Life! I Know Not What Thou Art.

By Barbauld, Anna Laetitia (nee Aiken) .

Life! I know not what thou art,

But know that thou and I must part;

And when, or how, or where we met

I own to me's a secret yet;

But this I know, when thou art fled,

Where'er they lay these limbs, this head,

No clod so valueless shall be

As all that then remains of me.

O whither, whither dost thou fly?

Where bend unseen thy trackless course?

And in this strange divorce,

Ah, tell where I must seek this compound I?

To the vast ocean of empyreal flame

From whence thy essence came

Dost thou thy flight pursue, when freed

From matter's base encumb'ring weed?

Or dost thou, hid from sight,

Wait, like some spell-bound knight,

Through blank oblivious years th' appointed hour

To break thy trance and reassume thy power?

Yet canst thou without thought or feeling be?

O say, what art thou when no more thou'rt thee?

Life! we have been long together,

Through pleasant and through cloudy weather:

'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;

Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear; -

Then steal away, give little warning,

Choose thine own time;

Say not Good Night, but in some brighter clime

Bid me Good Morning.