

COOMBE-ELLEN.¹

CALL the strange spirit that abides unseen
 In wilds, and wastes, and shaggy solitudes,
 And bid his dim hand lead thee through these scenes
 That burst immense around! By mountains, glens,
 And solitary cataracts that dash
 Through dark ravines; and trees, whose wreathed roots
 O'erhang the torrent's channelled course; and streams,
 That far below, along the narrow vale,
 Upon their rocky way wind musical.

Stranger! if Nature charm thee, if thou lovest 10
 To trace her awful steps, in glade or glen,
 Or under covert of the rocking wood,
 That sways its murmuring and mossy boughs
 Above thy head; now, when the wind at times
 Stirs its deep silence round thee, and the shower
 Falls on the sighing foliage, hail her here
 In these her haunts; and, rapt in musings high,
 Think that thou holdest converse with some Power
 Invisible and strange; such as of yore
 Greece, in the shades of piney Mænalaus, 20
 The abode of Pan, or Ida's hoary caves,
 Worshipped; and our old Druids, 'mid the gloom
 Of rocks and woods like these, with muttered spell
 Invoked, and the loud ring of choral harps.

Hast thou oft mourned the chidings of the world,
 The sound of her disquiet, that ascends
 For ever, mocking the high throne of GOD!
 Hast thou in youth known sorrow! Hast thou drooped,

¹ Coombe-Elan (in Welsh, Cwm Elan) is situated among the most romantic mountains of Radnorshire, about five miles from Rhayd'r. This poem is inscribed to Thomas Grove, Esq. of Fern, Wiltshire, at whose summer residence, in Radnorshire, it was written.

Heart-stricken, over youth's and beauty's grave, 29
 And ever after thought on the sad sound
 The cold earth made, which, cast into the vault,
 Consigned thy heart's best treasure—dust to dust!
 Here, lapped into a sweet forgetfulness,
 Hang o'er the wreathed waterfall, and think
 Thou art alone in this dark world and wide!

Here Melancholy, on the pale crags laid,
 Might muse herself to sleep; or Fancy come,
 Witching the mind with tender cozenage,
 And shaping things that are not; here all day
 Might Meditation listen to the lapse 40
 Of the white waters, flashing through the cleft,
 And, gazing on the many shadowing trees,
 Mingle a pensive moral as she gazed.

High o'er thy head, amidst the shivered slate,
 Behold, a sapling yet, the wild ash bend,
 Its dark red berries clustering, as it wished
 In the clear liquid mirror, ere it fell,
 To trace its beauties; o'er the prone cascade,
 Airy, and light, and elegant, the birch
 Displays its glossy stem, amidst the gloom 50
 Of alders and jagged fern, and evermore
 Waves her light pensile foliage, as she wooed
 The passing gale to whisper flatteries.
 Upon the adverse bank, withered, and stripped
 Of all its pleasant leaves, a scathed oak
 Hangs desolate, once sovereign of the scene,
 Perhaps, proud of its beauty and its strength,
 And branching its broad arms along the glen:
 Oh, speaks it no remonstrance to the heart!
 It seems to say: So shall the spoiler come, 60
 The season that shall shatter your fair leaves,
 Gay children of the summer! yet enjoy

Your pleasant prime, and lift your green heads high, 63
 Exulting ; but the storm will come at last,
 That shall lay low your strength, and give your pride
 To the swift-hurrying stream of age, like mine.

And so severe Experience oft reproves
 The gay and careless children of the world ;
 They hear the cold rebuke, and then again
 Turn to their sport, as likes them, and dance on ! 70
 And let them dance ; so all their blooming prime
 They give not up to vanity, but learn
 That wisdom and that virtue which shall best
 Avail them, when the evil days draw nigh,
 And the brief blossoms of their spring-time fade.

Now wind we up the glen, and hear below
 The dashing torrent, in deep woods concealed,
 And now again white-flashing on the view,
 O'er the huge craggy fragments. Ancient stream,
 That murmurest through the mountain solitudes, 80
 The time has been when no eye marked thy course,
 Save His who made the world ! Fancy might dream
 She saw thee thus bound on from age to age
 Unseen of man, whilst awful Nature sat
 On the rent rocks, and said : These haunts be mine.
 Now Taste has marked thy features ; here and there
 Touching with tender hand, but injuring not,
 Thy beauties ; whilst along thy woody verge
 Ascends the winding pathway, and the eye
 Catches at intervals thy varied falls. 90

But loftier scenes invite us ; pass the hill,
 And through the woody hanging, at whose feet -
 The tinkling Ellen winds, pursue thy way.
 Yon bleak and weather-whitened rock, immense,
 Upshoots amidst the scene, craggy and steep,
 And like some high-embattled citadel,

That awes the low plain shadowing. Half-way up 97
 The purple heath is seen, but bare its brow,
 And deep-intrenched, and all beneath it spread
 With massy fragments riven from its top.

Amidst the crags, and scarce discerned so high,
 Hangs here and there a sheep, by its faint bleat
 Discovered, whilst the astonished eye looks up,
 And marks it on the precipice's brink
 Pick its scant food securé :—and fares it not
 Ev'n so with you, poor orphans, ye who climb
 The rugged path of life without a friend ;
 And over broken crags bear hardly on,
 With pale imploring looks, that seem to say,
 My mother ! she is buried, and at rest, 110
 Laid in her grave-clothes ; and the heart is still,
 The only heart that throughout all the world
 Beat anxiously for you ! Oh, yet bear on ;
 He who sustains the bleating lamb shall feed
 And comfort you : meantime the heaven's pure beam,
 That breaks above the sable mountain's brow,
 Lighting, one after one, the sunless crags,
 Awakes the blissful confidence, that here,
 Or in a world where sorrow never comes,
 All shall be well. 120

Now through the whispering wood
 We steal, and mark the old and mossy oaks
 Imboss the mountain slope ; or the wild ash,
 With rich red clusters mantling ; or the birch,
 In lonely glens light-wavering ; till behold !
 The rapid river shooting through the gloom
 Its lucid line along ; and on its side
 The bordering pastures green, where the swinked ox
 Lies dreaming, heedless of the numerous flies
 That, in the transitory sunshine, hum 130

Round his broad breast ; and further up the cot, 131
 With blue, light smoke ascending ; images
 Of peace and comfort ! The wild rocks around
 Endear your smile the more, and the full mind,
 Sliding from scenes of dread magnificence,
 Sinks on your charms reposing ; such repose
 The sage may feel, when, filled and half-oppressed
 With vast conceptions, smiling he returns
 To life's consoling sympathies, and hears,
 With heartfelt tenderness, the bells ring out ; 140
 Or pipe upon the mountains ; or the low
 Of herds slow winding down the cottaged vale,
 Where day's last sunshine linger. Such repose
 He feels, who, following where his SHAKSPEARE leads,
 As in a dream, through an enchanted land,
 Here, with Macbeth, in the dread cavern hails
 The weird sisters, and the dismal deed
 Without a name ; there sees the charmed isle,
 The lone domain of Prospero ; and, hark !
 Wild music, such as earth scarce seems to own, 150
 And Ariel o'er the slow-subsiding surge
 Singing her smooth air quaintly ! Such repose
 Steals o'er her spirits, when, through storms at sea,
 Fancy has followed some nigh-foudered bark
 Full many a league, in ocean's solitude
 Tossed far beyond the Cape of utmost Horn,
 That stems the roaring deep ; her dreary track
 Still Fancy follows, and at dead of night
 Hears, with strange thunder, the huge fragments fall
 Crashing, from mountains of high-drifting ice 160
 That o'er her bows gleam fearful ; till at last
 She hails the gallant ship in some still bay
 Safe moored ; or of delightful Tinian,
 Smiling, like fairy isle, amid the waste ;

Or of New Zealand, where from sheltering rocks 165
 The clear cascades gush beautiful, and high
 The woodland scenery towers above the mast,
 Whose long and wavy ensign streams beneath.
 Far inland, clad in snow, the mountains lift
 Their spiry summits, and endear the more 170
 The sylvan scene around ; the healing air
 Breathes o'er green myrtles, and the poe-bird flits,
 Amid the shade of aromatic shrubs,
 With silver neck and blue enamelled wing.

Now cross the stream, and up the narrow track,
 That winds along the mountain's edge, behold
 The peasant girl ascend : cheerful her look,
 Beneath the umbrage of her broad black hat,
 And loose her dark-brown hair ; the plodding pad
 That bears her panting climbs, and with sure step 180
 Avoids the jutting fragments ; she, meantime,
 Sits unconcerned, till, lessening from the view,
 She gains the summit and is seen no more.

All day, along that mountain's heathy waste,
 Booted and strapped, and in rough coat succinct,
 His small shrill whistle pendent at his breast,
 With dogs and gun, untired the sportsman roams ;
 Nor quits his wildly-devious range, till eve,
 Upon the woods, the rocks, and mazy rills
 Descending, warns him home : then he rejoins 190
 The social circle, just as the clear moon,
 Emerging o'er the sable mountain, sails
 Silent, and calm, and beautiful, and sheds
 Its solemn grandeur on the shadowy scene.
 To music then ; and let some chosen strain
 Of HANDEL gently recreate the sense,
 And give the silent heart to tender joy.

Pass on to the hoar cataract,¹ that foams 198
 Through the dark fissures of the riven rock ;
 Prone-rushing it descends, and with white whirl,
 Save where some silent shady pool receives
 Its dash ; thence bursting, with collected sweep,
 And hollow sound, it hurries, till it falls
 Foaming in the wild stream that winds below.
 Dark trees, that to the mountain's height ascend,
 O'ershade with pendent boughs its mossy course,
 And, looking up, the eye beholds it flash
 Beneath the incumbent gloom, from ledge to ledge
 Shooting its silvery foam, and far within
 Wreathing its curve fantastic. If the harp 210
 Of deep poetic inspiration, struck
 At times by the pale minstrel, whilst a strange
 And beauteous light filled his uplifted eye,
 Hath ever sounded into mortal ears,
 Here I might think I heard its tones, and saw,
 Sublime amidst the solitary scene,
 With dimly-gleaming harp, and snowy stole,
 And cheek in momentary frenzy flushed,
 The great musician stand. Hush, every wind
 That shakes the murmuring branches! and thou stream, 220
 Descending still with hollow-sounding sweep,
 Hush ! 'Twas the bard struck the loud strings : Arise,
 Son of the magic song, arise !
 And bid the deep-toned lyre
 Pour forth its manly melodies.
 With eyes on fire,
 CARADOC rushed upon the foe ;
 He reared his arm—he laid the mighty low !
 O'er the plain see him urge his gore-bathed steed !

¹ Nant-Vola.

They bleed, the Romans¹ bleed ! 230

He lifts his lance on high,

They fly ! the fierce invaders fly !

Fear not now the horse or spear,

Fear not now the foeman's might ;

Victory the cry shall hear

Of those who for their country fight ;

O'er the slain

That strew the plain,

Stern on her sable war-horse shall she ride, 239

And lift her red right hand, in their heart's blood deep dyed !

Return, my Muse ! the fearful sound is past ;

And now a little onward, where the way

Ascends above the oaks that far below

Shade the rude steep, let Contemplation lead

Our footsteps ; from this shady eminence

'Tis pleasant and yet fearful to look down

Upon the river roaring, and far off

To see it stretch in peace, and mark the rocks

One after one, in solemn majesty

Unfolding their wild reaches ; here with wood 250

Mantled, beyond abrupt and bare, and each

As if it strove, with emulous disdain,

To tower in ruder, darker amplitude.

Pause, ere we enter the long craggy vale ;

It seems the abode of Solitude. So high

The rock's bleak summit² frowns above our head,

Looking immediate down, we almost fear

Lest some enormous fragment should descend

With hideous sweep into the vale, and crush

The intruding visitant. No sound is here, 260

¹ The *Silures*, comprehending Radnorshire, Herefordshire, Brecknockshire, Monmouthshire, and Glamorganshire, were the bravest of the Britons ; Caractacus, the greatest and most renowned leader Britain had ever produced, was their king. — ² Dole-Vinoc rock.

Save of the stream that shrills, and now and then 261

A cry as of faint wailing, when the kite

Comes sailing o'er the crags, or straggling lamb

Bleats for its mother. Here, remote from man,

And life's discordant roar, might Piety

Lift up her early orisons to Him

Who made the world ; who piled up, mighty rocks,

Your huge o'ershadowing summits ; who devolved

The mighty rivers on their mazy course ;

Who bade the seasons roll, and they rolled on 270

In harmony ; who filled the earth with joy,

And spread it in magnificence. O GOD !

Thou also madest the great water-flood,

The deep that uttereth thy voice ; whose waves

Toss fearful at thy bidding. Thou didst speak,

And lo ! the great and glorious sun, from night

Tenfold upspringing, through the heavens' wide way

Held his untired career. These, in their course,

As with one shout of acclamation, praise

Thee, LORD ! thee, FATHER ! thee, ALMIGHTY KING ! 280

Maker of earth and heaven ! Nor less the flower

That shakes its purple head, and smiles unseen

Upon the mountain's van ; nor less the stream

That tinkles through the cliff-encircled bourne,

Cheering with music the lone place, proclaim :

In wisdom, Father, hast thou made them all !

Scenes of retired sublimity, that fill

With fearful ecstasy and holy trance

The pausing mind ! we leave your awful gloom,

And lo ! the footway plank, that leads across 290

The narrow torrent, foaming through the chasm

Below ; the rugged stones are washed and worn

Into a thousand shapes, and hollows scooped

By long attrition of the ceaseless surge,

Smooth, deep, and polished as the marble urn, 295
 In their hard forms. Here let us sit, and watch
 The struggling current burst its headlong way,
 Hearing the noise it makes, and musing much
 On the strange changes of this nether world.
 How many ages must have swept to dust 300
 The still succeeding multitudes, that "fret
 Their little hour" upon this restless scene,
 Or ere the sweeping waters could have cut
 The solid rock so deep! As now its roar
 Comes hollow from below, methinks we hear
 The noise of generations, as they pass,
 O'er the frail arch of earthly vanity,
 To silence and oblivion. The loud coil
 Ne'er ceases; as the running river sounds
 From age to age, though each particular wave 310
 That made its brief noise, as it hurried on,
 Ev'n whilst we speak, is past, and heard no more;
 So ever to the ear of Heaven ascends
 The long, loud murmur of the rolling globe;
 Its strife, its toils, its sighs, its shouts, the same!
 But lo! upon the hilly croft, and scarce
 Distinguished from the crags, the peasant hut
 Forth peeping; nor unwelcome is the sight.
 It seems to say: Though solitude be sweet,
 And sweet are all the images that float 320
 Like summer-clouds before the eye, and charm
 The pensive wanderer's way, 'tis sweeter yet
 To think that in this world a brother lives.
 And lovelier smiles the scene, that, 'mid the wilds
 Of rocks and mountains, the bemused thought
 Remembers of humanity, and calls
 The wildly-roving fancy back to life.

Here, then, I leave my harp, which I have touched

With careless hand, and here I bid farewell 329
 To Fancy's fading pictures, and farewell
 The ideal spirit that abides unseen
 'Mid rocks, and woods, and solitudes. I hail
 Rather the steps of Culture, that ascend
 The precipice's side. She bids the wild
 Bloom, and adorns with beauty not its own
 The ridged mountain's tract ; she speaks, and lo !
 The yellow harvest nods upon the slope ;
 And through the dark and matted moss upshoots
 The bursting clover, smiling to the sun.
 These are thy offspring, Culture ! the green herb 340
 Is thine, that decks with rich luxuriance
 The pasture's lawny range ; the yellow corn,
 That waves upon the upland ridge, is thine ;
 Thine too the elegant abode, that smiles
 Amidst the rocky scene, and wakes the thought,
 The tender thought, of all life's charities.
 And senseless were my heart, could I look back
 Upon the varied way my feet have trod,
 Without a silent prayer that health and joy,
 And love and happiness, may long abide 350
 In the romantic vale where Ellen winds.

SUMMER EVENING AT HOME.

COME, lovely Evening ! with thy smile of peace
 Visit my humble dwelling ; welcomed in,
 Not with loud shouts, and the thronged city's din,
 But with such sounds as bid all tumult cease
 Of the sick heart ; the grasshopper's faint pipe
 Beneath the blades of dewy grass unripe,