

And as a lily in the wild see grew,  
Warm'd by the sun, and water'd by the dew,—  
The rose of Sharon ne'er had lovelier streak  
Than that which blossom'd on fair Miranda's cheek :  
But early frosts obstruct the fairest flower,  
And beauty flies from sorrow's luckless bower,  
And hearts wax wild when bleak misfortune's rain  
Falls fast, and wrongs can fire the coldest brain,  
And desolation lights her funeral fires  
When life's last hope in agony expires.

Yes, ere her twentieth summer sun had fled,  
Her kind protector mingled with the dead,  
And she was cast upon the world once more,  
Like shipwreck'd wretch on solitary shore,  
Of all the ills of fate lamenting sore.  
But fortitude was nigh, and bore her up,  
For still some balm-drops linger'd in her cup.  
She knew that life had trials, knew that all  
Must brave them from their cradle to their pall ;  
But when by village gossip she was told,  
Her lover had deserted her for gold,  
Had to a wealthier given his heart and hand,—  
Oh ! how it shook her frame : the waving wand  
Bends not more lowly in the boisterous gale  
Than meek Miranda, when she heard the tale.  
Yet did she not despair, no, calm consign'd,  
She curb'd her anguish with a power refined,  
And soon became as social and serene  
As if her hopes had never blasted been.  
To woe she now could lend a lightsome smile,  
With pleasing prattle others' cares beguile,  
Could look upon her own past joy and pain,  
As destiny which all that live must drain,  
Like her, in greater or in less degree,  
Whilst journeying onward to eternity.  
And if perchance her cheek assumed a hue,  
Changed from the tints it wore when cares were few,—  
If faded from its place the bloom of spring,—  
In autumn beauty she was ripening ;  
Pensive, and rich as fruit upon the bough,  
Too tremulous as ruder breezes blow.  
And soon eventful currents stirr'd the air,  
A youth with pleasing mien, and fortune fair,  
After a lapse of years, in absence spent  
Beneath the star that rules the occident,  
Return'd with ardent hope, and anxious eye,  
To mark once more his haunts of infancy.  
He saw Miranda, and at once confest  
The sacred flame that thrill'd within his breast ;  
But judge his rapture, when he found that she  
Repaid his vows with mutual sympathy,—  
Oh ! they were happy, happy as the first  
Fond pair in Eden, ere the fiend accurst  
Beguiled the witless woman. Need I tell  
Their joys to lovers ? Lovers know them well.  
Often at eve beside the silent brook,  
When Hesperus in heaven his station took,  
They talk'd in meek communion's holiest tone,  
Of all the wonders of the torrid zone,—  
The lofty Ceiba, towering large and high,  
And loftier still, and lovelier to the eye,  
The proud Palmeta,—beautiful and vast,  
Shrinking to pigmy growth the tallest mast ;—  
The Tamarind, the golden Orange grove,  
Where quick as lightning or a thought of love  
The Peri of the isles, in gorgeous glow,  
Twitters from blade to blade, from bough to bough.  
But why rehearse their converse ?—it was dear  
To them, though cynics in their pride may sneer.  
There was but one regret to mar their bliss,—  
Ere heaven could grant connubial happiness,  
The youth to foreign lands again must hie ;  
But ere twelve moons had gemm'd the midnight sky  
He would return, the waste of waters o'er,  
And leave his love and native land no more.

They parted,—o'er the deep he sail'd away,  
And she has watch'd and wept for many a day,  
Not that the light of hope, life's lamp, had fled,  
But absence weigh'd upon her heart like lead ;—  
Whilst others sought their sports with keen intent,  
" She sat like patience on a monument " ;—  
Of if at evening hour she sought the grove,  
Where Philomel was wont to warble love,  
She heard him still, but ah ! his song was changed  
Since 'neath the pendant boughs she last had ranged ;  
And oft returning o'er the well-known plain,  
A form approach'd her from the ruin'd fane,  
Approach'd, oh Heaven ! thine eye aright can see,  
Is it illusion or reality ?  
The wan cold moon withdrew her trembling light,  
The spirit fled and darkness veil'd her sight.

Time rolls apace. When hope was all but flown,  
She dream'd they walk'd within a woodland lone,

And on a bank of wild-flowers sat them down,  
To talk of love and all that love might own ;  
It was a glorious eve, a blessed time,  
Such as has seldom been since nature's prime.  
The fiery-footed sun, far in the west  
Had like a mighty monarch gone to rest,  
And in the east the round red moon arose,  
Attended by the star that gleams, and glows,  
Like beauty's eye ; while flowing at their feet  
A small rill rippled on in accents sweet  
As modest merit's song, when twilight grey  
Alone is listening ; and there they lay  
Lock'd in each other's arms : oh is there aught  
In life's lone vale with heavenly joys so fraught  
As when two mutual hearts unseen, alone,  
In pure embrace are molten into one ?  
Entranc'd she gazed upon his placid brow,  
'Twas bright and beautiful and pure as snow  
New-fallen from the clouds ; his liquid eye  
Met her's at every glance, and spoke reply  
To all her looks of love ; she was so blest  
She sunk with rapture on his heaving breast,  
And then as if to crown her joyance, he  
Clasp'd her in his embrace so lovingly,  
She nothing but oblivion's sweetness knew.—  
Her dream was chang'd ! and ocean heaved in view,  
The boundless, vast, unfathomable sea,—  
Stretching away like an eternity.  
At first it seem'd as glass, so calm, so fair,  
The heavens with all their blue were mirror'd there,  
And, but for one small speck, its surface broad,  
Was desolate as at the hour when God  
Gathered it in a heap, and bade it roll,  
An emblem of his might from pole to pole.  
But when young zephyr o'er it shook his wing,  
It moved and quiver'd like a living thing,—  
And with a gentle ripple, and a swell,  
Dislosed a bark ! she knew its bearing well !  
Awake ye winds, she cried, blow breezes blow  
Your balmy breath, ye waft my lover slow !  
And soon her aching eye beheld with dread  
The storm fiend o'er the deep in darkness tread,  
The big winds bellow'd with tumultuous breath,  
" The ship hung hovering on the verge of death,"  
The waves like mighty mountains, high and hoar  
Bore her direct upon the shelvy shore,—  
'This moment and their topmost ridge she rode,  
The next engulf'd her in their dark abode !  
Her crew, she saw them on a broken plank,  
And knew the form that bless'd her ere it sank,  
Knew it and started, with terrific scream,—  
Thanking all-pitying heaven, 'twas but a dream.

But why protract a tale of hopes and fears ?  
Enough, that after grief had dried her tears,  
One morn, abrupt and loud a stranger brought  
A letter with eventful tidings fraught,—  
She seized it eagerly, yet half afraid  
To learn her destiny, thus trembling read :  
" Montego Bay, October twenty-fourth,  
Honour'd Miranda, I have heard thy worth  
Proclaim'd in strains as glowing and sublime  
As are the beams that warm this western clime,—  
I ne'er have seen thy face, forgive this tear,  
But oh thy Edwin's praise hath made it dear,  
As his own memory ; need I tell you here,  
How oft when Cynthia's silver radiance shone,  
In silent splendour on the waters lone,—  
Our midnight watch in ecstasy we kept,  
And talk'd thy virtues o'er, and fondly wept ;—  
Ah, little dreamt we then, of storm, or wreck,  
The heavens our canopy, our world the deck.  
But God awoke the tempest, fierce and far,  
His awful agents urged vindictive war,—  
The moon withdrew her light, the planets reel'd  
In darkness, or a doubtful ray reveal'd,  
Rocks rose around, no arm was nigh to save,  
Our good ship struck and sunk beneath the wave ;  
I only 'scaped, of all her fated crew,  
To write this sad intelligence to you."

As when the fire of heaven, with vivid stroke  
Seathes the lone sapling on its native rock,  
Stript of its verdant leaves, its fragrance fled,  
You scarce can tell if 'tis alive or dead,—  
And as the bough when storms no more are seen,  
And summer and the landscape smile serene,  
Revived by genial suns and fostering showers,  
Again grows green, again puts forth its flowers,  
So when Miranda learn'd her fate severe,  
She shook convulsive, yet nor sigh nor tear  
Loaded her lip, or trembled in her eye,  
With liquid glance ; her brain was hot and dry.  
But when the hurricane of grief was past,  
And time, blest time, had soothed the mental blast,

She gradually regain'd her wonted bloom,  
And like the rose that blossoms o'er the tomb  
Where all we lived for, all we loved, are laid,  
A sweet but sobered influence round her shed.

Meanwhile, her first false lover now set free,  
By death, from chains which gall'd perpetually,—  
As if in reparation, fondly turn'd  
His thoughts to her for whom his soul had burn'd  
With warm devotion, ere guile found a part  
In God's best gift, an uncorrupted heart.  
But she with studious steps, where'er she stray'd,  
Avoided all his walks, till once, 'tis said,  
She met him in a lonely moonlight glade,—  
And ere her feet o'er evening's silver dew,  
Could turn, their homeward journey to pursue,  
Spell-bound she heard his vows, like sinner's sighs,  
Ascend to heaven, a willing sacrifice  
For all the wanderings of his wayward youth,—  
She wildly listen'd—could his words be sooth ?  
He had deceived her once—she once believed  
His vows, and o'er their broken faith had griev'd ;  
But now, oh Heav'n ! his suit so fondly prest,  
And love's warm fires still smouldering in her breast,—  
What could she do ?—old love is soon renew'd,  
The silent moonshine and the solitude,  
Softened her heart to pity,—pity brought  
Forgiveness for the wrongs his youth had wrought.  
She saw him kneel,—she heard his tongue confess  
His more than folly,—could her pride repress  
His hopes, or spurn his kindly proffer'd kiss ?  
No : on her lips like heavenly dew it fell,  
Her fate was seal'd, and all again was well !

Months pass'd : and winter storms had ceased to sing  
Their melancholy songs, and genial spring  
Brought gladness like a guest with garlands gay,  
And in its train their happy nuptial day.  
And still they met, and still they talk'd and smil'd,  
And joyously the tedious hours beguiled,  
Till holy Hymen with his sacred hands,  
As heaven had join'd their hearts, would join their hands,  
But wherefore part they now, as if they never  
Would meet again ? to-morrow soon would quiver  
With flickering beams o'er sparkling rill and river,  
And he would come and cherish her ; that gone,  
The next sweet sun that rose should see them one ;  
She bless'd him, and in ecstasy retired,  
To dream of bridal hours, 'till Phoebus fired  
The lingering clouds that cloak'd the eastern hill,—  
And when his radiant rays had tinged the rill  
With their meridian splendour, and bright noon  
Had rolled away in glory,—" he will soon  
Be here," she said, and look'd with wistful eye  
Often and ominous on the western sky,—  
But when his orb went down, and in the stream  
The star which lovers love diffused his beam,  
With half-suspended breath she sought the tree  
That oft had screen'd them with its canopy  
Of thickening leaves, distended broad and green—  
How beautiful ! how silent ! is the scene,—  
Above, in streaks of amber and of gold,  
The clouds their gorgeous drapery unfold,—  
Below, the tall cliff and the darkening wood  
Echo at intervals the falling flood,—  
And then are still as death—Ah ! is it he ?—  
'Twas but the rustling of their trysting tree,—  
He cannot now be long—the appointed hour  
Is past, and hark, the owl from yonder tower,  
Ill boding minstrel, with its mournful strain  
Tells the pale stars that night and silence reign.  
'Twas here—our wonted oak—the hour was even,  
And now the village clock hath told eleven.  
And lo ! the moon rose like a lovely bride,  
With one fond faithful lover by her side,  
And all the stars, from largest orb to least,  
Rejoiced like galliards at a bridal feast.  
Ha, happy stars ! hark ! twelve—and yet no sign  
Of him who claims her love—is love divine ?  
Is it a flame from heaven, or flash from hell ?  
She hurried home, and on her cold couch fell,—  
Colder than marble when the midnight moon  
Streams on the statues of the dead,—ere noon  
Her senses were restored, but nought could heal  
The anguish of her heart. " That merry peal—  
What mean its joyful notes ?" she shuddering cried—  
" Why Wilton's wived again," a clown replied.

She heard and sunk in stupor. Never more  
Her clay-cold cheek celestial sweetness wore,—  
True, health return'd, but hope, alas ! was dead—  
Its last long lingering ray with reason fled.

Why is a hair-dresser like the north star ? He revolves round the pole.