The Sons of the Soil

Sarah Stickney Ellis

Table of Contents

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"Long ere that hour had William Herbert found
One lowly spot of consecrated ground,
To him most sacred"—

PREFACE.

POETRY has ever been a transcript of those impressions made upon the human mind by scenes and circumstances, sentiments and emotions; which, while they are common to human nature in general, familiarity cannot vulgarize, nor critical examination deprive of intensity and interest. This transcript, when made with simplicity and faithfulness, has invariably found an answer in the human heart; for as the ear naturally delights in music, and, when deprived of the enjoyment which music affords, feels an indescribable longing for the refreshment of melodious sounds; so naturally do the feelings of the heart expand and exult in that higher and more

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Page vi

exquisite music of the mind, conveyed at once to the understanding and the affections, through the medium of poetry.

Such being the case, it seems impossible, so long as human beings think and feel, observe and experience, that poetry should vanish from the earth. There are, however, states of society, and stages of civilization, in which it appears to be less acceptable than in others; and popular opinion has pronounced upon the present time as being peceuliarly unpropitious to the gratification of poetic taste; nor would the apparent presumption of sending forth a poem at such a time, and from such a pen as mine, be sufficiently justified, but for the peculiar views I have been led to entertain on the subject of poetry as it exists at the present day.

It appears to me, that public taste has not yet recovered from a series of over−excitements, produced in rapid succession, by the legends of Scott, the lyrics of Moore, and the deep and more impassioned strains of Byron. All, or nearly all, the poets who have followed these, have attempted to follow in the same course; until the flowers—and they were many—which grew beside their path, have been trodden

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Page vii

down by the pressure of numerous feet; and from the very frequency and familiarity with which such subjects have been presented to our view, chivalry has lost its romance, love and beauty have almost ceased to charm, and passion has raved itself to death.

Does it then follow, that poetry must die also? Let us not admit the thought of such a stigma falling upon our country, or our age. One thing, however, is necessary; and it has been overlooked by almost all who have lately attempted to write poetry.

After the over−excitement which created so false and unnatural a taste has entirely subsided, we must return to nature, and simplicity. It is more than probable that many will return in vain, beeause the ear long accustomed to the higher symphonies of genius, will scarcely condescend, for some time at least, to listen to the humbler melody of simple bards. But nature must prevail at last; and whatever the event of the experiment I have made may be, its failure or success will in no way affect my conviction, that by returning to simplicity—by making simplicity without weakness or puerility the constant companion of his studies, the poet who is true to nature may

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Page viii

yet find acceptance with intelligent and feeling minds.

In the "Poetry of Life," I have endeavoured to prove that four qualifications are necessary for an able and successful poet—power, imagination, impression, and taste. To only one of these—a capability for receiving lively and lasting impressions, do I make any pretension: yet such is my confidence in the power of simplicity and truth, that I commit my poem to the public, not doubting but there will be found amongst that public some whose experience will testify to its faithfulness, and more whose hear will respond to its truth. It contains no exaggerated statements. I know that such things are, as I have here described.

It has suited my purpose, amongst other illustrations, to have actual representations made of the home of my childhood, as well as of my father's present residence; but in making this confession, I should wish to have it clearly understood, that the representation of real scenes extends no farther. The description of the habits of the farmer's family, as well the conduct of his landlord, has arisen entirely out the imagination of the writer; and, in

the latter case

Page ix

especially, would be very unjustly regarded as a specimen of the conduct of landed proprietors in general.

I cannot, in the usual manner, explain my reasons for selecting the subject which occupies the following pages; because, instead of saying that I have chosen it, I must say that it is almost ever present to my mind. The story is adventitious, and has arisen out of the popular evils of the day; but some of the scenes I have attempted to describe are such as are well calculated to force themselves into verse; and if they fail to present to others the same vivid colouring which distinguishes them amongst my early associations, the fault is in the writer, as a poet—not in the rural scenes of England, as a subject for poetry. Indeed, it has been chiefly when contemplating such scenes, and the habits and feelings of those who are connected with them, that I have renewed my confidence in the conviction, that poetry never can become extinct.

It is the fashion of the day to overlook, as unworthy of attention, much that is connected with the happiness and misery of social life; and to bring every effort of industry and mental application to

Page x

bear upon the machinery of mere animal existence. In conformity with the same mode of thinking, we hear perpetually of our national prosperity being calculated in exact proportion with our commerce, and with the competition England is enabled to maintain with the markets abroad. Thus we are too much disposed to forget, that the real prosperity of a nation ought to be calculated by its elevation in the scale of moral feeling, rather than by its facility in supplying the bodily wants of the community at large.

That much of this true elevation of feeling belong to the agricultural classes, no one can deny who has become familiarized with their social and domestic habits; and it ought to be esteemed as highest amongst the many privileges of rural life, that the circumstances in which the farmer is placed have a natural tendency to induce a tone of feeling, the value of which can never be computed by the greatest physical advantages this world is able to supply.

In his association with the more laborious classes, the agriculturist is placed on a footing very different from that of the manufacturer. The simple fact, that in one case the workiing people are called "men," and in the other "hands," implies of itself a wide dif−

Page xi

ference. To the manufacturer, they are, for the most part, but instruments of labour—mere hands; and they are taken into his employment when trade is said to be brisk, and dismissed when he needs them no more, just as so many tools are taken up, or laid aside, to suit the service of the day.

But the farmer dwells, as it wrere, amongst his own people. He has most probably grown up from infancy beside them. His children may have been playmates with theirs. He knows all the internal economy of the cottages around him. His people come to him for advice in their domestic and social transactions; and he feels, too sensibly for his peace of mind, that when his own altered circumstances render it necessary for him to dismiss any of them from his service, that distress, which he is well able to picture, will cast a gloom over the humble abodes, and darken the cheerful hearths, whose evening glow has so often imparted gladness to his heart. He does not hear of this distress as of the visitation of some public calamity diffused amonost an unknown multitude; but he is acquainted with its every feature, and in a manner compelled to trace it home; to picture to his mind the well−known countenances of

Page xii

those who sutfer, and to hear the individual voices that have so often responded to his own, deepened into the tones of bitterest complaint.

It is almost impossible but that this kind of intimate association should produce a degree of mutual interest and fellow−feeling, highly advantageous to both parties in their intercourse with each other; and it seems equally reasonable to conclude, that circumstances of a similar nature should attach the same people to their native

country in a more than ordinary manner. The mechanic, or the worker in manufactories, dwells, for the most part, in towns, where nothing but the house he inhabits—sometimes the single chamber he occupies—can be called his own; and that only for a week, a month, a year, or a short term of years, as the fluctuations of trade may render necessary, or desirable. He leaves his lodgings as a traveller leaves his inn, if not quite as often, at any rate with as little regret, except so far as the inconveniences of a removal may affect his comfort. But the agricultural labourer has a feeling of property, not only in his own cottage and garden, but in his master's farm—in the scenes of his boyish rambles, in the fields he has been accustomed to

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Page xiii

cultivate, the trees he has planted, and, above all, the animals he has watched and fed for his master's use. His children, himself, and his parents have, in many cases, been born in the same parish. He feels an interest in the very soil on which they have grown and flourished. And if this be the case with the poor labourer, how powerful must be the same feeling in the mind of his employer, whose attachment to the soil may reasonably be supposed to bear a relative proportion to the property he holds.

Modes of thinking peculiar to the present day have rendered somewhat obsolete the old−fashioned virtue of patriotism; and I am quite willing to admit, that the widest expansion of enlightened benevolence must carry out the views of the philanthropist to the utmost range of human existence; but until the mind is thus enlightened, it is certainly better that the benevolent affections should extend to a village, a district, or a whole country, than that they should never be awakened at all. And if we admit patriotism to be a virtue, I feel little hesitation in saying, that it exists in all its genuine simplicity and force amongst those whose local interests have taken deepest root in their native soil.

Page xiv

It is not my desire so far to oveistretch the point of merit, as to attempt to prove that the agricultural classes, in any thing that relates to their religious advancement, are at all superior to the rest of the community. I am even prepared to admit, that there is less fervency of religious zeal, and certainly less religious kuowledge diffused amongst them as a body; but, in admitting this, I must not forget how much less has been done for them than for others, through the agency of Christian benevolence. Compared with the inhabitants of towns, they may be said, except in particular districts, to be almost entirely left to themselves. The consequence is, that the vices into which they fall are more of a personal and individuital character; and that, while they are exempt from some of the popular evils which prevail amongst congregated masses of mankind, they are equally exempt from the benign influence of combined effort, as it flows through the channels of Christian instruction, and public beneficence.

There is something in their circumstances, however, which, if they could be more effectually reached by this influence, might tend very much to forward the views of Christian benevolence on their behalf.

Page xv

It is the constant reference they are almost compelled to make to the superintendence of Divine power.

The mechanic has little inducement, from the circumstances by which he is surrounded, to refer the success or the failure of his efforts, to anything beyond mere physical causes. The rate of wages, the employment of other hands, the patent inventions of the day, or the nature of the material in which he works, are, with him and his fellow−labourers, the chief topics of calculation and thought. But the farmer, even when he does limit his views to what is merely physical, has a far wider field of observation, as regards the phenomena of nature; and when he is sufficiently enlightened to look beyond this, he must be insensible indeed not to be reminded every day, and every hour, by the changes in the atmosphere, the aspect of the heavens, the chemical processes going forward in the earth, the instinct of animals, and the economy of vegetation, that a supreme and superintending power is above and around him—pervading and governing the world—the secret spring of all movement—the source of all life—the giver of all good.

Page xvi

It would be idle to assert that all who are employed in cultivating the soil are addicted to trains of thought in unison with such subjects. But the occupations of the agricultural classes, and the scenes and circumstances with which they are necessarily associated, are unquestionably conducive to an elevated tone of mental exercise, and moral feeling; and there is much in their simple lives, and in their recent and present experience, calculated to excite the deepest interest in the minds of their countrymen.

THE SONS OF THE SOIL.

BOOK I.

'**TIS** early dawn, and morning's welcome ray
Gilds the blue mountains, rising far away
From out the bosom of a mimic sea,
Where the white vapours float along the lea;
Till the proud sun, exulting in his might,
Enrobes the earth in universal light.
'Tis spring's bright morn—and oh! what tongue can tell
The mingled melodies that mount and swell,
And float upon the flowery scented gale,
Wakeninig sweet echoes throughi the verdant vale—
Harmonious voices—mellow−toned, and shrill,
Liquid, and murmuring, and almost still,
So small the fountain, and so pure the stream
From whence it flows, like music in a dream.
Yet, not the feeblest note of forest bird,
E'er by the brink of woodland−waters heard,
Nor loudest clarion that salutes the morn,
But bath some note of gladness, still upborne,
A hymn of gratitude for life and light,
To the clear heavens fresh opening on the sight.

'Tis spring's sweet morn; and let our poets say
Whate'er they list, of that cerulean day,
That rises o'er Italia's clasic shore.
My native land for me! I ask no more.
My native land, clad in her robe of flowers.
Her daisied meadows, and her woodbine bowers
Her lilacs gay, her bright laburniums, seen
Like fringe of gold beneath a mantle green;
Her streams that wander through the shady grove.
With cadence gentle as the voice of love;
Her patient herds that slumber on the lea,
Her gales that waft the honey−laden bee,
Her blooming orchards girt around with may,
That falls like snow, when from the scented spray
The song−bird flutters on his joyous wing,
To soar away to the blue skies and sing;
Her pastures with the yellow cowslip rife,
And sportive lambs, in wantonness of life,
Wildly careering o'er the grassy downs,
Where furze, or broom, the goal of triumph crowns;
Her verdant hills beyond the village spire,
And many a heath−clad mountain rising higher,
Around whose base the circling river winds,
Or through the vale its path of beauty finds.
Such are thy pictures, and I love to dwell

On scenes so long remembered, and so well—
Scenes that I gazed on fondly from my birth,
That made thee then the loveliest spot of earth.
And such thou art, beloved land, to me,
And ever wilt be—come what may to thee.

On spring's bright morn, 'mid such a scene as this,
Where all we realize of earthly bliss
Is gathered round us by a hand divine,
Till nought remains for which the heart can pine,
Laden with perfume woke the early breeze,
Gorgeous in sunshinie stood the ancient trees,
The stately elm, and feathery ash, that grew
Around a dwelling almost hid from view—
A long, and low−roofed dwelling, where the door
Looked as if all might enter—rich and poor.
There was no sloping lawn before that spot,
But gravel−walk, and just one little plot
Of new−mown grass, so freshly green and smooth,
It seemed the traveller's weary eye to soothe.
No massive gate of entrance marked the road,
Nor graceful sweep its doubtful welcome showed:
But hid beneath a honeysuckle screen
A garden wicket opened on the green.
While on one side a blooming border lay,
Enriched with fragrant herbs, and flowerets gay:
The fairy leaf of classic thyme was there,
The purple panzy, and the primrose fair,
And ancient southernwood, and box, and rue,
And wall−flower sweet, within that garden grew.
While over−head, dispensing rich perfume,
There hung a canopy of roseate bloom,
Or, shaken by the gently waving trees,
A shower of blossoms fluttered in the breeze:
The blushing promise of expectant spring,
Sweet pledge of all the waning year might bring.
These here strewed the ground, a carpet far more fair
Than man's ingenious labour could prepare,
With toil of weary hands and curious care.
High above all, in outline broad and bold,
Stood the tall ash, the elm, and chestnut old;
Stretching athwart that lowly roof their arms,
Faithful through every change, through winds, and storms,
Breaking the tempest, sheltering from the rain,
Shadowing from noontide heat that scorched the plain,
Tempering the air with freshness and delight,
Parting the moonbeams into gems of light,
True to the promise of their early prime,
Verdant again with every sweet spring−time.
Such friends were they, those venerable trees;
Boast ye who may of friends more true than these.

Was there not one within that peaceful home
Who might have boasted, had the question come
To her fond heart, for she was proud to be
The creature of one soul's idolatry.
And such a soul—so manly and so clear,
So firm of purpose, upright, and sincere,
Untaught of schools, yet filled with noble aims,
And that high virtue, which all praise disclaims,
With patriot fire to emulate a Tell,
And but one weakness—that he loved too well.
Yet she he loved was worthy of his care,
So gentle and so true, so fond and fair,
So self−devoted, looking to the end
For the remoter good, and thus his friend.
Ne'er seeking sunshine from his weary brow,
Nor urging service when his step was slow;
Not tiring his vexed ear with puny grief,
Nor asking, when she ought to have given, relief.
As some will tax the patience with a train
Of twice−told wrongs, and undeserved pain.
Till very kindness deems its duty is
To wish the sufferer in a world of bliss.
If such things could be, Mary knew them not.
She felt no wrongs, was cheerful in her lot:
To her the sweet return of morning light
Brought a new life, still fraught with new delight;
For she had one to love, and serve, and cheer,
Who paid her back in kindness as sincere;
And both felt bound their earthly course to make,
As smooth as might be, for the other's sake.

And now with that sweet morn of spring they rose
To offer up to heaven their early vows,
With jovful spirits to kneel down and pray,
And bless the light that brought another day,
Laden with all things needful—all things good,
They only asked for deeper gratitude,
Love that was less of earth, hopes more on high,
And greater willingness to live, or die.
For they were growing to that lovely scene,
As if their very root of life had been
Within the earth's deep bosom planted there,
To live, and bloom, for ever fresh and fair.
They looked around them with a joy so pure
And felt the blessings of each day so sure,
They were so fain to hope, so glad to trust,
They failed to think what might be, or what must—
Of dark or drear, calamitous or strange,
They knew no evil, and they feared no change.
Thus while that sun his radiant course pursued,

He found no hearts more filled with gratitude,
More free to own that mercy crowned their days
To tune their thankfulness to hymns of praise.
It was the spring−tide flow of life to them,
Might not some rock—some gale—that current stem?
Might not that tide with natural ebb fall back,
And leave behind a waste and sterile track?
Were they prepared, in sorrow's wintry hour,
To own, and bless the same benignant power?
When darkening clouds should overcast their sun,
To bow the head, and say, "Thy will be done?"

Harsh question and injurious thought, away!
A happier theme is ours—the dawn of day,
A day of homely toil, and household care,
Where faithful hands the task of labour share,
Leaving no burden for the weak to bear.
To each, an equal and appropriate part
Assigned by her, who ruled o'er every heart.
With gentle grace, but undisputed power.
As if the right to rule had been her dower.
So lightly fell the rein, it seemed to be
By skilful management, not mastery,
That all were brought to labour, or to learn.
While willing service yielded quick return.
There was this secret in her household sway,
She rose the earliest with the rising day,
She was the first within that happy home—
The very first, at duty's call to come;
And, let their daily task be great or small,
She was the most industrious of them all:
So thoughtless of herself, that he whose care
Was ever watchful, bade the servants spare
Their gracious mistress—bade them tend her well,
Observe this sacred charge, but never tell
That they had been thus schooled in arts of love,
And thus they tried their faithfulness to prove.

Nor was the stir of active life alone
Within that dwelling. To the fields were gone
A band of sturdy workmen, some to clear
The weedy bank, and some the fence to rear,
Some to lead forth the lazy team, and some
To drive the kine from their green pastures home.
While he, their honoured master, bent his way
To where his patient flocks in quiet lay,
His faithful dog companion by his side,
Bound by the twofold chain of love and pride,
As first he leads the way, and then looks back
To mark if well his master minds the track.
Now through the vale their winding path they take,

Brushing the dew−drops from the heathery brake;
Now on the top of breezy hill they stand,
The hill from whence they look o'er all the land;
And well the farmer loved to linger there,
To count his herds, and mark his meadows fair,
The rows of spiral corn, advancing slow
With verdant green still deepening as they grow,
The scented bean−field, and the purple clover,
Rustling and waving as the wind sweeps over.
The hawthorn hedge with tufts of scented may,
And rebel weeds, luxuriant, wild, and gay,
Bounding the greenest fields of all his farm,
Where sheltering sheds defend from wind and storm
His choice young cattle, and his favourite steed
Unrivalled, both in safety and in speed,
That comes, and tosses high his flowing mane,
With joy to hear his master's voice again,
Then wheeling backward, bounds along the turf,
Like a proud galley o'er the ocean surf.

These, and ten thousand well−known sights, present
A view, that to the farmer's heart was sent
Like incense, for he drank such draughts of joy,
His was the happiness without alloy
Of which we dream, and so he dreamed awhile,
Wearing the aspect of an inward smile.
Deeper than laughter was the bliss that broke
Forth from his eye, and echoed when he spoke;
Yet never half so radiant was his look,
As when at eve his homeward path he took,
After the absence of some long, long day,
For long it seemed to him, and far away,
When duty called him to the neighbouring town,
Though gathering wealth his frugal pains might crown.
But there was light within his sheltered home,
And smiles, and hopes, and better things to come.
That woo'd him back, where'er his lot might be,
From stirring sights, and sounds of revelry.
A sweeter voice he knew would welcome him,
When his own fire shone through the twilight dim,
Shooting its ray athwart the grass−plot green,
The mossy boughs of orchard−trees between.
Yes, and he knew that star of promise well,
Even at the distant gate, his eye could tell
If bright it burned, if cheerful looked his hearth,
If like itself, that loveliest spot of earth.

Nor came the day when burned that fire less bright,
While spoke that voice in tones of less delight;
For she, who had her handmaids at her call,
And her own babes, more welcome far than all,

Her friendly neighbours, and her social cheer,
Was lonely still, till he she loved was near—
Lonely in busy hall, in garden bower,
But lonely most in evening's silent hour,
When fall the lengthening shadows on the hill,
And childhood's happy voice grows hushed and still.
In that sweet hour, when sleeps the brooding dove
Within the cradle of her nestling's love,
When sings the forest bird his last sweet song,
And echoing woods the melody prolong,
When distant sounds of falling water come
Like tidings from a long−remembered home,
And softly sighs the breath of evening breeze,
Wakening an answer from the whispering trees,
And slowly fade the sunbeams from the west,
Melting away in ocean's billowy breast;
In that sweet hour, it was her faithful part
To nurse the cherished idol of her heart,
To think him nobler, kinder than before,
Recall his gentle ways, and count them o'er—
As broods the miser on his secret hoard,
To dwell at last upon the tenderest word.

And now she starts to hear the wished−for sound,
He comes not yet—it is the restless hound.
The dews are falling, and the hour is late—
Again! she hears the clap of distant gate.
It is the foot−fall of that faithful steed,
She knows it well—he comes—he comes with speed!
Triumphant war−horse in proud castle−yard
Was never yet with more of rapture heard.
The hearth has long been swept, she stirs the fire,
And then piles up the blazing fabric lhigher,
Till pours the kettle forth its cheering song,
While treads a manly step the garden−walk along.

It was no vulgar bliss that crowned their lot,
They were industrious, but they ne'er forgot
The treasures of the mind, the heart's warm store,
Than all their household comforts valued more.
They were untaught, in modern schools at least.
Yet much they loved an intellectual feast,
And such they deemed it, as the night closed in,
At that blest hour, when social joys begin,
To muse upon the well−selected page
Of favourite poet, or of wiser sage.
There was a niche beside their cheerful hearth,
That held an ancient book−case, with the worth
Of many minds, concentrated, and clear,
And thoughts that to the reader's eye appear
His own, so natural and familiar.

'Twas not the wealth of circulating lore
That reached the farmer's hospitable door,
Nor pile of newly−written books, passed on
From hand to hand, their titles only known;
But volumes chosen with attentive care,
Read, and remembered, and still treasured there,
Like friends of early days, that answer vet
In the loved voice we never can forget.

Such was the evening's happiness to those
Who thus could meet at busy day's sweet close;
Such their enjoyment, when their meal was done,
And well−filled tray and smoking kettle gone,
The curtains drawn, the blazing fire burnt clear,
The farmer seated in his elbow−chair,
The rosy sleeper, from its mother's breast
Gently translated to its cradled nest,
The tired domestics gathered in from toil,
Some to repose, and some to sit and smile
Around the genial glow of kitchen hearth,
Whiling away the hours in harmless mirth.
But they more blest, that unpretending pair,
Who felt the weightier load of daily care,
Theirs was an equal share of bliss to know,
Of deeper joys from happier thoughts that flow.
And now they kindly speak of all that brings
Around the heart such fond familiar things,
That, had their language marked some written page,
It well had met the scorn of learned sage;
So trifling seems each item of that whole,
That still may weigh upon the burdened soul.

And now their mutual store of separate thought,
Which that long day's divided interest brought,
Unfolded to each other, no reserve
On either side, no different end to serve,
They choose what volume shall the evening close,
Who shall instruct, or soothe them to repose,
What bard shall tune his soft melodious lay,
Thompson, or Burns, or melancholy Gray,
What stricter moralist, with sober pen
In storied page describe the ways of men,
Goldsmith, or Addison with faultless style,
Or weightier Johnson with his wordy pile
Of cumbrous epithets, and periods round,
Taxing the ear with endless pomp of sound.
These, and their wise compatriots, all were there,
And all content that narrow space to share,
Men for whose range of thought the heavens were small,
And the vast earth but as an infant's ball,
Who found such jarring elements in other minds,

As none but mighty genius ever finds;
Yet here they dwelt together, side by side,
Alike bereft of love, and hate, and pride.
All meekly bound, all quiet, close, and still,
Silent, or vocal, at another's will;
Their petty faults extinct—forgotten—lost,
For ever fixed, what men applauded most.

But now, all lighter pages laid aside,
That holy book, the comfort, stay, and guide
Of erring wanderers through this vale of tears,
At wonted hour of needful rest appears.
Deeply sonorous was the solemn voice
Of him who read that sacred strain, his choice
Falling, as if by instinct, on such part
As seemed most meet to animate the heart
With aspirations to the joys of heaven,
And gratitude profound for blessings given.

It is the holy hour of evening prayer,
Descend, thou peaceful Dove, in mercy there.
Lo! the poor suppliant his sorrow brings,
Descend, thou Dove, with healing on thy weing,
If weary laden in a world of grief,
Behold he kneels! with tears he asks relief;
Fainting beneath the burden of the day,
He seeks the shadowy night, to weep and pray.
If in the pomp of manly power he stand,
Asking a boon, yet seeming to command,
Descend, thou Dove, his earth−born pride control,
Come, with the dews of evening, melt his soul.
If he hath ought against his brother, come,
Come, heavenly Dove, and let one happy home
Receive them both, one bower of peace be theirs,
Angel of mercy, listen to their prayers!
If he have wandered from the ways of truth,
Blighting the promise of his early youth,
Call back the prodigal, thou gentle Dove,
Teach him once more to trust a Father's love!
But if his earthly home be all too fair,
Then, holy Dove, descend, yet spare! oh spare!
Let the dim shadow of thy hovering wings
Warn him, without the weight of grief that brings
A blight upon the bosom where it falls,
Deeper for all the bliss its touch recalls.
Warn him, but gently tell thy tale of tears,
Blast not his hopes, but yet awake his fears.
Listen! he prays thee to behold his heart,
Canst thou not purify the vital part
With less than torture—less than fiery trial?
Angel of mercy! then uplift thy phial,

Pour down the burning flood, so let the end
Be glorious, thou the mourner's friend.

BOOK II.

NOW autumn's sun, late rising o'er the hills,
Sends down his liquid light in shining rills,
And like a radiant joy, just dimmed by tears,
His golden glory through the mist appears;
Tinging the forest trees with molten fire,
Gilding the woodland cot and village spire,
Making the dews an ocean, pure, and white,
Till bursts a world of beauty on the sight.

'Tis spring no more, bright summer's bloom is gone,
And the world wears a deeper, graver tone;
Grave, but yet gorgeous—deep, but, oh! how fair
The mingled hues that seem to tinge the air,
As if the breeze brought colour where it blew,
And flakes of gold, and green, and purple, threw
O'er feathery woods, and richer fields of grain,
And heathy hills, and orchard−sprinkled plain.

There is a fresh crisp sound, beneath the tread,
Of withering herbs, and leaves already dead;
Yet brighter bloom the flowers that still remain,
As if they knew they ne'er should bloom again.
And still we hail a sky without a cloud
For winter slumbers in his icy shroud;
Still glows the sunshine, and still wave the trees
Their leafy boughs, fanned by the gentle breeze,
That like a whispering voice steals o'er the plain,
Then sinks to rest, and all is still again—
So still, we hear the distant reaper's call,
And silvery sound of woodland waterfall,
And hum of wandering bee, going forth once more
To add new treasures to her winter's store,
And solemn caw of venerable rook,
Flapping his wings from out the sheltered nook,
Where silent sit a conclave of his kind,
Unlike to wiser conclaves, of one mind.
Unlike themselves, when portioned out in pairs,
The bustling stir of spring's new life was theirs,
And ceaseless din of nestlings' greedy cry,
And fluttering wings that scarce found time to fly,
Though on the blissful embassy of love,
Through the wide realms of nature free to rove.

How different seems their very nature now,
Single their cry, their movements grave and slow.
The curse of idleness has reft away,

Each bustling joy that crowned their happier day,
And far away through distant skies they roam,
Seeking the silent forest for their home.
Who has not heard their autumn voice, and found
The melody of nature in that sound!
Harsh in itself—discordant, were it near;
But oh! what music to the tuneful ear.
Hath it not language for the heart as well,
Of more than man's familiar tongue can tell?
Of blighted flowers, and scattered leaves, and sighs,
And clouds that overcast the sunny skies?
Of withered wreaths o'er faded brows that stray,
Of time, and death, and sorrow, and decay?
In one sad voice, disconsolate, and drear,
Hymning a dirge for the departing year.

Away, ye idle dreams! why linger here
Like aimless bark, this fruitless course to steer?
What boots the cry of wandering rook to me?
Behold the harvest field! and hear the glee
Of merry reapers as they bind the sheaves,
The maiden laughing as the band she weaves,
The jocund wagoner with creaking load
Driving his team along the dusty road,
The welcome shout that hails his quick return,
The clattering hoofs that seem their task to spurn,
So light their burden, as they hasten back,
To wind along the headland's dubious track.

But who shall paint the farmer's secret joy,
While by the hand he leads his rosy boy,
And talks of fruitful fields, with such a smile
As tells of many a deeper thought the while.
For now there stirred within his manly breast
The silent movements of a stranger guest,
Wakening fair visions yet but half defined,
And half acknowledged to the dreamer's mind.
That guest had been ambition in a heart
More formed to emulate the hero's part;
But he was wary, prudent, fond of peace,
And only sought his substance to increase
By building barns, and adding field to field,
That wider produce richer gains might yield.
Not simply to possess, he spurned the thought
Of hoarded gold by ceaseless labour bought;
But men had lived to make themselves a name,
Though strange, as he was, to their country's fame;
And might not one who wisely held the plough
Purchase the fields he only rented now?
He had one son, and lovely daughters three,
Might they not live a different race to be?

Less worn with toil, less ignorant, and rude,
And if more polished, why not then more good?

Thus mused the farmer, as he paced along,
Or stooped, the reapers' sturdy band among;
For his firm hand, more able than the rest,
Was seldom folded in his homely vest;
And noontide shadows stealing o'er the plain
Warned them that nightfall soon must come again,
With the last gathering−in of that year's grain.

It was the harvest−home, and evening came
With such a burning sunset! Words were tame
To tell the golden glories of that sky,
Where every tint of beauty seemed to lie
Sleeping in splendour, bathed in floods of light,
That far away receded from the sight,
Till the blue heavens grew colder, and there rose
The vesper star, sweet herald of repose.

And now the evening dews begin to fall,
And chilly airs sigh through the poplar tall.
Why gleam its shivering leaves so white and clear?
What makes the shadowy lane so dark and drear?
As moves the creaking team its turf along,
While tunes the wagoner his rustic song?
It is the moon, from out the eastern sea
Rising in all her pomp of majesty—
The harvest moon, above the distant hill,
Whence gleams her silvery light, so soft and still,
Glancing through leafy bough, and hedge−row green,
Stealing the venerable elms between,
Till falls the light upon the reapers' toil,
While pleased they turn to greet her gentle smile,
Then stooping to their cheerful task again
Gather the yellow sheaves that still remain,
For the last team returns—a welcome sight,
Hailed by the jovial band with fresh delight.

It was the harvest−home, and shouts of glee
Were bursting forth, in echoes wild and free,
From distant headland, and from nearer dell,
Till far across the vale they rose and fell
And one was listening, with attentive ear
Well tuned to such familiar sounds of cheer,
Whose task of household toil had all been done
With the sweet fall of that day's setting sun;
Save that her bustling handmaids counsel claimed,
And her wild babes, like a young flock untamed,
Demanding freedom for this happy day,
Sported, and laughed their merry thoughts away.

She heard the shouts, and listening, heard again,
It warmed her heart to hear them yet more plain;
That nought might want her care, she looked around
O'er the wide board with rural plenty crowned,
Then turned from out her lowly door, to see
How slept the moonlight on the verdant lea,
How the soft dews were falling, and the star
Of eve kept watch, from its blue throne afar.

She stood beneath a chesnut−tree, and leaned
Against a bough, that oft her cheek had screened
From noontide radiance when the sun was high,
And not a cloud sailed through the summer sky,
While overhead, among those leaves, had sate
The soft wood−pigeon cooing to his mate.
And now she stands beneath that chesnut−tree,
And the white mists float round her, like a sea
Without a wave, so silvery, and so calm,
That in their very silence there is balm.
Yes, there is something in the earth, the air,
And the blue heavens, that stirs her soul to prayer,
While thoughts of deep−felt gratitude arise,
For the rich harvest, and the favouring skies.

The reapers tarry long. The infant band
Come forth to watch, and near their mother stand.
They tarry long; but, hark! their shouts of joy,
Mixed with the laughter of her own loved boy,
Who, proudly mounted on the foremost horse,
Blends his wild song with sounds more rude and coarse.
Urging to swifter pace the sober steed,
With gaudy ribbons fluttering round its head,
Nor dreams he now of prouder hopes to come,
Of days more glorious than the harvest−home.

The matron listened with a mother's love,
She heard that childish voice all sounds above.
Through her whole frame there ran a trembling thrill,
Like the soul's movement when the lips are still
Was it the depth of her unuttered joy,
Her heart's warm welcome to her happy boy?
Or had the dews of evening chilled her blood,
As all too late beneath the shade she stood?
For now there whispered through the leafy trees
Mysterious murmurs of the awakening breeze,
That stirred the shadow of the chesnut bough,
And waved the silken hair around her brow.

They tarry long; but now at length they come,
Their honoured master first she welcomes home,
"What ails thee, Mary? Why that cheek so pale?

Thy lips are trembling. 'Tis this autumn gale.
Thou art too venturesome to stand so long
At this late hour, listening the reaper's song.
Come to the fire—I'll chafe thy gentle hand."
And soon before the blazing hearth they stand.

Some men would scarce have marked in such a scene
If pale, or flushed, their helpmeet's cheek had been;
For not the joy of harvest−home alone
Enlivened every rustic look and tone,
But the rich produce of each well−tilled field
Was more than double what they once did yield,
And prices rising with the wars abroad
Enhanced the value of each groaning load.
But had the wealth of India been his own,
And he himself a monarch on his throne,
Not the first sight of thousands at his feet
Had lured his eye to forms less fair and sweet
'Mid the full burst of acclamations loud
He would have heard, and known, amongst the crowd,
That gentle voice, to his familiar ear,
In all its tones, so musical and clear.

And now, with heart almost too full of bliss,
He sees, and feels that something strange there is
In the dim shadow of that sunken eye,
Where mingled light and beauty used to lie.
She strove to smile; but, oh! to those who love
There is a fond faint smile, all words above
In its strong power to warn, and to subdue,
With a sad tale—unspoken, yet how true!
"What ails thee, Mary?"—He could ask no more,
Her drooping form to their own couch he bore,
He smoothed the pillow, and he laid to rest
The head that oft found peace upon his breast.
She said she felt less chill, yet spoke of thirst,
And bade him go, but bring her water first.
With eager hand she seized the sparkling draught,
And deep and long the cool clear liquid quaffed.
At length unwillingly he left her side,
For she began his lingering stay to chide;
Yet, when he joined the revellers below,
No sign of boding fear he chose to show.
He touched no food, spoke no superfluous word,
But bade them welcome to the social board.
So well his sturdy frame was schooled and nerved,
He looked around to see that all were served,
Maintaining still the master's manly part,
Without betraying what was next his heart,
Save when he stooped to kiss the prattling child,
That in its mother's mimic beauty smiled,

Then, and then only, had there gushed a tear,
But that a quick−eyed maiden stood too near.

That evening closed without the wonted glee,
The wonted songs, or sounds of revelry.
For all knew well that one familiar face
Was wanting there, their plenteous meal to grace;
Yet none would tax their master's silent mood,
With question that might seem ill−timed, or rude,
Why she was wanting from that social scene,
Where oft her step the most alert had been.

So they departed early, one by one,
And soon of all that band the last was gone.
And midnight came, and hushed was every sound,
Save in one chamber, silence reigned around.
In that one chamber, who shall paint the scene—
The thoughts that fluctuate, hope and fear between—
Hope, that would build upon a feverish smile,
And fear, that dreads delirium all the while.
There have been nights like this. Let memory tell
Her tale of woe, already known too well;
Then pass we on; for there are things more deep
Than words can utter, or than tears can keep.

And nine such heavy nights passed o'er his head,
Nor knew the sufferer how those hours had sped;
Till the tenth morning, when across her brow
The tide of reason seemed to ebb and flow
With more of natural impulse, and she spoke
In feeble accents, words that almost broke
The manly heart they had been meant to bless,
For, oh! they were too full of tenderness—
Of thoughts, and things, none else might understand,
Save he who felt the pressure of that hand,
And saw it lifted, as the words of prayer
Passed through her lips, yet scarcely stirred the air;
So gentle was the parting spirit's flight
Away from this sad world, to realms of light.

Nine days had passed, and now the tenth had come
Since the bright morning of that harvest−home;
And he who then led forth the reaper's band,
With look and voice to cheer or to command,
Seemed as if years, instead of days, had been
Rolled o'er his head, this world and him between.
Well, had it been so—had the calm which spread
Around the chamber of the silent dead
Reached his strong heart, and filled its vacant room
With brighter visions of the life to come.
But there were thoughts of darkness and of gloom

That would not stretch themselves beyond the tomb,
Bold questioning of heaven's eternal laws,
Why man should suffer thus, nor learn the cause,
Why tears should dim the newly−opened eye,
Why all the loveliest things of earth should die,
And why to hearts so faithful, fond, and true,
Time breaks the bonds he never can renew.
Such were the thoughts that thronged his aching breast,
And marred his peace whene'er he sought for rest;
Not the meek sufferance of the wounded mind,
That oft as keenly feels, when more resigned.
His outward bearing looked like patience too,
His brow was calm, his lamentations few,
But the deep grief within his soul that raged,
A fearful strife with every virtue waged.

There is a season of the waning year,
When, if the heavens are blue, and bright, and clear,
If cloudless sunshine sleeps along the plain,
We half believe that summer smiles again,
And deem the lingering flowers more bright and fair,
Fanned by the freshness of autumnal air.
But if the rains descend—the winds arise—
If clouds or tempest overcast the skies,
Or if a dull cold mist hangs on the day,
Too light to fall, too dense to float away,
Then winter reigns at once, with gloomy power,
And mournful looks each little opening flower,
As if misplaced, upon the sterile bed,
By faded leaves, and withering herbs o'erspread.

'Twas on such wintry morn of autumn day,
That William Herbert rose, but not to pray,
Not to look out upon his garden green,
That once his chosen paradise had been,
Not to look up to heaven with thankful heart,
He could not yet feel gratitude, apart
From her who taught him what was earthly bliss,
Who ne'er again would blend her smiles with his.
He rose the earliest, for he could not sleep,
And walked into his fields, and tried to weep;
But though he put away his manly pride,
Tears were a luxury to him denied.
So he returned, with restless wandering feet—
Where was the welcome his return to greet?
His home was silent, his domestics sad,
His children, in their first deep mourning clad,
Looked half abashed, the younger ones half pleased;
Their girlish airs his goaded spirit teased,
To think the sable trappings of the tomb
Should yield them other thoughts than grief and gloom.

It was that day—the heaviest day of all,
When pent−up tears again begin to fall;
When that lone thing, its chamber shared by none,
The very dearest now begin to shun;
When distant friends arrive, and neighbours come
In solemn vestments to the mourner's home;
When business ceases, and all things give way,
To mark with more distinctness that one day.

It is not parting when the loved one dies,
For still the same sweet image meets our eyes;
And while the heart−wrung mourner stands and weeps,
Fond fancy whispers that the loved one sleeps.
For there we see the same unclouded brow
That looked in hours of quiet, calm as now,
The meekly folded hands, the braided hair,
All—all the same, except more cold and fair.
But the true parting comes, with hearse and plume,
And strange rude sounds in that late silent room,
Breaking the sanctity we loved to keep,
Wakening, we almost fear, the dead from sleep,
Touching with hired hands—oh! name it not!
How can they violate that sacred spot!
Yet this true parting must be—the deep grave
Must have its own—no human power can save;
And we must look our very last, and know
The real depth—the bitterness of woe.

With wintry aspect had that day begun,
There was no wind—no rain—but yet no sun;
A dreamy silence slumbered all around,
And damp and chill the dews lay on the ground,
No movement stirred the air, save, now and then,
A leaf came flickering down upon the plain,
Or lonely robin from the leafless spray,
Tuned a sad song, then winged his flight away.
Such was the day, when forth the mourners came,
Some real mourners, others but in name,
Swelling the train with aspect sad and slow,
While half they mimicked, half partook the woe.
And now they reach the little churchyard green,
Where solemn priest in sacred stole is seen,
And place their burden down, and weep again,
All unabashed, before the eyes of men.
But he wept not, who mourned the most of all,
His shrouded eye no natural tears let fall.
Lonely, and wrapt in his deep anguish, there
He stood apart; he had no grief to share
With friend or neighbour. It was all his own.
He was a miser in this wealth alone.

He stood apart, no marble form more still;
Nor watchful eye could mark the withering thrill
That ran through all his frame, at that deep sound
Of "dust to dust" within the hollow ground.
And when the silent mourners turned away,
He also turned. Why should he longer stay?

'Twas well for him, or for his outward mien,
His sister had arrived to grace the scene,
To deck his children in their costly black,
And now to lead him from the churchyard back,
To bid his neighbours to the plenteous board,
And smile as if all comfort was restored.

And William Herbert sate among the rest,
His silent thoughts deep locked within his breast.
He knew no single heart in all that throng
Could understand his grief. Then why prolong
The fruitless sympathy that touched him not,
But fell like rain upon some desert spot.
He sate among them, not a silent host,
Though few the words his quivering lip that crossed.
He bore their presence with a patient brow,
And seemed to hear, and understand, and know
All their small converse, and the smaller balm
They kindly offered him, to soothe and calm.
At last the day declines, and evening comes,
And they depart to seek their different homes,
While he retires to that familiar room
Where darkly falls the night, in tenfold gloom.
Again the couch is spread, the curtains drawn,
The unpressed pillow with its snow−white lawn,
Cold—cold as winter, and the silence there—
No voice to answer, and no ear to hear.
Lowly he falls upon his bended knee,
"It is too much!—kind Heaven, I come to thee.
Bear with me, gracious Father, yet awhile,
For I have been too happy in thy smile,
Unschooled in all the chastenings of thy rod,
Teach me to see thy hand even here, O God!"

BOOK III.

THE deepest grief the human heart can know
Writes not its impress on an altered brow,
Assumes no outward character, nor wears
Before observant eyes the trace of tears.
Thus William Herbert met the world again,
And mixed in all the wonted ways of men,
Unchanged in things that common friends would mark;
Yet altered was that world to him, and dark.
One bitter drop mixed with his daily cup,
One spring of life—the sweetest—all dried up.
As yields the leading branch of goodly tree
Unto the cankerworm, so yielded he;
All its fresh boughs but that, still green and gay,
That one consumed by premature decay.
Thus he went forth again, and bought, and sold,
And gained new influence, and amassed more gold;
For all things prospered with him, and he grew
A man of weight amongst the simple few,
Seared it might be in heart, yet upright, kind, and true.

And round his hearth a fairy band was seen
Of infant loveliness, or on the green
Sporting beneath the apple−boughs, where oft
Was heard the cuckoo's voice, or dove's more soft,
Or on the flowery bank, or in the dell,
Where rippling streams were wont to sink and swell.
A lovely band they were, and full of glee,
Rich in the bloom of untamed infancy.
Sweet liberty 'twas yet their bliss to boast,
No native tone, no inborn gladness lost
Thought was just leading through their infant minds
That endless clue that human knowledge winds,
While vague conclusions, such as nature draws,
Awoke some glimmerings of effect and cause.
But feeling, in her wayward wild career,
Had far outstripped stern wisdom, even here.
For theirs were looks of beauty flashing bright,
And waves of raven−hair as dark as night,
And wreathing curls around their brows of snow,
And rosy smiles that quickly come and go,
With some faint touch of mournfulness the while,
As if those fair lips might not always smile;
And the deep shadow of their soft dark eyes
More of tenderness than men deem wise.

Henry, the oldest, and the only son,

His race of classic lore had just begun.
The reverend pastor of a neighbouring church
Deigned to conduct his mind in its research;
And well he taught his daily tasks, and heard
His pupil parse, and construe every word.
But had he watched him more, that reverend man
Would much have marvelled, one who learned to scan
Should learn to moralize almost as soon,
And pause as oft to gaze upon the moon
With mournful eye half dimmed by gathering tears,
And brow of thought too earnest for his years.
Yes, it was sad, yet beautiful to see
How learned that boy deep sorrow's mystery,
Dreaming of his lost mother and her grave,
Till memory's tide swept o'er him like a wave,
And all things present vanished from his view,
While fancy framed a world less cold and true.

Whence came such thoughts? He had been taught to plough,
To ride, to measure land, to reap, and sow,
And once he loved the farmer's life so free,
And nothing but a farmer's boy would be.
Yet lately had he looked on rustic toil
With something haughty on his brow the while,
Deeming such occupation mean, compared
With reading Virgil, or the Grecian bard.
Whence came such thoughts? There was a secret store,
A precious pile of circulating lore
Brought by his aunt from the next market town;
And every week a fresh supply came down.
These had he found, and greedily devoured,
While the sweet poison o'er his bosom poured.
Here had he learned what time could ne'er unteach,
By all that sage might say, or pastor preach;
And, absent, moody, dreamer as he was,
His aunt looked on, nor knew to check the cause.

Matilda Herbert was more fair than wise,
She had not dim, but undiscerning eyes.
Books were to her amusement, nothing more,
To kill the weary time she read them o'er.
So that a maiden loved, a hero bled,
Enough for her, the volume soon was read.
She had been trained in city schools, and thought
Good manners should at any price be bought,
Good clothing and good looks beyond even these,
Nor failed good furniture her eye to please.
Thus she looked down upon the farmer's home,
And deemed it much to quit the town, and come
To scenes so humble, rustic, and obscure,
Which, but for novels, she could ne'er endure.

Still she was kind, and had the heart to love
Sweet children, if they would but learn to move
Softly and gracefully, and curtsy low,
And go about as well−bred children go.
'Twas in such teaching, here she found a band
Of idle rebels under her fair hand.
Nature was yet too strong within their hearts,
For all to learn at once their different parts,
And scorn crept in sometimes, and marred the rule
She sought to establish in her polished school;
And they rushed forth, when hours of play came round,
Like pent−up torrents, with such bursts of sound
From silvery voices, and such laughter wild,
As left small hope to make them soft or mild.

Martha, the oldest girl, with auburn hair
In close crisp curls around her cheek so fair,
Rosy, and dimpled o'er with smiles of glee,
The worst of all that rebel band was she.
For if one moment she looked grave or shy,
Some frolic fun flashed from her hazel eye,
Or mimic majesty set forth the grace
With which her aunt embellished all her ways.
Yet was she grave sometimes—by Henry's side,
And to be near him was her joy and pride;
Grave—for deep earnest love is ever so,
And she had learned this tenderest love to know.
To share his sport was bliss enough for her,
Yet much she strove his sorrows too to share;
And oft would check her mirth, to think, and pause,
But ne'er could fully comprehend their cause.
The world to her was all so fair and bright,
Its petty cares so transient and so light;
No thought had she for maladies of mind,
While those she loved were happy, good, and kind.
Thus when her brother's moody fit came on,
And she beheld him wandering all alone,
She ran to join him, that he might not be
So lonely, and so wrapt in mystery.
Then would she tell him sportive tales, and gay,
And try to win him to his favourite play,
Till he became a wiser, happier boy,
And smiled again with gratitude and joy.

Thus the twain roamed together through the fields,
Reaping the golden fruit that nature yields
From summer flowers, and leaves, and murmuring rills,
And purple tints upon the distant hills;
From all things pure, and beautiful, and bright,
Reaping a perfect harvest of delight.

Lucy was next in age, too young to roam
Wide as they wandered from their father's home;
Too delicate her frame, too slightly cast,
To bear the roughness of a single blast.
She was a tall pale girl, with thoughtful eyes,
Of that dark blue we gaze on with surprise
To find them not more dark, so deep the shade
By the soft waving of their lashes made.
Her forehead was like moonlight, high, and fair,
Gleaming beneath the shadow of her hair—
Cloud−coloured hair, that floated round her brow
Like fleecy vapours over hills of snow,
Her mother's smile she wore, her look of truth,
With all the touching tenderness of youth,
And something mournful too beyond her years,
That almost moved the observant eye to tears.
She was a calm, sweet child, like a young dove
Pining at heart for its lost mother's love;
Love was her element, nor could she live
Without this richest of all boons to give.
She would have loved her aunt, and often tried,
When evening came, to nestle to her side;
Till quick repulse forbade the child to press
So closely as to spoil her silken dress.
Then would she sit apart, and wait, and watch
Some glimpse of her dear father's form to catch,
Or run to meet him with extended arms,
And that fond look the lonely heart that warms.
She was so like her mother. He could bear
To meet each day's returning weight of care;
But he was melted by this tenderness,
And almost wished the child would love him less.
Still would he press her kindly to his breast,
And on his bosom lay her head to rest,
Smooth her soft hair, and kiss her gentle brow,
Wishing she ne'er might live his grief to know.
Vain wish! In lieu of the sad tears he shed
Alone, at midnight, by her infant bed,
He should have taught her lips the words of prayer,
And shielded his sweet flower by more than mortal care.

Helen, the youngest, who shall paint her form?
What line so delicate, what tints so warm,
As those that marked, in childhood's happy time,
Her beaming beauty ere it reached its prime?
Health never glowed beneath a fairer cheek,
Nor deeper blushes feeling's power could speak,
Nor Grecian sculptor e'er portrayed a face
More perfect in its symmetry and grace.
Her brow was queen−like, and her raven hair
In glossy bands lay smoothly parted there,

Save when the unconquered impulse of her will
Sent her young steps careering o'er the hill,
Free as the wandering winds, for none could say,
With hope to be obeyed, "here should they stay."
Her lips were like a Hebe's, but her eye—
'Twas there her beauty's witchery seemed to lie—
Deep, dark, intelligent, with such a blaze
Of living light as mocked the observer's gaze.
High was her intellect, her genius bold
Had been imperious, had her heart been cold;
And none had hoped her haughty soul to tame,
Save for the fleeting blush, that went and came,
And mist of girlish tears, that often showed
Her heart was yet more feminine than proud.
Music to her was rapture. Not a flower
Bloomed on earth's bosom, but it had the power
To move her soul to gladness, and her hand,
Quick in its imitative art, she could command
To do whate'er her fertile fancy planned.

Who could behold her with a parent's love,
Nor deem her born all rustic cares above?
Proud was her lady−aunt to show the child,
Nor with less pride her father looked, and smiled;
Yet something touched his heart with secret fear
That all these gifts'might prove her greater snare.
How could he save her? Sometimes he would check
The impetuous pride that raised her haughty neck,
Sometimes would harshly speak, and sternly look,
Or meet her quick success with cold rebuke.
But he forgot there was one only cure,
One only antidote both safe and sure;
For human weakness, or for human pride,
Through this world's wilderness, one only guide.

Thus they grew up around him, fair, and free,
Like flowers of summer round some goodly tree.
Nor knew he then, or cared not, if he knew,
How full of weeds the soil in which they grew.
He saw their bright luxuriance. Would it last?
Would their green stems break with the autumn blast?
He asked not, for his bosom's grief had grown
A sort of listless, melancholy tone,
Pervading life, and thus the world passed by,
Its lights and shades unnoticed by his eye.

Yet were not all things quite indifferent grown;
One spring of feeling closed, its force was thrown
Into another channel, most extreme
In its wide difference from his early dream.
When o'er his path the light of life had set,

Deep in his heart he nursed each fond regret,
Too sacred to bring forth to public gaze;
And thus he walked in his accustomed ways,
And mixed with other men, and bought, and sold,
Forcing his mind to calculate his gold:
And there arose a sort of inward joy
From out such calculations, that would buoy
His spirit up; until at length he deemed
His life less wearisome than once it seemed.

It was a stirring time in Britain then,
War was abroad, and all true Englishmen
Were called to nerve themselves in heart, or hand,
To vindicate their laws, or guard their land.
And over this green isle of beauty came
The war−trump, and the scarlet vest of fame,
The prancing charger, and the rattling drum,
Breaking our rural silence with the hum
Of stranger voices, and of restless feet,
That trod our village pathways like a street.
Then ran the village maid all unabashed
To see the glittering arms, that gleamed, and clashed,
While rustic youths forsook the tardy plough,
The soldier's nobler exercise to know.

It was a stirring time for Britain then;
The conqueror's hostile fleet was on the main,
Invasion threatened, and the eastern shore
With many a tented field was studded o'er.
Dire were the tidings brought by every post,
Of troops surrendering, and of armies lost;
Yet woke the war−cry from beleagured ground,
And bloody field, with glory in its sound,
And gentle eyes awhile forgot to weep,
So strong the patriot call—so loud and deep.
And Britain answered from her northern dales,
Her peaceful hamlets, and her southern vales;
Her yeoman bands forsook their flocks, and rose
With sword in hand, to guard their country's cause.
The w aving plume, the glittering helm and spear,
With bold defiance of all doubt and fear,
Dazzling the wary, deafening the distressed,
Stunning the voice of pity in the breast;
Till war became a sort of demon−god,
And men could bleed and worship under his fierce rod.

Nor was it glory's brazen voice alone
That drowned the notes of pity's feebler tone,
Keen avarice, too, with tearless eye, looked on.
And men who would have mourned a single death,
A single wound, if near their native hearth,

Grew callous to the groans of thousands, where
The fiend of battle drove his blood−stained car.
That battle−field was distant, and that groan
Came not across the deep—was not their own.
But all their own the yellow grain that grew
Deepening in golden beauty to their view,
Their own the wealth that British produce made,
While ports were closed, and strict embargoes laid
On importations from the hostile shore.
And thus their greedy gains they counted o'er,
Blessing themselves for prosperous men in trade,
Because they doubled what they once had made;
While breathing sometimes just a passing sigh,
For those who fought abroad, and needs must die.

Was William Herbert such a man as these?
Why question we? Our simple tale agrees
With other tales of human nature told,
How grows the insidious love and thirst of gold.
Yet let us vindicate his name again,
From taint of avarice, that foulest stain.
He was no miser, but he knew that wealth
Though it could neither purchase life, nor health,
Nor peace of mind—could purchase good esteem
Before the world, could make the humble seem
Exalted, and the silent sufferer blest,
Softening the pillow of the sore distressed.
Thus, though he truly grieved such tales to hear
Of wide destruction from the fields of war,
Yet fired with that old−fashioned patriot zeal,
That but for one dear spot of earth can feel,
Deeming each Frenchman too a deadly foe,
Created, formed, and fated to be so,
That death most glorious for one's country's good,
(That country England, always understood,)
How could he, burning with this patriot fire,
A lower price for English grain desire?

No. He was like mankind. No whit more wise,
The specious seeming often mocked his eyes.
Then let us turn again to that fair page,
Where infancy was ripening into age
Around his hearth, and watch the tide of time
Flow brightly on, ere youth had reached its prime.

Oh, thou art beautiful, sweet spring of life!
Unsullied by disease, unworn by strife!
The heart yearns over thee, to keep thee pure,
That thy fresh loveliness may but endure,
That storms may never reach thee, nor the blight
Of sin or sorrow check thy blossoms bright.

The heart yearns over thee, for never more,
When once thy bloom is gone, can time restore
The rose or lily to thy faded cheek,
Or wake thy voice in youth's glad tones to speak.
Couldst thou be ever thus, life were too fair,
This world too lovely, and too free from care.
By the clear light of thine unruffled brow,
Thy soft eyes gleaming under lids of snow,
The dewy freshness of thy lip, thy hair
Floating and free, unsilvered o'er by care,
Thy sportive step, thy dimpling smile, thy song,
The silvery tones that to thy voice belong,
But, most of all, by thy strong power to trust,
To admire and vindicate whate'er is just,
By all the golden hopes that bloom in youth,
And by thy love, unshaken as thy truth,
I would implore thee, ere that youth is past,
And thy frail bark on life's rough ocean cast,
To dedicate the gifts in childhood given,
With all their freshness and their bloom, to heaven.

BOOK IV.

THE trees that flourished round the farmer's home
Were bright with verdure, and the gales that come
Laden with summer perfume, softly blew
And woke the early flowers 'mid summer dew.
Green was the grassy plot before that door,
The sloping border richly spangled o'er;
For nice the eye that watched that garden now,
And choice the flowers her care had brought to blow.
While all within the rural dwelling too
Assumed a look less rustic, and more new.
For there were carpets wrought by foreign looms,
And costly curtains to the ancient rooms,
Save to one window, narrow−paned, and low,
Whose verdant screen was still allowed to grow.
There rose the cherry−tree with blossoms white,
Spreading its page of promise to the sight,
While on each side there grew a rosy bower.
With sweetbriar wakening to the balmy shower,
And darker jessamine its stars displayed,
Gleaming and twinkling through the leafy shade,
Like fairy moonlight; and above them all,
The ambitious ivy climbed along the wall.
Within that lattice low, a clustering vine
Was trained, and taught its tendrils green to twine
Into a leafy canopy, and throw
Its soft cool shadow on the room below,
Tempering the noontide radiance of the sun,
When o'er that rustic roof his light was thrown.
It was a wide bow−window, never now
Hath modern taste a scene like that to show;
But such a scene for moonlight! There would come
Pale glancing beams into that ancient room,
With deepest shade from venerable trees
That slowly waved their branches in the breeze,
While over the green turf and silvery dew
Each stately stem a line of darkness threw.
And then the stillness! Not a sound was there,
But the low whisper of the evening air,
And shivering poplar, with its trembling leaves,
That oft a tale of midnight mystery weaves.

Who could have lingered long mid such a scene
Nor yet imagination's slave have been?
Alas! there dwelt, within that charmed bower,
Hearts all too capable to feel her power.

Nor was it in this lovely room alone
That comfort reigned, or taste; for there was thrown
An air of beauty over every one:
Something that bade you welcome—woo'd your stay,
And seemed your lingering footsteps to delay;
Something that new−built rooms can never bring
With all their pomp of modern furnishing
To bear upon the feelings, or to pay
For half the pains it costs to make them gay.

Yet looked the aunt with discontented brow
Upon these pleasant rooms, they were so low.
It was no use to paper or to paint,
The walls were old, the mantel−pieces quaint,
The entrance mean; she never saw a door
That looked so like the master's being poor.
Entrance was every thing. There was no space
To meet a guest with courtesy or grace,
No drawing−room! She really never knew
A house where comforts were so small and few.

"Comforts!" the farmer thought, "with all this stir
I see them not so plenteous as they were.
Yet be it so. These trifles touch not me,
So that the children and their aunt agree."
For they would sometimes break from her control,
And tell him tales that vexed his very soul,
Of idle strife, in which they scarce were brought
At last to yield, and rarely deemed they ought.
Yet was each cause of contest so minute,
No sapient judge might settle the dispute.
Thus would they teaze the parent's spirit more,
Until, in hope some quiet to restore,
He sent his daughters to a distant school,
To learn submission to a wiser rule.

But ere they went, a most important cause
For consultation, made the parties pause.
Where should they send them to? The aunt believed
Her brother oft in his sage views deceived.
Thus would she guide his judgment by her own,
That bright results her happier hopes might crown.
Good schools were all her theme. The farmer, too,
Sought a good school to send his daughters to.

But never yet was word less understood,
Than that plain word of simple meaning—good.
Good is to many what they most desire,
To others, only what will raise them higher.
And thus the aunt believed those schools were good,
Where vulgar persons never might intrude,

Where terms were high, and ladies all were taught
To sit, and stand, and curtsy as they ought,
To sing with skill, to touch the harp with grace,
To paint a landscape, or a human face,
To speak Italian, French, and sometimes Greek,
To write in angles sharp, and lines oblique.
These were the schools Matilda Herbert meant
By good, and here the wondering girls were sent.
For she was one who brought her ends about,
By talking long, and wearing patience out;
And little knew her brother of the skill
To win or wind a woman to his will.
Thus inly wishing that her words would cease,
He oft resigned, for very love of peace.

And now, the girlish band of idlers gone,
The farmer turned for pleasure to his son.
He saw him grown a tall and comely youth,
His eye intelligent, and full of truth,
His step erect and bold, his noble face
And forehead high, adorned with manly grace;
And he would fondly call him to his side,
To give him counsel, with a secret pride,
Even in the very faults he seemed to blame.
Labouring the young aspirant to reclaim
From love of vanities, and useless books,
But most from love of gentlemanly looks.
Then would he talk to him of fields of corn,
What hay must soon be mown, what sheep be shorn,
Bid him bestir himself amongst the men,
Their admiration and respect to gain,
Showing what farmers should be proud to show,
How much the master's abler hand can do.

Thus would he counsel, and the youth appeared
At times attentive to the truths he heard,
But oftener pleased with visions of his own,
While far away his wandering thoughts had flown.
He knew his father had an upright heart,
Wise, and well−meaning, in the humble part
He acted as a farmer, and a friend,
And sage advice in common things could lend;
But did the parent e'er presume to say
The youthful dreamer idly spent his day,
Did he presume his pleasures to direct,
Call them expensive, or appear to expect
More actual service from his agile hand,
Then did the insulted boy indignant stand,
Demanding if his father wished to have
His son to be his servant, or his slave.

Yet was it youth's quick fire alone that woke
In Henry's breast, when thus his father spoke.
One moment, and the impetuous flame expired,
And he was all a parent's love desired,
Prompt to assist, and willing to obey,
Where'er affection pointed out the way;
But where he deemed the elder judgment erred,
Leaning to notions ignorant or absurd,
'Twas there he stood his ground, as striplings can,
In all the incipient majesty of man.

Oh, worst attendant on advancing mind
When children fail to speak in accents kind;
Fail to respect old age, or hoary hair,
Spurning the precepts of parental care,
Because the light of modern lore has shed
A fancied halo round the youthful head!
Could the fond mother, when she soothes her child
With patient brow, and voice so soft and mild,
Answering in gentle tones its fretful cry,
Singing, through midnight hours, its lullaby—
Or could the father, his strong heart subdued
To woman's weakness by its playful mood,
Yielding to love the time of needful rest,
That he may lull the prattler on his breast,
Watching the feverish tint upon its cheek,
With fears too anxious, heart too faint, to speak—
Feeling that this wide world, with all its wealth,
Has not one blessing like the hope of health
To that beloved child, that suffering lies
Lovelier than all earth's beauty to their eyes—
Could they believe that child would ever live
The scornful look, the harsh reply to give,
Would they not love, and watch, and serve it less?
No, for a parent's love was sent to bless
Beyond all calculation—all reward—
The feeble steps of infancy to guard.
It is the only love to mortals given
That asks no recompense on this side heaven!

One year elapsed before the girls returned
To tell their wondering father what they learned.
And Martha hailed with joy the promised day,
Her smile than all the rest more bright and gay.
For she who never loved that city−school,
Had broken half its laws, and spurned its rule.
Twelve months she knew her bondage was to last,
Nor cared she how the stated time was passed,
So that the moments flew, the day arose
Quickly, and hastened to a speedy close.
No deep−stained character she bore away,

Her faults were heedlessness, and love of play.
She was incapable, her teachers said,
Sadly deficient, both in hand and head,
She had no intellect, at least not much;
Perchance they found not which the key to touch.
For she had been, with all her follies wild,
At home the shrewdest and the quickest child,—
Quick to perceive, and pertinent of speech,
Teaching herself what no one else could teach.
And now she runs through all her favourite haunts,
Setting her will against her lady−aunt's,
When checked in frolic fun, or sagely told
She must not gambol now, she is too old.
Yet, spite of boarding−school, and spite of age,
And spite of maxims both refined and sage,
With Henry's dog she scours the garden round,
And clears the border at a single bound,
Breaking the last rare plant her aunt has bought,
Raising it up again as quick as thought,
Courting her bantams with their snow−white brood,
Casting them down a perfect pile of food,
Chasing the pony round the paddock green,
Where oft her infant steps at play were seen.
It was the very fulness of her joy
That sent her forth, more like some untamed boy,
Than school−bred lady just returned from town,
With well−dressed hair, and fashionable gown.

Yet was not Martha always light and gay,
No real idler, though so fond of play.
Her heart had its warm gushes of delight,
Which passed away, like beams of morning light,
Leaving a day, not cloudy, but serene,
Whose softened splendour mellowed every scene.
She was no idler, and her willing hand
In household duty she would oft command,
Provoking from her aunt a scornful smile,
Yet by her father loved, and praised the while.

"It was thy mother's custom," he would say,
"Walk, Martha dear, in all the lovely way
She chose on earth, for pattern is there none
More pure, or bright, for thee to make thine own."

Thus Martha learned, though none was near to ask,
Each servant's character, and separate task,
Spoke kindly to the feeble, while she strove
To make them early rise, and quickly move.
Nor was the cottage of the poor forgot,
Well had her mother taught each lowly spot,
Where dwelt the aged, or where mourned the sad,

And she too sought them out, with looks so glad,
It cheered their very hearts, they often said,
And often prayed for blessings on her head,
That one so young and beautiful should come
To soothe the widow in her silent home,
That one so blest, so happy, should endure
To sit and talk so kindly to the poor

And with such occupations came at last
A graver tone o'er her young spirit cast.
Watching the sorrows of the indigent,
This searching query through her bosom went—
"Why am I favoured more than these? am I
More fit to live, or more prepared to die?
Yet let me learn this lesson from their grief,
Those who enjoy, should ever yield relief;
And those, who most abundantly possess,
Should use their blessings, only more to bless."

Henry observed his sister's opening mind
Grow more enlightened, serious, and refined;
And while her busy hand the needle plied,
He read some favourite volume by her side;
Choosing, to please her, what possessed a tone
Of healthy feeling so much like her own,
Reserving for the silent hours of night
What moved his soul with more intense delight—
Plays—poetry—deep passion's burning page,
That Martha called, fit only for the stage,
Peeping askance, with laughter−loving eye,
When reached her brother's voice the climax high;
Till with a dubious look, half smile, half frown,
He closed the page, and laid the volume down.
Then would he touch, with happier skill, the flute,
Well tuned his sister's silvery voice to suit,
And she would follow him in tones as clear,
Led by her quick, but yet untutored ear.
While far away, along the shadowy grove,
Sent the sweet melody its tale of love.
Thus passed the evening hours, and day's sweet close
Woo'd not two kindlier spirits to repose,
Found not two hearts more free from earthly care,
Than theirs, who tuned their "nativewood−notes" there.

Years passed away, and from the town there came
The younger girls, still fair, but not the same.
Helen, more changed than Lucy, looked around
As if she scarcely knew her native ground.
All was so rustic, some things were so mean,
She never thought her father's home had been
So little like a gentleman's abode,

"And then again that stupid line of road!
Why not a sweep?"
The farmer looked, and saw
'Twas easy there a gentler line to draw.

"Why not an avenue? Those trees cut down
Would leave a road for every passing clown;
Here **we** might come, between these elms so dark,
That stand so well, and make the field a park."

"So have I thought," the echoing aunt exclaimed,
"A thousand times. And now the thing is named,
Why not a new front door? It really is
A bar to entrance, having one like this."

The farmer gave not, nor refused assent,
While round his grounds the innovators went;
But when they touched that once−loved scene of peace—
The ancient house—he found his patience cease.
That door! oh, blessed portal! once had been
Her favourite seat, whose steps had crossed that green
When to his home she came a willing bride,
His household comforts all to her untried.

"Touch not that door," he said, "yon trees may fall,
Yon fence may vanish, or yon garden−wall,
But come not near the house—I charge you not,
It is from all your schemes, a sacred spot.
Enough, and more, has surely now been done
To make it look more like a modern one,
And if one single stone be moved away,
The whole shall fall. Remember what I say."

"The very thing we want," the aunt replied,
And whispering drew more near to Helen's side.
"Move but that stone, how happy should we be
The end of all these wretched rooms to see;
These passages—so narrow, dark, and small,
Instead of one good spacious entrance−hall.
I know the landlord never would object,
When houses fall, what else can they expect?
And ours is falling fast, do as we may,
The old damp walls will crumble to decay.
A house has just been built for farmer Bell,
And why not build a house for us as well?"

Thus spoke the aunt, but in an under tone,
Not daring quite to make her wishes known
In all their force, exuberance, and extent,
Yet shrewd conjecture gathered what she meant.

It was the first idea of the kind
That ever reached the farmer's niusing mind.
It seemed worth cherishing, so strange, and new,
As thus it rose upon his mental view.
For he was quickly pained by outward things
That rudely touched his bosom's inmost springs,
And while they talked, it vexed his soul to find
They knew no beauty in that house enshrined.

"Then be it so," he thought, "that ancient wall,
With its sweet roses and green leaves, may fall.
They heed it not, and I can bear the blow;
I have borne heavier strokes than that ere now.
True, I have been within that home of rest,
Beyond all human calculation, blest.
But there I've known calamity as well,
Deeper than ever human tongue could tell.
And while that window with its vine, appears
To tell me of the bliss of early years,
It tells me also of my nightly tears;
Till the remembrance, with its sting of pain,
Will sometimes force those tears to flow again.
And shall I cancel all that scene of joy,
This ceaseless pang of memory to destroy?"

Vain thought! But still it lingered in his brain,
And came, and went, and still returned again.
And there were many voices, quick, and clear,
That in their various tones assailed his ear
All on one side—"That ancient house must fall!"
So he gave way, at last, before them all.

The farmer's landlord was a liberal man,
Who listened kindly to his tenant's plan,
He knew the low−roofed tenement was old,
And heard, believing, what the farmer told,
Of crumbling wall, dilapidated roof,
Of casement neither wind nor water proof;
And pitying much the occupants within,
He gave his word—the builders should begin.
All that would make the house substantial, large,
Good, and respectable, should be his charge;
But if the farmer's thoughts were raised more high,
His own resources must the rest supply.

Then came the architect, with curious look
Scanning that ancient building like a book,
Reading the worth of every inch of wall,
Lintels, and door−posts, windows, beams, and all.
Yes, every pane of that low window made
Part of his calculation—'twas his trade.

And followed soon the unrelenting band
Of sturdy workmen, each with able hand,
And murderous weapon, eager to destroy
That lovely scene of well−remembered joy.
Who struck the first, the farmer never knew,
He saw them all prepared, and then withdrew,
Wending through fields of tufted corn and hay,
With his old dog, their oft−accustomed way;
Till heightening day the hour of noon had told,
And he the work of ruin must behold.

'Tis a sad sight, though often seen on earth,
The ruin of the place that gave us birth—
Total destruction of that actual scene—
Razed from the ground, as if it ne'er had been.
'Tis not alone the old protecting wall
That sinks before us, as the fragments fall;
But even the space we used to call our own
Is mixed with common air—dissolved, and gone.
We know the flowers of spring will bloom again,
The woodland warblers will renew their strain,
The stately tree that falls will leave behind
Some seed, or stem, or sapling of its kind;
All things that e'er on earth's fair bosom grew,
Time, in some form or likeness, will renew:
Even dearest friends, whose early troth was given,
Severed below, may live to meet in heaven.
But never more around our native hearth,
When once destroyed, can life restore its mirth.
All—all is gone—that well−remembered door,
The sound of welcome feet along that floor,
The window where we sat in musing hour,
Watching the moonbeams, listening to the shower,
The twilight shade of that sequestered spot,
The Sabbath evening worship, ne'er forgot;
The chamber of our childhood where we slept,
And, still more sacred, where we oft have wept
Tears by the nearest friend unseen—unknown—
Hoarding the treasure of our grief alone—
All—all have vanished, by one stroke of fate:
Man may destroy, but cannot recreate.

BOOK V.

NOW rose a stately fabric to the view,
With front commanding, and with aspect new;
In bold advance upon the verdant green,
Where once the snowdrop's silvery bells were seen.
Still waved the ash her pendent branches wide,
Those prouder walls, that loftier roof beside;
Still hung the elm her canopy of green,
That sheltered once, now but adorned the scene;
Still spread the lilach, and laburnum bright,
Their flowery scented garlands to the sight;
Still glowed the border with its roseate bloom,
And still the sweetbriar sent its rich perfume
Around, abroad, upon the ambient air,
Mingling with zephyrs cool, and odours rare.
No more the ancient, lowly door was seen,
Inviting every step that crossed the green.
But now a noble portal seemed to guard
That hall, where base intrusion was debarred,
Where smoothly swept a graceful line of road,
As if to point the gentleman's abode.

Why not? The British tradesman has his box,
Where coaches wait, and liveried servant knocks.
The man of looms may boast his costly wine,
And ask the magnates of the land to dine,
May buy the fields by hoarded items won,
And purchase next, a title for his son.
Who grudges him his carpets, or his plate,
His grounds, his green−house, on his entrance−gate?
Who grudges him his freedom to bestride
The high−bred horse he ne'er has learned to ride?
Who grudges him, through all this generous land,
The hard−earned privilege of looking grand?

But should the farmer, too aspiring grown,
Dare but to lay his spade and sickle down,
Or, moving onward with the march of mind,
Leave his dull habits and rude haunts behind—
Should he presume with honest gains to buy
What city weavers undisturbed enjoy,
Loud is the outcry then—"Put down! put down!
Bind to his native earth the adventurous clown,
Wring from his hold this luxury and excess,
Double his rent, or make his profits less!"

Sons of the Soil! ye were not born to be

Servants, or suppliants to the proud and free.
Pleased with the sunshine of a few short years,
Heedless, I grant, your lavish waste appears;
But you have claims upon your native land
No patriot bosom ever could withstand.
And should your virtues vanish from her soil,
Vain were the strife of manufacturing toil
Along the trampled mead, and smoking plain,
To wake the glory of that land again.

I am a woman, and I must not say
What statesmen should do, or what monarchs may:
Yet would I ask, what nation could be great,
Whose land was sacrificed to serve the state?
Whose fertile bosom, with its robe of health,
Its fruits, its flowers, its fields of golden wealth,
Were seared and blasted, that the fiery glow
Of moving Hecklas o'er those fields might go?
Scorching the bloom of paradise beneath,
Sending afar their sulphur−tainted breath,
Uprooting all her rural green abodes,
To make the landscape one vast map of roads—
One universal workship, roaring wide,
Between the realm of waves on either side—
One mighty engine, labouring, forcing, heating,
With its ten thousand human pulses beating.

Is this the land on which a God of love
Looks down approving, from his throne above?
This the reflection of his glory, given
To show mankind some transient glimpse of heaven?
'Tis not that hearts amid the bustling throng
May not to heaven's own sacred fold belong,
But does this life, by restless millions led,
Promote the cause for which a Saviour bled?
Can mere industry, or mechanic art,
Implant his image in the human heart?
No; let the furnace glow, the engine roar,
The living meteor glide from shore to shore;
If human reason finds no time to pause,
To think of God, or contemplate his laws—
If human love, tossed in the general strife,
Holds not the anchor of eternal life—
If locked in actual labour of the hand,
Untaught by wisdom, ignorant we stand—
Ignorant of all true knowledge, or the sense
Of good and evil, with their consequence;
How shall we prosper as a nation? How
In aught that dignifies our nature, grow?
In aught that gives true riches, how increase?
In aught that satisfies, how find our peace?

Pass we to other themes. A stately dome
Was that which now the farmer called his home;
And all sat down with well−contented air
To watch improvement still progressing there.
The aunt looked on, and, smiling, gave command,
While Martha, with her never−tiring hand,
Inspecting each apartment, drawer, and shelf,
Consulting others, acted for herself.
Lucy was wrapt in thought. Above, below,
Visions of future comfort seemed to grow,
But while she mused, a sigh would sometimes tell
The past to her, was yet remembered well.
Helen cared little for the humble past,
Her soul's proud anchor in the future cast.
That unknown future seemed a world of wealth,
From whence she drew for her young spirit's health;
For satisfying draught had never yet
Passed her warm lips. Her morning sun might set.
Were there not brighter worlds to win elsewhere,
Beyond the circle of her native sphere?
Genius, that wildfire of the brain, was hers;
Taste, that too oft the impossible prefers;
Ambition, searching for some untried good;
With vague emotions, still less understood;
Pleasures, and pains, a vacillating host,
That never yet the vulgar pathway crossed;
All these, implanted in her ardent mind,
If not more happy, made her more refined;
Gave to her spirit, even in early youth,
Its quenchless thirst for beauty, more than truth.
And with this impulse came—how oft it comes,
Disdain for humble means, and lowly homes,
And all the intercourse of rural life,
With homely matron, or domestic wife.
These Helen shunned, scarce wishing to offend,
Yet wishing less to call such neighbour friend.
Her friends were in the books of taste she loved,
The woods, the hills, the valleys where she roved,
The landscapes she designed, the scenes she drew
From her own bright imagination new,
The masters old, whose pictures decked the wall,
Where stood her mirror, richly framed, and tall,
Reflecting in its light her Hebe form,
With Grecian forehead, but with blushes warm—
Too warm, too true, to woman's early prime,
For sculptured goddess of the olden time.
Nor less her passion for the sister art,
Whose power more quickly thrills the human heart.
Martha was musical, and had the skill
To sing and warble like a woodland rill;

But Helen loved the science, and her ear
Was pained by sounds to untaught minstrels dear.
Thus many a joy her happier sister knew,
Was unrevealed to her exalted view;
And while on Mlartha's brow contentment sat,
Helen aspired to share some loftier fate.
With deeper fondness for poetic lore,
Henry was formed to live with nature more;
With his own favourite Burns, by wood and stream,
Of summer birds and autumn gales to dream.
While Lucy, her own feelings unexpressed,
Seemed but to smile or suffer for the rest.

Yet did the happy band united rove,
Differing in nature, but the same in love,
Along the flowery paths of early life,
Free from its cankering care, and sordid strife.
If melancholy sometimes touched their brows,
'Twas but as evening shadows touch the rose;
Its bloom unsullied meets the morning light,
And their young hearts soon glowed with new delight.

The farmer's mansion now was all complete,
With spacious hall untrod by vulgar feet,
With Grecian portico, and pillars high,
Around whose base no servile weeds might lie.
And not the architect more proudly scanned
The goodly edifice his taste had planned,
Than looked the inmates on their work within,
Where costly furniture well−placed was seen.

"Costly indeed!" the farmer oft would say:
"'Tis yours to choose; my part, alas! to pay."

Yet even to him, insensibly, had grown
The list of things he longed to call his own;
For one still brought another in its train,
If this was elegant, must that be plain?
Good taste forbade—"If modern couches here,
Why spoil the whole, by those old curtains there?
If music in this deep recess we place,
A handsome sideboard must the other grace."
Thus grew the scene, as all such scenes will grow;
Though few philosophers can tell us how:
Thus swelled the catalogue, and rose the tide
Of tradesmen's bills, already laid aside.
What boots the wealth by ceaseless toil attained,
The pomp, the splendour, by ambition gained,
If lost, or hidden from admiring gaze,
Through scenes retired our silent steps we trace:
If rural shades conceal it from the world,

Vain, too, the hero's conquering flag unfurled;
As well might cankerworm or moth destroy,
If all unseen our treasures we enjoy.

Thus thought Matilda Herbert, as she saw
The carpets spread, without a single flaw,,
The furniture untouched, unsullied all
The paint and papering of each well−built wall.
But while she mused, behold a splendid sight!
The landlord's carriage, with his ponies white,
And brisk out−riders, old, and young, and gay,
And ladies mounted on their pafreys grey.
A lordly troop. Who could the strangers be?
Would they all pass? Matilda watched to see.

And now a hurrying groom rides to the door,
And leaves this message—At the hour of four
The landlord's party will return and call,
Lord William Douglas, with his friends, and all.

"Now mercy on us!" cried the maiden aunt,
Lost to her dignity, "How much I want
Even yet to finish off the drawing−room.
Brother! young ladies! Henry! Martha! come,
There is no time to lose."
The news was told,
The farmer heard it with expression cold;
His sister wondered how such men were made,
So little natural feeling they betrayed.
No want, however, in the rest was seen,
Youth's own excitement, fear and joy between,
Sent them on errands vague, whose purpose strange
Each new idea had the power to change.
Martha alone with wonted method moved,
The bustling stir of active life she loved,
And while she wished for guests less grand than those,
The exertion pleased her better than the cause.

Henry declared he never would appear,
Not he indeed! Why should such guests come there?
Yet was he missing ere the appointed hour,
In secret yielding to the magic power
That ruled his toilet, where a charm was thrown
Around his form, not strictly nature's own.
'Twas Lucy's part to gather flowerets gay,
Contrast their tints, and form the rich bouquet;
But while her fingers trimmed the roses fair,
She quite forgot her own soft waving hair.
Not Helen thus unmindful. O'er her brow
The sable bands were smoothly taught to flow,
Leaving the outline of her Grecian head

In all its clsssic purity displaced.
Nor stooped that head to look on trifles low,
Her aunt, her sisters might their care bestow
On needful viands, or well−dusted chairs.
The books, the pictures, she alone prepares,
Spreads out the annuals, brings the engravings down,
With the last novel lately come from town,
Lays her portfolio just to catch the view,
Opens the music most approved and new,
Brings out the sofas farther from the wall,
Displaces chairs, and ottomans, that all
May wear an aspect more familiar,
As if the family lived always there.

And now at last, the eventful moment come,
Matilda Herbert hastens from her room,
With looks that seemed to say—"Well, this is life."
Yet how unlike to William Herbert's wife!
The guests arrive, what boots it here to say
How fair the ladies, or the men how gay,
How smoothly swept the graceful train along,
With those soft airs that to the great belong,
When high−born beauty seeks the lowly vale,
Or praises merit on an humble scale.
With restless steps from room to room they go,
The aunt conductress, eloquent, but slow,
Lest her deep curtains, or her paperings pale,
To catch some guest's admiring eye, should fail.

Vain hope delusive! What to them were all
The various colours blending on the wall?
More rare, and more attractive to their sight,
Was the cool dairy, and the milk so white,
The kitchen graced with pewter and with tin,
And the back−door, where fowls would fain come in—
Those pretty fowls the ladies loved to feed,
Casting them down sweet cakes instead of bread.
Pleased with the pastime, all things else forgot,
Perversely still they gathered round that spot,
While farming men passed out, and still they stood,
Charmed with the novelty of scenes so rude.

Amazed, indignant, looked Matilda then,
To see the rolling gait of those coarse men;
And, worse than all, the bucket's rattling sound
Assailed her ear with horror most profound.
She pleaded with her guests, entreated—prayed—
They would just saunter through the garden's shade.
At length, her purpose gained, she led the way,
And soon dispersing through the walks they stray.

The farmer with his landlord talked alone,
No servile meekness o'er his look was thrown,
No different smile he wore for titled dame,
In court, or market, he had been the same.
They spoke of business, and their looks were grave;
Yet all unlike the master, and the slave;
Each born to share a widely different lot,
Dependence on the other ne'er forgot.
Without his rents the landlord could not live,
And freely did the tenant toil, and give;
The farmer felt his station far below,
Yet owned a freeman's right to stay, or go.

How sped those moments to the fluttering throng,
Bright garden vistas, and green bowers among?
The proudest day that dawned on Helen—this
The hour most redolent of fancied bliss.
Lord William Douglas was an honoured name,
Known to the world, and could he be the same?
He was; and Helen heard him talk, and tell
Of battles fought, and wounds remembered well.
Battles? and he so young!—wounds? and so fair!
With princely hand, and waves of golden hair!
Tall and majestic was his martial mien,
In visions Helen such a form had seen.
What could induce him thus to condescend—
With his vast store of knowledge to unbend?
Say, was he all the courtly man he seemed?
No, of his distant native vale he dreamed;
And rural sights, and pastoral scenes, had power
To win his spirit back to childhood's hour.
Then would the pride of rank, the pomp of arms,
Lose in his eye their artificial charms;
Then would he cast the hero from his brow,
While o'er his lip truth's simple tide would flow..
And Helen listened, like a wood−nymph wild
Caught by some strain of music, soft, and mild.
Her eye intent, her rosy lips apart,
Her cheek suffused with blushes from her heart.

Soon passed that hour. The lordly train were gone,
The farmer's family were left alone;
And even those who wished them gone before
Felt a strange void when that bright scene was o'er.
Long did the aunt expatiate on their dress,
And sage opinion of its cost express;
While Martha, half admiring, half in doubt,
Hinted how strangely they had peeped about;
As if they felt they had the right to come
And see the furnishing of every room.

Then rose the warm defence on Helen's part,
With those keen jests that troubled Martha's heart;
For she was listening to the manly suit
Of one who stood no higher in repute
Than worthy tradesman of the neighbouring town,
And many a sneer upon his love was thrown.
Not by the farmer, for he knew him well,
And oft his worth and generous deeds would tell:
How he had fostered with parental care
His orphan sister, sickly, young, and fair;
How he had laboured to retrieve his name
From debts that darkened o'er his father's fame;
And how, before his fellow−men he stood,
With character unblemished, staunch, and good.

Such was the man who sued for Martha's hand,
Nor knew she how to yield, or to withstand.
He had her father's praise, and that was much,
But yet to woman's heart how keen the touch
Of sisters' satire, and of brother's scorn.
This she might brook—that never could be borne.
For they would talk, with many a droll grimace,
Of tapes, and trimmings, calicoes, and lace,
Of pence and halfpence, counted out with care,
And oftener still, of Gilpin's trip to Ware;
Till Martha caught the same infectious smile,
Though tears would sometimes dim her eyes the while.

At last she roused herself. This would not do—
Unworthy of her sex! unkind! untrue!
Would he have suffered insult on her name?
Deep answering blushes stained her cheek with shame.
This would not do She went at evening hour,
And found her brother in their favourite bower;
She saw him musing, lost in gloomy thought,
And wished some joyful tidings she had brought.

"Henry," she said, and kissed his mournful brow,
"What ails thee, dearest? Am I not to know?"

Henry replied, half angry, half distressed,
Some strange emotion labouring in his breast,
"My father tells me, Martha, we are wrong,
And have been quite mistaken all along,
About the expenses he has had to meet,
With lessening prices for his oats and wheat.
I asked him if he meant me still to live
Beneath his roof He would no answer give,
Nor seemed the idea willingly to come,
That I must sometime seek a separate home.
He spoke of all the cost this house had been,

The grounds without, the furniture within:
Would I could now call back the ancient one,
Or claim the portion of an only son!"

"Is this the case?" said Martha; "Then I know
At once, dear Henry, what I ought to do.
Smile not—yes, I will give you leave to smile,
And my fixed purpose will declare the while.
I love the man—at least, I think I could,
Who oft provokes your mirth in jesting mood;
And I will love him better, for I see
There is more need than once there seemed to be
For us to seek beyond our native hearth
Some lasting shelter, and some home on earth.
Yet, Henry dearest, grant me one request,
It is not much, to soothe a sister's breast;
I could not ask it, would your pleasures be
Curtailed in aught, for granting this to me.
But, my own brother, I have borne too much
Of that rude handling—that unfeeling touch,
That wounds the spirit."
"Martha, say no more."
He kissed her cheek, that burning tears fell o'er,
And promised faithfully, nor broke his word,
That from that hour his jest should ne'er be heard.

BOOK VI.

THERE are some minds that never feel their power
While beams the light of pleasure's sunny hour,
Unknown their strength to combat earthly ills,
While the sweet draught their cup of gladness fills.
Then are they sometimes vain, capricious too,
Uncertain, changeful, to themselves untrue,
The slightest breath disturbs them, and they fear,
Yet scarce know why, their onward course to steer.
But let the storm come darkening o'er their way,
No more amid the restless surf they play;
But sweeping forward on the foaming main,
Nor wind, nor wave, can stem their course again.

Martha was one of these, a sportive child,
A girl ungovernable, wayward, wild,
A woman sensitive, and quickly moved
By praise or censure from the few she loved.
Thus had her lover urged his suit in vain,
She yielded not, yet feared to give him pain.
One day relenting, pleased she heard him praised,
Another changed by laughter idly raised;
Her aunt's derision, and her sisters' scorn
Blighting the hopes of better feeling born.

But were they true, the tidings Henry told?
Her father suffering from his want of gold?
No power, no means, her brother's wish to grant—
Her sisters useless, and extravagant—
It was too true; her father now could raise
But half the income of more prosperous days;
And her strong purpose firmly fixed at last,
All weak misgivings to the winds she cast.
She could be happy, that she never feared,
With one whose goodness more and more endeared;
Her father's home would still be bright and gay,
For those who lingering in that home might stay;
But she, more blest, would hail the welcome thought,
Her bread should never by his toil be bought.

Henry was silent now, or kindly spoke,
For deeper thoughts within his bosom woke.
Lucy had seldom joined the unfeeling jest,
And Helen's scorn grew milder with the rest;
Ere came that day of mingled joy and pain,
The first link breaking in their household chain.
A few short weeks were left to Martha yet,

To teach her faithful memory to forget;
To build her future out of things unseen,
Her home without the garden, and the green;
To cast her hope's bright anchor in the sea,
And wait the issues of—uncertainty.

And now, to make the strengthening bond more close,
The prudent lover ventured to propose,
His orphan sister, as a guest, should come
To share the welcome of the farmer's home.
She came, and kindness and respect were paid,
Both warm and genuine, to the town−bred maid,
Whose fairy foot, small waist, and pallid cheek,
The tenderest mould of human form bespeak.
She was an orphan, left in childhood lone,
No mother's love around her cradle thrown,
Her helpless infancy her only dower.
And thus her brother, from its earliest hour,
In all things else a prudent man and sage,
Had watched too fondly o'er her tender age;
Had spared her youth with discipline to train,
And thus consigned her to a world of pain.
True, she appeared most gentle, kind, and fair,
As untried characters so often are;
But a spoiled child to feeble woman grown,
Let no man love, the cost will be his own.

It was the time for waving woods to show
The autumnal tints that deepen as they glow,
For golden grain to wave alone the field,
For orchard boughs their rosy fruit to yield;
And still the farmer joined the reapers' hand,
Sharing their labour with unsparing hand.
And Henry joined them too, but oftener strayed
To where his sisters wandered through the glade,
Seeking the hazel−nut, the purple sloe,
Or fruitful bramble with its prickly bough,
Or pausing by the brink of pebbly brook,
For social converse, or for idle book.
While Martha plied her needle by their side,
And oft to stay their rambling footsteps tried.

Here Henry found them, not like nymphs of old
Bathing their tresses in the fountain cold,
But laughing merrily with girlish glee,
His welcome form in rustic garb to see.
Then would they chide him to the field again,
And bid him hasten back to reap the grain.
Yet claim his aid to reach some loftier bough,
Or, o'er the brook, some stepping−stone to throw;
While feeble Emma, leaning on his arm,

Asked, without words, protection from all harm.
For she, unused to scenes so strange and wild,
Shrunk back from danger, like a timid child;
Declared she never could the streamlet pass,
And looked for poisonous adders in the grass.
While trembling, laughing, she would step within
The brook's clear margin, with her slipper thin,
Then say she needs must die, for never yet
Had she escaped from cold, with feet so wet.

Oh, pretty airs of female helplessness!
Weak in yourselves, what influence ye possess,
What power to win the lordly heart of man,
When neither common sense nor wisdom can.
Grant we, the charm of weakness is not all,
The foot that steps aside must needs be small.
Vain childish fear must tinge a lovely brown,
And fair must be the lip whence folly's accents flow.

'Twas thus the orphan, oft by Henry's side
Looked up imploring for his help to guide;
And while her fairy hand she placed in his,
It thrilled his bosom with a secret bliss,
To think how well—how ably he could blend
All she desired—protector, guide, and friend.
So passed those autumn hours. 'Twas like a dream,
So fair and fruitless such bright visions seem,
When gazing back from winter's world of snow,
We ask, Where are those fruits and flowerets now?

Could autumn moons for ever brightly shine,
And verdant boughs their wreaths of beauty twine,
Could cloudless suns for ever rise and set,
And fragrant flowers beam forth with dew−drops wet,
Could fields and forests look for ever green,
No touch of blight upon their foliage seen;
Could the clear brook unsullied still remain,
Through summer's burning heat, and winter's rain;
Could the sweet warblers of the genial spring
Through the whole year their songs of gladness sing;
Could beauty last, or blooming health remain,
Or youth outlive all grief, disease, and pain;
Then were it sweet through fadeless woods to stray,
With some fair being, innocent as gay,
Whose smiling charms should make the flowers more bright—
Whose kindness wake a world of new delight;
Sweet were it then for fancy's skill to weave
Some scheme of sorrow, not enough to grieve,
Some hardship, or some hind'rance, to induce
That gentle thing our willing aid to choose.

Thus reasons man, and thus he reasons right,
While suppositions merely meet his sight.
But when he brings his beautiful ideal
To share a world like ours—so stern and real—
To face the tempest, and endure the storm,
With tears and terrors that have ceased to charm;
When sordid cares, a restless host, arise;
When beauty fades, and youth's warm vigour dies;
When dormant temper wakens, wild and fierce,
And childhood's ceaseless cries, that wound and pierce;
When sickness comes, and penury and pain,
With all the ills that follow in their train;
Oh, who would dare to meet the woes of life,
And share its sorrows with a pining wife?
Who would commit his children to her care,
Or seek her sympathy his grief to share?
Who would expect, when trials pressed him sore,
The timid trembler could his peace restore?
Or who would wish, beside his feverish bed,
The feeble thing that could not raise his head?
With nerves too delicate to feel at home
Where sickness saddened, or where death might come?

No! let not sterling virtues lose their worth
Before these graces of unnatural birth,
Forced into life by artificial means,
To make all women goddesses, or queens.
And let not man his generous nature trust,
Seldom indeed, more generous than just.
It is not always that he loves to soothe;
For idle steps the rugged path to smooth;
To guide the fearful, or support the weak;
Or wisdom's words in folly's ear to speak.
The knot once tied, he wisely asks in turn
To be the soothed one, and his wife must learn.
Her part is now to cheer his rugged path,
To calm his fears, and soften down his wrath,
To chase the clouds of sorrow from his brow,
And the bright side of every scene to show.
Woe waits her failure, misery most extreme,
If of her selfish griefs she still would dream—
The loss of all to woman's heart most dear—
Her husband's love—what hath she left to cheer?
But let her seek for happiness in his,
Ask nought on earth but secondary bliss,
Then comes her recompense, her full reward—
Peaceful her breast, unchanging his regard.

Cold and insensible must be the heart
That feels not sad, when comes the hour to part,
Even with the slightly loved, or lately known,

Whose lot on earth has mingled with our own.
But when affection weaves the binding chain,
When treasured memories all their warmth retain,
When thoughts of childhood shared within one home,
A cloud of witnesses, unsought for, come;
Then will the tide of natural sorrow swell,
Though hope may brighten o'er the last farewell.

'Twas thus around the farmer's cheerful home,
Where hand in hand the sisters used to roam,
They wandered now, the last time on the green,
While fell the moonlight, verdant boughs between.
Martha once more at Henry's side appears,
Her bright eyes glancing through unbidden tears,
While Lucy's arm around her slender waist,
A silent witness of her love, was placed.
Helen most beautiful when most subdued,
Shared with the rest that evening's pensive mood;
And gentle Emma, still from Henry took
For more than courtesy, each tone and look,
Reading by that fine instinct woman knows,
Truth, that no language half so quickly shows.

Was it not luxury then to feel the power
Of autumn moonlight in that peaceful hour?
To see the shadows of those ancient trees,
To hear the whisperings of the evening breeze,
To cast the flood−gates of remembrance back,
To walk again through childhood's dubious track,
To see the past, as oft its page appears,
Without its trials, and without its tears?
To turn and watch the best beloved on earth,
Standing upon the soil that gave them birth
For the last time? yet pining not to stay,
So bright the hope that beckons them away?
Yes there is luxury in grief like this,
Something that almost turns our tears to bliss;
While thoughts unspoken flow from heart to heart,
And no one dares to utter—"We must part!"

Such was the evening, but when morning rose
A different scene awoke them from repose.
Guests from both town and country—favours white,
And silks and satins glowing on the sight,
Coaches in waiting, horsemen of all grades,
At doors and windows simpering servant maids.
Away they go—a fluttering cavalcade,
Wheeling along beyond the chesnut shade;
At length they reach the little church−yard green,
And pass its venerable elms between,
While cottage dames—their spinning−wheels forgot,

And village children, hasten to the spot.
What ails the father that he will not brook
That gazing concourse? Why that altered look?
Can heart like his find aught to sadden here?
Yes, he hath seen one tombstone, white, and clear.
And now he thinks, yet fain his thoughts would shroud,
Of the last time he met that gazing crowd!
The next may be to raise another mound,
Another tombstone on that hallowed ground.
Whose will it be? Oh! question full of fear!
Who best can say, "My home hath not been here."

'Twas an old−fashioned wedding, and there came
Relations of all character and name;
For that one day, distinction laid aside;
While poured good wishes on the blooming bride.
They were a motley group from far and near,
Yet welcome all, and plenteous was the cheer.
And wide was spread the richly−furnished board,
Before that mansion's hospitable lord.
Then rose the playful smile to Helen's lip,
To see how strangely people taste and sip,
When all unused to touch the glittering plate,
Which marks to them the tables of the great.
Scarce with respectful tone and look she spoke,
For Henry's glancing eye her laughter woke,
As gathered in their friends with aspect strange,
While strove the aunt to assemble and arrange—
Yet fared they not amiss—served was each guest,
With viands choice, and wines the very best.
No labour lost to satisfy or please,
No fear the keenest hunger to appease.
Vast had the preparation been, and vast
The admiring wonder of each rural guest.
Dishes were there of which they ne'er had heard,
While those best known, so strangely were prepared,
So strewn with flowers, so garnished, and displayed,
Vain their surmises how such things were made.
Thus ignorant what to ask for, or to trust,
They half desired again the homely crust.
Till William Herbert pressed them to partake,
With heart−warm smiles that welcomes ever make;
When freedom reigned amid the happy throng,
Too fain at last their welcome to prolong.

'Twas an old−fashioned wedding, and the sun
Went down before the parting had begun.
That sad, sad parting, when the household chain
Is broken, never more to hold again
One severed link—perchance the firmest there;
How shall the chain of love that fragment spare?

The bride and bridegroom, with the guests, all gone,
Sadness around the farmer's hearth was thrown,
For sorely missed was Martha's flitting form,
Her willing hand, her greeting frank and warm,
When gathering in beside the evening fire,
She looked around, with smiles that never tire.

Henry alone, who would have felt the most
Had no sweet dream his mental vision crossed,
Walked to and fro, along the silent room,
And inly smiled, scarce conscious of the gloom.
For he had won from that fair orphan girl,
A gem beyond all price—a precious pearl—
The love—the confidence of her young heart,
And thus he smiled, when others sighed to part.
Thus woke the morning light with joy to him,
His future now, no longer dark or dim;
No more he spurned the farmer's homely toil,
His secret visions brightening all the while;
Labour was light, and tasks of duty, now
Cast not a cloud upon his ardent brow.
'Twas the first dawn of manly hope that gave
Strength to his wilt and made his purpose grave,
That swept the fairy dreams of youth aside,
And filled his bosom with a generous pride,
To break away from selfish pleasure's thrall,
To be to one, and for her sake to all,
Within whose sphere his influence might extend,
The man of weight—the counsellor—the friend.

Love hath been said to seek the leafy glen,
Moonlight, and mountain haunts, untrod by men;
To shun the world, and shrink from vulgar day,
Or in soft sighs to breathe itself away;
But Henry's love, formed on a different plan,
Reclaimed the poet—dignified the man;
And taught him how to live, and think, and feel,
As one who labours for the general weal.
Thus would he close the fascinating page,
When the experience of riper age
Called his attention to his father's farm,
To raise the shed, or keep the cattle warm;
And scarce one hour of pastime would he spare,
To seek the feathered brood or timid hare.
Yet was his promise to Lord William made,
To roam with him along the leafy glade,
To scour the stubble−field, or climb the hill,
Startling the pheasant where the woods were still;
Sending along the lonely wilderness
Their murderous echo—signal of distress.

And bright the rosy morn that called them forth,
Cloudless the sky, the freshening breeze blew north.
The long grass bent beneath a sheet of dew,
Save where the sportsman's wandering feet brushed through;
Or bounding dogs that gambolled far and wide,
Till called, and chidden, to their master's side.
One moment drooping, patient, meek, and slow,
The next, away across the fields they go;
Impelled, regardless of all future strife,
By their ungovernable gush of life,—
Of life pent up within the weary stall,
Shut out from sunshine, and free air, and all
That man luxuriates in, and yet denies
To the poor dog that pining, suffering, lies,
Bright was the morn, and lovely was the scene,
As burst the sunlight o'er the deepening green,
The purple heather, and the mellower glow
Tinging the woods in the deep vale below.
Where hastening on its way, a swollen brook,
Rippling along, its pleasant pastime took.
Sound was there none but this along the hill,
Save the nut−gatherers answering, and then still,
Or bleat of wandering sheep, or rustling tree,
As winged the flutteringi bird its flight so free.

Is it not happiness to stand and gaze
'Mid the deep silence of such autumn days?
The harvest gathered in—man's labour done—
Nature reflecting back a cloudless sun—
Smiling, yet scarce with joy—asleep, not dead—
Her diadem of beauty round her head.
It is not happiness for man; his bliss
Wakens the woods from silence deep like this,
With the brute echo of his barbarous gun,
And victims' quivering cry, that scream and run.
Vain are the autumn tints to him—his eye
No charm beyond the cowering hare can spy.
Vain are the rippling streams—his anxious ear
Nought but the covey's whirring sound can hear.
Vain all the brightest boons by nature given,
Her sunniest scenes, her shadowings forth of heaven,
If man must ever mar her smiling face,
And o'er her verdant realm his bloody pathway trace.

BOOK VII.

THERE is a landmark to the traveller's eye,—
Hope's constant symbol pointing to the sky,—
The village spire, above the trees that throw
Their mournful shadow o'er the graves below.
And well the eye long used to other lands
Recalls again the valley where it stands,
The green hill−side, the hedge−row, and the lane,
The meadow−stream meandering through the plain,
Spanned by the bridge, where meets the village maid
Her rustic lover in the evening shade.
All these, with their soft colouring warm and true,
The wanderer's faithful memory can renew;
Nor time, nor change, nor distance, can impair
The lovely landscape ever green and fair.
'Tis for the village spire the school−boy looks,
Returning home from masters, and from books,
To gambol half his classic lore away,
Through the bright summer's jocund holiday.
'Tis for the village spire the maiden sighs,
While gazing fondly with her tearful eyes,
She sees it gleaming through the twilight gloom,
When first her footsteps leave her native home.
'Tis for the village spire the exile burns,
With yearning bosom, as remembrance turns
To all he was, and all he might have been,
Had he remained as simple as that scene.
Nor looks the eye of faith unheeding there,
Upon that beacon rising high and clear,
Pointing from out the grovelling things of earth,
To that bright realm where sorrow ne'er had birth.

And Lucy Herbert loved to think, and gaze
Upon that scene, well known in early days,
When wandering with her sisters, forth they came
To seek the lowly door of village dame;
Or when with cordial by their mother sent,
To the old cottage in the lane they went,
To see the sick man on his humble bed,
And feverish child within its cradle laid.
Long sickness lingers in the poor man's home,
And death most wished for seems most loath to come.
The feverish child that fearful hour survived,
Had now at woman's brightest bloom arrived;
While the old father, scarcely half restored,
His widowed state and helpless doom deplored.
Yet Phebe nursed him well, and made his hearth

Look clean and cheerful, though it wanted mirth,
For theirs was real poverty to know,
That fatal cankerworm so sure and slow,
That oft from cheek of beauty eats the rose,
And o'er the path of age its venom throws.

'Twas in this cottage first that Lucy found
The reverend pastor of the hamlets round;
A venerable man, with hoary hair,
And staff in hand, meet sign of pastoral care.
Here too she heard him read the words of truth,
With well−timed counsel both for age and youth.
And she would listen with attentive ear,
Until that voice—its tones so firm and clear,
Gave to those truths an impulse o'er her soul,
Powerful alike to soften, and control.
Little she learned of doctrine, less she knew
Of points disputed by the learned few;
But deep and ardent was her wish to prove
How much she felt a dying Saviour's love;
How yearned her bosom to redeem the time,
The wasted moments of her girlish prime;
And she would ask, in accents meek and low,
That holy man to guide, and teach her how.
She was a simple child in wisdom's ways,
Yet could she sing her heavenly Father's praise
With feelings more intense, and more profound.
That earthly bliss she never yet had found.
For much that others felt not, pained her mind;
She was too delicate, and too refined,
Too gentle for this world, with its rude strife;
And thus she seemed almost to shrink from life,
Like some frail bark, that, having put to sea,
Finds the dark billows heave too heavily,
While tossed and shattered by the raging main,
It fain would seek the sheltering port again.
Oh! where should suffering soul like this findd peace
Amid the world's wild storms that never cease?
Or such meek dove find shelter for her breast,
Save in the ark of everlasting rest?

'Twas not alone to muse and think of heaven,
That Lucy's mind to better thoughts was given;
Though well she loved, at evening,'s twilight hour,
To yield her soul to contemplation's power;
Yet was she found, with each returning sun,
Awake to life, its serious tasks begun,
Prepared to meet the duties of the day,
As those alone can be, who rise to pray.
And now her browr, so pure and calm before,
With a more heavenly radiance was spread o'er,

While she more patiently would bear reproof,
Suffer injurious thought, nor stand aloof
From occupations once degrading deemed,
That now a part of Christian duty seemed.
Now was she seen, with every Sabbath−day,
At morn, and noon, to wend her cheerful way
Through summer's scorching heat, and winter's rain,
To that old church beside the village lane,
Where groups of girls to meet her first, would try,
And look their welcome as her steps drew nigh.
Then would she lead them through the solemin aisle.
And check the forward step, and sportive smile;
With mild authority, but look severe,
Inspiring love, and still commanding fear.

How shall the pedagogue be made to learn,
That youthful generous tempers needs must spurn
The mock majestic of his petty rule,
That vainly fights for mastery in his school?
Can he believe mere punishment will bring
Conviction to the breast where follies spring?
Can he believe, while peeping all about,
To find the whispering or the sleeping out,
With cane upraised, and fury in his eve,
And switching cut that makes the culprit cry?—
Can he believe? or will his pupils say
That this is worship on the Sabbath−day?—
His thoughts in unison with what they hear,
Of Christian charity, and slavish fear
Cast out by love? No, while they turn again
To where the preacher pours his fervid strain,
They hear the stroke of prayer−book on the head
Of some tired sleeper, or their own instead.

Shame would we cry upon this scene of strife,
But that it represents poor human life.
Our best endeavours mingled with alloy,
Our works of love with passions that destroy.
So gross the ignorance that blinds our eyes
To human nature, ever in disguise,
That e'en this pedagogue may sink to rest,
Thanking his Maker he has done his best.

Nor could the graceful form of Lucy move
Unheeded on her embassy of love.
One eye there was that watched her bending low,
Truth on her lips, and peace upon her brow,
Her snow−white hand extending round the form
Of rebel child, so rosy, rude, and warm,
So well content in ignorance to dwell,
And scarce by that soft touch constrained to spell,

That common patience would have pushed aside
The infectious sleeper, and some other tried.
But she was labouring in a sacred cause,
And hence her meekness and her strength arose.
Yes, there was one who marked her placid look,
And sometimes turned from off his holy book,
While hung the attentive audience on his breath,
To see if Lucy took her seat beneath—
A young collegian, who had come to share
His sacred duties with the pastor there.
For feeble grew the venerable man,
His years advancing to life's utmost span;
Yet while his people hailed him with delight,
They thought the curate better could indite,
Could read more fluently and charmed the ear
With voice more musical, and smooth, and clear.

Eustace could speak in silvery tones, and soft,
With bland expression, more inviting oft
Than real kindness clothed in homely dress,
Though for the hour of trial, how much less!
Yet was he kind, for he was mild of mood,
And while he saw the fact, scarce understood
How any man should let such fiery guest
As guilty passion desolate his breast.
Thus were the sinful doubly so to him,
Who saw temptation thtoughit a glass so dim,
It seemed a thing far off amongst the vile,
While he from his proud eminence could smile,
And wonder at the grovelling mass below
Of blindfold ignorance, and guilty woe.
Well schooled in doctrine, he was fain to impart
The knowledge he had gained, though not by heart:
Of best constructions oft would talk and tell,
And high authorities could quote as well;
With ready finger point the dubious text,
Expose the false translator's vain pretext,
Proving, whatever might be said or thought,
His memory at least had been well taught.

All this to Lucy seemed a mine of gold,
Wisdom's true wealth, its endless worth untold.
And she would listen, anxiously intent
To catch whate'er the learned student meant;
Till question came at last of her belief,
When burned her cheek with shame as well as grief;
To think how low, how ignorant her mind,
Compared with one so lofty and refined.
Yet she confessed herself, as one who fears
Still hopes assistance from the friend who hears;
And while the glistening tear−drops dimmed her eye,

She looked more like an angel from the sky
Sent down to minister, than guilty child.
How could he answer but in accents mild?—
Too mild, alas! for yer young heart to bear,
Without that impress time can never wear,
Nor effort move, nor hope with colouring gay,
Nor sorrow wash, with all her tears, away.

Lucy was formed to love, not with excess,
Nor weak display of lavish tenderness;
But with deep thoughts that seemed so meek and still,
Yet her fond bosom's utmost bound could fill,
Tuning its various chords, that used to lie
Unstrung before, to one sweet melody.

The man who lightly speaks of woman's love
Knows not that precious pearl, all price above.
He sees her smiling through the sunny hour,
Fickle, and vain, and arrogant of power,
Sporting with passion that she loves to calm,
Inflicting wounds that she may pour the balm,
Ambitious to subdue, yet quick to show
The willing tears for other's pain that flow;
He sees this fluttering thing with eyes so bright,
Tortured by pain, enraptured by delight;
He hears her promise never more to rove,
And calls the gift she offers him, her love.

Oh! worse than insult to that sacred name,
To call the glimmering of such feeble flame,
That constant light, by gracious heaven bestowed
To cheer the pilgrim on life's thorny road.
But there is love in woman's "heart of hearts,"
That scarcely with expiring breath departs.
Pure as a child's affection, when it feels
The first warm gush that o'er its bosom steals;
Fervent and faithful, as a mother knows
When round her babe the sheltering arm she throws,
Warm, as the fire that lights the martyr's zeal;
Great, as the hero's lofty soul can feel;
Firm, as true friendship, but far more intense.
And more regardless of all recompense;
Ambitious to deserve, vain but to be
The loveliest object one on earth can see;
Fickle to suit his mood; whene'er he sighs,
Sad, with true sorrow, not its poor disguise;
Pleased when he smiles, yet not with wild delight,
Fearing to force herself upon his sight;
Lest her weak fondness should be seen too much,
Too little felt, the magic of its touch.

This love was Lucy's, nor unasked it came
Tinging her cheek with many a blush of shame—
Shame that she was not worthy of the friend
Who sought with hers his future lot to blend.
Yet she could learn his wishes, watch his mood,
The boundless debt of love and gratitude
Could make it all her happiness to pay,
Through the sweet service of each future day.

Love has its attributes, and never yet
Was born without them, or was half so sweet
As when some other flowery bands entwine
With its fair wreath, like roses with the vine.
Thus will affliction blend in woman's breast,
Hope of compassion with the stranger guest;
And sorrow's tear her sympathy command,
When love alone had vainly sought her hand.
Thus oft she learns, not sober truth alone,
Though clear the light upon its pages thrown,
Yet while the tide of knowledge fills her mind,
Her heart is less intelligent than kind.
Thus when religion lends her holy flame
To cast a halo round some honoured name,
Pure, then, and deep, the well−spring whence arise
Thoughts of affection, wrapped in fair disguise,
Blending the flowers that blossom on this earth
With those that ne'er beneath the skies had birth;
Gilding the landscape with celestial light,
For this cold world too holy, and too bright;
Sending to heaven, upon the wings of prayer,
Feelings too human for acceptance there.
And when the issue comes, as come it must,
Sinking too low beneath the sentence just;
As if shut out—rejected from above,
Because some blight has touched our earthly love.

Lucy, while venturing on temptation's brink,
Was far too peaceful, and too blest, to think
That danger lurked, where safety seemed to lead,
And thus she feared not that fair path to tread.
Thus were the duties of each day more dear,
Because the approving smile so oft was near;
And evening came more sweetly to her eye,
When he she reverenced so much, was nigh.

Nothing was wanting now: she once had been
Lonely and sad, when gazing on that scene—
The village church—the trees—and that low grave,
O'er which the elms their dark green branches wave.
Here had she wandered, and had ofttimes thought
Her mother's death so sore a grief had brought,

No future bliss could ever soothe her pain,
Or the world look like paradise again.
Here had she mused, and wept those tears unseen,
Which but for secret channels ne'er had been;
Tears that will sometimes dim the sunny eye,
And stain the cheek of youth, we scarce know why.
Save that the heart, too covetous of joy,
Wants more of happiness, with less alloy;
And pines to think, while pleasure's cup runs o'er.
That this is all, and life can give no more.

It was not thus with Lucy now, her eye
Saw neither cloud nor tempest in the sky;
Nor blight, nor weed, nor shadow on the ground,
Nor falling leaf, nor barren waste around.
For he who taught her spirit to aspire
With more belief, though not with more desire,
Seemed like a shield around her helplessness,
And thus she loved him, almost to excess.

BOOK VIII.

'**TWAS** not the waning year alone that threw
Its sombre shadow where the poplar grew,
And leafy chesnut spread its branches wide,
And graceful ash, that stately ball beside.
But many an anxious thought had lately come
To cloud the sunshine of the farmer's home.
Not that calamity had fallen there,
But vague forebodings, with a secret fear
That though the present hour was gilded o'er,
The future held less smiling ones in store.

Nor was it on the father's brow alone
That care sat brooding; Henry, graver grown,
Partook the feeling in its deepest tone.
For his was disappointment—vain desire,
Of which weak hope is born, soon to expire;
With sense of wrong, as if his father could
Give him his rightful portion, if he would.
While his fair Emma, waiting for the bliss
Of blending all her happiness with his,
With childish murmuring oft provoked his spleen
Against a parent, who had ever been
But too indulgent, and too proud of him,
Noting his faults with partial eyes, and dim.

Mean time had Helen happiness, beyond
These grovelling thoughts, that seemed too weak and fond,
And yet too much of calculation born,
To move her pity, or escape her scorn.
She had her store of happiness untold,
To her more precious far than hoarded gold—
Not tangible, alas! nor sure, nor real,
But more enjoyed, for being all ideal.

Autumn was past, and winter now had come,
With storm and tempest, round the farmer's home,
Yet brightly burned his cheerful hearth within,
As when our social evenings first begin;
When, in defiance of the blast without,
We stir the fire, and shut the darkness out.
And while the night came on with gathering gloom,
The crimson glow that lighted up that room
Threw all around its mellow tints, and warm,
As if in mockery of the raging storm.
Then Helen struck the chords she loved so well,
And sung of many a lover's fond farewell,

Of mermaid's song where treacherous billows roar,
Of exile pining for his native shore,
Of battle−field, and "clarion wild and shrill,"
And hunter's horn loud echoing o'er the hill.
Then glowed her cheek with feelings warm and high,
That found no voice save in her minstrelsy;
Then flashed her eye with more than human light,
While rose some fabled heroine on the sight.

What form is that with high and courtly mien,
His hand upon the charmed pages seen,
Turning the leaves, yet with enraptured look
Watching the page of beauty's fairer book?
Lord William Douglas, wearied with the chase,
By Helen's side assumes his wonted place,
Turns to depart, yet idly lingers still,
For loud the wintry blast howls on the hill.
Is it the storm that keeps him loitering there?f
Or that enchantress with her raven hair?
Sporting with chains that women love to throw
Around their captives, and then bid them go.
For Helen oft would answer his good−night
As if she cared not when he left her sight,
Then strike the notes of some wild mountain−air,
He could not choose but turn again to hear.
Thus sped those evening hours, so quickly gone
That Helen scarce believed the vision flown,
Ere some sweet morrow dawned upon her view,
With the same colouring−bright, but how untrue!

They know not half the beauties of the year,
Who say that summer days alone look fair.
Give back the sunshine of a winter's morn
To nature's child with genuine feeling born.
The silent, breathless slumber of the breeze,
The glittering hoar−frost on the leafless trees,
The high blue vault of heaven without a cloud,
The clay−cold earth encircled in her shroud
Of silvery grey, concealment meet for death,
Hiding the secrets of decay beneath.
Oh, well−remembered mornings of delight!
Ere the white frost−work vanished from the sight,
To watch the fairy forest on the pane
Melt with the breath, then grow to life again.
With bounding step along the fields to go,
And hear the pent−up torrent's gurgling flow;
The crisp grass rustling underneath the tread,
Its fleecy carpet all around us spread;
The clear sharp air inhaling, fresh, and free;
While health's own rose, so beautiful to see,
Bloomed on each cheek, and made the lilies there

More purely white, more exquisitely fair.

Helen admired, but did not seek from art
The purer joy that nature can impart.
She loved her music, and she loved the charm
That taste could blend even with a rustic farm;
But more she loved the rosy morning's dawn,
And traced with joyous step the grassy lawn.
For still she drank those draughts of natural joy
Which artificial wants so soon destroy.
'Twas thus she wandered forth one winter's morn,
Say, could it be to hear the huntsman's horn?
No; for her heart was feminine, and kind?
In such rude sport what pastime could she find?
But, hark! they come. The murderous pack is near,
Their deep−mouthed yells loud echoing on the ear,
The clattering horsemen whooping, wild and hollow,
The furious steeds that tear the ground to follow,
The scarlet coats that blaze along the wood,
Where crashing boughs across the path obtrude.
Away! away! as swiftly as they came,
They speed, and vanish, like some meteor's flame.
But Helen wears a blush upon her cheek,
And in her eyes' bright radiance, hopes that speak
Sweet promise for that day's departing light,
When from the field returns the wearied knight.

Now spreads along the landscape far and near
A shadow not of clouds, but something drear,
That seems to whisper to the listening ear
Of dark forebodings, and mysterious powers,
Ranging the earth through winter's stormy hours.
Now wakes the wind with melancholy tone
Among the topmost boughs, that creak, and moan,
And bow themselves before the gathering blast,
Till the first rush of giant strength has passed;
When, sweeping back, they meet the foe once more,
And all becomes one universal roar.
Then rise thick murky clouds before the sun,
And evening closes in with darkness dun;
While wends the peasant home his cheerless way,
Ere the last light expires of dying day.
Sweet is it then to draw the curtains warm,
And hear the ceaseless fury of the storm
Howling around, without one thought of fear
That the fierce enemy can enter there.
Sweet is it then to stir the evening fire,
To add fresh fuel, watch the blaze burn higher,
Pity the sailors, and then look to see
How many bright eyes beam with hope and glee.
Sweet is it then to weave the social bond

With minds congenial, faithful hearts, and fond;
To feel the best beloved on earth are near,
In that blest hour of safety, more than dear,
Secure, and sheltered from the raging blast,
The robe of comfort that our love would cast
Around them ever, closely folded now,
Warmth at their heart, and peace upon their brow.
Love in the sunny hour is not like this,
It wants more deep intensity of bliss,
More contrast with a rude and stormy world,
Whose jarring elements are tossed and hurled
Around the sacred precincts of that home,
Where safety reigns, and tempests never come.

And Douglas sate beside the farmer's hearth
With those bright smiles that waken thoughts of mirth.
Well pleased he seemed Matilda's tea to sip,
A soldier's story ever on his lip,
Chasing from William Herbert's brow of care
The sombre shade that sometimes darkened there,
Beguiling Henry to forget his love,
By tales of battle−field, the patriot heart that move.

This night more animated, more alive
To all the joy that social hour can give,
He sate amongst them, seeming happier far
Than wearing on his breast the knightly star.
Till Helen woke his favourite Highland strain,
When stood the soldier by her side again;
While stooping low, as if to read the page
That seemed so oft his notice to engage,
He said in gentle accents, soft, and sad,
"May you ne'er sing with heart and voice less glad.
And think not, Helen, I am light or gay,
I only laugh to chase my grief away."

"Grief?" Helen smiled; she ne'er had heard of woe
That all around such merriment could throw.

"Nay, smile not, Helen, cruel, heartless one,
Or, if you will, smile only when I'm gone."

"Gone?"
"Yes, I soon shall cross the raging sea,
And you as soon will cease to think of me.
Yet take this wreath of pearls, and sometimes wear
The poor memorial in your raven−hair."

The maid was startled into helplessness.
She felt his hand upon her forehead press,
Binding the silken cord around her brow,

While o'er her cheek there rushed a crimson glow,
And then a sudden dimness to her eyes—
Not tears of sorrow, only of surprise.
She spoke not; how could language have expressed
The mixed emotions struggling in her breast.
And he was gone forth on that stormy night,
To meet the winds, and battle with their might.
Yet ere he left, a promise had been made
To ride together through the beech−wood shade
For the last time! Oh! words of fearful sound!
Who has not felt your meaning, too profound,
Too potent in its melancholy power,
Ruling the destiny of some short hour
On which depends the fate of future years,
With all its wealth of joy, or waste of tears.

Slowly and mournfully that morn awoke,
And dimly daylight on the landscape broke.
Yet Helen went at the appointed hour,
Unfelt, the chilly blast, or glancing shower.
Fresh beauty brightening in her cheek and eyes,
With the brisk gale, and healthy exercise.
The storm was hushed, but peace had not returned,
The solemn beech−wood seemed as if it mourned
The ruthless fury of the winter's blast,
That from its boughs their leafy garland cast.
While all around, beneath the horses' tread,
Thick beds of rustling leaves the feet betrayed.
Sad was the murmuring of that gale among
Those stately trees that stood so firm and strong,
With interwoven branches, cold and grey,
To guard the traveller on his silent way.
And meet that scene for love to say farewell,
The cloudy heaven its pall, the moaning wind its knell.

Douglas was gone, and with him passed away
The golden light of many an autumn day.
Winter's dark hours, how weary were they grown!
Since that fair dream from Helen's heart had flown.
Yet was there promise of his quick return,
And memory's page on which her eye might turn;
And all the magic colouring hope could bring
To tinge life's picture with the hues of spring.
These still were left, and in her secret soul
Something that bade defiance to control—
Something that grew out of her own conceit,
Yet the dull lapse of many an hour would cheat,
Telling strange stories of congenial minds,
And that mysterious destiny that winds
Its secret chain around the faithful−hearted,
Though far away, by time and distance parted.

Robbed of this confidence, with promise rife,
Ill had she brooked the dull routine of life,
When the last weeks of winter wore that gloom
Well known to all within the farmer's home,
Ere lengthening days enlivening sunshine bring,
With all the cheerful redolence of spring.

There is a time when nature seems to make
A stern determination not to wake;
When the snows melt, and swollen streams run deep,
And plashy pools the sere brown herbage steep;
When first the snowdrop dares the storm endure,
The only thing on earth which then looks pure;
When tempted forth, because the days are long,
Light only seems our misery to prolong,
By forcing out, from every dark recess,
The desolation, and the dreariness.

This, the least lovely season of the year,
Had now returned, with daylight cold and drear.
Yet Henry smiled, for youth was in his breast,
And hope, a still more animating guest,
Now conjured up a world of pure delight,
Where scarce one cloud obscured his ardent sight.
His father, oft assailed, and sorely tried
With strange petitions, hard to be denied,
Yielded at last a full and free consent,
And Henry was, or seemed to be, content—
Content at least, his gentle bride should come
To share the comforts of his father's home;
For there was room enough for him and her,
And surely all her presence must prefer.
So kind, so fair, so lovely to his eye,
What envious caviller a fault could spy.
She had been taught by Martha too, and now,
Like other household dames, could sit and sew,
Could talk of management, and count the cost
Of some things, though not those she wanted most.
True, she was portionless, but he would toil
Oh, how unceasingly, to see her smile;
And deem all labour sweet, all suffering light,
That purchased her one moment of delight.
Martha had warned him not to make the trial
Until the maid, more schooled in self−denial,
Should learn a few plain rules of common sense,
Her tears to check, and not with each pretence
Of pain, or grief, to human nature common,
To deem herself the most ill−fated woman.
"Wait, Henry dear," the prudent sister said,
"Till a few years have rolled above her head.
I cannot teach her all at once to know

That earthly happiness must ever flow
Back to ourselves, from bliss that we bestow."

Henry believed not half that Martha told;
Possession was to him a mine of gold.
And, like his lordly brethren, he felt sure,
If there was evil, he himself could cure.
He was the safest guide, he knew the best,
Or, if be failed in ought, then love would do the rest.

Thus came the orphan to her future home,
Decked, as she thought a lovely bride should come.
Nor spared her brother aught, nor Martha's hand
Withheld whate'er its bounty could command.
And Emma took their gifts with smiling brow,
As if it was their duty to bestow,
Hers to receive. Oh! ignorance of right!
How oft this poor dependence meets the sight,
And pains the heart, even in our favoured land,
Where women cannot—will not understand,
How they may lean on others, and depend,
Yet never know what constitutes a friend;
How they may be both gentle and refined,
Yet want the noblest attributes of mind;
How they may charm the ear, and please the eye,
Yet live unhonoured, and unmourned−for die.

And now with those bright bridal days of hope,
Spring came at last, and every woodland slope
Lay smiling where the russet brown had been,
Adorned again in velvet robe of green.
Spring came at last, and with contented heart
Henry prepared himself for that stern part
Which duty prompted. To the fields he went
With step alert, nor did his heart relent,
Though Emma ofttimes would have lured his stay,
By playful chiding ere he turned away.

"Are we not bound by every claim," said he,
"That most imperative and just can be,
To make my father feel, 'mid cares that goad,
We are at least not willingly a load?"

"A load? dear Henry, what a word to use!"

"This is no time more polished phrase to choose.
And let us soften as we will, the name,
The truth—the serious truth—remains the same."

Henry was changed even now, and Emma felt
Her tears had somewhat lost their power to melt.

One only purpose seemed to fill his mind,
It might be noble, but it scarce was kind
To leave her gentle charms, once loved so well,
For coarse rude men who came to buy and sell.

Thus Emma reasoned, while she sate and wept;
But Henry still his manly purpose kept.
For well he knew he must no longer dream:
His hand must labour, and his head must scheme,
If he, with name unstained, and conscience clear,
Would meet the trials of the coming year.
And William Herbert now his counsels shared
Gladly, with one who ever seemed prepared
With willing service, and with feeling heart,
To act an able and an upright part.

Thus passed those summer months, while Lucv's care
Was called to scenes of solemn service, where
The reverend pastor bowed his hoary head,
And she kept watch beside his dying bed.
At length the scene was closed, and Eustace prayed
In seeming fervency beside the maid,
That he might catch that mantle as it fell,
And in that parting spirit's glory dwell.
It was a solemn scene, and Lucy felt
The sordid world before her vision melt,
With all its weariness, and all its strife,
Lost in the balance with eternal life.
Oh, could we linger by the bed of death,
How might we trample earthly scenes beneath!
But soon there comes a morrow less sublime,
And we return to grovelling things of time.

'Twas thus with Lucy, though her faithful heart
Asked only with one treasure not to part.
Yet that she hoarded with a miser's care,
Pure though it seemed, perchance it was her snare.

Eustace was pastor of that village now,
And oft with Lucy in her walks would go,
To hear the blessings of the needy poor
Welcome her step at every cottage door.
Why should they dwell apart? They long had known
And oft acknowledged that their hearts were one.
So Eustace won at last her free consent,
And on the embassy of hope he went.

It was one bright and smiling summer's day,
When all around, in heaven and earth, looked gay.
And Lucy sate within a cool alcove,
Sweet flowers beside her, and blue skies above.

Fair child of peace, with sunlight on her brow,
If there be real happiness below,
'Twas hers in that bright golden hour to know.
Yes, she was happy—happy even here,
For she had much to hope, and nought to fear;
With the whole world, and with herself at rest,
No anxious tumult thrilled her youthful breast.
Nothing to envy, nothing to forgive,
Was it not bliss enough to feel, and live?
Yes; and the birds sang o'er her with delight,
And the gay flowers sprang sweetly to her sight,
While the whole voice of nature seemed to pour
Praise and thanksgiving through that sunny hour.

At length she heard a footstep on the grass,
And saw a shadow o'er the threshold pass.
She raised her eyes. What could there be to chase
The smile of gladness from her lover's face?
Yet so it seemed; but he began to speak,
And she looked down to hide her blushing cheek.

"Lucy, I know not how to act a part.
Grieved, disappointed, you shall know my heart.
I told vour father of our plighted love,
And much he seemed our union to approve,
Called you, as oft he does, his favourite child,
And while he sighed to part with you, still smiled,
To think a home—a surer home, he said,
Than he could offer, soon would shield your head.
I know not why, but something struck my mind
Strange in his manner, though it seemed so kind;
At length the truth was told—would you believe,
Your father can no marriage portion give!"

"And is that all?" said Lucy. "Heed it not.
We can be happy in the poorest cot!"

"Poetic visions, Lucy, charm not me.
Have I not lived such happiness to see?"

"Then what remains?" she asked, with timid voice.
Can we not wait? or has your heart a choice?"

"Yes, we could wait, if there was ought to cheer,
Or brighter promise for the coming year."

"Then what remains?" asked Lucy once again,
Her pale lip quivering with a thrill of pain.

"I scarcely know," said Eustace, "but I think
'Twere madness thus to venture on the brink

Of hopeless poverty, with no pretence
But creature−love, for tempting Providence.
You know my yearly stipend is but small:"—

He should have seen her turning to the wall
As if the stones could pity; and the blush
That grew upon her face, the burning gush
Of woman's feeling, o'er her brow and cheek,
And flashing eye that used to be so meek—
It passed—and never marble looked more pale
Than Lucy, while she listened to his tale.

He marked her not, his eye was cold, and clear,
Fixed on a bed of withering roses there;
He marked her not, for different thoughts possessed
His anxious mind, and laboured in his breast
At length he spoke— "The more I view the case,
The more I see that misery and disgrace
Await our union; yet it seems not well
That our decision I alone should tell."

Lucy looked up, sheiid not quite perceive
His real meaning, or could not believe.
At length, however, it was made more clear;
She heard—and understood—and shed no tear.
He took her hand, she drew it not away,
'Twas cold as marble, and she let it stay.

"You comprehend my meaning?"
"Yes, I do."

"I thought you must, for all I say is true.
And I am pleased we can so well agree.
It makes the trial easier far to me.
And you will say it was your own desire,
Not mine, that our engagement should expire?"

"I will."
"Farewell then, Lucy, ever dear;
I'm glad your judgment is so cool and clear.
True, I can ne'er be happy as with you,
But something to my station still is due;
And I, to give that office more respect,
A portion with my partner must expect."

"Enough," said Lucy; "I can understand."
And coldly she withdrew her captive hand.

"Farewell!" he said, and left her standing there,
Like some mute sculptured image of despair.
The birds sang o'er her as with fresh delight,

The flowers looked up as if to meet her sight,
The sun smiled high in cloudless light above,
And the soft gale sighed with the breath of love.
The birds sang o'er her, and she heard their song;
Why should they now their melody prolong?
The blooming flowers her care was wont to tend,
Was there not one to droop like sorrowing friend?
Great glorious orb of day, blest source of light!
Thy noontide radiance mocks the mourner's sight;
And thou soft breeze, with perfume−laden wing,
To the seared heart, what healing canst thou bring?

BOOK IX.

WELL hath the preacher in his wisdom said
That "all is vanity"—mankind misled
By seeming good that ends in real pain;
Their toil vexatious, and their labour vain.
Preachers less wise take up the strain, and say,
"Renounce the world, cast all its cares away,
Its wealth, its glory, and its joy despise,
Or deem them only dangers in disguise."
Then speaks philosophy with like disdain
Of sensual pleasure, and of sordid gain;
Nor these alone. The same untiring theme,
Adorned in verse, or fabled in a dream,
Thrills many a bosom with poetic fire,
And wakes the music of the maiden's lyre.

Throughout the land, wherever truth is taught,
In every place where human throngs resort,
Or in the peaceful chamber of repose,
Around the social hearth at evening's close,
Beneath the low−roofed cottage in the glen,
Or where the author plies his weary pen,
This language still salutes the listening ear—
"This world is worthless—we but pilgrims here!"
United in this sentiment, we see
Poet, and sage, and moralist agree.
No voice uplifted to refute the fact,
Experience too, least willing to retract,
All are agreed—the self−same truth we hear,
And ask—what can we less—"Are all sincere?"

What can we less, when he who first believed
This solemn truth, and o'er its import grieved—
When he, appointed by Divine command
To raise the noblest work of human hand,
Wisdom his birthright, and his lineage pure,
His sceptre stedfast, and his kingdom sure—
When he could range the bound of earthly bliss,
To make the fulness of enjoyment his;
Could lay his heavenly−gifted birthright down,
To deck with borrowed gems his princely crown;
Could bow his regal head at last, and fall
A captive slave in pleasure's fatal thrall;
Draining the lowest dregs of luxury's cup,
Drinking its bitterest draught of poison up.

Are there not those who preach this truth even now,

And yet before the same false idol bow?—
More pure, more lawful in their soul's desire,
But not less prone to offer up strange fire?—
Who call the world contemptible, and mean,
Yet on its flowery bosom love to lean?

And not the preacher only, but the sage,
And the stern satirist who condemns the age,
The sentimentalist, and poet too,
Have they not all one secret end in view?
To please the grovelling world they so despise,
To hide their faults and frailties from her eyes?
Whate'er betide their happiness the while,
To court her favour, and secure her smile?

Yes; and this lovely isle, from shore to shore,
Beats with the tumult—echoes with the roar—
The strife of hand—the mastery of mind—
Conflicting interests in one combat joined,
To gain the eminence of worldly fame,
And from the dust of earth create a name.

Else why the pallid cheek, the sunken eye,
The sleepless hours of feverish agony,
The midnight watch, the care−distracted brow,
The weary step, the burning tears that flow,
The draught impure, drained only to destroy
Pain's ceaseless pang, or wake some dream of joy?
Why the mute anguish of enduring years
That in more slow but certain form appears,
The unkind reproach that love so fain would spare,
Wrung from the restless impulse of despair?
The severed links of friendship rudely torn,
The averted look—the ingratitude—the scorn?
All, all that misery o'er life's path has hurled
Endured in willing slavery to the world?

Go, search the hovel by the mountain−side,
Pierce the low depths, where cheerless miners glide;
Sail with the wave−worn seaman o'er the deep,
And watch the money−laden merchant's sleep;
Go through the lovely homes that grace our land,
By the soft bed of sated luxury stand,
Explore the camp, the court, the green recess,
The seat of toil, the bower of idleness,
Mark every eye, examine every heart,
And say if half the bitterest tears that start,
And more than half the deadly guilt that stains
Our fertile soil, and desolates our plains,
Spring not from love of gold, or dread of shame,
From fear to lose, or hope to gain a name.

Oh, could we always feel, as some have felt
On the bold mountain's brow, when vapours melt,
And fleecy clouds are floating far away,
And the green earth sleeps in the light of day,
Or seems to sleep, for stillness reigns around,
And in the vault of heaven, its blue profound
Looks nearer; while we stand beneath the skies,
Too firm to fall, too weak, alas! to rise.
Yet can we gaze from that far height, and see
How insignificant each tower, and tree,
Each home, and hamlet, scattered o'er the plain,
Each lake, and landmark, scarcely known again.
But we descend, and as the vale below
Nears to our sight, familiar objects grow;
The forest throws its branches to the sky,
The tower resumes its ancient dignity,
The lake spreads wide her bosom to the gale,
The lofty beacon warns the distant sail,
The hamlet holds a hundred human souls,
And that green smiling home our destiny controls.

'Tis thus we stand beside the bed of death,
Watching the awful scene, with scarce a breath,
A word, a movement, or a secret thought,
Not with some high and holy purpose fraught.
Then wakes the voice of conscience, lulled before,
Then opens wide the everlasting door,
Revealing all the light to mortals given,
While truth stands forth, clad in the robes of heaven.
Then melts the world away, and the world's care,
And fade her garlands that once looked so fair:
Her powers, her dignities, are nothing then,
Ashes her gold, and fools her mighty men.

And shall we, having felt all this, return,
And on the altar of her worship burn
Our very hearts? Yet one thing let us learn
If we have fallen into the common snare,
Let us, from others who are captive there,
Withhold the stern rebuke, the harsh reproof,
The unchristian scorn that bids them stand aloof,
For having missed, not having sought, the end
To which we still our strenuous efforts bend.

The farmer saw his error, all too late
To check the evil, or arrest his fate;
Fool that he was, with the first favouring gale
To launch his bark, and hoist his swelling sail;
To trust the billows of that treacherous sea—
The smiling ocean of prosperity;

Whose shores are strewn with many a noble wreck
Whose shining waters lave the shattered deck,
And hide within their secret depths beneath
The rocks of ruin, and the caves of death.

Fool that he was. He saw his error now,
He felt it too, if truth was on his brow,
And strove by manly effort to repair
All that was lost—all that remained, to spare.
Yet while his pleasant home looked smiling still,
And guests flocked in, his spacious rooms to fill,
While his wide table scarce could hold them all,
Or hurrying servants answer to their call,
While forth they roamed to see the lovely grounds,
To praise the farmer's taste, and stroke his hounds,
To enjoy his fruit, and loiter all day long
The garden−walks and rosy bowers among,
To say, if happiness e'er lived on earth,
It must in some such lovely scene have birth;
Truth bids us tell, that all things were not quite
So fair as those which met the stranger's sight.
No; there was many a cloudy brow behind
Those lovely scenes, and many an anxious mind,
And many a consultation how to bear,
Or how retrench, the expenses of the year.
One blamed another: William Herbert thought
The wines too costly that his sister bought;
And she, retorting like her mother Eve,
O'er the great house at length began to grieve.

But Henry trembled most, with secret fear,
Whene'er this war of words he chanced to hear;
For Emma's sacred name his aunt would blend
With tones that little sweetness seemed to lend.
Whether it was, that luxuries late enjoyed
By the stern order of the day destroyed,
Retrenching still against her secret mind,
Her goaded spirit had become less kind:
Or that the gentle Emma wore not now
The smile of peace that once adorned her brow,
But piqued and flattered by a tell−tale maid,
Against the aunt some lurking spleen betrayed.
Whate'er the cause, the consequence was sure,
Small hope remained that love could long endure
Between such hearts, perchance too much the same
In their weak points, to bear each other's blame.
'Twas human nature, ever tried the most
By trifling things that no importance boast,
That spring from some small root of bitterness,
And still unchecked grow fruitful of distress.

'Twas different with the farmer, and his son;
A happier, nobler course had they begun.
Strength lies in union, and they owned the truth;
One had experience, and the other youth;
These well might serve the end they had in view,
If both to their best interests were true.
'Twas pleasant then to see them range their fields,
Reaping the joy that smiling nature yields;
Scarce knew they more, for 'twas no fancied trial
That called their mutual strength to self−denial.
Their country groaned beneath a grievous load,
Care sighed at home, and hunger stalked abroad;
The slow reaction of that lingering war
Still sent its starving tribes from door to door,
And those who scarce their children's bread could buy
Must pay their mite, or let the paupers die.
One hope was left amid the general gloom—
Still plenty bloomed around the farmer's home,
His fields were green, his ripening harvest grew,
And waved in golden promise to his view.

Nor were the sordid cares that pained his breast
All that disturbed the farmer's nightly rest.
In those still hours, when proud ambition sleeps,
And wounded conscience her lone vigil keeps,
The long, long midnight hours, when secret woes
Press on the soul that vainly seeks repose,
When truths unwelcome, that we scarce beheld
By day, stern darkness has revealed,
And spectres rise and swell upon the view,
In all their, naked hideousness, too true—
Spectres of thought, that might have flitted by
Unheeded, when the sun was in the sky,
And life and motion in the earth and air,
And smiling nature all around us fair:
But in those silent hours what worlds awake,
What shapes the monsters of our fancy take
What legions stand around our sleepless bed,
What voices speak from the long lost, or dead!
Making the stillness vocal, and the night
Peopled with forms, too fearful, or too bright.

'Twas in these hours that William Herbert felt
A strange vague tenderness his bosom melt.
While o'er the past he turned his lingering view,
And saw what time could never more renew.
Fair was the scene, but fast it fleeted by,
And left the present, all before his eye,
Instinct with life, too tangible and clear,
Naked, and stern, to waken aught but fear,
That to each thought a stern sharp outline gave;

Until the future came, like wave on wave
Of some vast ocean, rolling to the shore
Its world of waters with their billowy roar.

Here were the demons that awoke his dread.
The spectral host that stood around his bed
Lived in the future, came with every thought
That near his view that unknown future brought;
And asked, what conscience oft had asked before,
For whom he lived, for what increased his store?
Nor his alone the sum of wasted hours,
Of time, of influence, and of mental powers,
Of all, entrusted to the use of man
For working out his heavenly Father's plan:
One thought there was prevailing o'er the rest,
With keener anguish rankling in his breast,
'Twas of his children—how had he prepared
Their hearts and minds for what must now be shared
Amongst them all—that bitter joyless cup
That pride prepares—that misery must drink up?
He saw with all a parent's partial view
Their lovely forms, their gentle ways, and knew
How dear to them the luxuries of life,
How harsh and cruel all its sordid strife!
And while his own forebodings told their doom,
And the storm hastened on, with gathering gloom,
He would have shielded them from that dark hour,
Even with his life, had Heaven bestowed the power.

He once had thought that Lucy was secure
From the stern fortune that he must endure,
And scarcely heeded, if endured alone
But o'er her path strange mystery had been thrown;
And there were rumours of her changeful mind,
Though once she seemed so faithful, and so kind.
Oft had he thought, if Lucy ever loved,
The depth of woman's feeling would be proved
In her calm suffering, and her sweet content,
And the strong faith to woman's purpose lent,
Bearing her up above the ills of life,
Beyond its follies, and beyond its strife.
But he was startled from this dream, to find
Her fondest hopes so willingly resigned,
The strictest, coolest calculations, made
By a young, generous, self−devoted maid;
All things considered duly, and at last
A total blank upon her future cast
By her own will—affection thrown aside,
As nothing, in the scale with worldly pride.
Prudence was well, but Eustace was not poor,
He had enough their comfort to ensure;

And Lucy, once so lowly, meek, and mild—
He could not understand his favourite child.
Yet did he fondly call her to his side,
And half in play her fickle purpose chide,
"I thought," he said, "your love had been more true;
My own kind Lucy, this is not like you."

She would have answered, but her voice seemed gone,
And in her drooping eye the bright tears shone;
While her pale lip with silent anguish stirred,
And strife of soul, but still no voice was heard.

Did willing sacrifice e'er look like this?
Alas! we hardly know what anguish is,
Until the stricken heart is called to give
Its idols up, and still to feel, and live.

"Father," she said, at last, "I cannot bear
Your censure, and your kindness ill can spare.
But trust me for awhile—time yet may show
I have done wisely, though you doubt me now."

"Nay, Lucy, not your wisdom, but your love—
I knew a soul that would have soared above
This worthless world, and made its home of rest
Within the shelter of one faithful breast.
It was your mother's, Lucy, and I dreamed
Yours was the same, but such it only seemed."

Harsh words, that pierced her gentle bosom through.
What could the helpless, feeble sufferer do?
She threw her arms around her father's neck,
And sobbed aloud, as if her heart would break.
"Spare me!" she cried, "Oh spare me yet awhile!
Smile on me, father, as you used to smile.
I have no power the real truth to show,
But I am very wretched—this I know!"

"The real truth!" said William Herbert; "Why
Allow such mystery in the case to lie?
If I could think that he had been to blame,
The world should know it and his reverend name
Bear such a stain as time could ne'er wash out."

"Father," said Lucy, "entertain no doubt
Of his integrity; whate'er you see
Or hear of blame, it rests alone with me.
Yet smile, dear father, as you did before,
And speak as kindly; it will all pass o'er:
I am not changed—not altered in my heart,
I still can act a faithful daughter's part;

And time, that breaks so many bonds, shall prove
How true I am to you−how tender in my love."

Again she pressed her lips upon his brow,
While o'er his cheek he felt her warm tears flow.
"It is enough," he said, "I ask no more;
May pitying heaven thy cheerfulness restore.
Come to my heart, beloved child, again,
Fain would I calm thy spirit, soothe thy pain;
And if I fail in aught, or seem unkind,
'Twill be because I may not know thy mind,
And thus, from ignorance of its tenderest chord,
May grieve thy bosom by some careless word."

He asked no more; no more did Lucy tell.
It was a theme on which no tongue could dwell
Unsanctioned; and at length it passed away,
Unravelled still—the mystery of a day.

Lucy had not so learned the will of heaven
As to believe her kindly feelings given
For single purpose—but to serve the end
Of making happy one peculiar friend.
Of her own mind she held such humble views,
That no exalted walk she dared to choose;
But faith and charity might still be hers,
Though hope had seemed to vanish from her prayers;
And when she strove to look beyond the grave,
'Twas but to say—"Almighty Father, save!
Rock of the perishing! I come to thee.
Strength of the feeble! stretch thy hand to me—
To me, the weakest of thy creatures—come
And bear me o'er these gloomy waters home!"

And with this simple trust, there came at length
A balm that gave her wounded spirit strength,
And she went forth again, at morn and eve,
Not in the solitude of woods to grieve;
But o'er life's path, with thorns so thickly strewn,
To seek for sorrow greater than her own;
To lift the latch where hopeless penury
Plies the dull task, and stills the infant cry;
To penetrate the dimly lighted room,
Where helpless suffering spreads a sombre gloom;
To see the father on his dying bed,
And hear the mother wailing for her dead.

Nor idly came her faithful step to these,
Nor was her aim alone to soothe, or please:
But to instruct—to teach them to behold
With trusting eyes the sacred truths she told.

And oft her gentle voice was heard at eve,
When summer dews their silvery curtain weave,
From out the ivied porch, or lattice low,
Beside the bed of death—the couch of woe.
Reading, with serious tone, and lip of truth,
That holy book, the guide of age, and youth.
And those who saw her smile of sweetness there,
Or heard her breathe the very soul of prayer,
Deemed her most happy—thought the joy she bore
To others, was from her abundant store;
And the soft soothing of her tenderness,
From a young heart that never knew distress.

Is it not thus that real mourners find
Heaven's own appointed solace for the mind?
And bearing comfort to the sore distressed,
Return with peace for their own wounded breast?
Yes; and these are the deepest mourners too,
Though to a higher, nobler impulse, true.
Theirs is the sympathy whose ceaseless flow
Springs from their own internal source of woe;
Theirs the great grief, in majesty sublime,
That bears them o'er the trifling things of time;
Theirs the true knowledge of what suffering is;
Else why that thirsting after heavenly bliss,
Which never yet inspired a child of earth,
Till burst that tide of woe that in the heart has birth.

The tears that fall beside the new−made grave,
The sable vestments, and deep pall, that wave
Around the funeral, all attract the eye,
And nature needs must weep for those who die.
The loss of wealth, the sad reverse of fate,
That robs the rich man of his lordly state,
Are blazoned forth, and told by every tongue,
While sorrowing friends the mournful tale prolong.
All outward characters of human grief,
From human sympathy find some relief:
But there are griefs beyond all knowledge deep,
And pangs too keen for pity's eye to weep,
That live, and ache, within the folded heart,
When no one sees the bitter tear−drop start,
When smiles perchance flit o'er the weary brow,
And from the lip e'en tones of gladness flow.
Oh, how should years of agony like this
Be borne? and yet such agony there is!
It is that mercy bids the mourner come
And look, with eye of faith, beyond the tomb.

BOOK X.

NOW summer days were swiftly gliding on,
And o'er the waving grain bright sunbeams shone,
Each morn revealing to the farmer's view
Hope's cheering promise, every hour more true.
How could he doubt the God of nature smiled?
And Henry too his anxious fears beguiled
By gazing on the cloudless skies above,
And counting all his heavenly Father's love.
Oh, feeblest calculation made by man!
When rests his faith on what our eyes may scan
Of bright or fair in that stupendous plan
Arranged not less in mercy, when the storm
Rages around, than when the sunbeams warm;
Not less when rolls destruction o'er our fields,
Than when its richest store our harvest yields;
Not less when turns our earthly bliss to woe,
Than when in sweetest streams life's sparkling currents flow.

Yet is it good to look abroad, and see
The noontide joy of nature's revelry,
To gaze admiring on this glorious world—
The flag of smiling plenty wide unfurled,
Floating afar from every verdant height,
In every valley waving to the sight.

What floods of life then swell the tide of hope!
The white flocks grazing on the mountain slope,
The peaceful herds in the green pastures laid,
And sweet songs echoing through the leafy glade.
For all this fulness—this extreme of good,
What can we render but our gratitude?
That how withhold? or, while we feel and live,
Our heart's best incense how refuse to give?

So felt the farmer ofttimes, when he gazed
On nature's face, and then he inly praised
That gracious hand, which freely spread the whole
Like a perpetual banquet for his soul.
'Twas thus he roamed, with Henry by his side,
From field to field, while yet the flowing tide
Of hope and joy had scarce attained its height,
And sunny skies still glowed before their sight.

But soon dark evenings came, and winds blew loud,
And the wide heavens were clothed as with a shroud:
No sunshine pierced the gloom, and yet no rain

Fell on the earth its ripening bloom to stain.
There seemed a darkness in the very air—
Something that bade the boding soul prepare—
At length it came. Fierce northern gales blew wild,
And tore the leafy boughs where beauty smiled;
The floods fell heavily, and bowed the grain
Beneath the tempest and the sheeted rain.
It ceased awhile. The reapers had begun
Their task of hope, though still the clouded sun
Kept far aloof, and hid his smiling brow;
Yet they resumed their joyless labour now
Uncheered, and doubtful how the end would prove,
So cold the earth, so dark the skies above.
Nor waited long the tempest−laden gales.
Again they come—the hissing shower prevails:
Low pools arise, and widen into floods;
Like rushing waves resound the leafy woods;
While cornfields, beaten level as the plain,
Lie, lost and hopeless, blackening in the rain.

And William Herbert saw the ruin spread,
And oft arose at midnight from his bed,
To listen if the rushing rains had ceased,
Or if the wrath of heaven was yet appeased.
But midnight only seemed to darken o'er
All that was bleak and desolate before;
While louder rushed the foaming torrent then,
And heavier fell the rain−drops on the pane.
How dreary were those hours of midnight gloom
To the lone parent in his cheerless room!
And sorely did he need a hand to smooth
His restless couch—a gentle voice to soothe.
But she was gone, who would have stayed his soul
From sinking, by the silent sweet control
Of woman's influence, and of woman's love,
Bearing his spirit this rude world above.

Sad were the scenes which met the farmer's eye
When forth he went, his scattered sheaves to tie;
Thick−matted heaps, o'er which the rank weeds threw
Their clustering arms, and down the burden drew;
While sprouting corn in coarse luxuriance lay
Prone on the ground—embedded in the clay.
These met his view; and furrows filled with rain
Soaking and saturating all his grain.
And then his labourers, dripping with the showers,
Wasting in idleness their noontide hours,
Beneath the hawthorn hedge, behind the sheaves,
Or where the sycamore extends her leaves;
Yet all expecting payment on the day
When their full wages he was wont to pay.

It was a sight to move the farmer's heart—
Almost to make the unmanly tear−drop start
In Henry's eye; for he had much at stake,
His home to lose—his fortune all to make.
And he was young, and life to him was fair,
How could he look around, and not despair?
How could he look around, and see the waste—
The desolation o'er his prospects cast,
Nor ask, presumptuous, whence had come the gloom—
How had he sinned, to merit such a doom?
Or, worse—why Heaven should blast the generous boon
So freely given—repented of so soon.

Thus Henry questioned, but no peace arose,
Or ever will, from reasoning on the laws
By which this world is governed, and sustained.
Enough for us, that God's own end is gained;
That end beyond the range of human mind,
Most wise, most just, most merciful and kind.
The farmer, schooled by discipline to bear
With brow unchanged, the heaviest weight of care,
Was sad but silent, and no murmuring word,
Or sound impatient, from his lips was heard.
But Henry, restless as a fretful child,
With dark anticipations almost wild,
Reckoned his loss, and counted o'er his fears;
While his fair bride reproached him with her tears,
For making her the partner of his home,
Ere he had known what sorrows were to come.

So passed that gloomy season, and there grew
From out the general grief contentions new,
Small, but yet frequent—who should most give up,
Or most retain—that seems the bitter drop
That poisons all; when we have made display
Of casting superfluities away,
To find that others will not give their share,
Or learn from us, their luxuries to spare.
Then shrinks each effort—fails each noble aim,
If they withhold, we long to do the same;
Or, while the treasured good remains with them,
We wish it ours, and envying, still condemn.

Thus all the farmer's family believed
Their purpose right, but o'er each other grieved.
Matilda Herbert, watchful of the rest,
Her censure oft implied, more than expressed,
If Emma dressed too well, or looked too fine,
Or had too weak an appetite to dine.
While she, retorting in her quiet way,

The retributive taunt could well convey;
Or by her servant send an insult down,
The maiden aunt's antipathy to crown.

Say not that straitened means bring nought to dread
Save in the actual want of daily bread.
They bring the very worst of human ills,
The bitterest draught our earthly cup that fills.
They bring domestic strife—contention—spleen—
And envy, mother of the deadliest sin—
Injurious thoughts—imbittered words, that burn
And goad the writhing spirit to return
The pain it suffers on the offender's head.
Then say not, poverty brings nought to dread.

Yet came not these in their most hideous form—
In their full power to ravage and deform.
Within the farmer's hospitable home,
How could such fearful discord ever come?
'Twas but the shallow waves of life that stirred
With the rude breath of some injurious word.
The tide flowed on more peacefully below,
Where no deep root of bitterness could grow;
And love was still the well−spring of the stream,
Though somewhat troubled did its waters seem.

'Twas near the close of that ill−fated year,
When all things looked most desolate and drear,
While yet November's scattered foliage lay
Untrodden o'er the traveller's gloomy way;
The farmer's landlord in his ancient hall
Prepared to hold a jocund festival.
Not for his titled friends; his guests were now
Those who had learned to speed the rustic plough—
His tenantry—the yeoman of the land—
Their wives and daughters—one united hand—
Servants, and satellites—all asked to come
And grace his old hereditary home.
Grace, it might be, or not; for far and wide
His grooms, delighted, on their errand ride,
Dropping a note of invitation here,
Where spreads the man of wealth his courteous cheer:
Startling the inmates of the cottage there,
Where hands less delicate the meal prepare.
From house to house, with clattering hoofs they fly,
Their thundering knock proclaims their dignity;
The maid sets down her pail upon the floor,
And curious children peep around the door;
The dame walks forth, with pleasure−sparkling eye,
Proud to be asked, yet fearful to reply;
While simpering daughters scarcely deign to come

To wait in person on their landlord's groom.
Yet some less bashful bring the foaming cup,
And to the smiling horseman hold it up;
While others send their servants, and remain
Behind the scenes, meet distance to maintain.

Thus spread the summons, far and wide it flew;
While many a matron wondered what to do:
Refuse she dared not, and she scarcely would,
Even if her prudent spouse had thought she could.
Yet how to dress, to curtsy, or to go
Into those splendid rooms, she ne'er should know.
It seemed as if her foot perforce must slip,
Just as the words of greeting passed her lip;
Or that some dire calamity must fall
Upon her head−dress, ere she reached the hall.
Yet, with this train of suppositions, came
A secret pleasure to the rustic dame;
And if profusion ne'er was seen before,
She would not spare—she must be garnished o'er
With lace, and ribbons yellow, green, and blue,
And deepest red, that seemed as if it grew
From the rich crimson of her glowing face,
So much alike their beauty, and their grace.

Strange were the different scenes which then arose,
Breaking the peaceful hamlet's long repose.
Fashions consulted—carriers charged to bear
Each precious burden from the town with care,
Things brought to light long hidden from the view,
Old dresses manufactured into new,
Clothes made to fit for that illustrious night
That for all others had been deemed too tight.
Some felt themselves arrayed for any court,
While others thought their utmost power fell short
Of what they wished, 'mid such a scene, to wear,
And still, to all, the appointed hour drew near.

How fared it then in William Herbert's home?
It seemed as if no summons there had come—
No preparation—no consulting there—
Could they not mean that festival to share?
Truth was, they were prepared for such a scene,
And only wished their family had been
Passed by—forgotten—anything but asked.
How should their hatred of the thing be masked?
To go, a vassal rather than a guest,
And sit with hungry boors at that great feast!—
It was too humbling to their secret pride;
And yet their landlord's bidding they must bide.

"And since it must be," William Herbert said,
"Let us all hope some good may yet be made
Of this strange meeting. Such there used to be
Between the landlords and their tenantry
In days of yore; and we may go to hear
Of rents being lessened for the coming year."

Matilda Herbert recollected then
That other well−bred ladies—nine or ten—
Must needs be there; while Emma thought aside
Henry would like to show his lovely bride.

It had been difficult for Helen's mind
To yield a point like this; but there combined
Against her pride hope's glimmering of faint joy,
Which still she strove by reasoning to destroy.
Yet watchful eyes deceived, or there had been
Amongst those grooms Lord William's servant seen,
So she resolved, more complaisance to show,
Her father's wishes to consult, and go.

Lucy was held excused: she had no heart
To grace a pageant, or to act a part;
And thus she lent her willing hand to all,
To braid the hair, and fold the graceful shawl.
Her aunt she decked, magnificently gay,
And proud the latest fashions to display;
Emma, adorned in colours pure and chaste,
And round her brow a wreath of roses placed,
Whose silvery sprays above her temples twined,
Pale as her beauty, simple as her mind.
But long did Lucy linger o'er that scene
Where Helen stood, more like a stately queen,
Than form familiar, gifted but with powers
To live as we do, in this world of ours.
No gorgeous trappings clothed her graceful form,
No mimic flowers outvied her blushes warm;
Smooth lay the folds of her deep raven hair,
One band of purest pearls alone was there.

At length the vision fades from Lucy's sight:
The hour arrives; she bids them all good−night
With looks of kindness—almost looks of joy,
Why should her grief their happiness destroy?
Now are they gone, the sheltering curtains drawn,
And closed the gate that echoes o'er the lawn.
She turns to her lone hearth, and vacant chair:
Oh, hour of deepest luxury for despair!
When all are gone, no loiterer left to see
The gushing tears of pent−up misery;
No word to answer, and no smile to meet,

The silent embers brightening at our feet;
Alone—secure—no intercourse to dread,
No step to startle with approaching tread;
Deep night around us, with her sable gloom,
Soft beams of mellow light within the room,
Hour after hour to nurse our anguish there,
And taste the genuine luxury of despair.

Meantime the lights within the landlord's hall
Were glancing brightly, and the tapestried wall
Displayed its curious colouring to the view,
And o'er the scene mysterious splendour threw:
While smiling servants hasten to and fro,
Pleased with the frolic, dazzled with the show.
Now to the door strange equipages come,
And trembling fair ones seek the tiring room;
While wondering farmers stand and stroke their hair,
With hat in hand, afraid to venture where
They see the richly liveried footmen run,
And where they hope the feasting has begun.
Alas! what hours had they to wish and wait,
Ere by the genial board at last they sate!
Rich fragrant coffee first must touch the lip
In gilded cups, from which they taste and sip,
And deem it well as prelude to the rest,
Though scarcely worth presenting to a guest.

Still swells the moving pageant on the sight,
Dames from the dairy, milkmaids red and white,
These clad in russet, those in silken sheen,
Jockeys in boots, and clowns in coats of green,
While gliding here and there, amongst the rest,
Were statelier matrons fashionably dressed,
With silent daughters just returned from school,
Beating the air with fans, to keep it cool.

There too was seen that noblest form of man,
Built upon nature's most majestic plan;
Firm, tall, and free, his shoulders broad, and bold,
His sturdy hand well used to grasp, and hold:
His mien erect, his foot placed on the ground
With purpose fixed, and dignity profound;
His temples wreathed with natural waves of hair,
His manly forehead smooth, and calm, and fair,
Contrasting well with the deep bronze below,
And sunny tints upon his cheek that glow.
Such were the men that Britain once could boast,
Whose homes adorned her land, from coast to coast;
Untaught in Attic lore, unskilled, perchance,
To tread the mazes of the graceful dance;
Yet firm to sanction, and defend her laws;

Shepherds at home, but soldiers in her cause;
And proud at heart to bear her honoured name,
Yet still more proud of her unsullied fame.
Where are they now? Go ask the western waves—
The southern billows, where they find their graves?
Search the wild prairie, trace them o'er the plain
Where the log−cabin shields them from the rain;
Or track the wide Australian wastes, and say,
How fare the sons that England sends away?

But to our story. Such had Henry been,
A perfect model of the man we mean;
Save that his hand was fairer, and his eye
Had more of beauty, less of energy.
And he looked on, amid the glittering scene
Unmoved, as if his daily path had been
With flitting forms and brilliant lights adorned;
All rude amazement his proud spirit scorned.
Enough for him, one form so slight and fair
Leaned on his arm, and looked the loveliest there;
His honoured father too, well pleased, he saw
Close to his side the graceful Helen draw,
Lest vulgar freedom should provoke her frown,
Or hands familiar dare to touch her own.

Now changed the scene, wide doors were thrown aside,
And forth there issued such a sparkling tide
Of flowers, and gems, and beauty decked for show,
That scarce the wondering farmers seemed to know
Whether from earth or heaven the vision came;
Yet silent every social group became:
And those who most had deemed themselves adorned
Their own poor vestments now beheld, and scorned.
It was the landlord, and his noble friends,
And o'er the widening space his train extends,
Breathing around, where'er they turn their eyes,
That tone of welcome that in utterance dies.

What form is that clad in a soldier's dress,
Whose smiles the glow of happiness express?
A radiant beauty leans upon his arm,
He sees no other; not a single form,
Nor eye, nor look, in all that moving mass
Before his faithless memory seems to pass.
At length the farmer meets him, face to face;
His brow assumes the very faintest trace
Of recognition, and he slightly bends
As if in greeting; while his ear attends
Still undiverted, to the foreign tongue
Of her who looks so beautiful and young,
Of noble birth, though distant lands must claim

The honour of her lineage, and her name.

They passed, and mingled with the dancing throng,
And William Herbert led his child along,
Both silent, though he thought her gentle hand
Shook on his arm; and he could understand,
Though not for worlds could he have then explained
His mingled feelings, or the pang that pained.
One thought alone distinctly touched his heart,
And almost made the burning tear−drop start.
His daughter Helen ne'er had been so dear,
Nor to his kindly sympathies so near,
As in this hour of her insulted pride;
And thus he pressed her closer to his side.
She felt the pressure. Woman quickly feels
The touch that secret sympathy reveals.
'Tis her mute witness that she is not left
Alone on earth, of every friend bereft;
And thus she hoards the memory in her soul,
When o'er her head life's troubled waters roll.

Why linger we amid this festal throng;
To graver scenes our sympathies belong.
Enough to know the feast and frolic grew
Not to their height, till morn her veil withdrew,
And o'er the world her purple radiance threw.
Afraid to meet even pity's tenderest touch,
Long ere that hour had Helen sought her couch,
Put out her light, and laid her head to rest,
Hoping to shroud the anguish of her breast
Even from herself; but darkness only brought
More perfect torture with each burning thought.
No tear had yet bedewed her feverish cheek,
No word of sorrow had she deigned to speak;
But through the silent night, when none are near,
A wounded spirit is too hard to bear
Without some natural overflow of grief—
And tears were surely given to bring relief.
Lucy was sleeping, or appeared to sleep,
So Helen fearlessly began to weep.
With such excess the tide of sorrow grew,
She heard not the soft step that near her drew,
Nor saw the gentle form beside her bed,
That bent with deepest feeling o'er her head.

"Helen, dear Helen."
It was Lucy's voice,
Sweet as an angels, and she had no choice
But to disclose the secret of her woes,
While darkness hid her blushes as they rose.
For there was shame—deep−burning shame, with all

That else had pained; but this was mingling gall
With bitterest wormwood. Yet she told the whole,
And meekly asked for comfort to her soul.
She told how Douglas had appeared that night
Like some bright vision, dazzling to her sight;
How he no sign of memory betrayed,
How, with another pleased, he scorned the rustic maid.

Yet this was nothing. "Can I tell the rest?
Yes; and for ever tear him from my breast.
The titled guests had joined the merry dance,
Ladies, and lords, and waiting−maids from France;
All blending in one many−coloured maze,
While those who could not dance stood round to gaze.
At length the ladies of the hall retired,
When louder grew the glee, and more inspired
Each booted jockey, and each turbaned dame,
That forth from out their hiding−places came.
I would have left, but heard my father say
We must not be the first to turn away.
Thus came my punishment. Oh, Lucy, hide
Thy searching eyes, and spare thy sister's pride!
Douglas returned, and now he came alone,
All the proud revellers but him were gone.
He came with smiles upon his altered brow,
And the poor farmer's daughter he could know;
Could touch her hand familiarly, and say
How well she looked, how happy was that day.
I fear there was a blush upon my cheek
As he drew near; and when I tried to speak,
I could not quite my trembling voice control;
For something came like gladness to my soul,
After long grief. But, oh! it passed away,
And left such blackness! Lucy, never say
One word of this to any human ear.
Keep it, dear Lucy, and be more than dear.
I thought his words were somewhat strange, and free,
And when I looked into his face to see
His real meaning, there I read the whole!
His brow was flushed—his eye−balls seemed to roll—
Wine was the secret of his gallantry,
And I, amid those dancing grooms, might be
His village belle—his plaything for an hour,
Till pride, or prudence, should resume its power.

"Oh, Lucy! and he once did seem so kind,
And pure, and noble, that I gave my mind
To his smooth flatteries, which deceived me so.
Spurn me not, dearest Lucy, if I show
To thee the weakness of a woman's heart.
Thine is, I know, a more exalted part,

A calmer course along life's path to trace,
With less disquietude, and less disgrace."

"Helen," said Lucy, "sorrow sometimes lies
Hid in the heart, and veiled from human eyes;
While deepest shame may burn beneath a cheek
Whose tell−tale blushes never more shall speak.
But let that pass. Come to thy sister's breast,
Meet place for sorrow and for shame to rest.
Cheer thee, beloved one. 'Twas but a dream,
'Twill pass away, and life will fairer seem,
And thou wilt live to love and hope again,
With less of confidence, yet less of pain.
Lean on this breast; my heart is beating sore—
Its burning throb will surely soon be o'er;
Yet let us take sweet counsel while we may.
I feel, dear Helen, that I shall not stay
Long to be near thee; and I fain would say
Something to strengthen thee, as well as soothe—
Would stretch my hand thy thorny path to smooth.
'Tis an old story, that this world is fair
In seeming only—all its joys a snare;
And we will leave this melancholy strain
For themes more cheering, and for truths more plain,
Will ask our heavenly Father, in his love,
To send us light and healing from above,
And guide our footsteps through the days of youth,
By his own Spirit, in the paths of truth."

BOOK XI.

IT had been hoped by many a rural guest
Who went to share his landlord's sumptuous feast,
That some great benefit would quickly come—
Some good soon follow to his humbler home—
Some cheerful tidings that the man of power
Had looked with pity on their adverse hour.
Knowing the blighted harvest of that year,
They thought he brought them round his board, to cheer,
And would, with like benevolent intent,
Remit some portion of their winter's rent.

Schooled in the Arab's hospitable lore,
They thought no guest could enter at that door,
Or break the bread of plenty at that board,
Without some heartfelt kindness from its lord—
Some bond of sympathy, with secret power
Binding them all more closely, from that hour.
Vain childlike confidence! where had they learned
This simple trust, by the keen worldling spurned?
'Twas in their peaceful homes—their bowers of rest,
Where sordid interests seldom goad the breast;
Where man, uniting in his Maker's plan,
Knows not his fiercest enemy in man.

If there still lives simplicity on earth,
'Tis where these sons of nature's soil have birth.
If there be those who know no servile fear—
Men who can trust their fellow−men, 'tis here;
If there be hope that smiles are what they seem,
That human kindness is not all a dream;
That human fellowship, and human love,
Have something vital, their mere names above;
If there be justice—if a sense of right;
For the oppressed, a fearless arm to fight;
If there be truth that nobly spurns a lie,
Nor knows the science of that treachery
That rules the mart, and stains the courtly robe,
And mocks reliance o'er the peopled globe.
If these are ever found beneath the skies,
'Tis where our country's peaceful hamlets rise;
Where men, untutored in the tricks of trade,
Live—but no longer flourish—in the shade.

Bright were the hopes that wakened many a smile,
And cheered the farmers in their wintry toil;
And William Herbert smiled amongst the rest,

While the same hope enlivened Henry's breast;
As forth they rode, one stormy winter's day,
To face the tempest on the broad highway.
Swift was their speed, and neither brow betrayed
Of dark foreboding, or of doubt, a shade.
More provident—perchance more proud than some,
Their full amount of rent they bore from home;
Yet not the less dismissed all thought of fear
That half would be returned them, for that year.

What troops they passed that morn along the road!
Brisk jockeys there their rival steeds bestrode;
While sober men, who seemed to ride and sleep,
Dodged through the mire with footfall loud and deep.
Some, pleased to greet their neighbours as they went,
Drew up in ranks, as if with one consent;
And talking loudly of the price of grain,
Threw on their horses' necks the loosened rein.

The concourse thickened as the town they neared,
And soon their landlord's equipage appeared,
Hailed by his faithful tenantry around
With kindling joy, yet with respect profound.
Some thought that none that equipage excelled,
Even when a royal festival was held;
Some praised the servants, and a few their dress;
Some thought the great man easy of access;
While more approved his horses, and bestowed
Their utmost praise on one he sometimes rode.

It had been easy to have bound those men
By love and gratitude's enduring chain;
They were so simple, and so fain to trust
To that great lord for what was kind and just.
Then let us trace them on their homeward way,
When darkness fell upon that wintry day.
Sharp was the sleet, and fiercely blew the wind,
Piercing and pitiless, as if to find
Some wound to search—some undefended part
By which to rend a passage to the heart.
'Twas not enough, the smarting eye−balls felt
That icy shower in tears of anguish melt;
'Twas not enough, the cheek was scathed and bare,
Robbed of all natural shelter from the hair;
'Twas not enough, the hand that held the rein
Stiffened with cold, or agonized with pain;
But that rude wind drove back the folded coat,
With savage purpose sought the guarded throat,
Through each small crevice sent a quivering wound,
And then, with louder triumph, howled around.

And there were some who met the blast that night,
And had enough to feel, without the spite
Of sleet, or gale, or winter's withering frost:
For now their last—their only hope was lost.
Nor lost their hope alone. Strange tidings came
To make that day of memorable name.
Their landlord, kind and complaisant of mood,
Smiled on them all, and hoped they understood
What the great pressure of the times required;
How able men, in what they most desired
As best and wisest for the state, should be
Supported by their faithful tenantry.
In short, amid the wreck of that sad year,
He plainly told them, that they must appear
On the next rent−day with an added sum;
That he was going abroad; but one would come
Well authorized, and able to enforce,
In all he wished, to adopt the surest course.
"You have your choice," he said, "to go, or stay;
But I must have my money, come what may."

How did they bear those tidings? Some went home
Early, and sullenly. Like children, some
Pleaded, and strove to modify their doom;
While others, reckless—maddened with despair,
Feasted, and drank, and drove away their care;
Till, blustering forth, and battling with the blast,
They reeled away, and found their homes at last.

Long ere these revellers forsook the board,
Had William Herbert left its courteous lord;
Henry had silently led forth his steed,
And both pursued their homeward way with speed.
Nor had one word escaped them, till they drew
Near to the lane where their own poplars grew;
When slackened both the rein, and slowly trod
Their weary horses that familiar road.

"I have been thinking," said the farmer, then,
"Whom I can spare amongst my labouring men.
All have been like one family to me,
But some must be dismissed, I plainly see.
It grieves my heart these cruel truths to say;
Yet the old shepherd hardly earns his pay;
The poor lame boy, who keeps our garden trim,
His distant parish will provide for him;
And Phebe's father, so infirm and slow,
To the new workhouse we must make him go."

"Or go ourselves," said Henry; "'twere as well,
As thus the pauper catalogue to swell."

"I once had hoped," his father calmly said,
"In life's decline, to rest my weary head
Amongst these people; and to find a grave
Beneath the elms that in yon churchyard wave;
Leaving behind me many a happy home,
Followed with blessings to the peaceful tomb,
But I must act this cold ungrateful part,
Must drive them from my door, and from my heart;
Bid them begone, because their strength has failed,
Age has enfeebled, or disease assailed.
This is their recompense for years of toil,
This the sole tribute of their native soil."

'Twas even so; and while that wintry gale
Swept through the cot, and chilled its inmates pale,
While the black clouds burst with their fleecy load,
And drifting snow lay thick upon the road,
The farmer forced himself, with aching heart,
To tell his faithful labourers they must part.
And one went home to spend that evening cold
Without a fire—he was infirm and old.
Another tried to smile, and say good−night,
But dashed away the tears that dimmed his sight.
A third looked up into his master's face,
And would have spoken; but his speech gave place
To sullen pride, for he had served him well,
And long—why should he stoop his griefs to tell?

So they retired, a silent, joyless train,
Ne'er to retrace that well−known path again.
They closed the gate, whose echo brought to mind
The love long cherished for their master kind;
They turned, and saw the glimmering of his fire,
How could he wish their comforts to expire?
And he so wealthy, in that spacious home,
Where flitting forms were seen, from room to room
Gliding about, as if no thought of care
Had ever reached the happy inmates there.

Sad were the tidings to their village brought,
While busy rumour half the story caught,
And tinged the other half with darker hue,
From vague conclusions, neither kind nor true.
Yet true it was, that, ere a month had gone,
These men, and more, were on their parish thrown,
Tasting the tender mercies known to those,
And those alone, who feel the pauper's woes.
And some were placed along the public way,
With weary hammer labouring all the day;
While others, more ill−fated, worked their rounds

From house to house, their ears assailed by sounds
That had no soothing for the sons of care,
And bade them anything but welcome there.

Much has been said of slavery abroad,
Much has been done, and nobly, that this load
Might be removed, and Britain's glorious name
Stand forth unsullied by one taint of shame.
And over all this isle has spread the sound,
When men have proved, by argument profound,
That slavery does not only gall and bind
The human body, but degrade the mind.
Yet, have we not, within our favoured realm,
Where justice reigns, and wisdom guides the helm,
Seen bondage galling as the actual chain
That binds the negro to his task of pain?
Have we not seen, when hands that oft have held
The spade or sickle in the open field;
When sinewy arms well skilled to guide the plough,
To drive the team, to reap the grain, or sow;
When forms herculean, warmed by hearts as bold,
With strength that scarcely in old age grew old:
Were driven by dire necessity to swell
The pauper's ranks, or bid their homes farewell;
To ask for help, unwillingly bestowed,
Or gain, instead, those bitter taunts that goad
The generous bosom in its hour of need;
When, but for helpless children wanting bread,
The sturdy suppliant would rather die,
Than tax the parish for his own supply.

That winter was a dreary one to all;
Dark were the days, and sullen was the fall
Of silent snow upon the frozen earth;
And hushed was many a voice that spoke of mirth
In days gone by, when village hearths burned bright,
And youths and maidens hailed the winter's night,
With all its frolic, and its social cheer,
Its gathering home of friends long−tried and dear.
Where are they now? The hamlet seems to sleep
'Mid the white plain, so pathless and so deep,
That scarce the shepherd toils his wonted way,
To strew the ground with welcome heaps of hay,
To guard the fence, or trim the low−roofed shed,
Or track the wandering sheep with dubious tread.

Nor looked the world less dreary, when there fell
A drizzling rain; when streams began to swell,
And heave their icy burdens to the brink;
And the deep drifts to melt away, and sink;
And here, and there, along the fields, were seen

Ridges of earth, and spots of mournful green.

It needs some thought to solace or to please
The farmer, when he looks on scenes like these;
Some hope to lead him forth, when falls the rain,
To turn the watercourse, to guard his grain,
The sluice to widen, or the trench to cast,
By skill ingenious, and by labour vast.
Nor thinks the townsman on his couch of rest
What anxious fears assail the farmer's breast;
What shifting plans must agitate his mind,
With every change that rules the restless wind.
Yet neither comfort came with cheering smile
To William Herbert, nor did hope beguile;
And while his brows was shadowed o'er with care,
Henry's expression looked more like despair.
For he would sit, his daily labour done,
Through that long hour, ere evening has begun,
Resting his elbow on the table near,
Upon his hand, his brow so pale, and clear;
While his thick raven hair, with natural flow,
Cast a deep shadow o'er his cheek below;
And his dark eyes, that sometimes seemed to see
Nothing, on earth, but hopeless misery,
Fixed on the fire their melancholy gaze,
And watched unmoved the flickering of the blaze:
Nor turned away, when others' prattling mood
Upon his silent musing would intrude;
Nor yet awoke to answering smiles of love,
When the fair Emma would his patience prove,
By questions idle, and ill framed to please,
To soothe his grief, or cure his mind's disease.

Yet was it only at the darkening hour
Of winter's twilight, that the secret power
Of speechless thought sat brooding o'er his soul,
Chaining its energies with stern control.
Brisk morning drove him early to the field,
The fence to prop, the sturdy axe to wield;
And when the frost had melted from the ground,
Amongst the flocks and herds to trace his round;
To guide the plough along the fallow plain,
Or strew once more, with skilful hand, the grain.

And could this toil, unceasingly pursued—
Could health, or youth with impulse firm and good—
Could manly will, by noble purpose moved,
Sufficient for their hour of need have proved;
The farmer and his son might ne'er have known
Such gloomy shadows o'er their future thrown.
But all too late their effort to redeem

Errors long past. There was no human scheme,
Nor power in industry, or human thought,
To meet such evils as the past had wrought.
And hard it seems to battle with the rage
Of storm and tempest; constant war to wage
With foes so pitiless as sleet and hail,
When clouds are dark, and northern winds prevail;
Yet feel no cheering promise in the breast,
That here, at last, may weary age find rest.

'Twas long ere spring with verdure clothed the plain,
That Lucy Herbert traced those paths again
Which led her where disease its vigil kept,
Where want complained, or hopeless suffering wept.
Her sister Martha, generous still, and true
To those she loved in childhood, ne'er withdrew
Her heart's warm interest from the lowly few
Who used to claim her sympathy and care;
And now that richer boons her hand could spare,
Lucy was made her almoner, and bore
Bounty and blessing to the needy poor.

Sore was her trial when she talked with those
Who to her father traced their wants and woes;
Who thought him pitiless, and hard of heart,
With his old friends so willingly to part.
Yet had she ever known, from earliest youth,
The touching eloquence of simple truth;
And her mild speech, and earnest looks, could win
Entire belief, when argument had been
Fruitless and vain, as breath of idle wind,
To check the impulse of a wounded mind.
Thus had she felt more earnestly the need
Of her mild influence, when the tidings spread
Of discontent amongst the village poor,
Driven, as they called it, from the farmer's door.
And thus she stayed not for the rains to cease,
The skies to clear, or winds to hold their peace;
But, like some gentle flower, too frail to last,
That bares too soon its bosom to the blast,
She went, regardless of herself, and strove
To waken for her father, thoughts of love;
To prove him blameless, and to still the sigh,
And hush the murmurings, of despondency.

Nor was her lightest task in Phebe's home,
Where oft in childhood she was wont to come;
Where the old father, querulous with pain,
Of many a lighter grievance would complain.
But now such complicated ills prevailed,
That scarce her soothing sympathy availed.

"Troubles," he said, "are never sent alone."
And then he told his over, one by one;
How, in old age upon the parish cast,
His daughter Phebe, at the very last,
When all things darkened round him, and her care
Alone remained to make him not despair—
How she could leave him—yes, could choose to wed,
Not to remain at home, and shield his head;
But to go forth, where wild Atlantic waves
Tempt idle youths to seek untimely graves.

Lucy was listening, but her ear had caught
Another well−known sound; and quick as thought
Once the warm hectic would have stained her cheek,
But now no more its tell−tale blushes speak.
Calm, pale, and passionless—almost as cold
As marble, she could now behold
The moving form, and hear the living voice
Of him whose love would once have been her choice
Above all treasures, and above all bliss:
Of all that earth could yield, her soul had asked but this.

She had so loved him: not a thought had been
In her pure mind, that he might not have seen;
Nor vague desire might ever there intrude,
Nor wish, that sought not to promote his good;
Nor could imagination wake one hope,
But he was still its centre, and its scope.
She had so loved him—with such childlike trust,
Looking to him for what was great, and just,
Generous, and noble, and approved of heaven;
That scarce a more enduring faith was given
To her meek prayers, than to her earthly love;
Bearing her up, life's troubled waves above.
And thus it was, that when this sacred chain
Was broken, nothing could unite again
Its severed links—that nothing could impart
The slightest value to one separate part.
It was the entireness of the perfect whole
That gave it strength and beauty to her soul.
That strength had failed her: haply it was well,
For, from that hour, she bade this world farewell.
Yet seemed it only fading from her view,
To leave the colouring of the next more true;
And while she dwelt on earth, 'twas but as one
Whose task of earthly toil is nearly done.
Thus was her spirit seldom moved to grief,
And her eyes wept not. 'Twould have been relief
To natural feeling; but that fount was sealed
By silent suffering, to no ear revealed.

'Twas strange that Lucy now could calmly hear
The voice that once had been too kind, and dear;
And raise her eyes unblushing to that face,
Nor linger, lines of beauty there to trace.
Yet such things have been; and she was not one
To shrink from tasks of duty when begun.
She felt like some lone pilgrim, and her day
Of weariness was wearing fast away.
Then what to her were shadows o'er her path,
Clouds in the sky, or in the tempest, wrath?
A few brief months—it might be only days,
And she no more would tread the thorny ways
That o'er this world's vast wilderness extend.
Happy for her, that journey soon would end.

'Twas in such confidence, that Lucy heard
That well−known voice—yes, every tone and word;
But joined not in familiar converse there,
Apart she sate; she did not choose to share
Social communion, or exchange of thought,
With one whose hand by money might be bought.
Yet, had she said good−night, and left that scene,
Perchance his patronizing care had been
Extended to her solitary walk;
So she remained, to hear the poor man talk
Of all his sorrows; while the pastor told
Of consolation; but with look so cold,
And tone so regulated, smooth, and mild,
As never yet the sorrowing heart beguiled.

At length he rose; and Lucy breathed again
When he was gone, with less oppressive pain;
And hastened forth to meet the chilly blast,
While deepening shadows o'er her path were cast.

It was a cold March evening, and there blew
A piercing gale; and Lucy, shivering, drew
Her cloak around her frail and slender form,
That bent beneath the anger of the storm.
Yet had there been some hopeful sign of spring
In birds that fluttered on the joyous wing,
And firmer felt the ground beneath the tread,
And the pale snowdrop reared its drooping head,
While lengthening daylight lingered in the west,
And earlier woke the labourer from his rest.
And Lucy, as she closed her father's gate,
Heard the old rook, that in the elm−tree sate,
Soothe his companions with a solemn caw,
Bidding them fear not—he no danger saw.

Such were the omens of returning spring.

To health, and youth, sweet promise did they bring.
But Lucy, from that cold and cheerless day,
Looked not the same: she seemed to fade away;
And though bright spring with gladness came at last,
She bloomed no more—her spring of life was past.
She heard the birds sing gaily o'er her head;
But her pale cheek was pillowed on her bed.
They brought her flowers—wild flowers, that once she loved,
When through the fields her wandering footsteps roved;
She thanked her friends, and called them kind, and good;
Yet smiled for joy, far less than gratitude
For while she prayed to wait more patiently,
Her yearning heart was pining to be free.

Why should we wish for those we love to stay
And meet the conflict of another day?
When wings of faith are theirs, to bear their flight
Up to the realms of everlasting light?
Yet nature mourns, when merciless decay
Steals o'er the loved one while the world looks gay;
When skies are bright, and western gales blow soft,
And odorous breath of opening blossoms waft;
And sparkling streams flow with a silvery sound,
Wakening the verdure of the earth around;
When all is fair, and life so full of joy,
We scarce believe that blight will e'er destroy.
Hard is it then to watch the loveliest brow
Round which the sunny ringlets used to flow
Darkening with death—the feet whose joyous speed
Trod the green lawn, and flower−enamelled mead,
Tracing their lonely pathway to the grave—
No power to stay their course—no help to save.
Hard is it then, when beauty paints the sky,
And living things that mount the air, and fly
On happy wing, are warbling out their bliss—
Hard is it then, amid such joy as this,
To see our loved one hastening to the tomb,
To watch the cherished of our social home
From the fresh fields, the garden, and the bower,
Passing away like some untimely flower.
And not a sunbeam fading from above,
Nor scented blossom withering in the grove,
Nor silvery streamlet lingering on its way,
Nor sportive idler pausing in its play,
Nor soaring bird, in all the sunny sky,
Singing the less because that flower must die.

Amid such scenes did Lucy Herbert lie
So faint, and breathless, that the breeze passed by—
The odour−scented breeze—and brought no balm—
No power to heal her malady, or calm

Her fluttering pulse, which seemed to wear away
All hope that life would linger out the day.
Her father, seated by her restless bed,
Kind words of gentlest soothing sometimes said;
And when soft sunset through the casement shone
He still was there, and they were left alone.

"Father," she said, "the day is nearly done;
I shall not live to see to−morrow's sun.
Let me be laid beside my mother's grave,
Where the green elms their evening shadows wave."

Then did she stretch her thin white hand to his,
And drew him near to meet her gentle kiss,
And held his forehead to her feverish cheek,
As if some other words she yet must speak.

"Father," she said, once more, "I would not wake
Pain in your bosom; yet I may not take
This burden on my conscience to the grave.
Love is not only given to bless, but save.
And I, if I had truly loved your soul,
Had sought to win it from the world's control.
Yet hear me now—the last time I shall speak—
The last time I shall kiss a parent's cheek.
Hear me, and question not—my words are true;
And well I know they must be short, and few.
This world, dear father, is no place of rest,
Lean not, nor hope for safety, on its breast;
Nor yield to hopeless sorrow, or despair,
If seeming good should sometimes prove a snare.
Think of my mother in her heavenly home,
And one, the weakest child of earth. Oh, come
And join us there, and let us meet at last
Happy and safe, when life's dark waves are passed!"

She ceased; and o'er her lip, and cheek, and brow,
A burning tide of crimson seemed to flow.
It passed away; and the cold dews of death
Came in its stead, and sunk her fluttering breath.
And so she faded from the joyous earth.
A vacant place was at her father's hearth;
And where the elms their evening shadows wave,
She slept in peace beside her mother's grave.

BOOK XII.

SINCE the sad hour of parting with his child,
Seldom the sorrow−stricken father smiled;
Yet was not sadness all the shade that threw
Across his manly brow a graver hue.
Something there was, more deep, but more resigned
Than grief, that pains and agitates the mind—
A holier calm to all his feelings given,
A firmer confidence and faith in Heaven.
He was an altered man; but less in word
Than thought; for rarely was he heard
To tell of changes wrought upon his heart.
Enough for him, to choose that better part—
Enough for him, to seek that service sweet
Blessed by the Saviour, when with spotless feet
He came and trod the thorny ways of earth—
Enough for him, at last to feel the worth
Of heavenly things. The rest might pass away.
His strength was now sufficient for the day;
And troubles, once so grievous to endure,
Now harmed him not, his peace was too secure.

And sorely needed was this heavenly calm,
With all it yields, of healing, and of balm.
For thickly came the trials of each hour,
While o'er his earthly course dark shadows seemed to lower.

Yet did not all despond. A few there were
Who cast away the burden of their care,
When summer smiled, and purple meadows threw,
Over the sunny slope a richer hue.
And spread the cheering influence far and wide,
Like the soft swell of some long−wished−for tide.
For smiling nature, like a welcome guest,
With joy enlivened many a drooping breast:
And hope revived, when harvest once again
Waved her wide banner o'er the golden plain.

And now the reapers hasten to the field,
Stoop to their toil, or resolutely wield
The sweeping scythe; and with a rushing sound
Thick waves of yellow grain fall to the ground.

'Tis merry then to hear the jocund laugh,
To see the noontide groups that smile, and quaff
The foaming flask beneath the hawthorn−tree,
Or where the flowery bank invites the bee.

'Tis merry then, through England's fruitful land
To see the gathering of troop, and band,
Not for the fatal field of deadly war;
But the deep call of plenty, from afar
Bringing the homeless to the social board—
The hungry to the feast—the starving horde
From the far boundary of Hibernia's shore.
To taste of joy, and feel their cup run o'er.

Such was the scene which met the farmer's gaze,
And to remembrance brought his early days.
Such was the scene; and he could feel again
The joy of harvest; while the peopled plain
Rang with the shouts, and echoed with the glee—
The genuine burst of nature's revelry.

Such was the scene. Bright mornings glided on,
And through unclouded azure sailed the sun.
But ere the fulness of his noontide heat,
There fell, at times, a light and drizzling wet,
That hung in pearly drops on leaf and spray,
And scarce was gone before the noon of day.
There was no wind—not even a breath to blow,
And shake the moisture from the bending bough.
And time passed on, and still the white mists fell,
And deeper lay on shady bank, and dell;
Till scarce the sunbeams in their midday blaze
From their far height could glimmer through the haze;
While loitering labourers watched, and waited, still
To see the vapours vanish from the hill;
Or nearer outline of the leafy wood;
Or even the trees, that in the hedge−row stood;
Or passing traveller; or horse, that trod
With sounding footfall on the pebbly road.
Yet vain their wish; for nature seemed to sleep:
Her misty curtain drawn, so soft, and deep.
And all grew still—around—above—beneath—
Silent, and stirless, as the realm of death.

"Oh, blessed breeze! when wilt thou rise again?
Come back, and sweep this ruin from the plain.
Wake, howling storm—come, billowy blast, and roar!
And let us hear the stir of life once more."

Such was the prayer that dwelt on Henry's tongue.
Impatient of delay, and bold, and young,
He would have dared the tempest in its wrath,
And watched the lightning shoot across his path;
Rather than this slow fate—this silent doom
Closing around him, like the fabled tomb—
The iron grave that narrowed every night,

And yet so slowly, as to mock the sight.

Yet neither prayer impatient could prevail,
Nor louder murmuring wake the silent gale.
And o'er the steaming earth it soon was found
Fresh grain was vegetating on the ground;
And from the matted sheaves young shoots of green.
Springing to life, in rapid growth, were seen.

"It is enough!" the farmer inly sighed;
"I have borne much, and have been sorely tried;
But now I know—and, what is more—I feel
I have no power to judge of human weal,
Or what is ultimately best for man.
Enough, that this is heavenly Wisdom's plan."

And meekly did he watch the ruin spread,
Nor word of question, or complaint, he said.
While others sank beneath the general gloom.
His smile was brightest. While they paced the room
With restless step, and brow of anxious care,
He kindly soothed, and bade them not despair.
Though his the trial—his the real loss,
It seemed as if he scarcely felt the cross;
So sure he was that Heaven in mercy sent
This stroke, and would, if needed, still relent.

Yet was the sorrow great—the ruin wide.
Broad fields of wasted grain on every side
Lay blackening in the farmer's weary sight.
Till, when the morning dawned, he wished for night,
When darkness o'er the world her curtain drew,
And hid the desolation from his view.

It was a year of suffering to the poor,
And loud their cries assailed the farmer's door
For cheaper bread; while angry tumult raged,
And rival parties fiery warfare waged.

Britain was then no home of rest to those
Who sought a shelter for their secret woes.
And where her laden ships at anchor rode,
Hundreds embarked to seek that rest abroad.
Nor burdened parishes refused their aid.
Paupers, and people who had failed in trade,
Farmers, and labouring men, wives, children, too,
In crowded cabins sighed their last adieu
To English comfort—never found again
By those who sought their homes beyond the main.

What means the change in William Herbert's home?

Whence all the bustling throngs that crowding come,
And force their presence into every spot
Where fancy leads them, whether asked, or not?
First, in the house, attraction seems to bring
The thickest concourse—talking—wondering—
Yet scarcely wondering either, for they shake
The sapient head, and sage conjectures make,
And say they made them months—nay, years ago,
Upon the consequence of all this show—
This lavish waste—this freedom of expense,
So unbecoming to a man of sense.

Thus, while they talk, the speaker's eye perceives
The very table with its rosewood leaves
Long wished for, and the couches made to match.
Their cost is nothing. Other eyes may catch
Those envied objects, if he stays to doubt,
He sees the auctioneer, and calls him out;
And soon the goods, for others' use too dear,
Are made his own, and in his home appear.

One day was spent in stripping every room
Consigning all things to the general doom;
Rich beds, and costly curtains hung with taste,
Were soon torn down, and then as quickly cast
Into their own allotment; while the crowd
Pressed closely in, and lavishly bestowed
Loud censure or loud praise on every hand,
But most on things they did not understand;
While some long treasured with peculiar care,
Weighed in the balance, were found wanting there.

It was a sickening sight to one whose eve
Gazed o'er the golden fields of memory;
And felt these trifles, by the crowd despised,
Linked with her treasures all too dearly prized.
Yet William Herbert stood amid the throng,
And talked with some, but seemed not to belong
To any. On his brow there was a look
Which curious trifling never yet could brook;
And many a tongue, as he drew near that day,
Was hushed, and many an idler turned away.

One day passed over, and the second came,
And still the stir and tumult were the same.
But now the stables and the cattle−yard
Attract attention, and invite regard;
And knowing judges, in that glorious field
Their rival powers of eloquence may wield.
Some stroke the graceful neck of high−bred steed,
Or try the chaise−horse at his utmost speed;

While others feel the fleecy backs of sheep,
Or praise the slender neck, and shoulder deep.
Next to the fold repair the busy throng,
By the meek heifer, tell her lineage long,
Pronounce, upon the ruminating cow,
Sentence authoritative, sage, and slow;
Nor know, nor ask, what feels the farmer then,
While pass, from stall to shed, these learned men.

Hard had it been for such to know the mood
Of William Herbert, as he silent stood
Gazing—no busy meddler questioned why;
But gazing still, when all had passed him by—
For there were names prolonged amongst his herds
Through many generations—sacred words—
Mary, and Lucy—well could he recall
How, when, and where, they had been given to all;
And childish fancy had been pleased to hear
Strange application of those names so dear;
And one had smiled, who ne'er would smile again.
Away! away! ye bitter thoughts of pain!
That thrilling touch the spell of memory broke,
And from his dream of by−gone days he woke.

On the third morning met that crowd again,
Trampling the garden walks—the grassy plain
That used to lie, in velvet beauty green,
The Grecian portal and tall trees between.
And now they search around, and drag to view
All implements of husbandry; all new,
And rare inventions, framed by modern skill,
The earth to pulverize, the drain to fill.
Wagons, and carts, and carriages were there,
Curious machines, contrived the roots to tear
Of poisonous weeds; besides all patent tools
That e'er were formed on scientific rules.
Yet few there were amid that wondering throng
Who knew how much of science might belong
To such familiar purpose; or the use
Of those strange things that ignorance might abuse.

And great the loss that consequently fell
Upon this property, though loved so well,
And bought so eagerly each part had been;
Now cast aside, like things that scarce were seen.

And calmly William Herbert watched the whole,
Yet felt those weary days of trial roll
Like troubled waters o'er his sinking soul.
He was alone, for younger hearts had been
Less patient, or less firm, to bear that scene.

Henry was busy at the neighbouring port,
Where they were both accustomed to resort
To sell their produce; but his errand now
Cast a far different look upon his brow.
Martha had kindly offered to the rest
Her hospitable home, where many a guest
Found peace and comfort. Could they ask for more?
Blessing was hers, in basket and in store,
For she had followed, not her woman's whim,
Nor fashion's ignis fatuus, vague, and dim;
But justice first had ruled with equal sway
Her guarded conduct, through each untried way;
Then generous feeling, with exhaustless store,
Followed, and strewed with flowers her pathway o'er.
This was the real luxury of life
To her, the recompense for all its strife.
And she had pleaded with her father oft
By strongest argument, persuasion soft,
And all the touching eloquence of love,
Now in his trying hour, to let her prove
The blest experience of a real friend;
Through life's decline her kindness to extend;
As he had cherished her in early youth,
To guard his hoary hairs with tenderness and truth.

It might not be. He smiled, and shook his head.
"My child, I have another path to tread—
A sterner path; yet willingly I go.
Stay not my steps, and check thy tears of woe.
Though waves may flow between us, deep, and wide,
Nor time, nor space, affection can divide.
The same eternal Father will look down
Upon us both, our separate bliss to crown;
And prayer will find us at the mercy−seat,
Morning and evening, in communion sweet."

Matilda Herbert, when retrenchment threw
Its chains around her, quietly withdrew,
And left a home ill suited to her taste,
For one, by greater elegancies graced.
'Twas then arranged, to spare all needless pain,
That Helen with her sister should remain;
Yet sore the conflict to her generous breast
Before she yielded, or believed it best.
And all the while these mournful plans were laid,
Emma bemoaned her fate, and would have stayed
With her young babe, but that some sense prevailed
Of common duty. So she sate, and wailed,
And wore away each day with vain complaint,
Deaf to all reason, and beyond restraint.

And now when April skies again looked bright,
And bursting buds just opening to the sight
Spotted the spray with little gems of green,
And here the yellow daffodil was seen,
And there the primrose, with her moonlight hue,
Spread her pale stars of beauty to the view;
A lonely man, in musing posture, stood,
His shoulder leaning on the knotted wood
That formed, in days gone by, a garden bower,
Wreathed all around with many a lovely flower.
He gazes on the walks, the trees, the grass;
And musing still, uncounted moments pass.
Lost in his dream, he has begun to bind
The broken stems of ivy, and to wind
The wandering honeysuckle round the tree,
Where once its odorous garlands hung so free.
Why fall those branches from his drooping hand?
At once he seems to feel, and understand
Such task is vain; for never more to him
Shall bloom those flowers, or wave that leafy stem.

He passes from the garden to the hall,
But will not enter, since he may not call
That home his own. He hastens through the yard,
Where stranger voices from the door are heard,
And the new occupants seem all alive,
Like restless bees, rejoicing in their hive.
He looked not back; it was enough to know
That they were strangers, and that he must go.
Yet did he linger where no eye could see
Along the silent fields, beneath the tree
He planted in his youth, when life was fair,
And his smooth brow was all untouched by care.
What sound is that which bursts upon his ear?
What footsteps bound along the hedge−row near?
His favourite horse, the one he loved to ride
In the short heyday of his worldly pride.

"Go, happy steed!" he said, and stroked its mane.
"Go, happy steed, to yon green fields again.
My noble friend—the last to meet me here,
Haste thee away! I have no words of cheer."

It seemed as if the ungrateful creature knew.
Back from the fence his noble neck he drew,
Tossed his proud head, and bounding o'er the sward,
Spurned with disdain all token of regard.

And now the farmer reached the shady lane,
And saw the village spire, and heard again
Its chiming bells, that struck upon his ear

Like voices loved in childhood, and still dear.
It was the sunset hour, and evening threw
O'er every western slope a golden hue,
While village labourers, wending slowly home,
Sought their own cottage, ere the twilight gloom.
And ere that hour, had William Herbert found
One lowly spot of consecrated ground
To him most sacred, where a peaceful mound
More newly made, beside a greener grave,
Taught him how vain was human help to save.
To these he came; with reverential tread.
How did he long to bear away his dead
To that far home his weary age was seeking,
Longer to keep the bond that fast was breaking.
Here then he leaned upon his staff, and stood,
Till the grey mist obscured the distant wood;
And wished to go, but could not break away
From those low graves, beside his path that lay.

The sun went down that night in cold grey clouds,
And widely spread the gloom, that often shrouds
Spring's welcome form, and dims her cheerful smile,
Hiding her beauty from our sea−girt isle.
Bleak was the gale, when morning woke again,
From the north−east; and o'er the grassy plain,
And growth of early plants, a blight was blown,
While nature wore an aspect sere and brown.

But neither northern blast, nor blight, nor cold,
Could stay the lapse of tide and time, nor hold
Back from the sinking heart its dreary doom:
The hour approached, and deeper grew the gloom.
Nor came from far or near that welcome sound
That hope foretells, amid despair profound—
Some tidings strange, that will not let us go,
Though all things tend to one sad point of woe—
Some spell around our parting footsteps cast—
Some voice to bid us stay, even at the last.
Is it, that from the fairy tales of youth,
We learn this lesson, rather than from truth?
Or that the human heart would surely break,
Did no such false delusive promise speak?

Yet so it is; and Emma watched the hour
Come hastening on, and still believed some power
In heaven or earth would keep her from the sea,
Whose dreary waters heaved so gloomily.
Poor child! there might be weakness in her fear;
Yet of all cruelties e'er practised here,
'Tis not the least, to drag from social ease
From warm security, and pride, and peace,

Across the main, such feeble things as these,
And hope to see them bear their share of toil,
When planted in a strange, uncultured soil.

And Henry saw the injustice—felt the wrong.
What could he more? His arm was firm, and strong,
He would defend her from all touch of harm,
And she must learn to meet the wind and storm.
With other thoughts, he had enough to bear;
It was his chosen duty to prepare
All needful things—a task that suited best
The ardent impulse of his manly breast.
Nor his alone the effort. Many more
Were gathering there, to leave their native shore.
But they were poor, and hardy—trained to toil,
And ignorant, too, how many a billowy mile
Would stretch between them and their native isle.

These are the men whose interest bids them go,
Bids them escape from penury and woe.
They heed not labour. Their untiring arms
Pine for the exercise that cheers, and warms.
They ask but food—food of the simplest kind,
And natural rights, to keep the upright mind
From servile fear, from base unmanly art,
And agonizing doubts that rend the heart.
These are the men who should be free to eat
The bread of peace by industry made sweet;
And when their country sends them o'er the main,
Hers is the loss, but theirs the greater gain.

The hour approached; and busy hands were there,
And all had much to do, and much to bear,
The weak to comfort, and the old to leave,
Yet scarce a moment to look back or grieve.
Fair rosy girls, the wives of yesterday,
Gathered, and stowed their little wealth away,
In that small cabin, where the matron sate
With her poor babes, all ignorant of their fate.
And still the aged parent came to see,
With tears renewed, that scene of misery;
And friends flocked in, to make confusion worse,
And more confounded; till, with accents hoarse,
The impatient captain bade them all depart:
No time had he for sorrows of the heart.

The hour approached; and Emma's faith grew faint,
And faint alike her accents of complaint.
Her lip was pale, and quivering, and her hand
Relaxed its hold, when Henry's firm command
Bade her prepare; for he had tried all power

Of kindness to console her till that hour.
And now, while fled the life−blood from her cheek,
And sank her voice as if no more to speak,
He pressed one kiss of pity on her lip,
And bore her senseless to the heaving ship,
Placed her upon a couch with gentlest care,
And called on Phebe to attend her there.

Worse yet remained; for stronger hearts had now
To meet the trial, and to bear the blow.
All had been calm until the parting scene,
And great the strife to bear that hour had been;
But lovely cheeks had lost their rosy bloom,
And restless feet paced through the silent room
On fancied errand; though all things were done
By Martha's watchful care long since begun.
It was in vain to linger: time stayed not,
And would have told the hour, had they forgot;
But every moment seemed their last on earth,
Counted, and valued now by tenfold worth.
A sad procession through the streets they passed,
No wandering look on either side was cast;
And Henry waited in the tossing boat,
While the rude sailor strained his lusty throat
With shouts that vainly bade them hasten on,
To leave the shore before the tide was gone.

Well was it then that gazing crowds stood by,
That seamen shouted, and that waves dashed high.
It seemed to stun the agony of heart
That William Herbert felt at last to part;
For Helen hung upon her father's neck,
Lost to all care her woman's tears to check;
And Martha's sobs of anguish came too near,
And too distinctly, to a parent's ear.

Another hour, and from the heaving deck
No form is seen distinctly—not a speck
By which the vision of the aching eye
Its loved and lovely forms may yet descry.
But the long line of wave−resounding shore
Stretches away; and soon are seen no more
The gazing concourse on the peopled wharf,
The sturdy boatmen battling with the surf,
Deep−laden vessels resting on the tide,
And prouder galleys moored in stately pride.

The sun had sunk behind a dark grey cloud,
The waves heaved heavily, the winds blew loud,
And night came on, and still that fearless prow
Its pathway through the billows seemed to plough.

Cold dreary twilight clothed the earth and sea;
But not the nearer forms of misery.
For there were shrieking babes, untended all,
And wretched men, who answered not the call
Of helpless wives. Most desolate of these
Was Emma, bending on her feeble knees,
Pleading, with all the eloquence of tears,
That Henry yet would spare her tender years,
Her gentle frame, and send her to the shore,
With her poor child, safe from the billows' roar.
Then did she pray for shelter from the storm,
And threw her arms around his manly forn.

"Spare me!" she cried; "my aching brow is bare,
And the rude gale plays wildly with my hair—
That flaxen hair, of which each separate tress
Thou oft hast counted in thy tenderness,
Deeming no beauty like the cheek that now
Leans on thy bosom pale as winter's snow.
Oh, shield me from the storm! Thou once wert kind—
Can fear or danger warp thy constant mind?"

Why turns he not? That voice could once have won
His ear from music. Has its sweetness gone?
No; but he sees that distant line of shore,
And knows, and feels, he ne'er shall see it more—
That gentle slope—that range of wood−crowned hills—
He sees them all—his eye with anguish fills.
He had a Briton's heart, and loved the land—
The very soil on which he used to stand.
Proud of his country's noble name was he,
Proud of her laws, and boasted liberty;
And while he gazes through the gathering gloom,
Injustice seems to mingle with his doom.

"Fade faster yet, ungrateful shore!" he said;
"Behold my tears! the last for thee I shed.
Far—far I go, where unknown forests wave,
And ne'er return to ask thee for a grave."

Many and various were the minds that met
Upon that deck before the sun had set;
And varied still the groups that gathered there,
With every shade from sadness to despair.
But William Herbert sat apart from all;
Perchance to watch the billows swell and fall.
No; for his eye is stretch'd too far away,
And farther still his thoughts unbidden stray.
He sees again the cheerful hearth begin
Its smile of joy, as evening closes in;
The same dark evening—such there used to be,

When gleamed that light beneath the orchard tree:
And he was weary, and the cold wind blew,
But hearts were blending there, both warm and true.

"Oh, dream of blss! what dreary gulf has come
Between me, and this long−remembered home?
I see my bower of peace and beauty gone.
Father, I bow—thy gracious will be done!
Through the short years this failing strength may last;
Teach me—oh, teach me to redeem the past.
Grant me to witness, through this changing scene,
Thy guiding light, the clouds of care between;
Thy shield of faith upon my lonely breast;
Thy gracious hand to lead me to my rest.
Then let the tempest roar, the billows heave,
I have no more a bower of peace to leave;
In distant wilds my weary steps may roam;
In realms of light I seek my only home."

THE END.