

## LUCY; OR, THE MASKED BALL.

A TALE.

WHO, wandering at early hour,  
 While dewdrops hang on every flower,  
 And twinkle, in the slanting rays,  
 Like stars with iridescent blaze;  
 While birds, from copse and limber spray,  
 Welcome with song the infant day:—  
 Who, wandering then, can coldly view  
 The smiling Daisy bathed in dew;  
 The Violet, from her leafy bed,  
 The sweetest colours round her spread;  
 And blushing, as her buds disclose  
 Her all-unrivalled charms, the Rose,  
 Lovely with Nature's simple grace!  
 And ever wish to change their place?  
 The Daisy in the rich parterre  
 Would, cheerless, smile unnoticed; there,  
 Vainly, the Violet dispense—  
 Her perfume on the pimper'd sense,

Which scarce can rouse from apathy  
The scents of Ind and Araby;  
And, but contemned her native grace,  
Droop the wild Rose in such a place.  
Like these young Lucy blossomed, ere  
Her bosom knew the pangs of care:  
A floweret meet for peaceful vale,  
Green glen, or still sequestered dale;  
A village maid, in simple dress,  
All meek retiring loveliness:  
Her joys so pure and innocent,  
She scarcely knew that Discontent,  
Corroding Envy, Hate, and Care,  
Inhabitants terrestrial were:  
For, in the hamlet where she dwelt,  
Their pestilence had not been felt;  
Her world, within whose narrow bound  
Those gentle sympathies were found,  
Which harmonize frail human kind  
As earth and heaven were conjoin'd.  
But, where from earth is Grief exil'd?  
Young Lucy was Affliction's child!

Her sire had for his country bled  
And died, on Honour's gory bed;  
And, far from towns, his widow sped;  
Hoping, in this sweet solitude,  
She might the scorn of Pride elude;  
For well she knew, that the world's eye  
Falls cold upon adversity.

In a green glen, embowered in trees,  
Yet open to the western breeze,  
Lay the small village, where she chose  
To seek for shelter and repose.  
Few were its habitants, and these  
Nature's rude sons; yet, if they knew  
But little, vice was absent too.  
The only solace that beguiled  
Her melancholy, was her child,  
Whose smile of love and fond caress  
Oft cheer'd her spirit's loneliness;  
And as she hung with pure delight  
Upon her neck, in colours bright,  
Hope would the future paint, and through  
Her grief-cloud ope a spot of blue;



A fitful gleam, which passed; and, then,  
Gloom settled over all again.

Time wings his flight, the rosebud blows ;  
The child to lovely woman grows ;  
The beauty of the infant face  
Is heightened by maiden grace ;  
Lucy is artless Lucy still,  
But, in her swelling bosom, thrill  
Feelings and thoughts, which all declare  
The infant is no longer there.  
The archness of her blooming face  
To modesty hath yielded place ;  
Her cheek glows with a fainter red,  
Save when quick kindling blushes spread  
Their damask flush, and tint the snows  
Of her bosom's lilies with the rose :  
Her eye, a sparkling diamond set  
Within the lustre-softening jet  
Of the fringed lid, no more repays  
Responsive every passing gaze ;  
The parted lip, the dimple's wile,  
Only betray the chastened smile ;

While, beaming with expression sweet,  
For angel woman truly meet,  
Each feature bears the stamp of mind,  
By culture moulded and refin'd.  
For her sole parent strove to store  
Her opening mind with useful lore ;  
Spread Nature's volume to her eye,  
Pure fount of true philosophy,  
Source whence the streams of knowledge flow,  
And of the flowers that round them blow.  
And, save her sacrifice to heaven,  
To Lucy all her hours were given ;  
For Lucy all her bosom's care,  
Her morning hymn, her evening prayer.

Oft, as the mother's eye survey'd  
The change Time in her child had made,  
And onward glanced, although a tear  
Would now, and now a smile appear,  
As Fear and Hope, alternate, threw  
Their clouds and sunshine on the view,  
Yet, in the future, would she see  
The promise of felicity.

As when autumnal morning breaks,  
And earth from her soft slumber wakes,  
While the first rays scarce pierce the clouds  
That all the dewy valley shrouds,  
Above the sea of mist, is seen  
Some tufted knoll, like islet green,  
Or summit of gigantic oak,  
Or hidden cot's blue rising smoke;  
Till, as if dream of phantasy,  
The orb of day, uprising high,  
Flings back the vapoury veil, and lo!  
The landscape glitters bright below.  
But, ah! ere noontide hour, is gone  
The splendour which we gazed upon!

And who hath found, who shall e'er find  
Fortune immutable and kind?  
The purest flake of fallen snow  
Is crushed the peasant's foot below;  
The brightest stream of mountain spring  
Runs troubled in its wandering;  
And Lucy's life, through sun and shower,  
Was chequered to its closing hour.



And, now, across the stubbled field  
The fowler stalked, and, harshly, peal'd  
The gun's hoarse note. The timid hare  
Cowers closer in her sheltering lair;  
And, as her brood she gathers round,  
Scared by the death-denouncing sound,  
Whose boomings, borne upon the gale,  
Startle the silence of the vale,  
The partridge feels her little breast  
With all a mother's cares opprest.  
'Twas in that season—the last beam  
Of Even shed a golden gleam,  
When Lucy stood beside the rill  
Which turned the hamlet's little mill,  
And, chaffering its pebbles white,  
Glittered beneath the parting light;  
Half lost in thought, half listening  
To its sweet chidings, when the spring  
Of a dog startled her:—amazed—  
She turned—a youth upon her gazed,  
Whose garb and bearing, form and face  
Bespoke him of a gentle race.  
As the doe starts, when the loud horn  
Bursts on her ear at early morn,

And forward springs with winged bound,  
Then stops and listens, glancing round  
Quick panting, yet delays to fly;  
So Lucy meets the stranger's eye,  
All perturbation: and, as turn  
Homeward her trembling feet, and burn  
Her cheeks with blushes, as impell'd  
By some strong power, while onward held  
Her trembling limbs, each step she flies,  
Turn backward her inquiring eyes;  
While the fond youth, her cause of care,  
Stands moveless as he marble were.  
“Such matchless beauty! such a mien!  
Is she a mortal I have seen?  
Do dreams on waking sense obtrude?  
Or, in this earthly solitude,  
Exiled awhile from heaven's bourne,  
Is sent an angel to sojourn?”  
So mused the youth.—O'er Lucy stole  
A pensive listlessness of soul:  
In sleep, her dreams,—awake, her thought  
The rill before her ever brought;  
And, when eve came, she wist not why,  
Turned there her steps unconsciously.



Need we describe the lover's eyes  
Encountering in Love's emprise ?  
How oft they met, and gazed, and strove  
To give an utterance to love ;  
Yet, silent gaz'd, as if afraid  
The air would whisper what they said ?  
For thus, since Love on earth has dwelt,  
Have looked his votaries and felt.  
At length, a tongue each bosom found,  
And vows were pledged, and hearts were bound ;  
And holy rites and blessings o'er,  
Lucy and Edmund part no more.

The moon hung in the vault of sky,  
A thousand bright stars twinkling nigh :  
Dancing beneath her silver sheen  
The ripples of the rill were seen ;  
But, as if soothed their chafferings,  
They babbled in low murmurings.  
The soft light spread a soothing gleam  
On bank and brae, on cot and stream ;  
And, straggling through the leafy grove,  
Chequered the path of whispering love :

While the breeze scarcely breathed a sigh  
As it kissed the flowers in passing by,  
Stealing the odours of their breath  
For incense to the sleeping earth:  
For Nature lay in balmy rest  
Soft as babe's on a mother's breast;  
And all on earth, in air, in sky,  
Seemed tuned to perfect harmony.  
Such was the night when Lucy took  
A last and melancholy look  
Of her loved vale. Can words impart  
The conflict of the bursting heart,  
When, to the spot our childhood knew  
And loved, we bid a first adieu?  
Where path, and bank, and stile, and tree  
Have witnessed our felicity,  
And seem as friends, who still should share  
Our bosom's pleasures and its care?  
'Tis vain!—Say we, that Lucy's mind,  
Yet scarcely to her fate resign'd,  
That deep affliction keenly felt  
As on the past it fondly dwelt.  
Her arms were round her husband flung,  
And, weeping, on his neck she hung.

The past was all a fairy dream,  
A joyous hour, a sunny gleam:  
While Doubt upon the future flings  
His dark, foreboding shadowings.  
But tears, in lovers' bridal hour,  
Are droppings of a summer shower,  
Soon spent: and, if to man be given  
A foretaste of the bliss of heaven,  
It is, when, at Affection's shrine,  
Two faithful hearts their fates conjoin.  
Alas! that all so short should be  
Their dream of young felicity!  
Like scene, depicted by the eye  
Of Fancy, on an evening sky;  
Scarce formed, before it fades from sight  
Behind the curtain of the night.  
For since, in Paradise, began  
The influence of Love on man,  
The hour of rapture still hath been  
Short as the twilight's closing scene.

Now changed the daisied mead, the hill,  
The vine-clad cot, the grove, the rill,



Nature and all her green retreats  
For squares, and palaces, and streets :  
And Lucy, simple village maid,  
As Fashion's votary arrayed,  
Gracing with beauty Rank and Pride,  
Is hailed as wealthy Edmund's bride.  
But true to Nature, for a while  
Lucy saw only splendid toil  
In fashion, and oft sighing, cast  
A wistful look upon the past :  
But Edmund still was kind ; and he  
Declaimed of wealth's felicity ;  
And she believed ; and quickly shone  
Of Fashion's stars the brightest one.

Her mother wept the change, in vain,  
And sought her solitude again :  
While midnight hours, routes, concerts, balls,  
The feverish sleep till noon, the calls  
Of heartless visitors, the ride  
For morning air at eventide ;  
Meeting old dowagers in shops,  
The gossip of intruding fops,

Scandal, the fulsome flattery  
Of those who prey on vanity,  
Dress, news, the opera, the play,  
Fill'd Lucy's hours from day to day.

But, ah! no more the blushing rose  
Of health upon her soft cheek glows;  
For Death, beneath whose blasting lower  
Already drooped the fragile flower,  
Had glared on her. The toilet nigh  
Tended he oft assiduously;  
And whispering soft, as Bridget dare,  
What slight habiliments to wear,  
What rouge the faded cheek could dye  
In mock of Nature's mastery,  
On her fair bosom breathed:—the air,  
Envenomed, chilled the current there  
Of life's warm flood, and its fell load  
Left in that bosom to corrode.  
Poor Lucy! weetless of thy fate,  
Like bird by serpent fascinate,  
Pleasure allures thy careless heart,  
But rankles there the poison's smart!

Why that commotion ? wherefore all  
Those ornaments in room and hall ?  
Upon the walls are festoons hung,  
With roses and with lilies strung ;  
While ivy wreaths the columns bind,  
By nicest skill of art design'd ;  
And, carved in purest gold, the vine  
Their lofty capitals entwine.  
Pictured upon the floor, is seen  
The story of Cytherea's queen  
Just risen from the waves, while nigh  
Cupids on wanton pinions fly.  
From sculptured urns, fresh flowers distil  
Their sweetest scents the air to fill ;  
And, Art with Nature striving, seem  
All realized which poets dream ;  
And Edmund's house a temple smiles  
For Pleasures' ever-witching wiles.

The cards are sent, the night draws nigh  
For the masked ball's festivity :  
And, with the toilet's tasteful cares,  
Lucy to meet her guests prepares.  
Her graceful ringlets, trained to throw  
Soft shadows on the bosom's snow,



Are bound with wreath, where rubies made  
The flowers, on leaves of diamond laid.  
Strings of pale, orient pearls lie  
On that fair bosom's ivory,  
Whose heaving charms the kerchief's gauze  
Scarce from the wandering eye withdraws ;  
While, on the cheek, is lightly spread  
The rouge's softly blended red,  
For the live rose that blossomed there  
Withered in Fashion's atmosphere.  
Circling her slender waist, the zone  
Was clasped with a large onyx stone,  
On which was carved, all disarray'd,  
Of beauteous form, a stooping maid  
Laving her feet with crystal wave  
That issued from a gelid cave.

But, vainly, dress and jewels try  
Her native charms to amplify ;  
And, vainer still, to stay the dart  
Death levels at her youthful heart.  
He, grisly tyrant ! silently  
In the pearly lustre of her eye,  
Marking how slow his poison wrought,  
Impatient, for an instant, thought

To strike the blow: but paused, and o'er  
Her bosom breathed as before.  
Like northern sleety blast it fell  
And froze life's current to its well;  
Shook her whole frame, through limb and arm,  
And all was horror and alarm:  
But, soon revived, Lucy is found  
The gayest of the festive round.

What needs it that gay scene describe,  
The dazzling lights, the masked tribe,  
The music's melody, the feet  
That, glancing to its measures beat;  
What needs it say, how were display'd  
The characters in masquerade?  
The matron, in the maid's attire,  
Cloaking with modesty desire;  
The sober squire of seventy  
Tottering in guise of chivalry;  
The widow, in her second weeds,  
As nun devout with cross and beads;  
The faithless wife as vestal pure;  
The rake in clericals demure;  
The clown, the king, the saint, the thief,  
Lawyers who never saw a brief,

Priests, soldiers, madmen, England, France,  
Love, Folly, DEATH, all mingled in the dance.

What youth is he, whom Lucy's eye  
Still follows so assiduously?  
Who ever tracks, from place to place,  
That nymph in habit of a Grace,  
Whose interchange of amorous glance  
Bespeaks the future dalliance?  
Oh! hapless moment!—weight of woes!  
'Tis Edmund, and him Lucy knows.

Can words the wounded feelings speak  
That flushed with ire her angel cheek?  
Can language paint the deep distress  
Which changed that flush to pallidness?  
Now swims the room before her eyes;  
Quenched seem the lights, the music dies;  
She feels a horror o'er her creep;  
She sobs, but tries, in vain, to weep;  
But, uttering shrieks of wild dismay,  
Sinks to the ground and swoons away.

Is there a sight more full of woe  
In the wide range of ills below,



Than youthful loveliness, when laid,  
Bereft of sympathetic aid,  
On couch of sickness?—and is nigh  
No breast, on which the head may lie,  
No hand, to wipe away a tear,  
No voice, to whisper in the ear  
Sweet words of Hope:—but her last moan  
The sufferer must breathe alone?  
Ah! none:—yet such was Lucy's fate,  
Though crowds of menials on her wait,  
When Death's fell breathings tainted all,  
Even the cup medicinal.  
Still, wildly, her delirious eye  
Would roll, her mother to descry;  
And, "mother," that endearing name,  
Her tongue a thousand times exclaim.

Ah, Lucy! when it was too late,  
Thy mother, and thy faithless mate,  
Both wept beside thee.—Woke to shame,  
A humbled penitent he came  
And pardon craved.—She turned her eye,  
Like a pure angel from the sky

Smiling in peace, and mildly said—  
 “Edmund, ’tis given,”—then droop’d her head.  
 ’Twas o’er—but, yet, the smile remain’d:—  
 ’Twas all of Lucy *Death* had gained.

A. T. T.

