Nutting

Nutting DCMS 15

Ah what a crash was that—with gentle hand

Touch those fair hazels; my beloved Maid,

Though tis a sight invisible to thee,

From such rude intercourse the woods all shrink,

As at the blowing of Astolpho’s horn. 5

While in the cave we sat thou didst o’erflow

With love even for the unsubstantial clouds

And silent incorporeal colours spread

Over the surface of the earth and sky.

But had I met thee now with that keen look 10

Half cruel in its eagerness, thy cheek

Thus rich with a tempestuous bloom, in truth

I might have half believed that I had pass’d

A houseless being in a human shape,

An enemy of nature, one who comes 15

From regions far beyond the Indian hills.

Come rest on this light bed of purple heath

And let me see thee sink to a dream

Of gentle thoughts till once again thine eye

Be like the heart of love and happiness, 20

Yet still as water when the winds are gone

And no man can tell whither.— See those two stems

Both stretched upon the ground, two brother trees

That in one instant at the touch of spring

Put forth their tender leaves, and for nine years, 25

In the dark nights, have both together heard

The driving storm—I would not strike a flower

As many a man will strike his horse, at least

If frozn the wantonness in which we play

With things we love, or from a freak of

[ Or from involuntary act of hand

Or foot unruly with excess of life, ]

It chanced that I ungently used a tuft [ ] or snapp’d the stem

Of foxglove bending o’er his native rill,

I should be loth to pass along my road

With unreprov’d indifference, I would stop

Self-question’d, asking wherefore that was done.

For, seeing little worthy or sublime

In what we blazon with the pompous names 40

Of power and action, I was early taught

To love those unassuming things that fill

A silent station in this beauteous world.

And dearest maiden, thou upon whose lap

I rest my head, oh! do not deem that these 45

Are idle sympathies. It seems a day,

One of those heavenly days that cannot die,

When through the autumnal woods, a figure quaint,

Equipp’d with wallet and with crooked stick

They led me, and I follow’d in their steps,

Trick’d out in proud disguise of beggar’s weeds,

Put on for the occasion, by advice

And exhortation of my frugal dame.

Motley accoutrement! of power to smile

At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and, in truth,

More ragged than need was. They led me far,

Those guardian Spirits, into some near nook

Unvisited, where not a broken bough

Droop’d with its wither’d leaves, ungracious sign

Of devastation, but the hazels rose

Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,

A virgin scene! A little while I stood,

Breathing with such suppression of the heart

As Joy delights in; and with wise restraint

Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed

The banquet, or beneath the trees I sate

Among the flowers, and with the flowers I play’d;

A temper known to those, who, after long

And weary expectation, have been bless’d

With sudden happiness beyond all hope.

—Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves

The violets of five seasons reappear

And fade, unseen by any human eye,

Where faery water-breaks do murmur on

For ever, and I saw the sparkling foam,

And with my cheek upon the mossy stones

That like a flock of sheep were fleec’d with moss

I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,

In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay

Tribute to ease, and, of its joy secure,

he heart luxuriates with indifferent things,

Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,

And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,

And dragg’d to earth both branch and bough, with crash

And merciless ravage, and the shady nook 85

Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,

Deform’d and sullied, patiently gave up

Their quiet spirit; and unless I now

Confound my present being with the past,

Even then, when from the bower I turn’d away, 90

Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings-

I felt a sense of pain when I beheld

The silent trees and the intruding sky.

Then, dearest maiden, if I have not now

The skill to be thy teacher, think of him, 95

The ragged boy, and let his parting look

Instruct. Move, sweet maid, along these shades

In gentleness of heart.—With gentle hand

Touch, for there is a spirit in the woods.

Nutting DCMS 16

Ah! what a crash was that! with gentle hand

Touch these fair hazels-My beloved Maid!

Though ’tis a sight invisible to thee,

From such rude intercourse the woods all shrink

As at the blowing of Astolpho’s horn.—

Thou, Lucy, art a maiden “inland bred”,

And thou hast “known some nurture”; but in truth

If I had met thee here with that keen look

Half cruel in its eagerness, those cheeks

Thus [ ] flushed with a tempestuous bloom,

I might have almost deem’d that I had pass’d

A houseless being in a human shape,

An enemy of nature, hither sent

From regions far beyond the Indian hills.-

Come rest on this light bed of purple heath,

And let me see thee sink into a dream

Of gentle thoughts, protracted till thine eye

Be calm as water when the winds are gone

And no one can tell whither. See those stems

Both stretch’d along the ground, two brother trees

That in one instant at the touch of spring

Put forth their tender leaves, and through nine years,

In the dark nights, have both together heard

The driving storm— Well! blessed be the Powers

That teach philosophy and good desires

In this their still Lyceum, hand of mine

Wrought not this ruin—I am guiltless here.

For, seeing little worthy or sublime

In what we blazon with the pompous names

Of power and action, I was early taught

To look with feelings of fraternal love

Upon those unassuming things which hold

A silent station in this beauteous world.

Ye gentle Stewards of a Poet’s time!

Ye Powers! without whose aid the idle man 35

Would waste full half of the long summer’s day,

Ye who, by virtue of this dome of leaves

And its cool umbrage, make the forenoon walk,

When July suns are blazing, to his verse

Propitious, as a range o’er moonlight cliffs 40

Above the breathing sea—And ye no less!

Ye too, who with most necessary care

Amid the concentration of your groves

Restore the springs of his exhausted frame,

And ye whose general ministry it is 45

To interpose the covert of these shades,

Even as a sleep, betwixt the heart of man

And the uneasy world, ’twixt man himself,

Not seldom, and his own unquiet heart,

Oh! that I had a music and a voice 50

Harmonious as your own, to tell the world

What ye have done for me.