

Classic Poetry Series

Johannes Carl Andersen

- poems -

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Maui Victor

Unhewn in quarry lay the Parian stone,
Ere hands, god-guided, of Praxiteles
Might shape the Cnidian Venus. Long ungrown
The ivory was which, chiselled, robbed of ease
Pygmalion, sculptor-lover. Now are these,
The stone and ivory, immortal made.
The golden apples of Hesperides
Shall never, scattered, in blown dust be laid,
Till Time, the dragon-guard, has lived his last decade.

The Cnidian Venus, Galatea's shape,
A wondering world beheld, as we behold, --
Here, in blest isles beyond the stormy Cape,
Where man the new land dowers with the old,
Are neither marble shapes nor fruits of gold,
Nor white-limbed maidens, queened enchantress-wise;
Here, Nature's beauties no vast ruins enfold,
No glamour fills her such as 'wildering lies
Where Mediterranean waters laugh to Grecian skies.

Acropolis with figure group and frieze,
Parthenon, Temple, concepts born divine,
Where in these Isles are wonders great as these?
Unquarried lies the stone in teeming mine,
Bare is the land of sanctuary and shrine;
But though frail hands no god-like record set
Great Nature's powers are lavish, and combine
In mountain dome, ice-glancing minaret,
Deep fiord, fiery fountain and lake with tree-wove carcanet.

And though the dusky race that to and fro,
Like their own shades, pass by and leave no trace,
No age-contemning works from quick brain throw,
They still have left what Time shall not efface, --
The legends of an isolated race.
Not vainly Maui strove; no, not in vain
He dared the old Mother of Death and her embrace:
That mankind might go free, he suffered pain --
And death he boldly dared, eternal life to gain.

Not death but dormancy the old womb has known,
New love shall quicken it, new life attain:
These legends old in ivory and stone
Shall live their recreated life again, --
Shall wake, like Galatea, to joy and pain.
Legends and myths and wonders; what are these
But glittering mines that long unworked have lain?
A Homer shall unlock with magic keys
Treasure for some antipodean Praxiteles!

Johannes Carl Andersen

Soft, Low and Sweet

Soft, low and sweet, the blackbird wakes the day,
And clearer pipes, as rosier grows the gray
Of the wide sky, far, far into whose deep
The rath lark soars, and scatters down the steep
His runnel song, that skyey roundelay.

Earth with a sigh awakes; and tremors play,
Coy in her leafy trees, and falt'ring creep
Across the daisy lawn and whisper, "Well-a-day,"
Soft, low and sweet.

From violet-banks the scent-clouds float away
And spread around their fragrance, as of sleep:
From ev'ry mossy nook the blossoms peep;
From ev'ry blossom comes one little ray
That makes the world-wealth one with Spring, always
Soft, low and sweet.

Johannes Carl Andersen

Summer

And sleeps thy heart when flower and tree
Adorn the summer stillness?
And did young Spring pass over thee
In chillness?

Their scent delights and pleases,
On petalled breezes blown,
But in their beauty freezes
Thine own.

The flower awakes, the tree is leafed,
Yet love in thee is dumb,—
Flowers fall, fruits ripen, corn is sheafed,
Ho! Winter's cold will come.

When wakens some November morn
Dew-soft, around thee brightly,
And blossoms on the grey hawthorn
Lie whitely,

Come thou, thy bosom beating,
And learn, through new-found bliss,
No time so joyous, fleeting,
As this.

Come thou, with shadows in thine eyes,
And singing in thy heart,
And learn, 'mid trees, with flowers and skies,
How young and dear thou art.

Johannes Carl Andersen