As published in "POEMS, selected from her earliest productions, to those of the present year" (1808):

SONNETS

by

Susan Evance

Set to music, performed and produced by

nion

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Cover artwork: The ninth wave (detail) by Ivan Konstantinovich Aivazovsky (1817-1900)
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Susan Evance

LITTLE is known about Miss Evance, apart from her two volumes of poetry, published in 1808 and 1818, respectively.

Somewhere between these publications she married a Mr. Hooper, and it is suggested she had children and a brother in the navy.

Although reviews of her first collection were favourable, her second volume received little attention and, sadly, she dropped out of sight - and was quickly forgotten.

This album is the first of two volumes, based on the 1808 publication by Susan Evance. It's a tribute to her beautiful, melancholic poetry.

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- Volume One -

SONNET

WRITTEN AT NETLEY ABBEY.

WHY should I fear the spirits of the dead ?
What if they wander at the hour of night,
Amid these sacred walls, with silent tread,
And dimly visible to mortal sight !
What if they ride upon the wandering gale,
And with low sighs alarm the listening ear;
Or swell a deep, a sadly-sounding wail,
Like solemn dirge of death ! why should I fear?
No ! seated on some fragment of rude stone,
While through the Ash-trees waving o'er my head
The wild winds pour their melancholy moan,
My soul, by fond imagination led,
Shall muse on days and years for ever flown,
And hold mysterious converse with the dead !

SONNET

AS o'er the gloomy heath the Pilgrim strays,
When night's dark shadows thicken all around,
While nought he hears, save the low moaning sound
Of sweeping winds--at length, far distant rays
Of light from some low cottage bless his gaze;
With joy he then pursues his lonely way,
No longer to despair and grief a prey,
But cheering hope once more his bosom sways.
Thus have I wander'd in Life's dreary scene,
Forlorn and hopeless--while Affliction's blast
My sky with threat'ning clouds has overcast;
But gentle Friendship's hallow'd lamp serene,
With guiding ray has bid my fears depart,
And spread its soothing influence through my heart.

SONNET

WRITTEN IN A RUINOUS ABBEY.

AS 'mid these mouldering walls I pensive stray,
With moss and ivy rudely overgrown,
I love to watch the last pale glimpse of day,
And hear the rising winds of evening moan.
How loud the gust comes sweeping o'er the vale !
Now faintly murmurs midst those distant trees;
The owl begins her melancholy wail,
Filling with shrieks the pauses of the breeze.
Fancy, thy wildest dreams engage my mind--
I gaze on forms which not to earth belong;
I see them riding on the passing wind,
And hear their sadly-sweet, expressive song.
Wrap'd in the dear tho' visionary sound,
In spells of rapture all my soul is bound !

Sonnet
To Despair.

PALE ruthless Demon ! terrible Despair !
Whose step is horror, and whose voice is death !
Thou rid'st on blasts that rend the midnight air,
Mingling with wintry storms thy baleful breath.
Oft too thou sit'st upon a gloomy rock
That overhangs the wild and boist'rous deep;
Where foaming waves the ship-wreck'd seaman mock,
And o'er his head with raging fury sweep.
There dost thou view him struggling with the wave,
And panting, try to gain the welcome shore;
But ah thou doom'st him to a briny grave–
And soon he fainting sinks--to rise no more.
Unpitying Demon ! sure thy pow'r accurst
Is of all human miseries the worst.

Sonnet
To Content.

O LEAVE me not, Content ! I cannot bear
The absence of thy sweet, thy heavenly smile;
'Tis that alone can gild the form of care,
Can smooth the ruggedness of wearying toil.
Ah ! I have shun'd wild passion's stormy course,
Left her intoxicating cup of joy,
To drink from thy serene and hallow'd source
The sweets that know no mingled dark alloy.
Depart not then--but with those angel charms
That first endear'd thee to my youthful heart,
O Come, and hush these fluttering alarms,
And all thy peaceful purity impart.
Subdue each rising wish, each feeling rude,
And reign within my bosom's solitude.

Sonnet
To Evening.

SWEET Evening, hail! thy melancholy hour
Soothes all my soul to calmness and repose.
How soft thy gentle gale, that sighing blows
Upon the wild heath's solitary flow'r,
Shaking with fluttering wing its dewy head !
With what mild splendor shines the pensive star
Whose silvery lustre decks thy shadowy car !
To me it tells of blissful moments fled--
And musing fancy backward takes her flight,
To gaze on images to fancy dear,
And bathe them with the sad regretful tear.
Yet, 'tis a sadness mingled with delight;
Just as a strain of music, mournful, low,
Melts the full heart with silent pleasing woe.

Sonnet
To love.

I KNOW thy charms, sweet Love ! enchanting boy,
On whose smooth cheek unfading roses glow:
Where softest smiles of innocence and joy
Tender yet gay, their dimpled graces show ;--
Dark is the blue of thy bewitching eye,
Whose melting glances thrill the raptur'd sight:
And deep the magic of thy tuneful sigh;
While at thy voice, hope paints in colours bright
Her wild romantic scenes. O heavenly child,
I shun thee not--! love thy aspect mild:
Come then, and realize with touch divine
The airy forms which Fancy's call obey,
And I will bow before thy pow'rful sway,
And heap sweet offerings on thy holy shrine.

Sonnet
Written on returning to my home.

WITH weeping tenderness once more I gaze
On these romantic scenes I love so well:
Where peace and pensive solitude still dwell,
As in my happy childhood's smiling days;
When my unfolding mind did first behold
The charms of nature with a musing eye,
And caught sweet melancholy's magic sigh;
When through the wood's deep shadowy glen I stroll'd,
With transport listening, as the carol clear
Of some sweet linnet hail'd the opening day,
Or hymn'd to sleeping eve th' enchanting lay.
Ah! lovely scenes--I meet you with a tear--
For strange vicissitudes have cross'd my way,
Since last I saw the glitering sun-beam here!

Sonnet
To the clouds.

O YE who ride upon the wand'ring gale,
And silently, yet swiftly pass away--
I love to view you, when the glimmering ray
Of early morning tints your forms so pale,
Or when meek twilight gleams above the steep,
As in fantastic changeful shapes ye fly
Far in the west,--when smiles the summer sky,
Or when rough wintry winds with fury sweep
Along the hill your darkly-frowning forms,
All desolate and gloomy as my heart.
Ah ! could I but from this sad earth depart
And wander careless as the roving storms
Amidst your shadowy scenes--borne by the wind,
Far I would fly, and leave my woes behind !

Sonnet
To Autumn.

MILD pensive Autumn ! how I love to stray
At thy sweet season through the woody vale;
And when the western orb's declining ray
Tinges thy varied foliage, hear the gale
Of evening sigh among the lofty trees,
And watch thy mists obscure the mountain's height;
While sportive swallows, tossing in the breeze,
Collect, preparing for their distant flight.
As, lovely Autumn ! on thy charms I gaze,
Thy soften'd charms which I so dearly prize,
A thrilling tender melancholy sways
My raptur'd heart, and tears suffuse my eyes.
These feelings, which thy pensive hours employ,
Who would resign for all the world calls joy !

Sonnet

REPENTANCE, bathe me in thy sea of tears!
Ah touch my heart with purifying sway;
And let these stains my darken'd conscience bears,
By thy pale waters all be wash'd away;
Yet how can these remove Guilt's gloomy die!
Oh how atone for oft repeated sin
Regardless of each warning from on high,
The call without--the monitor within !--
Redeeming mercy--here alone the thought
Can rest in hope;--yet come Repentance, come,
With all thy tender melting sorrows fraught,
And guide this wand'ring heart. unto its home;
And while my own sad erring ways I grieve,
Ah may I others learn to pity and forgive.

Sonnet
To a Violet.

SPRING's sweet attendant ! modest simple flower,
Whose soft retiring charms the woods adorn,
How often have I wander'd at that hour,
When first appear the rosy tints of morn,
To the wild brook--there, upon mossy ground,
Thy velvet form all beautiful to view;
To catch thy breath that steals delicious round,
And mark thy pensive smile thro' tears of dew:
But then I sigh that other Vi'lets bloom
Unseen, in wilds where foot-step never trod,
Find unadmir'd, unnotic'd, there a tomb,
And mingle silent with the grassy sod;
Ah, so the scatter'd flowers of genius rise;
These bloom to charm--that, hide--neglected dies.

Sonnet
To Happiness.

O HAPPINESS! thou fair enchanting form,
That, rob'd in brightness, swiftly steal'st along;
Oft mingling with the gay the glittering throng
Of blue-eyed laughing Hope--or glowing warm,
In fancy's rainbow colours sweetly drest,
Flitt'st on light silken wings before my sight--
Ah ! why so soon pursue thine airy flight!
Return--return--and bless this throbbing breast.
Alas ! in vain I spread my eager arms:
In vain I court thy heavenly smile serene--
Thou'rt but a wanderer through this changeful scene,
And fleeting are thy transitory charms.
Yes angel form! thy dwelling is not here ;
Thou reignest in some loftier purer sphere!