

Complete Poems

Complete Poems

John Keats



ALMA CLASSICS

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Complete Poems

Imitation of Spenser*

Now Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touched a verdant hill;
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

There the kingfisher saw his plumage bright 10
Vying with fish of brilliant dye below;
Whose silken fins and golden scales light
Cast upward, through the waves, a ruby glow:
There saw the swan his neck of archèd snow
And oared himself along with majesty;
Sparkled his jetty eyes; his feet did show
Beneath the waves like Afric's ebony,
And on his back a fay reclined voluptuously.

Ah, could I tell the wonders of an isle 20
That in that fairest lake had placèd been,
I could e'en Dido of her grief beguile;
Or rob from aged Lear his bitter teen!*

For sure so fair a place was never seen,
Of all that ever charmed romantic eye:
It seemed an emerald in the silver sheen
Of the bright waters – or as when on high,
Through clouds of fleecy white, laughs the cerulean sky.

And all around it dipped luxuriously
Slopings of verdure through the glossy tide,
Which, as it were in gentle amity, 30
Rippled delighted up the flowery side;
As if to glean the ruddy tears, it tried,
Which fell profusely from the rose-tree stem!
Haply it was the workings of its pride,
In strife to throw upon the shore a gem
Outvying all the buds in Flora's diadem.*

On Peace*

O Peace, and dost thou with thy presence bless

The dwellings of this war-surrounded isle,

Soothing with placid brow our late distress,

Making the triple kingdom brightly smile?

Joyful I hail thy presence, and I hail

The sweet companions that await on thee;

Complete my joy – let not my first wish fail,

Let the sweet mountain nymph thy favourite be,

With England's happiness proclaim Europa's liberty.

O Europe, let not sceptred tyrants see

10

That thou must shelter in thy former state;

Keep thy chains burst, and boldly say thou art free;

Give thy kings law – leave not uncurbed the great;

So with the horrors past thou'lt win thy happier fate!

“Fill for Me a Brimming Bowl”*

What wondrous beauty! From this moment

I efface from my mind all women.

TERENCE*

Fill for me a brimming bowl

And let me in it drown my soul:

But put therein some drug, designed

To banish woman from my mind:

For I want not the stream inspiring

That heats the sense with lewd desiring,

But I want as deep a draught

As e'er from Lethe's waves was quaffed;

From my despairing breast to charm

The image of the fairest form

10

That e'er my revelling eyes beheld,

That e'er my wandering fancy spelled.

TO LORD BYRON

'Tis vain! Away I cannot chase
The melting softness of that face,
The beamingness of those bright eyes,
That breast – earth's only paradise.

My sight will never more be blessed,
For all I see has lost its zest,
Nor with delight can I explore
The classic page, the Muse's lore.

20

Had she but known how beat my heart,
And with one smile relieved its smart,
I should have felt a sweet relief,
I should have felt "the joy of grief".*
Yet as a Tuscan mid the snow
Of Lapland thinks on sweet Arno,
Even so for ever shall she be
The halo of my memory.

To Lord Byron*

Byron, how sweetly sad thy melody!
Attuning still the soul to tenderness,
As if soft Pity, with unusual stress,
Had touched her plaintive lute, and thou, being by,
Hadst caught the tones, nor suffered them to die.
O'er shading sorrow doth not make thee less
Delightful: thou thy griefs dost dress
With a bright halo, shining beamily,
As when a cloud a golden moon doth veil,
Its sides are tinged with a resplendent glow,
Through the dark robe oft amber rays prevail,
And like fair veins in sable marble flow;
Still warble, dying swan, still tell the tale,
The enchanting tale, the tale of pleasing woe!

10

“As from the Darkening Gloom
a Silver Dove”*

As from the darkening gloom a silver dove
Upsoars, and darts into the eastern light,
On pinions that naught moves but pure delight,
So fled thy soul into the realms above,
Regions of peace and everlasting love;
Where happy spirits, crowned with circlets bright
Of starry beam, and gloriously bedight,
Taste the high joy none but the blest can prove.
There thou or joinest the immortal choir
In melodies that even heaven fair
Fill with superior bliss, or, at desire
Of the omnipotent Father, cleavest the air
On holy message sent – what pleasures higher?
Wherefore does any grief our joy impair?

10

“Can Death Be Sleep, When Life
Is but a Dream”*

I

Can death be sleep, when life is but a dream,
And scenes of bliss pass as a phantom by?
The transient pleasures as a vision seem,
And yet we think the greatest pain's to die.

II

How strange it is that man on earth should roam
And lead a life of woe, but not forsake
His rugged path; nor dare he view alone
His future doom, which is but to awake.

To Chatterton*

O Chatterton, how very sad thy fate!
Dear child of sorrow – son of misery!
How soon the film of death obscured that eye
Whence Genius wildly flashed and high debate.
How soon that voice, majestic and elate,
Melted in dying murmurs! Oh, how nigh
Was night to thy fair morning! Thou didst die
A half-blown flow'ret which cold blasts amate.*
But this is past: thou art among the stars
Of highest heaven: to the rolling spheres
Thou sweetly singest – naught thy hymning mars,
Above the ingrate world and human fears.
On earth the good man base detraction bars
From thy fair name, and waters it with tears.

10

Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt Left Prison*

What though, for showing truth to flattered state,
Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
In his immortal spirit, been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
Minion of grandeur, think you he did wait?
Think you he naught but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturned'st the key?
Ah, no, far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spenser's halls he strayed, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers, and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air:
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?

10

To Hope*

When by my solitary hearth I sit,
And hateful thoughts enwrap my soul in gloom;
When no fair dreams before my "mind's eye"* flit,
And the bare heath of life presents no bloom;
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Whene'er I wander, at the fall of night,
Where woven boughs shut out the moon's bright ray,
Should sad Despondency my musings fright
And frown to drive fair Cheerfulness away, 10
Peep with the moonbeams through the leafy roof,
And keep that fiend Despondence far aloof.

Should Disappointment, parent of Despair,
Strive for her son to seize my careless heart,
When like a cloud he sits upon the air,
Preparing on his spellbound prey to dart,
Chase him away, sweet Hope, with visage bright,
And fright him as the morning frightens night!

Whene'er the fate of those I hold most dear
Tells to my fearful breast a tale of sorrow, 20
O bright-eyed Hope, my morbid fancy cheer;
Let me awhile thy sweetest comforts borrow:
Thy heaven-born radiance around me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head!

Should e'er unhappy love my bosom pain,
From cruel parents or relentless fair,
Oh, let me think it is not quite in vain
To sigh out sonnets to the midnight air!
Sweet Hope, ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head! 30

In the long vista of the years to roll,
Let me not see our country's honour fade:
Oh, let me see our land retain her soul,

ODE TO APOLLO

Her pride, her freedom – and not freedom’s shade.
From thy bright eyes unusual brightness shed –
Beneath thy pinions canopy my head!

Let me not see the patriot’s high bequest,
Great Liberty – how great in plain attire! –
With the base purple of a court oppressed,
Bowing her head and ready to expire,
But let me see thee stoop from heaven on wings
That fill the skies with silver glitterings!

40

And as, in sparkling majesty, a star
Gilds the bright summit of some gloomy cloud,
Brightening the half-veiled face of heaven afar,
So when dark thoughts my boding spirit shroud,
Sweet Hope, celestial influence round me shed,
Waving thy silver pinions o’er my head.

Ode to Apollo*

In thy western halls of gold,
When thou sittest in thy state,
Bards, that erst sublimely told
Heroic deeds and sung of fate,
With fervour seize their adamantine lyres,
Whose chords are solid rays, and twinkle radiant fires.

There Homer with his nervous* arms
Strikes the twanging harp of war,
And even the western splendour warms,
While the trumpets sound afar:
But, what creates the most intense surprise,
His soul looks out through renovated eyes.

10

Then, through thy temple wide, melodious swells
The sweet majestic tone of Maro’s lyre:*
The soul delighted on each accent dwells –
Enraptured dwells – not daring to respire,
The while he tells of grief around a funeral pyre.

'Tis awful silence then again,
 Expectant stand the spheres,
 Breathless the laurellèd peers, 20
 Nor move till ends the lofty strain,
 Nor move till Milton's tuneful thunders cease
 And leave once more the ravished heavens in peace.

Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,
 And quickly forward spring
 The Passions – a terrific band –
 And each vibrates the string
 That with its tyrant temper best accords,
 While from their master's lips pour forth the inspiring words.

A silver trumpet Spenser blows, 30
 And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
 From a virgin chorus flows
 A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.
 'Tis still! Wild warblings from the Aeolian lyre
 Enchantment softly breathe, and tremblingly expire.

Next thy Tasso's ardent numbers
 Float along the pleasèd air,
 Calling youth from idle slumbers,
 Rousing them from Pleasure's lair –
 Then o'er the strings his fingers gently move, 40
 And melt the soul to pity and to love.

But when *Thou* joinest with the Nine*
 And all the powers of song combine,
 We listen here on earth:
 The dying tones that fill the air
 And charm the ear of evening fair,
 From thee, great god of bards, receive their heavenly birth.

Lines Written on 29th May, the Anniversary of the Restoration of Charles II*

Infatuate Britons, will you still proclaim
His memory, your direst, foulest shame?
Nor patriots revere?

Ah, when I hear each traitorous lying bell,
'Tis gallant Sidney's, Russell's, Vane's sad knell
That pains my wounded ear.*

To Some Ladies*

What though, while the wonders of nature exploring,
I cannot your light, mazy footsteps attend,
Nor listen to accents that, almost adoring,
Bless Cynthia's face,* the enthusiast's friend:

Yet, over the steep whence the mountain stream rushes,
With you, kindest friends, in idea I muse –
Mark the clear tumbling crystal, its passionate gushes,
Its spray that the wild flower kindly bedews.

Why linger you so, the wild labyrinth strolling?
Why breathless, unable your bliss to declare?
Ah, you list to the nightingale's tender condoling,
Responsive to sylphs, in the moonbeamy air.

10

'Tis morn, and the flowers with dew are yet drooping;
I see you are treading the verge of the sea:
And now – ah, I see it! – you just now are stooping
To pick up the keepsake intended for me.

If a cherub, on pinions of silver descending,
Had brought me a gem from the fretwork of heaven,
And, smiles with his star-cheering voice sweetly blending,
The blessing of Tighe* had melodiously given,

20

It had not created a warmer emotion
 Than the present, fair nymphs, I was blessed with from you –
 Than the shell from the bright golden sands of the ocean
 Which the emerald waves at your feet gladly threw.

For, indeed, 'tis a sweet and peculiar pleasure
 (And blissful is he who such happiness finds)
 To possess but a span of the hour of leisure,
 In elegant, pure and aerial minds.

On Receiving a Curious Shell and a Copy of Verses from the Same Ladies*

Hast thou from the caves of Golconda* a gem,
 Pure as the ice drop that froze on the mountain,
 Bright as the hummingbird's green diadem
 When it flutters in sunbeams that shine through a fountain?

Hast thou a goblet for dark sparkling wine –
 That goblet right heavy, and massy, and gold,
 And splendidly marked with the story divine
 Of Armida the fair and Rinaldo the bold?*

Hast thou a steed with a mane richly flowing?
 Hast thou a sword that thine enemy's smart is? 10
 Hast thou a trumpet rich melodies blowing?
 And wear'st thou the shield of the famed Britomartis?*

What is it that hangs from thy shoulder, so brave,
 Embroidered with many a spring-peering flower?
 Is it a scarf that thy fair lady gave?
 And hastest thou now to that fair lady's bower?

Ah, courteous Sir Knight,* with large joy thou art crowned;
 Full many the glories that brighten thy youth!
 I will tell thee my blisses, which richly abound
 In magical powers, to bless and to soothe. 20

On this scroll thou seest written in characters fair
 A sunbeamy tale of a wreath and a chain;*
 And, warrior, it nurtures the property rare
 Of charming my mind from the trammels of pain.

This canopy mark: 'tis the work of a fay;
 Beneath its rich shade did King Oberon languish,
 When lovely Titania was far, far away,
 And cruelly left him to sorrow and anguish.

There, oft would he bring from his soft-sighing lute
 Wild strains to which, spellbound, the nightingales listened; 30
 The wondering spirits of heaven were mute,
 And tears 'mong the dewdrops of morning oft glistened.

In this little dome,* all those melodies strange,
 Soft, plaintive and melting for ever will sigh;
 Nor e'er will the notes from their tenderness change;
 Nor e'er will the music of Oberon die.

So, when I am in a voluptuous vein,
 I pillow my head on the sweets of the rose
 And list to the tale of the wreath and the chain,
 Till its echoes depart – then I sink to repose. 40

Adieu, valiant Eric,* with joy thou art crowned!
 Full many the glories that brighten thy youth!
 I too have my blisses, which richly abound
 In magical powers, to bless and to soothe.

To Emma*

Oh, come, dearest Emma, the rose is full blown,
 And the riches of Flora are lavishly strown;
 The air is all softness, and crystal the streams,
 And the west is resplendently clothèd in beams!

We will hasten, my fair, to the opening glades,
 The quaintly carved seats and the freshening shades,
 Where the fairies are chanting their evening hymns,
 And in the last sunbeam the sylph lightly swims.

And when thou art weary, I'll find thee a bed
 Of mosses and flowers to pillow thy head; 10
 There, beauteous Emma, I'll sit at thy feet,
 While my story of love I enraptured repeat.

So fondly I'll breathe, and so softly I'll sigh,
 Thou wilt think that some amorous Zephyr is nigh...
 Ah, no!... as I breathe, I will press thy fair knee,
 And then thou wilt know that the sigh comes from me.

Then why, lovely girl, should we lose all these blisses?
 That mortal's a fool who such happiness misses.
 So smile acquiescence and give me thy hand,
 With love-looking eyes and with voice sweetly bland. 20

Song*

Tune: 'Julia to the Wood-Robin'*

Stay, ruby-breasted warbler, stay,
 And let me see thy sparkling eye –
 Oh, brush not yet the pearl-strung spray,
 Nor bow thy pretty head to fly.

Stay while I tell thee, fluttering thing,
 That thou of love an emblem art –
 Yes, patient plume thy little wing,
 Whilst I my thoughts to thee impart!

When summer nights the dews bestow
 And summer suns enrich the day, 10
 Thy notes the blossoms charm to blow:
 Each opes delighted at thy lay.

So when in youth the eye's dark glance
 Speaks pleasure from its circle bright,
 The tones of love our joys enhance
 And make superior each delight.

“WOMAN! WHEN I BEHOLD THEE FLIPPANT, VAIN”

And when bleak storms resistless rove
And every rural bliss destroy,
Naught comforts then the leafless grove
But thy soft note, its only joy –

20

E'en so the words of love beguile
When Pleasure's tree no longer bears,
And draw a soft, endearing smile
Amid the gloom of grief and tears.

“Woman! When I Behold Thee Flippant, Vain”*

Woman! When I behold thee flippant, vain,
Inconstant, childish, proud and full of fancies,
Without that modest softening that enhances
The downcast eye, repentant of the pain
That its mild light creates to heal again –
E'en then, elate, my spirit leaps and prances,
E'en then my soul with exultation dances
For that to love, so long, I've dormant lain;
But when I see thee meek and kind and tender,
Heavens, how desperately do I adore
Thy winning graces – to be thy defender
I hotly burn – to be a Calidore –
A very Red Cross Knight – a stout Leander* –
Might I be loved by thee like these of yore!

10

Light feet, dark violet eyes and parted hair,
Soft dimpled hands, white neck and creamy breast,
Are things on which the dazzled senses rest
Till the fond, fixèd eyes forget they stare.
From such fine pictures, Heavens, I cannot dare
To turn my admiration, though unpossessed
They be of what is worthy – though not dressed
In lovely modesty and virtues rare.
Yet these I leave as thoughtless as a lark;
These lures I straight forget – e'en ere I dine,
Or thrice my palate moisten: but when I mark
Such charms with mild intelligences shine,
My ear is open like a greedy shark,
To catch the tunings of a voice divine.

20

Ah, who can e'er forget so fair a being?
 Who can forget her half-retiring sweets? 30
 God! She is like a milk-white lamb that bleats
 For man's protection. Surely the All-seeing,
 Who joys to see us with His gifts agreeing,
 Will never give him pinions who entreats
 Such innocence to ruin – who vilely cheats
 A dovelike bosom. In truth there is no freeing
 One's thoughts from such a beauty; when I hear
 A lay that once I saw her hand awake,
 Her form seems floating palpable and near;
 Had I e'er seen her from an arbour take 40
 A dewy flower, oft would that hand appear,
 And o'er my eyes the trembling moisture shake.

To Solitude*

O Solitude! If I must with thee dwell,
 Let it not be among the jumbled heap
 Of murky buildings: climb with me the steep –
 Nature's observatory – whence the dell,
 Its flowery slopes, its river's crystal swell,
 May seem a span; let me thy vigils keep
 'Mongst boughs pavilioned, where the deer's swift leap
 Startles the wild bee from the foxglove bell.
 But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
 Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind, 10
 Whose words are images of thoughts refined,
 Is my soul's pleasure; and it sure must be
 Almost the highest bliss of humankind,
 When to thy haunts two kindred spirits flee.

To George Felton Mathew*

Sweet are the pleasures that to verse belong,
 And doubly sweet a brotherhood in song;
 Nor can remembrance, Mathew, bring to view
 A fate more pleasing, a delight more true
 Than that in which the brother poets* joyed,

TO GEORGE FELTON MATHEW

Who with combinèd powers their wit employed
To raise a trophy to the drama's Muses.
The thought of this great partnership diffuses
Over the genius-loving heart a feeling
Of all that's high and great, and good, and healing. 10

Too partial friend! Fain would I follow thee
Past each horizon of fine poesy –
Fain would I echo back each pleasant note
As o'er Sicilian seas clear anthems float
'Mong the light skimming gondolas far parted,
Just when the sun his farewell beam has darted –
But 'tis impossible: far different cares
Beckon me sternly from soft "Lydian airs"*
And hold my faculties so long in thrall 20
That I am oft in doubt whether at all
I shall again see Phoebus in the morning,
Or flushed Aurora in the roseate dawning!
Or a white naiad in a rippling stream,
Or a rapt seraph in a moonlight beam,
Or again witness what with thee I've seen:
The dew by fairy feet swept from the green,
After a night of some quaint jubilee
Which every elf and fay had come to see –
When bright processions took their airy march
Beneath the curvèd moon's triumphal arch. 30

But might I now each passing moment give
To the coy muse, with me she would not live
In this dark city, nor would condescend
Mid contradictions her delights to lend.
Should e'er the fine-eyed maid to me be kind,
Ah, surely it must be whene'er I find
Some flowery spot, sequestered, wild, romantic,
That often must have seen a poet frantic;
Where oaks, that erst the Druid knew, are growing,
And flowers, the glory of one day, are blowing; 40
Where the dark-leaved laburnum's drooping clusters
Reflect athwart the stream their yellow lustres
And, intertwined, the cassia's arms unite,
With its own drooping buds, but very white;

Where on one side are covert branches hung,
 'Mong which the nightingales have always sung
 In leafy quiet; where to pry, aloof,
 Atween the pillars of the sylvan roof
 Would be to find where violet beds were nestling;
 And where the bee with cowslip bells was wrestling. 50
 There must be too a ruin dark and gloomy,
 To say: "Joy not too much in all that's bloomy."

Yet this is vain: O Mathew, lend thy aid
 To find a place where I may greet the maid –
 Where we may soft humanity put on
 And sit and rhyme, and think on Chatterton,
 And that warm-hearted Shakespeare sent to meet him
 Four laurelled spirits, heavenward to entreat him.
 With reverence would we speak of all the sages 60
 Who have left streaks of light athwart their ages –
 And thou shouldst moralize on Milton's blindness
 And mourn the fearful dearth of human kindness
 To those who strove with the bright golden wing
 Of genius to flap away each sting
 Thrown by the pitiless world. We next could tell
 Of those who in the cause of freedom fell:
 Of our own Alfred, of Helvetian Tell;
 Of him whose name to ev'ry heart's a solace,
 High-minded and unbending William Wallace.
 While to the rugged north our musing turns 70
 We well might drop a tear for him and Burns.*

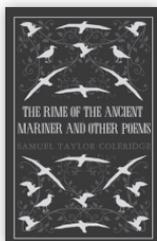
Felton, without incitements such as these,
 How vain for me the niggard Muse to tease!
 For thee, she will thy every dwelling grace,
 And make "a sunshine in a shady place";*
 For thou wast once a floweret blooming wild,
 Close to the source – bright, pure and undefiled –
 Whence gush the streams of song: in happy hour
 Came chaste Diana from her shady bower,
 Just as the sun was from the east uprising; 80
 And, as for him some gift she was devising,
 Beheld thee, plucked thee, cast thee in the stream
 To meet her glorious brother's greeting beam.

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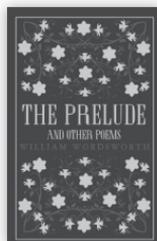
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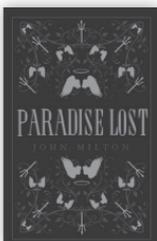
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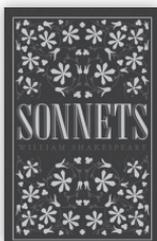
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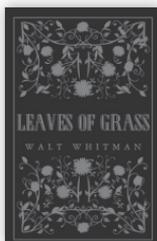
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