Ebenezer Elliott, 
Corn Law 
Rhymer: 

Poems of 
Sheffield & 
Environs 

edited by 
Agnes Lehoczky & 
Adam Piette
Ebenezer Elliott, Corn Law Rhymer: Poems of Sheffield & Environs

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In collaboration with BA creative writing students & the students on the MA in Creative Writing. Published with the support of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities at the University of Sheffield: Strategic Development Fund, and forming part of the ‘Psyche of the City’ strand of the PlastiCities project:
http://occursus.wordpress.com/plasticities
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Preface

‘Two generous critics (one of them writing in the New Monthly Magazine, and the other in the Athenæum,) have praised so highly this little, unpuffed, unadvertised book, that I am almost compelled to doubt whether I still live in England. What! in the land of castes and cant, take a poor self-educated man by the hand, and declare that his book is worth reading!’

A distinctly acid humour not always evident in Ebenezer Elliott’s poems is given free rein in his prefaces and notes. The quoted passage introduces the preface to his Corn Law Rhymes in the collected edition of 1834, striking the pose of any outsider poet, some unclubbable fellow who not only went to the wrong school but was never invited to the right literary parties. But perhaps, he suggests, his poems have been noticed just because they are ‘the work of a mechanic poet’ and cites others with similar novelty value – Benjamin Franklin, Shakespeare, Burns. As he says elsewhere he tries ‘notes uncouth’ in ‘rugged English ruggedly’. Or again, ‘I feed on Nature’s bane, and mess with scorn’ (‘The Village Patriarch’ Book III) ‘In railing foully, and in writing ill.’

We should not allow too much credence to Elliott’s frequent self-caricatures. They are offered with a purpose and a dash of mockery. He no more belongs among the ‘peasant poets’ in that dubious succession from Stephen Duck to John Clare than he does among the university men. He identified himself as a ‘mechanic’ but he was also an entrepreneur, an ironmaster whose fortunes rose and fell with the boom-and-bust economy of Sheffield in the 1820s and 30’s. (He called boom ‘glut’ and bust ‘scarcity’ but the phenomenon’s the same and uncomfortably familiar.) He set himself a demanding curriculum for his self-education and he was evidently well-read not only in the English poets but political economists, historians (especially of the English Revolution), philosophers (more limitedly but particularly Locke) as well as French and German authors. This in itself complicates and should certainly temper our view of him.

The mock-modesty of the 1834 preface eases and enables Elliott’s approach to a dilemma he felt keenly. His poetry had been recognised because of its political content but by critics who deeply disapproved of ‘political poetry’. His work was thus set up as an exemplar of what should not be said in poems and its qualities devalued in the light of his passionate political commitments, particularly to the cause of free trade and the repeal of the Corn Laws or, as he preferred to say, ‘the bread-tax’.
Elliott’s answer is twofold, or at least has two aspects which are slightly nuanced. His essential position is that all genuine poetry is political. He cites Homer, Dante, Milton, Cowper, Burns. ‘Why should the sensitive bard take less interest than other men, in those things which most nearly concern mankind?’ he asks, and ‘was not Pope himself a politician? Aye, and a great one. What is poetry but impassioned truth – philosophy in its essence – [...] Are there no politics in Hamlet? Is not Macbeth – is not the drama of Wallenstein a sublime political treatise?’ Poetry is the art of the polis: a large claim, perhaps, for a ‘poor self-educated man’ to make but it gains strength from the impression which Elliott’s poetry always gives, that the author is very much a ‘man of the polis’ even though his territory is the manufacturing city of Sheffield and far removed from the gentlemen’s club commonly known as the Houses of Parliament. Reading Elliott we are bound to feel that it is not so much that he inhabits Sheffield as that the city and its environs inhabit him.

Elliott’s allied position is ‘that any subject whatever in which man takes interest, however humble and common-place it may be, is capable of inspiring high and true poetry.’ Clearly these ‘humble and common-place’ things are in Elliott’s view poetised and politicised simultaneously; the nuance is that he is here defining a specific aim and a distinction between his own work and what he calls in another note ‘genteel poetics’ where ‘such vulgarities are not to be found.’ He is distancing himself from the album verse in which the last remains of Romanticism were interred. He is also incidentally foreshadowing a notion of poetry (or the poetic subject) which only gained ascendancy a century later.

So how well did Elliott achieve his poetic aim? His attention to the ‘common-place’ is everywhere apparent although largely focussed on rural detail. He’d rather describe the felicities of Wincobank or Stanage than his workshop in Gibraltar Street. (An account survives of its heaps of ‘iron of all sorts, sizes, and forms’, with plaster casts of Shakespeare, Achilles, Ajax and Napoleon jumbled in a ‘chaos of rusty bars’.) In ‘Steam, at Sheffield’ he revels in the hazardous glamour of the latest engines but anyone would wish that he’d more often turned his eye for detail to the city’s blackened ginnels and their inmates. In one occasional poem he glimpses a ‘proud mechanic’ ‘on his sofa reading Locke’ and then he glances away. Tell us more! Was the mechanic reading the Treatises of Government or the Essay Concerning Human Understanding? Was he one of the ‘many mechanics’ who, Elliott claimed, ‘can write better than the author of the Corn Law Rhymes’? All of whom, so far as I know, remain unpublished.

Elliott yearned to be remembered for more than the Corn Law Rhymes. ‘The Splendid Village’ and ‘The Village Patriarch’ are the most re-readable of his narrative poems and it’s no coincidence that they are also the most political, portraying rural communities impoverished by taxation. The poems are
weakened by an inability to restrain description but there are vivid passages and memorable vignettes. The courtship of the blind 100-year-old Enoch Wray and the 85-year-old five-times-widowed dream-interpreter Alice Green in ‘The Village Patriarch’ is a precious instance of Elliott’s humour. Blindness is a recurrent theme in several of his poems, perhaps a recollection of his own six-week childhood blindness caused by smallpox but also an effective counterpoint to the wealth of visual detail surrounding but unseen by Enoch Wray and others. The narrative poems are invigorated by local expressions such as ‘scrating’, ‘croose’, ‘struttle’, ‘cranshy’, ‘squattering’, ‘sliving’, ‘slapest’, ‘histie’ and ‘flaskering’, most of which are not recorded in the OED. The Corn Law Rhymes are nevertheless the stronger work, perhaps because they are underwritten by the Burnsian constraints of popular song. It was above all else the bread-tax which ‘hammered’ Elliott’s feelings ‘cold-short’, one of his relatively and surprisingly few metaphors drawn from the steelworks. You do not read and easily forget such direct speech and spare diction as

Give, give, they cry – and take!
For wilful men are they
Who tax’d our cake, and took our cake,
To throw our cake away.

Alan Halsey
Introduction

Ebenezer Elliott is the Corn Law Rhymer, the vociferous and savage-tongued advocate of the poor against the bread-tax. Admired by Southey and Carlisle, champion of the new industrial working class, he is at the same time a troubling figure for present-day radicals. As an iron merchant, and scion of a foundry-owning clan, Elliott gives voice to that odd contradiction, the middle-class radical – odder perhaps even than the Tory radical. For Elliott, the Corn Laws were iniquitous not only because, in his view, the main sustenance of his workers was being taxed to protect British corn against foreign competition, but also because the interests the laws sustained were those of the agricultural landowning class, the core of what he saw as true blue Toryism. The ideological battle of the anti-Corn Law movement of the mid-nineteenth century, for him, lay in a fight to the death between Tory landowners and benevolent industrialists for the hearts and minds of the People, understood as agricultural workers tempted into towns to work for the new factories.

As a poet, Elliott begins as an entirely conventional semi-amateur exponent of watery Romanticism, a nerveless, soupy versifying based on imitation of Wordsworth, Scott, Burns and Crabbe. As such, his early verse advocates a spectrum of natural beauties which would prove uncomfortable in his later Corn Rhymer phase. For how can one exalt the untouched sublimity of the countryside if the feudal system running the ‘natural’ world is so corrupt? The answer would lie in a form of Sunday right-to-roam theory of the natural environment: the industrial worker, liberated from feudal bonds by the factories, is a free citizen of the world, and especially free to tramp across the moors of Yorkshire as a new version of Wordsworth’s freeholder freeman. This explains the preachy Sabbatarianism of some of his songs (‘Hail, Sabbath! day of mercy, peace, and rest!’): for Sunday is ‘tired Labour’s day’ (‘Artisan’s Outdoor Hymn’) and needs to be preserved to protect the essential relationship between industrial millenarianism and Romantic ideology. It also explains the relationship between town and country: not pastoral, not urban pastoral, but an urbanism built upon the natural right to the world.

The Whiggishness of all this can pall, as Elliott generates arguments which would grace the table of any libertarian Thatcherite. The only difference is the verve of the para-socialist hymning of the travails and sufferings of the poor, both agricultural and industrial. If the Free Trade dogma at the back of Elliott’s radicalism is too thick with the syrup of mercantile self-righteousness and false consciousness, at the same time the anger at conditions, qua conditions, strikes true too.

If everything in Elliott’s writing is political, then, does that mean we can ignore any form of quality control (to use a mercantile term)? As far as the editors are concerned, having trawled through the thousands of lines, much of the poetry is bilge: awash with the residue and seepages of the industrial contradictions. Elliott
can be criminally sentimental, jogtrottingly cliché-ridden, soggy and damp and dead as wet straw. But at his best, energized by anger, or moved by local detail, exalted by story, or high-falutin’ with comic energy, he can write a region, he can do Sheffield and environs (or it does him).

‘I claim to be the pioneer,’ he trumpeted, ‘of the greatest, the most beneficial, the only crimeless revolution, which man has yet seen. I also claim to be the poet of the Revolution – the Bard of Freetrade; and through the posterity, wisdom and loving-kindness which Freetrade will ultimately bring, the Bard of Universal Peace’ (Introduction to More Verse and Prose [1850]). Humbug. Yet when he takes the blind Andrew Turner by the hand, in ‘Steam at Sheffield’, and sees for him the smoke-choked streets of Sheffield, understood as ‘Trade’s black vapours’ created by the ‘black workshop in the streeted waste’, he may be voicing a reformer’s point of view he disagrees with, yet he sees it nevertheless. And there is, too, a wonder in Elliott’s wonder, his extolling of the ‘nobler beauty’ in ‘the form / That wields the hissing steel’, his hero-worship of ‘Watt! and his million-feeding machinery!’; the extolling of ‘Steam-miracles of demi-deity!’ His blind companion can now see this just as the Victorian reader now can, or indeed ourselves, seeing the ‘smoky cloud’ that is industrial Sheffield across blindnesses of time and space. Turner can hear though, and Elliott asks us to hear too, ‘the unwearied crash and roar / Of iron powers, that, urged by restless fire, / Toil ceaseless, day and night, yet never tire.’ Elliott comes across like some proto-Futurist, hailing the ‘metal god’, the ‘beneficent thunder’ of the machines, in his Whig hymn to ‘Futurity’.

Counterpart and dissentient element to these industrial songs are four other sub-genres favoured by Elliott, and of interest to us today in our post-industrial and globalizing world of invisible powers and forces. They are, first, comic Burnsian satires which semi-consciously reveal the darknesses of the city. ‘If my composition smells of the workshop and the dingy warehouse, I cannot help it; soot is soot’ [Introduction to The Village Patriarch (1832)]. And the sootiness shows too in the comic writing. In the extraordinary ‘Scottish Nationality’, Elliott indulges in some dubious imitation of Burns in a fantasy of a Scottish Sheffield worker on holiday in hell. MacWhiskey, and yes that is his name, takes a bottle of Sheffield air with him and gets Satan to sniff: and turns the devil’s red face blue and white with disgust and rage. The joke is broad: but in telling the tale, Elliott paints a picture of Hell as a thinly disguised portrait of Sheffield:

Swift, in the centre roll’d a wheel,
By torrents urg’d of melted steel,
(Than Teneriff or Etna higher,
A rushing overshot of fire,)
To which attach’d, a hammer rav’d,
That rock’d the floor of hell fire-pav’d;
While gnarled hearts, that could not melt,
And ne’er a touch of pity felt,
Receiv’d the oft-repeated stroke.

Elliott reveals the hellishness of his own industrial environment in this comic interlude, in ways that go against the proto-Futurist ideology of the merchant radical class. The steel city contains the potential of hellish environment for the workers, despite Elliott’s bias. Here from ‘The Village Patriarch’, another vision of hell:

A fiery flood,
As of steel molten, on their nerves all bare,
Rush’d from the brazen sky.

Elliott broke with the Chartists once he realised they dropped support for the anti-Corn Law movement; and was always bitterly opposed to communism and socialism. Yet these comic visions of hell unwittingly rhyme with Engels on Manchester (‘the frightful condition of this Hell upon Earth’ [The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844]).

Second, there is the sharper-edged Miltonic and Wordsworthian political writing, particularly the 1848 sonnets of the sequence ‘Year of Seeds’ which tie Sheffield’s concerns to the revolutionary changes affecting Europe and the world. These have a fitful clarity and burly eloquence which communicate the suffering of the exploited poor with the pared-down language of complaint (‘Her husband built a house upon the waste, / And lost it’), whilst connecting the Sheffield environment to the struggle for justice raging across the Europe of 1848:

All hail, Westknab! Great Kinder! Blakelowscar!
Stanedge! Winhill! Storm’s Blackstone! From afar
When ye come forth in ether clear and still,
Sad tidings ye convey to Hargate-rill
Of coming wreck and elemental war.

Thirdly, there are the country poems, which explore the natural environment as a citizen’s equally natural right, but in ways which can be read as ‘republican’. The pretty country cottages hide horrors: ‘Beauty without, hides death within, / Like flowers upon the shroud of sin’ (‘British Rural Cottages’). The landscape graced by the rivers Don and Rother speaks to Elliott of this elemental birthright, as taproot back to Wordsworth’s Republican myth of Edenic freeholder men and women, coloured by a neo-Malthusian desire for free space (free of the city transforming the world): ‘My spirit shakes its fetters. I crave room / For rest, for rest’ (‘Don and Rother’). Sheffield itself retains the vision of free nature, at its doorstep, as it were, portal to this freedom: ‘before him glide / Don, Rivelin, Loxley, wandering in their pride / From heights that mix their azure with the cloud’ (‘The Ranter’).
And lastly, the poems which made his name, the Corn Law poems giving voice to the plight of the poor: occasionally these will rise above the ‘Freetrade’ bread-tax libertarianism and discover true radical edge and register. The poems discover and sustain a plain speech of the street, free of fake dialecty condescension, telling the story right, if tarnished by the accents of melodrama:

They sold the chairs, they took the bed, and went;
A fiend’s look after them the husband sent;
His thin wife held him faintly, but in vain;
She saw the alehouse in his scowl of pain

The poems as a whole may not stand up to that much scrutiny, but there is enough here to justify a re-presentation at least of the documents, especially such as concern the picturing of industrial Sheffield at the height of its steel-making powers. When Elliott began writing, Upperthorpe was in the countryside, and this PlastiCities project can use his lines to re-imagine the expansion of industrial Sheffield over the landscape. His childhood reminiscence drew him too to the Rother valley, and the country round Conisborough and Mexborough: and he sets many of his ‘border’ ballad verses in this region (eg ‘Second Nuptials’), with the hard tack of talk from Rawmarsh and ‘Greasbro’ energizing the lines. His verse takes us by the hand, like blind Andrew Turner, and shows streets, furnaces, lanes, and into the rooms of the poor, and displays the complexity of the Industrial Revolution as difficult, traumatic compromise between factory-built and rural environments. The ‘Scenes grand, and wild, and terrible’ of the two sublimes, the sublime of mountains, moors, rocks and rivers, and the sublime of the ‘metal god’: they meet in the mixed contradictions and tangled conventions running Elliott’s verse. As such, they provide an old map to the darker 19th century debates – about political justice for the new industrial classes, potential sources of dream and futurity, knotted struggles to cohere across the violent contradictions in the northern cities – which we are free to use or ignore as long as we make the effort to remember that many of these questions, many of the same forms of compromise and false consciousness, are with us still as we walk through post-industrial Sheffield. From Crookes down to Kelham Island and along Neepsend to Wardsend Cemetery: the city is haunted by the ghosts of the workshops and dingy warehouses of Elliott’s Sheffield.

The edition of the Poetical Works of 1876 had a poem by Walter Savage Landor as preface. It is an interesting poem, and I would like to end this introduction with Landor: as ghost Virgil to the journeys made by Elliott’s verse. The poem celebrates the erection of the statue to Elliott now in Weston Park, and praises its sculptor, Neville Burnard. The sculptor had a tragic life story: he became an alcoholic tramp after the death of his daughter, died in a workhouse, and was buried in an unmarked pauper’s grave. It is hard to keep this in mind whilst reading Landor’s poem, but if one does, the ironies deepen and darken, ironies to do with
the ‘humble’ and ‘lowly’ which were the accepted cant terms for the poor. Such monuments as Burnard’s statue (and the monument we are free to make of Elliott’s poetry) are ‘ghosted’ by the image of the unmarked pauper’s grave, the ‘natural’ destination of so many life trajectories under the compulsions of industrial capitalism.

ON THE STATUE OF EBENEZER ELLIOTT BY NEVILLE BURNARD, ORDERED BY THE WORKING MEN OF SHEFFIELD
By Walter Savage Landor

GLORY to those who give it! who erect
The bronze and marble, not where frothy tongue
Or bloody hand points out - no, but where God
Ordains the humble to walk forth before
The humble, and mount higher than the high.
Wisely, O Sheffield, wisely hast thou done
To place thy ELLIOTT on the plinth of fame;
Wisely hast chosen for that solemn deed
One like himself, born where no mother’s love
Wrapt purple round him, nor rang golden bell,
Pendant from Libyan coral, in his ear,
To catch a smile or calm a petulance;
Nor tickled downy scalp with Belgic lace;
But whom strong genius took from poverty,
And said, Rise, mother, and behold thy child!
She rose, and Pride rose with her but was mute.

Three Elliots there have been, three glorious men,
Each in his generation. One was doom’d
By despotism and prelacy to pine
In the damp dungeon, and to die for Law,
Rack’d by slow tortures ere he reacht the grave.
A second hurled his thunderbolt and flame
When Gaul and Spaniard moor’d their pinnaces,
Screaming defiance at Gibraltar’s frown,
Until one moment more, and other screams,
And other writhings rose above the wave
From sails afire and hissing where they fell,
And men half burnt along the buoyant mast.
A third came calmly on and askt the rich
To give laborious hunger daily bread,
As they in childhood had been taught to pray
By God’s own Son, and sometimes have prayed since.
God heard; but they heard not. God sent down bread;
They took it, kept it all, and cried for more,
Hollowing both hands to catch and clutch the crumbs.

I may not live to hear another voice,
ELLIOTT, of power to penetrate as thine,
Dense multitudes; another none may see,
Leading the muses from unthrifty shades,
To fields where corn gladdens the heart of man,
And where the trumpet with defiant blast
Blows in the face of war and yields to peace.
Therefor take thou these leaves, fresh, firm, tho’ scant, –
To crown the City that crowns thee her son.
She must decay: Toledo hath decaid;
Ebro hath half forgotten what bright arms
Flasht on his waters; what high dames adorn’d
The baldric; what torn flags o’erhung the aile;
What parting gift the ransom’d knight exchanged.
But louder than the anvil rings the lyre;
And thine hath raised another City’s wall
In solid strength to a proud eminence,
Which neither conqueror, crushing braver men,
Nor time, o’ercoming conquerer, can destroy.
So now, ennobled by thy birth, to thee
She lifts with pious love the thoughtful stone.
Genius is tired in search of gratitude;
Here they have met; may neither say farewell.

Adam Piette
from The Splendid Village

I sought the churchyard where the lifeless lie,
And envied them—they rest so peacefully!
"No wretch comes here, at dead of night," I said,
"To drag the weary from his hard-earn'd bed;
No schoolboys here with mournful relics play,
And kick 'the dome of thought' o'er common clay;
No city cur snarls here o'er dead-men's bones;
No sordid fiend removes memorial stones:
The dead have here what to the dead belongs,
Though legislation makes not laws, but wrongs."
I sought a letter'd stone, on which my tears
Had fall'n like thunder-rain, in other years;
My mother's grave I sought, in my despair,
But found it not!—Our gravestone was not there!
No, we were fallen men, mere Workhouse slaves—
And how could fallen men have names or graves?
I thought of sorrow in the wilderness,
And death in solitude, and pitiless
Interment in the tiger's hideous maw;
I pray'd; and praying, turn'd from all I saw.
My prayers were curses!

{...}

England! can this be England?—this my home?
This country of the crime without a name,
And men who know nor mercy, hope, nor shame?
O Light! that cheer'st all life, from sky to sky,
As with a hymn, to which the stars reply!
Canst thou behold this land, O holy light!
And not turn black with horror at the sight?
Fall'n country of my fathers! fall'n and foul!
Thy body still is here, but where the soul?
I look upon a corpse—'tis putrid clay—
And fiends possess it. Vampires, quit your prey!
Or vainly tremble, when the dead arise,
Clarion'd to vengeance by shriek-shaken skies,
And crunch your hearts, and drink your blood for ale!
Then eat each other, till the banquet fail!
O thou dark tower that look'st o'er ancient woods
To see the tree of fire put forth its buds!
Baronial Keep! whose ruins, ivy-grown,
The time-touch'd ash mistakes for living stone,
Grasping them with his withen roots, and fast
Binding the present with the faded past!
While, cropp'd with every crime, the tax-plough'd moor,
And footpaths stolen from the trampled poor,
And commons, sown with curses loud and deep,  
Proclaim a harvest, which the rich shall reap—  
Call up the iron men of Runnymead,  
And bid them look on lords, whom peasants feed!  
Then—when the worm slinks down at nature's groan,  
And with the shrieking heav'n thy dungeons moan—  
O'er the loud fall of greatness, misery fed,  
Let their fierce laugh awake their vassals dead,  
The shaft-famed men, whom yet tradition sings,  
Who served, but did not feed, the fear'd of kings,  
To join the wondering laugh, and wilder yell,  
While England flames – “a garden” and a hell.
ON SEEING A WILD HONEYSuckle IN FLOWER,
NEAR THE SOURCE OF THE RIVER DON,
AUGUST 1817

I

What dost thou here, sweet woodbine wild?
Like all-shunn’d wretch forlorn,
From good by rigid fate exil’d,
From hope’s bless’d visions torn,
And curs’d in Nature’s genial hour;
What dost thou here, wild woodbine flower?
Here verdure frowns! and, from on high,
Through vallies black and bare,
(The realm of cold sterility,
Where thou alone art fair.)
Don hastes, like pilgrim scorn’d and grey,
In search of richer scenes, away.

II

How like a tyrant in distress,
Though late, at last, betray’d,
This land appears in loneliness!
What gloom of light and shade!
Dark mirror of the darker storm,
On which the cloud beholds his form!
Like night in day, how vast and rude,
On all sides, frowns the heath!
This horror is not solitude,
This barrenness is death;
And here, in sable shroud array’d,
Nature, a giant corse, is laid.

III

Is motion life? There rolls the cloud,
The ship of sea-like heaven,
By hand unseen its canvas bowed,
Its gloomy streamers riven;
If sound is life, in accents stern,
Here ever moans the restless fern.
Yea, life is here! the plover sails,
   And, loud, torments the sky;
The wind, gaunt famine’s herald, wails
   Hungrily, hungrily;
The lean snake starts before my tread,
The dry brash cranshing o’er his head.
And, on grey Snealsden’s summit lone,
   The gloom-clad terrors dwell!
It is the tempest’s granite throne,
   It is the thunder’s hell;
Hark! his dread voice! his glance of ire
Gleams, and the darkness melts in fire.
Hurtles the torrent’s sudden force
   In swift rage at my side;
The bleak crag, lowering o’er his course,
   Scorns sullenly his pride;
Time’s eldest born! with naked breast,
And marble shield, and flinty crest,
And thou, at his etersial feet,
To make the desert sport,
Bloom’st, all alone, wild woodbine sweet,
   Like modesty at court:
No leaf, save thine, is here to bless;
How lonely is thy loveliness!
Far hence thy sister is, the rose,
   That virgin-fancied flower;
Nor almond here, nor lilac grows,
   To form th’ impassion’d bower;
Nor may thy beauteous languor rest
Its pale cheek on the lily’s breast.
Who breathes thy sweets? Thou bloom’st in vain
   Where none thy charms may see!
Save kite, or wretch like homeless Cain,
   What guest shall visit thee?
Here, and alone! sad doom, I ween,
   To be of such wild realm the queen!
THE DEVIL ON SNEALSDEN-PIKE

Dark on his raft Napoleon stood,
And, looking towards us o’er the flood,
Vow’d what he would do, if he could;
When on Holemoss, the powers of evil,
Each great, and every little devil
Met, his high deeds to celebrate.
Belzebub sat i’ th’ midst in state,
And held and wav’d, in sulphury hand,
Thick as my arm, a lighted brand,
O’ th’ marrow made of heroes brave
As ever won an envied grave,
Who, fearless, fought, but fought in vain,
In Underwalden’s battle slain.
And fast the fiery cup went round;
And loud, their long tails lash’d the ground;
And deep the devil his daffy’s took,
Till star and planet o’er him shook,
And sometimes three moons, sometimes two,
Danc’d hornpipes to his maudlin view,
Though split and torn appear’d they all,
Like Suffolk cheeses, broke with mall.
And higher still his voice he rais’d
The more he drank, and, winking, prais’d
His pupil’s Machiavelian brains
Which, draining Europe’s richest veins,
Made freedom’s champions fight for chains,
While mercy, pale with horror, fled.
“And come what may,” the devil said,
“Let Boney fall, or higher soar.
“Freedom shall fall, to rise no more.”
Thus did the feast infernal end?
No – powers of goodness us defend! –
For then they drank, on bended knee,
Their hero’s health, with three times three;
And, since from heaven those angels fell,
To feed on fiery pangs in hell,
Did ne’er to earth such scene appear,
Did never earth such tumult hear.
But when, with hiss of snaky pinions,
All drunk, they sought their own dominions,
Steeds broke the tether; from the stall
Forth rush’d the ox, o’er hedge and wall; 
And – worst of all, and worse than all, – 
Old Satan, from the hubbub hieing, 
Paus’d on the blast, and from his hand, 
Where clouds on Snealsden-Pike are flying, 
Dropp’d, with malicious grin, his brand; 
When, stumbling o’er the fallen light, 
A drunkard (late from Barnesly fair, 
And wandering, lost, in murky air) 
Stoop’d, took it, and, with mad delight, 
Fir’d, on the mountain’s side, the heath. 
Dark, and more dark, the world beneath 
Frown’d, as the flame spread wide and higher, 
And Rumour had a tongue of fire. 
Distinct in light, black Bretland tower’d; 
Holme, from his mist, sublimely lour’d; 
Awak’d, grey Dead-Edge shook his brow; 
And groaning Don fled, pale, below. 
Far hamlets trembled as they gaz’d, 
And Fear averr’d the beacon blaz’d; 
And loud the Devil laugh’d on the wind, 
Wagging his joyful tail behind, 
While wrinkled on his rump the skin, 
As if each hair had soul within. 
Why clos’d grey Will his tavern door? 
What asking crowds from all sides pour! 
Why clanks so loud the hoof of steed? 
Why yon pale horseman’s darkling speed? 
“Why but because our fleet is stranded, 
And, worst that can be, Boney’s landed, 
And coming, like a cataract; 
And whores are ravish’d, pig-sties sack’d – 
And York is burn’d – and Pontefract – 
And rolling drums to glory call 
The dreadful Locals, one and all?” – 
Hail, Crambo! and, Night’s muse sublime, 
Hail, and endure! and, scorning Time, 
Heroes of Rother, live in rhyme! – 
And, hey for our town! ‘tis a sight 
To make a Cæsar die of fright! 
And what a strange and mingled sound, 
Like fire and water, underground! 
It is the hum of hurried feet,
It is the Babel of the street,
Where Rawmarsh bears, and Greasbro witches,
Ask, snuffling, “What ail Tommy’s breeches,
Who, puffing, comes, all bones and wind,
Dragging his bum a league behind?”
But pity’s muse will best relate
The sorrows of that night of fate.
Love, of the ever ready tear,
Could not but be a mourner here.
Queer tears, and manag’d well, she shed,
By leering Tom, o’er faithful Ned;
Sad tears from pregnant Sukey’s eye,
Tears of tried truth and constancy,
Some say, for Jack of Wickersly,
Others, for flame-nos’d Jem o’ th’ Mill;
And quarts of tears for brawny Bill.
Eyes, never stain’d with woe before,
Now blubber’d cheeks and bosom o’er,
For many a short, and many a tall one;
And soul-drops might be had by th’ gallon.
from SECOND NUPTIALS

ADVERTISEMENT

In this book it is related, how William Bray deserted his wife; how Mathew Hall won her heart, by talking of her husband until she wept; how she swam a drake with her tears, and married Mathew; how William Bray returned to his wife, after an absence of ten years; how she took him for the Devil, and did her best to scratch his eyes out! and how the man had his mare again, and all was well.

And, sudden, rush’d into the hall
A man, whose aspect and attire
Startled the circle by the fire.

SCOTT

XX.

Then Mary to the window drew,
And, hid behind the curtain blue,
Look’d out into the dismal night.
Gone was the universal white;
Wild heaven with skurrying clouds was spread;
And through the darkness rush’d the light
Oft, as the wan moon, overhead,
Like murder chas’d by conscience, fled;
And lovely was th’ illumin’d cloud,
As, on the tip of virgin dead,
The smile that mocks her stainless shroud.
And, as a maniac bends aghast,
Smiting his clench’d hands high and fast,
Did many a huge tree, in the blast
Wave, crashing loud, his branches vast,
Between her and the light.
Afar, she saw the river deep,
And Mexbro, by his side, asleep;
And all the snow was in the stream,
Roaring beneath the fitful beam;
But the wild rain had ceas’d to pour.
Then o’er her heart chill terror crept,
And fancy, sad enthusiast, wept,
And heard the distant waters roar.
“Did Mathew, on that gloomy shore,
Where the vo’c’d billows wail of woe,
As, dread, in frantic whirls, they flow,
Seek him, the man of mystery?
But little good bodes he to me.
Ah! – ne’er be that thought realiz’d! –
Wedded in vain, and vainly priz’d,
Deep in the wave lies Mathew, drown’d?”
She look’d, but vainly look’d around:
Yet some one mov’d, or seem’d to move,
She thought, between the house and grove:
On tiptoe stood the anxious dame!
But o’er the moon, like envy, came
Darkness – and all was dread and woe.
Thus, Empress of Britannian bowers,
The hawthorn shakes her lovely flowers
Beneath th’ half-shaded beam of noon,
Which, glimmering on the pale wave, soon
Vanishes with the dying breeze,
And the cloud deepens o’er the trees,
While green-isled Morley, dark and still,
Listens beneath the glooming hill.
But, while she stood entran’c’d in woe,
The door flew open wide; and, lo,
A stranger enter’d! “Mathew? No!”
With clench’d hands, and retracted form,
Like sapling bent beneath the storm,
Or statue of Despair, she stood.
“Where is thy husband, Mathew Hall?”
Exclaim’d, in seeming sullen mood,
That age-bent stranger, broad and tall,
With spade-like beard of reddish grey.
The bride, who scarce knew what to say,
Stood mute awhile, then, half afraid,
“Art thou my husband’s friend?” she said.
“I am,” quoth he, with alter’d tone,
“His best, his worst, his only one.”
Forthwith, unask’d, he took his seat;
While Jacob, once more on his feet,
Warbled a stave, with gruntle sweet,
Such as was used in times pass’d long,
Ere notes and tunes were known in song.

[...]  

XXVI.  

“Renounce him then, at once for me!”
Exclaim’d that man of mystery.
“Dost thou not know me, woman, say?
Behold thy husband, William Bray!”
And round her neck his arms he threw,
And cried, “What now? Why this ado?”
And kiss’d, as he would kiss her through.
But she cuff’d, kick’d, and bawl’d, “Away!
Off, dotard, off! or thou shalt rue
My biting tooth, and tearing nail.”
Then glowr’d she – neither pleas’d, nor civil, –
Like one who thinks he sees the devil,
And knows him by his horns and tail.
“Thou? – thou my husband, William Bray?
Why thou art, as a badger, grey!”
Quoth he, “I am, and well I may;
I have been absent many a day.”
“But,” shrilly yell’d she in dismay,
“Thou art as ugly as thou’rt grey,
With whiskers red, as reynard’s tail,
And square beard, like a windmill sail. –
Why dost thou still, so goat-like, eye me? –

XXVII.  

She said, and cross’d herself, in fear,
And surely thought a fiend was near,
And, trembling, hoped, (for doubts came o’er her,)
It was the devil that stood before her!
Then grinn’d the sage, a slyish grin;
And she, to bear suspense unable,
Flew at him, overturning th’ table,
And seem’d, in tooth and claw, a dragon,
Resolv’d to leave him not a rag on.
Lord, what a pickle he was in!
His bones almost fled out of’s skin;
For, in a second, the virago
Had left him scarce a thread to take to.
And first the long beard left his chin,
Then fell to earth his cloak so big,
His cat-skin cap, his worsted wig;
And, like enchantress, self-enchanted,
Gaz’d Mary – on the man she wanted!
He stoop’d no more like toothless eighty,
Or porter beneath burden weighty,
But stood before her strait and young;
And locks of darkest auburn hung,
Cluster’d, above his martial brow,
While love laugh’d on his lip below.
Oh, love, thou still play’st queer tricks many,
Though old and tame, I play not any!

XXVIII.

“Twice-wedded widow! do not bawl -
Twice woo’d! twice won! turn not away -
Behold thy husband, Mathew Hall!
Behold thy husband, William Bray! –
Oh, dearest, and in trouble tried,
Receive me to thy faithful side!
Oh, then most constant, when untrue!
Forgiveness is contrition’s due;
Forgive! - and I will quit thee never,
But spurn suspicion, and for ever,
Cast o’er thy faults affection’s mist,
And humbly kiss thy gentle fist.”

XXIX.

She hung upon his bosom, weak;
She look’d the love she could not speak.
He smil’d the rose back to her cheek:
“Thou fond and full heart! do not break.”
He seal’d with kisses warm her lips;
And – as the half-flying redbreast sips
A dewdrop from the lily’s breast,
Then, perching on it, trills his song; –
So kiss’d he off her tears, to rest
Soothing the heart-throb, tortur’d long.
Like fairy, shod with gossamer,
Joy, unexpected, came to her,
For pass’d woe to atone.
Her lip lay on his neck embrac’d:
As if an angel’s glance had chas’d
Her darkness, it was gone.
And who shall boast a heroine like mine?
Not more than woman, yet almost divine,
Minerva-like in battle she appears,
Venus in love, and Niobe in tears;
Before her Laila, Constance fade to air;
And ten to nothing! she shall thrash Gulnare!

XXX.

Then all said – what they had to say;
And all shook hands with William Bray,
Save Jacob, who, in drink profound,
Lay stretch’d out huge along the ground.
To earth, and earth’s love reconcile’d,
The broken heart of Harry smil’d,
Through tears, like those which saints in heaven
Shed to behold a foe forgiven.
It was, indeed, a glorious wedding!
Charles, all on fire to write upon it,
Swore ‘twas a subject for a sonnet,
And, bard-like, in his haste to write,
Forgot to wish his love good night;
But Nancy stay’d to see the bedding.
And learnedly the learn’d have shown
The stocking then, once more, was thrown:
And ancient Night relax’d her brow,
And felt, ‘tis said, she scarce knew how,
While, with her grey tongue’s watery tip,
She lick’d her greenish gums and lip;
And clapp’d her glasses on her nose,
Right loath a sight o’ th’ fun to lose;
And stoop’d, and star’d, with twinkling eye,
And crisp’d with smiles her cheek awry,
Like crumpled dish-clout laid to dry,
And squeez’d her thumb, with gripe uncouth,
And broke her blue and only tooth;
Then thought, like many a matron staid,
Of many a prank that love had play’d,
In times gone by, beneath her shade;
Forgot her crutch, her age, her pain,
And liv’d her young years o’er again.
QUEER BOBBY IN 1837.
BUT NOT THE BOBBY OF 1846.

“News! news!” “What news?”
“The skin of a butcher’s a – e
Would sole a pair of shoes.”

*Old Ballad.*

If hard and tough grow butchers’ bums,
Because they often ride;
If thick with cant, as both my thumbs,
Is meek Saint Agnew's hide;
If consciences grow thick and foul
    With quibbles that men use;
The skin of sweet Sir Robert's soul
    Would sole a pair of shoes.

If greedy men, with eating ducks,
    Web-footed ne’er have grown,
The landed leech, our blood that sucks,
Wont bring us beef from stone;
But if backsides, once soft as down,
    Have tough as teak become,
Sir Robert, bobbing up and down,
    Is like a butcher’s bum.

And if his soul’s thin skin grows tough
    With bobbing up and down;
And nought but leather’s tough enough
    To save a leagur’d town;
What need we do, our foes to ban,
    Our country’s wounds to heal,
But get some practis’d hand to tan
    The well-bobb’d soul of Peel?

And since the man won’t think it sin
    To save a soul from hell -
But which his soul, and which his skin,
    May find it hard to tell -

32
What need we do, I fain would learn,
If such a case befal,
But lime and soak the whole concern,
And tan him, soul and all?

But where a tanner shall we get,
Not squeamish in his wame?
For Brougham no longer tans such ket;
   My lords, it were a shame!
Unless our Queen would musk the scum
   Of bobbers, as is fit,
And send him, nick-nam’d “Baron Bum,”
   Up to the civet-pit.

NOTES

What a knitter of stockings is in a family, since the invention of the stocking-loom, Peel is in Parliament. The improved machinery of the human mind has, to this hour, wrought no beneficial effect upon him. He is still a knitter, painfully taking up spinster’s stitches, worth, in a pair of stockings, fourpence! Place him in his natural position, take the pins from his fingers, force into his hand a book containing the alphabet of political science, and before the close of another year, he will cease to be overtopped in mental stature by any mechanic’s apprentice. He is not a goose, and if he were, plucking one does not enable it to fly better; why, then, does he pluck himself? He is blinded by the glare of the cruel sunshine which fortune has cast upon him. Strip him of his artificial advantages, and you give him an eagle’s wing. Sprung from the people, why does he not lead public opinion? The reek of the aristocratic dunghill covers him, like a nightmare, forcing on him a dream of vulgarity hostile to his noble nature. Why should such a man wish to be a Stanley? By no possible process can the healthy verjuice of humanity be turned into aromatic vinegar, acceptable in Puppydom.

Upperthorpe, 3rd Feb., 1837.
DARBY GILL.

Where, travel-tir'd, from Winco's feet,
Don creeps slow Rother's moan to meet,
An exile wak'd, again to prove
The might of famine, sorrow, love.

"Bless'd Mary!" thus, he feebly pray'd,
"I faint - Bless'd Mary, lend thine aid.
No work is here, but for the strong!
I hunger, Mary! oh, how long?
For leave to toil, I begg'd in vain;
Gaunt rivals met, mocking pain:

"Return," they said, "o'er ocean's foam,
To popish Ireland, murder's home."

On raindrops chill the moon shines chill;
Dost thou behold her, Katy Gill?
Wak'st thou, to weep with weeping flowers,
While here I perish, far from ours?
No more to see my blessed four!
In this world never, never more!
Mother of God! send them to me;
For I, oh, Mary, come to thee!
A long, sad tale is truly told;
I cannot live, yet am not dead;
My tears are hot, my blood runs cold:
Thou, deep, bright river, be my bed!
Oh, comfort me! for some are fain
To beg cold water oft' in vain!"
Smiling, he rose; and like a bride
That meets her bridegroom, sought the tide.
Then, flashing far, the waters rose,
And mutter'd curses on his foes;
While on the stream, and from the sky,
The sickled moon gleam'd angrily.*

* On Thursday an inquest was held at Brightside Bierlow poorhouse, on the body of Darby Gill, an irish-man aged 30, who left Straw-Mill near Dublin about six weeks ago in search of work, but finding none and having no money, threw himself into the river at Attercliffe. Sheffield Iris, June 25, 1839.
STEAM AT SHEFFIELD

To Charles Hindley, Esq., M.P., one of our creators of national wealth – who, while they enrich themselves, silently reproach the splendid drones of society, by increasing the productive capital of the State – I inscribe this humble Poem, wishing it were worthier.

I.

Well, gaze thou on the hills, and hedge-side flowers!
But blind old Andrew will with me repair
To yonder massive pile, where useful powers,
Toiling unconsciously, aloud declare
That man, too, and his works, are grand and fair.
Son of the far-famed self-taught engineer,
Whose deeds were marvels in the bygone days!
Ill it becomes thee, with ungrateful sneer,
The trade-fed town and townsmen to dispraise.
Why rail at Traffic’s wheels, and crowded ways?
Trade makes thee rich; then, William, murmur not
Though Trade’s black vapours ever round thee rise.
Trade makes thee sage; lo! thou read’st Locke and Scott!
While the poor rustic, beast-like, lives and dies,
Blind to the page of priceless mysteries!

“Fair is the bow that spans the shower,” thou say’st,
“But all unlovely, as an eyeless skull,
Is man’s black workshop in the streeted waste.”
And can the city’s smoke be worse than dull,
If Martin found it more than beautiful?

Did he, did Martin steal immortal hues
From London’s cloud, or Carron’s gloomy glare –
Light-darken’d shadows, such as Milton’s muse
Cast o’er th’ Eternal – and shalt thou despair
To find, where man is found, the grand and fair?
Can’st thou love Nature, and not love the sound
Of cheerful labour? He who loathes the crew
To whose hard hands the toiling oar is bound,
Is dark of spirit, bilious as his hue,
And bread-tax-dyed in Tory lust’s true blue.
“Thou lov’st the woods, the rocks, the quiet fields!”
But tell me, if thou can’st, enthusiast wan!
Why the broad town to thee no gladness yields?
If thou lov’st Nature sympathize with man;
For he and his are parts of Nature’s plan.
But can’st thou love her if she love not thee?
She will be wholly loved, or not at all.
Thou lov’st her streams, her flowers; thou lov’st to see
The gorgeous haleyon strike the bulrush tall
Thou lov’st to feel the veil of evening fall,
Like gentlest slumber, on a happy bride;
For these are Nature’s! Art not thou hers too?
A portion of her pageantry and pride;
In all thy passions, all thou seek’st to do,
And all thou dost? The earth-worm is allied
To God, and will not have her claims denied,
Though thou disown her fellow-worm, and scorn
The lowly beauty of his toil and care.
“Sweet is the whisper of the breezy morn
To waking streams.” And hath the useful share
No splendour? Doth the tilter’s cottage wear
No smiles for thee? “How beauteous are the dyes
That grove and hedgerow from their plumage shake!”
And cannot the loud hammer, which supplies
Food for the blacksmith’s rosy children, make
Sweet music to thy heart? “Behold the snake
Couch’d on its bed of beams.” The scaly worm
Is lovely, coil’d above the river’s flow;
But there is nobler beauty in the form
That welds the hissing steel, with ponderous blow;
Yea, there is majesty on that calm brow,
And in those eyes the light of thoughts divine!

II.

Come, blind old Andrew Turner! link in mine
Thy time-tried arm, and cross the town with me;
For there are wonders mightier far than thine;
Watt! and his million-feeding enginery!
Steam-miracles of demi-deity!
Thou can’st not see, unnumber’d chimneys o’er,
From chimneys tall the smoky cloud aspire;
But thou can’t hear the unwearied crash and roar
Of iron powers, that, urged by restless fire,
Toil ceaseless, day and night, yet never tire,
Or say to greedy man, “Thou dost amiss.”

III.

Oh, there is glorious harmony in this
Tempestuous music of the giant, Steam,
Commingling growl, and roar, and stamp, and hiss,
With flame and darkness! Like a Cyclop’s dream,
It stuns our wondering souls, that start and scream
With joy and terror; while, like gold on snow
Is morning’s beam on Andrew’s hoary hair!
Like gold on pearl is morning on his brow!
His hat is in his hand, his head is bare;
And, rolling wide his sightless eyes, he stands
Before this metal god, that yet shall chase
The tyrant idols of remotest lands,
Preach science to the desert, and efface
The barren curse from every pathless place
Where virtues have not yet atoned for crimes.
He loves the thunder of machinery!
It is beneficent thunder, though, at times,
Like heaven’s red bolt, it lightens fatally.
Poor blind old man! what would he give to see
This bloodless Waterloo! this hell of wheels;
This dreadful speed, that seems to sleep and snore,
And dream of earthquake! In his brain he feels
The mighty arm of mist, that shakes the shore
Along the throng’d canal, in ceaseless roar
Urging the heavy forge, the clanking mill,
The rapid tilt, and screaming, sparkling stone.
Is this the spot where stoop’d the ash-crown’d hill
To meet the vale, when bee-loved banks, o’ergrown
With broom and woodbine, heard the cushat lone
Coo for her absent love? - Oh, ne’er again
Will Andrew pluck the freckled foxglove here!
How like a monster, with a league-long mane,
Or Titan’s rocket, in its high career,
Towers the dense smoke! The falcon, wheeling near,
Turns, and the angry crow seeks purer skies.

IV.
At first, with lifted hands in mute surprise,
Old Andrew listens to the mingled sound
Of hammer, roll, and wheel. His sightless eyes
Brighten with generous pride, that man hath found
Redemption from the manacles which bound
His powers for many an age. A poor man’s boy
Constructed these grand works! Lo! like the sun,
Shines knowledge now on all! He thinks with joy
Of that futurity which is begun -
Of that great victory which shall be won
By Truth o’er Falsehood; and already feels
Earth shaken by the conflict. But a low
Deep sigh escapes him; sadness o’er him steals,
Shading his noble heart with selfish woe;
Yes, Envy clouds his melancholy brow.
What! shall the good old times, in aught of good,
Yield to the days of cant and parish pay,
The sister-growth of twenty years of blood?
His ancient fame, he feels, is past away;
He is no more the wonder of his day -
The far-praised, self-taught, matchless engineer!

V.

But he is still the man who planted here
The first steam-engine seen in all the shire -
Laugh’d at by many an Eldon far and near -
While sundry sage Newcastles, in their ire,
Swore that a roasting in his boiler fire
Would best reward the maker. Round his form
The spirit of the Moors wrapp’d fold on fold
Of thund’rous gloom, and flash’d th’ indignant storm
From his dilating eyes, when first uproll’d
The volumed smoke, that, like a prophet, told
Of horrors yet to come. His angry scowl
Cast night at noon o’er Rivelin and Don,
And scared o’er Loxley’s springs the screaming fowl;
For rill and river listen’d, every one,
When the old Tory put his darkness on.
Full soon his deep and hollow voice forth brake,
Cursing the tilting, tipling, strange machine;
And then the lightning of his laughter spake,
Calling the thing a “Whimsy.” To this day
A “Whimsy” it is call’d, wherever seen;
And strangers, travelling by the mail, may see
The coal-devouring monster, as he rides,
And wonder what the uncouth beast may be
That canters, like a horse with wooden sides,
And lifts his food from depths where night presides,
With winking taper, o’er the in-back’d slave,
Who, laid face upward, hews the black stone down.
Poor living corpse! he labours in the grave;
Poor two-legg’d mole! he mines for half-a-crown
From morn to eve – that wolves, who sleep on down,
And pare our bones, may eat their bread-tax warm!

VI.

But could poor Andrew’s “Whimsy” boast an arm,
A back like these? Upstart of Yesterday!
Thou doubler of the rent of every farm,
From John o’ Groat’s to Cornwall’s farthest bay!
Engine of Watt! unrivall’d is thy sway.
Compared with thine, what is the tyrant’s power?
His might destroys, while thine creates and saves.
Thy triumphs live and grow, like fruit and flower;
But his are writ in blood, and read on graves!
Let him yoke all his regimented slaves,
And bid them strive to wield thy tireless fly,
As thou canst wield it. Soon his baffled bands
Would yield to thee, despite his wrathful eye.
Lo! unto thee both Indies lift their hands!
Thy vapoury pulse is felt on farthest strands!
Thou tirest not, complainest not – though blind
As human pride (earth’s lowest dust) art thou.
Child of pale thought! dread masterpiece of mind!
I read nor thought nor passion on thy brow!
To-morrow thou wilt labour, deaf as now!
And must we say “that soul is wanting here?”

VII.

No; there he moves, the thoughtful engineer,
The soul of all this motion; rule in hand,
And coarsely apron’d – simple, plain, sincere –
An honest man; self-taught to understand
The useful wonders which he built and plann’d.
Self-taught to read and write – a poor man’s son,
Though poor no more – how would he sit alone,
When the hard labour of the day was done,
Bent o’er his table, silent as a stone,
To make the wisdom of the wise his own!
How oft of Brindley’s deeds th’apprenticed boy
Would speak delighted, long ere freedom came!
And talk of Watt! while, shedding tears of joy,
His widow’d mother heard, and hoped the name
Of her poor boy, like theirs, would rise to fame.
Was not her love prophetic? Is he famed?
Yea; for deep foresight, and improving skill,
And patience, which might make the proud ashamed.
Built by himself, lo! yonder, from the hill
His dwelling peeps! – and she is with him still;
Happy to live, and well prepared to die!

VIII.

How unlike him is Grip, the upstart sly,
Who on the dunghill, whence he lately rose,
Lost his large organ of identity,
And left his sire to starve! Alas, he knows
No poor man now! But every day he goes
To visit his nine acres, pitiless
Of him who tills the road, that shoeless boor
Who feeds his brother exile in distress.
Hark! muttering oaths, he wonders why
Are not all Irish! Eyeing, then, the moor,
He swears, if he were king, what he would do!
Our corn-importing rogues should have a fall;
For he would plough the rocks, and trench them too.
And then of bloody papists doth he bawl;
If he were king, he’d (damn them!) shoot them all.
And then he quotes the Duke! and sagely thinks
That princes should be loyal to the throne.
And then he talks of privilege – and winks:
Game he can’t eat, he hints; but kills his own.
And then he calls the land a marrow bone,
Which tradesmen suck; for he no longer trades,
But talks of traffic with defensive sneer.
Full deeply is he learn’d in modes and grades,  
And condescends to think my Lord his peer!  
Yet, lo! he noddeth at the engineer –  
Grins at the “fellow” – grunts – and lounges on!
from THE VILLAGE PATRIARCH

XII.

But much he dreads the town's distracting maze,
Where all, to him, is full of change and pain.
New streets invade the country; and he strays,
Lost in strange paths, still seeking, and in vain,
For ancient landmarks, or the lonely lane
Where oft he play'd at Crusoe, when a boy.
Fire vomits darkness, where his lime-trees grew;
Harsh grates the saw, where coo'd the wood-dove coy;
Tomb crowds on tomb, where violets droop'd in dew;
And, brighter than bright heaven, the speedwell blue
Cluster'd the bank, where now the town-bred boor
(Victim and wretch, whose children never smile.)
Insults the stranger, sightless, old, and poor,
On swill'd Saint Monday, with his cronies vile,
Drunk for the glory of the holy isle,
While pines his wife, and tells to none her woes!

XIII.

Here, Enoch, flaunts no more the wild brier rose,
Nor basks the lizard here, or harmless snake.
No more the broom, in spring, all golden glows
O'er the clear rill, that, whimpering through the brake,
Heard thy blythe youth the echoing vale awake.
All that was lovely then is gloomy now.
Then, no strange paths perplex'd thee no new streets,
Where draymen bawl, while rogues kick up a row;
And fishwives grin, while fopling fopling meets;
And milk-lad his rebellious donkey beats;
While dwarfish cripple shuffles to the wall;
And hopeless tradesman sneaks to alehouse mean;
And imps of beggary curse their dad, and squall
For mammy's gin; and matron, poor and clean,
With tearful eye, begs crust for lodger lean;
And famish'd weaver, with his children three,
Sings hymns for bread; and legless soldier, borne
In dog-drawn car, implorelith charity;
And thief with steak from butcher runs forlorn;
And debtor bows, while banker smiles in scorn;
And landed pauper, in his coach and four,
Bound to far countries from a realm betray'd,
Scowls on the crowd, who curse the scoundrel's power,
While coachee grins, and lofty lady's maid
Turns up her nose at bread-tax-paying trade,
Though master bilketh dun, and is in haste.

XIV.

Changed scenes, once rural – changed, and not defaced!
Far other woes were yours in time of old,
When Locksley o'er the hills of Hallam chased
The wide-horn'd stag, or with his bowmen bold
Waged war on kinglings. Vassal robbers prowld,
And, tiger-like, skulk'd robber lords for prey,
Where now groan wheelworn streets, and labour bends
O'er thousand anvils. Bled the feudal fray,
Or raved the foray, where the cloud ascends
For ever; and from earth's remotest ends
Her merchants meet, where hamlets shriek'd in flames.

XV.

Scenes, rural once! ye still retain sweet names,
That tell of blossoms and the wandering bee:
In black Pea-Croft no lark its lone nest frames;
Balm-Green, the thrush hath ceased to visit thee!
When shall Bower-Spring her annual corncrake see,
Or start the woodcock, if the storm be near?

XVI.

But, mourning better days, the widow here
Still tries to make her little garden bloom –
For she was country-born. No weeds appear,
Where her poor pinks deplore their prison-tomb;
To them, alas! no second spring shall come!
And there, in May, the lilac gasps for breath;
And mint and thyme seem fain their woes to speak,
Like saddest portraits, painted after death;
And spindling wallflowers, in the choking reek,
For life, for life uplift their branches weak.
Pale, dwindled lad, that on her slated shop
Sett'st moss and groundsel from the frosty lea!
O'er them no more the tiny wren shall hop.
Poor plants! - poor child! I pity them and thee!
Yet blame I not wise Mercy's high decree.
They fade - thou diest; but thou to live again -
To bloom in heav'n. And will thy flowers be there?
Heav'n without them, would smile for thee in vain.
Thither, poor boy, the primrose shall repair,
There violets breathe of England's dewy air,
And daisies speak of her, that dearest one,
Who then shall bend above thy early bier,
Mourning her feeble boy for ever gone,
Yet long to clasp his dust for ever here!
No, no, it shall not want or flower or tear!
In thy worn hand her sorrow will not fail
To place the winter rose, or wind-flower meek;
Then kiss thy marble smile, thy forehead pale,
But not the icy darkness from thy cheek;
Then gaze - then press her heart that yet shall break;
And feebly sob - “My child, we part to meet!”

XVII.

Hark! music still is here! How wildly sweet,
Like flute-notes in a storm, the psalm ascends
From yonder pile, in traffic's dirtiest street!
There hapless woman at her labour bends,
While with the rattling fly her shrill voice blends;
And ever, as she cuts the headless nail,
She sings - “I waited long, and sought the Lord,
And patiently did bear.” A deeper wail
Of sister voices joins, in sad accord -
“He set my feet upon his rock adored!”
And then, perchance - “O God, on man look down!”

[...]

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Book III

I.

Ere Bedford's loaf or Erin's sty be thine,
Cloud-rolling Sheffield! want shall humble all.
Town of the unbow'd poor! thou shalt not pine
Like the fall'n rustic, licensed Rapine's thrall;
But, first to rise, wilt be the last to fall!
Slow are thy sons the pauper's trade to learn.
Though, in the land that blossoms like the rose,
The English peasant and the Irish kerne
Fight for potatoes - thy proud labourer knows
Nor Workhouse wages, nor the exile's woes.
Not yet thy bit of beef, thy pint of ale,
Thy toil-strung heart, which toil could ne'er dismay,
Nor yet thy honest, skill'd right hand shall fail;
Last, from thy hearths, the poor man's pride shall stray;
And still shall come thy well-paid Saturday,
And still thy morn of rest be near and sure.

II.

Light! all is not corrupt, for thou art pure,
Unchanged, and changeless. Though frail man is vile,
Thou look'st on him - serene, sublime, secure,
Yet, like thy Father, with a pitying smile.
Light! we may cloud thy beams, but not defile.
Even on this wintry day, as marble cold,
Angels might quit their home, to visit thee,
And match their plumage with thy mantle, roll'd
Beneath God's throne, o'er billows of a sea
Whose isles are worlds, whose bounds infinity.
Why then is Enoch absent from my side?
I miss the rustle of his silver hair;
A guide no more, I seem to want a guide,
While Enoch journeys to the house of pray'r;
And ne'er came Sabbath day but he was there!
Lo, how like him, erect and strong, though grey,
Yon village tower, time touch'd, to God appeals!
But hark! the chimes of morning die away!
Hark! - to the heart the solemn sweetness steals,
Like the heart's voice, unfelt by none who feels
That God is love, that man is living dust;
Unfelt by none whom ties of brotherhood
Link to his kind; by none who puts his trust
In nought of earth that hath survived the flood,
Save those mute charities, by which the good
Strengthen poor worms, and serve their Maker best.

III.

Hail, Sabbath! day of mercy, peace, and rest!
Thou o'er loud cities throw'st a noiseless spell.
The hammer there, the wheel, the saw, molest
Pale thought no more. O'er trade's contentious hell
Meek quiet spreads her wings invisible.
But when thou com'st, less silent are the fields
Through whose sweet paths the toil-freed townsman steals.
To him the very air a banquet yields.
Envious, he watches the poised hawk, that wheels
His flight on chainless winds. Each cloud reveals
A paradise of beauty to his eye.
His little boys are with him, seeking flowers,
Or chasing the too venturous gilded fly.
So by the daisy's side he spends the hours,
Renewing friendship with the budding bowers;
And - while might, beauty, good, without alloy,
Are mirror'd in his children's happy eyes -
In his great temple, offering thankful joy
To Him, the infinitely Great and Wise,
With soul attuned to Nature's harmonies,
Serene, and cheerful, as a sporting child.
His heart refuses to believe, that man
Could turn in to a hell the blooming wild
The blissful country, where his childhood ran
A race with infant rivers, ere began
King-humbling, blind misrule his wolfish sway.

{...}
Book V

III.

Five rivers, like the fingers of a hand,
Flung from black mountains, mingle, and are one
Where sweetest valleys quit the wild and grand,
And eldest forests, o'er the silvan Don,
Bid their immortal brother journey on,
A stately pilgrim, watch'd by all the hills.
Say, shall we wander where, through warrior's graves,
The infant Yewden, mountain-cradled, trills
Her doric notes? Or, where the Locksley raves
Of broil and battle, and the rocks and caves
Dream yet of ancient days? Or, where the sky
Darkens o'er Rivilin, the clear and cold,
That throws his blue length, like a snake, from high?
Or, where deep azure brightens into gold
O'er Sheaf, that mourns in Eden? Or, where roll'd
On tawny sands, through regions passion-wild,
And groves of love, in jealous beauty dark,
Complains the Porter, Nature's thwarted child,
Born in the waste, like headlong Wiming? Hark!
The poised hawk calls thee, Village Patriarch!
He calls thee to his mountains! Up, away!
Up, up, to Stanedge! higher still ascend,
Till kindred rivers, from the summit grey,
To distant seas their course in beauty bend,
And, like the lives of human millions, blend
Disparted waves in one immensity!

IV.

Beautiful rivers of the desert! ye
Bring food for labour from the foodless waste.
Pleased stops the wanderer on his way, to see
The frequent weir oppose your heedless haste.
Where toils the Mill, by ancient woods embraced,
Hark, how the cold steel screams in hissing fire?
But Enoch sees the Grinder's wheel no more,
Couch'd beneath rocks and forests, that admire
Their beauty in the waters, ere they roar
Dash'd in white foam the swift circumference o'er.
There draws the Grinder his laborious breath;
There, coughing, at his deadly trade he bends.
Born to die young, he fears nor man nor death;
Scorning the future, what he earns he spends;
Debauch and Riot are his bosom friends.
He plays the Tory, sultan-like and well:
Woe to the traitor that dares disobey
The Dey of Straps! as rattan'd tools shall tell.
Full many a lordly freak, by night, by day,
Illustrates gloriously his lawless sway.
Behold his failings! hath he virtues, too?
He is no pauper, blackguard though he be.
Full well he knows what minds combined can do,
Full well maintains his birthright – He is free!
And, frown for frown, outstares monopoly!
Yet Abraham and Elliot, both in vain,
Bid science on his cheek prolong the bloom;
He will not live! he seems in haste to gain
The undisturb'd asylum of the tomb,
And, old at two-and-thirty, meets his doom!
Man of a hundred years, how unlike thee!

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Book VII

VI.

The vision changed; and, lo! methought I stood
Where sinners swelter in the penal glare
Of everlasting noon! A fiery flood,
As of steel molten, on their nerves all bare,
Rush'd from the brazen sky; and scorching air
Burn'd upward from red rocks of solid fire.
There I beheld a statesman, evil-famed,
With unremitting and intense desire
To quench inimitable thirst inflamed;
Stretch'd, moaning, on the cinderous marl; and named,
In scorn and rage, by spectres pitiless,
Who bade him, smiting their clinch'd hands, restore
Their homes, their innocence, their happiness;
And, in dire mockery, to his hot lips bore
Rags, steep'd in black, thick, slippery, burning gore.
But when he dozed, worn out with pain, he dream'd
Of fire, and talk'd of fire that ever burn'd;
And through his frame, in all his vitals gleam'd
Fire; and his heart and brain, to cinder turn'd,
Still crack'd and blazed, while, tossing, low he mourn'd,
And from his eyes dropp'd tears of sable flame.
For now no longer in his fraudulent brain
Schoon'd dreams of crime -
- bought good untinged with shame,
False as the mists that loom along the main
With shows of golden Ophir, sought in vain
Where fiends of shipwreck watch their prey, and smile.

VII.

Yet seem'd he not the vilest of the vile.
An apparition cold of life in stone,
Or life in ice, drew nigh, with lips of bile;
A visage to the awed spectators known,
That turn'd to frigid rancour, like his own,
Their fiery hatred. Frozen where they stood,
Chain'd by his smile petrific, and his eye
Whose serpent keenness sadden'd while it blazed -
“Make way!” they yell'd, “the fatal fool draws nigh;
The dog of kings, their whip for poverty,
Seeks here the luxury of infernal tears.”
Then shriek'd the prostrate wretch, as black he rose -
“Even here Democracy his standard rears!
Save me, my Brother, from unutter'd woes,
Worse even than Paine deserved or Ireland knows!”
“Thee? Aspect mean!” replied the new-arrived,
“Thee? And am I thy brother? Lo, on thee
I look with scorn - Driv'l'r! whose fears contrived
To thrall arm'd kings, whom I was born to free.
And dost thou claim fraternity with me?
I blew not up a spark into a flame
That set the earth on fire: I drove no trade
In petty retail havoc: No! I came,
I saw, I conquer'd; and a world dismay'd
Found safety in my daring, that array'd
Slaves, who in freedom's fight like freemen fought,
And still are slaves.” Then, turning to the crowd
Of silent spectres - who regarded nought
But him, such awe controll'd them - he, with proud
Scorn, read their abject fear, and cried aloud -
“Hence, vile Plebeians! know your lord.” And well
The abject ghosts obey'd; for, while he spoke,
He raised his hand to strike; but, ere it fell,
Approaching sounds, that in the distance broke
Murmuring, arrested the descending stroke.
As, when black midnight melts from sky to sky,
And shriek the lightnings at the wrath of heav'n,
Air becomes fire, and, like a sea on high,
Wide whirlwind rolls his deluge, tear'd and riv'n,
While, with closed eyes, guilt prays to be forgiv'n,
So, sight shrink'd, conquer'd, from his visage frore,
That mock'd insulted fire with icy glare,
While seem'd the torrid clime to burn the more
As if incensed, and sounds swell'd on the air
Which told of foes that knew not how to spare.
Soon, spectre skeletons, like wolves in chase,
Came howling on. As outstretch'd greyhounds fleet,
Some with riv'n ribs, and one with half a face,
They came, all hungry, and their clattering feet
Stamp'd on the soil of adamantine heat.
Then sprang they on him, and his muscles rent
With cranching teeth; and still their hate increased
As fast it fed, and joyful sounds forth sent;
Yet from the rapturous banquet oft they ceased,
Exclaiming, in the pauses of the feast,
“Ice-hearted Dog! - when fell the crimson dew
At Wexford, there we died! - In dungeons we!
We of slow famine! - We at Peterloo!
We, by the mercy of the scourge set free!”
Unvanquish'd by relentless torture, he,
While crisp'd in fire his cold flesh, scorched and torn,
Forgot not, though he wept, the bearing high
And proud demeanor of a tyrant born,
But cried, uplooking to the hopeless sky -
“Thou, who inhabitest eternity!
Here, too, thy frown is felt, thy mercy just.”
But when those skinless dogs of hell had pared
The bones of their oppressor, and, with gust
Infernal, crunch'd his vitals, till the bared,
Cold, burning heart, with pulses unimpair'd,
Shone in its grated chamber, like a light
That saddens some snaked cavern's solitude;
Then, pangs of deathless hunger in their might,
Wring savage howlings from his soul subdued;
And, thenceforth and for ever, he pursued,
Heading that dismal pack, the sentenced dead,
For food, for food! hunter of souls! with yell
Immortal, hounding on his fiends, while fled
Their prey, far shrieking through unbounded hell.
In ravenous ardour, sateless, horrible,
He champ'd together still his stony jaws.
O could the living heirs of fear and hate
See the lost trampler on eternal laws,
Taught by his voice of mourning, ere too late,
How would they shun his crimes to shun his fate,
And, e'en for mean self-love, be less than fiends!

[...]

Book X

III

He kneels; and, in the twilight of thy shade,
Reads, with his fingers, what his chisel wrought;
Perchance th' effusions of his pensive thought,
Full oft recited in his soul with pride.

IV.

Erect, like youth, stands this sepulchral stone:
But what is youth? a flower; and life? a dream.
Read! – for youth, life, the flower, the dream, are gone:
Read! – “Death is life! I am not what I seem:
Think of poor Henry still! but rightly deem.”

V.

The next is dateless; but, aged eighteen years,
Died she, whom hardest hearts have ceased to blame;
The kind still read her epitaph with tears:
“Here rests a stranger - she had once a name:
Weep for the gentle dust that died of shame.”

VI.
They did not lay his bones where four roads meet.
Although his crime was grief, which some called pride,
Wrong not the wrong'd, who slumbers at thy feet!
“Was Jones a coward? Honest, yet belied,
He was too brave to live disgraced, and died.”

VII.
In yonder grave heaven's grateful debtor lies,
Struck blind in youth - old Shiloh Hollischart.
“The beam of beauty left his cheerful eyes,
To glow more deeply, brightly, in his heart.”
Read, mortal! be instructed, and depart.

VIII.
“Tears for the slander'd! tears - but shed too late.
Come! if thou come to weep, traducer fell,
Whose slighted love hath done the work of hate!
But thou, perchance, hast yet more lies to tell
Of her who loved but thee, and loved too well?”

IX.
This still retreat, thou faithful to the dead,
Claims thy attentive pause, demands thy tear!
Stop! read again th' inscription, often read: -
“Remember me; and, weeping, linger here,
If still to thee thy Harcourt's name is dear!
But, if thou wed again, O come not near!”

X.
A broken mast, a bursting wave, a child
Weeping, a woman frantic on the shore -
Rude stone! thou tell'ost a story sad and wild: -
“Pain, want, unkindness, all 'afflictions sore,'
Disease, suspense, with constancy I bore;
My heart was broken – Letty lies with me;
And now we know that Matthew died at sea.”

XI.

No sculptured stone informs the passer by
That the poor clown is now the Squireling's peer:
Here lies a rogue, whose crime was poverty!
And just Sir Cornlaw sleeps in marble near!
Bones of the treadmill'd slave! - what do ye here?
Oh, shame to bread-tax'd England's bought-and-sold!
The loathsome wretch, who toil'd, and starved, and died,
And he whose merit was a robber's gold,
Repose, like married equals, side by side!
Audacious Death, is Mammon thus defied?
What, shall the parish-paid of yesterday
Rest with the sacred boroughmongering great?
Why fence ye not a pauper's Golgotha,
Where, buried without bell, these dogs may wait
The crowing cock, while rich men rot in state?
I.

I am not death, O King! nor by him sent
O’er thy sad heart my pinions black to wave;
But, when men die, I stand, in silence bent,
Writing the deeds of warrior, saint, or slave,
   And canonize the timid and the brave.
   They die, but after them their actions live,
      For good or ill. Speak, then, if thou wouldst be,
      Though bad, not worst; and mercy may forgive
      The cureless past. What shall I write of thee?
   Shall toil be plunder’d still – or trade be free?
Know’st thou the law by which Kings govern well,
The golden law – “Reign not for some but all?”
Shall I to men, and to the immortals tell
That thou didst fetter hope, or disenthral?
   O answer, ere the fatal curtain fall!
To-morrow, and the Sultan is forgot
   Even in the harem; but on realms oppress’d
   The scar remains, where pass’d the iron hot
   With which he sear’d them; and wrongs unredress’d
   Cry to the hopeless dead – “Ye shall not rest!”
Would’st thou be mourn’d with curses or with tears?
As angels mourn the blow that casts aside
The axle of a world, for years and years
Turning the seasons back, and all their pride?
   Or as men mourn a godlike friend who died?
   Thou hast, men say, for misery’s tear a sigh;
      But if thy heart is warm, ‘tis warm in vain.
King of the Bread-Tax! dearly did’st thou buy
   That title. Shall it evermore remain
   To mock thy virtues, an eternal stain?

II

No answer? – Oft the meanest of mankind,
Gay as “The Tenth,” and polish’d as their swords,
Have rivall’d Nash in etiquette of mind,
And all the littleness of forms and words;
   But thou art King of Squires, and reign’st for Lords!
To teach thy sire, earth wept a sea of gore;
   He lived unteachable, and died untaught
By curses wrung from millions. It is o’er,
   And thou wast heir of all his madness wrought;
Be this thy plea – all else availeth nought.

But nations beggar’d, that ye might bequeath
Old bonds to France redeem’d! and Peterloo
Immortal! and Napoleon’s deathless death!

These were such deeds as vulgar kings can do;
   They made thee famous, but not matchless too.
King of Dear Corn! Time hears, with ceaseless groan,
   Time ever hears, sad names of hate and dread:
But thou, thou only, of all monarchs known,
   Didst legislate against thy People’s bread!
King of the Corn-Laws! thus wilt thou be read!

For ever thus. A monarch calls thee – Go:
And if there be, in other worlds, a throne
That waits a prince unequal’d, be not slow
To seize the vacant seat – it is thine own;
   King of Dear Corn! thou art “thyself alone!”
Safe is thy fame. ‘Tis come, th’unerring hour
   That calls even kings to their account away;
And o’er thee frowns a shadow and a power
   To quench the stars, and turn the living day
Black. Yoked below, pant Horror and Dismay;
The steeds, O King! with soundless speed, that drag
Thee, and a king more dreaded than his Lord,
   The King of Kings – O Death! behold his flag –
The wormy shroud! his sceptre, crown, and sword –
   Worms! his dread slaves – worms, worms that do his word!
But where are thine! thy slaves! thy flatterers? – Gone.
   Nor need’st thou sigh for parasite or sage;
For, lo! the mightiest of all kings, but one,
   (Lord of the dust that once was youth and age.)
Attends thee fallen! Behold his equipage!

How strange a chariot serves both him and thee!
But Death rides royally – no stop, no stay;
On, on! far hence thy final home must be.

What cloud swings there? A world that turns from day
   Her mountains. Death drives well – Away! Away!
As when to ships, which mists at sea surround,
   The dangerous fog assumes a golden hue,
While rocks draw near with sudden breakers bound,
And distant mountains, reeling into view,
Lift o’er the clouds their cliffs of airy blue;
So, to thy soul, released from mortal ties,
Scenes grand, and wild, and terrible, and new,
Strange lands, strange seas, the stars of unknown skies -
The realms of death with all their hosts arise.
King of Dear Corn! the dead have heard that name;
They come - imperial spectres throng to meet
Him, who, at once, eclipsed their dismal fame.
But why should despots long to kiss thy feet?
Did Nero starve his People? No - O shame!
He only hymn’d the flames that, street by street,
Swept Rome, no longer Roman; - it is meet
That greatness bow to greatest. Famine’s lord!
What pallid crowds plebeian round thee rise!
Sent to sad graves by human fiends abhor’d,
They come to thank thee with their tears and sighs: -
Nay, shrink not from the crowd of hollow eyes!
Thou know’st their children live to toil and pine,
And that eternity’s long roll supplies
No nickname, deathless, grand, and just as thine.
But who is she, of aspect masculine,
Amid the silent moving silently,
With saddest step but not unroyal air,
And gazing like an injured friend
on thee?
There is sublimity in her despair!
O King! that pitying look is hard to bear!
Thee she forgives, but not the havoc made
By thy meek servants and most gracious foes,
Who sagely interdict, hope, profit, trade.
And must thy name be link’d for aye with those -
"The triple hundred kinglings" - who oppose
All change but evil change; and, deaf and blind,
Refute the sun and ocean as he flows?
While daily, hourly, in their war on mind,
They scourge again the Saviour of mankind.
O why didst thou obey them from thy throne?
Thou might’st have been, alas! thou would’st not be
King of the People! (would that thou had’st known
How almost godlike ‘tis to rule the free!) -
Or lived a tyrant! not the nominee
Of tyrants, wallowing in their victims’ woe,
And arm’d to curse mankind, with worse than stings.
Compared with thine, their deeds are night on snow:
The breath of dungeons on a seraph’s wings!
Derision! who would reign where such are kings?
But to be slave – if thou wert willing slave –
Of mean barbarians; to be signing clerk
Of palaced almoner, and tax-fed knave;
To wear their livery, and their badge and mark;
To love the light, and yet to choose the dark; –
This, this was vile, and did to millions wrong
Not to be borne by men who boast a spark
Of manly worth. O Tamer of the strong!
Wake thy slow angel, God! He slumbers long –
His voice of reformation should be heard,
His hand be active, not to overturn,
But to restore; ere, sick with hope deferr’d,
The good despond; ere lord and peasant mourn,
Homeless alike; ere Waste and Havoc spurn,
With hand and foot, the dust of Power and Pride;
While tower and temple at their bidding burn,
And the land reels, and rocks from side to side,
A sailless wreck, with none to save or guide;
A sailless wreck, with multitudes to do
Deeds more accursed than pirate’s deck e’er saw;
A helmless wreck, a famine-frantic crew,
All rage and hunger, hand, and voice, and maw;
And on that rolling wreck, no food, no hope, no law!
Again we meet, where often we have met,
   Dear Rother! native Don!
We meet again, to talk, with vain regret,
Of deedless aims! and years remember’d yet –
   The past and gone!

We meet again – perchance to meet no more!
   O Rivers of the heart!
I hear a voice, unvoyaged billows o’er,
Which bids me hasten to their pathless shore,
   And cries, “Depart!”

“Depart!” it cries. “Why linger on the stage
   Where virtues are veil’d crimes?
Have I not read thee, even from youth to age?
Thou blotted book, with only one bright page!
   Thy honest rhymes!

“Depart, pale Drone! What fruit-producing flower
   Hast thou rear’d on the plain?
What useful moments count’st thou in thine hour?
What victim hast thou snatch’d from cruel power?
   What tyrant slain?”

I will obey the power whom all obey.
   Yes, Rivers of the heart!
O’er that blind deep, where morning casts no ray
To cheer the oarless wanderer on his way,
   I will depart.

But first, O Rivers of my childhood! first
   My soul shall talk with you;
For on your banks my infant thoughts were nursed;
Here from the bud the spirit’s petals burst,
   When life was new.

Before my fingers learn’d to play with flowers,
   My feet through flowers to stray;
Ere my tongue lisp’d, amid your dewy bowers,
Its first glad hymn to Mercy’s sunny showers,
   And air, and day;

When, in my mother’s arms, an infant frail,
   Along your windings borne,
My blue eye caught your glimmer in the vale,
Where halcyons darted o’er your willows pale,
   On wings like morn.

Ye saw my feelings round that mother grow,
   Like green leaves round the root!
Then thought, with danger came, and flower’d like woe!
But deeds, the fervent deeds that blush and glow,
   Are Virtue’s fruit.

From infancy to youth; from schoolboy days,
   When life with stones and flowers
Sports, like the stream that with the sunbeam plays
Till age counts fearfully his number’d days —
   We waste our powers.

What doth the man but what the child hath done?
   We live, we talk, we move!
The best of all who prate beneath the sun;
The praised of all who smile, and talk, and run;
   But live and love.

And if the best are like the useless gem
   That shines in idle state;
Heavy, on those who crush the useful stem —
Heavy will fall the hand of God on them
   Who live and hate!

Who bruise the weak, but bind no broken reed;
   Who know not ruth nor shame;
Who, flowerless, ban the flower, to plant the weed;
And curse the toiling worms on whom they feed,
   In God’s great name!

Can I not crush them? No. Then, warning voice,
   Teach me to welcome thee!
I cannot crush them. Let me then rejoice
Because thou call’st; and make my fate my choice –
Bound and yet free.

Is it not love, to loathe the loveless? Yea,
‘Tis love like God’s to man!
The love of angels for their God! – Away!
Such love alone repayeth those who pay –
No other can.

They love not God, who do not hate man’s foes,
With hatred – not like mine –
But deep as Hell and blacker. To loathe those
Who blast the hope of freedom as it blows,
Is love divine.

Ah! many a blossom of the holy tree
Hath blossom’d but to fade!
Poland! the tears of nations flow for thee!
Thy bud of late redemption, Italy,
In dust is laid!

But hath no hope cheer’d man’s despair since first
I trod thy margin, Don?
Yea, mighty links of evil’s chain are burst;
And they who curse, and will not bless, accursed
Fall, one by one.

Though Poland bleeds where Kosciusko died,
Hark! truth-taught millions say,
To thrones, crime-sceptred, “Lo, you are defied!”
And, at my birth, Redemption’s angel cried,
"America!"

Then, Rivers, tell my mother earth, I come
To slumber on her breast!
For, lo, my drooping thoughts refuse to bloom!
My spirit shakes its fetters. I crave room
For rest, for rest.
Up, sluggards, up! the mountains one by one,
Ascend in light; and slow the mists retire
From vale and plain. The cloud on Stannington
Beholds a rocket—No, 'tis Morthen spire!
The sun is risen! cries Stanedge, tipp'd with fire;
On Norwood's flowers the dew-drops shine and shake;
Up, sluggards, up! and drink the morning breeze.
The birds on cloud-left Osgathorpe awake;
And Wincobank is waving all his trees
O'er subject towns, and farms, and villages,
And gleaming streams, and wood, and waterfalls.
Up! climb the oak-crown'd summit! Hoober Stand
And Keppel's Pillar gaze on Wentworth's halls,
And misty lakes, that brighten and expand,
And distant hills, that watch the western strand.
Up! trace God's foot-prints, where they paint the mould
With heavenly green, and hues that blush and glow
Like angel's wings; while skies of blue and gold
Stoop to Miles Gordon on the mountain's brow.
Behold the Great Unpaid! the prophet, lo!
Sublime he stands beneath the Gospel tree,
And Edmund stands on Shirecliffe at his side;
Behind him, sinks, and swells, and spreads a sea
Of hills, and vales, and groves; before him glide
Don, Rivelin, Loxley, wandering in their pride
From heights that mix their azure with the cloud;
Beneath him, spire and dome are glittering;
And round him press his flock, a woe-worn crowd.
To other words, while forest echoes ring,
"Ye banks and braes o' bonny Doon," they sing;
And, far below, the drover, with a start
Awaking, listens to the well-known strain,
Which brings Shihallian's shadow to his heart,
And Scotia's loneliest vales; then sleeps again,
And dreams, on Loxley's banks, of Dunsinane.
Look on the clouds, the streams, the earth, the sky:
Lo, all is interchange and harmony!
Where is the gorgeous pomp which, yester morn,
Curtain'd yon orb with amber, fold on fold?
Behold it in the blue of Rivelin, borne
To feed the all-feeding seas! the molten gold
Is flowing pale in Loxley's crystal cold,
To kindle into beauty tree and flower,
And wake to verdant life hill, vale, and plain.
Cloud trades with rivers, and exchange is power:
But should the clouds, the streams, the winds disdain
Harmonious intercourse, nor dew nor rain
Would forest-crown the mountains; airless day
Would blast, on Kinderscout, the heathy glow;
No purply green would meeken into grey,
O'er Don at eve; no sound of river's flow
Disturb the sepulchre of all below.
from Win-Hill, or, the Curse of God

High on the topmost jewel of thy crown,
    Win-Hill! I sit bareheaded, ankle-deep
In tufts of rose-cupp'd bilberries; and look down
On towns that smoke below, and homes that creep
Into the silvery clouds, which far-off keep
Their sultry state! and many a mountain stream,
And many a mountain vale, "and ridgy steep;"
The Peak, and all his mountains, where they gleam
Or frown, remote or near, more distant than they seem!

There flows the Ashop, yonder bounds the Wye,
And Derwent here towards princely Chatsworth trends;
But, while the Nough steals purple from the sky,
Lo! northward far, what giant's shadow bends?
A voice of torrents, hark! its wailing sends;
Who drives yon tortured cloud through stone-still air?
A rush! a roar! a wing! a whirlwind rends
The stooping larch! The moorlands cry 'Prepare!
It comes! ye gore-gorged foes of want and toil, beware!'
    It comes! Behold! - Black Blakelow hoists on high
His signals to the blast from Gledhill's brow.
Them, slowly glooming on the lessening sky,
The bread-tax'd exile sees, (in speechless woe,
Wandering the melancholy main below,
Where round the shores of Man the dark surge heaves,) And while his children's tears in silence flow,
Thinks of sweet scenes to which his soul still cleaves,
That home on Etherow's side, which he for ever leaves.
Now expectation listens, mute and pale,
While, ridged with sudden foam, the Derwent brawls;
Arrow-like comes the rain, like fire the hail;
And, hark! Mam-Tor on shuddering Stanage calls!
See, what a frown o'er castled Winnat falls!
Down drops the death-black sky! and Kinderscout,
Conscious of glory, laughs at intervals;
Then lifts his helmet, throws his thunders out,
Bathes all the hills in flame, and hails their stormy shout.
High on the topmost jewel of thy crown,
    Win-Hill! I sit bareheaded, ankle-deep
In tufts of rose-cupp'd bilberries; and look down
On towns that smoke below, and homes that creep
Into the silvery clouds, which far-off keep
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Then lifts his helmet, throws his thunders out,
Bathes all the hills in flame, and hails their stormy shout.
VERSES
ON THE OPENING OF THE
SHEFFIELD AND ROTHERHAM
RAILWAY

Forests! - thou river'd landscape wide! -
   Beneath storm-threat'ning skies,*
I stand on war-mark'd Winco's side,
   And see, with gladdened eyes,
Another triumph for mankind—
Another victory of mind
   O'er man's worst enemies.

They come! the shrieking steam ascends
   Slow moves the banner'd train;
They rush! the towering vapour bends -
   The kindled wave again
Screams over thousands, thronging all
To witness now the funeral
   Of law-created pain.

Behold it - Osgathorpe, behold!*  
   Look down, and cry "All hail!"
Skies! brighten into blue and gold,
   O'er all the living vale!
Wan, lingering foxglove! you, ye trees!
Thou wood of Tinsley! tell the breeze
   That hell's dark cheek turns pale;

For Mind shall conquer time and space;
   Bid East and West shake hands!
Bring, over Ocean, face to face,
   Earth's ocean-sever'd strands;
And, on his path of iron, bear
Words that shall wither, in despair,
   The tyrants of all lands.

Eternal River! - roaring still,
   As roar'd thy foamy wave
When first each wild-rose-skirted rill
Heard moorland echoes rave;
Thou seest, amid thy meadows green,
The goodliest sight that earth hath seen
Since man made fire his slave.

Fire-kindling Man! how weak wast thou
Ere thou hadst conquer'd fire!
How like a worm, on Canklow's brow,
Thou shrank'st from winter's ire!
Or heard'st the torrent-gathering night
Awake the wolf, with thee to fight,
Where these broad shades aspire!

How dismal was thy airy hall,
Thy throne for hearthless kings!
But glorious was thy funeral pall;
And there are direr things
Than thy red-rule of forest law,
Thy last home in the raven's maw,
Thy hearse of living wings.

Yes he whom scorn and hunger ban,
Whom ease and law belic,
Who vainly asks his fellow man
For “leave to toil” and die,
Is sadder, weaker, than wast thou,
When naked here, on Winco's brow,
Thou didst the wolf defy.

In vain thou mak'st the air a slave
That works and will not tire;
And burn'st the flame-destroying wave,
And rid'st on harness'd fire;
In vain - if millions toil half-fed,
And Crompton's children, begging bread,
Wealth-hated, curse their sire.

Fire-kindling man! thy life-stream runs,
Even yet, through sighs and groans:
Too long thy Watts and Stephenson's,
With brains have fatten'd drones;
O Genius! all too long, too oft,
At thee the souls of clay have scoff'd,
And sold thy little ones!

Sold them to Misery's dungeon gloom;
To Rapine's menial blow;
To beggary's brawl-fill'd lodging-room,
Where Famine curses woe;
Then to the death-den's workhouse floor,
To which good Christians bring the poor,
By stages sure and slow.

But, lo! the train! - On! onward!- still
Loud shrieks the kindled wave;
And back fly hamlet, tree, and hill,
White steam, and banners brave;
And thoughts on vapoury wings are hurl'd,
To shake old thrones and change a world,
And dig Abaddon's grave.

Mountains, that were when graves were not!
Time-humbled Templestowe,*
Thou tell'st of eagled Rome and Scott,
What dateless years shall know!
Lo! Mind prepares the final fall;
The many-nation'd funeral
Of law-created woe!

Eternal River! - roaring now,
As erst, in earlier years,
Ere grief began, with youthful brow,
To live an age of tears;
Thou hear'st, beneath this brightening sky,
A voice of Power that will not die
While man hath hopes and fears.

He, (conquering fire, and time, and space,)
Bids East and West shake hands;
Brings, over ocean, face to face,
Earth's ocean-sever'd strands;
And, on his iron road, will bear
Words that shall wither, in despair,
The tyrants of all lands.
NOTES

*The morning was clouded, but burst into sudden splendour over the rushing trains.
†A beautiful eminence between Sheffield and Winco-bank, and, like the latter, overlooking a landscape of equal beauty.
✽The remains of a fortification at the Ickles, near Rotherham. See Scott's novel of “Ivanhoe”
LINES
ON SEEING UNEXPECTEDLY A
NEW CHURCH, WHILE WALKING,
ON THE SABBATH, IN OLD-PARK
WOOD, NEAR SHEFFIELD

From Shirecliffe, o’er a silent sea of trees,
When evening waned o’er Wadsley’s cottages,
I look’d on Loxley, Rivilin, and Don,
While at my side stood truth-loved Pemberton*;
And wonder’d, far beneath me, to behold
A golden spire, that glow’d o’er fields of gold.
Out of the earth it rose, with sudden power,
A bright flame, growing heavenward, like a flower,
Where erst nor temple stood, nor holy psalm
Rose to the mountains in the day of calm.
There, at the altar, plighted hearts may sigh;
There, side by side, how soon their dust may lie!
Then carven stones the old, old tale will tell,
That saddens joy with its brief chronicle,
Till Time, with pinions stolen from the dove,
Gently erase the epitaph of love;
While rivers sing, on their unwearied way,
The song that but with earth can pass away,
That brings the tempest’s accents from afar,
And breathes of woodbines where no woodbines are!
Yet deem not that Affection can expire,
Though earth and skies shall melt in fervent fire;
For truth hath written, on the stars above -
“Affection cannot die, if God is Love!”
Whene’er I pass a grave with moss o’ergrown,
Love seems to rest upon the silent stone,
Above the wreck of sublunary things,
Like a tired angel sleeping on his wings.

* The unequalled lecturer on the drama.
RIBBLEDIN; OR THE CHRISTENING

No name hast thou! lone streamlet
    That lovest Rivilin.
Here, if a bard may christen thee,
    I'll call thee “Ribbledin;”
Here, where first murmuring from thine urn,
    Thy voice deep joy expresses;
And down the rock, like music, flows
    The wildness of thy tresses.

Here, while beneath the umbrage
    Of Nature’s forest bower,
Bridged o’er by many a fallen birch,
    And watch’d by many a flower,
To meet thy cloud-descended love,
    All trembling, thou retirest –
Here will I murmur to thy waves
    The sad joy thou inspirest.

Dim world of weeping mosses!
    A hundred years ago,
Yon hoary-headed holly tree
    Beheld thy streamlet flow:
See how he bends him down to hear
    The tune that ceases never!
Old as the rocks, wild stream, he seems,
    While thou art young for ever.

Wildest and lonest streamlet!
    Grey oaks, all lichen’d o’er!
Rush-bristled isles! ye ivied trunks
    That marry shore to shore!
And thou, gnarl’d dwarf of centuries,
    Whose snaked roots twist above me!
O for the tongue or pen of Burns,
    To tell you how I love ye!

Would that I were a river,
    To wander all alone
Through some sweet Eden of the wild,
    In music of my own;
And bathed in bliss, and fed with dew,
    Distill’d o’er mountains hoary,
Return unto my home in heav’n
    On wings of joy and glory!

Or that I were the lichen,
    That, in this roofless cave,
(The dim geranium’s lone boudoir.)
    Dwells near the shadow’d wave,
And hears the breeze-bow’d tree-tops sigh,
    While tears below are flowing,
For all the sad and lovely things
    That to the grave are going!

O that I were a primrose,
    To bask in sunny air!
Far, far from all the plagues that make
    Town-dwelling men despair!
Then would I watch the building-birds,
    Where light and shade are moving,
And lovers’ whisper, and love’s kiss,
    Rewards the loved and loving!

Or that I were a skylark,
    To soar and sing above,
Filling all hearts with joyful sounds,
    And my own soul with love!
Then o’er the mourner and the dead,
    And o’er the good man dying,
My song should come like buds and flowers,
    When music warbles flying.

O that a wing of splendour,
    Like you wild cloud, were mine!
You bounteous cloud, that gets to give,
    And borrows to resign!
On that bright wing, to climes of spring
    I’d bear all wintry bosoms,
And bid hope smile on weeping thoughts,
    Like April on her blossoms;

Or like the rainbow, laughing
    O’er Rivilin and Don,
When misty morning calleth up
   Her mountains, one by one,
While glistening down the golden broom,
   The gem-like dew-drop raineth,
And round the little rocky isles
   The little wave complaineth.

O that the truth of beauty
   Were married to my rhyme!
That it might wear a mountain charm
   Until the death of Time!
Then, Ribbledin! would all the best
   Of Sorrow’s sons and daughters
See Truth reflected in my song,
   Like beauty on thy waters.

No longer, nameless streamlet,
   That marriest Rivilin!
Henceforth, lone Nature’s devotees
   Would call thee “Ribbledin,”
Whenever, listening where thy voice
   Its first wild joy expresses,
And down the rocks all wildly flows
   The wildness of thy tresses.
FOOTPATHS

The poor man’s walk they take away,
The solace of his only day,
Where now, unseen, the flowers are blowing,
And, all unheard, the stream is flowing!

In solitude unbroken,
   Where rill and river glide,
The lover’s elm, itself a grove,
Laments the absent voice of love;
How bless’d I oft sat there with Fanny,
When tiny Jem and little Annie
   Were fairies at my side!

O dew-dropp’d rose! O woodbine!
   They close the bowery way,
Where oft my father’s father stray’d,
And with the leaves and sunbeams play’d,
Or, like the river by the wild wood,
Ran with that river, in his childhood,
   The gayest child of May!

Where little feet o’er bluebells,
   Pursued the sun-bless’d bee,
No more the child-loved daisy hears
The voice of childhood’s hopes and fears;
Thrush! never more, by thy lone dwelling,
Where fountain’d vales thy tale are telling,
   Will childhood startle thee?

The poor man’s path they take away,
His solace on the Sabbath day;
The sick heart’s dewy path of roses,
Where day’s eye lingers ere it closes!
SONG

Nor alehouse scores, nor alehouse broils
Turn my good woman pale;
For in my pantry I've a keg
Of home-brewed ale.
The devil keeps a newspaper
    Where tavern-wranglers rail,
    Because it tempts his doomed and lost
    To drink bad ale.
    But I read news at second-hand,
    Nor find it flat and stale;
While Hume's or Hindley's health I drink
In home-brew'd ale.
My boys and girls delight to see
My friends and me regale,
While Nancy, curtsying, deigns to sip
    Our home-brew'd ale;
    And when the widow'd pauper comes,
    To tell her monthly tale,
    I sometimes cheer her with a drop
    Of home-brew'd ale;
It tells her heart of better days,
Ere she grew thin and pale,
When James, before the banker fail'd,
Drank home-brew'd ale.
I'll melt no money in my drink,
    Where ruffians fight and rail:
    The gauger never dipp'd his stick
    In my cheap ale.
    But when we household suffrage get,
    And honest men prevail;
Then, hey, mechanics, for free trade,
And cheaper ale!
TO FANNY

Britoness! angels love in thee
Angelic truth and piety;
But angels do not bow the knee
   To God-defying homicides.

For others’ woes thy bosom bleeds;
Deep is thy hate of hateful deeds;
But why of words, and forms, and creeds,
   O why art thou the homager?

Does true religion war on mind?
Is pure religion deaf and blind?
They best serve God, who serve mankind;
   Christ bade us feed his little ones.

O then contemn the base and cold!
Say to thy sons, “Be just and bold,
Unawed by power, un bribed by gold!”
   Britoness! this is piety.

Thou bid’st me scorn this world of care;
“For better worlds,” thou say’st, “prepare!”
Not I – if angel forms are there
   Apologists of tyranny.

Where Milton’s eyes, no longer dim,
See Seraphs walk with slander’d Pym,
I would not hear the cherubim
   Sing Tory odes to Castlereagh.
SONG.
[They sold the chairs, they took the bed, and went]

They sold the chairs, they took the bed, and went;
A fiend’s look after them the husband sent;
His thin wife held him faintly, but in vain;
She saw the alehouse in his scowl of pain.

Upon her pregnant womb her hand she laid,
Then stabb’d her living child! and shriek’d, dismay’d -
“Oh, why had I a mother!” wildly said
That saddest mother, gazing on the dead.

Slowly she turn’d, and sought the silent room -
Her last-born child’s lone dwellingplace and tomb!
Because they could not purchase earth and prayer,
The dear dead boy had long lain coffin’d there!

But that boy hath a sister - where is she?
Dying, where none a cherub fall’n may see: -
“Mother! O come!” she sobs, with stifled groan,
In that blest isle, where pity turns to stone.

Before the judge, the childless stood amazed,
With none to say, “My Lord! the wretch is crazed.”
Crowds saw her perish, but all eyes were dry;
Drunk, in the crowd, her husband saw her die!

Around the murderer’s wrists they lock the chain:
What, tyrant? whom hath Rapine’s victim slain?
The widow, hunger-stung and sorrow-bent,
Who ask’d, with tears, her lodger’s weekly rent!

O Wholesale Dealers in waste, want, and war!
Would that your deeds were written! - and they are!
Written and graved, on minds and hearts oppress’d;
Stamp’d deep, and blood-burnt-in, o’er realms unbless’d!
THE HOME OF TASTE

You seek the home of taste, and find
    The proud mechanic there,
Rich as a king, and less a slave,
    Throned in his elbow-chair!
Or on his sofa reading Locke,
    Beside his open door!"
Why start? – why envy worth like his
    The carpet on his floor?

You seek the home of sluttery –
    "Is John at home?" you say.
"No, sir; he’s at the ‘Sportsman’s Arms’;
    The dog-fight’s o’er the way."
O lift the workman’s heart and mind
    Above low sensual sin!
Give him a home! the home of taste!
    Outbid the house of gin!†

O give him taste! it is the link
    Which binds us to the skies –
A bridge of rainbows, thrown across
    The gulph of tears and sighs;
Or like a widower’s little one –
    An angel in a child –
That leads him to her mother’s chair,
    And shows him how she smiled.

NOTES

* This is not an overcharged picture of the condition of some of the mechanics of Sheffield.
† O that I could express in rhyme this sentiment, as it came, clothed in beauty and holiness, from the lips of Dr. Knight, at our last cutlers’ feast!
SONG. [Let idlers despair! there is hope for the wise]

Let idlers despair! there is hope for the wise,
   Who rely on their own hearts and hands;
And we read in their souls, by the flash of their eyes,
   That our land is the noblest of lands.
Let knaves fear for England, whose thoughts wear a mask,
   While a war on our trenchers they wage;
Free trade and no favour is all that we ask!
   Fair play, and the world for a stage!

Secure in their baseness, the lofty and bold
   Look down on their victims beneath;
Like snow on a skylight, exalted and cold,
   They shine o’er the shadow of death;
In the warm sun of knowledge, that kindles our blood,
   And fills our cheer’d spirits with day,
Their splendour, contemn’d by the brave and the good,
   Like a palace of ice melts away.

Our compass, which married the East to the West,
   Our press, which makes many minds one,
Our steam-sinew’d giant that toils without rest,
   Proclaim that our perils are gone.
We want but the right, which the God of the right
   Denies not to birds and to bees;
The charter of Nature! that bids the wing’d light
   Fly chainless as winds o’er the seas.
CORONATION ODE.

WRITTEN FOR THE SHEFFIELD WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION

Victoria, cypress-crown'd! thou good in vain!
How the red wreath, with which thy name is bound -
The page which tells the first deeds of thy reign,
Black and blood-bloated - cheer the Calmuck hound,
Whose growl o'er Brunswick hails thee, cypress-crown'd!

Canada weeps - and yet her dead are free!
Throned o'er their blood! who would not be a Queen?
The Queen of new-made graves, who would not be?
Of glory's royal flowers the loveliest seen!
So young! yet all that the deplored have been!

Here too, O Queen, thy woe-worn people feel
The load they bear is more than they can bear!
Beneath it twenty million workers reel!
While fifty thousand idlers rob and glare,
And mock the sufferings which they yet may share!

The drama soon will end. Four acts are past:
The curtain rises o'er embracing foes!
But each dark smiler hugs his dagger fast!
While Doom prepares his match, and waits the close!
Queen of the Earthquake! would'st thou win or lose?

Still shall the Car of Juggernaut roll on,
O'er broken hearts and children born in vain,
Banner'd with fire! while "thousand men as one"
Sink down beneath its coward wheels of pain,
That crush our souls, through crunching blood and brain!

Stop! - for to ruin Antoinette was led,
By men, who only when they died awoke!
Base nobles who, o'er France vain darkness spread,
And, goading her faint steeds with stroke on stroke,
Loaded the wain - until the axles broke!

Stop! - "for the blasting engine's iron Laws,"

79
Then saved not thrones from outraged Heav’n’s control,
When hunger urged up to the cannon’s jaws
A sea of men, with only one wild soul!
Hark! still I hear the echo of its roll!
LINES, WRITTEN FOR THE SHEFFIELD
MECHANICS’ FIRST EXHIBITION

Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter,
  Come duly, as of old;
Winds blow, suns set, and morning saith,
  “Ye hills, put on your gold!”
Gray Stanage and his mountain’d sea
  Roll, granite-billow’d, ever;
And Loxley, Sheaf, and Ewden, leave
  Their dewy valleys never.

The song of Homer liveth;
  Dead Solon is not dead;
Thy splendid name Pythagoras,
  O’er realms of suns is spread!
If Milton’s lay could pass from earth,
  Heaven’s bards that lay might cherish;
And Watt’s great deed hath changed a world,
  And will not, cannot perish.

But Babylon and Memphis
  Are letters traced in dust: –
Read them, earth’s tyrants! – ponder well
  The might in which ye trust!
They rose, while all the depths of guilt
  Their vain creators sounded:
They fell, because on fraud and force
  Their corner-stones were founded.

Truth, Mercy, Knowledge, Justice,
  Are powers that ever stand;
They build their temples in the soul,
  They work with God’s right hand;
Their sword is thought! the minds they teach
  Grow daily, hourly wiser;
But Memphian Kings found ignorance
  Their true and last adviser!

Then, Trader, Lord, or Yeoman,
  If thou a patriot art –
If thou would’st weep to see the light
   Of England’s name depart,
Her streets blood-flooded, and her plains
   In boundless conflagration -
Instruct her poor benighted sons,
   And save a sinking nation!

Shall we not lift the lowly,
   Whom law and custom ban?
O help us to exalt and praise
   God, in the mind of man!
Art thou a Man? Then, haste to aid,
   Perchance, a sireless brother!
And in his parent, worn with want,
   “O son! behold thy mother!”

Friends of the chain’d in spirit!
   Set free our soul-bound slaves!
And a redeemed and thankful world
   Shall smile upon your graves;
Age after age shall see your deeds
   In useful beauty growing -
Still gathering strength to save and bless -
   Like streams to ocean flowing.

Ye too, whose aims are selfish,
   Who plough that ye may reap!
Come hither! here for harvest sow,
   And give to get and keep!
Bless and be bless’d, thou sordid son,
   And thou more sordid father!
Plant gloom with light - and you and yours
   A thousandfold shall gather.

Like sunbeams to the moorland,
   Or rest to weary woe,
Or silence to the Sabbath hills,
   Your names will come and go!
Your worth, like Ewden, lingering
   Around his hawthorn blossoms -
Or Stanage beckoning to his clouds -
   Shall live in other bosoms.
LET ME REST

He does well who does his best:
Is he weary? let him rest:
Brothers! I have done my best,
I am weary – let me rest.
After toiling oft in vain,
Baffled, yet to struggle fain;
After toiling long, to gain
Little good with mickle pain;
Let me rest – But lay me low,
Where the hedgeside roses blow;
Where the little daisies grow,
When the winds a-maying go;
Where the footpath rustics plod;
Where the breeze-bow’d poplars nod;
Where the old woods worship God;
Where His pencil paints the sod;
Where the wedded thrrostle sings;
Where the young bird tries his wings;
Where the wailing plover swings
Near the runlet’s rushy springs!
Where, at times, the tempest’s roar,
Shaking distant sea and shore,
Still will rave old Barnesdale o’er;
To be heard by me no more!
There, beneath the breezy west,
Tired and thankful, let me rest,
Like a child, that sleepeth best
On its gentle mother’s breast.
BRITISH RURAL COTTAGES
IN 1842

The scentless rose, train’d by the poor,
May sometimes grace the peasant’s door;
But when will comfort enter there?
Beauty without, hides death within,
Like flowers upon the shroud of sin:
For ev’n the poor man’s marriage-joys,
His wife, his sad-lipp’d girls and boys,
In mercy or in mockery given,
But brighten, with their “hour of heav’n,”
A life of ghastly toil and care:
His pay is pain, his hope despair,
Although the cottage-rose is fair!
Out of his weekly pittance small,
Three crowns, for children, wife, and all,
Poor British Slave! how can he save
A pittance for his evening’s close?
No roses deck the workhouse-grave!
Where is the aged pauper’s rose!
SONNET. [From cloud-swept Snowgate,  
Dearne!]

From cloud-swept Snowgate, Dearne! now swift, now slow,  
Thou comest, playing still a busy tune;  
And while rich woodbines braid the locks of June,  
And wild hedge-roses in her bosom glow,  
That tune is sweet. On, sky-fed Wanderer, go!  
Waste not at monkish Burton this bright hour;  
Pass Darfield’s meads, and many a blossom’d bower;  
Bid Wath good night! and sleep at Conisbro’,  
In Don’s cold arms. Here, scarcely heard to lisp,  
Thy waters bask in evening’s purply gold,  
And round thy lilies - fresh, blush-tinged, and crisp -  
Linger, as loth to leave this loveliest scene -  
Bard of the Rustic Wreath! my tale is told;  
I stand again, where thou hast often been.
BRIMHAM ROCKS

Rocks! sacred deem’d to eldest fraud, when fear
First darken’d death’s reality with dreams!
The spirit of your cruel worship seems,
Like a wolf’s shadow, yet to linger here,
Deepening the gloom with peril still too near;
For guile and knowledge long have been allies,
Most pious found when preaching blasphemies,
Most treacherous when most trusted. But the year,
Whose seasons are all winters, soon must close;
Knowledge hath join’d the millions; and mankind
Are learning to distinguish friends from foes;
The eagle-eyed give sight unto the blind;
The eagle-wing’d are chasing crime-made woes;
The mighty-voiced are heard in every wind.
TREES AT BRIMHAM

Gnarl’d oak and holly! stone-cropp’d like the stone!
Are ye of it, or is it part of you?
Your union strange is marvellously true,
And makes the granite, which I stand upon,
Seem like the vision of an empire gone –
Gone, yet still present, thou it never was,
Save as a shadow – let the shadow pass!
So perish human glories, every one!
But Rocks! ye are not shadows; Trees! ye cast
Th’ Almighty’s shadow o’er the homeward bee,
His name on Brimham! yea, the coming blast,
Beneath his curtains, reads it here with me;
And pauses not to number marvels past,
But speeds the thunder on o’er land and sea.
ROCK IDOL AT BRIMHAM

Stone! did the hand of sacerdotal fraud
Shape thee into this vital type of things?
Or did a million winters, on their wings
Of scythe-like perseverance come abroad,
To bid Conjecture stand before thee awed,
And, almost severing thee from parent-earth,
Make thee a marvel? Vainly giv’st thou birth
To solemn fancies, building an abode
Around thee, for a world of shapeless ghosts;
Vainly they rise before me, calling up
Kings and their masters, and imagined hosts
That fight for clouds. What then? The heath-flower’s cup
With dew-drops feeds this fountain ever clear,
And the ring’d ouzel whistles – “God is here!”
FOUNTAINS ABBEY

Abbey! for ever smiling pensively,
How like a thing of Nature dost thou rise,
Amid her loveliest works! as if the skies,
Clouded with grief, were arch’d thy roof to be,
And the tall trees were copied all from thee!
Mourning thy fortunes – while the waters dim
Flow like the memory of thy evening hymn;
Beautiful in their sorrowing sympathy;
As if they with a weeping sister wept,
Winds name thy name! But thou, though sad, art calm,
And time with thee his plighted troth hath kept;
For harebells deck thy brow, and, at thy feet,
Where sleep the proud, the bee and red-breast meet,
Mixing thy sighs with Nature’s lonely psalm.
RETURN TO SHEFFIELD

To swelter in the town’s distemper’d glow,
Heart-sick to sleep, and weary wake to strife,
To make a curse of hope, a broil of life,
And blight the rose to bid the cypress grow,
Pain’s angel calls me; and I rise to go
Back from the castled wood, the sainted tower –
Scenes where man’s home is lovely as a flower,
And he himself still fair, though stain’d with woe!
Where Nid, and Aire, and Wharfe through Eden glide,
Or Brimham’s rocks of Druid terrors tell,
No longer, little lyre, may I abide;
No more with Nature’s lonely powers to dwell,
I leave thee here on Skell’s all-beauteous side;
Toy of the Titans! tiny Harp, farewell!!
TO THOMAS LISTER

Bard of the Future! as the morning glows
O’er lessening shadows, shine thou in this land.
Till the rich drone pays Labour what he owes,
“Strive unto death” against his plundering hand;
And bid the temple of free conscience stand
Roof’d by the sky, for ever. “As the rose,
Growing beside the streamlet of the field,"
Send sweetness forth on every breeze that blows;
Bloom like the woodbines where the linnets build;
Be to the mourner as the clouds, that shield,
With wings of meeken’d flame, the summer flower;
Still, in thy season, beautifully yield
The seeds of beauty; sow eternal power;
And wed eternal truth! though suffering be her dower

Don whispers audibly; but Wharncliffe’s dread,
Like speechless adoration, hymns the Lord;
While, smiting his broad lyre, with thunder stored,
He makes the clouds his harp-strings. Gloom is spread
O’er Midhope, gloom o’er Tankersley, with red
Streak’d; and noon’s midnight silence doth afford
Deep meanings, like the preaching of the Word
To dying men. Then, let thy heart be fed
With honest thoughts! and be it made a lyre,
That God may wake its soul of living fire,
And listen to the music. O do thou,
Minstrel serene! to useful aims aspire!
And, scorning idle men and low desire,
Look on our Father’s face with meek submitted brow.

Yes, Lister! bear to him who toils and sighs
The primrose and the daisy, in thy rhyme;
Bring to his workshop odorous mint and thyme;
Shine like the stars on graves, and say, Arise,
Seed sown in sorrow! that our Father’s eyes
May see “the bright consummate flower” of mind;
And the great heart of ransom’d human kind
Sing in all homes the anthem of the wise:
“Freedom is peace! Knowledge is Liberty!
Truth is religion.” O canst thou refuse
To emulate the glory of the sun,
That feedeth ocean from the earth-fed sky;
And to the storm, and to the rain-cloud’s hues,
Saith, “All that God commandeth shall be done!”
CASTLE HOWARD

Palfreyman! hither, with toil-strengthen'd frame,
What time Napoleon warr'd on Russian snows,
I came, a wanderer's privilege to claim,
And gaze on deathless death, and deathless woes.
The soul of truth glow'd then, as now it glows,
O'er all the life and glory of these walls;
Ideal Power, in pomp of gloom and flame,
Call'd on my spirit then as now he calls:
“Do not my sons,” he said, “deserve their fame?”
I could not scorn his bright star-written name,
Though, in her majesty heart-deified,
A beauteous friend, all graceful, with me came;
Yet I turn'd from him with a husband's pride,
And bless'd the LIVING WOMAN at my side.
Sarah and William Adams! here we stood,
Roof’d by the cloud, which cast his frown between
Wardsend and Loxley’s moorlands. From the wood
Of one-starr’d Grenno, like a sea unseen,
The wind swept o’er us, seeming, in his might,
To shake the steadfast rocks; while, rushing keen
Beyond the edge of darkness, stormy light,
As from a league-wide trumpet, on the scene
A cataract of glory pour’d; and, bright
In gloom, the hill-tops islanded the night
Of billowy shade around us. Vale and hill,
Forest and cloud, were restless as a fight;
They seem’d as they would never more be still;
While, anchor’d over all, the high-poised kite
Saw the foam’d rivers dash their blue with white.
CLOUDLESS STANAGE.

Why, shower-loved Derwent! have the rainbows left thee?
Mam-Tor! Win-Hill! a single falcon sails
Between ye; but no airy music wails.
Who, mountains! of your soft hues hath bereft ye,
And stolen the dewy freshness of your dales?
Dove-stone! thy cold drip-drinking fountain fails;
Sun-darken’d shadows, motionless, are on ye;
Silence to his embrace of fire hath won ye;
And light, as with a shroud of glory, veils
The Peak and all his marvels. Slowly trails
One streak of silver o’er the deep dark blue
Its feathery stillness, while of whispered tales
The ash, where late his quivering shade he threw,
Dreams o’er the thoughtful plant that hoards its drops of dew.
When last I look’d on thee, thy brow was black
   With trouble, and beneath it flames flashed out;
While on thine awful face the heav’ns flung back
   The red glare of thy lightnings, Kinderscout!
And all thy brethren answered with a shout
   Their monarch’s voice, that spake from sea to sea,
O’er all their cataracts. But now the trout
Sleeps in thy voiceless runlets. Now the bee
   Alone is restless here: he sings to thee
An ode of praise, where, reddening like the rose,
Amid the hoof-marks of the thunder, glows
   The cloud-fed berry; and the clouds, to me,
(While blusheth wide around the purple flower,)
   Seem mute, in honour of thy noontide hour.

Mountains! ye awe and tire me. Fare ye well!
   And let the tempests love ye. But, below,
The happy homed-and-hearth’d affections dwell.
   Amid yon floral sea, where daisies blow
And children gather them, the village bell
Saith that the young are married; while the old
Talk of glad yesterdays, or fondly tell
   Of buried loves. For joy is grief foretold!
And there young widows’ hearts grow deadly cold,
   And the poor orphan’s smile is faint and brief,
When marriage chimes are heard o’er grange and wold.
   Yet comfort there I seek, and joy in grief;
For man, by feelings strong as death controll’d,
   Gives heart for heart, and knows that hearts are never sold.
A DREAM

I dream’d that, tired with travel, I return’d
To Blacklow’s summit, and stood there with God
Alone, at midnight. Side by side we trod
The heath; and while around us rock’d and burn’d
The mountains, like a mountain’d sea of flame,
A gilded worm pronounced in scorn His name!
I, with my foot, the reptile would have spurn’d,
But could not. We stood still as death! That worm
Then spun slim films around th’ Almighty’s form,
Binding the hands that lift the seas, the feet
That will tread out the stars! and while, in mirth,
It spake this curse, I heard my own heart beat:
“With worse than barrenness I curse thee, Earth!
Henceforth, let every child be hopeless from his birth!”

But God said, “No! surely thou shalt not see
Every child hopeless, because thou art vile;
For thou art thy own victim, watch’d by me,
And I sheath vengeance in a dreadful smile.
But ere I bless thy curses for mankind,
And make them curses infinite to thee,
Thousands of thousands, foodless as the wind –
Yea, thousand, thousand, thousand men shall be
Care-hunted to the grave, by thine and thee.
And thou more crimes and criminals shalt make,
Than all earth’s monsters heretofore have made:
Hell from beneath shall rise to bless thee, Snake!
And Death, to sum his profits by thy trade,
Count through all ages past, their men and states betray’d.”
CONISBOROUGH CASTLE

In other days, time-darken’d Conis’b’rough,
Men thought of Hengist when they spoke of thee!
My native river murmurs near thee now,
As then it murmur’d, hasting to the sea,
Through hazel bowers, where memory loves to be;
But in these days, thy pilgrims whisper low
The name of Scott, and join with his thy name.

Him, the Napoleon of Parnassus, thou
Hast seen with Shakspeare equal deem’d in fame;
Nor may the Cæsar of the Muses claim,
His throne unshared. Twice thirteen years are past,
Since hither, almost dead with care, I came,
What time another Cæsar fiercely cast
O’er earth his stormy shade, which kings beheld aghast.

Through Russian wastes that Cæsar chased a cloud:
Calm was its aspect; for it had the power
To make his crowded host a lifeless crowd,
He being conquer’d in that fated hour,
Which gave his queen destruction for a dower.

Slow was its motion, and few accents loud
Broke from its chamber’d thunder as it fled;
But, when it stopp’d and spake, the conqueror bow’d,
Lower than vanquish’d kings, his laurel’d head.
They, waking from the vileness of their dread,
Gazed on the self-crown’d wretch, in mean surprise;
Then, with the vulgar dust, which he had spread
Around the consul’s chair, bedimm’d his eyes,
And bade him die, as baffled baseness dies.

Yet better was it, that the Fool of Force
Triumph’d by force, and fell by force subdued,
Than that the ancient thrones of foot and horse
Had quelled, at once, the uproused multitude,
Whom giant wrongs with Titan might embued.
Well fought the people under Terror’s wing;
And banded monarchs trembled, fled, and sued;
For Terror reign’d, Gaul’s omnipresent king!
And homed, on tyrants’ hearths the storm they brewed!
They serve us still, with strife! still, still renew’d;
The fight of fate accelerates their doom;
Themselves they mar, by battle, fraud, and feud;
And in large letters, of mixed flame and gloom,
Write, “The Republic! cometh, and will come.”
Come the Republic then! Or come the will
Of one wise despot! Let the Nation sway
Or be swayed well! But we will not be still
Of fifty thousand kingly-wolves the prey:
O Britain, sweep them from thy hearth away!
What! shall they reign alone, like the simoom,
Kings of the dead? Not so! we toil, and pay;
And here we perish pall’d beneath their gloom –
Ere Mockery, throned o’er London’s ashes, say,
“Behold a manless land! a nation’s tomb!”
The heavens shall cry, Ha, ha! and shout their doom;
Their names shall be a byword of dismay;
Chaff for the whirlwind shall their pomp become;
Their homes be graves, and dust for ruin they.
Come the republic then! but not the strife
Of want-struck millions for immediate bread!
“The labour of the poor man is his life,”
And on our lives shall palaced fraud be fed?
“They who rob him, strike Me!” the Lord hath said;
“They break my everlasting covenant!
And therefore worms beneath their pride are spread;
For are not murderers number’d with the dead?
Fainting, their sons shall ask, their daughters pant,
For drink and bread, in vain; and both shall flee
Unbless’d, go where they may, o’er land or sea,
And learn how hard to bear are scorn and want!
For I (the poor man’s God) his strength will be,
And shake the dead leaves down, but save the tree!”
GOOD MEN'S GRAVES

Lone, they rest. Nor Snap, nor Snivel,
Robs, or pities virtue’s dust!
Marble insults, Cant and Drivel
Build not o’er the just.
Them, in thought, the honest only
Visit, while they toil as slaves:
Oh, ‘Tis true! the stars shine lonely
Over good men’s graves.
All in silence, not in sorrow,
Read they on the wordless sod,
“These men’s deeds will speak, to-morrow;
They are words of God;
Heard in heav’n, with tears of gladness;
Mute on earth! yet working there;
Bringing chains for rapine’s madness,
Wings for chain’d despair.”
ARTISAN’S OUTDOOR HYMN

Again, oh, Lord, we humbly pray
That Thou wilt guide our steps aright:
Bless here, this day, tired Labour’s day!
Oh, fill our souls with love and light!
For failing food, six days in seven,
We fill the black town’s dust and gloom:
But here we drink the breath of heav’n,
And here to pray the poor have room.
The stately temple, built with hands,
Throws wide its doors to pomp and pride;
But in the porch their beadle stands,
And thrusts the child of toil aside.
Therefore we seek the daisied plain,
Or climb thy hills, to touch thy feet;
Here, far from splendour’s city-fane,
Thy weary sons and daughters meet.

Is it a crime to tell Thee here,
That here the sorely-tried are met?
To seek thy face, and find Thee near?
And on thy rock our feet to set?
Where, wheeling wide, the plover flies;
Where sings the woodlark on the tree;
Beneath the music of thy skies,
Is it a crime to worship Thee?

“We waited long, and sought Thee, Lord,”
Content to toil, but not to pine;
And with the weapons of thy Word
Alone, assail’d our foes and thine.
Thy truth and Thee, we bade them fear;
They spurn thy truth, and mock our moan!
“Thy counsels, Lord, they will not hear,
And Thou hast left them to their own.”
THE POOR MAN’S DAY.

Sabbath holy!
To the lowly
Still art thou a welcome day.
When thou comest, earth and ocean,
Shade and brightness, rest and motion,
Help the poor man’s heart to pray.

Sun-waked forest!
Bird, that soarest
O’er the mute, empurpled moor!
Throstle’s song, that stream-like flowest!
Wind, that over dewdrop goest!
Welcome now the woe-worn poor.

Little river,
Young for ever!
Cloud, gold-bright with thankful glee!
Happy woodbine, gladly weeping!
Gnat, within the wild rose keeping!
Oh, that they were bless’d as ye!

Sabbath holy!
For the lowly
Paint with flowers thy glittering sod;
For affliction’s sons and daughters,
Bid thy mountains, woods, and waters,
Pray to God, the poor man’s God!

From the fever,
(Idle never
Where on Hope Want bars the door.)
From the gloom of airless alleys,
Lead thou to green hills and valleys
Weary Lordland’s trampled poor!

Pale young mother!
Gasping brother!
Sister, toiling in despair!
Grief-bow’d sire, that life-long diest!
White-lipp’d child, that sleeping sighest!
Come, and drink the light and air.

Still God liveth;
Still he giveth
What no law can take away;
And, oh, Sabbath! bringing gladness
Unto hearts of weary sadness,
Still art thou “The Poor Man’s Day!”
THE IMITATED LANE

Now, Landscape-Maker, that with living trees
Createst Painting! thou should’st hither come,
And here learn how the town-sick heart to please.
Can’st thou not, in thy tiny wild, find room
For a wild lane, that with capricious ease
Shading or brightening self-taught branch or flower,
Will saunter gently to a seated bower?
Or lead thee through a cloudlet of green gloom,
Cheer’d by the music of its hidden rills,
To sudden sunburst? where the hunter’s cot
Looks down on rivers, and the distant hills
Climb to the firmament, yet marry not
Their purple to the orange-blaze, that fills
O’er-arching heav’n with pomp,
And peace, and power!
ODE ON THE MARRIAGE OF VICTORIA THE FIRST

Queen of our Hearts! true marriage
   Is made of solid bread;
Not so, that Many-Childed Plague
   Which curseth board and bed:
The ghastly league of woe with crime,
   To which starved men are driven,
Though marriage call’d by law-made saints,
   Hath other names in heav’n.

Lady! may all the blessings
   Which thou would’st give to all
Who call thee queen, or God their lord,
   On thee, thrice blessèd, fall!
If ‘tis thy wish that every pair
   Should live in love for ever,
May God return thee good for good,
   And love desert thee never!

But want and crime, Victoria,
   Law-wedded in this land,
Are curses, million-multiplied,
   That frown on every hand;
And thou wilt wake, with him thou lov’st,
   From brief and troubled slumbers,
If law of thine deal lessening loaves
   To famine’s doubling numbers.

Where’er they are, thy kindlings
   Sow baseness, cant, and pride;
The name of their feudality
   By wretched men is sigh’d:
Deep hatred of their race accru’d
   Gaunt orphan-victims cherish;
At home, abroad, the millions groan,
   The hopeless millions perish.

Then, be a Man, Victoria,
   If thou would’st reign, a Queen!
Wise must thou be, and brave, and all
   That honour’s best have been,
If thou would’st tame the Feudal Beast,
   Whose hydra-headed howling
Appals the devils whom he serves,
   And Ruin, o’er him scowling.

Remember Austria’s daughter!
   And lest thy true heart fail,
Ask what were they for whom she died,
   When banded kings turn’d pale?
Around her, throne and altar fell,
   In thousand fragments shiver’d,
Because she hearken’d unto men
   Who would not be deliver’d!

Beautiful as the cistus,
   That o’er the stonechat’s nest
Stoops, when the moorland clouds lie down
   On evening’s lap to rest,
Art thou, my Queen! the morning dews
   Upon the orchard blossom,
Are not more pure than is the heart
   Within thy royal bosom.

But can the Queen be happy,
   If millions round her weep?
In love’s elysium, while hope faints,
   Can Hope’s Victoria sleep?
No. Bringer of Redemption! thou,
   In love’s elysium sleeping,
Would’st wake, to grieve with starving men,
   And worth in dungeons weeping.

The woodbine’s cluster’d beauty,
   That hides the brooding thrush,
And weds the wild hedgerose, when Morn
   Shakes pearls from tree and bush,
All trembling like the skylark’s wing,
   Would dread his voice of gladness,
And hate the marriages of Spring,
   If dower’d with hate and sadness.

Behold that silent captive,
   Apprentice’d to the tomb!
His heart-worn features glimmering through
   The dull damp prison-gloom!
Roden? or Bradshaw? is he call’d;
   Shaw? Oastler? Greg? O’Connor?
No. What his crime? Say, hath he sold
   His memory to dishonour?
Hath he traduc'd a nation,
   Because three hundred years
Have seen her trampled people drink
   Subjection's poison'd tears?
All other shame hath he eclips'd,
   Barbarian, Greek, and Roman,
Blaspheming all bless'd names in one,
   The sacred name of woman?

Hath he betray'd the people
   Unto the people's foes?
Mean triumphs given to paltriest men,
   Whose gods are bonds and blows?
Deceived the poor, the everwrong'd?
   And factious, noisy, froward,
Urg'd them to unpartaken death---
   A cruel, skulking coward?

No. He whose spirit dieth
   Beneath that dungeon's pall,
Proclaim'd that all men equal are,
   For God is sire of all!
Oh, Lady, if thy heart were stone,
   His tale of tears would move it!
The man thou see'st is guileless, brave;
   Kind, childlike William Lovett.

And names of crimeless sorrow
   Are whisper'd, aye, and heard,
When wide-wing'd Trouble hovers o'er
   Doom'd empires, like a bird;
Till wildly old subverted states,
   While tears of blood are gushing,
Create the Force that crusheth Power---
   Like upturn'd ocean's rushing.

At voluntary tumult
   Misrule may safely frown:
Not mobs that will, but mobs that must,
   Bring thron'd Oppression down!
And wise are they who timely hear
   The gentle voice, which pleadeth
That self-endanger'd Pomp would grant
The safeguards it most needeth.
SCOTSMEN TO SCOTLAND,
WRITTEN FOR THE SCOTSMEN OF SHEFFIELD

Thy Men of Men shall we forget,
Old Scotland? No. Where’er we be,
All lonely, or in exile met,
    We think of them and thee.
Mother of Knox! “hast thou a charm”
That gives to all thy name who bear
Thoughts which unnerve the despot’s arm,
    And Will, to do and dare?
Thou bad’st him build on tyrant’s bones
An altar to the Lord of Lords;
Thou gav’st him power to shatter thrones,
    And vanquish kings, with words.
Stern Mother of the deathless dead!
Where stands a Scot, a freeman stands,
Self-stay’d, if poor – self-clothed, self-fed,
    Mind-mighty, in all lands.
No mitred pleader need thy sons,
To save the wretch whom Mercy spurns;
No classic lore thy little ones,
    Who find a Bard in Burns.
Their path, though dark, they will not miss;
Secure, they tread on danger’s brink;
They say, “This shall be!” and it is;
    For, ere they act, they think.
Mother of Burns! thy woe-nursed bard
Not always wisely thought or said;
He err’d, he sinn’d – but, oh, ‘tis hard
    To ban the voiceless dead!
Mother! thy doric speech hath power
The heart with passion’s thrill to move;
But none could sing, in hall or bower,
    Like him, thy Bard of Love.
Who dipp’d his words in lightning? Who
With thunder arm’d his stormy rhyme?
Who made his music tender, true,
    Terse, terrible, sublime?
Who bade thy bard, in thrall, maintain
A freeman’s port, where’er he trod?
Who taught the peasant to disdain
Proud Fashion’s Minstrels? God.
Who gave the child of toil a lyre,
With living sunbeams wildly strung?
And taught his soul of living fire
Truth’s universal tongue?
God. * But with torture Faction fill’d
The cup he drain’d in gloomy pride:
What marvel, if the poison kill’d?
What marvel, if he died?
Few were his days, his fortunes foul;
Bravely he struggled, though not long;
And with a poet’s glowing soul,
Drew near to God in song.
For Conscience to thy poet said,
“Burns! be a martyr!” “For the truth,
I will,” he cried – and bow’d his head,
And died, grey-hair’d in youth.
With little men he might not stay,
But hasted from a world unkind:
Oh, guess the worth he threw away,
By what he left behind!
And what a wreath his fame had worn,
Amid a world’s immortal tears,
Had he, like England’s Milton, borne
The fruit of sixty years!
But shall it of our sires be told
That they their “brother poor” forsook?
No! for they gave him more than gold;
They bought the brave man’s Book!
Scotland! thy sons – and not unearn’d
This day of pleasing tears returns –
Are met to mourn thy trampled, spurn’d,
Poor, broken-hearted Burns.
And oft again, the kind, the brave,
Who sorrow’s feast, like him, have shared,
Will meet, to honour in his grave
Thy glorious rustic bard.
Oh, spare his frailties! – write them not
On mute Misfortune’s coffin-lid! –
Ev’n Bacon err’d, and greater Scott
Not always greatly did.
A fearful gift is flame from heav’n,
To him who bears it in his breast:
Self-fired, and blasted, but forgiv’n,
Let Robert’s ashes rest.

NOTES

* See Coleridge’s Hymn to Sunrise.
from THE YEAR OF SEEDS

I

Toy of the Titans! Tiny Harp! again
I quarrel with the order of thy strings,
Establish’d by the law of sonnet-kings,
And used by giants who do nought in vain.
Was Petrarch, then mistaken in the strain
That charms Italia? Were they tasteless things
That Milton wrought? And are they mutterings
Untuneful, that pay Wordsworth with pleased pain?
No. But I see that tyrants come of slaves;
That states are won by rush of robbers’ steel;
And millions starved and tortured to their graves,
Because as they are taught men think and feel;
Therefore, I change the sonnet’s slavish notes
For cheaper music, suited to my thoughts.

IV

Why do the tears swell in his gloom’d wife’s eyes?
To her and hers he is already lost.
Oh, conscious river, crisping in the frost!
Thou snow, that stifles echo! and ye skies,
Alive with stars, that seem to watch the glade,
And, there, some object, that all ghastly lies!
The last night of the dying Year hath seen
Two widows and twelve orphans newly made!
And Law will have another victim soon.
Not ten yards from our Lady’s wayside spring;
Where daisy-rill, iced o’er, is glittering,
The lover’s gate, and gospel-thorn between;
Upon its back lies stark a horrid thing,
With dead eyes staring at the ghastly moon.

VI

Give not our blankets, tax-fed Squire, to him,
Thy willing pauper, with the dangerous brow!
He is not worthier, generous Squire, than thou,
But stronger far, and sound in wind and limb.
Know'st thou yon widow? She is wise and chaste; 
And comely, though her famish'd eyes wax dim. 
Her husband built a house upon the waste, 
And lost it: they who found it should make haste 
With help for her who, else, will die to-day. 
She hath no blankets! and no parish-pay: 
But she hath frosted feet, a fireless grate, 
A well-swept floor – by neighbour’s feet untrod! 
Tears, which are ice; a starved dog, a clean plate. 
Her wedding ring, her bible – and her God!

VII

Ralph Leech believes (and he can read and write,) 
That Conference Sunday-schools have saved the nation. 
He would compel the dark to seek his light, 
Yet hates, for freedom’s sake, state-education. 
That corn laws are “Man’s wisdom, and God’s mercy;” 
That Prairie is the Book of Common Prayer; 
And that one Shakspeare is a fat old Player; 
He doubts no more than that Canton’s in Jersey. 
Though cold the night, how fast his chapel fills! 
Why? Sir De Suckem hath a message sent, 
Urging the Suckems of the People’s Cause 
To prop Saint Suckem’s Navigation laws; 
Therefore, our friends petition Parliament 
Against cheap sugar, slavery, and steam mills!

VIII

All hail, Westknab! Great Kinder! Blakelowscar! 
Stanedge! Winhill! Storm’s Blackstone! From afar 
When ye come forth in ether clear and still, 
Sad tidings ye convey to Hargate-rill 
Of coming wreck and elemental war. 
While broadens the bright sun, or noontide star; 
As if, corrupted by their uncurb’d will, 
The lofty and the bright rejoiced in ill. 
So, when drew nigh doom’d Britain’s baleful hour, 
Portents of mightiest Evil Spirits cast 
Dire brightness on the face of Evil Power; 
And love and labour, heart-struck, stood aghast, 
While horror wrote, beneath th’ affrighted sky
A blood-red warning for eternity.

XIV

Red evening, in her green-and-silver robes,
   Looks from the uplands on the lakes below,
O’er realms of hawthorn, white with little globes
   In which is folded up May’s fragrant snow.
With closing eyes, to sleep the daisies go;
   Beneath the fire-flower’d broom awakes the hare;
And gentle winds are waiting, fain to blow
   News of the open’d rose to sons of care
Who toil for coffins! where the brave despair.
   There, lo, in Trade’s dark street, his trade of woe
The ever-weary village-genius plies!
   Poor Boy! he sees not that he daily dies;
Though oft he longs to see the pink’d flower grow
   Where, wing’d with love’s glad strength, the wheeling plover cries.

XV

Oh, many-window’d House, whose light is gloom!
   A homeless youth (brought by despair, to die
Where hope comes not,) pants in thy upper room,
   And sees the May-Day lark ascend the sky;
But flower of May shall never meet his eye,
   Nor mate the earth-worm’s all-forgotten guest.
No. She who would have call’d the golden broom,
   Or hawthorn-flower, to love him in the tomb,
Hath long been haven’d where the weary rest.
   Who sees him weep? Who hears his latest sigh?
What hireling fiend mocks twice his parting groan?
   His sire, his sister, the last friend, are gone
To Sin’s Australia, where the bad thrive best;
   And in a crowded world, he dies alone.

XVI

Not here, not here! I beg it as a boon;
   If ye dare weep and hope to be forgiv’n,
Lay not the poet of the village here,
   Where comes no sunlight, save the grin of noon!
But to that grave-yard, full of peace and heav’n,
   Where, not unhonour’d, rests a village seer,
(Who lived beloved, to die forgotten soon,)
Bear ye the child of flowers. Oh, lay him near
His grandsire’s bones! for thither — when the wind
Bends the young twig, or shakes the old leaf down —
May stray (too scornful of the plunder’d town,)
Some hopeful, worth-respecting bard sublime.
Who (in man’s ashes honouring human kind,)
May read the name of both, and do it into rhyme.

XVII

Why? If the unremember’d are a crew
That yet will number all beneath the sun,
Though words outlive the evil that men do,
And written be their names in blood and flame,
Ev’n of the famous famed shall be not one!
Why lingers, then, on his greystone, the name
Of one whom all forget? Moss, water, air,
Day, night, ask Why? And our poor hearts declare
That ev’n this record is a sort of fame!
But though mute words may hallow long the spot
Where the forgotten say, “Forget us not,”
We write on graves the heart’s last wish in vain!
And dust and lime, at last, alone remain
Where mind that was can never be again.

XXI

Church of the Hamlet! thy grey tower and thee
Coeval elms hide from the passer-by:
Temple within a temple! thou can’st see,
Unseen thyself, the pilgrim, quietly
Seated below; or coming funeral;
Or wedding-party’s quicker pace, to me
Sadder than funeral’s slow solemnity,
Its young, white bearers, or its sable pall.
But I tread on thy graves. Lo, freshly blown,
June’s trellised flowers o’er-top the ancient wall
Of the good curate’s garden! peeping down,
As if to read, with me, on stones moss-grown,
Names of the dead! whose doings none recall;
Whose doom — Oblivion! is the doom of all.
XXIV

The footprints of departed life remain
   For hours, or years, or age-long years of years,
On sand, clay, stone. Thus, chroniclers of tears
   Die, but not so Time’s History of Pain.
Rooted on graves, Truth bears a living flower!
   Man may forgive, but wounds their scars retain
As warnings! and the Powers of Good ordain
   That to forget shall not be in our power.
For worst ills, too, have roots: they are the fruit
   Of plotted action worn to habitude;
And the grey dynasties of Force might live,
   Safe in their privilege of fraud and feud,
If agony died recordless and mute,
   And to forget were easy as forgive.

XXVIII

We are not lonely, Kinderscout! I stand
   Here, with thy sire, and gaze, with him and thee,
On desolation. This is Liberty!
   I want no wing, to lift me from the land,
But look, soul-fetter’d, on the wild and grand.
   Oh, that the dungeon’d of the earth were free
As these fix’d rocks, whose summits bare command
   Yon cloud to stay, and weep for Man, with me!
Is this, then, solitude? To feel our hearts
   Lifted above the world, yet not above
The sympathies of brotherhood and love?
   To grieve for him who from the right departs?
And strive, in spirit, with the martyr’d good?
   “Is this to be alone?” Then, welcome solitude.

XXXIX

I dream’d that God was Silence. Air was dead,
   And Life a corpse laid out. The clouds had died
Of sunless cold. O’er all things snow was spread,
   Mute as the billows of a frozen sea;
And, voiceless, the eternal wind swept wide
   Under dumb skies, o’er steel-like sea and land.
Echo herself had perish’d, but reply
From her none needed was, where time forgot
The letters of his name, and sound was not,
And motion soundless; and all victory
Crown’d freezing Death, who, with world-covering hand,
And sword-like pen – and with an inward laugh –
On Mind’s vast grave, wrote dead Hope’s epitaph
In ice for ink: “Her Dream was Liberty.”
ONE OF THE HOMES,
A HEALTH OF TOWNS' BALLAD

The small boy, in his home of sighs,
   As if he hated man,
Died, with raised hand, and open eyes,
   Frowning at little Ann.
Then, died his bird: she wept, she sigh'd:
   'Twas worn to skin and bone;
But whether it of famine died,
   Or fever, is not known.
She wept, but not for John - and yet
   She loved her brother well;
She wept - wept for his little pet!
   But why she could not tell.
Where frown'd its friend, his bird she put
   Within the coffin small;
But then the lid refused to shut!
   She thought she heard him call!
The dead hand propp'd the coffin-lid,
   Above the dreadful frown;
It would keep up! it would, and did;
   The joiner screwed it down.
And so, they slept in company;
   The blighted feather’d flower!
And poor bud of humanity -
   Both blighted in one hour.
Farewell, thou old street-shunning lane,
   Where John whole hours would stay,
When welcomed flowers came back again,
   To welcome rainbow’d May!
Flowers which by name he once could call!
   For he, with childish pride,
Had kept, at home, a funeral
   Of flowers, that weekly died.
His father, who loved wild flowers, too,
   Had taught the child their names,
Though, with a florist’s pride, he grew
   Outlandish flowers, in frames.
Where lay the father on the floor,
   Was laid the coffin small;
The mother lay behind the door,
   So, there were four in all;
The blasted, black, once beauteous thorn,
That never more would grow;
The rose, once sweet as dewy morn;
The blighted bud of woe;
And, happiest there of all, the bird
That ne’er saw God’s bless’d sun,
Or growing flower; ne’er saw, or heard,
Tree wave, or river run.
The rats peep’d out behind the door,
And loth they seem’d to go;
The rats jumped down beneath the floor,
Into the sewer below.
Men raised, in haste, the coffins three,
In fearful haste were they:
Ann, famish’d, follow’d gloomily,
And heard the parson pray.
Grey-hair’d he was, a grey-hair’d youth,
Kind, humble, just, and wise;
He look’d on woe-worn toil and truth
With pity’s tearful eyes;
For he, a poor man’s friendless son,
Once suffer’d long distress,
And hard up-hill his way had won
To honour’d usefulness.
His gown’d back to the wind he turn’d,
And waved the holy book:
On corpses three, by one child mourn’d
He look’d, with solemn look:
Behind him far, two youths well clad
Stood mute, with ladies two:
Before him gasp’d the bann’d and bad,
A poor death-daring crew:
One feebly clasp’d a dying child,
Sobbing; another said,
“Thank God for Plague!” and darkly smiled:
A third said, “God is dead!”
Their famine grinn’d - What could it less?
Their sadness wore a frown;
Their “loop’d and window’d raggedness”
Blasphemed the parson’s gown.
But when that grey-hair’d pastor spoke,
Their prostrate hearts arose,
And trembling hope, like starlight, broke
On each despairer’s woes:
“In life,” he said, “we are in death,
Through death to life we rise:
In fear man draws his fleeting breath,
In sorrow lives and dies:
We come like shadows – and are gone;
Dust are we, dust to be;
Until this mortal hath put on
Its immortality.”
John Fowler, I owe you a tale or a song,
    I've remain'd, I confess it, your debtor too long;
So, painting in verse and rude Saxon a scene
    Where oft with the bard of the rabble you've been,
I daub on the landscape a figure or two,
    Not portraits from life, but ideally true,
And humbly inscribe the poor picture to you.

I.

    Said horse-swapping Jem, with his hat on his lap,
        While his bull-bitch sat listening near,
    “Was ever yet seen by a Stannington-Chap*
        A contrast like this I see here?
    With Susan, my cousin, just four feet by two,
        Here's a gipsy as tall as a stee:
    I guess, she is telling my fortune to Sue;
        And, I guess, we know what it will be.”

II.

    With his legs on the turf, o'er his hat and his knees,
        Behind the bare brambles he bent,
    While Rivilin sang to the palm-waving breeze,**
        A sweet ancient song about new-budded trees,
    As townward together the stream and the breeze
        Through regions of loveliness went;
    And he gazed, squatting low in the old birken wood,***

    On the marble-fac'd prophetess brown,
        Whose eyes flash'd black venom where stately she stood,
    In her grey cloak and long sallow gown;‡
    With her slightly arch'd nose, her smooth brow finely spread,
        Her chin sharply chisel'd, and bold
    Under lips of firm beauty, her face and her head
        Formed an oval of darkness and gold.
    Her hair was like horserail, when glossy it lies
On the strong stallion’s neck, where the fledged linnet flies;
And her black felted hat, suiting well with her size,
   Was a crown on the head of a queen;
But ’twas strange! when he look’d on her face and wild eyes,
   Her eyes only seem’d to be seen.

III.

“What faults,” said the giantess, lifting her brow
   While a smile lit her loveliness grim,
“What faults hath John Mathews, thy husband, that thou
   Would’st swap him for horse-swapping Jem?”

IV.

“I can’t bear the sight of the flimsy old fool,”
   Black with rage, childless Susan replied,
“While he bends o’er his books, like a sack on a stool,
   Fill’d with lumbering learning and pride.
Is it my fault, or his with his tea-water blood,
   (In a Maltster a fault seldom seen,)
That I’m talk’d of in scorn, under bonnet and hood
   Wherever big bellies convene?
The lawyers want hanging. What right have old men
   To marry fair maids of eighteen?
But he wheez’d, when he courted me, like a pipp’d hen,
   Such maggot’s meat never was seen.
This day is his birthday; he’s fifty or more;
   How strong the changed villain appears!
Oh, never was damsel so cheated before!
   And his folly grows green with his years.
Of original sin, and the fruits of the fall,
   I hate the vile picture he paints:
He hardly believes in the Devil at all!
   Then how can he trust in the saints?
He pays to a Bookclub - When, when will it break?
   Its infidels fill me with fear! -
He wastes in a newspaper fourpence a week,
   And in music five shillings a year.
For what did I marry? The Wigtwizzle land
Will go, when he dies, to Jem’s Nan!
His little gets less, like an used clew of band;
I have neither won money nor man.
The corn which he buys, goes as fast as it comes;
He malts it, and sells it on trust;
His customers schedule, while he sucks his thumbs,
And thrive, while I pine on a crust.
Every rogue knows Old Clever, whom babies deceive;
He gets all, to risk all again!
Oh, he’ll make his old will, when he’s nothing to leave!
I may knit, but industry is vain.
And he reads, ay, and writes, when his day’s work is done,
Bent double beside the great pan,
While my cousin swaps horses, or fettles his gun,
Or fights in the fair – like a man.”

V.

“A hard case indeed!” – in her ear-rings of gold,
Blue-kerchief’d beneath hat and chin,
Said the black-stockinged sorner; and then slowly told
Her charm of deep cunning and sin:
“They husband bewitch’d shall, feet foremost, be borne
To Bradfield, where slumber his sires,
If thou, after tea, before ten in the morn,
Wilt visit thy cousin, Jem Squires;
And – nipping the thumb of his crippled left hand
With the finger and thumb of thy right,
Say, ‘Coffins mean Weddings! and, Jem, understand
That Morning still follows the Night!’
But if thou, in him, ere the summer be o’er,
A true loving husband wouldst find,
Before thou go forth, let thy tyrant, once more,
Hear a bit of thy long-troubled mind:
And no one shall ask thee, ‘What did’st thou? or Why?’
Nor shalt thou be scared or ashamed;
For ends may be ruled by the planets on high,
And no honest woman be blamed.”

VI.

She said, and away, with a spring in her feet,
(Erect, bony-ankled, and strong.)
Departed, through gorse, blooming golden and sweet,
While the lark sang his evening song.
Jem laugh’d, but not loudly. How joyfully fast
Through the wood of moss’d birches went Sue!
And both reach’d their homes, ere the setting sun cast
Bright gold on the cloud that from Stannington pass’d,
And purple o’er Rivlin blue.

VII.

All night, she lay sleepless – or dreaming, all night,
That a coffin a wedding implies! –
John dream’d he had lost her! and wept with delight!
But he waked, and saw rage in her eyes!
With her hands on her hips, clad already, she seem’d
Prepared, and determined for strife;
For John was bewitch’d! and by all he was deem’d
The plague of his plague of a wife.
“Young wives and old husbands shall never agree,”
Sigh’d Susan, repenting too late;
“One side of a ladder is hardly a stee,”
Sigh’d John, as he turn’d from his mate.
Poor Henpeck! to please her all vainly he tried;
For though quite an angel was she,
He could not have pleased her, unless he had died,
And no such intention had he.
A spell was upon him – Yes, do what he might,
His virtues were manifest crimes;
He always did wrong, and she always did right!
As she’d told him, some hundreds of times.

VIII.

Bright, bright shone the morning, when breakfast was done;
But Sally, the maid, look’d with fear
On Susan’s broad face, that grew black in the sun –
A sign that a tempest was near.
The thrush sang without, where the gorse and the broom
Wore their gold, near the overshot mill;
And the birch was in bud, and the larch was in bloom,
Beside the old farm on the hill;
But, within, nought was heard save the sad undergrowl
Of Susan, that lady of grief,
While John turn’d his back on the wife of his soul,
Pretending to read, and be deaf;
Yet watching the storm, which he well knew would come,
And lifting his left ear in pain,
As he chuck’d the crack’d seal, with his finger and thumb,
On the ring of his copper watch-chain;
Or fast in his book turn’d the pages, unread;
Or twisted its bit of red tape;
Or pull’d to and fro the brown wig on his head,
With its tail doubled up in his cape.

Slow rising, at length – like Sir Graham in place,
Or a broad-bottom’d Image of Fate;
She stood – like Resolve, sworn to steal a watch-case,
Or like a thick “pillar of state;”
But soon on the floor stump’d her short flabby legs,
Her broad face seem’d broader to grow,
And then, as she spoke, she revolved on her pegs,
Like a tub on one end turning slow.

IX.

“This Now, Learned Old Fellow! I'll state thy true case:
Oh, what a wrong’d woman am I!
I'll leave thee, I'll get a good housekeeper's place –
And do something else by and bye.
This comes of your printing, and new-fangled schools;
I'm driven from thy board, and thy bed;
But if thou art wise, let me live with the fools,
For they know how to butter their bread.
Oh, if I'd an income, a home of my own,
I'd ne'er look again on thy face;
But my wrongs, Mister Intellect! all shall be known
When I've got a good housekeeper’s place.
Then, bless’d with thy absence, and snug as a mouse,
I'll pick with a friend a dry bone;
For thy famous tup shins shall ne’er enter our house,
Though I can't turn thee out of thy own.
I read thee, Old Dog, and old Cain on thy brow!
My pearls are but thrown unto swine;
A pattern for servants to copy art thou;
What manners, Old Beggar, are thine!
Thy brothers were beggars – Thou Son of Old Spite!
Will the brother of fools say, I lie?
Thy parish-paid aunt was a threadbare Old Fright;
Thy father was blind of an eye;
Thy uncle's lean niece had a face like a fish;
Her husband gave bail for two thieves;
Thy cousin, blue Snob, was sold up, spoon and dish;
Did he die in a shirt without sleeves?
Thy sisters, they – Oh, not a breath can I fetch!
Dog! my breathing – my breathing’s so bad! –
But it’s well there’s a madhouse, thou raving Old Wretch!
Sarah! Sarah! the Fellow’s gone mad!"

X.

But John kept his temper: “Do leave us, dear Sue!
For I’ve long been the plague of thy life:
Besides, I and Sally without thee can do;
And Jem is in want of a wife.”

XI.

“Agreed!” with a shout answer’d Susan; and soon
She complied with the despot’s desire;
For she roll’d out of door, like a lady balloon,
Or a puncheon of brandy on fire.
Bright red was her gown, green and yellow her shawl,
Betassell’d and fringed to the knee;
And a cloak of flower’d purple she flung over all;
Oh, a regular tulip was she!
Beneath her umbrella-like bonnet, put on
With a town-knowing twitch of much grace,
She seem’d like two fat tapster’s-wives, join’d in one.
And netted together with lace.
In front, like a star, her broad quarters between,
Shone her clasp of raised silver on steel;
And she holds in one hand, that her wealth may be seen,
Her boa and tippet of seal;
While the other, muff’d richly, and cushion’d from cold,
She waves, like a fan, as she goes,
Both to show her gold watch, round her waist chain’d in gold,
And cool the hot blood in her nose.
And fast through the croft, where the crab blossom’d white,
Scattering snow to the bilberry brake;
Fast by the old stones, with grey lichens and light
   Speckled o’er, like the back of a snake;
Fast down the steep hill, through the wild wizard wood,
   Fast over the river she hied;
Then, climb’d to the nook, where her cousin’s house stood,
   And met there – Himself and his Bride!
A chaise at the gate, and a postboy she found;
   At their ribands she could not but stare,
When he open’d the door, threw the steps to the ground –
   And out came the new-married pair!
For Jem (Shabby Fellow!) had wedded his maid!
   Oh, Prophetess, deep was thy guile!
And vulgar he look’d in his breeches of plaid,
   When thus spake the bride, with a smile:
“Good Susan, we ask not, What dost thou? or why?
   Nor are we afraid or ashamed;
For ends may be ruled by the planets on high,
   And no honest woman be blamed.”

XII.

“Did Sal stop the clock, from past five until seven?”
   Said Jem, with the look of a lamb;
“By my wife’s lever-watch it is now near eleven;
   There’s treachery, certain I am.”

XIII.

For the first time in life Susan redden’d with shame,
   And out rush’d the bull-bitch, to see!
But, broad as a cask, o’er the bitch roll’d the dame;
   Oh, a sadly changed lady was she!
In dirt lay the tulip, red, purple, and green,
   With its stripes of bright yellow so fine!
And truly she said, “I’m not fit to be seen,”
   While vainly Jem press’d her to dine.

XIV.

Back, down the long bank, full of wisdom, she went:
   Let none on that name cast a slur!
She could not conceive what the vile gipsy meant,
By supposing that Jem would suit her!
He rode like a clown, in his coat or his cloak,
And she loath’d his vile breeches of plaid:
If he brought her tobacco, (she did sometimes smoke,)
It was always in brandy o’erpaid.
A nasty, colloguing, conspiring, lame cheat,
One-handed, left-legg’d, and pig-eyed!
She’d not cross her door sich a fellow to meet,
Nor stand in the road by his side.
She always knew well what his tendencies were;
Oh, his tastes were all grovelling and base!
And he might be a bastard! she’d scorn to appear
Where a trull, like his wife, show’d her face.
“Would I condescend,” said the dignified dame,
“To touch sich a minx with the tongs?
I better know how to preserve a good name,
And what to good breeding belongs.
A coarse tasteless tassel – a cheat, and no witch –
What a vile tawdry dress she has on!
But she’ll keep his accounts – she can write; if he’s rich,
They’ll shine, till his money is gone;
And when it is gone he will rightly have learn’d
What ladies who scribble can do;
And wish all the books, but the Bible, were burn’d,
And their readers, (or one of them,) too.
I would not be spiteful, but; God mend them both!
It’s the worse wish I wish them, I’m sure;
He’s a good-for-nought, bandy-shank’d blackguard and sloth,
And she quite as pretty as pure.
I wish her no harm, with her blushes of brass;
But she may have six twins in three years,
And corrupt every farantly neighbour she has,
Setting them and their wives by the ears.
Poor Gudgeon! he’s hook’d – by a child-bearing Pouse!
But sluts are best married to rakes:
May their pigs get the itch! and smoke stifle his house!
And her oven spoil all that it bakes!”

XV.

But now she drew nigh to the river again,
And the wood of moss’d birches so old;
While black over Stanage, with hail and with rain,
A tempest of April was roll'd:
Right and left, like a shaft-broken arrow of doom,
    Unheard its red lightning was sent;
And, Up! the broad curtain of fire-lifted gloom,
    From the summit, at intervals went:
Like many-tail'd snakes, with their heads on the ground,
    And their many tails pendent in air,
In skeleton grimness, the aged trees around,
From the region of storms, and its black western mound,
    Lean'd motionless, silent, and bare;
But her heart heard no voice, when the damp hollow wind
    Through their dry branches drearily moan'd;
Nor felt she his touch, when it wetted each rind,
    And the fast-coming thunder-cloud groan'd.
Like steel which (worm-red, and not glowing with flame,)
    In water skill'd artisans dip,
Each big drop of rain seem'd to hiss as it came,
    And smoke on her hot under-lip:
More black grew her choler, more gloomy the skies;
Then, a blast shook the old wizard wood -
Where, lo! the tall gipsy, with night in her eyes,
    In the glare of the lightning-flash stood;
With night in her eyes, and the torrid sun's fire;
    With power in her mien and her form;
Beautiful wildly - Like Love soothing Ire;
    Or light on the clouds of the storm;
Or Knowledge, all calmly preparing the fall
    Of the crime-honour'd throne of the sword;
Or Goodness, declaring through one unto all,
    That the Father of all is the Lord.
As a poplar in summer, when gently the breeze
    Wakes its twiglets, with whisperings sweet,
Amid the grey trunks of the hoar forest trees
    Looks down on a flower at his feet;
So, a sable-hair'd child, with his eyes raised to hers,
    And his rose-lips half open to speak,
And the bronze of the bloom of the rich mountain furze
    Turning brown on his soft yellow cheek;
A child - her own miniature self - by the hand
    She held, looking down on his smile,
With a fulness of love that no heart could withstand,
    Save the heart of low cunning and guile.
For in her deep love there was sorrow as deep;
Ev’n there, on the spot where she stood,
(When the vale in October’s dim mist lay asleep,
   And the moon only watch’d o’er the wood.)
All silent, with none to assist or annoy,
   And in anguish too mighty for tears,
She had buried a daughter – the twin of the boy
   That made her acquainted with fears;
And while on the soul in his visage she gazed,
   She saw in her heart, the last look
Of her lost second-born, with her wild eyes up raised,
   As her flight to the angels she took.
But Susan saw nought in that beautiful child
   Akin to her own barren heart;
No trust could his aspect, so trustfully wild,
   To her all-doubting bosom impart;
She found in the might of the mother’s dark face
   Only dark indications of crime;
No grandeur, nor beauty! nor greatness, nor grace,
   In her action serene and sublime.
She knew not that Love plants with roses the wind,
   And builds on the seas as they roll;
That the waifs of the world can be gentle and kind,
   And the homeless find home in the soul;
But kept the true faith, in her maxims, derived
   From progenitors growing in grace,
And bred in-and-in, with the hornets they hived,
   Till perfection was stamp’d on their race.

XVI.

“Did I stop thy clock, from past five until seven?”
   Said the gipsy with ill-suppress’d laugh;
“By Ecclesfield chimes it is long past eleven:
   Thou’rt too late, by an hour and a half.”

XVII.

“The Snake!” Susan cried, “there she hisses in scorn;
   The Pickpurse! she stole my crown-piece;
The Rascal! I’ll watch her; she means, I’ll be sworn,
   To steal Tommy Somerset’s geese.
For who can be safe, when plain folks are ashamed
To sign for their names with a cross?
Our thieves, like Jem’s Nan, for book-learning are famed;
   And learn’d is yon rogue, to my loss!
No gipsy is she, but a thief from the town,
Where she borrow’d her books, as she borrow’d her gown.
But yonder’s my John! he is waiting, I see,
   To welcome his glove of soft silk:
Ev’n fools know the worth of a good wife, like me!
   So, I’ll hasten – and skim him his milk.”

XVIII.

Then, she puff’d up the hill, to the home of her love;
   And there a strange scene was display’d;
For John the bewitch’d, though expecting his dove,
   Sat at dinner, with Sarah, his maid,
In the neat pannel’d parlour, where Jem used to dine,
   When he call’d on his way from the shows:
He was sipping Jem’s cordial, the dame’s brandied wine,
   When Sarah in terror arose,
And in came meek Susan! who said not a word,
   But threw her soil’d shawl o’er a chair;
Then, courteously smil’d on her fear-feigning lord,
   And honour’d her maid with a stare.
A hot roasted fowl on the table was placed;
   So, feeling of hunger the stings,
She took Sarah’s chair, and to show her good taste,
   Help’d herself to the breast and both wings.
But in token of peace, both the sidebones for John,
   From under the straddle she carved;
And gave him both drumsticks, when both thighs were gone,
   To feed the fat hen he had starved;
For Susan transform’d by a spirit of power,
   Seem’d meek as a storm-cloud at rest;
And John the Bewitch’d, Unbewitch’d from that hour,
   Was of maltsters and mortals the best!
He spoke not, but placidly welcom’d the change
   Which Time, “that brings roses,” had brought;
Nor tardy was she to give evidence strange
   That in her was a miracle wrought
Lo, when she had dined, to the garden she went,
   Where she cull’d the first lilac of Spring,
The prize-polyanthus, with violets blent,
And primroses – tied in a string;  
And placed them – and laugh’d – on the cloth of pale blue,  
   In a vase, sprigg’d with gold on dead white;  
For all that is lovely and tasteful, she knew,  
   Fill’d his weak childish heart with delight.  
Sweet Flowers, how they smiled through the thunder’s bright tears,  
   On the maltster, self-scourged, though belied,  
Who shook in sly glee, the brown wig of his years,  
   With the gipsy-changed dame at his side:  
“Young wives and old husbands may sometimes agree,”  
   Said John, shaking hands with his mate;  
“A lobsided ladder’s a sort of a stee,”  
   Thought Susan, instructed, though late;  
While the Father of Love, from the brightening west  
   Where Loxley and Rivlin rise,  
Cast down on their waters, awake or at rest,  
And on John’s placid smile, and on Susan’s fond breast,  
   The soul-soothing blue of his eyes;  
And the redbreast peep’d in from the moss’d windowsill,  
   Where he sang in the sunny rain,  
Till the thunder-rent cloud, o’er the rough eastern hill,  
Retiring in wrath, that spake thunder-toned still,  
Left Stanage, serene as his Maker’s high will,  
   In sunshine and glory again;  
Proclaiming afar, in the silence of light,  
   His love of the lovely, the might of his might;  
Proclaiming afar, that the Beautiful lives  
   With the good and the wise, in His Temple of Mind,  
Still making life’s strength of the peace that he gives  
To the hearts of the gentle, the thoughtful, the kind.

NOTES

*Stannington is a village near Sheffield.  
+Stee is the Yorkshire name for ladder.  
**Rivilin is one of the rivers of Hallamshire, near Sheffield, where the blossoms of the willow are called palms.  
***The venerable wood here alluded to was destroyed in the year , to win a bit of wretched land, at twice the cost of its value. One of its old trees bore an uncouth likeness to three snakes twisted together, with their heads on the ground, and their tails in the air. With more pain than pleasure, I
saw, about a year ago, in the Stove of the Sheffield Botanical Gardens, fragments of this tree.
†For a chapter on gipsies, see William Howitt’s Rural Life in England, which has furnished me with some particulars of this description.
◊Fettled is an old Saxon word, signifying prepared. Thus, the Fettlers in an ironfoundry are preparers of the article for market.
from SCOTCH NATIONALITY: A VISION

BOOK I.

I’ve bought of Wordsworth, – not thoughts deep
As truth i’ th’ bottom of a well,
Nor wings of power to soar, and sweep
O’er summits, inaccessible
Without such aid; – but, for a penny,
I’ve bought a hero, one worth many.
A genuine pedlar. What he said,
Or dream’d, shall in Three Books be penn’d?
For your true Epic must, I’ve read,
Have a beginning, middle, end:
So said the Scotchman, Aristotle,
So prov’d his pupil, Amos Cottle.
In modern, as in ancient, days,
What have not mortals done for praise?
Thou, who to th’ everlasting skies
Link’st ashes, by an empty name,
With Time, and two Eternities!
Shadow of dust! immortal Fame!
Thou only deathless where all die!
Priz’d nothing! sole reality!

Pride, that unbow’d can pass the shrine
Of Glory’s god, yet bends at thine;
And well may man love trifes here,
If e’en their shadow thus is dear!
But who, alas! will dribble forth
My praises from the grateful North?
Small praise need he expect, in sooth,
Who praises Sawney with the truth.
But while I laud the booing nation,
I have this common consolation,
That when I shall be lowly laid,
And turn’d to dust, which casts no shade,
The ‘loftiest’ Scot, that lives a slave,
Would boo, for sixpence, o’er my grave.

In eighteen-hundred twenty-two,
Mac Whisky hight, a Sawney true,  
Half choak’d with dust, and sick of clamour,  
Left Sheffield and the sleepless hammer.
E’en profit’s ‘sel’ had vainly tried  
To tempt him longer there to ‘bide.
The smoke, in two nights and a day,  
Had smutch’d his raw red hide to grey;  
And, like a whale, he blew and cough’d,  
And rubb’d his reeky optics oft,  
And shook his lugs, as shakes a cur,  
When sous’d i’ th’ dyke, his hide and fur.
Yet, smiling, on his way he went,  
And seemed in ‘heart and soul content’;

For he had, in a clout with care,  
Tied up a slice o’ th’ Sheffield air,  
(In shape not oval, somewhat round,  
In weight exactly half a pound,)  
Which, on his travels, well he knew,  
Might gain him cash, and honour too;
Provided it were not mistaken  
For half a pound of Sheffield bacon.
Leaving old Hallam’s hell below,  
He climbed the hills four miles or so.

{...}

Soon darkness wan’d into a glimmer.
Anon, a star dawn’d on his sight,  
And biggen’d into painful light,  
A sun in universal night,  
Shining alone. Yet, petrified
With cold, he seem’d, perforce, to glide,  
Borne, like a leaf, on Fate’s dark tide,  
Until that lonely orb became  
The palace (so he deem’d) of flame,  
With roof on star-high pillars borne;
And thence stream’d wide a horrid morn,  
That flung infernal splendors o’er  
The sea of gloom without a shore.
Thither he went, he knew not why;
He enter’d there inaudibly;  
Then silent stood, and, shuddering, gazed
On giant fiends, who toil’d and blaz’d,
And laugh’d in frantic mirth, not ire,
And utter’d speech of soundless fire, –
A language splendid to the sight,
And beautiful, if not polite.

They seem’d, in truth, a jolly set,
As e’er round alehouse ingle met.
On them no wight for poor-rate call’d;
To them no priest for tithe-pig bawl’d;
No parson-justice threaten’d jail,
For death of partridge, hare, or quail;
No starv’d and toil-worn wretch was told,
By printed praises, bought and sold,
Of public charities by th’ score,
Upheld by monks with livings four,
And meant the price of livings more.
No plunder’d widow shriek’d for watchmen;
No Scotch slave crack’d of lofty Scotchmen;
No hireling, beggar-born in vain,
Talk’d of unwiring his champaign;
No glorious Constitution bless’d them;
No Borough’s Light-o’love caress’d them;
Unlike our wretches nick-named free,
(And truly free to toil and pay,
And die by famine’s sad decay.)
No fiend among them long’d to be
A negro slave, that he might flee
From pomp, scorn, hunger, liberty;
Unlike our saints, ’twas their delight
To wash repentant Ethiopés white;
Make purse-pride lick the beggar’s feet,
Who swept for daily bread the street;
Not flatter power, but punish wrong;
Not spurn the weak, but bend the strong.
Unenvious stood our hero, long
Gazing on that infernal throng;
For, with rebellious nostrils loth,
He snuff’d the fume of brimstone-broth;
Bad smell, I ween! for he in troth,
Puff’d back the dingy vapour slow,
And yearn’d for canny Edinbro’!
He cough’d amain, ’in fragrant pain;’
He held his nose, and cough’d again:
He curs’d the air so thick and hot,
And wish’d himself with Walter Scott,
Sir William Curtis, and the King,
Where round sirloin, in courtly ring,
A thousand chins were wagging all
Beneath the dome of festival.
Far, far, from Scotland’s feast, was he,
‘Mid scenes of woe, and shapes accurs’d,
And feasts are rare i’ th’ North Countree!
Yet, tho’ half choak’d, and ‘like to burst,’
Soon, less perturbed, he turn’d away
From those flame-breathers, to survey
The other wonders, sad and dire,
Of that tremendous hall of fire;
Terrific sights, which, soul subdu’d,
Mac Whisky, mute with horror, viewed.
Sweating, he cring’d and shudder’d there
To th’ point of every people’d hair;
His carcass, restless as the ocean,
Seem’d one grey sea, alive with motion;
While hell, – like ev’ry earthly region, –
Own’d that a Scotchman is a legion.

BOOK II.

Light! – But not thou, ‘etherial stream
Pure,’ whose divine remember’d beam
The bard of Eden hymn’d, with might
Almost than human more! – Hail, Light,
Infernal Light! hail, and for ever
Glow, like a tax-fed Tory’s liver!
Hail, and endure, like England’s debt,
That rock of power, unshaken yet,
And shaking all! – whether thou be
An effluence of divinity,
Or, self-existent, though unholy,
Kills virtue’s self with melancholy,
To think that evil, ever true
To evil, should be deathless, too;
Hail, and for aye illumine hell,
Still burning unconsumable!
For, though thou’rt dire to folks like me,
Some of our saints could ill spare thee;
And how, without my brimstone theme,
Could I through three books doze and dream,
And in this canto paint so weel
The Methyr Tidvil o’ the De’il?

Throughout the vast interior spread
In heaps, Mac Whisky saw the dead,
Stern fates’ innumerable hosts,
Huge piles of sin-atoning ghosts.
Tir’d demons plac’d, with practis’d art,
Each quality of souls apart,
O’er all the floor interminable;
The brittle, and the malleable,
The thin, the thick, the smooth, the rough,
The middle-cut, and very-tough;
While others to the furnace bore
Poor struggling souls, and shook and tore
Hot cinders from each scaly hide,
Then brought them out half purified;
Or, pincer-armed, with nice address
Annealing cold short consciences,
Drew forth, worm-red, a gripping crew,
And turn’d the hungry grey to blue.

Around, on every-hand, appear’d
Scenes, that from hearts to cinders scar’d
Might draw a Tory’s case-hard tear,
And wake to shricks his despot-fear.
Here, a tormenter wash’d, with fire,
A loyal game-protecting squire;
And told him, ‘twas a right manorial
Of tyrants, from time immemorial.

There a Right Reverend, just imported,
Heard himself call’d a rank dissenter;
Amazed, his slanderer he exhorted,
By meekly kicking the tormenter:
‘Ye dogs,’ he cried, ‘what right have you
To scald a bishop of Yahoo?
I will in Kingikin complain,
Where bishops do not sit in vain.'
But to his nose the demon blythe
Clapp’d a hot coke, and call’d it tythe,
Then held his tough sides lustily,
While Mitre yell’d ‘No popery!'

Him follow’d, demon-urged and faint,
A sort of advertising saint,
Or modern charitable knave,
Who seem’d to give more than he gave,
And made of charity a trade:
To hogwash for the poor, he paid;
And, while of want his neighbour died,
Sent books, to rot, o’er ocean wide.
Still for example sake gave he,
And not a doit in privacy.

Panting he carried on his back,
Of daily, weekly prints, a pack,
That made his holy sinews crack.
No wight was better known to fame;
In Sunday newspapers his name,
With saving virtues duly stuff’d,
Like a quack medicine, was puff’d:
He was an Ophir to saint-bribers
Who advertised their meek subscribers.
And his tormenters, sneering, swore
They truly wish’d for nothing more,
For that the moneys he had given,
Had purchas’d hell, if not brib’d heaven.

Then, tottering came, in alter’d form,
The pilot wise ‘who brought the storm:’
He, flame-baptiz’d, cut many a caper;
‘Water!’ he cried, - they gave him paper.
Next, mobb’d by Radicals, appear’d,
With fundamentals scorch’d and sear’d,
A sage well-wigg’d and eloquent,
From the new-found Southern Continent;
And while three imps, with caustic paw,
Curl’d crisp the learned wig of law,
Red as a turkey’s gill with fury,
He roar’d out for a Special Jury.
But the most abject wretch of all
Seem’d a patrician, broad as tall,
Fat, and yet famish’d: flesh and blood
With death seem’d struggling, as he stood:
‘Bread, for a dying man!’ he cried,
But none his urgent want supplied.
When paper-price, and war-demand,
Sad cot, full jail, and cheapen’d penny,
Had tempted him to ‘gage his land,
And sell his soul, - if he had any;
When tripled rents, and proven lies,
Ope’d the bedandied farmer’s eyes;
Who, borne no more on Arab steed,
Pawn’d even his dame’s strange silks for need;
When ruin’d trade, and stricken docket,
Made loyal merchants seek their brains,
And find them in an empty pocket;
When labour, robb’d of half his gains,
Sternly declar’d his right to live;
And still the horse-leech cried ‘Give! Give!
He then read Malthus, through and through,
And thought himself a Malthus, too,
For soon he found the truth untrue.
He prov’d that want is labour’s daughter;
That man’s divine ally is slaughter;
That public waste, which plain folks hate so,
Is caus’d by that vile root, potato;
That when folks starve, wise men should let them.
In hell the case was alter’d quite,
For every fiend could read and write.
He hunger’d, but he fed not there,
Thirsted, and drank the fiery air;
While, deaf as stones to his distress,
The rogues seem’d Tories, pitiless.
Last, with heart-wrung, heart-breaking air,
And long loose locks, and bended head,
Came one ‘who had no business there,’
Sad, silent, as the beauteous dead.
Taxation, war, and waste, had cloathed
Her husband in the rags he loathed;
Her infant on her breast had died,
Because that fount was unsupplied;  
Four other babes to her for food,  
Look’d up in vain. With curdling blood,  
The note her Edward forg’d, she paid,”  
And kiss’d her babes! then, undismay’d,  
And hand in hand, and side by side,  
While thousands sobb’d, with him she died;  
And thousands, in the breathless air,  
Mix’d with unutter’d curses pray’r.  
Now, pale as snow, but not appall’d,  
She gaz’d on scenes so strange; and call’d  
On Heav’n, to aid the orphan’d four,  
Who ne’er would see her sorrow more!

Aside the gloomy fiends all turn’d,  
To hide the tear that dropp’d and burn’d;  
When, lo, a shadow, angel-strong,  
Led by its little hand along  
A cherub, like a breathing flower!  
She look’d, she gasp’d, she lost all power  
Of motion, speech oppress’d with joy:  
They shriek, they rush; with rapture wild  
As th’ lightning’s glance, they fly, they meet,  
They mingle, in embraces sweet,  
Tears, smiles, and souls! then fade away,  
And melt into eternal day!  
Like wanderers who had lost their road,  
They seek their far, divine abode!

Swift, in the centre roll’d a wheel,  
By torrents urg’d of melted steel,  
(Than Teneriff or Etna higher,  
A rushing overshot of fire,)  
To which attach’d, a hammer rav’d,  
That rock’d the floor of hell fire-pav’d;  
While gnarled hearts, that could not melt,  
And ne’er a touch of pity felt,  
Receiv’d the oft-repeated stroke,  
And long endured, and never broke,  
Though stoutest devils tugg’d and swore,  
And turn’d the granite o’er and o’er:

Alas! ’twould make ev’n Satan pant,
To soften human adamant!
Reclin’d, and stern as turban’d Turk,
Watching the labourers at their work,
Lean’d one who, by his haughty air,
Was master of the demons there.
No king, by kinglings rul’d, he seem’d;
‘Legitimate’ on his forehead beam’d;
Yet seem’d his dark glance backward cast;
To him the present was the past.
Chain’d, in his soul sate passion’s force,
Pride, hate, regret, but not remorse;
And on his brow, which seem’d to ache,
Sad thought lay, like a coiled snake.
He long, unmov’d, the stranger saw,
Who stood aloof and pale in awe.
Slowly, at length, he rais’d his head,
With locks of cluster’d darkness spread;
And, in his calm and dreadful eye,
Undiadem’d regality
Seem’d yet heaven’s rival, and prepar’d
(Though not for war on heav’n,) to guard
Hell, ev’n in chains, and aim a brand
At all assault. With beckoning hand,
He call’d the stranger, who obey’d;
Then on his wame his left hand laid,
And, on his haunches rear’d, seem’d tall
As ‘mast of some great admiral;’

While from his princely lips forthcame
The soundless words, the speech of flame.*
Thus, with his guest, sans hesitation,
The devil join’d in conversation.

[...]

SATAN.
Is England like a barren waste,
Compar’d with Scotland?
MAC WHISKEY.
A mere bog.

SATAN.
What are the English like?
MAC WHISKEY.
The hog,
The rat, the spaniel, and the frog.

SATAN.
What said Mac ‘Lofty’ Slave, and lied?
What wasn’t the kettle call’d the pot?
‘Sot! is Dick Surgeon sent for?’ cried
Sir Toby, drunk; ‘I hate a sot!’

MAC WHISKY.
Wallowing through life in sordid mire,
Still each dull son excels his sire.
We sell boos, but to get them given,
Then kick all beggars, and are even:

The English pray,
And toil, and pay,
Slaves, without brains, that boo unbought,
We also boo, but not for nought.

SATAN.
What do they breathe, – air, or Scotch mist?

MAC WHISKY.
Sire, they breathe pork.

SATAN.
Trav’ler? Desist –
Here, knight o’ the hoof, such tales wont do,
Ye ken, mon, we have travell’d too.

MAC WHISKY.
Then, I am bound t’ exhibit here
A chop o’ th’ English atmosphere,
Which folks of Paris would declare
To be a true beef-steak of air.
With this good whittle, I mysel’
Cut it fra th’ lump, and scrap’d it well,
Resolv’d I would present it to
Your highness, – which I’m proud to do.
Why marvel, sire! In Hallamshire,
A wee bit distric’ west o’ York,
Are cubic miles o’ sic like pork.
‘Tis yours, sire! and, as I’m a sinner,
‘Tis genuine! Get it cook’d for dinner.
Laughing at Satan’s horse-like stare,
He show’d his slice of Sheffield air.
And ne’er liv’d wight, that lov’d to smile,
Who would not e’en have hopp’d a mile
To see the changes that took place
In the astonish’d demon’s face,
While, – gazing on what seem’d in hue,
And shape, the sole of some old shoe, –
He turn’d from dusky red to blue, –
From blue to tawny white, – and then
From white to dusky red again;
Until, at last, his angry grey
Flash’d, and in tempest roll’d away.
But our Third Canto shall display
(In lines, good reader, we assure thee,
Worth more than twice their weight in brass,)
What hell’s wise prince did in his fury,
And what hereafter came to pass.

BOOK III.

Noo will I sniff ye this once more,
Athenians! and my labour’s o’er:
Oh, let the savour o’ ye gang
Down through my wame, and mak’ me strang,
That I may stoutly end this sang!
How can I, poor in verse, refuse
Th’ assistance of the fragrant Muse?
I am no Scotchman, wise by birth,
And sure of praise, tho’ nothing worth;
I’m one, not many, and no slave;
And (tho’ a bard by right divine,) I praise no dunce, – I bribe no knave, –
I scribble in no magazine;
Nor have I Wordsworth’s power to sing
Of pedlars, ‘and that sort of thing’
But I have got a place i’ th’ Indies,
Where no Scotch perfume in the wind is;
Therefore, I hail thee once again,
Sweet Scotia’s Athens and Cockaigne!

[...]

... poor Mac Whisky, pale as lead,
Awaked, in diuretic dread,
Tho’ wet, quite sound in wind and limb;
No fiend had dar’d to injure him:
They had not singed a single hair,
But he had rubb’d his knuckles bare.
   Wondering to find himself beside
   The heath-bell sweet, on Hallam wide,
   He started up, and sought in fear
   His slice o’ th’ Sheffield atmosphere,
   Which finding safe, well pleas’d he smil’d;
Then – grunting in his iron gizzard,
   “Boo, ‘lofty’ Scot! starvation is hard!”
   He with a true Scotch tune beguil’d
   His not unsocial way.
’Twas now the dewy close of day;
   The thrrostle sung his love-taught lay,
   While flow’d in gold the rill;
   The toil’d horse graz’d ungirth’d and free;
   And, from his throned royalty,
   The sun stoop’d to the hill.
And, lo! along the moorland ridge,
   The mountain cotter’s smoke ascends!
Lo, e’er the Loxley’s one-arch’d bridge,
   A giant’s shadow bends!
But when from cave and copse outflew
   The owl, on felon wing;
   When purple meeken’d into blue
   O’er plaintive Riviling;
   When twilight, from the Druid grove,
   Repaid the woodbine with a tear,
And linger’d fondly o’er her love,
Because the parting time was near;
He then, with Nature, clos’d his eye,
His cares, hopes, dreams, at once, forgot,
   And, at the flask and porridge-pot,
   Rested with all his company.

THE END.