

**SUMMER
SKETCHES,
AND OTHER POEMS**

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Summer Sketches, and Other Poems by Bessie Rayner Parkes

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BY

BESSIE RAYNER PARKES.

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SUMMER SKETCHES.

[Lilian writing at night in a little country inn. Lights are upon the table, and a jug, from the grotesque mouth of which immense ferns and foxgloves tower upwards, and cast trembling graceful shadows upon the wall. All the implements of an artist lie scattered about the room, and books lettered "Ger-vinus," "Keats," "Ruskin." A low hum of voices comes from the bar of the inn, and the night wind rustles softly among the trees of the garden. Lilian smiles to herself as she writes.]

"DEAR Helen, in your smoky town
Forget not that I love you well,
And often in my studies brown
Walk with you where Paul's thunderous bell
Warns citizens of hour of noon;
This said (because the month of June
Is sentimental, and the moon
Commands our feelings to expand),
I take our travels up in hand.

Say, River God! whose fountain rills
Gush joyfully midst Cotswold Hills,
But whom, thro' London doomed to run,
White feet of cautious Naiads shun;
When daily blea'd by London fogs
Thou circlest round the Isle of Dogs,

Does not thy mighty bosom heave
 Once more Heaven's radiance to receive?
 Ah! when the misty mass recedes,
 And thou regain'st thy crowned reeds,
 And flowest grandly towards the sea,
 Who, Father Thames, more glad than thee?

Our childhood, as his founts serene,
 Developed in a busier scene;
 Oh, weary London, e'en in June!
 Oh, dusty streets! oh, dusky moon!
 Joyful as e'er I wish to be,
 (Joyful, tho' even leaving thee)
 That hour, when after brief confab,
 I started in a Bond Street cab,
 To where converge, like rays of light,
 In one broad focus of delight,
 From windruff'd sea and chalky ridge,
 Three southern lines at London Bridge.

Oh, what a storm of carpet-bags
 And panting folk was there!
 How madly waved the signal flags,
 With what a grand despair
 Ran everybody to and fro,
 Such railway stations only know.
 The porters (clad in Lincoln green,)
 Dash right and left in haste;
 Music accompanies the scene—
 Of steam let out to waste,
 And while the carriages are filling,
 Cosmos is selling for a shilling.

Great authors! had ye only known
That while you coin'd your brains
To such grand words, they would be sown
Like seeds broadcast, in trains!
The hum subsides, the doors enclose
A hundred people pack'd in rows,—
Our train, at sound of signal bell,
Starts forth, like soul released from hell.

Cast thy light pen away, my muse,
Some graver influence seek and use,
Frame words of more persuasive power
To paint a different scene and hour,
And with what thoughts, on wings of wind,
We left the world's great Heart behind.

Oh, dreary London, dark with smoke,
But more obscured by crime,
On whom no morning ever broke
Fit to be sung in rhyme.
Oh, dreary streets that well I know,
Oh, stifled households nursed in woe.

Oh, hapless children, never crown'd
With purity divine,
Young hearts in which no peace is found;
Unchristen'd by the sign,
The outward sign of inward joy,
Born heritage of girl and boy.

In those green fields towards which we flew,
 Kind hearts are labouring with the Lord ;
 Here, for a space, the laws eschew
 Their keen hereditary sword ;
 Hard justice, to compassion won,
 Regrets the sire and spares the son.

Perhaps across the oblivious sea
 These boys shall build a fairer fame,
 In social kingdoms yet to be
 Transmit an honourable name,
 And scarcely blush as they recall
 Those distant scenes which saw their fall.

REDHILL inspires no gloomy page,
 'T is lit with light from future days ;
 This is the purpose of the age,
 Which all fulfil in various ways,
 From every rank upsprings the cry,
 " Gather the children, lest they die."

From theft, from drink, from sensual sin,
 (Listen, O women, meek and pure,)
 Snatch these poor children, bring them in
 By thousands to your homes secure.
 They wail, from many an awful den,
 " O save us ere we grow to men."

Fain would I write one labourer's name,
 Did reverence not withhold my hand ;
 Work such as this affects not fame,
 A dew of kindness on the land
 It falls in vivifying rain,
 Sinks deep, and asketh nought again,