

EMILY BRONTË

The Visionary and Other Poems

EMILY BRONTË was born in 1818 in Thornton. She was the younger sister of Charlotte Brontë and the fifth of six children. In 1824, the family moved to Haworth, West Yorkshire in England, where Emily's father was curate. It was in these new surroundings that her literary life began to flourish. She worked briefly as a governess near Halifax, but returned to Haworth due to homesickness. She later travelled to Brussels to attend a private school with her sister, Charlotte.

After Charlotte discovered her poetic talent, the sisters collaborated on a pseudonymous volume of poetry, published as *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell* (1846). The volume sold only two copies. The poems within it, and others collected later, have now achieved classic literary status. Virginia Woolf believed that Emily's poetry would outlive her more famous novel. Emily published the first two volumes of *Wuthering Heights* in 1847. After catching a cold at her brother's funeral, Emily developed tuberculosis and, after refusing medical help, she died in December 1848. She is buried in Haworth.

EMILY BRONTË

The Visionary
and Other Poems

Edited by

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The Visionary and Other Poems

Faith and Despondency

‘**T**HE 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 gray,
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,
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,
Where evening closes dark and chill;

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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,
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;
Their dust is mingled with the sod,
Their happy souls are gone to God!
You told me this, and yet you sigh,

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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,
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
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,

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Shall strengthen thy desire—
Thy fervent hope, through storm and foam,
Through wind and ocean's roar,
To reach, at last, the eternal home,
The steadfast, changeless shore!

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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
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!

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Why did the morning dawn to break
So great, so pure, a spell;
And scorch with fire the tranquil cheek,
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
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;

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The curtains waved, the wakened flies
 Were murmuring round my room,
Imprisoned there, till I should rise,
 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!

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The Philosopher

ENOUGH OF THOUGHT, philosopher!
Too long hast thou been dreaming
Unlightened, 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,
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;
Heaven could not hold them all, and yet

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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 dost stand—an hour ago,
And round his feet three rivers ran,
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
Than its divided sources were!'

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'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,
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!'

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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?

Cold in the earth—and fifteen wild Decembers,
From those brown hills, have melted into spring:
Faithful, indeed, is the spirit that remembers
After such years of change and suffering!

Sweet Love of youth, forgive, if I forget thee,
While the world's tide is bearing me along;
Other desires and other hopes beset me,
Hopes which obscure, but cannot do thee wrong!

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No later light has lightened up my heaven,
No second morn has ever shone for me;
All my life's bliss from thy dear life was given,
All my life's bliss is in the grave with thee.

But, when the days of golden dreams had perished,
And even Despair was powerless to destroy;
Then did I learn how existence could be cherished,
Strengthened, and fed without the aid of joy.

Then did I check the tears of useless passion—
Weaned my young soul from yearning after thine;
Sternly denied its burning wish to hasten
Down to that tomb already more than mine.

And, even yet, I dare not let it languish,
Dare not indulge in memory's rapturous pain;
Once drinking deep of that divinest anguish,
How could I seek the empty world again?

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A Death-Scene

‘O DAY! HE cannot die
When thou so fair art shining!
O Sun, in such a glorious sky,
So tranquilly declining;

He cannot leave thee now,
While fresh west winds are blowing,
And all around his youthful brow
Thy cheerful light is glowing!

Edward, awake, awake—
The golden evening gleams
Warm and bright on Arden’s lake—
Arouse thee from thy dreams!

Beside thee, on my knee,
My dearest friend, I pray
That thou, to cross the eternal sea,
Wouldst yet one hour delay:

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I hear its billows roar—
I see them foaming high;
But no glimpse of a further shore
Has blest my straining eye.

Believe not what they urge
Of Eden isles beyond;
Turn back, from that tempestuous surge,
To thy own native land.

It is not death, but pain
That struggles in thy breast—
Nay, rally, Edward, rouse again;
I cannot let thee rest!

One long look, that sore reproved me
For the woe I could not bear—
One mute look of suffering moved me
To repent my useless prayer:

And, with sudden check, the heaving
Of distraction passed away;
Not a sign of further grieving
Stirred my soul that awful day.