

Rapture, to hear again the songs familiar
Of forest birds that carolled lightly as
He passed along, trilling the same sweet lays,
That charmed his infant ear;—to list once more,
The bee's low hum, as slow she winged her flight,
O'er beds of fragrant thyme, the treasured herb
Of each small cottage garden, murmuring,
So to his ear it seemed, a pleasant welcome
To his early home.

Onward he went,
With loitering steps—on to a sheltered nook
At the far end of that fair grassy vale,
Where, screened by ancient trees, and swelling hills,
That seemed to clasp it in their green embrace,
Stood the low cottage where his parents dwelt.
Unchanged its look, with its o'er-shadowing trees,
Its rustic porch, with ivy garlands hung,
Mid whose green wreaths the black-bird whistled still
In his old cage, swung from the rafters rude;
Its garden, gay with many colored flowers,
The larkspur's azure spikes uprising high
Like stately sentinels, to guard the band
Of sister flowers, that humbler bloomed around;
The ancient paling, interlaced with boughs
Of drooping birch, hawthorn, and alder bright,
Lending its roughness such a softening touch,
As moonlight flings o'er ruins old and grey;
The wicket open, as in days of yore.
A pledge of their free hearts, who dwelt within,
Which to their blazing hearth, and simple board,
A welcome gave to all.

Dwelt they there still?
He feared to ask his heart that question brief:
For, symptom of some change, before the door
Three cherub children gamboll'd, bright with health,
Who left their merry sports, to gaze in wonder
On the toil-worn man, who sat him down
Upon the fallen log—and pity swelled
Their innocent young hearts, as they beheld
His weary gait, his melancholy look,
Which turned on them so kindly, yet so sad,
That their warin hearts were melted; so they went
Timidly forward, the fair younger girl
And chubby boy, seeming half frightened by
They knew not what, close clinging to the skirt
Of their sweet elder sister.

Bolder she,
With childhood's matchless grace, toward the stranger
Her little basket held, with its small store
Of hoarded cakes, and prayed of him to eat.
The group was exquisite—and that fair girl,
The fairest of the three, lovely, and bright,
As the half-opened bud of the young rose—
There was a something in her voice, her look,
That moved his heart, stirring its hidden founts,
Within whose depths, sweet treasured memories slept.

Once had he seen such eyes—so dark, so soft,
So full of tender thought, so angel-like
In their celestial glance.

And now, again
They met his earnest gaze—his Lucy's eyes!
Her lip, her brow, her cheek of loveliest bloom!
The very ringlets of her golden hair,
Crowning with beauty, that young cherub's head!
He asked her name—'twas the dear name he loved—
His Lucy's own—she was—she was *her* child!
They all were *her's*, and of their mother
All bore some secret trait, that touched his heart,
Till it toward them yearned with such deep love,
As prompted him to clasp them in his arms,
With tears of joy and grief.

At that strange sight.
Forth from the cottage came an ancient dame,
Reverend and staid, with calm uplifted brow,
And the clear hue of ruddy healthful age
Upon her cheek, who when his face she saw,
Exclaimed, "My son!" and fell upon his neck,
Weeping glad tears, and with her welcome fond,
Mingling a prayer of gratitude to God,
Whose ear had heard her sighs, and pitying them,
Had led at length the long-lost wanderer back
To be the staff of her declining years;
For he on whom she leaned, no longer now
Walked by her side—alone and desolate.
She journeyed toward the grave.

But those dear children:—
Ah! simple was the tale—and sad withal—
They were his Lucy's treasures—orphans now—
Both parents lying in the churchyard green.
Leaving them helpless in the cold, cold world.
In pity then—but chiefly for his sake,
Who their dear mother loved, to her lone home
That widowed matron those sweet children took,
Changing its gloom to gladness with their smiles,
Which, like the sunshine breaking through dark clouds,
Pierced the deep shadows, which with years, had fall'n
Upon her aged heart—while their glad voices,
Ringing around her hearth, recalled a glow,
Faint though it was, of youthful feeling, such
As often woke again its withered chords.

So reaped she her reward—she who had cast
Her bread upon the waters, gathered back
With each returning tide, a store of blessing*—
Self approving thoughts, and happiness,
To rapture heightened, when her ear drank in
The grateful murmurs of her long-lost son.
For that kind deed of love to those dear orphans,
Who had called his cherished Lucy, mother—
To them a tender father he became—
Blessing and blest in that dear cottage home,
Whence never more he roamed.