

Classic Poetry Series

Anne Brontë
- poems -

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Anne Brontë(7 January 1820 – 28 May 1849)

Anne Brontë was a British novelist and poet, the youngest member of the Brontë literary family.

The daughter of a poor Irish clergyman in the Church of England, Anne Brontë lived most of her life with her family at the parish of Haworth on the Yorkshire moors. For a couple of years she went to a boarding school. At the age of nineteen, she left Haworth working as a governess between 1839 and 1845. After leaving her teaching position, she fulfilled her literary ambitions. She wrote a volume of poetry with her sisters (Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, 1846) and in short succession she wrote two novels. Agnes Grey, based upon her experiences as a governess, was published in 1847. Her second and last novel, The Tenant of Wildfell Hall appeared in 1848. Anne's life was cut short with her death of pulmonary tuberculosis when she was 29 years old.

Anne Brontë is somewhat overshadowed by her more famous sisters, [see here](#)

Family Background

Anne's father, Patrick Brontë (1777–1861), was born in a meagre two-room cottage in Emdale, Loughbrickland, County Down, Ireland. He was the first of ten children born to Hugh Brunty and Eleanor McCrory, a couple of poor Irish peasant farmers. The family surname mac Aedh Ó Proinntigh had been earlier Anglicised as Prunty or sometimes Brunty. Struggling against poverty, Patrick learned how to read and write and from 1798 to teach others. In 1802, at the age of twenty-six, he won a place at Cambridge to study theology at St. John's College. There he gave up his original name, Brunty, and called himself by the more distinguished Brontë. In 1807 he was ordained in the priesthood in the Church of England. He served as an assistant priest or curate in various parishes and in 1810 he published his first poem Winter Evening Thoughts in a local newspaper, followed in 1811 by a collection of moral verse, Cottage Poems. In 1811, he was made vicar of St. Peter's church in Hartshead in Yorkshire. The following year he was appointed an examiner of Bible knowledge at a Wesleyan academy, Woodhouse Grove School. There, at age thirty-five, he met his future wife, Maria Branwell, the headmaster's niece.

Anne's mother, Maria Branwell (1783–1821), was the daughter of a successful, property-owning grocer and tea merchant of Penzance, Thomas Branwell and Anne Crane, the daughter of a silversmith in the town. The eighth of eleven children, Maria had enjoyed all the benefits of belonging to a prosperous family in

a small town. After the death of both parents within a year of each other, Maria went to help her aunt with the teaching at the school. A tiny, neat woman, aged thirty, she was well read and intelligent. Her strong Methodist faith immediately attracted Patrick Brontë.

Though from vastly different backgrounds, within three months Patrick Brontë and Maria Branwell were married on 29 December 1812. Their first child, Maria (1814–1825), was born after their move to Hartshead. In 1815, Patrick was made curate of a chapel in the little village of Thornton, near Bradford; a second daughter, Elizabeth (1815–1825), was born shortly after. Four more children would follow: Charlotte, (1816–1855), Patrick Branwell (1817–1848), Emily, (1818–1848) and Anne (1820–1849).

Early Life

Anne, the youngest member of the Brontë family, was born on 17 January 1820, at number 74 Market Street in the village of Thornton, Bradford, Yorkshire, England. When Anne was born, her father was the curate of Thornton and she was baptised there on 25 March 1820. Shortly after, Anne's father took a perpetual curacy, a secure but not enriching vocation, in Haworth, a remote small town some seven miles (11 km) away. In April 1820, the Brontë family moved into the Haworth Parsonage, a five-room building which became their family home for the rest of their lives.

Anne was barely a year old when her mother became ill of what is believed to have been uterine cancer. Maria Branwell died on 15 September 1821. In order to provide a mother for his children, Patrick tried to remarry, but he had no success. Maria's sister, Elizabeth Branwell (1776–1842), had moved into the parsonage, initially to nurse her dying sister, but she subsequently spent the rest of her life there raising the Brontë children. She did it from a sense of duty, but she was a stern woman who expected respect, rather than love. There was little affection between her and the eldest children, but to Anne, her favourite according to tradition, she did relate. Anne shared a room with her aunt, they were particularly close, and this may have strongly influenced Anne's personality and religious beliefs.

In Elizabeth Gaskell's biography, Anne's father remembered her as precocious, reporting that once, when she was four years old, in reply to his question about what a child most wanted, she answered: "age and experience".

In the summer of 1824, Patrick sent his eldest daughters Maria, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily to Crofton Hall in Crofton, West Yorkshire, and later to the

Clergy Daughter's School, Cowan Bridge, Lancashire. When the two eldest siblings died of consumption in 1825, Maria on 6 May and Elizabeth on 15 June, Charlotte and Emily were immediately brought home. The unexpected deaths of Anne's two eldest sisters distressed the bereaved family enough that Patrick could not face sending them away again. For the next five years, all the Brontë children were educated at home, largely by their father and aunt. The young Brontës made little attempt to mix with others outside the parsonage, but relied upon each other for friendship and companionship. The bleak moors surrounding Haworth became their playground.

Education

Anne's studies at home included music and drawing. Anne, Emily and Branwell had piano lessons at the parsonage from the Keighley parish organist. The Brontë children received art lessons from John Bradley of Keighley and all of them drew with some skill. Their aunt tried to make sure the girls knew how to run a household, but their minds were more inclined to literature. Their father's well-stocked library was a main source of knowledge.

Those readings fed the Brontës' imaginations. The children's creativity soared after their father presented Branwell with a set of toy soldiers in June 1826. They named the soldiers and developed their characters, which they called the "Twelves". This led to the creation of an imaginary world: the African kingdom of "Angria". That was illustrated with maps and watercolour renderings. The children kept themselves busy devising plots about the people of Angria, and its capital city, "Glass Town", later called Verreopolis, and finally, Verdopolis.

These fantasy worlds and kingdoms gradually acquired all the characteristics of the real world—sovereigns, armies, heroes, outlaws, fugitives, inns, schools and publishers. For these peoples and lands the children created newspapers, magazines and chronicles, all of which were written out in extremely tiny books, with writing that was so small it was difficult to read without the aid of a magnifying glass. These juvenile creations and writings served as the apprenticeship of their later, literary talents.

Juvenilia

Around 1831, when Anne was eleven, she and her sister Emily broke away from Charlotte and Branwell in the creation and development of the fictional sagas of Angria establishing their own fantasy world of Gondal. Anne was at this time particularly close to Emily; the closeness of their relationship was reinforced by Charlotte's departure for Roe Head School, in January 1831. When Charlotte's

friend Ellen Nussey visited Haworth in 1833, she reported that Emily and Anne were "like twins", "inseparable companions". She described Anne at this time: "Anne, dear gentle Anne was quite different in appearance from the others, and she was her aunt's favourite. Her hair was a very pretty light brown, and fell on her neck in graceful curls. She had lovely violet-blue eyes; fine pencilled eyebrows and a clear almost transparent complexion. She still pursued her studies and especially her sewing, under the surveillance of her aunt." Anne also took lessons from Charlotte, after she came back from the boarding school, at Roe Head. Later, Anne began more formal studies at Miss Wooler's school at Roe Head, Huddersfield. Charlotte returned there on 29 July 1835 as a teacher. Emily accompanied her as a pupil; her tuition largely financed by Charlotte's teaching. Within a few months, Emily was unable to adapt to life at school, and by October, was physically ill from homesickness. She was withdrawn from the school and replaced by Anne.

At fifteen, it was Anne's first time away from home, and she made few friends at Roe Head. She was quiet and hard working, and determined to stay and get the education that would allow her to support herself. Anne stayed for two years, winning a good-conduct medal in December 1836, and returning home only during Christmas and the summer holidays. Anne and Charlotte do not appear to have been close during their time at Roe Head (Charlotte's letters almost never mention Anne) but Charlotte was concerned about the health of her sister. At some point before December 1837, Anne became seriously ill with gastritis and underwent a religious crisis. A Moravian minister was called to see Anne several times during her illness, suggesting that her distress was caused, at least in part, by conflict with the local Anglican clergy. Charlotte was sufficiently concerned about Anne's illness to notify Patrick Brontë, and to take Anne home where she remained to recover.

Employment at Blake Hall

Little is known about Anne's life during 1838, but in 1839, a year after leaving the school and at the age of nineteen, she was actively looking for a teaching position. As the daughter of a poor clergyman, she needed to earn a living. Her father had no private income and the parsonage would revert to the church on his death. Teaching or being a governess in a private family were among the few options available to poor but educated women. In April, 1839, Anne began to work as a governess with the Ingham family at Blake Hall, near Mirfield.

The children in Anne's charge were spoilt and wild, and persistently disobeyed and tormented her. She experienced great difficulty controlling them, and had almost no success in instilling any education. She was not empowered to inflict

any punishment, and when she complained of their behaviour to their parents, she received no support, but was merely criticised for not being capable of her job. The Inghams, unsatisfied with their children's progress, dismissed Anne at the end of the year. She returned home at Christmas, 1839, joining Charlotte and Emily, who had left their positions, and Branwell. The whole episode at Blake Hall was so traumatic for Anne, that she reproduced it in almost perfect detail in her later novel, *Agnes Grey*.

William Weightman

At Anne's return to Haworth, she met William Weightman (1814–1842), Patrick's new curate, who began work in the parish in August 1839. Twenty-five years old, he had obtained a two-year licentiate in theology from the University of Durham. He quickly became welcome at the parsonage. Anne's acquaintance with William Weightman parallels the writing of a number of poems, which may suggest that she fell in love with him. There is considerable disagreement over this point. Not much outside evidence exists beyond a teasing anecdote of Charlotte's to Ellen Nussey in January 1842.

It may or may not be relevant that the source of *Agnes Grey*'s renewed interest in poetry is the curate to whom she is attracted. As the person to whom Anne Brontë may have been attracted, William Weightman has aroused much curiosity. It seems clear that he was a good-looking, engaging young man, whose easy humour and kindness towards the Brontë sisters made a considerable impression. It is such a character that she portrays in Edward Weston, and that her heroine *Agnes Grey* finds deeply appealing.

If Anne did form an attachment to Weightman, that does not imply that he, in turn, was attracted to her. Indeed, it is entirely possible that Weightman was no more aware of her than of her sisters or their friend Ellen Nussey. Nor does it follow that Anne believed him to be interested in her. If anything, her poems suggest just the opposite—they speak of quietly experienced but intensely felt emotions, intentionally hidden from others, without any indication of their being requited. It is also possible that an initially mild attraction to Weightman assumed increasing importance to Anne over time, in the absence of other opportunities for love, marriage, and children.

Anne would have seen William Weightman on her holidays at home, particularly during the summer of 1842, when her sisters were away. He died of cholera in the same year. Anne expressed her grief for his death in her poem "I will not mourn thee, lovely one", in which she called him "our darling".

Governess

Anne soon obtained a second post: this time as a governess to the children of the Reverend Edmund Robinson and his wife Lydia, at Thorp Green, a wealthy country house near York. Thorp Green appeared later as Horton Lodge in her novel *Agnes Grey*. Anne was to have four pupils: Lydia, age 15, Elizabeth, age 13, Mary, age 12, and Edmund, age 8. Initially, she encountered the same problems with the unruly children that she had experienced at Blake Hall. Anne missed her home and family, commenting in a diary paper in 1841 that she did not like her situation and wished to leave it. Her own quiet, gentle disposition did not help matters. However, despite her outwardly placid appearance, Anne was determined and with the experience she gradually gained, she eventually made a success of her position, becoming well liked by her new employers. Her charges, the Robinson girls, ultimately became her lifelong friends.

For the next five years, Anne spent no more than five or six weeks a year with her family, during holidays at Christmas and in June. The rest of her time she was with the Robinsons at their home Thorp Green. She was also obliged to accompany the family on their annual holidays to Scarborough. Between 1840 and 1844, Anne spent around five weeks each summer at the resort, and loved the place. A number of locations in Scarborough formed the setting for *Agnes Grey*'s final scenes.

During the time working for the Robinsons, Anne and her sisters considered the possibility of setting-up their own school. Various locations, including their own home, the parsonage, were considered as places to establish it. The project never materialised and Anne chose repeatedly to return to Thorp Green. She came home at the death of her aunt in early November 1842, while her sisters were away in Brussels. Elizabeth Branwell left a £350 legacy for each of her nieces.

Anne returned to Thorp Green in January 1843. She secured a position for Branwell with her employers: he was to take over from her as tutor to the Robinsons' son, Edmund, the only boy in the family, who was growing too old to be under Anne's care. However Branwell did not live in the house with the Robinson family, as Anne did. Anne's vaunted calm appears to have been the result of hard-fought battles, balancing deeply felt emotions with careful thought, a sense of responsibility, and resolute determination. All three Brontë sisters had spent time working as governesses or teachers, and all had experienced problems controlling their charges, gaining support from their employers, and coping with homesickness—but Anne was the only one who persevered and made a success of her work.

Back at The Parsonage

Anne and Branwell continued to teach at Thorp Green for the next three years. However, Branwell was enticed into a secret relationship with his employer's wife, Lydia Robinson. When Anne and her brother returned home for the holidays in June 1846, she resigned her position. While Anne gave no reason for leaving Thorp Green, it is generally thought that she wanted to leave upon becoming aware of the relationship between her brother and Mrs. Robinson. Branwell was sternly dismissed when his employer found out about his relationship with his wife. In spite of her brother's behaviour, Anne retained close ties to Elizabeth and Mary Robinson, exchanging frequent letters with them even after Branwell's disgrace. The Robinson sisters came to visit Anne in December 1848.

Once free of her position as a governess, Anne took Emily to visit some of the places she had come to know and love in the past five years. An initial plan of going to the sea at Scarborough fell through, and the sisters went instead to York, where Anne showed her sister the York Minster.

A Book of Poems

In the summer of 1845, all four of the Brontës were at home with their father Patrick. None of the four had any immediate prospect of employment. It was at this point that Charlotte came across Emily's poems. They had been shared only with Anne, her partner in the world of Gondal. Charlotte proposed that they be published. Anne also revealed her own poems. Charlotte's reaction was characteristically patronising: "I thought that these verses too had a sweet sincere pathos of their own". Eventually, though not easily, the sisters reached an agreement. They told neither Branwell, nor their father, nor their friends about what they were doing. Anne and Emily each contributed 21 poems and Charlotte with nineteen. With Aunt Branwell's money, the Brontë sisters paid to have the collection published.

Afraid that their work would be judged differently if they revealed their identity as women, the book appeared under their three chosen pseudonyms—or pen-names, the initials of which were the same as their own. Charlotte became Currer Bell, Emily became Ellis Bell and Anne became Acton Bell. Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell was available for sale in May 1846. The cost of publication was about $\frac{3}{4}$ of Anne's annual salary at Thorp Green. On 7 May 1846, the first three copies of the book were delivered to Haworth Parsonage. The volume achieved three somewhat favourable reviews, but was a dismal failure, with only two copies being sold during the first year. Anne, however, began to

find a market for her more recent poetry. Both the Leeds Intelligencer and Fraser's Magazine published her poem "The Narrow Way" under her pseudonym, Acton Bell. Four months earlier, in August, Fraser's Magazine had also published her poem "The Three Guides".

Novelist

Agnes Grey

Even before the fate of the book of poems became apparent, the three sisters were working on a new project. They began to work on their first novels. Charlotte wrote *The Professor*, *Emily Wuthering Heights*, and *Anne Agnes Grey*. By July 1846, a package with the three manuscripts was making the rounds of London publishers.

After a number of rejections, *Emily's Wuthering Heights* and *Anne's Agnes Grey* were accepted by a publisher in London, but Charlotte's novel was rejected by every other publisher to whom it was sent. However, Charlotte was not long in completing her second novel, the now famous *Jane Eyre*, and this was immediately accepted by Smith, Elder & Co., a different publisher from *Anne's* and *Emily's* though also located in London. However, *Jane Eyre* was the first to appear in print. While *Anne* and *Emily's* novels 'lingered in the press', Charlotte's second novel was an immediate and resounding success. Meanwhile, *Anne* and *Emily* were obliged to pay fifty pounds to help meet the publishing costs. Their publisher, urged on by the success of *Jane Eyre*, finally published *Emily's Wuthering Heights* and *Anne's Agnes Grey* in December 1847. These two sold exceptionally well, but *Agnes Grey* was distinctly outshone by *Emily's* much more dramatic *Wuthering Heights*.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall

Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, was published in the last week of June 1848. It was an instant, phenomenal success; within six weeks it was sold out.

The Tenant of Wildfell Hall is perhaps the most shocking of the Brontës' novels. In seeking to present the truth in literature, *Anne's* depiction of alcoholism and debauchery was profoundly disturbing to nineteenth-century readers. Helen Graham, the tenant of the title, intrigues Gilbert Markham and gradually she reveals her mysterious past as an artist and wife of the dissipated Arthur Huntingdon. The book's brilliance lies in its revelation of the position of women at the time, and its multi-layered plot.

It is easy today to underestimate the extent to which the novel challenged existing social and legal structures. May Sinclair, in 1913, said that the slamming of Helen Huntingdon's bedroom door against her husband reverberated throughout Victorian England. Anne's heroine eventually leaves her husband to protect their young son from his influence. She supports herself and her son by painting, while living in hiding, fearful of discovery. In doing so, she violates not only social conventions, but also English law. At the time, a married woman had no independent legal existence, apart from her husband; could not own her own property, sue for divorce, or control custody of her children. If she attempted to live apart from him, her husband had the right to reclaim her. If she took their child with her, she was liable for kidnapping. In living off her own earnings, she was held to be stealing her husband's property, since any income she made was legally his.

London Visit

In July 1848, in order to dispel the rumour that the three "Bell brothers" were all the same person, Charlotte and Anne went to London to reveal their identities to the publisher George Smith. The women spent several days in his company. Many years after Anne's death, he wrote in the Cornhill Magazine his impressions of her, describing her as: "...a gentle, quiet, rather subdued person, by no means pretty, yet of a pleasing appearance. Her manner was curiously expressive of a wish for protection and encouragement, a kind of constant appeal which invited sympathy."

In the second edition of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, which appeared in August 1848, Anne clearly stated her intentions in writing it. She presented a forceful rebuttal to critics who considered her portrayal of Huntingdon overly graphic and disturbing. (Charlotte was among them.)

When we have to do with vice and vicious characters, I maintain it is better to depict them as they really are than as they would wish to appear. To represent a bad thing in its least offensive light, is doubtless the most agreeable course for a writer of fiction to pursue; but is it the most honest, or the safest? Is it better to reveal the snares and pitfalls of life to the young and thoughtless traveller, or to cover them with branches and flowers? O Reader! if there were less of this delicate concealment of facts—this whispering 'Peace, peace', when there is no peace, there would be less of sin and misery to the young of both sexes who are left to wring their bitter knowledge from experience."

Anne also sharply castigated reviewers who speculated on the sex of the authors,

and the appropriateness of their writing to their sex, in words that do little to reinforce the stereotype of Anne as meek and gentle.

I am satisfied that if a book is a good one, it is so whatever the sex of the author may be. All novels are or should be written for both men and women to read, and I am at a loss to conceive how a man should permit himself to write anything that would be really disgraceful to a woman, or why a woman should be censured for writing anything that would be proper and becoming for a man."

The increasing popularity of the Bells' work led to renewed interest in the Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell, originally published by Aylott and Jones. The remaining print run was purchased by Smith and Elder, and reissued under new covers in November 1848. It still sold poorly.

Family Tragedies

Only in their late twenties, a highly successful literary career appeared a certainty for Anne and her sisters. However, an impending tragedy was to engulf the family. Within the next ten months, three of the siblings, including Anne, would be dead.

Branwell's health had gradually deteriorated over the previous two years, but its seriousness was half disguised by his persistent drunkenness. He died on the morning of 24 September 1848. His sudden death came as a shock to the family. He was aged just thirty-one. The cause was recorded as chronic bronchitis – marasmus; though, through his recorded symptoms, it is now believed that he was also suffering from tuberculosis.

The whole family had suffered from coughs and colds during the winter of 1848 and it was Emily who next became severely ill. She deteriorated rapidly over a two month period, persistently refusing all medical aid until the morning of 19 December, when, being so weak, she declared: "if you will send for a doctor, I will see him now". It was far too late. At about two o'clock that afternoon, after a hard, short conflict in which she struggled desperately to hang on to life, she died, aged just thirty.

Emily's death deeply affected Anne and her grief further undermined her physical health. Over Christmas, Anne caught influenza. Her symptoms intensified, and in early January, her father sent for a Leeds physician, who diagnosed her condition as consumption, and intimated that it was quite advanced leaving little hope of a recovery. Anne met the news with characteristic determination and self-control. Unlike Emily, Anne took all the recommended medicines, and responded to all

the advice she was given. That same month Anne wrote her last poem, " A dreadful darkness closes in", in which she deals with the realisation of being terminally ill. Her health fluctuated as the months passed, but she progressively grew thinner and weaker.

Death

In February 1849, Anne seemed somewhat better. By this time, she had decided to make a return visit to Scarborough in the hope that the change of location and fresh sea air might initiate a recovery, and give her a chance to live. On 24 May 1849, Anne said her goodbyes to her father and the servants at Haworth, and set off for Scarborough with Charlotte and their friend Ellen Nussey. En route, the three spent a day and a night in York, where, escorting Anne around in a wheelchair, they did some shopping, and at Anne's request, visited York Minster. However, it was clear that Anne had little strength left.

On Sunday, 27 May, Anne asked Charlotte whether it would be easier for her if she return home to die instead of remaining at Scarborough. A doctor, consulted the next day, indicated that death was already close. Anne received the news quietly. She expressed her love and concern for Ellen and Charlotte, and seeing Charlotte's distress, whispered to her to "take courage". Conscious and calm, Anne died at about two o'clock in the afternoon, Monday, 28 May 1849.

Over the following few days, Charlotte made the decision to "lay the flower where it had fallen". Anne was buried not in Haworth with the rest of her family, but in Scarborough. The funeral was held on Wednesday, 30 May, which did not allow time for Patrick Brontë to make the 70-mile (110 km) trip to Scarborough, had he wished to do so. The former schoolmistress at Roe Head, Miss Wooler, was also in Scarborough at this time, and she was the only other mourner at Anne's funeral. She was buried in St. Mary's churchyard, beneath the castle walls, and overlooking the bay. Charlotte commissioned a stone to be placed over her grave, with the simple inscription "Here lie the remains of Anne Brontë, daughter of the Revd. P. Brontë, Incumbent of Haworth, Yorkshire. She died, Aged 28, 28 May 1849". Anne was actually twenty-nine at the time of her death.

Reputation

A year after Anne's death, further editions of her novels were required; however, Charlotte prevented re-publication of Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. In 1850, Charlotte wrote damningly "*Wildfell Hall* it hardly appears to me desirable to preserve. The choice of subject in that work is a mistake, it was too little consonant with the character, tastes and ideas of the gentle, retiring

inexperienced writer." This act was the predominant cause of Anne's relegation to the back seat of the Brontë bandwagon. Anne's novel was daring for the Victorian era with its depiction of scenes of mental and physical cruelty and approach to divorce. The consequence was that Charlotte's novels, along with Emily's *Wuthering Heights*, continued to be published, firmly launching these two sisters into literary stardom, while Anne's work was consigned to oblivion. Further, Anne was only twenty-eight when she wrote *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*; at a comparable age, Charlotte had produced only *The Professor*.

The general view has been that Anne is a mere shadow compared with Charlotte, the family's most prolific writer, and Emily, the genius. This has occurred to a large extent because Anne was very different, as a person and as a writer, from Charlotte and Emily. The controlled, reflective camera eye of *Agnes Grey* is closer to Jane Austen's *Persuasion* than to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. The painstaking realism and social criticism of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* directly counters the romanticised violence of *Wuthering Heights*. Anne's religious concerns, reflected in her books and expressed directly in her poems, were not concerns shared by her sisters. Anne's subtle prose has a fine ironic edge; her novels also reveal Anne to be the most socially radical of the three. Now, with increasing critical interest in female authors, her life is being reexamined, and her work reevaluated. A re-appraisal of Anne's work has begun, gradually leading to her acceptance, not as a minor Brontë, but as a major literary figure in her own right.

A Fragment

'Maiden, thou wert thoughtless once
Of beauty or of grace,
Simple and homely in attire
Careless of form and face.
Then whence this change, and why so oft
Dost smooth thy hazel hair?
And wherefore deck thy youthful form
With such unwearied care?
'Tell us -- and cease to tire our ears
With yonder hackneyed strain --
Why wilt thou play those simple tunes
So often o'er again?'
'Nay, gentle friends, I can but say
That childhood's thoughts are gone.
Each year its own new feelings brings
And years move swiftly on,

And for these little simple airs,
I love to play them o'er --
So much I dare not promise now
To play them never more.'
I answered and it was enough;
They turned them to depart;
They could not read my secret thoughts
Nor see my throbbing heart.

I've noticed many a youthful form
Upon whose changeful face
The inmost workings of the soul
The gazer's eye might trace.
The speaking eye, the changing lip,
The ready blushing cheek,
The smiling or beclouded brow
Their different feelings speak.

But, thank God! you might gaze on mine
For hours and never know
The secret changes of my soul
From joy to bitter woe.

Last night, as we sat round the fire
 Conversing merrily,
We heard without approaching steps
 Of one well known to me.

There was no trembling in my voice,
 No blush upon my cheek,
No lustrous sparkle in my eyes,
 Of hope or joy to speak;
But O my spirit burned within,
 My heart beat thick and fast.
He came not nigh -- he went away
 And then my joy was past.

And yet my comrades marked it not,
 My voice was still the same;
They saw me smile, and o'er my face --
 No signs of sadness came;
They little knew my hidden thoughts
 And they will never know
The anguish of my drooping heart,
 The bitter aching woe!

Olivia Vernon.

Anne Brontë

A Hymn

Eternal power of earth and air,
Unseen, yet seen in all around,
Remote, but dwelling everywhere,
Though silent, heard in every sound.
If e'er thine ear in mercy bent
When wretched mortals cried to thee,
And if indeed thy Son was sent
To save lost sinners such as me.

Then hear me now, while kneeling here;
I lift to thee my heart and eye
And all my soul ascends in prayer;
O give me -- give me Faith I cry.

Without some glimmering in my heart,
I could not raise this fervent prayer;
But O a stronger light impart,
And in thy mercy fix it there!

While Faith is with me I am blest;
It turns my darkest night to day;
But while I clasp it to my breast
I often feel it slide away.

Then cold and dark my spirit sinks,
To see my light of life depart,
And every fiend of Hell methinks
Enjoys the anguish of my heart.

What shall I do if all my love,
My hopes, my toil, are cast away,
And if there be no God above
To hear and bless me when I pray?

If this be vain delusion all,
If death be an eternal sleep,
And none can hear my secret call,
Or see the silent tears I weep.

O help me God! for thou alone
Canst my distracted soul relieve;
Forsake it not -- it is thine own,
Though weak yet longing to believe.

O drive these cruel doubts away
And make me know that thou art God;
A Faith that shines by night and day
Will lighten every earthly load.

If I believe that Jesus died
And waking rose to reign above,
Then surely Sorrow, Sin and Pride
Must yield to peace and hope and love.

And all the blessed words he said
Will strength and holy joy impart,
A shield of safety o'er my head,
A spring of comfort in my heart.

Anne Brontë

A Prayer

My God (oh, let me call Thee mine,
Weak, wretched sinner though I be),
My trembling soul would fain be Thine;
My feeble faith still clings to Thee.

Not only for the Past I grieve,
The Future fills me with dismay;
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
Thy suppliant is a castaway.

I cannot say my faith is strong,
I dare not hope my love is great;
But strength and love to Thee belong;
Oh, do not leave me desolate!

I know I owe my all to Thee;
Oh, TAKE the heart I cannot give!
Do Thou my strength--my Saviour be,
And MAKE me to Thy glory live.

Anne Brontë

A Prisoner In A Dungeon Deep

A prisoner in a dungeon deep
 Sat musing silently;
His head was rested on his hand,
 His elbow on his knee.
Turned he his thoughts to future times
 Or are they backward cast?
For freedom is he pining now
 Or mourning for the past?

No, he has lived so long enthralled
 Alone in dungeon gloom
That he has lost regret and hope,
 Has ceased to mourn his doom.

He pines not for the light of day
 Nor sighs for freedom now;
Such weary thoughts have ceased at length
 To rack his burning brow.

Lost in a maze of wandering thoughts
 He sits unmoving there;
That posture and that look proclaim
 The stupor of despair.

Yet not for ever did that mood
 Of sullen calm prevail;
There was a something in his eye
 That told another tale.

It did not speak of reason gone,
 It was not madness quite;
It was a fitful flickering fire,
 A strange uncertain light.

And sooth to say, these latter years
 Strange fancies now and then
Had filled his cell with scenes of life
 And forms of living men.

A mind that cannot cease to think
 Why needs he cherish there?
Torpor may bring relief to pain
 And madness to despair.

Such wildering scenes, such flitting shapes
 As feverish dreams display:
What if those fancies still increase
 And reason quite decay?

But hark, what sounds have struck his ear;
 Voices of men they seem;
And two have entered now his cell;
 Can this too be a dream?

'Orlando, hear our joyful news:
 Revenge and liberty!
Your foes are dead, and we are come
 At last to set you free.'

So spoke the elder of the two,
 And in the captive's eyes
He looked for gleaming ecstasy
 But only found surprise.

'My foes are dead! It must be then
 That all mankind are gone.
For they were all my deadly foes
 And friends I had not one.'

Anne Brontë

A Reminiscence

YES, thou art gone ! and never more
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me ;
But I may pass the old church door,
And pace the floor that covers thee.

May stand upon the cold, damp stone,
And think that, frozen, lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,
'Tis still a comfort to have seen ;
And though thy transient life is o'er,
'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been ;

To think a soul so near divine,
Within a form so angel fair,
United to a heart like thine,
Has gladdened once our humble sphere.

Anne Brontë

A Voice From The Dungeon

I'm buried now; I've done with life;
I've done with hate, revenge and strife;
I've done with joy, and hope and love
And all the bustling world above.
Long have I dwelt forgotten here
In pining woe and dull despair;
This place of solitude and gloom
Must be my dungeon and my tomb.

No hope, no pleasure can I find:
I am grown weary of my mind;
Often in balmy sleep I try
To gain a rest from misery,

And in one hour of calm repose
To find a respite from my woes,
But dreamless sleep is not for me
And I am still in misery.

I dream of liberty, 'tis true,
But then I dream of sorrow too,
Of blood and guilt and horrid woes,
Of tortured friends and happy foes;

I dream about the world, but then
I dream of fiends instead of men;
Each smiling hope so quickly fades
And such a lurid gloom pervades

That world -- that when I wake and see
Those dreary phantoms fade and flee,
Even in my dungeon I can smile,
And taste of joy a little while.

And yet it is not always so;
I dreamt a little while ago
That all was as it used to be:
A fresh free wind passed over me;

It was a pleasant summer's day,
The sun shone forth with cheering ray,
Methought a little lovely child
Looked up into my face and smiled.

My heart was full, I wept for joy,
It was my own, my darling boy;
I clasped him to my breast and he
Kissed me and laughed in childish glee.

Just then I heard in whisper sweet
A well known voice my name repeat.
His father stood before my eyes;
I gazed at him in mute surprise,

I thought he smiled and spoke to me,
But still in silent ecstasy
I gazed at him; I could not speak;
I uttered one long piercing shriek.

Alas! Alas! That cursed scream
Aroused me from my heavenly dream;
I looked around in wild despair,
I called them, but they were not there;
The father and the child are gone,
And I must live and die alone.

Marina Sabia

Anne Brontë

A Word To The Calvinists

You may rejoice to think yourselves secure,
You may be grateful for the gift divine,
That grace unsought which made your black hearts pure
And fits your earthborn souls in Heaven to shine.
But is it sweet to look around and view
Thousands excluded from that happiness,
Which they deserve at least as much as you,
Their faults not greater nor their virtues less?

And wherefore should you love your God the more
Because to you alone his smiles are given,
Because He chose to pass the many o'er
And only bring the favoured few to Heaven?

And wherefore should your hearts more grateful prove
Because for all the Saviour did not die?
Is yours the God of justice and of love
And are your bosoms warm with charity?

Say does your heart expand to all mankind
And would you ever to your neighbour do,
-- The weak, the strong, the enlightened and the blind --
As you would have your neighbour do to you?

And, when you, looking on your fellow men
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture then?
May God withhold such cruel joy from me!

That none deserve eternal bliss I know:
Unmerited the grace in mercy given,
But none shall sink to everlasting woe
That have not well deserved the wrath of Heaven.

And, O! there lives within my heart
A hope long nursed by me,
(And should its cheering ray depart
How dark my soul would be)

That as in Adam all have died
In Christ shall all men live
And ever round his throne abide
Eternal praise to give;

That even the wicked shall at last
Be fitted for the skies
And when their dreadful doom is past
To life and light arise.

I ask not how remote the day
Nor what the sinner's woe
Before their dross is purged away,
Enough for me to know

That when the cup of wrath is drained,
The metal purified,
They'll cling to what they once disdained,
And live by Him that died.

Anne Brontë

A Word To The 'Elect'

You may rejoice to think yourselves secure;
You may be grateful for the gift divine --
That grace unsought, which made your black hearts pure,
And fits your earth-born souls in Heaven to shine.
But, is it sweet to look around, and view
Thousands excluded from that happiness,
Which they deserved, at least, as much as you, --
Their faults not greater, nor their virtues less?

And, wherefore should you love your God the more,
Because to you alone his smiles are given;
Because he chose to pass the many o'er,
And only bring the favoured few to Heaven?

And, wherefore should your hearts more grateful prove,
Because for ALL the Saviour did not die?
Is yours the God of justice and of love
And are your bosoms warm with charity?

Say, does your heart expand to all mankind?
And, would you ever to your neighbour do --
The weak, the strong, the enlightened, and the blind --
As you would have your neighbour do to you?

And, when you, looking on your fellow-men,
Behold them doomed to endless misery,
How can you talk of joy and rapture then? --
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A hope, long nursed by me;
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Nor what the sinner's woe,
Before their dross is purged away;
Enough for me, to know

That when the cup of wrath is drained,
The metal purified,
They'll cling to what they once disdained,
And live by Him that died.

Acton

Anne Brontë

Alexander And Zenobia

Fair was the evening and brightly the sun
Was shining on desert and grove,
Sweet were the breezes and balmy the flowers
And cloudless the heavens above.

It was Arabia's distant land
And peaceful was the hour;
Two youthful figures lay reclined
Deep in a shady bower.

One was a boy of just fourteen
Bold beautiful and bright;
Soft raven curls hung clustering round
A brow of marble white.

The fair brow and ruddy cheek
Spoke of less burning skies;
Words cannot paint the look that beamed
In his dark lustrous eyes.

The other was a slender girl,
Blooming and young and fair.
The snowy neck was shaded with
The long bright sunny hair.

And those deep eyes of watery blue,
So sweetly sad they seemed.
And every feature in her face
With pensive sorrow teemed.

The youth beheld her saddened air
And smiling cheerfully
He said, 'How pleasant is the land
Of sunny Araby!

'Zenobia, I never saw
A lovelier eve than this;
I never felt my spirit raised
With more unbroken bliss!

'So deep the shades, so calm the hour,
So soft the breezes sigh,
So sweetly Philomel begins
Her heavenly melody.

'So pleasant are the scents that rise
From flowers of loveliest hue,
And more than all -- Zenobia,
I am alone with you!

Are we not happy here alone
In such a healthy spot?'
He looked to her with joyful smile
But she returned it not.

'Why are you sorrowful?' he asked
And heaved a bitter sigh,
'O tell me why those drops of woe
Are gathering in your eye.'

'Gladly would I rejoice,' she said,
'But grief weighs down my heart.
'Can I be happy when I know
Tomorrow we must part?

'Yes, Alexander, I must see
This happy land no more.
At break of day I must return
To distant Gondal's shore.

'At morning we must bid farewell,
And at the close of day
You will be wandering alone
And I shall be away.

'I shall be sorrowing for you
On the wide weltering sea,
And you will perhaps have wandered here
To sit and think of me.'

'And shall we part so soon?' he cried,
'Must we be torn away?

Shall I be left to mourn alone?
Will you no longer stay?

'And shall we never meet again,
Hearts that have grown together?
Must they at once be rent away
And kept apart for ever?'

'Yes, Alexander, we must part,
But we may meet again,
For when I left my native land
I wept in anguish then.

'Never shall I forget the day
I left its rocky shore.
We thought that we had bid adieu
To meet on earth no more.

'When we had parted how I wept
To see the mountains blue
Grow dimmer and more distant -- till
They faded from my view.

'And you too wept -- we little thought
After so long a time,
To meet again so suddenly
In such a distant clime.

'We met on Grecia's classic plain,
We part in Araby.
And let us hope to meet again
Beneath our Gondal's sky.'

'Zenobia, do you remember
A little lonely spring
Among Exina's woody hills
Where blackbirds used to sing,

'And when they ceased as daylight faded
From the dusky sky
The pensive nightingale began
Her matchless melody?

'Sweet bluebells used to flourish there
And tall trees waved on high,
And through their ever sounding leaves
The soft wind used to sigh.

'At morning we have often played
Beside that lonely well;
At evening we have lingered there
Till dewy twilight fell.

'And when your fifteenth birthday comes,
Remember me, my love,
And think of what I said to you
In this sweet spicy grove.

'At evening wander to that spring
And sit and wait for me;
And 'ere the sun has ceased to shine
I will return to thee.

'Two years is a weary time
But it will soon be fled.
And if you do not meet me -- know
I am not false but dead.'

* * *

Sweetly the summer day declines
On forest, plain, and hill
And in that spacious palace hall
So lonely, wide and still.

Beside a window's open arch,
In the calm evening air
All lonely sits a stately girl,
Graceful and young and fair.

The snowy lid and lashes long
Conceal her downcast eye,
She's reading and till now I have
Passed unnoticed by.

But see she cannot fix her thoughts,
They are wandering away;
She looks towards a distant dell
Where sunny waters play.

And yet her spirit is not with
The scene she looks upon;
She muses with a mournful smile
On pleasures that are gone.

She looks upon the book again
That chained her thoughts before,
And for a moment strives in vain
To fix her mind once more.

Then gently drops it on her knee
And looks into the sky,
While trembling drops are shining in
Her dark celestial eye.
And thus alone and still she sits
Musing on years gone by.

Till with a sad and sudden smile
She rises up to go;
And from the open window springs
On to the grass below.

Why does she fly so swiftly now
Adown the meadow green,
And o'er the gently swelling hills
And the vale that lies between?

She passes under giant trees
That lift their arms on high
And slowly wave their mighty boughs
In the clear evening sky,

And now she threads a path that winds
Through deeply shaded groves
Where nought is heard but sighing gales
And murmuring turtle doves.

She hastens on through sunless gloom
To a vista opening wide;
A marble fountain sparkles there
With sweet flowers by its side.

At intervals in the velvet grass
A few old elm trees rise,
While a warm flood of yellow light
Streams from the western skies.

Is this her resting place? Ah, no,
She hastens onward still,
The startled deer before her fly
As she ascends the hill.

She does not rest till she has gained
A lonely purling spring,
Where zephyrs wave the verdant trees
And birds in concert sing.

And there she stands and gazes round
With bright and searching eye,
Then sadly sighing turns away
And looks upon the sky.

She sits down on the flowery turf
Her head drooped on her hand;
Her soft luxuriant golden curls
Are by the breezes fanned.

A sweet sad smile plays on her lips;
Her heart is far away,
And thus she sits till twilight comes
To take the place of day.

But when she looks towards the west
And sees the sun is gone
And hears that every bird but one
To its nightly rest is flown,

And sees that over nature's face

A sombre veil is cast
With mournful voice and tearful eye
She says, 'The time is past!

'He will not come! I might have known
It was a foolish hope;
But it was so sweet to cherish
I could not yield it up.

'It may be foolish thus to weep
But I cannot check my tears
To see in one short hour destroyed
The darling hope of years.

'He is not false, but he was young
And time rolls fast away.
Has he forgotten the vow he made
To meet me here today?

'No. If he lives he loves me still
And still remembers me.
If he is dead -- my joys are sunk
In utter misery.

'We parted in the spicy groves
Beneath Arabia's sky.
How could I hope to meet him now
Where Gondal's breezes sigh?

'He was a shining meteor light
That faded from the skies,
But I mistook him for a star
That only set to rise.

'And with a firm yet trembling hand
I've clung to this false hope;
I dared not surely trust in it
Yet would not yield it up.

'And day and night I've thought of him
And loved him constantly,
And prayed that Heaven would prosper him

Wherever he might be.

'He will not come; he's wandering now
On some far distant shore,
Or else he sleeps the sleep of death
And cannot see me more!

'O, Alexander, is it thus?
Did we but meet to part?
Long as I live thy name will be
Engraven on my heart.

'I shall not cease to think of thee
While life and thought remain,
For well I know that I can never
See thy like again!'

She ceases now and dries her tears
But still she lingers there
In silent thought till night is come
And silver stars appear.

But lo! a tall and stately youth
Ascends the grassy slope;
His bright dark eyes are glancing round,
His heart beats high with hope.

He has journeyed on unweariedly
From dawn of day till now,
The warm blood kindles in his cheek,
The sweat is on his brow.

But he has gained the green hill top
Where lies that lonely spring,
And lo! he pauses when he hears
Its gentle murmuring.

He dares not enter through the trees
That veil it from his eye;
He listens for some other sound
In deep anxiety.

But vainly -- all is calm and still;
 Are his bright day dreams o'er?
Has he thus hoped and longed in vain,
 And must they meet no more?

One moment more of sad suspense
 And those dark trees are past;
The lonely well bursts on his sight
 And they are met at last!

Anne Brontë

An Orphan's Lament

She's gone -- and twice the summer's sun
Has gilt Regina's towers,
And melted wild Angora's snows,
And warmed Exina's bowers.
The flowerets twice on hill and dale
Have bloomed and died away,
And twice the rustling forest leaves
Have fallen to decay,

And thrice stern winter's icy hand
Has checked the river's flow,
And three times o'er the mountains thrown
His spotless robe of snow.

Two summers springs and autumns sad
Three winters cold and grey --
And is it then so long ago
That wild November day!

They say such tears as children weep
Will soon be dried away,
That childish grief however strong
Is only for a day,

And parted friends how dear soe'er
Will soon forgotten be;
It may be so with other hearts,
It is not thus with me.

My mother, thou wilt weep no more
For thou art gone above,
But can I ever cease to mourn
Thy good and fervent love?

While that was mine the world to me
Was sunshine bright and fair;
No feeling rose within my heart
But thou couldst read it there.

And thou couldst feel for all my joys
And all my childish cares
And never weary of my play
Or scorn my foolish fears.

Beneath thy sweet maternal smile
All pain and sorrow fled,
And even the very tears were sweet
Upon thy bosom shed.

Thy loss can never be repaired;
I shall not know again
While life remains, the peaceful joy
That filled my spirit then.

Where shall I find a heart like thine
While life remains to me,
And where shall I bestow the love
I ever bore for thee?

A.H.

Anne Brontë

Appeal

Oh, I am very weary,
Though tears no longer flow;
My eyes are tires of weeping,
My heart is sick of woe;

My life is very lonely,
My days pass heavily,
I'm wearing of repining,
Wilt thou not come to me?

Oh, didst thou know my longings
For thee, from day to day,
My hopes, so often blighted,
Thou wouldst not thus delay!

Anne Brontë

Call Me Away

Call me away; there's nothing here,
That wins my soul to stay;
Then let me leave this prospect drear,
And hasten far away.

To our beloved land I'll flee,
Our land of thought and soul,
Where I have roved so oft with thee,
Beyond the world's control.

I'll sit and watch those ancient trees,
Those Scotch firs dark and high;
I'll listen to the eerie breeze,
Among their branches sigh.

The glorious moon shines far above;
How soft her radiance falls,
On snowy heights, and rock, and grove;
And yonder palace walls!

Who stands beneath yon fir trees high?
A youth both slight and fair,
Whose bright and restless azure eye
Proclaims him known to care,
Though fair that brow, it is not smooth;
Though small those features, yet in sooth
Stern passion has been there.

Now on the peaceful moon are fixed
Those eyes so glistening bright,
But trembling teardrops hang betwixt,
And dim the blessed light.

Though late the hour, and keen the blast,
That whistles round him now,
Those raven locks are backward cast,
To cool his burning brow.

His hands above his heaving breast
Are clasped in agony --

'O Father! Father! let me rest!
And call my soul to thee!

I know 'tis weakness thus to pray;
But all this cankering care --
This doubt tormenting night and day
Is more than I can bear!

With none to comfort, none to guide
And none to strengthen me.
Since thou my only friend hast died --
I've pined to follow thee!
Since thou hast died! And did he live
What comfort could his counsel give --
To one forlorn like me?

Would he my Idol's form adore --
Her soul, her glance, her tone?
And say, "Forget for ever more
Her kindred and thine own;
Let dreams of her thy peace destroy,
Leave every other hope and joy
And live for her alone"?'

He starts, he smiles, and dries the tears,
Still glistening on his cheek,
The lady of his soul appears,
And hark! I hear her speak --

'Aye, dry thy tears; thou wilt not weep --
While I am by thy side --
Our foes all day their watch may keep
But cannot thus divide
Such hearts as ours; and we tonight
Together in the clear moon's light
Their malice will deride.

No fear our present bliss shall blast
And sorrow we'll defy.
Do thou forget the dreary past,
The dreadful future I.'

Forget it? Yes, while thou art by
 I think of nought but thee,
'Tis only when thou art not nigh
 Remembrance tortures me.

But such a lofty soul to find,
 And such a heart as thine,
In such a glorious form enshrined
 And still to call thee mine --
Would be for earth too great a bliss,
Without a taint of woe like this,
 Then why should I repine?

Anne Brontë

Confidence

Oppressed with sin and woe,
A burdened heart I bear,
Opposed by many a mighty foe:
But I will not despair.
With this polluted heart
I dare to come to Thee,
Holy and mighty as Thou art;
For Thou wilt pardon me.

I feel that I am weak,
And prone to every sin:
But Thou who giv'st to those who seek,
Wilt give me strength within.

Far as this earth may be
From yonder starry skies;
Remoter still am I from Thee:
Yet Thou wilt not despise.

I need not fear my foes,
I need not yield to care,
I need not sink beneath my woes:
For Thou wilt answer prayer.

In my Redeemer's name,
I give myself to Thee;
And all unworthy as I am
My God will cherish me.

O make me wholly Thine!
Thy love to me impart,
And let Thy holy spirit shine
For ever on my heart!

Anne Brontë

Despondency

I have gone backward in the work,
The labour has not sped,
Drowsy and dark my spirit lies,
Heavy and dull as lead.
How can I rouse my sinking soul
From such a lethargy?
How can I break these iron chains,
And set my spirit free?

There have been times when I have mourned,
In anguish o'er the past;
And raised my suppliant hands on high,
While tears fell thick and fast,

And prayed to have my sins forgiven
With such a fervent zeal,
An earnest grief --- a strong desire
That now I cannot feel!

And vowed to trample on my sins,
And called on Heaven to aid
My spirit in her firm resolves
And hear the vows I made.

And I have felt so full of love,
So strong in spirit then,
As if my heart would never cool
Or wander back again.

And yet, alas! how many times
My feet have gone astray,
How oft have I forgot my God,
How greatly fallen away!

My sins increase, my love grows cold,
And Hope within me dies,
And Faith itself is wavering now,
O how shall I arise!

I cannot weep but I can pray,
Then let me not despair;
Lord Jesus, save me lest I die,
And hear a wretch's prayer.

Anne Brontë

Dreams

While on my lonely couch I lie,
I seldom feel myself alone,
For fancy fills my dreaming eye
With scenes and pleasures of its own.
Then I may cherish at my breast
An infant's form beloved and fair,
May smile and soothe it into rest
With all a Mother's fondest care.

How sweet to feel its helpless form
Depending thus on me alone!
And while I hold it safe and warm
What bliss to think it is my own!

And glances then may meet my eyes
That daylight never showed to me;
What raptures in my bosom rise,
Those earnest looks of love to see,

To feel my hand so kindly prest,
To know myself beloved at last,
To think my heart has found a rest,
My life of solitude is past!

But then to wake and find it flown,
The dream of happiness destroyed,
To find myself unloved, alone,
What tongue can speak the dreary void?

A heart whence warm affections flow,
Creator, thou hast given to me,
And am I only thus to know
How sweet the joys of love would be?

Anne Brontë

Farewell

Farewell to thee! but not farewell
 To all my fondest thoughts of thee:
Within my heart they still shall dwell;
 And they shall cheer and comfort me.
O, beautiful, and full of grace!
 If thou hadst never met mine eye,
I had not dreamed a living face
 Could fancied charms so far outvie.

If I may ne'er behold again
 That form and face so dear to me,
Nor hear thy voice, still would I fain
 Preserve, for aye, their memory.

That voice, the magic of whose tone
 Can wake an echo in my breast,
Creating feelings that, alone,
 Can make my tranced spirit blest.

That laughing eye, whose sunny beam
 My memory would not cherish less; --
And oh, that smile! whose joyous gleam
 Nor mortal language can express.

Adieu, but let me cherish, still,
 The hope with which I cannot part.
Contempt may wound, and coldness chill,
 But still it lingers in my heart.

And who can tell but Heaven, at last,
 May answer all my thousand prayers,
And bid the future pay the past
 With joy for anguish, smiles for tears?

Anne Brontë

Fluctuations

What though the sun had left my sky;
 To save me from despair
The blessed moon arose on high,
 And shone serenely there.
I watched her, with a tearful gaze,
 Rise slowly o'er the hill,
While through the dim horizon's haze
 Her light gleamed faint and chill.

I thought such wan and lifeless beams
 Could ne'er my heart repay,
For the bright sun's most transient gleams
 That cheered me through the day:

But as above that mist's control
 She rose, and brighter shone,
I felt her light upon my soul;
 But now -- that light is gone!

Thick vapours snatched her from my sight,
 And I was darkling left,
All in the cold and gloomy night,
 Of light and hope bereft:

Until, methought, a little star
 Shone forth with trembling ray,
To cheer me with its light afar --
 But that, too, passed away.

Anon, an earthly meteor blazed
 The gloomy darkness through;
I smiled, yet trembled while I gazed --
 But that soon vanished too!

And darker, drearier fell the night
 Upon my spirit then; --
But what is that faint struggling light?
 Is it the Moon again?

Kind Heaven! increase that silvery gleam,
 And bid these clouds depart,
And let her soft celestial beam
 Restore my fainting heart!

Acton

Anne Brontë

Fragment

Yes I will take a cheerful tone
And feign to share their heartless glee,
But I would rather weep alone
Than laugh amid their revelry.

Anne Brontë

Gloomily The Clouds

Gloomily the clouds are sailing
 O'er the dimly moonlit sky;
Dolefully the wind is wailing;
 Not another sound is nigh;
Only I can hear it sweeping
 Heathclad hill and woodland dale,
And at times the nights's sad weeping
 Sounds above its dying wail.

Now the struggling moonbeams glimmer;
 Now the shadows deeper fall,
Till the dim light, waxing dimmer,
 Scarce reveals yon stately hall.

All beneath its roof are sleeping;
 Such a silence reigns around
I can hear the cold rain steeping
 Dripping roof and plashy ground.

No: not all are wrapped in slumber;
 At yon chamber window stands
One whose years can scarce outnumber
 The tears that dew his clasped hands.

From the open casement bending
 He surveys the murky skies,
Dreary sighs his bosom rending;
 Hot tears gushing from his eyes.

Now that Autumn's charms are dying,
 Summer's glories long since gone,
Faded leaves on damp earth lying,
 Hoary winter striding on, --

'Tis no marvel skies are lowering,
 Winds are moaning thus around,
And cold rain, with ceaseless pouring,
 Swells the streams and swamps the ground;

But such wild, such bitter grieving
 Fits not slender boys like thee;
Such deep sighs should not be heaving
 Breasts so young as thine must be.

Life with thee is only springing;
 Summer in thy pathway lies;
Every day is nearer bringing
 June's bright flowers and glowing skies.

Ah, he sees no brighter morrow!
 He is not too young to prove
All the pain and all the sorrow
 That attend the steps of love.

Anne Brontë

Home

How brightly glistening in the sun
The woodland ivy plays!
While yonder beeches from their barks
Reflect his silver rays.
That sun surveys a lovely scene
From softly smiling skies;
And wildly through unnumbered trees
The wind of winter sighs:

Now loud, it thunders o'er my head,
And now in distance dies.
But give me back my barren hills
Where colder breezes rise;

Where scarce the scattered, stunted trees
Can yield an answering swell,
But where a wilderness of heath
Returns the sound as well.

For yonder garden, fair and wide,
With groves of evergreen,
Long winding walks, and borders trim,
And velvet lawns between;

Restore to me that little spot,
With grey walls compassed round,
Where knotted grass neglected lies,
And weeds usurp the ground.

Though all around this mansion high
Invites the foot to roam,
And though its halls are fair within --
Oh, give me back my HOME!

Acton

Anne Brontë

If This Be All

O God! if this indeed be all
That Life can show to me;
If on my aching brow may fall
No freshening dew from Thee, --
If with no brighter light than this
The lamp of hope may glow,
And I may only dream of bliss,
And wake to weary woe;

If friendship's solace must decay,
When other joys are gone,
And love must keep so far away,
While I go wandering on, --

Wandering and toiling without gain,
The slave of others' will,
With constant care, and frequent pain,
Despised, forgotten still;

Grieving to look on vice and sin,
Yet powerless to quell
The silent current from within,
The outward torrent's swell:

While all the good I would impart,
The feelings I would share,
Are driven backward to my heart,
And turned to wormwood, there;

If clouds must ever keep from sight
The glories of the Sun,
And I must suffer Winter's blight,
Ere Summer is begun;

If life must be so full of care,
Then call me soon to Thee;
Or give me strength enough to bear
My load of misery.

Acton

Anne Brontë

In Memory Of A Happy Day In February

Blessed be Thou for all the joy
My soul has felt today!
O let its memory stay with me
And never pass away!
I was alone, for those I loved
Were far away from me,
The sun shone on the withered grass,
The wind blew fresh and free.

Was it the smile of early spring
That made my bosom glow?
'Twas sweet, but neither sun nor wind
Could raise my spirit so.

Was it some feeling of delight,
All vague and undefined?
No, 'twas a rapture deep and strong,
Expanding in the mind!

Was it a sanguine view of life
And all its transient bliss--
A hope of bright prosperity?
O no, it was not this!

It was a glimpse of truth divine
Unto my spirit given
Illumined by a ray of light
That shone direct from heaven!

I felt there was a God on high
By whom all things were made.
I saw His wisdom and his power
In all his works displayed.

But most throughout the moral world
I saw his glory shine;
I saw His wisdom infinite,
His mercy all divine.

Deep secrets of his providence
 In darkness long concealed
Were brought to my delighted eyes
 And graciously revealed.

But while I wondered and adored
 His wisdom so divine,
I did not tremble at his power,
 I felt that God was mine.

I knew that my Redeemer lived,
 I did not fear to die;
Full sure that I should rise again
 To immortality.

I longed to view that bliss divine
 Which eye hath never seen,
To see the glories of his face
 Without the veil between.

Anne Brontë

Last Lines

Jan 7th

A dreadful darkness closes in
 On my bewildered mind;
O let me suffer and not sin,
 Be tortured yet resigned.

Through all this world of whelming mist
 Still let me look to Thee,
And give me courage to resist
 The Tempter till he flee.

Weary I am -- O give me strength
 And leave me not to faint;
Say Thou wilt comfort me at length
 And pity my complaint.

I've begged to serve Thee heart and soul,
 To sacrifice to Thee
No niggard portion, but the whole
 Of my identity.

I hoped amid the brave and strong
 My portioned task might lie,
To toil amid the labouring throng
 With purpose pure and high.

But Thou hast fixed another part,
 And Thou hast fixed it well;
I said so with my breaking heart
 When first the anguish fell.

For Thou hast taken my delight
 And hope of life away,
And bid me watch the painful night
 And wait the weary day.

The hope and the delight were Thine;
 I bless Thee for their loan;

I gave Thee while I deemed them mine
Too little thanks, I own.

Shall I with joy Thy blessings share
And not endure their loss?
Or hope the martyr's crown to wear
And cast away the cross?

These weary hours will not be lost,
These days of passive misery,
These nights of darkness anguish tost
If I can fix my heart on Thee.

Weak and weary though I lie,
Crushed with sorrow, worn with pain,
Still I may lift to Heaven mine eyes
And strive and labour not in vain,

That inward strife against the sins
That ever wait on suffering;
To watch and strike where first begins
Each ill that would corruption bring,

That secret labour to sustain
With humble patience every blow,
To gather fortitude from pain
And hope and holiness from woe.

Thus let me serve Thee from my heart
Whatever be my written fate,
Whether thus early to depart
Or yet awhile to wait.

If Thou shouldst bring me back to life
More humbled I should be;
More wise, more strengthened for the strife,
More apt to lean on Thee.

Should Death be standing at the gate
Thus should I keep my vow;
But, Lord, whate'er my future fate
So let me serve Thee now.

Finished. Jan. 28, 1849.

Anne Brontë

Lines Composed In A Wood On A Windy Day

My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring
And carried aloft on the wings of the breeze;
For above and around me the wild wind is roaring,
Arousing to rapture the earth and the seas.
The long withered grass in the sunshine is glancing,
The bare trees are tossing their branches on high;
The dead leaves, beneath them, are merrily dancing,
The white clouds are scudding across the blue sky.

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray;
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing,
And hear the wild roar of their thunder today!

Acton

Anne Brontë

Lines Inscribed On The Wall Of A Dungeon In The Southern P Of I

Though not a breath can enter here,
I know the wind blows fresh and free;
I know the sun is shining clear,
Though not a gleam can visit me.
They thought while I in darkness lay,
'Twere pity that I should not know
How all the earth is smiling gay;
How fresh the vernal breezes blow.

They knew, such tidings to impart
Would pierce my weary spirit through,
And could they better read my heart,
They'd tell me, she was smiling too.

They need not, for I know it well,
Methinks I see her even now;
No sigh disturbs her bosom's swell,
No shade o'ercasts her angel brow.

Unmarred by grief her angel voice,
Whence sparkling wit, and wisdom flow:
And others in its sound rejoice,
And taste the joys I must not know,

Drink rapture from her soft dark eye,
And sunshine from her heavenly smile;
On wings of bliss their moments fly,
And I am pining here the while!

Oh! tell me, does she never give --
To my distress a single sigh?
She smiles on them, but does she grieve
One moment, when they are not by?

When she beholds the sunny skies,
And feels the wind of heaven blow;
Has she no tear for him that lies

In dungeon gloom, so far below?

While others gladly round her press
And at her side their hours beguile,
Has she no sigh for his distress
Who cannot see a single smile

Nor hear one word nor read a line
That her beloved hand might write,
Who banished from her face must pine
Each day a long and lonely night?

Alexander April 1826

Anne Brontë

Lines Written At Thorp Green

That summer sun, whose genial glow
Now cheers my drooping spirit so
Must cold and distant be,
And only light our northern clime
With feeble ray, before the time
I long so much to see.
And this soft whispering breeze that now
So gently cools my fevered brow,
This too, alas, must turn --
To a wild blast whose icy dart
Pierces and chills me to the heart,
Before I cease to mourn.

And these bright flowers I love so well,
Verbena, rose and sweet bluebell,
Must droop and die away.
Those thick green leaves with all their shade
And rustling music, they must fade
And every one decay.

But if the sunny summer time
And woods and meadows in their prime
Are sweet to them that roam --
Far sweeter is the winter bare
With long dark nights and landscapes drear
To them that are at Home!

Anne Brontë

Lines Written From Home

Though bleak these woods, and damp the ground
With fallen leaves so thickly strown,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan;
There is a friendly roof, I know,
Might shield me from the wintry blast;
There is a fire, whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still, where'er I go,
Cold stranger-glances meet my eye;
Though, when my spirit sinks in woe,
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh;

Though solitude, endured too long,
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue,
And overclouds my noon of day;

When kindly thoughts, that would have way,
Flow back discouraged to my breast; --
I know there is, though far away,
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there, that, clasped in mine,
The warmer heart will not belie;
While mirth, and truth, and friendship shine
In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
May there be thawed; and sweetly, then,
The joys of youth, that now depart,
Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, that thought shall be
My hope, my comfort, everywhere;
While such a home remains to me,
My heart shall never know despair!

Acton

Anne Brontë

Memory

Brightly the sun of summer shone,
Green fields and waving woods upon,
 And soft winds wandered by;
Above, a sky of purest blue,
Around, bright flowers of loveliest hue,
 Allured the gazer's eye.

But what were all these charms to me,
When one sweet breath of memory
 Came gently wafting by?

I closed my eyes against the day,
And called my willing soul away,
 From earth, and air, and sky;

That I might simply fancy there
One little flower -- a primrose fair,
 Just opening into sight;
As in the days of infancy,
An opening primrose seemed to me
 A source of strange delight.

Sweet Memory! ever smile on me;
Nature's chief beauties spring from thee,
 Oh, still thy tribute bring!
Still make the golden crocus shine
Among the flowers the most divine,
 The glory of the spring.

Still in the wall-flower's fragrance dwell;
And hover round the slight blue bell,
 My childhood's darling flower.
Smile on the little daisy still,
The buttercup's bright goblet fill
 With all thy former power.

For ever hang thy dreamy spell
Round mountain star and heather bell,
 And do not pass away
From sparkling frost, or wreathed snow,
And whisper when the wild winds blow,

Or rippling waters play.

Is childhood, then, so all divine?
Or Memory, is the glory thine,
 That haloes thus the past?
Not all divine; its pangs of grief,
(Although, perchance, their stay be brief,)
 Are bitter while they last.

Nor is the glory all thine own,
For on our earliest joys alone
 That holy light is cast.
With such a ray, no spell of thine
Can make our later pleasures shine,
 Though long ago they passed.

Acton

Anne Brontë

Mirth And Mourning

'O cast away your sorrow; --
A while, at least, be gay!

If grief must come tomorrow,
At least, be glad today!

'How can you still be sighing
When smiles are everywhere?

The little birds are flying
So blithely through the air;

'The sunshine glows so brightly
O'er all the blooming earth;
And every heart beats lightly, --
Each face is full of mirth.'

'I always feel the deepest gloom
When day most brightly shines:
When Nature shows the fairest bloom,
My spirit most repines;

'For, in the brightest noontide glow,
The dungeon's light is dim;
Though freshest winds around us blow,
No breath can visit him.

'If he must sit in twilight gloom,
Can I enjoy the sight
Of mountains clad in purple bloom,
And rocks in sunshine bright? --

'My heart may well be desolate, --
These tears may well arise
While prison wall and iron grate
Oppress his weary eyes.'

'But think of him tomorrow,
And join your comrades now; --
That constant cloud of sorrow
Ill suits so young a brow.

'Hark, how their merry voices
Are sounding far and near!
While all the world rejoices
Can you sit moping here?'

'When others' hearts most lightly bound
Mine feels the most oppressed;
When smiling faces greet me round
My sorrow will not rest:

'I think of him whose faintest smile
Was sunshine to my heart,
Whose lightest word could care beguile
And blissful thoughts impart;

'I think how he would bless that sun,
And love this glorious scene;
I think of all that has been done,
And all that might have been.

'Those sparkling eyes, that blessed me so,
Are dim with weeping now;
And blighted hope and burning woe
Have ploughed that marble brow.

'What waste of youth, what hopes destroyed,
What days of pining care,
What weary nights of comfort void
Art thou condemned to bear!

'O! if my love must suffer so --
And wholly for my sake --
What marvel that my tears should flow, --
Or that my heart should break!'

Zerona

Anne Brontë

Monday Night May 11th 1846 / Domestic Peace

Why should such gloomy silence reign;
And why is all the house so drear,
When neither danger, sickness, pain,
Nor death, nor want have entered here?
We are as many as we were
That other night, when all were gay,
And full of hope, and free from care;
Yet, is there something gone away.

The moon without as pure and calm
Is shining as that night she shone;
but now, to us she brings no balm,
For something from our hearts is gone.

Something whose absence leaves a void,
A cheerless want in every heart.
Each feels the bliss of all destroyed
And mourns the change - but each apart.

The fire is burning in the grate
As redly as it used to burn,
But still the hearth is desolate
Till Mirth and Love with Peace return.

'Twas Peace that flowed from heart to heart
With looks and smiles that spoke of Heaven,
And gave us language to impart
The blissful thoughts itself had given.

Sweet child of Heaven, and joy of earth!
O, when will Man thy value learn?
We rudely drove thee from our hearth,
And vainly sigh for thy return.

Anne Brontë

Music On Christmas Morning

Music I love -- but never strain
Could kindle raptures so divine,
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,
And rouse this pensive heart of mine --
As that we hear on Christmas morn,
Upon the wintry breezes borne.
Though Darkness still her empire keep,
And hours must pass, ere morning break;
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,
That music kindly bids us wake:
It calls us, with an angel's voice,
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn,
Which angels welcomed long ago,
When our redeeming Lord was born,
To bring the light of Heaven below;
The Powers of Darkness to dispel,
And rescue Earth from Death and Hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,
My raptured spirit soars on high;
I seem to hear those songs again
Resounding through the open sky,
That kindled such divine delight,
In those who watched their flocks by night.

With them, I celebrate His birth --
Glory to God, in highest Heaven,
Good-will to men, and peace on Earth,
To us a Saviour-king is given;
Our God is come to claim His own,
And Satan's power is overthrown!

A sinless God, for sinful men,
Descends to suffer and to bleed;
Hell must renounce its empire then;
The price is paid, the world is freed,
And Satan's self must now confess,

That Christ has earned a Right to bless:

Now holy Peace may smile from heaven,
And heavenly Truth from earth shall spring:
The captive's galling bonds are riven,
For our Redeemer is our king;
And He that gave his blood for men
Will lead us home to God again.

Acton

Anne Brontë

My God! O Let Me Call Thee Mine!

My God! O let me call Thee mine!
Weak wretched sinner though I be,
My trembling soul would fain be Thine,
My feeble faith still clings to Thee,
 My feeble faith still clings to Thee.
Not only for the past I grieve,
The future fills me with dismay;
Unless Thou hasten to relieve,
I know my heart will fall away,
 I know my heart will fall away.

I cannot say my faith is strong,
I dare not hope my love is great;
But strength and love to Thee belong,
O, do not leave me desolate!
 O, do not leave me desolate!

I know I owe my all to Thee,
O, take this heart I cannot give.
Do Thou my Strength my Saviour be;
And make me to Thy glory live!
 And make me to Thy glory live!

Anne Brontë

My Soul Is Awakened

My soul is awakened, my spirit is soaring,
And carried aloft on the wings of the breeze;
For, above, and around me, the wild wind is roaring
Arousing to rapture the earth and the seas.

The long withered grass in the sunshine is glancing,
The bare trees are tossing their branches on high;
The dead leaves beneath them are merrily dancing,
The white clouds are scudding across the blue sky.

I wish I could see how the ocean is lashing
The foam of its billows to whirlwinds of spray,
I wish I could see how its proud waves are dashing
And hear the wild roar of their thunder today!

Anne Brontë

Night

I love the silent hour of night,
For blissful dreams may then arise,
Revealing to my charmed sight
What may not bless my waking eyes!
And then a voice may meet my ear
That death has silenced long ago;
And hope and rapture may appear
Instead of solitude and woe.

Cold in the grave for years has lain
The form it was my bliss to see,
And only dreams can bring again
The darling of my heart to me.

Anne Brontë

Oh, They Have Robbed Me Of The Hope

Oh, they have robbed me of the hope
 My spirit held so dear;
They will not let me hear that voice
 My soul delights to hear.
They will not let me see that face
 I so delight to see;
And they have taken all thy smiles,
 And all thy love from me.

Well, let them seize on all they can: --
 One treasure still is mine, --
A heart that loves to think on thee,
 And feels the worth of thine.

Anne Brontë

Parting Address From Z.Z. To A.E.

O weep not, love! each tear that springs
 In those dear eyes of thine,
To me a keener suffering brings
 Than if they flowed from mine.
And do not droop! however drear
 The fate awaiting thee.
For my sake, combat pain and care,
 And cherish life for me!

I do not fear thy love will fail,
 Thy faith is true I know;
But O! my love! thy strength is frail
 For such a life of woe.

Were't not for this, I well could trace
 (Though banished long from thee)
Life's rugged path, and boldly face
 The storms that threaten me.

Fear not for me -- I've steeled my mind
 Sorrow and strife to greet,
Joy with my love I leave behind,
 Care with my friends I meet.

A mother's sad reproachful eye,
 A father's scowling brow --
But he may frown, and she may sigh;
 I will not break my vow!

I love my mother, I revere
 My sire, but doubt not me.
Believe that Death alone can tear
 This faithful heart from thee.

Zerona

Anne Brontë

Past Days

'Tis strange to think, there was a time
When mirth was not an empty name,
When laughter really cheered the heart,
And frequent smiles unbidden came,
And tears of grief would only flow
In sympathy for others' woe;
When speech expressed the inward thought,
And heart to kindred heart was bare,
And Summer days were far too short
For all the pleasures crowded there,
And silence, solitude, and rest,
Now welcome to the weary breast --

Were all unprized, uncourted then --
And all the joy one spirit showed,
The other deeply felt again;
And friendship like a river flowed,
Constant and strong its silent course,
For nought withstood its gentle force:

When night, the holy time of peace,
Was dreaded as the parting hour;
When speech and mirth at once must cease,
And Silence must resume her power;
Though ever free from pains and woes,
She only brought us calm repose;

And when the blessed dawn again
Brought daylight to the blushing skies,
We woke, and not reluctant then,
To joyless labour did we rise;
But full of hope, and glad and gay,
We welcomed the returning day.

Acton

Anne Brontë

Power Of Love

Love, indeed thy strength is mighty
 Thus, alone, such strife to bear --
Three 'gainst one, and never ceasing --
 Death, and Madness, and Despair!
'Tis not my own strength has saved me;
 Health, and hope, and fortitude,
But for love, had long since failed me;
 Heart and soul had sunk subdued.

Often, in my wild impatience,
 I have lost my trust in Heaven,
And my soul has tossed and struggled,
 Like a vessel tempest-driven;

But the voice of my beloved
 In my ear has seemed to say --
'O, be patient if thou lov'st me!'
 And the storm has passed away.

When outworn with weary thinking,
 Sight and thought were waxing dim,
And my mind began to wander,
 And my brain began to swim,

Then those hands outstretched to save me
 Seemed to call me back again --
Those dark eyes did so implore me
 To resume my reason's reign,

That I could not but remember
 How her hopes were fixed on me,
And, with one determined effort,
 Rose, and shook my spirit free.

When hope leaves my weary spirit --
 All the power to hold it gone --
That loved voice so loudly prays me,
 'For my sake, keep hoping on,'

That, at once my strength renewing,
 Though Despair had crushed me down,
I can burst his bonds asunder,
 And defy his deadliest frown.

When, from nights of restless tossing,
 Days of gloom and pining care,
Pain and weakness, still increasing,
 Seem to whisper 'Death is near,'

And I almost bid him welcome,
 Knowing he would bring release,
Weary of this restless struggle --
 Longing to repose in peace,

Then a glance of fond reproval
 Bids such selfish longings flee
And a voice of matchless music
 Murmurs 'Cherish life for me!'

Roused to newborn strength and courage,
 Pain and grief, I cast away,
Health and life, I keenly follow,
 Mighty Death is held at bay.

Yes, my love, I will be patient!
 Firm and bold my heart shall be:
Fear not -- though this life is dreary,
 I can bear it well for thee.

Let our foes still rain upon me
 Cruel wrongs and taunting scorn;
'Tis for thee their hate pursues me,
 And for thee, it shall be borne!

A.E.

Anne Brontë

Retirement

O, let me be alone a while,
 No human form is nigh.
And may I sing and muse aloud,
 No mortal ear is by.
Away! ye dreams of earthly bliss,
 Ye earthly cares begone:
Depart! ye restless wandering thoughts,
 And let me be alone!

One hour, my spirit, stretch thy wings,
 And quit this joyless sod,
Bask in the sunshine of the sky,
 And be alone with God!

Anne Brontë

Self Communion

'The mist is resting on the hill;
The smoke is hanging in the air;
The very clouds are standing still:
A breathless calm broods everywhere.
Thou pilgrim through this vale of tears,
Thou, too, a little moment cease
Thy anxious toil and fluttering fears,
And rest thee, for a while, in peace.'

'I would, but Time keeps working still
And moving on for good or ill:
 He will not rest or stay.
In pain or ease, in smiles or tears,
 He still keeps adding to my years
 And stealing life away.
His footsteps in the ceaseless sound
 Of yonder clock I seem to hear,
That through this stillness so profound
 Distinctly strikes the vacant ear.
 For ever striding on and on,
He pauses not by night or day;
And all my life will soon be gone
As these past years have slipped away.
He took my childhood long ago,
And then my early youth; and lo,
 He steals away my prime!
I cannot see how fast it goes,
But well my inward spirit knows
 The wasting power of time.'

'Time steals thy moments, drinks thy breath,
Changes and wastes thy mortal frame;
But though he gives the clay to death,
He cannot touch the inward flame.
Nay, though he steals thy years away,
Their memory is left thee still,
And every month and every day
Leaves some effect of good or ill.
The wise will find in Memory's store

A help for that which lies before
 To guide their course aright;
Then, hush thy plaints and calm thy fears;
Look back on these departed years,
 And, say, what meets thy sight?

'I see, far back, a helpless child,
Feeble and full of causeless fears,
Simple and easily beguiled
 To credit all it hears.

More timid than the wild wood-dove,
Yet trusting to another's care,
And finding in protecting love
Its only refuge from despair, --
Its only balm for every woe,
The only bliss its soul can know; --
 Still hiding in its breast.

A tender heart too prone to weep,
A love so earnest, strong, and deep
 It could not be expressed.

Poor helpless thing! what can it do
Life's stormy cares and toils among; --
How tread this weary desert through
That awes the brave and tires the strong?
Where shall it centre so much trust
Where truth maintains so little sway,
Where seeming fruit is bitter dust,
And kisses oft to death betray?
How oft must sin and falsehood grieve
A heart so ready to believe,
 And willing to admire!
With strength so feeble, fears so strong,
Amid this selfish bustling throng,
 How will it faint and tire!

That tender love so warm and deep,
 How can it flourish here below?
What bitter floods of tears must steep
The stony soil where it would grow!
O earth! a rocky breast is thine -
A hard soil and a cruel clime,

Where tender plants must droop and pine,
Or alter with transforming time.
That soul, that clings to sympathy,
As ivy clasps the forest tree,
 How can it stand alone?
That heart so prone to overflow
E'en at the thought of others' woe,
 How will it bear its own?

How, if a sparrow's death can wring
Such bitter tear-floods from the eye,
Will it behold the suffering
Of struggling, lost humanity?
The torturing pain, the pining grief,
The sin-degraded misery,
The anguish that defies relief?

'Look back again -- What dost thou see?'

'I see one kneeling on the sod,
With infant hands upraised to Heaven,
A young heart feeling after God,
Oft baffled, never backward driven.
Mistaken oft, and oft astray,
It strives to find the narrow way,
 But gropes and toils alone:
That inner life of strife and tears,
Of kindling hopes and lowering fears
 To none but God is known.
'Tis better thus; for man would scorn
Those childish prayers, those artless cries,
That darkling spirit tossed and torn,
 But God will not despise!
We may regret such waste of tears
Such darkly toiling misery,
Such 'wilderer doubts and harrowing fears,
Where joy and thankfulness should be;
But wait, and Heaven will send relief.
Let patience have her perfect work:
Lo, strength and wisdom spring from grief,
And joys behind afflictions lurk!

It asked for light, and it is heard;
God grants that struggling soul repose
And, guided by His holy word,
It wiser than its teachers grows.
It gains the upward path at length,
And passes on from strength to strength,
 Leaning on Heaven the while:
Night's shades departing one by one,
It sees at last the rising sun,
And feels his cheering smile.
In all its darkness and distress
For light it sought, to God it cried;
And through the pathless wilderness,
He was its comfort and its guide.'

'So was it, and so will it be:
Thy God will guide and strengthen thee;
 His goodness cannot fail.
The sun that on thy morning rose
Will light thee to the evening's close,
 Whatever storms assail.'

'God alters not; but Time on me
A wide and wondrous change has wrought:
And in these parted years I see
Cause for grave care and saddening thought.
I see that time, and toil, and truth,
An inward hardness can impart, --
Can freeze the generous blood of youth,
And steel full fast the tender heart.'

'Bless God for that divine decree! --
That hardness comes with misery,
And suffering deadens pain;
That at the frequent sight of woe
E'en Pity's tears forget to flow,
If reason still remain!
Reason, with conscience by her side,
But gathers strength from toil and truth;
And she will prove a surer guide
Than those sweet instincts of our youth.
Thou that hast known such anguish sore

In weeping where thou couldst not bless,
Canst thou that softness so deplore --
That suffering, shrinking tenderness?
Thou that hast felt what cankering care
A loving heart is doomed to bear,
 Say, how canst thou regret
That fires unfed must fall away,
Long droughts can dry the softest clay,
 And cold will cold beget?'

'Nay, but 'tis hard to feel that chill
Come creeping o'er the shuddering heart.
Love may be full of pain, but still,
'Tis sad to see it so depart, --
To watch that fire whose genial glow
Was formed to comfort and to cheer,
For want of fuel, fading so,
Sinking to embers dull and drear, --
To see the soft soil turned to stone
 For lack of kindly showers, --
To see those yearnings of the breast,
Pining to bless and to be blessed,
Drop withered, frozen one by one,
Till, centred in itself alone,
 It wastes its blighted powers.

Oh, I have known a wondrous joy
In early friendship's pure delight, --
A genial bliss that could not cloy --
My sun by day, my moon by night.
Absence, indeed, was sore distress,
And thought of death was anguish keen,
And there was cruel bitterness
When jarring discords rose between;
And sometimes it was grief to know
My fondness was but half returned.
But this was nothing to the woe
With which another truth was learned: --
That I must check, or nurse apart,
Full many an impulse of the heart
 And many a darling thought:
What my soul worshipped, sought, and prized,

Were slighted, questioned, or despised; --
 This pained me more than aught.
And as my love the warmer glowed
The deeper would that anguish sink,
That this dark stream between us flowed,
Though both stood bending o'er its brink;
Until, as last, I learned to bear
A colder heart within my breast;
To share such thoughts as I could share,
 And calmly keep the rest.
I saw that they were sundered now,
The trees that at the root were one:
They yet might mingle leaf and bough,
But still the stems must stand alone.

O love is sweet of every kind!
'Tis sweet the helpless to befriend,
To watch the young unfolding mind,
To guide, to shelter, and defend:
To lavish tender toil and care,
And ask for nothing back again,
But that our smiles a blessing bear
And all our toil be not in vain.
And sweeter far than words can tell
Their love whose ardent bosoms swell
 With thoughts they need not hide;
Where fortune frowns not on their joy,
And Prudence seeks not to destroy,
 Nor Reason to deride.

Whose love may freely gush and flow,
Unchecked, unchilled by doubt or fear,
For in their inmost hearts they know
It is not vainly nourished there.
They know that in a kindred breast
Their long desires have found a home,
Where heart and soul may kindly rest,
Weary and lorn no more to roam.
Their dreams of bliss were not in vain,
As they love they are loved again,
And they can bless as they are blessed.

O vainly might I seek to show
The joys from happy love that flow!
The warmest words are all too cold
The secret transports to unfold
Of simplest word or softest sigh,
Or from the glancing of an eye
 To say what rapture beams;
One look that bids our fears depart,
And well assures the trusting heart.
It beats not in the world alone --
Such speechless rapture I have known,
 But only in my dreams.

My life has been a morning sky
Where Hope her rainbow glories cast
O'er kindling vapours far and nigh:
And, if the colours faded fast,
Ere one bright hue had died away
Another o'er its ashes gleamed;
And if the lower clouds were grey,
The mists above more brightly beamed.
But not for long; -- at length behold,
Those tints less warm, less radiant grew;
Till but one streak of paly gold
Glimmered through clouds of saddening hue.
And I am calmly waiting, now,
To see that also pass away,
And leave, above the dark hill's brow,
A rayless arch of sombre grey.'

'So must it fare with all thy race
Who seek in earthly things their joy:
So fading hopes lost hopes shall chase
 Till Disappointment all destroy.
But they that fix their hopes on high
Shall, in the blue-refulgent sky,
 The sun's transcendent light,
Behold a purer, deeper glow
Than these uncertain gleams can show,
 However fair or bright.
O weak of heart! why thus deplore
That Truth will Fancy's dreams destroy?

Did I not tell thee, years before,
Life was for labour, not for joy?
Cease, selfish spirit, to repine;
O'er thine own ills no longer grieve;
Lo, there are sufferings worse than thine,
Which thou mayst labour to relieve.
If Time indeed too swiftly flies,
Gird on thine armour, haste, arise,
 For thou hast much to do; --
To lighten woe, to trample sin,
And foes without and foes within
 To combat and subdue.
Earth hath too much of sin and pain:
The bitter cup -- the binding chain
 Dost thou indeed lament?
Let not thy weary spirit sink;
But strive -- not by one drop or link
 The evil to augment.
Strive rather thou, by peace and joy,
The bitter poison to destroy,
 The cruel chain to break.
O strive! and if thy strength be small,
Strive yet the more, and spend it all
 For Love and Wisdom's sake!

'O I have striven both hard and long
But many are my foes and strong.
My gains are light -- my progress slow;
For hard's the way I have to go,
And my worst enemies, I know,
 Are these within my breast;
And it is hard to toil for aye, --
Through sultry noon and twilight grey
 To toil and never rest.'

'There is a rest beyond the grave,
A lasting rest from pain and sin,
Where dwell the faithful and the brave;
But they must strive who seek to win.'
"Show me that rest -- I ask no more.
Oh, drive these misty doubts away;
And let me see that sunny shore,

However far away!
However wide this rolling sea,
However wild my passage be,
Howe'er my bark be tempest tossed,
May it but reach that haven fair,
May I but land and wander there,
With those that I have loved and lost:
With such a glorious hope in view,
I'll gladly toil and suffer too.
Rest without toil I would not ask;
I would not shun the hardest task:
Toil is my glory -- Grief my gain,
If God's approval they obtain.
Could I but hear my Saviour say, --
"I know thy patience and thy love;
How thou hast held the narrow way,
For my sake laboured night and day,
And watched, and striven with them that strove;
And still hast borne, and didst not faint," --
Oh, this would be reward indeed!

'Press forward, then, without complaint;
Labour and love -- and such shall be thy meed.'

Anne Brontë

Self-Congratulation

Ellen, you were thoughtless once
Of beauty or of grace,
Simple and homely in attire,
Careless of form and face;
Then whence this change? and wherefore now
So often smooth your hair?
And wherefore deck your youthful form
With such unwearied care?
Tell us -- and cease to tire our ears
With that familiar strain --
Why will you play those simple tunes
So often, o'er again?
'Indeed, dear friends, I can but say
That childhood's thoughts are gone;
Each year its own new feelings brings,
And years move swiftly on:

'And for these little simple airs --
I love to play them o'er
So much -- I dare not promise, now,
To play them never more.'
I answered -- and it was enough;
They turned them to depart;
They could not read my secret thoughts,
Nor see my throbbing heart.

I've noticed many a youthful form,
Upon whose changeful face
The inmost workings of the soul
The gazer well might trace;
The speaking eye, the changing lip,
The ready blushing cheek,
The smiling, or beclouded brow,
Their different feelings speak.

But, thank God! you might gaze on mine
For hours, and never know
The secret changes of my soul
From joy to keenest woe.

Last night, as we sat round the fire
 Conversing merrily,
We heard, without, approaching steps
 Of one well known to me!

There was no trembling in my voice,
 No blush upon my cheek,
No lustrous sparkle in my eyes,
 Of hope, or joy, to speak;
But, oh! my spirit burned within,
 My heart beat full and fast!
He came not nigh -- he went away --
 And then my joy was past.

And yet my comrades marked it not:
 My voice was still the same;
They saw me smile, and o'er my face
 No signs of sadness came.
They little knew my hidden thoughts;
 And they will never know
The aching anguish of my heart,
 The bitter burning woe!

Acton

Anne Brontë

Severed And Gone

Severed and gone, so many years!
And art thou still so dear to me,
That throbbing heart and burning tears
Can witness how I cling to thee?
I know that in the narrow tomb
The form I loved was buried deep,
And left, in silence and in gloom,
To slumber out its dreamless sleep.

I know the corner where it lies,
Is but a dreary place of rest:
The charnel moisture never dries
From the dark flagstones o'er its breast,

For there the sunbeams never shine,
Nor ever breathes the freshening air,
-- But not for this do I repine;
For my beloved is not there.

O, no! I do not think of thee
As festering there in slow decay: --
'Tis this sole thought oppresses me,
That thou art gone so far away.

For ever gone; for I, by night,
Have prayed, within my silent room,
That Heaven would grant a burst of light
Its cheerless darkness to illumine;

And give thee to my longing eyes,
A moment, as thou shinest now,
Fresh from thy mansion in the skies,
With all its glories on thy brow.

Wild was the wish, intense the gaze
I fixed upon the murky air,
Expecting, half, a kindling blaze
Would strike my raptured vision there, --

A shape these human nerves would thrill,
A majesty that might appal,
Did not thy earthly likeness, still,
Gleam softly, gladly, through it all.

False hope! vain prayer! it might not be
That thou shouldst visit earth again.
I called on Heaven --- I called on thee,
And watched, and waited --- all in vain.

Had I one shining tress of thine,
How it would bless these longing eyes!
Or if thy pictured form were mine,
What gold should rob me of the prize?

A few cold words on yonder stone,
A corpse as cold as they can be --
Vain words, and mouldering dust, alone --
Can this be all that's left of thee?

O, no! thy spirit lingers still
Where'er thy sunny smile was seen:
There's less of darkness, less of chill
On earth, than if thou hadst not been.

Thou breathest in my bosom yet,
And dwellest in my beating heart;
And, while I cannot quite forget,
Thou, darling, canst not quite depart.

Though, freed from sin, and grief, and pain
Thou drinkest now the bliss of Heaven,
Thou didst not visit earth in vain;
And from us, yet, thou art not riven.

Life seems more sweet that thou didst live,
And men more true that thou wert one:
Nothing is lost that thou didst give,
Nothing destroyed that thou hast done.

Earth hath received thine earthly part;
Thine heavenly flame has heavenward flown;

But both still linger in my heart,
Still live, and not in mine alone.

Anne Brontë

Song

We know where deepest lies the snow,
And where the frost-winds keenest blow,
 O'er every mountain's brow,
We long have known and learnt to bear
The wandering outlaw's toil and care,
But where we late were hunted, there
 Our foes are hunted now.
We have their princely homes, and they
To our wild haunts are chased away,
 Dark woods, and desert caves.
And we can range from hill to hill,
And chase our vanquished victors still;
Small respite will they find until
 They slumber in their graves.

But I would rather be the hare,
That crouching in its sheltered lair
 Must start at every sound;
That forced from cornfields waving wide
Is driven to seek the bare hillside,
Or in the tangled copse to hide,
 Than be the hunter's hound.

Anne Brontë

Song 2

Come to the banquet -- triumph in your songs!
Strike up the chords -- and sing of Victory!
The oppressed have risen to redress their wrongs;
The Tyrants are o'erthrown; the Land is free!
The Land is free! Aye, shout it forth once more;
Is she not red with her oppressors' gore?
We are her champions -- shall we not rejoice?
Are not the tyrants' broad domains our own?
Then wherefore triumph with a faltering voice;
And talk of freedom in a doubtful tone?
Have we not longed through life the reign to see
Of Justice, linked with Glorious Liberty?

Shout you that will, and you that can rejoice
To revel in the riches of your foes.
In praise of deadly vengeance lift you voice,
Gloat o'er your tyrants' blood, you victims' woes.
I'd rather listen to the skylarks' songs,
And think on Gondal's, and my Father's wrongs.

It may be pleasant, to recall the death
Of those beneath whose sheltering roof you lie;
But I would rather press the mountain heath,
With naught to shield me from the starry sky,
And dream of yet untasted victory --
A distant hope -- and feel that I am free!

O happy life! To range the mountains wild,
The waving woods -- or Ocean's heaving breast,
With limbs unfettered, conscience undefiled,
And choosing where to wander, where to rest!
Hunted, oppressed, but ever strong to cope --
With toils, and perils -- ever full of hope!

'Our flower is budding' -- When that word was heard
On desert shore, or breezy mountain's brow,
Wherever said -- what glorious thoughts it stirred!
'Twas budding then -- Say has it blossomed now?
Is this the end we struggled to obtain?

O for the wandering Outlaw's life again!

Anne Brontë

Stanzas

Oh, weep not, love! each tear that springs
 In those dear eyes of thine,
To me a keener suffering brings,
 Than if they flowed from mine.
And do not droop! however drear
 The fate awaiting thee;
For my sake combat pain and care,
 And cherish life for me!

I do not fear thy love will fail;
 Thy faith is true, I know;
But, oh, my love! thy strength is frail
 For such a life of woe.

Were't not for this, I well could trace
 (Though banished long from thee,)
Life's rugged path, and boldly face
 The storms that threaten me.

Fear not for me -- I've steeled my mind
 Sorrow and strife to greet;
Joy with my love I leave behind,
 Care with my friends I meet.

A mother's sad reproachful eye,
 A father's scowling brow --
But he may frown and she may sigh:
 I will not break my vow!

I love my mother, I revere
 My sire, but fear not me-
Believe that Death alone can tear
 This faithful heart from thee.

Acton

Anne Brontë

The Arbour

I'll rest me in this sheltered bower,
And look upon the clear blue sky
That smiles upon me through the trees,
Which stand so thickly clustering by;
And view their green and glossy leaves,
All glistening in the sunshine fair;
And list the rustling of their boughs,
So softly whispering through the air.

And while my ear drinks in the sound,
My winged soul shall fly away;
Reviewing long departed years
As one mild, beaming, autumn day;

And soaring on to future scenes,
Like hills and woods, and valleys green,
All basking in the summer's sun,
But distant still, and dimly seen.

Oh, list! 'tis summer's very breath
That gently shakes the rustling trees --
But look! the snow is on the ground --
How can I think of scenes like these?

'Tis but the frost that clears the air,
And gives the sky that lovely blue;
They're smiling in a winter's sun,
Those evergreens of sombre hue.

And winter's chill is on my heart --
How can I dream of future bliss?
How can my spirit soar away,
Confined by such a chain as this?

Anne Brontë

The Bluebell

A fine and subtle spirit dwells
In every little flower,
Each one its own sweet feeling breathes
With more or less of power.
There is a silent eloquence
In every wild bluebell
That fills my softened heart with bliss
That words could never tell.

Yet I recall not long ago
A bright and sunny day,
'Twas when I led a toilsome life
So many leagues away;

That day along a sunny road
All carelessly I strayed,
Between two banks where smiling flowers
Their varied hues displayed.

Before me rose a lofty hill,
Behind me lay the sea,
My heart was not so heavy then
As it was wont to be.

Less harassed than at other times
I saw the scene was fair,
And spoke and laughed to those around,
As if I knew no care.

But when I looked upon the bank
My wandering glances fell
Upon a little trembling flower,
A single sweet bluebell.

Whence came that rising in my throat,
That dimness in my eye?
Why did those burning drops distil --
Those bitter feelings rise?

O, that lone flower recalled to me
My happy childhood's hours
When bluebells seemed like fairy gifts
A prize among the flowers,

Those sunny days of merriment
When heart and soul were free,
And when I dwelt with kindred hearts
That loved and cared for me.

I had not then mid heartless crowds
To spend a thankless life
In seeking after others' weal
With anxious toil and strife.

'Sad wanderer, weep those blissful times
That never may return!'
The lovely floweret seemed to say,
And thus it made me mourn.

Anne Brontë

The Captive Dove

Poor restless dove, I pity thee;
And when I hear thy plaintive moan,
I mourn for thy captivity,
And in thy woes forget mine own.
To see thee stand prepared to fly,
And flap those useless wings of thine,
And gaze into the distant sky,
Would melt a harder heart than mine.

In vain - in vain! Thou canst not rise:
Thy prison roof confines thee there;
Its slender wires delude thine eyes,
And quench thy longings with despair.

Oh, thou wert made to wander free
In sunny mead and shady grove,
And, far beyond the rolling sea,
In distant climes, at will to rove!

Yet, hadst thou but one gentle mate
Thy little drooping heart to cheer,
And share with thee thy captive state,
Thou couldst be happy even there.

Yes, even there, if, listening by,
One faithful dear companion stood,
While gazing on her full bright eye,
Thou mightst forget thy native wood.

But thou, poor solitary dove,
Must make, unheard, thy joyless moan;
The heart, that Nature formed to love,
Must pine, neglected, and alone.

Anne Brontë

The Captive's Dream

Methought I saw him but I knew him not;
He was so changed from what he used to be,
There was no redness on his woe-worn cheek,
No sunny smile upon his ashy lips,
His hollow wandering eyes looked wild and fierce,
And grief was printed on his marble brow,
And O I thought he clasped his wasted hands,
And raised his haggard eyes to Heaven, and prayed
That he might die - I had no power to speak,
I thought I was allowed to see him thus;
And yet I might not speak one single word;
I might not even tell him that I lived
And that it might be possible if search were made,
To find out where I was and set me free,
O how I longed to clasp him to my heart,
Or but to hold his trembling hand in mine,
And speak one word of comfort to his mind,
I struggled wildly but it was in vain,
I could not rise from my dark dungeon floor,
And the dear name I vainly strove to speak,
Died in a voiceless whisper on my tongue,
Then I awoke, and lo it was a dream!
A dream? Alas it was reality!
For well I know wherever he may be
He mourns me thus - O heaven I could bear
My deadly fate with calmness if there were
No kindred hearts to bleed and break for me!

Alexandrina Zenobia

Anne Brontë

The Consolation

Though bleak these woods and damp the ground
With fallen leaves so thickly strewn,
And cold the wind that wanders round
With wild and melancholy moan,
There is a friendly roof I know
Might shield me from the wintry blast;
There is a fire whose ruddy glow
Will cheer me for my wanderings past.

And so, though still where'er I roam
Cold stranger glances meet my eye,
Though when my spirit sinks in woe
Unheeded swells the unbidden sigh,

Though solitude endured too long
Bids youthful joys too soon decay,
Makes mirth a stranger to my tongue
And overclouds my noon of day,

When kindly thoughts that would have way
Flow back discouraged to my breast
I know there is, though far away
A home where heart and soul may rest.

Warm hands are there that clasped in mine
The warmer heart will not belie,
While mirth and truth and friendship shine
In smiling lip and earnest eye.

The ice that gathers round my heart
May there be thawed; and sweetly then
The joys of youth that now depart
Will come to cheer my soul again.

Though far I roam, this thought shall be
My hope, my comfort everywhere;
While such a home remains to me
My heart shall never know despair.

Hespera Caverndel

Anne Brontë

The Doubter's Prayer

Eternal Power, of earth and air!
Unseen, yet seen in all around,
Remote, but dwelling everywhere,
Though silent, heard in every sound.
If e'er thine ear in mercy bent,
When wretched mortals cried to Thee,
And if, indeed, Thy Son was sent,
To save lost sinners such as me:

Then hear me now, while, kneeling here,
I lift to thee my heart and eye,
And all my soul ascends in prayer,
Oh, give me -- give me Faith! I cry.

Without some glimmering in my heart,
I could not raise this fervent prayer;
But, oh! a stronger light impart,
And in Thy mercy fix it there.

While Faith is with me, I am blest;
It turns my darkest night to day;
But while I clasp it to my breast,
I often feel it slide away.

Then, cold and dark, my spirit sinks,
To see my light of life depart;
And every fiend of Hell, methinks,
Enjoys the anguish of my heart.

What shall I do, if all my love,
My hopes, my toil, are cast away,
And if there be no God above,
To hear and bless me when I pray?

If this be vain delusion all,
If death be an eternal sleep,
And none can hear my secret call,
Or see the silent tears I weep!

Oh, help me, God! For thou alone
Canst my distracted soul relieve;
Forsake it not: it is thine own,
Though weak, yet longing to believe.

Oh, drive these cruel doubts away;
And make me know, that Thou art God!
A faith, that shines by night and day,
Will lighten every earthly load.

If I believe that Jesus died,
And, waking, rose to reign above;
Then surely Sorrow, Sin, and Pride,
Must yield to Peace, and Hope, and Love.

And all the blessed words He said
Will strength and holy joy impart:
A shield of safety o'er my head,
A spring of comfort in my heart.

Anne Brontë

The Narrow Way

Believe not those who say
The upward path is smooth,
Lest thou shouldst stumble in the way
And faint before the truth.
It is the only road
Unto the realms of joy;
But he who seeks that blest abode
Must all his powers employ.

Bright hopes and pure delights
Upon his course may beam,
And there amid the sternest heights,
The sweetest flowerets gleam; --

On all her breezes borne
Earth yields no scents like those;
But he, that dares not grasp the thorn
Should never crave the rose.

Arm, arm thee for the fight!
Cast useless loads away:
Watch through the darkest hours of night;
Toil through the hottest day.

Crush pride into the dust,
Or thou must needs be slack;
And trample down rebellious lust,
Or it will hold thee back.

Seek not thy treasure here;
Waive pleasure and renown;
The World's dread scoff undaunted bear,
And face its deadliest frown.

To labour and to love,
To pardon and endure,
To lift thy heart to God above,
And keep thy conscience pure, --

Be this thy constant aim,
Thy hope and thy delight, --
What matters who should whisper blame,
Or who should scorn or slight?

What matters -- if thy God approve,
And if within thy breast,
Thou feel the comfort of his love,
The earnest of his rest?

Anne Brontë

The North Wind

That wind is from the North, I know it well;
No other breeze could have so wild a swell.
Now deep and loud it thunders round my cell,
 The faintly dies,
 And softly sighs,
And moans and murmurs mournfully.
I know its language; thus it speaks to me --
'I have passed over thy own mountains dear,
Thy northern mountains -- and they still are free,
Still lonely, wild, majestic, bleak and drear,
And stern and lovely, as they used to be
When thou, a young enthusiast,
As wild and free as they,
O'er rocks and glens and snowy heights
Didst often love to stray.

I've blown the wild untrodden snows
In whirling eddies from their brows,
And I have howled in caverns wild
Where thou, a joyous mountain child,
Didst dearly love to be.
The sweet world is not changed, but thou
Art pining in a dungeon now,
Where thou must ever be;
No voice but mine can reach thine ear,
And Heaven has kindly sent me here,
To mourn and sigh with thee,
And tell thee of the cherished land
Of thy nativity.'

Blow on, wild wind, thy solemn voice,
However sad and drear,
Is nothing to the gloomy silence
I have had to bear.

Hot tears are streaming from my eyes,
But these are better far
Than that dull gnawing tearless [time]
The stupor of despair.

Confined and hopeless as I am,
O speak of liberty,
O tell me of my mountain home,
And I will welcome thee.

Alexandrina Zenobia

Anne Brontë

The Parting

1

The chestnut steed stood by the gate
His noble master's will to wait,
The woody park so green and bright
Was glowing in the morning light,
The young leaves of the aspen trees
Were dancing in the morning breeze.
The palace door was open wide,
Its lord was standing there,
And his sweet lady by his side
With soft dark eyes and raven hair.
He smiling took her wary hand
And said, 'No longer here I stand;
My charger shakes his flowing mane
And calls me with impatient neigh.
Adieu then till we meet again,
Sweet love, I must no longer stay.'

2

'You must not go so soon,' she said,
 'I will not say farewell.
The sun has not dispelled the shade
 In yonder dewy dell;
Dark shadows of gigantic length
 Are sleeping on the lawn;
And scarcely have the birds begun
 To hail the summer morn;
Then stay with me a little while,'
She said with soft and sunny smile.

3

He smiled again and did not speak,
But lightly kissed her rosy cheek,
And fondly clasped her in his arms,
Then vaulted on his steed.
And down the park's smooth winding road

He urged its flying speed.
Still by the door his lady stood
And watched his rapid flight,
Until he came to a distant wood
That hid him from her sight.
But ere he vanished from her view
He waved to her a last adieu,
Then onward hastily he steered
And in the forest disappeared.

4

The lady smiled a pensive smile
 And heaved a gently sigh,
But her cheek was all unblanched the while
 And tearless was her eye.
'A thousand lovely flowers,' she said,
 'Are smiling on the plain.
And ere one half of them are dead,
 My lord will come again.
The leaves are waving fresh and green
 On every stately tree,
And long before they die away
 He will return to me!' --
Alas! Fair lady, say not so;
 Thou canst not tell the weight of woe
That lies in store for thee.

5

Those flowers will fade, those leaves will fall,
Winter will darken yonder hall;
Sweet spring will smile o'er hill and plain
And trees and flowers will bloom again,
And years will still keep rolling on,
But thy beloved lord is gone.
His absence thou shalt deeply mourn,
And never smile on his return.

Anne Brontë

The Parting (2)

1

The lady of Alzerno's hall
Is waiting for her lord;
The blackbird's song, the cuckoo's call
No joy to her afford.
She smiles not at the summer's sun,
Nor at the winter's blast;
She mourns that she is still alone
Though three long years have passed.

2

I knew her when her eye was bright,
I knew her when her step was light
And blithesome as a mountain doe's,
And when her cheek was like the rose,
And when her voice was full and free,
And when her smile was sweet to see.

3

But now the lustre of her eye,
So dimmed with many a tear;
Her footstep's elasticity,
Is tamed with grief and fear;
The rose has left her hollow cheeks;
In low and mournful tone she speaks,
And when she smiles 'tis but a gleam
Of sunshine on a winter's day,
That faintly beams through dreary clouds,
And in a moment dies away.
It does not warm, it does not cheer,
It makes us sigh for summer days
When fields are green, and skies are clear,
And when the sun has kinder rays.

4

For three years she has waited there,
Still hoping for her lord's return,
But vainly she may hope and fear
And vainly watch and weep and mourn;
She may wait him till her hairs are grey,
And she may wear her life away,
But to his lady and his home
Her noble lord will never come.

5

'I wish I knew the worst,' she said,
'I wish I could despair.
These fruitless hopes, this constant dread,
Are more than I can bear!' --
'Then do not hope and do not weep,
He loved thee faithfully,
And nothing short of death could keep
So true a heart from thee;
Eliza, he would never go,
And leave thee thus to mourn,
He must be dead, for death alone
Could hinder his return.'

6

'Twas thus I spoke because I felt
As if my heart would break,
To see her thus so slowly pining
For Alzerno's sake.
But more than that I would not tell,
Though all the while I knew so well
The time and nature of his death.
For when he drew his parting breath
His head was pillowed on my knee,
And his dark eyes were turned to me
With an agonised heart-breaking glance,
Until they saw me not --
O, the look of a dying man
Can never be forgot --!

Alexandrina Zenobia

1837

Anne Brontë

The Penitent

I mourn with thee and yet rejoice
 That thou shouldst sorrow so;
With Angel choirs I join my voice
 To bless the sinner's woe.
Though friends and kindred turn away
 And laugh thy grief to scorn,
I hear the great Redeemer say
 'Blessed are ye that mourn'.

Hold on thy course nor deem it strange
 That earthly cords are riven.
Man may lament the wondrous change
 But 'There is joy in Heaven'!

Anne Brontë

The Student's Serenade

I have slept upon my couch,
But my spirit did not rest,
For the labours of the day
Yet my weary soul opprest;
And, before my dreaming eyes
Still the learned volumes lay,
And I could not close their leaves,
And I could not turn away.

But I oped my eyes at last,
And I heard a muffled sound;
'Twas the night-breeze, come to say
That the snow was on the ground.

Then I knew that there was rest
On the mountain's bosom free;
So I left my fevered couch,
And I flew to waken thee!

I have flown to waken thee --
For, if thou wilt not arise,
Then my soul can drink no peace
From these holy moonlight skies.

And, this waste of virgin snow
To my sight will not be fair,
Unless thou wilt smiling come,
Love, to wander with me there.

Then, awake! Maria, wake!
For, if thou couldst only know
How the quiet moonlight sleeps
On this wilderness of snow,

And the groves of ancient trees,
In their snowy garb arrayed,
Till they stretch into the gloom
Of the distant valley's shade;

I know thou wouldst rejoice
To inhale this bracing air;
Thou wouldst break thy sweetest sleep
To behold a scene so fair.

O'er these wintry wilds, alone,
Thou wouldst joy to wander free;
And it will not please thee less,
Though that bliss be shared with me.

Acton

Anne Brontë

The Three Guides

1

Spirit of earth! thy hand is chill.
 I've felt its icy clasp;
And shuddering I remember still
 That stony-hearted grasp.
Thine eye bids love and joy depart,
 O turn its gaze from me!
It presses down my sinking heart; --
 I will not walk with thee!

2

'Wisdom is mine,' I've heard thee say,
 'Beneath my searching eye,
All mist and darkness melt away,
 Phantoms and fables fly.
Before me, truth can stand alone,
 The naked, solid truth:
And man matured my worth will own,
 If I am shunned by youth.

3

'Firm is my tread, and sure, though slow:
 My footsteps never slide:
And he that follows me shall know
 I am the surest guide.'
Thy boast is vain: but were it true
 That thou couldst safely steer
Life's rough and devious pathway through
 Such guidance I should fear.

4

How could I bear to walk for aye,
 With eyes to earthward prone,
O'er trampled weeds, and miry clay,
 And sand, and flinty stone.
Never the glorious view to greet
 Of hill and dale and sky,
To see that Nature's charms are sweet
 Or feel that Heaven is nigh?

5

If, in my heart arose a spring --
 A gush of thought divine,
At once stagnation thou wouldst bring
 With that cold touch of thine!
If glancing up, I sought to snatch
 But one glimpse of the sky,
My baffled gaze would only catch
 Thy heartless, cold grey eye.

6

If, to the breezes wandering near,
 I listened eagerly,
And deemed an angel's tongue to hear
 That whispered hope to me,
That heavenly music would be drowned
 In thy harsh, droning voice,
Nor inward thought, nor sight, nor sound
 Might my sad soul rejoice.

7

Dull is thine ear; unheard by thee
 The still small voice of Heaven.
Thine eyes are dim, and cannot see
 The helps that God has given.
There is a bridge, o'er every flood,
 Which thou canst not perceive,
A path, through every tangled wood;
 But thou will not believe.

8

Striving to make thy way by force,
 Toil-spent and bramble torn,
Thou'lt fell the tree that stops thy course,
 And burst through briar and thorn;
And pausing by the river's side,
 Poor reasoner, thou wilt deem,
By casting pebbles in its tide
 To cross the swelling stream.

9

Right through the flinty rock thou'lt try
Thy toilsome way to bore,
Regardless of the pathway nigh
That would conduct thee o'er.
Not only are thou, then, unkind,
And freezing cold to me,
But unbelieving, deaf, and blind --
I will not walk with thee!

10

Spirit of Pride! thy wings are strong;
Thine eyes like lightning shine;
Ecstatic joys to thee belong
And powers almost divine.
But 'tis a false destructive blaze,
Within those eyes I see,
Turn hence their fascinating gaze --
I will not follow thee!

11

'Coward and fool!' thou mayst reply;
'Walk on the common sod;
Go trace, with timid foot and eye,
The steps by others trod.
'Tis best the beaten path to keep,
The ancient faith to hold,
To pasture with thy fellow sheep,
And lie within the fold.

12

'Cling to the earth, poor grovelling worm,
'Tis not for thee to soar
Against the fury of the storm,
Amid the thunder's roar.
There's glory in that daring strife
Unknown, undreamt by thee;
There's speechless rapture in the life
Of those who follow me!'

13

Yes; I have seen thy votaries oft,
Upheld by thee their guide,

In strength and courage mount aloft
The steepy mountain-side;
I've seen them stand against the sky,
And gazing from below
Beheld thy lightning in their eye,
Thy triumph on their brow.

14

Oh! I have felt what glory then --
What transport must be theirs'
So far above their fellow men,
Above their toils and cares,
Inhaling nature's purest breath,
Her riches round them spread,
The wide expanse of earth beneath,
Heaven's glories overhead!

15

But -- I have seen them downwards dashed,
Down to a bloody grave;
And still thy ruthless eye has flashed,
Thy strong hand did not save!
I've seen some o'er the mountain's brow
Sustained a while by thee,
O'er rocks of ice and hills of snow
Bound fearless, wild, and free.

16

Bold and exultant was their mien
While thou didst cheer them on;
But evening fell -- and then, I ween,
Their faithless guide was gone.
Alas! how fared thy favourites then --
Lone, helpless, weary, cold --
Did ever wanderer find again
The path he left of old?

17

Where is their glory, where the pride
That swelled their hearts before;
Where now the courage that defied
The mightiest tempest's roar?

What shall they do when night grows black,
When angry storms arise?
Who now will lead them to the track
Thou taught'st them to despise?

18

Spirit of Pride! it needs not this
To make me shun thy wiles,
Renounce thy triumph and thy bliss,
Thy honours and thy smiles.
Bright as thou art, and bold, and strong,
That fierce glance wins not me,
And I abhor thy scoffing tongue --
I will not walk with thee!

19

Spirit of Faith! be thou my guide,
O, clasp my hand in thine,
And let me never quit thy side:
Thy comforts are divine!
Earth calls thee 'blind misguided one',
But who can show like thee
Past things that have been seen and done,
And things that are to be?

20

Secrets concealed from Nature's ken,
Who like thee can declare;
Or who like thee to erring men
God's holy will can bear?
Pride scorns thee for thy lowly mien;
But who like thee can rise
Above this restless, clouded scene, --
Beyond the holy skies?

21

Meek is thine eye and soft thy voice
But wondrous is thy might
To make the wretched soul rejoice,
To give the simple light.
And still to all that seek thy way,
Such magic power is given --

E'en while their footsteps press the clay
Their souls ascend to heaven.

22

Danger surrounds them, pain and woe
Their portion here must be;
But only they that trust thee know
What comfort dwells with thee,
Strength to sustain their drooping powers
And vigour to defend.
Thou pole-star of my darkest hours,
Affliction's firmest friend!

23

Day does not always mark our way;
Night's terrors oft appal,
But lead me, and I cannot stray;
Hold me: I shall not fall;
Sustain me, I shall never faint,
How rough soe'er may be
My upward road, -- nor moan nor plaint
Shall mar my trust in thee.

24

Narrow the path by which we go;
And oft it turns aside,
From pleasant meads where roses blow
And murmuring waters glide;
Where flowery turf lies green and soft,
And gentle gales are sweet,
To where dark mountains frown aloft,
Hard rocks distress the feet.

25

Deserts beyond lie bleak and bare,
And keen winds round us blow;
But if thy hand conducts me there,
The way is right, I know.
I have no wish to turn away:
My spirit does not quail.
How can it while I hear thee say,
'Press forward -- and prevail.'?

26

Even above the tempest's swell,
 I hear thy voice of love.
Of hope and peace I hear thee tell,
 And that blest home above.
Through pain and death, I can rejoice,
 If but thy strength be mine.
Earth hath no music like thy voice;
 Life owns no joy like thine!

27

Spirit of Faith! I'll go with thee:
 Thou, if I hold thee fast,
Wilt guide, defend, and strengthen me,
 And bring me home at last.
By thy help, all things I can do;
 In thy strength all things bear.
Teach me, for thou art just and true,
 Smile on me, -- thou art fair!

Anne Brontë

To -----

I will not mourn thee, lovely one,
 Though thou art torn away.
'Tis said that if the morning sun
 Arise with dazzling ray
And shed a bright and burning beam
 Athwart the glittering main,
'Ere noon shall fade that laughing gleam
 Engulfed in clouds and rain.

And if thy life as transient proved,
 It hath been full as bright,
For thou wert hopeful and beloved;
 Thy spirit knew no blight.

If few and short the joys of life
 That thou on earth couldst know,
Little thou knew'st of sin and strife
 Nor much of pain and woe.

If vain thy earthly hopes did prove,
 Thou canst not mourn their flight;
Thy brightest hopes were fixed above
 And they shall know no blight.

And yet I cannot check my sighs,
 Thou wert so young and fair,
More bright than summer morning skies,
 But stern death would not spare;

He would not pass our darling by
 Nor grant one hour's delay,
But rudely closed his shining eye
 And frowned his smile away,

That angel smile that late so much
 Could my fond heart rejoice;
And he has silenced by his touch
 The music of thy voice.

I'll weep no more thine early doom,
 But O! I still must mourn
The pleasures buried in thy tomb,
 For they will not return.

Anne Brontë

To Cowper

Sweet are thy strains, celestial Bard;
And oft, in childhood's years,
I've read them o'er and o'er again,
With floods of silent tears.
The language of my inmost heart,
I traced in every line;
My sins, my sorrows, hopes, and fears,
Were there -- and only mine.

All for myself the sigh would swell,
The tear of anguish start;
I little knew what wilder woe
Had filled the Poet's heart.

I did not know the nights of gloom,
The days of misery;
The long, long years of dark despair,
That crushed and tortured thee.

But, they are gone; from earth at length
Thy gentle soul is pass'd,
And in the bosom of its God
Has found its home at last.

It must be so, if God is love,
And answers fervent prayer;
Then surely thou shalt dwell on high,
And I may meet thee there.

Is he the source of every good,
The spring of purity?
Then in thine hours of deepest woe,
Thy God was still with thee.

How else, when every hope was fled,
Couldst thou so fondly cling
To holy things and holy men?
And how so sweetly sing,

Of things that God alone could teach?
And whence that purity,
That hatred of all sinful ways --
That gentle charity?

Are these the symptoms of a heart
Of heavenly grace bereft:
For ever banished from its God,
To Satan's fury left?

Yet, should thy darkest fears be true,
If Heaven be so severe,
That such a soul as thine is lost, --
Oh! how shall I appear?

Acton

Anne Brontë

Vanitas Vanitatis, Etc.

In all we do, and hear, and see,
Is restless Toil and Vanity;
While yet the rolling earth abides,
Men come and go like Ocean tides;
And ere one generation dies,
Another in its place shall rise.
That sinking soon into the grave,
Others succeed, like wave on wave;
And as they rise, they pass away.
The sun arises every day,
And hastening onward to the west
He nightly sinks but not to rest;
Returning to the eastern skies,
Again to light us he must rise.
And still the restless wind comes forth
Now blowing keenly from the north,
Now from the South, the East, the West;
For ever changing, ne'er at rest.
The fountains, gushing from the hills,
Supply the ever-running rills;
The thirsty rivers drink their store,
And bear it rolling to the shore,
But still the ocean craves for more.
'Tis endless labour everywhere,
Sound cannot satisfy the ear,
Sight cannot fill the craving eye,
Nor riches happiness supply,
Pleasure but doubles future pain;
And joy brings sorrow in her train.
Laughter is mad, and reckless mirth,
What does she in this weary earth?
Should wealth or fame our life employ,
Death comes our labour to destroy,
To snatch th' untasted cup away,
For which we toiled so many a day.
What then remains for wretched man?
To use life's comforts while he can:
Enjoy the blessings God bestows,
Assist his friends, forgive his foes,

Trust God, and keep His statutes still
Upright and firm, through good and ill --
Thankful for all that God has given,
Fixing his firmest hopes on heaven;
Knowing that earthly joys decay,
But hoping through the darkest day.

Anne Brontë

Vanitas Vanitatum, Omnia Vanitas

In all we do, and hear, and see,
Is restless Toil and Vanity.
While yet the rolling earth abides,
Men come and go like Ocean tides;
And ere one generation dies,
Another in its place shall rise;
That, sinking soon into the grave,
Others succeed, like wave on wave;

And as they rise, they pass away.
The sun arises every day,
And, hastening onward to the West,
He nightly sinks, but not to rest:

Returning to the eastern skies,
Again to light us, he must rise.
And still the restless wind comes forth,
Now blowing keenly from the North;

Now from the South, the East, the West,
For ever changing, ne'er at rest.
The fountains, gushing from the hills,
Supply the ever-running rills;

The thirsty rivers drink their store,
And bear it rolling to the shore,
But still the ocean craves for more.
'Tis endless labour everywhere!
Sound cannot satisfy the ear,

Light cannot fill the craving eye,
Nor riches half our wants supply;
Pleasure but doubles future pain,
And joy brings sorrow in her train;

Laughter is mad, and reckless mirth --
What does she in this weary earth?
Should Wealth, or Fame, our Life employ,
Death comes, our labour to destroy;

To snatch the untasted cup away,
For which we toiled so many a day.
What, then, remains for wretched man?
To use life's comforts while he can,

Enjoy the blessings Heaven bestows,
Assist his friends, forgive his foes;
Trust God, and keep his statutes still,
Upright and firm, through good and ill;

Thankful for all that God has given,
Fixing his firmest hopes on heaven;
Knowing that earthly joys decay,
But hoping through the darkest day.

Acton

Anne Brontë

Verses By Lady Geraldine

Why, when I hear the stormy breath
Of the wild winter wind
Rushing o'er the mountain heath,
Does sadness fill my mind?
For long ago I loved to lie
Upon the pathless moor,
To hear the wild wind rushing by
With never ceasing roar;

Its sound was music then to me;
Its wild and lofty voice
Made my heart beat exultingly
And my whole soul rejoice.

But now, how different is the sound?
It takes another tone,
And howls along the barren ground
With melancholy moan.

Why does the warm light of the sun
No longer cheer my eyes?
And why is all the beauty gone
From rosy morning skies?

Beneath this lone and dreary hill
There is a lovely vale;
The purling of a crystal rill,
The sighing of the gale,

The sweet voice of the singing bird,
The wind among the trees,
Are ever in that valley heard;
While every passing breeze

Is loaded with the pleasant scent
Of wild and lovely flowers.
To yonder vales I often went
To pass my evening hours.

Last evening when I wandered there
To soothe my weary heart,
Why did the unexpected tear
From my sad eyelid start?

Why did the trees, the buds, the stream
Sing forth so joylessly?
And why did all the valley seem
So sadly changed to me?

I plucked a primrose young and pale
That grew beneath a tree
And then I hastened from the vale
Silent and thoughtfully.

Soon I was near my lofty home,
But when I cast my eye
Upon that flower so fair and lone
Why did I heave a sigh?

I thought of taking it again
To the valley where it grew.
But soon I spurned that thought as vain
And weak and childish too.

And then I cast that flower away
To die and wither there;
But when I found it dead today
Why did I shed a tear?

O why are things so changed to me?
What gave me joy before
Now fills my heart with misery,
And nature smiles no more.

And why are all the beauties gone
From this my native hill?
Alas! my heart is changed alone:
Nature is constant still.

For when the heart is free from care,
Whatever meets the eye

Is bright, and every sound we hear
Is full of melody.

The sweetest strain, the wildest wind,
The murmur of a stream,
To the sad and weary mind
Like doleful death knells seem.

Father! thou hast long been dead,
Mother! thou art gone,
Brother! thou art far away,
And I am left alone.

Long before my mother died
I was sad and lone,
And when she departed too
Every joy was flown.

But the world's before me now,
Why should I despair?
I will not spend my days in vain,
I will not linger here!

There is still a cherished hope
To cheer me on my way;
It is burning in my heart
With a feeble ray.

I will cheer the feeble spark
And raise it to a flame;
And it shall light me through the world,
And lead me on to fame.

I leave thee then, my childhood's home,
For all thy joys are gone;
I leave thee through the world to roam
In search of fair renown,

From such a hopeless home to part
Is happiness to me,
For nought can charm my weary heart
Except activity.

Anne Brontë

Verses To A Child

1

O raise those eyes to me again
And smile again so joyously,
And fear not, love; it was not pain
Nor grief that drew these tears from me;
Beloved child, thou canst not tell
The thoughts that in my bosom dwell
 Whene'er I look on thee!

2

Thou knowest not that a glance of thine
Can bring back long departed years
And that thy blue eyes' magic shine
Can overflow my own with tears,
And that each feature soft and fair
And every curl of golden hair,
 Some sweet remembrance bears.

3

Just then thou didst recall to me
A distant long forgotten scene,
One smile, and one sweet word from thee
Dispelled the years that rolled between;
I was a little child again,
And every after joy and pain
 Seemed never to have been.

4

Tall forest trees waved over me,
To hide me from the heat of day,
And by my side a child like thee
Among the summer flowerets lay.
He was thy sire, thou merry child.
Like thee he spoke, like thee he smiled,
 Like thee he used to play.

5

O those were calm and happy days,
We loved each other fondly then;
But human love too soon decays,
And ours can never bloom again.
I never thought to see the day
When Florian's friendship would decay
 Like those of colder men.

6

Now, Flora, thou hast but begun
To sail on life's deceitful sea,
O do not err as I have done,
For I have trusted foolishly;
The faith of every friend I loved
I never doubted till I proved
 Their heart's inconstancy.

7

'Tis mournful to look back upon
Those long departed joys and cares,
But I will weep since thou alone
Art witness to my streaming tears.
This lingering love will not depart,
I cannot banish from my heart
 The friend of childish years.

8

But though thy father loves me not,
Yet I shall still be loved by thee,
And though I am by him forgot,
Say wilt thou not remember me!
I will not cause thy heart to ache;
For thy regretted father's sake
 I'll love and cherish thee.

Alexandrina Zenobia

Anne Brontë

Views Of Life

When sinks my heart in hopeless gloom,
And life can shew no joy for me;
And I behold a yawning tomb,
Where bowers and palaces should be;
In vain you talk of morbid dreams;
In vain you gaily smiling say,
That what to me so dreary seems,
The healthy mind deems bright and gay.

I too have smiled, and thought like you,
But madly smiled, and falsely deemed:
Truth led me to the present view,
I'm waking now -- 'twas then I dreamed.

I lately saw a sunset sky,
And stood enraptured to behold
Its varied hues of glorious dye:
First, fleecy clouds of shining gold;

These blushing took a rosy hue;
Beneath them shone a flood of green;
Nor less divine, the glorious blue
That smiled above them and between.

I cannot name each lovely shade;
I cannot say how bright they shone;
But one by one, I saw them fade;
And what remained when they were gone?

Dull clouds remained, of sombre hue,
And when their borrowed charm was o'er,
The azure sky had faded too,
That smiled so softly bright before.

So, gilded by the glow of youth,
Our varied life looks fair and gay;
And so remains the naked truth,
When that false light is past away.

Why blame ye, then, my keener sight,
That clearly sees a world of woes,
Through all the haze of golden light,
That flattering Falsehood round it throws?

When the young mother smiles above
The first-born darling of her heart,
Her bosom glows with earnest love,
While tears of silent transport start.

Fond dreamer! little does she know
The anxious toil, the suffering,
The blasted hopes, the burning woe,
The object of her joy will bring.

Her blinded eyes behold not now
What, soon or late, must be his doom;
The anguish that will cloud his brow,
The bed of death, the dreary tomb.

As little know the youthful pair,
In mutual love supremely blest,
What weariness, and cold despair,
Ere long, will seize the aching breast.

And, even, should Love and Faith remain,
(The greatest blessings life can show,)
Amid adversity and pain,
To shine, throughout with cheering glow;

They do not see how cruel Death
Comes on, their loving hearts to part:
One feels not now the gasping breath,
The rending of the earth-bound heart, --

The soul's and body's agony,
Ere she may sink to her repose,
The sad survivor cannot see
The grave above his darling close;

Nor how, despairing and alone,
He then must wear his life away;

And linger, feebly toiling on,
And fainting, sink into decay.

* * *

Oh, Youth may listen patiently,
While sad Experience tells her tale;
But Doubt sits smiling in his eye,
For ardent Hope will still prevail!

He hears how feeble Pleasure dies,
By guilt destroyed, and pain and woe;
He turns to Hope -- and she replies,
'Believe it not -- it is not so!'

'Oh, heed her not!' Experience says,
'For thus she whispered once to me;
She told me, in my youthful days,
How glorious manhood's prime would be.

When, in the time of early Spring,
Too chill the winds that o'er me pass'd,
She said, each coming day would bring
A fairer heaven, a gentler blast.

And when the sun too seldom beamed,
The sky, o'ercast, too darkly frowned,
The soaking rain too constant streamed,
And mists too dreary gathered round;

'She told me Summer's glorious ray
Would chase those vapours all away,
 And scatter glories round,
With sweetest music fill the trees,
Load with rich scent the gentle breeze,
 And strew with flowers the ground.

But when, beneath that scorching ray,
I languished, weary, through the day,
 While birds refused to sing,
Verdure decayed from field and tree,
And panting Nature mourned with me

The freshness of the Spring.

"Wait but a little while," she said,
"Till Summer's burning days are fled;
 And Autumn shall restore,
With golden riches of her own,
And Summer's glories mellowed down,
 The freshness you deplore."

And long I waited, but in vain:
That freshness never came again,
 Though Summer passed away,
Though Autumn's mists hung cold and chill,
And drooping nature languished still,
 And sank into decay.

Till wintry blasts foreboding blew
Through leafless trees -- and then I knew
 That Hope was all a dream.
But thus, fond youth, she cheated me;
And she will prove as false to thee,
 Though sweet her words may seem.'

Stern prophet! Cease thy bodings dire --
Thou canst not quench the ardent fire
 That warms the breast of youth.
Oh, let it cheer him while it may,
And gently, gently die away --
 Chilled by the damps of truth!

Tell him, that earth is not our rest;
Its joys are empty -- frail at best;
 And point beyond the sky.
But gleams of light may reach us here;
And hope the roughest path can cheer:
 Then do not bid it fly!

Though hope may promise joys, that still
Unkindly time will ne'er fulfil;
 Or, if they come at all,
We never find them unalloyed, --
Hurtful perchance, or soon destroyed,

They vanish or they pall;

Yet hope itself a brightness throws
O'er all our labours and our woes;
 While dark foreboding Care
A thousand ills will oft portend,
That Providence may ne'er intend
 The trembling heart to bear.

Or if they come, it oft appears,
Our woes are lighter than our fears,
 And far more bravely borne.
Then let us not enhance our doom;
But e'en in midnight's blackest gloom
 Expect the rising morn.

Because the road is rough and long,
Shall we despise the skylark's song,
 That cheers the wanderer's way?
Or trample down, with reckless feet,
The smiling flowerets, bright and sweet
 Because they soon decay?

Pass pleasant scenes unnoticed by,
Because the next is bleak and drear;
Or not enjoy a smiling sky,
Because a tempest may be near?

No! while we journey on our way,
We'll notice every lovely thing;
And ever, as they pass away,
To memory and hope we'll cling.

And though that awful river flows
Before us, when the journey's past,
Perchance of all the pilgrim's woes
Most dreadful -- shrink not -- 'tis the last!

Though icy cold, and dark, and deep;
Beyond it smiles that blessed shore,
Where none shall suffer, none shall weep,
And bliss shall reign for evermore!

Acton

Anne Brontë

Weep Not Too Much

Weep not too much, my darling;
Sigh not too oft for me;
Say not the face of Nature
Has lost its charm for thee.
I have enough of anguish
In my own breast alone;
Thou canst not ease the burden, Love,
By adding still thine own.
I know the faith and fervour
Of that true heart of thine;
But I would have it hopeful
As thou wouldst render mine.
At night, when I lie waking,
More soothing it will be
To say 'She slumbers calmly now,'
Than say 'She weeps for me.'

When through the prison grating
The holy moonbeams shine,
And I am wildly longing
To see the orb divine
Not crossed, deformed, and sullied
By those relentless bars
That will not show the crescent moon,
And scarce the twinkling stars,

It is my only comfort
To think, that unto thee
The sight is not forbidden --
The face of heaven is free.
If I could think Zerona
Is gazing upward now --
Is gazing with a tearless eye
A calm unruffled brow;

That moon upon her spirit
Sheds sweet, celestial balm, --
The thought, like Angel's whisper,
My misery would calm.

And when, at early morning,
 A faint flush comes to me,
Reflected from those glowing skies
 I almost weep to see;

Or when I catch the murmur
 Of gently swaying trees,
Or hear the louder swelling
 Of the soul-inspiring breeze,
And pant to feel its freshness
 Upon my burning brow,
Or sigh to see the twinkling leaf,
 And watch the waving bough;

If, from these fruitless yearnings
 Thou wouldst deliver me,
Say that the charms of Nature
 Are lovely still to thee;
While I am thus repining,
 O! let me but believe,
'These pleasures are not lost to her,'
 And I will cease to grieve.

O, scorn not Nature's bounties!
 My soul partakes with thee.
Drink bliss from all her fountains,
 Drink for thyself and me!
Say not, 'My soul is buried
 In dungeon gloom with thine;'
But say, 'His heart is here with me;
 His spirit drinks with mine.'

A.E.

Anne Brontë

Yes Thou Art Gone

Yes, thou art gone! and never more
Thy sunny smile shall gladden me;
But I may pass the old church door,
And pace the floor that covers thee,
May stand upon the cold, damp stone,
And think that, frozen, lies below
The lightest heart that I have known,
The kindest I shall ever know.

Yet, though I cannot see thee more,
'Tis still a comfort to have seen;
And though thy transient life is o'er,
'Tis sweet to think that thou hast been;

To think a soul so near divine,
Within a form, so angel fair,
United to a heart like thine,
Has gladdened once our humble sphere.

Acton

Anne Brontë

Z-----'s Dream

I dreamt last night; and in that dream
My boyhood's heart was mine again;
These latter years did nothing seem
With all their mingled joy and pain,
Their thousand deeds of good and ill,
Their hopes which time did not fulfil,
Their glorious moments of success,
Their love that closed in bitterness,
Their hate that grew with growing strength,
Their darling projects -- dropped at length,
And higher aims that still prevail, --
For I must perish ere they fail, --
That crowning object of my life,
The end of all my toil and strife,
Source of my virtues and my crimes,
For which I've toiled and striven in vain, --
But, if I fail a thousand times,
Still I will toil and strive again: --
Yet even this was then forgot;
My present heart and soul were not:
All the rough lessons life has taught,
That are become a part of me,
A moment's sleep to nothing brought
And made me what I used to be.
And I was roaming, light and gay,
Upon a breezy, sunny day,
 A bold and careless youth;
No guilty stain was on my mind;
And, if not over soft or kind,
 My heart was full of truth.
It was a well-known mountain scene; --
Wild steeps, with rugged glens between
I should have thirsted to explore,
Had I not trod them oft before.
A younger boy was with me there.
His hand upon my shoulder leant;
His heart, like mine, was free from care,
His breath, with sportive toil, was spent;
For my rough pastimes he would share,

And equal dangers loved to dare,
(Though seldom I would care to vie
In learning's keen pursuit with him;
I loved free air and open sky
Better than books and tutors grim,
And we had wandered far that day
O'er that forbidden ground away --
Ground, to our rebel feet how dear;
Danger and freedom both were there! --
Had climbed the steep and coursed the dale
Until his strength began to fail.

He bade me pause and breathe a while,
But spoke it with a happy smile.

His lips were parted to inhale
The breeze that swept the ferny dale,
And chased the clouds across the sky,
And waved his locks in passing by,
And fanned my cheek; (so real did seem
This strange, untrue, but truthlike dream;)
And, as we stood, I laughed to see
His fair young cheek so brightly glow.
He turned his sparkling eyes to me
With looks no painter's art could show,
Nor words portray; -- but earnest mirth,
And truthful love I there descried;
And, while I thought upon his worth,
My bosom glowed with joy and pride.

I could have kissed his forehead fair;
I could have clasped him to my heart;
But tenderness with me was rare,
And I must take a rougher part:
I seized him in my boisterous mirth;
I bore him struggling to the earth
And grappling, strength for strength we strove --
He half in wrath, -- I all for love;
But I gave o'er the strife at length,
Ashamed of my superior strength, --
The rather that I marked his eye
Kindle as if a change were nigh.

We paused to breathe a little space,
Reclining on the heather brae;
But still I gazed upon his face
To watch the shadow pass away.
I grasped his hand, and it was fled; --
A smile -- a laugh -- and all was well: --
Upon my breast he leant his head,
And into graver talk we fell, --
More serious -- yet so blest did seem
 That calm communion then,
That, when I found it but a dream,
 I longed to sleep again.

At first, remembrance slowly woke.
Surprise, regret, successive rose,
That love's strong cords should thus be broke
And dearest friends turn deadliest foes.
Then, like a cold, o'erwhelming flood
 Upon my soul it burst -----
This heart had thirsted for his blood;
 This hand allayed that thirst!
These eyes had watched, without a tear,
 His dying agony;
These ears, unmoved, had heard his prayer;
This tongue had cursed him suffering there,
 And mocked him bitterly!

Unwonted weakness o'er me crept;
I sighed -- nay, weaker still -- I wept!
Wept, like a woman o'er the deed
 I had been proud to do: --
As I had made his bosom bleed;
 My own was bleeding too.

Back foolish tears! -- the man I slew
 Was not the boy I cherished so;
And that young arm that clasped the friend
Was not the same that stabbed the foe:
By time and adverse thoughts estranged,
And wrongs and vengeance, both were changed.
Repentance, now, were worse than vain:

Time's current cannot backward run;
And be the action wrong or right,
 It is for ever done.
Then reap the fruits -- I've said his death
 Should be my country's gain: --
If not -- then I have spent my breath,
 And spilt his blood in vain:
And I have laboured hard and long,
 But little good obtained;
My foes are many, yet, and strong,
 Not half the battle's gained;
For, still, the greater deeds I've done,
The more I have to do.
The faster I can journey on,
 The farther I must go.
If Fortune favoured for a while,
I could not rest beneath her smile,
 Nor triumph in success:
When I have gained one river's shore
A wilder torrent, stretched before,
Defies me with its deafening roar;
 And onward I must press.
And, much I doubt, this work of strife,
 In blood and death begun,
Will call for many a victim more
 Before the cause is won. --
Well! my own life, I'd freely give
 Ere I would fail in my design; --
The cause must prosper if I live,
And I will die if it decline:
Advanced this far, I'll not recede; --
Whether to vanquish or to bleed,
Onward, unchecked, I must proceed.
 Be Death, or Victory mine!

EZ--

Anne Brontë