

**ONE HUNDRED SONNETS:
TRANSLATED AFTER THE ITALIAN
OF PETRARCA, WITH THE
ORIGINAL TEXT, NOTES, AND A
LIFE OF PETRARCH**

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One Hundred Sonnets: Translated After the Italian of Petrarca, with the Original Text, Notes,
and a Life of Petrarch by Francesco Petrarca & Susan Wollaston

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FRANCESCO PETRARCA & SUSAN WOLLASTON

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ST. ANNE.

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BY

SUSAN WOLLASTON.

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PREFACE.

It is not without a feeling of anxiety and diffidence, that I submit my poetical translation of "One Hundred Sonnets of Francesco Petrarca" to the world of critics, when I reflect how vast is the ordeal to which I have voluntarily exposed myself, in having undertaken a task none have thought fit to accomplish before me, whilst my sovereigns in intellect have not hesitated to acknowledge its difficulty.

But whilst I arrogate to myself the merit of standing the first who has ever made a complete selection of the best of the Italian works of the first lyric poet perhaps of any age, it is but justice to state the extreme labor it has cost

me to comprehend the often obscured meaning of my author, desirous as I was to return at least a faithful reflection of his created beauties, if (un-Prometheus-like) I failed to infuse into my subject the spirit of poesy, which I extracted from my great original.

It may be asked how can the "amorosi detti" of the lover, who sighed nearly five centuries ago, be supposed to awaken the sympathies of an age which has the addition of that period to its experience, and which doubtless has not failed to progress in an equal ratio, both in refinement and elevation of sentiment? My only reply is a reference to the works of "Il piu gentile amatore" of the fourteenth century, where, if I mistake not, the loftiest lover of the present day will find his inspirations already anticipated, whilst he is compelled to acknowledge in the music of "La Sorgia" the master key from which every succeeding modulation must proceed.

And here, perhaps, it will not be considered out of place should I say a word upon the metre in which I have clothed my Sonnets, in adopting which, however, I trust I shall be equally acquitted of arrogance or an assumption of originality. As it will be readily conceded—had I selected the more harmonious and consecutive rhymes, I should have probably conciliated the suffrages of the more general reader, and have doubtless accomplished my task with comparative ease to myself; but I have chosen rather to follow the opinion of classic scholars, who pronounce that the legitimate sonnet ought to be preserved in English, as in the Italian original. In obedience to this opinion, therefore, I have sacrificed sound to correctness, which indeed has proved advantageous, inasmuch as it has enabled me to follow my illustrious model, step by step, in the form of his Sonnets, though, in feature, mine may be found but a very humble transcript.

Though, like Frankenstein, I may one day rue the breath I have myself wooed into existence, I will not now shrink from the penalty, but willingly submit my work to the judgment of my countrymen.

Hampstead,
February 1841.