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: Clearing up - coast of Sicily (detail) by Andreas Achenbach (1815-1910)
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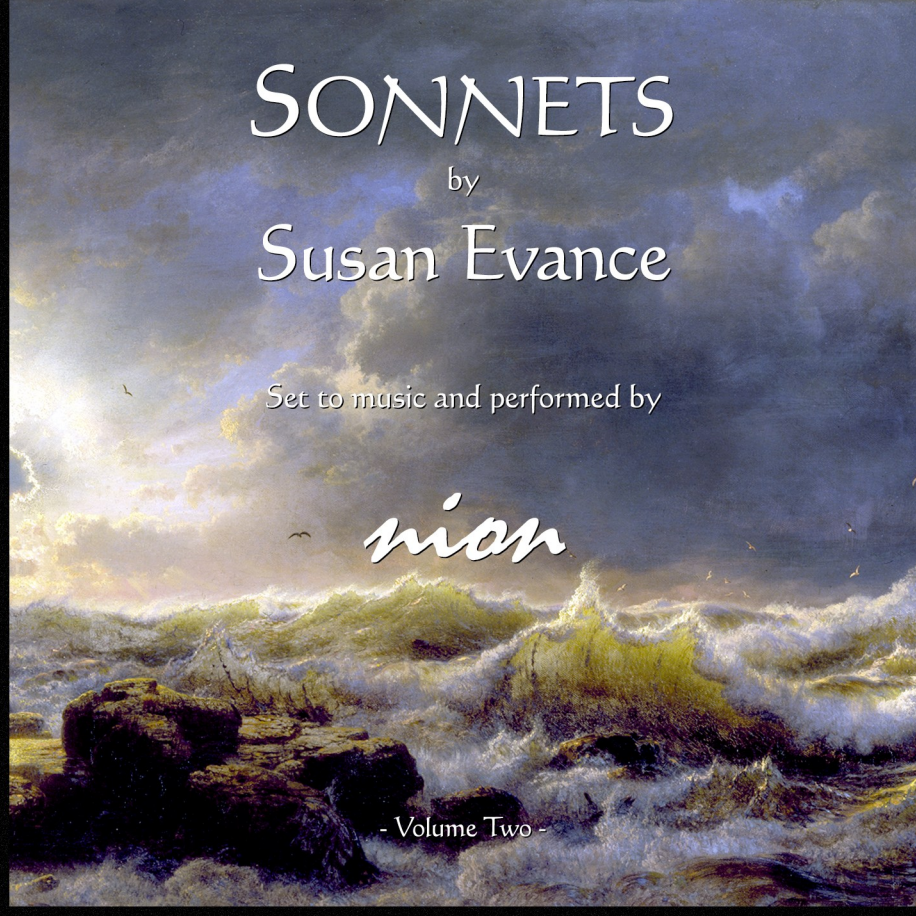



SUSAN EVANCE

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

SONNET
TO MELANCHOLY.

WHEN wintry tempests agitate the deep,
On some lone rock I love to sit reclin'd;
And view the sea-birds on wild pinions sweep,
And hear the roaring of the stormy wind,
That, rushing thro' the caves with hollow sound,
Seems like the voices of those viewless forms
Which hover wrapp'd in gloomy mist around,
Directing in their course the rolling storms.
Then, Melancholy ! thy sweet power I feel,
For there thine influence reigns o'er all the scene;
Then o'er my heart thy "mystic transports" steal,
And from each trifling thought my bosom wean.
My raptur'd spirit soars on wing sublime
Beyond the narrow bounds of space or time !

SONNET
TO A VILLAGE IN SUFFOLK, The Residence of a Friend

BLAKENHAM! although thy bounded scenes
Among no forests wave, no lofty hills arise,
Whence far-stretch'd prospects meet the raptur'd eyes--
No winding sea-dasht shores to thee belong,
Skirted by wild and rocky solitudes,
"Sublimities that most delight the mind"
Yet Blakenham, thy still meads where riv'lets wind,
Thy corn-fields waving 'neath the rustling breeze,
And thy secluded copses--they are dear
To me; and when I go far, far away,
Full oft amid thy scenes will memory stray.
Ah ! virtue, taste, refinement pure are here;
And these, when view'd by fond affection's eye,
Give thee an interest--which shall never die !

SONNET

O TAKE me from the hated haunts of man;
O hide me on some rock-encompass'd shore,
Where I may spend unseen life's little span,
And never hear of guilt and misery more
There a Recluse, within some lonely cave,
I'll read, and watch, and meditate, and pray;
I'll list the murmurs of the rolling wave,
And mark the rising and the setting ray;
No helpless animals for me shall bleed;
The hand of nature shall my wants supply--
I'll view them as at liberty they feed,
And their delight shall be my luxury.
O how I long for solitude like this !
For nature's innocence, and nature's bliss.

Sonnet

Recantatory to the preceding.

Ah no--enthusiasm's hour is fled;--
--Society, ! though many a saddening ill
Abides within the circle of thy tread,
Yet fondly do I cling unto thee still.
How could I live estrang'd from all mankind:
How could I bear the desolate remove
From all the sweet communion of the mind--
The Sympathies of friendship, and of love!--
Rebellious Man in every changing scene
Must feel th' effect of his primeval crime;--
Ah ! let him sometimes seek the shade serene,
And sooth his weary soul with thought sublime;--
But 'tis in social life that he must prove
Trials that fit him for the realms above.

Sonnet

Written on an Eminence over-hanging the Sea.

Ye rocks sublime, whose tops depending o'er
The restless main, form my rude lonely seat,
Where oft I listen to the solemn roar
Of foaming billows, breaking at my feet;
In your retreats can peace of mind be found,
Contented bliss, serenely sweet repose ?
Ah, yes ! the gales that whisper soft around,
Seem like meek Pity's voice to heal my woes.
Now, while I watch the waves as on they roll,
And mark their white heads at a distance rise,
Peace once again returns unto my soul,
And pale despair far from my bosom flies.
Sweet, soothing Nature ! on thy friendly breast
Reposing, all my griefs are lull'd to rest.

Sonnet

Why do I muse on moments that are past
Like the fond visions of an airy dream,
With weeping tenderness, and thought o'ercast
With shades of deep regret? Alas ! they seem
The smiling scenes where sunbeams of delight
Unclouded love to linger; strew'd with flowers,
Whose perfum'd buds appear more softly bright,
Than rainbow glittering on summer showers.
Ah! does not memory like Hope deceive?
Like Hope resign her realms to Fancy's sway,
Who fondly loves a magic veil to weave
For every past as well as future day?
Ah, surely yes! for Sorrow's tearful show'r
Falls on the beam that gilds our fairest hour.

Sonnet

Yon oak has brav'd full many a wintry storm,
And frown'd defiance to the changeful year.
The summer lightnings flashed in fury near,
The gales of Autumn howl'd around its form,
But steadfast, undismay'd, it scorn'd their pow'r,
And now, see evening's softest loveliest ray
Illumes its leaves, while zephyrs tired with play,
Sleep on the bosom of the silent hour.
Then, tho' the gusts of sad misfortune blow
O'er this chill'd bosom, I will not despair;
Hope, gentle Hope, shall point to prospects fair,
Where flow'rets bloom, and lingering sun beams glow;
Where, when Adversity's dark clouds are past,
The smile of peace shall sooth my soul at last.

Sonnet

Written near the Sea.

Now wild the blasts of Autumn sweep along
These rugged rocks, this solitary shore !
Mingled with Ocean's deep tempestuous roar,
And many a sea-bird's melancholy song.
But ah ! more wild the tumult of my soul--
More turbulent the feelings tossing there;
For ev'ry hope is blasted by Despair,
And clouds of darkness o'er my prospects roll,
The winds that agitate the foaming deep
Ere long shall sink to quiet calm repose;
But still this aching heart will sigh its woes,
Still will these streaming eyes in anguish weep—
Till death shall bid the storms of passion cease,
And lay me in the silent home of peace.

Sonnet

Written on leaving a beloved Residence.

Romantic shades, by nature wildly drest!
Scenes to my pensive bosom ever dear !
Where I have pass'd full many a happy year,
In health, in peace, and calm contentment blest ;--
For you have witness'd life's sweet dawn arise,
You have beheld gay childhood's smiling hours,
And first among your silent shadowy bow'rs
I learn'd retirement's tasteful joys to prize.
Dear hills ! the sun will gild your turf--the air
Will catch your thymy perfume on its wing--
And sweet as ever still your birds will sing:
But not for me;--I go to cities--where,
With sickening eye false splendour I shall view,
And sigh in vain, sweet shades, for happiness--and you !

Sonnet

Written in ill Health at the close of Spring.

Where are the tearful smile of youthful Spring,
That nurs'd the budding leaves and infant flow'rs?
Ah! vanish'd--like those dear regretted hours
That fled away on Pleasure's fairy wing,
When hope light scatter'd o'er my glowing way
Her rose-buds of delight.--The cooling breeze,
The wily sportive warblers of the trees,
And garlands sweet that made the woods so gay,
All, all are gone.--Spring will return again,
But never more for me its charms shall bloom,
For me then slumbering in the dreary tomb
The birds will sing and flow'rets blow in vain;
While gentle gales, the budding trees that wave,
Will breathe their lonely sighs across my grave.

Sonnet

Contentment ! I have left the lowly spot
Where Peace in still seclusion lov'd to dwell.
Within the shelter of thy simple cell,
There once was fix'd my humble happy lot;
Ah would that I had never known a change !
For 'mong reposing scenes that smil'd around,
Serenest bliss my quiet bosom found.--
'Twas Hope who taught my wand'ring feet to range
Cruel deluder ! she in pilgrim vest
Came to our cot: and by her witching tale,
"While dwelling there an unsuspected guest,"
Seduc'd me from Contentment's happy vale.
Ah ! now, alone, amidst surrounding fears,
I'm left to disappointment and to tears !

Sonnet

To a Convolvolus.

Did I not see thee ope thy lovely eye,
When Morning came with tresses bath'd in dew?
Were not thy artless charms display'd to view
When shone the brilliant sun-beam from on high?
Now that day's crimson splendours fading slow,
Yield to soft shadowy eye the silent sway,
Thou tremblest as the breezes o'er thee stray,
And fold'st thy leaves, and lay'st thy bosom low.
Alas, poor flower, thy little life is o'er,
The yellow morning shall return again,
But all her chearing dews will fall in vain,
For thou must never wake to taste them more.
I grieve for thee, yet, wherefore should I grieve?
Man's but a morning flow'r that like thee dies at eve.

Sonnet

O that religion in that breast did dwell !--
See how he leans upon the vessel's side,
And gloomily surveys the surgy tide.
Could you the meaning of that aspect tell,
Could you behold the heart that bosom hides,
Its passions tossing like the billows wild,
Its wishes by no soothing hope beguil'd,
But which impatience ever restless guides;
Ah did each thought perplex'd--each prospect dark--
Each feeling of despair now meet your sight,
You'd say that Man, "poor helpless driving bark!"
Needed a pilot to direct him right
On life's tumultuous waves--and waft him o'er
To some more shelter'd and more peaceful shore.