

# Poems 1817

John Keats

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# Poems 1817

## John Keats

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E-text prepared by Jonathan Ingram, Thierry A, David King, Charles Franks,  
and the Online Distributed Proofreading Team

“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

DEDICATION.

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 scanty 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 shallows: 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 auburne.  
 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

SPECIMEN OF AN INDUCTION TO A POEM.

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;

CALIDORE.

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;

ON RECEIVING A CURIOUS SHELL, AND A COPY OF VERSES, FROM

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.

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 discern'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 brodered, 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,

TO HOPE.

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

TO HOPE.

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;

IMITATION OF SPENSER.

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 shepherd (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,

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW.

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;

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW.

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.

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

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,  
 Bestriden 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 he 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

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

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

TO MY BROTHER GEORGE.

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;

TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

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 Belpheobe 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

TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

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,

TO CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

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 scantily, 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.

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?

SLEEP AND POETRY

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 tramlings 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 smoothness 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 this etext 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