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BRONTE POEMS

SELECTIONS FROM THE POETRY OF

CHARLOTTE, EMILY, ANNE AND BRANWELL BRONTË

CHARLOTTE BRONTË (1816-1855)
EMILY JANE BRONTË (1818-1848)
ANNE BRONTË (1820-1849)

From the painting, by Patrick Branwell Brontë, about 1835 in the National Portrait Gallery. (The figures in the group are, reading from left to right, Anne, Emily and Charlotte Bronte)

This is the picture shown by Charlotte Brontë to Mrs Gaskell and described by her in "The Life of Charlotte" Haworth Edition pages 135-136)

BRONTE POEMS

SELECTIONS FROM THE POETRY
OF CHARLOTTE, EMILY, ANNE
AND BRANWELL BRONTË

EDITED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION, BY

ARTHUR C. BENSON

WITH PORTRAITS AND FACSIMILES

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INTRODUCTION

I

It is a matter of something more than simple curiosity to trace, if possible, the physical descent of imaginative and technical qualities so marked and pronounced as those which flowered in the four Brontës. Mendelism—that is to say the new scientific view of heredity—has taught us to look confidently in the ancestry of any stock for the germs of outstanding faculties, even though it also indicates that such a variation implies a loss rather than a gain of balance, and that an outburst of intellectual or artistic force probably implies, not an added quality, but the abstracting of some other quality, the absence of which allows the mind to have freer play.

But though Mrs. Gaskell traced the life and temperament of the sisters in a fine flowing outline, full of insight and charm, and though Mr. Clement Shorter, with infinite patience and exactness of investigation, has accumulated an astonishing amount of

detailed evidence about the whole household, yet we cannot precisely discern the far-off approach of genius and capacity in their case. All that we know is that the mother, a Cornishwoman, had a taste for the elaborate, if somewhat prim, expression of emotions; and that the father, that grim and even grotesque figure, who in later life tended to submerge his face into ever-increasing folds of a cambric choker, was a zealous and industrious poet. He published, as a young parson, a volume entitled 'Cottage Poems,' and according to his own account—

'When relieved from Clerical avocations, he was occupied in writing the "Cottage Poems" from morning till noon, and from noon till night; his employment was full of indescribable pleasure, such as he could wish to taste as long as life lasts. His hours glided pleasantly and almost imperceptibly by, and when night drew on, and he retired to rest, ere his eyes closed in sleep with sweet calmness and serenity of mind, he often reflected that, though the delicate palate of criticism might be disgusted, the business of the day in the prosecution of this humble task was well-pleasing in the sight of God, and by His blessing might be rendered useful to some poor soul who cared little about critical niceties.'

Here is a case of undoubted artistic absorption;

but the manner and matter of Mr Brontë's verse can be adequately gauged and summarily dismissed by giving two not unfavourable specimens—

'Should poverty, modest and clean,
E'er please when presented to view,
Should cabin on brown heath or green,
Disclose aught engaging to you;
Should Erin's wild harp soothe the ear,
When touched by such fingers as mine,
Then kindly attentive draw near,
And candidly ponder each line.'

He further published a prose work called 'The Cottage in the Wood, or the Art of becoming Rich and Happy,' which contains a poetical episode entitled 'The Nightly Revel,' from which it may be inferred that he was a diligent student of Pope.

'Without, within, above, beneath, around,
Ungodly jests and deep-mouthed oaths resound;
Pale Reason, trembling, leaves her reeling throne,
Truth, Honour, Virtue, Justice, all are flown;
The sly, dark-glancing harlot's fatal breath
Allures to sin and sorrow, shame and death.
The gaming-table, too, that fatal snare,
Beset with fiercest passions fell is there.'

2

Mr. Brontë, however, though indifferent to critical niceties, lived much in the company of his children, at least in early days, and discerned signs of rising talent which struck him as being unusual and original. He encouraged them to read, to write, to discuss politics and current affairs; and on one occasion, having a mask in the house, encouraged them to reply to some curious questions which he asked them under cover of the mask, thinking that they would so speak with less timidity. The answers they made show extraordinary precocity.

There is no evidence that the Brontës ever played games like ordinary children, or ever associated with any family but their own. They talked and argued, they established what they called 'plays,' which seem to have been dramatic representations of interminable adventures. The plays were called 'Young Men,' 'Our Fellows,' and 'Islanders.' Besides these they had 'secret' plays, which were not enacted in common, but shared privately between two of them at a time. Thus Charlotte and Emily had plays of their own, and Emily and Anne had a play called 'The Gondals,'

or later 'The Gondal Chronicle,' which appears to have traced the adventures of a remote princely race, living in a mist-hung, rain-swept, northern land, under fierce feudal conditions of conquest, warfare, defeat, and imprisonment; to this cycle several of Emily Brontë's poems obviously belong. The children also spun endless romances and tales about the family of their great idol the Duke of Wellington, making his sons, the Marquis of Douro and Lord Charles Wellesley, their heroes. Several of these compositions still exist in manuscript, written in a tiny species of printed script in small paper note-books, given them by Mr. Brontë, who on one occasion appended a direction on the front page that everything written in the volume was to be 'in a good, plain, and legible hand.'

3

We have here, however, to confine ourselves to the development of the poetical gift in the children. There is a letter written by Charlotte Brontë in 1834 to her friend Miss Ellen Nussey, which shows what the poetry they read had been. . . . 'You ask me to recommend you some books for your perusal. I will do so in as few words as I

can. If you like poetry, let it be first-rate; Milton, Shakespeare, Thomson, Goldsmith, Pope, (if you will, though I don't admire him), Scott, Byron, Campbell, Wordsworth, and Southey. Now don't be startled at the names of Shakespeare and Byron. Both these were great men, and their works are like hemselves. You will know how to choose the good, and to avoid the evil; the finest passages are always the purest, the bad are invariably revolting; you will never wish to read them over twice. Omit the comedies of Shakespeare, and the "Don Juan," perhaps the "Cain," of Byron, though the latter is a magnificent poem—and read the rest fearlessly; that must indeed be a depraved mind which can gather evil from "Henry VIII," from "Richard III," from "Macbeth," and "Hamlet," and "Julius Cæsar." Scott's sweet, wild, romantic poetry can do you no harm. Nor can Wordsworth's, nor Campbell's, nor Southey's—the greatest part at least of his; some is certainly objectionable.' . . . If we add to these, from other sources of information, Coleridge, Crabbe, and Cowper, whose works they read and admired, it is clear enough what the literary models of the family circle were.

It may frankly be confessed that the interest of the Poems is entirely centred on the work of

Emily. If it had not been for the genius which her work unmistakably displays, the poetry of the other three would have sunk into oblivion.

The origin of the slender published volume of poems is given by Charlotte. She found a little MS. book in her sister Emily's handwriting, and was struck by the quality of the lyrics. Emily resented the discovery at first, and it took long to reconcile her to the idea of publication. Anne readily produced her own poems for Charlotte's inspection. Charlotte sent specimens of her own poetry certainly to Southey, and probably to Coleridge. She received a kind letter from Southey telling her to write poetry for its own sake 'not in a spirit of emulation and not with a view to celebrity.' He also said, 'Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be.'

However, the volume containing the poems of the three sisters was published at their own expense in 1846; and it is interesting to observe that here, as always, it was Charlotte who took the necessary practical measures for the accomplishment of the scheme.

It is not quite clear why Branwell's poems were not included. He had sent specimens of his work to Wordsworth with an enthusiastic and rhetorical letter. He received a reply, but it is not preserved;

Wordsworth certainly considered Branwell's letter a remarkable one, and remembered it when Charlotte Brontë became famous.

4

Of Charlotte Brontë's poems there is little to be said. The technique of them is careful enough, but the effect is stiff and conventional. They afford a clear proof of how ineffective even high genius can be, when employed in an uncongenial medium. It is strange that Charlotte Brontë's exquisite gift for poetical prose, her power of imaginative vision, her rich and flexible vocabulary, were all cramped and confined by metre and rhyme. Her actual management of rhythm and structure is more correct and accurate than Emily's, but there is little inspiration or originality. It is literary verse, and could not have been composed except in reliance upon standard models.

With Emily it is very different. In prose her technique is as decidedly German in origin as Charlotte's was no less decidedly French; the amazing novel 'Wuthering Heights' shows a deep dramatic power, a grasp of tragical character and situation, a force of lurid visualisation, which are different in kind from anything which Charlotte

attempted. Emily must always remain a deep enigma. She moves about the scene, a silent, impetuous, ardent figure, with passionate attachments to her own family, to the animals which shared their life, to the moors and hills beyond the bare Parsonage. Apart from these she could not exist; whenever she left home, she pined in a fierce nostalgia. She was indifferent to all opinion, she made no friends, she suffered profoundly. When she came to die, she was torn reluctant, agonised, and yet uncomplaining, out of the life she loved. Charlotte, it may be said, though afraid of life in a sense, yet enjoyed the touch of it in her own way, and found support in fame and friendship. But Emily's was a solitary and defiant spirit. Yet we have Charlotte's own definite testimony that the brave, laughter-loving, half-indolent, half-fiery character of Shirley was drawn closely from what she believed that Emily might have been if her life had been richer in opportunities. In the rough but profoundly interesting painting by Branwell of his three sisters, now in the National Portrait Gallery, Charlotte is homely and commonplace, Anne is meek and pensive, but there is a charm about the upright figure and irregular features of Emily, something boy-like and fresh, which survives even Branwell's unskilled handling.

When we turn to Emily's poetry, the genius of it becomes instantly apparent. She was speaking her own natural language. Her verse is often obscured by its plainness and directness, its apparent indifference to all artistic charm. It is full of weak and conventional rhymes, careless assonances, vague and broken rhythms. Very few of her poems are accurately constructed. But there is an immense feeling of reality and observation. The power of the Brontës lay in their capacity for multiplying the significance of what would seem to be small and trivial incidents and emotions; and Emily seems to have turned upon nature and life an unflinching vision, and to have really seen for herself the things which familiarity is so apt to blur.

Take the stanza describing the dewy morning with the view across the moorland—

> 'The damp stands in the long, green grass,
> As thick as morning's tears;
> And dreamy scents of fragrance pass
> That breathe of other years.'

Or such lines as the following, which give with marvellous exactness the background of the quiet house, the little incidents of daily life—

'The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
And give them leave to roam.'

Or this—

'The old clock in the gloomy hall
Ticks on, from hour to hour;
And every time its measured call
Seems lingering slow and slower.'

Or again—

'The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!'

She had, too, a marvellous power at the beginning of a lyric of striking a mysterious note. She is describing a border raid—

'Were they shepherds, who sat all day
On that brown mountain's side?
But neither staff nor dog had they,
Nor woolly flock to guide.'

And she had the faculty of bringing a picture, by a single detail, in a wholly unadorned phrase before the mind. Who has not seen a little moorland rivulet, running briskly beneath overhanging heather, eddying swiftly into a tiny basin, where the slender current revolves?

'Yet marked she not where Douglas lay,
She only saw the well;
The tiny fountain, churning spray
Within its mossy cell.'

More notable still is the true lyrical power of touching into life a mood or a scene, only hinted and suggested, which yet gathers into itself, as if by some concealed analysis, a whole throng of faint echoes and dim presences—

'Harp of wild and dream-like strain,
When I touch thy strings,
Why dost thou repeat again
Long-forgotten things?'

Or again—

'The busy day has glided by,
And hearts greet kindred hearts once more;
And swift the evening hour should fly,
But what turns every gleaming eye
So often to the unopened door?'

Or this—

'He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise, and change, that kill me with desire.'

Indeed, in this last mysterious poem, 'The

Signal Light,' which depicts a rapture of spiritual intensity, there are lines which show that if Emily had gained certainty of touch and a power of equable finish, she would have claimed a secure place among the most impassioned English lyrists.

But it must be admitted that, in their incomplete form, many of Emily's poems are bound to appeal most vividly to those who have a technical understanding of the craft of poetry. There is hardly a poem without a touch of high quality, but they are more like studies and sketches than finished pictures. This condition has its own charm and its own interest; but it needs a knowledge of the methods and difficulties of poetical art to see the extraordinary power of many of the lyrics through their incomplete and often amateurish form; yet even the very inequalities and broken outlines have a subtle suggestiveness of their own which cannot be gainsaid, while her command of melody and proportion in the too rare instances where she achieved a finished poem like 'Remembrance,' or the 'Song' —'The linnet in the rocky dells'—is a proof that the skill was there.

A few of Anne's poems are included; her mind was of a far more conventional order, and overshadowed by a cramping kind of orthodox piety. But in some of her poems there comes a flash of the

indomitable courage of the sisters, and a power of dealing with strong and unadorned phrases.

It has been customary to omit all mention of Branwell's work. The catastrophe of his life was so deplorable, and the wreck of a charming and attractive nature, through self-indulgence and morbidity, so tragical, that he has been hurried out of sight. It must remain one of the enigmas of heredity that the single brother of sisters whose conception of duty and purity was so grimly passionate, and who, for all their sensitiveness and susceptibility, kept so unflinching a hold upon a high and fearless morality, should seem to have lacked any toughness or chivalry of fibre. Branwell, in his surviving letters, displays a pretentious secondrateness which is almost impressive for its typical commonness and vulgarity. After he took to drink and opium, his statements became wholly unreliable. But still one can discern in him a touch of the charm and the enthusiasm which made him the admired and eager partner of his sisters' enterprises, and then betrayed him into a showy conviviality which ended in corruption. Branwell had a passion for applause on any terms; but his poems, infinitely morbid and macabre as they are, have in several places a touch of melody, while in 'Percy Hall' he shows a trace of Emily's power of observation, and 'The End of All'

gives a curious hint of what was to develop in the hands of the pre-Raphaelites as an artistic principle—the bold handling of common scenes and details with veracity and dignity.

5

The real great difficulty in making a selection of the Brontë poems is the simple one, that the most fragmentary and faulty of Emily's poems, even if it is but a few inconsequent lines, is more interesting, to speak frankly, than the most polished and finished poem by either Charlotte or Anne. It was not that Emily's experience was more poignant or tragic, it was not either that her human affections were deeper—indeed her attachment to animals and places was so strong that she seems to have formed scarcely any human alliances, except with her sister Anne. But her attitude to life was somehow larger and bolder, and the scanty glimpses we gain of her spirit give the sense of a consuming fire. In the midst of the life, which she loved in every smallest detail, she was haunted, it seems, by a sense of rebellion at her limitations—at the pain, the dreariness, the brevity of life. It is singular to note how many of her early poems employ the

image of the prisoner, enslaved and immured. Yet this sense of the baffled incompleteness of it all led her into a profound and daring mysticism. She believed, if it is possible to speak decisively, in an immortality which should incorporate her spirit with the Divine spirit; she thought of death as a revealer of secrets, and as adding a vitality and a purity to the soul rather than in any way diminishing its energies. This fibre of mysticism, with a strong sense of symbolism, added a poetical quality to her visions which is entirely unlike anything to which Charlotte ever attained; Charlotte's gift was rather the analysis and the expansion of emotion, while Emily's was the concentration of it; and thus even in her least successful poems, in her imitative flights—for there are several of her poems which are wholly Wordsworthian in construction and method—there are lines which glow and sparkle like gems with hidden wells of lucent fire; so that the very chips and leavings of her workshop have often a sense of art about them, a suggestiveness of phrase, a range of vision, which the cautious craftsmanship of her sisters never achieved. Yet it is hardly fair to Emily's reputation to print the rough drafts of poems which fail to attain to any sense of form or connection. I have tried in my selection to preserve all that is salient and exquisite;

and yet a prolonged study of her poems has made me feel a sense of preciousness and power about her lightest touches.

There are few surviving fragments of Branwell's poetry; yet, if I may speak frankly, I believe that he had a higher instinct for poetry than either Charlotte or Anne. His mental power was, however, so much damaged by the life he led, and his application so languid, that it is impossible not to recognise the feebleness of much of his execution. I believe, however, that Branwell's attitude to life, in spite of his lapses, was more like Emily's outlook than that of either Charlotte or Anne. He had the same untamed, imprisoned sense that Emily had, the same passionate rebellion against the discipline of life. And there is a real originality of phrase and even of thought about his best work, a relentless fidelity which is more akin to art than the deliberate and misapplied toil which characterises the weaker work of Charlotte and Anne. Branwell's, like Emily's, was a thwarted spirit. Unlike Emily, he was deeply ambitious, and like Charlotte, he would have found success sustaining. But he alone of the four had no moral patience, no power of defiance. Emily achieved it by her lofty independence of spirit, Charlotte by courage and tenacious interest in life, Anne by a deep religious

faith. But I believe Branwell to have possessed the artistic vision, though an early corruption of temperament leading to a base gaiety was fatal to all clearness and energy of presentment.

6

The final interest of the collection is this: that we have a glimpse of the poetical work of a group of four writers of solitary genius. The extreme seclusion in which the household lived, its lack of any width of experience, differentiates it from the work of most of the writers of the nineteenth century. The great poets of that era are characterised by a broad outlook upon life, a strong intellectual perception of the tendencies of the day, and a distinct purpose of interpreting the needs and aims of the time in poetry. The work of the Brontës on the other hand is wholly individualistic. They had no knowledge of social forces, no touch with intellectual movements. Their interests were homely, their circle was commonplace and demure. At the time when their poetical work was done, they had felt the touch of private tragedy and bereavement. But the very simplicity of the setting kept their minds firmly upon the large and intimate

realities of life; and thus perhaps the appeal of their work is more vivid and personal, because of the fact that it was centred upon problems perceived and interpreted by lonely genius, and not disguised by complicated relations, or merged in any of the schemes which invite the co-operation of mankind.

A. C. B.

TEXTUAL NOTE

THE chief difficulty about producing an absolutely correct text of the Brontë Poems lies in the fact that the script of the original MSS. is so minute as to be often hardly decipherable. A specimen of the original MS. is appended. Further, the punctuation and the indentation of the lines are very loose, while the spelling is often extremely incorrect. Moreover, both Charlotte and Emily Brontë often transferred stanzas from an unfinished poem into a completed poem on a similar subject.[1] *Those of the poems that were edited and published by Charlotte Brontë herself are perfectly accurate, both in orthography and punctuation. But Emily Brontë's spelling leaves much to be desired. I have corrected this throughout. For instance, she spelt the word 'watch' in a variety of ways, but most commonly as 'whach'; and I have not thought it advisable to leave these obvious errors. I have also introduced ordinary punctuation throughout, while I have made a few conjectural emendations. For instance, Emily Brontë describes the*

[1] See Emily Brontë's poems 92 and 93, pp. 208–211.

wintry moorland as 'flowless.' This is probably a misreading of 'flow'rless' (see page 103). *The text has, as far as possible, been restored from the original MSS., and I believe it to be now substantially correct. It must, however, be remembered that the volume is, after all, only a selection; and I have omitted a large number of imperfect and unfinished stanzas from the poems, which would certainly not have been published without revision and correction; while I have tried to retain everything short of mere chaotic scraps and jottings:*

A. C. B.

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PORTRAITS

(*From photographs taken immediately after the canvases were discovered, and before any restoration.*)

CHARLOTTE BRONTE (1816–1855).

EMILY JANE BRONTÉ (1818–1848).

ANNE BRONTÉ (1820–1849).

From the painting, by PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTE, about 1835 in the National Portrait Gallery (the figures in the group are, reading from left to right, ANNE, EMILY, and CHARLOTTE BRONTE).

Frontispiece

EMILY JANE BRONTE (1818–1848).

From the fragment of a portrait-group painted by her brother PATRICK BRANWELL BRONTE about 1845, now in the National Portrait Gallery.

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FACSIMILES

Facsimile MS. of the poem 'Remembrance' by EMILY BRONTE, in her autograph . . . *To face page* 166

Facsimile MS. of the lines 'Why ask to know what date, what clime' by EMILY BRONTE, in her autograph.

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These Facsimile pages have been reproduced from the MS. volume of her poems, 'transcribed by EMILY JANE BRONTE February 1844,' in the possession of the late Mrs. George M. Smith.

POEMS BY CHARLOTTE BRONTË

I

THE CHURCHYARD *

* * *

One night, when silence reigned around,
I heard sweet music rise,
Whose harp-like and harmonious sound
Came from the star-decked skies.

And when had died each silver tone,
Thy spirit passed away,
And left me a sad mourner lone,
On this dark earth to stay.

My sister, may it ever be
That from thy home on high
A hymn of peace may check in me
Each dark rebellious sigh.

Then, sister, shall I truly know
That mansions of the blest
Wait, till from weariness below,
My spirit enters rest!

* * *

December 24, 1829

* Poems marked with an asterisk (*) are now printed for the first time.

2

HOME-SICKNESS

[This singular poem is the supposed complaint of an African boy who is being educated in England.]

OF College I am tired. I wish to be at home,
Far from the pompous tutor's voice and the hated schoolboys' groan.

I wish that I had freedom to walk about at will,
That I no more was troubled with my Greek and slate and quill.

I wish to see my kitten, to hear my ape rejoice,
To listen to my nightingale's and parrot's lovely voice.

And England does not suit me! it's cold and full of snow,
So different from black Africa's warm sunny genial glow.

I'm shivering in the daytime and shivering all the night,
I'm called poor startled withered wretch and miserable wight.

And O ! I miss my brother ! I miss his gentle smile,
Which used so many long dark hours of sorrow to
beguile.

I miss my dearest mother ; I now no longer find
Ought half so mild as she was, so careful and so
kind.

O I have not my father's, my noble father's, arms,
To guard me from all wickedness, and keep me safe
from harms.

I hear his voice no longer ; I see no more his eye
Smile on me in my misery ; to whom now shall
I fly ?

February, 1830

3

THE WOUNDED STAG

PASSING amid the deepest shade
Of the wood's sombre heart,
Last night I saw a wounded deer
Laid lonely and apart.

Such light as pierced the crowded boughs—
Light scattered, scant, and dim—
Passed through the fern that formed his couch,
And centred full on him.

Pain trembled in his weary limbs,
Pain filled his patient eye;
Pain-crushed amid the shadowy fern
His branchy crown did lie.

Where were his comrades? where his mate?
All from his death-bed gone!
And he, thus struck and desolate,
Suffered and bled alone.

The Wounded Stag

Did he feel what a man might feel,
  Friendless and sore distrest?
Did Pain's keen dart, and Grief's sharp sting
  Strive in his mangled breast?

Did longing for affection lost
  Barb every deadly dart;
Love unrepaid, and Faith betrayed,
  Did these torment his heart?

No! leave to man his proper doom!
  These are the pangs that rise
Around the bed of state and gloom,
  Where Adam's offspring dies!

Circa 1833

4

KING RICHARD'S SONG

THRICE the great fadeless lights of heaven,
The moon, and the eternal sun,
As God's unchanging law was given,
Have each their course appointed run.
Three times the Earth her mighty way
Hath measured o'er a shoreless sea,
While hopeless still from day to day
I've sat in lone captivity,
Listening the wind and river's moan,
Wakening my wild harp's solemn tone,
And longing to be free.

Blondel! My heart seems cold and dead,
My soul has lost its ancient might.
The sun of chivalry is fled,
And dark despair's unholy night
Above me closes still and deep.
While wearily each lapsing day
Leads onward to the last long sleep;
The hour when all shall pass away,
When King and Captive, Lord and Slave,
Must rest unparted in the grave
A mass of soulless clay.

King Richard's Song

O long I've listened to the sound
  Of winter's blast and summer's breeze,
As their sweet voices sung around
  Through echoing caves, and wind-waved trees.
And long I've viewed from prison-bars
  Sunset and dawn, and night and noon ;
Watched the uprising of the stars,
  Seen the calm advent of the moon.
But blast and breeze, and stars and sun,
All vainly swept, all vainly shone,
    I filled a living tomb.

God of my fathers ! can it be ?
  Must I, the chosen of thy might,
Whose name alone brought victory,
  Whose battle-cry was "God my Right !"
Closed in a tyrant's dungeon cell
  Wear out the remnant of my life ;
And never hear again the swell
  Of high and hot and glorious strife,
Where trumpets peal and bugles sing,
And minstrels sweep the martial string,
    And wars, and fame are rife ?

No Blondel ! thou wert sent by heaven
  Thy King, thy Lion-King, to free.
To thee the high command was given,
  To rescue from captivity.

Haste from the Tyrant Austrian's hold,
Cross rapidly the rolling sea;
And go, where dwell the brave, the bold,
By stream and hill, and greenwood tree.
Minstrel, let Merry England ring
With tidings of her Lion-King,
And bring back liberty.

* * *

December 27th, 1833

5

SAUL

'NEATH the palms in Elah's valley
Saul with all his thousands lay,
Israel's mightiest nobles rally
Round their own anointed stay.
This has been a battle-day,
And the host lie wearily
On the field of conflict wide,
Where their slaughtered foemen be,
Spear and target thrown aside.

Saul within his purple tent
Seeks for rest, and seeks in vain,
Still a voice of sad lament
Mingles with the trumpet-strain,
Sounding o'er that war-like plain.
And the spirit of the King
Darkens with a cloud of woe,
Thicker, denser, gathering
As the rapid moments flow.

'Abner,' thus the monarch said,
'God has left me desolate,
All my heart is cold and dead
Crushed amid my royal state;
Samuel bid me ever mourn,
Crown and Kingdom from me rent;
Saul is not a man to turn,
Israel's strength can ne'er repent.

'Abner, is it day's declining
Brings this hour of darkness on?
As the evening sun is shining
Then I feel most sad and lone.
Lo! its beams are almost gone,
How their kindled glories burn
All along our tented field!
Spear and helm their flash return,
Back it beams from lance and shield.

'Palm and cedar catch the lustre
Shining on them, bright and sheen,
Where those groves of olives cluster,
Night has lit their fadeless green.
Those far hills are gem-like hued,
Sparkling through the crimson'd air,
All with roseate light imbued;
Abner! never scene so fair
Smiled on Monarch's solitude.

'Once I could have smiled again,
Full of hope, and young and free;
Now its beauty turns to bane,
And my spirit wearily
Shrinks that sight of bliss to see;
It hath no communion now
With a fair and sunny sky,
Nature's calm and stormless brow
Wakes in me no sympathy.

'O, methinks, were heaven scowling,
Were those green hills black and hoar,
Were the winds and billows howling
Dashed against a sunless shore,
Dark and cheerless evermore;
I should feel less filled with woe,
Filled with God-cursed misery,
Than when breezes soft and low
Whisper round me peacefully.

'Then when eve and twilight meet,
Dawning star and setting sun,
All that Earth has, calm and sweet,
Resting her bright plains upon,
Toil and strife and battle done.

Silent dews around me weeping,
Gleaming on the warrior's brow,
The weary warrior, hushed and sleeping
By his conquered foe.

'Hush! I'll cease this bootless sighing;
Bid the son of Jesse come,
Let his music, soft and dying,
Win my spirit from her gloom,
Call her exiled sunshine home.
He has many a sacred air,
Many a song of holiness,
That perchance may soothing bear,
Even to me, one hour of bliss.'

October 7th, 1834

6 *

Look into thought and say what dost thou see,
Dive, be not fearful, how dark the waves flow,
Sink through the surge, and bring pearls up to me,
Deeper, ay, deeper ; the fairest lie low.

I have dived, I have sought them, but none have I found,
In the gloom that closed o'er me no form floated by,
As I sunk through the void depths so black and profound
How dim died the sun and how far hung the sky !

What had I given to hear the soft sweep
Of a breeze bearing life through that vast realm of death !
Thoughts were untroubled and dreams were asleep,
The spirit lay dreadless and hopeless beneath.

1836

7

Gods of the old mythology
  Arise in gloom and storm ;
Adramalec, bow down thy head,
  Reveal, dark fiend, thy form,
The giant sons of Anakim
  Bowed lowest at thy shrine,
And thy temple rose in Argola,
  With its hallowed groves of vine ;
And there was eastern incense burnt,
  And there were garments spread,
With the fine gold decked and broidered,
  And tinged with radiant red,
With the radiant red of furnace flames
  That through the shadows shone,
As the full moon when on Sinai's top
  Her rising light is thrown.

This poem has been in some Collections attributed to Emily Brontë.

8

REASON

* * *

My life is cold, love's fire being dead,
That fire self-kindled, self-consumed ;
What living warmth erewhile it shed,
Now to how drear extinction doomed !

Devoid of charm, how could I dream
My unasked love would e'er return ?
What fate, what influence, lit the flame
I still feel inly, deeply, burn ?

Alas ! there are who should not love,
I to this dreary band belong ;
This knowing, let me henceforth prove
Too wise to list delusion's song.

No, Siren ! Beauty is not mine,
Affection's joys I ne'er shall know ;
Lonely will be my life's decline,
Even as my youth is lonely now.

Come Reason, Science, Learning, Thought,
To you my heart I dedicate;
I have a faithful subject brought,
Faithful because most desolate.

Fear not a wandering, feeble mind;
Stern Sovereign, it is all your own
To crush, to cheer, to loose, to bind;
Unclaimed, unshared, it seeks your throne.

Soft may the breeze of summer blow,
Sweetly its sun in valleys shine,
All earth around with love may glow,
No warmth shall reach this heart of mine.

* * *

1843

9 *

He saw my heart's woe, discovered my soul's anguish,
How in fever, in thirst, in atrophy it pined;
Knew he could heal, yet looked and let it languish,
To its moans spirit-deaf, to its pangs spirit-blind.

But once a year he heard a whisper low and dreary,
Appealing for aid, entreating some reply;
Only when sick, soul-worn and torture-weary,
Breathed I that prayer—heaved I that sigh.

He was mute as is the grave, he stood stirless as a tower;
At last I looked up, and saw I prayed to stone:
I asked help of that which to help had no power,
I sought love where love was utterly unknown.

Idolater I kneeled to an idol cut in rock,
I might have slashed my flesh and drawn my heart's best blood,
The Granite God had felt no tenderness, no shock;
My Baal had not seen nor heard nor understood.

In dark remorse I rose. I rose in darker shame,
Self-condemned I withdrew to an exile from my kind;
A solitude I sought where mortal never came,
Hoping in its wilds forgetfulness to find.

Now, Heaven, heal the wound which I still deeply feel;
Thy glorious hosts look not in scorn on our poor race;
Thy King eternal doth no iron judgment deal
On suffering worms who seek forgiveness, comfort, grace.

He gave our hearts to love, he will not love despise,
E'en if the gift be lost, as mine was long ago.
He will forgive the fault, will bid the offender rise,
Wash out with dews of bliss the fiery brand of woe;

And give a sheltered place beneath the unsullied throne,
Whence the soul redeemed may mark Time's fleeting course round earth;
And know its trial overpast, its sufferings gone,
And feel the peril past of Death's immortal birth.

10

MEMENTOS

* * *

ALL in this house is mossing over;
  All is unused, and dim, and damp;
Nor light nor warmth the rooms discover—
  Bereft for years of fire and lamp.

The sun, sometimes in summer, enters
  The casements with reviving ray;
But the long rains of many winters
  Moulder the very walls away.

And outside all is ivy, clinging
  To chimney, lattice, gable grey;
Scarcely one little red rose springing
  Through the green moss can force its way.

Unscared, the daw and starling nestle,
  Where the tall turret rises high,
And winds alone come near to rustle
  The thick leaves where their cradles lie.

I sometimes think, when late at even
I climb the stair reluctantly,
Some shape that should be well in heaven,
Or ill elsewhere, will pass by me.

I fear to see the very faces,
Familiar thirty years ago,
Even in the old accustomed places,
Which look so cold and gloomy now.

I've come to close the window hither,
At twilight, when the sun was down,
And fear my very soul would wither,
Lest something should be dimly shown,

Too much the buried form resembling,
Of her who once was mistress here;
Lest doubtful shade, or moonbeam trembling,
Might take her aspect, once so dear.

* * *

She bore in silence—but when passion
Surged in her soul with ceaseless foam,
The storm at last brought desolation,
And drove her exiled from her home;

And silent still, she straight assembled
The wrecks of strength her soul retained;
For though the wasted body trembled,
The unconquered mind to quail disdained.

She crossed the sea—now lone she wanders
By Seine's, or Rhine's, or Arno's flow :
Fain would I know if distance renders
Relief or comfort to her woe.

Fain would I know if, henceforth, ever,
These eyes shall read in hers again
That light of love which faded never,
Though dimmed so long with secret pain.

She will return, but cold and altered,
Like all whose hopes too soon depart ;
Like all on whom have beat, unsheltered,
The bitter blasts that blight the heart.

No more shall I behold her lying
Calm on a pillow, smoothed by me ;
No more that spirit, worn with sighing,
Will know the rest of infancy.

If still the paths of lore she follow,
'Twill be with tired and goaded will ;
She'll only toil, the aching hollow,
The joyless blank of life to fill.

And oh ! full oft, quite spent and weary,
Her hand will pause, her head decline ;
That labour seems so hard and dreary,
On which no ray of hope may shine.

Thus the pale blight of time and sorrow
Will shade with grey her soft, dark hair;
Then comes the day that knows no morrow,
And death succeeds to long despair.

* * *

II

THE WOOD

But two miles more, and then we rest!
  Well, there is still an hour of day,
And long the brightness of the West
  Will light us on our devious way;
Sit then, awhile, here in this wood—
So total is the solitude,
    We safely may delay.

These massive roots afford a seat,
  Which seems for weary travellers made.
There rest! The air is soft and sweet
  In this sequestered forest glade,
And there are scents of flowers around,
The evening dew draws from the ground;
    How soothingly they spread!

Yes; I was tired, but not at heart;
  No—that beats full of sweet content,
For now I have my natural part
  Of action with adventure blent;

Cast forth on the wide world with thee,
And all my once waste energy
To weighty purpose bent.

* * *

I am resolved that thou shalt learn
To trust my strength as I trust thine;
I am resolved our souls shall burn
With equal, steady, mingling shine;
Part of the field is conquered now,
Our lives in the same channel flow,
Along the self-same line;

And while no groaning storm is heard,
Thou seem'st content it should be so,
But soon as comes a warning word
Of danger—straight thine anxious brow
Bends over me a mournful shade,
As doubting if my powers are made
To ford the floods of woe.

Know, then it is my spirit swells,
And drinks, with eager joy, the air
Of freedom—where at last it dwells,
Chartered, a common task to share
With thee, and then it stirs alert,
And pants to learn what menaced hurt
Demands for thee its care.

Remember, I have crossed the deep,
And stood with thee on deck, to gaze
On waves that rose in threatening heap,
While stagnant lay a heavy haze,
Dimly confusing sea with sky,
And baffling, even, the pilot's eye,
Intent to thread the maze—

* * *

Sharp blew the sleet upon my face,
And, rising wild, the gusty wind
Drove on those thundering waves apace,
Our crew so late had left behind;
But, spite of frozen shower and storm,
So close to thee, my heart beat warm,
And tranquil slept my mind.

So now—nor foot-sore nor opprest
With walking all this August day,
I taste a heaven in this brief rest,
This gipsy-halt beside the way.
England's wild flowers are fair to view,
Like balm is England's summer dew,
Like gold her sunset ray.

But the white violets, growing here,
Are sweeter than I yet have seen,
And ne'er did dew so pure and clear
Distil on forest mosses green,

As now, called forth by summer heat,
Perfumes our cool and fresh retreat—
These fragrant limes between.

That sunset! Look beneath the boughs,
Over the copse—beyond the hills;
How soft, yet deep and warm, it glows,
And heaven with rich suffusion fills;
With hues where still the opal's tint,
Its gleam of prisoned fire, is blent,
Where flame through azure thrills!

Depart we now—for fast will fade
That solemn splendour of decline,
And deep must be the after-shade,
As stars alone to-night will shine;
No moon is destined—pale—to gaze
On such a day's vast phœnix blaze,
A day in fires decayed!

There—hand-in-hand we tread again
The mazes of this varying wood,
And soon, amid a cultured plain,
Girt in with fertile solitude,
We shall our resting-place descry,
Marked by one roof-tree, towering high
Above a farmstead rude.

Refreshed, ere long, with rustic fare,
We'll seek a couch of dreamless ease ;
Courage will guard thy heart from fear,
And Love give mine divinest peace:
To-morrow brings more dangerous toil,
And through its conflict and turmoil
We'll pass, as God shall please.

[*Author's Note.*—The preceding composition refers, doubtless, to the scenes acted in France during the last year of the Consulate.—C. B.]

12

FRANCES

SHE will not sleep, for fear of dreams,
  But, rising, quits her restless bed,
And walks where some beclouded beams
  Of moonlight through the hall are shed.

* * *

The close air of the grated tower
  Stifles a heart that scarce can beat,
And, though so late and lone the hour,
  Forth pass her wandering, faltering feet;

And on the pavement spread before
  The long front of the mansion grey,
Her steps imprint the night-frost hoar,
  Which pale on grass and granite lay.

Not long she stayed where misty moon
  And shimmering stars could on her look,
But through the garden archway soon
  Her strange and gloomy path she took.

Some firs, coëval with the tower,
Their straight black boughs stretched o'er her head;
Unseen, beneath this sable bower,
Rustled her dress and rapid tread.

There was an alcove in that shade,
Screening a rustic seat and stand;
Weary she sat her down, and laid
Her hot brow on her burning hand.

To solitude and to the night
Some words she now, in murmurs, said;
And trickling through her fingers white,
Some tears of misery she shed.

'God help me in my grievous need,
God help me in my inward pain;
Which cannot ask for pity's meed,
Which has no licence to complain;

'Which must be borne; yet who can bear,
Hours long, days long, a constant weight—
The yoke of absolute despair,
A suffering wholly desolate?'

* * *

She waited—as for some reply;
The still and cloudy night gave none;
Ere long, with deep-drawn, trembling sigh,
Her heavy plaint again begun.

'Unloved I love; unwept I weep;
Grief I restrain, hope I repress:
Vain is this anguish—fixed and deep;
Vainer, desires and dreams of bliss:

'My love awakes no love again,
My tears collect, and fall unfelt;
My sorrow touches none with pain,
My humble hopes to nothing melt.

'For me the universe is dumb,
Stone-deaf, and blank, and wholly blind;
Life I must bound, existence sum
In the strait limits of one mind;

'That mind my own. O! narrow cell;
Dark—imageless—a living tomb!
There must I sleep, there wake and dwell
Content, with palsy, pain, and gloom.'

Again she paused; a moan of pain,
A stifled sob, alone was heard;
Long silence followed—then again
Her voice the stagnant midnight stirred:

'Must it be so? Is this my fate?
Can I nor struggle, nor contend?
And am I doomed for years to wait,
Watching death's lingering axe descend?

'I've heard of heaven—I would believe;
For if this earth indeed be all,
Who longest lives may deepest grieve;
Most blest, whom sorrows soonest call.

'Oh! leaving disappointment here,
Will man find hope on yonder coast?
Hope, which, on earth, shines never clear,
And oft in clouds is wholly lost.

* * *

'Will he find bliss, which here he dreamed?
Rest, which was weariness on earth?
Knowledge, which, if o'er life it beamed,
Served but to prove it void of worth?

* * *

'If so, endure, my weary frame!
And when thy anguish strikes too deep,
And when all troubled burns life's flame,
Think of the quiet, final sleep;

'Think of the glorious waking-hour,
Which will not dawn on grief and tears,
But on a ransomed spirit's power,
Certain and free from mortal fears.

'Seek now thy couch, and lie till morn,
Then from thy chamber, calm, descend,
With mind nor tossed, nor anguish-torn,
But tranquil, fixed, to wait the end.'

* * *

13

THE LETTER

WHAT is she writing? Watch her now,
How fast her fingers move!
How eagerly her youthful brow
Is bent in thought above!
Her long curls, drooping, shade the light,
She puts them quick aside,
Nor knows that band of crystals bright
Her hasty touch untied.
It slips adown her silken dress,
Falls glittering at her feet;
Unmarked it falls, for she no less
Pursues her labour sweet.

The very loveliest hour that shines
Is in that deep blue sky;
The golden sun of June declines,
It has not caught her eye.
The cheerful lawn, and unclosed gate,
The white road far away,

In vain for her light footsteps wait,
  She comes not forth to-day.
There is an open door of glass
  Close by that lady's chair,
From thence, to slopes of mossy grass,
  Descends a marble stair.

Tall plants of bright and spicy bloom
  Around the threshold grow;
Their leaves and blossoms shade the room
  From that sun's deepening glow.
Why does she not a moment glance
  Between the clustering flowers,
And mark in heaven the radiant dance
  Of evening's rosy hours?
Oh, look again! Still fixed her eye,
  Unsmiling, earnest still,
And fast her pen and fingers fly,
  Urged by her eager will.

Her soul is in th' absorbing task;
  To whom, then, doth she write?
Nay, watch her still more closely, ask
  Her own eyes' serious light;
Where do they turn, as now her pen
  Hangs o'er th' unfinished line?
Whence fell the tearful gleam that then
  Did in their dark spheres shine?

The summer-parlour looks so dark,
When from that sky you turn,
And from th' expanse of that green park
You scarce may aught discern.

Yet o'er the piles of porcelain rare,
O'er flower-stand, couch, and vase,
Sloped, as if leaning on the air,
One picture meets the gaze.
'Tis there she turns; you may not see,
Distinct, what form defines
The clouded mass of mystery
Yon broad gold frame confines.
But look again; inured to shade
Your eyes now faintly trace
A stalwart form, a massive head,
A firm, determined face.

Black Spanish locks, a sunburnt cheek,
A brow high, broad, and white,
Where every furrow seems to speak
Of mind and moral might.
Is that her god? I cannot tell;
Her eye a moment met
Th' impending picture; then it fell
Darkened and dimmed and wet.

A moment more, her task is done,
And sealed the letter lies ;
And now, towards the setting sun
She turns her tearful eyes.

Those tears flow over, wonder not,
For by the inscription see
In what a strange and distant spot
Her heart of hearts must be !
Three seas and many a league of land
That letter must pass o'er,
Ere read by him to whose loved hand
'Tis sent from England's shore.
Remote colonial wilds detain
Her husband, loved though stern ;
She, mid that smiling English scene,
Weeps for his wished return.

14

PRESENTIMENT

'SISTER, you've sat there all the day,
Come to the hearth awhile;
The wind so wildly sweeps away,
The clouds so darkly pile.
That open book has lain, unread,
For hours upon your knee;
You've never smiled nor turned your head;
What can you, sister, see?'

'Come hither, Jane, look down the field;
How dense a mist creeps on!
The path, the hedge, are both concealed,
Ev'n the white gate is gone;
No landscape through the fog I trace,
No hill with pastures green;
All featureless is Nature's face,
All masked in clouds her mien.

'Scarce is the rustle of a leaf
Heard in our garden now;
The year grows old, its days wax brief,
The tresses leave its brow.

The rain drives fast before the wind,
The sky is blank and grey ;
O Jane, what sadness fills the mind
On such a dreary day ! '

'You think too much, my sister dear ;
You sit too long alone ;
What though November days be drear,
Full soon will they be gone.
I've swept the hearth, and placed your chair,
Come, Emma, sit by me ;
Our own fireside is never drear,
Though late and wintry wane the year,
Though rough the night may be.'

'The peaceful glow of our fireside
Imparts no peace to me :
My thoughts would rather wander wide
Than rest, dear Jane, with thee.
I'm on a distant journey bound,
And if, about my heart,
Too closely kindred ties were wound,
'Twould break when forced to part.

'"Soon will November days be o'er :"
Well have you spoken, Jane !
My own forebodings tell me more—

For me, I know by presage sure,
They'll ne'er return again :
Ere long, nor sun nor storm to me
Will bring or joy or gloom ;
They reach not that Eternity
Which soon will be my home.'

Eight months are gone, the summer sun
Sets in a glorious sky ;
A quiet field, all green and lone,
Receives its rosy dye.
Jane sits upon a shaded stile,
Alone she sits there now ;
Her head rests on her hand the while
And thought o'ercasts her brow.

She's thinking of one winter's day,
A few short months ago,
When Emma's bier was born away
O'er wastes of frozen snow.
She's thinking how that drifted snow
Dissolved in spring's first gleam,
And how her sister's memory now
Fades, even as fades a dream.

The snow will whiten earth again,
But Emma comes no more ;

Presentiment

She left, mid winter's sleet and rain,
  This world for Heaven's far shore.
On Beulah's hills she wanders now,
  On Eden's tranquil plain ;
To her shall Jane hereafter go,
  She ne'er shall come to Jane !

15

THE TEACHER'S MONOLOGUE

THE room is quiet, thoughts alone
People its mute tranquillity ;
The yoke put off, the long task done,—
I am, as it is bliss to be,
Still and untroubled. Now, I see,
For the first time, how soft the day
O'er waveless water, stirless tree,
Silent and sunny, wings its way.
Now, as I watch that distant hill,
So faint, so blue, so far removed,
Sweet dreams of home my heart may fill,
That home where I am known and loved
It lies beyond ; yon azure brow
Parts me from all Earth holds for me ;
And, morn and eve, my yearnings flow
Thitherward tending, changelessly.
My happiest hours, ay ! all the time,
I love to keep in memory,
Lapsed among moors, ere life's first prime
Decayed to dark anxiety.

Sometimes, I think a narrow heart
  Makes me thus mourn those far away,
And keeps my love so far apart,
  From friends and friendships of to-day ;
Sometimes, I think 'tis but a dream
  I treasure up so jealously,
All the sweet thoughts I live on seem
  To vanish into vacancy :
And then, this strange, coarse world around
  Seems all that's palpable and true ;
And every sight and every sound
  Combine my spirit to subdue
To aching grief ; so void and lone
  Is Life, and Earth—so worse than vain,
The hopes that, in my own heart sown,
  And cherished by such sun and rain
As Joy and transient Sorrow shed,
  Have ripened to a harvest there :
Alas ! methinks I hear it said,
  'Thy golden sheaves are empty air.'

All fades away ; my very home
  I think will soon be desolate ;
I hear, at times, a warning come
  Of bitter partings at its gate ;
And, if I should return and see
  The hearth-fire quenched, the vacant chair ;

And hear it whispered mournfully,
That farewells have been spoken there,
What shall I do, and whither turn?
Where look for peace? When cease to mourn?

16

'Tis not the air I wished to play,
The strain I wished to sing;
My wilful spirit slipped away
And struck another string.
I neither wanted smile nor tear,
Bright joy nor bitter woe,
But just a song that sweet and clear,
Though haply sad, might flow.

A quiet song, to solace me
When sleep refused to come;
A strain to chase despondency
When sorrowful for home.
In vain I try; I cannot sing;
All feels so cold and dead;
No wild distress, no gushing spring
Of tears in anguish shed;

But all the impatient gloom of one
Who waits a distant day,
When, some great task of suffering done,
Repose shall toil repay.

For youth departs, and pleasure flies,
And life consumes away,
And youth's rejoicing ardour dies
Beneath this drear delay;

And Patience, weary with her yoke,
Is yielding to despair,
And Health's elastic spring is broke
Beneath the strain of care.
Life will be gone ere I have lived;
Where now is Life's first prime?
I've worked and studied, longed and grieved,
Through all that rosy time.

To toil, to think, to long, to grieve,—
Is such my future fate?
The morn was dreary; must the eve
Be also desolate?
Well, such a life at least makes Death
A welcome, wished-for friend;
Then, aid me, Reason, Patience, Faith,
To suffer to the end!

17

EVENING SOLACE

THE human heart has hidden treasures,
In secret kept, in silence sealed ;—
The thoughts, the hopes, the dreams, the pleasures,
Whose charms were broken if revealed.
And days may pass in gay confusion,
And nights in rosy riot fly,
While, lost in Fame's or Wealth's illusion,
The memory of the Past may die.

But there are hours of lonely musing,
Such as in evening silence come,
When, soft as birds their pinions closing,
The heart's best feelings gather home.
Then in our souls there seems to languish
A tender grief that is not woe ;
And thoughts that once wrung groans of anguish,
Now cause but some mild tears to flow.

And feelings, once as strong as passions,
Float softly back—a faded dream ;
Our own sharp griefs and wild sensations,
The tale of others' sufferings seem.
Oh ! when the heart is freshly bleeding,
How longs it for that time to be,
When, through the mist of years receding,
Its woes but live in reverie !

And it can dwell on moonlight glimmer,
On evening shade and loneliness ;
And, while the sky grows dim and dimmer,
Feel no untold and strange distress—
Only a deeper impulse given,
By lonely hour and darkened room,
To solemn thoughts that soar to heaven
Seeking a life and world to come.

18

WATCHING AND WISHING[1]

Oh, would I were the golden light
That shines around thee now,
As slumber shades the spotless white
Of that unclouded brow!
It watches through each changeful dream
Thy features' varied play;
It meets thy waking eyes' soft gleam
By dawn—by opening day.

Oh, would I were the crimson veil
Above thy couch of snow,
To dye that cheek so soft, so pale,
With my reflected glow!
Oh, would I were the cord of gold
Whose tassel set with pearls
Just meets the silken cov'ring's fold,
And rests upon thy curls,

[1] First published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, December, 1860.

Dishevell'd in thy rosy sleep,
And shading soft thy dreams;
Across their bright and raven sweep
The golden tassel gleams!
I would be anything for thee,
My love—my radiant love—
A flower, a bird, for sympathy,
A watchful star above.

19

WHEN THOU SLEEPEST

WHEN thou sleepest, lulled in night,
Art thou lost in vacancy?
Does no silent inward light,
Softly breaking, fall on thee?
Does no dream on quiet wing
Float a moment 'mid that ray,
Touch some answering mental string,
Wake a note and pass away?

When thou watchest, as the hours
Mute and blind are speeding on,
O'er that rayless path, where lowers
Muffled midnight, black and lone;
Comes there nothing hovering near,
Thought or half reality,
Whispering marvels in thine ear,
Every word a mystery,

Chanting low an ancient lay,
Every plaintive note a spell,
Clearing memory's clouds away,
Showing scenes thy heart loves well?

Songs forgot, in childhood sung,
Airs in youth beloved and known,
Whispered by that airy tongue,
Once again are made thine own.

Be it dream in haunted sleep,
Be it thought in vigil lone,
Drink'st thou not a rapture deep
From the feeling? 'Tis thine own,
All thine own; thou need'st not tell
What bright form thy slumber blest;-
All thine own; remember well
Night and shade were round thy rest.

Nothing looked upon thy bed,
Save the lonely watch-light's gleam;
Not a whisper, not a tread
Scared thy spirit's glorious dream.
Sometimes, when the midnight gale
Breathed a moan and then was still,
Seemed the spell of thought to fail,
Checked by one ecstatic thrill;

Felt as all external things,
Robed in moonlight, smote thine eye:
Then thy spirit's waiting wings
Quivered, trembled, spread to fly;

Then th' aspirer wildly swelling
Looked, where 'mid transcendency
Star to star was mutely telling
Heaven's resolve and fate's decree.

Oh ! it longed for holier fire
Than this spark in earthly shrine ;
Oh ! it soared, and higher, higher,
Sought to reach a home divine.
Hopeless quest ! soon weak and weary
Flagged the pinion, drooped the plume,
And again in sadness dreary
Came the baffled wanderer home.

And again it turned for soothing
To th' unfinished, broken dream ;
While, the ruffled current smoothing,
Thought rolled on her startled stream.
I have felt this cherished feeling,
Sweet and known to none but me ;
Still I feel it nightly healing
Each dark day's despondency.

20

PARTING

THERE's no use in weeping,
  Though we are condemned to part :
There's such a thing as keeping
  A remembrance in one's heart :

There's such a thing as dwelling
  On the thought ourselves have nursed,
And with scorn and courage telling
  The world to do its worst.

We'll not let its follies grieve us,
  We'll just take them as they come ;
And then every day will leave us
  A merry laugh for home.

When we've left each friend and brother,
  When we're parted wide and far,
We will think of one another,
  As ev'n better than we are.

Parting

Every glorious sight above us,
  Every pleasant sight beneath,
We'll connect with those that love us,
  Whom we truly love till death !

In the evening, when we're sitting
  By the fire, perchance alone,
Then shall heart with warm heart meeting,
  Give responsive tone for tone.

We can burst the bonds which chain us,
  Which cold human hands have wrought,
And where none shall dare restrain us
  We can meet again, in thought.

So there's no use in weeping,
  Bear a cheerful spirit still ;
Never doubt that Fate is keeping
  Future good for present ill !

21

WINTER STORES

We take from life one little share,
And say that this shall be
A space, redeemed from toil and care,
From tears and sadness free.

And, haply, Death unstrings his bow,
And Sorrow stands apart,
And, for a little while, we know
The sunshine of the heart.

* * *

But Time, though viewlessly it flies,
And slowly, will not stay ;
Alike, through clear and clouded skies,
It cleaves its silent way.

Alike the bitter cup of grief,
Alike the draught of bliss,
Its progress leaves but moment brief
For baffled lips to kiss.

The sparkling draught is dried away,
The hour of rest is gone,
And urgent voices, round us, say,
'Ho, lingerer, hasten on!'

* * *

22

EVENTIDE *

* * *

THE house was still, the room was still,
'Twas eventide in June;
A caged canary to the sun
Then setting, trilled a tune.

A free bird on that lilac bush
Outside the lattice heard,
He listened long—there came a hush,
He dropped an answering word.

* * *

23 *

It is not at an hour like this
We would remember those we love,
As the far hills commingling kiss
That grey and sunless heaven above,
All dim and chilled, a time of tears
And dying hopes and gathering fears.

But I am lone, and so art thou,
And leagues of land between us lie,
And though we moan expiring now,
One could not watch the other die ;
And till corruption's work was done,
Neither could gaze his idol on.

And well I know this cloudy close,
Sealing a long dark day of gloom,
Will bring o'er that soft brow's repose
A token of untimely gloom ;
And it will droop in heart-felt pain,
As though it ne'er might rise again.

All pale that cheek; no fevered glow
  Of longing, watching, waiting love,
No swell of that white breast to show
  How pants in hope my suffering dove;
But one hand on the other laid,
She sits and weeps in twilight's shade.

* * *

24*

* * *

SPEAK of the North! A lonely moor
Silent and dark and trackless swells,
The waves of some wild streamlet pour
Hurriedly through its ferny dells.

Profoundly still the twilight air,
Lifeless the landscape; so we deem,
Till like a phantom gliding near
A stag bends down to drink the stream.

And far away a mountain zone,
A cold, white waste of snow-drifts lies,
And one star, large and soft and lone,
Silently lights the unclouded skies.

* * *

POEMS BY EMILY BRONTË

EMILY JANE BRONTË (1818-1848)

From the fragment of a portrait-group painted by her brother Patrick Branwell Brontë about 1845, now in the National Portrait Gallery

I know not how it falls on me

I

I KNOW not how it falls on me,
  This summer evening, hushed and lone ;
Yet the faint wind comes soothingly
  With something of an olden tone.

Forgive me if I've shunned so long
  Your gentle greeting, earth and air !
But sorrow withers e'en the strong,
  And who can fight against despair ?

June 3, 1831

2

* * *

LADY, watch Apollo's journey ;
Thus thy first hour's course shall be :
If his beams through summer vapours
Warm the earth all placidly,
Her days shall pass like a pleasant dream in sweet tranquillity.

If it darken, if a shadow
Quench his rays and summon rain,
Flowers may open, buds may blossom,
Bud and flower alike are vain ;
Her days shall pass like a mournful story in care and tears and pain.

If the wind be fresh and free,
The wide skies clear and cloudless blue,
The woods and fields and golden flowers
Sparkling in sunshine and in dew,
Her days shall pass in Glory's light the world's drear desert through.

July 12, 1836

The evening sun was sinking

3

THE evening sun was sinking down
  On low green hills and clustered trees ;
It was a scene as fair and lone
  As ever felt the soothing breeze
That cools the grass when day is gone,
  And gives the waves a brighter blue,
And marks the soft white clouds sail on,
  Like spirits of ethereal dew,
Which all the morn had hovered o'er
  The azure flowers where they were nursed,
And now return to Heaven once more,
  Where their bright glories shone at first.

September 23, 1836

4

Loud without the wind was roaring
Through the wan autumnal sky ;
Drenching wet the cold rain pouring
Spoke of stormy winter nigh.

All, too like that dreary eve
Sighed without repining grief,
Sighed at first, but sighed not long ;
Sweet, how softly sweet it came—
Wild words of an ancient song,
Undefined, without a name.

November 1836

Redbreast, early in the morning

5

REDBREAST, early in the morning
  Dark and cold and cloudy grey,
Wildly tender is thy music,
  Chasing angry thought away.

My heart is not enraptured now,
  My eyes are full of tears,
And constant sorrow on my brow
  Has done the work of years.

It was not hope that wrecked at once
  The spirit's calm in storm,
But a long life of solitude,
Hopes quenched, and rising thoughts subdued,
  A bleak November's calm.

What woke it then? A little child
  Strayed from its father's cottage door,
And in the hour of moonlight wild
  Lay lonely on the desert moor.

I heard it then, you heard it too,
And seraph sweet it sang to you ;
But like the shriek of misery
That wild, wild music wailed to me !

February 1837

6

* * *

'Twas just the time of eve
When parted ghosts might come
Above their prisoned dust to grieve,
And wail their woeful doom.

And truly at my side
I saw a shadowy thing,
Most dim, and yet its presence there
Curdled my blood with ghastly fear
And ghastlier wondering.

* * *

I fell down on the stone
But could not turn away;
My words died in a voiceless moan,
When I began to pray.

And still it bent above,
Its features full in view;
It seemed close by, and yet more far
Than this world from the farthest star
That tracks the boundless blue.

Indeed 'twas not the space
Of earth or time between ;
But the sea of deep eternity,
The gulf o'er which mortality
Has never never been.

* * *

June 10, 1837

7

I saw thee, child, one summer day,
Suddenly leave thy cheerful play,
And in the green grass lowly lying
I listened to thy mournful sighing.

I knew the wish that waked that wail,
I knew the source whence sprung those tears;
You longed for fate to raise the veil
That darkened over coming years.

The anxious prayer was heard, and power
Was given me, in that silent hour,
To open to an infant's eye
The portals of futurity.

But, child of dust, the fragrant flowers,
The bright blue flowers and velvet sod,
Were strange conductors to the bowers
Thy daring footsteps must have trod.

* * *

Those tiny hands in vain essay
To brush the shadowy fiend away;
There is a horror on his brow,
An anguish in his bosom now;

A fearful anguish in his eyes,
  Fixed strainedly on the vacant air ;
Hoarsely bursts in long-drawn sighs,
  His panting breath enchained by fear.

Poor child ! if spirits such as I
Could weep o'er human misery,
A tear might flow, ay, many a tear,
To see the dread that lies before,
To see the sunshine disappear ;

And hear the stormy waters roar,
Breaking upon a desolate shore,
Cut off from hope in early day,
From earth and glory cut away.

But he is doomed, and Morning's light
Must image forth the scowl of night,
And childhood's flower must waste its bloom
Beneath the shadow of the tomb.

July 1837

8

SLEEP not, dream not; this bright day
Will not, cannot last for aye;
Bliss like thine is bought by years
Dark with torment and with tears.

Sweeter far than placid pleasure,
Purer, higher beyond measure,
Yet, alas! the sooner turning
Into hopeless, endless mourning.

I love thee, boy, for all divine,
All full of God thy features shine.
Darling enthusiast, holy child,
Too good for this world's warring wild;
Too heavenly now, but doomed to be,
Hell-like in heart and misery.

And what shall change that angel brow,
And quench that spirit's glorious glow?
Relentless laws that disallow
True virtue and true joy below.

I too depart, I too decline,
And make thy path no longer mine.
'Tis thus that human minds will turn,
All doomed alike to sin and mourn ;
Yet all with long gaze fixed afar,
Adoring virtue's distant star.

July 26, 1837

The sun has set

9

THE sun has set, and the long grass now
Waves dreamily in the evening wind;
And the wild bird has flown from that old grey
stone,
In some warm nook a couch to find.

In all the lonely landscape round
I see no light and hear no sound,
Except the wind that far away
Comes sighing o'er the heathy sea.

August 1837

10

ALONE I sat; the summer day
Had died in smiling light away;
I saw it die, I watched it fade
From the misty hill and breezeless glade.

And thoughts within my soul were rushing,
And my heart bowed beneath their power;
And tears within my eyes were gushing
Because I could not speak the feeling,
The solemn joy around me stealing,
In that divine, untroubled hour.

I asked myself, O why has Heaven
Denied the precious gift to me,
The glorious gift to many given,
To speak their thoughts in poetry?

Dreams have encircled me, I said,
From careless childhood's sunny time;
Visions by ardent fancy fed
Since life was in its morning prime.

But now, when I had hoped to sing,
My fingers strike a tuneless string,
And still the burden of the strain—
I strive no more, 'tis all in vain!

* * *

August 1837

II

* * *

THE organ swells, the trumpets sound,
The lamps in triumph glow,
And none of all those thousand round
Regard who sleeps below.

Those haughty eyes that tears should fill
Glance clearly, cloudlessly ;
Those bounding breasts that grief should thrill
From thought of grief are free.

His subjects and his soldiers there
They blessed his rising bloom,
But none a single sigh can spare
To breathe above his tomb.

Comrades in arms, I've looked to mark
One shade of feeling swell,
As your feet stood above the dark
Recesses of his cell.

* * *

September 30, 1837

Far away is the land of rest

12

FAR away is the land of rest—
  Thousand miles are stretched between,
Many a mountain's stormy crest,
  Many a desert void of green.

Wasted, worn is the traveller,
  Dark his heart and dim his eye;
Without hope or comforter,
  Faltering, faint, and ready to die.

Often he looks to the ruthless sky,
  Often he looks o'er his dreary road,
Often he wishes down to lie
  And render up life's tiresome load.

But yet faint not, mournful man;
  Leagues on leagues are left behind
Since your aimless course began;
  Then go on, to toil resigned.

If you still despair, control,
  Hush its whispers in your breast;
You shall reach the final goal,
  You shall win the land of rest.

October 1837

13

THE old church tower and garden wall
Are black with autumn rain,
And dreary winds foreboding call
The darkness down again.

I watched how evening took the place
Of glad and glorious day;
I watched a deeper gloom efface
The evening's lingering ray.

October 1837

The night is darkening

14

THE night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow ;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.

The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow,
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below ;
But nothing dread can move me—
I will not, cannot go.

November 1837

15

SLEEP brings no joy to me,
Remembrance never dies,
My soul is given to mystery,
And lives in sighs.

Sleep brings no rest to me;
The shadows of the dead
My wakening eyes may never see
Surround my bed.

Sleep brings no hope to me,
In soundest sleep they come,
And with their doleful imag'ry
Deepen the gloom.

Sleep brings no strength to me,
No power renewed to brave;
I only sail a wilder sea,
A darker wave.

Sleep brings no friend to me
To soothe and aid to bear;
They all gaze on, how scornfully,
And I despair.

Sleep brings no joy to me

Sleep brings no wish to fret
  My harassed heart beneath ;
My only wish is to forget
  In endless sleep of death.

November 1837

16

STRONG I stand, though I have borne
Anger, hate, and bitter scorn ;
Strong I stand, and laugh to see
How mankind have fought with me.

Shade of history, I condemn
All the puny ways of men ;
Free my heart, my spirit free,
Beckon, and I'll follow thee.

False and foolish mortal, know,
If you scorn the world's disdain,
Your mean soul is far below
Other worms, however vain.

Thing of Dust, with boundless pride,
Dare you ask me for a guide ?
With the humble I will be ;
Haughty men are naught to me.

November 1837

TO A WREATH OF SNOW

O TRANSIENT voyager of heaven !
O silent sign of winter skies !
What adverse wind thy sail has driven
To dungeons where a prisoner lies ?

Methinks the hands that shut the sun
So sternly from this mourning brow
Might still their rebel task have done,
And checked a thing so frail as thou.

They would have done it, had they known
The talisman that dwelt in thee,
For all the suns that ever shone
Have never been so kind to me !

For many a week and many a day
My heart was weighed with sinking gloom,
When morning rose in mourning grey
And faintly lit my prison room.

But angel like, when I awoke,
Thy silvery form, so soft and fair,
Shining through darkness, sweetly spoke
Of cloudy skies and mountains bare,

The dearest to a mountaineer
Who all life long has loved the snow
That crowned his native summits drear,
Better than greenest plains below.

And, voiceless soulless messenger,
Thy presence wakes a thrilling tone
That comforts me while thou art here,
And will sustain when thou art gone.

December 1837

18

I DIE, but when the grave shall press
The heart so long endeared to thee,
When earthly cares no more distress,
And earthly joys are nought to me,

Weep not, but think that I have passed
Before thee o'er a sea of gloom,
Have anchored safe, and rest at last,
Where tears and mourning cannot come.

'Tis I should weep to leave thee here
On that dark ocean sailing drear,
With storms around and fears before,
And no kind light to point the shore.

* * *

December 1837

19

O MOTHER, I am not regretting
To leave this wretched world below,
If there be nothing but forgetting
In that dark land to which I go.

* * *

Twice twelve short years, and all is over;
And day and night to rise no more,
And never more to be a rover
Along the fields, the woods, the shore.

And never more at early dawning
To watch the stars of midnight wane,
To breathe the breath of summer morning,
And see its sunshine ne'er again.

I hear the abbey bells are ringing,
Methinks their chime sounds faint and drear,
Or else the wind is adverse winging,
And wafts their music from my ear.

The wind, the winter night is speaking
Of thoughts and things that should not stay;
Mother, come near! my heart is breaking,
I cannot bear to go away.

O mother, I am not regretting

And I must go whence no returning
To soothe your grief or calm your care.
Nay, do not weep; that bitter mourning
Tortures my soul with wild despair.

* * *

December 14, 1837

20

WEANED from life and flown away
In the morning of thy day,
Bound in everlasting gloom,
Buried in a hapless tomb.

Yet upon thy bended knee
Thank the power that banished thee;
Chain and bar and dungeon wall
Saved thee from a deadlier thrall.
Thank the power that made thee part
Ere that parting broke thy heart.
Wildly rushed the mountain spring
From its source of fern and ling;
How invincible its roar,
Had its waters worn the shore!

February 1838

O wander not so far away!

21

O WANDER not so far away!
O love, forgive this selfish tear;
It may be sad for thee to stay,
But how can I live lonely here?

The still May morn is warm and bright,
Sweet flowers are fresh, and grass is green,
And in the haze of glorious light
Our long low hills are scarcely seen.

Our woods—e'en now their young leaves hide
The blackbird and the throstle well;
And high in heaven so blue and wide
A thousand strains of Music swell.

He looks on all with eyes that speak
So deep, so drear a woe to me!
There is a faint red on his cheek
Not like the bloom I used to see.

Can Death—yes, Death he is thine own!
The grave shall close those limbs around,
And hush, for ever hush the tone,
I loved above all earthly sound.

Well! pass away with the other flowers;
Too dark for them, too dark for thee
Are the hours to come, the joyless hours,
That time is treasuring up for me.

If thou hast sinned in this world of care,
'Twas but the dust of thy drear abode;
Thy soul was pure when it entered here,
And pure will it go again to God.

February 20, 1838

22

SONG

THIS shall be thy lullaby,
Rocking on the stormy sea ;
Though it roar in thunder wild,
Sleep, stilly sleep, thou dark-haired child !

When our shuddering boat was crossing
Eldern's lake so rudely tossing,
Then 'twas first my nursling smiled ;
Sleep, softly sleep, my fair-browed child !

Waves above thy cradle break,
Foamy tears are on thy cheek,
Yet the ocean's self grows mild
When it bears my slumbering child.

May 1838

23

DOUGLAS' RIDE

WE'LL narrower draw the circle round,
And hush that music's solemn sound,
And quench the lamp and stir the fire,
To rouse its flickering radiance higher;
Loop up the window's velvet veil,
That we may hear the night-wind wail,
For wild those gusts, and well those chimes
Blend with a song of troubled times.

July 11, 1838

24

WHERE were ye all? and where wert thou?
I saw an eye that shone like thine,
But dark curls waved around his brow,
And his star-glance was strange to mine.

And yet a dreamlike comfort came
Into my heart and anxious eye,
And trembling yet to hear his name,
I bent to listen watchfully.

* * *

October 1838

25

* * *

THE desert moor is dark, there is tempest in the air ;
I have breathed my only wish in one last, one burning prayer,
A prayer that would come forth altho' it lingered long ;
That set on fire my heart, but froze upon my tongue.

And now, it shall be done before the morning rise ;
I will not watch the sun ascend in yonder skies.
One task alone remains—thy pictured face to view,
And then I go to prove if God, at least, be true !

Do I not see thee now ? Thy black resplendent hair ;
The glory-beaming brow, and smile how heavenly fair !
Thine eyes are turned away—those eyes I would not see ;
Their dark, their deadly ray would more than madden me.

* * *

The desert moor is dark

Oh! could I see thy lids weighed down in cheerless woe;
Too full to hide their tears, too stern to overflow;
Oh! could I know thy soul with equal grief was torn,
This fate might be endured—this anguish might be borne.

How gloomy grows the night! 'Tis Gondal's wind that blows;
I shall not tread again the deep glens where it rose.
I feel it on my face—Where, wild blast! dost thou roam?
What do we, wanderer, here, so far away from home?

I do not need thy breath to cool my death-cold brow;
But go to that far land, where she is shining now;
Tell her my latest wish, tell her my dreary doom;
Say that my pangs are past, but hers are yet to come.

Vain words, vain, frenzied thoughts! No ear can hear me call.
Lost in the desert air my frantic curses fall.

And could she see me now, perchance her lip
would smile,
Would smile in careless pride and utter scorn the
while!

And yet for all her hate, each parting glance would
tell
A stronger passion breathed, burned in this last
farewell—
Unconquered in my soul the Tyrant rules me
still:
Life bows to my control, but Love I cannot kill!

November 1, 1838

O dream, where art thou now?

26

O DREAM, where art thou now?
Long years have passed away
Since last from off thine angel brow
I saw the light decay.

Alas! alas for me!
Thou wert so bright and fair,
I could not think thy memory
Would yield me nought but care!

The moonbeam and the storm,
The summer eve divine,
The silent night of solemn calm,
The full moon's cloudless shine,

Were once entwined with thee,
But now with weary pain
Lost vision! 'tis enough for me
Thou canst not shine again.

November 3, 1838

27

THERE swept adown that dreary glen
A wilder sound than mountain wind—
The thrilling shouts of fighting men,
With something sadder far behind.

The thrilling shouts they died away
Before the night came greyly down,
But closed not with the closing day
The choking sob, the tortured moan.

Down in a hollow sunk in shade,
Where dark forms waved in secret gloom,
A ruined, bleeding form was laid,
Waiting the death that was to come.

November 1838

How still, how happy!

28

How still, how happy! These are words
That once would scarce agree together;
I loved the splashing of the surge,
The changing heaven, the breezy weather,

More than smooth seas and cloudless skies,
And solemn, soothing, softened airs
That in the forest woke no sighs,
And from the green spray shook no tears.

How still, how happy! now I feel
Where silence dwells is sweeter far
Than laughing mirth with joyous swell,
However pure its raptures are.

Come, sit down on this sunny stone;
'Tis wintry light o'er flow'rless moors;
But sit, for we are all alone,
And clear expand heaven's breathless shores.

I would that in the withered grass
Spring's budding wreaths we might discern,
The violet's eye might shyly flash,
And young leaves shoot among the fern.

It is but thought—full many a night
The snow shall clothe these hills afar ;
And storms shall add a drearier blight,
And winds shall wage a wilder war,

Before the lark may herald in
Fresh foliage, twined with blossoms fair,
And summer days again begin
Their glory-haloed crown to wear.

Yet my heart loves December's smile
As much as July's golden gleam !
Then let me sit, and watch the while
The blue ice curdling on the stream.

December 7, 1838

29

* * *

How deep into the wilderness
My horse had strayed, I cannot say ;
But neither morsel nor caress
Would urge him farther on the way.

So loosening from his neck the rein,
I set my worn companion free,
And billowy hill and boundless plain
Full soon divided him from me.

* * *

It was about the middle night
And under such a starless dome,
When gliding from the mountain's height,
I saw a shadowy spirit come.

Her wavy hair on her shoulders bare,
It shone like soft clouds round the moon ;
Her noiseless feet, like melting sleet,
Gleamed white a moment, then were gone.

* * *

January 12, 1839

30

MAY flowers are opening,
And leaves unfolding free;
There are bees in every blossom,
And birds on every tree.

The sun is gladly shining,
The stream sings merrily;
But lonely I am pining,
And all is dark to me.

O cold, cold is my heart!
It will not, cannot rise;
It feels no sympathy
With those refulgent skies.

Dead, dead is my joy,
I long to be at rest;
I wish the damp earth covered
This desolated breast.

If I were quite alone,
It might not be so drear,
When all my hope was gone;
At least I could not fear.

But the glad eyes around me
Must weep as mine have done,
And I must see the final gloom
Eclipse their morning sun.

If heaven would rain on me
That future storm of care,
So their fond hearts were free,
I'd be content to bear.

Alas! as lightning withers
The young and aged tree,
Both they and I shall fall beneath
The fate we cannot flee.

January 25, 1839

31

THE ABSENT ONE

FROM our evening fireside now
  Merry laugh and cheerful tone,
Smiling eye and cloudless brow,
  Mirth and music all are flown.

Yet the grass before the door
  Grows as green in April rain,
And as blithely as before
  Larks have poured their day-long strain.

* * *

One is absent, and for one,
Cheerless, chill is our hearthstone.
One is absent, and for him
Cheeks are pale and eyes are dim.

* * *

Just as once, through sun and mist
I have climbed the mountain's breast,
Still my gun with certain aim
Brought to earth the fluttering game :

But the very dogs repined ;
Though I called with whistle shrill,
Listlessly they[1] lagged behind,
Looking backward o'er the hill.

Sorrow was not vocal there ;
Mute their pain and my despair ;
But the joy of life was flown—
He was gone, and we were lone.

So it is by morn and eve ;
So it is in field and hall ;
For the absent one we grieve ;
One being absent, saddens all.

April 19, 1839

[1] 'Tay (or Tray) and Carlo' is a variation in one MS.

32

SONG

KING JULIUS left the south country,
His banners all bravely flying ;
His followers went out with Jubilee,
But they shall return with sighing.

Loud arose the triumphal hymn,
The drums were loudly rolling ;
Yet you might have heard in distant din
How a passing bell was tolling.

* * *

April 20, 1839

33

* * *

SILENT he sat. That stormy breast
At length, I said, has deigned to rest;
At length above that spirit flows
The waveless ocean of repose.

Let me draw near; 'twill soothe to view
His dark eyes dimmed with holy dew;
Remorse even now may wake within,
And half unchain his soul from sin.

Perhaps this is the destined hour
When Hell shall lose its fatal power,
And Heaven itself shall bend above
To hail the soul redeemed by love.

Unmarked I gazed; my idle thought
Passed with the ray whose shine it caught;
One glance revealed how little care
He felt for all the beauty there.

Oh ! crime can make the heart grow old
Sooner than years of wearing woe,
Can turn the warmest bosom cold
As winter wind or polar snow.

April 28, 1839

34

TO A BLUEBELL

SACRED watcher, wave thy bells!
Fair hill-flower and woodland child,
Dear to me in deep green dells,
Dearest on the mountains wild.

Bluebell, even as all divine
I have seen my darling shine;
Bluebell, even as fair and frail
I have seen my darling fail.
Lift thy head and speak to me,
Soothing thoughts are breathed by thee.
Thus they whisper, 'Summer's sun
Lights me till my life is done;
Would I rather choose to die
Under winter's stormy sky?

'Glad I bloom, and calm I fade,
Dews of heaven are round me stayed;[1]
Mourner, mourner, dry thy tears,
Sorrow comes with lengthened years.'

May 7, 1839

[1] 'Weeping twilights dew my head,' is another reading.

35

I AM the only being[1] whose doom
No tongue would ask, no eye would mourn ;
I've never caused a thought of gloom,
A smile of joy, since I was born.

In secret pleasure, secret tears,
This changeful life has slipped away,
As friendless after eighteen years,
As lone as on my natal day.

There have been times, I cannot hide,
There have been times when this was drear,
When my sad soul forgot its pride
And longed for one to love me here.

But those were in the early glow
Of feelings long subdued by care,
And they have died so long ago,
I hardly now believe they were.

[1] Here, as elsewhere, Emily Brontë uses *being* as a monosyllable.

I am the only being

First melted off the hope of youth,
  Then fancy's rainbow fast withdrew ;
And then experience told me truth
  In mortal bosoms never grew.

'Twas grief enough to think mankind
  All hollow, servile, insincere ;
But worse to turn to my own mind,
  And find the same corruption there.

May 17, 1839

36

CLAUDIA

I DID not sleep ; 'twas noon of day ;
I saw the burning sunshine fall,
The long grass bending where I lay,
The blue sky brooding over all.

I heard the mellow hum of bees,
And singing birds and sighing trees,
And far away in woody dell
The music of the Sabbath bell.

I did not dream remembrance still
Clasped round my heart its fetters chill ;
But I am sure the soul is free
To leave its clay a little while,
Or how, in exile's misery,
Could I have seen my country smile ?

In English fields my limbs were laid,
With English turf beneath my head ;
My spirit wandered o'er that shore
Where nought but it may wander more.

Yet if the soul can thus return,
I need not, and I will not mourn ;
And vainly did you drive me far
With leagues of ocean stretched between :
My mortal flesh you might debar,
But not the eternal fire within.

My monarch died, to rule for ever
A heart that can forget him never,
And dear to me, ay, doubly dear,
Though shut within the silent tomb,
His name shall be for whoso bear
This long-sustained and hopeless doom.

And brighter in the hour of woe
Than in the blaze of victory's pride,
That glory-shedding star shall glow
For which we fought and bled and died.

May 28, 1839

37

THE busy day has hurried by,
And hearts greet kindred hearts once more;
And swift the evening hours should fly,
But what turns every gleaming eye
So often to the door?

And then so quick away?—And why
Does sudden silence chill the room?
And laughter sink into a sigh,
And merry words to whispers die,
And gladness change to gloom?

Oh, we are listening for a sound
We know shall ne'er be heard again;
Sweet voices in the halls resound,
Fair forms, fond faces gather round,
But all in vain, in vain.

Their feet shall never waken more
The echoes in these galleries wide,
Nor dare the snow on mountain's brow,
Nor skim the river's frozen flow,
Nor wander down its side.

* * *

The busy day has hurried by

They, they are gone! Not for a while,
As golden suns at night decline,
And e'en in death our grief beguile,
Foretelling with a rose-red smile
How bright the morn will shine.

No; these dark towers are lone and lorn;
This very crowd is vacancy;
And we must watch and wait and mourn,
And half look out for their return;
And think their forms we see.

And fancy music in our ear,
Such as their lips could only pour,
And think we feel their presence near,
And start to find they are not here;
And never shall be more!

June 14, 1839

38

MONTH after month, year after year,
My harp has poured a dreary strain ;
At length a livelier note shall cheer,
And pleasure tune its chords again.

What though the stars and fair moonlight
Are quenched in morning dull and grey ?
They are but tokens of the night,
And this, my soul, is day.

June 18, 1839

39

COME hither, child; who gifted thee
With power to touch that string so well?
How daredst thou wake thoughts in me,
Thoughts that I would, but cannot quell!

Nay, chide not, lady; long ago
I heard those notes in Elbë Hall,
And had I known they'd waken woe,
I'd weep their music to recall.

But thus it was one festal night,
When I was hardly six years old,
I stole away from crowds and light,
And sought a chamber dark and cold.

I had no one to love me there,
I knew no comrade and no friend,
And so I went to sorrow where
Heaven, only heaven, could me defend.

Loud blew the wind. 'Twas sad to stay
From all that splendour round away.
I imaged in the lonely room
A thousand forms, a fearful gloom;

And with my wet eyes raised on high,
I prayed to God that I might die.
Suddenly in the silence drear
A sound of music reached my ear :

And then a voice—I hear it yet—
So full of soul, so deeply sweet ;
I thought that Gabriel's self had come
To take me to my father's home.

Three times it rose, that solemn strain,
Then died away, nor came again ;
And still the words and still the tone
Dwell in their might when all alone.

July 19, 1839

Mild the mist upon the hill

40

MILD the mist upon the hill,
Telling not of storms to-morrow ;
No, the day has wept its fill,
Spent its store of silent sorrow.

Oh, I'm gone back to the days of youth,
I am a child once more,
And 'neath my father's sheltering roof,
And near the old hall door,

I watch this cloudy evening fall,
After a day of rain ;
Blue mists, sweet mists of summer pall
The horizon's mountain chain.

The damp stands in the long, green grass
As thick as morning's tears ;
And dreamy scents of fragrance pass
That breathe of other years.

July 27, 1839

41

'How long will you remain? The midnight hour
Has tolled its last stroke from the minster tower.
Come, come; the fire is dead, the lamp burns low;
Your eyelids droop, a weight is on your brow;
Your cold hands hardly hold the weary pen:
Come; morn will give recovered strength again.'

No; let me linger; leave me, let me be
A little longer in this reverie:
I'm happy now; and would you tear away
My blissful thought that never comes with day?
A vision dear, though false, for well my mind
Knows what a bitter waking waits behind.'

'Can there be pleasure in this shadowy room,
With windows yawning on intenser gloom,
And such a dreary wind so bleakly sweeping
Round walls where only you are vigil keeping?
Besides, your face has not a sign of joy,
And more than tearful sorrow fills your eye.
Look on those woods, look on that mountain lorn,
And think how changed they'll be to-morrow morn:

How long will you remain?

The doors of heaven expanding bright and blue;
The leaves, the green grass, sprinkled with the dew;
And white mists rising on the river's breast,
And wild birds bursting from their songless nest,
And your own children's merry voices chasing
The phantom ghost that pleasure has been raising.'

'Ay, speak of these! but can you tell me why
Day breathes such beauty over earth and sky,
And waking sounds revive, restored again
To hearts that all night long have throbbed with pain?
Is it not that the sunshine and the wind
Lure from itself the woeful woe-worn mind,
And all the joyous music breathing by,
And all the splendours of that cloudless sky,
Re-give him shadowy gleams of infancy
And draw his tired gaze from futurity?'

August 12, 1839

42

THE starry night shall tidings bring ;
Go out upon the breezy moor,
Watch for a bird with sable wing,
And beak and talons dropping gore.

Look not around, look not beneath,
But mutely trace its airy way,
Mark where it lights upon the heath ;
Then, wanderer, kneel thee down, and pray.

What fortune may await thee there,
I will not, and I dare not tell ;
But Heaven is moved by fervent prayer,
And God is mercy—fare thee well !

* * *

It is not pride, it is not shame,
That makes her leave the gorgeous hall ;
And though neglect her heart might tame,
She mourns not for her sudden fall.

'Tis true she stands among the crowd,
An unmarked and an unloved child,
While each young comrade, blithe and proud,
Glides through the maze of pleasure wild.

And all do homage to their will,
  And all seem glad their voice to hear;
She heeds not that, but hardly still
  Her eye can hold the quivering tear.

What made her weep, what made her glide
  Out to the park this dreary day,
And cast her jewelled chains aside,
  And seek a rough and lonely way;

And down beneath a cedar's shade,
  On the wet grass regardless lie,
With nothing but its gloomy head
  Between her and the showering sky?

I saw her stand in the gallery long,
  Watching those little children there,
As they were playing [1] the pillars 'mong,
  And bounding down the marble stair.

August 13, 1839

[1] A monosyllable. Emily Brontë so pronounced, it is plain, words like 'being,' 'doing,' 'going.'

43

THERE was a time when my cheek burned
To give such scornful words the lie,
Ungoverned nature madly spurned
The law that bade it not defy.
Oh, in the days of ardent youth
I would have given my life for truth.

For truth, for right, for liberty,
I would have gladly, freely died ;
And now I calmly bear, and see
The vain man smile, the fool deride,
Though not because my heart is tame,
Though not for fear, though not for shame !

My soul still chokes at every tone
Of selfish and self-clouded error ;
My breast still braves the world alone,
Steeled as it ever was to terror.
Only I know, howe'er I frown,
The same world will go rolling on.

October 1839

44

SONG

O BETWEEN distress and pleasure
Fond affection cannot be!
Wretched hearts in vain would treasure
Friendship's joys when others flee.

Well I know thine eye would never
Smile, when mine grieved, willingly;
Yet I know thine eye for ever
Could not weep in sympathy.

Let us part; the time is over
When I thought and felt like thee;
I will be an ocean rover,
I will sail the desert sea.

Isles there are beyond its billow,
Lands where woe may wander free;
And, beloved, thy midnight pillow
Will be soft unwatched by me.

Not on each returning morrow,
When thy heart bounds ardently,
Needst thou then dissemble sorrow,
Marking my despondency.

Day by day some dreary token
Will forsake thy memory,
Till at last, all old links broken,
I shall be a dream to thee.

October 15, 1839

That wind, I used to hear it

45

THAT wind, I used to hear it swelling
With joy divinely deep;
You might have seen my hot tears welling,
But rapture made me weep.

I used to love on winter nights
To lie, and dream alone
Of all the rare and real delights
My lonely years had known.

And oh! above the best of those
That coming time should bear,
Like heaven's own glorious stars they rose,
Still beaming bright and fair.

November 28, 1839

46

I've been wandering in the greenwoods,
And 'mid flowery, smiling plains;
I've been listening to the dark floods,
To the thrush's thrilling strains.

I have gathered the pale primrose,
And the purple violet sweet;
I've been where the asphodel grows,
And where lives the red deer fleet.

I've been to the distant mountain,
To the silver singing rill,
By the crystal murm'ring fountain,
And the shady, verdant hill.

I've been where the poplar is springing
From the fair enamelled ground,
While the nightingale is singing
With a solemn, plaintive sound.

December 14, 1839

47

HEAVEN's glory shone where he was laid
In life's decline!
I turned me from that young saint's bed
To gaze on thine.

It was a summer day that saw
His spirit's flight;
Thine parted in a time of awe,
A winter's night.

Upon her soothing breast
She lulled her little child,
A winter sunset in the west
A heav'nly glory smiled.
I gazed within thine earnest eyes
And read the sorrow brooding there;
I heard thy young breast torn with sighs,
And envied such despair.

Go to the grave in youth's bare woe!
That dream was written long ago.

December 19, 1839

48

NEVER

Not many years, but long enough to see
No ten can deal such deadly misery
As the dear friend untimely called away ;
And still the more beloved, the greater still
Must be the aching void, the withering chill
Of each dark night and dim beclouded day.

December 23 [1839]

Thy sun is near meridian

49

THY sun is near meridian height,
And my sun sinks in endless night;
But if that night bring only sleep,
Then I shall rest, while thou wilt weep.

And say not that my early tomb
Will give me to a darker doom;
Shall these long agonising years
Be punished by eternal tears?

No! that I feel can never be;
A God of hate could hardly bear
To watch through all eternity,
His own creation's dread despair!

The pangs that wring my mortal breast,
Must claim from Justice lasting rest;
Enough, that this departing breath
Will pass in anguish worse than death.

* * *

Then come again ; thou wilt not shrink—
I know thy soul is free from fear—
The last full cup of triumph drink,
Before the blank of death be there.

* * *

January 6, 1840

50

He smiles and sings, though every air
  Betrays the faith of yesterday ;
His soul is glad to cast for her
  Virtue and faith and Heaven away.

Well, thou hast paid me back my love !
But, if there be a God above,
Whose arm is strong, Whose word is true,
This hell shall wring thy spirit too !

January 6, 1840

51

It is too late to call thee now,
I will not nurse that dream again ;
For every joy that lit my brow
Would bring its after-storm of pain.

Besides, the mist is half withdrawn,
The barren mountain-side lies bare,
And sunshine and awaking morn
Paint no more golden visions there.

Yet ever in my grateful breast
Thy darling shade shall cherished be ;
For God alone doth know how blessed
My early years have been in thee !

April 1840

52

'Tis moonlight, summer moonlight,
All soft, and still, and fair;
The silent time of midnight
Shines sweetly everywhere.

But most where trees are sending
Their breezy boughs on high,
Or stooping low are lending
A shelter from the sky.

And there in those wild bowers
A lovely form is laid,
Green grass and dew-steeped flowers
Wave gently round her head.

May 13, 1840

53

If grief for grief can touch thee,
If answering woe for woe,
If any truth can melt thee,
Come to me now !

I cannot be more lonely,
More drear I cannot be !
My worn heart throbs so wildly
'Twill break for thee.

And when the world despises,
When heaven repels my prayer,
Will not mine angel comfort ?
Mine idol hear ?

Yes, by the tears I've poured thee,
By all my hours of pain,
O I shall surely win thee,
Beloved, again.

May 18, 1840

54

COMPANIONS all day long we've stood,
The wild winds restless blowing,—
All day we've watched the darkened flood
Around our vessel flowing.

Sunshine has never smiled since morn,
And clouds have gathered drear,
And heavier hearts would feel forlorn,
And weaker minds would fear.

But look in each young shipmate's eyes
Lit by the evening flame,
And see how little stormy skies
Our joyous blood can tame.

No face the same expression wears,
No lip the same soft smile;
Yet kindness warms and courage cheers,
Nerves every breast the while.

It is the hour of dreaming now,
The red fire brightly gleams,
And sweetest in such fires' glow
The hour of dreaming seems.

I may not trace my thoughts of all,
But some I read as well
As I can hear the ocean's fall
And sullen surging swell.

The swifter soul is gone before,
It treads a forest wide,
Where bowers are bending to the shore,
And gazing on the tide.

* * *

September 17, 1840

[NOTE.—The six concluding verses are practically undecipherable in the MS.]

55

RETIREMENT

O LET me be alone awhile !
No human form is nigh ;
And I may sing and muse aloud,
No mortal ear is by.

Away, ye dreams of earthly bliss,
Ye earthly cares begone !
Depart, ye restless, wandering thoughts,
And let me be alone !

One hour, my spirit, stretch thy wings
And quit this joyless sod ;
Bask in the sunshine of the sky,
And be alone with God !

Sunday, December 13, 1840

56

THE CAGED BIRD

And like myself lone, wholly lone,
It sees the day's long sunshine glow ;
And like myself it makes its moan
In unexhausted woe.

Give we the hills our equal prayer,
Earth's breezy hills and heaven's blue sea ;
I ask for nothing further here
But my own heart and liberty.

Ah ! could my hand unlock its chain,
How gladly would I with it soar ;
And ne'er regret, and ne'er complain
To see its shining eyes no more.

But let me think that if to-day
It pines in cold captivity,
To-morrow both shall soar away,
Eternally, entirely free.

The Caged Bird

Methinks this heart should rest awhile,
So stilly round the evening falls;
The veiled sun shows no parting smile,
Nor mirth, nor music wakes my halls.

I have sat lonely all the day,
Watching the drizzling mist descend,
And first conceal the hills in grey,
And then along the valleys wend.

And I have sat and watched the trees,
And the sad flowers,—how drear they blow!
Those flowers were formed to reel the breeze,
Wave their light heads in summer's glow.

Yet their lives passed in gloomy woe,
And hopeless comes its dark decline,
And I lament, because I know
That cold departure pictures mine.

February 27, 1841

57

I SEE around me piteous tombstones grey
Stretching their shadows far away.
Beneath the turf my footsteps tread
Lie low and lone the silent dead,
Beneath the turf, beneath the mould,
For ever dark, for ever cold ;
And my eyes cannot hold the tears
That memory hoards for vanished years.
For time and death and mortal pain
Give wounds that will not heal again.
Let me remember half the woe
I've seen and heard and felt below,
And heaven itself, so pure and blest,
Could never give my spirit rest.
Sweet land of light ! Thy children fair
Know nought akin to our despair ;
Nor have they felt, nor can they tell
What tenants haunt each mortal cell,
What gloomy guests we hold within,
Torments and madness, fear and sin !
Well, may they live in ecstasy
Their long eternity of joy !
At least we would not bring them down

With us to weep, with us to groan.
No ! Earth would wish no other sphere
To taste her cup of suffering drear ;
She turns from heaven a tearless eye,
And only mourns that *we* must die !
Ah mother, what shall comfort thee
In all this boundless misery ?
To cheer our eager eyes awhile
We see thee smile, how fondly smile !
But who reads not through the tender glow
Thy deep, unutterable woe ?
Indeed no darling land above
Can cheat thee of thy children's love.
We all in life's departing shine,
Our last dear longings blend with thine,
And struggle still and strive to trace
With clouded gaze thy darling face.
We would not leave our native home
For *any* world beyond the tomb.
No, mother, on thy kindly breast
Let us be laid in lasting rest,
Or waken but to share with thee
A mutual immortality.

July 1841

58

GERALDINE

'Twas night; her comrades gathered all
Within their city's rocky wall;
When flowers were closed, and day was o'er,
Their joyous hearts awoke the more.

But lonely in her distant cave
She heard the river's restless wave
Chafing its banks with dreamy flow,
Music for mirth and wail for woe.

* * *

Yet I could hear my lady sing;
I knew she did not mourn;
For never yet from sorrow's spring
Such witching notes were born.

* * *

The dwellers in the city slept,
My lady in her woodland bed;
I watching o'er her slumber wept,
As one who mourns the dead.

August 17, 1841

59

WHAT winter floods, what streams of spring
Have drenched the grass by night and day,
And yet beneath that speeding ring
Unmoved and undiscovered lay.

The mute remembrancer of crime,
Long lost, concealed, forgot for years,
It comes at last to cancel time,
And waken unavailing tears.

March 27, 1842

60

* * *

O INNOCENCE, that cannot live
With heart-wrung anguish long,
Dear childhood's innocence, forgive,
For I have done thee wrong!

The bright rosebuds, those hawthorn shrouds
Within their perfumed bower,
Have never closed beneath a cloud,
Nor bent beneath a shower.

Had darkness once obscured their sun,
Or kind dew turned to rain,
No storm-cleared sky that ever shone
Could win such bliss again.

May 17, 1842

61

DEATH

DEATH ! that struck when I was most confiding
In my certain faith of joy to be—
Strike again, Time's withered branch dividing
From the fresh root of Eternity !

Leaves upon Time's branch were growing brightly,
Full of sap, and full of silver dew ;
Birds beneath its shelter gathered nightly ;
Daily round its flowers the wild bees flew.

Sorrow passed, and plucked the golden blossom ;
Guilt stripped off the foliage in its pride ;
But, within its parent's kindly bosom,
Flowed for ever Life's restoring tide.

Little mourned I for the parted gladness,
For the vacant nest and silent song—
Hope was there, and laughed me out of sadness ;
Whispering, ' Winter will not linger long ! '

And, behold! with tenfold increase blessing,
Spring adorned the beauty-burdened spray;
Wind and rain and fervent heat, caressing,
Lavished glory on that second May!

* * *

Cruel Death! The young leaves droop and languish;
Evening's gentle air may still restore—
No! the morning sunshine mocks my anguish—
Time, for me, must never blossom more!

Strike it down, that other boughs may flourish
Where that perished sapling used to be;
Thus, at least, its mouldering corpse will nourish
That from which it sprung—Eternity.

1843

62

GRAVE IN THE OCEAN

* * *

WHERE can the weary lay his head,
And lay it safe the while;
In a grave that never shuts its dead
From heaven's benignant smile?

* * *

But if to weep above her grave
Be such a priceless boon,
Go, shed thy tears in Ocean's wave
And they will reach it soon.

* * *

With thy mind's vision pierce the deep,
Look how she rests below,
And tell me why such blessed sleep
Should cause such bitter woe?

May 1, 1843

63

* * *

I GAZED upon the cloudless moon
  And loved her all the night,
Till morning came and radiant noon,
  And I forgot her light.

No, not forgot eternally
  Beneath its mighty glare :
But could the day seem dark to me
  Because the night was fair ?

July 26, 1843

64

* * *

I KNOW our souls are all divine,
I know that when we die
What seems the vilest, even like thine
A part of God himself shall shine
In perfect purity.

But coldly breaks November's day ;
Its changes, charmless all,
Unmarked, unloved, they pass away :
We do not wish one hour to stay,
Nor sigh at evening's fall.

And glorious is the gladsome rise
Of June's rejoicing morn ;
And who with unregretful eyes
Can watch the lustre leave its skies
To twilight's shade forlorn ?

* * *

O could it thus for ever be,
  That I might so adore ;
I'd ask for all eternity,
To make a paradise for me,
  My love—and nothing more.

July 28, 1843

65

'Twas yesterday at early dawn
I watched the falling snow ;
A drearier scene on winter morn
Was never stretched below.

I could not see the mountains round,
But I knew by the wind's wild roar,
How every drift in their glens profound
Was deepening ever more.

And then I thought of Elbë's bowers,
Beyond the southern sea,
Her tropic prairies bright with flowers,
And rivers wandering free.

* * *

Who, that has breathed that heavenly air,
To northern climes would come,
To Gondal's mists and moorlands drear,
And sleet and frozen gloom ?

Spring brings the swallow and the lark,
But what will winter bring?
Its twilight hours and evenings dark
To match the gift of spring?

* * *

Oh! how the hearts of voyagers beat
To feel the frost-wind blow!
What flower in Elbë's garden sweet
Is worth one flake of snow?

The blast which almost rends their sail
Is welcome as a friend;
It brings them home, that thundering gale,
Home to their journey's end.

* * *

December 19, 1843

66

AT CASTLE WOOD

THE day is done, the winter sun
  Is setting in its sullen sky,
And drear the course that has been run,
  And dim the hearts that slowly die.

No star will light my coming night,
  No morn of hope for me will shine ;
I mourn not Heaven would blast my sight,
  And I ne'er longed for joys divine.

Through life's hard task I did not ask
  Celestial aid, celestial cheer ;
I saw my fate without its mask,
  And met it too without a tear.

The grief that prest my aching breast
  Was heavier far than earth can be ;
And who would dread eternal rest
  When labour's hour was agony ?

Dark falls the fear of this despair
On spirits born of happiness;
But I was bred the mate of care,
The foster child of sore distress.

No sighs for me, no sympathy,
No wish to keep my soul below;
The heart is dead in infancy,
Unwept-for let the body go.

February 2, 1844

67

THIS summer wind with thee and me
Roams in the dawn of day ;
But thou must be, where it shall be
Ere evening—far away.

The farewell's echo from thy soul
Should not depart before
Hills rise and distant rivers roll
Between us evermore.

I know that I have done thee wrong,
Have wronged both thee and Heaven ;
And I may mourn my lifetime long,
Yet may not be forgiven.

Repentant tears will vainly fall
To cover deeds untrue,
But for no grief can I recall
The dreary word—Adieu !

Yet thou a future peace shalt win,
Because thy soul is clear ;
And I who had the heart to sin
Will find a heart to bear.

Till far beyond earth's frenzied strife,
That makes destruction joy,
Thy perished faith shall spring to life,
And my remorse shall die.

March 2, 1844

68

A DAY DREAM

On a sunny brae alone I lay
One summer afternoon;
It was the marriage-time of May,
With her young lover, June.

* * *

A thousand thousand gleaming fires
Seemed kindling in the air;
A thousand thousand silvery lyres
Resounded far and near:

Methought the very breath I breathed
Was full of sparks divine,
And all my heather-couch was wreathed
By that celestial shine!

And, while the wide earth echoing rung
To that strange minstrelsy,
The little glittering spirits sung,
Or seemed to sing, to me.

'O mortal! mortal! let them die;
Let time and tears destroy,
That we may overflow the sky
With universal joy!

'Let grief distract the sufferer's breast,
And night obscure his way;
They hasten him to endless rest,
And everlasting day.

'To thee the world is like a tomb,
A desert's naked shore;
To us, in unimagined bloom,
It brightens more and more!

'And, could we lift the veil, and give
One brief glimpse to thine eye,
Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,
Because they live to die.'

* * *

March 5, 1844

69

REMEMBRANCE

Cold in the earth—and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave!
Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second moon has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But, when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And ev'n Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest[1] anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

March 3rd, 1845

[1] In the original draft the word is 'delighted,' afterwards corrected to 'divinest.'

The MS. version of this poem, in the autograph of Emily Brontë, differs slightly from the printed text, which was revised by Emily Brontë for publication in 1846.

70

A THOUSAND sounds of happiness
And only one of real distress,
  One hardly uttered groan ;
But that has crushed all vocal joy,
Eclipsed the glory of the sky,
And made me think that misery
  Rules in our world alone !

About his face the sunshine glows,
And in his hair the south wind blows,
And violet and wild woodrose
  Are sweetly breathing near ;
Nothing without suggests dismay,
If he could force his mind away
From tracking farther day by day,
  The desert of despair.

Too truly agonised to weep,
His eyes are motionless as sleep ;
His frequent sighs, long-drawn and deep,
  Are anguish to my ear.

And I would soothe—but can I call
The cold corpse from its funeral pall,
And cause a gleam of hope to fall
With my consoling tear?

O Death! So many spirits driven
Through this false world, their all had given
To win the everlasting haven
To sufferers so divine:
Why didst thou smite the loved, the blest,
The ardent and the happy breast,
That full of hope desired not rest,
And shrank appalled from thine?

At least, since thou wilt not restore,
In mercy launch one arrow more;
Life's conscious death it wearies sore,
It tortures worse than thee.
Enough if storms have bowed his head,
Grant him at last a quiet bed
Beside his early stricken dead;
Even where he yearns to be!

April 22, 1845

71

THE PHILOSOPHER

ENOUGH of thought, philosopher!
Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unlightened, in this chamber drear,
While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musing once again?

'Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity.
And never care how rain may steep,
Or snow may cover me!
No promised heaven, these wild desires
Could all, or half fulfil;
No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
Subdue this quenchless will!'

'So said I, and still say the same;
Still, to my death, will say—
Three gods, within this little frame,
Are warring night and day;

Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
  They all are held in me;
And must be mine till I forget
  My present entity!
Oh, for the time, when in my breast
  Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
  And never suffer more!'

'I saw a spirit standing, man,
  Where thou dost stand—an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
  Of equal depth, and equal flow—
A golden stream—and one like blood,
  And one like sapphire seemed to be;
But, where they joined their triple flood,
  It tumbled in an inky sea.
The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
  Down through that ocean's gloomy night;
Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
  The glad deep sparkled wide and bright–
White as the sun, far, far more fair
Than its divided sources were!'

'And even for that spirit, seer,
  I've watched and sought my lifetime long;
Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air,
  An endless search, and always wrong.

Had I but seen his glorious eye
Once light the clouds that 'wilder me,
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
To cease to think, and cease to be ;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
Nor stretching eager hands to death,
Implored to change for senseless rest
This sentient soul, this living breath.
Oh, let me die—that power and will
Their cruel strife may close ;
And conquered good and conquering ill
Be lost in one repose ! '

October 1845

72

TELL me, tell me, smiling child,
What the past is like to thee?
An Autumn evening, soft and mild,
With a wind that sighs mournfully?

Tell me what is the present hour?
A green and flowery spray,
Where a young bird sits gathering its power
To mount and fly away?

And what is the future, happy one?
A sea beneath a cloudless sun;
A mighty, glorious, dazzling sea,
Stretching into infinity?

73

COME walk with me; there's only thee,
To bless my spirit now.
We used to love on winter nights
To wander through the snow.
Can we not woo back old delights?
The clouds rush dark and wild;
They fleck with shade our mountain bright
The same as long ago,
And on the horizon rest at last
In looming masses piled;
While moonbeams flash and fly so fast
We scarce can say they smiled.

Come walk with me, come walk with me,
We were not once so few;
But death has stol'n our company,
As sunshine steals the dew.
He took them one by one, and we
Are left, the only two;
So closer would my feelings twine
Because they have no stay but thine.

'Nay, call not me ; it may not be ;
Is human love so true ?
Can friendship's flower droop on for years,
And then revive anew ?
No ; though the soil be wet with tears,
How fair soe'er it grew ;
The vital sap once perished
Will never flow again.
And surer than that dwelling dread,
The narrow dungeon of the dead,
Time parts the hearts of men.'

74

It was night, and on the mountains
Fathoms deep the snowdrifts lay ;
Streams and waterfalls and fountains
Down the darkness stole away.

Long ago the hopeless peasant
Left his sheep all buried there,
Sheep that through the summer pleasant
He had watched with tend'rest care.

Now no more a cheerful ranger,
Following pathways known of yore,
Sad he stood, a wild-eyed stranger,
On his own unbounded moor.

75

* * *

A FRESH wind waves the clustering roses,
And through the open window sighs
Around the couch where she reposes,
The lady with the dovelike eyes;

With dovelike eyes and shining hair,
And velvet cheek so sweetly moulded;
And hands so white and soft and fair
Above her snowy bosom folded.

* * *

Her sister's and her brother's feet
Are brushing off the scented dew,
And she springs up in haste to greet
The grass and flowers and sunshine too.

Shall earth no more inspire thee

76

SHALL earth no more inspire thee,
Thou lonely dreamer now?
Since passion may not fire thee,
Shall nature cease to bow?

Thy mind is ever moving,
In regions dark to thee;
Recall its useless roving,
Come back, and dwell with me.

I know my mountain breezes
Enchant and soothe thee still,
I know my sunshine pleases,
Despite thy wayward will.

When day with evening blending,
Sinks from the summer sky,
I've seen thy spirit bending
In fond idolatry.

I've watched thee every hour;
I know my mighty sway:
I know my magic power
To drive thy griefs away.

Few hearts to mortals given,
On earth so wildly pine;
Yet few would ask a heaven
More like this earth than thine.

Then let my winds caress thee;
Thy comrade let me be:
Since nought beside can bless thee,
Return—and dwell with me.

[Note by Charlotte Brontë, prefixed to this poem in the edition of 1850:

"The following little piece has no title; but in it the Genius of a solitary region seems to address his wandering and wayward votary, and to recall within his influence the proud mind which rebelled at times even against what it most loved."]

77

YES, holy be thy resting-place
Wherever thou mayst lie;
The sweetest winds breathe on thy face
The softest of the sky.

And will not guardian angels send
Kind dreams and thoughts of love,
Though I no more may watchful bend
Thy loved repose above?

And will not heaven itself bestow
A beam of glory there,
That summer's grass more green may grow,
And summer's flowers more fair?

Farewell, farewell; 'tis hard to part,
Yet, loved one, it must be:
I would not rend another heart,
Not even with blessing thee.

Go! we must break affection's chain,
Forget the hopes of years:
Nay, grieve not—wouldest thou remain
To waken wilder tears?

* * *

78

LAST WORDS

I KNEW not 'twas so dire a crime
To say the word, 'Adieu';
But this shall be the only time
My lips or heart shall sue.

The wild hillside, the winter morn,
The gnarled and ancient tree,
If in your breast they waken scorn,
Shall wake the same in me.

I can forget black eyes and brows,
And lips of falsest charm,
If you forget the sacred vows
Those faithless lips could form.

If hard commands can tame your love,
Or strongest walls can hold,
I would not wish to grieve above
A thing so false and cold.

And there are bosoms bound to mine
With links both tried and strong ;
And there are eyes whose lightning shine
Has warmed and blest me long :

Those eyes shall make my only day,
Shall set my spirit free,
And chase the foolish thoughts away
That mourn your memory.

79

THE LADY TO HER GUITAR

For him who struck thy foreign string,
I ween this heart has ceased to care;
Then why dost thou such feelings bring
To my sad spirit—old Guitar?

It is as if the warm sunlight
In some deep glen should lingering stay,
When clouds of storm, or shades of night,
Have wrapt the parent orb away.

It is as if the glassy brook
Should image still its willows fair,
Though years ago the woodman's stroke
Laid low in dust their Dryad-hair.

Even so, Guitar, thy magic tone
Hath moved the tear and waked the sigh;
Hath bid the ancient torrent moan
Although its very source is dry.

80

THE OUTCAST MOTHER

I've seen this dell in July's shine,
  As lovely as an angel's dream ;
Above, Heaven's depth of blue divine,
  Around, the evening's golden beam.

I've seen the purple heather-bell
  Look out by many a storm-worn stone ;
And, oh ! I've known such music swell,
  Such wild notes wake these passes lone,

So soft, yet so intensely felt ;
  So low, yet so distinctly heard ;
My breath would pause, my eyes would melt,
  And tears would dew the green heath-sward.

I'd linger here a summer day,
  Nor care how fast the hours flew by,
Nor mark the sun's departing ray
  Smile sadly from the dark'ning sky.

Then, then, I might have laid me down,
And dreamed my sleep would gentle be;
I might have left thee, darling one,
And thought thy God was guarding thee!

But now there is no wand'ring glow,
No gleam to say that God is nigh;
And coldly spreads the couch of snow,
And harshly sounds thy lullaby.

Forests of heather, dark and long,
Wave their brown branching arms above;
And they must soothe thee with their song,
And they must shield my child of love.

Alas! the flakes are heavily falling,
They cover fast each guardian crest;
And chilly white their shroud is palling
Thy frozen limbs and freezing breast.

Wakes up the storm more madly wild,
The mountain drifts are tossed on high;
Farewell, unbless'd, unfriended child,
I cannot bear to watch thee die!

81

THE WANDERER FROM THE FOLD

How few, of all the hearts that loved,
  Are grieving for thee now ;
And why should mine to-night be moved
  With such a sense of woe ?

Too often thus, when left alone,
  Where none my thoughts can see,
Comes back a word, a passing tone
  From thy strange history.

Sometimes I seem to see thee rise,
  A glorious child again ;
All virtues beaming from thine eyes
  That ever honoured men :

Courage and truth, a generous breast
  Where sinless sunshine lay :
A being whose very presence blest
  Like gladsome summer day.

O, fairly spread thy early sail ;
And fresh, and pure, and free,
Was the first impulse of the gale
Which urged life's wave for thee !

Why did the pilot, too confiding,
Dream o'er that ocean's foam,
And trust in Pleasure's careless guiding
To bring his vessel home ?

For well he knew what dangers frowned,
What mists would gather dim ;
What rocks and shelves and sands lay round
Between his port and him.

The very brightness of the sun,
The splendour of the main,
The wind which bore him wildly on
Should not have warned in vain.

An anxious gazer from the shore—
I marked the whitening wave,
And wept above thy fate the more
Because I could not save.

It recks not now, when all is over :
But yet my heart will be
A mourner still, though friend and lover
Have both forgotten thee !

82

WARNING AND REPLY

In the earth, the earth, thou shalt be laid,
A grey stone standing over thee ;
Black mould beneath thee spread,
And black mould to cover thee.

'Well, there is rest there,
So fast come thy prophecy ;
The time when my sunny hair
Shall with grass roots entwined be.'

But cold, cold is that resting-place,
Shut out from joy and liberty,
And all who loved thy living face
Will shrink from it shudderingly.

'Not so ! Here the world is chill,
And sworn friends fall from me :
But there—they will own me still,
And prize my memory.'

Farewell, then, all that love,
All that deep sympathy :
Sleep on ; Heaven laughs above,
Earth never misses thee.

Turf-sod and tombstone drear
Part human company ;
One heart breaks only—here,
But that heart was worthy thee !

83

ENCOURAGEMENT

I DO not weep ; I would not weep ;
Our mother needs no tears :
Dry thine eyes, too ; 'tis vain to keep
This causeless grief for years.

What though her brow be changed and cold,
Her sweet eyes closed for ever ?
What though the stone, the darksome mould,
Our mortal bodies sever ?

What though her hand smoothe ne'er again
Those silken locks of thine ?
Nor, through long hours of future pain,
Her kind face o'er thee shine ?

Remember still, she is not dead ;
She sees us, sister, now ;
Laid, where her angel spirit fled,
'Mid heath and frozen snow.

And from that world of heavenly light
  Will she not always bend
To guide us in our lifetime's night,
  And guard us to the end?

Thou know'st she will; and thou mayst mourn
  That we are left below:
But not that she can ne'er return
  To share our earthly woe.

84

SONG

THE linnet in the rocky dells,
The moor-lark in the air,
The bee among the heather bells
That hide my lady fair :

The wild deer browse above her breast ;
The wild birds raise their brood ;
And they, her smiles of love caressed,
Have left her solitude !

I ween, that when the grave's dark wall
Did first her form retain,
They thought their hearts could ne'er recal
The light of joy again.

They thought the tide of grief would flow
Unchecked through future years ;
But where is all their anguish now,
And where are all their tears ?

Well, let them fight for honour's breath,
  Or pleasure's shade pursue—
The dweller in the land of death
  Is changed and careless too.

And, if their eyes should watch and weep
  Till sorrow's source were dry,
She would not, in her tranquil sleep,
  Return a single sigh!

Blow, west-wind, by the lonely mound,
  And murmur, summer-streams—
There is no need of other sound
  To soothe my lady's dreams.

85

A DEATH-SCENE

'O Day! he cannot die
When thou so fair art shining!
O Sun, in such a glorious sky,
So tranquilly declining;

'He cannot leave thee now,
While fresh west winds are blowing,
And all around his youthful brow
Thy cheerful light is glowing!

'Edward, awake, awake—
The golden evening gleams
Warm and bright on Arden's lake—
Arouse thee from thy dreams!

'Beside thee, on my knee,
My dearest friend, I pray
That thou, to cross the eternal sea,
Wouldst yet one hour delay:

'I hear its billows roar—
I see them foaming high ;
But no glimpse of a further shore
Has blest my straining eye.

'Believe not what they urge
Of Eden isles beyond ;
Turn back, from that tempestuous surge,
To thine own native land.

'It is not death, but pain
That struggles in thy breast—
Nay, rally, Edward, rouse again ;
I cannot let thee rest ! '

* * *

86

FAITH AND DESPONDENCY

'THE winter wind is loud and wild,
Come close to me, my darling child;
Forsake thy books, and mateless play;
And, while the night is gathering grey,
We'll talk its pensive hours away;—

'Iernë, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair,
And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes, with mimic rays,
To feel her cheek, so softly pressed,
In happy quiet on my breast.

'But yet even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And, in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens, blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill;

For lone among the mountains cold,
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain,
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!'

'Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me!
I often sat, for hours together,
Through the long nights of angry weather,
Raised on my pillow, to descry
The dim moon struggling in the sky;
Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock
Of rock with wave, and wave with rock;
So would I fearful vigil keep,
And, all for listening, never sleep.
But this world's life has much to dread;
Not so, my father, with the dead.'

* * *

87

HONOUR'S MARTYR

THE moon is full this winter night;
The stars are clear though few;
And every window glistens bright
With leaves of frozen dew.

The sweet moon through your lattice gleams,
And lights your room like day;
And there you pass, in happy dreams,
The peaceful hours away!

* * *

The old clock in the gloomy hall
Ticks on, from hour to hour;
And every time its measured call
Seems lingering slow and slower:

And, oh, how slow that keen-eyed star
Has tracked the chilly grey!
What, watching yet! how very far
The morning lies away!

Without your chamber door I stand ;
  Love, are you slumbering still ?
My cold heart, underneath my hand,
  Has almost ceased to thrill.

Bleak, bleak the east wind sobs and sighs,
  And drowns the turret bell,
Whose sad note, undistinguished, dies
  Unheard, like my farewell !

* * *

Oh, I would give my heart to death,
  To keep my honour fair ;
Yet, I'll not give my inward faith
  My honour's name to spare !

* * *

So foes pursue, and cold allies
  Mistrust me, every one :
Let me be false in others' eyes,
  If faithful in my own.

Heavy hangs the rain-drop

88

HEAVY hangs the rain-drop
From the burdened spray ;
Heavy broods the damp mist
On uplands far away.

Heavy looms the dull sky,
Heavy rolls the sea ;
And heavy throbs the young heart
Beneath that lonely tree.

Never has a blue streak
Cleft the clouds since morn ;
Never has his grim fate
Smiled since he was born.

Frowning on the infant,
Shadowing childhood's joy,
Guardian-angel knows not
That melancholy boy.

Day is passing swiftly
Its sad and sombre prime ;
Boyhood sad is merging
In sadder manhood's time :

All the flowers are praying
For sun, before they close,
And he prays too, unconscious,
That sunless human rose.

Blossom, that the west-wind
Has never wooed to blow,
Scentless are thy petals,
Thy dew is cold as snow !

Soul, where kindred kindness,
No early promise woke,
Barren is thy beauty,
As weed upon a rock.

Wither, soul and blossom !
You both were vainly given :
Earth reserves no blessing
For the unblest of heaven !

89

CHILD of delight, with sun-bright hair,
And sea-blue, sea-deep eyes!
Spirit of bliss! what brings thee here,
Beneath these sullen skies?

Thou shouldst live in eternal spring,
Where endless day is never dim;
Why, Seraph, has thine erring wing
Wafted thee down to weep with him?

* * *

90

THE SIGNAL LIGHT[1]

1. THE VISIONARY

SILENT is the house: all are laid asleep:
One alone looks out o'er the snow-wreaths deep,
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze
That whirls the 'wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far:
I trim it well, to be the wanderer's guiding-star.

Frown, my haughty sire! chide, my angry dame;
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame!

[1] 'The Signal Light' was Emily Brontë's original title.

But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare ;
What loves me, no word of mine shall e'er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn, then, little lamp ; glimmer straight and clear—
Hush ! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air :
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to me ;
Strange Power ! I trust thy might ; trust thou my constancy !

91

THE SIGNAL LIGHT

2. THE PRISONER

In the dungeon-crypts idly did I stray,
Reckless of the lives wasting there away;
'Draw the ponderous bars! open, Warder stern!'
He dared not say me nay—the hinges harshly turn.

'Our guests are darkly lodged,' I whisper'd, gazing through
The vault, whose grated eye showed heaven more grey than blue;—
This was when glad Spring laughed in awakening pride;—
'Ay, darkly lodged enough!' returned my sullen guide.

* * *

The captive raised her face; it was as soft and mild
As sculptured marble saint, or slumbering unwean'd child;
It was so soft and mild, it was so sweet and fair,
Pain could not trace a line, nor grief a shadow there!

The captive raised her hand and pressed it to her brow ;
'I have been struck,' she said, 'and I am suffering now ;
Yet these are little worth, your bolts and irons strong ;
And, were they forged in steel, they could not hold me long.

* * *

'Still let my tyrants know, I am not doomed to wear
Year after year in gloom and desolate despair ;
A messenger of Hope comes every night to me,
And offers for short life, eternal liberty.

'He comes with western winds, with evening's wandering airs,
With that clear dusk of heaven that brings the thickest stars.
Winds take a pensive tone, and stars a tender fire,
And visions rise, and change, that kill me with desire.

'Desire for nothing known in my maturer years,
When joy grew mad with awe, at counting future tears.
When, if my spirit's sky was full of flashes warm,
I knew not whence they came, from sun or thunderstorm.

'But, first, a hush of peace—a soundless calm descends;
The struggle of distress and 'fierce impatience ends;
Mute music soothes my breast—unuttered harmony,
That I could never dream, till Earth was lost to me.

'Then dawns the Invisible; the Unseen its truth reveals;
My outward sense is gone, my inward essence feels:
Its wings are almost free—its home, its harbour found,
Measuring the gulf, it stoops and dares the final bound.

'Oh! dreadful is the check, intense the agony,
When the ear begins to hear, and the eye begins to see;
When the pulse begins to throb, the brain to think again;
The soul to feel the flesh, and the flesh to feel the chain.

'Yet I would lose no sting, would wish no torture less;
The more that anguish racks, the earlier it will bless;

And robed in fires of hell, or bright with heavenly shine,
If it but herald death, the vision is divine!'

She ceased to speak, and we, unanswering, turned to go—
We had no further power to work the captive woe:
Her cheek, her gleaming eye, declared that man had given
A sentence, unapproved, and overruled by Heaven.

* Then like a tender child whose hand did just enfold
Safe in its eager grasp a bird it wept to hold,
When pierced with one wild glance from the troubled hazel eye,
It gushes into tears and lets its treasure fly.

* Thus ruth and selfish love, together striving, tore
The heart all newly taught to pity and adore;
If I should break the chain, I felt my bird would go;
Yet I must break the chain, or seal the prisoner's woe.

92 *

* * *

It was the autumn of the year ;
The time to labouring peasants dear :
Week after week, from noon to noon,
September shone as bright as June ;
Still, never hand a sickle held ;
The crops were garnered in the field,
Trod out, and ground by horses' feet,
While every ear was milky sweet ;
And kneaded on the threshing floor
With mire of tears and human gore.
Some said they thought that heaven's pure rain
Would hardly bless those fields again.
Not so—the all-benignant skies
Rebuked that fear of famished eyes—
July passed on with showers and dew,
And August glowed in showerless blue ;
No harvest time could be more fair
Had harvest fruits but ripened there.

* * *

Strange proofs I've seen, how hearts could hide
Their secret with a life-long pride,

And then reveal it as they died.
Strange courage, and strange weakness too,
In that last hour when most are true,
And timid natures strangely nerved
To deeds from which the desperate swerved !
These I may tell, but leave them now.
Go with me where my thoughts would go ;
Now all to-day, and all last night
I've had one scene before my sight—

Wood-shadowed dales ; a harvest moon
Unclouded in its glorious noon ;
A solemn landscape, wide and still,
A red fire on a distant hill ;
A line of fire, and deep below,
Another dusker, drearier glow ;
Charred beams, and lime, and blackened stones
Self-piled in cairns o'er burning bones ;
And lurid flames that licked the wood,
Then quenched their glare in pools of blood.

September 14, 1846

93 *

WHY ask to know what date, what clime?
There dwelt our own humanity,
Power-worshippers from earliest time,
Feet-kissers of triumphant crime,
Crushers of helpless misery,
Crushing down Justice, honouring wrong,
If that be feeble, this be strong.

Shedders of blood, shedders of tears,
Fell creatures avid of distress;
Yet mocking heaven with senseless prayers
For mercy on the merciless.

It was the autumn of the year
When grain grows yellow in the ear;
Day after day, from noon to noon,
That August's sun blazed bright as June.

But we with unregarding eyes
Saw panting earth and glowing skies.
No hand the reaper's sickle held,
Nor bound the bright sheaves in the field.

Our corn was garnered months before,
Threshed out and harvested with gore ;
Ground when the ears were milky sweet
With furious toil of hoofs and feet ;
I, doubly cursed, on foreign sod,
Fought neither for my home nor God.

May 13, 1843

94

Oh, all the cares these noontide airs
  Might seem to drive away,
So glad and bright each sight appears,
  Each sound so soft and gay !
And through the shade of yonder glade,
  Where thick the leaves are dancing,
While jewels rare and flow'rets fair
  In hundred plumes are glancing.
For there the palace portals rise
  Beyond its myrtle grove,
Catching the whitest, brightest dyes
  From the deep blue dome above.
But here this little lonely spot,
  Retires among its trees,
By all unknown, and noticed not,
  Save sunshine and the breeze ?

95

THERE's something in this glorious hour
That fills the soul with heavenly power,
And dims our eyes with sudden tears
That centre all the joys of years.
For we feel at once that there lingers still,
Like evening sunshine o'er a hill,
A glory round life's pinnacle ;
And we know, though we be yet below,
That we may not always linger so,
For still Ambition beckons on,—
Is this a height that may be won ?
And Hope still whispers in our ear,
'Others have been—thou mayst be there.'

Land of the west ! Thy glorious skies,
  Their dreamy depths of azure blue,
Their sunset isles of paradise,
  That float in golden glory through.
These depths of azure o'er my sight
  This musing moment seem to expand,
Revealing all their radiance bright
  In cloud and gorgeous land.

Land of the west! Thine evening sun
  Brings thousand voiceless thoughts to mind,
Of what I've said and seen and done
  In years by time long left behind;
And forms and faces lost for ever
  Seem arising round me now,
As if to bid farewell for ever
  Before my spirit go.
Oh! How they gush upon my heart
  And overflow my eyes!
I must not keep, I cannot part
  With such wild sympathies.

* * *

So 'ware her hour approaching fast,
  Upon her dying bed;
Are her wild dreams of western skies,
The shattered wrecks of memories
  That glitter through the gloom
Cast o'er them in the cold decay
Which signs the sickening soul away
  To meet its early tomb.
What pleasant airs upon her face
  With freshening coolness play,
As they would kiss each transient grace
  Before it fades away!

And backward rolled each deep red fold,
Begirt with tasselled cords of gold,
  The open arch displays.
O'er towers and trees that orb divine,
His own unclouded light, decline
  Before her glistening gaze.

96

THE heart which cannot know another,
Which will not learn to sympathise,
In whom the voice of friend, or brother,
Unheard, unechoed, sleeps or dies;
Between whom, and the world around,
Can stretch no life-uniting ties.

97

LADYBIRD! ladybird! fly away home,
Night is approaching, and sunset is come;
The herons are flown to their trees by the Hall;
Felt, but unseen, the damp dewdrops fall.
This is the close of a still summer day;
Ladybird! ladybird! haste! fly away!

* * *

98

SLEEP, mourner, sleep !—'I cannot sleep,
My weary mind still wanders on ;'
Then silent weep !—'I cannot weep,
For eyes and tears seem turned to stone.'

Oh might my footsteps find a rest !
Oh might my eyes with tears run o'er !
Oh could the wound but leave my breast
To lapse in days that are no more !

And if I could in silence mourn,
Apart from lying sympathy
And man's remarks or sighs or scorn,
I should be where I wish to be.

* * *

For I've been consecrate to grief—
I should not be if that were gone—
And all my prospect of relief
On earth would be to grieve alone !

To live in sunshine would be now
To live in Lethe ; every thought

Of what I have seen and been below
Must first be utterly forgot.

* * *

And voices tuned to music's thrill,
And laughter light as marriage strain,
Will only wake a ghostly chill,
As if the buried spoke again.

All—all is over; friend or lover
Cannot awaken gladness here;
Though sweep the strings their music over,
No sound will rouse the stirless air.

* * *

99

How Edenlike seem palace walls
When youth and beauty join
To waken up their lighted Halls
With looks and smiles divine!

How free from care the perfumed air
About them seems to play!
How glad and bright appears each sight,
Each sound how soft and gay!

'Tis like the heaven which parting days
In summer's pride imbue
With beams of such impartial blaze,
And yet so tender too!

Oh, memory brings a scene to mind
Beneath whose noble dome
Rank, beauty, wealth, and power combine
To light their lordly home.

Yet parting day, however bright,
It still is parting day—
The herald of approaching night,
The trappings of decay.

100

* * *

HERE am I standing lonely 'neath
The shade of quiet trees,
That scarce can catch a single breath
Of this sweet evening breeze.
And nothing in the twilight sky
Except its veil of clouds on high,
All sleeping calm and grey ;
And nothing on the summer gale
But the sweet trumpet's solemn wail
Slow sounding far away.

That and the strange, uncertain sound
Scarce heard, yet heard by all ;
A trembling through the summer ground,
A murmuring round the wall.

101

* * *

It was a little budding rose,
Round like a fairy globe,
And shyly did its leaves unclose
Hid in their mossy robe,
But sweet was the slight and spicy smell
It breathed from its heart invisible.

* * *

The rose is blasted, withered, blighted,
Its root has felt a worm,
And like a heart beloved and slighted,
Failed, faded, shrunk its form.
Bud of beauty, bonnie flower,
I stole thee from thy natal bower.

I was the worm that withered thee,
Thy tears of dew all fell for me;
Leaf and stalk and rose are gone,
Exile earth they died upon.
Yes, that last breath of balmy scent
With alien breezes sadly blent!

All her tresses backward strayed

102

* * *

All her tresses backward strayed
  Look golden in the gleam,
But her wan lips and sunken cheek
And full eyes eloquently speak
  Of sorrows gathering near,
Till those dark orbs o'erflowing fast
Are shadowed by her hand at last
  To hide the streaming tear.

Oh! say not that her vivid dreams
  Are but the shattered glass
Which but because more broken, gleams
  More brightly in the grass.
Her spirit is the unfathomed lake
Whose face the sudden tempests break
  To one tormented roar;
But as the wild winds sink in peace,
All those disturbèd waves decrease,
Till each far-down reflection is
  As lifelike as before.

She thought when that confession crossed
  Upon her dying mind,
'Twas sense and soul and memory lost,
  Though feeling burned behind.
But that bright heaven has touched a chord
And that wide west has waked a word
  Can still the spirit's storm ;
Till all the griefs that brought her here,
Each gushing with a bitterer tear,
Round her returning sight appear
  In more tremendous form ;

In glimpses of a spirit shore
The strength of eyesight to restore
  Which coming death denied ;
That while the world was lost to her
Her soul might rove a wanderer
  Through visional wonders wide.

And strange it is how oft in death,
  When reason leaves the brain,
What sudden power the fancy hath
  To seize the falling rein.
It cannot hold a firm control,
But it can guide the parting soul,
  Half leading and half led,

Through dreams where startling imagery
Hide with their feigned reality
  The tossed and fevered bed.

It seems as to the bleeding heart
  With dying torments riven
A quickened life in every part
  By fancy's force was given.
And all these dim, disjointed dreams,
Wherewith the failing memory beams,
  Are but the bright reflection
Flashed upward from the scattered glass
Of mirror broken on the grass,
Which shapeless figures on each piece
  Reveals without connection.

* * *

103

START not ! upon the minster wall
  Sunshine is shed in holy calm,
And lonely though thy footsteps fall,
  The saints shall shelter thee from harm.

Shrink not if it be summer noon,
  This shadow should night's welcome be ;
These stairs are steep, but landed soon
  We'll rest us long and quietly.

What though our path be o'er the dead,
  They slumber soundly in the tomb ;
And why should mortals fear to tread
  The pathway to their future home ?

Through the hours of yesternight

104

THROUGH the hours of yesternight
Hall and gallery blazed with light,
Every lamp its lustre showered
On the adorer and the adored.
None were sad that entered there,
All were loved and all were fair ;
Some were dazzling like the sun
Shining down at summer noon.
Some were sweet as amber even,
Living in the depth of Heaven ;
Some were soft, and kind, and gay,
  Morning's face not more divine ;
Some were like Diana's day,
  Midnight moonlight's holy shrine.

105

HARP of wild and dream-like strain,
  When I touch thy strings,
Why dost thou repeat again
  Long-forgotten things?

Harp, in other earlier days
  I could sing to thee,
And not one of all my lays
  Vexed my memory.

But now if I awake a note
  That gave me joy before,
Sounds of sorrow from thee float,
  Changing evermore.

Yet still steeped in memory's dyes
  They come sailing on,
Darkening all my summer skies,
  Shutting out my sun.

106

* * *

HERE with my knee upon thy stone
I bid adieu to feelings gone ;
I leave with thee my tears and pain,
And rush into the world again.

O come again ! what chains withhold
The steps that used so fleet to be ?
Come leave thy dwelling dark and cold,
Once more to visit me.

* * *

107

In dungeons dark I cannot sing,
  In sorrow's thrall 'tis hard to smile;
What bird can soar with broken wing?
  What heart can bleed and joy the while?

08

WHEN days of beauty deck the vale,
Or stormy nights descend,
How well my spirit knows the path
On which it ought to wend.

It seeks the consecrated spot
Beloved in childhood's years;
The space between is all forgot,
Its sufferings and its tears.

109

FALL, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day!
Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
Fluttering from the autumn tree.
I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.

All day I've toiled

110

All day I've toiled, but not with pain,
In learning's golden mine;
And now at eventide again
The moonbeams softly shine.

There is no snow upon the ground,
No frost on wind or wave;
The south wind blew with gentlest sound
And broke their icy grave.

'Tis sweet to wander here at night,
To watch the winter die,
With heart as summer sunshine light,
And warm as summer sky.

O may I never lose the peace
That lulls me gently now,
Though time should change my youthful face,
And years should shade my brow!

True to myself, and true to all,
May I be healthful still,
And turn away from passion's call,
And curb my own wild will.

III

THAT dreary lake, that moonlight sky,
  That wan moon struggling through the clouc
That sullen murmur whispering by,
  As if it dared not speak aloud,
Fall on my heart so sadly now,
Whither my joys so lonely flow.
Touch them not, they bloom and smile,
But their roots are withering all the while.

She dried her tears

112

SHE dried her tears and they did smile
To see her cheek's returning glow ;
Nor did discern how all the while
That full heart throbbed to overflow.

With that sweet look and lively tone,
And bright eye shining all the day,
They could not guess at midnight lone
How she would weep the time away.

113

I'M happiest now when most away
I can tear my soul from its mould of clay,
On a windy night when the moon is bright,
And my eye can wander through worlds of light.

When I am not, and none beside,
  Nor earth, nor sea, nor cloudless sky,
But only spirit wandering wide
  Through infinite immensity.

114

ALL hushed and still within the house ;
Without, all wind and driving rain ;
But something whispers to my mind,
Wrought up in rain and wailing wind :
Never again ? Why not again ? Never again !
Memory has power as well as wind !

* * *

115

I

My ancient ship upon my ancient sea
  Begins another voyage—nay, thou'rt gone,
But whither wending? who is gone with thee?
  Since parted from thee I am left alone,
Unknowing what my river's fate may be,
  Into its native world of tempests thrown.
Lost like a speck from my diverted eye,
Which wilder, mightier visions must survey;

Lost and unnoticed—far away the roar
  Of southern waters breaking to the wind,
With restless thunder rolling on before
  As the wild gale sweeps wilder on behind,
And every vision of old Afric's shore
  As much forgot and vanished out of mind
As the wild track thou marked'st so long ago
From those eternal waves which surge below.

Gone!—'tis a word which through life's troubled waste
  Seems always coming, and the only one
Which can be called the *present*. Hope is past,
  And hate and strife, and love and peace are gone

Before we think them, for their rapid haste
  Scarce gives us time for one short smile or groan,
Ere that thought dies, and new ones come between
It and our heart with some as fleeting scene.

And yet there is—or seems at least to be—
  A general haze of thought that colours all;
So though each one be different, all agree
  In the same melancholy shade-like pall;
Even as the shadows look the same to me,
  Though cast, I know, from many a varying wall
In this vast city—hut and temple sharing
In the same light, and the same darkness wearing.

Not that I deem all life a course of shade,
  Nor all the world a waste of streets like these:
From youth to age a mighty change is made
  As from this city to the southern seas.
For years through youthful hope our course is laid,
  For years in sloth, a sea without a breeze,
For years amid the stir of civil jar,
For years within, some silent, sleepless care,

Changing, and still the same, yet swiftly passing.
  'Tis here, 'tis there, 'tis nowhere—oh! my soul,
Is there no rest from such a fruitless chasing
  Of the wild dreams that ever round thee roll?

Each as it comes the parting thought defacing,
  Yet all still hurrying to the self-same goal.
Gone! Can I catch them?— but their path alone
Stretching afar toward one for ever gone!

What have I written? Nothing, for 'tis over,
  And seems as nothing in the single cloud
That shadows it, and long has seemed to hover
  O'er all the crossing thoughts that overflowed
In this wrecked spirit; oh! my ocean,
  Well may'st thou plough the deep so free and proud:
Thou bear'st the uniting tie of ceaseless dreams,
The fount, the confluence of a thousand streams.

II

I do not see myself again
A wanderer o'er the Atlantic main;
I do not backward turn my eye
Toward sleepless sea and stormy sky.
Oh no; these vanished visions rest
In far-off woodlands of the west;
And there let Hesperus arise
To watch my treasure where it lies.
  The present scenes, the present clime,
Forbid the dreams of olden time;
The present thoughts, the present hour,
Are rife with deeds of sterner power:

And who shall be my leading star
Amid the howling storm of war?

Hark! listen to the distant gun
From the battlefield of Edwardston [1];
It breaks upon the awful roar
  Which stuns my ears around,
And on their shout of victory
  Strikes with a hollow sound.
My struggles all are crowned with power,
And Fortune gives a glorious hour.
Men who hate me kneel before me,
Men who kneel are forced to adore me;
My name is on a million tongues,
The million babble on my wrongs;
And twenty years of tyrant pride
Which swore this modern God to hide,
At last have vanished in the rays
Of his unquenched, unclouded blaze.
Oh! is not Jesus come again
Over His thousand saints to reign?
To free the world from terror's chain,
While sin and Satan vainly spit
Their venomed fury, as they sit.
Their reign is past, their power is gone,
For fallen is mighty Babylon.

[1] Edwardston is one of the 'Gondal' names.

Through the hoarse howling of the storm
I saw,—but did I truly see
One glimpse of that unearthly form
Whose very name is Victory?
'Twas but a glance, and all seems past,
For cares like clouds again return,
And I'll forget him, till the blast
For ever from my soul has borne
That vision of a mighty man
Crushed into Dust!—

Forget him!—In the cannon's smoke—
How dense it thickens, till on high,
By the wild storm-blasts roughly broke,
It parts in volumes through the sky
That heavily are drifting by,
'Till the dread burst breaks forth once more
With whitening clouds which seem to fly
Affrighted from that ceaseless roar.
And there it lightens! Dashed with gore
The thick of battle rends in twain,
While their rough ranks of bristling steel
Flashing afar, while armed men
In mighty masses long and vast,
Like the wild waters of the main
Lashed into foam.—When, there again
Behold him! . . .

III

YET o'er his face a solemn light
Comes smiling from the sky,
And shows to sight the lustre bright
Of his uplifted eye ;

The aimless, heedless carelessness
Of happy infancy
O'er such a solemn fearfulness
Commingling with his glee,

The parted lips, the golden hair
That backward from his brow,
Without a single shade of care,
All hushed amid that moonlight air ;
Oh who so blest as thou !

Memory ! how thy magic fingers,
With a wild and passing thrill,
Wakes the chord whose spirit lingers,
Sleeping silently and still,

Fast asleep and almost dying,
Through my days of changeless pain,
Till I dream these strings are lying,
Never to be waked again.
Winds have blown, but all unknown ;
Nothing could arouse a tone
In that heart which like a stone
Senselessly has lain.

All seemed over—friend and lover
Strove to waken music there ;
Flew the strings their fingers over,
Still in silence slept the air.

Memory ! Memory comes at last,
Memory of feelings past,
And with an Æolian blast
Strikes the strings resistlessly.

July 1836

Certain of the lines included in the above poem appear in a manuscript of Emily Brontë's in the form of three unfinished stanzas, at the side of which she has scribbled the following words :

'I am more terrifically and infernally and idiotically and brutally STUPID—than ever I was in the whole course of my incarnate existence. The above precious lines are the fruits of one hour's most agonising labour between ½ past 6 and ½ past 7 in the evening of Wednesday July 1836.'

116

* * *

ONE pause upon the brink of life,
Before it breaks, in headlong strife,
Upon its downward road ;
One insight through the waters clear,
Before their pictures disappear
In the fierce foaming flood.

117

SHED no tears o'er that tomb,
For there are angels weeping;
Mourn not him whose doom
Heaven itself is mourning.

Look how in sable gloom
The clouds are earthward yearning;
And earth receives them home,
Even darker clouds returning.

Is it when good men die
That sorrow wakes above?
Grieve saints when other spirits fly
To swell their choir of love?

Ah! no: with louder sound
The golden harp strings quiver,
When good men gain the happy ground
Where they must dwell for ever.

But he who slumbers there,
His bark will strive no more
Across the waters of despair
To reach that glorious shore.

Shed no tears o'er that tomb

The time of grace is past,
And mercy, scorned and tried,
Forsakes to utter wrath at last
The soul so steeled by pride.

That wrath will never spare,
Will never pity know;
Will mock its victim's maddened prayer,
Will triumph in his woe.

Shut from his Maker's smile
The accursed man shall be;
For mercy reigns a little while,
But hate eternally.[1]

July 26, 1839

[1] An alternative in the author's manuscript runs:

'Compassion smiles a little while,
Revenge eternally.'

118

STARS

Ah ! why, because the dazzling sun
Restored our Earth to joy,
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky ?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And, with a full heart's thankful sighs,
I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me ;
And revelled in my changeful dreams,
Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought, star followed star
Through boundless regions on ;
While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through, and proved us one !

Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure, a spell ;
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek,
Where your cool radiance fell ?

Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow ;
The soul of nature sprang, elate,
But mine sank sad and low !

My lids closed down, yet through their veil
I saw him, blazing still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow, then,
To call back night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light again
Throb with my heart, and me !

It would not do—the pillow glowed,
And glowed both roof and floor ;
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door ;

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
And give them leave to roam.

Oh, stars, and dreams, and gentle night ;
  Oh, night and stars, return !
And hide me from the Hostile light
  That does not warm, but burn ;

That drains the blood of suffering men,
  Drinks tears, instead of dew ;
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
  And only wake with you !

119

ANTICIPATION

How beautiful the earth is still,
  To thee—how full of happiness!
How little fraught with real ill,
  Or unreal phantoms of distress!
How spring can bring thee glory, yet,
And summer win thee to forget
  December's sullen time!
Why dost thou hold the treasure fast,
Of youth's delight, when youth is past,
  And thou art near thy prime?

When those who were thy own compeers,
Equals in fortune and in years,
Have seen their morning melt in tears,
  To clouded, smileless day;
Blest, had they died untried and young,
Before their hearts went wandering wrong,—
Poor slaves, subdued by passions strong,
  A weak and helpless prey!

'Because I hoped while they enjoyed,
And by fulfilment, hope destroyed;
As children hope, with trustful breast,
I waited bliss, and cherished rest.
A thoughtful spirit taught me soon,
That we must long till life be done;
That every phase of earthly joy
Must always fade, and always cloy.

'This I foresaw—and would not chase
The fleeting treacheries;
But, with firm foot and tranquil face,
Held backward from that tempting race,
Gazed o'er the sands the waves efface
To the enduring seas.
There cast my anchor of desire
Deep in unknown eternity;
Nor ever let my spirit tire,
With looking for what is to be!

'It is hope's spell that glorifies,
Like youth, to my maturer eyes,
All Nature's million mysteries,
The fearful and the fair—
Hope soothes me in the griefs I know;
She lulls my pain for others' woe,
And makes me strong to undergo
What I am born to bear.

'Glad comforter! will I not brave,
Unawed, the darkness of the grave?
Nay, smile to hear Death's billows rave—
Sustained, my guide, by thee?
The more unjust seems present fate,
The more my spirit swells elate,
Strong, in thy strength, to anticipate
Rewarding destiny!'

12C

HOPE

HOPE was but a timid friend ;
  She sat without the grated den,
Watching how my fate would tend,
  Even as selfish-hearted men.

She was cruel in her fear ;
  Through the bars, one dreary day,
I looked out to see her there,
  And she turned her face away !

Like a false guard, false watch keeping,
  Still, in strife, she whispered peace ;
She would sing while I was weeping ;
  If I listened, she would cease.

False she was, and unrelenting ;
  When my last joys strewed the ground,
Even Sorrow saw, repenting,
  Those sad relics scattered round ;

Hope

Hope, whose whisper would have given
Balm to all my frenzied pain,
Stretched her wings, and soared to heaven,
Went, and ne'er returned again !

121

TO IMAGINATION

WHEN weary with the long day's care,
And earthly change from pain to pain,
And lost, and ready to despair,
Thy kind voice calls me back again,
Oh, my true friend! I am not lone,
While thou canst speak with such a tone!

So hopeless is the world without,
The world within I doubly prize;
Thy world, where guile and hate and doubt
And cold suspicion never rise;
Where thou and I and Liberty
Have undisputed sovereignty.

What matters it, that all around
Danger and guilt and darkness lie,
If but within our bosom's bound
We hold a bright, untroubled sky,
Warm with ten thousand mingled rays
Of suns that know no winter days?

To Imagination

Reason, indeed, may oft complain
  For Nature's sad reality,
And tell the suffering heart how vain
  Its cherished dreams must always be ;
And Truth may rudely trample down
The flowers of Fancy, newly-blown :

But thou art ever there, to bring
  The hovering vision back, and breathe
New glories o'er the blighted spring,
  And call a lovelier Life from Death,
And whisper, with a voice divine,
Of real worlds, as bright as thine.

I trust not to thy phantom bliss,
  Yet, still, in evening's quiet hour,
With never-failing thankfulness,
  I welcome thee, Benignant Power,
Sure solacer of human cares,
And sweeter hope, when hope despairs !

122

HOW CLEAR SHE SHINES!

How clear she shines! How quietly
I lie beneath her guardian light;
While heaven and earth are whispering me,
'To-morrow wake, but dream to-night.'

* * *

The world is going; dark world, adieu!
Grim world, conceal thee till the day;
The heart thou canst not all subdue
Must still resist, if thou delay!

Thy love I will not, will not share;
Thy hatred only wakes a smile;
Thy griefs may wound—thy wrongs may tear,
But, oh, thy lies shall ne'er beguile!

While gazing on the stars that glow
Above me, in that stormless sea,
I long to hope that all the woe
Creation knows, is held in thee!

* * *

123

SYMPATHY

THERE should be no despair for you
  While nightly stars are burning,
While evening pours its silent dew,
  And sunshine gilds the morning.
There should be no despair, though tears
  May flow down like a river:
Are not the best beloved of years
  Around your heart for ever?

They weep, you weep,—it must be so;
  Winds sigh as you are sighing,
And winter sheds its grief in snow
  Where Autumn's leaves are lying:
Yet, these revive, and from their fate
  Your fate cannot be parted:
Then, journey on, if not elate,
  Still never broken-hearted!

124

PLEAD FOR ME

Oh, thy bright eyes must answer now,
When Reason, with a scornful brow,
Is mocking at my overthrow!
Oh, thy sweet tongue must plead for me
And tell why I have chosen thee!

Stern Reason is to judgment come,
Arrayed in all her forms of gloom:
Wilt thou, my advocate, be dumb?
No, radiant angel, speak and say
Why I did cast the world away.

Why I have persevered to shun
The common paths that others run;
And on a strange road journeyed on,
Heedless, alike of wealth and power—
Of glory's wreath and pleasure's flower.

These, once, indeed, seemed Beings Divine;
And they, perchance, heard vows of mine,
And saw my offerings on their shrine;

But careless gifts are seldom prized,
And mine were worthily despised.

So, with a ready heart, I swore
To seek their altar-stone no more;
And gave my spirit to adore
Thee, ever-present, phantom thing—
My slave, my comrade, and my king.

A slave, because I rule thee still;
Incline thee to my changeful will,
And make thy influence good or ill:
A comrade, for by day and night
Thou art my intimate delight;

My darling pain that wounds and sears,
And wrings a blessing out from tears
By deadening me to earthly cares;
And yet, a king, though Prudence well
Hath taught thy subject to rebel.

And am I wrong to worship, where
Faith cannot doubt, nor hope despair,
Since my own soul can grant my prayer?
Speak, God of visions, plead for me,
And tell why I have chosen thee!

125

SELF-INTERROGATION

* * *

'Alas! the countless links are strong
That bind us to our clay;
The loving spirit lingers long,
And would not pass away!

'And rest is sweet, when laurelled fame
Will crown the soldier's crest;
But a brave heart, with a tarnished name,
Would rather fight than rest.'

'Well, thou hast fought for many a year,
Hast fought thy whole life through,
Hast humbled Falsehood, trampled Fear;
What is there left to do?'

''Tis true, this arm has hotly striven,
Has dared what few would dare;
Much have I done, and freely given,
But little learnt to bear!'

'Look on the grave where thou must sleep,—
Thy last, and strongest foe;
It is endurance not to weep,
If that repose seem woe.

'The long war closing in defeat—
Defeat serenely borne,—
Thy midnight rest may still be sweet,
And break in glorious morn!'

126

STANZAS TO ——[1]

WELL, some may hate, and some may scorn,
And some may quite forget thy name;
But my sad heart must ever mourn
Thy ruined hopes, thy blighted fame!
'Twas thus I thought, an hour ago,
Even weeping o'er that wretch's woe;
One word turned back my gushing tears,
And lit my altered eye with sneers.
Then, 'Bless the friendly dust,' I said,
'That hides thy unlamented head!
Vain as thou wert, and weak as vain,
The slave of Falsehood, Pride, and Pain—
My heart has nought akin to thine;
Thy soul is powerless over mine.'
But these were thoughts that vanished too;
Unwise, unholy, and untrue:
Do I despise the timid deer,
Because his limbs are fleet with fear?

[1] There is little doubt that the poem refers to Branwell Brontë.

Or, would I mock the wolf's death-howl,
Because his form is gaunt and foul?
Or, hear with joy the leveret's cry,
Because it cannot bravely die?
No! Then above his memory
Let Pity's heart as tender be;
Say, 'Earth, lie lightly on that breast,
And, kind Heaven, grant that spirit rest!'

127

MY COMFORTER

WELL hast thou spok'n, and yet not taught
A feeling strange or new ;
Thou hast but roused a latent thought,
A cloud-closed beam of sunshine brought
To gleam in open view.

Deep down, concealed within my soul,
That light lies hid from men ;
Yet glows unquenched, though shadows roll
Its gentle ray cannot control,
About the sullen den.

Was I not vexed, these gloomy ways
To walk alone so long ?
Around me, wretches uttering praise,
Or howling o'er their hopeless days,
And each with Frenzy's tongue ;—

A brotherhood of misery,
Their smiles as sad as sighs ;

Whose madness daily maddened me,
Distorting into agony
The bliss before my eyes!

So stood I, in Heaven's glorious sun,
And in the glare of Hell;
My spirit drank a mingled tone,
Of seraph's song, and demon's moan;
What my soul bore, my soul alone
Within itself may tell!

Like a soft air above a sea,
Tossed by the tempest's stir;
A thaw-wind, melting quietly
The snow-drift on some wintry lea;
No! what sweet thing resembles thee,
My thoughtful Comforter?

And yet a little longer speak,
Calm this resentful mood;
And while the savage heart grows meek,
For other token do not seek,
But let the tear upon my cheek
Evince my gratitude!

128

THE OLD STOIC

RICHES I hold in light esteem,
And Love I laugh to scorn ;
And lust of fame was but a dream,
That vanished with the morn :

And if I pray, the only prayer
That moves my lips for me
Is, 'Leave the heart that now I bear,
And give me liberty !'

Yes, as my swift days near their goal,
'Tis all that I implore ;—
In life and death a chainless soul,
With courage to endure.

129

A LITTLE while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.

Where wilt thou go, my harassed heart—
What thought, what scene invites thee now?
What spot, or near or far apart,
Has rest for thee, my weary brow?

There is a spot, 'mid barren hills,
Where winter howls, and driving rain;
But, if the dreary tempest chills,
There is a light that warms again.

The house is old, the trees are bare,
Moonless above bends twilight's dome;
But what on earth is half so dear,
So longed for, as the hearth of home?

The mute bird sitting on the stone,
The dank moss dripping from the wall,
The thorn-trees gaunt, the walks o'ergrown,
I love them—how I love them all!

Still, as I mused, the naked room,
The alien firelight died away;
And from the midst of cheerless gloom,
I passed to bright, unclouded day.

A little and a lone green lane
That opened on a common wide;
A distant dreamy dim blue chain
Of mountains circling every side.

A heaven so clear, an earth so calm,
So sweet, so soft, so hushed an air;
And, deepening still the dream-like charm,
Wild moor-sheep feeding everywhere.

That was the scene, I knew it well;
I knew the turfy pathway's sweep,
That, winding o'er each billowy swell,
Marked out the tracks of wandering sheep.

Could I have lingered but an hour,
It well had paid a week of toil;
But Truth has banished Fancy's power;
Restraint and heavy task recoil.

Even as I stood with raptured eye,
Absorbed in bliss so deep and dear,
My hour of rest had fleeted by,
And back came labour, bondage, care.

130

THE BLUEBELL

THE Bluebell is the sweetest flower
That waves in summer air :
Its blossoms have the mightiest power
To soothe my spirit's care.

There is a spell in purple heath
Too wildly, sadly dear ;
The violet has a fragrant breath,
But fragrance will not cheer.

The trees are bare, the sun is cold,
And seldom, seldom seen ;
The heavens have lost their zone of gold,
And earth her robe of green.

And ice upon the glancing stream
Has cast its sombre shade ;
And distant hills and valleys seem
In frozen mist arrayed.

The Bluebell cannot charm me now,
The heath has lost its bloom ;
The violets in the glen below,
They yield no sweet perfume.

But, though I mourn the sweet Bluebell,
'Tis better far away ;
I know how fast my tears would swell
To see it smile to-day.

For, oh ! when chill the sunbeams fall
Adown that dreary sky,
And gild yon dank and darkened wall
With transient brilliancy,

How do I weep, how do I pine
For the time of flowers to come,
And turn me from that fading shine,
To mourn the fields of home !

131

THE MOORS

AWAKEN, o'er all my dear moorland,
West wind, in thy glory and pride!
Oh! call me from valley and lowland,
To walk by the hill-torrent's side!

It is swelled with the first snowy weather;
The rocks they are icy and hoar,
And sullenly waves the long heather,
And the fern leaves are sunny no more.

There are no yellow stars on the mountain;
The bluebells have long died away
From the brink of the moss-bedded fountain,
From the side of the wintry brae.

But lovelier than corn-fields all waving
In emerald, and vermeil, and gold,
Are the heights where the north wind is raving,
And the crags where I wandered of old.

It was morning : the bright sun was beaming ;
How sweetly it brought back to me
The time when nor labour nor dreaming
Broke the sleep of the happy and free !

But blithely we rose as the dawn-heaven
Was melting to amber and blue,
And swift were the wings to our feet given,
As we traversed the meadows of dew.

For the moors ! For the moors, where the short grass
Like velvet beneath us should lie !
For the moors ! For the moors, where each high pass
Rose sunny against the clear sky !

For the moors, where the linnet was trilling
Its song on the old granite stone ;
Where the lark, the wild skylark, was filling
Every breast with delight like its own !

What language can utter the feeling
Which rose, when in exile afar,
On the brow of a lonely hill kneeling,
I saw the brown heath growing there ?

It was scattered and stunted, and told me
That soon even that would be gone :
It whispered, 'The grim walls enfold me,
I have bloomed in my last summer's sun.

* * *

Well—well ; the sad minutes are moving
Though loaded with trouble and pain ;
And some time the loved and the loving
Shall meet on the mountains again !

132

THE NIGHT-WIND

In summer's mellow midnight,
A cloudless moon shone through
Our open parlour window,
And rose-trees wet with dew.

I sat in silent musing;
The soft wind waved my hair;
It told me heaven was glorious,
And sleeping earth was fair.

I needed not its breathing
To bring such thoughts to me;
But still it whispered lowly,
'How dark the woods will be!'

'The thick leaves in my arbour
Are rustling like a dream,
And all their myriad voices
Instinct with spirit seem.'

The Night-wind

I said, 'Go, gentle singer,
Thy wooing voice is kind:
But do not think its music
Has power to reach my mind.

'Play with the scented flower,
The young tree's supple bough,
And leave my human feelings
In their own course to flow.'

The wanderer would not heed me;
Its kiss grew warmer still.
'O come!' it sighed so sweetly;
'I'll win thee 'gainst thy will.

'Were we not friends from childhood?
Have I not loved thee long?
As long as thou the solemn night,
Whose silence wakes my song.

'And when thy heart is resting
Beneath the church-aisle stone,
I shall have time for mourning,
And thou for being alone.'

[Note by Charlotte Brontë prefixed to this poem in the edition of 1850:

'"The Night-wind" breathing through an open window, has visited an ear which discerned language in its whispers.']

133

Ay—there it is! it wakes to-night
  Deep feelings I thought dead;
Strong in the blast—quick gathering light,
  The heart's flame kindles red.

'Now I can tell by thine altered cheek,
  And by thine eyes' full gaze,
And by the words thou scarce dost speak,
  How wildly fancy plays.

'Yes—I could swear that glorious wind
  Has swept the world aside,
Has dashed its memory from thy mind
  Like foam-bells from the tide:

'And thou art now a spirit pouring
  Thy presence into all:
The thunder of the tempest's roaring,
  The whisper of its fall:

'An universal influence,
  From thine own influence free;
A principle of life, intense,
  Lost to mortality.

'Thus truly, when that breast is cold,
Thy prisoned soul shall rise;
The dungeon mingle with the mould—
The captive with the skies.

'Nature's deep being thine shall hold,
Her spirit all thy spirit fold,
Her breath absorb thy sighs.
Mortal! though soon life's tale is told;
Who once lives, never dies!'

[Note by Charlotte Brontë prefixed to this poem in the edition of 1850:

'In these stanzas a louder gale has roused the sleeper on her pillow; the wakened soul struggles to blend with the storm by which it is swayed.']

134

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

Love is like the wild rose-briar;
Friendship like the holly-tree.
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms,
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,
Its summer blossoms scent the air;
Yet wait till winter comes again,
And who will call the wild-briar fair!

Then, scorn the silly rose-wreath now,
And deck thee with the holly's sheen,
That, when December blights thy brow,
He still may leave thy garland green.

Often rebuked

135

Often rebuked, yet always back returning
To those first feelings that were born with me,
And leaving busy chase of wealth and learning
For idle dreams of things which cannot be :

To-day, I will seek not the shadowy region ;
Its unsustaining vastness waxes drear ;
And visions rising, legion after legion,
Bring the unreal world too strangely near.

I'll walk, but not in old heroic traces,
And not in paths of high morality,
And not among the half-distinguished faces,
The clouded forms of long-past history.

I'll walk where my own nature would be leading :
It vexes me to choose another guide :
Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding ;
Where the wild wind blows on the mountain-side.

What have those lonely mountains worth revealing?
More glory and more grief than I can tell:
The earth that wakes one human heart to feeling
Can centre both the worlds of Heaven and Hell.

No coward soul is mine

136 [1]

No coward soul is mine,
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere:
I see Heaven's glories shine,
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.

O God within my breast,
Almighty, ever-present Deity!
Life—that in me has rest,
As I—undying Life—have power in Thee!

Vain are the thousand creeds
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,
Worthless as withered weeds,
Or idle froth amid the boundless main,

To waken doubt in one
Holding so fast by Thine infinity;
So surely anchored on
The steadfast rock of immortality.

[1] The following are the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote.—C. B.

With wide-embracing love
Thy spirit animates eternal years,
Pervades and broods above,
Changes, sustains, dissolves, creates, and rears.

Though earth and man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou were left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that his might could render void :
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.

POEMS BY ANNE BRONTË

I

THE BLUEBELL

A FINE and subtle spirit dwells
In every little flower,
Each one its own sweet feeling breathes
With more or less of power.

There is a silent eloquence,
In every wild bluebell,
That fills my softened heart with bliss
That words could never tell.

Yet I recall not long ago,
A bright and sunny day.
'Twas when I led a toilsome life
So many leagues away ;

That day along a sunny road
All carelessly I strayed,
Between two banks where smiling flowers
Their varied hues displayed.

Before me rose a lofty hill,
Behind me lay the sea ;
My heart was not so heavy then
As it was wont to be.

Less harassed than at other times
I saw the scene was fair,
And spoke and laughed to those around,
As if I knew no care.

But as I looked upon the bank,
My wandering glances fell
Upon a little trembling flower,
A single sweet bluebell.

Whence came that rising in my throat,
That dimness in my eyes ?
Why did those burning drops distil,
Those bitter feelings rise ?

Oh, that lone flower recalled to me
My happy childhood's hours,
When blue bells seemed like fairy gifts,
A prize among the flowers.

Those sunny days of merriment
When heart and soul were free,
And when I dwelt with kindred hearts
That loved and cared for me.

I had not then mid heartless crowds
To spend a thankless life,
In seeking after other's weal
With anxious toil and strife.

'Sad wanderer, weep those blissful times
That never may return!'
The lovely floweret seemed to say,
And thus it made me mourn.

August 22, 1840

2

LINES WRITTEN AT THORP GREEN [1]

THAT summer sun, whose genial glow
Now cheers my drooping spirit so,
  Must cold and silent be,
And only light our northern clime
With feeble ray, before the time
  I long so much to see.

* * *

But if the sunny Summer time
And woods and meadows in their prime
  Are sweet to them that roam,
Far sweeter is the Winter bare
With long dark nights and landscape drear
  To them that are at Home!

August 19th 1841

[1] A house where Anne Brontë was governess, her brother Branwell being at the same time tutor there.

3

THE DUNGEON

THOUGH not a breath can enter here,
I know the wind blows fresh and free;
I know the sun is shining clear
Though not a gleam can visit me.

They thought while I in darkness lay
'Twere pity that I should not know
How all the earth is smiling gay,
How fresh the vernal breezes blow.

They knew such tidings to impart
Would pierce my weary spirit through;
And could they better read my heart,
They'd tell me *she* was smiling too.

They need not, for I know it well,
Methinks I see her even now,
No sigh disturbs her bosom's swell,
No shade o'ercasts her angel brow.

Unmarred by grief her matchless voice,
Whence sparkling wit, and wisdom flow :
And others in its sound rejoice,
And taste the joys I must not know ;

Drink rapture from her soft dark eye,
And sunshine from her heavenly smile ;
On wings of bliss their moments fly
And I am pining here the while !

Oh ! tell me, does she never give
To my distress a single sigh ?
She smiles on them, but does she grieve
One moment, when they are not by ?

When she beholds the sunny skies,
And feels the wind of heaven blow ;
Has she no tear for him that lies
In dungeon gloom so far below ?

While others gladly round her press,
And at her side their hours beguile,
Has she no sigh for his distress,
Who cannot see a single smile,

Nor hear one word, nor read a line
That her beloved hand might write;
Who banished from her face must pine,
Each day a long a lonely night?

December 16th 1844

4

NIGHT *

I LOVE the silent hour of night,
For blissful dreams may then arise,
Revealing to my charmèd sight,
What may not bless my waking eyes.

And then a voice may meet my ear,
That death has silenced long ago ;
And hope and rapture may appear
Instead of solitude and woe.

Cold in the grave for years has lain
The form it was my bliss to see ;
And only dreams can bring again,
The darling of my heart to me.

Written early in 1845

5

DREAMS *

WHILE on my lonely couch I lie,
I seldom feel myself alone,
For fancy fills my dreaming eye
With scenes and pleasures of its own.

Then I may cherish at my breast
An infant's form beloved and fair,
May smile and soothe it into rest
With all a Mother's fondest care.

How sweet to feel its helpless form
Depending thus on me alone!
And while I hold it safe and warm
What bliss to think it is my own!

And glances then may meet my eyes
That daylight never showed to me;
What raptures in my bosom rise,
Those earnest looks of love to see,

To feel my hand so kindly prest,
  To know myself beloved at last,
To think my heart has found a rest
  My life of solitude is past!

But then to wake, and find it flown,
  The dream of happiness destroyed,
To find myself unloved, alone,
  What tongue can speak the dreary void?

Spring 1845

6

SONG

We know where deepest lies the snow,
And where the frost-winds keenest blow,
  On every mountain brow.
We long have known and learnt to bear,
The wandering outlaw's toil and care,
But where we late were hunted, there
  Our foes are hunted now.

We have their princely homes, and they,
To our wild haunts are chased away,
  Dark woods, and desert caves;
And we can range from hill to hill,
And chase our vanquished victors still,
Small respite will they find, until
  They slumber in their graves.

But I would rather be the hare,
That crouching in its sheltered lair,
  Must start at every sound;

That forced from cornfields waving wide,
Is driven to seek the bare hillside,
Or in the tangled copsewood hide,
Than be the hunter's hound !

September 3rd 1845

7 *

I DREAMT last night, and in that dream
  My boyhood's heart was mine again,
These latter years did nothing seem
  With all their mingled joy and pain;
Their thousand deeds of good and ill,
Their hopes which time did not fulfil,
Their glorious moments of success,
Their love that closed in bitterness,
Their hate that grew with growing strength,
Their darling projects—dropped at length,
And higher aims that still prevail;
For I must perish ere they fail,—
That crowning object of my life,
The end of all my toil and strife,
Source of my virtues and my crimes,
For which I've toiled and striven in vain,—
But if I fail a thousand times,
Still I will toil and strive again.
Yet even this was then forgot,
My present heart and soul were not;
All the rough lessons life has taught,
  That are become a part of me,

A moment's sleep to nothing brought
  And made me what I used to be;
And I was roaming light and gay,
Upon a breezy sunny day,
  A bold and careless youth,
No guilty stain was on my mind,
And, if not over soft or kind,
  My heart was full of truth.
It was a well-known mountain scene,
Wild steeps, with rugged glens between,
I should have thirsted to explore,
Had I not trod them oft before;
A younger boy was with me there,
  His hand upon my shoulder leant.
His heart, like mine, was free from care,
  His breath with sportive toil was spent;
For my rough pastimes he would share,
And equal dangers loved to dare,
  Though seldom I would care to vie,
In learning's keen pursuit with him.
  I loved free air and open sky
Better than books and tutors grim,
And we had wandered far that day
O'er that forbidden ground away,
Ground, to our rebel feet how dear,—
Danger and freedom both were there!—
Had climbed the steep and coursed the dale,
Until his strength began to fail.

He bade me pause and breathe awhile,
But spoke it with a happy smile,
His lips were parted to inhale
The breeze that swept the ferny dale,
And chased the clouds across the sky
And waved his locks in passing by,
And fanned my cheek—so real did seem
This strange, untrue, but truthlike dream—
And as we stood, I laughed to see
His fair young cheek so brightly glow,
He turned his sparkling eyes to me
With looks no painter's art could show,
Nor words portray, but earnest mirth,
  And truthful love I there descried,
And, while I thought upon his worth,
  My bosom glowed with joy and pride.
I could have kissed his forehead fair,
  I could have clasped him to my heart,
But tenderness with me was rare,
  And I must take a rougher part;
I seized him in my boisterous mirth,
I bore him struggling to the earth,
And grappling, strength for strength, we strove,
He half in wrath, I all for love,
But I gave o'er the strife at length,
Ashamed of my superior strength,
The rather that I marked his eye,
Kindle as if a change were nigh.

We paused to breathe a little space,
  Reclining on the heather brae,
But still I gazed upon his face,
  To watch the shadow pass away.
I grasped his hand, and it had fled,
A smile, a laugh, and all was well;
Upon my breast he leant his head,
And into graver talk we fell,—
More serious, yet so blest, did seem
  That calm communion then,
That, when I found it but a dream,
  I longed to sleep again.
At first remembrance slowly woke,
  Surprise, regret, successive rose,
That Love's strong cords should thus be broke,
  And dearest friends turn deadliest foes.
Then, like a cold, o'erwhelming flood
Upon my soul it burst;—
This heart had thirsted for his blood,
This hand allayed that thirst!
These eyes had watched without a tear,
  His dying agony;
These ears, unmoved, had heard his prayer,
This tongue had cursed him suffering there,
  And mocked him bitterly!

Unwonted weakness o'er me crept;
I sighed—nay, weaker still—I *wept!*

Wept, like a woman o'er the deed
I had been proud to do;
As I had made his bosom bleed,
My own was bleeding too.

Back foolish tears! the man I slew
Was not the boy I cherished so;
And that young arm that clasped the friend
Was not the same that stabbed the foe;
By time and adverse thoughts estranged,
And wrongs and vengeance, both were changed.
Repentance now were worse than vain,
Time's current cannot backward run,
And, be the action wrong or right,
It is for ever done.

* * *

September 12th 1846

8 *

SEVERED and gone, so many years,
And art thou still so dear to me,
That throbbing heart and burning tears,
Can witness how I clung to thee?

I know that in the narrow tomb
The form I loved was buried deep,
And left in silence, and in gloom,
To slumber out its dreamless sleep.

* * *

For ever gone! for I, by night
Have prayed, within my silent room
That Heaven would grant a burst of light
Its cheerless darkness to illume,

And give thee to my longing eyes,
A moment, as thou shinest now,
Fresh from thy mansion in the skies,
With all its glory on thy brow.

Wild was the wish, intense the gaze,
I fixed upon the murky air,
Expecting, half, a kindling blaze
Would strike my raptured vision there,—

A shape these human nerves would thrill,
A majesty that might appal,
Did not thy earthly likeness still
Gleam softly, gladly through it all.

False hope! vain prayer! It might not be
That thou shouldst visit earth again;
I called on heaven—I called on thee—
And watched, and waited, all in vain!

* * *

A few cold words on yonder stone,
A corpse as cold as they can be,
Vain words and mouldering dust, alone,—
Can this be all that's left of thee?

Oh, no! thy spirit lingers still
Where'er thy sunny smile was seen,
There's less of darkness, less of chill
On earth, than if thou hadst not been.

* * *

Life seems more sweet that thou didst live,
And men more true that thou wert one;
Nothing is lost that thou didst give,
Nothing destroyed that thou hadst done.

* * *

April 1847

9

Oh, they have robbed me of the hope
My spirit held so dear;
They will not let me hear that voice
My soul delights to hear.

They will not let me see that face
I so delight to see;
And they have taken all thy smiles,
And all thy love from me.

Well, let them seize on all they can;—
One treasure still is mine,—
A heart that loves to think on thee,
And feels the worth of thine.

10

THE NARROW WAY

BELIEVE not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way,
And faint before the truth.

It is the only road
Unto the realms of joy;
But he who seeks that blest abode
Must all his powers employ.

Bright hopes and pure delight
Upon his course may beam,
And there, amid the sternest heights,
The sweetest flowerets gleam.

On all her breezes borne,
Earth yields no scents like those;
But he that dares not grasp the thorn
Should never crave the rose.

Arm—arm thee for the fight!
Cast useless loads away;
Watch through the darkest hours of night,
Toil through the hottest day.

Crush pride into the dust,
Or thou must needs be slack;
And trample down rebellious lust,
Or it will hold thee back.

Seek not thine honour here;
Waive pleasures and renown;
The world's dread scoff undaunted bear,
And face its deadliest frown.

To labour and to love,
To pardon and endure,
To lift thy heart to God above,
And keep thy conscience pure;

Be this thy constant aim,
Thy hope, thy chief delight;
What matter who should whisper blame,
Or who should scorn or slight?

What matter, if thy God approve,
And if, within thy breast,
Thou feel the comfort of His love,
The earnest of His rest?

II

SELF-COMMUNION

'THE mist is resting on the hill;
The smoke is hanging in the air;
The very clouds are standing still:
A breathless calm broods everywhere.
Thou pilgrim through this vale of tears,
Thou, too, a little moment cease
Thy anxious toil and fluttering fears,
And rest thee, for a while, in peace.'

'I would, but Time keeps working still
And moving on for good or ill:
He will not rest nor stay.
In pain or ease, in smiles or tears,
He still keeps adding to my years
And stealing life away.
His footsteps in the ceaseless sound
Of yonder clock I seem to hear,
That through this stillness so profound
Distinctly strikes the vacant ear.

For ever striding on and on,
He pauses not by night or day;
And all my life will soon be gone
As these past years have slipped away.
He took my childhood long ago,
And then my early youth; and lo,
He steals away my prime!
I cannot see how fast it goes,
But well my inward spirit knows
The wasting power of time.'

'Time steals thy moments, drinks thy breath,
Changes and wastes thy mortal frame;
But though he gives the clay to death,
He cannot touch the inward flame.
Nay, though he steals thy years away,
Their memory is left thee still,
And every month and every day
Leaves some effect of good or ill.
The wise will find in Memory's store
A help for that which lies before
To guide their course aright;
Then, hush thy plaints and calm thy fears;
Look back on these departed years,
And, say, what meets thy sight?'

'I see, far back, a helpless child,
Feeble and full of causeless fears,

Simple and easily beguiled
To credit all it hears.
More timid than the wild wood-dove,
Yet trusting to another's care,
And finding in protecting love
Its only refuge from despair,—
Its only balm for every woe,
The only bliss its soul can know ;—
Still hiding in its breast.
A tender heart too prone to weep,
A love so earnest, strong, and deep
It could not be exprest.
Poor helpless thing ! what can it do
Life's stormy cares and toils among ;—
How tread this weary desert through
That awes the brave and tires the strong ?
Where shall it centre so much trust
Where truth maintains so little sway,
Where seeming fruit is bitter dust,
And kisses oft to death betray ?
How oft must sin and falsehood grieve
A heart so ready to believe,
And willing to admire !
With strength so feeble, fears so strong,
Amid this selfish bustling throng,
How will it faint and tire !
That tender love so warm and deep,
How can it flourish here below ?

What bitter floods of tears must steep
  The stony soil where it would grow!
O earth! a rocky breast is thine—
  A hard soil and a cruel clime,
Where tender plants must droop and pine,
  Or alter with transforming time.
That soul, that clings to sympathy,
As ivy clasps the forest tree,
  How can it stand alone?
That heart so prone to overflow
E'en at the thought of other's woe,
  How will it bear its own?
How, if a sparrow's death can wring
  Such bitter tear-floods from the eye,
Will it behold the suffering
  Of struggling, lost humanity?
The torturing pain, the pining grief,
  The sin-degraded misery,
The anguish that defies relief?'

'Look back again—What dost thou see?'

'I see one kneeling on the sod,
  With infant hands upraised to Heaven,—
—A young heart feeling after God,
  Oft baffled, never backward driven.

Mistaken oft, and oft astray,
It strives to find the narrow way,
  But gropes and toils alone:
That inner life of strife and tears,
Of kindling hopes and lowering fears
  To none but God is known.
'Tis better thus; for man would scorn
  Those childish prayers, those artless cries,
That darkling spirit tossed and torn,
  But God will not despise!

We may regret such waste of tears
  Such darkly toiling misery,
Such 'wildering doubts and harrowing fears,
  Where joy and thankfulness should be;
But wait, and Heaven will send relief.
  Let patience have her perfect work:
Lo, strength and wisdom spring from grief,
  And joys behind afflictions lurk!
It asked for light, and it is heard;
  God grants that struggling soul repose
And, guided by His holy word,
  It wiser than its teachers grows.
It gains the upward path at length,
And passes on from strength to strength,
  Leaning on Heaven the while:
Night's shades departing one by one,

It sees at last the rising sun,
And feels his cheering smile.
In all its darkness and distress
For light it sought, to God it cried;
And through the pathless wilderness,
He was its comfort and its guide.'

'So was it, and so will it be:
Thy God will guide and strengthen thee;
His goodness cannot fail.
The sun that on thy morning rose
Will light thee to the evening's close,
Whatever storms assail.'

'God alters not; but Time on me
A wide and wondrous change has wrought:
And in these parted years I see
Cause for grave care and saddening thought.
I see that time, and toil, and truth,
An inward hardness can impart,—
Can freeze the generous blood of youth,
And steel full fast the tender heart.'

'Bless God for that divine decree!—
That hardness comes with misery,
And suffering deadens pain;
That at the frequent sight of woe

E'en Pity's tears forget to flow,
  If reason still remain !
Reason, with conscience by her side,
  But gathers strength from toil and truth ;
And she will prove a surer guide
  Than those sweet instincts of our youth.
Thou that hast known such anguish sore
  In weeping where thou couldst not bless,
Canst thou that softness so deplore—
  That suffering, shrinking tenderness ?
Thou that hast felt what cankering care
A loving heart is doomed to bear,
  Say, how canst thou regret
That fires unfed must fall away,
Long droughts can dry the softest clay,
  And cold will cold beget ?'

'Nay, but 'tis hard to feel that chill
  Come creeping o'er the shuddering heart.
Love may be full of pain, but still,
  'Tis sad to see it so depart,—
To watch that fire whose genial glow
  Was formed to comfort and to cheer,
For want of fuel, fading so,
  Sinking to embers dull and drear,—
To see the soft soil turned to stone
  For lack of kindly showers,—
To see those yearnings of the breast,

Pining to bless and to be blessed,
Drop withered, frozen one by one,
Till, centred in itself alone,
It wastes its blighted powers.

Oh, I have known a wondrous joy
In early friendship's pure delight,—
A genial bliss that could not cloy—
My sun by day, my moon by night.
Absence, indeed, was sore distress,
And thought of death was anguish keen,
And there was cruel bitterness
When jarring discords rose between ;
And sometimes it was grief to know
My fondness was but half returned.
But this was nothing to the woe
With which another truth was learned :—
That I must check, or nurse apart,
Full many an impulse of the heart
And many a darling thought :
What my soul worshipped, sought, and prized,
Were slighted, questioned, or despised ;—
This pained me more than aught.
And as my love the warmer glowed
The deeper would that anguish sink,
That this dark stream between us flowed,
Though both stood bending o'er its brink ;

Until, at last, I learned to bear
A colder heart within my breast;
To share such thoughts as I could share,
And calmly keep the rest.
I saw that they were sundered now,
The trees that at the root were one:
They yet might mingle leaf and bough,
But still the stems must stand alone.
O love is sweet of every kind!
'Tis sweet the helpless to befriend,
To watch the young unfolding mind,
To guide, to shelter, and defend:
To lavish tender toil and care,
And ask for nothing back again,
But that our smiles a blessing bear
And all our toil be not in vain.
And sweeter far than words can tell
Their love whose ardent bosoms swell
With thoughts they need not hide;
Where fortune frowns not on their joy,
And Prudence seeks not to destroy,
Nor Reason to deride.

Whose love may freely gush and flow,
Unchecked, unchilled by doubt or fear,
For in their inmost hearts they know
It is not vainly nourished there.

They know that in a kindred breast
  Their long desires have found a home,
Where heart and soul may kindly rest,
  Weary and lorn no more to roam.
Their dreams of bliss were not in vain,
As they love they are loved again,
  And they can bless as they are blessed.

O vainly might I seek to show
The joys from happy love that flow !
The warmest words are all too cold
The secret transports to unfold
Of simplest word or softest sigh,
Or from the glancing of an eye
  To say what rapture beams ;
One look that bids our fears depart,
And well assures the trusting heart.
It beats not in the world alone—
Such speechless rapture I have known,
  But only in my dreams.

My life has been a morning sky
  Where Hope her rainbow glories cast
O'er kindling vapours far and nigh :
  And, if the colours faded fast,
Ere one bright hue had died away
  Another o'er its ashes gleamed ;

And if the lower clouds were grey,
  The mists above more brightly beamed.
But not for long;—at length behold,
  Those tints less warm, less radiant grew;
Till but one streak of paly gold
  Glimmered through clouds of saddening hue.
And I am calmly waiting, now,
  To see that also pass away,
And leave, above the dark hill's brow,
  A rayless arch of sombre grey.'

'So must it fare with all thy race
  Who seek in earthly things their joy:
So fading hopes lost hopes shall chase,
  Till Disappointment all destroy.
But they that fix their hopes on high
Shall, in the blue-refulgent sky,
  The sun's transcendent light,
Behold a purer, deeper glow
Than these uncertain gleams can show,
  However fair or bright.
O weak of heart! why thus deplore
  That Truth will Fancy's dreams destroy?
Did I not tell thee, years before,
  Life was for labour, not for joy?
Cease, selfish spirit, to repine;
  O'er thine own ills no longer grieve;

Lo, there are sufferings worse than thine,
  Which thou mayst labour to relieve.
If Time indeed too swiftly flies,
Gird on thine armour, haste, arise,
  For thou hast much to do;—
To lighten woe, to trample sin,
And foes without and foes within
  To combat and subdue.
Earth hath too much of sin and pain:
The bitter cup—the binding chain
  Dost thou indeed lament?
Let not thy weary spirit sink;
But strive—not by one drop or link
  The evil to augment.
Strive rather thou, by peace and joy,
The bitter poison to destroy,
  The tyrant chain to break.
O strive! and if thy strength be small,
Strive yet the more, and spend it all
  For Love and Wisdom's sake!'

'O I have striven both hard and long
But many are my foes and strong.
My gains are light—my progress slow;
For hard's the way I have to go,
And my worst enemies, I know,
  Are these within my breast;

And it is hard to toil for aye,—
Through sultry noon and twilight grey
To toil and never rest.'

'There is a rest beyond the grave,
A lasting rest from pain and sin,
Where dwell the faithful and the brave;
But they must strive who seek to win.'

'Show me that rest—I ask no more.
Oh, drive these misty doubts away;
And let me see that sunny shore,
However far away!
However wide this rolling sea,
However wild my passage be,
Howe'er my bark be tempest-tost,
May it but reach that haven fair,
May I but land and wander there,
With those that I have loved and lost;
With such a glorious hope in view,
I'll gladly toil and suffer too.
Rest *without* toil I would not ask;
I would not shun the hardest task:
Toil is my glory—Grief my gain,
If God's approval they obtain.
Could I but hear my Saviour say,—
"I know thy patience and thy love;

How thou hast held the narrow way,
For my sake laboured night and day,
And watched, and striven with them that strove;
And still hast borne, and didst not faint,"—
Oh, this would be reward indeed!'

'Press forward, then, without complaint;
Labour and love—and such shall be thy meed.'

April 17th 1848

12

FAREWELL to thee! but not farewell
To all my fondest thoughts of thee:
Within my heart they still shall dwell;
And they shall cheer and comfort me.

O beautiful, and full of grace!
If thou hadst never met mine eye,
I had not dreamed a living face
Could fancied charms so far outvie.

If I may ne'er behold again
That form and face so dear to me,
Nor hear thy voice, still would I fain
Preserve for aye their memory.

That voice, the magic of whose tone
Can wake an echo in my breast,
Creating feelings that, alone,
Can make my trancèd spirit blest.

That laughing eye, whose sunny beam
My memory would not cherish less;—
And oh, that smile! whose joyous gleam
No mortal language can express.

Adieu! but let me cherish still
The hope with which I cannot part.
Contempt may wound, and coldness chill,
But still it lingers in my heart.

And who can tell but Heaven, at last,
May answer all my thousand prayers,
And bid the future pay the past
With joy for anguish, smiles for tears.

13

A REMINISCENCE

YES, thou art gone ! and never more
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me ;
But I may pass the old church door,
And pace the floor that covers thee,

May stand upon the cold, damp stone,
And think that, frozen, lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,
'Tis still a comfort to have seen ;
And though thy transient life is o'er,
'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been ;

To think a soul so near divine,
Within a form so angel fair,
United to a heart like thine,
Has gladdened once our humble sphere.

14

THE ARBOUR

I'LL rest me in this sheltered bower,
And look upon the clear blue sky
That smiles upon me through the trees,
Which stand so thickly clustering by;

And view their green and glossy leaves,
All glistening in the sunshine fair;
And list the rustling of their boughs,
So softly whispering through the air.

And while my ear drinks in the sound,
My wingèd soul shall fly away;
Reviewing long departed years
As one mild, beaming, autumn day;

And soaring on to future scenes,
Like hills and woods, and valleys green
All basking in the summer's sun,
But distant still, and dimly seen.

Oh, list! 'tis summer's very breath
That gently shakes the rustling trees—
But look! the snow is on the ground—
How can I think of scenes like these?

'Tis but the frost that clears the air,
And gives the sky that lovely blue;
They're smiling in a winter's sun,
Those evergreens of sombre hue.

And winter's chill is on my heart—
How can I dream of future bliss?
How can my spirit soar away,
Confined by such a chain as this?

15

HOME

How brightly glistening in the sun
  The woodland ivy plays!
While yonder beeches from their barks
  Reflect his silver rays.

That sun surveys a lovely scene
  From softly smiling skies;
And wildly through unnumbered trees
  The wind of winter sighs:

Now loud, it thunders o'er my head,
  And now in distance dies.
But give me back my barren hills,
  Where colder breezes rise;

Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
  Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
  Returns the sound as well.

Home

For yonder garden, fair and wide,
With groves of evergreen,
Long winding walks, and borders trim,
And velvet lawns between—

Restore to me that little spot,
With grey walls compassed round,
Where knotted grass neglected lies,
And weeds usurp the ground.

Though all around this mansion high
Invites the foot to roam,
And though its halls are fair within—
Oh, give me back my HOME !

16

THE PENITENT

I MOURN with thee, and yet rejoice
That thou shouldst sorrow so;
With angel choirs I join my voice
To bless the sinner's woe.

Though friends and kindred turn away,
And laugh thy grief to scorn;
I hear the great Redeemer say,
'Blessed are ye that mourn.'

Hold on thy course, nor deem it strange
That earthly cords are riven:
Man may lament the wondrous change,
But 'there is joy in heaven!'

17

IF THIS BE ALL

O God ! if this indeed be all
That Life can show to me ;
If on my aching brow may fall
No freshening dew from Thee ;

If with no brighter light than this
The lamp of hope may glow,
And I may only dream of bliss,
And wake to weary woe ;

If friendship's solace must decay,
When other joys are gone,
And love must keep so far away,
While I go wandering on,—

Wandering and toiling without gain,
The slave of others' will,
With constant care and frequent pain,
Despised, forgotten still ;

Grieving to look on vice and sin,
Yet powerless to quell
The silent current from within,
The outward torrent's swell;

While all the good I would impart,
The feelings I would share,
Are driven backward to my heart,
And turned to wormwood there;

If clouds must ever keep from sight
The glories of the Sun,
And I must suffer Winter's blight,
Ere Summer is begun:

If Life must be so full of care—
Then call me soon to thee;
Or give me strength enough to bear
My load of misery!

18

MEMORY

BRIGHTLY the sun of summer shone
Green fields and waving woods upon,
And soft winds wandered by;
Above a sky of purest blue,
Around, bright flowers of loveliest hue,
Allured the gazer's eye.

But what were all these charms to me,
When one sweet breath of memory
Came gently wafting by?
I closed my eyes against the day,
And called my willing soul away,
From earth, and air, and sky;

That I might simply fancy there
One little flower—a primrose fair,
Just opening into sight;
As in the days of infancy,
An opening primrose seemed to me
A source of strange delight.

Sweet Memory ! ever smile on me ;
Nature's chief beauties spring from thee
  Oh, still thy tribute bring !
Still make the golden crocus shine
Among the flowers the most divine,
  The glory of the spring.

Still in the wallflower's fragrance dwell ;
And hover round the slight blue-bell,
  My childhood's darling flower.
Smile on the little daisy still,
The buttercup's bright goblet fill
  With all thy former power.

For ever hang thy dreamy spell
Round mountain star and heather bell,
  And do not pass away
From sparkling frost, or wreathèd snow,
And whisper when the wild winds blow
  Or rippling waters play.

* * *

19

TO COWPER

SWEET are thy strains, Celestial Bard;
And oft, in childhood's years,
I've read them o'er and o'er again,
With floods of silent tears.

The language of my inmost heart
I traced in every line;
My sins, *my* sorrows, hopes, and fears,
Were there—and only mine.

All for myself the sigh would swell,
The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
Had filled the Poet's heart.

I did not know the nights of gloom,
The days of misery:
The long, long years of dark despair,
That crushed and tortured thee.

But they are gone ; from earth at length
  Thy gentle soul is pass'd,
And in the bosom of its God
  Has found its home at last.

It must be so, if God is love,
  And answers fervent prayer ;
Then surely thou shalt dwell on high,
  And I may meet thee there.

Is He the source of every good,
  The spring of purity ?
Then in thine hours of deepest woe,
  Thy God was still with thee.

How else, when every hope was fled,
  Couldst thou so fondly cling
To holy things and holy men ?
  And how so sweetly sing

Of things that God alone could teach ?
  And whence that purity,
That hatred of all sinful ways—
  That gentle charity ?

Are *these* the symptoms of a heart
  Of heavenly grace bereft—
For ever banished from its God,
  To Satan's fury left ?

Yet, should thy darkest fears be true,
If Heaven be so severe,
That such a soul as thine is lost,—
Oh! how shall I appear?

20

PAST DAYS

'Tis strange to think there was a time
When mirth was not an empty name,
When laughter really cheered the heart,
And frequent smiles unbidden came,
And tears of grief would only flow
In sympathy for others' woe;

When speech expressed the inward thought,
And heart to kindred heart was bare,
And summer days were far too short
For all the pleasures crowded there;
And silence, solitude, and rest,—
Now welcome to the weary breast—

Were all unprized, uncourted then;
And all the joy one spirit showed,
The other deeply felt again;
And friendship like a river flowed,
Constant and strong its silent course,
For nought withstood its gentle force:

When night, the holy time of peace,
  Was dreaded as the parting hour ;
When speech and mirth at once must cease,
  And silence must resume her power ;
Though ever free from pains and woes,
She only brought us calm repose.

And when the blessed dawn again
  Brought daylight to the blushing skies,
We woke, and not reluctant then,
  To joyless labour did we rise ;
But full of hope, and glad and gay,
We welcomed the returning day.

21

CONSOLATION [1]

THOUGH bleak these woods, and damp the ground
With fallen leaves so thickly strown,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan ;

There is a friendly roof, I know,
Might shield me from the wintry blast ;
There is a fire, whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still, where'er I go,
Cold stranger-glances meet my eye ;
Though, when my spirit sinks in woe,
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh ;

[1] This poem, like most of its predecessors, was first printed in the volume of poems published in 1846. It was afterwards included by Charlotte Brontë in her 'Selection from the Poems of Acton Bell,' under the title of 'Lines Written from Home,' with this note :

'My sister Anne had to taste the cup of life as it is mixed for the class termed "Governesses."
The following are some of the thoughts that now and then solace a governess.'

Consolation

Though solitude, endured too long,
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue,
And overclouds my noon of day;

When kindly thoughts that would have way,
Flow back discouraged to my breast;
I know there is, though far away,
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,
The warmer heart will not belie;
While mirth, and truth, and friendship shine
In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
May there be thawed; and sweetly, then,
The joys of youth, that now depart,
Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, that thought shall be
My hope, my comfort, everywhere;
While such a home remains to me,
My heart shall never know despair!

22

APPEAL

Oh, I am very weary,
  Though tears no longer flow ;
My eyes are tired of weeping,
  My heart is sick of woe ;

My life is very lonely,
  My days pass heavily,
I'm weary of repining ;
  Wilt thou not come to me ?

Oh, didst thou know my longings
  For thee, from day to day,
My hopes, so often blighted,
  Thou wouldst not thus delay !

23

THE STUDENT'S SERENADE

I HAVE slept upon my couch,
  But my spirit did not rest,
For the labours of the day
  Yet my weary soul opprest;

And before my dreaming eyes
  Still the learned volumes lay,
And I could not close their leaves,
  And I could not turn away.

But I oped my eyes at last,
  And I heard a muffled sound;
'Twas the night-breeze, come to say
  That the snow was on the ground.

Then I knew that there was rest
  On the mountain's bosom free;
So I left my fevered couch,
  And I flew to waken thee!

I have flown to waken thee—
For, if thou wilt not arise,
Then my soul can drink no peace
From these holy moonlight skies.

And this waste of virgin snow
To my sight will not be fair,
Unless thou wilt smiling come,
Love, to wander with me there.

Then, awake! Maria, wake!
For, if thou couldst only know
How the quiet moonlight sleeps
On this wilderness of snow,

And the groves of ancient trees,
In their snowy garb arrayed,
Till they stretch into the gloom
Of the distant valley's shade;

I know thou wouldst rejoice
To inhale this bracing air;
Thou wouldst break thy sweetest sleep
To behold a scene so fair.

O'er these wintry wilds, alone,
Thou wouldst joy to wander free;
And it will not please thee less,
Though that bliss be shared with me.

24

THE CAPTIVE DOVE

Poor restless dove, I pity thee ;
And when I hear thy plaintive moan,
I mourn for thy captivity,
And in thy woes forget mine own.

To see thee stand prepared to fly,
And flap those useless wings of thine,
And gaze into the distant sky,
Would melt a harder heart than mine.

In vain—in vain ! Thou canst not rise :
Thy prison roof confines thee there ;
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,
And quench thy longings with despair.

Oh, thou wert made to wander free
In sunny mead and shady grove,
And far beyond the rolling sea,
In distant climes, at will to rove !

Yet, hadst thou but one gentle mate
Thy little drooping heart to cheer,
And share with thee thy captive state,
Thou couldst be happy even there.

Yes, even there, if, listening by,
One faithful dear companion stood,
While gazing on her full bright eye,
Thou might'st forget thy native wood.

But thou, poor solitary dove,
Must make, unheard, thy joyless moan;
The heart that Nature formed to love
Must pine, neglected, and alone.

25

SELF-CONGRATULATION

'ELLEN, you were thoughtless once
  Of beauty or of grace,
Simple and homely in attire,
  Careless of form and face.
Then whence this change? and wherefore now
  So often smooth your hair?
And wherefore deck your youthful form
  With such unwearied care?

'Tell us, and cease to tire our ears
  With that familiar strain;
Why will you play those simple tunes
  So often o'er again?'
'Indeed, dear friends, I can but say
  That childhood's thoughts are gone;
Each year its own new feelings brings,
  And years move swiftly on:

'And for these little simple airs—
  I love to play them o'er
So much—I dare not promise, now,
  To play them never more.'

I answered—and it was enough ;
  They turned them to depart ;
They could not read my secret thoughts,
  Nor see my throbbing heart.

I've noticed many a youthful form,
  Upon whose changeful face
The inmost workings of the soul
  The gazer well might trace ;
The speaking eye, the changing lip,
  The ready blushing cheek,
The smiling, or beclouded brow,
  Their different feelings speak.

But, thank God ! you might gaze on mine
  For hours, and never know
The secret changes of my soul
  From joy to keenest woe.
Last night, as we sat round the fire,
  Conversing merrily,
We heard, without, approaching steps
  Of one well known to me !

There was no trembling in my voice,
  No blush upon my cheek,
No lustrous sparkle in my eyes,
  Of hope, or joy, to speak ;

But, oh ! my spirit burned within,
My heart beat full and fast !
He came not nigh—he went away—
And then my joy was past.

And yet my comrades marked it not :
My voice was still the same ;
They saw me smile, and o'er my face
No signs of sadness came.
They little knew my hidden thoughts ;
And they will never know
The aching anguish of my heart,
The bitter burning woe !

26

FLUCTUATIONS

WHAT though the Sun had left my sky;
To save me from despair
The blessed moon arose on high,
And shone serenely there.

I watched her, with a tearful gaze,
Rise slowly o'er the hill,
While through the dim horizon's haze
Her light gleamed faint and chill.

I thought such wan and lifeless beams
Could ne'er my heart repay
For the bright sun's most transient gleams
That cheered me through the day:

But, as above that mist's control
She rose, and brighter shone,
I felt her light upon my soul;
But now—that light is gone!

Thick vapours snatched her from my sight,
And I was darkling left,
All in the cold and gloomy night,
Of light and hope bereft :

Until, methought, a little star
Shone forth with trembling ray,
To cheer me with its light afar—
But that, too, passed away.

Anon, an earthly meteor blazed
The gloomy darkness through ;
I smiled, yet trembled while I gazed—
But that soon vanished too!

And darker, drearier fell the night
Upon my spirit then ;—
But what is that faint struggling light ?
Is it the Moon again ?

Kind Heaven ! increase that silvery gleam,
And bid these clouds depart,
And let her soft celestial beam
Restore my fainting heart !

27

DESPONDENCY

I HAVE gone backward in the work ;
The labour has not sped ;
Drowsy and dark my spirit lies,
Heavy and dull as lead.

How can I rouse my sinking soul
From such a lethargy ?
How can I break these iron chains
And set my spirit free ?

There have been times when I have mourned
In anguish o'er the past,
And raised my suppliant hands on high,
While tears fell thick and fast ;

And prayed to have my sins forgiven,
With such a fervent zeal,
An earnest grief, a strong desire,
As now I cannot feel.

* * *

28

A PRAYER

My God,—oh, let me call Thee mine,
  Weak, wretched sinner though I be,—
My trembling soul would fain be Thine;
  My feeble faith still clings to Thee.

Not only for the Past I grieve,
  The Future fills me with dismay;
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
  Thy suppliant is a castaway.

I cannot say my faith is strong,
  I dare not hope my love is great;
But strength and love to Thee belong;
  Oh, do not leave me desolate!

I know I owe my all to Thee;
  Oh, *take* the heart I cannot give!
Do Thou my strength—my Saviour be,
  And *make* me to Thy glory live.

29

IN MEMORY OF A HAPPY DAY IN FEBRUARY

* * *

I WAS alone, for those I loved
Were far away from me;
The sun shone on the withered grass,
The wind blew fresh and free.

Was it the smile of early spring
That made my bosom glow?
'Twas sweet; but neither sun nor wind
Could cheer my spirit so.

Was it some feeling of delight,
All vague and undefined?
No; 'twas a rapture deep and strong,
Expanding in the mind.

Was it a sanguine view of life,
And all its transient bliss,
A hope of bright prosperity?
Oh, no! it was not this.

It was a glimpse of truth divine
  Unto my spirit given,
Illumined by a ray of light
  That shone direct from heaven.

* * *

30

CONFIDENCE

OPPRESSED with sin and woe,
A burdened heart I bear,
Opposed by many a mighty foe;
But I will not despair.

With this polluted heart,
I dare to come to Thee,
Holy and mighty as Thou art,
For Thou wilt pardon me.

I feel that I am weak,
And prone to every sin;
But Thou who giv'st to those who seek,
Wilt give me strength within.

Far as this earth may be
From yonder starry skies;
Remoter still am I from Thee:
Yet Thou wilt not despise.

Confidence

I need not fear my foes,
I need not yield to care ;
I need not sink beneath my woes,
For Thou wilt answer prayer.

In my Redeemer's name,
I give myself to Thee ;
And, all unworthy as I am,
My God will cherish me.

31

DOMESTIC PEACE

WHY should such gloomy silence reign,
And why is all the house so drear,
When neither danger, sickness, pain,
Nor death, nor want, have entered here?

We are as many as we were
That other night, when all were gay
And full of hope, and free from care;
Yet is there something gone away.

The moon without, as pure and calm,
Is shining as that night she shone;
But now, to us, she brings no balm,
For something from our hearts is gone.

Something whose absence leaves a void—
A cheerless want in every heart;
Each feels the bliss of all destroyed,
And mourns the change—but each apart.

Domestic Peace

The fire is burning in the grate
  As redly as it used to burn ;
But still the heart is desolate,
  Till mirth, and love, and *peace* return.

'Twas *peace* that flowed from heart to heart,
  With looks and smiles that spoke of heaven,
And gave us language to impart
  The blissful thoughts itself had given.

Domestic peace ! best joy of earth,
  When shall we all thy value learn ?
White angel, to our sorrowing hearth,
  Return—oh, graciously return !

32

THE THREE GUIDES

SPIRIT of Earth! thy hand is chill:
I've felt its icy clasp;
And, shuddering, I remember still
That stony-hearted grasp.
Thine eye bids love and joy depart:
Oh, turn its gaze from me!
It presses down my shrinking heart;
I will not walk with thee!

* * *

Dull is thine ear, unheard by thee
The still, small voice of Heaven;
Thine eyes are dim and cannot see
The helps that God has given.
There is a bridge o'er every flood
Which thou canst not perceive;
A path through every tangled wood,
But thou wilt not believe.

Striving to make thy way by force,
Toil-spent and bramble-torn,
Thou'lt fell the tree that checks thy course,
And burst through brier and thorn :
And, pausing by the river's side,
Poor reasoner ! thou wilt deem,
By casting pebbles in its tide,
To cross the swelling stream.

* * *

Spirit of Pride ! thy wings are strong,
Thine eyes like lightning shine ;
Ecstatic joys to thee belong,
And powers almost divine.
But 'tis a false, destructive blaze
Within those eyes I see ;
Turn hence their fascinating gaze ;
I will not follow thee.

* * *

Yes, I have seen thy votaries oft,
Upheld by thee their guide,
In strength and courage mount aloft
The steepy mountain-side ;
I've seen them stand against the sky,
And gazing from below,
Beheld thy lightning in their eye,
Thy triumph on their brow.

Oh, I have felt what glory then,
What transport must be theirs!
So far above their fellow-men,
Above their toils and cares;
Inhaling Nature's purest breath,
Her riches round them spread,
The wide expanse of earth beneath
Heaven's glories overhead!

* * *

Where is their glory, where the pride
That swelled their hearts before?
Where now the courage that defied
The mightiest tempest's roar?
What shall they do when night grows black,
When angry storms arise?
Who now will lead them to the track
Thou taught'st them to despise?

* * *

Day does not always mark our way,
Night's shadows oft appal,
But lead me, and I cannot stray,—
Hold me, I shall not fall;
Sustain me, I shall never faint,
How rough soe'er may be
My upward road,—nor moan, nor plaint
Shall mar my trust in thee.

* * *

Deserts beyond lie bleak and bare,
And keen winds round us blow;
But if thy hand conducts me there,
The way is right, I know.
I have no wish to turn away;
My spirit does not quail,—
How can it while I hear thee say,
'Press forward and prevail!'

33

THERE let thy bleeding branch atone
For every torturing tear.
Shall my young sins, my sins alone,
Be everlasting here?

Who bade thee keep that carvèd name
A pledge for memory?
As if oblivion ever came
To breathe its bliss on me;

As if through all the 'wildering maze
Of mad hours left behind
I once forgot the early days
That thou wouldst call to mind!

34

FRAGMENT *

YES I will take a cheerful tone
And feign to share their heartless glee ;
But I would rather weep alone
Than laugh amid their revelry.

January 26th 1849

35

LAST LINES[1]

I HOPED, that with the brave and strong,
My portioned task might lie;
To toil amid the busy throng,
With purpose pure and high.

But God has fixed another part,
And He has fixed it well;
I said so with my bleeding heart,
When first the anguish fell.

* A dreadful darkness closes in
On my bewildered mind;
O let me suffer and not sin,
Be tortured yet resigned.

* Shall I with joy thy blessings share
And not endure their loss.
Or hope the martyr's crown to wear
And cast away the cross?

[1] 'I have given the last memento of my sister Emily; this is the last of my sister Anne.—C. B.'

Thou, God, hast taken our delight,
  Our treasured hope away :
Thou bidst us how weep through the night
  And sorrow through the day.

These weary hours will not be lost,
  These days of misery,
These nights of darkness, anguish-tost,
  Can I but turn to Thee :

With secret labour to sustain
  In humble patience every blow ;
To gather fortitude from pain,
  And hope and holiness from woe.

Thus let me serve Thee from my heart,
  Whate'er may be my written fate :
Whether thus early to depart,
  Or yet a while to wait.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life,
  More humbled I should be ;
More wise, more strengthened for the strife,
  More apt to lean on Thee.

Should death be standing at the gate,
Thus should I keep my vow :
But, Lord ! whatever be my fate,
Oh, let me serve Thee now !

'These lines written, the desk was closed, the pen laid aside—for ever.—C. B.'

POEMS BY
BRANWELL BRONTË

So where He reigns

I

So where He reigns in glory bright,
Above those starry skies of night,
Amid His Paradise of light,
Oh, why may I not be?

Oft when awake on Christmas morn,
In sleepless twilight laid forlorn,
Strange thoughts have o'er my mind been borne,
How He has died for me;

And oft, within my chamber lying,
Have I awaked myself with crying
From dreams, where I beheld Him dying
Upon the accursed Tree;

And often has my mother said,
While on her lap I laid my head,
She feared for Time I was not made,
But for Eternity.

* * *

2

SONNET

ON THE CALLOUSNESS PRODUCED BY CARE

WHY hold young eyes the fullest fount of tears?
And why do youthful hearts the oftenest sigh,
When fancied friends forsake, or lovers fly,
Or fancied woes and dangers wake their fears?
Ah! he who asks has known but spring-tide years,
Or Time's rough voice had long since told him why!
Increase of days increases misery;
And misery brings selfishness, which sears
The heart's first feelings: 'mid the battle's roar,
In Death's dread grasp, the soldier's eyes are blind
To comrades dying, and he whose hopes are o'er
Turns coldest from the sufferings of mankind;
A bleeding spirit oft delights in gore:
A tortured heart oft makes a tyrant mind.

Circa 1842

3

NOAH'S WARNING OVER METHUSALEH'S GRAVE

BROTHERS and men! one moment stay
Beside your latest patriarch's grave,
While God's just vengeance yet delay,
While God's blest mercy yet can save.

Will you compel my tongue to say,
That underneath this nameless sod
Your hands, with mine, have laid to-day
The last on earth who walked with God?

* * *

He's gone!—my Father—full of days,—
From life which left no joy for him;
Born in creation's earliest blaze;
Dying—himself, its latest beam.

But he is gone! and, oh, behold,
Shown in his death, God's latest sign!
Than which more plainly never told
An Angel's presence His design.

By it, the evening beam withdrawn
Before a starless night descend ;
By it, the last blest spirit born
From this beginning of an end ;

By all the strife of civil war
That beams within yon fated town ;
By all the heart's worst passions there,
That call so loud for vengeance down ;

By that vast wall of cloudy gloom,
Piled boding round the firmament ;
By all its presages of doom,
Children of men—Repent ! Repent !

1842

4

OUR LADY OF GRIEF

WHEN all our cheerful hours seem gone for ever,
All lost that caused the body or the mind
To nourish love or friendship for our kind,
And Charon's boat, prepared, o'er Lethe's river
Our souls to waft, and all our thoughts to sever
From what was once life's Light; still there may be
Some well-loved bosom to whose pillow we
Could heartily our utter self deliver;
And if, towards her grave—Death's dreary road—
Our Darling's feet should tread, each step by her
Would draw our own steps to the same abode,
And make a festival of sepulture;
For what gave joy, and joy to us had owed,
Should death affright us from, when he would her restore?

1846

5

THE END OF ALL

In that unpitying Winter's night,
When my own wife—my Mary—died,
I, by my fire's declining light,
Sat comfortless, and silent sighed,
While burst unchecked grief's bitter tide,
As I, methought, when she was gone,
Not hours, but years, like this must bide,
And wake, and weep, and watch alone.

All earthly hope had passed away,
And each clock-stroke brought Death more nigh
To the still chamber where she lay,
With soul and body calmed to die;
But *mine* was not her heavenward eye
When hot tears scorched me, as her doom
Made my sick heart throb heavily
To give impatient anguish room.

'Oh now,' methought, 'a little while,
And this great house will hold no more
Her whose fond love the gloom could while
Of many a long night gone before!'
Oh! all those happy hours were o'er

When, seated by our own fireside,
I'd smile to hear the wild winds roar,
And turn to clasp my beauteous bride.

I could not bear the thoughts which rose
Of what *had* been, and what *must* be,
And still the dark night would disclose
Its sorrow-pictured prophecy ;
Still saw I—miserable me—
Long, long nights else, in lonely gloom,
With time-bleached locks and trembling knee-
Walk aidless, hopeless, to my tomb.

Still, still that tomb's eternal shade
Oppressed my heart with sickening fear,
When I could see its shadow spread
Over each dreary future year.
Whose vale of tears woke such despair
That, with the sweat-drops on my brow,
I wildly raised my hands in prayer
That Death would come and take me now ;

Then stopped to hear an answer given—
So much had madness warped my mind—
When, sudden, through the midnight heaven,
With long howl woke the Winter's wind ;
And roused in me, though undefined,

A rushing thought of tumbling seas,
  Whose wild waves wandered unconfined,
And, far-off surging, whispered, 'Peace.'

I cannot speak the feeling strange,
  Which showed that vast December sea,
Nor tell whence came that sudden change
  From aidless, hopeless misery;
  But somehow it revealed to me
A life—when things I loved were gone—
  Whose solitary liberty
Might suit me wandering tombward on.

'Twas not that I forgot my love,
  That night departing evermore;
'Twas hopeless grief for her that drove
  My soul from all it prized before;
  That misery called me to explore
A new-born life, whose stony joy
  Might calm the pangs of sorrow o'er,
Might shrine their memory, not destroy.

I rose, and drew the curtains back
  To gaze upon the starless waste,
And image on that midnight wrack
  The path on which I longed to haste,
  From storm to storm continual cast,

And not one moment given to view ;
O'er mind's wild winds the memories passed
Of hearts I loved—of scenes I knew.

My mind anticipated all
The things my eyes have seen since then ;
I heard the trumpet's battle-call,
I rode o'er ranks of bleeding men,
I swept the waves of Norway's main,
I tracked the sands of Syria's shore,
I felt that such strange strife and pain
Might me from living death restore.

Ambition I would make my bride,
And joy to see her robed in red,
For none through blood so wildly ride
As those whose hearts before have bled ;
Yes, even though thou should'st long have laid,
Pressed coldly down by churchyard clay,
And though I knew thee thus decayed,
I might smile grimly when away ;

Might give an opiate to my breast,
Might dream :—but oh ! that heart-wrung groan
Forced from me with the thought confessed
That all would go if she were gone ;
I turned, and wept, and wandered on

All restlessly—from room to room—
To that still chamber, where alone
A sick-light glimmered through the gloom.

The all-unnoticed time flew o'er me,
While my breast bent above her bed,
And that drear life which loomed before me
Choked up my voice—bowed down my head.
Sweet holy words to me she said,
Of that bright heaven which shone so near,
And oft and fervently she prayed
That I might some time meet her there;

But, soon enough, all words were over,
When this world passed, and Paradise,
Through deadly darkness, seemed to hover
O'er her half-dull, half-brightening eyes;
One last dear glance she gives her lover,
One last embrace before she dies;
And then, while he seems bowed above her,
His Mary sees him from the skies.

1847

6

PERCY HALL

* * *

THE westering sunbeams smiled on Percy Hall,
And green leaves glittered o'er the ancient wall
Where Mary sat, to feel the summer breeze,
And hear its music mingling 'mid the trees.
There she had rested in her quiet bower
Through June's long afternoon, while hour on hour
Stole, sweetly shining past her, till the shades,
Scarce noticed, lengthened o'er the grassy glades;
But yet she sat, as if she knew not how
Her time wore on, with Heaven-directed brow,
And eyes that only seemed awake, whene'er
Her face was fanned by summer evening's air.
All day her limbs a weariness would feel,
As if a slumber o'er her frame would steal;
Nor could she wake her drowsy thoughts to care
For day, or hour, or what she was, or where:
Thus—lost in dreams, although debarred from sleep,
While through her limbs a feverish heat would creep,

A weariness, a listlessness that hung
About her vigour, and Life's powers unstrung—
She did not feel the iron grip of pain,
But thought felt irksome to her heated brain ;
Sometimes the stately woods would float before her,
Commingled with the cloud-piles brightening o'er her,
Then change to scenes for ever lost to view,
Or mock with phantoms which she never knew :
Sometimes her soul seemed brooding on to-day,
And then it wildly wandered far away,
Snatching short glimpses of her infancy,
Or lost in day-dreams of what yet might be.

Yet—through the labyrinth-like course of thought—
Whate'er might be remembered or forgot,
Howe'er diseased the dream might be, or dim,
Still seemed the Future through each change to swim,
All indefinable, but pointing on
To what should welcome her when Life 'was gone ;
She felt as if—to all she knew so well—
Its voice was whispering her to say 'farewell ;'
Was bidding her forget her happy home ;
Was farther fleeting still—still beckoning her to come.

She felt as one might feel who, laid at rest,
With cold hands folded on a panting breast,
Has just received a husband's last embrace,
Has kissed a child, and turned a pallid face
From this world—with its feelings all laid by—
To one unknown, yet hovering—oh ! how nigh !

* * *

1847

7

ON CAROLINE

THE light of thy ancestral hall,
Thy Caroline, no longer smiles:
She has changed her palace for a pall,
Her garden walks for minster aisles:
Eternal sleep has stilled her breast
Where peace and pleasure made their shrine;
Her golden head has sunk to rest—
Oh, would that rest made calmer mine!

To thee, while watching o'er the bed
Where, mute and motionless, she lay,
How slow the midnight moments sped!
How void of sunlight woke the day!
Nor oped her eyes to morning's beam,
Though all around thee woke to her;
Nor broke thy raven-pinioned dream
Of coffin, shroud, and sepulchre.

Why beats thy heart when hers is still?
Why linger'st thou when she is gone?
Hop'st thou to light on good or ill?
To find companionship alone?

On Caroline

Perhaps thou think'st the churchyard stone
  Can hide past smiles and bury sighs :
That Memory, with her soul, has flown ;
  That thou canst leave her where she lies ?

No ! joy itself is but a shade,
  So well may its remembrance die ;
But cares, life's conquerors, never fade,
  So strong is their reality !
Thou may'st forget the day which gave
  That child of beauty to thy side,
But not the moment when the grave
  Took back again thy borrowed bride !

8

CAROLINE

I STOOPED to pluck a rose that grew
  Beside this window, waving then ;
But back my little hand withdrew,
  From some reproof of inward pain ;
For she who loved it was not there
  To check me with her dove-like eye,
And something bid my heart forbear
  Her favourite rosebud to destroy.
Was it that bell—that funeral bell,
  Sullenly sounding on the wind ?
Was it that melancholy knell
  Which first to sorrow woke my mind ?
I looked upon my mourning dress,
  Till my heart beat with childish fear,
And frightened at my loneliness,
  I watched, some well-known sound to hear.
But all without lay silent in
  The sunny hush of afternoon,
And only muffled steps within
  Passed slowly and sedately on.

* * *

There lay she then, as now she lies—
For not a limb has moved since then—
In dreamless slumber closed, those eyes
That never more might wake again.
She lay, as I had seen her lie
On many a happy night before,
When I was humbly kneeling by—
Whom she was teaching to adore:
Oh, just as when by her I prayed,
And she to heaven sent up my prayer,
She lay with flowers about her head—
Though formal grave-clothes hid her hair!
Still did her lips the smile retain
Which parted them when hope was high,
Still seemed her brow as smoothed from pain
As when all thought she could not die.
And, though her bed looked cramped and strange,
Her too bright cheek all faded now,
My young eyes scarcely saw a change
From hours when moonlight paled her brow.
And yet I felt—and scarce could speak—
A chilly face, a faltering breath,
When my hand touched the marble cheek
Which lay so passively beneath.

* * *

And thus it brought me back the hours
When we, at rest together,

Used to lie listening to the showers
  Of wild December weather ;
Which, when, as oft, they woke in her
  The chords of inward thought,
Would fill with pictures that wild air,
  From far-off memories brought ;
So, while I lay, I heard again
  Her silver-sounding tongue,
Rehearsing some remembered strain
  Of old times long agone !
And, flashed across my spirit's sight,
  What she had often told me—
When, laid awake on Christmas night,
  Her sheltering arms would fold me—
About that midnight-seeming day,
  Whose gloom o'er Calvary thrown,
Showed trembling Nature's deep dismay
  At what her sons had done.

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