

**CARMINA  
MINIMA**

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Carmina Minima by Charles Cowden Clarke

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**CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE**

**CARMINA  
MINIMA**



To  
Professor Francis James Child;  
as a token of kind regard,  
from the Author.



CARMINA MINIMA.

BY

CHARLES COWDEN CLARKE.

—“*Motés in the Sonné beame.*”

CHAUCER.

1859.

## Preface.

THIS knot of "unconsidered Trifles" (which certainly Autolycus himself would not care to "snap up") was intended only for private circulation,—as a keepsake and memorial of old and sweet friendships; of cordial acquaintances; and of abounding hospitalities.

The old saying however recurred to me;—"There be many that do know the Lord Mayor's Jester; but whom the Lord Mayor's Jester doth *not* know:" and so, I, in my late public capacity of lecturer, may possess numerous unrecognized friends among my audiences, who might desire to retain some small memento of one, who claimed, at all events, the merit of an honest zeal and assiduity in administering to their intellectual demands and recreation:—I therefore determined upon the usual, open form of publication.

The compositions themselves are casual thoughts, scattered, at long intervals, over more than a half century of varied, busy, and every-day mental employment. They accurately fulfil the present intention of their author concerning them; since, being "Trifles," they betoken his "Respect" in this, their presentation.

*Nice, Nov. 1858.*



## Carmina Minima.

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### Prologue

*To a School Play.*

**I**N times of yore, when our first Edward reign'd ;  
(Edward, whose brows by patriot blood were stain'd)  
In times of yore, when learning in our isle  
Dar'd not assume her present winning smile ;  
When dark-ey'd superstition's icy hand  
Benumb'd th' aspiring genius of the land ;  
The British Drama first began her course :  
Weak in its onset, feeble as the source  
Of great Maragnon, whose gigantic wave  
Rolls on (by thousand rills enhanc'd) to lave  
Each fertile region, gladdening as he rolls.  
Even so, our Drama, breaking from the thralls

Of purblind ignorance, first wound her way.  
*Her* stream was small, and weak *her* first essay ;  
 And our first actor was the Parish Clerk !  
 A man not quite the fittest form'd to work  
 Upon the feelings, or to rouse the mind  
 To deeds of fame—unless perchance you find  
 That Edward's Clerks were far more erudite  
 Than those whom we are doom'd to hear recite  
 Sublimest truths in quaint and vulgar tone.  
 The taste improv'd as men had wiser grown,  
 And plays were play'd by dramatists alone.

Then mighty Shakespeare burst to life and light !  
 The genius of our Drama hail'd the fight ;  
 And darted forth, exulting, on the wings of fame,  
 To publish to the world her victory, and claim  
 The wreaths that long had been the bright rewards  
 Bestow'd on Grecian, and on Roman bards.

Our author, who to-night implores your smile  
 On this, his first attempt,—though puerile,—  
 Begs me to warn you from the ill-tim'd laugh :  
 For you must be inform'd that more than half  
 Is Shakespeare's language blended with his own ;  
 And with such art, that they can scarce be known  
 Asunder. You, therefore, that are *well* read  
 In Shakespeare, must be cautious ere you spread



The sneer farcastic, since you may be found  
Committing sacrilege on bardic ground.

Our author and his friends in nought have spar'd  
expense ;

And you yourselves can testify their diligence ;

Then give them your applause—their sweetest recom-  
pense.

1806.

### Sunset.

*An irregular effusion.*

O H how exquisite is this stillness !  
The vulgar shout, and more obtrusive laugh  
Are now confin'd within those magic walls  
Licenc'd by the State. Never did I see  
So grand a sunset ! The whole expanse  
Is liquid gold ; and not a cloud has dar'd  
To intercept the flood of glory.  
“ Dark with th' excessive bright, the ‘ trees ’ appear,”  
Waving their locks majestic to the orb  
Of day. Now all the tiny habitants  
Of air are wheeling round and round my head,  
Shouting their vespers to the parting day.  
Their little congregated voices found  
Like gladfome boys at play—heard from afar.

Around me every object beams with joy.  
 The wide-extended fields of golden corn,—  
 Untorn by storms of wind, and lashing hail,—  
 Gently bow their heads to the soft step  
 Of balmy zephyrs dancing o'er their surface.  
 All—all are glad!—I too am glad as they :  
 Glad to be born free as my native air :  
 Free was I born ; and free will I remain.  
 Glad in my friends ; and glad to own a heart  
 Boundless as the deep ; warm as yonder glow ;  
 Leaping to cheer the persecuted foul ;  
 And grateful for the blessings shower'd around.

1805.

### The Nightingale.

**W**HAT time the sun has wheel'd into the deep  
 His fiery car, and evening cold and pale,  
 In ruffet clad, and zone begemm'd  
 With dewy pearls, in sober state  
 " Comes walking o'er the brow of yon high eastern hill,"  
 The Nightingale begins his tale of love :  
 Small in the onset, and abrupt :  
 Now in a loud and silver tone  
 Of extacy :—Now in a simple strain  
 So love-lorn, and indeed so full of ruth,

As though his little heart would burst :  
 Like to those sudden dying falls,  
 Struck from that airy harp by light-wing'd fays  
 Flitting o'er the strings. Sweetest warbler ! say—  
 What sorrows can afflict thy breast.  
 Thou hast no shining friend to spoil  
 Thee of thy mate : no oily villain thou,  
 To lure thy little partner from her home.  
 Senseless of these woes—happy bird !  
 Happy bird !—thou'rt in Paradise !

1807.

## Horace.

*Book I., Ode XI.*

“Tu ne quæris (scire nefas).”

**I** ADVISE, my dear Tom, that you never demand  
 What limits the Gods have prescrib'd to our days ;  
 Nor consult Mr. Andrews\*—that notable hand  
 At nativity-casting : believe me, 'tis base.  
 'Twere better to bear with an equable mind  
 Our lots, good or bad, as they're sent from above ;  
 Not caring if this be the last winter's wind  
 That blows over our heads ; or whether great Jove

\* Successor to MOORE, the Almanack-maker and Astrologer.