

Bereavement

By William Lisle Bowles

Whose was that gentle voice, that, whispering sweet,
Promised methought long days of bliss sincere!
Soothing it stole on my deluded ear,
Most like soft music, that might sometimes cheat
Thoughts dark and drooping! 'Twas the voice of Hope.
Of love and social scenes, it seemed to speak,
Of truth, of friendship, of affection meek;
That, oh! poor friend, might to life's downward slope
Lead us in peace, and bless our latest hours.
Ah me! the prospect saddened as she sung;
Loud on my startled ear the death-bell rung;
Chill darkness wrapt the pleasurable bowers,
Whilst Horror, pointing to yon breathless clay,
"No peace be thine," exclaimed, "away, away!"



Descended from a long line of clergymen, poet William Lisle Bowles grew up in Somerset, England. Unappreciated even in his lifetime, Bowles is best remembered as an early influence on Wordsworth and Coleridge. Bowles was an ardent defender of his own work and opinions, and engaged in literary feuds with some of the leading poets of his day, including Lord Byron. Though Bowles remains a minor figure in English literary history, his sonnets are an important link between the classical formalism of the 18th century and the radical individualism of the Romantic period.