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JAMES McHENRY: A Minor American Poet

By ORAL SUMNER COAD

PROBABLY *most of the best of our early American poetry has appeared in print, yet from time to time old packages of manuscripts are opened which contain verses worthy of publication. When the poems of James McHenry came into the Library, they seemed to reveal something about the life and thought of a late eighteenth-century Marylander that would be of general interest. We are happy that Dr. Coad has edited a number of them for the* JOURNAL.

NOT the least noticeable feature of the poetry written in the United States during our early decades as a nation is its sparseness. Freneau, of course, was an active laborer in this field who did much to fill the gap with honor. Next after him stand the Connecticut Wits, who, though sufficiently voluminous, are prevailingly dreary and at times unreadable. With the exception of these writers and a few other very minor ones, the visible poetic product of this country was slight until the appearance of "Thanatopsis" in 1817. This being true, any unpublished poet of this era, even though his claim to fame be modest, takes on a considerable importance. Such a poet was James McHenry, known as a figure of some prominence in our early political life, but almost completely unknown as a writer of verse. A short time ago, however, the Rutgers University Library came into the possession of a sheaf of McHenry's manuscript poems, running to over a hundred pages in all, the majority of which display a sufficient poetic merit to justify their publication here, for, in the editor's belief, they may enrich in some slight degree the lean period to which they belong.



JAMES M^CHENRY.
Nat. 1753 - Ob. 1816.

From the Miniature in the possession of the Family

To McHenry poetry was, to be sure, but a casual avocation in a life devoted largely to public affairs. And it is as a public servant that he is the subject of two biographies—the principal one by Bernard C. Steiner—and of a sketch in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. He was born in County Antrim, Ireland, November 16, 1753, of Scotch-Irish Presbyterian parents and received a classical education at Dublin. Having migrated to America in 1771, he persuaded his father, mother, and brother to follow him. Here the elder McHenry prospered as a Baltimore importer and was able to leave a substantial estate to his son James. After studying medicine at Philadelphia under the distinguished Benjamin Rush, McHenry served as surgeon with the patriot army from 1775 to 1778, although during a part of this time he was a British prisoner. In 1778 an appointment as secretary to Washington brought his medical career to an end. Later, as an aide to Lafayette, he was given the rank of major.

Political offices followed rapidly for McHenry. He was elected to the Maryland Senate in 1781, to the Congress of Confederation in 1783, and in 1787 to the Constitutional Convention, to whose deliberations he made no conspicuous additions. After two terms in the Maryland Assembly and a further one in the Senate, in 1796 he was appointed to Washington's cabinet as Secretary of War, an office he held during the remainder of Washington's administration and for one year under John Adams. The growing tension between the United States and France, however, brought about an estrangement between Adams and his Secretary of War; accordingly when the President asked for McHenry's resignation in 1800, it was tendered forthwith, and he retired from public life. Though not a major statesman, McHenry had been, within his Federalist limits, a high-minded and devoted servant of his country in his various offices, and he enjoyed the cordial esteem of Washington and Lafayette and the intimacy of Alexander Hamilton.

McHenry now withdrew to his country seat near Baltimore, where he lived quietly with his wife—the former Margaret Caldwell of Philadelphia, whom he had married in 1784—and in close association with his children. Here, after a period of invalidism resulting from paralysis, he died on May 3, 1816.

The poems in the Rutgers Library are surprisingly untouched by

McHenry's quarter-century of participation in public affairs.¹ Rather they are the product of a genial eighteenth-century gentleman to whom poetry was a polite accomplishment or sometimes an outlet for private emotions, rather than a weapon for political warfare or a tub to thump in some stirring cause. In other words he apparently studied not at all in the school of Churchill and but little in that of Pope—although he probably read *The Rape of the Lock* to some purpose. Nor is there any evidence that he ever heard of *Lyrical Ballads*. But one can imagine him conning, as often as any book of poetry, the familiar verse of Matthew Prior, to whom he refers in one of his poems, and like him inditing his graceful numbers to Chloe and the rest, and adding to the pastoral sisterhood that Peggy whom he happily found at his own domestic hearth. Well thumbed too, no doubt, was his Goldsmith, whose *Traveller* is presumably echoed in the American's descriptions of foreign scenes, and whose *Deserted Village* may have colored his interpretation of the rustic life of his own country. Perhaps it is not straining a point to suggest that his emphasis on rural sights and simple rural living also owes something to Gray and Cowper, and there may be a hint of Burns in those stanzas in which McHenry intersperses four-stressed and two-stressed lines. Milton he knew, for he used his "Song on May Morning" as a motto for his own poem on May, and he reflected in that poem something of the spirit of *L'Allegro*. But there is little point in attempting to trace McHenry's poetic debts in any detail; it is enough to say that he responded to most of the milder and less sensational trends of eighteenth-century poetry. At the same time he was more than merely an echo, for into his poems, imitative though they may be, he wove details based on first-hand observation of nature in America—the mocking-bird, the rattlesnake, the Alleghany wilderness with its wolves and bears and blazed trails; and in this respect he joins company with Freneau, who was in general a more daring and original poet.

To the handling of these themes, it must be admitted, McHenry brought no major gifts. Penetrating insight and the power of distin-

¹ How many other poems McHenry wrote I do not know, but B. C. Steiner (*The Life and Correspondence of James McHenry*, 1907) quotes from six not represented in the Rutgers manuscripts. These six, however, are closely allied in technique and subject to some of those printed below.

guished phrasing were alike denied him. Nevertheless he could express an idea neatly and with turns of phrase that are frequently attractive, even charming, while at their best his verses display a facility and polish that perhaps no American writer of his time could equal. He may justly be regarded as a very pleasant minor poet.

The portrait revealed in these poems is that of an easy man of the world, quite capable of fashionable trifling, yet one who found something very congenial in a simple, almost primitive, country way of life, and who withal wrote more sincerely of rural than of urban things. It is also the portrait of a staunch and unwavering American. But still more is it that of a devoted family man—a father who was deeply attached to his children and a husband whose warmth of love was unflagging to the end of his life, and, what is more rare, who never lost the power of expressing that love in ardent language. Finally, it is the portrait of one who, in his last years of sickness and sorrow, drew strength from his religious convictions. The poems support the estimate with which Mr. Steiner concludes his study of McHenry's public career: "Here we come to the end of the life of a courteous, high-minded, keen-spirited Christian gentleman. He was not a great man, but . . . great men loved him, while all men appreciated his goodness and the purity of his soul."

The McHenry manuscripts in the Rutgers Library fall into two groups. One group is contained in a little booklet of fifty-eight sheets, five by eight inches in size, held together by three thread ties run through perforations in the margin. Into this booklet have been entered fair copies of nineteen poems, only one side of each sheet being employed and a number of sheets being left entirely blank. There is no title-page or general ascription, but the titles and occasional notes leave no doubt that the verses are the work of McHenry, and the penmanship is also clearly his, since his initials and his signature appear within the booklet in the same handwriting as the poems. Perhaps their inclusion in the booklet indicates that their author considered these the best examples of his work. But there is another group of manuscripts in the collection consisting of loose sheets of various sizes, on which are found different versions of some of the items in the booklet and also about thirty additional pieces of similar nature and merit.

In this issue of the *JOURNAL* appear the poems contained in the booklet, with the exception of a small number that are too slight to call for publication. A selection from the loose manuscripts will be printed in a later issue. The following text is presented exactly as it appears in the booklet, except that cancelled passages have been omitted and the pieces have been rearranged in chronological order as far as possible. The reader is requested to assume, without benefit of the annoying “[sic],” that the frequent irregularities of spelling and punctuation are a gift from the bounty, not of the editor or the compositor, but of our cavalier poet.

MY HEART

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1774

Oft for an hour, a week, a day,
my little heart would truant roam;
but still amidst its frolic play,
a word would bring the wand’rer home.

Quite careless grown the thoughtless thing,
call’d love a dream or poets cheat;
would sport it round the fairest ring,
nor feel one pulse of passion beat.

When Emma² op’ning to the view,
the roseat charms of sweet fifteen,
away my heart with others flew
to hail the bashful new born queen.

Now weeks, and days and hours are spent
and hours and days and weeks in pain
nor sighs however pow’rful sent
can bring the wand’rer back again.

THE TRIFLE.³

WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1774.

Mira said, no longer dream,
take a trifle for your theme:
'tis a subject most profound;
try its hoary depths to sound;

² In a copy of this poem among the loose manuscripts the name is Maria. Does this prove that McHenry was fickle or that the lady enjoyed merely an ideal existence?

³ A variant of this poem among the loose manuscripts bears the headnote: “The subject given by a lady.” Another variant is dated “Middlebrook. Dec^r 26. 1778.” Middle-

you may have the luck to find,
 Cloe's wit and Strephons mind:
 thus without a poets name,
 you shall gain immortal fame.

High the danger of the task
 hear the boon I have to ask;
 just a lock of your black hair,
 whence the lock you best can spare.
 Now sweet muse begin the task,
 succeed and it shall be your last.

Who that would her charms display
 studies trifles night and day;
 trifles give, or joy or pain;
 curse the maid or bless the swain;
 trifles gain the lovers pray'r,
 hence such trifling with the fair.

For a trifle poets write;
 for a trifle heroes fight;
 for a trifle ladies sigh;
 for a trifle lovers die:

What is learning? time mispent;
 genius what? an idle bent:
 merit—a delusive good;
 wisdom—little understood;
 hence your wits, who've scan'd the age
 know the curse of being sage;
 and their talents wisely stifle
 to be great men—or a trifle.

Finest feelings finish'd taste,
 what, to neclace made of paste:
 manly sense, and winning grace,
 what, compar'd with Brussels lace;
 eyes that look the chastest fire,
 what, to those that speak desire;
 prudence, that directs each word,

brook, New Jersey, later known as Bound Brook, was Washington's temporary headquarters at this time. One wonders whether McHenry revived and revised these verses in 1778 to please a Jersey lady. At any rate he addressed them to Cloe instead of to Mira, as in the other two versions.

what, to repartee absurd:
Anna, with these charms and more,
died a maid, at sixty four.

Learn ye fair, the better art,
how to trifle with the heart;
how, in trifling to disclose,
iv'ry teeth in even rows;
how the gloveless little hand,
more than scepters may command,
whether rais'd to give or take
the sprightly tea, or rusky cake,
or commission to the tale,
where a sentiment would fail;
deftly how to wind the dance,
archly where to cast the glance,
tempting as the anglers bait;
certain as the barbed fate.

But 'tis not for me to tell,
of each wonder-working spell:
when to laugh, and when to cry,
at a feather, at a fly;
when to sicken, when recline,
pensive on the arm divine;
when to talk of ribbon, guaze;
gravely when of china flaws;
when in moping accents mourn,
lovers lost, or aprons torn;
these are things that would require,
the muse of Pope, or Mathew Prior.

Sailors on their native shore,
dangers or a shipwreck o'er,
Horace long ago has sung,
on some shrine a tablet hung;
so for this I ask a place,
where you view your lovely face;
that you oft each day may see,
the dangers I have run for thee!

TO M^{RS} M^CHENRY⁴

WRITTEN FROM NEW YORK. I WAS THEN A MEMBER OF CONGRESS
UNDER THE OLD CONFEDERATION.

I strive my Peggy strive in vain,
to lighten absence, lessen pain:
Since in what'er I say or do,
I find I'm absent still from you

Not e'en the precious pledge I bear,
(the dear resemblance of my fair)
or warms my heart or makes it beat,
for like the moon it gives no heat.

'Tis you alone with wond'rous skill,
can make my hours just what you will,
can soothe the troubled mind to rest,
and found a heav'n within my breast.

I'll strive against the stream no more
that drives me to a happier shore;
blow fresh ye gales, no wind alarms,
that bears me to my Peggys arms.

Behind I cast the cares of state,
the subtle crew, the vain debate;
who would not quit a wrangling life,
for such a woman, such a wife!

JANUARY 8TH. 1788.

This bridal morn brings to my mind,
whate'er of soft delight, I've known;
whate'er of wedded love and truth,
to me thy constant heart has shown.

On these I dwell with conscious pride,
for these are all my pleasures now,
save when I dream of thy dear form,
responding to my early vow.

⁴ A version of this poem, consisting of four stanzas, only three of which appear in our manuscript, was published in B. C. Steiner, *op. cit.*, p. 83. There it is included in a letter from McHenry to his wife written April 25, 1784.

Save when thou seem'st with anxious eye,
to watch each op'ning of the door,
and kiss the sweetly smiling child,
as absent for a year or more.

Such dear delights can absence yield,
where love's bright flame is seen to burn;
while expectations busy train,
rears roses for a wife's return.

And yet a tear intrusive steals,
across the sunshine of the day,
to think the object of thy care
to unrelenting pain's a prey.

But oft the bark the storm outrides,
that every heart had giv'n o'er;
and oft, when life is almost spent,
the shipwreck'd youth is boyd ashore.

Thus hope would banish ev'ry fear,
and kindly ease a sisters pain:
and fondly cheer the lonesome hour,
till you and spring return again!

N.B. The above was written in Baltimore while M^{rs} M^cHenry was in Philadelphia attending a sick sister.—J M^cH.

TO M^{rs} M^cHENRY AT BLOOM-HILL.⁵

(WRITTEN FROM NEW YORK)

Oh how I long my weary head to rest,
on the soft pillow of my Pegg'ys breast;
to taste with you the warb'lings of the grove,
the shades of Bloomhill and the sweets of love.
To lead through clover'd fields your dewy feet;
to climb the hill the opal morn to greet,
to see you playful skim the banks that shelve,
as when, that I was twenty, thou but twelve;⁶
just seem to fall, then rise with sudden grace,
with eye averted, and with blushing face!

⁵ This poem with two additional lines and other minor variations was published in B. C. Steiner, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁶ McHenry became acquainted with his future wife shortly after he came to America. She was almost nine years younger than he.

at silent noon, hard by the osierd brook,
 to read with you some philosophic book,
 or wring the heart with Shakespears glowing page
 old Lears madness, or Othellos rage.
 At eve to sip the dairys nicest cream,
 or help our Grace, to paddle thro' the stream;⁷
 hear the hens cluck to roost their scatter'd brood
 and the soft murmur of the distant flood.
 See sober night lead forth her starry train
 and jocund hamlets smoak along the plain;
 then to retire from ev'ry mortal view
 and pass till morn the wedded hours with you.

TO M^{RS} M^CHENRY

18 ANNIVERSARY OF OUR MARRIAGE
 JANU. 8TH 1802.

I

What off'ring shall the gods declare,
 for her who first my heart could touch;
 for her who guards it still with care,
 nor thinks this care a whit too much.

2

A rosy wreath enbalm'd by love,
 in the sweet breath of dewy May;
 borne by her fav'rite turtle dove,
 from realms of everlasting day.

3.

But soft it is herself who sings;
 "this rosy wreath you weave so gay,
 "with all the gifts that Venus brings,
 "fate dooms to immature decay.

4

"Ask for thy spouse gifts that maintain,
 "through years and time their mystic pow'rs
 "that give content and lighten pain,
 "and strew lifes thorny path with flow'rs."

⁷ Grace was the McHenrys' first child. Since she died at the age of four in 1789, this poem must have been written not long before that event.

Dear to my soul, these gifts divine
 the temper mild belongs to thee,
 the mothers ceaseless cares are thine,
 and unextinguish'd love of me.

TO M^{RS} M^CHENRY
 THE 19TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR MARRIAGE
 8 JANU 1804.⁸

To some it may seem odd to say,
 you are as dear to me this day,
 as in the hour we married were,
 and class'd among the happiest pair.

But let none think I mean by this,
 that we have tasted nought but bliss:
 light flying clouds, full well I ween,
 will scud across the brightest scene;
 and oft, the melancholly breeze,
 will sigh among the vocal trees;
 and oft, a little pebble shake,
 the peaceful bosom of the lake;
 disturb awhile its soft repose,
 and the fair images it shows.
 But neither flying cloud nor breeze,
 that sighs among the vocal trees;
 nor pebble that disturbs the lake
 could once my love or fealty shake.

Should any ask, why things are so
 I can but speak to what I know.
 Thou hast of prudence a large share,
 of housewifr'y, perhaps, to spare;
 and yet it may require it all,
 to regulate a house though small:
 one thing, I may with candor tell,
 household affairs are manag'd well;
 thou too, to me, hast been most kind,
 and to my many failings blind;

⁸ There is an error here somewhere; either it was their twentieth anniversary or the date should be 1803.

hast charm'd with sense, the ev'ning hour,
 nor seem'd to wish for sov'reign pow'r,
 and yet, I can't tell how, with ease,
 you do with me, just what you please.

Thus all our marriage days have past,
 the first scarce happier than the last;
 a scene of sweet content and joy;
 almost, almost, without alloy!

MARRIED LIFE.

TO MRS MCHENRY

JANUARY 8TH 1809.

Though five and twenty years are flown,
 and I am somewhat older grown;
 still fair, the bridal morn returns;
 still bright, the torch of hymen burns.

Is marriage then exempt from storms?
 a region that no ill deforms?
 and is it always pleasant weather,
 let who, and who, be link'd together?

I will not thus, or say, or sing,
 or call it a perpetual spring;
 but, I may say, without a lie,
 few clouds will dim its asure sky,
 unless the parties link'd together,
 do always count on pleasant weather.

Here, joys in even current flow,
 nor rise too high, nor sink too low;
 here, cooling breezes temper heat,
 and show'rs make roses smell more sweet;
 here, courteous words and actions prove
 a constant source of bridal love;
 here, ills to which all flesh is heir,
 are sooth'd by gentle womans care.

Such was the clime when link'd together,
 and much we've had of pleasant weather:
 here, then, I wish, to live and die,
 if Marg'ret catch my latest sigh!

MAY.⁹

1.

Stern winter with his slipp'ry sleet,
 no more betrays the milk-maids feet;
 no more, is seen, at dusky dawn,
 to wither with a look the lawn:
 to fix the headlong current fast,
 and bend the forest with his blast.

2.

A milder pow'r now rules the day,
 and ushers in the smiling May.
 A flow'ry wreath her forehead bound;
 her robe of emerald kiss'd the ground,
 and waving as the breezes blew,
 disclos'd her sandals gemm'd with dew.

3.

Now feather'd minstrels tune their throats,
 and in mid air wild music floats;
 but chief the choiristers among,
 the mocking-bird for varied song;
 for each, as the wild concert swells,
 he mocks in turn and all excels.

4.

On ev'ry side, what sights appear;
 sights often seen yet ever dear;
 meand'ring streams and sunny dales,
 flock-cover'd hills and verdant vales;
 the milk-maid blithe, and trav'ler gay,
 and shepherd singing merrily.

5.

What pure delight thy scenes impart,
 fair May to ev'ry feeling heart;
 thy bursting buds, and beauteous flow'rs;

⁹ A trial copy of "May" among the loose manuscripts contains this notation: "For my son M^r John M^cHenry. Written chiefly in Alleghany County in 1812." Alleghany County, Pa., was the residence of his son Daniel. Milton's "Song on May Morning" immediately precedes this poem in the booklet.

thy springing grain, and tepid show'rs;
 thy forests fill'd with od'rous trees,¹⁰
 recogniz'd in the balmy breese.

6.

And, ah! how sweet the virgins dream,
 soft wafted on a moonlight beam;
 how ardent the fond lovers sigh
 that's breath'd in thy congenial sky;
 nor lost that sigh in desert air,
 heard, all unseen, by damsel fair.

7.

Now May proclaims her peaceful reign,
 let man from cruel sports refrain,
 nor dare t' approach with felon feet,
 the timid deer in loves retreat;¹¹
 or with the murd'rous tube molest,
 the mother hov'ring round her nest.

8

Now frozen age and young desire,
 to groves and sylvan scenes retire;
 fresh pulses beat, fresh joys awake,
 in hall and hamlet, brook and brake;
 and swains in twilight walks reveal,
 to blushing maids the tender tale.

9.

Ye fair, just op'ning like the rose,
 with bosoms pure as mountain snows,
 forget not the sage matrons talk
 "with caution trust the twilight walk"
 and mind what antient rymsters sing,
 "love lurks in the soft air of spring."

¹⁰ The trial copy has a footnote on this line: "The magnolia &c. The odour of the magnolia is perceived at a great distance by travellers."

¹¹ Another note from the trial copy: "The Deer retire to covert places during their loves."

10.

Now forth the village pours her young;
in thread-the-needle some are strung;
others full nimbly beat the ground,
to the enliv'ning viols sound;
and still fresh dancers join the throng,
and the sweet minstrelsy prolong.

11.

The idlers of the village crew,
(for ev'ry village has a few)
in tipling-house brimful of glee,
drive down the day in wassailry.
Ah, soon or late these wits will pay,
for treating thus the rights of May.

12.

Now hies the husbandman abroad;
now joyous turns the mellow sod;
now in his eye, as he draws near,
is seen the promise of the year;
for now, benignant nature pours,
o'er earth her rich spontaneous stores.

13.

The bard now winds his wond'rous shell,
sweet echo answers from her cell;
now love with rapture swells the gale,
now weeps forlorn in darksome vale,
till phrensied by his own wild lay,
he sinks upon the breast of May.

14

These pleasures gentle May are thine,
of months, I ween, the most divine;
in youthful days to me how dear,
in age the cheeriest of the year.
Thus Damon sung, with locks all grey,
for still he lov'd the month of May.

ADDRESSED TO A FRIEND.

ON MY MARRIAGE WITH SOPHIA RAMSAY. 1812

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN BY

DAN^l W^m MCHENRY.¹²

You ask; do I still love to roam;
and what I've seen in foreign climes?
or better love to stay at home,
and imitate old fashion'd times?

I'll tell you, without art or guile,
what I still love, and what I've seen:
this told, if you vouchsafe to smile,
I've travell'd to some end, I ween.

Well pleas'd, I rang'd Italias plains,
and oft beneath her orange trees,
have heard her soft and mellow strains,
float sweetly on the moonlight breeze.

And oft when fancy rul'd the hour,
and Ariosto rais'd his lay,
enchanted by the minstrels pow'r
have pass'd in fairy scenes the day.

But fancy is not wanted here,
to cheat the sense with airy sights;
where nature charms throughout the year,
and art is pregnant with delights.

I stop'd awhile at learnings court,
where Florence shadows Arno's stream;
where still the charming arts resort,
and still the muses love to dream.

But on the skirts of Appenine,
in Arnos vale I loiter'd long;
O, had I, Scott, a gift like thine,
this vale should ever live in song.

¹² The title and headnote might lead to the belief that this poem was written by McHenry's son Daniel. It is evident, however, that the father, impressed by his son's experiences abroad, wrote under the pretense that Daniel was speaking. The ideas and style are certainly those of James McHenry. In "The Reception," below, the same fiction is employed.

Where'er I turn the curious eye,
 the loveliest landscapes rise to view,
 beneath a bright and beauteous sky,
 in combinations ever new.

And ever and anon, I meet,
 a peasantry in comely dress,
 whose farms afford a wholesome treat,
 whose looks their happiness confess.

In Rome that fills th' historic page,
 where heaps of splendid ruins lie,
 the mould'ring work of many an age,
 time pass'd almost unheeded by.

This mighty pow'r, small at its birth,
 that conquer'd by its arts and arms,
 the proudest nations of the earth,
 no more a tremb'ling world alarms.

Here sleep her warriors, here their train
 of captive kings, enchain'd like slaves;
 here princes whom no murders stain,
 without a stone to mark their graves.

Is this, I ask'd, to be the fate,
 of all that swells the trump of fame?
 must empires now renown'd and great,
 leave nought behind them but a name?

Will mortals never wiser grow?
 must the same tale be still renew'd?
 "then's nothing stable here below;"
 "then's nothing great, but what is good."

Here, freed from earthly hopes and fears,
 his world, a small monastic room,
 I saw a monk, grown grey with years,
 but graceful in the midst of gloom.

Fasting and penitence had shed,
 o'er a fine form their with'ring pow'r;
 the lustre of the eye was dead,
 consum'd by many a wakeful hour.

A mentor in this monk I found,
 whose daily kindness won my heart;
 who knew all learning and its bound,
 and knew this learning to impart.

Reason directed all he said,
 while fancy's beams, like solar light,
 dispersing ev'ry dark'ning shade,
 display'd new objects to the sight.

The lessons I was early taught;
 the truths that from religion flow,
 he strengthen'd by examples fraught,
 with all that pleasures give or woe.

He ask'd not, what my faith or creed;
 nor did he urge, as best, his own;
 his own, he held for best indeed;
 but that was rather guess'd than known.

Oft when I visited this spot,
 and listen'd to his treasur'd lore,
 Rome and its ruins were forgot,
 and for a while my native shore.

As my departure now drew nigh,
 my son, he said, and as he spoke,
 a tear stood tremb'ling in his eye,
 I feel, to part's a heavy stroke.

But go, perform your destin'd tour,
 new men and manners wait your view,
 in your free soil, in happier hour,
 I hope our friendship to renew.

But ah! his feet will never tread,
 fair liberty's most favour'd shore;
 to heav'nly climes his spirits fled,
 where we may meet to part no more.

In Naples much to praise I found,
 from palace down to cover'd stalls;
 but all repos'd on fickle ground,
 its houses, palaces, and halls.

That flame which kindles all the sky;
 that groan which still I seem to hear;
 that burning mount so very nigh,
 no pleasure mars, excites no fear.¹³

The crouds that throng yon ample street,
 exhibit a perpetual fair;
 here pious priest and juggler meet,
 this shews his tricks, that melts in pray'r.

But, 'tis thy environs and bay,
 adorn'd with many a charming isle,
 where objects offer ev'ry day,
 the longest life might well beguile.

Here contemplation loves to dwell,
 amidst the wrecks of antient days;
 to wander near the Sybils cell,
 and where the wailing spirit strays.

To climb the pathless mountain steep,
 that in one night rose from the wave;
 to plunge where smouldering fires sleep,
 in the dark, deep, and swelt'ring cave.

Here towns whole ages hid from sight,
 that burning ashes cover'd o'er,
 forth bursting to the noon day light,
 give promise sweet of long lost lore.

Here the fam'd baths of Baiæ spring;
 here, Rome pour'd forth her festive throng;
 its wanton walls no longer ring,
 with the loud laugh, and idle song.

Here stood the orators retreat,*
 himself without a funeral urn,
 who did fell Cataline defeat,
 and Cæsar from his purpose turn.

¹³ On the blank page at the left directly opposite this stanza appears the following quatrain:

The mountains voice was heard in vain,
 but dance and merriment prevail,
 save where the soft & pious strain
 ascends the heaven from cloisters pale.

* Tusculum. *McHenry's note.*

Here oft the Mantuan bard retir'd,
 to fragrant grove, and flow'ry green;
 here his last lay the muse inspir'd;
 and here his lawrell'd grave is seen.

In Venice, once the worlds great mart,
 and first among the naval pow'rs,
 now low on th' commercial chart,
 I gaz'd away some idle hours.

Its regal Doge had ceas'd to reign,
 had ceas'd the ocean wave to wed;
 its palaces indeed remain,
 the spirit of its nobles fled.

But still the Gondolier was seen,
 to sing with glee his wonted song;
 and parties still with joyous mien,
 in dear gondola glide along.

And merry maskers as of old,
 and fun and frolic flitted by;
 and still street orators unfold,
 to gaping crouds the well told lie.

And still, in Zendalet or hat,
 and dress that cover'd like a pall,
 the fair disclos'd, I know not what,
 of charms that kindness spoke to all.

And night was still a second day,
 as if Venetians never slept;
 and still in Marco's place the gay,
 to sunny morn sweet vigils kept.

I look'd, but saw not in their scite,
 the brazen steeds Lysippus made;
 here they no more inspire delight,
 to France by conq'ring bands convey'd.

These steeds of Corinth first the boast,
 in Rome long held a lofty place;
 thence borne to the Bizantine coast,
 next to rich Venice gave new grace.

How great the charm these steeds possess,
their artist what consummate skill;
that five proud capitols confess;
that ages pleas'd, and pleases still.

Before me lay the land of France,
where whilome Sterne delighted strayd;
join'd deftly in the cottage dance,
with labours sons in sylvan shade.

But rural sports had fled the plains;
few hands to pull the ripen'd fruit;
at eve were heard no lively strains,
the tabor and the pipe were mute.

Grim terror haunted ev'ry place,
the public walk, and private way,
nor to a gay deluded race,
gave sleep by night, or rest by day.

Here I beheld in warlike state,
the dreadful scourge of human kind;
his friendship fatal as his hate,
his treaties never meant to bind.

On ev'ry side, fell war and waste,
consum'd the products of the year;
on ev'ry side, youth drag'd to taste
a foreign death, without a tear.

When will this devastation cease,
that threatens the most distant lands?
when heav'n restore a world to peace,
and bind ambitions bloody hands?

The pencils boast, the chisels pride,
rich spoils from diff'rent nations torn,
here in Parisian halls reside,
till hence by other spoilers borne.

But what avails this pompous show,
the speaking picture, statue, bust?
can these relieve a parents woe,
or animate the sleeping dust?

Let State be added after State,
 till conquest reach its utmost bound;
 the victor may be surnam'd great,
 But France will not be happier found.

When the known world submissive bent,
 to the portentous Roman pow'r,
 Rome soon had reason to repent,
 her conquests made in evil hour.

My little tour now near its end,
 what have I gain'd, what have I lost?
 I gain'd a wise and faithful friend,
 I value more than all its cost.

But are no lessons to be got,
 from laws and customs not our own?
 are the best laws our favour'd lot,
 are faulty customs here unknown?

Had I no habits to correct?
 no prejudice of potent sway;
 no home-bred folly or defect,
 that travel could not wear away?

'Tis true, I have but little seen,
 of natures rich and ample store;
 and little glean'd where I have been,
 in fields so often glean'd before.

But whether I have gain'd or lost,
 these scenes already disappear;
 my eyes on other objects bent,
 a country lov'd and kindred dear.

As birds that annual visits pay,
 to lands remote or distant lake;
 the visits o'er, wing back their way,
 like them, a homeward course I take.

No matter where our lot be cast,
 if foreign from our place of birth,
 to this dear spot we cling as fast,
 as trees cling to their genial earth.

Sweet spot, my earliest years delight,
 which still I love, I know not why;
 your fields, your trees, float on my sight;
 here I was born, here wish to die.

In haste, I quit the Gallic strand,
 and bid adieu to foreign climes,
 to kiss once more my native land,
 and imitate old fashion'd times.

To feed my flocks in flow'ry fields;
 to gear the horse at dusky morn,
 that turns the sod that plenty yields,
 that carry's to the mill my corn.

To breathe a mild and wholesome air,
 and roam among my fav'rite trees;
 to win the heart of Daphne fair,
 a heart as pure as mountain breeze.

Let others court the tented plain,
 and all the circumstance of war;
 I take no pleasure midst the slain,
 nor sigh for honorable scar.

But let not this be understood,
 indiff'rence in my countrys cause;
 for it, if wrong'd, should flow my blood,
 not for renown, or vain applause.

Let others wear the Statesmans bays,
 full oft the price of wily art;
 I'd rather merit simple praise,
 by acts that win a neighbours heart.

Let others toil to heap up wealth,
 to morals oft a fatal snare;
 I'd rather try to lay up health,
 by labour light and diet spare.

There are who love the various sights,
 the City and its riches give;
 to spend in revelry their nights,
 and in its lordly mansions live.

I leave without one lingring look,
 the City and its gay resorts,
 for the log-house, by winding brook,
 for quiet sleep and rural sports.

To greet the hunter and his hound,
 partake at times his ven'son meal;
 pay visits to my neighbours round,
 whose welcome words but ill reveal.

Here mountains high and lonesome glades,
 where human track is seldom found;
 here endless woods, and solemn shades,
 give rise to many a thought profound.

Sequester'd here from busy life,
 from pomp and pride and public show,
 if bless'd with Daphne for a wife,
 I ask no greater bliss below.

And see, kind heav'n has heard my pray'r,
 the charming Daphne gives consent;
 consents to breathe the mountain air,
 and live with me and sweet content!

8 JANY. 1813

TO M^{RS} M^CHENRY

ON

THE TWENTY NINTH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR MARRIAGE

It is my antient minstrels lay,
 the same that woke to light the day,
 that gave me her I lov'd.
 Try, minstrel try, if thou cans't tell,
 the images my bosom swell,
 the pleasures I have prov'd.

O'erjoy'd his masters voice to hear,
 who ever held his music dear,
 and wishing still to please;
 may heav'n, he said, your days prolong,
 and this the burden of his song,
 borne on the morning breeze.

"Hail married life, of home-felt joy,
 "and calm delights that never cloy
 "the consecrated source.
 "In thy bless'd state men surely find,
 "the real friend and counç'lor kind
 "love and sweet intercourse.

"'Tis said, love spurns at human ties,
 "(one of smooth Popes poetic lies,
 "the libertines resort:
 "By human ties love's only bound;
 "at hymens side, love's only found,
 "to revel and to sport.

"Love, form'd of pure ætherial mould,
 "no sensual pleasure can behold,
 "or aid to give it birth.
 "From such he spreads his wings and flies,
 "and would, long since, have sought the skies,
 "had hymen left the earth.

"But still he's seen in hall and court,
 "where wealthy dames and squires disport,
 "and where no wealth is known:
 "And still alike on all to show'r,
 "the influence of his sov'reign pow'r
 "who bow to him alone.

"'Twas love, that made you fondly sip,
 "sweet nectar from yon sleeping lip;
 "love plann'd your happy lot.
 "And now, tho' weak your pulses beat,
 "and you have nearly lost your feet,
 "love hovers o'er your cot."¹⁴

¹⁴ This stanza bears the footnote: "Written at my sons in Alleghany." Mrs. McHenry wrote of this sojourn that "while there, my dear husband was taken with an infirmity in his legs, which, notwithstanding every means was used for his relief, gradually increased till he was entirely deprived of the use of them, the winter then coming on, we were obliged to remain there till the following summer, when with great difficulty he was got home." B. C. Steiner, *op. cit.*, pp. 587-588.

[WHERE ALLEGHANY LIFTS HIS HEAD]

THE FOLLOWING PIECE WAS WRITTEN IN THE WINTER OF THE YEAR
1813 ON THE ALLEGHANY MOUNTAIN, AT MY SONS HOUSE, AND ADDRESSED
TO CHARLES CARROLL ESQ—¹⁵

JAMES M^CHENRY

Where Alleghany lifts his head,
as silent as among the dead,
I pass my time.

Except the barking of a dog,
or grunting of a hungry hog
no sound is heard.

Sometimes, indeed, a wolf will howl,
and, sometimes, there is heard an owl
at midnight screech.

And, now and then, a hunters gun,
before the day be well begun
will echo far.

Once too a year, perhaps, is seen,
a traveller to cross the green
who's lost his way;

But neighbour full of harmless prate,
or great man at the rustic gate
I never see.

No image gay to give delight
all woods that stretch beyond the sight
and mountains drear.

'Tis thus, you think, I pass the day
in silence, and to thought a prey,
without one joy?

I own, of silence here's enough;
and solitude is pretty tough
to worldly men.

¹⁵ These genial stanzas give no hint of the paralysis from which their author was then suffering. The reply of Carroll and his wife will appear in an early issue of the JOURNAL.

For me, I like these solitudes,
these mountains high and stretching woods,
majestic scenes.

I like, at midnight hour, to view,
moving in bright celestial blue
the Queen of night.

I like to see, at early morn,
the sleeping dew-drop on the thorn
awake with light.

I like to watch the suns last ray,
that seems to linger and to play
the trees among.

I like in lonesome woods to ride,
the notched trees my only guide,
till tir'd of thought.

Then merging from their solemn shades,
through intermingled groves and glades,
whole hours to roam.

Should Rattlesnake across my way,
lay basking in the sunny ray,
I fear it not.

If undisturb'd, it will not bite;
if anger'd, will not spend its spite
till notice given.

Not so that reasoning creature man,
who poisons by long settled plan
without a rattle.

I like, in spring, when all is mirth,
to visit nature, at the birth
of fruits and flow'rs.

I like the summer bland and mild,
the breeze that kisses hay-cocks wild,
then breathes on me.

I like to see autumnal views,
to ponder o'er their changeful hues
and moral deep.

I like, in winter, a warm fire,
and here I have my hearts desire
great store of wood.

I like the patriarchal days,
and here's abundant room to graze
large herds and flocks.

I like the cabbin stor'd with health,
where pride and circumstance of wealth
are all unknown.

Where man for no distinction pants;
works to supply his daily wants,
and wants no more.

I like to hear by hunter told
his various feats of emprise bold
against the foe.

The hair-breadth scapes of many a dear,
and death himself so often near
from wolf and bear.

All this, you'll say is very good
for such as love poetic food,
mere mental stuff.

Soft, Sir, if eating be in favour,
here's venison of finest savour,
wild fowl and trout.

The mutton, too, bred on these hills,
and beef that richest juice distils,
what can equal.

Old wine, 'tis true, is rather rare;
but then here's plenty and to spare,
of water pure.

Now say, would you the friend disown,
who for these mountains leaves a town,
to rogues and riot.

JANY 8TH 1814
TO M^{RS} M^CHENRY.

I

When first your rosy cheek I kiss'd,
and thought myself among the bless'd,
and ask'd you to be mine;
you said, I often might repent,
should you from weakness give consent
our fortunes to entwine.

2.

Now whether you in earnest spoke,
or meant it only as a joke
it is but just to say,
I do not yet repent my lot
nor from the calender would blot,
our himeneal day.

3.

I have, 'tis true, some faults to find,
but they are of the lesser kind,
and such as some would please,
Our carpets are too often swept,
our house somewhat too neatly kept
for philosophic ease.

4.

When ladies their kind visits pay,
my hapless books, if in the way,
(I speak with reverence,)
whether a Tillotson or Swift,
on the first rap are turn'd adrift,
nor heard in their defence.

5

But his must be a feeble mind,
that would not to such faults be kind,
and angry comment spare;
knowing how quick the gossip eye,
will particles of dust descry,
and books in places rare.

6.

But why I don't my lot repent,
 and am so very well content,
 may in few words be told:
 My greater faults you kindly bear,
 and treat me still with tender care,
 tho' helpless grown and old.

ON THE DEATH OF MY SON DAN¹ W^m M^cHENRY, WHO WAS THROWN
 FROM HIS HORSE, A FEW MILES FROM MY HOUSE ON HIS WAY HOME
 TO HIS FARM IN ALLEGHANY COUNTY. 1814.

“AN UNSPOTTED LIFE IS OLD AGE.”

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON

My son, my son, so lov'd, so dear,
 my son, my son, oh cruel death,
 this morn in health, now on his bier,
 and I not breathe his latest breath.

Bring all that's left of this dear friend,
 close to my bed his body lay;
 now help me o'er the corpse to bend,
 to kiss, and kiss, his lips of clay.

Where now his worth,[?] whose love of truth,
 no foreign travels could affect,[?]
 where now his worth, that from his youth,
 was known no duty to neglect[?]

Where now his worth, whose reason rul'd
 his passions with despotic sway,[?]
 whose reason by religion school'd
 had learn'd to govern and obey[?]

Where now his worth, who from the lyre
 could soft melodious music bring;
 could high and holy joys inspire,
 or sweep the wires with fancy's wing[?]

Where now his worth, whose measur'd sense,
 could pride and vanity abash[?]
 could error cure without offence,
 and stubbornness without the lash[?]

Where now his worth, who cheer'd my sight
and careless of his time and health,
watch'd my sick couch, night after night,
as misers watch their hoarded wealth.

Where now his worth? forever flown?
my joys all center'd in his grave;
and must his worth, no longer known,
lie buried in oblivions cave?

For ever flown: ah no it lives;
virtues a plant that never dies;
on earth a sweet perfume it gives,
and bears rich fruit in distant skies.

It is not flown: his lips so cold,
may mingle with their sister dust;
but worth that's form'd of heav'nly mould,
lives in the ashes of the just.

And yet I mourn, most gracious god,
though well thy blessed word I know,
can cheer afflictions dark abode,
and dry the tears my cheeks o'erflow.

Come then, religion, gift of heav'n,
soother of sorrows the most deep;
come thou to whom the pow'r is giv'n,
bid me, no more, to wake and weep.

THE RECEPTION.

WRITTEN THE DAY AFTER THE DEATH OF MY DAUGHTER ANN BOYD'S CHILD,
AND SENT TO HIS MOTHER 16 JANY. 1815.¹⁶

THE SPEAKER, SUPPOSED TO BE ITS UNCLE, DAN^l W^m MCHENRY.

Why sweet Seraph tremble so,
this is not a land of woe.
Scarce a moment from thy birth,
thou canst nothing know of earth;

¹⁶ This child, Andrew Boyd, was born November 9, 1811. The sister referred to in the second stanza was Mary Boyd, who was born March 2, 1810, and died October 7, 1811.

of its trials, and its care;
 its temptations that ensnare;
 and the various ills that wait,
 mortals in their mundane state.

No fell dæmon enters here,
 nothing that can make you fear.
 in yon fields of Asphodel,
 none but happy spirits dwell;
 in these fields, a sister see,
 sweetly smile and beckon thee,
 here thou shall in safety stay
 till the resurrection day;
 till, our God, at signal giv'n,
 call us to a higher heav'n!

FRIENDSHIPS IMMORTAL.

Is friendship but a fleeting dream;
 a bubble on a rapid stream;
 a flying cloud a morning flow'r;
 an infants tears, an April show'r?
 Such is the frail and fickle kind,
 that oft misleads the feeble mind
 but friendships holy, meek and pure,
 all times and seasons will endure.
 Though loudly roars the angry storm,
 this still preserves its noble form;
 while round the heart its tendrils twine,
 as round the lofty oak the vine.

But when we leave our house of clay,
 and with immortals spend the day;
 absorb'd in our delightful lot,
 are earthly friendships all forgot?
 where'er we spend the blissful hour
 still mem'ry holds its wonted pow'r;
 our friendships mingle with our lot,
 and never, never, are forgot;
 he, then, I oft, in fancy see,
 still friendship feels, and thinks of me!