

NOTES:

1. *Numquam credit nec Judaeus*: Latin: 'Not even a Jew never believes.' Philo Judaeus or Philo of Alexandria (c. 20 BC–AD 50), a Jewish Hellenistic theologian and philosopher, wrote 'On the Birth of Abel and the Sacrifices Offered by Him and by His Brother Cain' and 'That the Worse is Wont to Attack Better'. See www.ecmarsh.com/crl/philo/book6.htm.

1842.17. 'THE LAND OF SWEDEN WAS A SILENT LAND'

Date: [c. 1842].

Source: Wimpole Street Notebook, f. 17, ABL (D0939).

- 1 The land of Sweden was a silent land
 2 Erewhile To me on our sounding of
 3 The names of its cold hills ~~that ruggedly~~
 4 Do ridge the world

1 3 ~~that ruggedly~~] other deletions, on ll. 2–3, do not appear here

1842.18. 'ROCK ME SOFTLY – SOFTLY MOTHER'

'Rock me softly' begins a monologue spoken by a poor child to its mother after the death of a baby brother. After making slow headway in the poem, as indicated by repetition and multiple versions of individual lines, EBB in lines that directly follow this fragment without a break pursued the subject of poverty that kills the innocent in a monologue addressed by a poor child to an affluent lady, similarly evoking pathos by speaking of a dying sibling (here a girl) and grieving mother. At l. 89 (see also l. 55), 'O pardon dear lady' (below) uses the imagery of rocking prominent in 'Rock me softly'.

In the Wimpole Street Notebook, this follows draft (D0509) of 'A Man's Requirements' (Volume 2, pp. 355–8). and is followed by unpublished fragment beginning 'O pardon' (see below). One deleted line and five deleted words are not transcribed here.

Date: [c. 1842].

Source: Wimpole Street Notebook, ff. 24 rev. v, ABL (D0782).

Rock me softly – softly mother
 Like the babe who died last week.
 You may rock me like another

Let me head lie on your shoulder
 Though you tell me I am older
 I have grown too like a baby – I am thin & I am weak
 Rock me mother from the hunger

5

Rock me softly softly mother
 Like the babe who died last week –
 I am older than the other
 I am grown so thin & weak
 That I seem as small as he –
 Rock the hunger-pain from me
 You may rock me, mother dear,
 And I wish you a happy new year.

10
15

Rock me softly softly mother
 Like the babe who died last week –
 I am grown as thin & weak –
 So now love me like the other –
 I am older!

20

NOTES:

1. *I am older*: Following two cancelled stanzas (versions of those printed above) not reproduced here, a blank line equivalent to a break between stanzas marks a new treatment of similar material, addressed not to 'mother' but to an affluent 'lady'. Lines written sideways in the margin span the last of this first fragment addressed to the mother and the first stanza addressing the 'lady': 'In the mud huts below we have all got the fever / My feet burned at night – so you'll leave me the snow. / And my mothers so weak I can steal away clever'.

1842.19. 'O PARDON DEAR LADY'

Connected through imagery and subject matter to the preceding monologue 'Rock me softly', 'O pardon dear lady' provides a particularly interesting context for 'The Cry of the Children' (Volume 1, pp. 431–45) in its use of a child speaker to articulate social protest. Although the focus here is on the 'hunger-pain' (l. 90) of poverty in a rural setting, not the working conditions of children in mines and factories, this ballad, like 'The Princess Marie' (above, pp. 616–25), reflects EBB's turn to more contemporary subject matter. The draft is heavily revised with cancellations and interpolations throughout.

Date: [c. 1842].

Source: Wimpole Street Notebook, ff. 23 rev. v to 19 rev. v, ABL (D0782).

O pardon dear lady, for standing unsightly¹
 So near to the windows, invited by none –
 With my little bare feet on the lawn I stepped lightly
 & when the snow melts all the marks will be gone –

Oh the squire's lovely lady, the countrysides new lady
 I hid me in summer to see you go pass 5
 While you smiled to yourself down the chestnut trees shady
 & the silk of your gown buzzed like bees to the grass

You drew me afar as the moon draws the water
 While you stood at the windows in the firelight behind 10
 And the ryebread as white as w^d suit a Duke's daughter
 Cast out to the birds for I saw you were kind –

And I thought to myself if you pitied the singers
 With pretty brown wings, & red tips on the tree
 While you heard in the valley the glad river ringing 15
 You might turn for Christs sake & have pity on me.

And once, when you wandered too far up the mountains²
 You asked at our cot if the road c^d be gone
 You smiled bright at the babe as you stood in the doorway
 & she never complained that you kept out the sun – 20

Poor baby – she lay in the lap of our mother
 Do you mind her, fair lady, how pretty & white
 She lay still – as your hands when enclasped in each other
 With her blue wandering eyes searching on for the light –

& my mother said softly . . . she looks for an angel
 To give her sweet company up to the skies 25
 You stood there that moment – she took not that passage evangel
 And smiled at you all {through the dark} in her eyes

& just so she died when you passed from our faces
 She wept for the first time, my mother wept sore 30
 Oh she said . . . In this rank in the sweet angels' places
 Do we see the proud ladies, O God, evermore?

Do not blame what she said – so mad with the sorrow
 She was worn with the fast & the watch of long hours –
 She was wroth that the child who must die ere the morrow
 Sh^d look off from her face to the sweetness of yours. 35

And the babe died at sunset. You ought to have seen her
 So pretty she looked in the coffin & shroud
 She had soon learnt her lessons & verses serener
 Was called to her holiday over the cloud. 40

So the minister said & my mother repeating
 Her voice from her tears did repeat it anon
 But my father grew wicked & mourned in his swearing
 That only the dull ones indeed w^d live on.

Five snowdrops I pulled when the snow melted off in 45
 The warm sheltered places ascended in my walks
 & laid white on her white little face in the coffin
 You c^d only discern them for flowers by the stalks

We buried her full in the smell of the meadow
 On the edge of the churchyard, & under a tree . . . 50
 But not under the yews for we thought that their shadow
 Too heavy for such {a} weak baby as she

The graves lie all flat in the snow, but in looking
 You may guess at the place where our baby is left
 Look its under that poplar which softly is rocking 55
 As if to the tune mother sang as she slept

You may look there o lady & may linger or pass
 & you may melt off the snow with your footsteps
 You may startle the birds as they sit in the grass there
 But however you smile on her, she will lie still 60

But in summer its shadow makes room on the grass there
 For the sunshine to speckle the place as it will
 & yourself lovely lady if happening to pass there
 But however you smile on her, she will lie still³

The next reason seems a less hard one seen lightly 65
 There's one crust more at supper now baby is dead . . .
 I hope God shut her eyes – when they laid her out whirely
 & so hungry! – climbed up to the sky for her bread –

Will you keep me a secret safe, safe from my mother –
 You won't tell even the birds lest they learn it for good 70
 And go singing it over again to each other
 While they fly past our cottage for life in the wood.

Some secrets are known so they tell me – & truly
 Little robin looks sly with his head on one side –
 Now you'll keep me my secret you promise it duly – 75
 Though I loved little babe, I am glad that she died –

Do not look so! – The reason which first shall be given
 Is she's happy! – & that's plain for my mother to see
 Why I've seen her knee deep in the rye fields of Heaven –
 & she said she's in bread for the angels & me. 80

Oh – the spikes of the corn rustled brightly around her
 And I heard in my dream how it trembled along
 & the sun of the sun with a glory encrowned her
 & the thought of my dream is as sweet as her song

And the last reason still an unkindler than this is 85
 But I now have the place – baby had it before
 On the lap of our mother I feel how her kisses
 Fall down with her tears on my face evermore –

And she rocks me so softly so softly she charms me
 Away from the hunger-pain aching within 90
 & my head grows so light while she lulls me & warms me
 I seem to float up like a soul without sin –

My sister they say has the heart of a Father
 Of a great holy Father to lie on & rest –
 W^d the angels that lean on her whispering together 95
 Forbid me the sleep on that motherly breast.

It is good to feel dizzy, & faint away softly
 While the clock in your heart strikes the moments aloud
 & her arms are still round you, still round you & softly
 The kiss on your eyelids is rained from a cloud 100

And your ears sing a song to themselves in the silence
 & you float & float on & grow large as you float
 You forget all the hunger . . . you're king of the islands
 You ride in a chariot – or glide in a boar –

Or you rise, as I said, as a soul does in dying –
 Ah to die so! – what pleasure! – & not to fall back 105
 To the dim heavy pain . . . like a bird filled with flying
 But to die on, die on, to the cold & the black

Do you know what they tell me – that children are living –
 Ay . . . & children as I am – no better they say 110
 Only finer . . . who sit by the grace of God's giving
 On fair mother's laps, never hungry all day

Do you think it can be so? – If I could be sure of it –
 If the queen's little children could sit in such state –
 In the palace & laugh . . . I w^d plead at the door of it 115
 Give us good daily bread . . . we are hungry & wait.

If its true, if its true, I can tell you the reason
 For they have a fine prayer which they say in the church
 'Give us bread day by day' – and God hears them in season
 For their white hands held up – as I saw from the porch 120

For if God hears them . . . God, up so high . . . they may hear me
 And if He gives them, all, they may give me a part
 I will pray then as soft & as meek so do not fear me
 They shall see through my prayers to the want in my heart.

Because it is God's . . . it is ours – he has told us 125
 To ask for it bravely with faith in the heart
 Have the tall ones & strong ones a right to withhold us
 Because we are feeble from having our parts

They may stretch up their white hands & pray in the churches
 Does God mind white hands – who has angels with wings 130
 Does he love their fine garments . . . who has all the arches
 Of heaven with its stars & its holiest things –

Our brown hands will please Him as well for His spirit
 Blest the poor – who inherit the earth . . . not as slaves⁴
 Where's our earth o ye rich men . . . the earth we inherit 135
 {Like} that ye have the heavens, & we have the graves

We're on God's side – So God I would rather
 Die out a poor child on my poor mother's knee
 Than grow to a rich man with harvests to gather
 & answer to no man save one answer to Thee 140

Now forgive me, I am but a child yet feel holy
 When I stand with my naked feet long in the snow
 I stamp with my feet in a bold melancholy
 And feel on God's side through the strength of the woe.

The earth seems to melt to my eyes as the snow might 145
 And I see all the dead once ahungered as I
 With their calm sunken eyes⁵

NOTES:

1. *O pardon dear lady, for standing unsightly*: EBB initially wrote 'A lady dear lady', above it 'Forgive' and then 'O pardon', leaving all three starts uncanceled; we here use what appears to be the latest thought.
2. *And once . . . the mountains*: Preceding this line EBB wrote a large sideways carat to indicate an insertion (perhaps the three lines written sideways on the previous page (see n. 1 to 'Rock me softly', above, p. 629).
3. *But however . . . lie still*: Following this line EBB drew a line across the page.
4. *Our brown hands . . . not as slaves*: echoing the Beatitudes, Matthew 5:5, where Christ declares 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.'
5. *With their calm sunken eyes*: The draft breaks off abruptly, though blank space remains on the page.