

The Elder's Rebuke

Emily Bronte

“Listen! When your hair, like mine,
Takes a tint of silver gray;
When your eyes, with dimmer shine,
Watch life's bubbles float away:

When you, young man, have borne like me
The weary weight of sixty-three,
Then shall penance sore be paid
For those hours so wildly squandered;
And the words that now fall dead
On your ear, be deeply pondered—
Pondered and approved at last:
But their virtue will be past!

“Glorious is the prize of Duty,
Though she be 'a serious power';
Traucherous all the lures of Beauty,
Thorny bud and poisonous flower!

“Mirth is but a mad beguiling
Of the golden-gifted time;
Love—a demon-meteor, wiling
Heedless feet to gulfs of crime.



“Those who follow earthly pleasure,
Heavenly knowledge will not lead;
Wisdom hides from them her treasure,
Virtue bids them evil-speed!

“Vainly may their hearts repenting.
Seek for aid in future years;
Wisdom, scorned, knows no relenting;
Virtue is not won by fears.”

Thus spake the ice-blooded elder gray;
The young man scoffed as he turned away,
Turned to the call of a sweet lute's measure,
Waked by the lightsome touch of pleasure:
Had he ne'er met a gentler teacher,
Woe had been wrought by that pitiless preacher.

