

No sunny beam shall gild thy grave,
No bird of pity thee deplore:

25

There shall no verdant branches wave,
For spring shall all her gems unfold,
And revel 'midst her beds of gold,
When thou art seen no more!

Where'er I find thee, gentle flow'r,

30

Thou still art sweet, and dear to me!
For I have known the cheerless hour,
Have seen the sun-beams cold and pale,
Have felt the chilling, wint'ry gale,
And WEPT, and SHRUNK LIKE THEE!

35

ODE INSCRIBED TO THE INFANT SON OF S. T. COLERIDGE, ESQ.¹

Born Sept. 14, 1800, at Keswick, in Cumberland

SPIRIT OF LIGHT! whose eye unfolds
The vast expanse of Nature's plan!

¹ Robinson and Coleridge were in each other's company, according to William Godwin's diary, in January and February of 1800. Coleridge moved his family to Gretna Green in the Lake District town of Keswick in July of that year. In an undated manuscript letter to Mrs. Coleridge, Robinson expresses regret that she has been too ill to visit, but looks forward to visiting Buttermere, a town near Keswick. Uncatalogued letter, ALS box 80, Harvard Theatre Collection, Nathan Marsh Pusey Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts. The version of this poem that was published in the *Morning Post* on October 17, 1800, follows:

*Ode, Inscribed to the Infant Son of S. T. Coleridge, Esq.
Born Sept. 14, at Keswick, in Cumberland*

SPIRIT OF LIGHT! Whose eye unfolds
The vast expanse of NATURE'S plan!
And from thy Eastern throne beholds
The paths of the lorn trav'ler Man!
To thee I sing! *Spirit of Light!* to thee
Attune the varying strain of wood-wild harmony.

I sing to thee! on Skiddaw's heights upborne —
Painting with Heav'n's own tint the brows of morn!

And from thy eastern throne beholds
The mazy paths of the lorn traveller — MAN!
To thee I sing! *Spirit of Light,* to thee
Attune the varying strain of wood-wild minstrelsy!

5

O Pow'r Creative! — but for Thee
Eternal Chaos all things would enfold;
And black as Erebus this system be,
In its ethereal space — benighted — roll'd.
But for thy influence, e'en *this day*

10

I sing to thee! while down the breezy steep
Thy broad wing rushes with impetuous sweep!
While far and wide the roscate ray
Flushes the dewy breast of day: —
Hope-fost'ring Day! which Nature bade impart
A Parent's transport to a Parent's heart!
DAY! that *first* saw the smiling BABY prest
Close to its beauteous Mother's throbbing breast:
While his clear, laughing eyes foretold
The mind susceptible — the spirit bold; —
The soul enlighten'd — virtues, prone to grace
With PITY's holy tear MAN's woe-bewilder'd race!

Ye Mountains! from whose crests sublime
Imagination might to frenzy turn;
Or to the starry realms impatient climb,
Scorning this low world's solitary bourne.
Ye CAT'RACTS! on whose headlong tide
The midnight whirlwinds howling ride; —
Ye silent LAKES! that trembling hail
The cold breath of the morning gale;
And on your lucid mirrors wide display,
In colours bright, in dewy lustre gay,
Fantastic woodlands, while the dappled dawn
Scatters its pearl-drops on the sunny lawn;
And thou, meek ORB, that lift'st thy silver bow
O'er frozen vallies, and o'er hills of snow; —
Ye all shall lend your wonders — all combine
To greet the Babe, with energies divine!
While his rapt soul, SPIRIT OF LIGHT! to THEE
Shall raise the magic song of wood-wild harmony!

Yet, who can tell, in this dread scene,
What sorrows thou art born to know?
Whether thy days content, serene —
Shall in one even tenour flow;

Would slowly, sadly, pass away;
Nor proudly mark the Mother's tear of joy,
The smile seraphic of the baby boy,
The Father's eyes, in fondest transport taught
To beam with tender hope — to speak the enraptur'd thought.

15

To thee I sing, Spirit of Light! to thee
Attune the strain of wood-wild minstrelsy.
Thou sail'st o'er SKIDDAW'S heights sublime,
Swift borne upon the wings of joyous time!
The sunny train, with widening sweep,

20

Or, plung'd in passion's whelming wave —
Despair shall mark an early grave; —
Or false ambition's scorpion brood
Lure thee to tread the fields of blood?
Who knows but fortune's frown may chase
From thy warm heart affection's grace —
And sordid Nature bid thee flee —
From the soft voice of wood-wild harmony!

Ye Rocks! coeval with the birth of TIME, —
Bold summits, link'd in chains of rosy light!
Ere long your whispering breezes shall invite
Your NATIVE SON the loftiest paths to climb, —
Where, in majestic pride of solitude,
Silent and grand, the *Hermit Thought* shall trace
Far o'er the wide infinity of space,
The mid-day horrors of the black'ning wood;
The misty glen, the torrent's foamy way,
The parting blush of summer's ling'ring day;
The wintry storm, with rushing clouds combin'd,
To seize the broad wings of th' unfetter'd wind;
Then, INFANT BOY! thy unchain'd tongue
Shall sing the song thy father sung,
And he shall listen, rapture fraught, to THEE,
And bless the dulcet tone of wood-wild harmony!

Then, hand in hand, together ye shall tread,
In converse sweet, the mountain's head,
Or on the river's will'wy bank,
Gather the wild-flow'rs budding near,
And often, with a pitying tear,
Bathe their soft leaves, so sweet, so dank,
Leaves, doom'd to fade,
In solitude's oblivious shade!
Emblems of GENIUS, taught to fear,

326 MARY ROBINSON

Rolls blazing down the misty-mantled steep;
And far and wide its rosy ray
Flushes the dewy-silver'd breast of day!
HOPE-FOST'RING DAY! which NATURE bade impart
Heav'n's proudest rapture to the parent's heart.
DAY! first ordain'd to see the baby prest
Close to its beauteous mother's throbbing breast;
While instinct, in its laughing eyes, foretold
The mind susceptible — the spirit bold —
The lofty soul — the virtues prompt to trace
The wrongs that haunt mankind o'er life's tempestuous space.

25

30

——O! fate severe! ——
E'en in the shades of life, the thorn
Of cold neglect — or smiling scorn;
Save when a kindred soul in thee —
Pours the soft plaint of wood-wild harmony!

Then through thy breast thy parent shall diffuse
The mightier magic of his loftier muse!
Then shall each sense, legitimate, expand,
The proud lyre thro' beneath thy glowing hand!
While WISDOM, chast'ning pleasure's smile,
Shall listen, and applaud the while;
And REASON (pointing to the sky,
Bright as the morning star, her "broad, bright eye!")
Shall ope the page of NATURE'S book sublime —
The lore of ev'ry age, the boast of ev'ry clime!

SWEET BOY! accept a STRANGER'S song,
Who joys to sing of thee,
Alone, her forest haunts among,
The haunts of wood-wild harmony!
A stranger's song, by falsehood undefild,
Hymns thee, O! INSPIRATION'S darling child!
In thee it hails the GENIUS of thy SIRE
Her sad heart sighing o'er her feeble lyre,
And, whether on the breezy height,
Where Skiddaw greets the dawn of light,
Ere the rude sons of labour homage pay
To summer's flaming eye, or winter's banner grey;
Whether, by bland religion early taught,
To track the devious pilgrimage of thought;
Or, borne on FANCY'S variegated wing,
A willing vot'ry to that shrine,
Where ART and SCIENCE all their flow'rs shall bring
Thy temples to entwine:

POETICAL WORKS (1806) 327

ROMANTIC MOUNTAINS! from whose brows sublime
Imagination might to frenzy turn!

35 Or to the starry worlds in fancy climb,

Scorning this low earth's solitary bourn —
Bold CATARACTS! on whose headlong tide
The midnight whirlwinds howling ride —
Calm-bosom'd LAKES! that trembling hail

40 The cold breath of the morning gale;

And on your lucid mirrors wide display,

In colours rich, in dewy lustre gay,

Mountains and woodlands, as the dappled dawn
Flings its soft pearl-drops on the summer lawn;

45 Or paly moonlight, rising slow,

While o'er the hills the ev'ning zephyrs' blow: —

Ye all shall lend your wonders — all combine

To bless the BABY BOY with harmonies divine.

O BABY! when thy unchain'd tongue

50 Shall, lispings, speak thy fond surprise;

When the rich strain thy father sung,

Shall from thy imitative accents rise;

When thro' thy soul rapt Fancy shall diffuse

The mightier magic of his loftier Muse;

60 Thy waken'd spirit, wond'ring, shall behold

Thy native mountains, capp'd with streamy gold!

Thy native Lakes, their cloud-topp'd hills among,

O! hills! made sacred by thy parent's song!

Then shall thy soul, legitimate, expand,

And the proud LYRE quick throb at thy command!

Whether LODORE for thee its white wave flings,

The brawling herald of a thousand springs;

Whether smooth BASENTHWAITE, at eve's still hour,

Reflects the young moon's crescent meekly pale,

Or MEDITATION seeks her silent bow'r

Amid the rocks of lonely BORRO-DALE;

Still may THY FAME survive, SWEET BOY, till time
Shall bend to KESWICK's vale thy SKIDDAW's brow sublime.

1 Light breezes

October 12, 1800

And WISDOM, ever watchful, o'er thee smile,
His white locks waving to the blast the while;
And pensive REASON, pointing to the sky,
Bright as the morning star her clear broad eye,
Unfold the page of NATURE's book sublime,
The lore of ev'ry age — the boast of ev'ry clime!

SWEET BABY BOY! accept a STRANGER's song;

An untaught Minstrel joys to sing of thee!¹

And, all alone, her forest haunts among,

Courts the wild tone of mazy harmony!

A STRANGER's song! BABE of the mountain wild,

Greets thee as Inspiration's darling child!

O! may the fine-wrought spirit of thy sire

Awake thy soul and breathe upon thy lyre!

And blest, amid thy mountain haunts sublime,

Be all thy days, thy rosy infant days,

And may the never-tiring steps of time

Press lightly on with thee o'er life's disastrous maze.

Ye hills, coeval with the birth of time!

Bleak summits, link'd in chains of rosy light!

O may your wonders many a year invite

Your native son the breezy path to climb;

Where, in majestic pride of solitude,

Silent and grand, the hermit THOUGHT shall trace,

Far o'er the wild infinity of space,

The sombre horrors of the waving wood;

The misty glen; the river's winding way;

The last deep blush of summer's ling'ring day;

The winter storm, that, roaming unconfin'd,

Sails on the broad wings of the impetuous wind.

O! whether on the breezy height

Where SKIDDAW² greets the dawn of light,

Ere the rude sons of labour homage pay

1 See Coleridge's poem to Robinson, "A Stranger Minstrel," in Appendix B.

2 A mountain north of where Coleridge lived in Keswick.

95 To Summer's flaming eye or Winter's banner grey;
 Whether LODORE¹ its silver torrent flings —
 The mingling wonders of a thousand springs!
 Whether smooth BASENTHWAITE,² at EVE'S still ho
 Reflects the young moon's crescent pale;
 Or meditation seeks her silent bow'r,
 100 Amid the rocks of lonely BORROWDALE.³
 Still may thy name survive, SWEET BOY! till TIME
 Shall bend to KESWICK'S vale — thy SKIDDAW'S brow sublime!

TO THE POET COLERIDGE⁴

RAPT in the visionary theme!

 SPIRIT DIVINE! with THEE I'll wander,
 Where the blue, wavy, lucid stream,
 'Mid forest glooms, shall slow meander!
 5 With THEE I'll trace the circling bounds
 Of thy NEW PARADISE extended;
 And listen to the varying sounds
 Of winds, and foamy torrents blended.

10 Now by the source which lab'ring heaves
 The mystic fountain, bubbling, panting,
 While Gossamer its net-work weaves,
 Adown the blue lawn slanting!
 I'll mark thy sunny dome, and view
 Thy Caves of Ice, thy fields of dew!
 Thy ever-blooming mead, whose flow'r
 Waves to the cold breath of the moonlight hour!
 Or when the day-star, peering bright

1 A waterfall near Keswick.
 2 A lake northwest of Keswick.
 3 A valley on the opposite side of Derwentwater lake from Keswick.
 4 This poem, which is signed SAPHO in the 1806 *Poetical Works*, is a response to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "Kubla Khan," which Robinson saw in manuscript. The "sunny dome" and "caves of ice" allude to images in Coleridge's poem, and Robinson's nymph with a dulcimer recalls Coleridge's damsel with a dulcimer.

On the grey wing of parting night;
 While more than vegetating pow'r
 Throbs grateful to the burning hour,
 As summer's whisper'd sighs unfold
 Her million, million buds of gold;
 Then will I climb the breezy bounds,
 Of thy NEW PARADISE extended,
 And listen to the distant sounds
 Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

 SPIRIT DIVINE! with THEE I'll trace
 Imagination's boundless space!

With thee, beneath thy sunny dome,
 I'll listen to the minstrel's lay,
 Hymning the gradual close of day;
 In *Caves of Ice* enchanted roam,

Where on the glittering entrance plays
 The moon's-beam with its silv'ry rays;
 Or, when glassy stream,

 That thro' the deep dell flows,
 Flashes the noon's hot beam;

The noon's hot beam, that midway shows
 Thy flaming Temple, studded o'er
 With all PERUVIA'S lustrous store!

There will I trace the circling bounds
 Of thy NEW PARADISE extended!

And listen to the awful sounds,
 Of winds, and foamy torrents blended!

And now I'll pause to catch the moan
 Of distant breezes, cavern-pent;

Now, ere the twilight tints are flown,
 Purpling the landscape, far and wide,
 On the dark promontory's side

I'll gather wild flow'rs, dew besprent,
 And weave a crown for THEE,
 GENIUS OF HEAV'N-TAUGHT POESY!
 While, op'ning to my wond'ring eyes,