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Summer Morning



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SUMMER MORNING.

BY

THOMAS MILLER.

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SUMMER MORNING.

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SUMMER MORNING.

A POEM.

BY

THOMAS MILLER.

AUTHOR OF "A DAY IN THE WOODS," "RURAL SKETCHES,"
"BEAUTIES OF THE COUNTRY," "ROYSTON GOWER," "FAIR ROSAMOND,"
"LADY JANE GREY," "GIDEON GILES," ETC.



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SUMMER MORNING.

MORNING again breaks through the mines of Heaven,
And shakes her jewelled kirtle on the sky,
Heavy with rosy gold. Aside are driven
The vassal clouds, which bow as she draws nigh,
And catch her scattered gems of orient dye,
The pearlèd-ruby which her pathway strews ;
Argent and amber, now thrown useless by .
The uncoloured clouds wear what she doth refuse,
For only once does Morn her sun-dyed garments use.

No print of sheep-track yet hath crushed a flower ;
The spider's woof with silvery dew is hung
As it was beaded ere the daylight hour :
The hookèd bramble just as it was strung,
When on each leaf the Night her crystals flung,
Then hurried off, the dawning to elude ;
Before the golden-beakèd blackbird sung,
Or ere the yellow-brooms, or gorses rude,
Had bared their armèd heads in lowly gratitude.

From Nature's old cathedral sweetly ring
 The wild-bird choirs — burst of the woodland band,
 Green-hooded nuns, who 'mid the blossoms sing ;
 Their leafy temple, gloomy, tall, and grand,
 Pillared with oaks, and roofed with Heaven's own hand.
 Hark ! how the anthem rolls through arches dun :—
 “ Morning again is come to light the land ;
 The great world's Comforter, the mighty Sun,
 Has yoked his golden steeds, the glorious race to run.”

Those dusky foragers, the noisy rooks,
 Have from their green high city-gates rushed out,
 To rummage furrowy fields and flowery nooks ;
 On yonder branch now stands their glossy scout.
 As yet no busy insects buzz about,
 No fairy thunder o'er the air is rolled :
 The drooping buds their crimson lips still pout ;
 Those stars of earth, the daisies white, unfold,
 And soon the buttercups will give back “ gold for gold.”

“ Hark ! hark ! the lark ” sings 'mid the silvery blue ;
 Behold her flight, proud man ! and lowly bow.
 She seems the first that does for pardon sue,
 As though the guilty stain which lurks below
 Had touched the flowers that drooped above her brow,
 When she all night slept by the daisies' side ;
 And now she soars where purity doth flow,
 Where new-born light is with no sin allied,
 And pointing with her wings Heaven-ward our thoughts would guide.

In belted gold the bees with "merry march"
Through flowery towns go sounding on their way :
They pass the streakèd woodbine's sun-stained arch,
And onward glide through streets of sheeted May,
Nor till they reach the summer-roses stay,
Where maiden-buds are wrapt in dewy dreams,
Drowsy through breathing back the new-mown hay,
That rolls its fragrance o'er the fringèd streams,—
Mirrors in which the Sun now decks his quivering beams.

Uprise the lambs, fresh from their flowery slumber,
(The daisies they pressed down rise from the sod;)—
He guardeth them who every star doth number,
Who called His Son a lamb,—"the Lamb of God;"
And for His sake withdrew th' uplifted rod,
Bidding each cloud turn to a silvery fleece,
The imaged flock for which our Shepherd trod
The paths of sorrow, that we might find peace :—
Those emblems of his love will wave till time shall cease.

On the far sky leans the old ruined mill,
Through its rent sails the broken sunbeams glow,
Gilding the trees that belt the lower hill,
And the old thorns which on its summit grow.
Only the reedy marsh that sleeps below,
With its dwarf bushes, is concealed from view ;
And now a struggling thorn its head doth show,
Another half shakes off the smoky blue,
Just where the dusty gold streams through the heavy dew :

And there the hidden river lingering dreams,
You scarce can see the banks which round it lie ;
That withered trunk, a tree, or shepherd seems,
Just as the light or fancy strikes the eye.
Even the very sheep, which graze hard by,
So blend their fleeces with the misty haze,
They look like clouds shook from the unsunned sky,
Ere morning o'er the eastern hills did blaze :—
The vision fades as they move further on to graze.

A chequered light streams in between the leaves,
Which on the greensward twinkle in the sun ;
The deep-voiced thrush his speckled bosom heaves,
And like a silver stream his song doth run,
Down the low vale, edgèd with fir-trees dun.
A little bird now hops beside the brook,
“ Peaking ” about like an affrighted nun ;
And ever as she drinks doth upward look,
Titters and drinks again, then seeks her cloistered nook.

What varied colours o'er the landscape play !
The very clouds seem at their ease to lean,
And the whole earth to keep glad holiday.
The lowliest bush that by the waste is seen,
Hath changed its dusky for a golden green
In honour of this lovely Summer Morn :
The rutted roads did never seem so clean,
There is no dust upon the wayside thorn,
For every bud looks out as if but newly born.

A cottage girl trips by with side-long look,
Steadying the little basket on her head ;
And where a plank bridges the narrow brook
She stops, to see her fair form shadowèd.
The stream reflects her cloak of russet red ;
Below she sees the trees and deep-blue sky,
The flowers which downward look in that clear bed,
The very birds which o'er its brightness fly :—
She parts her loose-blown hair, then wondering passes by

Now other forms move o'er the footpaths brown
In twos and threes ; for it is Market-day.
Beyond those hills stretches a little town,
And thitherward the rustics bend their way,
Crossing the scene in blue, and red, and grey ;
Now by green hedge-rows, now by oak-trees old,
As they by stile or thatchèd cottage stray.
Peep through the rounded hand, and you 'll behold
Such gems as Morland drew, in frames of sunny gold.

A laden ass, a maid with wicker maun',
A shepherd lad driving his lambs to sell,
Gaudy-dressed girls move in the rosy dawn,
Women whose cloaks become the landscape well,
Farmers whose thoughts on crops and prizes dwell ;
An old man with his cow and calf draws near.
Anon you hear the Village Carrier's bell ;
Then does his grey old tilted cart appear,
Moving so slow, you think he never will get there.

They come from still green nooks, woods old and hoary,
 The silent work of many a summer night,
 Ere those tall trees attained their giant glory,
 Or their dark tops did tower that cloudy height :
 They come from spots which the grey hawthorns light,
 Where stream-kissed willows make a silvery shiver.
 For years their steps have worn those footpaths bright
 Which wind along the fields and by the river,
 That makes a murmuring sound, a " rible-bibble " ever.

A troop of soldiers pass with stately pace,—
 Their early music wakes the village street :
 Through yon white blinds peeps many a lovely face,
 Smiling — perchance unconsciously how sweet !
 One does the carpet press with blue-veined feet,
 Not thinking how her fair neck she exposes,
 But with white foot timing the drum's deep beat ;
 And, when again she on her pillow dozes,
 Dreams how she 'll dance that tune 'mong Summer's richest roses.

So let her dream, even as beauty should !
 Let the white plumes athwart her slumbers sway !
 Why should I steep their swaling snow in blood,
 Or bid her think of battle's grim array ?
 Truth will too soon her blinding star display,
 And like a fearful comet meet her eyes.
 And yet how peaceful they pass on their way !
 How grand the sight as up the hill they rise !—
 I will not think of cities reddening in the skies.

How sweet those rural sounds float by the hill !

The grasshopper's shrill chirp rings o'er the ground,
 The jingling sheep-bells are but seldom still,
 The clapping gate closes with hollow bound,
 There's music in the church-clock's measured sound.
 The ring-dove's song, how breeze-like comes and goes,
 Now here, now there, it seems to wander round :
 The red cow's voice along the upland flows ;
 His bass the brindled bull from the far meadow lows.

“ Cuckoo ! cuckoo ! ” ah ! well I know thy note,

Those summer-sounds the backward years do bring,
 Like Memory's locked-up barque once more afloat :

They carry me away to life's glad spring,
 To home, with all its old boughs rustleing.

'Tis a sweet sound ! but now I feel not glad ;

I miss the voices which were wont to sing,
 When on the hills I roamed, a happy lad.

“ Cuckoo ! ” it is the grave — not thee — that makes me sad.

Tell me, ye sages, whence these feelings rise,—

Sorrowful mornings on the darkened soul ;
 Glimpses of broken, bright, and stormy skies,
 O'er which this earth — the heart — has no control ?

Why does the sea of thought thus backward roll ?
 Memory's the breeze that through the cordage raves,
 And ever drives us on some home-ward shoal,
 As if she loved the melancholy waves
 That, murmuring shore-ward break, over a reef of graves.

Hark how the merry bells ring o'er the vale,
 Now near, remote, or lost, just as it blows.
 The red cock sends his voice upon the gale,
 From the thatched grange his answering rival crows :
 The milkmaid o'er the dew-bathed meadow goes,
 Her tucked-up kirtle ever holding tight ;
 And now her song rings through the green hedge-rows,
 Her milk-kit hoops glitter like silver bright :—
 I hear her lover singing somewhere out of sight.

Where soars that spire, our rude forefathers prayed ;
 Thither they came, from many a thick-leaved dell
 Year after year, and o'er those footpaths strayed,
 When summoned by the sounding Sabbath bell,—
 For in those walls they deemed that God did dwell.
 And still they sleep within that bell's deep sound.
 Yon Spire doth here of no distinction tell ;
 O'er rich and poor, marble, and earthly mound,
 The Monument of all, — it marks one common ground.

See yonder smoke, before it curls to Heaven
 Mingles its blue amid the elm-trees tall ;
 Shrinking like one who fears to be forgiven,
 So on the earth again doth prostrate fall,
 And 'mid the bending green each sin recall.
 Now from their beds the cottage-children rise,
 Roused by some early playmate's noisy bawl ;
 And, on the door-step standing, rub their eyes,
 Stretching their little arms, and gaping at the skies.

The leaves "drop, drop," and dot the crisped stream
So quick, each circle wears the first away ;
Far out the tufted bulrush seems to dream,
And to the ripple nods its head away ;
The water-flags with one another play,
Bowling to every breeze that blows between,
While purple dragon-flies their wings display :
The restless swallow's arrowy flight is seen,
Dimpling the sunny wave, then lost amid the green.

The boy who last night passed that darksome lane,
Trembling at every sound, and pale with fear ;
Who shook when the long leaves talked to the rain,
And tried to sing, his sinking heart to cheer ;
Hears now no brook wail ghost-like on his ear,
No dead-man's groan in the black-beetle's wing :
But where the deep-dyed butterflies appear,
And on the flowers like folded pea-blooms swing,
With napless hat in hand he after them doth spring.

In the far sky the distant landscape melts,
Like pilèd clouds tinged with a darker hue ;
Even the wood which yon high upland belts
Looks like a range of clouds, of deeper blue.
One withered tree bursts only on the view,—
A bald bare oak, which on the summit grows,
(And looks as if from out the sky it grew :)
That tree has borne a thousand wintry snows,
And seen unnumbered mornings gild its gnarled boughs.

Yon weather-beaten grey old finger-post
 Stands like Time's land-mark pointing to decay ;
 The very roads it once marked out are lost :
 The common was encroached on every day
 By grasping men who bore an unjust sway,
 And rent the gift from Charity's dead hands.
 The post does still one broken arm display,
 Which now points out where the New Workhouse stands,
 As if it said " Poor man ! those walls are all thy lands."

Where o'er yon woodland-stream dark branches bow,
 Patches of blue are let in from the sky,
 Throwing a chequered underlight below,
 Where the deep waters steeped in gloom roll by ;
 Looking like Hope, who ever watcheth nigh,
 And throws her cheering ray o'er life's long night,
 When wearied man would fain lie down and die.
 Past the broad meadow now it rolleth bright,
 Which like a mantle green seems edged with silver light.

All things, save Man, this Summer morn rejoice :
 Sweet smiles the sky, so fair a world to view ;
 Unto the earth below the flowers give voice ;
 Even the wayside-weed of homeliest hue
 Looks up erect amid the golden blue,
 And thus it speaketh to the thinking mind :—
 " O'erlook me not ! I for a purpose grew,
 Though long mayest thou that purpose try to find,
 On us one sunshine falls ! God only is not blind !"

England, my country! — land that gave me birth!
Where those I love, living or dead, still dwell,
Most sacred spot — to me — of all the earth;
England! “with all thy faults I love thee well.”
With what delight I hear thy Sabbath bell
Fling to the sky its ancient English sound,
As if to the wide world it dared to tell
We own a God, who guards this envied ground,
Bulwarked with martyrs’ bones — where Fear was never found.

Here might a sinner humbly kneel and pray,
With this bright sky, this lovely scene in view,
And worship Him who guardeth us alway! —
Who hung these lands with green, this sky with blue,
Who spake, and from these plains huge cities grew;
Who made thee, mighty England! what thou art,
And asked but gratitude for all His due.
The Giver, God! claims but the beggar’s part,
And only doth require “a humble, contrite heart.”







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