

Classic Poetry Series

Susanna Strickland Moodie

- poems -

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Fancy and the Poet

Poet --

Enchanting spirit! -- at thy votive shrine
I lowly bend a simple wreath to twine;
O Come from the ideal world and fling
Thy airy fingers o'er my rugged string;
Sweep the dark chords of thought and give to earth
The thrilling song that tells thy heavenly birth --

Fancy --

Happiness when from earth she fled
I passed on her heavenward flight --
"Take this crown," the spirit said
"Of heaven's own golden light --
To the sons of sorrow the token give,
And bid them follow my steps and live!" --

I took the crown from the snowy hand,
It flashed like a living star;
I turned this dark earth to a fairy land
When I hither drive my car;
But I placed the crown round my tresses bright,
And man only saw its reflected light --

Many a lovely dream I've given,
And many a song divine;
But never! -- oh never -- that gift of heaven
Shall mortals temples twine --
Hope and love in the circlet glow!
'Tis all too bright for a world of woe --

Poet --

Hist -- Beautiful spirit! -- why silent so soon?
My ear drinks each word of thy magical tune;
My lyre owns thy touch -- and its tremulous strings
Vibrate beneath the soft play of thy wings;
Resume thy sweet lay, and reveal, ere we part
Thy home lovely spirit -- and say what thou art?" --

Fancy --

The gleam of a star thou cans't not see --
Of an eye 'neath its sleeping lid,
The sound of a far off melody
The voice of a stream that's hid;
Such must I still remain to thee
A wonder and a mystery! --

I live in the poet's dream
I flash on the painter's eye;
I dwell in the moon's pale beam,
In the depths of the star lit sky;
I traverse the earth, the air, the main,
And bind young hearts in my magic chain --

I float on the fleecy cloud
My voice is in ev'ry breeze;
I speak in the tempest loud,
In the sigh of the waving trees --
To the sons of earth -- in a mystic tone,
I tell of a world more bright than their own! --

Susanna Strickland Moodie

My Autograph

What -- write my name!
 How vain the feeble trust,
 To be remembered
 When the hand is dust --
Grieve rather that the talents freely given
Were used for earth -- not treasured up for Heaven!

Susanna Strickland Moodie

The Dying Hunter to His Dog

Lie down -- lie down! -- my noble hound,
That joyful bark give o'er;
It wakes the lonely echoes round,
But rouses me no more --
Thy lifted ears, thy swelling chest,
Thy eyes so keenly bright,
No longer kindle in my breast
The thrill of fierce delight;
When following thee on foaming steed
My eager soul outstripped thy speed --

Lie down -- lie down -- my faithful hound!
And watch this night by me,
For thee again the horn shall sound
By mountain, stream, and tree;
And thou along the forest glade,
Shall track the flying deer
When cold and silent, I am laid
In chill oblivion here.
Another voice shall cheer thee on,
And glory when the chase is won.

Lie down -- lie down! -- my gallant hound!
Thy master's life is sped;
Go -- couch thee on the dewy ground --
'Tis thine to watch the dead.
But when the blush of early day
Is kindling up the sky,
Then speed thee, faithful friend, away,
And to thy mistress hie;
And guide her to this lonely spot,
Though my closed eyes behold her not --

Lie down -- lie down! -- my trusty hound!
Death comes, and we must part --
In my dull ear strange murmurs sound --
More faintly throbs my heart;
The many twinkling lights of heaven
Scarce glimmer in the blue --
Chill round me falls the breath of even,
Cold on my brow the dew;
Earth, stars, and heavens, are lost to sight --
The chase is o'er! -- brave friend, good night! --

Susanna Strickland Moodie

The Sleigh-Bells

'Tis merry to hear, at evening time,
By the blazing hearth the sleigh-bells chime;
To know the bounding steeds bring near
The loved one to our bosoms dear.
Ah, lightly we spring the fire to raise,
Till the rafters glow with the ruddy blaze;
Those merry sleigh-bells, our hearts keep time
Responsive to their fairy chime.
Ding-dong, ding-dong, o'er vale and hill,
Their welcome notes are trembling still.

'Tis he, and blithely the gay bells sound,
As his sleigh glides over the frozen ground;
Hark! He has pass'd the dark pine wood,
He crosses now the ice-bound flood,
And hails the light at the open door
That tells his toilsome journey's o'er.
The merry sleigh-bells! My fond heart swells
And trobs to hear the welcome bells;
Ding-dong, ding-dong, o'er ice and snow,
A voice of gladness, on they go.

Our hut is small, and rude our cheer,
But love has spread the banquet here;
And childhood springs to be caress'd
By our beloved and welcome guest.
With a smiling brow his tale he tells,
The urchins ring the merry sleigh-bells;
The merry sleigh-bells, with shout and song
They drag the noisy string along;
Ding-dong, ding-dong, the father's come
The gay bells ring his welcome home.

From the cedar swamp the gaunt wolves howl,
From the oak loud whoops the felon owl;
The snow-storm sweeps in thunder past,
The forest creaks beneath the blast;
No more I list, with boding fear,
The sleigh-bells distant chime to hear.
The merry sleigh-bells with soothing power
Shed gladness on the evening hour.
Ding-dong, ding-dong, what rapture swells
The music of those joyous bells!

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The Step Mother

Well I recall my Father's wife,
The day he brought her home.
His children looked for years of strife,
And troubles sure to come --
Ungraciously we welcomed her,
A thing to scorn and blame;
And swore we never would confer
On her, a Mother's name

I see her yet -- a girl in years,
With eyes so blue and mild;
She greeted us with smiles and tears,
How sweetly too she smiled --
She bent to kiss my sullen brow,
With woman's gentle grace;
And laid her tiny hand of snow
On my averted face --

"Henry -- is this your son? She said --
"Dear boy -- he now is mine --
What not one kiss? --" I shook my head,
"I am no son of thine! --"
She sighed -- and from her dimpled cheek
The rosy colour fled;
She turned away and did not speak,
My thoughts were with the dead --

There leaped from out my Father's eyes
A jet of swarthy fire;
That flashed on me in fierce surprise --
I fled before his ire
I heard her gentle voice entreat --
"Forgiveness for her sake" --
Which added swiftness to my feet,
A sad and strange mistake --

A year had scarcely rolled away
When by that hated bride;
I loved to linger half the day,
In very joy and pride;
Her voice was music to mine ear,
So soft its accent fell;
"Dear Mother now" -- and oh, how dear
No words of mine can tell --

She was so gentle, fair and kind,
So pure in soul and free from art;
That woman with her noble mind,
Subdued my rebel heart --
I just had learned to know her worth,
My Father's second choice to bless;
When God removed her from the earth,

And plunged us all in deep distress --

Hot fever smote with burning blight
Stretchd on a restless bed of pain;
I moaning lay from morn till night
With aching limbs and throbbing brain --
Four weary weeks beside my bed,
She sat within a darkened room;
Untiring held my aching head,
Nor heeded silence -- cold and gloom --

And when my courage quite gave way,
And fainter grew my struggling breath;
She taught my stricken soul to pray
And calmly meet approaching death --
"Fear not God's angel, sent by Him,
The weary spirit to release;
Before the mortal eyes grow dim,
Floats down the white winged dove of peace" --

There came a change -- but fingers small,
No longer smoothed my matted hair;
She sprang not to my feeble call,
Nor helped to lift me to my chair --
And I arose as from the dead,
A life for her dear life was given;
The angel who had watched my bed
Had vanished into Heaven! --

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