

TO SOME BIRDS FLOWN AWAY.

("Enfants! Oh! revenez!")

[XXII, April, 1837]

Children, come back--come back, I say--  
You whom my folly chased away  
A moment since, from this my room,  
With bristling wrath and words of doom!  
What had you done, you bandits small,  
With lips as red as roses all?  
What crime?--what wild and hapless deed?  
    What porcelain vase by you was split  
To thousand pieces? Did you need  
    For pastime, as you handled it,  
Some Gothic missal to enrich  
    With your designs fantastical?  
    Or did your tearing fingers fall  
On some old picture? Which, oh, which  
Your dreadful fault? Not one of these;  
Only when left yourselves to please  
This morning but a moment here  
    'Mid papers tinted by my mind  
You took some embryo verses near--

Half formed, but fully well designed  
To open out. Your hearts desire  
Was but to throw them on the fire,  
Then watch the tinder, for the sight  
Of shining sparks that twinkle bright  
As little boats that sail at night,  
Or like the window lights that spring  
From out the dark at evening.

'Twas all, and you were well content.  
Fine loss was this for anger's vent--  
A strophe ill made midst your play,  
Sweet sound that chased the words away  
In stormy flight. An ode quite new,  
With rhymes inflated--stanzas, too,  
That panted, moving lazily,  
    And heavy Alexandrine lines  
That seemed to jostle bodily,  
    Like children full of play designs  
That spring at once from schoolroom's form.  
Instead of all this angry storm,  
Another might have thanked you well  
For saving prey from that grim cell,  
That hollowed den 'neath journals great,  
    Where editors who poets flout  
    With their demoniac laughter shout.

And I have scolded you! What fate  
For charming dwarfs who never meant  
To anger Hercules! And I  
Have frightened you!--My chair I sent  
Back to the wall, and then let fly  
A shower of words the envious use--  
"Get out," I said, with hard abuse,  
"Leave me alone--alone I say."  
Poor man alone! Ah, well-a-day,  
What fine result--what triumph rare!  
As one turns from the coffin'd dead  
So left you me:--I could but stare  
Upon the door through which you fled--  
I proud and grave--but punished quite.  
And what care you for this my plight!--  
You have recovered liberty,  
Fresh air and lovely scenery,  
The spacious park and wished-for grass;  
The running stream, where you can throw  
A blade to watch what comes to pass;  
Blue sky, and all the spring can show;  
Nature, serenely fair to see;  
The book of birds and spirits free,  
God's poem, worth much more than mine,  
Where flowers for perfect stanzas shine--  
Flowers that a child may pluck in play,

No harsh voice frightening it away.  
And I'm alone--all pleasure o'er--  
    Alone with pedant called "Ennui,"  
For since the morning at my door  
    Ennui has waited patiently.  
That docto-r-London born, you mark,  
One Sunday in December dark,  
Poor little ones--he loved you not,  
And waited till the chance he got  
To enter as you passed away,  
    And in the very corner where  
You played with frolic laughter gay,  
    He sighs and yawns with weary air.

What can I do? Shall I read books,  
Or write more verse--or turn fond looks  
Upon enamels blue, sea-green,  
And white--on insects rare as seen  
Upon my Dresden china ware?  
Or shall I touch the globe, and care  
To make the heavens turn upon  
Its axis? No, not one--not one  
Of all these things care I to do;  
All wearies me--I think of you.  
In truth with you my sunshine fled,  
And gayety with your light tread--

Glad noise that set me dreaming still.  
'Twas my delight to watch your will,  
And mark you point with finger-tips  
    To help your spelling out a word;  
To see the pearls between your lips  
    When I your joyous laughter heard;  
Your honest brows that looked so true,  
    And said "Oh, yes!" to each intent;  
Your great bright eyes, that loved to view  
    With admiration innocent  
My fine old Sèvres; the eager thought  
That every kind of knowledge sought;  
The elbow push with "Come and see!"

Oh, certes! spirits, sylphs, there be,  
And fays the wind blows often here;  
The gnomes that squat the ceiling near,  
In corners made by old books dim;  
The long-backed dwarfs, those goblins grim  
That seem at home 'mong vases rare,  
And chat to them with friendly air--  
Oh, how the joyous demon throng  
Must all have laughed with laughter long  
To see you on my rough drafts fall,  
My bald hexameters, and all  
The mournful, miserable band,

And drag them with relentless hand  
From out their box, with true delight  
To set them each and all a-light,  
And then with clapping hands to lean  
Above the stove and watch the scene,  
How to the mass deformed there came  
A soul that showed itself in flame!

Bright tricky children--oh, I pray  
Come back and sing and dance away,  
And chatter too--sometimes you may,  
A giddy group, a big book seize--  
Or sometimes, if it so you please,  
With nimble step you'll run to me  
    And push the arm that holds the pen,  
Till on my finished verse will be  
    A stroke that's like a steeple when  
Seen suddenly upon a plain.  
My soul longs for your breath again  
To warm it. Oh, return--come here  
With laugh and babble--and no fear  
    When with your shadow you obscure  
    The book I read, for I am sure,  
Oh, madcaps terrible and dear,  
That you were right and I was wrong.  
But who has ne'er with scolding tongue

Blamed out of season. Pardon me!

You must forgive--for sad are we.

The young should not be hard and cold

And unforgiving to the old.

Children each morn your souls ope out

Like windows to the shining day,

Oh, miracle that comes about,

The miracle that children gay

Have happiness and goodness too,

Caressed by destiny are you,

Charming you are, if you but play.

But we with living overwrought,

And full of grave and sombre thought,

Are snappish oft: dear little men,

We have ill-tempered days, and then,

Are quite unjust and full of care;

It rained this morning and the air

Was chill; but clouds that dimm'd the sky

Have passed. Things spited me, and why?

But now my heart repents. Behold

What 'twas that made me cross, and scold!

All by-and-by you'll understand,

When brows are mark'd by Time's stern hand;

Then you will comprehend, be sure,

When older--that's to say, less pure.

The fault I freely own was mine.  
But oh, for pardon now I pine!  
Enough my punishment to meet,  
You must forgive, I do entreat  
With clasped hands praying--oh, come back,  
Make peace, and you shall nothing lack.  
See now my pencils--paper--here,  
And pointless compasses, and dear  
Old lacquer-work; and stoneware clear  
Through glass protecting; all man's toys  
So coveted by girls and boys.  
Great China monsters--bodies much  
Like cucumbers--you all shall touch.  
I yield up all! my picture rare  
    Found beneath antique rubbish heap,  
My great and tapestried oak chair  
    I will from you no longer keep.  
You shall about my table climb,  
    And dance, or drag, without a cry  
From me as if it were a crime.  
    Even I'll look on patiently  
If you your jagged toys all throw  
Upon my carved bench, till it show  
The wood is torn; and freely too,  
I'll leave in your own hands to view,



My pictured Bible--oft desired--  
But which to touch your fear inspired--  
With God in emperor's robes attired.

Then if to see my verses burn,  
Should seem to you a pleasant turn,  
Take them to freely tear away  
Or burn. But, oh! not so I'd say,  
If this were Méry's room to-day.  
That noble poet! Happy town,  
Marseilles the Greek, that him doth own!  
Daughter of Homer, fair to see,  
Of Virgil's son the mother she.  
To you I'd say, Hold, children all,  
Let but your eyes on his work fall;  
These papers are the sacred nest  
In which his crooning fancies rest;  
To-morrow winged to Heaven they'll soar,  
For new-born verse imprisoned still  
In manuscript may suffer sore  
At your small hands and childish will,  
Without a thought of bad intent,  
Of cruelty quite innocent.  
You wound their feet, and bruise their wings,  
And make them suffer those ill things  
That children's play to young birds brings.

But mine! no matter what you do,  
My poetry is all in you;  
You are my inspiration bright  
That gives my verse its purest light.  
Children whose life is made of hope,  
Whose joy, within its mystic scope,  
Owes all to ignorance of ill,  
You have not suffered, and you still  
Know not what gloomy thoughts weigh down  
The poet-writer weary grown.  
What warmth is shed by your sweet smile!  
How much he needs to gaze awhile  
Upon your shining placid brow,  
When his own brow its ache doth know;  
With what delight he loves to hear  
Your frolic play 'neath tree that's near,  
Your joyous voices mixing well  
With his own song's all-mournful swell!  
Come back then, children! come to me,  
If you wish not that I should be  
As lonely now that you're afar  
As fisherman of Etrétat,  
Who listless on his elbow leans  
Through all the weary winter scenes,  
As tired of thought--as on Time flies--

And watching only rainy skies!

MRS. NEWTON CROSLAND.