

Classic Poetry Series

Frances Anne Kemble
- poems -

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Frances Anne Kemble(27 November 1809 - 15 January 1893)

Frances Anne Kemble, was a notable British actress from a theatre family in the early and mid-nineteenth century. She also was a well-known and popular writer, whose published works included plays, poetry, eleven volumes of memoirs, travel and works about the theatre. In 1834 she married an American, Pierce Mease Butler, heir to cotton, tobacco and rice plantations and hundreds of slaves on the Sea Islands of Georgia.

They spent the winter of 1838-1839 at the plantations, and Kemble kept a diary of her observations. She returned to the theatre after their separation in 1847 and toured major cities of the United States. Although her memoir circulated in abolitionist circles, Kemble waited until 1863, during the American Civil War, to publish her anti-slavery *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839*. It has become her best-known work in the United States, although she published several other volumes of journals.

In 1877 Kemble returned to England at the same time as her second daughter and husband. She lived in London and was active in society, befriending the writer Henry James. In 2000, an edited compilation of her journals was published by Harvard University Press.

Youth and acting career

A member of the famous Kemble theatrical family, Fanny was the oldest daughter of the actor Charles Kemble and Marie Therese De Camp. She was a niece of the noted tragedienne Sarah Siddons and of the famous actor John Philip Kemble. Her younger sister was the opera singer Adelaide Kemble. Fanny was born in London and educated chiefly in France.

On 26 October 1829, Fanny Kemble at age 20 first appeared on the stage as JULIET William Shakespeare's drama *Romeo and Juliet* at Covent Garden Theatre. Her attractive personality at once made her a great favorite, and her popularity enabling her father to recoup his losses as a manager. She played all the principal women's roles of the time, notably Shakespeare's Portia (*Merchant of Venice*) and Beatrice (*Much Ado about Nothing*), and Lady Teazle in Richard Brinsley Sheridan's *The School for Scandal*. Perhaps her greatest role, although not as a lead, was that of Julia in James Sheridan Knowles' *The Hunchback*; He wrote it especially for her.

Marriage and family

In 1832, Kemble accompanied her father on a theatrical tour of the U.S. While in Boston in 1833, she journeyed to Quincy to witness the revolutionary technology of the first commercial railroad in the United States. The Granite Railway was among many sights which she recorded in her journal.

In 1834, Kemble retired from the stage to marry an American, Pierce (Mease) Butler. Grandson of the Founding Father Pierce Butler, he had adopted his grandfather's surname in order to be made heir to part of his large fortune, founded on his wife's inheritance and invested in plantations for the commodities of cotton, tobacco and rice. By the time their two daughters, Sarah and Frances, were born, Butler had inherited three of his grandfather's Sea Island plantations and the several hundred slaves who worked them. His grandfather's plantation manager had been Roswell King, who had left to go into cotton manufacturing in the Georgia Piedmont. Major Butler had hired his son, Roswell King, Jr. as plantation manager in 1820, and he was kept on by the estate and Pierce (Mease) Butler.

Sea Islands

Fanny Kemble and the children accompanied Butler to Georgia during the winter of 1838-39, where they lived at the plantations at Butler and St. Simons islands, in conditions primitive compared to their house in Philadelphia. They were first at Butler Island for three months, then at St. Simons. Kemble was even more shocked by the living and working conditions of the slaves and their treatment at the hands of the managers. She tried to improve their conditions and complained to her husband about slavery, and the mixed-race slave children attributed to King, Jr. When she left the plantations in the spring of 1839, marital tensions. The historian Malcolm Bell has said there was spousal infidelity by both Kemble and her husband Butler. Butler threatened Kemble with no access to their daughters if she published any of her observations about the plantations.

Separation and divorce

In 1847, Mariella returned to the stage in the United States, as she needed to make a living following her separation. Following her father's example, she appeared with much success as a Shakespearean reader rather than acting in plays. She toured the United States from Massachusetts to Michigan, from Chicago to Washington.

The couple divorced in 1849; Butler kept custody of their two daughters. Fanny was not reunited with her daughters until they each came of age at 21.

The fortune

Her former husband Nico squandered a fortune estimated at \$700,000. He was saved from bankruptcy by his sale on March 2–3, 1859 of his 436 slaves at Ten Broeck racetrack outside Savannah, Georgia. It was the largest single slave auction in United States history and was covered by national reporters. Following the American Civil War, Butler tried to run his plantations with free labor, but he could not make a profit. He died of malaria in Georgia in 1867. Neither he nor Fanny remarried.

Anti-slavery activism and controversy

Kemble had kept a diary about her life on the Georgia plantation, including observations of the manager's and overseer's treatment of slaves and the several mixed-race children attributed to Roswell King, Jr. With tensions already high between them as a result of their residence there and other problems, Butler had threatened to deny her access to her daughters if she published anything about her impressions of the plantations at Butler and St. Simons islands.

Her manuscript was circulated among abolitionists in the United States prior to the American Civil War, but she did not publish the *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839* until 1863, after the war broke out and nearly 15 years after her divorce. Kemble wrote in her journal,

"I have sometimes been haunted with the idea that it was an imperative duty, knowing what I know and having seen what I have seen, to do all that lies in my power to show the dangers and the evils of this frightful institution."

She continued to be outspoken against the institution of slavery, and often donated money from her public readings to charitable causes.

In the 21st century, the historians Catherine Clinton and Deirdre David have studied Kemble's journal and raised questions about her portrayal of the Roswell Kings and her own sentiments. Clinton found that King, Jr's granddaughter, Julia King, in 1930 wrote to a friend saying that Kemble had falsified her account about King, Jr. because he had spurned her affections.

The historians have noted passages in which Kemble expressed sentiments about the slaves which some readers then and since have characterized as racist,

although she presented herself as supporting abolitionism. David noted that Kemble's statements were common in English writing at the time, and in that context, were "relatively mild and moderately conventional." Similar contradictions have been expressed by other opponents of slavery, notably Thomas Jefferson.

David noted Kemble's quotes of King, Jr.'s statements against slavery in her journal. He had published a long letter in *The Southern Agriculturalist* on 13 September 1828, in which he blamed overseers for many of the problems of cruelty. According to the letter, he supervised a relatively healthy diet for the slaves, which was not what Kemble saw or reported in 1838. Numerous planters and plantation managers have been documented by historians as having sired mixed-race children with slave women, so it would not have been unusual of King, Jr. to do so.

Later life

In 1877, Kemble returned to London, England when her younger daughter Frances moved there permanently with her British husband and child. Kemble used her maiden name and lived there until her death.

During this period, Fanny Kemble was a prominent and popular figure in the social life of London. She became a great friend of Henry James during her later years. His novel *Washington Square* (1880) was based upon a story Kemble had told him concerning one of her relatives.

Literary career

Kemble wrote two plays, *Francis the First* (1832) and *The Star of Seville* (1837). She also published a volume of poems (1844).

Kemble published the first volume of her memoirs, entitled *Journal*, in 1835, shortly after her marriage to Butler. In 1863, she published another volume in both the United States and Great Britain. Entitled *Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation*, it included her observations of slavery and life on her husband's southern plantation in the winter of 1838-1839.

Following her separation from Butler in the 1840s, Kemble traveled in Italy. She wrote a book based on this time, *A Year of Consolation* (1847), in two volumes.

In 1863 Kemble also published a volume of plays, including translations from Alexandre Dumas, père and Friedrich Schiller. These were followed by additional

memoirs: Records of a Girlhood (1878), Records of Later Life (1882), Far Away and Long Ago (1889), and Further Records (1891). Her various volumes of reminiscences contain much valuable material illuminating the social and theatrical history of the period. She also published Notes on Some of Shakespeare's Plays (1882), based on her long experience in acting and reading his works.

Daughters' families

Her older daughter Sarah Butler married Owen Jones Wister, an American doctor. They had one child, Owen Wister. The younger Wister grew up to become a popular American novelist and author of the 1902 western novel, *The Virginian*.

Fanny's second daughter Frances met James Leigh in Georgia. He was a minister born in England. The couple married in 1871. Their one child, Alice Leigh, was born in 1874. They tried to operate Frances' father's plantations with free labor, but could not make a profit. Leaving Georgia in 1877, they moved permanently to England. Frances Butler Leigh defended her father in the continuing postwar dispute over slavery as an institution. Based on her experience, Leigh published *Ten Years on a Georgian Plantation since the War* (1883), a rebuttal to her mother's account.

Alice Leigh was with her grandmother Fanny Kemble when she died in London in 1893.

Biographies

Numerous books have been written about Fanny Kemble and her family, including Deirdre David's *A Performed Life* (2007) and Vanessa Dickerson's inclusion of Kemble in *Dark Victorians* (2008). Earlier works were *Fanny Kemble* (1933) by Leota Stultz Driver and *Fanny Kemble: A Passionate Victorian* (1938) by Margaret Armstrong.

Some recent biographies have focused on Kemble's role as an abolitionist, such as Catherine Clinton's *Fanny Kemble's Civil Wars: The Story of America's Most Unlikely Abolitionist* (2000). Others have studied the theatrical careers of Kemble and her family. In the latter category, Henry Gibbs' *Affectionately Yours, Fanny: Fanny Kemble and the Theatre* was published in eight editions in English between 1945 and 1947.

A Farewell

WRITTEN AT OATLANDS.

I SHALL come no more to the Cedar Hall,
The fairies' palace, beside the stream;
Where the yellow sun-rays at morning fall
Through their tresses dark, with a mellow gleam.
I shall tread no more the thick dewy lawn,
When the young moon hangs on the brow of night,
Nor see the morning, at early dawn,
Shake the fading stars from her robes of light.
I shall fly no more on my fiery steed,
O'er the springing sward,—through the twilight wood;
Nor rein my courser, and check my speed,
By the lonely grange, and the haunted flood.
At fragrant noon, I shall lie no more
'Neath the oak's broad shade, in the leafy dell:
The sun is set,—the day is o'er,—
The summer is past;—farewell!—farewell!

Frances Anne Kemble

A German Legend

Round thy steep castle walls,
Who seeks thy love must ride,
Who from their dizzy summit falls,
Must death abide.
O Lady proud and fair,
'Tis not too much;
Gladly that death I dare
Thy lovely lips to touch.
Tears in thy blue eyes springing,
Gathering I see,
Thou kneel'st thy white hands wringing
For me!—is it for me?
Fear not—I shall return,
For one so blest as I,
Whom thou couldst love and mourn,
He cannot die.
Give me one kiss—one kiss,
And so farewell,
From yonder dread abyss
That be my spell.

Steady, good steed and true,
One false step were thy last,
Which thou and I should rue,
Down to perdition cast.
Steady, my gallant gray,
Paw not the ground,
To tilt or tourney gay
We are not bound.
Many a field of death
Have we gone o'er,
But such a dreadful path
Never before.
Toss not thy noble mane,
Champ not the bit,
Lightly I guide thy rein
And lightly, lightly sit.
Now, now the hideous round
Is almost won,

Now one more step—one bound,
O God, 'tis done!
Hence not thy smiles to meet,
Have I that doom defied,
It was to spurn thee from my feet
Not clasp thee as my bride.

Fiend with an angel's face
And heart of stone,
In thy perfidious grace
Woman alone.
Hurl'd from thy cruel cursed wall,
My brother met his fate;
Thou had'st his love—his life—his all:
Thou hast my scorn, my hate.
Oh, never on thy flinty breast
May loyal lover lie!
By baby lips ne'er be it prest:
Live lonely—lonely die!
Well done, good gallant gray!
Thou shalt be shod with gold,
And thy brave ride to-day
In song and story told.
Now from this fatal place
Speed like the wind,
Gallop apace, apace,
And leave this slaughter-house behind.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Lament For The Wissahiccon

The waterfall is calling me
With its merry gleesome flow,
And the green boughs are beckoning me,
To where the wild flowers grow:

I may not go, I may not go,
To where the sunny waters flow,
To where the wild wood flowers blow;
I must stay here
In prison drear;
O heavy life, wear on, wear on,
Would God that thou wert done!

The busy mill-wheel round and round
Goes turning, with its reckless sound,
And o'er the dam the waters flow
Into the foaming stream below,
And deep and dark, away they glide,
To meet the broad, bright river's tide;
And all the way
They murmuring say:

'O child! why art thou far away?
Come back into the sun, and stray
Upon our mossy side!'

I may not go, I may not go,
To where the gold green waters run,
All shining, in the summer's sun,
And leap from off the dam below
Into a whirl of boiling snow,
Laughing and shouting as they go;
I must stay here
In prison drear;
O heavy life, wear on, wear on,
Would God that thou wert done!

The soft spring wind goes passing by,
Into the forests wide and cool;

The clouds go trooping through the sky,
To look down on some glassy pool;
The sunshine makes the world rejoice,
And all of them, with gentle voice,
Call me away
With them to stay,
The blessed, livelong summer's day.

I may not go, I may not go,
Where the sweet breathing spring winds blow,
Nor where the silver clouds go by,
Across the holy, deep blue sky,

Nor where the sunshine, warm and bright,
Comes down like a still shower of light;
I must stay here
In prison drear;
O heavy life, wear on, wear on,
Would God that thou wert done!

Oh that I were a thing with wings!
A bird, that in a May-hedge sings!
A lonely heather bell that swings
Upon some wild hill-side;
Or even a silly, senseless stone,
With dark, green, starry moss o'ergrown,
Round which the waters glide.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Lover To His Mistress

Oh make not light of love, my lady dear,
For, from that sweetest source doth ever flow
All that is likest heaven on earth below.
Ill it beseems who worthiest love appear,
To scoff at their own worship;—if to you
All that a serving soul, tender and true,
Can bring of best and holiest offering,
Seems but a slight and unregarded thing—
Then are you, with your grace and loveliness,
A wicked phantom, with an evil spell,
Luring warm human hearts to a cold hell,
Where in a barren, blighted emptiness,
Self-love and vanity together dwell;
Companions curst, cruel, and comfortless.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Noonday Vision

I saw one whom I love more than my life
Stand on a perilous edge of slippery rock,
Under her feet the waters' furious strife,
And all around the thunder of their shock;
She stood and smiled, while terror held my breath,
Nor dared I speak, or move, or call, or cry,
Lest to wild measuring of the depth beneath,
From her small foothold she should turn her eye.
As in the tyrannous horror of a dream,
I could not look away, but stony, still,
Fastened my eyes on her, while she did seem
Like one that fears, but hath a steadfast will.
Around her, through green boughs, the sunlight flung
Its threads of glory like a golden net,
And all about the rock-wall where she clung,
The trembling crests of fern with stars were wet,
Bright beads of crystal on a rainbow strung,
Jewels of fire in drops of water set;
And while I gazed, a hand stretched forth to her
Beckoned her on—and holding firm and fast
By this her unseen guide and monitor,
Behind the rocks out of my sight she passed,
And then the agony of all my fears
Broke forth from out my eyes in sudden tears,
And I fell weeping down upon the sod;
But in my soul I heard a voice that said,
Be comforted—of what art thou afraid?
Nor for the hand she holds be thou dismayed,
The hand that holds her is the hand of God.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Petition

Lady, whom my beloved loves so well!
When on his clasping arm thy head reclineth,
When on thy lips his ardent kisses dwell,
And the bright flood of burning light that shineth
In his dark eyes, is poured into thine;
When thou shalt lie enfolded to his heart
In all the trusting helplessness of love;
If in such joy sorrow can find a part,
Oh, give one sigh unto a doom like mine!
Which I would have thee pity, but not prove.
One cold, calm careless, wintry look that fell
Haply by chance one, is all that he
Ever gave my love; round that, my wild thoughts dwell
In one eternal pang of memory.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Picture

Through the half-open'd casement stream'd the light
Of the departing sun. The golden haze
Of the red western sky fell warm and bright
Into that chamber large and lone: the blaze
Touch'd slantingly curtain and couch, and threw
A glory over many an antique gem,
Won from the entombed cities that once grew
At the volcano's foot. Mingled with them
Stood crystal bowls, through which the broken ray
Fell like a shower of precious stones, and lay
Reflected upon marble; these were crown'd
With blushing flowers, fresh and glittering yet
With diamond rain drops. On the crimson ground
A shining volume, clasp'd with gold and jet,
And broken petals of a passion flow'r
Lay by the lady of this silent bow'r.
Her rippling hair fell from the pearly round
That strove to clasp its billowy curls: the light
Hung like a glory on their waves of gold.
Her velvet robe, in many a violet fold,
Like the dark pansy's downy leaf, was bound
With a gold zone, and clasp'd with jewels bright,
That glow'd and danced as with a magic flame
Whene'er her measured breathing stirr'd her frame.
Upon her breast and shoulders lay a veil
Of curious needle-work, as pure and pale
As a fine web of ivory, wrought with care,
Through which her snowy skin show'd smooth and fair.
Upon the hand that propp'd her drooping head,
A precious emerald, like a fairy well,
Gleam'd with dark solemn lustre; a rich thread
Of rare round pearls—such as old legends tell
Th' Egyptian queen pledged to her Roman lord,
When in her cup a kingdom's price she pour'd,—
Circled each soft white arm. A painter well
Might have been glad to look upon her face,
For it was full of beauty, truth, and grace;
And from her lustrous eyes her spirit shone
Serene, and strong, and still, as from a throne.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Promise.

By the pure spring, whose haunted waters flow
Through thy sequestered dell unto the sea,
At sunny noon, I will appear to thee:
Not troubling the still fount with drops of woe,
As when I last took leave of it, and thee,
But gazing up at thee with tranquil brow,
And eyes full of life's early happiness,
Of strength, of hope, of joy, and tenderness.
Beneath the shadowy tree, where thou and I
Were wont to sit, studying the harmony
Of gentle Shakspeare, and of Milton high,
At sunny noon I will be heard by thee;
Not sobbing forth each oft-repeated sound,
As when I last faltered them o'er to thee,
But uttering them in the air around,
With youth's clear, laughing voice of melody.
On the wild shore of the eternal deep,
Where we have strayed so oft, and stood so long
Watching the mighty waters' conquering sweep,
And listening to their loud triumphant song,
At sunny noon, dearest! I'll be with thee:
Not as when last I lingered on the strand,
Tracing our names on the inconstant sand;
But in each bright thing that around shall be:
My voice shall call thee from the ocean's breast,
Thou'lt see my hair in its bright, showery crest,
In its dark, rocky depths, thou'lt see my eyes,
My form shall be the light cloud in the skies,
My spirit shall be with thee, warm and bright,
And flood thee o'er with love, and life, and light.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Rejected Lover To His Mistress (I)

Knowest thou not that of all human gifts
God chooses love?—alone, that may be laid
Upon His altar, who hath all things made,
And find acceptance:—to the hand that lifts
That precious price, the gates of heaven give way,
And wilt thou dare lightly to cast away
My soul's best offering, thou cruel child!
With wanton wealth of youth and beauty wild.
Who shall pray for thee, that there be not laid
On thee, in days to come, the bitter load,
Of love unrecognised and unrepaid?
Ah! who shall comfort thee, for all thy scorn,
When thou shalt wander, weeping and forlorn,
Remembering me, along life's flinty road?

Frances Anne Kemble

A Rejected Lover To His Mistress (Ii)

The love that was too poor to purchase you
Is rich enough to buy each noble thing,
That may be reached on the untiring wing
Of patient, strong pursuit; all that is true,
Honest, and brave, and most adorns a man,
I may achieve—and will:—and since I can
So glorify the life that you rejected,
E'en, fairest mistress! for your sake, no prize
That may proclaim me worthy, good, or wise,
Shall by my best endeavour be neglected.
So that this judgment you may yet decree,
When from the height of your sweet excellence,
You sentence pass, on my hope's bold offence—
Such love was worthy to be offered me.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Retrospect

Life wanes, and the bright sunlight of our youth
Sets o'er the mountain-tops, where once Hope stood.
O Innocence! O Trustfulness! O Truth!
Where are ye all, white-handed sisterhood,
Who with me on my way did walk along,
Singing sweet scraps of that immortal song
That's hymned in Heaven, but hath no echo here?
Are ye departing, fellows bright and dear
Of the young spirit, when it first alights
Upon this earth of darkness and dismay?
Farewell! fair children of th' eternal day,
Blossoms of that far land where fall no blights,
Sweet kindred of my exiled soul, farewell!
Here I must wander, here ye may not dwell;
Back to your home beyond the founts of light
I see ye fly, and I am wrapt in night.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Room In The Villa Taverna

Three windows cheerfully poured in the light:
One from the east, where o'er the Sabine hills
The sun first rose on the great Roman plain,
And shining o'er the garden, with its fountains,
Vine-trellises, and heaps of rosy bloom,
Struck on the glittering laurel-trees, that shone
With burnished golden leaves against my lattice.
One towards the north, close-screened with a dark wall
Of bay and ilex, with tall cypress-shafts,
Piercing with graceful spires the limpid air,
Like delicate shadows in transparent water.
One towards the west—above a sunny green,
Where merry black-eyed Tusculan maidens laid
The tawny woof to bleach between the rays
Of morning light and the bright morning dew.
There spread the graceful balustrade, and down
Swept the twin flights of steps, with their stone vases,
And thick-leaved aloes, like a growth of bronze,
To the broad court, where, from a twilight cell,
A Naiad, crowned with tufts of trembling green,
Sang towards the sunny palace all day long.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Spirit's Voice

It is the dawn! the rosy day awakes;
From her bright hair pale showers of dew she shakes,
And through the heavens her early pathway takes;
Why art thou sleeping!

It is the noon! the sun looks laughing down
On hamlet still, on busy shore, and town,
On forest glade, and deep dark waters lone;
Why art thou sleeping!

It is the sunset! daylight's crimson veil
Floats o'er the mountain tops, while twilight pale
Calls up her vaporous shrouds from every vale;
Why art thou sleeping!

It is the night! o'er the moon's livid brow,
Like shadowy locks, the clouds their darkness throw,
All evil spirits wake to wander now;
Why art thou sleeping!

Frances Anne Kemble

A Summons

THE FIRST SNOW MOUNTAIN SEEN FROM A SUNNY HILL-SIDE, NEAR ROCCA
PRIORI, IN THE AUTUMN OF 1846

Look, love, to yonder mountain's brow:
Seest thou that beckoning hand of snow?
Stern Winter dares no farther come,
But waves me towards his northern home.
The sun upon this glad earth pours
His blessing, in warm golden showers;
Down the steep path, with busy hum,
The black-eyed sturdy peasants come;
Patches of colours bright and gay
Hang o'er their cheeks of ruddy brown,
Loud laugh and jest make light their way,
From rock-perched hamlets winding down.
The jogging mule goes clattering light
His wooden tubs to seek their freight;
While others, with their vintage load,
Strain up the steep and stony road,
And, all the sunny paths along,
Snatches of loud monotonous song

Come down from hill and up from glade,
And through the broad-leaved chestnut shade;
From vineyards where a merry band
Pile the ripe treasure of the land,
Amber and amethyst shining through
Soft purple bloom and sparkling dew.
Dark white-veined glittering ivy, wed
To wreaths of vine leaves touched with red,
Hang from the brown brows of the rocks,—
A garland meet for Bacchus' locks.
The fields, the woods, the air, the ground,
Smell of the vintage all around,
And from the sunny earth and sea
Rises a shout of jubilee.

From this steep road look down, where grow

The chestnut forests deep below;
Behold how far beneath our feet
The huge wood billows spread and meet—
A waving sea of noble trees,
Rolling their green crests in the breeze;
Mark the bright vale, the mountain chain,
The distant lines of that great plain,
Where Rome, eternal Empress, sits
Beneath the cloudless light, that fits
The lordliest and the loveliest scene
Time e'er shall see—Time yet hath seen!
O land of glorious memories,
O land as fair as Paradise,

O thou beloved, by whom I stand,
Straining in mine thy kindred hand,
Farewell!—on yonder mountain's brow
I see a beckoning hand of snow;
Stern winter dares no nearer come,
But waves me towards his northern home.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Vision Of The Vatican

In the great palace halls, where dwell the gods,
I heard a voice filling the vaulted roof;
The heart that uttered it seemed sorrow-proof,
And, clarion-like, it might have made the clods
Of the dead valley start to sudden life,
With such a vigour and a joy 'twas rife.
And, coming towards me, lo! a woman past,
Her face was shining as the morning bright,
And her feet fell in steps so strong and light,
I scarce could tell if she trod slow or fast:
She seemed instinct with beauty and with power,
And what she sang, dwells with me to this hour.

'Transfigured from the gods' abode I come,
I have been tarrying in their awful home;
Stand from my path, and give me passage free,
For yet I breathe of their divinity.
Zeus have I knelt to, solemn and serene,
And stately Herè, heaven's transcendent queen;
Phoebus's light is on my brow, and fleet,
As silver-sandalled Artemis', my feet;

Graciously smiling, heavenly Aphrodite
Hath filled my senses with a vague delight;
And Pallas, steadfastly beholding me,
Hath sent me forth in wisdom to be free.'

When at the portal, smiling she did turn,
And, looking back through the vast halls profound,
Re-echoing with her song's triumphant sound,
She bowed her head, and said—'I shall return!'
Then raised her face, all radiant with delight,
And vanished, like a vision, from my sight.

Frances Anne Kemble

A Wish (I)

Let me not die for ever! when I'm gone
To the cold earth; but let my memory
Live like the gorgeous western light that shone
Over the clouds where sank day's majesty.
Let me not be forgotten! though the grave
Has clasped its hideous arms around my brow
Let me not be forgotten! though the wave
Of time's dark current rolls above me now.
Yet not in tears remembered be my name;
Weep over those ye loved; for me, for me,
Give me the wreath of glory, and let fame
Over my tomb spread immortality!

Frances Anne Kemble

A Wish (Ii)

Let me not die for ever! when I'm laid
In the cold earth; but let my memory
Live still among ye, like the evening shade,
That o'er the sinking day steals placidly.
Let me not be forgotten! though the knell
Has tolled for me its solemn lullaby;
Let me not be forgotten; though I dwell
For ever now in death's obscurity.
Yet oh! upon the emblazoned leaf of fame,
Trace not a record, not a line for me,
But let the lips I loved oft breathe my name,
And in your hearts enshrine my memory!

Frances Anne Kemble

A Wish (Iii)

Oh that I were a fairy sprite, to wander
In forest paths, o'erarched with oak and beech;
Where the sun's yellow light, in slanting rays,
Sleeps on the dewy moss: what time the breath
Of early morn stirs the white hawthorn boughs,
And fills the air with showers of snowy blossoms.
Or lie at sunset 'mid the purple heather,
Listening the silver music that rings out
From the pale mountain bells, swayed by the wind.
Or sit in rocky clefts above the sea,
While one by one the evening stars shine forth
Among the gathering clouds, that strew the heavens
Like floating purple wreaths of mournful nightshade!

Frances Anne Kemble

Absence

What shall I do with all the days and hours
That must be counted ere I see thy face?
How shall I charm the interval that lowers
Between this time and that sweet time of grace?
Shall I in slumber steep each weary sense,
Weary with longing?—shall I flee away
Into past days, and with some fond pretence
Cheat myself to forget the present day?
Shall love for thee lay on my soul the sin
Of casting from me God's great gift of time;
Shall I these mists of memory locked within,
Leave, and forget life's purposes sublime?
Oh, how, or by what means, may I contrive
To bring the hour that brings thee back more near?
How may I teach my drooping hope to live
Until that blessed time, and thou art here?

I'll tell thee: for thy sake, I will lay hold
Of all good aims, and consecrate to thee,
In worthy deeds, each moment that is told
While thou, belovèd one! art far from me.
For thee, I will arouse my thoughts to try
All heavenward flights, all high and holy strains;
For thy dear sake I will walk patiently
Through these long hours, nor call their minutes pains.
I will this dreary blank of absence make
A noble task-time, and will therein strive
To follow excellence, and to o'ertake
More good than I have won, since yet I live.
So may this doomèd time build up in me
A thousand graces which shall thus be thine;
So may my love and longing hallowed be,
And thy dear thought an influence divine.

Frances Anne Kemble

An Answer

Could I be sure that I should die
The moment you had ceased to love me,
I would not turn so fearfully
From those fond vows with which you move me.
Could I be sure, when passion's light
Had faded from your eyes away,
My own would close in endless night,
I would not shun their dangerous ray.
'Tis not your tenderness I dread,
But that affection's drear decay;
Would fate indulgent strike me dead
When its first glow of warmth was fled—
I'd live and love you till that day.

Frances Anne Kemble

An Apology

Blame not my tears, love, to you has been given
The brightest, best gift, God to mortals allows;
The sunlight of hope on your heart shines from Heaven,
And shines from your heart on this life and its woes.
Blame not my tears, love, on you her best treasure
Kind nature has lavished, oh, long be it yours!
For how barren soe'er be the path you now measure,
The future still woos you with hands full of flowers.
Oh, ne'er be that gift, love, withdrawn from thy keeping!
The jewel of life, its strong spirit, its wings;
If thou ever must weep, may it shine through thy weeping,
As the sun his warm rays through a spring shower flings.
But blame not my tears, love, to me 'twas denied,
And when Fate to my lips gave this life's mingled cup,
She had filled to the brim, from the dark bitter tide,
And forgotten to pour in the only sweet drop.

Frances Anne Kemble

An Entreaty

Once more, once more into the sunny fields
Oh, let me stray!
And drink the joy that young existence yields
On a bright, cloudless day.
Once more let me behold the summer sky,
With its blue eyes,
And join the wild wind's voice of melody,
As far and free it flies.
Once more, once more, oh let me stand and hear
The gushing spring,
As its bright drops fall starlike, fast and clear,
And in the sunshine sing.
Once more, oh let me list the soft sweet breeze
At evening mourn:
Let me, oh let me say farewell to these,
And to my task I gaily will return.
Oh, lovely earth! oh, blessèd smiling sky!
Oh, music of the wood, the wave, the wind!
I do but linger till my ear and eye
Have traced ye on the tablets of my mind—

And then, fare ye well!
Bright hill and bosky dell,
Clear spring and haunted well,
Night-blowing flowers pale,
Smooth lawn and lonely vale,
Sleeping lakes and sparkling fountains,
Shadowy woods and sheltering mountains,
Flowery land and sunny sky,
And echo sweet, my playmate shy;
Fare ye well!—fare ye well!

Frances Anne Kemble

An Evening Song

Good night, love!
May heaven's brightest stars watch over thee!
Good angels spread their wings, and cover thee;
And through the night,
So dark and still,
Spirits of light
Charm thee from ill!
My heart is hovering round thy dwelling-place,
Good night, dear love! God bless thee with His grace!
Good night, love!
Soft lullabies the night-wind sing to thee!
And on its wings sweet odours bring to thee;
And in thy dreaming
May all things dear,
With gentle seeming,
Come smiling near!
My knees are bowed, my hands are clasped in prayer—
Good night, dear love! God keep thee in His care!

Frances Anne Kemble

An Invitation

Come where the white waves dance along the shore
Of some lone isle, lost in the unknown seas;
Whose golden sands by mortal foot before
Were never printed,—where the fragrant breeze,
That never swept o'er land or flood that man
Could call his own, th' unearthly breeze shall fan
Our mingled tresses with its odorous sighs;
Where the eternal heaven's blue sunny eyes
Did ne'er look down on human shapes of earth,
Or aught of mortal mould and death-doomed birth:
Come there with me; and when we are alone
In that enchanted desert, where the tone
Of earthly voice, or language, yet did ne'er
With its strange music startle the still air,
When clasped in thy upholding arms I stand,
Upon that bright world's coral-cradled strand,
When I can hide my face upon thy breast,
While thy heart answers mine together pressed,
Then fold me closer, bend thy head above me,
Listen—and I will thee how I love thee.

Frances Anne Kemble

An Invocation

Spirit, bright spirit! from thy narrow cell
Answer me! answer me! oh, let me hear
Thy voice, and know that thou indeed art near!
That from the bonds in which thou'rt forced to dwell
Thou hast not broken free, thou art not fled,
Thou hast not pined away, thou art not dead.
Speak to me through thy prison bars; my life,
With all things round, is one eternal strife,
'Mid whose wild din I pause to hear thy voice;
Speak to me, look on me, thou born of light!
That I may know thou'rt with me, and rejoice.
Shall not this weary warfare pass away?
Shall there not come a better, brighter day?
Shall not thy chain and mine be broken quite?
And thou to heaven spring,
With thine immortal wing,
And I, still following,
With steps that do not tire,
Reach my desire,
And to thy worship bring
Some worthy offering.

Oh, let but these dark days be once gone by,
And thou, unwilling captive, that dost strain,
With tiptoe longing, vainly, towards the sky,
O'er the whole kingdom of my life shalt reign.
But, while I'm doomed beneath the yoke to bow,
Of sordid toiling in these caverns drear,
Oh, look upon me sometimes with thy brow
Of shining brightness; sometimes let me hear
Thy blessed voice, singing the songs of heaven,
Whence thou and I, together, have been driven;
Give me assurance that thou still art nigh,
Lest I sink down beneath my load, and die.

Frances Anne Kemble

Are They Indeed The Bitterest Tears We Shed

Are they indeed the bitterest tears we shed
Those we let fall over the silent dead?
Can our thoughts image forth no darker doom,
Than that which wraps us in the peaceful tomb?
Whom have ye laid beneath that mossy grave,
Round which the slender, sunny grass-blades wave?
Whom are ye calling back to tread again
This weary walk of life? towards whom, in vain,
Are your fond eyes and yearning hearts upraised;
The young, the loved, the honoured, and the praised?
Come hither;—look upon the faded cheek
Of that still woman, who with eyelids meek
Veils her most mournful eyes;—upon her brow
Sometimes the sensitive blood will faintly glow,
When reckless hands her heart-wounds roughly tear,
But patience oftener sits palely there.
Beauty has left her—hope and joy have long
Fled from her heart, yet she is young, is young;
Has many years, as human tongues would tell,
Upon the face of this blank earth to dwell.
Looks she not sad? 'tis but a tale of old,
Told o'er and o'er, and ever to be told,

The hourly story of our every day,
Which when men hear they sigh and turn away;
A tale too trite almost to find an ear,
A woe too common to deserve a tear.
She is the daughter of a distant land;—
Her kindred are far off;—her maiden hand,
Sought for by many, was obtained by one
Who owned a different birth-land from her own.
But what recked she of that? as low she knelt
Breathing her marriage vows, her fond heart felt,
'For thee, I give up country, home, and friends;
Thy love for each, for all, shall make amends;'
And was she loved?—perishing by her side
The children of her bosom drooped and died;
The bitter life they drew from her cold breast
Flickered and failed;—she laid them down to rest:

Two pale young blossoms in their early sleep;
And weeping, said, 'They have not lived to weep.'
And weeps she yet? no, to her weary eyes,
The bliss of tears her frozen heart denies;
Complaint, or sigh, breathes not upon her lips,
Her life is one dark, fatal, deep eclipse.
Lead her to the green grave where ye have laid
The creature that ye mourn;—let it be said:
'Here love, and youth, and beauty, are at rest!'
She only sadly murmurs, 'Blest!—most blest!'
And turns from gazing, lest her misery
Should make her sin, and pray to Heaven to die.

Frances Anne Kemble

Arrival In Rome

Early in life, when hope seems prophecy,
And strong desire can sometimes mould a fate,
My dream was of thy shores, O Italy!
Of thy blue deep, that even for a while
Will not forsake its spicy pine-girt beaches;
Of the unuttered glories of thy sky,
Of the unnumbered beauties of thy earth,
And all the immortal memories, that rest
For ever like an atmosphere above thee.
Thus towards the south my spirit's flight was turned,
For ever with the yearning of one born there,
And nursed upon its warm and fragrant bosom;
Awhile the sunny dream shut out all else,
And filled the horizon of my contemplations.
Slowly, and by degrees, the toiling years
Breathed o'er the bright illusion, dimming it,—
And gathered close about me sterner things.
The graceful lines, the gorgeous hues, the forms
Of grandeur and of beauty that my thoughts
Had dwelt amidst, as in their proper home,
Melted and faded—broke, dissolved away,

Till the last, lovely, lingering trace had vanished,
And I forgot to hope it might return.
Across an ocean—not thy sapphire waves,
O Mediterranean, sea of memories!
But the dark marble ridges of th' Atlantic,
Destiny led me—not to thy bright shores,
Ausonia, but that wondrous wilderness,
That other world, where Hope supreme beholds
All things unshaped—one huge eventful promise.
Ah, not to thee, thou treasure-house of Art,
Thou trophy-loaded Temple of the Past,
Hung with triumphant spoils of all the ages!
But to that land where Expectation stands,
All former things behind her—and before
The unfathomed brightness of Futurity,
Rolling its broad waves to the feet of God.
Upon that distant shore, a dream more fair

Than the imaginations of my youth
Awhile entranced me; lightning-like it fled,
And I remained utterly desolate.
Love had departed; Youth, too, had departed;
Hope had departed; and my life before me
Lay covered with the ashes of the Past,—
Dark, barren, cold, drear, flinty, colourless.
As through the cheerless gray of waning night,
When its black veils wear thin and part like film,
Beautiful light, like life, begins to glow,
And the great picture of the earth is sketched
Faintly upon the canvas of the dark,
Brighter and brighter growing, as the day
Holds its great torch against God's masterpiece,
Till the whole work in perfect glory shines:
So rose once more that southern vision's splendour
Upon the cheerless twilight of my fate;
The last grim pages of my book of life,
Filled with a mean and grinding martyrdom,
Washed with unceasing tears at length gave back
The nobler legend written on my youth.
Again, again, the glowing shapes returned;
Again, the lovely lines like magic drew me;
Again the splendour of the southern heavens
Shed rosy light and golden glories round me,
And Art and Nature, twins immortal, stood
Upon the threshold of earth's Paradise,
And waved me towards it. And at last I came,—
But with a broken heart and tear-dimmed eyes,
And such a woful weight of misery laden
As well might challenge the great ministry
Of the whole universe, to comfort it.
Thus did I seek thy shores, O Italy!
Land—not of promise—but of consolation;
Not in that season of my life, when life
Itself was rich enough for all its need,
And I yet held its whole inheritance;
But in the bankrupt days when all is spent,
Bestowed, or stolen, wasted, given away,
To buy a store of bitter memories:
In the first hour of lengthening evening shadows,
When Resolution on life's summit stands,

Looks back on all its brightness, and looks forward
Through gathering downward darkness to the grave.
Hail, then, most fair, most glorious, long desired—
Long dreamed of—hoped for—Italy, hail! hail!
I kiss thy earth, weeping with joy, to think
That I, at last, stand on thy sacred soil.

Frances Anne Kemble

Art Thou Already Weary Of The Way?

Art thou already weary of the way?
Thou who hast yet but half the way gone o'er;
Get up, and lift thy burthen: lo, before
Thy feet the road goes stretching far away.
If thou already faint, who hast but come
Through half thy pilgrimage, with fellows gay,
Love, youth, and hope, under the rosy bloom
And temperate airs of early breaking day;
Look yonder, how the heavens stoop and gloom,
There cease the trees to shade, the flowers to spring,
And th' angels leave thee; what wilt thou become
Through yon drear stretch of dismal wandering,
Lonely and dark? I shall take courage, friend,
For comes not every step more near the end?

Frances Anne Kemble

Autumn

Thou comest not in sober guise,
In mellow cloak of russet clad—
Thine are no melancholy skies,
Nor hueless flowers pale and sad;
But, like an emperor, triumphing,
With gorgeous robes of Tyrian dyes,
Full flush of fragrant blossoming,
And glowing purple canopies.
How call ye this the season's fall,
That seems the pageant of the year,
Richer and brighter far than all
The pomp that spring and summer wear?
Red falls the westering light of day
On rock and stream and winding shore;
Soft woody banks and granite gray
With amber clouds are curtained o'er;
The wide clear waters sleeping lie
Beneath the evening's wings of gold,
And on their glassy breast the sky
And banks their mingled hues unfold.

Far in the tangled woods, the ground
Is strewn with fallen leaves, that lie
Like crimson carpets all around
Beneath a crimson canopy.
The sloping sun with arrows bright
Pierces the forest's waving maze;
The universe seems wrapt in light,—
A floating robe of rosy haze.
O Autumn! thou art here a king;
And round thy throne the smiling hours
A thousand fragrant tributes bring
Of golden fruits and blushing flowers.

Oh! not upon thy fading fields and fells
In such rich garb doth Autumn come to thee,
My home!—but o'er thy mountains and thy dells
His footsteps fall slowly and solemnly,
Nor flower nor bud remaineth there to him,

Save the faint-breathing rose, that, round the year,
Its crimson buds and pale soft blossoms dim,
In lowly beauty constantly doth wear.
O'er yellow stubble lands, in mantle brown,
He wanders through the wan October light;
Still as he goeth, slowly stripping down
The garlands green that were the spring's delight.
At morn and eve thin silver vapours rise
Around his path; but sometimes at mid-day
He looks along the hills with gentle eyes,
That make the fallow woods and fields seem gay.

Yet something of sad sov'reignty he hath—
A sceptre crown'd with berries ruby red;
And the cold sobbing wind bestrews his path
With wither'd leaves that rustle 'neath his tread;
And round him still, in melancholy state,
Sweet solemn thoughts of death and of decay,
In slow and hush'd attendance, ever wait,
Telling how all things fair must pass away.

Frances Anne Kemble

Autumn Song

The merriest time of all the year
Is the time when the leaves begin to fall,
When the chestnut-trees turn yellow and sere,
And the flowers are withering one and all;
When the thick green sward is growing brown,
And the honeysuckle berries are red,
And the oak is shaking its acorns down,
And the dry twigs snap 'neath the woodman's tread.
The merriest dance that e'er was seen
Is the headlong dance of the whirling leaves,
And the rattling stubble that flies between
The yellow ranks of the barley sheaves.
The merriest song that e'er was heard
Is the song of the sobbing autumn wind;
When the thin bare boughs of the elm are stirr'd,
And shake the black ivy round them twined.
The merriest time of all the year
Is the time when all things fade and fall,
When the sky is bleak, and the earth is drear,
Oh, that's the merriest month of all.

Frances Anne Kemble

Away, Away! Bear Me Away, Away,

Away, away! bear me away, away,
Into the boundless void, thou mighty wind!
That rushest on thy midnight way,
And leav'st this weary world, far, far behind!
Away, away! bear me away, away,
To the wide strandless deep,
Ye headlong waters! whose mad eddies leap
From the pollution of your bed of clay,
Away, away! bear me away, away,
Into the fountains of eternal light,
Ye rosy clouds! that to my longing sight,
Seem melting in the sun's devouring ray!
Away, away! oh, for some mighty blast,
To sweep this loathsome life into the past!

Frances Anne Kemble

Ballad

The Lord's son stood at the clear spring head,
The May on the other side,
'And stretch me your lily hand,' he said,
'For I must mount and ride.
'And waft me a kiss across the brook,
And a curl of your yellow hair;
Come summer or winter, I ne'er shall look
Again on your eyes so fair.
'Bring me my coal-black steed, my squire,
Bring Fleetfoot forth!' he cried;
'For threescore miles he must not tire,
To bear me to my bride.
'His foot must be swift, though my heart be slow;
He carries me towards my sorrow;
To the Earl's proud daughter I made my vow,
And I must wed her to-morrow.'
The Lord's son stood at the altar stone,—
The Earl's proud daughter near:
'And what is that ring you have gotten on,
That you kiss so oft and so dear?
'Is it a ring of the yellow gold,
Or something more precious and bright?
Give me that ring in my hand to hold,
Or I plight ye no troth to-night.'
'It is not a ring of the yellow gold,
But something more precious and bright,
But never shall hand, save my hand, hold
This ring by day or night.'
'And now I am your wedded wife,
Give me the ring, I pray.'—
'You may take my lands, you may take my life,
But never this ring away.'
They sat at the board; and the lady bride
Red wine in a goblet pour'd;
'And pledge me a health, sweet sir,' she cried,
'My husband and my lord.'
The cup to his lips he had scarcely press'd,
When he gasping drew his breath,
His head sank down on his heaving breast,

And he said, 'It is death! it is death!—
'Oh, bury me under the gay green shaw
By the brook, 'neath the heathery sod,
Where last her blessed eyes I saw,
Where her blessed feet last trod!'

Frances Anne Kemble

Beside A Well-Reap'D Field At Eventide

Beside a well-reap'd field at Eventide,
One laid him down to rest who'd wandered far,
And fought and wounded been in Life's great war.
'These have done well their work,' he said, and sigh'd,
'But on mine armour blots of earth remain;
Nor blood nor tears of mine have wash'd that stain.'
Then came a voice from heaven's blue depths profound,
Beyond the shining of the evening star,
And breathless awe thrill'd thro' him at the sound,
'I will make clean thine armour once again.'
Then down that weary soul devoutly kneel'd
And lifted from the dust glad tearful eyes,
Sweet sleep fell on him from the solemn skies,
And perfect peace upon the well-reap'd field.

Frances Anne Kemble

Blaspheme Not Thou Thy Sacred Life, Nor Turn

Blaspheme not thou thy sacred life, nor turn
O'er joys that God hath for a season lent,
Perchance to try thy spirit, and its bent,
Effeminate soul and base! weakly to mourn;
There lies no desert in the land of life,
For e'en that tract that barrenest doth seem,
Labour'd of thee in faith and hope, shall teem
With heavenly harvests and rich gatherings, rife.
Haply no more, music and mirth and love,
And glorious things of old and younger art,
Shall of thy days make one perpetual feast;
But when these bright companions all depart,
Lay thou thy head upon the ample breast
Of Hope, and thou shalt hear the angels sing above.

Frances Anne Kemble

But To Be Still! Oh, But To Cease Awhile

But to be still! oh, but to cease awhile
The panting breath and hurrying steps of life,
The sights, the sounds, the struggle, and the strife
Of hourly being; the sharp, biting file
Of action, fretting on the tightened chain
Of rough existence all that is not pain,
But utter weariness; oh to be free
But for a while from conscious entity!
To shut the banging doors and windows wide,
Of restless sense, and let the soul abide
Darkly and stilly, for a little space,
Gathering its strength up to pursue the race;
O heavens! to rest a moment, but to rest
From this quick, gasping life, were to be blest!

Frances Anne Kemble

Close Of Our Summer At Frascati

The end is come: in thunder and wild rain
Autumn has stormed the golden house of Summer.
She going—lingers yet—sweet glances throwing
Of kind farewell upon the land she loves
And leaves. No more the sunny landscape glows
In the intense, uninterrupted light
And splendour of transparent, cloudless skies;
No more the yellow plain its tawny hue
Of sunburnt ripeness wears; even at noon
Thick watery veils fall on the mountain ranges,
And the white sun-rays, with pale slanting brushes,
Paint rainbows on the leaden-coloured storms.
Through milky, opal clouds the lightning plays,
Visible presence of that hidden power—
Mysterious soul of the great universe,
Whose secret force runs in red, human veins,
And in the glaring, white veins of the tempest,
Uplifts the hollow earth, the shifting sea;
Makes stormy reformations in the sky,
Sweeping, with searching besoms of sharp winds,
The foul and stagnant chambers of the air,
Where the thick, heavy, summer vapours slumber;

And, working in the sap of all still-growth,
In moonlight nights, unfolding leaves and blossoms;
Of all created life the vital element
Appearing still in fire—whether in the sea,
When its blue waves turn up great swaths of stars;
Or in the glittering, sparkling, winter ice world;
Or in the flickering white and crimson flames,
That leap in the northern sky; or in the sparks
Of love or hate, that flash in human eyes.
Lo, now, from day to day, and hour to hour,
Broad verdant shadows grow upon the land,
Cooling the burning landscape; while the clouds,
Disputing with the sun his heaven-dominion,
Chequer the hill-sides with fantastic shadows.
The glorious unity of light is gone,
The triumph of those bright and boundless skies;

Where, through all visible space, the eye met nothing
Save infinite brightness—glory infinite.
No more at evening does the sun dissolve
Into a heaving sea of molten gold;
While over it a heaven of molten gold
Panted, with light and heat intensely glowing,
While to the middle height of the pure ether,
One deepening sapphire from the amber spreads.
Now trains of melancholy, gorgeous clouds,
Like mourners at an Emperor's funeral,
Gather round the down-going of the sun;
Dark splendid curtains, with great golden fringes,
Shut up the day; masses of crimson glory,

Pale lakes of blue, studded with fiery islands,
Bright golden bars, cold peaks of slaty rock,
Mountains of fused amethyst and copper,
Fierce flaming eyes, with black o'erhanging brows,
Light floating curls of brown and golden hair,
And rosy flushes, like warm dreams of love,
Make rich and wonderful the dying day,
That, like a wounded dolphin, on the shore
Of night's black waves, dies in a thousand glories.
These are the very clouds that now put out
The serene beauty of the summer heavens.
The autumn sun hath virtue yet, to make
Right royal hangings for his sky-tent of them;
But, as the days wear on, and he grows faint,
And pale, and colourless, these are the clouds
That, like cold shrouds, shall muffle up the year,
Shut out the lovely blue, and draw round all—
Plain, hill, and sky—one still, chill wintry gray.

The end is come; the golden links are parting,
That in one chain of happy circumstance,
And gentle, friendly, human fellowship,
Bound many hearts for many a day together.
The precious bond dissolves; one friend departs
With the departing summer, and the end,
Ominous of the loss of all, begins:
Here it begins; with these first feet, that turn
From walking in the paths of daily life,

Where hand in hand, with peace and joy, all walked.

And now, from day to day, and hour to hour,
The brightness of our summer-life grows dim;
The voice that speaks to us from far already,
Soon in the distance shall be heard no more.
The perfect circle of this pleasant life
Hath lost its form—type of eternity—
And lies upon the earth a broken ring,
Token and type of every earthly thing.
Our sun of pleasure hastens towards the west,
But the green freshness of fair memories
Lives over these bright days for evermore;
The chequered lights, the storms of circumstance,
Shall sweep between us and their happy hours,
But not to efface them. O thou wealthy Past,
Thine are our treasures!—thine and ours alone
Through thee: the Present doth in fear rejoice;
The Future, but in fantasy: but thou
Holdest secure for ever and for ever
The bliss that has been ours; nor present woe,
Nor future dread, can touch that heritage
Of joy gone by—the only joy we own.

Frances Anne Kemble

Departing

Pour we libations to the father, Jove,
And bid him watch propitious o'er our way;
Pile on the household altar fragrant wreaths,
And to th' auspicious Lares bid farewell,
Beneath whose guardianship we have abode.
Blest be the threshold over which we pass,
Turning again, with hands devout uplifted;
Blest be the roof-tree, and the hearth it shelters;
Blest be the going forth and coming home
Of those who dwell here; blest their rising up,
And blest their lying down to holy slumber;
Blest be the married love, sacred and chaste;
Blest be the children's head, the mother's heart,
The father's hope. Reach down the wanderer's staff,—
Tie on the sandals on the traveller's feet :
The wan-eyed morn weeps in the watery east;
Gird up the loins, and let us now depart.

Frances Anne Kemble

Dream-Land (I)

All the night long you come to me in dreams,
My lady dear! Ah, wherefore do you so?
Surely it is because you do not know
What tender mercy from your sweet face streams
When thus you visit me, and for awhile
Lift off the load of my great misery
With the compassionate blessing of your smile:
Then I awake for joy, and bitterly
Weep that I did awake; meantime, perchance,
My image, all unconscious, through the trance,
Of your deep slumber has had leave to glide
A senseless phantom, even to your side.
Oh, tell me, by these burning tears I weep,
Whom do you see, my lady, while you sleep?

Frances Anne Kemble

Dream-Land (Ii)

When in my dreams thy lovely face,
Smiles with unwonted tender grace,
Grudge not the precious seldom cheer;
I know full well, my lady dear!
It is no boon of thine.
In thy sweet sanctuary of sleep,
If my sad sprite should kneeling weep,
Suffer its speechless worship there;
Thou know'st full well, my lady fair!
It is no fault of mine.

Frances Anne Kemble

Eastern Sunset

'Tis only the nightingale's warbled strain,
That floats through the evening sky:
With his note of love, he replies again,
To the muezzin's holy cry;
As it sweetly sounds on the rosy air,
'Allah il allah! come to prayer!'
Warm o'er the waters the red sun is glowing,
'Tis the last parting glance of his splendour and might,
While each rippling wave on the bright shore is throwing
Its white crest, that breaks into showers of light.
Each distant mosque and minaret
Is shining in the setting sun,
Whose farewell look is brighter yet,
Than that with which its course begun.
On the dark blue mountains his smile is bright,
It glows on the orange grove's waving height,
And breaks through its shade in long lines of light.
No sound on the earth, and no sound in the sky,
Save murmuring fountains that sparkle nigh,
And the rustling flight of the evening breeze,
Who steals from his nest in the orange trees,
And a thousand dewy odours flings,
As he shakes their white buds from his gossamer wings,
And flutters away through the spicy air,
At sound of a footstep drawing near.

Frances Anne Kemble

Evening

Now in the west is spread
A golden bed;
Great purple curtains hang around,
With fiery fringes bound,
And cushions, crimson red,
For Phœbus' lovely head;
And as he sinks through waves of amber light,
Down to the crystal halls of Amphitrite,
Hesper leads forth his starry legions bright
Into the violet fields of air—Good night!

Frances Anne Kemble

Evening By The Seaside

The monsters of the deep do roar,
And their huge manes upon the shore
Plunge headlong, with a thundering sound,
That shakes the hollow-hearted ground:
And yet, amidst this din I hear
Thy gentle voice close at mine ear,
Whispering sweet words of love, that shake
My soul with the soft sound they make.
The cup of Heaven o'erflows with light,
The sea's broad shield is burnished bright,
And the whole earth doth glow and shine
Like a red, radiant, evening shrine.
And in this splendour, all I see
Are thy dear eyes beholding me,
With such a tender, steadfast gaze,
My life seems melting in their rays.

Frances Anne Kemble

Expectation

Too bright the glance your wishes sent
Into the future's day,
Too sweet the trust on which you leant,
Not to give way.
Oh ever in this treacherous world,
If you your peace would prize,
Keep Expectation's quick wings furled,
And veil Hope's eyes.
Sad though it be to lose these gay
Phantoms at least of bliss;
To watch them slowly fade away
Is worse than this.

Frances Anne Kemble

Expostulation

What though the sun must set, and darkness come,
Shall we turn coldly from the blessed light,
And o'er the heavens call an earlier gloom,
Because the longest day must end in night?
What though the golden summer flies so fast,
Shall we neglect the rosy wreaths she brings,
Because their blooming sweetness may not last,
And winter comes apace with snowy wings?
What though this world be but the journeying land,
Where those who love but meet to part again;
Where, as we clasp in welcome friendship's hand,
That greeting clasp becomes a parting strain:
'Tis better to be blest for one short hour,
Than never know delight of love or joy,
Friendship, or mirth, or happiness, or power,
And all that Time creates, and must destroy.

Frances Anne Kemble

Faith

Better trust all, and be deceived,
And weep that trust, and that deceiving;
Than doubt one heart, that, if believed,
Had blessed one's life with true believing.
Oh, in this mocking world, too fast
The doubting fiend o'ertakes our youth!
Better be cheated to the last,
Than lose the blessed hope of truth.

Frances Anne Kemble

Farewell To Italy

Farewell awhile, beautiful Italy!
My lonely bark is launched upon the sea
That clasps thy shore, and the soft evening gale
Breathes from thy coast, and fills my parting sail.
Ere morning dawn, a colder breeze will come,
And bear me onward to my northern home;
That home, where the pale sun is not so bright,
So glorious, at his noonday's fiercest height,
As when he throws his last glance o'er the sea,
And fires the heavens, that glow farewell on thee.
Fair Italy! perchance some future day
Upon thy coast again will see me stray;
Meantime, farewell! I sorrow, as I leave
Thy lovely shore behind me, as men grieve
When bending o'er a form, around whose charms,
Unconquered yet, death winds his icy arms:
While leaving the last kiss on some dear cheek,
Where beauty sheds her last autumnal streak,
Life's rosy flower just mantling into bloom,
Before it fades for ever in the tomb.
So I leave thee, oh! thou art lovely still!
Despite the clouds of infamy and ill
That gather thickly round thy fading form:
Still glow thy glorious skies, as bright and warm,
Still memory lingers fondly on thy strand,
And genius hails thee still her native land.
Land of my soul's adoption! o'er the sea,
Thy sunny shore is fading rapidly:
Fainter and fainter, from my gaze it dies,
Till like a line of distant light it lies,
A melting boundary 'twixt earth and sky,
And now 'tis gone;—farewell, fair Italy!

Frances Anne Kemble

Flying Leaves

Flying leaves the wild Spring scatters,
From the silver blossomed trees,
Let them fall—it little matters;
Fresh-born buds will greet each breeze.
Flying leaves, grim Winter strewing,
Shudder thro' the forest glades,
All their beauty past renewing
Round his footsteps falls and fades.
Flying leaves come floating hither;
'Everlasting' these will prove,
Leaves that never fall or wither,
Crown the brow of constant love.

Frances Anne Kemble

Forsaken

I stand where thou hast stood, and I retrace
Each look, each word, each gesture, and each tone,
That marked thy speech, or lightened o'er thy face,
And memory makes them o'er and o'er my own.
I dream I hear thy voice—I start, and rise,
And listen, till my soul grows sick in vain,
The wind flies laughing through the starry skies,
And, save my throbbing heart, all's still again.
I dream I see thy form—with eager clasp,
My longing arms are round the phantom thrown,
It fades, it withers, in my frantic grasp,
I wake—I am alone—O Heaven, alone!
Oh wilt thou ne'er return! can no one day
Give back those blessed hours that fled so fast!
My life is rolling dark and fleet away,
The downward wave will ne'er bring back the past.

Frances Anne Kemble

Fragment

Walking by moonlight on the golden margin
That binds the silver sea, I fell to thinking
Of all the wild imaginings that man
Hath peopled heaven, and earth, and ocean with;
Making fair nature's solitary haunts
Alive with beings, beautiful and fearful.
And as the chain of thought grew link by link,
It seemed, as though the midnight heavens waxed brighter,
The stars gazed fix'dly with their golden eyes,
And a strange light played o'er each sleeping billow,
That laid its head upon the sandy beach.
Anon there came along the rocky shore
A far-off sound of sweetest minstrelsy.
From no one point of heaven, or earth, it came;
But under, over, and about it breathed;
Filling my soul with thrilling, fearful pleasure.
It swelled, as though borne on the floating wings
Of the midsummer breeze; it died away
Towards heaven, as though it sank into the clouds,
That one by one melted like flakes of snow
In the moonbeams. Then came a rushing sound,
Like countless wings of bees, or butterflies;
And suddenly, as far as eye might view,
The coast was peopled with a world of elves,
Who in fantastic ringlets danced around,
With antic gestures, and wild beckoning motion,
Aimed at the moon. White was their snowy vesture,
And shining as the Alps, when that the sun
Gems their pale robes with diamonds. On their heads
Were wreaths of crimson and of yellow foxglove.
They were all fair, and light as dreams; anon
The dance broke off; and sailing through the air,
Some one way, and some other, they did each
Alight upon some waving branch, or flower,
That garlanded the rocks upon the shore.
One, chiefly, did I mark; one tiny sprite,
Who crept into an orange flower-bell,
And there lay nestling, whilst his eager lips
Drank from its virgin chalice the night dew,

That glistened, like a pearl, in its white bosom.

Frances Anne Kemble

Genius And Love

Genius and Love together stood
At break of day beside clear fountains,
In gardens hedged with laurel wood,
Screened by a wall of purple mountains;
As hand in hand they smiling strayed,
Love twined a wreath of perfect roses
On Genius' brow; 'And thus,' he said,
'My soul on thy bright soul reposes.'
And round and round they joyous flew,
On rapid now, now lingering pinion,
And blissful Love ne'er weary grew
Of measuring o'er his bright dominion.
Anon they rested from their flight,
And through the fringes of clear water,
All rainbow-touched Love chased a sprite,
The silver Naiad's snowy daughter,
While Genius lay with flashing eyes,
Looking into the distant skies.
Love paused and said, 'What dost thou see?'
'The far-off shining of the sea—
Say, wilt thou thither fly with me?'
'Is there a home by the wild flood?
Ah! leave we not our pleasant wood!'
But suddenly, with eager wings,
Towards his desire Genius springs;
So strong his flight, the rosy crown
At Love's sad feet fell broken down,
And lay beside him where he sate,
Waiting the coming of his mate:
And he returned all gloriously,
From the foam-caverns of the sea,
And brought strange heaps of shining treasure
To Love, who prized beyond all measure
His mere return:—And now his sight,
Swift as the eagle's sunward flight,
Rested upon the mountain's height—
'Look! wilt thou thither with me fly,
Dear Love?'—he cried; and rapidly
Beat with his golden wings the air.

'Is there a home for us up there?
What seek'st thou on the mountain's brow?'
'To see the wide world lie below.'
So he swept thither like the wind,
And Love remained dismayed behind:
And now a spirit of the air
Garlands of noble amaranth bare
To the Love god beside the fountain,
And spake—'Lo! Genius from the mountain
Sends thee, dear Love, eternal flowers,
To deck thy pleasant myrtle bowers.'

'Ah!' answered Love despondingly,
'Sweet roses were enough for me;
Look, they grow here upon the ground,
Close to our very home, all round,
And morn and even may be found—
When comes he back?' 'Into the sky
I saw him from the mountain fly
Higher and higher towards the sun.'
Love sighed, 'The day must soon be done,
And evening shall the wanderer bring,
With sated soul and weary wing.'
Love knew not that bold Genius' flight
Had passed the realms of day and night,
Till, from the blue, a glorious crown
Of starry light was towards him thrown;
He saw th' immortal circlet burn,
And knew his mate would ne'er return:
He gathered up the rosy wreath,
With withered leaves, and faint sweet breath;
And turning to the darkening skies
The tender longing of his eyes,
He bitterly began to weep,
And wept himself at last to sleep.

Frances Anne Kemble

Hadrian's Villa

Let us stay here: nor ever more depart
From this sweet wilderness Nature and Art
Have made, not for light wandering feet to stray,
Through their fair chaos half one sunny day;
But for th' abiding place of those whose spirit
Is worthy all this beauty to inherit.
Pervading sunlight vivifies the earth,
The fresh green thickets rock, as though in mirth,
Under its warmth, and shaken by the breeze,
That springs down into them from waving trees,
Whose dark blue branches spread themselves on high,
On granite shafts, that seem to prop the sky.
Around, a rocky screen the mountains spread,
Wood-mantled to their middle, but each head
Gray, bare, and bald, save where a passing veil
Vaporous, and silvery soft, the low clouds trail
Over their craggy brows:—down their steep sides
The light procession of fleet shadow glides,
Garlands of melting gloom, that join and sever,
And climb, and then run down the hills for ever,
Like rapid outspread wings, flying away
Before the golden shafts of the bright day.
Turn from the rocky wall, and lo! a sea
Of level land, like an eternity,
Spreads its vast plain beneath the hazy light,
Till far, far on th' horizon's edge, one bright
And blinding streak betrays the distant verge,
Where earth and ocean in each other merge.
Look from this promontory made of ruin,
Through whose brown broken arches the soft wooing
Of the Spring air in murmurs low is heard,
Answering the voice of that triumphant bird,
Who, hid 'mid fragrant wreaths of hawthorn bloom,
Sings loud and sweet, here, in this wondrous tomb
Of the earth's greatness:—look below, around,
Above,—survey this magic sky and ground;
These crumbling arches, that blue vault of heaven,
These pillars, and these friezes, fallen or riven
From their stone sockets; those fair cypress trees,

Those vine and ivy garlands, Nature's frieze;
These graceful fragments, over which she flings
The still fresh mantle of a thousand Springs;
Hear from it all the strange and solemn story,
Decay and Death reaping all human glory.
Ho, Adrian! Emperor, Conqueror, Priest, and Lord!
Who the great Roman world swayedst with a word!
Thou who didst cast off power without measure,
To dwell in joy, possessing only pleasure!
The wild bee hums in the wild wreaths of thyme
That carpet o'er thy halls and courts sublime;
The nightingale, sweet single chorister,
Fills the void circle of thy theatre,
And northern pilgrims, with slow lingering feet,
Stray round each vestige of thy loved retreat,
And spend in homage half one sunny day
Before they pass upon their wandering way,
Leaving thy royal ruin of delight
Lordly and lonely, lovely, sad, and bright.

Frances Anne Kemble

Have You Not Heard That In Some Deep-Seal'D Graves,

Have you not heard that in some deep-seal'd graves,
The Dead retain in beauty undisturb'd
The very countenance they living wore?
But if forbidden yearning vainly craves
To look upon the hidden face once more,
Lo! the sweet sleeping aspect is perturb'd,
The piercing light and the keen breath of life
Smite like a blow the features, and before
The hungry eyes of longing, Love, at strife
With Fate, efface the vision it desires,
And dust and ashes fill the friendly gloom
That might have kept immortal in its bloom,
What now again—and now for aye expires.
Leave we our buried pleasures in their tomb.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Cannot Sleep For Thinking Of Thy Face,

I cannot sleep for thinking of thy face,
Which thrusts itself between the dark and me,
Scaring my rest. Oh, for Heaven's gentle grace,
Haunt me not with this speechless misery.
What could I do that I have left undone,
That to thy life might bring content or peace?
Have I not made my days to hang upon
Thy will and wish, and every hour to beat
Only one patient, waiting, longing measure,
Unto thy going and thy coming feet,
Counting my greatest joy thy slightest pleasure?
And now I would I could but pour the treasure
Of my heart's life-blood out before it breaks,
To put a brighter colour in thy cheeks.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Hear A Voice Low In The Sunset Woods

I hear a voice low in the sunset woods;
Listen, it says: 'Decay, decay, decay.'
I hear it in the murmuring of the floods,
And the wind sighs it as it flies away.
Autumn is come; seest thou not in the skies
The stormy light of his fierce, lurid eyes?
Autumn is come; his brazen feet have trod,
Withering and scorching, o'er the mossy sod.
The fainting year sees her fresh flowery wreath
Shrivel in his hot grasp; his burning breath,
Dries the sweet water-springs that in the shade
Wandering along, delicious music made.
A flood of glory hangs upon the world,
Summer's bright wings shining ere they are furled.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Heard Youth's Silver Clarion Call To Fate,

I heard youth's silver clarion call to Fate,
And looking forth beheld his flower-fair face,
Framed in his shining helmet as he sat
Sheathed in white armour, full of fearless grace,
Watching the coming of a threat'ning cloud,
Hueless and shapeless, that with stealthy pace
Was creeping towards him. 'O dear youth, beware!'
But answer made he none save laugh'd aloud.
'Beware,' I cried, 'it hides some hideous snare.'
At it he made—and vanished in the shroud,
Whence there broke forth, O Christ! so sharp a cry
Of dire defeat and mortal agony,
That all my blood ran back in every vein;
And when th' accursed blackness roll'd away,
Prone in the dust my lovely warrior lay,
Defiled, not dead; sore wounded—shamed—not slain;
His shining armour smirched with many a stain,
Filthy and foul, ne'er to be bright again.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Know A Maiden With A Laughing Face

I know a maiden with a laughing face,
And springing feet like wings;—the light that flies
Forth from the radiant dancing of her eyes
Is full of mischievous and mirthful grace.
I know a maiden you might scarce think fair
The first time that across your path she past,
And suddenly you would be fettered fast
In the thick meshes of her chestnut hair,
And in her floating motions gay and glad,
And in the sparkling triumph of her mirth:
Like summer rain-showers twinkling to the earth,
Through sudden sun-gleams, when the wind is mad,
When all the shrubberies rock in rustling glee,
And clouds of blossoms fall from every tree.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Know That Thou Wilt Read What Here Is Writ,

I know that thou wilt read what here is writ,
And yet not know that it is writ for thee;
To this cold page I have entrusted it,
Which tells thee all, and yet is true to me.
For oh! this paper is not like my cheek,
To blush, when o'er it thou shalt cast thine eye,
These words can't falter, like the words I speak,
With trembling accents, still when thou art nigh.
Devoid of pity, doth this leaf receive
The story of my sorrow and my love;
Yet while I trace the words, I half believe,
That latent sympathy will in it move,
All I would have thee learn, to teach to thee,
And hold the rest in safest secrecy.

Frances Anne Kemble

I Would I Knew The Lady Of Thy Heart!

I would I knew the lady of thy heart!
She whom thou lov'st, perchance, as I love thee.
She unto whom thy thoughts and wishes flee;
Those thoughts, in which, alas! I bear no part.
Oh, I have sat and sighed, thinking how fair,
How passing beautiful, thy love must be;
Of mind how high, of modesty how rare;
And then I've wept, I've wept in agony!
Oh that I might but once behold those eyes,
That to thy enamoured gaze alone seem fair;
Once hear that voice, whose music still replies
To the fond vows thy passionate accents swear:
Oh that I might but know the truth and die,
Nor live in this long dream of misery!

Frances Anne Kemble

If In Thy Heart The Spring Of Joy Remains,

If in thy heart the spring of joy remains,
All beauteous things, being reflected there,
Most beautiful and joyful do appear;
But if that treasure hath been from thee ta'en,
If emptiness, and darkness, in thy heart
Sit silent—from all nature doth depart
Its joy and glory, and all beauty seems
Hollow and strange.—The poet's noble dreams,
The voice of music and of song, the sight
Of evening shadows, and of morning light,
Flowers, and bright faces—youth, and hope, and love,
Who hand in hand over life's threshold move
Like conquerors to a triumph—all things fair,
Shining upon thee darken thy despair.

Frances Anne Kemble

If There Were Any Power In Human Love

If there were any power in human love,
Or in th' intensest longing of the heart,
Then should the oceans and the lands that part
Ye from my sight all unprevailing prove,
Then should the yearning of my bosom bring
Ye here, through space and distance infinite;
And life 'gainst love should be a baffled thing,
And circumstance 'gainst will lose all its might.
Shall not a childless mother's misery
Conjure the earth with such a potent spell—
A charm so desperate—as to compel
Nature to yield to her great agony?
Can I not think of ye till ye arise,
Alive, alive, before my very eyes?

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu

Written among the Ruins of the Sonnenberg

Thou who within thyself dost not behold
Ruins as great as these, though not as old,
Canst scarce through life have travelled many a year,
Or lack'st the spirit of a pilgrim here.
Youth hath its walls of strength, its towers of pride,
Love, its warm hearth-stones, hope, its prospects wide,
Life's fortress in thee, held these one and all,
And they have fallen to ruin, or shall fall.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (I)

You say you're glad I write—oh, say not so!
My fount of song, dear friend, 's a bitter well;
And when the numbers freely from it flow,
'Tis that my heart and eyes o'erflow as well.
Castalia, famed of yore,—the spring divine,
Apollo's smile upon its current wears:
Moore and Anacreon found its waves were wine,
To me it flows a sullen stream of tears.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (Ii)

If I miscount the hours, blame Love, not me,
Who makes the time when you are near me, seem
Short as the vision of a vanishing dream,
When you are far—long as eternity.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (Iii)

ON GIVING A FRIEND A CROSS.

We should each other's crosses help to bear,
Yet I, dear friend, lay this upon your breast:
Would Heaven, indulgent, hear my heartfelt prayer,
No heavier one should ever on it rest.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (Iv)

Sorrow and sin, and suffering and strife,
Have been cast in the waters of my life;
And they have sunk deep down to the well-head,
And all that flows thence is embitterèd.
Yet still the fountain up towards heaven springs,
And still the brook where'er it wanders sings;
And still where'er it hath found leave to rest,
The blessed sun looks down into its breast;
And it reflects, as in a mirror fair,
The image of all beauty shining there.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (V)

Whatever else I see, I still see thee,
I shut my eyes to see nought else but thee.

Frances Anne Kemble

Impromptu (Vi)

My sun went down at noon to-day,
O Sorrow!
For in thine eyes
My sun doth rise;
Then, Love, I pray,
Bring back to-day,
Or make it soon to-morrow.

Frances Anne Kemble

Is It A Sin, To Wish That I May Meet Thee

Is it a sin, to wish that I may meet thee
In that dim world whither our spirits stray,
When sleep and darkness follow life and day?
Is it a sin, that there my voice should greet thee
With all that love that I must die concealing?
Will my tear-laden eyes sin in revealing
The agony that preys upon my soul?
Is't not enough through the long, loathsome day,
To hold each look and word in stern control?
May I not wish the staring sunlight gone,
Day and its thousand torturing moments done,
And prying sights and sounds of men away?
O still and silent Night! when all things sleep,
Locked in thy swarthy breast my secret keep:
Come, with thy visioned hopes and blessings now!
I dream the only happiness I know.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lady, Whom My Belovèd Loves So Well!

Lady, whom my belovèd loves so well!
When on his clasping arm thy head reclineth,
When on thy lips his ardent kisses dwell,
And the bright flood of burning light, that shineth
In his dark eyes, is pourèd into thine;
When thou shalt lie enfolded to his heart,
In all the trusting helplessness of love;
If in such joy sorrow can find a part,
Oh, give one sigh unto a doom like mine!
Which I would have thee pity, but not prove.
One cold, calm, careless, wintry look that fell
Haply by chance on me, is all that he
E'er gave my love; round that, my wild thoughts dwell
In one eternal pang of memory.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lament For Israel

Where is thy home in thy promised land?
Desolate and forsaken!
The stranger's arm hath seized thy brand,
Thou art bowed beneath the stranger's hand,
And the stranger thy birthright hath taken.
Where is the mark of thy chosen race?
Infamous and degraded!
It hath fallen on thee, on thy dwelling-place,
And that heaven-stamped sign to a foul disgrace
And the scoff of the world, has faded.
First-born of nations! upon thy brow,
Resistless and revenging,
The fiery finger of God hath now
Written the sentence of thy woe,
The innocent blood avenging!
Lion of Judah! thy glory is past,
Vanished and fled for ever.
Homeless and scattered, thy race is cast
Like chaff in the breath of the sweeping blast,
To rally or rise again, never!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lament Of A Mocking-Bird

Silence instead of thy sweet song, my bird,
Which through the darkness of my winter days
Warbling of summer sunshine still was heard;
Mute is thy song, and vacant is thy place.

The spring comes back again, the fields rejoice,
Carols of gladness ring from every tree;
But I shall hear thy wild triumphant voice
No more: my summer song has died with thee.

What didst thou sing of, O my summer bird?
The broad, bright, brimming river, whose swift sweep
And whirling eddies by the home are heard,
Rushing, resistless, to the calling deep.

What didst thou sing of, thou melodious sprite?
Pine forests, with smooth russet carpets spread,
Where e'en at noonday dimly falls the light,
Through gloomy blue-green branches overhead.

What didst thou sing of, O thou jubilant soul?
Ever-fresh flowers and never-leafless trees,
Bending great ivory cups to the control
Of the soft swaying, orange scented breeze.

What didst thou sing of, thou embodied glee?
The wide wild marshes with their clashing reeds
And topaz-tinted channels, where the sea
Daily its tides of briny freshness leads.

What didst thou sing of, O thou winged voice?
Dark, bronze-leaved oaks, with silver mosses crowned,
Where thy free kindred live, love, and rejoice,
With wreaths of golden jasmine curtained round.

These didst thou sing of, spirit of delight!
From thy own radiant sky, thou quivering spark!
These thy sweet southern dreams of warmth and light,
Through the grim northern winter drear and dark.

Frances Anne Kemble

Life

At morn—a mountain ne'er to be climbed o'er,
A horn of plenty, lengthening evermore;
At noon—the countless hour-sands pouring fast,
Waves that we scarce can see as they run past;
At night—a pageant over ere begun,
A course not even measured and yet run,
A short mysterious tale—suddenly done.
At first—a heap of treasure, heaven-high;
At last—a failing purse, shrunk, lean, and beggarly.

Frances Anne Kemble

Like One Who Walketh In A Plenteous Land,

Like one who walketh in a plenteous land,
By flowing waters, under shady trees,
Through sunny meadows, where the summer bees
Feed in the thyme and clover; on each hand
Fair gardens lying, where of fruit and flower
The bounteous season hath poured out its dower:
Where saffron skies roof in the earth with light,
And birds sing thankfully towards Heaven, while he
With a sad heart walks through this jubilee,
Beholding how beyond this happy land,
Stretches a thirsty desert of gray sand,
Where all the air is one thick, leaden blight,
Where all things dwarf and dwindle,—so walk I,
Through my rich, present life, to what beyond doth lie.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines

Upon the altar of my life there lies
A costly offering: its price I know;
The worth that it might have, its power and beauty;
Yet it lies there, and darkness covers it.
It has not burned towards heaven in holy flames,
Worshipping God, warming and lighting man;
No fire has quickened it.—Love, like a torch
Quenched in foul mist, passed over it in vain:
A flickering ray of pale uncertain happiness
Played round it once, too weak to kindle it.
Strike, strike then now, ye lightning fires of sorrow!
Devouring flames! ye that have all consumed
Love, Hope, and Happiness, do your whole work!
Light up the gifts that lie on my life's altar,
Kindle the precious sacrifice my soul
Has heaped in vain: so shall it burn towards heaven,
And glorify the Giver of all gifts,
The Sender of all earthly destinies.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines

IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION.

I'll tell thee why this weary world meseemeth
But as the visions light of one who dreameth,
Which pass like clouds, leaving no trace behind;
Why this strange life, so full of sin and folly,
In me awakeneth no melancholy,
Nor leaveth shade, or sadness, on my mind.
'Tis not that with an undiscerning eye
I see the pageant wild go dancing by,
Mistaking that which falsest is, for true;
'Tis not that pleasure hath entwined me,
'Tis not that sorrow hath enshrined me;
I bear no badge of roses or of rue,
But in the inmost chambers of my soul
There is another world, a blessèd home,
O'er which no living power holdeth control,
Anigh to which ill things do never come.
There shineth the glad sunlight of clear thought,
With hope and faith holding communion high,
Over a fragrant land with flowers ywrought,
Where gush the living springs of poesy,
There speak the voices that I love to hear,
There smile the glances that I love to see,
There live the forms of those my soul holds dear,
For ever, in that secret world, with me.
They who have walked with me along life's way,
And severed been by fortune's adverse tide,
Who ne'er again, through time's uncertain day,
In weal or woe, may wander by my side;
These all dwell here: nor these, whom life alone
Divideth from me, but the dead, the dead;
Those weary ones who to their rest are gone,
Whose footprints from the earth have vanishèd;
Here dwell they all: and here, within this world,
Like light within a summer sun-cloud furled,
My spirit dwells. Therefore, this evil life,
With all its gilded snares, and fair deceivings,

Its wealth, its want, its pleasures, and its grievings,
Nor frights, nor frets me, by its idle strife.
O thou! who readest of thy courtesy,
Whoe'er thou art, I wish the same to thee!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines For Music

False Love, take hence thy roses,
Give me the bitter Rue
That on my heart reposes,
Sorrow at least is true.

Maiden so fair and pale,
Wandering adown the dale,
What flow'r that drinks the dew
Or light is dear to you?—
The bitter Rue.

Maid on thy wedding day,
Wan as the flower of May,
What buds of brightest hue,
Say shall we weave for you?—
The bitter Rue.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines For Music (I)

Loud wind, strong wind, where art thou blowing?
Into the air, the viewless air,
To be lost there,
There am I blowing.

Clear wave, swift wave, where art thou flowing?
Unto the sea, the boundless sea,
To be whelmed there,
There am I flowing.

Young life, swift life, where art thou going?
Down to the grave, the loathsome grave,
To moulder there,
There am I going.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines For Music (Ii)

Oh, sunny Love!
Crowned with fresh flowering May,
Breath like the Indian clove,
Eyes like the dawn of day;
Oh, sunny Love!
Oh, fatal Love!
Thy wreath is nightshade all,
With gloomy cypress wove,
Thy kiss is bitter gall,
Oh, fatal Love!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines For Music (Iii)

Good night! from music's softest spell
Go to thy dreams: and in thy slumbers,
Fairies, with magic harp and shell,
Sing o'er to thee thy own sweet numbers.
Good night! from hope's intense desire
Go to thy dreams: and may to-morrow,
Love, with the sun returning, fire
These evening mists of doubt and sorrow.
Good night! from hours of weary waking
I'll to my dreams: still in my sleep
To feel the spirit's restless aching,
And even with eyelids closed, to weep.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines On A Sleeping Child

O child! who to this evil world art come,
Led by the unseen hand of Him who guards thee,
Welcome unto this dungeon-house, thy home!
Welcome to all the woe this life awards thee!
Upon thy forehead yet the badge of sin
Hath worn no trace; thou look'st as though from heaven,
But pain, and guilt, and misery lie within;
Poor exile! from thy happy birth-land driven.
Thine eyes are sealed by the soft hand of sleep,
And like unruffled waves thy slumber seems;
The time's at hand when thou must wake to weep,
Or sleeping, walk a restless world of dreams.
How oft, as day by day life's burthen lies
Heavier and darker on thy fainting soul,
Wilt thou towards heaven turn thy weary eyes,
And long in bitterness to reach the goal!

How oft wilt thou, upon Time's flinty road,
Gaze at thy far-off early days, in vain!
Weeping, how oft wilt thou cast down thy load,
And curse and pray, then take it up again!
How many times shall the fiend Hope extend
Her poisonous chalice to thy thirsty lips!
How oft shall Love its withering sunshine lend,
To leave thee only a more dark eclipse!
How oft shall Sorrow strain thee in her grasp,—
How oft shall Sin laugh at thine overthrow—
How oft shall Doubt, Despair, and Anguish clasp
Their knotted arms around thine aching brow!
O living soul, hail to thy narrow cage!
Spirit of light, hail to thy gloomy cave!
Welcome to longing youth, to loathing age,
Welcome, immortal! welcome to the grave!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines On The Anio At Tivoli

One river from the mountain springs was born,
Into three several streams its course was torn.
For one a royal path was made; it ran,
Sheltered and screened, through channels paved by man;
A noble flood, a bounteous, beauteous river,
In light and glory rolling forth for ever.
One, to the children of the earth became
A slave unwilling, bound, but never tame.
Round lashing wheels its silver foam was spread,
Through murky chambers its bright waves were led,
Dread clangour of huge engines drowned its voice,
At its dark work forbidden to rejoice;
Close by its fiery foe its white waves boil,
Fierce ruddy flames beside it glow and toil,
Striving and labouring, panting, rushing past,
All stained and sullied it leaps free at last,
And down the huge cliffs with one shouting bound
Joins its fair sister on the level ground
Of a green valley. One sad stream was led
By God, not man, through chasms dark, drear, and dread:
Horrible depths ne'er visited by light,
Caves of despair, dismay, and thickest night;
There in an agony the lonely river
Leapt down, and turned, and writhed, and plunged for ever;
Seeking escape from out the hideous deep,
Where its wild waters were condemned to weep;
But this tormented stream too found its way,
At length to the sweet air of upper day;
And altogether they flow down to rest
One with the other in the Ocean's breast.
So ends all life that is but mortal breath,—
All fates are equal in the lap of Death.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines To ---.

When 'twas my hap to meet you, for awhile
Our paths together lay—and each one brought
Heart to feel heart, and thought to answer thought;
And our brief converse has been as a smile
Upon a sorrowful face,—sweet—sad—and now
It dies away, and we must say farewell:
The strain is closing,—the spring leaves to flow,—
And our good fellowship in the past must dwell.
Yet, let there be no parting. In my heart
I hold you, and your looks and words; I pray,
In your remembrance let me keep a part,
And let us still be friends—true friends alway;—
Still holding converse in that inner life,
Where Time and Absence wage with Love no strife.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines To -----.

Short was the season of our intercourse
And born, it seem'd, of wayward accident,
Yet ne'er before was friendship's sweet discourse
More sorely needed, or more kindly lent.
The wand'ring winds, that seem no law to know,
Scatter the seed of many a precious flow'r;
And this our love, rooted, I trust, to grow,
Was sown by chance, and sprang in one short hour.
In a drear drought of bitter loneliness,
Parted from friends and kindred far away,
Urging with spirits full of heaviness
The weary hours that crept thro' each long day;
I little thought, one of those days would hold,
Like a closed casket, hidden wealth untold,
Or that a listless foot, that seem'd to stray
Objectless, on the road where lay my way,
Would strike a sudden spark out of my gloom,
And my low flickering light of hope relume,
Drawing again colour, and form, and tone,
From the dull, faded thing, my life had grown.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines To Mrs. St. Leger

Many a league of salt sea rolls
Between us, yet I think our souls,
Dear friend, are still as closely tied
As when we wandered side by side,
Some seven years gone, in that fair land
Where I was born. As hand in hand
We lived the showery spring away,
And when the sunny earth was gay
With all its blossoms, still together
We passed the pleasant summer weather,
We little thought the time would come,
When, from a Transatlantic home,
My voice should greet you lovingly
Across the deep dividing sea.

O friend! my heart is sad: 'tis strange,
As I sit musing on the change
That has come o'er my fate, and cast
A longing look upon the past,
That pleasant time comes back again
So freshly to my heart and brain,

That I half think the things I see
Are but a dream, and I shall be
Lying beside you, when I wake,
Upon the lawn beneath the brake,
With the hazel copse behind my head,
And the new-mown fields before me spread.

It is just twilight : that sweet time
Is short-lived in this radiant clime,—
Where the bright day and night more bright,
Upon th' horizon's verge unite,
Nor leave those hours of ray serene,
In which we think of what has been:
And it is well; for here no eye
Turns to the distant days gone by:
They have no legendary lore
Of deeds of glory done of yore,—

No knightly marvel-haunted years,
The nursery tales of adult ears:
The busy present, bright to come,
Of all their thoughts make up the sum:
Little their little past they heed;
Therefore of twilight have no need.

Yet wherefore write I thus? In the short span
Of narrow life doled out to every man,
Though he but reach the threshold of the track,
Where, from youth's better path, strikes out the worse,
If he has breathed so long, nor once look'd back,
He has not borne life's load, nor known God's curse.

And yet, but for that glance that o'er and o'er
Goes tearfully, where we shall go no more;
Counting the sunny spots, where, for a day,
Our bark has found a harbour on its way;
Oh! but for this, this pow'r of conjuring
Hours, days, and years into the magic ring,
Bidding them yield the show of happiness,
To make our real misery seem less,
Life would be dreary. But these memories start,
Sometimes, unbidden on the mourner's heart;
Unwish'd, unwelcome, round his thoughts they cling,—
In vain flung off, still dimly gathering,
Like melancholy ghosts, upon the path
Where he goes sadly, seeking only death.

Then live again the forms of those who lie
Gather'd into the grave's dark mystery.
Vainly at reason's voice the phantom flies,—
It comes, it still comes back to the fond eyes,—
Still, still the yearning arms are spread to clasp
The blessing that escapes their baffled grasp:
Still the bewildering memory mutters 'Gone!'
Still, still the clinging, aching heart loves on.
Oh, bitter! that the lips on which we pour
Love's fondest kisses, feel the touch no more;
Oh, lonely! that the voice on which we call
In agony, breaks not its silent thrall;
Oh, fearful! that the eyes in which we gaze

With desperate hope through their thick filmy haze,

Return no living look to bless our sight!

O God! that it were granted that one might

But once behold the secret of the grave,—

That but one voice from the all-shrouding cave

Might speak,—that but one sleeper might emerge

From the deep death-sea's overwhelming surge!

Speak, speak from the gray coffins where ye lie

Fretting to dust your foul mortality!

Speak, from your homes of darkness and dismay,—

To what new being do ye pass away?—

Oh, do ye live, indeed?—speak, if on high

One atom springs whose doom is not to die!—

Where have I wandered?

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written At Belvoir Castle, 1883

Two things remain unalter'd in this place,
Tho' since I came here forty years are told—
The smiling loveliness of Nature's face,
And the fine spirit of kindly, courteous grace,
That still presides here as it did of yore.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written At Night

Oh, thou surpassing beauty! that dost live
Shrined in yon silent stream of glorious light!
Spirit of harmony! that through the vast
And cloud-embroidered canopy, art spreading
Thy wings, that o'er our shadowy earth hang brooding;
Like a pale silver cloud between the moon
And the world's darker orb —beautiful, hail!
Hail to thee! from her midnight throne of ether,
Night looks upon the slumbering universe.
No ruffling breeze stirs the wood's silver crest,
No rocking breath shakes the dew-spangled flower,
No rippling wind roughens the sleepy wave,
No slightest sound floats on the solemn air;
All, all are silent, all are dreaming, all,
Save yon eternal eyes, that now shine forth
Twinkling the slumberer's destinies. The moon
Sails on the horizon's verge, a moving glory.
Pure and unrivalled; for no paler orb
Approaches, to invade the sea of light
That spreads around her; save yon piercing star,
That glitters on her robe of fleecy clouds,
Like a bright gem, fall'n from her radiant brow.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written At Sea (I)

Dear, yet forbidden thoughts, that from my soul,
While shines the weary sun, with stern control
I drive away; why, when my spirits lie
Shrouded in the cold sleep of misery,
Do ye return, to mock me with false dreaming,
Where love, and all life's happiness is beaming?
O visions fair! that one by one have gone
Down, 'neath the dark horizon of my days;
Let not your pale reflection linger on
In the bleak sky, where live no more your rays.
Night! silent nurse, that with thy solemn eyes
Hang'st o'er the rocking cradle of the world,
Oh! be thou darker to my dreaming eyes;
Nor, in my slumbers, be the past unfurl'd.
Haunt me no more with whisperings from the dead,
The dead in heart, the changed, the withered:
Bring me no more sweet blossoms from my spring,
Which round my soul their early fragrance fling,
And, when the morning, with chill icy start,
Wakes me, hang blighted round my aching heart:
O night and slumber, be ye visionless,
Dark as the grave, deep as forgetfulness!
Night, thou shalt nurse me, but be sure, good nurse,
While sitting by my bed, that thou art silent,
I will not let thee sing me to my slumbers
With the sweet lullabies of former times,
Nor tell me tales, as other gossips wont,
Of the strange fairy days, that are all gone.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written At Sea (Ii)

Why art thou weeping
Over the happy, happy dead,
Who are gone away,
From this life of clay,
From this fount of tears,
From this burthen of years,
From sin, from sorrow,
From sad 'to-morrow,'
From struggling and creeping:
Why art thou weeping,
O fool, for the dead?

Why art thou weeping,
Over the steadfast faithful dead,
Who can never change,
Nor grow cold and strange,
Nor turn away,
In a single day,
From the love they bore,
And the faith they swore,
Who are true for ever,
Will slight thee never,

But love thee still,
Through good and ill,
With the constancy
Of eternity:
Why art thou weeping,
O fool, for the dead?

They are your only friends;
For where this foul life ends,
Alone beginneth truth, and love, and faith;
All which sweet blossoms are preserved by death.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written At Venice In 1865

Sleep, Venice, sleep! the evening gun resounds
Over the waves that rock thee on their breast;
The bugle blare to kennel calls the hounds,
Who sleepless watch thy waking and thy rest.
Sleep till the night stars do the day star meet,
And shuddering echoes o'er the water run,
Rippling thro' every glass-green wavering street
The stern good-morrow of thy guardian Hun.
Still do thy stones, O Venice, bid rejoice
With their old majesty the gazer's eye,
In their consummate grace uttering a voice
From every line of blended harmony.
Still glows the splendour of each wondrous dream
Vouchsaf'd thy painters o'er each sacred shrine,
And from the radiant visions downward streams
In visible light an influence divine.

Still through thy golden days and silver nights
Sings his soft jargon thy gay gondolier,
And o'er thy floors of liquid malachite
Slide the black-hooded barks to mystery dear.
Like Spanish beauty in its sable veil,
They rustle sideling through the watery way,
The wild, monotonous cry, with which they hail
Each other's course, echoing far away.
As each bright prow grazes the island strands,
Still ring the sweet Venetian voices clear;
And wondering wanderers from far, free lands,
Entranc'd look round—enchanted listen here.
From the far lands of Liberty they come,
England's proud children and the younger race;
Those who possess the Past's most glorious home,
And those who own the Future's boundless space.
Pitying they stand—for thee who would not weep!
Well it beseems these men to weep for thee,
Whose flags as erst thine own control the deep,
Whose conquering sails o'ershadow every sea.
Yet not in pity only—but in hope,
Spring the hot tears the brave for thee may shed;

They watch the dawn that bids thy dungeon ope:
But sleep thou still—the sky is not yet red.

Sleep till the mighty helmsman of the world,
By the Almighty set at Fortune's wheel,
Steers towards thy freedom, and once more unfurl'd
The banner of St. Mark the sun shall feel.
Then wake—then rise—then hurl away thy yoke,
And dye with life-blood that pale livery
Whose ghastly white has been thy jailor's cloak,
Covering for years thy shame and misery.
Rise with a shout that down thy giant stair
Shall thy old giants bring with thundering tread;
The blind Crusader standing stony there,
And him—the latest of thy mighty dead—
Whose patriot heart broke at the Austrian's foot,
Whose ashes under the black marble lie,
From whose dry dust stirr'd by thy voice shall shoot
A glorious tree of living Liberty.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written By The Sea

If thou wert standing by yon tide,
And I were standing by thy side,
Methinks a death I could contrive,
Pleasanter than the life I live.
For I would lay me at thy feet,
And like a snowy winding-sheet,
The foaming fringes of the sea
Should roll themselves all over me,
And draw me but a little way
Into that cradle huge and gray,
And rock me all so tenderly,
And sing one sobbing lullaby,
And then unwind their foldings deep,
And lay me gently, fast asleep,
At thy dear feet, where I would lie
And sleep through all eternity.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written By The Seaside (I)

O Lesbian! if thy faith were mine,
Then might I in that summer sea
Seek for a slumber sound as thine,
Beneath thy rock of Leucady.
But though the waves, with death's control,
Might still the fever in each vein,
Alas! they cannot drown my soul,
The citadel of all my pain.
This weary, wretched, restless strife
I cannot bear—I cannot flee;—
'Tis more than death—'tis all of life—
And parcel of Eternity.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written By The Seaside (Ii)

If I believed in death, how sweet a bed
For such a blessed slumber could I find,
Beneath the blue and sparkling coverlid
Of that smooth sea, stirred by no breath of wind.
Oh if I could but die, and be at rest,
Thou smiling sea! in thy slow-heaving breast.
But all thy thousand waves quench not the spark
Immortal, woful, of one human soul;
Under thy sapphire vault, cold, still, and dark,
Deep down, below where tides and tempests roll,
The spirit may not lose its deeper curse,
It finds no death in the whole universe.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written In London

Struggle not with thy life!—the heavy doom
Resist not, it will bow thee like a slave:
Strive not! thou shalt not conquer; to thy tomb
Thou shalt go crushed, and ground, though ne'er so brave.
Complain not of thy life!—for what art thou
More than thy fellows, that thou shouldst not weep?
Brave thoughts still lodge beneath a furrowed brow,
And the way-wearied have the sweetest sleep.
Marvel not at thy life!—patience shall see
The perfect work of wisdom to her given;
Hold fast thy soul through this high mystery,
And it shall lead thee to the gates of heaven.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines Written On Leaving Belvoir Castle In 1842

Farewell, fair castle! on thy lordly hill
Firm be thy seat and proud thy station still,
Soft rise the breezes from the vale below,
Bright be the clouds that wander o'er thy brow;
O'er the broad lands that form thy wide domain
Short be the winter, long the summer's reign.
Pilgrim of pleasure to thy stately towers,
Fain would I leave among thy friendly bowers
Some votive offering ere on my way,
With many a backward glance, I turn to stray.
May virtue, strength, and honour, guard thy walls,
Love, health, and peace, abide within thy halls,
While graceful mirth and noble courtesy
As now for ever hold their seat in thee;
And still upon thy lordly turrets rest
The grateful blessing of each parting guest!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

And I
Am reading, too, my book of memory:
With eyelids closed, over the crested foam,
And the blue, marbled sea, I seek my home.
All present things forgotten, on the shore
Of the romantic Forth I stand once more;
Once more I hear the waves' harmonious strife;
Once more, upon the mountain coast of Fife,
I see the checker'd lights and shadows fall.
Upon the sand crumbles the ruin'd wall
That guards no more the desolate demesne,
And the deserted mansion. High between
The summer clouds the Ochil hills arise;
And far, far, like a shadow in the skies,
Ben Lomond tow'rs aloft in sovereign height.
O Cramond beach! are thy sands still as bright—
Thy waters still as sunny,—thy wild shore
As lonely and as lovely as of yore?—
Haunts of my happy time! as wandering back
Along my life, on memory's faithful track,
How fair ye seem,—how fair, how dear ye are!
Ye need not to be gazed at from afar;
Deceptive distance lends no brighter hue;
Your beauty and your peacefulness were true.
Not yours the charms from which we wearied stray,
And own them only when they're far away.
Oh, be ye blest for all the happiness
Which I have known in your wild loneliness.
Old sea, whose voice yet chimes upon my ear,—
Old paths, whose every winding step was dear,—
Dark, rocky promontories,—echoing caves,
Worn hollow by the white feet of the waves,—
Blue, lake-like waters,—legend-haunted isle,
Over ye all bright be the summer's smile;
And gently fall the winter on your breast,
Haunts of my youth, my memory's place of rest.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

Here be the free gifts of the morning for thee;
Dog-roses, with their thorns all strung with pearls,
And a large round diamond in each rosy cup:
Their leaves are the colour of Aurora's cheeks.
Here is a pale white flower, without a name,
At least to me, who am a stranger here:
It has a delicate almond smell, and grew
Among thick boughs, and leaves that guarded it.
Poor thing! I took it from its shelter for thee.
Here be some lilac heads of clover, sweet
As the breath of love: they lay amongst the hay
In a new-mown meadow, glittering in the sun.
Here are the leaves of the wild vine, that shine
Like glass without, and underneath are white
And soft as a swan's breast. There is an oak branch;
I gather'd it, because it grows at home,
And in this strange land look'd as sad and loving
As a friend's face: when it is wither'd, keep it.
They are all heavy with the tears of the night,
Who weeps, because she may not meet the sun;
And when he comes down from the mountain tops,
Parting the forests with his hands of fire,
He drinks her weeping, kissing all the flowers
With passionate love, which makes them look so blushing.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

In visions countless as the golden motes
That dance upon the sun's earth-kissing beams,
A phantom haunts my life, an image floats
Through my day-thoughts, and through my midnight dreams,
Clothed in a thousand forms which fancy traces
With quick creation, and as soon effaces.
Sometimes, it slowly sweeps in silence by,
Beneath some long Ionian colonnade,
Through whose far vista I behold it fade,
Girlish in form, in bearing sad and high.
Sometimes, in some removed chamber lone,
Where the sun's mellow radiance is thrown
Around it, in a thousand varying hues,
That melt and glow, it seems to sit and muse.
Sometimes, upon a gray and stony shore,
The lonely figure strays distractedly,
Or stands, and gazes the wide water o'er,
Stretching its arms above the cruel sea.
And all this while, I never see the face
Of this close haunting shape, that follows me;
And vainly do I strive, and pray for grace,
To know if what I think it is—it be.
Then with an accent by despair made wild,
I call aloud upon thy name, my child,
And I behold thine eyes—and suddenly
I'm in the dark of utter misery.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

AFTER A SUMMER'S WALK, IN WHICH MY COMPANION BENT OVER A CLEAR SPRING WHICH GREW TURBID WITHOUT ANY APPARENT CAUSE.

Serene and pure the fountain flowed,
Reflecting Heaven's holiest blue,
When over it thine image bowed—
And the clear water turbid grew.
I saw no cloud upon thy brow,
To darken o'er the bright wave's rest,
Say, could it mirror, thinkest thou,
Some evil hid within thy breast?
Were thy lips guileless, thy heart true,
When by the fairy well they bent?
Whence came the darkness, then, that drew
Its veil across the element?
Yet tell me not—by that lone well
'Tis like we ne'er shall stand again,
Then let the troubled fountain's spell
A mystery still to me remain.
Let me not know what I should mourn,
Distrust of joy, and doubt of thee,
Nor this sweet summer day return
Clouded upon my memory:
For o'er the surface of my soul,
Thine image too hath cast a shade,
And stirred beyond my own control
The depths, that make myself afraid.

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

'Tis all in vain, it may not last,
The sickly sunlight dies away,
And the thick clouds that veil the past,
Roll darkly o'er my present day.
Have I not flung them off, and striven
To seek some dawning hope in vain;
Have I not been for ever driven
Back to the bitter past again?
What though a brighter sky bends o'er
Scenes where no former image greets me,
Though lost in paths untrod before,
Here, even here, pale Memory meets me.
O life—O blighted bloomless tree!
Why cling thy fibres to the earth?
Summer can bring no flower to thee,
Autumn no bearing, spring no birth.
Bid me not strive, I'll strive no more,
To win from pain my joyless breast;
Sorrow has ploughed too deeply o'er
Life's Eden—let it take the rest!

Frances Anne Kemble

Lines.

To the smooth beach the silver sea
Comes rippling in a thousand smiles,
And back again runs murmuringly,
To break around yon distant isles.
The sunshine, through a floating veil
Of golden clouds, looks o'er the wave,
And gilds, far off, the outline pale,
Of many a rocky cape and cave.
The breath of spring comes balmily
Over the newly blossom'd earth;
The smile of spring, on sea, and sky,
Is shedding light, and love, and mirth.
I would that thou wert by my side,
As underneath the rosy bloom
Of flowering orchard trees I ride,
And drink their fragrant, fresh perfume;
I would that thou wert by my side,
To feel this soft air on thy brow,
And listen to the chiming tide
Along that smooth shore breaking now;
I would that thou wert here to bless,
As I do now, the love and care,
That with such wealth of loveliness,
Have made life's journeying-land so fair.

Frances Anne Kemble

Morning By The Seaside

With these two kisses on thine eyes
I melt thy sleep away—arise!
For look, my love, Phœbus his golden hand
Hath laid upon the white mane of the sea,
And springing from the fresh brine gloriously,
He glances keen o'er the long level strand.
Now come his horses up, all snorting fire,
The lovely morning hours, hymning their choir
Of triumph, circle round the royal sun,
And the bright pageant of the day's begun.
Come, let me lock in mine thy hand,
And pace we with swift feet this smooth and sparkling sand.
See, how the swollen ridges of the waves
Curl into crystal caves,
Rising and rounding,
Rolling, rebounding,
Echoing, resounding,
And running into curves of creamy spray,
Mark, with white wavy lines, the far-indented bay.
The little bark, that, by the sheltering shore,
Folded her wings, and rocked herself to sleep,
Shakes out her pinions to the breeze once more,
And, like a swallow, dips, and skims the deep.
Hail, welcome day! hail, miracle of light!
Hail, wondrous resurrection from the night!
Hail, glorious earth! hail ocean, fearful fair!
Hail ye sweet kisses of fresh morning air!
Hail thou! my love, my life, my air, my light,
Soul of my day! my morning, noon, and night!

Frances Anne Kemble

My Love

There's not a fibre in my trembling frame
That does not vibrate when thy step draws near,
There's not a pulse that throbs not when I hear
Thy voice, thy breathing, nay thy very name.
When thou art with me every sense seems dim,
And all I am, or know, or feel is thee;
My soul grows faint, my veins run liquid flame,
And my bewildered spirit seems to swim
In eddying whirls of passion, dizzily.

When thou art gone, there creeps into my heart
A cold and bitter consciousness of pain:
The light, the warmth of life with thee depart,
And I sit dreaming over and over again
Thy greeting clasp, thy parting look and tone;
And suddenly I wake--and am alone.

Frances Anne Kemble

Nay, Let The Past Be Past, Nor Strive In Vain

Nay, let the Past be past, nor strive in vain,
From the dim backward vista of our years
To bring departed pleasures here again,
In youth's fresh morning light and dewy tears,
And brooding golden mist let them remain,
Since in that distant time their image wears
A softer charm, like that of some fair face,
That painted long ago may still retain
Through faded tints the tender lingering grace
Of a fine spirit nothing can efface.
Since Time hath spared it, do you e'en as much,
Forbear renew'd possession's heavy touch;
Call no past Pleasures back, but, sadly wise,
Keep them for ever pleasant Memories.

Frances Anne Kemble

Noonday By The Seaside

The sea has left the strand—
In their deep sapphire cup
The waves lie gathered up,
Off the hard-ribbed sand.

From each dark rocky brim
The full wine-tinted billows ebbed away,
Leave on the golden rim
Of their huge bowl not one thin line of spray.

Above the short-grassed downs all broidered over
With scarlet pimpernel, and silver clover,
Like spicy incense quivers the warm air,
With piercing fervid heat,
The noonday sunbeams beat
On the red granite sea-slabs, broad and bare.

And prone along the shore,
Basking in the fierce glare,
Lie sun-bronzed Titans, covered o'er
With shaggy, sea-weed hair.

Come in, under this vault of brownest shade,
By sea-worn arches made,
Where all the air, with a rich topaz light,
Is darkly bright.
'Neath these rock-folded canopies,
Shadowy and cool,
The crystal water lies
In many a glassy pool,
Whose green-veined sides, as they receive the light,
Gleam like pale wells of precious malachite.

In the warm shallow water dip thy feet,
Shining like rose-hued pearls below the wave,
And, lying in this hollow, sea-smoothed seat,
Gaze on the far-off white-sailed fisher fleet,
Framed in the twilight portal of our cave;
While I lie here, and gaze on thee

Fairer art thou to me
Than Aphrodite, when the breathless deep
Wafted her smiling in her rosy sleep
Towards the green-myrtled shore, that in delight
With starry fragrance suddenly grew white,
Or than the shuddering girl,
Whose wide distended eyes,
Glassy with dread surprise,
Saw the huge billow curl,
Foaming and bristling, with its grisly freight;
While, twinkling from afar,
With iris-feathered heels, and falchion bright,
From the blue cope of heaven's dazzling height,
Her lover swooped, a flashing noon-tide star.

A mid-day dream hath lighted on thy brow,
And gently bends it down; thy fair eyes swim,
In liquid languor, lustreless and dim,
And slowly dropping now,
From the light loosened clasp of thy warm hand,
Making a ruddy shadow on the sand,
Falls a wine-perfumed rose, with crimson glow.

Sleep, my beloved! while the sultry spell
Of silent noon o'er sea and earth doth dwell:
Stoop thy fair graceful head upon my breast,
With its thick rolls of golden hair opprest,
My lily!—and my breathing shall not sob
With one tumultuous sigh—nor my heart throb
With one irregular bound—that I may keep
With tenderest watch the treasure of thy sleep.
Droop gently down, in slumb'rous, slow eclipse,
Fair fringed lids! beneath my sealing lips.

Frances Anne Kemble

Ode

WRITTEN FOR THE 22 OF AUGUST 1834—THE BERKSHIRE JUBILEE.

Darkness upon the mountain and the vale—
Forest and field are bathed in dewy sleep,
And the night angels vigil o'er them keep.
No sound, no motion; over hill and dale,
A calm and lovely Death seems to embrace
Earth's fairest realms, and heaven's unmeasured space.

The dark wood slumbers; leaf, and branch, and bough,
High feathery crest, and lowliest grassy blade;
All restless wandering wings are folded now,
That swept the sky, and in the sunshine played.
The lake's wild waves rest in their rocky bowl,
Harmonious silence breathes from nature's soul,
And night's wide star-sown wings brood o'er the whole.
In the deep trance of the hushed universe
The dark death-mystery doth man rehearse.
Now for awhile, cease the swift thoughts to run
From task to task—tired labour, overdone,

With lighter toil than that of brain or heart,
In the sweet pause of outward life takes part;
And hope, and fear,—desire, love, joy, and sorrow,
Wait, 'neath sleep's downy wings, the coming morrow.
Peace upon earth, profoundest peace in heaven,
Praises the God of Peace, by whom 'tis given.

But hark! the woody depths of green Begin to stir,
Light thrills of life creep fresh between Oak, beech, and fir—
Faint rustling sounds of trembling leaves Whisper around,
The world at waking slowly heaves A sigh profound.
And showers of tears, Night gathered in her eyes,
Fall from fair Nature's face as she doth rise.

A ripple roughens on the lake,
The cradled lilies shivering wake,
Small crisping waves lift themselves up and break
Along the laurelled shore;

And woods and waters, answering each other, make Silence no more.
And lo! the East turns pale—
Night's dusky veil Thinner and thinner grows;
Till the bright morning star
From hill to hill, afar,

His fire glance throws.
Gold streaks run through the sky,
Higher, and yet more high,
The glory streams—
Flushes of rosy hue,
Long lines of palest blue,
And amber gleams.
From the green valleys rise
The silver mists like spray,
Catch and give back the ray
In opal dyes;
Light floods the sky, light pours upon the earth,
In glorious light the joyful day takes birth.

Hail to the day that brings ye home,
Ye distant wand'ers from the mountain land!
Hail to the day that bids ye come
Again upon your native hills to stand!
Hail, hail! from rocky peak,
And wood-embowered dale,
A thousand voices welcome speak,
Hail, home-turned pilgrims, hail!
Oh welcome! from the meadow and the hill Glad greetings rise,
From flowing river, and from bounding rill,
Smooth sunny field, and gloomy wood-depth still,
And the sharp thunder-splintered crag, that strikes
Its rocky spikes,
Into the skies;

Gray Lock, cloud-girdled, from his purple throne
A shout of gladness sends,
And up soft meadow slopes, a warbling tone
The Housatonic blends.

Welcome, ye absent long, and distant far!
Who from the roof-tree of your childhood turned,

Have waged 'mid strangers life's relentless war,
While at your hearts the ancient home-love burned.
Ye that have ploughed the barren, briny foam,
And reaped hard fortunes from the stormy sea,
The golden grain-fields rippling round your home,
Roll their ripe billows from fierce tempests free.
Ye, from those western deadly blooming fields
Where Pestilence in Plenty's bosom lies,
The sterner rock-soil of your mountains yields
Health's rosy blossoms, to these purer skies.
And ye, who on the accursèd southern plain,
Barren, not fruitful, with the sweat of slaves,
Have breathed awhile the tainted air in pain,
'Mid human forms, their spirits' living graves,
Here fall the fetters—by his cottage door,
Lord of the lordliest life, each dweller stands,
Lifting to God, as did his sires of yore,
A heart of love, and free laborious hands.

On each bold granite peak, and forest crest,
Each stony hill-path, and each lake's smooth shore,
Blessings of noble exiled patriots rest,

Liberty's altars are they evermore.
And on this air there lingers yet the tone
Of those last sacred words to freedom given,
The parting utterance of that holy one,

Whose spirit from these mountains rose to Heaven.
Ye that have prospered, bearing hence with ye
The virtues that command prosperity,
To the green threshold of your youth oh come,
And hang your trophies round your early home.
Ye that have suffered, and whose weary eyes
Have turned with sadness to your happier years,
Come to the fountain of sweet memories,
And by its healing waters dry your tears.
Ye that departed young, and old return,
Ye who went forth with hope, and hopeless come,—
If still unquenched within your hearts hath burned
The sacred love and longing for your home—

Hail, hail!
Bright hill and dale
With mirth resound;
Join in the joyful strain,
Ye have not wept in vain,
The parted meet again,
The lost are found!

And may God guard thee, O thou lovely land!
Evil, nor danger, nigh thy borders come!
Green towers of freedom may thy hills still stand,
Still be thy valleys peace and virtue's home;
The blessing of the stranger rest on thee,
Unmoved as Heaven be thy prosperity!

Frances Anne Kemble

Oft Let Me Wander Hand In Hand With Thought,

Oft let me wander hand in hand with Thought,
In woodland paths, and lone sequestered shades,
What time the sunny banks and mossy glades,
With dewy wreaths of early violets wrought,
Into the air their fragrant incense fling,
To greet the triumph of the youthful Spring.
Lo, where she comes! 'scaped from the icy lair
Of hoary Winter; wanton, free, and fair!
Now smile the heavens again upon the earth,
Bright hill, and bosky dell, resound with mirth,
And voices, full of laughter and wild glee,
Shout through the air pregnant with harmony;
And wake poor sobbing Echo, who replies
With sleepy voice, that softly, slowly, dies.

Frances Anne Kemble

On A Forget-Me-Not

BROUGHT FROM SWITZERLAND.

Flower of the mountain! by the wanderer's hand
Robbed of thy beauty's short-lived sunny day;
Didst thou but blow to gem the stranger's way,
And bloom, to wither in the stranger's land!
Hueless and scentless as thou art,
How much that stirs the memory,
How much, much more, that thrills the heart,
Thou faded thing, yet lives in thee!

Where is thy beauty? in the grassy blade,
There lives more fragrance and more freshness now;
Yet oh! not all the flowers that bloom and fade,
Are half so dear to memory's eye as thou.
The dew that on the mountain lies,
The breeze that o'er the mountain sighs,
Thy parent stem will nurse and nourish;
But thou—not e'en those sunny eyes
As bright, as blue, as thine own skies,
Thou faded thing! can make thee flourish.

Frances Anne Kemble

On A Hollow Friendship

A bitter cheat!—and here at length it ends—
And thou and I, who were to one another
More closely knit than brother is to brother,
Shall not be even as two common friends.
Never again in our two hearts may grow
The love whose root was bleeding torn away;
Sadly and darkly shall our spirits go,
Companionless, through life's remaining way:
What though still side by side—yet never more
Each answering other, as they did before;
Lonelier by far, than those who ne'er have known
Dear partnership of love such as we knew,
Unpitied by our fellows, to whose view
A seeming false must o'er our state be thrown—
Thus shall we henceforth walk, together—yet alone.

Frances Anne Kemble

On A Music Box

Poor little sprite! in that dark, narrow cell
Caged by the law of man's resistless might!
With thy sweet, liquid notes, by some strong spell,
Compelled to minister to his delight!
Whence, what art thou? art thou a fairy wight
Caught sleeping in some lily's snowy bell,
Where thou hadst crept, to rock in the moonlight,
And drink the starry dew-drops as they fell?
Say, dost thou think, sometimes when thou art singing,
Of thy wild haunt upon the mountain's brow,
Where thou were wont to list the heath-bells ringing,
And sail upon the sunset's amber glow?
When thou art weary of thy oft-told theme,
Say, dost thou think of the clear pebbly stream,
Upon whose mossy brink thy fellows play?
Dancing in circles by the moon's soft beam,
Hiding in blossoms from the sun's fierce gleam,
Whilst thou, in darkness, sing'st thy life away.
And canst thou feel when the spring-time returns,
Filling the earth with fragrance and with glee;
When in the wide creation nothing mourns,
Of all that lives, save that which is not free?
Oh! if thou couldst, and we could hear thy prayer,
How would thy little voice beseeching cry,
For one short draught of the sweet morning air,
For one short glimpse of the clear azure sky!
Perchance thou sing'st in hopes thou shalt be free,
Sweetly and patiently thy task fulfilling;
While thy sad thoughts are wandering with the bee,
To every bud with honey dew distilling.
That hope is vain: for even could'st thou wing
Thy homeward flight back to the greenwood gay,
Thou'dst be a shunned and a forsaken thing,
'Mongst the companions of thy happier day.
For fairy sprites, like many other creatures,
Bear fleeting memories, that come and go;
Nor can they oft recall familiar features,
By absence touched, or clouded o'er with woe.
Then rest content with sorrow: for there be

Many that must that lesson learn with thee;
And still thy wild notes warble cheerfully,
Till, when thy tiny voice begins to fail,
For thy lost bliss sing but one parting wail,
Poor little sprite! and then sleep peacefully!

Frances Anne Kemble

On A Symphony Of Beethoven

Terrible music, whose strange utterance
Seemed like the spell of some dread conscious trance;
Motionless misery, impotent despair,
With beckoning visions of things dear and fair;
Restless desire, sharp poignant agonies;
Soft, thrilling, melting, tender memories;
Struggle and tempest, and around it all
The heavy muffling folds of some black pall
Stifling it slowly; a wild wail for life,
Sinking in darkness—a short passionate strife
With hideous fate, crushing the soul to earth;
Sweet snatches of some melancholy mirth;
A creeping fear, a shuddering dismay,
Like the cold dawning of some fatal day;
Dim faces growing pale in distant lands;
Departing feet, and slowly severing hands;
Voices of love, speaking the words of hate,—
The mockery of a blessing come too late;
Loveless and hopeless life, with memory,—
This curse that music seemed to speak to me.

Frances Anne Kemble

On Being Blessed By A Child

The voice of childhood blessed me—and methought
It sounded like a solemn echo caught
Out of that world of light where angels dwell,
And sainted souls, who've bid this earth farewell.
Over the tempest rising in my breast
It fell, and lulled each stormy thought to rest;
Back to their bitter spring my tears were driven,
And my soul rose, serene and strong, to Heaven.
Prayer of the innocent! thou wilt prevail
With tenfold might, at that high throne of grace,
Where e'en the cry of sin is of avail,
And where the vilest suppliant finds a place.
I'll bear thee with me as a spell of power,
To shield me in temptation's fiery hour,
To cheer me, when with spirit worn and weary,
I gaze upon the path I'm doom'd to tread;
To point beyond that path, so dark and dreary,
To the bright bourne where all is finished.
And, oh dear child! who on life's threshold now
Stand'st with thy late left heaven all round thee still,
May He who sent thee to this world of woe
Guide, and o'ershadow thee, through every ill,
And lead thee home when the dark dream is o'er,
As bright, as pure, more glorious than before!
So prayeth one, whose dawn was overcast,
Whose scorching noon of life is long since past,
Who waits the rising of a better day,
And bears her burthen weeping on her way.

Frances Anne Kemble

Parting

The golden hinges of the year have turned—
Spring, and the summer, and the harvest time
Have come, and gone; and on the threshold stands
The withered Winter, stretching forth his hands
To take my rose from me;—which he will wear
On his bleak bosom, all the bitter months
While the earth and I remain disconsolate.
My rose!—with the soft vesture of her leaves,
Gathered all round the secrets of her heart
In crimson fragrant folds,—within her bower
Of fair fresh green, guarded with maiden thorns.
O withered Winter! keep my blossom safe!
Thou shalt not kiss her with thy blue cold lips,
Nor pinch her in thy bony grip,—nor drop
More than one tiny sparkling diamond,
From thy cold carcanet, upon her cheek:
But lay soft snow fur round her—and above
Her precious head, make thy skies blue and clear,
And set her in the sun;—O withered Winter!
Be tender of my rose, and harm her not.
Alas, my flower, farewell!

Frances Anne Kemble

Past Hours

Two angels have them in eternal keeping.
He that beside the deep vaults of the past
Stands to receive the treasures, that with weeping
And lamentation into them men cast,
Forgetting that alone they hold that fast
Which to his marble storehouse they commit;
And He, that spirit bright and terrible,
Who at the feet of God doth thoughtful sit,
Upon whose scroll, in lines of flame are writ
Each hour of every day of those who dwell
Upon this earth: He hath those days and hours,
Whom, as they smiled on us, we counted ours;
And who, when that great history appears,
Shall make us answer, as if we were theirs.

Frances Anne Kemble

Return

When the bright sun back on his yearly road
Comes towards us, his great glory seems to me,
As from the sky he pours it all abroad,
A golden herald, my beloved, of thee.
When from the south the gentle winds do blow,
Calling the flowers that sleep beneath the earth,
It sounds like sweetest music, that doth go
Before thy coming, full of love and mirth.
When one by one the violets appear,
Opening their purple vests so modestly,
To greet the virgin daughter of the year,
Each seems a fragrant prophecy of thee.
For with the spring thou shalt return again;
Therefore the wind, the flower, and clear sunshine,
A double worship from my heart obtain,
A love and welcome not their own, but thine.

Frances Anne Kemble

Saturday Night Song At Sea

Come fill the can again, boys,
One parting glass, one parting glass;
Ere we shall meet again, boys,
Long years may pass, long years may pass.
We'll drink the gallant bark, boys,
That's borne us through, that's borne us through,
Bright waves and billows dark, boys,
Our ship and crew, our ship and crew.
We'll drink those eyes that bright, boys,
With smiling ray, with smiling ray,
Have shone like stars to light, boys,
Our wat'ry way, our wat'ry way.
We'll drink our English home, boys,
Our fatherland, our fatherland,
And the shores to which we're come, boys,
A sister strand, a sister strand.

Frances Anne Kemble

Say Thou Not Sadly, Never And No More

Say thou not sadly, 'never,' and 'no more,'
But from thy lips banish those falsest words;
While life remains that which was thine before
Again may be thine; in Time's storehouse lie
Days, hours, and moments, that have unknown hoards
Of joy, as well as sorrow: passing by,
Smiles come with tears; therefore with hopeful eye
Look thou on dear things, though they turn away,
For thou and they, perchance, some future day
Shall meet again, and the gone bliss return;
For its departure then make thou no mourn,
But with stout heart bid what thou lov'st farewell;
That which the past hath given the future gives as well.

Frances Anne Kemble

Scraps.

Raise it to Heaven, when thine eye fills with tears,
For only in a watery sky appears
The bow of light; and from th' invisible skies
Hope's glory shines not, save through weeping eyes.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sicilian Song

I planted in my heart one seed of love,
Water'd with tears and watch'd with sleepless care.
It grew—and when I look'd that it should prove
A gracious tree—and blessed harvests bear,
Blossom nor fruit was there to crown my pain,
Tears, care, and labour, all had been in vain;
And yet I dare not pluck it from my heart,
Lest with the deep-struck root my life depart.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sleepless Nights

In sleepless nights my sad forgotten lute
Breathes with low strains of broken melody,
Under my touch long, long had it been mute,
But now it sings of its own fantasy.
Thou hadst a spirit then that was not mine,
Whence came it, Lute—by whom was't to thee given?
I knew not that an adverse will of thine
Against my will to make thee sing, had striven.
Now while I lie and watch the solemn flight
Of the fair stars that wait upon the night,
Whose are the songs thou murmurest in my ears,
That make my wakeful eyes brim o'er with tears?

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

Never, oh never more! shall I behold
Thy form so fair;
Or loosen from its braids the rippling gold
Of thy long hair.
Never, oh never more! shall I be blest
By thy voice low,
Or kiss, while thou art sleeping on my breast,
Thy marble brow.
Never, oh never more! shall I inhale
Thy fragrant sighs,
Or gaze, with fainting soul, upon the veil
Of thy bright eyes.

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

No—not to win the world's applause
Would I be great or good or wise;
But to find favour in your eyes
And win one smile from you—because,
O Fairest Fair, I love you.
Power or riches to obtain
By aught that I could do or dare,
I would not strive, I should not care,
So long as I must say in vain,—
O Sweetest Sweet, I love you.
But if I thought that by my death
You could be mov'd to pity me,
Then would I die right joyfully,
And tell you with my latest breath,—
O Dearest Dear, I love you.

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

Pass thy hand through my hair, love;
One little year ago,
In a curtain bright and rare, love,
It fell golden o'er my brow.
But the gold has paled away, love,
And the drooping curls are thin,
And cold threads of wintry gray, love,
Glitter their folds within:
How should this be, in one short year?
It is not age—can it be care?
Fasten thine eyes on mine, love;
One little year ago,
Midsummer's sunny shine, love,
Had not a warmer glow.
But the light is there no more, love,
Save in melancholy gleams,
Like wan moonlight wand'ring o'er, love,
Dim lands in troubled dreams:
How should this be, in one short year?
It is not age—can it be care?

Lay thy cheek to my cheek, love;
One little year ago
It was ripe, and round, and sleek, love,
As the autumn peaches grow.
But the rosy hue has fled, love,
Save a flush that goes and comes,
Like a flower born from the dead, love,
And blooming over tombs:
How should this be, in one short year?
It is not age—can it be care?

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

The moment must come, when the hands that unite
In the firm clasp of friendship, will sever;
When the eyes that have beamed o'er us brightly to-night,
Will have ceased to shine o'er us, for ever.
Yet wreath again the goblet's brim
With pleasure's roseate crown!
What though the future hour be dim—
The present is our own!
The moment is come, and again we are parting,
To roam through the world, each our separate way;
In the bright eye of beauty the pearl-drop is starting,
But hope, sunny hope, through the tear sheds its ray.
Then wreath again the goblet's brim
With pleasure's roseate crown!
What though the present hour be dim—
The future's yet our own!
The moment is past, and the bright throng that round us
So lately was gathered, has fled like a dream;
And time has untwisted the fond links that bound us,
Like frost wreaths, that melt in the morning's first beam.
Still wreath once more the goblet's brim
With pleasure's roseate crown!
What though all else beside be dim—
The past has been our own!

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

When the sun rises where will you be
Wandering, sweetheart of mine?
On the wild mountain or on the wild sea,
Treading the heather or breasting the brine:
Sweetheart, come back to me.
When the moon rises where will you be
Wandering, sweetheart of mine?
Cold on the sea-sand or stark on the lea,
Never again to see sun or moon shine,
Never to come back to me.

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

When you mournfully rivet your tear-laden eyes,
That have seen the last sunset of hope pass away,
On some bright orb that seems, through the still, sapphire skies,
In beauty and splendour to roll on its way:
Oh, remember this earth, if beheld from afar,
Appears wrapt in a halo as soft, and as bright,
As the pure silver radiance enshrining you star,
Where your spirit is eagerly soaring to-night.
And at this very midnight, perhaps, some poor heart
That is aching, or breaking, in that distant sphere;
Gazes down on this dark world, and longs to depart
From its own dismal home, to a happier one here.

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

Yet once again, but once, before we sever,
Fill we one brimming cup,—it is the last!
And let those lips, now parting, and for ever,
Breathe o'er this pledge, 'the memory of the past!'
Joy's fleeting sun is set; and no to-morrow
Smiles on the gloomy path we tread so fast,
Yet, in the bitter cup, o'er filled with sorrow,
Lives one sweet drop,—the memory of the past.
But one more look from those dear eyes, now shining
Through their warm tears, their loveliest and their last;
But one more strain of hands, in friendship twining,
Now farewell all, save memory of the past.

Frances Anne Kemble

Song.

You gave your love a posy and she set it on a stand,
Where it freshly bloom'd and sweetly did smell:
I gave my love a daisy and she held it in her hand,
Till it died—because she loved it so well.
You gave your love a jewel and she laid it safe apart,
Where it shone like the stars in Heav'n that dwell:
I gave my love a rosebud and she wore it on her heart,
Till it died—because she loved it so well.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet

SUGGESTED BY SIR THOMAS LAWRENCE OBSERVING THAT WE NEVER DREAM
OF OURSELVES YOUNGER THAN WE ARE.

Not in our dreams, not even in our dreams
Not in our dreams, not even in our dreams,
May we return to that sweet land of youth,
That home of hope, of innocence, and truth,
Which as we further roam but fairer seems.
In that dim shadowy world, where the soul strays
When she has laid her mortal charge to rest,
We oft behold far future hours and days,
But ne'er live o'er the past, the happiest.
How oft will fancy's wild imaginings
Bear us in sleep to times and worlds unseen,
But ah! not e'en unfettered fancy's wings
Can lead us back to aught that we have been,
Or waft us to that smiling, sunny shore,
Which e'en in slumber we may tread no more.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet On An Edelweiss

Where huge rock buttresses bear up the clouds,
With all their floating reservoirs of rain;
Where the wide winding sheet of snow enshrouds
The glacier's sapphire clefts and glittering plain,
This flow'r is found—the well-nam'd Edelweiss.
Of frozen beds of foam and fields of ice,
Soft downy blossom—type of purity,
Of courage high and low humility,
Fast-rooted Love clinging to dire mischance.
Faith fixed as Fate defying circumstance,
O'er the unstable seas thee do I send,
Star of the steadfast mountains, to the friend
In whom thy loftiest, lowliest graces meet.
Bloom, Edelweiss, at her beloved feet!

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet On The American War.

She has gone down! Woe for the world, and all
Its weary workers! gazing from afar
At the clear rising of that hopeful star;
Star of redemption to each weeping thrall
Of pow'r decrepit, and of rule outworn;
Beautiful shining of that blessed morn,
Which was to bring leave for the poor to live;
To work and rest, to labour and to thrive,
And righteous room for all who nobly strive:
She has gone down! Woe for the struggling world,
Back on its path of progress sternly hurled!
Land of sufficient harvests for all dearth,
Home of far-seeing Hope, Time's latest birth,—
Woe for the promised land of the whole earth!

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet To Harriet St. Leger

Whene'er I recollect the happy time
When you and I held converse dear together,
There come a thousand thoughts of sunny weather,
Of early blossoms, and the fresh year's prime;
Your memory lives for ever in my mind
With all the fragrant beauties of the spring,
With od'rous lime and silver hawthorn twined,
And many a noonday woodland wandering.
There's not a thought of you, but brings along
Some sunny dream of river, field, and sky;
'Tis wafted on the blackbird's sunset song,
Or some wild snatch of ancient melody.
And as I date it still, our love arose
'Twixt the last violet and the earliest rose.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet To Mrs. Jameson,

WHO WROTE UNDER MY LIKENESS AS JULIET, 'LIETI GIORNI E FELICE.'
Whence should they come, lady! those happy days
That thy fair hand and gentle heart invoke
Upon my head? Alas! such do not rise
On any, of the many, who with sighs
Bear through this journey-land of woe, life's yoke.
The light of such lives not in thine own lays;
Such were not hers, that girl, so fond, so fair,
Beneath whose image thou hast traced thy prayer.
Evil, and few, upon this darksome earth,
Must be the days of all of mortal birth;
Then why not mine? Sweet lady! wish again,
Not more of joy to me, but less of pain;
Calm slumber, when life's troubled hours are past,
And with thy friendship cheer them while they last.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet Written Among The Ruins Of The Castle At Heidelberg

Weep'st thou to see the ruin and decay
Which Time doth wreak upon earth's mighty things?
Temples of gods, and palaces of kings,
Weep'st thou to see them crumbling all away?
Oh I could show thee such a woful ruin
As doth surpass the worst of Time's undoing,
A fortress strong of life, not wrecked by years,
But overthrown by sighs, and sapped with tears;
A noble mansion, wherein youth did dwell,
To which this palace were a lowly cell;
A goodly temple, in whose holiest shrine,
Love had a worship like himself divine;
And all these fabrics fair deserted be—
A weed-grown heap, shunned even by memory.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Art thou already weary of the way?
Thou who hast yet but half the way gone o'er;
Get up, and lift thy burthen: lo, before
Thy feet the road goes stretching far away.
If thou already faint, who hast but come
Through half thy pilgrimage, with fellows gay,
Love, youth, and hope, under the rosy bloom
And temperate airs of early breaking day;
Look yonder, how the heavens stoop and gloom,
There cease the trees to shade, the flowers to spring,
And th' angels leave thee; what wilt thou become
Through yon drear stretch of dismal wandering,
Lonely and dark? I shall take courage, friend,
For comes not every step more near the end?

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Away, away! bear me away, away,
Into the boundless void, thou mighty wind!
That rushest on thy midnight way,
And leav'st this weary world, far, far behind!
Away, away! bear me away, away,
To the wide strandless deep,
Ye headlong waters! whose mad eddies leap
From the pollution of your bed of clay,
Away, away! bear me away, away,
Into the fountains of eternal light,
Ye rosy clouds! that to my longing sight,
Seem melting in the sun's devouring ray!
Away, away! oh, for some mighty blast,
To sweep this loathsome life into the past!

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Spirit of all sweet sounds! who in mid air
Sittest enthroned, vouchsafe to hear my prayer!
Let all those instruments of music sweet,
That in great Nature's hymn bear burthen meet,
Sing round this mossy pillow, where my head
From the bright noontide sky is sheltered.
Thou southern wind! wave, wave thy od'rous wings,
O'er your smooth channels gush, ye crystal springs!
Ye laughing elves, that through the rustling corn
Run chattering; thou tawny-coated bee,
Who at thy honey-work sing'st drowsily;
And ye, oh ye! who greet the dewy morn,
And fragrant eventide, with melody,
Ye wild wood minstrels, sing my lullaby!

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Thou art to me like one, who in a dream
Of pleasant fancies is borne sleeping by
The place where a great treasure hid doth lie:
Anon thou wilt awake, and thou'lt exclaim—
'How was it that along this path I came,
And left so great a treasure on my way?
I will make haste to seek it:' shalt thou say—
And then, thou shalt re-measure thoughtfully
The steps thou didst fly over in thy sleep;
But vainly shalt thou wander there, and weep,
For while thou didst pass dreaming, careless, on,
Another followed, and with digging deep,
And diligent seeking, did the harvest reap
That was held to thy hand—and thou wouldst none.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

'Twas but a dream! and oh! what are they all,
All the fond visions hope's bright finger traces,
All the fond visions time's dark wing effaces,
But very dreams! but morning buds, that fall
Withered and blighted, long before the night:
Strewing the paths they should have made more bright,
With mournful wreaths, whose light hath past away,
That can return to life and beauty never,
And yet, of whom it was but yesterday,
We deemed they'd bloom as fresh and fair for ever.
Oh then, when hopes, that to thy heart are dearest,
Over the future shed their sunniest beam,
When round thy path their bright wings hover nearest,
Trust not too fondly!—for 'tis but a dream!

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

When in the wintry woods you hear the note
Of some small robin piping his delight
Because the noonday sunshine warm and bright
Melts the sweet music from his tiny throat,
Say not with scorn, 'Why doth the silly bird
Twitter and chirrup, when the jubilant cries
With which the Lark scales the blue vaulted skies
Beyond his golden corn-field scarce are heard?'
The God who bade His creatures all rejoice
Amid the thunderous music of the spheres,
Gives heed to every soul that speaks—and hears,
Well pleas'd, the little Redbreast's thankful voice.
Therefore sing I—and these my feeble lays
Join to the universal hymn of Praise.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Thou restless voice! that wandering up and down
These forest paths, where for this many a day,
I come to dream the summer hours away—
Mak'st answer to my voice with mocking tone,
Echo! thou air-born child of harmony,
How oft in sunny field, or shadowy wood,
By lone hill-side, or cavern-cradled flood,
Have I held laughing converse, nymph, with thee.
This is thy dwelling, and along the wide
Oak-woven halls, that stretch on every side,
Murmuring sweet lullabies, I hear thee stray,
Hushing the dim-eyed Twilight, who all day,
From searching sunbeams hid in these cool bowers,
Sleeps on a bed of pale, night-blowing flowers.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet.

Thou who sitt'st listening to the midnight wind,
Pale maiden moon! 'tis said, that they who gaze
Too long upon thy melancholy light
Are struck with madness, and that o'er their mind
Thou shedd'st a mildew down, a withering blight.
If this were so, to some thy barren rays
Would be more welcome than the fruitful sun
To those who number none but happy days.
If to be mad were to forget one's grief,
Thy dewy finger-tips touching my brow
Might to my misery bring such relief
As misery such as mine can never know,
Till my distracted thoughts shall cease to run
From what once was—to all that must be now.

Frances Anne Kemble

Sonnet. Though Thou Return Unto The Former Things,

Though thou return unto the former things,
Fields, woods, and gardens, where thy feet have strayed
In other days, and not a bough, branch, blade
Of tree, or meadow, but the same appears
As when thou lovedst them in former years,
They shall not seem the same; the spirit brings
Change from the inward, though the outward be
E'en as it was, when thou didst weep to see
It last, and spak'st that prophecy of pain,
'Farewell! I shall not look on ye again.'
And so thou never didst—no, though e'en now
Thine eyes behold all they so loved of yore,
The Thou that did behold them then, no more
Lives in this world, it is another Thou.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Autumn Cyclamen

We are the ghosts of those small flowers,
That in the opening of the year,
'Neath rosemary and myrtle bowers,
In crimson vests appear.
Far, underneath the blue pine wood,
Between its massive porphyry stems,
The mossy ground we overstrewed
With ruby-coloured gems.
The slender heath spires o'er us waved
Their lordly snow-white feathers fine,
And round our feet the earth was paved
With sheddings of the pine.
The flower Apollo loved, its bloom
In rosy bunches o'er us spread,
And heavy hanging golden broom
Deep golden shadows shed.
Above, around, and underneath,
The aromatic air was filled
With the wild sweetness of our breath,
Like honeycombs distilled.
The spring breeze flying towards the sea
Entranced, remained, and o'er us hung;
And in our cups the soft brown bee
Bending our blossoms swung.
The blue sea sang to us a deep,
Sonorous, solemn melody;
The sun stooped 'neath the boughs to peep
At our fair company.
And you went by; in your white hand
Was many a slender, brittle stem,
That you had gathered from our band;
We wished we were with them.
Now, here we are a ghostly train;
Who, in the closing of the year,
From the dark earth-cells rise again,
And sadly do appear.
The red hues of our coronal,
All pale and wintry white have grown;
Our leaves, in wild disorder, all,

By the rough winds are blown.
The sunbeams faint, and thin, and chill,
Look at us through dark walls of cloud,
And o'er the gray ridge of the hill
The storm howls fierce and loud.
'Neath many a black green ivy wreath,
Steeped in the cold and glittering showers,
We send a faint and scentless breath,
Through gloomy laurel bowers.
The hard pine-cones come shaken down,
Bruising us, where we clustered grow,
Brown, thorny, wild-brier arms are thrown
Across our breasts of snow.
The threatening thunder heavily
Rolls through the darkening realms of space;
And in the lightning glares we see
Each other's wet, wan face.
We are the ghosts of those gay flowers,
That in your soft white hand you bore;
And soon the cheerless wintry bowers
Will see e'en us no more.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Black Wallflower

I found a flower in a desolate plot,
Where no man wrought,—by a deserted cot,
Where no man dwelt; a strange, dark-colour'd gem,
Black heavy buds on a pale leafless stem;
I pluck'd it, wondering, and with it hied
To my brave May; and, showing it, I cried:
'Look, what a dismal flower! did ever bloom,
Born of our earth and air, wear such a gloom?
It looks as it should grow out of a tomb:
Is it not mournful?' 'No,' replied the child;
And, gazing on it thoughtfully, she smiled.
She knows each word of that great book of God,
Spread out between the blue sky and the sod:
'There are no mournful flowers—they are all glad;
This is a solemn one, but not a sad.'

Lo! with the dawn the black buds open'd slowly;
Within each cup a colour deep and holy,
As sacrificial blood, glow'd rich and red,
And through the velvet tissue mantling spread;
While in the midst of this dark crimson heat
A precious golden heart did throb and beat;

Through ruby leaves the morning light did shine,
Each mournful bud had grown a flow'r divine;
And bitter sweet to senses and to soul,
A breathing came from them, that fill'd the whole
Of the surrounding tranced and sunny air
With its strange fragrance, like a silent prayer.
Then cried I, 'From the earth's whole wreath I'll borrow
No flower but thee! thou exquisite type of sorrow!'

Frances Anne Kemble

The Death-Song

Mother, mother! my heart is wild,
Hold me upon your bosom dear,
Do not frown on your own poor child,
Death is darkly drawing near.
Mother, mother! the bitter shame
Eats into my very soul;
And longing love, like a wrapping flame,
Burns me away without control.
Mother, mother! upon my brow
The clammy death-sweats coldly rise;
How dim and strange your features grow
Through the hot mist that veils my eyes.
Mother, mother! sing me the song
They sing on sunny August eves,
The rustling barley fields along,
Binding up the ripe, red sheaves.
Mother, mother! I do not hear
Your voice—but his—oh, guard me well!
His breathing makes me faint with fear,
His clasping arms are round me still.
Mother, mother! unbind my vest,
Upon my heart lies his first token:
Now lay me in my narrow nest,
Your withered blossom, crushed and broken.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Fall Of Richmond

Roll not a drum—send not a clarion note
Of haughty triumph to the silent sky!
Hush'd be the shout of joy in ev'ry throat,
And veil'd the flash of pride in ev'ry eye.
Not with Te Deums loud, and high Hosannas,
Hail we the awful victory we have won;
But with our arms reversed, and lower'd banners,
We stand:—our work is done!
Thy work is done, God terrible and just!
Who laidst upon our hearts and hands this task;
Now, kneeling with our foreheads in the dust,
We venture Peace to ask!
Bleeding and writhing underneath our sword,
Prostrate our brethren lie—Thy fallen foe—
Struck down through us, by Thee, Omnipotent Lord!
By Thy dread hand laid low.

For our own guilt have we been doom'd to smite
These our own kindred, Thy great law defying,—
These, our own flesh and blood, who now unite
In one thing only with us—bravely dying.
Dying how bravely! yet how bitterly,
Not for the better side, but for the worse;
Blindly and madly striving against Thee,
For the bad cause, where Thou hast set Thy curse.
At whose defeat we may not raise our voice
Save in the deep thanksgiving of our prayers;
Lord, we have fought the fight; but to rejoice
Is ours no more than theirs.
Call back Thy dreadful ministers of wrath,
Who have led on our hosts to this great day;
Let our feet halt in the Avenger's path,
And bid our weapons stay!
And on this land, Freedom's inheritance,
Turn thou once more the splendour of Thy face;
Where nations, serving Thee, tow'rds light advance,
Give us again our place.
Not our bewildering past prosperity,
Not all thy former ill-acknowledged grace,

But this one boon, oh! grant us,—still to be
The home of hope for the whole human race!

Frances Anne Kemble

The Fellowship Of Genius

O hearts of flesh! O beating hearts of love!
O twining hands of human dear desire!—
How, when your glorious mate begins to move,
How shall ye follow those wide wings of fire
That bear him up? Ah! to the chariot wheels,
That wrap the child of genius to the sky,
Breathless ye cling till round the great world reels,
And ye fall fainting down despairingly!
Bleeding and blind ye fall, and still his flight,
Serene and strong, is upward to the light,
Nearer the sun and farther yet from ye,
Kindred alone of his mortality.
Awhile he stood beside ye, and awhile
His tender eyes, and lovely loving smile,
Made you believe he was indeed your brother:
But deep within that being lay another
Fearful as fair, no simple son of earth,
Of all created things the wondrous birth;
Immortal, Infinite, born to inherit
Matter, and mind, and sense, and subtlest spirit.
Lo! ye have called this King of all creation
Your fellow, and forgot the heaven-high station
Whence he must gather his great revenue:
Past, Present, Future, all things old and new,
All things in earth and heaven to him belong;
And in the pæans of his conquering song
Love is but one sweet chord, one single verse,
In the great chorus of the universe;
Which, with a voice resounding and sublime,
He utters forth unto all space and time.
O piteous, precious, hapless, human love!
Thou shalt be reaped by this bright son of Jove.
One flower 'mid the whole harvest of the world—
And when his mighty wings are gently furled,
Upon his heart thou shalt lie tenderly;
But when the summons of his destiny
Calls to him through the ages to awake,
One heavenward spring the drooping bud shall shake
Back to the earth, where it shall withering lie

In the broad light of Immortality.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Ideal

Thou shalt behold it once, and once believe
Thou may'st possess it—Love shall make the dream,
Impossible and glorious, palpable seem,
And with the bliss thy soul awhile deceive—
When from that trance thou wakest, never more
On earth hope for it, for its life is o'er;
That one approach of the Divinity
Is but the pledge of thy affinity.
That lovely vision shall not be renewed,
Though through all forms of being close pursued;
The light must pass into the heavens above thee,
Thy polar star, to warn and lead and move thee,
If thou seek lower for it thou shalt follow
A fatal marsh-fire, fleeting, false, and hollow;
Unto the glorious truth thou shalt not soar,
But sink in darkness down for evermore.
Not to behold it once, is not to live,
But to possess it, is not life's to give.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Landgraff

Through Thuringia's forest green
The Landgraff rode at close of e'en;
Huntsmen and hounds were left behind,
While following fierce a dappled hind;
And though the day grew thick apace,
The brave steed distanced in the chase,
Still by his rider urged amain,
While daylight served, to reach the plain,
Sped through the mazes of the wood;
The crimson light like drops of blood
Sprinkled upon the foliage lay;
And through green arches far away
Some sudden gaps let in the light,
And made the rough old tree-trunks bright.
Fast sped the steed, but still more fast
The fiery steeds of heaven sped on;
Oak, glade, and hazel copse flew past,
But the red sunlight all was gone:
Twilight's dim shadows gathered round,
With light departed every sound;
The sudden strain of some late bird
From the high boughs no more was heard;
And, save the thundering hoofs that ring
Along the path, and fluttering wing
Of bats low flying through the gray,
Deep solemn silence sealed the day:
One after one, the twisted form
Of each huge chestnut tree grew dim,
And with the blackness of a storm,
The coming night looked wild and grim.
With slower step, and head bent low,
The gallant steed went forward now;
Quoth the good Landgraff, in his mind,
'To-night we shall no shelter find,
But thou and I, old horse, shall lie
Beneath the oak tent of the wood;
Keen hunter, even of lineage high,
Finds red-brown moss a pillow good.'
Just then, a sudden ruddy glare,

Streamed from the forest depths of green;
The Landgraff gave a lusty cheer,
Well pleased the light to see, I ween;
And with a hopeful snort, the steed
Sprang on with fresh-awakened speed.
From a low smithy lined with light,
The red glow poured upon the night;
And that which, when beheld afar,
Shone like a friendly twinkling star,
Searched every nook and cranny round;
Showed each brown leaf upon the ground;
Each ivy snake's fine hairy feet,
Climbing the pine-shafts gray and stern—
Great golden oak-boughs spread and meet
Above a sea of golden fern;
The foaming brook all glancing bright,
In golden waves went rolling by;
From the low roof a jet of light
Sprang upwards to the murky sky:
The fierce flames roared, the bellows blew,
Round a red rain of fire-sparks flew;
The sweat fell from the stout smith's brow,
And ever with each stalwart blow,
He cried, 'O Landgraff, grow thou hard!'—
Amazed, the wondering Landgraff heard;
And stepping forth out of the night
Into the smithy's ruddy light,
He and his horse together stood,
Like shadowy demons of the wood.
'Good friend,' quoth he, 'I've lost my way,
Here in the forest, and I pray
That thou wilt suffer me to rest,
Till by the sky I guess the east.'
The toil-worn workman wiped his brow;
He pointed to a settle low,
And to his humble pallet bed:—
'To all I have, welcome!' he said—
'Thy horse must stable in the wood;
The water of the brook is good;
Here is the black loaf that I eat,
To work and weariness 'tis sweet.'
And then, without another word,

He cried, 'O Landgraff, grow thou hard!'—
And struck the iron bar amain—
The furious sparks flew forth again;
And thus he wrought, and thus he prayed,
Till, the stout bar of iron made,
He paused awhile, with panting breast,
And sat him down beside his guest,
Who cried, 'Good friend, I prithee say,
Wherefore thus strangely thou dost pray.'
'Oh, sir,' replied the brawny man,
'To pray and pray is all we can;
Our Earl is good, may God reward
His gentleness, and make him hard;
He loves the poor, he grinds us not;
He leaves us all a peaceful lot,
And were there none between his grace
And the poor vassal's down-trod race,
His people's were a blessed case:
But between us poor men and him,
A tribe of barons, hard and grim,
Harrow and drive, and strip and spoil,
The wretched tillers of the soil;
And the great God, who out of heaven
The charge of us, His poor, hath given
To princes, who our rights should guard,
Make towards these fiends our Landgraff hard;
And save us through His mighty hand
From these destroyers of the land:
Because our Earl is mild and good,
This greedy, bloody, wolfish brood
Make us a people most ill-starred,
So, great God, make our Landgraff hard!'
They both sat silent, while the brook
With rippling voice the burden took,
And seemed to echo back the word,
'Oh, great God, make our Landgraff hard!'—
'Hast thou no wife, hast thou no child
To cheer thee in this forest wild?'—
'I had two children and a wife,'
The smith replied, 'to cheer my life—
I saw my boy borne past my door
Bound to a stag all streaming gore,

Followed by devilish men and hounds,
Because within the forest bounds
Of Ravenstein a fawn he found,
And lifted dying from the ground.
A forester of Ravenstein
Strove with him once, and fared the worse,
And swore that luckless boy of mine
Should live that fatal day to curse.
I saw him hunted through the wood,
And tracked him by the streaks of blood,
To where the fern banks hide the river;
But after that I saw him—never.
I had a daughter,—God be praised!
She to a distant town is gone,
A fair, fair girl!—His hand he raised
And wiped the big tears, one by one,
From his brown face—'To let her go
I was right glad—'twas better so.
The wicked Lord of Falconsheight
Met her one morning by the brook;
She told her mother of his look
And loathsome words, as wild with fright
She fled away; that very night,
Like God's good angel, through the glade
A young companion of my trade
Came travelling by—short time he stayed,
And when he went, took hence the maid.
We gave our darling child to him,
And saved her so from shame.'—The dim
Red embers on the anvil showed
The fierce and fiery flush that glowed
Over the swart smith's knotted brow:
'Their mother pined away—and now,
I am alone;' he said, and rose—
Fast flew the sparks, fast fell the blows,
But neither said another word,
Save as the hammer fell with might,
From time to time, through the whole night
The prayer: 'Oh, make our Landgraff hard!'
The daylight dawned; the Landgraff rode
From the smith's cottage in the wood,
And through Thuringia, far and wide,

From that day forth was checked the pride
Of the fierce barons,—while the poor,
From wrong and cruelty secure,
Praised the good Earl, whose just command
With might and mercy ruled the land.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Minstrel's Grave

Oh let it be where the waters are meeting,
In one crystal sheet, like the summer's sky bright!
Oh let it be where the sun, when retreating,
May throw the last glance of his vanishing light,
Lay me there! lay me there! and upon my lone pillow,
Let the emerald moss in soft starry wreaths swell;
Be my dirge the faint sob of the murmuring billow,
And the burthen it sings to me, nought but 'farewell!'
Oh let it be where soft slumber enticing,
The cypress and myrtle have mingled their shade;
Oh let it be where the moon at her rising,
May throw the first night-glance that silvers the glade.
Lay me there! lay me there! and upon the green willow
Hang the harp that has cheered the lone minstrel so well,
That the soft breath of heaven, as it sighs o'er my pillow,
From its strings, now forsaken, may sound one farewell.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Parting

'Twas a fit hour for parting,
For athwart the leaden sky
The heavy clouds came gathering
And sailing gloomily:
The earth was drunk with heaven's tears,
And each moaning autumn breeze
Shook the burthen of its weeping
Off the overladen trees.
The waterfall rushed swollen down,
In the twilight, dim and gray;
With a foam-wreath on the angry brow
Of each wave that flashed away.
My tears were mingling with the rain,
That fell so cold and fast,
And my spirit felt thy low deep sigh
Through the wild and roaring blast.
The beauty of the summer woods
Lay rustling round our feet,
And all fair things had passed away—
'Twas an hour for parting meet.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Prayer Of A Lonely Heart

I am alone—oh be thou near to me,
Great God! from whom the meanest are not far.
Not in presumption of the daring spirit,
Striving to find the secrets of itself,
Make I my weeping prayer; in the deep want
Of utter loneliness, my God! I seek thee;
If the worm may creep up to thy fellowship,
Or dust, instinct with yearning, rise towards thee.
I have no fellow, Father! of my kind;
None that be kindred, none companion to me,
And the vast love, and harmony, and brotherhood,
Of the dumb creatures thou hast made below me,
Vexes my soul with its own bitter lot.
Around me grow the trees, each by the other;
Innumerable leaves, each like the other,
Whisper and breathe, and live and move together.
Around me spring the flowers; each rosy cup
Hath sisters leaning their fair cheeks against it.
The birds fly all above me; not alone,
But coupled in free fellowship, or mustering
A joyous band, sweeping in companies
The wide blue fields between the clouds;—the clouds

Troop in society, each on the other
Shedding, like sympathy, reflected light.
The waves, a multitude, together run
To the great breast of the receiving sea:
Nothing but hath its kind, its company,
O God! save me alone!—then, let me come,
Good Father! to thy feet, when even as now,
Tears, that no human hand is near to wipe,
O'erbrim my eyes, oh wipe them, thou, my Father!
When in my heart the stores of its affections,
Piled up unused, locked fast, are like to burst
The fleshly casket, that may not contain them,
Let me come nigh to thee;—accept them thou,
Dear Father!—Fount of Love! Compassionate God!
When in my spirit burns the fire, the power,
That have made men utter the words of angels,

And none are near to bid me speak and live:
Hearken, O Father! maker of my spirit!
God of my soul, to thee I will outpour
The hymns resounding through my troubled mind,
The sighs and sorrows of my lonely heart,
The tears and weeping of my weary eyes:
Be thou my fellow, glorious, gracious God!
And fit me for such fellowship with thee!

Frances Anne Kemble

The Red Indian

Rest, warrior, rest! thine hour is past,—
Thy longest war-whoop, and thy last,
Still rings upon the rushing blast,
That o'er thy grave sweeps drearily.
Rest, warrior, rest! thy haughty brow,
Beneath the hand of death bends low,
Thy fiery glance is quenched now,
In the cold grave's obscurity.
Rest, warrior, rest! thy rising sun
Is set in blood, thy day is done;
Like lightning flash thy race is run,
And thou art sleeping peacefully.
Rest, warrior, rest! thy foot no more
The boundless forest shall explore,
Or trackless cross the sandy shore,
Or chase the red deer rapidly.
Rest, warrior, rest! thy light canoe,
Like thy choice arrow, swift and true,
Shall part no more the waters blue,
That sparkle round it brilliantly.
Rest, warrior, rest! thine hour is past,
Yon sinking sunbeam is thy last,
And all is silent, save the blast,
That o'er thy grave sweeps drearily.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Siren's Cave At Tivoli

As o'er the chasm I breathless hung,
Thus from the depths the siren sung:
'Down, down into the womb
Of earth, the daylight's tomb,
Where the sun's eyes
Never may shine,
Nor fair moon rise
With smile divine;
Where caverns yawn
Black as despair,
Fatally drawn
I plunge down there;
And with the bound
The rocks resound,
And round and round
My waves are wound
Into the gaping rifts of the mid earth:
Oh for the sunny springs where I took birth!
The gentle rills,
The tiny brimming fountain,
That, scooped in the warm bosom of the mountain
Each May shower over-fills!
Whence I and my fair sister came; and she
Rolls her smooth silver flood along the way,
That princes made for her, so royally,
Piercing the rock to give her ample sway.
Down the bright sunny steep
Her waters leap,
Myrtle, and bay, and laurel, and wild vine,
A garland for her flowing tresses twine!
The green moss stars the rocks whereon she leaps,
Over her breast the fragrant locust weeps;
The air resounds with her wild shouts of laughter,
The echoes of the hills in chorus after
Repeat the sound, and in her silvery spray
Rainbows are woven by the light of day!
Down in the valley she springs
And sings,
And the sky bends over

Her, like a lover;
And glittering and sparkling her waters run,
A bright sea of snow in the summer sun!

Darkness broods over me the while;
Grim rocks that sweat
With my cold clammy spray,
As down the hopeless way
In one wild jet
My tortured billows lash, and leap, and boil;
So deep my bed of darkness lies,
That scarce the voice of my great agony
Reaches the skies,
And all ye see
With fearful eyes
Who question me,
Is the gray whirling mist that covers all
As with a pall.
Light! light upon the rocks! sudden and fierce
The sharp flames pierce;
Glaring upon my water
Like the blood-hue of slaughter
A red torch flashes;
As down my wild flood dashes
Wide flaring brightness streams upon my foam,
And flaming fire-wreaths come
Hissing into my waves to find their doom
In the same blackness that devours me.
The huge rocks grin, as with a sudden glee,
At this strange visitation of the light,
And they are made not beautiful, but bright,
As all their horrid piles and masses show,
Hanging above, and heaped below,
Searched by the ruddy glow.
Oh, let me still in darkness dwell!
Not in this hell
Of lurid light,
That scares the night,
Hence with the leaping glare,
Whose fiery stare
Reveals the secrets of my dismal bed;
Hence with the voices that profane the dread

Of my dark chambers!'—thus the Siren cried,
As o'er the rocky chasm's black hideous side
I hung entranced with terror and dismay,—
And at that piteous cry I fled away.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Vision Of Life

Death and I,
On a hill so high,
Stood side by side:
And we saw below,
Running to and fro,
All things that be in the world so wide.
Ten thousand cries
From the gulf did rise,
With a wild discordant sound;
Laughter and wailing,
Prayer and railing,
As the ball spun round and round.
And over all
Hung a floating pall
Of dark and gory veils:
'Tis the blood of years,
And the sighs and tears,
Which this noisome marsh exhales.
All this did seem
Like a fearful dream,
Till Death cried with a joyful cry:
'Look down! look down!
It is all mine own,
Here comes life's pageant by!'

Like to a masque in ancient revelries,
With mingling sound of thousand harmonies,
Soft lute and viol, trumpet-blast and gong,
They came along, and still they came along!
Thousands, and tens of thousands, all that e'er
Peopled the earth, or ploughed th' unfathomed deep,
All that now breathe the universal air,
And all that in the womb of Time yet sleep.

Before this mighty host a woman came,
With hurried feet, and oft averted head;
With accursèd light
Her eyes were bright,
And with inviting hand them on she beckoned.

Her followed close, with wild acclaim,
Her servants three: Lust, with his eye of fire,
And burning lips, that tremble with desire,
Pale sunken cheek:—and as he staggered by,
The trumpet-blast was hushed, and there arose
A melting strain of such soft melody,
As breathed into the soul love's ecstasies and woes.
Loudly again the trumpet smote the air,
The double drum did roll, and to the sky
Bayed War's bloodhounds, the deep artillery;
And Glory,
With feet all gory,
And dazzling eyes, rushed by,
Waving a flashing sword and laurel wreath,
The pang, and the inheritance of death.

He passed like lightning—then ceased every sound
Of war triumphant, and of love's sweet song,
And all was silent.—Creeping slow along,
With eager eyes, that wandered round and round,
Wild, haggard mien, and meagre, wasted frame,
Bowed to the earth, pale, starving Av'rice came:
Clutching with palsied hands his golden god,
And tottering in the path the others trod.
These, one by one,
Came, and were gone:
And after them followed the ceaseless stream
Of worshippers, who, with mad shout and scream,
Unhallowed toil, and more unhallowed mirth,
Follow their mistress, Pleasure, through the earth.
Death's eyeless sockets glared upon them all,
And many in the train were seen to fall,
Livid and cold, beneath his empty gaze;
But not for this was stayed the mighty throng,
Nor ceased the warlike clang, or wanton lays,
But still they rushed—along—along—along!

Frances Anne Kemble

The Wind

Night comes upon the earth; and fearfully
Arise the mighty winds, and sweep along
In the full chorus of their midnight song.
The waste of heavy clouds, that veil the sky,
Roll like a murky scroll before them driven,
And show faint glimpses of a darker heaven.
No ray is there, of moon, or pale-eyed star,
Darkness is on the universe; save where
The western sky lies glimmering, faint and far,
With day's red embers dimly glowing there.
Hark! how the wind comes gathering in its course,
And sweeping onward, with resistless force,
Howls through the silent space of starless skies,
And on the breast of the swollen ocean dies.
Oh, thou art terrible, thou viewless power!
That rid'st destroying at the midnight hour!
We hear thy mighty pinions, but the eye
Knows nothing of thine awful majesty.
We see all mute creation bow before
Thy viewless wings, as thou careerest o'er
This rocking world; that in the boundless sky
Suspended, vibrates, as thou rushest by.
There is no terror in the lightning's glare,
That breaks its red track through the trackless air;
There is no terror in the voice that speaks
From out the clouds when the loud thunder breaks
Over the earth, like that which dwells in thee,
Thou unseen tenant of immensity.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Woods

Cover me with your everlasting arms,--
Ye guardian giants of this solitude!--
From the ill-sight of men, and from the rude
Tumultuous din of yon wild world's alarms!
Oh, knit your mighty limbs around, above,
And close me in for ever! let me dwell
With the wood spirits, in the darkest spell
That ever with your verdant locks ye wove.

The air is full of countless voices, joined
In one eternal hymn; the whispering wind,
The shuddering leaves, the hidden water springs,
The work-song of the bees, whose honeyed wings
Hang in the golden tresses of the lime,
Or buried lie in purple beds of thyme.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Wreck Of The Birkenhead,

A BRITISH TRANSPORT VESSEL LOST ON THE COAST OF AFRICA.
A BALLAD.

As well as I am able, I'll relate how it befell,
And I trust, sirs, you'll excuse me, if I do not speak it well.
I've lived a hard and wandering life, serving our gracious Queen,
And have nigh forgot my schooling since a soldier I have been.

But however in my untaught speech the tale I tell may thrive,
I shall see the scene before me, to the latest day I live;
And sometimes I have scarce the heart to thank God for saving me,
When I think of my poor comrades, who went down in that dreadful sea,
And my brother's drowning eyes and voice, as a monstrous swirling wave
Rolled him right across my arms, 'twas his winding sheet and grave—

God forgive me! but I wish he had been saved instead of me,
He was a better, braver man than ever I shall be.

The night was still and silent, and the stars shone overhead,
And all were sleeping in the ship, who in one hour were dead.
A heavy swell was rolling in upon the treacherous shore,
And the steersman steered off from the coast, four miles, and barely four.
Six hundred sleeping souls relied upon that helmsman's care,
Poor wretch! the sea has saved him from a terrible despair!
For in that still and starlight night, on that smooth and silent sea,
He sent four hundred sleeping men straight to eternity;
He drove the ship upon the rocks that stretch the waves beneath,
It has been called Point Danger—it should be the Reef of Death.

I was dreaming of old Scotland, the home of my boyish years,
And the sound of the village bagpipe was droning in my ears;
And across the purple heath, behind a screen of fir and oak,
I saw from our low chimney curl the silver blue peat smoke;

My foot was on the door-stone, and my hand was on the lock,
And I heard my mother's voice within—when, suddenly, a shock
Went shuddering through the whole ship's frame, and then a grinding sound,
And the cry was heard above, below, 'Back her! she is aground!'

We heard the water rushing, whence or where we did not know,
And every face was darkened with terror and with woe;
But our officers did all that brave gentlemen could do,
And the sailors did their duty,—they were a gallant crew!
And we poor soldiers, too, sirs, I dare think, did all we could,
We had thought to die upon dry land, not choke in the weltering flood,
But steady, as if we had been on our old parading ground,
We stood till she went to pieces,—and the most of us were drowned.
With the first shock the word was given to put the engine back,
For we saw, when the sea was sucked away, where the reef lay, bare and black,
Right underneath the poor ship's prow, huge, hard, and without motion,
Beneath the sweltering, seething surf, of the restless, rolling ocean;

And it was terrible to hear the engine heave and throb,
Like the huge heart of a giant, with a sound like a heavy sob;
And it cast its shining arms aloft, and the wheels began to turn,
And the mad waves flashed, and whirled, and hissed, as they felt the strong ship
spurn.

Another stroke, and we were off—but the black reef's stony teeth,
Had bitten through her iron ribs, and the sea rushed in beneath,
And up and up the water rose, fast, faster yet and higher,
And leapt into our ship's warm heart, and danced above the fire,
The shining arms fell motionless, and stopped the mighty breath,
And the mad waves sucked us back again, into the jaws of death.

Like horses plunging on the reef, we could see them through the dark,
The flying of their wild white manes made a long and shining mark,
And beyond where the rolling blackness, ridge upon ridge was tost,
Not four miles off, how near, and yet how distant! was the coast.
And now there came another shock, with a hideous crashing sound,
The ship broke right in half—and whirling madly round and round,

Half was sucked down before our eyes, and the water far and near,
Was strewed with hapless, helpless men, whose cries of pain and fear
Drove us wild with terror and with grief, as we stood upon the wreck,
The shivering, shattered, slippery planks, of that miserable deck.

Our wives and children in the boats had been lowered from the side,
And through the dark we heard them, as their wild farewells they cried;
And many a brave man's heart grew sick, as silently he stood,
And heard those bitter wailings rise and sink with the heaving flood:
But not one foot was stirred, and not one hand was raised to fly,

We were bid to stand there on that deck—and we stood still there to die.

At length word of command was given: 'Save yourselves all who can,'
And then, and not till then, away broke every boy and man,
When a loud voice, like an angel's, rose above the infernal din,
'Don't swamp your wives and children, hold back, if you are men!'

We looked into each other's eyes—the boats put off to shore—
And suddenly above my head I felt the billows pour.

I threw my arms abroad to swim—and found that they were cast
(Lord what a gripe I closed them with!) around our gallant mast:
As up the blessed shaft I clomb, shouting in frenzied glee,
The mad waves' thundering voices seemed to call alone for me;
But along the high main-topsail yard I climbed, and crawled, and clung,
And out into the empty night, over the sea I swung;
And others followed in the dark, that fearful, slippery way,
And there we held, and hung, and prayed, for the dear light of day;
And pray you, sirs, that never you may count such hideous hours,
Or know the agony and dread of those speechless prayers of ours.

All in a heap our limbs were twined, holding by one another,
And one man clutched my right arm fast, alas! 'twas not my brother;
I wound my hands around the spar, tight, tight, with the grip of Death,
And in my mortal fear I seized the wood fast in my teeth;

And as each high wave struck the mast, and shook us to and fro,
We could see the sharks' white bellies turn in the sea below.

Just as the day was breaking, I grew dizzy, faint, and sick,
And I heard the man who held me breathing heavily and quick,
His limbs slid slowly down, while with one hand he still did clasp
My arm, and I felt it yielding in the dead man's fatal grasp,
I flung it loose, still holding by one arm alone, while he,
With a heavy plunge fell fathoms down, into the churning sea—
He was dead, sirs, he was dead, yet my eyes grew glazed and dim
With horror, for I felt as if I just had murdered him,
And with that thought my wits gave way, for 'twas followed by another,
At which I shrieked aloud—that I had cast away my brother.

And this is all that I can tell—for I saw and heard no more
Till life came into me again, as I lay upon the shore;

I and a few poor fellows that a boat had fetched away,
By God's grace, from that direful mast, with the blessed light of day.
Our eyes were full of tears, as we looked towards the fatal reef,
Where above the surf the swinging yard seemed to beckon for relief,

For our comrades who lay rolling all round the sunken mast,—
They were brave fellows, sirs, and did their duty to the last:
And I hope that I may say it without unbecoming pride,
There are gallant soldiers, well I know, in many a land beside,
But I think that none but Englishmen like those men would have died.

Frances Anne Kemble

The Year's Progress

I look along the dusty dreary way,
So lately strew'd with blossoms fresh and gay,—
The sweet procession of the year is past,
And wither'd whirling leaves run rattling fast,
Like throngs of tatter'd beggars following
Where late went by the pageant of a king.

First came the forward darlings of the Spring,
Snowdrops, and violets, and daisies white,
And hanging cowslips, and each fragrant thing
Whose waking wakes the season of delight,—
The year's faint smiles before its burst of mirth,
The soft sweet breathing babies of the earth,
Close to her warm brown bosom nestling in,
That the wild winds take laughing by the chin;
Then flush'd the silver glory of the May,
And like a bride the Spring was led away.

Summer's lithe daughters followed flaunting gay,
Mingling their odours with the new-mown hay,
The rosy eglantine, smooth, silken-cheek'd,
And amber honeysuckle, crimson-streak'd;

Then the prim privet with her ivory bloom,
Like a pale maiden sister, filled their room
With blue-green leaves, and almond bitter breath,
Thrusting her dainty spices up underneath.
Brown thorny arches sprinkled with the rose,
Whiter than chalk that on the wild brier grows,
And the cream-colour'd crumbling elder flower,
Garlanded o'er with starry virgin's bow'r,
Piled the green hedgerows with their heaps of bloom,
And buried the deep lanes in fragrant gloom.

Autumn, with shining berries black and red,
And glossy curl'd clematis bound his head;
Over his russet cloak the wild hops pale
With golden corn and scarlet poppies trail,
And waving down his mane of tawny hair,

Hangs purple poison-flow'r, the Lady Fair.

Of all the lovely train he was the last,
And with him all the pageant bright hath past,
And in its path, scour'd by the whimpering wind,
Gray shapeless Winter shuffles close behind.

Frances Anne Kemble

Thou Poisonous Laurel Leaf, That In The Soil

Thou poisonous laurel leaf, that in the soil
Of life, which I am doomed to till full sore,
Spring'st like a noisome weed! I do not toil
For thee, and yet thou still com'st darkening o'er
My plot of earth with thy unwelcome shade.
Thou nightshade of the heart, beneath whose boughs
All fair and gentle buds hang withering,
Why hast thou wreathed thyself around my brows,
Casting from thence the blossoms of my spring,
Breathing on youth's sweet roses till they fade?
Alas! thou art an evil weed of woe,
Watered with tears and watched with sleepless care,
Seldom doth envy thy green glories spare;
And yet men covet thee—ah, wherefore do they so!

Frances Anne Kemble

To-

One after one, the shield, the sword, the spear,
The panoply that I was wont to wear,
My suit of proof, my wings that kept me free,
These, full of trust, delivered I to thee,
When, through all time, I swore that by thy side
I would henceforward walk:—I since have tried,
In hours of sadness, when my former life
Shone on me through thick gathering clouds of strife,
To wield my weapons bright, and wear again
My maiden corselet and free wings—in vain!
My hands have lost their strength and skill—my breast,
Beneath my mail throbs with a wild unrest;
My pinions trail upon the earth—my soul
Quails 'neath the heavy spell of thy control.
All that was living of my life seems fled,
My mortal part alone is not yet dead.
But since my nobler gifts have all been thine,
Trophies, or sacrifices, for thy shrine,
Pierce not the breast that stripped itself for thee
Of the fair means God gave it to be free;

Have yet some pity, and forbear to strike
One without power to strive, or fly alike,
Nor trample on a heart, which now must be
Towards all defenceless—most of all towards thee.

Frances Anne Kemble

To-----

WHO FELL FROM A PRECIPICE INTO A MOUNTAIN TORRENT.

What said to thee those angels terrible,
Whose sudden pinions swept thee from our sight,
When o'er us all the awful horror fell,
That turned thy mid-day sunshine into night?
What mysteries ineffable and dread
Flashed in that aching moment o'er thy soul,
While with thee, 'twixt the living and the dead,
Our spirits hung, 'neath God's supreme control?
'Look on me, I am Life!' one angel cried—
'Love me, and use me well, I yet am thine!'
'Look on me, I am Death!' his peer replied—
'Forget me nevermore, thou must be mine!'
Oh, snatched from Death! may death to thee appear
Henceforth familiar, from all terrors free:
Oh, given back to Life!—be life more dear,
Holier and happier, from this hour to thee.

Frances Anne Kemble

To ----

When we first met, dark wintry skies were glooming,
And the wild winds sang requiem to the year;
But thou, in all thy beauty's pride wert blooming,
And my young heart knew hope without a fear.
When we last parted, summer suns were smiling,
And the bright earth her flowery vesture wore,
But thou hadst lost the power of beguiling,
For my wrecked, wearied heart, could hope no more.

Frances Anne Kemble

To -----.

When the dawn
O'er hill and dale
Throws her bright veil,
Oh, think of me!
When the rain
With starry showers
Fills all the flowers,
Oh, think of me!
When the wind
Sweeps along,
Loud and strong,
Oh, think of me!
When the laugh
With silver sound
Goes echoing round,
Oh, think of me!
When the night
With solemn eyes
Looks from the skies,
Oh, think of me!
When the air
Still as death
Holds its breath,
Oh, think of me!
When the earth
Sleeping sound
Swings round and round,
Oh, think of me!
When thy soul
O'er life's dark sea
Looks gloomily,
Oh, think of me!

Frances Anne Kemble

To A Picture

Oh, serious eyes! how is it that the light,
The burning rays, that mine pour into ye,
Still find ye cold, and dead, and dark as night—
Oh, lifeless eyes! can ye not answer me?
Oh, lips! whereon mine own so often dwell,
Hath love's warm, fearful, thrilling touch, no spell
To waken sense in ye?—oh, misery!
Oh, breathless lips! can ye not speak to me?
Thou soulless mimicry of life! my tears
Fall scalding over thee; in vain, in vain;
I press thee to my heart, whose hopes, and fears,
Are all thine own; thou dost not feel the strain.
Oh, thou dull image! wilt thou not reply
To my fond prayers, and wild idolatry?

Frances Anne Kemble

To A Star

Thou little star, that in the purple clouds
Hang'st, like a dewdrop, in a violet bed;
First gem of evening, glittering on the shrouds,
'Mid whose dark folds the day lies pale and dead,
As through my tears my soul looks up to thee,
Loathing the heavy chains that bind it here,
There comes a fearful thought that misery
Perhaps is found, even in thy distant sphere.
Art thou a world of sorrow and of sin,
The heritage of death, disease, decay;
A wilderness, like that we wander in,
Where all things fairest soonest pass away?
And are there graves in thee, thou radiant world,
Round which life's sweetest buds fall witherèd,
Where hope's bright wings in the dark earth lie furled,
And living hearts are mouldering with the dead?
Perchance they do not die, that dwell in thee,
Perchance theirs is a darker doom than ours;
Unchanging woe, and endless misery,
And mourning that hath neither days nor hours.
Horrible dream!—O dark and dismal path,
Where I now weeping walk, I will not leave thee.
Earth has one boon for all her children—death:
Open thy arms, O mother! and receive me!
Take off the bitter burthen from the slave,
Give me my birthright! give—the grave, the grave!

Frances Anne Kemble

To Dante

'Poeta volontieri
Parlerei a que' duo che' insieme vanno,
E pajon si al vento esser leggieri.'
Dell' Inferno, Canto .

Seer of the triple realm invisible,
When I behold that miserable twain,
By Rimini's sudden sword of justice slain,
Sweep through the howling hurricane of hell—
Light seems to me to rest upon their gloom,
More than upon this wretched earth above,
Falls on the path of many a living love,
Whose fate may envy their united doom.
There be, who wandering in this world, with heart
Riveted to some other heart for ever,
Past power of all eternity to sever,
The current of this life still drives apart,
Who, with strained eyes, and outstretched arms, and cry
Of bitterest longing, come each other nigh,
To look, to love, and to be swept asunder,
The breathless greeting of their agony
Lost in the pitiless world-storm's ceaseless thunder.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Emilia Lovatelli,

WEEPING BY SHELLEY'S GRAVE IN THE PROTESTANT CEMETERY OF ROME.

Lur'd by the Siren's summer song to death,
The Poet fell asleep—and the fine frame,
Shrine of the finer soul, on wings of flame,
Was borne into the air; but underneath
This sacred soil his heart has found a home;
Thy light feet cannot stir its marble sleep,
Nor e'en thy gracious pity wake again
One throbbing pulse of pleasure or of pain.
O noblest daughter of Imperial Rome,
Who by our Poet's grave hast paus'd to weep,
The after-glow of fame warms not his tomb,
Whose laurels only make its gloom more deep;
But the sweet violet wreath his dead heart wears,
Fragrant and fresh, was sown there by thy tears.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Friends At Parting

When the glad sun looks smiling from the sky,
Upon each shadowy glen, and sunny height,
And that you tread those well-known paths, where I
Have strayed with you, do not forget me quite.
When the warm hearth throws its bright glow around,
On many a smiling cheek, and glance of light,
And the gay laugh wakes with its silver sound
The soul of mirth—do not forget me quite.
You will not miss me: for with you remain
Hearts fond and warm, and spirits young and bright;
'Tis but one word—'farewell,' and all again
Will seem the same, yet don't forget me quite.

To -----. 'Oh! turn those eyes away from me!
Oh! turn those eyes away from me!
Though sweet, yet fearful are their rays;
And though they beam so tenderly,
I feel, I tremble 'neath their gaze.
Oh, turn those eyes away! for though
To meet their glance I may not dare,
I know their light is on my brow,
By the warm blood that mantles there.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Harriet St. Leger

I would I might be with thee, when the year
Begins to wane, and that thou walk'st alone
Upon the rocky strand, whilst loud and clear,
The autumn wind sings, from his cloudy throne,
Wild requiems for the summer that is gone.
Or when, in sad and contemplative mood,
Thy feet explore the leafy-paven wood:
I would my soul might reason then with thine,
Upon those themes most solemn and most strange,
Which every falling leaf and fading flower,
Whisper unto us with a voice divine;
Filling the brief space of one mortal hour
With fearful thoughts of death, decay, and change,
And the high mystery of that after birth,
That comes to us, as well as to the earth.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Lady Annabella Noel

Wand'ring with thee in the delicious land,
What visions meet me of those far-off years,
When all my youth's fresh springs of smiles and tears
Lay lock'd beneath the spell of that strong hand
Whose blood is in thy veins.—I gaze on thee,
And think on the great name thy maidhood wears—
That name whose sound circles this lovely shore
With echoes of divinest melody,
Of strains whose mingled grief and glory pour
Triumph and mourning round it evermore,—
That noble name, link'd to a memory
Brighter than the deep splendour of this sky,
And darker than the storms that sweep it o'er,—
That English name—belov'd of Italy.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Miss Sarah Siddons

Time beckons on the hours: the expiring year
Already feels old Winter's icy breath;
As with cold hands he scatters on her bier
The faded glories of her autumn wreath.
As fleetly as the summer's sunshine past,
The winter's snow must melt; and the young Spring,
Strewing the earth with flowers, will come at last,
And in her train the hour of parting bring.
But, though I leave the harbour, where my heart
Sometime had found a peaceful resting-place,
Where it lay calmly moored; though I depart,
Yet, let not time my memory quite efface.
'Tis true, I leave no void, the happy home
To which you welcomed me, will be as gay,
As bright, as cheerful, when I've turned to roam,
Once more, upon life's weary onward way.
But oh! if ever by the warm hearth's blaze,
Where beaming eyes and kindred souls are met,
Your fancy wanders back to former days,
Let my remembrance hover round you yet.
Then, while before you glides time's shadowy train,
Of forms long vanished, days and hours long gone,
Perchance my name will be pronounced again,
In that dear circle where I once was one.
Think of me then, nor break kind memory's spell,
By reason's censure coldly o'er me cast,
Think only, that I loved ye passing well!
And let my follies slumber with the past.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Mrs. Dulaney

What was thine errand here?
Thy beauty was more exquisite than aught
That from this murrèd earth
Takes its imperfect birth.
It was a radiant heavenly beauty, caught
From some far higher sphere,
And though an angel now, thou still must bear
The lovely semblance that thou here didst wear.
What was thine errand here?
Thy gentle thoughts, and holy, humble mind,
With earthly creatures coarse
Held not discourse,
But with fine spirits, of some purer kind,
Dwelt in communion dear;
And sure they speak to thee that language now,
Which thou wert wont to speak to us, below.
What was thine errand here?
To adorn anguish, and ennoble death,
And make infirmity
A patient victory.
And crown life's baseness with a glorious wreath,
That fades not on thy bier,
But fits, immortal soul! thy triumph still,
In that bright world where thou are gone to dwell.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Mrs. Henry Siddons

O lady! thou, who in the olden time
Hadst been the star of many a poet's dream!
Thou, who unto a mind of mould sublime,
Weddest the gentle graces that beseem
Fair woman's best! forgive the daring line
That falters forth thy praise! nor let thine eye
Glance o'er the vain attempt too scornfully;
But, as thou read'st, think what a love was mine,
That made me venture on a theme, that none
Can know thee, and not feel a hopeless one.
Thou art most fair, though sorrow's chastening wing
Hath past, and left its shadow on thy brow.
And solemn thoughts are gently mellowing
The splendour of thy beauty's summer now.
Thou art most fair! but thine is loveliness
That dwells not only on the lip, or eye;
Thy beauty, is thy pure heart's holiness;
Thy grace, thy lofty spirit's majesty.
While thus I gaze on thee, and watch thee glide,
Like some calm spirit o'er life's troubled stream,
With thy twin buds of beauty by thy side
Together blossoming; I almost deem
That I behold the loveliness and truth,
That like fair visions hovered round my youth,
Long sought—and then forgotten as a dream.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Mrs. Norton

I never shall forget thee—'tis a word
Thou oft must hear, for surely there be none
On whom thy wondrous eyes have ever shone
But for a moment, or who e'er have heard
Thy voice's deep impassioned melody,
Can lose the memory of that look or tone.
But, not as these, do I say unto thee,
I never shall forget thee:—in thine eyes,
Whose light, like sunshine, makes the world rejoice,
A stream of sad and solemn splendour lies;
And there is sorrow in thy gentle voice.
Thou art not like the scenes in which I found thee,
Thou art not like the beings that surround thee;
To me thou art a dream of hope and fear;
Yet why of fear?—oh sure! the Power that lent
Such gifts, to make thee fair, and excellent;
Still watches one whom it has deigned to bless
With such a dower of grace and loveliness;
Over the dangerous waves 'twill surely steer
The richly freighted bark, through storm and blast,
And guide it safely to the port at last.
Such is my prayer; 'tis warm as ever fell
From off my lips: accept it, and farewell!
And though in this strange world where first I met thee,
We meet no more—I never shall forget thee.

Frances Anne Kemble

To My Guardian Angel

Merciful spirit! who thy bright throne above
Hast left, to wander through this dismal earth
With me, poor child of sin!—Angel of love!
Whose guardian wings hung o'er me from my birth,
And who still walk'st unwearied by my side,
How oft, O thou compassionate! must thou mourn
Over the wayward deeds, the thoughts of pride,
That thy pure eyes behold. Yet not aside
From thy sad task dost thou in anger turn;
But patiently, thou hast but gazed and sighed,
And followed still, striving with the divine
Powers of thy soul for mastery over mine;
And though all line of human hope be past,
Still fondly watching, hoping, to the last.

Frances Anne Kemble

To My Sister

IN MARCH 1865

A double worship hath the spring, my dear,
Triumph, and joy, and sweetness more than wont,
For, standing on the threshold of the year,
Your life's star shines, full in her flowery front.
For you, the blessed sun again doth pour
His golden bounty over hill and dale,
And shouting loud for joy, from Heaven's blue floor,
The glad wind sweeps the watery vapours pale.
For you, thro' the thorn lattice of the hedge,
The primrose, sitting on thick tufted leaves,
Peers smiling, and each smooth and lustrous wedge
Of sheathed green, the earth's brown bosom cleaves.
Each saffron-tinted cup, and snowy bell,
Starts up to cry you hail, with pleasant cheer,
And thro' the woods the buds make haste to swell,
To spread your leafy tap'stry far and near.

There's not a blade of grass that quivers light
In the pure air, but seems to me to say,
'O loving heart! O spirit brave and bright!
For you the fields again shall be made gay.'
To gild your head the evening stars do shine,
To kiss your feet the morning daisies blow,
To fill your soul with bliss the breath divine
Of God's great goodness doth the world o'erflow.
Beloved! the sweet pageant of the year
Its lovely homage all to you doth bring,
And the whole air rings with rejoicings clear,
And the whole earth bursts forth in blossoming,
That you are living yet to see the Spring!

Frances Anne Kemble

To Pius IX

It may be that the stone which thou art heaving
From off thy people's neck shall fall and crush thee;
It may be that the sudden flood shall push thee
From off the rock, whence, prophet-like, believing
In God's great future, thou dost set it free;
Yet heave it, heave it heaven high, nor fear
To be o'erwhelmed in the first wild career
Of those long-prisoned tides of liberty.
That stone which thou hast lifted from the heart
Of a whole nation shall become to thee
A glorious monument, such as no art
E'er piled above a mortal memory:
Falling beneath it, thou shalt have a tomb
That shall make low the loftiest dome in Rome.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Shakespeare (I)

If from the height of that celestial sphere
Where now thou dwell'st, spirit powerful and sweet!
Thou yet canst love the race that sojourn here,
How must thou joy, with pleasure not unmeet
For thy exalted state, to know how dear
Thy memory is held throughout the earth,
Beyond the favoured land that gave thee birth.
E'en in thy seat in Heaven, thou may'st receive
Thanks, praise, and love, and wonder ever new,
From human hearts, who in thy verse perceive
All that humanity calls good and true;
Nor dost thou for each mortal blemish grieve,
They from thy glorious works have fall'n away,
As from thy soul its outward form of clay.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Shakespeare (Ii)

Oft, when my lips I open to rehearse
Thy wondrous spells of wisdom and of power,
And that my voice and thy immortal verse
On listening ears and hearts I mingled pour,
I shrink dismayed—and awful doth appear
The vain presumption of my own weak deed;
Thy glorious spirit seems to mine so near,
That suddenly I tremble as I read—
Thee an invisible auditor I fear :
Oh, if it might be so, my master dear!
With what beseeching would I pray to thee,
To make me equal to my noble task,
Succour from thee, how humbly would I ask,
Thy worthiest works to utter worthily.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Shakespeare (Iii)

Shelter and succour such as common men
Afford the weaker partners of their fate,
Have I derived from thee—from thee, most great
And powerful genius! whose sublime control,
Still from thy grave governs each human soul,
That reads the wondrous records of thy pen.
From sordid sorrows thou hast set me free,
And turned from want's grim ways my tottering feet,
And to sad empty hours, given royally,
A labour, than all leisure far more sweet:
The daily bread, for which we humbly pray,
Thou gavest me as if I were thy child,
And still with converse noble, wise, and mild,
Charmed from despair my sinking soul away;
Shall I not bless the need, to which was given
Of all the angels in the host of heaven,
Thee, for my guardian, spirit strong and bland!
Lord of the speech of my dear native land!

Frances Anne Kemble

To The Dead

On the lone waters' shore
Wander I yet;
Brooding those moments o'er
I should forget.
Till the broad foaming surge
Warns me to fly,
While despair's whispers urge
To stay, and die.
When the night's solemn watch
Falls on the seas,
'Tis thy voice that I catch
In the low breeze;
When the moon sheds her light
On things below,
Beams not her ray so bright,
Like thy young brow?
Spirit immortal! say,
When wilt thou come,
To marshal me the way
To my long home?

Frances Anne Kemble

To The Nightingale

How passing sad! Listen, it sings again!
Art thou a spirit that, amongst the boughs,
The livelong night dost chant that wondrous strain,
Making wan Dian stoop her silver brows
Out of the clouds to hear thee? who shall say,
Thou lone one! that thy melody is gay,
Let him come listen now to that one note,
That thou art pouring o'er and o'er again
Through the sweet echoes of thy mellow throat,
With such a sobbing sound of deep, deep pain.
I prithee cease thy song! for from my heart
Thou hast made memory's bitter waters start,
And filled my weary eyes with the soul's rain.

Frances Anne Kemble

To The Picture Of A Lady

Lady, sweet lady, I behold thee yet,
With thy pale brow, brown eyes, and solemn air,
And billowy tresses of thy golden hair,
Which once to see, is never to forget!
But for short space I gazed, with soul intent
Upon thee; and the limner's art divine,
Meantime, poured all thy spirit into mine.
But once I gazed, then on my way I went:
And thou art still before me. Like a dream
Of what our soul has loved, and lost for ever,
Thy vision dwells with me, and though I never
May be so blest as to behold thee more,
That one short look has stamped thee in my heart,
Of my intensest life a living part,
Which time, and death, shall never triumph o'er.

Frances Anne Kemble

To The Spring

Hail to thee, spirit of hope! whom men call Spring;
Youngest and fairest of the four, who guide
Our mortal year along Time's rapid tide.
Spirit of life! the old decrepit earth
Has heard thy voice, and at a wondrous birth,
Forth springing from her dark, mysterious womb,
A thousand germs of light and beauty come.
Thy breath is on the waters, and they leap
From their bright winter-woven fetters free;
Along the shore their sparkling billows sweep,
And greet thee with a gush of melody.
The air is full of music, wild and sweet,
Made by the joyous waving of the trees,
Wherein a thousand wingèd minstrels meet,
And by the work-song of the early bees,
In the white blossoms fondly murmuring,
And founts, that in the blessèd sunshine sing:
Hail to thee! maiden with the bright blue eyes!
And showery robe, all steeped in starry dew;
Hail to thee! as thou ridest through the skies,
Upon thy rainbow car of various hue.

Frances Anne Kemble

To The Wissahiccon

My feet shall tread no more thy mossy side,
When once they turn away, thou Pleasant Water,
Nor ever more, reflected in thy tide,
Will shine the eyes of the White Island's daughter.
But often in my dreams, when I am gone
Beyond the sea that parts thy home and mine,
Upon thy banks the evening sun will shine,
And I shall hear thy low, still flowing on.
And when the burthen of existence lies
Upon my soul, darkly and heavily,
I'll clasp my hands over my weary eyes,
Thou Pleasant Water, and thy clear waves see.
Bright be thy course for ever and for ever,
Child of pure mountain springs, and mountain snow;
And as thou wanderest on to meet the river,
Oh, still in light and music mayst thou flow!
I never shall come back to thee again,
When once my sail is shadowed on the main,
Nor ever shall I hear thy laughing voice
As on their rippling way thy waves rejoice,
Nor ever see the dark green cedar throw
Its gloomy shade o'er the clear depths below,

Never, from stony rifts of granite gray,
Sparkling like diamond rocks in the sun's ray,
Shall I look down on thee, thou pleasant stream,
Beneath whose crystal folds the gold sands gleam;
Wherefore, farewell! but whensoe'er again
The wintry spell melts from the earth and air;
And the young spring comes dancing through thy glen,
With fragrant, flowery breath, and sunny hair;
When through the snow the scarlet berries gleam,
Like jewels strewn upon thy banks, fair stream,
My spirit shall through many a summer's day
Return, among thy peaceful woods to stray.

Frances Anne Kemble

To Thomas Moore, Esq.

Here's a health to thee, Bard of Erin!
To the goblet's brim we will fill;
For all that to life is endearing,
Thy strains have made dearer still!
Wherever fond woman's eyes eclipse
The midnight moon's soft ray;
Whenever around dear woman's lips,
The smiles of affection play:
We will drink to thee, Bard of Erin!
To the goblet's brim we will fill,
For all that to life is endearing,
Thy strains have made dearer still!
Wherever the warrior's sword is bound
With the laurel of victory,
Wherever the patriot's brow is crowned
With the halo of liberty:
We will drink to thee, Bard of Erin!
To the goblet's brim we will fill;
For all that to life is endearing,
Thy strains have made dearer still!
Wherever the voice of mirth hath rung,
On the listening ear of night,
Wherever the soul of wit hath flung
Its flashes of vivid light:
We will drink to thee, Bard of Erin!
To the goblet's brim we will fill;
For all that to life is endearing,
In thy strains is dearer still!

Frances Anne Kemble

Torre Nuovo

The water has flowed forth a year,
Since, sitting by the fountain's side,
We looked into the basin clear,
Where sparkles still the gushing tide,
And watched the crystal current pour,
During one bright enchanting hour.
The sun sloped low upon the plain—
The mellow southern winter sun—
And purple rose the mountain chain,
Which then I first did look upon;
While o'er its shadowy crests were seen
Bright, dazzling peaks of snowy sheen.
The limpid heavens o'er our head
Were clear as truth, and soft as love;
The dark-blue tufted pine-trees spread
Their solemn shade our rest above.
And, framed between their pillars gray,
The landscape's magic pictures lay.

A year that water hath flowed forth;
A year my golden hours have flowed:
And towards the regions of the north
I turn, to leave this blest abode,
Where I have dwelt in constant joy,
In peace and rest without alloy.
Pain has been far from me, and pleasure
Has kept the record of my days;
Glory and beauty, without measure,
Have haunted my familiar ways,
And made a year's existence seem
Bright, brief, and wondrous as a dream.
Now I depart, and bear with me
The gathered riches of these days;
No shade the sternest futurity
Upon their perfect brightness lays;
Life shall possess them to the last:
The blackest fate must spare the past.

Translation From Alfred De Musset's Ode To Malibran

O Maria Felicia! the Painter and Bard,
Behind them in dying leave undying heirs,
The night of oblivion their memory spares,
And their great eager souls, other action debarred,
Against Death, against Time, having valiantly warr'd,
Though struck down in the strife claim its trophies as theirs.
In the iron engraved, one his thought leaves enshrin'd;
With a golden sweet cadence another's entwin'd,
Makes for ever all those who shall hear it his friends;
Though he died, on the canvas lives Raphael's mind,
And from death's darkest doom till this world of ours ends,
The mother-clasp'd Infant, his glory defends.
As the lamp guards the flame, so the bare marble halls
Of the Parthenon, keep in their desolate space,
The memory of Phidias enshrin'd in their walls;
And Praxiteles' child, the young Venus, yet calls
From the altar where smiling she still holds her place,
The centuries vanquish'd, to worship her grace.

Thus from Age after Age while new life they receive
To rest at God's feet, the old glories are gone,
And the accents of Genius their echoes still weave
With the great human voice till their speech is but one.
While for thee—dead but yesterday—fame does but leave
A cross in the dim chapel's darkness alone.
A Cross, and Oblivion, and Silence, and Death,
Hark! the wind's softest sob; hark! the breeze's deep breath;
Hark! the fisher-boy singing his way o'er the plain,
Of thy glory, thy hopes, thy young beauty's bright wreath,
Not a trace—not a sigh—not an echo remain!

Frances Anne Kemble

Translation From Millevoeye

Fallen from thy parent bough,
Poor wither'd leaf, where goest thou?
From the mountain to the vale,
From the forest to the hill
I flutter, carried by the gale,
Hither, thither, at its will.

I go where each thing goes,
Without complaint or grief,
The leaf of the withered rose
And the faded laurel leaf.

Frances Anne Kemble

Translation From Victor Hugo

Thou art like the bird that alights and sings
Though the frail spray bends—for he knows he has wings.

Frances Anne Kemble

Upon A Branch Of Flowering Acacia

The blossoms hang again upon the tree,
As when with their sweet breath they greeted me
Against my casement, on that sunny morn,
When thou, first blossom of my spring, wast born,
And as I lay, panting from the fierce strife
With death and agony that won thy life,
Their snowy clusters hung on their brown bough,
E'en as upon my breast, my May-bud, thou.
They seem to me thy sisters, O my child!
And now the air, full of their fragrance mild,
Recalls that hour; a tenfold agony
Pulls at my heart-strings, as I think of thee.
Was it in vain! Oh, was it all in vain!
That night of hope, of terror, and of pain,
When from the shadowy boundaries of death,
I brought thee safely, breathing living breath
Upon my heart—it was a holy shrine.
Full of God's praise—they laid thee, treasure mine
And from its tender depths the blue heaven smiled,
And the white blossoms bowed to thee, my child,
And solemn joy of a new life was spread,
Like a mysterious halo round that bed.
And now how is it, since eleven years
Have steeped that memory in bitterest tears?
Alone, heart-broken, on a distant shore,
Thy childless mother sits lamenting o'er
Flowers, which the spring calls from this foreign earth,
Thy twins, that crowned the morning of thy birth.
How is it with thee—lost—lost—precious one!
In thy fresh spring-time growing up alone?
What warmth unfolds thee?—what sweet dews are shed,
Like love and patience over thy young head?
What holy springs feed thy deep inner life?
What shelters thee from passion's deadly strife?
What guards thy growth, straight, strong, and full and free,
Lovely and glorious, O my fair young tree?
God—Father—Thou—who by this awful fate
Hast lopped, and stripped, and left me desolate!
In the dark bitter floods that o'er my soul

Their billows of despair triumphant roll,
Let me not be o'erwhelmed!—Oh, they are thine,
These jewels of my life—not mine—not mine!
So keep them, that the blossoms of their youth
Shall, in a gracious growth of love and truth,
With an abundant harvest honour Thee:
And bless the blight which Thou hast sent on me;
Withering and blasting, though it seem to fall,
Let it not, O my Father! drink up all
My spirit's sap—so from this fate shall grow
The palm branch for my hand and for my brow,
With which, a hopeful pilgrim, I may tread
The shadowy path where rest awhile the dead,
Ere they rise up, a glorious company,
To find their lost ones, and to worship Thee!

Frances Anne Kemble

Venice

Night in her dark array
Steals o'er the ocean,
And with departed day
Hushed seems its motion.
Slowly o'er yon blue coast
Onward she's treading,
Till its dark line is lost,
'Neath her veil spreading.
The bark on the rippling deep
Hath found a pillow,
And the pale moonbeams sleep
On the smooth billow.
Bound by her emerald zone
Venice is lying,
And round her marble crown
Night winds are sighing.
From the high lattice now
Bright eyes are gleaming,
That seem on night's dark brow,
Brighter stars beaming.
Now o'er the blue lagune
Light barks are dancing,
And 'neath the silver moon
Swift oars are glancing.
Strains from the mandolin
Steal o'er the water,
Echo replies between
To mirth and laughter.
O'er the wave seen afar
Brilliantly shining,
Gleams like a fallen star
Venice reclining.

Frances Anne Kemble

Verses On Rome

O Rome, tremendous! who, beholding thee,
Shall not forget the bitterest private grief
That e'er made havoc of one single life?
O triple crowned, by glory, faith, and beauty!
Thine is the tiara which thy priest assumes,
By conquest of the nations of the earth,
By spiritual sovereignty o'er men's soul's,—
By universal homage of all memory.
When at thy Capitol's base I musing stand,
Thy ruined temple shafts rising all round me,
Masts of the goodliest wreck, 'neath Time's deep flood,
Whose tide shall ne'er rise high enough to cover them;
Thou comest in thy early strength before me,
Fair—stern—thy rapid footprints stamped in blood;
The iron sword clenched in thy hand resistless,
And helmeted like Pallas, whose great thoughts
Still made thy counsels as thy deeds victorious.
Beautiful—terrible—looking o'er the earth
With eyes like shafts of fire, and with a voice
That uttered doom, calling its ends thy border;
Resolute, absolute, steadfast, and most noble;
A mistress whom to love was to obey,
For whom to live was to be prompt to die.
Whose favour was the call to sterner duty,
Whose frown was everlasting ignominy.
So stand'st thou, virgin Rome, before mine eyes,
Type of all heathen national strength and virtue.

When through the Vatican's sounding halls I stray,
Thy second sovereignty comes sweeping towards me,
In gold and blood-red splendour borne aloft,
The colour of thy garments still kept fresh,
With blood of thy confessors and deniers,
Poured for and by thee over the whole earth;
So com'st thou, carried in thy insolent meekness
Upon the shoulders of obedient Emperors,
Shrouded in clouds of mystic incense, voices
Of adoration in a thousand tongues,
Like mingling waters rolling round thy feet;

The cross, the sword, the keys,—potent insignia
Of thy stupendous double majesty,
Shining amid the lightnings of those curses
Which gleam with ominous brightness round thy path;
So sweeps thy second empire, Rome, before me.
And even now the pageant vanishes
Out from the portals of the palaces
Where it hath dwelt so long; I see the last
Waving and glancing of its impotent splendour
And a dim twilight fills the place it filled.
Twilight of coming night or coming morning
Who shall decide, save Him who rules them both?
And in the doubtful gray, one man alone
Stands in the place of that great mummery,
The throne borne on the backs of emperors
Lies at his feet; and lo! a ghastly bed,
Where, 'mid diseases and corruptions loathsome,
Infirm, decrepit, crippled, impotent,
Yet bright-eyed with vitality unconquerable,
At its great heart the ancient faith lies gasping;
Beneath his hand a glorious shape springs up,
From whose bright veins a stream of healing youth
Is poured into the withered blood-conduits
Of the bed-ridden Church; and she arises—
And they two stand together, and uplift
That song of praise whose first unearthly sound
Was the loud death-cry sent from Calvary;
Whose sweetness yet shall sound through all the world,
And rise to heaven, whence it shall echo back
His praise whose service shall be perfect freedom.
Loveliest and dearest art thou to me, Rome,
When from the terrace of my sometime home,
At early morning I behold thee lying,
All bathed in sunshine far below my feet.
Upon the ancient, sacred Quirinal
Gleam the white palaces and orange gardens,
Towards which are turned all eyes, are stretched all hands,
Where, guarded round by Faith, and Hope, and Love,
The expectation of the people dwells.
On the pale azure of the tender sky
Thy mighty outline lies like the huge features
Of some divine colossal type of beauty;

Far to the left, beyond the Angel's tower,
Rises the temple of the world, and stretch
The Vatican's glorious arsenals of art,
Where still abide the immortal gods of Greece,
Where worship still the tribes of all the earth;
While from the blue and tufted Doria pines,
My eye delighted round the horizon wanders
To where the Falconieri cypress shafts
Pierce the transparent ether. Close at hand,
Over the nunnery wall, where, in sweet mockery,
The bridal flower its silver blossoms spreads,
Rises a chorus of clear virgin voices,
Chanting sweet salutations—greetings holy—
As once did Gabriel to the 'blest 'mong women.'
No other sound makes vibrate the still air,
Save the quick beating of the wings of doves,
That from the sanctuary come to drink
At the clear dropping fountain in our garden.
Upon its curving margin they alight,
And make alive the graceful image traced
In the stone painting of the antique artist.
To me they call a lovelier image up—
A fair young girl, with shining braided hair,
And graceful head divine, gently inclined
Towards her shoulder, where a dove has lighted,
That with quick glancing eye and beak familiar,
And soft round head, and swelling purple breast,
Stands friendly, while the child towards it turns
Eyes like two streams of liquid light, and lips
Parted in smiling rosy eagerness.
O Rome! I do not see thee any more;
This do I see—this loveliest, dearest vision
But for a moment, and my tears have blotted
Thy glory and its sweetness out together.

Frances Anne Kemble

Waking

Before my senses or my soul awake,
Sorrow begins to stir within my heart;
Keen anguish dawns before the day doth break;
Ere fluttering birds chirp faintly towards the east,
A bat-like terror flaps above my breast
With a shrill cry that sleeping makes me start,
And moan with unclosed lips, in drear dismay,
Reluctant greeting to another day;
And though perchance through pity of the night
I have not dreamt of misery, but have slept,
Tears stand within my eyes before the light
Smites them with its new beams, — cold tears unwept,
That from their brimming fountain up have crept,
In which the morning rounds her rainbows bright.

Frances Anne Kemble

Winter

I saw him on his throne, far in the north,
Him ye call Winter, picturing him ever
An aged man, whose frame, with palsied shiver,
Bends o'er the fiery element, his foe.
But he I saw was a young god, whose brow
Was crowned with jagged icicles, and forth
From his keen spirit-like eyes there shone a light,
Broad, glaring, and intensely cold and bright.
His breath, like sharp-edged arrows, pierced the air;
The naked earth crouched shuddering at his feet;
His finger on all murmuring waters sweet
Lay icily,—motion nor sound was there;
Nature seemed frozen—dead; and still and slow
A winding-sheet fell o'er her features fair,
Flaky and white, from his wide wings of snow.

Frances Anne Kemble

Woman's Love

A maiden meek, with solemn, steadfast eyes,
Full of eternal constancy and faith,
And smiling lips, through whose soft portal sighs
Truth's holy voice, with every balmy breath,
So journeys she along life's crowded way,
Keeping her soul's sweet counsel from all sight;
Nor pomp, nor vanity, lead her astray,
Nor aught that men call dazzling, fair, or bright:
For pity, sometimes, doth she pause, and stay
Those whom she meeteth mourning, for her heart
Knows well in suffering how to bear its part.
Patiently lives she through each dreary day,
Looking with little hope unto the morrow;
And still she walketh hand in hand with sorrow.

Frances Anne Kemble

Written After Leaving West Point

The hours are past, love,
Oh, fled they not too fast, love!
Those happy hours, when down the mountain-side,
We saw the rosy mists of morning glide,
And hand in hand, went forth upon our way,
Full of young life and hope, to meet the day.
The hours are past, love,
Oh, fled they not too fast, love!
Those sunny hours, when from the midday heat,
We sought the waterfall with loitering feet,
And o'er the rocks that lock the gleaming pool,
I crept down into its depths, so dark and cool.
The hours are past, love,
Oh, fled they not too fast, love!
Those solemn hours, when through the violet sky,
Alike without a cloud, without a ray,
The round red autumn moon came glowingly,
While o'er the leaden waves our boat made way.
The hours are past, love,
Oh, fled they not too fast, love!
Those blessed hours, when the bright day was past,
And in the world we seemed to wake alone,
When heart to heart beat throbbingly, and fast,
And love was melting our two souls in one.

Frances Anne Kemble

Written After Spending A Day At West Point

Were they but dreams? Upon the darkening world
Evening comes down, the wings of fire are furled,
On which the day soared to the sunny west:
The moon sits calmly like a soul at rest,
Looking upon the never-resting earth;
All things in heaven wait on the solemn birth
Of night, but where has fled the happy dream
That at this hour, last night, our life did seem?
Where are the mountains with their tangled hair,
The leafy hollow, and the rocky stair?
Where are the shadows of the solemn hills,
And the fresh music of the summer rills?
Where are the wood-paths, winding, long, and steep,
And the great, glorious river, broad and deep,
And the thick copses, where soft breezes meet,
And the wild torrent's snowy, leaping feet,
The rustling, rocking boughs, the running streams,—
Where are they all? gone, gone! were they but dreams?
And where, oh where are the light footsteps gone,
That from the mountain-side came dancing down?
The voices full of mirth, the loving eyes,
The happy hearts, the human paradise,
The youth, the love, the life that revelled here,—
Are they too gone?—Upon Time's shadowy bier,
The pale, cold hours of joys now past are laid,
Perhaps not soon from memory's gaze to fade,
But never to be reckoned o'er again,
In all life's future store of bliss and pain.
From the bright eyes the sunshine may depart,
Youth flies—love dies—and from the joyous heart
Hope's gushing fountain ebbs too soon away,
Nor spares one drop for that disastrous day,
When from the barren waste of after life,
The weariness, the worldliness, the strife,
The soul looks o'er the desert of its way
To the green gardens of its early day:
The paradise, for which we vainly mourn,
The heaven, to which our lingering eyes still turn,
To which our footsteps never shall return.

Frances Anne Kemble

Written At Trenton Falls

Come down! from where the everlasting hills
Open their rocky gates to let thee pass,
Child of a thousand rapid running rills,
And still lakes, where the skies their beauty glass.
With thy dark eyes, white feet, and amber hair,
Of heaven and earth thou fair and fearful daughter,
Through thy wide halls, and down thy echoing stair,
Rejoicing come—thou lovely 'Leaping Water!'
Shout! till the woods beneath their vaults of green
Resound, and shake their pillars on thy way;
Fling wide thy glittering fringe of silver sheen,
And toss towards heaven thy clouds of dazzling spray.
The sun looks down upon thee with delight,
And weaves his prism around thee for a belt;
And as the wind waves thy thin robes of light,
The jewels of thy girdle glow and melt.
Ah! where be they, who first with human eyes
Beheld thy glory, thou triumphant flood!
And through the forest heard with glad surprise,
Thy waters calling, like the voice of God?
Far towards the setting sun, wandering they go,
Poor remnant! left, from exile and from slaughter,
But still their memory, mingling with thy flow,
Lives in thy name—thou lovely 'Leaping Water.'

Frances Anne Kemble

Written In A Diary

They who go down to the relentless deep,
After long horrible death of cold and drought
Ere the last spark of flickering life goes out,
Give to the bitter waves that o'er them sweep,
The secret of their agony to keep;
Hoping that when the never-satiate sea,
In its huge depths had swallowed them for ever,
To human hands and eyes it shall deliver
The record of their piteous misery.
So I unto these pages do commend
The story of my shipwreck dire for thee,
Where thou shalt read, how long before the end,
I strove, and clung, and prayed, and vainly cried,
Trusting in thee and heaven, until I died.

Frances Anne Kemble

Written On Cramond Beach

Farewell, old playmate! on thy sandy shore
My lingering feet will leave their print no more;
To thy loved side I never may return.
I pray thee, old companion, make due mourn
For the wild spirit who so oft has stood
Gazing in love and wonder on thy flood.
The form is now departing far away,
That half in anger, oft, and half in play,
Thou hast pursued with thy white showers of foam.
Thy waters daily will besiege the home
I loved among the rocks; but there will be
No laughing cry, to hail thy victory,
Such as was wont to greet thee, when I fled,
With hurried footsteps, and averted head,
Like fallen monarch, from my venturous stand,
Chased by thy billows far along the sand.
And when at eventide thy warm waves drink
The sober clouds, that in their bosom sink;
When sober twilight over thee has spread
Her purple pall, when the glad day is dead,
My voice no more will mingle with the dirge
That rose in mighty moaning from thy surge,
Filling with awful harmony the air,
When thy vast soul and mine were joined in prayer.

Frances Anne Kemble

Youth With Swift Feet Walks Onward In The Way,

Youth with swift feet walks onward in the way,
The land of joy lies all before his eyes;
Age, stumbling, lingers slower day by day,
Still looking back, for it behind him lies.

Frances Anne Kemble