

Poems Of John Keats

By Keats, John
c1815

Realm Of Fancy, The

Ever let the Fancy roam!
Pleasure never is at home:
At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth,
Like to bubbles when rain pelteth;
Then let winged Fancy wander
Through the thought still spread beyond her:
Open wide the mind's cage - door,
She'll dart forth, and cloudward soar.
O sweet Fancy! let her loose;
Summer's joys are spoilt by use,
And the enjoying of the Spring
Fades as does its blossoming:
Autumn's red - lipp'd fruitage too,
Blushing through the mist and dew,
Cloys with tasting: What do then?
Sit thee by the ingle, when
The sear faggot blazes bright,
Spirit of a winter's night;
When the soundless earth is muffled,
And the caked snow is shuffled
From the ploughboy's heavy shoon;
When the Night doth meet the Noon
In a dark conspiracy
To banish Even from her sky.
- Sit thee there, and send abroad,
With a mind self - overaw'd
Fancy, high - commission'd: - send her!
She has vassals to attend her;
She will bring, in spite of frost,
Beauties that the earth hath lost;
She will bring thee, all together,
All delights of summer weather;
All the buds and bells of May
From dewy sward or thorny spray;
All the heaped Autumn's wealth,
With a still, mysterious stealth:
She will mix these pleasures up
Like three fit wines in a cup,
And thou shalt quaff it: - thou shalt hear
Distant harvest - carols clear;
Rustle of the reaped corn;
Sweet birds antheming the morn:
And, in the same moment - hark!
'Tis the early April lark,
Or the rooks, with busy caw,
Foraging for sticks and straw.
Thou shalt, at one glance, behold
The daisy and the marigold;
White - plumed lilies, and the first
Hedge - grown primrose that hath burst;
Shaded hyacinth, alway
Sapphire queen of the mid - May;
And every leaf, and every flower
Pearled with the self - same shower.
Thou shalt see the field - mouse peep
Meagre from its celled sleep;
And the snake all winter - thin
Cast on sunny bank its skin;
Freckled nest - eggs thou shalt see
Hatching in the hawthorn - tree,
When the hen - bird's wing doth rest
Quiet on her mossy nest;
Then the hurry and alarm
When the bee - hive casts its swarm;
Acorns ripe down - pattering,
While the autumn breezes sing.

Oh, sweet Fancy! let her loose;
 Everything is spoilt by use:
 Where's the cheek that doth not fade,
 Too much gazed at? Where's the maid
 Whose lip mature is ever new?
 Where's the eye, however blue,
 Doth not weary? Where's the face
 One would meet in every place?
 Where's the voice, however, soft,
 One would hear so very oft?
 At a touch sweet Pleasure melteth
 Like to bubbles when rain pelteth.
 Let then winged Fancy find
 Thee a mistress to thy mind:
 Dulcet - eyed as Ceres' daughter,
 Ere the God of Torment taught her
 How to frown and how to chide;
 With a waist and with a side
 White as Hebe's, when her zone
 Slipped its golden clasp, and down
 Fell her kirtle to her feet,
 While she held the goblet sweet,
 And Jove grew languid. - Break the mesh
 Of the Fancy's silken leash;
 Quickly break her prison - string,
 And such joys as these she'll bring:
 - Let the winged Fancy roam!
 Pleasure never is at home.

Ode On The Poets

Bards of Passion and of Mirth
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Have ye souls in heaven too,
 Double - lived in regions new?
 - Yes, and those of heaven commune
 With the spheres of sun and moon;
 With the noise of fountains wonderous
 And the parle of voices thunderous;
 With the whisper of heaven's trees
 And one another, in soft ease
 Seated on Elysian lawns
 Browsed by none but Dian's fawns;
 Underneath large blue - bells tented,
 Where the daisies are rose - scented,
 And the rose herself has got
 Perfume which on earth is not;
 Where the nightingale doth sing
 Not a senseless, tranced thing,
 But divine melodious truth,
 Philosophic numbers smooth;
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again;
 And the souls ye left behind you
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying.
 Here, your earth - born souls still speak
 To mortals, of their little week;
 Of their sorrows and delights;
 Of their passions and their spites;
 Of their glory and their shame;
 What doth strengthen and what maim: -
 Thus ye teach us, every day,
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth
 Ye have left your souls on earth!
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double - lived in regions new!

Mermaid Tavern, The

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
 What Elysium have ye known,
 Happy field or mossy cavern,
 Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?
 Have ye tippled drink more fine
 Than mine host's Canary wine?
 Or are fruits of Paradise
 Sweeter than those dainty pies
 Of Venison? O generous food!
 Drest as though bold Robin Hood
 Would, with his Maid Marian,
 Sup and bowse from horn and can.

I have heard that on a day
 Mine host's sign - board flew away
 Nobody knew whither, till
 An astrologer's old quill
 To a sheepskin gave the story -
 Said he saw you in your glory
 Underneath a new - old Sign
 Sipping beverage divine,
 And pledging with contented smack
 The Mermaid in the Zodiac!

Souls of Poets dead and gone,
What Elysium have ye known -
Happy field or mossy cavern -
Choicer than the Mermaid Tavern?

Happy Insensibility

In a drear - nighted December,
Too happy, happy Tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity:
The north cannot undo them
With a sleety whistle through them,
Nor frozen thawings glue them
From budding at the prime.

In a drear - nighted December,
Too happy, happy Brook,
Thy bubblings ne'er remember
Apollo's summer look;
But with a sweet forgetting
They stay their crystal fretting,
Never, never letting
About the frozen time.

Ah would 'twere so with many
A gentle girl and boy!
But were there ever any
Writhed not at passed joy?
To know the change and feel it,
When there is none to heal it
Nor numbed sense to steal it -
Was never said in rhyme.

Ode To A Nightingale

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and Lethe - wards had sunk:
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thy happiness, -
That thou, light - winged Dryad of the trees,
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full - throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage, that hath been
Cool'd a long age in the deep - delved earth,
Tasting of Flora and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sun - burnt mirth!
O for a beaker full of the warm South.
Full of the true, the blushing Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple - stained mouth;
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
What thou among the leaves hast never known,
The weariness, the fever, and the fret
Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,
Where youth grows pale, and spectre - thin, and dies;
Where but to think is to be full of sorrow
And leaden - eyed despairs;
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,
Or new Love pine at them beyond to - morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,
Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,
Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:
Already with thee! tender is the night,
And haply the Queen - Moon is on her throne,
Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;
But here there is no light
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown
Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways,

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet
Wherewith the seasonable month endows
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit - tree wild;
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;
And mid - May's eldest child,
The coming musk - rose, full of dewy wine,
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and for many a time
 I have been half in love with easeful Death,
 Call'd him soft names in many a muted rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath;
 Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!
 Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain -
 To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
 No hungry generations tread thee down;
 The voice I hear this passing night was heard
 In ancient days by emperor and clown;
 Perhaps the self - same song that found a path
 Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
 She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
 The same that oft - times hath
 Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
 Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
 To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
 Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
 As she is famed to do, deceiving elf.
 Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
 Past the near meadows, over the still stream,
 Up the hill - side; and now 'tis buried deep
 In the next valley - glades;
 Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
 Fled is that music: - do I wake or sleep?

Ode On A Grecian Urn

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness,
 Thou foster - child of Silence and slow Time,
 Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
 A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
 What leaf - fringed legend haunts about thy shape
 Of deities or mortals, or of both,
 In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
 What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
 What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
 What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
 Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
 Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
 Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone:
 Fair youth, beneath the trees, thou canst not leave
 Thy song, nor ever can those trees be bare;
 Bold Lover, never, never canst thou kiss,
 Though winning near the goal - yet, do not grieve;
 She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss,
 For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair!

Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
 Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
 And, happy melodist, unwearied,
 For ever piping songs for ever new;
 More happy love! more happy, happy love!
 For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
 For ever panting and for ever young;
 All breathing human passion far above,
 That leaves a heart high - sorrowful and cloy'd,
 A burning forehead, and a parching tongue.

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea - shore,
 Or mountain - built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul, to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! fair attitude! with brede
 Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
 With forest branches and the trodden weed;
 Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity. Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty, - that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,'

Ode To Autumn

Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,
 Close bosom - friend of the maturing sun;
 Conspiring with him how to load and bless
 With fruit the vines that round the thatch - eaves run;
 To bend with apples the moss'd cottage - trees,
 And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
 To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells
 With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,
 And still more, later flowers for the bees,
 Until they think warm days will never cease;
 For Summer has o'erbrimm'd their clammy cells.

Who hath not seen Thee oft amid thy store?
 Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may find
 Thee sitting careless on a granary floor,
 They hair soft - lifted by the winnowing wind;
 Or on a half - reap'd furrow sound asleep,
 Drowsed with the fume of poppies, while thy hook
 Spares the next swath and all its twined flowers:
 And sometimes like a gleaner thou dost keep
 Steady thy laden head across a brook;
 Or by a cider - press, with patient look,
 Thou watchest the last oozings, hours by hours.

Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?
 Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,
 While barred clouds bloom the soft - dying day
 And touch the stubble - plains with rosy hue;
 Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn
 Among the river - sallows, borne aloft
 Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;
 And full - grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;
 Hedge - crickets sing, and now with treble soft
 The redbreast whistles from a garden - croft;
 And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Ode To Psyche

[See Psyche: From the painting by Alfred de Curzon in the Luxembourg Gallery, Paris.]

O goddess! hear these tuneless numbers, wrung
 By sweet enforcement and remembrance dear,
 And pardon that thy secrets should be sung
 Even into thine own soft - conched ear:
 Surely I dream'd to - day, or did I see
 The winged Psyche with awaken'd eyes?
 I wander'd in a forest thoughtlessly,
 And, on the sudden, fainting with surprise,
 Saw two fair creatures, couched side by side
 In deepest grass, beneath the whisp'ring roof
 Of leaves and trembled blossoms, where there ran
 A brooklet, scarce espied:
 'Mid hush'd, cool - rooted flowers fragrant - eyed,
 Blue, silver - white, and budded Tyrian,
 They lay calm - breathing on the bedded grass;
 Their arms embraced, and their pinions too;
 Their lips touch'd not, but had not bade adieu,
 As if disjoined by soft - handed slumber,
 And ready still past kisses to outnumber
 At tender eye - dawn of aurorean love:
 The winged boy I knew;
 But who wast thou, O happy, happy dove?
 His Psyche true!

O latest - born and loveliest vision far
 Of all Olympus' faded hierarchy!
 Fairer than Phoebe's sapphire - region'd star,
 Or Vesper, amorous glow - worm of the sky;
 Fairer than these, though temple thou hast none,
 Nor altar heap'd with flowers;
 Nor Virgin - choir to make delicious moan
 Upon the midnight hours;
 No voice, no lute, no pipe, no incense sweet
 From chain - swung censer teeming;
 No shrine, no grove, no oracle, no heat
 Of pale - mouth'd prophet dreaming.

O brightest! though too late for antique vows,
 Too, too late for the fond believing lyre,
 When holy were the haunted forest boughs,
 Holy the air, the water, and the fire;
 Yet even in these days so far retired
 From happy pieties, thy lucent fans,
 Fluttering among the faint Olympians,
 I see, and sing, by my own eyes inspired.
 So let me be thy choir, and make a moan
 Upon the midnight hours;
 Thy voice, thy lute, thy pipe, thy incense sweet
 From swing'ed censer teeming:
 Thy shrine, thy grove, thy oracle, thy heat
 Of pale - mouth'd prophet dreaming.

Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
 In some untrodden region of my mind,
 Where branched thoughts, new grown with pleasant pain,
 Instead of pines shall murmur in the wind:
 Far, far around shall those dark - cluster'd trees
 Fledge the wild - ridged mountains steep by steep;
 And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds, and bees,
 The moss - lain Dryads shall be lull'd to sleep;
 And in the midst of this wide quietness
 A rosy sanctuary will I dress
 With the wreath'd trellis of a working brain,
 With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
 With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
 Who, breeding flowers, will never breed the same;
 And there shall be for thee all soft delight
 That shadowy thought can win,
 A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
 To let the warm Love in!

Ode On Melancholy

No, no! go not to Lethe, neither twist
 Wolf's - bane, tight - rooted, for its poisonous wine;
 Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kist
 By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine;
 Make not your rosary of yew - berries,
 Nor let the beetle, nor the death - moth be
 Your mournful Psyche, nor the downy owl
 A partner in your sorrow's mysteries;
 For shade to shade will come too drowsily,
 And drown the wakeful anguish of the soul.

But when the melancholy fit shall fall
 Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
 That fosters the droop - headed flowers all,
 And hides the green hill in an April shroud;
 Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
 Or on the rainbow of the salt sand - wave,
 Or on the wealth of globed peonies;
 Or if thy mistress some rich anger shows,
 Emprison her soft hand, and let her rave,
 And feed deep, deep upon her peerless eyes.

She dwells with Beauty - Beauty that must die;
 And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips
 Bidding adieu; and aching Pleasure nigh,
 Turning to poison while the bee - mouth sips:
 Ay, in the very temple of Delight
 Veil'd Melancholy has her sovran shrine,
 Though seen of none save him whose strenuous tongue
 Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine;
 His soul shall taste the sadness of her might,
 And be among her cloudy trophies hung.

Eve Of St. Agnes, The

St. Agnes' Eve! - Ah, bitter chill it was!
 The owl, for all his feathers, was a - cold;
 The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
 And silent was the flock in woolly fold:
 Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
 His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
 Like pious incense from a censer old,
 Seem'd taking flight for heaven, without a death,
 Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayer he saith.

His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
 Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
 And back returneth, meagre, barefoot, wan,
 Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
 The sculptur'd dead, on each side, seem to freeze,
 Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
 Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
 He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
 To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails.

Northward he turneth through a little door,
 And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
 Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor;
 But no - already had his deathbell rung:
 The joys of all his life were said and sung:
 His was harsh penance on St. Agnes' Eve:
 Another way he went, and soon among
 Rough ashes sat he for his soul's reprieve,
 And all night kept awake, for sinners' sake to grieve.

That ancient Beadsman heard the prelude soft;
 And so it chanc'd, for many a door was wide,
 From hurry to and fro. Soon, up aloft,
 The silver, snarling trumpets 'gan to chide:
 The level chambers, ready with their pride,
 Were glowing to receive a thousand guests:
 The carved angels, ever eager - eyed,
 Star'd where upon their heads the cornice rests,
 With hair blown back, and wings put cross - wise on their breasts.

At length burst in the argent revelry,
 With plume, tiara, and all rich array,
 Numerous as shadows haunting fairly
 The brain, new stuff'd, in youth, with triumphs gay
 Of old romance. These let us wish away,
 And turn, sole - thoughted, to one Lady there,
 Whose heart had brooded, all that wintry day,
 On love, and wing'd St. Agnes' saintly care,
 As she had heard old dames full many times declare.

They told her how, upon St. Agnes' Eve,
 Young virgins might have visions of delight,
 And soft adorings from their loves receive
 Upon the honey'd middle of the night
 If ceremonies due they did aright;
 As, supperless to bed they must retire,
 And couch supine their beauties, lily white;
 Nor look behind, nor sideways, but require
 Of Heaven with upward eyes for all that they desire.

Full of this whim was thoughtful Madeline;
 The music, yearning like a God in pain,
 She scarcely heard: her maiden eyes divine,
 Fix'd on the floor, saw many a sweeping train
 Pass by - she heeded not at all: in vain
 Came many a tiptoe, amorous cavalier,
 And back retir'd; not cool'd by high disdain,
 But she saw not: her heart was otherwhere:
 She sigh'd for Agnes' dreams, the sweetest of the year.

She danc'd along with vague, regardless eyes,
 Anxious her lips, her breathing quick and short:
 The hallow'd hour was near at hand: she sighs
 Amid the timbrels, and the throng'd resort
 Of whisperers in anger, or in sport;
 'Mid looks of love, defiance, hate and scorn,
 Hoodwink'd with faery fancy; all amort,
 Save to St. Agnes and her lambs unshorn,
 And all the bliss to be before to - morrow morn.

So, purposing each moment to retire,
 She linger'd still. Meantime, across the moors,
 Had come young Porphyro, with heart on fire
 For Madeline. Beside the portal doors,
 Buttress'd from moonlight, stands he, and implores
 All saints to give him sight of Madeline,
 But for one moment in the tedious hours,
 That he might gaze and worship all unseen;
 Perchance speak, kneel, touch, kiss - in sooth such things have been.

He ventures in: let no buzz'd whisper tell:
 All eyes be muffled, or a hundred swords
 Will storm his heart, Love's fev'rous citadel;
 For him, those chambers held barbarian hordes,
 Hyena foemen, and hot - blooded lords,
 Whose very dogs would executions howl
 Against his lineage: not one breast affords
 Him any mercy, in that mansion foul,
 Save one old beldame, weak in body and in soul.

Ah, happy chance! the aged creature came,
 Shuffling along with ivory - headed wand,
 To where he stood, hid from the torch's flame,
 Behind a broad hall - pillar, far beyond
 The sound of merriment and chorus bland:
 He startled her; but soon she knew his face,
 And grasp'd his fingers in her palsied hand,
 Saying, 'Mercy, Porphyro! hie thee from this place;
 They are all here to - night, the whole blood - thirsty race!

'Get hence! get hence! there's dwarfish Hildebrand;
 He had a fever late and in the fit
 He cursed thee and thine, both house and land:
 Then there's that old Lord Maurice, not a whit
 More tame for his grey hairs - Alas me! flit!
 Flit like a ghost away!' - 'Ah, Gossip dear,
 We're safe enough; here in this armchair sit,
 And tell me how' - 'Good Saints! not here, not here;
 Follow me, child, or else these stones will be thy bier.'

He follow'd through a lowly arched way,
 Brushing the cobwebs with his lofty plume;
 And as she mutter'd 'Well - a - well - a - day!
 He found him in a little moonlight room,
 Pale, lattic'd, chill, and silent as a tomb.
 'Now tell me where is Madeline,' said he,
 'O tell me, Angela, by the holy loom
 Which none but secret sisterhood may see,
 When they St. Agnes' wool are weaving piously.'

'St. Agnes! Ah! it is St. Agnes' Eve -
 Yet men will murder upon holy days:
 Thou must hold water in a witch's sieve,
 And be liege - lord of all the Elves and Fays,
 To venture so: it fills me with amaze
 To see thee, Porphyro! - St. Agnes' Eve!
 God's help! my lady fair the conjurer plays
 This very night: good angels her deceive!
 But let me laugh awhile, I've mickle time to grieve.'

Feebly she laugheth in the languid moon,
 While Porphyro upon her face doth look,
 Like puzzled urchin on an aged crone
 Who keepeth clos'd a wond'rous riddle - book,
 As spectacled she sits in chimney nook.
 But soon his eyes grew brilliant, when she told
 His lady's purpose; and he scarce could brook
 Tears, at the thought of those enchantments cold,
 And Madeline asleep in lap of legends old.

Sudden a thought came like a full - blown rose,
 Flushing his brow, and in his pained heart
 Made purple riot: then doth he propose
 A stratagem, that makes the beldame start:
 'A cruel man, and impious thou art:
 Sweet lady, let her pray, and sleep, and dream
 Alone with her good angels, far apart
 From wicked men like thee. Go, go! - I deem
 Thou canst not surely be the same that thou didst seem.'

'I will not harm her, by all saints I swear,'
 Quoth Porphyro: 'O may I ne'er find grace
 When my weak voice shall whisper its last prayer,
 If one of her soft ringlets I displace,
 Or look with ruffian passion in her face:
 Good Angela, believe me by these tears;
 Or I will, even in a moment's space,
 Awake, with horrid shout, my foemen's ears,
 And beard them, though they be more fang'd than wolves and bears.'

'Ah! why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
 A poor, weak, palsy - stricken, churchyard thing,
 Whose passing - bell may ere the midnight toll;
 Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
 Were never miss'd.' Thus plaining, doth she bring
 A gentler speech from burning Porphyro;
 So woful, and of such deep sorrowing,
 That Angela gives promise she will do
 Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Which was, to lead him, in close secrecy,
 Even to Madeline's chamber, and there hide
 Him in a closet, of such privacy
 That he might see her beauty unespied,
 And win perhaps that night a peerless bride,
 While legion'd faeries pac'd the coverlet,
 And pale enchantment held her sleepy - eyed.
 Never on such a night have lovers met,
 Since Merlin paid his Demon all the monstrous debt.

'It shall be as thou wishest,' said the Dame:
 'All cates and dainties shall be stored there
 Quickly on this feast - night: by the tambour frame
 Her own lute thou wilt see: no time to spare,
 For I am slow and feeble, and scarce dare
 On such a catering trust my dizzy head.
 Wait here, my child, with patience; kneel in prayer
 The while: Ah! thou must needs the lady wed,
 Or may I never leave my grave among the dead.'

So saying, she hobbled off with busy fear.
 The lover's endless minutes slowly pass'd;
 The Dame return'd, and whisper'd in his ear
 To follow her; with aged eyes aghast
 From fright of dim espial. Safe at last,
 Through many a dusky gallery, they gain
 The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd, and chaste;
 Where Porphyro took covert, pleas'd amain.
 His poor guide hurried back with agues in her brain.

Her faltering hand upon the balustrade,
 Old Angela was feeling for the stair,
 When Madeline, St. Agnes' charmed maid,
 Rose, like a mission'd spirit, unaware;
 With silver taper's light, and pious care,
 She turn'd, and down the aged gossip led
 To a safe level matting. Now prepare,
 Young Porphyro, for gazing on that bed;
 She comes, she comes again, like ring - dove frayed and fled.

Out went the taper as she hurried in;
 Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died;
 She clos'd the door, she panted, all akin
 To spirits of the air, and visions wide:
 No uttered syllable, or, woe betide!
 But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
 Paining with eloquence her balmy side;
 As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
 Her throat in vain, and die, heart - stifled, in her dell.

A casement high and triple - arch'd there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, and flowers, and bunches of knot - grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Unnumerable of stains and splendid dyes.
 As are the tiger - moth's deep - damask'd wings;
 And in the midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
 And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,
 A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and kings.

Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
 And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
 As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
 Rose - bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
 And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
 And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
 She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
 Save wings, for heaven: Porphyro grew faint:
 She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint.

Anon his heart revives: her vespers done,
 Of all its wreathed pearls her hair she frees;
 Unclasps her warmed jewels one by one;
 Loosens her fragrant bodice; by degrees
 Her rich attire creeps rustling to her knees;
 Half - hidden, like a mermaid in seaweed,
 Pensive awhile she dreams awake, and sees
 In fancy, fair St. Agnes in her bed,
 But dares not look behind, or all the charm is fled.

Soon, trembling in her soft and chilly nest,
 In sort of wakeful swoon, perplex'd she lay,
 Until the poppied warmth of sleep oppress'd
 Her soothed limbs, and soul fatigued away;
 Flown, like a thought, until the morrow - day;
 Blissfully haven'd both from joy and pain;
 Clasp'd like a missal where swart Paynims pray;
 Blinded alike from sunshine and from rain,
 As though a rose should shut, and be a bud again.

Stol'n to this paradise, and so entranced,
 Porphyro gazed upon her empty dress,
 And listen'd to her breathing, if it chanced
 To wake into a slumberous tenderness;
 Which when he heard, that minute did he bless,
 And breath'd himself: then from the closet crept,
 Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness,
 And over the hush'd carpet, silent, stepped,
 And 'tween the curtains peep'd, where, lo! - how fast she slept.

Then by the bed - side, where the faded moon
 Made a dim, silver twilight, soft he set
 A table, and, half - anguish'd, threw thereon
 A cloth of woven crimson, gold, and jet: -
 O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!
 The boisterous, midnight, festive clarion,
 The kettle - drum, and far - heard clarionet,
 Affray his ears, though but in dying tone: -
 The hall door shuts again, and all the noise is gone.

And still she slept an azure - lidded sleep,
 In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
 While he from forth the closet brought a heap
 Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd:
 With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
 And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
 Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
 From Fez; and spiced dainties, every one,
 From silken Samarcand to cedar'd Lebanon.

These delicates he heap'd with glowing hand
 On golden dishes and in baskets bright
 Of wreathed silver: sumptuous they stand
 In the retired quiet of the night,
 Filling the chilly room with perfume light. -
 'And now, my love, my seraph fair, awake!
 Thou art my heaven, and I thine eremite:
 Open thine eyes, for meek St. Agnes' sake,
 Or I shall drowse beside thee, so my soul doth ache.'

Thus whispering, his warm, unnerved arm
 Sank in her pillow. Shaded was her dream
 By the dusk curtains: - 'twas a midnight charm
 Impossible to melt as iced stream:
 The lustrous salvers in the moonlight gleam:
 Broad golden fringe upon the carpet lies:
 It seem'd he never, never could redeem
 From such a steadfast spell his lady's eyes;
 She mus'd awhile, entoil'd in woofed phantasies.

Awakening up, he took her hollow lute, -
 Tumultuous, - and, in chords that tenderest be,
 He play'd an ancient ditty, long since mute,
 In Provence call'd, 'La belle dame sans merci':
 Close to her ear touching the melody; -
 Wherewith disturb'd, she utter'd a soft moan:
 He ceased - she panted quick - and suddenly
 Her blue affrighted eyes wide open shone:
 Upon his knees he sank, as smooth - sculptured stone.

Her eyes were open, but she still beheld,
 Now wide awake, the vision of her sleep:
 There was a painful change, that nigh expell'd
 The blisses of her dream so pure and deep
 At which fair Madeline began to weep,
 And moan forth witless words with many a sigh;
 While still her gaze on Porphyro would keep;
 Who knelt, with joined hands and piteous eye,
 Fearing to move or speak, she look'd so dreamingly.

'Ah, Porphyro!' said she, 'but even now
 Thy voice was at sweet tremble in mine ear,
 Made tuneable with every sweetest vow;
 And those sad eyes were spiritual and clear:
 How chang'd thou art! how pallid, chill, and drear!
 Give me that voice again, my Porphyro,
 Those looks immortal, those complainings dear!
 Oh leave me not in this eternal woe,
 For if thou diest, my Love, I know not where to go.'

Beyond a mortal man impulsion'd far
 At these voluptuous accents, he arose,
 Ethereal, flush'd, and like a throbbing star
 Seen mid the sapphire heaven's deep repose;
 Into her dream he melted, as the rose
 Blendeth its odour with the violet, -
 Solution sweet: meantime the frost - wind blows
 Like Love's alarum pattering the sharp sleet
 Against the window - panes; St. Agnes' moon hath set.

'Tis dark: quick pattereth the flay - blown sleet:
 'This is no dream, my bride, my Madeline!'
 'Tis dark: the iced gusts still rave and beat:
 'No dream, alas! alas! and woe is mine!
 Porphyro will leave me here to fade and pine. -
 Cruel! what traitor could thee hither bring?
 I curse not, for my heart is lost in thine,
 Though thou forsakest a deceived thing: -
 A dove forlorn and lost with sick unpruned wing!'

'My Madeline! sweet dreamer! lovely bride!
 Say, may I be for aye thy vassal blest?
 Thy beauty's shield, heart - shap'd and vermeil dyed?
 Ah, silver shrine, here will I take my rest
 After so many hours of toil and guest,
 A famish'd pilgrim, - saved by miracle.
 Though I have found, I will not rob thy nest
 Saving of thy sweet self; if thou think'st well
 To trust, fair Madeline, to no rude infidel.

'Hark! 'tis an elfin - storm from faery land,
Of haggard seeming, but a boon indeed:
Arise - arise! the morning is at hand; -
The bloated wassailers will never heed: -
Let us away, my love, with happy speed;
There are no ears to hear, or eyes to see, -
Drown'd all in Rhenish and the sleepy mead:
Awake! arise! my love, and fearless be,
For o'er the southern moors I have a home for thee.'

She hurried at his words, beset with fears,
For there were sleeping dragons all around,
At glaring watch, perhaps, with ready spears -
Down the wide stairs a darkling way they found. -
In all the house was heard no human sound.
A chain - droop'd lamp was flickering by each door;
The arras, rich with horseman, hawk, and hound,
Flutter'd in the besieging wind's uproar
And the long carpets rose along the gusty floor.

They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall;
Like phantoms, to the iron porch, they glide;
Where lay the Porter, in uneasy sprawl,
With a huge empty flagon by his side:
The wakeful bloodhound rose, and shook his hide,
But his sagacious eye an inmate owns:
By one, and one, the bolts full easy slide: -
The chains lie silent on the footworn stones; -
The key turns, and the door upon its hinges groans.

And they are gone: aye, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm.
That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
And all his warrior - guests, with shade and form
Of witch, and demon, and large coffin - worm,
Were long be - nightmar'd. Angela the old
Died palsy - twitch'd, with meagre face deform;
The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
For aye unsought - for slept among his ashes cold.

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

'O what can ail thee, knight - at - arms,
Alone and palely loitering?
The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.

'O what can ail thee, knight - at - arms!
So haggard and so woe - begone?
The squirrel's granary is full,
And the harvest's done.

'I see a lily on thy brow
With anguish moist and fever - dew,
And on thy cheeks a fading rose
Fast withereth too.

'I met a lady in the meads,
Full beautiful - a faery's child,
Her hair was long, her foot was light,
And her eyes were wild.

'I made a garland for her head,
And bracelets too, and fragrant zone;
She look'd at me as she did love,
And made sweet moan.

'I set her on my pacing steed
And nothing else saw all day long,
For sidelong would she bend, and sing
A fairy's song.

'She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and manna - dew,
And sure in language strange she said
"I love thee true."

'She took me to her elfin grot,
And there she wept and sigh'd full sore,
And there I shut her wild, wild eyes
With kisses four.

'And there she lulled me asleep,
And there I dream'd - Ah! woe betide!
The latest dream I ever dream'd
On the cold hill's side.

'I saw pale kings and princes too,
Pale warriors, death - pale were they all,
They cried - "La belle Dame sans Merci
Hath thee in thrall!"'

'I saw their starved lips in the gloam
With horrid warning gaped wide,
And I awoke and found me here
On the cold hills' side.

'And this is why I sojourn here
Alone and palely loitering,
Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
And no birds sing.'

Grasshopper And Cricket, On The

The poetry of earth is never dead;
When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new - mown mead;
That is the grasshopper's - he takes the lead
In summer luxury, - he has never done
With his delights, for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.
The poetry of earth is ceasing never:
On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

First Looking Into Chapman's Homer, On

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep - brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne:
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:

- Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez - when with eagle eyes

He stared at the Pacific - and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise -
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

Sleep, To

O soft embalmer of the still midnight!
Shutting with careful fingers and benign
Our gloom - pleased eyes, embower'd from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine;
O soothest Sleep! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities;
Then save me, or the passed day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes;
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength for darkness, burrowing like a mole;
Turn the key deftly in the oiled wards,
And seal the hushed casket of my soul.

Human Seasons, The

Four Seasons fill the measure of the year;
There are four seasons in the mind of Man:
He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear
Takes in all beauty with an easy span:

He has his Summer, when luxuriously
Spring's honey'd cud of youthful thought he loves
To ruminate, and by such dreaming high
Is nearest unto heaven: quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings
He furleth close; contented so to look
On mists in idleness - to let fair things
Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook: -

He has his Winter too of pale misfeature,
Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

Great Spirits Now On Earth Are Sojourning

Great spirits now on earth are sojourning;
He of the cloud, the cataract, the lake,
Who on Helvellyn's summit, wide awake,
Catches his freshness from Archangel's wing;
He of the rose; the violet, the spring,
The social smile, the chain for Freedom's sake:
And lo! - whose steadfastness would never take
A meaner sound than Raphael's whispering.
And other spirits there are standing apart
Upon the forehead of the age to come;
These, these will give the world another heart
And other pulses. Hear ye not the hum
Of mighty workings in the human mart?
Listen awhile, ye nations, and be dumb.

Terror Of Death, The

When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has glean'd my teeming brain,
Before high - piled books, in charact'ry
Hold like rich garners the full - ripen'd grain;

When I behold, upon the night's starr'd face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And think that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance;

And when I feel, fair creature of an hour!
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the fairy power
Of unreflecting love - then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

Last Sonnet

Bright Star! would I were steadfast as thou art: -
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,

The moving waters at their priestlike task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors: -

No - yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillow'd upon my fair Love's ripening breast
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest;

Still, still to hear her tender - taken breath,
And so live ever, - or else swoon to death.