

First Love's Recollections

First love will with the heart remain
When all its hopes are by,
As frail rose blossoms still retain
Their fragrance till they die;
And joy's first dreams will haunt the mind
With shades from whence they sprung,
As Summer leaves the stems behind
On which Spring's blossoms hung.

Mary, I dare not call thee dear,
I've lost that right so long,
Yet once again I vex thine ear
With memory's idle song.
Had time and change not blotted out
The love of former days
Thou wert the last that I should doubt
Of pleasing with my praise.

When honied tokens from each tongue
Told with what truth we loved,
How rapturous to thy lips I clung
Whilst nought but smiles reproved;
But now methinks if one kind word
Were whispered in thine ear
Thou'dst startle like an untamed bird
And blush with wilder fear.

How loath to part, how fond to meet
Had we two used to be;
At sunset with what eager feet
I hastened on to thee.
Scarce nine days passed ere we met
In Spring, nay wintry weather;
Now nine years' suns have risen and set
Nor found us once together.

Thy face was so familiar grown,
Thyself so often by,
A moment's memory when alone
Would bring thee to mine eye;
But now my very dreams forget
That witching look to trace;
Though there thy beauty lingers yet,
It wears a stranger face.

I felt a pride to name thy name
But now that pride hath flown,
My words e'en seem to blush for shame

That own I love thee on.
I felt I then thy heart did share
Nor urged a binding vow;
But much I doubt if thou couldst spare
One word of kindness now.

And what is now my name to thee,
Though once nought seemed so dear?
Perhaps a jest in hours of glee
To please some idle ear;
And yet like counterfeits with me
Impressions linger on
Though all the gilded finery
That passed for truth is gone.

Ere the world smiled upon my lays,
A sweeter meed was mine –
Thy blushing look of ready praise
Was raised at every line,
But now methinks thy fervent love
Is changed to scorn severe
And songs that other hearts approve
Seem discord to thine ear.

When last thy gentle cheek I pressed
And heard thee feign adieu,
I little thought that seeming jest
Would prove a word so true.
A fate like this hath oft befell
E'en loftier hopes than ours;
Spring bids full many buds to swell
That ne'er can grow to flowers.

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