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The Complete Poems

written by

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The Poems

I. Poems Published in 1846

i [153]. *Faith and Despondency*

'The winter wind is loud and wild,
Come close to me, my darling child;
Forsake thy books, and mateless play;
And, while the night is gathering grey,
We'll talk its pensive hours away; —

10 'Iernë, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair,
And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes, with mimic rays;
To feel her cheek so softly pressed,
In happy quiet on my breast.

20 'But, yet, even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And, in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens, blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
Where evening closes dark and chill;
For, lone, among the mountains cold,
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!

 'Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me!

I often sat, for hours together,
 Through the long nights of angry weather,
 30 Raised on my pillow, to descry
 The dim moon struggling in the sky;
 Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock,
 Of rock with wave, and wave with rock;
 So would I fearful vigil keep,
 And, all for listening, never sleep.
 But this world's life has much to dread,
 Not so, my Father, with the dead.

 'Oh! not for them, should we despair,
 The grave is drear, but they are not there;
 40 Their dust is mingled with the sod,
 Their happy souls are gone to God!
 You told me this, and yet you sigh,
 And murmur that your friends must die.
 Ah! my dear father, tell me why?
 For, if your former words were true,
 How useless would such sorrow be;
 As wise, to mourn the seed which grew
 Unnoticed on its parent tree,
 Because it fell in fertile earth,
 50 And sprang up to a glorious birth –
 Struck deep its root, and lifted high
 Its green boughs, in the breezy sky.

 'But, I'll not fear, I will not weep
 For those whose bodies rest in sleep, –
 I know there is a blessed shore,
 Opening its ports for me, and mine;
 And, gazing Time's wide waters o'er,
 I weary for that land divine,
 Where we were born, where you and I
 60 Shall meet our Dearest, when we die;
 From suffering and corruption free,
 Restored into the Deity.'

'Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child!
 And wiser than thy sire;
 And worldly tempests, raging wild,
 Shall strengthen thy desire –
 Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
 Through wind and ocean's roar,
 To reach, at last, the eternal home,
 The steadfast, changeless, shore!'

70

ii [160]. *Stars*

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
 Restored our Earth to joy,
 Have you departed, every one,
 And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
 Were gazing down in mine,
 And with a full heart's thankful sighs,
 I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
 As they were life to me;
 And revelled in my changeful dreams,
 Like petrel on the sea.

10

Thought followed thought, star followed star,
 Through boundless regions, on;
 While one sweet influence, near and far,
 Thrilled through, and proved us one!

Why did the morning dawn to break
 So great, so pure, a spell;
 And scorch with fire, the tranquil cheek,
 Where your cool radiance fell?

20

Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of nature, sprang, elate,
But *mine* sank sad and low!

My lids closed down, yet through their veil,
I saw him, blazing, still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
And flash upon the hill.

30 I turned me to the pillow, then,
To call back night, and see
Your worlds of solemn light, again,
Throb with my heart, and me!

It would not do – the pillow glowed,
And glowed both roof and floor;
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door;

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
40 And give them leave to roam.

Oh, stars, and dreams, and gentle night;
Oh, night and stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light,
That does not warm, but burn;

That drains the blood of suffering men;
Drinks tears, instead of dew;
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
And only wake with you!

iii [157]. *The Philosopher*

'Enough of thought, philosopher!

Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unenlightened, in this chamber drear,

While summer's sun is beaming!
Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
Concludes thy musings once again?

"Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
Without identity,

10 And never care how rain may steep,
Or snow may cover me!
No promised heaven, these wild desires,
Could all, or half fulfil;
No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
Subdue this quenchless will!"

'So said I, and still say the same;

Still, to my death, will say –

Three gods, within this little frame,

Are warring night and day;

Heaven could not hold them all, and yet

20 They all are held in me;

And must be mine till I forget

My present entity!

Oh, for the time, when in my breast

Their struggles will be o'er!

Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,

And never suffer more!

'I saw a spirit, standing, man,

Where thou doth stand – an hour ago,

And round his feet three rivers ran,

30 Of equal depth, and equal flow –

A golden stream – and one like blood;

And one like sapphire seemed to be;

But, where they joined their triple flood

It tumbled in an inky sea.

The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
 Down through that ocean's gloomy night
 Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
 The glad deep sparkled wide and bright –
 White as the sun, far, far more fair
 40 Than its divided sources were!

 'And even for that spirit, seer,
 I've watched and sought my life-time long;
 Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air –
 An endless search, and always wrong!
 Had I but seen his glorious eye
 Once light the clouds that wilder me,
 I ne'er had raised this coward cry
 To cease to think, and cease to be;
 I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
 50 Nor, stretching eager hands to death,
 Implored to change for senseless rest
 This sentient soul, this living breath –
 Oh, let me die – that power and will
 Their cruel strife may close;
 And conquered good, and conquering ill
 Be lost in one repose!'

iv [158]. *Remembrance*

Cold in the earth – and the deep snow piled above thee,
 Far, far, removed, cold in the dreary grave!
 Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
 Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

 Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
 Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
 Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
 Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?