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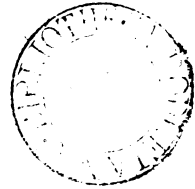
PASSING THOUGHTS

IN

SONNET STANZAS.

WITH

OTHER POEMS,



Original and Translated.

"FARI QUÆ SENTIAT."

LONDON:

ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE AND CO.

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TO THAT

GREAT PATRON OF LIGHT LITERATURE,

THE DRAWING ROOM TABLE,

WHOSE SUPPORT,

SO ESSENTIAL TO HIS SUCCESS, HE HUMBLY HOPES TO OBTAIN,

THIS VOLUME

IS EARNESTLY RECOMMENDED

AND RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

EVERY man, however busy, has some leisure at his command. That of the author is not abundant. Still there are odds and ends of time at his disposal, and some of these he has devoted to metrical composition—he is afraid to call it poetry, the word sounds so grand and implies so much. A few private friends have expressed a desire to read what he has written, and the readiest way of enabling them to do so, is to resort to the press. Besides satisfying their wish, he has another motive for printing. Each individual is a member of the body social, and exercises some influence over his fellow-men, whether for good or for evil. The productions to be found in the following pages, are the result of mental efforts,

however feeble; and they are offered as a small contribution to the common stock of literature, in the hope that they may afford some amusement, and prove of some utility.

The author has long thought, and in this volume endeavours to prove, that *the sonnet* is applicable to a more extended purpose than that to which it is usually restricted—the expression of some sentiment of love or other strong emotion. In the following pages he has made the experiment of employing it for description—for satire—for criticism; and with reference to subjects light as well as grave; in short for the general service of verse. How far he has succeeded, the reader must judge for himself.

The Sonnets will be found for the most part to follow strictly the laws of versification laid down for this species of composition: that is to say, the first eight lines are confined to two measures of four lines each, with only two rhymes in all, according to the following formula, A. B. B. A. A. B. B. A.

In the last six lines there are three rhymes, but

all admit that it is optional with the writer how these shall be arranged. The author is aware that the order which he has generally, but not always, followed, namely, a quatrain and a final couplet, thus, A. B. A. B. C. C., is by many not thought the best. He nevertheless prefers it; and believes that one reason why the Sonnet has never been popular is, that those who have not studied its structure—and they constitute a large majority of readers—do not feel conscious of its rythmical beauty.

With the law that governs the first eight lines there is no fault to be found; though many, to escape the difficulty of complying with it, make a third rhyme in the sixth and seventh lines, thus, A. B. B. A. A. C. C. A., which is admissible, perhaps, though not to be commended; but when, in the remaining six lines we follow such an order of rhyming as this—A. B. C. C. B. A., or such as this—A. B. C. B. C. A., the last line is so far from the first, that in the distance the rhyme is lost altogether to the ear of most readers.

The Sonnets headed "London," were intended to form part of a larger and more connected composition on that fertile subject; but the author changed his mind, and he will esteem himself fortunate if it be not considered that there are too many of these Sonnets already.

The Original Poems, not in the form of sonnets, and also the Translations, need no general remark. They either explain themselves without comment, or, where necessary, are explained by short notes.

LEONORA.*

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF BÜRGER.

I.

Poor Leonora's dreams were dread,
As she woke at break of day,
"Art thou, my William, false or dead,
"How long wilt thou delay?"
William had Frederick's army sought,
And at the field of Prague had fought ;
But or alive or slain
She strove to learn in vain.

* If Sir Walter Scott thought it necessary to apologise for publishing another translation of "Bürger's Lenore," a reason must needs be given for putting forth a new version. The metre of the original, which neither Sir Walter nor his predecessor, Taylor of Norwich, adhered to, the present translator deems essential to the preservation of its character ; and he ventures to hope, that the circumstance of his having adopted it, will compensate for the inferiority of his attempt in other respects, and that the English reader will thus form a more accurate notion of this remarkable poem, than even the great masters named above have, without this help, been able to convey.

II.

The king and empress weary grown
Of such a tedious feud,
Their hostile arms at length laid down,
And peace again renewed.
In either army songs were sung,
Rattled the drums, the trumpets rung ;
And homeward each returned,
With olive crowns adorned.

III.

And here and there and every where
Forth sallied old and young,
Whose shouts of gladness rent the air,
To greet the coming throng.
“Thank Heaven,” their wives and children cried ;
“Welcome !” said many a joyful bride.
For Leonore alone
Fond greeting there was none.

IV.

Of each returning troop she sought
That homeward bent their way ;
But there was none who tidings brought,
That might her fears allay.
And when the crowd was out of view,
She tore her locks of raven hue ;
And sunk upon the ground,
Absorbed in grief profound.

V.

Her mother ran to her relief,
“ Lord ! comfort the distrest ;
“ What ails thee, dearest ? Whence thy grief ? ”
And strained her to her breast.
“ O, mother, mother, all is gone,
“ The faithless world and I have done ;
“ On wretched me, alas !
“ The Lord no pity has.”

VI.

“ Help ! Jesu ! help my suffering one ;
“ Child ! pray to God above ;
“ Whate’er He doth is rightly done,
“ The Lord His own shall love.”
“ Peace, mother ! ’t is an idle plea,
“ God hath not rightly done by me,
“ Of what availed my prayer—
“ Nought ! nought ! ’t was empty air.”

VII.

“ Lord, shield us ! whom the Father sent,
“ He shall uphold His own,
“ My child ! the holy sacrament
“ Shall for your griefs atone.”
“ Ah, mother, that for which I grieve
“ No sacrament can e’er retrieve ;
“ No sacrament restore
“ To life, when life is o’er.”

VIII.

“ But what if he should perjured prove,
“ And all forsaking you
“ Should find abroad some other love,
“ And plight his troth anew ?
“ O were it thus—then let him go,
“ The false one ne'er shall prosper so.
“ When soul and body sever,
“ The wretch shall burn for ever.”

IX.

“ O, mother, mother, all is gone,
“ And I forlorn ! forlorn !
“ Death is my portion, death alone,
“ Would I had ne'er been born.
“ Out ! out ! for ever out my light,
“ Come horrid fate, and endless night ;
“ On wretched me, alas !
“ The Lord no pity has.”

X.

“ Save, Lord ! nor into judgment go
“ With thine afflicted maid,
“ What spake the tongue she doth not know,
“ Record not what she said.
“ Come, child, forget the woes you feel,
“ Think, think on your eternal weal ;
“ And thus beyond the grave
“ A bridegroom you shall have.”

XI.

“ O mother, what to me is weal,
“ Or what to me is woe ?
“ Yes, with my William, Heaven I feel,
“ Without him, hell below.
“ Out ! out ! for ever out my light,
“ Come, horrid death and endless night ;
“ Not Heaven itself to me,
“ Without him, Heaven can be.”

XII.

Despair thus maddening every sense,
Pervaded all her frame,
And on her Maker's Providence
She dared to cast the blame.
She wrung her hands, and beat her breast,
Until the sun had gone to rest,
And in the vault serene
The golden stars were seen.

XIII.

And hark ! without, the stamp, stamp, stamp
Of a courser's clattering feet ;
And hark ! at the balcon steps, the tramp
Of a rider, who sprang from his seat.
And hark ! again, 't was the tinkling twang
Of the portal bell that lightly rang ;
And ere the rider appeared,
These words were plainly heard.

XIV.

“ Holla! holla! my child arouse,
“ Awake art thou or sleeping?
“ Remember'st thou thy plighted vows?
“ Art happy, love, or weeping?”
“ So late, my William, is it you?
“ Awake am I and weeping too,
“ A life of woe I've led.
“ Whence have you hither sped?”

XV.

“ At midnight hour alone we ride,
“ From far Bohemia we,
“ And I am late, so rouse, my bride,
“ And mount along with me.”
“ Hark! through the hawthorn howls the wind,
“ Come in, my love, and you shall find
“ Shelter and warmth and rest,
“ Strained to my eager breast.”

XVI.

“ No—through the hawthorn let the blast
“ Howl on so sad and drear,
“ My courser chafes, my spurs are fast,
“ I dare not house me here.
“ Come quickly, dearest, wrap thee round,
“ And on my steed behind me bound ;
“ A hundred leagues be sped
“ Ere reached our bridal bed.”

XVII.

“ Ah ! would'st thou bear me off to-night
“ To my bridal bed so fast ?
“ No time remains for so rapid a flight,
“ The midnight hour is past.”
“ The moon shines brightly o'er the lea,
“ So swiftly ride the dead and we,
“ I'll wager we yet shall alight
“ At our bridal bed to-night.”

XVIII.

“ But tell me where thy bridal hall,
“ And where thy bridal bed ?”
“ Far—far from hence, still, cool, and small,
“ A fathom from foot to head.”
“ Hast room for me ?” “ For me and thee.
“ Come gird thee and mount along with me,
“ The guests await the bride,
“ The chamber’s yawning wide.”

XIX.

The maiden arose, and sprang with a bound
Behind the rider’s seat ;
And round him her delicate arms she wound,
As she sat on the courser fleet.
Then swift as an arrow from Tartar bow
In a whirlwind gallop away they go,
Till rider and steed were spent,
And the flint sparks flashed as they went.

xx.

Now on the left and on the right
The moving landscape flies ;
Heath, field, and bridge in rapid flight
Soon vanish from their eyes.
“ Dost fear, my love ? The moon shines bright.
“ Hurra ! the dead ride fast to-night.
“ Ah ! dearest, calm thy dread,
“ Nor shudder at the dead.”

xxi.

And whence those tones, that solemn knell ?
Why flapped that raven's wing ?
Tolls for the dead that parting bell,
And a burial dirge they sing.
A funeral train now came in view,
Now hearse and coffin nearer drew,
And howled as wintry gale
That choir of woe and wail.

XXII.

“ Bury the corse ere morning come
“ With knell, and dirge, and woe ;
“ My youthful bride I ’m bearing home,
“ To our bridal bed we go.
“ Come, Sexton, with your choir along,
“ And howl me forth a bridal song.
“ Come, Priest, the nuptials bless,
“ Ere bridal couch we press.”

XXIII.

The wailing ceased—vanished the bier.
Now following in his track,
Sweeping along the choir appear,
Close at the courser’s back.
Further and further on they ride
In a furious gallop both knight and bride,
Till rider and steed were spent,
And the hoofs flashed fire as they went.

XXIV.

Vales, mountains, trees, and hedges flew,
Both on the left and right ;
Towns, hamlets, cots scarce came in view
Ere they were out of sight.
“ Dost fear, my love? The moon shines bright.
“ Hurra! the dead ride fast to-night.
“ Ah, dearest, calm thy dread,
“ Nor shudder at the dead.”

XXV.

By moon-beams pale obscurely lit,
See! see! yon goblin rout,
Around a gallows tree they flit,
In a breezy dance about.
“ Holla! yon rabble, hither prance,
“ And weave for us a bridal dance ;
“ Come! follow in our train,
“ Till bridal bed we gain.”

XXVI.

And so the goblins rush, rush, rush,
Came sweeping on behind,
As through the leaves of withered bush,
Rustles the wintry wind.
Further and further on they ride,
In a furious gallop both knight and bride,
Till rider and steed were spent,
And the hoofs flashed fire as they went.

XXVII.

The darkling landscape's flying shades
Were now in distance lost,
And the Welkin fled above their heads,
And all the starry host.
"Dost fear, my love? the moon shines bright,
"Hurra! the dead ride fast to-night;
"Ah, dearest, calm thy dread
"Nor shudder at the dead."

XXVIII.

“ Hark ! hark ! the crow of Chanticleer,
“ Our sand is well nigh run.
“ Methinks I scent the morning air ;
“ My courser, hie thee on.
“ ’T is o’er ! our speedy journey ’s sped,
“ And gaping wide the bridal bed ;
“ The dead ride wondrous fast.
“ We ’ve gained the goal at last.”

XXIX.

And all at once in a gallop they came
To an iron portal—a knock
With a slender wand on its grated frame,
Burst open both bolt and lock.
The creaking valves flew open wide,
And over yawning graves they hied,
And tombstones glimmered around
In the moon-lit burial-ground.

xxx.

And now when all their labours cease,
With horror she perceives
The horseman's armour piece by piece
Fall off like autumn leaves.
A skull with neither hair nor beard,
A naked skull his head appeared,
On a skeleton beneath,
With scythe and glass of Death.

xxxI.

The restless courser pawed the ground,
And snorted fire and flame,
When lo! on a sudden the maiden found
He had vanished from under her frame.
Then in the air was heard a moan,
And the graves sent forth a dismal groan ;
And the maid 'twixt death and life,
Struggled in mortal strife.

xxxii.

While spectres danced by the moon-light pale
 Around in a mazy ring,
And as they moved with howl and wail,
 They thus were heard to sing :—
“ Though crushed thy heart, thy misery bear,
“ Nor ere to curse thy Maker dare ;
 “ Thy life hath reached its goal,
 “ God help thy sinking soul !”