1836

To--

N. Beverley Tucker
There is little merit in the following lines besides that rare merit in poetry, their truth. They were written in the place of the writer's nativity, where he had at length settled down, after an absence of thirty years. They were written in a house just purchased, and from which the former owner had not yet removed his family, and were inserted in the Album of his daughter. She was young, beautiful, accomplished, newly married, and wealthy. Though confined to her room by bad health, she was preparing for a voyage to Europe, since happily accomplished.

TO ——.

We met as strangers, Lady, tho' the scenes
On which thine eyes first opened, were the same
To which the sports of childhood, and the hopes
Of Manhood's flattering dawn, had bound my heart
With cords of filial love indissoluble.
We part as strangers, tho' the self-same roof
So long has sheltered both. I hear thy voice—
I hear thy fairy step—and trace the print
Of the soft kiss, with which thy lip has prest
My infant's cheek; and see her little hands
Rich with the gifts thy kindness has bestowed.
And this is all: but there is more than this
That with a link of sympathy connects
My heart with thee, as if some common lot,
Some common spell of destiny had bound
Our fates in one. And we have much in common.
The hope that guides thy steps to distant lands,
In quest of pleasures, such as boundless wealth,
And friends, and youth, and peerless beauty promise—
How much unlike the stern necessity,
Which drove me forth to roam thro' deserts wild,
And on the confines of society,
Where the fierce savage whets the vengeful knife
'Gainst cultivated brutes more fierce than he,
Through hardship, toil and strife, to win my bread!
But O! to leave the scenes of happy youth—
The Father's sheltering roof, the Mother's care,
The blithe play-fellows of our childish sports,
The gay companions of our gladsome hours,
The cherished friend, whose sympathy consol'd
The petty griefs, that, like a fleecy cloud,
But dimm'd the sunshine of our spring of life,
And, leaving she'd its freshness on the heart,
Melted away, leaving the scene more fair;
To lose all these!—what is it but the type
Of that last fatal wretch, that tears the heart
At once from all we love; and in one doom,
One common bond of sympathy, unites
The unnumbered victims, who in every rank,
Through every walk, thron'd to the gates of Death?
May we not deem that fond Mother's heart,
Though couched in bliss celestial, yet will yearn
To her deserted Child? And will not thine,
Where'er thy steps may roan, true to the pole
Of all thy young affections, point thy thoughts
To the fair scenes, clothed by thy fairy hand
With every charm of hue, and scent, and shade,
Thyself the brightest ornament? O yes!
From the rich isle, where science, art and wealth
Have crowded every joy, the ravished sense,
And heart, and mind can covet; from the plains
Of France the beauteous; from the vine-crowned hills
That in the glassy bosom of the Rhine
Their blushing frutages reflected see;
From classic Italy, the "marble waste"
Of desolated fans, and ruined tower,
And silent palaces, where once the doom
Of empires was decreed, the heart will turn
To Home. The trackless wild, where foot of man
Has never broke the silence with its tread,
Is more lonely than the thronging scene,
The "peopled solitude," where jostling crowds
Elbow their way, regardless that we look
Upon their strife—unconscious that we live,
The moss-grown rock, that in the savage dell
Has frowned for ages on the silent scene,
In its drear loneliness reflects our own,
And seems to give a kind of sympathy;
But stony hearts have none.

Known! yet unknown!
There is a strange mysterious interest
Folows the form, that fitting through the gloom
Of twilight, half concealed, and half disclos'd,
Glides silently away; and such a spell
Upon my memory, thy shadowy image
In traces faint but indestructible
Hath sketched. And I would be remembered too,
Not as I am, for thou hast never known me,
But as I fain would have thee fancy me.
And I shall be remembered—for the scenes
On which thy memory will love to dwell,
Are now my care. 'Tis mine to dress the vine
Which trained by thee its graceful foliage,
Gratefully spread to shelter thee: The flower
That mourns thy absence, watered by my hand,
Shall lift its drooping head and smile; and thou
In fancy shalt behold its blue eye glistening
Brighter through tears; and, with an answering smile,
And answering tear, thine own bright eye will bless me.

Then mayst thou think how I, my wanderings o'er,