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THE
ABBOT OF MUCHELNAYE
ETC.

THE
ABBOT OF MUCHELNAYE
SONNETS
ETC.

BY HENRY ALFORD



LONDON
WILLIAM PICKERING
1841

CHARLES WHITTINGHAM
CHISWICK



TO THE REV. JOHN MOULTRIE.

MY DEAR SIR,

SOME years since, you were pleased to address to me some very touching lines, which have had no small share in influencing me to the publication of this little work. You are now, as you were then, unknown to me: but I have ventured to think that you represented a class of persons to whom my poetic efforts may have given pleasure, and to whom in return for the expression of that pleasure, I am bound from time to time to furnish such new pieces as my leisure and inclination may allow me to write. Those who know my pursuits can testify that of late the former of these has

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served the latter but scantily. I should be ashamed of the smallness of this book, did I not look forward to the accomplishment of another task, long since begun, which I hope may prove a worthier fulfilment of your wishes on my behalf.

But, such as it is, I may be permitted to make this address to you the vehicle of a few remarks respecting its contents.

There will be found many poems in its pages, which have *originated* in domestic occurrences and feelings. That there is in some minds a prejudice against such subjects, I am well aware: but I am also aware that those persons who entertain it are not such as a poetical writer ought to endeavour to please. There are various inlets into the treasure-chambers of that wonderful palace, the heart of Man: but none enter so easily, or advance so far, as those who are admitted through the pure and quiet affections. Nor are the objects of those affections

regarded in the light of mere private connections, when they form part of the grouping of a poem. ‘Nihil humani alienum puto,’ is an indispensable requisite for the enjoyment of true poetry. This I need not have said to you: for you have made excellent use of this great principle in some of your most touching Poems.

There are again some pieces in the following pages against which objections of a different kind may be raised. In the ‘Inscription for a Village Cross,’ it may be said, I am favouring the superstitions of the Ages before the Reformation: and in the ‘Pictorial Illustrations of the Seasons,’ some may allege that I have erred in another way. But I am sure you will agree with me in claiming for Christian Art her high privilege of selecting from the records of Time, and the Creation of God, that which is pure and beautiful. Her functions are of universal import, and irrespective of the fashions or deemings of this or that age of men. When

she has bowed to these, she has degraded herself: she is the servant of Truth and Beauty, of Truth in Beauty, and Beauty in Truth: and to none other does she owe homage.

I might be tempted to dwell longer on this latter point, but that the Poem to which I alluded above, will, should I be permitted to finish it, furnish the best example and defence of my artistical sentiments.

I am, my dear Sir,

Your very faithful Servant,

HENRY ALFORD.

WYMESWOLD,
August 1, 1841.



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THE
ABBOT OF MUCHELNAYE.

DUODECAD THE FIRST.

I.

WITH pale ray, for she hath no fellow yet,
The eve-star shineth out above the west;
The sheep-bell tinkles, and the fold is set;
The swinkt kine one by one are laid to rest;
The rooks have ceased from chattering in their
nest;
And shepherds whistle homeward through the gray
And misty flats, where from the elmwood's breast
Forth rise, empurpled with the parting day,
The dim embattled tops of solemn Muchelnaye.

B

II.

Before the rosy streak had vanished
From the last cloud that look'd upon the sun,
In yonder Abbey pile the mass was said,
The psalm was chaunted, and the vespers done :
The holy men are singly pent each one
In chamber climbed by solitary stair ;
And he who labour'd in far fields alone
Late passing, hears upon the twilight air
Tu, Jesu, salva me—their deep and secret prayer.

III.

The Abbot sitteth in his chamber lone,
But now he laid his sacred vestment by,
And lean'd his crosier on the fretted stone ;
He prayeth not, but out into the sky
He looketh forth with wild and dreamful eye,
Under the quatre-foils of many hues
Carved in the clustered mullions broad and high ;
Full sorrowfully seems his heart to muse,
And fetches other sighs than holy Abbots use.

IV.

Belike he hath called up his youthful days,
Before he gave his soul to wait on Heaven;
When his steps wandered into downward ways;
And he has thought of sins to be forgiven
Like thunderstrokes athwart his conscience riven;
But all the fond admissions of his youth
Long since by prayer and penance have been
 shriven;
And he hath offered up, in shame and sooth,
His sad and peccant soul at the bright shrine of Truth.

V.

But he hath much to do with earthly sighs;
There is a vision of pure loveliness
Linked to a thousand painful memories,
That sear his inner soul with deep distress;
He kneeleth to his prayer, but not the less
That rising sorrow will not be repress:
He prayeth, but his lot he may not bless;
He drops his arms, erewhile that crossed his breast,
And counsels how his sad heart he may lighten best.

VI.

Yet time has been when he was bold and gay,
A boy of open brow, and lordly mien;
Him on his proud steed at the rise of day
First in the field his father's hills have seen,
To rouse the forest deer; and time has been
When he hath whispered words in lady's bower,
And wandered not alone in sward-paths green,
What time he wooed and won, in luckless hour,
The high-born Lady Agnes of St. Dunstan's tower.

VII.

One life-consuming thought his peace destroys;
Before his memory pass in wild array
As they have past full often, all the joys
That rose and set upon his bridal day;
O might he see that priest, who could betray
The secret trusted to his troth to keep;
And could that morn the solemn service say
With inward plot of treachery dark and deep;—
But let him rest—for vengeance will not alway sleep.

VIII.

That form of saintly beauty, robed in white,
With yielded hand ; his heart in bliss intense
High-throbbing with the triumph of delight ;
Those downward eyes of maiden innocence ;
That first sweet look of wedded confidence ;—
And then the armed grasp, the short reply,—
The dizzy swoon that fettered all his sense ;—
The waking underneath the portal high
In the faint glimmering light, with pale monks stand-
ing by.

IX.

He hath had Power ; but all athirst for love
He passed it by, and tasted not ; the Earth
Each summer-tide in meadow and in grove
Teemed with the riches of her yearly birth ;—
High music, and the sounds of holy mirth
Evening and morning fell upon his ear ;—
But all this, heard or seen, was nothing worth,
So there were wanting one sweet voice to cheer ;
Were this his Eden-ground, he finds no helpmate
here.

X.

His not ' the sickening pang of hope deferred,'
Nor calm dismissal of a treasure lost;
But anguish deep, unwritten and unheard,
Of the full heart amidst fulfilment crost;
When most assured, then downward smitten most;
Yet did the lamp of love burn upward bright;
Yet did the flame, though by fierce tempest tost,
With ever constant and consoling light
In solitude pierce through his spirit's darkest night.

XI.

His waking thoughts with sorrow trafficked most:
But when the gentle reign of sleep began,
Then through a varied and uncounted host
Of pleasant memories his free fancy ran;
Sometimes the heavenly harps their strain began,
Responsive quiring to each Angel hand;
And brightest throned amidst the high divan,
Sweetest in voice of all the sainted band
Was she—his wedded spouse—the glory of that land.

XII.

Sometimes through twilight fields, or summer
grove

They went in converse ; and the wondrous power
Of world-creation viewed by light of love ;

Sometimes he saw her with a blessed dower

Of fairest children, and each little flower

Grow into beauty, and its station keep

Around their common life ;—thus the night hour

Would pass dream-hallowed, and then faithless

sleep

Steal from his widowed couch, and he would wake
and weep.



THE
ABBOT OF MUCHELNAYE.

DUODECAD THE SECOND.

I.

IT is the solemn midnight ; and the Moon
Hard by the zenith holds her solemn state,
And yon flushed star will westward dip full soon,
Behind the elms that gird the abbey gate ;—
There stair and hall are drear and desolate,
And even devotion doth her votaries spare,
Save the appointed ones, on Heaven that wait,
Wafting upon the hushed unlistening air
Tu, Jesu, salva nos—their deep and night-long prayer.

II.

In low flat lines the slumbering dew-mist broods
Along the reaches of the Parret-stream;
And on the far off vales and clustered woods
Dwells, like the hazy daylight of a dream;
Piled over which, the dusky mountains seem
As a new continent, whose headlands steep
Within his day's fair voyage now doth deem
Some mariner, whose laden vessels creep
Across the dim white level of the severing deep.

III.

In the mid prospect, from its shadowy screen
Rises the Abbey pile; each pinnacle
Distinct with purest light; save where, dark green,
The ivy-clusters round some buttress dwell,
The sharp and slender tracery varying well;
Perfect the group, and to poetic gaze
Like a fair palace, by the potent spell
Of old magician summoned from the haze,
Some errant faery knight to wilder with amaze.

IV.

But list ! the pendant on the wicket-latch
Hath rung its iron summons ; and the sight
Through the uncertain shadowings may catch
A muffled figure, as of some lone wight
Belated in the flats this summer night,
And seeking refuge in the Abbey near :
Again those strokes the slumbering band affright,
And cause the wakeful choir, in doubt and fear,
To pause amid their chaunt, and breathless bend to
hear.

V.

Slow moves the porter, heavy with the load
Of age and sleep ; some newly happened ill,
Some wayside murder,—doth his heart forebode ;
And at the wicket come, he pauseth still,
And on his brow the icy drops distil ;
Till a faint voice admission doth implore—
‘ Open, blest Fathers,—the night-damps are chill ;
‘ So may your Abbot’s holy aid restore
‘ One whose life falters now at death’s uncertain door.’

VI.

The smaller wicket first he inward turns
For caution and assurance; then as slow
By the dim taper-light that flickering burns,
Scans well the stranger, whether friend or foe;
Then stooping draws the massy bolt below,
Well satisfied that such a form as stands
Before him now, no treachery can know,
Can bear no weapon in those trembling hands,
Nor be the wily scout of nightly prowling bands.

VII.

A holy woman is it, who desires
Speech with the Abbot's reverence: ' For fear
' Of God in Heaven, who each one's life requires
' At each one's brother's hand, call thou him here,
' Or point me where he rests; that I may clear
' My soul of that wherewith I am in trust;
' For she who sent me to her end is near;
' And who shall make amendment, or be just,
' When the pale eye hath mingled with its kindred
dust?

VIII.

‘ Sister, for by thy russet garb I guess
 ‘ Thou art of yonder saintly company
 ‘ Whose frequent hymns our holy mother bless,
 ‘ Borne hither from St. Mary’s Priory,
 ‘ Hard is it for one chilled with age like me
 , ‘ To do thine urgent bidding; close behind
 ‘ The landing of yon steep stair dwelleth he
 ‘ Of whom thou speakest; sleep doth seldom bind
 ‘ His eyelids; wakeful unto prayer thou shalt him
 ‘ find.’

IX.

Up the strait stair the long robed figure glides,
 The while the aged man his taper’s light
 Trims, and with friendly voice the stranger guides,
 Till the dark buttress hides her from his sight;
 And then he peers abroad into the night,
 Crossing himself for fear of aught unblest;
 For sprites and fairies, when the moon is bright,
 Weave their thin dances on the meadow’s breast,
 And sharp rays pierce the tombs, and rouse the dead
 from rest.

X.

He looks not long,—for down the stairs of stone
Footsteps are sounding, and from forth the pile
Passes the stranger, but not now alone ;
‘ Here, brother Francis, let thy keys awhile
‘ Rest in my keeping; I will thee assoil
‘ From aught that in mine absence may befall;
‘ So wilt thou spare thyself thy watch and toil
‘ For my return; my blessing guards ye all;
‘ For I must forth, when sorrow for my help doth call.’

XI.

The Abbot speaks, and they two glide along
In the dim moonlight, till the meadow haze
Enwraps them from the sight: the trees among,
And down the windings of the gleamy ways
They pass; and cross the Parret-stream, ablaze
With flickering ripples; then they track the moor
Even till they reach St. Mary’s Priory;
Ere which, the dark robed stranger goes before,
And without speech admits them through a lowly
door.

XII.

It is an humble chamber, and a group
Of holy sisters, in their work of love,
Over some prostrate form are seen to stoop,
And in the feeble glimmering slowly move;
And now the Abbot sees, bending above,
One stretched in anguish on the pavement there;
In wild unrest her white arms toss and rove;
On the dank floor is spread her tangled hair,
And with convulsive gasps she draws the sounding air.

XIII.

But see, she beckons, and he draweth near;
Again she beckons; and that sisterhood
Slowly retreat from what they may not hear;
The last is gone;—and now, with life endued,
The Abbot's form that lady rose and viewed;
'Sir Monk, I am not as I seem this hour!'
He trembles—nay, let no chill doubt intrude—
It is, it is, thine own, thy bride, thy flower,
The high-born Lady Agnes of St. Dunstan's tower!



THE
ABBOT OF MUCHELNAYE.

DUODECAD THE LAST.

I.

‘ **H**ERE is no place for greeting : fly afar
‘ Before the absent sisterhood return.
‘ In my well-sembled agony, yon star
‘ I watched, whose westering rays now faintly
 burn—
‘ It symbols forth my fate—and wouldst thou learn
‘ What bodes this meeting—ere it dips below
‘ The mountain range which thou canst just discern,
‘ Safe refuge must be won ; for as we go
‘ Shining it bodeth joy—but sunken, tears and woe.’

II.

She speaks, and forth into the gleamy night
 They pass together; dim and ill-defined
 Their thoughts;—now wandering with the mazy
 light
 Of the wan moon—now with the moaning wind;—
 Thus do great issues of a sudden joined
 Benumb men's spirits; who in thrall endure
 Waiting the judgment of the ordering mind,
 Who clears the vision with her influence pure,
 And lights up memory's lamps along the steep ob-
 scure.

III.

But whither shall they fly—the night's high noon
 Hath past, and she is faint and weary grown:
 ' Lady, the Abbey gate is reached full soon:
 ' There can I hide thee—in those towers of stone
 ' Are secret chambers kenned by me alone,
 ' Where I can tend thee, while the coming day
 ' Shall bring thee rest—then when its light hath
 flown,
 ' Mine be it, in maturer thought to say
 ' How we may shape our course to regions far away.'

IV.

With hurried steps to gain those towers they press ;
But ere they reached them, had that lady's sight
Not earthward dropped for very weariness,
She might have seen that clear symbolic light
First fainter wane, then vanish from the night ;
The other marked its dying radiance well :
But he was one whom omens could not fright ;
But 's spite his better judgment, sooth to tell,
Faintness struck through his heart, and broke joy's
rapturous spell.

V.

The Abbot sitteth in his chamber lone,
And by him sits the lady of his love ;
The crosier leans upon the fretted stone,
Swept by the sacred vestment from above ;
He prayeth not—for he can never move
His fond eyes from that lovely lady's brow ;
Whose downcast looks seem gently to reprove
The scheme that riseth in their wishes now
To doff the saintly veil, and break the chartered vow.

C

VI.

They gaze upon each other earnestly,
Scarce daring to discover but in look
What each might read of in the other's eye :
Belike ye wonder, what such question shook
The firm resolve that erst their spirits took ;—
In sooth God's vows were on them both ; but yet
The first law in the heaven-descended book
Firmer than veil or chartered vow is set
' Quos Deus junxit, homo ne quis sepatet.'

VII.

Oh who can sound the depth of human joy,
The fathomless tranquillity of bliss—
Clear shine the eyes, when in their calm employ
They scan some form which they have wept to miss ;
Quick through the being thrills the mystic kiss
Of wife, or clinging child ; light pass the days
Though sad, with such to cheer ; and sweet it is
To sit, and even unto tears to gaze
On flowers which Love hath given to bloom beside
our ways.

VIII.

Long hours have flown, to wedded rapture given ;
And now upon the dusk and dawning air,
Which murmurs, with its quick shrill pulses riven,
The matin bell sounds forth, calling to prayer
The Abbey-brotherhood and hamlets near :
Then spoke the Abbot : ‘ Part we for an hour ;
‘ Then follow me into a refuge near,
‘ A hiding place within this solid tower,
‘ Known but to those who here have held this highest
power.’

IX.

He leadeth her a dark and narrow way
Along the windings of that hidden stair ;
They might see nothing of the rising day,
Until that he had brought his lady dear
Unto a chamber, rudely fashioned, near
The top roof of the Abbey pile, and lit
By one small window, where the hour of prayer
Secure from rude intrusion she might sit,
And watch the morning clouds along the landscape
flit.

* * * * *

X.

‘ Say ye, she left Saint Mary’s Priory
 ‘ This night—perchance she roameth in the glade,
 ‘ Or seeketh some lone cottage wearily ;
 ‘ Strict search for her in this our Abbey made
 ‘ Hath found no trace : each hiding-place displayed
 ‘ Shews no such tenant : and our holy chief
 ‘ Tells how he left her on your pavement laid,
 ‘ What time she sunk exhausted by her grief,
 ‘ After confession gave her prisoned woes relief.’

* * * * *

XI.

Past is all peril now—the search is done,
 Past the spare meal, and spent the hour of prayer :
 The holy men are singly pent each one
 In chamber climbed by solitary stair :
 And quickly as the anxious lover dare
 He seeks with throbbing heart that nest secure :
 ‘ Rejoice, my wedded love, my life, my fair,
 ‘ Our way is straight, our course is safe as pure,
 ‘ Our life of love and joy from disappointment sure.’

XII.

He found her,—as ye find some cherished bud
Of early primrose, when the storm is past,
Crushed by the vexing of the tempest-flood;—
Prostrate and pale she lay—for Death had cast
His Gorgon spell upon her:—thick and fast
The Abbot's bursting heart did upward beat:
Awhile benumbed he stood: Reason at last
Fled with the wild crash from her central seat,
And all his soul within him burned with madden-
ing heat.

* * * * *

XIII.

Three hundred years above the tall elmwood
One ivied pinnacle hath signified
The place where once the Abbey pile hath stood:
A hundred years before, the Abbot died,
A man of many woes: one summer tide
They found his coffin in the churchyard wall;
And when they forced the stony lid aside,
Gazed on his face beneath the mouldered pall,
Even as the spirit left it—pale and tear-worn all.

XIV.

And often, down that dark and narrow way,
Along the windings of that hidden stair,
Sweeps a dim figure, as the rustics say,
And tracks the path even to the House of Prayer :
What in the dusky night it doeth there,
None may divine, nor its return have met ;
Only upon the hushed and listening air
Strange words, as men pass by, are sounding yet :
' Quos Deus junxit, homo ne quis separet.'



A DREAM.

THE night that is now past hath been to me
A time of wakeful, sleepful, fancies : oft
Have I been whirled aloft and rapt away
By some fierce gale : oft in some garden plot
Laid, in the scent of woodbine and of lilac,
While the laburnum hung its yellow locks
Above me, prisoning in, with flowery chains,
A slumbrous nook, aglow with golden light.
Before that night a weary time had past,
A night of anxious thoughts and prayers,
And they have left their traces on my spirit,
Now that pure calm hath come, and thankful joy.
But most of all, one dream I will relate,
Of import not obscure :—'tis a strange tale,
An errant, broken tale : and as the tale,
The measure wanders. Listen—it ran thus.

THE DREAM.

I.

Light was upon the sea!
The calm unbroken mirror
Of the level sea!
And ye might look around
For many a league each way
And ye should see no moving thing
Nor object that had shape:
But light upon the sea!
The calm unbroken mirror
Of the level sea!

A dimple in the centre of the view!
And then a spreading circle,
One and then another,
Onward, outward, spreading:
Even to the verge of heaven
Do those circles calmly roll,
And the sleeping light
Is all disquieted,

And leaps among the shining furrows
Of the waveful sea!

From the centre rising
Is a pillar mist-enwrapt,
A shining chrysalis
Of some being beautiful—
For lo the mist is clearing,
And a perfect form
Is hovering o'er the gently swelling waves;
A perfect form, but small
As is some faery sprite
Of mediæval tales.

II.

The mighty sea again!
And now the Eastern sun
Shone freshly on the water,
That leapt and sparkled bright,
As joyous for the sheen;
Each wavelet had its crest
Of dancing shivering foam:
And far as ye might see
Into the glowing South
They chased each other merrily.

Not as before unbounded
Was the gladsome sea;
A shore with beetling cliffs
Hung o'er the breaking spray,
And pure white sands beneath
Bordered a breezy bay:
And sporting on those sands
That same fair form I saw.

Now would he lie and gaze
Up to the deep blue heaven:
Now count the sparkling stones.
Within his infant reach:
Now listen the curved shells
Answering the ocean's roar;
Now would he tempt those waters
Unclothed and beautiful
As is some ancient marble
Of Love's winged god;
And float in ecstasy
Over the floating waves,
And let them bear him onward
To the smooth sand's verge.

III.

I saw the sea again !

But it was now once more
The great unbounded ocean,
But not mirror-calm,
Nor in wavelets broken :

It was in tumult dire
Of angry tossing billows,
Like unquiet monsters
Rolling in their agony
Over their watery couch.

And ere I long had looked,
Again appeared that form
Now stronger knit, and grown
Even to years mature.
His strength had trial sore :
For in that plunge of waters,
A little boat he guided
Rowing with all his power,
And guiding while he rowed :
Loud creaked his burdened barque
Not long : a crested billow

Fell headlong, and the vessel
Was seen no more ; but him
I saw with vigorous stroke
Mounting the valley sides
Between the towering waves.

IV.

Still the cliff-bounded sea !
And it was summer noon,
And all the land was still,
But on the water's face
The merry breeze was playing,
Whitening a chance wave here and there ;
And the dipping sea-birds
Sported, and screamed around :
And numberless white sails
Spotted the pleasant water—
 It was a sight of joy
 That made the bosom full !

Anon a gay and gallant boat
Flew by with canvass stretched
And straining to the wind,
Crushing each wave and making music harsh

As on its way it sped.
In it was that same form
The spectre of my dream,
Now in mid years, and pale
Methought, and over-watched :
But he was not alone :
A light and lovely shape
Beside him sitting there
Steered that his boat along.

Right joyously she went,
And merry was the sound
Of voice, and voice replying,
Just wafted to my ears
As the trim vessel passed.

v.

'Tis evening on the sea !
The fiery orb of heaven
Hath hid his last bright twinkle
Under yon western line :
And no star yet looks forth
From the blank unvaried sky.

Again 'tis breathless calm
Upon the ocean's face—
And the grey mournful light
Lies still upon the water,
Save where the cliff high turreted
Is imaged deep beneath.

Among the rocks surf-whitened,
Sitting, or wandering slow,
Was that same form again—
Alone, and sorrow-marked—
His eye was lustreless,
And ever and anon
He raised his hands aloft,
And spoke to one above him;
But, as it seemed, none heard,—
For still he wandered sad,
And I could see the tears
Spring from his brimming eyes
And fall upon those rocks.

And once again he looked
Into the fading sky,
Where one scarce visible star
Had lit its twinkling lamp :

Which when he saw, he smiled,
And a more copious flood
Of tears rained down his cheek :
Till on those barren stones
For very weariness of grief
He laid him down to die.

VI.

It was the noon of night—
Upon the ocean's breast
The vast concave of heaven
Was downward imaged, bright
With throbbing stars: no rest
The roving eye might find :
Horizon there was none,
But vast infinitude
Spread over and below.

Down from the upper air
Self-poised, a pillar glided,
Such as I saw erewhile,
But dark and mournful all :
Then first was manifest
The polished ocean surface :

For into its calm breast
Passed this array of woe :
And I could see, as slow
It sunk, that same appearance,
But in a dismal garb
Of death array. The sea
Closed over, without noise.

My dream was done : but as I woke, clear sounds
As of celestial music, were around me,
And spite of that last scene of death and woe,
My spirit was all joyous : and the day
Throughout, some voice was sounding in my ear,
He is not here, but risen !

My dream was, LIFE.

May 8, 1840.



A SPRING SCENE.

*A mossy bank: a young mother sits with her babe
and an elder child.*

Mother.

SO thou hast brought thy bosom full of daisies,
And gilded celandine. There, pour them forth—
A pretty April snow-storm. Now enfold
Thine arms about thy little sister's neck,
And gladden her with kisses.

(They are silent awhile)

Thou bright ineloquent blue of the vast heaven!
Thou ocean studded with thine isle of light—
And thou all-wrapping, all-sufficing air—
How full are ye of mystery—what hosts
But now are winging thro' this visible round
Their spirit-way—what throbbings of deep joy
Pulsate through all I see from the full bud

Whose unctuous sheath is glittering in the noon,
Up through the system of created things,
Even to the flaming ranks of seraphim!
And I and my beloved ones, are part
Of the world's hymn of praise,—a happy group
Of the Eternal's moulding,—gazed upon
Perchance of angels; thicker with rich gems
Of his own setting, than the guardian shrine
Of some cathedralled saint with offered jewels.
Shame upon Time,—that will write age and care
Upon your velvet cheeks, my little ones—
That will dry up the bosom where ye nestle—
Yea that in one short day can turn the vault
Of this unspotted glorious firmament
Into a dark gray wilderness of clouds
Hurrying to blot Heaven's light. Shame upon Time!

Child. Mamma, will the weather be as fine in
Heaven?

Mother. Thanks for that artless question. I was
growing
Mindless of that great Spring, which knows no check.
Yes, little prattlers, you may fancy Heaven
A sky for ever blue—a laughing sun

That knows no flitting shadows—a fair lawn
Besprinkled with your favourite flowers, and birds
Pouring around their gushing melodies;
And you and this soft little one, and me,
Sitting as we sit now : but all enwrapt
With lustrous beauty and unearthly light.
Thus now ;—but you will grow, and then your fancy
Will alter—and your Heaven no more be this,
But the lone walk with one whom Love hath knit
Into your very soul, while nightingale
From blosmy hawthorn's heart, awakes the night
To praise—and o'er ye both, from myriad stars,
The mighty presence of the Eternal Love
Falls, as the dewy odours on the air,
The incense of the temple where ye roam.
Then life perchance will change afresh ; and Love
Bereft of its support, and stand alone :
And then your Heaven will be a loftier thing,
A gazing on the open face of God,—
Knowledge, and light, and the unbounded sea
Of presences seraphic. Then, my child,
Life will go onward yet, and will become
Labour and sorrow, and your beauty-dreams
Will have past by, and all your high desires
Have sunk away ;—and then your Heaven will be

Wherever there is Rest—and so the way
Down to the grave, a thing you love not now,
Will be smoothed off and altered as it nears,
Till you shall e'en desire it for its sake.

Child. Sing me a song about the sky in Heaven.

Mother. Fade, fade away,
 Close by night, and droop by day,
 Little gilded flower:
 Thou hast brethren up above
 Watered by Eternal Love,
 In our Father's bower.

 Roll, onward roll,
Veil the sun and gloom the pole
 Dark and dismal cloud:
 There are skies in Heaven above
 Where the glorious sun of Love
 Shines without a shroud.



INSCRIPTION

FOR THE RUIN OF A VILLAGE CROSS,
HATHERN, LEICESTERSHIRE.

THE simple folk once used to throng
These mouldering steps beneath,
And every child that past along
Its soft petitions breathe,
In pious days of yore.

The working men at dawn of day
Were here assembled kneeling,
And to their labour bore away
A calm of holy feeling,
In Christian days of yore.

Till once a stalwart company
Of men with gloomy faces,
Unlike the men ye used to see
In such like holy places,
In quiet days of yore,

With savage hands pulled down the sign
Of our Redeemer's sorrow,
And promised in more force to join,
And break the rest to-morrow,—
Hating the days of yore.

But providence from then till now
This remnant hath befriended,
And by this shaft and time-worn steps
The memory hath defended,
Of the good days of yore.

And still, whene'er the good and great
On common times pass nigh me,
Though no petition they repeat,
Nor kneel in silence by me,
As in the days of yore,

Yet blessed thoughts upon their hearts
From heaven come gently stealing;
And each from this gray ruin parts,
With calmer, holier feeling,
Blessing the days of yore.



THE DEAD.

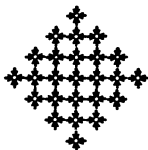
THE Dead alone are great!
While Heavenly plants abide on earth,
The soil is one of dewless dearth;
But when they die, a mourning shower
Comes down and makes their memories flower
With odours sweet though late.

The Dead alone are fair!
While they are with us, strange lines play
Before our eyes, and chase away
God's light: but let them pale and die,
And swell the stores of memory—
There is no envy there.

The Dead alone are dear!
While they are here, long shadows fall
From our own forms, and darken all:
But when they leave us, all the shade

Is round our own sad footsteps made,
And they are bright and clear.

The Dead alone are blest!
While they are here, clouds mar the day,
And bitter snow-falls nip their May;
But when their tempest-time is done,
The light and heat of Heaven's own Sun
Broods on their land of rest.





WRITTEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE,

1836.

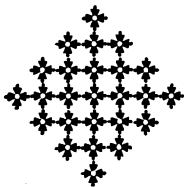
THE earth is clad
For her bridal glad,
Her robe is white
As the spotless light:
O'er field and hill
Its folds are still.

From her aery throne
The moon looks down,
Clothing with glory
The tree-tops hoary,
Which glittering are
Like purest spar.

A star or two
Diamond-blue
Through the space peers
Where the vapour clears,

And in long white masses
Silently passes.

The wind is awake
And his voice doth shake
The frost from the trees,
Then by degrees
Swells with a louder sound
Till it dies on the level ground.

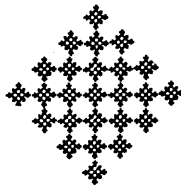




A DAY DREAM.

LEAVE love, leave life :—our moments are made
Of fragments of desire : O that with thee [up
 In some tree-shaded vale
 I might live out my years ;
Listening a lordly river over stones
Trailing its waters, or the leafy sighs
Of wooded hedge-rows ; or in flowery paths
Nursing bright blooms ; while still and unobserved
 The years should draw their train :
 Then under sunny rocks
Weave curious tales of love, and look through life
Into the inner springs of human thought ;
Presenting to the insight of our souls
Honour, and faith, and old integrity,
 And mighty leaps of will
 Down the slow course of fate ;

And how the ages grand
Tended with mystic chime
Of night-enthraling song
The Time-long sleep of Truth.





FEBRUARY 10, 1840.

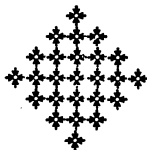
THEY saw thee kneel, with lowly mien,
In faith a child, in state a Queen ;
No circlet girt thy marble brow,
While at that altar thou didst bow,
And tears sprung forth from many an eye
In all that gorgeous company.

Around that brow, so high and fair,
The symbol of a kingdom's care
They bound a royal diadem,
Flashing with many a rarest gem ;
And British hearts were proud to own
Thy peaceful sway, thy virgin throne.

Again thou kneelest—on that brow
A snowy veil is trembling now ;
And as the solemn words pass by,
Thy woman's heart is throbbing high ;

Nor e'er did cottage maid rejoice
In purer love—in freer choice.

Young Queen—as through the shadowy Past
For glimpses of thy lot we cast,
And the dim things to come espy
Through the stern Present's gathering sky,
Our tears fall from us, as we pray
For blessings on thy bridal day!





THE NATIONAL PRAYER.

Oct. 1840.

FROM our aisles of places holy,
From our dwellings calm and lowly,
On the Autumn breezes slowly
 Swells the sound of prayer :—
God ! before thy footstool bending—
Anxious crowds their heart-wish blending,
To thine Heaven their vows are sending—
 Make our Queen thy care !

Brighter than our pomp and pleasure,
Precious, above every treasure,
Dear, beyond all human measure,
 Is that life we love :
Saviour ! slumbering not nor sleeping,
But thy watch in danger keeping,
Hear our prayer, receive our weeping—
 Guard her, from above !



THE DIRGE OF THE PASSING YEAR,
1840.

BRING flowers—but not the gay,
The tender, or the sweet :
But such as Winter's chill winds lay
Faded and dank across the spray,
Or strew beneath the feet.

Bring flowers to strew the bier—
He will be ready soon :
Already are his beauties sere—
And the much hailed, time-honoured year
To death is passing down.

He hath a warrior been :
And in the hallowed clime,
Where spiry rock and dark ravine
Guard the old cedar's solemn green,
Hath sped the march of Time.

He hath, in happy mood,
Turned priest, and charmed the spot
Where in her queenly womanhood
Our nation's hope betrothed stood,
Blest, beyond queenly lot.

And he hath bent in prayer
To the great God above
In peril that dear life to spare,
And o'er that young and royal pair
To spread his shield of love.

He hath his voice upsent
In minster and in aisle,
' Ye creatures of the dust, repent !
' He comes to claim what he hath lent,
' 'Tis yet a little while !'

His duties have been hard :
Yet hath he done them well :
He smote not where he should have spared,
But where his God the victim bared
His sword of justice fell.

The friend, the wife, the child—
Some took he, and some left;
He hath been cursed with curses wild—
Yet with his healing influence mild
Soothed he the soul bereft.

And he is dying now :
But yet once more again
Shall we behold him, not as now,—
But a dread form with awful brow,
Judging the sons of men.

Then will he tell his tale—
All hidden, shall be shewn :
Then will the iron-hearted quail—
The proud fall low, the strong man fail,
When all his words are known.

Then bring sweet flowers and gay—
Of holy thought and deed ;
Deck well his bier—that so we may
Look on him at that wrathful day
From fear and anguish free.



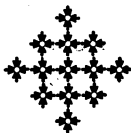
NOTTINGHAM
MECHANICS' EXHIBITION.

1840.

BRIGHT glowed the canvass, or with chastened
light

Of the wan moon was tinted; features, mild
With hopes angelic,—glorious visions wild
Fixed by Eternal Art, were there! the sight
Might rest on marble forms, perfect in grace
Symmetric, nymph, or hero half divine,
Or the calm hush of slumber infantine;—
Nature had sent her stores to fill the place:
All dazzling plumes on bird or moth bestowed,
Clear spiry crystals, grots of massive spar:—
So that it seemed all choicest things that are
Within those precincts had their blest abode;
And he who through these halls unknowing went,
Might ask for what high Presence all was meant?

Nor long should he inquire, ere he should meet
Not sweeping trains of pomp and courtly pride,
Illustrious visitant, or fêted bride,
Or whispering fall of beauty's dainty feet,
But the hard tramp of rustic, and the gaze
Of the pale-faced mechanic, and the eye
Unused before to stretch its aim so high,
Lit with the promise of aspiring days.
Prosper such work of Love—and may the halls
Which in glad zeal to feed the nation's heart
Have lacked awhile their gorgeous stores of art,
Teem with pure joy—the while their envied walls
Shine with adornments richer and more rare,
For the ten-thousands who their beauties share.





LINES

WRITTEN OCTOBER 23, 1836, A FEW HOURS AFTER
THE BIRTH OF MY FIRST CHILD.

BEAUTIFUL babe, I gaze upon thy face
That wears no trace of earth—thy silk-soft
cheek

Gladdens me even to tears—and thy full eyes,
Blue as the midnight heaven;—what thoughts are
they

That flit across thy being, now faint smiles
Awakening, now thy tiny fairy fingers
Weaving in restless play?—above thee bends
An eye that drinks sweet pleasure from thine own,
A face of meaning wonderful and deep,
A form in every member full of love.
Once thou wert hidden in her painful side,
A boon unknown, a mystery and a fear;
Strange pangs she bore for thee—but He, whose
name

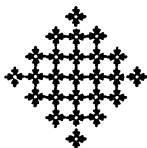
Is everlasting Love, hath healed her pain,
And paid her suffering hours with living joy.

Thou gentle creature—now thine eyes are hid
In soft Elysian sleep—a holy calm
Hath settled on thee, and thy little hands
Are folded on thy breast. Thus could I look
For ever on thee, babe, with yearning heart,
And strange unwonted pleasure.

And thou too,
Sweet mother, hast been dallying with sleep
Till thou hast yielded—and I sit alone,
Alone, as if by Providence divine,
To watch in spirit, and in peaceful verse
To speak my thankfulness and purest joy.
—Some, with the gift of song, have prophesied
High duties for their offspring,—and the words
Fresh from the parent heart, have wrought a charm
Upon their childhood and their growing youth;
And life hath taken colour from their love.
—And thou, my little Alice, now so frail,
So new to the new world,—in after-years
Shalt feel the wondrous tide of Poesy
Rise in thy swelling breast;—the happy earth,
And every living thing—Spring with its leaves,
And Summer clad in flowers, and Autumn, flush

With ripe abundance, and the Winter frost,
Shall lay the deep foundations of thy soul
In peace and purity—thence thou shalt love
The tale of strange adventure;—watch the dance
Of moonlit fairies on the crisping grass,—
And nurse thy little joys unchecked and free
With rhimes antique, and laughter-loving sports,
With wanton gambols in the sunny air,
And in the freshening bath of rocky streams.

But God hath knowledge of the years between;
Fair be thy lot, my first and early born—
The pledge and solace of our life-long love.





CHRISTMAS EVE, 1836.

THE stars are clear and frosty—and the Earth
Is laid in her first sleep, secure and calm :
The glorious works of God as at the first
Are very good. It is the blessed night
When, if the say of ancient chronicles
Deceive not, no ill spirit walks abroad ;
A night for holy prayers and fancies pure ;
A night when solitude in bed and board
Might frame itself celestial company
Out of its peopled thoughts.

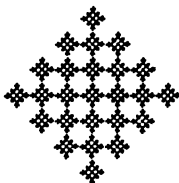
But here with me
Are two, on whom toil and the quiet time
Have wrought sweet slumber—and by breathings
soft
They testify their presence to my heart,
And waken kindly thoughts.

My earliest loved—

Thou, who in laughing childhood and ripe youth
Wast ever mine—with whose advancing thought
I grew entwined—and who in time didst yield
Thy maiden coyness, and in mystic band
Didst link thyself to me—one heart, one life
Binds us together—in the innermost soul
Either is known to other ; and we walk
The daily path of unrecorded life
Blest with a double portion of God's love.

And thou, in thy warm nook beside our bed
Peacefully wrapt in slumber infantine,
Thou treasure newly found of springing joy,—
Thou jewel in the coronet of love,—
Thou little flower, a choice plant's earliest gem—
Thou brightest morning-star, by Love divine
Set on the forehead of the hopeful East,—
Thou reckest not of Time—our human names
Mould not thy varying moods—if marking aught,
Measuring thy days by still-expected hours
Of soft appliance to thy Mother's breast ;
And yet methinks, so hallowed is the time,
That even thy cushioned cheek hath trace of it,
Clothed in a deeper and peculiar calm.

The blessings of a kindly Providence
Light on ye both—the way of life, not dark
With gathering storms as yet, invites us on;
We must advance, in threefold union strong,
And strong in Him who bound our lives in God.





WRITTEN IN A COPY OF 'THE REVOLT OF ISLAM,'
GIVEN AS A WEDDING PRESENT TO HER WHO
IS ADDRESSED IN THE FOLLOWING LINES, BUT
ORIGINALLY GIVEN TO MYSELF BY THE LA-
MENTED ARTHUR HENRY HALLAM.

BELOVED, to whose wedded hand I trust
This treasure of sweet song, it is but meet
That thou shouldst know its value; that the gift
May have its honour, and the giver share
His meed of grateful love.

No common price
Attends this wedding gift;—for blessed eyes
Have looked upon its pages—eyes whose light
Gladdened a circle of united hearts,
While yet they shone; and now that they are
quenched
In the cold grave, they dwell upon our souls,
A memory that can never die; a Power
That may not pass away. 'Twas not thy lot
To know and love him—let it be enough.

That oft his lips pronounced thy name with love
As one he fain would know, in happy days
Of youthful confidence and sacred joy.

He lived in Love; and God, whose son he was,
Not willing that the Spirit pure should pass
Into the dim and damping atmosphere
Of these our earthly haunts and scenes of care,
While yet the hills and skies and common sights
O'erflowed his soul with joy, and wondrous thoughts
Sprung burning in his heart, fetched him away
To the unwithering banks and deep-green glades
Where flows the River of Eternal Truth.

Be then by thee this gift as precious held,
As is his memory by the giver; look
On every page with inly fervent heart;
Learn lessons of pure beauty, and to shun
Only the errors of the Poet's creed,
Yielding free duty to his code of Love.





INSCRIPTION

FOR A BLOCK OF GRANITE ON THE SURFACE
OF THE MER DE GLACE.*

SEE me, by elemental warfare torn
From yonder peak's aerial crest,
Now on the rifted breast
Of this ice-ocean borne
By ministering ages without fail
Down to my rest
Among the shattered heaps in yonder deep-set vale.

Gray am I, for my conflict with the powers
Of air doth never cease; around

* We were informed by our Chamonix guide that these blocks are borne downwards by the slow motion of the whole of the vast glacier on which they are lying, and that from year to year their change of place is just perceptible.

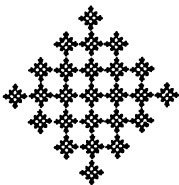
My lifted head doth sound
The voice of all the hours
Struck forth in tempest; from my fretted side
The snows rebound :
The avalanche's spray-balls in my rifts abide.

Glory and ruin doth my course behold;
After each wild and dreadful night
The day-birth heavenly bright
Floods all this vale with gold ;
And when the day sinks down, on every peak
Last shafts of light
The downward fading sky with lines of ruby streak.

All summer long the moan of many woods
Comes to me, and from far conveyed
The tumbling of the low cascade,
And rush of valley-floods.
The lavish rock-rose clothes with crimson hue
Each upward glade,
And the Alp-violet strews its stars of brightest blue.

Thus slowly down long ages shall I pass,
Unnoticed, save by practised eye

Of them, who use thus high
The traveller's steps to lead;
Then when the years by God apportioned
Shall have past by,
Leap from the lofty brink, and fill the vale with
dread.





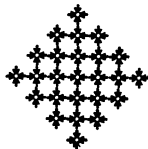
TO A MOONBEAM, BY OUR
FIRE SIDE.

WHAT dost thou here?
A drop of strange cold light
After thy airy flight
Of many a thousand league of sky?
Like glowworm, or the sparkling eye
Of snake dost thou appear
By this my nightly fire, among these faces dear.

Why art thou come?
Is it that night is bleak
And thou in vain dost seek
Some refuge from the chilly wind?
And thou no better nook couldst find
In earth or heaven's high dome
To nestle and be warm, than this our peopled home?

Now thou art gone—
And all thy light dost shroud
In some swart-bosomed cloud,
Or waitest on thy mother dear,
Bridging her way with opal clear,
Till vapour there is none,
And silver-bright she walks her peaceful path alone.

Here and away,
Bound on no great behest,
A fleeting spark at best,
So high is Heaven, or I so low,
That the least things that come and go
My wandering moods obey,
In thoughts that linger by me many a busy day.





A VILLAGE TALE,

RELATED ALMOST IN THE WORDS OF THE
NARRATOR.

HE was a blessed Father; and he taught
Us his four children (for in that my day
There were no schools as now) the way to read
The wonderful account, how this large world
Came into being, and the sun and moon,
And all the little stars that deck the heavens.
He loved my mother;—and when her he lost,
And first came home among the sable train
Of mourners, and his desolation sank
Into his soul, we thought his heart would burst.
But soon he built him up another home
In a new partner's breast. She loved us all
As if we were her own: and 'twould have made
Your heart rejoice to see my father sit
After his daily labour, self-deceived

Into domestic happiness, and blest
With us his rosy circle. But stern Death
Envied the healing of the breach he made,
And took our second mother. By this time
My Father was in years; and I believe
Without the two chairs filled beside the fire,
And some one to be busy and bear rule
In the house-matters, and to share his bed,
He would have known no peace. Therefore a
third

He led to church, and brought to live with us,—
But oh how changed was now our quiet hearth!—
A strange and wayward woman—one who went
From church to meeting, and then back to church,
And got no good from either. She would be
Days without speaking; and in sudden mood
Pour forth such hours of wild and rambling talk,
That we all shook to hear her. Happily
My Father knew not all; unsensing age
Came fast upon him, and his daily meal
And daily fire, and journey to his bed,
Were all he sought or knew.

One winter night,
I woke from sleep, and heard, or seemed to hear

Fierce struggling in their room, which joined our
own.

There was no door; I left my bed, and crept
To the open ground-sill; but 'twas quiet all,
And pitch pitch dark. Whether she heard me there
I know not, but I had scarce regained my bed
When she came to me, flying like distraught,
' Jenny, your Father's lying stiff and still,
' And will not be awaked.' I thought it strange
That she should try to wake him at mid night;
But I said nothing.

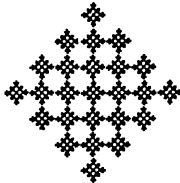
Sir, I said before

He was a blessed Father; and we mourned
Our very hearts out. Long before this time
My sisters had been married: so 'twas mine
To live with my strange mother. We were then
In the old meeting-house that was; you know
The place;—the stones that were beside the hearth
Were coverings of graves. 'Tis a lone house—
A dismal dismal place.

Well—from the hour
My Father died, this woman had no peace.
By day she never kept to the same chair
Five minutes at a time. Now she would rise

And stir the fire, now stare into the street,
Now work a stitch or two; then fling her out
Without a hat or shawl, and roam about
The village and the fields; and in the night,
Oh, Sir, 'twas dreadful; she would never go
Upstairs, but she and I slept in a bed
Placed in the lodging room, and all among
The grave-stones—trust me, 'twas a dismal thing—
All night she never slept; and when I woke,
Whether at midnight, or in dawn of morn,
I felt her beating with her lifted hand
Backward and forward, all about her breast;
' *Mother,*' said I, (for though she was not so,
We always *mother'd* her), *you have not yet*
' *Done beating of him off.*' So she went on—
And happy, Sir, was I when the time came
For me to leave her, and set up a home
Some twenty houses off, in love and peace,
With my own husband. We'd been married now
Some fifteen weeks, when as I sat at work,
A neighbour came in haste, with wildered looks,
' *Go to your mother.*' Up I rose and went—
And oh, Sir, what a scene—The doctor stood
With hands and arms all bloody, sewing up

A hideous wound. ‘ O mother, what a deed
Have you been doing!’—After that she lived
Three weeks, but never spoke—and as she lived,
So, Sir, she died, a wretched, wicked woman,
With strange unbridled thoughts : and deeds,—God
knows
What were her deeds—one day they will be shown.





SONNETS.

I.

WHEN I behold thee, only living one
In whom God's image pure and clear I see,
Far beyond all in humble sanctity,
Close at my side, attending me alone;
Strange questioning it raises, wherefore thine
Should be the subject life, and not the free;
Heavenly, but bound in earthly chains to me;
Superior, yet dependent: God's, yet mine.
I therefore have been taught to feel at length
That not most precious in the Eternal's sight
Self-guiding freedom is, knowledge, or strength,
Or power of song, or wit's deceiving light;
But yielding meekness, careless to be free,
And the clear flame of Love in Chastity.



II.

THOU for whom Life is Life, and every joy
Wears its best clothing, pardon if in haste
I have been prodigal, and have let waste
The oil of Love that should our lamp supply :
Dry up the tear that trembles in thine eye,
And let our pleasure have a sweeter taste
For this intrusion ; time is speeding fast,
And Love must bless its minutes as they fly.
Think thou of me as of one over-wrought
With importunity of daily toil,
Not free to wander in the land of thought,
But bound to till the same unkindly soil ;
Ever too ready to escape and flee,
But willing to endure, since blest with Thee.



III.

EACH morn the same sun rises on our day,
Measuring with every year his usual round ;
The merry bells that for our birthdays sound,
And those that knoll us to our homes of clay,
Speak ever with one voice : the skies obey
Spring whispering soft, and Summer blossom-
crown'd,
And Autumn flush, and Winter icy-bound ;—
Down Life's smooth channel Ages sleep their way.
The Babe, that smiling in her slumber lies
Lapt in thy breast, hath been there oft before ;
This day, this room, hath all been acted o'er ;
And ev'n the thought not first in me doth rise ;—
Time measures but the course of human will ;
'Tis we that move, while Providence is still.



IV.*

THERE is a bright space in yon rolling cloud
 Betokening the presence of the moon ;—
 Into the pure sky she will travel soon,
 In clearest beauty, free from envious shroud :—
 Even so to thee, my soul's sweet partner, bowed
 With pain severe, the light of Hope was shown ;
 And thou art now in æther of thine own,
 A clear blue space, with perfect calm endowed ;
 And this young Babe, a treasure newly found,
 Like some fair star attendant at thy side
 Shall journey on, through ease and peril tried :
 To him, whose being in your own is bound,
 For blest example and high solace given,—
 Heaven at Life's end, and Life itself a Heaven.

* This, and the following Sonnet, were written about the time of the birth of my first child.



V.

SLEEP, gentle Love, and let the soothing dew
Of deepest quiet cover every sense;
Calm visions rise before thine inward view,
And restless fears and doubts be banished thence;
And may the ministering hand of Providence
At every breathing give thee vigour new,
Thy gathering health from chill and danger fence,
And mantle fresh thy cheeks with beautiful hue.
And I, from whom the pangs of sudden pain
Lately my dearest treasure well-nigh reft,
Now safely sped, and breathing free again,
Have not enough of thankful offerings left
To pay my vows to God; rather with prayer
I weary Him afresh, to make thy life his care.



VI.*

LONG have we toiled, and past from day to day
Our stated round of duties, till the mind
 Reaches for change, and longs fresh paths to find
 From her accustomed dwelling far away :
 Come then, dear wife, while yet the Summer ray
 Fills all the air with gladness, and unbind
 Awhile the chains of duty ; then reclined
 Where Derwent or where Dove in varied play
 Leaps through his mossy rocks, let us entice
 The weary trout, or ply the pencil's art ;
 Or in some wooded dell that lies apart
 Woo the maid Poësy : no unworthy price
 Of year-long labour without ceasing wrought,
 And intermission of Poetic thought.

* This and the four following Sonnets were written in anticipation of, or during a summer month spent in the Peak of Derbyshire, 1836.



VII.

TO THE RIVER WYE.

IF, gentle stream, by promised sacrifice
Of kid or yearling, or by scattered flowers
Of votive roses culled from thy thick bowers,
Or golden cistus, we could thee entice
To be propitious to our love, no price
Should save these errant flocks; each nook but ours
Should shed its eglantine in twinkling showers,
For tribute from thy wooded Paradise.
But not thy flocks, nor briar-roses hung
In natural garlands down thy rocky hills,
Shall win thee to be ours; more precious far
Than summer blossoms or rich offerings are,
We bring thee sweet poetic descants, sung
To the wild music of thy tinkling rills.



VIII.

CLOSE is the nook ; the valley pathway steep
Above the river climbs ; and down the bank
With sweet wild roses and thick hazels rank,
By an unheeded track your feet may creep
Into a shady covert still and deep,
Harbour of flowery fragrance ; with full tide
The river slumbers by ; on either side
Over their rocks the merry runnels leap.
Here, in the freshness of each sunny morn,
Sit we in raptured converse ; every flower
Opens to greet us in our trellised bower,
With warm dew sparkling ; moss with hair unshorn
Is our soft pavement ; and the social throng
Unscared, around us pour their airy song.



IX.

TO THE YELLOW CISTUS.

FLOWER, that with thy silken tapestry
Of flexile petals interwove with green
Clothest the mountain walls of this calm scene,
We, a love-led poetic company,
Pronounce thee happy, if happiness it be
In every cleft the bright-gray rocks between
To plant thy seemly gems, and reign the queen
Of pathside blossoms over wood and lea.
Live, and of those poor fools who idly moan
Thy fragile life-time's shortness, reckon aught;
Thou diest not, when thy ripe blooms are strown
On the damp earth, or by the tempest caught;
Thou hast a future life to them unknown,—
In the eternity of human thought.



X.

HADDON HALL, DERBYSHIRE, JULY, 1836.

NOT fond displays of cost, nor pampered train
Of idle menials, me so much delight,
Nor mirrored halls, nor roofs with gilding bright,
Nor all the foolery of the rich and vain,
As these time-honoured walls, crowning the plain
With their gray battlements; within bedight
With ancient trophies of baronial might,
And figures dim, inwoven in the grain
Of dusky tapestry. I love to muse
In present peace, on days of pomp and strife;—
The daily struggles of our human life,
Seen through Time's veil, their selfish colouring lose :
As here the glaring beams of outer day
Through ivy-shadowed oriels softened play.



XI.

STRATFORD UPON AVON, JANUARY, 1837.

WE stood upon the tomb of Him whose praise
Time, nor oblivious thrift, nor envy chill,
Nor war, nor ocean with her severing space,
Shall hinder from the peopled world to fill ;
And thus in fulness of our heart we cried :
God's works are wonderful—the circling sky,
The rivers that with noiseless footing glide,
Man's firm-built strength, and Woman's liquid eye ;—
But the high spirit that sleepeth here below,
More than all beautiful and stately things
Glory to God the mighty Maker brings ;—
To whom alone 'twas given the bounds to know
Of human action, and the secret springs
Whence the deep streams of joy and sorrow flow.



XII.

ST. ROBERT'S CAVE, KNARESBOROUGH.*

WE gazed intent upon the murderous cave ;
 Too fair a place, methinks, for deeds of blood.
 Above, the rocks, dappled with pendent wood,
 Rose sheltering : and below with rippling wave
 The crystal Nidd flow'd by. The wondrous tale
 That from of old had turn'd our young cheeks pale,
 Came crowding on the present ;—yonder stood
 The guilt-worn Student, skilled without avail
 In ancient lore ; and yonder seemed to lie
 The melancholy corse, year after year
 Sending to Heaven its silent vengeance-cry,
 Till Aram's hour was come, and He, whose ear
 Was open, tracked the murderer where he fled,
 And wrath's right-aiming stroke descended on his
 head.

* The scene of the murder of Daniel Clarke by Eugene Aram.



XIII.

WRITTEN AT YORK ON THE DAY OF THE
CORONATION OF QUEEN VICTORIA,
JUNE 28, 1838.

SHINE out, thou Sun, and let the minster-towers
Pour forth their solemn music, and the crowd
Utter their oft repeated shouts and loud;—
Let little children bless the gladsome hours
Of this auspicious day :—for there are powers
Undreamt of by the selfish and the proud,
That work when Avarice in the dust is bowed,
And mean Utility. The summer flowers
That toil not neither spin, the deep blue sky,
The ever-twinkling waves that gird our land,
Have taught ye to rejoice :—therefore pass by,
Ye coloured pageants ;—shout, each girl and boy :—
Ill fare the heart that doth not feel your joy.



XIV.

SUMMIT OF SKIDDAW, JULY 7, 1838.

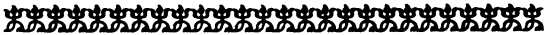
AT length here stand we, wrapt as in the cloud
In which Light dwelt before the Sun was born,
When the great Fiat issued, in the morn
Of this fair world ; alone and in a shroud
Of dazzling mist, while the wind whistling loud
Buffets thy streaming locks :—result forlorn
For us who up yon steep our way have worn
Elate with hope, and of our daring proud.
Yet though no stretch of glorious prospect range
Beneath our vision,—neither Scottish coast
Nor ocean island, nor the future boast
Of far-off hills descried,—I would not change
For aught on Earth, this solitary hour
Of Nature's grandest and most sacred power.



XV.

DESCENT OF THE SAME.

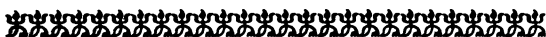
GLORY on glory greets our wondering sight
As we wind down these slopes ; mountain
and plain
Robed in rich sunshine, and the distant main
Lacing the sky with silver : and yon height
So lately left in clouds, distinct and bright.
Anon the mist enwraps us : then again
Burst into view lakes, pastures, fields of grain,
And rocky passes with their torrents white.
So on the head, perchance, and highest bent
Of thine endeavour, Heaven may stint the dower
Of rich reward long-hoped ; but thine ascent
Was full of pleasures,—and the teaching hour
Of disappointment hath a kindly voice
That moves the spirit inly to rejoice.



XVI.

WRITTEN AT AMPTON, SUFFOLK, JANUARY, 1838.

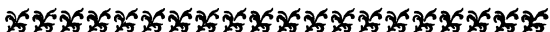
ONCE more I stray among this wilderness
Of ancient trees, and through the rustling fern
Golden and sere, brush forward; at each turn
Meeting fresh avenues in winter dress
Of long gray moss, or yellow lichen bright;
While the long lines of intercepted shade
Spread into distance through the turfey glade,
Chequered with rosy paths of evening light.
Here first I learned to tune my youthful thoughts
To themes of blessed import: woods and sky,
And waters, as they rushed or slumbered by,
For my poetic soul refreshment brought:
And now within me rise, unbidden long,
Fresh springs of life—fresh themes of earnest song.



XVII.

WYMESWOLD, APRIL, 1837.

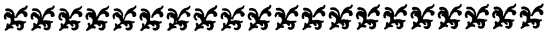
DEAR streamlet, tripping down thy devious
course,
Or lulled in smoothest pools of sombre hue,
Or breaking over stones with murmurs hoarse,—
To thee one grateful strain is surely due
From me, the Poet of thy native wolds,
Now that the sky is golden in the west,
And distant flocks are bleating from their folds,
And the pale Eve-star lifts her sparkling crest.
Would it were thus with thee, when summer suns
Shed their strong heats, and over field and hill
Swims the faint air, and all the cattle shuns
The brighter slopes : but then thy scanty rill
Has dwindled to a thread, and creeping through
The tangled herbage, shelters from the view



XVIII.

WYMESWOLD, APRIL, 1837.

NOR is a thankful strain from me not due
To you, ye company of cherished flowers,
That look upon, throughout the weary hours,
My study and my prison ; for from you
I learn that nature to her charge is true ;
That she, who clothes with bloom your lavish bowers
In kindlier climates, can in skies like ours
Paint your soft petals with their native hue.
And thence I learn that this poetic soul,
That fain would revel in the warmth and light
Of heavenly beauty, yet in strict control
Dwelling, and chilly realms of damp and blight,
Must not the more its proper task forego :
But in the dreariest clime its blossoms show.



XIX.

OFF OSTENDE,* JUNE 11, 1837.

BUT now, the level sea-horizon spanned
 With its unbroken line the azure round :
 I look again, and see the waters crowned
 With a pale coronet of distant land ;
 A shore by us untrodden and unknown,
 Thronged with strange men, and voices' stranger
 sound ;
 Where we shall wander long, and none be found
 To greet with kind salutes and call our own.
 Yet even thus, with thee, wife of my love,
 Enough the world is peopled ; one fond heart
 Resting on mine, with others I can part,
 Prizing thy gentle excellence above
 All native comfort,—and on land or sea
 Then best befriended, if alone with Thee.

* The following Sonnets are reminiscences of a tour on the Continent in July 1837.



XX.

BRUGES.

WOULDST thou behold, not the ensnaring
blaze
Of earthly grandeur in its envious noon,
But the calm majesty of other days
Reposing, as beneath the summer moon
Rests the laid Ocean—hie thee to the streets
Of ancient Bruges :—temple, dome, and tower,
Or pathside dwelling—whatsoever meets
Thy roving sight, bears record of a power
Long since departed : surely not so fair
When pomp and pride were tenants here, as now,
When solitary forms, with pious care,
Or thankful haply for some granted vow,
Stately and dark these vistas churchward tread,
Fit habitants for her, whose fame is with the dead.



XXI.

WRITTEN AT GHENT.

A LAS for England, if her native hearts
Were only to be won by stately towers,
Or oft-recurring chime of many parts,
With lively music cheating the dull hours ;
If only beauteous fields or lavish flowers
Would win and keep the children whom she bears ;
Not that we lack of these—but there are ours
More healing medicines for our daily cares :—
Nations have fought against the fanes they raised ;
For gold have bartered pomp : but where the law
Builds on men's hearts,—no longer vainly praised
But with a settled and deep rooted awe
It takes possession of its children's love,
And reigns, fit emblem of its source above.



XXII.

ANTWERP CATHEDRAL.

BE it not mine in these high aisles to tread
 Lightly, with scornful or with pitying gaze
 Viewing these worshippers, who on the days
 When English fanes are silent as the dead,
 Throng kneeling, where yon feeble candles shed
 Their flickering light :—far rather would I raise
 My hands in prayer with them, or join in praise,
 Or sit beneath their shrines in humble dread.
 Because our being's end is furthered best
 Not by the pride of reason, most unjust
 When it condemneth,—but by self-distrust,
 By mildness, and submission, and arrest
 Of sudden judgment: thus we learn to feel
 That all are one, and have one wound to heal.



XXIII.

BRUSSELS.

THE peaceful moon sheds downward from the
Upon the sleeping city her soft light; [sky
Lines of storm-laden vapour heavily
From the low North advance upon the night;
The minster towers are seen in vision bright
In front, distinct with fretted tracery ;
And long glades stretch beneath this giddy height,
Dappled with shadows dark of tower and tree.
Such wert thou, Brussels, when I gazed on thee ;
Thou, at whose name the circumstance of war
Rose to my youthful fancy ; now no more
A sound to move to tears ; to memory
Henceforth, as ever unto freedom, dear,
In virtue of this night so soft and clear.



XXIV.

WATERLOO.

THEY stood upon these plains, and side by side
Did battle for the world, too long enthralled
To the universal tyrant; one was called,
And one was left to cross the homeward tide;
Both, in their glory, as in arms, allied;—
But the loud voice of fame is hushed asleep,
Their sires are gone—no more their widows weep,
Their orphan sons forget them in their pride.
Yet deem not that they sold their lives for nought:
Who, that hath springing in his breast the fount
Of self-devoting love, the cost would count,
So might he in those favoured ranks have fought,
Increasing by his single strength's amount
That blessed victory for freedom wrought.

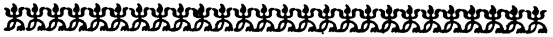


XXV.

WRITTEN AT FRANKFORT.

NO voice is heard along the city street
Of men, nor tramp of horse ; but the night
long

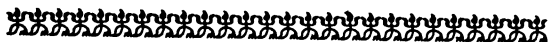
Yon nightingale fills all the air with song :—
I am a stranger here, but no less sweet
Those heavenly notes my raptured hearing greet,
Than when I stood my native dales among,
And the sweet blossom of the hawthorn flung
Its incense on my path, and at my feet
The glow-worm glistened. Bird of restless joy—
When first I learn'd to love this peopled earth,
I past beside thy haunts, a roving boy,
And thou wert mingled in my spirit's mirth ;
But now I am spell-fastened by thy strain,
And oft return to listen once again.



XXVI.

TO ALICE, IN ENGLAND. ALSO WRITTEN AT
FRANKFÖRT.

CHILD of our love, thou sleepest softly now
 In our dear home perchance, with thine own
 Resting upon thy rosy lips, the while [smile
 Thy little arm is folded on thy brow,
 And thou art dreaming of the summer flowers
 Shewn thee this sunny morn. Blest be thy sleep—
 Good angels round thy bed their watches keep
 In holy station through the silent hours.
 Thus we commit thee to the wakeful care
 Of Him whose mercy gave thee ; thus secure
 We leave thee in the confidence of prayer,
 Of thy best welfare and his blessing sure,
 Near, though to these our earthly eyes unseen,
 With us, though half the ocean rolls between.



XXVII.

MILAN CATHEDRAL.

HERE stand, Beloved, where the outer light
Falls, glorified by entrance to this shrine
Of the Eternal : where the tracery fine
Of marble shafts springs upward beyond sight ;
And hear the soaring chaunt in unison
Of manly voices, as by angel bands
Sent up to God—or see with spreading hands
The Fathers shout their ancient benison ;—
Shun not the full outpouring of thy soul ;—
Claim not exemption for thy judgment's sake ;
He, who will not divided service take,
Loves more the heart of man when offered whole,
Though by unlearned simplicity of fools,—
Than all the wrangling of polemic schools.



XXVIII.

THE TOMB OF SAN CARLO BORROMEIO, IN MILAN
CATHEDRAL.

LET not this gold, and jewels, and parade
Of cunning work in silver, and the cost
Of rich inlaying, be accounted lost :
It is the tribute of a nation, paid
To their good Shepherd, one who gladly laid
His life down for the sheep: the pride and boast
Of Lake Verbanus round his purple coast,
And Milan in her marble spires arrayed.
A thousand fell beside him, yet he dared
To enter and speak comfort: the death-spot
Was on the infant, but he trembled not
To give the saving rite: hallowed and spared
For blest example, he resigned his soul,—
No holier martyr in the sainted roll.



PICTORIAL EMBLEMS FOR THE SEASONS.

XXIX.

WINTER.

HAD I the wondrous magic to invest
Ideal forms in colour, I would paint
Thee, Winter, first, by an age-withered Saint
Deep in his beads : on his bare ribs should rest
A cross of lichen'd boughs : and duly prest
Each morn by horny knees, one for each bone,
There should be two round hollows in the stone,
Whither his bent limbs should be half adrest.
And in the entry of the holy cave
Where the same Saint should sit, a laughing boy,
Naked, and all aglow with play and joy,
Should peer fall slily on that Father grave,
In the full blessedness of childhood's morn,
And laugh his crusty solitude to scorn.



XXX.

SPRING.

SPRING should be drest in emblem quaint
and shy;

A troop of rosy girls escaped from bed
For very wantonness of play, should tread
The garden-paths; one tucks her night robe high
The dewy freshness of the lawn to try;
Some have been bolder, and unclothed and bright
The group is seen in the moon's mellow light;
Some, scatter'd, gaze upon the trees and sky.
But there should be that turn with hurried glance
Beckoning their play-mates, where by a side-path
Between the shrubs is seen to half-advance
The moody widow lodger; who in wrath
Is sure to scatter all their stealthy play,
And they will rue it ere the break of day.



XXXI.

SUMMER.

FOR Summer, I would paint a married pair
Sitting in close embraces, while a band
Of children kneel before them hand in hand ;
Healthful their cheeks, and from their mantling
hair,
Well-knit and clear, their downward limbs are bare ;
His hand is past over her neck, and prest
In pride of love upon her full ripe breast ;
And yet his brow is delved with lines of care,
And in her shining eye one truant tear
Stands, ready to be shed :—a quiet scene,
But not without perchance intruding fear
That never comes again what once hath been ;
And recollection that our fondest toil
But weaves a texture for the world to soil.



XXXII.

AUTUMN.

AUTUMN should be a youth wasted and wan,
A flush upon his cheek, and in his eye
Unhealthful fire ; and there should sit hard by
She that best loves him, ever and anon
Wistfully looking, and for pleasures gone
(So would I paint her) she should seem to sigh ;
The while some slender task her fingers ply,
Veiling the dread that trusts him not alone.
But he, high-rapt in Divine Poesy,
Unrolls the treasures of creative Art,
Spells framing for the world's unheeding heart ;
His very eye should speak, and you should see
That Love will brighten as his frame decays,
And Song not fail, but with his failing days.



XXXIII.

EPIMENIDES.

HE went into the woods a laughing boy;—
Each flower was in his heart; the happy bird
Flitting across the morning sun, or heard
From way-side thicket, was to him a joy:
The water springs that in their moist employ
Leapt from the banks, with many an inward word
Spoke to his soul, and every leaf that stirred
Found notice from his quickly-glancing eye.
There wondrous sleep fell on him: many a year
His lids were closed: youth left him, and he woke
A careful noter of men's ways: of clear
And lofty spirit: sages, when he spoke,
Forgot their systems; and the worldly-wise
Shrunk from the gaze of Truth with baffled eyes.



XXXIV.

ARION.

NOT song, nor beauty, nor the wondrous power
Of the clear sky, nor stream, nor mountain
glen,

Nor the wide Ocean, turn the hearts of men
To love, nor give the world-embracing dower
Of inward gentleness:—up from the bed
Blest by chaste beauty, men have risen to blood ;
And life hath perished in the flowery wood,
And the poor traveller beneath starlight bled.
Thus that musician in his wealth of song
Pouring his numbers, even with the sound
Swimming around them, would the heartless throng
Have thrust unto his death ; but with a bound
Spurning the cursed ship, he sought the wave,
And Nature's children did her Poet save.



XXXV.

LION, along whose streets in olden days
 Shone that divinest form, for whose sweet face
 A monarch sire with all his kingly race
 Were too content to let their temples blaze—
 Where art thou now? no massive columns raise
 Their serried shafts to heaven—we may not trace
 Xanthus and Simois, nor each storied place
 Round which poetic memory fondly plays.
 But in the verse of the Old Man divine
 Thy windy towers are built eternally;
 Nor shall the ages as they ruin by,
 Print on thy bulwarks one decaying sign:—
 So true is Beauty, clothed in endless rime:
 So false the sensual monuments of Time.



XXXVI.

THE WIDOWER. SUGGESTED BY A FRAGMENT
OF SAPPHO.

THE rolling chariot of the star-pied night
Midway hath mounted, and alone I lie;
Alone, and see the constellations bright
Set in their turn—and the haven of the sky
Receive the Pleiads, and Orion's might:—
Where is the form beloved, that slumbering by,
Should fill these arms, and with her breathings light
Weave o'er my wedded soul sweet films of joy?
Is she of those unresting heavens a part?
Or from the darkness near doth she attend
My watchings, and the deep wound of my heart
With ministration spiritual befriend?
Where'er thou art, around me or above,
Speak to my soul, for I am sick with Love.



XXXVII.

FRIEND of my heart, here in my close green
bower

I wait thy coming : slender clematis
And the rank wild-vine, with late primroses,
And classic tea-tree with small purple flower,
Are here, and foxglove with its bearded bell,
Haunt of the passing bee : and thy delight,
The lily of the valley, purest white,
Rising like fabled nymph from Ocean-shell.
Nor wanting is Canova's art divine :
On the rude trunk, native in Earth below,
The god of gladness, garlanded with vine,
And Ariadne re-assured from woe ;—
And the full noon, by leafy screen delayed,
Has spread the pebbled floor with fickle shade.



XXXVIII.

IN the deep waters perished they together,
In the full blessedness of that soft clime,
Before their love had caught a stain from Time
Or Age's blight, or Fortune's wintry weather :
Death touched their life but with a passing feather
Of his dark wing,—and in their wedded prime
They vanished from the Earth—by this my rime
Not to be mourned, but counted happy rather :—
Thus, my life's partner, be it thine and mine
Rather in noon of life to pass away
From this unquiet world, than to decline
From joy and springing hope :—who longer stay,
Live but to lose, and ripen to repine :
The more mature, the nearer to decay.



XXXIX.

TO CHARLES MERIVALE.

THOU friend whom chilling years have altered
not,

When shall we once again by winter fire
Or in the summer sun, quench our desire
Of pleasant converse, mingling thought with thought.
For we have wandered far abroad, and brought
Treasures from many lands,—joys that require
The sympathy of friends that will not tire,
But find an interest though the tale be nought.
Come then, for Summer sheds her sickly flowers,
And the new buds, unable to expand,
Hang dripping on the stalk : notice that hours
Are near, in mercy portioned to our land,
When rest is granted to the outward eye,
And thought is busy with the things gone by.



XL.

MY ANCESTORS.

UNKNOWN it is to me, who handed down
From sire to son mine humble family ;
Whether they dwelt in low obscurity,
Or by achievements purchased high renown :
Whether with princely or baronial crown
Their brows were bound, or martyr-wreath of flame :
No glories mark the track through which my name
Hath come : I only know it as mine own.
Yet am I one of no mean parentage :
The poorest line of Christian ancestry
Might serve upon the world's unbounded stage
To act God's dealings : all mankind might see
More truth than now they know, were this my line
Of distant sires their evidence to join.



XLI.

THE TWO LOTS.

TWO Pilgrims on a pleasant road set forth :
Green was the herbage by their journey side ;
Through deep and shrubby dells their way they
plied,
Fenced from the biting of the ruthless North ;
At length said one, ' I would that we were high
On yonder hill, whence we might look out wide
On towns and plains, even to the distant tide
Of Ocean, bordered by the vaulting sky.'
Thus parted they :—one by the alder'd brook
Wandered in easeful calm ; the other wound
Up the rock-path, with many a backward look
Tracing his progress, till no envious bound
Forbade his sight, and from the mountain-head
Earth, sea, and sky, in mighty prospect spread.



XLII.

THE heart of man is everywhere the same;—
 In distant Savoy roamed we long ago
 With one to guide us o'er the mountain snow;
 Scarce had we power in foreign tongue to frame
 Unhindered converse; often did he name
 Things strange to us; and dwell in accents slow
 On wayside views, or aught we asked to know,
 That we his skill in guidance might not blame.
 Yet is there written all that old man's life
 Deep on our memory; his cottage hearth
 Peopled with joy—his solitude and dearth
 When God called thence the mother and the wife;
 And how he looked, and said, 'I'll trust him yet:'
 All these are things which we can ne'er forget.*

* Some readers who are acquainted with Chamonix, may be interested to know that this guide was David Couttet, the elder.



XLIII.

TO A FRIEND CONCERNED IN EDUCATION.

FORCE not to over-growth the subject mind ;
Heaven's is the power that spread the native
soil ;

The tillage only asks thy careful toil,
On primal strength dependent : if confined
In depth, and barren, simple be thy seed,
Of hardy grain : God's providence hath need
Of some to marshal well the ranks behind,
As of the lofty spirits born to lead.
But if the tender plants of Truth thou sow,
Let there be depth of matter genial ;
And if the frosts should nip, and strong winds blow,
Their kindly opposites should countervail :
Blest gifts, unfailing in their fostering might,
Sunshine by day, the dews of heaven by night.



XLIV.

THE Light of Life may set—the artist-brain
Faint in her central seat—the warrior arm
Sink in the clash of swords—and Beauty's charm
Wither beneath the touch of tyrant pain :
The sweet light of the eyes grow dim and wane :
But Love may sit secure and take no harm
Shut in his quiet haven from alarm,
Whatever tempests vex the outer main.
Therefore, sweet girl, though not as heretofore
Spring the clear well of heavenly Poësy,
What should forbid in this retreat with Thee
To fill our hearts with Love, till runs no more
The current of our lives, and fresher birth
Of new-born interests blots our names from Earth.



XLV.

DEAR Spirit, lo, thy Poet, full at heart,
Puts on his singing garb and flowery gear,
To make sweet music in thy listening ear :
Too long hath he been mindless of his part ;
But now before his sight come and depart
The dreams of Thought in vision quick and clear ;
And new creations of the Soul appear
Clothed in the glory of undying Art.
Crush not, Beloved, though with touch most pure,
The tender plants arising ; stand beside,
And feed each springing leaf with daily showers :
So mayst thou see, in Life's declining hours,
The goodly umbrage of the grove mature
Over the weary world spread far and wide.



XLVI.

ON AN INCIDENT WHICH HAPPENED AT HAVRE,
APRIL, 1836.

SINCE my first essay to the world went forth,
Twice spoke the Critic from his seat severe
Words not unpleasing to my youthful ear;
Nor in my walk of life hath there been dearth
Of praising tongues, in earnest and in mirth:
Selfchiding it hath asked and wholesome fear
Firmly against the Seiren's voice to steer,
And measure praises by their sterling worth.
But when I learn that in a stranger land
My wandering fame hath in the hour of pain
Bespoke the soothing voice and ministering hand
For thee, my Father,—to resist were vain;—
Nearer to tears my thankful heart it stirred
Than each approving page or praising word.



XLVII.

ON MY STONE INKSTAND.

L OUD ragèd the tumult: ocean far and near
Seethed with wild anger, up the sloping sand
Driving the shreds of foam; while half in fear
We battled with the tempest, on the strand
Scarcely upheld; or clinging arm to arm
In wedge compact:—now would we venture brave
Into the trench of the retreating wave;—
Now shoreward flee, with not all-feign'd alarm.
A challenge did my gentle Sister speak:
—'Yon pebble fetch, 'mongst those that furthest roll,
Pierced on one face with an unsightly hole!—
Beneath a crested wave that curled to break,
I grasped the prize, not scathless: and since then
That stone hath held the stuff, that feeds my truant
pen.



XLVIII.

MY fairy girl, amidst her mirthful play,
Suddenly kneeling, clasps her hands in one,
And prays the words she has been taught to pray
Morning and evening; when her prayer is done,
In calm, as though some Mighty One was near
Who soothed her, but not awed, away she springs,
And runs to me with laughter silver-clear,
Till all our home with her full joyance rings.
Nor am I one who with displeasure cold
Such sport would chide; our heavenly Father's face
Each night and day her angel doth behold:
Her soul is filled with his baptismal grace;
Happy, if through her years and cares untold,
Such pure communion could her spirit hold.

January 19, 1839.



XLIX.

WE want but little—in the morning-tide
Bread to renew our energies : at noon
Cool shade, to quiet evening yielding soon :
And then a ramble by the hedgerow side,
Or what our cottage embers can provide
Of social comfort; and at night the boon
Of peaceful slumber, when the gleamy moon
Up the lone heavens in starry state doth ride.
All that is more than these, into our life
By accident of place or station brought,
Feeds not the silent growth of ripening thought,
Wisdom best learned apart from throngs and strife,
In the broad fields, the sky's unvalued wealth;
And Seasons gliding past us in their stealth.



L.

THE inward pleasure of our human soul
Oweeth no homage to the tyrant Will ;
Whether the roving spirit take its fill
Of strange delight, watching the far waves roll
And break upon the shore,—or by the bowl
Of some moss-lined fountain cool and still,
Or by the music of a tinkling rill,
Wander in maze of thought without control :—
Nor can the chains of ill-assured belief
Fetter the strivings of the deathless mind ;
Nor dull prescription bound the throes of grief ;
Spirits, in action nor degree confined,
Range the vast system :—whither then should I
But to sweet Nature for my wisdom fly ?



. LI.

DOST thou complain that in thy weary toil
Day after day takes from thee something dear,
So that less welcome through the circling year
Come the new Seasons—Spring with waking smile,
And full uncinctured Summer, and the guile
Of Autumn, lavishing, but stealing more,
And that close Winter brings thee not the store
Of sweet poetic labour, as erewhile?—
Be it thy care unfailing talk to hold
With Nature's children; be thou up at morn
Ere the first warbler sinks into the corn;
Stand and watch evening spread her tent with gold;
Thence draw thy treasures, of their worth secure:
Lower, deceives: the source alone is pure.



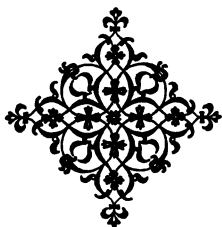
LII.

*ἄνω ποταμῶν ἱερῶν
χωροῦσι παγαί—*

EURIPID. MEDEA.

FRESH fount of feeling, which from earliest days
Hast sprung within mine heart,—let not thy
streams

Now fail me, when this world's unreal dreams
Fever my spirit ; cool me, now the blaze
Of Mammon's temple burns my aching gaze ;
Nor, though the world thy clearness shallow deems,
And all thy purity for nought esteems,
Shrink back into thy Source in dread amaze.
And Thou, from whom is every perfect gift,
Speak to my spirit by thy Church and Word ;
Let thy reminding voice be often heard
About my path ; so shall my soul uplift
Her eyes, by growing cares cast down, and see,—
Though Earth turn barren,—her fresh springs in
Thee.



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