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The Complete Poems

written by

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Contents

Acknowledgements xiv

Introduction

Historical Survey xv

This Edition xix, *Copy-Text and Order* xix, *Poems and Poetical Fragments* xxi, *Titles* xxiii, *Spelling and Capitalization* xxiv, *Punctuation* xxiv, *Gondal* xxix

Table of Dates xxxiii

Further Reading

Editions xxxix

Reference xl

Biography and Criticism xl

The Poems

I. Poems Published in 1846

i [153]. Faith and Despondency: "The winter wind is loud and wild" 3

ii [160]. Stars: 'Ahl why, because the dazzling sun' 5

iii [157]. The Philosopher: "Enough of thought, philosopher" 7

iv [158]. Remembrance: 'Cold in the earth – and the deep snow piled above thee' 8

v [156]. A Death-Scene: "O Day! he cannot die" 9

vi [149]. Song: 'The linnet in the rocky dells' 11

vii [163]. Anticipation: 'How beautiful the earth is still' 12

viii [166]. The Prisoner (A Fragment): 'In the dungeon-crypts, idly did I stray' 14

ix [141]. Hope: 'Hope was but a timid friend' 16

x [146]. A Day Dream: 'On a sunny brae, alone I lay' 17

xi [150]. To Imagination: 'When weary with the long day's care' 19

xii [132]. How Clear She Shines: 'How clear she shines! How quietly' 20

- xiii [182]. Sympathy: 'There should be no despair for you' 21
- xiv [152]. Plead for Me: 'Oh, thy bright eyes must answer now' 22
- xv [130]. Self-Interrogation: "'The evening passes fast away"' 23
- xvi [159]. Death: 'Death! that struck when I was most confiding' 25
- xvii [105]. Stanzas to —: 'Well, some may hate, and some may scorn' 26
- xviii [155]. Honour's Martyr: 'The moon is full this winter night' 26
- xix [115]. Stanzas: 'I'll not weep that thou art going to leave me' 29
- xx [144]. My Comforter: 'Well hast thou spoken, and yet, not taught' 29
- xxi [121]. The Old Stoic: 'Riches I hold in light esteem' 30

II. Dated Poems

1. 'Cold clear and blue the morning heaven' 32
2. 'Will the day be bright or cloudy' 32
3. 'Tell me tell me smiling child' 33
4. 'The inspiring music's thrilling sound' 33
5. 'High waving heather 'neath stormy blasts bending' 34
6. 'Woods you need not frown on me' 34
7. 'Start not upon the minster wall' 35
8. 'Redbreast early in the morning' 35
9. 'Through the hours of yesternight' 36
10. 'There shines the moon, at noon of night' 36
11. 'The night of storms has passed' (incorporating 'Woe for the day Regina's pride') 38
12. 'I saw thee child one summer's day' 40
13. 'Sleep not dream not this bright day' 42
14. 'O God of heaven! the dream of horror' 43
15. 'The battle had passed from the height' (incorporating 'How golden bright from earth and heaven', 'Not a vapour had stained the breezeless blue', and 'Only some spires of bright green grass') 45
16. 'The sun has set and the long grass now' 46

17. 'Lady in your Palace Hall' 47
18. 'And first an hour of mournful musing' 47
19. 'Wind sink to rest in the heather' 47
20. 'Long neglect has worn away' 48
21. 'Awaking morning laughs from heaven' 48
22. 'Alone I sat the summer day' 49
23. A. G. A. to A. E.: 'Lord of Elbë, on Elbë hill' 50
24. 'The organ swells the trumpets sound' 50
25. 'A sudden chasm of ghastly light' 51
26. 'The old church tower and garden wall' 53
27. Lines: 'Far away is the land of rest' 53
28. 'Now trust a heart that trusts in you' 54
29. 'Sleep brings no joy to me' 55
30. 'Strong I stand though I have borne' 56
31. 'The night is darkening round me' (incorporating 'I'll come when thou art saddest' and 'I would have touched the heavenly key') 56
32. To a Wreath of Snow: 'O transient voyager of heaven' 57
33. Song by Julius Angora: 'Awake! awake! how loud the stormy morning' 58
34. Lines: 'I die but when the grave shall press' 59
35. 'O mother I am not regretting' 60
36. 'Weaned from life and torn away' 62
37. 'I'm happiest when most away' 62
38. 'Deep deep down in the silent grave' (incorporating 'Here with my knee upon thy stone', 'O come again what chains withhold', and 'Was it with the fields of green') 63
39. 'How loud the storm sounds round the Hall' 64
40. 'What use is it to slumber here' 64
41. 'O evening why is thy light so sad' (incorporating 'It's over now I've known it all') 64
42. 'The wide cathedral Aisles are lone' 65
43. 'O hinder me by no delay' 66
44. 'Darkness was overtraced on every face' 66
45. 'Harp of wild and dream like strain' 67
46. Song to A. A.: 'This shall be thy lullaby' 67
47. 'Why do I hate that lone green dell' 68

48. A. G. A. to A. S.: 'O wander not so far away' 68
 49. Gleneden's Dream: 'Tell me, watcher, is it winter' 69
 50. 'None of my kindred now can tell' 72
 51. 'Twas one of those dark cloudy days' 73
 52. 'Lonely at her window sitting' 73
 53. 'There are two trees in a lonely field' 73
 54. 'What is that smoke that ever still' 73
 55. 'Still as she looked the iron clouds' 74
 56. 'Away away resign me now' 74
 57. 'It will not shine again' 74
 58. 'None but one beheld him dying' 74
 59. 'Coldly bleakly drearily' 75
 60. 'Old Hall of [Elbë] ruined lonely now' 75
 61. Douglas's Ride: 'Well, narrower draw the circle round' 75
 62. 'For him who struck thy foreign string' 78
 63. 'In dungeons dark I cannot sing' 78
 64. 'The evening sun was sinking down' 78
 65. 'Fall leaves fall die flowers away' 79
 66. Song by Julius Brenzaida to G. S.: 'Geraldine, the moon is shining' 79
 67. Song by J. Brenzaida: 'I knew not 'twas so dire a crime' 80
 68. 'Where were ye all? and where wert thou' 81
 69. 'I paused on the threshold I turned to the sky' 82
 70. 'O come with me thus ran the song' 82
 71. F. De Samara to A. G. A.: 'Light up thy halls! 'Tis closing day' 82
 72. 'When days of Beauty deck the earth' 84
 73. 'Still beside that dreary water' 84
 74. 'There swept adown that dreary glen' 84
 75. 'O Dream, where art thou now' 85
 76. 'Loud without the wind was roaring' 86
 77. 'A little while, a little while' 88
 78. 'How still, how happy! those are words' 90
 79. 'The blue bell is the sweetest flower' 91
 80. 'The night was dark yet winter breathed' 92
 81. 'From our evening fireside now' 94
 82. Song: 'King Julius left the south country' 96

83. Lines: 'The soft unclouded blue of air' 97
84. To the Blue Bell: 'Sacred watcher, wave thy bells' 99
85. 'I am the only being whose doom' 99
86. 'May flowers are opening' 100
87. Lines by Claudia: 'I did not sleep 'twas noon of day' 101
88. 'I know not how it falls on me' 102
89. Written on Returning to the P. of I. on the 10th of January 1827: 'The busy day has hurried by' 103
90. 'Month after month year after year' 104
91. 'And now the house dog stretched once more' 105
92. A Farewell to Alexandria: 'I've seen this dell in July's shine' 106
93. 'Come hither, child - who gifted thee' 107
94. 'Shed no tears o'er that tomb' 108
95. 'Mild the mist upon the hill' 109
96. 'How long will you remain? The midnight hour' 110
97. 'The starry night shall tidings bring' 111
98. 'It is not pride it is not shame' 112
99. 'It was night and on the mountains' 112
100. 'Fair sinks the summer evening now' 113
101. 'Alcona in its changing mood' 114
102. Song: 'O between distress and pleasure' 115
103. 'There was a time when my cheek burned' 116
104. 'The wind I hear it sighing' 117
105. [xvii. Stanzas to —] 118
106. 'The wind was rough which tore' 118
107. 'That wind I used to hear it swelling' 118
108. 'Come, walk with me' 119
109. 'Heaven's glory shone where he was laid' 120
110. 'Upon her soothing breast' 120
111. 'I gazed within thine earnest eyes' 120
112. Written in the Gaaldine Prison Caves to A. G. A.:
'Thy sun is near meridian height' 121
113. 'Far, far away is mirth withdrawn' 123
114. 'It is too late to call thee now' 124
115. [xix. Stanzas] 125
116. 'If grief for grief can touch thee' 125
117. 'Tis moonlight summer moonlight' 125

118. The Night-Wind: 'In summer's mellow
midnight' 126
119. 'Companions, all day long we've stood' 127
120. 'And like myself lone wholly lone' 129
121. [xxi. The Old Stoic] 129
122. 'Shall Earth no more inspire thee' 130
123. 'Aye there it is! It wakes tonight' 131
124. 'I see around me tombstones grey' 131
125. Geraldine: "'Twas night, her comrades gathered
all' 133
126. Rosina: 'Weeks of wild delirium past' 134
127. A. S. to G. S.: 'I do not weep, I would not weep' 137
128. H. A. and A. S.: 'In the same place, when Nature
wore' 138
129. Written in Aspin Castle: 'How do I love on summer
nights' 139
130. [xv. Self-Interrogation] 143
131. On the Fall of Zalona: 'All blue and bright, in glorious
light' 143
132. [xii. How Clear She Shines] 145
133. To A. S. 1830: 'Where beams the sun the
brightest' 146
134. E. G. to M. R.: 'Thy Guardians are asleep' 147
135. 'Had there been falsehood in my breast' 148
136. To A. G. A.: "'Thou standest in the greenwood
now'" 148
137. 'Yes holy be thy resting place' 149
138. A. G. A. to A. S.: 'At such a time, in such a spot' 150
139. 'In the earth, the earth thou shalt be laid' 152
140. Rodric Lesley. 1830: 'Lie down and rest, the fight is
done' 152
141. [ix. Hope] 153
142. M. G. for the U. S.: "'Twas yesterday at early
dawn' 153
143. At Castle Wood: 'The day is done - the winter
sun' 155
144. [xx. My Comforter] 156
145. A. G. A. to A. S.: 'This summer wind, with thee and
me' 156

146. [x. A Day Dream] 156
 147. E. W. to A. G. A.: 'How few, of all the hearts that
 loved' 157
 148. The Death of A. G. A.: 'Were they shepherds, who sat
 all day' 158
 149. [vi. Song] 168
 150. [xi. To Imagination] 168
 151. D. G. C. to J. A.: 'Come, the wind may never
 again' 169
 152. [xiv. Plead for Me] 169
 153. [i. Faith and Despondency] 170
 154. From a Dungeon Wall in the Southern College:
 "Listen! when your hair like mine" 170
 155. [xviii. Honour's Martyr] 171
 156. [v. A Death-Scene] 172
 157. [iii. The Philosopher] 172
 158. [iv. Remembrance] 172
 159. [xvi. Death] 172
 160. [ii. Stars] 172
 161. 'A thousand sounds of happiness' 172
 162. A. E. and R. C.: 'Heavy hangs the raindrop'
 (incorporating 'Child of Delight! with sunbright
 hair') 173
 163. [vii. Anticipation] 175
 164. M. A. Written on the Dungeon Wall - N. C.: 'I know
 that tonight, the wind is sighing' 175
 165. Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle: 'Silent is the House -
 all are laid asleep' 177
 166. [viii. The Prisoner (A Fragment)] 181
 167. 'No coward soul is mine' 182
 168. 'Why ask to know the date - the clime' 183
 169. 'Why ask to know what date what clime' 190

III. Undated Poems

170. 'All day I've toiled but not with pain' 191
 171. "'Tis evening now the sun descends' 192
 172. 'There let thy bleeding branch atone' 192
 173. 'What winter floods what showers of spring' 192
 174. 'All hushed and still within the house' 193

175. 'Iernë's eyes were glazed and dim' 193
 176. 'But the hearts that once adored me' 194
 177. 'Methinks this heart should rest awhile' 194
 178. 'That dreary lake that midnight sky' 195
 179. 'His land may burst the galling chain' 195
 180. 'She dried her tears and they did smile' 196
 181. 'Love is like the wild rose briar' 196
 182. [xiii. Sympathy] 197

IV. Poems of Doubtful Authorship

- 'Often rebuked, yet always back returning' 198
 To the Horse Black Eagle Which I Rode at the Battle of
 Zamorna: 'Swart steed of night, thou hast charged thy
 last' 199

Appendix 1 A list of poems in their order of appearance in
 the *Gondal Poems* notebook and the Honresfeld
 manuscript 200

Appendix 2 Poems as edited by Charlotte Brontë in 1850

- 'A little while, a little while' 203
 The Bluebell: 'The Bluebell is the sweetest flower' 204
 'Loud without the wind was roaring' 205
 'Shall Earth no more inspire thee' 208
 The Night-Wind: 'In summer's mellow midnight' 209
 'Ay – there it is! It wakes to-night' 210
 Love and Friendship: 'Love is like the wild rose-briar' 211
 The Elder's Rebuke: "'Listen! When your hair, like
 mine'" 211
 The Wanderer from the Fold: 'How few, of all the hearts
 that loved' 212
 Warning and Reply: 'In the earth – the earth – thou shalt
 be laid' 214
 Last Words: 'I knew not 'twas so dire a crime' 214
 The Lady to Her Guitar: 'For him who struck thy foreign
 string' 215
 The Two Children: 'Heavy hangs the rain-drop' 216
 The Visionary: 'Silent is the house: all are laid asleep' 218
 Encouragement: 'I do not weep; I would not weep' 219

xiii CONTENTS

Stanzas: 'Often rebuked, yet always back returning' 220
'No coward soul is mine' 220

Notes 223

Index of Titles 287

Index of First Lines 289

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The Poems

I. Poems Published in 1846

i [153]. *Faith and Despondency*

'The winter wind is loud and wild,
Come close to me, my darling child;
Forsake thy books, and mateless play;
And, while the night is gathering grey,
We'll talk its pensive hours away; —

'Iernë, round our sheltered hall
November's gusts unheeded call;
Not one faint breath can enter here
Enough to wave my daughter's hair,
10 And I am glad to watch the blaze
Glance from her eyes, with mimic rays;
To feel her cheek so softly pressed,
In happy quiet on my breast.

'But, yet, even this tranquillity
Brings bitter, restless thoughts to me;
And, in the red fire's cheerful glow,
I think of deep glens, blocked with snow;
I dream of moor, and misty hill,
20 Where evening closes dark and chill;
For, lone, among the mountains cold,
Lie those that I have loved of old.
And my heart aches, in hopeless pain
Exhausted with repinings vain,
That I shall greet them ne'er again!

'Father, in early infancy,
When you were far beyond the sea,
Such thoughts were tyrants over me!

I often sat, for hours together,
 Through the long nights of angry weather,
 30 Raised on my pillow, to descry
 The dim moon struggling in the sky;
 Or, with strained ear, to catch the shock,
 Of rock with wave, and wave with rock;
 So would I fearful vigil keep,
 And, all for listening, never sleep.
 But this world's life has much to dread,
 Not so, my Father, with the dead.

'Oh! not for them, should we despair,
 The grave is drear, but they are not there;
 40 Their dust is mingled with the sod,
 Their happy souls are gone to God!
 You told me this, and yet you sigh,
 And murmur that your friends must die.
 Ah! my dear father, tell me why?
 For, if your former words were true,
 How useless would such sorrow be;
 As wise, to mourn the seed which grew
 Unnoticed on its parent tree,
 Because it fell in fertile earth,
 50 And sprang up to a glorious birth –
 Struck deep its root, and lifted high
 Its green boughs, in the breezy sky.

'But, I'll not fear, I will not weep
 For those whose bodies rest in sleep, –
 I know there is a blessed shore,
 Opening its ports for me, and mine;
 And, gazing Time's wide waters o'er,
 I weary for that land divine,
 Where we were born, where you and I
 60 Shall meet our Dearest, when we die;
 From suffering and corruption free,
 Restored into the Deity.'

'Well hast thou spoken, sweet, trustful child!
 And wiser than thy sire;
 And worldly tempests, raging wild,
 Shall strengthen thy desire –
 Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
 Through wind and ocean's roar,
 To reach, at last, the eternal home,
 70 The steadfast, changeless, shore!'

ii [160]. *Stars*

Ah! why, because the dazzling sun
 Restored our Earth to joy,
 Have you departed, every one,
 And left a desert sky?

All through the night, your glorious eyes
 Were gazing down in mine,
 And with a full heart's thankful sighs,
 I blessed that watch divine.

I was at peace, and drank your beams
 10 As they were life to me;
 And revelled in my changeful dreams,
 Like petrel on the sea.

Thought followed thought, star followed star,
 Through boundless regions, on;
 While one sweet influence, near and far,
 Thrilled through, and proved us one!

Why did the morning dawn to break
 So great, so pure, a spell;
 And scorch with fire, the tranquil cheek,
 20 Where your cool radiance fell?

Blood-red, he rose, and, arrow-straight,
His fierce beams struck my brow;
The soul of nature, sprang, elate,
But *mine* sank sad and low!

My lids closed down, yet through their veil,
I saw him, blazing, still,
And steep in gold the misty dale,
And flash upon the hill.

I turned me to the pillow, then,
To call back night, and see
30 Your worlds of solemn light, again,
Throb with my heart, and me!

It would not do – the pillow glowed,
And glowed both roof and floor;
And birds sang loudly in the wood,
And fresh winds shook the door;

The curtains waved, the wakened flies
Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
40 And give them leave to roam.

Oh, stars, and dreams, and gentle night;
Oh, night and stars return!
And hide me from the hostile light,
That does not warm, but burn;

That drains the blood of suffering men;
Drinks tears, instead of dew;
Let me sleep through his blinding reign,
And only wake with you!

iii [157]. *The Philosopher*

'Enough of thought, philosopher!
 Too long hast thou been dreaming
 Unenlightened, in this chamber drear,
 While summer's sun is beaming!
 Space-sweeping soul, what sad refrain
 Concludes thy musings once again?

 '“Oh, for the time when I shall sleep
 Without identity,
 And never care how rain may steep,
 10 Or snow may cover me!
 No promised heaven, these wild desires,
 Could all, or half fulfil;
 No threatened hell, with quenchless fires,
 Subdue this quenchless will!”’

'So said I, and still say the same;
 Still, to my death, will say –
 Three gods, within this little frame,
 Are warring night and day;
 20 Heaven could not hold them all, and yet
 They all are held in me;
 And must be mine till I forget
 My present entity!
 Oh, for the time, when in my breast
 Their struggles will be o'er!
 Oh, for the day, when I shall rest,
 And never suffer more!'

'I saw a spirit, standing, man,
 Where thou doth stand – an hour ago,
 And round his feet three rivers ran,
 30 Of equal depth, and equal flow –
 A golden stream – and one like blood;
 And one like sapphire seemed to be;
 But, where they joined their triple flood
 It tumbled in an inky sea.

The spirit sent his dazzling gaze
 Down through that ocean's gloomy night
 Then, kindling all, with sudden blaze,
 The glad deep sparkled wide and bright –
 White as the sun, far, far more fair
 40 Than its divided sources were!

'And even for that spirit, seer,
 I've watched and sought my life-time long;
 Sought him in heaven, hell, earth, and air –
 An endless search, and always wrong!
 Had I but seen his glorious eye
 Once light the clouds that wilder me,
 I ne'er had raised this coward cry
 To cease to think, and cease to be;
 I ne'er had called oblivion blest,
 50 Nor, stretching eager hands to death,
 Implored to change for senseless rest
 This sentient soul, this living breath –
 Oh, let me die – that power and will
 Their cruel strife may close;
 And conquered good, and conquering ill
 Be lost in one repose!'

iv [158]. *Remembrance*

Cold in the earth – and the deep snow piled above thee,
 Far, far, removed, cold in the dreary grave!
 Have I forgot, my only Love, to love thee,
 Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

Now, when alone, do my thoughts no longer hover
 Over the mountains, on that northern shore,
 Resting their wings where heath and fern-leaves cover
 Thy noble heart for ever, ever more?