

Classic Poetry Series

John Kenyon
- poems -

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John Kenyon(1784-1856)

John Kenyon was born in Jamaica, the son of a wealthy West Indian landowner, but came to England while quite a boy, and was a conspicuous figure in literary society during the second quarter of the century. He published some volumes of minor verse, but is best known for his friendships with many literary men and women, and for his boundless generosity and kindness to all with whom he was brought into contact. Crabb Robinson described him as a man 'whose life is spent in making people happy.' He was a distant cousin of Miss Barrett, and a friend of [Robert Browning](http://www.poemhunter.com/robert-browning/), who dedicated to him his volume of 'Dramatic Romances,' besides writing and sending to him 'Andrea del Sarto' as a substitute for a print of the painter's portrait which he had been unable to find.

A Day At Tivoli - Epilogue

Farewell, Romantic Tivoli!
With all thy pleasant out-door time;
For now, again, we cross the sea,
To house us in our northern clime.

Since Love and Duty both advise
No longer, even here, to roam;
Nor all too slackly hold the ties,
That cluster round the heart of home.
And bid us find old feelings there;
And our own native pleasures woo;
Nor muse, as now, (how sweet soe'er
The musing be)—but plan—and do.

And yet, in many an interval,
How oft, Beloved Tivoli!
Shall Fancy hear thy waters fall;
And Memory come—to dream with Thee.

John Kenyon

A Day At Tivoli - Prologue

Fair blows the breeze—depart—depart—
And tread with me th' Italian shore;
And feed thy soul with glorious art;
And drink again of classic lore.
Nor sometime shalt thou deem it wrong,
When not in mood too gravely wise,
At idle length to lie along,
And quaff a bliss from bluest skies.

Or, pleased more pensive joy to woo,
At twilight eve, by ruin grey,
Muse o'er the generations, who
Have passed, as we must pass, away.
Or mark o'er olive tree and vine
Steep towns uphung; to win from them
Some thought of Southern Palestine;
Some dream of old Jerusalem.

Come, Pilgrim-Friend! At last our sun outbreaks,
And chases, one by one, dawn's lingering flakes.
Come, Pilgrim-Friend! and downward let us rove
(Thy long-vow'd vow) this old Tiburtian grove.
See where, beneath, the jocund runnels play,
All cheerly brighten'd in the brightening day.
E'en in the far-off years when Flaccus wrote,
('Tis here, I ween, no pedantry to quote,)
Thus led, they gurgled thro' those orchard-bowers
To feed the herb—the fruitage—and the flowers.

Come, then, and snatch Occasion; transient boon!
And sliding into Future all too soon.
That Future's self possession just as brief,
And stolen, soon as given, by Time—the Thief.
Well! if such filching knave we needs must meet,
Let us, as best we may, the Cheater cheat;
And, since the Then, the Now, will flit so fast,
Look back, and lengthen life into the Past.

That Past is here; where old Tiburtus found

Mere mountain-brow, and fenc'd with walls around;
And for his wearied Argives reared a home
Long ere yon seven proud hills had dream'd of Rome.
'Tis here, amid these patriarch olive trees,
Which Flaccus saw, or ancestry of these;
Oft musing, as he slowly strayed him past,
How here his quiet age should close at last.

And here behold them, still! Like ancient seers
They stand; the dwellers of a thousand years.
Deep-furrow'd, strangely crook'd, and ashy-grey,
As ghost might gleam beneath the touch of day.
All strangely perforate too; with rounded eyes,
That ever scan the traveller as he hies:
Fit guardians of the spot they seem to be,
With centuries seen, and centuries yet to see.

Who treads this pallid grove, by moonlight pale,
Might half believe the peasant's spectre tale
Of Latian heroes old, that come to glide
Along these silent paths at even-tide;
Or Sibyl, wan with ghastly prophecy,
From her near fane, as whilom, wandering by.
But Morning, now, and sunny vines are here,
From tree to tree gay-gadding without fear;

Or else in verdant rope their fibres string,
As if to tempt the little Loves to swing;
Or, tricking silvery head and wrinkled stem
With tendril-curl, or leafy diadem;
A sportive war of graceful contrast wage,
The Grave and Gay—green Youth and hoary Age.
Hence we may feel Resounding Anio's shock,
As his full river thunders from his rock.
Yet mark! meanwhile adown its own small dell
How falls or winds each little cascatelle.

With no rude sound—with no impetuous rush;
But blandly—fondly—or by bank or bush.
Or floats in air; as when mild mermaid frees
(Or so they feign) her tresses to the breeze;
And careless, for a while, of coral bower,

Basks on the sunny sands till noontide's scorching hour.
How sweet! to have such gentle waters near;
Just soothing, ne'er disturbing eye nor ear.
Nor deem I those unblest, whom choice—or fate—
Leads to prefer the Lesser to the Great.

'Repose, thou better privilege than fame.'—
So felt, we know, the great historic name,
Mecænas; he who owned those villa-halls,
All stately once, tho' now but rifted walls.
And hither, wisely truant, oft would come,
Forth from the smokes, the toils, the strifes of Rome.
For, tho' defaced, discolour'd, broken, bow'd,
Yet were they then of gold and ivory proud.
Or far beyond what proudest wealth might do,
From thoughtful art a nobler triumph drew.

There, dark-hued urns, with mythic picture fraught,
Time's treasures! stood, from old Etruria brought;
Which even then had claim'd uncounted date,
When you great Rome was yet a struggling state.
Or marble vases there, in white array,
Beam'd back an added lustre to the day.
Or, better, when the gladly-welcom'd guest
Came to the banquet, rich with every zest,
From lamp of chisell'd bronze, adjusted light
Threw out some Phidian marvel on the night;
Evoking, heightening thus, in form or face,
Each subtler beauty or diviner grace.

Nor yet, when hours of feast had found their close,
Or jaded statesman sighed for short repose,
Was wanting, there, some well-befitting room,
Nor all-too bright, nor quite subdued to gloom,
Whose odoriferous cedar-shelves along
Fair scrolls were ranged; philosophy or song.
There, all our Lost might be. All Livy told,
(Where now?) and all Menander limned of old,
Fresh from the life; with sweet Simonides;
And glorious Sappho, —greater yet than These.

And then, perchance, you small and sinuous rill,

In open day now glittering down the hill,
Slid underground its tube-directed path,
To feed or sculptured fount or perfumed bath.
Their graceful rites, their gorgeous prides are gone;
Their proudest monument a crumbled stone!
Yet if the marble and the bronze decay,
Their storied memories fade not thus away;
But cluster still, tho' dying centuries toll,
Beadrolls for thought, and relics for the soul.

Hence here have bowed, thro' farthest tracts of time,
Genius and Lore, from every cultured clime.
And hence, no less, thro' many a countless year,
Like us, shall unborn pilgrims worship here.
And how may pilgrim stand on spot like this,
Nor feel what flitting wayfarer he is?
Here, where the joys, the griefs, the hopes, the fears,
The busy doings of three thousand years,
Since first Tiburtus made these hills his hold,
Have dreamed their dream, and mingle with the mould.
Men pass like cloud, or wave, or morning dew:
A thought nor very deep, nor very new.
Yet who, as here, shall find him, face to face,
In presence of that Mighty Commonplace,
And not imbibe the moral of the spot,
Accept the general doom—and murmur not?

Yet, if All die, there are who die not All;
(So Flaccus hoped), and half escape the pall.
The Sacred Few! whom love of glory binds,
'That last infirmity of noble minds,
'To scorn delights, and live laborious days,'

And win thro' lofty toil undying praise.
What if for These, now verging to the tomb,
As yet, nor laurels spread nor myrtles bloom;
Proud mortgagees they stand of Fame's estate,
And for the brave reversion bear to wait.
Nay, what tho' never from th' ungrateful soil
Green chaplets spring, for guerdon of the toil;
In calm content their avarice sublime
May well forego those unpaid debts of Time;

Who, e'en while clutching at the generous pelf,
Priz'd ever, most, the virtue for itself.

So go we musing on. But, as we go,
Just glimpse yon lizard frisking to and fro.
Now here—now there—now straightly fixed he lies;
Then turns him sudden in a mock surprise.
Give him this southern wall, this sprightly sun,
And Past and Future are to him as One.
Tell him of either, (for he loves to talk
With loiterer, pausing on his easy walk,)
Tell him of either, and, with eyes that glisten,
And head aslant, awhile he seems to listen,
Then jerks him merry off, as if to say,
'Good Sirs! for me sufficient is the day.'
So, should grave memories ever come to press
Life's present hour with thought of past distress;
Or future years o'erhang us, vague or dim,
Why, we may come and take a hint from him.
And who not thus delights him, who or what,
In such a clime, or animate or not?

These hill-side vines; this wide expanding plain;
These fields—of pasture, here; and there, of grain;
These twisted chesnuts, with their cheery green;
Yon darker cypress, spired above them seen;
Which, many a century, land-mark, there, hath stood,
Self-lifted obelisk, immortal wood;
Those aloes, that with sworded panoply
Still warn the pilgrim, who would dare too nigh;
Yon steeply climbing town; that rocky height;
Seem they not living in the living light?
For each grey flake hath faded from the view,
And all around is one Ausonian Blue.
Not the fresh dawn, not evening's tenderest hour,
Speak to the spirit with a deeper power.
As eye and heart strain up that azure air,
What light—what love—what fixedness is there!
Transient—we know—Eternal—let it seem!
With such blue sky we only ask to dream.

E'en he, (behold! him in that shaggy coat)—

Yon goat-herd, with his only browsing goat,
On the hill-slope; beside that humming stream;
This heaven above; how can he help but dream!
He ne'er was train'd in thronging city vast,
For some huge deck to shape the mighty mast;
To face, in ship, the deadly Afran breeze;

Or drop the anchor deep in Arctic seas,
Like our stern sons. Yet not for this despise,
Albeit in seeming vacancy he lies.
Not idle they the most, who idlest seem;
Nor lost are all the hours in which we dream.
In trade's dim workshops all unused to moil,
Small share is his of luxuries won by toil.
But luxuries he hath not unrefin'd,
That please, perchance, yet more his southern mind.

Mere idlesse pleases; as supine he lies,
And gazing upward thro' the blazing skies,
Wins shifting colours to his dazzl'd eyes;
Or red or azure. And delights to see
The brilliant mockeries as they come and flee;
And wonders, why? Or makes of each a gem,
Such as might grace a pontiff's diadem;
Ruby or sapphire. Strange to me—or you;
But, here, All love this dreamy 'Nought-to-do.'
Or by tradition's tongue, or ruin old,
Of his own land's great deeds hath he been told;
And asks himself, erewhile, with wishful pain,
Why may not those brave days return again?
And tho' still mingling in confusion quaint
Profane and Sacred; Warrior and Saint;
Yet each in turn hath taught him, if need were,
Like This, to suffer—or, like That, to dare.

Think too that These were they, whose flags, unfurl'd
Beneath Rome's eagle crest, once shook the world.
Yon peasant-girl, —you mark'd her where she stood,
In her just pride of conscious womanhood—
(Against yon column now she leans awhile,
Graceful, you'll own, as milkmaid by a stile.)
Behold her in her country's old costume;

Is lady statelier in a palace room?
Too poor, we know; perchance, too inly great,
The town's last mode to wish to imitate.
Barefooted—but with no submissive mien;
In beauty's regal right—a lawful queen.
Such type to Michael's chisel had given a law;
And Raphael's self but painted what he saw.
In region, where not oft the Dryad charms
Town-loving Signor to his woods and farms;

And palaces, within proud city shut,
But rarely neighbour on the peasant's hut;
(He'privileg'd—or doom'd—by lot of birth
To see, but seldom, these the Lords of earth
'Mid equals rear'd, what other should he be
But equal too—a freeman 'mid the free?
Our nobler civil rights to him unknown,
Yet all his social freedom—all his own.
But where wealth's stringent or out-doling hand
From point to point wide stretches o'er a land;
In power or bounty ever seen or felt,
Like lictor's fasces or an almsman's belt;
Tho' order hence, with all its blessings, flow, —
As fertilizing waters guided go—
Yet as, henceforth, we lose the stream that played
Thro' its own runnels, free and not afraid;

So there, by wealth or purchased or controlled,
Word—gesture—look—in native frankness bold—
Are quelled, like sprite, beneath the Wand of Gold.
Again—(prolix beyond the thing I ought,
You kindly bear, and let me speak my thought)
In land—where from the plough men rushed to arms,
Just saved a state, and then re-sought their farms—
I love these breathings free; these heads erect;
I love, in look and speech, this brave neglect.
With ancient memories they better suit
Than balanced phrases or observance mute.
Nay, for a spot like this seem least unmeet,
As in high natures Grand and Simple greet.
Is this the race down-dwindled to a weed?
A rotted trunk? or but a buried seed?

Which, if the storm should rise and floods up-tear
The shrouding soil, and give it back to air,
Shall sprout again; no longer matter brute;
But gladden'd with green leaves and its own glorious fruit.
Oh Italy! if fallen (as some delight
To say thou art), yet fallen from what vast height;
Oh Italy! thou land of memories dear,
Yet not for these alone we prize thee here;
But gladly take thee, with acceptive heart,
Not for thy 'hast been,' but for what thou art.
For who that knows thy seas of brightest wave,
Their shelving shores or rocky steeps that lave;
Thy lakes, 'mid mountains laid, in soft blue length,
Like Beauty guarded at the feet of Strength;
Thy landscape, seen at morn or evening hour,
Town—village—cresting chapel—arch or tower;

Rich art—rich nature—each on each that press,
Till the sense aches with very loveliness;
Thy corn with fruitage mixed; thy realms of vine,
For ever beauteous—if they droop, or twine;
Thy balmiest clime, which daily tasks can leaven
With bliss, from out the common air of heaven;
Man's natural bearing; woman's easy grace;
From very rags—in gesture and in face;
Thy dark-eyed childhood's ever-ready smile
Of playful innocence or playful wile;
Or knows thy human nature's better part,
Swift thought, swift feeling, and the kindly heart;
And knows, beside, what thousand pulses beat
To win thy glories back, with generous heat;
Who but for thee must fervent vows forecast,
And hope thy Future, while he dreams thy Past?
But now 'tis Mid-day! and the deep retreat
Of Anio's grot must shield us from the heat.

'Twas in such deep recess Salvator's touch
Won its dark truth, and Gaspar fed on such.
Lo! the rapt river along its channel'd ledge
Precipitous hurrying to that dizzy edge.
Now, for one breathless moment, high uphung,

Like curled sea-wave; then—forth, as foamy, flung.
Here—in long lance-like flakes—straight down; while, there—
As if were all uncoiled Medusa's hair,
The serpent-waters twirl and hiss in air.
Or else, in black and rocky cauldron bound,
For ever eddy round and round and round;
Wakening the thought, or sadden'd or sublime,
Of endless toil, or never-ending time.
All types from clashing waters—all are here;
All types and all emotions; sound and fear;

Pent agonies, that struggle for relief;
Free gushing tears; dishevelled locks of grief;
Mad angers; sullen pause; re-bursting ire;
With flood still swifter than pursuing fire.

Yet beauty too. But such as poets shed
Round the great vision of that snake-tress'd head,
Perplexing beauty—beauty wreathed with dread.
'Tis a great scene! Yet, not by it opprest,
We feel its greatness in a buoyant breast.
For (not as when some wild Helvetian flood
Dives down its sombre depth of piny wood)
Here, all around, hath Gladness flung her braid
Of green festoons, and scattered light and shade.

Or rather—if the word were fitlier won—
Not shade, but shadow—playmate of the sun.
Gloom glorified! as suits a southern clime;
And (bear the phrase) a Cheerfuller Sublime.
E'en far within the grot Light sports with Dark;
Here—a long arrowy streak; and there—a spark.
If disappearing, soon to re-illuminate;
Like festive fire-fly, glancing thro' the gloom;
Or old Venetian masquer, richly dight,
Who, 'neath his waxen torches' orange light,
With gems and spangles glitters on the night.
Who, Anio! that hath come, or soon or late,
To this thy shrine, but deems the day—a date;
Whence to recal at will, his whole life's length,
Thy voice—thy speed—thy beauty and thy strength?

Whether thou tinklest from some mountain-rest,—
Thy birth-place—where the eagle builds his nest;
Or cruel bandit plants him; thence to strain

His greedy vision o'er the cowering plain;
Or whether, wandered from thy native hills,
(As strong and stronger grown from clustering rills)
Thou pausest for a while in silent lake,

Where that she-wolf her passing thirst might slake,
Who (prowled to Tiber down and destined thus)
Suckled great Rome in infant Romulus;
Or holdest on by feudal tower, or hall
From Cæsars named, or nameless ruined wall;
Or by quaint villa; such as after days
For Este's princely line made pride to raise;
Where, many a time, thy rushing wave would roll
Intenser power o'er Ariosto's soul;
Brightening, thro' secret sympathies, the lay,
Which here he loved to weave (or so they say);

And which for aye—like thee—shall flow along
As wild—as smooth—as playful and as strong;
Whether thou speak of simple Sabine farms,
Or call, as now, to song—or art—or arms;
Be welcome every dream thou waftest down,
And every tale; but most of old renown.
Tell us of statesman—warrior—bard—or sage—
Wonder or love of many a famous age—
What time, by seas shut in and rocky strand,

And all-undreaming of the Roman brand,
Our Britain lay, a yet unhistoried land.
Hail and Farewell! Resounding Anio!
And now, Fair Stream! with milder current flow
On 'mid thy vines and pasture; till thou come
'Neath the proud walls of twice Imperial Rome.

Thence, with old Tiber, soon to sport thee free
'Mid the blue waters of the Tyrrhene sea.
Thou, Pilgrim-Friend! (we know) wert never one,
Mere idle praiser of the days foregone;

Nor striving still to shroud with poor pretence
Of classic feeling gap of week-day sense;
But ever, in thy wisdom, taking heed
That worthy life is made of daily deed.
And tho' (by shrewd Saint Stephen stolen, of late,
From converse of thy friends—to serve the state)
It thee befits to pay thy studious vow
To Hansard rather than to Livy—now;
Yet hence, methinks, 'tis joyance doubly sweet
In this, the dream-land of our youth to meet;
Together turn again the classic page,
And win us back our boyhood's loftier age;
And church and state for some brief weeks eschew;
And make again this Ancient World our New.
But, here, far back the scroll must be unroll'd;
Here, where ten centuries do not make the Old.

Where old they deem in antiquarian thought
Some work by Ancus or by Tarquin wrought.
That tunnel huge, or prison Mammertine;
Or old may grant the Fabian—Julian—line;
But half a Modern make our Constantine;
And, as they pass his structures, on their way,
Scarce note them—as but things of yesterday.
Small matter! Old or new, we'll list the while,
As Ciceroni teach us—or beguile.
And, if some tales for question seem to call,
In sifting Niebuhr's spite, accept them all.
Where Curtius leapt, believe the very spot;
Or muse with Numa in th' Egerian grot.
Yea—sweet for him, by parent doomed to court—
Unwilling suitor—ancient law-report;
Awhile to snatch him from the hated thrall
Of pleader's desk, or point-contesting hall;
And sweet, not less, for thee, who legislate,
To 'scape committee-room and dull debate;
Corn question—currency—and funded debt;
French marriage—and the treaty of Utretcht;
And leaving—not too long—our own dear land,
To hail—as we of late—the Belgic strand;
Thence, o'er their ill-laid rail, right glad to roll,—

Tho' shaken sore—to this Ausonian Goal.
Not stately Bruges might detain us, now,
Nor Meuse, soft-gliding 'neath her fortress'd brow;

More pleased some while to thrust from off the scene
Battles and sieges, Marlborough and Eugene.
Nay, prizing thee, old Legendary Rhine!
Less for thy legends than thy climbing vine.
Nor yet in famed Helvetia tarrying long,
Tho' there green vales and glittering mountains throng;
And We aye pleased to feel the bosom swell,
By Uris rock, at thought of William Tell.
But onward still our purposed way we take
O'er tall Gothard and by Locarno's lake;
Or climbing slow, or if in full career,
With Rome! Rome! Rome! in heart and eye and ear.
Still thirsting; till at last we came to stand,
Glad Exodites! in it—our Promised Land.

And what our Pisgah view? Crushed piles of state
The walls within; and dun and desolate
Campagna round; with bridge and tower destruct
By age or war; and ruined aqueduct
Athwart the fading twilight. And is this
A Forum? or a vast Necropolis?
Temples—for tombs; a nation's dust beneath;
With silence round, that fears almost to breathe;
And city-solitude, so strangely drear,
The Living seem to have no business—here.
If in some vineyard ground our step be stayed,
Awhile, beside the peasant's delving spade;
(Now—vineyard; once—Patrician's client court,
When that near Forum was a world's resort)
As up and up the rank black mould is cast,
The very earth seems odorous of the Past.

Each after each, behold in turn out-thrown
Tile—faded stucco—scrap of sculptured stone.
Anon—some shattered urn, or broken frieze;
Power—turned to skeleton! His fragments—These.
Ruins and fragments! Is it these that Ye
From your own thriving land come forth to see?

We answer, 'Yea;' these are the things that We
From our own thriving land come forth to see.
We come to see how ancient power may die,
And ponder on a realm's mortality.
Yet, seeing how survive the Good—the Just;
In goodness and in justice learn to trust.
We come, as in fond youth, to sympathize,
Thro' backward ages, with the Great and Wise;

And feel—as then—some throb thro' inner heart,
Where life's low interests claim no smallest part.
We come from restless plan and restless deed,
Ambition's instrument, or habit's need,
To find the Calm which generous leisures give,
And less in act than meditation live.
We come from wit's and jest's enlivening strife,
And all the dearer bliss of household life,
To feed on pensive thoughts; yet not the less
To win a pleasure from our pensiveness.
And if those grave and pensive thoughts (and such
Our case may be) should press the heart too much;
'Twere not so very far to find our way
Mid glorious art, that tells of no decay.
Where beams each high conception just the same
As when from Grecian chisel first it came.

Tho' mortal-born, of beauty that might mate
With archetype celestial increate.
Nay, beauteous more than in their glittering prime,
Tinged softly by the sun-set hues of Time.
Then, if some friend should come, with best intent,
To warn of hours all uselessly misspent;
He too may learn (nor is the lore abstruse)
That uselessness, like this, is noblest use.
That while the busy serfs of wealth and power
Fawn only on the Present's sordid hour,
(No lofty thought or back—or forward—cast)
We pluck our nobler Present from the Past.
Nor pause we there, but, starting forth anew,
From thence shape out a nobler Future too.
This long discourse hath led us far away
'Mid other themes from our Tiburtian day,

But now again, with renovated grace,
We bow before the Genius of the Place,
Full of the scene around; and all-intent,
As slow we travel up this steep ascent,
To win the passing pictures, as they rise
From present hour, or ancient memories.
For here, glance where eye may, or footstep fall,
Or new or old, 'tis picture—picture—All.
This structure near, mere peasant's dwelling-place,
Is not itself without some claim of grace.
Its terraced roof, square tower, and arching gate
To Art, long since, thro' picture consecrate.
For Creed of Art hath not alone to do
With reason'd faith, but with tradition too;
And Beauty's self we hold for most divine,
When Memory stands Priestess at her shrine.

Behold! its sunward wall. How all-ablaze
With one full glow of ripest, yellowest maize;
Whose rich-ribbed cylinders, in order strung,
Seem tassels, for some festal rite uphung.
Or each might be fit cresting ornament
For regal canopy, or warrior-tent.
No brighter hues hath Ceres in her horn;
No cheerier ever broke from saffron morn.
More golden—ne'er from furnace-fires were rolled
Than these, sun-wrought in vegetable gold.
Which almost might requite his absent ray,
Themselves a sun-shine for each clouded day.
While yon ripe gourds, that strew the court-yard floor,
Beam upward, each a mass of glittering ore.
But now, with these our rural splendours done,
And we, like them, full-saturate with sun;
How fresh it is, as, step by step, we mount,
To watch the gushings of that marble fount.

Its cistern—some antique sarcophagus;
(Here, Old and New for ever mingle—thus)
While its raised cup, whenceforth the Naiads toss
O'erbrimming wave, is fringed with greenest moss.
(For, in these lands comes oft from mere neglect,

What art long while might ponder to effect.)
Each pendent tuft, with sparkling spray bedript,
Seems it not emerald, with diamond tipt?
And then those female forms, with braided hair,
And heads erect, that classic urns up-bear;
(From forth whose shapely rims dewed vine-leaves drop;—
Thrust partly in, escaping lymph to stop.)
These, as around the cistern's edge they throng,
Say, might not These to Grecian Art belong?

Whoe'er from life's mere prose awhile would flee,
Should roam with us this land of reverie.
Where museful fancy needeth not the aid
Of cloister dim, or silent colonnade,
Or solitary shore, or moonlight glen,
But meets her visions 'mid the haunts of men;
And feels in broadest sun-light round her stream
From every waking fact some answering dream.
And how that lofty Past exalts the Now!
That churl—a Cincinnatus at the plough!
Yon kite, slow circling up the Blue—afar—
An augury! or be it peace or war.
Those very geese, out clamouring, one and all,
The Sacred Birds that saved the Capitol!
And lo! thro' yonder arch those oxen twain;
On slowly swaying that grape-loaded wain.

Right goodly creatures, beautiful to view!
Dark-hoofed—dark-maned—the rest of creamy hue;
With large soft eyes. All soft as Here's were,
('Tis Homer's simile, so we may dare)—
When their pride slept, and love alone was there.
Now, thro' the spacious court behold they go;
Now, pause beside the pillared portico.
With foliage drest, and that rich ruby freight,
Nay—draw they not, in sacrificial state,
A Bacchic offering to some temple's gate?
Mark the broad wheels—but two! That yoking bar,
Just as of old! No wain—but ancient car!
And they, above the piled up grapes who ride,
Their naked limbs with purpling vintage dyed,
The Fauns! And here, ere long, the rest shall be:

Look with poetic eyes and thou shalt see

Bacchante lithe; and jesting Satyr near;
With broad Silenus, staggering in the rear,
Tho' doubly propped; while gay goat-footed Pan
'Mid pipe and cymbal triumphs in the van.
Then that old Crone, with lifted tambourine,
Which still she smites; and some strange rhythm between,
Or, rather, mixed; while to the double sound
A dark-tress'd girl is dancing round and round,
That Crone, with hair unkempt, yet scarce uncouth,
(So well it suits) and that fore-thrusting tooth,
Keen—almost prescient—tooth of prophetess;
(A flitting fancy, which I may not press)
That Crone shall be our Sibyl! And that Girl,
Still hurried round and round in dizzier whirl;
With her wild eye almost to frenzy fired,
(Such look in Delphi had been held inspired)

And flashing locks, and every flashing limb,
She shall be Priestess! and that Song—the Hymn!
And wherefore, 'No?' Why may not this be chaunt
From Pythian tripod or Dodona's haunt?
For, as some stream, by ancient fragments hid,
From earthquake—flung; or mighty hill—down slid;
(That cumber, many a league, the valleys round

With huge grey rock or grass-grown earthy mound
Still holds its silent way 'neath all that hides,
Then at some far-off point once more outglides,
Another stream; another, yet the same;
E'en those, who quaff, may guess not whence it came;
No otherwise this mystic rhythm may flow,
Far winding on, from ages long ago;
Some Grecian chaunt, its secret course unknown,
And heard, at last, in region not its own.

Old customs die not, but sprout forth again;
The names distorted, while the things remain.
Fane, 'Church' baptized, sees new-named votaries vow,
And old Chief Augur is Prime Pontiff, now.
E'en Jove himself, Great Jove Capitoline,

Rules in strange semblance o'er a later shrine.
His twice-fused bronze transformed, by pious feint,
From Pagan Deity to Christian Saint.
At this you smile; and who would smile refuse?
But when the smile is o'er, 'twere well to muse.
Olympian Zeus, upon his golden throne;
Calm Pallas, glorious in her Parthenon;
Or rudest Sibyl, from her rocky cave,
Mid spiky aloes, issued forth to rave;
Or curling smokes, o'er Judah wont to rise
From bull or goat, in barbarous sacrifice;

These, for rank falsehoods, while the most eschew,
In stern contempt for Gentile and for Jew;
These, for imperfect truths, let us accept;
Instalments of the universal debt;
Acknowledgment, we know, far off and dim;
Yet, not the less, acknowledgment of Him,
'In every age, in every clime adored;
(So sang the bard,) Jehovah—Jove—or Lord.'
This preachment o'er, (which yet you mildly bear,
Of preachments all-impatient as you are),
Yon church, whence now intones the holy mass,
If so you please, we'll enter as we pass.
For churches here (with reverence be it said)
Are not too holy held for week-day tread.
But each, at will and unrebuked for wrong,
May come and muse their column'd aisles along:

And some high influence win, or grave delight
From picture, incense, or the chaunted rite;
Or find fit hour, as every passing day
Its joy or sorrow brings—to praise or pray.
But now with festal silks the shafts are bound,
And glittering fringes edge the arches round.
Of granites red, or cippolino grey,
Or carvings quaint, small sight for us—to-day.
We quarrel not. There are, we know, who hate,
Or half unchristian deem such pious fête.
Yet silvered Saints, and Virgin fancy-drest
For peasant-worshipper may be the best.

Rare entrance his, or none, thro' palace gate;
Be this his palace hall—his room of state.
Or let him bring his humble sorrows here,
Secure, at least, of one Great Listener's ear.

These types, so falsified, from earliest youth
Have been to him the very types of truth;
And his own toil hath helped the monthly dole
That gilds the shrine, and bids the organ roll.
Worships—like tastes—have each their power and tone;
Church ne'er was meant for Dilletant' alone.
And Christians, such as would all rites confine
To their own forms, are Christians none of mine.
Then spare him, Critic! as he kneels in this
His ill-drest fane, and loves for God's—and his.
'Of all the ills unhappy mortals know,
A life of wandering is the greatest woe.'
So thought Ulysses; but we think not so.
And blest it is, with pilgrim-staff in hand,
At our own will to roam each ancient land,

(Of which in school-boy volume first we read,
Yet never dared to hope our feet should tread)
And test with manhood's sense the dreams of youth,
Nor lose the vision, and yet win the truth.
If nature-led; to track with pleasant pains
Their mountain-wilds and cultivated plains.
If student; in some shy monastic crypt,
To try old text by new found manuscript.
If vowed to art; its each attempt explore,
From primal Ægypt, or the Xanthian shore,
To where in Greece it triumphed; deified
And deifying; then like mortal died.
In this bright land again to spring to life,
And strive again; scarce conquered in the strife.
But he who to the land, that sent him forth,
Brings back but this, brings product little worth.
Huge virtuoso—true! But driveller blind

Beside the larger soul—the deeper mind—
Which, learning man, hath learnt to love mankind.
Our hostel hold us now; not undistrest

By pleasant toil; for pleasures must have rest.
Here, sit—or sleep—or scrawl the pane—your fill;
Or rhyme—like me, (against Minerva's will!)
Who for sublimer flight nor bold nor strong,
May just achieve to journalize in song.
Yet for brief space. For now, it seems, we dine:
Lo! here, wild boar—and, here, Falernian wine;
With figs—ripe grapes—and rarest wheaten bread.
And who may tell but here the board was spread
For genial Flaccus and for Maro—thus—
Two thousand years ago, as now for us?
Just fancy! when they sat, as here we sit,
The frolic—and the wisdom—and the wit.

And here came he, the blood of ancient kings,
To find the joyance equal converse brings.
With them gay chatting, as the whim might be,
Of one's arch Phillis, one's sweet Lalage.
Or last year's visit to Bandusia's fount;
Or journey planned to yon Soractes' mount.
Or laughing back, with still-recurring glee,
Those sparkling days from Rome to Brindisi.
Here too the Cæsar might consort with them;—
His Purple laid aside and Diadem—
Well-pleased, amid their talk and easy cheer,
To glimpse his own great Rome—yet feel it not too near.
What glimpse (had glimpse been given) of years to come!
The conquering Goth; and that twice pillaged Rome.

Gone! eagles—banners—lances—lictors' rods;
The temples crumbling o'er their crumbled Gods.
All steadfast as they seemed, his ancient stock
Uprooted from their Capitolian rock.
The far-off realms, they swayed but with the sword,
Crouched at a swordless pontiff's slightest word.
Their mighty palace (of each glory reft,
Nor marble frieze, nor porphyry pillar left;
Nor floor, as once, with rich mosaic spread;
Nor hues cerulean arching overhead)
Roofless and void; and only, now, renowned
As larger ruin 'mid the ruins round.
The baths with rubbish choked; the fountains dry;

The green acanthus, as in mockery,
(And wild, as when by chance in wicker sown,
It gave, of old, its graceful hint to stone)
Wandering, at will, amid those very halls,
Where once 'twas carved for golden capitals.

Some lingering terrace but a loftier spot,
Whence to discern that his own Rome was not.
Thee, Flaccus! the self-promised not to die,
A kindlier star hath sped thy prophecy.
Or song itself fulfils its own desire;
Realms fade away, and dynasties expire;
Yet on from age to age sounds thine—with Maro's lyre.
But here, by rightful and peculiar lot,
Ye hover most, the Genii of the spot.
Of memory—vision—feeling—thought—a part;
Heard from each lip, or borne in every heart.
Brave bliss! What braver may to bard belong?
Save its own joy from self-requiting song.
Diverse the strains. Yet would we figure how
Together oft ye trod this favorite brow.

Not now in jocund converse, as of late,
But each his inner theme to meditate.
Thou, it might be, some polished lyric verse;
Now, fondly dallying; now, brightly terse.
Or precept, each with its own wisdom rife,
That models—here—a poem; there—a life.
Or else wouldst hie thee to the busy street,
To sketch some silly pride or grave conceit.
Then round to us the playful picture turn,
And bid us in that glass ourselves re-learn.
Meanwhile (so dream we on) the Mantuan Bard
To yon tall peak hath paced the silent sward.
Thenceforth to scan, in prospect calm and free,
The various plain, from hill to circling sea.

Pale region, now; with culture ill be-spel;
Then, one wide Georgic, bright beneath him spread.
Or, not unprompted by that far sea-line,
Would ponder o'er th' Eneian tale divine;
Till clear before him, and in perfect plan,

The Heroic Vision stood — 'Arms and the Man.'
Once more I move you (our third flask is done,
And lo! the shadows lengthen in the sun)
To view yon time-hued fane, at this soft hour,
When eye and spirit best may feel its power.
Laud we the Gods! No connoisseur is near,
With his clipp'd talk our frank delight to sear.
Who, while a thousand admirations crave,
Still harps and harps on arch and architrave;
And, vowed to his five orders, fain would school
Our kindling spirits with his three-foot rule.

Scarce more, if we might choose our time and place,
Here would we wish that nobler critic race,
Esthetical; who stand on tiptoe still,
And see far less with eyesight than with will.
Would-be discoverers, on vague voyage bent;
Interpreters 'of meanings never meant;'

Of the true creed, but whose ecstatic faith
O'erpasseth ever what the Gospel saith;
These, while the smaller critics tease or vex,
With their dim dreams disturb us—or perplex;
Or, if such comment sound not civil quite,
Daze out our clearness with their too much light.

Digressive thus, ere passing thoughts be gone,
I crave your leave, and idly ramble on,
(You still indulging) till I bring you near
Our famous temple—and behold it!—here.

Amid these varying tales of ruin old,—
Some, scanty gathered up; some, falsely told—
Sibyl's or Vesta's we may hardly tell:
But he, who first devised, devised it well,
Here, where it stands, with circling columns bound,
And placed—how calm! above the gulf profound,
To tame these rugged rocks—this torrent's stress—
With power of Beauty and of Gentleness.
So might we feign, some fair high-lineaged queen
Rules o'er a raging crowd with look serene.
So too, when some great Master hath designed

To paint in human form th' Eternal Mind;
And humbly dares essay that lofty brow,
Which holds the Past—the Future—and the Now;
Awhile we pause before his art severe;
Then, reverent bend; yet less in love than fear.

But when, ere long, around those awful brows
In graceful curve his cherub-group he throws;
Each with its little arms—beneath—above—
Outstretch'd to clasp, and childhood's look of love;
Behold! those awful brows no longer lower,
But Sense of Love hath soothed the Sense of Power.
So—Pilgrim-Friend! our pleasant day is sped:
'To-morrow, to fresh woods;' to-night, to bed.
Yet from these heights throw one more glance abroad,
And some few moments dream with dreamy Claude.
Beneath—are field and stream and lake and wood,
And site, where ancient city stands—or stood.
Around—the hills. That—here—in bay recede,
As if for nestling culture taking heed;
Or boldly—there—indent the level plain,
Like promontory pronged into the main.

As parts for other clime th' unwilling day,
See! how that far Campagna sinks away.
A sea of purpled land, now, seems to be;
Now, scarce distinguished from the purple sea.
E'en while we gaze, how vanish on the view
Each bright—each fair—each fading—faded—hue!
A pensive light, while aught of light remains;
Then—pensive veil for these Deserted Plains!

John Kenyon

A Fragment

TO---

Dear H---, it was you who laid it down
That up to Christmas we've no fogs in town;
And then you asked me, as I well remember,
What can the country offer in November?
To which I answer prospects, ne'er more fair,
Stream, wood and valley, seen through smokeless air;
And moon, where'er she ranges, viewed at will,
Or if chance-hidden, not by house—but hill;
And every star, for love on one to fix;
And deep, rich sunsets, between five and six,
That most convenient hour, just ere we dine,
And no bad prelude to wood fires and wine;
And trees, some stripped and some with lingering hues,
From which, at will, our moral we may choose;
And fifty things beside, that joy impart
To the quick fancy or the thoughtful heart.
E'en now I stood by a clear river's brim,
And saw red leaves like golden fishes swim—

John Kenyon

Age

Full oft you're plaining that in age
Our faculties and feelings die.
And it may be that thinkers sage
Do think like you. Yet plain not I.
When sick we've grown of pride and show,
Why should our striving strength live on?
Or why should love forbear to go,
When all we cared to love—are gone?

John Kenyon

Apparitions

If, as they say, the Dead erewhile return,
Sent or permitted, from their shadowy bourn;
Yet not, or so we trust, shall every ghost,
In his old guise, reclaim our mortal coast.
Let Spurio, if once more among us thrown,
Come back in any shape—except his own.
While, Phyllis! you, the frank and debonnair,—
Do you return—the very thing you were.

John Kenyon

Aspasia

TO -----.

Bright Aspasia! say—how is it?
Tell us with what spell is rife
Smile of thine, whose briefest visit
Wakes each dullest clod to life?
Zephyr shall we type thee, thawing
Vernal flower from Arctic block?
Or some Attic sun-beam, drawing
Hidden oil from rudest rock?
Or believe thee sprite of ages?
Very Her, whom Socrates
Worshipped more than all the Sages,
All the vaunted Seven of Greece.

And their systems throwing over
For the lessons of her eyes,
Happy pupil! happier lover!
Doubly won his name of 'Wise.'
So come thou, delicious preacher!
Orator—of sparkling looks!
Come, like Her, and be our teacher;
Better far than all the books.
Book-worm pedants but benight us;
Cumbrous setting clouds the gem.
Bring but thy bright smile to light us,
And who'd go for fogs to them?

John Kenyon

Astronomy

Lucinda! Lucinda! why all this abstraction?
May astronomy hold no communion with mirth?
Stars—comets—eclipses have these such attraction
To steal you from our mere pleasures of earth?
You, who lately would sportively 'flirt it' and 'fan it,'
At dinner or ball—grown so grave in a trice!
Have you found, pretty Plato! so fervid our planet,
You must needs flee to Saturn to borrow his ice?
Just so it once happened—I well can remember—
(For seasons, like souls, are erewhile out of tune)
That the frost and the fast-falling sleet of December
Came to cover the freshness and glory of June.

Like some beautiful prude, all coldness and brightness,
The landscape shone chill in its dazzle of snow.
Yet it was but a surface of froreiness and whiteness,
For green herb and gay flowret were springing below.
Till the genial Spirit of Summer, indignant
That Winter should thus re-intrude on his reign,
Called Zephyr to aid; and with fervor benignant
Woke each valley to gladness and beauty again.
So too, Sweet Astronomer! thou shalt re-waken
From these visions remote amid comet and star;
And learn how you truants are ever mistaken
Home-pleasures who leave to find new ones afar.
Make but sign from the ark, and each joyful back-comer
O'er thy deluge of science shall speed, like the dove.

Fond beamings from friendship unfreeze thee, like summer;
Or, warmer than friendship, some breathing from love.
And when—telescope closed—and unpuzzled by Airy—
Thro' opera glass we win pleasanter view;
Should folk happen to smile at your sky-ward vagary,
Why—we'll swear that 'the stars were in fault,' and not you.

John Kenyon

Attica Mella

The bees, Sir, wont sting you; then why this ado?
And for honey—they'll never make honey of you—
They're too wise to select such a flavourless fellow;
At least—if intent upon Attica mella.

John Kenyon

Blushing

TO---

Chloris! I cannot help but blush
To meet that dark and glancing eye;
Sportive you mark the sudden flush,
Then feign surprise and wonder why.
Oh! have you seen the frozen stream,
That wakes beneath the sunny ray?
It dances in the genial beam,
It leaps to feel the touch of May.
Or have you viewed, with young surprise,
The tube that tells of heat or rain.
And watched the sparkling fluid rise,
And throb along the crystal vein?
Thus, Chloris! when thy dark eyes speak,
Quickened by them the blood will start;
Swift speeds the current to my cheek,
But has its fount within my heart.

John Kenyon

Bordighiera

Graceful Palms of Bordighiera!
Bending o'er the Riviëra;
Tho' by Devon's wave we've seen
Beechen grove, as brightly green;
And the light-leaved linden trees
Quivering in the soft sea breeze;
And have loved them all the more,
Clustering by our native shore;
Yet, ye Palms of Bordighiera!
Bending o'er this Riviëra,
Grove than yours was never fairer—
Graceful Palms of Bordighiera!

John Kenyon

Brook Of Sanguinetto,

NEAR THE LAKE OF THRASYMENE.

We win, where least we care to strive;
And where the most we strive—we miss.
Old Hannibal, if now alive,
Might sadly testify to this.
He lost the Rome, for which he came;
And—what he never had in petto—
Won for this little brook a name—
Its mournful name of Sanguinetto.

John Kenyon

Casa Mia

Thou wert born where huge Missouri,
Rushing heretofore alone,
Bears to Mississippi dowry
Of more waters than his own;
But hast never learn'd, like me,
From the years of infancy,
With unsated love to look
On one own dear little brook.
Thou hast felt the treeless prairie
In its awful sameness spread;
Countless leagues, that never vary;
Wide well nigh as ocean's bed;

But hast never learned, like me,
From the years of infancy,
How to prize the hedge-row bound
Of one tiny plot of ground.
Thou hast dreamed where endless forest
Clusters on, a realm of trees;
And, to hear thee, half abhorrest
Any woods less vast than these;
For thou ne'er hast learned like me,
From the years of infancy,
How to love, with love unbroke,
Some one tree, this own old oak.
Vaunt thou then, if such thy notion,
Prairie—forest—flung afar;
And thy streams, whose mighty motion
Meets the tides with equal war;
But accord meanwhile to me
What I've loved from infancy,
This one tree—this hedge-row nook—
And my own dear little brook.

John Kenyon

Champagne Rose - I

Lily on liquid roses floating—
So floats yon foam o'er pink champagne—
Fain would I join such pleasant boating,
And prove that ruby main,
And float away on wine!
Those seas are dangerous, greybeards swear—
Whose sea-beach is the goblet's brim;
And true it is—they drown old Care,
But what care we for him,
So we but float on wine!

And true it is—they cross in pain,
Who sober cross the Stygian ferry;
But only make our Styx—champagne,
And we shall cross right merry,
Floating away on wine!
Old Charon's self shall make him mellow,
Then gaily row his boat from shore;
While we, and every jovial fellow,
Hear—unconcerned—the oar,
That dips itself in wine!

John Kenyon

Champagne Rose - Ii

Praise who will the duller liquor
Juice of Portugal or Spain;
Fill for me with lighter—quicker—
Fill for me with Rose Champagne.
See the glass its foam upgiving,
Creaming—beading—round the brim,
Such, were old Anacreon living,
Such should be the wine for him!
Elixir blest! Bacchus and Flora,
'Twas He proposed—She smiled compliance—
Thee—a spell for mortal sorrow,
Thee devised in gay alliance.
Full of the plan, they leapt delighted
From leafy couch, where each reposes,
And while they plied their task united,
(One gave the grapes, and one the roses.)

Young Love stood near, with curious eye,
And heedful watched the chemic union,
And smiled to think how, by and bye,
The play of looks, the soul's communion,
And the tied tongue's first liberty
Should thrive beneath that magic essence.
And what, thou glorious alchemy!
What though thy primal effervescence,
Like Love's, too bright—too dear to stay—
Like Love's—die almost in the tasting—
Yet each I snatch, as best I may;
Ah! why are both so little lasting.

John Kenyon

Childhood - I

TO---

I judge not hardly childhood's giddy glee;
For I remember when my mother died,
Half-wondering at that age what death might be,
How few the tears I shed. And when they hied
To shape her garden-grave (use,—sanctified
Among the dwellers of our tropic isle)
Where tamarind and orange, side by side,
Wove brightest bower, I too was there the while;
If moist-eyed 'mid the sad, yet curious more
Than sorrowful. But when the blasted rock,
Impracticable else, shook off a store
Of fruit, down raining at the nitrous shock,
On rushed I, with a childish joy, to seize
My spoil, the fruit of those grave-shadowing trees.

John Kenyon

Childhood - II

TO---

Yet brood deep feelings in the youngling breast,
Though undeveloped, natural as speech;
And my own tropic isle this truth impressed,
That Nature teaches more than man may teach.
'Twas on an orange-tree, just within reach
Of childish hands, a bird had built her nest,
A mother-bird; and ne'er more impious breach
Than mine upon that blissful home of rest,
On sleeping town did night-spied warrior make;
And memory yet recalls the mournful song
Which the reft parent, for her nestlings' sake,
Poured, round her ruined dwelling hovering long;
While every touch, that did her grief impart,
Dropt, like a precept, on my conscious heart.

John Kenyon

Childhood - Iii

TO---

So when, mere child, I crossed the Atlantic tide,
Ah! ne'er to see our Carib isle again—
There, as it chanced, the watchful seaman spied
A bark come drifting o'er the azure plain;
Which, as it neared us, we beheld it void
Of living thing—alone on that wide main;
Hinting a tale of wretches that had died
By rock, or whelming surge, or hunger-slain
On the waste wave. So on that bark did go
Unquestioned; bearing o'er the waters blue
Its own mysterious story—none might know;
But left me, as it faded on the view,
With spirit stirred, and eye unconsciously
That strained upon that solitary sea.

John Kenyon

Destiny

'Strange Power! mysterious Destiny!
Thou who dost love to sit, alone,
With moveless lip, and brooding eye,
Close beside the' eternal throne;
When from the Godhead's forming hand
The globe leapt forth, He gave command
That Thou shouldst guard the circling sphere,
And guide, and balance, and control
The mighty mass, the breathing soul,
And heed the vast machinery roll
Through Time's immortal year.

'Or may it be, as some have thought,
That from the very birth of Time,
While yet this whirling globe was not,
Thy primal spirit ruled sublime;
That, when the mighty Being came
To forge this world's ænigma-frame,
He felt thy power no less than We;
But learned how Thou the Good and Ill
Hadst doomed in endless course to wheel,
And curbed e'en his wide-shadowing will
Reluctantly to Thee?

'Before or since, effect or cause,
Or limiting, or limited,
Yet say, oh! whence those dooming laws,
Or His or Thine, so dark—so dread.
In anger was it, or in mirth,
Ye bade Oppression walk the earth,
Torturing the race with scourge and chain?
Why flaunts yon despot on a throne
By treachery reared and blood-bestrown,
While Kosciusko's dungeon-groan
Ascends to Heaven in vain?

'Hath virtue then no saving force,
Hath justice no prevailing might
To stay that scythed chariot's course,

Dark as eclipse and swift as light?
Inwoven in one eternal chain,
Evil and good, and bliss and pain,
Are all the links alike to Thee?
Brute forms that breathe, high souls that feel,
Matter inert and human will,
Stamped all with one portentous seal
To work one blind decree?
'Man sinks in musing wonder lost!
Meanwhile his bark, with shattered sail,
Fast verging to some unknown coast,
Hurries adown the unslackening gale.
Amid thy gathering mysteries
In vain for glimpse of light he tries
To trace his course—to read his doom;
He fears the sea, he dreads the shore,
And darkness thickening more and more,
Till hope, and fear, and suffering o'er,
Thou wreck'st him on the tomb.'

By one, through many a change of grief
Full sorely tried, these words were spoken;
But Heaven in pity sent relief
To troubled brain and heart half-broken.
The self-same star, to Syrian land
That led, of old, the Magi-band,
Uplit for him that night of pain;
And beamed on that despairing sight,
With the first flush of morning light,
A clasping haven, calmly bright,
Beyond Life's stormy main.

John Kenyon

Dorchester Amphitheatre .

By Rome's old amphitheatre I stood,
Still pretty perfect, on the Weymouth road,
Within some half a mile of Dorchester.
There had I come, as others come, to feed
A curious eye, and win such thoughts as spring
From sense of contrast 'twixt the ideal Past
And the fact-speaking Present. In good sooth
Strange contrast did I find; for all within
The oval boundary of that fair arena
Was seen to spread a most unclassic growth
Of vile potatoes! Plant, to me it seems,
Aye somewhat vile to view; which, when the World
New-found first gave it to our older climes,
She gave with true utilitarian aim,

Far more for use than beauty. But these were
Of all most vile; black spotted, with torn leaves
And draggled stalks; dank and disconsolate
As Autumn rains and trampling feet could make them.
Some pauper-hand had sown the ragged crop;
No peasant's, but some mean suburban hand;
Whether with license from the corporation,
Or of his own coarse will I might not learn,
'Twas a sore check to fancy; and, full sure,
Fine lady or yet finer gentleman,
Fastidious dandlers of their own sweet wills,
At once had quitted, in a brisk disgust,
Potatoes—amphitheatre—and all.
But I had learned (a lesson time will teach)
To make the best of matters, and, beside,
'Tis a wise pride, through the mind's alchemy,
To draw a pleasure from poor promisings
Nor hard the task; for let but patience watch
The process, and up-comes, in no long time,
Through subtile ducts of feeling or of thought,
The good which lurks in all things.

So I went not;
But, laid at length upon the topmost edge

Of that green circus, failed not soon to win
Full recompence. For the benignant air
Was very bliss to breathe; and evening, now,
Was slanting her long shadows o'er the land,
And, with her shadows, peace! All told of peace,
Insensate things and things of life; each flake
Of floating cloud, like white-sailed bark becalmed,
That paused in the blue sky; the thrifty rook,
Last labourer in the newly furrowed field,
Seen wending homeward on slow-waving wing;
And unyoked ox that, tranquil still, though freed,
Swayed leisurely by, to food and needful rest
In stable or night pasture. Nor did man
Not profit by the hour; but stole him forth
From out the precinct of the toiling town
To taste, abroad, our nobler human rest,
Which links with meditation; pondering, now,
The quiet of the plain; now sending forth
Freed thought to travel 'mid the circling hills.

Who may misprize Dorchestrian hills? What though
They tower to no such height as looks with scorn
Over a dwindled plain; what though no crags
Be there to fortify; no forest belts

To gird them midway round; yet theirs, instead,
Are graceful slopes with shadowy dips between;
And theirs are breezy summits, not too high
To recognise familiar sights, and catch
Familiar sounds of life, the ploughman's call
Or tinkling from the fold. Yet thence the eye
Feeds on no stinted landscape, sky and earth
And the blue sea; and thence may wingèd thought,
Which ever loves the vantage ground of hills,
Launch amid buoyant air, and soar at will.

Fair, amid these, art thou, camp-crested Mount,
In some far time, for some forgotten cause,
Named of the Maiden. Nor doth surer lore
Attest if Briton or if Roman wound
Those triple trenches round thee; regular
As terraces, by architect up-built

For princely pleasure-ground, or those, far-famed,
By ancient hunters made—so some have deemed—
Or else by Nature's self in wild Glenroy.

Along thy sides they stretch, ring above ring,
Marking thee from afar; then vanish round
Like the broad shingly banks, which ocean heaves
In noble curves along his winding shore.
The passing wayfarer with wonder views
E'en at imperfect distance, their bold lines,
And asks the Who? the Wherefore? and the When?
Wafting his spirit back into far times,
And dreaming as he goes. But whoso stays,
And climbs the turf-way to thy tabled top,
Shall reap a fuller wonder; shall behold
Thy girdled area, of itself a plain,
Where widely feeds the scattered flock; shall mark
Thy trenches, complicate' with warlike art,
And deep almost as natural ravine
Cut in the mountain; or some startling rent
In the blue-gleaming glacier; or as clefts,
Severing the black and jagged lava-walls,
Which old Vesuvius round his crater flings,
Outworks, to guard the mysteries within.
But these are smooth and verdant. Tamed long since,
Breastwork abrupt and pallisaded mound
Are, now, but sloping greensward; as if Nature,

Who vainly her mild moral reads to man,
Still strove to realize the blessed days,
By seers avouched, by statesmen turned to dreams,
When war shall be no more.

So mused I there!

As who had failed to muse? But now the sun,
Silently sunken, with departing light
Had fused the whole horizon; not alone
His western realm, but flooded refluent gold
Back to the southern hills, along whose tops
Are seen to stretch, in far continuous line,
Sepulchral barrows. Brightly-verdant cones
I marked them rise beneath his earlier ray;
But now they stood against that orange light

Each of a velvet blackness; like the bier
Before some high-illumined altar spread
When a king lies in state; and well might seem
To twilight fantasy, like funeral palls,
Shrouding the bones of aboriginal men,
Who there had lived and died, long ere our tribes
Had heard the name or felt the conquering arms
Of Rome or Roman; or as yet had seen,

Mocking their hearths of clay and turf-built huts,
The prætor's quaint mosaic or tiled bath;
Or heard our hard-school task, the phrase of Terence,
Banded in common parlance round the land.

This was the hour of Fancy, Spirit shy!
Who weaves no dreams beneath the garish day,
Or if indeed she weave, yet tells them not,
So fearful of the comment, or the jeer.
Nay, still the more from vulgar guess to hide
Her visionary themes, will oft put on,
With harmless treachery, worldly masquerade
Of common-place or business; squaring now
Some dull frivolity of daily life,
Visit or etiquette; now poring o'er
Law book or ledger, or long-drawn report
Of grave committee, just as if she prized
The things she seems to ponder but when night
Is in the heaven, her natural day begins.
Then, like yon star, which, when the morning sun
Came forth, first trembled, and then dropt away
To unobserved seclusion, and yet now
Once more hangs thoughtful in the twilight sky;

E'en so doth Fancy venture forth again
To float among the tinted clouds of eve;
And—hovering now—now car-like borne along—
Imbues her visions with their loveliest hues,
And gives them back yet lovelier of her own.
Ere long, uncontradicted and more bold,
She gives command to Matter and to Space
To work her bidding; and behold! the Twain,
Like Genii-servants of the lamp or ring,

Contract themselves at once, or else dilate
As she would have it. Nor may Time oppose
His realm's remoteness, parted by the gulf
Of cycled centuries; for she knows to weave
Her gossamer threads so subtile, yet so strong,
That linkèd by the long invisible line,
Present and Past are one.

This was her hour,
The potent hour of Fancy! As of old
The games were just beginning; and I saw
The rural dwellers hastening o'er the plain
By ones, and twos, and threes; some quaint to view
With their own painted skins, and some hirsute

In spoil of wolf or bear. A denser mass
Poured from the crowded city; helm and gown,
The soldier and civilian; and, ere long,
These circling seats, almost obliterate' now,
And where the shy mole-cricket, undisturbed,
Creaks his funereal note, were thronged with looks
So eager—so intent—it seemed as if
No desolation e'er could touch the place.
Mingled they sat, conquered and conqueror;
The intruder and the native of the land;
Fair British damsel by dark Roman maid;
And whoso had but scanned, with curious eye,
The multitude there met, had singled out
Each separate race, distinct as then they showed,
Ere holy marriage rites, and lapse of years,
Had fused the swarthy South and paler North
Into one blended beauty.

Fancy still
Relaxed not, and behold! the games went on.
But here no wretched gladiator died,
To stimulate the jaded taste corrupt
Of a luxurious city, mingling blood

And sport together; here no lordly brute,
Pride of his woods, tiger nor spotted 'pard
Was brought to bathe his beautiful sides in gore.

But simple games were here, befitting well
Remoter province. Yet there wanted not
The course of chariots, seven times rapt around
The level circus; nor impetuous speed
Of the foot-racer swift; nor clenched hand
With cestus mailed; nor strong transcendent arm
Whirling the discus far and far away.

Here too were jugglers' feats, with many a feint
Of the quick hand, deceiving eye and guess;
Perchance transmitted down from those who strove
With Moses, when the rods to serpents rolled
In ancient Egypt, aye for magic famed;
And whose strange sorceries even now perplex
The traveller, and send him doubting home.
And graceful dancers here from Southern Gaul
Wove their gay measures, with half-wingèd feet
Quivering in air, as if the air were half
Their element; nor was there lack of song
From smooth Italian clime, nor of sweet flute,

Breathing some lay, on slope of Aready
First framed by love-sick shepherd; courting now
Barbarian ears; which yet delighted heard,
And treasured up the strain.

Him too I saw—
(For Fancy bodied forth whate'er she willed)—
The shepherd-minstrel of remotest time,
Zampognatore, who, with moving arm,
From the pressed bag compels the struggling air
Into a liquid music. He had strayed
From his Calabrian home, lone wanderer,
For humble gain, thus far; and such, e'en now,
Gay Naples! when returning Christmas brings
High festival, amid thy crowded streets
Are seen and heard, hymning each sacred shrine.
In simple sheep-skin clad, they wend along,
(Rude vesture! worn of old, when men first watched
Their feeding flocks along the grassy hills,)
And seem like records of an earlier world,
Linking the Past and Present. And, full oft,

(If Fancy might presume on holy ground,)

Me would she fondly lure to dream that such
As these, perchance, in old Judæa's land,
The missioned angel summoned from their folds,
To learn the glorious birth in Bethlehem!

A pause—and, lo! two well-trained wrestlers come,
Briton with Roman matched; and as they stand
Eyeing each other, face to face, erect,
Look like bold statues, which some master-hand
Hath wrought to best proportion. Soon their arms
Are grasping each the other's at full length.
Anon they stoutly close; and while they strive
Each one to stir the other from the base
Of his firm footing, you behold them rock
Like gallant vessels in a stormy surge,
Whose proud yards almost touch the deep; or trees
Full-foliaged, which, when some mighty wind
Sweeps through the forest, stagger to and fro,
Full soon to fall! A thousand straining eyes,
And utter silence, and suspended breaths,
Are waiting on the contest; till, at last,
By one collected effort whirled amain,
Prostrate the Roman lies. Then all at once

Bursts a loud shout from the rude tribes around,
Mixed with the broad uncultured laugh. Yet one
Stood there, who joined not in the laugh nor shout,
A chieftain of the land! but deeply groaned
Within his inmost soul to mark his race,
Firm as they were of valour and of limb,
Thus to the stranger bowed. Yet wherefore groan?
Finite is human wrong; while Justice holds
Eternally—to balance and redress—
Her righteous scales above.

Not far away,
In modest beauty sat a British maid,
That chieftain's daughter. She nor heard the shout,
Nor marked the triumph. All her thoughts, the while,
Were in the Imperial City; thither led

By tale of young centurion, whose dark plume,
As he bent o'er her, nearer and more near,
Soft-shadowed her sweet face. From him she heard
Of mighty amphitheatres, within
Whose ample bounds a hundred chariots roll;
Then—flooded to broad lakes—a hundred barks
Glide o'er their vast arenas. Passing by,
In pity to that pitying heart of hers,

Combat of man or beast, he spoke of shows
More gentle, that enforced no shuddering ear.
He told her of the nodding elephant,
Huge and compact of bulk, and girt with tower;
And dromedary of ungainly stride;
And still more rare, and stranger still of form,
Camelopard; yet prized for sinuous grace
Of neck, and delicate step, and loving eye,
Mild as her own.

She, with half doubting eyes,
Expanding as he spoke, sat by and listened,
Scarce knowing if she might believe or not;
Hard though it were such speaker not to trust.
Then would he tell her of proud palaces,
Temples, and towers; yet most he loved to speak
Of his own native home, their Sabine farm;
Where still his mother dwelt, 'mid their own fields,
Their fruitful olive trees and tents of vine;
Vaunting his dear Penates; yet therewith
Mingling, as if by chance, some gentle word
Of Cupid and of Hymen.

Thence I turned
To the benign Proconsul. He was one,
Or so imagination loved to feign,
Of Rome's first blood, tracing his lofty line,
Through long-drawn pedigree and consular fast,
To race of Lelius or of Scipio;
And thence fore-born large thoughts to interweave
Of statesman and of sage. Some warrior-pride
He well might feel, beholding all around
His steadfast soldiery, and the strong walls

Of the near city, and those camp-crowned hills,
Plucked from their fierce defenders. Yet his heart
Was gentle, and his mind full-fraught with lore
From history won, and humanized by power
Of mild philosophy; nor lacked he love
For Maro's polished strain, or bolder song
Of old Mæonides. And now, e'en now,
Amid this throng and tumult of the games,
There seemed to flit athwart his pensive brow
Such thoughts, as oft, at eve, will touch the soul
Of him who sojourns in a foreign land.

Say, did he think on his own native Rome
And fallen empires? on Etruria old,
Gone like a dream—on Carthage, vanish'd too—

And the razed walls of proud Jerusalem?
Then ask himself if that barbarian flood,
Rolled from the stormy regions of the North,
Billow on billow, and o'erhanging now
In dread suspense, should yet withhold its wave;
Or burst in vengeance on sweet Italy,
Whelming her ancient glories? Did he muse
How, then, each conquered realm, long tributary,
The Dacian tribes, wide Gaul and mountain-Spain
Should snap their bonds? and e'en this isle remote
Start from its vassalage, perhaps to pluck
Itself—some shred of empire?

Prescience

Thus far might warn from shrine of thoughtful mind,
Or yet more thoughtful heart, deceiving not.
But not far thoughts, nor deep humanities,
Nor clear experience from old histories won,
Might hint of all the coming. Who might tell
How ships, contemptuous of the guiding shore,
Should breast right onward o'er strange seas, and find
A world as yet unknown; all bold to dare
—Though still beat back—the beakèd promontory,
For ever weltered round by stormy waves,

From which the trireme bark had shrunk amazed?

Then burst on other oceans, all unguessed
Till now, far-spread and thousand-islanded,
Amid new climates and beneath new stars?
Not well-known constellations; not the Twins,
Orion, nor the ancient Pleiades;
But stars yet unbeheld; which when, at first,
The helmsman viewed, he doubted his own eyes,
Perchance grown old, or else with watching worn,
And questioned if he read aright; or if
To mar the boldness of presumptuous man,
Who dared (for so might be) forbidden seas,
The very heavens themselves were changed.

Or how
Might'st Thou, Proconsul mild! (albeit full-stored
With lore of statesman, and far-reaching thought)
How might'st thou dream that this barbarian isle,
O'er which it seemed half-exile e'en to rule,
This Britain utterly from the world shut out,
Should rise from strife to strife, from strength to strength,
Foremost among the nations; conquering
O'er lands and seas to which the Roman realm,
In its most lordly day, was but a speck?

That she should shed her laws, her polity,
Her cultured language, and her peaceful arts,
All she had stored from her own toils, and all
That came from Rome or Greece transmitted down,
A glorious gift! o'er half the peopled globe?
There to survive, when she, perchance, may be
What Rome and Greece are now!

Change deep as this,
What oracle might bring thee to believe?
Or that, in tract of time, a day could come,
When, in this very amphitheatre,
A common plant—its lonely tenant now—
By a chance-traveller scanned—should summon up,
To dim the glories of departed Rome,
The mightier marvel of a new-found world?

John Kenyon

Earthly Parting

Had Heaven, to prayer of mine more kind,
But snapped my thread of Being first,
I know how, lingering here behind,
Thou wouldst have deemed thy lot the worst;
And how thou wouldst have shed the tear
Over my coldly silent bier.
But this, alas! might not be so,
And I remain to weep for Thee;
And still weep on, though well I know
Such parting is but life's decree;
That, doomed to leave, or left forlorn,
We must be mourned for, or must mourn.

John Kenyon

Eclipse

Moon! if e'er thy broader light
Helped lover's prayer by night;
Now Eclipse hath veiled thee over,
Doubly—doubly—help a lover.
Let thy beams, that shrouded be,
Win to a like mystery.
Now, when stars alone do shine,
Bid my Loved One's brow incline—
Sweet Obscurer!—over mine.
Then, while chaste avowal slips
From her—hereto—guarded lips,
I will bless each bland Eclipse.

John Kenyon

Epitaph

Riches I had! they faded from my view—
And troops of friends! but they deceived me too—
And fame! it came and went—a very breath;
While faith stood firm, and soothed the hour of death.

John Kenyon

Epitaph For A Roman Catholic Churchyard

Weary centinel of earth,
Grief's companion from my birth,
Doomed no more to watch and weep,
Now I sleep the dreamless sleep
In this calmly shrouding cell;
But what the waking—who may tell!
In that fated hour of fear,
Mary! Mother! be thou here.
Fear to sooth and hope to shed,
Bend thee o'er this earthy bed;
And let my waking view thee mild
As mother o'er her wakening child.

John Kenyon

Experimentum Crucis

With different colour glows each ray
That joins to feed the solar day.
Yet, each commingling as they pass,
They lose distinction in the mass,
Where Iris-hues, grown tintless quite,
Stand wondering at their own pure White.

Yet prove that White with sifting lens,
No more it cheats the dazzled sense;
But, re-transmuted to the view,
Beams back its red—or green—or blue.
Nor less, in every church gregarious,
Opinion's colours are as various.

Nor less each hue with other locks,
To form the pure white Orthodox;
That scorns all other shade—sectarian!—
Plain Quaker-drab, or half-tint Arian.
But if—as philosophic use is—
We try Experimentum Crucis;
To find if what so whitely beams
Be, in good sooth, the thing it seems;
From moral lens, in varying streak,
How soon the lines diverge and break!
Observe how rule of faith refracts
From doctrine—here; and, there, from facts.
How many a lurking tinge comes out;
What intersecting lines of doubt.
And that broad stripe of scepticism,
See, how it flashes from the prism.

In prudence, now, we break the glass;
We must view churches but in mass.
Nor split too nicely at the focus
Opinions, jumbled hocus-pocus.

MORAL.

Churches! Churches! hence take heed;
And give the tolerance which ye need.

Your whitest orthodox effulgence
Worth no one ray—from wise indulgence.

John Kenyon

Flowers From Waterloo

We sprang on no ignoble soil;
'Twas on the field of Waterloo.
Our culture was the battle-toil,
And many a hero's blood—our dew.
Yet, fair as other plants that breathe
Their peaceful sweets we flourish, now.
Oh! where to find a fitter wreath
For patriot's or for soldier's brow.

John Kenyon

For The Same Book

With all its best of sense and wit
Each Album's earlier leaves are writ;
No page—but Love and Friendship on it
Shower dainty prose and perfumed sonnet;
While not one troubling thought comes nigh
Of future dearth and vacancy.

Yet blight, e'en now, is on the wing
To nip that vernal blossoming;
His tribute flowers Wit fails to yield,
Sense, worldly grown, seeks wider field;
E'en Love and Friendship cease to write,
And half the book is idle white.

Turn, Emblem-seeker, turn and look,
Thou'lt find a moral in the book.
Though young, its lot may soon be thine;
Searce old, long since I've found it mine.
Youth's early loves, like vapour, fled;
Its friendships—with the cold—the dead,—
The lofty hopes by manhood cherished
In disappointment plunged and perished;
Year after year they struggled—sank—
Then left my life this Album's blank.

John Kenyon

For The Sister's Album

Soft lays, that dwell on lips and eyes.
Long since with me have had their day;
At fifty, hearts grow cold or wise;
This book receives a graver lay.
Ill suits with would-be-youthful rhyme
Clogged ink, for keeping all the worse;
Come, halting pen! grown stiff by time,
And limp admonitory verse.
Should he, who fawningly deceives,
His flatteries here be fain to write,
Then, budding volume! close thy leaves,
Like flowers, that shut them from the night.
Not wholesome every breeze that sighs;
And they who tend thee, Sister-pair,
Shall guard thy blossom from surprise
Of vulgar touch or baleful air.

E'en wit, too reckless in his game,
Might fray thy bloom; but biting sneer,
Though dignified with satire's name,
Let him not bring his canker here.
But here would open-hearted love,
Or friendship here inscribe his strain,
Then, gentle book! each fear remove,
And bid thy leaves expand again.
Nor needs it second-sighted eyes,
To know that both shall hither come,
(Sly love perchance in friendship's guise)
And join to feed the flow'ret's bloom.
But oh! if She, the matron Muse,
The loving Mother and the dear,
Some lay of her's should interfuse,
As sunny dew-drop bright and clear;
Then, Flower of Albums! clasp the gem
She hangs amid thy leaves; and tower,
With freshened hues and straighter stem,
A happy—fond—rejoicing flower.

John Kenyon

Fragment.

Crotchets—odd mixings up of soul and sense—
(Sense, if the truth were told, oft mastering Soul)
Full sure he had; but we did suffer them,
For they were gentle and obeyed the rein.
Nay—wayward fantasies, that come and go
From nerve or brain, and link and cling together
At their own will (and surely such were his)
'Twere hard, methinks, to blame!

John Kenyon

Freedom

Tis not because fierce swords are flashing there,
With license and a reckless scorn of life,
When for some petty gaud upstarts a strife,
That Freedom there must harbour. Slavery's air
Breeds many a liveried satrap, prompt to dare,
And soldier-serfs are ready there and rife
To march at summons of the jerking fife.
But where swords—some—are turned to ploughshares;
where
Others, not rusted, o'er the household hearth,
In peaceful pomp, near cradled babe are hung;
And sires rest revered in holy earth,
And marriage-bells with holy cheer are rung,
There Freedom dwells, Constraint's sublime reward.
And Peace must rear her, e'en if War must guard.

John Kenyon

From Anacreon

ODE I.

Sing the old Atridæ!

Sing, my Lyre, of Cadmus.

But the Lyre, refusing,

Only sang of Love.

Strings and Lyre I changed—to

Chaunt of great Alcides.

Still the Lyre responded

Nought but notes of Love.

Farewell! then—to heroes;—

For what time remains me—

Since my Lyre will echo

Thoughts alone of Love.

John Kenyon

Gossip

Gossip right and left you're strowing,
Never heeding what you do;
Tho' each idle word you're sowing
Friend and neighbour long may rue.
When we marked you lately loosing
Stone from yonder green hill's side,
You but in your sport were choosing
Swift adown to see it glide.
You look'd pale tho', when in fury,
Like a mad thing just releas'd,
Threatening work for judge and jury,
Wild it whirred o'er man and beast.

Think then, Chatterer! 'mid your doing,
If for others nought you rue,
How the very seed you're strewing
May spring up—ill seed for you.
Yon maim'd traveller, you behold him,
Smitten sore by avalanche;
Wiser heads in vain had told him
On to move, in silence staunch.
Now his own sad cup he's drinking;
Word of his provoked the fall,
Which so lamed; and left him thinking
How that word was cause of all.

John Kenyon

Grammarye

'Argantyr! awake—awake—
Hervor bids thy slumbers fly.
Magic chords around thee break;
Argantyr! reply—reply.'

In vain had they striven—those Beldames three—
With all their might of grammarye,
And many a mutter and many a hum,
To make the Dead Man from his tomb forth come.
For they had vowed by force of spell,
The reason why I dare not tell,
To drag him once more to light of day,
And bring him far and far away
From that his silent house of clay
Which, ere he came there, in grave-clothes dress'd,
He had sighed for, so oft, for his home of rest.

'Away, away, ye Mumbler three!
Away, quoth the Wizard, and leave him to me!
Ay, leave him to me, and I'll play him a stave,
That, I warrant, shall force him to stir in his grave,
And fumble from 'neath his coffin lid,
And, up, follow me wheresoever I bid.'
'But first, ye old Hags! go bring me my viol,
Which from Living—nor Dead—brook'd never denial.
And my bow, which I strang, to suit such song,
Of a drowned witch's locks, both lank and long.
And deep howsoever his grave it may be,
Were it deep as a well, he shall list him to me.'
They have tottered them back and brought him the viol
Which from Living—nor Dead—brook'd never denial;
And they cower them close to witness the trial;

Grinning and gibbering 'Now we shall see
If he, with his stave, doeth better than we.'
And that magical viol, oh! how was it made?
From a gibbeted skull which the winds had flayed
Of its dark flowing locks and each crinkle of skin,

Brown-shiny without, and hollow within.
With eye-holes for sound-holes; with neck-bone for neck;
While the strings to bridge up 'twas the nose gave its wreck.
For, somehow or other, nose, mouth, brow and chin,
Each ghost of a feature chimed wond'rously in,
To fashion the form of that strange violin;
Which, looking its player full up in the face,
Would mock him, erewhile, with a wickéd grimace,
As much as to hint 'Ere 'tis long—in my place.'

Yet the Wizard—he bated no jot of his pride;
But smiled him in triumph the head-stone beside.
For he felt 'neath his bow the throb of the stave
All eager to summon the Dead from his grave.
Then thus to his mocker, 'To-day I sway thee;
Come to-morrow what will—'tis small matter to me.'
And he bade forth the song. Nor sad—nor slow—
Like prophet's, who, constrained to show,
Reluctantly denounceth woe;
But brisk, as in merriment on it did go,
And we knew he was gibing the sleeper below.
And we saw, ere 'twas long, the round turf upride,
And split in the middle and fall on each side;

And lo! on his feet the Dead Man stood!
First—pausing awhile, as in puzzled mood,
Then—followed wherever the Wizard would.
While those Beldames three, in hideous glee,
Shouted and laughed the sight to see.

John Kenyon

Growing Attachment

With the freshness and placid sensations of morning,
As yet all unconscious of hope or of plan,
(Sweet gleams through thin hazes the prospect adorning,)
'Twas thus that our dawn of attachment began.
If 'twere Friendship or Love, that we knew not full surely,
But yet 'twas delicious to saunter along,
Not quite guessing whither, but feeling securely,
With such omens around us—we couldn't go wrong.

With hearts thus uncertain, (for hearts have their weather,)
Full many a pathway we threaded, and grove;
Till, at last, (so it fell,) we stood plighting together
In the precincts—nay, right in the presence of Love.
We have plighted! And now—(as yon mid-sun is beaming
With the hazes of morning no longer at strife)—
So Love his meridian fervour is streaming,
And quickening all round us the landscape of life.
If mists gather o'er, he pervades and enlightens;
His eyes glance a magic wherever they fall;
A magic the Present—the Future that brightens;
That modifies, beautifies, glorifies all.
And dost Thou then sigh, his duration distrusting,
And deem'st Thou such brilliancy never can last?
That suns shall wax fainter; that hearts will be rusting,
And that lovers must weep over happiness—past.

What though glorious at mid-day the Master of Heaven,
Yet are they less dear, his slant rays, ere he part?
And hath not Love too his mild glories of even,
His warm peaceful hues—his soft skies for the heart?
And such are the colours his hand shall shed over us,
When youth's throbbing pulse shall to calmness give place;
Enough that, when silence and darkness shall cover us,
We have felt his full flame—and but die with the race.
And I feel it, Belovèd!—they do not deceive us,
Who say that, hereafter, some welcoming shore
Shall to home of yet brighter existence receive us,
To love, as we now love, and ne'er to part more.

John Kenyon

Growing Old

AFTER THOMAS CAREW

Shyest Lady!—say not so;
Say not you are growing old.
'Tis a tale that, well you know,
Fits me most if truly told.
Then, shy Lady! be more bold—
Say not you are growing old.

Bloomy faces, surface graces,
Pretty prattle, yea or nay;
Smiles all empty, meant to tempt ye,
These indeed may fade away.
But the smiles that beam from sense;
But the eyes' intelligence;
But the voice with feeling fraught;
But the word of serious thought;

With self-judgment ever lowly;
These be charms that fade but slowly.
In yonder new-found world, they say,
When summer-suns have passed away,
And autumn-cloud and fog and rain
And wind and cold are come again;
'Mid all this tristful weather-strife
Doth a new summer start to life.
Their Indian summer call they this,
And calm (they say) and bright it is.
More calmly bright, more sweetly gay,
Than that which late hath passed away.

Lady, thou hast felt the touch
Of sickness and of sorrow much;
But they now shall both be past,
Like that singing autumn-blast,

Which yet singeth augury
Of good season, soon to be.

Brighter suns shall rise before thee,
Softer breezes shall flit o'er thee.
Thou shalt have thine Indian summer;
And we will welcome the New Comer.

John Kenyon

Happiness

A face I saw, whose outward calm
All inward peace might well express;
And whose, I asked, that brow of balm?
Her name, they said, was Happiness.
And what those fillet-bands, I cried,
The which in either hand she bears?
Just such round Cupid's eyes are tied,
And such eternal Justice wears.
'Wouldst Thou be happy,' 'twas replied,
'O'er coming hours must one be cast;
And one (I knew the truth, and sighed)
Must shroud the memory of the past.'

John Kenyon

Hint To The Poets

Brother Bard! if dream thou nourish,
Thro' new fancy or new truth,
'Mid the sons of fame to flourish,
Thou must lean on heart of youth.
Youth is eager; youth—elastic;
Plieth both to old and new.
Age deems all, but old, fantastic;
And doth 'novel gaud' eschew.
Youth, as yet of time unthrifty,
Poet's song will stay to hear.
Bent on business grey-beard Fifty
To the charmer stops his ear.

Bring us back your wandering Homer!
Glorious pedlar—poem-pack'd!
Midas old shall greet the Roamer
With a clause from Vagrant Act.
Count not on your fresh creation!
Living Homer begged his bread.
'Twas a second generation
Twined its wreath for Homer—dead.

John Kenyon

In A Portrait Gallery

In vain, Bright Girl! you bid us mark
Each charm of portrait round us thrown,
When sight and soul alike are dark
To every face—except your own.
And while yon connoisseurs eschew
All 'Perfect'—save in the 'Ideal;'
To prove them false we turn to you,
And find our 'Perfect'—in the 'Real.'

John Kenyon

Inscription For A Vase

In elder Greece, where fostering liberty
Nursed kindling Genius to adventure high,
Some master-hand achieved this urn of grace,
Within whose storied orb we fondly place
One precious ringlet from the sacred head
Of him, to more than Grecian virtue bred,
Who for his struggling country freedom won,
Heroic, self-controlling Washington!
Stranger! doth charm of art thy soul inspire,
Yet more, doth freedom's flame thy bosom fire?
Then own that votary's hand did ne'er consign
A dearer relic to a worthier shrine.

John Kenyon

Inscription For An Eagle's Foot

Me—Lycia nursed amid her blaze of day;
Me long, on strengthening plume I winged my way
To every peak around her mountain coast,
But o'er Phoenicus loved to hover most;
And watch, at eve, the ever-burning flame,
That from his storied summit quivering came
Or stooped to scan, amid the valleys lone,
Once famous cities, now but fabling stone.
At last to earth down circling, all too nigh,
Chimæra's birth place, Cragus, saw me die.—
What here remains was borne, on British prow,
By Xanthian Pilgrim—home. I serve him now.

John Kenyon

L'envoi To A Poem On Tolerance

Go! little Book, thine own disciple be,
And learn to tolerate those who turn from thee.
Or laughed to scorn, or in oblivion sunk,
Go! little Book, and learn to line a trunk.
Some rain-bound traveller, in ennui's despair,
May cast a moment's notice on thee—there.
Thy last sad hope (and pride deserves such shocks)
Like hers—of old—at bottom of a box.

John Kenyon

La Piquante

Quoth Flavilla, 'Think I can't
Why they will call me 'piquant.'

Yet, Flavilla! should we try,
We might find the reason why.
Be thy mien 'devout and pure,
'Sober, steadfast, and demure;'
Yet—if something in thy smile
Contradict it all the while,
Is'nt this, Flavilla!—grant—
Is'nt this to be piquant?
Be thy talk not gay o'er much;
Yet—if serious-seeming touch

Stirreth ever more the string
Of some fond imagining,
Is'nt this, Flavilla!—grant—
Is'nt this to be piquant?

If when deeplier we would look
Into that half-open book,
Thou dost close it, Slyest Saint!
More to tempt us by restraint;
Is'nt this, Flavilla!—grant—
Is'nt this to be piquant?

Would we know what else may serve
This—thy mantle of reserve—
Whether thou dost shroud in it
Loving thoughts, for lady fit,
Or but some provoking wit—

If, with pretty, wilful dealing,
Now—close veiled—now part revealing—
Thou, like some coquettish nun,
Mockest still our fancies on;
Then, just as we had hoped to win
Way the parlour-nook within,
Coolly turning, bidd'st us wait

Thy pleasure at the outer grate;
Isn't this, Flavilla!—grant—
Isn't this to be piquant?

John Kenyon

Lines For A Scrap-Book

Gay register of harmless mirth,
Record of dear domestic hours;
The votive hand, which gave thee birth,
Now wreathes thy parting page with flowers.
Such mirth is reason's—virtue's treasure—
And they who, ere life's scrap-book closes,
Have filled the leaves with guiltless pleasure,
Shall find the Finis wrought in roses.

John Kenyon

Lines For The Late Caroline K.'s Album

Like thine own Album, which lies here before me,
Life is a volume. Sweetly some are writ
In sanctity; as when mild Guido's pencil
Portrays some Sybil-saint—her eye upturned
On Seraph-teacher—with whose word her pen
Moves in accord. All such with record stored
Of heavenward aspirations, and, not less,
Of earthly loves and charities—as holy—
Each stain—if stain there be from the world's handling—
Cleansed from their pages, shall librarian Spirits
Hang on celestial shelves; thence oft perused
By higher natures, not unpleased to learn
Of this our nether sphere.

Beloved friend!
Who for thyself still doubttest—still the more
For those meek doubts—Thy volume shall be there.

John Kenyon

Lines Sent To Elia,

Elia! thro' irony of hearts the mender,
May this pig prove like thine own pathos—tender.
Bear of thy sageness, in its sage, the zest;
And quaintly crackle, like thy crackling jest.
And—dry without—rich inly—as thy wit,
Be worthy thee—as thou art worthy it.

PS.

Beside the sty-born finding room to spare,
Begs kind acceptance of himself—a hare.
And since, being sylvan, he but ill indites,
Hopes he may eat much better than he writes.

John Kenyon

Lines Suggested By Ode Xxix. Book I. Of Horace

And so, dear Hicks! on 'Nature's wealth'
Your new-found phrase—and rustic health
Intent, and cottage-life;
You scheme from town to steal away,
And chain yourself, or so they say,
To that grave joy—a wife.
What parish girl shall find employ
To deck the bride? what louting boy
Lead out the one-horse chair,
When, just at noon-day, forth you ride,
Correctly spousal, side by side,
And sadly take the air?

And can it be, dear Hicks! that you
For such dull raptures would eschew
The life we lead in town?
No, Hicks! I'd just as soon believe
One might hold water in a sieve,
Or make up-Thames run down,
As you desert the volumes rare
Panizzi buys up every where,
Or gets by hooks and crooks;
Or bear to lose your daily walk
To the Museum, and his talk,
Still better than his books.

John Kenyon

Lines,

From East and West, and North and South,
What shoals are here! they go—they come—
Yet, take whatever road they will,
Not one but leads them to the tomb.
They stop—step in—just scrawl their names—
Then off they hurry, out of breath;
Yet not a hand is busy here,
But writes a register for death.

John Kenyon

Love

'Mother! I've seen a little boy
With curling locks and eyes of blue;
They seemed the very eyes for joy,
Though wet with tears like morning dew.
'His shoulders half with wings were hid,
For play-things he had bow and quiver;
And while he sued, as sue he did,
His tears came gushing like a river.
'And sighed, one's very soul to wring,
Soothing the while a prisoned dove;
Yet still that wild ungrateful thing
Strove to be free, but vainly strove.

'So soft he sued, he couldn't fail;
I listened, till my heart was aching,
And He, the while he told his tale,
He sobbed as if his own were breaking.'
'Oh Nea! be not thou beguiled
By all his tears and all his sueing;
Learn, silly girl! that weeping child,
That weeping child is our undoing.
'He'll win thee with his urchin sigh,
Then work thee woe, and laugh for joy;
While thou shalt stand in anguish by,
All vain to melt that laughing boy.
'Then when again the sprite you see,
You'll tell him by his prisoned dove—
Run—shut the door—turn quick the key—
You know not what a boy is Love.'

John Kenyon

Love In Disguise

Unscathed through Beauty's thorny ways
Be mine, I said, henceforth to rove;
Too long hath Love consumed my days,
But now I shut my heart to love.
The Godhead heard—and 'Ah!—not so'—
With gay malicious glance, he cries,
'Who thinks to foil my fairer blow,
By wile, a surer victim, dies.'
And soon in Friendship's shape he came,—
Ah! how might I the cheat divine?
No fear had I of Friendship's flame,—
And led me to that bower of thine

And o'er us slipped a silken band,—
Friendship's it seemed to be—no more;
And yet, I own, mere Friendship's hand
Had never thrilled me so before.
Anon—in critic Taste's disguise,
He bade me scan each outward charm;
I scanned them with admiring eyes,
And all without one thought of harm.
Last—aged Wisdom's form he wore;—
With Wisdom what had Love to do?—
'Mind—temper—heart'—he said—'explore;'
I found them sage, and kind and true.
In Friendship's—Taste's—and Wisdom's guise,
'Twas so Love came my heart to move;
What blindness—never to surmise
That each was but a mask for Love!

John Kenyon

Love's Auction

Could pretty Jane be put to sale,
I'd have no auctioneer in vogue;
Not Christie should her charms detail,
But Truth should dress the catalogue.
Within the leaves no falsehood slid;
No grace hitch'd in which Jane hath not.
Then all the world would come and bid;
But only Love should buy the lot.

John Kenyon

Memento Vivere

When life was young, in pensive guise
I made it a fantastic glory,
To pause and sentimentalize
O'er every sad 'Memento Mori.'
Dear fourscore friend! in their dull place
How gladlier now I turn to thee,
With all thy cheery wit and grace,
Thou bright 'Memento Vivere.'

John Kenyon

Mid-Day

'Tis deepest Mid-day! Not a sound is heard,
Save this low insect-murmur; which yet seems
No voice from mere capricious things of life,
But some mysterious tone of Earth herself,
Holy as Silence! Not a shadow flits
Checquering the plain; no sign of coming change
Varies the sky; no thinnest breath of air
Wafts movement to a bough. Th' unsoftened hills
Stare broadly out, as if they ne'er had known
The veiling touch of Eve; while the hot sea,
Waveless to sight as frozen oceans are,
Beams steadfastly beneath the steadfast sun.
'Tis a strange fixedness, which links with thoughts
Of old eternity; and half might seem
To him who broods in its deep quietude,
As if our world were an unchanging thing,
Where all hath been so from the very first,
And evermore must be.

John Kenyon

Monument At Lucerne

When madden'd France shook her King's palace floor,
Nobly, heroic Swiss, ye met your doom.
Unflinching martyr to the oath he swore,
Each steadfast soldier faced a certain tomb.
Not for your own, but others' claims ye died:
The steep, hard path of fealty called to tread,
Threatened or soothed, ye never turned aside,
But held right on, where fatal duty led!
Reverent we stand beside the sculptured rock,
Your cenotaph—Helvetia's grateful stone;
And mark in wonderment, the breathing block,
Thorwaldsen's glorious trophy—in your own.

Yon dying lion is your monument!
Type of majestic suffering, the brave brute,
Human almost, in mighty languishment,
Lies wounded, not subdued; and, proudly mute,
Seems as for some great cause resigned to die:
And, hardly less than hero's parting breath,
Speaks to the spirit, thro' th' admiring eye,
Of courage—faith—and honourable death.

John Kenyon

Moonlight

Not alway from the lessons of the schools,
Taught evermore by those who trust them not,
Though in fine phrase tricked out, or bodied forth
In solid saw, spring forth the fairest fruits
Of wisdom or of duty. Spirits there are
Who, rather from the forms of outward nature—
Those teachers who in our dull colleges
Have never taken degree—rejoice to cull
Their doctrine; nutriment to grosser sense,
If alien, yet with finer essences

Not unassimilate! Such win their lore
Through many a sympathy, from 'stones, and trees,
And running brooks;' from every sound and thing;
Yea, from far less; from films of sounds and things;
The airiest shadow flitting o'er the mead;
The last thin whisper of the evening breeze;
The faintest hue that dies along the main.
Such thoughts dost Thou, beloved Moon, shed forth
For poets, which from them we gather up
Not scant; and I have had them of my own,
Gentle and fair, and, as I fain would deem,
Not unpoetic quite, though never stamped
With countermark of verse; I all unskilled
Of measure, or the thoughts themselves too swift
Or subtile for the workmanship of words
And yet, though woven of thy most delicate rays,
Or snatched, as might be, from quick-vanishing stars,
Twinkling and gone, not thence, would I believe,
Mere passing thoughts, but fitted to endure,
For profit of the meditative mind,
As yon sweet stars and Thou, fair Moon, endurest.
For I have loved Thee from my childhood up

Till now; from when, beneath far tropic skies,
Forth guided by my ancient Afran nurse,
Whose ebon face strange contrast made with Thine,
I first observed Thee; and, observing, wondered
If those, thy seeming features, nose and mouth,

And steadfast eyes, were really such as ours,
And asked of her, like wondering. Nor when
To these fair isles conveyed, a growing school-boy,
From forth our play-ground's narrow boundary,
I spied thee, 'mid blue ether, in thy freedom
Careering, even like the white-sailed ship
That sped me hither; or if I beheld thee,
When sultry summer-air forbade to sleep,
Slanting, at midnight, through th' uncurtained window,
On the half-testered bed, uncurtained too,
Our youngster couch; not then could I withhold
To gaze upon Thee; pensive half—half glad,
I scarce knew which nor wherefore, with a vague
Unsatisfied delight. And as, in days
Ere chivalry was gone, some youthful knight,
Of high-born damsel, whom he ne'er might reach,
Enamoured, worshipped still her peerless beauty,
And dress'd his thoughts on hers, and thus imbibed

Civility with love; not less, fair Idol,
On thee I hung in thy removèd sphere,
And duly paid my visionary vows
To thy bright purity; nor was the soul,
E'en in those stripling-days, as now I deem,
Wholly by such communion unrefined.
Nor seldom did I win from thy sweet light
A more creative and less pensive joy;
Such joy as kindly Fancy oft will weave
For childhood; kindlier still, if she desert not
Our after-years. 'Twas when dim-floating clouds
Were hung in the still west, and there had hung
From hour of parted twilight. They had watched
The sinking Sun's last glory, and caught thence,
Around his golden garment clustering,
A passing radiance not their own; but now,
Though rayless, hueless, still they lingered here,
As in persisting love (so spirits, they say,
Will hover round loved spots); nor lingered here
In vain; for Thou didst bring a second day
Less bright than his; but not less beautiful.
Sun of the Midnight! Then those pallid clouds,

Each in its turn by thy soft light lit up,
Grew to a living dream-land. Earth and Sea,
In all their shows, were there, with semblances
Of man, or beast, or monster. Not an image
Through childhood's brain had flitted, won, perchance,
From tale of nurse or grandsire, or out-gleaned
From story-book, thumbed o'er and o'er again,
But there found type or home. What mattered it,
In that free hour, of tyrant pedagogue,
Or brute school-comrade, tyrant more than he;
Or grammar rule, perplexing easy speech;
Or cramp obdurate sum, tried ten times o'er
On the smeared slate? I recked not of them then—
I thought not of them! No discoverer
By land or sea, to cape or central range
Tacking his own proud name, to dream thenceforth
Of immortality;—no conqueror—
No! not the Norman, broadly parcelling
Among his mailed knights and barons bold
New territory—was more lord than I
In that my flaky kingdom; free to give,
Make or unmake, at pleasure! Yon far cloud,
Floating like island in its sea of sky,

Should be the spot for Crusoe! There Saint George
Was fighting with the dragon, while below
Paced slowly Bunyan's Pilgrim with his staff!
There stood the magic steed, which whirled away
Young Calmaralzaman; there drove the bark,
Rapt fiercely by invisible force along,
To split, with Sinbad, on the loadstone shore!
But when came classic lessons, and all fresh
From lore of Tooke's Pantheon—a new world
Peopled with deity—I knew how thine,
In the far days of famed Antiquity,
Had been no slighted worship; glorious then
Of my new knowledge, and fantastical
As innocent childhood is, I longed to have been
The shepherd youth, of whom then first I read,
Endymion; Endymion, loved in Latmos!
(Ah! me, quaint shepherd, not of crook, but satchel,
And guessing, at that age, how much of love!)

And, in my foolishness, almost I craved
Those Pagan days again. Then would recur
The holy teachings of the primal book,
'The Sun to rule the day, and Thou the night,'

And wake to wiser musings. Mixture strange
Of sacred and profane! Yet each in turn
Struck its own chord, and made Thee dearer still.
Nor me when onward years had loosed at length
From 'prisonment of school-boy, and left free
To choose my own observatories, when
And where I willed, frank-breathing mountain-top
Or wide-viewed plain, did I less love thy light,
Sweet Moon; and, e'en amid the revelries
Of the mad city, when thy thoughtful beam
Hath met me, sliding slow from temple to tower,
Or pausing on the broad and silent street,
Beneath that pause more broad and yet more silent;
How oft hath the wild will of wayward youth
Received in Thee a monitor, not vain,
To calm and summon home. But if, far rather,
Thou wert seen planing o'er some lovely region,
From city remote, to thy attempering ray
More native; making its day-loveliness
Yet lovelier; softening with diffused beauty
Near plain; or making with long narrow line
The distant sea; or, slanted with soft step

Almost to earth, wert streaming light behind
Some ancient wood, more forward thence to fling
Its huge black outline; Thou thyself chance-spied
Through the tall stems; or else wert stealing down
The shadowy dingle, pensively to rest
By the hushed waters of some bosomed lake;
'Mid scene like this, to love most harmonised,
How dearer was thy presence! By such mirror,
(Mirror of Dian! aptly named by those
Who dwelt near Nemi's wooded wave,) how oft
Fixed have I stood to watch thy dream-like image,
And then upturned me from the soft reflection
To view thy very Self in the high heaven.
There wert Thou, with the same unaltered features

Which mocked my childhood; features still, indeed,
So Science tells, but features of a world,
Visible continents and circling seas,
With all their promontories. Tranced thus,
(My childish fancies weaned, but love unbated,)
How fondly have I longed, how deeply yearned
To know Thee nearer; yearned to climb thy hills,
And thread thy peaceful valleys; there, perchance,

To meet some loved one lost; and well content,
With such sweet compensation, to forego
This native earth of ours, by folly and guilt
Too often marred; and yet, though often marred,
Beautiful still; and still more beautiful
That Thou, fair Moon! dost shed thy peace upon it.
That peace, how deep! this night of thousand stars,
That hide themselves abashed from the bold sun,
But hang, all fondly, on thy gentler brow—
How calm! Yet not o'er calmer skies alone,
Mild Moon! is thy dominion Thou dost sway
The very storm to obey thy peacefulness.
When winds are piping, and the chargèd clouds,
As if out-summoned by that warlike music,
First in black squadrons rush; then sternly muster
In sullen mass, on either side the heaven,
Like armies face to face, with space between;
'Tis then Thou glidest forth; like some pale nun,
Unhooded, whom a high and rare occasion
Wrests from her sanctuary, to interpose
In mortal quarrel, so Thou glidest forth,
And lookest thy mild bidding; and the winds

Are silent; and those close-compacted clouds,
Disbanding, fleet in tender flakes away,
And leave the world to thy tranquillity.
On such a night it was, so wildly fitful,
That Thou, Conductress of my way, didst lead me
To where the mighty mystery of Stonehenge
Broods o'er the silent plain, and with mute power
Rules the vast circuit of its sea-like space,
As Thou dost rule the sky. For many a mile
I journeyed, pondering on the days when Thou

Wert shining o'er the Druid; being to him
His Sun, his chronicler of months and years,
And sanctifier of his rites most holy!
And musing on the rites—the priest—all gone!
Thou and that lonely fane the sole abiders!
In my inmost spirit I felt how the dead Past
Controuls the living Present; binding awe
And melancholy, of high strain or low,
Not solely on the' imaginative mind,
That 'mid mere earthly precinct asks no home,
But e'en on fleshlier natures, which escape not
Foresight of their own doom, to vanish in turn.

So did I reach to where uprose those pillars
'Mid their sepulchral barrows; turfey tombs!
Which yet outlast the marble. At the first
All indistinctly visioned; but, ere long,
When Thou wert lucent in the open path
Which winds had swept before Thee, then I saw them
In their huge steadfastness; and felt their power
Unutterable, and in wonder stood!
Then too I longed to chase away those clouds
Which still were flocking round Thee, like the ghosts
Of fabled Orcus; and to question Thee
Of all the past; as the great Florentine,
Who saw the triple vision, reverently
Questioned mild Maro 'mid the dim sojourn.
Say, Moon! for Thou didst shine o'er Paradise
From the beginning; its sole light by night,
Thou and the stars; ere yet that other light
From the preventing sword with double tongue
Flamed at the gateway; and hast seen the shepherds
In old Chaldæa watchers of those stars,
And of thy nightly course, with each event
Of after-rolling time; say, who first planned
The mystic round of those gigantic columns?

Who dragged the masses from their yawning quarries,
And planted on such bases as might scorn
The earthquake, and uphung rock upon rock?
Are they, as some have dreamed, unconquered relics
Of a young world; survivors of the flood;

Reared by a first-born strength mightier than ours?
Or if indeed the work of men like us,
In what far cycle? Stood they here before
Elder Assyria, or ere Egypt was?
Before those pyramids, or ere the towers
Of Belus old? Or did they rise, thus rude,
And curl their uncouth ring in that same age
Which saw the fair-proportioned Parthenon,
In its first finish of Pentelic marble,
Outsparkle from the hand of Phidias?
Say, for Thou knowest; Thou hast seen of each
The birth and the old age; hast seen the rites
Of either worship, Pallas's or Thine;
Beheld thine oaken or her olive-wreath
Hung on each altar; and beholdest, now,
The vaunted wonder of each famous temple,
The Celtic circle and the Grecian frieze,
Both ruin-smote!

Was it, O Moon! in prescience
Of populous champaigns turned to pallid wastes;
And temples—fallen; and roofless palaces;
And monuments—men know not whose they were;
Making our solid earth seem but a play-place
For Mutability; was it for this
That Thou didst choose the undecaying sea
For thy peculiar realm? Towers, built like rocks,
Crumble and strew the region; forests old
Are treeless wastes; where hills, up-peaked, yawn now
Deep gulfs; such foot-marks Mutability
Leaves on the land. But, for the ocean-waves,
Myriads of sharp-keeled ships have cut athwart them
To their safe ports, and left behind no furrow;
Ten thousand gallant barks with all their trim
Have sunk, yet where they sunk remains no sign;
Tempest hath wrenched the Pharos from its rock,
And toppled down, with every tended light,
To gorge the surge they lit; Earthquake hath flung
Whole cities to the deep; yet o'er the fragments,
Acanthus, or volute, or fluted column,
Or causeway, clattering once with proud-horsed chariot,
It rolls as heretofore. This isle of ours

What if no Earthquake rend! yet change steals o'er it
Slowly, but surely; and, ere yet the half
Of our threescore-and-ten be past, we learn
The lesson. Nor alone the works of Man,
The long-trimmed avenue, or hall ancestral,
On which our youngling wonder loved to gaze,
Are sought for and are gone; yon very headland
Which now thy light is lifting from the waves,
Or struck by storm, or fretted by still frost,
Wears not the form it wore when, yet an urchin,
Timidly bold, I scrambled on its edge
Precipitous, and, warned a hundred times,
Would still gaze giddily down. And yet the waters
Are circling round its base, as seems, no other
Than those my childhood knew; and such, no doubt,
The woad-stained aboriginal beheld,
When his flat coracle from off his shoulder
He slipped upon them; such the unflinching Roman
Stemmed with the strong oar of his beakèd galley;
And such the more impetuous Norman blood
Swept through, to win a kingdom in a day.
Hence rightly didst Thou make the ocean-waves

Thine appanage; their very change constraining
To a vicissitude so fixed, that change
With them is but renewal.—Storm may smite them,
And flash their sprays all round, like wind-tost feathers,—
Still they re-plume their beauty; and, like Thee,—
Thou, waxing, waning; They, in ebb or flow—
Though ever changing are the same for ever.
Through what invisible controul Thou rulest
These willing waves, sublimer intellects
Have found and taught; and veneration waits
On their vast toils. But far-reached arguments
Of densities, and gravitating powers,
Mean distance—perigee, and apogee—
Forewarned eclipses—total or in part—
With each attraction, simple or combined,
Were never meant for hold unscientific
Of brain like mine; while lettered diagrams,
And algebraic symbols, line or cross,—

Strange as the shapes, which, in our Carib isle,
Rude Obi-wizard scrawls on hut or tree,
Or as demure astrologer erst traced
On vellum, when he sold the stars for gold—

These but perplex the more, like Cabala,
Searing the sense. Enough for me to know,
Through such chance-knowledge as mere hear-say brings,
And faith, if uninquiring yet sincere,
Enough for me to know, wide-ruling Moon!
That thine it is to lead the foam-edged surges
Along the shores; or up the sinuous harbour
Where ships ride inland, lifting their tall masts
Above the groves; or call them to the loch,
Whose briny inlet, winding from the main,
Tempt up the grampus 'mid the heathy hills.
Enough for me to know that Thou, no less,
Dost fill the curving horns of mightiest bay,
Whose indrawn waters are themselves a sea,
While kingdoms clasp it round. Or if I turn
From lore of book or chart to watch the billows
In-rolling from the deeps with joyous motion;
And catch their thousand faces glistening up
In thy clear light, and hear their thousand voices,
Like a whole people's at a jubilee;
Or if I see them, as I see them, now,
Beneath this calmest sky as smoothly spread,
And whitely, as an alabaster floor;

No touch of cloud and not a murmur on them;
E'en where they meet the shore scarce murmuring;
As all reposing in thy clement ray,
Yet ready to up-leap at thy least bidding;
Beholding this, what needs more formal warrant
From inky hand of gowned Philosophy
To prove that Thou art in full right their Queen?
And Queen Thou art in this thy realm of midnight,
And lovely as Queen-like; yet not lovely less
When Thou art lapsing on through either twilight,
Companion of the Evening or the Dawn.
For ever to the heart, which feeds on beauty,
The Evening and the Morning make the day;

Meridian Suns are mate-fellows of Earth,
But Morn and musing Eve consort with Heaven.
And ne'er did Dawn behold Thee lovelier yet,
Than when we saw Thee, one remembered day,
Thee and that brightest of all morning-stars,
Hang o'er the Adrian; not in thy full lustre,
But graceful with slim crescent; such as, erst,
Some Arab chief beheld in his own sky

Of purest, deepest azure; and so loved it,
So loved it, that he chose it for his symbol;
A peaceful symbol in a warlike banner!
And oft, I ween, in many a distant camp,
'Mid the sharp neigh of steeds, and clash of cymbals,
And jingle of the nodding Moorish bells,
When he hath caught that image o'er the tents,
Hath he bethought him of the placid hours
When Thou wert whitening his night-feeding flocks
On Yemen's happy hills; and then, perchance,
Hath sighed to think of war!
We too beheld Thee
With untired eye fixed upward; scarce regarding
(So deep the charm which Thou hadst wrapped around us)
Where reddening lines along the Eastward Sea
Spoke of the Sun's uprising. Up He rose,
From o'er the regions of the near Illyria,
Glorious, how glorious!—if less gladly hailed
As warning thy departure. Yet, some time,
Ye shone together; and we then might feel
How they, the ancient masters of that land,
The dwellers on the banks of Rubicon,
Who saw what we were seeing, uninstru^t

Of wiser faith, had, in no feigned devotion,
Bowed down to Thee, their Dian, and to Him,
Bright-haired Apollo! We too bowed our hearts,
But in a purer worship, to the One,
Who made, Alone, the hills and seas and skies,
And Thee, fair Moon, the Hallower of them all!
Well did that Sun fulfil his rising promise,
Showering redundant light, the live-long day,
O'er plain, and inland peak, and bluest sea;

And brightening the far mole, which Old Ancona
Hath reared upon the waves. Meanwhile thy form
(Faint and more faint, and, if might be, more fair;
And still, as near to lose Thee, loved the more)
Thinned to unseen. But as some morning dream,
Too sweet to part with, and which yet must fade
At touch of light, will oft unconsciously
Mix with the day, serener thoughts inweaving
Than sun-beams bring; or as some melody,
Closed on the ear, nor e'en by it remembered,
Will still its silent agency prolong
Upon the spirit, with a hoarded sweetness
Tempering the after-mood; e'en so didst Thou

Waft the bland influence of thy dawning presence
Over the onward hours.

Yet, Thou sphered Vestal!

If mine it were to choose me when to bend
Before thy high-hung lamp; and venerate
Thy mysteries; and feel, not hear, the voice
Of thy mute admonition; let it be
At holy vesper-tide, when nature all
Whispers of peace; if solemn less than night's,
More soothing still. Such season of the Soul
Obeys Thee best. For as the unwrinkled pool,
Stilled o'er by stirless Eve, will dimple under
The tiniest brushing of an insect's wing;
So, at that hour, do human hearts respond
To every touch of finer thought.

Such eve,

Such blessed eve was ours, when last we stood
Beside the storied shore of Gaëta,
Breathing its citroned air. Silence more strict
Was never. The small wave, or ripple rather,
Scarce lispings up the sand, crept to the ear
Sole sound; nor did we break the calm with movement,
Or sacrilege of word; but stayed in peace,

Of Thee expectant. And what need had been
Of voicèd language, when the silent eye,
And silent pressure of each linkèd arm,
Spokemore than utterance? Nay, whose tongue might tell

What hues were garlanding the western sky
To welcome thy approaching! Purple hues
With orange wove, and many a floating flake
Crimson or rose, with that last tender green
Which best relieves thy beauty. Who may paint
How glowed those hills, with depth of ruddy light
Translucified, and half ethereal made,
For thy white feet to tread on? and, ere long—
Ere yet those hues had left or sky or hill,
One peak with pearly top confess'd thy Coming.
There didst Thou pause awhile, as inly musing
O'er realm so fair! And, first, thy rays fell partial
On many a scattered object, here and there;
Edging or tipping, with fantastic gleam,
The sword-like aloe, or the tent-roofed pine,
Or adding a yet paler pensiveness
To the pale olive-tree; or, yet more near us,
Were flickering back from wall reticulate'
Of ruin old. But when that orb of Thine

Had clomb to the mid-concave, then broad light
Was flung around o'er all those girding cliffs,
And groves, and villages, and fortress towers,
And the far circle of that lake-like sea,
Till the whole grew to one expanded sense
Of peacefulness, one atmosphere of love,
Where the Soul breathed as native, and mere Body
Sublimed to Spirit.

She, too, stood beside us,
Our human type of Thee; the Pure, the Peaceful,
The Gentle—potent in her gentleness!
And, as she raised her eyes to thy meek glory,
In the fond aspiration of a heart,
Which prized all beauty and all sanctity;
We saw, and loved to see, thy sainting ray
Fall, as in fondness, on her upturned brow,
Serene—like it. Alas! in how brief space
Coldly to glitter on her marble tomb!
She lies in her own land; far from the scene
Of that fair eve; but Thou, its fairer part,
Thou Moon! art here; and now we gaze on Thee
To think on Her; if still in sorrow, yet

Not without hope; and, for the time to come,
Though dear to us thy light hath ever been,
Shall love Thee yet the more for her sweet sake.

Once more that tomb hath opened! and She, who,
Companion of my wanderings as my life,
Thus far had listened to th' unfinished strain,
Shedding fond tears to hear a Sister's praise,
Now lies in death beside her. Fare thee well,
Thou faithful Heart! and Thou, dejected Song!
For now thy spell is broken—fare thee well.

John Kenyon

Music

Awake, thou Harp! with music stored,
Awake! and let me feel thy power;
Fling forth, in turn, from every chord,
The thronging notes in ceaseless shower.
Following thy measures, as they rise,
Upfloating forms of every hue
Shall flit before my half-closed eyes,
And I will dream the visions true.
Breathless I list the streaming wires,
Responsive to the minstrel-hand,
While faded hopes and young desires
Come stealing back, a pensive band;

Ah! now I know the sounds too well
Thy murmuring strings are fain to move,
For when may Memory cease to dwell
On Her, who loved that lay of love!
For She could win thine every key,
From strains that suit a lady's bower,
To fits of wildest minstrelsy
From moonlight glen or lonely tower.
Bold swelling notes of war—yet such
The most as told of pity near—
She loved them all! and every touch
Recals my wandering thoughts to Her.
Vain dreams, away! In vacant mood
Now let my wearied heart recline;
No more I call on Fancy's brood
To mix, sweet Harp! their spells with thine.
Like one who drifts in idle boat
Unoared, and heedless whither bound,
Thus, languid laid, oh! let me float
Adown thy silvery stream of sound.

'Tis soft as evening's dewy sigh,
Sweeter than summer's balmiest breath;
Half conscious—half entranced—I lie,
And seem to touch the verge of death.
And, thus beguiled, how blest it were

To cross that dark and fated sea!
Then, just escaped this world of care,
To wake, and—Nea! dwell with Thee!

John Kenyon

On A Dog

Thy happy years of deep affection past,
Cartouche! our faithful friend, rest here—at last.
We loved thee for a love man scarce might mate;
And now we place thee here with sadness, great
As man may own for brute. Might less be given
To love so pure as thine and so unriven?

Love was thy very life. Thine every thought,—
Or instincts—all to that one impulse wrought.
Our words—our very looks—to thee were known;
The shade of feature like the touch of tone.
The pensive brow might some light sorrow press,
(Such as, erewhile, o'er hour of blissfulness

May flit, like summer-cloud, soon come and gone)
'Twas then the lifted eye, and wistful moan,
And head, laid gently on the sufferer's knee,
Told—plain as speech—how sad that grief to thee.
Or did some cheerier look, or word, betray,
How slight soe'er, the sadness passed away;
Soon the gay bound—fond crouch—or winning whine
As plainly said how much our joy was thine.

That flame of living love, to-day—to-morrow—
The same, thro' circling years of joy or sorrow;
That even, as revolving years went by,
Seemed but to glow with more intensity,
Say! could it be created but to die?
Must man's alone survive his earthly state?
And all of love beside wheel but a date
Ephemeral—to sink annihilate?

Vain questionings are these of 'Is' or 'Ought!'
Oh vain! perchance unholy strife of thought.
Chase, reasoning Brain! these doubts that creep and steal;
And cease to think—tho' not ashamed to feel.

John Kenyon

On A Picture

This pictured work, with ancient graces fraught,
(Or so they say) Albertinelli wrought.
He who that touching piece achieved, where meet
The Sisters twain, in Visitation sweet.
Of which the Tuscan city, 'mid her crowd
Of miracles, e'en yet is justly proud.
Oh! matchless line of years, whose generous strife
Reared the reviving arts to perfect life.
Then Petrarch's native lay refined on love;
Then Angelo the impetuous chisel drove;
Then oracles, that stirred young Raphael's breast,
Spoke forth in colours, clear as words, exprest.

Thou too, the pencil's scarce less gifted seer,
Fair is the dream thy hand interprets here.
How sweet yon infant Christ's down-beaming smile
On bright Saint John; who lifts his own the while!
That bliss of young maternity how sweet!
Where mildly mingling Saint and Mother meet.
Nay, more than mother's rapture; to behold
Her Saviour-Son, by prophet-bards foretold.
Or, if adoring meekness e'er had shrine
In human face, Fond Catherine! 'tis in thine.
In that one present joy of all possess;
Heedless of Future; and by Past—unprest.
But Her's, who stands a-near that elder boy,—
Margaret's—I ween is no untroubled joy.
In Her, methinks, the painter's hand hath sought
Meanings to plant of more than common thought.

A look, as if that calm, yet clouded, eye
Had glimpsed the minglings of futurity.
And, 'mid the glories of each final doom,
Foresaw, not less, the sorrows first to come.

John Kenyon

Past And Future

Our Past—how strangely swift! Its years—mere months!
Months—clipped to weeks! and longest day—an hour!
But oh! how slow the Future; slow to all
Of every age and being. Yon school-urchin,
Fresh from his Christmas-home, as now he bends him
With saddened brow o'er the black greasy slate;
Or strains himself, at stroke of early clock,
His all-unwelcome bedtime, to confront
Cold touch of wiry sheet, ah! not like home's;
How vainly would he pierce the dim half year

To his next holidays; and asks himself,
'And will they—will they—can they ever come?'
Youth too, who sighs for the proud masterdom
Of one and twenty; his great holiday;
When he may satisfy intense desire
With horn and hound and golden racing-cup;
Maturer toys! Or he, young too, who wends him
From Eastern warfare, on some gallant ship,
Home to his bride affianced, whom he hath loved
From their late school-hood; tho' the willing prow
Cut cheerily on; and the still-steady breeze
Stiffen each sail; and that long lively wake
May tell to all but him how fast she goes;
He too (and each in turn) exclaims 'How slow!'
Yea, Middle-Age not less, tho' oft he hath proved
How Time, the crawling tortoise, as he deemed,

Hath, all that while, been Time, the fleet of foot;
Who—having won the Future all too soon—
With sudden turning, as of wheel reversed—
Unwinds that Future back into the Past;
Spite of experience, he too holds the Coming
A long, long tract; blank space interminable,
On which to inscribe his plans; wealth to be won;
Or honours added; or field joined to field;
Or glory achieved thro' arms, or art, or song;
Till, on a day, he finds his head a-whitening;
Yet, even then, his plans all unfulfilled,

May scarce yield credence to his own grey hairs.
So surely is the Future long to All!
Nay, not to All. A certain hill there is,
Not like the mighty Tuscan's obscure wood,
'In the mid-way of this our mortal life,'

But one third further on; which whoso climbs,
Should pensive thought disown him not, there finds
If brief the Past, how brief the Future too.
Thence marks he what scant slip doth lie between
Him and that fated sea, that gulfeth all.
So near, he views distinct the thin surf-line,
Narrowing yet more and more the narrow strand.
And even may hear the onward-stealing wave,
Which pulses, ah! how regular; if faint
As his own pulse, which soon shall cease to beat.

Sad lore to learn! which he, who once hath learned,
Forgets not; but henceforward walks his life
Ghost-beckoned by the Future. Like to him,
(Of such men tell) some second-sighted seer,
For whom the very merriest village bells,
That ever pealed for new-born babe, or bride,
Have yet, within, a haunting under-note,
That saith 'Ere long we toll.' Or yet more like

Yon felon-wretch law doomed; to whom yet mercy
Hath granted some brief respite; if, in sooth,
It be a boon of mercy, that sad leave
To pause awhile, and shudder o'er th' abyss,
And then 'Farewell.'
So 'tis—that every age
Doth make its own believings. Things, so named,
But seemings; and our very solidest facts
Mere shadows from the will; or standing-place
Shapes the whole vision. Sculptor young was he,
And teeming with the thoughts of his own years,
Who first devised yon figure of old Time.
He knew him old; and gave him withered limbs;
Yet sinewy, and strong for work withal;
(For Youth believeth in long working day,)
And those firm wings; for he had far to fly;

And that stout scythe; for he had much to mow;

Then with one forelock, and ('twas Art's caprice)
A chrystal hour-glass in the marble-hand,
The statue stood complete.

And stood around

A group—as young—regarding. Hopes and Fears—
Nay—Fears were none; but gratulating Hopes;
Each for his own glad prospect. While the gayer
Were jeering him. As 'Go thy way, Old Grey-beard!
Thou of the chrystal cone admonitory!

With thy long scythe and longer wings, go mow
All, if thou wilt, the steppes of Tartary;
Or fly thee, if thou choose, from pole to pole;
For what art thou to us? Unless indeed
We clutch—as sooth we will—the jocund moral
Of thy short forelock, and enjoy the Present.'
That Present long had passed. Years were flown by;
And lo! there stood beside that self-same statue

Another group; another yet the same;

A few grey-headed men; the scant remains
Of those who had gazed before. The rest—where were they?
But now, methinks, not only were their locks,
But eye-sights changed,—to which no more appeared
The same—that statue; or had changed, like them.
For that broad chrystal cone, down which, of old,
When shifted to reverse by curious hand,
The sands had seemed to drawl, (like some rich unguent
From forth the narrow neck of golden vase
Dripping reluctantly, when dark-locked beauty
Impatient craves it for her clustering hair,)
They now beheld it dwarfed and tapered down
To minute-glass; through which the glittering grains,
Too swift almost for aged eyes to follow,

Leapt twinklingly; as if in turn to jeer,
With 'Now, good friends! we sure run fast enough!
So too that scythe, whose length of curvature
Had seemed full fit to sweep uncounted fields,
(And which, or whether plied thro' rough or smooth,
—For rough and smooth to Time are all the same—

Had stirred the heedless ear of youth no more
Than doth the mower's, who, on some sweet June morn,
Steals silently amid the dewy grass,)
Was now a short hooked sickle; fit not less
For its cramped breadth of harvest; and they heard it,
Or thought they heard it, rasping audibly
With brisk sharp rustle 'mid the dry sere stalks;
Themselves as dry and sere!
While each long wing,
Down pointed from spare back to skinny heel,

—Which might have borne strong eagle on his quest
From realm to realm—was clipped and rounded now,
As those which only just suffice to bear
The whirring partridge on from brake to brake;
If swift, yet soon to fall. Or like the plumes
Fan-shaped and hardly fledged; which sculpture hangs
On the sleek shoulders of the little Loves.
They too, as many a maiden's tear attests,
They too, who take short flights—and drop too soon.
But lo! beside that figure of old Time
Stood now another figure; which, whilom,
Had not stood there; or which they saw not then,
When youth is busied more to feel than see.
Figure it was with loosely-folded arms,
And bended brow, and introspective eye,
Which seemed as if it pondered on the Past.
The young, had any such been mingling there,

Might well have marvelled what such form should mean.
But of that gray-haired group, which clustered round,
Not one there was but knew the name—and sighed—
When—asking—it was answered them 'Regret.'

John Kenyon

Pretence. Part I - Table-Talk

A. —True! nor recant I—true! I did engage
That e'en in this most seeming virtuous age,
With no vast stretch, with no far-scenting wind,
Fit game for Satire were not hard to find.
Nay, would you question? let us cast around
'Mid our home walks, and loosely try the ground.
If Folly fly, her flight is full in view;
If Guilt have coverts, we may track them through.

B. —Dost thou then doubt this matchless excellence,
Our age's boast?

A. —Nay, deem it—half—Pretence.
Whether she flit through high judicial halls,
Or snugly nestle in cathedral stalls;
Whether to crowded mart she make resort;
Or proudly perch in senate or at court;
Or, reared remote, accomplish her desires
'Mid fields, the haunts of justices and squires;
After long beat, by failure undeterred,
I ne'er, at least, could flush this phoenix-bird.

As fossil growths, yet not like ours, are found;
As maladies through centuries run their round,
(So saith the Leech, his cane beneath his chin,)
And leprosies went out, when nerves came in;
E'en so, I deem, some equal average
Its good and ill metes out to every age;
In each its own peculiar virtue flowers;
Each grows its vicious weed; Pretence is Ours.

To seem, not be, our ever-anxious aim,
Such is our vice, beneath a double name;
In turn by Folly nursed, and crafty Sense,
And now Pretension called, and now Pretence.
This seeks a vain display; this seeks to hide;
And one from Interest springs, and one from Pride;

Sometimes apart; more oft, in holy tether,

Like sovereigns leagued, they rule and rob together.
But oh! what type may paint each varying form,
Shadow or light, the zephyr or the storm?
Prompt as aërial clouds that drift and wreathe;
Changeful of hue, as seas that roll beneath;
They take all colours, turn at every call;
Shift through a thousand shapes, and cheat in all.

Blest are the brutes untaught! to Nature true,
Their earliest instincts last their Being through;
On man, scarce swaddled yet, grave teachers tend,
Yet not a lesson holds him to the end.
Mistaken mother! why, in gentle sooth,
On us instil your cradle-creed of truth?
Mere nursery tale; our after sole concern
To live a lie, and all our lore unlearn.

Oh Faith! with childhood thou art found alone,
That ne'er suspects a guilt, except its own.
With happy play tired out, it drops to bed,
And leaves, sleep-seized, the little prayer unsaid;

And this it is, full sure, the innocent sin,
That, all next day, grieves its poor heart within;
Its pretty self it scarce enough can chide,
But dreams all good of all the world beside.
And still, sweet child! from each misgiving free,
Sport on 'mid snares, as yet no snares for thee;
And love the fair-browed visions, while they last,
And cling to Faith, which will but fleet too fast.

The youth, who long hath trod with trusting feet,
Starts from the flash which shows him life's deceit;
Then, with slow footstep, ponders, undeceived,
On all his heart, for many a year, believed;
But hence he eyes the world with sharpened view,
And learns, too soon, to separate false from true.

Yet keenest searcher, though his lanthorn light,
Veered sudden round, flash many a rogue to sight,
Foiled, oftener still, by deep hypocrisies,
Must ask, at length, not what each does, but is;

With sadder, subtler wisdom learns to scan,
And tests, more oft, the action by the man.

Seen from new points what various comment bear
In life, as landscape, shows of Dark or Fair!
How misty motives hinder truth to spy!
How deeds but flare to cheat the observer's eye!
What searching sermon wrought that solemn turn
In Aspro's faith? the man was always stern.
Swerved to Rome's worship, what conviction strong
Swayed Gusto? love for picture and for song.
When Servio gave that vote for liberty,
A place refused might hint the reason why.
When Hirco raised yon Magdalen from the dust,
Who doubts 'twas Charity that pimped to Lust?

Or thin or deep, all tricked in some disguise;
Discreet observance just what satisfies;
Looks free, hearts closed; or but by license drawn,
Like water, sentried in a garrison;
We shift, with easy air, our things of dross,
Counterfeit medals with a well-feigned gloss,
While each receives the other's coin untold,
And counters, by convention, pass for gold.

To show—to hide—to seem what we are not.
Some willing feigners—some constrained by lot—

(For who would combat naked needs must fail,
Where others sheathe in visor and in mail)
Lo! here of half the virtues, which we count,
The mighty secret, and the true amount.
And feign they might, from my poor comment free,
Myself to criticise enough for me,
So each, snug nestled in his borrowed skin,
Would cease to bawl for praise with sturdy din.
But when, false claims not timorous to discuss,
All clamour forth 'For models look on Us,'
Mere silent scorn no longer I may nurse,
And honest indignation vents the verse.

But come, if still conviction poise in doubt,

And see if facts may bear our thesis out.
Forth then we fare, and, no wide tract surveyed,
Pause where the Lombards plied their ancient trade;
Where still, 'mid tawny ledgers, loves to hold
His daily watch the Sacred Thirst of Gold,
And sniffs, by noon-lit lamp, in dusky lane,
The rich, rank odours steamed around from gain.
Yet these but breathe the city's morning air,
No vesper-star must see Sir Balaam there,

For Pride, long since, hath whispered in each ear,
That gold, at such a rate, were bought too dear.
Soon some vast tract reluctant Ceres yields,
The lake is wound, and parked a hundred fields,
And mansion huge, at Wealth's supreme command,
Like snowy mountain, glistens o'er the land;
And clump-encircled, and plantation-bound,
Proud as its lord scorns all the country round;
While each excess luxurious city loves
Parades its pride, or riots, through the groves.
There Taste, run mad, on high, like Muezzin, set,
Shouts o'er the roof from many a minaret,
Or shows, right happy, to the gaping clown
The Moorish front, and pillars upside down.
Antiques within—'tis so the broker calls—
And varnished Raphaels, vouched originals;
There books, unread, bedizened all and new,
Flaunt in the gold their writers never knew;
Puzzling the host, there sparkle hard-named wines,
De Reyniere scarce might count the varying vines;
And there, while flatterers swill in thirsty strife,
Capricious smiles or frowns the haughty wife.

Are these, grave Whittington, respected Shade!
Are these thine ancient, simple sons of trade?

B. —I grant 'tis luxury; yet the race who moil
May rightly claim remission from their toil;
And if excess unduly there be found,
'Tis but degree; and who shall fix the bound?

A. —And so shall Satire graduate each offence,

Nor treat Pretension as she treats Pretence;
Shall merely smile to mark the smaller spot,
But justly frowns indignant on the blot.
She smiles when Balaam quits his old resort,
And city-friends, to leave his card at court;
And smiles to see the new-bought blazonry
Far flaming from his chariot, flashing by.
She frowns on knavish show, that yet awhile
Tricks out some tottering credit, to beguile,
Then bursts, at once, in ruin, wide and deep,
Whence orphans pine and widowed mothers weep.
She frowns on seals to broken contracts set,
And the long file that glooms the last gazette,
Which honest Gripus reads with clenching fist,
Then sends his own pure name to swell the list.

She frowns on hollow scheme, on puffed-up share,
And that late gulf, fraud-scooped, in Gresham's square;

(The ravening Southsea flowed not more profound,
A gulf, not greedier, cleft Rome's forum ground)
Round which, in gamester strife, all England stood,
City and court—and all for England's good!
Nor closed we saw it, till those jaws between
Pride, Conscience, Honour, all were tumbled in;
All! for the chance some lucky hit affords
To strut a Croesus and to herd with lords.

'He who would taste of true felicity,'
Quoth Martial, 'let his friends his equals be;'
'Pares Amici;' which Servilio hears,
And inly renders, 'let your friends be Peers.'

Servilio—thus I mask a once-loved name—
Be he our type; the race are all the same;
With whom through childhood's trusting bowers I strayed;
Conversed with school-boy earnestness or played;
Our young affections wreathed in strictest twine;
Of his love jealous; all his quarrels mine;

And still we loved, as years familiar ran
From childhood up to youth; from youth to man;

Servilio scarcely knows my name of late;
Servilio, now, may only know the Great.

On a low pony asked, as suits, to ride,
Him late I saw, with pity for his pride,
Straining, in vain, behind the spanking blood,
And happy to receive his Lordship's mud.

For days his Grace's well-watched pathway trod,
A bow perchance he wrests or wins a nod;
Then, home returned, his own full pride he wakes,
Bows, like the Duke; and gives the nod he takes.

You meet Servilio with his only boy,
A very dream of love! a living joy!
'Why, 'tis a cherub every heart to stir,
Your own sweet child?'—'Sir Simon's godchild, Sir.'
Ignobly proud to tell the honour done,
And happier in the sponsor than the son!

Such are the tribe in Grandeur's skirts who nest,
And soil, with reptile crawl, his crmined vest.

Keep Us alike from cold and fawning friends;
Where flattery begins, there friendship ends.
Friendless the Great, whom friended most we call;
A King—the most unfriended wretch of all!
Where'er his palace-gate its front shall rear,
Be graved thereon 'No friendship enters here.'

His easy days Charles Stuart—not the First—
Best of companions, if of Kings the worst;
Whiled gaily, with a witty, merry crew,
Friends! nay, not courtiers—loving all and true!
How true, how loving—tell that proving hour
When Death shall lay his clay-cold hand on Power;
Yea, even before hath ceased the death-bed knell,
Let many a kingly couch, deserted, tell.

The closing hour hath passed, which, soon or late,
Must pass o'er all; a monarch lies in state;
In lonely state; for Love hath gone, and Sorrow,

To plan the crowning pageant for to-morrow.
Now, let thy fancy pierce yon glimmering room,
That coffin's only guard one sordid groom;
Mark how, the prowling night-rat scarce forbid,
The varlet snores beside the ready lid.

And what his dreams? Are they of kingly fame,
A weeping people, and a world's acclaim?
Ah, no! he dreams of some contested grace,
Trapping or plume, his perquisite of place;
Mutters his greedy discontent, half loud,
And gropes, with sleep-tied hand, to clutch the shroud!

Yet, e'en for him, deserted thus who dies,
Ere long shall statues gleam; shall columns rise;
And epitaphs Servility shall bring;
Who lauds dead Kingship, flatters living King.

City and court found each so strictly true,
Grave seats of Themis! turn we now to you.

B. —Let Prudence prompt, and spare each learned hall.

A. —If Prudence prompt, say rather, 'Praise them all;'
Thus, so we trust, the eulogistic rhyme
May turn to profit in the fitting time,
And haply, when we stand arrest to move,
No Midas curl his brows, an adverse Jove.
Begin the song! Pleas—Bench—whate'er the name,
Crack the round globe, they stand in fearless fame!

Truth's ancient ramparts, built to guard and stem,
Pretence found never resting-place in them!
There no convenient fictions lie for truth,
But deed avowed is deed in very sooth!
No merely formal there prevails o'er fact,
But essence stamps its character on act!
There too the Moral Sense, severely keen,
A very prude, keeps trembling quarantine;
Refuses still, indignantly sublime,
Or shuddering takes her tainted fee from crime!
And there, within should plague-spot chance to steal,

Pure Spurcio sits to fumigate and heal!

B. —Ironic thus your skin you scarce shall save;
For—spite the opinion old Trebatius gave—
Had these, our courts, tried Flaccus, much I doubt
If even his wit had borne him harmless out.

A. —The smoke, the riches and the strifes of Rome
Right glad I quit; come, rural blisses! come.
To sweet retreats, unostentatious bowers,
We wend us now; to fields and farms and flowers!

'God made the country and man made the town,'
Or true or false, so Cowper wrote it down;
And fields, I ween, might boast a purer race,
Ere change of manners grew on change of place,
While yet broad Trent and Cumbrian mountains bold
Were real barriers, guarding habits old.
Then if the goodman, or the goodinan's wife,
Sighed sore to view the far-famed city's strife,
Soon the rough waggon stage and quagmire road
Stirred fond remembrance of the old abode.
E'en when amid the mighty city set,
E'en there they gazed, less wonder than regret;
Till, back returning from the great event,
Their life's one pride, they died—at home—content.

For such dull bliss our age hath too much wit;
Home, now, no resting-place, but place to quit.
In endless change we live; in change we die;
Found scarcely one, of all life's flitters by,
The turf to tenant where his fathers lie.

For ancient village lane, irriguous, deep,
Through moss and wreathing roots that loved to creep;

For church-way paths, through meadows wandering free;
Sweet records of an old civility;
By many a faded generation trod,
Who simply sought their fathers' house of God,
There, where it rose, with old grey tower serene,
From forth the elm-trees on the village green,

Ere town and country yet were clustered thick
With trim new-fangled chapels of red brick;
For these—fork forth new roads, like branching veins,
And strong thro' each the living current strains,
Till every pulse from fevered city's heart
Fires with fierce throb the realm's extremest part.

'When shall I see the country once again?'
Thus sighed the Latian bard his ancient strain;
But we—his sylvan longings should we share—
Must ask not when we shall behold, but where.

For now, as travels on mid wigwamed hills
The civilizing power, that taints or kills,
Along each British valley's sweet approach
Whirls in the city with the whirling coach;

Cigars and waltzes; latest caps; last news
Of Crockford's—Almack's—justice-rooms and stews,
And controversial preachers, and French shoes.
Its vices roused, its roughness ill smoothed down,
Each village now would ape the lordly town;
'Rustic' mere term for what no longer is,
And all the land one vast metropolis.

Thou best companion of the wise and good,
For so the wise have named thee, Solitude!
If wise and good but co-exist with thee,
Like Indian tribes, they soon must cease to be.

For lo! Publicity with searching spell
Hath pierced the shade of every household cell;
The day's gazette her scroll of magic might,
Within—without—she pours unnatural light;
Bids the keen beam thro' cottage, palace—pass,
And shows each tenant as in house of glass,
Till, like sun-loving plants, life's general crew
Lives but in one broad glare of public view.

Scorning all bliss from home-bred duties wrought,
And all just pride of individual thought,

Distorted worth she gives, with twisting lens,
To vulgar show and proudly-base expense.
Scorning no less, so gaping crowds approve,
'That perfect witness of all-judging Jove,'
Which, fallen on evil days, and poor and blind,
Its grand composure breathed o'er Milton's mind,
She stamps, instead, on a theatric age
The false and conscious movements of the stage,
Till, perfect actors grown, men play life's part
To the last scene with calculated art.

Vexed by hypocrisies, or chafed by pride,
'What walls shall guard us, or what shades shall hide?'
Where'er we turn, for ever—ever nigh,
Publicity pursues us as we fly;
At every hour, in each remotest place
Prescribes the phrase, or modifies the face;
Of pettiest hamlet pettiest deed notes down,
And makes the country fastuous as the town.
So now, when rural squires would meet to dine,
The county press must vaunt the vast design;
E'en as when Muckworm his town-feast would blaze,
Himself the paragraph both writes and pays.

And not alone where roaring feast goes round,
Is heard the pride-proclaiming trumpet's sound;
On Charity, scarce charity if told,
It waits, as 'mid the Pharisees of old;
And if gorged wealth, with patronizing air,
Buy some small pasteboard at a Serious Fair;
Or keep his oldest friend, broke down and grey,
Just one degree above mere parish pay,
The ready newsman, on our modest plan,
Makes known to Heaven 'The Charitable Man.'
So left hands learn each action of the right,
And not a bushel now conceals a light.

The Great themselves, who, from their loftier sky,
Might view small glories with disdainful eye,
The very Great themselves—

B. —Nay, spare the Great,

The world will swear, 'tis envy all or hate.

A. —Yet falsely swear. Nor sect's nor party's slave,
Each topic free to choose, or gay or grave;
With equal friends, and peaceful daily bread,
Me envy quits, to fret the Great instead.
Nay, more! Each lingering glory fond to trace,
The Muse hath ever loved an ancient race;

Loved, where she might, to deck with sweetest rhyme
Each precious relic of the olden time,
And snatch and wreath anew, with greenest bay,
The fading chaplets Age would cast away;
But when, as now, low-stooping to Pretence—

B. —Was Walpole then such perfect innocence?

A. —Yet, if Sir Robert knew each patriot's price,
Pretence, at least, was not his age's vice.
No idle blushes—no grimaces made—
The account was rendered in, and Cato paid.
If guileful they, yet ours the graver guile;
We cheat with vows—they cheated with a smile.

Yes! now—pretences—oaths—have current use
To blanch the apostate's plea—the knave's excuse.
Himself lynx-eyed, this finds a people's mind
Besotted deep, and lends his blaze to blind.
This vows reform; reform full deftly planned
To hinder warmer heart and franker hand.
'To shirk one's party' Gyro damns for sin,
Nor 'rats' from his, as long as they keep in.
Old Syphax cries, 'I hate a party's thrall,'
And, pledged to none, receives his bribes from all.

E'en loftiest natures, with ambition curst,
Hard penalty! to lead must follow first;
And when the rest, at length, the van concede,
Keep the old track, and only just precede;
On useful knavery hold the bridle slack,
And, when seems useful, rein frank honour back;
With falsehood, nay with treachery, oft must mate,

And greatness lose, in striving to be great.
Hence, if, at last, the struggling will thou bend,
And stoop to herd awhile for worthiest end;
Add thy proud venture to their vulgar wares,
Nor scorn to let thy motives mix with theirs;
Yet, in disgust, thou oft shalt quit the band,
To take, like Abdiel, solitary stand;
Or, held impracticable and high-flown,
Left, if not leaving, find thyself alone.

And what for him who leans on others' part,
But disappointed hopes, and sickening heart!

In freedom reared, for treachery deemed too young,
A nation's hopes on high-born Cassius hung.
When stormy senates raised the stern debate,
Of power he seemed to save a sinking state;

And many a bold, confiding heart, I wis,
Had pledged its dearest, holiest hopes to his.
Gods! how we felt, when, strong in honour's might,
For England's fame he rose, for England's right;
Hurled his proud threats, impeachment and disgrace;
Flashed—flamed—then perorated—snug in place!

Greatness is goodness, else not worth a pin;
Mere talent's greatness stirs no chord within,
But, like keen razor plied the surface o'er,
Acts simply on the surface, and no more.

Sick to the core of thin or deep Pretence,
The attack, false-motived, or as false defence;
Of furious partisan, and dirty job,
And bribing candidate, and greedy mob;
Sick of great names, wherewith all Europe rings,
Of peoples sick, and ministers, and kings,
In soul I turn to scenes beloved of yore,
And fret for Greeks and Catholics no more.

Granta! beneath whose mildly-cloistering bowers
Swift years I passed, made up of idlest hours;

Ere yet on hearts, in flowing frankness bold,
Unfeeling Time had fixed his freezing hold;
For still this praise be thine, gone spirit of youth!
Thy very vices had their touch of truth—
Granta! for thee though wreath I never won,
Granta! receive again thy world-tired son;
Pleased, as of old, by thy calm stream to stray,
And where youth smoothly sped, dream age away.

In vain! To college halls, to churchmen's bowers
The feigning spirit pierces and o'erpowers;
Gains on the vulgar thought, nay—finer sense,
Watches his hour, and whispers the pretence.

Rufus, the scape-grace of a public school,
Focus of mischief! scorner of each rule!
Not held quite 'raff,' nor quite without a flaw,
If tried by school-boy honour's nicer law,
To Alma came; as if to show how place
Could work no miracle; at least in grace.
Still his old duns relate his every shift;
Still proctors tell how wary or how swift;

Boon friends—how very prone his clay to wet;
While fellow-freshmen never can forget
His strange good luck, or judgment in a bet;
How oft he cleaned 'em out on Bibury course,
And what a hand he was to sell a horse.

E'en when the bishop's mild ordaining hand
Had stricter rule imposed with gown and band,
Our deacon yet of strictness little smacked,
Nor made he vast pretence to what he lacked.

But when his lot befell to settle down,
A well-paid curate in a thriving town,
Where mammon and devotion, each a pride,
'Twixt prayer and pelf th' ambitious crowd divide,
To his clear interests never quite a dunce,
A change came o'er the outward man at once.
You know him, now, by somewhat straighter hair;
And a strained look of sanctimonious care,

Which, as must seem, no worldly thought distracts;
And a huge quarto pocket, stuffed with tracts;
And sermon sour; and week-day talk austere;
Save when he holds some female follower's ear;

Such gifts to rich preferment needs must come,
Or win a trusting wife—with half a plum.

But these—the coarser clays—the common strain!
On gifted Hiero muse with deeper pain;
Hiero—who poor beneath the tempting stole,
Still proudly kept the freedom of his soul;
Nor on another's mind could grant it good
To screw the fetters which himself eschewed;
Till placed, as chanced, a minister beside,
Those vows he changed, and quelled that barren pride.
The palinodia soon, in graceful sort,
For this he meant it—kisses hands at court;
'A charming candour' all the maids avow,
And the meek mitre veils his blushing brow.

Oh! ruined promise of a brighter hour!
Oh! throb for honour, ill exchanged for power!
So some sweet forest plant, born for the shade,
To richer soil, or sunnier skies conveyed,
Tho' there with stem to worthless stature grown,
Offends with a coarse blossom—not its own.

B. —If these be facts, or only talk severe,
I stand in doubt, and interrupt you here;

Yet frankly own, if half you say be true,
Satire, e'en now, may find enough to do.

A. —When least—then best. In my own doing's spite,
Little love I the Satire which I write.
Harsh drugs, tho' given but to drive ailments out,
Will sometimes in the giver wake a doubt;
And this the Satirist still must take in trust,
E'en those hate him who own his Satire just.

John Kenyon

Pretence. Part II - The Library

A. —If then, in sooth, Pretension and Pretence,
The coxcomb's half, the worldling's double sense,
If these our age divide, or jointly share,
Compelling to confederate or to bear;
To court Pretension, while we scorn its pride,
Pretence detect, and yet conspire to hide;
How sweet, my friend, as now, to steal away,
And give to frankness one unblushing day.

Chased from yon spreading oak's serene alcove
By modish nymph, our Dryad of the grove;

But, luckier far than Horace in his walk,
Escaped yon worldling's overweening talk;
Peaceful with books, come, let this shrouding room
Receive us to its window-tinted gloom;
Such, Lambeth! as thy towers have harboured long,
Like cowlèd monk amid the city's throng—
Here, from intrusion free of pride or pelf,
Here let us range, at will, each silent shelf;
And, odours round while tattered bindings cast,
Inhale the dying gales of centuries past.

Lo! here around, the minds of every age,
Pilgrim and bard, theologian and sage.
Some forth have fared, to paint, with faithful pen,
The modes and cities of far distant men;
Some choose a quest, more deep, if more confined,
And sound each process of the thinking mind;
Or quit that more abstracted search, to sear
Event or act of individual man;
Or legends old, or languages explore,
And guide from age to age, from lore to lore.
These watch the eternal planets eyeling by,
And win the wondrous wisdom of the sky;

These sift each smallest growth of earth or air,
And find, not less, ennobling knowledge there.
Here too are they who own no single thrall,

But catch, to re-transmit, the lights of all;
Now, track the One intelligence and rule
From system vast to tiniest molecule;
And now a yet more blessed lore impart,
And fix the principles, and mould the heart.

How oft, at evening, when the mind, o'erwrought,
Finds, in dim reverie, repose from thought,
Just at that hour when soft subsiding day
Slants on the glimmering shelves its latest ray;
And pensive breeze, from dewy jessamin,
Through open casement, scarcely felt, steals in,—
Along those darkling files I ponder slow,
And muse, how vast the debt to books we owe.

Yes! friends they are! and friends thro' life to last!
Hopes for the future! memories for the past!
With them, no fear of leisure unemployed;
Let come the leisure, they shall fill the void;
With them, no dread of joys that fade from view;
They stand beside us, and our youth renew;

Telling fond tales of that exalted time,
When lore was bliss, and power was in its prime.
Come then, delicious converse still to hold,
And still to teach, ye long-loved volumes old!

Yet here commix, at will, the old and new,
Grave first-editions and the last review.
All sizes, as all ages, crowd the wall,
Sermons from Oxford, pamphlets from Whitehall;
Huge quarto tomes, that curve the groaning shelves,
Sedate octavos; petit-maître twelves;
Here thick black hides some ancient sage enfold;
Here last year's witlings fade in green and gold.

Yon folios, jerkined, clasped, in stout array,
Were all renowned polemics in their day;
Right fierce were they to argue or to rail,
Nor boded once yon spider's dusky veil.
But thou, polemic though thou wert, o'er thee,
Thou mild as learned, mitred Jeremy!

If ever that dark spinner chance to stray,
With pious hand I brush the film away.

More near, and often stirred with reverent hand,
No cobwebbed race, immortal poets stand.
Their leaves, by Time's own autumn tinted o'er,
Come turn we now, and fondly taste their lore;
With curious eye oft pausing to survey
Where the shy worm hath worked his ancient way;
And, undiverted then by fresh review,
A hermit-student, went his volume through.

Due honour to the stout-built Man of Prose!
Reasoner on facts! who scorns to feel, but knows!
Yet be it mine, who love not less the true,
To lead, well-feigning bards! my hours with you;
And sick, long since, of facts that falsify,
And reasonings, that logically lie,
With you live o'er my wisely-credulous youth,
And in your fictions find life's only truth.

And sweet 'twill be, or hope would so believe,
When close round life its fading tints of eve,
To turn again our earlier volumes o'er,
And love them then, because we've loved before;
And inly bless the waning hour that brings
A will to lean once more on simple things.

If this be weakness, welcome life's decline!
If this be second childhood, be it mine!

Yet to the radiance of new-risen mind
Nor stupidly, nor insolently blind,
And no mere praisers of departed hours,
We hate no day, because more bright than ours.
But, as the pilgrim, worn with toil or time,
Will fondly hanker for his native clime,
And wins, or hopes to win, reviving powers
From first-loved fields and childhood's simple bowers,
E'en so do we reclaim our youthful light,
To us more mildly healing, if less bright.

Who has not loved, erewhile, to pause and look
On childhood's record in some old school-book,
Name—or grim portrait scrawled in ink—agen
Awakening memories, which had slept till then?
What if the spirit shrink in sudden grief,
When the eye lights on some remembered leaf,
With parent, or beloved friend, once read,
The, now, for-ever-parted—or the dead!
Though for brief space the stroke be still severe,
Not long we shun the line that wakes the tear,

But, stealing back to that love-hallowed page,
With its own balsam its own wound assuage.

Digression o'er, turn once again to see
These witnesses of many a century.
Yes! ages—present—past—are mingling here;
Yet, welcome elders! still to me most dear.
As when along some gallery's pictured line
Frown statesmen old, and modern beauties shine;
Though Reynolds there bestow his breathing skill,
Hard-featuring Holbein holds the fancy still.

Now—doubly sweet such refuge found with books!
To stray with mild Piscator up the brooks;
With Cowley muse beneath the greenwood tree,
Or taste old Fuller's wise simplicity.
Or if his Worthies, though removed their span,
Smack yet too strongly of the living man,
Then backward turn to question Homer o'er,
Or dream of storied ages, rolled before;
Faint-glimmering now, like far-off beacon light
O'er misty ocean scarcely read aright.

But if, perplexed by history's fabling theme,
Vexed thought would float entire on fancy's stream,
To me more dear than all the East e'er gave,
Those nightly tales, Arabia's gift, I crave
With Sinbad let me wander, sailor bold,
And hear his mighty marvels, ten times told;
Or read again of Morgiana, who
The robber-chief with whirling dagger slew;

Or, fondlier lingering, through charmed hours prolong
'Of Thalaba the wild and wondrous song.'
Thrice summoned, scarce I quit those Genii bowers,
Most loved, as most unlike this world of ours.

To us the mere material world is all;
Our pride; our tax; our pleasure and our thrall.
Science, whom scarce the circling spheres may fold,
Chained to a desk we hire to scheme for gold;
Drag from his heights Imagination down,
To please, for daily bread, the modish town;
And daintiest Art, the dreaming child of Grace,
Wake from her dream to paint some idiot face.
Virtue herself, born guest of Heaven's high roof,
Gift of the Godhead; gift at once and proof;

E'en Her, blind bigots of our planet birth,
E'en Her, we fain would fetter down to earth;
Just mark where Bat-Expedience flits at height,
And meanly, there, would bound her eagle-flight.

From such a world, all touch, all ear, all eye,
What marvel, then, if proud Abstraction fly;
Amid Hercynian shades pursue his theme,
And leave the land of Locke to gold and steam?

But thou art not of those who, hence and thence,
Glean for low ends their pic-nie scraps of sense;
A lofty thinker, proud thy thirst to slake
At truth's well-head, unbribed, for truth's own sake;
Or art thou of the race still more unfit
To wrestle with the clans of worldly wit;
One, whom ere yet thy youngling thought could reach
To wield sweet verse, or e'en well-painting speech,
Some unseen presence fed with many a dream
Won from old bard, or caught from cloud or stream;
And still, though turmoiled mid the things that are,
Still dost thou love to muse on Good and Fair;

And, faith outworking from far names sublime,
The brethren-band of every age and clime,
To thy young heart's first creed of virtue cling,

Nor stoop to think her an unreal thing;
Oh! prize those dreams, oh! guard that creed of thine;
But guard it hid within thy bosom's shrine;
To clasp, at silent eve, at unwatched morn,
But let not garish day detect to scorn.

And scorn it will. For, while on viewless wings
Thou soarest 'mid thy high imaginings,
The future, not the present, is thy lot;
Thou livest in a world that knows thee not.
Of this be warned; nor yet of this alone;
Those who once loved shall mock thee or disown.
Lo! one and all the former friendly band,
Who stand in lofty place, or wish to stand,
Look on, and 'do confess they wonder much
They e'er could hold companionship with such!
'Tis true, those dreams of Good, in earlier youth,
Might wear—did wear—a sort of look of truth;
But forty years should surely tame the brain,
Such reveries at forty scarce are sane,

And hurt one's fortune, when they last such while!
—Then hug they their own wisdom with a smile.

'But books, thou say'st, shall shield thee; and when men
Neglect or scorn, thou'lt turn to books agen;
And, safe from all that slight and all that sneer,
With truth and wisdom nurse high musings here.'

And blest it were with them, if wise and true,
Once more to live and candid youth renew;
But truth and wisdom guide not every pen;
In trust we flee to books, and find them—men.
And here, e'en here, 'mid this conventual gloom,
And sacred, as might seem, Pretence finds room,
Mid ancient tomes niched in, and learned dust,
To offend the moral or the taste disgust;
And plies herself a hundred worldly ways
For petty interest, or as petty praise.

The sordid tribes who say and then unsay,
And flatter or asperse, and each for pay,

Of these, though here full rife, no talk we hold,
But leave them—glad to leave them—to their gold.

Mere pelf Furilio scorns, and burns for fame;
But easier finds to filch than build a name;
So picks and steals from authors little read,
As birds of carrion banquet on the dead.

Such rob in silence. Some, hard rogues, abuse
The very victims they design to use.
Some praise to steal; but cloak in such disguise,
The stolen babe might cheat a mother's eyes.
Thus Gulo, at a feast, tactician fine,
Hints the fish stale on which he schemes to dine;
Yon limner thus, with skill to understand,
Views the great product of some master's hand;
Extols each firmer touch, each finer trace,
The strength of muscle and the turn of grace;
Then to his task; where, if not line by line,
He steals the spirit of the whole design.
Changes perhaps a gesture, helm, or gown,
For posture, arms, or drapery of his own;
And having wrought a picture not amiss,
Brings forth the pilfered piece and calls it his.

And not Pretence alone, in borrowed dress,
Pretension comes to taint these shelves no less,

And, false to mere-affected softened down,
Infects alike the laic and the gown;
And, as herself more slender, wadded more,
Struts in such robe as nature never wore;
Whate'er the theme more pleased to seem than be,
And verse and prose one wide hyperbole.

Behold her there, where, scorning sponge or file,
She o'erinforms yon bard's plethoric style;
And with strange freight of similes, far sought,
Cumbers all o'er his shallow waves of thought.
'Tis true, by fits e'en mighty Homer slept,
Then from repose to freshened force up-leapt;
But bard nor critic now give truce to vigour;

Each syllable must strive; each word be figure.

So fame is won. Nor only poet's rhyme
Must feed on flowers and flutter in sublime;
But, like false head that froths on sickly beer,
When drugs belie sweet malt and hop austere,
Church-briefs themselves with tropes are mantling o'er,
And humble prose is humble prose no more.

Yet strip, more oft, from each its fine brocade,
How mean the mould of thought beneath displayed!
Thus, posset-stirred, old January pranks
In youthful hose too wide for shrunken shanks;
Thus when, the booth without, some bumpkin's eye
Hath fed on pictured monster, ten feet high,
Giant or huge Bonassus, from his lair
Hurling at once three hunters high in air,
Let in, his visage takes most rueful touch,
To find that In and Out unlike so much.

From them—the grandiose or superfine,
In various guise who travesty the Nine;
And them, who thus in petty pilferings deal,
And them, yet more, who slander while they steal;
But most from such as serve men's hates for hire,
And burn with coals from off the Muse's fire,
Oft would I flee, beyond all printing's reach,
Back to the golden days of simple speech,
When yet of Press no prophecy could wot,
And e'en preserving Manuscript was not.

Oh! blessed days, too blest again to see,
Alike from authors and from critics free.

Then talk to simple topics was addrest;
Who best dispatched the boar, or cooked him best;
Which fur was found the warmest, wolf's or bear's;
If turf or clay best fenced from wintry airs;
Who foremost his bold spear in battle bore,
Or dared his vessel farthest from the shore.
Then none sat, chair-bound, forced to hear or say
Of this man's sermon, or of that man's play;

Nor inly yawned, while evenings ran to waste
In wise discourse on learning or on taste.
Then, too, no promised guest, engaged to dine
With scribbler-host, so tempted by his wine,
Was bound, as now, in rueful compliment,
To read that host's dull book before he went.

Yet minds were then, as now, with fruitage fraught,
And wit could point his jest, while wisdom thought;
And each passed current, for delight or law,
In gay allusion or the solid saw.
Yet whoso thus aspired to please or teach
Was strained to hang his fame on passing speech;
Such transient fame as living breaths afford;
A fleeting glory from a winged word!

So sped the unwriting age. Came Cadmus then,
To leave in doubt if worse his lettered pen,
Or serpents' teeth that grew to armèd men.

For smothered hates could now find seemlier vent,
And stab with peaceful-looking instrument.
Yet Wit and Wisdom hence advantage gained;
Their Spoken would have flown; their Writ remained;
And them the pen most served, if not alone;
—As gems we set, but slight the meaner stone.
Nay, when, as chance it would, the hungry scribe
Was won to toil for Folly's tempting bribe,
The ephemeral birth just fluttered, and was gone;
Bavius soon passed, while Maro still lived on.

The great Emathian conqu'ror bade unfold
Iliad and Odyssee in cist of gold!
Nor less did every age, in safest crypt,
Strive to preserve the darling manuscript.
But when the wild barbarians, horde on horde,
Surged on, and letters died beneath the sword;
Then every secret nook, designed to save
The fondly-reverenced scroll, became its grave,

Where lost it lay, through mouldering years of gloom,
Like mummy-king, forgotten in his tomb.

Princely Lorenzo, who not scorned the gown,
But wreathed the scholar's with the statesman's crown,
With generous quest explored them, where they lay,
And gave each glorious vellum back to day.
They came, like heralds from some far-off clime
Of ancient fame, ambassadors from Time;
And who but burned to unseal their trusted lore,
And turn the high dispatches o'er and o'er?
Nay, then, 'twas held no scorn to copy out,
And pause, and pore, till texts were free from doubt;
Genius himself on such slow task might moil;
Where great the End, ne'er vulgar is the Toil.

Oh matchless line of years, whose generous strife
Reared man's reviving mind to perfect life.
Then Petrarch's native lay refined on love;
Then Angelo the' impetuous chisel drove;
Then Oracles, that stirred young Raphael's breast,
Spoke forth in colours, clear as words, exprest;

And Learning, made no coldly gainful art,
Was Sacrifice, and offered from the heart.

When first, our questing age to scourge or bless,
Ingenious Faust had framed the wondrous press,
And taught to each, intent on good or ill,
To waft on volant leaf the thought at will,
Along the skies what dubious omen sailed,
What prophecy or greeted, or bewailed?
Or who might guess from whence the power was given,
Upsent—from hell—to tempt, or dropt—in love—from heaven?

Come back, long-toiling Faust! come back and see
The produce of thy Good-and-Evil tree;
Count o'er its mingled fruits of joy and pain,
Then say if thou wouldst plant it o'er again!
Thou too, wise Caliph Omar! who art said
All Alexandria's ovens to have fed,
Visit our shelves once more. Where'er we look
Pamphlet on pamphlet, book buds out on book;
Turn wheresoe'er we will, new volumes sprout;

Some of fair promise; most lack clearing out.

Come, then, thou Critic-Caliph—come again,
Nor decimate; but take the nine in ten!

B. —The ground thus cleared, you plant your own instead,
And shrewdly gain one chance of being read.

John Kenyon

Punning—after Cowley

TO AQUILIUS.

Pun and Wit do both surprise;
Yea, but with a difference.
Offspring foolish—offspring wise—
This—of sound; and that—of sense.
Easy pun, like plaister mould,
E'en when best, may scarce assure a
Fragile fame; while Wit doth hold
Bravely on, piëtra dura.
Yet when Pun to Wit allied,
Close to Wit doth take his station,
Why, his presence we'll abide
For the sake of his Relation.

Or when thou thro' every fytte
Dear Aquilius! hast been running;
Wisdom—poetry—and wit,
Then dost drop to sheerest Punning.
Tho' with sound he ill agree;
Tho' with sense sad war he wage;
Still we'll greet him for his glee;
And love him for his parentage.

John Kenyon

Racine And Shakespeare

As one too long immured in courtly bower,
Such as Le Nôtre shaped, high-wrought and trim,
And of the world admired, though less by him
Whose soul hath felt the charm of Nature's power;
If chance some sunny glade, freshened with shower,
Arrest his step; sudden—eyes, heart, and limb,
Feel the delight, and pleasant thoughts up-brim
At sight of natural herb or forest flower,
Or wild brook in its freedom wandering
Thus, mine own Shakspeare, sweet it is to me
'Mid Arden's woods, with wild deer communing,
Or arm in arm with Jaquez, far to flee
My late imprisonment, ill-brooked, within
The stately garden-ground of smooth Racine.

John Kenyon

Raising The Dead

We all have heard, and marvelled as we heard,
Of seers, who have raised the Dead from out their tombs,
And made them parley. Nor would I gainsay
Such story. For who knows the invisible links,
Mysterious sympathies of life with life,
Or life, perchance, with death? Or guesses what
Thessalian spells, or what divining rod
The soul erewhile may have weird gift to use,
And, with strange power, interrogate the grave,
Yet leave the turf unbroke? Or even may reach
Up the blue regions, where freed spirits dwell,

With her far-finding telescope of love;
Or, may be, hate!
Nay, are our nightly dreams
But fancies of the brain? some straggling shreds
From memory? or, meaner still, mere jet
From stomach or nerve? Or, rather, do we not,
(So sometimes I have deemed) what time we sleep,
—If sleep it be, and not a wider waking—
Within the close-drawn curtains, face to face,
Hold actual commerce with the living Dead?
Who stand beside us; and do look upon us;
And well nigh touch us with their stony hands;
And see themselves in our fixed lineaments
Fit comradeship! dead life with living death!
And then, when morn hath come, with crow of cock,
Or early swallow, twittering by the lattice,
To summon them back to their lonely homes,

And us to all the over busy doings
Of this world's life; we, in our ignorance,
Because they have left no foot-prints on the night,
Do swear we have dreamed.
Nor doth it hap alone
Within the silent and the dim domain
Of sleep; that doubtful confine laid between
The Here and the Hereafter; nor where deed
Of guilt doth hold some troubled mind awake

At midnight; nor where mist, obscure as night,
Hath wrapt the Gaël upon his mountain moor,
And the pale wraith doth prophesy him woe;
Not in such moments only do the Dead
Revisit earth. Go thou and throw thyself
On some hill side, beneath the bluest sky
And cheeriest sun; or—better—when the touch
Of twilight eve hath sanctified the air,

And very earth thou liest on; and surrender
Thy spirit to old memories; and 'tis chance
If then thy half-closed eyes behold them not.
Uncalled they come; or led by threads of thought
Too fine to scan. Thy dearest objects once,
And now, behold! they come to thee again,
And hang around thee, sweetly visible,
And real as life itself. If life itself
Be a real thing; and not—as some have deemed—
A dream of shadows; sequel to a drama
Acted before; and we (its actors, then,
But, now, forgetful of the parts we played)
No creatures of fresh breath, but the stale ghosts
Of former Being; doomed to walk once more
This weary earth; and fret the appointed years,
In penance of some evil we have done;
But when—and what—and where—we must not know.

Uncalled they come. But we can call them too,
(I speak but what I know) and make them pass
Before us. If not alway, yet by fits,
When the strong will and planet hour have met
In apt conjunction. But why only then,
Or not to all accorded, who may find?
Then may be seen the newly-gifted seer,
With steadfast eye, yet outward nought beholding,
Like one in presence of some lofty thought
Or deed; absorbed in it, and it alone;
Or prophet so may have gazed in his strong hour.
For now he feels his spirit privileged
All strangely (how—he knows not, yet he knows it)
To hold communion with the parted life;
And from that very spot where now he stands,

To speed (as if along some chargèd wire,

That mocks at far and near, and rough and smooth)

His swift invisible message to the tomb.

I speak but what I know. Of late I found me

Where I had dwelt of yore; and stood to gaze

On the once well-known scene. Behind me rose

The quaint old town; its square cathedral tower

Lifted above; while all before and round

Lay spread the lovely landscape. Those smooth meads;

And the bright sparkling river, bright as ever,

Gliding amid; and bearing white-sailed bark

To the near sea. And green hills sloping up

On the other side; with woods and homes ancestral;

And many a cheery prospect-tower, that told

How man had loved the region; and the purple

Of heathy moors beyond them. And I thought me

Of all their little valleys, folded in;

Each with its vagrant brook. Sweet solitudes!

Which I had roamed with Her, who made them all

Sweeter than solitude; from whom I had dreamed

Never to part. But on that baffled vision

I dared to think no more.

Yet still I longed

To muse on some whom I had known—with Her—

In that spring-hour of life, (They were not all

Deceivers!) and who now, like Her, were gone!

And never on this earth to meet again,

Save only in such vision—memory-led.

So, all the less distrustedly to dream,

I stood and leaned, with closèd eyes, against

That lingering fragment of the old town-wall,

Where I had leaned of old—but not alone!

And memory came to aid me, the whole spot

Re-peopling; and I caught, or seemèd to catch

Familiar looks; and heard, or seemèd to hear,

Familiar tones; first—one's; and then—another's.

The best beloved came first. Relations dear,

Part of whose life I was, as they of mine;

And friends—as dear. And then acquaintances,

More or less strict. And foremost among these,
(For now—as then—the church had due precedence)
The well-bred dean; and jovial prebendary;
And wife prebendal, with her stately look
Dwarfing wife secular. And, next, town-member,
From his near seat, aye welcome; liberal ever
Of hare and pheasant; or with blindest smile
Winning constituent. And young barrister
From the great city; at provincial board
Predominant; with legal tale and jest
From Westminster or circuit. And the staid
Physician; and the brisk apothecary,
Rapping from door to door; with news from each

Regaling convalescent. Gossip rare!
Yet kindly ever by the poor man's bed.
There too the youthful curate, with white brow
And chiselled lip; and mild, yet fervent eye;
Full oft descanting with ingenuous warmth
On type or prophecy; while hectic cheek
All the sad time too plainly spoke its own.
Now wherefore was it? (for I sought it not)
That on a sudden stretched its length before me
The old town ball-room; lit as it was wont
At races or assize time. And behold!
Thro' the wide double doors came flitting in
Fair white-robed Misses; separate or in be vies;
Now, ones—and twos—and threes; then, thick together,
(Like gradual snow flakes) whitening the whole floor.
Or rather shall we say, for fitter type,

Like orange-blossoms, which some summer-breeze
Is fluttering from amid the glossy boughs
To blanch the beds beneath. So in they streamed,
A galaxy of muslin.
Those white robes
Had long been shrouds! and that gay dance—what since,
Let Holbein tell us!
Yea, I saw them all,
As I had seen of yore. Here the young heir,
Not quite unconscious. There, the matron-mother
Of those three youthful Graces; eagle eyed;

From the side benches, her tall eyrie, brooding
O'er park and manor. And flirtations thin,
Meant for the general eye; and deep-souled looks
Of silent love, the lookers fain would hide.

And wreath'd smiles—some, hollow; and the sneer
Forecast to wound; and petty rivalries,
And pettier leagues; and all the worthless doings
Of this our daily life—done by the Dead!
Them too I saw, those three deep-wrinkled hags,
Pink-rouged; dark-ringletted; and diamond-decked;
Yet hag-like still. Beneath whose baleful breath
The fairest fame would wither; whose dim hints,
And counsels shrewd, and worming confidences
Had art to melt the firmest plighted faith
Of youthful bride affianced. There they stood,
With snake-like eyes; sharp voices; finger up;
Those ball-room beldames! And I heard them gibber,
E'en as ghosts gibber; or as they themselves
Had gibbered here on earth. I heard, and scarce
Forbore to curse them.

Say, had wrath such power
To quicken memory? for it now seemed freshened
To a new strength. We all have read, when earthquake
Hath smote some ancient city's street of tombs,
Disrupting their foundations, how come forth
Graven sarcophagus, and pictured urn,
And the grey ashes of forgotten men
Five hundred lustres buried. Even so,
Stirred by some influence, be it what it might,
Did now the long-sealed chambers of the brain
Give up their Dead. And, lo! before me stood
All of the Parted I had known from when
I first began to know; (for of the Quick
None came to mingle). And not those alone
Whom I had sought to see, but all, yea all,
Or separate, or in clusters. Mother—nurse—
Preceptor. Next, school-comrades—college-friends—
(Ah! little had we dreamed to part so soon)

And then the yet more numerous host, 'mid whom

Our after-life hath thrust us. More and more,
Swifter and swifter. Till there grew a sense
Confused and ill at ease, as if it now
Were all too cramp for those who there would enter.
Hast thou not heard erewhile some gentle music?
(If thro' similitudes I speak (perchance,
Usque ad nauseam) 'tis that speech direct
Might fail to tell my story; nor boast I
Wide masterdom of words.) But as some music,
Slowly preluding with soft notes and few,
Swells by degrees; and other instruments
Join in; till finally the whole orchestra,
Like some freshed river, swollen with tributaries,
Hath gathered up the multitudinous minglings,
Then flings them all with unresolvable speed
In one broad crash upon the shrinking ear;
So shrank I at that moment, as all these,

Poured forth from East and West and North and South,
Were round and round me eddying, till the brain spun.
Nor was I any longer in the Present;
(For time itself seemed reeling with the brain)
My Present was the Past! Life's actual hour
Supplanted by the vanished! As they tell
Of drowning men, with whom all former memories;
All they have done or suffered; known or felt;
Childhood and manhood; loves and enmities;
Nay, things that were, or seemed to be, forgotten,
Are all whirred back upon the sharpened sense,
To be compressed within that struggling minute;
Thus suddenly, (I may not say unrolled,
But, somehow, flung before me) in that instant
Flashed a whole life.
How may words paint to thee
What thou hast never felt? Or how I stood

(There was no time for fear) but all-amazed,
Like one who hath oped a sluice he may not stop.
Till, in a moment of collected will,
Quivering the while, but stronger than I knew,
I bade them—and they went!
What went? mere visions?

Were these, so real, so distinct, but visions?
Or were they—could they be (I dare confess
Such thought was glancing by me) no—not shadows!
But they—the Dead—come back in body again?
'Yea, visions'—thou wilt tell me — 'shadows mere—'
'Such stuff as dreams are made of;' when the mind
Diseased, or else in sport, is peopling space
With shapes of matter. (If that mind and matter
In sooth be twain.) Or thou wilt tell how fancy

Is still most potent when the soul is stirred;
As mine was then. Or else wilt hold wise descant,
In metaphysic guise, of filmy links
Associative; and echoes—tho' unheard—
From thought to thought. And think'st thou then that I
Not thus philosophized? Yet 'twas not these
I speak but what I know—and 'twas not these.
Now listen to a tale incredible!
And yet most true. Nay, 'tis no jesting story;
Nor was I drugged with opium; nor was it
Some wild hallucination of a brain,
Thou'lt say—o'erwrought. But it was given me,
(I tell thee a true tale, believe or not)
But it was given me in that hour to know
Distinct, as e'er distinctest knowledge stood,
(Yet how or whence such knowledge came, I knew not;

Nor if to tempt or punish, that I know not
But it was given me in that hour to know
That they, the Parted—wheresoe'er they were—
That they should feel and hear me in their graves!
Not merely in yon church-yard, but wherever
Their bones did house them. And should leave awhile,
(No, not mere phantoms, but the very Dead)
Those graves all tenantless—to march before me!
'Twas a strange power. A ghastly dream to shrink from,
If it had been a dream; but, being a power,
I cared to use it; and with will perverse
(For power corrupteth will), did choose to see
Her, whom but now my heart had shrunk to think of.
And She did come! and I beheld her what
She was when last we parted. Was it love

Or anger made me call that vision up?
I might not stay to know; but this I know,
That all of wrath, long cherished—and revenge—
(For that thought too, all hideous as it was,
Had yet been there) did melt them fast away
Before that once loved presence; till (each wrong
Forgiven) the old affection ruled alone.
One other was there in that church-yard laid,
Whom I had loved the least (why did She love him?)
My foe; and him—the next—I willed to see.
And will was now compulsion; and I saw him;
Yea, with these very bodily eyes I saw him
Stir in his shroud, beneath the coffin-lid!
And staring upward with wide helpless eyes,
He moaned—I heard him—wherefore dost thou wake me?

Then too I saw—nay 'twas no fantasy—
Two other eyes—eyes unmistakeable—
Gazing reproachfully. And all at once,
With a most swift revulsion of the heart,
I started from my own unnatural power,
And knew that I had done a deed unholy.
Ay, started every limb; and so aroused me!
And, lifting with that start the closed lids,
Beheld, oh blessed! just beneath me lying
That alway lovely landscape; lovelier now
Than ever; while, like ghost before the day,
The unholy power had vanished.
As some dreamer,
Amid the wanderings of his troubled dream,
All on a sudden finds himself in-coiled
In some strange guilt; tho' how it was he knows not;
Nor even if his; yet, nathless, shame and fear

Are all around him; if by chance, just then,
From forth the sweetly dawning East, some ray
Slant to his eye-lids, heavenly visitant!
He, leaping up with inexpressible joy,
Finds himself shrieved; or as some noble spirit,
Who, lured by pride, (oh! if such tale be true,
May heaven from us avert the dire temptation)

Hath plighted with the Demon, dreadful pact!
And sold his soul for power; and, having tested,
Succeeds; then shudders at his own success;
And flings him on his kness in agony
Of prayer; if that, with penitence, may melt
The seal from off the accursed bond; and lo!
His prayer is heard. Like him—like him so saved
In such a mortal hour, ev'n so felt I;
When, starting from that gift of horrible might,
(Or be it dream, if dream thou still wilt have it)
I did behold again the cheery sun
On that up-sparkling river. Mother Earth!

To me thou ne'er wert dearer. Rather say,
Never so dear. Oh! how I joyed to see
Those blue-eyed children, lightly gamboling
On the shorn turf anear. That loving dog,
Who seemed as if he ne'er could love enough,
Fond frolicking beside them; every bird,
How small soever, that with tiny rustle
Burst from the bushes. Ay, and those grave daws,
Now, musing on the old cathedral tower;
Now, wheeling round and round in the clear air.
Oh! what a calming bliss to be once more
(Escaped such fearful fact—or mocking vision)
Amid these mild realities of life!
Then first it was I comprehended how
Complacently might king resign his crown.
Nor marvelled any longer at the tale
Of potent wizards, who had burned their books.

John Kenyon

Remembrance Of Sunset

Where silent elms are clustering round
That grey church-tower, which peers above,
She sleeps beneath the narrow mound,
Whom I had loved with brother's love.
The sun, o'er yonder wooded height
Slow-drawing on his evening streak,
Had glanced a ray of rosy light
Athwart her pale and dying cheek;
And while that glorious orb of his
Yet hung—departing—in the west,
Amid a kindred scene like this
Her noble spirit sank to rest.
But, ever since, this westering light,
These purpled hills, that flaming sea,
Those streaks o'er yonder wooded height,
Though beauteous still, are sad to me.

John Kenyon

Reminiscence

TO---

Yes, Lady! yes—that voice of thine,
That voice of thine, whose strange control
Steals o'er this wondering heart of mine,
As forth the touching accents roll;
On which, beneath the noon-day grove,
So late my rapt attention hung,
While that sweet tale of father's love
Came faltering from a daughter's tongue;
Yes, Lady! yes—that voice of thine
Recalls a voice I knew before,
And well may stir this heart of mine
With throbs it deemed to feel no more.

And then thy sweetly-pensive smile,
Whose sweetness seems to strive with pain,
This, too, in her beloved erewhile,
In thee betrays my heart again.
Yet when to smile of thine I cling,
I seem as to the dead untrue;
And what a joy thy voice would bring,
But that it brings a sorrow too!
I look—I listen—loth to part;
Yet wish that we had never met;
And feel how sadly fares a heart,
Twixt love that vibrates and regret.

John Kenyon

Reverie

Oh! blest it is by blazing hearth,
With many a well-loved friend beside,
And harp, and wine, and graceful mirth,
To mock December's stormy pride.
And blest it is, by studious light,
The gusty wind unheard the while,
To cheat the fast-receding night
With poet's song or sage's toil.
But I not less the hour may prize
'When glowing embers thro' the room,'
And fitful flame that flaps and dies,
'Teach light to counterfeit a gloom.'

For then I sit and dream again,
The visions of departed years;
A winding road of joy and pain,
A varied view of smiles and tears.
I think on days of youthful trust;
On Love's and Friendship's changeful will;
On some—estranged, and some—in dust;
And one or two that love me still.
Then, if the bitter with the sweet,
Too deeply mixed, bid Memory groan,
Yet Fancy lends her dear deceit
To mould a future all my own.
I cull from forth her boundless scope
Whate'er of beautiful or rare
Had ever fed my youthful hope,
And build me fairy domes in air.
While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress, or friend, around me stream;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream.

Yet, firm as faith of young romance,
These weave their spell within my breast;
Till, buried in delicious trance,
'Twixt truth and falsehood I am blest.
And hence it is the hour I prize,

'When glowing embers thro' the room,'
And fitful flame that flaps and dies,
'Teach light to counterfeit a gloom.'

John Kenyon

Rhymed Plea For Tolerance - Dialogue I

A.— That Preacher's strain I never could approve,
Who, but in driblets, dwells on Christian Love;
And when, in sooth, not wholly passing by,
Seems not so much to teach, as not deny;
Each controversial acre toils to till,
But Charity lets sprout or die at will.

Yet the heart vents still more indignant blame,
Where Lawgivers their sullen codes proclaim,
And idly would constrain the creed within,
As if Belief were Crime, and Tolerance—Sin.

And though, at length, our Senatorial Band,
Reluctantly—with cold and grudging hand—

Hath loosed faith's sterner statutes—yet a few
Retained, for old misdeeds to gall the Jew—
Those sterner statutes Custom's iron pen,
Rased from the Books, writes deeply still on Men.

Hence we of Tolerance little yet may boast,
Stranger, too long, to Freedom's vaunted coast,
For here tho' bigot Pride her mild disguise
Full oft assume, entrapping who relies,
(Like that far-fabled wolf who first beguiled
With grandam-speech and then devoured the child)
Yet not the less a ready rod he rears
To smite—where safe—whom more he hates than fears,
Nor slow, meanwhile, his own harsh heart to please
With that old unction, 'I am not like These.'

Deeds, that seem Love's, drip oft from saving Sense,
And many a slow concession filters thence;
But largest Prudence ne'er was Virtue's Whole,
Whose Love, a Spirit, gushes from the Soul;

Presumes no rights—deals round no patron glance,
Nor Toleration is, but Tolerance.

B.— If gush Our Love in no strong jet that towers,
To fall, refreshing round, in rainbow showers;
This praise, at least, accord us, 'Faith is Ours.'

A.— Alone, where Faith and Tolerance combine,
Religion deigns to rear her genuine shrine;
There finds companionship of kindred birth,
And then, as once the Angels, walks on earth.

And can I then but feel the deep offence,
When stern Intolerance leagued, and low Pretence,
In that pure fane, with foul intrusion, nest,
And crush her births—the loveliest and the best!

Such tax Religion pays—her glory's price—
Her style usurped by every masquing Vice.
Pebbles—though bright—fraud takes small heed to them,
But every rogue would counterfeit the gem.

B.— Nay now beware.

A.— Of all the wraths that burst,
A Saint's, unsainted, is, I know, the worst;
To lash the dire offence at once they turn,
And still, when conscious most, most fiercely burn.
But if the just reproof—your harder fate—
For plaint no room allow, nor open hate;
Each to his den, like venom'd adders crept,
Watchful the while, but moveless as they slept,
Some dark reprisal, there, they brood and hatch,
With deep low cunning, wisdom's overmatch,
And closely-guarded look and guarded word,
All smooth! aye, smoother than the smoothest sword!
Oh! thou, believe them never. If they swear,
Look to thyself, and still the more beware;
For he, who listens, walks, in treacherous trust,
O'er burning lava, and a fragile crust.

And hapless He, o'er whom with hanging weight
Broods silently a theologic hate.

In his simplicity he fears no shock,

So calm, so very moveless seems the rock.
But soon he feels, by stroke alone made known,
The sliding avalanche of slippery stone;
Then lies, an unsuspecting victim, low,
For 'twas from treacherous stillness came the blow.

B.— Then wherefore speak?

A.— Yet why should I be mute?
If right, allow me—or if wrong, refute,
And own that where Intolerance wakes the offence,
The verse that smites her is but self defence.
And what smooth doctrine wins us to applaud,
Where interest hints the gain, a pious fraud?
What schoolman's logic strains us to confess
A lie may suit with honest purposes?
For us; who flowers in honour's path would strew,
Nor much averse 'to give the Devil his due,'
We still will hold it shame and bitter ruth,
Where interest-minted falsehoods pass for truth.

And lo!—a church now beards each brothel door,
Yet Vice lives on as sensual as before.
To each its votaries throng and plight their troth,
And one same congregation serves for both.

For loitering worshipper small space allowed,
Now gasping aisles scarce hold the Sunday crowd.
Yet let thine eye pursue—God's service o'er—
Each solemn group through home's re-opening door;
There mark how soon the world resumes its place,
And earthly lusts rush in on heavenly grace.
See caustic slander there, see sneering craft
Mix up for thirsty hate some well-spiced draught;
Which lips, just reverent from the sacred cup,
Shall welcome with keen smile and drain it up.

Such, oft, is faith. A pageant but for gaze,
A gold-fringed drapery, kept for public days
Which to a closet, for the most, we trust,
And, but for sabbath service cleanse from dust!

As pilgrims, whose devotions else might faint,
Will worship oft the image for the saint;
As grasping misers come, ere long, to prize
Gold for itself, yet more than what it buys;
Thus—soon—the soul to mere external leans,
High ends forgets, and meanly dotes on means;
And, as in Social, so in Sacred, clings
Not to the Spirit, but the Forms of things;
Prims outward feature for the grace within,
Puts on the sackcloth, not throws off the sin;
Earth views and skies, nor worships at the view;
But, once a week, prays stoutly in a pew.
Just sees, just feels, as Custom shifts the prism,
And—born a Spirit—dies—a Formalism.

Might'st thou, e'en thou, most wise and holy Paul!
Quit, for brief season, heaven's eternal hall,
And for mere Saint made known—nor more—nor less,
Just prove our thresholds, in some simple dress,
With locks ill shorn, and labour-hardened skin,
I know not house polite would let thee in;

Nor, spite of all those glorious gifts of thine,
What bishop's civil wife would ask to dine.

But though Devotion's shows, probed more and more,
Might still be found more hollow at the core;
Belief, not Practice, prized at highest rate,
Barren Belief, or fruitful most in Hate;
Yet, as each Age, of cheerfulness or gloom,
On its own pilgrims dons its own costume;
As Guilds, whate'er the individual man,
Wear all one cloak—the livery of the clan;
So universal Britain now—no less,
Her motley motives shrouds in 'Godliness,'
—As smugglers clap run goods beneath a pall—
And that mere skin-deep covering serves for all.

And yet my friend, by no irreverence stirr'd,
Nor mocking 'Godliness,' I name that word!
Paul's word, no doubt, when, with uplifted hand,
He taught at Athens, 'mid the Gentile band;

Or when, in Judah, 'gainst her ancient yoke
He strove, and Felix trembled as he spoke.

But 'Godliness' then told of faith and love,
Mild Duties here, and holiest Hopes above;
Now some mere thought of Ritual import brings
Things change with Times and Meanings change with Things.

Some flashy hand-bill spreads the news of grace,
'To-day, a Mission Meeting will have place.'
Prompt at the call, pure Faith, Pretence, and Sin,
Interest and Fear, strange medley, all rush in;
There pious Hope, there wide expanding Love
Join in one prayer, to speed the herald dove;
There, too, each scheming son of Trade attends,
This, keen to gain—this, fearing loss of, friends;
Poor Cliens owns such summons sad for him,
Still he must fail not,—'tis my Lady's whim;
The village Galen, groaning inwardly,
Contributes there, perforce, his hard-carn'd fee;

Glad Sectaries profit by the occasion lent,
To waft o'er distant fields the dear Dissent;
There too the Rector's glebe its produce pours,
Seed for new church on far Australian shores;
Which, so he deems, to future tithe shall grow,
While Deans expand and purple Bishops blow.
The Borough Member too must join the tribe,
For speech, well timed, may save a costlier bribe;
There too his Lordship comes—perhaps a prank?
Not so—the chair, 'tis thought, befits his rank;
And, Ascot o'er, play slack at every hell,
'The thing seems proper,' and 'He might as well.'

Love-feast is this, where brother links with brother;
Or Gamester Club, where each would pluck the other?

B.— Yet, in one Bark and pledged one Course to steer,
These must be Tolerant, if not quite Sincere.

A.— Creeds—inward—outward—Doctrine of old sects,

Philosophy hath borne, but Heaven rejects.

God scarce may yield the Conscience thus to trim;
Mixed motives are for Man; the one for Him.
Though worldly shrewdness worldly work may do,
He loves alone the simple and the true.

Nay more. As kings, who cling to right divine,
Freedom to crush, though jealous, yet combine;
So these, though differing each, all join to assail
Who rashly dares to stand without their pale.
Nor him avails on Truth, for aid, to call,
Nor, Samson-like, assay to shake their wall;
That shaken wall, if chance so far he win,
Shall, with its block and rubble, whelm him in.

B.— Though Falsehood thus may cowl opinion in,
Or timid Prudence veil, to falsehood kin,
Frankness shall dare a course direct to steer;
We make—ourselves—the Spectres which we fear.

A.— So dreams the Youth.—Age dreads the tongue may slip,
And presses close the finger on the lip;

And pondering what the cunning Frenchman said,
'That truths there are to show and truths to shade,'
Tames to meek mien avowal's earlier pride,
And e'en from Friendship's ear submits to hide.

Hence warmth, nor honest doubt, is licensed here;
With hypocrites e'en silence is a sneer.
Frankness himself they strain, through fear, to aid,
Unwilling partner in the dirty trade.
For touch the mystery these their rites enclose,
Hint, or but look, what each in secret knows;
And, 'Drug the bowl,' they shout; 'Prepare the rods,'
'For he, like Socrates, denies the gods!'

Teacher of Truth, be this thy gracious charter,
To live imprisoned, or to die a martyr.
This lore each age hath learned—or old or new—
Derived alike from Christian and from Jew.

Hence thou, Geologist, take timely heed,
Nor let a quarry quarrel with a creed.

Truth may lie, fossil, in some cave, no doubt;
But 'twere a mad success to win her out;
For ere Thou lead, or She come safely forth,
Astræa must return once more to earth.

Rapt to some peak, or trailing on the ground,
For each how various Faith's horizon bound;
Yet, far as Soul Sincere is virtue's test,
What truly each perceives, for each is best.
Let Knowledge upward win from view to view,
But drag not—strain not with Procrustian screw.

B.— Duty, you grant, must rise in truth's defence.

A.— But Duty, oft, is Temper's mere pretence;
And ne'er is soul so deftly swayed to evil,
As when, in guise of Conscience, tempts the Devil.
—And if a heart be found, which rarely plies
To the fond need of human sympathies,
'Tis there Intolerance loves to fix her place,
Proud, as old Stylite, of her narrow base,

And wider worship views with aspect sour,
And crooks and more contracts from hour to hour.

B.— But Certainties, we hold, should doubt exclude—

A.— 'Twixt sect and sect, yet where the Certitude?
For very truth their dogmas all profess,
And who may dare decide 'twixt guess and guess?
Or every shifting shade perceive or say,
Which parts, not black from white, but grey from grey?
Various our means, one same our right to scan,
The judgment is for God, and not for Man;
And if that judgment of the all-seeing Throne—
No thought may dare, yet Tolerance is our own.

B.— But judge we must.

A.— Then let no blinding pride
Of dogmatism, but mild heart decide.
Where his own Wisdom bounds his Mercy's store,
The veriest Sage in charity is poor.

Perchance, who doomed us thus to disagree,
Planned this arena for our charity;
For beauteous end, bade Virtue—Weakness—join,
And turns our freedom's self to discipline.
By many a step we mount Heaven's awful stair,
And Love fits here, as Knowledge waits us there.

If e'er some slight misgiving thou should'st know
Of present creed—for thought will ebb and flow—
Straight, from thyself, the passing lesson take,
And spare another's for thine own mind's sake.
Faith, vowed unchangeable, may win Thee sorrow,
When Light—to-day—appears less Light—to-morrow.

But if thine own peculiar faith be fixed,
Yet earth is fully wide for creeds commixed.
Or, grant, that all must fuse to one consent,
Love more hath won than ever argument.
Nor need thine argument be rasping file;
Pour forth the milk of reason, not its bile;

Nay, if by foe ungentle scorn be shown,
Bear his Intolerance and chain down thine own.

As Poles Magnetic, like the like, repel,
So harsh with harsh refuses still to dwell;
But, proved with wiser gentleness aright,
Veers gladly round to greet its opposite;
Clasps, with a trembling joy, the new found heart,
Turns, as it turns, and clings and dreads to part.

Hence Church, which votaries would retain, when won,
Of hard, unsocial creed the taint should shun.
Exclusive dogmas train the heart to Pride,
Pride, bent on power, picks quarrel to divide;
And—lordliest sin of all the mortal seven—
Would rather 'reign in hell, than serve in heaven.'

And hence (so suicidal follies work)
Our kirk-born pride, ere long, rejects the kirk;
And—(as from public ball small gentry wheel
To squeeze select in parlour cribs genteel)

Comrades no longer—Leaders all would be,
In chapel snug, or pious coterie;
And—orthodoxy, like old empire, gone—
Like Satraps, split the realm—to seize a throne.

—'Twere better done—if Churches thus may thin—
Like ancient Rome to 'ascribe new nations in,
Far as we may each sacred Guild extend,
Hard names forbear—and greet as Friend to Friend.

B.— But, strongly feeling, strongly we express.

A.— Yet Permanence how little waits on Stress!
Half-Christian Plato! long thy mild controul
Clung to the musings of the thoughtful soul;
While harsher lore—the Cynic's bitter flow,
And all the dogmas of the Portico,
Dictators once—ruled but their little year,—
A story now—a moral—or a sneer.

Truth, self-assured, no wrathful flutter knows,
As sculptured strength is noblest in repose.
'Tis thus some Masterpiece of Grecian art
Speaks to the vision of the thoughtful heart,
And, mildly powerful, tames the gazer's breast
To the calm spirit of Majestic Rest.

Ye Suns, which every clime in order strike,
Ye generous Breezes, poured for all alike;
Hues, for all hearts outspread thro' western skies,
Fields—Woods—with each your odours, forms and dyes,
Which all may gaze upon or breathe at will,
And, if unlike, all odorous—beauteous—still;
From lip of blooming rose or lily's cup,
Or whencesoe'er, One incense offering up;
Do ye in sooth no exhortation read,

Ye mild Analogies! to milder creed?

And, more than these, Thou, all-recipient Mind!
That, not to flesh tenement confined,

Canst thence, as from some watch-tower's narrow bound,
Scan, like Astronomer, all ether round,
Or glance at will to each remotest place
Of earth's domain, the Denizen of Space;
Thou great Discoverer! chartered to explore
Far steppe, or central range, or circling shore,
From where, contracted to their pigmy span,
The Polar Race recedes almost from man,
To where Circassia's ever-favoured earth
Guards the fine impress of primeval birth;
Or cleavest th' unparcelled sea, our world's highway!
Or hung on planet, cycling far away,
Its path, its period with high thought canst dare,
Nor e'er dost stoop to doubt that Good is there;
Oh how (like felon who not heeds the link
Which galls his limb, so he but eat and drink)
Oh! how may'st Thou, to such brave height once risen,
Crouch down content in some sour dogma's prison?

Or if, descending from that height sublime,
We turn the records of historic time,

Of many a vanished age the deeds recal,
And think—and act—and grieve—and hope with All,
Their opportunities—temptations—scan,
And finding Human—sympathize as Man,
Led onward thus to gentle thoughts and free,
Say why—Devotion!—are we doomed to be
But harsh and narrow when we link with Thee?

Let Thought with Love but teach us to expand,
And Love shall teach yet more to understand;
So he who climbs finds other hills in view
Far o'er the plain and climbs those others too;
And winning thus his prospect—part by part—
Stamps in the end All Nature on his heart.

B.— 'But Principles we hate, and not the Man.'

A.— 'Tis dangerous thus to balance on a span;
For spite each nice distinction, logic-spun,
Thinker and Thought, to common minds, are one.
Not Calvin's self could snap the vulgar tether,
So burned the Man and Principles together.

Give Law her sword—to Faith her bough of peace;
For conscience Faith was meant, and not police;
No petty constable at wake or fair,
But the heart's silent guardian everywhere.

B.— 'Not Peace I came to send ye, but a Sword.'
'Tis Scripture text.

A.— And Calvin's ill-strained word.
Calvin—who made God's judgment—fore-decree,
And but some gloomier Dis his deity;
Whose doctrine was a Babel, jargoned o'er
With strifes of thought, as strifes of tongue, before;
—Election!—Reprobation!—terms as clear
As ancient Asia's mystic character,
The pilgrim puzzling, while he stoops to pick
From some half dubious site his lettered brick;
—Or catacomb, 'mid whose dim caverns crost,
Man 'finds no end, in wandering mazes lost.'

The particle divine—the guiding spark—
Love, that like sun-beam, beckons through the dark,
On Her I call'd, to cheer the abhorred gloom,
And echo'd every vault—'Predestined Doom.'

B.— Yet now—no Rothschild—greedy king to soothe,
Is strained to yield an ingot—or a tooth;
No star-chambers their penal dues devise,
Then priest-like, feed upon the sacrifice;
—The race were bigot then —now—each, at need,
Finds, at least here,—fit couch to suit his creed.

A.— And if thou choose some couch of theirs, 'tis well—
Or lend thy single wave their tides to swell;

But self-supporting Faith, that swears to none,
Or pledges Sacrament to God alone,
—Such as our holy Milton chose at last—
At this by every hand some stone is cast.—

Hence Worldly Calculation leagues with Scet,
Where breastworks guard and battle lines protect;

And, like shrewd knave, enlisted Regular,
Claims surety from acknowledged rights of war;
While the poor clown, unprivileged by drill,
Home who defends, is hanged or shot at will.

Thus faith, that fain would seem communion high,
—Let truth be told,—full oft is policy;
A home-insurance—a prudential plan—
By some avowed—through God to manage Man.

B.— Yet pause and say—this policy austere,
Till our third George's day scarce thriving here,
Whence sprouts it now?

A.— From league of pride and fear;
From league of anxious pride and courage lax,
For sway their sceptre, for defence their tax;
Such two-fold sword, as cunning fencers wield,
At once an edge to smite, and ward to shield.

When lofty Charles and ancient Privilege
Of new-mailed liberty first felt the siege,

Then first Old England rather groan'd, than rang,
With godly hymns and Barebones' nasal twang.
But then, not less, the godless cavalier
Flung his loose ballad on the offended ear;
And still, for so extremes extremes provoke,
Mocked the prim preachment with the ribald joke.

A following century struck a wiser mean;
The mass was then more cheerful, but more clean.
Yet then un-prudish Addison could win,
Then Pope deem'd raillery, unstarch'd, no sin;

Then scornful Swift could frolic with free touch,
And Peachum pleased a race that robbed not much.
Some even have played with Congreve's comic lyre,
Nor felt the tinder temp'rament take fire.
War with pretence satiric Fielding waged,
Yet thousands read of Blifil unenraged;
(For least who feign are least by banter crost,
'Tis doubtful titles stir the passions most
And follies forth, and forth e'en vices streamed,
Yet Man, meanwhile, was Better than he seem'd.

Then too our Second George, not over-staid,
Would lead his court to merry masquerade,
And if the mask chance-vices covered there,
'Twas not, as 'neath the Third, life's daily wear.

And Puritans, extinct, had ceased to rage,
And vex with holy war the graceful Stage;
And then if Constance, or discrowned Lear,
Had roused some loftier throb or deeper tear;
Or sweet Miranda's purest womanhood
Touched the fine sense of Beautiful and Good;
Or glorious Falstaff, raciest son of earth,
Shook from his sides immeasurable mirth;
Or free Autolycus, as nature free,
Had won to bear his rogueries for his glee,
E'en then—no follower of play-scourging Prynne
Denounced, as now, the Sympathy for Sin.

And then—though Wesley—strong in fervent youth,
Strong in man's weakness, strong in his own truth,
Followers, ere long, drew round him—Hope and Fear—
Rueful Pretence, and Penitence sincere;

Votaries, the most with little to resign,
Rude audience—from the workshop or the mine;
And though erewhile, at pride's or faith's command,
Some titled dowager would head the band;
For stimulants still charm fair devotee,
Chapel for church—for writ, extempore—;
And though a court, more decent than before,
With cowl and hood court-vices covered o'er,

And cast from Windsor's towers a monkish gloom;
Yet Frankness still had genial air and room—
Free, in the main, to pray—or sport—at will—
And our dear land was 'merry England' still.

—But when, as chanced, from limbs and wearied reins
France, slavery-stung, burst body-bands and chains;
Some were rejoiced—some doubted—some were sad—
But all, at length, allowed her freedom—mad—
Most for our own proclaimed a muzzle right,
Some would have slain—so much they feared the bite.
The danger, seen through mist, loomed large and near,
And Reason—Principles—were lost in Fear.

Then ancient statesmen took their daily range
Round one small spot, and shuddering talked of change;
—Or, niched, discreet, behind Prescription's shield,
In his own wrong, urged Valour to the field.
Wealth, 'mid his coffers, feared th' approaching war,
And ribboned Title trembled for his star;
Vague unused terrors crept upon the brave,
And scarce the scornful Bar its scorn could save.
The ready Pulpit joined the Statesman's game,
And Freedom walked our British soil in shame.

And then, though some of wiser, loftier views,
By Meditation kindled, or the Muse,
With peril not unthreatened, took their stand,
And taught 'unawed amid a slavish band,'
E'en these, though strong to bid the Few rejoice,
Yet found no echo in the general voice;
For still, o'er leaden brains and hearts of clay
Philosophy and Song both died away.

Nor well-starred They, to whom, in that sharp hour,
Heaven gave the gifts of Genius and of Power,

And poured upon their spirits, like a flood,
The heroic instincts of the Pure and Good.—
In world-shunn'd solitude alone they stood,
Feared and yet scorned,—half excommunicate,
Detraction joyed on all their steps to wait,

And infant foes were taught to lisp in hate.

Nor strange, if then, by force prevailing prest,
—For still 'mid storm the Pliant fares the best—
Apostate natures recantation sung;
Then with new vigour, virulent as young,
Well nigh to blood the ready rabble stung;
When Priestley, driven in distant lands to roam,
Himself the flames scarce 'scaped that wrapt his home.

—But thou, Transcendent Burke, Ambiguous Sage!
Great Light, at once, yet Darkener of our age!
Beneath thy home's necessities severe
A pensioned pleader, yet of soul sincere;
If thou, when zeal to blinding passion grew,
Could'st overlook the Many for the Few;

Lend thy strong hand to prop proud prelate lord,
And o'er the serf keep hung the feudal sword;
Yet that all-grasping sense, that fancy's fire,
That pictured speech, far ages shall admire;
That intellectual chivalry, whose pride
Was glorious combat on the weaker side;
That generous heart, which saw th' Oppressor low,
Then 'quite forgot his vices in his woe.'

Strange fear of Change beneath thy Sorcery grew,
And Kings perplexed and smote the Nations too;
And strengthened These on ancient forms to rest,
And cheated Those to hold old forms the best.

Such was the cup that met my youngling lip,
And, pressed in friendly guise, not hard to sip.
Yet from the draught full soon I learn'd to shrink,
As healthful stomachs loathe the sick man's drink.
Smooth as it was—and well contrived to steep
The drowsing sense in slavery's icy sleep;
Yet then, as nature kindly willed it should,
Forth from the proffered evil leapt a good;

Th' o'erstrong narcotic played a wholesome part,
And, with redeeming nausea, cleans'd the heart.

—Then first it was, in rising manhood warm,
Fondly I dared to gaze on Freedom's form.
Some high-born Grecian maid she seemed to be,
With open brow and wild eye glancing free—
Wild glancing eye, that yet could flash a frown,
If need there were, to awe presumption down.
Stirred deeply by her pure yet thrilling touch,
At glowing twenty I might glow too much;
But now the headlong age, that deems amiss,
Is past—and knowledge shows her as she is,
In the clear mirror of calm judging truth,
Almost the vision of my earliest youth;
E'en now, if force at home, or foreign arms,
Would quell that glancing eye, or soil those charms;
If lustful kings should mark her for their prey,
Or the vile mob, more fierce and lewd than they;
E'en now, with deeper, holier love adored,
I fly to shield or save her with the sword.

Yes—Kings might learn, if truth could reach a throne,
That Freedom's dearest rights are all their own.
That where the free-born soul hath leave to start,
Quickened themselves, and quickening every heart,
They lead—at will—a more devoted throng
Than e'er for Asian despot rolled along,
Lead to heroic life, or glorious graves;
But Themselves wither in a land of Slaves.
So wisdom deems. So Britain deemed no more,
And exiled Freedom fled the scoffing shore!

Soon—Freedom, queen of willing service, gone,
Hypocrisy usurped the vacant throne;
Cheered by the proud—the rich—the base—the dull—
And every fool, too cold to play the fool.
All in one grave demeanour primly deckt,
—For Gravity still cheats with most effect—
City and Court, all false and all afraid,
Low at her feet their solemn mummeries played.
The sneering Sceptic there, to swell the band,
Linked with the noisy Bigot, hand-in-hand;

There bold impetuous Speed, on fire to go,
Reined in by prudent Dulness, paced it slow;
And there, with all beguiling, few beguiled,
Augur looked Augur in the face, nor smiled.—

Then frightened Wealth, as new-scared converts use,
Repaired church pulpits and re-lined his pews;
In those new precincts dozed at morning prayer,
And when he took his evening nap, 'twas there.

Nor less in grave committee was he seen,
The district-Draco, with demurest mien;
While brief decorum nursed a double zest
For the coarse story and the tawdry jest.

'When Evil men conspire, the Good combine '
This flamed their flag device, their motto line.
By this each Mummer vowed, not swore, to stand,
And new-born statutes vermined thro' the land.
'Twas then, like loathsome worm, in loathsome sty,
The rank Informer swelled and Prompter Spy—

How fostered there let wiser heads decide,
By Love for Virtue or the Hates of Pride.

—'Twas thus by Pride and Fear the pact was built,
When Godliness held forth his hand to Guilt;
Yet hence his own snug vice each fondles free,
Safe in the cloak of that free-masonry.—
So when our Bacchus of the Colonnade
To cheap champagne invites and masquerade,
Sinner and Saint, coarse manners and foul skin,
Beneath the shrouding domino all slip in.

Then vaunt we not of 'pious.'—Oft as heard,
False, hackney'd as it is, I hate the word!
Whether on graceful Fry, with eloquent lip,
Or Stock-exchange Apostle—with his Scrip;
Or lean tub-orator, with way-worn feet,
Or well-paid club-itinerant, posting fleet;
Or quaker, proudly-plain, or judge be-furred,
The nauseous praise be hitched, I hate the word—

Term prostitute! like prostitute, allied
By turns, with fraud—with meanness or with pride.

In Gentile days, while yet the darkling crowd
Clashed shields to Mars, or low to Plutus bowed,
A Piety arose, of birth divine,
Like that, first known on earth in Palestine;
Teacher of doctrines, yet dissuading hate,
A scrip, his treasury,—and a staff, his state—
Mere Pilgrim, glory—gold—rejecting all,
And sprung too fresh from heaven, for earthly thrall.

—A farther day that sandal'd Pilgrim sees,
With 'mitred front, in courts and palaces.'
For simple scrip, huge coffers whence to draw,
For simple staff, sustaining sword of law.—
With statesmen leagued, with smooth expectants round,
New see to beckon,—family to found,—
Thus hardly placed beneath temptation's rod,
Ah! me—if Mammon share his heart with God!

O'er bustled with the World—this truth confess—
Religion drops, too oft, to Worldliness;
Of many a heaven-born hope foregoes the hold,
And every hour soils more with earthly mould;

Yet, decent ever, looks and moves with care,
And ushers Peccadillo in—with Prayer.

Let Saints to regal roofs make rare resort;
Not oft a Cloister purifies a Court.
Nay, let experience tell, the Royal Touch,—
—Least—when most fond—not aids Religion much;
Infects with human lusts, with worldly hopes,
And taints from Village Vicars up to Popes.
Faith's essence pure sublimes o'er King and Queen,
Nor should a Laïs ever make a Dean.

But if our Church and State must needs combine,
And at each levee bow some stout Divine,
—I, little bred in theocratic school,
Would rather there behold him bow, than rule.

—For when, in courtly service wax'd too great,
Some Laud, or some La Chaise, assumes the state;
Conscience must wait, all trembling, at his beck,
And burdened Faith, like camel, cower the neck;

Or free if these should stand and nought afraid,
Like Hermit Peter, he proclaims crusade;
Prudence, old pilot, dashes from the helm,
And, for some idle dictum, wrecks a realm.

And, hardly more, amid the quonum kind,
'In fair round belly, with good capon lined,
'And eyes severe, and beard of formal cut,'
Love I to see the Parish Pastor put;
There to discourse of partridges and hares,
And hold grave descant on the guilt of snares;
Then raise his tone, and feel, or feign, an ire,
Such as may please his Lordship or the Squire!

In yon low hut, yon orphan'd hearth anear,
Me more delights our Curate mild to hear,
With holier 'instances' and 'wiser saw,'
Than ever came from human wit or law.

Ah! me—if mammon scarcely less affect
Us too, the flock, establishment and sect!

In earthly coin all struggling to be paid,
And traders all—in grand or petty trade.

Frail the mere faith, in love not founded deep,
By every worldly interest lulled to sleep,
Be God himself, alone, our love, our pride;
For pay who serves, perchance may swerve aside.
Here earth's rich realms, there heaven's far-visioned coast,
What marvel, if the nearest tempt the most!

Blest days were those, ere clustering clubs had birth,
And men stood prized for individual worth.—
Ere yet the vain, the cunning, and the crazed
Coarse conclaves held—be-praising and be-praised;

Their force—mere pioneer for fortune's way—
Their meekness—but a mask for worldly sway.

Glad for themselves, not scornful for the rest,
—So best is praise to heaven, thro' love, addrest—
Then the meek Layman, and the Layman's wife,
Contented trod the sheltering vale of life;

Their docile hearts to sabbath lessons turned,
Nor dared to teach, but practised what they learn'd;
For trespasses forgiven implored, each day,
And, more than all, temptations kept away;
Each happy in the joy plain duty breeds,
And winning heaven e'en less with prayers than deeds.

The Pastor then 'to all the country dear'—
No platform orator—no pamphleteer—
Not basely busy for committee sway,
Nor plotting glories for some public day;
Not skilful with God's name to interlace
Smooth flatteries for villains high in place
Nor darting round, from undisputed chair,
O'er prostrate souls damnation and despair,
Down to degrade pure love of God's own law
To felon fear, by lashes kept in awe;
He, 'mid the shades of parish usefulness,
To his home flock did his whole soul address,
Or wrought, retired within that studious home,
Some learned toil for ages yet to come;

Nor harsh, meanwhile, nor loud; but mildly grave,
And still most mild, when most intent to save.

Such were the 'pious race' of other days,
And many a lingerer still deserves the praise.
But these, though heaven look kindly on the race,
Our Sancto-Critics deem devoid of grace;
A piety baptize of coarser frame,
And every busy bustler wins the name.

Where now our 'Pious Pastor?'—Seek him there,
In the stoved chapel, near the modish square,

Around where lady patronesses throng,
And list a sermon—as they list a song.

But not like him, whom Cowper's touch could show,
Of doctrine light, and pastor less than beau;
In pulpit tactics He more deeply wise
Of Calvin's creed the stirring lore applies;
Like him, with mystic phrase, succeeds to move,
And holds, like him, by threatenings more than love.

Nor shuns he now to vent the sound austere
Of hell, erst irksome to politer ear;
While, each to other wafts the penalty,
'For me th' angelic flower—its thorns for thee;'
Some pleasure strange e'en that dread word excites,
A 'belle horreur,' that tickles as it frights.—

Yet parish duties him suffice not half;
O'er farther flocks must stretch that pastoral staff.
His week-day works yon echoing hall must greet,
Where clashing chariots block the wrangling street;
Or hand-bill spread, or paragraph must teach,
Or his own modest after-dinner speech!

All are not such! One know I, mild, sincere,
From low ambition, as from avarice clear;
With tolerance blest, with lore, by toil unrolled;
All Grecian sage, all Hebrew bard, hath told;
Critic, yet shrinking from polemic strife;
And Teacher, whose best lesson is his life!
On him, and minds like his, when sad I sink,
My wearied heart, refreshing, turns to think—

But names, that Virtue shall be proud to shrine,
Too well I love, to mar with praise of mine!

Yon 'Pious' Layman—(not like him of yore)—
So well the pupil tests the teacher's lore—
Yon 'Pious' Layman—he whose bursting purse
For widows', orphans' trusts, is ne'er the worse;
Say whence could he the holy claim imbibe?
He found it in two words, 'subscribe—subscribe.'

Is there a mission—some enthusiast's dream?
Or new-planned church—a builder-preacher's scheme?
Some week-day sermon?—Jew-converting school?—
Pleased to be marked, and not unpleas'd to rule,
The busiest, boldest, of the gathering tribe,
He dins from door to door, 'subscribe—subscribe—'
For all his toil of body and of lung,
—Like Irus, stout of limb, and glib of tongue,—
The sole return his modest wishes dare,
The treasurer's office, and the voted chair;
The snug job contract, the consulting fee,
And all the honour of the charity!

Yet he, meanwhile, with looks that bear no part
With the low interests grovelling at his heart,
Can talk of labours, but for conscience, hard!
Then hint how virtue is its own reward,
And own some hopes of heaven—in humbleness!—
Though disappointed, none need miss it less,
Who, if in truth, no other world were his,
Hath schemed so well to be repaid in this!

There are, I know, with purest impulse fraught,
Impulse, not wildly good—but duty-taught,—
Who to no human eye their acts address,
Seen, or unseen, their instinct but to bless;
Their pity, but without its pride, impart,
Let gold pay gold, but conquer heart with heart.
Spirits like these no phrase of mine would wound,
For if not here, oh! where is holy ground?

And what tho' sometimes with this finer joy
A human frailty mingle its alloy;
And the pure ore of hearts, love-satisfied,
Some tinge betray, less pure, fused in by pride;

E'en then, t' assay the vessel's quality
But little prone, whence want may drink supply,
Not mine to intercept the flattering fame—
Their's be the vestry vote, the public name;
Nay, not the beadle, as he bustles by,

Shall doff his hat more civilly than I.—

But for the paltry tribe, who calculate,
Still ere they give, the profit and the rate;
Each pro and con. in balanced file arrayed,
And charity itself,—a thing of trade;
And e'en, when worldly least, then lent, not given;
Upcounting still their interest-score with heaven;
But for these ruffian-mendicants; (just such
Le Sage hath drawn—a musket for a crutch
Who quest for alms, in accent of command,
And in the name of pity, bid me stand;
Hector'd by such, I prize at equal rate
Who robs me with the pistol, or the plate.—

Yet this might pass; and He, without my plaint,
A Worldling here, be worshipp'd there a Saint.

On saintly throne, by brother worldlings set,
The well-fumed Lama of his own Thibet!
But if he wield that most ill-gotten name,
A mace to batter down his neighbour's fame,
And crush who scorns to flatter; stung at this,
What marvel, if I paint him as he is!
Then from his full-blown pride and bursting bags,
Turn to revere sincerity in rags!

B.— If motive-sifting thus our deeds you touch,
The world will say that you refine too much.

A.— That Deeds are good or ill, as motive-wrought;
That holiest Forms, not Spirit-fed, are nought;
That Piety degrades her high-born strain,
In scramble with the mammon tribe for Gain;
That Charity of Heart is heaven's delight;
These are Plain Truths, and Maxims very Trite.
Yet, as still-trickling rain-drops, one by one,
Will wear their impress on obdurate stone;
As green trees clustering round our very door,
Seen daily, for that cause but please the more;

So Moral Truths, that seek not to surprise,

As more familiar, more attract the wise;
So Maxims Trite, their frequency their strength,
By repetition stamp themselves at length;
With oft-driven furrow, first, the Reason till;
Then, from the Reason, pass into the Will.—

Let Meditation deep—let Fancy bold—
Vaunt of new matter—I but dress the old;
Perchance ill dress; but striving nothing New,
Am well content to be accorded True.

John Kenyon

Rhymed Plea For Tolerance - Dialogue II.

A.—

By no faint shame withheld from general gaze,
'Tis thus, my friend, we bask us in the blaze;
Where deeds, more surface-smooth than inly bright,
Snatch up a transient lustre from the light.

Yet as rich hues, in loom of nature spun,
The rose itself, will fade in torrid sun;
Or diamond to vapour fleet away,
In the fierce furnace of the focal ray;
True virtues thus, of finer frame or hue,
In that unnatural glare of public view,
Their beauty lose—and lose their essence too.

Applause least wins, where hearty thoughts engage,
'Tis the mere Actor frets him for a Stage.—

Nor Man alone now strives for saintly fame,
The passion steals o'er many a gentle Dame;
And faith, that once held timid course—to pray,—
Now throbs in furious lust of public sway.
How could I dream, that thou shouldst e'er affect,
Gay, flirting Phyllis, leadership of sect?
Frank and fond-hearted then, if not discreet;
The censor now, and terror of the street.

Yet, Phyllis, by thy new evangelism
Though puzzled sore, I never called it schism.
Knelt at thy bible-rout, where chairs were hassocks,
And petticoats expounded texts—like cassocks;
With penny contributions wage no war,
Nor breathed one comment on thy ball-bazaar.
If thoughts will rise, when simpering Rosa barter
For coin of whisker'd cornet ladies' garters;
If gallopade be scarce a saint-like frolic,
And waltz, though winning, hardly apostolic;

Earth thus for heaven to tax may yet be meet,
Odour of gain, spring whence it will, is sweet;

And if, in sooth, sprout forth some small abuses,
Yet all come sanctified to pious uses.

License thus far, far Saint, my creed accords—
But blame I must that tongue, 'whose words are swords.'
If holier now, dear Phyllis, than of yore,
And great the gain—be tolerant yet the more;
For of all humours by which soul is crost,
A piety, turned acrid, cankers most.—

Melancthon! well didst thou thy mother sway
To keep her aged feet in the old way;
With life's first lights to cheer its evening gloom,
And drop, in placid temper, to the tomb.—

As quiet leaf, that sleeps on summer trees,
Will turn and tremble to the awakening breeze;

As glassy lake, that wood and sky reflects,
Or ruin, boast of ancient architects,
Let the gale rise, and clouds come clustering o'er,
With wave upheaved runs darkening to the shore;
Sensitive Woman thus (as some have thought,
With sympathies, yet more than logic, fraught,)
O'er her sweet rest should winds of doctrine blow,
Quick as the leaf, will vibrate to and fro,
Or break from anchorage, where she rode at ease,
And whelm her own, and wreck her household's peace.

And yet Devotion, though from high her birth,
Was made to dwell amid the ties of earth,
And, with her own melodious prayer to blend
All gentle names of family and friend.
And if not always in her eager ears
Responses ring, immediate from the spheres,
Yet sweetest echoes back from earth are given,
That if not heavenly all,—still speak of heaven.

But, Woman, Thou, who o'er the craving soul
Would'st nought but heaven's unmingled music roll;

Thou, soon or late, shalt feel th' o'erwrought desire

On the strained strings or languish or expire;
And then Hypocrisy—forgive the word—
Steals in and—for Devotion—smites the chord;
Or through that gentle breast, by stealth, in glide
The vexing demons of Dispute and Pride.

Ah! then, when daily joys less fondly press,
When Sister—Friend—or Husband win thee less,
Through thine own bosom stern inquiry move,
And sift, if this, indeed, be Holy Love!

Giver of gifts! Disposer of my life!
Oh! save me from a Controversial Wife!
Each Gospel lesson be it her's to prize,
But more its Duties than its Mysteries;
Her sigh to guilt,—her tear to suffering given,—
And, night and morn, her own sweet prayer to heaven;
But let no demon tempt her to the claim
Of Parlour-Disputant's ill-sorted fame;

Such theologic triumphs all not worth
One happy household-look—one quiet evening hearth.

Thou Faith, with whom, when purest,—group unriven—
Link Charity, for earth—and Hope, for Heaven—
(Group lovelier than those favourite Three of Jove,
By fabling chisel wreath'd for classic love
Before whose upward glances, glory-fraught,
Words quail, and faints the ineffectual thought;
Yet, downward from that high communion sped,
Then, sweetest Comforter of sorrow's bed;
'Tis thine in human hearts, unforced, to grow,
Dropt gently in from all we see and know;
And, of all earthly spots, thou lov'st to dwell,
Unvex'd, in home affection's tranquil cell.
To thee, plain prayer—proud mass—each varying toll—
All are but types, whose essence is the soul;
Tests—synods—these thy spirit loves, nor lacks,
But warder's bolt abhors and lictor's axe.

Louis, by servile France misnamed the Great,
(In France when kingship stood at higher rate)

Say, could he hear, where now, most Stately Shade,
He loves to plan some Stygian masquerade;
—Or, following up the bent of mortal will,
Along Cocytus weaves the grave quadrille;
—Or rather, leaving now that fabled plain,
To take, as suits our theme, a graver strain;—
Say—would he still his earthly dogmas hold?—
And meek, yet steadfast faith, and conscience bold,
These would he deem that Kings—that God—should pay
With dragonnades on earth and pains for aye?
Or of a wise Repentance feel the weight,
And o'er each bitter edict weep—too late?

Ye who on mortal man temptations shower,
One trial spare, and prove him not with Power!

For, as changed soil still modifies the seed,
As clime adds fierceness, gentleness, to breed;

As chemists mark, when like approaches like,
How strong affinities will rush to strike;
As generous wine that makes the cheerful glad,
Transforms the dull to stern—the wild to mad;
So Faith, in harsh or gentle bosom sown,
Shapes here a Calvin—here a Fénelon—
Him who his Lord's own spirit seemed to wake,
And him, who burned Servetus at the stake.

'Mighty, we shout, is Truth, and must prevail,'
Nor, till the glove be thrown, begin to quail.
Then in her scutcheon we suspect a flaw,
And harness, for the battle, strong in law;
And as the doubtful duel draws more near,
More doubt the verdict of the Ithuriel spear;
'List some stout Pleader—Second for the fight,
And pack a jury—to decide the right.

Yet Truth from Themis asks nor sword nor mace,
Give but the quiet balance in their place.
Who with brute force her temperate cause defends,
Her plaint must bide—'Protect me from my friends;'

And thence may ponder on His patient word,
Who bade the hot disciple 'Sheath his sword!'

Beneath the proud Pantheon's girdling dome
When found all vagrant Deities a home,
From some fond votary each received a prayer,
And Nemesis and Até had their share.
But when that vast idolatry was gone,
And Faith, less darken'd, worshipp'd but the One,
To Him each worshipper, in selfish guise,
Transferred his favourite Virtue or his Vice.
In Love, Love found his godhead.—The Severe
Felt not the Love, and bowed alone to Fear.
Each culled some different text—Self-Will to stay—
Or read the self-same text—a different way.

So—Passions still were Deities—and Schism,
As free to choose—but sourer Pantheism;—
And hence 'twixt sect and sect, when strifes arose,
And banded Converts widened off to Foes,
The scornful Sadducee would jeer amain
At Discord and the Furies come again!

Thus Doctrines, rebel natures meant to bind,
Themselves, more oft, are govern'd by each Mind,
Most have two Creeds.—The one from Ritual known,
The other, Temper-moulded, and our own.—

Reason may balance with her patient poise,
But Temper-creeds admit no compromise.
—As Friends, far sundered by the Atlantic main,
To friendship cling, and sigh to meet again;
Yet when to Village Neighbourhood they draw,
Like other neighbours, stickle for a straw;
So minds that muse, with no unkindly heed,
Where mountain doubts divide, on distant creed;
Let but some two approach so near together,
Mere feather parts, will quarrel for that feather;
And fume that, won almost to concert pitch,
Accord should there, abruptly, make its hitch.

Some from themselves wide differing, yet sincere,

Swerved by disturbing fancies, swiftly veer;
Or if, like Saurian monsters, turned with pain,
Once turned—dart forward fiercely straight again;

Now grasp the Whole, now some stray Scrap recal,
(For Text or Context oft is difference all)
Yet, Bosom-pride of every change the root,
For each would Suffer, or would Persecute;
—Had Martyrs or Inquisitors become,
And dared—or lit—your fires, Madrid and Rome.

The Goule—'tis story of Arabian strain—
Her rice picked up with bodkin, grain by grain;
And nature thus, we scarce know why, imparts
Her needle intellects and pin-point hearts—
We scarce know why, unless her aim hath been
Word-Critic shrewd, or Theologian keen,
Who, dull to what precedes, or follows next,
Clips out his Godhead from some single text.

Seize we, with wider scope, the Gospel's Whole,
Flux dim with clear, and fuse along the soul.
Then—when our Form beams forth, of perfect mould,
And not one drossy fragment specks its gold;
—Then, let Comparison together strike
This and That Image—and oh! how unlike.

So Scripture text may serve man's Mortal Foe,
So Scripture text hath wrought our weal or woe;
Now interceding Saint, that leads to God,
Hired Bravo now, that stabs at Hatred's nod.
He least perplexed through discrepance shall move,
Who makes his running comment—Christian Love.

B.— But now, concede, we neither hang nor burn;
Tests are mere Forms.—From ours you'll scarcely turn.
What Virtue—Wisdom—own, if Thou reject,
Of Prejudice—of Pride—thysself suspect.

A.— But where Compliance helps to mend our store,
'Twere wisdom to suspect ourselves yet more.
—All courtesy to faith of foeman shown,

I deem not well to parley with our own.

Nor well to pledge, where Tests—grown Forms—disjoin
The inward Spirit from the outward Sign;
For that first Insincerity, confess'd,
Sheds its far tinge of Doubt on all the rest.

Who Truth on Falsehood builds, with idiot hand
But piles his granite on a shifting sand.

Bold Gelon, called at length to pastoral cares,
Sifts through the test he scorns and stoutly swears.
Servio, with wiser heart, if weaker head,
To 'scape dilemma, gulps the oaths unread.

Whoe'er to 'sticking place' his heart would screw
For Faith, or Fair,—at least should deem them true.
Worn Creeds have pluck'd new strength from rival Schism,
But die beneath a bought Indifferentism.

Why must Authority on oaths insist,
When thus we take and break them, as we list?
And where the justice of a penal due,
That holds the frank and lets the cunning through?

Reared up in Paley's qualm-controlling school,
Our good old Granta's comfortable rule—

You say Subscription scarce was meant to bind—
But is there here no martyrdom of mind?
Accept—and lurks no Snare for conscience by?
Refuse—and threats no starving Penalty?
If now no Alva torture for the state,
Is there no Alva in a private Hate?
No Force, when lacking plaint of guiltier deed,
We criminate a neighbour for his Creed?

That neighbour on thy manor starts a doubt,
Or from thy favourite vestry votes thee out.
The law forbids to stab the man or stone.—
Hint him not Orthodox, thy work is done.
Let honest fools cry, 'Shame.' Thou, unperplexed,

Shalt show good warrant in some twisted text;
Whilst hand with thine each coward foe shall link,
With Thee combining,—if like Him they think.

Perchance, the very Courts shall help thee through;
For truth and justice have, long since, been two.

Lo! where yon Pleader-knave—Paine's perfect growth—
With well-fee'd horror probes some Sectary's oath.
With 'Sir, you this reject'—or 'this believe.'
(The judge—perchance—no stickler in his sleeve
Then doffs that mask devout—just one hour worn—
For curse habitual, and a sceptic scorn.

And who but grieves, when dooms dogmatic part
From Priesthood's lip—more rarely from his heart;
To that, more oft, some milder reading taught
By gentle nature, or by critic thought.
What though his voice subdued, and shrinking eye
Speak word and thought contending inwardly;
What though, stern Athanase, (if Sainted once,)
Thy curses win from Mercy no response;
Yet, dropped on soil of Ignorance or Pride,
To Hate they spring, and man from man divide;
Of old—to pyre of martyrdom gave birth,
Now agonise some dear domestic hearth,
When son or husband, starting from the thrall,
Incredulous hates—then madly doubts of all.

Where Bigotry in voice of vengeance speaks,
Himself fore-slays the very end he seeks.
Some kneeling Faith near Tolerance still is found,
Intolerance wafts Scepticism round;
Or else to other folds drives clean away
Whom sophist tongues had never lured to stray.

Benign examples, on which all may look,
Plead more for creed than preachment or than book,
Of many a rising schism repress the spark,
Or win the rebel back and save the ark.

—Yet, spite of time and trial, still the same,

Our explications and our oaths we frame;
Frame for eternity!—though every year
Steal silent on, its own Interpreter.
The Forms meanwhile remain, a seemly crust,
Till some Chance hurtle—and the things are dust!
Like dust or petty nuisance scorned; but yet
Potent, till then, to torture or to fret.

Lore, from calm bowers, by Cam and Isis laved!

Lore, by fond Youth with cheated transport craved!
'Tis yours to lure the young Enquirer on,
Through many a path, that tracks from ages gone,
Till, where Thought's vistas open yet more free,
Subscription blocks the way—and bans Degree;
And, while a thousand powers of prospect stir,
Would strain to beg some loop-hole glimpse from Her.

Who crouches through that low and narrow door,
To him his Fate cries sternly—'Think no more.'
Hard to abstain, but perilous to press,
Where after-thought may bring 'the more or less';
And Thou be held, as fast or loose thy thrall,
Socinian here—there Evangelical.

If Thought will rise, let Thoughtlessness dispute it;
A strenuous idler, fiddle it, or flute it;
Be wise in tulips, learned on a haunch—
Your little Thinker is the truly Staunch;
Or better—let thy life with deeds be fraught,
Such as heaven loves—but still abstain from Thought!

Beneath the surface of yon level deep
Lurk rifting rocks, and gulping currents sweep.
And what are Creeds, planed down by State Decree,
But the smooth treachery of a summer sea?
This Leo learned, Rome's Pilot, to his cost,
When half his freight of ancient faith was lost.—

And now, scarce less, a strange horizon lowers,
And Change, His church that wreck'd, may burst on Ours;
Burst, as of old, like Luther's lightning shock,

The fold half-crush, and dissipate the flock.

Hence more, as earthly meed may seem less sure,
Cleanse we our faith;—for honest held, if poor.
Soldier, for conscience his good sword who draws,
Should have to boast, at least, a sterling cause.

That scattered creeds shall scarce converge to one,
If observation, century-school'd, have shown;
As adders deaf to each dogmatic word,
Nor much conciliated by the sword;

'Twere now as well another course to trim,
If not for wisdom, merely for the whim;
And since Authority so long hath tried,
And failed at last—take Tolerance for a guide.

But if Authority we needs must have,
With rod to smite and fetter to enslave;
Her let me worship, venerably old,
Tiara-bound, and vesture starred with gold;
And hear—'mid crosses, shrines, her anthems roll,
And incense breathe, at once, through sense and soul;
As tost, in fragrant wreathings, to and fro,
Amid the pictured dreams it lingers slow
Of thoughtful Raffaele or vast Angelo.

Blind wisdom theirs, who bade old Harshness stay,
And Beauty—half that soothed it—tore away.

—Plain English Scripture doth right well for me;
But if its blessed meanings still must be

Read in another's sense—mine strictly bound—
Me then let loftier Latin peal around,
Where antique mass intones its deep delight,
And far tradition rules, in Reason's spite.

Ye Senator-Economists, who plan
Substantial blessings for Elector-man;
Embodying each your own, or prompter's scheme,
Canal or corn law—currency or steam;

For one brief hour, these loftier cares at rest,
Weave one poor speech, to plead for Minds Opprest.
Let trade, if so ye deem, unfetter'd be,
But leave the Conscience, like the trader, free.
Tithes—and tithe-proctors, if ye will, control,
But dogmas harsh, not less, that tithe the soul.
Let Charity no more be ruled a sin,
Nor Justice, but by license, smuggled in;
Nor holy rights of Tolerance left to guess,
But Love, like Hate, by statute taught express.
Disused though long, impeach her not of loss,
But trumpet-sound her, at the public Cross;

—Yet not for dole, at will withheld, or given,—
But birth-right, like the genial air of heaven.—
If round us yet ancestral rancours throng,
To you, ye Senates, half pertains the wrong;
—But ill a backward legislation suits,
The law 'twas Orpheus gave, and not the Brutes.

B.— Yet ours is 'Toleration practical'—

A.— If fit the freedom, why retain the thrall?
—Rightful our Creed, like ancient Christian men
Why strained to hide and worship in a den?
—Why still condemned beneath your sway to pine?
Speak, Athanasius! speak, ye Thirty-nine!

Wise is it, thus to bid us weep or laugh?
Half to perplex and turn to bigots half?
While of old disputants on our free sense
Ye harness thus the hates or the pretence,
Ye too, like charioteers who curb and strain,
May chance, when least ye fear, to snap the rein.

Of tangled problems why thus large your list?
Christian to be must each turn casuist?
By cobweb clues how hard our way to find!
'Tis not with gossamers we lead the blind;
And, left to hair-split logic's breaking line,
What Theseus-Faith may triumph o'er the mine?

Your zig-zag ray distracts our straight desire,
Or tempts, like ignis fatuus, to the mire;
Light would ye proffer—let it aid—not mar,
To focus drawn and fixed as polar star,
Nor hard to find, and never kindled hot,
To martyrize dim sight which finds it not.

Thee, Charity, did peace-persuading Paul
Wisely prefer, the rarest gem of all;
For Alms he knew, full oft, the gifts of Pride,
And Faith, erewhile, by Selfishness supplied;
—But thee, of Meekness born, and Self-control,
The very scarcest product of the soul.
In strife apart our other Virtues flee,
When not in sister union held by Thee;

And, breaking from their old harmonious chime,
Jar, in each other's ears, like Guilt or Crime;
But where thy presence is, there all the rest
Cluster in Love, and that one spot is blest.

And proofs have been, if ancient tale may move,
Of Faith unconquered and unconquered Love;
Who, trailed amid the Arena's brutal crew,
Died for belief, and prayed for those who slew;
And still of these, though much in sooth they fail,
Fragments are found to win us to the tale.
As when some mighty tree hath met the shock
Of storm or axe; a ruin—or a block;
Though high in air no more its branches toss,
The wreck remains—to tell how vast it was.

'To tame the proud—the fettered slave to free,
These are imperial arts and worthy thee.'
Allow me, thus, in English phrase to quote,
When 'glorious John' translates what Virgil wrote.
Nor ill, in truth, some loftier virtues throve,
When bowed the darkened world to Gentile Jove;

Nor were long years, ere purer faith was born,
Of household loves and duties all forlorn;
And every land hath known, since first it saw

Seed cast on furrow, wise restraint of Law;
—But—Humbled Heart! that lesson first was given
In Galilee; to temper sterner leaven,
Make Heaven of Earth; then lead from Earth to Heaven.

Thence Virtue—not to Action prompted less,—
Yet harder glory won from Passiveness;
And, peacefully sublime, brooked sweetly, there,
Her doubled task—to Do and to Forbear.

—Oh! bitter produce of that Christian tree,
For Loving kindness and for Charity!
One sheltering sky—one earth to feed the root—
The Brethren pluck—and Hatred is the fruit!
The pious bandit thus, Abruzzi's son,
His dagger bears and crucifix in one;
The point full sharp for deeds of blood and guilt,
And our meek Saviour carved upon the hilt.

—With differing optics earth and sky we view,
And what to Me is dark, beams bright to You.
Nay things, the very same to sight confest,
With differing impulse strike upon the breast.
Say then, if Outward Forms,—the plainest speech
Of nature, various aspects yield for each;
If mountain peak, and forest's deep abyss,
To thee indifferent, mould another's bliss;
How then may Mere Conceptions, clear far less,
To all alike conveyed, alike impress?
Of Will, of Thought, the measure who shall find,
Or strain one dogma on each varying mind?

When from our North the Zephyr-breeze shall blow,
And Tides flow equalised, nor high, nor low;
On the lithe Pard when shows each spot alike,
And with one colour eyes from Beauty strike;
Then bring the pattern of thy Choosing Wit,
And bid all human race conform to it.

Or rather, as each herb selects from earth
The vital food that fosters best its birth;

Even so, let Individual Minds drink in
The nurture to their spirit most akin;
Freely by each his own calm progress won,
And—of Faith's 'many mansions' found the One.

Then ceaseless why, in village and in town,
'Twixt sect and sect, dispute of up and down?
With secular why mix religious strife,
To add one pang the more to worried life?
If coming worlds at pleasure we divide,
In this why walk not kindly, side by side?
In guild why thus contentious ever meet?
Why thwart our pavement? why not light the street?

B.— But Faith is Will.

A.— So taught Bray's easy Vicar,
And innocently wondered folk should bicker;
—Next, held each stickler-obstinate,—not dim—
Last, hated all, no weathercocks, like him.

—Oh! milky maxim! And not his alone,—
Now Metaphysic claims it for his own;
And having twisted,—doubted,—talked,—his fill—
Decrees, at last, dogmatic, 'Faith is Will.'

—And when the crowd, of old, was clustering thick
Round the last throb of dying Heretic,
Inquisitors, I ween, might well instil
The very self-same maxim, 'Faith is Will.'
—Convenient phrase! that serves his several turn,
Who wills to flatter, or who wills to burn!
Or saves the brambled foot from thorns that goad,—
Of our Theology the Royal Road!

On crust-when Stoic dined, in robe of stuff,
'Tenacious! Just!' the phrase went well enough;
But, for a race 'mid silks and clarets cast,
Trite is the maxim, and the mode o'erpast.

To him, who wills a borough or a place;
To him, who wills a living from His Grace;

—Wills, for his son, a rich and pious wife;
Or, for himself, unpersecuted life
Or him, whose heart and brain, tired fairly out,
Will sweet repose from logic and from doubt;
I too, well pleased to thrive and to be still,
I too, full oft could echo—'Faith is Will'—
Though checked, as oft, by him, whose honest heart
To Conscience clings, and spurns the Trimmer's part.

Where varying Creeds diverge, like vista-views,
In separate lines, and Thought stands free to choose,
If honest Prejudice oppose some hill
To block the best—thus far let Faith be will.
But hold no commune with that Faith polite,
Which, knowing black for black, would will it white;
And taunts each slower creed which dares gainsay,
Or clasps not yet, her option of to-day,
And feasts with every rite in every grove,
And veers by turns to Titan and to Jove.

Not Swallows, whom the instinct of the year
Convenes for flight, with swifter motion veer,

When all the tiny birds in long array
First cloud with cindery wing the clear blue day,
Then, as by signal, suddenly to view
Glance their white breasts and change the squadron's hue.
Not rapid more (to illumine that mighty dome,
'The world's great wonder and e'en thine, oh Rome!'
When loftier festivals their pomp prepare)
The fiery transmutation flames in air.
There, while innumerable eyes on that vast ring
Of tempered lamps, serene as moonbeam cling,
Hands all unseen bright flambeaux toss on high,
And the changed fires flash ruddy round the sky;
—But Faith, I ween, with steadier light should burn,
Nor quite at will, like glancing Swallow, turn.

But where stern statutes summon state-bound men
Old creeds to quit, or—quitting—clasp again,
And sorely-hunted Faith pursuit bemocks

With season-shifted hue, like Arctic fox,
Of such Compliance deem not We quite ill
Though prone it be to mould Belief on Will.

Our Prosperous Faith, unthreatened yet, may frown,
But hard it is to wear the Martyr's crown;
And justly hence high guerdon waits on them,
Who, spite its thorns, have dared that diadem.

Yes, Conscience, thy strong Presence can constrain
To view, with scarce a smile, e'en Southcote's train.
Corrupt their text may be, or weak its gloss,
But Soul Sincere to gold can coin the dross.

Truth's ancient Landmarks, parting Good from Ill,
These well to know nor labour asks nor skill;
Conscience hath writ life's daily duties plain,
Nor lets the Moral vibrate with the Brain;
But Creeds that from ideal regions come,
And 'mid unvisioned objects seek their home,
—Each with some favourite phantasy imprest,—
On this they muse or rave, and scorn the rest.
Hence Syria saw her silent Hermits brood,
Hence whirl'd the Priestess 'mid the Delphic wood;
Hence Swedenborg 'presumed empyreal air'—
Hence Tongues Prophetic screech in Regent Square.

Calm Reason may deplore such Freaks should be;
But, if they find their Followers, leave them Free.

Some think a Sabbath feast no grievous sin;
Some on their Sabbath let no stranger in.
This creed with cheerful dance accords right well,
This deems a pirouette a step for hell.
If sour Geneva bear a Sunday play,
Give we, as mildly, every faith its way;
For many a Pilgrim Prayer, to Us unknown,
By its own pathway travels to the Throne.

Where mighty congregations throng amain,
And pulpit-thunders shake the astonished fane,
And through far roofs long-volumed organs peal,

There are, who then alone consent to feel.
Others, Shy Souls! whom silken crowds perplex,
Polemics tire, and Actor Preachers vex,
Love more, like Hermit, near his cross of stone,
To pace, at eve, the silent turf alone,
And softly breathe, or inly muse, a prayer,
And find, not less, the General Father there.

And whencesoe'er the glow—from Outward Sense,
Or fully fed by Inner Heart intense;
What wins to love his God and Neighbour best,
Be this, for each, the object and the Test.

'Built in the eclipse, and rigged with curses dark,'
With Puritan I quarrel not, though stark;
But let him breast along his Narrow Sea,
Right easy, if he keep but clear of Me.
—Yet some a Sabbath galls, o'er-strictly set,
—As hounds, kept long at walk, in kennel fret—
And then the silent niece, the meek-eyed wife,
Shrink from the prelude growl of coming strife,
As, 'neath the thraldoms of a tedious day,
Strained chords of temper, one by one, give way.
E'en Thou, the saccharine of all week-day men—
Confess, my Friend! art somewhat acid then.

—Oft too, on minds not abstract quite, nor pure,
Long-stretched devotions that but ill endure,
Slander, who thrives on leisure unemployed,
Slander drops in, to fill the uneasy void;

And duly makes, if not in holiest guise,
Her Sabbath day, a day of Sacrifice!

Thy Creed, like Country, is thy Birth's, not Thine;
The unconscious Baptism of some frontier line;
Swathed round Thee by yon sweep of Mountain ridge,
Swerved by a Rivulet, changing at a Bridge.
On this side or on that by hazard thrown,
For regal rights we battle or our own;
And here or there, as first we draw our breath,
Theology decrees us Life or Death.

Such, where thou partest with thy ten-yards span
Of Polity and Faith the various man,
Such thoughts, St. Maurice! to thy Bridge will cling,
Around its antique arches clustering,
Calvin and Leo, Landaman and King,

Or e'en old Pagan Jove, who first saw thrown
Those arches o'er thy waters, Rapid Rhone.

All that feeds eye and ear—our earliest books,—
Fond childhood's hill-side walks, and playmate brooks,—
Tale of old martyr—picture—bust—or song—
These stoutly chain, or hurry hearts along
With force than reasonings and than truth more strong.

Or, if Conviction's guileless sophistry
Steal in, with kisses, at the Mother's knee;
'Mid toils, so seeming-slight, yet firmly set,
What after-growth may struggle with the net?

'Tis thus th' Affections clasp what Faith denies,
For creed who quits must snap a thousand ties.
Him tolerate we, whom Conscience strains to stray,
And him—who simply plods the beaten way.

B.— False or absurd, what, treat all creeds alike?
Nor Ridicule to shame, nor Law to strike?
'Twere like the man, so fearful, or so civil,
He burned a taper both to Saint and Devil.

A.— False creeds have thriven, e'en when by Laws comprest,
And Ridicule been busy with the best.
Where creeds no public decencies offend,
Nor with forced nostrums our poor creeds would mend,
To pass them gently by is Wisdom's plan;
Let Force sway brutes, but Reason keep for man;
Nay deem unsafe with Ridicule to smite;
Laughter may err; but Mercy must be right.

Who Ridicule would make of Truth the test,
He reasons ill, with moral not the best.
Our mirth breathes oft-times from no zephyr-coast,

And seldom is most wise, when keen the most.
Jester—for jest—Wit asks for cutting sense—
Heaven's milder canon bids Benevolence.

As keenest eye, closed in by cramping fence,
Will lose, or soon or late, its wider sense;
So least who knows least feels another's right,
And Narrow Creed most oft is Narrow Sight.
—And hence Intolerance, of all her sons,
For her chief Aide-de-camp most loves a Dunce;
Who, like dense Critic on Greek text obscure,
Still rages most, when least his light is sure,
And where an Angel's sense might pause in fear,
Decides at once with statute or with sneer.

Or Bigot shall himself exclude the ray
From his own crypt, and then denies the day;
But while, like fog, He dark and darker grows,
And o'er all nature his own darkness throws,
Love, like the bow that curves from yonder Blue,
Cheers earth and sky, and nobly spans the Two.—

The slowly judging eye—the doubting ear—
The holy love of truth, the reverent fear—
The philosophic brain, that loves to scan,
May make a Sage, but spoil a Partisan.

From struggling sects, such wiselier keep aloof,
For Zealotry but seldom waits on Proof;
The All—the None—concedes no ground between,
And smiles, with bitter scorn, at 'Golden Mean.'

But not alone within some cloister's bound,
Or chapel trim, contracted creed is found.
At good men's feasts, as where monks diet spare,
The harsh, exclusive heart is everywhere.
The Libertine, whose nights, whose every day,
Wild orgies whelm of pleasure or of play;
When Apoplexy, his first visit, knocks,
Or Palsy helps, unasked, to shake the box;
E'en he, at once, with new-born zeal is wroth,
For Ignorance and Vice turn bigots both.

Go! go! Thou frightened Neophyte and learn
This wiser creed and milder truth discern.
Where Penitence takes counsel but from Fear,
Tho' in heaven's track—to heaven she comes not near.
Back to the path, whence first we turned aside,
'Tis frank Regret—'tis loving Hope must guide;

But up the Steep and thro' the Eternal Gate
No Penitence may pass which leagues with Hate.
The 'Joy in Heaven' is over them alone
Who curse no Neighbour's sin, but weep Their Own.

Little to know the lot of fervent Youth,
Yet deem that little All—undoubted truth.
For him each boundary line is coloured strong,
And all is fiercely right, or fiercely wrong.
Nor ill on Youthhood sits that generous rage,
But let a wiser tolerance wait on Age.
Firm on himself the rule of Strictness press'd,
Each mild Exception keep he for the rest;
Through many a meditation trained to know,
How little sure our guesses here below;
Through many a moral conflict, viewed or striven,
Taught, ere he die, 'Forgive to be Forgiven.'

In the Brain's chambers, as the Heart's deep frame,
How oft is error, that which vice we name!
And hopes—for Virtue—thoughts—for Truth—that try,
How oft, by strange refractions, swerved awry!

When Timour ravaged realms, in fierce delight,
His dream was Providence, and Fated Right.
When Ganges chokes some aged parent's breath,
'Tis Filial Love prepares the work of death.
Their falsest Creed, some Truth ill understood
Their Foulest Act, some Misdirected Good.

In minds, as nature, 'tis my doctrine still,
The Good is essence, accident the Ill;
And deeds, that win from virtue least consent,
More oft o'erselfish than malevolent.

To this, 'mid Virtue's wreck, I grapple fast,
And cling in hope, like sailor to the mast.

Mark, with observant eye, the inferior kinds,
Through all their tribes how fondest instinct winds.
Drink in of Infancy the answering smile,
Ere petty passions touch it, to defile.
Hear Youth his glorious aspirations roll,
Ere worldliness steal in, to taint the soul.
Of Manhood test the basest, earthliest leaven,
And feelings mingle there might mix with heaven.

These—not ascetic dogmas that degrade—
Shall teach to love the beings God hath made,
And—glorious fruitage from a noble stem—
Lead on to love the God, who made, through Them!

Who asks allegiance, as from heaven addrest,
On sympathies akin to heaven must rest.
Build Faith on fancies fine, or matter brute,
Your subtilities we slight—your facts dispute.
Reasonings may cheat us, if they soar or plod,
But God is Love, and Love the test of God.

When He with primal love bade hearts o'erbrim,
'Twas not alone mankind to love—but Him.
He gave us faith, in Him—th' Unseen—to trust,
He gave us justice, Him to adore—the Just.
Less to the senses spake than souls of men,

And now would teach us, as he taught us then.

And when best logic's best-forged links decay,
And e'en foundation-facts dissolve away;
—Such logic as, perchance, Aquinas drew
From facts, which sifting Brown for errors knew—
(For truths undoubted, of one age the text,
Are oft the scouted falsehoods of the next)—
Faith then shall find in heart from hates aloof
Her holiest hope and grasp her firmest proof.

Such Faith be mine! Earth-lover, yet with wings

To soar above the abyss of mortal things;
And, if through doubtful skies sent forth to roam,
With thought on Love still turned—Her ark and home.

Fade tangible and visible combined,
She lives, while conscience lives and mind is mind.
Let Mutability through systems roll,
She still is here, the Witness in the soul;
And here, eternal as in heaven, shall stand,
In tabernacle never made with hand!

Instructors bland! your memories ne'er shall cease,

Who teach us Wisdom, when ye teach us Peace;
Who win to think, and prize each thought that flows
O'er gentler hearts, from 'meanest flower that blows';
And—our World's Book thus mildly understood—
Find your own solace in a Creed of Good.

Walton! who long in busy city pent,
Yet most, 'mid streams and fields fulfilled his bent;
Benign of spirit; and, though Simple Sage;
How fondly have I turned his quiet page;
And led by sedgy Lea, or clearer Dove,
Inhaled, with him, the very breath of Love.

And me, if since, in ne'er forgotten hour,
That Lore of Love hath stirr'd with deeper power;
And taught yet keener glow—with wider aim—
Nature's own Priest, 'twas Wordsworth fed the Flame.

B.— Circle of Tolerance if thus vast you draw,
Useless our hulks! and every sage of law!
Of idlesse shall each Midas feel the strain,
And Sidney Cove her pilgrims crave in vain.

A.— If Crime she find, let Law just vengeance take;
But Crime of Creed—she doth not find, but make;
Like Æsop's wolf, who marked the lamb for prey,
Herself the Guilt invents; then turns to slay.
But He, each inner motive wise to scan,
Shall look with kindlier glance on erring man,

And, though the Lictor smite, refrain His rod;
For Tolerance, earth-rejected, dwells with God.

Pilots of Good! who guide o'er farthest seas,
Untired, our Bible-laden argosies;
To where, by populous Ganges, weed-like thrown,
The poor dejected Paria pines alone;
Or where, 'mid Polynesia's seas of blue,
Some island Seer proclaims his stern Taboo;
For these, with generous haste, unload your freight,
Our Faith, our Morals,—all—except our Hate.
By Indian streams, beneath Australian skies,
Countless as stars, ere long, our Fanes shall rise,
And white-robed Hopes each altar beam above;
But lay their first foundations deep in Love.

So shall your task be hailed indeed Divine,
And Heber's gentlest spirit bless each shrine.

I, in their turn, have known each various crew
Of all the sects, that ever Evans drew.
At morning meetings joined each gathering host,
And pledged at dinner many a dismal toast.
True, when I heard each straining leader teach
Of heights exclusive, all assumed to reach;
Left far behind all stretch of sympathy,
Beating the wing, in vain, to soar so high,
My grosser essence, all unused to bear
The tingling of those Alpine regions rare,
Dropt gladly down to breathe in common air;
To tread my own calm valley-paths again,
And talk of simple Creeds, with simple Men.

Yet as the traveller, who some lofty brow
Hath reached, whence spreads his journey past below,
Enough perceives to know how turned aside
His erring steps, if not henceforth to guide;

So I—well marked each controversial tribe—
Each race that will not, or that will, subscribe—
Calvinists—Lutherans—Socinians—All—
High-Church—Low-Church,—and Evangelical;—

Conflicting tenets, each by each abhorred,
The other each to hate their sole accord;
Observed—how this asserts what that denies,
One takes the extreme, another qualifies;
Or, veering round, by turns affirms—retracts—
Now swerved by fancies—steadying now on facts;
What tangled strifes contending sects provoke,
The snow-white surplice, or Geneva cloak;—
If but t' asperge the new-born babe of sin,
Or plunge the full grown Baptist fairly in;—
How firmly this on Two—this leans on Seven—
Yet, right or wrong, in earnest All for heaven;—
I may not dare pronounce man's proper creed
So full in light, 'that he who runs may read.'—
Can own a Stray may honestly be out,
Nor quite would damn a Brother for a Doubt.

Instincts there are, I know, that rise and cleave,
Wind round the heart, and bind it to believe;
And Doctrines, such as early lore imparts,
And sheds, like morning dew, on Infant Hearts,
When o'er her lisping babe the Mother stands,
And moulds his prayer, and joins his little hands.
Yet these, Guides only for the straightway road,
That humbly leads, through duty, up to God;
But blind and helpless for the dangerous lee
Of wide theology's unfathomed sea;
These all desert the wretch, who hangs, perplex'd,
On the dark comment and the doubtful text;
Doomed, for his sins, to drift, and drive through all,
Mad or inspired, from Brothers up to Paul,
And force him, long by winds of doctrine blown,
To seize the helm—and work a course his own.

Oh Friend, be ours, of softer metal wrought,
To rock us in the creed each mother taught!
To others left the controversial leaf;
By others reaped its triumphs—and its grief!

Is it a boon, repose of soul to quit,
For all the pride of logic and of wit?
And, too vain-glorious for quiescent state,

Mix fiercely in dispute and learn to hate?

Is it a boon, when Love's and Friendship's voice
Call thee with them to trust and to rejoice,
Like some far planet thy lone course to wheel,
Nor feel, nor hope what others hope and feel.

When village-groups, for sabbath worship drest,
Throng the green churchyard where their Fathers rest,
And mourners, bending o'er the precious dust,
Win solace from the Bliss that waits the Just—
Is it a boon to approach that house of prayer,
And feel thy footstep hath 'no business there;'
To kneel thee, where thy boyhood knelt—and then
Weep in thy heart Thou 'canst not say Amen?'

Vainly with Guilt when groaning Virtue strives,
And, but in Heaven, not one sad hope survives;

Is it a boon thou, Knowledge, hast conferred,
To deem the strife unmarked, the groan unheard?
Ourselves to deem mere Atoms, random-hurled,
The Orphans of an Unregarded World?
And 'mid the body's, 'mid the soul's distress,
To clutch our utmost Hope—from Hopelessness?

Is it a boon, when Dissolution's strife
Hangs—trembling—o'er the bed of Child or Wife;
And the fond Sufferer turns amid her pain,
And looks, and strives to say, 'We meet again;'
Is it a boon to stand in anguish by,
And meet with some lip-phrase that clinging eye,
While the sad Sceptic Heart makes no reply?
Then, bending o'er the tomb to which she sank,
Present to feel—and Future—one mere Blank?

Oh! thou from Faith's mild bondage sadly free,
'Lone mariner, upon a shoreless sea;'
Oh! say, thou deeply wounded Child of Doubt,
Thus, in thy solitude of soul, shut out

From Nature's fondest, holiest sympathies,
Doth Knowledge—(vaunt it Knowledge)—pay for this?

Thee shall some Guiding Instinct's mild behest
Yet turn in season to the appointed nest.
On ever-questing wing 'twere hard to go,
For surer All we Feel than all we Know!

Hence Thou—though logic-mailed, shalt not disdain
Philosophy!—that mild enthusiast train;
Spirits, by nature's thousand harmonies
That touched, respond; and, without reasonings, wise,
Find types for faith, in earth—and sea—and skies.

Malvern—I love to track in thought, e'en now,
Our twilight path along thy turfy brow,
That tinted—oh! how fair! by Hallowing Even,
Rose, like a ladder step, 'twixt Earth and Heaven.
Eastward, o'er sunless valley, far beneath,
Wan shadows crept, our Human Vale of death;
While beamed, soft radiant, in the mellow west,
Mute as we gazed, the Mansions of the Blest!

Who, placed on that far-grasping promontory,
Not thus had imaged out life's Two-fold Story?
Or Who, beneath that sweet and silent air,
Not worshipped—as Our Spirits worshipped there?

But art Thou of those searching minds, in sooth,
That track, through Thought alone, the vein of truth?
A keen and subtile Intellect, yet stout
To drag Conviction from the depths of Doubt?
Then delve; but from thy toil keep pride apart;
And link to the Stern Brain a Trusting Heart.

So shalt thou reach Belief.—Not the mere Note,
Stale from some Teacher's tongue, and caught by rote;
Nor Dogma, from the forehead of a Dunce
That springs, his Pallas, cap-a-pee at once;
Nor love-taught Faith, as Knighthood fierce to start,
When Beauty smiles Belief into the heart;
And prompt, not less, let wrinkles—frowns—succeed,

To start, a Ready Recreant, from the Creed;

Not such Bold Trust, as Convict Wretches snatch
From desperate need of heaven's uplifted latch,
Whom Ghostly Comforters so cleanse—or paint—
Not one but dies, at least, a Three days' Saint;
Nor yet the dim assent from Anguish wrung,
From feeble signs scarce gleaned, or faltering tongue,
When speechless Palsy hangs the helpless head,
Or low Delirium plucks the dying bed;—
For when no Instinct of our vital Whole,
Nor early Lesson, woven with the soul,
Carefully, then, to concentration wrought
By the slow process of alembic Thought,
Belief is toil of Brain; 'tis Labour's dower,
Reared painfully, thro' frost—and sun—and shower,
And the slow growth of many a ripening hour,
That, like the Aloe's blossom, long to come,
Yet comes at last, and bears Immortal Bloom.

Thrice happy He, who—Conqueror at length,—
On such calm height repairs his weary strength;

And, more and more, sees darkness rolled away,
Till the full prospect brightens into day.
Yet—not for this, inflate' with new-born pride,
Looks he with scorn on all the world beside;
But downward casts benignant glances o'er
The minds that stray, where his had strayed before,
And hopes, and prays for All, before that Throne,
Where Knowledge—Goodness—Intellect are One.

And what though Some, not shunning to be taught,
Nay thirsty for the truth, yet find it not;
Like fainting travellers, through Arabian sand,
Where the shy fount still mocks the searching hand,
Condemned to tread the Doubter's dreary way,
To the last tinge of life's descending day.
Yet, e'en for these,—the Spirit bold and rude,
And all the irreverent Heat of Youth subdued,—
Slow rolling years at length have done their part,
While, from the Husband's and the Father's heart,

New feelings, household interests, budding out—
If not supplanting, yet o'ershadowing Doubt—

Produce, at length, the calm submitted mind,
That Past and Present scans with will resigned,
And onward pondering o'er the dark Untrod,
In humblest acquiescence rests on God.

And yet, such Faith though God perhaps permit,
Nor Church, nor Conventicle, deem it fit.
No sheltering niche have they for trembling Doubt;
Or true, or false, the Creed must still be stout.
Pledged to some Sect—less matter what that one—
But woe betide the Wretch that herds with none.

Each hath his own Prophetic Dream, I wis.—
His mad Millennium Scheme—and mine is This!
A greater than the old Saturnian birth
Shall come, when, o'er this vexed and vexing earth
Tolerance her wing shall spread, like Parent Dove,
And Faith be but another word for Love;
And Conscience, on no synods forced to wait,
Herself perform the work of Sect and State.

In thought I see the Destined Years unfold,
The Blissful Reign for eager earth foretold.
Lo! there the Few—by grateful nations loved—
The More—by man unmarked—by heaven approved—
Some Oberlin—but to his village known;
Some Titus, beaming virtue from a throne;
Minds with each hue of every faith imbued,
Like but in this—all followers of the Good.—
Here Bramin—there the Worshipper of Fire—
Mild Pagan here—there holy Christian sire—
From every Age and Clime—a beauteous band—
Priests—Sages—Bards—they wander hand in hand;
In tranquil converse quest for Truth Alone,
Nor chafe, though each believe that Truth his own;
Of rival creeds shake off the Hate or Fear,
And—wondrous! love more nearly, as more near;
Oft pondering, 'mid that strangely-peaceful scene,
How Theologic Hates had ever been!

B.— Translated hence to some Angelic Sphere,
Such Tolerance we may meet, but hardly here.

Meanwhile, like thee who rambles in discourse,
Must for Utopian pass, if not for worse.

A.— Utopian! 'tis a sneer I heed not much;
And—for what worse—confound not me with such.
Through Stranger-paths but little prone to range,
I keep the old, and leave, who will, to change;
But taught the Gospel came, that strifes should cease,
Deem, like Moravian, its best lesson—Peace;
On harder doctrines lean, in quiet trust,
And leave polemic folios—in their dust;—
But this point hold—howe'er each sect may brawl,
Where pure the life, where free the Heart from gall,
Whate'er the Creed, Heaven looks with Love on All!

John Kenyon

Rhymed Plea For Tolerance - Prefatory Dialogue

A.— Yes, I confess, I do regret the times
When Pope and Dryden knit their manly rhymes;
When Sense, to Fancy near, like light and shade
Each chasing each, their due succession made;
Or, wisely intermingled, wrought to view
Some master-work, not brilliant more than true.

That sister-reign is o'er; and, Queen sublime,
Fancy alone now rules each realm of rhyme;

And too fastidious direct to borrow
From human heart its homely joy or sorrow,
Distils her loves and hatreds, smiles and tears
From flowers and moon-beams, clouds and gossamers,
And fierce by turns or languishingly fine,
Burns, shivers, sobs and throbs through every line.

On as I read, what marvel, if perplext—
Now by half phrases, now half meanings vext;
Now by descriptions tired, that find no close,
Now strained by unimaginable woes;
'Mid flickering lights, to no one focus brought;
'Mid mirage mists, still baffling thirsty thought;
And nightmare fantasies from drowsy grot,
And far similitudes that liken not;
Where, style and story, all is wild or dim
As Pythian oracle or Orphic hymn;
What marvel if my wondering spirit seem
To drift amid the fragments of a dream,
And mocked by moony mysteries all too long,
Crave the clear sense of Pope's and Dryden's song.

Ye, thus who write in spite of critic law,
How had their satire kept your freaks in awe!
And, to sole sway controlling her pretence,
Bound Fancy down to compromise with Sense!

B.— Nay, call not up your satirists,—railers all,
From Gifford downward up to Juvenal.

A.— 'Tis true, of all that ink satiric page,
Few dip the pen from purely virtuous rage.
'Tis true, each stroke erased, not honest quite,
And blackened leaves not few must turn to white
Gone with the trash of many a blockhead's brains,
And perished, too, some else immortal strains.

Fond of the frail applause that waits on wit,
Curio deals right and left each reckless hit;
Dines at their board, then sketches, to the life,
His simple neighbour or his neighbour's wife;
Nay, should the need be pressing, without ruth,
To win a smile will gently wrest a truth.

Yet deem not Curio cruel. Merely gay
He wounds, like gamesome tiger, all in play.
And what, if once he broke an honest heart,
Wit stands his bail—it was but pride of art.
Keen surgeons thus, where milder means might heal,
Will sometimes fly, too fondly, to the steel.
Thus idle sportsmen, over-proud to kill,
Will maim and murder, just to show their skill.

Stern Milo never strove to raise a smile;
Satire with him is but a vent for bile.
Fretful of stomach and of soul severe,
The vice he marks, and paints it broad and clear
So broad, so clear, that his unblushing text
Mends not the present age, and taints the next.

The dilettanti these. Then comes the trade,
With portraits drawn and fitted, ready made;
Prepared, as hunger prompts them, or the metre,
To hang on hapless James or fated Peter.

Some clothe their subjects all in masquerade,
Like great incognitos thence more displayed
From Rome or Greece the gauzy drapery bring,
Then wink and whisper, 'Nero means the king.'

Pimp of the soul, this tickles prurient ears,

Resistless bait, with living characters;
Ambiguous facts gleams up, nor one rejects—
All he half knows, and all but half suspects;
Then o'er each page his nauseous notes he throws,
And tastes, for verse too dull, provokes with prose.
So mountebanks, who know their craft full well,
Loose jests hitch in to bid their poisons sell;
The crowd corrupt flock round with eager eyes,
And buy at once their nostrums, and despise.

Sage Furio's deeper speculating quill
A nephew's name rhymed from his uncle's will;
Then changed, like serpent's skin, the satirist's tone,
Wound round that uncle, and rhymed in his own.

Not Boileau knew with subtler art to raise
On satire's ground adroit relief of praise;
Boileau, who swooped on every feeble thing,
But tamed his beak in flattery for a king.

These are the vile—but his a viler part,
Who makes his prey some woman's breaking heart,
And pours on penitence his caustic in,
Till the seared frailty hardens into sin.
Or, if the better nature, somewhat nice,
Though dropt to frailty, yet revolt at vice,
And, deeply sorrowing and repenting deep,
Cling to the pardon meant for those that weep;
Each day to some atoning duty given,
Yet deeming all she may too scant for heaven;
Still, not the less, around her home forlorn,
Whirls he the unpitying blast of public scorn,
Till wrecked She sink beneath the driving gale,
Like some unsheltered flow'ret, meek and pale,
That, meant for warmer suns and gentler skies,
Hangs its dejected head, and pines, and dies.

Oh! deem for such I hold a scorn like thine—
Better than this the workshop, or the mine—
Or rag-man's trade, or scavenger's, obscene—
A toil more innocent, and quite as clean.

But when, more strong than pulpit and than laws,
Satire her voice uplifts in virtue's cause,
—Stern as the clang from Joshua's trumpet blown,
When the stout walls of Jericho crashed down—
That powerful voice I hail in honest trust,
Join in the fray and vaunt our quarrel just.
With joy I see, beneath the withering blast,
Forth from their holds the conscious vices haste;
Follies and coxcombries their stations yield,
And many a bluff pretension quit the field;
While, 'mid the scared and scampering herds of flight,
Virtue stands firm, and smiles in temperate might.

B.— Thus exercised, e'en I her power revere—

A.— And what though Satire, sometimes too austere,

With reckless onset, whirl away together
Guilt's braving plume, and Folly's harmless feather,
They, who on public stage uncalled appear,
Must take the fortune of the theatre.

And, though I ne'er would grant the searching knife
To probe the trembling quick of private life,
Some wife's, some sister's gentle heart to strain,
The good uncertain, but assured the pain;
Yet still, if so it chance, on private ground,
(Such weeds on virtue's soil are often found)
Some happy folly show its smirking pride,
Too gaily tempting to be passed aside;
Some butt legitimate for gamesome wit;
Why—we must sketch the trifler—bid him sit.

Yet here let satire veil with quaint disguise,
And, while our mirth she tickles, cheat our eyes—
Throw in a whisker—hide a blotch that shows—
And, if not yet be-purpled, tint the nose;
That, while 'the sketch is nature,' all agree,
Nor friend nor foe shall whisper, 'This is he.'

Yet, I re-echo, when by shame unawed,
Some bold intruding villain stalks abroad—

Honour and right who counts as things of straw,
Evading, or perhaps above, the law;
Some prætor knave, half India in his purse,
Some royal favourite, a nation's curse;
Who not content to pamper vice, his own,
Crawls to his Prince's ear and taints the throne;
Some statesman, chafed at liberty's least word,
Whose will would change the pandeets for the sword;
Some patriot, reckless the mad crowd to drive
On danger's brink, if he thenceforth may thrive;
Some muck-worm prelate, earthly gains made sure,
Who leaves a bloated million from the poor;
Some title-hunting judge, whose slanting sight
Can meanly blink a wrong, or wrest a right,
Shifting th' unsteady scales from hour to hour,
Or crushing freedom with the mace of power;
Him (and that worst corruption as I name,
The kindling passion almost bursts to flame)—
Him let the verse with eager hate pursue,
Till seized, and bound, and dragged to public view.

Beneath the well-earned scourge he writhe at length,
And own that Satire hath her hour of strength.

Truth—justice—freedom—these are your's—are mine;
These to no power unquestion'd we resign;
These who invades, or rich, or learn'd, or high,
His meet reward, drinks satire's chalice dry.

'Twas thus of old, when plague his arrows sped—
(Of moral plagues we have our store instead—)
Thy lazarets, fair Venice, could confine
The noblest, proudest, of each ancient line;
Great names, for whom immortal Titian wrought,
And gave to time each beaming brow of thought;
Yet stern o'er these the state-physician stood,
And stoutly drenched them for the public good.

B.— So be it. For the guilty, great or rich,
Her cup let satire, conscience have her twitch.

A.— Yet rank, with crime though stained, hath many a charm

Satire to soothe, nay, conscience to disarm.
Where, chafing at the bold affront, he sits,
Levée'd by hungry knaves and fawning wits,
See venal Eloquence—oh! task unmeet—
Cull fairest flowers and strew them at his feet.
See Poesy, that plies a shameless trade,
A prostitute in vestal robes arrayed,
For him her lyre attune, and wreath her bays,
And brim, with Hebe smile, her cup of praise,
Whose lulling draught, like oil to waves applied,
Steals o'er each rising throb of guilt and pride.

'Gold too, thou puissant lord where'er we roam,
Yet Britons find thee powerful most at home;
Standard with us of manners and of worth,
Far more than virtue—rival e'en of birth.
On every rank though now this rule be prest,
'Rise if thou canst—keep sternly down the rest,'
E'en where frore coteries their ice oppose,
Thy ray can pierce, dissolving as it goes;

Slides through saloons for proud Precedence built,
And glints its softening hues on vulgarest guilt.
Peeps forth some stigma, wresting Honour's groan,
'True, 'tis a blotch, yet such as friend may own.'
But where the Pylades who dares to note
With recognition frank a threadbare coat?

B.— Thus guarded, why attempt the rich—the great?
Let the muse pause, admonish'd ere too late,
Ere yet, suspended by a single thread,
Stern 'ex officio' tremble o'er her head.
Let learning, talent, weep o'er Wakefield's tomb,
Share thou the grief, but shun the kindred doom.

A.— True! some have made a quarry of a king,
But found a minister a dangerous thing;
Tenacious, sensitive, resentful more;
While e'en the best are ticklish, if not sore.
'Twas thus when once a sprightly kid had dared
The lion's den, the generous despot spared,
But spared in vain.—He 'scaped the monarch's might,

To die beneath the snarling jackal's bite.

Yet laureate Dryden, in no sparing sort,
Could lash, by turns, the people and the court.
On glowing wheels the satire swept along,
And no stern judge forbade the sounding song.

Pope followed next; by toil, by genius fit,
To point the lightest dart of polished wit;
To bend no less firm reason's bow of strength,
And give the high-drawn arrow all its length;
With art, to all beside himself denied,
And such successful art that art to hide,
His best aimed hit seemed but a casual glance,
And labour's finished work th' effect of chance.
His too a sportive scorn—the happy mean
Satire's fierce frown and ribald jest between—
A tempered vein yet feared not less by all,
The court, the town, the senate and the hall.
Him still untired successive lustres saw,
Yet on he wrote, and all unscathed by law.

Churchill, e'en him, the eloquent, the coarse,
The gifted spendthrift, profligate of force,

Spirit and power to scorn, degrade, belie,—
Even him the Dracos of his day passed by.
Statesmen of purer then, or hardier frame,
Or shunned the vice, or stoutly dared the blame.
Our prudish age, more sensitively nice,
Starts from the blame and merely hugs the vice.

B.— Yet these, your wits, oft leapt the boundary line,
The manor right, which conscience must define.
E'en when from sportive mood the chase arose,
Hatred too oft came mangling at the close.

A.— Yet one there was who spurned the lawless taint—
Monster, how rare! The poet and the saint!
Cowper—who, keen and free to choose his ground,
Still made the fence of truth his satire's bound;
Winged lighter follies with no rancorous aim,

And when he smote a vice, yet spared the name.

So still be Satire's chemistry refined,
Her sane drawn forth, mere acrid left behind.

Nay, when, perchance, some glowing guilt may seem
Justly to claim her penalty extreme,
Yet, let her think how oft th' envenomed blame
Of falsehood's tongue hath scarred some noblest name,
And, check'd awhile, suspend the bitter cup,
Lest Socrates himself should drain it up.

Nor turn away, e'en when hard words she use,
Nor always quite refined, our Moral Muse.
If busied oft amid the worthless brood,
Her best-loved themes are still the wise and good;
And strained, betimes, to weave satiric lays,
She strikes her favourite lyre to virtue's praise.

Just so, within that loathsome prison gate,
'Mid guilt and crime, and ribald laugh and hate,
Yon female Saint, with steadfast footstep, moves,
And bears the ill, because the good she loves;
Untainted walks amid that tainted leaven,
Sees earth's worst part, and communes still with heaven.

And thou, my Master-Bard, to whom belong
The heights, at once, of satire and sweet song;
Whom, as I read, my humbled hopes incline
Still but to read, and blot each verse of mine;
Though in thy strain harsh notes erewhile prevail,
'Sporus at court, or Japhet in a jail;'
Yet, led by thee, what purest thoughts engage!
With thee I rock a mother's cradled age,
Or following Harley to his dungeon cell,
'When the last lingering friend hath bade farewell,'
There learn, contemptuous of all meaner fame,
That poesy and virtue are the same.

B.— So stout your plea—almost I deem that You,
In nature's spite, would join the scribbling crew.

A.— Ironic, flout not thus the race sublime,
Founders of souls—immortal heirs of time;
When laws are changed, when dynasties are gone,
Names that shall live transcendent and alone.

When ruin drives, as ruin oft hath driven,
O'er realms, the favoured realms long deemed of heaven;
Thy peopled shores, my more than native land,
(Far be the day) like Tyre's, a desert strand;
Yet then—if prophet thought unscorned may press
Through time's far scope, nor faint beneath the stress—
O'er southern isles, now struggling from the deep,
When busy sounds of population sweep,
To dusky tribes shall these their power impart,
And of new clustering nations build the heart;
While coral reefs, where now but sea-birds throng,
Learn Bacon's sense and echo Milton's song.

Proud lot is his, whose comprehensive soul,
Keen for the parts, capacious for the whole,
Thought's mingled hues can separate, dark from bright,
Like the fine lens that sifts the solar light;
Then recompose again th' harmonious rays,
And pour them powerful in collected blaze—
Wakening, where'er they glance, creations new,
In beauty steeped, nor less to nature true;

With eloquence that hurls from reason's throne
A voice of might, or pleads in pity's tone;
To agitate, to melt, to win, to soothe,
Yet kindling ever on the side of truth;
Or swerved, by no base interest warped awry,
But erring in his heart's deep fervency;
Genius for him asserts the unthwarted claim,
With these to mate—the sacred Few of fame—
Explore, like them, new regions for mankind,
And leave, like theirs, a deathless name behind.

But ne'er for me 'twas meant, with daring prow,
To cleave wide oceans, unexplored till now;
And having gained some yet sea-shrouded clime,
Scale with intrepid foot its cliffs sublime;

Then point to some untravelled upland's brow,
Or green savannah, sweetly spread below;
Or gaily plunging thro' some new found glade,
Invite the rest 'to choice of sun and shade;'
Strange stream to track, refreshing unnam'd flowers,
Of sweeter scent, or brighter hue than ours;

Or taste the fruit, yet plucked by none but me,
Or the wild honey, spoil of forest bee.
Enough for me, to whom benignant heaven,
That still dooms best, far humbler lot hath given;
Enough for me, remote from tracks of praise,
To stray through well-known fields by trodden ways;
Musing of things, tho' neither new nor deep,
Well pleased to smile, and not too cold to weep;
Content, tho' conscious of no lofty call,
And if not high, thence fearless of a fall.

Yet in our Carib isle, young Savage yet,
—My earliest playmates of the race of jet;
With whom, unclad, I crawled or climbed at will,
And loved them then—and love in memory still;
There, if some palm-tree, to my wondering sight,
Strained up aloft—as seemed to infinite;
Or, flung from thunder-cloud, down-clashing rain
Smote the live rock, then upward steamed amain;
—Or when some day of languid heat was done,
And woke the land-breeze to the setting sun,

Wafting, how sweet! its perfumed snatches by,
From citrons or ananas clustering nigh;
Or from that garden-nook, with flowers o'ercrept—
My Mother's grave—the first o'er which I wept,
(For so in that fair isle our 'Parted slept
Or when from forth night's darkly blue expanse
Bright tropic stars by myriads met my glance,
Or countless fire-flies, frisking as in mirth,
Twinkled along—my little stars of earth;
All these, if fancy cheat not, breathed for me—
Young Savage yet—their silent poesy.

But when, o'er years, as yet of lore quite scant,

Uprose the horn-book—Glorious Visitant!
The Muses came with that expanding day,
First pious Watts, then—strange transition—Gray!
A chance-found book! Oh! how I loved to read
Of kingly Odin and the coal-black steed—
The gory shuttle, tossed from hand to hand,
And all the mysteries of that Runic land.
Still 'mid the depths my childish thought was drown'd,
But when the sense I miss'd I hung upon the sound.

The Sacred Volume, too, in that fond time,
Would stir me with its Beauteous or Sublime;
Yet pictures more than precepts for each age
Culls its own lore from that all-pregnant page.
There novice Childhood pores with curious eye,
There learns the Man—to live, the Sire—to die.

Then every image won, where all was new,
And more to win, the Wondrous was the True;
The stork, who knows th' appointed hour at hand;
The turtle heard soft murmuring thro' the land;
Ships that to Ophir or to Tarshish sail;
Leviathan—Behemoth—mighty Whale!
Then too the Cherubim and sword of flame,
And Red Sea rushing round as Egypt came,
And Burning Bush, and that dread issuing Voice,
With fearful joy—all bade my heart rejoice,
And then, as now, I thrilled beneath Prose speech
Of loftier power than Verse shall ever reach.

Next he, the lord of each upgrowing mind,
Poet and legislator of mankind,

Next Homer came—as yet, not He of Greek,
But Homer, such as Pope had made him speak.
What vows were straight for every hero sped,
The while, as temper willed, or fancy led,
We parted, like Seamander's branching tide,
This to the Grecian, this the Trojan side;
Then with mock sword, and slate, our mimic shield,
Hector or Ajax, overfought each field!

E'en now, when years their dawning tints of rose
Have lost, and hopes, like flowers, are fain to close;
E'en now I feel o'er life's descending hour
Steal back those joys with recollected power;
My school-boy days around me group anew,
And the heart's witness vouches Rogers true!

Thee, Shakspeare, half might memory overlook,
For thou to me wert Nature more than Book.
To thee my days, my nights, I loved to give,
Nor seemed, the while, so much to read—as live.

A further day maturer pleasures brought,
Yet Feeling still was powerful over Thought;
Then proud I heard the pomp of Dryden roll,
And humbly dared to measure Milton's soul.

Thus years trod upward, till the impatient mind
Stood on the verge of manhood unconfined;
A World beneath at will, and Alps sublime
Sparkling afar, a very bliss to climb;
And Pleasures then were an uncounted Sum,
And Being—but a Poesy to come.

Nay, I confess, in those tumultuous hours
When future life seemed glory all or flowers,
Yet to myself unknown—then who can blame?—
I 'scaped not quite the Calenture of Fame.

As one who sails with some long-lingering fleet,
Till his brain fevers with the tropic heat,
In the green hue that clothes the barren seas,
Views his own native fields, his village trees;

Vision or truth in vain he questions o'er,
The strong delusion gains him more and more;
Till down he dashes 'mid the ravening foam,
And the wave closes o'er his dream of home;
So on my youth the strong temptation came,
The cheating view, the feverish thirst of fame.
To me her sterile waves, her storm-ridged sands,
Were thrifty meadows all or furrowed lands.

Long time I gazed, long ponder'd on the brink,
And all but took the headlong plunge—in ink.

B.— Temptation mad! If such again allure,
And hellebore and blister fail of cure,
Why, let the critic lancet breathe a vein,
And free from folly at the expense of pain.

A.— Nor need. For, disenchanted now by truth,
Stand forth in real guise the dreams of youth.
Dicers I know them now in desperate game,
Mad jousters in the tournament of fame,
Where the too tempting prize though thousands miss,
Yet every rash adventurer deems it his.

—Mere doting usurers, their last guinea lent,
E'en avarice dozed in dreams of cent. per cent.,
Whom Hope, long Promiser that seldom pays,
Cheats with post-obit bonds of distant praise.

Oh lettered life, for men of rich degree
Soft cradle, rocking them to rickety,
Thou art for Him—the unstivered Wretch—to whom
Genius for curse was given—the treadmill's doom.
He, while plump Publishers stand by and smile,
Whirls endless on his still revolving mile,
Sighs for his labour's end—sighs on—and dies the while!

How blest are they to whom the immortal lyre
Yields their full joy to listen and admire.
What anxious hopes, what jealous fears arise,
Ourselves the candidates and fame the prize.

The Student pale, with glory's passion fraught,
To glory gives his daily, nightly thought;
Day following day, long week succeeding week,
More strong his love, and paler grows his cheek,

While to that inner heart's consuming glow
The lofty Mistress still replies him 'No.'
Yet still lured on, tho' trembling for his pains,
When of ten blotted lines scarce one remains,

Of love, of fear, he knows each anxious turn,
Now fondly prizes, gladly now would burn
Till blest, at length, in Bulmer's loveliest dress,
Proudly his babe he shows, his darling of the press.

But as, not seldom, o'er the peasant's field,
His children's bread, with hope, with rapture till'd,
Comes sudden blight to mar his fondest aim,—
So fares it with the toiling Serf of fame.
Too soon, on hurrying wings, or grey or blue,
Sweeps o'er his hopes the Demon of Review,
Casts on his babe an eye of evil power,
And withers all his greatness in an hour.
Struggles awhile the strong but shrinking pride,
The hapless frame with genius still allied,
Struggles awhile, in vain; then, bending low,
Disdains, yet bows in anguish to the blow,

Spirits, I know, there are of steadfast force,
With genius linked, steel-strung and yet not coarse,
That proved, not worsted, in the Herculean thrall,
Rise, like Antæus, stronger from the fall.
But they, the most, whom weaker nerves sustain,
Shrink, like the plant, instinctive from the pain;
And some, like Keats, heart-stricken overmuch,
While the world sneer'd, have died beneath the touch.

Or grant, perchance, the splendid guerdon gained
Springs sorrow sudden on the good attained.
The critic's jest though 'scaped, or truth severe,
Yet comes the foe's loud laugh or silent sneer;
While every dunce would mar the hard-won fame,
And mix his hisses with the world's acclaim.

Or if thy verse, in high poetic spasm,
Hath stirred some unadvised enthusiasm;
Or calmler-purposed, yet mean fears above,
Roused from drugged sleep duty, or human love;

Such love—such duty—as cold worldlings shun,
Or one, or both; or both more oft in one;
Then of those worldly tribes starts each thy foe,

The thoughtful wish derides—the impassioned glow,
And shouts it crime—to Teach—and guilt—to Know.

Nor foes alone, nor dunces, shall combine;—
E'en he, that earliest, best-loved friend of thine,
With whom thou brak'st the bread of trusting truth,
Sheltering beneath the sacred tents of youth;
With him, so love had planned, through scenes to go
Of mingled pleasure or partaken woe;
The last affections of the parting man
To close in fondness, as the boy's began —
E'en he, at length, takes up the torturer's part,
With surer knowledge barbs the unthought-of dart,
Or drives the poniard right into the heart.

But He for blighted hopes thus doomed to mourn,
And warmest friendship chilled with cold return,

And all too-conscious of the grief that stings,
Or soothed awhile yet startled by the strings,
Well may He shrink with touch of tuneful shell
To rouse the slumberers from their silent cell.
The long-loved lyre, that would renew his pains,
He views in secret anguish and abstains,
Like Zion's saddened harps, which willows bore
Once struck with cheerful hand—now struck no more!

Monster of faith! or should the friend forbear;
Should foes molest not, nay, should dunces spare;
Yet wait not less, to nip or prose, or rhyme,
The silent blights, the sealing frosts of Time.
Men fade like leaves! Leaves, budded from the pen,—
Forgive the equivoque,—fade fast as men.
Fanned by hope's vernal breeze awhile they play,
Or fondly flaunt in glory's summer ray;
But o'er their freshness steals th' unheeded year,
Words change their hues, and very thought grows sere,
'Till winter comes to rend each lingering name,
And prove how few the evergreens of fame.

E'en Ye, majestic band, to whom I owe,
By turns, or lofty thrill, or pause from woe;

E'en Ye, far-beaming lights from centuries past,
Or so despondence deems, shall fade at last.
O'er surging years, our arts—our arms that whelm,
Shall unborn races drift, or guide the helm,
Nor heed, perchance, amid their fate or care,
To ask of old Tradition what We were.
Then by that deluge sea, our destined grave,
Shall lonely Silence sit, and watch the wave,
Where of all glory's peaks, now proudly steep,
Scarce one lone Ararat shall spot the deep.

B.— Enough! when talk thus allegoric grows,
Fain would I yawn, and wish it at a close.

A.— Then here we part. Yet end we here to say,
This hand may ne'er presume to touch the bay.
For me more fit, at leisure laid along,
My days to cheat with charm of others' song,

And court in peace, nor mocked at nor admired,
Th' unpurchased duties of a life retired.
From guilt, from hate, as best I may, aloof;
Too weak to cast, too shy to meet reproof;
Yet proud, in Virtue's cause, faint voice to raise,
And be, for one brief hour, the thing I praise;
Well pleased, meanwhile, to see once more commence
The reign of temperate Fancy, leagued with Sense;
And, if the lash were plied with honest view,
Not much displeas'd that Sense were Satire too.

John Kenyon

Ringlets

Ringlets are net by Cupid spread,
And such will Abra's prove to thee.
So strong the mesh, tho' fine the thread,
In vain you'll struggle to be free.
But, soon, like fresh-snared falcon bold,
Who, fierce at first, his plumage swells,
You too shall learn to love the hold
Of lady's leash—and hood—and bells.
Or would you flee? She smiles: secure,
That, though awhile escaped the chain,
You'll still be watching for the lure
To perch upon her wrist again.

John Kenyon

Rufus's Tree

O'er the New Forest's heath-hills bare,
Down steep ravine, by shaggy wood,
A pilgrim wandered; questing where
The relic-tree of Rufus stood.
Whence, in our England's day of old,
Rushing on retribution's wing,
The arrow—so tradition told—
Glanced to the heart of tyrant-king.
Some monument he found, which spoke
What erst had happen'd on the spot;
But, for that old avenging oak,
Decayed long since, he found it not.

Yet aye, where tyrants grind a land,
Let trees, like this, be found to grow;
And never may a Tyrrel's hand
Be lacking there—to twang the bow!

John Kenyon

Sacred Gipsy Carol - Epilogue

DEVOTION.

Where shall Devotion find her fitting food?
'Twas asked; and it was answered, 'Every where.'
Whate'er the region, bring but thou the mood,
And, high or low, her nutriment is there.
Her's—road-side chapel; her's—cathedral roof;
Her's—Christ—Bambino; her's—Jehovah—King;
The holy reverence, which bends—aloof;
The love familiar, that delights to cling.

Her's—purest Godhead, veiled in depth of skies;
The Being, unapproachable—unseen;
And her's—the visible; for peasant eyes
By village painter robed in red or green.
Come, lead me thou to yonder ancient pile,
Where the built organ, through its thousand flutes,

Peals majesty; and incense, all the while,
Is circling up 'mid arches and volutes;
And as we wander thro' the wond'rous fane,
Or kneel us, trust me! I shall feel, like thee,
Chaunt—censer—picture—statue—rubied pane—
Nay, cope and robe. But come thou too, with me,
To where yon worshipper, more picturesque
Than graceful, in his coat of many a flaw,
Is humbly hymning to that Saint grotesque,
'From forth his scannel-pipe of wretched straw.'

And then avouch, (not bearing less in mind
The glorious strains that roll these roofs along,)
That there Devotion too fit food may find
In the rude notes of that street-chaunted song.
So deemed our elder race. Their faith—they knew—
Was strong for daily wear; a stuff to trust.
No flimsy robe, hung up the whole week thro',
'And but for Sunday-service cleansed from dust;'

But a stout faith, that free from formalism,
(On which Devotion's name too oft we dub,)

In week-day life nor found, nor sought, a schism;
But mingled with it; and could bear the rub.
Or, must we come in smoother phrase array'd,
(Tho' truth, I ween, might spare such silken grace,)
Their faith (like Una, wheresoe'er she stray'd)
Could make 'a sunshine in the shady place.'

And far above, as abstract thought may reach,
And far beneath, as human instincts go,
Could find congenial atmosphere in each;
No theme too lofty, as no love too low.
With such interpretation would I leaven
That ladder-vision, erst by Jacob seen;
Its foot on common earth; its top in heaven;
And God's mild angels on each step between.

John Kenyon

Sacred Gipsy Carol - Prologue

Refuse not, Reader, the brief mysterie-play,
Which our poor Gipsy-trio here enacts;
For thoughtful spirits love such legend lay,
Oft true to feeling, false albeit to facts.
Nay, judging reason yet more true shall hold
Such fabling tale, to gentle heart when true,
Than stricter fact, with dogma harsh and cold,
Oft falsified; to harden me or you.

Faith, like yon liberal sun's impartial power,
Where'er her genial ray, like his, shall strike,
Wakes forth from every soil its fitting flower;
If not alike each flower—all flowers—alike.
And tho' erewhile she cleave empyreal air,
Not less 'mid such as lowly valleys give
She loves to float and pause; and every where,
Or high or low, in sympathies can live.
Then, thoughtful spirit! hold thou not in scorn
Her votive gift of very humblest weed.
That humblest weed hath comeliness, where born;
Tis still the heart which consecrates the creed.
Nor take our speech in mockery or despite,
Tho' strange it be, or ruder than thine own.
Where equal justice rules, with equal right
Each tribe—each tongue—hath access to the throne.

FIRST GIPSY. Gipsies Three, Gipsies Three;
Roamers wide o'er field and fell;
Farers free, where'er we be;
Such are we, such are we;
Fortunes also we can tell.
Pretty child! so sweet and mild,
Would you choose your lot to know,

Weal or woe—weal or woe—
Cross our hands, for we can show.
Janan! why a-loitering stand?
Come and read the Infant's hand.

SECOND GIPSY. Thou art, thou art, as I can see,
The equal of the Deity,
His well-belovèd progeny,
And born to be adored.
Yea—I can see that Thou art He,
Co-partner of the Deity;
Fore-born for me, fore-born for me,
Ere chaos felt the Word.
For Love it was that gave thee birth;
Boundless Love for All on earth.
With Virgin-Mother—Father—none.
This—all this—in thy palm is shown.

FIRST GIPSY. Yet, still a secret lags behind,
Which Janan hath not cared to tell.
Yet still a secret lags behind,
Which soon shall work its marvel well.
Messiah dear! put here—put here—
A silver piece, to make us cheer;
Then—Janan tells it, Darling Dear!

SECOND GIPSY. Yet, 'mid this bliss, yet mid this bliss,
Something of very hard there is,
For our behoof, to do.
Yea—yea—I wis, 'mid all this bliss,
Something of very hard there is,
To work our safety through.
That Cross—Salvation's Cross—I see;
And if of thy sad martyrie
My tongue the cause may dare to touch,
It is—that Thou hast loved too much.

FIRST GIPSY. But still at the end of the vital line
A secret untold remains to divine.
Give again, sweet Babe! thy palm to spell,
And a charming secret we can tell.
But, first, the tester we must hold;
Without it, nothing can be told.

SECOND GIPSY. Thou art God and Mortal too;
And, as such, shalt live—not much—
On this earth, our human birth.

Thou art God and Mortal too;

And, being so, full soon shalt go
From thy sojourn here below.
Nought a nature, thus divine,
From Eternity can sever;
Endless life a gift of thine,
And thine essence lives for ever.

FIRST GIPSY. But dost thou not wish, as fit it is,
We should speak a word to thy mother dear;
And in our homely gipsy guise
Make our compliment to her?
Already, fair Lady, we understand
That a mystery lurks in that beautiful hand.
Do thou, Janan, thou,
Who so well knowest how,
Say a somewhat to pleasure the lady's ear.

SECOND GIPSY. Lady, thou art of royal blood;
Thy house in glory long hath stood;
The world hath loftier—none.
Thou art, in sooth, of royal blood,
Thy house in glory long hath stood;
All this to me is known.
Thy Lord—thy Son! Thy God—his Father!
What would blessed woman rather?
Sainted Daughter of thy Lord!
Happy Mother of thy God!

FIRST GIPSY. But thou, old Man! who by the manger,
Quietly dost take thy stand,
Let us see, respected stranger,
Let us see and read thy hand.
And think'st thou, then, that, plotting sly,
We shall steal yon ass that is feeding by?
Old Man! Old Man! far better pelf
Would be the blessed babe himself.
But first, kind Master! hand your groat,
And let us quench a thirsty throat.

SECOND GIPSY. I see by that hand, I see full sure,

That thou art great and just and pure.
By that hand dost thou stand full clearly proved
Great and pure and well-beloved.
Husband! wisely mastering sense
With a saint-like abstinence,
Thou to Providence didst bow;
And art thou not rewarded now?

FIRST GIPSY. But now, Sweet Babe! full well we wot
That thou art born with little store;
Thy lot—a naked—lowly lot;
Therefore—of pence we talk no more.
And didst thou fear, my darling Dear!
To see the scarecrow gipsy near?
Yet wherefore start? for God thou art!—
Then hear our prayer—before we part.

CHORUS OF THE THREE GIPSIES. If with too much liberty,
We have dared thine ear importune;
If with too much liberty,
We have dared to read thy fortune;
Humbly We pray to Thee,
Build thou for us a destiny;
And be it one, Immortal Son
Blessing us Eternally.

John Kenyon

Sappho

Two graceful portals led to Sappho's bower;
Two fitly graceful portals. By the one,
A winning group, the Syren Senses stood,
Chanting their sweet temptation; while the other
Was fondly guarded by the Muses nine.
Love chose, for so it seemed, the wiselier part,
And prayed the gentle Muses. But, no sooner,
In bland compliance with that prudent prayer,
Were the valves opened, than those wayward Senses
Fled their own gate, and thrust them in with him;
Proud of the freak—a gay, tumultuous throng.
Then first He found that 'twas delusion—All;—
Must such delusions hold him evermore?—
Those separate groups—his own fantastic dream;
And that the double gates—in sooth—were One.

John Kenyon

Second Love

The ne'er-forgetting! him who loves but once!
Romance may laud, but Cupid dubs for dunce;
And jeers, and mocks him on from pain to pain.
Who but hath sworn him ne'er to love again,
Then forged, himself, new links and chafed at his own chain?

There are who drink, intoxicate to be;
And some because intoxicate already.
E'en like these last, I snatched the cup from thee,
And hurried to my lip with hand unsteady.
A draught it was, from whence fond hopes, at first,
Bead round the heart, and then, like bubbles, burst.

But tho' I knew the treachery of the cup,
Thou wert the Hebe, and I drained it up.
And now, as all repentingly I lie,
Like some slow-sobering quaffer—wonder why.

John Kenyon

Shrine Of The Virgin - Part I

'The traveller, who hears that vesper-bell,
How'er employed, must send a prayer to heaven
In foreign lands I liked the custom well,
For with the calm and sober thoughts of even
It well accords; and, wert Thou journeying there,
It would not hurt thee, George! to join that vesper-prayer.'
Southey's Saint Gualberto.

Who knows not, fair Sicilian land!
How proudly thou wert famed of yore,
When all the Muses hymned thy strand,
And, pleased to tread so sweet a shore,
Bacchus and Ceres, hand in hand,
To thee their choicest treasures bore,
And saw upreared their graceful shrines
'Mid waving corn and curling vines.

Yes—land thou wert of fruits and flowers,
The favoured land of Deity;
By Jove made glad with suns and showers,
By Neptune cheered with brightest sea;
E'en Dis, beneath his gloomy bowers,
Had heard, and loved to dream of thee,
And, when he willed to take a bride,
Snatched her from Enna's sloping side.
Those hollow creeds have passed away,
Those false, if graceful, shrines are gone;
A purer faith, of stricter sway,
For our behoof, their place hath won;
And Christian altars overlay
Yon temple's old foundation stone;
And in Minerva's vacant cell
Sublimest wisdom deigns to dwell.
And where, within some deep shy wood,
And, seen but half through curving bough,
In silent marble Dian stood,
Behold! a holier Virgin, now,

Hath sanctified the solitude;

And Thou, meek Mary—Mother! thou,
Dost hallow each old pagan spot,
Or storied stream or fabled grot.
The devious pilgrim, far beguiled,
How gladly doth he turn to greet
Thy long sought image 'mid the wild,
A calming thought—a vision sweet.
If grief be his then, Lady mild!
Thy gentle aid he will entreat,
And, bowed in heart not less than deed,
Findeth a prayer to fit the need.
There, while his secret soul he bares,
That lonely altar bending by,
The traveller, passing unawares,
Shall stay his step—but not too nigh—
And hearkening to those unforced prayers,
Albeit the creed he may deny,
Shall own his reason less averse,
And spirit, surely, not the worse.

Thy shrines are lovely—wheresoe'er—
And yet—if it were mine to choose
One—loveliest—where fretted Care
Might come, to rest—or Thought, to muse—
'Twould be that one, so soft and fair,
That standeth by old Syracuse;
Just where those salt-sea waters take
The likeness of an inland lake.
Green tendrilled plants, in many a ring,
Creep round the grey stone, tenderly,
As though in very love to cling
And clasp it; while the reverent sea
A fond uplooking wave doth bring,
To break, anon, submissively;
As if it came that brow to greet,
Then whisper praise beneath thy feet.
When suns, that sink in twilight clear,
Forth from the city tempt to roam,
Be mine to meet sweet evening here,
And muse on friends I've left at home.

But She, who loves the mariner,

Shall yet more duly hither come,
Where, fitly, thou art held to be
Our Guardian Lady of the Sea.

John Kenyon

Shrine Of The Virgin - Part II

She cometh to the seaward shrine,
A mother, with her children three;
And they have made the holy sign,
And they have dropped on bended knee;
Three in the lowly rite combine,
And one is cradled peaceably.
That mother's heart hath business here,
For she doth love the mariner.
Her gallant boy is on the deep;
She loves him more that he is brave;
Yet when around Peloro's steep
The midnight surges leap and rave,

What marvel if a mother weep!
And, thinking on the tropic wave,
Doth flee to thee, Oh mother mild!
Thou mother of the blessed child!
Through winds that sweep like hurricane,
And deadly lightning's lurid light,
She speedeth to the pillared fane,
Where thou dost stand in silver bright
If solace but for him she gain,
What should a mother's soul affright!
And now the porch-way she doth win,
And thro' the portal glideth in.
I love the ever open door
That welcomes to the house of God!
I love the wide-spread marble floor,
By every foot in freedom trod!
Free altars let me kneel before,
Free as the pathway or the sod,
Whence journeying pilgrim, 'mid broad air,
Wafts unpremeditated prayer.

She prayeth 'mid the silent pile;
Her whispers round the columns creep;
She prayeth all alone; the while
Her babes at home securely sleep.
Their brother loved to see her smile—

She would not they should see her weep;
Youth's rightful joys she will not dim
With tears—not even tears for him.
But now, when eve is calm and bright,
You see her here; and not alone;
Her children, in the sweet blue light,
Are with her by the sculptured stone;
With her they share a soothing sight,
Yon scarce-stirred bark—the only one—
Almost as still, on that still tide,
As unrocked cradle by her side.
Bland omen doth that vessel bring;
'As smoothly sails his vessel now;'
Then mark how hope and fondness cling
Around the elder maiden's brow,

The while on that sweet younger thing,
Too young to frame itself a vow,
The mother thoughtful hand doth lay,
And timely teacheth how to pray.
As homeward now their way they trace,
Their bosoms own no anxious smart;
For they have seen that blessed face,
And know how She can calm impart,
Who, tho' in heaven's supremest place,
Bears as on earth a woman's heart;
And know that She will guard him—She—
Mother of Him, who walked the sea!
And if, at last, those hopes deceive,
Yet be our reasoning scorn repress
Nay, since 'tis sweet to those who grieve
To dream of comfort and of rest,
Dissuade not, if they do believe,
And, leaning on that Mother blest,
Link earth below to heaven above
By tender ties of human love.

John Kenyon

Silchester

My travels' dream and talk for many a year,
At length I view thee, hoary Silchester!
Pilgrim long vowed; now only hither led,
As with new zeal by fervent Mitford fed,
Whose voice of poesy and classic grace
Had breathed a new religion on the place.

'Scaped from the pride, the smoke, the busy hum
Of our metropolis, a later Rome,
How sweet to win one calm, uncrowded day,
Where congregated man hath passed away!

For these old city-walls, a half-league round,
Are but the girdle now of rural ground;
These stones from far-off fields, toil-gathered thence
For man's protection, but a farm's ring-fence;
The fruit of all his planning and his pain
By Nature's certain hand resumed again!

Yet eyes instructed, as along they pass,
May learn from crossing lines of stunted grass,
And stunted wheat-stems, that refuse to grow,
What intersecting causeways sleep below.
And ploughshare, deeplier delving on its path,
Will oft break in on pavement quaint or bath;
Or flax-haired little one, from neighbouring cot,
Will hap on rusted coin, she knows not what;
'Bout which, though grave collectors make great stir,
Some pretty pebble found had more contented her.

From trees that shade thine amphitheatre,
Hoarse caws the rook, and red-breast carols clear;
All silent else! nor human foot nor call
Are heard to-day within its turfy wall;
Gone—many a century since—its shouts—its shows.
Here thought may now hold commune with repose.

Yet sheds the sun no other evening glow,
Than tinged these walls two thousand years ago;

While leaves, e'en such as then in autumn fell,
Twirling adown with faint decaying smell,
Mix with the pensive thoughts of ruin well.

These walls already reared did Cæsar see?
Rose they, Stonehenge! coevally with thee,
Whose years, in prose untold or Druid-rhyme,
Still baffle thought—the riddle of old Time?
Or was it Rome first fixed to fortify
This pleasant spot? deserted when? or why?
What name, familiar to historic ear,
Ruled this hill-circled track, Proconsul here;
And master of these fields, though fair they be,
Sighed for his sunny vines beyond the Tyrrhene sea?

Within these bounds when Jove's high altar stood,
Was the oak worshipped in yon sloping wood?
And did each creed, as creeds are wont to do,
The other scorn, and hold itself the true?

Declare, Geologist! what ancient sea
These flinty nodules fashioned, thus to be
Ruin or rock, as each—a mystery!

Thy very name a puzzle! Yet, I wis,
Seanning these flints, 'twas 'Castrum Silicis,'
My books away, I vouch not how it is;
For heavy tomes of antiquarian lore
Burden the traveller much, if reader more.

In vain for Cicerone round I seek;
Speak, ancient bulwarks! your own story speak;
Vexed heretofore by dilettanti lungs,
How often have I wished that stones had tongues!

Can He explain, stretched silent as his fold,
Perchance of Latin blood, yon shepherd old,
Himself a crumbling ruin of fourscore?
'The Romish folk, he says, dwelt here of yore;'
'Tis all he knows—the learned searce know more.
Slow I muse on, in idle question lost,
If knowledge or if mystery please the most.

John Kenyon

Song Of The Manes

Come, dance we now in friendly band;
The Manes twinkling Hesperus calls;
Cynthia through heaven a trembling light
Shoots from her silver horns.

None, blushing for his own poor grave,
Craves—here—another's lordlier tomb;
All equalized, at last, by Death,
Who mocks our human pride.
Yet we too have our stars, though not
Lovely as earth's; our zephyrs we,
If scarce like spring's; some lighter airs,
And many a cypress grove.

Manes, belov'd! whose debt is paid,
Yet, as we dance, still scatter flowers,
Though of dim hue; and lilies shed,
If dusky—grateful still.
How apt our feet! This springy turf
No plod of heavy business knows;
As deftly, weightless, bodiless,
We wingèd shadows play!
Thrice sinks our song to silence down;
Thrice turn we to the Elysian pole;
And thrice athwart the waste of night
Bid our wan torches gleam.
Thou who shalt see, forbear to blame!
Songs shalt thou chaunt, ere long, like ours;
Like thee—were we; like us—be thou;
So follow—and farewell!

John Kenyon

Sonnet Written After Having Read A. F. Rio's, *Petite Chouaunerie*

Call not our Bretons backward. What if rude
Of speech and mien, and rude of fashion—drest;
Yet dwells firm faith beneath each simple vest;
With valiant heart, that scorns all servitude,
But to the Right. When France's fickler blood
Crouch'd to the crown'd pageant of the day,
New-fangled homage These disdained to pay;
But kept old vows in truth and hardihood.
And with no surface-glare, no facet-light,
But the rich inward lustre of the gem,
When tried in shade, were yet more deeply bright.
And therefore, Traveller! call not backward—Them,
Found never yet, in worst extremity,
Backward to bear—nor backward when to die.

John Kenyon

Sream Travel

Who hath not longed, by converse fired or book,
To break him sudden from his own home-nook,
(There, in cramp nest, too long, like dormouse curled)
And speed from land to land, and scan the world?
But Time and Space stood ready to forbid
Or Niagara—or the Pyramid.
'Soon shall thy arm, Unconquer'd Steam! afar
Drag the slow barge and drive the rapid car.'

Some twice five lustres since, so sang the bard:
Bold was the prophecy; the credence hard.
The jeerer jeered; the thinker stood aloof
In pause; 'but now the time hath given it proof.'
Did Venus win from Vulcan, Mighty Power!
That thou shouldst strain a day within an hour?
And lend her thy twin spirits, Force and Speed,
To break down distance for some gentle need?
And did Minerva join Cythera's prayer?
Or bribe thee with some gift of science rare,
For her young sages, or of state or law,
Within vacation half a world to draw?
And (not as when, of old, men plodded slow
'To Pyrenean or the river Po')
Fling forth each acolyte, as suits him best,
To Moslem East, or Transatlantic West?

Then snatch the senator, o'er land and main,
Home to his voters and the house—again?
Or from his poetry and picturesque
Whirl back the future chancellor to his desk?
The fire-wheeled bark would part. Storm saith her 'Nay'

With blustering throat; yet lo! she bursts away.
In vain around her curl the landward seas;
In vain—to stop her—strains the landward breeze.
Not like you white winged loiterers, taken aback
By the fierce blast, and foiled of skilful tack;
At anchor tossing still, with close-reefed sail,
Sick of delay, yet bondsmen of the gale;

She, in mad surf tho' forced awhile to reel,
And heave and dive, from bowsprit down to keel,
Asserts, full soon, her self-selected course,
And conquers wind and wave by inner force.

And while swift smoke, as from volcano's mouth,
(Such Pliny saw) is hurried, north or south,
By the head wind; (the swiftlier driven back,
The more to show what power would thwart her track)
She, leaving coast and bay far, far, behind,
As all contemptuous of that bullying wind;
And fluttering round to unresisting spray
Each coming wave, that would contest her way;
Unoared, uncanvassed, marches on, until
Instinct almost she seems with human will.
Like some strong mind, that, shipped on fortune's bark,
Holds onward still, unflinching to the mark;
And loves, or so might seem, to breast and urge
Thro' life's worst seas, and scoffs at wind and surge.
But now her prow hath touched the foreign strand;
And harnessed, lo! the iron coursers stand.

Fire hooped, with fuming nostril; us to bear,
Swift as swift arrow, thro' the whistling air.
We mount the car. And what our course may stay,
Strength—Victory—Companions of our way!
On—on we rush. A hundred leagues forecast,
And lo! a hundred leagues already past.
On—on we rush. A hundred pictures tost
On the quick eye—right—left—and yet not lost.
For as fast eagle, fastest when he flies,
Battle or prey, the things he loves, descries;
So the brief pictures We; as sudden caught
By rapid eye for yet more rapid thought.
And not alone shall glancing vision win
Each larger feature of the sweeping scene,
Wood, stream, or hill; but many a smaller charm,
Croft,—garden,—lowly roofs of village farm;

(Which from some causeway lowlier, lovelier seem;
Fond homes for fancy; landscape in a dream
With mowers beside their noon-side flagon gay;

And children, tumbling in the tedded hay.
Or—as for contrast—the slow-furrowing plough;
Or feeding kine, that (all accustomed, now)
On as we flash along the echoing ways,
Lift not their quiet heads; but calmly graze.
Tall ship! proud steed! let loftier poets dream;
I plod for thee, most unpoetic Steam!
Thou used, yet scorned! till thro' some chance we find
A poesy in man's all-conquering mind.

John Kenyon

Suggested By The Death Of Charles Skinner Matthews

Joyously launched on life's untravelled streams,
Youth fears nor open sea nor treacherous bay;
Gay voyager, whose wildly devious way
Fond hope and fancy cheer with mingled gleams.
Yet fondly deem not thou those cloudless beams
That hail thy morn shall wait thy closing day;
Autumnal storms must rend the blooms of May,
And life's first blisses fade like very dreams.
Then blest are they, who, at the current's head,
Have quaffed the gushing waters cold and clear,
Nor tracked them downward to their oozy bed;
Inhaled the morning zephyr's freshening breath,
Then, ere the gathering winds of night they hear,
Seek peacefully the silent couch of Death.

John Kenyon

The Broken Appointment

I sought at morn the beechen bower.
Thy verdant grot;
It came—it went—the promised hour—
I found thee not.
Light Zephyrs from the quivering boughs
Soon brushed the transient dew;
Then first I feared that Love's own vows
Were transient too!
At eve I sought the well known stream
Where, wont to rove,
We breathed so oft, by twilight gleam,
Our vows of love;
I stopped upon the pleasant brink,
And saw the wave glide past;
Ah me! I could not help but think
Love glides as fast.

Then all along the moonlight glen,
So soft—so fair—
I sought thy truant steps agen—
Thou wert not there.
The clouds held on their busy way
Athwart the waning Moon;
And such, I said, Love's fitful ray,
And wanes as soon.
Oh! I had culled for thee a wreath
Of blossoms rare;
But now each flowret droops beneath
The chill night-air.
'Tis past—long past—our latest hour,
And yet thou art not nigh;
Oh! Love, thou art indeed a flower
Born but to die!

John Kenyon

The Gods Of Greece

Ye Gods of Greece! Bright Fictions! when
Ye ruled, of old, a happier race,
And mildly bound rejoicing men
In bonds of Beauty and of Grace;
When worship was a service light,
And duty but an easy bliss,
And white-hued fanes lit every height;
Then—what a sparkling world was this.
Creation, then but newly born,
Felt all the glowing trust of youth;
And pulses, yet, were all unworn,
And poesy was very truth;

And Gods were spread thro' earth and air,
And looked or spoke, in sight or sound;
And who but loved to worship there,
Where they were mingling all around?
Not then was yonder radiant sun
Mere globe of fire, as now they say;
But Phoebus urged his chariot on,
A guiding God!—and made the day.
Each hoary hill, each thymy mount,
Some fond presiding Oread tended;
And Naiads bent by every fount
From which a gushing stream descended.
'Twas Daphne's voice—so taught the creed—
That murmur'd from yon laurel tree;
'Twas Syrinx from the hollow reed
Out-sighed her plaintive melody.

No bird sent forth that fervent trill;
'Twas Philomel the song supplying;
And Venus wept, on yonder hill,
O'er young Adonis, gored and dying.
And then, if perfumed airs came breathing,

At eve, from off th' Ægean shore,
While little waves, their white foams wreathing,
The green-hued deeps were fleecing o'er;

From mountain-cave, beneath the rock,
'Twas Zephyrus out-spued the breeze;
'Twas Proteus—leading forth his flock
To feed along the verdant seas.
The Gods—not then they held it scorn
To mate with old Deucalion's race;
And many a Demigod was born,
Fit progeny from such embrace.

And deeper faith—intenser fire—
Fed Sculptor's chisel—Poet's pen;
What nobler themes might Art require
Than Gods—on earth, and God-like Men?
Yea! Gods then watched with loving care,
(Or such, at least, the fond belief)
E'en lifeless things of earth and air,
The cloud—the stream—the stem—the leaf.
Iris—a Goddess!—tinged the flower
With more than merely rainbow hues;
Great Jove himself sent down the shower,
Or freshened earth with healing dews.
E'en Beauty's self more beauteous seemed,
When Ganymede a God could thrall;
And Youth, to fancy, youthlier beamed,
And Souls were more heroical.

Where Hymen stood for priest, the heart
In sweeter bonds than our's was wed;
Nay—life more gently seemed to part,
When 'twas the Parcae cut the thread.
And temples shone like palaces,
And game, and victor's coronal,
And festal dance, 'mid flowers and trees,
And song and bowl were Sacred—all.
E'en at the last doomed hour of death
No terrors scared the death-bed room;
A kiss beguiled the parting breath,
A Genius welcom'd to the tomb.
If but the willing Graces bent
O'er deed or rite with smile approving;
If but the Muses gave consent
Or cheered, perchance, with accent loving;

The Gods forbade no pleasure—then—
Nor doomed it—sin; nor held it—folly;
But deigned to share the joys of men;
The Beautiful, was still the Holy!
And while those Gods so deigned to share
Our mortal pleasures, downward bending,
We too to their Empyrean air
In noble strife were upward tending.
Ah! generous Creeds, that blossom'd forth
'Mid southern Græcia's softer bowers,
What blight-wind from our bitter North
Hath seared your hues and shrunk your flowers?
Too proud for earlier leading-strings
Our world disdains each old Ideal;
And, clogged with mere prosaic things,
Plods heavily life's sullen Real.

Idalian smiles! Jove's lofty brow!
Pan! the Wood-nymphs! all are gone!
Bright as ye were, bright Fictions!—now—
Ye live in Poet's dream—alone.

John Kenyon

The Greek Wife

I love thee best, Old Ocean! when
Thy waters flow all-ripplingly;
And quiet lake, in inland glen,
Might seem, well nigh, a type of thee;
And when long-lingering lights of eve
Float o'er thy waves that hardly heave.
And anchor'd vessels seen afar,
Athwart the bay, with slanting shroud,
And crossing line of rope and spar,
Hang pictured on the yellow cloud;
While Silence, from the placid shore,
May count each pulse of distant oar.

And Spirit-Airs—for so they seem—
Are whispering of some far-off land.
For then doth Fancy love to dream
Along thy visionary strand;
And winneth tender thoughts from thee,—
Perchance too tender, Gentle Sea!
No mother-home is world of our's
For dreamy tenderness alone,
But a rude school; and sturdier powers
That shrink not from the shock—the groan—
And hearts heroical and free
Are thy stern teaching, Stormy Sea!
Hence—from this shore we love to view,
Yet with no meanly-safe delight,
Yon chafing surge of inky hue,
Whose foams, all ominously white,

As the white shroudings of the grave,
Curl o'er the black and greedy wave.
And now, beneath this darken'd sky,
By lightning flashes shown more dark,
Watch silently, with eager eye,
All wildly tost that Grecian bark,
Whose stoutest hand scarce holds the helm
'Mid whirling waves that rush to whelm.
That bark to guide a torch's light

Is gleaming thro' the troubled air.
Who lifts it there? In pale affright
A wife—a mother—lifts it there,
For him; who, spite of coming wreck,
All calmly treads his splitting deck.
And yet one pang he scarce may brook:
He knows who lights that dangerous strand.

Oh! might he gather one last look!
But clasp once more that loving hand!
Cease, raging Demons of the Dark!
And spare the light, and spare the bark.
She too, might power, like wishes, fly,
Would fly to tread that deck with him.
Again she lifts the torch on high;
But, half extinct, the torch is dim;
Or flickers useless light behind,
Back-driven by the cruel wind.
If that brave bark may triumph yet,
No guardian Spirit comes to tell;
Or if the Fates, in conclave met,
Hang brooding now o'er yonder swell,
As when on that disastrous night
Abydos saw the failing light.

If that brave bark may triumph yet,
We know not how 'tis doomed above;
But this for lesson sure is set,
That Courage firm and faithful Love,
Or if they live, or if they die,
Have each fulfilled their mission high.
Where faithful Love, where Courage glows,
The patriot virtues take their birth,
And thrive in home's serene repose;
Till bursting from the household hearth,
Throughout a land her every son,
At duty's call, up-starts as one.
Through what a dreary tract of time,
Hast thou not seen, Egean Wave!
Each dweller of thy storied clime
A struggler, now—and, now, a slave.

In war, in peace, struck down, or vext,
By Roman, first; by Moslem, next.
Yet Love hath never fled thy shore;
And Courage old still lingers there.
And them may Freedom more and more
Still nourish, with her new-born air,
In hearts of women and of men,
Till Salamis revive again.

John Kenyon

The Joy Of Grief

'In vain you touch that answering wire,
Attuned to softest notes of peace;
Not all the soothings of the lyre
Can bid a father's anguish cease.
The pang which youth's wild bosom wrings,
The deeper woe of manhood's stage
May melt before the breathing strings,
But not the settled griefs of age.
'I too those strings once loved full well,
When woke a daughter's hand the measure,
And love and music joined the spell,
That made each note a thrill of pleasure.
Hope too stood by, and every sound
With omen bland interpreted;
But Hope is now with cypress crowned,
And ear and heart alike are dead.'

'Oh slight not so the minstrel's strain,
Nor all his precious power forego,
Though now each varying cadence pain
A heart that bleeds with recent woe.
If oft thy suns in grief have set,
If still thy skies may seem o'ercast,
These chords can sooth the present yet,
And pluck its bitter from the past.
'Through all thy soul their calm shall creep,
Like friendship's sympathizing tone,
And, lulling sadder thoughts to sleep,
To tender memories wake alone;
And, sweet as sweetest eloquence
Of bard or sage, shall breathe relief;
And win thee, through thy charmèd sense,
To own at length the Joy of Grief.'

John Kenyon

The Moorland Girl

TO---

True! She had been in city gay,
And seen whate'er its pomps could show
To win her youthful heart away,
The courtly ball, the fluttering beau.
And She hath form and face as fair
As sculpture asks or painting wills;
Yet, spite of all that flattered there,
Her heart was 'mid her native hills.
Once more, amid those native hills,
A moorland girl, behold her bound,
While all her heart with pleasure fills
At rural sight, or rural sound;
Whether She lift her eye to note
The kite, high circling on the gale,
Or pause to catch the tones that float
From hidden cushat down the dale.

Or if She climb the mountain side
To pluck her favorite heath again,
Or down the alder-valley glide,
Or linger in the fir-tree glen,
In bliss—the haunts of pomp and pelf
May never know—each moment wheels,
While sisters, spirits like herself,
Share and enhance the bliss She feels.
Sweet bud of beauty! moorland girl!
Still, still hold on thy dream-like race,
Far from the city's heartless whirl,
And all the tribes of common-place
Still mould thine own wild paradise,
Enjoying—living—loving thus—
And wheresoe'er thy presence is,
Shall still be paradise to Us.

John Kenyon

The Neglected Wife

They tell me that my face is fair,
That sunny smiles are on my cheek—
Yet sorrow hath been busy there,
For many a day—for many a week—
And struggling thoughts I may not speak;
And keen regrets, both deep and keen;
And what if smiles the surface streak,
All cheerless are the depths within!

My marriage troth I gave—received—
While friends stood by with joy elate,
And said, what my fond heart believed,
That mine should be a blest estate.
Ah! better than such wedding-fête,
Ah! better than such bridal bed,
The long-drawn funeral's plummy state,
The winding-sheet that wraps the dead.
For I full many a dream had wove,
Such dreams as cheat the hopes of youth,
Of meeting souls, that meet to love,
Unchanging love! undying truth!
What have I reap'd? the rankling tooth
Of jealousy—His broken vow!
Dreams that ye were, in bitter sooth,
Deceitful dreams! I know ye now.
My faith—my fondness set at nought,
The civil taunt, or insult rude,
The desert heart, where hope is not,
And weeks and months of solitude,

Are these indeed love's proper food?
And still rejected or forlorn,
Still must I quell my boiling blood,
And crouch me to neglect or scorn?
He too—the plighted object—He—
Fond dream of many a shaping mood,
Whom young creative fantasy
With each romantic gift endued,
Was it for this he came and wooed?

Sent by what minister of wrath,
In very form of fair and good—
To mock my faith—to blight my path?
To blight my path! One path there is,
I know—for feet by travel torn,
Which leads to smoother world than this,
And where the wretched cease to mourn.
Oh! teach, kind Heaven! a heart forlorn
To make that path its hope most dear—
Or else all vainly I was born,
For I have nought but sorrow here.

John Kenyon

The Renewal

I knew her, when my youthful time
Beyond the verge of manhood stood;
And she was in her glorious prime
Of freshly ripened womanhood.
And when her darkly radiant eye,
With longest lash of silken jet,
Glanced forth a double witchery,
Where sympathies and sense were met.
And o'er her rich embrownèd skin,
All richly brown as tropic rind,
The colour mantled from within.
As blushes told her secret mind.

And voice, and smile, and whitest gleam
Of forehead high thro' raven hair
Awakened in each heart some dream,
Which, once awakened, lingered there.
Mine lingered long. Till, on a day,
I met her once again, to find
If Time may something take away,
He yet hath more to leave behind.
For hers was still that darkest eye,
And longest lash, and gleaming brow;
And smiles that won, in day gone by,
Were waiting still—to win us now.
And still that voice was hers; and grace,
Which more than youthliest bloom can thrall;
And sense, outspeaking from the face;
And goodness, beaming over all.

And if ecstatic hope now stirs
Less warmly, than in hour of youth,
Some airy visions still are hers,
'Mid many a lesson taught by truth.
And if, perchance, some hues be fled,
If eye or smile be radiant less;
Serener charm they own, instead,
And win new power from pensiveness.
'Tis thus, when hearts are swept along

Beneath some master minstrel's play,
The sweetest part of all the song
Is where the music dies away.
But is the Music past and gone?
Nay, listen! for it wakes again;
A lay prolonged, of tenderer tone;
A sweeter joy from softer strain.

And therefore do I prize the day
I met her once again to find,
If Time may something take away,
He yet hath more to leave behind.

John Kenyon

The Streams

Two streams there were, two streams from separate founts,
Both beautiful to see, and one—most holy;
(From Siloa this, and this from Hippocrene)
Together onward flowing, side by side,
Through the mind's region. And on either marge
Of either stream were frequent altars reared,
Accordant with the Genius of each wave,
Or sacred or profane. Less solemn these—
As if for festal rites ordained, and dight
With sculptured attributes—for so they showed—
Of lighter faith; or Cupid's torch or Hymen's,
Or thyrsus bound with ivy; while beside
Their white reliefs sleek kid or heifer stood
With gilded horns, and neek by graceful hand

Of priestess wreathed with flowers; the which—for dew—
Trembled with ruby drops, caught as they sparkled
From full libations of outgushing wine.
Those other altars were beheld to rise
Of a severer beauty; their sole symbol—
The Saving Cross! their only sacrifice—
A contrite heart, and prayers not scorned in heaven!

Yet though each separate source, of false or true,
Sped its own oracles, which—rightly read—
Were of no balanced weight; yet still on each
Waited the Duties and the Charities,
Which soften or control our human heart.
And ministered to each its clustering Graces,
(Or classic called, or by more sacred name)
These, truly, of a looser zone, while Those
Stood by in matron-robe more strict. Nor lacked
To each its Muses—its delightful Muses!
For while beside one wave were heard sweet sounds
From the Eolian lyre or Theban flute,
Linking fresh sweetness to sweet ode or hymn;
Pealed o'er that other such high strains as erst
Broke forth in Judah from the passionate hand

Of Prophet-King—praise—or victorious song—
Or deep repentings—on the ten-stringed harp
Made vocal, then; but well consorted, now,
With the far-reaching organ, as it triumphed
O'er the full choir; or with some single voice
Mingled its milder notes.

Those varying strains
To hear; amid those varying groups of beauty
To stray, and learn what sage or prophet taught,
From every clime thronged vota'ries; and, in sooth,
Most sweet and profitable had it been
To wander 'mid the far-stretched lawns, which opened
Between those sidelong waters, and to quaff
From each in turn—worshipping at the one.
But so it was—the simple truth to tell—
The livelier flow of that less holy river,
And lighter Muses, and more pliant Graces,
Won to its careless marge the larger throng;
Still won; and oft, in their own reason's spite,
Amid its open Grecian colonnades
Kept lingering; of those graver Gothic fanes,
High arched, and dim, and of mysterious power,
Neglectful. And so 'twas till all had reached

To where those streams flowed round each side the hill,
'Which stands midway in this our mortal life.'
From that hill-top the backward-looking eye
Could track the livelier and the calmer currents
E'en to the distant cliffs, whence first they fell;
But to the forward sight—changed was the scene.
For while the course of that serener wave
Held onward, through mild landscape, to the view
Interminable, this from Hippocrene,
Not far below the base of that mid hill,
With sudden plunge flung itself under ground,
And, as it parted, sounded sad farewell!
Then, 'mid the votaries of the vanished stream,
Its lovers, with a too-exclusive love,
Were cheated looks and strange perplexities,
And sorrow; and, worse than sorrow, desperate mirth!
Some at their own loss jested recklessly,

Till came a Power, and bade them jest no more!
Some wandered, seeking; some, disputing, sat;
And, 'mid their seekings and disputings, died!
While fiercer bloods, impatient of the Present,

Which mated all too poorly with the Past,
And the' enigmatic Future hot to know,
With their own sudden swords resolved the riddle.
So fared it with the' unwise. The wiser part
Paused not, but turned them sideway to the marge
Of that, till now, less-heeded stream, and found it
Such as might win a will all free to choose.
More calm, perchance, than e'en when first they knew it,
And therefore to maturer choice more kin;
And if more deep, more clear; and, as more clear,
Adding fresh loveliness to earth, and still
With surer certitude reflecting heaven.

Soon won the yielding heart a kindred calm
From that calm stream; with hopes, bright as the flowers
Which bloomed around. For flowers were blooming round;
Some—new to knowlege; of perennial odours,
And all undying hues; thither, no doubt,
From Paradise transplanted. Some they knew,
If less enduring, yet almost as fair,

For dwellers on that Gentile-stream; nor scorned
Their presence here; nay, gathered thence sweet memories
Of many a joy once quaffed from Hippocrene,
With this their deeper bliss from Siloa's source
To mingle, as those flowers together mingled.
And feeding thus on old remembrances,
And joys at hand, and hopes more blissful still,
They followed the on guiding wave to where
Silent it lapsed into the fated sea,
Which all must voyage o'er. Nor ended here
The bliss. For by the shore rode anchored barks,
(Not by such fabled forms as Charon old,
But by Angelic Natures piloted,)
The' awaiting pilgrims o'er its rough or smooth
(For not to all the passage was the same)
Safely to waft; while from that very shore

All might behold what lovely regions rose
Beyond in the horizon; fair as clouds,
The fairest ever hung in western sky,
But not like them to fade; eternal dwellings
Of Spirits who had passed, and landed there!

John Kenyon

The Surprise

TO---

I marked her grave and nun-like air,
When all beside were gay and free;
And true, I said, the face is fair,
But that was ne'er enough for me.
And Her's, I grant, are speaking eyes,
And Her's is brow of thoughtful mould;
but these will never win the wise,
When linked with heart too calm and cold.
For me, a frost so chill and deep,
I cannot tarry for its breaking;
These sleeping Beauties—let 'em sleep,
I never knew one worth the waking.

And so I talked—till—on a day—
Lured by I know not what vagary,
She put such store of charms in play.
Such frolic graces, smiles so airy;
With cadences like music strung,
And sense with feeling so commingling,
That I though staid, and not too young,
Felt, like the rest, my bosom tingling.
A foolish tingling—yet so dear,
An idle—yet so sweet a pain,
I knew not if to wish, or fear
That she were calm and cold again.

John Kenyon

The Travelled Oyster

An oyster, upon oozy bed,
Like his forefathers, born and bred,
It chanced, was wafted far and wide
By force of wind and force of tide;
Nor are there wanting folk to say
He drifted fairly round the bay.
At last he drifted back agen;
The very finest one might ken
Of travelled oyster-gentlemen.
For, though ne'er out of his own shell,
He saw, or thought he saw, as well,
And was, or deemed himself, as wise
As fishes who use fins and eyes.
In secret news he yields to none;
Knows all the deeds by muscles done;

'Mong limpets what dark plots are hatching,
What territory prawns are snatching;
And has—from information—glimpse
Of coming war among the shrimps.
On all who hap within his reach,
(For 'tis his darling pride to teach)
He rolls that tongue which none may quell;
While every brother of the shell
Is sadly bound to stand the shock,
Chained, like Prometheus, to his rock.

And, Reader! we have seen, I wis,
Full many a dull-brained fish like this,
Who, having drifted Europe round,
Floats back at last to his old ground;
And though, like oyster, shut within
His sulky shell, he nought hath seen,
Yet still, in right of foreign travel,
Assumes to talk—instruct and cavil.
Speak of a church—he quotes Saint Peter's;
A watch—he cites Breguet's repeaters;
And e'en the trout, on which we dine,
Would have been better from the Rhine;

While we, chair-bound and wretched quite,
Are forced to feign a mien polite.

Good Reader! were it ours to choose,
Such ne'er should quit their native ooze;
Or ne'er, at least, should hit the track
Which brings them, for our torture, back.

John Kenyon

The Two Harps

I tarried on the strains to hang
Outfloating from yon ancient trees;
Strains from two airy harps, that rang
Responsive to the minstrel breeze.
One, chaunting to the wind that wooed,
Swang full on every gazer's eye;
The other, far within the wood,
Low breathed its hermit melody.
This told a tale of nought but gladness;
Of frolic nymphs on tiptoe stealing;
And feats of wine and festive madness;
Gay Fauns that danced and Satyrs reeling.
The other sighed so sad a tone,
Methought some desolate child of air
Had made those very strings his own
To vent heart-broken anguish there.

Each harp was sweet; yet while—not vain—
Thrilled thro' the sense the livelier din,
That other sweetest—saddest strain—
My inmost spirit drank it in.
Then deem not, deem not—Emmeline!
That Abra's frolic glance of glee
From thee my steadfast faith can win,
From thee, my gentlest love! from thee.
E'en now when 'mid yon blazing room
A dream of joy—she floats inspired,
I come to court the tender gloom,
Where thou dost love to sit retired;
And while she bids the rest rejoice
With winning word—with winning wile—
I turn to catch thy plaintive voice—
I flee—to win thy thoughtful smile.
Let frolic from her dark eyes peep;
Mine be the blue which tear-drops fill;
For if her charm of joy strike deep,
Thy pensive spells sink deeper still.

John Kenyon

They Choose Not Ill Their Lot Who Choose

They choose not ill their lot who choose
All quietly to live and die,
By Science sheltered or the Muse,
In unpretending privacy.
Proud epitaph—the world's acclaim—
These ask thou not; if, in their room,
Some few but love thy living name,
And household tears bedew the tomb.

John Kenyon

Time

Like as one, erewhile pursuing,
Shouts him o'er his captured foe,
'Spite of all thy fleetest doing,
Now, thou Slave! behind me go.'
So doth Time, austere transmuter,
Following, following, fast and fast,
Lay strong hand on forward Future;
Then consigns him to the Past.

John Kenyon

To A Female Friend,

RETURNING TO AMERICA.

Lady! you ask a farewell verse;
Reluctant I obey.
Far, gladlier far, would we rehearse
Some rhyme to bid thee stay.
For, if but lately we have met,
We all shall lose thee with regret.
But if full surely thou must go
From us, who fain would keep,
May westering breezes cheerly blow,
Rewafting o'er the Deep
To where thine own dear land imparts
Its bliss of loved and loving hearts.

Of late, like some full cargoed ship,
Thy mind did voyage forth;
Transporting on no vulgar trip
Its freight of precious worth;
And bartering on, from shore to shore,
Or thought for thought, or lore for lore.
Yet tho' from Gaul and Rome's own clime
Rich memories thou hast borne
For home-reflection's after-time,
I know thou wilt not scorn
To muse erewhile on Britain's bowers;
Thy native land scarce less than ours.
Blood, that was once our English blood,
No more let seas divide.
A mightier power hath stemmed the flood,
The old Atlantic tide;

And wide and wider hence shall roll
The glorious traffic—soul with soul.
Lady! not easily withstood!
Thy frolic wish is won;
And, if in somewhat pensive mood,
Behold five stanzas done.

But, Lady! only come agen,
For stanzas five—we'll write thee ten.

John Kenyon

To An Æolian Harp

Oh! breezy harp! that, with thy fond complaining,
Hast held my willing ear this whole night long;
Mourning, as one might deem, that pale moon's waning;
Sole listener, oft, of thy melodious song;
Sweet harp! if hushed awhile that tuneful sorrow,
Which may not flow unintermitted still,
A lover's prayer one strain, less sad, might borrow
Of all thou pourest at thine own sweet will;
Now when, her forehead in the moonlight beaming,
Yon dark-tress'd maid, beneath the softening hour,
As fain to lose no touch of thy sad streaming,
Leans to the night from forth her latticed bower;

And this low whispering air, and thy lorn ditty
Around her heart their mingled spell have wove;
Now cease awhile that lay, which plains for pity,
To wake thy bolder song that tells of love.

John Kenyon

To Echo

Why, jeering Echo! thus renew my pain,
And give me mine own sorrows back again?
Speak but to those who hail thee and rejoice,
Nor render grief's involuntary voice.
If to these rocks in plaintive mood I come,
In trust I came, for I believed them dumb;
And if one name I spoke in trust too free,
To Silence it was spoken—not to Thee.

John Kenyon

To George Hayter, Esq.

ON HIS PICTURE OF THE TRIAL OF LORD WILLIAM RUSSELL.

Hayter! almost I deemed the pencil's art
Too weak to cope with that renownèd story,
That tale—of sorrow much, but more of glory,
How beauteous Russell played her matchless part.
Now, gazing on thy fervent work, my heart
Recants, and drinks therefrom unstinted pleasure;
For ne'er did history's pen, nor poet's measure,
More touching sense of that brave scene impart.
Kindling, I gaze; and, still the more I gaze,
I feel my blood in brisker current moving;
While pure and high emotions stream, like rays,
From his calm bearing—her intensest loving—
Till every breath I draw is honour's breath,
And my stirred heart's sole throb—heroic death.

John Kenyon

To H. M. W.

ON READING HER POEMS.

Blest is the bard, whose modest pride,
Unlured by vapour gleams of wit,
Still clings to nature as a guide
With following feet, that fear to quit.
And blest are they, who o'er life's road,
Too often treacherous or abrupt,
Tho' guile betray and malice goad,
Move kindly on and uncorrupt.
But doubly bless'd is thy part,
Who, 'mid bad taste—bad world—still true,
Preserv'st simplicity of heart,
As woman, and as poet, too.

John Kenyon

To Isaac Walton

Walton! dear Angler! when, a school-freed boy,
Of varnished rod and silken tackle proud,
I sought the brooks, or by some still deep pool,
Still, or stirred only by the gentle west—
Lay stretched at noon, and watched my trembling float,
Thou wert my sole companion; and I conned,
Studios, thy varied precepts o'er and o'er.
And though, since then, full many a taste be changed,
And me the fisher's simple sport no more
Wins from light sleep, ere yet the streaky dawn
Hath tinged the steaming wave with yellow light;
Nor keeps me lingering on the grassy brink,
Till sober night be fallen, and all lies hushed
Beneath the silent moon; save—only heard—
The stream's faint ripple, and the leaping trout.
By fits upflashing in the silvery beam,
Startling the general pause, then pressing it,

Thus interrupted, deeper on the heart;
Yet still, old man! I love the soothing power
Thy rural landscapes breathe, like vernal breeze,
Freshening the soul; I love thy pastoral songs,
Those simple chauntings of the elder time,
Thy contemplative vein, thy sweet content,
And e'en thine antique phrase hath charms for me.
And long as woods and skies and watered shores,
And spring's and summer's change and changeful hours,
Have power for pleasure—thou shalt please me still.
E'en now, when winter locks the still deep lake
In fastest frost, and stately-winding streams
Rest motionless, and prattling brooks are mute;
By my warm hearth, at evening's thoughtful hour,
I love to sit and turn thy charmèd page,
Till, answering to the gentle sorcery,
Fair images and thoughts, that slumbered long,
Of parted years awake; and, memory-led,
Once more I seem to tread the banks of Dove,
Those verdant banks—and list his water's flow,
And catch his eddies, glittering in the sun;

Breathing the freshness of a second spring,
While all my boyish days revive again.

John Kenyon

To Louisa C—, For Her Album

Life is an Album; and my free
Imagination loves to look
And read, with happy augury,
Thy life's as yet scarce opened book.
And well begins that volume fair;
And ever, onward as it goes,
May Feeling write high lyrics there,
And Sense inscribe his sober prose.
And on the living vellum pure
Be gifts from Hope and Memory met;
From Memory, picture sweetly sure—
From Hope, her fanciful vignette.

The breathing book may many a friend
Flock round with love that needs no call;
But fondest o'er its records bend
Sweet home-affections—best of all.
So if on Time's advancing tome—
Far be the day—some creeping grief
Must, like the treacherous book-worm come,
To spot, perchance, or pierce a leaf;
If such intruder there, as here,
Should threaten some lines 'twixt youth and age,
Those household Loves shall still be near
To chase the spoiler from the page.
And thus, in kindly pleasures past,
With conscience that of nought repents,
Thy volumed years shall show at last,
A blessed table of contents.

John Kenyon

To Mary Anning

Thee, Mary! first 'twas lightning struck,
And then a water-vat half drowned;
But I can't think 'twas mere blind luck
Twice left for dead—twice brought thee round.
No! Fortune in her prescient mood,
I must believe, e'en then was planning
To fabricate a something good
Of Thee, the twice-saved Mary Anning.

This to fulfil she did not bid
Thy feet o'er foreign soils to roam,
For well she knew what powers lay hid
In these blue cliffs that touched thy home.
And hither led, in vain to Thee
Or marle, or rock, was insight banning;
Some folk can through a millstone see;
And so, in sooth, can Mary Anning.
Mere child as yet, this sea-beat strand
'Twas thine to wander all alone,
Upgathering in thy little hand
Chance-pebble bright, or fossil bone.
Though keenest winds were whistling round,
Though hottest suns thy cheek were tanning,
Nor suns, nor winds could check or bound
The duteous toils of Mary Anning.
At first these relic-shrouding rocks
Were but thy simple stock in trade,
Wherewith, through pain, and worldly shocks,
A widowed mother's lot to aid.

But now, with taught and teaching eye,
Thy practised sense their sense is scanning;
And learning and philosophy
Both own their debt to Mary Anning.
E'en poets shall by Thee set store;
For wonders feed the poet's wish;
And is their mermaid wondrous more
Than thy half-lizard and half-fish?
And therefore 'tis that, all the time

Yon shark's head Thou art measuring, spanning,
I inly weave this uncouth rhyme
In honest praise of Mary Anning.
True, Mary! we—earth-born—must go,
Like these lost tribes, to earth again,
While Lyme's dark-headed urchins grow,
Each in his turn, to grey-haired men.
Yet when, grown old, this beach they walk,
Some pensive breeze their gray locks fanning,
Their sons shall love to hear them talk
Of many a feat of Mary Anning.

John Kenyon

To My Friend ,Joseph Ritchie,

Ritchie! to whom it shall be given to view
And trace (none worthier) that strange river's swell,
The desert's glory and its mystery too;
Oft when those Afran sands immeasurable,
And wearisome alike of form and hue,
Shall hang upon thy spirits like a spell,
Yet then shall recollections, bright and true,
Of thine own land, like waters from a well,
Rise to refresh thee; vale and pastoral stream,
And cottage smokes that curl thro' evening air,
And cultured plains, where populous cities teem,
And voice of friend beloved shall all be there,
With thought of guerdon high from Honour's hand
To cheer thy progress thro' that dangerous land.

John Kenyon

To S. C.

The chords thy ready fingers used to move
At fond request of dear domestic love,
Now grief, alas! hath tried that heart too much,
Thou yieldest up to meet another's touch.
No longer thine, they leave us yet behind
The better music of thy well-tuned mind,
Whose various melodies, each singly sweet,
Make of thy life one harmony complete;
And Love's firm tone, which time nor clime can mar,
And ne'er one shock of temper comes to jar.

John Kenyon

To The Lamented Memory Of F. H. C.

Sweet friend, farewell! to whom propitious birth
Gave beauty—sense—the prosperous goods of earth;
To whom not less were faith and duty given,
Those better gifts which fit our earth for heaven.
First by glad days—then through long sickness tried,
'Mid pleasures—pure—by pain still purified;—
Such was that soul, which meekly kissed the rod,
Then soared, for us too soon, and rests with God.
Farewell! our love inscribes this faithful stone,
Not to bewail thy lot, but weep our own.

John Kenyon

Translation

I've found a port. Hope—Fortune—Farewell ye!
Cheat others now. Enough ye've cheated me.

John Kenyon

Truth

A stripling Bonze (from Eastern clime
We bring the tale we have to tell)
Was standing, once upon a time,
Beside the margin of a well.
Down which he peer'd him wistfully,
As if all deeply pondering
On matter which therein might be,
Some curious or some precious thing.
There while he paused, an old Fakir
Observing, as he wandered by,
Thus spake him, 'What dost thou do here?
To whom the stripling made reply.

'Good Father! I have heard them tell
How truth, our angel-friend in doubt,
Doth hold her dwelling in a well,
And I full fain would win her out.'
'Nay, prythee, Boy! lift not that rope,
If grey experience may advise.
The very best we e'er may hope
From truth, when won, is compromise.'
'Or, scorning that, make sure, fond youth!
Thou now art sowing years of strife.
Who needs will battle for the truth
Shall lead a mighty sorry life.'
The stripling heard; the rope let go;
And never from that hour applied
To such unthankful task; and lo!
Became Chief Bonze before he died.

John Kenyon

Upper Austria

We loved that Upper Austrian land;
And who, that knows, would love it less?
Which, as it seems, alike the hand
Of God and man conspire to bless.
His stream-dispensing hills, that tower,
Man's happy, lowly, household bower,
On sunny slope, in quiet dell,
These well may win a fond farewell.
How may we e'er forget the power
Of those huge hills, at sunset hour?

Peak and black ridge upheaved on high
Athwart the gorgeous evening sky,
While brightest waves beneath were rolled
In amethyst or living gold.
Or how the beams that loved to wake
With morning touch Gemunden's lake;
Or that pale moon which paused to light
Dark Traunstein's solitary height?

Nor more, Fair Land! may we forget
Thy Happy with thy Lovely met.
Those rural dwellings snug and warm,
And strong to meet the winter storm.
With casement green, and vine around;
Each in its plot of garden ground.
The most—beneath. But some that creep
Where the sun beckons up the steep;
Near neighbours to the beechen grove,
Which mingles with the pines above.

And every little mountain-plain,
Of herb profuse or waving grain;
Where all that eye beholds is rife
With signs of well-contented life.

O Liberty! thou sacred name!
Whate'er reproach may thee befall,

From judgment just or spiteful blame,
To thee I cling—on thee I call.
And, yet, thou art not All in All;
And, e'en where thou art worshipp'd less,
In spite of check, in spite of thrall,
Content may spring, and happiness.

And tho', man's rightful claim to cheer,
Thy fuller beams be wanting here;
Yet happy they, if right I spell,
The folk within this land who dwell.

Here no hard look, no dogged eye,
Meets, to repel, the passer by;
But observation loves to scan
Mild greetings sped from man to man;
Bland courtesies; kind words that fall
From each to each, and all to all.
And here is woman's bending grace,
That bends reply; and answering face,
With servile smile not falsely deckt,
But honest smile from self-respect.
While peasant boy, with curly pate,
And arm surcharged with book and slate,
Gives frank reciprocating look,
The fruit—I ween—of slate and book.
Nor lack there signs to speak a sense
Imbided of holier influence.

For if there be or nook or spot
More lovely than the rest;
Beside the brook, beneath the grot,
Some chapel neat is drest;
Whenceforth the Virgin-Mother seen,
In azure robe depict' or green,
From that her ever-blessed face
Sheds softer beauty o'er the place.
Or He, who died on holy-rood,
Is there, with thoughts of deeper mood
To sanctify the solitude.

'Tis true—for me their accents rung

In fact, as name, a stranger-tongue.
A cloud, if words alone could speak,
Thro' which no ray of thought might break.
But soul of ready sympathy
Finds semaphore in silent eye.
And smiles that play from silent lips
Clear what were else the heart's eclipse.

And One was with me, who could spell
Whate'er each tongue might say,
And oft, I ween, their sense would tell
In better phrase than they.
And all that German land was known
To him, familiar as his own.
Their states, their dynasties he knew,
Their folk, how many or how few;
Each tale of conquest, battle, siege,
Right, custom, tenure, privilege,
With all that appertaineth; down
From Cæsar or from King to Clown;
And all that priest or jurist saith
Of modes of law or modes of faith.

And he had comment, full and clear,
The fruit of many a travelled year;
But more, by meditation brought
From inner depths of silent thought;
Or fresh from fountain, never dry,
Of undisturbed humanity.

When first among these hills we came,
The Autumn lingered bright;
But winter now begins to claim
His old ancestral right.
He speaks intelligible speech
In the red yellow of the beech;
And mingles with the breeze a touch
Of polar air; in sooth not much;
But such as serves to hint the day,
When he shall rule, not far away.

Fall'n leaves are straggling down the brook,

With something of prophetic look;
Whose little eddies circle round
With more, methinks, than summer sound.
While the strong rivers, now more strong,
With dimmer current sweep along.
And frequent gust and chilling rain,
That meet the traveller on the plain,
Are telling tale of wintry war
Amid the topmost peaks—afar.

Scarce longer, Hills of whitening brow!
Man's summer day endures;
And snowy flakes are falling, now,
On other heads than yours;
And colder, dimmer currents roll
From Time or Chance to chill the soul.
Our fervent youth's adventurous blood
Defies or place or clime,

And dares the mountain or the flood,
Thro' winter's stormiest time.
When sober eld, grown weak or wise,
Seeks gentler scenes and milder skies.

So we will seek a milder sky,
By where slow roads up creep
Atween the summits, cresting high,
Of some huge Alpine steep;
By easier way thenceforth to glide
Adown the smooth Italian side.

With choice before us, shall we go
Where Stelvio winds his road,
Above the realms of thawless snow,
To where green things refuse to grow,
Primeval frosts' abode?

Then—beating cloud, and bitter wind,
And torrent fierce left all behind—
I Drop down to Como's southern bowers,
And drink the breath of orange flowers?
Or else, in idle boat reclined,

Hang loitering round that little bay,
Where erst inquiring Pliny lay
Thro' long observant hours;
Or haply nursed some inner dream,
Beside his intermitting stream?

Or rather shall we follow, now,
The waters as they roll
From rugged Brenner's lowlier brow
Adown the steep Tyrol;
To where Catullus loved to wake
His sweetest harp on Garda's lake?

Rich is the land, (all own its power,)
The land for which we part,
Italia!—rich in every dower
Of nature and of art.
And rich in precious memories—more—
From fragrant urns of classic lore.
But whether 'mid Etrurian bowers,
Where gallery spreads and palace towers;
Or where, beneath cerulean day,
Bright Naples clasps her double bay;
Or where steep-fallen Anio roves,
All peaceful now, thro' Tibur's groves;
On thee, contentment's happy home,
Land of bright stream and hill!
Fair Austrian land! where'er we roam,
Our hearts shall ponder still.

John Kenyon

Winds Of Doctrine

By winds diverse of doctrine blown,
Old Spurio, lately bigot fix'd,
Hath now no creed to call his own,
But slants him on, some two betwixt.
So when, cross-meeting, force and force
Have smote some stationary ball,
It takes no longer straightway course,
But sidles to diagonal.

John Kenyon

Written At Schwytz

'Twas not satiety—disgust—
That led a wanderer forth to roam,
To look for hearts of firmer trust,
Or brighter eyes—thus far from home;
'Twas not for honour's prouder beat,
'Twas not for morals' chaster strain,
Nor law, that sways from holier seat,
With steadier hand or lighter rein;
Oh! not for these, dear English land,
He left thy billow-beaten shore;
And absence to that rocky strand
But binds his heart-strings more and more.

But art Thou one to crouch thy back
Compelled beneath a despot's frown,
Where threat the impaler and the rack
Beside the crosier and the crown;
If nourished high with ancient lore
Thy generous heart be sunk to groan,
And but in dreams to ponder o'er
The freedom Thou wouldst die to own;
Then, pensive traveller! rest thee here;
Let happier thoughts thy soul employ;
Rest by these hearths to freemen dear,
And give thy heart one pause of joy.

John Kenyon

Written In A Country Churchyard

Oh! how I hate the cumbrous pride
Of plume and pall and scutcheon'd hearse,
And all the rank and ready tide
Of venal prose and lying verse.
Nor in the city's churchyard, rife
With close compacted crowds of dead,
And clogged with thoughts of stir and strife,
Would I consent to lay my head
But where 'mid Quantock's waving scene
Of brow and glen, some village church
From forth the coppice clustering green
Projects its grey and simple porch;

From whose worn seat the eye may view
Brown upland slope and cattled plain,
And, farther still, the summits blue
Of hills that skirt the channell'd main;
There, Nea, in some quiet nook,
May we our place of resting have,
And let a broad majestic oak
Wave its green branches near the grave.
No costly stone for us be planned
With palisading stern and high,
As if from truth's indignant hand
To fence foul flattery's graven lie;
But o'er the turf let sun and air
And dew their blessed influence fling,
And rosy children gather there
The earliest violets of the spring;
There let the cuckoo's oft-told tale
Be heard at flush of morning light;
And there the pensive nightingale
Chaunt requiem half the summer night.

John Kenyon

Written In Richmond

Thames swept along in summer pride,
Sparkling beneath his verdant edge;
With frolic kiss, as, half-denied,
Light airs were glancing o'er the tide,
Or whispering in the secret sedge.
Cheerful the landscape's sunny green,—
Yet still, in pensive mood reclined,
Pondering of things to be, or been,
I shrank at many a visioned scene
Of fear—before; of grief—behind.
The insect-tribes, but newly born,
Were flaunting in the 'awake'ning ray;
In me they woke no touch of scorn;
I saw them frail, but more to mourn
The kindred doom of man's decay.

For here, of old, his booty won,
The Dane caroused in barbarous glee,
Or Roman veteran, toil-foredone,
Lay stretched beneath the westering sun,
In dreams of pleasant Italy.
Or floating by, in gallant show,
Gay beauty glanced at monarch's jest,
Nor marked where, high above the prow,
'Mid mirth and wine, and music's flow,
Sat Change—a dark and threatening guest.
Their mirth is sped; their gravest theme
Sleeps with the things that cease to be;
Their longest life—a morning gleam;
A bubble bursting on the stream,
Then swept to Time's unfathomed sea.
Yes! all, beneath or Change or Chance,
And passing, like the passing river,
The wassail shout, the dreamer's trance,
And monarch's jest, and beauty's glance,
Were human all, and gone for ever!

John Kenyon

Zoë A Portrait

When Zoë turns to look or speak,
We feel a spell the heart beguile.
Dwells it in pure transparent cheek;
In laughing eye, or frolic smile?
Dwells it in frank, yet well-bred, air;
Dwells it in habit, choice, but simple;
Lurks it in ringlet of her hair;
Or shifts it with the shifting dimple?
No!—These are not her spells from Love;
Only the lesser charms he uses;
Slight witcheries the sense to move;
His baits—his pitfalls—and his nooses.

Yet these have oft betrayed the wise—
But she hath deeper spells than these:
A temper, gay as summer skies,
Yet gentle as the vernal breeze.
And blushes, quick that come—and go,
As feeling wakens or reposes,
When neck and cheek and forehead glow,
Like one wide bed of open'd roses.
And ready wit, of playful dealing;
Or—if some tale of grief betide—
As ready tear; which, while outstealing,
She—shyly still—attempts to hide.

John Kenyon