

VI

CONFESSIONAL
POEMS

Confessional Poems

PREFACE

FROM EARLY MIDDLE AGE, Coleridge slowly began to produce a new poetry of confession and "allegoric" revelation quite unlike anything he had previously written. It could be called the poetry of his "darker self", with an inward, metaphysical quality that is wholly new. All sorts of personal anxieties and spiritual doubts, previously unsuspected (although going right back to childhood) begin to surface in its strange and difficult imagery (see "Limbo", No. 68).

This is probably the least known, and certainly the least appreciated, part of Coleridge's work. It is ignored by almost all modern criticism, by most contemporary anthologies, and also perhaps by many young readers who do not like the idea of the Romantic poet growing old. But the troubling visitations of the young self upon the old self are one of Coleridge's most piercing and repeated motifs (see "Phantom or Fact", No. 71).

Even though these fifteen poems are scattered over more than thirty years, between 1802 and Coleridge's death in 1834, they form as distinctive a group as the Conversation Poems, and have a similar autobiographical thread. Two of the families who supported Coleridge in the "dark years", after the break up of the Lake District household, are significant if shadowy presences: the Morgans (see "To Two Sisters", No. 61) and the Gillmans of Highgate (see "The Garden of Boccaccio", No. 70). The difference is that the autobiography is now introverted and lacks a familiar external landscape. Instead, the new psychological inwardness is expressed in the repeated use of "allegories": projected scenes of self-confrontation or self-discovery, which Coleridge describes as "moving Masquerades" or "emblems" (see "Hope and Time", No. 64). Images of reflection — moons, mirrors, shadows, doubles, dreams — are frequent. Coleridge's conversations are held with himself, or between versions of himself (see the doubled titles, "Hope and Time", "Youth and

Age", "Phantom or Fact"), and so the new confessional form emerges.

Collected here as a sequence, there are no unfinished fragments and several sustained poems of considerable length (see "The Garden of Boccaccio", No. 70). Many of the poems were evidently worked on and returned to over more than a decade (see "The Pang More Sharp Than All", No. 63), and show Coleridge's consistent and painstaking workmanship. (A touching emblem of this can be found elsewhere in the little fragment, "The Yellow Hammer", No. 83.) Altogether they form a "confession" of more than five hundred lines of verse, which is almost as long as "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (No. 32) and in its way no less dramatic.

It could be argued that the real subject of Coleridge's confession is his prolonged and self-destructive opium addiction. This addiction was well-established by the winter of 1802 (see "The Pains of Sleep", No. 60); by 1811 it had brought him to professional breakdown and personal despair (see "The Suicide's Argument", No. 65). Despite repeated attempts to break its hold, his unhappy personal life always drove him back to it (see "The Visionary Hope", No. 66). It was only partly brought under control, after 1816, by his confidante and friend, the surgeon James Gillman, at Highgate (see "Limbo", No. 68) though the threat of a relapse into severe addiction remained with him as late as 1828 (see "The Garden of Boccaccio", No. 70).

But what unifies these poems at a far deeper level is Coleridge's long struggle with mental depression. The experience of depression is itself an almost defining characteristic of the Romantic mind, closely connected with an increase in solitary self-awareness and a decrease in religious faith. The language to describe it actually changed at this period, from the antique "hypochondria" and "melancholy" (used by Boswell and Keats), to the modern "dejection" and "depressed spirits" (used by Coleridge and Shelley).

Coleridge had identified a large theme. Depression of some kind is now a common experience for most people at some point in their lives, and not necessarily in old age. Psychologists also presume to say that it is almost universal for creative artists. Coleridge's Confessional Poems examine depression in many ways, describing it variously as the loss of spiritual "Hope" (Nos. 64, 66), the loss of human "Love" (Nos. 63, 72) and the loss of inner creative power (Nos. 62, 70). In one of his most subtle, allegoric pieces, he describes it memorably as the loss of the "magic Child" within the adult's "secret heart" (see No. 63).

It is this terrible sense of dissolving identity, of powerlessness, of dispersing energy and joy, which seems to lie at the heart of the Confessional Poems. (The concept of "negative" energy, and "negation" is also recurrent.) Against it, Coleridge invokes an elusive but persistent metaphysic of "Hope", as a fundamental force in both the natural and moral universe (see No. 66). The theme clearly grows out of "Dejection: An Ode" (No. 50), but it is pursued much further and, significantly, with greater courage. Though there are often strong elements of self-pity, the prevailing tone is one of bleak and bitter realism, frequently touched with a certain self-mockery.

On the whole these are poems of doubt and dark reflection: mature, sombre, and self-questioning. They include some of Coleridge's most dense, speculative metaphysical poetry, such as the double-sonnet "Human Life" (No. 67), and his most desperate religious poems such as "Epitaph" (No. 73). But there is also a thin, persistent silvery thread of light-verse, which produces odd atonal effects, like "An Ode to the Rain" (No. 59), and "A Tombless Epitaph" (No. 62). It also produces, towards the end, a playful bitter-sweet masterpiece like "Youth and Age" (No. 69). It would be quite wrong to think that, as a poet, Coleridge never escaped from his depression. (On the theme of joyful escape, see "The Delinquent Travellers", No. 101.)

An Ode to the Rain

COMPOSED BEFORE DAYLIGHT, ON THE MORNING
 APPOINTED FOR THE DEPARTURE OF A VERY WORTHY,
 BUT NOT VERY PLEASANT VISITOR,
 WHOM IT WAS FEARED THE RAIN MIGHT DETAIN

I

I know it is dark; and though I have lain,
 Awake, as I guess, an hour or twain,
 I have not once opened the lids of my eyes,
 But I lie in the dark, as a blind man lies.

O Rain! that I lie listening to,
 You're but a doleful sound at best:

I owe you little thanks, 'tis true,
 For breaking thus my needful rest!

Yet if, as soon as it is light,

O Rain! you will but take your flight,
 I'll neither rail, nor malice keep,
 Though sick and sore for want of sleep.

But only now, for this one day,
 Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

II

O Rain! with your dull two-fold sound,
 The clash hard by, and the murmur all round!

You know, if you know aught, that we,
 Both night and day, but ill agree:

For days and months, and almost years,
 Have limped on through this vale of tears,

Since body of mine, and rainy weather,
 Have lived on easy terms together.

Yet if, as soon as it is light,

O Rain! you will but take your flight,
 Though you should come again to-morrow,

And bring with you both pain and sorrow;
 Though stomach should sicken and knees should swell —

I'll nothing speak of you but well.
But only now for this one day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

30

III

Dear Rain! I ne'er refused to say
You're a good creature in your way;
Nay, I could write a book myself,
Would fit a parson's lower shelf,
Showing how very good you are. —
What then? sometimes it must be fair
And if sometimes, why not to-day?
Do go, dear Rain! do go away!

35

IV

Dear Rain! if I've been cold and shy,
Take no offence! I'll tell you why.
A dear old Friend e'en now is here,
And with him came my sister dear;
After long absence now first met,
Long months by pain and grief beset —
We three dear friends! in truth, we groan
Impatiently to be alone.
We three, you mark! and not one more!
The strong wish makes my spirit sore.
We have so much to talk about,
So many sad things to let out;
So many tears in our eye-corners,
Sitting like little Jacky Horners —
In short, as soon as it is day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away.

40

45

50

V

And this I'll swear to you, dear Rain!
Whenever you shall come again,
Be you as dull as e'er you could
(And by the bye 'tis understood,
You're not so pleasant as you're good),

55

Yet, knowing well your worth and place,
I'll welcome you with cheerful face;
And though you stayed a week or more,
Were ten times duller than before;
Yet with kind heart, and right good will,
I'll sit and listen to you still;
Nor should you go away, dear Rain!
Uninvited to remain.
But only now, for this one day,
Do go, dear Rain! do go away.

60

65

The Pains of Sleep

Ere on my bed my limbs I lay,
 It hath not been my use to pray
 With moving lips or bended knees;
 But silently, by slow degrees,
 My spirit I to Love compose, 5
 In humble trust mine eye-lids close,
 With reverential resignation,
 No wish conceived, no thought exprest,
 Only a sense of supplication;
 A sense o'er all my soul imprest 10
 That I am weak, yet not unblest,
 Since in me, round me, every where
 Eternal Strength and Wisdom are.

But yester-night I prayed aloud
 In anguish and in agony, 15
 Up-starting from the fiendish crowd
 Of shapes and thoughts that tortured me:
 A lurid light, a trampling throng,
 Sense of intolerable wrong,
 And whom I scorned, those only strong! 20
 Thirst of revenge, the powerless will
 Still baffled, and yet burning still!
 Desire with loathing strangely mixed
 On wild or hateful objects fixed.
 Fantastic passions! maddening brawl! 25
 And shame and terror over all!
 Deeds to be hid which were not hid,
 Which all confused I could not know
 Whether I suffered, or I did:
 For all seemed guilt, remorse or woe, 30
 My own or others still the same
 Life-stifling fear, soul-stifling shame.

So two nights passed: the night's dismay
Saddened and stunned the coming day.
Sleep, the wide blessing, seemed to me
35
Distemper's worst calamity.
The third night, when my own loud scream
Had waked me from the fiendish dream,
O'ercome with sufferings strange and wild,
40
I wept as I had been a child;
And having thus by tears subdued
My anguish to a milder mood,
Such punishments, I said, were due
To natures deepliest stained with sin, —
45
For aye entempesting anew
The unfathomable hell within,
The horror of their deeds to view,
To know and loathe, yet wish and do!
Such griefs with such men well agree,
50
But wherefore, wherefore fall on me?
To be beloved is all I need,
And whom I love, I love indeed.

To Two Sisters

To know, to esteem, to love, — and then to part —
 Makes up life's tale to many a feeling heart;
 Alas for some abiding-place of love,
 O'er which my spirit, like the mother dove,
 Might brood with warming wings!

O fair! O kind! 5

Sisters in blood, yet each with each intertwined
 More close by sisterhood of heart and mind!
 Me disinherited in form and face
 By nature, and mishap of outward grace;
 Who, soul and body, through one guiltless fault 10
 Waste daily with the poison of sad thought,
 Me did you soothe, when solace hoped I none!
 And as on unthaw'd ice the winter sun,
 Though stern the frost, though brief the genial day,
 You bless my heart with many a cheerful ray; 15
 For gratitude suspends the heart's despair,
 Reflecting bright though cold your image there.
 Nay more! its music by some sweeter strain
 Makes us live o'er our happiest hours again,
 Hope re-appearing dim in memory's guise — 20
 Even thus did you call up before mine eyes
 Two dear, dear Sisters, prized all price above,
 Sisters, like you, with more than sisters' love;
 So like you *they*, and so in *you* were seen
 Their relative statures, tempers, looks, and mien, 25
 That oft, dear ladies! you have been to me
 At once a vision and reality.
 Sight seem'd a sort of memory, and amaze
 Mingled a trouble with affection's gaze.

Off to my eager soul I whisper blame, 30
 A Stranger bid it feel the Stranger's shame —
 My eager soul, impatient of the name,

No strangeness owns, no Stranger's form descries:
The chidden heart spreads trembling on the eyes.
First-seen I gazed, as I would look you thro'! 35
My best-beloved regain'd their youth in you, —
And still I ask, though now familiar grown,
Are you for *their* sakes dear, or for your own?
O doubly dear! may Quiet with you dwell!

In Grief I love you, yet I love you well! 40
Hope long is dead to me! an orphan's tear
Love wept despairing o'er his nurse's bier.
Yet still she flutters o'er her grave's green slope:
For Love's despair is but the ghost of Hope!

Sweet Sisters! were you placed around one hearth 45
With those, your other selves in shape and worth,
Far rather would I sit in solitude,
Fond recollections all my fond heart's food,
And dream of *you*, sweet Sisters! (ah! not mine!)
And only *dream* of you (ah! dream and pine!) 50
Than boast the presence and partake the pride,
And shine in the eye, of all the world beside.

A Tombless Epitaph

'Tis true, Idoloclastes Satyrane!
 (So call him, for so mingling blame with praise,
 And smiles with anxious looks, his earliest friends,
 Masking his birth-name, wont to character
 His wild-wood fancy and impetuous zeal,) 5

'Tis true that, passionate for ancient truths,
 And honouring with religious love the Great
 Of elder times, he hated to excess,
 With an unquiet and intolerant scorn,
 The hollow Puppets of a hollow Age, 10
 Ever idolatrous, and changing ever
 Its worthless Idols! Learning, Power, and Time,
 (Too much of all) thus wasting in vain war
 Of fervid colloquy. Sickness, 'tis true,
 Whole years of weary days, besieged him close, 15
 Even to the gates and inlets of his life!
 But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,
 And with a natural gladness, he maintained
 The citadel unconquered, and in joy
 Was strong to follow the delightful Muse. 20
 For not a hidden path, that to the shades
 Of the beloved Parnassian forest leads,
 Lurked undiscovered by him; not a rill
 There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,
 But he had traced it upward to its source, 25
 Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,
 Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and culled
 Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,
 Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,
 The haunt obscure of old Philosophy, 30
 He bade with lifted torch its starry walls
 Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame
 Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.
 O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts!

O studious Poet, eloquent for truth! 35
Philosopher! contemning wealth and death,
Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love!
Here, rather than on monumental stone,
This record of thy worth thy Friend inscribes,
Thoughtful, with quiet tears upon his cheek. 40

The Pang More Sharp Than All

AN ALLEGORY

I

He too has flitted from his secret nest,
 Hope's last and dearest child without a name! —
 Has flitted from me, like the warmthless flame,
 That makes false promise of a place of rest
 To the tired Pilgrim's still believing mind; — 5
 Or like some Elfin Knight in kingly court,
 Who having won all guerdons in his sport,
 Glides out of view, and whither none can find!

II

Yes! he hath flitted from me — with what aim,
 Or why, I know not! 'Twas a home of bliss, 10
 And he was innocent, as the pretty shame
 Of babe, that tempts and shuns the menaced kiss,
 From its twy-cluster'd hiding place of snow!
 Pure as the babe, I ween, and all aglow
 As the dear hopes, that swell the mother's breast — 15
 Her eyes down gazing o'er her claspéd charge; —
 Yet gay as that twice happy father's kiss,
 That well might glance aside, yet never miss,
 Where the sweet mark emboss'd so sweet a targe —
 Twice wretched he who hath been doubly blest! 20

III

Like a loose blossom on a gusty night
 He flitted from me — and has left behind
 (As if to them his faith he ne'er did plight)
 Of either sex and answerable mind
 Two playmates, twin-births of his foster-dame: — 25
 The one a steady lad (Esteem he hight)
 And Kindness is the gentler sister's name.
 Dim likeness now, though fair she be and good,

Of that bright Boy who hath us all forsook; –
But in his full-eyed aspect when she stood, 30
And while her face reflected every look,
And in reflection kindled – she became
So like Him, that almost she seem'd the same!

IV

Ah! he is gone, and yet will not depart! –
Is with me still, yet I from him exiled! 35
For still there lives within my secret heart
The magic image of the magic Child,
Which there he made up-grow by his strong art,
As in that crystal orb – wise Merlin's feat, –
The wondrous "World of Glass," wherein inisled 40
All long'd-for things their beings did repeat; –
And there he left it, like a Sylph beguiled,
To live and yearn and languish incomplete!

V

Can wit of man a heavier grief reveal?
Can sharper pang from hate or scorn arise? – 45
Yes! one more sharp there is that deeper lies,
Which fond Esteem but mocks when he would heal.
Yet neither scorn nor hate did it devise,
But sad compassion and atoning zeal!
One pang more blighting-keen than hope betray'd! 50
And this it is my woeful hap to feel,
When, at her Brother's hest, the twin-born Maid
With face averted and unsteady eyes,
Her truant playmate's faded robe puts on;
And inly shrinking from her own disguise 55
Enacts the faery Boy that's lost and gone.
O worse than all! O pang all pangs above
Is Kindness counterfeiting absent Love!

Hope and Time

In the great City rear'd, my fancy rude
 By natural Forms unnurs'd and unsubdued
 An Alien from the Rivers and the Fields
 And all the Charms, that Hill or Woodland yields,
 It was the pride and passion of my Youth 5
 T' impersonate and color moral Truth:
 Rare Allegories in those Days I spun,
 That oft had mystic senses oft'ner none.
 Of all Resemblances however faint,
 So dear a Lover was I, that with quaint 10
 Figures fantastically grouped I made
 Of commonest Thoughts a moving Masquerade.
 'Twas then I fram'd this obscure uncouth Rhyme,
 A sort of Emblem 'tis of HOPE and TIME.

In ancient Days, but when I have not read, 15
 Nor know I, where — but 'twas some elfish Place—
 Their pennons, ostrich-like for Sails outspread,
 Two wingéd Children run an endless Race—
 A Sister and a Brother!
 But HOPE outruns the other— 20
 Yet ever flies she with reverted Face,
 And looks and listens for the Boy behind:
 Time is his Name — and he, alas! is blind,
 With regular Step o'er rough and smooth he passed,
 And knows not whether he is first or last. 25

The Suicide's Argument

Ere the birth of my life, if I wished it or no,
 No question was asked me – it could not be so!
 If the life was the question, a thing sent to try,
 And to live on be Yes; what can No be? to die.

NATURE'S ANSWER

Is't returned, as 'twas sent? Is't no worse for the wear? 5
 Think first, what you are! Call to mind what you were!
 I gave you innocence, I gave you hope,
 Gave health, and genius, and an ample scope.
 Return you me guilt, lethargy, despair?
 Make out the invent'ry; inspect, compare! 10
 Then die – if die you dare!

Human Life

ON THE DENIAL OF IMMORTALITY

If dead, we cease to be; if total gloom
 Swallow up life's brief flash for aye, we fare
 As summer-gusts, of sudden birth and doom,
 Whose sound and motion not alone declare,
 But are their whole of being! If the breath
 Be Life itself, and not its task and tent,
 If even a soul like Milton's can know death;
 O Man! thou vessel purposeless, unmeant,
 Yet drone-hive strange of phantom purposes!
 Surplus of Nature's dread activity,
 Which, as she gazed on some nigh-finished vase,
 Retreating slow, with meditative pause,
 She formed with restless hands unconsciously.
 Blank accident! nothing's anomaly!

If rootless thus, thus substanceless thy state,
 Go, weigh thy dreams, and be thy hopes, thy fears,
 The counter-weights! — Thy laughter and thy tears
 Mean but themselves, each fittest to create
 And to repay the other! Why rejoices
 Thy heart with hollow joy for hollow good?
 Why cowl thy face beneath the mourner's hood?
 Why waste thy sighs, and thy lamenting voices,
 Image of Image, Ghost of Ghostly Elf,
 That such a thing as thou feel'st warm or cold?
 Yet what and whence thy gain, if thou withhold
 These costless shadows of thy shadowy self?
 Be sad! be glad! be neither! seek, or shun!
 Thou hast no reason why! Thou canst have none;
 Thy being's being is contradiction.

Limbo

'Tis a strange place, this Limbo! – not a Place,
 Yet name it so; – where Time and weary Space
 Fettered from flight, with night-mare sense of fleeing,
 Strive for their last crepuscular half-being, –
 Lank Space, and scytheless Time with branny hands 5
 Barren and soundless as the measuring sands,
 Not mark'd by flit of Shades, – unmeaning they
 As moonlight on the dial of the day!

But that is lovely – looks like human Time, –
 An Old Man with a steady look sublime, 10
 That stops his earthly task to watch the skies;
 But he is blind – a statue hath such eyes; –
 Yet having moonward turn'd his face by chance,
 Gazes the orb with moon-like countenance,
 With scant white hairs, with foretop bald and high, 15
 He gazes still, – his eyeless face all eye; –
 As 'twere an organ full of silent sight,
 His whole face seemeth to rejoice in light! –
 Lip touching lip, all moveless, bust and limb –
 He seems to gaze at that which seems to gaze on him! 20

No such sweet sights doth Limbo den immure,
 Wall'd round, and made a spirit-jail secure,
 By the mere horror of blank Naught-at-all,
 Whose circumambience doth these ghosts enthrall.
 A lurid thought is growthless, dull Privation, 25
 Yet that is but a Purgatory curse;
 Hell knows a fear far worse,
 A fear – a future state; – 'tis positive Negation!

Youth and Age

Verse, a breeze mid blossoms straying,
 Where Hope clung feeding, like a bee –
 Both were mine! Life went a-maying
 With Nature, Hope, and Poesy,
 When I was young! 5
 When I was young? – Ah, woful When!
 Ah! for the change 'twixt Now and Then!
 This breathing house not built with hands,
 This body that does me grievous wrong,
 O'er aery cliffs and glittering sands, 10
 How lightly then it flashed along: –
 Like those trim skiffs, unknown of yore,
 On winding lakes and rivers wide,
 That ask no aid of sail or oar,
 That fear no spite of wind or tide! 15
 Nought cared this body for wind or weather
 When Youth and I lived in't together.

Flowers are lovely; Love is flower-like;
 Friendship is a sheltering tree;
 O! the joys, that came down shower-like, 20
 Of Friendship, Love, and Liberty,
 Ere I was old!

Ere I was old? Ah woful Ere,
 Which tells me, Youth's no longer here!
 O Youth! for years so many and sweet, 25
 'Tis known, that Thou and I were one,
 I'll think it but a fond conceit –
 It cannot be that Thou art gone!
 Thy vesper-bell hath not yet toll'd: –
 And thou wert aye a masker bold! 30
 What strange disguise hast now put on,
 To make believe, that thou art gone?
 I see these locks in silvery slips,

This drooping gait, this altered size:
But Spring-tide blossoms on thy lips, 35
And tears take sunshine from thine eyes!
Life is but thought: so think I will
That Youth and I are house-mates still.

Dew-drops are the gems of morning,
But the tears of mournful eve! 40
Where no Hope is, life's a warning
That only serves to make us grieve,

When we are old:

That only serves to make us grieve
With oft and tedious taking-leave, 45
Like some poor nigh-related guest,
That may not rudely be dismiss;
Yet hath outstay'd his welcome while,
And tells the jest without the smile.

The Garden of Boccaccio

Of late, in one of those most weary hours,
 When life seems emptied of all genial powers,
 A dreary mood, which he who ne'er has known
 May bless his happy lot, I sate alone;
 And, from the numbing spell to win relief, 5
 Call'd on the Past for thought of glee or grief.
 In vain! bereft alike of grief and glee,
 I sate and cow'r'd o'er my own vacancy!
 And as I watch'd the dull continuous ache,
 Which, all else slumb'ring, seem'd alone to wake; 10
 O Friend! long wont to notice yet conceal,
 And soothe by silence what words cannot heal,
 I but half saw that quiet hand of thine
 Place on my desk this exquisite design.
 Boccaccio's Garden and its faery, 15
 The love, the joyance, and the gallantry!
 An Idyll, with Boccaccio's spirit warm,
 Framed in the silent poesy of form.

Like flocks adown a newly-bathéd steep
 Emerging from a mist: or like a stream 20
 Of music soft that not dispels the sleep,
 But casts in happier moulds the slumberer's dream,
 Gazed by an idle eye with silent might
 The picture stole upon my inward sight.
 A tremulous warmth crept gradual o'er my chest, 25
 As though an infant's finger touch'd my breast.
 And one by one (I know not whence) were brought
 All spirits of power that most had stirr'd my thought
 In selfless boyhood, on a new world tost
 Of wonder, and in its own fancies lost; 30
 Or charm'd my youth, that, kindled from above,
 Loved ere it loved, and sought a form for love;
 Or lent a lustre to the earnest scan

Of manhood, musing what and whence is man!
 Wild strain of Scalds, that in the sea-worn caves 35
 Rehearsed their war-spell to the winds and waves;
 Or fateful hymn of those prophetic maids,
 That call'd on Hertha in deep forest glades;
 Or minstrel lay, that cheer'd the baron's feast;
 Or rhyme of city pomp, of monk and priest, 40
 Judge, mayor, and many a guild in long array,
 To high-church pacing on the great saint's day:
 And many a verse which to myself I sang,
 That woke the tear, yet stole away the pang
 Of hopes, which in lamenting I renew'd: 45
 And last, a matron now, of sober mien,
 Yet radiant still and with no earthly sheen,
 Whom as a faery child my childhood woo'd
 Even in my dawn of thought – Philosophy;
 Though then unconscious of herself, pardie, 50
 She bore no other name than Poesy;
 And, like a gift from heaven, in life's glee,
 That had but newly left a mother's knee,
 Prattled and play'd with bird and flower, and stone,
 As if with elfin playfellows well known, 55
 And life reveal'd to innocence alone.

Thanks, gentle artist! now I can descry
 Thy fair creation with a mastering eye,
 And all awake! And now in fix'd gaze stand,
 Now wander through the Eden of thy hand; 60
 Praise the green arches, on the fountain clear
 See fragment shadows of the crossing deer;
 And with that serviceable nymph I stoop,
 The crystal, from its restless pool, to scoop.
 I see no longer! I myself am there, 65
 Sit on the ground-sward, and the banquet share.
 'Tis I, that sweep that lute's love-echoing strings,
 And gaze upon the maid who gazing sings:
 Or pause and listen to the tinkling bells
 From the high tower, and think that there she dwells. 70
 With old Boccaccio's soul I stand possess'd,
 And breathe an air like life, that swells my chest.
 The brightness of the world, O thou once free,

And always fair, rare land of courtesy!
 O Florence! with the Tuscan fields and hills 75
 And famous Arno, fed with all their rills;
 Thou brightest star of star-bright Italy!
 Rich, ornate, populous, — all treasures thine,
 The golden corn, the olive, and the vine.
 Fair cities, gallant mansions, castles old, 80
 And forests, where beside his leafy hold
 The sullen boar hath heard the distant horn,
 And whets his tusks against the gnarléd thorn;
 Palladian palace with its storied halls;
 Fountains, where Love lies listening to their falls; 85
 Gardens, where flings the bridge its airy span,
 And Nature makes her happy home with man;
 Where many a gorgeous flower is duly fed
 With its own rill, on its own spangled bed,
 And wreathes the marble urn, or leans its head, 90
 A mimic mourner, that with veil withdrawn
 Weeps liquid gems, the presents of the dawn; —
 Thine all delights, and every muse is thine;
 And more than all, the embrace and intertwine
 Of all with all in gay and twinkling dance! 95
 Mid gods of Greece and warriors of romance,
 See! Boccace sits, unfolding on his knees
 The new-found roil of old Mæonides;
 But from his mantle's fold, and near the heart,
 Peers Ovid's Holy Book of Love's sweet smart! 100
 O all-enjoying and all-blending sage,
 Long be it mine to con thy mazy page,
 Where, half conceal'd, the eye of fancy views
 Fauns, nymphs, and wingéd saints, all gracious to thy muse!

 Still in thy garden let me watch their pranks, 105
 And see in Dian's vest between the ranks
 Of the trim vines, some maid that half believes
 The vestal fires, of which her lover grieves,
 With that sly satyr peeping through the leaves!

Phantom or Fact

A DIALOGUE IN VERSE

AUTHOR

A lovely form there sate beside my bed,
 And such a feeding calm its presence shed,
 A tender love so pure from earthly leaven,
 That I unnethe the fancy might control,
 'Twas my own spirit newly come from heaven, 5
 Wooing its gentle way into my soul!
 But ah! the change – It had not stirr'd, and yet –
 Alas! that change how fain would I forget!
 That shrinking back, like one that had mistook!
 That weary, wandering, disavowing look! 10
 'Twas all another, feature, look, and frame,
 And still, methought, I knew, it was the same!

FRIEND

This riddling tale, to what does it belong?
 Is't history? vision? or an idle song?
 Or rather say at once, within what space 15
 Of time this wild disastrous change took place?

AUTHOR

Call it a moment's work (and such it seems)
 This tale's a fragment from the life of dreams;
 But say, that years matur'd the silent strife,
 And 'tis a record from the dream of life. 20

Love's Apparition and Evanishment

AN ALLEGORIC ROMANCE

Like a lone Arab, old and blind,
 Some caravan had left behind,
 Who sits beside a ruin'd well,
 Where the shy sand-asps bask and swell;
 And now he hangs his aged head aslant, 5
 And listens for a human sound – in vain!
 And now the aid, which Heaven alone can grant,
 Upturns his eyeless face from Heaven to gain;
 Even thus, in vacant mood, one sultry hour,
 Resting my eye upon a drooping plant, 10
 With brow low bent, within my garden-bower,
 I sate upon the couch of camomile;
 And – whether 'twas a transient sleep, perchance,
 Flitted across the idle brain, the while
 I watch'd the sickly calm with aimless scope, 15
 In my own heart; or that, indeed a trance,
 Turn'd my eye inward – thee, O genial Hope,
 Love's elder sister! thee did I behold,
 Drest as a bridesmaid, but all pale and cold,
 With roseless cheek, all pale and cold and dim, 20
 Lie lifeless at my feet!
 And then came Love, a sylph in bridal trim,
 And stood beside my seat;
 She bent, and kissed her sister's lips,
 As she was wont to do; – 25
 Alas! 'twas but a chilling breath
 Woke just enough of life in death
 To make Hope die anew.

Epitaph

Stop, Christian passer-by! – Stop, child of God,
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod
A poet lies, or that which once seem'd he.
O, lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.;

5
That he who many a year with toil of breath
Found death in life, may here find life in death!
Mercy for praise – to be forgiven for fame
He ask'd, and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same!