



“Thus merit ever loves and seeks the shade” -- FORGOTTEN POEMS AND POETS (1776-1805)

Although upon closer examination we are *sometimes* pleasantly surprised by the diversity and originality to be found in 18th and early 19th century American poetry, the majority of poets in this country followed what was being composed in Britain, and to that extent most of the American poetry of those times tends to be slavishly imitative and not infrequently dull reading today. The problem by and large began and was a result of a desire of British writers to follow in the footsteps of the Greek and Roman classics, and instill the style and manners of the ancients into both English prose and verse. Yet as J.A.K. Thomson explains, and to make the point for our purposes more succinctly, what by and large worked well for prose did not, by contrast, work so well for poetry, whether British or American.

“Dr. [Samuel] Johnson has been a good deal sneered at for thinking the Dryden-Pope [heroic] couplet more musical than [Milton’s] “Lycidas,” but it is evident that Dryden and Pope thought so to. We cannot explain what looks like an insensitiveness of ear, but we have to accept it as fact. We must know what the age admired if we are to understand its approach to antiquity. What it admired then was good sense, pointedly expressed, and an almost geometrical regularity of form with a corresponding regularity of meter. It must be allowed that these things are to be found in the classical literature and that the eighteenth century view is not so much wrong as inadequate. It is a view that had the right to be expressed, and if the results were disappointing or even bad poetry they were almost wholly splendid and salutary in prose...

“‘The best of the modern language poets in all languages,’ wrote Garth to Pope at the beginning of the latter’s career, ‘are those that have nearest copied the ancients.’ The young poet accepted and maintained this opinion throughout his life, and it may be called on the whole the orthodox view of the eighteenth century. No one therefore can hope to understand that century unless he understands something of what the classics meant to it...

“...their [Dryden and Pope’s] followers and imitators had in general little to say, and then the inadequacy of the doctrine [i.e., of mechanically imitating, or attempting to imitate, the ancients] was revealed...” (*The Classical Background of English Literature* (1948), pp. 188, 190-191.)

And yet what so frequently the would-be 18th century classical poet failed to understand had been clearly enunciated by Pope himself in the “Essay on Criticism” (1709):

“First follow nature and your judgment frame
By her just standard, which is still the same.
Unerring nature still divinely bright,
One clear, unchanged and universal light,
Life force and beauty, must to all impart,

At once the source and end and test of art
Art from that fund each just supply provides,
Works without show and without pomp presides
In some fair body thus the informing soul
With spirits feeds, with vigor fills the whole,
Each motion guides and every nerve sustains,
Itself unseen, but in the effects remains...

“But when to examine every part he came
Nature and Homer were he found the same
Convinced, amazed, he checks the bold design
And rules as strict his labored work confine
As if the Stagirite o'erlooked each line
Learn hence for ancient rules a just esteem,
To copy nature is to copy them...”

But such appreciation and feeling for the natural was not lost on all, and there were effulgent exceptions to robotically conventional or mindlessly routine poetry. Works like those of Countess Anne Finch's "A Nocturnal Reverie," James Thomson's "Seasons," John Dyer's "Grongar Hill," Goldsmith's "Deserted Village," MacPherson's "Ossian," and Chatterton's "Rowley" poems, to name a few, were there also; helping to plant the seeds that subsequently flourished into heart felt, moody, and or pensive romanticism.

In America Philip Freneau was himself a forerunner of the romantic movement, at least in America, and even somewhat earlier poets like Philip Livingston, Annis Stockton, and even Phillis Wheatley (the latter by her sincere and impassioned appeals for freedom) made auspicious strides in creatively rising above the cloying affectation and rigidity of obligatory and formulaic classicism. 18th century American poetic satirists, on the other hand, tended to be less fortunate; and their albeit capably crafted mock epics and related pieces generally suffer from a strained and sometimes painfully dated sense of humor.

One of the first notable British romantic influences on American post-Revolutionary War poets and who was especially liked was Thomas Chatterton. John Blair Linn "of New York," for example, in 1795 wrote and published an elegy in the "Rowley" poet's honor; while one anonymous Baltimore poet from the same period adopted for himself the pseudonym "Augustus Chatterton." Not long after, Sir Walter Scott and Byron then became all the rage.

Yet just as not all 18th century classicists, whether British or American, could no where near come to emulating the success of Dryden, Pope or Cowper, so most early and later 19th century would-be romantics fell decidedly short of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Burns, or Blake; so that change in genre or focus did not automatically produce better bards. Far be it from us to then to assume that romanticism was necessarily or always an improvement over classicism. Perhaps therefore we might just as well conclude (with apologies to Alexander Pope):

For brands of poetry let fools contest;
whate'er imparts *true* heart or wit is best.¹

And important to remember too, not all classicisms and romanticisms are the same. "Classicism is health, Romanticism is sickness," said one quondam romantic. Yet Goethe's classicism was almost singularly Hellenic in emphasis; whereas 18th century British and American poets in general were or sought to be Augustan in style and taste. By the same token, to show how divergent styles and avenues of approach to romanticism could be requires nothing more than a cursory list of well known romantic poets by which to compare each other with.

¹ Though for Pope's own views on what makes for good poetry and written in the spirit of Horace, see his *Essay on Criticism*.

American poets of the early Republic were invariably patriotic and no less emphatic about it. Nonetheless, the American people themselves and at large were too busy expanding business, seeking fortunes, and founding the country to bother with literature, and poetry in particular. Two of the most common themes of early 19th American century poems are either unrequited love and the social futility of a poetic vocation; both of which, to be frank, were often felt by the poet very bitterly.

One of the best tests for ascertaining whether a poem is good or not is how it sounds when read aloud. And it is a gratifying thing if after sifting through heaps of old and forgotten poetry (indeed, not so infrequently, rightly forgotten poetry) one chances across something that, if admittedly less than perfect, is even so vigorous, moving, and still retains meaning and significance on the human level. Applying this method and criteria, and having spent some weeks pouring through poems by unknown and relatively unknown American poets in the span from, roughly, 1770 to 1800, the following are eight poems which I thought deserve a second chance. Well, I liked them anyway; choosing however only eight in order to make the experience of reading them all the more easier, and consequently more enjoyable to readers not normally given to reading poems. I mention this because I by no means want to leave the impression that there are not more worthwhile poems that might have been included. But with “Time’s winged chariot hurrying near,” others and the rest, I hope, will in this instance excuse the practical exigency of a brief collection and review.

Prefatory Note.

In the course of this article several works are cited or mentioned, and which we list here for purposes of advance and more convenient reference:

* *The Beauties of poetry, British and American: containing some of the productions of Waller, Milton, Addison, Pope, Shirley, Parnell, Watts, Thomson, Young, Shenstone, Akenside, Gray, Goldsmith, Johnson, Moore, Garrick, Cowper, Beattie, Burns, Merry, Cowley, Wolcott, Palmerston, Penrose. Evans, Barlow, Dwight, Freneau, Humphreys, Livingston, J. Smith, W.M. Smith, Ladd, Bayard, Hopkinson, James, Markoe, Prichard, Fentham, Bradford, Dawes, Lathrop, Osborne.* (1791), edited by Mathew Carey.²

* *Specimens of American Poetry* (1829), in three volumes, by Samuel Kettell.³

* *Cyclopedia of American Literature* (1854-1875), in two volumes, by Evert Augustus Duyckinck and George Long Duyckinck.⁴

Of further interest also are:

* *Specimens of the American Poets* (1822), published in London, by Henry Roscoe.⁵

* *Early American Poetry: A Compilation of the Titles of Volumes of Verse and Broad-sides, Written by Writers Born or Residing in North America, and Issued During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1903 and 1907), in two volumes, by Oscar Wegelin.⁶

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Joseph Hazard (c. 1750-?) of Lincoln College, Oxford is known to us as the author of *The Conquest of Quebec* published in 1769; which is an altogether nice piece of its kind and of the pre-revolutionary period; bemoaning life’s transience while celebrating Wolfe’s victory and British patriotism. Whether he is possibly the same (which at present doesn’t seem likely) or else a relation to Joseph Hazard (1757-1817) [sic], from New York and the author of *Juvenile Poems, On a Diversity of Subjects* (1789) and *Hazard’s Poems* (1814) is a point I was not able to determine; except that we do know that the mother of

<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N17951.0001.001?rgn=subject:view=to>

<sup>3</sup> For vol. 1, see <https://tinyurl.com/l26tdlj>; vol. 2 at <https://tinyurl.com/mw5xdkj>; vol. 3 <https://tinyurl.com/lfba688>

<sup>4</sup> For vol. 1, see <https://tinyurl.com/nxze8qm>; vol. 2 at <https://tinyurl.com/mvhex7k>

<sup>5</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/lf9p46v>

<sup>6</sup> For vol. 1 see <https://tinyurl.com/kk6mqrm>; and vol. 2 at <https://tinyurl.com/mny5hqh>

the latter Hazard was named Elizabeth. The Duyckincks make no mention whatsoever of any Joseph Hazard; though Kettell in his anthology includes one Hazard poem from the 1814 publication. Otherwise and outside the contents of *Juvenile* and *Hazard's Poems*, and that during the Revolutionary War he was a friend of liberty and supporter of the American cause, there was little or no information I could obtain about this author.

These are two melancholy pieces taken from *Juvenile Poems* (1789), that I personally found both affectionately likeable, if also somewhat and unintentionally amusing.

**ELEGY 3d. The Lot of Humanity.**

THE heirs of sorrow, from life's earliest date,  
Alike with ills one common war we wage;  
Through every period feel the blasts of fate,  
In grief's dark volume only, shift the page.

Predestin'd pupils for a school of pain,  
How soon, alas! we sad proficient grow;  
Foreign to us, all knowledge else is vain,  
Wise only in diversity of woe.

Some flattering form of happiness invites;  
Eager we start—the tinsell'd bauble chace;—  
In fond pursuits of fancy, drawn delights  
Urge the abortive, unsuccessful race.

Caught by the appearance of illusive joys,  
Fictitious pleasures, we for real believe;  
Yet, ah! how soon the wish'd fruition cloy,  
And nought behind but deadly poisons leave.

So the gay serpent, as he basks supine,  
Charms the fleet warbler on his airy way;  
Downward he drops, unconscious of design,  
To latent death, an unsuspecting prey.

Of what avail is Reason's friendly beam,  
Celestial light! to aid our frailties giv'n?  
Immers'd in darkness, scarce a feeble gleam  
Vouches the gift peculiar of Heav'n.

Mere slaves of Passion's arbitrary sway,  
Restraint we know not, nor admit controul;  
But blindly err, as Folly marks the way,  
And one impetuous frenzy rules the soul:

Deaf to Reflection's moralizing pow'rs,  
In vain they point their efficacious balm;  
Dark o'er the mind, one gloomy tempest low'rs,  
Nor yields the shortest interval of calm.

What strange fatality our steps attend!  
What dire events result our ev'ry deed!  
From specious bliss some sad mischance depends,  
Wounds us to lose, and kills, if we succeed.

The sport of Fortune, at her option tost,  
Of ev'ry sensual appetite the slave—  
Each purpos'd scheme, by wayward fortune crost—  
Ah! why should we protracted being crave!

Tormenting state! sad privilege to live!  
Too late convinc'd, th' important truth we know;  
Life's fairest prospects glitter to deceive,  
Nor true Felicity exists below.

*New-Haven*, Dec. 24th, 1776.

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**Written under a great Depression of Spirits, upon viewing the artful and insincere raised to the heighth of Prosperity;—the last ten lines being intended as an Epitaph.**

GRANT me, ye pow'rs! from life the wish'd release,  
And sooth my passage to the realms of peace;  
This troubled mind to envied rest compose,  
That feels its own, but bleeds for others woes;  
That knows no sordid, no ignoble aim,  
Or basely triumphs in another's shame;  
But glows to find, tho' small his share of bliss,  
That some there are who boast more happiness.  
'Tis not for me to crave a longer date,  
Who daily bends beneath the blasts of fate;  
For whom the sun darts not one chearful ray,  
Or gilds with joy the orient face of day:  
For happier youths, let vernal roses bloom—  
Mine be the dreary regions of the Tomb:—

EPITAPH.

YET, should my milder fortune have design'd,  
That I one kindred soul shall leave behind;  
By Friendship prompted, should he chance to stray,  
Where these frail Limbs in dull Oblivion lay;—  
O! may his breast heave forth one anxious sigh—  
One tear of pity glisten from his eye:  
Sad as he thinks what once I us'd to be—  
How near to him—how dear he was to me;—  
This tribute paid, my friend may onward go—  
*One Sigh—one Tear*—is all that's due to *Joe*.

*Poughkeepsie*, July 22d, 1778.<sup>7</sup>

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Saamel Kettell has this, among other things, to say about physician and poet William Ladd (1755-1786), from Newport, Rhode Island, "His life is marked with a character of singularity, for it realizes the dreams of romance, and presents as striking a case of ill-starred love as ever furnished a theme for the

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<sup>7</sup> From Hazard's *Juvenile Poems, On a Diversity of Subjects* (1789), (pp. 15-17) and (pp. 42-43); available at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N16979.0001.001?view=toc>  
While for *Hazard's Poems* (1814 edition), see: <https://tinyurl.com/mptels4>  
See also *Kettell* vol. 3, pp. 112-113.

novelist or poet. Ladd possessed by nature a warm susceptible heart, and a lively fancy. His early days were passed amid privations, but his exuberant spirits and imaginative turn of mind made amends for this lack of the gifts of fortune, and secured him enjoyments in his penury. He became attached to poetry, first as an amusement, and afterwards as a solace and refuge from the troubles and mortifications which beset him. His warm fancy, and quick susceptibility of feeling, kindled this attachment into enthusiasm, and carried him into a dreaming state of existence. His imagination reposed in regions of sunshine and bliss, and pictured every scene in glowing colors..."

Along with the above quoted from sketch and other pieces, "Arouet and Amanda" can be found in Kettell at vol. 1, pp. 334-341.

#### **AROUET TO AMANDA.**

Once more, dear maid, the wretched Arouet writes;  
His pen obedient, as his heart indites;  
These lines may haply waste your precious time,  
And his loathed writings may be deem'd a crime.  
Thou say'st that friendship can afford a cure  
To the deep wounds, the sorrows I endure ;  
The generous thought with rapture I pursue—  
It must be lovely, for it comes from you.  
But O how poor is friendship to express  
"The soul-felt pang of exquisite distress."  
Once I was happy—blest with native ease,  
A friend could cheer me, and a book could please;  
But now no joys from books or friendship flow,  
Not one poor respite to my load of woe.  
Did not you, dearest, see my fond distress,  
Beyond all power of language to express?  
The whirling thought, the swift impassion'd kiss,  
Delirium sweet and agony of bliss.  
How have I listen'd when your accents broke,  
And kiss'd the air that trembled as you spoke.  
Death, friendly Death will soon relieve my pain,  
Long sure he cannot be implored in vain.  
When to my sight the monarch of the tomb  
Shall rise terrific and pronounce my doom;  
Will then Amanda, ah! she will, I trust,  
Pay the last tribute to my clay-cold dust:  
Will sighing say, here his last scene is o'er,  
Who loved as mortal never loved before.  
Dear, matchless maid! that kind concern display'd,  
Would sweetly soothe my melancholy shade.  
O'er my lone tomb O yield that sad relief;  
Breathe the soft sigh and pour out all your grief;  
Or shed one tear in pity as you pass,  
And just remember that your Arouet was.

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Born in Santa Cruz, West Indies, Peter Markoe (1752?-1792), although in 1775 passing the bar at Lincoln's Inn, England in 1775, relinquished a legal career to become, like friend Philip Freneau, a full time poet, playwright, pro-American political activist in Philadelphia, and in Markoe's case, a playwright. Among his published works are "The Patriot Chief" (1783), a stage play; *Miscellaneous Poems* (1787); *The Algerine spy in Pennsylvania: or, Letters written by a native of Algiers on the affairs of the United States of*

America, from the close of the year 1783 to the meeting of the Convention (1787); The Times (1788), a book length poem; and "Reconciliation; or The triumph of nature: a comic opera, in two acts." (1790).

HOPE. AN ODE.

HEARD ye that sigh?—Soft as the gales,
Which gently stole thro' Eden's vales,
Ere man, as yet not desp'rate grown by vice,
Mourn'd his lost innocence and Paradise,
To heav'n it rises—Angels, bear the sound,
Far, far above the starry frame!
From Hope's aspiring breast it came;
And whilst glad myriads wait around,
With never-fading glory crown'd,
Present it at the throne of grace,
An offering worthy of the place.

Heart-soothing Hope! thou friend of man!
With thee our earliest bliss began!
To thee, sweet comforter! our wishes tend;
Ah! deign thy humble vot'ries to befriend!
Guard us, bright seraph! from corroding care!
When all our weak resources fail,
When friends forsake, and foes assail,
Thy sure assistance let us share,
And chace the monster, fell Despair.
Compell'd to seek his native hell,
In torments let him rage and yell!

Soul-cheering Hope! the verse inspire,
As with bold hand I strike the lyre,
As, urged by thee, I wake the willing muse,
Who, warm'd by patriot cares, extends her views.
Reason and truth the heart-felt wish allow.
Hail, self-dependent Industry!
A nation's bliss must spring from thee:
I form no visionary vow;
Since active Science guides the plough;
And Valour rivalling old Rome,
The shuttle throws, or rears the dome.

Yet, yet, thou universal friend!
To all the race thy views extend;
And faintly sketch, sweet Hope, the happy plan,
Which may exalt the savage into man.
Base Av'rice! from th' uncultur'd scene remove,
Who dar'st the garb of Justice wear!
To scenes of polish'd life repair;
Nor think, thy maxims can improve
Th' untutor'd tenant of the grove.
Can Avarice religion preach?
Shall they, who rob, pretend to teach?

Ye, whom superior talents bless,
Whom virtue leads to happiness!
By moral culture first prepare the soil;

Religion's fruit shall then reward your toil,
On earth the visionary ladder stood,
Which reach'd at length, the yielding skies,
And man, by slow degrees, must rise.
Uncheck'd by fear, unstained with blood,
Thus shall ye rear the public good
On Justice, which shall time defy,
'Till Hope be swallow'd up in Joy.⁸

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John Lathrop (Jr., 1772-1820) son of a Boston minister, after graduating from Harvard took up and practiced law for a while, but subsequently became an educator. As well as a part time poet, he occasionally gave orations, such as at Fourth of July events. In 1799, he sailed to Calcutta, India, where he taught and unsuccessfully attempted to set up a seminary school there, returning then to the United States in 1819. Both a Federalist and a Free Mason, he was friend and an associate of the likes of Fisher Ames and poet Robert Treat Paine, Jr. Like John Blair Linn, there has been more written on him than the rest of our less than familiar poets, and the Duyckinks allot a comparatively spacious entry to him. Though he wrote sundry odes, monodies, and other miscellaneous pieces, Lathrop's most conspicuous poetic work is *Speech of Caunonicus, or an Indian Tradition* (1802);⁹ "Caunonicus" referring to a Sachem of the Narraghusett.

A WINTER PIECE.

SURLY Winter now returns;
Nature droops her head, and mourns:
Sol's oblique, descending ray
Lends a faint and transient day;
Night the realms of day invades,
And her dark dominion spreads.
Brooks no more meandering run;
Streams are harden'd into stone;
Where the boatman oft has ply'd,
Pond'rous sleds securely glide.

Naked and deform'd are seen
Meadows lately dress'd in green.
Groves and fields are disarray'd;
Leaves are wither'd, dry'd the blade.
Songsters of the wood are flown,
All their cheerful music gone;
Not a swallow strains his throat,
The lark forgets his sprightly note;
Zephyrs, with their gentle breeze,
Sport no more along the trees:
Winds in angry murmurs howl,
Skies with gathering tempests scowl;
Proudest forests humbly bend;
Thick the woolly flakes descend.
See, how fast the valley fills!
How the driving snow-bank swells!
Batt'ring hail-stones urge the hind,
Refuge in her shed to find;

⁸ Carey pp. 177-178.

⁹ Available at <https://tinyurl.com/lrh99o4>

Trembling stands the hardy steer,
Lowling for the master's care.

Farmers now their stables tend,
And from storms the herds defend;
Load with new-thresh'd grain the floor;
Prudent deal the winter's store;
Shiv'ring from the cold retire;
Heap fresh fuel on the fire;
From the evening borrow day,
Drive the piercing frosts away;
Sit secure within the doors,
And defy the storm that roars;
With a book, or chat, deceive
The slow hours of winter's eve;
Teach the list'ning youths the lore,
Which their grandsires taught before;
And their admiration raise
With good things of ancient days:
Or the works of distant climes,
Or the news of modern times.
Thus dull winter rolls away:
Thus we pass the irksome day.

Ah! a deadlier winter speeds—
Winter which no spring succeeds.
When our blooming youth is gone,
And our frosty age comes on,
Then no more will spring return—
Age is hopeless—age forlorn—
Hopeless?—no—the silver'd head
Shows, the storms of life are fled:
So the sunshine tips the hills,
As it louring clouds dispels.

Happy christian, who has trod
All the length of virtue's road,
From the goal his eye can cast
Back on storms and dangers past,
And with hope anticipate
Pleasures of the heav'nly state!
When is clos'd this varied scene,
Calmer seasons then begin.¹⁰

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This poem is one of a related set by an anonymous writer reproduced in Elihu Hubbard Smith's *American Poems, selected and original* (1793), and which contains this explanatory note: "This, and the succeeding Poems, signed BIRTHA, are extracted from the *Gazette of the United States*; where they form part of a poetical Correspondence, carried on under the signatures of ELLA<sup>11</sup> and BIRTHA. We have selected the following Poems as being most correct, and most worthy of preservation; especially as they are now offered to the public with the author's corrections."

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<sup>10</sup> Carey p. 204-206, and see Duyckinck vol. 1, pp. 611-614, Kettle vol. 2, pp. 101-108.

<sup>11</sup> Identified by Fred Lewis Pattee, in *The First Century of American Literature: 1770-1870* (1935) p. 109, as Elihu Hubbard Smith himself.

“Ella” and “Birtha,” incidentally, are characters in Chatterton’s “Ella, A Tragical Interlude” (or “AElla”) one of the “Rowley” poems and which first appeared in print in 1777.

**TO ELLA.**

AH! vainly Ella, do I hear  
Thy lute complain, in notes so clear,  
As would seduce an angel’s ear;  
That bids me check the song of praise,  
And give to *other themes*, my lays.

To fierce disease and grief a prey,  
In pain I pass the lingering day.

No more I raise the sprightly strain,  
Or warble the melodious song,  
That fill’d the breast with envied pain,  
And could the joys of life prolong.

Now, when the *glowing orb* of day,  
Hath sunk beneath the western wave;  
With melancholy heart I stray  
To hear the stream his border lave.

Or like some pilgrim press the yielding grass,  
And wet my sandals with the nightly dew,  
A sprig of laurel breaking as I pass,  
To thee I say the honoring branch is due.

My dangerous course along the vale I take,  
Beneath the hanging rock, that seems to shake  
With ev’ry blast, and threatens on my head  
Its crushing weight to roll;  
But my undaunted soul,  
Enjoys the scene, nor feels the chill of terror spread.

Now, near a cavern dark, and wild,  
With folded arms I stand,  
Like melancholy’s gloomy child;  
I heave the swelling sigh;  
Upon the passing gale;  
While from my ever-streaming eye;  
Adown my cheeks, so wan and pale,  
The tears incessant drop upon my hand.  
There I hear the moping owl,  
His dismal whoopings roll,  
Upon the heavy ear of night,  
In sounds that would thy soul affright.

But oh! my bursting heart!  
So tortur’d by the fang of grief,  
In other scenes would seek relief:  
On fancy’s rapid wing I’d dart  
Where Horror with his staring eye,  
And upright hair,  
Sits gazing on the fiery sky,

When sulphurous lightnings fly,  
And swell the soul to wild despair.

Where the vex'd wave with mad'ning roar,  
Rolls thundering on the craggy shore,  
And aims with ev'ry dreadful shock,  
To burst apart the flinty rock;  
When still like wretched man! in vain  
He strives his purpose to obtain;  
Mad to despair, he flies again  
And clamours to his parent main.

BIRTHA.

MAY 21, 1791.<sup>12</sup>

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Of the poets contained in this brief sampler, John Blair Linn (1777-1804), originally from Shippensburg, Pennsylvania, is the best known and documented; with his brother in law Charles Brockden Brown having written a posthumous sketch of him.¹³ While I hope at a later date to devote a special article to Linn, here at least for now is a melancholy sonnet of his.

MARY'S TOMB, A SONNET.

WHAT mournful noise resounds from yonder grove?
The grove where Mary slumbers in her tomb;
What sigh is that, what plaintive voice of love?
Which flings its sorrow to the midnight gloom—

II.

What figure's that, which glimmers through the trees?
And drooping bends, upon the flowery green,
Whose locks wave gently with the fanning breeze,
And anguish'd views the sad surrounding scene—

III.

'Tis mourning Belville weeping o'er the urn
Where mould'ring in the dust his Mary lies,
Whom hope had sooth'd with smiles at his return,
But now deluding, shuns his sorrowing eyes.

IV.

His sad remembrance paints the lovely maid,
Their former love, their happiness and joy,
When she in beauty and in health array'd,
Was the sole object of his mind's employ.

V.

When last he parted from her soft embrace
To seek the dangers of the ocean's swell;
When the tears trickled o'er her gentle face

¹² *American Poems, selected and original* (1793), edited by Elihu Hubbard Smith, pp. 240-242, available at:

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N19277.0001.001/1:3?rgn=div1;view=toc>

¹³ And which can be found as an introductory piece in Linn's *Valerian, A Narrative Poem* (1805), pp. iii-xxiv, and also in *The Port Folio* (in three parts): Jan. 1809, pp 21-29; Feb. 1809, pp. 129-134, Mar. 1809, pp. 195-203.

As he the beauteous mourner, bade farewell.

VI.

Returning; she has fled his anxious arms,
And sought the icy fetters of the tomb,
No more her Belville views her blooming charms,
But cloth'd in sorrow, sighs his hapless doom.

VII.

O'er the fair maid, ye trees your verdure wave,
Protect her with your wide and cooling shade,
Softly ye dews distill upon her grave,
Where Belville's tears the debt of sorrow paid.¹⁴

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Samuel Low (1765-1819), states Kettell, is the author of a compilation of verse, in two volumes, "published at New York in 1800." Low was a playwright as well as poet, and his collection is unique for its focus on and attempts at sonnets in a variety of forms.

#### **TO A VIOLET.**

Though not the gaudy Tulip's drap'ry fine,  
Yet thou, fair plant, canst Tyre's rich purple boast;  
The beauty of the Amethyst is thine;  
Thy neat and simple garb delights me most;  
Unseen and shadowy forms, of tiny size,  
Delicious dew-drops from thy surface sip,  
Feast on thy charms their microscopic eyes,  
And breathe thy sweets, as o'er thy leaves they trip.  
Emblem of innocence and modest worth,  
Who lov'st the eye of rude remark to shun,  
Whose lovely, lowly form still tends to earth,  
Unlike the flower which courts the mid-day sun;  
Thou seem'st, sweet flow'ret, of his beam afraid;—  
Thus merit ever loves and seeks the shade.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Miscellaneous works, prose and poetical. By a young gentleman of New-York* (1795), pp. 141-143.

<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N21984.0001.001?view=toc>

See also Duyckinck vol. 1, p. 262, and *The Port Folio*, Jan. 1809, vol. VII, no. 1, pp 21-29; Feb. 1809, vol. 1, no. 2, pp 129-134; March 1809, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 195-203.

<sup>15</sup> Kettell vol. 1, pp. 318-324.



*J. B. LINN.*

*William Clifton (1772-1799) and John Blair Linn (1777-1804).*

## FORGOTTEN POEMS AND POETS, Part II

As Fred Lewis Pattee notes in *The First Century of American Literature: 1770-1870* (1935), p. 364, it is most peculiar yet true nonetheless that an exceptionally high number of poets of the early Republic suffered or died from tuberculosis; furnishing, as he does so, the following (partial) list:

|                         |                |                  |
|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| St. John Honeywood..... | 1765-1798..... | 33 years         |
| William Clifton.....    | 1772-1799..... | 27 "             |
| John Blair Linn.....    | 1777-1804..... | 27 "             |
| Carlos Wilcox.....      | 1794-1827..... | 32 "             |
| Joseph Rodman Drake...  | 1795-1820..... | 25 "             |
| J. G. C. Brainard.....  | 1796-1828..... | 32 "             |
| James W. Eastburn.....  | 1797-1819..... | 22 "             |
| John Everett.....       | 1801-1826..... | 25 "             |
| E. C. Pinkney.....      | 1802-1828..... | 17 "             |
| Lucretia Davidson.....  | 1808-1825..... | 28 "             |
| Willis G. Clark.....    | 1810-1841..... | 31 "             |
| Lucy Hooper.....        | 1817-1841..... | 24 "             |
| Margaret Davidson.....  | 1823-1838..... | 15 <sup>16</sup> |

And yet if being cut down in the prime of youth were not misfortune enough, Pattee, with small qualification and with little exception to give in the form of excerpts to consider, summarily brushes aside and dismisses their poetry as irredeemably vapid, dull, and forgettable. Although, after some casual scanning of the writings of these authors, his assessment seems for the most part fair, it is by no means wholly so. For if one takes the time and trouble -- though admittedly not always an agreeable task where a voluminous amount of material is involved -- to go through the compositions of these and other young poets of the early Republic, there is a good chance with a few of them of finding verses which, if not to be classed with the great poetry of the ages, is or may be at least sufficiently novel, touching, amusing (whether intentionally or no), musical, and or of unusual historical interest; insofar as the piece may, perhaps even strikingly, disclose heretofore unknown or little suspected aspects to the artistic temperament and imagination of then young America.

<sup>16</sup> Elihu Hubbard Smith (1771-1798), like Clifton and Balir, also passed away at 27. The dates for Lucretia Davidson are here corrected from his Pattee's text. He also mentions that Washington Irving and William Cullen Bryant were lifelong consumptives; to which we can add as well that Charles Brockden Brown was one of those who died at a relatively young age (39) of the malady. Joseph Dennie, though his was a different disease, stands out as another premature fatality (at age 43) of that literary era.

Unfortunately however, owing to the occupational necessity of having to digest and review large quantities of reading, while often having to do so in great haste no less, literary historians too frequently have the regrettable tendency of casually lumping literary works into “good” and “bad” categories. While understandable for practical reasons, it even so leaves the misleading impression that a literary work is *always* either merely good or bad; when of course this is by no means true; nor is the *just* assessment of a writing so simple as the approach or method seems to imply. Nor is the justification or basis of judgments made any more clear and acceptable when, whether consciously or not, personal or subjective concerns, such as present day social or ideological or regional agendas for example, come into play, sometimes surreptitiously, into the critic’s weighing of an author’s effort.

What in practice is customarily ignored is that a literary, or any artistic, work is assessed on the basis of criteria of a given critic’s choosing. Sometimes the particular criterion employed is obviously implied or stated; at others times it is not so, and rather and instead simply assumed without discussion. If then we are to take a critic seriously, it only makes sense for us to know what he or she values and what the criteria they apply to a work are. And yet do we do this?

Having mentioned this, perhaps it might help further to suggest that the criteria a critic applies should be interpreted as measures or “litmus tests” of a work’s *use* or *usefulness*. For example, relegating our discussion here to poetry, a given poem could be said to have the following uses:

1. To inspire or otherwise move us emotionally; while conveying or else hinting at a spiritual, moral, and or social message.
2. To amuse and entertain.
3. To instruct and educate; whether as intended by the author, and or viewing the work in historical retrospect.

Whether the poem effectively achieves any or all of the above, that is, is found useful, depends on, among other things, the context in which the poem is read: including the reader’s mood of the moment (the emotional “weather,” so to speak); capacity for and range of emotion (including sense of humor); level of education and sophistication; imagination and musicality; and what he or she values generally. So vital in importance are such contexts in the experience of poetry, and others arts and genres, that even proven and undeniable masterworks may, as we know, markedly suffer in our enjoyment and appreciation of them; if the time is not right; some other context in which they are experienced or presented is deficient or inappropriate, including what may be inherently lacking in the reader or audience itself.

At the very least then, readers should regularly take any kind of literary or artistic criticism or evaluation with at least a grain of salt; particularly when we are routinely being told given works are either all “good” or all “bad,” and all the more so should we be cautious when it comes to assessing works of by gone ages, when changes in taste can radically prevent us from understanding how people felt and took life, whether in its pains and pleasures, way back when. For instance, it is not untypical of some habitually peremptory late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century modernists and putative “realists” to ridicule 18<sup>th</sup> century poetic idealism or early 19<sup>th</sup> century sentimentalism. Granted some idealist and sentimentalists on occasion deserve such ridicule. Unfortunately, however, in the process readers are sometimes misled into conflating the rejection of poorly expressed idealism or sentimentalism as justified condemnation of idealism and or sentimentalism themselves. And this, of course, is most unfair. Moreover and as a practical matter worth remembering, it is possible that even in the case of an idealistic or sentimental poet who writes badly, their sincerity (where such is actually present) still may manage to get through and move us; even if for example -- or perhaps even because -- they are so naïve in their outlook or else, as writers, artificial or contrived in their expressions (e.g., à la the Della Cruscans.) Though the effect on us is not what the poet wished, in fact he unintentionally might cause us to laugh, nonetheless, we know what he (or she) means, we know what they are striving at. And despite what is or seems an overtly imperfect performance, there still may be present in the verse something to palpably feel and enjoy; that is, at least, if we but cut them a little slack and make some effort to feel and see things the way they did.

But all this is qualified with a *may*, and naturally it still remains for literary scholars and historians to scrutinize and sift carefully, and there is admittedly much poetry from the past that no amount of

sensitivity is ever going to give life to; and such value it might possess is, at most, strictly of a historical and informational character. Only there are, on the other hand, every now and then overlooked or forgotten poems that merit new perusal, indeed some which will find “keepers;” if we will give ourselves to be more indulgent and receptive; while taking care to bypass cold prejudice, the whims of current dogma, and overly nice convention. For not so infrequently whether a poem or other literary work is “still read” or not begs, rather than answers, the question why, and we *might* well find that the assumed shortcoming perhaps lies more in the reader than the given work or author.

In a recent foray of mine then to take a closer and further look at what young poets of the early Republic might especially deserve reappraisal and a more extended look at than usual, two I finally decided on were William Clifton and John Blair Linn: both originally from Pennsylvania; both (at different times) part of the Philadelphia’s Federalist leaning literati set; both passed away at the age of 27. While they received some respect and appreciation in their day, and somewhat after their early passing as well, such praise and acknowledgments were ephemeral and regularly qualified with reminders that while their work did not quite or uniformly achieve the best or highest standards of excellence, it most certainly showed exceptional *promise* – but alas, a promise not to be realized due to their untimely deaths. The verdict is substantially true, and we would not want to leave the impression that Clifton or Blair necessarily evinced timeless or towering genius that eluded or was unjustly neglected by history and the critics. However, if we glean some of what is best among their writings, they are interesting as youthful voices, post-teenage dreamers and worthy exemplars of the momentous era in which they were born, lived and died. And at the very least, they are, in this writer’s view, certainly good enough to be spared complete oblivion as competent *literary artists* -- which is more than can be said generally of their poetical peers of about the same age group in late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century America.

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William Clifton (1772-1799), son of an affluent and prosperous “mechanic” or craftsman, grew up in a strict Quaker family in Philadelphia; so strict that it was not till his late teens that it was possible for him to dispense with formal Quaker dress and manners. He was said to have suffered from an ailment throughout most of his life, possibly the consumption that ultimately killed him; and that prevented him from mixing in public and being involved much socially. At nineteen years of age, a ruptured blood vessel so injured him that he was, it was said, prevented from taking up a formal calling or career; evidently seeming to imply that he then had to live on his family’s wealth. Despite this, one of his biographers very oddly states he was “much attached to the sports of the field, and was peculiarly accomplished in the arts of the sportsman.”¹⁷ Otherwise and aside from a small circle of literary friends, he was prone to be solitary. In seclusion, he took special pains to educate himself, and as he matured developed abilities as an accomplished poet, sketch artist, and musician.

Politically, he was of a decidedly “anti-mob,” Federalist bent, very much in the mold of Alexander Hamilton and Joseph Dennie; only perhaps more so than they. And his first published writings as a poet were vitriolic yet elegant of their kind heroic couplets, in the style of Dryden and Samuel Butler, lampooning the opponents of the Jay Treaty with Great Britain. At a time when America was becoming enamored of Revolutionary France, he was so staunch an enemy of the Jacobins that he was indignant that the *Quasi*-War had been prevented by President John Adams from becoming a formal one. At the same time as penning a song to celebrate Nelson’s victory at the Nile, he has a poem entitled “The Descent of Tallyrand into Hell.” In “The Chimeraid,” an unfinished work, although the invectives are more tempered than earlier, he lets loose his sarcasm against Jefferson and the Republicans as well as the French.

Yet he first particularly achieved real literary notice in his day for an epistle he wrote as a foreword to an American edition (published by William Cobbett) of conservative English writer William Gifford’s (1756-1826) verse satires *Baviad* (1791) and *Maeviad* (1794);¹⁸ which, among other points

¹⁷ *Analectic Magazine*, June 1814, pp. 479-488

¹⁸ It was in these works that Gifford came forth as one of the first and leading detractors of Della Crusca; a band wagon soon followed on both sides of the Atlantic. Later he was one of the most prominent on the staff of the “notorious” *Quarterly Review*.

made, ascribed the decline in poetry to a decline in morals. Clifton's introduction, and cited by later reviewers as his most finished and elaborate opus, opens with these disgruntled, telling stanzas:

“In these cold shades, beneath these shifting skies,
Where Fancy sickens, and where Genius dies;
Where few and feeble are the Muse's strains,
And no fine frenzy riots in the veins,
There still are found a few to whom belong
The fire of virtue and the soul of song;
Whose kindling ardour still can wake the shines
When learning triumphs, and when Gifford sings.
To thee the lowliest bard his tribute pays,
His little wild-flower to thy wreath conveys;
Pleas'd, if permitted round thy name to bloom,
To boast one effort rescued from the tomb.

“While this delirious age enchanted seems
With hectic fancy desultory dreams;
While wearing fast away is every trace
Of Grecian vigour, und of Roman grace,
With fond delight, we yet one bard behold,
As Horace polish'd, and as Persius hold,
Reclaim the art, assert the muse divine,
And drive obtrusive dulness from the shrine.
Since that great day which saw the tablet rise,
A thinking block, and whisper to the eyes,
No time has been that touch'd the muse so near,
No age when learning had so much to fear,
As now, when *love-lorn ladies light verse frame*,
And every rebus-weaver talks of fame...”

Outside punctilious antiquaries, however, Clifton's work would most probably have been lost to posterity but for the gathering of his poems following his death in December 1799 in a publication titled *Poems, chiefly occasional, by the late Mr. Clifton* (1800); and from which the following selections are taken.

IL PENSEROSO.¹⁹

I hate this spongy world, with all its store,
This bustling, noisy, nothingness of life,
This treacherous herd of friends with hollow core,
This vale of sorrow, and this field of strife.

Me, shall some little tranquil thatch receive,
Some settled low content, remote from care,
There will I pipe away the sober eve,
And laugh all day at Lady Fortune there.

Why should I mingle in the mazy ring,
Of drunken folly at the shrine of chance?
Where insect pleasure flits on burnished wing,
Eludes our wishes, and keeps up the dance.

When in the quiet of an humble home.

¹⁹ *Poems, chiefly occasional, by the late Mr. Clifton* (1800) p. 94.

Beside the fountain, or upon the hill,
Where strife and care and sorrow never come,
I may be free and happy, if I will.

SONG²⁰

Boy, shut to the door, and bid trouble begone,
If sorrow approach, turn the key,
Our comfort this night from the glass shall be drawn.
And mirth our companion shall be.

Who would not with pleasure the moments prolong.
When tempted with Friendship, Love, Wine, and a
Song.

What art thou, kind power, that soft'nest me so,
That kindest this love-boding sigh,
That bid'st with affection, my bosom o'erflow,
And send'st the fond tear to my eye.

I know thee! for ever thy visit prolong,
Sweet spirit of Friendship, Love, Wine, and a Song.

See the joy-waking influence rapidly fly.
And spirit with spirit entwine,
The effulgence of rapture enamels each eye,
Each soul rides triumphant like mine.

On a sea of good humour floats gayly along.
Surrounded with Friendship, Love, Wine, and a Song.

And now to the regions of Fancy we soar,
Thro' scenes of enchantment we stray,
We revel in transports untaxed before,
Or loiter with love on the way.

Resolv'd like good fellows the time to prolong,
That cheers us with Friendship, Love, Wine, and a Song.

For Friendship, the solace of mortals below,
In the thicket of life, loves a rose,
Good wine can content on misfortune bestow,
And a song's not amiss I suppose.

Then fill, my good fellows, the moment prolong,
With a bumper to Friendship, Love, Wine, and a Song.

SONG, "Soul of Columbia"²¹

Soul of Columbia, quenchless spirit, come!
Unroll thy standard to the sullen sky!

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 95.

²¹ *Ibid.* p. 96.

Bind on thy war-robcs, beat thy furious drum:
Rouse, rouse thy Lion Heart, and fire thy Eagle eye.

Dost thou not hear the hum of gathering war?
Dost thou not know
The insidious foe
Yokes her gaunt wolves and mounts her midnight car!

Dost thou not hear thy tortured seamen's cries?
Poor, helpless souls, in dreary dungeons laid;
Towards thee they turn their dim, imploring eyes;
Alas! they sink—and no kind hand to aid.

Thou dost, and every son of thine
Shall rest in guilty peace no more;
With noble rage, they pant to join
The conflict's heat, the battle's roar.

Loose to the tempest let the banner fly;
Rouse, rouse thy Lion Heart, and fire thy Eagle eye.

MARY WILL SMILE.²²

The morn was fresh, and pure the gale,
When Mary, from her cot a rover,
Pluck'd many a wild rose of the vale
To bind the temples of her lover.
As near his little farm she stray'd,
Where birds of love were ever pairing,
She saw her William in the shade,
The arms of ruthless war preparing.
"Though now," he cried, "I seek the hostile plain,
Mary shall smile, and all be fair again."

She seized his hand, and "Ah!" she cried,
"Wilt thou to camps and war a stranger
Desert thy Mary's faithful side,
And bare thy life to every danger?
Yet go, brave youth! to arms away!
My maiden hands for fight shall dress thee,
And when the drum beats far away,
I'll drop a silent tear and bless thee.
Return'd with honor, from the hostile plain,
Mary will smile, and all be fair again.

The bugles through the forest wind,
The woodland soldiers call to battle,
Be some protecting angel kind,
And guard thy life when cannons rattle!"
She sung, and as the rose appears
In sunshine, when the storm is over,
A smile beam'd sweetly through her tears,
The blush of promise to her lover.

²² *Ibid.* p. 102.

Return'd in triumph from the hostile plain,
All shall be fair, and Mary smile again.

TO A ROBIN.²³

From winter so dreary and long,
Escaped, ah! how welcome the day,
Sweet Bob with his innocent song,
Is return'd to his favorite spray.

When the voice of the tempest was heard,
As o'er the bleak mountain it pass'd,
He hied to the thicket, poor bird!
And shrunk from the pitiless blast.

By the maid of the valley survey'd,
Did she melt at thy comfortless lot?
Her hand, was it stretch'd to thy aid,
As thou pick'dst at the door of her cot?

She did; and the wintery wind,
May it howl not around her green grove:
Be a bosom so gentle and kind,
Only fann'd by the breathings of love.

She did; and the kiss of her swain,
With rapture, the deed shall requite,
That gave to my window again
Poor Bob and his song of delight.

TO FANCY.²⁴

Airy traveller, queen of song,
Sweetest fancy, ever young,
I to thee my soul resign;
All my future life be thine:
Rich or beggar'd, chain'd or free,
Let me live and laugh with thee.

Pride perhaps may knock, and say,
"Rise thou sluggard, come away:"
But can he thy joy impart,
Will he crown my leaping heart?
If I banish hence thy smile
Will he make it worth my while?

Is my lonely pittance past,
Fleeting good too light to last,
Lifts my friend the latch no more,
Fancy, thou canst all restore;
Thou canst, with thy airy shell,

²³ *Ibid.* p. 104.

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 105.

To a palace raise my cell.

At night, while stretch'd on lowly bed,
When tyrant tempest shakes my shed,
And pipes aloud; how bless'd am I,
All cheering nymph, if thou art by,
If thou art by to snatch my soul
Where billows rage and thunders roll.

From cloud, o'er peering mountain's brow
We'll mark the mighty coil below,
While round us innocently play
The lightning's flash, and meteor's ray:
And, all so sad, some spectre form
Is heard to moan amid the storm.

With thee to guide my steps I'll creep
In some old haunted nook to sleep,
Lull'd by the dreary night-bird's scream,
That flits along the wizard stream,
And there, till morning 'gins appear,
The tales of troubled spirits hear.

Sweet's the dawn's ambiguous light,
Quiet pause 'tween day and night,
When, afar, the mellow horn
Chides the tardy-gaited morn,
And asleep is yet the gale
On sea-beat mount, and river'd vale.

But the morn, though sweet and fair,
Sweeter is when thou art there;
Hymning stars successive fade,
Fairies hurtle through the shade,
Love-lorn flowers I weeping see,
If the scene is touch'd by thee.

When unclouded shines the day,
When my spirits dance and play,
To some sunny bank we'll go
Where the fairest roses blow,
And in gamesome vein prepare
Chaplets for thy spangled hair.

Thus through life with thee I'll glide,
Happy still whate'er betide,
And while plodding sots complain
Of ceaseless toil and slender gain,
Every passing hour shall be
Worth a golden age to me.

Then lead on, delightful power,
Lead, Oh! lead me to thy bower;
I to thee my soul resign,
All my future life be thine.
Rich or beggar'd, chain'd or free,

Let me live and laugh with thee.

A FLIGHT OF FANCY.²⁵

For lonely shades, and rustic bed,
Let philosophic spirits sigh;
Ask no melancholy shed,
No hermit's dreary cave, not I.

But where, to skirt some pleasant vale,
Ascends the rude uncultured hill,
Where 'midst its cliffs to every gale,
Young Echo mocks the passing rill:

Where spring to every merry year,
Delighted trips her earliest round;
Sees all her varied tints appear,
And all her fragrant soul abound;

There let my little villa rise,
In beauty's simple plumage drest:
And greet with songs the morning skies,
Sweet bird of art, in nature's nest!

Descending there, on golden wing,
Shall fancy, with her bounties roam;
And every laurell'd art shall bring
An offering fair to deck my home.

Green beds of moss, in dusky cells,
When twilight sleeps from year to year,
And fringed plats, where Flora dwells,
With the wild wood shall neighbor near.

The fairies through my walks shall roam,
And sylphs inhabit every tree;
Come Ariel, subtlest spirit, come,
I'll find a blossom there for thee;

Extended wide, the diverse scene,
My happy casement shall command,
The busy farm, the pasture green,
And tufts where shelter'd hamlets stand.

Some dingle oft shall court my eye
To dance among the flow'rets there,
And here a lucid lake shall lie,
Emboss'd with many an islet fair.

From crag to crag, with devious sweep,
Some frantic flood shall headlong go,
And, bursting o'er the dizzy steep,
Shall slumber in the lake below.

²⁵ *Ibid.* p. 108.

In breezy isles and forests near,
The sylvans oft their haunts shall leave;
And oft the torrent pause to hear
The lake-nymph's song, at silent eve.

There shall the moon with half shut eye,
Delirious, hear her vocal beam,
To fingering sounds responsive sigh,
And bless the hermit's midnight dream.

No magic weed nor poison fell
Shall tremble there; nor drug uncouth,
To round the muttering wizard's spell,
Or bathe with death the serpent's tooth.

No crusted ditch nor festering fen
With plagues shall teem, a deadly brood.
No monster leave his nightly den
To lap the 'wilder'd pilgrim's blood.

But on the rose's dewy brink,
Each prisms tear shall catch the gleam;
And give the infant buds to drink,
The colors of the morning beam.

The waters sweet, from whispering wells,
Shall loiter 'neath the flowery brake;
Shall visit oft the Naiad's cells,
And hie them to the silver lake.

The muse shall hail, at peep of dawn,
Melodiously the coming day;
At eve her song shall soothe the lawn,
And with the mountain echoes play.

There spring shall laugh at winter's frown,
There summer blush for gamesome spring,
And autumn, prank'd in wheaten crown,
His stores to hungry winter bring.

'Tis mine! 'tis mine! this sacred grove,
Where truth and beauty may recline,
The sweet resort of many a love;
Monimia,²⁶ come and make it thine.

For thee the bursting buds are ripe,
The whistling robin calls thee here,
To thee complains the woodland pipe;
Will not my loved Monimia hear?

A fawn I'll bring thee, gentle maid,
To gambol round thy pleasant door;

²⁶ [Edit. Chaste beauty and title character of Thomas Otway's very popular "The Orphan, or the Unhappy Marriage, A Tragedy" (1680).]

I'll curl thee wreaths that ne'er shall fade,
What shall I say to tempt thee more?

The blush that warms thy maiden cheek,
The morning eye's sequester'd tear,
For me, thy kindling passion speak
And chain this subtle vision here.

Spots of delight, and many a day
Of summer love for me shall shine;
In truth my beating heart is gay,
At sight of that fond smile of thine.

Come, come, my love, away with me,
The morn of life is hastening by,
To this gay scene we'll gaily flee,
And sport us 'neath the peaceful sky.

And when that awful day shall rise,
That sees thy cheek with age grow pale,
And the soul fading in thine eyes,
We'll sigh and quit the weeping vale.

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In comparing William Clifton and John Blair Linn (1777-1804) as poets, the former comes across, all in all, as the more polished and better versifier. While Clifton is vigorous, knows what he wants, and cuts and organizes his phrases and stanzas more cleanly and clearly. Linn generally is less sure of himself and in trying out different modes and genres leaves the impression of someone not altogether resolved as to his aim. The result is often a mix of styles and approaches that typically -- though by no means always -- suffer from a lack of harmonizing consistency. One of his biographers, Lewis Leary, in an April 1947 article for *The William and Mary Quarterly* (vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 148-176), in part explains this by saying: "Linn clearly did not know where he stood amid the confusion of what his readings told him should be written and the frantic promptings of his own adolescent sensibility."<sup>27</sup> Indeed, for a young man, Linn was extremely well read, making himself acquainted with the great authors and poets of classical antiquity and the relatively more recent past, e.g., Shakespeare, Milton, Robert Blair, James Thomson, Thomas Gray, and the modern writers of or closer to his day, including Samuel Johnson, James Beattie, James MacPherson, Thomas Chatterton, Robert Merry (of Della Crusca), Friedrich Schiller, Ann Radcliffe -- as well as the more prominent American authors like Dwight, Barlow, and Trumbull: with all these being cursory listings of whom his studies covered. But his critical judgment -- for he did write literary reviews and essays -- furthermore sometimes failed him ridiculously. Leary mentions, for example, that despite his enthusiasm he misread Milton. As well, Linn brushed aside both Freneau and Wordsworth as of minor significance. Further, he was taken in by MacPherson's hoax; even so far as to at one point praise "Ossian" as the greatest of all poets! His "The Death of Washington" (1800), written in the style of the same Celtic bard, John P. McWilliams rightly and accurately characterizes as laughable.

Notwithstanding, there is much, with some gleaning, that remains to like and find of interest in Linn's writings, and given which and had he time to ripen as an author there is good reason to believe he (and or Clifton as well) might indeed very well have ended up attaining legitimate and lasting fame as the preeminent poet in the generation that produced Brockden Brown, as its novelist; William Dunlap, its playwright, and Joseph Dennie, its luminary of letters and essayist.

His father William Linn, of Scotch-Irish heritage, was a graduate of Princeton, having as fellow classmates Freneau, Aaron Burr, and James Madison. He was ordained as a Presbyterian minister; acted as

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<sup>27</sup> Leary, p. 157.

chaplain in the Continental Army with the Pennsylvania line, and subsequently attained distinction as a pastor of several established congregations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York. An intimate with Washington's family, he was installed as the House of Representatives' first chaplain. He further and eventually earned the positions as president of three colleges, including Rutgers; all the while acquiring for himself a reputation as a widely respected and esteemed pamphlet writer, orator, and educator. He married three times (the first two of his wives having died), and bore several children, with John Blair Linn (1777-1804) being the first, and whom he survived by four years.

The poet was born at the old family homestead at Shippensburg, Pennsylvania in the midst of the Revolutionary War on March 14, 1777. He along with the family moved to several locations with each new change of his father's place of employment, including New York. At nine years of age he was put in the hands of private instructors and subsequently attended a country boarding school at Flushing on Long Island; during which period he was introduced to and became proficient in Latin. Like Clifton, his health was from the beginning precarious and his youthful days at Flushing, when he was more robust and surrounded by nature, are contrasted in Brown's biography with the sickly last years of his life spent mostly in busy, urban settings. At thirteen he was entered into Columbia College, and graduated from there at seventeen. From an early age he shown a marked enthusiasm for poetry and literature, and some of his writings as a teenager appeared in *New-York Magazine*, including an essay "The Young Composer" where he expressed his life long view that the purpose of writing was first and foremost to make oneself understood clearly, and not be unnaturally trammelled by arbitrary form and convention. With a mind to becoming an attorney, he obtained a clerk's position with Alexander Hamilton's law office. However, like so many authors who started out that way, he became disenchanted with the dry learning and dissembling artificiality of the legal life and studies; with the lure of the theater and letters only drawing him further away in this. He wrote two plays, one of which *Bourville Castle, Or the Gallic Orphan* (1797) was produced by John Hodgkinson, William Dunlap and the Old American Company. No copies of these survive, and evidently *Bourville Castle* did not meet with the hope for stage success. Finally abandoning the legal profession, he turned to a religious vocation, and after studying with colleagues of his father in Schenectady became a member of the Presbyterian clergy. He subsequently married Hester Bailey (daughter of a colonel John Bailey of Poughkeepsie), later having three children (two of whom survived him), and in 1799 was offered and obtained the highly respected position as assistant pastor to Rev. John Ewing at the First Presbyterian Church of Philadelphia, the most important of its denominational kind in the city. From that time to his death in 1804, he was active in the pulpit and in print; was well liked as a preacher and minister, while remaining to the end fervently devoted to his calling and profession.

Yet all this while – whether as college student, law clerk, divinity scholar, and ultimately minister -- Linn was assiduously engaged in literary projects of one kind or other; with his chief literary (as opposed to religious related) publications over the years being as follows:

\* *Miscellaneous Works, Prose and Poetical by a Young Gentleman of New-York* (1795)

\* *The Poetical Wanderer: Containing, Dissertations on the Early Poetry of Greece, On Tragic Poetry, and on the Power of Noble Actions on the Mind, to which are Added Several Poems* (1796)

\* "The Death of Washington" (1800)

\* *The Powers of Genius* (1801, then a second edition in 1802)

\* *Valerian, A Narrative Poem: Intended, in Part, to Describe The Early Persecutions of the Christians, and Rapidly to Illustrate the Influence of Christianity on the Manners of the Nations* (1805, unfinished and printed posthumously)<sup>28</sup>

Wrote Brown in his biographical sketch of Linn: "To mankind at large his short life was useful and glorious, since it was devoted to the divine purpose of inculcating moral and religious duty, and the purpose, only less divine, of illuminating the imagination with the visions of a glowing and harmonious poetry." Here he was, at least in part, alluding to something Linn enunciated himself; where the latter states: "Literature, next to religion, is the fountain of our greatest consolation and delight...literature

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<sup>28</sup> In addition, Linn, signing himself as "I.O." was a regular contributor, mostly as poet, to Brown's *Literary Magazine, and American Register*; appearing at: Oct. 1803, p. 47; Dec. 1803, pp. 191-192; Feb. 1804, pp. 336-341; Mar. 1804, pp. 424-425; April 1804, p. 18; May 1804 p. 117.



renders men more eminently useful, opens wider their intellect to the reception of divine light, banishes religious superstition, and bows the knee, with purer adoration, before the throne of God. Literature on the rugged journey of life scatters flowers, it over shadows the path of the weary, and refreshes the desert with its streams. He who is prone to sensual pursuits may seek his joy in the acquirement of silver and gold, and bury his affections with the treasure in his coffers. The nobler soul, enlightened by genius and taste, looks far above these possessions. His riches are the bounty of knowledge, his joys are those which wealth cannot purchase. He contemplates nature in her endless forms, and finds companions, where men of different pursuits would experience the deepest solitude.”<sup>29</sup>

This thought is perhaps all the more interesting when one recalls that the title “bard” is Celtic in origin, and bards were originally members of the Druidic priesthood. In Latin poetry, such as Vergil, the word “vates” refers to seers and prophets as well as sometimes being used a reference to poets. And, of course, was not King David himself among the very most renown of songsters and harpists? All of which suggests that poets down through history have acted as a secondary priesthood or ministry, and it comes as no great surprise that such as Dwight, Barlow, Freneau, and Brackenridge, while themselves originally chaplains and or otherwise intended for holy orders, diverged -- after each one’s peculiar fashion -- into literary and other secular careers. Here Linn was going in reverse and formally stayed with the church.

Perhaps one might add that only in scripture and literature, including oratory, can what we value most be adequately spoken of; and only in scripture and literature do matters cosmic and divine, and of the deepest heart and spirit have a context and venue where verbal communication is even possible. So that, it could be argued, but for scripture and literature all these concerns would or might be lost.

We tend to think that if one was good enough as an author, one could simply make a living writing. But it was only around the latter 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century that this was beginning to become even possible. Prior to that, well-known authors, not least of which poets, almost always -- even someone like the highly successful MacPherson -- needed to rely on a regular job, a rich inheritance, and or royal patronage; of which there was nothing of the latter sort in the United States. And when real money did start coming the way of some American authors, it was for their work as fiction writers, novelists, journalists, lecturers and essayists; no one ever, not even Bryant or Whitman, could expect to survive on his earnings as a poet.

In making selections of Linn’s verse, I have chosen both short poems and extracts from longer ones from over the span of his brief career, commencing in 1795. They reflect what strike me as some of his best work as a poet, or else show him at his creatively adventurous, and which and for that reason some may find interesting and or amusing. Though he often unsuccessfully strains for effect and his wording hackneyed even silly, there is here, even so, at their root strong feeling, and an impassioned desire to transcend the mundane and routine. Leary faults him for confounding religion and poetry in a way that caused the latter to suffer, and there is some truth to this. Likewise, Linn loved nature, but unlike Wordsworth, sought it in outdated 18<sup>th</sup> century style tropes and pastoral idealizations; apparently with a mind to imitating William Collins. Yet in his striving for the sublime, he sometimes shows an able talent for the pictorial, making the imagery of a few of his poems memorable. In some respects we might even say he possessed a little something of William Blake’s otherworldly intuition; conjuring up strange visions and starry scenes that at times are impressively imaginative; such as, for example, in the opening book of *Valerian* (which we have included.)

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On the basis of a most encouraging subscription list, in 1795, and at eighteen years of age, Linn put out his first publication *Miscellaneous Works, Prose and Poetical by a Young Gentleman of New-York* (1795), unsigned and anonymous. It contained an unusual mix of different types of poems and short essays; some of which had previously appeared in the *New-York Magazine*. Much of the prose reads like school exercises, but which nevertheless occasionally contain mature thoughts and musings; such as and for instance:

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<sup>29</sup> *The Powers of Genius* (1802, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) pp. 13-14.

“To the imagination man owes some of the most pleasing moments of his life; it wafts him to celestial regions, unseen, untrod, and brings to his contemplative view, those beautiful and captivating scenes which none but she herself can paint. It is she that paints the lovely grottos, the verdant vallies and the spreading lawns, the retreats of muses, and the gentle streams which meander through them; she brings to the view of the youthful lover, the charming form of his Amelia, and dwells on the pleasing prospect, when she shall be his.—She presents to youth honor, fame, and rewards...”<sup>30</sup>

It is with the poems, however, with which we are concerned, and what follows are some of the better or at least more striking ones.

### ADDRESS TO SOLITUDE. AN ODE.<sup>31</sup>

THY haunts, O Solitude! I love to rove,  
Along thy lawns, beneath thy shady grove;  
Among thy bowers to rear the humble cot,  
And soft indulge my bosom's secret thought:  
There, musing, ponder on the tale of woe,  
And bid the tear of duteous sorrow flow.

As o'er the flow'ry dales I stray along  
I'd catch the music of thy murm'ring streams,  
I'd listen to thy songster's plaintive song  
Which lul[!]s the mind in fancy's fairy dreams;  
The voice of noisy man not there is found,  
The clam'rous discord of the town not there;  
None but a rural and melodious sound,  
In mournful music warbles thro' the air.

The brownish Thrush from yonder spray  
Tunes his clear melifluous lay,  
While dim evening spreads her veil  
Philomela resumes her tale.  
Quiv'ring flows the strain along,  
Attentive sorrow lists the song;  
The sad enthusiast lends her ears,  
Compos'd reflection calls her tears;  
Dull melancholy soothes the wound  
And glimm'ring visions hover round.

A dreary gloom surrounds the woodland plain,  
Music and silence hold their tranquil reign;  
A low'ring darkness wraps the rural scene,  
The moon from high, reflects her ray serene.  
Her trembling beams break thro' the spreading trees,  
While parting moves the ev'ning's sighing breeze.  
Now let me seek O Solitude thy shade!

A son of sorrow, and a son of woe!  
To mourn the ravages which death hath made,  
And to humanity a tear bestow.—  
Delusive objects strike my sorrowing eyes,

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<sup>30</sup> *Miscellaneous Works, etc.* (1795) p. 15.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 9-11.

Form'd by fair Luna's clear reflective light  
Behind the bushes awful forms arise,  
And fleeting phantoms glide before the fight,  
Come, O gloomy solitary shade!  
Thy vot'ry's anguish'd breast pervade—

Where nourish'd reigns the weeping thought  
And mourns humanity's appointed lot;  
Clothe all thy scenes in sorrow's dress,  
Thy murm'ring streams let grief express;  
Let visions thro' the thicket stray,  
And superstition bend its way—  
Let all thy plains congenially impart  
And sigh responsive to a bleeding heart.

### MELANCHOLY. AN ODE.<sup>32</sup>

ON yonder barren isle in dreary cells,  
The dread enchantress, Melancholy, dwells,  
And her dark draught prepares;

Sad, hollow accents from her cave resound,  
A glimm'ring taper throws its rays around,  
And lights the frightful snares.

Within the cell a misty stream appears,  
Swell'd with humanity's afflicted tears,  
Which murm'ring seems to flow;

O'er mossy rocks its trick'ling course it bends,  
Ghosts stand and gaze when foaming it descends,  
And raise shrill shrieks of woe.

Upon the ground, th' enchantress sits reclin'd,  
Around the cave howls the loud sighing wind,  
A snake beside her lies,

Loose and disordered is her shaggy head,  
A spotted mantle round her limbs is spread,  
Deep stain'd with various dyes.

Upon its hinge hoarse moves the iron door,  
Sad, sullen sounds rise from the echoing floor,  
Sweet music to her ear.

Sudden she starts from her dim aged seat,  
Sends a shrill scream which echoes wild repeat,  
Which phantoms startling hear.

Around the cell her crimson eyes she throws,  
A dreary silence spreads its still repose,  
No whisp'ring zephyr blows:

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 11-13.

Save the hard drawing of the hag's foul breath,  
Bad as the vapours of destroying death;  
And the slow stream which flows.

She distant, here, from human eye remains,  
No moral wanders o'er her pensive plains,  
Here dusky Raven's scream;

Here glimm'ring ghosts glide solemnly along,  
Who pausing list the Raven's dolesome song,  
And gaze on Luna's beam.

Before the cell a cypress' branches spread,  
The weeping-willow hangs its sorrowing head,  
Which form a dreary scene:

Behind steep rocks with tow'ring aspect rise,  
And strike an awe on the astonish'd eyes;  
On distant shores survey'd.

When Cynthia on the plains her shadow throws,  
When Luna and the twinkling planet glows,  
And light the Gothic scene;

Close round her limbs the fairy wraps her robe,  
She frightful wanders from her dark abode,  
And dimly stalks the green.

**ELEGY, SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN DELIVERED BY CHATTERTON, JUST  
BEFORE HIS DEATH, AFTER HE HAD TAKEN A POTION OF ARSENIC.**<sup>33</sup>

SCENE lies in his room—Pieces of manuscripts which he had torn are scattered about the floor, and the dreadful phial which contained the poison standing on the table.—After having stood for a considerable time in a very thoughtful posture, he at length speaks—

I.  
Ah! fond deceiver Hope, thy reign is o'er,  
No more shall Chatterton be sooth'd by thee.  
Soon will death waft him from this hated shore,  
And launch a wretch in dread eternity.

II.  
Eternity! thou awful starting name!  
I tremble and shrink back at inward thought,  
How can I now a God's protection claim?  
O hapless youth what is thy destin'd lot?

III.  
But what is there on earth that bids me live?  
Fortune on me has always look'd with guile;  
To Chatterton her gifts, she scorns to give  
No friend but pity ever lent a smile.

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 143-147.

IV.

On others she has pour'd her plenteous store,  
More than is needful for frail life's support,  
While I for food in silence must deplore,  
Or the compassion of the haughty court.

V.

Shall Chatterton, e'er thus himself demean?  
One who has claim'd Britannia's sons applause,  
Hath he not feelings both acute and keen?  
Which rise repugnant, to th' Almighty's laws.

VI.

Nature hath call'd, I quickly have obey'd,  
Unable to support Affliction's load,  
Life's glim'ring taper now begins to fade,  
Soon will I reach the awful grave's abode.

VII.

The soft poetic note will cease to flow  
From Chatterton's, or Rowley's pen,  
No more he'll tune the youthful lyre to woe,  
No more he'll seek a charitable friend.

VIII.

No more he'll mourn on earth his hapless fate,  
No more he'll claim the poet's scant reward,  
No more he'll be dependent on the great,  
Or bow submissive to a haughty Lord.

IX.

To those who've hurt the feelings of his mind,  
Poor Chatterton doth now forgiveness lend,  
All that he asks and all he would remind,  
Let those who've injur'd, now lament his end.

X.

An author's lot is poverty and pain,  
The son of disappointment, anguish, grief—  
Hope still retaining its deceitful reign,  
Soothes his sad soul with prospects of relief.

XI.

But Ah! Those prospects only but appear  
And vanish from the anxious eager eye—  
In vain affliction drops the briny tear,  
In vain the bosom heaves the pensive sigh.

XII.

O my fond mother, how thy tender breast  
Will shrink with anguish at the deed I've done;  
Oft have you lull'd me when by woe oppress'd,  
Oft have you pray'd for blessing on your son.

XIII.

How will you cast to Heaven your streaming eyes,

And tear your tresses and your flowing hair;  
Your bursting bosom scarce will hold your sighs,  
And human reason scarce support despair.

XIV.

And thou my sister, whose soft feeling glows  
For Chatterton with tenderness and love,  
Whose sorrow beats congenial with my woes,  
How will the news thy gentle passions move.

XV.

But O! the horrid crimson deed is done,  
In vain, your throbbing sighs and starting tears—  
Soon will the thread of human life be spun,  
Now to my view eternity appears.

XVI.

Your son, your brother, at his latest breath,  
With pensive gratitude remembers you;  
Fond thought retains you, as he sinks in death  
And bids you both eternally adieu.

XVII.

The ev'ning comes to close the solemn scene,  
The sun now sets in awfulness and gloom;  
Slow glides the deep, in blue expanse serene,  
The weeping willow slumbers o'er my tomb.

XVIII.

The dusky raven sends its mournful cry,  
The distant thunder repercussive roars,  
The fading light saint glimmers on my eye,  
Now sable night his frightful curtain low'rs.

XIX.

Silence now holds all nature calm and still,  
Ah! there the death-bell sends its hollow toll,  
Here death now stalks, to obey the sov'reign will,  
To him I now resign my fleeting soul.

#### ADDRESS TO ADELINE.<sup>34</sup>

WHEN beauteous Adeline attunes her lyre,  
Each poet-bosom thrills with genial fire,  
The patriot passions with fond rapture glow  
When *freedom's* charms in warbling music flow,  
When *Independence* in her soaring strains,  
Smiles o'er Columbia's free and happy plains—

Soft was thy music, fair poetic maid,  
Which sweetly sung in Beth'lem's lonely shade,  
When Lehighs [sic] stream receiv'd the plaintive song,  
And still more mournful murm'ring flow'd along.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 170-171.

Oft has thy lyre in accents smooth and slow,  
Tun'd in soft melody the tale of woe.

The flowing numbers told a maid distress'd,  
And wafted sorrow to a stranger's breast,  
Fair *scenes of Nature* in luxuriance rose,  
And kindly smil'd on Adeline's repose;  
But still their charms no soothing aid impart,  
Still thoughtful sorrow damps thy feeling heart.

Thy odes inspiring lively ardour cheer,  
Thy tender elegy demands a tear,  
The lofty strain of LIBERTY is thine,  
The *soothing numbers* of the sacred nine;  
Accept sweet poetess what candor pays  
In admiration of thy tuneful lays.

~\*\*~

The poems in *The Poetical Wanderer: Containing, Dissertations on the Early Poetry of Greece, On Tragic Poetry, and on the Power of Noble Actions on the Mind, to which are Added Several Poems* (1796) are easily more forgettable than those found in *Miscellaneous Works*, but there is at least one piece which here we might insert.

#### **The Author's Elegy over the remains of his Pen<sup>35</sup>**

FAREWELL kind friend who zealous in thy trust,  
Hast trac'd the wanderings of a youthful heart,  
Thy worn remains I now bestow the dust,  
And sadly mourn that we are forc'd to part.

How patient thou hast borne they tiresome lot,  
And faithful follow'd where I chose to lead!  
Mark'd what was passing in my busy thought,  
And told the world what they will never read!

Dull lines or not, 'twas all the same to thee,  
Thou follow'd on unknown to any fear;  
They zeal was guided by a love for me,  
Who car'd as little for a cynic's sneer.

Now in my service thou art sad decay'd,  
Perhaps I've been a master too severe;  
Who much too often has requir'd thy aid,  
And yet may mourn this usage with a tear.

Farewell thou pen—a tender last farewell!  
Thou must for ever leave this musing eye.  
We all must part and seek the mouldering cell.  
We all must sicken, and we all must die.

How long the wight who mourns o'er thy remains,  
Will live beyond thee none on earth can tell;  
Perhaps they elegy may close his strains,

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<sup>35</sup> *The Poetical Wanderer, etc.* pp. 111-112.

And no more Pens he'll ever bid farewell!

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Having been largely a critical success both in England and America, *The Powers of Genius* (1801), a book length verse performance filled with copious explanatory footnotes,<sup>36</sup> is the one effort poet Linn was expected to be most remembered for, and went through two printings. "Genius," as he uses the term, refers to invention led on by imagination. As a didactic work, *Powers* is actually very good of its kind; in parts reminiscent of Dryden, Pope, Thomson and Akenside – and, one might add, American William Livingston; only and for that reason better suited to the eighteenth than nineteenth century. Notwithstanding, it still has its stirring and evocative passages that make the whole worth preserving.

### Part I

Say what is Genius? words can ne'er define  
That power which springs from origin divine;  
Genius we know by her impetuous force;  
We know the torrent by its headlong course;  
We know the sun by his effulgent ray,  
Which gloom disperses from the face of day.  
Invention marks the genius of the soul,  
And on the lightning rides from pole to pole.  
It sweeps with comets its eccentric flight,  
And soars in air beyond the world's dim sight;  
Disdains the paths that common footsteps tread,  
But breathes the spirit of the mountain head:  
It flies through scenes unvisited before,  
"Exhausts this world, and then imagines" more.  
Allied with Genius see bright Fancy move  
The queen alike of terror and of love;  
She gives the wings on which Invention soars  
And untried regions of the world explores.  
With ease she varies her enchanting forms,  
Now roves thro' peaceful meads, now flies with  
storms:  
Now her fair fingers kiss the shepherd's reed,  
And now she shudders at some nameless deed:  
Now sadly wandering thro' the twilight grove,  
She tells the tale of unrequited love.  
Now rous'd to rage she chills the soul with fear,  
To arms she cries and grasps the quivering spear.  
While sinks the world within the arms of sleep,  
And Night's thick mantle falls upon the deep;  
While not a murmur breaks the still serene,  
And fairy footsteps only press the green,  
Then wond'rous visions to her sight appear  
And sounds celestial melt upon her ear;  
Ev'n then enwrapt with murkiest shades she walks,  
Pours sweetest numbers and with Genii talks.  
....The memory notes transactions as they roll,  
And calls past images before the soul.  
Forth at her magic call the scene appears  
Which long lay buried in the depth of years;  
The active principle on her relies,  
On her foundation bids the building rise.

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<sup>36</sup> Here omitted.



Judgment with these and Sympathy refin'd  
 Guide and improve the genius of the mind.  
 The heart too cold to feel the generous glow,  
 The heart that melts not at another's woe,  
 The heart that owns not Handel's angel-lay  
 Shall sleep forever in its house of clay:  
 There Genius never dwells an happy guest,  
 She finds no entrance in the frozen breast.  
 Though erring taste be found in early years,  
 Yet blooming genius oft in youth appears;  
 Youth sometimes burns with all the poet's rage,  
 And speaks the glory of a riper age....<sup>37</sup>

Taste is the willing umpire of the soul,  
 And arm'd with sanctions acts without controul;  
 It takes from Genius a reflected ray,  
 As Cynthia brightens from the source of day.  
 The seeds of taste in numerous breasts are sown,  
 But few can mighty Genius call their own.  
 Born in his wilds, the rude and humble swain,  
 Whose wishes centre in his small domain,  
 Who night and morning breaths the chilling air,  
 And tends his flock the object of his care;  
 Views Nature's landscape with admiring eye,  
 And looks with wonder on the evening sky;  
 He loves the grandeur of the gliding flood,  
 The pensive silence of the deep-dark wood;  
 He loves to hear, while stretch'd on lowly bed,  
 The storm beat loudly on his little shed;  
 Delighted views the golden sun of morn  
 And hears the hunter wind his early horn;  
 The voice of music meets his willing ear,  
 The tale of sorrow ever claims his tear.  
 These warm impressions speak uncultur'd Taste,  
 Which lives with rustics in the dreary waste;  
 Which spreads o'er Nature an enrapturing smile,  
 And smooths for man the rugged brow of Toil.  
 Who loves to wander o'er romantic plains,  
 Will likewise love the bard's descriptive strains;  
 Who loves to listen to the feathered throng,  
 Enraptur'd hears the poet raise his song...<sup>38</sup>

## Part II

THO' in the dreary depths of Gothic gloom,  
 Genius will burst the filters of her tomb;  
 Yet Education should direct her way,  
 And nerve, with firmer grasp, her powerful sway.  
 To shun instruction from the ancient page,  
 Despise the records of the classic age,  
 "Would be the folly of a truant-mind  
 To counsel deaf, to its true interest blind.

<sup>37</sup> *The Powers of Genius* (1802, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition) pp.22-26.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* pp.32-35.

He that neglects the culture of the soil  
 Whose richness would reward his utmost toil,  
 Deserves more censure than the rugged swain  
 Who wastes no labour on the barren plain.  
 ....The mind on knowledge and on science bent,  
 Would sooner learn from others, than invent.  
 But few can hope unaided to explore  
 Where human footstep never was before.  
 Science still wears the blooming face of youth,  
 And darkness yet conceals some useful truth:  
 We should not spurn our Father's toil and aid  
 But build where sages their foundation laid.  
 Round the old oak the springing ivy twines,  
 Nor shuns support the wild luxuriant vines.  
 Wisdom a venerable form appears  
 Moving along beneath a load of years.  
 The comet's glare enlightens not the world,  
 Which flies thro' Heaven, in wild confusion hurl'd;  
 But 'tis the Sun that holds his ste[a]dfast sphere,  
 And crowns the seasons of the rolling year.  
 The marble buried, in its native mines,  
 Conceals the beauty of its clouds and lines;  
 The sculptor's polish can each feature give,  
 And even make the rugged marble live!  
 Thus Genius, in the night of darkness born,  
 May wind, unnotic'd, her resounding horn,  
 Unless fair Science to her wondering soul,  
 The page of Knowledge and of Art unroll[1].  
 Like the stout traveller straying from his course,  
 She errs the more from her exhaustless force...<sup>39</sup>

Tho' Genius mostly loves some daring theme,  
 Yet she can warble with the tinkling stream;  
 Tho' her bold hand strikes the hoarse thundering  
 strings,  
 Yet not the nightingale more sweetly sings.  
 Hush! every sound....let not a zephyr move;  
 O, let me listen to those notes of love!  
 For tender Virgil breathes his softest strain,  
 And Amaryllis fills the shady plain:  
 His voice of music lulls the stilly scene,  
 And not a whisper flits across the green.  
 In transport lost I tread some fairy shade,  
 And hear the accents of my peerless maid!  
 Her silent footsteps thro' the glade I trace,  
 And seem to clasp her in my fond embrace;  
 Around me flows the breath of every flower,  
 And wildest music breaks from every bower.  
 Thou murmuring breeze! O bear upon thy wing  
 That strain, which flows from Petrarch's mourn-  
 ful string.  
 O speak those charms which Petrarch's Laura  
 wears!  
 O breathe that passion which he mourn'd in tears!

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* pp.53-35.

Thou stream of Time! bear in thy course, along,  
The early lustre of Italian song!...<sup>40</sup>

### Part III

What vast delights flow on that glowing breast,  
By Virtue strengthened and by Genius blest!  
Whate'er in Nature beautiful or grand,  
In air, or ocean, or the teeming land,  
Meets its full view, excites a joy unknown,  
To those whom Genius dashes from her throne.  
Genius finds speech in trees; the running brook,  
To her speaks language, like a favourite book;  
She dresses Nature in her brightest form,  
She hears with rapture the descending storm,  
She lists the chiming of the falling stream,  
Which lulls to sleep and wakes the airy dream;  
Enwrapt with solitude she loves to tread  
O'er rugged hills, or where the green-woods spread;  
To hear the songsters of the lonely grove,  
Breathe their sweet strains of gladness and of love:  
She loves the darkness of an aged wood,  
The ceaseless uproar of the restive flood,  
The sullen grandeur of the mountain's brow  
Which throws a shadow on the vales below.  
She loves to wander when the moon's soft ray,  
Treads on the footsteps of departing day,  
When heavy sadness hangs upon the gale,  
And twilight deepens o'er the dusky vale...<sup>41</sup>

....As late I roam'd the Hudson's banks along,  
What time the night-bird pour'd his gloomy song:  
What time the moon threw her ascending beam  
O'er Night's dark bosom and the wizard stream;  
I heard this strain....(it now no longer flows  
Peace to the ashes of a man of woes!)  
Here on this beaten rock, O let me rest!  
Breathe thou clamp gale upon my throbbing breast!  
Roll on bold River, let me hear thee rave,  
I love the music of thy silver wave.  
Long years have flown since I, a careless boy,  
Plung'd in thy waters with a boisterous joy.  
Now worn with care, to every joy unknown,  
I seek thy shades unpitied and alone.  
In early youth my steps were led astray  
From Gain's proud temple by the Muse's lay;  
From crowded streets and busy throngs I fled  
Where woodland-scenes and quiet vallies spread.  
Fair Nature's haunts unwearied I explored,  
Where sang the stream, where falling waters roar'd.  
A fond enthusiast on the mountain's brow,  
I heard the echo babble from below.

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* pp.61-64.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* pp.94-95.

I lov'd the dingle and the tangled dell,  
 And crept with silence to her hermit-cell.  
 Nature I lov'd when cloth 'd in mildest charms,  
 She lur'd sweet Quiet to her fondling arms.  
 I lov'd her more when with her clouds o'ercast,  
 She hove the ocean with her yelling blast,  
 When thunders roll'd from her Creator's hand,  
 Burst from the skies and shook the wondering land...<sup>42</sup>

Sons of Columbus! on whose distant land,  
 Peace pours her blessings from her bounteous hand;  
 Whose sail of Commerce, spreads where Ocean  
     roars,  
 And brings the tribute of a thousand shores.  
 O hear my voice!....my warning words attend!  
 The sceptre own of an immortal friend!  
 O! what is Virtue cherish and pursue,  
 Nor lose this darling object from your view;  
 Your love, your soul, your whole affections, give  
 To him who died that rebel man might live;  
 O! banish hence that dark and civil rage,  
 The scourge and curse of this degenerate age;  
 Let every breast with social virtue move,  
 Let every bosom own a brother's love.  
 Crown'd by your hand, let Learning flourish here;  
 And, cloth'd in fogs, bid Dullness disappear;  
 Cherish the arts of usefulness and peace:  
*O! let your own Columbia rival Greece.*  
 Thus Genius spoke....express'd a parent's prayer;  
 Rose on the clouds, and melted into air.<sup>43</sup>

~\*\*~

*Valerian, A Narrative Poem: Intended, in Part, to Describe The Early Persecutions of the Christians, and Rapidly to Illustrate the Influence of Christianity on the Manners of the Nations* (1805), as noted earlier, appeared posthumously, and tells the fictitious tale of a young Roman Christian who flies Nero's persecutions to find safe haven in a strange and wild kingdom in the Caucasus; with, as the title states, purpose of showing the beneficial effects of Christianity on a heathen peoples. There are the makings of a good story here, but unfortunately the poem's uncompleted state renders this rather a vexation and annoyance. Which is perhaps and partly why a writer for the *The Boston Review*, June 1807, pp. 319-322, did not like the idea of the work being published at all. Linn's choice of names for his characters and places is not the best, and in that his powers of invention do not serve him well. Yet his description of a far off, imaginary land is at times entrancing and effective.

## BOOK I.

FAR in the east, washed by the restless wave,  
 Montalvia spreads her bold and fruitful shores:  
 There dwelt a people little known to fame,  
 But brave and hardy. No historic page  
 Has held their picture to succeeding years,  
 Nor told those customs, those heroic deeds,  
 Those early scenes of love, which might instruct

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<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.* pp.97-99.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.* pp.107-108.

The children of a distant age and clime.

From Tuscan origin this people sprang.  
A wandering tribe, they left their native fields  
In search of other climes, and on those shores,  
Which they Montalvia called, they reared their tents,  
And formed their homes. Time, as she flew, increased  
Their number and their strength, and introduced  
The arts, to ornament their domes, their walls,  
Their wide-spread cities, and their waving fields;  
To brighten all the joys of social life.

Through the long waste of time, O let me look  
On those wild regions, on their waving woods,  
On their high rocks, beat by unceasing storms!  
Rise to my view embodied forms of men;  
And hither, airy Fancy, speed thy flight;  
Unroll thy record; whisper to my ear  
Thy burning thoughts; lend me thy wings, and bear  
Me over tracts unvisited by man!  
Thy fairy visions oft have met my eyes,  
When musing in the dark of solitude  
And night; oft, listening to thy wayward dreams,  
I've followed thee o'er cloud-capt hills, o'er streams,  
O'er plains, o'er scorching sands, o'er unsunned snows,  
O'er deserts nightly vexed by stormy blasts:  
Now be my guide once more, and let my song  
Prove not unworthy of thy varying powers,  
And not displeasing for the world to hear!

A man revered within Montalvia lived,  
Alcestes named, low bowed with weight of years.  
He by his king was held in honour, love;  
By all his wide-spread tribe in reverence held  
For mild demeanour. He vaunted that his eye  
Pierced far into the' oblivious past, and scanned  
The map of onward time; that Heaven to him  
Revealed all secret things, from others hid;  
That oft, at midnight, to his hallowed ear  
Some heaven-sent minister, in whispers soft,  
Told him the will of those who rule o'er men.

Far in a glade, beneath a mountain's brow,  
Stood the low mansion of this aged seer.  
Some mossy trees bent over his rude cot,  
And swinging to the winds their giant arms,  
Made music like the dashing of the sea.  
A bed, some rushy seats, a lumbering chest,  
Composed the scanty furniture within.  
Upon the hearth, with some dry fuel piled,  
A watch-dog slumbered, grey with many years:  
Attendant on Alcestes, his fond master,  
And grateful to the hand which gave him food,  
He slumbered only where the old man lay,  
And followed him in all his museful walks.

An only child watched the declining age  
Of this kind man; Azora was she called:  
A fairer maid no fancy ever formed.  
Time had flown by, and numbered eighteen years  
Since on her birth her happy father smiled.  
Her form was moulded by the softest grace;  
Roved o'er her face bewitching smiles, and o'er  
Her shoulders fell a shining flood of hair.  
No step so lightly as Azora's moved  
In the gay gambols to the tabor's sound,  
When yellow moonlight slept upon the hills.  
Skilled was her father to draw music forth  
From strings that, likest those of airy harp,  
Breathed ravishing and sad melliflence;  
And he had taught his daughter all his art;  
And oft, when twilight stole upon the vale,  
And in her steps enamoured Silence came,  
Azora's harp was heard, Azora's voice  
Companioning, far sweeter than its own.

On the still cottage of Alcestes rose  
The dawning smile, the brightening tints of morn.  
Propped by his staff, and followed by his dog,  
He bent his footsteps to the neighbouring shore:  
For still on nature he delighted looked,  
Mused o'er a world of grandeur, drear and wild,  
With raptured thought; and yet his eye reposed  
As fondly on the calmly, softly fair.  
Arrived, he clambered 'midst the jutting rocks,  
And leaning thoughtfully upon his staff,  
Gazed on the waters rolling at his feet.  
While wrapt in meditation thus he stood,  
A cloud obscured the beams of early day,  
The winds uprose, the angry Caspian raved,  
And hove his billows higher in the blast.  
Thus high above the elemental war,  
The sage stood museful, muttering to the winds  
The burthens of his heart and wayward dreams,  
When suddenly and oft his ears were pierced  
By the loud barking of his faithful dog.  
Curious to know the cause, he turned his steps,  
And sought his dog, whom at the water's edge,  
Pawing the sand, he found, and on the surge  
Bending a wistful and inquiring look:  
When lo! the sage, lifting his eyes, beheld  
A man, whom waves had cast upon the shore,  
With members cold and still, bereft of life.  
Youthful he seemed, and noble in his form;  
His face and uncouth raiment plainly spoke  
A stranger, from some distant coast unknown.

Alcestes raised him in his aged arms,  
Hoping that life was not quite flown beyond  
The strenuous call of his health-giving art;  
And aid obtaining, gently bore away  
To his low cot, and to his rushy bed.

Nor was the hope deceitful, nor his call  
Inefficacious. Soon he noted life,  
Yet tremulous, within the clay-cold breast.

With generous care he and his daughter nursed  
The unknown wand'rer; watched they o'er his couch;  
By every gentle healing art they wooed  
His lingering spirit back; and back it came.  
When first he oped to the fair light his eyes,  
He saw Alcestes and Azora bending,  
With anxious eyes and piteous, o'er his bed,  
And heard their cry of joy to see him live.  
Astounded he beheld them, and in voice  
But faint and scarcely audible, inquired,  
"In what place he was cast, in what strange land,  
And who the friends who saved a wretched wight,  
To wanderings born, to hardships, and to tears?"

Kindly the venerable man replied:  
"Quiet, O stranger! every doubt and fear,  
The Winds have cast thee in the house of friends.  
I snatched thee from the flood, I brought thee hither,  
And joy to see thee live and speak again.  
Receive then, youth, whate'er my cell bestows;  
Mine and my daughter's hands shall give thee food  
And drink, and watch thy couch till strength returns.  
Rest, stranger, rest in peace till time restore  
Joy to thy heart, and vigour to thy limbs."

The old man's prayer was heard; his guest's pale cheek  
Was visited again by dews of health.  
A few succeeding days nerved his bold arm  
Again with all its wonted strength. He lived  
To thank his kind preserver for his care,  
To lavish blessings on his silver head.  
By more acquaintance more his heart was linked  
To his protecting friends; knit were their souls  
In bonds of union undissolvable.

Communing oft, the stranger asked the seer  
For tidings of the land before him spread,  
To him unknown, and now his place of rest.  
What race, he asked, sojourn in these long vales,  
Or harbour in the hills I see remote?  
And who their judges, kings, and incensed gods?

To whom the sage, in accents mild, replied:  
This realm, O stranger, fame reports afar;  
Its kindly soil rewards the ploughman's toil,  
And gives rich harvests to industrious hands:  
Green vallies meet the gladdened view; and streams  
Profusely flow through fields, and fill the air  
With coolness, and with murmurs musical.

In shadowy lawns the shepherd's pipe is heard  
To call the swains and rustic maids to sport,

While blows the gale embathed in wholesome dews,  
And sweetly wanders o'er their heads the moon,  
And throws her silver lustre in their paths.  
Oft from the thicket, at the still of night,  
Or mountain's side, the wildered peasant hears  
A voice of melody, more soft and shrill  
Than shepherd's reed, to which the fairy tribes  
Lead on the dance, and hold their mystic rites.

Montalvia's children are a race devout,  
And sacred domes they rear to many a God,  
In Ombecilla, their imperial seat.  
Their God of Gods is great Oasis. He  
Lives in bright palaces above the skies;  
His eye looks farther than his sun's beam goes;  
His voice is thunder; and his nod shakes worlds.  
The morning is his smile, the storm his wrath;  
He knows the ways of men; approves the good,  
But looks indignant on the bad; and when  
The good man dies, he wafts him to his halls,  
Where shines a blissful day that never sets:  
But when he sweeps the bad man from the earth,  
He thrusts the struggling ghost, through gaping rift,  
Far into earth's vast womb, where darkness dwells,  
With other guilty souls, an endless doom.

Oasis and his vassal Gods befriend  
The good: but there are Gods malign, his foes,  
And foes of all good men, and foes of joy.  
Evil is their good, and groans their music sweet;  
Death is their sport, and blood their banquet best;  
They blow man's frantic passions into rage,  
And goad his footsteps on to midnight deeds;  
They loose the hell-hounds of unending strife,  
And rain on earth diseases, plagues, and death.

Frequent on altars are the victims laid,  
As offerings to the Gods. Those who are kind,  
Benevolent, and just, and friends of men,  
Are honoured with the sacrifice of lambs.  
From these their votaries seek the smile of peace,  
The fruitful field, the sky without a storm,  
The richest blessings of indulgent heaven.  
To stern malignant deities are slain  
The beasts congenial to their savage mind:  
The hull, the tyger, wild boar of the wood;  
And oft the warrior youth, the blooming maid,  
Are offered to appease their deadly rage.

O'er wide Montalvia Oriander reigns,  
Raised by the people's voice to kingly state.  
Of stature huge he is, of temper fierce,  
But brave, and skilled to rule o'er restless men.  
His hue is swarthy; his deep-seated eyes  
Throw glances on his foes that check their steps,  
And shoot a dizzy terror through their brain.



Alike terrific are his step and mien:  
He moves as he well knew his high desert,  
As one born to subdue. When wronged, his wrath  
Is like the ocean, when in rage he heaves  
Most high his billows of destruction; yet  
Not tearless nor unmoved by woe is he,  
And generous deeds are not unknown to him.  
He loves his race; and threescore years have rolled  
Since he has ruled them wisely in his love,  
Fought all their battles, and engrossed their dangers!

Of, in their songs, the poets of the land  
Teach youthful ears and credulous, that their king  
Has sprung from Gods, and is to Gods allied  
In wisdom and in strength, and ne'er to die.  
The king assents, and his best gifts enrich  
The tuneful authors of his deity...<sup>44</sup>

## BOOK II.

THE jocund morning rose: from his high hill  
The sun looked down, and gladdened all the plain;  
Nature awakened from her still repose,  
And, starting, shook the dew-drops from her robe.  
The happy inmates of Alcestes' cot  
From slumbers broke, and hailed the blush of day:  
Assembling round the social board, they joined  
In conversation sweet and unrestrained.  
Anxious for him whose life he had preserved,  
Alcestes asked his guest whence he had come;  
To what far region he designed his course,  
When he was cast upon these eastern shores.  
To whom the youth in accents mild replied:

Kind reverend father, nought shall I withhold  
From one to whom protection, life are due.  
My tale will not detain your patience long;  
And nought it has to please or interest,  
Unless it meet an interest in your love.  
Valerian I am called; I came from Rome;  
I left a father in those splendid walls;  
I fled from persecution, pain, and death:  
For I, of christian faith, was hunted down  
By tyrants, thirsting for the blood of those  
Who would not own the idol gods they serve,  
And on their altars burn their sacrifice...<sup>45</sup>

Laid in the earth, the tomb did not long hold  
Him whose dominion over death extends.  
Christ broke asunder all the bonds of death;  
He triumphed o'er the grave; he lived again on earth;  
He called around him his dejected friends;

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<sup>44</sup> *Valerian* (1805) pp. 1-13.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 31-32.

He blessed them and rekindled all their zeal,  
And darting upwards on the wings of wind,  
He sought again his own eternal throne,  
And left them gazing on the passing clouds.

Commissioned by the heavenly will of him  
Who bled and died that rebel man might live,  
His bold disciples traversed sea and land,  
Preaching the truths which they had heard of him,  
And publishing his overtures of peace.  
No dangers could intimidate these men;  
They braved the frowns, the pleasures of the world:  
Love for their God, love for their fellow-men  
Impelled them on, and thunder-clothed their tongues.  
Some hardy champions of the cross arrived  
At Rome; proclaimed aloud the Christian faith,  
And planted there an early church of Christ.  
This little band, though peaceable and mild,  
The foes of strife, and like their master meek,  
Were not permitted to remain in peace.  
Loud roared the blasts of persecuting zeal;  
The heathen raised his unrelenting sword;  
The Roman tyrant issued his decree,  
And Christian blood in torrents flowed: but still I  
In Rome religion flourished and increased;  
The cause of Christ defied the threat of power,  
The arm of malice, and consuming flames...<sup>46</sup>

O pardon, sir, these tears, which still will flow:  
I am a soldier, nor disdain to weep;  
That holy matron who was thus destroyed  
Was my fond mother. Yes, I saw her die;  
I tried to save her, but I strove in vain.  
I, a late convert to the Christian faith,  
Escaped the dangers of that hateful night,  
But was reserved for further scenes of woe.  
My father still inflexibly remained  
Attached to heathen principles and rites.  
Whate'er his will might be, he had no power  
To shield his wife or son from frantic foes.  
Finding no safety in his house I fled;  
I refuge sought in unfrequented ways,  
In narrow lanes: and at the dead of night  
Stole like a felon from my lurking-place,  
In search of friends, who roved unhoused like me.<sup>47</sup>

*[Valerian relates the various trials, violence and abuses he and his fellow Christians suffered at the hands of the Nero's soldiers.]*

...Escaped from prison, I and my new friend  
Resolved to fly for ever from those shores  
Where liberty of conscience was denied,  
Where God was worshipped midst the fears of death.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 38-39.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 42-43.

Disguised, by night to Ostia's port we came,  
And meeting there with several Christian friends,  
Who there had gathered with the same design,  
A vessel we obtained, in which we all  
Embarked, and left the walls of haughty Rome,  
Our fields, our country, and our friends behind,  
And guided by Caelestial on our way,  
We turned our sails toward these far-eastern climes,  
The most remote from Roman rage and power.

Through different countries, many woes we passed,  
In quest of these-auspicious scenes of rest:  
Through Scylla and Charybdis safe we came,  
Through the rough Hellespont we ploughed our way,  
O'er the dark Euxine then with prosperous winds,  
With hearts made lighter with success, we flew.  
At length we reached the Caspian ocean's mouth,  
And hailed with joy its ever-rolling wave.  
But ah! this transport was too soon o'ercast;  
A storm arose, the billows beat the skies,  
The vessel reeled beneath the sweeping blast,  
The helm refused the guidance of the hand,  
The sails were split in pieces, and we drove,  
Left to the fury of the winds and waves.

Long we sustained this elemental war,  
Till on a rock the unrelenting winds  
The gallant vessel dashed: ah! then arose  
Loud shrieks which mingled with the thundering storm;  
The shivered timbers floated on the sea,  
And o'er the sinking hulk the waters rolled.  
My noble friends and all the crew were lost;  
They perished struggling with the flood; me, me  
Alone the raging billows safely bore,  
And cast me on these friendly shores of peace.  
You found me, father, you have brought me here,  
And, thanks to you and to this generous maid,  
I live. I feel again the glow of health;  
I live to bend in gratitude and praise  
To that high Power who guides the course of worlds,  
And who in love the sparrow's life sustains.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 56-58.



One of the famous Stuart portraits of Sarah, circa 1802.

### FORGOTTEN POEMS AND POETS, Part III

*“LET not the CRITIC, with disdainful eye,  
In the weak verse condemn the novel plan;  
But own, that VIRTUE beams in ev’ry sky,  
Tho wayward frailty is the lot of man.”*

~ a closing stanza to “Ouâbi; Or the Virtues of Nature: An Indian Tale in Four Cantos” (1790)

Born in the same year (but two weeks before, i.e., 29 Aug.) as the fall of Quebec to the British in 1759 and surviving in 1846 to still be around at the beginnings of the United States war with Mexico, Sarah Wentworth Morton’s long life spanned the most famous eras of early American history. And even had she not become a beloved and much respected female poet of her generation, the drama of her life in several respects would seem to have contained the elements and makings of a sweeping epic novel. Only it is to be regretted that there is so much more to know that we don’t, and the gaps in our record of her are too great to adequately tell her full life story as much as one would otherwise have liked. The only extensive biography of any substantial length on her is the 122 page *Philenia; the life and works of Sarah Wentworth Morton, 1759-1846* (1931) by Emily Pendleton and Milton Ellis;<sup>49</sup> which, very helpful and highly commendable as it doubtless is, leaves one wishing for more.

Sarah Wentworth Morton’s father, James Apthorp (1731-1799), a loyalist sympathizer, was one of Boston’s most affluent merchants; while her mother, Sarah Wentworth (1735-1820), was the granddaughter of one of the last Royal Governors of New Hampshire. Sarah, our poet, was in her late teens and early twenties during the Revolutionary war, dwelling in Boston and its environs; her family, despite their political leanings, being good friends of the Adamses, Hancocks and the Quincys. Shortly before the end of the conflict, 24 Feb. 1781, she married Perez Morton (1751-1837), zealous and vocal rebel patriot, orator, attorney and free mason, and along with her husband became a prominent socialite promoting the newly established local theater. The two also were members of an elite Boston circle that formed the *Sans Souci* club (started in the winter of 1784-85) that held dances and card playing. Although the limit on gambling was 25 cents a wager, the club was derided by some of the local press and ridiculed in theatrical farces for being a snobbish association that, by its indulging in such luxury, manifested a callousness and indifference to many at that time, not least of which the nation itself, suffering economically hard times.

However, the real scandal to hit the Mortons occurred in 1787 and 1788. Frances (also “Fanny”) Apthorp, Sarah’s younger sister, while staying with the couple had (unknown then to Sarah) a clandestine love affair with Perez; when sometime near the end of 1787, she secretly bore him a female child, and which was removed to a spot some 15 miles outside Boston to be raised. Before long, word did get out to

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<sup>49</sup> Available as a .pdf at: <https://archive.org/details/PhileniaSarahWentworthMorton1931> and also: <https://www.scribd.com/document/366000140/Philenia-the-life-and-works-of-Sarah-Wentworth-Morton-1759-1846>

Sarah and Frances' father, who not so surprisingly was quite incensed over the revelation.<sup>50</sup> Instead of being patient and allowing the Mortons and Frances to come up with an arrangement and settlement of the matter on their own, he attempted to force an open confrontation with Perez and Sarah in order to clearly establish responsibility for what happened; with Perez, most ungallantly, having insinuated the blame was Frances'. Things finally came to a head when on 28 August 1788 Frances, in ingesting poison, committed suicide. Her brother, a lieutenant in the Royal Navy, subsequently challenged Perez to a duel. This the latter attempted to avoid, and the trial by pistols was at last prevented by the intervention of the Sheriff of Suffolk county. Despite his less than honorable handling of all that had taken place, Perez was informally defended by John Adams and former Mass. Governor James Bowdoin, acting as mediators, and by them was acquitted of any wrong doing with respect to Frances Apthorp's death. Though pardoning and much pitying of her sister, Sarah also forgave her husband, and evidently took his part in the face of acrimony leveled at him in the light of the tragedy. This last emerged from the same local newspapers and satirical playwrights who had ridiculed the couple earlier, and who at the same time were the ones making public what had occurred in the Morton home.<sup>51</sup>

However the story attained even more widespread notoriety when a fictional account, based in part on the tragedy, was anonymously published, *The Power of Sympathy* (1789). Credited as the first American novel, it is generally now believed now to have been written by William Hill Brown, an indirect acquaintance of the Mortons; though for many years, and quite erroneously, thought to have been a work of Sarah's. In effort to quash any further publicity, the couple, with indifferent success, endeavored to buy up all copies of the book and had them destroyed; so that to this day only a small handful of original editions survive.

Despite these shocking events, Perez Morton went on to continue his auspicious career as a jurist and government official, up until his death in 1837.<sup>52</sup> Sarah, for her part, remained steadfast and loyal to him, and after the initial agitation and turmoil aroused, the scandal seems to have gradually died out and faded from public awareness. Though her husband was a Democratic-Republican in largely Federalist Massachusetts, Sarah interestingly and for her part sided with the latter party. It was on some official visits in 1802 and 1803 with him to Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. that, in the first of these cities, Gilbert Stuart painted three portraits of her and that stand out as some of his most celebrated canvasses. Like noted Philadelphia hostess and society superstar of the Washington and Adams administrations Ann Willing Bingham, Sarah in her prime was both a recognized beauty and one of the most prominent female socio-cultural trendsetters of the new Republic. We might also note in casual passing that Sarah, an Episcopalian in Calvinist dominated New England, advocated evergreens as decorations at Christmas time; in an era when New Englanders did not generally observe that holiday as a festive occasion. In addition, she had a serious penchant and flair for architecture and aided cousin Charles Bulfinch in the unique and usual plan of her Dorchester residence; a design later emulated by others.

These both necessary and notable odd points and incidents mentioned, it is not the aim of this article to attempt to present anything like a full outline of her life and career. Rather our greater purpose is to rather to look at Sarah the poet, and even in that regard the intent is not so much to survey the wider corpus of her work but selections of some of her more successful and more interesting efforts in verse. By not having included her in our survey of Clifton and Linn, we would not want to seem to imply that Morton as a "Forgotten Poet" could not vie with them as one of the better ones of that period of American history. She of course could; and yet as a *female* poet she was understood to be *formally* an amateur; since by the mores of that day a woman's duty was first and foremost as a mother, wife, and homemaker. A distinction of priority Sarah herself proudly held to. So that for most of her career, she signed herself as "Constantia" (briefly, very early on) and "Philenia," and only titled her literary work with her real name in 1823; all of which discouraged her being taken as the *fully* participating professional in the company of her male peers.

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<sup>50</sup> Though Apthorp, as a loyalist, incurred property seizures by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, he remained in the state and was repatriated after the war.

<sup>51</sup> Where Frances was buried and quite what happened to her and Perez's daughter, insofar as I have been able to determine, is unknown.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Lee IV, who also suffered scandal as the result of an affair with his sister in law. And though not tainted with an out of wedlock child or someone's suicide, the affair even so wrought havoc to his public career and reputation. Perez Morton, by contrast, was much better politically entrenched before any storm could hit.

Yet compared to Annis Boudinot Stockton, Mercy Otis Warren, Philis Wheatley Peters, Ann Eliza Bleeker, or even Susanna Rowson (whose true notoriety as a writer came as a novelist), Sarah Morton was, for a spell and reportedly, widely known and popular, at least by her last pen name. Her poems frequently appeared not only in many New England papers and periodicals, but in those of New York and Philadelphia as well; with the *Massachusetts Magazine* in 1791 proclaiming Philenia “the Sappho of America.”

As mentioned and as has been the general custom in our articles, in the ensuing selections of Morton’s (mostly) poems we wanted to present our subject at (what seems to us at any rate) some of her best, or in other instances at least her most historically attention grabbing, as an author. There are other writings of hers which, while of career importance, we can easily afford to overlook for the sake of sparing readers what is frankly sometimes dull and academic reading.

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“To the Breath of Kindness” is one of Morton’s earliest known pieces, and was composed when she was sixteen years of age. It, and many of the other poems that follow, can be found in My Mind and Its Thoughts, in Sketches, Fragments, and Essays (pp. 32-33), a compendium of her work that was printed in 1823. Prior to that most of her poems appeared in periodicals; with the 1823 volume being an occasion to update and materially revise many of the same.

TO THE BREATH OF KINDNESS.

The following lines being, as their style imports, a production of early youth, are here inserted, not surely for poetic merit, but rather for the grateful sentiment at that period felt, uttered, and inscribed

TO THE KINDEST OF THE KIND.⁵³

Sweet is the garden’s breeze that flows,
With health and sweetness from the rose;
Charm’d was the strain *Cecilia* knew,
And with enrapturing finger drew;
So sweet the breath which kindness moves,
So charms the voice attention loves:
She, with the organ’s lifted peal,
Could make a listening Angel feel,
With floating wing from heaven descend,
And o’er her fine attractions bend,
To thee a finer strain is given,
A strain that wins the heart to heaven.

What time the breath of kindness steals
O’er every pang that sorrow feels;
With all affection’s hoarded stores,
How rich the balmy whisper pours,
Rich as the spring’s first blossom blow.
Warm as the lip of summer glows;
Sweet as the morning’s clovered vale,
And healthful as its zephyr’d gale,
More prized than wealth; than worlds more dear;
Still may that whisper loiter near;
Still to this trusting heart reveal,
What only thou—loved friend! can’st feel.

⁵³ Truly these childish Lines were not then seen by the individual to whom they were inscribed in very early youth.

~**~

Pendleton: "Not long after the suicide of her unfortunate sister, Mrs. Morton suffered another saddening loss in the death of an infant son, born in April, 1789...This bereavement the unhappy mother lamented in one of her best early poems..."

MEMENTO,
FOR MY INFANT, WHO LIVED BUT EIGHTEEN HOURS.⁵⁴

As the pure snow-drop, child of April tears,
Shook by the rough wind's desolating breath—
Scarce o'er the chilly sod its low head rears,
And trembling dies upon the parent heath.

So my lost boy, arrayed in fancy's charms,
Just born to mourn—with premature decay
To the cold tyrant stretched his feeble arms,
And struggling sighed his little life away.

As not in vain the early snow-drop rose,
Though short its date, and hard the withering gale;
Since its pale bloom ethereal balm bestows,
And cheers with vernal hope the wasted vale.

My perished child, dear pledge of many a pain!
Torn from this ruffian world, in yon bright sphere,
Joins with awakened voice the cherub train,
And pours his sweet breath on a mother's ear.

Kind dreams of morn his fairy phantom bring,
And floating tones of extasy impart,
Soft as when Seraphs strike the heavenly string
To charm the settled sorrow of the heart.

~**~

From 21st to the 31st of October 1789, President Washington visited Boston with Morton subsequently penning these lines in his honor. We give here both the original version as it appeared in Elihu Hubbard Smith's 1793 national anthology American Poems, Selected and Original (p. 180), and the quite different one that is contained in My Mind and Its Thoughts, etc. (1823) Of further note, in addition to Washington, Morton dedicated poetic tributes to: Henry Lee, John Jay, John Adams, Fisher Ames, John Trumbull (the painter), Benjamin Lincoln, Aaron Burr, Mrs. Richard Montgomery, General Arthur St. Clair (on his Nov. 1791 disastrous defeat on the Wabash at the hands of the Miami confederacy), Henry Knox, Gilbert Stuart, John Rodgers, Oliver Hazard Perry, James Lawrence, Jacob Brown, and Marie Antoinette.

ODE TO THE PRESIDENT,
On his visiting the Northern States.

THE Season sheds its mildest ray,
O'er the blue waves the sun-beams play,
The bending harvest gilds the plain,
The tow'ring vessels press the main,
The ruddy ploughman quits his toil,

⁵⁴ *My Mind and Its Thoughts, in Sketches, Fragments, and Essays* (1823) pp. 255-256.

The pallid miser leaves his spoil,
And grateful paeans hail the festive year,
Which bids *Columbia's* guardian God appear.

Hence! DISAPPOINTMENT's anxious eye,
And pale AFFLICTION's ling'ring sigh;
Let sorrow from the brow be torn,
And ev'ry heart forget to mourn;
Let smiles of peace their charms display
To grace this joy-devoted day,
And, where *that* arm preserv'd the peopled plain,
Shall mild Contentment hold her placid reign.

Let "*white rob'd choirs*" in beauty gay
With lucid flowrets strew the way,
Let Lilachs scent the purpled lawn,
And roses emulate the dawn,
Let domes their circling honors spread,
And wreaths entwine that glorious head;
To thee, GREAT WASHINGTON, each lyre be strung,
Thy matchless deeds by ev'ry bard be sung!

When FREEDOM rais'd her drooping head,
Thy arm her willing heros led,
When all her hopes, to thee resign'd,
Were resting on thy god-like mind,
How did that soul, to fear unknown,
And feeling for *her* fate alone,
O'er Danger's threat'ning form the faulchion wield,
And tread with dauntless step the crimson field!

Not DECIUS—patriot dear to fame!
Not CINCINNATUS—deathless name!
Not HE,⁵⁵ who led the Athenian band,
The saviour of a bleeding land,
Could such exalted worth display,
Nor shine with such unclouded ray.
Of *Age* the HOPE, of *Youth* the LEADING STAR,
The *Soul* of PEACE, the CONQUERING ARM OF WAR.

~*~

ODE FOR MUSIC.⁵⁶

INSCRIBED TO GEORGE WASHINGTON, UPON HIS PUBLIC ENTRANCE
IN THE TOWN OF BOSTON, DURING HIS PRESIDENCY.

The season sheds its mildest ray,
O'er the blue waves the sunbeams play;
The bending harvest clothes the plain,
The bannered vessels cheer the main;
The ruddy ploughboy quits his toil,
The pallid miser leaves his spoil.
And grateful p[ae]ans hail the festive year,

⁵⁵ Themistocles.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 137-138.

Which bids Columbia's guiding chief appear.
Hence disappointment's anxious eye,
And pining envy's lingering sigh,
Let sorrow from the brow be borne,
And every heart forget to mourn,
While smiles of peace their charms display,
To grace this joy-devoted day;
For the great Washington each lyre be strung,
Thy matchless deeds by every bard be sung.

When FREEDOM raised her drooping head,
And many a suffering hero led;
When every hope to thee resigned,
Were resting on thy glorious mind;
How did that breast, to fear unknown,
And feeling for her fate alone—
O'er peril's threatening form the falchion wield,
And tread with dauntless step the endangered field.

Not *Decius*—patriot dear to fame,
Not *Cincinnatus*' deathless name,—
Not he, who led the Spartan band,
The saviour of a bleeding land—
Could more triumphant worth display,
Nor shine with such unclouded ray,
Of age the hope—of youth the leading star—
The eye of peace—the conquering arm of war.

~**~

Along with the much shorter "The African Chief" (1792), Morton is most oft remembered as a poet for her "Ouâbi, or the Virtues of Nature, an Indian Tale in four cantos" (1790), based on a real life narrative about Europeans personally interacting with native Americans she had read in Mathew Carey's American Museum. While the dramatic idealization of American Indians went as far back as Restoration stage productions, such as those of John Dryden and Aphra Behn, Morton created a hit of her own with an interracial romance and tragedy of torrid passion and startling flamboyance. "Ouâbi" was so well received that one British playwright wrote a theater script directly based on it. Moreover, portions of the poem give one the very strong impression of having given Longfellow ideas for "Hiawatha." Although panned by one erudite critic friend of hers for its metrical looseness, in retrospect such defect would actually seem, though unintentionally, to have worked to the poem's advantage; applying similar reasoning as Thomas Warton did in his censure of Alexander Pope's classical adaptation of Chaucer's "House of Fame": "An attempt to unite order and exactness of imagery with a subject formed on principles so professedly romantic and anomalous, is like giving Corinthian pillars to a Gothic place."⁵⁷

An outstanding study and review of "Ouâbi" well worth recommending for the poem's further exploration is: "AZAKIA, Ouâbi, and Sarah Wentworth Apthorp Morton: A Romance of the Early American Republic" by Gordon Sayre, Princeton University Library Chronicle, volume LXIV, no. 2, Winter 2003, p. 313.⁵⁸

Here we reproduce the title character's death song. Having survived torture at the hands of his Huron enemies and having willingly relinquished his wife to a white suitor, but who is also his bosom friend and fellow warrior, the Illinois chief descants this exiting dirge.

⁵⁷ *History of English Poetry*, vol. II, sec. XIV.

⁵⁸ See: <https://tinyurl.com/yambvekr>

While for an online text of the poem itself, see: <http://www.auburn.edu/~downejm/Morton-Ouabi.html> or <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/evans/N17528.0001.001?view=toc>

DEATH SONG.⁵⁹

REAR'D *midst the war-empurpled plain,*
What Illinois submits to PAIN!
How can the glory-darting fire
The coward chill of death inspire!

The *sun* a blazing *heat* bestows,
The *moon* *midst* *pensive ev'ning* glows,
The *stars* in *sparkling beauty* shine,
And *own* their **FLAMING SOURCE** *divine.*

Then let me hail th' IMMORTAL FIRE,
And in the sacred flames expire;
Nor yet those Huron hands restrain;
This bosom scorns the throbs of pain.

No griefs this warrior-soul can bow,
No pangs contract this even brow;
Not all your threats excite a fear,
Not all your force can start a tear.

Think not with me my tribe decays,
More glorious chiefs the hatchet raise;
Not unreveng'd their sachem dies,
Not unattended greets the skies.

Celario listens with the ear of care,
His sinking limbs their wonted aid refuse,
He calls his warriors with distracted air,
Whose ready hands the suff'ring victim loose.

Around his feet the young deliv'rer clings;
It is *Ouâbi!* greatest! first of men!
The song of death the dauntless sachem sings,
Yet clasps his lov'd *Celario* once agen [sic].

Thro' the deep wood they seek the healing balm,
Weep on his hand, or at his feet deplore;
Ah! how unlike *Ouâbi's* glorious form!
Now gash'd with wounds, and bath'd in streams of gore!

Snatch'd from the wish'd oblivion of the field,
Subjected to the victor's hard decree,
Struck by his form, their iron bosoms yield,
They grant a life depriv'd of liberty.

Th' indignant chief the proffer'd boon disdains,
Defies their rage, and scorns their threat'ning ire,
Demands the tortures, and their rending pains,
The ling'ring anguish of the tardy fire.

The Death Song echo'd thro' the hollow wood,
Just when *Celario* led his warrior-train,

⁵⁹ 1790 text pp. 37-39.

Th' affrighted foe discard the work of blood,
And fly impetuous o'er the arid plain.

Thus when a carcass clogs the opening vale,
And birds of prey in prowling circles throng,
If some fierce hound approach the tainted gale,
He drives the wild relentless brood along.

Pale horror stalks, and swift destruction reigns,
Carnage and death pollute the ruined glade,
'Till nature's wearied arm a respite gains,
When night pacific spreads her sable shade.

~**~

An occasional piece found in Hubbard Smith.

INVOCATION TO HOPE.⁶⁰

SOOTHER of Life! by whose delusive charm
This feeling heart resists the pointed woe,
Whose magic power, with fancied joys can warm,
And wipe the tear which Anguish taught to flow;

If, thro' the varied griefs my Youth has known,
No charm but these could raise my votive eye;
O leave me not, now every blessing's flown,
Whilst my sad bosom heaves the lengthen'd sigh.

The grated prison, and the lov'd-form'd bower,
The wretch, whom Disappointment wastes away,
The frugal hut, the gilded dome of power,
Joy in thy smiles and court thy equal sway.

By thee, the friendless sufferer learns to bear;
By thee, the patient heart forgets its woe;
Thou mak'st Misfortune's iron aspect fair,
And e'en the frozen cheek of Misery glow.

Leave me no more, as on that fated morn
When my rash soul the impious deed design'd,
And when, unconscious of thy blest return,
The foe Despair usurp'd my tortur'd mind.

But yet, bright Goddess! with deceptive smile,
Come, and a host of Fictions in thy train,
With dreams of peace my wearied heart beguile,
And sink in fancied bliss the real pain.

~**~

Another from the same anthology.

PRAYER TO PATIENCE.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Elihu Hubbard Smith's *American Poems, Selected and Original* (1793) p. 182.

⁶¹ Elihu Hubbard Smith's *American Poems, Selected and Original* (1793) pp. 183-184.

GODDESS of the steady eye!
All thy Apathy impart,
From a world of woe I fly,
Take, oh take me to thy heart!

Lend me all thy healing power,
Teach me to suppress the groan,
Let me while affliction's lower,
Turn like NIOBE to stone.

Let me to the *sneer* of scorn,
Still return the placid *smile*,
Calm,—when angry passions frown,
Silent,—when the rude revile.

Check the Tyrant of the mind,
Source of *sorrow*, *Foe to thee*;
Who can peace, or solace find,
Rack'd by *Sensibility*!

Snatch me from her wasting sway,
Shield me with thy firmer aid,
Let me still thy voice obey,
Gentle, peace-preserving maid!

If greater pangs this bosom rend,
Than ever bosom felt before;
Further may thy sway extend,
Greater, deeper be thy power.

Be every *wrong* disarm'd by thee,
Rob stern *Oppression* of his pride,
Bid *Malice* at thy presence flee,
Turn *Envy's* venom'd dart aside.

Let hard *Reproach* soft kindness feel,
To cold *Disdain* be pity lent,
From *Anger* wrest his lifted steel,
From black *Revenge* his discontent.

Goddess of the tearless eye!
Yet give me thy pacific charms;
To thy calm bosom let me fly,
And find a refuge in thy arms!

~**~

One of Philenia's most popular appearances were her exchanges with "Alfred," that is poet Robert Treat Paine, Jr., and which were frequently reprinted in periodicals in the 1790s. Paine, as well as Joseph Dennie, was an ardent admirer of Mrs. Morton; though in Paine's case, and based on these writings, his fondness may have taken on a more personal cast. We give a sample of one such tandem foray, and as it is printed in Hubbard Smith.⁶²

⁶² *Ibid.* pp. 186-193.

ALFRED TO PHILENIA.⁶³

MY morn of life was bright and fair,
The distant mists of gloomy *Care*,
By *Joy's* light breeze, which daily blew,
Were scatter'd far beyond the view.
Then blessings crown'd the happy hours—
Then *Pleasure* strew'd my path with flowers;
Then *Virtue* oped an easy way,
And led my footsteps up to day.
If e'er the *Child of Sorrow* mourn'd
My sympathetic bosom burn'd;
The highest bliss my soul could know,
Was, to relieve the pang of woe.

Such scenes my fondest feelings warm'd—
Such scenes my earliest habits form'd;
This dangerous race thro' youth I ran,
And, ruin'd, reach'd the verge of man.

Alas! sad wretch!—I've wept, and run
At *Pity's* call—to be undone;
Beneath the flowers which strew'd my way.
The thorn of keenest anguish lay;
Even in the boss of *Virtue's* shield,
The sting of torture lay conceal'd.

Ah, fatal *Love!*—
Now *Hope* has clos'd her sun-bright eye,
And midnight glooms my midday sky;
Despair now heaves his horrid form,
And frowns terrific in the storm;
No ray of bliss now meets my sight,
And my whole soul is wrap'd in night.

Ah, sweetest *Poetess!* thy lay
Can charm the weightiest woes away;
The soft compassion of thy feeling breast,
Can shed a drop of balm, and lull my soul to rest.

PHILENIA TO ALFRED.

ALFRED! the heaven lent muse is thine,
Then bid impetuous sorrow cease;
And at the bright *Apollo's* shrine,
Recal[l] thy exil'd heart to peace.

Vain is the tear in anguish shed,
And vain the pang by passion fed,
Then to the muse thy moments give,
And for her deathless laurel *live*.

Ne'er hope in careless crouds [sic] to find

⁶³ This, and the three next succeeding Poems, are extracted from the *Columbian Centinel* [sic] of 1791.

A refuge for thy *lonely* mind,
Think not the sympathetick sigh,
The language of the moving eye,
 Will o'er thy with'ring sorrows flow;
Envy will sneer, and *rancour* frown,
Or *ignorant malice* drag thee down,
 And scorn to solace what it cannot know.

Yet there are *some* to mercy true;
 And such *my griefs* have found,
 Who o'er each life-destroying wound,
Shed pity's healing dew.

Such be thy favour'd lot, for they
Will live beyond the summer day,
Will mid'st the weeping autumn smile,
And e'en the wintry waste beguile;
Will thy sad breast from anguish free,
The friends of gentleness and thee.

But, if the slave of love thou art
 Still languish and *endure*,
For when that strikes *the feeling heart*,
 Like death, it has no cure.

ALFRED TO PHILENIA.

AND does the heart, by love distress'd,
 "Like death, admit no cure?"
Must *Alfred's* deeply-tortur'd breast,
 "Still languish, and endure?"

Ah! for a moment stay thy doom,
Nor drive him frantic to the tomb.
Thy sweet, thy all-subduing lay,
The tempests of the soul obey—
At thy command its ragings cease—
Thou speak'st and ev'ry heart is peace;
While thron'd sublime above the storm,
Thou wear'st a radiant Seraph's form,
And, smiling o'er the solemn scene,
Thy aspect speaks a mind serene.

 Know then—o'er *Alfred's* sinking soul,
 The waves of ceaseless anguish roll—
 Love has assail'd his yielding heart,
 And pierc'd it with his sharpest dart;
Time's lenient hand its healing aid denies?
And every hour a heavier pang supplies.

When life's quick eddies warm'd his youthful heart,
He fell a prey to soft deceptive art—
To DELIA every real charm was given,
And ALFRED lov'd her next to Truth and Heaven.
Unus'd to guile, in love with truth,

And glowing with the fire of youth,
His mind the future prospect view'd,
Where fancy every blessing shew'd—
The path of bliss expanded lay,
And flowers EDENIAN strew'd the way,
While all around the alluring scene,
Transported Friendship smil'd serene,
And Nature with endearing smile,
Spread out each gay enchanting wile,
And from the landscape scene refin'd,
Brought sweetest rapture to the mind.

But when this gay delusion slew,
A dreary desert oped to view;
Where nought but thorns the cheerless heath supplied,
Where Hope swift fled, and Expectation died.

But ALFRED lives amid a world of night,
Each hour beguiles him of a fresh delight;
“Chill Penury's” fiends, with angry aspect lour
Round his sad path, and wither every flower,
No gleams of joy pierce thro' the encreasing gloom,
And Peace eludes his grasp, and flies beyond the tomb.

Must ALFRED then “the slave of Love,”
“Still languish and endure?”
Can nought the torturing pangs remove
Is death the only cure?

The world has “friends to mercy true”—
“Such ALFRED'S griefs have found,”
Who in his breast “shed pity's healing dew”—
But Friendship's pity cannot heal the wound.

PHILENIA TO ALFRED.

“PENURY,” no ALFRED! 'tis not thine,
In thy rich Soul's exhaustless Mine
Abounds more Wealth, than GANGES golden Shores
E'er on the tawny Chiefs bestow'd,
When parting from the sacred Flood,
The falsly, glitt'ring, yellow Sand,
Spreads Treasure thro' the torrid Land,
Or tho' from out the burning Soil,
Drawn by the harden'd Hand of Toil,
The precious sparkling Drops are plac'd
Round the slim Zone of Beauty's Waist,
And add new Splendour to some Monarch's Stores.
Does not the vernal Morning rise
With Radiance to thy grateful Eyes?
Does not the breezy Flow of Eve
A Transport to thy Bosom give?
And ev'ry life-dissolving Sigh,
Fill thy rapt Soul with Extacy,
When thy lost Charmer on thy Vision beams,

And feeds wild Fancy with delusive Dreams?

Ah! ALFRED, I of Griefs could speak,
'Till at soft Pity's call
The iron Tears would fall
In burning Streams down hard Oppression's Cheek.
But no! I quit the heartless Lay,
And cast the unavailing Theme away.

When wand'ring o'er the fragrant Vale,
Soft Warblings wafting thro' the Gale,
Does not thy Soul a Pardon find
For Words unjust, and Deeds unkind?
Do not the cruel Herd inspire
Compassion or Disdain?
Can Scorn's cold Eye thy bosom fire.
To yield one Wrong again?
No! ALFRED, no! the MUSE is thine!
And where her Bounties flow,
All the bright beaming Virtues shine,
The warm Affections glow.
Then can that Dust poor Misers hoard,
Enrich thy wealthy Soul?
Can sordid Ore one Bliss afford?
One tyrant Pang controul?

The friendless Flatt'rer's smile to prove,
To purchase venal Beauty's Eye,
To swell mad Envy's frantic Sigh,
And lose each Sympathy of Love;
Such are the Joys which Gold can give,
And such e'en Misers may receive,
But such can ne'er be thine.—
The MUSE extends her open Arms,
She courts thee with unbounded Charms,
Her Pencil paints each glowing Scene,
Her Musick floats along the Green,
By her the laurel'd Virtues live,
She bids degraded Vice, the Blush of Conscience give.
Science is her's, and ev'ry Art divine.
Then like PHILENIA quit the Herd,
Where Mercy is unknown:
And be thy votive Prayer preferr'd,
At great APOLLO's Throne.

Sweet Solitude, kind Nurse of Song,
Allures me from the joyless Throng,
Spreads her reposing Breast to me,
And bids my tuneless Harp waft long
Adieus to cities and to thee.

~**~

*Morton's most often seen and anthologized piece, and which in tribute Bryant reuses the title for in one of his own poems; while Whittier for his part quotes Morton's lines in what is arguably his own best poetical work, "Snow Bound."*⁶⁴

THE AFRICAN CHIEF (1792)

See how the black ship cleaves the main,
High bounding o'er the dark blue wave,
Remurmuring with the groans of pain,
Deep freighted with the princely slave!

Did all the gods of Afric sleep,
Forgetful of their guardian love,
When the white tyrants of the deep,
Betrayed him in the palmy grove.

A chief of *Gambia's* golden shore,
Whose arm the band of warriors led,
Or more—the lord of generous power,
By whom the foodless poor were fed.

Does not the voice of reason cry,
Claim the first right that nature gave,
From the red scourge of bondage fly,
Nor deign to live a burden'd slave.

Has not his suffering offspring clung,
Desponding round his fetter'd knee;
On his worn shoulder, weeping hung,
And urged one effort to be free?

His wife by nameless wrongs subdued,
His bosom's friend to death resign'd;
The flinty path-way drench'd in blood;
He saw with cold and frenzied mind.

Strong in despair, then sought the plain,
To heaven was raised his steadfast eye,
Resolved to burst the crushing chain,
Or 'mid the battle's blast to die.

First of his race, he led the band,
Guardless of danger, hurling round,
Till by his red avenging hand,
Full many a despot stain'd the ground.

When erst *Messenia's*⁶⁵ sons oppress'd,
Flew desperate to the sanguine field,
With iron clothed each injured breast,
And saw the cruel Spartan yield,

⁶⁴ *My Mind and Its Thoughts, in Sketches, Fragments, and Essays* (1823) pp. 201-203.

⁶⁵ "When erst *Messenia's* sons oppressed."

The Messenians being conquered by the Spartans, and agreeably to the custom of the age, the miserable remnant led into slavery, under these circumstances were so inhumanly oppressed, that rising, and united in arms, they seized upon a Spartan fortress, and after innumerable injuries, inflicted and reciprocated, finally obtained their freedom.

Did not the soul to heaven allied,
With the proud heart as greatly swell,
As when the *Roman Decius* died,
Or when the *Grecian* victim fell?⁶⁶

Do later deeds quick rapture raise,
The boon *Batavia's William* won,
Paoli's time-enduring praise,
Or the yet greater *Washington!*

If these exalt thy sacred zeal,
To hate oppression's mad control,
For bleeding *Afric* learn to feel,
Whose chieftain claim'd a kindred soul.

Ah, mourn the last disastrous hour,
Lift the full eye of bootless grief,
While victory treads the sultry shore,
And tears from hope the captive chief;

While the hard race of pallid hue,
Unpractised in the power to feel,
Resign him to the murderous crew,
The horrors of the quivering wheel.

Let sorrow bathe each blushing cheek,
Bend piteous o'er the tortured slave,
Whose wrongs compassion cannot speak,
Whose only refuge was the grave.

~**~

STANZAS.⁶⁷

I like—it is my choice to live unseen—
Unsought—by all whom busy eyes admire,
To watch the brightening germ, the deepening green,
And from the glare of vertic wealth retire.

I like the gracious spring—the summer gay—
The autumn, in his every bounty kind,
I the social winter's unpretending day,
The kindly converse, and the modest mind.

What is to me the city's revel throng,
I love the sighing of the solemn grove,
The soft half warble of the twilight song,
The fragrant eve's reflective calm, I love.

If friends have passed, and sorrows found their place,
And the hurt mind laments its lone career,
If lost of life the sunshine and the grace,
Yet may one tender gleam of hope appear.

⁶⁶ Leonidas.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 198-199.

Where the crushed thought can find a voice, and where
Some healthful pleasure on the sick heart rise
Some living loveliness—some buried care,
Warm the cold cheek, and light the languid eyes!

~**~

MAUDLA.

THE CARELESS SINNER TURNED PERSECUTING
SAINT, PARTLY IMITATED FROM THE FRENCH.⁶⁸

When *Maud* was young, her deeds were bad,
Of aged *Maud* the ways are sad;
That sin which charmed her earlier eyes,
Now from her hideous figure flies,
And since that Satan tempts no more,
She to her God unlocks the door;
As if what tophet loathes and leaves,
Heaven and its angel host receives,
And ugliest sin were welcome there,
Where all is good, and all is fair;
Thus to the rancorous heart is given
The hope of blessedness and heaven,
Even as the cankering reptiles come,
To where the peach unfolds its bloom:
And from the veriest trash may rise,
The bright carnation's fragrant dyes.⁶⁹

~**~

*Pendleton: "Perhaps the crowning bereavement of her lifetime was the death of her only son, Charles, on 28 February, 1809. His whole existence had been one of suffering, but his affectionate, noble, and sincere nature and his unblemished character had endeared him to many beside his mother...For a time she was inconsolable and unable to believe his loss real..."*⁷⁰

LAMENTATIONS

OF AN UNFORTUNATE MOTHER,
OVER THE TOMB OF HER ONLY SON.⁷¹

"Oh lost!" *forever lost*—thy mother's eyes,
No more shall see thy morn of hope arise,
No more for her its day resplendent shine,
But grief eternal rule like wrath divine,
Blotting from earth's drear scene each mental ray

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 61.

⁶⁹ The character from the French prose, and that which precedes it, were a task imposed on the author at the city of Washington, unappropriate, and certainly without the least intended personality.

⁷⁰ Poem text *Ibid.* pp. 260-261.

⁷¹ *Charles Ward Apthorp Morton* expired of a Dropsy of the Brain, a disease always accompanied by premature but extraordinary capacity. Its fatal termination was accelerated by sedentary habits and intense study. In his very early childhood he appeared a prodigy of genius;—and entered the University at thirteen—where he gave the fairest promise of excellence in Science and the Fine Arts ; for although endowed by nature with a taste for the Sister Powers of Music, Painting and Poetry ; from his devotion to the more honourable pursuits of Science, he relinquished these but a short time previous to his last illness. His heart was noble and sincere; abounding with passions, and affections. His integrity unblemished and his death productive of self-despair to his unfortunate Mother. At his early age having already made Improvements in Medical Electricity; for which he received a Certificate from the President and Professors of Harvard University. But his whole existence was that of suffering, owing to the original feebleness of his constitution and the energetic sensibility of his mind.

That chased the phantom of despair away.

When fortune saw me all her gifts resign,
No murmur wakened, for thy love was mine;
Though hard her frown, and many a blow severe
Called to thy brilliant eye the clouding tear;
Yet poor the boon that waits on fortunes store,
Since the full pampered heart still pines for more.

Distress on thee, my son, her mildews shed,
To blight the laurel blooming round thy head;
Chilled by her grasp, but not to wrongs resigned,
For warm as summer glowed thine active mind;
No syren pleasure, potent to betray,
Ere lured thy lone and studious hours away.

But science on thy young attractions smiled,
For genius gave thee birth, and called thee child.
The painter's touch, the minstrel's art divine,
With many a charm of polished life were thine,
And thine the soul sublime, too ardent wrought,
The impetuous feeling, and the burst of thought;
Strong and resistless—to the *few* alone,
Was all the treasure of thy being known.
Cold was its fate—yet o'er thy wrongs supreme
Young Genius rose—with rich and radiant beam,
While the fine eye, to that and nature true,
Spoke all that mind inspired, or sorrow knew.

Poor Boy! I thought thou o'er my urn would'st weep!
And grieving yield me to the tomb's last sleep;
Nor, in thy dawn of years, when hope was gay,
Like heaven's bright arch of promise, melt away—
Lost, like a sun-beam in the spring's chill hours,
And transient as the garden's earliest flowers:
But dearer thou than rays that morn illumine,
And lovelier far than nature's vernal bloom;
These, when the storm has past, again return,
But what shall wake thy deep death-slumbering urn?
What but the voice of heaven, that strain divine,
Which bids the trembling earth its trust resign.
Then the bold genius, and the feelings wild,
No more to wrongs and woes shall bear my child;
But that warm heart to generous pity known,
Which all the grieved affections made their own,
With the pure essence of that brain of fire,
Shall to a Seraph's fervid flame aspire;
And angels with arch-angels, pleased to find,
The blest expression of thy kindred mind;
Charming from memory's thought its earthly pain,
Will give thee to thy mother's soul again.



As painted by Massachusetts artist Sarah Goodridge, sometime in the 1830s.

FORGOTTEN POEMS AND POETS, Part IV

“And I heard him exclaim, ere he drove out of sight...”

While all the “forgotten” poets considered thus far are, at bare minimum, catalogued by historians of early American letters, the author of what is probably America’s best known poem -- ever -- has not been accorded even this humble distinction. Indeed, not only has *his* singularly beloved poem been for more than a century and half mistakenly attributed to another, he is not even mentioned or noted (let alone given an entry or section) in either Kettell, the Duckykincks, or Grisworld -- not to mention all subsequent anthologies or studies of that kind. That is until *very* recently.

Part of the reason for this is that Henry Livingston, Jr. (1748-1828), of Poughkeepsie, New York, who wrote “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (c. 1823), or as it is more familiarly known “A Night Before Christmas,” never published poetry under his own name, and instead penned verses and rhymes solely for familial (not infrequently for children), and or parochial consumption. While his poetry was sometimes published in local newspapers from the 1790s into the 1820s, it was done so anonymously, being usually signed with an “R.,” that being the sole indication, if any, of his identity.

Thanks however to the persevering efforts of 5th generation descendant Mary Van Deusen, and in the company of other Livingston family members and the assistance of several professional scholars, it is now possible both to become properly acquainted with the person and writings of Henry Livingston, Jr., and to formally declare, with a more than reasonable amount of certain conviction, that it is he, rather than Clement Clarke Moore (1779-1863), that is the author of the much treasured “Visit from St. Nicholas.”⁷²

We have stated previously that the American version of Santa Claus or St. Nicholas got its popular start with Washington Irving’s *History of New York* (1809).⁷³ But to be more accurate, our country’s take on St. Nick originated, strictly speaking, in historical Dutch New Amsterdam, the setting of Irving’s satire.⁷⁴ What’s more, and while the British occupied New York city, St. Nicholas was yet around even at the time of the American Revolution -- exactly whose side he took in the conflict, needless to add, we don’t know. Nevertheless and of course, it was Livingston’s poem that above all made Santa Claus most famous, indeed a holiday institution, in the United States.

Although the great Livingston clan originally hailed from Scotland, Henry Livingston, Jr., a great grandson of Robert Livingston the Elder (1654-1728), was appropriately three quarters Dutch. He also, as it happens, was a Major in the 3rd New York Regiment in 1775, and, under Col. (later Brig. Gen.) James Clinton, briefly accompanied Montgomery’s invasion of Canada, his military career for health and political reasons (as Van Deusen’s explains) was short lived, and most of the war he spent seeing to or otherwise administering sequestered loyalists estates and property, from a state appointed post he held while living in Poughkeepsie. It is not a little remarkable then that “The Night Before Christmas” was, insofar as we can adequately determine, composed by a Revolutionary War veteran.

As to why then Clement Clarke Moore claimed authorship still remains a mystery, and there are a number of possibilities that might be conjectured.⁷⁵ But off hand, one plausible explanation seems to be that his children at first, and mistakenly, stated to newspapers that he wrote it. He then, and to spare them and himself embarrassment, went along with what, though not intentionally at first, turned out to be a *public* deception.

Van Deusen suggests that “A Visit from St. Nicholas” was probably written between 1805 and 1810. If prior to 1809, this would seem to imply that Irving did not influence Livingston, as we have before

⁷² See Van Deusen’s website at <http://www.henrylivingston.com/> and, as well, her *Henry Livingston, Jr.: The Christmas Poet You Always Loved* (2016); both of which this introductory article is heavily indebted to.

⁷³ See *Continental Army Series*, vol. 1, p. 568.

⁷⁴ For more on the New Amsterdam history of St. Nicholas, see *Olde Ulster*, vol. IX, Jan. 1913, no. 1, pp. 17-20 (and which quotes a *New York Times* article of December 26th, 1912); available at: <https://tinyurl.com/y85apojc>

⁷⁵ Even and including, in my humble opinion and somewhere along the chronological line, manipulation by criminal spirit people over so sacred an object – *perhaps*.

positively asserted. While I don't think this likely, still it is not entirely impossible that the poem somehow saw print or was otherwise circulated before Irving's *History of New York* appeared, and that it was the latter who obtained St. Nicholas ideas from Livingston (rather than the other way around.)

And yet even if such was not the case, it does seem very possible that Livingston may nonetheless have significantly impacted Irving's writing, and for that matter those of James Kirke Paulding as well. For in addition to verse, Livingston's did occasionally publish prose writings, and these sometimes of a satirical kind. Here is a sample of some of the same; from a piece entitled "The Antiquity and Universality of the English Language," and that appeared in *The New-York Magazine* in (note the date) September 1791:

"THE people of the United States are almost generally descended from Englishmen: he that proves therefore that the language of Englishmen (like the old fashioned Hebrew) was once that used by all the world, will add a considerable bolster to occidental vanity.

"The venerable empire of China got its name from the following circumstance, if the memoirs of Fo-hung-fo are to be credited. Some thousand moons ago, one of its monarchs happened to be as great an epicure as any modern monarch need to be: he used to summon up his cook every morning after sipping his gin-feng beverage, and demand the bill of fare of the day. Among other viands, the cook once mentioned a chine of pork -- it happened not to be the king's favourite morsel, and in a voice of thunder he reiterated Chine-ha! -- China-ha was echoed from every nook of the palace -- from palace to the city -- from the city to the provinces -- and, finally ended in giving name to the greatest empire the sun ever illumined.

"In the capital of this very country, a bevy of young girls took it in their heads to wear their conical bonnets uncommonly peaking -- the reader at a blush sees whence came the name of Peking. Some authors, however, and they too of tolerable reputation, say, that one of the emperors of the dynasty of Chung-tchi, was so immoderately fond of pease, that he got the name of Pea-king, and gave it to the royal residence.

"The city of Nan-kin, it is well known, took its name from one Nancy Keene, a trollop, who kept a gin-shop in Liverpool. Her business there growing dull, she tramped over to China, and set up the trade of brewing tea-toddy, in the town which now bears her name without having suffered the least corruption. -- How fickle is fortune! This vagabond slut has stamped her name upon one of the first cities of the world; while the great Columbia, with much ado, communicated his to the paltry mud heap of St. Kitts!

"Two thousand three hundred and seventy years ago, there lived upon the east bank of the Irtish, a chubbed, fiery, high-mettled khan, of the name of Harry. His red-pepper temper procured him the nick-name of Tart-Harry. The appellation spread to his neighborhood -- to his dominions -- and, finally to one half of all Asia.

"King James the first in a fit of titl[t]eing conferred the honour of knighthood upon a loin of beef; and succeeding monarchs have frequently dignified in a similar manner, masses of animated humanity not more respectable/ One of the ancient monarchs on the Malabar coast, in a frolic knighted an overgrown rat that rioted in his rice plantations: the whiskered gentleman got the name of Sir-rat! and the city of Surat perpetuates the ludicrous transaction.

"One of the queens of Tunis was a mighty mincing, fastidious, prinky body, and thereby disgusted all her courtiers; who could not refrain frequently exclaiming that she was too-nice! -- and in that epithet gave name to a sover[e]ign state...

"It is well known that the Indians called the island of New-York Manhattan [sic] -- now, this is a palpable corruption of Man-hating; a nick-name given to a sterile old damsel, that scolded out her existence in a cabin which stood on the very ground now occupied by the City-hall."

Shades of *Salmagundi* and Dietrich Knickerbocker! And although this should not be assumed as incontrovertible proof, still the likelihood of Irving and Paulding imbibing the spirit of and taking cues from Livingston at least stands as a palpable and tantalizing possibility.

What might be further surprising to discover is that Livingston was, oddly enough, part sarcastic *philosophe* and part inspired religious divine, and something of an 18th century “Renaissance” man, not unlike Benjamin Franklin or Francis Hopkinson; in his case being an astute farmer, surveyor, justice of the peace, state commissioner in different posts, party activist in politics, painter and sketch artist, flute player, and very much the family man, marrying twice and having several children. One relation and contemporary who knew him described Livingston as possessing a veritable encyclopedic intelligence. Yet while his poetry and prose often display the gentle elegance and spoofing quality of Hopkinson, paradoxically there is a frank earthiness here reminiscent of Franklin, and Brackenridge as well; though the quality of his humor is generally of a lesser caliber than these two. Like William Clifton and as we tend to find with most American poets of that day, he was pronouncedly anti-Gallican and pro-Britain in the latter’s wars with Napoleon. Yet despite this he was also characteristically no less patriotic in celebrating American victories in the War of 1812.

And though, as mentioned, he was out of the loop when it came time to first writing about the first poets of the United States, it might in part and with some justice at any rate be said of Livingston what Thomas Warton did regarding the troubadours, namely: “The minstrels of these times, who were totally uneducated, and poured forth spontaneous rhymes in obedience to the workings of nature, often exhibited more genuine strokes of passion and imagination, than the professed poets.”⁷⁶

The what seem to me some of the better or more choice selections of his poetry reproduced below come from Van Deusen’s website and books on Livingston, and where, for that matter, all of his known poems can be found.

~~~~\*\*\*~~~~

*This fragment of a poem, addressed to his infant daughter, was written when Livingston was with the army en route to Montreal in 1775.*<sup>77</sup>

Sweet Innocent lye still & sleep,  
 While chearfull seraphs vigils keep,  
 To ward off ev’ry shaft of death  
 That may be wing'd to seize thy breath.  
 Dear Infant how serene you lay,  
 Nor heed the bustle of the day!  
 Thy little bosom knows no care,  
 For guilt ne[']er lay & wrankled there;  
 In thee all troubles die & cease,  
 And all is quiet all is peace.  
 How much unlike thy Father's life  
 Amid the Din of Arms & strife!  
 The tumult and the noise of war  
 Forever thundring in his ear.  
 Thy mother too has shed her tears  
 Has heav’d her sigh & known her fears  
 .  
 Her lips hath not forgot to press  
 The bitter cup of keen distress.  
 And Thou sweet Babe will soon perceive  
 That to be mortal is to grieve;  
 That as the spark will upward fly,  
 So man still lives to mourn & dye.

~~~~\*\*\*~~~~

⁷⁶ *History of English Poetry*, vol. III, sec. XIX.

⁷⁷ To Sarah Welles Livingston, 7 Sept. 1775, Illinois State Archives, Sidney Breese Papers.

*"Translation of a letter from a tenant of Mrs. Van Kleeck to that lady dated January 9, 1781."*⁷⁸

TO MISS.

SWEET as op'ning roses are
As 'th expanded lilly fair
Blithsome as the breathing day
Smiling as the smiling May
Heav'n itself her feeling mind
Loveliest of the lovely kind
Is my Daphne - sweetest maid
That e'er sported in the glade

When beneath the nodding grove
She inclines to muse or rove
Airs of Eden float around
Flow'rs spontaneous deck the ground
Cupids clap their wings about her
Life itself's not life without her.
[1789]

~**~

**To the memory of Sarah Livingston
who was born on the 7th of Novr. 1752
& died Sepr. 1st, 1783.**

BEYOND where billows roll or tempests vex
Is gone the gentlest of the gentle sex!
---Her brittle bark on life's wild ocean tost
Unequal to the conflict soon was lost.
Severe her sufferings! much, alas, she bore,
Then sunk beneath the storm & rose no more.

But when th' Archangel's awful trump shall sound
And vibrate life thro all the deep profound
Her renovated vessel will be seen,
Transcendant floating on the silver stream!
All beauteous to behold! serene she glides
Borne on by mildest & propitious tides;
While fanning zephyrs fill her snow white sails
And aid her passage with the friendliest gales
Till safe within the destin'd port of bliss
She furls her sails and moors in endless peace.

~**~

EASTER, April 11, 1784.

I
WHEN JESUS bow'd his awful head
And dy'd [t'] avert our fatal doom,
His friends the sacred corpse convey'd,
To the dark region of the tomb.

⁷⁸ Also *New-York Magazine and Literary Repository*, Sept 1791.

II

The Angelic host, with wonder saw,
Their sov'reign leave his bright abode,
To vindicate the righteous law,
Promulged by th Eternal GOD.

III

They view'd him in the sinner's stead
Obey the precepts man forsook;
While woes unnumbered oer his head,
Like an unbounded ocean broke.

IV

But when they saw the fatal tree,
And there, the son of GOD expire!
(Unknown the ineffable decree,
Amazement fill'd the heav'nly choir.

V

And the dejected friendless train,
Who fondly dream't of empire here;
Now mourn'd each expectation vain,
And every hope dissolv'd in air.

VI

Their foes exult. And scoffing cry,
"And is your boasted leader gone?"
"His pow'r! The power but to die?"
"His kingdom! but a narrow tomb?"

VII

Let earth rejoice, let heav'n resound!
Behold the conquering MONARCH rise!
From the dark mansion under ground,
To the bright empire of the skies!

VIII

Resplendant [sic], now each promise shines;
Divinely bright each varying scene.
The great TRANSACTION how sublime!
And LOVE how infinite! to men.

IX

The Angels bow before their KING;
But never hail'd a SAVIOR'S name;
Tis Man, can a REDEEMER sing;
And dying love exalts his theme.

~**~

**AN ELEGY ON THE DEATH OF MONTGOMERY TAPPEN⁷⁹
who dies at Poughkeepsie on the 20th of Nov. 1784
in the ninth year of his age.**

The sweetest, gentlest, of the youthful train,
Here lies his clay cold upon the sable bier!
He scarce had started on life's varied plain,
For dreary death, arrested his career.

His cheek might vie with the expanded rose,
And Genius sparkled in his azure eyes!
A victim so unblemish'd Heaven chose;
And bore the beauteous lambkin to the skies.

Adieu thou loveliest child! adieu adieu!
Our wishes fain would follow thee on high.
What more can friendship - what more fondness do,
But drop 'th unbidden tear & heave the sigh?

Ye youths, whose ardent bosoms virtue fires:
Who eager wish applause & pant for fame;
Press round MONTGOMERY'S hearse
- the NAME inspires.
And lights in kindred souls its native flame.

COLUMBIA grateful hails the tender sound
And when MONTGOMERY'S nam'd still drops a tear.
From shore to shore to earth's remotest bound,
Where LIBERTY is known that NAME is dear.

~**~

ECCLESIASTES XII.⁸⁰

WHILE strength and blooming youth are thine,
Think on thy Maker, GOD;
To his behest thy soul incline,
And press for his abode.
Before the evil days draw nigh,
When age with all its cares,
Will wring the long distressful sigh,
And steep your eye in tears.
When suns will shine but shine in vain,
And moons gleam not for thee;
And the bright stars, refulgent train!
Then fruitless wish to see.
Thy flagging arms with age unstrung –
Bouy'd with infirmities –
Unchew'd the morsel on thy tongue:
And dark the acheing eyes.
When pleasure bootless courts thy gate,
And music, heav'nly born,
When ev'ry solace comes too late,

⁷⁹ Livingston's first cousin.

⁸⁰ *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 23 Mar. 1786.

And thou art all forlorn!
Or e'er the silver cord be loos'd,
Or broke, the golden bowl;
Or the rich flood of vital juice
Congeal'd, forget to roll.
And dust to mix with dust shall hie,
Earth tending to its earth;
And the immortal spirit fly,
To him who gave it birth.

~**~

**On my sister Joanna's
entrance into her 33d year**
[16 May 1787]

On this thy natal day permit a friend -
A brother - with thy joys his own to blend:
In all thy gladness he would wish to share
As willing in thy griefs a part to bear.

Meekly attend the ways of higher heav'n!
Is much deny'd? Yet much my dear is giv'n.
Thy health, thy reason unimpaired remain
And while as new fal'n snows thy spotless fame.
The partner of thy life, attentive - kind -
And blending e'en the interests of the mind.

What bliss is thine when fore thy glist'ning eye
Thy lovely infant train pass jocund by!
The ruddy cheek, the smiling morning face
Denote a healthy undegenerate race:
In them renew'd, you'll live & live again,
And children's children's children lisp thy name.

Bright be the skies where'er my sister goes
Nor scowling tempests injure her repose -
The field of life with roses thick be strow'd
Nor one sharp thorn lie lurking in the road.
Thy ev'ry path be still a path of peace
And each revolving year thy joys increase;
Till hours & years & time itself be o'er
And one eternal day around thee pour.

~**~

THE CARELESS PHILOSOPHER'S SOLILOQUY.⁸¹

I rise when I please, when I please I lie down
Nor seek, what I care not a rush for, renown:
The rattle call'd wealth I have learnt to despise
Nor aim to be either important or wise.

Let women & children & children-like men

⁸¹ *Poughkeepsie Advertiser*, 5 Sept. 1787.

Pursue the false trollop the world has called fame.
Who just as enjoyed, is instantly flown
And leaves disappointment the hag in her room.

If the world is content not to stand in my way
The world may jog on both by night & by day
Unimpeded by me - not a straw will I put
Where a dear fellow-creature uplifteth its foot.

While my conscience upbraids not, I'll rise
and lye down
Nor envy a monarch his cares and his crown.

~**~

GOD IS LOVE.

*St. John.*⁸²

I LOVE my feeble voice to raise
In humble pray'r and ardent praise
Till my rapt soul attains that height
When all is glory and delight.

I LOVE to read the book of Heav'n
Which Grace to fall'n man has giv'n;
Where evr'y page and evr'y line
Proclaims its origin divine.

I LOVE that consecrated Fane
Where GOD has stamp'd his holy name:
United with my brethren there
We hear the word and join in pray'r.

I LOVE to join the pious few
And there the covenant renew,
Recount our joys, relate our grief
And jointly ask from GOD relief.

I LOVE on Pity's wing to fly
To sooth the deep expiring sigh,
To wipe the tear from wan distress
And light a smile on Sorrow's face.

I LOVE to view domestic bliss
Bound with the ligature of peace,
Where Parents - Children - All agree
To tune the lute of harmony.

I LOVE the morning's roseate ray,
I bless the glorious march of day,
And when the lulling ev'ning comes
I love the night amidst its glooms.

I LOVE to anticipate the day

⁸² *Poughkeepsie Advertiser*, 5 Sept. 1787.

When the freed spirit wings its way
To the Jerusalem above

~**~

**To my little niece ANNE DUYCKINCK,
aged 9 years.**

To his charming black-ey'd niece
Uncle Harry wishest peace!
Wishes roses ever strow'd
O'er her sublunary road!

No rude winds around her howl
O'er her head no tempests scowl;
No red lightnings flash around
No loud thunders rock the ground!

Bright has been her morning sun
Brighter still be that to come!
All a blue serene above,
Within, all innocence & love.

[c. 1787]

~**~

AN INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY.⁸³

The winter all surly is flown,
The frost, and the ice, and the snow:
The violets already have blown,
Already the daffodils glow.
The forests and copses around,
Their foilage begin to display;
The copses and forests resound
With the music and disport of May.

E'er Phoebus has gladdened the plains,
E'er? the mountains are tip'd with his gold.
The sky larks shrill matin proclaims,
A songster, harmonius as bold.

The Linnet, and Thrush, thro the day,
Join notes with the soft cooing dove;
Not a bush, but can witness a lay;
Or the softer endearments of Love.

At eve, when the shadows prevail;
And night throws her mantle around;
The nightingale warbles her tale
And harmony dwells in the sound.
The grasshopper chirps at our feet,
The butterfly wings it along,

⁸³ *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 19 Jan. 1788.

The season of love will compleat
What they want in the raptures of song.

Not an insect that flits o'er the lawn
But gambols in pleasure and play,
Rejoicing the winter is gone,
And hailing the pleasanter May.

Let us join in their revels my dear!
To innocent joy give a loose!
No surfeits or harm can we fear
The pleasures we cannot abuse.

What is all the gay town can bestow?
That all its inhabitants share?
But trifles and glitter and show,
That cloy and displeas as they glare.

These snares may entangle the weak;
But never the rational soul;
The flimsy enchantments will break
Where reason can never control.

By the side of a murmuring stream,
Where willows the margin imbrown;
We'll wander, unheeded, unseen,
Nor envy the taste of the town.

In scenes, where confusion and noise
And riots loud voice is unknown;
We'll humbly participate joys,
That ever from greatness have flown.

Let avarice smile o'er its gain,
Ambition exult at its height,
Dissipation unloose every rein,
In pursuit of forbidden delight.

We'll cling to our cottage, my love,
There a meeting with bliss we ensure.
The Seraphs who carol above
Must smile on enjoyments so pure.

~**~

The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah when he had been sick.⁸⁴

WHEN blooming health and chearful days
Far from my tents had flown,
When nature sunk by quick decays
And ev'ry hope was gone.
When yawning dreadful in my sight
Lay the dark dismal tomb,
To tear me from the chearful light

⁸⁴ *Poughkeepsie Journal*, 15 Apr. 1788.

And plunge me in its gloom:
My God and why withhold thy race?
I cry'd in pangs of woe!
No more thy Heav'n - diffusing face
Shall I behold below.
As Cranes that chant in clouds above,
At times I loud complain;
And then like the lone mourning dove
In secret sigh my pain.
Like the Arabians shifted tent,
Departed is mine age;
And as the weavers shuttle spent,
I drop from off the stage
But what am I, poor breathing clay,
That dare to murmur still?
Asham'd, resigned, I obey
Nor more dispute his will.
By grief and pain, distress and death,
The soul is hush'd to peace:
That when is past th' expiring breath
It may respire in bliss.

~**~

ON THE NEW-YEAR.⁸⁵

LO! from the east the sun appears
And all the bright creation cheers!
The dew-wash'd grass erect their spires
And hail the genial orient fires.
While flow'rs expand their ev'ry sweet
And revel in the vital heat.

The lofty oak, the towering pine
To catch his beams sublimely climb!
Their waving tops reflect the blaze
And shed abroad his crimson rays.

Chill'd with the night, the flocks around
In the warm influence blithly bound
And usher in the gladsom day
With all the jollity of play.

The choristers in every grove
Begin the tuneful din of love:
Each bush resounds with sweetest notes!
Wild music on each zephyr floats.

But Man! a nobler theme inspires
And Heav'n 'th immortal spirit fires!
At nature's rich & ample feast,
He sits a not unthankful guest,
Remembering all these goods below
From higher sources still do flow.

⁸⁵ *New-York Weekly Museum*, June 1790.

Led by Ambition all divine
He sighs for pleasures more sublime!
Nor ought his soul can satisfy
Short of the raptures in the skies.

~**~

THE EPITHALAMIUM, A Marriage Poem.⁸⁶

'Twas summer when softly the breezes were blowing
And Hudson majestic so sweetly was flowing
The groves rang with music & accents of pleasure
And nature in rapture beat time to the measure

When Helen and Jonas so true and so loving
Along the green lawn were seen arm in arm moving
Sweet daffodils, violets and roses spontaneous
Wherever they wandered sprang up instantaneous.

The ascent the lovers at length were seen climbing
Whose summit is grac'd by the temple of Hymen:
The genius presiding no sooner perceived them
But spreading his pinions he flew to receive them:
With kindest of greetings pronounced them welcome [sic]
While hollidays [sic] clangor rang loud to the welkin.

~**~

***Poughkeepsie Journal* CARRIER'S ADDRESS, 1823.**

Oft before you have I stood
An ancient sage was once requir'd
To name the object most desired;
Reply'd in brief, nor less sublime,
Twas sum'd in one short word, 'twas TIME.
With Time the fair creation rose
And steady Time still onward goes
With ceaseless pace, 'till that great day
When in portentous dread array '
'Th Angelic herald's trump shall pour
These awful words "TIME IS NO MORE."
But still that solemn hour shall come,
The tide of Time goes rolling on,
And each expiring billow view
'Th expansive heaving of the new.
The varying scenes which mark'd the year,
Which now has finish'd its career,
With hasty pencil I will trace
And at your feet the sketching place.

...

Bending low in gratitude:
Pardon this my last endeavor,
To obtain your smiles and favor.

⁸⁶ *New-York Magazine or Literary Repository*, Feb. 1791.

I could mention winter's terrors
 Speak of summer's torrid fervors,
 Greet you with a thousand storms,
 Dangers in a thousand forms,
 Ever frowning in the way
 On the news deliver day.
 But 'tis neither fair or witty
 Thus to urge my PATRONS' pity;
 Pity! no, I here disclaim it,
 You yourselves wont let me name it.
 On her MERIT rests thy Muse,
 Grace her kindly if you choose.
 As you have smiled on me may heaven smile upon you,
 The sky o'er your heads be enchantingly blue,
 The streamlets and rivers which flow at your feet
 Be smooth as the mirror, as the eglantine sweet,
 No thorn in the roses that lie in your road,
 And the angel of PEACE hov'ring o'er your abode.

~**~

From Daughter Jane's Manuscript Book, 1827.

LO FROM THE EAST.

LO! from the east the sun appears
 And all the bright creation cheers!
 The dew-wash'd grass erect their spires
 And hail the genial orient fires.
 While flow'rs expand their ev'ry sweet
 And revel in the vital heat.

The lofty oak, the towering pine
 To catch his beams sublimely climb!
 Their waving tops reflect the blaze
 And shed abroad his crimson rays.

Chill'd with the night, the flocks around
 In the warm influence blithly bound
 And usher in the gladsom day
 With all the jollity of play.

The choristers in every grove
 Begin the tuneful din of love:
 Each bush resounds with sweetest notes!
 Wild music on each zephyr floats.

But Man! a nobler theme inspires
 And Heav'n 'th immortal spirit fires!
 At nature's rich & ample feast,
 He sits a not unthankful guest,
 Remembering all these goods below
 From higher sources still do flow.

Led by Ambition all divine
 He sighs for pleasures more sublime!

Nor ought his soul can satisfy
Short of the raptures in the skies.

~**~

From the same.

Without distinction, fame, or note
Upon the tide of life I float,
A bubble almost lost to sight
As cobweb frail, as vapor light;
And yet within that bubble lies
A spark of life which never dies.

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