered neither for sight nor sound,
For he knew that his cause was good.

III.

“ I tell the truth—I tell no lie,”
Old Gian Battista said ;
“ But hear me out, and patiently,
Signori wise and dread ;
And, if I fail sure proof to bring
How I came by this golden ring,
(He held it high, that all might see),
There are the cells and the Piombi—
Or—off with this old grey head.

IV.

“ Ye know—all know—what fearful work
The winds and waves have driven
These three days past. That darkness murk
So shrouded earth and heaven,
We scarce could tell if sun or moon
Look'd down on island or lagune,
Or if 'twere midnight or high noon ;
And yells and shrieks were in the air,
As if with spirits in despair
The very fiends had striven.

v.

“ And busy, sure enough, were they,
As soon ye ’ll understand ;
Many believed the doomful day
Of Venice was at hand :
For high o’er every level known,
The rising flood came crashing on,
Till not a sea-mark old was seen,
Nor of the striplet islets green
A speck of hard, dry sand.

vi.

“ ‘ Well, Gian and his old boat,’ quoth I,
‘ Together must sink or swim.
They’ve both seen service out wellnigh,
Half founder’d, plank and limb ;
But good San Marco, if he will,
Can save his own fair city still.
I put my trust in him.’

VII.

“ So—for the night was closing o’er—
San Marco’s Riva by,
I thought my little boat to moor,
And lie down patiently
To sleep, or watch, as best I might,
Telling my beads till morning light—
I scarce could see to make all tight,
Night fell so suddenly.

VIII.

“ While I still fumbled (stooping low),
A voice hail’d close at hand.
I started to my feet, and lo !
Hard by, upon the strand,
Stood one in close-cowl’d garments white,
Who seem’d by that uncertain light,
Methought, an holy Carmelite,
Slow beckoning with the hand.

IX.

“ Before, in answer to the call,
I ’d clear’d my husky throat,
Down leapt that stately form and tall
Into my crazy boat—
A weight to crush it through. But no,
He came down light as feather’d snow,
As soundless ; and, composedly
Taking his seat, ‘ My son,’ said he,
‘ Unmoor and get afloat.’

X.

“ ‘ Corpo di Bacco ! get afloat
In such a storm ! ’ quoth I,
‘ Just as I ’m mooring my old boat
Here snug all night to lie.
And, Padre, might I make so free,
What service would you have of me ? ’
‘ First to San Giorgio,’ answer’d he,
‘ Row swift and steadily ;

XI.

“ ‘ And fear thou not ; for a strong arm
Will be with thee,’ he said,
‘ And not a hair shall come to harm,
This night, of thy grey head.
And guerdon great shall be thy meed,
If faithful thou art found at need.’
‘ Well, good San Marco be my guide,
Quoth I, and, my old boat untied ;
‘ I ’ve little cause for dread :

XII.

“ ‘ Nothing to lose but my old life,—
So for San Giorgio !—hey !’—
Never again so mad a strife
Unto my dying day
Shall I e’er wage with wind and sea ;
And yet we danced on merrily :
Now cleaving deep the briny grave,
Now breasting high the foamy wave,
Like waterfowl at play.

XIII.

“How we spun on!—’Tis true I plied
That night a lusty oar;
But such a wind, and such a tide
Down full upon us bore!
And yet—in marv’lous little space
We reach’d San Giorgio’s landing-place.
‘Well so far,’ said my ghostly fare,
And bidding me await him there,
Rose up, and sprang ashore.

XIV.

“And in a moment he was gone,
Lost in the dark profound;
Nor, as my oars I lay upon,
Heard I a footfall sound
Going or coming; and yet twain
Stood there, when the voice hail’d again,
And, starting, I look’d round.

xv.

“Down stept they both into the boat—
‘And now, my son!’ said he
Whom first I took—‘once more afloat—
Row fast and fearlessly.
And for San Nicolo make straight.’
‘Nay, nay,’ quoth I—‘’tis tempting fate’—
But he o’erruled me, as of late,
And—splash!—away went we.

xvi.

“Away, away—thro’ foam and flood!—
‘Rare work this same!’ thought I,
‘Yet, faith, right merrily we scud!
A stouter oar I ply,
Methinks, than thirty years ago.
The Carmelite keeps faith, I trow—
Hurra, then, for San Nicolo!
We’re a holy crew surely!’

xvii.

“ Thus half in jest, half seriously,
Unto myself I said,
Looking askance at my company.
But our second trip was sped ;
And there, on the marge of the sea-wash’d strand,
Did another ghostly figure stand ;
And down into the boat stept he.—
I cross’d myself right fervently,
With a sense of creeping dread.

xviii.

“ But the Carmelite (I call him so,
As he seemed at first to me),
Said—‘ Now, my son ! for the Castles row,
Great things thou soon shalt see.’
Without a word, at his bidding now
For the Lido Strait I turn’d my prow,
And took to my oar with a thoughtful brow,
And pull’d on silently.

xix.

“When to the Lido pass we came,
Cospetto! what a sight—
Air, sky, and sea seem'd all on flame,
And by that lurid light
I saw a ship come sailing in
Like a ship of hell; and a fiendish din
From the fiendish crew on her deck rose high,
And ‘Ho! ho! ho!’ was the cursed cry—
‘Venice is doom'd to-night!’

xx.

“Then in my little boat, the three,
With each a stretch'd-out hand,
Stood up;—and that sign, made silently,
Was one of high command.
For in a moment, over all,
Thick darkness dropt, as 'twere a pall;
And the winds and waves sank down to sleep,
Though the mutt'ring thunder, low and deep,
Ran round, from strand to strand.

XXI.

“ As it died away, the murky veil,
Like a curtain, aside was drawn ;
And lo ! on the sea lay the moonlight pale,
And the dæmon-ship was gone.
The moonlight lay on the glassy sea,
And the bright stars twinkled merrily,
Where the rippling tide roll'd on.

XXII.

“ ‘ Well done, well done, so far, my son ! ’
Said the first of the ghostly three.
‘ Thy good night's work is well nigh done,
And the rich reward to be :
Put back—and, as we homeward row,
Land these my brethren dear ; whom know
For San Giorgio and San Nicolo—
Thou shalt afterwards know me.’

XXIII.

“ ‘ And doubtless,’ to myself I said,
‘ For the greatest of the three : ’

But I spoke not ; only bow'd my head,
Obeying reverently :
And pulling back, with heart elate,
Landed as bidden my saintly freight,
—That ever, old boat, it should be thy fate,
To have held such company !

xxiv.

“ The voyage was done ; the Riva won,
From whence we put to sea.
‘ And now, my son ! ’ said the mighty one,
‘ Once more attend to me ;
Present thee with the coming day
Before the Signori, and say,
That I, San Marco, sent thee there,
The great deliverance to declare,
This night wrought gloriously.

xxv.

“ ‘ What thou hast heard and seen this night,
With fearless speech unfold :
And thy good service to requite,

I will, to thee be told
 Five hundred ducats! ' Holy saint!
 I meekly ask'd, with due restraint ;
 ' Will they believe what I shall say,
 And count, on his bare word, such pay
 To the fisherman poor and old ?'

XXVI.

“ ‘ This token give to them,’ said he,—
 And from his finger drew
 The ring, most noble Signori,
 I here present to you.
 ‘ Let search in my treasury be made,
 ’Twill be found missing there,’ he said,
 So—vanished from my view !”

XXVII.

There ran a whisp'ring murmur round,
 As Gian closed his tale :
 And some, still unbelieving, frown'd,
 And some with awe grew pale.
 Then all, as with one voice, cried out,

“Why sit we here in aimless doubt,
The means, and place of proof so nigh ?
One glance at the holy treasury
All words will countervail.”

XXVIII.

Led by the Doge Gradenigo,
Set forth the solemn train,
Through arch and column winding slow
Till the great church door they gain.
With them the fisherman was led,
Guarded by two ; but his old head
He held up high :—“For sure,” said he,
“San Marco will keep faith with me,
And prove his own words plain.”

XXIX.

The Proveditore stept on first
With high authority ;
And at his word, wide open burst
The saintly treasury ;
And holy monks, with signs devout,

Held high the blessed relics out':
And gifts of emperors and kings
(Priceless, inestimable things !)
Display'd triumphantly.

xxx.

Familiar as their beads to them
(So oft recounted o'er
Each history) was relic, gem,
And all the sacred store.
But now, "What know ye of this thing?"
The Doge said, holding forth the ring,
"Have ye seen its like before?"

xxxI.

Short scrutiny sufficed. "Full well
That ring we know," said they.
"But if taken hence by miracle,
Or how, we cannot say.
'Tis the same this blessed image wore,
San Marco's self." All doubt was o'er.
"Viva San Marco evermore!"
Was the deafening roar that day.

xxxii.

What throat than Gian's louder strain'd
The exulting sound to swell?
And when the ducats, fairly gain'd,
Into his cap they tell,
With promise for San Marco's sake
Like sum a yearly dole to make:
"Viva San Marco!" shouted he;
"Who would not row in such company
Against all the fiends in hell?"

C.

THE WINTRY MAY—1837.

WHEN Summer faded last away
I sighed o'er every shortening day ;
Comparing, with its pale-hued flowers,
My sicklied hopes and numbered hours,
And thinking—" Shall I ever see
That Summer sun renewed for me ?"

When Autumn shed her foliage sere,
Methought I could have dropt a tear
With every shrivelled leaf that fell,
And frost-night blossom. " Who can tell
When leaves again clothe shrub and tree,"
Whispered my heart—" Where thou wilt be ?"

But when Old Winter's rule severe
Set in triumphant—dark and drear—
Tho' shrinking from the bitter blast,
Methought—"This worst once overpast,
With balmy, blessed Spring, may be
A short revival yet for me."

And this is May—but where, Oh! where
The balmy breath, the perfumed air
I pined for, while my weary sprite
Languished away the long, long night,
Living on dreams of roving free
By primrose bank and cowslip lea.

Unkindly season! cruel Spring!
To the sick wretch no balm ye bring;
No herald gleam of summer days,
Reviving, vivifying rays.
Seasons to come may brighter be,
But Time—Life—Hope—run short with me.

Yet therefore faint not fearful heart !
Look up and learn "the better part,"
That shall outlast Life's little day ;
Seek Peace, which passeth not away.
Look to the land where God shall be
Life—light—yea all in all to thee.

ONCE UPON A TIME.



I MIND me of a pleasant time,
A season long ago ;
The pleasantest I've ever known,
Or ever now shall know.
Bees, birds, and little tinkling rills,
So merrily did chime ;
The year was in its sweet spring-tide,
And I was in my prime.

I've never heard such music since,
From every bending spray ;
I've never plucked such primroses,
Set thick on bank and brae.

I've never smelt such violets
As all that pleasant time
I found by every hawthorn-root—
When I was in my prime.

Yon moory down, so black and bare,
Was gorgeous then and gay
With golden gorse—bright blossoming—
As none blooms now-a-day.
The Blackbird sings but seldom now
Up there in the old Lime,
Where hours and hours he used to sing—
When I was in my prime.

Such cutting winds came never then
To pierce one thro' and thro' ;
More softly fell the silent shower,
More balmily the dew.
The morning mist and evening haze,
(Unlike this cold grey rime)
Seemed woven warm of golden air—
When I was in my prime.

And Blackberries—so mawkish now—
 Were finely flavoured then ;
And Nuts—such reddening clusters ripe
 I ne'er shall pull again.
Nor Strawberries blushing bright—as rich
 As fruits of sunniest clime ;
How all is altered for the worse
 Since I was in my prime !

WILD FLOWERS.

YE who courtly beauty prize
Cast not here your scornful eyes ;
Nature's lowly children we,
Bred on bank—in brake—on lea,—
By the meadow runlet's brink,
In the tall cliff's craggy chink,
On the sea-shore's arid shingle,
On bleak moor—in bosky dingle,
On old tower and ruined wall,
By the sparkling waterfall.

Not a hue of gaudier glow,
Not a streak to art we owe ;

Never hand but Nature's own—
Nature's "sweet and cunning one"—
Hath imparted charm and grace
To our unaspiring race :
All her elements of might,
Common air and common light,
Shower and sunshine, mist and dew ;
And her labourers—blithe ones too—
All unhired, for love she finds,
Bees, and birds, and wandering winds.

Courtly scorners ! not for ye
Bloom our tribes of low degree ;
Stately Aloe,—Tuberose tall,
Fitly grace baronial hall ;
Flaunting in exotic pride,
(Sculptured Nymph or Fawn beside,)
From marble vase on terrace wide,
Where jewelled robes sweep rustling by,
And lordly idlers lounge and sigh ;—
There intrude not such as we,
Commoners of low degree.

Yet have we our lovers too,
 Hearts to holy Nature true,
 Such as find in all her ways
 Objects for delight and praise,—
 From the Cedar, straight and tall,
 To “the Hyssop on the wall.”

Favoured mortals ! to your eyes,
 All unveiled, an Eden lies,
 Hidden from the worldling’s view ;
 Wells of water gush for you
 Where his sealèd sight doth spy
 Nought but dull aridity :—
 Hither come—to you we ’ll tell
 Where our sweetest sisters dwell ;
 Show you every secret cell
 Where the coy take sanctuary,
 “Pale maids that unmarried die ;”—
 Primroses, and paler yet
 The unstainèd, odorous violet.
 Hither come, and you shall see
 Where the loveliest lilies be :—

They through forest vistas gleaming
(Azure clouds of heaven's own seeming),—
They their snowy heads that hide,
Cowering by the coppice side,—
They that stand in nodding ranks,
All along the river's banks
Golden daffodils ; and they
—Brightest of the bright array—
With a swan-like grace that glide,
Anchored on the waveless tide,—
These and flowery myriads more,
All their charms—a countless store—
All their sweets shall yield to thee,
Nature's faithful votary !

Tho' we grace not lordly halls,
Yet, on rustic festivals,
Who than we are fitlier seen
Flaunting o'er the village green ?
Many a kerchief deck we there ;
Many a Maiden's nut-brown hair ;
Many a straw hat, plaited neat

By shepherd boy, we make complete
With cowslip cark'net :—Then to see
With what an air, how jauntily
On his curled pate 'tis stuck awry,
To snare some cottage beauty's eye !

Joyous childhood roving free,
With our sweet bells greedily
Both his chubby hands doth fill.
Welcome plunderer, pluck at will !
Nature's darling ! dear to thee
More than garden tribes are we.
Pluck at will enough to deck,
Boy, thy favourite lambkin's neck.

Pineth some pale wretch away
In prison cell, where cheerful day
Only thro' the deep-set bars
Beams obliquely, and the stars
Scarce can glance a pitying eye
On the poor soul's misery ;
Haply on some lodgment nigh,

Mossy bastion's mouldering edge,
Loophole chink, or grating ledge,
One of us (some fragrant thing)
Taketh stand, and thence doth fling
On the kind air soft perfume
Down to that dark prison room ;
Entering with the balmy gale,
Thoughts of some dear native vale,
Some sweet home by mountain stream,
On the captive's soul may gleam ;
Wafting him, in fondest dream,
To the grass-plat far away,
Where his little children play.

On the poor man's grave we're found,
Honouring the unhonoured ground ;
To the grave—the grave, for aye—
Reverential dues we pay,
When all thought hath passed away
From all living, long ago,
Of the dust that sleeps below ;
From the sunken hillock gone,

E'en the cold memorial stone,
Unforsaking, we alone
Year by year fresh tribute spread
O'er the long-forgotten Dead.

THE GREENWOOD SHRIFT.

OUTSTRETCHED beneath the leafy shade
Of Windsor forest's deepest glade

A dying woman lay ;

Three little children round her stood,

And there went up from the greenwood

A woeful wail that day.

“ Oh, Mother ! ” was the mingled cry,

“ Oh, Mother ! Mother ! do not die,

And leave us all alone.”

“ My blessed Babes ! ”—she strove to say,

But the faint accents died away

In a low sobbing moan.

And then life struggled hard with death,
And fast and strong she drew her breath,
 And up she raised her head ;
And peering thro' the deep wood maze,
With a long, sharp, unearthly gaze,
 “ Will he not come ? ” she said.

Just then, the parting boughs between,
A little maid's light form was seen,
 All breathless with her speed ;
And following close a man came on,
A portly man to look upon,
 Who led a panting steed.

“ Mother ! ” the little maiden cried,
Or e'er she reached the woman's side,
 Or kissed her clay-cold cheek,
“ I have not idled in the town,
But long went wand'ring up and down
 The Minister to seek.

“ They told me here, they told me there,—
I think they mocked me everywhere ;
 And when I found his home,
And begged him, on my bended knee,
To bring his book and come with me,
 Mother ! he would not come.

“ I told him how you dying lay,
And could not go in peace away
 Without the Minister :
I begged him for dear Christ, his sake,—
But oh !—my heart was fit to break—
 Mother ! he would not stir.

“ So—tho’ my tears were blinding me—
I ran back fast as fast could be,
 To come again to you :
When here, close by, this Squire I met,
Who asked so mild what made me fret ?
 And when I told him true,

“ ‘ I will go with you, child,’ he said,
‘ God sends me to this dying bed.’

Mother ! he ’s here—hard by.”

While thus the little maiden spoke,
The man, his back against an oak,
Looked on with glistening eye.

The bridle on his neck flung free,
With quivering flank, and trembling knee,
Pressed close his bonny bay ;
A statelier man, a statelier steed
Paced never greensward glade, I rede,
Than those stood there the day.

So, while the little maiden spoke,
The man, his back against an oak,
Looked on with glistening eye
And folded arms ; and in his look
Something that, like a sermon book,
Said—“ All is vanity !”

But when the dying woman's face
Turned tow'rd him, with a wistful gaze,
 He stept to where she lay ;
And, kneeling down, bent over her,
Saying—" I am a Minister ;—
 My sister, let us pray."

And well, withouten book or stole,
(God's words were printed on his soul,)
 Into the dying ear
He poured, as 'twere an Angel's strain,
The things that unto life pertain
 And death's dark shadows, clear :—

He spoke of sinners' lost estate
In Christ renewed, regenerate ;—
 Of God's most blest decree,
That not a single soul shall die
Who turns repentant, with the cry,
 " Be merciful to me ! "

Then, as the spirit ebbed away,
He raised his hands and eyes to pray
 That peaceful it might pass ;
And then——the orphans' wail alone
Was heard, as they knelt, every one,
 Close round on the green grass.

Such was the sight their wondering eyes
Beheld, in heart-struck mute surprise,
 Who reined their coursers back,
Just as they found the long astray,
Who, in the heat of chase, that day
 Had wandered from the track.

Back each man reined his pawing steed,
And lighted down, as if agreed,
 In silence at his side ;
And there, uncovered all, they stood :
It was a wholesome sight and good,
 That day, for mortal pride.

For of the noblest of the land
Was that deep-hushed, bare-headed band ;
 And, central in the ring,
By that dead Pauper on the ground,
Her ragged orphans clinging round,
 Knelt their anointed King !

LAMENT FOR LILIAS.

Is there no power in Love? Hath Love no chain
Of linkèd strength to hold the spirit here?
Has earth no pleasant places to detain
One heavenly nature from its higher sphere?

Love was about thee, Lilies! from thy birth
Love, like an atmosphere, encircled thee;
A flower, almost too beautiful for earth,
That in our sight did dwell continually.

Our joy!—our pride!—our darling!—our delight!—
More precious in thy sheltering leaves deep set,
That shrinking timidly from common sight,
Bloomed but for us, our own sweet violet.

But oh! the fragrance that it shed abroad ;
 The incense that to highest heaven ascended
 From those meek virtues a heart-searching God
 Loves best, with his dear Son's own meekness blended.

A Stranger came and coveted our flower ;
 Yet *not a* Stranger Lilies' heart who won,
 And pressed, prevailed, and bore her from her bower,
 To be of his the life, the light, the sun.

Meekly she moved, with matron grace serene,
 In duty and in love's enlarged sphere ;
 And the heart blessed her—and the eye was seen
 Warm glistening as her well-known step drew near.

And thus beloved and blessing, was she blessed?—
 So bounteously, that life could have in store
 One only gift, which, crowning all the rest,
 Would make her cup of happiness run o'er.

'Twas granted ; tidings came—"a child was born :"
 Was there not gladness in the house that day !

Down sank the sun, uprose the merry morn,—
Pale, cold in death, the new-made mother lay.

Oh ! what a ruin—what a wreck was there
Of goodliest structure ever reared below !
Our Best !—our Beautiful as Angels are !—
Why wouldst thou leave us ? Wherefore wouldst thou
go ?

Hadst thou no power, oh Love, the fleeting breath
The life of many lives awhile to stay ?
Hast thou no power, oh Love ! to fight with Death,
To fight—to overcome—to conquer ? Yea,

Thou hast, thou hast. The fight, the victory
For us, the lost regained, *is* fought and won :
The grave can never hold whom Christ sets free ;
We shall rejoin thee, loved and lovely one !

TOO LATE.



Too late—the curse of life !
 Could we but read
In many a heart the thoughts that inly bleed,
 How oft were found,
Engraven deep, those words of saddest sound,
 Curse of our mortal state,
 Too late ! too late !

Tears are there, acrid drops
 That do not rise
Quick gushing to the eyes,
Kindly relieving, as they gently flow,
 The mitigable woe :

But oozing inward, silent, dark, and chill,
Like some cavernous rill,
That falls congealing—turning into stone
The thing it falls upon.

But now and then, may be,
The pent-up pain
Breaks out resistless in some passionate strain
Of simulated grief ;
Seeking relief
In that fond idle way
From thoughts on life that prey.

“ How truthfully conceived ! ”
With glistening eyes,
Some listener cries ;
“ Fine art to feign so well ! ”
Ah ! none can tell
So truthfully the deep things of the heart
Who have not felt the smart.

Too late—the curse of life !

Take back the cup
 So mockingly held up
 To lips that may not drain.

Was it no pain
 That long heart-thirst?
 That the life-giving draught is offered first
 On that extremest shore
 Who leaves, shall thirst no more.

Take back the cup!—yet, no;
 Who dares to say
 'Tis mockingly presented? Let it stay.
 If here too late,
 There is a better state,
 A cup that this may typify, prepared
 For those who 've little of life's sweetness shared,
 Nor many flow'rets found
 On earthly ground;
 Yet patiently hold on, awaiting meek
 The call of Him they seek—
 “Come, thou that weepst, yet hast stood the test,—
 Come to thy rest.”

ON
SEEING LAID THE FIRST STONE OF
PENINGTON CHURCH—1838.

ON this day's purpose, Lord !
Send down thy blessing ;
Hear thou the suppliant hearts
Thy throne addressing :—
Let thy light shine on this appointed place ;
And perfect our imperfect work, thro' grace.

Full well, O Lord ! we know,
That temples made with hands
Thou needest not, whose power
Creation spans ;
Yet dwellest oft in shrines—not molten gold—
But some poor humble heart of human mould.

But thou hast pledged thy word,
Where two or three
Are gathered in thy name,
Thyself will be.
Thus we behold, by Faith's far-stretching eye,
Thy presence in the future Sanctuary.

Therefore we lay this stone,
And humbly pray—
Be with us, Lord ! and bless
Our act this day.
Be with their hearts and counsels who direct,
And with the builder's hand, Almighty Architect !

But chiefly be with those
Shall hither come,
When, consecrated, stands
The finished dome.
On all, O Father ! let thy Spirit rest—
People and Priest—on all—in every breast.

On this day's purpose, Lord!
Send down thy blessing :
Hear thou the suppliant hearts
Thy throne addressing :—
Let thy light shine on this appointed place ;
And perfect our imperfect work, thro' grace.

TO
A YOUNG SOUTH AMERICAN SPANIARD.

STRANGER, from a land of sunshine !

What, returning, wilt thou tell
Of the sunless land thou leavest,
With, perhaps, a last farewell ?

Wilt thou, of thy young experience,
When the story shall be told,
Say that, like our dull cold climate,
Hearts and minds are dull and cold ?

No ; a less ungentle record
Of the past thou 'lt bear away ;
“ Good and evil have I met with,
Strength and weakness,” thou wilt say.

Truth and error—coldness, kindness—

All the good I bear in mind ;

All remembrance of the evil

Leave, with England's fogs, behind.

THE WARNING.

THERE'S bloom upon the lady's cheek,
There's brightness in her eye :
Who says the sentence is gone forth,
That that fair thing must die ?

Must die before the flowering Lime,
Out yonder, sheds its leaf :
Can this thing be, O human flower !
Thy blossoming so brief ?

Nay, nay, 'tis but a passing cloud,
Thou dost but droop awhile ;
There's life, (long years) and love, and joy
(Whole ages) in that smile—

In the gay call that to thy knee
Brings quick that loving child,
Who looks up in those laughing eyes,
With his large eyes so mild.

Yet thou art doomed—art dying. All
The coming hour foresee ;
But, in love's cowardice, withhold
The warning word from thee.

God help thee, and be merciful !
His strength is with the weak ;
Thro' babes and sucklings the Most High
Hath oft vouchsafed to speak ;

And speaketh now—" Oh Mother, dear !"
Whispers the little child,
—And there is trouble in his eyes,
Those large blue eyes so mild—

“ Oh Mother, dear ! they say that soon,
When here I seek for thee,
I shall not find thee ; nor out there
Under the old oak tree,

Nor upstairs in the Nursery,
Nor anywhere, they say :
Where wilt thou go to, Mother, dear ?
Oh, do not go away ! ”

There was deep silence—a long hush—
And then, the child’s low sob :
Her quivering eyelids close ; one hand
Holds down the heart’s quick throb.

And the lips move, tho’ sound is none :
That inward voice is prayer ;
And hark !—“ Thy will, O Lord ! be done,”
And tears are trickling there,

Down that fair cheek, on that young head,
And round her neck he clings ;
And child and mother murmur out
Unutterable things :

He half unconscious,—she heart-struck
With sudden, solemn truth,
That number'd are her days on earth,
Her shroud prepared in youth ;

That all in life her heart holds dear
God calls her to resign :
She hears—feels—trembles—but looks up,
And sighs—“ Thy will be mine ! ”

ARCHBISHOP GERSON.

A R. C. LEGEND.



A VOICE from the sinful city
Goes up to God on high—
“ Why tarries the righteous doom,
When the time of o'erflowing is come
Of the cup of iniquity ? ”

And the good Archbishop Gerson,
As he kneels in penance drear
On the cold hard flags so white,
At the hour of dead midnight,
That accusing voice doth hear.

And, groaning, he lifteth up
His eyes to the holy rood ;
When lo ! from the piercèd side,
And the gaping nail-wounds wide,
Wells out as 'twere fresh-drawn blood.

The old man beats his breast,
At that awful sight, full sore ;
And he bends down his aged brow
—All beaded with sweat-drops now—
Till it toucheth the marble floor.

And he wrestles in earnest prayer ;
But the accusing voice still cries,
“ How long, O Lord ! how long
Wilt thou bear with *thy* people's wrong,
With *this* people's iniquities ? ”

“ Haste hither, my brethren dear !
And humble yourselves with me,
My holy brethren all ! ”
Is the Archbishop's piercing call,
In the strength of his agony.

They come at the call with speed,
They kneel, and weep, and pray ;
But the voice of prayer is drowned
In that dread accusing sound,
“ O Lord ! make no delay.”

“ We are grievous offenders all—
All leprous and defiled :
What lips shall be found this day
With prevailing prayer to pray,
Save the lips of a little child ? ”

“ Of such little ones hither bring,”
Cries aloud the Archbishop then.
And they gather, at his command,
Round the altar, a sinless band,
Tho’ the children of sinful men.

And the pure young voices rise
On the incense of taintless breath :
And there reigneth o’er all the while,
Throughout that majestic pile,
A stillness as deep as death.

For crozier and cowl alike
In the dust lie prostrate there ;
Of those living men laid low
In the depth of abasement now,
Stirreth not hand or hair.

But the pleading voice goes up
From that infant choir the while ;
And behold, o'er the face divine
Playeth, like lightning-shine,
The gleam of a gracious smile.

Then upriseth, like one entranced,
The Archbishop on his feet :—
“ Give thanks for a day of grace ! ”
He crieth, with radiant face,—
“ Give thanks, as is most meet.

“ The Innocents' prayer ascendeth
Above the Accuser's cry ;
Their Angels are heard in heaven,
And a day of grace is given.
Glory to God most High ! ”

ABRAM AND THE FIRE-WORSHIPPER.

A RABBINICAL LEGEND.

IN his tent door, at eventide,
The Father of the Faithful stands,
 With upraised hands,
 Shading his sight
 From the low slanting light,
As thro' the Palms, on either side,
 And over the red sands,
And thro' the burning haze,
He sends afar a wistful gaze,
Belated traveller haply to discern,
 And make him turn
 Into the tent that night,
 An honoured guest,
To comfort there his heart with food and rest.

And lo !

As at the wish appears,
Bowed down with weight of years
More than of weariness, an aged man.

White was his beard as snow,

Feeble and slow

His tottering gait ;

And Abram doth not wait,

But while one ran

To bid prepare the bath, makes haste to meet

The slow advancing feet :

And " Turn in here, my Father, and eat bread,

And with thy servant rest to-night," he said.

They have washed the desert sands

From the stranger's burning feet ;

They have poured upon his hands

Pure water, cool and sweet,

And now they set on meat ;

And with sweet sense of rest

The way-worn guest

Prepares to eat.

But—" Hold ! "—with lowering brow

Of dark surprise

The entertainer cries—

" Man ! what art thou

That bowest not the head,

Nor prayer hast said

To the Most High, before thou breakest bread ? "

Meekly the Man replies,

Uplifting his dim eyes,

(Dim now with tears

As with his hundred years,)

" Oh ! let not my Lord's ire

Wax hot against me now ;

Thy servant doth not bow

To Gods of wood or stone ;

I worship One alone

To whom all souls aspire—

The Everliving One,

The sacred fire."

" Hence, Heathen, from my door !

Pollute my place no more ! "

In zeal for the true God, cries Abram then ;
 “ Nor there must thou be laid
 Under that palm tree’s shade ;
 ’Twould wither at the root,
 Nor evermore bear fruit,
 Accursed among men !
Back to the howling wilderness again ;
 Go forth, and see
If there thy God will seek and cherish thee.”

Meekly the man obeys ;
 He takes his staff,
(While from behind is heard a mocking laugh,)
 And foot-sore, and in pain,
And hungry and athirst, goes forth again
 Into the lonesome night :
 Nor for that sight
Relenteth Abram ; in the tent he stays,
 Sternly resolved, and says,
With self-complacency devout,
“ I have done well,—I have cast out

The unbelieving thing abhorred ;
So be it ever with thy foes, O Lord ! ”

Then spake a Voice, and said,
“ Where, Abram, is thy guest ? ”—

“ *Thou* knowest best

Who knowest all things ! ” straight, withouten dread,

Abram replies :

“ Thou knowest well, All-wise,
That I am very jealous for thy name,
And strong to put to shame

Thine enemies ;

And even now,

(His hundred years of sin be on his head)

Have I not thrust out one, who unto thee

Never made vow,

Nor bent the knee ?

All-just ! for this good deed remember me.”

“ Ill, Abram, hast thou done,”

The Voice made answer then,—

“ Have I not set the sun

To shine upon all men,

Mine—every one.—

And could'st not thou forbear

One hour with him, an hundred years my care ?

Whom *I* have borne with, tho' he knew me not,

He, the untaught.—

Go, bring thy brother back,

Nor let him lack

Love's service ; peradventure so to win,

From ignorant sin

Of foul idolatry,

A soul for me.”

The word was spoken,

The heart of pride was broken ;

Gone was the blindness—

Altered to loving-kindness

The zealot mood :

“ Lord ! thou alone art good,

And I am nought.

The ill that I have wrought

Forgive me now ;

There is none good but Thou ! ”

So Abram spake, heart-chastened ;
And forth, in anxious quest
Of the despised guest
—Despised no longer—hastened.
Nor long in vain
He, with his Servants, sought ;
Small progress had he made, that Man forlorn,
Aged, and weak, and worn :
And found, they bring him to the tent again
With tenderest care,
To honourable entertainment there,
Soft rest and choicest fare :
And Abram waited on his guest that night,
Self-humbled in his sight.

THE THREE SISTERS.

LOCH AWE.—Three large Ash-trees by the road-side are known by the name of the Three Sisters, from the persons who planted them ; and this was all we heard. A more durable monument these Sisters, whoever they were, might have left, but not a more beautiful nor a more affecting one, under whatever circumstances they may have planted the trees which have already so long survived them,—whether in the joyousness of childhood, with no fore-thought and fore-feeling to disturb their enjoyment ; or perhaps with too much of that feeling, when they were about to be separated for the first time, or for ever.

MR. SOUTHEY'S *Scotch Journal*, p. 247.

STOP, Traveller ! rest and contemplate

A moment on thy way,

Those three fair spreading Ashen trees,

That gently in the noon-day breeze

Wave light their feathery spray.

Thou walkest on thy worldly way,

And seek'st the crowded mart.

Yet pause—thou never wilt repent

(Stolen from the world) these moments spent

In quietness of heart.

“The world is too much with us” all—
It is a blessed thing
To find a little resting-place,
A secret nook—a charmed space,
Safe from its entering.

Where hoarded thoughts, pure, spiritual,
Imaginative, holy,
(Released awhile from clinging clay,)
May revel—innocently gay,
Or mildly melancholy.

Where Memory’s inward eye may dwell
On consecrated treasures,
Too precious to be gazed upon
Where Life’s cold common round runs on,
Of heartless cares and pleasures.

Where Fancy may in Cloudland build,
Or smallest earthly space,
As here—and so we come at last
To an old story of the past,
Connected with this place—

Yet not a story :—just a sketch—
A shadowy outline rude ;
Such as, methinks, 'twere pleasant play
To sit and fill this summer day,
With apt similitude.

These Ash trees—(mark their number well ;
Their equal growth you see,
Their equal ages : vigorous, green
As their first leafy prime was seen)—
Are called—“The Sisters Three.”

By whom—or after whom so called,
None living now can say ;
Nor planted how long since—nor more
Than that the name they bear, they bore
In a long distant day,

Memorial of a mortal three
Who set them where they stand,
Their pensile branches still to wave
When long long mouldered in the grave,
Each planter Sister's hand—

Unsculptured, fragile monument !

Who wills, may read in thee
 —Reading with thoughtful heart, and mind
 To dreamy questioning inclined—
 A touching mystery.

What were those Sisters ?—young or old ?—

Of high or humble birth ?
 Simple or wise—admired or scorned ?
 Loved and lamented, or unmourned
 Passed they away from earth ?—

Came they in joyous childhood here,

From sad fore-feeling free,
 To set—by hands parental led—
 The Sapling trees that overhead
 Inarch so loftily ?

Or hither, in short after-time,

(Tears from their young eyes starting)
 Came they with saddened mien sedate,
 And arms entwined, to consecrate
 The eve of a first parting ?

Each calling by a Sister's name
The youngling Ash then set ;
And blessing, as she turned away,
The frail memorial of a day
It stands recording yet.

Or was it, of the Sisters three
When two were dead and gone,
That, all-absorbed in mournful thought,
This spot the sad survivor sought—
The last and lonely one!—

This spot, in childish joyance oft
Where they had played together,
Merry as blossoms on the bough,
Or birds, their fairy sports I trow
Scarce startled from the heather.

Two soundly sleep in distant graves—
And one stands all alone,
Fading and failing fast—with her
To perish the last chronicler
Of those to dust gone down.—

So thought she, reasoning with herself,
Perchance, that thing forlorn ;
And, gazing sadly round, sighed on—
“ Here all will look when we are gone
As we had ne'er been born ! ”

A natural thought ! most natural,
The fond desire to leave
Some record (than elaborate tomb
More fitting here) of those for whom
None would be left to grieve.

And so perhaps she caused to plant
These trees that self-same day.—
Traveller ! I've dreamt my dream—Grudge not
Thy tarriance in this quiet spot—
Pass peaceful on thy way.

THE LANDING OF THE PRIMROSE.

AUSTRALIA'S strand was swarming
With myriads, tier on tier ;
Like bees, they clung and clustered
On wall and pile and pier.

The wanderer and the outcast—
Hope—Penitence—Despair—
The felon and the free-man,
Were intermingling there.

There ran a restless murmur,
A murmur deep not loud ;
For every heart was thrilling
Thro' all that motley crowd :

And every eye was straining
 To where a good ship lay,
With England's red-cross waving
 Above her decks that day.

And comes she, deeply freighted
 With human guilt and shame?
And wait those crowds expectant,
 To greet with loud acclaim?

Or, comes she treasure-laden,
 And ache those anxious eyes
For sight of her rich cargo,
 Her goodly merchandise?

See, see! they lower the long boat,
 And now they man the barge;
Tricked out and manned so bravely,
 For no ignoble charge.

Gold gleams on breast and shoulder
Of England's own true-blue ;
That sure must be the captain,
Salutes his gallant crew.

And that the captain's lady
They're handing down the side ;
"Steady, my hearts, now, steady!"
Was that the coxswain cried.

"Hold on," she's safely seated,
"In oars,"—a sparkling splash ;
Hats off on deck—one cheer now—
"Pull hearties!" off they dash.

And now the lines long stretching
Of earnest gazers, strain
(Converging to one centre)
The landing-place to gain.

“ A guard, a guard ! ” in haste then
The governor calls out ;
“ Protect the lady’s landing
From all that rabble rout.”

Her foot is on the gunwale,
Her eyes on that turmoil ;
A moment so she lingers,
Then treads Australia’s soil.

With looks of humid wonder
She gazes all about ;
And oh ! her woman’s nature
Calls that no “ *rabble rout.* ”

For well she reads the feeling
Each face expressive wears ;
And well she knows what wakes it—
That precious thing she bears.

That precious thing—oh wondrous !
A spell of potent power
From English earth transported,
A little lowly flower.

Be blessings on that lady,
Be blessings on that hand ;
The first to plant the primrose
Upon the Exile's land !

The sound had gone before her,
No eye had closed that night ;
So yearned they for the morrow,
So longed they for the light.

She smiles while tears are dropping,
She holds the treasure high ;
And land and sea resounding,
Ring out with one wild cry.

And sobs at its subsiding
From manly breasts are heard ;
Stern natures, hearts guilt-hardened,
To woman's softness stirred.

One gazes all intentness,
That felon Boy—and lo !
The bold bright eyes are glistening,
Long, long, unmoistened so.

The woman holds her child up :
“ Look, little one ! ” cries she,
“ I pulled such when as blithesome
And innocent as thee.”

No word the old man utters,—
His earnest eyes grow dim ;
One spot beyond the salt sea
Is present now to him.

There blooms the earliest primrose,
His father's grave hard by ;
There lieth all his kindred,
There he shall never lie.

The living mass moves onward,
The Lady and her train ;
They press upon her path still,
To look and look again.

Yet on she moves securely,
No guards are needed there ;
Of her they hem so closely
They would not harm a hair.

Be blessings on that Lady !
Be blessings on that hand,
The first to plant the primrose
Upon the Exile's land.

TO
A CENTAGENARIAN ON HER HUNDREDTH
BIRTHDAY.

AGED handmaid of the Lord,
Humbly waiting on his word ;
Peace be with thee !—Peace and love
On Earth beneath—In Heaven above.

Thou between two worlds dost stand :
Long so near the better land,
That from thence a wandering ray
Seems about thy brow to play ;

That, on Life's extremest shore,
From the rough road travelled o'er,
Calmly resting, thou may'st cry
“ Now is my salvation nigh.”

Pilgrim of an hundred years !
Loosened from life's hopes and fears,

What hast thou to do but wait
(Almost there) at Heaven's gate ?

All the little space between
Pleasant still, and fresh and green ;
So the greenness of the heart
Lives in thee,—youth's better part.

Types and tidings of good cheer
Comfort thee throughout the year ;
From thy Bible's countless store
To the spring-flowers at thy door.

Bursting from their wintry tomb,
There again those bright ones bloom ;
Pass a few short seasons o'er
Of life and death, to wake no more.

But when Earth gives up her trust
—Aye, every grain of human dust—
Far other wakening thine shall be,
Death swallowed up in Victory.

TO EMILY.

A LITTLE bird has sung to me
That my small cousin Emily
 Betrays a turn for rhyming :
Well pleased I heard that little bird,
For in my day, such rhyming play
 I too have spent some time in,

And found it pretty pastime too ;
And *more than that* I'll say to you,
 Let who will differ widely :
“ An idle trade,” by some 'tis said,—
But so you see, all trades may be,
 If followed ill, or idly.

Who giveth all, gives all things good ;
So runs, if rightly understood,
 The truth of this same story :
The gifts of song to Him belong,
And grateful love will best improve
 The talent, to His glory.

THAT'S WHAT WE ARE.



CAREFUL, and troubled about many things,
(Alas ! that it should be so with us still,
As in the days of Martha) I went forth
Harassed and heartsick, with hot, aching brow,
Thought-fevered—haply to escape myself.

Beauteous that bright May-morning—all about,
Sweet influences of earth, and air, and sky,
Harmoniously accordant.—I alone
(The troubled spirit that had driven me forth)
In dissonance with that fair frame of things
So blissfully serene. God had not yet
Let fall the weight of chastening, that makes dumb
The murmuring lip and stills the rebel heart,
Ending all earthly interests ; and I called
(O Heaven !) that incomplete experience—Grief.
It would not do. The momentary sense

Of soft refreshing coolness passed away,
Back came the troublous thoughts, and all in vain
I strove with the tormentors : all in vain
Applied me with forced interest to peruse
Fair Nature's outspread volume : all in vain
Looked up admiring at the dappled clouds
And depths cerulean. Even as I gazed,
The film—the earthly film—obscured my vision,
And in a lower region, sore perplexed
Again I wandered, and again shook off,
With vexed impatience, the besetting cares,
And set me straight to gather, as I walked,
A field-flower nosegay. Plentiful the choice ;
And in few moments, of all hues I held
A glowing handful. In few moments more
Where were they? Dropping as I went along
Unheeded on my path ; and I was gone—
Wandering far off, in maze of thought perplexed.

Despairingly I sought the social scene—
Sound—motion—action—interchange of *words*,
Scarcely of *mind*—rare privilege !

We talked—

Oh! how we talked—discussed and solved all questions,—
 Religion, morals, manners, politics,
 Physics and metaphysics, books and authors,
 Fashion and dress, our neighbours and ourselves ;
 And ever as the senseless changes rang,
 And I helped ring them, in my secret soul
 Grew weariness, disgust, and self-contempt ;
 And, more disturbed in spirit, I resumed,
 More cynically sad, my homeward way.

It led me through the Church-yard, and methought
 There entering, as I let the iron gate
 Swing to behind me, that the change was good—
 The unquiet living for the quiet dead.
 And at that moment, from the old Church tower
 A knell resounded—“ Man to his long home
 Drew near”—“The mourners went about the streets;”
 And there, few paces onward, to the right,
 Close by the pathway lay an open grave—
 Not of the humbler sort, shaped newly out,
 Narrow and deep in the dark mould ; when filled,

To be roofed over by the living sod,
And left for all adornment (and so best)
To Nature's reverential hand.

The tomb

Made ready there for a new habitant
Was that of an old family : I knew it—
A very ancient altar tomb, where Time
With his rough fret-work mocked the Sculptor's art,
Feebly elaborate—heraldic shield
And mortuary emblems half effaced ;
Deep sunken at one end, of many names
Graven with suitable inscription, each
Upon the shelving slab and sides, scarce now
Might any but an antiquarian eye
Make out a letter. Five and fifty years
The door of that dark dwelling had shut in
The last admitted sleeper. She, 'twas said,
Died of a broken heart—a widowed mother
Following her only child, by violent death
Cut off untimely : and the whisper went,
By his own hand. The tomb was ancient then,
When they two were interred ; and they the first

For whom, within the memory of man,
It had been opened ; and their names filled up
(With sharp cut newness mocking the old stone)
The last remaining space. And so it seemed
The gathering was complete ; the appointed number
Laid in the sleeping chamber, and sealed up
Inviolate, till the great reckoning day.
The few remaining of the name dispersed,
The family fortunes dwindled, till at last
They sank into decay, and out of sight,
And out of memory ; till an aged man,
Passed by some parish very far away,
To die in ours—his legal settlement—
Claimed kindred with the long-forgotten race,
Its sole survivor ; and in right thereof—
Of that affinity—to moulder with them
In the old family grave.

“ A natural wish,”

Said the authorities ; and “ sure enough
He *was* of the old stock—the last descendant ;
And it would cost no more to bury him
Under the old cracked tombstone, with its scutcheons,

Than in the common ground." So, graciously,
The boon was granted, and he died content.
And now the Pauper's funeral had set forth,
And the bell tolled (not many strokes nor long—
Pauper's allowance)—he was coming home.
But while the train was yet a good way off—
The workhouse burial train—I stopt to look
Upon the scene before me ; and methought—
Oh that some gifted painter could behold
And give duration to that living picture,
So rich in moral and pictorial beauty,
If seen arightly by the spiritual eye,
As with the bodily organ !

The old tomb,
With its quaint tracery, gilded here and there
With sunlight glancing thro' the o'erarching lime,
Far flinging its cool shadow flickering light ;
Our gray-haired sexton, with his hard gray face,
(A living tombstone) resting on his mattock
By the low portal ; and just over right,
His back against the lime-tree, his thin hands
Locked in each other, hanging down before him.

As with their own dead weight, a tall slim youth
With hollow hectic cheek, and pale parched lip,
And labouring breath, and eye upon the ground
Fast rooted, as if taking measurement
Betime for his own grave. I stopt a moment,
Contemplating those thinkers—Youth and Age
Marked for the sickle; as it seemed, the *unripe*
To be first gathered. Stepping forward then,
Down to the house of Death, with vague expectance
I sent a curious, not unshrinking gaze.
There lay the burning head and broken heart
Long, long at rest; and many a *Thing* beside
That had been life—warm, sentient, busy life!—
Had hungered—thirsted—laughed—wept—hoped and
feared—
Hated and loved—enjoyed and agonised.
Where of all this was all I looked to see—
The mass of crumbling coffins, some belike
Flattened and shapeless? Even in this damp vault,
With more completeness could the old Destroyer
Have done his darkling work? Yet lo! I looked
Into a small square chamber, swept and clean,

Except that on one side, against the wall,
Lay a few fragments of dark rotten wood,
And a small heap of fine, rich, reddish earth
Was piled up in a corner.

“ How is this ? ”

In stupid wonderment I asked myself,
And dull of apprehension. Turning then
To the old Sexton—“ Tell me, friend,” I said,
“ Here *should be* many coffins—where are they ? ”

He raised his eyes to mine with a strange look
And strangely meaning smile ; and I repeated
(For not a word he spoke) my witless question.

Then with a deep distinctness he made answer—
Distinct and slow—looking to where I pointed,
Thence full into my face, and what he said
Thrilled thro' my very heart—“ *That's what we are !* ”

So I was answered. Sermons upon Death
I had heard many : Lectures by the score
Upon Life's vanities ; but never words

Of mortal Preacher to my heart struck home
 With such convicting sense and suddenness,
 As the plain-spoken Homily, so brief,
 Of that unlettered man.

“That’s what we are,”

Repeating after him, I murmured low,
 In meek acknowledgment, and bowed the head
 Profoundly reverential. A deep calm
 Came over me, and to the inward eye
 Vivid perception. Set against each other
 I saw weighed out the things of Time and Sense,
 And of Eternity; and oh! how light
 Looked in that truthful hour the earthly scale!
 And oh! what strength, when from the penal doom
 Nature recoiled, in *His* remembered words—
 “I am the Resurrection and the Life!”

And other words of that Divinest Speaker
 (Words to all mourners of all time addressed)
 Seemed spoken to me as I went along
 In prayerful thought, slow musing on my way—
 “*Believe in me. Let not your hearts be troubled.*”

And sure I could have promised in that hour,
But that I knew myself, how fallible,
That never more should cross or care of life
Disquiet or distress me. So I came,
Chastened in spirit, to my home again,
Composed and comforted ; and crossed the threshold
That day " a wiser, *not* a sadder," woman.

'TIS HARD TO DIE IN SPRING.

“ A short time after this he was laid upon his sick-bed, when a bright sun reminded him of his favourite time of year, and he said, ‘ I shall never see the peach-blossom, or the flowers of Spring : it is hard to die in Spring.’

“ ‘ God,’ he said, ‘ had placed him in a Paradise, and he had everything that could make a man happy.’

“ Yet eminently calculated as he was to enjoy such blessings, and nervous as his constitution was, he met the approach of death with composure, with gratitude and resignation to the will of Him whose beneficence had given, and whose pleasure it was now to take away.”

—MEMOIRS OF ROBERT SURTEES, ESQ., BY GEO. TAYLOR, ESQ.

“ ’Tis hard to die in Spring,” were the touching words
he said,

As cheerfully the light stole in—the sunshine round his
bed ;—

“ ’Tis hard to die in Spring, when the green earth looks
so gay ;

I shall not see the peach-blossom.”—’Twas thus they
heard him say.

'Twas thus the gentle spirit—oh! deem it not offence—
Departing, fondly lingered among the things of sense;
Among the pleasant places where God his lot had cast,
To walk in peace and honour, blessed and blessing to the
last.

While some, tho' heaven-ward wending, go mourning all
their years,
Their meat (so wisdom willeth) the bitter bread of tears;
And some resisting proudly the soft persuasive word,
Must feel—in *mercy made to feel*—the terrors of the
Lord.

There are whom he leads lovingly, by safe and pleasant
ways,

Whose service, yea, *whose very life*, is gratitude and
praise—

Diffusive, active, kindly; enjoying to impart—
Receiving to distribute—the service of the heart.

For such this ruined Earth *all through*, is not a vale of
tears,

Some vestige of its primal form amid the wreck appears;

And tho' immortal longings oft in secret soar above,
The heart awhile contented fills its lower sphere of love.

“God placed me in a Paradise!” So spake his grate-
ful heart,

As grateful still from all he loved, when summoned to
depart.

Thrice blessed he in life and death, to whom, so called,
'twas given

To pass, before aught faded here, from Paradise to
Heaven!

I WEEP, BUT NOT REBELLIOUS TEARS.

I WEEP, but not rebellious tears;
I mourn, but not in hopeless woe;
I droop, but not with doubtful fears;
For whom I 've trusted, Him I know:
"Lord! I believe, assuage my grief,
And help—O help mine unbelief!"

My days of youth and health are o'er,
My early friends are dead and gone;
And there are times it tries me sore
To think I'm left on earth alone.
But then faith whispers—" 'Tis not so,
He will not leave, nor let thee go."

Blind eyes—fond heart—poor soul that sought
Enduring bliss in things of earth!

Remembering but with transient thought,
Thy heavenly home, thy second birth ;
Till God in mercy broke at last
The bonds that held thee down so fast.

As link by link was rent away,
My heart wept blood, so sharp the pain,
But I have lived to count this day
That temp'ral loss eternal gain ;
For all that once detained me here
Now draws me to a holier sphere.

A holier sphere, a happier place,
Where I shall know as I am known,
And see my Saviour face to face
And meet, rejoicing round his throne,
The faithful few,* made perfect there
From earthly stain and mortal care.

* The word "few" is used here in no presumptuously exclusive sense of the Author's, but simply as being the scriptural phrase—"Many are called, but few chosen."

The word having been altered lately, in two religious publications, when the poem was inserted unknown to the Author, it is thought proper to annex this note.

PAST AND PRESENT.

I SAW a little merry maiden,
With laughing eye and sunny hair,
And foot as free as mountain fairy,
And heart and spirit light as air.

And hand and fancy active ever,
Devising, doing, striving still ;
Defeated oft, despairing never,
Up springing strong in heart and will.

I saw her bounding in her gladness
On a wild heath at dewy morn,
Weaving a glistening wild-rose garland
With clusters from the scented thorn.

I saw her singing at her needle,
 And quick and well the work went on,
Till song and fingers stopt together,
 Not for sad thought of fair days gone,

But that of fairer still, a vision
 Rose to the happy creature's sight ;
And to a fairy world of fancy
 The mind was gone, more swift than light.

I saw her smiling in her slumber,
 The happy day-dream not gone by ;
I saw her weep—but bosom sunshine
 Broke out before the tear was dry.

I saw her “troops of friends” encircling,
 Read kind good will in many a face,
With a bright glance, that seemed exulting :
 O happy world ! O pleasant place.

I saw a drooping dark-browed woman
 With sunken cheek, and silvered hair ;
The widow's veil more deeply shading
 A shaded brow, the brow of care.

I saw her wandering in her loneliness,
 Among the tombs at even-tide,
When Autumn winds with hollow murmur
 Among funereal branches sighed.

I saw the sere leaves falling round her,
 Where o'er the dead those dark boughs wave,
I heard a voice—I caught a murmur,
 “O weary world ! O peaceful grave !”

I thought upon that merry maiden,
 I looked upon that woman lone,
That form so buoyant, this so drooping
 O Time ! O change !—were one—my own.

TO A WIDOWED FRIEND.

NOVEMBER, 1845.

THE first young leaves were budding
When my dear one dying lay ;
The withered last are dropping,
As thine has past away.

But they've met in the land of summer,
In the land where there's no decay,
Where God is their portion for ever,
And his presence eternal day.

Would we draw them down from their glory,
Would we call them back from their bliss,
To sorrow again and suffer
In such a world as this ?

Oh, no!—by the love we bore them—
By the love that can never die ;
That sprang up in Time to be ripened
In immortality.

Oh, no!—by our own high calling ;
Oh, no!—by the hope so sure,
If casting on Christ our burthen,
We faithfully endure.

We have yet to do, and to suffer,
As our lonely paths we tread,
And the sinking heart of the mourner
Will often die with the dead.

But not in the grave to linger
With dust and darkness there ;
For the stone hath been rolled away
From the door of the Sepulchre.

“Lift up the hands that hang down, then”—

“The hands and the feeble knees;”

Let us go on our way rejoicing,

As “one who believing, sees.”—

Sees Christ, over Death victorious,

Returning in bright array,

With his Saints in the faith departed,

All—all in his train that day!

SONNETS.

WRITTEN IN THE FLY-LEAF OF MY FATHER'S OLD
COPY OF IZAAK WALTON'S COMPLETE ANGLER.

As fondly these discoloured leaves I turn,
Outsteal, methinks, sweet breathings of the May ;
Of flower-embroidered fields, and new-mown hay,
And sound of oaten pipe, and " trotting burn,"
And lark and milkmaid's song. Among the fern
And blue bells once again I seem to lie,
A happy child ; my father angling nigh,
Intent, as 'twere our daily bread to earn,
On his mute pastime. In that quiet nook
Nestling, o'ershadowed by a pollard beach,
And poring dear old Izaak ! on thy book,
Lessons I learnt the schools can never teach,—
Lessons that time can ne'er efface, nor age
Nor worldly teachings, from the heart's warm page.

ON

HEARING FOR THE FIRST TIME THE BELLS
FROM A NEW CHURCH

As on my churchward path I walked to-day,
Another church bell from the west first heard
(Sound "pleasanter than song of earliest bird")
With the soft air came mingling. On my way
I paused a moment, for the Voice said—"Stay,
And listening, lift thine heart in silent prayer,
That I to many a long closed ear, may bear
The call awakening:—Lift thine heart and pray
That many to their father's house so brought,
(Some careless, or but curious,) there may find
And taste the well with living waters fraught:
And going forth renewed in heart and mind,
May walk hereafter, ever faithful found,
Like pilgrims to a better country bound."

TO

THE CROWN PRINCE OF HANOVER.



“WHOM the Lord loves he chastens.” Upon thee
Betimes, O Prince! the loving hand severe
Was laid, to give the world assurance clear
How sweet the uses of adversity.
How perfect, more than outward sense, may be
The inward vision, purged by heavenly truth,
Which gave thee to discern in blooming youth
Things that pertain to Heaven. So fixing free
Thy faith immutable, that, all prepared,
On the unerring will thou dost await,
Whether to give thee back the sense impaired,
Or, dooming darkness for thy mortal state,
To open first thine eyes where they shall meet
The Saviour’s, smiling from the mercy-seat.

TO THE
MOTHER OF LUCRETIA AND MARGARET
DAVIDSON.

O LADY ! greatly favoured, greatly tried—
Was ever glory, ever grief like thine,
Since hers, the Mother of the Man Divine,
The Perfect One—The Crowned—The Crucified?
Wonder and joy, high hope and chastened pride
Thrilled thee, intently watching hour by hour
The fast unfolding of each human flower,
In hues of more than mortal brilliance dyed.
And then the blight—the fading—the first fear—
The sickening hope—the doom—the end of all—
Heart withering, if indeed all ended here.—
But from the dust, the coffin, and the pall,
Mother bereaved ! thy tearful eyes upraise—
Mother of Angels ! join their songs of praise.

OH, pleasant Cloud-land! many a structure fair
In thy romantic region have I reared,
When life was new and countless paths appeared,
Leading to happiness. Even early care
(For it came early) scarcely could impair
The ærial masonry; rebuilt as fast
As by unkind reality down-cast.

But then the springs of youth began to wear
Of Youth and Hope: the toppling fabrics fell
Each after other crushed—the Builder last,
Storm-beat to earth. But there I cannot dwell;
Too hard the soil—too cold the bitter blast—
The soil too treacherous.—I must away
To the warm regions of the perfect day.

UNTHINKING youth ! how prodigal thou art,
Lavish and reckless of thy priceless wealth,
Time, talents, energies, occasion, health,
And large capacity of mind and heart
For knowledge—happiness. The spendthrift's part
Thou playest, and the wanton's : all the while
Stealthily dodging thee with bony smile,
Coldly derisive, and uplifted dart,
The fell Anatomy.—A wakening day,
Tardy and startling comes—" I will arise ;
And gird my loins, and get me on my way
And overtake Time yet," the dreamer cries ;
But on *he* speeds who never yet would wait,
And that fell watcher whispers now—" Too late !"

FORGIVE, O Father ! the infirmity
Of thy poor child of dust ; that when I muse
On things to come, my wildered thoughts refuse
To dwell upon the glorious imagery
That clothes thy promises :—Heaven's hierarchy,
“Thrones, dominations,” uncreated Light,
The Everlasting and the Infinite.

But oh ! the blessedness by faith to see
That pitying face divine of him who bore
Our mortal nature, shedding human tears
For human sorrows : and with him, no more
To weep—to be the sport of hopes and fears,
Our own—our best beloved—upon his breast,
Till the time comes, who take their happy rest.

ON, on upon our mortal course we go,
Striving and struggling, pressing forward all
To the same goal—a grave; and many fall
On all sides, out of sight e'er well we know
Whither or how,—the way still crowded so
With others in advance; till here and there
(As when the woodman's axe is laying bare
Old forest stems) appears a gap.—And lo!
The foremost rank grows thin—they drop away
Faster and faster on those steps we tread,
Till scarce a straggler on our path doth stray;
And now the last is gone. The narrow bed
For us lies ready—our life's tale is told
To the concluding leaf.—*We are the old.*

“PATIENT I am, resigned and calm,” ye say ;
Yet there are seasons of strong agony,
Unseen by all but the All-seeing Eye,
When Nature passionately breaks away,
Like a long pent-up torrent, from all stay
Of reason and of grace, and I could cry—
“Give me this thing, O Lord ! or let me die ;”
But that a hand upon my lips doth lay
Its merciful restraint ; and then, like rain,
Streams gently down a heart-relieving shower ;
And self-rebuked, the soul prepares again,
Strengthened in weakness, to abide her hour
And the Lord’s leisure ; casting, as most meet,
Her all—her sins and sorrows—at His feet.

TO AN OLD FAMILY PORTRAIT,



OH, lovely Lady! my fair Ancestress!
Of all familiar faces I have known
From earliest recollection, thine alone
In my declining day of dark distress
Looks on me now with pitying gentleness,
All others far away. Those earnest eyes,
Melting, methinks, with living sympathies,
Meet mine, and to a heart in heaviness
Discourse with eloquent utterance passing speech.
Thou hast known sorrow in thy little day,
For thou wert human: thy sweet patience teach
(That thou wert patient those mild features say)
To thy sad daughter, in her strange estate
Sore tried—so mated, yet so desolate.

WE came together at life's eventide,
Fast friends of twenty years ; cementing now
For brief duration here, with holiest vow,
Our earthly union, sealed and sanctified
By an immortal hope. His mind would guide,
His strength support, methought, my feeble frame,
God strengthening both ; in him the vital flame
Burnt up so brightly yet :—so side by side,
Mutually comforting, we might descend
The downward way slow dark'ning ; but than death
Worse darkness was at hand—more doleful end—
Not *worst*—not *final*. When with life's poor breath
All here is finished, gloriously restored,
Thee shall I meet, beloved ! in likeness of thy Lord !

ON MY HUSBAND'S BIRTHDAY.



SIXTY and seven hast thou fulfilled this day,
My Husband, of the appointed years of man ;
Now resting from thy labours a brief span
Before the final close. I dare not pray
That the mysterious veil be drawn away
Which parts thee from this world and all its woes :
So parted, thou dost hold perhaps—God knows—
Higher communion, for thy portion lay
In a fair heritage—“ an heavenly.”—Aye,
When goodliest here, toward that better land
Thy thoughts still tended, and with all thy might
The Master's work committed to thine hand
Thou didst—deep mindful of the coming night.
Lord ! in thine own good time make thou his darkness
light !





PR Southey, Robert
5464 Robin Hood
R6
1847

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