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Poems Published in 1846

Faith and Despondency

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

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

“But, yet, even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me –
And in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens blocked with snow.
I dream of moor and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill –
For lone among the mountains cold
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches in hopeless pain,
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!”

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

“Oh! Not for them should we despair,
The grave is drear, but they are not there:
Their dust is mingled with the sod,
Their happy souls are gone to God!
You told me this, and yet you sigh,
And murmur that your friends must die.
Ah! My dear father, tell me why?
For, if your former words were true,
How useless would such sorrow be.
As wise to mourn the seed which grew
Unnoticed on its parent tree,
Because it fell in fertile earth,
And sprang up to a glorious birth –
Struck deep its root, and lifted high
Its green boughs in the breezy sky.

“But I’ll not fear, I will not weep
For those whose bodies rest in sleep –
I know there is a blessed shore,
 Opening its ports for me and mine;
And, gazing time’s wide waters o’er,

I weary for that land divine,
Where we were born, where you and I
Shall meet our dearest when we die –
From suffering and corruption free,
Restored into the Deity.”

“Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child!
And wiser than thy sire –
And worldly tempests, raging wild,
Shall strengthen thy desire –
Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
Through wind and ocean’s roar,
To reach, at last, the eternal home,
The steadfast, changeless shore!”

Stars

Ah! Why, because the dazzling sun
Restored our Earth to joy,
Have you departed, every one,
And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
Were gazing down in mine,
And with a full heart’s thankful sighs,
I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
As they were life to me –
And revelled in my changeful dreams
Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought, star followed star,
Through boundless regions on,
While one sweet influence, near and far,
Thrilled through and proved us one!

Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure a spell,
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek
Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red he rose, and arrow-straight
His fierce beams struck my brow –
The soul of nature sprang elate,
But *mine* sank sad and low!

My lids closed down, yet through their veil
I saw him blazing still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow then
To call back night and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again,
Throb with my heart and me!

It would not do – the pillow glowed,
And glowed both roof and floor;
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door.

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

Oh, stars, and dreams, and gentle night –
Oh, night and stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light
That does not warm but burn;

That drains the blood of suffering men –
Drinks tears instead of dew –
Let me sleep through his blinding reign
And only wake with you!

The Philosopher

“Enough of thought, philosopher!
Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unenlightened in this chamber drear,
While summer’s sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musings once again?

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

“So said I, and still say the same –
Still, to my death, will say –
Three gods within this little frame
Are warring night and day.
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet

They all are held in me –
And must be mine till I forget
My present entity!
Oh, for the time when in my breast
Their struggles will be o'er!
Oh, for the day when I shall rest,
And never suffer more!”

“I saw a spirit, standing, man,
Where thou doth stand – an hour ago –
And round his feet three rivers ran,
Of equal depth, and equal flow –
A golden stream – and one like blood,
And one like sapphire seemed to be,
But where they joined their triple flood,
It tumbled in an inky sea.

The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
Down through that ocean's gloomy night,
Then kindling all with sudden blaze,
The glad deep sparkled wide and bright –
White as the sun, far, far more fair
Than its divided sources were!”

“And even for that spirit, seer,
I've watched and sought my lifetime long:
Sought him in heaven, hell, earth and air –
An endless search, and always wrong!
Had I but seen his glorious eye
Once light the clouds that wilder me,
I ne'er had raised this coward cry
To cease to think, and cease to be;
I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
Nor, stretching eager hands to death,
Implored to change for senseless rest

This sentient soul, this living breath.
Oh, let me die – that power and will
Their cruel strife may close,
And conquered good and conquering ill
Be lost in one repose!”

Remembrance

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Death Scene

“O Day! He cannot die
When thou so fair art shining!
O Sun, in such a glorious sky,
So tranquilly declining.

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

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

“Beside thee, on my knee,
My dearest friend, I pray

That thou, to cross the eternal sea,
Wouldst yet one hour delay.

“I hear its billows roar –
I see them foaming high –
But no glimpse of a further shore
Has blessed my straining eye.

“Believe not what they urge
Of Eden isles beyond –
Turn back from that tempestuous surge
To thy own native land.

“It is not death but pain
That struggles in thy breast –
Nay, rally, Edward, rouse again –
I cannot let thee rest!”

One long look that sore reproved me
For the woe I could not bear –
One mute look of suffering moved me
To repent my useless prayer.

And, with sudden check, the heaving
Of distraction passed away –
Not a sign of further grieving
Stirred my soul that awful day.

Paled, at length, the sweet sun setting
Sunk to peace the twilight breeze:
Summer dews fell softly, wetting
Glen, and glade, and silent trees.

Then his eyes began to weary,
Weighed beneath a mortal sleep,

And their orbs grew strangely dreary,
Clouded even as they would weep.

But they wept not, but they changed not,
Never moved, and never closed –
Troubled still, and still they ranged not,
Wandered not, nor yet reposed!

So I knew that he was dying –
Stooped, and raised his languid head –
Felt no breath, and heard no sighing,
So I knew that he was dead.

Song

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

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

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

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

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