

Classic Poetry Series

**Caroline Elizabeth Sarah
Norton
- poems -**

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Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton(22 March 1808 – 15 June 1877)

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton was a famous British society beauty, feminist, social reformer, and author of the early and mid nineteenth century.

 Youth and Marriage

Caroline was born in London, England to Thomas Sheridan and Caroline Henrietta Callander. Her father was an actor, soldier, and colonial administrator, and the son of the prominent Irish playwright and Whig statesman Richard Brinsley Sheridan. Her mother was Scottish, the daughter of a landed gentleman, Col. Sir James Callander of Craigforth and Lady Elizabeth MacDonnell, the sister of an Irish peer, Lord Antrim. Mrs. Sheridan authored three short novels described by one her daughter's biographers as "rather stiff with the style of the eighteenth century, but none without a certain charm and wit..."

In 1817, her father died in South Africa, where he was serving as the colonial secretary at the Cape of Good Hope. The family was left virtually penniless. The Duke of York, an old friend of her grandfather's, arranged for Caroline's family to live at Hampton Court Palace in a "grace and favour" apartment, where they remained for several years.

The combined beauty and accomplishments of the Sheridan sisters led to them being collectively referred to as the Three "Graces". The eldest sister, Helen, was a song-writer who married the 4th Baron Dufferin and Claneboye. Through her, Caroline became the aunt of the 1st Marquess of Dufferin and Ava, who later served as the third Governor General of Canada and eighth Viceroy of India. Her younger sister, Georgiana, considered the prettiest of the three, later became the Duchess of Somerset.

In 1827, Caroline married the Hon. George Chapple Norton, barrister, M.P. for Guildford, and the younger brother of Lord Grantley. Norton was a jealous and possessive husband, given to violent fits of drunkenness, and the union quickly proved unhappy due to his mental and physical abuse of Caroline. To make matters worse, Norton was unsuccessful in his chosen career as a barrister, and the couple fought bitterly over money.

During the early years of her marriage, Caroline used her beauty, wit, and political connections, to establish herself as a major society figure's unorthodox

behaviour and candid conversation raised more than a few eyebrows among 19th-century British high society; she made enemies and admirers in almost equal measure. Among her friends she counted such literary and political luminaries as Samuel Rogers, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Edward Trelawney, Mary Shelley, Fanny Kemble, Benjamin Disraeli, the future King Leopold I of Belgium and William Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire.

In spite of his jealousy and pride, Norton encouraged his wife to use her connections to advance his career. It was entirely due to her influence that in 1831 he was made a Metropolitan Police Magistrate.

During these years, Caroline turned to prose and poetry as a means of releasing her inner emotions. Her first book, *The Sorrows of Rosalie* (1829), was well received. *Undying One* (1830), a romance founded upon the legend of the Wandering Jew soon followed.

Separation and Melbourne scandal

In 1836, Caroline left her husband. Caroline managed to subsist on her earnings as an author, but Norton claimed these as his own, arguing successfully in court that, as her husband, Caroline's earnings were legally his. Paid nothing by her husband, her earnings confiscated, Caroline used the law to her own advantage. Running up bills in her husband's name, Caroline told the creditors when they came to collect, that if they wished to be paid, they could sue her husband.

Not long after their separation, Norton abducted their sons, hiding them with relatives in Scotland and later in Yorkshire, refusing to tell Caroline anything of their whereabouts. Norton accused Caroline of being involved in an ongoing affair with her close friend, Lord Melbourne, the then Whig Prime Minister. Initially, Norton demanded £10,000 from Melbourne, but Melbourne refused to be blackmailed, and Norton instead took the Prime Minister to court.

Lord Melbourne wrote in a letter to Lord Holland that, "The fact is he (Norton) is a stupid brute, and she had not temper nor dissimulation enough to enable her to manage him." Despite this admission, hoping to avert an even worse scandal, he pleaded with Caroline to return to Norton, insisting that "a woman should never part from her husband whilst she can remain with him." Lord Melbourne relented a few days later, stating that he understood her decision to leave:

"This conduct upon his part seems perfectly unaccountable...You know that I have always counselled you to bear everything and remain to the last. I thought it for the best. I am afraid it is no longer possible. Open breaches of this kind are

always to be lamented, but you have the consolation that you have done your utmost to stave this extremity off as long as possible."

The trial lasted nine days, and in the end the jury threw out Norton's claim, siding with Lord Melbourne. However, the resulting publicity almost brought down the government. The scandal eventually died away, but not before Caroline's reputation was ruined and her friendship with Lord Melbourne destroyed.

Norton continued to prevent Caroline from seeing her three sons, and blocked her from receiving a divorce. According to British law in 1836, children were the legal property of their father, and there was little Caroline could do to regain custody.

Political activity

Caroline was soon faced with an additional tragedy; the death of her youngest son, William, in 1842. The child, out riding alone, suffered a fall from his horse and was injured. According to Caroline, the child's wounds were minor; however, they were not properly attended and blood-poisoning set in. Norton, realising that the child was near death, sent for Caroline. Unfortunately, William died before she arrived and she blamed Norton for the child's death, accusing him of neglect. After William's death, Norton allowed Caroline to visit their sons, but he retained full custody, and all of her visits were supervised.

Due to her dismal domestic situation, Caroline became passionately involved in the passage of laws promoting social justice, especially those granting rights to married and divorced women. Her poems "A Voice from the Factories" (1836) and "The Child of the Islands" (1845) centred around her political views.

When Parliament debated the subject of divorce reform in 1855, Caroline submitted to the members a detailed account of her own marriage, and described the difficulties faced by women as the result of existing laws: "An English wife may not leave her husband's house. Not only can he sue her for restitution of "conjugal rights," but he has a right to enter the house of any friend or relation with whom she may take refuge...and carry her away by force...

If her husband take proceedings for a divorce, she is not, in the first instance, allowed to defend herself...She is not represented by attorney, nor permitted to be considered a party to the suit between him and her supposed lover, for "damages."

If an English wife be guilty of infidelity, her husband can divorce her so as to marry again; but she cannot divorce the husband, a vinculo, however profligate he may be....

Those dear children, the loss of whose pattering steps and sweet occasional voices made the silence of [my] new home intolerable as the anguish of death...what I suffered respecting those children, God knows . . . under the evil law which suffered any man, for vengeance or for interest, to take baby children from the mother.

Primarily because of Caroline's intense campaigning, Parliament passed the Custody of Infants Act 1839 and the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857. The Matrimonial Causes Act allowed married women to inherit property and take court action on their own behalf, while the Custody of Children Act granted mothers limited custodial rights over minor children. Caroline Norton's efforts formed the basis of what Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon campaigned for successfully years later.

Caroline's old friend, Lord Melbourne, opposed the reforms she fought for. He was scolded for his opposition by Queen Victoria; the Queen wrote that he defended his actions, stating: "I don't think you should give a woman too much right...there should not be two conflicting powers...a man ought to have the right in a family."

While Caroline fought to extend women's legal rights, she wasn't involved in further social activism, and had no interest in the 19th-century women's movement with regard to issues such as women's suffrage. In fact, in an article published in *The Times* in 1838, countering a claim that she was a "radical", Caroline stated: "The natural position of woman is inferiority to man. Amen! That is a thing of God's appointing, not of man's devising. I believe it sincerely, as part of my religion. I never pretended to the wild and ridiculous doctrine of equality."

Later life

Legally unable to divorce her husband, Caroline engaged in a five-year affair with prominent Conservative politician Sidney Herbert in the early 1840s. The affair ended with his marriage to another in 1846. In middle age she befriended the author George Meredith. She served as the inspiration for Diana Warwick, the intelligent, fiery-tempered heroine of Meredith's novel *Diana of the Crossways*, published in 1885.

Caroline finally became free with the death of George Norton in 1875. She married an old friend, Scottish historical writer and politician Sir W. Stirling Maxwell in March 1877. Caroline died three months later.

Family and descendants

Her eldest son, Fletcher Norton, died of tuberculosis in Paris at the age of thirty. Caroline was devastated by the loss.

In 1854, her remaining son, Thomas Brinsley Norton, married a young Italian, Maria Chiara Elisa Federigo, whom he met in Naples. Thomas also suffered from poor health, and spent much of his life as an invalid, reliant upon his mother for financial assistance. Despite his ill health, he lived long enough to succeed his uncle as 4th Baron Grantley of Markenfield. Lord Grantley also predeceased his mother, dying in 1877. His son, John, inherited the title and estates.

The 5th Lord Grantley was a numismatist, and a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London, the Royal Numismatic Society and the British Numismatic Society. He assembled a large collection of coins and also grew orchids. He caused a scandal in 1879, when he ran off with another man's wife, the former Katharine McVickar, daughter of a wealthy American jilted husband was the 5th Lord Grantley's older cousin, Major Charles Grantley Campbell Norton. Katharine's marriage to Charles was annulled, and they were married that November, five days before the birth of their first child. Despite her scandalous introduction to British society, Katharine went on to become a successful London hostess.

A Destiny

I.

THERE was a lady, who had early wed
One whom she saw and lov'd in her bright youth,
When life was yet untried--and when he said
He, too, lov'd her, he spoke no more than truth;
He lov'd as well as baser natures can,--
But a mean heart and soul were in that man.

II.

And they dwelt happily, if happy be
Not with harsh words to breed unnatural strife:
The cold world's Argus-watching failed to see
The flaw that dimm'd the lustre of their life;
Save that he seem'd tyrannical, tho' gay,
Restless and selfish in his love of sway.

III.

The calm of conscious power was not in him;
But rather, struggling into broader light,
The secret sense, they feel, however dim,
Whose chance position gives a sort of right
(As from the height of a prescriptive throne,)
To govern natures nobler than their own.

IV.

And as her youth waned slowly on, there fell
A nameless shadow on that lady's heart;
And those she lov'd the best (and she lov'd well),
Had of her confidence nor share, nor part;
Her thoughts lay folded from Life's lessening light,
Like the sweet flowers which close themselves at night.

V.

And men began to whisper evil things
Against the honour of her wedded mate;
That which had pass'd for youth's wild wanderings,
Showed more suspicious in his settled state;
Until at length,--he stood, at some chance game,

Discover'd,--branded with a Cheater's name.

VI.

Out, and away he slunk, with felon air;
Then, calling to him one who was his friend,
Bid him to that unblemish'd wife repair
And tell her what had chanced, and what the end;
How they must leave the country of their birth,
And hide,--in some more distant spot of earth.

VII.

It was a coward's thought: he could not bear
Himself to be narrator of his shame;
He that had trampled oft, now felt in fear
Of her who still must keep his blighted name,--
And shrank in fancy from that steadfast eye,
The window to a soul so pure and high.

VIII.

She heard it. O'er her brow there pass'd a flush
Of sunset red; and then so white a hue,
So deadly pale, it seem'd as if no blush
Through that transparent cheek should shine anew;
As if the blood had frozen in that hour,
And her check'd pulse for ever lost its power.

IX.

And twice and once did she essay to speak;
And with a gesture almost of command,
(Though in its motion it was deadly weak)
She faintly lifted up her graceful hand:--
But then her soul came back to her, strength woke,
And with a low but even voice, she spoke:

X.

'Go! say to him who dream'd of other chance,
That HERE none sit in judgment on his sin;
That to his door the world's scorn may advance,
And cloud his path, but doth not enter in.
Here dwell his Own: to share, to soothe disgrace;!--
Which having said, she cover'd up her face,

XI.

And, as he left her, sank in bitter prayer,--
If prayer that may be term'd which comes to all,
That sudden gushing of our vain despair,
When none but God can hear or heed our call;
And the wreck'd soul feels, in its helpless hour,
Where only dwells full mercy with full power.

XII.

And he came home, a crush'd and humbled wretch;
Whom when she saw, she but this comfort found,
In her kind arms that shrinking form to catch,
Which tenderly about his neck she wound,
As in the first proud days of love and trust,
E'er yet his reckless head was bow'd in dust!

XIII.

And they departed to a distant shore;
But wheresoe'er they dwelt, however lone,
Shame, like a marble statue at his door,
Flung her 'thwart shadow o'er his threshold stone;
Still darken'd all their daylight hours, and kept
Cold watch above them even while they slept.

XIV.

And there was no more love between those two!
It died not in the shock of that dark hour--
Such shocks destroy not love, whose purple hue
Fades rather, like some autumn-wither'd flower,
Which day by day along the ruin'd walk
We see--then miss it from the sapless stalk;

XV.

And, while it fadeth, oft with gentle hand
Doth memory turn to life's dark journal-book;
And, passing foul misdeeds, intently stand
On its first page of glorious hope to look;
Weeping she reads,--and, seeing all so fair,
Pleads hard for what we are, by what we were!

XVI.

So through that hour love lived; and, though in part

'Twas one of most unutterable pain,
It had its sweetness too, and told her heart
All she could do, and all she could sustain;
The holy love of woman buoy'd her up,
And God gave strength to drink the bitter cup.
XVII.

But when, as days crept on, she saw him still
Less grateful than abash'd beneath her eye,
And studying not how best to banish ill,
But what he might conceal and what deny,
Her soul revolted, and conceived a scorn,
Sinful and harsh, although of virtue born.
XVIII.

And oft she pray'd, with earnestness and pain,
That heaven would bid that proud contempt depart,
And wept to find the prayer and effort vain,
Though it was breathed in agony of heart--
Vain as the murmur of 'Thy will be done,'
Breathed by the death-bed of an only son!
XIX.

For when her children err'd (as children will)
A sickening terror smote her heart with fears,
And scarce she measured the degree of ill,
Or made indulgence for their tender years;
They were HIS children; and the chance of shame
Kept watch for those who bore that father's name.
XX.

And, thinking thus, reproof would take a tone
So strangely passionate, severe, and wild--
So deeply alter'd,--so unlike her own,--
It stung and terrified her startled child,
Whose innate sense of justice seem'd to show
Him over-chidden, being chidden so.
XXI.

And then a gush of mother's love would swell
Her grieving heart,--and she would fondly press
The young offending head she loved so well

Close to her own, with many a soft caress,
Whose reconciling sweetness all in vain
Stopp'd her boy's tears, while her's ran down like rain.
XXII.

The world (which still pronounces from the show
Of outward things) whisper'd and talk'd of this;
Erring and obstinate, its crowds ne'er know
How much in judging they may judge amiss,
Or how much agony and broken peace
May lie beneath the seeming of caprice!
XXIII.

But he, her husband (for he was not dull),
Saw through these workings of a troubled mind,
And, that her cup of sorrow might be full,
He taunted her with words and looks unkind,
Which with a patient bowing of the heart
She took--like one resolved to do her part.
XXIV.

And years stole on (for years go by like days,
Leaving but scatter'd hours to mark their course),
And brightness faded from that lady's gaze,
And her cheek hollow'd, and her step lost force,
Till it was plain to even a careless eye
That she was doom'd, before her time, to die.
XXV.

She died, as she had lived, her secret soul
Shut from the sweet communion of true friends;
Her words, though not her thoughts, she could control,
And still with calm respect his name she blends:
They all stood round her whom she call'd her Own,
And saw her die--yet was that death-bed lone!
XXVI.

But in its darkest hour her thoughts were stirr'd,
And something falter'd from her dying tongue,
Mournful and tender--half pronounced, half heard--
For which he was too base--his boys too young;
So whatso'er the warning faintly given,

It lay between her parting soul and Heaven.
XXVII.

He wept for her--ah! who would not have wept
To see that worn face in its pallid shroud,
Proving how much she suffer'd ere she slept
At peace for ever! Violent and loud
Was the outbreaking of his sudden grief,
And, like all feelings in that heart, 'twas brief.
XXVIII.

And something strange pass'd o'er his soul instead,
When thinking upon her whom he had lost,
Almost like a relief that she was dead:--
She, whose high nature scorn'd his fault the most,
And show'd it least,--had vanish'd from the earth,
And none could check his sin, or shame his mirth.
XXIX.

So he return'd to many an evil way,
Like one who strays when guiding light is gone;
And mid the profligate, miscall'd 'the gay,'
Crept to a slippery place--his tale half known--
Ill look'd on, yet endured--the useful tool
Of every bolder knave, or richer fool.
XXX.

And his two sons in careless beauty grew,
Like wild-flowers in his path: he mark'd them not,
Nor reck'd he what they needed, learnt, or knew,
Or what might be on earth their future lot;
But they died young--which is a thought of rest!
Unscorn'd, untempted, undefiled--so best.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

A Voice From The Factories

WHEN fallen man from Paradise was driven,
Forth to a world of labour, death, and care;
Still, of his native Eden, bounteous Heaven
Resolved one brief memorial to spare,
And gave his offspring an imperfect share
Of that lost happiness, amid decay;
Making their first approach to life seem fair,
And giving, for the Eden past away,
CHILDHOOD, the weary life's long happy holyday.
II.

Sacred to heavenly peace, those years remain!
And when with clouds their dawn is overcast,
Unnatural seem the sorrow and the pain
(Which rosy joy flies forth to banish fast,
Because that season's sadness may not last).
Light is their grief! a word of fondness cheers
The unhaunted heart; the shadow glideth past;
Unknown to them the weight of boding fears,
And soft as dew on flowers their bright, ungrieving tears.
III.

See the Stage-Wonder (taught to earn its bread
By the exertion of an infant skill),
Forsake the wholesome slumbers of its bed,
And mime, obedient to the public will.
Where is the heart so cold that does not thrill
With a vexatious sympathy, to see
That child prepare to play its part, and still
With simulated airs of gaiety
Rise to the dangerous rope, and bend the supple knee?
IV.

Painted and spangled, trembling there it stands,
Glances below for friend or father's face,
Then lifts its small round arms and feeble hands
With the taught movements of an artist's grace:
Leaves its uncertain gilded resting-place--
Springs lightly as the elastic cord gives way--

And runs along with scarce perceptible pace--
Like a bright bird upon a waving spray,
Fluttering and sinking still, whene'er the branches play.
V.

Now watch! a joyless and distorted smile
Its innocent lips assume; (the dancer's leer!)
Conquering its terror for a little while:
Then lets the TRUTH OF INFANCY appear,
And with a stare of numbed and childish fear
Looks sadly towards the audience come to gaze
On the unwonted skill which costs so dear,
While still the applauding crowd, with pleased amaze,
Ring through its dizzy ears unwelcome shouts of praise.
VI.

What is it makes us feel relieved to see
That hapless little dancer reach the ground;
With its whole spirit's elasticity
Thrown into one glad, safe, triumphant bound?
Why are we sad, when, as it gazes round
At that wide sea of paint, and gauze, and plumes,
(Once more awake to sense, and sight, and sound,)
The nature of its age it re-assumes,
And one spontaneous smile at length its face illumines?
VII.

Because we feel, for Childhood's years and strength,
Unnatural and hard the task hath been;--
Because our sickened souls revolt at length,
And ask what infant-innocence may mean,
Thus toiling through the artificial scene;--
Because at that word, CHILDHOOD, start to birth
All dreams of hope and happiness serene--
All thoughts of innocent joy that visit earth--
Prayer--slumber--fondness--smiles--and hours of rosy mirth.
VIII.

And therefore when we hear the shrill faint cries
Which mark the wanderings of the little sweep;
Or when, with glittering teeth and sunny eyes,
The boy-Italian's voice, so soft and deep,

Asks alms for his poor marmoset asleep;
They fill our hearts with pitying regret,
Those little vagrants doomed so soon to weep--
As though a term of joy for all was set,
And that their share of Life's long suffering was not yet.
IX.

Ever a toiling child doth make us sad:
'T is an unnatural and mournful sight,
Because we feel their smiles should be so glad,
Because we know their eyes should be so bright.
What is it, then, when, tasked beyond their might,
They labour all day long for others' gain,--
Nay, trespass on the still and pleasant night,
While uncompleted hours of toil remain?
Poor little FACTORY SLAVES--for You these lines complain!
X.

Beyond all sorrow which the wanderer knows,
Is that these little pent-up wretches feel;
Where the air thick and close and stagnant grows,
And the low whirring of the incessant wheel
Dizzies the head, and makes the senses reel:
There, shut for ever from the gladdening sky,
Vice premature and Care's corroding seal
Stamp on each sallow cheek their hateful die,
Line the smooth open brow, and sink the saddened eye.
XI.

For them the fervid summer only brings
A double curse of stifling withering heat;
For them no flowers spring up, no wild bird sings,
No moss-grown walks refresh their weary feet;--
No river's murmuring sound;--no wood-walk, sweet
With many a flower the learned slight and pass;--
Nor meadow, with pale cowslips thickly set
Amid the soft leaves of its tufted grass,--
Lure them a childish stock of treasures to amass.

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XII.

Have we forgotten our own infancy,
That joys so simple are to them denied?--
Our boyhood's hopes--our wanderings far and free,
Where yellow gorse-bush left the common wide
And open to the breeze?--The active pride
Which made each obstacle a pleasure seem;
When, rashly glad, all danger we defied,
Dashed through the brook by twilight's fading gleam,
Or scorned the tottering plank, and leapt the narrow stream?
XIII.

In lieu of this,--from short and bitter night,
Sullen and sad the infant labourer creeps;
He joys not in the glow of morning's light,
But with an idle yearning stands and weeps,
Envyng the babe that in its cradle sleeps:
And ever as he slowly journeys on,
His listless tongue unbidden silence keeps;
His fellow-labourers (playmates hath he none)
Walk by, as sad as he, nor hail the morning sun.
XIV.

Mark the result. Unnaturally debarred
All nature's fresh and innocent delights,
While yet each germinating energy strives hard,
And pristine good with pristine evil fights;
When every passing dream the heart excites,
And makes even guarded virtue insecure;
Untaught, unchecked, they yield as vice invites:
With all around them cramped, confined, impure,
Fast spreads the moral plague which nothing new shall cure.
XV.

Yes, this reproach is added; (infamous
In realms which own a Christian monarch's sway!)
Not suffering only is their portion, thus
Compelled to toil their youthful lives away:
Excessive labour works the SOUL'S decay--
Quenches the intellectual light within--
Crushes with iron weight the mind's free play--
Steals from us LEISURE purer thoughts to win--
And leaves us sunk and lost in dull and native sin.

XVI.

Yet in the British Senate men rise up,
(The freeborn and the fathers of our land!)
And while these drink the dregs of Sorrow's cup,
Deny the sufferings of the pining band.
With nice-drawn calculations at command,
They prove--rebut--explain--and reason long;
Proud of each shallow argument they stand,
And prostitute their utmost powers of tongue
Feebly to justify this great and glaring wrong.

XVII.

So rose, with such a plausible defence
Of the unalienable RIGHT OF GAIN,
Those who against Truth's brightest eloquence
Upheld the cause of torture and of pain:
And fear of Property's Decrease made vain,
For years, the hope of Christian Charity
To lift the curse from SLAVERY'S dark domain,
And send across the wide Atlantic sea
The watchword of brave men--the thrilling shout, 'BE FREE!'

XVIII.

What is to be a slave? Is't not to spend
A life bowed down beneath a grinding ill?--
To labour on to serve another's end,--
To give up leisure, health, and strength, and skill--
And give up each of these against your will?
Hark to the angry answer:--'Theirs is not
A life of slavery; if they labour,--still
We pay their toil. Free service is their lot;
And what their labour yields, by us is fairly got.'

XIX.

Oh, Men! blaspheme not Freedom! Are they free
Who toil until the body's strength gives way?
Who may not set a term for Liberty,
Who have no time for food, or rest, or play,
But struggle through the long unwelcome day
Without the leisure to be good or glad?
Such is their service--call it what you may.

Poor little creatures, overtasked and sad,
Your Slavery hath no name,--yet is its Curse as bad!
XX.

Again an answer. 'T is their parents' choice.
By some employ the poor man's child must earn
Its daily bread; and infants have no voice
In what the allotted task shall be: they learn
What answers best, or suits the parents' turn.'
Mournful reply! Do not your hearts inquire
Who tempts the parents' penury? They yearn
Toward their offspring with a strong desire,
But those who starve will sell, even what they most require.
XXI.

We grant their class must labour--young and old;
We grant the child the needy parents' tool:
But still our hearts a better plan behold;
No bright Utopia of some dreaming fool,
But rationally just, and good by rule.
Not against TOIL, but TOIL'S EXCESS we pray,
(Else were we nursed in Folly's simplest school);
That so our country's hardy children may
Learn not to loathe, but bless, the well apportioned day.
XXII.

One more reply! The last reply--the great
Answer to all that sense or feeling shows,
To which all others are subordinate:--
'The Masters of the Factories must lose
By the abridgement of these infant woes.
Show us the remedy which shall combine
Our equal gain with their increased repose--
Which shall not make our trading class repine,
But to the proffered boon its strong effects confine.'
XXIII.

Oh! shall it then be said that TYRANT acts
Are those which cause our country's looms to thrive?
That Merchant England's prosperous trade exacts
This bitter sacrifice, e'er she derive
That profit due, for which the feeble strive?

Is her commercial avarice so keen,
That in her busy multitudinous hive
Hundreds must die like insects, scarcely seen,
While the thick-thronged survivors work where they have been?
XXIV.

Forbid it, Spirit of the glorious Past
Which gained our Isle the surname of 'The Free,'
And made our shores a refuge at the last
To all who would not bend the servile knee,
The vainly-vanquished sons of Liberty!
Here ever came the injured, the opprest,
Compelled from the Oppressor's face to flee--
And found a home of shelter and of rest
In the warm generous heart that beat in England's breast.
XXV.

Here came the Slave, who straightway burst his chain,
And knew that none could ever bind him more;
Here came the melancholy sons of Spain;
And here, more buoyant Gaul's illustrious poor
Waited the same bright day that shone before.
Here rests the Enthusiast Pole! and views afar
With dreaming hope, from this protecting shore,
The trembling rays of Liberty's pale star
Shine forth in vain to light the too-unequal war!
XXVI.

And shall REPROACH cling darkly to the name
Which every memory so much endears?
Shall we, too, tyrannise,--and tardy Fame
Revoke the glory of our former years,
And stain Britannia's flag with children's tears?
So shall the mercy of the English throne
Become a by-word in the Nation's ears,
As one who pitying heard the stranger's groan,
But to these nearer woes was cold and deaf as stone.
XXVII.

Are there not changes made which grind the Poor?
Are there not losses every day sustained,--
Deep grievances, which make the spirit sore?

And what the answer, when these have complained?
'For crying evils there hath been ordained
The REMEDY OF CHANGE; to obey its call
Some individual loss must be disdained,
And pass as unavoidable and small,
Weighed with the broad result of general good to all.'
XXVIII.

Oh! such an evil now doth cry aloud!
And CHANGE should be by generous hearts begun,
Though slower gain attend the prosperous crowd;
Lessening the fortunes for their children won.
Why should it grieve a father, that his son
Plain competence must moderately bless?
That he must trade, even as his sire has done,
Not born to independent idleness,
Though honestly above all probable distress?
XXIX.

Rejoice! Thou hast not left enough of gold
From the lined heavy ledger, to entice
His drunken hand, irresolutely bold,
To squander it in haggard haunts of vice:--
The hollow rattling of the uncertain dice
Eats not the portion which thy love bestowed;--
Unable to afford that PLEASURE'S price,
Far off he slumbers in his calm abode,
And leaves the Idle Rich to follow Ruin's road.
XXX.

Happy his lot! For him there shall not be
The cold temptation given by vacant time;
Leaving his young and uncurbed spirit free
To wander thro' the feverish paths of crime!
For him the Sabbath bell's returning chime
Not vainly ushers in God's day of rest;
No night of riot clouds the morning's prime:
Alert and glad, not languid and opprest,
He wakes, and with calm soul is the Creator blest.
XXXI.

Ye save for children! Fathers, is there not

A plaintive magic in the name of child,
Which makes you feel compassion for their lot
On whom Prosperity hath never smiled?
When with your OWN an hour hath been beguiled
(For whom you hoard the still increasing store),
Surely, against the face of Pity mild,
Heart-hardening Custom vainly bars the door,
For that less favoured race--THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR.
XXXII.

'The happy homes of England!'--they have been
A source of triumph, and a theme for song;
And surely if there be a hope serene
And beautiful, which may to Earth belong,
'T is when (shut out the world's associate throng,
And closed the busy day's fatiguing hum),
Still waited for with expectation strong,
Welcomed with joy, and overjoyed to come,
The good man goes to seek the twilight rest of home.
XXXIII.

There sits his gentle Wife, who with him knelt
Long years ago at God's pure altar-place;
Still beautiful,--though all that she hath felt
Hath calmed the glory of her radiant face,
And given her brow a holier, softer grace.
Mother of SOULS IMMORTAL, she doth feel
A glow from Heaven her earthly love replace;
Prayer to her lip more often now doth steal,
And meditative hope her serious eyes reveal.
XXXIV.

Fondly familiar is the look she gives
As he returns, who forth so lately went,--
For they together pass their happy lives;
And many a tranquil evening have they spent
Since, blushing, ignorantly innocent,
She vowed, with downcast eyes and changeful hue,
To love Him only. Love fulfilled, hath lent
Its deep repose; and when he meets her view,
Her soft look only says,--'I trust--and I am true.'
XXXV.

Scattered like flowers, the rosy children play--
Or round her chair a busy crowd they press;
But, at the FATHER'S coming, start away,
With playful struggle for his loved caress,
And jealous of the one he first may bless.
To each, a welcoming word is fondly said;
He bends and kisses some; lifts up the less;
Admires the little cheek, so round and red,
Or smooths with tender hand the curled and shining head.
XXXVI.

Oh! let us pause, and gaze upon them now.
Is there not one--beloved and lovely boy!
With Mirth's bright seal upon his open brow,
And sweet fond eyes, brimful of love and joy?
He, whom no measure of delight can cloy,
The daring and the darling of the set;
He who, though pleased with every passing toy,
Thoughtless and buoyant to excess, could yet
Never a gentle word or kindly deed forget?
XXXVII.

And one, more fragile than the rest, for whom--
As for the weak bird in a crowded nest--
Are needed all the fostering care of home
And the soft comfort of the brooding breast:
One, who hath oft the couch of sickness prest!
On whom the Mother looks, as it goes by,
With tenderness intense, and fear supprest,
While the soft patience of her anxious eye
Blends with 'God's will be done,'--'God grant thou may'st not die!'
XXXVIII.

And is there not the elder of the band?
She with the gentle smile and smooth bright hair,
Waiting, some paces back,--content to stand
Till these of Love's caresses have their share;
Knowing how soon his fond paternal care
Shall seek his violet in her shady nook,--
Patient she stands--demure, and brightly fair--
Copying the meekness of her Mother's look,

And clasping in her hand the favourite story-book.
XXXIX.

Wake, dreamer!--Choose;--to labour Life away,
Which of these little precious ones shall go
(Debarred of summer-light and cheerful play)
To that receptacle for dreary woe,
The Factory Mill?--Shall He, in whom the glow
Of Life shines bright, whose free limbs' vigorous tread
Warns us how much of beauty that we know
Would fade, when he became dispirited,
And pined with sickened heart, and bowed his fainting head?

XL.

Or shall the little quiet one, whose voice
So rarely mingles in their sounds of glee,
Whose life can bid no living thing rejoice,
But rather is a long anxiety;--
Shall he go forth to toil? and keep the free
Frank boy, whose merry shouts and restless grace
Would leave all eyes that used his face to see,
Wistfully gazing towards that vacant space
Which makes their fireside seem a lone and dreary place?
XLI.

Or, sparing these, send Her whose simplest words
Have power to charm,--whose warbled, childish song,
Fluent and clear and bird-like, strikes the chords
Of sympathy among the listening throng,--
Whose spirits light, and steps that dance along,
Instinctive modesty and grace restrain:
The fair young innocent who knows no wrong,--
Whose slender wrists scarce hold the silken skein
Which the glad Mother winds;--shall She endure this pain?

XLII.

Away! The thought--the thought alone brings tears!
THEY labour--they, the darlings of our lives!
The flowers and the sunbeams of our fleeting years;
From whom alone our happiness derives

A lasting strength, which every shock survives;
The green young trees beneath whose arching boughs
(When failing Energy no longer strives,)
Our wearied age shall find a cool repose;--
THEY toil in torture!--No--the painful picture close.
XLIII.

Ye shudder,--nor behold the vision more!
Oh, Fathers! is there then one law for these,
And one for the pale children of the Poor,--
That to their agony your hearts can freeze;
Deny their pain, their toil, their slow disease;
And deem with false complaining they encroach
Upon your time and thought? Is yours the Ease
Which misery vainly struggles to approach,
Whirling unthinking by, in Luxury's gilded coach?
XLIV.

Examine and decide. Watch through his day
One of these little ones. The sun hath shone
An hour, and by the ruddy morning's ray,
The last and least, he saunters on alone.
See where, still pausing on the threshold stone,
He stands, as loth to lose the bracing wind;
With wistful wandering glances backward thrown
On all the light and glory left behind,
And sighs to think that HE must darkly be confined!
XLV.

Enter with him. The stranger who surveys
The little natives of that dreary place
(Where squalid suffering meets his shrinking gaze),
Used to the glory of a young child's face,
Its changeful light, its coloured sparkling grace,
(Gleams of Heaven's sunshine on our shadowed earth!)
Starts at each visage wan, and bold, and base,
Whose smiles have neither innocence nor mirth,--
And comprehends the Sin original from birth.
XLVI.

There the pale Orphan, whose unequal strength
Loathes the incessant toil it must pursue,

Pines for the cool sweet evening's twilight length,
The sunny play-hour, and the morning's dew:
Worn with its cheerless life's monotonous hue,
Bowed down, and faint, and stupefied it stands;
Each half-seen object reeling in its view--
While its hot, trembling, languid little hands
Mechanically heed the Task-master's commands.
XLVII.

There, sounds of wailing grief and painful blows
Offend the ear, and startle it from rest;
(While the lungs gasp what air the place bestows
Or misery's joyless vice, the ribald jest,
Breaks the sick silence: staring at the guest
Who comes to view their labour, they beguile
The unwatched moment; whispers half suppress
And mutterings low, their faded lips defile,--
While gleams from face to face a strange and sullen smile.
XLVIII.

These then are his Companions: he, too young
To share their base and saddening merriment,
Sits by: his little head in silence hung;
His limbs cramped up; his body weakly bent;
Toiling obedient, till long hours so spent
Produce Exhaustion's slumber, dull and deep.
The Watcher's stroke,--bold--sudden--violent,--
Urges him from that lethargy of sleep,
And bids him wake to Life,--to labour and to weep!
XLIX.

But the day hath its End. Forth then he hies
With jaded, faltering step, and brow of pain;
Creeps to that shed,--his HOME,--where happy lies
The sleeping babe that cannot toil for Gain;
Where his remorseful Mother tempts in vain
With the best portion of their frugal fare:
Too sick to eat--too weary to complain--
He turns him idly from the untasted share,
Slumbering sinks down unfed, and mocks her useless care.
L.

Weeping she lifts, and lays his heavy head
(With a woman's grieving tenderness)
On the hard surface of his narrow bed;
Bends down to give a sad unfelt caress,
And turns away;--willing her God to bless,
That, weary as he is, he need not fight
Against that long-enduring bitterness,
The VOLUNTARY LABOUR of the Night,
But sweetly slumber on till day's returning light.
LI.

Vain hope! Alas! unable to forget
The anxious task's long, heavy agonies,
In broken sleep the victim labours yet!
Waiting the boding stroke that bids him rise,
He marks in restless fear each hour that flies--
Anticipates the unwelcome morning prime--
And murmuring feebly, with unawakened eyes,
'Mother! Oh Mother! is it yet THE TIME?'--
Starts at the moon's pale ray--or clock's far distant chime.
LII.

Such is his day and night! Now then return
Where your OWN slumber in protected ease;
They whom no blast may pierce, no sun may burn;
The lovely, on whose cheeks the wandering breeze
Hath left the rose's hue. Ah! not like these
Does the pale infant-labourer ask to be:
He craves no tempting food--no toys to please--
Not Idleness,--but less of agony;
Not Wealth,--but comfort, rest, CONTENTED POVERTY.
LIII.

There is, among all men, in every clime,
A difference instinctive and unschooled:
God made the MIND unequal. From all time
By fierceness conquered, or by cunning fooled,
The World hath had its Rulers and its Ruled:--
Yea--uncompelled--men abdicate free choice,
Fear their own rashness, and, by thinking cooled,
Follow the counsel of some trusted voice;--
A self-elected sway, wherein their souls rejoice.

LIV.

Thus, for the most part, willing to obey,
Men rarely set Authority at naught:
Albeit a weaker or a worse than they
May hold the rule with such importance fraught:
And thus the peasant, from his cradle taught
That some must own, while some must till the land,
Rebels not--murmurs not--even in his thought.
Born to his lot, he bows to high command,
And guides the furrowing plough with a contented hand.

LV.

But, if the weight which habit renders light
Is made to gall the Serf who bends below--
The dog that watched and fawned, prepares to bite!
Too rashly strained, the cord snaps from the bow--
Too tightly curbed, the steeds their riders throw--
And so, (at first contented his fair state
Of customary servitude to know,)
Too harshly ruled, the poor man learns to hate
And curse the oppressive law that bids him serve the Great.

LVI.

THEN first he asks his gloomy soul the CAUSE
Of his discomfort; suddenly compares--
Reflects--and with an angry Spirit draws
The envious line between his lot and theirs,
Questioning the JUSTICE of the unequal shares.
And from the gathering of this discontent,
Where there is strength, REVOLT his standard rears;
Where there is weakness, evermore finds vent
The sharp annoying cry of sorrowful complaint.

LVII.

Therefore should Mercy, gentle and serene,
Sit by the Ruler's side, and share his Throne:--
Watch with unerring eye the passing scene,
And bend her ear to mark the feeblest groan;
Lest due Authority be overthrown,
And they that ruled perceive (too late confest!)
Permitted Power might still have been their own,

Had they but watched that none should be opprest--
No just complaint despised--no WRONG left unredrest.
LVIII.

Nor should we, Christians in a Christian land,
Forget who smiled on helpless infancy,
And blest them with divinely gentle hand.--
'Suffer that little children come to me:'
Such were His words to whom we bow the knee!
These to our care the Saviour did commend;
And shall we His bequest treat carelessly,
Who yet our full protection would extend
To the lone Orphan child left by an Earthly Friend?
LIX.

No! rather what the Inspired Law imparts
To guide our ways, and make our path more sure;
Blending with Pity (native to our hearts),
Let us to these, who patiently endure
Neglect, and penury, and toil, secure
The innocent hopes that to their age belong:
So, honouring Him, the Merciful and Pure,
Who watches when the Oppressor's arm grows strong,--
And helpeth them to right--the Weak--who suffer wrong!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

An Emblem Of Life

Oh! Life is like the summer rill, where weary daylight dies;
We long for morn to rise again, and blush along the skies:
For dull and dark that stream appears, whose waters in the day,
All glad, in conscious sunniness, went dancing on their way.
But when the glorious sun hath 'woke, and look'd upon the earth,
And over hill and dale there float the sounds of human mirth;
We sigh to see day hath not brought its perfect light to all,
For with the sunshine on those waves, the silent shadows fall.

Oh! like that changeful summer rill our years go gliding by,
Now bright with joy, now dark with tears, before youth's eager eye.
And thus we vainly pant for all the rich and golden glow,
Which young Hope, like an early sun, upon its course can throw,
Soon o'er our half illumined hearts the stealing shadows come,
And every thought that 'woke in light receives its share of gloom;
And we weep while joys and sorrows both are fading from our view,
To find, wherever sunbeams fall, the shadow cometh too.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

As When From Dreams Awakening

AS when from dreams awaking
The dim forms float away
Whose visioned smiles were making
Our darkness bright as day;
We vainly strive, while weeping,
From their shining spirit track,
(Where they fled while we were sleeping,)
To call those dear ones back!

Like the stars, some power divides them
From a world of want and pain;
They are there, but daylight hides them,
And we look for them in vain.
For a while we dwell with sadness,
On the beauty of that dream,

Then turn, and hail with gladness
The light of morning's beam.

So, when memory's power is wringing
Our lonely hearts to tears,
Dim forms around us bringing
That brightened former years:
Fond looks and low words spoken,
Which those dreamy days could boast,
Rise; till the spell be broken,
We forget that they are lost!

But when the hour of darkness rolls
Like heavy night away;
And peace is stealing o'er our souls,
Like the dawn of summer day:
The dim sweet forms that used to bless,
Seem stealing from us too;
We loved them-but joy's sunniness
Hath hid them from our view!

Oh could day beam eternally,
And Memory's power cease,

This world, a world of light would be,
Our hearts were worlds of peace:

But dreams of joy return with night,
And dwell upon the past-
And every grief that clouds our light,
Reminds us of the last!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Babel

KNOW ye in ages past that tower
By human hands built strong and high?
Arch over arch, with magic power,
Rose proudly each successive hour,
To reach the happy sky.

It rose, till human pride was crushed--
Quick came the unexpected change;
A moment every tone was hushed,
And then again they freely gushed,
But sounded wild and strange.

Loud, quick, and clear, each voice was heard,
Calling for lime, and stone, and wood,
All uttered words--but not one word;
More than the carol of a bird,
Their fellows understood.

Is there no Babel but that one,
The storied tower of other days?--
Where, round the giant pile of stone,
Pausing they stood--their labour done,
To listen in amaze.

Fair springs the tower of hope and fame,
When all our life is fairy land;
Till, scarcely knowing what to blame,
Our fellows cease to feel the same--
We cease to understand.

Then, when they coldly smile to hear
The burning dreams of earlier days;
The rapid fall from hope to fear,
When eyes whose every glance was dear,
Seem changing as they gaze:

Then, when we feel 'twere vain to speak
Of fervent hopes--aspirings high--
Of thoughts for which all words are weak--

Of wild far dreams, wherein we seek
Knowledge of earth and sky:

Of communings with nature's God,
When impulse deep the soul hath moved--

Of tears which sink within the sod,
Where, mingling with the valley clod,
Lies something we have loved:

Then cometh ours;--and better theirs--
Of stranger tongues together brought,
Than that in which we all have shares,
A Babel in a world of cares--
Of feeling and of thought.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Dedication

ONCE more, my harp! once more, although I thought
Never to wake thy silent strings again,
A wandering dream thy gentle chords have wrought,
And my sad heart, which long hath dwelt in pain,
Soars, like a wild bird from a cypress bough,
Into the poet's Heaven, and leaves dull grief below!

And unto Thee--the beautiful and pure--
Whose lot is cast amid that busy world
Where only sluggish Dulness dwells secure,
And Fancy's generous wing is faintly furl'd;
To thee--whose friendship kept its equal truth
Through the most dreary hour of my embitter'd youth--

I dedicate the lay. Ah! never bard,
In days when Poverty was twin with song;
Nor wandering harper, lonely and ill-starr'd;
Cheer'd by some castle's chief, and harboured long;
Not Scott's 'Last Minstrel,' in his trembling lays,
Woke with a warmer heart the earnest meed of praise!

For easy are the alms the rich man spares
To sons of Genius, by misfortune bent,
But thou gav'st me, what woman seldom dares,
Belief--in spite of may a cold dissent--
When slandered and maligned, I stood apart,
From those whose bounded power, hath wrung, not crushed, my heart.

Then, then, when cowards lied away my name,
And scoff'd to see me feebly stem the tide;
When some were kind on whom I had no claim,
And some forsook on whom my love relied,
And some, who might have battled for my sake,
Stood off in doubt to see what turn 'the world' would take--

Thou gavest me that the poor do give the poor,
Kind words, and holy wishes, and true tears;
The loved, the near of kin, could do no more,
Who changed not with the gloom of varying years,

But clung the closer when I stood forlorn,
And blunted Slander's dart with their indignant scorn.

For they who credit crime are they who feel
Their own hearts weak to unresisted sin;
Mem'ry, not judgment, prompts the thoughts which steal
O'er minds like these, an easy faith to win;
And tales of broken truth are still believed
Most readily by those who have themselves deceived.

But, like a white swan down a troubled stream,
Whose ruffling pinion hath the power to fling
Aside the turbid drops which darkly gleam
And mar the freshness of her snowy wing,--
So Thou, with queenly grace and gentle pride,
Along the world's dark waves in purity dost glide;

Thy pale and pearly cheek was never made
To crimson with a faint false-hearted shame;
Thou didst not shrink,--of bitter tongues afraid,
Who hunt in packs the object of their blame;
To Thee the sad denial still held true,
For from thine own good thoughts thy heart its mercy drew.

And, though my faint and tributary rhymes
Add nothing to the glory of thy day,
Yet every Poet hopes that after-times
Shall set some value on his votive lay,--
And I would fain one gentle deed record
Among the many such with which thy life is stored.

So, when these lines, made in a mournful hour,
Are idly open'd to the Stranger's eye,
A dream of THEE, aroused by Fancy's power,
Shall be the first to wander floating by;
And they who never saw thy lovely face,
Shall pause,--to conjure up a vision of its grace!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Description Of A Lost Friend

FROM THE MORNING POST.

LOST--near the 'Change in the city,
(I saw there a girl that seemed pretty)
'Joe Steel,' a short, cross-looking varlet,
With a visage as red as scarlet:
His nose and chin of a hue
Approaching nearly to blue:
With legs just the length, and no more,
That will trot him from door to door;
And a most capacious paunch,
Fed with many a venison haunch.
Whoever will bring the same
To a tailor's of the name
Of Patterson, Watson, and Co.,
Shall receive a guinea or so.
And that all may understand,
And bring him safe to hand,
I subjoin as well as I can,
The character of the man.
He's a grumpy sort of a fellow,
Till liquor has made him mellow;
The sort of man who never
Wishes your guests to be clever,
When he's asked to come and dine,
But only wants his wine.
He is but a stupid ass,
Even when he's filled his glass,
And emptied it too, a dozen
Times, with some civil cousin.
I don't remember his saying
Aught, that meant more than braying.
We met and we talked together
Of politics and the weather,
Of the taxes and the king,
And that silly sort of thing;
But he never would give an opinion
As to the sort of dominion
He should like to live under, if we

To think of such things were free.
He said it was all speculation,
More harm than good to the nation.
He wouldn't abuse the Commons;
Nor admire a pretty woman's
Ankle, that tripped thro' the park
When it wasn't light or dark.
Laugh at him--he turned sour;
Talk gravely--his brow would lower.
Sometimes he wished to grow fat,
(I'm sure it was needless, that)
When he was over-fed,
Or out of spirits, he said.
Sometimes he wished to be thin,
(When he poured fresh spirits in.)
But he never, when we were alone,
Said any thing new of his own.
The merrier you were, the more
He grumbled, and fumed, and swore;
The happier you were, the less
He cared for your happiness.
We never agreed for a day,
Except when one was away.
And meeting too often of late,
It was my peculiar fate
To say something bitter and bad
About wives being not to be had,
When a batchelor got a red nose,
And his short legs were shrunk in his hose--
It was witty; but cost me my friend:
For, being too late to amend,
He took it amiss that I
The defects of his form should spy.
Perchance he had borne a few jeers
On the purple hue of his ears,
But to say that his legs were small!
Oh! his heart's blood was turned to gall.
So leaving his bottle, he swore
That he never would enter my door.
And I chuckled within my own heart,
Snapped my fingers, and saw him depart,
But, alas! now I've lost him, I find

There was no one so much to my mind.
I have now got a good-tempered fellow,
But he tells me my face is grown yellow.
I've got a new friend that is clever,
But he's brewing his good things for ever:
Another, who talks at a rate
That is frightful, of church and of state,
And never will give in a jot,
Tho' you reason and bawl till you're hot:
Another--but why should I bring
Of friends, as of onions, a string
To my dinners, except that I feel
No number can make a Joe Steel!
When they're lively, I think it a bore;
When they're silent, I miss him the more.
I miss him when I would recall
Some fact of my youth to them all.
Not one of my friends seems to care
If I once had a head of black hair--
Not one of them seems to believe
How the pretty girls once used to grieve
When they missed me amongst them,--Oh! no,
I can have no friend equal to Joe!--
I miss his round, red, surly face--
I miss his short legs from their place--
I miss him--I'm growing quite sad;
I think my old port is turned bad--
I miss him, and draw this conclusion,
(Tho' others may think it delusion)
That, with all their worst faults at their back,
(And I'm sure poor Joe Steel had a pack)
Tho' they never can alter or mend;
There's no friend like a very old friend!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Dreams

SURELY I heard a voice-surely my name
Was breathed in tones familiar to my heart!
I listened-and the low wind stealing came,
In darkness and in silence to depart.

Surely I saw a form, a proud bright form,
Standing beside my couch! I raised mine eyes:
'Twas but a dim cloud, herald of a storm,
That floated through the grey and twilight skies.

Surely the brightness of the summer hour
Hath suddenly burst upon the circling gloom!
I dream; 'twas but the perfume of a flower,
Which the breeze wafted through the silent room.

Surely a hand clasped mine with greetings fond!
A name is murmured by my lips with pain;
Woe for that sound-woe for love's broken bond.
I start-I wake-I am alone again!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Edward

HEAVY is my trembling heart, mine own love, my dearest,
Heavy as the hearts whose love is poured in vain;
All the bright day I watch till thou appearest,
All the long night I dream of thee again.
When the whisp'ring summer breeze is waving o'er me lightly,
When the moaning winter winds their wail of sadness make;
Then dearest, then, thine image riseth brightly,
I am weary of my life, for Edward's sake.

When in the halls of light, all bright and happy faces,
Smiling turn to greet a friend, and wander on
Far through the distant crowd, my heart thy proud form traces,
My eye is sadly fixed on thee alone.
When that dear, familiar voice, some careless word hath spoken,
When thy brow a moment bends, a cold farewell to take;
Then, dearest, then, my heart is well nigh broken,
I am weary of my life, for Edward's sake.

Oh, Edward! dark my doom!--this heart will love for ever,
Though thou wilt never share its joy or pain,
Thine eye will turn to mine, and meet its glance, but never
Beam fondly back on hers who loves in vain.
But when weary life is o'er, and in the grave I'm lying,
(Silently a woman's heart should hide its love and break;)
Then, dearest, then, some voice shall tell thee, sighing,
How weary was my life to me, for Edward's sake.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Escape From The Snares Of Love

YOUNG LOVE has chains of metal rare,
Heavy as gold-yet light as air:
It chanced he caught a heart one day
Which struggled hard, as loth to stay.

Prudence, poor thing, was lingering near-
She whispered in the captive's ear,
'Cease, little flutterer; bear thy chain,
And soon thou shalt be free again!'

No; I assert my right to fly-
The chain shall break, and Love shall die
What! I remain a willing slave?
No-freedom, freedom, or the grave!

Meanwhile Love slumbered by his prize
His languid limbs and closing eyes
Prudence beheld-she spoke again,
'Oh! yet a moment bear thy chain!'

Unheeded prayer! the struggling heart
Strove still the slender links to part,
While timid Prudence gazed and sighed,
Weary of strife, and loth to chide.

One moment more the links had broke,
But slumbering Love, alarmed, awoke;
With iron rivets bound the chain,
And turned secure to sleep again.

Let hearts which now in bondage weep,
Repose, till wearied Love shall sleep:
Oh! struggle not, lest he should wake ;-
Slip off the chain-it will not break.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

First Love

YES, I know that you once were my lover,
But that sort of thing has an end,
And though love and its transports are over,
You know you can still be--my friend:
I was young, too, and foolish, remember;
(Did you ever hear John Hardy sing?)
It was then, the fifteenth of November,
And this is the end of the spring!

You complain that you are not well-treated
By my suddenly altering so;
Can I help it?--you're very conceited,
If you think yourself equal to Joe.
Don't kneel at my feet, I implore you;
Don't write on the drawings you bring;
Don't ask me to say, 'I adore you,'
For, indeed, it is now no such thing.

I confess, when at Bognor we parted,
I swore that I worshipped you then--
That I was a maid broken-hearted,
And you the most charming of men.
I confess, when I read your first letter,
I blotted your name with a tear--
But, oh! I was young--knew no better,
Could I tell that I'd meet Hardy here?

How dull you are grown! how you worry,
Repeating my vows to be true--
If I said so, I told you a story,
For I love Hardy better than you!
Yes! my fond heart has fixed on another,
(I sigh so whenever he's gone,)
I shall always love you--as a brother,
But my heart is John Hardy's alone.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

I Cannot Love Thee!

I CANNOT love thee, tho' thy soul
Be one which all good thoughts control;
Altho' thy eyes be starry bright,
And the gleams of golden light
Fall upon thy silken hair,
And thy forehead, broad and fair;
Something of a cold disgust,
(Wonderful, and most unjust,)
Something of a sullen fear
Weighs my heart when thou art near;
And my soul, which cannot twine
Thought or sympathy with thine,
With a coward instinct tries
To hide from thy enamour'd eyes,
Wishing for a sudden blindness
To escape those looks of kindness;

Sad she folds her shivering wings
From the love thy spirit brings,
Like a chainéd thing, caress'd
By the hand it knows the best,
By the hand which, day by day,
Visits its imprison'd stay,
Bringing gifts of fruit and blossom
From the green earth's plenteous bosom;
All but that for which it pines
In those narrow close confines,
With a sad and ceaseless sigh--
Wild and wingéd Liberty!

Can it be, no instinct dwells
In th' immortal soul, which tells
That thy love, oh! human brother,
Is unwelcome to another?
Can the changeful wavering eye,
Raised to thine in forced reply,--
Can the cold constrainéd smile,
Shrinking from thee all the while,--
Satisfy thy heart, or prove

Such a likeness of true love?

Seems to me, that I should guess
By what a world of bitterness,
By what a gulf of hopeless care,
Our two hearts divided were:
Seems to me that I should know
All the dread that lurk'd below,
By want of answer found
In the voice's trembling sound;
By the unresponsive gaze;
By the smile which vainly plays,
In whose cold imperfect birth
Glow no fondness, lives no mirth;
By the sigh, whose different tone
Hath no echo of thine own;
By the hand's cold clasp, which still
Held as not of its free will,
Shrinks, as it for freedom yearn'd;--
That my love was unreturn'd.

When thy tongue (ah! woe is me!)
Whispers love-vows tenderly,
Mine is shaping, all unheard,
Fragments of some withering word,

Which, by its complete farewell,
Shall divide us like a spell!
And my heart beats loud and fast,
Wishing that confession past;
And the tide of anguish rises,
Till its strength my soul surprises,
And the reckless words, unspoken,
Nearly have the silence broken,
With a gush like some wild river,--
'Oh! depart, depart for ever!'

But my faltering courage fails,
And my drooping spirit quails;
So sweet-earnest looks thy smile
Full of tenderness the while,
And with such strange pow'r are gifted

The eyes to which my own are lifted;
So my faint heart dies away,
And my lip can nothing say,
And I long to be alone,--
For I weep when thou are gone!

Yes, I weep, but then my soul
Free to ponder o'er the whole,
Free from fears which check'd its thought,
And the pain thy presence brought,
Whispers me the useless lie,--
'For thy love he will not die,
Such pity is but vanity.'
And I bend my weary head
O'er the tablets open spread,
Whose fair pages me invite
All I dared not say to write;
And my fingers take the pen,
And my heart feels braced again
With a resolute intent;--
But, ere yet that page be sent,
Once I view the written words
Which must break thy true heart's chords;
And a vision, piercing bright,
Rises on my coward sight,
Of thy fond hand, gladly taking
What must set thy bosom aching;
While too soon the brittle seal
Bids the page the worst reveal,
Blending in thy eager gaze--
Scorn, and anguish, and amaze.

Powerless, then, my hand reposes
On the tablet which it closes,
With a cold and shivering sense
Born of Truth's omnipotence:
And my weeping blots the leaves,
And my sinking spirit grieves,
Humbled in that bitter hour
By the very consciousness of power!
What am I, that I should be
Such a source of woe to thee?

What am I, that I should dare
Thus to play with thy despair,
And persuade myself that thou
Wilt not bend beneath the blow?

Rather should my conscience move
Me to think of this vain love,
Which my life of peace beguiles,
As a tax on foolish smiles,
Which--like light not meant for one
Who, wandering in the dark alone,
Hath yet been tempted by its ray
To turn aside and lose his way--
Binds me, by their careless sin,
To take the misled wanderer in.

And I praise thee, as I go,
Wandering, weary, full of woe,
To my own unwilling heart;
Cheating it to take thy part
By rehearsing each rare merit
Which thy nature doth inherit.
To myself their list I give,
Most prosaic, positive:--
How thy heart is good and true,
And thy face most fair to view;
How the powers of thy mind
Flatterers in the wisest find,
And the talents God hath given
Seem as held in trust for Heaven;
Labouring on for noble ends,--
Steady to thy boyhood's friends,--
Slow to give, or take, offence,--
Full of earnest eloquence,--
Hopeful, eager, gay of cheer,--
Frank in all thy dealings here,--

Ready to redress the wrong
Of the weak against the strong,--
Keeping up an honest pride
With those the world hath deified,
But gently bending heart and brow

To the helpless and the low;--
How, in brief, there dwells in thee
All tht's generous and free,
All that may most aptly move
My Spirit to an answering love.

But in vain the tale is told;
Still my heart lies dead and cold,
Still it wanders and rebels
From the thought that thus compels,
And refuses to rejoice
Save in unconstrainēd choice.

Therefore, when thine eyes shall read
This, my book, oh take thou heed!
In the dim lines written here,
All shall be explained and clear;

All my lips could never speak
When my heart grew coward-weak,--
All my hand could never write,
Tho' I planned it day and night,--
All shall be at length confest,
And thou'lt forgive,--and let me rest!
None but thou and I shall know
Whose the doom, and whose the woe;
None but thou and I shall share
In the secret printed there;
It shall be a secret still,
Tho' all look on it at will;
And the eye shall read in vain
What the heart cannot explain.
Each one, baffled in his turn,
Shall no more its aim discern,
Than a wanderer who might look
On some wizard's magic book,
Of the darkly-worded spell
Where deep-hidden meanings dwell.
Memory, fancy, they shall task
This sad riddle to unmask,--
Or, with bold conjectural fame,
Fit the pages with a name;--

But nothing shall they understand,
And vainly shall the stranger's hand
Essay to fling the leaves apart,
Which bear MY message to THY heart!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

I Do Not Love Thee

I DO not love thee! - no! I do not love thee!
And yet when thou art absent I am sad;
 And envy even the bright blue sky above thee,
Whose quiet stars may see thee and be glad.

I do not love thee! - yet, I know not why,
Whate'er thou dost seems still well done, to me:
 And often in my solitude I sigh
That those I do love are not more like thee!

I do not love thee! - yet, when thou art gone,
I hate the sound (though those who speak be dear)
 Which breaks the lingering echo of the tone
Thy voice of music leaves upon my ear.

I do not love thee! - yet thy speaking eyes,
With their deep, bright, and most expressive blue,
 Between me and the midnight heaven arise,
Oftener than any eyes I ever knew.

I know I do not love thee! yet, alas!
Others will scarcely trust my candid heart;
 And oft I catch them smiling as they pass,
Because they see me gazing where thou art.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

I Was Not False To Thee

I WAS not false to thee, and yet
My cheek alone looked pale;
My weary eye was dim and wet,
My strength began to fail.
Thou wert the same; thy looks were gay,
Thy step was light and free;
And yet, with truth, my heart can say,
I was not false to thee!

I was not false to thee, yet now
Thou hast a cheerful eye,
With flushing cheek and drooping brow
I wander mournfully.
I hate to meet the gaze of men,
I weep where none can see;
Why do I only suffer, when
I was not false to thee?

I was not false to thee; yet oh!
How scornfully they smile,
Who see me droop, who guess my woe,
Yet court thee all the while.
'Tis strange! but when long years are past,
Thou wilt remember me;
Whilst I can feel until the last,
I was not false to thee!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Ifs

OH! if the winds could whisper what they hear,
When murmuring round at sunset through the grove;
If words were written on the streamlet clear,
So often spoken fearlessly above:
If tell-tale stars, descending from on high,
Could image forth the thoughts of all that gaze,
Entranced upon that deep cerulean sky,
And count how few think only of their rays!

If the lulled heaving ocean could disclose
All that has passed upon her golden sand,
When the moon-lighted waves triumphant rose,
And dashed their spray upon the echoing strand.
If dews could tell how many tears have mixed
With the bright gem-like drops that Nature weeps,
If night could say how many eyes are fixed
On her dark shadows, while creation sleeps!

If echo, rising from her magic throne,
Repeated with her melody of voice
Each timid sigh-each whispered word and tone,
Which made the hearer's listening heart rejoice.
If Nature could, unchecked, repeat aloud
All she hath heard and seen-must hear and see-
Where would the whispering, vowing, sighing crowd
Of lovers, and their blushing partners, be?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Love Not

LOVE not, love not! ye hapless sons of clay!
Hope's gayest wreaths are made of earthly flowers—
Things that are made to fade and fall away
Ere they have blossom'd for a few short hours.

Love not!

Love not! the thing ye love may change:
The rosy lip may cease to smile on you,
The kindly-beaming eye grow cold and strange,
The heart still warmly beat, yet not be true.

Love not!

Love not! the thing you love may die,
May perish from the gay and gladsome earth;
The silent stars, the blue and smiling sky,
Beam o'er its grave, as once upon its birth.

Love not!

Love not! oh warning vainly said
In present hours as in the years gone by;
Love flings a halo round the dear ones' head,
Faultless, immortal, till they change or die,

Love not!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Mary

YES, we were happy once, and care
My jocund heart could ne'er surprise;
My treasures were, her golden hair,
Her ruby lips, her brilliant eyes.
My treasures were--alas! depart
Ye visions of what used to be!
Cursed be the heart--the cruel heart--
That stole my Mary's love from me.

Dark are my joyless days--and thou--
Dost thou too dream, and dreaming weep?
Or, careless of thy broken vow,
Unholy revels dost thou keep?
No, Mary, no,--we loved too well,
Such deep oblivion cannot be;
Cursed be the lips, where guile could dwell,
To lure thy love away from me!

It cannot be!--ah! haply, while
With wild reproach I greet thy name,
Thy ruby lip hath ceased to smile--
Thy happy head is bowed with shame!
Haply, with haggard want opprest,
Thou weepest where no eye may see;
Cursed be the spoiler's cruel breast--
But, oh! my Mary--heaven shield thee!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

May-Day, 1837

I.

MAY-DAY is come!--While yet the unwilling Spring
Checks with capricious frown the opening year,
Onward, where bleak winds have been whispering,
The punctual Hours their ancient playmate bear;
But those who long have look'd for thee, stand by,
Like men who welcome back a friend bereaved,
And cannot smile, because his sadden'd eye
Doth mutely tell them how his soul is grieved.
Even thus too greet thine alter'd face to-day,
Thou friend in mourning garb!--chill, melancholy May!

II.

To thee the first and readiest smiles of Earth,
Lovely with life renew'd, were always given,--
To thee belong'd the sunshine and the mirth
Which bathed all Nature with a glow from Heaven,--
To thee the joy of Childhood's earnest heart,
His shouting song, and light elastic tread,
His brows high arch'd, and laughing lips apart,
Bright as the wreath that bound his rosy head.--
Thou wert of Innocence the holiday,
Thou garlanded and glad!--thou ever-blooming May!

III.

Yet will I not reproach thee for thy change:
Closed be the flower, and leafless be the tree!
Smile not as thou wert wont; but sad, and strange,
And joyless, let thy tardy coming be!
So shall I miss those infant voices less,
Calling each other through the garden bowers,
Meeting and parting in wild happiness,
Leading a light dance thro' the sunny hours;
Those little mirthful hearts, who, far away,
Breathe, amid cloud-capp'd hills, a yet more wintry May!

IV.

Ah, boys! your play-ground is a desert spot,

Revisited alone, and bathed with tears;
And where ye pass your May-day, knoweth not
The mother who hath watch'd your dawning years.
Mine is no more the joy to see ye come,
And deem each step hath some peculiar grace!
Yours is no more the mother's welcome home,
Smiling at each beloved, familiar face!
And I an thankfiul that this dreary May
Recals not, save by name, that brighter, happier day!
V.

I should have felt more mock'd, if there had been
More peace and sunshine round me,--had the grove,
Clad in transparent leaves of tender green,
Been full of murm'ring sounds of Nature's love;
I should have wept more bitterly beneath
The frail laburnum trees, so faint and fair,--
I should have sicken'd at the lilac's breath,
Thrown by the warm sun on the silent air;
But now, with stern regret I wend my way--
I know thee not,--thou cold, and unfamiliar May!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

My Childhood's Home

I HAVE tasted each varied pleasure,
And drunk of the cup of delight;
I have danced to the gayest measure
In the halls of dazzling light.
I have dwelt in a blaze of splendour,
And stood in the courts of kings;
I have snatched at each toy that could render
More rapid the flight of Time's wings.
But vainly I've sought for joy or peace,
In that life of light and shade;
And I turn with a sigh to my own dear home-
The home where my childhood played!

When jewels are sparkling round me,
And dazzling with their rays,
I weep for the ties that bound me
In life's first early days.
I sigh for one of the sunny hours
Ere day was turned to-night;
For one of my nosegays of fresh wild flowers,
Instead of those jewels bright.
I weep when I gaze on the scentless buds
Which never can bloom or fade;
And I turn with a sigh to those gay green fields-
The home where my childhood played.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

My Heart Is Like A Withered Nut!

MY heart is like a withered nut,
Rattling within its hollow shell;
You cannot ope my breast, and put
Any thing fresh with it to dwell.
The hopes and dreams that filled it when
Life's spring of glory met my view,
Are gone! and ne'er with joy or pain
That shrunken heart shall swell anew.

My heart is like a withered nut;
Once it was soft to every touch,
But now 'tis stern and closely shut;--
I would not have to plead with such.
Each light-toned voice once cleared my brow,
Each gentle breeze once shook the tree
Where hung the sun-lit fruit, which now
Lies cold, and stiff, and sad, like me!

My heart is like a withered nut--
It once was comely to the view;
But since misfortune's blast hath cut,
It hath a dark and mournful hue.
The freshness of its verdant youth
Nought to that fruit can now restore;
And my poor heart, I feel in truth,
Nor sun, nor smile shall light it more!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

My Native Land!

WHERE is the minstrel's native land?
Where the flames of light and feeling glow;
Where the flowers are wreathed for beauty's brow;
Where the bounding heart swells strong and high,
With holy hopes which may not die--
There is my native land!

What is that bright land's music name?
Ere it bent its neck to a foreign yoke,
It was called the land of the broad strong oak--
The land of the free--the German land--
But her sons lie slain by the stranger's hand,
And she weeps sad tears of shame.

Why does the minstrel's country weep?
That the hurricane's rage hath bowed the pride
Of those who should stem the rising tide;
That her princes quail--and that none will hear
Her holy words of might and fear--
Therefore my land must weep!

To whom does the minstrel's country call?
It calls to the silent heavenly powers,
With despair, as the thunder darkly lowers,
For its freedom--for those who should break its chain--
For the hand that never strikes in vain--
To these doth my country call!

For what does the minstrel's country sigh?
That the bloodhound may hunt beyond the bound
Of the soil which brave hearts make holy ground;
That the serf may cease; and our sons be free,
Or those who have borne them, cease to be--
For this does my country sigh!

And still doth the minstrel's country hope?
Her hope is firm, for her cause is good--
That her brave will rise, and her true in blood;
And that God the avenger, our fathers' God,

Will mark the tears that bedew her sod--
Such is my country's hope!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Old Friends

HOW are they waned and faded from our hearts,
The old companions of our early days!
Of all the many loved, which name imparts
Regret when blamed, or rapture at its praise?
What are their several fates, by Heaven decreed,
They of the jocund heart, and careless brow?
Alas! we scarcely know and scarcely heed,
Where, in this world of sighs, they wander now.

See, how with cold faint smile, and courtly nod,
They pass, whom wealth and revelry divide-
Who walked together to the house of God,
Read from one book, and rested side by side;
No look of recognition lights the eye
Which laughingly hath met that fellow-face;
With careless hands they greet and wander by,
Who parted once with tears and long embrace.

Oh, childhood! blessed time of hope and love,
When all we knew was Nature's simple law,
How may we yearn again that time to prove,
When we looked round, and loved whate'er we saw.
Now dark suspicion wakes, and love departs,
And cold distrust its well-feigned smile displays;
And they are waned and faded from our hearts,
The old companions of our early days!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

On Seeing Anthony, The Eldest Child Of Lord And Lady Ashley

I.

IT was a fair and gentle child
Stood leaning by his mother's knee;
His noble brow was smooth and mild--
His eyes shone bright with frolic glee--
And he was stately, though so young;
As from a noble lineage sprung.

II.

So, gazing on him, as we gaze,
Upon a bud, whose promise yet
Lies shut from all the glowing rays
Which afterwards illumine it:
I marvell'd what the fruit might be
When that fair plant became a tree.

III.

Ah! then, what dreams of proud success,
That lordly brow of beauty brought,
With all its infant stateliness,
And all its unripe power of thought!
What triumphs, boundless, unconfined,
Came crowding on my wand'ring mind!

IV.

I gave that child, the voice might hold
A future senate in command;
Head clear and prompt--heart true and bold--
As quick to act as understand:
I dream'd the scholar's fame achieved--
The hero's wreath of laurel weaved!

V.

But as I mused, a whisper came
Which (like a friend's reproachful tone,
Whose gentleness can smite with shame

Far more than fiercest word or frown
Roused my vex'd conscience by its spell,
And thus the whisper'd warning fell:--
VI.

'Ah! let the shrouded future be,
With all its weight of distant care!
Cloud not with dreams of vanity
That blue bright eye, and forehead fair!
Nor cast thy worldly hopes and fears
In shadow o'er his happy years!
VII.

'Desire not, even in thy dreams,
To hasten those remoter hours
Which, bright although their promise seems,
Must strip his spring-time of its flowers!--
What triumph, in the time to come,
Shall match these early days of home?
VIII.

'This is the Eden of his life,--
His little heart bounds glad and free:
Amid a world of toil and strife,
All independent smileth he!
Nor dreams by that sweet mother's side
Of dark Ambition's restless pride.
IX.

'But, like a bird in winter,--still
Fill'd with a sweet and natural joy,
Tho' frost lies bleak upon the hill,
And mists obscure the cold grey sky,
Which sings, tho' on a leafless bough,--
He smiles, even at the gloomiest brow!
X.

Oh! looking a child's fair face
Methinks should purify the heart;
As angel presences have grace
To bid the darker powers depart,
And glorify our grosser sense

With a reflected innocence!

XI.

And seeing thee, thou lovely boy,
My soul, reproach'd, gave up its schemes
Of worldly triumph's heartless joy,
For purer and more sinless dreams,
And mingled in my farewell there
Something of blessing and of prayer.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

On The Purple And White Carnation

'Twas a bright May morn, and each opening flower
Lay sunning itself in Flora's bower;
Young Love, who was fluttering round, espied
The blossoms so gay in their painted pride;
And he gazed on the point of a feathered dart,
For mischief had filled the boy-god's heart;
And laughed as his bowstring of silk he drew,
And away that arrow at random flew:
Onward it sped like a ray of light,
And fell on a flower of virgin white,
Which glanced all snowy and pure at the sun,
And wept when his glorious course was run:
Two little drops on its pale leaves lay
Pure as pearls, but with diamond ray,

(Like the tear on Beauty's lid of snow,
Which waits but Compassion to bid it flow
It rested, that dart; and its pointed tip
Sank deep where the bees were wont to sip;
And the sickening flower gazed with grief
On the purple stains which dimmed each leaf,
And the crystal drops on its leaves that stood
Blushed with sorrow and shame till they turned to blood.

It chanced that Flora, wandering by,
Beheld her flow'ret droop and die;
And Love laughed in scorn at the flower-queen's woe,
As she vainly shook its leaves of snow.
Fled from her lip was the smile of light :--
'Oh! who hath worked thee this fell despite!
Thou who did'st harm, alas! to none,
But joyed'st all day in the beams of the sun!'
"Twas Love!" said the flower, and a scented sigh
Loaded the gale that murmured by.
'Twas Love! and the dew-drops that blushed on the wound
Sank slow and sad to the pitying ground.

"Twas Love!" said Flora: 'accursed be the power
That could blight the bloom of so fair a flower.

With whispers and smiles he wins Beauty's ears,
But he leaves her nothing save grief and tears.
Ye gods! shall he bend with such tyranny still
The weak and the strong to his wanton will?
No! the hearts that he joins may rude discord sever;
Accursed be his power for ever and ever.'

She spoke, and wept; and the echo again
Repeated the curse, but all in vain--
The tyrant laughed as he fluttered away,
Spreading his rainbow wings to the day,
And settling at random his feathered darts
To spoil sweet flowers, or break fond hearts.

He fled--and the queen o'er her flower in vain
Poured the evening dew and the April rain,
The purple spots on her heart still were.
And she said, as she wept her fruitless care,
'The blight and the stain may be washed away,
But what Love hath ruined must sink in decay.'

And she sent it on earth, to dwell below
In the autumn fog and the winter snow.
And even, 'tis said, on summer eves
O'er that sad lost flower she wails and grieves;
And the drops that by mortals as dew are seen
Are the tears of the mourning flower-queen.

And when men are gazing with fond delight
On its varied leaves, and call them bright,
And praise the velvet tints, and say
There never was flower more pure and gay:
That flow'ret says, as it droops its head,
'Alas! for the day when by love I bled;
When my feathery flowers were pure and white,
And my leaves had no earthly stain or blight,
When no chilling blasts around me blew,
And in Flora's garden of light I grew.
Oh! the blight and the stain may be washed away,
But what Love hath ruined must sink in decay.'

Picture Of Twilight

Oh, Twilight! Spirit that dost render birth
To dim enchantments; melting heaven with earth,
Leaving on craggy hills and running streams
A softness like the atmosphere of dreams;
Thy hour to all is welcome! Faint and sweet
Thy light falls round the peasant's homeward feet,
Who, slow returning from his task of toil,
Sees the low sunset gild the cultured soil,
And, though such radiance round him brightly glows,
Marks the small spark his cottage-window throws.
Still as his heart forestalls his weary pace,
Fondly he dreams of each familiar face,
Recalls the treasures of his narrow life -
His rosy children and his sunburnt wife,
To whom his coming is the chief event
Of simple days in cheerful labour spent.
The rich man's chariot hath gone whirling past
And these poor cottagers have only cast
One careless glance on all that show of pride,
Then to their tasks turn'd quietly aside;
But him they wait for, him they welcome home,
Fix'd sentinels look forth to see him come;
The fagot sent for when the fire grew dim,
For him the watching of that sturdy boy,
For him those smiles of tenderness and joy,
For him - who plods his sauntering way along,
Whistling the fragment of some village song!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Recollections

DO you remember all the sunny places,
Where in bright days, long past, we played together?
Do you remember all the old home faces
That gathered round the hearth in wintry weather?
Do you remember all the happy meetings,
In Summer evenings round the open door--
Kind looks, kind hearts, kind words and tender greetings,
And clasping hands whose pulses beat no more?
Do you remember them?

Do you remember all the merry laughter;
The voices round the swing in our old garden:
The dog that, when we ran, still followed after;
The teasing frolic sure of speedy pardon:
We were but children then, young happy creatures,
And hardly knew how much we had to lose--
But now the dreamlike memory of those features
Comes back, and bids my darkened spirit muse.
Do you remember them?

Do you remember when we first departed
From all the old companions who were round us,
How very soon again we grew light-hearted,
And talked with smiles of all the links which bound us?
And after, when our footsteps were returning,
With unfelt weariness, o'er hill and plain;
How our young hearts kept boiling up, and burning,
To think how soon we'd be at home again.
Do you remember this?

Do you remember how the dreams of glory
Kept fading from us like a fairy treasure;
How we thought less of being fam'd in story,
And more of those to whom our fame gave pleasure.
Do you remember in far countries, weeping,
When a light breeze, a flower, hath brought to mind
Old happy thoughts, which till that hour were sleeping,
And made us yearn for those we left behind?
Do you remember this?

Do you remember when no sound 'woke gladly,
But desolate echoes through our home were ringing,
How for a while we talked--then paused full sadly,
Because our voices bitter thoughts were bringing?
Ah me! those days--those days! my friend, my brother,
Sit down and let us talk of all our woe,
For we have nothing left but one another;
Yet where they went, old playmate, we shall go--
Let us remember this.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Recollections Of A Faded Beauty

AH! I remember when I was a girl
How my hair naturally used to curl,
And how my aunt four yards of net would pucker,
And call the odious thing, 'Diana's tucker.'
I hated it, because although, you see,
It did for her, it didn't do for me.
(Popkins said I should wear a low corsage,
But this I know was merely badinage.)
I recollect the gaities of old--
Ices when hot, and punch when we were cold!
Race-balls, and county-balls, and balls where you,
For seven shillings, got dance and supper too.
Oh! I remember all the routs and plays--
'But words are idle,' as Lord Byron says;
And so am I, and therefore can spare time,
To put my recollections into rhyme.
I recollect the man who did declare
When I was at the fair, myself was fair:
(I had it in my album for three years,
And often looked, and shed delicious tears.)
I didn't fall in love, however, then,
Because I never saw that man again.
And I remember Popkins--ah! too well!
And all who once in love with Chloë fell.
They called me Chloë for they said my grace
Was nymph-like; as was also half my face.
My mouth was wide, but then I had a smile
Which might a demon of its tears beguile.--
As Captain Popkins said, or rather swore,
He liked me, (ah! my Popkins!) all the more.
He couldn't bear a little mouth, for when
It laughed, 'twas like a long slit in a pen;
Or button-hole stretched on too big a button;
Or little cut for gravy in boiled mutton.
(Popkins was clever)--but I must proceed
More regularly, that my friends may read.
I didn't marry, for I couldn't get
A man I liked; I haven't got one yet;
But I had handsome lovers by the score:

Alas! alas! I always sighed for more.

First came young Minton, of the ninth Hussars,
His eyes were bright and twinkling as the stars.
There was, indeed, a little little cast,
But he assured me that it would not last;
And only came, when he, one cold bivouac,
Gazed on the foe, and could not turn it back--
The chill was so intense! Poor Minton, I
Really did think he certainly would die.
He gave me of himself a little print;
The painter did not see or heed the squint.
Squint it was not--but one eye sought the other
With tenderness, as 'twere a young twin brother.
He gave it, and he sighed: oh! often after
The memory of that sigh hath chill'd my laughter.
I'm sure I might have married him, but then
I never did enough encourage men:
And somehow he made love to Anna Budge;
I never owed the ugly minx a grudge,
Though, God knows, she was cross and plain enough.
The things he us'd to say to her--such stuff!

Then came young Frederic Mortimer de Veaux:
A cruel, faithless wretch, that work'd me woe.
But such a man! so tall, so straight--he took
A lady's heart away at every look.
Such a hooked nose, such loads of curly hair--
Such a pale, wild, intense, Byronic air;
And his whole soul, (as he himself has said,)
'Wandering about among the mighty dead.'
He had read books, and rather liked to show it,
And always spoke like an inspired poet.
Last time we met, my heart prophetic drew
A mournful omen from his wild adieu:
I wrote it down, when he had closed the door.
All I remembered--would it had been more!--
'Allah hu! shall I ever behold thee again,
Sweet cause of my transport--dear cause of my pain?
Al, hamdu il Illah! what place can be fair,
My Rose of the Desert, if thou art not there?
Yet I go--for stern duty compels me to do so--

From the world where my heart is, like far-banished Crusoe.
Gul's gardens invite me, but Fate says, depart,
Bismillah! farewell, young Haidee of my heart!
Was it not beautiful? it was--ah, me!--
Who would have thought such lips could traitors be?
Who could have thought, who saw his bright eye burn,
He spoke--intending never to return?

Then Mr. Humley asked aunt's leave to wed,
And winked, and asked if love was in my head,
Or heart; and then proceeding things to settle,
(Helping my aunt the while to lift the kettle,)--
Said, 'you shall have a cozy home, my dear,
And fifty pounds (to buy you clothes) a year.
And we must get your aunt, or some kind fairy
To teach you how to churn and mind the dairy.'
'A cozy home!' why, did one ever hear
Of such a man? and, to call me 'my dear:'
Me--I was Frederick Mortimer's heart's Haidee;
Young Minton's star of hope and gladness--me!
But I refused him; though my aunt did say
'That it was an advantage thrown away;'
(He an advantage!)--'that she'd make me rue it--
Make me a nun--' I'd like to see her do it!
Down, down, rebellious heart! I am a nun,
At least, the same as if I had been one.
I do repent I thought myself too comely;
I do repent I am not Mrs. Humley!

Then, cold and cautious, came young Archy Campbell.
Full many a sunset walk, and pleasant ramble,
I took with him; but I grew weary soon,
Because, instead of turning from the moon
To gaze on me, he bade me look with him,
And wondered when her light would grow more dim,
And the world fade away. I should have tired
Before our honey-moon had half expired.

Oh! loved when first I met thee, and for ever,
Thou, from whom cold caprice hath made me sever--
Where art thou, Popkins?--Captain Popkins! oh!
Dear recollection and delicious woe!

Most generous, most genteel. Oh! thou, alas!
'Of the best class, and better than thy class,'
Where art thou? Ah! it matters not to me;
By Chloë's side thou never more shalt be!
How sweetly didst thou sing 'Those Evening Bells'--
Still the dear echo in my bosom swells:
How gaily didst thou dance, how clearly whistle!
How neatly fold each elegant epistle!
How thin thy pumps were, and how bright thy boot,
('Twas that brought 'Warren's blacking' in repute.)
How nameless was thy majesty of form,
Making each man look like a wriggling worm,
That dared beside thy shoulders' broad expanse
To venture his lank shape. By what sweet chance
Did all, that would have been defects in others,
(Whom yet you deemed your fellow-men and brothers,)
Turn to perfection when beheld in you;
Tho' short, yet graceful; fat, but active too!

He wrote, adored, proposed--but some curst power
Bade me nip off his young Hope's budding flower:
I did not even answer that sweet letter,
Because I thought, perhaps, I'd get a better.
Oh! Chloë, tear thy hair, and beat thy breast;
How couldst thou get a better than the best?
'Tis over now--the agony, despair,
With which I beat that breast, and tore that hair;
When one unmeaning note of cold adieu,
Mixed with reproach, was all my silence drew.
Gone, and for ever!--I could scarce believe it:
Surely he wrote, and I did not receive it!
Vain hope! he went--he was my heart's one love;
All other men, all other loves, above.
I would have married him without a penny,
Each lover after him was one too many!

There was a certain Irishman, indeed,
Who borrowed Cupid's darts to make me bleed.
My aunt said he was vulgar; he was poor,
And his boots creaked, and dirtied her smooth floor.
She hated him; and when he went away,
He wrote--I have the verses to this day:--

Wirasthru! then, my beautiful jewel,
I'm quite tired out of my life.
I can't fight with Fortune a duel,
I cannot have you for a wife.
The beauties of nature adorning
No longer afford me delight:
In the night, och! I wish it were morning,
In the morning I wish it were night!

For your aunt, she has writ me a letter,
(Och, den, she's a sad dirty rogue!)
Does she think other men love you better,
Because I've a bit of the brogue?
In regard to the fighting and swearing,
Sure, jewel, it's all for the best;
Just to drown all the grumbling and tearing,
That gives my poor stomach no rest.

Small work I've had late at the carvin',
Less than none I can't have, any how;
And ye wouldn't deny, when he's starvin',
Your Danny a bit of a row?
Then, good night to you, love, or good morrow;
Sure, it's all just the same which I say,
For the differ is small, to my sorrow,
When one gets neither breakfast, nor tay!

Now was this vulgar, which was'said or sung?'
Or but the ling'ring of his native tongue
In ears which thought it music; being such
As he had known in childhood's early years,
What time we suffer little, and hope much;
And oft turn back to gaze upon with tears!
I liked him, and I liked his verses; but
In some vile squabble, as to where he put
His walking-stick, and whether sticks were stronger
For being cut on Irish ground, or longer,
He lost his life; and I my last real love:
For though a few still round me used to rove,
Whether they had not half his sense and merit--
I never have loved since with any spirit!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet I

ON SEEING THE BUST OF THE YOUNG PRINCESS DE MONTFORT
(In the studio of Bartolini, at Florence).

SWEET marble I didst thou merely represent,
In lieu of her on whom our glances rest,
Some common loveliness,--we were content,
As with a modell'd beauty, well express'd;
But, by the very skill which makes thee seem
So like HER bright and intellectual face,
The heart is led unsatisfied to dream;
For sculpture cannot give the breathing grace,
The light which plays beneath that shadowy brow,
Like sunshine on the fountains of the south,--
The blush which tints that cheek with roseate glow,--
The smile which hovers round that angel-mouth:
No! such the form o'er which Pygmalion sigh'd--
Too fair to be complete while SOUL was still denied!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet II

RAPHAEL.

BLESS'D wert thou, whom Death, and not Decay,
Bore from the world on swift and shadowy wings,
Ere age or weakness dimm'd one brilliant ray
Of thy rapt spirit's high imaginings,
While yet thy heart was full of fervid love,
And thou wert haunted by resistless dreams
Of all in earth beneath, or Heaven above,
On which the light of beauty richest gleams,--
Dead, but not deathlike, wert thou borne along;
Silent and cold, oh thou that didst combine
Sculpture, and painting, and the gift of song;
While on thy brow, and on that work divine
Borne with thee, glow'd from thine Italian sky
A light whose glory spoke of immortality!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Iii

THE FORNARINA.

AND bless'd was she thou lovedst, for whose sake
Thy wit did veil in fanciful disguise
The answer which thou wert compell'd to make
To Rome's High Priest, and call'd her then 'Thine Eyes;'
Tho' of her life obscure there is no trace,
Save where its thread with THY bright history twines,--
Tho' all we know of her be that sweet face
Whose nameless beauty from thy canvass shines,--
Dependent still upon her Raphael's fame,
And but recorded by her low degree,
As one who had in life no higher claim
Than to be painted and be loved by thee;--
Yet would I be forgot, as she is now,
Once to have press'd my lips on that seraphic brow!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Iv

BE frank with me, and I accept my lot;
But deal not with me as a grieving child,
Who for the loss of that which he hath not
Is by a show of kindness thus beguiled.
Raise not for me, from its enshrouded tomb,
The ghostly likeness of a hope deceased;
Nor think to cheat the darkness of my doom
By wavering doubts how far thou art released:
This dressing Pity in the garb of Love,--
This effort of the heart to seem the same,--
These sighs and lingerings, (which nothing prove
But that thou leav'st me with a kind of shame,)--
Remind me more, by their most vain deceit,
Of the dear loss of all which thou dost counterfeit.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet IX

TO THE COUNTESS HELÉNE ZAVADOWSKY.

WHEN our young Queen put on her rightful crown
In Gothic Westminster's long-hallow'd walls,
The eye upon no lovelier sight look'd down
Than thou, fair Russian! Memory still recalls
The soft light of thy sapphire-colour'd eyes,
The rich twine of thy simply-braided hair,
And the low murmur of the crowd's surprise
To see thee pass along so strangely fair.
Nor didst thou charm by looks and smiles alone,--
Thy 'broken English' had its share of grace;
For something in thy accent and thy tone
So match'd the beauty of thy gentle face,
We seem'd to hear our old familiar words
Set to some foreign lute or harp's melodious chords!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet V

BECAUSE I know that there is that in me
Of which thou shouldst be proud, and not ashamed,--
Because I feel one made thy choice should be
Not even by fools and slanderers rashly blamed,--
Because I fear, howe'er thy soul may strive
Against the weakness of that inward pain,
The falsehoods which my enemies contrive
Not always seek to wound thine ear in vain,--
Therefore I sometimes weep, when I should smile,
At all the vain frivolity and sin
Which those who know me not (yet me revile)--
My would-be judges--cast my actions in;
But else their malice hath nor sting nor smart--
For I appeal from them, Beloved, to thine own heart!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Vi

WHERE the red wine-cup floweth, there art thou!
Where luxury curtains out the evening sky;--
Triumphant Mirth sits flush'd upon thy brow,
And ready laughter lurks within thine eye.
Where the long day declineth, lone I sit,
In idle thought, my listless hands entwined,
And, faintly smiling at remember'd wit,
Act the scene over to my musing mind.
In my lone dreams I hear thy eloquent voice,
I see the pleased attention of the throng,
And bid my spirit in thy joy rejoice,
Lest in love's selshness I do thee wrong.
Ah! midst that proud and mirthful company
Send'st thou no wandering thought to love and me?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet VII

LIKE an enfranchised bird, who wildly springs,
With a keen sparkle in his glancing eye
And a strong effort in his quivering wings,
Up to the blue vault of the happy sky,--
So my enamour'd heart, so long thine own,
At length from Love's imprisonment set free.
Goes forth into the open world alone,
Glad and exulting in its liberty:
But like that helpless bird, (confined so long,
His weary wings have lost all power to soar,)
Who soon forgets to trill his joyous song,
And, feebly fluttering, sinks to earth once more,--
So, from its former bonds released in vain,
My heart still feels the weight of that remember'd chain.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Viii

TO MY BOOKS.

SILENT companions of the lonely hour,
Friends, who can never alter or forsake,
Who for inconstant roving have no power,
And all neglect, perforce, must calmly take,--
Let me return to YOU; this turmoil ending
Which worldly cares have in my spirit wrought,
And, o'er your old familiar pages bending,
Refresh my mind with many a tranquil thought:
Till, haply meeting there, from time to time,
Fancies, the audible echo of my own,
'Twill be like hearing in a foreign clime
My native language spoke in friendly tome,
And with a sort of welcome I shall dwell
On these, my unripe musings, told so well.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet X

TO TAGLIONI.

SPIRIT of Grace, whose airy footsteps fall
So lightly! sure the looker-on must be
Most dull of fancy who doth not recall
Some sweet comparison to picture thee!
The white snow, drifting in its soundless showers,--
The young bird resting on a summer-bough,--
The south-wind bending down the opening flowers,--
The clear wave lifted with a gentle flow,--
Rippling and bright, advancing and retreating,
Curling around the rock its dancing spray,
Like a fair child whose kiss of gentle greeting
Woos a companion to make holiday,--
Such are the thoughts of beauty round me shed,
While pleased my eyes pursue thy light elastic tread.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xi

GREEN avenue, whose shadow dim and sweet
Pleasantly shelter'd me in days of yore,
Dear lost companion, whose slow-pacing feet
Then wander'd with me on that moss-paved floor,--
Still, like a natural temple, spring those trees,
Their column'd stems high-arching over-head?
Still dost THOU love, while sighs the murmuring breeze,
At Summer eve that velvet path to tread?
Then, gentle friend, in whose unworldly eyes,
And on whose calm, serene, expressive brow,
The light of many a prayer reflected lies,
As thou with Heaven didst constant commune know,--
Though, in this world, divided we must be,
Kneel in that quiet spot, and pray to God for ME!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xii

I STAND beside the waves,--the mournful waves,--
Where thou didst stand in silence and in fear,
For thou wert train'd by custom's haughty slaves,
And love, from such as I, disdain'd to hear;
Yet, with the murmur of the echoing sea,
And the monotonous billows, rolling on,
Were mingled sounds of weeping,--for in thee
All nature was not harden'd into stone:
And from the shore there came a distant chime
From the old village-clock;--ah! since that day,
Like a dull passing-bell each stroke of time
Falls on my heart; and in the ocean spray
A voice of lamentation seems to dwell,
As in that bitter hour of agonised farewell!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xiii

THE WEAVER.

LITTLE they think, the giddy and the vain,
Wandering at pleasure 'neath the shady trees,
While the light glossy silk or rustling train
Shines in the sun or flutters in the breeze,
How the sick weaver plies the incessant loom,
Crossing in silence the perplexing thread,
Pent in the confines of one narrow room,
Where droops complainingly his cheerless head:--
Little they think with what dull anxious eyes,
Nor by what nerveless, thin, and trembling hands,
The devious mingling of those various dyes
Were wrought to answer Luxury's commands:
But the day cometh when the tired shall rest,--
Where weary Lazarus leans his head on Abraham's breast!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xiv

OH! crystal eyes, in which my image lay
While I was near, as in a fountain's wave;
Let it not in like manner pass away
When I am gone; for I am Love's true slave,
And in my eyes thine image dwells enshrined,
Like one who dazzled hath beheld the sun,
So that to other beauty I am blind,
And scarce distinguish what I gaze upon:
Let it be thus with thee! By all our vows,--
By the true token-ring upon thy hand,--
Let such remembrance as my worth allows
Between thee and each bright temptation stand,--
That I, in those clear orbs, on my return,
As in the wave's green depth, my shadow may discern.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xix

But since, in all that brief Life's narrow scope,
No day pass'd by without some gentle deed,
Let us not 'mourn like them that have no hope,'
Though sharp the stroke,--and suddenly decreed;
For still, when Spring puts out her tender leaves,
And Nature's beauty seems to bud in vain,
(Since then the yearning spirit doubly grieves
With fresh remembrance of unconquer'd pain,)
Returns the precious memory of all
The grace and goodness of that creature fair,
Whom it pleased God in early days to call
From this dim world of trouble, toil, and care,--
And seldom is such bless'd conviction given
That She we mourn on Earth is now a Saint in Heaven!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xv

TO MISS AUGUSTA COWELL.

[To whom I owe the popularity of some of my favourite ballads.]

WHEN thy light fingers touch th' obedient chords,
Which, with a gentle murmur, low respond,
Waiting the measure of the coming words
From that sweet voice, so plaintive, sad, and fond,--
Say does some wingéd Ariel, hovering near,
Teach thee his island music note for note,
That thou may'st copy with an echo clear
Th' enchanted symphonies that round thee float?
Or do all Melodies, whilst thou art playing,
(Each with the offering of some chorded sound,)
On the low slanting sunbeam earthward straying,
Like meek subservient spirits wander round;
In Harmony's dim language asking thee
Which of them, for the hour, shall thy attendant be?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xvi

WHITE Rose of Bourbon's branch, so early faded!
When thou wert carried to thy silent rest,
And every brow with heavy gloom was shaded,
And every heart with fond regret oppress'd,--
Sweet was the thought thy brother gave to him
Who, far away on Ocean's restless wave,
Could not behold those fair eyes closed and dim,
Nor see thee laid in thy untimely grave!
And, pitying him who yet thy loss must hear,--
Whose absent breast a later pang must feel,--
Murmur'd, with touching sadness, by thy bier,
'Adieu for me! Adieu for Joinville!'
Sweet was the thought, and tender was the heart
Which thus remember'd all who in its love had part.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xvii

Nor wert thou only by thy kindred wept,--
Young mother! gentle daughter! cherish'd wife!
Deep in her memory France hath fondly kept
The records of thy unassuming life:
Oft shall the statue heroine bring to mind,--
As pale it gleams beneath the light of day,
In all the thoughtful grace by thee design'd,--
The worth and talent which have pass'd away!
Oft shall the old, who see thy child pass by,
Smiling and glad, despite his orphan'd lot,
Look on him with a blessing and a sigh;
As one who suffers loss, yet feels it not,
But lifting up his innocent eyes in prayer,
Vaguely imagines Heaven,-foretaught that thou art THERE!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Sonnet Xviii

SINCE in the pleasant time of opening flowers
That flow'r, Her life, was doom'd to fade away,--
Since Her dear loss hath shaded lovely hours,
And turn'd to mourning all the smiles of May,--
Henceforward when the warm soft breath of Spring
Bids cowslips star the meadows, thick and sweet;
When doves are in the green wood murmuring,
And children wander with delighted feet;
When, by their own rich beauty downward bent,
Soft Guelder-roses hang their tufts of snow,
And purple lilacs yield a fragrant scent,
And bright laburnum droops its yellow bough;--
Let that Spring-time be welcomed with a sigh,
For Her lamented Rake,--who was so young to die!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Arab's Farewell To His Horse

MY beautiful! my beautiful! that standest meekly by
With thy proudly arched and glossy neck, and dark and fiery eye;
Fret not to roam the desert now, with all thy winged speed-
I may not mount on thee again-thou'rt sold, my Arab steed!
Fret not with that impatient hoof-snuff not the breezy wind-
The further that thou fliest now, so far am I behind;
The stranger hath thy bridle rein-thy master hath his gold-
Fleet-limbed and beautiful! farewell! -thou'rt sold, my steed-thou'rt sold!

Farewell! those free untired limbs, full many a mile must roam,
To reach the chill and wintry sky, which clouds the stranger's home;
Some other hand, less fond, must now thy corn and bed prepare;
The silky mane I braided once, must be another's care!
The morning sun shall dawn again, but never more with thee
Shall I gallop through the desert paths, where we were wont to be:
Evening shall darken on the earth; and o'er the sandy plain
Some other steed, with slower step, shall bear me home again.

Yes, thou must go! the wild free breeze, the brilliant sun and sky,
Thy master's home-from all of these, my exiled one must fly.
Thy proud dark eye will grow less proud, thy step become less fleet,
And vainly shalt thou arch thy neck, thy master's hand to meet.
Only in sleep shall I behold that dark eye, glancing bright
Only in sleep shall hear again that step so firm and light:

And when I raise my dreaming arm to check or cheer thy speed,
Then must I starting wake, to feel-thou'rt sold, my Arab steed!

Ah! rudely then, unseen by me, some cruel hand may chide,
Till foam-wreaths lie, like crested waves, along thy panting side:
And the rich blood, that is in thee swells, in thy indignant pain,
Till careless eyes, which rest on thee, may count each started vein.
Will they ill-use thee? If I thought-but no, it cannot be-
Thou art so swift, yet easy curbed; so gentle, yet so free.
And yet, if haply when thou'rt gone, my lonely heart should yearn-
Can the hand which casts thee from it now, command thee to return?

Return! -alas! my Arab steed! what shall thy master do,
When thou who wert his all of joy, hast vanished from his view?

When the dim distance cheats mine eye, and through the gath'ring tears
Thy bright form, for a moment, like the false mirâge appears.
Slow and unmounted will I roam, with weary foot alone,
Where with fleet step, and joyous bound, thou oft hast borne me on;
And, sitting down by that green well, I'll pause and sadly think,
'It was here he bowed his glossy neck, when last I saw him drink! '

When last I saw thee drink! -away! the fevered dream is o'er-
I could not live a day, and know, that we should meet no more!
They tempted me, my beautiful! for hunger's power is strong-
They tempted me, my beautiful! but I have loved too long.
Who said that I had given thee up? Who said that thou wert sold?
'Tis false-'tis false, my Arab steed! I fling them back their gold!
Thus, thus, I leap upon thy back, and scour the distant plains;
Away! who overtakes us now, shall claim thee for his pains!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Autumn Wind

I.

HUSH, moaning autumn wind! be still, be still!
Thy grieving voice forbiddeth hearts to rest;
We hear thee sweeping down the lonely hill,
And mournful thoughts crowd o'er the human breast.
Why wilt thou haunt us, with thy voice unkind,
Sadd'ning the earth? Hush, moaning autumn wind!

II.

Toss not the branching trees so wildly high,
Filling the forest with thy dreary sound:
Without thy aid the hues of summer die,
And the sear leaves fall scatter'd to the ground.
Thou dost but hasten, needlessly unkind,
The winter's task, thou moaning autumn wind!

III.

Sweep not thro' Ocean's caves with hollow roar,
Driving our fair ships to some rock-bound strand!
While the vex'd sea foams wrathful to the shore,
The seaman's wife looks shuddering from the land,
And widow'd hearts for many a year shall find
Death in thy voice, thou moaning autumn wind!

IV.

Round our calm dwellings, when our hearths are gay,
Roam not, oh howling spirit of Despair!
As tho' thou wert a creature seeking prey,
And where the land look'd richest, found it there.
We have enough of memories unkind
Without thy voice, thou moaning autumn wind!

V.

Thee the sad mourner lists, and turns to weep,
In the blank silence of her lonely home;
The sick man hears, and starts from broken sleep,
And the night-wanderer sighs--compell'd to roam;
While the poor shiver, for their huts unkind

Bar thee not out, thou searching autumn wind!
VI.

Back to the barren hill and lonely glen!
Here let the wandering of thy echoes cease;
Sadly thou soundest to the hearts of men,--
Hush thy wild voice, and let the earth have peace;
Or, if no chain thy restless will can bind,
Sweep thro' the desert, moaning autumn wind!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Banner Of The Covenanters

I.

HERE, where the rain-drops may not fall, the sunshine doth not play,
Where the unfelt and distant breeze in whispers dies away;
Here, where the stranger paces slow along the silent halls,
Why mutely art thou hanging thus against the massive walls?
Thou, that hast seen blood shed for thee--that midst the battle-tide
Hast faintly lit the soldier's eye with triumph ere he died;
Bright banner, which hath witness'd oft the struggles of the free,
Emblem of proud and holy hope, is this a place for thee?

II.

Wake! wave aloft, thou Banner! let every snowy fold
Float on our wild, unconquer'd hills, as in the days of old:
Hang out, and give again to Death a glory and a charm,
Where Heaven's pure dew may freshen thee, and Heaven's pure sunshine warm.
Wake, wave aloft!

I hear the silk low rustling on the breeze,
Which whistles through the lofty fir, and bends the birchen trees;
I hear the tread of warriors arm'd to conquer or to die;
Their bed or bier the heathery hill, their canopy the sky.

III.

What, what is life or death to them? they only feel and know
Freedom is to be struggled for, with an unworthy foe--
Their homes--their hearths--the all for which their fathers, too, have fought,
And liberty to breathe the prayers their cradled lips were taught.
On, on they rush--like mountain streams resistlessly they sweep--
On! those who live are heroes now--and martyrs those who sleep!
While still the snow-white Banner waves above the field of strife,
With a proud triumph, as it were a thing of soul and life.

IV.

They stand--they bleed--they fall! they make one brief and breathless pause,
And gaze with fading eyes upon the standard of their cause;--
Again they brave the strife of death, again each weary limb
Faintly obeys the warrior soul, tho' earth's best hopes grow dim;--
The mountain-rills are red with blood, the pure and quiet sky
Rings with the shouts of those who win, the groans of those who die;

Taken--re-taken--raised again, but soil'd with clay and gore,
Heavily, on the wild free breeze, that Banner floats once more.
V.

I hear the wail of women now: the dreadful day is done:
God's creatures wait to strive and slay until to-morrow's sun:
I hear the heavy breathing of the weary ones who sleep,
The death-sob and the dying word, 'the voice of them that weep;'
The half-choked grief of those who, while they stifle back their breath,
Scarce know if what they watch be hush'd in slumber or in death;
While mournfully, as if it knew and felt for their despair,
The moon-lit Banner flaps and falls upon the midnight air.
VI.

Morning! the glad and glorious light! the waking of God's earth,
Which rouses men to stan with gore the soil that gave them birth.
In the still sunshine sleeps the hill, the stream, the distant town;
In the still sunshine--clogg'd and stiff--the battle-flag hangs down.
Peace is in Heaven, and Heaven's good gifts, but war is amongst men--
Red blood is pouring on the hill, wild shouts are in the glen;
'T is past--they sink, they bleed, they fly--that faint, enfeebled host,
Right is not might--the Banner-flag, the victory, are lost!
VII.

Heaven's dew hath drunk the crimson drops which on the heather lay,
The rills that were so red with gore, go sparkling on their way;
The limbs that fought, the hearts that swell'd, are crumbled into dust,
The souls which strove are gone to meet the spirits of the just;
But that frail silken flag, for which, and under which, they fought,
(And which e'en now retains its power upon the soul of thought,)
Survives--a tatter'd, senseless thing--to meet the curious eye,
And wake a momentary dream of hopes and days gone by.
VIII.

A momentary dream! oh! not for one poor transient hour,
Not for a brief and hurried day that flag exerts its power;
Full flashing on our dormant souls the firm conviction comes,
That what our fathers did for theirs, we could for our homes.
We, too, could brave the giant arm that seeks to chain each word,
And rule what form of prayer alone shall by our God be heard:
We, too, in triumph or defeat, could drain our heart's best veins,
While the good old cause of Liberty for Church and State remains!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Blind Man's Bride

I.

WHEN first, beloved, in vanish'd hours
The blind man sought thy love to gain,
They said thy cheek was bright as flowers
New freshen'd by the summer rain:
They said thy movements, swift yet soft,
Were such as make the wingéd dove
Seem, as it gently soars aloft,
The image of repose and love.

II.

They told me, too, an eager crowd
Of wooers praised thy beauty rare,
But that thy heart was all too proud
A common love to meet or share.
Ah! thine was neither pride nor scorn,
But in thy coy and virgin breast
Dwelt preference, not of PASSION born,
The love that hath a holier rest!

III.

Days came and went;--thy step I heard
Pause frequent, as it pass'd me by:--
Days came and went;--thy heart was stirr'd,
And answer'd to my stifled sigh!
And thou didst make a humble choice,
Content to be the blind man's bride,
Who loved thee for thy gentle voice,
And own'd no joy on earth beside.

IV.

And well by that sweet voice I knew
(Without the happiness of sight)
Thy years, as yet, were glad and few,--
Thy smile, most innocently bright:
I knew how full of love's own grace
The beauty of thy form must be;
And fancy idolized the face

Whose loveliness I might not see!

V.

Oh! happy were those days, beloved!
I almost ceased for light to pine
When thro' the summer vales we roved,
Thy fond hand gently link'd in mine.
Thy soft, 'Good night' still sweetly cheer'd
The unbroken darkness of my doom;
And thy 'Good morrow, love,' endear'd
Each sunrise that return'd in gloom!

VI.

At length, as years roll'd swiftly on,
They spoke to me of Time's decay--
Of roses from thy smooth cheek gone,
And ebon ringlets turn'd to grey.
Ah! then I bless'd the sightless eyes
Which could not feel the deepening shade,
Nor watch beneath succeeding skies
Thy withering beauty faintly fade.

VII.

I saw no paleness on thy cheek,
No lines upon thy forehead smooth,--
But still the BLIND MAN heard thee speak
In accents made to bless and soothe:
Still he could feel thy guiding hand
As thro' the woodlands wild we ranged,--
Still in the summer light could stand,
And know thy HEART and VOICE unchanged.

VIII.

And still, beloved, till life grows cold,
We'll wander 'neath a genial sky,
And only know that we are old
By counting happy years gone by:
For thou to me art still as fair
As when those happy years began,--
When first thou cam'st to soothe and share
The sorrows of a sightless man!

IX.

Old Time, who changes all below,
To wean men gently for the grave,
Hath brought us no increase of woe,
And leaves us all he ever gave:
For I am still a helpless thing,
Whose darken'd world is cheer'd by thee--
And thou art she whose beauty's spring
The blind man vainly yearn'd to see!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Boatswain's Song

A CHEER to keep our hearts up,
A cup to drown our tears,
And we'll talk of those who perished,
Our mates in former years.
The Betsey was a vessel
As tight as ship could be--
And we cheered to keep our hearts up,
As she tossed upon the sea.

Thro' one dark day we struggled
To stem the foaming tide;
Night came--the straining vessel
All helplessly did ride.
The storm was raging loudly,
The angry heavens did frown--
A cheer to keep your hearts up--
The Betsey, she went down!

The morning broke which many
Might never see again,
And thick and blind and heavy
Came down the drenching rain
We got the smallest boat out,
Jack, Tom, and I, and gave
A cheer to keep our hearts up,
As we toiled against the wave.

Three days we struggled onward,
Without a sight of land;
And we grew so faint and failing,
We could scarcely bear a hand.
It's a bitter thing to battle
With the ocean for your foe:
We cheered to keep our hearts up,
But the cheer was hoarse and low.

Then we thought, with sinking spirits,
Of the shore we'd never see:
Tom wept, and thought of Mary--

Jack talked of home with me.
Each brawny arm grew fainter,
The boat was thinly stored:
A cheer to keep your hearts up--
Poor Jack went overboard!

At last, somehow we landed
Where the cliff was steep and high;
We told Jack's poor old mother,
(We were too much men to cry.)
They'd ha' liked to see me Boatswain,
The Betsey's gallant crew.
Come, a cheer to keep our hearts up,
We shall all of us die too.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Bride

SHE is standing by her loved one's side,
A young and a fair and a gentle bride,
But mournfulness hath crost her face
Like shadows in a sunny place,
And wistfully her eye doth strain
Across the blue and distant main.
My home! my home!-I would I were
Again in joyous gladness there!
My home! my home!-I would I heard
The singing voice, like some small bird,
Of him, our mother's youngest child,
With light soft step, and features mild.-
I would I saw that dear one now,
With the proud eye and noble brow,

Whose very errors were more loved
Than all our reason most approved.
And she, my fairy sister, she,
Who was the soul of childish glee;
Who loved me so-oh, let me hear
Once more those tones familiar, dear,
Which haunt my rest; and I will smile
Even as I used to do erewhile.
I know that some have fall'n asleep-
I know that some have learnt to weep-
But my heart never feels the same
As when those light steps round me came:
And sadness weighs my heavy eye
Beneath this cheerless stranger sky:
Tho' fewer now might round me come-
It is my home-my own old home!

She is back again in her sunny home,
And thick and fast the beatings come
Of that young heart, as round she sees
The same sweet flowers, the same old trees;
But they, the living flowers she loved,
Are they the same? are they unmoved?-
No-time which withers leaf and stem

Hath thrown his withering change o'er them.

Where there was mirth, is silence now-
Where there was joy, a darkened brow-
The bounding step hath given place
To the slow stealing mournful pace;
The proud bright eye is now less proud,
By time, and thought, and sickness bowed.
And the light singing voice no more
Its joyful carols echoes o'er,
But whispers; fearful some gay tone
May wake the thought of pleasures gone.
It is her home-but all in vain
Some lingering things unchanged remain:
The present wakes no smile-the past
Hath tears to bid its memory last.
She knew that some were gone-but oh!
She knew not-youth can never know
How furrowed o'er with silent thought
Are brows which grief and time have taught.
The murmuring of some shadowy word,
Which was a name-which now, unheard,
May wander thro' the clear cold sky,
Or wake the echo for reply:
The lingering pause in some bright spot
To dream of those who now are not:
The gaze that vainly seeks to trace
Lost feelings beaming on a face

Where time and sorrow, guilt and care,
Have past and left their withering there:-
These are her joys; and she doth roam
Around her dear but desert home;
Peopling the vacant seats, till tears arise,
And blot the dim sweet vision from her eyes.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Captive Pirate

THE captive pirate sate alone,
Musing over triumphs gone,
Gazing on the clear blue sky
From his dungeon window high.
Dreamingly he sate, and thought
Of battles he had seen and fought;
And fancy o'er him threw her spell.
He deemed he had not bid farewell
To the friends who loved him best:
O'er the white wave's snowy crest
Seems he now once more to sail,
Borne by the triumphant gale:
Cheerily the light bark bounds,
In his ears the music sounds
Of hoarsely mingling waves and voices,
And his inmost soul rejoices!

He gives the signal of command,
He waves-he drops-the lifted hand!
It was a sound of clashing steel-
Why starts he thus? what doth he feel?
The clanking of his iron chain
Hath made him prisoner again!
He groans, as memory round him brings
The shades of half-forgotten things.
His friends! his faithful friends!-a sigh
Bursts from that bosom swelling high.
His bark! his gallant bark!-a tear
Darkens the eye that knew not fear.
And another meaner name
Must lead his men to death or fame!
And another form must stand
(Captain of his mourning band)
On the deck he trod so well,
While his bark o'er ocean's swell
Is sailing far, far out at sea,
Where he never more may be!

Oh! to be away once more
From the dark and loathsome shore!
Oh! again the sound to hear
Of his ship's crew's hearty cheer!
Souls who by his side have stood,
Careless of their ebbing blood,

Wiped the death-dew from their brow,
And feebly smiled their truth to show!
Little does the Pirate deem
Freedom now were but a dream;
Little does the chieftain think
That his lost companions drink
Strugglingly by the salt sea wave,
Once their home, and now their grave!
And the bark from which they part,
(While his sad and heavy heart
Yearns to tread her gallant deck,)
Helpless lies, a heaving wreck!

And little will they deem, who roam
Hereafter in their floating home,
While their sunlit sail is spread,
That it gleams above the dead-
That the faithless wave rolls on
Calmly, as they were not gone,
While its depths warm hearts doth cover,
Whose beatings were untimely over!
And little will they deem, who stand
Safe upon the sea-girt land,
That to the stranger all it gave
Was-a prison and a grave!

That the ruin'd fortress towers
Number'd his despairing hours,
And beneath their careless tread,
Sleeps-the broken-hearted dead!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Careless Word

A WORD is ringing thro' my brain,
It was not meant to give me pain;
It had no tone to bid it stay,
When other things had past away;
It had no meaning more than all
Which in an idle hour fall:
It was when first the sound I heard
A lightly uttered, careless word.

That word--oh! it doth haunt me now,
In scenes of joy, in scenes of woe;
By night, by day, in sun or shade,
With the half smile that gently played
Reproachfully, and gave the sound
Eternal power thro' life to wound.
There is no voice I ever heard,
So deeply fix'd as that one word.

When in the laughing crowd some tone,
Like those whose joyous sound is gone,
Strikes on my ear, I shrink--for then
The careless word comes back again.
When all alone I sit and gaze
Upon the cheerful home-fire blaze,
Lo! freshly as when first 'twas heard,
Returns that lightly uttered word.

When dreams bring back the days of old;
With all that wishes could not hold;
And from my feverish couch I start
To press a shadow to my heart--
Amid its beating echoes, clear
That little word I seem to hear:
In vain I say, while it is heard,
Why weep?--'twas but a foolish word.

It comes--and with it come the tears,
The hopes, the joys of former years;
Forgotten smiles, forgotten looks,

Thick as dead leaves on autumn brooks,
And all as joyless, though they were
The brightest things life's spring could share.
Oh! would to God I ne'er had heard
That lightly uttered, careless word!

It was the first, the only one
Of those which lips for ever gone
Breathed in their love--which had for me
Rebuke of harshness at my glee:
And if those lips were here to say,
'Beloved, let it pass away,'
Ah! then, perchance--but I have heard
The last dear tone--the careless word!

Oh! ye who, meeting, sigh to part,
Whose words are treasures to some heart,
Deal gently, ere the dark days come,
When earth hath but for one a home;
Lest, musing o'er the past, like me,
They feel their hearts wrung bitterly,
And, heeding not what else they heard,
Dwell weeping on a careless word.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Chapel Royal St. James's, On The 10th February, 1840

I.

ONCE more the people meet,
With glad expectant faces: once again
The fair young monarch and her lovely train,
With slow and gentle feet,
Move in a solemn ceremony on;
And jewels glitter in the morning sun!

II.

Not long, oh! Time, not long
It seems, since crown'd as Britain's welcome Queen,
The like fair sight in fair array was seen;
And the hush'd listening throng,
Watching those steps thro' Westminster's proud aisle,
Wept with full hearts, tho' joyous all the while.

III.

And they come forth anew,
In bridal white, that gentle virgin band,
The chosen flowers of Britain's happy land;
For holy love and true
Hath wrought an hour of hope without alloy--
A fairy sight of splendour and of joy.

IV.

There,--with her locks of light,
Gleaming like gold around her noble head,--
The orphan'd ELEANOR, with stately tread,
Went by, a vision bright;
Bidding sweet thoughts of love and triumph start
Into a father's and a sister's heart.

V.

There,--in her beauty, pass'd
Young FRANCES COWPER; her transparent cheek
Blushing the greetings which she might not speak,

As on the crowd she cast
The shy soft glances of those dark-blue eyes,
In whose untom'd depth such sweetness lies!
VI.

There, with her spotless name,
The gentle HOWARD, good, and fair, and mild,
And bright-eyed BOUVERIE, noble Radnor's child,
And rose-bud VILLIERS came;
And, with her sweet frank smile, young IDA HAY,
Looking all gladness, like a morn in May.
VII.

There, brilliant LENNOX moved;
The Paget beauty shining from her brow,
And the dark, deer-like eyes that glanced below:
While, gentle and beloved,
Amid the glories of that courtly throng,
DELAWARE'S youthful daughter pass'd along.
VIII.

There, (theme for poet's praise!)
With swanlike throat, and clear majestic eye,
VERULAM's stately MARY glided by,
And, with her quiet gaze
Fixed smiling on the scene which she survey'd,
The soldier ANGLESEA'S bright ADELAIDE.
IX.

And she, whose orbs of blue,
Like mountain lakes beheld by moonlight, gleam
With all the shadowy softness of a dream
Such as Endymion knew:
Whose glossy locks with rich luxuriance twine
Around her brow: the Lady WILHELMINE.
X.

Young were they all--and fair,--
But thou, VICTORIA, held'st thy fitting place,
As amongst garden-flowers the lily's grace,
Blooms with a royal air;
And from that lovely various group, apart,

Dids't stand, and gently look the Queen thou art.
XI.

The smile thy young lip wore,
Spoke joy to Him, who, from his distant home,
Hath sped in wintry time o'er ocean's foam--
To seek our island shore,
With his frank heart, and brow so fair and true,
Claiming thy love-and England's welcome too.
XII.

Oh! may that welcome prove
The herald of deep gladness;--since in thee
Old England's brightest hopes renew'd we see,
All-hallow'd be thy love;
And still with proud content the day allied,
When Princely ALBERT claim'd his Royal Bride!
XIII.

May He, whose gifted hand,
Hath twined sweet wreaths of Poetry and Song;
Live happy among English heart so long
That, native to the land,
He shall forget that e'er his harp was strung
To any accents but our mother-tongue:
XIV.

And Thou,--Oh! may the Crown
Which in youth's freshest, earliest moment, graced
The brow, whose childhood's roses it replaced,
Ne'er weigh thy spirit down;
Nor tearful hours, nor careful thoughts, beguile
One ray of gladness from thy gracious smile:
XV.

But brightly to the last,
Fair Fortune shine, with calm and steady ray,
Upon the tenor of thy happy way;
A future like the past:
And every prayer by loyal subjects said,
Bring down a separate blessing on thy head!

The Child Of Earth

I.

FAINTER her slow step falls from day to day,
Death's hand is heavy on her darkening brow;
Yet doth she fondly cling to earth, and say,
'I am content to die, but, oh! not now!
Not while the blossoms of the joyous spring
Make the warm air such luxury to breathe;
Not while the birds such lays of gladness sing;
Not while bright flowers around my footsteps wreath.
Spare me, great God, lift up my drooping brow!
I am content to die--but, oh! not now!'

II.

The spring hath ripen'd into summer-time,
The season's viewless boundary is past;
The glorious sun hath reach'd his burning prime;
Oh! must this glimpse of beauty be the last?
'Let me not perish while o'er land and lea
With silent steps the lord of light moves on;
Nor while the murmur of the mountain bee
Greets my dull ear with music in its tone!
Pale sickness dims my eye, and clouds my brow;
I am content to die--but, oh! not now!'

III.

Summer is gone, and autumn's soberer hues
Tint the ripe fruits, and gild the waving corn;
The huntsman swift the flying game pursues,
Shouts the halloo, and winds his eager horn.
'Spare me awhile to wander forth and gaze
On the broad meadows and the quiet stream,
To watch in silence while the evening rays
Slant thro' the fading trees with ruddy gleam!
Cooler the breezes play around my brow;
I am content to die--but, oh! not now!'

IV.

The bleak wind whistles, snow-showers, far and near,

Drift without echo to the whitening ground;
Autumn hath pass'd away, and, cold and drear,
Winter stalks on, with frozen mantle bound.
Yet still that prayer ascends:--'Oh! laughingly
My little brothers round the warm hearth crowd,
Our home-fire blazes broad, and bright, and high,
And the roof rings with voices glad and loud;
Spare me awhile! raise up my drooping brow!
I am content to die--but, oh! not now!'

V.

The spring is come again--the joyful spring!
Again the banks with clustering flowers are spread;
The wild bird dips upon its wanton wing:--
The child of earth is number'd with the dead!
'Thee never more the sunshine shall awake,
Beaming all redly thro' the lattice-pane;
The steps of friends thy slumbers may not break,
Nor fond familiar voice arouse again!
Death's silent shadow veils thy darken'd brow;
Why didst thou linger?--thou art happier now!'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Autumn

I.

BROWN Autumn cometh, with her liberal hand
Binding the Harvest in a thousand sheaves:
A yellow glory brightens o'er the land,
Shines on thatched corners and low cottage-eaves,
And gilds with cheerful light the fading leaves:
Beautiful even here, on hill and dale;
More lovely yet where Scotland's soil receives
The varied rays her wooded mountains hail,
With hues to which our faint and soberer tints are pale.

II.

For there the Scarlet Rowan seems to mock
The red sea coral--berries, leaves, and all;
Light swinging from the moist green shining rock
Which beds the foaming torrent's turbid fall;
And there the purple cedar, grandly tall,
Lifts its crowned head and sun-illumined stem;
And larch (soft drooping like a maiden's pall)
Bends o'er the lake, that seems a sapphire gem
Dropt from the hoary hill's gigantic diadem.

III.

And far and wide the glorious heather blooms,
Its regal mantle o'er the mountains spread;
Wooing the bee with honey-sweet perfumes,
By many a viewless wild flower richly shed;
Up-springing 'neath the glad exulting tread
Of eager climbers, light of heart and limb;
Or yielding, soft, a fresh elastic bed,
When evening shadows gather, faint and dim,
And sun-forsaken crags grow old, and gaunt, and grim.

IV.

Oh, Land! first seen when Life lay all unknown,
Like an unvisited country o'er the wave,
Which now my travelled heart looks back upon,
Marking each sunny path, each gloomy cave,

With here a memory, and there a grave:--
Land of romance and beauty; noble land
Of Bruce and Wallace; land where, vainly brave,
Ill-fated Stuart made his final stand,
Ere yet the shivered sword fell hopeless from his hand--
V.

I love you! I remember you! though years
Have fled o'er the hills my spirit knew,
Whose wild uncultured heights the plough forbears,
Whose broomy hollows glisten in the dew.
Still shines the calm light with as rich a hue
Along the wooded valleys stretched below?
Still gleams my lone lake's unforgotten blue?
Oh, land! although unseen, how well I know
The glory of your face in this autumnal glow!
VI.

I know your deep glens, where the eagles cry;
I know the freshness of your mountain breeze,
Your brooklets, gurgling downward ceaselessly,
The singing of your birds among the trees,
Mingling confused a thousand melodies!
I know the lone rest of your birchen bowers,
Where the soft murmur of the working bees
Goes droning past, with scent of heather flowers,
And lulls the heart to dream even in its waking hours.
VII.

I know the grey stones in the rocky glen,
Where the wild red-deer gather, one by one,
And listen, startled, to the tread of men
Which the betraying breeze hath backward blown!
So,--with such dark majestic eyes, where shone
Less terror than amazement,--nobly came
Peruvia's Incas, when, through lands unknown,
The cruel conqueror with the blood-stained name
Swept, with pursuing sword and desolating flame!
VIII.

So taken, so pursued, so tracked to death,
The wild free monarch of the hills shall be,

By cunning men, who creep, with stifled breath,
O'er crag and heather-tuft, on bended knee,
Down-crouching with most thievish treachery;
Climbing again, with limbs o'erspent and tired,
Watching for that their failing eyes scarce see,--
The moment, long delayed and long desired,
When the quick rifle-shot in triumph shall be fired.
IX.

Look! look!--what portent riseth on the sky?
The glory of his great betraying horns;
Wide-spreading, many-branched, and nobly-high,
(Such spoil the chieftain's hall with pride adorns.)
Oh, Forest-King! the fair succeeding morns
That brighten o'er those hills, shall miss your crest
From their sun-lighted peaks! He's hit,--but scorn
To die without a struggle: sore distress,
He flies, while daylight fades, receding in the West.
X.

Ben-Doran glows like iron in the forge,
Then to cold purple turns,--then gloomy grey;
And down the ravine-pass and mountain-gorge
Scarce glimmers now the faintest light of day.
The moonbeams on the trembling waters play,
(Though still the sky is flecked with bars of gold
And there the noble creature stands, at bay;
His strained limbs shivering with a sense of cold,
While weakness films the eye that shone so wildly bold.
XI.

His fair majestic head bows low at length;
And, leaping at his torn and bleeding side,
The fierce dogs pin him down with grappling strength;
While eager men come on with rapid stride,
And cheer, exulting in his baffled pride.
Now, from its sheath drawn forth, the gleaming knife
Stabs his broad throat: the gaping wound yawns wide:
One gurgling groan, the last deep sigh of life,
Wells with his gushing blood,--and closed is all the strife!
XII.

'Tis done! The hunted, animal Despair,
That hoped and feared no future state, is past:
O'er the stiff nostril blows the evening air;
O'er the glazed eye real darkness gathers fast;
Into a car the heavy corse is cast;
And homeward the belated hunter hies,
Eager to boast of his success at last,
And shew the beauty of his antlered prize,
To Her he loves the best,--the maid with gentle eyes!

XIII.

And she, whose tender heart would beat and shrink
At the loud yelping of a punished hound,
With rosy lips and playful smile shall drink
The Highland health to him, that circles round.
And where the creature lies, with crimson wound,
And cold, stark limbs, and purple eyes half-closed,
There shall her gentle feet at morn be found!
Of such strange mixtures is the heart composed,
So natural-soft,--so hard, by cunning CUSTOM glozed.

XIV.

But, lo! the Sabbath rises o'er those hills!
And gathering fast from many a distant home,
By wild romantic paths, and shallow rills,
The Highland groups to distant worship come.
Lightly their footsteps climb, inured to roam
Miles through the trackless heather day by day:
Lasses, with feet as white as driven foam,
And lads, whose various tartans, brightly gay,
With shifting colour deck the winding mountain way.

XV.

And some, with folded hands and looks demure,
Are nathless stealing lingering looks behind,
Their young hearts not less reverently pure
Because they hope to welcome accents kind,
And, in that Sabbath crowd, the Loved to find;
And children, glancing with their innocent eyes,
At every flower that quivers in the wind;
And grey-haired shepherds, calm, and old, and wise,
With peasant-wisdom,--drawn from gazing on the skies.

XVI.

And Auld-Wives, who with Sabbath care have donned
Their snowy mutches, clean, and fresh, and white;
And pious eyes that well The BOOK have conned;
And snooded heads, bound round with ribands bright;
And last,--an old man's grandchild, treading light
By his blind footsteps; or a Mother mild,
Whose shadowy lashes veil her downcast sight,
Bearing along her lately christened child:--
And still by friendly talk their journey is beguiled.

XVII.

Oh, Scotland, Scotland!--in these later days,
How hath thy decent worship been disgraced!
Where, on your Sabbath hills, for prayer and praise,
Solemn the feet of reverend elders paced,
With what wild brawling, with what ruffian haste,
Gathering to brandish Discord's fatal torch,
Have men your sacred altar-grounds defaced;
Mocking with howling fury, at the porch,
The ever-listening God, in his own holy Church!

XVIII.

The Taught would choose their Teacher: be it so!
Doubtless his lessons they will humbly learn,
Bowing the meek heart reverently low,
Who first claim right to choose him or to spurn;
Drop sentences of suffrage in the urn;
And ballot for that Minister of God,
Whose sacred mission is to bid them turn
Obedient eyes toward the chastening rod,
And walk the narrow path by humbler Christians trod!

XIX.

Choose,--since your forms permit that choice to be,--
But choose in brotherhood, and pious love;
Assist at that selection solemnly,
As at a sacrifice to One above.
What! fear ye Rome's high altars? Shall THEY prove
The error and the stumbling-block alone?
Their crucifixes, meant your hearts to move,--

Their pictured saints--their images of stone--
Their Virgins garlanded--their Jesu on his Throne?
XX.

Yea! rather fear 'the image of a Voice,'
Set up to be an idol and a snare:
Fear the impression of your prideful choice,
The human heart-beat mingling with the prayer;
The heavy sigh that comes all unaware;
The sense of weeping, strugglingly repress;
The yearning adoration and despair,
With which unworthiness is then confest;
Mortal disturbance sent to break Religion's rest!
XXI.

Fear the excitement--fear the human power
Of eloquent words, which 'twixt you and the skies,
Stand like a fretted screen; and, for that hour,
Confuse and mar the tranquil light that lies
Beyond, unbroken! Fear the glow that dies
With the occasion: darkest dangers yawn
'Neath the foundation where your hope would rise:
For true light fadeth not, nor is withdrawn,
The Lamb's calm City wrapt in one Eternal Dawn!
XXII.

Children, who playing in their ignorant mirth,
Behold the sunbeam's warm reflected ray,
Reaching to grasp it, touch the blank cold earth,
Their eyes averted from the Source of Day,
Not knowing where the Actual Glory lay.
Fear YE to snatch at glittering beams, and lose
The light that should have cheered your mortal way:
Tremble, responsible yet weak, to choose;
'Ye know not what ye ask,'--nor what ye should refuse!
XXIII.

Say, was it word of power, or fluent speech,
Which marked those simple men of Galilee,
For Christ's disciples? was it theirs to preach
With winning grace, and artful subtilty,
The Saviour's message,--'Die to live with me?'

Bethsaida's fisherman, who bare the spite
Of heathen rage at Patras,--or those three
Who saw HIM glorified on Tabor's height,
And bathed in bloody sweat on dark Gethsemane's night?
XXIV.

The homeliest voice that weakly leads the van
Of many prayers, shall sound as sweet among
The angel host,--as his, the eloquent man,
Who with miraculous sweet, and fervent tongue,
Charms with a spell the mute, applauding throng;
No better, (as respects his human gift)
Than many a Heathen Poet, whose great song,
Age after age continues yet to lift,
As down the Stream of Time melodious treasures drift.
XXV.

Brothers, why make ye War? and in His Name,
Whose message to the earth was Peace and Love;
What time the awful voice to Shepherds came,
And the clear Herald-Star shone out above?
When shall the meaning of that message move
Our bitter hearts? When shall we cease to come
The patience of a gentle God to prove;
Cainlike in temper,--though no life we doom,--
Our prayer a curse, although our altar be no tomb?
XXVI.

When that indulgence which the PERFECT grants,
By the IMPERFECT also shall be granted;
When narrow light that falls in crooked slants,
Shines broad and bright where'er its glow is wanted;
When cherished errors humbly are recanted;
When there are none who set themselves apart,
To watch how Prayers are prayed, and sweet hymns chanted;
With eyes severe, and criticising heart,--
As though some Player flawed the acting of his part.
XXVII.

From Saints on Earth,--defend us, Saints in Heaven!
By their un-likeness to the thing they ape;
Their cheerlessness, where God such joy hath given,

(Covering this fair world with a veil of crape)
Their lack of kindness in any shape;
Their fierce, false judgments of another's sin;
And by the narrowness of mind they drape
With full-blown fantasies, and boasts to win
A better path to Heaven, than others wander in!
XXVIII.

And ye, calm Angels in that blissful world,
From whence (close knit in brotherhood of strife)
The strong rebellious spirits, downward hurled,
Came to this Earth, with love and beauty rife,
And poisoned all the fountain-wells of life;
Spread the soft shelter of your peaceful wings,
When hard looks stab us like a two-edged knife,
And hearts that yearned for Pity's healing springs,
Are mocked, in dying thirst, by gall which Malice brings.
XXIX.

From the cold glare of their self-righteous eyes,--
From scornful lips, brimful of bitter words,--
From the curled smile that triumphs and defies,--
From arguments that sound like clashing swords,--
Save us, ye dwellers among music-chords!
Whose unseen presence doubtless lingers nigh,
Although no more our blinded sense affords
Your radiant image to the craving eye,
Nor sees your herald-wings, swift-spreading, cleave the sky!
XXX.

No more to Ishmael's thirst, or Hagar's prayer,
The suffering or the longing heart on Earth;
No more to soothe funereal despair;
No more to fill the cruise in bitter dearth,
Or turn the widow's wailing into mirth;
Shall they return who watched in holy pain
The Human Death, that closed the Heavenly Birth!
Rebellious earth, twice sanctified in vain,
Lonely from those pure steps must evermore remain.
XXXI.

But deep in each man's heart, some angel dwells,--

Mournfully, as in a sepulchral tomb;
Set o'er our nature like calm sentinels,
Denying passage to bad thoughts that come
Tempting us weakly to our final doom,
Patient they watch, whatever may betide;
Shedding pure rays of glory through the gloom,
And bowing meek wings over human pride,--
As once in the lone grave of Him, the Crucified!
XXXII.

Angels of Grief,--who, when our weak eyes tire
Of shedding tears, their sad sweet lessons teach;
Angels of Hope,--who lift with strong desire
Our mortal thoughts beyond a mortal reach;
Angels of Mercy,--who to gentle speech,
And meek, forgiving words, the heart incline,
Weaving a link of brotherhood for each;
Angels of Glory,--whose white vestments shine
Around the good man's couch, in dying life's decline.
XXXIII.

Need of such heavenly counterpoise have we
To bear us up, when we would grovel down;
To keep our clogged and tarnished natures free
From the world-rust that round our hearts hath grown
Like mouldering moss upon a sculptured stone;
To soften down the cruelty and sin
Of crabbèd Selfishness, that stands alone,
With greedy eyes that watch what they may win,
The whole wide world a field to gather harvest in!
XXXIV.

To gather Harvest! In this Autumn prime,
Earth's literal harvest cumpers the glad land!
This is the sultry moment--the dry time,
When the ripe golden ears, that shining stand,
Fall, rustling, to the Reaper's nimble hand:
When, from those plains the bright sheaves lie among,
(Whose fertile view the sloping hills command,)
Float cheerful sounds of laughter and of song,
And merry-making jests from many a rural throng.
XXXV.

Sweet is the prospect which that distance yields!
Here, honest toil;--while there a sunburnt child
Sleeps by the hedge-row that divides the fields,
Or where the sheltering corn is stacked and piled;
And as the groups have one by one defiled,
(Leaving unwatched the little sleeper's place,)
You guess the Mother, by the way she smiled;
The holy Love that lit her peasant-face,
The lingering glance, replete with Feeling's matchless grace.
XXXVI.

He lieth safe until her task be done--
Lulled, basking, into slumber sound and deep;
That Universal Cherisher, the Sun,
With kindly glow o'erlooks his harmless sleep,
And the rough dog close neighbourhood shall keep,
(Friend of the noble and the lowly born)
Till careful shepherds fold the wandering sheep,
And wearied reapers leave the unfinished corn--
Resting through dewy night, to recommence at morn.
XXXVII.

Oh, picture of Abundance and of Joy!
Oh, golden Treasure given by God to Man!
Why com'st thou shaded by a base alloy?
What root of evil poisons Nature's plan?
Why should the strain not end as it began,
With notes that echo music as they come?
What mournful silence--what mysterious ban--
Hushes the tones of those who onward roam,
With choral gladness singing,--'happy Harvest-Home?'
XXXVIII.

What altered cadence lingers in the Vale,
Whose mass of full-eared sheaves the reapers bind?
A sound more sad than Autumn-moaning gale,
More dreary than the later whistling wind
That ushers Winter, bitter and unkind.
Again!--it soundeth like a human sigh!
A horrid fear grows present to my mind:
Here, where the grain is reaped that stood so high,

A Man hath lain him down: to slumber?--no,--to die!
XXXIX.

Past the Park gate,--along the market-road,--
And where green water-meadows freshly shine,
By many a Squire and Peer's unseen abode,--
And where the village Alehouse swings its sign,
Betokening rest, and food, and strengthening wine,--
By the rich dairy, where, at even-tide,
Glad Maidens, singing, milk the lowing kine,--
Under blank shadowing garden-walls, that hide
The espaliered fruit well trained upon their sunnier side,--
XL.

Jaded and foot-sore, he hath struggled on,
Retracing with sunk heart his morning track;
In vain to HIM the Harvest and the Sun;
Doomed, in the midst of plenteousness, to lack,
And die unfed, beneath the loaded stack,
He hath been wandering miles to seek RELIEF;
(Disabled servant--Labour's broken hack!)
And he returns--refused! His Hour is brief;
But there are those at home for whom he groans with grief.
XLI.

My pulse beats faster with the coming fear!
I cannot lift his dull expiring weight:
What if the fainting wretch should perish here?
Here,--sinking down beside the rich man's gate,--
On the cropped harvest;--miserable fate!
He tells me something--what, I cannot learn:
Feeble--confused--the words he fain would state:
But accents of complaint I can discern,
And mention of his wife and little ones in turn!
XLII.

He's DEAD! In that last sigh his weak heart burst!
An end hath now been put to many woes:
The storm-beat mariner hath reached the worst,--
His 'harbour and his ultimate repose.'
He to a world of better justice goes,
We to the Inquest-Room, to hear, in vain,

Description of the strong convulsive throes,
The mighty labour, and the petty gain,
By which a struggling life gets quit at last of pain.
XLIII.

To hear, and to forget, the oft-told story,
Of what forsaken Want in silence bears:
So tarnishing commercial England's glory!
To hear rich men deny that poor men's cares
Should be accounted business of theirs;
To hear pale neighbours (one degree less poor
Than him who perished) prove, all unawares,
The generous opening of THEIR lowly door,
The self-denying hearts that shared the scanty store.
XLIV.

To hear, and acquiesce in, shallow words,
Which make it seem the sickly labourer's fault,
That he hath no accumulated hoards
Of untouched wages; wine, and corn, and malt;
To use when eyesight fails, or limbs grow halt;
To hear his character at random slurred,--
'An idle fellow, sir, not worth his salt;'
And every one receive a bitter word
For whom his clay-cold heart with living love was stirred:
XLV.

His Wife, a shrew and slattern, knowing not
(What all her betters understand so well)
How to bring comfort to a poor man's lot,
How to keep house,--and how to buy and sell;
His Daughter, a degraded minx, who fell
At sixteen years,--and bore a child of shame,
Permitted with th' immoral set to dwell!
His eldest Son, an idiot boy, and lame,--
In short, the man WAS starved--but no one was to blame.
XLVI.

No one:--Oh! 'Merry England,' hearest thou?
Houseless and hungry died he on thy breast!
No one: Oh! 'Fertile England,' did thy plough--
Furrow no fields; or was their growth repress

By famine-blight that swept from east to west?
No one:--'Religious England,' preach the word
In thy thronged temples on the Day of Rest,
And bid the war of Faith and Works accord:--
'Who giveth to the Poor, he lendeth to the Lord!'
XLVII.

Trust me, that not a soul whose idle hand
Stinted to spare, and so declined to save;
Not one of all who call it 'Native Land,'
Which to their dead and starved compatriot gave
A humble cradle,--and a lowlier grave,--
Stands blameless of this death before the face
Of judging Heaven! The gathered store they have,
That shall condemn them. National disgrace
Rests on the country cursed by such a piteous case.
XLVIII.

And yet not once, nor twice, but countless times,
We, in blind worship of the golden calf,
Allow of deaths like these! While funeral chimes
Toll for the rich, whose graven paragraph
Of vanished virtues (too complete by half),
The heirs of their importance soothe and please.
The poor man dies--and hath no EPITAPH!
What if your churchyards held such lines as these,
The listless eye to strike,--the careless heart to freeze?
XLIX.

'Here lies a man who died of Hunger-pain,
In a by-street of England's Capital.
Honest, (in vain!) industrious, (in vain!)
Willing to spend in useful labour all
His years from youth to age. A dangerous fall
Shattered his limbs, and brought him to distress.
His health returned: his strength was past recall:
He asked assistance (earnings growing less,)
Received none, struggled on, and died of Want's excess.'
L.

'Here rests in Death, (who rested not in Life!)
The worn-out Mother of a starving brood:

By night and day, with most courageous strife,
She fought hard Fortune to procure them food:
(A desert-pelican, whose heart's best blood
Oozed in slow drops of failing strength away!)
Much she endured; much misery withstood;
At length weak nature yielded to decay,
And baffled Famine seized his long-resisting prey.'

LI.

Oh! the green mounds, that have no head-stones o'er them,
To tell who lies beneath, in slumber cold;
Oh! the green mounds, that saw no Mutes deplore them,
The Pauper-Graves, for whom no church-bells tolled;
What if our startled senses could behold,
(As we to Sabbath-prayer walk calmly by,)
Their visionary epitaphs enrolled;
Upstanding grimly 'neath God's equal sky,
Near the white sculptured tombs where wealthier Christians lie!

LII.

Then we should THINK: then we should cry, ALAS!
Then many a pulse would flutter mournfully,
And steps would pause, that now so reckless pass:
For, in this chequered world of ours, we see
Much Carelessness, but little Cruelty;
And (though Heaven knows it is no boast to tell,)
There dwelleth in us a deep sympathy,
Too often, like the stone-closed Arab well,
Sealed from their helpless thirst whose torments it should quell.

LIII.

We shelter SELFISHNESS behind the mask
Of INCREDULITY: we will not own
What, if admitted, leaves a heavy task
To be performed; or spurned if left undone,
Stamping our frozen hearts as made of stone.
Or, if we grant such suffering exists,
Wide-spread and far, we plead,--'how vain for ONE
To strive to clear away these hopeless mists,
'Striking a few sad names from off these endless lists!'

LIV.

'WHAT CAN I DO? I know that men have died
'Of their privations; truly, I believe
'That honest labour may be vainly plied:
'But how am I this sorrow to relieve?
'Go, let our Rulers some great plan achieve,
'It rests with These to settle and command,--
'We, meaner souls, can only sigh and grieve.'
So, sitting down, with slack and nerveless hand,
Supine we hear the cry that waileth through the land.
LV.

But let us measure help, by their deep woe:
Are we, indeed, as powerless to aid
As they to struggle? Conscience whispers, 'NO!'
Conscience, who shrinks uneasy and afraid,
Condemned,--if that brief answer must be made.
Though, in the Cowardice that flies the pain,
A spark of better nature is betrayed,
Proving, if their appeal could entrance gain,
Our hearts would not be roused and spoken to in vain.
LVI.

But because generous minds stand few and far,
Like wholesome ears of grain in fields of blight:--
Because one earnest soul, like one great star,
Rises,--without the power in single light
To break the darkness of surrounding night:--
Because the sufferings of the Mass require
The Many, not the Few, their wrongs to right;-
Therefore, Great Hearts grow sick with vain desire,
And, baffled at each turn, the weaker spirits tire.
LVII.

The GRADUAL is God's law. And we all fail
Because we will not copy it, but would
Against deep-rooted obstacles prevail,
(Which have the change of centuries withstood)
By hurried snatching in our rashest mood:
So, leaving dying branches in our grasp,
Vanishes all the growth of promised good;
Or from the green leaves darts some poisonous asp,
And stings the hand outstretched the fruitage fair to clasp.

LVIII.

So the Mock-Patriot leaves the Poor man's home
A thousand times more wretched, than when first
Loud declamation, full of froth and foam,
Weak discontent to strong rebellion nurst!
By those to whom he proffered aid, accurst,--
Called to account for days of helpless woe,--
The bubble promises give way, and burst,
Which left his rash lips with such ready flow:
The Idol of Himself,--the Orator for show!

LIX.

Solemn the malediction set on him
Who doth 'pervert the judgment' of the poor,
Mislead the blind and ignorant, and dim
The meagre light which led them heretofore.
Faces he knows not,--weak ones who deplore
The ruin wrought by him,--in dreams shall rise;
Night's veil of darkness cannot cover o'er
The wild reproaching of their blood-shot eyes,
Nor its deep silence hush their hoarse lamenting cries!

While those whom he opposed, pronounce it Sin,
That, with mad Discord in his meteor track,
Some shallow theory of hope to win,
He hounded on a wild infuriate pack:
The feet he taught to leave the quiet track,
Who shall prevent, or whither shall they tread?
What mighty force shall dam the waters back,
When the swoln torrent hath found room to spread?
Rolling and fierce it comes, and whelms his reckless head!

Yet, let no man who feels himself secure
That Wrong exists, believe that humble tools
May not amend, what pining they endure.
Let him not fear the ridicule of fools,
Nor sneers of cold utilitarian schools,
To whom enthusiasts ever seem insane:
Nor to old laws and inappropriate rules

Bow slavish down because his lot is plain,
Unstarred by Rank or Power, ungilt by Wealth or Gain.
LXII.

What! were they demi-gods and angels, then,
Who have done deeds of glory in our land?
Or only honest, earnest-hearted men,
Born their great mission here to understand,
And nobly labour at it, heart and hand?
Were they all Princes and great Lords, who trod
Their share of Earth in natural command?
No! THEY believed the Breath that woke the clod,
And honoured in themselves the sentient spark from God!
LXIII.

HE did not breathe a different breath of life
Into the noble and the lowly born:
Sprung from one clay, though now in parted strife,
Brothers,--though some may crouch and some may scorn.
WE framed a difference, such as bids the Morn
Shine veiled or bright; but, sent through latticed pane,
Or mullioned arch, or prison-bars forlorn,
Or gleaming through dim aisles with painted stain,
God's outward light it was, God's light it must remain!
LXIV.

Not in the body, or the body's gauds,--
Not in the coronet a goldsmith wrought,--
Not in the pomp a gaping crowd applauds
(Like a pleased child when spangled toys are brought,)
But in the proud pre-eminence of THOUGHT
Lies the true influence that shall aspire:
The Victory in a battle mutely fought:
For that light, none can trample out,--that fire
The breath of fierce disdain but teaches to rise higher!
LXV.

Hath Science, in her march, avowed no claims
But theirs, first trained in Academic letters?
Doth History give no roll of patriot-names,
Peasants themselves, of peasant sons begetters,
Who taught that light to some, miscalled their BETTERS?

Men, who with iron hands, and hearts as stout,
Filed through the links of Folly's golden fetters;
And rough smith's work they made of it, no doubt,
Small choice of tools, when Souls from Prison would break out.
LXVI.

Yet doubly beautiful it is to see
One, set in the temptation of High Class,
Keep the inherent deep nobility
Of a great nature, strong to over-pass
The check of circumstance and choking mass
Of vicious faults which youthful leisure woo;
Mirror each thought in Honour's stainless glass;
And, by all kindly deeds that Power can do,
Prove that the brave good heart hath come of lineage true.
LXVII.

His gladdest welcome shall be giv'n by those
Who seemed to hold aloof from gentle blood:
Men, falsely deemed RANK'S democratic foes,
Because they love not FASHION'S selfish brood,
And look on idle Pomp with bitter mood.
Straightforward is their judgment; true, and keen;
The English Oak disowns the grafted wood,--
Spurns the high title, linked with spirit mean,--
And scorns the branch whereon the Lowly dare not lean!
LXVIII.

Oh! Graceful seems the bending of his brow;
Lovely the earnestness that fills his eyes;
Holy the fire that gave his heart its glow
(Spark of that same great Light which never dies.)
With hope, not fear, they watch his gradual rise:--
His youth's glad service in his age recall:--
Cheer in the race,--and glory in the prize,--
For his sake loving Rank, and Pomp, and all,--
Deeming such statue needs a lofty Pedestal!
LXIX.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! May such men as these
Alone be teachers of thy childhood pure;
Greet thy fair youth with friendly courtesies,

And to thine age with happy bond endure.
Feel with them; act with them; those ills to cure
That lie within the reach of brotherhood;
For these are men no shallow hopes allure,
Whose loyalty is current in their blood,
But who the people's claims have wisely understood.
LXX.

Hear a brief fable. One, with heedless tread,
Came o'er the wild fair grass that ne'er was mown:
Then said the grass,--'Your heel is on my head;
And, where in harmless freedom I have grown,
Sorely your iron foot hath tramped me down;
But God,--who to my veins such freshness gave,
Shall heal me with a healing of his own,
Till I, perchance, may lift my head to wave
Above the marble tomb that presses down your grave.'
LXXI.

If he had trod the path within his reach,
And let the wild grass hear the cricket sing,
Think you it would have turned with bitter speech?
No! but saluted him as Nature's king.
Oh, fable,--but not folly,--for the thing
We trample down, if life from God be in it,
Sooner or later takes the upward spring;
And sorely we may rue the reckless minute
We strove to crush its strength, and not in peace to win it.
LXXII.

And not alone in this same trampling strife
Consists Oppression's force; that creeping eft,
That lizard-blooded, frozen death-in-life,
NEUTRALITY, the cursed of Heaven, hath left
More misery to be borne by those bereft
Of power to strive against ill-fortune's spite.
The dagger hath gone home unto the heft;
And those stood by, who would not, but who might
Have turned the assassin steel, and stayed the unequal fight.
LXXIII.

Oh! there are moments of our lives, when such

As will not help to lift us, strike us down!
When the green bough just bends so near our clutch,
When the light rope so easily were thrown,
That they are murderers who behold us drown.
Well spoke the Poet-Heart so tried by woe,
That there are hours when left despairing, lone,
'Each idle ON-LOOKER appears a FOE:'
For Hate can scarce do worse, than no compassion show.
LXXIV.

Neutrality Is Hate: the aid withheld,
Flings its large balance in the adverse scale;
And makes the enemy we might have quelled,
Strong to attack, and certain to prevail;
Yea, clothes him, scoffing, in a suit of mail!
Those are the days which teach unhappy elves
No more such callous bosoms to assail;
The rocky soil no more the weak-one delves;
Upright we stand, and trust--in God, and in ourselves.
LXXV.

'The flesh will quiver when the pincers tear;'
The heart defies, that feels unjustly slighted;
The soul, oppressed, puts off its robe of Fear,
And warlike stands, in gleaming armour dighted;
And whensoever the Wronged would be the Righted,
There always have been, always must be, minds
In whom the Power and Will are found united;
Who rise, as Freedom fit occasion finds,
Skilled Workmen in a Craft which no Apprentice binds.
LXXVI.

And therefore should we aid who need our aid,
And freely give to those who need our giving;
Look gently on a brother's humbler trade,
And the coarse hand that labours for its living,
Scorn not because our fortunes are more thriving;
Spurn the cold rule,--'all BARTER, no BESTOWING,'
And such good plans as answer our contriving,
Let no false shame deter from open shewing;--
The crystal spring runs pure,--though men behold it flowing.
LXXVII.

But granting we in truth were weak to do
That which our hearts are strong enough to dream;
Shall we, as feeble labourers, wandering go,
And sit down passive by the lulling stream,
Or slumber basking in the noon-tide beam?
Shall we so waste the hours without recall,
Which o'er Life's silent dial duly gleam;
And from red morning to the dewy fall,
Folding our listless hands, pursue no aim at all?
LXXVIII.

Would not the lip with mocking smile be curled,
If some poor reaper of our autumn corn,
Some hired labourer of the actual world,
Treated our summons with neglect forlorn;
Pleading that Heaven, which made him weakly-born,
Had thus excused him from all settled task?
Should we not answer, with a kind of scorn,
'Do what thou canst,--no more can Reason ask,
But think not, unemployed, in idleness to bask?'
LXXIX.

In Heaven's own land,--the heart,--shall we put by
All tasks to US allotted and assigned,--
While thus the mote within a Brother's eye
Clearly we see, but to the beam are blind?
How can we set that reaper sheaves to bind,
According to his body's strength; yet seek
Excuse for our soul's indolence to find?
Oh! let the red shame flush the conscious cheek,--
For duties planned by God, NO man was born too weak!
LXXX.

Task-work goes through the world! the fluent River
Turneth the mill-wheels with a beating sound,
And rolleth onward toward the sea for ever!
The Sea heaves restless to its shoreward bound;
The Winds with varying voices, wander round;
The Branches, in their murmur, bend and thrill;
Flower after flower springs freshly from the ground;
The floating Clouds move ceaseless o'er the hill;

Nothing is set in calm; nothing (save Death) is still.
LXXXI.

That glorious orb of Heaven, the blessèd Sun,
A daily journey makes from East to West;
Nightly the Moon and Stars their courses run.
Yea, further we may learn our Lord's behest,
Taught by the pulse that heaves each living breast,
Our folding of the hands is in the GRAVE
And fixed in HEAVEN the Sabbath of our Rest!
Meanwhile, with Sun, and Wind, and Cloud, and Wave,
We ply the life-long task our great Creator gave.
LXXXII.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! when to thy young heart
Life's purpose pleads with mighty eloquence,--
Hear, Thou, as one who fain would act his part
Under the guiding of Omnipotence;
Whose clay-wrapped Spirit, looking up from hence,
Asketh what labour it may best perform
Ere the NIGHT cometh; when quick life and sense
Are fellow-sleepers with the slow blind worm,--
And Death's dark curtain hides the sunshine and the storm!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Conclusion

I.

MY lay is ended! closed the circling year,
From Spring's first dawn to Winter's darkling night;
The moan of sorrow, and the sigh of fear,
The ringing chords of triumph and delight
Have died away,--oh, child of beauty bright,--
And all unconscious of my song art thou:
With large blue eyes of Majesty and might,
And red full lips, and fair capacious brow,
No Leader of the World,--but Life's Beginner, now!

II.

Oh, tender human blossom, thou art fair,
With such a beauty as the eye perceives
Watching a bud of promise rich and rare
In the home-shadow of surrounding leaves.
THOUGHT, the great Dream-bringer, who joys and grieves
Over the visions of her own creating,
Resting by Thee, a sigh of pleasure heaves;
The fever of her rapid flight abating
Amid the golden hopes around thy cradle waiting.

III.

Thou--thou, at least, art happy! For thy sake
Heaven speaks reversal of the doom of pain,
Set on our Nature when the Demon-Snake
Hissed the first lie, a woman's ear to gain,
And Eden was lamented for in vain!
THOU art not meant, like other men, to thirst
For benefits no effort can attain:
To struggle on, by Hope's deceiving nurst,
And linger still the last, where thou wouldst fain be first.

IV.

The royal canopy above thy head
Shall charm away the griefs that others know:--
Oh! mocking dream! Thy feet Life's path must tread:
The Just God made not Happiness to grow

Out of condition: fair the field-flowers blow,
Fair as the richer flowers of garden ground;
And far more equally are joy and woe
Divided,--than they dream, who, gazing round,
See but that narrow plot, their own life's selfish bound.
V.

True,--in thy Childhood's Spring thou shalt not taste
The bitter toil of factory or mine:
Nor the Strong Summer of thy manhood waste
In labour vain, and want that bids thee pine:
The mellow Autumn of thy calm decline--
The sheltered Winter of thy happy Age--
Shall see home-faces still around thee shine--
No Workhouse threatening, where the heart's sick rage
Mopes like a prisoned bird within a cheerless cage.
VI.

True, that, instead of all this weary grief,
This cutting off what joy our life affords,
This endless pining for denied relief,
All Luxury shall hail thee! music's chords
Shall woo thee,--and sweet utterance of words
In Minstrel singing: Painting shall beguile
Thine eye with mimic battles, dark with swords,--
Green sylvan landscapes,--beauty's imaged smile,--
And books thy leisure hours from worldly cares shall wile.
VII.

There ends the sum of thy Life's holiday!
WANT shall not enter near thee,--PLEASURE shall:
But Pomp hath wailed when Poverty looked gay,
And SORROW claims an equal tax from all:
Tears have been known from Royal eyes to fall
When harvest-trudging clowns went singing by:
Sobs have woke echoes in the gilded hall:
And, by that pledge of thine Equality,
Men hail thee BROTHER still, though thou art set so high.

VIII.

DEATH, too, who heeds not poorer men's regret,

Neither is subject to the will of Kings;
All Thrones, all Empires of the Earth are set
Under the vaulted shadow of his wings:
He blights our Summers, chills our fairest springs,
Nips the fresh bloom of some uncertain flower,
Yea, where the fragile tendril closest clings,
There doth his gaunt hand pluck, with sudden power,
Leaving green burial-mounds, where stood Affection's bower.
IX.

Where is young Orleans? that fair Prince of France,
Who 'scaped a thousand threatening destinies
Only to perish by a vulgar chance?
Lost is the light of the most lovely eyes
That ever imaged back the summer skies!
Widowed the hapless Wife, who seeks to train
Childhood's frail thread of broken memories,
So that her Orphan may at least retain
The haunting shadow of a Father's face,--in vain!
X.

Oh! Summer flowers, which happy children cull,
How were ye stained that year by bitter weeping,
When he, the stately and the beautiful,
Wrapped in his dismal shroud lay coldly sleeping!
The warm breeze through the rustling woods went creeping,
The birds with gladdening notes sang overhead:
The peasant groups went laughing to their reaping,
But, in the gorgeous Palace, rose instead,
Sobs,--and lamenting Hymns,--and Masses for the Dead!
XI.

Where, too, is She, the loved and lately wived,
The fair-haired Daughter of an Emperor,
Born in the time of roses, and who lived
A rose's life; one Spring, one Summer more,
Dating from Girlhood's blushing days of yore,--
Fading in Autumn,--lost in Winter's gloom,--
And with the opening year beheld no more?
She and her babe lie buried in the tomb,
The green bud on the stem,--both withered in the bloom!
XII.

Then, RUSSIA wept! Then, bowing to the dust
That brow whereon proud Majesty and Grace
Are chiselled as in some ideal bust,--
All vain appeared his power, his realm's wide space,
And the high blood of his imperial race!
He sank,--a grieving man,--a helpless Sire,--
Who could not call back to a pale sweet face
By might of rule, or Love's intense desire,
The light that quivering sank, in darkness to expire.
XII.

Where is the angel sent as Belgium's heir?
Renewing hopes so linked with bitter fears,
When our own Charlotte perished young and fair,--
The former love of long departed years!
That little One is gone from earth's cold tears
To smile in Heaven's clear sunshine with the Blest,
And in his stead another bud appears.
But when his gentle head was laid to rest,
Came there not boding dreams to sting his Father's breast?
XIV.

Of Claremont? of that dark December night,
When, pale with weary vigils vainly kept,--
Crushed by the destiny that looked so bright,--
Dark-browed and beautiful, he stood and wept
By one who heard him not, but dumbly slept!
By one who loved him so, that evermore
Her young heart with a fervent welcome leapt
To greet his presence! But those pangs are o'er,
And Heaven in mercy keeps more smiling days in store.
XV.

God hath built up a bridge 'twixt man and man,
Which mortal strength can never overthrow;
Over the world it stretches its dark span,--
The keystone of that mighty arch is WOE!
Joy's rainbow glories visit earth, and go,
Melting away to Heaven's far-distant land;
But Grief's foundations have been fixed below:
PLEASURE divides us:--the Divine command

Hath made of SORROW'S links a firm connecting band.
XVI.

In the clear morning, when I rose from sleep,
And left my threshold for the fresh'ning breeze,
There I beheld a grieving woman weep;
The shadow of a child was on her knees,
The worn heir of her many miseries:
'Save him!' was written in her suppliant glance:
But I was weaker than its fell disease,
And ere towards noon the Dial could advance
Death indeed saved her babe from Life's most desperate chance.
XVII.

The sunset of that day,--in splendid halls--
Mourning a little child of Ducal race
(How fair the picture Memory recalls!)
I saw the sweetest and the palest face
That ever wore the stamp of Beauty's grace,
Bowed like a white rose beat by storms and rain,
And on her countenance my eyes could trace,
And on her soft cheek, marked with tearful stain,
That she had prayed through many a midnight watch in vain.
XVIII.

In both those different homes the babe was dead:
Life's early morning closed in sudden night:
In both, the bitter tears were freely shed,
Lips pressed on lids for ever closed from light,
And prayers sobbed forth to God the Infinite.
From both, the little one was borne away
And buried in the earth with solemn rite.
One, in a mound where no stone marked the clay,
One, in a vaulted tomb, with funeral array.
XIX.

It was the last distinction of their lot!
The same dull earth received their mortal mould:
The same high consecration marked the spot
A Christian burying-place, for young and old:
The same clear stars shone out all calmly cold
When on those graves the sunset hour grew dim:

And the same God in glory they behold,--
For Life's diverging roads all lead to Him
Who sits enthroned in light among the Cherubim!
XX.

None could revoke the weeping Beggar's loss,--
None could restore that lovely Lady's child,--
Else untold sums had been accounted dross
To buy, for one, the life that moved and smiled:
Else had my heart, by false regret beguiled,
Recalled the other from his blest abode:
One only power was left by Mercy mild,
Leave to give alms,--which gladly I bestowed
Where the lone tears had fall'n, half freezing while they flowed.
XXI.

Beautiful Royal Child, that art to me
Only the sculptured image of a thought:
A type of this world's rank and luxury
Through whom the Poet's lesson may be taught:
The deeds which are by this world's mercy wrought,
Lie in the compass of a narrow bound;
Our Life's ability,--which is as nought,--
Our Life's duration,--which is but a sound,--
And then an echo, heard still faintly lingering round!
XXII.

The sound being sweet, the echo follows it;
And noble deeds should hallow noble names:
The very Ancestry that points a right
To all the old hereditary claims,
With a true moral worldly triumph tames.
What vanity Earth's riches to amass,--
What folly to incur its thousand shames,--
When bubble generations rise and pass,
So swiftly, by the sand in Time's returning glass!
XXIII.

Pilgrims that journey for a certain time--
Weak Birds of Passage crossing stormy seas
To reach a better and a brighter clime--
We find our parallels and types in these!

Meanwhile since Death, and Sorrow, and Disease,
Bid helpless hearts a barren pity feel;
Why, to the POOR, should checked compassion freeze?
BROTHERS, be gentle to that ONE appeal,--
WANT is the only woe God gives you power to heal!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Opening

I.

OF all the joys that brighten suffering earth,
What joy is welcomed like a new-born child?
What life so wretched, but that, at its birth,
Some heart rejoiced--some lip in gladness smiled?
The poorest cottager, by love beguiled,
Greets his new burden with a kindly eye;
He knows his son must toil as he hath toiled;
But cheerful Labour, standing patient by,
Laughs at the warning shade of meagre Poverty!

II.

The pettiest squire who holds his bounded sway
In some far nook of England's fertile ground,
Keeps a high jubilee the happy day
Which bids the bonfires blaze, the joybells sound,
And the small tenantry come flocking round,
While the old steward triumphs to declare
The mother's suffering hour with safety crowned;
And then, with reverent eyes, and grey locks bare,
Falters--'GOD bless the Boy!' his Master's Son and Heir!

III.

The youthful couple, whose sad marriage-vow
Received no sanction from a haughty sire,
Feel, as they gaze upon their infant's brow,
The angel, Hope, whose strong wings never tire--
Once more their long discouraged hearts inspire;
Surely, they deem, the smiles of that young face,
Shall thaw the frost of his relentless ire!
Homeward they turn in thought; old scenes retrace;
And, weeping, yearn to meet his reconciled embrace!

IV.

Yea, for this cause, even SHAME will step aside,
And cease to bow the head and wring the heart;
For she that is a mother, but no bride,
Out of her lethargy of woe will start,

Pluck from her side that sorrow's barbéd dart,
And, now no longer faint and full of fears,
Plan how she best protection may impart
To the lone course of those forsaken years
Which dawn in Love's warm light, though doomed to set in tears!
V.

The dread exception--when some frenzied mind,
Crushed by the weight of unforeseen distress,
Grows to that feeble creature all unkind,
And Nature's sweetest fount, through grief's excess,
Is strangely turned to gall and bitterness;
When the deserted babe is left to lie,
Far from the woeful mother's lost caress,
Under the broad cope of the solemn sky,
Or, by her shuddering hands, forlorn, condemned to die:
VI.

Monstrous, unnatural, and MAD, is deemed,
However dark life's Future glooms in view,
An act no sane and settled heart had dreamed,
Even in extremity of want to do!
And surely WE should hold that verdict true,
Who, for men's lives--not children's--have thought fit
(Though high those lives were valued at their due)
The savage thirst of murder to acquit,
By stamping cold revenge an error of crazed wit!
VII.

She--after pains unpitied, unrelieved--
Sate in her weakness, lonely and forlorn,
Listening bewildered, while the wind that grieved,
Mocked the starved wailing of her newly born;
Racking her brain from weary night till morn
For friendly names, and chance of present aid;
Till, as she felt how this world's crushing scorn,
Passing the Tempter, rests on the Betrayed,--
Hopeless, she flung to Death the life her sin had made!
VIII.

Yes, deem her mad! for holy is the sway
Of that mysterious sense which bids us bend

Toward the young souls new clothed in helpless clay,--
Fragile beginnings of a mighty end,--
Angels unwinged,--which human care must tend
Till they can tread the world's rough path alone,
Serve for themselves, or in themselves offend.
But God o'erlooketh all from His high throne,
And sees, with eyes benign, their weakness--and our own!
IX.

Therefore we pray for them, when sunset brings
Rest to the joyous heart and shining head;
When flowers are closed, and birds fold up their wings,
And watchful mothers pass each cradle-bed
With hushed soft steps, and earnest eyes that shed
Tears far more glad than smiling! Yea, all day
We bless them; while, by guileless pleasure led,
Their voices echo in their gleesome play,
And their whole careless souls are making holiday.
X.

And if, by Heaven's inscrutable decree,
Death calls, and human skill be vain to save;
If the bright child that clambered to our knee,
Be coldly buried in the silent grave;
Oh! with what wild lament we moan and rave!
What passionate tears fall down in ceaseless shower!
There lies Perfection!--there, of all life gave--
The bud that would have proved the sweetest flower
That ever woke to bloom within an earthly bower!
XI.

For, in this hope our intellects abjure
All reason--all experience--and forego
Belief in that which only is secure,
Our natural chance and share of human woe.
The father pitieth David's heart-struck blow,
But for himself, such augury defies:
No future Absalom his love can know;
No pride, no passion, no rebellion lies
In the unsullied depth of those delightful eyes!
XII.

Their innocent faces open like a book,
Full of sweet prophecies of coming good;
And we who pore thereon with loving look,
Read what we most desire, not what we should;
Even that which suits our own Ambition's mood.
The Scholar sees distinction promised there,--
The Soldier, laurels in the field of blood,--
The Merchant, venturous skill and trading fair,--
None read of broken hope--of failure--of despair!
XIII.

Nor ever can a Parent's gaze behold
Defect of Nature, as a Stranger doth;
For these (with judgment true, severe, and cold)
Mark the ungainly step of heavy Sloth,--
Coarseness of features,--tempers quickly wroth:
But those, with dazzled hearts such errors spy,
(A halo of indulgence circling both
The plainest child a stranger passes by,
Shews lovely to the sight of some enamoured eye!
XIV.

The Mother looketh from her latticed pane--
Her Children's voices echoing sweet and clear:
With merry leap and bound her side they gain,
Offering their wild field-flow'rets: all are dear,
Yet still she listens with an absent ear:
For, while the strong and lovely round her press,
A halt uneven step sounds drawing near:
And all she leaves, that crippled child to bless,
Folding him to her heart, with cherishing caress.
XV.

Yea, where the Soul denies illumined grace,
(The last, the worst, the fatallest defect
SHE, gazing earnest in that idiot face,
Thinks she perceives a dawn of Intellect:
And, year by year, continues to expect
What Time shall never bring, ere Life be flown:
Still loving, hoping,--patient, though deject,--
Watching those eyes that answer not her own,--
Near him,--and yet how far! with him,--but still alone!

XVI.

Want of attraction this love cannot mar:
Years of Rebellion cannot blot it out:
The Prodigal, returning from afar,
Still finds a welcome, giv'n with song and shout!
The Father's hand, without reproach or doubt,
Clasps his,--who caused them all such bitter fears:
The Mother's arms encircle him about:
That long dark course of alienated years,
Marked only by a burst of reconciling tears!

XVII.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! if the watch of love
To even the meanest of these fates belong,
What shall THINE be, whose lot is far above
All other fortunes woven in my song?
To guard THY head from danger and from wrong,
What countless voices lift their prayers to Heaven!
Those, whose own loves crowd round, (a happy throng!)
Those, for whom Death the blessed tie hath riven;
And those to whose scathed age no verdant branch is given!

XVIII.

There's not a noble matron in the land,
Whose christen'd heir in gorgeous robes is drest,--
There's not a cottage mother, whose fond hand
Rocks the low cradle of her darling's rest,--
By whom THOU art not thought upon and blest!
Blest for thyself, and for HER lineage high
Who lull'd thee on her young maternal breast;
The Queenly Lady, with the clear blue eye,
Through whom thou claimest love, and sharest loyalty!

XIX.

They pray for THEE, fair child, in Gothic piles,
Where the full organ's deep reverberate sound
Rolls echoing through the dim cathedral aisles,
Bidding the heart with inward rapture bound,
While the bent knee sinks trembling to the ground.
Till, at the signal of some well-known word,
The white-robed choristers rise circling round;

Mingling clear voices with divine accord,
In Hallelujahs loud, that magnify the Lord!
XX.

They pray for THEE in many a village church,
Deep in the shade of its sequester'd dell,
Where, scarcely heard beyond the lowly porch,
More simple hymns of praise less loudly swell;
Oft led by some fair form,--remember'd well
In after years among the grateful poor--
Whose lot it is in lordly halls to dwell,
Thence issuing forth to seek the cotter's door,
Or tread with gentle feet the sanded schoolhouse floor.
XXI.

They pray for THEE, in floating barks that cleave
Their compass-guided path along the sea;
While through the topmast shrouds the keen winds grieve,
As through the branches of some giant tree;
And the surf sparkles in the vessel's lee.
Par from thine Albion's cliffs and native home,
Each crew of loyal mariners may be,
But, mingling with the dash of Ocean's foam,
That prayer shall rise, where'er their trackless course they roam.
XXII.

And where, all newly on some foreign soil
Transplanted from the o'erpeopled Fatherland,
(Where hardy enterprise and honest toil
Avail'd them not) the Emigrant's thin band,
Gather'd for English worship, sadly stand;
Repressing wandering thoughts, which vainly crave
The Sabbath clasp of some familiar hand,
Or yearn to pass the intervening wave
And wet with Memory's tears some daisy-tufted grave:--
XXIII.

There, even there, THY name is not forgot--
Child of the land where they were children too!
Though sever'd ties and exile be their lot,
And Fortune now with different aspect woo,--
Still to their country and religion true,

From them the Indian learns, in broken phrase,
To worship Heaven as his converters do;
Simply he joins their forms of prayer and praise,
And, in Thy native tongue, pleads for Thy valued days.
XXIV.

Yea, even Earth, the dumb and beautiful,
Would seem to bid Thee welcome--in her way;
Since from her bosom thou shalt only cull,
Choice flowers and fruits, from blossom and from spray.
Spring--Summer--Autumn--Winter--day by day,
Above thy head in mystery shall brood;
And every phase of glory or decay,
And every shift of Nature's changeful mood,
To THEE shall only bring variety of good!
XXV.

No insufficient harvest's poverty,
One grain of plenty from thy store can take;
No burning drought that leaves green meadows dry,
And parches all the fertile land, shall make
The fountains fail, where thou thy thirst shalt slake!
The hardest winter that can ever bind
River, and running rill, and heaving lake,
With its depressing chain of ice, shall find
An atmosphere round THEE, warm as the summer wind!
XXVI.

From woes which deep privations must involve,
Set in luxurious comfort far aloof,
THOU shalt behold the vanishing snow dissolve,
From the high window and the shelter'd roof;
Or, while around thee, webs of richest woof
On gilded pillars hang in many a fold;
Read, in wise books, writ down for thy behoof,
(Sounding like fables in the days of old!)
What meaner men endure from want and pinching cold.
XXVII.

Oh, since this is, and must be, by a law
Of God's own holy making, shall there not
Fall on thy heart a deep, reflecting awe,

When thou shalt contemplate the adverse lot
Of those by men, but not by Heaven, forgot?
Bend to the lowly in their world of care;
Think, in thy Palace, of the labourer's cot;
And justify the still unequal share
By all they power to aid, and willingness to spare!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Spring

I.

WHAT shalt THOU know of Spring? A verdant crown
Of young boughs waving o'er thy blooming head:
White tufted Guelder-roses, showering down
A fairy snow-path where thy footsteps tread:
Fragrance and balm,--which purple violets shed:
Wild-birds,--sweet warbling in commingled song:
Brooklets,--thin murmuring down their pebbly bed;
Or more abundant rivers,--swept along
With shoals of tiny fish, in many a silver throng!

II.

To THEE shall be unknown that weary pain,
The feverish thirsting for a breath of air,--
Which chokes the heart of those who sigh in vain
For respite, in their round of toil and care:
Who never gaze on Nature fresh and fair,
Nor in sweet leisure wile an hour away;
But, like caged creatures, sullenly despair,
As day monotonously follows day,
Till youth wears on to age, and strength to faint decay.

III.

A feeble girl sits working all alone!
A ruined Farmer's orphan; pale and weak;
Her early home to wealthier strangers gone,
No rural beauty lingers on her cheek;
Her woe-worn looks a woeful heart bespeak;
Though in her dull, and rarely lifted eye,
(Whose glances nothing hope, and nothing seek,)
Those who have time for pity, might descry
A thousand shattered gleams of merriment gone by!

IV.

Her window-sill some sickly plants adorn,
(Poor links to memories sweet of Nature's green!)
There to the City's smoke-polluted morn
The primrose lifts its leaves, with buds between,

'Minished and faint, as though their life had been
Nipped by long pining and obscure regret;
Torn from the sunny bank where erst were seen
Lovely and meek companions, thickly set,--
The cowslip, rich in scent, and humble violet!
V.

Too fanciful! the plant but pines, like her,
For purer air; for sunbeams warm and kind;
Th' enlivening joy of nature's busy stir,
The rural freedom, long since left behind!
For the fresh woodlands,--for the summer wind,--
The open fields with perfumed clover spread;--
The hazel copse,--whose branches intertwined
Made natural bow'rs and arches overhead,
With many a narrow path, where only two could tread.
VI.

Never, oh! never more, shall these afford
Her stifled heart their innocent delight!
Never, oh! never more, the rich accord
Of feathered songsters make her morning bright!
Earning scant bread, that finds no appetite,
The sapless life she toils for, lingers on;
And when at length it sinks in dreary night,
A shallow, careless grave is dug,--where none
Come round to bless her rest, whose ceaseless tasks are done!
VII.

And now, the devious threads her simple skill
Wove in a quaint device and flowery line,
Adorn some happier maid, whose wayward will
Was struck with wishing for the fair design:
Some 'curléd darling' of a lordly line,
Whose blooming cheek, through veils of texture rare,
Mantling with youth's warm blood is seen to shine;
While her light garments, draped with modest care,
Soft as a dove's white wings, float on the breezy air.
VIII.

Oh, there is need for permanent belief
In the All-Equal World of Joy to come!

Need for such solace to the restless grief
And heavy troubles of our earthly home!
Else might our wandering reason blindly roam,
And ask, with all a heathen's discontent,
Why Joy's bright cup for some should sparkling foam,
While others, not less worthy, still lament,
And find the cup of tears the only portion sent!
IX.

But for the Christian's hope, how hard, how cold,
How bitterly unjust, our lot would seem!
How purposeless and sad, to young and old!
How like the struggles of a torturing dream,
When ghastly midnight bids us strive and scream!
All fades--all fleets--of which our hearts grow fond;
Pain presses on us to the last extreme,--
When lo! the dawn upriseth, clear beyond,
And, radiant from the East, forbids us to despond.
X.

And many a crippled child, and aged man,
And withered crone, who once saw 'better days,'
With just enough of intellect to scan
This gracious truth; uncheered by human praise,
Patient plods through the thorn-encumbered ways:
Oh, trust God counts the hours through which they sigh,
While His green Spring eludes their suffering gaze,
And flowers along Earth's spangled bosom lie,
Whose barren bloom, for them, must unenjoyed pass by!
XI.

So lives the little Trapper underground;
No glittering sunshine streaks the oozy wall;
Not e'en a lamp's cold glimmer shineth round
Where he must sit (through summer days and all,
While in warm upper air the cuckoos call,)
For ever listening at the weary gate
Where echoes of the unseen footsteps fall.
Early he comes, and lingers long and late,
With savage men, whose blows his misery aggravate.
XII.

Yet sometimes, (for the heart of childhood is
A thing so pregnant with joy's blessed sun,
That all the dismal gloom that round him lies
Can scarce suffice to bid its rays begone)
In lieu of vain complaint, or peevish moan,
A feeble SONG the passing hour will mark!
Poor little nightingale! that sing'st alone,
Thy cage is very low, and bitter dark;
But God hears thee, who hears the glad upsoaring lark.
XIII.

God seeth thee, who sees the prosperous proud
Into the sunshine of their joy go forth:
God marks thee, weak one, in the human crowd,
And judgeth all thy grief, (as all their mirth,)
Bird with the broken wing that trails on earth!
His angels watch thee, if none watch beside,
As faithfully--despite thy lowly birth--
As the child-royal of the queenly bride,
Or our belief is vain in Christ the Crucified!
XIV.

In Christ! who made young children's guileless lives
The cherished objects of His love and care;
Who bade each sinner that for pardon strives,
Low, at Heaven's feet, a child-like heart lay bare;
Opening the world's great universal prayer
With these meek words: 'Our Father!' Strange, that we
The common blessings of His earth and air
Deny to those who, circling round His knee,
Embraced, in mortal life, His immortality!
XV.

Those 'common blessings!' In this chequered scene
How scant the gratitude we shew to God!
Is it, in truth, a privilege so mean
To wander with free footsteps o'er the sod,
See various blossoms paint the valley clod,
And all things into teeming beauty burst?
A miracle as great as Aaron's rod,
But that our senses, into dulness nurst,
Recurring Custom still with Apathy hath curst.

XVI.

They who have rarest joy, know Joy's true measure;
They who most suffer, value Suffering's pause;
They who but seldom taste the simplest pleasure,
Kneel oftenest to the Giver and the Cause.
Heavy the curtains feasting Luxury draws,
To hide the sunset and the silver night;
While humbler hearts, when Care no longer gnaws,
And some rare holiday permits delight,
Lingering, with love would watch that earth-enchanting sight.

XVII.

So sits the pallid weaver at his loom,
Copying the wreaths the artist-pencil drew;
In the dull confines of his cheerless room
Glisten those tints of rich and living hue.
The air is sweet, the grass is fresh with dew,
And feverish aches are throbbing in his veins,
But his are work-day Springs, and Summers too;
And if he quit his loom, he leaves his gains--
That gorgeous, glistening silk, designed with so much pains!

XVIII.

It shall be purchased as a robe of state
By some great lady, when his toil is done;
While on her will obsequious shopmen wait,
To shift its radiance in the flattering sun:
And as she, listless, eyes its beauty, none
Her brow shall darken, or her smile shall shade,
By a strange story--yet a common one--
Of tears that fell (but not on her brocade,)
And misery weakly borne while it was slowly made.

XIX.

For while that silk the weaver's time beguiled,
His wife lay groaning on her narrow bed,
The suffering mother of a new-born child,
Without a cradle for its weakly head,
Or future certainty of coarsest bread;
Not, in that hour of Nature's sore affright,
A fire, or meal that either might be fed;

So, through the pauses of the dreadful night,
Patient they lay, and longed for morning's blessed light.
XX.

Not patient--no; I over-rate his strength
Who listened to the infant's wailing cry,
And mother's weary moan, until at length
He gave them echo with a broken sigh!
Daylight was dawning, and the loom stood nigh:
He looked on it, as though he would discern
If there was light enough to labour by.
What made his heart's-blood leap, and sink, in turn?
What, in that cold gloom caused his pallid cheek to burn?
XXI.

What made him rise, with wild and sudden start?
Alas! the poor are weak, when they are tried!
(Can the rich say, that they, with steadfast heart,
Have all temptations constantly defied?)
He counts the value of that robe of pride;
And while the dawn clears up, that ushers in
His child's first morn on life's uncertain tide,
He keeps its birthday with a deed of sin,
And pawns his master's silk, bread for his wife to win.
XXII.

Let none excuse the deed, for it was wrong:--
And since 'twas ruin to the wretch employed,
No doubt the hour's despair was wild and strong
Which left that loom of silken splendours void:
Let Virtue trust their meal was unenjoyed,
Eaten in trembling, drenched with bitterness,--
And that the faint uncertain hope which buoyed
His heart awhile, to hide his guilt's excess,
And get that silk redeemed, was vain, from his distress:
XXIII.

So that true Justice might pursue her course;
And the silk, finished by 'a different hand,'
Might in good time (delayed awhile perforce)
Be brought to clothe that lady of the land
Whom I behold as in a vision stand.

Lo! in my vision, on its folds are laid
The turquoise-circled fingers of her hand;
While by herself, and her attendant maid,
Its texture, soft and rich, is smiled on and surveyed.
XXIV.

Indifferent to her, the heavy cost
Of that rich robe, first pawned for one poor meal;
She that now wears it, and her lord, may boast
No payment made,--yet none dare say THEY steal!
No, not if future reckoning-hours reveal
Debts the encumbered heir can never pay;
But whose dishonest weight his heart shall feel
Through many a restless night and bitter day,
Hearing what cheated men of the bad dead will say.
XXV.

Onward she moves, in Fashion's magic glass,
Half-strut, half-swim, she slowly saunters by:
A self-delighting, delicate, pampered mass
Of flesh indulged in every luxury
Folly can crave, or riches can supply:
Spangled with diamonds--head, and breast, and zone,
Scorn lighting up her else most vacant eye,
Careless of all conditions but her own,
She sweeps that stuff along, to curtsy to the throne.
XXVI.

That dumb woof tells no story! Silent droops
The gorgeous train, voluminously wide;
And while the lady's knee a moment stoops
(Mocking her secret heart, which swells with pride,)
No ragged shadow follows at her side
Into that royal presence, where her claim
To be admitted, is to be allied
To wealth, and station, and a titled name,--
No warning voice is heard to supplicate or blame.
XXVII.

Nor,--since by giving working hands employ,
Her very vanity must help their need
Whom, in her life of cold ungenerous joy,

She never learned to pity or to heed,--
Would sentence harsh from thoughtful minds proceed;
But that the poor man, dazzled, sees encroach
False lights upon his pathway, which mislead
Those who the subject of his wrongs would broach,
Till Rank a bye-word seems,--and Riches a reproach.
XXVIII.

How oft some friendly voice shall vainly speak
The sound true lessons of Life's holier school;--
How much of wholesome influence prove weak,
Because one tinselled, gaudy, selfish fool,
Hath made the exception seem the practiced rule!
In Luxury, so prodigal of show,--
In Charity, so wary and so cool,--
That wealth appeared the poor man's open foe,
And all, of high estate, this language to avow:--
XXIX.

'A life of self-indulgence is for Us,
'A life of self-denial is for them;
'For Us the streets, broad-built and populous,
'For them, unhealthy corners, garrets dim,
'And cellars where the water-rat may swim!
'For Us, green paths refreshed by frequent rain,
'For them, dark alleys where the dust lies grim!
'Not doomed by Us to this appointed pain,--
'God made us, Rich and Poor--of what do these complain?'
XXX.

Of what? Oh! not of Heaven's great law of old,
That brightest light must fall by deepest shade;
Not that they wander hungry, gaunt, and cold,
While others in smooth splendours are arrayed;
Not that from gardens where they would have strayed
You shut them out, as though a miser's gem
Lay in the crystal stream or emerald glade,
Which they would filch from Nature's diadem;
But that you keep no thought, no memory of THEM.
XXXI.

That, being gleaners in the world's large field

(And knowing well they never can be more,)
Those unto whom the fertile earth must yield
Her increase, will not stand like him of yore,
Large-hearted Boaz, on his threshing-floor,
Watching that weak ones starve not on their ground.
How many sills might frame a beggar's door,
For any love, or help, or pity found,
In rich men's hearts and homes, to help the needy round!
XXXII.

Meanwhile, enjoy your Walks, your Parks, your Drives,
Heirs of Creation's fruits, this world's select!
Bask in the sunshine of your idle lives,
And teach your poorer brother to expect
Nor share, nor help! Rouse up the fierce-toned sect
To grudge him e'en the breeze that once a-week
Might make him feel less weary and deject;
And stand, untouched, to see how thankful-meek
He walks that day, his child close nestling at his cheek.
XXXIII.

Compel him to your creed; force him to think;
Cut down his Sabbath to a day of rest
Such as the beasts enjoy,--to eat, and drink,
And drone away his time, by sleep opprest:--
But let 'My lady' send, at her behest,
A dozen different servants to prepare,
Grooms, coachmen, footmen, in her livery drest,
And shining horses, fed with punctual care,
To whirl her to Hyde Park, that she may 'take the air.'
XXXIV.

Yet, even with her, we well might moralise;
(No place too gay, if so the heart incline!)
For dark the Seal of Death and Judgment lies
Upon thy rippling waters, Serpentine!
Day after day, drawn up in linkèd line,
Your lounging beauties smile on idle men,
Where Suicides have braved the Will Divine,
Watched the calm flood that lay beneath their ken,
Dashed into seeming peace, and never rose again!
XXXV.

There, on the pathway where the well-groomed steed
Restlessly paws the earth, alarmed and shy;
While his enamoured rider nought can heed
Save the soft glance of some love-lighted eye;
There, they dragged out the wretch who came to die
There was he laid--stiff, stark, and motionless,
And searched for written signs to notify
What pang had driv'n him to such sore excess,
And who should weep his loss, and pity his distress!
XXXVI.

Cross from that death-pond to the farther side,
Where fewer loiterers wander to and fro,
There,--buried under London's modern pride,
And ranges of white buildings,--long ago
Stood Tyburn Gate and gallows! Scenes of woe,
Bitter, heart-rending, have been acted here;
While, as he swung in stifling horrid throe,
Hoarse echoes smote the dying felon's ear,
Of yells from fellow-men, triumphant in his fear!
XXXVII.

Not always thus. At times a Mother knelt,
And blest the wretch who perished for his crime;
Or a young wife bowed down her head, and felt
Her little son an orphan from that time;
Or some poor frantic girl, whose love sublime
In the coarse highway robber could but see
Her heart's ideal, heard Death's sullen chime
Shivering and weeping on her fainting knee,
And mourned for him who hung high on the gallows-tree.
XXXVIII.

Nowhere more deeply stamped the trace of gloom
Than in this light haunt of the herding town;
Marks of the world's Forgotten Ones, on whom
The eye of God for ever looketh down,
Still pitiful, above the human frown,
As Glory o'er the Dark! Earth's mercy tires!
But Heaven hath stored a mercy of its own,
Watching the feet that tread among the briars,

And guiding fearful eyes, when fainter light expires.
XXXIX.

Yet no such serious thoughts their minds employ,
Who lounge and wander 'neath the sunshine bright,
But how to turn their idleness to joy,
Their weariness to pleasure and delight;
How best with the ennui of life to fight
With operas, plays, assemblies, routs, and balls--
The morning passed in planning for the night
Feastings and dancings in their lighted halls;
And still, as old ones fade, some newer pleasure calls.
XL.

Betwixt the deathly stream and Tyburn Gate
Stand withered trees, whose sapless boughs have seen
Beauties whose memory now is out of date,
And lovers, on whose graves the moss is green!
While Spring, for ever fresh, with smile serene,
Woke up grey Time, and drest his scythe with flowers,
And flashed sweet light the tender leaves between,
And bid the wild-bird carol in the bowers,
Year after year the same, with glad returning hours.
XLI.

Oh, those old trees! what see they when the beam
Falls on blue waters from the bluer sky?
When young Hope whispers low, with smiles that seem
Too joyous to be answered with a sigh?
The scene is then of prosperous gaiety,
Thick-swarving crowds on summer pleasure bent,
And equipages formed for luxury;
While rosy children, young and innocent,
Dance in the onward path, and frolic with content.
XLII.

But when the scattered leaves on those wan boughs
Quiver beneath the night wind's rustling breath;
When jocund merriment, and whispered vows,
And children's shouts, are hushed; and still as Death
Lies all in heaven above and earth beneath;
When clear and distant shine the steadfast stars

O'er lake and river, mountain, brake, and heath,--
And smile, unconscious of the woe that mars
The beauty of earth's face, deformed by Misery's scars;
XLIII.

What see the old trees THEN? Gaunt, pallid forms
Come, creeping sadly to their hollow hearts,
Seeking frail shelter from the winds and storms,
In broken rest, disturbed by fitful starts;
There, when the chill rain falls, or lightning darts,
Or balmy summer nights are stealing on,
Houseless they slumber, close to wealthy marts
And gilded homes:--there, where the morning sun
That tide of wasteful joy and splendour looked upon!
XLIV.

There the man hides, whose 'better days' are dropped
Round his starvation, like a veil of shame;
Who, till the fluttering pulse of life hath stopped,
Suffers in silence, and conceals his name:--
There the lost victim, on whose tarnished fame
A double taint of Death and Sin must rest,
Dreams of her village home and Parents' blame,
And in her sleep by pain and cold opprest,
Draws close her tattered shawl across her shivering breast.
XLV.

Her history is written in her face;
The bloom hath left her cheek, but not from age;
Youth, without innocence, or love, or grace,
Blotted with tears, still lingers on that page!
Smooth brow, soft hair, dark eyelash, seem to wage
With furrowed lines a contradiction strong;
Till the wild witchcraft stories, which engage
Our childish thoughts, of magic change and wrong,
Seem realised in her--so old, and yet so young!
XLVI.

And many a wretch forlorn, and huddled group
Of strangers met in brotherhood of woe,
Heads that beneath their burden weakly stoop,--
Youth's tangled curls, and Age's locks of snow,--

Rest on those wooden pillows, till the glow
Of morning o'er the brightening earth shall pass,
And these depart, none asking where they go;
Lost in the World's confused and gathering mass,--
While a new slide fills up Life's magic-lantern glass.
XLVII.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! in thy royal bowers,
Calm THOU shalt slumber, set apart from pain;
Thy spring-day spent in weaving pendent flowers,
Or watching sun-bows glitter through the rain,
Spanning with glorious arch the distant plain;
Or listening to the wood-bird's merry call;
Or gathering sea-shells by the surging main;
And, wheresoe'er thy joyous glances fall,
The wise shall train thy mind, to glean delight from all.
XLVIII.

But most thou'lt love all young and tender things,
And open wide and bright, in pleased surprise,
When the soft nestling spreads its half-fledged wings,
Thy innocent and wonder-loving eyes,
To see him thus attempt the sunny skies!
Thou shalt enjoy the kitten's frolic mood,
Pursue in vain gay-painted butterflies,
Watch the sleek puppy lap its milky food,
And fright the clucking hen, with all her restless brood.
XLIX.

Eager thou'lt gaze, where, down the river's tide,
The proud swan glides, and guards its lonely nest;
Or where the white lambs spot the mountain's side,
Where late the lingering sunshine loves to rest;
Midst whom, in frock of blue and coloured vest,
Lies the young shepherd boy, who little heeds
(The livelong day by drowsy dreams opprest)
The nibbling, bleating flock that round him feeds,
But to his faithful dog leaves all the care it needs.
L.

In time, less simple sights and sounds of Earth
Shall yield thy mind a pleasure not less pure:

Mighty beginnings--schemes of glorious birth--
In which th' Enthusiast deems he may secure,
By rapid labour, Fame that shall endure;
Complex machines to lessen human toil,
Fair artist-dreams, which Beauty's forms allure,
New methods planned to till the fertile soil,
And marble graven works, which time forbears to spoil.
LI.

For, like the Spring, Man's heart hath buds and leaves,
Which, sunned upon, put forth immortal bloom;
Gifts, that from Heaven his nascent soul receives,
Which, being heavenly, shall survive the tomb.
In its blank silence, in its narrow gloom,
The clay may rest which wrapped his human birth;
But, all unconquered by that bounded doom,
The Spirit of his Thought shall walk the earth,
In glory and in light, midst life, and joy, and mirth.
LII.

Thou'rt dead, oh, Sculptor--dead! but not the less
(Wrapped in pale glory from th' illumined shrine)
Thy sweet St. Mary stands in her recess,
Worshipped and wept to, as a thing divine:
Thou'rt dead, oh, Poet!--dead, oh, brother mine!
But not the less the curbèd hearts stoop low
Beneath the passion of thy fervent line:
And thou art dead, oh, Painter! but not so
Thy Inspiration's work, still fresh in living glow.
LIII.

These are the rulers of the earth! to them
The better spirits due allegiance own;
Vain is the might of rank's proud diadem,
The golden sceptre, or the jewelled crown;
Beyond the shadow of a mortal frown
Lofty they soar! O'er these, pre-eminent,
God only, Sovran regnant, looketh down,
God! who to their intense perception lent
All that is chiefest good and fairest excellent.
LIV.

Wilt thou take measure of such minds as these,
Or sound, with plummet-line, the Artist-Heart?
Look where he meditates among the trees--
His eyelids full of love, his lips apart
With restless smiles; while keen his glances dart,
Above--around--below--as though to seek
Some dear companion, whom, with eager start,
He will advance to welcome, and then speak
The burning thoughts for which all eloquence is weak.
LV.

How glad he looks! Whom goeth he to meet?
Whom? God:--there is no solitude for him.
Lies the earth lonely round his wandering feet?
The birds are singing in the branches dim,
The water ripples to the fountains' brim,
The young lambs in the distant meadows bleat;
And he himself beguiles fatigue of limb
With broken lines, and snatches various sweet,
Of ballads old, quaint hymns for Nature's beauty meet!
LVI.

Love is too earthly-sensual for his dream;
He looks beyond it, with his spirit-eyes!
His passionate gaze is for the sunset-beam,
And to that fainting glory, as it dies,
Belongs the echo of his swelling sighs.
Pale wingèd Thoughts, the children of his Mind,
Hover around him as he onward hies;
They murmur to him 'Hope!' with every wind,
Though to their lovely Shapes our grosser sight is blind.
LVII.

But who shall tell, when want and pain have crost
The clouded light of some forsaken day,
What germs of Beauty have been crushed and lost,
What flashing thoughts have gleamed to fade away?
Oh! since rare flowers must yet take root in clay,
And perish if due culture be denied;
Let it be held a Royal boast to say,
For lack of aid, no heaven-born genius died;
Nor dwindled withering down, in desert-sands of Pride!

LVIII.

The lily-wand is theirs! the Angel-gift!
And, if the Earthly one with failing hand
Hold the high glory, do Thou gently lift,
And give him room in better light to stand.
For round THEE, like a garden, lies the land
His pilgrim feet must tread through choking dust;
And Thou wert born to this world's high command,
And he was born to keep a Heavenly Trust;
And both account to ONE, the Merciful and Just.

LIX.

Youth is the spring-time of untarnished life!
Spring, the green youth of the unfaded year!
We watch their promise, midst the changeful strife
Of storms that threaten and of skies that clear,
And wait, until the harvest-time appear.
CHILD OF THE ISLANDS, may those springs which shed
Their blossoms round thee, give no cause for fear;
And may'st thou gently bend, and meekly tread,
Thy garlanded glad path, till summer light be fled!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Summer

I.

FOR Summer followeth with its store of joy;
That, too, can bring thee only new delight;
Its sultry hours can work thee no annoy,
Veiled from thy head shall be its glowing might.
Sweet fruits shall tempt thy thirsty appetite;
Thy languid limbs on cushioned down shall sink;
Or rest on fern-grown tufts, by streamlets bright,
Where the large-throated deer come down to drink,
And cluster gently round the cool refreshing brink.

II.

There, as the flakèd light, with changeful ray
(From where the unseen glory hotly glows)
Through the green branches maketh pleasant way,
And on the turf a chequered radiance throws,
Thou'lt lean, and watch those kingly-antlered brows--
The lustrous beauty of their glances shy,
As following still the pace their leader goes,
(Who seems afraid to halt--ashamed to fly,)
Rapid, yet stately too, the lovely herd troop by.

III.

This is the time of shadow and of flowers,
When roads gleam white for many a winding mile;
When gentle breezes fan the lazy hours,
And balmy rest o'er pays the time of toil;
When purple hues and shifting beams beguile
The tedious sameness of the heath-grown moor;
When the old grandsire sees with placid smile
The sunburnt children frolic round his door,
And trellised roses deck the cottage of the poor.

IV.

The time of pleasant evenings! when the moon
Riseth companioned by a single star,
And rivals e'en the brilliant summer noon
In the clear radiance which she pours afar;

No stormy winds her hour of peace to mar,
Or stir the fleecy clouds which melt away
Beneath the wheels of her illumined car;
While many a river trembles in her ray,
And silver gleam the sands round many an ocean bay!
V.

Oh, then the heart lies hushed, afraid to beat,
In the deep absence of all other sound;
And home is sought with loth and lingering feet,
As though that shining tract of fairy ground,
Once left and lost, might never more be found!
And happy seems the life that gipsies lead,
Who make their rest where mossy banks abound,
In nooks where unplucked wild-flowers shed their seed;
A canvass-spreading tent the only roof they need!
VI.

Wild Nomades of our civilised calm land!
Whose Eastern origin is still betrayed
By the swart beauty of the slender hand,--
Eyes flashing forth from over-arching shade,--
And supple limbs, for active movement made;
How oft, beguiled by you, the maiden looks
For love her fancy ne'er before pourtrayed,
And, slighting village swains and shepherd-crooks,
Dreams of proud youths, dark spells, and wondrous magic books!
VII.

Lo! in the confines of a dungeon cell,
(Sore weary of its silence and its gloom!)
One of this race: who yet deserveth well
The close imprisonment which is her doom:
Lawless she was, ere infancy's first bloom
Left the round outline of her sunny cheek;
Vagrant, and prowling Thief;--no chance, no room
To bring that wild heart to obedience meek;
Therefore th' avenging law its punishment must wreak.
VIII.

She lies, crouched up upon her pallet bed,
Her slight limbs starting in unquiet sleep;

And oft she turns her feverish, restless head,
Moans, frets, and murmurs, or begins to weep:
Anon, a calmer hour of slumber deep
Sinks on her lids; some happier thought hath come;
Some jubilee unknown she thinks to keep,
With liberated steps, that wander home
Once more with gipsy tribes a gipsy life to roam.
IX.

But no, her pale lips quiver as they moan:
What whisper they? A name, and nothing more:
But with such passionate tenderness of tone,
As shews how much those lips that name adore.
She dreams of one who shall her loss deplore
With the unbridled anguish of despair!
Whose forest-wanderings by her side are o'er,
But to whose heart one braid of her black hair
Were worth the world's best throne, and all its treasures rare.
X.

The shadow of his eyes is on her soul--
His passionate eyes, that held her in such love!
Which love she answered, scorning all control
Of reasoning thoughts, which tranquil bosoms move.
No lengthened courtship it was his to prove,
(Gleaning capricious smiles by fits and starts)
Nor feared her simple faith lest he should rove:
Rapid and subtle as the flame that darts
To meet its fellow flame, shot passion through their hearts.
XI.

And though no holy priest that union blessed,
By gipsy laws and customs made his bride;
The love her looks avowed, in words confessed,
She shared his tent, she wandered by his side,
His glance her morning star, his will her guide.
Animal beauty and intelligence
Were her sole gifts,--his heart they satisfied,--
Himself could claim no higher, better sense,
So loved her with a love, wild, passionate, intense!
XII.

And oft, where flowers lay spangled round about,
And to the dying twilight incense shed,
They sat to watch heaven's glittering stars come out,
Her cheek down-leaning on his cherished head--
That head upon her heart's soft pillow laid
In fulness of content; and such deep spell
Of loving silence, that the word first said
With startling sweetness on their senses fell,
Like silver coins dropped down a many-fathomed well.
XIII.

Look! her brows darken with a sudden frown--
She dreams of Rescue by his angry aid--
She dreams he strikes the Law's vile minions down,
And bears her swiftly to the wild-wood shade!
There, where their bower of bliss at first was made,
Safe in his sheltering arms once more she sleeps:
Ah, happy dream! She wakes; amazed, afraid,
Like a young panther from her couch she leaps,
Gazes bewildered round, then madly shrieks and weeps!
XIV.

For, far above her head, the prison-bars
Mock her with narrow sections of that sky
She knew so wide, and blue, and full of stars,
When gazing upward through the branches high
Of the free forest! Is she, then, to die?
Where is he--where--the strong-armed and the brave,
Who in that vision answered her wild cry?
Where is he--where--the lover who should save
And snatch her from her fate--an ignominious grave?
XV.

Oh, pity her, all sinful though she be,
While thus the transient dreams of freedom rise,
Contrasted with her waking destiny!
Scorn is for devils; soft compassion lies
In angel-hearts, and beams from angel-eyes.
Pity her! Never more, with wild embrace,
Those flexile arms shall clasp him ere she dies;
Never the fierce sad beauty of her face
Be lit with gentler hope, or love's triumphant grace!

XVI.

Lonely she perishes; like some wild bird
That strains its wing against opposing wires;
Her heart's tumultuous panting may be heard,
While to the thought of rescue she aspires;
Then, of its own deep strength, it faints and tires:
The frenzy of her mood begins to cease;
Her varying pulse with fluttering stroke expires,
And the sick weariness that is not peace
Creeps slowly through her blood, and promises release.

XVII.

Alas, dark shadows, press not on her so!
Stand off, and let her hear the linnet sing!
Crumble, ye walls, that sunshine may come through
Each crevice of your ruins! Rise, clear spring,
Bubbling from hidden fountain-depths, and bring
Water, the death-thirst of her pain to slake!
Come from the forest, breeze with wandering wing!
There, dwelt a heart would perish for her sake,--
Oh, save her! No! Death stands prepared his prey to take.

XVIII.

But, because youth and health are very strong,
And all her veins were full of freshest life,
The deadly struggle must continue long
Ere the free heart lie still, that was so rife
With passion's mad excess. The gaoler's wife
Bends, with revolted pity on her brow,
To watch the working of that fearful strife,
Till the last quivering spark is out. And now
All's dark, all's cold, all's lost, that loved and mourned below.

XIX.

She could not live in prison--could not breathe
The dull pollution of its stagnant air,--
She, that at dewy morn was wont to wreath
The wild-briar roses, singing, in her hair,--
She died, heart-stifled, in that felon-lair!
No penitence; no anchor that held fast
To soothing meditation and meek prayer,

But a wild struggle, even to the last--
In death-distorted woe her marble features cast!
XX.

And none lament for her, save only him
Who choking back proud thoughts and words irate,
With tangled locks, and glances changed and dim,
Bows low to one who keeps the prison-gate,
Pleading to see her; asking of her fate;
Which, when he learns, with fierce and bitter cries
(Howling in savage grief for his young mate)
He curseth all, and all alike defies;--
Despair and fury blent, forth flashing from worn eyes!
XXI.

With vulgar terror struck, they deem him wild--
Fit only for the chains which madmen clank.
But soon he weepeth, like a little child!
And many a day, by many a sunny bank,
Or forest-pond, close fringed with rushes dank,
He wails, his clenched hands on his eyelids prest;
Or by lone hedges, where the grass grows rank,
Stretched prone, as travellers deem, in idle rest,
Mourns for that murdered girl, the dove of his wild nest.
XXII.

Little recks he, of Law and Law's constraint,
Reared in ill-governed sense of Liberty!
At times he bows his head, heart-stricken, faint;
Anon--in strange delirious agony--
He dreams her yet in living jeopardy!
His arm is raised,--his panting breast upheaves,--
Ah! what avails his youth's wild energy?
What strength can lift the withering autumn leaves,
Light as they drifting lie on her for whom he grieves!
XXIII.

Her SPRING had ripened into Summer fruit;
And, if that fruit was poison, whose the blame?
Not hers, whose young defying lips are mute--
Though hers the agony, though hers the shame--
But theirs, the careless crowd, who went and came,

And came and went again, and never thought
How best such wandering spirits to reclaim;
How earnest minds the base have trained and taught,
As shaping tools vile forms have into beauty wrought.
XXIV.

The land that lies a blank and barren waste
We drain, we till, we sow, with cheerful hope:
Plodding and patient, looking yet to taste
Reward in harvest, willingly we cope
With thorns that stay the plough on plain and slope,
And nipping frosts, and summer heats that broil.
Till all is done that lies within the scope
Of man's invention, to improve that soil,
Earnest we yet speed on, unceasing in our toil.
XXV.

But for the SOUL that lieth unreclaimed,
Choked with the growth of rankest weeds and tares,
No man puts forth his hand, and none are blamed;
Though plenteous harvest might repay his cares,
Though he might 'welcome angels, unawares.'
The earth he delves, and clears from every weed,
But leaves the human heart to sinful snares;
The earth he sows with costly, precious seed,
But lets the human heart lie barren at its need.
XXVI.

Once I beheld (and, to my latest hour,
That sight unfaded in my heart I hold)
A bright example of the mighty power
One human mind, by earnest will controlled,
Can wield o'er other minds--the base and bold,
Steeped in low vice, and warped in conscious wrong;
Or weaker wanderers from the Shepherd's fold,
Who, sinning with averted faces, long
To turn again to God, with psalm and angel-song.
XXVII.

I saw one man, armed simply with God's Word,
Enter the souls of many fellow-men,
And pierce them sharply as a two-edged sword,

While conscience echoed back his words again;
Till, even as showers of fertilising rain
Sink through the bosom of the valley clod,
So their hearts opened to the wholesome pain,
And hundreds knelt upon the flowery sod,
One good man's earnest prayer the link 'twixt them and God.
XXVIII.

That amphitheatre of awe-struck heads
Is still before me: there the Mother bows,
And o'er her slumbering infant meekly sheds
Unusual tears. There, knitting his dark brows,
The penitent blasphemer utters vows
Of holy import. There, the kindly man,
Whose one weak vice went near to bid him lose
All he most valued when his life began,
Abjures the evil course which erst he blindly ran.
XXIX.

There, with pale eyelids heavily weighed down
By a new sense of overcoming shame,
A youthful Magdalen, whose arm is thrown
Round a young sister who deserves no blame;
(As though like innocence she now would claim,
Absolved by a pure God!) And, near her, sighs
The Father who refused to speak her name:
Her penitence is written in her eyes--
Will he not, too, forgive, and bless her, ere she rise?
XXX.

Renounce her not, grieved Father! Heaven shall make
Room for her entrance with the undefiled.
Upbraid her not, sad Mother! for the sake
Of days when she was yet thy spotless child.
Be gentle with her, oh, thou sister mild!
And thou, good brother! though by shame opprest;
For many a day, amid temptations wild,
Madly indulged, and sinfully carest,
She yearned to weep and die upon thy honest breast.
XXXI.

Lost Innocence!--that sunrise of clear youth,

Whose lovely light no morning can restore;
When, robed in radiance of unsullied truth,
Her soul no garment of concealment wore,
But roamed its paradise of fancies o'er
In perfect purity of thought--is past!
But He who bid the guilty 'sin no more'
A gleam of mercy round her feet shall cast,
And guide the pilgrim back to heaven's 'strait Gate' at last.
XXXII.

By that poor lost one, kneel a happier group,
Children of sinners, christened free from sin;
Smiling, their curled and shining heads they stoop,
Awed, but yet fearless; confident to win
Blessings of God; while early they begin
(The Samuels of the Temple) thus to wait
HIS audible voice, whose Presence they are in,
And formally, from this auspicious date,
Themselves, and their young lives, to HIM to dedicate.
XXXIII.

While, mingling with those glad and careless brows,
And ruddy cheeks, embrowned with honest toil;
Kneels the pale artisan (who only knows
Of Luxury--how best its glittering spoil,
Midst whirring wheels, and dust, and heat, and oil,
For richer men's enjoyment to prepare);
And ill-fed labourers of a fertile soil,
Whose drunkenness was Lethe to their care,--
All met, for one good hope, one blessing, and one prayer!
XXXIV.

I will not cavil with the man who sneers
At priestly labours, as the work of hell;
I will not pause to contradict strange fears
Of where the influence ends, begun so well;
One only thought remained with me to dwell,
For ever with remembrance of that scene,
When I beheld hearts beat and bosoms swell,
And that melodious voice and eye serene
Govern the kneeling crowd, as he their God had been.
XXXV.

I thought, in my own secret soul, if thus,
(By the strong sympathy that knits mankind)
A power untried exists in each of us,
By which a fellow-creature's wavering mind
To good or evil deeds may be inclined;
Shall not an awful questioning be made,
(And we, perchance, no fitting answer find!)
'Whom hast THOU sought to rescue, or persuade?
Whom roused from sinful sloth? whom comforted, afraid?'
XXXVI.

For whom employed,--e'en from thy useless birth,--
The buried Talent at thy Lord's command?
Unprofitable servant of the earth!
Though here men fawned on thee, and licked thy hand
For golden wealth, and power, and tracts of land;
When the Eternal Balance justly weighs,
Above thee, in the ranks of heaven, shall stand,
Some wretch obscure, who through unnoticed days,
Taught a poor village school to sing their Maker's praise.
XXXVII.

A mournful memory in my bosom stirs!
A recollection of the lovely isle
Where, in the purple shadow of thy firs
Parkhurst! and gloomy in the summer smile,
Stands the CHILD'S PRISON: (since we must defile
So blest a refuge, with so curst a name)
The home of those whose former home was vile;
Who, dogged, sullen, scoffing, hither came,
Tender in growth and years, but long confirmed in shame.
XXVIII.

Alas! what inmates may inhabit there?
Those to whose infant days a parent's roof,
In lieu of a protection, was a snare;
Those from whose minds instruction held aloof,
No hope, no effort made in their behoof;
Whose lips familiar were with blasphemy,
And words obscene that mocked at all reproof,
But never uttered prayer to the Most High,

Or learned one gentle hymn, His name to glorify.
XXXIX.

Th' Untaught, Uncared-for, 'neath whose stolid look
The Scriptures might have lain, a block of wood,
Hewn to the shape and semblance of a book,
For any thing they knew in it of good,
Or any text they heard or understood.
THESE are your Prisoned Children! Germs of Men,
Vicious, and false, and violent of mood,
Such as strange carelessness first rears, and then
Would crush the sting out by a death of pain!
XL.

But skilful hands have drawn the arrow's barb
From the unfestered wound which Time shall heal!
And though 'tis mournful, in their prison garb,
To see them trooping to their silent meal;
And though, among them, many brows reveal
Sorrow too bitter for such childish hearts;
Yet the most pitiful (if just) must feel
(E'en while the tear of forced compassion starts)
That blessed is the hope their suffering imparts!
XLI.

The Saved are there, who would have been the Lost;
The Checked in crime, who might have been the Doomed;
The wildbriar buds, whose tangled path was crost
By nightshade poison trailing where they bloomed!
The Wrecked, round whom the threatening surges boomed,
Borne in this Life-boat far from peril's stress;
The Sheltered, o'er whose heads the thunder loomed;
Convicts (convicted of much helplessness
Exiles, whom Mercy guides through guilt's dark wilderness.
XLII.

I saw One sitting in that Island Prison
Whose day in solitude was going down,
E'en as in solitude its light had risen!
His little savage sullen face, bent down,
From all kind words, with an averted frown--
A world of dumb defiance in his scowl!

Or, looking up, with gaze that seemed to own,
'I scorn the smiting of your forced control;
My body scourge or slay, you shall not bend my soul!'
XLIII.

But one was weeping--weeping bitter tears!
Of softer mould his erring heart was made;
And, when the sound of coming steps he hears
Advancing to his lone cell's cheerless shade,
He turns, half welcoming and half afraid,
Trustful of pity, willing to be saved;
Stepping half way to meet the proffered aid;
Thankful for blessings kind and counsel grave;
Strange to this new sad life, but patient, calm, and brave.
XLIV.

Brave! for what courage must it not require
In a child's heart, to bear those dreadful hours?
Think how WE find the weary spirit tire,
How the soul sinks with faint and flagging powers,
Pent in, in these indulgent lives of ours,
By one monotonous day of winter's rain!
Woe for the prisoned boy, who sadly cowers,
In his blank cell, for days of dreary pain,
Pining for human looks and human tones in vain.
XLV.

Nor let it be forgot, for these young spirits,
(Although by gross and vulgar sin defiled,)
How differently judged were their demerits,
Were each a noble's or a gentle's child.
Are there no sons at college, 'sadly wild?'
No children, wayward, difficult to rear?
Are THEY cast off by Love? No, gleaming mild
Through the salt drops of many a bitter tear,
The rainbow of your hope shines out of all your fear!
XLVI.

For they are YOUNG, you say; and this green stem
With shoots of good shall soon be grafted in:
Meanwhile, how much is FROLIC, done by them,
Which, in the poor, is punishable SIN?

Nor mark I this, a useless sigh to win,
(They lose their ground, who falsely, lightly chide,)
But to note down how much your faith you pin
Upon the worth of that, to them supplied--
Revealed Religion's light, and Education's guide.
XLVII.

Yea, for yourselves and sons, ye trusted it,
And knew no reed it was you leaned upon;
Therefore, whoso denies that benefit
To meaner men in ignorance chained down,
From each this true reproach hath justly won:--
'Oh, selfish heart! that owned the healing sure,
Yet would not help to save MY erring son!'
They cry to you, 'PREVENT!'--You cannot cure,
The ills that, once incurred, these little ones endure!
XLVIII.

The criminal is in the felon's dock:
Fearful and stupified behold him stand!
While to his trial cold spectators flock,
And lawyers grave, and judges of the land.
At first he grasps the rail with nervous hand,
Hearing the case which learnedly they state,
With what attention ignorance can command:
Then, weary of such arguing of his fate,
Torpids and dull he sinks, throughout the long debate.
XLIX.

Vapid, incomprehensible to him
The skilful pleader's cross-examining wit;
His sullen ear receives, confused and dim,
The shouts of laughter at some brilliant hit,
When a shrewd witness leaves the Biter bit.
He shrinks not while the facts that must prevail
Against his life, unconscious friends admit;
Though Death is trembling in the adverse scale,
He recks no more than if he heard the autumn gale.
L.

Oh, Eloquence, a moving thing art thou!
Tradition tells us many a mournful story

Of scaffold-sentenced men, with noble brow,
Condemned to die in youth, or weak and hoary,
Whose words survived in long-remembered glory!
But eloquence of words the power hath not
(Nor even their fate, who perished gaunt and gory)
To move my spirit like his abject lot,
Who stands there, like a dog, new-sentenced to be shot!
LI.

Look, now! Attention wakes, with sudden start,
The brutish mind which late so dull hath been!
Quick grows the heavy beating at his heart!
The solemn pause which rests the busy scene,
He knows, though ignorant, what that must mean--
The Verdict! With the Jury rests his chance!
And his lack-lustre eye grows strangely keen,
Watching with wistful, pleading, dreadful glance,
Their consultation cease, their foreman slow advance.
LII.

His home, his hopes, his life, are in that word!
His ties! (for think ye not that he hath ties?)
Alas! Affection makes its pleading heard
Long after better sense of duty dies,
Midst all that Vice can do to brutalise.
Hark to the verdict--'Guilty!'--All are foes!
Oh, what a sight for good, compassionate eyes,
That haggard man; as, stupified with woes,
Forth from the felon's dock, a wretch condemned he goes!
LIII.

A wretch condemned, but not at heart subdued.
Rebellious, reckless, are the thoughts which come
Intruding on his sentenced solitude:--
Savage defiance! gnawing thoughts of home!
Plots to escape even now his threatened doom!
Sense of desertion, persecution!--all
Choke up the fount of grief, and bid the foam
Stand on his gnashing lips when tears should fall,
And mock the exhorting tones which for repentance call!
LIV.

For if one half the pity and the pains,
The charity, and visiting, and talk,
Had been bestowed upon that wretch in chains,
While he had yet a better path to walk,
Life's flower might still have bloomed upon its stalk!
He might not now stand there, condemned for crime,
(Helpless the horror of his fate to balk!)
Nor heard the sullen bell, with funeral chime,
Summon him harshly forth, to die before his time!
LV.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! thou, whose cradle-bed
Was hallowed still with night and morning prayer!
Thou, whose first thoughts were reverently led
To heaven, and taught betimes to anchor there!
Thou, who wert reared with fond peculiar care,
In happiest leisure, and in holiest light!
Wilt THOU not feed the lamp whose lustre rare
Can break the darkness of this fearful night,
Midst dim bewild'ring paths to guide faint steps aright?
LVI.

Wilt thou not help to educate the poor?
They will learn something, whether taught or no;
The Mind's low dwelling hath an open door,
Whence, wandering still uneasy, to and fro,
It gathers that it should, or should not, know.
Oh, train the fluttering of that restless wing!
Guide the intelligence that worketh woe!
So shall the Summer answer to the Spring,
And a well-guided youth an age of duty bring.
LVII.

Thus,--freed from the oppressive pang which chokes
A young warm heart that pities men in vain,--
Thou'lt roam beneath thy Windsor's spreading oaks,
And see Life's course before thee, clear and plain,
And how to spare, and how to conquer, pain:
Or, greeting fair Etona's merry groups,
Thou'lt think, not only for this noble train,
The dovelike wing of Science brooding stoops,
But shadows many a head that else obscurely droops!

LVIII.

Glad shalt thou roam beneath those oaks, fair Boy!
While round thy conscious feet the earth's cold dust
Reflects a sunshine from the Poor Man's joy!
There dream of England's Glory: nor distrust
Thy cheering hopes, for men who seek to thrust
Cold counsel on thy young, inspired heart;
Pleading that, though 'tis politic and just
To fill each studded port and loaded mart,
Utopian are the schemes free knowledge to impart!

LIX.

Yet shalt thou dream of England's commerce, too;
And the tall spreading trees,--which, branching round,
Thy footsteps to their covert coolness woo,--
Cast visionary shadows on the ground
Of floating ships for distant stations bound.
Unheard shall be the wild-bird's song! Instead,
Hoarsely the roar of fancied waves shall sound;
And o'er the shining sands thy soul shall tread,
With Albion's snowy cliffs high beetling o'er thy head!

LX.

Or Thought, in her strange chaos, shall display
That proudest sight reserved for English eyes--
The building ship--which soon shall cleave its way
Through the blue waters, 'neath the open skies.
The stately oak is felled, and low it lies,
Denuded of its lovely branches--bare
Of e'en the bark that wrapped its giant size
Roughly defying all the storms of air,
One fragment of its gnarled and knotted strength to tear.

LXI.

Out of its swelling girth are aptly hewn
The timbers fitted for the massive frame;
By perfect rule and measurement foreshewn,
Plank after plank, each answering to the same,
The work goes on--a thing without a name--
Huge as a house, and heavy as a rock,
Enough the boldest looker-on to tame,

Standing up-gazing at that monstrous block,
Whose grand proportions seem his narrow sense to mock.
LXII.

And ceaseless, hammering, shouting, pigmy forms
Work, crawl, and clatter on her bulging sides:
Are those the beings, who, in Heaven's wild storms,
Shall move that mass against opposing tides?
One, tread her decks, with proud impetuous strides?
Others, through yawning port-holes point the gun,--
Scattering the foe her glorious strength derides,
And shouting 'Victory' for a sea-fight won?
Oh, magic rule of MIND, by which such works are done!
LXIII.

But, first, the Launch must send our ship afloat:
Assembled thousands wait the glorious sight:
Gay-coloured streamers deck each tiny boat,
And glistening oars reflect a restless light:
Till some fair form, with smiles and blushes bright,
And active hand (though delicate it seem)
Advances to perform the 'Christening Rite;'
The fragile crystal breaks, with shivering gleam,
And the grand mass comes forth, swift gliding, like a dream.
LXIV.

Now give her MASTS and SAILS!--those spreading wings
Whose power shall save from many a dangerous coast!
Her ROPES, with all their bolts, and blocks, and rings;
Her glorious FLAG, no foe shall dare to brave
Who sees it come careering o'er the wave!
Give her, the HEARTS of OAK, who, marshalled all,
Within her creaking ribs when tempests rave
And the fierce billows beat that echoing walls
Fearless and calm obey the Boatswain's mustering call.
LXV.

Give her, those giant ANCHORS, whose deep plunge
Into the startled bosom of the Sea,
Shall give the eager sailor leave to lounge
In port awhile, with reckless liberty.
Soon shall his changeful heart impatiently,

For their unmooring and upheaving long;
For 'Sailing-orders' which shall set him free;
While his old messmates, linked in brawny throng,
Coil up the Cable's length--huge, intricate, and strong!)
LXVI.

Give her, her CAPTAIN! who, from that day forth,
With her loved beauty all his speech shall fill;
And all her wanderings, East, West, South, and North,
Narrate,--with various chance of good and ill,--
As though she lived, and acted of free will.
Yet, let no lip with mocking smile be curled ;--
These are the souls, that man with dauntless skill,
Our Wooden Walls; whose Meteor-flag, unfurled,
Bids England 'hold her own' against th' united world!
LXVII.

Dear Island-Home!--and is the boast so strange
Which bids thee claim the Empire of the Sea?
O'er the blue waters as we fearless range,
Seem not the waves familiar friends to be?
We knew them in the Country of the Free!
And now they follow us with playful race,
Back rolling to that land of liberty,
And dashing round her rocks with rough embrace,
Like an old shaggy dog that licks its Master's face.
LXVIII.

Yea, and a Watch-dog too, if there be need!
A low determined growl, when danger lowers,
Shall, from the gloomy port-holes, grimly speed,
To rouse our Heroes, and our armed Powers.
Let the land-circled nations keep their towers,
Their well-scanned passports, and their guards secure,--
We'll trust this floating, changeful wall of ours,
And, long as ocean-waves and rocks endure,
So long, dear Island-Home, we'll hold thy freedom sure!
LXIX.

Back to our ship! She breasts the surging tide;
The fair breeze freshens in the flowing sheet!
With deafening cheers the landsmen see her glide,

And hearts, that watch her progress, wildly beat.
Oh! where and when shall all the many meet,
Who part to-day? That secret none may sound!
But slowly falls the tread of homeward feet;
And, in the evening, with a sigh goes round,
That brief, but thrilling toast, 'Health to the Outward-Bound!'
LXX.

Health to the Outward-Bound! How many go
Whose homeward voyage never shall be made!
Who but that drear Sea-Burial shall know,
Which bids the corse the shifting flood invade!
No grave--no stone beneath the cypress-shade,
Where mourning friends may gather round and weep,
Whose distant wretchedness is yet delayed:
Orphans at home a jubilee may keep,
While Messmates' hands commit a Father to the deep!
LXXI.

Some, whom the cry of 'FIRE!' doth overtake
On the wide desert of the lonely seas,
Their vague escape in open boats shall make;
To suffer quenchless thirst, and parched disease,
And hunger-pangs the DEATH-LOT shall appease.
Some, crashing wrecked in one stupendous shock,
Endure more helpless rapid fate than these,
And vainly clinging to the foam-washed block,
Die, drifted like weak weeds from off the slippery rock.
LXXII.

Some, scarcely parted twice a cable's length
From those who on the firm earth safely stand,
Shall madly watch the strained united strength
And cheers and wavings of the gallant band,
Who launch their life-boat with determined hand.
Ah! none shall live, that zealous aid to thank;
The wild surge whirls the life-boat back to land,--
The hazy distance suddenly grows blank,--
In that last labouring plunge the fated vessel sank!
LXXIII.

And some shall plough their homeward track in vain,

Dying, it may be, within sight of shore:
While others, (dreariest horror of the main!)
Are vaguely 'lost' and never heard of more.
Ah, me! how many now such fate deplore,
As his for whom Grief's wild and piercing cry
Followed, e'er yet lamenting tears were o'er,
Shed for his brother; doomed, like him, to die
In youth,--but not like him without one kinsman nigh!
LXXIV.

Peace to thy woeful heart, thou grey-haired sire;
Each, had he lived, his duty would have done:
Towards gallant deeds unwearied to aspire,
Was thine own heritage to either son.
Yet thou hast wept,--like him whose race is run,--
Who rose a happy Father when the day
Through morning clouds, with misty radiance shone;
But when at eve his ship got under way,
Left his unburied son in wild Algoa Bay!
LXXV.

His generous son, who risked his own young life
Hoping another from that doom to save;
And battled nobly with the water's strife,
E'er the green billows were his floating grave.
Nor died alone, beneath the whelming wave;
Others,--less known perhaps,--not cherished less
By those who for their presence vainly crave,--
Sank struggling down in utter weariness,
Lost in that wild dark night of terrible distress.
LXXVI.

Oh, hearts have perished, neither faint nor few,
Whose names have left no echo save at home;
With many a gallant ship, whose fearless crew
Set sail with cheerful hope their course to roam!
Buried 'neath many a fathom's shifting foam,--
By the rude rocks of many a distant shore,--
Their visionary smiles at midnight come
To those whose waking eyes their loss deplore,--
Dreaming of their return, who shall return no more!
LXXVII.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! some such saddening tales,
Thou, in thine infancy, perchance shalt hear;
Linked with the names a Nation still bewails,
And warrior-deeds to England's glory dear.
Ah! let them not fall lightly on thine ear!
Though Death calmed down that anguish, long ago,
The record is not ended; year by year
Recurring instances of loss and woe
Shall bid thee, for like grief, a like compassion show!
LXXVIII.

Neglect not, Thou, the sons of men who bled
To do good service in the former time;
Slight not some veteran father of the Dead,
Whose noble boys have perished in their prime.
Accept not selfishly, the love sublime
And loyalty which in such souls hath burned.
What though it be thy right; the lack, a crime?
Yet should no honest heart by thine be spurned--
True service paid with smiles, and thanks, is cheaply earned.
LXXIX.

Keep Thou the reverence of a youthful heart
To Age and Merit in thy native land;
Nor deem CONDITION sets thee far apart:
ABOVE, but not ALOOF, a Prince should stand:
Still near enough, to stretch the friendly hand
To those whose names had never reached the throne,
But for great deeds, performed in small command:
Since thus the gallant wearers first were known,
Hallow those names; although not Royal like thine own.
LXXX.

And let thy Smile be like the Summer Sun,
Whose radiance is not kept for garden-flowers,
But sends its genial beams to rest upon
The meanest blushing bud in way-side bowers.
Earth's Principalities, and Thrones, and Powers,
If Heaven's true Delegates on Earth they be,
Should copy Heaven; which giveth fertile Showers,
The Dew, the Warmth, the Balm, the Breezes free,

Not to one Class alone,--but all Humanity!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Child Of The Islands - Winter

I.

ERE the Night cometh! On how many graves
Rests, at this hour, their first cold winter's snow!
Wild o'er the earth the sleety tempest raves;
Silent, our Lost Ones slumber on below;
Never to share again the genial glow
Of Christmas gladness round the circled hearth;
Never returning festivals to know,
Or holidays that mark some loved one's birth,
Or children's joyous songs, and loud delighted mirth.

II.

The frozen tombs are sheeted with one pall,--
One shroud for every churchyard, crisp and bright,--
One foldless mantle, softly covering all
With its unwrinkled width of spotless white.
There, through the grey dim day and starlit night,
It rests, on rich and poor, and young and old,--
Veiling dear eyes,--whose warm homne-cheering light
Our pining hearts can never more behold,--
With an unlifting veil,--that falleth blank and cold.

III.

The Spring shall melt that snow,--but kindly eyes
Return not with the Sun's returning powers,--
Nor to the clay-cold cheek, that buried lies,
The living blooms that flush perennial flowers,--
Nor, with the song-birds, vocal in the bowers,
The sweet familiar tones! In silence drear
We pass our days,--and oft in midnight hours
Call madly on their names who cannot hear,--
Names graven on the tombs of the departed year!

IV.

There lies the tender Mother, in whose heart
So many claimed an interest and a share!
Humbly and piously she did her part
In every task of love and household care:

And mournfully, with sad abstracted air,
The Father-Widower, on his Christmas Eve,
Strokes down his youngest child's long silken hair,
And, as the gathering sobs his bosom heave,
Goes from that orphaned group, unseen to weep and grieve.
V.

Feeling his loneliness the more this day
Because SHE kept it with such gentle joy,
Scarce can he brook to see his children play,
Remembering how her love it did employ
To choose each glittering gift and welcome toy:
His little timid girl, so slight of limb,--
His fearless, glorious, merry-hearted boy,--
They coax him to their sports,--nor know how dim
The Christmas taper's light must burn henceforth for him!
VI.

Ah! when these two are wrapt in peaceful sleep,
His worn eyes on the sinking embers set,
A Vigil to her Memory shall keep!
Her bridal blush when first his love she met,--
Her dying words of meek and fond regret,--
Her tearful thanks for all his kindness past,--
These shall return to him,--while linger yet
The last days of the year,--that year the last
Upon whose circling hours her sunny smile was cast!
VII.

Life's Dial now shows blank, for want of HER:
There shall be holiday and festival,
But each his mourning heart shall only stir
With repetitions of her funeral:
Quenched is the happy light that used to fall
On common things, and bid them lustre borrow:
No more the daily air grows musical,
Echoing her soft good night and glad good morrow,
Under the snow she lies,--and he must grieve down sorrow!
VIII.

And learn how Death can hallow trivial things;
How the eyes fill with melancholy tears

When some chance voice a common ballad sings
The Loved sang too, in well-remembered years,--
How strangely blank the beaten track appears
Which led them to the threshold of our door,--
And how old books some pencilled word endears;
Faint tracery, where our dreaming hearts explore
Their vanished thoughts whose souls commune with us no more!
IX.

Under the snow she lies! And there lies too
The young fair blossom, neither Wife nor Bride;
Whose Child-like beauty no man yet might woo,
Dwelling in shadow by her parent's side
Like a fresh rosebud, which the green leaves hide.
Calm as the light that fades along the West,
When not a ripple stirs the azure tide,
She sank to Death: and Heaven knows which is best,
The Matron's task fulfilled, or Virgin's spotless rest.
X.

A quiet rest it is: though o'er that form
We wept, because our human love was weak!
Our Dove's white wings are folded from the storm,--
Tears cannot stain those eyelids pure and meek,--
And pale for ever is the marble cheek
Where, in her life, the shy quick-gushing blood
Was wont with roseate eloquence to speak;
Ebbing and flowing with each varying mood
Of her young timid heart, so innocently good!
XI.

And, near her, sleeps the old grey-headed Sire,
Whose faded eyes, in dying prayer uplifted,
Taught them the TRUTH who saw him thus expire,
(Although not eloquent or greatly gifted)
Because they saw the winnowing fan that sifted
Chaff from the grain, disturbed not his high Trust:
In the dark storm, Hope's anchor never drifted,
The dread funereal sentence, 'Dust to Dust,'
No terror held for him who slumbers with the Just.
XII.

There, too, is laid the son of many vows;
The stately heir--the treasure of his home:
His early death hath saddened noble brows,
Yet to grieved hearts doth consolation come:
Where shall they find, though through the world they roam,
A star as perfect, and as radiant clear?
Like Ormonde's Ossory, in his early doom,
The throb of triumph checks the rising tear;
No living son can be their dead Son's proud compeer.

XIII.

HE was not called to leave temptations hollow,
And orgies wild, and bacchanalian nights:
Where vice led on, his spirit scorned to follow:
His soul, self-exiled from all low delights,
Mastered the strength of sensual appetites:
Great plans, good thoughts, alone had power to move him,
Holy Ambition, such as Heaven requites:
His heart, (as they best know who used to love him,)
Was young, and warm, but pure, as the white snow above him.

XIV.

He sleeps! And she, his young betrothèd bride,
Sleeps too,--her beauty hid in winding-sheet.
The blind tears, freely shed for both, are dried;
And round their silent graves the mourner's feet
Have ceased to echo: but their souls shall meet
In the far world, where no sad burial chime
Knells for departed life; but, endless sweet,
In purity, and love, and joy sublime,
Eternal Hope survives all past decays of Time.

XV.

And there, rests One, whom none on earth remember
Except that heart whose fond life fed its own!
The cherished babe, who, through this bleak December,
Far from the Mother's bosom, lieth lone,
Where the cold North-wind makes its wintry moan.
A flower, whose beauty cannot be renewed;
A bird, whose song beyond the cloud is gone;
A child, whose empty cradle is bedewed
By bitter-falling tears in hours of solitude!

XVI.

Ah! how can Death untwist the cord of Love,
Which bid those parted lives together cling?
Prest to the bosom of that brooding Dove,
Into those infant eyes would softly spring
A sense of happiness and cherishing:
The tender lips knew no completed word,--
The small feet could not run for tottering,--
But a glad silent smile the red mouth stirred,
And murmurs of delight whene'er her name was heard!

XVII.

Oh! Darling, since all life for death is moulded,
And every cradled head some tomb must fill,--
A little sooner only hast thou folded
Thy helpless hands, that struggled and are still:
A little sooner thy Creator's will
Hath called thee to the Life that shall endure;
And, in that Heaven his gathered saints shall fill,
Hath 'made thy calling and election sure.'
His work in thee being done, was thy death premature?

XVIII.

Baptised,--and so from sin innate reclaimed,--
Pure from impure,--Redemption's forfeit paid,--
Too young to be for wilful errors blamed,--
Thy Angel, little Child so lowly laid,
For ever looketh upward, undismayed!
No earthly trespass, clouding Heaven's clear light,
Casts the Great Glory into dreadful shade:
We weep for thee by day,--we weep by night,--
Whilst thou beholdest GOD with glad enraptured sight!

XIX.

Whom call we prematurely summoned? All
In whom some gleams of quivering sense remain:
Leaves not quite rotted yellow to their fall,
Flowers not yet withered dry in every vein:
All who depart ere stress of mortal pain
Makes that which crushes pain a blessed boon:
The extremest verge of life we would attain,--

And come he morning, evening, night, or noon,
Death, which must come to all, still comes to all too soon.
XX.

For either,--being young,--a bitter strife
Divides the parent's heart 'twixt woe and wonder,
Or, being set and planted in mid-life,
So many earthward roots are torn asunder,
The stroke falls blasting like the shock of thunder!
Or, being old, and good, and fit to die,
The greater is their loss who sheltered under
That tree's wide-spreading branches! Still we sigh,
And, craving back our Dead, lament them where they lie!
XXI.

Yet there, the pangs of mortal grief are o'er!
Pictures and lockets worn in Love's wild fever,
Rest on unthrobbing hearts: ears hear no more
Harsh words, which uttered once must haunt for ever,
Despite forgiving wish, and sad endeavour:--
Maniacs, whom fellow-creatures feared and bound,
Learn the dread fastening of their chain to sever;
Those bloodshot eyes, that glared so wildly round,
Sealed in eternal calm, and closed in holy ground.
XXII.

Peace comes to those, who, restless and forlorn,
Wasting in doubt's cold torment, day by day,
Watched alienated eyes for fond return
Of Love's warm light for ever passed away.
Ah, fools! no second morn's renewing ray
Gilds the blank Present, like the happy Past;
Madly ye built, 'mid ruin and decay,--
Striving Hope's anchor in the sand to cast,
And, drifting with the storm, made shipwreck at the last!
XXIII.

There your Philosophers and Poets dwell:
Your great Inventors,--men of giant mind;
The hearts that rose with such a mighty swell,
How little earth sufficeth now to bind!
Heroes and Patriots, Rulers of their kind,

Ambitious Statesmen, flatterers of the Throne,
All, in this lowly rest, their level find:
The weakness of their mortal strength laid down
Beneath the mouldering leaves of Glory's laurelled crown.
XXIV.

And high above them, on the cypress bough,
The little winter robin, all day long,
Slanting his bright eye at the dazzling snow,
Sings with a loud voice and a cheerful song:
While round about, in many a clustering throng,
The tufted snowdrop lifts its gentle head,
And bird and flower, in language mute yet strong,
Reprove our wailing for the happy dead,
And, by their joy, condemn the selfish tears we shed.
XXV.

For Snowdrops are the harbingers of Spring,--
A sort of link between dumb life and light,--
Freshness preserved amid all withering,--
Bloom in the midst of grey and frosty blight,--
Pale Stars that gladden Nature's dreary night!
And well the Robin may companion be,
Whose breast of glowing red, like embers bright,
Carries a kindling spark from tree to tree,
Lighting the solemn yew where darkness else would be.

XXVI.

The Rose is lovely fair, and rich in scent,
The Lily, stately as a cloistered nun,
The Violet, with its sweet head downward bent,
The Polyanthus, in the noon-day sun,
And Blue-bell swinging where the brooklets run:
But all these grow in summer hours of mirth;
Only the Snowdrop cometh forth alone,
Peering above the cold and niggard earth,
Then bending down to watch the soil that gave it birth.
XXVII.

Seeming to say,--'Behold, your DEAD lie here,
'Beneath the heavy mould whose burial sound

'Smote with such horror on your shrinking ear
'When the dark coffin sank beneath the ground:
'Yet therefrom spring these flowers that quiver round,
'Their frail bells trembling o'er the damp cold sod.
'Fear not, nor doubt--your lost ones shall be found;
'For they, like us, shall burst the valley clod,
'And, in white spotless robes, rise up to light and God!'
XXVIII.

Oh! nothing cheerless dwelleth by the tomb,
And nothing cheerless in the wintry sky;
They are asleep whose bed is in that gloom;
They are at rest who in that prison lie,
And have no craving for their liberty!
They hear no storm; the clear frost chills them not,
When the still solemn stars shine out on high;
The dreamless slumber of the grave shall blot
All record of dull pain and suffering from their lot!
XXIX.

Theirs was the Dreadful Snow,--who, hand to hand,
Bravely, but vainly, massacre withstood,
In the dark passes of the INDIAN land,
Where thoughts of unforgotten horror brood!
Whose cry for mercy, in despairing mood,
Rose in a language foreign to their foes,
Groaning and choking in a sea of blood,
No prayer--no hymn to soothe their last repose,
No calm and friendly hands their stiffening eyes to close!

XXX.

Theirs was the Dreadful Snow,--who trembling bore
Their shuddering limbs along; and pace by pace
Saw in that white sheet plashed with human gore
The dread familiar look of some brave face,--
Distorted,--ghastly,--with a lingering trace
Of life and sorrow in its pleading glance,--
A dying dream of parted Love's embrace,--
A hope of succour, brought by desperate chance,--
Or wild unconscious stare of Death's delirious trance.
XXXI.

Theirs was the Dreadful Snow,--who left behind
Brothers and husbands, foully, fiercely slain:
Who, led by traitors, wandered on, half blind
With bitter tears of sorrow, shed in vain,
Crossing the steep ascent, or dreary plain;
Mothers of helpless children,--delicate wives,
Who brought forth wailing infants, born in pain,
Amid a crowded wreck of human lives,
And scenes that chill the soul, though vital strength survives.
XXXII.

Theirs was the Dreadful Snow,--who never laid
Their Dead to rest with service and with psalm:
Their bones left bleaching in the alien shade
Of mountains crested with the Indian Palm.
Oh! English village graves, how sweet and calm
Shines on your native earth the setting sun!
Yet GLORY gave their wounds a healing balm--
Glory,--like that thy youthful trophies won
In thy first 'prime of life,'-- victorious Wellington!
XXXIII.

'In thy life's prime,'--ere yet the fading grey
Had blanched the tresses of thy gallant head:
Or from thy step Time's gradual faint decay
Stole the proud bearing of a Soldier's tread!
Gone are the troops thy voice to battle led,--
Thy conquering hand shall wield the sword no more,--
The foes and comrades of thy youth are dead,--
By Elba's rock and lone St. Helen's shore
No prisoned Emperor hears the boundless ocean roar.

XXXIV.

But, though its battle-strength be out of date,
The eager gesture of that warrior hand,--
Raised in the warmth of brief and blunt debate
In the hushed Senate of thy native land,--
Hath something in it of the old command;
The voice retains a certain power to thrill
Which cheered to Victory many a gallant band:

In thy keen sense, and proud unconquered will,
Though thy Life's Prime be past, men own their Leader still!
XXXV.

Plodding his way along the winter path,
Behold, a different lot hard fortune shews:
A blind old veteran in the tempest's wrath,
Around whose feet no fabled laurel grows.
Long hath he dwelt in an enforced repose;
And, when the tales of glorious deeds are heard,
His sightless countenance with pleasure glows,--
His brave old heart is for a moment stirred,--
Then, sad he shrinks away, muttering some mournful word.
XXXVI.

For ever idle in this work-day world--
For ever lonely in the moving throng--
Like a seared leaf by eddying breezes whirled,
Hither and thither vaguely borne along:
No guide to steer his course, if right or wrong,
Save the dumb immemorial friend of man,
Who, by some instinct delicate and strong,
From those impassive glances learns to scan
Some wish to move or rest,--some vestige of a plan:
XXXVII.

The wildbird's carol in the pleasant woods
Is all he knows of Spring! The rich perfume
Of flowers, with all their various scented buds,
Tells him to welcome Summer's heavy bloom:
And by the wearied gleaners trooping home,--
The heavy tread of many gathering feet,--
And by the laden Waggon-loads that come
Brushing the narrow hedge with burden sweet,--
He guesses Harvest in, and Autumn's store complete.
XXXVIII.

But in God's Temple the great lamp is out;
And he must worship glory in the Dark!
Till Death, in midnight mystery, hath brought
The veiled Soul's re-illuminating spark,--
The pillar of the CLOUD enfolds the ark!

And, like a man that prayeth underground
In Bethlehem's rocky shrine, he can but mark
The lingering hours by circumstance and sound,
And break with gentle hymns the solemn silence round.
XXXIX.

Yet still Life's Better Light shines out above!
And in that village church where first he learned
To bear his cheerless doom for Heaven's dear love,
He sits, with wistful face for ever turned
To hear of those who Heavenly pity earned:
Blind Bartimeus, and him desolate
Who for Bethesda's waters vainly yearned:
And inly sighs, condemned so long to wait,
Baffled and helpless still, beyond the Temple gate!
XL.

And can the Blind man miss the Summer sun?
This wintry sheet of wide unbroken white
His sealed blank eyes undazzled rest upon;
Yet round him hangs all day a twofold night,
He felt the warmth, who never saw the light!
He loved to sit beside the cottage door
When blossoms of the gorse were golden bright,
And hear glad children's shouts come o'er the moor,
And bask away his time in happy dreams of yore.
XLI.

The Sunbeam slanting down on bench or bank
Was, unto him, a sweet consoling friend;
Such as our mournful hearts incline to thank,
But that such thanks affection's depth offend.
All vanished pictures it had power to send
That greeted his keen eyesight, long ago!
Gay plumèd troops defiling without end,--
And glancing bayonets and martial show,--
And hands he used to grasp,--and looks he used to know.
XLII.

Yea, sometimes, back again to earlier life,
Even to his childish days, his thoughts would steal;
And hear, in lieu of arms and clashing strife,

The low hum of his Mother's spinning wheel,--
And on his withered cheek her lips could feel
As when she kissed its boyish sunburnt bloom:
And fancy little acts of love and zeal,
By which she now would soothe his bitter doom:
But she is dead,--and he,--alone in all his gloom!
XLIII.

Oh! by the beauty of a Summer day,--
The glorious blue that on the fountain lies,--
The tender quivering of the fresh green spray,--
The softness of the night when stars arise;
By the clear gladness of your children's eyes,--
And the familiar sweetness of that face
Most welcome to you underneath the skies,--
Pity that fellow-creature's mournful case
Whom Darkness follows still, where'er his dwelling-place!

XLIV.

'PITY THE BLIND!' How oft, in dolent tone,
That cry is heard along the peopled street,
While the Brute-Guide with patient care leads on
The tardy groping of his Master's feet!
But little dream we, as those steps we meet,
We too are blind, though clear the visual ray
That gives us leave familiar looks to greet,
Smiling and pausing on our onward way:
We too are blind,--and dark the paths wherein we stray.
XLV.

Yea, blind! and adder-deaf,--and idiot-dull,--
To many a sight and sound that cries aloud.
Is there no moral blindness of the Soul?
Is he less shut from light, who, through the crowd
Threads his blank way, among the poor and proud,--
The foul and fair,--all forms to him the same,--
Than they whose hearts have never yet avowed
Perception of the universal claim
Wrapped in that common phrase, a 'fellow-creature's' name.
XLVI.

Christmas is smiling at the Rich man's door,--
Its joyous holiday his home endears:
Christmas is frowning on the thin-clad Poor,
With looks of cold distress and frozen tears:
How plain the duty of the time appears!
But Selfishness is Blindness of the Heart;
And, having eyes, we see not; having ears,
We hear not warnings, which should make us start,
While God's good angels watch the acting of our part.
XLVII.

Now, slowly trudging through the crispèd snow,
Under the wintry arch of Heaven's clear dome,
Joy's cadenced music set to tones of woe,
Beneath the windows of the rich man's home
Street-Singers, with their Christmas Carols, roam.
Ah! who shall recognise that sound again,
Nor think of him, who hallowed years to come,
When the past Christmas taught his fervent pen
A 'CAROL' of dear love and brotherhood 'twixt men!
XLVIII.

To what good actions that small book gave birth,
God only knows, who sends the wingèd seed
To its appointed resting-place on earth!
What timely help in hours of sorest need,--
What gentle lifting of the bruised reed,--
What kind compassion shewn to young and old,--
Proved the true learning of its simple creed,--
We know not,--but we know good thoughts, well told,
Strike root in many a heart, and bear a hundred-fold!
XLIX.

Oh, lovely lesson! art thou hard to learn?
Is it indeed so difficult to share
The school-boy hoard our efforts did not earn?
Shall we still grudge life's luck, to lives of care,
And dream that what we spend on these, we spare?
ALMS being the exception, SELF the rule,
Still shall we give our guinea here and there
('Annual') to church, and hospital, and school,
And lavish hundreds more, on pleasures which befool.

L.

Take but the aggregate of several sums
Allotted for the privilege to stay,
Watching some dancer's feet, who onward comes
Light as a bird upon a bending spray:
When,--oh! thou custom-governed Conscience,--say,
Did niggard Charity at once bestow
What careless Pleasure squanders every day?
When did the tale of real and squalid woe
Awake within thy breast such sympathetic glow?

LI.

Prosaic Questioner, thy words beguile
No listener's ear: SHE curtsies, gazing round:
Who would not spend a fortune on her smile!
How curved the stately form prepared to bound
With footfall echoing to the music's sound,
In the Cachucha's proud triumphant pace !
What soft temptation in her look is found
When the gay Tarantalla's wilder grace
Wakes all th' impassioned glow that lights her Southern face!

LII.

And now, a peasant girl, abashed she stands:
How pretty and how timid are her eyes:
How gracefully she clasps her small fair hands,
How acts her part of shy and sweet surprise:
How earnest is her love without disguise:
How piteously, when from that dream awaking,
She finds him false on whom her faith relies,
All the arch mirth those features fair forsaking,
She hides her face and sobs as though her heart were breaking!

LIII.

A Sylphide now, among her bowers of roses,
Or, by lone reeds, a Lake's enamoured fairy,
Her lovely limbs to slumber she composes,
Or flies aloft, with gestures soft and airy:
Still on her guard when seeming most unwary,
Scarce seen, before the small feet twinkle past,
Haunting, and yet of love's caresses chary,

Her maddened lover follows vainly fast,--
While still the perfect step seems that she danced the last!
LIV.

Poor Child of Pleasure! thou art young and fair,
And youth and beauty are enchanting things:
But hie thee home, bewitching Bayadère,
Strip off thy glittering armlets, pearls, and rings,
Thy peasant boddice, and thy Sylphide wings:
Grow old and starve: require true Christian aid:
And learn, when real distress thy bosom wrings,
For whom was all that costly outlay made:
For SELF, and not for thee, the golden ore was paid!
LV.

For the quick beating of the jaded heart,
When sated Pleasure woke beneath thy gaze,
And heaved a languid sigh, alone, apart,
Half for thy beauty, half for 'other days:'
For the trained skill thy pliant form displays,
Pleasing the eye and casting o'er the mind
A spell which, Circé-like, thy power could raise,
A drunkenness of Soul and Sense combined,
Where Fancy's filmy Veil gross Passion's form refined.
LVI.

For these, while thou hadst beauty, youth, and health,
Thou supple-limbed and nimble-stepping slave
Of two cold masters, Luxury and Wealth,
The wages of thy task they duly gave,
Thy food was choice, and thy apparel brave:
Appeal not now to vanished days of joy
For arguments to succour and to save,--
Proud Self indulgence hath a newer toy,
And younger slaves have skill, and these thy Lords employ.
LVII.

And thou, first flatterer of her early prime,
Ere praises grew familiar as the light,
And the young feet flew round in measured time
Amid a storm of clapping every night;
Thou, at whose glance the smile grew really bright

That decked her lips for tutored mirth before,--
Wilt THOU deny her and forget her quite?
Thy idol, for whose sake the lavish store
In prodigal caprice thy hand was wont to pour?
LVIII.

Yea, wherefore not? for SELF, and not for her,
Those sums were paid, her facile love to win:
Thy heart's cold ashes vainly would she stir,
The light is quenched she looked so lovely in!
Eke out the measure of thy fault, and sin
'First with her, then against her,' cast her off,
Though on thy words her faith she learned to pin:
The WORLD at her, and not at thee, shall scoff,--
Yea, lowlier than before, its servile cap shall doff.
LIX.

And since these poor forsaken ones are apt
With ignorant directness to perceive
Only the fact that gentle links are snapt,
Love's perjured nonsense taught them to believe
Would last for ever: since to mourn and grieve
Over these broken vows is to grow wild:
It may be she will come, some winter eve,
And, weeping like a broken-hearted child,
Reproach thee for the days when she was thus beguiled.
LX.

Then,--in thy spacious library,--where dwell
Philosophers, Historians, and Sages,
Full of deep lore which thou hast studied well;
And classic Poets, whose melodious pages
Are shut, like birds, in lacquered trellis cages,--
Let thy more educated mind explain
By all experience of recorded ages,
How commonplace is this her frantic pain,
And how such things have been, and must be yet again!
LXI.

If the ONE BOOK should strike those foreign eyes,
And thy professed Religion she would scan,--
Learning its shallow influence to despise;

Argue thy falsehood on a skilful plan,
Protestant, and protesting gentleman!
Prove all the folly, all the fault, her own;
Let her crouch humbly 'neath misfortune's ban;
She hath unlovely, undelightful grown,
That sin no words absolve: for that no tears atone!
LXII.

But Prudery,--with averted angry glance,--
Bars pleading, and proclaims the sentence just;
Life's gambler having lost her desperate chance,
Now let the Scorned One grovel in the dust!
Now let the Wanton share the Beggar's crust!
Yet every wretch destroyed by Passion's lure,
Had a First Love,--Lost Hope,--and Broken Trust:
And Heaven shall judge whose thoughts and lives are pure,
Not always theirs worst sin, who worldly scorn endure.
LXIII.

The Worthlessness of those we might relieve
Is chill Denial's favourite pretence:
The proneness of the needy to deceive
By many a stale and counterfeit pretence,--
Their vice,--their folly,--their improvidence.
There's not a ragged beggar that we meet,
Tuning his voice to whining eloquence,
And shuffling towards us with half-naked feet
As some rich equipage comes rolling down the street,--
LXIV.

But we prepare that Sinner to condemn,
And speak a curse, where we were called to bless:
From a corrupted root,--a withered stem;
'Tis gross hypocrisy, and not distress,
Or want brought on by loathsome drunkenness,
Seen in the wandering of his bloodshot eye
Glazed stupid with habitual excess:
Even children raise a simulated cry,--
Worthless we deem them all,--and worthless pass them by.
LXV.

Nor without reason is the spirit grieved,

And wrath aroused for Truth and Justice' sake:
The tales by which vile Cunning hath deceived,
On calculated chances planned to make
Frozen Compassion's sealed-up fountains wake;
The affectation of distorted pains;
The stealthy dram which trembling fingers take
To send the chill blood coursing through the veins
From a worn heart which scarce its vital heat retains;--
LXVI.

Craving of gifts to pawn, exchange, or sell;--
These are the baser errors of the Poor!
What thine are, Almsgiver, thou best canst tell,
And how thy spirit its temptations bore,
Giving thee now a right to bar the door
Against thy fellow-trespasser: his brow
Hath lost, perchance, the innocence of yore:
The wrestling sin that forced his Soul to bow,
He hath not bravely met and overborne: hast THOU?
LXVII.

Oh, different temptations lurk for all!
The Rich have idleness and luxury,
The Poor are tempted onward to their fall
By the oppression of their Poverty:
Hard is the struggle--deep the agony
When from the demon watch that lies in wait
The soul with shuddering terror strives to flee,
And idleness--or want--or love--or hate--
Lure us to various crimes, for one condemning fate!
LXVIII.

Didst THOU, when sleety blasts at midnight howled,
And wretches, clad in Misery's tattered guise,
Like starving wolves, it may be, thieved and prowled;
Never lie dreaming,--shut from winter skies,--
While the warm shadow of remembered eyes,
Like a hot sun-glow, all thy frame opprest;
And love-sick and unhallowed phantasies
Born of a lawless hope, assailed thy breast,
And robbed God's solemn night, of Prayer and tranquil rest.
LXIX.

When the great Sunrise, shining from above
With an impelling and awakening ray,
Found thee so listless in thy sinful love,
Thy flushing cheek could only turn away
From the clear light of that distasteful day,
And, leaning on thy languid hand, invite
Darkness again, that fading dreams might stay,--
Was God's fair Noon not robbed of Duty's Right,
Even as the holy rest was cheated from his night?
LXX.

Whom thou dost injure,--thou that dost not strike,--
What thou dost covet,--thou that dost not steal,--
HE knows, who made Temptations so unlike,
But SIN the same: to HIM all hearts reveal
The Proteus-like disguises which conceal
That restless Spirit which doth so beguile
And easily beset us: all we feel
Of good or bad,--He knows,--and all the vile
Degrading earthly stains which secret thought defile.
LXXI.

HIS eye detects the stealthy murderer's arm
Uplifted in the hour of midnight gloom:
HE sees, through blushes delicately warm,
Feigned Innocence her forfeit throne resume,
And marks the canker underneath the bloom:
But oft the sentence erring man decreed,
Finds before HIM reversal of its doom:
HE judgeth all our sorrow--all our need--
And pitying bends to hear the sorely tempted plead.
LXXII.

What if by HIM more sternly shall be judged
Crimes to which no necessity impelled,
Than theirs, to whom our human justice grudged
Compassion for the weeping we beheld?
What if the savage blow that madly felled
The object of fierce rage, be lighter deemed
Than cruelty where life-blood never welled,
But where the hope was quenched that faintly gleamed,

And the heart drained of tears which still unpitied streamed?
LXXIII.

What if the village brawl, the drunken bout,
The Sabbath-breaking of the skittle-ground,
Shall all be sins foregone and blotted out,
And in their stead worse Sabbath-breaking found
In that which stands not chid for brawling sound;
The silent printed libel; which invests
A strip of paper with the power to wound,--
Where some fair name like dew on nightshade rests,
In a coarse gathered heap of foul indecent jests?
LXXIV.

How, if the ignorant clown less vile appears,
Than educated stabbers in the dark,
Who joyed in matron grief, and girlish tears,
And lit in happy homes that quenchless spark
The bitterness of DOUBT: who bid the ark
Float over troubled waters for all time;
And those who once sang joyous as the lark
Bow down in silence; tarnished for no crime;
Stung by a trailing snake, and spotted with its slime?
LXXV.

Oh! learnèd, clothed, and cultivated minds,
To whom the laws their purpose have declared,
Sit ye in judgment but on labouring hinds?
Yea, for the poor your censure is not spared!
Yet shall the faults they made, the crimes they dared,
The errors which ye found so hard to pass,
Seem as the faults of children, when compared
With the corruption of a different class,
When God calls angels forth from this world's buried mass.
LXXVI.

Weigh, weigh and balance nicely as you will
The poor man's errors with the poor man's need:
The fiat of the Just One liveth still,
And Human laws, though blindly men may read,
The law of Heaven can never supersede.
By the cold light of Wisdom's complex rules

Vainly we study hard a different creed,--
'Do AS YE WOULD BE DONE BY' mocks the schools,
And mars the shallow craft of worldly-witted fools.
LXXVII.

A careless Giver is the poor man's curse!
Think not, by this, absolved of alms to stand;
The niggard heart of indolence does worse,
Stinting both trouble and the liberal hand.
Obey the voice of a divine command;
'Remember Mercy!' haply thou shalt save
If only one, of all that mournful band,
From gaol, or workhouse, or an early grave!
Hear, thou,--and Heaven shall hear thy voice for mercy crave.
LXXVIII.

Yea, hear the voice that for compassion calls:
Prove him unworthy ere he be denied:
Lest, through thy coldness, dismal workhouse walls
Blankly enclose him round on every side,
And from his eyes God's outward glory hide.
There, like a creature pent in wooden shed,
He in a bitter darkness shall abide,
Duly though sparely clothed, and scanty fed,
But pining for the paths his feet were wont to tread.
LXXIX.

There shall his soul, of Nature's sweetness reft,
Robbed of the light that came in angel-gleams
And on the mind such blessed influence left,--
Be filled with dark defying prison-dreams.
Cruel the world's enforced relieving seems,
Preserving life, but not what made life fair;
Stagnant and shut from all life's running streams,
His heart sinks down from feverish restless care,
Into the weary blank of brutalised Despair!
LXXX.

Where is the gorse-flower on the golden moor?
Where the red poppy laughing in the corn?
Where the tall lily at the cottage door,--
The briar-rose dancing in the breezy morn,--

The yellow buttercups of sunshine born,--
The daisies spangling all the village green,--
The showering blossoms of the scented thorn,--
The cowslips that enwreathed the May-day Queen?
What hath he done, that these shall never more be seen?
LXXXI.

Oh, flowers! oh, dumb companions on lone hills,--
In meadow walks, and lovely loitering lanes,--
Whose memory brings fresh air and bubbling rills
Amid Life's suffocating fever-pains;
For Rich and Poor your equal joy remains!
Decrepid age and childhood's careless mirth
Alike shall own the power your spell retains:
Midst all the fading changes of the earth
Your smiles, at least, live on,--immortal in their birth.
LXXXII.

Who, when some inward anger fiercely burned,--
Hath trod the fresh green carpet where ye lie,
Your soft peace-making faces upward turned,
With a dumb worship to the solemn sky,--
Nor felt his wrath in shame and sorrow die?
Old voices calling to his haunted heart
From grassy meadows known in infancy,
Playfields whose memory bids a teardrop start,
Scenes from a former life whose sunshine dwells apart.
LXXXIII.

When there had been no quarrels--and no deaths--
No vacant places in our early home:
When blossoms, with their various scented breaths,
Were all the pure hearts knew of beauty's bloom,
Where earthlier passion yet had found no room:
When, from low copse, or sunny upland lawn,
We shouted loud for joy, that steps might come
Bounding and springing, agile as the fawn,--
And 'Sleep came with the dew,' and gladness with the dawn.
LXXXIV.

Oh! Flowers, oh! gentle never-failing friends,
Which from the world's beginning still have smiled

To cheer Life's pilgrim as he onward wends,--
Seems not your soothing influence, meek and mild,
Like comfort spoken by a little child,
Who, in some desperate sorrow, though he knows
Nothing of all Life's grieving, dark and wild,
An innocent compassion fondly shews,
And fain would win us back from fever to repose?
LXXXV.

For morbid folly let my song be chid,--
Incur the cynic's proudly withering sneer,--
But these are feelings (unexpressed) which bid
The poor man hold his cottage freedom dear;
The matin lark hath thrilled his gladdened ear,
With its exulting and triumphant song;
The nightingale's sweet notes he loved to hear,
In the dim twilight, when the labouring throng
All weary from their work, in silence trudged along.
LXXXVI.

The glowing Claudes,--the Poussins,--which your eyes
Behold and value,--treasure as you may,--
His pictures were the sights you do not prize--
The leaf turned yellow by the autumn ray,
The woodbine wreath that swung across his way,
The sudden openings in the hazel-wood:--
He knew no history of Rome's decay,
But, where grey tombstones in the churchyard stood,
He spelt out all the Past on which his mind could brood.
LXXXVII.

Some humble love-scene of his village lot,
Or some obscure Tradition, could invest
Field, copse, and stile,--or lone and shadowy spot,--
With all the Poetry his heart confest:
The old companions that he loved the best
Met not in crowds at Fashion's busy call:
But loud their merriment, and gay the jest,
At statute fair and homely festival:
And now, life's path is dark, for he hath lost them all!
LXXXVIII.

Therefore deal gently with his destiny,
Which, rightly looked on, differs from your own,
Less in the points of feeling, than degree:
Contrast the great and generous pity shewn,--
The bounteous alms some inquest-hour makes known,--
Bestowed by those whose means of self-support
Are so precarious,--with the pittance thrown
From niggard hands, which only spend for sport,
Scattering vain largesse down in Pleasure's idle court.
LXXXIX.

Contrast the rich man, with his ready wealth
Feeing a skilled Physician's hand to ease
The pang that robs him of that blessing Health,
With the poor man's lone hour of fell disease;
The wretched ague-fits that burn and freeze,
He understands not; but his aching head
Is conscious that the wasting arm he sees
Grown daily thinner, earns his children's bread,
And that they pine and starve around his helpless bed.
XC.

Contrast that terror of the chastening rod
Which those to whom so much was giv'n, must feel,
With the one anxious hope of meeting God!
Of finding all the bliss, the glory real,--
The Mercy that their sorrows past shall heal,--
The Eternal rest,--the happy equal share,--
All that was promised by the Preacher's zeal,
When weekly pausing in a life of care,
Poor voices joined the rich in thanksgiving and prayer.
XCI.

The stamp of imperfection rests on all
Our human intellects have power to plan;
'Tis Heaven's own mark, fire-branded at the fall,
When we sank lower than we first began,
And the Bad Angel stained the heart of man:
The Good our nature struggles to achieve
Becomes, not what we would, but what we can:--
Ah! shall we therefore idly, vainly grieve,
Or coldly turn away, reluctant to relieve?

XCII.

Even now a Radiant Angel goeth forth,
A spirit that hath healing on his wings,--
And flieth East and West and North and South
To do the bidding of the King of Kings:
Stirring men's hearts to compass better things,
And teaching BROTHERHOOD as that sweet source
Which holdeth in itself all blessed springs;
And shewing how to guide its silver course,
When it shall flood the world with deep exulting force.

XCIII.

And some shall be too indolent to teach,--
And some too proud of other men to learn,--
And some shall clothe their thoughts in mystic speech,
So that we scarce their meaning may discern;
But all shall feel their hearts within them burn,
(Even those by whom the Holy is denied)
And in their worldly path shall pause and turn,
Because a Presence walketh by their side,
Not of their earthlier mould, but pure and glorified:

XCIV.

And some shall blindly overshoot the mark,
Which others, feeble-handed, fail to hit,
And some, like that lone Dove who left the ark,
With restless and o'erwearied wing to flit
Over a world by lurid storm-gleams lit,--
Shall seek firm landing for a deed of worth,
And see the water-floods still cover it:--
For 'there are many languages on Earth,
But only one in Heaven,' where all good plans have birth.

XCV.

Faint not, oh Spirit, in dejected mood
Thinking how much is planned, how little done:
Revolt not, Heart, though still misunderstood,
For Gratitude, of all things 'neath the sun,
Is easiest lost,--and insecurest, won:
Doubt not, clear mind, that workest out the Right

For the right's sake: the thin thread must be spun,
And Patience weave it, ere that sign of might,
Truth's Banner, wave aloft, full flashing to the light.
XCVI.

Saw ye the blacksmith with a struggling frown
Hammer the sparkle-drifting iron straight,--
Saw ye the comely anchor, holding down
The storm-tried vessel with its shapely weight?
Saw ye the bent tools, old and out of date,
The crucibles, and fragments of pale ore,--
Saw ye the lovely coronet of state
Which in the festal hour a monarch wore,
The sceptre and the orb which in her hand she bore?
XCVII.

Saw ye the trudging labourer with his spade
Plant the small seedling in the rugged ground,--
Saw ye the forest-trees within whose shade
The wildest blasts of winter wander round,
While the strong branches toss and mock the sound?
Saw ye the honey which the bee had hived,
By starving men in desert wandering found;
And how the soul gained hope, the worn limbs thrived,
Upon the gathered store by insect skill contrived?
XCVIII.

Lo! out of Chaos was the world first called,
And Order out of blank Disorder came.
The feebly-toiling heart that shrinks appalled,
In Dangers weak, in Difficulties tame,
Hath lost the spark of that creative flame
Dimly permitted still on earth to burn,
Working out slowly Order's perfect frame:
Distributed to those whose souls can learn,
As labourers under God, His task-work to discern.
XCIX.

CHILD OF THE ISLANDS! Thou art one by birth
In whom the weak ones see a human guide:
A Lily in the garden of their earth,
That toilest not, but yet art well supplied

With costly luxuries and robes of pride.
Thy word shall lead full many a wavering soul,
Behoves thee therefore hold thyself allied
With the Mind-Workers, that thy good control
May serve HIS world whose light shines out from pole to pole.
C.

So, when Life's Winter closes on thy toil,
And the great pause of Death's chill silence comes,--
When seeds of good lie buried in the soil,
And labourers rest within their narrow homes,--
When dormant Consciousness no longer roams
In awe-struck fancy towards that distant land
Where no snow falleth, and no ocean foams,
But waits the trumpet in the Angel's hand,--
THOU may'st be one of those who join Heaven's shining band.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Christening

(Of my Brother's infant Son, February 21, 1839.)

I.

THERE is a sound of laughter light and gay,
And hurried welcomes, as of joyful greeting;
The stir and murmur of a holiday,
The grouping of glad friends each other meeting:
And in the midst art THOU--thou tiny flower,
Whose coming hath so cheer'd this wintry hour!

II.

Helpless thou liest, young blossom of our love!
The sunshine of fond smiles around thee beaming,
Blessings call'd down on thee from Heaven above,
And every heart about thy future dreaming:--
Meek peace and utter innocence are now
The sole expression of thy baby brow.

III.

Helpless thou liest, thy little waxen face
Eagerly scann'd by our inquiring glances,
Hoping some lovely likeness there to trace,
Which fancy finds, and so thy worth enhances;
Clothing with thought mature, and power of mind,
Those infant features, yet so faintly lined.

IV.

And still thy youthful mother bendeth down
Her large, soft, loving eyes, brimful of gladness,
Her cheek almost as waxen as thine own,
Her heart as innocently free from sadness:
And still a brighter smile her red lip wears,
As each her young son's loveliness declares.

V.

And sometimes as we gaze a sigh is heard,
(Though from the happy group all grief seems banished,)
As thou recallest, little nestling bird,
Some long familiar face whose light hath vanish'd;

Some name, which yet hath power our hearts to thrill--
Some smile, whose buried beauty haunts us still!

VI.

Ah! most to Her, the early widow'd, come
Thoughts of the blossoms that from earth have perish'd;
Lost to her lone and solitary home,
Though in her brooding memory fondly cherish'd:--
Her little grandson's baby-smiles recall
Not one regretted hope of youth, but all!

VII.

Her Son's son lies upon her cradling knee,
And bids her heart return, with mournful dreaming,
To her own first-born's helpless infancy,
When hope-youth's guiding star-was brightly beaming;
And He, who died too soon, stood by and smiled,
And bless'd alike the mother and her child.

VIII.

Since then, how many a year hath fled past!
What unforeseen events, what joys, what sorrows,
With sunshine or with clouds have overcast
The long succession of her lonely morrows;
Ere musing o'er this fair and new-born face,
A fresh link carried on her orphan'd Race!

IX.

Fair child, that race is not by man's award
Ennobled,--but by God; no titles sounded
By herald's trump, or smooth and flattering bard,
Proclaim within what lines thy rank is bounded:--
Thy power hereditary none confine,
The gift of Genius, boy, by right is thine!

X.

Be humble, for it is an envied thing;
And men whose creeping hearts have long submitted
Around the column'd height to clasp and cling
Of Titled Pride--by man to man transmitted,--
Will grudge the power they have less cause to dread,
Oppose thee living, and malign when dead.

XI.

One of thy lineage served his country well
(Though with her need her gratitude departed);
What in her memory now is left to dwell?
The faults of him who died half broken-hearted:--
And those, whose envious hands ne'er stretch'd to save,
Pluck down the laurels springing from his grave.

XII.

Yet hush! it is a solemn hour; and far
Be human bitterness and vain upbraiding;
With hope we watch thy rising, thou young star,
Hope not all earthly, or it were too fading;
For we are met to usher in thy life,
With Prayer,--which lifteth hearts, and quelleth strife!

XIII.

Hush'd is the busy group, and still as death;
All at the sacred altar meekly kneeling;
For thy sake, who so lately drew thy breath,
All unto Heaven with earnest heart appealing.
A solemn voice addresses the Most High,
And with a murmuring echo we reply.

XIV.

All holy be the hour! and, oh! may Heaven
Look down and bless the anxious mother's part,
As meekly she confides the treasure given
So lately to her young and hoping heart;
And pleads that God's great love may be his stay,
And guide her little Wanderer on his way.

XV.

So let it be! and when the noble head
Of thy true-hearted father, babe beloved,
Now glossy dark, is silver-gray instead,
And thy young birth-day far away removed;
Still may'st thou be a comfort and a joy,--
Still welcome as this day, unconscious boy!

The Cold Change

In the cold change which time hath wrought on love
(The snowy winter of his summer prime),
Should a chance sigh or sudden tear-drop move
Thy heart to memory of the olden time;
Turn not to gaze on me with pitying eyes,
Nor mock me with a withered hope renewed;
But from the bower we both have loved, arise
And leave me to my barren solitude!
What boots it that a momentary flame
Shoots from the ashes of a dying fire?
We gaze upon the hearth from whence it came,
And know the exhausted embers must expire:
Therefore no pity, or my heart will break;
Be cold, be careless-for thy past love's sake!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Creole Girl; Or, The Physician's Story

I.

SHE came to England from the island clime
Which lies beyond the far Atlantic wave;
She died in early youth--before her time--
'Peace to her broken heart, and virgin grave!'

II.

She was the child of Passion, and of Shame,
English her father, and of noble birth;
Though too obscure for good or evil fame,
Her unknown mother faded from the earth.

III.

And what that fair West Indian did betide,
None knew but he, who least of all might tell,--
But that she lived, and loved, and lonely died,
And sent this orphan child with him to dwell.

IV.

Oh! that a fair and innocent young face
Should have a poison in its looks alone,
To raise up thoughts of sorrow and disgrace
And shame most bitter, although not its own!

V.

Cruel were they who flung that heavy shade
Across the life whose days did but begin;
Cruel were they who crush'd her heart, and made
Her youth pay penance for his youth's wild sin;

VI.

Yet so it was;--among her father's friends
A cold compassion made contempt seem light,
But, in 'the world,' no justice e'er defends
The victims of their tortuous wrong and right:--

VII.

And 'moral England,' striking down the weak,

And smiling at the vices of the strong,
On her, poor child! her parent's guilt would wreak,
And that which was her grievance, made her wrong.
VIII.

The world she understood not; nor did they
Who made that world,--her, either, understand;
The very glory of her features' play
Seem'd like the language of a foreign land;
IX.

The shadowy feelings, rich and wild and warm,
That glow'd and mantled in her lovely face,--
The slight full beauty of her youthful form,
Its gentle majesty, its pliant grace,--
X.

The languid lustre of her speaking eye,
The indolent smile of that bewitching mouth,
(Which more than all betray'd her natal sky,
And left us dreaming of the sunny South,)--
XI.

The passionate variation of her blood,
Which rose and sank, as rise and sink the waves,
With every change of her most changeful mood,
Shock'd sickly Fashion's pale and guarded slaves.
XII.

And so in this fair world she stood alone,
An alien 'mid the ever-moving crowd,
A wandering stranger, nameless and unknown,
Her claim to human kindness disallow'd.
XIII.

But oft would Passion's bold and burning gaze,
And Curiosity's set frozen stare,
Fix on her beauty in those early days,
And coarsely thus her loveliness declare;
XIV.

Which she would shrink from, as the gentle plant,

Fern-leaved Mimosa folds itself away;
Suffering and sad;--for easy 'twas to daunt
One who on earth had no protecting stay.
XV.

And often to her eye's transparent lid
The unshed tears would rise with sudden start,
And sink again, as though by Reason chid,
Back to their gentle home, her wounded heart;
XVI.

Even as some gushing fountain idly wells
Up to the prison of its marble side,
Whose power the mounting wave for ever quells,--
So rose her tears--so stemm'd by virgin pride.
XVII.

And so more lonely each succeeding day,
As she her lot did better understand,
She lived a life which had in it decay,
A flower transplanted to too cold a land,--
XVIII.

Which for a while gives out a hope of bloom,
Then fades and pines, because it may not feel
The freedom and the warmth which gave it room
The beauty of its nature to reveal.
XIX.

For vainly would the heart accept its lot
And rouse its strength to bear avow'd contempt;
Scorn will be felt as scorn,--deserved or not,--
And from its bitter spell none stand exempt.
XX.

There is a basilisk power in human eyes
When they would look a fellow-creature down,
'Neath which the faint soul fascinated lies,
Struck by the cold sneer, or the with'ring frown.
XXI.

But one there was, among that cruel crowd,

Whose nature half rebell'd against the chain
Which fashion flung around him; though too proud
To own that slavery's weariness and pain.
XXII.

Too proud; perhaps too weak; for Custom still
Curbs with an iron bit the souls born free;
They start and chafe, yet bend them to the will
Of this most nameless ruler,--so did he.
XXIII.

And even unto him the worldly brand
Which rested on her, half her charm effaced;
Vainly all pure and radiant did she stand,--
Even unto him she was a thing disgraced.
XXIV.

Had she been early doom'd a cloister'd nun,
To Heaven devoted by a holy vow--
His union with that poor deserted one
Had seem'd not more impossible than now.
XXV.

He could have loved her--fervently and well;
But still the cold world, with its false allure,
Bound his free liking in an icy spell,
And made its whole foundation insecure.
XXVI.

But not like meaner souls, would he, to prove
A vulgar admiration, her pursue;
For though his glances after her would rove,
As something beautiful, and strange, and new,
XXVII.

They were withdrawn if but her eye met his,
Or, for an instant if their light remain'd,
They soften'd into gentlest tenderness,
As asking pardon that his look had pain'd.
XXVIII.

And she was nothing unto him,--nor he

Aught unto her; but each of each did dream
In the still hours of thought, when we are free
To quit the real world for the things which seem.
XXIX.

When in his heart Love's folded wings would stir,
And bid his youth choose out a fitting mate,
Against his will his thoughts roam'd back to her,
And all around seem'd blank and desolate.
XXX.

When, in his worldly haunts, a smother'd sigh
Told he had won some lady of the land,
The dreaming glances of his earnest eye
Beheld far off the Creole orphan stand;
XXXI.

And to the beauty by his side he froze,
As though she were not fair, nor he so young,
And turn'd on her such looks of cold repose
As check'd the trembling accents of her tongue,
XXXII.

And bid her heart's dim passion seek to hide
Its gathering strength, although the task be pain,
Lest she become that mock to woman's pride--
A wretch that loves unwoo'd, and loves in vain.
XXXIII.

So in his heart she dwelt,--as one may dwell
Upon the verge of a forbidden ground;
And oft he struggled hard to break the spell
And banish her, but vain the effort found;
XXXIV.

For still along the winding way which led
Into his inmost soul, unbidden came
Her haunting form,--and he was visited
By echoes soft of her unspoken name,
XXXV.

Through the long night, when those we love seem near,

However cold, however far away,
Borne on the wings of floating dreams, which cheer
And give us strength to meet the struggling day.
XXXVI.

And when in twilight hours she roved apart,
Feeding her love-sick soul with visions fair,
The shadow of his eyes was on her heart,
And the smooth masses of his shining hair
XXXVII.

Rose in the glory of the evening light,
And, where she wander'd, glided evermore,
A star which beam'd upon her world's lone night,
Where nothing glad had ever shone before.
XXXVIII.

But vague and girlish was that love,--no hope,
Even of familiar greeting, ever cross'd
Its innocent, but, oh! most boundless scope;
She loved him,--and she knew her love was lost.
XXXIX.

She gazed on him, as one from out a bark,
Bound onward to a cold and distant strand,
Some lovely bay, some haven fair may mark,
Stretching far inward to a sunnier land;
XL.

Who, knowing he must still sail on, turns back
To watch with dreaming and most mournful eyes
The ruffling foam which follows in his track,
Or the deep starlight of the shoreless skies.
XLI.

Oh! many a hopeless love like this may be,--
For love will live that never looks to win;
Gems rashly lost in Passion's stormy sea,
Not to be lifted forth when once cast in!

PART II.

I.

So time roll'd on, till suddenly that child
Of southern clime and feelings, droop'd and pined
Her cheek wax'd paler, and her eye grew wild,
And from her youthful form all strength declined.

II.

'Twas then I knew her; late and vainly call'd,
To 'minister unto a mind diseased,'--
When on her heart's faint sickness all things pall'd,
And the deep inward pain was never eased:

III.

Her step was always gentle, but at last
It fell as lightly as a wither'd leaf
In autumn hours; and wheresoe'er she pass'd
Smiles died away, she look'd so full of grief.

IV.

And more than ever from that world, where still
Her father hoped to place her, she would shrink;
Loving to be alone, her thirst to fill
From the sweet fountains where the dreamers drink.

V.

One eve, beneath the acacia's waving bough,
Wrapt in these lonely thoughts she sate and read;
Her dark hair parted from her sunny brow,
Her graceful arm beneath her languid head;

VI.

And droopingly and sad she hung above
The open page, whereon her eyes were bent,
With looks of fond regret and pining love;
Nor heard my step, so deep was she intent.

VII.

And when she me perceived, she did not start,
But lifted up those soft dark eyes to mine,
And smiled, (that mournful smile which breaks the heart!)
Then glanced again upon the printed line.

VIII.

'What readest thou?' I ask'd. With fervent gaze,
As though she would have scann'd my inmost soul,
She turn'd to me, and, as a child obeys
The accustom'd question of revered control,
IX.

She pointed to the title of that book,
(Which, bending down, I saw was 'Coralie,')
Then gave me one imploring piteous look,
And tears, too long restrain'd, gush'd fast and free.
X.

It was a tale of one, whose fate had been
Too like her own to make that weeping strange;
Like her, transplanted from a sunnier scene;
Like her, all dull'd and blighted by the change.
XI.

No further word was breathed between us two;--
No confidence was made to keep or break;--
But since that day, which pierced my soul quite thro',
My hand the dying girl would faintly take,
XII.

And murmur, as its grasp (ah! piteous end!)
Return'd the feeble pressure of her own,
'Be with me to the last,--for thou, dear friend,
Hast all my struggles, all my sorrow known!'
XIII.

She died!--The pulse of that untrammell'd heart
Fainted to stilness. Those most glorious eyes
Closed on the world where she had dwelt apart,
And her cold bosom heaved no further sighs.
XIV.

She died!--and no one mourn'd, except her sire,
Who for a while look'd out with eyes more dim;
Lone was her place beside his household fire,
Vanish'd the face that ever smiled on him.
XV.

And no one said to him--'Why mournest thou?'
Because she was the unknown child of shame;
(Albeit her mother better kept the vow
Of faithful love, than some who keep their fame.)
XVI.

Poor mother, and poor child!--unvalued lives!
Wan leaves that perish'd in obscurest shade!
While round me still the proud world stirs and strives,
Say, shall I weep that ye are lowly laid?
XVII.

Shall I mourn for ye? No!--and least for thee,
Young dreamer, whose pure heart gave way before
Thy bark was launch'd upon Love's stormy sea,
Or treachery wreck'd it on the farther shore.
XVIII.

Least, least of all for thee! Thou art gone hence!
Thee never more shall scornful looks oppress,
Thee the world wrings not with some vain pretence,
Nor chills thy tears, nor mocks at thy distress.
XIX.

From man's injustice, from the cold award
Of the unfeeling, thou hast pass'd away;
Thou'rt at the gates of light, where angels guard
Thy path to realms of bright eternal day.
XX.

There shall thy soul its chains of slavery burst,
There, meekly standing before God's high throne,
Thou'lt find the judgments of our earth reversed,
And answer for no errors but thine own.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Crooked Sixpence

TAKE then back your foolish token,
Since it cannot change like you;
When I feel my heart is broken,
Shall it still proclaim you true?
When you gave it, you besought me
Never from that pledge to part:
If I am what then you thought me,
You have spurned an honest heart!

When, far hence, the boisterous billows
Rage upon the stormy deep;
And your landsmen press their pillows,
Careless how we sailors sleep:
Think how happy you had made him--
Think how grieved he was to part;--
Who, though harshly you upbraid him,
Loved ye, with an honest heart!

Farewell, Nancy, but if ever
Eyes you love grow gloomy, then,
Oh! remember, though we sever
You have still a friend in Ben.
Yes; dear girl, he'll still defend you;
And some comfort 'twill impart,
Aid of any sort to lend you--
Though you broke an honest heart!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Dream

'Twas summer eve; the changeful beams still play'd
On the fir-bark and through the beechen shade;
Still with soft crimson glow'd each floating cloud;
Still the stream glitter'd where the willow bow'd;
Still the pale moon sate silent and alone,
Nor yet the stars had rallied round her throne;
Those diamond courtiers, who, while yet the West
Wears the red shield above his dying breast,
Dare not assume the loss they all desire,
Nor pay their homage to the fainter fire,
But wait in trembling till the Sun's fair light
Fading, shall leave them free to welcome Night!

So when some Chief, whose name through realms afar
Was still the watchword of succesful war,
Met by the fatal hour which waits for all,
Is, on the field he rallied, forced to fall,
The conquerors pause to watch his parting breath,
Awed by the terrors of that mighty death;
Nor dare the meed of victory to claim,
Nor lift the standard to a meaner name,
Till every spark of soul hath ebb'd away,
And leaves what was a hero, common clay.

Oh! Twilight! Spirit that dost render birth
To dim enchantments; melting Heaven with Earth,
Leaving on craggy hills and running streams
A softness like the atmosphere of dreams;
Thy hour to all is welcome! Faint and sweet
Thy light falls round the peasant's homeward feet,
Who, slow returning from his task of toil,
Sees the low sunset gild the cultured soil,
And, tho' such radiance round him brightly glows,
Marks the small spark his cottage window throws.
Still as his heart forestals his weary pace,
Fondly he dreams of each familiar face,
Recalls the treasures of his narrow life,
His rosy children, and his sunburnt wife,

To whom his coming is the chief event
Of simple days in cheerful labour spent.
The rich man's chariot hath gone whirling past,
And those poor cottagers have only cast
One careless glance on all that show of pride,
Then to their tasks turn'd quietly aside;
But him they wait for, him they welcome home,
Fond sentinels look forth to see him come;
The fagot sent for when the fire grew dim,
The frugal meal prepared, are all for him;
For him the watching of that sturdy boy,
For him those smiles of tenderness and joy,
For him,--who plods his sauntering way along,
Whistling the fragment of some village song!

Dear art thou to the lover, thou sweet light,
Fair fleeting sister of the mournful night!
As in impatient hope he stands apart,
Companion'd only by his beating heart,
And with an eager fancy oft beholds
The vision of a white robe's fluttering folds
Flit through the grove, and gain the open mead,
True to the hour by loving hearts agreed!

At length she comes. The evening's holy grace
Mellows the glory of her radiant face;
The curtain of that daylight faint and pale
Hangs round her like the shrouding of a veil;
As, turning with a bashful timid thought,
From the dear welcome she herself hath sought,
Her shadowy profile drawn against the sky
Cheats, while it charms, his fond adoring eye.

Oh! dear to him, to all, since first the flowers
Of happy Eden's consecrated bowers
Heard the low breeze along the branches play,
And God's voice bless the cool hour of the day.
For though that glorious Paradise be lost,
Though earth by blighting storms be roughly cross'd,
Though the long curse demands the tax of sin,
And the day's sorrows with the day begin,
That hour, once sacred to God's presence, still

Keeps itself calmer from the touch of ill,
The holiest hour of earth. Then toil doth cease--
Then from the yoke the oxen find release
Then man rests pausing from his many cares,
And the world teems with children's sunset prayers!

Then innocent things seek out their natural rest,
The babe sinks slumbering on its mother's breast;
The birds beneath their leafy covering creep,
Yea, even the flowers fold up their buds in sleep;
And angels, floating by, on radiant wings,
Hear the low sounds the breeze of evening brings,
Catch the sweet incense as it floats along,
The infant's prayer, the mother's cradle-song,
And bear the holy gifts to worlds afar,
As thigs too sacred for this fallen star.

At such an hour, on such a summer night,
Silent and calm in its transparent light,
A widow'd parent watch'd her slumbering child,
On whose young face the sixteenth summer smiled.
Fair was the face she watch'd! Nor less, because
Beauty's perfection seem'd to make a pause,
And wait, on that smooth brow, some further touch,
Some spell from Time,--the great magician,--such
As calls the closed bud out of hidden gloom,
And bids it wake to glory, light, and bloom.
Girlish as yet, but with the gentle grace
Of a young fawn in its low resting-place,

Her folded limbs were lying: from her hand
A group of wild-flowers,--Nature's brightest band,
Of all that laugh along the Summer fields,
Of all the sunny hedge-row freely yields,
Of all that in the wild-wood darkly hide,
Or on the thyme-bank wave in breezy pride,--
Show'd, that the weariness which closed in sleep
So tranquil, child-like, innocent, and deep,
Nor festal gaiety, nor toilsome hours,
Had brought; but, like a flower among the flowers,
She had been wandering 'neath the Summer sky,
Youth on her lip and gladness in her eye,

Twisting the wild rose from its native thorn,
And the blue scabious from the sunny corn;
Smiling and singing like a spirit fair
That walk'd the world, but had no dwelling there.
And still (as though their faintly-scented breath
Preserv'd a meek fidelity in death)
Each late imprison'd blossom fondly lingers
Within the touch of her unconscious fingers,
Though, languidly unclasp'd, that hand no more
Guards its possession of the rifled store.

So wearily she lay; so sweetly slept;
So by her side fond watch the mother kept;
And, as above her gentle child she bent,
So like they seem'd in form and lineament,
You might have deem'd her face its shadow gave
To the clear mirror of a fountain's wave;
Only in this they differ'd; that, while one
Was warm and radiant as the Summer sun,
The other's smile had more a moonlight play,
For many tears had wept its glow away;
Yet was she fair; of loveliness so true,
That time, which faded, never could subdue:
And though the sleeper, like a half-blown rose,
Show'd bright as angels in her soft repose,
Though bluer veins ran through each snowy lid,
Curtaining sweet eyes, by long dark lashes hid--
Eyes that as yet had never learnt to weep,
But woke up smiling, like a child's, from sleep;
Though fainter lines were pencill'd on the brow,
Which cast soft shadow on the orbs below;
Though deeper colour flush'd her youthful cheek,
In its smooth curve more joyous and less meek,
And fuller seem'd the small and crimson mouth,
With teeth like those that glitter in the South,--
She had but youth's superior brightness, such
As the skill'd painter gives with flattering touch
When he would picture every lingering grace
Which once shone brighter in some copied face;
And it was compliment, whene'er she smiled,
To say, 'Thou'rt like thy mother, my fair child!'

Sweet is the image of the brooding dove!--
Holy as Heaven a mother's tender love!
The love of many prayers and many tears,
Which changes not with dim declining years,--
The only love which on this teeming earth
Asks no return from Passion's wayward birth;
The only love that, with a touch divine,
Displaces from the heart's most secret shrine
The idol SELF. Oh! prized beneath thy due
When life's untried affections all are new,--
Love, from whose calmer hope and holier rest
(Like a fledged bird, impatient of the nest)
The human heart, rebellious, springs to seek
Delights more vehement, in ties more weak;
How strange to us appears, in after-life,
That term of mingled carelessness and strife,

When guardianship so gentle gall'd our pride,
When it was holiday to leave thy side,
When, with dull ignorance that would not learn,
We lost those hours that never can return--
Hours, whose most sweet communion Nature meant
Should be in confidence and kindness spent,
That we (hereafter mourning) might believe
In human faith, though all around deceive;
Might weigh against the sad and startling crowd
Of ills which wound the weak and chill the proud,
Of woes 'neath which (despite of stubborn will,
Philosophy's vain boast, and erring skill)
The strong heart downward like a willow bends,
Failure of love,--and treachery of friends,--
Our recollections of the undefiled,
The sainted tie, of parent and of child!

Oh! happy days! Oh years that glided by,
Scarce chronicled by one poor passing sigh!
When the dark storm sweeps past us, and the soul
Struggles with fainting strength to reach the goal;
When the false baits that lured us only cloy,
What would we give to grasp your vanish'd joy!
From the cold quicksands of Life's treacherous shore
The backward light our anxious eyes explore,

Measure the miles our wandering feet have come,
Sinking heart-weary, far away from home,
Recall the voice that whisper'd love and peace,
The smile that bid our early sorrows cease,
And long to bow our grieving heads, and weep
Low on the gentle breast that lull'd us first to sleep!

Ah! bless'd are they for whom 'mid all their pains
That faithful and unalter'd love remains;
Who, Life wreck'd round them,--hunted from their rest,--
And, by all else forsaken or distress'd,--
Claim, in one heart, their sanctuary and shrine--
As I, my Mother, claim'd my place in thine!

Oft, since that hour, in sadness I retrace
My childhood's vision of thy calm sweet face;
Oft see thy form, its mournful beauty shrouded
In thy black weeds, and coif of widow's woe;
Thy dark expressive eyes all dim and clouded
By that deep wretchedness the lonely know:
Stifling thy grief, to hear some weary task
Conn'd by unwilling lips, with listless air,
Hoarding thy means, lest future need might ask
More than the widow's pittance then could spare.
Hidden, forgotten by the great and gay,
Enduring sorrow, not by fits and starts,
But the long, self-denial, day by day,
Alone amidst thy brood of careless hearts!
Striving to guide, to teach, or to restrain
The young rebellious spirits crowding round,
Who saw not, knew not, felt not for thy pain,
And could not comfort--yet had power to wound!
Ah! how my selfish heart, which since hath grown
Familiar with deep trials of its own,
With riper judgment looking to the past,
Regrets the careless days that flew so fast,
Stamps with remorse each wasted hour of time,
And darkens every folly into crime!

Warriors and statesmen have their meed of praise,
And what they do or suffer men record;
But the long sacrifice of woman's days

Passes without a thought--without a word;
And many a holy struggle for the sake
Of duties sttenily, faithfully fulfill'd,--
For which the anxious mind must watch and wake,
And the strong feelings of the heart be still'd--
Goes by unheeded as the summer wind,
And leaves no memory and no trace behind!
Yet, it may be, more lofty courage dwells
In one meek heart which braves an adverse fate,
Than his, whose ardent soul indignant swells
Warm'd by the fight, or cheer'd through high debate:
The Soldier dies surrounded;--could he live
Alone to suffer, and alone to strive?

Answer, ye graves, whose suicidal gloom
Shows deeper horror than a common tomb!
Who sleep within? The men who would evade
An unseen lot of which they felt afraid.
Embarrassment of means, which work'd annoy,--
A past remorse,--a future blank of joy,--
The sinful rashness of a blind despair,--
These were the strokes which sent your victims there.

In many a village churchyard's simple grave,
Where all unmark'd the cypress-branches wave;
In many a vault where Death could only claim
The brief inscription of a woman's name;
Of different ranks, and different degrees,
From daily labour to a life of ease,
(From the rich wife who through the weary day
Wept in her jewels, grief's unceasing prey,
To the poor soul who trudged o'er marsh and moor,
And with her baby begg'd from door to door,--)
Lie hearts, which, ere they found that last release,
Had lost all memory of the blessing 'Peace;'
Hearts, whose long struggle through unpitied years
None saw but Him who marks the mourner's tears;
The obscurely noble! who evaded not
The woe which He had will'd should be their lot,
But nerved themselves to bear!

Of such art thou,

My Mother! With thy calm and holy brow,
And high devoted heart, which suffer'd still
Unmurmuring, through each degree of ill.
And, because Fate hath will'd that mine should be
A Poet's soul (at least in my degree),--
And that my verse would faintly shadow forth
What I have seen of pure unselfish worth,--
Therefore I speak of Thee; that those who read
That trust in woman, which is still my creed,
Thy early-widow'd image may recall
And greet thy nature as the type of all!

Enough! With eyes of fond unwearied love
The Mother of my story watch'd above
Her sleeping child; and, as she views the grace
And blushing beauty of that girlish face,
Her thoughts roam back through change of time and tide,
Since first Heaven sent the blessing by her side.

In that sweet vision she again receives
The snow-white cradle, where that tiny head
Lay, like a small bud folded in its leaves,
Foster'd with dew by tears of fondness shed;
Each infantine event, each dangerous hour
Which pass'd with threatening o'er its fragile form,
Her hope, her anguish, as the tender flower
Bloom'd to the sun, or sicken'd in the storm,
In memory's magic mirror glide along,
And scarce she notes the different scene around,
And scarce her lips refrain the cradle-song
Which sooth'd that infant with its lulling sound!

But the dream changes; quiet years roll on;
That dawn of frail existence fleets away,
And she beholds beneath the summer sun
A blessed sight; a little child at play.
The soft light falls upon its golden hair,
And shows a brow intelligently mild;
No more a cipher in this world of care,
Love cheers and chides that happy conscious child.
No more unheeding of her watchful love,
Pride to excel, its docile spirit stirs;

Regret and hope its tiny bosom move,
And looks of fondness brightly answer hers;
O'er the green meadow, and the broomy hill,
In restless joy it bounds and darts along;
Or through the breath of evening, low and still,
Carols with mirthful voice its welcome song.

Again the vision changes; from her view
The CHILD'S dear love and antic mirth are gone;
But, in their stead, with cheek of rose-leaf hue,
And fair slight form, and low and silvery tone,
Rises the sweetest spirit Thought can call
From memory's distant worlds--the fairy GIRL;
Whose heart her childish pleasures still enthrall,
Whose unbound hair still floats in careless curl,
But in whose blue and meekly lifted eyes,
And in whose shy, though sweet and cordial smile,
And in whose changeful blushes, dimly rise
Shadows and lights that were not seen erewhile:
Shadows and lights that speak of woman's love,
Of all that makes or mars her fate below;
Mysterious prophecies, which Time must prove
More bright in glory, or more dark with woe!
And that soft vision also wanders by
Melting in fond and innocent smiles away,
Till the loved REAL meets the watchful eye
Of her who thus recall'd a former day;
The gentle daughter, for whose precious sake
Her widow'd heart had struggled with its pain.
And still through lonely grief refused to break,
Because that tie to Earth did yet remain.
Now, as she fondly gazed, a few meek tears
Stole down her cheek; for she that slumber'd there,
The beautiful, the loved of many years.
A bride betroth'd must leave her fostering care;
Woo'd in another's home apart to dwell.--
Oh! might that other love but half as well!
As if the mournful wish had touch'd her heart,
The slumbering maiden woke, with sudden start;
Turn'd, with a dazzled and intense surprise,
On that fond face her bright, bewilder'd eyes;
Gazed round on each familiar object near,

As though she doubted yet if sense was clear;
Cover'd her brow and sigh'd, as though to wake
Had power some spell of happy thought to break;
Then murmur'd, in a low and earnest tone,
'Oh! is that blessed dream for ever gone?'

Strange is the power of dreams! Who hath not felt,
When in the morning light such visions melt,
How the veil'd soul, though struggling to be free,
Ruled by that deep, unfathom'd mystery,
Wakes, haunted by the thoughts of good or ill,
Whose shadowy influence pursues us still?

Sometimes remorse doth weigh our spirits down;
Some crime committed earns Heaven's angriest frown;
Some awful sin, in which the tempted heart
Hath scarce, perhaps, forborne its waking part,
Brings dreams of judgment; loud the thunders roll,
The heavens shrink blacken'd like a flaming scroll;
We faint, we die, beneath the avenging rod,
And vainly hide from our offended God.
For oh! though Fancy change our mortal lot,
And rule our slumbers, CONSCIENCE sleepeth not;
What strange sad dial, by its own true light,
Points to our thoughts, how dark soe'er the night,
Still by our pillow watchful guard it keeps,
And bids the sinner tremble while he sleeps.

Sometimes, with fearful dangers doom'd to cope,
'Reft of each wild and visionary hope,
Stabb'd with a thousand wounds, we struggle still,
The hand that tortures, powerless to kill.
Sometimes 'mid ocean storms, in fearful strife,
We stem the wave, and shrieking, gasp for life,
While crowding round us, faces rise and gleam,
Some known and loved, some, pictures of our dream;
High on the buoyant waters wildly toss'd--
Low in its foaming caverns darkly lost--
Those flitting forms the dangerous hour partake,
Cling to our aid, or suffer for our sake.
Conscious of present life, the slumbering soul
Still floats us onward, as the billows roll,

Till, snatch'd from death, we seem to touch the strand,
Rise on the shoreward wave, and dash to land!
Alone we come: the forms whose wild array
Gleam'd round us while we struggled, fade away,--
We know not, reck not, who the danger shared,
But, vaguely dreaming, feel that we are spared.

Sometimes a grief, of fond affection born,
Gnaws at our heart, and bids us weep till morn;
Some anguish, copied from our waking fears,
Wakes the eternal fount of human tears,
Sends us to watch some vision'd bed of death,
Hold the faint hand, and catch the parting breath,
Where those we prized the most, and loved the best,
Seem darkly sinking to the grave's long rest;
Lo! in our arms they fade, they faint, they die,
Before our eyes the funeral train sweeps by;
We hear the orphan's sob--the widow's wail--
O'er our dim senses woeful thoughts prevail,
Till, with a burst of grief, the spell we break,
And, weeping for th' imagined loss, awake.
Ah me! from dreams like these aroused at length,
How leaps the spirit to its former strength!
What memories crowd the newly conscious brain,
What gleams of rapture, and what starts of pain!
Till from the soul the heavy mists stand clear,
All wanes and fades that seem'd so darkly drear,
The sun's fair rays those shades of death destroy,
And passionate thankfulness and tears of joy
Swell at our hearts, as, gazing on his beam,
We start, and cry aloud, 'Thank Heaven, 'twas but a dream!'

But there are visions of a fairer kind,
Thoughts fondly cherish'd by the slumbering mind,
Which, when they vanish from the waking brain,
We close our eyes, and long to dream again.
Their dim voice calls to our forsaken side
Those who betray'd us, seeming true and tried;
Those whom the fast receding waves of time
Have floated from us; those who in the prime
And glory of our young life's eagle flight
Shone round like rays, encircling us with light,

And gave the bright similitude of truth
To fair illusions--vanish'd with our youth.
They bring again the tryst of early love,
(That passionate hope, all other hopes above!)
Bid the pale hair, long shrouded in the grave,
Round the young head in floating ringlets wave,
And fill the air with echoes. Gentle words,
Low laughter, and the sing of sweet birds,
Come round us then; and drooping of light boughs,
Whose shadow could not cool our burning brows,
And lilac-blossoms, scenting the warm air,
And long laburnums, fragile, bright, and fair;
And murmuring breezes through the green leaves straying,
And rippling waters in the sunshine playing,
All that around our slumbering sense can fling
The glory of some half-forgotten spring!
They bring again the fond approving gaze
Of old true friends, who mingled love with praise;
When Fame (that cold bright guiding-star below)
Took from affection's light a borrow'd glow,--
And, strong in all the might of earnest thought,
Through the long studious night untired we wrought,
That others might the morning hour beguile,
With the fond triumph of their wondering smile.
What though those dear approving smiles be gone,
What though we strive neglected and alone,
What though no voice now mourns our hope's alloy,
Nor in the hour of triumph gives us joy?
In dreams the days return when this was not,
When strong affection sooth'd our toilsome lot:
Cheer'd, loved, admonish'd, lauded, we aspire,
And the sick soul regains its former fire.

Beneath the influence of this fond spell,
Happy, contented, bless'd, we seem to dwell;
Sweet faces shine with love's own tender ray,
Which frown, or coldly turn from us, by day;
The lonely orphan hears a parent's voice;
Sad childless mothers once again rejoice;
The poor deserted seems a happy bride;
And the long parted wander side by side.

Ah, vain deceit! Awaking with a start,
Sick grow the beatings of the troubled heart;
Silence, like some dark mantle, drops around,
Quenching th' imagined voice's welcome sound;
Again the soul repeats its old farewells,
Again recalls sad hours and funeral knells;
Again, as daylight opens on their view,
The orplan shrieks, the mother mourns anew;
Till clear we feel, as fades the morning star,
How left, how lonely, how oppres'd we are!

And other dreams exist, more vague and bright
Than MEMORY ever brought to cheer the night;--
Most to the young and happy do they come,
To those who know no shelter but of home;
To those of whom the inspired writer spoke,
When from his lips the words prophetic broke,
Which (conscious of the strong and credulous spell
Experience only in the heart can quell)
Promised the nearer glimpse of perfect truth
Not to cold wisdom, but to fervent youth;
Each, in their measure, caught its fitful gleams,--
The young saw visions, and the old dream'd dreams.

The young! Oh! what should wandering fancy bring
In life's first spring-time but the thoughts of spring?
Worlds without winter, blooming amaranth bowers,
Garlands of brightness wreath'd from changeless flowers;
Where shapes like angels wander to and fro,
Unwing,'d, but glorious, in the noontide glow,
Which steeps the hills, the dales, the earth, the sea,
In one soft flood of golden majesty.
In this world,--so create,--no sighs nor tears,--
No sadness brought with lapse of varying years,

No cold betrayal of the trusting heart,--
No knitting up of love fore-doom'd to part,--
No pain, deformity, nor pale disease,--
No wars,--no tyranny,--no fears that freeze
The rapid current of the restless blood,--
Nor effort scorn'd,--nor act misunderstood,--
No dark remorse for ever-haunting sin,--

But all at peace without--at rest within;
And hopes which gild Thought's wildest waking hours,
Scatter'd around us carelessly as flowers.

Oh! Paradise, in vain dost thou depart;
Thine image still is stamp'd on every heart!
Though mourning man in vain may seek to trace
The site of that which was his dwelling-place,
Though the four glittering rivers now divide
No realms of beauty with their rolling tide,

Each several life yet opens with the view
Of that unblighted world where Adam drew
The breath of being: in each several mind,
However cramp'd, and fetter'd, and confined,
The innate power of beauty folded lies,
And, like a bud beneath the summer skies,
Blooms out in youth through many a radiant day,
Though in life's winter frost it dies away.

From such a vision, bright with all the fame
Her youth, her innocence, her hope, could frame,
The maiden woke: and, when her shadowy gaze
Had lost the dazzled look of wild amaze
Turn'd on her mother when she first awoke,
Thus to her questioning glance she answering spoke:--

'Methought, oh! gentle Mother, by thy side
I dwelt no more as now, but through a wide
And sweet world wander'd; nor even then alone;
For ever in that dream's soft light stood one,--
I know not who,--yet most familiar seem'd
The fond companionship of which I dream'd!

A Brother's love, is but a name to me;
A Father's, brighten'd not my infancy;
To me, in childhood's years, no stranger's face
Took, from long habit, friendship's holy grace;
My life hath still been lone, and needed not,
Heaven knows, more perfect love than was my lot
In thy dear heart: how dream'd I then, sweet Mother,
Of any love but thine, who knew no other?

'We seem'd, this shadow and myself, to be
Together by the blue and boundless sea:
No settled home was present to my thought--
No other form my clouded fancy brought;
This one Familiar Presence still beguiled
My every thought, and look'd on me and smiled.
Fair stretch'd in beauty lay the glittering strand,
With low green copses sloping from the land;
And tangled underwood, and sunny fern,
And flowers whose humble names none cared to learn,
Small starry wild flowers, white and gold and blue,
With leaves turn'd crimson by th' autumnal hue,
Bask'd in the fervour of the noontide glow,
Whose hot rays pierced the thirsty roots below.

The floating nautilus rose clear and pale,
As though a spirit trimm'd its fairy sail,
White and transparent; and beyond it gleam'd
Such light as never yet on Ocean beam'd:
And pink-lipp'd shells, and many-colour'd weeds,
And long brown bulbous things likc jasper beads,
And glistening pearls in beauty faint and fair,
And all things strange, and wonderful, and rare,
Whose true existence travellers make known,
Seem'd scatter'd there, and easily my own.
And then we wove our ciphers in the sands,
All fondly intertwined by loving hands;
And laugh'd to see the rustling snow-white spray
Creep o'er the names, and wash their trace away.
And the storm came not, though the white foam curl'd
In lines of brightness far along the coast;
Though many a ship, with swelling sails unfurl'd,
From the mid-sea to sheltering haven cross'd;
Though the wild billows heaved, and rose, and broke,
One o'er the other with a restless sound,
And the deep spirit of the wind awoke,
Ruffling in wrath each glassy verdant mound;
While onward roll'd that army of huge waves,
Until the foremost, with exulting roar,

Rose, proudly crested, o'er his brother slaves,

And dash'd triumphant on the groaning shore!
For then the Moon rose up, Night's mournful Queen,
'Walking with white feet o'er the troubled Sea,'
And all grew still again, as she had been
Heaven's messenger to bring Tranquillity;
Till, pale and tender, on the glistening main
She sank and smiled like one who loves in vain.
And still we linger'd by that shadowy strand,
Happy, yet full of thought, hand link'd in hand;
The hush'd waves rippling softly at our feet,
The night-breeze freshening o'er the Summer's heat;
With our hearts beating, and our gazing eyes
Fix'd on the star-light of those deep blue skies,
Blessing 'the year, the hour, the place, the time;'
While sounded, faint and far, some turret's midnight chime.

'It pass'd, that vision of the Ocean's might!
I know not how, for in my slumbering mind
There was no movement, all was shifting light,
Through which we floated with the wandering wind;
And, still together, in a different scene,
We look'd on England's woodland, fresh and green.

'No perfume of the cultured rose was there,
Wooing the senses with its garden smell,--
Nor snow-white lily,--call'd so proudly fir,
Though by the poor man's cot she loves to dwell,
Nor finds his little garden scant of room
To bid her stately buds in beauty bloom;--
Nor jasmin, with her pale stars shining through
The myrtle darkness of her leaf's green hue,--
Nor heliotrope, whose grey and heavy wreath
Mimics the orchard blossoms' fruity breath,--
Nor clustering dahlia, with its scentless flowers
Cheating the heart through autumn's faded hours,--
Nor bright chrysanthimum, whose train'd array
Still makes the rich man's winter path look gay,
And bows its hardy head when wild winds blow,
To free its petals from the fallen snow;--
Nor yet carnation;'
(Thou, beloved of all
The plants that thrive at Art or Nature's call,

By one who greets thee with a weary sigh
As the dear friend of happy days gone by;
By one who names thee last, but loves thee first,
Of all the flowers a garden ever nursed;

The mute remembrancer and gentle token
Of links which heavy hands have roughly broken,
Welcomed through many a Summer with the same
Unalter'd gladness as when first ye came,
And welcomed still, though--as in later years
We often welcome pleasant things--with tears!)

I wander! In the Dream these had no place,--
Nor Sorrow:--all was Nature's freshest grace.

'There, wild geranium, with its woolly stem
And aromatic breath, perfumed the glade;
And fairy speedwell, like some sapphire gem,
Lighted with purple sparks the hedge-row's shade;
And woodbine, with her tinted calyxes,
And dog-rose, glistening with the dews of morn,
And tangled wreaths of tufted clematis,
Whose blossoms pale the careless eye may scorn,
(As green and light her fairy mantles fill
To hide the rough hedge or the crumbling wall,)
But in whose breast the laden wild-bees dive
For the best riches of their teeming hive:

'There, sprang the sunny cricket; there, was spread
The fragile silver of the spider's thread,
Stretching from blade to blade of emerald grass,
Unbroken, till some human footstep pass;
There, by the rippling stream that murmur'd on,
Now seen, now hidden--half in light, half Sun--
The darting dragon-fly, with sudden gleam,
Shot, as it went, a gold and purple beam;
And the fish leap'd within the deeper pool,
And the green trees stretch'd out their branches cool,
Where many a bird hush'd in her peopled nest
The unfledged darlings of her feather'd breast,
Listening her mate's clear song, in that sweet grove
Where all around breathed happiness and love!

'And while we talk'd the summer hours flew fast,
As hours may fly, with those whose love is young;
Who fear no future, and who know no past,
Dating existence from the hope that sprung
Up in their hearts with such a sudden light,
That all beyond shows dark and blank as night.

'Until methought we trod a wide flat heath,
Where yew and cypress darkly seem'd to wave
O'er countless tombs, so beautiful, that death
Seem'd here to make a garden of the grave!
All that is holy, tender, full of grace,
Was sculptured on the monuments around,
And many a line the musing eye could trace,
Which spoke unto the heart without a sound.
There lay the warrior and the son of song,
And there--in silence till the judgment-day--
The orator, whose all-persuading tongue
Had moved the nations with resistless sway:
There slept pale men whom science taught to climb
Restlessly upward all their labouring youth;
Who left, half conquer'd, secrets which in time
Burst on mankind in ripe and glorious truth.
He that had gazed upon the steadfast stars,
And could foretel the dark eclipse's birth,
And when red comets in their blazing cars
Should sweep above the awed and troubled earth:--
He that had sped brave vessels o'er the seas,
Which swiftly bring the wanderer to his home,
Uncanvass'd ships, which move without a breeze,
Their bright wheels dashing through the ocean foam:--

All, who in this life's bounded brief career
Had shone amongst, or served their fellow-men,
And left a name embalm'd in glory here,
Lay calmly buried on that magic plain.
And he who wander'd with me in my dream,
Told me their histories as we onward went,
Till the grave shone with such a hallow'd beam,
Such pleasure with their memory seem'd blent,
That, when we look'd to heaven, our upward eyes

With no funereal sadness mock'd the skies!

'Then, change of scene, and time, and place once more;
And by a Gothic window, richly bright,
Whose stain'd armorial hoarings on the floor
Flung the quaint tracery of their colour'd light,
We sate together: his most noble head
Bent o'er the storied tome of other days,
And still he commented on all we read,
And taught me what to love, and what to praise.
Then Spenser made the summer-day seem brief,
Or Milton sounded with a loftier song,
Then Cowper charm'd, with lays of gentle grief,
Or rough old Dryden roll'd the hour along.

Or, in his varied beauty dearer still,
Sweet Shakspeare changed the world around at will;
And we forgot the sunshine of that room
To sit with Jacquez in the forest gloom;
To look abroad with Juliet's anxious eye
For her boy-lover 'neath the moonlight sky;
Stand with Macbeth upon the haunted heath,
Or weep for gentle Desdemona's death;
Watch, on bright Cydnus' wave, the glittering sheen
And silken sails of Egypt's wanton Queen;
Or roam with Ariel through that island strange
Where spirits, and not men, were wont to range,
Still struggling on through brake, and bush, and hollow,
Hearing that sweet voice calling--'Follow! follow!'

'Nor were there wanting lays of other lands,
For these were all familiar in his hands:
And Dante's dream of horror work'd its spell,--
And Petrarch's sadness on our bosoms fell,--
And prison'd Tasso's--he, the coldly-loved,
The madly-loving! he, so deeply proved
By many a year of darkness, like the grave,
For her who dared not plead, or would not save,

For her who thought the poet's suit brought shame,
Whose passion hath immortalized her name!
And Egmont, with his noble heart betray'd,--

And Carlos, haunted by a murder'd shade,--
And Faust's strange legend, sweet and wondrous wild,
Stole many a tear:--Creation's loveliest child!
Guileless, ensnared, and tempted Margaret,
Who could peruse thy fate with eyes unwet?

'Then, through the lands we read of, far away,
The vision led me all a summer's day:
And we look'd round on southern Italy,
Where her dark head the graceful cypress rears
In arrowy straightness and soft majesty,
And the sun's face a mellower glory wears;
Bringing, where'er his warm light richly shines,
Sweet odours from the gum-distilling pines;
And casting o'er white palaces a glow,
Like morning's hue on mountain-peaks of snow.

'Those palaces! how fair their columns rose!
Their courts, cool fountains, and wide porticos!
And ballustraded roofs, whose very form
Told what an unknown stranger was the storm!

In one of these we dwelt: its painted walls
A master's hand had been employ'd to trace;
Its long cool range of shadowy marble halls
Was fill'd with statues of most living grace;
While on its ceilings roll'd the fiery car
Of the bright day-god, chasing night afar,--
Or Jove's young favourite, toward Olympus' height
Soar'd with the Eagle's dark majestic flight,--
Or fair Apollo's harp seem'd freshly strung,
All heaven group'd round him, listening while he sung.

'So, in the garden's plann'd and planted bound
All wore the aspect of enchanted ground;
Thick orange-groves, close arching over head,
Shelter'd the paths our footsteps loved to tread;
Or ilex-trees shut out, with shadow sweet,
Th' oppressive splendour of the noontide heat.
Through the bright vista, at each varying turn,
Gleam'd the white statue, or the graceful urn;
And, paved with many a curved and twisted line

Of fair Mosaic's strange and quaint design,
Terrace on terrace rose, with steep so slight,
That scarce the pausing eye inquired the height,

Till stretch'd beneath in far perspective lay
The glittering city and the deep blue bay!
Then as we turn'd again to groves and bowers,
(Rich with the perfume of a thousand flowers,)
The sultry day was cheated of its force
By the sweet winding of some streamlet's course:
From sculptured arch, and ornamented walls,
Rippled a thousand tiny waterfalls,
While here and there an open basin gave
Rest to the eye and freshness to the wave;
Here, high above the imprison'd waters, stood
Some imaged Naiad, guardian of the flood;
There, in a cool and grotto-like repose,
The sea-born goddess from her shell arose;
Or river-god his fertile urn display'd,
Gushing at distance through the lone arcade,--
Or Triton, lifting his wild conch on high,
Spouted the silver tribute to the sky,--
Or, lovelier still, (because to Nature true,
Even in the thought creative genius drew,)
Some statue-nymph, her bath of beauty o'er,
Stood gently bending by the rocky shore,
And, like Bologna's sweet and graceful dream,
From her moist hair wrung out the living stream.

'Bright was the spot! and still we linger'd on
Unwearied, till the summer-day was done;
Till He, who, when the morning dew was wet,
In glory rose--in equal glory set.
Fair sank his light, unclouded to the last,
And o'er that land its glow of beauty cast;
And the sweet breath of evening air went forth
To cool the bosom of the fainting earth;
To bid the pale-leaved olives lightly wave
Upon their seaward slope (whose waters lave
With listless gentleness the golden strand,
And scarcely leave, and scarce return to land);
Or with its wings of freshness, wandering round,

Visit the heights with many a villa crown'd,
Where the still pine and cypress, side by side,
Look from their distant hills on Ocean's tide.

'The cypress and the pine! Ah, still I see
These thy green children, lovely Italy!
Nature's dear favourites, allow'd to wear
Their summer hue throughout the circling year!
And oft, when wandering out at even-time
To watch the sunsets of a colder clime,

As the dim landscape fades and grows more faint,
Fancy's sweet power a different scene shall paint;
Enrich with deeper tints the colours given
To the pale beauty of our English heaven,--
Bid purple mountains rise among the clouds,
Or deem their mass some marble palace shrouds,--
Trace on the red horizon's level line,
In outlines dark, the high majestic pine,--
And hear, amid the groups of English trees,
His sister cypress murmuring to the breeze!

'Never again shall evening, sweet and still,
Gleam upon river, mountain, rock, or hill,--
Never again shall fresh and budding spring,
Or brighter summer, hue of beauty bring,
In this, the clime where 'tis my lot to dwell,
But shall recall, as by a magic spell,
Thy scenes, dear land of poetry and song!
Bid thy fair statues on my memory throng;
Thy glorious pictures gleam upon my sight
Like fleeting shadows o'er the summer light;
And send my haunted heart to dwell once more,
Glad and entranced by thy delightful shore--
Thy shore, where rolls that blue and tideless sea,
Bright as thyself, thou radiant Italy!

'And there (where Beauty's spirit sure had birth,
Though she hath wander'd since upon the earth,
And scatter'd, as she pass'd, some sparks of thought,
Such as of old her sons of genius wrought,
To show what strength the immortal soul can wield

E'en here, in this its dark and narrow field,
And fill us with a fond inquiring thirst
To see that land which claim'd her triumphs first)
Music was brought--with soft impressive power--
To fill with varying joy the varying hour.
We welcomed it; for welcome still to all
It comes, in cottage, court, or lordly hall;
And in the long bright summer evenings, oft
We sate and listened to some measure soft
From many instruments; or, faint and lone,
(Touch'd by his gentle hand, or by my own,)
The little lute its chorded notes would send
Tender and clear; and with our voices blend
Cadence so true, that, when the breeze swept by,
One mingled echo floated on its sigh!

'And still as day by day we saw depart,
I was the living idol of his heart:
How to make joy a portion of the air
That breathed around me, seem'd his only care.
For me the harp was strung, the page was turn'd;
For me the morning rose, the sunset burn'd;
For me the Spring put on her verdant suit;
For me the Summer flower, the Autumn fruit;
The very world seem'd mine, so mighty strove
For my contentment, that enduring love.

'I see him still, dear mother! Still I hear
That voice so deeply soft, so strangely clear;
Still in the air wild wandering echoes float,
And bring my dream's sweet music note for note!
Oh! shall those sounds no more my fancy bless,
Which fill my heart, and on my memory press?
Shall I no more those sunset clouds behold,
Floating like bright transparent thrones of gold?
The skies, the seas, the hills of glorious blue;
The glades and groves, with glories shining through;
The bands of red and purple, richly seen
Athwart the sky of pale, faint, gem-like green;

When the breeze slept, the earth lay hush'd and still,
When the low sun sank slanting from the hill,

And slow and amber-tinged the moon uprose,
To watch his farewell hour in glory close?
Is all that radiance past--gone by for ever--
And must there in its stead for ever be
The grey, sad sky, the cold and clouded river,
And dismal dwellings by the wintry sea?
E'er half a summer, altering day by day,
In fickle brightness, here, hath pass'd away!
And was that form (whose love might still sustain)
Nought but a vapour of the dreaming brain?--
Would I had slept for ever!

Sad she sigh'd;
To whom the mournful mother thus replied:--

'Upbraid not Heaven, whose wisdom thus would rule
A world whose changes are the soul's best school:
All dream like thee, and 'tis for Mercy's sake
That those who dream the wildest, soonest wake;
All deem Perfection's system would be found
In giving earthly sense no stint or bound;
All look for happiness beneath the sun,
And each expects what God hath given to none.

'In what an idle luxury of joy
Would thy spoil'd heart its useless hours employ!
In what a selfish loneliness of light
Wouldst thou exist, read we thy dream aright!
How hath thy sleeping spirit broke the chain
Which knits thy human lot to other's pain,
And made this world of peopled millions seem
For thee and for the lover of thy dream!

'Think not my heart with cold indifference heard
The various feelings which in thine have stirr'd,
Or that its sad and weary currents know
Faint sympathy, except for human woe:
Well have the dormant echoes of my breast
Answer'd the joys thy gentle voice express'd;
Conjured a vision of the stately mate
With whom the flattering vision link'd thy fate;
And follow'd thee through grove and woodland wild,

Where so much natural beauty round thee smiled.

'What man so worldly-wise, or chill'd by age,
Who, bending o'er the faint descriptive page,
Recals not such a scene in some fair nook--
(Whereon his eyes, perchance, no more shall look
Some hawthorn copse, some gnarl'd majestic tree,
The favourite play-place of his infancy?
Who has not felt for Cowper's sweet lament,
When twelve years' course their cruel change had sent;
When his fell'd poplars gave no further shade,
And low on earth the blackbird's nest was laid;
When in a desert sunshine, bare and blank,
Lay the green field and river's mossy bank;
And melody of bird or branch no more
Rose with the breeze that swept along the shore?

'Few are the hearts, (nor theirs of kindest frame,)
On whom fair Nature holds not such a claim;
And oft, in after-life, some simple thing--
A bank of primroses in early Spring--
The tender scent which hidden violets yield--
The sight of cowslips in a meadow-field--
Or young laburnum's pendant yellow chain--
May bring the favourite play-place back again!
Our youthful mates are gone; some dead, some changed,
With whom that pleasant spot was gladly ranged;

Ourselves, perhaps, more alter'd e'en than they--
But there still blooms the blossom-showering May;
There still along the hedge-row's verdant line
The linnet sings, the thorny brambles twine;
Still in the copse a troop of merry elves
Shout--the gay image of our former selves;
And still, with sparkling eyes and eager hands,
Some rosy urchin high on tiptoe stands,
And plucks the ripest berries from the bough--
Which tempts a different generation now!

'What though no real beauty haunt that spot,
By graver minds beheld and noticed not?
Can we forget that once to our young eyes

It wore the aspect of a Paradise?
No; still around its hallow'd precinct lives
The fond mysterious charm that memory gives;
The man recals the feelings of the boy,
And clothes the meanest flower with freshness and with joy.

'Nor think by older hearts forgotten quite
Love's whisper'd words; youth's sweet and strange delight!
They live--though after-memories fade away;
They live--to cheer life's slow declining day;
Haunting the widow by her lonely hearth,
As, meekly smiling at her childrcn's mirth,
She spreads her fair thin hands towards the fire,
To seek the warmth their slacken'd veins require:
Or gladdening her to whom Heaven's mercy spares
Her old companion with his silver hairs;
And while he dozes--changed, and dull, and weak--
And his hush'd grandchild signs, but dares not speak,--
Bidding her watch, with many a tender smile,
The wither'd form which slumbers all the while.

'Yes! sweet the voice of those we loved! the tone
Which cheers our memory as we sit alone,
And will not leave us; the o'er-mastering force,
Whose under-current's strange and hidden course
Bids some chance word, by colder hearts forgot,
Return--and still return--yet weary not
The ear which woos its sameness! How, when Death
Hath stopp'd with ruthless hand some precious breath,
The memory of the voice he hath destroy'd
Lives in our souls, as in an aching void!

How, through the varying fate of after-years,
When stifled sorrow weeps but casual tears,
If some stray tone seem like the voice we knew,
The heart leaps up with answer faint and true!
Greeting again that sweet, long-vanish'd sound,
As, in earth's nooks of ever-haunted ground,
Strange accident, or man's capricious will,
Wakes the lone echoes, and they answer still!

'Oh! what a shallow fable cheats the age,

When the lost lover, on the motley stage,
Wrapp'd from his mistress in some quaint disguise,
Deceives her ear, because he cheats her eyes!
Rather, if all could fade which charm'd us first,--
If, by some magic stroke, some plague-spot cursed,
All outward semblance left the form beloved
A wreck unrecognised, and half disproved,
At the dear sound of that familiar voice
Her waken'd heart should tremble and rejoice,
Leap to its faith at once,--and spurn the doubt
Which, on such showing, barr'd his welcome out!

'And if even words are sweet, what, what is song,
When lips we love, the melody prolong?
How thrills the soul, and vibrates to that lay,
Swells with the glorious sound, or dies away!
How, to the cadence of the simplest words
That ever hung upon the wild harp's chords,
The breathless heart lies listening; as it felt
All life within it on that music dwelt,
And hush'd the beating pulse's rapid power
By its own will, for that enchanted hour!

'Ay! then to those who love the science well,
Music becomes a passion and a spell!
Music, the tender child of rudest times,
The gentle native of all lands and climes;
Who hymns alike man's cradle and his grave,
Lulls the low cot, or peals along the nave;
Cheers the poor peasant, who his native hills
With wild Tyrolean echoes sweetly fills;
Inspires the Indian's low monotonous chant,
Weaves skilful melodies for Luxury's haunt;
And still, through all these changes, lives the same,
Spirit without a home, without a name,

Coming, where all is discord, strife, and sin,
To prove some innate harmony within
Our listening souls; and lull the heaving breast
With the dim vision of an unknown rest!

'But, dearest child, though many a joy be given

By the pure bounty of all-pitying Heaven,--
Though sweet emotions in our hearts have birth,
As flowers are spangled on the lap of earth,--
Though, with the flag of Hope and Triumph hung
High o'er our heads, we start when life is young,
And onward cheer'd, by sense, and sight, and sound,
Like a launch'd bark, we enter with a bound;
Yet must the dark cloud lour, the tempest fall,
And the same chance of shipwreck waits for all.
Happy are they who leave the harbouring land
Not for a summer voyage, hand in hand,
Pleasure's light slaves; but with an earnest eye
Exploring all the future of their sky;
That so, when Life's career at length is past,
To the right haven they may steer at last,
And safe from hidden rock, or open gale,
Lay by the oar, and furl the slacken'd sail,--
To anchor deeply on that tranquil shore
Where vexing storms can never reach them more!

'Wouldst thou be singled out by partial Heaven
The ONE to whom a cloudless lot is given?
Look round the world, and see what fate is there,
Which justice can pronounce exempt from care:
Though bright they bloom to empty outward show,
There lurks in each some canker-worm of woe;
Still by some thorn the onward step is cross'd,
Nor least repining those who're envied most:
The poor have struggling, toil, and wounded pride,
Which seeks, and seeks in vain, its rags to hide;
The rich, cold jealousies, intrigues, and strife,
And heart-sick discontent which poisons life;
The loved are parted by the hand of Death,
The hated live to curse each other's breath:
The wealthy noble mourns the want of heirs;
While, each the object of incessant prayers,
Gay, hardy sons, around the widow's board,
With careless smiles devour her scanty hoard;
And hear no sorrow in her stifled sigh,
And see no terror in her anxious eye,--

While she in fancy antedates the time

When, scatter'd far and wide in many a clime,
These heirs to nothing but their Father's name
Must earn their bread, and struggle hard for fame;
To sultry India sends her fair-hair'd boy--
Sees the dead desk another's youth employ--
And parts with one to sail the uncertain main,
Never perhaps on earth to meet again!

'Nor ev'n does Love, whose fresh and radiant beam
Gave added brightness to thy wandering dream,
Preserve from bitter touch of ills unknown,
But rather brings strange sorrows of its own.
Various the ways in which our souls are tried;
Love often fails where most our faith relied;
Some wayward heart may win, without a thought,
That which thine own by sacrifice had bought;
May carelessly aside the treasure cast,
And yet be madly worshipp'd to the last;
Whilst thou, forsaken, grieving, left to pine,
Vainly may'st claim his plighted faith as thine;
Vainly his idol's charms with thine compare,
And know thyself as young, as bright, as fair;

Vainly in jealous pangs consume thy day,
And waste the sleepless night in tears away;
Vainly with forced indulgence strive to smile
In the cold world, heart-broken all the while,
Or from its glittering and unquiet crowd,
Thy brain on fire, thy spirit crush'd and bow'd,
Creep home unnoticed, there to weep alone,
Mock'd by a claim which gives thee not thine own,
Which leaves thee bound through all thy blighted youth
To him whose perjured soul hath broke its truth;
While the just world, beholding thee bereft,
Scorns--not his sin--but thee, for being left!

'Ah! never to the Sensualist appeal,
Nor deem his frozen bosom aught can feel.
Affection, root of all fond memories,
Which bids what once hath charm'd for ever please
He knows not: all thy beauty could inspire
Was but a sentiment of low desire:

If from thy cheek the roses hue be gone,
How should love stay which loved for that alone?
Or, if thy youthful face be still as bright
As when it first entranced his eager sight,

Thou art the same; there is thy fault, thy crime,
Which fades the charms yet spared by rapid Time.
Talk to him of the happy days gone by,
Conceal'd aversion chills his shrinking eye:
While in thine agony thou still dost rave,
Impatient wishes doom thee to the grave;
And if his cold and selfish thought had power
T' accelerate the fatal final hour,
The silent murder were already done,
And thy white tomb would glitter in the sun.
What wouldst thou hold by? What is it to him
That for his sake thy weeping eyes are dim?
His pall'd and wearied senses rove apart,
And for his heart--thou never hadst his heart.

'True, there is better love, whose balance just
Mingles Soul's instinct with our grosser dust,
And leaves affection, strengthening day by day,
Firm to assault, impervious to decay.
To such, a star of hope thy love shall be
Whose steadfast light he still desires to see;
And age shall vainly mar thy beauty's grace,
Or wantons plot to steal into thy place,

Or wild Temptation, from her hidden bowers,
Fling o'er his path her bright but poisonous flowers,--
Dearer to him than all who thus beguile,
Thy faded face, and thy familiar smile;
Thy glance, which still hath welcomed him for years
Now bright with gladness, and now dim with tears!
And if (for we are weak) division come
On wings of discord to that happy home,
Soon is the painful hour of anger past,
Too sharp, too strange an agony to last;
And, like some river's bright abundant tide
Which art or accident hath forced aside,
The well-springs of affection, gushing o'er,

Back to their natural channels flow once more.

'Ah! sad it is when one thus link'd departs!
When Death, that mighty severer of true hearts,
Sweeps through the halls so lately loud in mirth,
And leaves pale Sorrow weeping by the hearth!
Bitter it is to wander there alone,
To fill the vacant place, the empty chair,
With a dear vision of the loved one gone,
And start to see it vaguely melt in air!

Bitter to find all joy that once hath been
Double its value when 'tis pass'd away,--
To feel the blow which Time should make less keen
Increase its burden each successive day,--
To need good counsel, and to miss the voice,
The ever trusted, and the ever true,
Whose tones were wont to cheer our faltering choice,
And show what holy Virtue bade us do,--
To bear deep wrong, and bow the widow'd head
In helpless anguish, no one to defend;
Or worse,--in lieu of him, the kindly dead,
Claim faint assistance from some lukewarm friend,--
Yet scarce perceive the extent of all our loss
Till the fresh tomb be green with gathering moss--
Till many a morn have met our sadden'd eyes
With none to say 'Good morrow;'--many an eve
Sent its red glory through the tranquil skies,
Each bringing with it deeper cause to grieve!

'This is a destiny which may be thine--
The common grief: God will'd it should be mine:
Short was the course our happy love had run,
And hard it was to say 'Thy will be done!'
'Yet those whom man, not God, hath parted, know
A heavier pang, a more enduring woe;
No softening memory mingles with their tears,
Still the wound rankles on through dreary years,
Still the heart feels, in bitterest hours of blame,
It dares not curse the long-familiar name;
Still, vainly free, through many a cheerless day,
From weaker ties turns helplessly away,

Sick for the smiles that bless'd its home of yore,
The natural joys of life that come no more;
And, all bewildered by the abyss, whose gloom
Dark and impassable as is the tomb,
Lies stretch'd between the future and the past,--
Sinks into deep and cold despair at last.

'Heaven give thee poverty, disease, or death,
Each varied ill that waits on human breath,
Rather than bid thee linger out thy life
In the long toil of such unnatural strife.
To wander through the world unreconciled,
Heart weary as a spirit-broken child,
And think it were an hour of bliss like heaven
If thou could'st die--forgiving and forgiven,--
Or with a feverish hope, of anguish born,
(Nerving thy mind to feel indignant scorn
Of all the cruel foes who 'twixt ye stand,
Holding thy heartstrings with a reckless hand,)
Steal to his presence, now unseen so long,
And claim his mercy who hath dealt the wrong!
Into the aching depths of thy poor heart
Dive, as it were, even to the roots of pain,
And wrench up thoughts that tear thy soul apart,
And burn like fire through thy bewilder'd brain.
Clothe them in passionate words of wild appeal
To teach thy fellow-creature how to feel,--
Pray, weep, exhaust thyself in maddening tears,--
Recal the hopes, the influences of years,--
Kneel, dash thyself upon the senseless ground,
Writhe as the worm writhes with dividing wound,--
Invoke the heaven that knows thy sorrow's truth,
By all the softening memories of youth--
By every hope that cheer'd thine earlier day--
By every tear that washes wrath away--
By every old remembrance long gone by--
By every pang that makes thee yearn to die;
And learn at length how deep and stern a blow
Near hands can strike, and yet no pity show!

'Oh! weak to suffer, savage to inflict,
Is man's commingling nature; hear him now

Some transient trial of his life depict,
Hear him in holy rites a suppliant bow;
See him shrink back from sickness and from pain,
And in his sorrow to his God complain;
'Remit my trespass, spare my sin,' he cries,
'All-merciful, Almighty, and All-wise;
Quench this affliction's bitter whelming tide,
Draw out thy barbed arrow from my side:'--
--And rises from that mockery of prayer
To hale some brother-debtor to despair!

'May this be spared thee! Yet be sure, my child,
(Howe'er that dream thy fancy hath beguiled,)
Some sorrow lurks to cloud thy future fate;
Thy share of tears,--come early or come late,--
Must still be shed; and 'twere as vain a thing
To ask of Nature one perpetual spring
As to evade those sad autumnal hours,
Or deem thy path of life should bloom, all flowers.'

She ceased: and that fair maiden heard the truth
With the fond passionate despair of youth,
Which, new to suffering, gives its sorrow vent
In outward signs and bursts of wild lament:--

'If this be so, then, mother, let me die
Ere yet the glow hath faded from my sky!
Let me die young; before the holy trust
In human kindness crumbles into dust;
Before I suffer what I have not earn'd,
Or see by treachery my truth return'd;
Before the love I live for, fades away;
Before the hopes I cherish'd most, decay;
Before the withering touch of fearful change
Makes some failliar face look cold and strange,
Or some dear heart close knitted to my own,
By perishing, hath left me more alone!
Though death be bitter, I can brave its pain
Better than all which threatens if I remain:
While my soul, freed from ev'ry chance of ill,
Soars to that God whose high mysterious will
Sent me, foredoom'd to grief, with wandering feet,

To grope my way through all this fair deceit!
Her parent heard the words with grieved amaze,
And thus return'd, with calm reproving gaze:--

'Blaspheme not Heaven with rash impatient speech,
Nor deem, at thine own hour, its rest to reach,
Unhappy child! The full appointed time
Is His to choose; and when the sullen chime,
And deep-toned striking of the funeral bell,
Thy fate to earthly ears shall sadly tell,
Oh! may the death thou talk'st of as a boon,
Find thee prepared,--nor come even then too soon!

'True, ere thou meet'st that long and dreamless sleep,
Thy heart must ache--thy weary eyes must weep:
It is our human lot! The fairest child
That e'er on loving mother brightly smiled,--
Most watch'd, most tended--ere his eyelids close
Hath had his little share of infant woes,
And dies familiar with the sense of grief,
Though for all else his life hath been too brief!
But shall we therefore, murmuring against God,
Question the justice of his chastening rod,
And look to earthly joys as though they were
The prize immortal souls were given to share?

'Oh! were such joys and this vain world alone
The term of human hope--where, where would be
The victims of some tyranny unknown,
Who sank, still conscious that the mind was free?
They that have lain in dungeons years on years,
No voice to cheer their darkness,--they whose pain
Of horrid torture wrung forth blood with tears,
Murder'd, perhaps, for some rapacious gain,--
They who have stood, bound to the martyr's stake,
While the sharp flames ate through the blistering skin,--
They that have bled for some high cause's sake,--
They that have perish'd for another's sin,
And from the scaffold to that God appeal'd
To whom the naked heart is all reveal'd,
Against the shortening of life's narrow span
By the blind rage and false decree of man?

And where obscurer sufferers--they who slept
And left no name on history's random page,--
But in God's book of reckoning, sternly kept,
Live on from year to year, from age to age?
The poor--the labouring poor! whose weary lives,
Through many a freezing night and hungry day,
Are a reproach to him who only strives
In luxury to waste his hours away,--

The patient poor! whose insufficient means
Make sickness dreadful, yet by whose low bed
Oft in meek prayer some fellow-sufferer leans,
And trusts in Heaven while destitute of bread;
The workhouse orphan, left without a friend;
Or weak forsaken child of want and sin,
Whose helpless life begins, as it must end,
By men disputing who shall take it in;
Who clothe, who aid that spark to linger here,
Which for mysterious purpose God hath given
To struggle through a day of toil and fear,
And meet him--with the proudest--up in heaven!
These were, and are not:--shall we therefore deem
That they have vanish'd like a sleeper's dream?
Or that one half creation is to know
Luxurious joy, and others only woe,
And so go down into the common tomb,
With none to question their unequal doom?
Shall we give credit to a thought so fond?
Ah! no--the world beyond--the world beyond!
There, shall the desolate heart regain its own!
There, the oppress'd shall stand before God's throne!
There, when the tangled web is all explain'd,
Wrong suffer'd, pain inflicted, grief disdain'd,

Man's proud mistaken judgments and false scorn
Shall melt like mists before uprising morn,
And holy truth stand forth serenely bright,
In the rich flood of God's eternal light!

'Then shall the Lazarus of the earth have rest--
The rich man judgment--and the grieving breast
Deep peace for ever. Therefore look thou not

So much to what on earth shall be thy lot,
As to thy fate hereafter,--to that day
When like a scroll this world shall pass away,
And what thou here hast done, or here enjoy'd,
Import but to thy soul:--all else destroy'd!

'And have thou faith in human nature still;
Though evil thoughts abound, and acts of ill;
Though innocence in sorrow shrouded be,
And tyranny's strong step walk bold and free!
For many a kindly generous deed is done
Which leaves no record underneath the sun--
Self-abnegating love and humble worth,
Which yet shall consecrate our sinful earth!
He that deals blame, and yet forgets to praise,
Who sets brief storms against long summer-days,

Hath a sick judgment. Shall the usual joy
Be all forgot, and nought our minds employ,
Through the long course of ever-varying years,
But temporary pain and casual tears?
And shall we all condemn, and all distrust,
Because some men are false and some unjust?
Forbid it Heaven! far better 'twere to be
Dupe of the fond impossibility
Of light and radiance which thy vision gave
Than thus to live Suspicion's bitter slave.
Give credit to thy mortal brother's heart
For all the good that in thine own hath part,
And, cheerfully as honest prudence may,
Trust to his proffer'd hand's protecting stay:
For God, who made this teeming earth so full,
And made the proud dependant on the dull--
The strong upon the weak--thereby would show
One common bond should link us all below.

'And visit not with a severer scorn
Faults, whose deep root was with our nature born,
From which--though others woo'd thee just as vain--
Thou, differently tempted, didst abstain:
Nor dwell on points of creed--assuming right
To judge how holy in his Maker's sight

Is he who at a different altar bends;
For hence have ris'n the bitterest feuds of friends,
The wildest wars of nations; age on age
Hath desecrated thus dark History's page;
And still (though not, perhaps, with fire and sword)
Reckless we raise 'The banner of the Lord!'
Mock Heaven's calm mercy by the plea we make,
That all is done for gentle Jesus' sake,--
Disturb the consciences of weaker men,--
Employ the scholar's art, the bigot's pen,--
And rouse the wrathful and the spirit-proud
To language bitter, vehement, and loud,
Whose unconvincing fury wounds the ear,
And seeking, with some sharp and haughty sneer,
How best the opposing party may be stung,--
Pleads for Religion with a devil's tongue!

'Oh! shall God tolerate the meanest prayer
That humbly seeks his high supernal throne,
And man--presumptuous Pharisee--declare
His fellow's voice less welcome than his own?

Is it a theme for wild and warring words
How best to satisfy the Maker's claim?
In rendering to the Lord what is the Lord's,
Doth not the thought of violence bring shame?
Think ye he gave the branching forest-tree
To furnish fagots for the funeral pyre?
Or bid his sunrise light the world, to see
Pale tortured victims perish there by fire?
No! oft on earth, dragg'd forth in pain to die,
The heretic may groan--the martyr bleed--
But, set before his Sovereign Judge on high,
'Tis man's offence condemns him, not his creed.
His first commandment was to worship Him;
His next--to love the creature He hath made:
How blind the eyes of those who read, how dim,
Who see not here religious fury stay'd!
From the proud half-fulfilment of his law
Sternly he turns away his awful face,
Nor will contentment from their service draw,
Who fail to grant a fellow-creature grace.

Haply the days of martyrdom are past,
But still we see, without a visible end,
The bitter warfare of opinion last,
Tho' God hath will'd that man should be man's friend.

Therefore do thou, e'er yet thy youthful heart
Be tinged with their revilings, safe retreat,
And in those fierce discussions bear no part,--
Odious in all--in woman most unmeet,--
But in the still dark night, and rising day,
Humbly collect thy thoughts, and humbly pray.

'And be not thou cast down, because thy lot
The glory of thy dream resembleth not.
Not for herself was woman first create,
Nor yet to be man's idol, but his mate.
Still from his birth his cradled bed she tends,
The first, the last, the faithfulest of friends;
Still finds her place in sickness or in woe,
Humble to comfort, strong to undergo;
Still in the depth of weeping sorrow tries
To watch his death-bed with her patient eyes!
And doubt not thou,--(although at times deceived,
Outraged, insulted, slander'd, crush'd, and grieved;
Too often made a victim or a toy,
With years of sorrow for an hour of joy;
Too oft forgot midst Pleasure's circling wiles,
Or only valued for her rosy smiles,--)

That, in the frank and generous heart of man,
The place she holds accords with Heaven's high plan;
Still, if from wandering sin reclaim'd at all,
He sees in her the angel of recal;
Still, in the sad and serious hours of life,
Turns to the sister, mother, friend, or wife;
Views with a heart of fond and trustful pride
His faithful partner by his calm fireside;
And oft, when barr'd of Fortune's fickle grace,
Blank ruin stares him darkly in the face,
Leans his faint head upon her kindly breast,
And owns her power to soothe him into rest,--
Owns what the gift of woman's love is worth

To cheer his toils and trials upon earth!

'Sure it is much, this delegated power
To be consoler of man's heaviest hour!
The guardian angel of a life of care,
Allow'd to stand 'twixt him and his despair!
Such service may be made a holy task;
And more, 'twere vain to hope, and rash to ask.
Therefore, oh! loved and lovely, be content,
And take thy lot, with joy and sorrow blent.

Judge none; yet let thy share of conduct be,
As knowing judgment shall be pass'd on thee
Here and hereafter; so, still undismay'd,
And guarded by thy sweet thoughts' tranquil shade,
Undazzled by the changeful rays which threw
Their light across thy path while life was new,
Thou shalt move sober on,--expecting less,
Therefore the more enjoying, happiness.'

There was a pause; then, with a tremulous smile,
The maiden turn'd and press'd her mother's hand.--
'Shall I not bear what thou hast borne e'erwhile?
Shall I, rebellious, Heaven's high will withstand?
No! cheerly on, my wandering path I'll take,
Nor fear the destiny I did not make:
Though earthly joy grow dim--though Pleasure waneth--
This thou hast taught thy child, that GOD remaineth!'

And from her mother's fond protecting side
She went into the world, a youthful bride.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Dying Hour

I.

OH! watch me; watch me still
Thro' the long night's dreary hours,
Uphold by thy firm will
Worn Nature's sinking powers!

II.

While yet thy face is there
(The loose locks round it flying),
So young, and fresh, and fair,
I feel not I am dying!

III.

Stoop down, and kiss my brow!
The shadows round me closing
Warn me that dark and low
I soon shall be reposing.

IV.

But while those pitying eyes
Are bending thus above me,
In vain the death-dews rise,--
Thou dost regret and love me!

V.

Then watch me thro' the night,
Thro' my broken, fitful slumber;
By the pale lamp's sickly light
My dying moments number!

VI.

Thy fond and patient smile
Shall soothe my painful waking;
Thy voice shall cheer me while
The slow grey dawn is breaking!

VII.

The battle-slain, whose thirst

No kindly hand assuages,
Whose low faint farewells burst
Unheard, while combat rages,--
VIII.

The exiled, near whose bed
Some vision'd form seems weeping,
Whose steps shall never tread
The land where he lies sleeping,--
IX.

The drown'd, whose parting breath
Is caught by wild winds only,--
Theirs is the bitter death,
Beloved, for they die lonely!
X.

But thus, tho' rack'd, to lie,
Thou near, tho' full of sadness,
Leaves still, e'en while I die,
A lingering gleam of gladness!
XI.

I feel not half my pain
When to mine thy fond lip presses,--
I warm to life again
Beneath thy soft caresses!
XII.

Once more, oh! yet once more
Fling, fling thy white arms round me,
As oft in days of yore
Their gentle clasp hath bound me;
XIII.

And hold me to that breast
Which heaves so full with sorrow--
Who knows where I may rest
In the dark and blank to-morrow?
XIV.

Ah! weep not--it shall be

An after-thought to cheer thee,
That while mine eyes could see,
And while mine ears could hear thee--
XV.

Thy voice and smile were still
The spells on which I doated,
And thou, through good and ill,
To me and mine devoted!
XVI.

And calmly by my tomb,
When the low bright day declineth,
And athwart the cypress gloom
The mellow sunset shineth,--
XVII.

Thou'lt sit and think of Him,
Who, of Heaven's immortal splendour,
Had a dream on earth, though dim,
In thy love so pure and tender,--
XVIII.

Who scarcely feels thy touch,--
Whom thy voice can rouse no longer,--
But whose love on earth was such,
That only death was stronger.
XIX.

Yes, sit, but not in tears!
Thine eyes in faith uplifting,
From thy lot of changeful years,
To the Heaven where naught is shifting.
XX.

From this world, where all who love
Are doomed alike to sever,
To the glorious realms above,
Where they dwell in peace for ever!
XXI.

And then such hope shall beam

From the grave where I lie sleeping,
This bitter hour shall seem
Too vague and far for weeping--
XXII.

And grief--ah! hold me now!
My fluttering pulse is failing,--
The death-dews chill my brow,--
The morning light is paling!
XXIII.

I seek thy gaze in vain,--
Earth reels and fades before me;
I die!--but feel no pain,--
Thy sweet face shining o'er me!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Faithful Friend

O, FRIEND! whose heart the grave doth shroud from human joy or woe,
Know'st thou who wanders by thy tomb, with footsteps sad and slow?
Know'st thou whose brow is dark with grief? whose eyes are dim with tears?
Whose restless soul is sinking with its agony of fears?
Whose hope hath fail'd, whose star hath sunk, whose firmest trust deceived,
Since, leaning on thy faithful breast, he loved and believed?

'Tis I!--Return and comfort me, for old remembrance' sake,--
From the long silence of the tomb--the cheerless tomb--awake!
I listen--all is still as death--no welcome step is nigh,--
I call thee, but thou answerest not--the grave hath no reply!
But mournfully the strange bright sun shines on thy funeral stone,
And sadly, in the cypress bough, the wild wind makes her moan.

When we were young, and cheerfully the promised future glow'd,
I little thought to stand alone by this thy last abode;
I little thought, in early days, O generous and kind!
That THOU, the first, shouldst quit the earth, and leave me, wreck'd, behind.

Thine was the pure unjealous love! I know they told us then
That Genius's gifts divided me from dull and common men;
That thou wert slow to science; that the chat and letter'd page
Had in them no deep spell whereby thy spirit to engage;
But rather thou wouldst sail thy boat, or sound thy bugle horn,
Or track the sportsman's triumph thro' the fields of waving corn,
Than o'er the pond'rous histories of other ages bend,
And it was true! Our minds were cast as pleased the will of Heaven,
And different powers unto me, and unto thee, were given!
No trick of talent deck'd thy speech and glorified thy youth,--
Its simple spell of eloquence lay in its earnest truth;
Nor was the gladsome kindness which brighten'd on thy brow,
The beauty which in fiction wins Love's fond romantic vow;
But gazing on thine honest face, intelligently bold,
Oft have I doubted of the gifts which men so precious hold,--
Wit, learning, wealth, seem'd overprized, since thou, dear friend, couldst be
So closely knit unto my heart by thy simplicity.

The worldly-wise may sneer at this, and scorn thee, if they will,--
THY judgment was not sharpen'd by the cunning of their skill;

No deep and calculating thoughts lay buried in thy breast,
To chill and vex thy honest heart, and startle it from rest;
No dream of cold philosophy, to make thee doubt and sigh,
And fawn and flatter half thy kind, and pass the others by!
And there thou liest forgotten--thou faithful friend, and true--
Thy resting-place beneath the cold damp shadow of the yew;
And quietly within the tomb's dark precincts wert thou laid,
As a faded leaf unnoticed drops within the forest's shade.

How should the world have tears for thee!--the world hath nothing lost--
No parent's high ambitious hope THY early death hath crost;
No sculptured falsehood gives to fame thy monumental stone,--
From the glory of our Senate-house, nor orator is gone:

Science hath lost no well-known name,--no soldier's heart shall bound,
Linking old England's victories with that inglorious sound;
No jealous and tomb-trampling foe shall find it worth his while,
With a false history of thy acts, thy country to beguile;
No mercenary hand in haste prepare the letter'd tome,
And publicly reveal the fond small weaknesses of Home;
Not some vainglorious friend (who yet hath lov'd thee to the last)
Permit all men to buy and sell his records of the past;
Nor give thy living letters up, nor print thy dying words;
Nor sweep with sacrilegious hand Affection's holy chords;
Nor with a frozen after-thought dissect thy generous heart,
And count each pulse that bid thy blood gush with a quicker start.

No! Blest OBSCURITY was thine! In sacred darkness dwells
The mem'ry of THY last fond looks and faltering farewells;

And none shall drag thy actions forth, for Slander or for Praise,
To that broad light which never glowed round thy unnoticed days.
At times a recollected jest, or snatch of merry song,
Which was so thine, that still to thee its ringing notes belong,
To boon companions back again thy image may recal,--
But lightly sits thy memory, oh Faithful Friend, on all!
The old house still hath echoes glad; tho' silent be thy voice,
Thy empty place at bed and board forbids not to rejoice!
Still with its white and gleaming sail, by strangers launch'd to float
Across the blue lake in the sun, glides on thy little boat;
Thy steed another rider backs,--thy dogs new masters find,
But I,--I mourn thy absence still, thou generous and kind:

Since I have lost thy pleasant smile, and voice of ringing mirth,
A silence and a darkness seems come down upon the earth;
A weight sits heavy on my heart, and clogs my weary feet,
For, wander where I will, thy glance I never more shall meet.

I cannot knit my soul again; my thoughts are wide astray
When others by my side would wile an hour or two away;
My door flings wide to welcome in some less familiar face,
And my heart struggles hard to fill thy ever vacant place;
But all is vain! Dim thoughts of THEE across my bosom steal,
And still, the louder mirth around, the lonelier I feel;
Yea, even that should make me proud, the laurel wreath of Fame
But brings me back our early days, and the echo of thy name;
But brings me back thy cheerful smile, when yet a careless boy,
Mine was the toil, but thou didst share the glory and the joy;
And bright across the awarded prize thy kind eye answer'd mine,
As full of triumph and delight as though that prize were thine.
Yes! all is vain! I want not Wit, I want not Learning's power,
I want THY hand, I want THY smile to pass the cheerless hour;

I want thy earnest, honest voice, whose comfort never fail'd;
I want thy kindly glance, whose light no coldness ever veil'd;
I feel at every turn of life thy loss hath left me lone,
And I mourn the friend of boyhood's years, the friend for ever gone!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Faithful Guardian

Two beautiful and rosy babes are pictured here alone,
Two infants of a noble race, as any near the throne:--
And, in the cradle's shadow, lies a stately-looking hound,
His fine limbs full of strength and grace, couched humbly on the ground:
Humbly upon the ground lies he: while from the young child's arm
A jealous spaniel snarling peeps, whom no caress can charm;
Though close that dimpled arm is bent, as though its clasp would fain
Its spoiled companion's idle wrath to gentleness restrain;

Small need of care! The stately hound, still calm and couchant lies,
With lazy kindness lifting up his wise and honest eyes;
Declaring by the emblem meet of his serene repose,
How frankly generous hearts can bear the baiting of mean foes.
Not so, O! noble-natured brute, would'st thou quiescent rest,
If the sound of danger roused the blood within thy valiant breast;
If near these helpless little fays,--thy master's children--came
The doubtful tread of stranger's feet, on whom they had no claim;

Then, then, upspringing with a bound;--aroused for their defence,--
Each nerve would arm with savage strength thy keen and eager sense,
And the darkly gleaming eyes where now such softened shadows play,
Would burn like watch-fires, lit at night, to scare the foe away.
And were the danger real to these, by whom thy watch is kept,--
E'er a rough hand should dare profane the cradle where they slept,
E'er a rude step should reach the spot where now they smile at play,--
Thy fangs would meet within his throat, to hold the wretch at bay!

Thou would'st battle, noble creature, for these children of thy lord's,
As men fight for a Royal Prince, whose crown hangs on their swords;--
Soldiers, who hear their General's cry, by treachery hemm'd in,--
Freemen, who strike for home and hearth, 'gainst Tyranny's proud sin,--
So would'st thou strive! And bold were he who then could lay thee low,
For still thy fierce and mighty grasp would pin the struggling foe,
And if keen sword, or human skill, cut short thy gasping breath,
Should he be thought thy conqueror? No!--Thy conqueror would be Death.

Oh, tried and trusted! Thou whose love ne'er changes nor forsakes,
Thou proof how perfect God hath stamped the meanest thing he makes;
Thou, whom no snare entraps to serve, no art is used to tame,--

(Train'd, like ourselves, thy path to know, by words of love and blame
Friend! who beside the cottage door, or in the rich man's hall,
With steadfast faith still answerest the one familiar call,--
Well by poor hearth and lordly home thy couchant form may rest,
And Prince and Peasant trust thee still, to guard what they love best!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Faithless Knight

THE lady she sate in her bower alone,
And she gaz'd from the lattice window high,
Where a white steed's hoofs were ringing on,
With a beating heart, and a smother'd sigh.
Why doth she gaze thro' the sunset rays--
Why doth she watch that white steed's track--
While a quivering smile on her red lip plays?
'Tis her own dear knight--will he not look back?

The steed flew fast--and the rider past--
Nor paus'd he to gaze at the lady's bower;
The smile from her lip is gone at last--
There are tears on her cheek--like the dew on a flower!
And 'plague on these foolish tears,' she said,
'Which have dimm'd the view of my young love's track;
For oh! I am sure, while I bent my head,
It was then--it was then that my knight look'd back.'

On flew that steed with an arrow's speed;
He is gone--and the green boughs wave between:
And she sighs, as the sweet breeze sighs through a reed,
As she watches the spot where he last has been.
Oh! many a sun shall rise and set,
And many an hour may she watch in vain,
And many a tear shall that soft cheek wet,
Ere that steed and its rider return again!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Fallen Leaves

I.

WE stand among the fallen leaves,
Young children at our play,
And laugh to see the yellow things
Go rustling on their way:
Right merrily we hunt them down,
The autumn winds and we,
Nor pause to gaze where snow-drifts lie,
Or sunbeams gild the tree:
With dancing feet we leap along
Where wither'd boughs are strown;
Nor past nor future checks our song--
The present is our own.

II.

We stand among the fallen leaves
In youth's enchanted spring--
When Hope (who wearies at the last)
First spreads her eagle wing.
We tread with steps of conscious strength
Beneath the leafless trees,
And the colour kindles on our cheek
As blows the winter breeze;
While, gazing towards the cold grey sky,
Clouded with snow and rain,
We wish the old year all past by,
And the young spring come again.

III.

We stand among the fallen leaves
In manhood's haughty prime--
When first our pausing hearts begin
To love 'the olden time;'
And, as we gaze, we sigh to think
How many a year hath pass'd
Since 'neath those cold and faded trees
Our footsteps wander'd last;
And old companions--now perchance

Estranged, forgot, or dead--
Come round us, as those autumn leaves
Are crush'd beneath our tread.
IV.

We stand among the fallen leaves
In our own autumn day--
And, tott'ring on with feeble steps,
Pursue our cheerless way.
We look not back--too long ago
Hath all we loved been lost;
Nor forward--for we may not live
To see our new hope cross'd:
But on we go--the sun's faint beam
A feeble warmth imparts--
Childhood without its joy returns--
The present fills our hearts!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Fever-Dream

IT was a fever-dream; I lay
Awake, as in the broad bright day,
But faint and worn I drew my breath
Like those who wait for coming death;
And my hand lay helpless on my pillow
Weak as a reed or bending willow;
And the night-lamp, with its shadowy veil,
And its light so sickly, faint, and pale,
Gleamed mournfully on objects round;
And the clock's stroke was the only sound;
Measuring the hours of silent time
With a heavy and unwelcome chime,
As still monotonously true
To its pulse-like beat, the minutes flew.

I was alone, but not asleep;
Too weary, and too wetk to weep.
My eyes had closed in sadness there;
And they who watched o'er my despair
Had placed that dim light in the room,
And deepened the surrounding gloom,
By curtaining out the few sad rays
Which made things present to my gaze;
And all because they vainly thought
At last the night its rest had brought,--
Alas! rest came no more to me
So heavy was my misery!

They left me, and my heart was filled
With wandering dreams, whose fancies thrilled
Painfully through my feeble brain,
Till I almost wished them back again.
Yet wherefore should I bid them stay?
They could not chase those dreams away,
But only watch me as I lay.

They left me, and the midnight stroke
From the old clock the silence broke;
And with a wild repining sigh

I wished it were my time to die!
And then, with spirit all dismayed,
For that wild wish, forgiveness prayed,
Humbling myself to God's high power
To bear His will, and wait His hour.

And while I darkly rested there,
The breath of a young child's floating hair,
Perfumed, and warm, and glistening bright,
Swept past me in the shrouding night;--
And the footsteps of children, light and quick,
(While my heart beat loud, and my breath came thick)
Went to and fro on the silent floor;--
And the lock was turned in the fastened door,
As a child may turn it, who tiptoe stands
With his fair round arms and his dimpled hands,
Putting out all their strength in vain
Admittance by his own means to gain:
Till his sweet impatient voice is heard
Like the chirp of a young imprisoned bird,
Seeking an entrance still to win
By fond petitions to those within.

A child's soft shadowy hair, bright smiles,
His merry laugh, and coaxing wiles,
These are sweet things,--most precious things,--
But in spite of my brain's wild wanderings,
I knew that they dwelt in my fancy only,
And that I was sad, and left, and lonely;
And the fear of a dreadful madness came
And withered my soul like a parching flame;
And I felt the strong delirium growing,
And the thread of my feeble senses going,
And I heard with a horror all untold
Which turned my hot blood icy-cold,
Those light steps draw more near my bed;
And by visions I was visited,
Of the gentle eyes which I might not see,
And the faces that were so far from me!

And blest, oh I blest was the morning beam
Which woke me up from my fever-dream!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Forsaken

I.

IT is the music of her native land,--
The airs she used to love in happier days;
The lute is struck by some young gentle hand,
To soothe her spirit with remember'd lays.

II.

But her sad heart is wandering from the notes,
Her ear is fill'd with an imagined strain;
Vainly the soften'd music round her floats,
The echo it awakes is all of pain!

III.

The echo it awakes, is of a voice
Which never more her weary heart shall cheer;
Fain would she banish it, but hath no choice,
Its vanish'd sound still haunts her shrinking ear,--

IV.

Still haunts her with its tones of joy and love,
Its memories of bitterness and wrong,
Bidding her thoughts thro' various changes rove,--
Welcomes, farewells, and snatches of wild song.

V.

Why bring her music? She had half forgot
How left, how lonely, how oppress'd she was;
Why, by these strains, recal her former lot,
The depth of all her suffering, and its cause?

VI.

Know ye not what a spell there is in sound?
Know ye not that the melody of words
Is nothing to the power that wanders round,
Giving vague language to harmonious chords?

VII.

Oh I keep ye silence! He hath sung to her,

And from that hour--(faint twilight, sweet and dim,
When the low breeze scarce made the branches stir)--
Music hath been a memory of HIM!

VIII.

Chords which the wandering fingers scarcely touch
When they would seek for some forgotten song,--
Stray notes which have no certain meaning, such
As careless hands unthinkingly prolong,--

IX.

Come unto HER, fraught with a vivid dream
Of love, in all its wild and passionate strength,--
Of sunsets, glittering on the purple stream,--
Of shadows, deepening into twilight length,--

X.

Of gentle sounds, when the warm world lay hush'd
Beneath the soft breath of the evening air,--
Of hopes and fears, and expectations crush'd,
By one long certainty of blank despair!

XI.

Bear to the sick man's couch the fiery cup,
Pledged by wild feasters in their riotous hours,
And bid his parch'd lips drink the poison up,
As tho' its foam held cool refreshing powers,--

XII.

Lift some poor wounded wretch, whose writhing pain
Finds soothing only in an utter rest,
Forth in some rude-made litter, to regain
Strength for his limbs and vigour for his breast;--

XIII.

But soothe ye not that proud forsaken heart
With strains whose sweetness maddens as they fall;
Untroubled let her feverish soul depart--
Not long shall memory's power its might enthrall;

XIV.

Not long,--tho' balmy be the summer's breath!

In the deep stillness of its golden light,
A shadowy spirit sits, whose name is DEATH,
And turns, what was all beauty, into blight;
XV.

And she, before whose sad and dreaming eye
Visions of by-gone days are sweeping on,
In her unfaded youth shall drooping die,
Shut from the glow of that Italian sun:
XVI.

Then let the organ's solemn notes prolong
Their glory round the silence of her grave,
Then let the choral voices swell in song
And echo thro' the chancel and the nave;
XVII.

For then her heart shall ache not at the sound,
Then the faint fever of her life shall cease
Silence, unbroken, calm, shall reign around,
And the long restless shall be laid at peace.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Future.

I WAS a laughing child, and gaily dwelt
Where murmuring brooks, and dark blue rivers roll'd,
And shadowy trees outspread their silent arms,
To welcome all the weary to their rest.
And there an antique castle rais'd its head,
Where dwelt a fair and fairy girl: perchance
Two summers she had seen beyond my years;
And all she said or did, was said and done
With such a light and airy sportiveness,
That oft I envied her, for I was poor,
And lowly, and to me her fate did seem
Fraught with a certainty of happiness.
Years past; and she was wed against her will,
To one who sought her for the gold she brought,
And they did vex and wound her gentle spirit,
Till madness took the place of misery.

And oft I heard her low, soft, gentle song,
Breathing of early times with mournful sound,
Till I could weep to hear, and thought how sad.
The envied future of her life had prov'd.
And then I grew a fond and thoughtful girl,
Loving, and deeming I was lov'd again:
But he that won my easy heart, full soon
Turn'd to another:-she might be more fair,
But could not love him better. And I wept,
Day after day, till weary grew my spirit,
With fancying how happy she must be
Whom he had chosen-yet she was not so;
For he she wedded, loved her for a time,
And then he changed, even as he did to me,
Though something later; and he sought another
To please his fancy, far away from home.
And he was kind: oh, yes! he still was kind.
It vex'd her more; for though she knew his love
Had faded like the primrose after spring,
Yet there was nothing which she might complain,
Had cause to grieve her; he was gentle still.
She would have given all the store she had,

That he would but be angry for an hour,
That she might come and soothe his wounded spirit,
And lay her weeping head upon his bosom,
And say, how freely she forgave her wrongs:

But still, with calm, cold kindness he pursued
(Kindness, the mockery of departed love!)
His way-and then she died, the broken-hearted;
And I thanked heaven, who gave me not her lot,
Though I had wish'd it.

Again, I was a wife, a happy wife;
And he I loved was still unchangeable,
And kind, and true, and loved me from his soul;
But I was childless, and my lonely heart
Yearned for an image of my heart's beloved,
A something which should be my 'future' now
That I had so much of my life gone by;
Something to look to after I should go,
And all except my memory be past.
There was a child, a little rosy thing,
With sunny eyes, and curled and shining hair,
That used to play among the daisy flowers,
Looking as innocent and fair as they;
And sail its little boat upon the stream,
Gazing with dark blue eyes in the blue waters,
And singing in its merriment of heart
All the bright day: and when the sun was setting,
It came unbid to its glad mother's side,
To lisp with holy look its evening prayer:
And, kneeling on the green and flowery ground,
At the sweet cottage door-he fixed his eyes

For some short moments on her tranquil face,
As if she was his guiding star to God;
And then with young, meek, innocent brow upraised,
Spoke the slow words with lips that longed to smile,
But dared not. Oh! I loved that child with all
A mother's fondest love; and, as he grew
More and more beautiful from day to day,
The half-involuntary sigh I gave
Spoke but too plain the wish that he were mine-
My child-my own. And in my solitude,

Often I clasped my hands and thought of him,
And looked with mournful and reproachful gaze
To heaven, which had denied me such a one.
Years past: the child became a rebel boy;
The boy a wild, untamed, and passionate youth;
The youth a man-but such a man! so fierce,
So wild, so headlong, and so haughty too,
So cruel in avenging any wrongs,
So merciless when he had half avenged them!
At length his hour had come-a deed of blood,
Of murder, was upon his guilty soul.
He stood in that same spot, by his sweet home,
The same blue river flowing by his feet,
(Whose stream might never wash his guilt away
The same green hills, and mossy sloping banks,
Where the bright sun was smiling as of yore:

With pallid cheek and dark and sullen brow,
The beautiful and lost; you might have deemed
That Satan, newly banished, stood and gazed
On the bright scenery of an infant world.
For, fallen as he was, his Maker's hand
Had stamped him beautiful, and he was so still.
And his eyes turned from off his early home
With something like a shudder; and they lighted
On his poor broken-hearted mother's grave.
And there was something in them of old times,
Ere sin had darkened o'er their tranquil blue,
In that most mournful look-that made me weep;
'For I had gazed on him with fear and anguish
Till now. And, 'weep for her,' my favourite said,
For she was good-I murdered her-I killed
Many that harmed me not.' And still he spoke
In a low, listless voice; and forms came round
Who dragged him from us. I remember not
What followed then. But on another day,
There was a crowd collected, and a cart
Slowly approached to give to shameful death
Its burden; and there was a prayer, and silence,
Silence like that of death. And then a murmur!
And all was over. And I groaned, and turned
To where his poor old father had been sitting;

And there he sate, still with his feeble limbs

And palsied head, and dim and watery eyes,
Gazing up at the place where was his son;
And with a shuddering touch I sought to rouse him,
But could not, for the poor old man was dead.
And then I flung myself upon the ground,
And mingled salt tears with the evening dew;
And thanked my God that he was not my son;
And that I was a childless, lonely wife.
To-morrow I will tell thee all that now
Remains to tell-but I am old and feeble.
And cannot speak for tears.
She rose and went,
But she returned no more. The morrow came,
But not to her;-the tale of life was finished,
Not by her lips, for she had ceased to breath.
But, by this silent warning joined to hers,
How little we may count upon the future,
Or reckon what that future may bring forth!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The German Student's Love-Song

I.

BY the rush of the Rhine's broad stream,
Down whose rapid tide
We sailed as in some sweet dream
Sitting side by side;
By the depth of its clear blue wave
And the vine-clad hills,
Which gazed on its heart and gave
Their tribute rills;

By the mountains, in purple shade,
And those valleys green
Where our bower of rest was made,
By the world unseen;
By the notes of the wild free bird,
Singing over-head
When nought else in the sunshine stirr'd
Round our flowery bed;

By these, and by Love's power divine,
I have no thought but what is thine!

II.

By the glance of thy radiant eyes,
Where a glory shone
That was half of the summer skies
And half their own;
By the light and yet fervent hold
Of thy gentle hand,--
(As the woodbines the flowers enfold
With their tender band

By thy voice when it breathes in song,
And the echo given
By lips that to Earth belong,
Float up to Heaven;
By the gleams on thy silken hair
At the sunset hour,

And the breadth of thy forehead fair
With its thoughtful power;

By these, and by Love's soul divine,
I have no hope but what is thine!
III.

By the beauty and stillness round
When the lake's lone shore
Scarce echoed the pleasant sound
Of the distant oar;
By the moonlight which softly fell
On all objects near,
And thy whisper seemed like a spell
In thy Lover's ear;

By the dreams of the restless past,
And the hope that came
Like sunshine in shadow cast
With thy gentle name;
By the beat of thy good true heart
Where pure thoughts have birth;
By thy tears, when Fate bade us part,
And thy smiles of mirth;

By these, and by Love's power divine,
I have no hope but what is thine!
IV.

By the gloom of those holy fanes
Where the light stream'd through
Dim orange and purple panes
On the aisles below;
By the ruin'd and roofless wall
Of that castle high,
With its turrets so grey and tall
In the clear blue sky;

By beauty, because its light
Should thy portion be,
And whatever is fair and bright
Seems a part of thee;

And by darkness and blank decay,
Because they tell
What the world would be, THOU away,
Whom I love so well;

By these, and by Love's power divine,
My heart, my soul, my life, are thine!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Greek Girl's Lament For Her Lover

IMRA! thy form is vanished
From the proud and patriot band;
Imra! thy voice is silent,
'Mongst the voices of the land.
And bravely hast thou fallen;
In joy didst thou depart;
Their chains shall never bind thee,
Young hero of my heart!

But with thee the dream is over
That bound my soul so long;
And the words of fame and glory
Have vanished from my song:
My heart which bounded proudly
Is as sad as sad can be;
I thought it beat for freedom,
But I feel it beat--for thee.

I thought the victory's triumph
Would have made my soul rejoice,
But that was when I listened
To the music of thy voice.
The dreams of fame and conquest,
Of my country being free;
What love were they to Zoë,
But most blessed dreams of thee?

It is past--thy voice may never
Speak of triumph, or of love;
And the bright hope that was burning
Hath flown with thee above.
This earth contains no dwelling,
No land of rest for me;
When Hellas was my country,
I dwelt in it with thee!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Hunting Horn Of Chalemagne

SOUND not the Horn!--the guarded relic keep:
A faithful sharer of its master's sleep:
His life it gladden'd--to his life belong'd,--
Pause--ere thy lip the royal dead hath wrong'd.
Its weary weight but mocks thy feeble hand;
Its desolate note, the shrine wherein we stand.
Not such the sound it gave in days of yore,
When that rich belt a monarch's bosom wore,--
Not such the sound! Far over hill and dell
It waked the echoes with triumphant swell;

Heard midst the rushing of the torrent's fall,
From castled crag to roofless ruin'd hall,
Down the ravine's precipitous descent,
Thro' the wild forest's rustling boughs it went,
Upon the lake's blue bosom linger'd fond,
And faintly answer'd from the hills beyond:

Pause!--the free winds that joyous blast have borne:--
Dead is the hunter!--silent be the horn!

Sound not the horn! Bethink thee of the day
When to the chase an Emperor led the way;
In all the pride of manhood's noblest prime,
Untamed by sorrow, and untired by time,
Life's pulses throbbing in his eager breast,
Glad, active, vigorous,--who is now at rest:--
How he gazed round him with his eagle eye,
Leapt the dark rocks that frown against the sky,
Grasp'd the long spear, and curb'd the panting steed
(Whose fine nerves quiver with his headlong speed),
At the wild cry of danger smiled in scorn,
And firmly sounded that re-echoing horn!

Ah! let no touch the ivory tube profane
Which drank the breath of living Charlemagne;
Let not like blast by meaner lips be blown,
But by the hunter's side the horn lay down!

Or, following to his palace, dream we now
Not of the hunter's strength, or forest bough,
But woman's love! HER offering this, perchance,--
This, granted to each stranger's casual glance,
This, gazed upon with coldly curious eyes,
Was giv'n with blushes, and received with sighs!
We see her not;--no mournful angel stands
To guard her love-gift from our careless hands;
But fancy brings a vision to our view--
A woman's form, the trusted and the true:
The strong to suffer, tho' so weak to dare
Patient to watch thro' many a day of care,
Devoted, anxious, generous, void of guile,
And with her whole heart's welcome in her smile;
Even such I see! Her maidens, too, are there,
And wake, with chorus sweet, some native air;
But tho' her proud heart holds her country dear,
And tho' she loves those happy songs to hear,

She bids the tale be hush'd, the harp be still,
For one faint blast that dies along the hill.
Up, up, she springs; her young head backward thrown;
'He comes! my hunter comes!--Mine own--mine own!'

She loves, and she is loved--her gift is worn--
'Tis fancy, all!--And yet--lay down the horn!

Love--life--what are ye?--since to love and live
No surer record to our times can give!
Low lies the hero now, whose spoken name
Could fire with glory, or with love inflame;
Low lies the arm of might, the form of pride,
And dim tradition dreameth by his side.
Desolate stand those painted palace-halls,
And gradual ruin mines the massy walls,
Where frank hearts greeted many a welcome guest,
And loudly rang the beaker and the jest;--
While here, within this chapel's narrow bound,
Whose frozen silence startles to the sound
Of stranger voices ringing thro' the air,
Of faintly echoes many a humble prayer;

Here, where the window, narrow arch'd, and high,
With jealous bars shuts out the free blue sky,--
Where glimmers down, with various-painted ray,
A prison'd portion of God's glorious day,--
Where never comes the breezy breath of morn,
Here, mighty hunter, feebly wakes thy horn!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The King Of Denmark's Ride

WORD was brought to the Danish king
(Hurry!)

That the love of his heart lay suffering,
And pin'd for the comfort his voice would bring;
(Oh! ride as though you were flying!)
Better he loves each golden curl
On the brow of that Scandinavian girl
Than his rich crown jewels of ruby and pearl;
And his rose of the isles is dying!

Thirty nobles saddled with speed,
(Hurry!)
Each one mounting a gallant steed
Which he kept for battle and days of need;
(Oh! ride as though you were flying!)
Spurs were struck in the foaming flank;
Worn-out chargers stagger'd and sank;
Bridles were slacken'd, and girths were burst;
But ride as they would, the king rode first,
For his rose of the isles lay dying!

His nobles are beaten, one by one;
(Hurry!)
They have fainted, and falter'd, and homeward gone;
His little fair page now follows alone,
For strength and for courage trying.
The king look'd back at that faithful child;
Wan was the face that answering smil'd;
They passed the drawbridge with clattering din,
Then he dropp'd; and only the king rode in
Where his rose of the isles lay dying!

The king blew a blast on his bugle horn;
(Silence!)
No answer came; but faint and forlorn
An echo return'd on the cold gray morn,
Like the breath of a spirit sighing.
The castle portal stood grimly wide;
None welcom'd the king from that weary ride;

For dead, in the light of the dawning day,
The pale sweet form of the welcomer lay,
Who had yearn'd for his voice while dying!

The panting steed, with a drooping crest,
Stood weary.
The king return'd from her chamber of rest,
The thick sobs choking in his breast;
And, that dumb companion eyeing,
The tears gush'd forth which he strove to check;
He bowed his head on his charger's neck:
"O steed—that every nerve didst strain,
Dear steed, our ride hath been in vain
To the halls where my love lay dying!"

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - A Threnody

HOW Memory haunts us! When we fain would be
Alone and free,
Uninterrupted by his mournful words,
Faint, indistinct, as are a wind-harp's chords
Hung on a leafless tree,--
He will not leave us: we resolve in vain
To chase him forth--for he returns again,
Pining incessantly!
In the old pathways of our lost delights
He walks on sunny days and starlit nights,
Answering our restless moan,
With,--'I am here alone,
My brother Joy is gone--for ever gone!
Round your decaying home
The Spring indeed is come,
The leaves are thrilling with a sense of life,
The sap of flowers is rife,
But where is Joy, Heaven's messenger,--bright Joy,--
That curled and radiant boy,
Who was the younger brother of my heart?
Why let ye him whom I so loved depart?
Call him once more,
And let us all be glad, as heretofore!'

Then, urged and stung by Memory, we go forth,
And wander south and north,
Deeming Joy may yet answer to our yearning;
But all is blank and bare:
The silent air
Echoes no pleasant shout of his returning.
Yet somewhere--somewhere, by the pathless woods,
Or silver rippling floods,
He wanders as he wandered once with us;
Through bright arcades of cities populous;
Or else in deserts rude,
Happy in solitude,
And choosing only Youth to be his mate,
He leaves us to our fate.
We hear his distant laughter as we go,

Pacing, ourselves, with Woe,--
Both us he hath outstripped for evermore!
Seek him not in the wood,
Where the sweet ring-doves ever murmuring brood;
Nor on the hill, nor by the golden shore:
Others inherit that which once was ours;
The freshness of the hours,--
The sparkling of the early morning rime,
The evanescent glory of the time!

With them, in some sweet glade,
Warm with a summer shade,
Or where white clover, blooming fresh and wild,
Breathes like the kisses of a little child,
He lingers now:--we call him back in vain
To our world's snow and rain;
The bower we built him when he was our guest
Life's storms have beaten down,
And he far off hath flown,
And buildeth where there is a sunnier nest;
Or, closing rainbow wings and laughing eyes,
He lieth basking 'neath the open skies,
Taking his rest
On the soft moss of some unbroken ground,
Where sobs did never sound.
Oh! give him up: confess that Joy has gone:
He met you at the source of Life's bright river;
And if he hath passed on,
'Tis that his task is done,
He hath no future message to deliver,
But leaves you lone and still for ever and for ever!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Conclusion

PEACE to their ashes! Far away they lie,
Among their poor, beneath the equal sky.
Among their poor, who blessed them ere they went
For all the loving help and calm content.
Oh! happy beings, who have gone to hear
'Well done, ye faithful servants,' sounding clear;
How easy all your virtues to admire;
How hard, alas! to copy and aspire.

Servant of God, well done! They serve God well
Who serve His creatures: when the funeral bell
Tolls for the dead, there's nothing left of all
That decks the scutcheon and the velvet pall
Save this. The coronet is empty show:
The strength and loveliness are hid below:
The shifting wealth to others hath accrued:
And learning cheers not the grave' solitude:
What's DONE, is what remains! Ah, blessed they
Who leave completed tasks of love to stay
And answer mutely for them, being dead,
Life was not purposeless, though Life be fled.
Even as I write, before me seem to rise,
Like stars in darkness, well remembered eyes
Whose light but lately shone on earth's endeavour,
Now vanished from this troubled world for ever.
Oh! missed and mourned by many,--I being one,--
HERBERT, not vainly thy career was run;
Nor shall Death's shadow, and the folding shroud,
Veil from the future years thy worth allowed.
Since all thy life thy single hope and aim
Was to do good,--not make thyself a name,--
'Tis fit that by the good remaining yet,
Thy name be one men never can forget.
Oh! eyes I first knew in our mutual youth.
So full of limpid earnestness and truth;
Eyes I saw fading still, as day by day
The body, not the spirit's strength, gave way;
Eyes that I last saw lifting their farewell
To the now darkened windows where I dwell,--

And wondered, as I stood there sadly gazing,
If Death were brooding in their faint upraising;
If never more thy footstep light should cross
My threshold stone--but friends bewail thy loss,
And She bewidowed young, who lonely trains
Children that boast thy good blood in their veins;
Fair eyes,--your light was quenched while men still thought
To see those tasks to full perfection brought!
But GOOD is not a shapeless mass of stone,
Hewn by man's hands and worked by him alone;
It is a seed God suffers One to sow,--
Many to reap; and when the harvests grow,
GOD giveth increase through all coming years,--
And lets us reap in joy, seed that was sown in tears.

Brave heart! true soldier's son; set at thy post,
Deserting not till life itself was lost;
Thou faithful sentinel for others' weal,
Clad in a surer panoply than steel,
A resolute purpose,--sleep, as heroes sleep,--
Slain, but not conquered! We thy loss must weep,
And while our sight the mist of sorrow dims,
Feel all these comforting words die down like hymns
Hushed after service in cathedral walls;
But proudly on thy name thy country calls,
By thee raised higher than the highest place
Yet won by any of thy ancient race.
Be thy sons like thee! Sadly as I bend
Above the page, I write thy name, lost friend!
With a friend's name this brief book did begin,
And a friend's name shall end it: names that win
Happy remembrance from the great and good;
Names that shall sink not in oblivion's flood,
But with clear music, like a church-bell's chime,
Sound through the river's sweep of onward rushing Time!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Dedication

FRIEND of old days, of suffering, storm, and strife,
Patient and kind through many a wild appeal;
In the arena of thy brilliant life
Never too busy or too cold to feel:

Companion from whose ever teeming store
Of thought and knowledge, happy memory brings
So much of social wit and sage's lore,
Garnered and gleaned by me as precious things:

Kinsman of him whose very name soon grew
Unreal as music heard in pleasant dreams,
So vain the hope my girlish fancy drew,
So faint and far his vanished presence seems.

To thee I dedicate this record brief
Of foreign scenes and deeds too little known;
This tale of noble souls who conquered grief
By dint of tending sufferings not their own.

Thou hast known all my life: its pleasant hours,
(How many of them have I owed to thee!)
Its exercise of intellectual powers,
With thoughts of fame and gladness not to be.

Thou knowest how Death for ever dogged my way,
And how of those I loved the best, and those
Who loved and pitied me in life's young day,
Narrow, and narrower still, the circle grows.

Thou knowest--for thou hast proved--the dreary shade
A first-born's loss casts over lonely days;
And gone is now the pale fond smile, that made
In my dim future, yet, a path of rays.

Gone, the dear comfort of a voice whose sound
Came like a beacon-bell, heard clear above
The whirl of violent waters surging round;
Speaking to shipwrecked ears of help and love.

The joy that budded on my own youth's bloom,
When life wore still a glory and a gloss,
Is hidden from me in the silent tomb;
Smiting with premature unnatural loss,

So that my very soul is wrung with pain,
Meeting old friends whom most I love to see.
Where are the younger lives, since these remain?
I weep the eyes that should have wept for me!

But all the more I cling to those who speak
Like thee, in tones unaltered by my change;
Greeting my saddened glance, and faded cheek,
With the same welcome that seemed sweet and strange

In early days: when I, of gifts made proud,
That could the notice of such men beguile,
Stood listening to thee in some brilliant crowd,
With the warm triumph of a youthful smile.

Oh! little now remains of all that was!
Even for this gift of linking measured words,
My heart oft questions, with discouraged pause,
Does music linger in the slackening chords?

Yet, friend, I feel not that all power is fled,
While offering to thee, for the kindly years,
The intangible gift of thought, whose silver thread
Heaven keeps untarnished by our bitterest tears.

So, in the brooding calm that follows woe,
This tale of LA GARAYE I fain would tell,--
As, when some earthly storm hath ceased to blow,
And the huge mounting sea hath ceased to swell;

After the maddening wrecking and the roar,
The wild high dash, the moaning sad retreat,
Some cold slow wave creeps faintly to the shore,
And leaves a white shell at the gazer's feet.

Take, then, the poor gift in thy faithful hand;

Measure its worth not merely by my own,
But hold it dear as gathered from the sand
Where so much wreck of youth and hope lies strown.

So, if in years to come my words abide--
Words of the dead to stir some living brain--
When thoughtful readers lay my book aside,
Musing on all it tells of joy and pain,

Towards thee, good heart, towards thee their thoughts shall roam,
Whose unforsaking faith time hath not riven;
And to their minds this just award shall come,
'Twas a TRUE friend to whom such thanks were given!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Part I

ON Dinan's walls the morning sunlight plays,
Gilds the stern fortress with a crown of rays,
Shines on the children's heads that troop to school,
Turns into beryl-brown the forest pool,
Sends diamond sparkles over gushing springs,
And showers down glory on the simplest things.
And many a young seigneur and damsel bold
See with delight those beams of reddening gold,
For they are bid to join the hunt to-day
By Claud Marot, the lord of La Garaye;
And merry is it in his spacious halls;
Cheerful the host, whatever sport befalls,
Cheerful and courteous, full of manly grace,
His heart's frank welcome written in his face;
So eager, that his pleasure never cloys,
But glad to share whatever he enjoys;
Rich, liberal, gaily dressed, of noble mien,
Clear eyes,--full curving mouth,--and brow serene;
Master of speech in many a foreign tongue,
And famed for feats of arms, although so young;
Dexterous in fencing, skilled in horsemanship--
His voice and hand preferred to spur or whip;
Quick at a jest and smiling repartee,
With a sweet laugh that sounded frank and free,
But holding Satire an accursèd thing,
A poisoned javelin or a serpent's sting;
Pitiful to the poor; of courage high;
A soul that could all turns of fate defy
Gentle to women: reverent to old age:
What more, young Claud, could men's esteem engage?
What more be given to bless thine earthy state,
Save Love,--which still must crown the happiest fate!
Love, therefore, came. That sunbeam lit his life
And where he wooed, he won, a gentle wife
Born, like himself, of lineage brave and good;
And, like himself, of warm and eager mood;
Glad to share gladness, pleasure to impart,
With dancing spirits and a tender heart.
Pleased too to share the manlier sports which made

The joy of his young hours. No more afraid
Of danger, than the seabird, used to soar
From the high rocks above the ocean's roar,
Which dips its slant wing in the wave's white crest,
And deems the foamy undulations, rest.

Nor think the feminine beauty of her soul
Tarnished by yielding to such joy's control;
Nor that the form which, like a flexile reed,
Swayed with the movements of her bounding steed,
Took from those graceful hours a rougher force,
Or left her nature masculine and coarse.
She was not bold from boldness, but from love;
Bold from gay frolic; glad with him to rove
In danger or in safety, weal or woe,
And where he ventured, still she yearned to go.
Bold with the courage of his bolder life,
At home a tender and submissive wife;
Abroad, a woman, modest,--ay, and proud;
Not seeking homage from the casual crowd.
She remained pure, that darling of his sight,
In spite of boyish feats, and rash delight;
Still the eyes fell before an insolent look,
Or flashed their bright and innocent rebuke;
Still the cheek kept its delicate youthful bloom,
And the blush reddened through the snow-white plume.

He that had seen her, with her courage high,
First in the chase where all dashed rapid by;
He that had watched her bright impetuous look
When she prepared to leap the silver brook,--
Fair in her Springtime as a branch of May,--
Had felt the dull sneer feebly die away,
And unused kindly smiles upon his cold lips play!

God made all pleasure innocent; but man
Turns them to shame, since first our earth began
To shudder 'neath the stroke of delving tools
When Eve and Adam lost,--poor tempted fools,--
The sweet safe shelter of their Eden bowers,
Its easy wealth of sun-ripe fruits and flowers,
For some forbidden zest that was not given,

Some riotous hope to make a mimic heaven,
And sank,--from being wingless angels,--low
Into the depths of mean and abject woe.

Why should the sweet elastic sense of joy
Presage a fault? Why should the pleasure cloy,
Or turn to blame, which Heaven itself inspires,
Who gave us health and strength and all desires?
The children play, and sin not;--let the young
Still carol songs, as others too have sung;
Still urge the fiery courser o'er the plain,
Proud of his glossy sides and flowing mane;
Still, when they meet in careless hours of mirth,
Laugh, as if Sorrow were unknown to earth;
Prattling sweet nothings, which, like buds of flowers,
May turn to earnest thoughts and vigilant hours.
What boys can suffer, and weak women dare,
Let Indian and Crimean wastes declare:
Perchance in that gay group of laughers stand
Guides and defenders for our native land;--
Folly it is to see a wit in woe,
And hold youth sinful for the spirits' flow.
As thro' the meadow lands clear rivers run,
Blue in the shadow--silver in the sun--
Till, rolling by some pestilential source,
Some factory work whose wheels with horrid force
Strike the pure waters with their dripping beams,
Send poison gushing to the crystal streams,
And leave the innocent things to whom God gave
A natural home in that translucent wave
Gasping strange death, and floating down to show
The evil working in the depths below,--
So man can poison pleasure at its source;
Clog the swift sparkle of its rapid course,
Mix muddy morbid thoughts in vicious strife,
Till to the surface floats the death of life;--
But not the less the stream itself was pure--
And not the less may blameless joy endure.

Careless,--but not impure,--the joyous days
Passed in a rapturous whirl; a giddy maze,
Where the young Count and lovely Countess drew

A new delight from every pleasure new.
They woke to gladness as the morning broke;
Their very voices kept, whene'er they spoke,
A ring of joy, a harmony of life,
That made you bless the husband and the wife.
And every day the careless festal throng,
And every night the dance and feast and song,
Shared with young boon companions, marked the time
As with a carillon's exulting chime;
Where those two entered, gloom passed out of sight,
Chased by the glow of their intense delight.

So, till the day when over Dinan's walls
The Autumn sunshine of my story falls;
And the guests bidden, gather for the chase,
And the smile brightens on the lovely face
That greets them in succession as they come
Into that high and hospitable home.

Like a sweet picture doth the Lady stand,
Still blushing as she bows; one tiny hand,
Hid by a pearl-embroidered gauntlet, holds
Her whip, and her long robe's exuberant folds.
The other hand is bare, and from her eyes
Shades now and then the sun, or softly lies,
With a caressing touch, upon the neck
Of the dear glossy steed she loves to deck
With saddle-housings worked in golden thread,
And golden bands upon his noble head.
White is the little hand whose taper fingers
Smooth his fine coat,--and still the lady lingers,
Leaning against his side; nor lifts her head,
But gently turns as gathering footsteps tread;
Reminding you of doves with shifting throats,
Brooding in sunshine by their sheltering cotes.
Under her plumèd hat her wealth of curls
Falls down in golden links among her pearls,
And the rich purple of her velvet vest
Slims the young waist, and rounds the graceful breast.

So, till the latest joins the happy Meet;
Then springs she gladly to her eager feet;

And, while the white hand from her courser's side
Slips like a snow-flake, stands prepared to ride.
Then lightly vaulting to her seat, she seems
Queen of some fair procession seen in dreams;
Queen of herself, and of the world; sweet Queen!
Her crown the plume above her brow serene,
Her jewelled whip a sceptre, and her dress
The regal mantle worn by loveliness.

And well she wears such mantle: swift the horse,
But firm her seat throughout the rapid course;
No rash unsteadiness, no shifting pose
Disturbs that line of beauty as she goes:
She wears her robe as some fair sloop her sails,
Which swell and flutter to the rising gales,
But never from the cordage taut and trim
Slacken or swerve away. The evening dim
Sees her return, unwearied and unbent,
The fair folds falling smooth as when she went;
The little foot no clasping buckle keeps,
She frees it, and to earth untrammelled leaps.

Alas! look well upon that picture fair!
The face--the form--the smile--the golden hair;
The agile beauty of each movement made,--
The loving softness of her eyes' sweet shade,
The bloom and pliant grace of youthful days,
The gladness and the glory of her gaze.
If we knew when the last time was the last,
Visions so dear to straining eyes went past;
If we knew when the horror and the gloom
Should overcast the pride of beauty's bloom;
If we knew when affection nursed in vain
Should grow to be but bitterness and pain;
It were a curse to blight all living hours
With a hot dust, like dark volcano showers.
Give thanks to God who blinded us with Hope;
Denied man skill to draw his horoscope;
And, to keep mortals of the present fond,
Forbid the keenest sight to pierce beyond!

Falsehood from those we trusted; cruel sneers

From those whose voice was music to our ears;
Lonely old age; oppressed and orphaned youth;
Yearning appeals to hearts that know no ruth;
Ruin, that starves pale mouths we loved to feed;
A friend's forsaking in our utmost need;
These come,--and sting,--and madden; ay, and slay;
But not the less our joy hath had its day;
No little cloud first flecked our tranquil skies,
Presaging shipwreck to the prophet eyes;
No hand came forth upon the walls of home
With vanishing radiance writing darkest doom;
No child-soul called us in the dead of night,
Thrilled with a message from a God of might;
No shrouded Seer, by some enforcing spell,
Rose from Death's rest, Life's restless chance to tell;
The lightning smote us--shivering stem and bough:
All was so green: all lies so blighted now!

They ride together all that sunny day,
Claud and the lovely Lady of Garaye;
O'er hill and dale,--through fields of late reaped corn,
Through woods,--wherever sounds the hunting horn,
Wherever scour the fleet hounds, fast they follow,
Through tufted thickets and the leaf-strewn hollow;
And thrice,--the game secured,--they rest awhile,
And slacken bridle with a breathless smile:
And thrice, with joyous speed, off, off they go,--
Like a fresh arrow from a new-strung bow!

But now the ground is rough with boulder stones,
Where, wild beneath, the prisoned streamlet moans,
The prisoned streamlet struggling to be free,
Baring the roots of many a toppling tree,
Breaking the line where smooth-barked saplings rank,
And undermining all the creviced bank;
Till gushing out at length to open space,
Mad with the effort of its desperate race,
It pauses, swelling o'er the narrow ridge
Where fallen branches make a natural bridge,
Leaps to the next descent, and, balked no more,
Foams to a waterfall, whose ceaseless roar
Echoes far down the banks, and through the forest hoar!

Across the water full of peaked stones--
Across the water where it chafes and moans--
Across the water at its widest part--
Which wilt thou leap,--oh, lady of brave heart?

Their smiling eyes have met--those eager two:
She looks at Claud, as questioning which to do:
He rides--reins in --looks down the torrent's course,--
Pats the sleek neck of his sure-footed horse,--
Stops,--measures spaces with his eagle eye,
Tries a new track, and yet returns to try.
Sudden, while pausing at the very brink,
The damp leaf-covered ground appears to sink,
And the keen instinct of the wise dumb brute
Escapes the yielding earth, the slippery root;
With a wild effort as if taking wing
The monstrous gap he clears with one safe spring;
Reaches--(and barely reaches)--past the roar
Of the wild stream, the further lower shore,--
Scrambles--recovers,--rears--and panting stands
Safe 'neath his master's nerveless trembling hands.

Oh! even while he leapt, his horrid thought
Was of the peril to that lady brought;
Oh! even while he leapt, her Claud looked back,
And shook his hand to warn her from the track.
In vain: the pleasant voice she loved so well
Feebly re-echoed through that dreadful dell,
The voice that was the music of her home
Shouted in vain across that torrent's foam.

He saw her, pausing on the bank above;
Saw,--like a dreadful vision of his love,--
That dazzling dream stand on the edge of death:
Saw it--and stared--and prayed--and held his breath.
Bright shone the Autumn sun on wood and plain;
On the steed's glossy flanks and flowing mane;
On the wild silver of the rushing brook;
On his wife's smiling and triumphant look;
Bright waved against the sky her wind-tost plume,
Bright on her freshened cheek the healthy bloom,--

Oh! all bright things, how could ye end in doom?

Forward they leaped! They leaped--a coloured flash
Of life and beauty. Hark! a sudden crash,--
Blent with that dreadful sound, a man's sharp cry,--
Prone,--'neath the crumbling bank,--the horse and lady lie!

The heart grows humble in an awe-struck grief;
Claud thinks not, dreams not, plans not her relief.
Strengthen him but, O God! to reach the place,
And let him look upon her dying face!
Let him but say farewell! farewell, sweet love!
And once more hear her speak, and see her move,--
And ask her if she suffers where she lies,--
And kiss the lids down on her closing eyes,--
And he will be content.

He climbs and strives:

The strength is in his heart of twenty lives;
Across the leaf-strewn gaps he madly springs;
From branch to branch like some wild ape he swings;
Breasts, with hot effort, that cold rushing source
Of death and danger. With a giant's force
His bleeding hands and broken nails have clung
Round the gnarled slippery roots above him hung,
And now he's near,--he sees her through the leaves;
But a new horrid fear his mind receives:
The steed! his hoofs may crush that angel head!
No, Claud,--her favourite is already dead,
One shivering gasp thro' limbs that now stretch out like lead.

He's with her! is he dying too? his blood
Beats no more to and fro; his abstract mood
Weighs like a nightmare; something, well he knows,
Is horrible,--and still the horror grows;
But what it is, or how it came to pass,
Or why he lies half fainting on the grass,
Or what he strove to clutch at in his fall,
Or why he had no power for help to call,
This is confused and lost.

But Claud has heard

A sound like breathings from a sleeping bird
New-caged that day,--a weak disturbing sigh,

The whisper of a grief that cannot cry,--
Repeated, and then still; and then again
Repeated,--and a long low moan of pain.

The hunt is passing; through the arching glade
The hounds sweep on in flickering light and shade,
The cheery huntsman winds his rallying horn,
And voices shouting from his guests that morn
Keep calling, calling, 'Claud, the hunt is o'er,
Return we to the merry halls once more!'
Claud hears not; heeds not;--all is like a dream
Except that lady lying by the stream;
Above all tumult of uproarious sound
Comes the faint sigh that breathes along the ground,
Where pale as death in her returning life
Writhes the sweet angel whom he still calls wife.

He parts the masses of her golden hair,
He lifts her, helpless, with a shuddering care,
He looks into her face with awe-struck eyes;--
She dies--the darling of his soul--she dies!

You might have heard, through that thought's fearful shock,
The beating of his heart like some huge clock;
And then the strong pulse falter and stand still,
When lifted from that fear with sudden thrill
He bent to catch faint murmurs of his name,
Which from those blanched lips low and trembling came:
'Oh! Claud!' she said: no more--
But never yet,
Through all the loving days since first they met,
Leaped his heart's blood with such a yearning vow
That she was all in all to him, as now.
'Oh! Claud--the pain!'
'Oh! Gertrude, my beloved!'
Then faintly o'er her lips a wan smile moved,
Which dumbly spoke of comfort from his tone,
As though she felt half saved, not so to die alone.

Ah! happy they who in their grief or pain
Yearn not for some familiar face in vain;
Who in the sheltering arms of love can lie

Till human passion breathes its latest sigh;
Who, when words fail to enter the dull ear,
And when eyes cease from seeing forms most dear,
Still the fond clasping touch can understand,--
And sink to death from that detaining hand!

He sits and watches; and she lies and moans;
The wild stream rushes over broken stones;
The dead leaves flutter to the mossy earth;
Far-away echoes bring the hunters' mirth;
And the long hour creeps by--too long--too long;
Till the chance music of a peasant' song
Breaks the hard silence with a human hope,
And Claud starts up and gazes down the slope;
And from a wandering herdsman he obtains
The help whose want has chilled his anxious veins.
Into a simple litter then they bind
Thin cradling branches deftly intertwined;
And there they lay the lady as they found her,
With all her bright hair streaming sadly round her;
Her white lips parted o'er the pearly teeth
Like pictured saints', who die a martyr's death,--
And slowly bear her, like a corpse of clay,
Back to the home she left so blithe to-day.

The starry lights shine forth from tower and hall,
Stream through the gateway, glimmer on the wall,
And the loud pleasant stir of busy men
In courtyard and in stable sounds again.
And through the windows, as that death-bier passes,
They see the shining of the ruby glasses
Set at brief intervals for many a guest
Prepared to share the laugh, the song, the jest;
Prepared to drink, with many a courtly phrase,
Their host and hostess--'Health to the Garayes!'
Health to the slender, lithe, yet stalwart frame
Of Claud Marot--Count of that noble name;
Health to his lovely Countess: health--to her!
Scarce seems she now with faintest breath to stir:
Oh! half-shut eyes--oh! brow with torture damp,--
Will life's oil rise in that expiring lamp?
Are there yet days to come, or does he bend

Over a hope of which this is the end?

He shivers, and hot tears shut out the sight
Of that dear home for feasting made so bright;
The golden evening light is round him dying,
The dark rooks to their nests are slowly flying,
As underneath the portal, faint with fear,
He sees her carried, now so doubly dear;
'Save her!' is written in his anxious glances,
As the quick-summoned leech in haste advances.
'Save her!'--and through the gloom of midnight hours,
And through the hot noon, shut from air and flowers,
Young Claud sits patient--waiting day by day
For health for that sweet lady of Garaye.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Part II

A FIRST walk after sickness: the sweet breeze
That murmurs welcome in the bending trees,
When the cold shadowy foe of life departs,
And the warm blood flows freely through our hearts:
The smell of roses,--sound of trickling streams,
The elastic turf cross-barred with golden gleams,
That seems to lift, and meet our faltering tread;
The happy birds, loud singing overhead;
The glorious range of distant shade and light,
In blue perspective, rapturous to our sight,
Weary of draped curtains folding round,
And the monotonous chamber's narrow bound;
With,--best of all,--the consciousness at length,
In every nerve of sure returning strength:--

Long the dream stayed to cheer that darkened room,
That this should be the end of all that gloom!

Long, as the vacant life trained idly by,
She pressed her pillow with a restless sigh,--
'To-morrow, surely, I shall stronger feel!'
To-morrow! but the slow days onward steal,
And find her still with feverish aching head,
Still cramped with pain; still lingering in her bed;
Still sighing out the tedium of the time;
Still listening to the clock's recurring chime,
As though the very hours that struck were foes,
And might, but would not, grant complete repose.
Until the skilled physician,--sadly bold
From frequent questioning,--her sentence told!
That no good end could come to her faint yearning,--
That no bright hour should see her health returning,--
That changeful seasons,--not for one dark year,
But on through life,--must teach her how to bear:
For through all Springs, with rainbow-tinted showers,
And through all Summers, with their wealth of flowers,
And every Autumn, with its harvest-home,
And all white Winters of the time to come,--
Crooked and sick for ever she must be:

Her life of wild activity and glee
Was with the past, the future was a life
Dismal and feeble; full of suffering; rife
With chill denials of accustomed joy,
Continual torment, and obscure annoy.
Blighted in all her bloom,--her withered frame
Must now inherit age; young but in name.
Never could she, at close of some long day
Of pain that strove with hope, exulting lay
A tiny new-born infant on her breast,
And, in the soft lamp's glimmer, sink to rest,
The strange corporeal weakness sweetly blent
With a delicious dream of full content;
With pride of motherhood, and thankful prayers,
And a confused glad sense of novel cares,
And peeps into the future brightly given,
As though her babe's blue eyes turned earth to heaven!
Never again could she, when Claud returned
After brief absence, and her fond heart yearned
To see his earnest eyes, with upward glancing,
Greet her known windows, even while yet advancing,--
Fly with light footsteps down the great hall-stair,
And give him welcome in the open air
As though she were too glad to see him come,
To wait till he should enter happy home,
And there, quick-breathing, glowing, sparkling stand,
His arm round her slim waist; hand locked in hand;
The mutual kiss exchanged of happy greeting,
That needs no secrecy of lovers' meeting;
While, giving welcome also in their way,
Her dogs barked rustling round him, wild with play;
And voices called, and hasty steps replied,
And the sleek fiery steed was led aside,
And the grey seneschal came forth and smiled,
Who held him in his arms while yet a child;
And cheery jinglings from unfastened doors,
And vaulted echoes through long corridors,
And distant bells that thrill along the wires,
And stir of logs that heap up autumn fires,
Crowned the glad eager bustle that makes known
The Master's step is on his threshold-stone!

Never again those rides so gladly shared,
So much enjoyed,--in which so much was dared
To prove no peril from the gate or brook,--
Need bring the shadow of an anxious look,
To mar the pleasant ray of proud surprise
That shone from out those dear protecting eyes.
No more swift hurrying through the summer rain,
That showered light silver on the freshened plain,
Hung on the tassels of the hazel bough,
And plashed the azure of the river's flow.
No more glad climbing of the mountain height,
From whence a map, drawn out in lines of light,
Showed dotting villages, and distant spires,
And the red rows of metal-burning fires,
And purple covering woods, within which stand
White mansions of the nobles of the land.

No more sweet wanderings far from tread of men,
In the deep thickets of the sunny glen,
To see the vanished Spring bud forth again;
Its well remembered tufts of primrose set
Among the sheltered banks of violet;
Or in thatched summer-houses sit and dream,
Through gurgling gushes of the woodland stream;
Then, rested rise, and by the sunset ray
Saunter at will along the homeward way;
Pausing at each delight,--the singing loud
Of some sweet thrush, e'er lingering eve be done;
Or the pink shining of some casual cloud
That blushes deeper as it nears the sun.

The rough woodpath; the little rocky burn;
Nothing of this can ever now return.
The life of joy is over: what is left
Is a half life; a life of strength bereft;
The body broken from the yearning soul,
Never again to make a perfect whole!
Helpless desires, and cravings unfulfilled;
Bitter regret, in stormy weepings stilled;
Strivings whose easy effort used to bless,
Grown full of danger and sharp weariness;
This is the life whose dreadful dawn must rise

When the night lifts, within whose gloom she lies:
Hope, on whose lingering help she leaned so late,
Struck from her clinging by the sword of fate--
That wild word NEVER, to her shrinking gaze,
Seems written on the wall in fiery rays.

Never!--our helpless changeful natures shrink
Before that word as from the grave's cold brink!
Set us a term whereto we must endure,
And you shall find our crown of patience sure;
But the irrevocable smites us down;--
Helpless we lie before the eternal frown;
Waters of Marah whelm the blinded soul,
Stifle the heart, and drown our self-control.
So, when she heard the grave physician speak,
Horror crept through her veins, who, faint and weak,
And tortured by all motion, yet had lain
With a meek cheerfulness that conquered pain,
Hoping,--till that dark hour. Give back the hope,
Though years rise sad with intervening scope!
Scarce can those radiant eyes with sickly stare
Yet comprehend that sentence of despair:
Crooked and sick for ever! Crooked and sick!
She, in whose veins the passionate blood ran quick
As leaps the rivulet from the mountain height,
That dances rippling into Summer light;
She, in whose cheek the rich bloom always stayed,
And only deepened to a lovelier shade;
She, whose fleet limbs no exercise could tire,
When wild hill-climbing wooed her spirit higher!
Knell not above her bed this funeral chime;
Bid her be prisoner for a certain time;
Tell her blank years must waste in that changed home,
But not for ever,--not for life to come;
Let infinite torture be her daily guest,
But set a term beyond which shall be rest.

In vain! she sees that trembling fountain rise,
Tears of compassion in an old man's eyes;
And in low pitying tones, again he tells
The doom that sounds to her like funeral bells.
Long on his face her wistful gaze she kept;

Then dropped her head, and wildly moaned and wept;
Shivering through every limb, as lightning thought
Smote her with all the endless ruin wrought.
Never to be a mother! Never give
Another life beyond her own to live,
Never to see her husband bless their child,
Thinking (dear blessed thought!) like him it smiled:
Never again with Claud to walk or ride,
Partake his pleasures with a playful pride,
But cease from all companionship so shared,
And only have the hours his pity spared.
His pity--ah! his pity, would it prove
As warm and lasting as admiring love?
Or would her petty joys' late-spoken doom
Carry the great joy with them to joy's tomb?
Would all the hopes of life at once take wing?
The thought went through her with a secret sting,
And she repeated, with a moaning cry,
'Better to die, O God! 'Twere best to die!'
But we die not by wishing; in God's hour,
And not our own, do we yield up the power
To suffer or enjoy. The broken heart
Creeps through the world, encumbered by its clay;
While dearly loved and cherished ones depart,
Though prayer and sore lamenting clog their way.

She lived: she left that sick room, and was brought
Into the scenes of customary thought:
The banquet-room, where lonely sunshine slept,
Saw her sweet eyes look round before she wept;
The garden heard the slow wheels of her chair,
When noon-day heat had warmed the untried air;
The pictures she had smiled upon for years,
Met her gaze trembling through a mist of tears;
Her favourite dog, his long unspoken name
Hearing once more, with timid fawning came;
It seemed as if all things partook her blight,
And sank in shadow like a spell of night.

And she saw Claud,--Claud in the open day,
Who through dim sunsets, curtained half away,
And by the dawn, and by the lamp's pale ray

So long had watched her!
And Claud also saw,
That beauty which was once without a flaw;
And flushed,--but strove to hide the sense of shock,--
The feelings that some witchcraft seemed to mock.
Are those her eyes, those eyes so full of pain?
Her restless looks that hunt for ease in vain?
Is that her step, that halt uneven tread?
Is that her blooming cheek, so pale and dead?
Is that,--the querulous anxious mind that tells
Its little ills, and on each ailment dwells,--
The spirit alert which early morning stirred
Even as it rouses every gladsome bird,
Whose chorus of irregular music goes
Up with the dew that leaves the sun-touched rose?

Oh! altered, altered; even the smile is gone,
Which, like a sunbeam, once exulting shone!
Smiles have returned; but not the smiles of yore;
The joy, the youth, the triumph, are no more.
An anxious smile remains, that disconnects
Smiling from gladness; one that more dejects,
Than floods of passionate weeping, for it tries
To contradict the question of our eyes:
We say, 'Thou'rt pained, poor heart, and full of woe?'
It drops that shining veil, and answers 'No;'
Shrinks from the touch of unaccepted hands,
And while it grieves, a show of joy commands.
Wan shine such smiles;--as evening sunlight falls
On a deserted house whose empty walls
No longer echo to the children's play
Or voice of ruined inmates fled away;
Where wintry winds alone, with idle state,
Move the slow swinging of its rusty gate.

But something sadder even than her pain
Torments her now; and thrills each languid vein.
Love's tender instinct feels through every nerve
When love's desires, or love itself doth swerve.
All the world's praise re-echoed to the sky
Cancels not blame that shades a lover's eye;
All the world's blame, which scorn for scorn repays,

Fails to disturb the joy of lover's praise.
Ah! think not vanity alone doth deck
With rounded pearls the young girl's innocent neck,
Who in her duller days contented tries
The homely robe that with no rival vies,
But on the happy night she hopes to meet
The one to whom she comes with trembling feet,
With crimson roses decks her bosom fair,
Warm as the thoughts of love all glowing there,
Because she must his favourite colours wear;
And all the bloom and beauty of her youth
Can scarce repay, she thinks, her lover's truth.

Vain is the argument so often moved,
'Who feels no jealousy hath never loved;'
She whose quick fading comes before her tomb,
Is jealous even of her former bloom.
Restless she pines; because, to her distress,
One charm the more is now one claim the less
On his regard whose words are her chief treasures,
And by whose love alone her worth she measures.

Gertrude of La Garaye, thy heart is sore;
A worm is gnawing at the rose's core,
A doubt corrodeth all thy tender trust,
The freshness of thy day is choked in dust.
Not for the pain--although the pain be great,
Not for the change--though changed be all thy state;
But for a sorrow dumb and unrevealed,
Most from its cause with mournful care concealed--
From Claud--who goes and who returns with sighs
And gazes on his wife with wistful eyes,
And muses in his brief and cheerless rides
If her dull mood will mend; and inly chides
His own sad spirit, that sinks down so low,
Instead of lifting her from all her woe;
And thinks if he but loved her less, that he
Could cheer her drooping soul with gaiety--
But wonders evermore that Beauty's loss
To such a soul should seem so sore a cross.

Until one evening in that quiet hush

That lulls the falling day, when all the gush
Of various sounds seem buried with the sun,
He told his thought.
As winter streamlets run,
Freed by some sudden thaw, and swift make way
Into the natural channels where they play,
So leaped her young heart to his tender tone,
So, answering to his warmth, resumed her own;
And all her doubt and all her grief confest,
Leaning her faint head on his faithful breast.

'Not always, Claud, did I my beauty prize;
Thy words first made it precious in my eyes,
And till thy fond voice made the gift seem rare,
Nor tongue nor mirror taught me I was fair.
I recked no more of beauty in that day
Of happy girlishness and childlike play,
Than some poor woodland bird who stays his flight
On some low bough when summer days are bright,
And in that pleasant sunshine sits and sings,
And breaks the plumage of his glistening wings,
Recks of the passer-by who stands to praise
His feathered smoothness and his thrilling lays.
But now, I make my moan--I make my moan--
I weep the brightness lost, the beauty gone;
Because, now, fading is to fall from thee,
As the dead fruit falls blighted from the tree;
For thee,--not vanished loveliness,--I weep;
My beauty was a spell, thy love to keep;
For I have heard and read how men forsake
When time and tears that gift of beauty take,
Nor care although the heart they leave may break!'

A husband's love was there--a husband's love,--
Strong, comforting, all other loves above;
On her bowed neck he laid his tender hand,
And his voice steadied to his soul's command:
'Oh! thou mistaken and unhappy child,
Still thy complainings, for thy words are wild.
Thy beauty, though so perfect, was but one
Of the bright ripples dancing to the sun,
Which, from the hour I hoped to call thee wife,

Glanced down the silver stream of happy life.
Whatever change Time's heavy clouds may make,
Those are the waters which my thirst shall slake;
River of all my hopes thou wert and art;
The current of thy being bears my heart;
Whether it sweep along in shine or shade,
By barren rocks, or banks in flowers arrayed,
Foam with the storm, or glide in soft repose,--
In that deep channel, love unswerving flows!
How canst thou dream of beauty as a thing
On which depends the heart's own withering?
Lips budding red with tints of vernal years,
And delicate lids of eyes that shed no tears,
And light that falls upon the shining hair
As though it found a second sunbeam there,--
These must go by, my Gertrude, must go by;
The leaf must wither and the flower must die;
The rose can only have a rose's bloom;
Age would have wrought thy wondrous beauty's doom;
A little sooner did that beauty go--
A little sooner--Darling, take it so;
Nor add a strange despair to all this woe;
And take my faith, by changes unremoved,
To thy last hour of age and blight, beloved!

But she again,--'Alas! not from distrust
I mourn, dear Claud, nor yet to thee unjust.
I love thee: I believe thee: yea, I know
Thy very soul is wrung to see my woe;
The earthquake of compassion trembles still
Within its depths, and conquers natural will.
But after,--after,--when the shock is past,--
When cruel Time, who flies to change so fast,
Hath made my suffering an accustomed thing,
And only left me slowly withering;
Then will the empty days rise chill and lorn,
The lonely evening, the unwelcome morn,
Until thy path at length be brightly crost
By some one holding all that I have lost;
Some one with youthful eyes, enchanting, bright,
Full as the morning of a liquid light;
And while my pale lip stiff and sad remains,

Her smiles shall thrill like sunbeams through thy veins:
I shall fade down, and she, with simple art,
All bloom and beauty, dance into thy heart!
Then, then, my Claud, shall I--at length alone--
Recede from thee with an unnoticed moan,
Sink where none heed me, and be seen no more,
Like waves that fringe the Netherlandish shore,
Which roll un murmuring to the flat low land,
And sigh to death in that monotonous sand.'

Again his earnest hand on hers he lays,
With love and pain and wonder in his gaze.

'Oh, darling! bitter word and bitter thought
What dæmon to thy trusting heart hath brought?
It may be thus within some sensual breast,
By passion's fire, not true love's power possest;
The creature love, that never lingers late,
A springtide thirst for some chance-chosen mate.
Oh! my companion, 'twas not so with me;
Not in the days long past, nor now shall be.
The drunken dissolute hour of Love's sweet cup,
When eyes are wild, and mantling blood is up,
Even in my youth to me was all unknown:
Until I truly loved, I was alone.
I asked too much of intellect and grace,
To pine, though young, for every pretty face,
Whose passing brightness to quick fancies made
A sort of sunshine in the idle shade;
Beauties who starred the earth like common flowers,
The careless eglantines of wayside bowers.
I lingered till some blossom rich and rare
Hung like a glory on the scented air,
Enamouring at once the heart and eye,
So that I paused, and could not pass it by.
Then woke the passionate love within my heart,
And only with my life shall that depart;
'Twas not so sensual strong, so loving weak,
To ebb when ebbs the rose-tinge on thy cheek;
Fade with thy fading, weakening day by day
Till thy locks silver with a dawning grey:
No, Gertrude, trust me, for thou may'st believe,

A better faith is that which I receive;
Sacred I'll hold the sacred name of wife,
And love thee to the sunset verge of life!
Yea, shall so much of empire o'er man's soul
Live in a wanton's smile, and no control
Bind down his heart to keep a steadier faith,
For links that are to last from life to death?
Let those who can, in transient love rejoice,--
Still to new hopes breathe forth successive sighs,--
Give me the music of the accustomed voice,
And the sweet light of long familiar eyes!

He ceased. But she, for all her fervent speech,
Sighed as she listened. 'Claud, I cannot reach
The summit of the hope where thou wouldst set me,
And all I crave is never to forget me!
Wedded I am to pain and not to thee,
Thy life's companion I no more can be,
For thou remainest all thou wert--but I
Am a fit bride for Death, and long to die.
Yea, long for death; for thou wouldst miss me then
More even than now, in mountain and in glen;
And musing by the white tomb where I lay,
Think of the happier time and earlier day,
And wonder if the love another gave
Equalled the passion buried in that grave.'

Then with a patient tenderness he took
That pale wife in his arms, with yearning look:
'Oh! dearer now than when thy girlish tongue
Faltered consent to love while both were young,
Weep no more foolish tears, but lift thy head;
Those drops fall on my heart like molten lead;
And all my soul is full of vain remorse,
Because I let thee take that dangerous course,
Share in the chase, pursue with horn and hound,
And follow madly o'er the roughened ground.
Not lightly did I love, nor lightly choose;
Whate'er thou lovest I will also lose;
If bride of Death,--being first my chosen bride,--
I will await death, lingering by thy side;
And God, He knows, who reads all human thought,

And by whose will this bitter hour was brought,
How eagerly, could human pain be shifted,
I would lie low, and thou once more be lifted
To walk in beauty as thou didst before,
And smile upon the welcome world once more.
Oh! loved even to the brim of love's full fount,
Wilt thou set nothing to firm faith's account?
Choke back thy tears which are thy bitter smart,
Lean thy dear head upon my aching heart;
It may be God, who saw our careless life,
Not sinful, yet not blameless, my sweet wife,
(Since all we thought of, in our youth's bright May,
Was but the coming joy from day to day
Hath blotted out all joy to bid us learn
That this is not our home; and make us turn
From the enchanted earth, where much was given,
To higher aims, and a forgotten heaven.'

So spoke her love--and wept in spite of words;
While her heart echoed all his heart's accords,
And leaning down, she said with whispering sigh,
'I sinned, my Claud, in wishing so to die.'
Then they, who oft in Love's delicious bowers
Had fondly wasted glad and passionate hours,
Kissed with a mutual moan:--but o'er their lips
Love's light passed clear, from under Life's eclipse.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Part Iii

NEVER again! When first that sentence fell
From lips so loth the bitter truth to tell,
Death seemed the balance of its burdening care,
The only end of such a strange despair.
To live deformed; enfeebled; still to sigh
Through changeless days that o'er the heart go by
Colourless,--formless,--melting as they go
Into a dull and unrecorded woe,--
Why strive for gladness in such dreary shade?
Why seek to feel less cheerless, less afraid?
What recks a little more or less of gloom,
When a continual darkness is our doom?
But custom, which, to unused eyes that dwell
Long in the blankness of a prison cell,
At length shows glimmerings through some ruined hole,--
Trains to endurance the imprisoned soul;
And teaching how with deepest gloom to cope,
Bids patience light her lamp, when sets the sun of hope.

And e'en like one who sinks to brief repose
Cumbered with mournfulness from many woes;
Who, restless dreaming, full of horror sleeps,
And with a worse than waking anguish weeps,
Till in his dream some precipice appear
Which he must face, however great his fear:
Who stepping on those rocks, then feels them break
Beneath him,--and, with shrieks, leaps up awake;
And seeing but the grey unwelcome morn,
And feeling but the usual sense forlorn,
Of loss and dull remembrance of known grief,
Melts into tears that partly bring relief,
Because, though misery holds him, yet his dreams
More dreadful were than all around him seems:--
So, in the life grown real of loss and woe,
She woke to crippled days; which, sad and slow
And infinitely weary as they were,
At first, appeared less hard than fancy deemed, to bear.
But as those days rolled on, of grinding pain,
Of wild untamed regrets, and yearnings vain,

Sad Gertrude grew to weep with restless tears
For all the vanished joys of blighted years.
And most she mourned with feverish piteous pining,
When o'er the land the summer sun was shining;
And all the volumes and the missals rare,
Which Claud had gathered with a tender care,
Seemed nothing to the book of nature, spread
Around her helpless feet and weary head.

Oh! woodland paths she ne'er again may see,
Oh! tossing branches of the forest tree,
Oh! loveliest banks in all the land of France,
Glassing your shadows in the silvery Rance;
Oh! river with your swift yet quiet tide,
Specked with white sails that seem in dreams to glide;
Oh! ruddy orchards, basking on the hills,
Whose plenteous fruit the thirsty flagon fills;
And oh! ye winds, which, free and unconfined,
No sickness poisons, and no heart can bind,--
Restore her to enjoyment of the earth!
Echo again her songs of careless mirth,
Those little Breton songs so wildly sweet,
Fragments of music strange and incomplete,
Her small red mouth went warbling by the way
Through the glad roamings of her active day.

It may not be! Blighted are summer hours!
The bee goes booming through the plats of flowers,
The butterfly its tiny mate pursues
With rapid fluttering of its painted hues,
The thin-winged gnats their transient time employ
Reeling through sunbeams in a dance of joy,
The small field-mouse with wide transparent ears
Comes softly forth, and softly disappears,
The dragon-fly hangs glittering on the reed,
The spider swings across his filmy thread,
And gleaming fishes, darting to and fro,
Make restless silver in the pools below.
All these poor lives--these lives of small account,
Feel the ethereal thrill within them mount;
But the great human life,--the life Divine,--
Rests in dull torture, heavy and supine,

And the bird's song, by Garaye's walls of stone,
Crosses, within, the irrepressible moan!
The slow salt tears, half weakness and half grief,
That sting the eyes before they bring relief,
And which with weary lids she strives in vain
To prison back upon her aching brain,
Fall down the lady's cheek,--her heart is breaking:
A mournful sleep is hers; a hopeless waking;
And oft, in spite of Claud's beloved rebuke,
When first the awful wish her spirit shook,--
She dreams of DEATH,--and of that quiet shore
In the far world where eyes shall weep no more,
And where the soundless feet of angels pass,
With floating lightness o'er the sea of glass.

Nor is she sole in gloom. Claud too hath lost
His power to soothe her,--all his thoughts are tost
As in a storm of sadness: shall he speak
To her, who lies so faint, and lone, and weak,
Of pleasant walks and rides? or yet describe
The merry sayings of that careless tribe
Of friends and boon companions now unseen,--
Or the wild beauty of the forest green,--
Or daring feats and hair-breadth 'scapes, which they
Who are not crippled, think a thing for play?

He dare not:--oft without apparent cause
He checks his speaking with a faltering pause;
Oft when she bids him, with a mournful smile,
By stories such as these the hour beguile,
And he obeys--only because she bids--
He sees the large tears welling 'neath the lids.
Or if a moment's gaiety return
To his young heart that scarce can yet unlearn
Its habits of delight in all things round,
And he grows eager on some subject found
In their discourse, linked with the outward world,
Till with a pleasant smile his lip is curled,--
Even with her love she smites him back to pain!
Upon his hand her tears and kisses rain;
And with a suffocated voice she cries,
'O Claud!--the old bright days!'

And then he sighs,
And with a wistful heart makes new endeavour
To cheer or to amuse;--and so for ever,
Till in his brain the grief he tries to cheat,
A dreary mill-wheel circling seems to beat,
And drive out other thoughts--all thoughts but one:
That he and she are both alike undone,--
That better were their mutual fate, if when
That leap was taken in the fatal glen,
Both had been found, released from pain and dread,
In the rough waters of the torrent's bed,
And greeted pitying eyes, with calm smiles of the Dead!

A spell is on the efforts each would make,
With willing spirit, for the other's sake:
Through some new path of thought he fain would move,--
And she her languid hours would fain employ,--
But bitter grows the sweetness of their love,--
And a lament lies under all their joy.
She, watches Claud,--bending above the page;
Thinks him grown pale, and wearying with his care;
And with a sigh his promise would engage
For happy exercise and summer air:
He, watches her, as sorrowful she lies,
And thinks she dreams of woman's hope denied;
Of the soft gladness of a young child's eyes,
And pattering footsteps on the terrace wide,--
Where sunshine sleeps, as in a home for light,
And glittering peacocks make a rainbow show,--
But which seems sad, because that terrace bright
Must evermore remain as lone as now.

And either tries to hide the thoughts that wring
Their secret hearts; and both essay to bring
Some happy topic, some yet lingering dream,
Which they with cheerful words shall make their theme;
But fail,--and in their wistful eyes confess
All their words never own of hopelessness.

Was then DESPAIR the end of all this woe?
Far off the angel voices answer, No!
Devils despair, for they believe and tremble;

But man believes and hopes. Our griefs resemble
Each other but in this. Grief comes from Heaven;
Each thinks his own the bitterest trial given;
Each wonders at the sorrows of his lot;
His neighbour's sufferings presently forgot,
Though wide the difference which our eyes can see
Not only in grief's kind, but its degree.
God grants to some, all joys for their possession,
Nor loss, nor cross, the favoured mortal mourns;
While some toil on, outside those bounds of blessing,
Whose weary feet for ever tread on thorns.
But over all our tears God's rainbow bends;
To all our cries a pitying ear He lends;
Yea, to the feeble sound of man's lament
How often have His messengers been sent!
No barren glory circles round His throne,
By mercy's errands were His angels known;
Where hearts were heavy, and where eyes were dim,
There did the brightness radiate from Him;
God's pity,--clothed in an apparent form,--
Starred with a polar light the human storm,
Floated o'er tossing seas man's sinking bark,
And for all dangers built one sheltering ark.

When a slave's child lay dying, parched with thirst,
Till o'er the arid waste a fountain burst,--
When Abraham's mournful hand upheld the knife
To smite the silver cord of Isaac's life,--
When faithful Peter in his prison slept,--
When lions to the feet of Daniel crept,--
When the tried Three walked through the furnace glare,
Believing God was with them, even there,--
When to Bethesda's sunrise-smitten wave
Poor trembling cripples crawl'd their limbs to lave;--
In all the various forms of human trial,
Brimming that cup, filled from a bitter vial,
Which even the suffering Christ with fainting cry
Under God's will had shudderingly past by:--

To hunger, pain, and thirst, and human dread;
Imprisonment; sharp sorrow for the dead;
Deformed contraction; burdensome disease;

Humbling and fleshly ill!--to all of these
The shining messengers of comfort came,--
God's angels,--healing in God's holy name.

And when the crowning pity sent to earth
The Man of Sorrows, in mysterious birth;
And the angelic tones with one accord
Made loving chorus to proclaim the Lord;
Was Isaac's guardian there, and he who gave
Hagar the sight of that cool gushing wave?
Did the defender of the youthful Three,
And Peter's usher, join that psalmody?
With him who at the dawn made healing sure,
Troubling the waters with a freshening cure;
And those, the elect, to whom the task was given
To offer solace to the Son of Heaven,
When,--mortal tremors by the Immortal felt,--
Pale, 'neath the Syrian olives, Jesu knelt,
Alone,--'midst sleeping followers warned in vain;
Alone with God's compassion, and His pain!

Cease we to dream. Our thoughts are yet more dim
Than children's are, who put their trust in Him.
All that our wisdom knows, or ever can,
Is this: that God hath pity upon man;
And where His Spirit shines in Holy Writ,
The great word COMFORTER comes after it.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Part Iv

SILENT old gateway! whose two columns stand
Like simple monuments on either hand;
No trellised iron-work, with pleasant view
Of trim-set flowery gardens shining through;
No bolts to bar unmasked intruders out;
No well-oiled hinge whose sound, like one low note
Of music, tells the listening hearts that yearn,
Expectant of dear footsteps, where to turn;
No ponderous bell whose loud vociferous tone
Into the rose-decked lodge hath echoing gone,
Bringing the porter forth with brief delay,
To spread those iron wings that check the way;
Nothing but ivy-leaves, and crumbling stone;
Silent old gateway,--even thy life is gone!

But ere those columns, lost in ivvied shade,
Black on the midnight sky their forms portrayed;
And ere thy gate, by damp weeds overtopped,
Swayed from its rusty fastenings and then dropped,--
When it stood portal to a living home,
And saw the living faces go and come,
What various minds, and in what various moods,
Crossed the fair paths of these sweet solitudes!

Old gateway, thou hast witnessed times of mirth,
When light the hunter's gallop beat the earth;
When thy quick wakened echo could but know
Laughter and happy voices, and the flow
Of jocund spirits, when the pleasant sight
Of broidered dresses (careless youth's delight,)
Trooped by at sunny morn, and back at falling night.

And thou hast witnessed triumph,--when the Bride
Passed through,--the stately Bridegroom at her side;
The village maidens scattering many a flower,
Bright as the bloom of living beauty's dower,
With cheers and shouts that bid the soft tears rise
Of joy exultant, in her downcast eyes.
And thou hadst gloom, when,--fallen from beauty's state,--

Her mournful litter rustled through the gate,
And the wind waved its branches as she past,--
And the dishevelled curls around her cast,
Rose on that breeze and kissed, before they fell,
The iron scroll-work with a wild farewell!

And thou hast heard sad dirges chanted low,
And sobbings loud from those who saw with woe
The feet borne forward by a funeral train,
Which homeward never might return again,
Nor in the silence of the frozen nights
Reclaim that dwelling and its lost delights;
But lowly lie, however wild love's yearning,
The dust that clothed them, unto dust returning.
Through thee, how often hath been borne away
Man's share of dual life--the senseless clay!
Through thee how oft hath hastened, glad and bold,
God's share--the eager spirit in that mould;
But neither life nor death hath left a trace
On the strange silence of that vacant place.

Not vacant in the day of which I write!
Then rose thy pillared columns fair and white;
Then floated out the odorous pleasant scent
Of cultured shrubs and flowers together blent,
And o'er the trim-kept gravel's tawny hue
Warm fell the shadows and the brightness too.

Count Claud is at the gate, but not alone:
Who is his friend?
They pass, and both are gone.
Gone, by the bright warm path, to those sad halls
Where now his slackened step in sadness falls;
Sadness of every day and all day long,
Spite of the summer glow and wild bird's song.

Who is that slow-paced Priest to whom he bows
Courteous precedence, as he sighing shows
The oriel window where his Gertrude dwells,
And all her mournful story briefly tells?
Who is that friend whose hand with gentle clasp
Answers his own young agonizing grasp,

And looks upon his burst of passionate tears
With calmer grieving of maturer years?

Oh! well round that friend's footsteps might be breathed
The blessing which the Italian poet wreathed
Into a garland gay of graceful words,
As full of music as a lute's low chords;
'Blessed be the year, the time, the day, the hour,'
When He passed through those gates, whose gentle power
Lifted with ministrant zeal the leaden grief,
Probed the soul's festering wounds and brought relief,
And taught the sore vexed spirits where to find
Balm that could heal, and thoughts that cheered the mind.

Prior of Benedictines, did thy prayers
Bring down a blessing on them unawares,
While yet their faces were to thee unknown,
And thou wert kneeling in thy cell alone,
Where thy meek litanies went up to Heaven,
That ALL who suffered might have comfort given,
And thy heart yearned for all thy fellow-men,
Smitten with sorrows far beyond thy ken?

He sits by Gertrude's couch, and patient listens
To her wild grieving voice;--his dark eye glistens
With tearful sympathy for that young wife,
Telling the torture of her broken life;
And when he answers her she seems to know
The peace of resting by a river's flow.
Tender his words, and eloquently wise;
Mild the pure fervour of his watchful eyes;
Meek with serenity of constant prayer
The luminous forehead, high and broad and bare;
The thin mouth, though not passionless, yet still;
With a sweet calm that speaks an angel's will,
Resolving service to his God's behest,
And ever musing how to serve Him best.
Not old, nor young; with manhood's gentlest grace;
Pale to transparency the pensive face,
Pale not with sickness, but with studious thought,
The body tasked, the fine mind overwrought;
With something faint and fragile in the whole,

As though 'twere but a lamp to hold a soul.
Such was the friend who came to La Garaye,
And Claud and Gertrude lived to bless the day!

There is a love that hath not lover's wooing,
Love's wild caprices, nor love's hot pursuing;
But yet a clinging and persistent love,
Tenderly binding, most unapt to rove;
As full of fervent and adoring dreams,
As the more gross and earthlier passion seems,
But far more single-hearted; from its birth,
With humblest notions of unequal worth!
Guided and guidable; with thankful trust;
Timid, lest all complaint should be unjust;
Circling,--a lesser orb,--around its star
With tributary love, that dare not war.
Such is the love which aged men inspire;
Priests, whose pure hearts are full of sacred fire;
And friends of dear friends dead,--whom trembling we admire.
A touch of mystery lights the rising morn
Of love for those who lived ere we were born;
Whose eyes the eyes of ancestors have seen;
Whose voice hath answered voices that have been;
Whose words show wisdom gleaned in days gone by,
As glory flushes from a sunset sky.
Our judgment leans upon them, feeling weak;
Our hearts lift yearning towards them as they speak,
And silently we listen, lest we lose
Some teaching truth, and benefits refuse.

With such a love did Gertrude learn to greet
The gentle Prior; whose slow-pacing feet
Each day of her sad life made welcome sound
Across the bright path of her garden ground.
And ere the golden summer past away,
And leaves were yellowing with a pale decay;
Ere, drenched by sweeping storms of autumn rain,
In turbulent billows lay the beaten grain;
Ere Breton orchards, ripening, turned to red
All the green freshness which the spring-time shed,
Mocking the glory which the sunset fills
With stripes of crimson o'er the painted hills,--

Her thoughts submitted to his thoughts' control,
As 'twere an elder brother of her soul.

Well she remembered how that soul was stirred,
By the rebuking of his gentle word,
When in her faltering tones complaint was given,
'What had I done; to earn such fate from Heaven?'

'Oh, Lady! here thou liest, with all that wealth
Or love can do to cheer thee back to health;
With books that woo the fancies of thy brain,
To happier thoughts than brooding over pain;
With light, with flowers, with freshness, and with food,
Dainty and chosen, fit for sickly mood:
With easy couches for thy languid frame,
Bringing real rest, and not the empty name;
And silent nights, and soothed and comforted days;
And Nature's beauty spread before thy gaze:--

'What have the Poor done, who instead of these
Suffer in foulest rags each dire disease,
Creep on the earth, and lean against the stones,
When some disjuncting torture racks their bones;
And groan and grope throughout the wearying night,
Denied the rich man's easy luxury,--light?
What has the Babe done,--who, with tender eyes,
Blinks at the world a little while, and dies;
Having first stretched, in wild convulsive leaps,
His fragile limbs, which ceaseless suffering keeps
In ceaseless motion, till the hour when death
Clenches his little heart, and stops his breath?
What has the Idiot done, whose half-formed soul
Scarce knows the seasons as they onward roll;
Who flees with gibbering cries, and bleeding feet,
From idle boys who pelt him in the street!
What have the fair girls done, whose early bloom
Wasting like flowers that pierce some creviced tomb,
Plants that have only known a settled shade,
Lives that for others' uses have been made,--
Toil on from morn to night, from night to morn,
For those chance pets of Fate, the wealthy born;
Bound not to murmur, and bound not to sin,

However bitter be the bread they win?
What hath the Slandered done, who vainly strives
To set his life among untarnished lives?
Whose bitter cry for justice only fills
The myriad echoes lost among life's hills;
Who hears for evermore the self-same lie
Clank clog-like at his heel when he would try
To climb above the loathly creeping things
Whose venom poisons, and whose fury stings,
And so slides back; for ever doomed to hear
The old witch, Malice, hiss with serpent leer
The old hard falsehood to the old bad end,
Helped, it may be, by some traducing friend,
Or one rocked with him on one mother's breast,--
Learned in the art of where to smite him best.

'What we must suffer, proves not what was done:
So taught the God of Heaven's anointed Son,
Touching the blind man's eyes amid a crowd
Of ignorant seething hearts who cried aloud
The blind, or else his parents, had offended;
That was Man's preaching; God that preaching mended.
But whatsoe'er we suffer, being still
Fixed and appointed by the heavenly will,
Behoves us bear with patience as we may
The Potter's moulding of our helpless clay.
Much, Lady, hath He taken, but He leaves
What outweighs all for which thy spirit grieves;
No greater gift lies even in God's control
Than the large love that fills a human soul.
If taking that, He left thee all the rest,
Would not vain anguish wring thy pining breast?
If, taking all, that dear love yet remains,
Hath it not balm for all thy bitter pains?

'Oh, Lady! there are lonely deaths that make
The heart that thinks upon them burn and ache;
And such I witnessed on the purple shore
Where scorched Vesuvius rears his summit hoar,
And Joan's gaunt palace, with its skull-like eyes,
And barbarous and cruel memories,
For ever sees the blue wave lap its feet,

And the white glancing of the fishers' fleet.
The death of the FORSAKEN! lone he lies,
His sultry noon, fretted by slow black flies,
That settle on pale cheek and quivering brow
With a soft torment. The increasing glow
Brings the full shock of day; the hot air grows
Impure alike from action and repose;
Bruised fruit, and faded flowers, and dung and dust,
The rich man's stew-pan, and the beggar's crust,
Poison the faint lips opening hot and dry,
Loathing the plague they breathe with gasping sigh,
The thick oppression of its stifling heat,
The busy murmur of the swarming street,
The roll of chariots and the rush of feet;
With the tormenting music's nasal twang
Distorting melodies his loved ones sang!
'Then comes a change--not silence, but less sound,
Less echo of hard footsteps on the ground,
Less rolling thunder of vociferous words,
As though the clang struck out in crashing chords
Fell into single notes, that promise rest
To the wild fever of the labouring breast.

'Last cometh on the night--the hot, bad night,
With less of all--of heat, of dust, of light;
And leaves him watching, with a helpless stare,--
The theme of no one's hope and no one's care!
The cresset lamp, that stands so grim and tall,
Widens and wavers on the upper wall;
And calming down from day's perpetual storm
His thoughts' dark chaos takes some certain form,
And he begins to pine for joys long lost,
Or hopes unrealized;--till bruised and tost
He sends his soul vain journeys through the gloom
For radiant eyes that should have wept his doom.
Then clasps his hands in prayer, and for a time,
Gives aspirations unto things sublime:
But sinking to some speck of sorrow found,
Some point which, like a little festering wound,
Holds all his share of pain,--he gazes round,
Seeking some vanished form, some hand whose touch
Would almost cure him; and he yearns so much,

That passionate painful sobs his breathing choke,
And the thin bubble of his dream hath broke!

'So, still again; and all alone again;
Not even a vision present with his pain.
The hot real round him; the forsaken bed;
The tumbled pillow, and the restless head.
The drink so near his couch, and yet too far
For feeble hands to reach; the cold fine star
That glitters through the unblinded window-pane,
And with slow gliding leaves it blank again;
Till morning flushing through the world once more,
Brings the dull likeness of the day before,--
The first vague freshness of new wings unfurled,
As though Hope lighted, somewhere, in the world;
The heat of noon; the fading down of light;
The glimmering evening, and the restless night.
And then again the morning; and the noon;
The evening and the morning;--till a boon
Of double weakness sinks him, and he knows
One or two other days shall end his woes:
One or two mournful evenings, glimmering grey,
One or two hopeless risings of new day.
One or two noons too weak to brush off flies,
One or two nights of flickering feeble sighs,
One or two shivering breaks of helpless tears,
One or two yearnings for forgotten years,--
And then the end of all, then the great change,
When the freed soul, let loose at length to range,
Leaves the imprisoning and imprisoned clay,
And soars far out of reach of sorrow and decay!'

Then Claud, who watched the faint and pitying flush
Tint her transparent cheek; with sudden gush
Of manly ardour, spoke of soldier deaths;
Of scattered slain who lay on cold bleak heaths:
Of prisoners pining for their native land
After the battle's vain and desperate stand;
Brave hearts in dungeons,--rusting like their swords;
And wounded men,--midst whom the rifling hordes
Of spoil-desiring searchers crept and smote,--
Who vainly heard the rallying bugle's note,

Or the quick march of their companions pass;
Sunk, dumb and dying, on the trampled grass.

Then also, the meek anxious Prior told
Of war's worst horrors,--when in freezing cold,
Or in the torrid heat, men lay and groaned,
With none to hear or heed them when they moaned;
Or, with half-help,--borne in a comrade's arms
To where, all huddled up in feverish swarms,
The dying numbers mocked the scanty skill
Of wearied surgeons,--crowding, crowding still,
With different small degrees of lingering breath,
Asking for instant aid, or choked in death.
Order, and cleanliness, and thought, and care,
The hush of quiet, or the sound of prayer,
These things were not:--nor, from the exhausted store,
Medicines and balms, to help the troubling sore;
Nor soft cool lint, like dew on parched-up ground,
Clothing the weary, burning, festering wound;
Nor delicate linen; nor fresh cooling drinks
To woo the fever-cracking lip which shrinks
Even from such solace; nor the presence blest
Of holy women watching broken rest,
And gliding past them through the wakeful night,
Like her whose Shadow made the soldier's light.

And as the three discoursed of things like these,
Sweet Gertrude felt her mind grow ill at ease.
The words of Claud,--that God took what was given
To teach their hearts to turn from earth to heaven;
The Prior's words, of tender mild appeal,
Teaching her how for others' woes to feel;
Weighed on her heart; till all the past life seemed
Thankless and thoughtless: and the lady dreamed
Of succour to the helpless, and of deeds
Pious and merciful, whose beauty breeds
Good deeds in others, copying what is done,
And ending all by earnest thought begun.

Nor idly dreamed. Where once the shifting throng
Of merry playmates met, with dance and song,--
Long rows of simple beds the place proclaim

A Hospital, in all things but the name.
In that same castle where the lavish feast
Lay spread, that fatal night, for many a guest,
The sickly poor are fed! Beneath that porch
Where Claud shed tears that seemed the lids to scorch,
Seeing her broken beauty carried by
Like a crushed flower that now has but to die,
The self-same Claud now stands and helps to guide
Some ragged wretch to rest and warmth inside.
But most to those, the hopeless ones, on whom
Early or late her own sad spoken doom,
Hath been pronounced; the Incurables; she spends
Her lavish pity, and their couch attends.
Her home is made their home; her wealth their dole;
Her busy courtyard hears no more the roll
Of gilded vehicles, or pawing steeds,
But feeble steps of those whose bitter needs
Are their sole passport. Through that gateway press
All varying forms of sickness and distress,
And many a poor worn face that hath not smiled
For years,--and many a feebled crippled child,--
Blesses the tall white portal where they stand,
And the dear Lady of the liberal hand.

Not in a day such happy change was brought;
Not in a day the works of mercy wrought:
But in God's gradual time. As Winter's chain
Melts from the earth and leaves it green again:
As the fresh bud a crimsoning beauty shows
From the black briars of a last year's rose:
So the full season of her love matures,
And her one illness breeds a thousand cures.
Her soft eyes looking into other eyes,
Bleared, and defaced to blinding cavities,
Weary not in their task; nor turn away
With a sick loathing from their glimmering ray.
Her small white comforting hand,--no longer hid
In pearl-embroidered gauntlet,--lifts the lid
Outworn with labour in the bitter fields,
And with a tender skill some healing yields;
Bathes the swoln redness,--shades unwelcome light;--
And into morning turns their threatening night.

And Claud, her eager Claud, with fervent heart,
Earnest in all things, nobly does his part;
His high intelligence hath mastered much
That baffled science: with a surgeon's touch
He treats,--himself,--the hurts from many a wound,
And, by deep study, novel cures hath found.
But good and frank and simple he remains,
Though a King's notice lauds successful pains;
And, echoing through his grateful country, fame
Sends to far nations noble Garaye's name.
Oh! loved and revered long that name shall be,
Though, crumbled on the soil of Brittany,
No stone, at last, of that pale Ruin shows
Where stood the gateway of his joys and woes.
For, in the Breton town, the good deeds done
Yield a fresh harvest still, from sire to son:
Still thrives the noble Hospital that gave
Shelter to those whom none from pain could save;
Still to the schools the ancient chiming clock
Calls the poor yeanelings of a simple flock:
Still the calm Refuge for the fallen and lost
(Whom love a blight and not a blessing crost,)
Sends out a voice to woo the grieving breast,--
Come unto me, ye weary, and find rest!
And still the gentle nurses,--vowed to give
Their aid to all who suffer and yet live,--
Go forth in show-white cap and sable gown,
Tending the sick and hungry in the town,
And show dim pictures on their quiet walls
Of those who dwelt in Garaye's ruined halls!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lady Of La Garaye - Prologue

RUINS! A charm is in the word:
It makes us smile, it makes us sigh,
'Tis like the note of some spring bird
Recalling other Springs gone by,
And other wood-notes which we heard
With some sweet face in some green lane,
And never can so hear again!
Ruins! They were not desolate
To us,--the ruins we remember:
Early we came and lingered late,

Through bright July, or rich September;
With young companions wild with glee,
We feasted 'neath some spreading tree--
And looked into their laughing eyes,
And mocked the echo for replies.
Oh! eyes--and smiles--and days of yore,
Can nothing your delight restore?
Return!
Return? In vain we listen;
Those voices have been lost to earth!
Our hearts may throb--our eyes may glisten,
They'll call no more in love or mirth.
For, like a child sent out to play,
Our youth hath had its holiday,
And silence deepens where we stand
Lone as in some foreign land,
Where our language is not spoken,
And none know our hearts are broken.

Ruins! How we loved them then!
How we loved the haunted glen
Which grey towers overlook,
Mirrored in the glassy brook.
How we dreamed,--and how we guessed,
Looking up, with earnest glances,
Where the black crow built its nest,
And we built our wild romances;
Tracing in the crumbled dwelling

Bygone tales of no one's telling!

This was the Chapel: that the stair:
Here, where all lies damp and bare,
The fragrant thurible was swung,
The silver lamp in beauty hung,
And in that mass of ivied shade
The pale nuns sang--the abbot prayed.

This was the Kitchen. Cold and blank
The huge hearth yawns; and wide and high
The chimney shows the open sky;
There daylight peeps through many a crack
Where birds immund find shelter dank,
And when the moonlight shineth through,
Echoes the wild tu-whit tu-whoo
Of mournful owls, whose languid flight
Scarce stirs the silence of the night.

This is the Courtyard,--damp and drear!
The men-at-arms were mustered here;
Here would the fretted war-horse bound,
Starting to hear the trumpet sound;
And Captains, then of warlike fame,
Clanked and glittered as they came.
Forgotten names! forgotten wars!
Forgotten gallantry and scars!
How is your little busy day
Perished and crushed and swept away!

Here is the Lady's Chamber, whence
With looks of lovely innocence
Some heroine our fancy dresses
In golden locks or raven tresses,
And pearl embroidered silks and stuffs,
And quaintly quilted sleeves and ruffs,
Looked forth to see retainers go,
Or trembled at the assaulting foe.

This was the Dungeon; deep and dark!
Where the starved prisoner moaned in vain
Until Death left him, stiff and stark,

Unconscious of the galling chain
By which the thin bleached bones were bound
When chance revealed them under ground.

Oh, Time! oh, ever conquering Time!
These men had once their prime:
But now, succeeding generations hear
Beneath the shadow of each crumbling arch
The music low and drear,
The muffled music of thy onward march,
Made up of piping winds and rustling leaves
And plashing rain-drops falling from slant eaves,
And all mysterious unconnected sounds
With which the place abounds.
Time doth efface
Each day some lingering trace
Of human government and human care:

The things of air
And earth, usurp the walls to be their own;
Creatures that dwell alone,
Occupy boldly: every mouldering nook
Wherein we peer and look,
Seems with wild denizens so swarming rife,
We know the healthy stir of human life
Must be for ever gone!
The walls where hung the warriors' shining casques
Are green with moss and mould;
The blindworm coils where Queens have slept, nor asks
For shelter from the cold.
The swallow,--he is master all the day,
And the great owl is ruler through the night;
The little bat wheels on his circling way
With restless flittering flight;

And that small black bat, and the creeping things,
At will they come and go,
And the soft white owl with velvet wings
And a shriek of human woe!
The brambles let no footstep pass
By that rent in the broken stair,
Where the pale tufts of the windle-strae grass

Hang like locks of dry dead hair;
But there the keen wind ever weeps and moans,
Working a passage through the mouldering stones.

Oh, Time! oh, conquering Time!
I know that wild wind's chime
Which, like a passing bell,
Or distant knell,
Speaks to man's heart of Death and of Decay;
While thy step passes o'er the necks of Kings
And over common things,--
And into Earth's green orchards making way,
Halts, where the fruits of human hope abound,
And shakes their trembling ripeness to the ground.

But hark, a sudden shout
Of laughter! and a nimble giddy rout,
Who know not yet what saddened hours may mean,
Come dancing through the scene!

Ruins! Ruins! let us roam
Through what was a human home,
What care we
How deep its depths of darkness be?
Follow! Follow!
Down the hollow
Through the bramble-fencing thorns
Where the white snail hides her horns;
Leap across the dreadful gap
To that corner's mossy lap,--
Do, and dare!
Clamber up the crumbling stair;
Trip along the narrow wall,
Where the sudden rattling fall
Of loosened stones, on winter nights,
In his dreams the peasant frights:
And push them, till their rolling sound,
Dull and heavy, beat the ground.

Now a song, high up and clear,
Like a lark's enchants the ear;
Or some happy face looks down,

Looking, oh! so fresh and fair,
Wearing youth's most glorious crown,
One rich braid of golden hair:
Or two hearts that wildly beat,
And two pair of eager feet,
Linger in the turret's bend
As they side by side ascend,
For the momentary bliss
Of a lover's stolen kiss;
And emerge into the shining
Of that summer day's declining,
Disengaging clasping hands
As they meet their comrade bands;
With the smile that lately hovered,
(Making lips and eyes so bright,)
And the blush which darkness covered
Mantling still in rosy light!

Ruins! Oh! ye have your charm;

Death is cold, but life is warm;
And the fervent days we knew
Ere our hopes grew faint and few,
Claim even now a happy sigh,
Thinking of those hours gone by:
Of the wooing long since passed,--
Of the love that still shall last,--
Of the wooing and the winning;
Brightest end to bright beginning;
When the feet we sought to guide
Tripped so lightly by our side,
That, as swift they made their way
Through the path and tangled brake,
Safely we could swear and say
We loved all ruins for their sake!

Gentle hearts, one ruin more
From amongst so many score--
One, from out a host of names,
To your notice puts forth claims.
Come! with me make holiday,
In the woods of La Garaye,

Sit within those tangled bowers,
Where fleet by the silent hours,
Only broken by a song
From the chirping woodland throng.
Listen to the tale I tell:
Grieve the story is--not sad;
And the peasant plodding by
Greets the place with kindly eye
For the inmates that it had!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lament For Shuil Donald's Daughter

I.

IN old Shuil Donald's cottage there are many voices weeping,
And stifled sobs, and murmurings of sorrow wild and vain,
For the old man's cherish'd blessing on her bed of death lies sleeping,--
The sleep from which no human wish can rouse her soul again.
Oh, dark are now those gentle eyes which shone beneath their lashes
So full of laughter and of love--it seems but yesterday--
Well may Shuil Donald mourn beside his hearth's forsaken ashes,
His lily of the valley is wither'd away!

II.

The spring shall come to other hearts with breezes and with showers,
But lonely winter still shall reign in old Shuil Donald's home;
Others may raise the song of joy, and laugh away the hours,
But he--oh! never more may joy to his lone dwelling come.
Her name shall be an empty sound, in idle converse spoken,
Forgotten shall she be by those who mourn her most to-day--
All, all but one, who wanders with his Highland spirit broken,
His lily of the valley is wither'd away!

III.

And he--long, long, at even-tide, when sunset rays are gleaming,
That sad old man shall sit within his lonely cottage door,
Desolate, desolate shall sit, and muse with idle dreaming
On days when her returning step came quick across the moor.
Oh! never more her quiet smile, her cheerful voice of greeting,
Shall rouse to warmth his aged heart, when darkly sinks the day--
Never, oh! never more on earth those loved ones may be meeting--
His lily of the valley is wither'd away!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Lost One

COME to the grave--the silent grave! and dream
Of a light, happy voice--so full of joy,
That those who heard her laugh, would laugh again,
Echoing the mirth of such an innocent spirit;
And pause in their own converse, to look round,
Won by the witchery of that gleesome tone.
Come to the grave--the lone dark grave! and dream
Of eyes whose brilliancy was of the soul,
Eyes which, with one bright flash from their dark lids,
Seemed at a glance to read the thoughts of others;
Or, with a full entire tenderness,
The pure expression of all-perfect love,
(Of woman's love, which is for you alone,
While your's is for yourself)--gave in that look
The promise of a life of meek affection.
Come to the grave--the mouldering grave! and dream
Of a fair form that glided over earth
One of its happiest creatures:--to her cheek

The lightest word might bring the blushing blood
In pure carnation;--down her graceful neck,
The long rich curls of jet hung carelessly,
Untortured by the cunning hand of art:
And on her brow, bright purity and joy,
Twin sisters, sate,--as on a holy throne.
Come yet unto the grave--the still, damp grave!
And dream of a young heart that beat with life,
And all life's best affections; of a heart
Where sorrow never came, nor fear, nor sin--
Nor aught save innocence, and perfect love:
And, having dreamed of such a lovely being--
So gay, so bright, so pure, so fond, so meek--
Having thus conjured up a form of love
In thine own pausing and regretful mind;--
A vision will be present to thy soul,
A faint, but faithful portraiture, of one
Most dearly loved, and now for ever lost!

The Mother's Heart

I.

WHEN first thou camest, gentle, shy, and fond,
My eldest-born, first hope, and dearest treasure,
My heart received thee with a joy beyond
All that it yet had felt of earthly pleasure;
Nor thought that any love again might be
So deep and strong as that I felt for thee.

II.

Faithful and true, with sense beyond thy years,
And natural piety that lean'd to Heaven;
Wrung by a harsh word suddenly to tears,
Yet patient of rebuke when justly given--
Obedient--easy to be reconciled--
And meekly-cheerful--such wert thou, my child!

III.

Not willing to be left; still by my side
Haunting my walks, while summer-day was dying;--
Nor leaving in thy turn; but pleased to glide
Thro' the dark room where I was sadly lying,
Or by the couch of pain, a sitter meek,
Watch the dim eye, and kiss the feverish cheek.

IV.

O boy! of such as thou are oftenest made
Earth's fragile idols; like a tender flower,
No strength in all thy freshness,--prone to fade,--
And bending weakly to the thunder-shower,--
Still, round the loved, thy heart found force to bind,
And clung, like woodbine shaken in the wind!

V.

Then THOU, my merry love;--bold in thy glee,
Under the bough, or by the firelight dancing,
With thy sweet temper, and thy spirit free,
Didst come, as restless as a bird's wing glancing,
Full of a wild and irrepressible mirth,

Like a young sunbeam to the gladden'd earth!

VI.

Thine was the shout! the song! the burst of joy!
Which sweet from childhood's rosy lip resoundeth;
Thine was the eager spirit nought could cloy,
And the glad heart from which all grief reboundeth;
And many a mirthful jest and mock reply,
Lurk'd in the laughter of thy dark-blue eye!

VII.

And thine was many an art to win and bless,
The cold and stern to joy and fondness warming;
The coaxing smile;--the frequent soft caress;--
The earnest tearful prayer all wrath disarming!
Again my heart a new affection found,
But thought that lore with thee had reach'd its bound.

VIII.

At length THOU camest; thou, the last and least;
Nick-named 'The Emperor' by thy laughing brothers,
Because a haughty spirit swell'd thy breast,
And thou didst seek to rule and sway the others;
Mingling with every playful infant wile
A mimic majesty that made us smile:--

IX.

And oh! most like a regal child wert thou!
An eye of resolute and successful scheming!
Fair shoulders--curling lip--and dauntless brow--
Fit for the world's strife, not for Poet's dreaming:
And proud the lifting of thy stately head,
And the firm bearing of thy conscious tread.

X.

Different from both! Yet each succeeding claim,
I, that all other love had been forswearing,
Forthwith admitted, equal and the same;
Nor injured either, by this love's comparing,
Nor stole a fraction for the newer call--
But in the Mother's heart, found room for ALL!

The Mother's Last Watch

Written on the occasion of the death of the infant daughter of Her Grace the Duchess of Sutherland.

I.

HARK, through the proudly decorated halls,
How strangely sounds the voice of bitter woe,
Where steps that dread their echo as it falls
Steal silently and sadly to and fro.
There, wither'd lies the bud so lately given,
And, beautiful in grief as when she smiled,
Bow'd 'neath the unexpected stroke of Heaven,
The mourning Mother watches o'er her Child.

II.

'Tis her last Watch! Sleep seals those infant lids,
Dark fall the lashes on that roseleaf cheek-
But oh!--the look is there, which Hope forbids;
Of Death--of Death those heavy eyelids speak!--
'Tis her last Watch!--no more that gentle hand
With cautious love shall curtain out the light--
No more that graceful form shall mutely stand
And bless thy slumbers thro' the shadowy night.

III.

Hush'd is the innocent heart which throbbing pain,
Vain hope, and vain regret had never moved.
The God who gave hath claim'd his gift again,
And angels welcome her, on earth so loved.
Yet still of hope and fear the endless strife
Within that Mother's bosom faintly swells,
Still, still she gazes on, and dreams of life,
Though the fond falsehood Reason's pow'r repels.

IV.

Unheard each word of comfort faintly falls
From lips whose tones in other days were dear,
Her infant's smile is all her heart recalls,--
Her infant's voice is all her heart can hear;--
She clasps its hand, the feverish glow of hers

Wakes into warmth the freezing current's flow;
She bends,--her sobbing breath a ringlet stirs
With mimic life upon its pallid brow.

V.

Oh! what a mournful thing is human love!
In happier days of hope and bliss gone by
The Mother's heart with pitying throb would move
If but a teardrop dimm'd that laughing eye:
And now she prays that Heaven the boon may give
To hear from those pale lips a cry of pain--
Aught that could bid her sinking soul revive,
And tell the mourner thou wert hers again!

VI.

Ah ! never more that dream of hope may be!--
The summer breeze among the boughs shall wave,
The summer sun beam bright o'er land and lea,
But thou, no spring shall wake thee from the grave!
No more those little rosy lips shall greet
With brightly sudden smile her look of pride;
No more with falt'ring steps those fairy feet
Shall totter onward to her cherish'd side.

VII.

All, all is over! See, with painful start
She wakens from her trance to feel the whole,
And know the pang even from thy corse to part--
Thou vainly guarded treasure of her soul!
The hand that, ah! so often hath caress'd,
Aids now to place thee in thy narrow bed!
The last wild kiss upon thy cheek is press'd--
The last fond tear upon thy coffin shed!
And all is hush'd: but oft thro' Life's dull track
(When time her present sorrow hath beguiled)
That pale, sweet brow shall dimly bring us back
The Mother's last Watch o'er her fairy Child!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Mourners

LOW she lies, who blest our eyes
Through many a sunny day;
She may not smile, she will not rise--
The life hath past away!
Yet there is a world of light beyond,
Where we neither die nor sleep--
She is there, of whom our souls were fond--
Then wherefore do we weep?

The heart is cold, whose thoughts were told
In each glance of her glad bright eye;
And she lies pale, who was so bright,
She scarce seemed made to die.
Yet we know that her soul is happy now,
Where the saints their calm watch keep;
That angels are crowning that fair young brow--
Then wherefore do we weep?

Her laughing voice made all rejoice,
Who caught the happy sound;
There was gladness in her very step,
As it lightly touched the ground.
The echoes of voice and step are gone;
There is silence still and deep:
Yet we know she sings by God's bright throne--
Then wherefore do we weep?

The cheek's pale tinge, the lid's dark fringe;
That lies like a shadow there,
Were beautiful in the eyes of all--
And her glossy golden hair!
But though that lid may never wake
From its dark and dreamless sleep,
She is gone where young hearts do not break--
Then wherefore do we weep?

That world of light with joy is bright,
This is a world of woe:
Shall we grieve that her soul hath taken flight,

Because we dwell below?
We will bury her under the mossy sod,
And one long bright tress we'll keep;
We have only given her back to God--
Ah! wherefore do we weep?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Name

THY name was once the magic spell, by which my thoughts were bound,
And burning dreams of light and love were wakened by that sound;
My heart beat quick when stranger tongues, with idle praise or blame,
Awoke its deepest thrill of life, to tremble at that name.

Long years--long years have passed away, and altered is thy brow;
And we who met so gladly once, must meet as strangers now:
The friends of yore come round me still, but talk no more of thee;
'Tis idle ev'n to wish it now--for what art thou to me?

Yet still thy name, thy blessed name, my lonely bosom fills,
Like an echo that hath lost itself among the distant hills,
Which still, with melancholy note, keeps faintly lingering on,
When the jocund sound that woke it first is gone--for ever gone.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Picture Of Sappho

I.

THOU! whose impassion'd face
The Painter loves to trace,
Theme of the Sculptor's art and Poet's story--
How many a wand'ring thought
Thy loveliness hath brought,
Warming the heart with its imagined glory!

II.

Yet, was it History's truth,
That tale of wasted youth,
Of endless grief, and Love forsaken pining?
What wert thou, thou whose woe
The old traditions show
With Fame's cold light around thee vainly shining?

III.

Didst thou indeed sit there
In languid lone despair--
Thy harp neglected by thee idly lying--
Thy soft and earnest gaze
Watching the lingering rays
In the far west, where summer-day was dying--

IV.

While with low rustling wings,
Among the quivering strings
The murmuring breeze faint melody was making,
As though it wooed thy hand
To strike with new command,
Or mourn'd with thee because thy heart was breaking?

V.

Didst thou, as day by day
Roll'd heavily away,
And left thee anxious, nerveless, and dejected,
Wandering thro' bowers beloved--
Roving where he had roved--

Yearn for his presence, as for one expected?

VI.

Didst thou, with fond wild eyes
Fix'd on the starry skies,
Wait feverishly for each new day to waken--
Trusting some glorious morn
Might witness his return,
Unwilling to believe thyself forsaken?

VII.

And when conviction came,
Chilling that heart of flame,
Didst thou, O saddest of earth's grieving daughters !
From the Leucadian steep
Dash, with a desperate leap,
And hide thyself within the whelming waters?

VIII.

Yea, in their hollow breast
Thy heart at length found rest!
The ever-moving waves above thee closing--
The winds, whose ruffling sigh
Swept the blue waters by,
Disturb'd thee not!--thou wert in peace reposing!

IX.

Such is the tale they tell!
Vain was thy beauty's spell--
Vain all the praise thy song could still inspire--
Though many a happy band
Rung with less skilful hand
The borrowed love-notes of thy echoing lyre.

X.

FAME, to thy breaking heart
No comfort could impart,
In vain thy brow the laurel wreath was wearing;
One grief and one alone
Could bow thy bright head down--
Thou wert a WOMAN, and wert left despairing!

The Pilgrim Of Life.

PILGRIM, who toilest up life's weary steep,
To reach the summit still with pleasure crowned;
Born but to sigh and smile; to sin and weep,
Dost mark the busy multitudes around?
Dost mourn, with those who tread with fainting feet,
And blighted worn-out heart, the self same road?
Dost laugh with those who think their travel sweet,
And deem existence no unwelcome load?-
Ah, no! unconscious of their joy or woe,
Quick hurrying onward still, or gazing back,
With feeble lustre round their planet glow
A few beloved, connected with thy track;
Dear links of life, for whom to toil is bliss;
Circlet of stars in young hope's diadem;
Gay lightsome hearts who know no joy but this-
To be together is enough for them.

Thou pausest on thy way-one light is set-
No power of love relumes the torch of life;
Whate'er it was, 'tis lost-and vain regret
Pursues the rosy babe, or faithful wife.
'Tis past-'tis gone-the brightness of those eyes
Can cheer no more thy melancholy home:
But grief may not endure-new joys arise;
The past is not-but thou hast years to come!
New joys arise-eager thou pressest on,
Hope's brilliant mockery deceiving still.
And now thou weepest o'er delusions gone,
Now hail'st with transport days devoid of ill.
Yet ever as thou goest on thy way,
However bright may be the present hour,
Clings to thy mind with brightest, purest ray,
The joy thou could'st not hold, the faded flower-
Still dearest seems the past; and as each light,
Extinguished, leaves thee lone, through memory's tears
More dim the future rises to thy sight,
More bright the visions of thine early years.
Pilgrim of Life! why slackenest thou thy speed?
Why is that brow of eager hope o'ercast?

A pause-a struggle-and the hour decreed
Mingles for aye the present with the past!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Poet's Choice

I.

'Twas in youth, that hour of dreaming;
Round me, visions fair were beaming,
Golden fancies, brightly gleaming,
Such as start to birth
When the wandering restless mind,
Drunk with beauty, thinks to find
Creatures of a fairy kind
Realised on Earth!

II.

Then, for me, in every dell
Hamadryads seem'd to dwell
(They who die, as Poets tell,
Each with her own tree);
And sweet mermaids, low reclining,
Dim light through their grottos shining,
Green weeds round their soft limbs twinning,
Peopled the deep Sea.

III.

Then, when moon and stars were fair,
Nymph-like visions fill'd the air,
With blue wings and golden hair
Bending from the skies;
And each cave by echo haunted
In its depth of shadow granted,
Brightly, the Egeria wanted,
To my eager eyes.

IV.

But those glories pass'd away;
Earth seem'd left to dull decay,
And my heart in sadness lay,
Desolate, uncheer'd;
Like one wrapt in painful sleeping,
Pining, thirsting, waaking, weeping,
Watch thro' Life's dark midnight keeping,

Till THY form appear'd!

V.

THEN my soul, whose erring measure
Knew not where to find true pleasure
Woke and seized the golden treasure
Of thy human love;
And, looking on thy radiant brow,
My lips in gladness breathed the vow
Which angels, not more fair than thou,
Have register'd above.

VI.

And now I take my quiet rest,
With my head upon thy breast,
I will make no further quest
In Fancy's realms of light;
Fay, nor nymph, nor wingēd spirit,
Shall my store of love inherit;
More thy mortal charm doth merit
Than dream, however bright:

VII.

And my soul,-like some sweet bird
Whose song at summer eve is heard,
When the breeze, so lightly stirr'd,
Leaves the branch unbent,--
Sits and all-triumphant sings,
Folding up her brooding wings,
And gazing out on earthly things
With a calm content.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Poplar Field

'The poplars are fell'd: farewell to the shade,
And the whispering sound of the cool colonnade;
The winds play no longer and sing in the leaves,
Nor Ouse on his bosom their image receives.

'Twelve years have elapsed, since I last took a view
Of my favourite field, and the bank where they grew;
And now in the grass behold they are laid,
And the tree is my seat, that once lent me a shade.

'The blackbird has fled to another retreat,
Where the hazels afford him a screen from the heat,
And the scene where his melody charm'd me before
Resounds with his sweet-flowing ditty no more.

'My fugitive years are all hasting away,
And I must ere long lie as lowly as they,
With a turf on my breast, and a stone at my head,
Ere another such grove shall arise in its stead.

"Tis a sight to engage me, if anything can,
To muse on the perishing pleasures of man;
Tho' his life be a dream, his enjoyments, I see,
Have a being less durable even than he.'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Rebel

WITH none to heed or mark
The prisoner in his cell,
In a dungeon, lone and dark,
He tuned his wild farewell.
The harp whose strings might never breathe again
The joyous sounds it gave to Freedom's strain,
With hurried chords, his trembling fingers woke;
And thus the brave, but captive rebel spoke :--

Farewell! mine own dear land!
That I have loved thee well,
This faint, but blood-red hand,
These iron fetters tell:
And if I weep, it is not for the breeze,
At summer evenings whispered thro' the trees;
Though I would die to breathe that air again--
I weep, to think upon my country's chain!

Farewell to those I loved,
Whom I no more shall see;
And, oh! in sorrow proved,
To those who once loved me,
With whom beneath the chesnut's spreading shade
In happy days of infancy, I played;
Who never more will hear the rebel's name
Without a blush, a crimson blush, of shame.

Oh! I am young to die,
Forsaken thus by all:
With none to hear me sigh,
With none to weep my fall.
How my heart yearns for joys for ever flown--
My mother's hand--my sister's gentle tone!
And wishes wild within my bosom swell,
In sorrow's broken tones to bid farewell!

Land of untrodden hills!
Where still, in happy dreams,
I hear the mountain rills,

Leap forth in gushing streams:
I love thee so, that fearfully I shrink
From death, whose power will burst each galling link;
And sigh to live, though life no more be free,
Lest, in the grave, I dream no more of thee!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Reprieve

A MOMENT since, he stood unmoved--alone;
Courage and thought on his resolute brow;
But hope is quivering in the broken tone,
Whose bitter anguish seems to shake him now:
Her light foot woke no echo as it came,
The rustling robe her sudden swiftness told;
She pleads for one who dies a death of shame;
She pleads--for agony and love are bold.

'Oh! hear me, thou, who in the sunshine's glare
So calmly waitest till the warning bell
Shall of the closing hour of his despair
In gloomy notes of muffled triumph tell.

Let him not die! Avenging Heaven is just;
Thine, a like fate in after years may be:
Thy forfeit head may gasping bite the dust,
While those thou lovest, plead in vain for thee!
Thou smilest sternly: thou could'st well brave death;
Hast braved it often on the tented field.
So fought my hero on th' ensanguined heath,
With desperate strength, that knew not how to yield:
But oh! the death whose punctual hour is set,
And waited for mid lingering thoughts of pain;
Where no excitement bids the heart forget,
And skill and courage are alike in vain;
Who shall find strength for that?--Oh! man, to whom
Fate, chance, or what thou wilt, hath given this hour--
Upon whose will depends his dreaded doom--
Doth it not awe thee, thinking of thy power?
In the wide battle's hot and furious rage,
Where the mix'd banners flutter to and fro,
Where all alike the desperate combat wage,
One of a thousand swords may pierce him through:
But, now, his life is in thy single hand:
To thee the strange and startling power is given--
And thou shalt answer for this day's command
When ye stand face to face in God's own Heaven.

Bear with me! pardon me this sudden start!
My words are bitter, for my heart is sore;
And oh! dark soldier of the iron heart,
Fain would I learn the speech should touch thee more!
He hath a mother--age hath dimm'd her sight--
But when his quick returning step comes nigh,
She smiles, as though she saw a sudden light,
And turns to bless him with a stifled sigh.
When to her arms a lonely wretch I go,
And she doth ask for him, the true and the brave,
While on her cheek faint smiles of welcome glow,
How shall I answer 'he is in the grave!'
He hath a little son--a mirthful boy,
Whose coral lips with ready smiles are curl'd;
Wilt thou quench all the spring-time of his joy,
And leave him orphan in a friendless world?
Hast thou no children?--Do no visions come,
When the low night-wind through the poplar grieves--
Echoes of farewell voices--sounds of home--
For which thy busy day no leisure leaves?
Some one doth love thee--some one thou dost love--
(For such the blessed lot of all on earth,)
Some one to whom thy thoughts oft fondly rove,
The sharer of thy sorrows and thy mirth;

Who with dim weeping eyes, and thoughts that burn,
Sees thy proud form lead forth th' embattled host;
To whom 'a victory' speaks of thy return--
And 'a defeat' means only thou are lost!
If such there be, (and on thy helm-worn brow
Sternness, not cruelty, doth seem to reign,)
Think it is she, who kneels before thee now,
Her heart which bursts with agony of pain.

'Hark--'T is the warning stroke--his hour is come--
I hear the bell slow clanging on the air--
I hear the beating of the muffled drum--
Thou hast a moment yet to save and spare!
Oh! when returning to thy native land,
Greeted with grateful tears and loud acclaim;
While gazing on thy homeward march they stand,
And smiling children shout thy welcome name:

How wilt thou bear the joyous village chimes,
Whose ringing peals remind thee of to-day--
Will not my image haunt thee at those times?
And my hoarse desperate voice seem yet to pray?
When thy long term of bloody toil is past,
And the hush'd trumpet calls no more to arms--
Will not his death thy tranquil brow o'ercast,
And rob that peaceful hour of half its charms?

When thy child's mother bends thy lip to press,
And her true hand lies clasp'd within thine own--
Will her low voice have perfect power to bless,
Remembering me, the widow'd and the lone?
When they embrace thee--when they welcome thee--
By all my hopes of Heaven, thy brow relents!
Oh! sign the paper--let his life go free--
Give it me quick!--
'What ho! Raise her--the woman faints!'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Ringlet

OH! treasured thus by passion's slave,
Dear relic of the bygone year;
Say, what remains of her who gave?
The vain regret--the useless tear.
The clasping hands--the throbbing brow--
The murmuring of that shadowy word,
To which had answered once--oh! now,
Why is that light quick step unheard?

What in those syllables is found,
That such a start of woe can claim?
A word is but an empty sound,--
Alas! it is--it was--her name!
It was--yes, she was once! as gay,
As full of life, as aught that lives;
The breath--the life--hath passed away,
But not the pang her memory gives.

Bright tress! thy beauty bringeth now
A thousand dreams of rapture gone;
Her sunny eyes, her radiant brow,
The low, light laughter of her tone.
Gazing on thee, again she stands
Before me, as in days of old;
With all her young head's shining bands,
And all its wavy curls of gold.

Till as I view thee, silken tress,
I feel within my suffering heart,--
'Tis all which now my sight can bless,
All that of her will not depart.
Oh! thou that wert life's dearest prize,
That now art but a thought of pain;
Why do thy tones--thy laughing eyes--
Rise up to wring my soul again?

I roam in vain:--the sun that beams
Is still the sun we looked upon;
My hand, my lonely hand, in dreams,

Seeks still for thine to clasp its own.
My heart resists all time--all change,
And finds no other form so dear.
My memory, wheresoe'er I range,
Clings to the spot where thou wert near.

Change!--thou wert all life's scenery:
To me, the billowy, bounding wave--
The wide green earth--the far blue sky,
Form but the landscape of thy grave!

Oh! bitter is their boon of life
Who cannot hope--who may not die--
I linger in a world of strife,
Whilst thou art in the happy sky!
I envy thee the peace thou hast,
And, but 'tis sin, the knee would bow,
That He who made thee all thou wast,
Would make me all--that thou art now!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Rock Of The Betrayed

I.

IT was a Highland chieftain's son
Gazed sadly from the hill:
And they saw him shrink from the autumn wind,
As its blast came keen and chill.

II.

His stately mother saw,--and spoke
With the heartless voice of pride;
'T is well I have a stouter son
The border wars to ride.'

III.

His jealous brother saw, and stood,
Red-hair'd, and fierce, and tall,
Muttering low words of fiendish hope
To be the lord of all.

IV.

But sickly Allan heard them not,
As he look'd o'er land and lea;
He was thinking of the sunny climes
That lie beyond the sea.

V.

He was thinking of the native land
Whose breeze he could not bear;
Whose wild free beauty he must leave,
To breathe a warmer air.

VI.

He was dreaming of his childhood's haunts,
And his grey-hair'd father's praise;
And the chance of death which hung so near
And darken'd his young days.

VII.

So he turn'd, and bade them both farewell,

With a calm and mournful smile;
And he spoke of dwelling far away,
But only for a while.

VIII.

And if a pang of bitter grief
Shot wildly through his heart,
No man heard Allan Douglas sigh,
Nor saw the tear-drop start:

IX.

For he left in Scotland none who cared
If e'er he should return,
In castle hall, or cottage low,
By river or by burn.

X.

Only upon the heather brae
His quivering lip he press'd;
And clasp'd the senseless birchen tree,
And strain'd it to his breast;

XI.

Because the human heart is full
Of love that must be given,
However check'd, estranged, and chill'd,
To something under Heaven.

XII.

And these things had been friends to him
Thro' a life of lonely hours--
The blue lake, and the waving birch,
And the low broom's scented flowers.

XIII.

Twice had the snow been on the hills,
And twice the soft spring rain,
When Allan Douglas bent his way
To his native land again.

XIV.

More healthful glow'd his hollow cheek,

His step was firm and free,
And he brought a fair Italian girl
His bonny bride to be.

XV.

But darkly sneer'd his brother cold,
When he saw that maiden fair,
'Is a foreign minion come to wed
The Highland chieftain's heir?'

XVI.

And darkly gloom'd the mother's brow
As she said, 'Am I so old,
That a stranger must so soon come here
The castle keys to hold?'

XVII.

Then spoke the young Italian girl
With a sweet and modest grace,
As she lifted up her soft black eyes
And look'd them in the face:

XVIII.

'A stranger and an orphan comes
To Allan's native land,
And she needs the mother's welcome smile,
And the brother's friendly hand.

XIX.

'Be thine! oh, stately lady--thine--
The rule that thou dost crave,
For Allan's love is all I earn'd,
And all I seek to have.

XX.

'And trust me, brother, tho' my words
In foreign accents fall,
The heart is of no country born,
And my heart will love you all.'

XXI.

But vain the music of her tongue

Against the hate they bore;
And when a babe her love had bless'd
They hated her the more.
XXII.

They hated her the more because
That babe must be the heir,
And his dark and lovely eyes at times
His mother's look would wear.
XXIII.

But lo! the keen cold winter came
With many a bitter blast:
It pierced thro' sickly Allan's frame,--
He droop'd and died at last!
XXIV.

Oh! mournfully at early morn
That young wife sat and wept,--
And mournfully, when day was done,
To her widow'd couch she crept,--
XXV.

And mournfully at noon she rock'd
The baby on her knee;
'There is no pity in their hearts,
My child, for thee and me.
XXVI.

'There was no pity in their hearts
For him who is at rest:
How should they feel for his young son
Who slumbers at my breast?'
XXVII.

The red-hair'd brother saw her tears,
And said, 'Nay, cease thy moan--
Come forth into the morning air,
And weep. no more alone!'
XXVIII.

The proud stepmother chid her woe;--

'Even for thy infant's sake
Go forth into the morning air,
And sail upon the lake!'
XXIX.

There seem'd some feeling for her state;
Their words were fair and mild;
Yet she shudder'd as she whisper'd low,
'God shield me and my child!'
XXX.

'Come!' said dead Allan's brother stern,
'Why dost thou tremble so?
'Come!'--and with doubt and fear perplex'd,
The lady rose to go.
XXXI.

They glided over the glassy lake,
'Till its lulling murmur smote,
With a death-like omen, to and fro',
Against the heaving boat.
XXXII.

And no one spoke;--that brother still
His face averted kept,
And the lady's tears fell fast and free
O'er her infant as it slept.
XXXIII.

The cold faint evening breeze sprang up
And found them floating on;
They glided o'er the glassy lake
Till the day's last streak was gone--
XXXIV.

Till the day's last streak had died away
From the chill and purple strand,
And a mist was on the water's face
And a damp dew on the land;
XXXV.

Till you could not trace the living hue

Of lip, or cheek, or eye,
But the outline of each countenance
Drawn dark against the sky.
XXXVI.

And all things had a ghastly look,
An aspect strange and drear;--
The lady look'd to the distant shore
And her heart beat wild with fear.
XXXVII.

There is a rock whose jutting height
Stands frowning o'er that lake,
Where the faintest call of the bugle horn
The echo's voice will wake:--
XXXVIII.

And there the water lifts no wave
To the breeze, so fresh and cool,
But lies within the dark rock's curve,
Like a black and gloomy pool.
XXXIX.

Its depth is great,--a stone thrown in
Hath a dull descending sound,
The plummet hath not there been cast
Which resting-place hath found.
XL.

And scatter'd firs and birch-trees grow
On the summit, here and there--
Lonely and joylessly they wave,
Like an old man's thin grey hair.
XLI.

But not to nature's hand it owes
Its mournfulness alone,
For vague tradition gives the spot
A horror of its own.
XLII.

The boatman doffs his cap beneath

Its dark o'er-hanging shade,
And whispers low its Gaelic name,--
'THE ROCK OF THE BETRAY'D.'
XLIII.

And when the wind, which never curls
That pool, goes sweeping by,
Bending the firs and birchen trees
With a low and moaning sigh,--
XLIV.

He'll tell you that the sound which comes
So strange, and faint, and dim,
Is only heard at one set hour,
And call'd 'THE LADY'S HYMN.'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Sense Of Beauty

SPIRIT! who over this our mortal Earth,
Where nought hath birth
Which imperfection doth not some way dim,
Since Earth offended HIM--
Thou who unseen, from out thy radiant wings
Dost shower down light o'er mean and common things;
And, wandering to and fro,
Through the condemn'd and sinful world dost go,
Haunting that wilderness, the human heart,
With gleams of glory that too soon depart,
Gilding both weed and flower;--
What is thy birth divine? and whence thy mighty power?

The Sculptor owns thee! On his high pale brow
Bewild'ring images are pressing now;
Groups whose immortal grace
His chisel ne'er shall trace,
Though in his mind the fresh creation glows;
High forms of godlike strength,
Or limbs whose languid length
The marble fixes in a sweet repose!
At thy command,
His true and patient hand
Moulds the dull clay to Beauty's richest line,
Or with more tedious skill,
Obedient to thy will,
By touches imperceptible and fine,
Works slowly day by day
The rough-hewn block away,
Till the soft shadow of the bust's pale smile
Wakes into statue-life and pays the assiduous toil!

Thee, the young Painter knows,--whose fervent eyes,
O'er the blank waste of canvas fondly bending,
See fast within its magic circle rise
Some pictured scene, with colours softly blending,--
Green bowers and leafy glades,
The old Arcadian shades,
Where thwarting glimpses of the sun are thrown,

And dancing nymphs and shepherds one by one
Appear to bless his sight
In Fancy's glowing light,
Peopling that spot of green Earth's flowery breast
With every attitude of joy and rest.

Lo! at his pencil's touch steals faintly forth
(Like an uprising star in the cold north)
Some face which soon shall glow with beauty's fire:
Dim seems the sketch to those who stand around,
Dim and uncertain as an echoed sound,
But oh! how bright to him, whose hand thou dost inspire!

Thee, also, doth the dreaming Poet hail,
Fond comforter of many a dreary day--
When through the clouds his Fancy's car can sail
To worlds of radiance far, how far, away!
At thy clear touch (as at the burst of light
Which Morning shoots along the purple hills,
Chasing the shadows of the vanish'd night,
And silvering all the darkly gushing rills,
Giving each waking blossom, gemm'd with dew,
Its bright and proper hue--
He suddenly beholds the chequered face
Of this old world in its young Eden grace!
Disease, and want, and sin, and pain, are not--
Nor homely and familiar things:--man's lot
Is like his aspirations--bright and high;
And even the haunting thought that man must die,
His dream so changes from its fearful strife,
Death seems but fainting into purer life!

Nor only these thy presence woo,
The less inspired own thee too!
Thou hast thy tranquil source
In the deep well-springs of the human heart,
And gushest with sweet force
When most imprison'd; causing tears to start
In the worn citizen's o'erwearied eye,
As, with a sigh,
At the bright close of some rare holiday,
He sees the branches wave, the waters play--

And hears the clock's far distant mellow chime
Warn him a busier world reclaims his time!

Thee, Childhood's heart confesses,--when he sees
The heavy rose-bud crimson in the breeze,
When the red coral wins his eager gaze,
Or the warm sunbeam dazzles with its rays.
Thee, through his varied hours of rapid joy,
The eager Boy,--
Who wild across the grassy meadow springs,
And still with sparkling eyes
Pursues the uncertain prize,
Lured by the velvet glory of its wings!

And so from youth to age--yea, till the end--
An unforsaking, unforgetting friend,
Thou hoverest round us! And when all is o'er,
And Earth's most loved illusions please no more,
Thou stealest gently to the couch of Death;
There, while the lagging breath
Comes faint and fitfully, to usher nigh
Consoling visions from thy native sky,
Making it sweet to die!
The sick man's ears are faint--his eyes are dim--
But his heart listens to the Heavenward hymn,
And his soul sees--in lieu of that sad band,
Who come with mournful tread
To kneel about his bed,--
God's white-robed angels, who around him stand,
And waive his Spirit to 'the Better Land!'

So, living,--dying,--still our hearts pursue
That loveliness which never met our view;
Still to the last the ruling thought will reign,
Nor deem one feeling given--was giv'n invain!
For it may be, our banish'd souls recal
In this, their earthly thrall,
(With the sick dreams of exiles,) that far world
Whence angels once were hurl'd;
Or it may be, a faint and trembling sense,
Vague, as permitted by Omnipotence,
Foreshows the immortal radiance round us shed,

When the Imperfect shall be perfected!
Like the chain'd eagle in his fetter'd might,
Straining upon the Heavens his wistful sight,
Who toward the upward glory fondly springs
With all the vain strength of his shivering wings,--
So chain'd to earth, and baffled--yet so fond
Of the pure sky which lies so far beyond,
We make the attempt to soar in many a thought
Of Beauty born, and into Beauty wrought;
Dimly we struggle onwards:--who shall say
Which glimmering light leads nearest to the Day!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Tryst

I.

I went, alone, to the old familiar place
Where we often met,--
When the twilight soften'd thy bright and radiant face
And the sun had set.
All things around seem'd whispering of the past,
With thine image blent--
Even the changeful spray which the torrent cast
As it downward went!
I stood and gazed with a sad and heavy eye
On the waterfall--
And with a shouting voice of agony
On thy name did call!

II.

With a yearning hope, from my wrung and aching heart
I call'd on thee--
And the lonely echoes from the rocks above
They answer'd me!
Glad and familiar as a household word
Was that cherish'd name
But in that grieving hour, faintly heard,
'T was not the same!
Solemn and sad, with a distant knelling cry,
On my heart it fell--
'T was as if the word 'Welcome' had been answer'd by
The word 'FAREWELL!'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Undying One' - Canto I

MOONLIGHT is o'er the dim and heaving sea,--
Moonlight is on the mountain's frowning brow,
And by their silvery fountains merrily
The maids of Castaly are dancing now.
Young hearts, bright eyes, and rosy lips are there,
And fairy steps, and light and laughing voices,
Ringing like welcome music through the air--
A sound at which the untroubled heart rejoices.
But there are hearts o'er which that dancing measure
Heavily falls!
And there are ears to which the voice of pleasure
Still vainly calls !
There's not a scene on earth so full of lightness
That withering care
Sleeps not beneath the flowers, and turns their brightness
To dark despair!

Oh! Earth, dim Earth, thou canst not be our home;
Or wherefore look we still for joys to come?
The fairy steps are flown--the scene is still--
Nought mingles with the murmuring of the rill.
Nay, hush! it is a sound--a sigh--again!
It is a human voice--the voice of pain.
And beautiful is she, who sighs alone
Now that her young and playful mates are gone:
The dim moon, shining on her statue face,
Gives it a mournful and unearthly grace;
And she hath bent her gentle knee to earth;
And she hath raised her meek sad eyes to heaven--
As if in such a breast sin could have birth,
She clasps her hands, and sues to be forgiven.
Her prayer is over; but her anxious glance
Into the blue transparency of night
Seems as it fain would read the book of chance,
And fix the future hours, dark or bright.
A slow and heavy footstep strikes her ear--
What ails the gentle maiden?--Is it fear?
Lo! she hath lightly raised her from the ground,
And turn'd her small and stag-like head around;

Her pale cheek paler, and her lips apart,
Her bosom heaving o'er her beating heart:
And see, those thin white hands she raises now
To press the throbbing fever from her brow--

In vain--in vain! for never more shall rest
Find place in that young, fair, but erring breast!
He stands before her now--and who is he
Into whose outspread arms confidingly
She flings her fairy self?--Unlike the forms
That woo and win a woman's love--the storms
Of deep contending passions are not seen
Darkening the features where they once have been,
Nor the bright workings of a generous soul,
Of feelings half conceal'd, explain the whole.
But there is something words cannot express--
A gloomy, deep, and quiet fixedness;
A recklessness of all the blows of fate--
A brow untouch'd by love, undimm'd by hate--
As if, in all its stores of crime and care,
Earth held no suffering now for him to bear.
Yes--all is passionless--the hollow cheek
Those pale thin lips shall never wreath with smiles;
Ev'n now, 'mid joy, unmoved and sad they speak
In spite of all his Linda's winning wiles.
Yet can we read, what all the rest denies,
That he hath feelings of a mortal birth,
In the wild sorrow of those dark bright eyes,
Bent on that form--his one dear link to earth.
He loves--and he is loved! then what avail
The scornful words which seek to brand with shame?

Or bitterer still, the wild and fearful tale
Which couples guilt and horror with that name?
What boots it that the few who know him shun
To speak or eat with that unworthy one?
Were all their words of scorn and malice proved,
It matters not--he loves and he is loved!

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'Linda! my Linda!' thus the silence broke,
And slow and mournfully the stranger spoke,

'Seat we ourselves upon this mossy bed,
Where the glad airs of heaven wave o'er thy head,
And thou shalt hear the awful tale which ne'er
Hath yet been breathed, save once, to mortal ear.
And if, my Linda--nay, love, tremble not--
Thou shudder'st to partake so dark a lot--
Go--and be happy in forgetfulness,
And take--I'd bless thee if my tongue could bless,'
There was that sudden sinking of the tone
That lingers in our memory when alone,
And thrills the heart to think how deep the grief
Which sues no pity--looks for no relief.
Oh! deep, beyond the feeble power of tears,
Such scene will dwell within our souls for years;
And it will seem but yesterday we heard
The faltering pause--the calm but broken word;

Saw the averted head, where each blue vein
Swell'd in its agony of mental pain;
And heard the grief confess'd:--no, not confess'd,
But struggling burst convulsive from the breast!
'Isbal,' that gentle voice half-murmuring said,
As from his shoulder she upraised her head;
'Thou knowest I love thee. When I came to-night
I had resolved thy future, dark or bright,
Should still be mine--Beloved--so must it be,
For I have broke a fearful vow for thee.
This morning he who calls himself my brother
(Oh! can he be the child of my sweet mother?)
Pleaded once more for him--that hated friend
Whose bride I was to be; I could but bend
To the cold earth my faint and trembling knee,
And supplicate, with woman's agony,
That he would spare me--but an hour--a day--
I clasp'd my brother's knees--that brother said me nay!
He held a poinard to my shrinking heart,
And bade me breathe the vow--
Never in life or death from him to part
Who is--my husband now.
Isbal, we were betrothed; my lips in fear
Pronounced those words--but oh! my heart was here--
Here--in the calm cold moonlight by thy side,

Here--where the dark blue waters gently glide,

Here--in my childhood's haunts, now ev'n more dear.

Than in those happy days, for thou art near.

Yes--while the unheeded vow my faint lip spoke,

Recall'd the echo which thy tones awoke--

Thy image rose between me and the shrine;

Surely the vow before it breathed was thine.

To-morrow's sun proud Carlos claims his wife;

To-morrow's sun shall see my span of life

Devoted unto thee--thy tale can make

No lot I would not share for thy sweet sake;

No--Ere I hear it, let love's fond vow be--

To have no earth--no heaven--no hope but thee!

Now tell me all.'--Again that gentle head

With dewy eyes and flushing cheek is laid

Upon his arm; and with a thrill of pain

The broken thread is thus renew'd again:

'From the first hour I saw thee, on that night

When dancing in the moonbeam's chequer'd light

With those young laughing ones who now are gone,

By this same fountain which is murmuring on;

When my deep groan burst through the music's sound,

And that soft eye went glancing, startled, round--

From that sweet hour, when pity seem'd to move,

I loved thee--as the wretched only love.

Oft since, when in the darkness of my day

I sit, and dream my wretched life away;

In the deep silence of my night of tears,

When Memory wakes to mourn for vanish'd years;

Shunn'd--scorn'd--detested--friendless and alone,

I've thought of thee--and stifled back my groan!

I've come in daylight, and have flung me down

By the bright fountain's side,

Chased with dear thoughts of thee each gloomy frown,

And bless'd my promised bride.

I've come when stormy winds have howl'd around

Over the yielding flowers,

Bending their gentle heads unto the ground,

And thought of thee for hours.

I've come--my Linda knows that I have come

When the soft starlight told
That she had left her haughty brother's home,
And hearts, as dead and cold
As the chill waters of a moonless sea,
For the light dance and music's revelry.
With gay and loving maids; and I have watch'd
Till one by one those soft steps have departed,
And my young mournful Linda hath been snatch'd
To the sear bosom of the broken-hearted!
Linda, there is a land--a far dark land,
Where on this head the red avenging hand
Fell with its heaviest bolts--When watching by
The bitter cross of Him of Calvary

They stood who loved and did believe in Him,
I said, while all around grew dark and dim--'
'Isbal, dear Isbal!' shriek'd the affrighted maid,
'For that dear Saviour's sake--for him who said
He died for sinners--mock me not, I pray--
Oh! yet, beloved, those words of Death unsay!'
She hung upon his bosom, and look'd up
Into those dark wild eyes with grief and fear.
Alas! poor maiden, 'twas a bitter cup
To drink from hands which love had made so dear.
As a knell o'er the river
Flings its lingering tone,
Telling of joys for ever
Lost and gone:
As the murmuring sound
Of a slow deep stream,
Where the sullen shadows round
Reject each sunny beam:
So o'er the maiden's spirit, like a moan,
Falls the deep sameness of that strange calm tone.

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'I tell thee centuries have pass'd away,
And that dark scene is still like yesterday;
The lurid clouds roll'd o'er each failing head,
The Godlike dying, and the guilty dead:

And awful signs were seen, and I was there--

Woman, I was--or wherefore my despair?

I'll whisper thee--* * * *

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Linda, my Linda! start not thus away--
My brain is 'wilder'd--what, love, did I say?
Forget the words--forget! Eternal God!
Is not this earth the same which then I trod?
Do not the stars gleam coldly from above,
Mocking the lips that dare to talk of love?
I know--I feel it cannot be forgot;
Yet, oh! forsake me not--forsake me not!
Didst thou not bid me tell thee all? oh! rest
Still on this worn and sad and guilty breast;
Whatever sins the eye of Heaven may see,
Its last faint throb alone will end its love for thee!

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I stood awhile, stifling my gasping breath,
Fearfully gazing on that scene of death:
Then with a shuddering groan of pain I shrouded
My straining eyes, and turn'd, a cowering worm,
To either side where grimly death had clouded
The image of his maker in man's form.
On one low cross a dark and fearful brow,
On which the dews of death are standing now,

Shows black despair:

And on the other, though the eye be dim,
And quivering anguish in each stiffening limb,
Mercy and hope are there!
Then rose the wailing sound of woman's woe
Appealing unto Heaven,
And sinners bow'd their heads, and bent them low,
And howl'd to be forgiven--
And I glanced madly round--One after one
They stole away, and I was left alone--
I--the Undying One, in that dim night!
Oh! words can never tell my soul's affright;
The sickening, thrilling, dark, and fainting fear
That rose within my breast:--I seem'd to hear
A thousand voices round; I could not pray,
But fled in solitary shame away.

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Linda! thou wilt not think that after this
Dark hour of agony,
A day, a moment ev'n, of fever'd bliss
Could yet remain for me:
But so it was, a wild and sudden hope
Sprung in my heart--if that my life could cope
With sickness and with time, I yet might be
Happy through half an immortality.

I sat at festal boards, and quaff'd red wine,
And sang wild songs of merriment and mirth;
And bade young sparkling eyes around me shine,
And made a guilty paradise of earth.
I built me palaces, and loved to dwell
'Mongst all which most the eager heart rejoices;
Bright halls, where silvery fountains rose and fell,
And where were ringing light and cheerful voices;
Gay gardens where the bowery trees around
Their leafy branches spread,
And rosy flowers upon the mossy ground
Their honey'd perfume shed.
But yet the curse was on me; and it came
Tainting my life with pains like hell's dark flame.
The flowers withered:
One after one
Death's cold hand gathered,
Till all were gone:
And the eyes that were sparkling
With pleasure's ray,
Lay cold and darkling
Till judgment-day.
Lonely and weeping
A few were left,
Of those who were sleeping
Too soon bereft ;

But they soon were lying
Beneath the sod--
And I, the Undying,
Remained--with God!

And the silvery fountains went murmuring on,
But the voices of music and pleasure were gone.
And I could not bear the banquet-room,
Reminding me ever of my doom;
When the purple goblet I tried to quaff,
In my ear there rang some forgotten laugh;
And when the lay I sought to pour,
Voices came round me which sang no more.
Yea! when I saw some lovely form,
I thought how soon it must feed the worm--
And shrank from the touch it left behind,
As if I were not of human kind;
Or that the thing I could not save
Were withering, then, in the cold dark grave.
I wandered through my halls
Broken-hearted:--
Is it my voice which calls
On the departed,
With that stern, sad tone?
Where are, beloved in vain,
Your countless numbers?
May you not wake again

From your dark slumbers?
Am I to be alone?
Oh! let but one return--
One fond one only;
Raise up the heavy urn,
Life is so lonely--
I ask no more of Heaven.
The mocking echoes round,
My words repeating
With their dim dreary sound,
Forbid our meeting--
I may not be forgiven!
Linda! my Linda! those, and those alone
Who have lived on, when more than life was gone;
And being yet young, look to the heavy years
Which are to come--a future all of tears--
Those only who have stood in some bright spot
With those beloved ones who shared their lot,
And stand again in that sweet fairy scene,

When those young forms are as they had not been;
When gazing wildly round, some fancied word
Strikes on the listening spirit, and it seems
As if again those gentle tones were heard
Which never more can sound except in dreams--
Those only who have started and awoke
In anguish'd pain,

And yearn'd (the gladsome vision being broke)
To dream again--
Can feel for me. It seem'd a little day
In which that generation pass'd away;
And others rose up round me, and they trod
In those same streets--upon the selfsame sod
They loved and were beloved: they ate--they laugh'd--
And the rich grape from ancient goblets quaff'd:
But I remain'd alone--a blighted thing,
Like one sere leaf amid the flowers of spring!
My sick worn heart refused to cling again
To dreams that pass away, and yearnings vain.
Thou canst not think how strange:--how horribly strange
It was to see all round me fade and change,
And I remain the same!--I sat within
My halls of light, a thing of care and sin;
The echoes gave me back the wild sad tone
Of every deep and solitary moan;
Fearful I gazed on the bright walls around,
And dash'd the mocking mirrors to the ground.
And when I wander'd through the desert crowd
Of all my fellow-men, I could have bow'd
And grovell'd in the dust to him who would
Have struck my breast, to slay me where I stood.
They shrank from me as from some venomous snake
Watchfully coil'd to spring from the dark brake

On the unwary. Fearful--fearful tales
Pass'd on from sire to son, link'd with my name,
With all the awful mystery which veils
A tale of guilt, and deepens its dark shame
They shrank from me, I say, as, gaunt and wild
I wander'd on through the long summer's day
And every mother snatch'd her cowering child

With horror from my solitary way!
I fled from land to land, a hunted wretch;
From land to land those tales pursued me still:
Across the wide bright sea there seem'd to stretch
A long dark cloud my fairest hopes to kill.
I grew a wanderer: from Afric's coast,
Where gaily dwelt the yet unfetter'd black,
To Iran, of her eager sons the boast,
I went along my dim and cheerless track.
O'er the blue Mediterranean, with its isles
And dancing waves, and wildly pleasing song,
By Lusitania's land of sun and smiles,
My joyless bark in darkness sail'd along!
On many a soil my wandering feet have trod,
And heard the voice of nations worship God.
Where the dim-minded Heathen raised his prayer
To some bright spirit dwelling in mid-air,
I have stood by, and cursed the stiffen'd knee
Which would not bow like him to Deity.

Where the proud Ghebir, still at morning hour,
Confess'd a God of glory and of power
In the red sun that roll'd above his head,
There have I been, and burning tear-drops shed.
Where the Mahometan, through ages gone,
In his dark faith hath blindly wander'd on;
Where the incredulous Jew, yet unforgiven,
Still vainly waits the crucified of Heaven;
Where the meek Christian raises to the skies
His clasping hands, and his adoring eyes,
And prays that God--the All-seeing God--will bless
His heart with purity of holiness;
Where rosy infancy in smiles was kneeling,
With murmuring, half-imperfect word, appealing
Unto the giver of all good--where joy
Its tearful thanks return'd, and bless'd the day
When should be tasted bliss which cannot cloy,
And tears in heaven's own light be dried away;
And where the frantic voice of love's despair
Sends forth its thrilling sound, half wail, half prayer;
In every temple, and at every shrine
I've stood and wish'd the darkest worship mine--

So I might see, howe'er the beam mistaking,
Some smile from Heaven upon a heart that's breaking!

"Twas on God's glad and holy sabbath day,
When the wide world kneels down at once to pray,--
When every valley, every mountain sod,
Sends its faint tribute to the mighty God,
And the low murmurings of the voiceless airs
Waft on the echo of a thousand prayers--
I stood on England's fresh and fairy ground.
All lay in dewy stillness far around,
Save the soft chiming of the village bell,
Which seem'd a tale of love and peace to tell.
I stood among the tombs--and saw the crowd
Of Christians enter in;
Each meek and humble head they gently bow'd,
And chased the thoughts of sin.
I watch'd them-one by one they onward pass'd
And from my sight were gone,
The welcome opening door received the last
And left me there alone.
The blood rush'd thickly to my panting heart,
And as I turn'd me sorrowing to depart,
An inward voice seem'd whispering--'Sinner, go!
And with those meek adorers bend thee low.'
I trembled--hesitated--reach'd the door
Through which the pious crowd had ceased to pour:
A sudden faintness came upon me there,
And the relaxing limb refused to bear.

I sank upon a stone, and laid my head
Above the happy and unconscious dead;
And when I rose again, the doors were closed!
In vain I then my fearful thoughts opposed;
Some busy devil whisper'd at my heart
And tempted me to evil.--'Shall the dart
Of pain and anguish (thus I wildly said,)
Fall only on my persecuted head?
Shall they kneel peaceful down, and I stand here
Oppress'd with horror's sick and fainting fear?
Forbid it, Powers of Hell!--A lowly cot
Stood near that calm and consecrated spot:

I enter'd it:--the morning sunshine threw
Its warm bright beams upon the flowers that grew
Around it and within it--'twas a place
So peaceful and so bright, that you might trace
The tranquil feelings of the dwellers there;
There was no taint of shame, or crime, or care.
On a low humble couch was softly laid
A little slumberer, whose rosy head
Was guarded by a watch-dog; while I stood
In hesitating, half-repentant mood,
My glance still met his large, bright, watchful eye,
Wandering from me to that sweet sleeper nigh.
Yes, even to that dumb animal I seem'd
A thing of crime: the murderous death-light gleam'd

Beneath my brow; the noiseless step was mine;
I moved with conscious guilt, and his low whine
Responded to my sigh, whose echo fell
Heavily--as 'twere loth within that cot to dwell.
My inmost heart grew sick--I turn'd me where
The smouldering embers of a fire still were;.
With shuddering hand I snatch'd a brand whose light
Appear'd to burn unnaturally bright;
And then with desperate step I bore that torch
Unto the chapel's consecrated porch!
A moment more that edifice had fired
And all within in agony expired;
But, dimly swelling through my feverish soul,
A chorus as from heaven's bright chancel came,
Dash'd from my madden'd lips Guilt's venom'd bowl,
And quench'd in bitter tears my heart's wild flame.
The pealing organ, with the solemn sound
Of countless voices, fill'd the air around;
And, as I leant my almost bursting brow
On the cold walls, the words came sad and slow
To me, the exiled one, who might not share
The joyfulness of their prayer.
Sadly I watch'd till through the open door
The crowd of worshippers began to pour;
The hour was over--they had pray'd to Heaven,
And now return'd to peaceful homes forgiven;

While I--one 'wildering glance I gave around
Upon that sunny, consecrated ground;
The warbling birds, whose little songs of joy
The future and the past can ne'er alloy;
The rosy flowers, the warm and welcome breeze
Murmuring gently through the summer trees,
All--all to me was cursed--I could not die!
I stretch'd my yearning arms unto the sky,
I press'd my straining fingers on my brow,
(Nothing could cool its maddening pulses now,)
And flung me groaning by a tombstone there
To weep in my despair!

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Long had I wept: a gentle sound of woe
Struck on my ear--I turn'd the cause to know.
I saw a young fair creature silently
Kneeling beside a stone,
A form as bright as man would wish to see,
Or woman wish to own;
And eyes, whose true expression should be gladness,
Beam'd forth in momentary tears of sadness,
Showing like sun-shine through a summer rain
How soon 'twill all be bright and clear again.
I loved her!--

* * * * *

In truth she was a light and lovely thing,
Fair as the opening flower of early spring.
The deep rose crimson'd in her laughing cheek,
And her eyes seem'd without the tongue to speak;
Those dark blue glorious orbs!--oh! summer skies
Were nothing to the heaven of her eyes.
And then she had a witching art
To wile all sadness from the heart;
Wild as the half-tamed gazelle,
She bounded over hill and dell,
Breaking on you when alone
With her sweet and silvery tone,
Dancing to her gentle lute
With her light and fairy foot;
To our lone meeting-place

Stealing slow with gentle pace,
To hide among the feathery fern;
And, while waiting her return,
I wander'd up and down for hours--
She started from amid the flowers,
Wild, and fresh, and bright as they,
To wing again her sportive way.

'And she was good as she was fair;
Every morn and every even

Kneeling down in meekness there
To the Holy One of Heaven;
While those bright and soul-fraught eyes
With an angel's love seem'd burning,
All the radiance of blue skies
With an equal light returning.
The dream of guilt and misery
In that young soul had never enter'd;
Her hopes of Heaven--her love of me,
Were all in which her heart had centred:
Her longest grief, her deepest woe,
When by her mother's tomb she knelt,
Whom she had lost too young to know
How deep such loss is sometimes felt.

'It was not grief, but soft regret,
Such as, when one bright sun hath set
After a happy day, will come
Stealing within our heart's gay home,
Yet leaves a hope (that heart's best prize)
That even brighter ones may rise.
A tear, for hours of childhood wept;
A garland, wove for her who slept;
A prayer, that the pure soul would bless
Her child, and save from all distress;

A sigh, as clasp'd within her own
She held my hand beside that stone,
And told of many a virtue rare
That shone in her who slumber'd there--
Were all that clouded for a while

The brightness of her sunny smile.

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It was a mild sweet evening, such
As thou and I have sometimes felt
When the soul feels the scene so much
That even wither'd hearts must melt;
We sat beside that sacred place--
Her mother's tomb; her glorious head
Seem'd brightening with immortal grace,
As the impartial sun-light shed
Its beams alike on the cold grave,
Wandering o'er the unconscious clay,
And on the living eyes which gave
Back to those skies their borrow'd ray.
'Isbal, beloved!' 'twas thus my Edith spoke,
(And my worn heart almost to joy awoke
Beneath the thrill of that young silver tone
'Isbal, before thou call'st me all thine own,
I would that I might know the whole
Of what is gloomy in thy soul.

Nay, turn not on me those dark eyes
With such wild anguish and surprise.
In spite of every playful wile,
Thou know'st I never see thee smile;
And oft, when, laughing by thy side
Thou think'st that I am always gay,
Tears which are hanging scarcely dried
By thy fond kiss are wiped away.
And deem me not a child; for though
A gay and careless thing I be,
Since I have loved, I feel that, oh!
I could bear aught--do aught for thee!

'What boots it to record each gentle tone
Of that young voice, when ev'n the tomb is gone
By which we sat and talk'd? that innocent voice,
So full of joy and hope, that to rejoice
Seem'd natural to those who caught the sound!
The rosy lips are moulder'd under ground:
And she is dead--the beautiful is dead!

The loving and the loved hath pass'd away,
And deep within her dark and narrow bed
All mutely lies what was but breathing clay.

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Why did I tell the wildly horrible tale?--
Why did I trust the voice that told me she
Could bear to see beyond the lifted veil
A future life of hopeless misery?--
I told her all-- * * * * *
There was a long deep pause.
I dared not raise my eyes to ask the cause,
But waited breathlessly to hear once more
The gentle tones which I had loved of yore.
Was that her voice?--oh God!--was that her cry?
Were hers those smother'd tones of agony?
Thus she spoke; while on my brow
The cold drops stood as they do now :--
'It is not that I could not bear
The worst of ills with thee to share:
It is not that thy future fate
Were all too dark and desolate:
Earth holds no pang--Hell shows no fear
I would not try at least to bear;
And if my heart too weak might be,
Oh! it would then have broke for thee!
No, not a pang one tear had cost
But this--to see thee, know thee, lost!'

'My parch'd lips strove for utterance--but no,
I could but listen still, with speechless woe:
I stretch'd my quivering arms--'Away! away!'
She cried, 'and let me humbly kneel, and pray
For pardon; if, indeed, such pardon be
For having dared to love--a thing like thee!'

'I wrung the drops from off my brow;
I sank before her, kneeling low
Where the departed slept.
I spoke to her of heaven's wrath
That clouded o'er my desert path,

I raised my voice and wept!
I told again my heart's dark dream,
The lighting of joy's fever'd beam,
The pain of living on;
When all of fair, and good, and bright;
Sank from my path like heaven's light
When the warm sun is gone.
But though 'twas pity shone within her eye,
'Twas mingled with such bitter agony,
My blood felt chill.
Her round arms cross'd upon her shrinking breast,
Her pale and quivering lip in fear compress'd
Of more than mortal ill,
She stood.--'My Edith!--mine!' I frantic cried;
'My Edith!--mine!' the sorrowing hills replied;

And the familiar sound so dear erewhile,
Brought to her lip a wild and ghastly smile.
Then gazing with one long, long look of love,
She lifted up her eyes to heaven above,
And turned them on me with a gush of tears:
Those drops renew'd my mingled hopes and fears.
'Edith!--oh! hear me!' With averted face
And outspread arms she shrank from my embrace.
'Away!--away!--'She bent her shuddering knee,
Bow'd her bright head--and Edith ceased to be!
She was so young, so full of life,
I linger'd o'er the mortal strife
That shook her frame, with hope--how vain!
Her spirit might return again.
Could she indeed be gone?--the love
Of my heart's inmost core!--I strove
Against the truth.--That thing of smiles,
With all her glad and artless wiles--
She, who one hour ago had been
The fairy of that magic scene!--
She, whose fond playful eye such brilliance shed,
That laughter-loving thing--could she be cold and dead?--
I buried her, and left her there;
And turn'd away in my despair.

'And Evening threw her shadows round

That beautiful and blessed ground,
And all the distant realms of light
Twinkled from out the dark blue night.
So calmly pure--so far away
From all Earth's sorrows and her crimes,
The gentle scene before me lay;
So like the world of olden times,
That those who gazed on it might swear
Nothing but peace could enter there.
And yet there lay ungrown, untrod,
The fresh and newly turned-up sod,
Which cover'd o'er as fair a form
As ever fed the noxious worm.
There, but an hour ago--yea, less,
The agony and bitterness
Of human feelings, wrought so high
We can but writhe awhile and die,
Troubled the peace around; and sent
Wild shrieks into the firmament.
How strange the earth, our earth, should share
So little in our crime or care!
The billows of the treacherous main
Gape for the wreck, and close again
With dancing smiles, as if the deep
Had whelm'd not with eternal sleep

Many and many a warm young heart
Which swell'd to meet, and bled to part.
The battle plain its verdant breast
Will show in bright and sunny rest,
Although its name is now a word
Through sobs, and moans, and wailing heard;
And many, mourn'd for from afar,
There died the writhing death of war.
Yea, ev'n the stream, by whose cool side
Lay those who thirsted for its tide,
Yearning for some young hand of yore,
Wont in bright hours with smiles to pour
The mantling wine for him whose blood
Is mixing with the glassy flood--
Ev'n that pure fountain gushes by
With all its former brilliancy;

Nor bears with it one tint to show
How crimson it began to flow.
And thus an echo takes the tone
Of agony: and when 'tis gone,
Air, earth, and sea forget the sound,
And all is still and silent round.
And thus upon each cherish'd grave
The sunbeams smile, the branches wave;
And all our tears for those who now are not,
Sink in the flowery turf--and are forgot!

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And I return'd again, and yet again,
To that remember'd scene of joy and pain:
And ev'n while sitting by the early tomb
Of her who had deserved a better doom,
Her laughing voice rang in my ear,
Her fairy step seem'd coming near,
Until I raised my heavy eyes:
Then on the lone and desert spot I bow'd,
And hid my groaning head, and wept aloud.'

The stranger paused--and Linda gently wept
For him who lived in pain--for her who slept;
And clung to him, as if she fear'd that fate
Would strike him there and leave her desolate.
He spoke--and deaf her ear to all below,
Save the deep magic of that voice of woe!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Undying One - Canto II

'YEARS pass'd away in grief--and I,
For her dear sake whose heart could feel no more,
The sweetness and the witchery of love,
Which round my spirit such deep charm had wove:
And the dim twilight, and the noonday sky,
The fountain's music, the rich brilliancy
Of Nature in her summer--all became
To me a joyless world--an empty name--
And the heart's beating, and the flush'd fond thought
Of human sympathy, no longer brought
The glow of joy to this o'er-wearied breast,
Where hope like some tired pilgrim sank to rest.
The forms of beauty which my pathway cross'd
Seem'd but dim visions of my loved and lost,

Floating before me to arouse in vain
Deep yearnings, for what might not come again,
Tears without aim or end, and lonely sighs,
To which earth's echoes only gave replies.

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And I departed--once again to be
Roaming the desert earth and trackless sea:
Amongst men; but not with them: still alone
Mid crowds, unnamed--unnoticed--and unknown.
I wander'd on--and the loud shout went forth
Of Liberty, from all the peopled world,
Like a dark watch-word breathing south and north
Where'er the green turf grew, or billow curl'd;
And when I heard it, something human stirr'd
Within my miserable breast, and lo!
With the wild struggling of a captive bird;
My strong soul burst its heavy chain of woe.
I rose and battled with the great and brave,
Dared the dark fight upon the stormy wave.--
From the swarth climes, where sunshine loves to rest,
To the green islands of the chilly west,
Where'er a voice was raised in Freedom's name,
There sure and swift my eager footstep came.

And bright dreams fired my soul--How sweet will be
To me the hour of burning victory!

When the oppressor ceaseth to oppress,
And this sad name the tortured nations bless:
When tyranny beneath my sword shall bend,
And the freed earth shall turn and own me for her friend!

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Where Rome's proud eagle, which is now a name,
Spread forth its wings of glory to the sky;
And young warm hearts, that dreamt of deathless fame,
Woke from that dream to gaze around and die:
Where the pale crescent gleam'd athwart the cloud
Of men array'd to perish in their pride;
And the harsh note of war rang wild and loud
To urge the course of that impetuous tide:
Where Spain's dark banner o'er the castle walls
Heavily floats upon the mournful breeze--
And firmly sad the measured footstep falls
Of him who dreams of home in scenes like these:
Where steep'd in bitter tears and guiltless blood,
The lily flag of France droops sadly down:
Where England's lion o'er the heaving flood
Boastfully flutters in its proud renown:
Ev'n where her sister island dimly rears
(Though all the freshness from its hue be gone)
Her verdant standard from a land of tears,
While there are winds in heaven to waft it on:--

'Neath these, and many more than these, my arm
Hath wielded desperately the avenging steel--
And half exulting in the awful charm
Which hung upon my life--forgot to feel!

'I fought and conquer'd--and when all was done
How fared misfortune's persecuted son?
The dim days pass'd away and left me lone;
The tyrant and the slave alike were gone.
The indignant eyes that flash'd their wrath afar--
The swords that glitter'd through the cloudy war--
The swelling courage of the manly breast--

The iron hand whose strength the weak oppress'd--
The shouting voices in the deadly fray--
The jest and song that made ev'n camps seem gay--
The sounds--the forms--the feelings which had made
Those scenes in which my feet so long had stray'd--
Where and what are they now? a bitter dream
Lit by a meteor-like delusive gleam.
Freedom! thou art indeed a dream! a bright
And beautiful--a vision of pure light,
Pour'd on our earth-clad spirits from above--
Where all are equals, and where all is love:
But yet no less a dream. Where is the land
Which for the ploughshare hath exchanged the brand,

And been at peace for ever? Is there not
A war with all things in our changeful lot?
A war with Heaven, a war with our own souls,
Where stormily the sea of passion rolls--
Wrecking each better feeling, which doth strain
For liberty--and wrings our hearts to pain?
The war of fallen spirits with their sin,
The terrible war which rageth deep within--
Lo! there the cause of all the strife below
Which makes God's world a wilderness of woe.
Ye dream, and dream, and dream from day to day,
And bleed, and fight, and struggle, and decay;
And with high-sounding mockeries beguile
Natures that sink, and sicken all the while.
Whither are the old kings and conquerors gone?
Where are the empires lost--the empires won?
Look--from the classic lands whose fallen pride
Is fain to summon strangers to their side--
Where with weak wail they call themselves oppress'd,
Who, if unchain'd, would still be slaves at best--
To far across the dim and lonely sea
Where the thrice-conquer'd styles herself 'the free:'
How many generations now are past
Since the first war-cry rose, and when will be the last?
Yet is there freedom in a distant clime,
Where freedom dwelleth to the end of time;

And peace, and joy, and ignorance of fear,

And happiness--but oh! not here! not here!
Not in this world of darkness and of graves,
Where the strong govern, and the weak are slaves.
Thou, whose full heart would dream of liberty,
Go out beneath the solitary sky
In its blue depth of midnight--stand and gaze
While the stars pour on thee their gentle rays;
And image, if thou canst, unto thy soul
A little part of the most wondrous whole
Of all that lies beyond--there no dark strife
Destroys the creatures of the God of Life;
There no ambition to be made more great
Turns the pure love of brothers into hate.
Each hath his place assign'd him like the stars
Up in the silent sky, where nothing wars.

"Twas on a battle plain,--here in thine own
Sweet land of sunshine, that I paused to mark
The heaps of slaughter'd heroes now o'erthrown,
Whose helpless corpses lay all stripp'd and stark.
'Twas in the time when Moorish blood first mix'd
With haughty Spain's; and on her spotless name
The dint and brand of slavery affix'd;
And blood was spilt to reap eternal shame.

The useless struggle ended on that day,
And round about Grenada's walls there lay
Many and many a brave young bosom, gored
By the rude spear or deeply thrusting sword.
And silence was upon that fatal field
Save when, to nature's anguish forced to yield,
Some fallen soldier heaved a broken sigh
For his far home, and turn'd him round to die:
Or when the wailing voice of woman told
That her long weary search was not in vain,
And she had found the bosom, stiff and cold,
Where her soft clustering curls had often lain.
'Twas one of these that burst upon my ear
While watching on that field: the wind-harp's tone
Was not more mournful, nor more sweetly clear,
Than was the sound of that sad woman's moan.
Through the dim moonlight I beheld a form--

Her dark brow clouded with grief's passionate storm,
And on her breast an infant calmly slept
Which she would pause to gaze on; and again,
With bitterness renew'd, she loudly wept,
And call'd on its dead father--but in vain!

'My early and my only love, why silent dost thou lie,
When heavy grief is in my heart, and tear-drops in mine eye;

I call thee, but thou answerest not, all lonely though I be:
Wilt thou not burst the bonds of sleep, and rise to comfort me?

' Oh! wake thee--wake thee from thy rest upon the tented field:
This faithful breast shall be at once thy pillow and thy shield;
If thou hast doubted of its truth and constancy before,
Oh! wake thee now, and it will strive to love thee even more.

'If ever we have parted, and I wept thee not as now,
If ever I have seen thee come, and worn a cloudy brow,
If ever harsh and careless words have caused thee pain and woe,
Then sleep, in silence sleep, and I--will bow my head and go.

' But if, through all the vanish'd years whose shadowy joys are gone,
Through all the changing scenes of life, I thought of thee alone;
If I have mourn'd for thee when far, and worshipp'd thee when near,
Then wake thee up, my early love, this weary heart to cheer!

'Awake! thy baby-boy is here, upon whose soft cheek lie
No tears of grief, save those which fall from his sad mother's eye;
How, lingering, didst thou gaze on him when we were forced to part--
Rise up, for he is here again, and press him to thy heart!

' In vain, in vain--I dream of thee and joyous life in vain;
Thou never more shalt rise in strength from off the bloody plain;
Thou never more shalt clasp thy boy, nor hold me to thy breast:
Thou hast left us lonely on the earth, and thou art gone to rest.

'Awake thee, my forsaken boy!--awake, my babe, and weep;
Art thou less wretched that thy brow no trace of woe can keep?
Oh! would through life that thou mightst taste no cup but that of joy,
And I, as now, might weep for both--my boy!--my orphan boy!'

'She paused and raised her dark wild eyes, where bright
In the blue heavens broke the dawning light--

But what to her was day or sunshine now,
All vainly beaming on that pallid brow?
She only felt that never more with him,
In the deep cloudless noon, or moonlight dim,
Her weary feet might wander--that his voice
Should never bid her beating heart rejoice--
That where there had been sunniness and bliss,
Silence and shadows and deep loneliness
Must be her portion--that all days to come
Would rise upon a widow'd heart and home.--
She only felt, while weeping on that spot,
That bright and waking world contain'd him not!
She rose as if to go--yet once again
Turn'd back in tears to gaze upon the slain;
And raised her voice of wail, whose tone might ne'er
Awake an echo in that slumbering ear:--

'We shall meet no more on the sunny hill,
Where the lonely wild flower springs and dies;
We shall meet no more by the murmuring rill,
Where the blue cool waters idly rise.
The sunshine and flowers all bright remain
In their lonely beauty, as of yore;
But to me 'twill never be bright again--
We shall meet no more! we shall meet no more!

'We shall meet no more in the lighted halls,
Amid happy faces and gay young hearts ;
I may listen in vain as each footstep falls,
I may watch in vain as each form departs!
There are laughing voices, but thy young tone
Its cheerful greeting hath ceased to pour;
Thy form from the dancing train is gone--
We shall meet no more! we shall meet no more!'

'Such was the scene where first I saw and loved
Xarifa.--She was beautiful, but not
By that alone my wither'd heart was moved;
But that long days, unwept though unforgot,

Arose before me, freshly to oppress,
And wring my secret soul to bitterness.
Her sorrow was as mine, and every word
She utter'd in her agony did seem
As if a spirit voice I dimly heard
Speaking of Edith in a weary dream.
And so it was--our tearful hearts did cling
And twine together ev'n in sorrowing;
And we became as one--her orphan boy.
Lisp'd the word 'Father' as his dark eyes gazed,
With their expressive glance of timid joy,
Into my face, half pleased and half amazed.

And we did dwell together, calmly fond
With our own love, and not a wish beyond.

'Well, we were happy; and I vainly thought
That happiness so calm might last--but no!
Suns rose, and set, and rose; years came and pass'd,
And brought with them my lot--the lot of woe.
And the boy grew in beauty and in strength,
Rousing my soul to love him more and more--
Till I gazed on that graceful form at length
With a proud worship--and while musing o'er
The happy future, half forgot that fate
Had doom'd me ever to be desolate--
That all I loved had but a life as frail
As the young flower that wooes the summer gale;
And that the hour must come, when they would flee
To that far land of peace where was no place for me!
And ev'n before that hour, upon my home
Dark shadows fell from weary day to day;
And where there had been sunniness, was gloom--
And that boy's mother changed and pined away.
In her unquiet eye from year to year
Rose the expression of a restless fear,
And lines, which time had yet forborne to trace,
Were writ by care upon her fading face.

There would she sit, and steal a fearful glance,
Or fix those Moorish eyes as in a trance
Upon my form; and love dwelt still within

That pure fond heart which suffer'd for no sin.
And she would strive my sorrow to beguile,
And start, and wipe away her tears, and smile,
If, gazing in her waking dream, she caught
My eye, and read therein the master thought.
But never through those years did word or sign
Ask for the secret which was wholly mine.
She faded silently as doth the rose,
Which but in death reveals the secret smart,
And faintly smiling, to the last bestows
A balmy perfume from its withering heart.
How often, when I gazed on her, there came
The earnest wish that trembled through my frame,
To rise--to clasp her to my'swelling breast,
To falter forth my tale, and be at rest!
When others, whom the laws of Heaven had tied,
Wander'd through this world's sunshine side by side;
Each beaming face bright as their brows above,
With perfect confidence and mutual love--
When I have seen some young heart's feeling rise
And glisten forth from glad and loving eyes;
Or heard the murmur'd words fond lips have spoken
Of faith unchanged and firm, and vows unbroken--

How I have strain'd my clasp'd and quivering hands,
And stretch'd them to the heavens as if in prayer;
Yearning to bow to Nature's strong commands,
And cloud another's life with my despair!
But when I thought of Edith--of that hour
When suddenly, and like a storm-scathed flower
She sank and perish'd, whose dear brightness seem'd
More beautiful than aught my heart had dream'd--
I shrank within myself, and silently
Met the sad glances of her anxious eye.

'Oh Sympathy!--how little do they know,
Who to a fellow heart confide their woe,
Who raise their tearful gaze to see again
Reflected back those drops of summer rain--
How weighs the lid which dares not show its tear,
But weeps in silence, agony, and fear;
And, dying for a glance, must yet disown

The sacred balm of hearts, and writhe alone!
To stifle grief till none but God can see,
Longing the while to say, 'Come, weep with me:
Weep! for the flowers have faded from my path,
The rays of light have left my darken'd sky:
Weep! for thy tear is all the wanderer hath,
Whose lone despair would bid him groan--and die:'

Thus--thus to shrink from every outstretch'd hand,
To strive in secret, and alone to stand;
Or, when obliged to mingle with the crowd,
Curb the pain'd lip which quiveringly obeys--
Gapes wide with sudden laughter, vainly loud,
Or writhes a faint slow smile to meet their gaze--
This--this is hell! The soul which dares not show
The barbed sorrow which is rankling there,
Gives way at length beneath its weight of woe,
Withers unseen, and darkens to despair!

'One eve at spring-tide's close we took our way,
When eve's last beams in soften'd glory fell,
Lighting her faded form with sadden'd ray,
And the sweet spot where we so loved to dwell.
Faintly and droopingly she sat her down
By the blue waters of the Guadalquivir;
With darkness on her brow, but yet no frown,
Like the deep shadow on that silent river.
She sat her down, I say, with face upturn'd
To the dim sky, which daylight was forsaking,
And in her eyes a light unearthly burn'd--
The light which spirits give whose chains are breaking!
And, as she gazed, her low and tremulous voice
In murmuring sweetness did address the earth,

With mournful rapture, which makes none rejoice;
And gladness, which to sorrow doth give birth.

'The spring! I love the spring! for it hath flowers,
And gaily plumaged birds, and sapphire skies,
And sleeping sunshine, and soft cooling showers,
And shadowy woods where weary daylight dies.
And it hath dancing waters, where the sun,

With an enamour'd look at the light waves,
Doth lull himself to rest when day is done,
And sinks away behind their rocky caves.

'I love the spring, for it hath many things
In earth and air that mind reel of old days;
Voices and laughter and light murmurings
Borne on the breeze that through the foliage plays;
And sounds that are not words, of human joy
From the deep bosom of the shelter'd wood;
Woods dimm'd by distance, where, half pleased, half coy,
The maiden chides her broken solitude.

'The spring of youth!--how like to nature's spring,
When its light pleasures all have pass'd away,
Are the dim memories which that word can bring,
Wringing the heart that feels its own decay!

The half forgotten charm of many a scene
Coming confusedly athwart the brain;
The wandering where our former steps have been
With forms that may not wander there again;--

'Murmurings and voices where some single tone
Thrills for a moment, and forgets to sound;
Yearnings for all that now is past and gone,
And vain tears sinking in the mossy ground:--
Oh! this is all, and more than all, which stays
To mock us with the sunshine of past years;
And those spring shadows on our autumn days
Cast their dim gloom, and turn our smiles to tears!

'She paused--and on the river bent her glance,
As if she loved to see the waters dance,
And dash their silver sparkles on the shore
In mockery of Ocean's giant roar.
And a half smile lit up that pallid brow,
As, casting flowers upon the silent stream,
She watch'd the frail sweet blossoms glide and go
Like human pleasures in a blissful dream.
And then, with playful force she gently flung
Small shining pebbles from the river's brink,

And o'er the eddying waters sadly hung,
Pleased, and yet sorrowful, to see them sink.

'And thus,' she said, 'doth human love forget
Its idols--some sweet blessings float away,
Follow'd by one long look of vain regret,
As they are slowly hastening to decay;
And some, with sullen plunge, do mock our sight,
And suddenly go down into the tomb,
Startling the beating heart, whose fond delight
Chills into tears at that unlook'd-for doom.
And there remains no trace of them, save such
As the soft ripple leaves upon the wave;
Or a forgotten flower, whose dewy touch
Reminds us some are withering in the grave!
When all is over, and she is but dust
Whose heart so long hath held thy form enshrined;
When I go hence, as soon I feel I must,
Oh! let my memory, Isbal, haunt thy mind.
Not for myself--oh! not for me be given
Vain thoughts of vain regret; though that were sweet;
But for the sake of that all-blissful Heaven,
Where, if thou wilt it, we yet may meet.
When in thy daily musing thou dost bring
Those scenes to mind, in which I had a share;
When in thy nightly watch thy heart doth wring
With thought of me--oh! murmur forth a prayer!
A prayer for me--for thee--for all who live
Together, yet asunder in one home--

Who their soul's gloomy secret dare not give,
Lest it should blacken all their years to come.
Yes, Isbal, yes; to thee I owe the shade
That prematurely darkens on my brow;
And never had my lips a murmur made--
But--but that--see! the vision haunts me now!
She pointed on the river's surface, where
Our forms were pictured seated side by side;
I gazed on them, and her's was very fair;
And mine--was as thou seest it now, my bride.
But her's, though fair, was fading--wan and pale
The brow whose marble met the parting day.

Time o'er her form had thrown his misty veil,
And all her ebon curls were streak'd with grey:
But mine was youthful--yes! such youth as glows
In the young tree by lightning scathed and blasted--
That, joyless, waves its black and leafless boughs,
On which spring showers and summer warmth are wasted.
The lines upon my brow were those of age;
The hollow cheek might speak of time or woe;
But all the rest was as in life's first stage--
The tangled curls without one touch of snow.
Oh! wherefore do I thus describe old times?
Am I not here--the same accursed thing,
Stamp'd with the brand of darkness for my crimes--
Never to die--but ever withering?

'Yes--yes--it is of her that I would tell.
She turn'd, as from my lips a murmur fell,
Half curse, half groan--and with a gentle look
Of angel love and pity thus she spoke:--

'Isbal, forgive me, if a bitter thought
This first, last time hath to thy heart been brought
By her who loved thee, ev'n in doubt and dread,
Better than ought, save him--the early dead!
Forgive me! for I would not pass from earth
With one dark thought, which may have had its birth
Unknown to thee; nor leave thee till I've said--
(Chide not these tears, which weakness makes me shed)--
Till I have said--and truth is on my tongue--
How fervently my heart to thine hath clung:
How I have shrunk, yet sought thy dear caress;
How I have feared--but never loved thee less:
How I have smiled for thee,--with thee, unbid,
While quivering tears rose 'neath the swelling lid--
And still kept silence when I would have spoken
For fear that seal'd-up fountain should be broken.
How I have--Isbal--Isbal--when I'm gone,
And thou hast nothing left to smile upon;
Remember--'tis a weak, a foolish prayer--
But do remember how I tried to bear

That worst of human pangs, a breaking heart,

And never let thee know how deep the smart!
Remember, that I never sought to know
The secret source of thy mysterious woe;
Nor ask'd why 'midst all changing things--unmoved
Thou--thou--(I tremble--heed it not, beloved!)--
Unmoved thou hast remained--Oh, Isbal, pray;
For dark the fear that clouds my parting day.
And though the word be vain--the time be pass'd,
Remember--I have loved thee to the last!
She ceased, and strove my hand in hers to keep:
She wept not then--she was too weak to weep--
But with a faint fond gaze, half awe, half love,
Like an embodied prayer,--she look'd above.
And I--I would have told her then--that tale
The dream of which had turn'd her soft cheek pale,
And sent her to her grave--but she refused.
'Isbal, thy confidence is not abused:
If thou art sinful, let me know it not;
If thou hast sorrow'd, let it be forgot:
The past is nothing now, and I would die
Without one thought which may not soar on high.'

And she did droop and die, and pass away,
Leaving her memory, and that youthful son

Who sorrow'd for a while and then was gay,
And spoke in smiles of that lamented one.
Happy! for him the present bore no sting,
The past no agonies:--the future rose,
Bright as the colours of an angel's wing
Too far from earth to darken with its woes.
And he was form'd to love the haunts of men,
And to be fervently beloved again;
Firm, but yet gentle--fearless, but not bold--
Gay with the young, and tender to the old;
Scorning the heart where dark distrust was shown,
Because no treachery ever stain'd his own;
Ardent in love, but yet no-ways inclined
To sue wherever beauty sate enshrined:--
Such was my orphan care, and I became
Proud of Abdallah's father's blessed name.
Glad were the youths in whom fond friends could spy

Abdallah's graceful mien and daring eye:
Fondly the aged hail'd their favourite boy
With faltering words of mingled praise and joy:
Nor less the fair and fairy ones adored
The eloquent of tongue, and swift of sword.
And, from the many beautiful, he chose
One that might share in peace his evening's close;
There might be others fairer--but she was
So young--so meek--so feminine--applause,

And pride, and admiration, and the wild
Half worship which we pay earth's erring child--
All the tumultuous brain and bosom's stir
Sank into tenderness a sight of her.
You could not gaze on her, nor wish to shield
That shrinking form and gentle head from harm.
No borrow'd art could light or lustre yield,
But every bright addition spoil'd a charm.

'Their bridal day--their bridal day--it is
A day to be remember'd, deep within
The gloomy caves where dwells the foe of bliss,
And sends his fiends to tempt man on to sin.
The hall was bright with many-colour'd lamps;
The air was peopled with soft happy sounds;
And, careless of the dewy midnight damps,
Young feet were twinkling in the moonlit grounds:
The purple wine was mantling in the cup,
And flashing its rich hue upon their brows,
Who bent with eager lips to quaff it up,
And add their laughter to the loud carouse:
The merry jest--the superstitious tale--
The random question, and the tart reply,
Rang on in murmurings confused--till pale
The moonlight waned, and left the dawning sky.

The light dance ceased--by lips as sweet as thine
The word of fond farewell was slowly said;
Many departed--many sank supine,
With folded arms beneath each heavy head.
But still, with every lingering tardy guest
The brimming wine-cup circled as before:

And still went round the oft-repeated jest,
Which with impatient glance the bridegroom bore.
There was a traveller, who chanced to be
Invited with this joyous company;
And he was telling of the wondrous sights--
The popular sports--the strange and wild delights
Which in far countries he had heard and seen;
And once in Italy, where he had been,
How in great ruin'd Rome he heard a strange
Wild horrible tale of one who, for a crime
Too deadly to relate, might never change,
But live undying to the end of time:
One who had wander'd sadly up and down
Through every sunny land and peopled town,
With Cain's dark sign deep branded on his brow--
A haggard thing of guilt, and want, and woe!--
Breathings that seem'd like sobs, so loud they came
And chokingly from out my trembling frame,
Fill'd up the awful pause which came at length,
As if to give his words more horrid strength.

And every eye turn'd wonderingly and wild
Upon my face, while shudderingly I smiled,
And said, 'It is a fearful tale indeed;
But one that scare needs daunt ye, since ye are
From the dark fiend whom Heaven such fate decreed,
And Rome's imperial ruins, distant far.'
More had I said, nor heeded their reply,
But that Abdallah met my glance, and rose;--
And on his face I fix'd my wandering eye,
Which glared, and glared, and glared, and would not close.
And o'er his eager brow there shot a gleam,
As if but now remembering some dark dream.
And his lips parted--but he did not speak;
And his hand rose, but languidly and weak
Sank down again; while still we gazing stood
Into each other's eyes, as if for food.
I tried to laugh, but hollow in my throat
The gurgling murmur died; and once again
That young arm rose, and on the table smote,
And the slow words came audibly and plain:
While on all sides they fled and left us there,

Guilt, fear, and anguish, battling with despair.
'Arise, accursed! and go forth in peace!
No hand shall harm thee, and no tongue insult;

But 'neath this roof thy unblest voice must cease;
And thy dark sin must meet its dark result.'
I trembled, but obey'd not; from his face
My eyes withdrew, and sank upon the ground
While standing rooted, helpless, in my place,
I utter'd some half inarticulate sound--
Terms that I scarce remember--all, save one,
Utter'd with agony--it was, 'My son.'
And well I can recall the look, ev'n now,
Of scorn angelic on his lip and brow;
The cold defiance of his alter'd eye;
The tone that bade me wander forth and die:
Like the bright cherub to his home in hell
Dooming the first who sinn'd--the first who fell.

'Thy son! I thank kind heaven, whate'er my lot,
That word is false; my father thou art not!
My father!--back unto thy place of crime,
Dark fiend, who slew my mother ere her time!
Darest thou remind me by the awful sound,
How a mock link to thee that angel bound?
Well can I now explain her gentle look
Of mingled terror, anguish, and rebuke,
As 'neath thy blasting look, from day to day,
Sick of the joyless world, she pined away.

Breathe not the words, she loved thee: true, she loved:
In that her virtue, not thine own, is proved.
She loved, because the purity within
Her gentle heart was ignorance of sin.
Praise be to Heaven, she died! I little thought
Such words should to my secret soul be taught;
But I would howl them to the assembled world:
Praise be to Heaven, she died! nor saw thee hurl'd
From out the haunts of men with fear and hate,
Like a wan leper from the city's gate!
Praise be to Heaven, she died! nor saw thee stand
With shrinking quivering form, and nerveless hand--

The cowardice of guilt within thy heart,
And shaking thee--all devil as thou art!
Go!--The poor leper, scarr'd, and pale, and wan,
And driven groaning from his fellow man;
Trailing his loathsome languid limbs afar,
And gazing back where all his loved ones are--
The loved, who love him not: oh! he is free
From ill or sadness, when compared with thee.
Though all forsake him as he helpless lies,
And, straining his dim eyes, doth wonder where
Are those who should watch o'er him as he dies,
Cool his hot mouth, and soften his despair:
Though in the dust with agony he rolls--
His is the body's plague, and thine, and thine--the soul's!

'Bitter the truth, and bitterly I spoke,
When from my lip the first deep murmur broke;
And then to that young heart I made appeal--
That heart which seem'd for all but me to feel:
Till like a torrent my pent words found way,
And thus I raved:--

"Happy the cottager! for he hath sons
And blue-eyed daughters made for love and mirth;
And many a child whose chasing footstep runs
Around the precincts of his humble hearth.
Borne on the breeze their light-toned laughter comes,
Making glad music in the parents' ear;
And their bright faces light their humble homes,
Brows all unshaded yet by guilt or fear!
And if at length one rosy head bows low,
And prayers are vain from death's dark power to save,
The lessen'd circle meet in mingled woe
To weep together o'er that gentle grave:
And, gazing through their misty tears, they see
(Like the blue opening through the stormy cloud)
Faces where grief was never meant to be,
And eyes whose joy doth mock the sable shroud.
The one link sever'd from that broken chain
Is lost, and they must cling to what is left;

Back to their many loves they turn again,

And half forget of what they were bereft.
But I--I had but thee! I had but thee!
And thou wert precious to my weary heart:
For thee I bow'd the head and bent the knee--
For thee I toil'd till the strong vein would start.
And thou didst pay me then with many a smile,
And broken words by joy-touch'd lips breathed forth;
And many a little playful infant wile--
Dear to my soul--to others little worth.
The lip that now hath quiver'd forth its curse,
The shuddering hand that bade my form obey--
The trembling limbs that shrink as if from worse
Than death could threaten to his human prey--
All--all have clung to me, with each fond sign:
The tottering feeble step hath sought my aid:
And oft have gently nestled, close to mine,
The clustering curls of that indignant head!
I am but human, though the tale be true
Which curses me with life, while life may last;
And the long future which doth mock my view,
But makes me cling more closely to the past.
Leave me not!--leave me not!--whate'er I be,
Thou surely shouldst not judge me, nor forsake;
If not by ties of nature bound to thee,
Sure there are other ties man may not break.

Leave me not!--leave me not! I am not changed,
Though thou but now hast heard my tale of sin:
I still can love thee, boy, as when we ranged,
Hand link'd in hand, those pleasant bowers within:
I know that other men will gaze and scoff
As the lone desolate one doth journey on;
I know that human things will cast me off--
But thou!--forsake me not--my son!--my son!'

'He shook--the deep sob labour'd in his breast--
Then sprang to me with a convulsive cry;
And, as my head sank on that place of rest,
Mingled with mine hot tears of agony.
And she, his fairy bride--she did not shrink,
But clung to me, as if she wish'd to prove,
When sorrow's cup is brimming to the brink,

How weak is woman's fear to woman's love!
Oh! nought of self is in their gentle hearts.
The things we tempt--and trample when they fall,
Danger and death--the dread that sin imparts,
Sadden, but shake not--they will love through all.
And we return'd, we three, unto our home--
The home that had been ours in peace so long,
And sunshine seem'd upon our hearts to come,
As that young bride pour'd forth her evening song.

'The morning dawn'd, and glad I wander'd out
Where the young flowers hung clustering about:
And a rich wreath I wove for her who slept,
Where nature's pearly drops still freshly wept.
That dark blue morning brighten'd into day--
But none came forth--oh! where, my heart, were they?
I sought them in the little shady grove,
Where their young lips first learn'd to breathe of love;
I sought them by the fountain's playful stream,
Where they were wont of happiness to dream;
I call'd them out to breathe the open day--
But none came forth--oh! where, my heart, were they?
That heart beat thick--I enter'd where the couch
Bedeck'd with flowers had woo'd their fond approach;
I gazed around--no sign of life was there;
My voice unanswer'd died upon the air;
The yet unfaded flowers were blooming gay--
But none came forth--oh! where, my heart, were they?
Where were they?--ay, where were they? once again
I sought them, though I felt the search was vain--
Through every well-known path and sunny spot
I sought those truants--but I found them not;
And when at length the weary day was done,
I sat me down, and knew I was alone.
Oh! had a sob, a sound, but broke my sleep--
Had I but been allow'd to rise and weep--

Convulsively to strain them, ere they went,
To my chill'd breast; to give my anguish vent;
Methought I could have borne it; but to rise
And glad me in the fresh and waking skies--
To greet the sun with joyfulness,--to wait,

Expecting them, and yet be desolate;
To twine those flowers, and see them fade away,
Frail as the hopes that sicken'd with the day;
To groan and listen, and to groan again,
While Echo only answer'd to my pain;
To start from feverish dreams, and breathe unheard
Loud words of welcome to that vision'd pair;
To listen in my sleep some singing bird,
And wake and find it was not Zara there;
To stretch my eager arms those forms to bind,
And with redoubled bitterness to find
The shadowy vision gone I loved to trace,
And darkness where had beam'd each youthful face:--
This was my lot--and this I learnt to bear,
And cursed the human links which bound me still to care.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Undying One - Canto Iv

'TIS done--the night has pass'd away;
And, basking in the sunny day,
The laughing fountain's waters bear
No record of each burning tear;--
The silent echoes give no sound
Of shriek or moan; and nothing round
Can tell what breaking hearts have been
So lately in that quiet scene.
But ere the evening falls again,
Many a step o'er mount and glen
Shall hurry far and wide, to seek
Her of the pallid brow and cheek.
Proud is the eye of the bridegroom lord!
He hath girt him round with a trusty sword,

And the horse that hath borne him to battle for years,
Gladly his angry summons hears.
His red nostrils snuffing the morning air,
Nothing he heeds their heavy care,
But waits till his high curving neck shall be freed,
To bound o'er the hills with an arrow's speed.
He is gone--full swiftly he dashes by--
And many a bright and beautiful eye
Follows the rider's form;--and dreams
Of pleasant walks by the dancing streams,
Of moonlight whisperings in the grove,
Of looks of ardour, and vows of love,
Fill those young hearts: and they wonder why
Visions so happy should make them sigh:
And more they wonder, that any one
Of the numberless forms their eyes have known,
Should have stolen a heart which Carlos woo'd
By the fount, and the lone wood's solitude.

Oh! love--real love! intoxicating dream
Of beauty and of happiness! how vain
Are our aspirings after thee, which seem
To bring thee near us!--doubt and causeless pain,
And jealousies, and most unconstant sighs

For something fairer than this world supplies;
And fondness which doth end in faint disgust;
And airy hopes that crumble down to dust ;--
These are not love,--though these too oft impart
A false excitement to the swelling heart.

To look upon the fairy one, who stands
Before you, with her young hair's shining bands,
And rosy lips half parted;--and to muse,
Not on the features which you now peruse,
Not on the blushing bride,--but look beyond
Unto the aged wife, nor feel less fond:
To feel, that while thy arm can strike them dead,
No breathing soul shall harm that gentle head:
To know, that none with fierce and sudden strife
Shall tear thee from her, save with loss of life:
To keep thee but to one, and let that one
Be to thy home what warmth is to the sun;
To gaze, and find no change, when time hath made
Youth's dazzling beauty darken into shade,
But fondly--firmly--cling to her, nor fear
The fading touch of each declining year:--
This is true love, when it hath found a rest
In the deep home of manhood's faithful breast.

To worship silently at some heart's shrine,
And feel, but paint not, all its fire in thine:
To pray for that heart's hopes, when thine are gone,
Nor let its after coldness chill thine own:
To hold that one, with every fault, more dear
Than all who whisper fondness in thine ear:
To joy thee in his joy, and silently
Meet the upbraiding of his angry eye:
To bear unshrinking all the blows of fate,
Save that which leaves thy sorrow desolate:
Nor deem that woe, which thou canst feel is still
Borne with him, and for him; through every ill
To smile on him,--nor weep, save when apart,
God, and God only; looks into thy heart:
To keep unchanged thy calm, pure, quiet love,
If he, inconstant, doth a new one prove;
To love all round him as a part of him,

Ev'n her he worships:--though thine eye be dim
With weeping for thyself--to pray that not
One cloud may darken o'er their earthly lot:
With the affection of true hearts, to see
His happiness, which doth not hang on thee :--
Oh! this is woman's love--its joy--its pain;
And this--it hath been felt--and felt in vain.

They are dancing again, by the misty veil
Of the star-lit sky and the moonlight pale.
Laughing and murmuring voices rise
With their gladsome tones, to the peaceful skies:
And no one voice hath a sadder tone
For the sake of her whose form is gone,
Though her step was light in the dance, and her brow
Fairer than any which gleam there now.
Yet after the dance is done, and faint
Each languid limb on the turf is thrown,
Their gathering voices strive to paint
The stranger-heart that Linda won.
And still, as his wasted form, pale brow,
And mournful looks to their thoughts appear;
With his deep, sad voice, they wonder how
He hath pleaded his tale in Linda's ear.
And some dream wildly of wizard bower
Which hath tempted those fair young feet to stray:
And some of the sweet and charmed power
Which lies in the moonlight's holy ray:
And some who love--oh! they fondly feel,
In the hopeful heart of the promised bride,
That her soul may be bound in the woe or weal
Of the stranger by the fountain's side:
And none be able to know, or tell,
How such a love in her young heart grew--
Till the charm have bound their souls as well,
And the flame burn bright in their bosoms too.

They travel fast--the bridegroom lord,
With his prancing steed and his trusty sword;
And the brother-tyrant by his side,
With marble brow and heart of pride.
But vainly they follow o'er vale and hill,

Through the tufted heath, or the cool clear rill;
That mournful pair are far before,
Where the bleak sands lie, and the billows roar.
Far from the smiling land of her birth,
Her early home on the boundless earth,
Hath Linda, with tears, resolved to go,
For her mother's son is her deadly foe.
Stern as he was when she watch'd each look,
And obey'd ere he spoke--oh! how shall he brook
That her heart hath swerved, and her vows are naught
For the sake of the love which a stranger brought?
Oh! far may her white foot seek, and reach,
A home on Erin's shingled beach!
Where Miriam dwelt--in their bless'd land
Of the free warm heart, and the open hand;
Where no hypocrite sneer their wrath disguises,
But the sword springs out as the heart's blood rises;

There hath she chosen her home to be:
And their bark bounds over the foaming sea.
Silently watching by Isbal's side,
Sadly she looks on the curling tide;
And, gloomily as it roams o'er all,
His eye is a guide where hers shall fall.
Sudden a light shot o'er that eye,
And a quivering through him came;
And Linda, though she knows not why,
Clings trembling to his frame.
Hurriedly he spoke,
As the deep flush broke
O'er his face:
'There is a vessel--would it were a wreck!--
I know it by the flag; and on that deck
Are forms my soul can trace.
Though yet I see them not, I know
That, could we meet, a bitter woe
Were thine, their power beneath:
Though yet I hear them not, I feel
Each voice would tear the polish'd steel
From out its idle sheath.
Curse on the sails, whose lagging speed
Doth leave us in our hour of need!

Is there no wind in heaven?
They come--oh! Linda, cling to me:
Come closer yet: more strength will be
To love and vengeance given!

Vain wrath! Young Linda gazes on the sight
Which thus hath conjured up a desperate fight;
And, in the distance she doth spy a sail,
With its flag fluttering gently on the gale,
White, calm, and peaceful:--strange in truth it seems,
That such a sight hath power to wake such dreams.
Yet doth she shudder, as with vehement force
He clasps her round, and views the vessel's course.
It nears--it nears--and through the signal glass,
The distant forms of crew and captain pass.--
'Tis they! 'tis they! Her brother's haughty form,
Proudly erect, defies the coming storm:
And, seated near him, in his mantle clad,
With brow almost as haughty, but more sad,
Is he who woo'd her heart, when love was yet
A dream--which those who wake, strive vainly to forget!

She sees them, but all unconscious they,
Who tracks them thus on their distant way.
They hail the vessel, then turn to gaze
Upon the sunset's parting rays;
And veering in their course, they sever,
Careless if they should part for ever!
But Isbal hath fix'd his straining sight
On the gleamy look of her canvas white,
And with impatient glance on high
Chides the full sails that hide the sky;
And yearns, till that distant land be won,
For spirits' wings to bear him on.
Bounds the light ship on her foamy track,
With her crimson pennant floating back:
Onward impell'd by the steady gales,
That are firmly pressing the swelling sails.

On she goes, and the waves are dashing
Under her stern, and under her prow;
Oh! pleasant the sound of the waters splashing

To those who the heat of the desert know.

On she goes--and the light is breaking
In a narrow streak o'er the distant sea;
And the shouts confused of the crew are waking
The silent air with an echo free.

On she goes--and the moon hath risen--
The holy moon that her veil doth shroud;
And like a mournful face from prison,
She looketh out of her watery cloud.

Graceful as earth's most gentle daughters,
That good ship sails through the gleaming spray--
Like a beautiful dream on the darken'd waters,
Till she anchors in Killala bay.

Erin!--be hush'd, my lyre! Oh! thou,
With ardent mind and eager brow;
With heart and harp together strung,
The hero's soul, the poet's tongue;
Who shall attempt the chorded shell
Which thou hast breathed upon so well?
Or who shall seek that land to praise,
Nor seem to echo back thy lays?
That land, 'the land that bore thee;' never
Shall aught thy name from Erin's sever--
Nor dream of Erin's beauty be,
That doth not also breathe of thee.
And if perchance, in after years,
Some other harp shall wake our tears;

Or, with a burst of glorious song,
Bear our rapt souls in dreams along:
The songs they sing, the lays they pour,
Shall bring us back thy genius--Moore!
Oh! yes--by all that others feel,
When from thy lip the low words steal:
By many an unregarded sigh
The winds have caught in passing by:
By wild far dreams of light divine,
That come not, save to souls like thine:

By the heart-swelling thou hast wrought:
By thy deep melody of thought:
By tear, and song, and ardour won--
The harp of Erin is thine own!

A storm is in the sky; a storm on earth;
And terror pale hath hush'd the voice of mirth.
And strong determination gleams forth now
From the deep lines of many a careless brow.
A storm is on the sea; a storm in heaven;
And wildly on the vessel's course is driven.
Forth rushes lightning from the lurid skies,
And ere the pilot's lips can pray,--he dies!
Aghast they stand;--the blacken'd corse lies there,
Sickening their helpless hearts with deep despair:

While Isbal waves his vainly lifted hand,
And shouts in deafen'd ears his proud command:
'Each to his post! Myself will take the helm,
Though lightnings dart, and billows overwhelm.
Why dream ye thus? Is death so dreadful then
To shrinking things that boast the name of men?
Will ye be daunted that one soul hath gone
Ere he had time to say, 'I go alone!'
Struggle for life! for soon the yawning tide,
Which howls and dashes o'er the good ship's side,
Shall come to claim its prey:--each to his post,
And strain and labour, or the ship is lost!
Alarm, and shame, and wonder fill their hearts;
And then his fiery speech some warmth imparts.
All hands aboard with silent strength obey,
And the strain'd vessel ploughs her labour'd way.

A bark--a bark comes tossing o'er the wave,
(On the dark face of heaven, more darkly seen)
Right on the vessel's course,--while ev'n the brave
Shudder for breath;--what doth the helmsman mean?
Onward she comes--by raging wave and wind
Helplessly driven with a meteor's speed:
Almost she touches:--is the helmsman blind,
That of such danger he doth take no heed?

Well doth he know that ship, whose eye hath watch'd
All the long day; and now doth glaring stand,
His only fear that heaven perchance hath snatch'd
His deep revenge from out his desperate hand.
She comes!--a shock--a hollow whiffing sound--
A wail that o'er the troubled waters went
Of many howling voices;--a harsh sound
Of the keel grating o'er that bark's descent;
And all was over!--Oh! in those few words
How much of agony, and hope, and fear,
And yearnings after life, and treasured hoards
Of young hearts' feelings, cease and disappear!
All--all was over! what, we may not know;
But, looking back, in our own breasts we feel
Much perish'd, with the separate all of those
Who sank beneath that vessel's grating keel.
And with them perish'd Linda's brother stern,
And the young bridegroom in his hour of youth:
And Linda feels her brain and bosom burn--
Oh! it had madden'd her to know the truth!
The murderous truth, that he she loved--for whom
And for whose love she broke her plighted troth,
With strong and ruthless hand prepared the doom,
Which sickens her to dream upon--for both.
But as it was, she gazed into his face,
And round upon the black and empty space,

And then with shudderings cold she bow'd her head,
And gazed upon the waters.--
Have the dead
Power to rise? She sees a single form
All impotently struggling with the storm,
And tossing high his arm, as if to crave
A rescue from his comrades' watery grave.
Oh! save him!--save him! Swift a rope is thrown,
And on the deck, with an exhausted groan,
The half-drown'd wretch is laid. With greedy glare
Doth Isbal watch him for a moment there;
And then with faded glance draws calmly back,
And seems to watch the vessel's furrow'd track.
Meanwhile full many a rough but hearty grasp
Greets the lone stranger; but his hand the clasp

Returns not--and their words of welcome seem
Spoken to one who hears not, but doth dream.
Wistfully gazing up into their eyes,
As though he understood them not--awhile
All motionless he stands; then to the skies,
Then on the sea, with a most bitter smile.
And thus he spoke, but whom he loved, or why,
Is in His book who suffer'd them to die:--

'It was a pleasant dream--possessing thee,
Albeit thy stay was very short on earth:
And still my hopes and heart are blessing thee,
Thou of the glad bright eyes and voice of mirth.
It was a pleasant dream--but thou art gone,
By many a billow cover'd from my sight:
Thou'lt come no more to cheer me when alone--
Thy lips are mute--thine eyes no more are bright.
Oh! thou in whom my life was all bound up,
What is that life without thee? Long ere now
I deem'd that I had drain'd pale sorrow's cup--
Alas! I had not seen death on thy brow.

'Oft, when with boding fears I've sat to watch
For thy dear coming, with dim weary gaze,
Or wander'd out thine eye's first glance to catch,
Fancy hath painted them with fading rays.
I've dream'd of danger and of death; and when
Thine answering look hath met my anxious eye;
When I have clasp'd thee to my heart again--
That heart's full joy hath strain'd to agony.
But it hath come at last--the long dark day,
The cheerless absence which hath no return;
And what is left to me? where lies thy clay--
There--there, beloved, doth my beacon burn!'

Wildly he gazed upon the green deep wave,
As if he sought a spot to be his grave;
Then turning him where Isbal stood aside,
'My curse upon thee, helmsman!' loud he cried.
He leapt--the waters closed, and murmur'd o'er:
The heart that beat to suffer--felt no more.
And Isbal started, and young Linda wept;

And the heavens brighten'd, and the loud winds slept.
The cold pale moon began once more to shine,
And the tall vessel sped athwart the brine.

'Tis deep blue midnight--many a star
Is twinkling in the heavens afar.
The autumn winds are blowing keen
The straight and steady masts between;
And motionless the vessel lies,
As she were traced upon the skies.
Within that anchor'd ship are some
Fond simple hearts who dream of home;
And murmuring in their sleep, they hear
Far distant voices whispering near.
Within that anchor'd ship are many
Whose careless dreams (if they have any)
Bring back some lightly-utter'd jest,
To brighten o'er their lonely rest.

Within that anchor'd ship are none
Who sleep not, save the watch--and one
Who may not rest--who dares not dream;
And he--whence glows that sudden beam
That shot along his pallid brow?
Again--again--'tis brighter now--
Awake! awake! 'tis danger--death!--
The flames are round, above, beneath;
Fire! on the lonely waste of sea--
Fire! where no human help can be!
Wild, breathless, and aghast, the crew
Crowd the scorch'd deck. A busy few,
With the rude instinct that doth make
Man struggle for existence' sake,
Lower the boats:--one after one
Those frail light barks are landward gone,
Ere Isbal from his vision'd trance
Is roused.--What meets his hurried glance?
Half burnt, half drown'd, around him dying,
Are wretches on the waters lying.
He gazes on all with shivering start--
'Tis the curse--'tis the curse of that broken heart!
He hails the last boat--'Oh! not for my life

Do I ask you to brave the element's strife;
But for her who is dearer than life'--in vain!
A hoarse voice answers him again:

'When thou wert helmsman, the ship went down,
And the heavens look'd out with an angry frown.
How know we who or what thou art,
A man in form, but a fiend in heart!
Thou didst not shudder, nor quail, nor shrink,
When we heard the waves their death-sob drink;
Though brave men held their breath, to see
Their fellows die so suddenly!
The wrath of Heaven is on thy head,
And a cry is come up from the early dead--
It hath wrought on us this awful sign;
And we will not perish for thee or thine!'

It was over now!--and alone they stood
In that fiery ship, on the glowing flood;
With a woman's love, and a woman's fear,
She clung to that bosom, now doubly dear;
And she look'd up into his death-like face,
From the eager clasp of his firm embrace,
With a strange wild smile, which seem'd to say,
'Let us die together.' He turn'd away,
And he gazed far out on the lonely sea,
Where the billows are raging desperately;
He gazed far out to the utmost verge,
But the sickening sound of the booming surge,

And the dashing waves, with their ceaseless strife,
Coursing each other like things of life--
And a howl through the lighted firmament,
As the boat, and the boat's crew downward went--
Sounds of sorrow, and sights of fear,
Were all which struck on his eye and ear.
He look'd around him:--the fiery blaze
Mocking the pale moon's quiet rays;
The red flames licking the top-mast high,
As if climbing to reach the cool clear sky;
And the waters which came with a hissing,
On the side of the burning ship to dash;

The fire-tinged sails, and the lonely deck,
Which must soon be a black and helpless wreck;
The perishing fragments of all which lay
So proudly bright at the close of day;
And the memory of that grating sound,
When the keel pass'd over the wretches drown'd:
These, and the thoughts such scenes impart,
Were all that struck on his eye and heart.
All--was it all? Was there no pale form,
Shining amid the element's storm,
With her lip compress'd, and her dark eye proud,
While the flames rose high, and the blast blew loud?
Feeling that now no earthly power
Could sever their hearts for one short hour,

And careless of death, because she knew
That where he sank, she must perish too!
He look'd on her, and his heart grew sick,
And his filmy glance was dull and thick,
As wildly earnest he gazed once more
From the rolling sea to the distant shore.
A wild light shot o'er his gloomy brow;
'Oh! Heaven, dear Linda, is with us now!
Amid these scenes of fear and dread,
Thy Isbal, still secure, might tread:
The floating wave would bear him on
To live--but he would live alone.
Oh! by the love thou bear'st me still,
Though to me thou owest all earthly ill;
By the hours, and days, and years of bliss
Which made thy dreams, ere life sank to this;
By the hope that hath been, and that still may be,
Plunge into the waves, beloved, with me.'
Wildly she gazes, and shrouds her eyes
From the dark confusion of sea and skies.
Oh! woman's heart! to die by his side
Less fearful seems than to stem that tide;
Those roaring, raging, horrible waves,
Which are rolling o'er her shipmates' graves.

Onward--onward--and Isbal draws
His labour'd breath with a gasping pause;

The curse is light
On his soul that night;
For a heart is beating against his breast,
Where his lonely thoughts have found sweet rest,
And a calm delight.

Onward--onward--she faints not yet--
Though her cheek be cold, and her long hair wet;
And Isbal yearns,
As her fond eye turns
To search for hope in his eager face;
For land, and a mossy resting-place,
Where nothing burns.

Onward--onward--for weary miles
Through the lone chill waters, where nothing smiles,
And the light hath shrunk--
And the wave hath drunk
The last dull, cheerless, ruddy gleam,
And naught remains but an awful dream
Of the good ship sunk.

Onward--onward--in darkness now,
And the dew is standing on Isbal's brow;
And his soul is wrung,
As the arms which clung
Confidingly, droop in their beauty there
On the nervous strength of his shoulder bare,
Where her long hair hung.

Onward--onward--he hears once more
Murmurs and sounds from the blessed shore.
He heedeth not
His long dark lot,
But strains that form in a long embrace,
And tenderly kisses her cold pale face,
And his toil is forgot.

'Thou'rt saved, my Linda! See, the land is won--
The pleasant land where we may live alone:
The deep firm land, where we may stand and gaze
Upon the ocean in its stormiest days.

Linda, my beautiful! oh, blessed be
That day of well-remember'd agony
Which stamp'd the brand of darkness on my brow--
Since I have lived, beloved, to save thee now.'

He hath lifted her and laid her down,
And taken her soft hand in his own,
And wrung the brine from out her hair,
And raised its weight from her bosom fair,
Its cold damp weight, that her breath may come
Free from its pure and lovely home.
He hath press'd his cheek close, close to hers,
To feel when the first pulsation stirs,
And now he watches with patient love
Till that fainting form begin to move.
Long may he watch. Oh! never more
By the rolling sea, or the pleasant shore,
Shall her mournful voice with its gentle sigh
Whisper soft words of melody.
Never, oh! never more, her form
With faithful step, through sun and storm,
Shall follow him from land to land
Or like his guardian spirit stand.
Long may he watch for that head to rise,
For the gentle glance of those waking eyes:
Cold and pale as she lieth now--
With her weary limbs, and her faded brow,
So must she lie for evermore--
She hath pass'd her trials, and reach'd the shore!

Ah! who shall tell their agonized despair,
Who, after watchful nights of ceaseless prayer,
And days of toil, and hours of bitter tears,
And agony that does the work of years--
Stand by the bed of death with whirling brain,
And feel they toil'd, and loved, and pray'd, in vain.
Sadly and fearfully they shrink from those
Whose looks confirm the story of their woes,
And seek with visionary words to buoy
Their spirits up with prophecies of joy:
Ev'n while their blanch'd lips quiver in their dread,
The faint tongue murmurs, 'No, they are not dead!'

And yet we feel they are. So Isbal stood
By the deep, rolling, and eternal flood;
And so he sought some comfort to impart
With a fond falsehood to his conscious heart;
And still repeated, 'Lo, she breathes! she stirs!'
When his own breath had waved a tress of hers.
The oft repeated echo died away
Of those vain words; and as the ocean spray
With its light snow-shower drenches her again,
His lip gives forth uncertain sounds of pain.

In his wrung heart he seeks to guess
When perish'd so much of loveliness;

And in Fancy's dream her arms again
Cling, as they clung around him then.
Which of the mountain waves that rose,
Bade her meek eyes for ever close?
Was it her corpse that he bore for miles,
When he gladly dreamt of her grateful smiles?
Or did her white feet touch the shore,
Ere her spirit departed for evermore?
With a straining force his deep thoughts dwell
On each murmur that rose 'mid the ocean's swell.
Was it, when feebly her young arms sank,
That the dashing waters her spirit drank,
And her breath pass'd out on the billows high
With a faint and an unremember'd sigh?
But no--for long after he spoke to cheer,
And her sweet voice answer'd in his ear.
Was it when darkness fell around,
And the red ship sank with a gurgling sound--
That her angel soul to its haven past
On the unseen wings of the midnight blast?
Did she yearn for the far land hopelessly,
As her stiff limbs shrank from the foaming sea:
Or did she yield her up to death,
With a weary moan, and a gasping breath?
Vainly he searches his tortured brain
For a farewell word, or a sigh of pain;

Silently as he bore her on,

Her soul from its gentle frame hath gone,
And never on earth shall his heart discover
The moment her love and her life were over;
Only this much shall the lost one know--
Where she hath departed, he may not go!

With sternly folded arms, and indrawn breath,
He stands and gazes on that form of death.
The deep--the sickening certainty is there,
The doom eternal of his long despair.
O'er the dim wave he flung his desperate arm,
Forgetful in his anguish of the charm
That bound his life. With effort wild and vain
He plunges headlong in the treacherous main;
While the lone sea, with melancholy sound,
Returns him groaning to the mossy ground.
Again he leaps the tide-wash'd bank, which late
He deem'd a shelter from the storms of fate:
The dashing waters yield, and then divide;
But still he sinks not in the whelming tide.
Proudly he stemm'd the billows, when his arms
Bore the faint burden of his Linda's charms:
Proudly he gazed upon the waters high,
Whose strength contain'd no power to bid him die:

But now he curses, with a bitter voice,
The ocean, which doth triumph and rejoice,
As the green billows, heaving in the day,
Greedily roar around that lifeless clay.
Hark! the wild howl that echoes through the land,
As his foot spurns the smooth and glittering sand.
That wave its floating weight on shore hath thrown;
And 'the Undying One' is left alone.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Undying One- Canto Iii

'THERE is a sound the autumn wind doth make
Howling and moaning, listlessly and low:
Methinks that to a heart that ought to break
All the earth's voices seem to murmur so.
The visions that crost
Our path in light--
The things that we lost
In the dim dark night--
The faces for which we vainly yearn--
The voices whose tones will not return--
That low sad wailing breeze doth bring
Borne on its swift and rushing wing.
Have ye sat alone when that wind was loud,
And the moon shone dim from the wintry cloud?
When the fire was quench'd on your lonely hearth,
And the voices were still which spoke of mirth?

If such an evening, tho' but one,
It hath been yours to spend alone--
Never,--though years may roll along
Cheer'd by the merry dance and song;
Though you mark'd not that bleak wind's sound before,
When louder perchance it used to roar--
Never shall sound of that wintry gale
Be aught to you but a voice of wail!
So o'er the careless heart and eye
The storms of the world go sweeping by;
But oh! when once we have learn'd to weep,
Well doth sorrow his stern watch keep.
Let one of our airy joys decay--
Let one of our blossoms fade away--
And all the griefs that others share
Seem ours, as well as theirs, to bear:
And the sound of wail, like that rushing wind
Shall bring all our own deep woe to mind!

'I went through the world, but I paused not now
At the gladsome heart and the joyous brow:
I went through the world, and I stay'd to mark

Where the heart was sore, and the spirit dark:
And the grief of others, though sad to see,
Was fraught with a demon's joy to me!

'I saw the inconstant lover come to take
Farewell of her he loved in better days,
And, coldly careless, watch the heart-strings break--
Which beat so fondly at his words of praise.
She was a faded, painted, guilt-bow'd thing,
Seeking to mock the hues of early spring,
When misery and years had done their worst
To wither her away. The big tears burst
From out her flashing eyes, which turn'd on him
With agony, reproach, and fear, while dim
Each object swam in her uncertain sight,
And nature's glories took the hue of night.
There was, in spite of all her passion's storm,
A wild revolting beauty in her form;
A beauty as of sin, when first she comes
To tempt us from our calm and pleasant homes.
Her voice, with the appealing tone it took,
Her soft clear voice, belied her fearless look:
And woman's tenderness seem'd still to dwell
In that full bosom's agonizing swell.
And he stood there, the worshipp'd one of years--
Sick of her fondness--angry at her tears;
Choking the loathing words which rose within
The heart whose passion tempted her to sin;
While with a strange sad smile lost hours she mourns,
And prays and weeps, and weeps and prays by turns.

A moment yet he paused, and sigh'd--a sigh
Of deep, deep bitterness; and on his eye
Love's gentle shadow rested for a space--
And faded feelings brighten'd o'er his face.
'Twas but a moment, and he turn'd in wrath
To quench the sunshine on her lonely path.
And his lip curl'd, as on that alter'd cheek
His cold glance rested--while, all faint and weak,
With tearful sad imploring gaze she stood,
Watching with trembling heart his changeful mood;
Her thin lips parted with a ghastly smile,

She strove to please--yet felt she fail'd the while.
And thus his words burst forth:' And dost thou dare
Reproach me with the burden of thy care?
Accuse thy self-will'd heart, where passion reign'd;
Some other hand the lily might have stain'd,
For thou didst listen when none else approved,
Proud in thy strength, and eager to be loved.
Rose of the morning, how thy leaves are gone!
How art thou faded since the sunrise shone!
Think not my presence was the cause of all--
Oh no, thy folly would have made thee fall:
Alike thy woe--alike the cause of blame--
Another tempter, but thine act the same.
And tell me not of all I said or swore:
Poor wretch! art thou as in the days of yore?

Thing of the wanton heart and faded brow,
Whate'er I said or did--I loathe thee now!
The frozen tears sank back beneath the lid,
Whose long black lashes half their sadness hid--
And with a calm and stedfast look, which spoke
Unutterable scorn, her spirit woke:--
'And thou art he, for whom my young heart gave
All hope of pardon on this side the grave!
For whom I still have struggled on, for years,
Through days of bitterness and nights of tears!--
True, I am changed since that bright summer's day,
When first from home love lured my steps to stray:
And true it is that art hath sought to hide
The work of woe which all my words belied;--
But for whose sake have I with watchful care,
Though sick at heart, endeavour'd to be fair?
For whom, when daylight broke along the skies,
Have I with fear survey'd my weeping eyes?
For whom, with trembling fingers sought to dress
Each woe-worn feature with mock loveliness?
Chased the pale sickness from my darken'd brow,
And strove to listen, calm--as I do now?
For whom--if not for thee?--Oh! had I been
Pure as the stainless lily--were each scene
Of guilt and passion blotted from that book
Where weepingly and sad the angels look--

Did I stand here the calm approved wife,
Bound to thee by the chain that binds for life--
Could I have loved thee more? The dream is past--
I who forsook, am lonely at the last!
One hour ago the thought that we must part,
And part for ever, would have broke my heart:
But now--I cast thee from me! Go and seek
To pale the roses on a fresher cheek.
Why lingerest thou? Dost fear, when thou art gone,
My woman's heart will wake, and live alone?
Fear not--the specious tongue whose well-feign'd tale
Hath lured the dove to leave her native vale,
May use its art some other to beguile;
And the approving world--will only smile.
But she who sins, and suffers for that sin,
Who throws the dangerous die, and doth not win--
Loves once--and loves no more!' He glided by,
And she turn'd from him with a shuddering sigh.

'I saw the widower mournful stand,
Gazing out on the sea and the land;
O'er the yellow corn and the waving trees,
And the blue stream rippling in the breeze.
Oh! beautiful seem the earth and sky--
Why doth he heave that bitter sigh?

Vain are the sunshine and brightness to him--
His heart is heavy, his eyes are dim.
His thoughts are not with the moaning sea,
Though his gaze be fix'd on it vacantly:
His thoughts are far, where the dark boughs wave
O'er the silent rest of his Mary's grave.
He starts, and brushes away the tear;
For the soft small voices are in his ear,
Of the bright-hair'd angels his Mary left
To comfort her lonely and long bereft.
With a gush of sorrow he turns to press
His little ones close with a fond caress,
And they sigh--oh! not because Mary sleeps,
For she is forgotten--but that HE weeps.
Yes! she is forgotten--the patient love,

The tenderness of that meek-eyed dove,
The voice that rose on the evening air
To bid them kneel to the God of prayer,
The joyous tones that greeted them, when
After a while she came again--
The pressure soft of her rose-leaf cheek--
The touch of her hand, as white and weak
She laid it low on each shining head,
And bless'd the sons of the early dead:
All is forgotten--all past away
Like the fading close of a summer's day:

Or the sound of her voice (though they scarce can tell
Whose voice it was, that they loved so well)
Comes with their laughter, a short sweet dream--
As the breeze blows over the gentle stream,
Rippling a moment its quiet breast,
And leaving it then to its sunny rest.
But he!--oh! deep in his inmost soul,
Which hath drunk to the dregs of sorrow's bowl--
Her look--and her smile--the lightest word
Of the musical voice he so often heard,
And never may hear on earth again,
Though he love it more than he loved it then--
Are buried--to rise at times unbid
And force hot tears to the burning lid:
The mother that bore her may learn to forget,
But he will remember and weep for her yet!
Oh! while the heart where her head hath lain
In its hours of joy, in its sighs of pain;
While the hand which so oft hath been clasp'd in hers
In the twilight hour, when nothing stirs--
Beat with the deep, full pulse of life--
Can he forget his gentle wife?
Many may love him, and he in truth
May love; but not with the love of his youth:
Ever amid his joy will come
A stealing sigh for that long-loved home,
And her step and her voice will go gliding by
In the desolate halls of his memory!

'I saw a father weeping, when the last

Of all his dear ones from his sight had past--
The young lamb, in his solitary fold,
Who should have buried him, for he was old.
Silently she had pass'd away from earth,
Beloved by none but him who gave her birth:
And now he sat, with haggard look and wild,
By the lone tomb of his forgotten child:--

'None remember thee! thou whose heart
Pour'd love on all around.
Thy name no anguish can impart--
'Tis a forgotten sound.
Thine old companions pass me by
With a cold bright smile, and a vacant eye--
And none remember thee
Save me.

'None remember thee! thou wert not
Beauteous as some things are;
No glory beam'd upon thy lot,
My pale and quiet star.
Like a winter bud that too soon hath burst,
Thy cheek was fading from the first--

And none remember thee
Save me!

'None remember thee! they could spy
Nought, when they gazed on thee,
But thy soul's deep love in thy quiet eye--
It hath pass'd from their memory.
The gifts of genius were not thine
Proudly before the world to shine--
And none remember thee
Save me!

'None remember thee! now thou'rt gone,
Or they could not choose but weep,--
When they think of thee, my gentle one,
In thy long and lonely sleep.
Fain would I murmur thy name, and tell
How fondly together we used to dwell--
But none remember thee
Save me!'

'I saw a husband, and a guilty wife,
Who once made all the sunshine of his life,
Kneeling upon the threshold of her home,
Where heavily her weary feet had come:
A faded form, a humble brow, are hers--
The livery which sinful sorrow wears;

While with deep agony she lifts her eyes,
And prays him to forgive her, ere she dies!
Long days--long days swell in his broken heart,
When death had seem'd less bitter than to part--
When in her innocence her hush'd lip spoke
The faint confession of the love he woke;
And the first kiss on that pure cheek impress'd,
Made her shrink, trembling, from his faithful breast.
And after years when her light footstep made
Most precious music--when in sun or shade
She was the same bright, happy, loving thing--
Low at his feet she now lies withering!
His half-stretch'd hand already bids her be
Forgiven and at peace--his kindly eye
Is turn'd on her through tears, to think that she,
His purely-loved, should bide such agony.
Already on his tongue the quivering word
Of comfort trembles, though as yet unheard;
Already he hath bent o'er that pale face:
Why starts he, groaning, from her wild embrace?
Oh! as she clasp'd his knees, her full heart woke
To all its tenderness--a murmur broke
Forth from her lip; the cherish'd name of one
Whose image dwelt when purity was gone,
Secure amid the ruins of lost things,
Filling her soul with soft imaginings,

Like a lone flower within the moss-grown halls
Where echo vainly unto echo calls.
Deep wrath, and agony, and vain despair,
Are painted on his brow who hears her prayer.
'Breathe not her name--it is a sound
Of fearfulness and dread.
Seest thou no trace of tears around?
Yet have salt tears been shed!

Thy babe who nestled at thy breast,
And laugh'd upon thy knee;
That creature of the quiet rest,
Thy child--was too like thee!
The careless fawn that lightly springs--
The rosebud in the dew--
The fair of nature's fairy things--
Like them thy daughter grew.
And then she left her father's side,
Not, woman! as a happy bride,
With a tearful smile, half sad, half meek;
The flush of guilt was on her cheek:
And in the desert wilds I sought--
And in the haunts of men.
Woman! what thou hast felt is naught
To what I suffer'd then.
I thought that--but it may not be--
I thought I could have pardon'd thee;

But when I dream of her, and think
Thy steps led on to ruin's brink--
Oh she is gone, and thou art here
Where ye both were of yore--
To mock with late-repentant tear
Hopes which may come no more!
Hadst thou, frail wretch, been by her still,
To shield her gentle head from ill--
To do thy mother's part--but go--
I will not curse thee, in my woe :
Only, depart!--and haply when
Lonely and left I die,
Thy pardon'd form shall rise again
And claim one parting sigh!
He closed on her the portal of her home,
Where never more her weary feet may come--
And their wrung hearts are sever'd till that day
When God shall hear, and judge the things of clay.

'I saw the parricide raving stand,
With a rolling eye, and a bloody hand;
Through his thick chill veins the curdling stream
Flows dark and languid. No sunny beam

Can wake the deep pulse of his heart to joy,
Since he raised his murderous hand to destroy.
By day, by night, no pause is given
Of hope to the soul accursed by Heaven.
Through the riotous feast; through his own dull groans;
Through the musical sound of his loved one's tones;
Through the whispering breath of the evening air,
Faulters the old man's dying prayer.
Few were the words he spoke as he sank;
And the greedy poniard his life-blood drank:
'Spare me, my son, I will yield thee all.'
Oh, what would the murderer give to recall
One murmuring sigh to that silent tongue,
Which in infancy sought his ear to please;
One pulse of life, to the hands that clung
Feebly and tremblingly round his knees!
In vain! he hath won the gold he sought;
And the burning agony of thought
Shall haunt him still, till he lays his head
With a shuddering groan on his dying bed!

'I saw a young head bow'd in its deep woe,
Ev'n unto death; and sad, and faint, and slow,
As she sat lonely in her hall of tears,
Her lips address'd some shade of other years:
'Oh! dear to the eyes that are weeping
Was thy form, my lost love:
Though the heart where thine image is sleeping
Its truth might not prove.
I have wept and turn'd from thee, for fear thou shouldst trace
All the love that I bore thee, deep writ on my face.
But oh! could we once more be meeting,
As then, love, we met:
Could I feel that fond heart of thine beating,
Close, close, to mine yet:
I would cling to thee, dearest, nor fear thou shouldst guess
How deeply thy welcome had power to bless,
Oh! tis not for a day, or an hour,
I part from thee now,
To weep and shake off, like a flower,
The tears from my brow:
'Tis to sit dreaming idly of days that are gone,

And start up to remember--that I am alone.
They say that my heart hath recover'd
The deep bitter blow;
That the cloud which for long days hath hover'd,
Is gone from my brow;
That my eyes do not weep, and my lips wear a smile;
It is true --but I do not forget thee the while.
Oh, they know not, amidst all my gladness,
Thy shadow is there:

They feel not the deep thrill of sadness,
Nor the soul's lone despair.
They see not the sudden quick pang, when thy name
Is carelessly utter'd, to praise or to blame!
If to gaze on each long-treasured token
Till bitter tears flow,
And to wonder my heart is not broken
By the weight of its woe:
To join in the world's loud and 'wilderling din,
While a passionate feeling is choking within:
If to yearn, in the arms that once bound thee,
To lean down my head;
With the dear ones who used to come round thee,
Salt tear-drops to shed:
If to list to the voice that is like thine, in vain;
And feel its dim echo ring wild through my brain:
If to dream there were pleasure in meeting
Those who once were with thee:
To murmur a sad farewell greeting,
Then sink on my knee;
With my straining hands clasp'd to the Heavens in prayer,
And my choked bosom heaving with grief and despair:
If to sit and to think of thee only,
While they laugh round the hearth;
And feel my full heart grow more lonely
At the sound of their mirth:--
If this be forgetting thee, dear one and good--
Forget thee--forget thee--Oh God! that I could!

'I saw the child of parents poor,
Dreaming with pain of her cottage door;
Which she left for the splendour which may not cheer--

Pomp hath not power to dry one tear.
The palace--the sunshine--what are they to her
'Mid the heart's full throb, and the bosom's stir?
The picture that rises bedimm'd with tears,
Is an aged woman, bow'd down by years;
Sitting alone in her evening's close,
And feebly weeping for many woes.
Her thin hands are weaving the endless thread,
Her faded eyes gaze where her daughter fled,
O'er the moss-grown copse and the wooded hill:
'Oh! would that I were with my mother still!
That I were with her who rear'd me up--
(And I fill'd to the brim her sorrow's cup)--
That I were with her who taught me to pray
At the morning's dawn and the close of day--
That I were with her whose harshest look
Was half of sorrow and half rebuke.
Oh! the depth of my sin I never could see,
But I feel it now, with the babe on my knee.'

The high proud gaze of her scornful eye
Is quench'd with the tears for days gone by;
And her little one starts from its broken rest,
Woke by the sobs of that heaving breast.
She gazes with fear on its undimm'd brow--
What are the thoughts that lurk below?
Perchance, like her own, the day will come
When its name shall be hush'd in its parent home;
When the hearts that cherish its lightest tone,
Shall wish that the sound from earth were gone.
Perchance it is doom'd to an early grave,
Or a struggling death on the stormy wave;
Or the fair little dimpled hand that clings
So fast in her soft hair's shining rings,
May be dark with the blood of his fellow-men,
And the clanking chain hang round it then.
Haply, forgetting her patient care,
The young, bright creature slumbering there,
Shall forsake her--as she hath forsaken them--
For a heavy heart and a diadem!
She clasps it strong with a burning kiss--
'Oh God! in thy mercy, spare me this.'

'I saw a widow, by her cherish'd son,
Ere all of light, and life, and hope, was gone--
When the last dying glance was faintly raised,
Ere death with withering power the brightness glazed
Of those deep heavenly eyes: a glance which seem'd
To ask her, if the world where he had dream'd
Such dreams of happiness with her, must be
Forsaken in the spring-tide of his glee:
If he indeed must die. I saw her take
His hand, and gaze, as if her heart would break,
On his pale brow and languid limbs of grace,
And wipe the death-dew gently from his face.
I saw her after, when the unconscious clay,
Deaf to her wild appeals, all mutely lay,
With brow upturn'd, and parted lips, whose hue
Was scarce more pale than hers, who met my view.
She stood, and wept not in her deep despair,
But press'd her lips upon his shining hair
With a long bitter kiss, and then with grief--
Like hers of old, who pray'd and found relief--
She groan'd to God, and watch'd to see him stir,
But, ah! no prophet came, to raise him up for her!

'I saw the orphan go forth in dread
Through the pitiless world, and turn to gaze
Once more on the dark and narrow bed
Where sleep the authors of her days.
Well may she weep them, for never more,
After she turns from that cottage door,
Will her young heart beat to a kindly word,
Such as in early days she heard:
Or her young eye shine, as she hastens her pace
To bask in the light of a loved one's face.
Her lot is cast;
Her hope is past;
The careless, the cold, and the cruel may come
To gaze on the orphan, and pass her by:
But a word, or a sound, or a look of home--
For them she must bow her head, and die!

'I saw the dark and city-clouded spot,

Where, by his busy patrons all forgot,
The young sad poet dreams of better days,
And gives his genius forth in darken'd rays.
Chill o'er his soul, gaunt poverty hath thrown
Her veil of shadows, as he sighs alone;
And, withering up the springs and streams of youth,
Left him to feel misfortune's bitter truth,
And own with deep, impassion'd bitterness,
Who would describe--must faintly feel, distress.
Slowly he wanders, with a languid pace,
To the small window of his hiding-place;

Pressing with straining force, all vainly now,
His hot, weak fingers on his throbbing brow;
And seeking for bright thoughts, which care and pain
Have driven from his dim and 'wilder'd brain.
He breathes a moment that unclouded air,
And gazes on the face of nature there--
Longing for fresh wild flowers and verdant fields,
And all the joys the open sunshine yields:
Then turning, he doth rest his heavy eye
Where his torn papers in confusion lie,
And raves awhile, and seats himself again,
To toil and strive for thoughts and words, in vain:
Till he can bid his drooping fancy feel,
And barter genius, for a scanty meal!

'I've been where fell disease a war hath waged
Against young joy,--where pestilence hath raged,
And beauty hath departed from the earth
With none to weep her.--I have seen the birth
Of the lorn infant, greeted but with tears,
And dim forebodings, and remorseful fears,
When to the weary one the grave would show
Less dreadful than a long long life of woe.
I've been in prisons, where in lone despair,
Barr'd from God's precious gifts, the sun and air,
The debtor pines, for a little gold,
His fellow man in iron chains would hold:
There have I seen the bright inquiring eye
Fade into dull and listless vacancy;
There have I seen the meek grow stern and wild;

And the strong man sit weeping like a child;
Till God's poor tortured creatures in their heart
Were fain to Curse their Maker, and depart.
All have I seen--and I have watch'd apart
The fruitless struggles of a breaking heart,
Bruised, crush'd, and wounded by the spoiler's power,
And left to wither like a trodden flower;
Till I have learnt with ease each thought to trace
That flush'd across the fair and fading face,
And known the source of tears, which day by day
Weakness hath shed, and pride hath brush'd away.

'It was in Erin--in the autumn time,
By the broad Shannon's banks of beauty roaming;
I saw a scene of mingled woe and crime--
Oh! ev'n to my sear'd eyes the tears seem'd coming!
It was a mother standing gaunt and wild,
Working her soul to murder her young child,
Who lay unconscious in its soft repose
Upon the breast, that heaved with many woes.
She stood beside the waters, but her eyes
Were not upon the river, nor the skies,
Nor on the fading things of earth. Her soul
Was rapt in bitterness--and evening stole
Chill o'er her form, while yet with nerveless hand
She sought to throw her burden from the land.
'Twas pitiful to see her strive in vain,
Rise sternly up, then melt to love again;
With horrible energy, and lip compress'd,
Hold forth her child--then strain it to her breast
Convulsively; as if some gentle thought
Of all its helpless beauty first was brought
Into her 'wilder'd mind--the soft faint smiles,
Whose charm the mother of her tears beguiles,
Which speak not aught of mirth or merriment,
But of full confidence, and deep content,
And ignorance of woe:--the murmur'd sounds
Which were to her a language, rise up now--
And, like a torrent bursting from its bounds,
Swell in her heart, and shoot across her brow.
Oh! she who plans its death in her despair,
Hath tended it with fond and watchful care;

Hath borne it wearily for many a mile,
Repaid with one fond glance, or gentle smile:
Hath watch'd through long dark nights with patient love,
When some light sickness struck her nestling dove;

And yearn'd to bear its pain, when that meek eye
Turn'd on her, with appealing agony!
Look on her now!--that faint and feverish start
Hath waken'd all the mother in her heart:
That feeble cry hath thrill'd her very frame :--
Was it for murder such a soft heart came?
She will not do it--Fool! the spirit there
Is stronger far than love--it is despair!
Mothers alone may read that mother's woe:
Her heart may break--but she will strike the blow.
Once more she pauses; bending o'er its face,
Calm and unconscious in its timid grace;
Then murmurs to it by the chilly wave,
Ere one strong effort dooms it to the grave:--

'Thou of the sinless breast!
Which passion hath not heaved, nor dark remorse
Swell'd with its full and agonizing curse--
Lo! thou art come to rest!

'Warm is thy guileless heart,
Whose slight quick pulses soon shall beat no more:
Hear'st thou the strong trees rock?--the loud winds roar?
I and my child must part!

'Deep 'neath the sullen sky,
And the dark waters which do boil and foam,
Greedy to take thee to their silent home--
My little one must lie!

'Peace to thy harmless soul!
There is a heaven where thou mayst dwell in peace;
Where the dark howling of the waters cease,
Which o'er thy young head roll.

'There, in the blue still night,
Thou'lt watch, where stars are gleaming from the sky,

O'er the dark spot where thou wert doom'd to die,
And smile, a cherub bright.'

'A plash upon the waves--a low
Half-stifled sob, which seem'd as though
The choked breath fought against the stream--
And all was silent as a dream.
Then rose the shriek that might not stay,
Though much that soul had braved;
And ere its echo died away,
Her little one was saved.

Sudden I plunged, and panting caught
The bright and floating hair,
Which on the waters lustre brought,
As if 'twere sunshine there.
I stood beside that form of want and sin,
That miserable woman in her tears;
Who wept, as though she had not cast it in
To perish with the sorrows of past years.
She thank'd me with a bitter thankfulness,
And thus I spoke: 'Oh! woman, if it is
Sickness and poverty, and lone distress,
That prompted thee to do a deed like this,
Take gold, and wander forth, and let me be
A parent to the child renounced by thee!
Greedily did she gaze upon the gold,
With a wild avarice in her hollow eye;
And stretch'd her thin damp fingers, clammy cold,
To seize the glittering ore with ecstasy.
But when I claim'd the little helpless thing,
For whose young life that gold had paid the worth;
Close to the breast where it lay shivering,
She strain'd it gaspingly, and then burst forth:--

'I would have slain it! Fool! 'tis true I would;
Because I saw it pine, and had no food:
Because I could not bear its faint frail cry,
Which told my brain such tales of agony:
Because its dumb petitioning glances said,
Am I thy child? and canst not give me bread?
Because, while faint and droopingly it lay

Within my failing arms from day to day,
The tigress rose within my soul--I could
Have slain a man, and bid it lap his blood!
My little one!--my uncomplaining child!
Whose lengthen'd misery drove thy mother wild,
Did they believe that aught but death could part
These nestling limbs from her poor tortured heart?--
No! had the slimy waters gurgled o'er
Thy corpse, and wash'd the slippery reed-grown shore,
Leaving no trace, except in my despair,
Of what had once disturb'd the stillness there--
I could have gazed upon it, and not wept;
For calmly then my little one had slept.
No nightly moans would then have wrung my soul;
No daylight withering bid the tear-drop roll.
In my dark hours of misery and want,
The memory of thy pallid face might haunt,
Not, not to wring my heart with vain regret,
But to remind what thou hadst suffer'd yet,
If from life's wretchedness I had not freed
Thy grateful soul, which thank'd me for the deed.

I lost thee--but I have thee here again,
Close to the heart which now can feel no pain.
Cling to me!--let me feel that velvet cheek--
Look at me, with those eyes so dove-like meek!
Press thy pale lips to mine, and let me be
Repaid for all I have endured for thee.
Part from thee!--never! while this arm hath strength
To hold thee to the bosom where thou liest:
Praise be to God, bright days have dawn'd at length!
I need not watch thy struggles as thou diest.
Part from thee! never--no, my pale sweet flower!
The wealth of worlds would bribe my heart in vain,
Though 'twere to give thee up for one short hour--
Take back thy gold--I have my babe again!
Yet give me food, and I will clasp thy knees,
And night and day will kneel for thee to Heaven;
Else will a lingering death of slow disease,
Or famine gaunt, be all that thou hast given.
And when I die-- then, then be kind'--She ceased:
Her parted lips were tinged with crimson gore,

Her faint hand half, and only half, released
The unconscious form she had been weeping o'er:
Worn nature could not bear the sudden strife;
I look'd upon her--but there was no life!

'That little outcast grew a fairy girl,
A beautiful, a most beloved one.
There was a charm in every separate curl
Whose rings of jet hung glistening in the sun,
Which warm'd her marble brow. There was a grace
Peculiar to herself, ev'n from the first:
Shadows and thoughtfulness you seem'd to trace
Upon that brow, and then a sudden burst
Of sunniness and laughter sparkled out,
And spread their rays of joyfulness about.
Like the wild music of her native land,
Which wakes to joy beneath the minstrel's hand,
Yet at its close gives forth a lingering tone--
Sad, as if mourning that its mirth is gone,
And leaves that note to dwell within your heart,
When all the sounds of joyfulness depart:
So in her heart's full chords there seem'd to be
A strange and wild, but lovely melody:
Half grief--half gladness--but the sadness still
Hanging like shadows on a summer rill.
And when her soul from its deep silence woke,
And from her lip sweet note of answer broke,
Memory in vain would seek the smile that play'd
With her slow words, like one beam in the shade;
Her sorrow hung upon your heart for years--
And all her sweet smiles darken'd into tears.

I loved her, as a father loves his child:
For she was dutiful, and fond, and mild,
As children should be--and she ripen'd on
Like a young rosebud opening to the sun;
Till the full light of womanhood was shed,
Like a soft glory, round about her head.
In all my wanderings, through good and ill,
In storm and sunshine, she was with me still:
Not like a cold sad shadow, forced to glide
Weary--unloved--unnoticed, by my side:

But with her whole heart's worship, ever near,
To love, to smile, to comfort, and to cheer.
Her gentle soul would fear to hurt a worm;
Yet danger found her unappall'd and firm:
Her lip might blanch, but her unalter'd eye
Said, I am ready for thy sake to die.
She stood by me and fear'd not, in that place
When the scared remnant of my wretched race
Gave England's Richard gifts, to let them be
All unmolested in their misery:
And while their jewels sparkled on his hand,
His traitor lips gave forth the dark command
Which, midst a drunken nation's loud carouse,
Sent unexpected death from house to house,
Bade strong arms strike, where none their force withstood,
And woman's wail be quench'd in woman's blood.

She stood by me and fear'd not, when again,
A bloody death cut short a life of pain;
When, with red glaring eyes and desperate force,
Brother laid brother low, a prostrate corse,
Rather than yield their bodies up to those,
In word, in act, and in religion--foes.
She gazed and fainted not, while all around
They lay like slaughter'd cattle on the ground;
With the wide gash in each extended throat,
Calling for vengeance to the God who smote
On Israel's side, ere Israel fell away,
And in her guilt was made the stranger's prey.

'And after that, we dwelt in many lands,
And wander'd through the desert's burning sands;
Where, strange to say, young Miriam sigh'd to be:
Where nature lay stretch'd out so silently
Beneath the glorious sun, and here and there
The fountains bubbled up, as fresh and fair
As if the earth were fill'd with them, and none
In their last agonizing thirst sank down,
With eyes turn'd sadly to far distant dreams
Of unseen gushing waters, and cool streams.

'There is a little island all alone

In the blue Mediterranean; and we went
Where never yet a human foot had gone,
And dwelt there, and young Miriam was content.
There was a natural fountain, where no ray
Of light or warmth had ever found its way,
Thick clustered o'er with flowers; and there she made
A bower of deep retirement and shade;
And proud she was, when, rosy with the glow
Of triumph and exertion, she could show
Her palace of green leaves,--and watch my eyes
For the expected glance of pleased surprise.
Oh! she was beautiful!--if ever earth
To aught of breathing loveliness gave birth.

'One evening--one sweet evening, as we stood,
Silently gazing on the silent flood:
A sudden thought rose swelling in my heart:
Ought my sweet Miriam thus to dwell apart
From human kind? So good, so pure, so bright,
So form'd to be a fervent heart's delight;
Was she to waste the power and will to bless
In ministering to my loneliness?
And then a moment's glance took in her life--
I saw my Miriam a blessed wife;

I saw her with fair children round her knee,
I heard their voices in that home of glee,
And turn'd to gaze on her:--if ever yet,
Turning with shadowy hope, and vain regret,
And consciousness of secret guilt or woe,
Thine eyes have rested on the open brow
Of sinless childhood--thou hast known what I
Felt, when my glance met Miriam's cloudless eye.
Oh! Thought, thou mould where misery is cast--
Thou joiner of the present with the past--
Eternal torturer! wherefore can we not
Through all our life be careless of our lot
As in our early years?--No cares to come
Threw their vain shadow o'er her bosom's home;
No bitter sorrow, with its vain recall,
Poison'd her hope--the present hour was all.
I gazed on her--and as a slow smile broke

Of meek affection round her rosy mouth,
I thought the simple words my heart would choke,
'Would Miriam weep to leave the sunny south?'
Silent she stood--then, in a tone scarce heard,
Faulter'd forth, 'father!' Oh! it wrung, that word;
And snatching her with haste unto my breast,
Where in her childhood's hour of sunny rest
Calmly her innocent head had often slept,
With a strange sense of misery--I wept.

'Oh! weary days, oh! weary days,
Of flattery and empty praise,
When in the tainted haunts of men
My Miriam was brought again.
With vacant gaze and gentle sigh,
She turned her from them mournfully;
As if she rather felt, than saw,
That they were near:--they scarce could draw
A word of answer from her tongue,
Where once such merry music rung,
Save when the island was their theme--
And then, as waking from a dream,
Her soft eye lighted for a while,
And round her mouth a playful smile
Stole for a moment, and then fled,
As if the hope within were dead.
Where'er I gazed, where'er I went,
Her earnest look was on me bent
Stealthily, as she wish'd to trace
Her term of exile on my face.
And many sought her hand in vain.
With pleading voice, and look of pain.
Weepingly she would turn away
When I besought her to be gay;
And resolutely firm, withstood
The noble and the great of blood;

Though they woo'd humbly, as they woo
Who scarcely hope for what they sue.
Oh! glad was Miriam, when at last
I deem'd our term of absence past:
And as her light foot quickly sprang

From out our bark, 'twas thus she sang:--

'The world! the sunny world! I love
To roam untired, till evening throws
Sweet shadows through the pleasant grove,
And bees are murmuring on the rose.
I love to see the changeful flowers
Lie blushing in the glowing day--
Bend down their heads to 'scape the showers,
Then shake the chilly drops away.

'The world! the sunny world! oh bright
And beautiful indeed thou art--
The brilliant day, the dark-blue night,
Bring joy--but not to every heart.
No! till, like flowers, those hearts can fling
Grief's drops from off their folded leaves,
'Twill only smile in hope's bright spring,
And darken when the spirit grieves.'

'She was return'd; but yet she grew not glad;
Her cheek wore not the freshness which it had.
The withering of the world, like the wild storm
Over a tender blossom, left her form
With traces of the havoc that had been,
Ev'n in the sunny calm, and placid scene.
Her brow was darken'd with a gentle cloud;
Her step was slower, and her laugh less loud;
And oft her sweet voice falter'd, though she said
Nothing in which deep meaning could be read.
I watch'd her gestures when she saw me not,
And once--(oh! will that evening be forgot?)
I stole upon her, when she little thought
Aught but the moaning wind her whispers caught.

'She sat within her bower, where the sun
Linger'd, as loth to think his task was done:
And languidly she raised her heavy gaze,
To meet the splendour of his parting rays.
O'er the smooth cheek which rested on her hand;
Down the rich curls by evening breezes fann'd;
Upon the full red lip, and rounded arm,

The swan-like neck, so snowy, yet so warm--
Each charm the rosy light was wandering o'er,
Brightening what seem'd all-beautiful before.

I paused a moment, gazing yet unseen
Beneath the sleeping shadows dark and green;
And thought, how strange that one so form'd to bless
Should better love to live in loneliness.
Pure, but not passionless, was that soft brow
So warmly gilded by the sunset now;
And in her glistening eye there shone a tear,
Like those we shed when dreaming--for some dear
But lost illusion, which returns awhile
Our nights to brighten with remember'd smile,
And yet we feel is lost, though sleep, strong sleep,
Chains the swollen lid, that fain would wake and weep.
I sat me down beside her; round the zone
That clasp'd her slender waist my arm was thrown:
And the bright ringlets of her shining hair
My fond hand parted on her forehead fair;
And thus I spoke, as with a smile and sigh
She murmur'd forth a welcome timidly:
'Again within the desert and at rest,
Say, does my Miriam find herself more blest,
Than when gay throngs in fond devotion hung
Upon the sportive accents of her tongue?
Is all which made the city seem so gay,
The song, the dance, all dream-like pass'd away?
The sighs, the vows, the worshipping forgot?
And art thou happier in this lonely spot?

Is there no form, all vision-like enshrined
Deep 'mid the treasures of thy guileless mind?
And, deaf to every pure and faithful sigh,
Say, would my desert rose-bud lonely die?'
High, 'neath the arm which carelessly caress'd,
Rose the quick beatings of that gentle breast;
And the slight pulses of her fair young hand,
Which lay so stirlessly within my own,
Trembled and stopp'd, and trembled, as I scann'd
The flushing cheek on which my glance was thrown.
'She loves,' said I; while selfish bitter grief

Swell'd in my soul;--'she loves, and I must live
Alone again, more wretched for the brief
Bright sunshine which her presence used to give.'
And then with sadden'd tones, (which, though I strove
To make them playful, tremulously came)
I murmur'd:'Yes! he lives, whom thou canst love.
His name, dear Miriam--whisper me his name.'
There was a pause, and audibly she drew
Her heaving breath; and faint and fainter grew
The hand that lay in mine; and o'er her brow
Flush'd shadows chased each other to and fro:
Till like a scorch'd-up flower, with languid grace
That young head droop'd, but sought no resting-place.

'Dreams pass'd across my soul--dreams of old days--
Of forms which in the quiet grave lay sleeping;
Of eyes which death had stripp'd of all their rays,
And weary life had quench'd with bitter weeping:
Dreams of the days when, human still, my heart
Refused to feel immortal, and kept clinging
To transient joys, which came and did depart
As fresh flowers wither, which young hands are flinging.
Dreams of the days I loved, and was beloved--
When some young heart for me its sighs was giving,
And fond lips murmur'd forth the vow that proved
Its truth in death, its tenderness when living:
And dreaming thus, I sigh'd. Answering, there came
A deep, low, tremulous sob, which thrill'd my frame.
A moment, that young form shrunk back abash'd
At its own feelings; and all vainly dash'd
The tear aside, which speedily return'd
To quench the cheek where fleeting blushes burn'd.
A moment, while I sought her fears to stay,
The timid girl in silence shrank away--
A moment, from my grasp her hand withdrew--
A moment, hid her features from my view--
Then rising, sank with tears upon my breast,
Her struggles and her love at once confess'd.

'Years--sorrow--death--the hopes that leave me lone,
All I have suffer'd, and must suffer on;
The love of other bright things which may pass

In half eclipse, beyond the darken'd glass
Through which my tearful soul hath learnt to gaze--
The fond delusions of all future days:--
All that this world can bring, hath not the power
To blot from memory that delicious hour.
She, who I thought would leave me desolate--
For whom I brooded o'er a future fate;
She, who had wander'd through each sunny land,
Yet found no heart that could her love command--
She lay within my arms, my own--my own--
Unsought, unwoo'd, but oh! too surely won.

'She was not one of many words and vows,
And breathings of her love, and eager shows
Of warm affection;--in her quiet eye,
Which gazed on all she worshipp'd silently,
There dwelt deep confidence in what she loved,
And nothing more--till some slight action proved
My ceaseless thought of her: then her heart woke,
And fervent feeling like a sunrise broke
O'er her illumined face. Her love for me
Was pure and deep, and hidden as the fount

Which floweth 'neath our footsteps gushingly,
And of whose wanderings none may take account;
And like those waters, when the fountain burst
To light and sunshine, which lay dark at first,
Quietly deep, it still kept flowing on--
Not the less pure for being look'd upon.

'And then she loved all things, and all loved her.
Each sound that mingleth in the busy stir
Of nature, was to her young bosom rife
With the intelligence of human life.
Edith, my playful Edith, when her heart
Tenderly woke to do its woman's part,
Fill'd with a sentiment so strong and new,
Each childish passion from her mind withdrew,
And looking round upon the world beheld
Her Isbal only. By deep sorrow quell'd,
Xarifa's was a melancholy love.
The plashing waters, the blue sky above,

The echo speaking from the distant hill,
The murmurs indistinct which sweetly fill
The evening air--all had for her a tone
Of mournful music--and I stood alone
The one thing that could bid her heart rejoice
With the deep comfort of a human voice.

Not so, young Miriam. Love, within her breast,
Had been a welcome and familiar guest
Ev'n from her childhood:--I was link'd with all
The sunny things that to her lot might fall;
The past--the present--and the future, were
Replete with joys in which I had my share.
Nothing had been, or ever could be, felt
Singly, within the heart where such love dwelt--
Her birds, her trees, her favourite walks, her flowers,
She knew them not as hers--they were all ours.
And thus she loved in her imaginings
Our earth, and all its dumb and living things;
Oft whispering in her momentary glee,
It was the world I dwelt in; part of me:
And, bound by a sweet charm she might not break,
She look'd upon that world, and loved it for my sake.

'How shall I tell it? Linda, a dark pain
Is in my heart, and in my burning brain.--
Where is she?--where is Miriam?--who art thou?
Oh! wipe the death-dew from her pallid brow;
I dare not touch her! See, how still she lies,
Closing in weakness her averted eyes:
Gaspingly struggling for her gentle breath--
And stretching out her quivering limbs in death!

Will no one save her? Fool!--the shadow there
Is the creation of thine own despair.
No love, no agony, is in her heart:
In sin, in suffering, she hath now no part.
She is gone from thee--sooner doom'd to go
Than Nature meant; but thou didst will it so.

'Oh, Linda! the remembrance of that day,
When sad Xarifa's spirit pass'd away,

Haunted me ever with a power that thou,
Who hast not sinn'd or suffer'd, canst not know.
My joys were turn'd to miseries, and wrought
My heart into delirium; I thought
That, as she wept, so Miriam would weep,
And start and murmur in her troubled sleep:
That, as she doubted, Miriam too would find
A dark suspicion steal across her mind:
That, as she faded, Miriam too would fade,
And lose the smile that round her full lips play'd:
That as she perish'd--Miriam too would die,
And chide me with her last reproachful sigh.
Often when gazing on her open brow,
And the pure crimson of her soft cheek's glow--
Sudden, a dark unhappy change would seem
To fall upon her features like a dream.

In vain her merry voice, with laughing tone,
Bade the dim shadow from my heart begone:
Pale--pale and sorrowful--she seem'd to rise,
Death on her cheek, and darkness in her eyes;
The roundness of her form was gone, and care
Had blanch'd the tresses of her glossy hair.
Wan and reproachful, mournfully and mild
Her thin lips moved, and with an effort smiled.
And when with writhing agony I woke
From the delusion, and the dark spell broke;
And Miriam stood there, smiling brilliantly,
Shuddering, I said, 'And yet these things must be.'
Must be;--that young confiding heart must shrink
From my caress; the joyous eyes which drink
Light from the sunshine that doth play within,
Must grovel downcast with a sense of sin;
Or, startled into consciousness, will gaze
Bewilderingly upon the sunset rays;
And, meeting mine, with sorrow wild and deep,
Heart and eyes sinking, turn again to weep.
Yes, these things must be: if, when years have pass'd,
Each leaving her more fading than the last,
She turns to the companion of her track,
And, while her wandering thoughts roam sadly back,
Seeks in her soul the reason why his form

Laughs at the slow decay or ruffling storm,

That hath wreck'd better things;--while on her sight,
With the deep horrible glare, and certain light
Of hell to a lost soul, the slow truth breaks;
Till, as one wounded in his sleep, awakes
To writhe, and shriek, and perish--silently:
Her heart is roused--to comprehend and die.

'To die!--and wherefore should she not depart
Ere doubt hath agonized the trusting heart?
Wherefore not pass away from earth, ere yet
Its mossy bosom with her tears is wet?--
It was a summer's morning, when the first
Glance of that dreadful haunting vision burst
Upon my mind:--I doom'd her then to die,
For then I pictured to my heart and eye
A world where Miriam was not:--often after,
Amid the joyous ringing of her laughter,
In sunshine and in shade, those thoughts return'd,
Madden'd my brain, and in my bosom burn'd.
Oh, God! how bitter were those idle hours,
When softly bending o'er her fragrant flowers,
She form'd her innocent plans, and playfully
Spoke of that future which was not to be!
How bitter were her smiles--her perfect love--
Her deep reliance, which no frowns could move,

On the affections of my murderous heart,
Where the thought brooded,--when shall she depart?
As Jephthah gazed upon her smiling face,
Who bounded forth to claim his first embrace;
And felt, with breathless and bewilder'd pause,
Her early death foredoom'd--her love the cause:
As Jephthah struggled with the vow that still
Bound his pain'd soul against his own free will;
And heard her fond and meekly-worded prayer,
To climb the well-known hills, and wander there,
Weeping to think that in her virgin pride
The beautiful must perish--no man's bride;
And that her name must die away from earth;
And that her voice must leave the halls of mirth,

And they be not less mirthful: so to me
It was to gaze on Miriam silently:
Miriam, who loved me; who, if I had said,
'Lo! thou must perish--bow thy gentle head,'--
Would have repress'd each faint life-longing sigh,
Bared her white bosom, and knelt down to die,
Without a murmur.--So when she upraised
Her quiet eyes, and on my features gazed,
Asking me to come forth and roam with her
Around her favourite haunts, the maddening stir
Of agony and vain resolve would rend
My bosom, and to earth my proud head bend.

It seem'd to me as if that gentle prayer
She breathed--to bid farewell to all her share
Of life and sunshine; to behold again
The high bright happy hills and outstretch'd plain;
And then--come back and die. I left that isle,
And Miriam follow'd with a tearful smile,
Glad to be with me, sorrowful to go
From the dear scene of joy and transient woe.
As Eve to Eden--towards that land of rest
She gazed, then turn'd, and wept upon my breast.
To Italy's sweet shores we bent our course;
And for a while my grief and my remorse,
And all my fearful thoughts, forsook me, when
We mingled in the busy haunts of men.
But oh! the hour was fix'd--though long delay'd;
Like the poor felon's doom, which some reprieve hath stay'd.

'One night a dream disturb'd my frenzied soul.
Methought, to Miriam I confess'd the whole
Of what thou know'st, and watch'd her young glad face,
That on her brow her feelings I might trace.
Methought that, as I gazed, the flushing red
Once more upon her cheek and bosom spread,
As when she told her love; and then--and then--
(How strongly does that vision rise again!)

Each hue of life by gradual shades withdrew,
Till ev'n her dark blue eyes seem'd fading too.
Paler and paler--whiter and more white--

Gazing upon me in the ghastly light,
Her features grew; till all at length did seem
Like moving marble, in that sickly dream,
Except the faded eyes; they faintly kept
The hue of life, and look'd on me, and wept.
And still she spoke not, but stood weeping there,
Till I was madden'd with mine own despair--
And woke. She lay beside me, who was soon
To perish by my hand: the pale clear moon
O'er her fair form a marble whiteness threw,
And wild within my heart the madness grew.
I rush'd from out that chamber, and I stood
By the dim waters of the moon-lit flood;
And in that hour of frantic misery,
I thought my vision told how she would die,
Pining and weeping.--I return'd again,
And gazed upon her with a sickening pain.
Her fair soft arms were flung above her head,
And the deep rose of sleep her cheek was tinging:
The tear which all who follow me must shed,
Slept 'neath the lashes which those orbs were fringing.
And there she lay--so still, so statue-like--
I stagger'd to her--

I lifted up my desperate arm to strike--
Linda--I slew her!
Once--only once--she faintly strove to rise;
Once--only once--she call'd upon my name;
And o'er the dark blue heaven of those eyes,
Death, with its midnight shadows, slowly came.
That tone's despairing echo died away;
The last faint quivering pulsation ceased
To thrill that form of beauty, as it lay
From all the storms and cares of life released:
And I sat by the dead. Fast o'er my soul
A dream of memory's treasured relics stole.
And the day rose before me, and the hour,
When Miriam sat within her own sweet bower,
The red rich sunset lighting on her cheek;
Afraid to trust herself to move or speak,
Conscious and shrinking--while I strove to trace
Her bosom's secret on her guileless face.

I turn'd to press her to my burning heart--
I that had slain her--Wherefore did I start?
Cold, pure, and pale, that glowing cheek was laid,
And motionless each marble limb was lying;
Closed were those eyes which tears of passion shed,
And hush'd the voice that call'd on me in dying.
Gone!--gone!--that frozen bosom never more,
Press'd to mine own, in rapture shall be beating:
Gone!--gone!--her love, her struggles--all was o'er,
Life--weary life, would bring for us no meeting!

'They bore her from me, and they laid her low,
With all her beauty, in the cheerless tomb;
And dragg'd me forth, all weak with pain and woe,
Heedless of death, to meet a murderer's doom.
The wheel--the torturing wheel--was placed to tear
Each quivering limb, and wring forth drops of pain;
And they did mock me in my mute despair,
And point to it, and frown--but all in vain.
The hour at length arrived--a bright sweet day
Rose o'er the world of torture, and of crime;
And human blood-hounds and wild birds of prey
Waited with eagerness their feasting time.
And as I gazed, a wild hope sprang within
My feverish breast:--perchance this dreadful death
And my past sufferings might efface my sin;
And I might now resign my weary breath.
And as the blessed thought flash'd o'er my mind,
I gazed around, and smiled.--To die--to die--
Oh little thought those wolves of human kind,
What rapture in that word may sometimes lie!
They stripp'd my unresisting limbs, and bound;
And the huge ponderous engine gave a sound

Like a dull heavy echo of the moans,
The exhausted cries, the deep and sullen groans,
Of all its many victims. Through each vein
Thrill'd the strange sense of swift and certain pain;
And each strong muscle from the blood-stain'd rack,
Conscious of suffering, quiveringly shrank back.
But I rejoiced--I say I did rejoice:
And when from the loud multitude a voice

Cried 'Death!' I wildly echoed it, and said
'Death! Death! oh, lay me soon among the dead.'
And they did gaze on me with fiendish stare,
Half curiosity, and half the glare
Of bloody appetite; while to and fro,
Nearer and nearer, wheel'd the carrion crow,
As seeking where to strike.--A pause, and hark!
The signal sound!
When sudden as a dream, the heavens grew dark
On all around:
And the loud blast came sweeping in its wrath,
Scattering wide desolation o'er its path:
And the hoarse thunder struggled on its way;
And livid lightning mock'd the darken'd day
With its faint hellish lights.--They fled, that crowd,
With fearful shrieks, and cries, and murmurs loud,
And left me bound. The awful thunder crash'd
Above my head; and in my up-turn'd eyes

The gleams of forked fire brightly flash'd,
Then died along the dark and threatening skies:
And the wild howling of the fearful wind
Madden'd my ringing brain; while, swiftly driven,
The torrent showers fell all thick and blind,
Till mingling seem'd the earth and angry heaven,
A flash--a sound--a shock--and I was free--
Prostrate beside me lay the shiver'd wheel
In broken fragments--I groan'd heavily,
And for a while I ceased to breathe or feel.

'And I arose again, to know that death
Was not yet granted--that the feverish hope
Of yielding up in torture my cursed breath
Was quench'd for ever; and the boundless scope
Of weary life burst on my soul again,
Like the dim distance of the heaving main
On some lost mariner's faint failing eyes;
Who, fondly dreaming of his native shore,
(While in his throat the gurgling waters rise)
Fancies he breathes that welcome air once more,
And far across the bleak lone billows sees
Its blue cool rivers, and its shady trees;

Till when, upraised a moment by the wave,
He views the watery waste, and sickening draws
One long last gasping sigh for a green grave,
Ere helplessly he sinks in Ocean's yawning jaws.

'Night fell around. The quiet dews were weeping
Silently on the dark and mournful earth;
And Sorrow pale its sleepless watch was keeping,
And slumber weigh'd the closing lid of mirth;
While the full round-orb'd moon look'd calmly down
From her thin cloud, as from a light-wreathed crown:
And I went out beneath her silver beams;
And through my 'wilder'd brain there pass'd dark dreams
Of Miriam, and of misery, and death;
And of that tomb, and what lay hid beneath:
And I did lay my head upon that grave,
Weepingly calling on her gentle name;
And to the winds my grieving spirit gave
In words which half without my knowledge came:--

'Thou art gone, with all thy loveliness,
To the silence of the tomb,
Where the voice of friends can never bless,
Nor the cool sweet breezes come;
Deep, deep beneath the flowers bright,
Beneath the dark blue sky,
Which may not send its joyous light
To gladden those who die.
This world to thee was not a world of woe:
My bird of beauty! wherefore didst thou go?

'Thou art gone, and gone for ever--thou
In whom my life was bound:
The seal of death is on thy brow,
And in thy breast a wound.
Who could have slain thee, thou who wert
So helpless and so fair?
When strong arms rose to do thee hurt,
Why was not Isbal there?
Didst thou not call upon him in thy woe?
My bird of beauty! wherefore didst thou go?

'Thou art gone!--Oh! fain my heart would rest,
And dream--but thou art gone;
The head that lay upon my breast
Is hid beneath that stone.
And art thou there? and wilt thou ne'er
Rise up from that dark place,
And, shaking back thy glossy hair,
Laugh gladly in my face?
This world to thee was not a world of woe:
I loved thee--wherefore, wherefore didst thou go?

'Return, return! Oh! if the rack--
If nature's death-like strife,
Borne silently, could bring thee back
Once more to light, and life:
Ev'n if those lips that used to wreath
Smiles that a glory shed,
Ne'er parted but in scorn, to breathe
Dark curses on my head:--
Oh! I could bear it all, nor think it woe:
My bird of beauty! wherefore didst thou go?

'Once more--once more--oh! yet once more!
If I could see thee stand,
A breathing creature, as before
I smote thee with this hand.
If that dear voice--oh! must these groans,
This agony be vain?
Will no one lift the ponderous stones,
And let thee rise again?
Thou wert not wont in life to work me woe:
My bird of beauty! wherefore didst thou go?'

'And then I reason'd--Wherefore should the sod
Hold all of her, which hath not gone to God?
I have the power again that form to see--
I have the wish once more with her to be:
And wherefore should we fear to look upon
What, from our sight, some few short hours is gone?
Wherefore the thrill our senses which comes o'er
At sight of what shall breathe and feel no more?
Oh! Miriam, can there be indeed a place

Where I must dread to look upon thy face?--
And then I knelt, and desperately did tear
The earth from off that form so young and fair,
And dash'd aside the sods which heavily
Press'd on the bosom which had beat for me.
At length 'twas over;--at the break of day
The scatter'd fragments round about me lay;
And we once more were seated side by side--
The half-immortal, and his victim bride!
What the grave yet had had no power to change,
Her long bright locks, these fingers did arrange
As she had worn them in her life's short spring;
And the sweet flowers which lay half withering
Upon the turf, I wreathed with pains and care,
And braided them among her glossy hair.
And the rich glow of light burst on mine eyes;
And the bright morning, with her dark blue skies,

Beam'd on the pale and faded form, that lay
Cold and unconscious in the waking day.
And forms drew round me, in a busy crowd:
But though I saw them come, I heeded not,
But call'd on Miriam with upbraidings loud,
And clung to that beloved and fatal spot.
And rude hands dragg'd me thence. I know not how
Or where they fetter'd me; but when I woke
From that night's dream, with cooler pulse and brow,
Chains hung around me, which might not be broke,
And in a damp deep dungeon I was flung,
With scarce a gleam of heaven's sweet light to cheer,
And silence round, save when my irons rung,
Or the stern keeper's foot was drawing near.
And many a weary day and sleepless night,
I sat unmoved within that wretched cell,
Dreaming confusedly of that last sight,
The alter'd form of her I loved so well.
'Miriam! my Miriam!--Such the first faint word
Which burst my trembling lip with deep low sighs,
Unconscious that the frowning keeper heard,
And gazed with half-contempt, and half-surprise.
And then I raved, and with a shaking hand
Traced that dear name upon the dewy clay,

And strove with feeble limbs to rise and stand,
Greeting the vision'd form that might not stay.

And they did call me mad--oh! such his madness
Who having lost what he half fear'd to love,
Deep from his prison dungeon's gloomy sadness
Sent forth his spirit by her side to rove,
And dreamt of love, and Italy's sweet skies,
And Leonora's proud impassion'd eyes;
And from his world of misery gazed afar
On his own dream, as on a lovely star.

'And from the earth I imaged forth a form,
And call'd it Miriam, and would smile to see
How calmly, amid all my passion's storm,
Its stedfast rayless eyes still gazed on me.
And I did love it, with a love beyond
All that I felt before, except for her:
And call'd to it, till, feverishly fond,
I thought the clay began to speak and stir.

'One day I slept--I had not slept for long,
Long weary days and nights ;--and in my ear
Rang the sweet notes of Miriam's gentle song,
Which ev'n in that lone rest I smiled to hear:--

'The world--the sunny world!--I love
To roam untired, till evening throws
Sweet shadows in the pleasant grove;
And bees are murmuring on the rose.
I love to see the changeful flowers
Lie blushing in the glowing day,
Bend down their heads to 'scape the showers,
Then shake the chilly drops away.'

'I woke and saw my keeper by me stand;
And curiously he gazed, with wondering eyes,
On the form moulded by my frantic hand,
And sternly bade me from my bed arise.
Oh! well my heart foreboded from his brow:
Methinks I see the dark stern glances now,
With which he heard my tale, for I did kneel

And swear each secret feeling to reveal,
So he would leave my precious Miriam there,
To comfort Isbal in his lone despair.
He heard: and o'er that dark and sullen brow
A smile ev'n darker pass'd; and he did throw
That image rudely on the echoing ground,
And spurn'd in scorn the broken fragments round;
And call'd me madman, and the threaten'd scourge
Shook o'er my fetter'd limbs, his words to urge.
He left me--madness did not come till then
In spite of all I suffer'd.--Till that hour

I had distinguish'd all, like other men,
Nor sunk beneath misfortune's blasting power.
But then, I felt a circling in my brain;
A laugh convulsive in my choking breast;
A starting in each heavy temple vein,
A weight which all my shivering limbs oppress'd.
Through my bewilder'd brain the warm blood rush'd,
From my distended mouth in torrents gush'd;
And with a low sick sob I sank in pain,
Trusting no more to wake or breathe again.

'Days, months, and years roll'd on, and I had been
A prisoner a century; had seen
Change after change among my keepers; heard
The shrieks of new-made captives, (which oft stirr'd
My heart again to madness) and the groans
Of those whom death released; the low faint moans
Of the exhausted; and I yet remain'd
To my dark dungeon, and existence, chain'd.
But wherefore should I struggle thus, to show
The dull monotony of endless woe?
Suffice it, that it was amongst a race
Then, yet unborn, that I beheld thy face--
Thy angel face, for whom ev'n I would crave
A few years respite from the welcome grave.'

He ceased; and with a tearless deep despair,
Turn'd to the sad one who sat by him there;
And neither spoke;--but o'er his wasted frame
A shaking, as of strong convulsion, came:

And, taking her faint hand between his own,
Quivering he press'd it, with a heavy groan;
And look'd into her face, as if to read
His fate therein--and bow'd his grief-worn head
Upon his arms awhile; then started up
To live--or drink the dregs of sorrow's cup.
And she rose too, who had been sitting by,
Gazing upon those dark curls vacantly;
And once or twice half-bending, as she would
Have press'd her lips on them--though stain'd with blood,
She rose, and when he murmur'd forth his fears--
'Is it too horrible? must I depart?'
Look'd up, and with an agony of tears,
Spread forth her arms, and clasp'd him to her heart.

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Visionary Portrait

I.

As by his lonely hearth he sate,
The shadow of a welcome dream
Pass'd o'er his heart,--disconsolate
His home did seem;
Comfort in vain was spread around,
For something still was wanting found.

II.

Therefore he thought of one who might
For ever in his presence stay;
Whose dream should be of him by night,
Whose smile should be for him by day;
And the sweet vision, vague and far,
Rose on his fancy like a star.

II.

'Let her be young, yet not a child,
Whose light and inexperienced mirth
Is all too wingéd and too wild
For sober earth,--
Too rainbow-like such mirth appears,
And fades away in misty tears.

IV.

'Let youth's fresh rose still gently bloom
Upon her smooth and downy cheek,
Yet let a shadow, not of gloom,
But soft and meek,
Tell that some sorrow she hath known,
Tho' not a sorrow of her own.

V.

'And let her eyes be of the grey,
The soft grey of the brooding dove,
Full of the sweet and tender ray
Of modest love;

For fonder shows that dreamy hue
Than lustrous black or heavenly blue.

VI.

'Let her be full of quiet grace,
No sparkling wit with sudden glow
Bright'ning her purely chisell'd face
And placid brow;
Not radiant to the stranger's eye,--
A creature easily pass'd by;

VII.

'But who, once seen, with untold power
For ever haunts the yearning heart,
Raised from the crowd that self-same hour
To dwell apart,
All sainted and enshrined to be
The idol of our memory!

VIII.

'And oh! let Mary be her name
It hath a sweet and gentle sound
At which no glories dear to fame
Come crowding round,
But which the dreaming heart beguiles
With holy thoughts and household smiles

IX.

'With peaceful meetings, welcomes kind,
And love, the same in joy and tears,
And gushing intercourse of mind
Thro' faithful years;
Oh! dream of something half divine,
Be real--be mortal--and be mine!'

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Wanderer Looking Into Other Homes

A LONE, wayfaring wretch I saw, who stood
Wearily pausing by the wicket gate;
And from his eyes there streamed a bitter flood,
Contrasting his with many a happier fate.
Bleak howled the wind, the sleety shower fell fast
On his bare head, and scanty-covered breast;
As through the village with quick step I past,
To find sweet shelter in my home of rest.

'Oh! that I too could call a home my own!'
Said the lone wanderer, as he wistful gazed
Through the clear lattice, on the hearth's wide stone,
Where cheerily the jocund fire blazed.
'Oh! that I too, in such a cot might dwell!
Where the bright homefire blazeth clear and high:
Where joy alone my grateful heart might swell,
And children's children bless me when I die!'

Little he deemed what bitterness was there,
Who murmured thus his aspirations vain,--
Little he deemed that one as fond as fair
Lay faintly sighing on a bed of pain:
And by her side, a restless vigil keeping,
One who had deeply wronged that gentle heart--
Knelt with clasped hands; now praying, and now weeping;
Dreading, each hour, to see the soul depart.

They were two sisters jealous love had twained;
And one had slandered he who faded lay,
Because she deemed her slighted love disdained:
And he they both had loved was far away:
And from that hour, the younger drooped and pined,
Like a pale snowdrop bowing down her head;
Joyless of life--to slow disease resigned--
The heart within her was already dead.

Here, for her sake, they woo the mountain gale,
If, haply, change may yet prevent her fate.
But he, the wanderer, knew not of this tale,

And humbly sues admittance at their gate.
He enters--what hath met his eager eyes?
Pale as the white-fringed drapery spread beneath,
His early loved, his sorely slandered, lies,
Heaving with pain her faint and quickened breath.

O'er her soft arm her long, dark, glossy hair,
Floats in unbraided beauty,--and her cheek,--
Ah, me! the deeply-crimsoned tinge is there,
That of sharp woe and early death doth speak.
How beautiful, beneath her drooping eye,
The glowing hectic of that cheek appears,
Where the long lashes like soft shadows lie,
Seeking in vain to prison back her tears.

She gazes--shrieks--'tis he! at length 'tis he,
Whom dreams and waking thoughts have brought in vain!
And must she die, e'er yet from sorrow free,
Her head hath rested on his heart again?
A few slow, bitter words of wild appeal--
Of earnest explanation faintly given--
A pressure, which his hand can scarcely feel,
And her freed soul is on its way to heaven!

So, wanderers in the world may pausing gaze
Upon some radiant form with smiles of light,
And seeing but the outward beam that plays,
Envy their joys--and deem that all is bright.
The homes of other hearts! oh! yet beware,
Ye, who with friendly guise would enter in,
Lest all be false,--and ye be doomed to share
Their guilt or woe--their sadness or their sin!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Widow To Her Son's Betrothed

I.

AH, cease to plead with that sweet cheerful voice,
Nor bid me struggle with a weight of woe,
Lest from the very tone that says 'rejoice'
A double bitterness of grief should grow;
Those words from THEE convey no gladdening thought,
No sound of comfort lingers in their tone,
But by their means a haunting shade is brought
Of love and happiness for ever gone!

II.

My son!--alas, hast thou forgotten him,
That thou art full of hopeful plans again?
His heart is cold--his joyous eyes are dim,--
For him THE FUTURE is a word in vain!
He never more the welcome hours may share,
Nor bid Love's sunshine cheer our lonely home,--
How hast thou conquer'd all the long despair
Born of that sentence--He is in the tomb?

III.

How can thy hand with cheerful fondness press
The hands of friends who still on earth may stay--
Remembering his most passionate caress
When the LONG PARTING summon'd him away?
How can'st thou keep from bitter weeping, while
Strange voices tell thee thou art brightly fair--
Remembering how he loved thy playful smile,
Kiss'd thy smooth cheek, and praised thy burnish'd hair?

IV.

How can'st thou laugh? How can'st thou warble songs?
How can'st thou lightly tread the meadow-fields,
Praising the freshness which to spring belongs,
And the sweet incense which the hedge-flower yields?
Does not the many-blossom'd spring recal
Our pleasant walks through cowslip-spangled meads,--
The violet-scented lanes--the warm south-wall,

Where early flow'rets rear'd their welcome heads?

V.

Does not remembrance darken on thy brow
When the wild rose a richer fragrance flings--
When the caressing breezes lift the bough,
And the sweet thrush more passionately sings;--
Dost thou not, then, lament for him whose form
Was ever near thee, full of earnest grace?
Does not the sudden darkness of the storm
Seem luridly to fall on Nature's face?

VI.

It does to ME! The murmuring summer breeze,
Which thou dost turn thy glowing cheek to meet,
For me sweeps desolately through the trees,
And moans a dying requiem at my feet!
The glistening river which in beauty glides,
Sparkling and blue with morn's triumphant light,
All lonely flows, or in its bosom hides
A broken image lost to human sight!

VII.

But THOU!--Ah! turn thee not in grief away;
I do not wish thy soul as sadly wrung--
I know the freedom of thy spirit's play,
I know thy bounding heart is fresh and young:
I know corroding Time will slowly break
The links which bound most fondly and most fast,
And Hope will be Youth's comforter, and make
The long bright Future outweigh the Past.

VIII.

Only, when full of tears I raise mine eyes
And meet thine ever full of smiling light,
I feel as though thy vanish'd sympathies
Were buried in HIS grave, where all is night;
And when beside our lonely hearth I sit,
And thy light laugh comes echoing to my ear,
I wonder how the waste of mirth and wit
Hath still the power thy widow'd heart to cheer!

IX.

Bear with me yet! Mine is a harsh complaint!
And thy youth's innocent lightheartedness
Should rather soothe me when my spirits faint
Than seem to mock my age's lone distress.
But oh! the tide of grief is swelling high,
And if so soon forgetfulness must be--
If, for the DEAD, thou hast no further sigh,
Weep for his Mother!--Weep, young Bride, for ME!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

The Winter's Walk

MARK'D--as the hours should be, Fate bids us spend
With one illustrious, or a cherish'd friend--
Rich in the value of that double claim,
Since Fame allots the friend a Poet's name,--
My 'Winter's Walk' asserts its right to live
Amongst the brightest thoughts my life can give,
And leaves a track of light on Memory's way
Which oft shall gild the future Summer's day.

Gleam'd the red sun athwart the misty haze
Which veil'd the cold earth from its loving gaze,
Feeble and sad as Hope in Sorrow's hour,
But for THY soul it still had warmth and power;
Not to its cheerless beauty wert thou blind,
To the keen eye of thy poetic mind

Beauty still lives, tho' nature's flow'rets die,
And wintry sunsets fade along the sky!
And nought escaped thee as we stroll'd along,
Nor changeful ray, nor bird's faint chirping song;
Bless'd with a fancy easily inspired,
All was beheld, and nothing unadmired;
Not one of all God's blessings giv'n in vain,
From the dim city to the clouded plain.

And many an anecdote of other times,--
Good earnest deeds,--quaint wit,--and polished rhymes,--
Many a sweet story of remembered years
Which thrilled the listening heart with unshed tears,--
Unweariedly thy willing tongue rehearsed,
And made the hour seem brief as we conversed.

Ah! who can e'er forget, who once hath heard,
The gentle charm that dwells in every word
Of thy calm converse? In its kind allied
To some fair river's bright abundant tide,
Whose silver gushing current onward goes,
Fluent and varying; yet with such repose

As smiles even through the flashings of thy wit,
In every eddy that doth ruffle it.
Who can forget, who at thy social board
Hath sat,--and seen the pictures richly stored,
In all their tints of glory and of gloom,
Brightening the precincts of thy quiet room;
With busts and statues full of that deep grace
Which modern hands have lost the skill to trace,
(Fragments of beauty--perfect as thy song
On that sweet land to which they did belong,)
Th' exact and classic taste by thee displayed;
Not with a rich man's idle fond parade,
Not with the pomp of some vain connoisseur
Proud of his bargains, of his judgment sure,
But with the feelings kind and sad, of one
Who thro' far countries wandering hath gone,
And brought away dear keepsakes, to remind
His heart and home of all he left behind.

But wherefore these, in feeble rhyme recal?
Thy taste, thy wit, thy verse, are known to all;
Such things are for the World, and therefore doth
The World speak of them; loud, and nothing loth

To fancy that the talent stamped by Heaven
Is nought unless their echoed praise be given,
A worthless ore not yet allowed to shine,
A diamond darkly buried in its mine.
These are thy daylight qualities, whereon
Beams the full lustre of their garish sun,
And the keen point of many a famed reply
Is what they would not 'willingly let die.'
But by a holier light thy angel reads
The unseen records of more gentle deeds,--
And by a holier light thy angel sees
The tear oft shed for humble miseries,--
The alms dropp'd gently in the beggar's hand,
(Who in his daily poverty doth stand
Watching for kindness on thy pale calm brow,
Ignorant to whom he breathes his grateful vow).
Th' indulgent hour of kindness stol'n away
From the free leisure of thy well-spent day,

For some poor struggling Son of Genius, bent
Under the weight of heart-sick discontent;
Whose prayer thou hearest, mindful of the schemes
Of thine own youth;--the hopes, the fever-dreams
Of Fame and Glory which seemed hovering then,
(Nor only seemed) upon thy magic pen;

And measuring not how much beneath thine own
Is the sick mind thus pining to be known,
But only what a wealth of hope lies hushed
As in a grave,--when men like these are crushed!

And by that light's soft radiance I review
Thy unpretending kindness, calm and true,
Not to me only,--but in bitterest hours
To one whom Heaven endowed with varied powers;
To one who died, e'er yet my childish heart
Knew what Fame meant, or Slander's fabled dart!
Then was the laurel green upon his brow,
And they could flatter then, who judge him now;
Who, when the fickle breath of fortune changed,
With equal falsehood held their love estranged;
Nay, like mean wolves, from whelp-hood vainly nursed,
Tore at the easy hand that fed them first.
Not so didst THOU the ties of friendship break--
Not so didst THOU the saddened man forsake;
And when at length he laid his dying head
On the hard rest of his neglected bed,
He found,--(tho' few or none around him came
Whom he had toiled for in his hour of Fame;--

Though by his Prince, unroyally forgot,
And left to struggle with his altered lot;--)
By sorrow weakened,--by disease unnerved,--
Faithful at least the friend he had not served:
For the same voice essayed that hour to cheer,
Which now sounds welcome to his grandchild's ear;
And the same hand, to aid that Life's decline,
Whose gentle clasp so late was linked in mine!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

They Loved One Another

THEY loved one another! young Edward and his wife,
And in their cottage-home they dwelt, apart from sin and strife.
Each evening Edward weary came from a day of honest toil,
And Mary made the fire blaze, and smiled a cheerful smile.
Oh! what was wealth or pomp to them, the gaudy glittering show,
Of jewels blazing on the breast, where heaves a heart of woe!
The merry laugh, the placid sleep, were theirs; they hated sloth,
And all the little that they had, belonged alike to both,
For they loved one another!

They loved one another; but one of them is gone,
And by that vainly cheerful hearth poor Edward sits alone.
He gazes round on all which used to make his heart rejoice,
And he misses Mary's gentle smile, he misses Mary's voice.
There are many in this chilly world who would not care to part,
Tho' they dwell together in one home, and ought to have one heart,
And yet they live! while never more those happy ones may meet;
And the echo from her home is gone of Mary's busy feet:
And they loved one another!

They loved one another! but she hath past away,
And taken with her all the light, the sunshine of his day;
And Edward makes no loud lament, nor idly sits and mourns,
But quietly goes forth at morn, and quietly returns.
The cottage now is still and dark, no welcome bids him home,
He passes it and wanders on, to sit by Mary's tomb.
Oh! weep my friends-for very sad and bitter it must be
To yearn for some familiar face we never more may see-
When we loved one another!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

To Ferdinand Seymour

ROSY child, with forehead fair,
Coral lip, and shining hair,
In whose mirthful, clever eyes
Such a world of gladness lies;
As thy loose curls idly straying
O'er thy mother's cheek, while playing,
Blend her soft lock's shadowy twine
With the glittering light of thine,--
Who shall say, who gazes now,
Which is fairest, she or thou?

In sweet contrast are ye met,
Such as heart could ne'er forget:
Thou art brilliant as a flower,
Crimsoning in the sunny hour;
Merry as a singing-bird,
In the green wood sweetly heard;

Restless as if fluttering wings
Bore thee on thy wanderings;
Ignorant of all distress,
Full of childhood's carelessness.

She is gentle; she hath known
Something of the echoed tone
Sorrow leaves, where'er it goes,
In this world of many woes.
On her brow such shadows are
As the faint cloud gives the star,
Veiling its most holy light,
Tho' it still be pure and bright;
And the colour in her cheek
To the hue on thine is weak,
Save when flush'd with sweet surprise,
Sudden welcomes light her eyes;
And her softly chisel'd face
(But for living, moving grace)
Looks like one of those which beam
In th' Italian painter's dream,--

Some beloved Madonna, bending
O'er the infant she is tending;

Holy, bright, and undefiled
Mother of the Heaven-born child;
Who, tho' painted strangely fair,
Seems but made for holy prayer,
Pity, tears, and sweet appeal,
And fondness such as angels feel;
Baffling earthly passion's sigh
With serenest majesty!

Oh! may those enshrouded years
Whose fair dawn alone appears,--
May that brightly budding life,
Knowing yet not sin nor strife,--
Bring its store of hoped-for joy,
Mother, to thy laughing boy!
And the good thou dost impart
Lies deep-treasured in his heart,
That, when he at length shall strive
In the bad world where we live,
THY sweet name may still be blest
As one who taught his soul true rest!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

To The Lady H.O.

I.

COME o'er the green hills to the sunny sea!
The boundless sea that washeth many lands,
Where shells unknown to England, fair and free,
Lie brightly scatter'd on the gleaming sands.
There, 'midst the hush of slumbering ocean's roar,
We'll sit and watch the silver-tissued waves
Creep languidly along the basking shore,
And kiss thy gentle feet, like Eastern slaves.

II.

And we will take some volume of our choice,
Full of a quiet poetry of thought,
And thou shalt read me, with thy plaintive voice,
Lines which some gifted mind hath sweetly wrought;
And I will listen, gazing on thy face,
(Pale as some cameo on the Italian shell!)
Or looking out across the far blue space,
Where glancing sails to gentle breezes swell.

III.

Come forth! The sun hath flung on Thetis' breast
The glittering tresses of his golden hair;
All things are heavy with a noonday rest,
And floating sea-birds leave the stirless air.
Against the sky, in outlines clear and rude,
The cleft rocks stand, while sunbeams slant between;
And lulling winds are murmuring thro' the wood,
Which skirts the bright bay with its fringe of green.

IV.

Come forth! All motion is so gentle now,
It seems thy step alone should walk the earth,--
Thy voice alone, the 'ever soft and low,'
Wake the far-haunting echoes into birth.
Too wild would be love's passionate store of hope,
Unmeet the influence of his changeful power,--
Ours be companionship, whose gentle scope

Hath charm enough for such a tranquil hour.

V.

And slowly, idly wandering, we will roam,
Where the high cliffs shall give us ample shade;
And watch the glassy waves, whose wrathful foam
Hath power to make the seaman's heart afraid.
Seek thou no veil to shroud thy soft brown hair,--
Wrap thou no mantle round thy graceful form;
The cloudless sky smiles forth as still and fair
As tho' earth ne'er could know another storm.

VI.

Come! Let not listless sadness make delay,--
Beneath Heaven's light that sadness will depart;
And as we wander on our shoreward way,
A strange, sweet peace shall enter in thine heart.
We will not weep, nor talk of vanish'd years,
When, link by link, Hope's glittering chain was riven:
Those who are dead, shall claim from love no tears,--
Those who have injured us; shall be forgiven.

VII.

Few have my summers been, and fewer thine;--
Youth blighted is the weary lot of both:
To both, all lonely shows our life's decline,
Both with old friends and ties have waxéd wroth.
But yet we will not weep! The breathless calm
Which lulls the golden earth, and wide blue sea,
Shall pour into our souls mysterious balm,
And fill us with its own tranquillity.

VIII.

We will not mar the scene--we will not look
To the veil'd future, or the shadowy past;
Seal'd up shall be sad Memory's open book,
And childhood's idleness return at last!
Joy, with his restless, ever-fluttering wings,
And Hope, his gentle brother,--all shall cease:
Like weary hinds that seek the desert springs,
Our one sole feeling shall be peace--deep peace!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Twilight

IT is the twilight hour,
The daylight toil is done,
And the last rays are departing
Of the cold and wintry sun.
It is the time when Friendship
Holds converse fair and free,
It is the time when children
Dance round the mother's knee.
But my soul is faint and heavy,
With a yearning sad and deep,
By the fireside lone and dreary
I sit me down and weep!
Where are ye, merry voices,
Whose clear and bird-like tone,
Some other ear now blesses,
Less anxious than my own?

Where are ye, steps of lightness,
Which fell like blossom-showers?
Where are ye, sounds of laughter,
That cheer'd the pleasant hours?
Thro' the dim light slow declining,
Where my wistful glances fall,
I can see your pictures hanging
Against the silent wall;--
They gleam athwart the darkness,
With their sweet and changeless eyes,
But mute are ye, my children!
No voice to mine replies.
Where are ye? Are ye playing
By the stranger's blazing hearth;
Forgetting in your gladness,
Your old home's former mirth?
Are ye dancing? Are ye singing?
Are ye full of childish glee?
Or do your light hearts sadden
With the memory of me?
Round whom, oh! gentle darlings,
Do your young arms fondly twine,

Does she press you to her bosom
Who hath taken you from mine?

Oh! boys, the twilight hour
Such a heavy time hath grown,--
It recalls with such deep anguish
All I used to call my own,--
That the harshest word that ever
Was spoken to me there,
Would be trivial--would be welcome--
In the depth of my despair!
Yet no! Despair shall sink not,
While Life and Love remain,--
Tho' the weary struggle haunt me,
And my prayer be made in vain:
Tho' at times my spirit fail me,
And the bitter tear-drops fall,
Tho' my lot be hard and lonely,
Yet I hope--I hope thro' all!

When the mournful Jewish mother
Laid her infant down to rest,
In doubt, and fear, and sorrow,
On the water's changeful breast;

She knew not what the future
Should bring the sorely-tried:
That the High Priest of her nation,
Was the babe she sought to hide.
No! in terror wildly flying,
She hurried on her path;
Her swoln heart full to bursting
Of woman's helpless wrath;
Of that wrath so blent with anguish,
When we seek to shield from ill
Those feeble little creatures
Who seem more helpless still!
Ah! no doubt, in such an hour,
Her thoughts were harsh and wild;
The fiercer burned her spirit,
The more she loved her child;
No doubt, a frenzied anger

Was mingled with her fear,
When that prayer arose for justice
Which God hath sworn to hear.
He heard it! From His Heaven,
In its blue and boundless scope,
He saw that task of anguish,
And that fragile ark of hope;

When she turn'd from that lost infant,
Her weeping eyes of love,
And the cold reeds bent beneath it--
His angels watch'd above!
She was spared the bitter sorrow
Of her young child's early death,
Or the doubt where he was carried
To draw his distant breath;
She was call'd his life to nourish
From the well-springs of her heart,
God's mercy re-uniting
Those whom man had forced apart!

Nor was thy woe forgotten,
Whose worn and weary feet
Were driven from thy homestead,
Through the red sand's parching heat;
Poor Hagar! scorn'd and banish'd,
That another's son might be
Sole claimant on that father,
Who felt no more for thee.

Ah! when thy dark eye wander'd,
Forlorn Egyptian slave!
Across that lurid desert,
And saw no fountain wave,--
When thy southern heart, despairing,
In the passion of its grief,
Foresaw no ray of comfort,
No shadow of relief;
But to cast the young child from thee,
That thou might'st not see him die,
How sank thy broken spirit--
But the Lord of Hosts was nigh!

He (He, too oft-forgotten,
In sorrow as in joy)
Had will'd they should not perish--
The outcast and her boy:
The cool breeze swept across them
From the angel's waving wing,--
The fresh tide gush'd in brightness
From the fountain's living spring,--
And they stood--those two--forsaken
By all earthly love or aid,
Upheld by God's firm promise,
Serene and undismay'd!

And thou, Nain's grieving widow!
Whose task of life seem'd done,
When the pale corse lay before thee
Of thy dear and only son;
Though Death, that fearful shadow,
Had veil'd his fair young eyes,
There was mercy for thy weeping,
There was pity for thy sighs!
The gentle voice of Jesus,
(Who the touch of sorrow knew)
The grave's cold claim arrested
E'er it hid him from thy view;
And those loving orbs re-open'd
And knew thy mournful face,--
And the stiff limbs warm'd and bent them
With all life's moving grace,--
And his senses dawn'd and waken'd
From the dark and frozen spell,
Which death had cast around him
Whom thou did'st love so well;
Till, like one return'd from exile
To his former home of rest,
Who speaks not, while his mother
Falls sobbing on his breast;

But with strange bewilder'd glances
Looks round on objects near,
To recognise and welcome
All that memory held dear,--

Thy young son stood before thee
All living and restored,
And they who saw the wonder
Knelt down to praise the Lord!

The twilight hour is over!
In busier homes than mine
I can see the shadows crossing
Athwart the taper's shine;
I hear the roll of chariots
And the tread of homeward feet,
And the lamps' long rows of splendor
Gleam through the misty street.
No more I mark the objects
In my cold and cheerless room;
The fire's unheeded embers
Have sunk--and all is gloom;

But I know where hang your pictures
Against the silent wall,
And my eyes turn sadly towards them,
Tho' I hope--I hope thro' all.

By the summons to that mother,
Whose fondness fate beguiled,
When the tyrant's gentle daughter
Saved her river-floating child;--
By the sudden joy which bounded
In the banish'd Hagar's heart,
When she saw the gushing fountain
From the sandy desert start;--
By the living smile which greeted
The lonely one of Nain,
When her long last watch was over
And her hope seem'd wild and vain;--
By all the tender mercy
God hath shown to human grief,
When fate or man's perverseness
Denied and barr'd relief,--

By the helpless woe which taught me
To look to him alone,

From the vain appeals for justice
And wild efforts of my own,--
By thy light--thou unseen future,
And thy tears--thou bitter past,
I will hope--tho' all forsake me,
In His mercy to the last!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

We Have Been Friends Together

WE have been friends together,
In sunshine and in shade;
Since first beneath the chestnut-trees
In infancy we played.
But coldness dwells within thy heart,
A cloud is on thy brow;
We have been friends together—
Shall a light word part us now?

We have been gay together;
We have laugh'd at little jests;
For the fount of hope was gushing
Warm and joyous in our breasts.
But laughter now hath fled thy lip,
And sullen glooms thy brow;
We have been gay together—
Shall a light word part us now?

We have been sad together,
We have wept, with bitter tears,
O'er the grass-grown graves, where slumber'd
The hopes of early years.
The voices which are silent there
Would bid thee clear thy brow;
We have been sad together—
Oh! what shall part us now?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Weep Not For Him That Dieth

I.

WEEP not for him that dieth--
For he sleeps, and is at rest;
And the couch whereon he lieth
Is the green earth's quiet breast:
But weep for him who pineth
On a far land's hateful shore,
Who wearily declineth
Where ye see his face no more!

II.

Weep not for him that dieth,
For friends are round his bed,
And many a young lip sigheth
When they name the early dead;
But weep for him that liveth
Where none will know or care,
When the groan his faint heart giveth
Is the last sigh of despair.

III.

Weep not for him that dieth,
For his struggling soul is free,
And the world from which it flieth
Is a world of misery;
But weep for him that wareth
The captive's galling chain:
To the agony he beareth,
Death were but little pain.

IV.

Weep not for him that dieth,
For he hath ceased from tears,
And a voice to his replieth
Which he hath not heard for years;
But weep for him who weepeth
On that cold land's cruel shore--
Blest, blest is he that sleepeth,--

Weep for the dead no more!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

When Poor In All But Hope And Love

WHEN, poor in all but hope and love,
I clasped thee to my faithful heart;
For wealth and fame I vowed to rove,
That we might meet no more to part!
Years have gone by-long weary years
Of toil, to win thee comfort now-
Of ardent hopes-of sickening fears-
And wealth is mine-but where art thou?

Fame's dazzling dreams, for thy dear sake,
Rose brighter than before to me;
I clung to all I deemed could make
My burning heart more worthy thee.
Years have gone by-the laurel droops
In mockery o'er my joyless brow :
A conquered world before me stoops,
And Fame is mine-but where art thou?

In life's first hours, despised and lone,
I wandered through the busy crowd;
But now that life's best hopes are gone,
They greet with pride and murmurs loud.
Oh! for thy voice! thy happy voice,
To breathe its laughing welcome now;
Wealth, fame, and all that should rejoice,
To me are vain-for where art thou?

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton

Would I Were With Thee!

WOULD I were with thee! every day and hour
Which now I spend so sadly, far from thee--
Would that my form possessed the magic power
To follow where my heavy heart would be!
Whate'er thy lot--by land or sea--
Would I were with thee--eternally!

Would I were with thee! when, the world forgetting,
Thy weary limbs upon the turf are thrown,
While bright and red the evening sun is setting,
And all thy thoughts belong to heaven alone:
While happy dreams thy heart employ--
Would I were with thee--in thy joy!

Would I were with thee! when, no longer feigning
The hurried laugh that stifles back a sigh;
Thy young lip pours unheard its sweet complaining,
And tears have quenched the light within thine eye:
When all seems dark and sad below,
Would I were with thee--in thy woe!

Would I were with thee! when the day is breaking,
And when the moon hath lit the lonely sea--
Or when in crowds some careless note awaking:
Speaks to thy heart in memory of me.
In joy or pain, by sea or shore--
Would I were with thee--evermore!

Caroline Elizabeth Sarah Norton