H. J. Jackson, "Those Who Write for Immortality" (Yale University Press, 2015)

Recommended Supplementary Readings

The following passages are recommended as accompaniments for Chapters Two, Four, and Five.

CHAPTER TWO, "An Heroic Model of Authorship"


The Method of treating the Borough Paupers--Many maintained at their own Dwellings--Some Characters of the Poor--The School-mistress, when aged--The Idiot--The poor Sailor--The declined Tradesman and his Companion--This contrasted with the Maintenance of the Poor in a common Mansion erected by the Hundred--The Objections to this Method: Not Want, nor Cruelty, but the necessary Evils of this Mode--What they are--Instances of the Evil--A Return to the Borough Poor--The Dwellings of these--The Lanes and By-ways--No Attention here paid to Convenience--The Pools in the Pathways--Amusements of Sea-port Children--The Town-Flora--Herbs on Walls and vacant Spaces--a female Inhabitant of the Alley--A large Building let to several poor Inhabitants--Their Manners and Habits.

Farewell to these; but all our poor to know,
Let's seek the winding Lane, the narrow Row,
Suburban prospects, where the traveller stops
To see the sloping tenement on props,
With building-yards immix'd, and humble sheds and shops;
Where the Cross-Keys and Plumber's-Arms invite
Laborious men to taste their coarse delight;
Where the low porches, stretching from the door,
Gave some distinction in the days of yore,
Yet now neglected, more offend the eye,
By gloom and ruin, than the cottage by:
Places like these the noblest town endures,
The gayest palace has its sinks and sewers.
Here is no pavement, no inviting shop,
To give us shelter when compell'd to stop;
But plashy puddles stand along the way,
Fill'd by the rain of one tempestuous day;
And these so closely to the buildings run,
That you must ford them, for you cannot shun;
Though here and there convenient bricks are laid,
And door-side heaps afford their dubious aid.

Lo! yonder shed; observe its garden-ground,
With the low paling, form'd of wreck, around:
There dwells a Fisher; if you view his boat,
With bed and barrel--'tis his house afloat;
Look at his house, where ropes, nets, blocks, abound,
Tar, pitch, and oakum--'tis his boat aground:
That space enclos'd, but little he regards,
Spread o'er with relics of masts, sails, and yards:
Fish by the wall, on spit of elder, rest,
Of all his food, the cheapest and the best,
By his own labour caught, for his own hunger dress'd.

Here our reformers come not; none object
To paths polluted, or upbraid neglect;
None care that ashy heaps at doors are cast,
That coal dust flies along the blinding blast:
None heed the stagnant pools on either side,
Where new-launch'd ships of infant-sailors ride:
Rodneys in rags here British valour boast,
And lisping Nelsons fright the Gallic coast.
They fix the rudder, set the swelling sail,
They point the bowsprit, and they blow the gale:
True to her port, the frigate scuds away,
And o'er that frowning ocean finds her bay;
Her owner rigg'd her, and he knows her worth,
And sees her, fearless, gunwale-deep go forth;
Dreadless he views his sea, by breezes curl'd,
When inch-high billows vex the watery world.

There, fed by food they love, to rankest size,
Around the dwellings docks and wormwood rise;
Here the strong mallow strikes her slimy root,
Here the dull nightshade hangs her deadly fruit;
On hills of dust the henbane's faded green,
And pencil'd flower of sickly scent is seen;
At the wall's base the fiery nettle springs,
With fruit globose and fierce with poison'd stings;
Above (the growth of many a year) is spread
The yellow level of the stone-crop's bed;
In every chink delights the fern to grow,
With glossy leaf and tawny bloom below:
These, with our sea-weeds, rolling up and down,
Form the contracted Flora of the town.

Say, wilt thou more of scenes so sordid know?
Then will I lead thee down the dusty Row;
By the warm alley and the long close lane,--
There mark the fractured door and paper'd pane,
Where flags the noon-tide air, and, as we pass,
We fear to breathe the putrefying mass:
But fearless yonder matron; she disdains
To sigh for zephyrs from ambrosial plains;
But mends her meshes torn, and pours her lay
All in the stifling fervour of the day.

Her naked children round the alley run,
And roll’d in dust, are bronzed beneath the sun;
Or gambol round the dame, who, loosely dress’d,
Woos the coy breeze to fan the open breast:
She, once a handmaid, strove by decent art
To charm her sailor’s eye and touch his heart;
Her bosom then was veil’d in kerchief clean,
And fancy left to form the charms unseen.

But when a wife, she lost her former care,
Nor thought on charms, nor time for dress could spare;
Careless she found her friends who dwelt beside,
No rival beauty kept alive her pride:
Still in her bosom virtue keeps her place,
But decency is gone, the virtues’ guard and grace.

See that long boarded Building!—By these stairs
Each humble tenant to that home repairs—
By one large window lighted—it was made
For some bold project, some design in trade:
This fail’d,—and one, a humourist in his way,
(Ill was the humour,) bought it in decay;
Nor will he sell, repair, or take it down;
'Tis his,—what cares he for the talk of town?
“No! He will let it to the poor;—a home
Where he delights to see the creatures come:”
“They may be thieves;”—“Well, so are richer men;”
“Or idlers, cheats, or prostitutes;”—“What then?”
“Outcasts pursued by justice, vile and base;”—
“They need the more his pity and the place:”
Convert to system his vain mind has built,
He gives asylum to deceit and guilt.

In this vast room, each place by habit fix’d,
Are sexes, families, and ages mix’d—
To union forc’d by crime, by fear, by need,
And all in morals and in modes agreed;
Some ruin’d men, who from mankind remove;
Some ruin’d females, who yet talk of love;
And some grown old in idleness—the prey
To vicious spleen, still railing through the day;
And need and misery, vice and danger bind
In sad alliance each degraded mind.

That window view!—oil’d paper and old glass
Stain the strong rays, which, though impeded, pass,
And give a dusty warmth to that huge room,
The conquer’d sunshine’s melancholy gloom;
When all those western rays, without so bright,
Within become a ghastly glimmering light,
As pale and faint upon the floor they fall,
Or feebly gleam on the opposing wall:
That floor, once oak, now pieced with fir unplaned,
Or, where not pieced, in places bored and stain’d;
That wall once whiten’d, now an odious sight,
Stain’d with all hues, except its ancient white;
The only door is fasten’d by a pin,
Or stubborn bar, that none may hurry in:
For this poor room, like rooms of greater pride,
At times contains what prudent men would hide.

Where’er the floor allows an even space,
Chalking and marks of various games have place;
Boys, without foresight, pleased in halters swing;
On a fix’d hook men cast a flying ring;
While gin and snuff their female neighbours share,
And the black beverage in the fractur’d ware.

On swinging shelf are things incongruous stored,—
Scraps of their food,—the cards and cribbage-board,—
With pipes and pouches; while on peg below,
Hang a lost member’s fiddle and its bow:
That still reminds them how he’d dance and play,
Ere sent untimely to the Convicts’ Bay.

Here by a curtain, by a blanket there,
Are various beds conceal’d, but none with care;
Where some by day and some by night, as best
Suit their employments, seek uncertain rest;
The drowsy children at their pleasure creep
To the known crib, and there securely sleep.

Each end contains a grate, and there beside
Are hung utensils for their boil’d and fried—
All used at any hour, by night, by day,
As suit the purse, the person, or the prey.

Above the fire, the mantel-shelf contains
Of china-ware some poor unmatch’d remains;
There many a tea-cup’s gaudy fragment stands,
All placed by vanity’s unwearied hands;
For here she lives, e’en here she looks about,
To find some small consoling objects out:
Nor heed these Spartan dames their house, nor sit
‘Mid cares domestic,—they nor sew nor knit;
But of their fate discourse, their ways, their wars,
With arm’d authorities, their 'scapes and scars:
These lead to prevent evils, and a cup
If fortune grants it, winds description up.
High hung up at either end, and next the wall,  
Two ancient mirrors show the forms of all,  
In all their force;--these aid them in their dress,  
But with the good, the evils too express,  
Doubling each look of care, each token of distress.


[Roderick, the last of the Visigoth kings of Spain (d 711), having left the battlefield in disguise when defeat was certain, has spent some years as a penitent monk and hermit, but is roused to action by a vision of his mother, and crosses the country in an attempt to find her.]

Leaving these captive scenes behind, he crost  
Cavado's silver current, and the banks  
Of Lima, through whose groves in after years,  
Mournful yet sweet, Diogo's amorous lute  
Prolong'd its tuneful echoes.\(^1\) But when now  
Beyond Arnoya's tributary tide,  
He came where where Minho roll'd its ampler stream  
By Auria's ancient walls, fresh horrors met  
His startled view; for prostrate in the dust  
Those walls were laid, and towers and temples stood  
Tottering in frightful ruins, as the flame  
Had left them black and bare; and through the streets,  
All with the recent wreck of war bestrewn,  
Helmet and turban, scymitar and sword,  
Christian and Moor in death promiscuous lay  
Each where they fell; and blood-flakes, parch'd and crack'd  
Like the dry slime of some receding flood;  
And half-burnt bodies, which allured from far  
The wolf and raven, and to impious food  
Tempted the houseless dog.

A thrilling pang,  
A sweat like death, a sickness of the soul,  
Came over Roderick. Soon they pass'd away,  
And admiration in their stead arose,  
Stern joy, and inextinguishable hope,  
With wrath, and hate, and sacred vengeance now

\(^1\) [Southey's note:] Diogo Bernardes, one of the best of the Portuguese poets, was born on the banks of the Lima, and passionately fond of its scenery. Some of his sonnets will bear comparison with the best poems of their kind. There is a charge of plagiarism against him for having printed several of Camoens's sonnets as his own; to obtain any proofs upon this subject would be very difficult; this, however, is certain, that his own undisputed productions resemble them so closely in unaffected tenderness, and in sweetness of diction, that the whole appear like the works of one author.
Indissolubly link'd. O valiant race,
O people excellently brave, he cried,
True Goths ye fell, and faithful to the last;
Though overpower'd, triumphant, and in death
Unconquer'd! Holy be your memory!
Bless'd and glorious, now and evermore
Be your heroic names! . . Led by the sound,
As thus he cried aloud, a woman came
Toward him from the ruins. For the love
Of Christ, she said, help me a little while
Thy charitable help! . . . Her words, her voice,
Her look, more horror to his heart convey'd
Than all the havoc round: for though she spake
With the calm utterance of despair, in tones
Deep-breathed and low, yet never sweeter voice
Pour'd forth its hymns in ecstasy to Heaven.
Her hands were bloody, and her garments stain'd
With blood, her face with blood and dust defiled.
Beauty and youth, and grace and majesty,
Had every charm of form and feature given;
But now upon her rigid countenance
Severest anguish set a fixedness
Ghastlier than death.

She led him through the streets
A little way along, where four low walls,
Heapt rudely from the ruins round, enclosed
A narrow space: and there upon the ground
Four bodies, decently composed, were laid,
Though horrid all with wounds and clotted gore:
A venerable ancient, by his side
A comely matron, for whose middle age,
(If ruthless slaughter had not intervened.)
Nature it seem'd, and gentle Time, might well
Have many a calm declining year in store;
The third an armêd warrior, on his breast
An infant, over whom his arms were cross'd.
There, . . with firm eye and steady countenance,
Unfaltering, she addrest him, . . there they lie,
Child, Husband, Parents, . . Adosinda's all!
I could not break the earth with these poor hands,
Nor other tomb provide, . . but let that pass!
Auria itself is now but one wide tomb
For all its habitants; 2--What better grave?

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2 [Southey's note:] The present Orense. The Moors entirely destroyed it: depopulavit usque ad solum, are the words of one of the old brief chronicles. In 832, Alonzo el Casto found it too completely ruined to be restored.—Espagna Sagrada, xvii. p. 48.
What worthier monument? . . Oh cover not
Their blood, thou Earth! and ye, ye blessèd Souls
Of heroes and of murder’d Innocents,
Oh never let your everlasting cries
Cease round the Eternal Throne, till the Most High
For all these unexampled wrongs hath given
Full, . . overflowing vengeance!

While she spake
She raised her lofty hands to Heaven, as if
Calling for justice on the Judgement-seat;
Then laid them on her eyes, and leaning on
Bent o'er the open sepulchre.

But soon
With quiet mien collectedly, like one
Who from intense devotion, and the act
Of ardent prayer, arising, girds himself
For this world's daily business, . . she arose,
And said to Roderick, Help me now to raise
The covering of the tomb.

With half-burnt planks,
Which she had gather’d for this funeral use
They roof’d the vault, then laying stones above
They closed it down; last, rendering all secure,
Stones upon stones they piled, till all appear’d
A huge and shapeless heap. Enough, she cried,
And taking Roderick's hands in both her own,
And wringing them with fervent thankfulness,
May God show mercy to thee, she exclaim’d,
When most thou needest mercy! Who thou art
I know not; not of Auria, . . for of all
Her sons and daughters, save the one who stands
Before thee, not a soul is left alive.
But thou hast render’d to me, in my hour
Of need, the only help which man could give.
What else of consolation may be found
For one so utterly bereft, from Heaven
And from myself must come. For deem not thou
That I shall sink beneath calamity:
This visitation, like a lightning-stroke,
Hath scathed the fruit and blossom of my youth;
One hour hath orphan'd me, and widow'd me,
And made me childless. In this sepulchre
Lie buried all my earthward hopes and fears,
All human loves and natural charities, . .
All womanly tenderness, all gentle thoughts,
All female weakness too, I bury here,
Yea, all my former nature. There remain
Revenge and death: . . the bitterness of death
Is past, and Heaven already hath vouchsafed
A foretaste of revenge.

Look here! she cried,
And drawing back, held forth her bloody hands,
'Tis Moorish! . . In the day of massacre,
A captain of Alcahman's murderous host
Reserved me from the slaughter. Not because
My rank and station tempted him with thoughts
Of ransom, for amid the general waste
Of ruin all was lost; . . Nor yet, be sure,
That pity moved him, . . they who from this race
Accurst for pity look, such pity find
As ravenous wolves shew the defenceless flock.
My husband at my feet had fallen; my babe, . .
Spare me that thought, O God! . . and then . . even then
Amid the maddening throes of agony
Which rent my soul, . . when if this solid Earth
Had open'd and let out the central fire
Before whose all-involving flames wide Heaven
Shall shrivel like a scroll and be consumed,
The universal wreck had been to me
Relief and comfort; . . even then this Moor
Turn'd on me his libidinous eyes, and bade
His men reserve me safely for an hour
Of dalliance, . . me! . . me in my agonies!
But when I found for what this miscreant child
Of Hell had snatch'd me from the butchery,
The very horror of that monstrous thought
Saved me from madness; I was calm at once, . .
Yet comforted and reconciled to life:
Hatred became in me the life of life,
Its purpose and its power.

The glutted Moors
At length broke up. This hell-dog turn'd aside
Toward his home; we travell'd fast and far,
Till by a forest edge at eve he pitched
His tents. I wash'd and ate at his command,
Forcing revolted nature; I composed
My garments and bound up my scatter'd hair;
And when he took my hand and to his couch
Would fain have drawn me, gently I retired
From that abominable touch, and said,
Forbear to-night I pray thee, for this day
A widow, as thou seest me, am I made;
Therefore, according to our law, must watch
And pray to-night. The loathsome villain paused
Ere he assented, then laid down to rest;
While at the door of the pavilion, I
Knelt on the ground, and bowed my face to earth;
But when the neighbouring tents had ceased their stir,
The fires were out, and all were fast asleep,
Then I arose. The blessed Moon from Heaven
Lent me her holy light. I did not pray
For strength, for strength was given me as I drew
The scymitar, and, standing o'er his couch,
Raised it in both my hands with steady aim
And smote his neck. Upward, as from a spring
When newly open'd by the husbandman,
The villain's life-blood spouted. Twice I struck,
So making vengeance sure; then, praising God,
Retired amid the wood, and measured back
My patient way to Auria, to perform
This duty which thou seest.

As thus she spake,
Roderick intently listening had forgot
His crown, his kingdom, his calamities,
His crimes, . . so like a spell upon the Goth
Her powerful words prevail'd. With open lips,
And eager ear, and eyes which, while they watch'd
Her features, caught the spirit that she breathed,
Mute and enrapt he stood, and motionless;
The vision rose before him; and that shout,
Which, like a thunder-peal, victorious Spain
Sent through the welkin, rung within his soul
Its deep prophetic echoes. On his brow
The pride and power of former majesty
Dawn'd once again, but chang'd and purified:
Duty and high heroic purposes
Now hallow'd it, and as with inward light
Illumed his meagre countenance austere.

Awhile in silence Adosinda stood,
Reading his alter'd visage and the thoughts
Which thus transfigur'd him. Aye, she exclaim'd,
My tale hath mov'd thee! it might move the dead,
Quicken captivity's dead soul, and rouse
This prostrate country from her mortal trance:
Therefore I live to tell it; and for this
Hath the Lord God Almighty given to me
A spirit not my own and strength from Heaven;
Dealing with me as in the days of old
With that Bethulian Matron when she saved
His people from the spoiler. What remains
But that the life which he hath thus preserved
I consecrate to him? Not veil’d and vow’d
To pass my days in holiness and peace;
Nor yet between sepulchral walls immur’d,
Alive to penitence alone; my rule
He hath himself prescribed, and hath infused
A passion in this woman’s breast, wherein
All passions and all virtues are combined;
Love, hatred, joy, and anguish, and despair,
And hope, and natural piety, and faith,
Make up the mighty feeling. Call it not
Revenge! thus sanctified and thus sublimed,
'\(T\) is duty, '\(t\) is devotion. Like the grace
Of God, it came and saved me; and in it
Spain must have her salvation. In thy hands
Here on the grave of all my family,
I make my vow.

She said, and kneeling down,
Placed within Roderick’s palms her folded hands.
This life, she cried, I dedicate to God,
Therewith to do him service in the way
Which he hath shown. To rouse the land against
This impious, this intolerable yoke, . .
To offer up the invader’s hateful blood, . .
This shall be my employ, my rule and rite,
Observances and sacrifice of faith;
For this I hold the life which he hath given,
A sacred trust; for this, when it shall suit
His service, joyfully will lay it down.
So deal with me as I fulfil the pledge,
O Lord my God, my Saviour and my Judge.

Then rising from the earth, she spread her arms,
And looking round with sweeping eyes exclaim’d,
Auria, and Spain, and Heaven receive the vow!

CHAPTER FOUR, "What about Merit?"

I. Keats, three sonnets on fame from the early, middle, and later phases of his career  (text from Poems of John Keats, ed. Stillinger [1978])

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

(composed 1815, published 1817)

When I have fears that I may cease to be
When I have fears that I may cease to be
   Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high piled books, in charactry,
   Hold like rich garners the full ripen'd grain;
When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
   Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
   Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour,
   That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the fairy power
   Of unreflecting love;--then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till love and fame to nothingness do sink.

(composed 1818, published 1848)

On Fame

Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy
   To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy,
   And dotes the more upon a heart at ease;
She is a gipsey, will not speak to those
   Who have not learnt to be content without her;
A jilt, whose ear was never whisper'd close,
   Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her;
A very gipsey is she, Nilus born,
   Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar;
Ye love-sick bards, repay her scorn for scorn;
   Ye artists lovelorn, madmen that ye are!
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu;
Then, if she likes it, she will follow you.
2. Hunt, samples (all texts from Hunt's *Poetical Works*, ed. Milford [1923])

(a) From *The Feast of the Poets* (lines 75-110)

The God, then, no sooner had taken a chair,
And rung for the landlord to order the fare,
Than he heard a strange noise and a knock from without,—
And scraping and bowing, in came *such* a rout!
There was Arnold, and Reynolds, and Dibdin, and Cherry,
All grinning as who should say, "Shan't we be merry?"
And Hook, who had come with an absolute tear up,
And sweet Billy Dimond, a-patting his hair up.
The God, for an instant, sat fixed as a stone,
Till recov'ring, he said in a good-natured tone,
"Oh, the waiters, I see;—ah, it's all very well,—
Only one of you'll do just to answer the bell."
But lord! to see all the great dramatists' faces!
They looked at each other, and made such grimaces!
Then turning about, left the room in vexation,
And Hook, they say, couldn't help muttering "Damnation!"
'Twas lucky for Colman he wasn't there too,
For his pranks would have certainly met with their due,
And Sheridan's also, that finished old tricker;—
But one was in prison, and both were in liquor.

The God fell a-laughing to see his mistake,
But stopped with a sigh for poor Comedy's sake;
Then gave mine host orders, who bowed to the floor,
And presented three cards that were brought to the door:
Apollo just gave them a glance with his eye,
"Spencer--Rogers--Montgom'ry,"—and putting them by,
Begged the landlord to give his respects to all three,
And say he'd be happy to see them to tea.

"Your Majesty, then," said the Gaius, "don't know
That a person named Crabbe has been waiting below?
He has taken his chair in the kitchen, they say."
"Indeed!" said Apollo, "Oh, pray let him stay:
He'll be much better pleased to be with 'em downstairs,
And will find ye all out with yourcookings and cares;—
But mind that you treat him as well as you're able,
And let him have part of what goes from the table."

(published 1811; text of 1815 version)

(b) From *The Descent of Liberty*, lines 125-67, conclusion of Scene 1
[Myrtilla sings]
Gentle and unknown delight,
    Hovering with thy music near us,
If that our request be right,
    Lean thee tow’rd the earth, and hear us;
And if we may yet rejoice,
    Touch the silence with a voice.

By the lingering day forlorn,
    And the dread of the drear morrow,
By the infant yet unborn,
    Waiting for its world of sorrow,
By youth, forgetful to rejoice,
    And middle age's failing voice;

By the griefs of many lands,
    And hearts that waste in secret places,
By the list of trembling hands,
    And the tears on furrowed faces,
Say, shall anguish yet rejoice?
    Spirit dear, put forth a voice.

[Spirit sings]
To the griefs of many lands,
    To hearts that waste in secret places,
To the lift of trembling hands,
    And the tears on furrowed faces,
To Beauty's and to Virtue's voice,
    I am come to bid rejoice.

[Two Echoes] Rejoice! Rejoice!

[Recitative] 'Tis my brethren of the sky,
Couriers we of Liberty,
Coming hither, one by one,
    Like the streaks before the sun.
She herself is now not far,
    But has passed the morning-star;
And if ye would wish to see
What shall help to set ye free,
    From the greenwood start ye forth,
And turn your eyes from south to north.

[A symphony of pipes mingles in; and the Spirit sings again]
Elsewhere now I take my voice;
    Locks of grey!
    And lips of May!
And shepherds all, rejoice, rejoice!

[Echoes dying off ] Rejoice! Rejoice!

[Myrtilla ]
This is deliciousness!--Our friends will go,
And bring us word dear father, of this sight:
You must in-doors, and rest your spirit awhile. [Exeunt severally.]

(published 1815)

(c) From The Story of Rimini: Canto Two, "The Bride's Journey to Rimini"

We'll pass the followers, and their closing state;
The court was entered by a hinder gate;
The duke and princess had retired before,
Joined by the knights and ladies at the door;
But something seemed amiss, and there ensued
Deep talk among the spreading multitude,
Who got in clumps, or paced the measured street,
Filling with earnest hum the noontide heat;
Nor ceased the wonder, as the day increased,
And brought no symptoms of a bridal feast,
No mass, no tilt, no largess for the crowd,
Nothing to answer that procession proud;
But a blank look, as if no court had been;
Silence without, and secrecy within;
And nothing heard by listening at the walls,
But now and then a bustling through the halls,
Or the dim organ roused at gathering intervals.

The truth was this:--The bridegroom had not come,
But sent his brother, proxy in his room.
A lofty spirit the former was, and proud,
Little gallant, and had a sort of cloud
Hanging forever on his cold address,
Which he mistook for proper manliness.
But more of this hereafter. Guido knew
The prince's character; and he knew too,
That sweet as was his daughter, and prepared
To do her duty, where appeal was barred,
She had stout notions on the marrying score,
And where the match unequal prospect bore,
Might pause with firmness, and refuse to strike
A chord her own sweet music so unlike.
The old man therefore, kind enough at heart,
Yet fond from habit of intrigue and art,
And little formed for sentiments like these,
Which seemed to him mere maiden niceties,
Had thought at once to gratify the pride
Of his stern neighbour, and secure the bride,
By telling him, that if, as he had heard,
Busy he was just then, 'twas but a word,
And he might send and wed her by another,--
Of course, no less a person than his brother.
The bride meantime was told, and not unmoved,
To look for one no sooner seen than loved;
And when Giovanni, struck with what he thought
Mere proof how his triumphant hand was sought,
Dispatched the wished for prince, who was a creature
Formed in the very poetry of nature,
The effect was perfect, and the future wife
Caught in the elaborate snare, perhaps for life.

One shock there was, however, to sustain,
Which nigh restored her to herself again.
She saw, when all were housed, in Guido's face
A look of leisurely surprise take place;
A little whispering followed for a while,
And then 'twas told her with an easy smile,
That Prince Giovanni, to his great chagrin,
Had been delayed by something unforeseen,
But rather than defer his day of bliss
(If his fair ruler took it not amiss)
Had sent his brother Paolo in his stead;
"Who," said old Guido, with a nodding head,
"May well be said to represent his brother,
For when you see the one, you know the other."

By this time Paolo joined them where they stood,
And, seeing her in some uneasy mood,
Changed the mere cold respects his brother sent
To such a strain of cordial compliment,
And paid them with an air so frank and bright,
As to a friend appreciated at sight,
That air, in short, which sets you at your ease,
Without implying your perplexities,
That what with the surprise in every way,
The hurry of the time, the appointed day,
The very shame which now appeared increased,
Of begging leave to have her hand released,
And above all, those tones, and smiles, and looks,
Which seemed to realize the dreams of books
And helped her genial fancy to conclude
That fruit of such a stock must all be good,
She knew not how to object in her confusion;
Quick were the marriage-rites; and, in conclusion,
The proxy, turning midst the general hush,
Kissed her meek lips, betwixt a rosy blush.

At last, about the vesper hour, a score
Of trumpets issued from the palace door,
The banners of their brass with favours tied,
And with a blast proclaimed the wedded bride.
But not a word the sullen silence broke,
Till something of a gift the herald spoke,
And with a bag of money issuing out,
Scattered the ready harvest round about;
Then burst the mob into a jovial cry,
And largess! largess! claps against the sky,
And bold Giovanni's name, the lord of Rimini.

The rest however still were looking on,
Careless and mute, and scarce the noise was gone,
When riding from the gate, with banners reared,
Again the morning visitors appeared.
The prince was in his place; and in a car,
Before him, glistening like a farewell star,
Sate the dear lady with her brimming eyes;
And off they set, through doubtful looks and cries;
For some too shrewdly guessed, and some were vexed
At the dull day, and some the whole perplexed;
And all great pity thought it to divide
Two that seemed made for bridegroom and for bride.
Ev'n she, whose heart this strange, abrupt event
Had seared, as 'twere, with burning wonderment,
Could scarce, at times, a passionate cry forbear
At leaving her own home and native air;
Till passing now the limits of the town,
And on the last few gazers looking down,
She saw by the road-side an aged throng,
Who wanted power to bustle with the strong,
Had learnt their gracious mistress was to go,
And gathered there, an unconcerted shew;
Bending they stood, with their old foreheads bare,
And the winds fingered with their reverend hair.
Farewell! farewell, my friends! she would have cried,
But in her throat the leaping accents died,
And, waving with her hand a vain adieu,
She dropt her veil, and backwarder withdrew
And let the kindly tears their own good course pursue.

It was a lovely evening, fit to close
A lovely day, and brilliant in repose.
Warm, but not dim, a glow was in the air;
The softened breeze came smoothing here and there;
And every tree in passing, one by one,
Gleamed out with twinkles of the golden sun:
For leafy was the road with tall array,
On either side, of mulberry and bay,
And distant snatches of blue hills between;
And there the alder was with its bright green,
And the broad chestnut, and the poplar's shoot,
That like a feather waves from head to foot,
With, ever and anon, majestic pines;
And still from tree to tree the early vines
Hung garlanding the way in amber lines.

Not long the princess kept her from the view
Of that dear scenery with its parting hue;
For sitting now, calm from the gush of tears,
With dreaming eye fixed down, and half-shut ears,
Hearing, yet hearing not, the fervent sound
Of hoofs thick reckoning and the wheel's moist round,
A call of "Slower!" from the farther part
Of the checked riders, woke her with a start;
And looking up again, half sigh, half stare,
She lifts her veil, and feels the freshening air.

'Tis down a hill they go, gentle indeed,
And such, as with a bold and pranksome speed
Another time they would have scorned to measure;
But now they take with them a lovely treasure,
And feel they should consult her gentle pleasure.

And now with thicker shades the pines appear;
The noise of hoofs grows duller to her ear;
And quitting suddenly their gravelly toil,
The wheels go spinning o'er a sandy soil.
Here first the silence of the country seems
To come about her with its listening dreams,
And, full of anxious thoughts, half freed from pain,
In downward musing she relapsed again,
Leaving the others who had passed that way
In careless spirits of the early day,
To look about, and mark the reverend scene,
For awful tales renowned, and everlasting green.

A heavy spot the forest looks at first,
To one grim shade condemned, and sandy thirst,
Or only chequered, here and there, with bushes
Dusty and sharp, or plashy pools with rushes,
About whose sides the swarming insects fry,
Opening with noisome din, as they go by.
But entering more and more, they quit the sand
At once, and strike upon a grassy land,
From which the trees, as from a carpet, rise
In knolls and clumps, with rich varieties.
A moment's trouble find the knights to rein
Their horses in, which, feeling turf again,
Thrill, and curvet, and long to be at large
Or scour the space and give the winds a charge,
Or pulling tight the bridles, as they pass,
Dip their warm mouths into the freshening grass.
But soon in easy rank, from glade to glade,
Proceed they, coasting underneath the shade,
Some baring to the cool their placid brows,
Some looking upward through the glimmering boughs,
Or peering grave through inward-opening places,
And half prepared for glimpse of shadowy faces.
Various the trees and passing foliage here,--
Wild pear, and oak, and dusky juniper,
With briony between in trails of white,
And ivy, and the suckle's streamy light,
And moss, warm gleaming with a sudden mark,
Like flings of sunshine left upon the bark,
And still the pine, long-haired, and dark, and tall,
In lordly right, predominant o'er all.

Much they admire that old religious tree
With shaft above the rest up-shooting free,
And shaking, when its dark locks feel the wind,
Its wealthy fruit with rough Mosaic rind.
At noisy intervals, the living cloud
Of cawing rooks breaks o'er them, gathering loud
Like a wild people at a stranger's coming;
Then hushing paths succeed, with insects humming,
Or ring-dove, that repeats his pensive plea,
Or startled gull, up-screaming tow'rd the sea.
But scarce their eyes encounter living thing,
Save, now and then, a goat loose wandering
Or a few cattle, looking up aslant
With sleepy eyes and meek mouths ruminant;
Or once, a plodding woodman, old and bent,
Passing with half-indifferent wonderment,
Yet turning, at the last, to look once more;
Then feels his trembling staff, and onward as before.

So ride they pleased,—till now the couching sun
Levels his final look through shadows dun;
And the clear moon, with meek o'er-lifted face,
Seems come to look into the silvering place.
Then first the bride waked up, for then was heard,
Sole voice, the poet's and the lover's bird,
Preluding first, as if the sounds were cast
For the dear leaves about her, till at last
With shot-out raptures, in a perfect shower
She vents her heart on the delicious hour.
Lightly the horsemen go, as if they'd ride
A velvet path, and hear no voice beside:
A placid hope assures the breath-suspended bride.

So ride they in delight through beam and shade,—
Till many a rill now passed, and many a glade,
They quit the piny labyrinths, and soon
Emerge into the full and sheeted moon:
Chilling it seems; and pushing steed on steed,
They start them freshly with a homeward speed.
Then well-known fields they pass, and straggling cots,
Boy-storied trees, and passion-plighted spots;
And turning last a sudden corner, see
The square-lit towers of slumbering Rimini.
The marble bridge comes heaving forth below
With a long gleam; and nearer as they go,
They see the still Marecchia, cold and bright,
Sleeping along with face against the light.
A hollow trample now,—a fall of chains,—
The bride has entered,—not a voice remains;—
Night, and a maiden silence, wrap the plains.

(published 1816)
(d) From The Story of Rimini: lines 434-87 from Canto 3, "The Fatal Passion," describing a pavilion in a garden

But 'twixt the wood and flowery walks, halfway,
And formed of both, the loveliest portion lay,
A spot, that struck you like enchanted ground;—
It was a shallow dell, set in a mound
Of sloping shrubs, that mounted by degrees,
The birch and poplar mixed with heavier trees;
From under which, sent through a marble spout,
Betwixt the dark wet green, a rill gushed out,
Whose low sweet talking seemed as if it said
Something eternal to that happy shade:
The ground within was lawn, with plots of flowers
Heaped towards the centre, and with citron bowers;
And in the midst of all, clustered about
With bay and myrtle, and just gleaming out,
Lurked a pavilion,—a delicious sight,
Small, marble, well-proportioned, mellowy white,
With yellow vine-leaves sprinkled,—but no more,—
And a young orange either side the door.
The door was to the wood, forward, and square,
The rest was domed at top, and circular;
And through the dome the only light came in,
Tinged, as it entered, with the vine-leaves thin.

It was a beauteous piece of ancient skill,
Spared from the rage of war, and perfect still;
By most supposed the work of fairy hands,
Famed for luxurious taste, and choice of lands,—
Alcina, or Morgana,—who from fights
And errant fame inveigled amorous knights,
And lived with them in a long round of blisses,
Feasts, concerts, baths, and bower-enshaded kisses.
But 'twas a temple, as its sculpture told,
Built to the nymphs that haunted there of old;
For o'er the door was carved a sacrifice
By girls and shepherds brought, with reverent eyes,
Of sylvan drinks and foods, simple and sweet,
And goats with struggling horns and planted feet:
And on a line with this ran round about
A like relief, touched exquisitely out,
That shewed, in various scenes, the nymphs themselves;
Some by the water side on bowery shelves
Leaning at will,—some in the water sporting
With sides half swelling forth, and looks of courting,—
Some in a flowery dell, hearing a swain
Play on his pipe, till the hills ring again,—
Some tying up their long moist hair,—some sleeping
Under the trees, with fauns and satyrs peeping,—
Or, sidelong-eyed, pretending not to see
The latter in the brakes come creepingly,
While their forgotten urn, lying about
In the green herbage, let the water out.
Never, be sure, before or since was seen
A summer-house so fine in such a nest of green.

All the green garden, flower-bed, shade, and plot,
Francesca loved, but most of all this spot.

(published 1816)

(e) From Captain Sword and Captain Pen, Part Four, "On What Took Place on the Field of Battle the Night After the Victory," lines 194-266. Hunt's prose Postscript to the poem opens thus: "The object of this poem is to show the horrors of war, the false ideas of power produced in the minds of its leaders, and, by inference, the unfitness of those leaders for the government of the world."

'Tis a wild night out of doors;
The wind is mad upon the moors,
And comes into the rocking town,
Stabbing all things, up and down,
And then there is a weeping rain
Huddling 'gainst the window-pane,
And good men bless themselves in bed;
The mother brings her infant's head
Closer, with a joy like tears,
And thinks of angels in her prayers;
Then sleeps, with his small hand in hers.

Two loving women, lingering yet
Ere the fire is out, are met,
Talking sweetly, time-beguiled,
One of her bridegroom, one her child,
The bridegroom he. They have received
Happy letters, more believed
For public news, and feel the bliss
The heavenlier on a night like this.
They think him housed, they think him blest,
Curtained in the core of rest,
Danger distant, all good near;
Why hath their "Good night" a tear?

Behold him! by a ditch he lies
Clutching the wet earth, his eyes
Beginning to be mad. In vain
His tongue still thirsts to lick the rain,
That mocked but now his homeward tears;
And ever and anon he rears
His legs and knees with all their strength,
And then as strongly thrusts at length.
Raised or stretched, he cannot bear
The wound that girds him, weltering there:
And "Water!" he cries, with moonward stare.
"I will not read it!" with a start,
Burning cries some honest heart;
"I will not read it! Why endure
Pangs which horror cannot cure?
Why--Oh why? and rob the brave,
And the bereaved, of all they crave,
A little hope to gild the grave?"

Askest though why, thou honest heart?
'Tis because thou dost ask, and because thou dost start.
'Tis because thine own praise and fond outward thought
Have aided the shows which this sorrow has wrought.
A wound unutterable--O God!
Mingles his being with the sod.
"I'll read no more."--Thou must, thou must:
In thine own pang doth wisdom trust.

His nails are in earth, his eyes in air,
And "Water!" he crieth--he may not forbear.
Brave and good was he, yet now he dreams
The moon looks cruel; and he blasphemes.

"No more! no more!" Nay, this is but one;
Were the whole tale told, it would not be done
From wonderful setting to rising sun.
But God's good time is at hand--be calm,
Thou reader! and steep thee in all thy balm
Of tears or patience, of thought or good will,
For the field--the field awaiteth us still.
"Water! water!" all over the field:
To nothing but Death will that wound-voice yield.
One, as he crieth, is sitting half-bent;
What holds he so close?--his body is rent.
Another is mouthless, with eyes on cheek;
Unto the raven he may not speak.
One would fain kill him; and one half round
The place where he writhes, hath up-beaten the ground.
Like a mad horse hath he beaten the ground,
And the feathers and music that litter it round,
The gore, and the mud, and the golden sound.
Come hither, ye cities! ye ball-rooms, take breath!
See what a floor hath the Dance of Death!

(published 1835)

(f) Three Hampstead sonnets from a series published in *The Examiner* in 1815

*Sonnet to Hampstead IV*
Winter has reached ye once again at last;
   And now the rambler, whom thy groves yet please,
   Feels on his house-warm lips the thin air freeze;
While in his shrugging neck the resolute blast
Comes edging; and the leaves, in heaps down cast,
   He shuffles with his hastening foot, and sees
   The cold sky whitening through the wiry trees,
And sighs to think his loitering noons have passed.

And do I love thee less to paint thee so?
   No: this the season is of beauty still
   Doubled at heart,—of smoke with whirling glee
Uptumbling ever from the blaze below,
   And home remembered most,—and oh, loved hill,
   The second, and the last, away from thee!

*Sonnet to Hampstead VII*
As one who after long and far-spent years
   Comes on his mistress in an hour of sleep,
   And half-surprised that he can silence keep,
Stands smiling o'er her through a flash of tears,
To see how sweet and self-same she appears;
   Till at his touch, with little moving creep
   Of joy, she wakes from out her calmness deep,
And then his heart finds voice, and dances round her ears:--

So I, first coming on my haunts again,
   In pause and stillness of the early prime,
   Stood thinking of the past and present time,
With earnest eyesight, scarcely crossed with pain;
   Till the fresh moving leaves, and startling birds,
   Loosened my long-suspended breath in words.

*Hampstead VII. Description of the Village*
A steeple issuing from a leafy rise,
   With farmy fields in front, and sloping green,
   Dear Hampstead, is thy southern face serene,
Silently smiling on approaching eyes.
Within, thine ever-shifting looks surprise,—
   Streets, hills, and dells, trees overhead now seen,
   Now down below, with smoking roofs between,—

A village, revelling in varieties,
Then northward what a range,—with heath and pond,
   Nature's own ground; woods that let mansions through,
And cottaged vales with pillowy fields beyond
And clump of darkening pines, and prospects blue,
And that clear path through all, where daily meet
Cool cheeks, and brilliant eyes, and morn-elastic feet.

3. A timed sonnet competition between Hunt and Keats on the subject of the grasshopper and the cricket, 30 December 1816
Keats, *On the Grasshopper and the Cricket*

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

Hunt, *To the Grasshopper and the Cricket*

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,
   Catching your heart up at the feel of June,
   Sole voice that's heard amidst the lazy noon,
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;—
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class
   With those who think the candles come too soon,
   Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;

Oh sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,
   One to the fields, the other to the hearth,
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong
   At your clear hearts; and both were sent on earth
To sing in thoughtful ears this natural song:
   In doors and out, summer and winter,—Mirth.

4. Cornwall, samples from his *Poetical Works* in the Galignani (Paris) edition of 1829, with minor reformatting of stage directions

(a) A "dramatic scene" in full: "The Two Dreams" (1819)
   Calphurnia here, my wife, stays me at home;
   She dreamp tonight she saw --- --- ---
And these does she apply for warnings, portents,
And evils imminent.

*Julius Caesar*, act ii, scene 2.

And dreams in their development have breath,
And tears, and tortures, and the touch of joy;
They leave a weight upon our waking thoughts,
And look like heralds of eternity:
They pass like spirits of the past,—they speak
Like sibyls of the future.

—Lord Byron. *The Dream.*

This scene is founded on a tale of Boccaccio. Gabriello, a young gentleman of Brescia, was privately married to the daughter of a nobleman there. Andreana (which was her name) excluded him one night from her society. On his remonstrance afterwards, she related to him a dream; and he, at the moment of relating another, intended to show her the fallacy of dreams, fell dead.

**SCENE.**

A Garden.

Gabriello, Andreana.

*Gab.* Come hither, Andreana, you and I
Have lived in Brescia here as lovers—
Nay, husband and wife, full three years now: or more!

*And.* 'T is more.

*Gab.* You're right, sweet, 't is so. In that time
I never failed to see you at the hour
We fixed for meeting: if 't were fine, 't was well;
If cold, my love was warm: if stormy, I
Wrapp'd my cloak round and smiled, for you were safe;
And when the piping winds of winter blew
Sharp sleet against me and the blinding rain,
And the loud quarrelling elements cast out
Their sheeted fires, 't was something cheerful still
To think of the after-welcome you would give me.
But these are trifles.

*And.* Not to me: I know
How constant you have been, love: have I not
Confess'd it often?

*Gab.* Often.

*And.* Well then, why
Remind me thus—thus harshly (for you did)
Of what I own so gratefully?

*Gab.* Andreana,
Last night 't is said (the only night when I
Since our sweet marriage, have been barred from you)
The young Count Strozzi visited—your father:
Was 't not so?

*And.* Yes.

*Gab.* And why was I excluded?

*And.* I had a silly trouble on me then:
You'll laugh when I shall tell you of it (I hope,
You will laugh;) I have had--a dream; sit closer,  
And press your palm 'gainst mine--that's well; but you  
Have quite forgot your usual kiss.  

Gab. There.  

And. You press my lip too hard.  

Gab. I'll try again.  

And. Pshaw! but laugh at me now, dear. I have had  
A horrid dream: methought we lay together  
Beside this splashing fountain: it was night,  
(A sultry night) and over-head the stars  
Went rolling 'round and 'round the moonless skies:  
The noise they uttered in their rushing course  
Was like a serpent's hiss.--Look there, Gabriello,  
Orion's centre star moved then.  

Gab. Away,  
You idle girl.  

And. Keep your eye fix'd.  

Gab. Go on.  

And. Well.--I was lying then, as I am now,  
Within your arms. How sweet Love's pillow is!  
I look'd at you and smiled: I spoke, but you  
Heaved a deep sigh and trembled. Still the stars  
Went 'round and 'round, their circles lessening  
At each revolve: At last one reached the point  
Right o'er your head, and sank--Another came  
And sank in darkness--then another died.  
Orb after orb came rolling in its round,  
As though impell'd within your influence,  
And vanish'd like the first. Saturn alone  
(Your natal star) blazed suddenly aloof:  
At last he stagger'd with a hideous noise,  
As though a globe were cracking, and his ring  
Shook, and look'd white about him, and a light  
Came streaming from his sphere. But why tell this?  
He died with the rest, at last: then I--  

Gab. Awoke?  

And. No, no. Would that I had. Now listen, love:  
Attentive too.  

Gab. I rest upon your words:  
You tell a dream so prettily.  

And. I thought  
That when the last star died, a thundering sound  
Was heard in the air, like groans and horrid laughs,  
And shrieks and syllables in an unknown tongue:  
And over us vast wings, that might have borne  
The lost archangel in his wanderings,
Floated, and once they touched me (but you lay
Beside me, so I felt no fear). At last
There rose a shadowy thing from out your body,
And stood in silence by you. It was not
Flesh, no nor vapour; but it seem'd to be
A dismal compound of the elements,
Huddled by chance together ere the form
Of man was fixed and fashioned into beauty,
Then, like a loathsome and unfinished thing,
Flung aside for ever.

_Gab._ So, what happened then?

And. Why then the thing hung over you. You scream'd
And struggled painfully, but it laugh'd and flapp'd
Its chilling wings, and breathed on you--Then you
Lay still--

_Gab._ Proceed.

And. And then the dark earth yawned,
And there came out blue fires and sounds of torture,
Curses and shrieks--then solitary laughs.
The creature seized you in its arms and sprung
(I could not hold you then, dear Gabriello)
With you into the gulf: and then I 'woke.

_Gab._ And is this all?

And. Is 't not enough? alas!

_Gab._ Shame, silly girl, look up and kiss me. So
The ghost you see has never harmed my lip,
And yours grow sweeter daily.

And. Oh! you flatterer:
You do the same to others. You were called
A gallant youth before I knew you.

_Gab._ Aye,
But not since, Andreana. I have lost
My name for gallantry now, (a serious thing
Alas, alas!) I have a mind to grieve
As you did 'bout the dream.

And. Ah! why will you
Bring that back to my memory? Let us talk
Of something else.

_Gab._ Why then about my dream;
For I've dreamt too, and 't was a terrible dream,
Yet I am here to laugh at it.

And. When did it happen?

_Gab._ Last night.

And. Was 't of yourself?

_Gab._ I'll tell you soon, dearest.

I dreamt--
And. Was 't--was 't about the stars?
Gab. No, no, you coward, I--
And. Now, as I live
Orion's lights are out.
Gab. Your eyes grow dim.
Look! there they are, there.
And. Ah! they're come again.
Gab. Well, as you please.--I thought I had a fawn,
White and as spotless as the snow that lies
On inaccessible hills. I thought I loved
This fawn as I love you, sweet.
And. Ah! so much?
Gab. Why haply not, but much, that's certain: So,
To keep the pretty thing secure, I bought
A collar of gold and lock'd it round its neck,
Which fast'ning to me by a chain, I roamed
For exercise in the forest. The silly deer
Frolick'd and toss'd its antler'd head about,
And lick'd my hand at times, and then 't would browse
On thyme and odorous herbs: at last, fatigued,
I sate upon a hillock that arose
'Neath a wild orange-tree, and plucked some flowers
To make a coronet for my horned fool;
And flung a leaf or two at times upon it:
These it would take in its mouth but liking not
The taste, cast them away, and then would run
In sportive anger toward me. This did waste
Some time. At last--
And. What was the end?
Gab. You are
Impatient, sweet. While I was busy with
My garland, the chain shook, and there came forth
A sob like sorrow from my pretty fawn.
I look'd--its ears were pricked up, and its eyes
(From which a tremulous light came) seem'd to start
From the head: the slight limbs trembled, and the flanks
Heaved up and down as though it had been chased;
The fore legs were stretch'd out, the hinder bent
Beneath its delicate body.
And. Yes; go on.
Then--
Gab. A black greyhound bitch then started forth:
Lean 't was, and like a wolf.
And. But black?
Gab. Yes, black
As winter nights are when the heavy clouds
Do curtain up the stars.
And. I do not like
The colour.
Gab. Nor the dog, sweet, as you'll see:
The dog ran towards me.
And. Towards the fawn, you mean
Gab. Towards me, my Andreana: that was odd.
And. But all dreams are, you know.
Gab. They are. I like
To hear you talk thus: some half hour ago
And you'd have conjured something terrible
From this slight dream.
And. True, true,—but for the story.
Gab. The dog ran tow'rs me with outstretch'd jaws
From which the white foam trickled; its red tongue
Was curl'd within its mouth, and every tooth
Stood bare and grinning at me. Then I shook.
And. Afraid, my love?
Gab. Why, somewhat frighten'd, for
I had no power to move. Then the beast sprung
Against my heart. By heaven! I felt a pain
As though a dagger struck me, and it seized
My side (my left side here), and gnaw'd it way
In a moment to my heart: the blood gush'd out,
And once methought so freely that the dog
Was blinded with it, but he shook 't away
And came with fiercer appetite. At last,
Now hearken, love.
And. I do, I do.
Gab. At last--
And. What then?
Gab. I--
And. Ha! speak quickly; then--
Gab. I 'woke. [Laughing.
And. Ha-ha-ha-ha: I'll punish you for this.
And is this really all?
Gab. In truth it is:
Is 't not enough?--will you have more?
And. No, no.
Gab. Now, Andreana, learn how little hath
A dream to do with life, and yet life is
Itself a dream perhaps; with me it hath
Been happy, for young Andreana's mine.
Yet, not a dream; for that were bad indeed
Should all our hopes be frail,--evanishing
With the coarse mould that pens the spirit up:
Oh no, the spirit's immortal, sure. How fine
And marvellous the subtile intellect is.
Beauty's creator! It adorns the body
And lights it like a star. It shines for ever,
And like a watch-tower to the infidel
Shows there's a land to come.

And. How grave you are.

Gab. Something oppresses me: I'll blow it away.

There--now 't is gone--oh!--

And. What's the matter, love?

Gab. O Andreana! Here, here clasp your arms
About me, love: my life's departing: quick--
Closer--oh! close: press harder, sweet: the blood
Is running from my heart.

And. O Gabriello!

Speak, speak: do not look so. Nay--

Gab. My love--ah!--

And. So that's well:
You're easier now; do you feel faint? Alas!
He swoons. I'll scoop some water from the fountain,
And kiss him into life again. I never
Saw him thus ill before: Gabriello!
Dear Gabriello! Now this is pretence:
I know it.--Ha!--he's dead.  

(Falls.

(b) From *Marcian Colonna* (1820), opening of Part Two

Love surely hath been breathing here.

*Sibylline Leaves.*

We will leave them to themselves,
To the moon and the stars, these happy elves,
To the murmuring wave and the zephyr's wing,
That dreams of gentlest joyance bring,
To bathe their slumbering eyes.

*Isle of Palms.*

Oh power of love so fearful and so fair--
Life of our life on earth, yet kin to care--
Oh! thou day-dreaming Spirit, who dost look
Upon the future, as the charmed book
Of Fate were open'd to thine eyes alone--
Thou who dost cull, from moments stolen and gone
Into eternity, memorial things
To deck the days to come--thy revellings
Were glorious and beyond all others: Thou
Didst banquet upon beauty once; and now
The ambrosial feast is ended!--Let it be.
Enough to say, "It was,"--Oh! upon me
From thy o'ershadowing wings ethereal
Shake odorous airs, so may my senses all
Be spell-bound to thy service, beautiful power,
And on the breath of every coming hour
Send me faint tidings of the things that were,
And aid me as I try gently to tell
The story of that young Italian pair,
Who loved so lucklessly, yet ah! so well.

II

How long Colonna in his gloomier mood
Remained, it matters not: I will not brood
On evil themes; but, leaving grief and crime,
At once, I pass unto a blither time.
--One night--one summer night--he wandered far
Into the Roman suburbs; Many a star
Shone out above upon the silent hours,
Save when, awakening the sweet infant flowers,
The breezes travel’d from the west, and then
A small cloud came abroad and fled again.
The red rose was in blossom, and the fair
And bending lily to the wanton air
Bared her white breast, and the voluptuous lime
Cast out his perfumes, and the wilding thyme
Mingled his mountain sweets, transplanted low
'Midst all the flowers that in those regions blow.
--He wandered on: At last, his spirit subdued
By the deep influence of that hour, partook
E’en of its nature, and he felt imbued
With a more gentle love, and he did look
At times amongst the stars, as on a book
Where he might read his destiny. How bright
Heaven’s many constellations shone that night!
And from the distant river a gentle tune,
Such as is uttered in the month of June,
By brooks, whose scanty streams have languished long
For rain, was heard;--a tender, lapsing song
Sent up in homage to the quiet moon.

(c) From Gyges (1820), the closing stanzas 29-39

The boy came (guided by the king) to where,
   In the most deep and silent hour of night,
Stood Lais: quite unloosed, her golden hair
   Went streaming all about like lines of light,
And, through the lattice-leaves gusts of soft air
Sigh'd like perfume, and touched her shoulders white,
And o'er her tresses and her bosom play'd,
Seeming to love each place o'er which they stray'd.

Then sank she on her couch and drew aside
The silken curtains and let in the moon,
Which trembling ran round the chamber wide,
Kissing and flooding the rich flowers which June
Had fann'd to life, and which in summer pride
'Rose like a queen's companions. Lais soon,
Touch'd by the scene, look'd as she had forgot
The world: the boy stood rooted to the spot.

He stood, with beating pulse and widen'd eyes,
Like one struck dumb by some magician's charm,
Listening to the low music of her sighs,
And gazing on her white and rounded arm;
At last the lady motion'd as to rise,
When it occurr'd to him there might be harm
Unless he left (and quickly left) the place:
He moved, and then she met him, face to face.

It was the lady's turn to wonder now.
She wonder'd, but her wonder soon subsided,
And scorn and anger flash'd across her brow;
At length, she grew more calm, and (perhaps guided
By pity for his youth) she ask'd him how--
How a young gentleman like him, who prided
Himself upon his modesty, could call
At such an hour--he blush'd and told her all.

She swore she would have vengeance for the wrong,
Double and deadly vengeance--and she had.
His majesty soon after took that long
Journey whence none but ghosts, or things as bad,
Return: 't was said his wine grew mighty strong,
And that 't was handed by this curious lad,
(Gyges) whom Lais fancied from that day,
And made Lord of herself and Lydia.

That king! he was the last of all his race--
A race of kings and heroes; and he lay
Helpless and dead: his smile gave power and place
Honour and wealth and joy, but yesterday.
But poison had swept the smile from off his face,
And his cold limbs went floating far away,
Stript of the tomb wherein he should have slept:
He lived unhonour'd, and he died unwept.

It is a chilling thing to see as I
Have seen, a man go down into the grave,
Without a tear, or e'en an altered eye:
Oh! sadder far than when fond women rave,
Or children weep or aged parents sigh
O'er one whom art and love doth strive to save
In vain; man's heart is soothe'd by every tone
Of pity, saying he's "not quite alone."

I saw a pauper once, when I was young,
Borne to his shallow grave: the bearers trod
Smiling to where the death-bell heavily rung,
And soon his bones were laid beneath the sod:
On the rough boards the earth was gaily flung:
Methought the prayer which gave him to his God
Was coldly said:--then all, passing away,
Left the scarce-coffin'd wretch to quick decay.

It was an autumn evening, and the rain
Had ceased awhile, but the loud winds did shriek
And call'd the deluging tempest back again,
The flag-staff on the church-yard tow'r did creak,
And through the black clouds ran a lightning vein,
And then the flapping raven came to seek
Its home: its flight was heavy, and its wing
Seem'd weary with a long day's wandering.

How the frail pair lived on I know not: I
Have but subdued Candaules to my strain.

It was enough for me that he should die,
And having kill'd the king, why--that's the main
So, for the moral of my story, try
(Turning to the beginning once again),
To trace it in the quaint and antique text;
You'll find the meaning not at all perplex'd.

Reader, this trifle's ended: I have told
The tale and shown the moral "in a way"
Yet doth my page another truth unfold,
Namely, that women of the present day
Are not so bad, nor half, as those of old.
Then, cast not thou the lesson quite away,
That--as they're better than they were before,
Why, men should love 'em (*wisely*) more and more.

(d) From *A Sicilian Story* (1820), the conclusion, stanzas 18-21

That day the green tree wither'd, and she knew
The solace of her mind was stol'n and gone:
And then she felt that she was quite alone
In the wide world; so to the distant woods
And caverned haunts, and where the mountain floods
Thunder into the silent air, she flew.
She flew away, and left the world behind,
And all that man doth worship, in her flight;
All that around the beating heart is twined;
Yet, as she looked farewell to human kind,
One quivering drop arose and dimm'd her sight,
The last that frenzy gave to poor distress.
And then into the dreary wilderness
She went alone, a crazed, heart-broken thing:
And in the solitude she found a cave
Half hidden by the wild-brier blossoming,
Whereby a black and solitary pine,
Struck by the fiery thunder, stood, and gave
Of pow'r and death a token and a sign:
And there she lived for months: She did not heed
The seasons or their change, and she would feed
On roots and berries, as the creatures fed
Which had in woods been born and nourished.

Once, and once only, was she seen, and then
The chamois hunter started from his chace,
And stopped to look a moment on her face,
And could not turn him to his sports again.
Thin Famine sate upon her hollow cheek,
And settled Madness in her glazed eye
Told of a young heart wrong'd and nigh to break,
And, as the spent winds waver ere they die,
She to herself a few wild words did speak,
And sung a strange and broken melody;
And ever as she sung she strew'd the ground
With yellow leaves that perish'd ere their time,
And well their fluttering fall did seem to chime
With the low music of her song:--the sound
Came like a dirge filling the air around.
And this (or like) the melancholy rhyme.

1.
There is a spirit stands by me:
It comes by night, it comes by day,
And when the glittering lightnings play,
Its look is pale and sad to see.
*T is he--to whom my brother gave
A red unconsecrated grave.

2.

I hear him when the breezes moan,
And, when the rattling thunders talk,
I hear him muttering by me walk,
And tell me I am "quite alone."
It is the daemon of the dead,
For all that's good hath upwards fled.

3.

It is a daemon which the wave
Hath cast abroad to scare my soul;
Yet wherefore did the waters roll
So idly o'er his hasty grave?
Was the sad prayer I uttered then
Unheard,—or is it due again?

4.

Is 't not enough that I am here,
Brainstruck and cold and famished,
A mean remove above the dead,—
But must my soul be wild with fear
As sorrow, now that hope is gone,
And I am lost and left alone?

5.

They told me, when my days were young,
That I was fair and born to reign,
That hands and hearts were my domain,
And witchery dwelt upon my tongue:
And now--but what is this to me,
Struck on the rock of memory?

6.
And yet at times I dream--aye yet,
Of vanish'd scenes and golden hours,
And music heard in orange bowers
(For madness cannot quite forget),
And love, breathed once to me alone,
In sighs, and many a melting tone.

7.

Then curious thoughts, and floating things
Saved from the deluge of the brain,
Pass with perplexity and pain;
Then darkness, deaths, and murderings,--
And then unto my den I hie,
And vainly vainly pray to die.

At last she wandered home. She came by night.
The pale moon shot a sad and troubled light
Amidst the mighty clouds that moved along,
The moaning winds of Autumn sang their song,
And shook the red leaves from the forest trees;
And subterranean voices spoke. The seas
Did rise and fall and then that fearful swell
Came silently which seamen know so well;
And all was like an Omen. Isabel
Passed to the room where, in old times, she lay,
And there they found her at the break of day;
Her look was smiling, but she never spoke
Or motioned, even to say--her heart was broke:
Yet, in the quiet of her shining eye
Lay death, and something we are wont to deem
(When we discourse of some such mournful theme)
Beyond the look of mere mortality.

She died--yet scarcely can we call it Death
When Heaven so softly draws the parting breath;
She was translated to a finer sphere,
For what could match or make her happy here?
She died, and with her gentle death there came
Sorrow and ruin, and Leoni fell
A victim to that unconsuming flame,
That burns and revels on the heart of man;
Remorse.--This is the tale of Isabel,
And of her love the young Italian.

(e) "Marcelia" (1820)
It was a dreary place. The shallow brook
That ran throughout the wood, there took a turn
And widen'd: all its music died away,
And in the place a silent eddy told
That there the stream grew deeper. There dark trees
Funereal (cypress, yew, and shadowy pine,
And spicy cedar) cluster'd, and at night
Shook from their melancholy branches sounds
And sighs like death: 't was strange, for through the day
They stood quite motionless, and look'd methought
Like monumental things, which the sad earth
From its green bosom had cast out in pity,
To mark a young girl's grave. The very leaves
Disown'd their natural green, and took a black
And mournful hue: and the rough brier, stretching
His straggling arms across the rivulet,
Lay like an armed sentinel there, catching
With his tenacious leaf, straws, wither'd boughs,
Moss that the banks had lost, coarse grasses which
Swam with the current, and with these it hid
The poor Marcelia's death-bed.-- --Never may net
Of venturous fisher be cast in with hope,
For not a fish abides there. The slim deer
Snorts as he ruffles with his shorten'd breath
The brook, and panting flies the unholy place,
And the white heifer lows and passes on;
The foaming hound laps not, and winter birds
Go higher up the stream. And yet I love
To loiter there: and when the rising moon
Flames down the avenue of pines, and looks
Red and dilated through the evening mists,
And chequer'd as the heavy branches sway
To and from with the wind, I stay to listen,
And fancy to myself that a sad voice,
Praying, comes moaning through the leaves, as 't were
For some misdeed. The story goes that some
Neglected girl (an Orphan, whom the world
Frown'd upon) once stray'd thither, and 't was thought
Cast herself in the stream. You may have heard
Of one Marcelia, poor Molini's daughter, who
Fell ill and came to want? No? oh she loved
A wealthy man who mark'd her not. He wed,
And then the girl grew sick and pin'd away,
And drown'd herself for love. Some day or other
I'll tell you all the story.
"Melancholy" (1820)

There is a mighty Spirit, known on earth
By many names, though one alone becomes
Its mystery, its beauty, and its power.
It is not Fear,--'t is not the passive fear
That sinks before the future, nor the dark
Despondency that hangs upon the past:
Not the soft spirit that doth bow to pain,
Nor that which dreads itself, or slowly eats
Like a dull canker till the heart decays.
But in the meditative mind it lives,
Shelter'd, caress'd, and yields a great return
And in the deep silent communion
Which it holds ever with the poet's soul,
Tempers, and doth befit him to obey
High inspiration. To the storms and winds
It giveth answer in as proud a tone;
Or on its seat, the heart of man, receives
The gentler tidings of the elements.--
I--often home returning from a spot
Holy to me from many wanderings,
Of fancy, or in fact, have felt the power
Of Melancholy stealing on my soul
Mingling with pleasant images, and from
Sorrow dividing joy; until the shape
Of each did gather to a diviner hue,
And shone unclouded by a thought of pain.
Grief may sublime itself, and pluck the sting
From out its breast, and muse until it seem
Ethereal, starry, speculative, wise.
But then it is that Melancholy comes,
Out-charming grief--(as the grey morning stills
The tempest oft) and from its fretful fire
Draws a pale light, by which we see ourselves,
The present, and the future, and the past.

CHAPTER FIVE, "Raising the Unread"

1. John Clare, “The Ants” and “Hereafter” from The Village Minstrel (1821) and “Grasshoppers” (composed in the Northborough Asylum between 1832 and 1837). Texts for the two sonnets are the versions published in 1821; “Grasshoppers” is from Poems Chiefly from Manuscript ed. Blunden and Porter (1920).
The Ants
What wonder strikes the curious, while he views
The black ant's city, by a rotten tree,
Or woodland bank! In ignorance we muse:
Pausing, annoyed,--we know not what we see,
Such government and thought there seem to be;
Some looking on, and urging some to toil,
Dragging their loads of bent-stalks slavishly:
And what's more wonderful, when big loads foil
One ant or two to carry, quickly then
A swarm flock round to help their fellow-men.
Surely they speak a language whisperingly,
Too fine for us to hear; and sure their ways
Prove they have kings and laws, and that they be
Deformed remnants of the Fairy-days.

Hereafter
Ah, when this world and I have shaken hands,
And all the frowns of this sad life got through,
When from pale Care and Sorrow's dismal lands
I turn a welcome and a wish'd adieu;
How blest and happy, to eternal day,
To endless happiness without a pain,
Will my poor weary spirit sail away,
That long long look'd for "better place" to gain:
How sweet the scenes will open on her eye,
Where no more troubles, no more cares annoy;
All the sharp troubles of this life torn by,
And safely moor'd in heaven's eternal joy:
Sweet will it seem to Fate's oppressed worm,
As trembling Sunbeams creeping from the storm.

Grasshoppers
Grasshoppers go in many a thumping spring
And now to stalks of tasseled sow-grass cling,
That shakes and swees awhile, but still keeps straight;
While arching oxeye doubles with his weight.
Next on the cat-tail-grass with farther bound
He springs, that bends until they touch the ground.

2. John Clare, five versions of “Beans in Blossom”

(a) From The Rural Muse (1835) 130-1

The south-west wind! how pleasant in the face
It breathes! while, sauntering in a musing pace
I roam these new ploughed fields; or by the side
Of this old wood, where happy birds abide,
And the rich blackbird, through his golden bill,
Utters wild music when the rest are still.
Luscious the scent comes of the blossomed bean,
As o’er the path in rich disorder lean
Its stalks; whence bees, in busy rows and toils,
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils.
The herd-cows toss the molehills in their play;
And often stand the stranger’s steps at bay,
Mid clover blossoms red and tawny white,
Strong scented with the summer’s warm delight.

(b) From *The Poems of John Clare* ed. J. W. Tibble (1935) 2:133

The south-west wind, how pleasant in the face
It breathes! While, sauntering in a musing pace,
I roam these new-ploughed fields; or by the side
Of this old wood, where happy birds abide,
And the rich blackbird, through his golden bill,
Utters wild music when the rest are still.
Now luscious comes the scent of blossomed bean,
As o’er the path in rich disorder lean
Its stalks; whence bees, in busy songs and toils,
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils.
The herd-cows toss the mole-hills in their play;
And often stand the stranger’s steps at bay,
Mid clover blossoms red and tawny white,
Strong scented with the summer’s warm delight.

(c) From *Selected Poems and Prose of John Clare* ed. Eric Robinson and Geoffrey Summerfield (1967) 159

The south west wind how pleasant in the face
It breathes while sauntering in a musing pace
I roam these new ploughed fields and by the side
Of this old wood where happy birds abide
And the rich blackbird through his golden bill
Litters wild music when the rest are still
Now luscious comes the scent of blossomed beans
That o’er the path in rich disorder leans
Mid which the bees in busy songs and toils
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils
The herd cows toss the molehills in their play
And often stand the strangers steps at bay
Mid clover blossoms red and tawny white
Strong scented with the summers warm delight


The south west wind how pleasant in the face
It breathes while sauntering in a musing pace
I roam these new ploughd fields & by the side
Of this old wood where happy birds abide
& the rich black bird through his golden bill
Utters wild music when the rest are still
Now luscious comes the scent of blossomed beans
That oer the path in rich disorder leans
Mid which the bees in busy songs & toils
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils
The herd cows toss the mole hills in their play
& often stand the strangers steps at bay
Mid clover blossoms red & tawny white
Strong scented with the summers warm delight


The south-west wind, how pleasant in the face
It breathes, while sauntering in a musing pace
I roam these new-ploughed fields, and by the side
Of this old wood where happy birds abide
And the rich blackbird through his golden bill
Utters wild music while the rest are still:
Now luscious comes the scent of blossomed beans
That o’er the path in rich disorder leans,
Mid which the bees in busy songs and toils
Load home luxuriantly their yellow spoils;
The herd cows toss the molehills in their play;
And often stand the stranger’s steps at bay
Mid clover blossoms red and tawny-white,
Strong-scented with the summer’s warm delight.


Yes, let me tell of Jennet, my last child;
In her the charms of all the rest ran wild,
And sprouted as they pleased. Still by my side,
I own she was my favourite, was my pride,
Since first she labour’d round my neck to twine,
Or clasp’d both little hands in one of mine:
And when the season broke, I’ve seen her bring
Lapfuls of flowers, and then the girl would sing
Whole songs, and halves, and bits, O, with such glee!
If playmates found a favourite, it was she.
Her lively spirit lifted her to joy;
To distance in the race a clumsy boy
Would raise the flush of conquest in her eye,
And all was dance, and laugh, and liberty.
Yet not hard-hearted, take me right, I beg,
The veriest romp that ever wagg’d a leg
Was Jennet; but when pity soothed her mind,
Prompt with her tears, and delicately kind.
The half-fledg’d nestling, rabbit, mouse, or dove,
By turns engaged her cares and infant love;
And many a one, at the last doubtful strife,
Warm’d in her bosom, started into life.

   At thirteen she was all that Heaven could send,
My nurse, my faithful clerk, my lively friend;
Last at my pillow when I sunk to sleep,
First on my threshold soon as day could peep:
I heard her happy to her heart’s desire,
With clanking pattens, and a roaring fire.
Then, having store of new-laid eggs to spare,
She fill’d her basket with the simple fare,
And weekly trudg’d (I think I see her still)
To sell them at yon house upon the hill.
Oft have I watch’d her as she stroll’d along,
Heard the gate bang, and heard her morning song;
And, as my warm ungovern’d feeling rose,
Said to myself, “Heaven bless her! There she goes.”
Long would she tarry, and then dancing home,
Tell how the lady bade her oft’ner come,
And bade her talk and laugh without control;
For Jennet’s voice was music to the soul,--
My tale shall prove it:--For there dwelt a son,
An only child, and where there is but one,
Indulgence like a mildew reigns, from whence
Mischief may follow if that child wants sense.
But Alfred was a youth of noble mind,
With ardent passions, and with taste refined;
All that could please still courted heart and hand,
Music, joy, peace, and wealth, at his command;
Wealth, which his widow’d mother deem’d his own;
Except the poor, she lived for him alone.
Yet would she weep by stealth when he was near,
But check’d all sighs to spare his wounded ear;
For from his cradle he had never seen
Soul-cheering sunbeams, or wild Nature’s green.
But all life’s blessings centre not in sight;
For Providence, that dealt him one long night,
Had given, in pity to the blooming boy,
Feelings more exquisitely tuned to joy.
Fond to excess was he of all that grew;
The morning blossom sprinkled o’er with dew,
Across his path, as if in playful freak,
Would dash his brow, and weep upon his cheek;
Each varying leaf that brush’d where’er he came,
Press’d to his rosy lip, he call’d by name;
He grasp’d the saplings, measured every bough,
Inhaled the fragrance that the spring months throw
Profusely round, till his young heart confess’d
That all was beauty, and himself was bless’d.
Yet when he traced the wide extended plain,
Or clear brook side, he felt a transient pain;
The keen regret of goodness, void of pride,
To think he could not run without a guide.

Who, guess ye, knew these scenes of home delight
Better than Jennet, bless’d with health and sight?
Whene’er she came, he from his sports would slide,
And catch her wild laugh, listening by her side;
Mount to the tell-tale clock with ardent spring,
And feel the passing hour, then fondly cling
To Jennet’s arm, and tell how sweet the breath
Of bright May mornings on the open heath;
Then off they started, rambling far and wide,
Like Cupid with a wood-nymph by his side.

Thus months and months roll’d on, the summer pass’d,
And the long darkness, and the winter blast,
Sever’d the pair; no flowery fields to roam,
Poor Alfred sought his music and his home.
What wonder, then, if inwardly he pined?
The anxious mother mark’d her stripling’s mind
Gloomy and sad, yet striving to be gay
As the long tedious evenings pass’d away:
'Twas her delight fresh spirits to supply,—
My girl was sent for—just for company.

A tender governess my daughter found,
Her temper placid, her instruction sound;
Plain were her precepts, full of strength, their power
Was founded on the practice of the hour:
Theirs were the happy nights to peace resign’d,
With ample means to cheer th’ unbended mind;
The Sacred History, or the volumes fraught
With tenderest sympathy, or towering thought,
The laughter-stirring tale, the moral lay,
All that brings dawning reason into day.
There Jennet learn’d by maps, through every land
To travel, and to name them at command;
Would tell, how great their strength, their bounds how far,
And show where uncle Charles was in the war.
The globe she managed with a timid hand,
Told which was ocean, which was solid land,
And said, whate’er their different climates bore,
And still roll’d round, though that I knew before.

Thus grown familiar, and at perfect ease,
What could be Jennet’s duty but to please?
Yet hitherto she kept, scarce knowing why,
One powerful charm reserv’d, and still was shy.
When Alfred from his grand-piano drew
Those heavenly sounds that seem’d for ever new,
She sat as if to sing would be a crime,
And only gazed with joy, and nodded time.
Till one snug evening,—I myself was there,—
The whispering lad inquired, behind my chair,
“Bowman, can Jennet sing?” “At home,” said I,
“She sings from morn to night, and seems to fly
From tune to tune, the sad, the wild, the merry,
And moulds her lip to suit them like a cherry;
She learn’d them here.”—“O ho!” said he, “O ho!”
And rubbed his hands, and stroked his forehead, so.
Then down he sat, sought out a tender strain,
Sung the first words, then struck the chords again:
“Come, Jennet, help me, you must know this song
Which I have sung, and you have heard so long.”
I mark’d the palpitation of her heart,
Yet she complied, and strove to take a part,
But faint and fluttering, swelling by degrees,
Ere self-composure gave that perfect ease,
The soul of song:—then, with triumphant glee,
Resting her idle work upon her knee,
Her little tongue soon fill’d the room around
With such a voluble and magic sound,
That, spite of all her pains to persevere,
She stopp’d to sigh, and wipe a starting tear;
Then roused herself for faults to make amends,
While Alfred trembled to his fingers’ ends.
But when this storm of feeling sunk to rest,  
Jennet, resuming, sung her very best,  
And on the ear, with many a dying fall,  
She pour’d th’enchanting “Harp of Tara’s Hall.”  
Still Alfred hid his raptures from her view,  
Still touch’d the keys, those raptures to renew,  
And led her on to that sweet past’ral air,  
“The Highland Laddie with the yellow hair.”  
She caught the sound, and with the utmost ease  
Bade Nature’s music triumph, sure to please:  
Such truth, such warmth, such tenderness express’d,  
That my old heart was dancing in my breast.  
Upsprung the youth, “O Jennet, where’s your hand?  
There’s not another girl in all the land,  
If she could bring me empires, bring me sight,  
Could give me such unspeakable delight:  
You little baggage! Not to tell before  
That you could sing; mind—you go home no more!”  
Thus I have seen her from my own fireside  
Attain the utmost summit of her pride;  
For, from that singing hour, as time roll’d round,  
At the great house my Jennet might be found,  
And, while I watch’d her progress with delight,  
She had a father’s blessing every night,  
And grew in knowledge at that moral school,  
Till I began to guess myself a fool.  
Music; why she could play as well as he!  
At least I thought so,—but we’ll let that be:  
She read the poets, grave and light, by turns,  
And talk’d of Cowper’s “Task,” and Robin Burns;  
Nay, read without a book, as I may say,  
As much as some could with in half a day.  
’Twas thus I found they pass’d their happy time,  
In all their walks, when Nature in her prime  
Spread forth her scents and hues, and whisper’d love  
And joy to every bird in every grove;  
And though their colours could not meet his eye,  
She pluck’d him flowers, then talk’d of poetry.  
Once on a sunbright morning, ‘twas in June,  
I felt my spirits and my hopes in tune,  
And idly rambled forth, as if t’explore  
The little valley just before my door.  
Down by yon dark-green oak I found a seat  
Beneath the clustering thorns, a snug retreat  
For poets, as I deem’d, who often prize  
Such holes and corners far from human eyes;
I mark’d young Alfred, led by Jennet, stray
Just to this spot, both chatting on their way:
They came behind me, I was still unseen;
He was the elder, Jennet was sixteen.
My heart misgave me, lest I should be deem’d
A prying listener, never much esteem’d;
But this fear soon subsided, and I said,
“I’ll hear this blind man and my little maid.”
That instant down she pluck’d a woodbine wreath,
The loose leaves rattled on my head beneath;
This was for Alfred, which he seiz’d with joy,
“O, thank you, Jennet,” said the generous boy.
Much was their talk, which many a theme supplied,
As down they sat, for every blade was dried.
I would have skulk’d away, but dare not move,
“Besides,” thought I, “they will not talk of love;”
But I was wrong, for Alfred, with a sigh,
A little tremulous, a little shy,
But with the tenderest accents, ask’d his guide
A question which might touch both love and pride.
“This morning, Jennet, why did you delay,
And talk to that strange clown upon your way,
Our homespun gardener? How can you bear
His screech-owl tones upon your perfect ear?
I cannot like that man, yet know not why,
He’s surely quite as old again as I;
He’s ignorant, and cannot be your choice,
And ugly too, I’m certain, by his voice,—
Besides, he call’d you pretty.”—“Well, what then?
I cannot hide my face from all the men;
Alfred, indeed, indeed, you are deceived,
He never spoke a word that I believed;
Nay, can he think that I would leave a home
Full of enjoyment, present and to come,
While your dear mother’s favours daily prove
How sweet the bonds of gratitude and love?
No, while beneath her roof I shall remain,
I’ll never vex you, never give you pain.”
“Enough, my life!” he cried, and up they sprung;
By heaven, I almost wish’d that I was young;
It was a dainty sight to see them pass,
Light as the July fawns upon the grass,
Pure as the breath of spring when forth it spreads,
Love in their hearts, and sunshine on their heads.
Next day I felt what I was bound to do,
To weigh the adventure well, and tell it too;
For Alfred’s mother must not be beguiled,
He was her earthly hope, her only child;
I had no wish, no right, to pass it by,
It might bring grief, perhaps calamity.
She was the judge, and she alone should know
Whether to check the flame or let it grow.
I went with fluttering heart, and moisten’d eye,
But strong in truth, and arm’d for her reply.
“Well, master Bowman, why that serious face?”
Exclaim’d the lovely dame, with such a grace,
That had I knelt before, I had been
Not quite the simplest votary ever seen.
I told my tale, and urged that well-known truth,
That the soft passion in the bloom of youth
Starts into power, and leads th’unconscious heart
A chase where reason takes but little part;
Nothing was more in nature, or more pure,
And from their habits nothing was more sure.
Whether the lady blush’d from pride or joy,
I could but guess;--at length she said,--“My boy
Dropp’d not a syllable of this to me!
What was I doing, that I could not see?
Through all the anxious hours that I have known,
His welfare still was dearer than my own;
How have I mourn’d o’er his unhappy fate!
Blind as he is! The heir to my estate!
I now might break his heart, and Jennet’s too;
What must I, Bowman, or what can I do?”
“Do, madam?” said I boldly, “If you trace
Impending degradation or disgrace
In this attachment, let us not delay;
Send my girl home, and check it while you may.”
“I will,” she said, but the next moment sigh’d;
Parental love was struggling hard with pride.
I left her thus, deep musing, and soon found
My daughter, for I traced her by the sound
Of Alfred’s flageolet; no cares had they,
But in the garden bower spent half the day.
By starts he sung, then wildest trillings made,
To mock a piping blackbird in the glade.
I turn’d a corner and approach’d the pair;
My little rogue had roses in her hair!
She whipp’d them out, and with a downcast look,
Conquer’d a laugh by poring on her book.
My object was to talk with her aside,
But at the sight my resolution died;
They look’d so happy in their blameless glee,
That, as I found them, I e’en let them be;
Though Jennet promised a few social hours
’Midst her old friends, my poultry, and my flowers.
She came; but not till fatal news had wrung
Her heart through sleepless hours, and chain’d her tongue;
She came, but with a look that gave me pain,
For, though bright sunbeams sparkled after rain,
Though every brood came round, half run, half fly,
I knew her anguish by her alter’d eye,
And strove, with all my power, where’er she came,
To soothe her grief, yet gave it not a name.
At length a few sad bitter tears she shed,
And on both hands reclined her aching head.
'Twas then my time the conqueror to prove,
I summon’d all my rhetoric, all my love.
"Jennet, you must not think to pass through life
Without its sorrows, and without its strife;
Good, dutiful, and worthy as you are,
You must have griefs, and you must learn to bear."
Thus I went on, trite moral truths to string,—
All chaff, mere chaff, where love has spread his wing:
She car’d not, listen’d not, nor seem’d to know
What was my aim, but wiped her burning brow,
Where sat more eloquence and living power
Than language could embody in an hour.
With soften’d tone I mentioned Alfred’s name,
His wealth, our poverty, and that sad blame
Which would have weigh’d me down, had I not told
The secret which I dare not keep for gold,
Of Alfred’s love, o’erheard the other morn,
The gardener, and the woodbine, and the thorn;
And added, "Though the lady sends you home,
You are but young, child, and a day may come—"
"She has not sent me home, dear father, no;
She gives me leave to tarry or to go;
She has not blamed me,—yet she weeps no less,
And every tear but adds to my distress:
I am the cause,—thus all that she has done
Will bring the death or misery of her son.
Jealous he might be, could he but have seen
How other lads approach’d where I have been;
But this man’s voice offends his very soul,
That strange antipathy brooks no control;
And should I leave him now, or seem unkind,
The thought would surely wreck his noble mind;
To leave him thus, and in his utmost need!
Poor Alfred! then you will be blind indeed!
I will not leave him."--"Nay, child, do not rave;
What! would you be his menial, be his slave?"
"Yes," she exclaim'd, and wiped each streaming eye,
"Yes, be his slave, and serve him till I die;
He is too just to act the tyrant's part,
He's truth itself." Oh, how my burden'd heart
Sigh'd for relief!--soon that relief was found;
Without one word we traced the meadow round,
Her feverish hand in mine, and weigh'd the case,
Nor dared to look each other in the face;
Till, with a sudden stop, as if from fear
I roused her sinking spirit, "Who comes here?"
Down the green slope before us, glowing warm,
Came Alfred, tugging at his mother' arm;
Willing she seem'd, but still he led the way,
She had not walk'd so fast for many a day;
His hand was lifted, and his brow was bare,
For now no clust'ring ringlets wanton'd there,
He threw them back in anger and in spleen,
And shouted "Jennet!" o'er the daisied green.
Boyish impatience strove with manly grace
In every line and feature of his face;
His claim appear'd resistless as his choice,
And when he caught the sound of Jennet's voice,
And when with spotless soul he clasp'd the maid,
My heart exulted while my breath was stay'd.
"Jennet, we must not part! return again;
What have I done to merit all this pain?
Dear mother, share my fortune with the poor,
Jennet is mine, and shall be--say no more;
Bowman, you know not what a friend I'll be;
Give me your daughter, Bowman, give her me;
Jennet, what will my days be if you go?
A dreary darkness and a life of woe:
My dearest love, come home, and do not cry;
You are my daylight, Jennet, I shall die."
To such appeals all prompt replies are cold,
And stately prudence snaps her cobweb hold.
Had the good widow tried, or wish'd, to speak,
This was a bond she could not, dared not break;
Their hearts (you never saw their likeness, never)
Were join'd, indissolubly join'd for ever.
Why need I tell how soon our tears were dried,
How Jennet blush'd, how Alfred, with a stride,
Bore off his prize, and fancied every charm,
And clipp'd against his ribs her trembling arm;
How mute we seniors stood, our power all gone!
Completely conquer'd, Love the day had won,
And the young vagrant triumph'd in our plight,
And shook his roguish plumes, and laugh'd outright.
Yet by my life and hopes, I would not part
With this sweet recollection from my heart:
I would not now forget that tender scene
To wear a crown, or make my girl a queen.
Why need be told how pass'd the months along,
How sped the summer's walk, the winter's song,
How the foil'd suitor all his hopes gave up,
How Providence with rapture fill'd their cup?
No dark regrets, no tragic scenes to prove,
The gardener was too old to die for love.
A thousand incidents I cast aside
To tell but one--I gave away the bride--
Gave the dear youth what kings could not have given,
Then bless'd them both, and put my trust in Heaven.
There the old neighbours laugh'd the night away,
Who talk of Jennet's wedding to this day.
And could you but have seen the modest grace,
The half-hid smiles that play'd in Jennet's face,
Or mark'd the bridegroom's bounding heart o'erflow,
You might have wept for joy, as I could now:
I speak from memory of days long past;
Though 'tis a father's tale, I've done at last.