

Classic Poetry Series

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

- poems -

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A Summer Evening's Meditation

'TIS past ! The sultry tyrant of the south
Has spent his short-liv'd rage ; more grateful hours
Move silent on; the skies no more repel
The dazzled sight, but with mild maiden beams
Of temper'd light, invite the cherish'd eye
To wander o'er their sphere ; where hung aloft
DIAN's bright crescent, like a silver bow
New strung in heaven, lifts high its beamy horns

Impatient for the night, and seems to push
Her brother down the sky. Fair VENUS shines
Even in the eye of day ; with sweetest beam
Propitious shines, and shakes a trembling flood
Of soften'd radiance from her dewy locks.
The shadows spread apace ; while meek'd Eve
Her cheek yet warm with blushes, slow retires
Thro' the Hesperian gardens of the west,
And shuts the gates of day. 'Tis now the hour
When Contemplation, from her sunless haunts,
The cool damp grotto, or the lonely depth
Of unpierc'd woods, where wrapt in solid shade
She mused away the gaudy hours of noon,
And fed on thoughts unripen'd by the sun,
Moves forward ; and with radiant finger points
To yon blue concave swell'd by breath divine,
Where, one by one, the living eyes of heaven
Awake, quick kindling o'er the face of ether

One boundless blaze ; ten thousand trembling fires,
And dancing lustres, where th' unsteady eye
Restless, and dazzled wanders unconfin'd
O'er all this field of glories : spacious field !
And worthy of the master : he, whose hand
With hieroglyphics older than the Nile,
Inscrib'd the mystic tablet; hung on high
To public gaze, and said, adore, O man !
The finger of thy GOD. From what pure wells
Of milky light, what soft o'erflowing urn,
Are all these lamps so fill'd ? these friendly lamps,
For ever streaming o'er the azure deep
To point our path, and light us to our home.
How soft they slide along their lucid spheres !
And silent as the foot of time, fulfil
Their destin'd courses : Nature's self is hush'd,
And, but a scatter'd leaf, which rustles thro'
The thick-wove foliage, not a sound is heard

To break the midnight air ; tho' the rais'd ear,
Intensely listening, drinks in every breath.
How deep the silence, yet how loud the praise !
But are they silent all ? or is there not
A tongue in every star that talks with man,

And woos him to be wise ; nor woos in vain :
This dead of midnight is the noon of thought,
And wisdom mounts her zenith with the stars.
At this still hour the self-collected soul
Turns inward, and beholds a stranger there
Of high descent, and more than mortal rank ;
An embryo GOD ; a spark of fire divine,
Which must burn on for ages, when the sun,
(Fair transitory creature of a day !)
Has clos'd his golden eye, and wrapt in shades
Forgets his wonted journey thro' the east.

Ye citadels of light, and seats of GODS !
Perhaps my future home, from whence the soul

Revolving periods past, may oft look back
With recollected tenderness, on all
The various busy scenes she left below,
Its deep laid projects and its strange events,
As on some fond and doating tale that sooth'd
Her infant hours ; O be it lawful now
To tread the hallow'd circles of your courts,
And with mute wonder and delighted awe
Approach your burning confines. Seiz'd in thought
On fancy's wild and roving wing I sail,
From the green borders of the peopled earth,
And the pale moon, her duteous fair attendant;
From solitary Mars ; from the vast orb
Of Jupiter, whose huge gigantic bulk
Dances in ether like the lightest leaf;
To the dim verge, the suburbs of the system,
Where chearless Saturn 'midst her watry moons
Girt with a lucid zone, majestic sits

In gloomy grandeur ; like an exil'd queen
Amongst her weeping handmaids: fearless thence
I launch into the trackless deeps of space,
Where, burning round, ten thousand suns appear,
Of elder beam ; which ask no leave to shine
Of our terrestrial star, nor borrow light
From the proud regent of our scanty day ;
Sons of the morning, first born of creation,
And only less than him who marks their track,
And guides their fiery wheels. Here must I stop,
Or is there aught beyond ? What hand unseen
Impels me onward thro' the glowing orbs
Of inhabitable nature ; far remote,
To the dread confines of eternal night,
To solitudes of vast unpeopled space,
The desarts of creation, wide and wild ;
Where embryo systems and unkindled suns
Sleep in the womb of chaos; fancy droops,

And thought astonish'd stops her bold career.
But oh thou mighty mind ! whose powerful word
Said, thus let all things be, and thus they were,
Where shall I seek thy presence ? how unblam'd
Invoke thy dread perfection ?
Have the broad eye-lids of the morn beheld thee ?
Or does the beamy shoulder of Orion
Support thy throne ? O look with pity down
On erring guilty man ; not in thy names
Of terrour clad ; not with those thunders arm'd
That conscious Sinai felt, when fear appall'd
The scatter'd tribes; thou hast a gentler voice,
That whispers comfort to the swelling heart,
Abash'd, yet longing to behold her Maker.

But now my soul unus'd to stretch her powers
In flight so daring, drops her weary wing,
And seeks again the known accustom'd spot,

Drest up with sun, and shade, and lawns, and streams,
A mansion fair and spacious for its guest,
And full replete with wonders. Let me here
Content and grateful, wait th' appointed time
And ripen for the skies: the hour will come
When all these splendours bursting on my sight
Shall stand unveil'd, and to my ravished sense
Unlock the glories of the world unknown.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

A Thought on Death

When life as opening buds is sweet,
And golden hopes the fancy greet,
And Youth prepares his joys to meet,--
Alas! how hard it is to die!

When just is seized some valued prize,
And duties press, and tender ties
Forbid the soul from earth to rise,--
How awful then it is to die!

When, one by one, those ties are torn,
And friend from friend is snatched forlorn,
And man is left alone to mourn,--
Ah then, how easy 'tis to die!

When faith is firm, and conscience clear,
And words of peace the spirit cheer,
And visioned glories half appear,--
'Tis joy, 'tis triumph then to die.

When trembling limbs refuse their weight,
And films, slow gathering, dim the sight,
And clouds obscure the mental light,--
'Tis nature's precious boon to die.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

A Thought on Death: November, 1814

1 When life as opening buds is sweet,
2 And golden hopes the fancy greet,
3 And Youth prepares his joys to meet,--
4 Alas! how hard it is to die!

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Anna Lætitia Barbauld

An Inventory of the Furniture in Dr. Priestley's Study

A map of every country known,
With not a foot to call his own.
A list of folks that kicked a dust
On this poor globe, from Ptol. the First;
He hopes,-- indeed it is but fair,--
Some day to get a corner there.
A group of all the British kings,
Fair emblem! on a packthread swings.
The Fathers, ranged in goodly row,
A decent, venerable show,
Writ a great while ago, they tell us,
And many an inch o'ertop their fellows.
A Juvenal to hunt for mottos;
And Ovid's tales of nymphs and grottos.
The meek-robed lawyers all in white;
Pure as the lamb,-- at least, to sight.
A shelf of bottles, jar and phial,
By which the rogues he can defy all,--
All filled with lightning keen and genuine, 20 And many a little imp he'll pen you in;
Which, like Le Sage's sprite, let out,
Among the neighbours makes a rout;
Brings down the lightning on their houses,
And kills their geese, and frights their spouses.
A rare thermometer, by which
He settles, to the nicest pitch,
The just degrees of heat, to raise
Sermons, or politics, or plays.
Papers and books, a strange mixed olio,
From shilling touch to pompous folio;
Answer, remark, reply, rejoinder,
Fresh from the mint, all stamped and coined here;
Like new-made glass, set by to cool,
Before it bears the workman's tool.
A blotted proof-sheet, wet from Bowling.
--'How can a man his anger hold in?'--
Forgotten rimes, and college themes,
Worm-eaten plans, and embryo schemes;--
A mass of heterogeneous matter,
A chaos dark, no land nor water;--
New books, like new-born infants, stand,
Waiting the printer's clothing hand;--
Others, a mottly ragged brood,
Their limbs unfashioned all, and rude,
Like Cadmus' half-formed men appear;
One rears a helm, one lifts a spear,
And feet were lopped and fingers torn
Before their fellow limbs were born;
A leg began to kick and sprawl
Before the head was seen at all,
Which quiet as a mushroom lay
Till crumbling hillocks gave it way;
And all, like controversial writing,

Were born with teeth, and sprung up fighting.

'But what is this,' I hear you cry,
'Which saucily provokes my eye?'--
A thing unknown, without a name,
Born of the air and doomed to flame.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Caterpillar, The

No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
The azure and the orange that divide
Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer,
My garment has enfolded, and my arm
Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet;
Thou hast curled round my finger; from its tip,
Precipitous descent! with stretched out neck,
Bending thy head in airy vacancy,
This way and that, inquiring, thou hast seemed
To ask protection; now, I cannot kill thee.
Yet I have sworn perdition to thy race,
And recent from the slaughter am I come
Of tribes and embryo nations: I have sought
With sharpened eye and persecuting zeal,
Where, folded in their silken webs they lay
Thriving and happy; swept them from the tree
And crushed whole families beneath my foot;
Or, sudden, poured on their devoted heads
The vials of destruction.--This I've done
Nor felt the touch of pity: but when thou,--
A single wretch, escaped the general doom,
Making me feel and clearly recognise
Thine individual existence, life,
And fellowship of sense with all that breathes,--
Present'st thyself before me, I relent,
And cannot hurt thy weakness.--So the storm
Of horrid war, o'erwhelming cities, fields,
And peaceful villages, rolls dreadful on:
The victor shouts triumphant; he enjoys
The roar of cannon and the clang of arms,
And urges, by no soft relentings stopped,
The work of death and carnage. Yet should one,
A single sufferer from the field escaped,
Panting and pale, and bleeding at his feet,
Lift his imploring eyes,-- the hero weeps;
He is grown human, and capricious Pity,
Which would not stir for thousands, melts for one
With sympathy spontaneous:-- 'Tis not Virtue,
Yet 'tis the weakness of a virtuous mind.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Characters

OH ! born to sooth distress, and lighten care ;
Lively as soft, and innocent as fair ;
Blest with that sweet simplicity of thought
So rarely found, and never to be taught ;
Of winning speech, endearing, artless, kind,
The loveliest pattern of a female mind ;
Like some fair spirit from the realms of rest
With all her native heaven within her breast ;
So pure, so good, she scarce can guess at sin,

But thinks the world without like that within ;
Such melting tenderness, so fond to bless,
Her charity almost becomes excess.
Wealth may be courted, wisdom be rever'd,
And beauty prais'd, and brutal strength be fear'd ;
But goodness only can affection move ;
And love must owe its origin to love.

OF gentle manners, and of taste refin'd,
With all the graces of a polish'd mind ;
Clear sense and truth still shone in all she spoke,

And from her lips no idle sentence broke.
Each nicer elegance of art she knew ;
Correctly fair, and regularly true :
Her ready fingers plied with equal skill
The pencil's task, the needle, or the quill.
So pois'd her feelings, so compos'd her soul,
So subject all to reason's calm controul,
One only passion, strong, and unconfin'd,
Disturb'd the balance of her even mind :
One passion rul'd despotic in her breast,
In every word, and look, and thought confest ;
But that was love, and love delights to bless
The generous transports of a fond excess.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Delia, An Elegy

YES, DELIA loves! My fondest vows are blest ;
Farewel the memory of her past disdain ;
One kind relenting glance has heal'd my breast,
And balanc'd in a moment years of pain.

O'er her soft cheek consenting blushes move,
And with kind stealth her secret soul betray ;

Blushes, which usher in the morn of love,
Sure as the red'ning east foretells the day.

Her tender smiles shall pay me with delight
For many a bitter pang of jealous fear ;
For many an anxious day, and sleepless night,
For many a stifled sigh, and silent tear.

DELIA shall come, and bless my lone retreat ;
She does not scorn the shepherd's lowly life ;
She will not blush to leave the splendid seat,
And own the title of a poor man's wife.

The simple knot shall bind her gather'd hair,
The russet garment clasp her lovely breast :
DELIA shall mix amongst the rural fair,
By charms alone distinguish'd from the rest.

And meek Simplicity, neglected maid,
Shall bid my fair in native graces shine :
She, only she, shall lend her modest aid,
Chaste, sober priestess, at sweet beauty's shrine !

How sweet to muse by murmuring springs reclin'd ;
Or loitering careless in the shady grove,
Indulge the gentlest feelings of the mind,
And pity those who live to aught but love !

When DELIA's hand unlocks her shining hair,
And o'er her shoulder spreads the flowing gold,
Base were the man who one bright tress would spare
For all the ore of India's coarser mold.

By her dear side with what content I'd toil,
Patient of any labour in her sight ;
Guide the slow plough, or turn the stubborn soil,
Till the last, ling'ring beam of doubtful light.

But softer tasks divide my DELIA's hours ;
To watch the firstlings at their harmless play ;
With welcome shade to screen the languid flowers,
That sicken in the summer's parching ray.

Oft will she stoop amidst her evening walk,

With tender hand each bruised plant to rear ;
To bind the drooping lily's broken stalk,
And nurse the blossoms of the infant year.

When beating rains forbid our feet to roam,
We'll shelter'd sit, and turn the storied page ;
There see what passions shake the lofty dome
With mad ambition or ungovern'd rage :

What headlong ruin oft involves the great ;
What conscious terrors guilty bosoms prove ;
What strange and sudden turns of adverse fate
Tear the sad virgin from her plighted love.

DELIA shall read, and drop a gentle tear ;
Then cast her eyes around the low-roof'd cot,
And own the fates have dealt more kindly here,
That blest with only love our little lot.

For love has sworn (I heard the awful vow)
The wav'ring heart shall never be his care,
That stoops at any baser shrine to bow :
And what he cannot rule, he scorns to share.

My heart in DELIA is so fully blest,
It has not room to lodge another joy ;
My peace all leans upon that gentle breast,
And only there misfortune can annoy.

Our silent hours shall steal unmark'd away
In one long tender calm of rural peace ;
And measure many a fair unblemish'd day
Of chearful leisure and poetic ease.

The proud unfeeling world their lot shall scorn
Who 'midst inglorious shades can poorly dwell :
Yet if some youth, for gentler passions born,
Shall chance to wander near our lowly cell,

His feeling breast with purer flames shall glow ;
And leaving pomp, and state, and cares behind,
Shall own the world has little to bestow
Where two fond hearts in equal love are join'd.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Dirge

Pure spirit! O where art thou now!
O whisper to my soul!
O let some soothing thought of thee,
The bitter grief control!

'Tis not for thee the tears I shed,
Thy sufferings now are o'er;
The sea is calm, the tempest past,
On that eternal shore.

No more the storms that wrecked thy peace
Shall tear that gentle breast;
Nor Summer's rage, nor Winter's cold,
Thy poor, poor frame molest.

Thy peace is sealed, thy rest is sure,
My sorrows are to come;
Awhile I weep and linger here,
Then follow to the tomb.

And is the awful veil withdrawn,
That shrouds from mortal eyes,
In deep impenetrable gloom,
The secrets of the skies?

O, in some dream of visioned bliss,
Some trance of rapture, show
Where, on the bosom of thy God,
Thou rest'st from human woe!

Thence may thy pure devotion's flame
On me, on me descend;
To me thy strong aspiring hopes,
They faith, thy fervours lend.

Let these my lonely path illumine,
And teach my weakened mind
To welcome all that's left of good,
To all that's lost resigned.

Farewell! With honour, peace, and love,
Be thy dear memory blest!
Thou hast no tears for me to shed,
When I too am at rest.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Dirge.

Pure spirit! O where art thou now!
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Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Dirge: Written November 1808

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3 O let some soothing thought of thee,
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5 'Tis not for thee the tears I shed,
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33 Farewell! With honour, peace, and love,
34 Be thy dear memory blest!
35 Thou hast no tears for me to shed,
36 When I too am at rest.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Hymn To Content

O Thou, the Nymph with placid eye !
O seldom found, yet ever nigh !
 Receive my temperate vow :
Not all the storms that shake the pole
Can e'er disturb thy halcyon soul,
 And smooth unalter'd brow.

O come, in simplst vest array'd,
With all thy sober cheer display'd

To bless my longing sight ;
Thy mien compos'd, thy even pace,
Thy meek regard, thy matron grace,
 And chaste subdued delight.

No more by varying passions beat,
O gently guide my pilgrim feet
 To find thy hermit cell ;
Where in some pure and equal sky
Beneath thy soft indulgent eye
 Thy modest virtues dwell.

Simplicity in Attic vest,
And Innocence with candid breast,
 And clear undaunted eye ;
And Hope, who points to distant years,
Fair opening through this vale of tears
 A vista to the sky.

There Health, thro' whose calm bosom glide
The temperate joys in even tide,
 That rarely ebb or flow ;
And Patience there, thy sister meek,
Presents her mild, unvarying cheek
 To meet the offer'd blow.

Her influence taught the Phrygian sage
A tyrant master's wanton rage
 With settled smiles to meet ;
Inur'd to toil and bitter bread
He bow'd his meek submitted head,
 And kiss'd thy sainted feet.

But thou, oh Nymph retir'd and coy !
In what brown hamlet dost thou joy
 To tell thy simple tale ;

The lowliest children of the ground,
Moss rose, and violet, blossom round,
 And lily of the vale.

O say what soft propitious hour

I best may chuse to hail thy power,
And court thy gentle sway ?
When Autumn, friendly to the Muse,
Shall thy own modest tints diffuse,
And shed thy milder day.

When Eve, her dewy star beneath,
Thy balmy spirit loves to breathe,
And every storm is laid ;
If such an hour was e'er thy choice,
Oft let me hear thy soothing voice
Low whispering thro' the shade.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Life

LIFE! I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part;
And when, or how, or where we met,
I own to me 's a secret yet.
But this I know, when thou art fled,
Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,
No clod so valueless shall be
As all that then remains of me.

O whither, whither dost thou fly?
Where bend unseen thy trackless course?
And in this strange divorce,
Ah, tell where I must seek this compound I?
To the vast ocean of empyreal flame
From whence thy essence came
Dost thou thy flight pursue, when freed
From matter's base encumbering weed?
Or dost thou, hid from sight,
Wait, like some spell-bound knight,
Through blank oblivious years th' appointed hour
To break thy trance and reassume thy power?
Yet canst thou without thought or feeling be?
O say, what art thou, when no more thou'rt thee?

Life! we have been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;--
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not Good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me Good-morning!

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Ode To Spring

SWEET daughter of a rough and stormy fire,
Hoar Winter's blooming child ; delightful Spring !
Whose unshorn locks with leaves
And swelling buds are crowned ;

From the green islands of eternal youth,
(Crown'd with fresh blooms, and ever springing shade,)
Turn, hither turn thy step,
O thou, whose powerful voice

More sweet than softest touch of Doric reed,
Or Lydian flute, can sooth the madding winds,
And thro' the stormy deep
Breathe thy own tender calm.

Thee, best belov'd ! the virgin train await
With songs and festal rites, and joy to rove
Thy blooming wilds among,
And vales and dewy lawns,

With untir'd feet ; and cull thy earliest sweets
To weave fresh garlands for the glowing brow
Of him, the favour'd youth
That prompts their whisper'd sigh.

Unlock thy copious stores ; those tender showers
That drop their sweetness on the infant buds,
And silent dews that swell
The milky ear's green stem.

And feed the slowering osier's early shoots ;
And call those winds which thro' the whispering boughs
With warm and pleasant breath
Salute the blowing flowers.

Now let me sit beneath the whitening thorn,
And mark thy spreading tints steal o'er the dale ;
And watch with patient eye
Thy fair unfolding charms.

O nymph approach ! while yet the temperate sun
With bashful forehead, thro' the cool moist air
Throws his young maiden beams,
And with chaste kisses woes

The earth's fair bosom ; while the streaming veil
Of lucid clouds with kind and frequent shade
Protect thy modest blooms
From his severer blaze.

Sweet is thy reign, but short ; The red dog-star
Shall scorch thy tresses, and the mower's scythe

Thy greens, thy flow'rets all,
Remorseless shall destroy.

Reluctant shall I bid thee then farewell ;
For O, not all the Autumn's lap contains,
Nor Summer's ruddiest fruits,
Can aught for thee atone

Fair Spring ! whose simplest promise more delights
Than all their largest wealth, and thro' the heart
Each joy and new-born hope
With softest influence breathes.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

On A Lady's Writing

HER even lines her steady temper show ;
Neat as her dress, and polish'd as her brow ;
Strong as her judgment, easy as her air ;
Correct though free, and regular though fair :
And the same graces o'er her pen preside
That form her manners and her footsteps guide.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

On The Backwardness Of The Spring 1771

IN vain the sprightly sun renews his course,
Climbs up th' ascending signs and leads the day,
While long embattled clouds repel his force,
And lazy vapours choak the golden ray.

In vain the spring proclaims the new-born year ;
No flowers beneath her lingering footsteps spring,
No rosy garland binds her flowing hair,
And in her train no feather'd warblers sing.

Her opening breast is stain'd with frequent showers,
Her streaming tresses bath'd in chilling dews,
And sad before her move the pensive hours,
Whose flagging wings no breathing sweets diffuse.

Like some lone pilgrim, clad in mournful weed,
Whose wounded bosom drinks her falling tears,
On whose pale cheek relentless sorrows feed,
Whose dreary way no sprightly carol cheers.

Not thus she breath'd on Arno's purple shore,
And call'd the Tuscan Muses to her bowers ;
Not this the robe in Enna's vale she wore,
When Ceres daughter fill'd her lap with flowers.

Clouds behind clouds in long succession rise,
And heavy snows oppress the springing green ;
The dazzling waste fatigues the aching eyes,
And fancy droops beneath th' unvaried scene.

Indulgent nature loose this frozen zone ;
Thro' opening skies let genial sun-beams play ;
Dissolving snows shall their glad impulse own,
And melt upon the bosom of the May.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

On The Death Of Mrs. Jennings

'TIS past : dear venerable shade, farewell !
Thy blameless life thy peaceful death shall tell.
Clear to the last thy setting orb has run ;
Pure, bright, and healthy like a frosty sun :

And late old age with hand indulgent shed
Its mildest winter on thy favour'd head.
For Heaven prolong'd her life to spread its praise,
And blest her with a Patriarch's length of days.
The truest praise was hers, a chearful heart,
Prone to enjoy, and ready to impart.
An Israelite indeed, and free from guile,
She show'd that piety and age could smile.
Religion had her heart, her cares, her voice ;
'Twas her last refuge, as her earlieft choice.
To holy Anna's spirit not more dear
The church of Israel, and the house of prayer.
Her spreading offspring of the fourth degree
Fill'd her fond arms, and clasp'd her trembling knee.
Matur'd at length for some more perfect scene,
Her hopes all bright, her prospects all serene,
Each part of life sustain'd with equal worth,
And not a wish left unfulfill'd on earth,

Like a tir'd traveller with sleep opprest,
Within her childrens' arms she dropt to rest.
Farewel ! thy cherish'd image, ever dear,
Shall many a heart with pious love revere :
Long, long shall mine her honour'd memory bless,
Who gave the dearest blessing I possess.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Ovid To His Wife

MY aged head now stoops its honours low,
Bow'd with the load of fifty winters' snow;
And for the raven's glossy black assumes
The downy whiteness of the cygnet's plumes :
Loose scatter'd hairs around my temples stray,
And spread the mournful shade of sickly grey :

I bend beneath the weight of broken years,
Averse to change, and chill'd with causeless fears.
The season now invites me to retire
To the dear lares of my household fire ;
To homely scenes of calm domestic peace,
A poet's leisure, and an old man's ease ;
To wear the remnant of uncertain life
In the fond bosom of a faithful wife ;
In safe repose my last few hours to spend,
Nor fearful nor impatient of their end.
Thus a safe port the wave-worn vessels gain,
Nor tempt again the dangers of the main ;
Thus the proud steed, when youthful glory fades,
And creeping age his stiffening limbs invades,
Lies stretch'd at ease on the luxuriant plain,
And dreams his morning triumphs o'er again :
The hardy veteran from the camp retires,
His joints unstrung, and feeds his household fires,

Satiate with same enjoys well-earn'd repose,
And sees his stormy day serenely close.

Not such my lot : Severer fates decree
My shatter'd bark must plough an unknown sea.
Forc'd from my native seats and sacred home,
Friendless, alone, thro' Scythian wilds to roam ;
With trembling knees o'er unknown hills I go,
Stiff with blue ice and heap'd with drifted snow :
Pale suns there strike their feeble rays in vain,
Which faintly glance against the marble plain ;
Red Ister there, which madly lash'd the shore,
His idle urn seal'd up, forgets to roar ;
Stern winter in eternal triumph reigns,
Shuts up the bounteous year and starves the plains.
My failing eyes the weary waste explore,
The savage mountains and the dreary shore,
And vainly look for scenes of old delight ;

No lov'd familiar objects meet my fight ;
No long remember'd streams, or conscious bowers,
Wake the gay memory of youthful hours.
I fondly hop'd, content with learned ease,
To walk amidst cotemporary trees ;
In every scene some fav'rite spot to trace,

And meet in all some kind domestic face ;
To stretch my limbs upon my native soil,
With long vacation from unquiet toil ;
Resign my breath where first that breath I drew,
And sink into the spot from whence I grew.
But if my feeble age is doom'd to try
Unusual seasons and a foreign sky,
To some more genial clime let me repair,
And taste the healing balm of milder air ;
Near to the glowing sun's directer ray,
And pitch my tent beneath the eye of day.
Could not the winter in my veins suffice,

Without the added rage of Scythian skies ?
The snow of time my vital heat exhaust,
And hoary age, without Sarmatian frost?
Ye tuneful maids ! who once, in happier days,
Beneath the myrtle grove inspir'd my lays,
How shall I now your wonted aid implore ;
Where seek your footsteps on this savage shore,
Whose ruder echoes ne'er were taught to bear
The poet's numbers or the lover's care ?

Yet storm and tempest are of ills the least
Which this inhospitable land infest :
Society than solitude is worse,
And man to man is still the greatest curse.
A savage race my fearful steps surround,
Practis'd in blood and disciplin'd to wound ;
Unknown alike to pity as to fear,
Hard as their soil, and as their skies severe.

Skill'd in each mystery of direst art,
They arm with double death the poison'd dart :
Uncomb'd and horrid grows their spiky hair ;
Uncouth their vesture, terrible their air :
The lurking dagger at their side hung low,
Leaps in quick vengeance on the hapless foe :
No stedfast faith is here, no sure repose ;
An armed truce is all this nation knows :
The rage of battle works, when battles cease ;
And wars are brooding in the lap of peace.
Since CÆSAR wills, and I a wretch must be,
Let me be safe at least in misery !
To my sad grave in calm oblivion steal,
Nor add the woes I fear to all I feel !

Yet here, forever here, your bard must dwell,
Who sung of sports and tender loves so well.
Here must he live : but when he yields his breath

O let him not be exil'd even in death !

Lest mix'd with Scythian shades, a Roman ghost
Wander on this inhospitable coast.
CÆSAR no more shall urge a wretch's doom ;
The bolt of JOVE pursues not in the tomb.
To thee, dear wife, some friend with pious care
All that of OVID then remains shall bear ;
Then wilt thou weep to see me so return,
And with fond passion clasp my silent urn.
O check thy grief, that tender bosom spare,
Hurt not thy cheeks, nor soil thy flowing hair.
Press the pale marble with thy lips, and give
One precious tear, and bid my memory live :
The silent dust shall glow at thy command,
And the warm ashes feel thy pious hand.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Rights of Women, The

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest;
O born to rule in partial Law's despite,
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!

Go forth arrayed in panoply divine;
That angel pureness which admits no stain;
Go, bid proud Man his boasted rule resign,
And kiss the golden sceptre of thy reign.

Go, gird thyself with grace; collect thy store
Of bright artillery glancing from afar;
Soft melting tones thy thundering cannon's roar,
Blushes and fears thy magazine of war.

Thy rights are empire: urge no meaner claim,--
Felt, not defined, and if debated, lost;
Like sacred mysteries, which withheld from fame,
Shunning discussion, are revered the most.

Try all that wit and art suggest to bend
Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee;
Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;
Thou mayst command, but never canst be free.

Awe the licentious, and restrain the rude;
Soften the sullen, clear the cloudy brow:
Be, more than princes' gifts, thy favours sued;--
She hazards all, who will the least allow.

But hope not, courted idol of mankind,
On this proud eminence secure to stay;
Subduing and subdued, thou soon shalt find
Thy coldness soften, and thy pride give way.

Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,
Conquest or rule thy heart shall feebly move,
In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,
That separate rights are lost in mutual love.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Songs

COME here fond youth, whoe'er thou be,
That boasts to love as well as me ;
And if thy breast have felt so wide a wound,
Come hither and thy flame approve ;
I'll teach thee what it is to love,
And by what marks true passion may be found.

It is to be all bath'd in tears ;
To live upon a smile for years ;
To lie whole ages at a beauty's feet :

To kneel, to languish and implore ;
And still tho' she disdain, adore :
It is to do all this, and think thy sufferings sweet.

It is to gaze upon her eyes
With eager joy and fond surprise ;
Yet temper'd with such chaste and awful fear
As wretches feel who wait their doom ;
Nor must one ruder thought presume
Tho' but in whispers breath'd, to meet her ear.

It is to hope, tho' hope were loft ;
Tho' heaven and earth thy passion crost ;
Tho' she were bright as sainted queens above,
And thou the least and meanest swain
That folds his flock upon the plain,
Yet if thou dar'st not hope, thou dost not love.

It is to quench thy joy in tears :
To nurse strange doubts and groundless fears :
If pangs of jealousy thou hast not prov'd,
Tho' she were fonder and more true
Than any nymph old poets drew,
Oh never dream again that thou hast lov'd.

If when the darling maid is gone,
Thou dost not seek to be alone,
Wrapt in a pleasing trance of tender woe ;
And muse, and fold thy languid arms,
Feeding thy fancy on her charms,
Thou dost not love, for love is nourish'd so.

If any hopes thy bosom share
But those which love has planted there,
Or any cares but his thy breast enthrall,

Thou never yet his power hast known ;
Love sits on a despotic throne,
And reigns a tyrant, if he reigns at all.

Now if thou art so lost a thing,

Here all thy tender sorrows bring,
And prove whose patience longest can endure :
We'll strive whose fancy shall be lost
In dreams of fondest passion most ;
For if thou thus hast lov'd, oh ! never hope a cure.

S O N G II.

IF ever thou dost joy to bind
Two hearts in equal passion join'd,

O son of VENUS ! hear me now,
And bid FLORELLA bless my vow.

If any bliss reserv'd for me
Thou in the leaves of fate should'st see ;
If any white propitious hour,
Pregnant with hoarded joys in store ;

Now, now the mighty treasure give,
In her for whom alone I live :
In sterling love pay all the sum,
And I'll absolve the fates to come.

In all the pride of full-blown charms
Yield her, relenting, to my arms:
Her bosom touch with soft desires,
And let her feel what she inspires.

But, CUPID, if thine aid be vain
The dear reluctant maid to gain ;
If still with cold averted eyes
She dash my hopes, and scorn my sighs ;

O ! grant ('tis all I ask of thee)
That I no more may change than she ;
But still with duteous zeal love on,
When every gleam of hope is gone.

Leave me then alone to languish,
Think not time can heal my anguish ;
Pity the woes which I endure ;
But never, never grant a cure.

S O N G III.

SYLVIA. LEAVE me, simple shepherd, leave me ;
Drag no more a hopeless chain :
I cannot like, nor would deceive thee ;
Love the maid that loves again.

CORIN. Tho' more gentle nymphs surround me,

Kindly pitying what I feel,
Only you have power to wound me ;
SYLVIA, only you can heal.

SYLVIA. CORIN, cease this idle teasing ;
Love that's forc'd is harsh and sour :
If the lover be displeasing,
To persist disgusts the more.

CORIN. 'Tis in vain, in vain to fly me,
SYLVIA, I will still pursue ;
Twenty thousand times deny me,
I will kneel and weep anew.

SYLVIA. CUPID ne'er shall make me languish,
I was born averse to love ;
Lovers' sighs, and tears, and anguish,
Mirth and pastime to me prove.

CORIN. Still I vow with patient duty
Thus to meet your proudest scorn ;
You for unrelenting beauty,
I for constant love was born.

But the fates had not consented,
Since they both did fickle prove ;
Of her scorn the maid repented,
And the shepherd of his love.

S O N G IV.

WHEN gentle CELIA first I knew,
A breast so good, so kind, so true,
Reason and taste approv'd ;
Pleas'd to indulge so pure a flame,
I call'd it by too soft a name,
And fondly thought I lov'd.

Till CHLORIS came, with sad surprise
I felt the light'ning of her eyes
Thro' all my senses run ;
All glowing with resistless charms,
She fill'd my breast with new alarms,
I saw, and was undone.

O CELIA ! dear unhappy maid,
Forbear the weakness to upbraid
Which ought your scorn to move ;
I know this beauty false and vain,
I know she triumphs in my pain,
Yet still I feel I love.

Thy gentle smiles no more can please,
Nor can thy softest friendship ease
The torments I endure ;
Think what that wounded breast must feel
Which truth and kindness cannot heal,
Nor even thy pity cure.

Oft shall I curse my iron chain,
And wish again thy milder reign
With long and vain regret ;

All that I can, to thee I give,
And could I still to reason live
I were thy captain yet.

But passion's wild impetuous sea
Hurries me far from peace and thee ;
'Twere vain to struggle more :
Thus the poor sailor slumbering lies,
While swelling tides around him rise,
And push his bark from shore.

In vain he spreads his helpless arms,
His pitying friends with fond alarms
In vain deplore his state ;
Still far and farther from the coast,
On the high surge his bark is tost,
And foundering yields to fate.

S O N G V.

AS near a weeping spring reclin'd
The beauteous ARAMINTA pin'd,
And mourn'd a false ungrateful youth ;
While dying echoes caught the sound,
And spread the soft complaints around
Of broken vows and alter'd truth ;

An aged shepherd heard her moan,
And thus in pity's kindest tone
Address'd the lost despairing maid :
Cease, cease unhappy fair to grieve,
For sounds, tho' sweet, can ne'er relieve
A breaking heart by love betray'd.

Why shouldst thou waste such precious showers,
That fall like dew on wither'd flowers,
But dying passion ne'er restor'd?
In beauty's empire is no mean,
And woman, either slave or queen,
Is quickly scorn'd when not ador'd.

Those liquid pearls from either eye,
Which might an eastern empire buy,
Unvalued here and fruitless fall ;
No art the season can renew
When love was young, and DAMON true ;
No tears a wandering heart recall.

Cease, cease to grieve, thy tears are vain,
Should those fair orbs in drops of rain
Vie with a weeping southern sky :

For hearts o'ercome with love and grief
All nature yields but one relief;
Die, hapless ARAMINTA, die.

S O N G VI.

WHEN first upon your tender cheek
I saw the morn of beauty break
With mild and chearing beam,
I bow'd before your infant shrine,
The earliest sighs you had were mine,
And you my darling heme.

I saw you in that opening morn
For beauty's boundless empire born,

And first confess'd your sway ;
And e'er your thoughts, devoid of art,
Could learn the value of a heart,
I gave my heart away.

I watch'd the dawn of every grace,
And gaz'd upon that angel face,
While yet 'twas safe to gaze ;
And fondly blest each rising charm,
Nor thought such innocence could harm
The peace of future days.

But now despotic o'er the plains
The awful noon of beauty reigns,
And kneeling crowds adore ;
These charms arise too fiercely bright,
Danger and death attend the fight,
And I must hope no more.

Thus to the rising God of day
Their early vows the Persians pay,
And bless the spreading fire ;
Whose glowing chariot mounting soon
Pours on their heads the burning noon ;
They sicken, and expire.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Caterpillar

No, helpless thing, I cannot harm thee now;
Depart in peace, thy little life is safe,
For I have scanned thy form with curious eye,
Noted the silver line that streaks thy back,
The azure and the orange that divide
Thy velvet sides; thee, houseless wanderer,
My garment has enfolded, and my arm
Felt the light pressure of thy hairy feet;
Thou hast curled round my finger; from its tip,
Precipitous descent! with stretched out neck,
Bending thy head in airy vacancy,
This way and that, inquiring, thou hast seemed
To ask protection; now, I cannot kill thee.
Yet I have sworn perdition to thy race,
And recent from the slaughter am I come
Of tribes and embryo nations: I have sought
With sharpened eye and persecuting zeal,
Where, folded in their silken webs they lay
Thriving and happy; swept them from the tree
And crushed whole families beneath my foot;
Or, sudden, poured on their devoted heads
The vials of destruction.--This I've done
Nor felt the touch of pity: but when thou,--
A single wretch, escaped the general doom,
Making me feel and clearly recognise
Thine individual existence, life,
And fellowship of sense with all that breathes,--
Present'st thyself before me, I relent,
And cannot hurt thy weakness.--So the storm
Of horrid war, o'erwhelming cities, fields,
And peaceful villages, rolls dreadful on:
The victor shouts triumphant; he enjoys
The roar of cannon and the clang of arms,
And urges, by no soft relentings stopped,
The work of death and carnage. Yet should one,
A single sufferer from the field escaped,
Panting and pale, and bleeding at his feet,
Lift his imploring eyes,-- the hero weeps;
He is grown human, and capricious Pity,
Which would not stir for thousands, melts for one
With sympathy spontaneous:-- 'Tis not Virtue,
Yet 'tis the weakness of a virtuous mind.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

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Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Groans Of The Tankard

OF strange events I sing, and portents dire ;
The wond'rous themes a reverent ear require ;
Tho' strange the tale, the faithful Muse believe,
And what she says with pious awe receive.

'Twas at the solemn, silent, noon-tide hour,
When hunger rages with despotic power,
When the lean student quits his Hebrew roots
For the gross nourishment of English fruits,
And throws unfinish'd airy systems by
For solid pudding and substantial pye,

When hungry poets the glad summons own,
And leave spare fast to dine with Gods alone ;
Our sober meal dispatch'd with silent haste,
The decent grace concludes the short repast :
Then urg'd by thirst we cast impatient eyes
Where deep, capacious, vast, of ample size,
The tankard stood, replenish'd to the brink
With the cool beverage blue-ey'd Naiads drink.
But lo ! a sudden prodigy appears,
And our chill'd hearts recoil with startling fears ;
Its yawning mouth disclos'd the deep profound,
And in low murmurs breath'd a sullen sound ;
Cold drops of dew did on the sides appear ;
No finger touch'd it, and no hand was near ;
At length th' indignant vase its silence broke,
First heav'd deep hollow groans, and then distinctly spoke.

"How chang'd the scene ! for what unpardon'd crimes
"Have I surviv'd to these degenerate times ?

"I, who was wont the festal board to grace,
"And midst the circle lift my honest face,
"White o'er with froth, like Etna crown'd with snow,
"Which mantled o'er the brown abyss below,
"Where Ceres mingled with her golden store
"The richer spoils of either India's shore,
"The dulcet reed the Western islands boast,
"And spicy fruit from Banda's fragrant coast.
"At solemn feasts the nectar'd draught I pour'd,
"And often journey'd round the ample board :
"The portly Alderman, the stately Mayor,
"And all the furry tribe my worth declare ;
"And the keen Sportsman oft, his labours done,
"To me retreating with the setting sun,
"Deep draughts imbib'd, and conquere'd land and sea,
"And overthrew the pride of France by me.

"Let meaner clay contain the limpid wave,
"The clay for such an office nature gave ;

"Let China's earth, enrich'd with colour'd stains,
"Pencil'd with gold, and streak'd with azure veins,
"The grateful flavour of the Indian leaf,
"Or Mocho's sunburnt berry glad receive ;
"The nobler metal claims more generous use,
"And mine should flow with more exalted juice.
"Did I for this my native bed resign,
"From the dark bowels of Potosi's mine ?
"Was I for this with violence torn away,
"And drag'd to regions of the upper day ?
"For this the rage of torturing furnace bore,
"From foreign dross to purge the bright'ning ore ?
"For this have I endur'd the fiery test,
"And was I stamp'd for this with Britain's lofty crest ?

"Unblest the day, and luckless was the hour
"Which doom'd me to a Presbyterian's power ;
"Fated to serve the Puritanick race,

"Whose slender meal is shorter than their grace ;
"Whose moping sons no jovial orgies keep ;
"Where evening brings no summons but to sleep ;
"No Carnival is even Christmas here,
"And one long Lent involves the meagre year.
"Bear me, ye pow'rs ! to some more genial scene,
"Where on soft cushions lolls the gouty Dean,
"Or rosy Prebend, with cherubic face,
"With double chin, and paunch of portly grace,
"Who lull'd in downy slumbers shall agree
"To own no inspiration but from me.
"Or to some spacious mansion, Gothic, old,
"Where Comus sprightly train their vigils hold ;
"There oft exhausted, and replenish'd oft,
"Oh ! let me still supply th' eternal draught ;
"Till care within the deep abyss be drown'd,
"And thought grows giddy at the vast profound."

More had the goblet spoke, but lo ! appears
An ancient Sybil furrow'd o'er with years ;
Her aspect sour, and stern ungracious look
With sudden damp the conscious vessel struck ;
Chill'd at her touch its mouth it slowly clos'd,
And in long silence all its griefs repos'd :
Yet still low murmurs creep along the ground,
And the air vibrates with the silver sound.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Invitation

HEALTH to my friend, and long unbroken years,
By storms unruffled and unstain'd by tears :
Wing'd by new joys may each white minute fly ;
Spring on her cheek, and sunshine in her eye :
O'er that dear breast, where love and pity springs,
May peace eternal spread her downy wings :

Sweet beaming hope her path illumine still,
And fair ideas all her fancy fill.
From glittering scenes which strike the dazzled sight
With mimic grandeur and illusive light,
From idle hurry, and tumultuous noise,
From hollow friendships, and from sickly joys,
Will DELIA, at the muse's call retire
To the pure pleasures rural scenes inspire ?
Will she from crowds and busy cities fly,
Where wreaths of curling smoke involve the sky,
To taste the grateful shade of spreading trees,
And drink the spirit of the mountain breeze?

When winter's hand the rough'ning year deforms,
And hollow winds foretel approaching storms,
Then Pleasure, like a bird of passage, flies
To brighter climes, and more indulgent skies ;
Cities and courts allure her sprightly train,

From the bleak mountain and the naked plain ;
And gold and gems with artificial blaze,
Supply the sickly sun's declining rays :
But soon returning on the western gale
She seeks the bosom of the grassy vale ;
There, wrapt in careless ease, attunes the lyre
To the wild warblings of the woodland quire ;
The daisied turf her humble throne supplies,
And early primroses around her rise.
We'll follow where the smiling goddess leads,
Thro' tangled forests or enamel'd meads ;
O'er pathless hills her airy form we'll chase,
In silent glades her fairy footsteps trace :
Small pains there needs her footsteps to pursue,
She cannot fly from friendship, and from you.
Now the glad earth her frozen zone unbinds,
And o'er her bosom breathe the western winds :
Already now the snow-drop dares appear,

The first pale blossom of th' unripen'd year ;
As FLORA's breath, by some transforming power,
Had chang'd an icicle into a flower :
Its name, and hue, and scentless plant retains,
And winter lingers in its icy veins.
To these succeed the violet's dusky blue,
And each inferior flower of fainter hue ;

Till riper months the perfect year disclose,
And FLORA cries exulting, See my Rose!

The Muse invites, my DELIA haste away,
And let us sweetly waste the careless day.
Here gentle summits lift their airy brow ;
Down the green slope here winds the labouring plow ;
Here bath'd by frequent show'rs cool vales are seen,
Cloath'd with fresh verdure, and eternal green ;
Here smooth canals, across th' extended plain,
Stretch their long arms, to join the distant main :

The sons of toil with many a weary stroke
Scoop the hard bosom of the solid rock ;
Resistless thro' the stiff opposing clay
With steady patience work their gradual way ;
Compel the genius of th' unwilling flood
Thro' the brown horrors of the aged wood ;
Cross the lone waste the silver urn they pour,
And clear the barren heath or sullen moor :
The traveller with pleasing wonder sees
The white sail gleaming thro' the dusky trees ;
And views the alter'd landscape with surprise,
And doubts the magic scenes which round him rise.
Now, like a flock of swans, above his head
Their woven wings the flying vessels spread ;
Now meeting streams in artful mazes glide,
While each unmingled pours a separate tide ;
Now through the hidden veins of earth they flow,
And visit sulphurous mines and caves below ;

The ductile streams obey the guiding hand,
And social plenty circles round the land.

But nobler praise awaits our green retreats ;
The Muses here have fixt their sacred seats.
Mark where its simple front yon mansion rears,
The nursery of men for future years :
Here callow chiefs and embryo statesmen lie,
And unfledg'd poets short excursions try :
While Mersey's gentle current, which too long
By fame neglected, and unknown to song,
Between his rushy banks, (no poet's theme)
Had crept inglorious, like a vulgar stream,
Reflects th' ascending seats with conscious pride,
And dares to emulate a classic tide.
Soft music breathes along each op'ning shade,
And soothes the dashing of his rough cascade.
With mystic lines his sands are figur'd o'er,

And circles trac'd upon the letter'd shore,
Beneath his willows rove th' inquiring youth,

And court the fair majestic form of truth.
Here nature opens all her secret springs,
And heav'n-born science plumes her eagle wings :
Too long had bigot rage, with malice swell'd,
Crush'd her strong pinions, and her flight withheld ;
Too long to check her ardent progress strove :
So writhes the serpent round the bird of Jove ;
Hangs on her flight, restrains her tow'ring wing,
Twists its dark folds, and points its venom'd sting.
Yet still (if aught aright the Muse divine)
Her rising pride shall mock the vain design ;
On sounding pinions yet aloft shall soar,
And thro' the azure deep untravel'd paths explore.
Where science smiles, the Muses join the train ;
And gentlest arts and purest manners reign.
Ye generous youth who love this studious shade,

How rich a field is to your hopes display'd !
Knowledge to you unlocks the classic page ;
And virtue blossoms for a better age.
Oh golden days! oh bright unvalued hours !
What bliss (did ye but know that bliss) were yours?
With richest stores your glowing bosoms fraught,
Perception quick, and luxury of thought ;
The high designs that heave the labouring soul,
Panting for fame, impatient of controul ;
And fond enthusiastic thought, that feeds
On pictur'd tales of vast heroic deeds ;
And quick affections, kindling into flame
At virtue's, or their country's honour'd name ;
And spirits light to every joy in tune ;
And friendship ardent as a summer's noon ;
And generous scorn of vice's venal tribe ;
And proud disdain of interest's sordid bribe ;
And conscious honour's quick instinctive sense ;

And smiles unforc'd ; and easy confidence ;
And vivid fancy, and clear simple truth ;
And all the mental bloom of vernal youth.

How bright the scene to fancy's eye appears,
Thro' the long perspective of distant years,
When this, this little group their country calls
From academic shades and learned halls,
To fix her laws, her spirit to sustain,
And light up glory thro' her wide domain !
Their various tastes in different arts display'd,
Like temper'd harmony of light and shade,
With friendly union in one mass shall blend,
And this adorn the state, and that defend.
These the sequester'd shade shall cheaply please,
With learned labour and inglorious ease :

With those, impell'd by some resistless force,
O'er seas and rocks shall urge their vent'rous course ;

Rich fruits matur'd by glowing suns behold,
And China's groves of vegetable gold ;
From every land the various harvest spoil,
And bear the tribute to their native soil :
But tell each land (while every toil they share,
Firm to sustain, and resolute to dare,)
MAN is the nobler growth our realms supply,
And SOULS are ripen'd in our northern sky.

Some pensive creep along the shelly shore ;
Unfold the silky texture of a flower ;
With sharpen'd eyes inspect an hornet's sting,
And all the wonders of an insect's wing.
Some trace with curious search the hidden cause
Of nature's changes, and her various laws ;
Untwist her beauteous web, disrobe her charms,
And hunt her to her elemental forms :
Or prove what hidden powers in herbs are found

To quench disease and staunch the burning wound ;
With cordial drops the fainting head sustain,
Call back the flitting soul, and still the throbs of pain.

The patriot passion this shall strongly feel,
Ardent, and glowing with undaunted zeal ;
With lips of fire shall plead his country's cause,
And vindicate the majesty of laws.
This cloath'd with Britain's thunder, spread alarms
Thro' the wide earth, and shake the pole with arms.
That to the sounding lyre his deeds rehearse,
Enshrine his name in some immortal verse,
To long posterity his praise consign,
And pay a life of hardships by a line.
While others, consecrate to higher aims,
Whose hallow'd bosoms glow with purer flames,
Love in their heart, persuasion in their tongue,
With words of peace shall charm the list'ning throng,

Draw the dread veil that wraps th' eternal throne,
And launch our souls into the bright unknown.

Here cease my song. Such arduous themes require
A master's pencil, and a poet's fire :
Unequal far such bright designs to paint,
Too weak her colours, and her lines too faint,
My drooping Muse folds up her fluttering wing,

And hides her head in the green lap of spring.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Mouse's Petition

OH ! hear a pensive captive's prayer,
For liberty that sighs ;
And never let thine heart be shut
Against the prisoner's cries.

For here forlorn and sad I sit,
Within the wiry grate ;
And tremble at th' approaching morn,
Which brings impending fate.

If e'er thy breast with freedom glow'd,
And spurn'd a tyrant's chain,
Let not thy strong oppressive force
A free-born mouse detain.

Oh ! do not stain with guiltless blood
Thy hospitable hearth ;
Nor triumph that thy wiles betray'd
A prize so little worth.

The scatter'd gleanings of a feast
My scanty meals supply ;
But if thine unrelenting heart
That slender boon deny,

The chearful light, the vital air,
Are blessings widely given ;
Let nature's commoners enjoy
The common gifts of heaven.

The well taught philosophic mind
To all compassion gives ;
Casts round the world an equal eye,
And feels for all that lives.

If mind, as ancient sages taught,
A never dying flame,
Still shifts thro' matter's varying forms,
In every form the same,

Beware, lest in the worm you crush
A brother's soul you find ;
And tremble lest thy luckless hand
Dislodge a kindred mind.

Or, if this transient gleam of day
Be all of life we share,
Let pity plead within thy breast,
That little all to spare.

So may thy hospitable board
With health and peace be crown'd ;

And every charm of heartfelt ease
Beneath thy roof be found.

So when unseen destruction lurks,
Which men like mice may share,
May some kind angel clear thy path,
And break the hidden snare.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Origin Of Song Writing

WHEN Cupid, wanton boy, was young,
His wings unfledg'd, and rude his tongue,

He loiter'd in Arcadian bowers,
And hid his bow in wreaths of flowers ;
Or pierc'd some fond unguarded heart,
With now and then a random dart ;
But heroes scorned the idle boy,
And love was but a shepherd's toy :
When Venus, vex'd to see her child
Amidst the forests thus run wild,
Would point him out some nobler game,
Gods, and godlike men to tame.
She seiz'd the boy's reluctant hand,
And led them to the virgin band,
Where the sister muses round
Swell the deep majestic sound ;
And in solemn strains unite,
Breathing chaste, severe delight :
Songs of chiefs, and heroes old,
In unsubmitting virtue bold ;

Of even valour's temperate heat,
And toils to stubborn patience sweet ;
Of nodding plumes, and burnish'd arms,
And glory's bright terrific charms.

The potent sounds like light'ning dart
Resistless thro' the glowing heart ;
Of power to lift the fixed soul
High o'er fortune's proud controul ;
Kindling deep, prophetic musing ;
Love of beauteous death infusing ;
Scorn, and unconquerable hate
Of tyrant pride's unhallow'd state.
The boy abash'd, and half afraid,
Beheld each chaste immortal maid :
Pallas spread her Egis there ;
Mars stood by with threat'ning air ;

And stern Diana's icy look
With sudden chill his bosom struck.

Daughters of Jove receive the child,
The queen of beauty said, and smil'd :
(Her rosy breath perfum'd the air,
And scatter'd sweet contagion there ;
Relenting nature learnt to languish,
And sicken'd with delightful anguish
Receive him, artless yet and young ;
Refine his air and smooth his tongue ;
Conduct him thro' your fav'rite bowers,

Enrich'd with fair perennial flowers,
To solemn shades and springs that lie
Remote from each unhallow'd eye ;
Teach him to spell those mystic names
That kindle bright immortal flames ;

And guide his young unpractis'd feet
To reach coy learning's lofty seat.

Ah, luckless hour ! mistaken maids !
When Cupid sought the Muses shades :
Of their sweetest notes beguil'd,
By the sly insidious child,
Now of power his darts are found
Twice ten thousand times to wound.
Now no more the slacken'd strings
Breathe of high immortal things,
But Cupid tunes the Musis lyre,
To languid notes of soft desire :
In every clime, in every tongue,
'Tis love inspires the poet's song.
Hence Sappho's soft infectious page ;
Monimia's woe ; Othello's rage ;
Abandon'd Dido's fruitless prayer ;

And Eloisa's long despair ;
The garland bless'd with many a vow,
For haughty Sacharissa's brow ;
And wash'd with tears the mournful verse
That Petrarch laid on Laura's herse.

But more than all the sister quire,
Music confess'd the pleasing fire.
Here sovereign Cupid reign'd alone ;
Music and song were all his own.
Sweet as in old Arcadian plains,
The British pipe has caught the strains :
And where the Tweed's pure current glides,
Or Lissy rolls her limpid tides,
Or Thames his oozy waters leads
Thro' rural bowers or yellow meads,
With many an old romantic tale
Has cheer'd the lone sequester'd vale;

With many a sweet and tender lay
Deceiv'd the tiresome summer-day.

'Tis yours to cull with happy art
Each meaning verse that speaks the heart ;
And fair array'd, in order meet,
To lay the wreath at beauty's feet.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Rights of Woman.

Yes, injured Woman! rise, assert thy right!
Woman! too long degraded, scorned, opprest;
O born to rule in partial Law's despite,
Resume thy native empire o'er the breast!
Go forth arrayed in panoply divine;
That angel pureness which admits no stain;
Go, bid proud Man his boasted rule resign,
And kiss the golden sceptre of thy reign.
Go, gird thyself with grace; collect thy store
Of bright artillery glancing from afar;
Soft melting tones thy thundering cannon's roar,
Blushes and fears thy magazine of war.
Thy rights are empire: urge no meaner claim,--
Felt, not defined, and if debated, lost;
Like sacred mysteries, which withheld from fame,
Shunning discussion, are revered the most.
Try all that wit and art suggest to bend
Of thy imperial foe the stubborn knee;
Make treacherous Man thy subject, not thy friend;
Thou mayst command, but never canst be free.
Awe the licentious, and restrain the rude;
Soften the sullen, clear the cloudy brow:
Be, more than princes' gifts, thy favours sued;--
She hazards all, who will the least allow.
But hope not, courted idol of mankind,
On this proud eminence secure to stay;
Subduing and subdued, thou soon shalt find
Thy coldness soften, and thy pride give way.
Then, then, abandon each ambitious thought,
Conquest or rule thy heart shall feebly move,
In Nature's school, by her soft maxims taught,
That separate rights are lost in mutual love.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

The Rights of Women

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Anna Lætitia Barbauld

To A Lady

FLOWERS to the fair : To you these flowers I bring,
And strive to greet you with an earlier spring.
Flowers sweet, and gay, and delicate like you ;
Emblems of innocence, and beauty too.
With flowers the Graces bind their yellow hair,
And flowery wreaths consenting lovers wear.

Flowers, the sole luxury which nature knew,
In Eden's pure and guiltless garden grew.
To loftier forms are rougher tasks assign'd ;
The sheltering oak resists the stormy wind,
The tougher yew repels invading foes,
And the tall pine for future navies grows ;
But this soft family, to cares unknown,
Were born for pleasure and delight alone.
Gay without toil, and lovely without art,
They spring to cheer the sense, and glad the heart.
Nor blush, my fair, to own you copy these ;
Your best, your sweetest empire is---to please.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

To a Little Invisible Being Who is Expected Soon to Become Visible

Germ of new life, whose powers expanding slow
For many a moon their full perfection wait,--
Haste, precious pledge of happy love, to go
Auspicious borne through life's mysterious gate.

What powers lie folded in thy curious frame,--
Senses from objects locked, and mind from thought!
How little canst thou guess thy lofty claim
To grasp at all the worlds the Almighty wrought!

And see, the genial season's warmth to share,
Fresh younglings shoot, and opening roses glow!
Swarms of new life exulting fill the air,--
Haste, infant bud of being, haste to blow!

For thee the nurse prepares her lulling songs,
The eager matrons count the lingering day;
But far the most thy anxious parent longs
On thy soft cheek a mother's kiss to lay.

She only asks to lay her burden down,
That her glad arms that burden may resume;
And nature's sharpest pangs her wishes crown,
That free thee living from thy living tomb.

She longs to fold to her maternal breast
Part of herself, yet to herself unknown;
To see and to salute the stranger guest,
Fed with her life through many a tedious moon.

Come, reap thy rich inheritance of love!
Bask in the fondness of a Mother's eye!
Nor wit nor eloquence her heart shall move
Like the first accents of thy feeble cry.

Haste, little captive, burst thy prison doors!
Launch on the living world, and spring to light!
Nature for thee displays her various stores,
Opens her thousand inlets of delight.

If charmed verse or muttered prayers had power,
With favouring spells to speed thee on thy way,
Anxious I'd bid my beads each passing hour,
Till thy wished smile thy mother's pangs o'erpay.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

To Mr. Barbauld

Come, clear thy studious looks awhile,
'T is arrant treason now
To wear that moping brow,
When I, thy empress, bid thee smile.

What though the fading year
One wreath will not afford
To grace the poet's hair,
Or deck the festal board;

A thousand pretty ways we'll find
To mock old Winter's starving reign;
We'll bid the violets spring again,
Bid rich poetic roses blow,

Peeping above his heaps of snow;
We'll dress his withered cheeks in flowers,
And on his smooth bald head
Fantastic garlands bind:
Garlands, which we will get
From the gay blooms of that immortal year,
Above the turning seasons set,
Where young ideas shoot in Fancy's sunny bowers.

A thousand pleasant arts we'll have
To add new feathers to the wings of Time,
And make him smoothly haste away:
We'll use him as our slave,
And when we please we'll bid him stay,
And clip his wings, and make him stop to view
Our studies, and our follies too;
How sweet our follies are, how high our fancies climb.

We'll little care what others do,
And where they go, and what they say;
Our bliss, all inward and our own,
Would only tarnished be, by being shown.
The talking restless world shall see,
Spite of the world we'll happy be;
But none shall know
How much we're so,
Save only Love, and we.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

To Mr. Barbauld, November 14, 1778

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To Mrs. P*****, with some Drawings of Birds and Insects

The kindred arts to please thee shall conspire,
One dip the pencil, and one string the lyre.
(Pope)

Amanda bids;--at her command again
I seize the pencil, or resume the pen;
No other call my willing hand requires,
And Friendship, better than a Muse inspires.

Painting and Poetry are near allied;
The kindred arts two sister Muses guide:
This charms the eye, that steals upon the ear;
There sounds are tuned, and colours blended here:
This with a silent touch enchants our eyes,
And bids a gayer, brighter world arise:
That, less allied to sense, with deeper art
Can pierce the close recesses of the heart;
By well-set syllables, and potent sound,
Can rouse, can chill the breast, can soothe, can wound;
To life adds motion, and to beauty soul,
And breathes a spirit through the finished whole:
Each perfects each, in friendly union joined;--
This gives Amanda's form, and that her mind.

But humbler themes my artless hand requires,
No higher than the feathered tribe aspires.
Yet who the various nations can declare
That plough with busy wing the peopled air?
These cleave the crumbling bark for insect food;
Those dip their crooked beak in kindred blood:
Some haunt the rushy moor, the lonely woods;
Some bathe their silver plumage in the floods;
Some fly to man, his household gods implore,
And gather round his hospitable door,
Wait the known call, and find protection there
From all the lesser tyrants of the air.

The tawny Eagle seats his callow brood
High on the cliff, and feasts his young with blood.
On Snowdon's rocks, or Orkney's wide domain,
Whose beetling cliffs o'erhang the Western main,
The royal bird his lonely kingdom forms
Amidst the gathering clouds and sullen storms;
Through the wide waste of air he darts his sight,
And holds his sounding pinions poised for flight;
With cruel eye premeditates the war,
And marks his destined victim from afar:
Descending in a whirlwind to the ground,
His pinions like the rush of waters sound;
The fairest of the fold he bears away,
And to his nest compels the struggling prey;
He scorns the game by meaner hunters tore,

And dips his talons in no vulgar gore.

With lovelier pomp along the grassy plain
The Silver Pheasant draws his shining train.
On Asia's myrtle shores, by Phasis' stream,
He spreads his plumage to the sunny gleam;
But when the wiry net his flight confines,
He lowers his purple crest, and inly pines:
The beauteous captive hangs his ruffled wing,
Opprest by bondage and our chilly spring.
To claim the verse unnumbered tribes appear,
That swell the music of the vernal year:
Seized with the spirit of the kindly May,
They sleek the glossy wing, and tune the lay;
With emulative strife the notes prolong,
And pour out all their little souls in song.

When winter bites upon the naked plain,
Nor food nor shelter in the groves remain,
By instinct led, a firm united band,
As marshaled by some skillful general's hand,
The congregated nations wing their way
In dusky columns o'er the trackless sea;
In clouds unnumbered annual hover o'er
The craggy Bass, or Kilda's utmost shore;
Thence spread their sails to meet the southern wind,
And leave the gathering tempest far behind;
Pursue the circling sun's indulgent ray,
Course the swift seasons, and o'ertake the day.

Not so the insect race, ordained to keep
The lazy sabbath of a half-year's sleep:
Entombed beneath the filmy web they lie,
And wait the influence of a kinder sky.
When vernal sunbeams pierce their dark retreat,
The heaving tomb distends with vital heat;
The half-formed brood, impatient of their cell,
Start from their trance, and burst their silken shell;--
Trembling awhile they stand, and scarcely dare
To launch at once upon the untried air:
At length assured, they catch the favouring gale,
And leave their sordid spoils, and high in ether sail.
So when brave Tancred struck the conscious rind,
He found a nymph in every trunk confined;
The forest labours with convulsive throes,
The bursting trees the lovely births disclose,
And a gay troop of damsels round him stood,
Where late was rugged bark and lifeless wood.
Lo! the bright train their radiant wings unfold!
With silver fringed, and freckled o'er with gold:
On the gay bosom of some fragrant flower
They idly fluttering live their little hour;

Their life all pleasure, and their task all play,
All spring their age, and sunshine all their day.
Not so the child of sorrow, wretched Man,
His course with toil concludes, with pain began;
That his high destiny he might discern,
And in misfortune's school this lesson learn
Pleasure's the portion of the inferior kind;
But glory, virtue, Heaven for Man designed.

What atom-forms of insect life appear!
And who can follow Nature's pencil here?
Their wings with azure, green and purple glossed,
Studded with coloured eyes, with gems embossed,
Inlaid with pearl, and marked with various stains
Of lively crimson through their dusky veins.
Some shoot like living stars athwart the night,
And scatter from their wings a vivid light,
To guide the Indian to his tawny loves,
As through the woods with cautious step he moves.
See the proud giant of the beetle race;
What shining arms his polished limbs enchase!
Like some stern warrior formidably bright,
His steely sides reflect a gleaming light:
On his large forehead spreading horns he wears,
And high in air the branching antlers bears:
O'er many an inch extends his wide domain,
And his rich treasury swells with hoarded grain.

Thy friend thus strives to cheat the lonely hour,
With song or paint, an insect or a flower:--
Yet if Amanda praise the flowing line,
And bend delighted o'er the gay design,
I envy not nor emulate the fame
Or of the painter's or the poet's name:
Could I to both with equal claim pretend,
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Anna Lætitia Barbauld

To Wisdom

O WISDOM ! if thy soft controul
Can sooth the sickness of the soul,
Can bid the warring passions cease,
And breathe the balm of tender peace,
WISDOM ! I bless thy gentle sway,
And ever, ever will obey.

But if thou com'st with frown austere
To nurse the brood of care and fear ;
To bid our sweetest passions die,
And leave us in their room a sigh ;

Of if thine aspect stern have power
To wither each poor transient flower,
That cheers the pilgrimage of woe,
And dry the springs whence hope should flow ;
WISDOM, thine empire I disclaim,
Thou empty boast of pompous name !
In gloomy shade of cloisters dwell,
But never haunt my chearful cell.
Hail to pleasure's frolic train ;
Hail to fancy's golden reign ;
Festive mirth, and laughter wild,
Free and sportful as the child ;
Hope with eager sparkling eyes,
And easy faith, and fond surprise :
Let these, in fairy colours drest,
Forever share my careless breast ;
Then, tho' wise I may not be,
The wise themselves shall envy me.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Verses On Mrs Rowe

SUCH were the notes our chaster SAPPHO sung,
And every muse dropt honey on her tongue.
Blest shade ! how pure a breath of praise was thine,
Whose spotless life was faultless as thy line :
In whom each worth and every grace conspire,
The Christian's meekness and the Poet's fire.
Learn'd without pride, a woman without art ;
The sweetest manners and the gentlest heart.

Smooth like her verse her passions learnt to move,
And her whole soul was harmony and love :
Virtue that breast without a conflict gain'd,
And easy like a native monarch reign'd.
On earth still favour'd as by heaven approv'd,
The world applauded, and ALEXIS lov'd.
With love, with health, with fame, and friendship blest,
And of a chearful heart the constant feast,
What more of bliss sincere could earth bestow ?
What purer heaven could angels taste below ?
But bliss from earth's vain scenes too quickly flies ;
The golden chord is broke, ALEXIS dies.
Now in the leafy shade, and widow'd grove,
Sad PHILOMELA mourns her absent love.
Now deep retir'd in FROME's enchanting vale,
She pours her tuneful sorrows on the gale ;
Without one fond reserve the world disclaims,
And gives up all her soul to heavenly flames.

Yet in no useless gloom she wore her days ;
She lov'd the work, and only shun'd the praise.
Her pious hand the poor, the mourner blest ;
Her image liv'd in every kindred breast.
THYNN, CARTERET, BLACKMORE, ORRERY approv'd,
And PRIOR prais'd, and noble HERTFORD lov'd ;
Seraphic KENN, and tuneful WATTS were thine,
And virtue's noblest champions fill'd the line.
Blest in thy friendships ! in thy death too blest !
Receiv'd without a pang to endless rest.
Heaven call'd the Saint matur'd by length of days,
And her pure spirit was exhal'd in praise.
Bright pattern of thy sex, be thou my muse ;
Thy gentle sweetness thro' my soul diffuse :
Let me thy palm, tho' not thy laurel share,
And copy thee in charity and prayer.
Tho' for the bard my lines are yet too faint,
Yet in my life let me transcribe the saint.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld

Verses Written In An Alcove

NOW the moon-beam's trembling lustre
 Silvers o'er the dewy green,
And in soft and shadowy colours
 Sweetly paints the checquer'd scene.

Here between the opening branches
 Streams a flood of soften'd light,
There the thick and twisted foliage
 Spreads the browner gloom of night.

There is sure the haunt of fairies,
 In yon cool Alcove they play ;
Care can never cross the threshold,
 Care was only made for day.

Far from hence be noisy clamour,
 Sick disgust and anxious fear ;
Pining grief and wasting anguish
 Never keep their vigils here.

Tell no tales of sheeted spectres,
 Rising from the quiet tomb ;
Fairer forms this cell shall visit,
 Brighter visions gild the gloom.

Choral songs and sprightly voices
 Echo from her cell shall call ;
Sweeter, sweeter than the murmur
 Of the distant water fall.

Every ruder gust of passion
 Lull'd with music dies away,
Till within the charmed bosom
 None but soft affections play :

Soft, as when the evening breezes
 Gently stir the poplar grove ;
Brighter than the smile of summer,
 Sweeter than the breath of love.

Thee, th' enchanted Muse shall follow,
 LISSY ! to the rustic cell,
And each careless note repeating
 Tune them to her charming shell.

Not the Muse who wreath'd with laurel,
 Solemn stalks with tragic gait,
And in clear and lofty vision
 Sees the future births of fate ;

Not the maid who crown'd with cypress
 Sweeps along in scepter'd pall,

And in sad and solemn accents
Mourns the crested heroe's fall ;

But that other smiling sister,
With the blue and laughing eye,
Singing, in a lighter measure,
Strains of woodland harmony :

All unknown to fame or glory,
Easy, blith and debonair,
Crown'd with flowers, her careless tresses
Loosely floating on the air.

Then, when next the star of evening
Softly sheds the silent dew,
Let me in this rustic temple,
LISSY ! meet the Muse and you.

Anna Lætitia Barbauld