

Hours of Solitude. A Collection of Original Poems. Volume II.

Dacre, Charlotte, b. 1782

Charlotte Payne, -- creation of electronic text.

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HOURS OF SOLITUDE.

A COLLECTION OF

Original Poems,

NOW FIRST PUBLISHED.

BY CHARLOTTE DACRE,
BETTER KNOWN BY THE NAME OF
ROSA MATILDA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

—◆—
VOL. II.
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Ah! what is mirth but turbulence unholy,
When to the charm compared of heavenly melancholy?

MILTON.

London:

Printed by D. N. SHURY, Berwick-street, Soho;

FOR HUGHES, WIGMORE-STREET, CAVENDISH-SQUARE;
AND RIDGEWAY, PICCADILLY.

1805.

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VOL. II.

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IT may be proper to state, that a translation of the Poem which bears the title of "The Lass of Fair Wone," from the German of Bürger, I once met with in a periodical publication four or five years ago; conceiving it extremely interesting, but yet susceptible of some improvement, I ventured to make in it such alterations as I flattered myself, without deducting from the sense or substance of the original, might render it, in some measure, more acceptable to the English reader; for the Germans, in an overstrain'd attempt at nature, often pourtray her in her worst and plainest garb. The heroine in the poem alluded to after perpetrating the murder of her infant, is made to finish her career at the gallows. To run a pin through the heart of a born babe, and be hung for the action, I judged an event, however justly conceived, too familiarly disgusting to require an excuse for its suppression.

Whether or not I have succeeded in the wish of improving, by any attempt of mine, the translation of

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this poem, I must leave to the decision of those who are most capable of judging; at the same time hoping it will be fully understood I am far from claiming any merit on so trifling an occasion.

I have subjoined a few stanzas as specimens of the translation to which I have alluded.

**SPECIMEN OF THE FORMER
TRANSLATION
OF
THE LASS OF FAIR WONE.**

HER sire, a harsh and angry man,
With furious voice revil'd,
"Hence from my sight, I'll none of thee--
I harbour not thy child."

And fast amid her fluttering hair,
With clenched fist he gripes,
And seized a leathern thong, and lash'd
Her side with sounding stripes.

"Poor soul, I'll have thee hous'd and nurs'd;
Thy terrors I lament:
Stay here--we'll have some further talk--
The old one shall repent:

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What's fit and fair I'll do for thee,
Shalt yet retain my love--
Shalt wed my huntsman, and we'll then
Our former transports prove.

"Me vengeance waits; my poor, poor child,
Thy wound shall bleed afresh,
When ravens from the gallows tear
Thy mother's mould'ring flesh."

Hard by the bow'r her gibbet stands;
Her skull is still to show;
It seems to eye the barren grave,
Three spans in length below.

THE LASS OF FAIR WONE.

From the German of Bürger.

BESIDE the parson's dusky bow'r*

 Why strays a troubl'd sprite,
That dimly shines in lonely hour
 Thro' curtains of the night?

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

Why steals along yon slimy bank
 An hov'ring fire so blue,
That lights a spot both drear and dank,
 Where falls nor rain nor dew?

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The parson once a daughter had,
Fair village maids above;
Unstain'd as fair--and many a lad
Had sought the maiden's love.

High o'er the hamlet proudly dight
Beyond the winding stream,
The windows of yon mansion bright
Shone in the evening beam.

A Bacchanalian lord dwelt there,
Unworthy of his name;
He plung'd a father in despair,
And robb'd a maiden's fame.

With wine and tapers sparkling round,
The night flew swift away;
In huntsman's dress, with horn and hound,
He met the dawning day.

He sent the maid his picture, deck'd
With diamonds, pearls, and gold;
Ah! silly maid, why not reject
What on the back was told?

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"Despise the love of shepherd boys;
Shalt thou be basely woo'd
That worthy art of highest joys,
And youths of noble blood?"

"The tale I would to thee unfold
In secret must be said;
And when the midnight hour is told,
Fair love, be not afraid.

"And when the am'rous nightingale
Like thee shall sweetly sing,
A stone thy window shall assail,
My idol forth to bring."

Attired in vest of gayest blue,
He came with lonely tread,
And silent as the beams that threw
Their pale light o'er her head.

And did no thought affect his breast,
Or bid his feet delay?
Ah! no! the crime but adds a zest
To spur his guilty way.

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And when the sweet-pip'd nightingale
Sang from the dusky bow'r,
A stone her window did assail
Just at the midnight hour.

And ah! she came;--his treacherous arms
The trembling maid receive;
How soon do they in lover's charms
A lover's truth believe!

* Lock'd in his arms, she scarcely strove,
Seduc'd by young desire,
The glowing twin brother of Love,
Possess'd with wilder fire.

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

Still struggling, faint, he led her on
Tow'rd the fatal bow'r,
So still--so dim--while all along
Sweet smelt each blushing flow'r.

Then beat her heart--and heav'd her breast--
And pleaded ev'ry sense;
Remorseless the seducer prest,
To blast her innocence.

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But soon in tears repentant drown'd,
The drooping fair bemoan'd,
And oft, when night in terror frown'd,
Forlorn and sad she roam'd.

And when the fragile flow'rs decay'd,
The bloom her cheeks forsook,
And from her eyes no longer play'd
The loves with wily look.

* And when the leaves of autumn fell,
And grey the grass was grown,
Her bosom rose with lovely swell,
And tighter grew her zone.

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

And when the mow'rs went a field
The yellow corn to ted,
She felt her sorrowing bosom yield
To all a mother's dread.

And when the winds of winter swept
The stubborn glebe among,
In wild despair and fear she wept
The lingering night along.

And when the fault of yielding love
No more could be conceal'd,
She knelt, her father's soul to move,
And, weeping, all reveal'd.

+ But vain her tears; the ruthless sire
In piteous voice revil'd,
And while his eye-balls flash'd with fire,
He spurn'd his hapless child:

+ **See specimen of former translation.**

Spurn'd her with cruelty severe,
And smote her snowy breast;
The patient blood, that gush'd so clear,
Its purity confess'd.

* Such are the dang'rous thorns of love,
That strew the virgin's way,
While faithless as its roses prove,
'Tis they that first decay.

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

Then drove her forth forlorn to wail
Amid the dreary wild,
Forgets that mortals all are frail,
But more--forgets his child!

* Unhappy parent!--passion's slave!
Had nature been thy guide,
Thy child, now sunk in hasten'd grave,
Might still have been thy pride.

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

Up the harsh rock so steep and slim'd,
The mourner had to roam,
And faint on tott'ring feet she clim'd
To seek her lover's home.

"Alas! my blood-stain'd bosom see,
The drooping sufferer cried;
"A *mother* hast thou made of me,
Before thou mad'st a *bride* .

"This is thy ruthless deed--behold!"
And sinking on the floor;
"Oh! let thy love with honour hold,
My injur'd name restore."

+ "Poor maid! I grieve to see thy woe;
My folly now lament:
Go not while harsh the tempests blow,
Thy father shall repent."

+ See specimen of former translation.

"I cannot stay," she shudd'ring cried,
 "While dubious hangs my fame.
Alas! forswear thy cruel pride,
 And leave me not to shame.

"Make me thy wife, I'll love thee true;
 High Heaven approves the deed:
For mercy's sake some pity shew,
 E'en while for thee I bleed!"

"Sure 'tis thy mirth, or dost thou rave?
 "Can I," he scoffing cried,
"Thy forfeit name from scorn to save,
 E'er wed a peasant maid?"

"What honour bids I'll do for thee--
 My huntsman shall be thine;
While still our loves, voluptuous free,
 No shackles shall confine."

"Damn'd be thy soul, and sad thy life,
 May pangs in hell await!
Wretch! if too humble for thy wife,
 Oh, why not for thy mate?"

"May God attend, my bitter prayer!
Some high-born spouse be thine,
Whose wanton arts shall mock thy care,
And spurious be thy line.

"Then traitor fell, how wretched those
In hopeless shame immers'd,
Strike thy hard breast with vengeful blows,
While curses from it burst!

"Roll thy dry eyes, for mercy call,
Unsooth'd thy grinning woe;
Through thy pale temples fire the ball,
And sink to fiends below!"

Then starting up, she wildly flew,
Nor heard the hissing sleet,
Nor knew how keen the tempest blew,
Nor felt her bleeding feet.

"Oh where, my God! where shall I roam?
For shelter where shall fly?"
She cried, as wild she sought the home
Where still she wish'd to die.

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Tow'rd the bow'r, in frenzied woe,
The fainting wand'rer drew,
Where wither'd leaves and driving snow
Made haste her bed to strew:

E'en to that bower, where first undone,
Now yields its bed forlorn,
And now beholds a cherub son
In grief and terror born.

"Ah, lovely babe!" she cried, "we part
Ne'er, ne'er to meet again!"
Then frantic pierc'd its tender heart--
The new-born life is slain.

Swift horror seiz'd her shudd'ring soul--
"My God, behold my crime!
Let thy avenging thunders roll,
And crush me in my prime!"

With blood-stain'd hands the bank beside
Its shallow grave she tore.
"There rest in God," she wildly cried,
"Where guilt can stab no more."

Then the red knife, with blood imbru'd,
Of innocence, she press'd;
Its fatal point convulsive view'd,
And sheath'd it in her breast.

* Beside her infant's lonely tomb
Her mould'ring form is laid,
Where never flow'r is seen to bloom
Beneath the deadly shade.

*** In the translation to which I have already alluded, the lines only rhyme alternately; wherever I have added an entire stanza I have marked the passage by an asterisk.**

Where falls nor rain nor heavenly dew,
Where sun-beam never shines,
Where steals along the fire so blue,
And hov'ring spectre pines.

There, too, its blood-stain'd hand to wave,
Her mournful ghost is seen,
Or dimly o'er her infant's grave,
Three spans in length, to lean.