

**Classic Poetry Series**

**Mark Akenside**

**- poems -**

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## Amoret

If rightly tuneful bards decide,  
If it be fix'd in Love's decrees,  
That Beauty ought not to be tried  
But by its native power to please,  
Then tell me, youths and lovers, tell—  
What fair can Amoret excel?

Behold that bright unsullied smile,  
And wisdom speaking in her mien:  
Yet—she so artless all the while,  
So little studious to be seen—  
We naught but instant gladness know,  
Nor think to whom the gift we owe.

But neither music, nor the powers  
Of youth and mirth and frolic cheer,  
Add half the sunshine to the hours,  
Or make life's prospect half so clear,  
As memory brings it to the eye  
From scenes where Amoret was by.

This, sure, is Beauty's happiest part;  
This gives the most unbounded sway;  
This shall enchant the subject heart  
When rose and lily fade away;  
And she be still, in spite of Time,  
Sweet Amoret in all her prime.

Mark Akenside

## Complaint, The

Away! away!

Tempt me no more, insidious Love:  
Thy soothing sway  
Long did my youthful bosom prove:  
At length thy treason is discern'd,  
At length some dear-bought caution earn'd:  
Away! nor hope my riper age to move.

I know, I see  
Her merit. Needs it now be shown,  
Alas! to me?  
How often, to myself unknown,  
The graceful, gentle, virtuous maid  
Have I admired! How often said—  
What joy to call a heart like hers one's own!

But, flattering god,  
O squanderer of content and ease  
In thy abode  
Will care's rude lesson learn to please?  
O say, deceiver, hast thou won  
Proud Fortune to attend thy throne,  
Or placed thy friends above her stern decrees?

Mark Akenside

## **For a Column At Runnymede**

Thou, who the verdant plain dost traverse here  
While Thames among his willows from thy view  
Retires; O stranger, stay thee, and the scene  
Around contemplate well. This is the place  
Where England's ancient barons, clad in arms  
And stern with conquest, from their tyrant king  
(Then rendered tame) did challenge and secure  
The charter of thy freedom. Pass not on  
Till thou hast blest their memory, and paid  
Those thanks which God appointed the reward  
Of public virtue. And if chance thy home  
Salute thee with a father's honour'd name,  
Go, call thy sons: instruct them what a debt  
They owe their ancestors; and make them swear  
To pay it, by transmitting down entire  
Those sacred rights to which themselves were born.

Mark Akenside

## Hymn to Science

Science! thou fair effusive ray  
From the great source of mental day,  
Free, generous, and refin'd!  
Descend with all thy treasures fraught,  
Illumine each bewilder'd thought,  
And bless my lab'ring mind.

But first with thy resistless light,  
Disperse those phantoms from my sight,  
Those mimic shades of thee;  
The scholiast's learning, sophist's cant,  
The visionary bigot's rant,  
The monk's philosophy.

O! let thy powerful charms impart  
The patient head, the candid heart,  
Devoted to thy sway;  
Which no weak passions e'er mislead,  
Which still with dauntless steps proceed  
Where Reason points the way.

Give me to learn each secret cause;  
Let number's, figure's, motion's laws  
Reveal'd before me stand;  
These to great Nature's scenes apply,  
And round the globe, and thro' the sky,  
Disclose her working hand.

Next, to thy nobler search resign'd,  
The busy, restless, human mind  
Thro' ev'ry maze pursue;  
Detect Perception where it lies,  
Catch the ideas as they rise,  
And all their changes view.

Say from what simple springs began  
The vast, ambitious thoughts of man,  
Which range beyond control;  
Which seek Eternity to trace,  
Dive thro' th' infinity of space,  
And strain to grasp the whole.

Her secret stores let Memory tell,  
Bid Fancy quit her fairy cell,  
In all her colours drest;  
While prompt her sallies to control,  
Reason, the judge, recalls the soul  
To Truth's severest test.

Then launch thro' Being's wide extent;  
Let the fair scale, with just ascent,  
And cautious steps, be trod;

And from the dead, corporeal mass,  
Thro' each progressive order pass  
To Instinct, Reason, God.

There, Science! veil thy daring eye;  
Nor dive too deep, nor soar too high,  
In that divine abyss;  
To Faith content thy beams to lend,  
Her hopes t' assure, her steps befriend,  
And light her way to bliss.

Then downwards take thy flight agen;  
Mix with the policies of men,  
And social nature's ties:  
The plan, the genius of each state,  
Its interest and its pow'rs relate,  
Its fortunes and its rise.

Thro' private life pursue thy course,  
Trace every action to its source,  
And means and motives weigh:  
Put tempers, passions in the scale,  
Mark what degrees in each prevail,  
And fix the doubtful sway.

That last, best effort of thy skill,  
To form the life, and rule the will,  
Propitious pow'r! impart:  
Teach me to cool my passion's fires,  
Make me the judge of my desires,  
The master of my heart.

Raise me above the vulgar's breath,  
Pursuit of fortune, fear of death,  
And all in life that's mean.  
Still true to reason be my plan,  
Still let my action speak the man,  
Thro' every various scene.

Hail! queen of manners, light of truth;  
Hail! charm of age, and guide of youth;  
Sweet refuge of distress:  
In business, thou! exact, polite;  
Thou giv'st Retirement its delight,  
Prosperity its grace.

Of wealth, pow'r, freedom, thou! the cause;  
Foundress of order, cities, laws,  
Of arts inventress, thou!  
Without thee what were human kind?  
How vast their wants, their thoughts how blind!  
Their joys how mean! how few!

Sun of the soul! thy beams unveil!  
Let others spread the daring sail,  
On Fortune's faithless sea;  
While undeluded, happier I  
From the vain tumult timely fly,  
And sit in peace with thee.

Mark Akenside

## Nightingale, The

To-night retired, the queen of heaven  
With young Endymion stays;  
And now to Hesper it is given  
Awhile to rule the vacant sky,  
Till she shall to her lamp supply  
A stream of brighter rays.

Propitious send thy golden ray,  
Thou purest light above!  
Let no false flame seduce to stray  
Where gulf or steep lie hid for harm;  
But lead where music's healing charm  
May soothe afflicted love.

To them, by many a grateful song  
In happier seasons vow'd,  
These lawns, Olympia's haunts, belong:  
Oft by yon silver stream we walk'd,  
Or fix'd, while Philomela talk'd,  
Beneath yon copses stood.

Nor seldom, where the beechen boughs  
That roofless tower invade,  
We came, while her enchanting Muse  
The radiant moon above us held:  
Till, by a clamorous owl compell'd,  
She fled the solemn shade.

But hark! I hear her liquid tone!  
Now Hesper guide my feet!  
Down the red marl with moss o'ergrown,  
Through yon wild thicket next the plain,  
Whose hawthorns choke the winding lane  
Which leads to her retreat.

See the green space: on either hand  
Enlarged it spreads around:  
See, in the midst she takes her stand,  
Where one old oak his awful shade  
Extends o'er half the level mead,  
Enclosed in woods profound.

Hark! how through many a melting note  
She now prolongs her lays:  
How sweetly down the void they float!  
The breeze their magic path attends;  
The stars shine out; the forest bends;  
The wakeful heifers graze.

Whoe'er thou art whom chance may bring  
To this sequester'd spot,  
If then the plaintive Siren sing,

O softly tread beneath her bower  
And think of Heaven's disposing power,  
Of man's uncertain lot.

O think, o'er all this mortal stage  
What mournful scenes arise:  
What ruin waits on kingly rage;  
How often virtue dwells with woe;  
How many griefs from knowledge flow;  
How swiftly pleasure flies!

O sacred bird! let me at eve,  
Thus wandering all alone,  
Thy tender counsel oft receive,  
Bear witness to thy pensive airs,  
And pity Nature's common cares,  
Till I forget my own.

Mark Akenside

## Ode IX. To Curio

Thrice hath the spring beheld thy faded fame  
    Since I exulting grasp'd the tuneful shell:  
Eager through endless years to sound thy name,  
    Proud that my memory with thine should dwell.  
How hast thou stain'd the splendor of my choice!  
Those godlike forms which hover'd round thy voice,  
Laws, freedom, glory, whither are they flown?  
What can I now of thee to time report,  
Save thy fond country made thy impious sport,  
Her fortune and her hope the victims of thy own?  
    There are with eyes unmov'd and reckless heart  
    Who saw thee from thy summit fall thus low,  
Who deem'd thy arm extended but to dart  
    The public vengeance on thy private foe.  
But, spite of every gloss of envious minds,  
The owl-ey'd race whom Virtue's lustre blinds,  
Who sagely prove that each man hath his price,  
I still believ'd thy aim from blemish free,  
I yet, even yet, believe it, spite of thee  
And all thy painted pleas to greatness and to vice.  
    Thou didst not dream of Liberty decay'd,  
    Nor wish to make her guardian laws more strong:  
But the rash many, first by thee misled,  
    Bore thee at length unwillingly along."  
Rise from your sad abodes, ye curst of old,  
For faith deserted or for cities sold,  
Own here one untry'd, unexampled, deed;  
One mystery of shame from Curio, learn,  
To beg the infamy he did not earn,  
And scape in Guilt's disguise from Virtue's offer'd meed.  
    For saw we not that dangerous power avow'd  
    Whom freedom oft hath found her mortal bane,  
Whom public Wisdom ever strove to exclude,  
    And but with blushes suffereth in her train?  
Corruption vaunted her bewitching spoils,  
O'er court, o'er senate, spread in pomp her toils,  
And call'd herself the states directing soul:  
Till Curio, like a good magician, try'd  
With Eloquence and Reason at his side,  
By strength of holier spells the inchantress to control.  
    Soon with thy country's hope thy fame extends;  
    The rescued merchant oft thy words resounds:  
Thee and thy cause the rural hearth defends;  
    His bowl to thee the grateful sailor crowns:  
The learn'd recluse, with awful zeal who read  
Of Grecian heroes, Roman patriots dead,  
Now with like awe doth living merit scan:  
While he, whom virtue in his blest retreat  
Bade social ease and public passions meet,  
Ascends the civil scene, and knows to be a man.  
    At length in view the glorious end appear'd:  
    We saw thy spirit through the senate reign;

And Freedom's friends thy instant omen heard  
 Of laws for which their fathers bled in vain.  
 Wak'd in the strife the public Genius rose  
 More keen, more ardent from his long repose:  
 Deep through her bounds the city felt his call:  
 Each crowded haunt was stirr'd beneath his power,  
 And murmuring challeng'd the deciding hour  
 Of that too vast event, the hope and dread of all.  
 O, ye good powers! who look on human kind,  
 Instruct the mighty moments as they roll;  
 And watch the fleeting shapes in Curio's mind,  
 And steer his passions steady to the goal.  
 O Alfred, father of the English name,  
 O valiant Edward, first in civil fame,  
 O William, height of public virtue pure,  
 Bend from your radiant seats a joyful eye  
 Behold the sum of all your labours nigh,  
 Your plans of law complete, your ends of rule secure.  
 'Twas then -- O shame! O soul from faith estrang'd!  
 O Albion, oft to flattering vows a prey!  
 'Twas then -- Thy thought what sudden frenzy chang'd?  
 What rushing palsy took thy strength away?  
 Is this the man in Freedom's cause approv'd?  
 The man so great, so honour'd, so belov'd?  
 Whom the dead envy'd, and the living bless'd?  
 This patient slave by tinsel bonds allur'd?  
 This wretched suitor for a boon abjur'd?  
 Whom those that fear'd him, scorn; that trusted him, detest?  
 O lost alike to action and repose!  
 With all that habit of familiar fame,  
 Sold to the mockery of relentless foes,  
 And doom'd to exhaust the dregs of life in shame,  
 To act with burning brow and throbbing heart  
 A poor deserter's dull exploded part,  
 To slight the favour thou canst hope no more,  
 Renounce the giddy crowd, the vulgar wind,  
 Charge thy own lightness on thy country's mind,  
 And from her voice appeal to each tame foreign shore.  
 But England's sons, to purchase thence applause,  
 Shall ne'er the loyalty of slaves pretend,  
 By courtly passions try the public cause;  
 Nor to the forms of rule betray the end.  
 O race erect! by manliest passions mov'd,  
 The labours which to virtue stand approv'd,  
 Prompt with a lover's fondness to survey;  
 Yet, where Injustice works her wilful claim,  
 Fierce as the flight of Jove's destroying flame,  
 Impatient to confront, and dreadful to repay.  
 These thy heart owns no longer. In their room  
 See the grave queen of pageants, Honour, dwell  
 Couch'd in thy bosom's deep tempestuous gloom  
 Like some grim idol in a sorcerer's cell.

Before her rites thy sickening reason flew,  
 Divine Persuasion from thy tongue withdrew,  
 While Laughter mock'd, or Pity stole a sigh:  
 Can Wit her tender movements rightly frame  
 Where the prime function of the soul is lame?  
 Can Fancy's feeble springs the force of Truth supply?  
 But come: 'tis time: strong Destiny impends  
 To shut thee from the joys thou hast betray'd:  
 With princes fill'd, the solemn fane ascends,  
 By Infamy, the mindful demon sway'd.  
 There vengeful vows for guardian laws effac'd,  
 From nations fetter'd, and from towns laid waste,  
 For ever through the spacious courts resound:  
 There long posterity's united groan,  
 And the sad charge of horrors not their own,  
 Assail the giant chiefs, and press them to the ground.  
 In sight old Time, imperious judge, awaits:  
 Above revenge, or fear, or pity, just,  
 He urgeth onward to those guilty gates  
 The great, the sage, the happy, and august.  
 And still he asks them of the hidden plan  
 Whence every treaty, every war began,  
 Evolves their secrets, and their guilt proclaims:  
 And still his hands despoil them on the road  
 Of each vain wreath by lying bards bestow'd,  
 And crush their trophies huge, and rase their sculptur'd names.  
 Ye mighty shades, arise, give place, attend:  
 Here his eternal mansion Curio seeks:  
 -- Low doth proud Wentworth to the stranger bend,  
 And his dire welcome hardy Clifford speaks:  
 `` He comes, whom Fate with surer arts prepar'd  
 To accomplish all which we but vainly dar'd;  
 Whom o'er the stubborn herd she taught to reign:  
 Who sooth'd with gaudy dreams their raging power,  
 Even to it's last irrevocable hour;  
 Then baffled their rude strength, and broke them to the chain."  
 But ye, whom yet wise Liberty inspires,  
 Whom for her champions o'er the world she claims,  
 (That household godhead whom of old your sires  
 Sought in the woods of Elbe, and bore to Thames)  
 Drive ye this hostile omen far away;  
 Their own fell efforts on her foes repay;  
 Your wealth, your arts, your fame, be her's alone:  
 Still gird your swords to combat on her side;  
 Still frame your laws her generous test to abide;  
 And win to her defence the altar and the throne.  
 Protect her from yourselves, ere yet the flood  
 Of golden luxury, which Commerce pours,  
 Hath spread that selfish fierceness through your blood,  
 Which not her lightest discipline endures:  
 Snatch from fantastic demagogues her cause:  
 Dream not of Numa's manners, Plato's laws:

A wiser founder, and a nobler plan,  
O sons of Alfred, were for you assign'd:  
Bring to that birthright but an equal mind,  
And no sublimer lot will Fate reserve for man.

Mark Akenside

## Ode on a Sermon Against Glory

Come then, tell me, sage divine,  
Is it an offence to own  
That our bosoms e'er incline  
Toward immortal glory's throne?  
For with me nor pomp, nor pleasure,  
Bourbon's might, Braganza's treasure,  
So can fancy's dream rejoice,  
So conciliate reason's choice,  
As one approving word of her impartial voice.

If to spurn at noble praise  
Be the pass-port to thy heaven,  
Follow thou those gloomy ways;  
No such law to me was given,  
Nor, I trust, shall I deplore me  
Faring like my friends before me;  
Nor an holier place desire  
Than Timolean's arms acquire,  
And Tully's curule chair, and Milton's golden lyre.

Mark Akenside

## Ode to The Country Gentlemen Of England

Thou, heedless Albion, what, alas, the while  
Dost thou presume? O inexpert in arms,  
Yet vain of freedom, how dost thou beguile,  
With dreams of hope, these near and loud alarms?  
Thy splendid home, thy plan of laws renown'd,  
The praise and envy of the nations round,  
What care hast thou to guard from fortune's sway?  
Amid the storms of war, how soon may all  
The lofty pile from its foundations fall,  
Of ages the proud toil, the ruin of a day!

No: thou art rich, thy streams and fertile vales  
Add industry's wise gifts to nature's store:  
And every port is crowded with thy sails,  
And every wave throws treasure on thy shore.  
What boots it? If luxurious plenty charm  
Thy selfish heart from glory, if thy arm  
Shrink at the frowns of danger and of pain,  
Those gifts, that treasure is no longer thine.  
Oh rather far be poor. Thy gold will shine  
Tempting the eye of force, and deck thee to thy bane.

But what hath force or war to do with thee?  
Girt by the azure tide and thron'd sublime  
Amid thy floating bulwarks, thou canst see,  
With scorn, the fury of each hostile clime  
Dash'd ere it reach thee. Sacred from the foe  
Art thy fair fields: athwart thy guardian prow  
No bold invader's foot shall tempt the strand--  
Yet say my country, will the waves and wind  
Obey thee? Hast thou all thy hopes resign'd  
To the sky's fickle faith? the pilot's wavering hand?

Nor yet be aw'd, nor yet your task disown,  
Though war's proud votaries look on severe;  
Though secrets, taught erewhile to them alone,  
They deem profan'd by your intruding ear.  
Let them in vain, your martial hope to quell,  
Of new refinements, fiercer weapons tell,  
And mock the old simplicity, in vain:  
To the time's warfare, simple or refin'd,  
The time itself adapts the warrior's mind;  
And equal prowess still shall equal palms obtain.

Mark Akenside

## Pleasures Of Imagination, The

### BOOK I

With what attractive charms this goodly frame  
Of Nature touches the consenting hearts  
Of mortal men; and what the pleasing stores  
Which beauteous imitation thence derives  
To deck the poet's, or the painter's toil;  
My verse unfolds. Attend, ye gentle pow'rs  
Of musical delight! and while I sing  
Your gifts, your honours, dance around my strain.  
Thou, smiling queen of every tuneful breast,  
Indulgent Fancy! from the fruitful banks  
Of Avon, whence thy rosy fingers cull  
Fresh flowers and dews to sprinkle on the turf  
Where Shakspeare lies, be present: and with thee  
Let Fiction come, upon her vagrant wings  
Wafting ten thousand colours through the air,  
Which, by the glances of her magic eye,  
She blends and shifts at will, through countless forms,  
Her wild creation. Goddess of the lyre,  
Which rules the accents of the moving sphere,  
Wilt thou, eternal Harmony! descend  
And join this festive train? for with thee comes  
The guide, the guardian of their lovely sports,  
Majestic Truth; and where Truth deigns to come,  
Her sister Liberty will not be far.  
Be present all ye genii, who conduct  
The wandering footsteps of the youthful bard,  
New to your springs and shades: who touch his ear  
With finer sounds: who heighten to his eye  
The bloom of Nature, and before him turn  
The gayest, happiest attitude of things.

...

Or shall I mention, where celestial Truth  
Her awful light discloses, to bestow  
A more majestic pomp on Beauty's frame?  
For man loves knowledge, and the beams of Truth  
More welcome touch his understanding's eye,  
Than all the blandishments of sound his ear,  
Than all of taste his tongue. Nor ever yet  
The melting rainbow's vernal-tinctur'd hues  
To me have shone so pleasing, as when first  
The hand of Science pointed out the path  
In which the sun-beams gleaming from the west  
Fall on the watery cloud, whose darksome veil  
Involves the orient; and that trickling shower  
Piercing through every crystalline convex  
Of clustering dew-drops to their flight oppos'd,  
Recoil at length where concave all behind  
The internal surface on each glassy orb  
Repeals their forward passage into air;

That thence direct they seek the radiant goal  
From which their course began; and, as they strike  
In different lines the gazer's obvious eye,  
Assume a different lustre, through the brede  
Of colours changing from the splendid rose  
To the pale violet's dejected hue.

Mark Akenside

## The Complaint

AWAY! away!  
Tempt me no more, insidious Love:  
Thy soothing sway  
Long did my youthful bosom prove:  
At length thy treason is discern'd,  
At length some dear-bought caution earn'd:  
Away! nor hope my riper age to move.

I know, I see  
Her merit. Needs it now be shown,  
Alas! to me?  
How often, to myself unknown,  
The graceful, gentle, virtuous maid  
Have I admired! How often said--  
What joy to call a heart like hers one's own!

But, flattering god,  
O squanderer of content and ease  
In thy abode  
Will care's rude lesson learn to please?  
O say, deceiver, hast thou won  
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## The Nightingale

To-night retired, the queen of heaven  
With young Endymion stays;  
And now to Hesper it is given  
Awhile to rule the vacant sky,  
Till she shall to her lamp supply  
A stream of brighter rays.

Propitious send thy golden ray,  
Thou purest light above!  
Let no false flame seduce to stray  
Where gulf or steep lie hid for harm;  
But lead where music's healing charm  
May soothe afflicted love.

To them, by many a grateful song  
In happier seasons vow'd,  
These lawns, Olympia's haunts, belong:  
Oft by yon silver stream we walk'd,  
Or fix'd, while Philomela talk'd,  
Beneath yon copses stood.

Nor seldom, where the beechen boughs  
That roofless tower invade,  
We came, while her enchanting Muse  
The radiant moon above us held:  
Till, by a clamorous owl compell'd,  
She fled the solemn shade.

But hark! I hear her liquid tone!  
Now Hesper guide my feet!  
Down the red marl with moss o'ergrown,  
Through yon wild thicket next the plain,  
Whose hawthorns choke the winding lane  
Which leads to her retreat.

See the green space: on either hand  
Enlarged it spreads around:  
See, in the midst she takes her stand,  
Where one old oak his awful shade  
Extends o'er half the level mead,  
Enclosed in woods profound.

Hark! how through many a melting note  
She now prolongs her lays:  
How sweetly down the void they float!  
The breeze their magic path attends;  
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Whoe'er thou art whom chance may bring  
To this sequester'd spot,  
If then the plaintive Siren sing,

O softly tread beneath her bower  
And think of Heaven's disposing power,  
Of man's uncertain lot.

O think, o'er all this mortal stage  
What mournful scenes arise:  
What ruin waits on kingly rage;  
How often virtue dwells with woe;  
How many griefs from knowledge flow;  
How swiftly pleasure flies!

O sacred bird! let me at eve,  
Thus wandering all alone,  
Thy tender counsel oft receive,  
Bear witness to thy pensive airs,  
And pity Nature's common cares,  
Till I forget my own.

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## The Pleasures Of Imagination

### BOOK I

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In which the sun-beams gleaming from the west  
Fall on the watery cloud, whose darksome veil  
Involves the orient; and that trickling shower  
Piercing through every crystalline convex  
Of clustering dew-drops to their flight oppos'd,  
Recoil at length where concave all behind  
The internal surface on each glassy orb  
Repeals their forward passage into air;

That thence direct they seek the radiant goal  
From which their course began; and, as they strike  
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