# Poems 1817

by John Keats

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The Project Gutenberg eBook of Poems 1817, by John Keats

Poems 1817 BY JOHN KEATS "What more felicity can fall to creature, Than to enjoy delight with liberty." Fate of the Butterfly.—SPENSER.

DEDICATION. TO LEIGH HUNT, ESQ.

Glory and loveliness have passed away; For if we wander out in early morn, No wreathed incense do we see upborne Into the east, to meet the smiling day: No

crowd of nymphs soft voic'd and young, and gay, In woven baskets bringing ears of corn, Roses, and pinks, and violets, to adorn The shrine of Flora in her early May. But there are left delights as high as these, And I shall ever bless my destiny, That in a time, when under pleasant trees Pan is no longer sought, I feel a free A leafy luxury, seeing I could please With these poor offerings, a man like thee.

[The Short Pieces in the middle of the Book, as well as some of the Sonnets, were written at an earlier period than the rest of the Poems.]

POEMS.

"Places of nestling green for Poets made." STORY OF RIMINI.

I stood tip-toe upon a little hill, The air was cooling, and so very still. That the sweet buds which with a modest pride Pull droopingly, in slanting curve aside, Their scantly leaved, and finely tapering stems, Had not yet lost those starry diadems Caught from the early sobbing of the morn. The clouds were pure and white as flocks new shorn, And fresh from the clear brook; sweetly they slept On the blue fields of heaven, and then there crept A little noiseless noise among the leaves, Born of the very sigh that silence heaves: For not the faintest motion could be seen Of all the shades that slanted o'er the green. There was wide wand'ring for the greediest eye, To peer about upon variety; Far round the horizon's crystal air to skim, And trace the dwindled edgings of its brim; To picture out the quaint, and curious bending Of a fresh woodland alley, never ending; Or by the bowery clefts, and leafy shelves, Guess were the jaunty streams refresh themselves. I gazed awhile, and felt as light, and free As though the fanning wings of Mercury Had played upon my heels: I was light-hearted, And many pleasures to my vision started; So I straightway began to pluck a posey Of luxuries bright, milky, soft and rosy.

A bush of May flowers with the bees about them; Ah, sure no tasteful nook would be without them; And let a lush laburnum oversweep them, And let long grass grow round the roots to keep them Moist, cool and green; and shade the violets, That they

may bind the moss in leafy nets.

A filbert hedge with wild briar overtwined, And clumps of woodbine taking the soft wind Upon their summer thrones; there too should be The frequent chequer of a youngling tree, That with a score of light green brethen shoots From the quaint mossiness of aged roots: Round which is heard a spring-head of clear waters Babbling so wildly of its lovely daughters The spreading blue bells: it may haply mourn That such fair clusters should be rudely torn From their fresh beds, and scattered thoughtlessly By infant hands, left on the path to die.

Open afresh your round of starry folds, Ye ardent marigolds! Dry up the moisture from your golden lids, For great Apollo bids That in these days your praises should be sung On many harps, which he has lately strung; And when again your dewiness he kisses, Tell him, I have you in my world of blisses: So haply when I rove in some far vale, His mighty voice may come upon the gale.

Here are sweet peas, on tip-toe for a flight: With wings of gentle flush o'er delicate white, And taper fulgent catching at all things, To bind them all about with tiny rings.

Linger awhile upon some bending planks That lean against a streamlet's rushy banks, And watch intently Nature's gentle doings: They will be found softer than ring-dove's cooings. How silent comes the water round that bend; Not the minutest whisper does it send To the o'erhanging sallows: blades of grass Slowly across the chequer'd shadows pass. Why, you might read two sonnets, ere they reach To where the hurrying freshnesses aye preach A natural sermon o'er their pebbly beds; Where swarms of minnows show their little heads, Staying their wavy bodies 'gainst the streams, To taste the luxury of sunny beams Temper'd with coolness. How they ever wrestle With their own sweet delight, and ever nestle Their silver bellies on the pebbly sand. If you but scantily hold out the hand, That very instant not one will remain; But turn your eye, and they are there again. The ripples seem right glad to

reach those cresses, And cool themselves among the em'rald tresses; The while they cool themselves, they freshness give, And moisture, that the bowery green may live: So keeping up an interchange of favours, Like good men in the truth of their behaviours Sometimes goldfinches one by one will drop From low hung branches; little space they stop; But sip, and twitter, and their feathers sleek; Then off at once, as in a wanton freak: Or perhaps, to show their black, and golden wings, Pausing upon their yellow flutterings. Were I in such a place, I sure should pray That nought less sweet, might call my thoughts away, Than the soft rustle of a maiden's gown Fanning away the dandelion's down; Than the light music of her nimble toes Patting against the sorrel as she goes. How she would start, and blush, thus to be caught Playing in all her innocence of thought. O let me lead her gently o'er the brook, Watch her half-smiling lips, and downward look; O let me for one moment touch her wrist; Let me one moment to her breathing list; And as she leaves me may she often turn Her fair eyes looking through her locks aubùrne. What next? A tuft of evening primroses, O'er which the mind may hover till it dozes; O'er which it well might take a pleasant sleep, But that 'tis ever startled by the leap Of buds into ripe flowers; or by the flitting Of diverse moths, that aye their rest are quitting; Or by the moon lifting her silver rim Above a cloud, and with a gradual swim Coming into the blue with all her light. O Maker of sweet poets, dear delight Of this fair world, and all its gentle livers; Spangler of clouds, halo of crystal rivers, Mingler with leaves, and dew and tumbling streams, Closer of lovely eyes to lovely dreams, Lover of loneliness, and wandering, Of upcast eye, and tender pondering! Thee must I praise above all other glories That smile us on to tell delightful stories. For what has made the sage or poet write But the fair paradise of Nature's light? In the calm grandeur of a sober line, We see the waving of the mountain pine; And when a tale is beautifully staid, We feel the safety of a hawthorn glade: When it is moving on luxurious wings, The soul is lost in pleasant smotherings: Fair dewy roses brush against our faces, And flowering laurels spring from diamond vases; O'er head we see the jasmine and

sweet briar, And bloomy grapes laughing from green attire; While at our feet, the voice of crystal bubbles Charms us at once away from all our troubles: So that we feel uplifted from the world, Walking upon the white clouds wreath'd and curl'd. So felt he, who first told, how Psyche went On the smooth wind to realms of wonderment; What Psyche felt, and Love, when their full lips First touch'd; what amorous, and fondling nips They gave each other's cheeks; with all their sighs, And how they kist each other's tremulous eyes: The silver lamp,—the ravishment,—the wonder— The darkness,—loneliness,—the fearful thunder; Their woes gone by, and both to heaven upflown, To bow for gratitude before Jove's throne. So did he feel, who pull'd the boughs aside, That we might look into a forest wide, To catch a glimpse of Fawns, and Dryades Coming with softest rustle through the trees; And garlands woven of flowers wild, and sweet, Upheld on ivory wrists, or sporting feet: Telling us how fair, trembling Syrinx fled Arcadian Pan, with such a fearful dread. Poor nymph,—poor Pan,—how he did weep to find, Nought but a lovely sighing of the wind Along the reedy stream; a half heard strain, Full of sweet desolation—balmy pain.

What first inspired a bard of old to sing Narcissus pining o'er the untainted spring? In some delicious ramble, he had found A little space, with boughs all woven round; And in the midst of all, a clearer pool Than e'er reflected in its pleasant cool, The blue sky here, and there, serenely peeping Through tendril wreaths fantastically creeping. And on the bank a lonely flower he spied, A meek and forlorn flower, with naught of pride, Drooping its beauty o'er the watery clearness, To woo its own sad image into nearness: Deaf to light Zephyrus it would not move; But still would seem to droop, to pine, to love. So while the Poet stood in this sweet spot, Some fainter gleamings o'er his fancy shot; Nor was it long ere he had told the tale Of young Narcissus, and sad Echo's bale.

Where had he been, from whose warm head out-flew That sweetest of all songs, that ever new, That aye refreshing, pure deliciousness, Coming ever to bless The

wanderer by moonlight? to him bringing Shapes from the invisible world, unearthly singing From out the middle air, from flowery nests, And from the pillowy silkiness that rests Full in the speculation of the stars. Ah! surely he had burst our mortal bars; Into some wond'rous region he had gone, To search for thee, divine Endymion!

He was a Poet, sure a lover too, Who stood on Latmus' top, what time there blew Soft breezes from the myrtle vale below; And brought in faintness solemn, sweet, and slow A hymn from Dian's temple; while upswelling, The incense went to her own starry dwelling. But though her face was clear as infant's eyes, Though she stood smiling o'er the sacrifice, The Poet wept at her so piteous fate, Wept that such beauty should be desolate: So in fine wrath some golden sounds he won, And gave meek Cynthia her Endymion.

Queen of the wide air; thou most lovely queen Of all the brightness that mine eyes have seen! As thou exceedest all things in thy shine, So every tale, does this sweet tale of thine. O for three words of honey, that I might Tell but one wonder of thy bridal night!

Where distant ships do seem to show their keels, Phoebus awhile delayed his mighty wheels, And turned to smile upon thy bashful eyes, Ere he his unseen pomp would solemnize. The evening weather was so bright, and clear, That men of health were of unusual cheer; Stepping like Homer at the trumpet's call, Or young Apollo on the pedestal: And lovely women were as fair and warm, As Venus looking sideways in alarm. The breezes were ethereal, and pure, And crept through half closed lattices to cure The languid sick; it cool'd their fever'd sleep, And soothed them into slumbers full and deep. Soon they awoke clear eyed: nor burnt with thirsting, Nor with hot fingers, nor with temples bursting: And springing up, they met the wond'ring sight Of their dear friends, nigh foolish with delight; Who feel their arms, and breasts, and kiss and stare, And on their placid foreheads part the hair. Young men, and maidens at each other gaz'd With hands held back, and motionless, amaz'd To see the

brightness in each others' eyes; And so they stood, fill'd with a sweet surprise, Until their tongues were loos'd in poesy. Therefore no lover did of anguish die: But the soft numbers, in that moment spoken, Made silken ties, that never may be broken. Cynthia! I cannot tell the greater blisses, That follow'd thine, and thy dear shepherd's kisses: Was there a Poet born?—but now no more, My wand'ring spirit must no further soar.—

SPECIMEN OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM.

Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry; For large white plumes are dancing in mine eye. Not like the formal crest of latter days: But bending in a thousand graceful ways; So graceful, that it seems no mortal hand, Or e'en the touch of Archimago's wand, Could charm them into such an attitude. We must think rather, that in playful mood, Some mountain breeze had turned its chief delight, To show this wonder of its gentle might. Lo! I must tell a tale of chivalry; For while I muse, the lance points slantingly Athwart the morning air: some lady sweet, Who cannot feel for cold her tender feet, From the worn top of some old battlement Hails it with tears, her stout defender sent: And from her own pure self no joy dissembling, Wraps round her ample robe with happy trembling. Sometimes, when the good Knight his rest would take, It is reflected, clearly, in a lake, With the young ashen boughs, 'gainst which it rests, And th' half seen mossiness of linnets' nests. Ah! shall I ever tell its cruelty, When the fire flashes from a warrior's eye, And his tremendous hand is grasping it, And his dark brow for very wrath is knit? Or when his spirit, with more calm intent, Leaps to the honors of a tournament, And makes the gazers round about the ring Stare at the grandeur of the balancing? No, no! this is far off:—then how shall I Revive the dying tones of minstrelsy, Which linger yet about lone gothic arches, In dark green ivy, and among wild larches? How sing the splendour of the revelries, When buts of wine are drunk off to the lees? And that bright lance, against the fretted wall, Beneath the shade of stately banneral, Is slung with shining cuirass, sword, and shield? Where ye may see a spur in bloody field. Light-footed damsels

move with gentle paces Round the wide hall, and show their happy faces; Or stand in courtly talk by fives and sevens: Like those fair stars that twinkle in the heavens. Yet must I tell a tale of chivalry: Or wherefore comes that knight so proudly by? Wherefore more proudly does the gentle knight, Rein in the swelling of his ample might?

Spenser! thy brows are arched, open, kind, And come like a clear sun-rise to my mind; And always does my heart with pleasure dance, When I think on thy noble countenance: Where never yet was ought more earthly seen Than the pure freshness of thy laurels green. Therefore, great bard, I not so fearfully Call on thy gentle spirit to hover nigh My daring steps: or if thy tender care, Thus startled unaware, Be jealous that the foot of other wight Should madly follow that bright path of light Trac'd by thy lov'd Libertas; he will speak, And tell thee that my prayer is very meek; That I will follow with due reverence, And start with awe at mine own strange pretence. Him thou wilt hear; so I will rest in hope To see wide plains, fair trees and lawny slope: The morn, the eve, the light, the shade, the flowers: Clear streams, smooth lakes, and overlooking towers.

CALIDORE. A Fragment.

Young Calidore is paddling o'er the lake; His healthful spirit eager and awake To feel the beauty of a silent eve, Which seem'd full loath this happy world to leave; The light dwelt o'er the scene so lingeringly. He bares his forehead to the cool blue sky, And smiles at the far clearness all around, Until his heart is well nigh over wound, And turns for calmness to the pleasant green Of easy slopes, and shadowy trees that lean So elegantly o'er the waters' brim And show their blossoms trim. Scarce can his clear and nimble eye-sight follow The freaks, and dartings of the black-wing'd swallow, Delighting much, to see it half at rest, Dip so refreshingly its wings, and breast 'Gainst the smooth surface, and to mark anon, The widening circles into nothing gone.

And now the sharp keel of his little boat Comes up with ripple, and with easy float, And glides into a bed of water lillies: Broad leav'd are they and their white canopies Are upward turn'd to catch the heavens' dew. Near to a little island's point they grew; Whence Calidore might have the goodliest view Of this sweet spot of earth. The bowery shore Went off in gentle windings to the hoar And light blue mountains: but no breathing man With a warm heart, and eye prepared to scan Nature's clear beauty, could pass lightly by Objects that look'd out so invitingly On either side. These, gentle Calidore Greeted, as he had known them long before.

The sidelong view of swelling leafiness, Which the glad setting sun, in gold doth dress; Whence ever, and anon the jay outsprings, And scales upon the beauty of its wings.

The lonely turret, shatter'd, and outworn, Stands venerably proud; too proud to mourn Its long lost grandeur: fir trees grow around, Aye dropping their hard fruit upon the ground.

The little chapel with the cross above Upholding wreaths of ivy; the white dove, That on the windows spreads his feathers light, And seems from purple clouds to wing its flight.

Green tufted islands casting their soft shades Across the lake; sequester'd leafy glades, That through the dimness of their twilight show Large dock leaves, spiral foxgloves, or the glow Of the wild cat's eyes, or the silvery stems Of delicate birch trees, or long grass which hems A little brook. The youth had long been viewing These pleasant things, and heaven was bedewing The mountain flowers, when his glad senses caught A trumpet's silver voice. Ah! it was fraught With many joys for him: the warder's ken Had found white coursers prancing in the glen: Friends very dear to him he soon will see; So pushes off his boat most eagerly, And soon upon the lake he skims along, Deaf to the nightingale's first under-song; Nor minds he the white swans that dream so sweetly: His spirit flies before him so completely.

And now he turns a jutting point of land, Whence may be seen the castle gloomy, and grand: Nor will a bee buzz round two swelling peaches, Before the point of his light shallop reaches Those marble steps that through the water dip: Now over them he goes with hasty trip, And scarcely stays to ope the folding doors: Anon he leaps along the oaken floors Of halls and corridors.

Delicious sounds! those little bright-eyed things That float about the air on azure wings, Had been less heartfelt by him than the clang Of clattering hoofs; into the court he sprang, Just as two noble steeds, and palfreys twain, Were slanting out their necks with loosened rein; While from beneath the threat'ning portcullis They brought their happy burthens. What a kiss, What gentle squeeze he gave each lady's hand! How tremblingly their delicate ancles spann'd! Into how sweet a trance his soul was gone, While whisperings of affection Made him delay to let their tender feet Come to the earth; with an incline so sweet From their low palfreys o'er his neck they bent: And whether there were tears of languishment, Or that the evening dew had pearl'd their tresses, He feels a moisture on his cheek, and blesses With lips that tremble, and with glistening eye All the soft luxury That nestled in his arms. A dimpled hand, Fair as some wonder out of fairy land, Hung from his shoulder like the drooping flowers Of whitest Cassia, fresh from summer showers: And this he fondled with his happy cheek As if for joy he would no further seek; When the kind voice of good Sir Clerimond Came to his ear, like something from beyond His present being: so he gently drew His warm arms, thrilling now with pulses new, From their sweet thrall, and forward gently bending, Thank'd heaven that his joy was never ending; While 'gainst his forehead he devoutly press'd A hand heaven made to succour the distress'd; A hand that from the world's bleak promontory Had lifted Calidore for deeds of glory.

Amid the pages, and the torches' glare, There stood a knight, patting the flowing hair Of his proud horse's mane: he was withal A man of elegance, and stature tall: So that the waving of his plumes would be High as the berries of a wild ash tree, Or as the

winged cap of Mercury. His armour was so dexterously wrought In shape, that sure no living man had thought It hard, and heavy steel: but that indeed It was some glorious form, some splendid weed, In which a spirit new come from the skies Might live, and show itself to human eyes. 'Tis the far-fam'd, the brave Sir Gondibert, Said the good man to Calidore alert; While the young warrior with a step of grace Came up,—a courtly smile upon his face, And mailed hand held out, ready to greet The large-eyed wonder, and ambitious heat Of the aspiring boy; who as he led Those smiling ladies, often turned his head To admire the visor arched so gracefully Over a knightly brow; while they went by The lamps that from the high-roof'd hall were pendent, And gave the steel a shining quite transcendent.

Soon in a pleasant chamber they are seated; The sweet-lipp'd ladies have already greeted All the green leaves that round the window clamber, To show their purple stars, and bells of amber. Sir Gondibert has doff'd his shining steel, Gladdening in the free, and airy feel Of a light mantle; and while Clerimond Is looking round about him with a fond, And placid eye, young Calidore is burning To hear of knightly deeds, and gallant spurning Of all unworthiness; and how the strong of arm Kept off dismay, and terror, and alarm From lovely woman: while brimful of this, He gave each damsel's hand so warm a kiss, And had such manly ardour in his eye, That each at other look'd half staringly; And then their features started into smiles Sweet as blue heavens o'er enchanted isles.

Softly the breezes from the forest came, Softly they blew aside the taper's flame; Clear was the song from Philomel's far bower; Grateful the incense from the lime-tree flower; Mysterious, wild, the far heard trumpet's tone; Lovely the moon in ether, all alone: Sweet too the converse of these happy mortals, As that of busy spirits when the portals Are closing in the west; or that soft humming We hear around when Hesperus is coming. Sweet be their sleep. * * * * * * * * *

TO SOME LADIES.

What though while the wonders of nature exploring, I cannot your light, mazy footsteps attend; Nor listen to accents, that almost adoring, Bless Cynthia's face, the enthusiast's friend:

Yet over the steep, whence the mountain stream rushes, With you, kindest friends, in idea I rove; Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes, Its spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.

Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling? Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare? Ah! you list to the nightingale's tender condoling, Responsive to sylphs, in the moon beamy air.

'Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping, I see you are treading the verge of the sea: And now! ah, I see it—you just now are stooping To pick up the keep-sake intended for me.

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending, Had brought me a gem from the fret-work of heaven; And smiles, with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending, The blessings of Tighe had melodiously given;

It had not created a warmer emotion Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blest with from you, Than the shell, from the bright golden sands of the ocean Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure, (And blissful is he who such happiness finds,) To possess but a span of the hour of leisure, In elegant, pure, and aerial minds.

On receiving a curious Shell, and a Copy of Verses, from the same Ladies.

Hast thou from the caves of Golconda, a gem Pure as the ice-drop that froze on the mountain? Bright as the humming-bird's green diadem, When it flutters in sun-beams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine? That goblet right heavy, and massy, and

gold? And splendidly mark'd with the story divine Of Armida the fair, and Rinaldo the bold?

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing? Hast thou a sword that thine enemy's smart is? Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing? And wear'st thou the shield of the fam'd Britomartis?

What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave, Embroidered with many a spring peering flower? Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave? And hastest thou now to that fair lady's bower?

Ah! courteous Sir Knight, with large joy thou art crown'd; Full many the glories that brighten thy youth! I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound In magical powers to bless, and to sooth.

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair A sun-beamy tale of a wreath, and a chain; And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark: 'tis the work of a fay; Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish, When lovely Titania was far, far away, And cruelly left him to sorrow, and anguish.

There, oft would he bring from his soft sighing lute Wild strains to which, spell-bound, the nightingales listened; The wondering spirits of heaven were mute, And tears 'mong the dewdrops of morning oft glistened.

In this little dome, all those melodies strange, Soft, plaintive, and melting, for ever will sigh; Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change; Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein, I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose, And list to the tale of the wreath, and the chain, Till its echoes depart; then I sink to repose.

Adieu, valiant Eric! with joy thou art crown'd; Full many the glories that brighten thy youth, I too have my blisses, which richly abound In magical powers, to bless and to sooth.

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TO * * * *

Hadst thou liv'd in days of old, O what wonders had been told Of thy lively countenance, And thy humid eyes that dance In the midst of their own brightness; In the very fane of lightness. Over which thine eyebrows, leaning, Picture out each lovely meaning: In a dainty bend they lie, Like two streaks across the sky, Or the feathers from a crow, Fallen on a bed of snow. Of thy dark hair that extends Into many graceful bends: As the leaves of Hellebore Turn to whence they sprung before. And behind each ample curl Peeps the richness of a pearl. Downward too flows many a tress With a glossy waviness; Full, and round like globes that rise From the censer to the skies Through sunny air. Add too, the sweetness Of thy honied voice; the neatness Of thine ankle lightly turn'd: With those beauties, scarce discrn'd, Kept with such sweet privacy, That they seldom meet the eye Of the little loves that fly Round about with eager pry. Saving when, with freshening lave, Thou dipp'st them in the taintless wave; Like twin water lillies, born In the coolness of the morn. O, if thou hadst breathed then, Now the Muses had been ten. Couldst thou wish for lineage higher Than twin sister of Thalia? At least for ever, evermore, Will I call the Graces four.

Hadst thou liv'd when chivalry Lifted up her lance on high, Tell me what thou wouldst have been? Ah! I see the silver sheen Of thy broidered, floating vest Cov'ring half thine ivory breast; Which, O heavens! I should see, But that cruel destiny Has placed a golden cuirass there; Keeping secret what is fair. Like sunbeams in a cloudlet nested Thy locks in knightly casque are rested: O'er which bend four milky plumes Like the gentle lilly's blooms Springing from a costly vase.

See with what a stately pace Comes thine alabaster steed; Servant of heroic deed! O'er his loins, his trappings glow Like the northern lights on snow. Mount his back! thy sword unsheath! Sign of the enchanter's death; Bane of every wicked spell; Silencer of dragon's yell. Alas! thou this wilt never do: Thou art an enchantress too, And wilt surely never spill Blood of those whose eyes can kill.

TO HOPE.

When by my solitary hearth I sit, And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom; When no fair dreams before my "mind's eye" flit, And the bare heath of life presents no bloom; Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed, And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night, Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray, Should sad Despondency my musings fright, And frown, to drive fair Cheerfulness away, Peep with the moon-beams through the leafy roof, And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair, Strive for her son to seize my careless heart; When, like a cloud, he sits upon the air, Preparing on his spell-bound prey to dart: Chace him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright, And fright him as the morning frightens night!

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow, O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer; Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow: Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed, And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain, From cruel parents, or relentless fair; O let me think it is not quite in vain To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air! Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed. And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

In the long vista of the years to roll, Let me not see our country's honour fade: O let me see our land retain her soul, Her pride, her freedom; and not freedom's shade.

From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed— Beneath thy pinions canopy my head!

Let me not see the patriot's high bequest, Great Liberty! how great in plain attire! With the base purple of a court oppress'd, Bowing her head, and ready to expire: But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings That fill the skies with silver glitterings!

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud; Brightening the half veil'd face of heaven afar: So, when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud, Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed, Waving thy silver pinions o'er my head.

February, 1815.

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

Now Morning from her orient chamber came, And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill; Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame, Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill; Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distill, And after parting beds of simple flowers, By many streams a little lake did fill, Which round its marge reflected woven bowers, And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the king-fisher saw his plumage bright Vieing with fish of brilliant dye below; Whose silken fins, and golden scales' light Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow: There saw the swan his neck of arched snow, And oar'd himself along with majesty; Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony, And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah! could I tell the wonders of an isle That in that fairest lake had placed been, I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile; Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen: For sure so fair a place was never seen, Of all that ever charm'd romantic eye: It seem'd an emerald in the silver sheen Of the bright waters; or as when on high, Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the coerulean sky.

And all around it dipp'd luxuriously Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,

Which, as it were in gentle amity, Rippled delighted up the flowery side; As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried, Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem! Haply it was the workings of its pride, In strife to throw upon the shore a gem Outvieing all the buds in Flora's diadem.

Woman! when I behold thee flippant, vain, Inconstant, childish, proud, and full of fancies; Without that modest softening that enhances The downcast eye, repentant of the pain That its mild light creates to heal again: E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps, and prances, E'en then my soul with exultation dances For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain: But when I see thee meek, and kind, and tender, Heavens! how desperately do I adore Thy winning graces;—to be thy defender I hotly burn—to be a Calidore— A very Red Cross Knight—a stout Leander— Might I be loved by thee like these of yore.

Light feet, dark violet eyes, and parted hair; Soft dimpled hands, white neck, and creamy breast, Are things on which the dazzled senses rest Till the fond, fixed eyes, forget they stare. From such fine pictures, heavens! I cannot dare To turn my admiration, though unpossess'd They be of what is worthy,—though not drest In lovely modesty, and virtues rare. Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark; These lures I straight forget,—e'en ere I dine, Or thrice my palate moisten: but when I mark Such charms with mild intelligences shine, My ear is open like a greedy shark, To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

Ah! who can e'er forget so fair a being? Who can forget her half retiring sweets? God! she is like a milk-white lamb that bleats For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing, Who joys to see us with his gifts agreeing, Will never give him pinions, who intreats Such innocence to ruin,—who vilely cheats A dove-like bosom. In truth there is no freeing One's thoughts from such a beauty; when I hear A lay that once I saw her hand awake, Her form seems floating palpable, and near; Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear, And o'er my eyes

the trembling moisture shake.

EPISTLES. "Among the rest a shepheard (though but young Yet hartned to his pipe) with all the skill His few yeeres could, began to fit his quill." Britannia's Pastorals.—BROWNE.

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW.

Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong, And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song; Nor can remembrance, Mathew! bring to view A fate more pleasing, a delight more true Than that in which the brother Poets joy'd, Who with combined powers, their wit employ'd To raise a trophy to the drama's muses. The thought of this great partnership diffuses Over the genius loving heart, a feeling Of all that's high, and great, and good, and healing.

Too partial friend! fain would I follow thee Past each horizon of fine poesy; Fain would I echo back each pleasant note As o'er Sicilian seas, clear anthems float 'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted, Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted: But 'tis impossible; far different cares Beckon me sternly from soft "Lydian airs," And hold my faculties so long in thrall, That I am oft in doubt whether at all I shall again see Phoebus in the morning: Or flush'd Aurora in the roseate dawning! Or a white Naiad in a rippling stream; Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam; Or again witness what with thee I've seen, The dew by fairy feet swept from the green, After a night of some quaint jubilee Which every elf and fay had come to see: When bright processions took their airy march Beneath the curved moon's triumphal arch.

But might I now each passing moment give To the coy muse, with me she would not live In this dark city, nor would condescend 'Mid contradictions her delights to lend. Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind, Ah! surely it must be whene'er I find Some flowery spot, sequester'd, wild, romantic, That often must have seen a poet frantic; Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing, And flowers, the glory of

one day, are blowing; Where the dark-leav'd laburnum's drooping clusters Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres, And intertwined the cassia's arms unite, With its own drooping buds, but very white. Where on one side are covert branches hung, 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung In leafy quiet; where to pry, aloof, Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof, Would be to find where violet beds were nestling, And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling. There must be too a ruin dark, and gloomy, To say "joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

Yet this is vain—O Mathew lend thy aid To find a place where I may greet the maid— Where we may soft humanity put on, And sit, and rhyme and think on Chatterton; And that warm-hearted Shakspeare sent to meet him Four laurell'd spirits, heaven-ward to intreat him. With reverence would we speak of all the sages Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages: And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness, And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness To those who strove with the bright golden wing Of genius, to flap away each sting Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell Of those who in the cause of freedom fell: Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell; Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace, High-minded and unbending William Wallace. While to the rugged north our musing turns We well might drop a tear for him, and Burns.

Felton! without incitements such as these, How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease: For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace, And make "a sun-shine in a shady place:" For thou wast once a flowret blooming wild, Close to the source, bright, pure, and undefil'd, Whence gush the streams of song: in happy hour Came chaste Diana from her shady bower, Just as the sun was from the east uprising; And, as for him some gift she was devising, Beheld thee, pluck'd thee, cast thee in the stream To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam. I marvel much that thou hast never told How, from a flower, into a fish of gold Apollo chang'd thee; how thou next didst seem A black-eyed swan upon the widening stream; And when thou first didst in that mirror trace The placid features of a human face: That thou hast never told thy

travels strange. And all the wonders of the mazy range O'er pebbly crystal, and o'er golden sands; Kissing thy daily food from Naiad's pearly hands.

November, 1815.

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

Full many a dreary hour have I past, My brain bewilder'd, and my mind o'ercast With heaviness; in seasons when I've thought No spherey strains by me could e'er be caught From the blue dome, though I to dimness gaze On the far depth where sheeted lightning plays; Or, on the wavy grass outstretch'd supinely, Pry 'mong the stars, to strive to think divinely: That I should never hear Apollo's song, Though feathery clouds were floating all along The purple west, and, two bright streaks between, The golden lyre itself were dimly seen: That the still murmur of the honey bee Would never teach a rural song to me: That the bright glance from beauty's eyelids slanting Would never make a lay of mine enchanting, Or warm my breast with ardour to unfold Some tale of love and arms in time of old.

But there are times, when those that love the bay, Fly from all sorrowing far, far away; A sudden glow comes on them, nought they see In water, earth, or air, but poesy. It has been said, dear George, and true I hold it, (For knightly Spenser to Libertas told it,) That when a Poet is in such a trance, In air he sees white coursers paw, and prance, Bestridden of gay knights, in gay apparel, Who at each other tilt in playful quarrel, And what we, ignorantly, sheet-lightning call, Is the swift opening of their wide portal, When the bright warder blows his trumpet clear, Whose tones reach nought on earth but Poet's ear. When these enchanted portals open wide, And through the light the horsemen swiftly glide, The Poet's eye can reach those golden halls, And view the glory of their festivals: Their ladies fair, that in the distance seem Fit for the silv'ring of a seraph's dream; Their rich brimm'd goblets, that incessant run Like the bright spots that move about the sun; And, when upheld, the wine from each bright jar Pours with the lustre of a falling star. Yet further off, are

dimly seen their bowers, Of which, no mortal eye can reach the flowers; And 'tis right just, for well Apollo knows 'Twould make the Poet quarrel with the rose. All that's reveal'd from that far seat of blisses, Is, the clear fountains' interchanging kisses. As gracefully descending, light and thin, Like silver streaks across a dolphin's fin, When he upswimmeth from the coral caves. And sports with half his tail above the waves.

These wonders strange be sees, and many more, Whose head is pregnant with poetic lore. Should he upon an evening ramble fare With forehead to the soothing breezes bare, Would he naught see but the dark, silent blue With all its diamonds trembling through and through: Or the coy moon, when in the waviness Of whitest clouds she does her beauty dress, And staidly paces higher up, and higher, Like a sweet nun in holy-day attire? Ah, yes! much more would start into his sight— The revelries, and mysteries of night: And should I ever see them, I will tell you Such tales as needs must with amazement spell you.

These are the living pleasures of the bard: But richer far posterity's award. What does he murmur with his latest breath, While his proud eye looks through the film of death? "What though I leave this dull, and earthly mould, Yet shall my spirit lofty converse hold With after times.—The patriot shall feel My stern alarum, and unsheath his steel; Or, in the senate thunder out my numbers To startle princes from their easy slumbers. The sage will mingle with each moral theme My happy thoughts sententious; he will teem With lofty periods when my verses fire him, And then I'll stoop from heaven to inspire him. Lays have I left of such a dear delight That maids will sing them on their bridal night. Gay villagers, upon a morn of May When they have tired their gentle limbs, with play, And form'd a snowy circle on the grass, And plac'd in midst of all that lovely lass Who chosen is their queen,—with her fine head Crowned with flowers purple, white, and red: For there the lily, and the musk-rose, sighing, Are emblems true of hapless lovers dying: Between her breasts, that never yet felt trouble, A bunch of violets full blown, and double,

Serenely sleep:—she from a casket takes A little book,—and then a joy awakes About each youthful heart,—with stifled cries, And rubbing of white hands, and sparkling eyes: For she's to read a tale of hopes, and fears; One that I foster'd in my youthful years: The pearls, that on each glist'ning circlet sleep, Gush ever and anon with silent creep, Lured by the innocent dimples. To sweet rest Shall the dear babe, upon its mother's breast, Be lull'd with songs of mine. Fair world, adieu! Thy dales, and hills, are fading from my view: Swiftly I mount, upon wide spreading pinions, Far from the narrow bounds of thy dominions. Full joy I feel, while thus I cleave the air, That my soft verse will charm thy daughters fair, And warm thy sons!" Ah, my dear friend and brother, Could I, at once, my mad ambition smother, For tasting joys like these, sure I should be Happier, and dearer to society. At times, 'tis true, I've felt relief from pain When some bright thought has darted through my brain: Through all that day I've felt a greater pleasure Than if I'd brought to light a hidden treasure. As to my sonnets, though none else should heed them, I feel delighted, still, that you should read them. Of late, too, I have had much calm enjoyment, Stretch'd on the grass at my best lov'd employment Of scribbling lines for you. These things I thought While, in my face, the freshest breeze I caught. E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers That crowns a lofty clift, which proudly towers Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades, Chequer my tablet with their, quivering shades. On one side is a field of drooping oats, Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats So pert and useless, that they bring to mind The scarlet coats that pester human-kind. And on the other side, outspread, is seen Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple, and green. Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now Mark the bright silver curling round her prow. I see the lark down-dropping to his nest. And the broad winged sea-gull never at rest; For when no more he spreads his feathers free, His breast is dancing on the restless sea. Now I direct my eyes into the west, Which at this moment is in sunbeams drest: Why westward turn? 'Twas but to say adieu! 'Twas but to kiss my hand, dear George, to you!

August, 1816.

TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

Oft have you seen a swan superbly frowning, And with proud breast his own white shadow crowning; He slants his neck beneath the waters bright So silently, it seems a beam of light Come from the galaxy: anon he sports,— With outspread wings the Naiad Zephyr courts, Or ruffles all the surface of the lake In striving from its crystal face to take Some diamond water drops, and them to treasure In milky nest, and sip them off at leisure. But not a moment can he there insure them, Nor to such downy rest can he allure them; For down they rush as though they would be free, And drop like hours into eternity. Just like that bird am I in loss of time, Whene'er I venture on the stream of rhyme; With shatter'd boat, oar snapt, and canvass rent, I slowly sail, scarce knowing my intent; Still scooping up the water with my fingers, In which a trembling diamond never lingers.

By this, friend Charles, you may full plainly see Why I have never penn'd a line to thee: Because my thoughts were never free, and clear, And little fit to please a classic ear; Because my wine was of too poor a savour For one whose palate gladdens in the flavour Of sparkling Helicon:—small good it were To take him to a desert rude, and bare. Who had on Baiae's shore reclin'd at ease, While Tasso's page was floating in a breeze That gave soft music from Armida's bowers, Mingled with fragrance from her rarest flowers: Small good to one who had by Mulla's stream Fondled the maidens with the breasts of cream; Who had beheld Belphoebe in a brook, And lovely Una in a leafy nook, And Archimago leaning o'er his book: Who had of all that's sweet tasted, and seen, From silv'ry ripple, up to beauty's queen; From the sequester'd haunts of gay Titania, To the blue dwelling of divine Urania: One, who, of late, had ta'en sweet forest walks With him who elegantly chats, and talks— The wrong'd Libert as,—who has told you stories Of laurel chaplets, and Apollo's glories; Of troops chivalrous prancing; through a city, And tearful ladies

made for love, and pity: With many else which I have never known. Thus have I thought; and days on days have flown Slowly, or rapidly—unwilling still For you to try my dull, unlearned quill. Nor should I now, but that I've known you long; That you first taught me all the sweets of song: The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine; What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine: Spenserian vowels that elope with ease, And float along like birds o'er summer seas; Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness; Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderness. Who read for me the sonnet swelling loudly Up to its climax and then dying proudly? Who found for me the grandeur of the ode, Growing, like Atlas, stronger from its load? Who let me taste that more than cordial dram, The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram? Shew'd me that epic was of all the king, Round, vast, and spanning all like Saturn's ring? You too upheld the veil from Clio's beauty, And pointed out the patriot's stern duty; The might of Alfred, and the shaft of Tell; The hand of Brutus, that so grandly fell Upon a tyrant's head. Ah! had I never seen, Or known your kindness, what might I have been? What my enjoyments in my youthful years, Bereft of all that now my life endears? And can I e'er these benefits forget? And can I e'er repay the friendly debt? No, doubly no;—yet should these rhymings please, I shall roll on the grass with two-fold ease: For I have long time been my fancy feeding With hopes that you would one day think the reading Of my rough verses not an hour misspent; Should it e'er be so, what a rich content! Some weeks have pass'd since last I saw the spires In lucent Thames reflected:—warm desires To see the sun o'er peep the eastern dimness, And morning shadows streaking into slimness Across the lawny fields, and pebbly water; To mark the time as they grow broad, and shorter; To feel the air that plays about the hills, And sips its freshness from the little rills; To see high, golden corn wave in the light When Cynthia smiles upon a summer's night, And peers among the cloudlet's jet and white, As though she were reclining in a bed Of bean blossoms, in heaven freshly shed. No sooner had I stepp'd into these pleasures Than I began to think of rhymes and measures: The air

that floated by me seem'd to say "Write! thou wilt never have a better day." And so I did. When many lines I'd written, Though with their grace I was not oversmitten, Yet, as my hand was warm, I thought I'd better Trust to my feelings, and write you a letter. Such an attempt required an inspiration Of a peculiar sort,—a consummation;— Which, had I felt, these scribblings might have been Verses from which the soul would never wean: But many days have past since last my heart Was warm'd luxuriously by divine Mozart; By Arne delighted, or by Handel madden'd; Or by the song of Erin pierc'd and sadden'd: What time you were before the music sitting, And the rich notes to each sensation fitting. Since I have walk'd with you through shady lanes That freshly terminate in open plains, And revel'd in a chat that ceased not When at night-fall among your books we got: No, nor when supper came, nor after that,— Nor when reluctantly I took my hat; No, nor till cordially you shook my hand Mid-way between our homes:—your accents bland Still sounded in my ears, when I no more Could hear your footsteps touch the grav'ly floor. Sometimes I lost them, and then found again; You chang'd the footpath for the grassy plain. In those still moments I have wish'd you joys That well you know to honour:—"Life's very toys With him," said I, "will take a pleasant charm; It cannot be that ought will work him harm." These thoughts now come o'er me with all their might:— Again I shake your hand,—friend Charles, good night.

September, 1816.

SONNETS

I. TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

Many the wonders I this day have seen: The sun, when first he kist away the tears That fill'd the eyes of morn;—the laurel'd peers Who from the feathery gold of evening lean:— The ocean with its vastness, its blue green, Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,— Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears Must think on what will be, and what has been. E'en now, dear George, while this for you I write,

Cynthia is from her silken curtains peeping So scantly, that it seems her bridal night, And she her half-discover'd revels keeping. But what, without the social thought of thee, Would be the wonders of the sky and sea?

II. TO * * * * * *

Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs Be echoed swiftly through that ivory shell, Thine ear, and find thy gentle heart; so well Would passion arm me for the enterprize: But ah! I am no knight whose foeman dies; No cuirass glistens on my bosom's swell; I am no happy shepherd of the dell Whose lips have trembled with a maiden's eyes; Yet must I dote upon thee,—call thee sweet. Sweeter by far than Hybla's honied roses When steep'd in dew rich to intoxication. Ah! I will taste that dew, for me 'tis meet, And when the moon her pallid face discloses, I'll gather some by spells, and incantation.

III. Written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left Prison.

What though, for showing truth to flatter'd state Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he, In his immortal spirit, been as free As the sky-searching lark, and as elate. Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait? Think you he nought but prison walls did see, Till, so unwilling, thou unturn'dst the key? Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate! In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair, Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew With daring Milton through the fields of air: To regions of his own his genius true Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

IV.

How many bards gild the lapses of time! A few of them have ever been the food Of my delighted fancy,—I could brood Over their beauties, earthly, or sublime: And often, when I sit me down to rhyme, These will in throngs before my mind intrude: But no confusion, no disturbance rude Do they occasion; 'tis a pleasing chime. So the unnumber'd sounds that evening store; The songs of birds—the whisp'ring of the

leaves— The voice of waters—the great bell that heaves With solemn sound,—and thousand others more, That distance of recognizance bereaves, Make pleasing music, and not wild uproar.

V. To a Friend who sent me some Roses.

As late I rambled in the happy fields, What time the sky-lark shakes the tremulous dew From his lush clover covert;—when anew Adventurous knights take up their dinted shields: I saw the sweetest flower wild nature yields, A fresh-blown musk-rose; 'twas the first that threw Its sweets upon the summer: graceful it grew As is the wand that queen Titania wields. And, as I feasted on its fragrancy, I thought the garden-rose it far excell'd: But when, O Wells! thy roses came to me My sense with their deliciousness was spell'd: Soft voices had they, that with tender plea Whisper'd of peace, and truth, and friendliness unquell'd.

VI. To G. A. W.

Nymph of the downward smile, and sidelong glance, In what diviner moments of the day Art thou most lovely? When gone far astray Into the labyrinths of sweet utterance? Or when serenely wand'ring in a trance Of sober thought? Or when starting away, With careless robe, to meet the morning ray, Thou spar'st the flowers in thy mazy dance? Haply 'tis when thy ruby lips part sweetly, And so remain, because thou listenest: But thou to please wert nurtured so completely That I can never tell what mood is best. I shall as soon pronounce which grace more neatly Trips it before Apollo than the rest.

VII.

O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell, Let it not be among the jumbled heap Of murky buildings; climb with me the steep,— Nature's observatory—whence the dell, Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell, May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep 'Mongst boughs pavillion'd, where the deer's swift leap Startles the wild bee from the fox-glove bell. But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee, Yet the sweet

converse of an innocent mind, Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd, Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be Almost the highest bliss of human-kind, When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

VIII. TO MY BROTHERS.

Small, busy flames play through the fresh laid coals, And their faint cracklings o'er our silence creep Like whispers of the household gods that keep A gentle empire o'er fraternal souls. And while, for rhymes, I search around the poles, Your eyes are fix'd, as in poetic sleep, Upon the lore so voluble and deep, That aye at fall of night our care condoles. This is your birth-day Tom, and I rejoice That thus it passes smoothly, quietly. Many such eves of gently whisp'ring noise May we together pass, and calmly try What are this world's true joys,—ere the great voice, From its fair face, shall bid our spirits fly.

November 18, 1816.

IX.

Keen, fitful gusts are whisp'ring here and there Among the bushes half leafless, and dry; The stars look very cold about the sky, And I have many miles on foot to fare. Yet feel I little of the cool bleak air, Or of the dead leaves rustling drearily, Or of those silver lamps that burn on high, Or of the distance from home's pleasant lair: For I am brimfull of the friendliness That in a little cottage I have found; Of fair-hair'd Milton's eloquent distress, And all his love for gentle Lycid drown'd; Of lovely Laura in her light green dress, And faithful Petrarch gloriously crown'd.

X.

To one who has been long in city pent, 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer Full in the smile of the blue firmament. Who is more happy, when, with hearts content, Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair And gentle tale of love and languishment? Returning home at evening, with an ear Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye

Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career, He mourns that day so soon has glided by: E'en like the passage of an angel's tear That falls through the clear ether silently.

XI. On first looking into Chapman's Homer.

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold, And many goodly states and kingdoms seen; Round many western islands have I been Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. Oft of one wide expanse had I been told That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne; Yet did I never breathe its pure serene Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold: Then felt I like some watcher of the skies When a new planet swims into his ken; Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men Look'd at each other with a wild surmise— Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

XII. On leaving some Friends at an early Hour.

Give me a golden pen, and let me lean On heap'd up flowers, in regions clear, and far; Bring me a tablet whiter than a star, Or hand of hymning angel, when 'tis seen The silver strings of heavenly harp atween: And let there glide by many a pearly car, Pink robes, and wavy hair, and diamond jar, And half discovered wings, and glances keen. The while let music wander round my ears. And as it reaches each delicious ending, Let me write down a line of glorious tone, And full of many wonders of the spheres: For what a height my spirit is contending! 'Tis not content so soon to be alone.

XIII. ADDRESSED TO HAYDON.

Highmindedness, a jealousy for good, A loving-kindness for the great man's fame, Dwells here and there with people of no name, In noisome alley, and in pathless wood: And where we think the truth least understood, Oft may be found a "singleness of aim," That ought to frighten into hooded shame A money mong'ring, pitiable brood. How glorious this affection for the cause Of stedfast genius, toiling gallantly! What when a stout unbending champion awes Envy, and Malice to their

native sty? Unnumber'd souls breathe out a still applause, Proud to behold him in his country's eye.

XIV. ADDRESSED TO THE SAME.

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning; He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake, Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake, Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing: He of the rose, the violet, the spring. The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake: And lo!—whose stedfastness would never take A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering. And other spirits there are standing apart Upon the forehead of the age to come; These, these will give the world another heart, And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum Of mighty workings?———————— Listen awhile ye nations, and be dumb.

XV. On the Grasshopper and Cricket.

The poetry of earth is never dead: When all the birds are faint with the hot sun, And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead; That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead In summer luxury,—he has never done With his delights; for when tired out with fun He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed. The poetry of earth is ceasing never: On a lone winter evening, when the frost Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever, And seems to one in drowsiness half lost, The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

December 30, 1816.

XVI. TO KOSCIUSKO.

Good Kosciusko, thy great name alone Is a full harvest whence to reap high feeling; It comes upon us like the glorious pealing Of the wide spheres—an everlasting tone. And now it tells me, that in worlds unknown, The names of heroes, burst from clouds concealing, And changed to harmonies, for ever stealing Through cloudless blue, and round each silver throne. It tells me too, that on a happy day, When some

good spirit walks upon the earth, Thy name with Alfred's, and the great of yore Gently commingling, gives tremendous birth To a loud hymn, that sounds far, far away To where the great God lives for evermore.

XVII.

Happy is England! I could be content To see no other verdure than its own; To feel no other breezes than are blown Through its tall woods with high romances blent: Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment For skies Italian, and an inward groan To sit upon an Alp as on a throne, And half forget what world or worldling meant. Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters; Enough their simple loveliness for me, Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging: Yet do I often warmly burn to see Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing, And float with them about the summer waters.

SLEEP AND POETRY "As I lay in my bed slepe full unmete Was unto me, but why that I ne might Rest I ne wist, for there n'as erthly wight [As I suppose] had more of hertis ese Than I, for I n'ad sicknesse nor disese." CHAUCER.

SLEEP AND POETRY

What is more gentle than a wind in summer? What is more soothing than the pretty hummer That stays one moment in an open flower, And buzzes cheerily from bower to bower? What is more tranquil than a musk-rose blowing In a green island, far from all men's knowing? More healthful than the leafiness of dales? More secret than a nest of nightingales? More serene than Cordelia's countenance? More full of visions than a high romance? What, but thee Sleep? Soft closer of our eyes! Low murmurer of tender lullabies! Light hoverer around our happy pillows! Wreather of poppy buds, and weeping willows! Silent entangler of a beauty's tresses! Most happy listener! when the morning blesses Thee for enlivening all the cheerful eyes That glance so brightly at the new sun-rise.

But what is higher beyond thought than thee? Fresher than berries of a mountain

tree? More strange, more beautiful, more smooth, more regal, Than wings of swans, than doves, than dim-seen eagle? What is it? And to what shall I compare it? It has a glory, and nought else can share it: The thought thereof is awful, sweet, and holy, Chacing away all worldliness and folly; Coming sometimes like fearful claps of thunder, Or the low rumblings earth's regions under; And sometimes like a gentle whispering Of all the secrets of some wond'rous thing That breathes about us in the vacant air; So that we look around with prying stare, Perhaps to see shapes of light, aerial lymning, And catch soft floatings from a faint-heard hymning; To see the laurel wreath, on high suspended, That is to crown our name when life is ended. Sometimes it gives a glory to the voice, And from the heart up-springs, rejoice! rejoice! Sounds which will reach the Framer of all things, And die away in ardent mutterings.

No one who once the glorious sun has seen, And all the clouds, and felt his bosom clean For his great Maker's presence, but must know What 'tis I mean, and feel his being glow: Therefore no insult will I give his spirit, By telling what he sees from native merit.

O Poesy! for thee I hold my pen That am not yet a glorious denizen Of thy wide heaven—Should I rather kneel Upon some mountain-top until I feel A glowing splendour round about me hung, And echo back the voice of thine own tongue? O Poesy! for thee I grasp my pen That am not yet a glorious denizen Of thy wide heaven; yet, to my ardent prayer, Yield from thy sanctuary some clear air, Smoothed for intoxication by the breath Of flowering bays, that I may die a death Of luxury, and my young spirit follow The morning sun-beams to the great Apollo Like a fresh sacrifice; or, if I can bear The o'erwhelming sweets, 'twill bring to me the fair Visions of all places: a bowery nook Will be elysium—an eternal book Whence I may copy many a lovely saying About the leaves, and flowers—about the playing Of nymphs in woods, and fountains; and the shade Keeping a silence round a sleeping maid; And many a verse from so strange influence That we must ever

wonder how, and whence It came. Also imaginings will hover Round my fire-side, and haply there discover Vistas of solemn beauty, where I'd wander In happy silence, like the clear meander Through its lone vales; and where I found a spot Of awfuller shade, or an enchanted grot, Or a green hill o'erspread with chequered dress Of flowers, and fearful from its loveliness, Write on my tablets all that was permitted, All that was for our human senses fitted. Then the events of this wide world I'd seize Like a strong giant, and my spirit teaze Till at its shoulders it should proudly see Wings to find out an immortality.

Stop and consider! life is but a day; A fragile dew-drop on its perilous way From a tree's summit; a poor Indian's sleep While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep Of Montmorenci. Why so sad a moan? Life is the rose's hope while yet unblown; The reading of an ever-changing tale; The light uplifting of a maiden's veil; A pigeon tumbling in clear summer air; A laughing school-boy, without grief or care, Riding the springy branches of an elm.

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm Myself in poesy; so I may do the deed That my own soul has to itself decreed. Then will I pass the countries that I see In long perspective, and continually Taste their pure fountains. First the realm I'll pass Of Flora, and old Pan: sleep in the grass, Feed upon apples red, and strawberries, And choose each pleasure that my fancy sees; Catch the white-handed nymphs in shady places, To woo sweet kisses from averted faces,— Play with their fingers, touch their shoulders white Into a pretty shrinking with a bite As hard as lips can make it: till agreed, A lovely tale of human life we'll read. And one will teach a tame dove how it best May fan the cool air gently o'er my rest; Another, bending o'er her nimble tread, Will set a green robe floating round her head, And still will dance with ever varied case, Smiling upon the flowers and the trees: Another will entice me on, and on Through almond blossoms and rich cinnamon; Till in the bosom of a leafy world We rest in silence, like two gems upcurl'd In the recesses of a pearly shell.

And can I ever bid these joys farewell? Yes, I must pass them for a nobler life, Where I may find the agonies, the strife Of human hearts: for lo! I see afar, O'er sailing the blue cragginess, a car And steeds with streamy manes—the charioteer Looks out upon the winds with glorious fear: And now the numerous tramplings quiver lightly Along a huge cloud's ridge; and now with sprightly Wheel downward come they into fresher skies, Tipt round with silver from the sun's bright eyes. Still downward with capacious whirl they glide, And now I see them on a green-hill's side In breezy rest among the nodding stalks. The charioteer with wond'rous gesture talks To the trees and mountains; and there soon appear Shapes of delight, of mystery, and fear, Passing along before a dusky space Made by some mighty oaks: as they would chase Some ever-fleeting music on they sweep. Lo! how they murmur, laugh, and smile, and weep: Some with upholden hand and mouth severe; Some with their faces muffled to the ear Between their arms; some, clear in youthful bloom, Go glad and smilingly, athwart the gloom; Some looking back, and some with upward gaze; Yes, thousands in a thousand different ways Flit onward—now a lovely wreath of girls Dancing their sleek hair into tangled curls; And now broad wings. Most awfully intent The driver, of those steeds is forward bent, And seems to listen: O that I might know All that he writes with such a hurrying glow.

The visions all are fled—the car is fled Into the light of heaven, and in their stead A sense of real things comes doubly strong, And, like a muddy stream, would bear along My soul to nothingness: but I will strive Against all doublings, and will keep alive The thought of that same chariot, and the strange Journey it went.

Is there so small a range In the present strength of manhood, that the high Imagination cannot freely fly As she was wont of old? prepare her steeds, Paw up against the light, and do strange deeds Upon the clouds? Has she not shewn us all? From the clear space of ether, to the small Breath of new buds unfolding? From the meaning Of Jove's large eye-brow, to the tender greening Of April meadows? Here her altar shone, E'en in this isle; and who could paragon The fervid choir that lifted

up a noise Of harmony, to where it aye will poise Its mighty self of convoluting sound, Huge as a planet, and like that roll round, Eternally around a dizzy void? Ay, in those days the Muses were nigh cloy'd With honors; nor had any other care Than to sing out and sooth their wavy hair.

Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a schism Nurtured by foppery and barbarism, Made great Apollo blush for this his land. Men were thought wise who could not understand His glories: with a puling infant's force They sway'd about upon a rocking horse, And thought it Pegasus. Ah dismal soul'd! The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew Of summer nights collected still to make The morning precious: beauty was awake! Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed To musty laws lined out with wretched rule And compass vile: so that ye taught a school Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit, Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit, Their verses tallied. Easy was the task: A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race! That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face, And did not know it,—no, they went about, Holding a poor, decrepid standard out Mark'd with most flimsy mottos, and in large The name of one Boileau!

O ye whose charge It is to hover round our pleasant hills! Whose congregated majesty so fills My boundly reverence, that I cannot trace Your hallowed names, in this unholy place, So near those common folk; did not their shames Affright you? Did our old lamenting Thames Delight you? Did ye never cluster round Delicious Avon, with a mournful sound, And weep? Or did ye wholly bid adieu To regions where no more the laurel grew? Or did ye stay to give a welcoming To some lone spirits who could proudly sing Their youth away, and die? 'Twas even so: But let me think away those times of woe: Now 'tis a fairer season; ye have breathed Rich benedictions o'er us; ye have wreathed Fresh garlands: for sweet music has been heard In many places;—some has been upstirr'd From out its crystal dwelling in a

lake, By a swan's ebon bill; from a thick brake, Nested and quiet in a valley mild, Bubbles a pipe; fine sounds are floating wild About the earth: happy are ye and glad.

These things are doubtless: yet in truth we've had Strange thunders from the potency of song; Mingled indeed with what is sweet and strong, From majesty: but in clear truth the themes Are ugly clubs, the Poets Polyphemes Disturbing the grand sea. A drainless shower Of light is poesy; 'tis the supreme of power; 'Tis might half slumb'ring on its own right arm. The very archings of her eye-lids charm A thousand willing agents to obey, And still she governs with the mildest sway: But strength alone though of the Muses born Is like a fallen angel: trees uptorn, Darkness, and worms, and shrouds, and sepulchres Delight it; for it feeds upon the burrs, And thorns of life; forgetting the great end Of poesy, that it should be a friend To sooth the cares, and lift the thoughts of man.

Yet I rejoice: a myrtle fairer than E'er grew in Paphos, from the bitter weeds Lifts its sweet head into the air, and feeds A silent space with ever sprouting green. All tenderest birds there find a pleasant screen, Creep through the shade with jaunty fluttering, Nibble the little cupped flowers and sing. Then let us clear away the choaking thorns From round its gentle stem; let the young fawns, Yeaned in after times, when we are flown, Find a fresh sward beneath it, overgrown With simple flowers: let there nothing be More boisterous than a lover's bended knee; Nought more ungentle than the placid look Of one who leans upon a closed book; Nought more untranquil than the grassy slopes Between two hills. All hail delightful hopes! As she was wont, th' imagination Into most lovely labyrinths will be gone, And they shall be accounted poet kings Who simply tell the most heart-easing things. O may these joys be ripe before I die.

Will not some say that I presumptuously Have spoken? that from hastening disgrace 'Twere better far to hide my foolish face? That whining boyhood should with reverence bow Ere the dread thunderbolt could reach? How! If I do hide myself, it

sure shall be In the very fane, the light of Poesy: If I do fall, at least I will be laid Beneath the silence of a poplar shade; And over me the grass shall be smooth shaven; And there shall be a kind memorial graven. But oft' Despondence! miserable bane! They should not know thee, who athirst to gain A noble end, are thirsty every hour. What though I am not wealthy in the dower Of spanning wisdom; though I do not know The shiftings of the mighty winds, that blow Hither and thither all the changing thoughts Of man: though no great minist'ring reason sorts Out the dark mysteries of human souls To clear conceiving: yet there ever rolls A vast idea before me, and I glean Therefrom my liberty; thence too I've seen The end and aim of Poesy. 'Tis clear As any thing most true; as that the year Is made of the four seasons—manifest As a large cross, some old cathedral's crest, Lifted to the white clouds. Therefore should I Be but the essence of deformity, A coward, did my very eye-lids wink At speaking out what I have dared to think. Ah! rather let me like a madman run Over some precipice; let the hot sun Melt my Dedalian wings, and drive me down Convuls'd and headlong! Stay! an inward frown Of conscience bids me be more calm awhile. An ocean dim, sprinkled with many an isle, Spreads awfully before me. How much toil! How many days! what desperate turmoil! Ere I can have explored its widenesses. Ah, what a task! upon my bended knees, I could unsay those—no, impossible! Impossible!

For sweet relief I'll dwell On humbler thoughts, and let this strange assay Begun in gentleness die so away. E'en now all tumult from my bosom fades: I turn full hearted to the friendly aids That smooth the path of honour; brotherhood, And friendliness the nurse of mutual good. The hearty grasp that sends a pleasant sonnet Into the brain ere one can think upon it; The silence when some rhymes are coming out; And when they're come, the very pleasant rout: The message certain to be done to-morrow. 'Tis perhaps as well that it should be to borrow Some precious book from out its snug retreat, To cluster round it when we next shall meet. Scarce can I scribble on; for lovely airs Are fluttering round the room like doves in pairs; Many

delights of that glad day recalling, When first my senses caught their tender falling. And with these airs come forms of elegance Stooping their shoulders o'er a horse's prance, Careless, and grand—fingers soft and round Parting luxuriant curls;—and the swift bound Of Bacchus from his chariot, when his eye Made Ariadne's cheek look blushingly. Thus I remember all the pleasant flow Of words at opening a portfolio.

Things such as these are ever harbingers To trains of peaceful images: the stirs Of a swan's neck unseen among the rushes: A linnet starting all about the bushes: A butterfly, with golden wings broad parted, Nestling a rose, convuls'd as though it smarted With over pleasure—many, many more, Might I indulge at large in all my store Of luxuries: yet I must not forget Sleep, quiet with his poppy coronet: For what there may be worthy in these rhymes I partly owe to him: and thus, the chimes Of friendly voices had just given place To as sweet a silence, when I 'gan retrace The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease. It was a poet's house who keeps the keys Of pleasure's temple. Round about were hung The glorious features of the bards who sung In other ages—cold and sacred busts Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts To clear Futurity his darling fame! Then there were fauns and satyrs taking aim At swelling apples with a frisky leap And reaching fingers, 'mid a luscious heap Of vine leaves. Then there rose to view a fane Of liny marble, and thereto a train Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward: One, loveliest, holding her white band toward The dazzling sun-rise: two sisters sweet Bending their graceful figures till they meet Over the trippings of a little child: And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping. See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs;— A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion With the subsiding crystal: as when ocean Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothiness o'er Its rocky marge, and balances once more The patient weeds; that now unshent by foam Feel all about their undulating home.

Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down At nothing; just as though the earnest frown Of over thinking had that moment gone From off her brow, and left her all alone.

Great Alfred's too, with anxious, pitying eyes, As if he always listened to the sighs Of the goaded world; and Kosciusko's worn By horrid suffrance—mightily forlorn.

Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green, Starts at the sight of Laura; nor can wean His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they! For over them was seen a free display Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone The face of Poesy: from off her throne She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell. The very sense of where I was might well Keep Sleep aloof: but more than that there came Thought after thought to nourish up the flame Within my breast; so that the morning light Surprised me even from a sleepless night; And up I rose refresh'd, and glad, and gay, Resolving to begin that very day These lines; and howsoever they be done, I leave them as a father does his son.

Finis.

Corrections:

Three spelling errors were corrected for the Project Gutenberg edition. The original lines appeared in the 1817 edition as follows :

To**** Line 10: Like to streaks across the sky,

To Charles Cowden Clarke Line 82: Of my rough verses not an hour mispent;

Sleep and Poetry Line 181: Could all this be forgotten? Yes, a scism

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK POEMS 1817 ***

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