

LINES

WRITTEN ON HEARING THE NEWS OF THE
DEATH OF NAPOLEON

Published with *Hellas*, 1821.

WHAT ! alive and so bold, O Earth ?
Art thou not over-bold ?
What ! leapest thou forth as of old
In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold ?
Ha ! leapest thou forth as of old ?
Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead ?

How ! is not thy quick heart cold ?
What spark is alive on thy hearth ?
How ! is not *his* death-knell knolled ?
And livest *thou* still, Mother Earth ?
Thou wert warming thy fingers old
O'er the embers covered and cold
Of that most fiery spirit, when it fled ;
What, Mother, do you laugh now he is dead ?

'Who has known me of old,' replied
Earth,
'Or who has my story told ?
It is thou who art over-bold.'
And the lightning of scorn laughed forth
As she sung, 'To my bosom I fold
All my sons when their knell is knolled,
And so with living motion all are fed,
And the quick spring like weeds out of the
dead.

'Still alive and still bold,' shouted Earth,
'I grow bolder, and still more bold.
The dead fill me ten thousand-fold
Fuller of speed, and splendor, and mirth.
I was cloudy, and sullen, and cold,
Like a frozen chaos uprolled,
Till by the spirit of the mighty dead
My heart grew warm. I feed on whom I fed.

'Ay, alive and still bold,' muttered Earth,
'Napoleon's fierce spirit rolled,
In terror, and blood, and gold,
A torrent of ruin to death from his birth.
Leave the millions who follow to mould
The metal before it be cold ;
And weave into his shame, which like the
dead
Shrouds me, the hopes that from his glory
fled.'

SONNET

POLITICAL GREATNESS

Published by Mrs. Shelley, *Posthumous Poems*, 1824.

NOR happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms
or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes
tame ;
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts,
History is but the shadow of their shame,
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant
starts
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet,
Staining that Heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers
knit
By force or custom ? Man who man would be
Must rule the empire of himself ; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

A BRIDAL SONG

The poem was composed for insertion in a projected play of Williams, *The Promise, or a Year, a Month, and a Day*. Published by Mrs. Shelley, *Posthumous Poems*, 1824.

I

THE golden gates of sleep unbar
Where strength and beauty, met to-
gether,
Kindle their image like a star
In a sea of glassy weather !
Night, with all thy stars look down ;
Darkness, weep thy holiest dew ;
Never smiled the inconstant moon
On a pair so true.
Let eyes not see their own delight ;—
Haste, swift hour, and thy flight
Oft renew.

II

Fairies, sprites, and angels, keep her !
Holy stars, permit no wrong !
And return to wake the sleeper,
Dawn, — ere it be long.
O joy ! O fear ! what will be done
In the absence of the sun !
Come along !