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THOUGHTS DURING SICKNESS.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

I.

INTELLECTUAL POWERS.

O THOUGHT! O Memory! gems for ever heaping
High in the illumined chambers of the mind;
And thou, divine Imagination! keeping
Thy lamp's lone star mid shadowy hosts enshrined;
How, in one moment, rent and disentrined
At fever's fiery touch apart they fall,
Your glorious combinations!—broken all.
As the sand-pillars by the desert's wind
Scattered to whirling dust!—O soon uncrown'd!
Well may your parting swift, your strange return,
Subdue the soul to lowliness profound,
Guiding its chastened vision to discern
How by meek faith heaven's portals must be past
Ere it can hold your gifts inalienably fast.

SICKNESS LIKE NIGHT.

Thou art like night, O sickness! deeply stilling
Within my heart the world's disturbing sound,
And the dim quiet of my chamber filling
With low, sweet voices, by life's tumult drown'd.
Thou art like awful night!—thou gatherest round
The things that are unseen,—though close they lie,—
And with a truth, clear, startling, and profound,
Giv'st their dread presence to our mortal eye.
Thou art like starry, spiritual night!
High and immortal thoughts attend thy way,
And revelations, which the common light
Brings not, though wakening with its rosy ray
All outward life:—be welcome, then, thy rod,
Before whose touch my soul unfolds itself to God!

III.

ON RETZCH'S DESIGN OF THE ANGEL OF DEATH.*

Well might thine awful image thus arise,
With that high calm upon thy regal brow,
And the deep solemn sweetness in those eyes,
Unto the glorious Artist!—Who but thou
The fleeting forms of beauty can endow
For Him with permanence?—Who make those gleams
Of brighter life that colour his lone dreams
Immortal things? Let others *trembling* bow,
Angel of Death, before thee!—not to those
Whose spirits with eternal Truth repose
Art thou a fearful shape! And oh for *me*
How full of welcome would thine aspect shine,
Did not the cords of strong affection twine
So fast around my soul, it cannot spring to Thee!

* Suggested by the beautiful and remarkable description in Mrs. Jameson's
"Visits and Sketches."

IV.

REMEMBRANCES OF NATURE.

O Nature ! thou didst rear me for thine own,
With thy free singing birds and mountain brooks,
Feeding my thoughts in primrose-haunted nooks
With fairy phantasies and wood-dreams lone.
And thou didst teach me every wandering tone
Drawn from the many whispering trees and waves,
And guide my step to founts and starry caves,
And where bright mosses wove thee a rich throne
Midst the green hills: and now that, far estranged
From all sweet sounds and odours of thy breath,
Fading I lie, within my heart unchanged
So glows the love of thee, that not for death
Seems that pure passion's fervor—but ordain'd
To meet on brighter shores thy majesty unstain'd.

V.

FLIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

Whither, oh ! whither wilt thou wing thy way ?
What solemn region first upon thy sight
Shall break, unveil'd for terror or delight ?
What hosts, magnificent in dread array ?
My spirit ! where thy prison-house of clay
After long strife is rent ?—Fond, fruitless quest !
The unfledged bird, within his narrow nest,
Sees but a few green branches o'er him play,
And thro' their parting leaves, by fits reveal'd,
A glimpse of summer sky : nor knows the field
Wherein his dormant powers must yet be tried :—
Thou art that bird ! of what beyond thee lies
Far in th' untrack'd, immeasurable skies
Knowing but this—that thou shalt find thy Guide !

VI.

FLOWERS.

Welcome, oh pure and lovely forms, again
Unto the shadowy stillness of my room!
For not alone ye bring a joyous train
Of summer thoughts attendant on your bloom,
Visions of freshness, of rich bowery gloom,
Of the low murmurs filling mossy dells,
Of stars that look down on your folded bells
Thro' dewy leaves—of many a wild perfume
Greeting the wanderers of the hill and grove
Like sudden music; more than this ye bring,
Far more: ye whisper of th' all-fostering love
Which thus hath clothed you, and whose dove-like wing
Broods o'er the sufferer drawing fever'd breath,
Whether the couch be that of life or death.

VII.

THE RECOVERY.

Back then, once more, to breast the waves of life,
To battle on against th' unceasing spray,
To sink o'erwearied in the stormy strife
And rise to strive again : yet on my way
Oh linger still, thou light of better day,
Born in the hours of loneliness ; and you,
Ye childlike thoughts, the holy and the true,
Ye that came bearing, while subdued I lay,
The faith, the insight of life's vernal morn
Back on my soul, a clear, bright sense, new-born,
Now leave me not ; but as profoundly pure
A blue stream rushes thro' a darker lake 11
Unchanged, e'en thus with me your journey take,
Wafting sweet airs of heaven thro' this low world obscure.
