

VII

VISIONARY
FRAGMENTS

Visionary Fragments

PREFACE

COLERIDGE IS THE GREAT master of the creative fragment. He can almost be said to have turned it into a literary form of its own, with as much authenticity as the conversation poem or the ballad. A great deal of his criticism, too, is most powerful in the fragmentary state: the marginal note in his essays, the sudden detached image in the *Biographia Literaria* or *The Friend*, the many volumes of "Marginalia" themselves, or the sudden aside in his Shakespearean Lectures (as the famous remark on Hamlet's silence, "Suppression prepares for overflow", which could be said to contain all Freud).

But what exactly is a Coleridgean fragment? It might be simply a small and haphazard piece of unfinished work, like the jotting from an artist's sketchbook, and several of these are contained in this group, such as "The Knight's Tomb" (No. 85) or "The Netherlands" (No. 92). They have their own particular interest, giving us a sense of Coleridge's "workshop", the way he played with the sound of language, or caught at particular atmospheres in a landscape. The connection between musicality, mood and emotion emerges as unusually important to him, as shown in the two contrasted "Songs" (Nos. 87, 88), and the "Four Metrical Experiments" (No. 86).

But the Coleridgean fragment more often contains the idea or seed for some much larger construction. This is what is implied by "visionary". It is the small unfinished piece, which somehow implies a huge completed opus. Like the carefully designed "ruin" in an eighteenth-century park, it is a powerfully Romantic form of architectural suggestion or evocation, in which the visible part suggests the invisible whole. The finest example of this is "Kubla Khan" (No. 74), which Coleridge explicitly says was originally "not less than from two to three hundred lines": he cannot recall the whole, but we are magically led to believe that it is there.

Coleridge became fascinated in later life with the psychology of

creativity, and the mechanism of inspiration. He added prose prefaces to previously abandoned poems, and published them as specimens of this kind of creative fragment (see Nos. 74, 75, 77, 90). Like "Kubla Khan", they are presented as "psychological curiosities".

Coleridge is fascinated by the way that the creative powers work, but also how they fail to work. His Notebooks show that he had a strikingly modern idea of creativity coming from an "unconscious" part of the mind, and once described consciousness as the "narrow neck" of a vast bottle in which memory and imagination floated. In the preface to "Kubla Khan" he describes this poetic unconscious as being accessible in a "state of reverie", and capable of composing a long poem without conscious effort or control. But it can also be closed off from the powers of recollection, like a ruffled pool of water losing an image from its surface.

Similar problems of conscious recollection, and lost inspiration, are described in the preface to "The Wanderings of Cain" (No. 75). And in the preface to "The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree" (No. 77), Coleridge wistfully asks for some younger poet to recover his inspiration for him, and turn the prose notes back into poetry. Another, light-hearted account of a poem's inspiration appears in "Aria Spontanea" (No. 90), where Coleridge merely gives a fragment of "the music", and then vividly describes how it first came to him, like a bumble bee whirring over the top of Quantock. "Ars Poetica" (No. 89) gives a more analytical account of the conscious, shaping imagination at work, by "transforming" a piece of flat, descriptive verse into an emotive image.

In this way Coleridge's fragments bring us as close as we can get to the threshold of the creative process itself. Coleridge tended to associate it, at least metaphorically, with the action of flowing water or with the free flight of birds. Throughout his letters and Notebooks he also compared it to the mental patterns revealed in dreams, where the mind spontaneously dramatizes and visualizes a large series of symbolic events without conscious control or censorship. He spoke of the "streamy" nature of these sequences and likened poetry to a "waking dream". But the inability to recover or reconstruct these patterns at will, except in fragments, seemed to him an inherent problem for all creative artists.

All his life he was visited by such dreams or reveries (as well as nightmares), but he remained doubtful of his powers to present them more than fleetingly in poetry or make sense of them philosophically. The dream that produced "Kubla Khan" in 1797 remains the most

famous of these mysterious visitations, but as late as 1827 Coleridge could record similar experiences:

... I awoke last night, or rather with the poor relic of Volition breaking the Enchanter's Talisman, succeeded at length in awakening myself out of a terrific fantastic Dream, which would have required tenfold the imagination of a Dante to have constructed in the waking state . . . After many years' watchful notice of the phenomena of the somnial state, and an elaborate classification of its *characteristic* distinctions, I remain incapable of explaining any one Figure of all the numberless Personages of this shadowy world."

(Letter, 28 November 1827.)

Yet despite this disclaimer, few poets have given us a more vivid sense of the creative unconscious in its dream-like state of flow or fugue.

Some of his most powerful and disturbing fragments are "emblem" poems, where there is a strong sense of menacing or forbidden meanings. Here again the small or tell-tale image mysteriously implies some much larger concept. The fragment "A Sunset" (No. 78) seems almost to suggest that the Divine Creator is retreating from his Universe; and this is echoed by "A Dark Sky" (No. 79) though such an idea was abhorrent to Coleridge's conscious Christian faith. While "The Tropic Tree" (No. 80) suggests some monstrous shape haunting Coleridge's most personal relationships. These can be compared with the "allegoric" revelations of the Confessional Poems. Other emblems are clearer, but none the less suggest some large, unconscious anxiety: in "Psyche" (No. 81) it is the ravenous, caterpillar hunger of the unhappy soul; and in "The World That Spidery Witch" (No. 91), it is the claustrophobic weavings of old age.

Above all, the fragments give us a unique sense of Coleridge actually at work as a poet. They show him sketching out one idea in a few amazing moments; or developing another over several years. But always he is experimenting, rejecting, forgetting and recovering. Perhaps one sees two sides to him as a creative artist: the one "drifting and wailing", like "The Sea Mew" (No. 82); the other carefully "filing" a piece of shining metal, like "The Yellow Hammer" (No. 83). He is simultaneously the passive, astonished dreamer and the active, meticulous craftsman.

Kubla Khan:

OR, A VISION IN A DREAM. A FRAGMENT

The following fragment is here published at the request of a poet of great and deserved celebrity [Lord Byron], and, as far as the Author's own opinions are concerned, rather as a psychological curiosity, than on the ground of any supposed poetic merits.

In the summer of the year 1797, the Author, then in ill health, had retired to a lonely farm-house between Porlock and Linton, on the Exmoor confines of Somerset and Devonshire. In consequence of a slight indisposition, an anodyne had been prescribed, from the effects of which he fell asleep in his chair at the moment that he was reading the following sentence, or words of the same substance, in "Purchas's Pilgrimage": "Here the Khan Kubla commanded a palace to be built, and a stately garden thereunto. And thus ten miles of fertile ground were inclosed with a wall." The Author continued for about three hours in a profound sleep, at least of the external senses, during which time he has the most vivid confidence, that he could not have composed less than from two to three hundred lines; if that indeed can be called composition in which all the images rose up before him as *things*, with a parallel production of the correspondent expressions, without any sensation or consciousness of effort. On awaking he appeared to himself to have a distinct recollection of the whole, and taking his pen, ink, and paper, *instantly and eagerly* wrote down the lines that are here preserved. At this moment he was unfortunately called out by a person on business from Porlock, and detained by him above an hour, and on his return to his room, found, to his no small surprise and mortification, that though he still retained some vague and dim recollection of the general purport of the vision, yet, with the exception of some eight or ten scattered lines and images, all the rest had passed away like the images on the surface of a stream into which a stone has been cast, but, alas! without the after restoration of the latter!

Then all the charm
Is broken — all that phantom-world so fair
Vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread,

35

And each mis-shape the other. Stay awhile,
Poor youth! who scarcely dar'st lift up thine eyes —
The stream will soon renew its smoothness, soon
The visions will return! And lo, he stays,
And soon the fragments dim of lovely forms
Come trembling back, unite, and now once more
The pool becomes a mirror.

40

Yet from the still surviving recollections in his mind, the Author
has frequently purposed to finish for himself what had been
originally, as it were, given to him. Αὔριον ἄδιον ἄσω:
[tomorrow I shall sing a sweeter song]: but the to-morrow is
yet to come.

20

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

5

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

10

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momentarily was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst

15

20

Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war! 30

32d
The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device, 35
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice! → paradox

End of measure dome
A damsel with a dulcimer → musical instrument
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played, 40
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song.

To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long, 45
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice, 50
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

→ He has got the power
on imaginative power.

The Wanderings of Cain

PREFATORY NOTE

A prose composition, one not in metre at least, seems *prima facie* to require explanation or apology. It was written in the year 1798, near Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, at which place (*sanctum et amabile nomen!* rich by so many associations and recollections) the author had taken up his residence in order to enjoy the society and close neighbourhood of a dear and honoured friend, T. Poole, Esq. The work was to have been written in concert with another [Wordsworth], whose name is too venerable within the precincts of genius to be unnecessarily brought into connection with such a trifle, and who was then residing at a small distance from Nether Stowey. The title and subject were suggested by myself, who likewise drew out the scheme and the contents for each of the three books or cantos, of which the work was to consist, and which, the reader is to be informed, was to have been finished in one night! My partner undertook the first canto: I the second: and which ever had *done first*, was to set about the third. Almost thirty years have passed by; yet at this moment I cannot without something more than a smile moot the question which of the two things was the more impracticable, for a mind so eminently original to compose another man's thoughts and fancies, or for a taste so austere and simple to imitate the Death of Abel? Methinks I see his grand and noble countenance as at the moment when having despatched my own portion of the task at full finger-speed, I hastened to him with my manuscript – that look of humourous despondency fixed on his almost blank sheet of paper, and then its silent mock-piteous admission of failure struggling with the sense of the exceeding ridiculousness of the whole scheme – which broke up in a laugh: and the Ancient Mariner was written instead.

Years afterward, however, the draft of the plan and proposed incidents, and the portion executed, obtained favour in the eyes of more than one person, whose judgment on a poetic work could not but have weighed with me, even though no parental partiality had been thrown into the same scale, as a make-weight: and I determined on commencing anew, and composing the whole in stanzas, and

made some progress in realising this intention, when adverse gales drove my bark off the "Fortunate Isles" of the Muses: and then other and more momentous interests prompted a different voyage, to firmer anchorage and a securer port. I have in vain tried to recover the lines from the palimpsest tablet of my memory: and I can only offer the introductory stanza, which had been committed to writing for the purpose of procuring a friend's judgment on the metre, as a specimen: —

Encinctured with a twine of leaves,
That leafy twine his only dress!
A lovely Boy was plucking fruits,
By moonlight, in a wilderness.
The moon was bright, the air was free,
And fruits and flowers together grew
On many a shrub and many a tree:
And all put on a gentle hue,
Hanging in the shadowy air
Like a picture rich and rare.
It was a climate where, they say,
The night is more belov'd than day.
But who that beauteous Boy beguil'd,
That beauteous Boy to linger here?
Alone, by night, a little child,
In place so silent and so wild —
Has he no friend, no loving mother near?

I have here given the birth, parentage, and premature decease of the "Wanderings of Cain, a poem", — intreating, however, my Readers, not to think so meanly of my judgment as to suppose that I either regard or offer it as any excuse for the publication of the following fragment (and I may add, of one or two others in its neighbourhood) in its primitive crudity. But I should find still greater difficulty in forgiving myself were I to record *pro taedio* publico a set of petty mishaps and annoyances which I myself wish to forget. I must be content therefore with assuring the friendly Reader, that the less he attributes its appearance to the Author's will, choice, or judgment, the nearer to the truth he will be.

"A little further, O my father, yet a little further, and we shall come into the open moonlight." Their road was through a forest of fir-trees; at its entrance the trees stood at distances from each other, and the path was broad, and the moonlight and the moonlight shadows reposed upon it, and appeared quietly to inhabit that solitude. But soon the path winded and became narrow; the sun at high noon sometimes speckled, but never illumined it, and now it was dark as a cavern. 5

"It is dark, O my father!" said Enos, "but the path under our feet is smooth and soft, and we shall soon come out into the open moonlight." 10

"Lead on, my child!" said Cain; "guide me, little child!" And the innocent little child clasped a finger of the hand which had murdered the righteous Abel, and he guided his father. "The fir branches drip upon thee, my son." "Yea, pleasantly, father, for I ran fast and eagerly to bring thee the pitcher and the cake, and my body is not yet cool. How happy the squirrels are that feed on these fir-trees! they leap from bough to bough, and the old squirrels play round their young ones in the nest. I clomb a tree yesterday at noon, O my father, that I might play with them, but they leaped away from the branches, even to the slender twigs did they leap, and in a moment I beheld them on another tree. Why, O my father, would they not play with me? I would be good to them as thou art good to me: and I groaned to them even as thou groanest when thou givest me to eat, and when thou coverest me at evening, and as often as I stand at thy knee and thine eyes look at me?" Then Cain stopped, and stifling his groans he sank to the earth, and the child Enos stood in the darkness beside him. 15 20 25

And Cain lifted up his voice and cried bitterly, and said, "The Mighty One that persecuteth me is on this side and on that; he pursueth my soul like the wind, like the sand-blast he passeth through me; he is around me even as the air! O that I might be utterly no more! I desire to die - yea, the things that never had life, neither move they upon the earth - behold! they seem precious to mine eyes. O that a man might live without the breath of his nostrils. So I might abide in darkness, and blackness, and an empty space! Yea, I would lie down, I would not rise, neither would I stir my limbs till I became as 30 35

the rock in the den of the lion, on which the young lion resteth
his head whilst he sleepeth. For the torrent that roareth far off
hath a voice: and the clouds in heaven look terribly on me;
the Mighty One who is against me speaketh in the wind of the
cedar grove; and in silence am I dried up." Then Enos spake
to his father, "Arise, my father, arise, we are but a little way
from the place where I found the cake and the pitcher." And
Cain said, "How knowest thou!" and the child answered –
"Behold the bare rocks are a few of thy strides distant from the
forest; and while even now thou wert lifting up thy voice, I
heard the echo." Then the child took hold of his father, as if
he would raise him: and Cain being faint and feeble rose slowly
on his knees and pressed himself against the trunk of a fir, and
stood upright and followed the child.

The path was dark till within three strides' length of its
termination, when it turned suddenly; the thick black trees
formed a low arch, and the moonlight appeared for a moment
like a dazzling portal. Enos ran before and stood in the open
air; and when Cain, his father, emerged from the darkness, the
child was affrighted. For the mighty limbs of Cain were wasted
as by fire; his hair was as the matted curls on the bison's fore-
head, and so glared his fierce and sullen eye beneath: and the
black abundant locks on either side, a rank and tangled mass,
were stained and scorched, as though the grasp of a burning
iron hand had striven to rend them; and his countenance told
in a strange and terrible language of agonies that had been, and
were, and were still to continue to be.

The scene around was desolate; as far as the eye could reach
it was desolate: the bare rocks faced each other, and left a long
and wide interval of thin white sand. You might wander on
and look round and round, and peep into the crevices of the
rocks and discover nothing that acknowledged the influence
of the seasons. There was no spring, no summer, no autumn:
and the winter's snow, that would have been lovely, fell not
on these hot rocks and scorching sands. Never morning lark
had poised himself over this desert; but the huge serpent often
hissed there beneath the talons of the vulture, and the vulture
screamed, his wings imprisoned within the coils of the serpent.
The pointed and shattered summits of the ridges of the rocks
made a rude mimicry of human concerns, and seemed to
prophecy mutely of things that then were not; steeples, and

battlements, and ships with naked masts. As far from the wood as a boy might sling a pebble of the brook, there was one rock by itself at a small distance from the main ridge. It had been precipitated there perhaps by the groan which the Earth uttered when our first father fell. Before you approached, it appeared to lie flat on the ground, but its base slanted from its point, and between its point and the sands a tall man might stand upright. It was here that Enos had found the pitcher and cake, and to this place he led his father. But ere they had reached the rock they beheld a human shape: his back was towards them, and they were advancing unperceived, when they heard him smite his breast and cry aloud, "Woe is me! woe is me! I must never die again, and yet I am perishing with thirst and hunger."

Pallid, as the reflection of the sheeted lightning on the heavy-sailing night-cloud, became the face of Cain; but the child Enos took hold of the shaggy skin, his father's robe, and raised his eyes to his father, and listening whispered, "Ere yet I could speak, I am sure, O my father, that I heard that voice. Have not I often said that I remembered a sweet voice? O my father! this is it": and Cain trembled exceedingly. The voice was sweet indeed, but it was thin and querulous, like that of a feeble slave in misery, who despairs altogether, yet can not refrain himself from weeping and lamentation. And, behold! Enos glided forward, and creeping softly round the base of the rock, stood before the stranger, and looked up into his face. And the Shape shrieked, and turned round, and Cain beheld him, that his limbs and his face were those of his brother Abel whom he had killed! And Cain stood like one who struggles in his sleep because of the exceeding terribleness of a dream.

Thus as he stood in silence and darkness of soul, the Shape fell at his feet, and embraced his knees, and cried out with a bitter outcry, "Thou eldest born of Adam, whom Eve, my mother, brought forth, cease to torment me! I was feeding my flocks in green pastures by the side of quiet rivers, and thou killedst me; and now I am in misery." Then Cain closed his eyes, and hid them with his hands; and again he opened his eyes, and looked around him, and said to Enos, "What beholdest thou? Didst thou hear a voice, my son?" "Yes, my father, I beheld a man in unclean garments, and he uttered a sweet voice, full of lamentation." Then Cain raised up the Shape that was like Abel, and said: - "The Creator of our father, who had

respect unto thee, and unto thy offering, wherefore hath he forsaken thee?" Then the Shape shrieked a second time, and rent his garment, and his naked skin was like the white sands beneath their feet; and he shrieked yet a third time, and threw himself on his face upon the sand that was black with the shadow of the rock, and Cain and Enos sate beside him; the child by his right hand, and Cain by his left. They were all three under the rock, and within the shadow. The Shape that was like Abel raised himself up, and spake to the child, "I know where the cold waters are, but I may not drink, wherefore didst thou then take away my pitcher?" But Cain said, "Didst thou not find favour in the sight of the Lord thy God?" The Shape answered, "The Lord is God of the living only, the dead have another God." Then the child Enos lifted up his eyes and prayed; but Cain rejoiced secretly in his heart. "Wretched shall they be all the days of their mortal life," exclaimed the Shape, "who sacrifice worthy and acceptable sacrifices to the God of the dead; but after death their toil ceaseth. Woe is me, for I was well beloved by the God of the living, and cruel wert thou, O my brother, who didst snatch me away from his power and his dominion." Having uttered these words, he rose suddenly, and fled over the sands: and Cain said in his heart, "The curse of the Lord is on me; but who is the God of the dead?" and he ran after the Shape, and the Shape fled shrieking over the sands, and the sands rose like white mists behind the steps of Cain, but the feet of him that was like Abel disturbed not the sands. He greatly outrun Cain, and turning short, he wheeled round, and came again to the rock where they had been sitting, and where Enos still stood; and the child caught hold of his garment as he passed by, and he fell upon the ground. And Cain stopped, and beholding him not, said, "he has passed into the dark woods," and he walked slowly back to the rocks; and when he reached it the child told him that he had caught hold of his garment as he passed by, and that the man had fallen upon the ground: and Cain once more sate beside him, and said, "Abel, my brother, I would lament for thee, but that the spirit within me is withered, and burnt up with extreme agony. Now, I pray thee, by thy flocks, and by thy pastures, and by the quiet rivers which thou lovedst, that thou tell me all that thou knowest. Who is the God of the dead? where doth he make his dwelling? what sacrifices are acceptable unto him? for

I have offered, but have not been received; I have prayed, and have not been heard; and how can I be afflicted more than I already am?" The Shape arose and answered, "O that thou 165 hadst had pity on me as I will have pity on thee. Follow me, Son of Adam! and bring thy child with thee!"

And they three passed over the white sands between the rocks, silent as the shadows.

The Mad Monk

I heard a voice from Etna's side;
 Where o'er a cavern's mouth
 That fronted to the south
 A chesnut spread its umbrage wide:
 A hermit or a monk the man might be; 5
 But him I could not see:
 And thus the music flow'd along,
 In melody most like to old Sicilian song:

"There was a time when earth, and sea, and skies,
 The bright green vale, and forest's dark recess, 10
 With all things, lay before mine eyes
 In steady loveliness:
 But now I feel, on earth's uneasy scene,
 Such sorrows as will never cease; —
 I only ask for peace; 15
 if I must live to know that such a time has been!"
 A silence then ensued:
 Till from the cavern came
 A voice; — it was the same!
 And thus, in mournful tone, its dreary plaint renew'd: 20

"Last night, as o'er the sloping turf I trod,
 The smooth green turf, to me a vision gave
 Beneath mine eyes, the sod —
 The roof of Rosa's grave!

"My heart has need with dreams like these to strive, 25
 For, when I woke, beneath mine eyes I found
 The plot of mossy ground,
 On which we oft have sat when Rosa was alive. —
 Why must the rock, and margin of the flood,
 Why must the hills so many flow'rets bear, 30
 Whose colours to a *murder'd* maiden's blood,
 Such sad resemblance wear? —

"*I struck the wound*, – this hand of mine!
For Oh, thou maid divine,
 I lov'd to agony!
The youth whom thou call'd'st thine
 Did never love like me!

35

"Is it the stormy clouds above
 That flash'd so red a gleam?
 On yonder downward trickling stream? –
'Tis not the blood of her I love. –
The sun torments me from his western bed,
 Oh, let him cease for ever to diffuse
 Those crimson spectre hues!
Oh, let me lie in peace, and be for ever dead!"

40

45

Here ceas'd the voice. In deep dismay,
Down thro' the forest I pursu'd my way.

The Blossoming of the Solitary Date-Tree

A LAMENT

I seem to have an indistinct recollection of having read either in one of the ponderous tomes of George of Venice, or in some other compilation from the uninspired Hebrew writers, an apologue or Rabbinical tradition to the following purpose:

While our first parents stood before their offended Maker, 5
and the last words of the sentence were yet sounding in
Adam's ear, the guileful false serpent, a counterfeit and a
usurper from the beginning, presumptuously took on him-
self the character of advocate or mediator, and pretending 10
to intercede for Adam, exclaimed: "Nay, Lord, in thy justice,
not so! for the man was the least in fault. Rather let the
Woman return at once to the dust, and let Adam remain in
this thy Paradise." And the word of the Most High answered
Satan: "*The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* Treacherous 15
Fiend! if with guilt like thine, it had been possible for thee
to have the heart of a Man, and to feel the yearning of a
human soul for its counterpart, the sentence, which thou
now counsellest, should have been inflicted on thyself."

The title of the following poem was suggested by a fact men- 20
tioned by Linnaeus, of a date-tree in a nobleman's garden which
year after year had put forth a full show of blossoms, but never
produced fruit, till a branch from another date-tree had been
conveyed from a distance of some hundred leagues. The first
leaf of the ms. from which the poem has been transcribed, and 25
which contained the two or three introductory stanzas, is
wanting: and the author has in vain taxed his memory to repair
the loss. But a rude draught of the poem contains the substance
of the stanzas, and the reader is requested to receive it as the
substitute. It is not impossible, that some congenial spirit, whose 30
years do not exceed those of the Author at the time the poem
was written, may find a pleasure in restoring the Lament to its
original integrity by a reduction of the thoughts to the requisite
metre.

S. T. C.

Beneath the blaze of a tropical sun the mountain peaks are the
Thrones of Frost, through the absence of objects to reflect the
rays. "What no one with us shares, seems scarce our own."
The presence of a ONE,

The best belov'd, who loveth me the best,

5

is for the heart, what the supporting air from within is for the
hollow globe with its suspended car. Deprive it of this, and all
without, that would have buoyed it aloft even to the seat of
the gods, becomes a burthen and crushes it into flatness.

2

The finer the sense for the beautiful and the lovely, and the
fairer and lovelier the object presented to the sense; the more
exquisite the individual's capacity of joy, and the more ample
his means and opportunities of enjoyment, the more heavily
will he feel the ache of solitariness, the more unsubstantial
becomes the feast spread around him. What matters it, whether
in fact the viands and the ministering graces are shadowy or
real, to him who has not hand to grasp nor arms to embrace
them?

10

15

3

Imagination; honourable aims;
Free commune with the choir that cannot die;
Science and song; delight in little things,
The buoyant child surviving in the man;
Fields, forests, ancient mountains, ocean, sky,
With all their voices – O dare I accuse
My earthly lot as guilty of my spleen,
Or call my destiny niggard! O no! no!
It is her largeness, and her overflow,
Which being incomplete, disquieteth me so!

20

25

For never touch of gladness stirs my heart,
 But tim'rously beginning to rejoice 30
 Like a blind Arab, that from sleep doth start
 In lonesome tent, I listen for thy voice.
 Belovéd! 'tis not thine; thou art not there!
 Then melts the bubble into idle air,
 And wishing without hope I restlessly despair. 35

The mother with anticipated glee
 Smiles o'er the child, that, standing by her chair
 And flatt'ning its round cheek upon her knee,
 Looks up, and doth its rosy lips prepare
 To mock the coming sounds. At that sweet sight 40
 She hears her own voice with a new delight;
 And if the babe perchance should lisp the notes aright,

Then is she tenfold gladder than before!
 But should disease or chance the darling take,
 What then avail those songs, which sweet of yore 45
 Were only sweet for their sweet echo's sake?
 Dear maid! no prattler at a mother's knee
 Was e'er so dearly prized as I prize thee:
 Why was I made for Love and Love denied to me?

The Tropic Tree

As some vast Tropic tree, itself a wood,
 That crests its head with clouds, beneath the flood
 Feeds its deep roots, and with the bulging flank
 Of its wide base controls the fronting bank –
 (By the slant current's pressure scoop'd away 5
 The fronting bank becomes a foam-piled bay)
 High in the Fork the uncouth Idol knits
 His channel'd brow; low murmurs stir by fits
 And dark below the horrid Faquir sits –
 An Horror from its broad Head's branching wreath 10
 Broods o'er the rude Idolatry beneath –

The Sea Mew

Sea-ward, white gleaming thro' the busy scud
With arching Wings, the sea-mew o'er my head
Posts on, as bent on speed, now passaging
Edges the stiffer Breeze, now, yielding, drifts,
Now floats upon the air, and sends from far
A wildly-wailing Note.

5

The Yellow Hammer

The spruce and limber yellow-hammer
In the dawn of spring and sultry summer,
In hedge or tree the hours beguiling
With notes as of one who brass is filing.

On Donne's Poetry

With Donne, whose muse on dromedary trots,
Wreathe iron pokers into true-love knots;
Rhyme's sturdy cripple, fancy's maze and clue,
Wit's forge and fire-blast, meaning's press and screw.

Four Metrical Experiments

I

IAMBICS

No cold shall thee benumb,
 Nor darkness stain thy sight;
 To thee new Heat, new Light
 Shall from this object come,
 Whose Praises if thou now wilt sound aright,
 My Pen shall give thee leave hereafter to be dumb.

2

TROCHAICS

Thus she said, and, all around,
 Her diviner spirit, gan to borrow;
 Earthly Hearings hear unearthly sound,
 Hearts heroic faint, and sink asound.
 Welcome, welcome, spite of pain and sorrow
 Love to-day, and Thought to-morrow.

3

A PLAINTIVE MOVEMENT

Go little Pipe! for ever I must leave thee,
 Ah, vainly true!
 Never, ah never! must I more receive thee?
 Adieu! adieu!
 Well, thou art gone! and what remains behind,
 Soothing the soul to Hope?
 The moaning Wind –
 Hide with sere leaves my Grave's undaisied Slope.

Once again, sweet Willow, wave thee!
 Why stays my Love?
Bend, and in yon streamlet – lave thee!
 Why stays my Love?
Oft have I at evening straying,
Stood, thy branches long surveying,
 Graceful in the light breeze playing, –
 Why stays my Love?

Song from *Remorse*

Hear, sweet Spirit, hear the spell,
 Lest a blacker charm compel!
 So shall the midnight breezes swell
 With thy deep long-lingering knell.

And at evening evermore, 5
 In a chapel on the shore,
 Shall the chaunter, sad and saintly,
 Yellow tapers burning faintly,
 Doleful masses chaunt for thee,
 Miserere Domine! 10

Hush! the cadence dies away
 On the quiet moonlight sea:
 The boatmen rest their oars and say,
 Miserere Domine!

Song from *Zapolya*

A sunny shaft did I behold,
 From sky to earth it slanted:
 And poised therein a bird so bold –
 Sweet bird, thou wert enchanted!

He sank, he rose, he twinkled, he trolled 5
 Within that shaft of sunny mist;
 His eyes of fire, his beak of gold,
 All else of amethyst!

And thus he sang: "Adieu! adieu!
 Love's dreams prove seldom true. 10
 The blossoms they make no delay:
 The sparkling dew-drops will not stay.
 Sweet month of May,
 We must away;
 Far, far away! 15
 To-day! to-day!"

Ars Poetica

It has been before observed that images, however beautiful, though faithfully copied from nature, and accurately represented in words, do not of themselves characterize the poet. They become proofs of original genius only as far as they are modified by a predominant passion; or by associated thoughts or images awakened by that passion; or when they have the effect of reducing multitude to unity, or succession to an instant; or lastly, when a human and intellectual life is transferred to them from the poet's own spirit,

“Which shoots its being through earth, sea and air”.

In the two following lines, for instance, there is nothing objectionable, nothing which would preclude them from forming, in their proper place, part of a descriptive poem: —

“Behold yon row of pines, that shorn and bow'd
Bend from the sea-blast, seen at twilight eve.”

But with the small alteration of rhythm, the same words would be equally in their place in a book of topography, or in a descriptive tour. The same image will rise into a semblance of poetry if thus conveyed: —

“Yon row of bleak and visionary pines,
By twilight-glimpse discerned, mark! how they flee
From the fierce sea-blast, all their tresses wild
Streaming before them.”

Aria Spontanea

10 SEPT 1823. WEDNESDAY MORNING, 10 O' CLOCK

ON the tenth day of September, –
 Eighteen hundred Twenty Three,
 Wednesday morn, and I remember
 Ten on the *Clock* the Hour to be
 [*The Watch and Clock do both agree*] 5

An *Air* that whizzed διὰ ἐγκεφάλου (right across the diameter of my Brain) exactly like a Hummel Bee, *alias* Dumbeldore, the gentleman with Rappee Spenser (*sic*), with bands of Red, and Orange Plush Breeches, close by my ear, at once sharp and burry, right over the summit of Quantock at earliest Dawn just between the Nightingale that I stopt to hear in the Copse at the Foot of Quantock, and the first Sky-Lark that was a Song-Fountain, dashing up and sparkling to the Ear's eye, in full column, or ornamented Shaft of sound in the order of Gothic Extravaganza, out of Sight, over the Cornfields on the Descent of the Mountain on the other side – out of sight, tho' twice I beheld its *mute* shoot downward in the sunshine like a falling star of silver: –

ARIA SPONTANEA

Flowers are lovely, Love is flower-like,
 Friendship is a shelt'ring tree – 20
 O the Joys, that came down shower-like,
 Of Beauty, Truth, and Liberty,
 When I was young, ere I was old!

The World That Spidery Witch

MY DEAR FRIEND

I have often amused myself with the thought of a self-conscious Looking-glass, and the various metaphorical applications of such a fancy – and this morning it struck across the Eolian Harp of my Brain that there was something pleasing and emblematic (of what I did not distinctly make out) in two such Looking-glasses fronting, each seeing the other in itself, and itself in the other. Have you ever noticed the Vault or snug little Apartment which the Spider spins and weaves for itself, by spiral threads round and round, and sometimes with strait lines, so that its lurking parlour or withdrawing-room is an oblong square? This too connected itself in my mind with the melancholy truth, that as we grow older, the World (alas! how often it happens that the less we love it, the more we care for it, the less reason we have to value its Shews, the more anxious are we about them – alas! how often do we become more and more loveless, as Love which can outlive all change save a change with regard to itself, and all loss save the loss of its *Reflex*, is more needed to sooth us and alone is able so to do!) What was I saying? O, I was adverting to the fact that as we advance in years, the World, that spidery Witch, spins its threads narrower and narrower, still closing on us, till at last it shuts us up within four walls, walls of flues and films, windowless – and well if there be sky-lights, and a small opening left for the Light from above.

I speak in figures, inward thoughts and woes
 Interpreting by Shapes and outward shews:
 Where daily nearer me with magic Ties,
 What time and where, (wove close with magic Ties
 Line over line, and thickning as they rise) 5
 The World her spidery threads on all sides spin
 Side answ'ring side with narrow interspace,
 My Faith (say I; I and my Faith are one)
 Hung, as a Mirror, there! And face to face
 (For nothing else there was between or near) 10
 One Sister Mirror hid the dreary Wall,
 But *that* is broke! And with that bright compeer
 I lost my object and my inmost All –
 Faith *in* the Faith of THE ALONE MOST DEAR!
 Ah! me!! 15
 Call the World spider: and at fancy's touch
 Thought becomes image and I see it such.
 With viscous masonry of films and threads
 Tough as the nets in Indian Forests found
 It blends the Waller's and the Weaver's trades 20
 And soon the tent-like Hangings touch the ground
 A dusky chamber that excludes the day
 But cease the prelude and resume the lay.

The Netherlands

Water and windmills, greenness, Islets green; –
Willows whose Trunks beside the shadows stood
Of their own higher half, and willowy swamp: –
Farmhouses that at anchor seem'd – in the inland sky
The fog-transfixing Spires –

5