Diplomatic Transcription of the Esdaile Notebook

<text type="manuscript">  
<body>  
<div1 type="multiple poems">  
<lg1 type="poem">[To Harriet]</lg1>

<hand=“HWS”>To Harriet</hand>

<hand=“PBS”>

<lg>

<l>Whose is the love that gleaming thro the world</l>

<l>Wards off the poisonous arrow of its scorn?</l>

<l rend=“indented1”>Whose is the warm & partial praise</l>

<l rend=“indented2”>Virtues most sweet reward?</l>

</lg>

<lg>

<l>Whose looks gave grace to the majestic theme</l>

<l>The sacred, free & fearless theme of truth</l>

<l rend=“indented1”>Whose form did I gaze fondly on</l>

<l rend=“indented2”>And love mankind the more?</l>

</lg>

<lg>

<l>Harriet! on thine.<>—<>thou wert my purer soul</l>

<l>Thou wert the inspiration to my song</l>

<l rend=“indented1”>Thine are these early wilding flowers</l>

<l rend=“indented2”>Tho’ garlanded by me.</l>

<l>Then twine the withering wreath-buds round thy <>brow</></l>

<l>Its bloom may deck their pale & faded prime</l>

<l rend=“indented1”>Can they survive without thy love</l> <l rend=“indented2”>Their wild & moody birth?</l>

</lg>

</hand>

</lg1>

<>Poems<>

<> —— <>

<>A sabbath Walk<>

<>Sweet are the stilly forest glades:<>

<>Imbued with holiest feelings there<>

<>I love to linger pensively<>

<>And court seclusions smile<>

This mountain labyrith of loveliness

Is sweet to me even when the frost has torn

All save the ivy clinging to the rocks

Like friendship to a friends adversity!

<>Yes in my souls devotedness<>

<>I love to linger in the wilds <> <>I have my God, & worship him<>

<>O vulgar souls more ardently<>

<>Than ye the Almighty fiend<>

<>Before whose throne ye kneel<>

Tis not the soul pervading all Tis not the fabled cause that framed

The everlasting orbs of Heaven

And this eternal earth

Nor the cold Christians blood staind King of Kings

Whose shine is in the temple of my heart

Tis that divinity whose work & self

Is harmony & wisdom, truth & love

Who in the forests rayless depth

And in the cities wear<add>y</add>ing glare

In sorrow, solitude & death

Accompanies the soul

Of him who dares be free

It is a lovely winters day.

Its brightness speaks of Deity

Such as the good man venerates Such as the Poet loves

Ah! softly oer the quiet of the scene

A pealing harmony is felt to rise

The village bells are sweet but they denote

That spirits love by the clock, & are devout

All at a stated hour. the sound

Is sweet to sense but to the heart

It tells of worship insincere

Creeds half believed, the ear that bends

To custom, prejudice & fear

The tongue that’s bought to speak

The heart that’s hired to feel

But to the man sincerely good

Each day will be a sabbath day

Consigned to thoughts of holiness And deeds of lving love

The God he serves requires no cringing creed,

No idle prayers, no senseless mummeries

No gold, no temples & no hirelng priests

The winds, the pineboughs & the waters make Its melody. the hearts of all

The beings it pervadeth, form

A temple for it’s purity

The wills of those that love the right

Are offerings beyond

Thanks givings, prayers & gold.

The Crisis

When we see Despots prosper in their weakness,

When we see Falshood triumph in its folly,

When we see Evil, Tyranny, Corruption

Grin, grow and fatten—

When Virtue toileth thro’ a world of sorrow,

When Freedom dwelleth in the deepest dungeon,

When Truth in chains and infamy bewaileth

O’er a world’s ruin—

When Monarchs laugh upon their thrones securely,

Mocking the woes which are to them a treasure,

Hear the deep curse, and quench the Mother’s hunger

In her child’s murder—

Then may we hope the consummating hour

Dreadfully, sweetly, swiftly is arriving

When light from Darkness, peace from desolation

Bursts unresisted.

Then mid the gloom of doubt and fear and anguish

The votaries of virtue may raise their eyes to Heaven

And confident watch till the renovating day star

Gild the horizon.

Passion

(to the

Fair are thy berries to the dazzled sight,

Fair is thy chequered stalk of mingling hues,

And yet thou dost conceal

A deadly poison there

Uniting good and ill.

Art thou not like a lawyer whose smooth face

Doth promise good, while hiding so much ill?

Ah! no. The semblance even

Of goodness lingereth not

Within that hollow eye.

Art thou the tyrant whose unlovely brow

With rare and glittering gems is contrasted?

No—thou mayst kill the body,

He withers up the soul;

Sweet thou when he is nigh.

Art thou the wretch whose cold and sensual soul

His hard-earned mite tears from the famished hind

Then says that God hath willed

Many to toil and groan

That few may boast at ease?

Art thou the slave whose mercenary sword

Stained with an unoffending brother’s blood

Deeper yet shews the spot

Of cowardice, whilst he

Who wears it talks of courage!

Ah no! else while I gaze upon thy bane

I should not feel unmingled with contempt

This awful feeling rise:

As if I stood at night

In some weird ruin’s shade.

Thou art like youthful passion’s quenchless fire

Which in some unsuspecting bosom glows,

So wild, so beautiful,

Possessing wondrous power

To wither or to warm.

Essence of Virtue blasting virtue’s prime,

Bright bud of Truth producing Falshood’s fruit,

Freedom’s own soul that binds

The human will in chains

Indissolubly fast!

Prime source of all that’s lovely, good and great,

Debasing man below the meanest brute,

Spring of all healing streams,

Yet deadlier than the gall

Blackening a monarch’s heart!

Why art thou thus, O Passion? Custom’s chains

Have bound thee from thine Heaven-directed flight

Or thou wouldst never thus

Bring misery to man,

Uniting good and ill.

To Harriet

Never, O never, shall yonder Sun

Thro’ my frame its warmth diffuse

When the heart that beats in its faithful breast

Is untrue, fair girl, to thee;

Nor the beaming moon

On its nightly voyage

Shall visit this spirit with softness again

When its soaring hopes

And its fluttering fears

Are untrue—fair girl, to thee!

O Ever while this frail brain has life

Will it thrill to thy love-beaming gaze,

And whilst thine eyes with affection gleam

It will worship the spirit within.

And when death comes

To quench their fire

A sorrowful rapture their dimness will shed

As I bind me tight

With thine auburn hair

And die as I lived with thee.

Falshood and Vice

a Dialogue

Whilst Monarchs laughed upon their thrones

To hear a famished nation’s groans

And hugged the wealth, wrung from the woe

That makes their eyes and veins o’erflow,

Those thrones high built upon the heaps

Of bones where frenzied Famine sleeps,

Where slavery with her scourge of iron

Stained in mankind’s unheeded gore,

And war’s mad fiends the scene environ

Mingling with shrieks a drunken roar,

There Vice and Falshood took their stand

High raised above the unhappy land.

Falshood

Brother! arise from the dainty fare

Which thousands have toild and bled to bestow—

A finer feast for thy hungry ear

Is the news that I bring of human woe.

Vice

And secret one, what hast thou done

To compare in thy tumid pride with me—

I, whose career thro’ the blasted year

Has been marked by ruin and misery?

Falshood

What have I done! I’ve torn the robe

From baby Truth’s unsheltered form

And round the desolated globe

Worn safely the bewildering charm.

My tyrant-slaves to a dungeon floor

Have bound the dauntless innocent,

And streams of fertilizing gore

Flow from her bosom’s hideous rent

Which this unfailing dagger gave . . .

I dread that blood. No more. This day

Is ours, tho’ her eternal ray

Must shine upon our grave . . .

Yet know, proud Vice, had I not given

To thee the mask I stole from Heaven,

Thy shape of ugliness and fear

Had never gained admission here.

Vice

And know that had I disdained to toil

But sate in my noisome cave the while

And ne’er to these hateful sons of Heaven,

GOLD, MONARCHY or MURDER given,

Hadst thou with all thine art essayed

One of thy games then to have played,

With all thine overweening boast,

Falshood, I tell thee thou had lost!—

But wherefore this dispute . . . we tend

Fraternal to one common end.

In this cold grave beneath my feet

Will our hopes, our fears and our labours meet.

Falshood

I brought my daughter RELIGION on Earth.

She smothered its sweetest buds in their birth

But dreaded Reason’s eye severe

So the crocodile slunk off slily in fear

And loosed her bloodhounds from the den—

They started from dreams of slaughtered men

And by the light of her poison eye

Did her work o’er the wide Earth frightfully.

The deathy stench of her torches’ flare,

Fed with human fat, polluted the air.

The curses, the shrieks, the ceaseless cries

Of the many mingling miseries,

As on she trod, ascended high

And trumpeted my Victory!

Brother, tell what thou hast done.

Vice

I have extinguished the noonday sun

In the carnage smoke of battles won;

Famine, Murder, Hell and Power

Were sated in that joyous hour

Which searchless fate had stampt for me

With the seal of his security.

For the bloated Wretch on yonder throne

Commanded the bloody fray to rise;

Like me he joyed at the stifled moan

Wrung from a Nation’s miseries,

Whilst the snakes, whose slime *even him* defiled,

In extacies of malice smiled . . . .

They thought ’twas theirs!!—but mine the deed:

Theirs is the toil, but mine the meed.

Ten thousand victims madly bleed;

They think that tyrants goad them there

With poisonous war to taint the air,

These tyrants on their beds of thorn

Swell in their dreams of murderous fame

And with their gains to lift my name

Restless they plan from night to morn.

I—I do all. Without my aid,

Thy daughter, that relentless maid,

Could never o’er a deathbed urge

The fury of her venomed scourge.

Falshood

Brother, well.—The world is ours,

And whether thou or I have won,

The pestilence expectant lowers

On all beneath yon blasted Sun.

Our joys, our toils, our honors meet

In the milkwhite and wormy winding sheet:

A short-lived joy, unceasing care,

Some heartless scraps of godly prayer,

A moody curse and a frenzied sleep

Ere gapes the grave’s unclosing deep,

A tyrant’s dream, a coward’s start,

The ice that clings to a priestly heart,

A judge’s frown, a courtier’s smile

Make the great whole for which we toil.

And Brother! Whether thou or I

Have done the work of misery,

It little boots.—thy toil and pain

Without my aid were more than vain,

And but for thee I ne’er had sate

The guardian of Heaven’s palace gate.

To the Emperors of Russia and Austria

who eyed the battle of Austerlitz from

the heights whilst Buonaparte was

active in the thickest of the fight

Coward Chiefs! who while the fight

Rages in the plain below

Hide the shame of your affright

On yon distant mountain’s brow,

Does one human feeling creep

Thro’ your hearts’ remorseless sleep?

On that silence cold and deep

Does one impulse flow

Such as fires the Patriot’s breast,

Such as breaks the Hero’s rest?

No, cowards! ye are calm and still,

Keen frosts that blight the human bud

Each opening petal blight and kill

And bathe its tenderness in blood.

Ye hear the groans of those who die,

Ye hear the whistling death-shots fly,

And when the yells of Victory

Float o’er the murdered good,

Ye smile secure.—On yonder plain

The game, if lost, begins again.

Think ye the restless fiend who haunts

The tumult of yon gory field,

Whom neither shame nor danger daunts,

Who dares not fear, who cannot yield,

Will not with Equalizing blow

Abase the high, exalt the low,

And in one mighty shock o’erthrow

The slaves that sceptres wield,

Till from the ruin of the storm

Ariseth Freedom’s awful form?

Hushed below the battle’s jar

Night rests silent on the Heath,

Silent save where vultures soar

Above the wounded warrior’s death.

How sleep ye now, unfeeling Kings!

Peace seldom folds her snowy wings

On poisoned memory’s conscience-stings

Which lurk bad hearts beneath:

Nor downy beds procure repose

Where crime and terror mingle throes.

Yet may your terrors rest secure.

Thou Northern chief, why startest thou?

Pale Austria, calm those fears. Be sure

The tyrant needs such slaves as you:

Think ye the world would bear his sway

Were dastards such as you away?

No! they would pluck his plumage gay

Torn from a nation’s woe

And lay him in the oblivious gloom

Where Freedom now prepares your tomb.

To November

O month of gloom whose sullen brow

Bears stamp of storms that lurk beneath,

No care or horror bringest thou

To one who draws his breath

Where Zephyrs play and sunbeams shine

Unstained by any fog of thine.

Whilst thou obscurest the face of day

Her radiant eyes can gild the gloom,

Darting a soft and vernal ray

On Nature’s leafless tomb.

Yes! tho’ the landscape’s beauties flee

My Harriet makes it spring to me.

Then raise thy fogs, invoke thy storms,

Thy malice still my soul shall mar,

And whilst thy rage the Heaven deforms

Shall laugh at every care,

And each pure feeling shall combine

To tell its Harriet “I am thine!”

It once was May. The Month of Love

Did all it could to yield me pleasure,

Waking each green and vocal grove

To a many-mingling measure,

But warmth and peace could not impart

To such a cold and shuddering heart.

Now thou art here—come! do thy worst

To chill the breast that Harriet warms.

I fear me, sullen Month! thou’lt burst

With envy of her charms

And finding nothing’s to be done

Turn to December ere thou’st won.

Written on a beautiful day in Spring

In that strange mental wandering when to live,

To breathe, to be, is undivided joy,

When the most woe-worn wretch would cease to grieve,

When satiation’s self would fail to cloy;

When unpercipient of all other things

Than those that press around, the breathing Earth

The gleaming sky and the fresh season’s birth,

Sensation all its wondrous rapture brings

And to itself not once the mind recurs—

Is it foretaste of Heaven?

So sweet as this the nerves it stirs,

And mingling in the vital tide

With gentle motion driven,

Cheers the sunk spirits, lifts the languid eye,

And scattering thro’ the frame its influence wide

Revives the spirits when they droop and die.

The frozen blood with genial beaming warms

And to a gorgeous fly the sluggish worm transforms.

On leaving London for Wales.

Thou miserable city! where the gloom

Of penury mingles with the tyrant’s pride,

And virtue bends in sorrow o’er the tomb

Where Freedom’s hope and Truth’s high Courage died,

May floods and vales and mountains me divide

From all the taints thy wretched walls contain

That life’s extremes in desolation wide

No more heap horrors on my beating brain,

Nor sting my shuddering heart to sympathy with pain.

With joy I breathe the last and free farewell

That long has quivered on my burdened heart;

My natural sympathies to rapture swell

As from its day thy cheerless glooms depart,

Nor all the glare thy gayest scenes impart

Could lure one sigh, could steal one tear from me,

Or lull to languishment the wakeful smart

Which virtue feels for all ’tis forced to see,

Or quench the eternal flame of generous Liberty.

Hail to thee, Cambria, for the unfettered wind

Which from thy wilds even now methinks I feel

Chasing the clouds that roll in wrath behind

And tightening the soul’s laxest nerves to steel!

True! Mountain Liberty alone may heal

The pain which Custom’s obduracies bring,

And he who dares in fancy even to steal

One draught from Snowdon’s ever-sacred spring

Blots out the unholiest rede of worldly witnessing.

And shall that soul to selfish peace resigned

So soon forget the woe its fellows share?

Can Snowdon’s Lethe from the freeborn mind

So soon the page of injured penury tear?

Does this fine mass of human passion dare

To sleep, unhonouring the patriot’s fall,

Or life’s sweet load in quietude to bear

While millions famish even in Luxury’s hall

And Tyranny high-raised stern lowers over all?

No, Cambria! never may thy matchless vales

A heart so false to hope and virtue shield,

Nor ever may thy spirit-breathing gales

Waft freshness to the slaves who dare to yield.

For me! . . . the weapon that I burn to wield

I seek amid thy rocks to ruin hurled,

That Reason’s flag may over Freedom’s field,

Symbol of bloodless victory, wave unfurled—

A meteor-sign of love effulgent o’er the world.

Hark to that shriek! my hand had almost clasped

The dagger that my heart had cast away

When the pert slaves whose wanton power had grasped

All hope that springs beneath the eye of day

Pass before Memory’s gaze in long array.

The storm fleets by and calmer thoughts succeed;

Feelings once more mild reason’s voice obey.

Woe be the tyrant’s and the murderer’s meed,

But Nature’s wound alone should make their Conscience bleed.

Do thou, wild Cambria! calm each struggling thought;

Cast thy sweet veil of rocks and woods between,

That by the soul to indignation wrought

Mountains and dells be mingled with the scene.

Let me forever be what I have been,

But not forever at my needy door

Let Misery linger, speechless, pale and lean.

I am the friend of the unfriended poor;

Let me not madly stain their righteous cause in gore.

No more! the visions fade before my sight

Which Fancy pictures in the waste of air

Like lovely dreams ere morning’s chilling light:

And sad realities alone are there.

Ah! neither woe, nor fear, nor pain can tear

Their image from the tablet of my soul,

Nor the mad floods of despotism where

Lashed into desperate furiousness they roll,

Nor passion’s soothing voice, nor interest’s cold control.

A winter’s day

O! wintry day! that mockest spring

With hopes of the reviving year—

That sheddest softness from thy wing

And near the cascade’s murmuring

Awakenest sounds so clear

That peals of vernal music swing

Thro’ the balm atmosphere:

Why hast thou given, o year! to May

A birth so premature,

To live one incompleted day

That the mad whirlwind’s sullen sway

May sweep it from the moor,

And winter reassume the sway

That shall so long endure?

Art thou like Genius’s matin bloom,

Unwelcome promise of its prime,

That scattereth its rich perfume

Around the portals of the tomb,

Decking the scar of time

In mockery of the early doom?

Art thou like Passion’s rapturous dream

That o’er life’s stormy dawn

Doth dart its wild and flamy beam,

Yet like a fleeting flash doth seem

When many chequered years are gone

And tell the illusion of its gleam

Life’s blasted springs alone?

Whate’er thou emblemest, I’ll breathe

Thy transitory sweetness now,

And whether Health with roseate wreathe

May bind mine head, or creeping Death

Steal o’er my pulse’s flow,

Struggling the wintry winds beneath

I’ll love thy vernal glow.

To Liberty

O let not Liberty

Silently perish;

May the groan and the sigh

Yet the flame cherish

Till the voice to Nature’s bursting heart given,

Ascending loud and high,—

A world’s indignant cry—

And startling on his throne

The tyrant grim and lone

Shall beat the deaf vault of Heaven.

Say, can the Tyrant’s frown

Daunt those who fear not

Or break the spirits down

His badge that wear not?

Can chains or death or infamy subdue

The free and fearless soul

That dreads not their control—

Sees Paradise and Hell,

Sees the Palace and the cell,

Yet bravely dares prefer the good and true?

Regal pomp and pride

The Patriot falls in scorning,

The spot whereon he died

Should be the despot’s warning:

The voice of blood shall on his crimes call down Revenge!

And the spirits of the brave

Shall start from every grave

Whilst from her Atlantic throne

Freedom sanctifies the groan

That fans the glorious fires of its change.

Monarch! sure employer

Of vice and want and woe,

Thou Conscienceless destroyer,

Who and what art thou!—

The dark prison house that in the dust shall lie,

The pyramid which guilt

First planned, which man has built,

At whose footstone want and woe

With a ceaseless murmur flow

And whose peak attracts the tempests of the sky.

The pyramids shall fall . . . . . .

And Monarchs! so shall ye!

Thrones shall rust in the hall

Of forgotten royalty

Whilst Virtue, Truth and Peace shall arise

And a Paradise on Earth

From your fall shall date its birth,

And human life shall seem

Like a short and happy dream

Ere we wake in the daybeam of the skies.

On Robert Emmet’s tomb

May the tempests of Winter that sweep o’er thy tomb

Disturb not a slumber so sacred as thine;

May the breezes of summer that breathe of perfume

Waft their balmiest dews to so hallowed a shrine.

May the foot of the tyrant, the coward, the slave

Be palsied with dread where thine ashes repose,

Where that undying shamrock still blooms on thy grave

Which sprung when the dawnlight of Erin arose.

There oft have I marked the grey gravestones among

Where thy relics distinguished in lowliness lay

The peasant boy pensively lingering long

And silently weep as he passed away.

And how could he not pause if the blood of his sires

Ever wakened one generous throb in his heart:

How could he inherit a spark of their fires

If tearless and frigid he dared to depart?

Not the scrolls of a court could emblazon thy fame

Like the silence that reigns in the palace of thee,

Like the whispers that pass of thy dearly loved name,

Like the tears of the good, like the groans of the free.

No trump tells thy virtues—the grave where they rest

With thy dust shall remain unpolluted by fame

Till thy foes, by the world and by fortune caresst,

Shall pass like a mist from the light of thy name.

When the storm cloud that lowers o’er the daybeam is gone,

Unchanged, unextinguished its lifespring will shine—

When Erin has ceased with their memory to groan,

She will smile thro’ the tears of revival on thine.

a Tale of Society as it is

from facts 1811

She was an Aged Woman, and the years

Which she had numbered on her toilsome way

Had bowed her natural powers to decay.

She was an Aged Woman, yet the ray

Which faintly glimmered thro’ the starting tears,

Pressed from their beds by silent misery,

Hath soul’s imperishable energy.

She was a cripple, and incapable

To add one mite to golden luxury,

And therefore did her spirit clearly feel

That Poverty—the crime of tainting stain—

Would merge her in its depths never to rise again.

One only son’s love had supported her.

She long had struggled with infirmity

Lingering from human lifescenes, for to die

When fate has spared to rend some mental tie

Not many wish, and surely fewer dare.

But when the tyrant’s bloodhounds forced her Child

For tyrant’s power unhallowed arms to wield,

Bend to another’s will, become a thing

More senseless than the sword of battle field,

Then did she feel keen sorrow’s keenest sting,

And many years had past ere comfort they would bring.

For seven years did this poor woman live

In unparticipated solitude:

Thou mightst have seen her in the desart rude

Picking the scattered remnants of its wood;

If human, thou mightst then have learned to grieve.

The gleanings of precarious charity

Her scantiness of food did scarce supply;

The proofs of an unspeaking sorrow dwelt

Within her ghastly hollowness of eye:

Each arrow of the Season’s change she felt,

Yet still she yearned ere her sad course were run,

One only hope it was, once more to see her son.

It was an eve of June, when every star

Spoke peace from Heaven to those on Earth that live.

She rested on the moor . . . . ’twas such an eve

When first her soul began indeed to grieve—

Then he was here . . . now he is very far.

The freshness of the balmy evening

A sorrow o’er her weary soul did fling,

Yet not devoid of rapture’s mingled tear;

A balm was in the poison of the sting:

This aged sufferer for many a year,

Had never felt such comfort . . . . she supprest

A sigh, and turning round clasp’d William to her breast.

And tho’ his form was wasted by the woe

Which despots on their victims love to wreak—

Tho’ his sunk eyeball, and his faded cheek,

Of slavery, violence and scorn did speak—

Yet did the aged Woman’s bosom glow;

The vital fire seemed reillumed within

By this sweet unexpected welcoming.

O! consummation of the fondest hope

That ever soared on Fancy’s dauntless wing!

O! tenderness that foundst so sweet a scope!

Prince! who dost swell upon thy mighty sway,

When thou canst feel such love, thou shalt be great as they!

Her son, compelled, the tyrant’s foes had fought,

Had bled in battle, and the stern control

That ruled his sinews and coerced his soul

Utterly poisoned life’s unmingled bowl

And unsubduable evils on him wrought.

He was the shadow of the lusty child

Who, when the time of summer season smiled,

For her did earn a meal of honesty

And with affectionate discourse beguiled

The keen attacks of pain and poverty

Till power as envying this, her only joy,

From her maternal bosom tore the unhappy boy.

And now cold charity’s unwelcome dole

Was insufficient to support the pair,

And they would perish rather than would bear

The law’s stern slavery and the insolent stare

With which law loves to rend the poor man’s soul—

The bitter scorn, the spirit-sinking noise

Of heartless mirth which women, men and boys

Wake in this scene of legal misery . . .

Oh! William’s spirit rather would rejoice

On some wild heath with his dear charge to die.

The death that keenest penury might give

Were sweeter far than cramped by slavery to live.

And they have borne thus long the winter’s cold,

The driving sleet, the penetrating rain;

It seemeth that their element is pain

And that they never will feel life again,

For is it life to be so deathlike old?—

The sun’s kind light feeds every living thing

That spreads its blossoms to the breath of spring,

But who feeds thee, unhappy wanderer?

With the fat slaves who from the rich man’s board

Lick the fallen crumbs thou scantily dost share

And mutterest for the gift a heartless prayer:

The flow’rs fade not thus. Thou must poorly die.

The changeful year feeds them. The tyrant, man, feeds thee.

And is it life that in Youth’s blasted morn

Not one of youth’s dear raptures are enjoyed—

All natural bliss with servitude alloyed,

The beating heart, the sparkling eye destroyd,

And manhood of its brightest glories shorn,

Debased by rapine, drunkenness and woe,

The foeman’s sword, the vulgar tyrant’s blow,

Ruined in body and soul till Heaven arrive—

His health and peace insultingly laid low,

Without a fear to die or wish to live,

Withered and sapless, miserably poor,

Relinquished for his wounds to beg from door to door?

Seest thou yon humble sod where oziers bind

The pillow of the monumentless dead.

There since her thorny pilgrimage is sped

The aged Sufferer rests on the cold bed

Which all who seek or who avoid must find.

O let her sleep! and there at close of eve

’Twere holiness in solitude to grieve

And ponder on the wretchedness of Earth.

With joy of melancholy I would leave

A spot that to such deep-felt thoughts gives birth,

And tho’ I could not pour the useless prayer

Would weep upon the grave and leave a blessing there.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hitchener, 7 January 1812

1

She was an aged woman, and the years

Which she had numbered on her toilsome way

Had bowed her natural powers to decay

She was an aged woman. yet the ray

Which faintly glimmered thro her starting tears

Pressed into light by silent misery

Hath soul’s imperishable energy.—

She was a c<rip>ple and incapable

To add one mite to gold-fed luxury

And therefore did her spirit dimly feel

That Poverty the crime of tainting stain

Would merge her in its’ depths never to rise again

2

One only sons love had supported her

She long had struggled with infirmity

Lingering to human life scenes for to die

When fate has spared to rend some mental tie

<No>t many wish and surely fewer dare

<B>ut when the tyrants bloodhounds forced her child

<?> his cursed power unhallowed arms to weild,

Bend to another’s will, become a thing

Moresenseless than the sword of battle field

Then did she feel keen sorrows keenest sting

And many years had passed ere comfort they cd. bring

3

For seven years did this poor worman live

In unparticipated solitude

Thou mighst have seen her in the forest rude

Picking the scattered remnants of its wood

If human thou mightst then have learned to feel

The gleanings of precarious charity

Her scantiness of food did scarce supply

The proofs of an unspeaking sorrow dwelt

Within her gastly hollowness of eye

Each arrow of the seasons change she felt

Yet still she groans ere yet her race were run

One only hope it was! once more to see her [~~?~~] Son

4

It was an eve of June when every star

Spoke peace from Heaven x x x x

She rested on the moor. twas such an eve

When first her soul began indeed to grieve

Then he was here; now he is very far!

The sweetness of the balmy evening

A sorrow oer her aged soul did fling

Yet not devoid of raptures mingled tear

A balm was in the poison of the sting!

This aged sufferer for many a year

Had never felt much comfort. she supprest

A sigh—and turning round clasp’d William to her breast

5

And tho’ his form was wasted by the woe

Which tyrants on their Victims love to wreak

Tho’ his sunk eyeball, and his faded cheek

Of slavery, violence & scorn did speak

Yet did the aged womans bosom glow!

The vital fire seemed reillumed within

By this sweet unexpected welcoming

Oh consummation of the fondest hope

That ever soared on fancy’s wildest wing

Oh! tenderness that foundst so sweet a scope!

Prince who dost pride thee on thy mighty sway

When thou canst feel such love thou shalt be ~~blest as~~ great as they

6

Her son compelled the country’s foes had fought

Had bled in battle. & the stern control

Which ruled his sinews hdcoerced his soul

Utterly poisoned life’s unmingled bowl

And unsubduable evils on him brought

He was the shadow of the lusty child

Who, when the time of summer season smiled

Did earn for her a meal of honesty

And with affectionate discourse beguild

The keen attacks of pain and poverty,

’Till Power as envying her this only joy

From her maternal bosom tore the unhappy boy

7

And now cold charity’s unwelcome dole

Was insufficient to support the Pair

And they, wd perish rather that wd bear

The law’s stern slavery, and the insolent stare

With which law loves to rend the poor mans soul

The bitter scorn, the spirit sinking noise

Of heartless mirth which women men & boys

Wake in this scene of legal misery

x x x x x x———

The solitary 1810

Darest thou amid this varied multitude

To live alone, an isolated thing,

To see the busy beings round thee spring

And care for none?—in thy calm solitude,

A flower that scarce breathes in the desart rude

To Zephyr’s passing wing?

Not the swarth Pariah in some Indian Grove

Lone, lean and hunted by his brothers’ hate,

Hath drunk so deep the cup of bitter fate

As that poor wretch who cannot, cannot love.

He bears a load which nothing can remove—

A killing, withering weight.

He smiles . . . ’tis sorrow’s deadliest mockery;

He speaks . . . the cold words flow not from his soul;

He acts like others, drains the genial bowl;

Yet, yet he longs altho’ he fears to die.

He pants to reach what yet he seems to fly,

Dull Life’s extremest goal.

The Monarch’s funeral—

An Anticipation

1810

The growing gloom of eventide

Has quenched the sunbeam’s latest glow

And lowers upon the woe and pride

That blasts the city’s peace below.

At such an hour how sad the sight

To mark a Monarch’s funeral

When the dim shades of awful night

Rest on the coffin’s velvet pall;

To see the Gothic Arches shew

A varied mass of light and shade,

While to the torches’ crimson glow

A vast cathedral is displayed;

To see with what a silence deep

The thousands o’er this death-scene brood,

As tho’ some wizard’s charm did creep

Upon the countless multitude

To see this awful pomp of death

For one frail mass of mouldering clay,

When nobler men the tomb beneath

Have sunk unwept, unseen away.

For who was he, the uncoffined slain,

That fell in Erin’s injured isle

Because his spirit dared disdain

To light his country’s funeral pile?

Shall he not ever live in lays

The warmest that a Muse may sing

Whilst monumental marbles raise

The fame of a departed King?

May not the Muse’s darling theme

Gather its glorious garland thence

Whilst some frail tombstone’s Dotard dream

Fades with a monarch’s impotence!

—Yet, ’tis a scene of wondrous awe

To see a coffined Monarch lay,

That the wide grave’s insatiate maw

Be glutted with a regal prey!

Who *now* shall public councils guide?

Who rack the poor on gold to dine?

Who waste the means of regal pride

For which a million wretches pine?

It is a child of earthly breath,

A being perishing as he,

Who throned in yonder pomp of death

Hath now fulfilled his destiny.

Now dust to dust restore! . . . O Pride,

Unmindful of thy fleeting power,

Whose empty confidence has vied

With human life’s most treacherous hour,

One moment feel that in the breast

With regal crimes and troubles vext

The pampered Earthworms soon will rest,

One moment feel . . . . and die the next.

Yet deem not in the tomb’s control

The vital lamp of life can fail—

Deem not that e’er the Patriot’s soul

Is wasted by the withering gale.

The dross, which forms the *King,* is gone

And reproductive Earth supplies,

As senseless as the clay and stone

In which the kindred body lies:

The soul which makes the *Man* doth soar,

And love alone survives to shed

All that its tide of bliss can pour

Of Heaven upon the blessed dead.

So shall the Sun forever burn,

So shall the midnight lightnings die,

And joy that glows at Nature’s bourn

Outlive terrestrial misery.

And will the crowd who silent stoop

Around the lifeless Monarch’s bier,

A mournful and dejected group,

Breathe not one sigh, or shed one tear?

Ah! no—’tis wonder, ’tis not woe:

Even royalists might groan to see

The *Father of the People*, so

Lost in the Sacred Majesty.

To the Republicans of North America

Brothers! between you and me

Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar,

Yet in spirit oft I see

On the wild and winding shore

Freedom’s bloodless banner wave,

Feel the pulses of the brave

Unextinguished by the grave,

See them drenched in sacred gore,

Catch the patriot’s gasping breath

Murmuring “Liberty” in death.

Shout aloud! let every slave

Crouching at corruption’s throne

Start into a man and brave

Racks and chains without a groan!

Let the castle’s heartless glow

And the hovel’s vice and woe

Fade like gaudy flowers that blow,

Weeds that peep and then are gone,

Whilst from misery’s ashes risen

Love shall burst the Captive’s prison.

Cotopaxi! bid the sound

Thro’ thy sister mountains ring

Till each valley smile around

At the blissful welcoming.

And o! thou stern Ocean-deep

Whose eternal billows sweep

Shores where thousands wake to weep

Whilst they curse some villain King,

On the winds that fan thy breast

Bear thou news of freedom’s rest.

Earth’s remotest bounds shall start:

Every despot’s bloated cheek,

Pallid as his bloodless heart,

Frenzy, woe and dread shall speak . . . .

Blood may fertilize the tree

Of new bursting Liberty—

Let the guiltiness then be

On the slaves that ruin wreak,

On the unnatural tyrant-brood

Slow to Peace and swift to blood.

Can the daystar dawn of love

Where the flag of war unfurled

Floats with crimson stain above

Such a desolated world? . . .

Never! but to vengeance driven

When the patriot’s spirit shriven

Seeks in death its native Heaven—

Then to speechless horror hurled

Widowed Earth may balm the bier

Of its memory with a tear.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hitchener, 14 February 1812

Brothers, between you and me

Whirlwinds sweep and billows roar

Yet in spirit oft I see

On thy wild and winding shore

Freedoms bloodless banners wave

Feel the pul<ses> of the brave

Unextinguished in the grave

See them drenched in sacred gore

Catch the warriors gasping breath

Murmuring Liberty in death

—

Shout aloud! let every slave

Crouching at Corruptions throne

Start into a man and brave

Racks and chains without a groan

And the castle’s heartless glow

And the hovels vice and woe

Fade like gaudy flowers that blow

Weeds that peep & then are gone

Whilst from miserys ashes risen

Love shall burst the Captives prison

—

Cotopaxi! bid the sound

Thro’ thy sister mountains ring

Till each valley smile around

At the blissful welcoming

And oh thou stern ocean deep

Thou, whose foamy billows sweep

Shores where thousands wake to weep

Whilst they curse a villain king

On the winds that fan thy breast

Bear thou news of freedoms rest

—

Can the daystar dawn of Love

Where the flag of war unfurled

Floats with crimson stain above

The fabric of a ruined world

Never! but to vengeance driven

When the patriots spirits shriven

Seeks in Death its native Heaven

There to desolation hurled

Widowed love may watch thy bier

Balm thee with its dying tear.

Written at Cwm Ellan 1811

When the peasant hies him home, and the day-planet reposes,

Pillowed on the azure peaks that bound the western sight,

When each mountain flower its modest petal tremulously closes

And sombre, shrouded twilight comes to lead her sister Night.

Vestal dark! how dear to me are then thy dews of lightness

That bathe my brow so withering, scorched beneath the daybeam’s brightness:

More dear to me, tho’ day be robed in vest of dazzling whiteness,

Is one folding of the garment dusk that wraps thy form, O Night!

With thee I still delight to sit where dizzy Danger slumbers,

Where ’mid the rocks the fitful blast hath wak’d its wildest lay

Till beneath the yellow moonbeam decay the dying numbers,

And silence, even in fancy’s throne, hath seized again the sway.

Again she must resign it, hark! for wildest cadence pouring

Far, far amid the viewless glen beneath, the Ellan roaring

Mid tongued woods, and shapeless rocks with moonlight summits soaring

It mingles its magic murmuring with the blast that floats away.

To Death

Death, where is thy victory!

To triumph whilst I die,

To triumph whilst thine ebon wing

Infolds my shuddering soul,

O Death, where is thy sting?

Not when the tides of murder roll,

When Nations groan that Kings may bask in bliss,

Death, couldst thou boast a victory such as this,—

When in his hour

Of pomp and power

Thy slave, the mightiest murderer, gave

Mid nature’s cries

The sacrifize

Of myriads to glut the grave,—

When sunk the tyrant, sensualism’s slave,

Or Freedom’s life-blood streamed upon thy shrine?

Stern despot, couldst thou boast a Victory such as mine?—

To know, in dissolution’s void

That Earthly hopes and fears decay,

That every sense but Love, destroyed,

Must perish with its kindred clay,—

Perish ambition’s crown!

Perish its sceptered sway;

From Death’s pale front fade Pride’s fastidious frown

In death’s damp vault, the lurid fires decay

Which Envy lights at heaven-born virtue’s beam;

That all the cares subside

Which lurk beneath the tide

Of life’s unquiet stream . . . .

Yes! this were Victory!

And on some rock whose dark form glooms the sky

To stretch these pale limbs when the soul is fled,

To baffle the lean passions of their prey,

To sleep within the chambers of the dead!—

Oh! not the Wretch around whose dazzling throne

His countless courtiers mock the words they say,

Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown,

As I on Death’s last pang and faint expiring groan.

Tremble, ye Kings whose luxury mocks the woe

That props thy column of unnatural state:

Ye the curses deep tho’ low

From misery’s tortured breast that flow

Shall usher to your fate.—

Tremble, ye conquerors at whose fell command

The War-fiend Riots o’er an happy land—

Ye, desolation’s gory throng

Shall bear from victory along

To Death’s mysterious strand.

’Twere Hell that Vice no pain should know

But every scene that memory gives

Tho’ from the selfsame fount might flow

The joy which Virtue aye receives . . .

It is the grave—no conqueror triumphs now;

The wreathes of bay that bound his head

Wither around his fleshless brow.

Where is the mockery fled

That fired the tyrant’s gaze?

’Tis like the fitful glare that plays

On some dark-rolling thunder cloud,

Plays whilst the thunders roar,

But when the storm is past

Fades like the warrior’s name.

Death! in thy vault when Kings and peasants lie

Not power’s stern rod or fame’s most thrilling blasts

Can liberate thy captives from decay.

My triumph, their defeat; my joy, their shame.

Welcome then, peaceful Death, I’ll sleep with thee—

Mine be thy quiet home, and thine my Victory.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Hogg Manuscript, ca. 1810

Death! where is thy Victory!

To triumph whilst I die

To triumph whilst thine ~~hand of fate~~ ebon wing

Enfolds my shuddering soul

Oh! death where is thy sting

Not when the tides of murder roll

When nations groan that Kings may bask in bliss

Death! canst thou boast a victory such as this

When in his hour, of pomp & power

Thy blow the mightiest murderer gave

Mid nature’s cries, the sacrifize 12-13

Of millions to glut the grave

When sunk the tyrant desolation’s slave 15

Or Freedom’s life blood streamed upon thy shrine

Stern tyrant couldst thou boast a victory such as mine

To know in dissolution’s void

That mortals ~~hopes & fears~~ bubbles sank away

That every thing but Love destroyed 20

Must perish with it’s kindred clay

Perish Ambitions crown

Perish her sceptered sway

From Death’s pale front fade Pride’s fastidious frown

In Death’s damp vault the lurid fires decay 25

That Envy lights at heaven-born virtues beam

That all the cares subside

Which lurk beneath the tide

Of life’s unquiet stream

Yes this is a victory 30

And on yon rock whose dark form glooms the sky

To strech these pale limbs when the soul is fled

To baffle the lean passions of their prey

To sleep within the palace of the dead!—

Oh! not the King around whose dazzling throne 35

His countless countless mock the words they say

Triumphs amid the bud of glory blown

As I, in this cold bed & faint expiring groan

Tremble ye proud whose ~~bosoms~~ grandeur mocks the woe

Which props thy column of unnatural state 40

Ye, the plainings faint & low

~~Which~~ From misery’s tortured ~~breast~~ soul that flow

Shall usher to your fate . .

Tremble ye conquerors at whose fell command

The war-fiend riots oer a peaceful land 45

Ye, desolations gory throng

Shall bear from victory along

To that mysterious strand

“Dark Spirit of the desart rude”

Dark Spirit of the desart rude

That o’er this awful solitude,

Each tangled and untrodden wood,

Each dark and silent glen below

Where sunlight’s gleamings never glow, 5

Whilst jetty, musical and still,

In darkness speeds the mountain rill;

That o’er yon broken peaks sublime,

Wild shapes that mock the scythe of time,

And the pure Ellan’s foamy course, 10

Wavest thy wand of magic force—

Art thou yon sooty and fearful fowl

That flaps its wing o’er the leafless oak

That o’er the dismal scene doth scowl

And mocketh music with its croak? 15

I’ve sought thee where day’s beams decay

On the peak of the lonely hill;

I’ve sought thee where they melt away

By the wave of the pebbly rill;

I’ve strained to catch thy murky form 20

Bestride the rapid and gloomy storm:

Thy red and sullen eyeball’s glare

Has shot, in a dream thro’ the midnight air

But never did thy shape express

Such an emphatic gloominess. 25

And where art thou, O thing of gloom? . .

On Nature’s unreviving tomb

Where sapless, blasted and alone

She mourns her blooming centuries gone!—

From the fresh sod the Violets peep, 30

The buds have burst their frozen sleep,

Whilst every green and peopled tree

Is alive with Earth’s sweet melody.

But thou alone art here,

Thou desolate Oak, whose scathed head 35

For ages has never trembled,

Whose giant trunk dead lichens bind,

Moaningly sighing in the wind,

With huge loose rocks beneath thee spread—

Thou, Thou alone art here! 40

Remote from every living thing,

Tree, shrub or grass or flower,

Thou seemest of this spot the King

And with a regal power

Suck like that race all sap away 45

*And yet upon the spoil decay.*

“The pale, the cold and the moony smile”

The pale, the cold and the moony smile

Which the meteor beam of a stormy night

Sheds on a lonely and seagirt isle

Till the dawning of morn’s undoubted light

Is the taper of life so fickle and wan 5

That flits round our steps till their strength is gone.

Oh! Man, hold thee on with courage of soul

Thro’ the long, long night of thy doubtful way,

And the billows of cloud that around thee roll

Shall subside in the calm of eternal day: 10

For all in this world we can surely know

Is a little delight and a little woe.

All we behold, we feel that we know—

All we perceive, we know that we feel;

And the coming of death is a fearful blow 15

To a brain unencompassed by nervestrings of steel,

When all that we know, we feel and we see

Shall fleet by like an unreal mystery.

The secret things of the grave are there

Where all but this body must surely be, 20

Tho’ the fine-wrought eye and the wondrous ear

No longer will live to hear or to see

All that is bright and all that is strange

In the gradual path of unending change.

Who telleth the tales of unspeaking Death? 25

Who lifteth the veil of what is to come?

Who painteth the beings that are beneath

The wide-stretching realms of the peopled tomb

And uniteth the hopes of what shall be

With the fears and the love for that which we see? 30

“Death-spurning rocks!”

Death-spurning rocks! here have ye towered since Time

Sprung from Tradition’s mist-encircled height

Which Memory’s palsied pinion dreads to climb,

Awed by the phantoms of its beamless night.

Death-spurning rocks! Each jagged form 5

Shall still arrest the passing storm

Whilst rooted there the aged Oak

Is shivered by the lightning’s stroke.

Years shall fade fast, and centuries roll away—

Ye shall spurn death no more but like your Oak decay. 10

A maniac-sufferer soared with wild intent

Where Nature formed these wonders. On the way

There is a little spot. Fiends would relent

Knew they the snares that there for memory lay—

How many a hope and many a fear 15

And many a vain and bitter tear—

Whilst each prophetic feeling wakes

A brood of mad and venomed snakes

To make the lifesprings of his soul their food,

To twine around his veins and fatten on his blood. 20

To quench his pangs he fled to the wild moor—

One fleeting beam flashed but its gloom to shew:

Turned was the way-worn wanderer from the door

Where Pity’s self promised to soothe his woe

Shall he turn back. The tempest there 25

Sweeps fiercely thro’ the turbid air

Beyond a gulph before that yawns.

The daystar shines, the daybeam dawns.

God! Nature! Chance! remit this misery—

It burns!—why need he live to weep who does not fear to die? 30

The Tombs

These are the tombs. O cold and silent Death,

Thy Kingdom and thy subjects here I see.

The record of thy victories

Is graven on every speaking stone

That marks what once was man. 5

These are the tombs. Am I, who sadly gaze

On the corruption and the sculls around,

To sum the mass of loathsomeness,

And to a mound of mouldering flesh

Say——“thou wert human life!” 10

In thee once throbbed the Patriot’s beating heart,

In thee once lived the Poet’s soaring soul—

The pulse of love, the calm of thought,

Courage and charity and truth

And high devotedness— 15

All that could sanctify the meanest deeds,

All that might give a manner and a form

To matter’s speechless elements,

To every brute and morbid shape

Of this phantasmal world: 20

That the high sense which from the stern rebuke

Of Erin’s victim-patriot’s death-soul shone,

When blood and chains defiled the land,

Lives in the torn uprooted heart

His savage murderers burn. 25

Ah, no! else while these tombs before me stand

My soul would hate the coming of its hour,

Nor would the hopes of life and love

Be mingled with those fears of death

That chill the warmest heart. 30

To Harriet

It is not blasphemy to hope that Heaven

More perfectly will give those nameless joys

Which throb within the pulses of the blood

And sweeten all that bitterness which Earth

Infuses in the heaven-born soul—O Thou 5

Whose dear love gleamed upon the gloomy path

Which this lone spirit travelled, drear and cold,

Yet swiftly leading to those awful limits

Which mark the bounds of Time and of the space

When Time shall be no more: wilt thou not turn 10

Those spirit-beaming eyes and look on me,

Until I be assured that Earth is Heaven

And Heaven is Earth?—will not thy glowing cheek,

Glowing with soft suffusion, rest on mine

And breathe magnetic sweetness thro’ the frame 15

Of my corporeal nature, thro’ the soul

Now knit with these fine fibres? I would give

The longest and the happiest day that fate

Has marked on my existence but to feel

*One* soul-reviving kiss . . . oh thou most dear, 20

’Tis an assurance that this Earth is Heaven

And Heaven the flower of that untainted seed

Which springeth here beneath such love as ours.

Harriet! let death all mortal ties dissolve

But ours shall not be mortal—the cold hand 25

Of Time may chill the love of Earthly minds

Half frozen now, the frigid intercourse

Of common souls lives but a summer’s day—

It dies where it arose upon this Earth:

But ours! oh ’tis the stretch of fancy’s hope 30

To portray its continuance as now,

Warm, tranquil, spirit-healing. Nor when age

Has tempered these wild extacies, and given

A soberer tinge to the luxurious glow

Which blazing on devotion’s pinnacle 35

Makes virtuous passion supercede the power

Of reason, nor when life’s æstival sun

To deeper manhood shall have ripened me,

Nor when some years have added judgement’s store

To all thy woman sweetness, all the fire 40

Which throbs in thine enthusiast heart, not then

Shall holy friendship (for what other name

May love like ours assume?) not even then

Shall custom so corrupt, or the cold forms

Of this desolate world so harden us 45

As when we think of the dear love that binds

Our souls in soft communion, while we know

Each other’s thoughts and feelings, can we say

Unblushingly a heartless compliment,

Praise, hate or love with the unthinking world 50

Or dare to cut the unrelaxing nerve

That knits our love to Virtue—can those eyes

Beaming with mildest radiance on my heart

To purify its purity e’er bend

To soothe its vice or consecrate its fears? 55

Never, thou second self! is confidence

So vain in virtue that I learn to doubt

The mirror even of Truth?—Dark Flood of Time!

Roll as it listeth thee. I measure not

By months or moments thy ambiguous course. 60

Another may stand by me on thy brink

And watch the bubble whirled beyond his ken

Which pauses at my feet.—The sense of love,

The thirst for action, and the impassioned thought

Prolong my being. If I wake no more 65

My life more actual living will contain

Than some grey veteran’s of the world’s cold school

Whose listless hours unprofitably roll,

By one enthusiast feeling unredeemed.

Virtue and Love! unbending Fortitude, 70

Freedom, Devotedness and Purity—

That life my spirit consecrates to you.

Sonnet: To Harriet

on her birth day, August 1, 1812

O thou, whose radiant eyes and beamy smile

Yet even a sweeter somewhat indexing,

Have known full many an hour of mine to guile

Which else would only bitter memories bring,

O ever thus, thus! as on this natal day, 5

Tho’ age’s frost may blight those tender eyes,

Destroy that kindling cheek’s transparent dyes

And those luxuriant tresses change to grey,

Ever as now with Love and Virtue’s glow

May thy unwithering soul not cease to burn. 10

Still may thine heart with those pure thoughts o’erflow

Which force from mine such quick and warm return,

And I must love thee even more than this

Nor doubt that Thou and I part but to meet in bliss.

Sonnet: To a balloon, laden with Knowledge

Bright ball of flame that thro’ the gloom of Even

Silently takest thine etherial way

And with surpassing glory dimm’st each ray

Twinkling amid the dark blue Depths of Heaven,

Unlike the Fire thou bearest, soon shalt thou 5

Fade like a meteor in surrounding gloom,

Whilst that unquencheable is doomed to glow—

A watch light by the patriot’s lonely tomb,

A ray of courage to the opprest and poor,

A spark, tho’ gleaming on the hovel’s hearth, 10

Which thro’ the tyrants’ gilded domes shall roar,

A beacon in the darkness of the Earth,

A Sun which o’er the renovated scene

Shall dart like truth where Falshood yet has been.

Sonnet: On launching some bottles filled with

Knowledge into the Bristol Channel.

Vessels of Heavenly medicine! may the breeze

Auspicious waft your dark green forms to shore;

Safe may ye stern the wide surrounding roar

Of the wild whirlwinds and the raging seas;

And oh! if Liberty e’er deigned to stoop 5

From yonder lowly throne her crownless brow,

Sure she will breathe around your emerald group

The fairest breezes of her west that blow.

Yes! she will waft ye to some freeborn soul

Whose eyebeam, kindling as it meets your freight, 10

Her heaven-born flame on suffering Earth will light

Until Its radiance gleams from pole to pole

And tyrant-hearts with powerless envy burst

To see their night of ignorance dispersed.

Sonnet: On waiting for a wind

to cross the Bristol Channel from Devonshire to Wales.

Oh! for the South’s benign and balmy breeze!

Come gentle spirit! thro’ the wide Heaven sweep;

Chase inauspicious Boreas from the seas,

That gloomy tyrant of the unwilling deep.

These wilds where Man’s profane and tainting hand 5

Nature’s primæval loveliness has marred

And some few souls of the high bliss debarred

(Which else obey her powerful command)

I leave without a sigh. Ye mountain piles

That load in grandeur Cambria’s emerald vales, 10

Whose sides are fair in cultivation’s smiles

Around whose jagged heads the storm cloud sails—

A heart that’s all thine own receive in me

With Nature’s fervour fraught and calm in purity.

To Harriet

Harriet! thy kiss to my soul is dear:

At evil or pain I would never repine

If to every sigh and to every tear

Were added a look and a kiss of thine.

Nor is it the look when it glances fire, 5

Nor the kiss when bathed in the dew of delight,

Nor the throb of the heart when it pants desire

From the shadows of eve to the morning light,

But the look when a lustre of joy-mingled woe

Has faintly obscured all its bliss-beaming Heaven, 10

Such a lovely, benign and enrapturing glow

As sunset can paint on the clouds of even,

And a kiss, which the languish of silent love,

Tho’ eloquent, faints with the toil of expressing,

Yet so light, that thou canst not refuse, my dove! 15

To add this one to the debt of caressing.

Harriet! adieu to all vice and care:

Thy love is my Heaven, thy arms are my world;

While thy kiss and thy look to my soul remain dear

I should smile tho’ Earth from its base be hurled. 20

For a heart as pure and a mind as free

As ever gave lover, to thee I give,

And all that I ask in return from thee

Is to love like me and with me to live.

This heart that beats for thy love and bliss, 25

Harriet! beats for its country too,

And it never would thrill with thy look or kiss

If it dared to that country’s cause be untrue.

Honor, and wealth and life it spurns,

But thy love is a prize it is sure to gain, 30

And the heart that with love and virtue burns

Will never repine at evil or pain.

Mary to the Sea-Wind

I implore thee, I implore thee, softly swelling Breeze,

Waft swift the sail of my lover to the shore

That under the shadow of yon darkly-woven trees

I may meet him, I may meet him to part with him no more.

For this boon, for this boon, sweet Sea-Wind, will I weave 5

A garland wild of heath flowers to breathe to thee perfume.

Thou wilt kiss them, yet like Henry’s thy kisses will but leave

A more heaven-breathing fragrance and sense-enchanting bloom.

And then on Summer evens I will hasten to inhale—

Remembering that thou wert so kind—thy balmy, balmy breath; 10

And when thy tender pinions in the gloom begin to fail

I will catch thee to my bosom ere thou diest on the heath.

I will catch thee to my bosom—and if Henry’s oaths are true,

A softer, sweeter grave thou wilt never find than there.

Nor is it, lovely Sea-Wind, nor is it to undo 15

That my arms are so inviting, that my bosom is so fair.

A retrospect of Times of Old

The mansions of the Kings are tenantless . . . .

Low lie in dust their glory and their shame.

No tongue survives their virtuous Deeds to bless,

No tongue with execration blasts their fame,

But on some ruined pile, where yet the gold\* 5

Casts purple brilliance o’er colossal snow,

Where sapphire eyes in breathing statues glow

And the tainted blast sighs mid the reeds below,

Where grim effigies of the Gods of old

In mockery stand of ever-changing men 10

Their ever-changing worship. Ah how vain!

(Yet baubles aye must please the multitude.)

There Desolation dwells!—Where are the Kings?

Why sleep they now if sleep be not eternal?

Cannot Oblivion’s silent tauntings call 15

The kings and heroes from their quietude

Of Death, to snatch the Scrolls from her palsying hand,

To tell the world how mighty once they were.——

They dare not wake . . . thy Victory is here

O Death!— Yet I hear unearthly voices cry, 20

“Death, thou’lt be swallowed up in Victory!”

Yes, Dream of fame! the halls are desolate

Where whitened skeletons of thine heroes lie . . .

Stillness keeps watch before each grass-grown gate

Save where amid thy towers the Simoon’s sigh 25

Wakes the lone lyre whose mistress sleeps below

And bids it thrill to notes of awfulness and woe.

There ages since, some Royal Bloodhound crept

When on these pillared piles a midnight lay—

Which, but from visioned memories, long has fled— 30

To work ambition whilst his brother slept,

And reckless of the peaceful smile that played

Around his dream-fraught features when betrayed—

They told each innocent secret of the day—

Wakened the thoughtless victim, bade him stare 35

Upon the murderous steel . . . The chaste pale glare

Of the midnight moonbeam kissed its glittering blade—

A moment! and its brightness, quenched in blood,

Distained with murder the moon’s silver flood.

The blushing moon, wide-gathering vapours shrouded. 40

One moment did he triumph;—but remorse,

Suspicion, anguish, fear, all triumph clouded.

Destruction . . Suicide . . his last resource . . .

Wider yawned the torrent. The moon’s stormy flash

Disclosed its black tumultuousness . . . the crash 45

Of rocks and boughs mixed with its roarings hoarse.

A moment! And he dies! Hark to the awful dash!\*

Such were thy works, Ambition, even amid

The darksome times of generations gone,

Which the dark veil of viewless hours has hid 50

The veil of hours forever onward flown.

Swift roll the waves of Time’s eternal tide:

The peasant’s grave, marked by no tribute stone,

Not less remembered than the gilded bed

On which the hero slept! now ever gone,— 55

Passion and will and power, flesh, heart and brain and bone!

Each trophied bust where gore-emblazoned Victory

In breathing marble shook the ensanguined spear,

Flinging its heavy purple canopy

In cold expanse o’er martyred Freedom’s bier, 60

Each gorgeous altar where the victims bled

And grim Gods frowned above their human prey,

Where the high temple echoing to the yell

Of death-pangs, to the long and shuddering groan,

Whilst sacred hymns along the aisles did swell 65

And pitiless priests drowned each discordant moan—

All, all have faded in past time away!

New Gods, like men, changing in ceaseless flow,

Ever at hand as antient ones decay,

Heroes, and Kings and laws have plunged the world in woe. 70

Sesostris, Caesar, and Pizarro come!

Thou Moses! and Mahommed,\* leave that gloom!

Destroyers! never shall your memory die!

Approach, pale Phantom, to yon mould’ring tomb

Where all thy bones, hopes, crimes and passions lie. 75

And thou, poor peasant, when thou pass’t the grave

Where deep enthroned in monumental pride

Sleep low in dust the mighty and the brave,

Where the mad conqueror whose gigantic stride

The Earth was too confined for, doth abide, 80

Housing his bones amid a little clay,

In gratitude to Nature’s Spirit bend

And wait in still hope for thy better end.

{Shelley’s Footnotes. Key first one to line 5, key the second one to line 47, key the third one to line 72}

\*Gilding yet remains on the cornices of the ruined palace of Persepolis—

\*I believe it was only in those early times when Monarchy was in its apprenticeship that its compunction for evil deeds was unendurable . . There is no instance upon record parallel to that related above, but I know that neither men, nor sets of men become vicious but slowly and step by step, each less difficult than the former.

\*To this innumerable list of legal murderers our own age affords numerous addenda. Frederic of Prussia, Buonaparte, Suwarroff, Wellington and Nelson are the most skilful and notorious scourges of their species of the present day.—­—

The Voyage

A Fragment

Devonshire—August 1812

Quenched is old Ocean’s rage;

Each horrent wave that flung

Its neck that writhed beneath the tempest’s scourge

Indignant up to Heaven,

Now breathes in its sweet slumber 5

To mingle with the day

A spirit of tranquillity.

Beneath the cloudless sun

The gently swelling main

Scatters a thousand colourings 10

And the wind that wanders vaguely thro’ the void,

With the flapping of the Sail, and the dashing at the prow,

And the whistle of the sailor in that shadow of a calm

A ravishing harmony makes.

O! why is a rapt soul e’er recalled 15

From the palaces of visioned bliss

To the cells of real sorrow!

That little vessel’s company

Beheld the sight of loveliness—

The dark grey rocks that towered 20

Above the slumbering sea,

And their reflected forms

Deep in its faintly-waving mirror given.

They heard the low breeze sighing

The listless sails and ropes among, 25

They heard the music at the prow,

And the hoarse, distant clash

Sent from yon gloomy caves

Where Earth and Ocean strive for mastery.

A mingled mass of feeling 30

Those human spirits prest

As they heard, and saw, and felt

Some fancied fear, and some real woe

Mixed with those glimpses of heavenly joy

That dawned on each passive soul. 35

Where is the woe that never sees

One joybeam illumine the night of the mind?

Where is the bliss that never feels

One dart from the quiver of earthly pain?

The young and happy spirits now 40

Along the world are voyaging—

Love, friendship, virtue, truth,

Simplicity of sentiment and speech,

And other sensibilities

Known by no outward name, 45

Some faults that Love forgives,

Some flaws that Friendship shares,

Hearts passionate and benevolent,

Alive, and urgent to repair

The errors of their brother heads; 50

All voyage with them too.

They look to land . . . . they look to Sea;

Bounded one is, and palpable

Even as a noonday scene . .

The other indistinct and dim, 55

Spangled with dizzying sunbeams,

Boundless, untrod by human step,

Like the vague blisses of a midnight dream

Or Death’s immeasurable main,

Whose lovely islands gleam at intervals 60

Upon the Spirit’s visioned solitude

Thro’ Earth’s wide woven and many colour’d veil.

It is a moveless calm.

The sailor’s whistle shrill

Speeds clearly thro’ the sleeping atmosphere— 65

As country curates pray for rain

When drought has frustrated full long—

He whistles for a wind

With just the same success.

Two honest souls were they 70

And oft had braved in fellowship the storm,

Till from that fellowship had sprung

A sense of right and liberty

Unbending, undismayed, aye they had seen

Where danger, death and terror played 75

With human lives in the boiling deep,

And they had seen the scattered spray

Of the green and jagged mountain-wave

Hid in the lurid tempest cloud,

With lightnings tinging all its fleeting form, 80

Rolled o’er their fragile bark.

A dread and hopeless month

Had they participated once

In that diminutive bark:—

Their tearless eyes uplifted unto Heaven 85

So fruitlessly for aid!

Their parched mouths oped eager to the shower

So thin and sleety in that arctic clime.

Their last hard crust was shared

Impartial in equality, 90

And in the dreadful night

When all had failed . . . even hope,

Together they had shared the gleam

Shot from yon lighthouse tower

Across the waste of waves. 95

And therefore are they brave, free, generous.

For who that had so long fought hand to hand

With famine, toil and hazard, smil’d at Death

When leaning from the bursting billow’s height

He stares so ghastly terrible, would waste 100

One needless word for life’s contested toys?

Who that had shared his last and nauseous crust

With Famine and a friend, would not divide

A landsman’s meal with one who needed it?

Who that could rule the elements and spurn 105

Their fiercest rage, would bow before a slave

Decked in the fleetingness of Earthly power?

Who that had seen the soul of Nature work—

Blind, changeless and eternal in her paths—\*

Would shut his eyes and ears, quaking before 110

The bubble of a Bigot’s blasphemy?

The faintly moving prow

Divided Ocean’s smoothness languidly.

A landsman there reclined,

With lowering close-contracted brow 115

And mouth updrawn at intervals

As fearful of his fluctuating bent,

His eyes wide-wandering round

In insecure malignity,

Rapacious, mean, cruel and cowardly, 120

Casting upon the loveliness of day

The murkiness of villainy . . .

By other nurses than the battling storm,

Friendship, Equality and Sufferance,

His manhood had been cradled,— 125

Inheritor to all the vice and fear

Which Kings and laws and priests and conquerors spread

On the woe-fertilized world.

Yes! in the dawn of life,

When guileless confidence and unthinking love 130

Dilate all hearts but those

Which servitude or power has cased in steel,

He bound himself to an unhappy woman;

Not of those pure and heavenly links that Love

Twines round a feeling to Freedom dear, 135

But of vile gold, cank’ring the breast it binds,

Corroding and inflaming every thought

Till vain desire, remorse and fear

Envenom all the being.

Yet did this chain, tho’ rankling in the soul 140

Not bind the grosser body; he was wont

All means to try of thriving.

To those above him, the most servile cringe

That ignorance e’er gave to titled Vice

Was simperingly yielded; 145

To those beneath, the frown which Commerce darts

On cast-off friends, unprofitably poor,

Was less severe than his.

There was another too . . .

One of another mould. 150

He had been cradled in the wildest storm

Of Passion, and tho’ now

The feebler light of worn-out energies

Shone on his soul, yet ever and anon

A flash of tempests long past by 155

Would wake to pristine visions.

Now he was wrapt in a wild, woeful dream.

Deeply his soul could love,

And as he gazed on the boundless sea

Chequered with sunbeams and with shade, 160

Alternate to infinity,

He fell into a dream.

He dreamed that all he loved

Across the shoreless wastes were voyaging

By that unpitying landsman piloted, 165

And that at length they came

To a black and barren island rock.

Barren the isle . . . no egg

Which sea mews leave upon the wildest shore;

Barren the isle . . no blade 170

Of grass, no seaweed, not the vilest thing

For human nutriment . . . .

He struggled with the pitiless landsman there

But nerved tho’ his frame with love,

Quenchless, despairing love, 175

It nought availed . . . strong Power

Truth, love and courage vanquished.

A rock was piled upon his feeble breast.

All was subdued, but that

Which is immortal, unsubduable. 180

He still continued dreaming . . . .

The rock upon his bosom quenched not

The frenzy and defiance of his eye,

But the strong and coward landsman laughed to scorn

His unprevailing fortitude, 185

And in security of malice stabbed

One who accompanied his voyagings.

The blood gushed forth, the eye grew dim,

The nerve relaxed, the life was gone.

His smile of dastardly revenge 190

Glared upon dead frame.

Then back the Victim flung his head

In horror insupportable

Upon the jagged rock whereon he lay,

And human Nature paused awhile 195

In pity to his woe.

When he awaked to life

She whom he loved was bending over him.

Haggard her sunken eye . . . .

Bloodless her quivering lips . . . 200

She bended to bestow

The burning moisture from her feverish tongue

To lengthen out his life

Perhaps till succour came! . .

But more her dear soft eyes in languid love 205

When life’s last gleam was flickering in decay

The waning spark rekindled

And the faint lingering kiss of her withered lips

Mingled a rapture with his misery.

A bleeding Sister lay 210

Beside this wretched pair,

And He the dastard of relentless soul

In moody malice lowered over all.

And this is but a dream!

For yonder—see! the port in sight! 215

The vessel makes towards it!

The sight of their safety then,

And the hum of the populous town

Awakened them from a night of horror

To a day of secure delights. 220

Lo! here a populous Town:

Two dark rocks either side defend,

The quiet water sleeps within

Reflecting every roof and every mast.

A populous town! it is a den 225

Where wolves keep lambs to fatten on their blood.

’Tis a distempered spot. Should there be one,

Just, dauntless, rational, he would appear

A madman to the rest.

Yes! smooth-faced tyrants chartered by a Power 230

Called King, who in the castellated keep

Of a far distant land wears out his days

Of miserable dotage, pace the quay

And by the magic of that dreadful word,

Hated tho’ dreadful, shield their impotence, 235

Their lies, their murders, and their robberies.

See, where the sailor absent many years

With Heaven in his rapture-speaking eyes

Seeks the low cot where all his wealth reposes,

To bring himself for joy, and his small store, 240

Hard earned by years of peril and of toil,

For comfort to his famine-wasted babes.

Deep in the dark blue Sea the unmoving moon

Gleams beautifully quiet . . . such a night

When the last kiss from Mary’s quivering lips 245

Unmanned him. To the well-known door he speeds

His faint hand pauses on the latch . . His heart

Beats eagerly.—When suddenly the gang

Dissolves his dream of rapture—no delay!

No pity! unexpostulating power 250

Deals not in human feelings . . . he is stript

By those low slaves whose master’s names inflict

Curses more fell than even themselves would give;

The Indian muslins and the Chinese toys,

These for small gain, and those for boundless love, 255

Thus carefully concealed, are torn away;

The very handkerchief his Mary gave

Which in unchanging faithfulness he wore

Rent from his manly neck! his kindling eye

Beamed vengeance, and the tyrant’s manacles 260

Shook on his struggling arm; “Where is my Wife?

Where are my Children?”—close beside him stood

A sleek and pampered town’s man—“oh! your wife

“Died this time year in the House of Industry—

“Your young ones all are dead, except one brat 265

“Stubborn as you—Parish apprentice now.”

They have appropriated human life

And human happiness, but these weigh nought

In the nice balanced Politician’s scale,

Who finds that murder is expedient 270

And that vile means can answer glorious ends.

Wide Nature has outstretched her fertile Earth

In commonage to all.—But they have torn

Her dearest offspring from her bleeding breast,

Have disunited Liberty and life, 275

Severed all right from duty, and confused

Virtue with selfishness.—The grass-green hills,

The fertile vallies and the limpid streams,

The beach on the seashore, the sea itself,

The very snow-clad mountain peaks, whose height 280

Forbids all human footstep . . the ravines

Where cataracts have roared ere Monarchs were,

Nature, fair Earth, and Heaven’s untainted air

Are all apportioned out . . . some bloated Lord

Some priestly pilferer, or some Snake of Law, 285

Some miserable mockery of a man,

Some slave without a heart, looks over these

And calls them *Mine*—in self-approving pride.

The millionth of the produce of the vale

He sets apart for *charity*. Vain fool! 290

He gives in mercy, while stern Justice cries,

“Be thou as one of them—resign thine hall

Brilliant with murder’s trophies, and the board

Loaded with surfeiting viands, and the gems

Which millions toil to bring thee.—Get thee hence 295

And dub thyself a man, then dare to throw

One act of usefulness, one thought of love

Into the balance of thy past misdeeds!”

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to line 109}

\*It is remarkable that few are more experimentally convinced of the doctrine of necessity than old sailors, who have seen much and various service. The peculiarly engaging and frank generosity of seafaring men probably is an effect of this cause. Those employed in small and ill-equipped trading vessels seem to possess this generosity in a purer degree than those of a King’s ship. The habits of subjection and coercion imbued into the latter may suffice to explain the cause of the difference.

A Dialogue—1809

Death

Yes! my dagger is drenched with the blood of the brave.

I have sped with Love’s wings from the battlefield grave

Where Ambition is hushed neath the peacegiving sod

And slaves cease to tremble at Tyranny’s nod.

I offer a calm habitation to thee, 5

Victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Drear and damp is my hall, but a mild Judge is there

Who steeps in oblivion the brands of Despair.

Nor a groan of regret, nor a sigh, nor a breath

Dares dispute with grim Silence the empire of Death; 10

Nor the howlings of envy resound thro’ the gloom

That shrouds in its mantle the slaves of the tomb.

I offer a calm habitation to thee;

Say, Victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Mortal

Mine eyelids are heavy, my soul seeks repose— 15

It longs in thy arms to embosom its woes,

It longs in that realm to deposit its load

Where no longer the scorpions of perfidy goad,

Where the phantoms of Prejudice vanish away

And Bigotry’s bloodhounds lose scent of their prey. 20

Yet tell me, dark Death, when thine Empire is o’er

What awaits on futurity’s mist-circled shore?

Death

Cease, cease, wayward mortal! I dare not unveil

The shadows that float oer eternity’s vale.

What thinkest thou will wait thee? A \*Spirit of Love 25

That will hail thy blest advent to mansions above?

For Love, mortal! gleams thro’ the gloom of my sway

And the clouds that surround me fly fast at its ray.

Hast thou *loved*?—then depart from these regions of hate

And in slumber with me quench the arrows of fate 30

That canker and burn in the wounds of a heart

That urges its sorrows with me to depart.

I offer a calm habitation to thee;

Say, Victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Mortal

Oh sweet is thy slumber, and sweeter the ray 35

Which after thy night introduces the day!

How soft, how persuasive, self-interest’s breath

Tho’ it floats to mine ear from the bosom of Death!

I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all,

Yet a lingering friend may be grieved at my fall, 40

And Virtue forbids, tho’ I languish to die,

When Departure might heave Virtue’s breast with a sigh.

Yet Death! oh! my friend, snatch this form to thy shrine

And I fear, dear destroyer, I shall not repine.

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to line 25}

\*The author begs to be understood by this expression neither to mean the Creator of the Universe, nor the Christian Deity.—When this little poem was written the line stood thus, “What waits for the good?” but he has altered it on transcription, because however his feelings may love to linger on a future state of Happiness, neither Justice, reason nor passion can reconcile to his belief that the crimes of this life, equally necessary and inevitable as its virtues, should be punished in another:

“Earth in itself

“Contains at once the evil and the cure

“And all sufficing Nature can chastize

“Those who transgress her law.”

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Hogg Manuscript, ca. 1810

Death

–For my dagger is bathed in the blood of the brave

I come, care-worn tenant of life! from the grave

Where Innocence sleeps ’neath the peace-giving sod

And the good cease to tremble at Tyranny's nod

I offer a calm habitation to thee 5

Say, victim of grief wilt thou slumber with me,

Thy mansion is damp, cold silence is there

But it lulls in oblivion the fiends of Despair

Not a groan of regret, not a sigh, not a breath

Dares dispute with grim silence the empire of Death 10

I offer a calm habitation to thee . . 13

Say, victim of grief wilt thou slumber with me?

Mortal

Mine eyelids are heavy, my soul seeks repose 15

It longs in thy cells to embosom its’ woes

It longs in thy cells to deposit its’ load,

Where no longer the scorpions of perfidy goad

Where the phantoms of prejudice vanish away

And Bigotry's blood-hounds lose scent of their prey 20

Yet tell me dark Death! when thine Empire is o'er

What awaits on Futurity's mist-covered shore?

Death

Cease cease wayward mortal! . I dare not unviel

The shadows that float oer Eternity's vale

Nought waits for the good but a spirit of love 25

That will hail their blest advent to mansions above

For Love Mortal! gleams thro' the gloom of my sway

And the shades which surround me fly fast at its ray

Hast thou loved?—then depart from these regions of hate

And in slumber with me blunt the arrows’ of fate 30

I offer a calm habitation to thee, 33

Say victim of grief, wilt thou slumber with me?

Mortal

Oh! sweet is thy slumber, oh! sweet is the ray 35

Which after thy night introduces the day

How concealed, how persuasive, self-interest's breath

Tho' it floats to mine ear from the bosom of death

I hoped that I quite was forgotten by all

Yet a lingering friend might be grieved at my fall 40

And duty forbids, tho' I languish to die

When departure might heave Virtue's breast with a sig<h>.

Oh! death, oh my friend snatch this form to thy shr<ine>

And I fear dear destroyer I shall not repine.—

1810

How eloquent are eyes!

Not the rapt Poet’s frenzied lay

When the soul’s wildest feelings stray

Can speak so well as they.

How eloquent are eyes! 5

Not music’s most impassioned note

On which love’s warmest fervours float

Like they bid rapture rise.

Love! look thus again,

That your look may light a waste of years 10

Darting the beam that conquers cares

Thro’ the cold shower of tears!

Love! look thus again,

That Time the victor as he flies

May pause to gaze upon thine eyes, 15

A victor then in vain!—

Yet no! arrest not Time,

For Time, to others dear, we spurn,

When Time shall *be* no more we burn

When Love meets full return. 20

Ah no! arrest not Time.

Fast let him fly on eagle wing,

Nor pause till Heaven’s unfading spring

Breathes round its holy clime.

Yet quench that thrilling gaze 25

Which passionate Friendship arms with fire,

For what will eloquent eyes inspire

But feverish, false desire?

Quench then that thrilling gaze

For age may freeze the tremulous joy; 30

But age can never *love* destroy.

It lives to better days.

Age cannot love destroy.

Can perfidy then blight its flower

Even when in most unwary hour 35

It blooms in fancy’s bower?

Age cannot love destroy.

Can slighted vows then rend the shrine

On which its chastened splendours shine

Around a dream of joy? 40

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hogg, 18-19 June 1811

Age cannot love destroy 33

But perfidy can blast the flower

E’en when in most unwary hour 35

It blooms in Fancy’s bower

Age cannot love destroy

But Perfidy can rend the shrine

In which its vermeil splendors shine

*X X X*

1810

Hopes that bud in youthful breasts

Live not thro’ the lapse of time:

Love’s rose a host of thorns invest

And ungenial is the clime

Where its blossoms blow. 5

Youth says—the purple flowers are mine

That fade the while they glow.

Dear the boon to Fancy given,

Retracted while ’tis granted.

Sweet the rose that breathes in Heaven 10

Altho’ on Earth ’tis planted,

Where its blossoms blow,

Where by the frosts its leaves are riven

That fade the while they glow.

The pure soul lives that heart within 15

Which age cannot remove

If undefiled by tainting sin,

A sanctuary of love

Where its blossoms blow,

Where, in this unsullied shrine, 20

They fade not while they glow.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hogg, 18-19 June 1811

Hopes that swell in youthful breasts

Live they thro’ the waste of time? . . .

Love’s rose an host of thorns invests

Cold ungenial is the clime

Where its’ honours blow 5

Youth says . . the purple flowers are mine

Which die the while they glow

Dear the boon to Fancy given

Retracted whilst it’s granted! —— ——

Sweet the rose which lives in Heaven 10

Altho’ on Earth ’tis planted

Where its’ honours blow

Where by Earth’s slaves the leaves are riven

Which die the while they glow. . . .

X X X X

September 23, 1809

Moonbeam! leave the shadowy dale

To cool this burning brow—

Moonbeam, why art thou so pale

As thou glidest along the midnight vale

Where dewy flowrets grow? 5

Is it to mimic me?

Ah, that can never be;

For thy path is bright

And the clouds are light

That at intervals shadow the star-studded night. 10

Now all is deathy still on Earth,

Nature’s tired frame reposes;

Yet ere the golden morning’s birth

Its radiant gates uncloses,

Flies forth her balmy breath; 15

But mine is the midnight of death,

And Nature’s morn

To my bosom forlorn

Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn.

Wretch! suppress the glare of madness 20

Struggling in thine haggard eye,

For the keenest throb of sadness,

Pale despair’s most sickening sigh,

Is but to mimic me.

But that can never be 25

When the darkness of care

And the death of despair

Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs that rankle there.

SUPPLEMENT

*To the Moonbeam* in Letter to Hogg, 17 May 1811

—To The Moonbeam

Moonbeam, leave the shadowy vale

To bathe this burning brow

Moonbeam, why art thou so pale

As thou walkest oer the dewy dale

Where humble wild flowers grow 5

Is it to mimic me?

But that can never be

For thine orb is bright

And the clouds are light

That at intervals shadow the star studded night 10

Now all is deathy still on Earth

Natures tired frame reposes

And ere the golden mornings birth

It’s radiant hues discloses

Flies forth its balmy breath, 15

But mine is the midnight of death

And Natures morn

to my bosom forlorn

Brings but a gloomier night, implants a deadlier thorn

Wretch! suppress the glare of madness 20

Struggling in thine haggard eye

For the keenest throb of sadness

Pale despairs most sickening sigh

Is but to mimic me

And this must ever be 25

When the twilight of care

And the night of despair

Seem in my breast but joys to the pangs that walk there

**[Poems about Mary]**

Advertisement

The few poems immediately following are selected from many written during three weeks of an entrancement caused by hearing Mary’s story——I hope that the delicate and discriminating genius of the friend who related it to me will allow the publication of the heart-breaking facts under the title of Leonora.—For myself at that time: nondum, amabam, et amare amabum, quaerebam quid amerem, amans amare.\*

Mary died three months before I heard her tale.—

November 1810

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to final sentence of first paragraph in the Advertisement}

\*Confess. St. Augustin.

To Mary I

Dear girl! thou art wildered by madness,

Yet do not look so, sweet.

I could share in the sigh of thy sadness,

Thy woe my soul could meet.

I loved a heart sincerely. 5

Yes! dear it was to mine;

Yet, Mary, I love more dearly

One tender look of thine.

Oh! do not say that Heaven

Will frown on errors past; 10

Thy faults are all forgiven,

Thy Virtues ever last.\*

The cup with death o’erflowing

I’ll drink, fair girl, to thee.

For when the storm is blowing 15

To shelter we may flee.

Thou canst not bear to languish

In this frail chain of clay,

And I am tired of anguish.

Love! let us haste away! 20

Like thee, I fear to weather

Death’s darksome wave alone.

We’ll take the voyage together.

Come, Mary! let’s begone.

Strange mists my woe efface, love, 25

And thou art pale in Death . . . .

Give one, one last embrace, love,

And we resign our breath.

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to line 12}

\*This opinion is of all others the most deeply rooted in my conviction. The enquirer will laugh at it as a dream, the Christian will abhor it as blasphemy.—Mary, who repeatedly attempted suicide, yet was unwilling to die alone.—Nor is it probable that she would, had I instead of my friend been subjected to the trial of sitting a summer’s night by her side.—whilst two glasses of poison stood on the table, and she folded me to her tremulous bosom in extasies of friendship and despair!— ~~What are the Romances of Leadenhall Str. to this of real life?~~

To Mary II

Fair one! calm that bursting heart . . . .

Dares then fate to frown on thee,

Lovely, spotless as thou art?

Tho’ its worst poison lights on me,

Then dry that tear; 5

Thou needest not fear

These woes when thy limbs are cold on the bier.

Start not from winter’s breathing, dearest,

Tho’ bleak is yonder hill . . .

As perjured love the blast thou fearest 10

Is not half so deadly chill;

Like these winds that blow

No remorse does it know

And colder it strikes than the driving snow.

The tomb is damp and dark and low, 15

Yet with thee the tomb I do not dread.

There is not a place of frightful woe

Where with thee I’d refuse to lay my head . . .

But our souls shall not sleep

In the grave damp and deep 20

But in love and devotion their holy day keep.\*

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to line 21}

\*The expression *devotion,* is not used in a religious sense; for which abuse of this lovely word, few have a greater horror than the Author.

To Mary III

Mary, Mary! art thou gone

To sleep in thine earthy cell?

Presses thy breast the death-cold stone?

Pours none the tear, the sob, the groan,

Where murdered virtue sleeps alone 5

Where its first glory fell?

Mary, Mary, past is past!

I submit in silence to fate’s decree,

Tho’ the tear of distraction gushes fast

And at night when the lank reeds hiss in the blast 10

My spirit mourns in sympathy.

Thou wert more fair in mind than are

The fabled heavenly train,

But thine was the pang of corroding care,

Thine, cold contempt and lone despair 15

And thwarted love—more hard to bear . . .

And I—wretch!—weep that such they were,

And I . . . . still drag my chain.

Thou wert but born to weep, to die,

To feel dissolved the dearest tie— 20

Its fragments by the pityless world

Adown the blast of fortune hurl’d

To strive with envy’s wreckful storm.

Thou wert but born to weep and die,

Nor could thy ceaseless misery, 25

Nor heavenly virtues aught avail,

Nor taintless innocence prevail

With the world’s slaves thy love to spare,

Nor the magic unearthly atmosphere

That wrapt thine ethereal form. 30

Such, loveliest Mary, was thy fate,

And such is Virtue’s doom . . . .

Contempt, neglect and hatred wait

Where yawns a wide and dreary gate

To drag its votaries to the tomb. 35

Sweet flower! that blooms amid the weeds

Where the dank serpent, interest, feeds!

To the Lover of Mary

Drink the exhaustless moonbeam where its glare

Wanly lights murdered virtue’s funeral

And tremulous sheds on the corpse-shrouding pall

A languid, languid flare . . . . .

Hide thee, poor Wretch, where yonder baleful yew 5

Sheds o’er the clay that now is tenantless—

Whose spirit once thrilled to thy warm caress—

Its deadly, deadly dew.

The moon-ray will not quench thy misery,

But the yew’s death-drops will bring peace to thee, 10

And yonder clay-cold grave thy bridal bed shall be.

And since the Spirit dear that breathes of Heaven

Has burst the powerless bondage of its clay

And soars an Angel to eternal day,

Purged of its earthly leaven, 15

Thy yearnings now shall bend thee to the tomb,

Oblivion blot a life without a stain

And death’s cold hand round thy heart’s ceaseless pain

Enfold its veil of gloom.

The wounds shall close of Misery’s scorpion goad 20

When Mary greets thee in her blest abode

And worships holy Love, in purity thy God.

O this were joy! and such as none would fear

To purchase by a life of passing woe,

For on this earth the sickly flowers that glow 25

Breathe of perfection there.

Yet live—for others barter thine own bliss,

And living shew what towering Virtue dares

To accomplish even in this vale of tears:

Turn Hell to Paradise, 30

And spurning selfish joy soar high above

The Heaven of Heavens, let ever eternal \*love

Despised awhile, thy sense of holier \*Virtue prove.

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to lines 32 and 33}

\*As if they were not synonimous!

1810

Dares the Lama, most fleet of the Sons of the Wind,

The Lion to rouse from his lair?

When the tyger awakes, can the fast-fleeting hind

Repose trust in his footsteps of air?

No—abandoned it sinks in helpless despair; 5

The monster transfixes his prey,

On the sand flows its life-blood away,

And the rocks and the woods to the death-yells reply

Protracting the horrible harmony.

Yet the fowl of the desart when danger encroaches 10

Dares dreadless to perish, defending her brood,

Tho’ the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants approaches,

Thirsting—aye, thirsting for blood—

And demands, like mankind, his brother for food,

Yet more lenient, more gentle, than they; 15

For hunger, not glory, the prey

Must perish—revenge does not howl o’er the dead,

Nor ambition with fame bind the murderer’s head.

Tho’ weak as the Lama that bounds on the Mountains

And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of air, 20

Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of fountains,

Tho’ a fiercer than tygers is there,

Tho’ more frightful than death it scatters despair,

And its shadow, eclipsing the day,

Spreads the darkness of deepest dismay 25

O’er the withered and withering nations around

And the war-mangled corpses that rot on the ground.

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream

Waves too poisonously lovely for mortals to see;

They basked for awhile in the love-darting beam 30

Then perished—and perished like me,

For in vain from the grasp of Religion I flee:

The most tenderly loved of my soul

Are slaves to its chilling control . . .

It pursues me. It blasts me. Oh! where shall I fly? 35

What remains but to curse it, to curse it and die?

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hogg, 20 April 1811

Dares the lama most fleet of the sons of the wind

The Lion to rouse from his scull covered lair

When the tyger awakes can the fast fleeting hind

Repose trust in his footsteps of air

No!— abandoned he sinks in a trance of despair 5

The monster transfixes his prey

On the sand flows his life blood away

Whilst India’s rocks to his death-yells reply

Protracting the horrible harmony

Yet the fowl of the desert when danger encroaches 10

Dare fearless to perish defending her brood

Tho the fiercest of [] cloud-piercing tyrants approaches

Thirsting—aye, thirsting for blood

And demands like mankind his brother for food

Yet more lenient more gentle than they 15

For hunger, not glory the prey

Must perish . . Revenge does not howl o’er the dead

Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer’s head

Tho weak as the Lama that bounds on the mountains

And endued not with fast fleeting footsteps of air 20

Yet yet will I draw from the purest of fountains

Tho’ a fiercer than ty[gers] is there

Tho more dreadful than Death, it scatters despair

Tho its’ shadow eclipses the day

And the darkness of deepest dismay 25

Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror around

And lowers on the corpses that rot on the ground

They came to the fountain to draw from its stream

Waves too pure too celestial for mortals to see

They basked for awhile in its silvery beam 30

Then perished, & perished like me

For in vain from the grasp of religion I fle

The most tenderly loved of my soul

Are slaves to its hated control

It pursues me, it blasts me! ah where shall I fly 35

What remains but to curse it, to curse it & die

1809

I will kneel at thine altar, will crown thee with bays.

Whether God, Love or Virtue thou art,

Thou shalt live . . . aye! more long than these perishing lays

Thou shalt live in this high-beating heart.

Dear love! from its life-strings thou never shalt part, 5

Tho’ Prejudice clanking her chain,

Tho’ Interest groaning in gain,

May tell me thou closest to Heaven the door,

May tell me that thine is the way to be poor.

The victim of merciless tyranny’s power 10

May smile at his chains if with thee;

The most sense-enslaved loiterer in Passion’s sweet bower

Is a wretch if unhallowed by thee.

Thine, thine is the bond that alone binds the free.

Can the free worship bondage? nay, more, 15

What they feel not, believe not, adore

What if felt, if believed, if existing must give

To thee to create, to eternize, to live.—

For Religion more keen than the blasts of the North

Darts its frost thro’ the self-palsied soul; 20

Its slaves on the work of destruction go forth;

The divinest emotions that roll

Submit to the rod of its impious control.

At the venemous blast of its breath

Love, concord, lies gasping in death, 25

Philanthropy utters a war-drowned cry

And selfishness, conquering, cries Victory!

Can we then thus tame, thus impassive behold

That alone whence our life springs destroyed?

Shall Prejudice, Priestcraft, Opinion and Gold— 30

Every passion with interest alloyed—

Where Love ought to reign, fill the desolate void?

But the Avenger arises, the throne

Of selfishness totters, its groan

Shakes the nations.—It falls, love seizes the sway; 35

The sceptre it bears unresisted away.

Fragment of a Poem,

the original idea of which

was suggested by the cowardly and infamous bombardment of Copenhagen

x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

The ice mountains echo, the Baltic, the Ocean

Where cold sits enthroned on its solium of snow:

Even Spitzbergen perceives the terrific commotion.

The roar floats on the whirlwinds of sleet as they blow,

Blood clots with the streams as half frozen they flow, 5

Lurid flame o’er the cities the meteors of war

And mix their deep gleam with the bright polar glare.

Yes! the arms of Britannia victorious are bearing

Fame, triumph and terror wherever they spread.

Her Lion his crest o’er the nations is rearing, 10

Ruin follows . . . it tramples the dying and dead . . .

But her countrymen fall . . . the bloodreeking bed

Of the battle-slain sends a complaint-breathing sigh;

It is mixed with the shoutings of victory.

I see the lone female. The sun is descending— 15

Dank carnage-smoke sheds an ensanguining glare.

Night its shades in the orient earlier is blending

Yet the light faintly marks a wild maniac’s stare.

She lists to the death shrieks that came on the air,

The pride of her heart to her bosom she prest, 20

Then sunk on his form in the sleep of the blest.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hogg, 11 January 1811

Yes! the arms of Britannia victorious are bearing

Fame, Triumph & Glory wherever they spead

Her Lion his crest oer the nations is rearing; [10]

Ruin follows! it tramples the dying & dead

Thy countrymen fall, the ~~complaint-breathing sigh bed~~ blood-reeking bed 5

Of the battle-slain sends a complaint breathing sigh

It is mixed with the shoutings of Victory! [14]

Old Ocean to shrieks of Despair is resounding

It washes the terror-struck nations with gore

Wild horror the fear-palsied Earth is astounding 10

And murmurs of fate fright the dread-convulsed shore

The Andes in Sympathy start at the roar

Vast Aetna alarmed leans his flame-glowing brow

And hugh Teneriffe stoops with his pinnacled snow.

The ice-mountains echo. the Baltic, the Ocean 15 [1]

Where Cold sits enthoned on his solium of snow

E’en Spitzbergen perceives the terrific commotion

The roar floats on the whirlwinds of sleet as they blow

<Bloo>d tinges the streams as half frozen they flow [5]

<Th>e meteors of war’s lurid flame thro’ the air 20

They mix their bright gleam with the red Polar glare. [7]

X X X X X X X X

All are Bretheren,— the African bending

To the stroke of the hard hearted Englishmans rod

The courtier at Luxury’s Palace attending

The Senator trembling at Tyranny’s nod 25

Each nation wch kneels at the footstool of God

All are Brethren; then banish Distinction afar

Let concord & Love heal the miseries of War.

1809

On an Icicle that clung to the grass of a grave

O take the pure gem to where Southernly Breezes

Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair,

In which the warm current of love never freezes

As it circulates freely and shamelessly there,

Which untainted by crime, unpolluted by care, 5

Might dissolve this dear ice-drop, might bid it arise,

Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies.

For I found the pure gem when the daybeam returning

Ineffectual gleams on the snow-spangled plain,

When to others the longed-for arrival of morning 10

Brings relief to long night-dreams of soul-racking pain.

But regret is an insult. To grieve is in vain.

And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair

Sought Heaven to meet with its kindred there?

Yet ’twas some Angel of kindness descending 15

To share in the load of Mortality’s woe,

Who, over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending,

Bade sympathy’s tenderest tear-drops to flow

And consigned the rich gift to the Sister of Snow;

And if Angels can weep, sure I may repine 20

And shed tear-drops, tho’ frozen to ice, on thy shrine.

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Letter to Hogg, 6 January 1811

Oh! take the pure gem to where southernly breezes

Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as fair

In which the warm current of Love never freezes

As it rises unmingled with selfishness there

Which untainted by Pride, unpolluted by care 5

Might dissolve the dim ice drop, might bid it arise

Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the skies

Or where the stern warrior his country defending

Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to pour

~~Where~~ Or oer the fell corpse of a dread Tyrant bending 10

Where Patriotism red with his guilt-reeking gore

Plants Liberty’s flag on the slave-peopled shore

With Victory’s cry, with the shout of the free

Let it fly taintless spirit to mingle with thee

For I found the pure gem when the day-beam returning 15 [8]

Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain

When to others the wished-for arrival of morning [10]

Brings relief to long-visions of soul racking pain

But regret is an insult—to grieve is in vain

And Say why should we grieve that a spirit so fair 20

Seeks Heaven to mix with its kindred there

But still ’twas some Spirit of kindness descending [15]

To share in the load of mortality’s woe

Who over thy lowly built sepulchre bending

Bade sympathy’s tenderest tear-drop to flow 25

Not for thee soft compassion celestials did know

But if Angels can weep, sure Man may repine [20]

May weep in mute grief oer thy low laid shrine

And did I then say for the Altar of Glory

That the earliest the loveliest flowers I’d entwine 30

Tho’ with millions of blood-reeking victims ’tis gory

Tho’ the tears of the widow polluted its shrine

Tho’ around the orphans, the fatherless pine.

Oh! fame all thy glories I’d yield for a tear

To shed on the grave of an heart so sincere. 35

1808

Cold are the Blasts when December is howling,

Chill are the damps on a dying friend’s brow,

Stern is the Ocean when tempests are rolling,

Sad is the grave where a brother lies low,

But chillier is scorn from the false one that lov’d thee, 5

More stern is the sneer from the friend that has proved thee,

More sad are the tears when these sorrows have moved thee

That, envenomed by wildest delirium, flow.

And alas! thou, Louisa, hast felt all this horror! . .

Full long the fallen Victim contended with fate 10

Till—a destitute outcast abandoned to sorrow—

She sought her babe’s food at her ruiner’s gate.

Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer;

He turned laughing away from her anguish-fraught prayer,

She spoke not, but wringing the rain from her hair, 15

Took the rough mountain path, tho’ the hour was late.

On the cloud-shrouded summit of dark Penmanmawr

The form of the wasted Louisa reclined,

She shrieked to the ravens loud croaking afar,

She sighed to the gusts of the wild sweeping wind.— 20

“Ye storms o’er the peak of the lone mountain soaring,

Ye clouds with the thunder-winged tempest-shafts lowering,

Thou wrath of black Heaven, I blame not thy pouring,

But thee, cruel Henry, I call thee unkind.”

Then she wreathed a wild crown from the flow’rs of the mountain, 25

And deliriously laughing the heath twigs entwined.

She bedewed it with tear-drops, then leaned o’er the fountain

And cast it a prey to the wild sweeping wind.

“Ah! go,” she exclaimed, “where the tempest is yelling.

’Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling— 30

But I left, a pityless outcast, my dwelling.

My garments are torn—so they say is my mind.”

Not long lived Louisa.—And over her grave

Waved the desolate limbs of a storm-blasted yew.

Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave, 35

But spirits of love steep her slumbers in dew;

Then stay thy swift steps mid the dark mountain heather,

Tho’ bleak be the scene and severe be the weather,

For perfidy, traveller, cannot bereave her

Of the tears to the tombs of the innocent due. 40

SUPPLEMENT

Version in Hogg Manuscript, Late October or November 1810

Cold cold is the blast when December is howling

Cold are the damps on a dying mans brow

Stern are the seas when the wild waves are rolling

And sad the grave where a loved one lies low

But colder is scorn from the being who loved thee 5

More stern is the sneer from the friend who has proved thee

More sad are the tears when these sorrows have moved thee

Which mixed with groans, anguish & wild madness flow.

And ah! Poor Louisa has felt all this horror

Full long the fallen victim contended with fate 10

Till a destitute outcase abandoned to sorrow

She sought her babe’s food at her ruiner’s gate

Another had charmed the remorseless betrayer

He turned callous aside from her moans & her prayer

She said nothing but wringing the wet from her hair 15

Crossed the dark mountain side tho the hour it was late

’Twas on the dark summit of huge Penmanmawr

That the form of the wasted Louisa reclined,

She shrieked to the ravens that croaked from afar

And she sighed to the gusts of the wild sweeping wind 20

I call not yon rocks clouds where the thunder peals rattle

I call not yon rocks where the elements battle 22

But thee perjured Henry I call thee unkind 24

The she wreathed in her hair the wild flowers of the mountain 25

And deliriously laughing a garland entwined

She bedewed it with tears, then she hung oer the fountain

And laving it, cast it a prey to the wind

“Ah! go” she exclaimed “where the tempest is yelling

’Tis unkind to be cast on the sea that is swelling 30

But I left a pityless outcast my dwelling

My garments are torn so they say is my mind”

Not long lived Louisa—but over her grave

Waved the desolate form of a storm-blasted yew

Around it no demons or ghosts dare to rave 35

But spirits of Peace steep her slumbers in dew

Then stay thy swift steps mid the dark mountain heather

Tho chill blow the wind & severe be the weather,

For perfidy traveller cannot bereave her

Of the tears to the tombs of the innocent due 40

1809

Henry and Louisa\*

a Poem in two parts

————————————

She died for love—and he for glory

————————————

The Parting

Part the First.

Scene—England

I

Where are the Heroes? sunk in death they lie.

What toiled they for? titles and wealth and fame.

But the wide Heaven is now their canopy,

And legal murderers their loftiest name,

Enshrined on brass their glory and their shame 5

What tho’ torn Peace and martyred Freedom see?

What tho’ to most remote posterity

Their names, their selfishness for ay enscrolled,

A shuddering world’s blood-boltered eyes behold,

Mocking mankind’s unbettered misery? 10

Can this perfection give, can valour prove

One wish for others’ bliss, one throb of love . . .

II

Yet darest thou boast thyself superior.—Thou!

Vile worm! whom lovely woman deigns to bless,

And, meanly selfish, bask in glory’s glow, 15

Rending the soul-spun ties of tenderness

Where all desires rise for thine happiness?

Canst thou boast thus and hope to be forgiven?

Oh! when thou started’st from her last caress,

From purest love by vulgar Glory driven, 20

Couldst thou have e’er deserved, if thou resigned’st, Heaven?

III

IV

V

And shadowed by affection’s purple wing

Bid thee forget how Time’s fast footstep sped:

Would die in peace when thou wert mingled with the dead.

VI

Had Glory’s fire consumed each tender tie 25

That links to love the Heaven-aspiring soul?

Could not that voice, quivering in agony,

That struggling pale resolve that dared control

Passion’s wild flood, when wildest it did roll,

Could not impassioned tenderness that burst 30

Cold prudery’s bondage, owning all it felt—

Could not these, warrior, quench thy battle thirst,

Nought this availed thine iron-bound breast to melt,

To make thy footsteps pause where love and freedom dwelt?

VII

Yes! every soul-nerve vibrated . . . a space 35

Enchained in speechless awe the warrior stood.

Superior reason, Virtue, manner, grace,

Claimed for a space their rights . . . . in varying mood

Before her lovely eyes in thought he stood

Whilst Glory’s train flashed on his mental eye 40

Which wandered wildly where the fight’s red flood,

The crash of death, the storm of Victory,

Roll round the hopes of love that only breathe to die.

VIII

Then She exclaimed as love-nerved sense returned,

“Go . . mingle in thy country’s battle tide . . . 45

Forget that love’s pale torch hath ever burned.

Until thou meet’est me clothed in Victor-pride

May guardian spirits keep thee . . . far and wide

O’er the red regions of the day-scorched zone

For glory seek . . but here thou wilt abide— 50

Here in this breast—thou wilt abide alone.

I will thine empire be. My heart shall be thy throne.”

IX

When Princes at fair Reason’s bidding bend,

Resigning power for Virtue’s fadeless meed,

Or spirits of Heaven to man submission lend, 55

The debt of gratitude is great indeed;

In vain the heart its thankfulness to prove

Aye might attempt to do the debt away.

Yet what is this compared to Woman’s love,

Dear Woman’s love, the dawn of Virtue’s day, 60

The bliss-inspiring beam, the soul-illuming ray?

X

Then Henry spoke as he checked the rising tear,

“That I have loved thee and must love for ever

Heaven is a witness—Heaven to whom are dear

The hearts that earthly chances cannot sever, 65

Where bloom the flowers that cease to blossom never.

Religion sanctifies the cause, I go

To execute its vengeance. Heaven will give

To me (so whispers hope) to quell the foe.

Heaven gives the good to conquer and to live, 70

And thou shalt next to God his votive heart receive.

XI

Say, is not he the Tyrant of the World

And are not we the injured and the brave?

Unmoved shall we behold his flag unfurled,

Flouting with impious Wing Religion’s grave, 75

Triumphant gleaming o’er the passive wave,

Nor raise an arm, nor one short pleasure yield

The boon of immortality to save?

Hope is our tempered lance, faith is our shield;

Conquest or death for these wait on the gory field. 80

XII

Even at that hour when hostile myriads clash

And terrible death shakes his resistless dart,

Mingling wild wailings with the battle crash,

Then thou and Heaven shall share this votive heart.

When from pale dissolution’s grasp I start 85

(If Heaven so wills) even then will I be thine.

Nor can the whelming tomb have power to part

From all it loves a heart that loves like mine,

From thee . . round whom its hopes, its joys, its fears entwine.”

XIII

A sicklier tint crept o’er Louisa’s cheek . . . . 90

“But thou art dearer far to me than all

That fancy’s visions feign, or tongue can speak.

Yes! may I die, and be that death eternal,

When other thoughts but thee my soul enthrall.

The joys of Heaven I prize thee far above, 95

Thee, dearest, will my Soul its Saviour call.

My faith is thine . . my faith-gained heaven, thy love;

My Hell, when cruel fates thee from these arms remove.

XIV

Farewell” . . . she spoke. The warrior’s war-steeled breast,

Quivering in feeling’s agonized excess, 100

Scarce drew its breath, to sickliness oppressed

By mingled self-reproach and tenderness;

He dared not speak, but rushed from her caress.

The sunny glades; the little birds of spring

Twittering from every garlanded recess, 105

Returning verdure’s joy that seem’d to sing

Whilst woe with stern hand smote his every mental string;

XV

The fragrant dew-mists from the Ivied Thorn

Whose form o’ershadowed love’s most blissful bower,

Where oft would fly the tranquil time of morn, 110

Or swifter urge its flight dear evening’s hour,

When purple twilight in the East would lower

And the amorous starbeam kiss the loveliest form

That ever bruised a pleasure-fainting flower

Whose emanative eyebeam, thrilling, warm, 115

Around her sacred presence shed a rapturing charm;

XVI

Each object so beloved, each varied tone

Of heavenly feeling that can never die,

Each little throb his heart had ever known

Impetuous rushed on fainting memory. 120

Yet not alone for parted extacy,

To which he now must bid a long adieu,

Started the bitter tear or burst the sigh;

In all the pangs that, spite concealment, grew

O’er his Louisa’s peace, a deeper soul-pang drew. 125

XVII

The balmy breath of soul-reviving dawn

That kissed the bosom of the waveless lake,

Scented with spring-flowers, o’er the level lawn

Struck on his sense, to woe scarce yet awake.

He felt its still reproach, the upland brake 130

Rustled beneath his war-steed’s eager prance,

Hastening to Egypt’s shore his way to take,

But swifter hastening to dispel the trance

Of grief, he hurried on, smothering the last sad glance.

XVIII

Sweet flower! in dereliction’s solitude 135

That scatterest perfume to the unheeding gale

And in the grove’s unconscious quietude

Murmurest (thyself scarce conscious) thy sad tale—

Sure it is subject for the Poet’s wail,

Tho’ faint, that one so worthy to be prized, 140

The fairest flower of the loveliest vale,

To withering Glory should be sacrifized,

That hides his hateful form in Virtue’s garb disguised.

XIX

Religion! hated cause of all the woe

That makes the world this wilderness. Thou spring 145

Whence terror, pride, revenge and perfidy flow,

The curses which thy pampered minions bring

On thee shall Virtue’s votary fear to fling?

And thou, dear Love! thy tender ties to sever,

To drown in shouts thy bliss-fraught murmuring, 150

Ceaseless shall selfish Prejudice endeavour?

Shall she succeed? . . oh no, whilst I live, never, never!

XX

For by the wrongs that flaming deep

Within this bosom’s agony,

That dry the source whence others weep,— 155

I swear that thou shalt die!

Henry and Louisa

The Meeting

Part Second

I

’Tis night . . No planet’s brilliance dares to light

The dim and battle-blushing scenery,

Friends mixed with foes urge unremitting fight

Beneath War’s suffocating canopy, 160

And, as sulphureous meteors fire the sky,

Fast flash the deathful thunderbolts of War,

Whilst groans unite in frightful harmony

And wakened vultures shrieking from afar

Scent their half-murdered prey amid the battle’s jar. 165

II

Now had the Genius of the south, sublime

On mighty Atlas’ tempest-cinctured throne,

Looked over Afric’s desolated clime,

Deep wept at slavery’s everlasting moan

And his most dear-beloved nation’s groan. 170

The Boreal whirlwind’s shadowy wings that sweep

The veined bosom of the northern world

That hears contending thunders on the deep,

Sees hostile flags on Egypt’s strand unfurled,

Brings Egypt’s faintest groan to waste and ruin hurled. 175

III

Is this then all that sweeps the midnight sand?

Tells the wild blast no tales of deeper woe?

Does war alone pollute the unhappy land?

No—the low fluttering and the hectic glow

Of hope, whose sickly flowret scarce can blow, 180

Chilled by the ice-blast of intense despair;

Anguish that dries the big tear ere it flow,

And maniac love, that sits by the beacon’s glare

With eyes on nothing fixed, dim like a mist-clothed star.

IV

No fear save one could daunt her—Ocean’s wave, 185

Bearing Britannia’s hired asassins on

To victory’s shame or an unhonored grave,

Beheld Louisa mid an host alone.

The womanly dress that veiled her fair form is gone,

Gone is the timid wandering of her eye, 190

Pale firmness nerved her anguished heart to stone;

The sense of shame, the flush of modesty,

By stern resolve were quenched or only glowed to die.

V

“Where is my love—my Henry—is he dead?”

Half-drowned in smothered anguish wildly burst 195

From her parched lips—“is my ador’d one dead?

Knows none my Henry? War! thou source accurst

In whose red flood I see these sands immerst,

Hast thou quite whelmed compassion’s tearful spring

Where thy fierce tide rolls to slake Glory’s thirst? 200

Perhaps thou, Warrior, some kind word dost bring

From my poor Henry’s lips when Death its shade did fling.”

VI

A tear of pity dimmed the Warrior’s gaze.

“I know him not, sweet maiden, yet the fight

That casts on Britain’s fame a brighter blaze 205

Should spare all yours, if ought I guess aright.

But ah! by yonder flash of sulphurous light

The dear loved work of battle has begun.

Fame calls her votaries.” He fled. The night

Had far advanced before the fray was done; 210

Scarce sunk the roar of war before the rising Sun.

VII

But sight of wilder grief where slept the dead

Was witnessed by the morn’s returning glow,

When frantic o’er the waste Louisa sped

To drink her dying lover’s latest vow: 215

Sighed mid her locks the sea-gales as they blew,

Bearing along faint shrieks of dying men

As if they sympathized with her deep woe.

Silent she paused a space, and then again

New-nerved by fear and hope sprang wild across the plain. 220

VIII

See where she stops again! . . . a ruin’s shade

Darkens his fading lineaments, his cheek

On which remorseful pain is deep pourtrayed

Glares, death-convulsed and ghastly. Utterings break—

Shuddering, unformed—his tongue essays to speak. 225

There low he lies! poor Henry! where is now

Thy dear, deserted love? Is there no friend

To bathe with tears that anguish-burning brow,

None comfort in this fearful hour to lend,

When to remorseful grief thy parting spirits bend? 230

IX

Yes! pain had steeped each dying limb in flame

When, mad with mingled hope and pale dismay,

Fleet as the wild deer his Louisa came,

Nerved by distraction.—A pale tremulous ray

Flashed on her eyes from the expiring day. 235

Life for a space rushed to his fainting breast.

The breathing form of love-enlivened clay

In motionless rapture pale Louisa prest

And stung by maddening hope in tears her bliss exprest.

X

Yet was the transport wavering . . . the dew 240

Of bodily pain that bathed his pallid brow,

The pangs that thro’ his anguished members flew,

Tho’ half subdued by Love’s returning glow,

Doubt mixed with lingering hope must needs bestow.

Then she exclaimed—“Love, I have sought thee far, 245

Whence our own Albion’s milder sea gales blow

To this stern scene of fame-aspiring war;

Thro’ waves of danger past thou wert my polar star.

XI

Live then, dear source of life! and let the ray

Which lights thy kindling eyebeam softly speak 250

That thou hast loved when I was far away—

Yet thou art pale. Death’s hectic lights thy cheek.

Oh! if one moment fate the chain should break

Which binds thy soul unchangeably to mine:

Another moment’s pain fate dare not wreak. 255

Another moment . . . . . I am ever thine!

Love, turn those eyes on me! ah, death has dimmed their shine.”

XII

Ceased her voice. The accents mild

In frightful stillness died away.

More sweet than Memnon’s plainings wild 260

That float upon the morning ray

Died every sound . . save when

At distance o’er the plain

Britannia’s legions swiftly sweeping,

Glory’s ensanguined harvest reaping, 265

Mowed down the field of men,

And the silent ruins, crumbling nigh,

With echoes low prolonged the cry

Of mingled defeat and victory.

XIII

More low, more faint yet far more dread 270

Arose the expiring warrior’s groan,

Stretched on the sand, his bloody bed,

In agonized death was Henry laid

But he did not fall alone . . .

Why then that anguished sigh 275

Which seems to tear the vital tie,

Fiercer than death; more fell

Than tyranny, contempt or hate?

Why does that breast with horror swell

Which ought to triumph over fate? 280

Why? ask the pallid, griefworn mien

Of poor Louisa, let it speak:

But her firm heart would sooner break

Than doubt the soul where love had been.

XIV

Now, now he dies! his parting breath, 285

The sulphurous gust of battle bears.

The shriek, the groan, the gasp of death,

Unmoved Louisa hears,

And a smile of triumph lights her eye

With more than mortal radiancy.— 290

Sacred to Love a deed is done!—

Gleams thro’ battle clouds the Sun,

Gleams it on all that’s good and fair

Stretched on the Earth to moulder there.

Shall Virtue perish? No; 295

Superior to Religion’s tie,

Emancipate from misery,

Despising self, their souls can know

All the delight love can bestow

Where Glory’s phantom fades away 300

Before Affection’s purer ray,

When tyrants cease to wield the rod

And slaves to tremble at their nod.

XV

There near the stunted palms that shroud

The spot from which their spirits fled 305

Shall pause the human hounds of blood

And own a secret dread.

There shall the victor’s steel-clad brow,

Tho’ flushed by conquest’s crimson glow,

Be changed with inward fear; 310

There stern and steady by long command

The pomp-fed despot’s sceptered hand

Shall shake as if death were near,

Whilst the lone captive in his train

Feels comfort as he shakes his chain. 315

{Shelley’s Footnote. Key to Title.}

\*The stanza of this Poem is radically that of Spencer altho’ I suffered myself at the time of writing it to be led into occasional deviations. These defects I do not alter now, being unwilling to offer any outrage to the living portraiture of my own mind; bad as it may be pronounced.

A Translation of

The Marsellois Hymn

1

Haste to battle, Patriot Band!

A day of Glory dawns on thee!

Against thy rights is raised an hand:—

The bloodred hand of tyranny!

See! the ferocious slaves of power 5

Across the wasted country scour

And in thy very arms destroy

The pledges of thy nuptial joy—

Thine unresisting family!

Chorus

Then citizens, form in battle array, 10

For this is the dawn of a glorious day.

March, march, fearless of danger and toil,

And the rank gore of tyrants shall water your soil!

2

What wills the coward, traitorous train

Of Kings, whose trade is perfidy? 15

For whom is forged this hateful chain,

For whom prepared this slavery?

For you. On you their vengeance rests . . .

What transports ought to thrill your breasts!

Frenchmen! this unhallowed train 20

To ancient woe would bind again

Those souls whom valour has made free!

Chorus &c.

3

What! shall foreign bands compel

Us to the laws of tyranny?

Shall hired soldiers hope to quell 25

The arm upraised for liberty?

Great God! by these united arms

Shall despots, their own alarms,

Pass neath the yoke made for our head!

Yea! pomp-fed Kings shall quake with dread— 30

These masters of Earth’s destiny!

Chorus &c.

4

Tremble, Kings! despised of Man!

Ye traitors to your country,

Tremble! your parricidal plan

At length shall meet its destiny. 35

We all are soldiers fit for fight,

But if we sink in glory’s night

Our Mother Earth will give ye new

The brilliant pathway to pursue

That leads to Death or Victory! 40

Chorus &c.

5

Frenchmen! on the guilty brave

Pour your vengeful energy.—

Yet in your triumph, pitying save

The unwilling slaves of tyranny;

But let the gore-stained despots bleed, 45

Be death fell Bouillé’s bloodhound-meed;

Chase those unnatural fiends away

Who on their mothers’ vitals prey

With more than tyger cruelty!

Chorus &c.

6

Sacred Patriotism! uphold 50

The avenging bands who fight with thee;

And thou, more dear than meaner gold,

Smile on our efforts, Liberty!

Where conquest’s crimson streamers wave,

Haste thou to the happy brave, 55

Where at our feet thy dying foes

See as their failing eyes unclose

Our glory and thy Victory!

SUPPLEMENT

Stanza Included in Letter to Graham, ca. 19 June 1811

Tremble kings despised of man!

ye traitors to your country

Tremble! your parricidal plan

at length shall meet its destiny . . . . 35

we all are soldiers fit to *fight* [5]

but if we sink i n glorys nigt

our mother Earth will give ye new

the brilliant pathway to pursue

which leads to *Death* *or* *Victory!* . . 40

Written in very early youth

I’ll lay me down by the church-yard tree

And resign me to my destiny;

I’ll bathe my brow with the poison dew

That falls from yonder deadly yew,

And if it steal my soul away 5

To bid it wake in realms of day,

Spring’s sweetest flowers shall never be

So dear to gratitude and me!

Earthborn glory cannot breathe

Within the damp recess of death; 10

Avarice, Envy, Lust, Revenge

Suffer there a fearful change;

All that grandeur ever gave

Moulders in the silent grave.

Oh! that I slept near yonder yew, 15

That this tired frame might moulder too!

Yet Pleasure’s folly is not mine,

No votarist I at Glory’s shrine;

The sacred gift for which I sigh

Is not to live to feel alone— 20

I only ask to calmly die,

That the tomb might melt this heart of stone

To love beyond the grave.

Zeinab and Kathema

Upon the lonely beach Kathema lay;

Against his folded arm his heart beat fast.

Thro’ gathering tears the Sun’s departing ray

In coldness o’er his shuddering spirit past,

And all unfelt the breeze of evening came 5

That fanned with quivering wing his wan cheek’s feeble flame.

“Oh!” cried the mourner, “could this widowed soul

“But fly where yonder Sun now speeds to dawn.”

He paused—a thousand thoughts began to roll;

Like waves they swept in restless tumult on, 10

Like those fast waves that quick-succeeding beat

Without one lasting shape the beach beneath his feet.

And now the beamless, broad and yellow sphere

Half sinking lingered on the crimson sea;

A shape of darksome distance does appear 15

Within its semicircled radiancy.

All sense was gone to his betrothed one—

His eye fell on the form that dimmed the setting sun,—

He thought on his betrothed . . . for his youth

With her that was its charm to ripeness grew. 20

All that was dear in love, or fair in truth

With her was shared as childhood’s moments flew,

And mingled with sweet memories of her

Was life’s unveiling morn with all its bliss and care.

O wild and lovely Superstition’s spell­­— 25

Love for the friend that life and freedom gave;

Youth’s growing hopes that watch themselves so well,

Passion so prompt to blight, so strong to save

And childhood’s host of memories combine

Her life and love around his being to entwine, 30

And to their wishes with its joy-mixed pain.

Just as the veil of hope began to fall,

The Christian murderers over-ran the plain,

Ravaging, burning and polluting all.

Zeinab was reft to grace the robbers’ land; 35

Each drop of kindred blood stained the invaders’ brand.

Yes! they had come their holy book to bring,

Which God’s own son’s apostles had compiled

That charity and peace, and love might spring

Within a world by God’s blind ire defiled, 40

But rapine, war and treachery rushed before

Their hosts, and murder dyed Kathema’s bower in gore.

Therefore his soul was widowed, and alone

He stood in the world’s wide and drear expanse.

No human ear could shudder at his groan, 45

No heart could thrill with his unspeaking glance;

One only hope yet lingering dared to burn,

Urging to high emprize and deeds that danger spurn.

The glow has failed on Ocean’s western line,

Faded from every moveless cloud above. 50

The moon is up—she that was wont to shine

And bless thy childish nights of guileless love,

Unhappy one, ere Christian rapine tore

All ties, and stain’d thy hopes in a dear mother’s gore.

The form that in the setting Sun was seen 55

Now in the moonlight slowly nears the shore,

The white sails gleaming o’er the billows green

That sparkle into foam its prow before,

A wanderer of the deep it seems to be,

On high adventures bent, and feats of chivalry. 60

Then hope and wonder filled the mourner’s mind.

He gazed till vision even began to fail,

When to the pulses of the evening wind

A little boat approaching gave its sail,

Rode o’er the slow-raised surges near the strand, 65

Ran up the beach and gave some stranger men to land.

“If thou wilt bear me to far England’s shore

Thine is this heap—the Christian’s God!”

The chief with gloating rapture viewed the ore

And his pleased avarice gave the willing nod. 70

They reach the ship, the fresh’ning breezes rise

And smooth and fast they speed beneath the moonlight skies.

What heart e’er felt more ardent longings now?

What eye than his e’er beamed with riper hope

As curbed impatience on his open brow 75

There painted fancy’s unsuspected scope,

As all that’s fair the foreign land appeared

By ever-present love, wonder and hope endeared?

Meanwhile thro’ calm and storm, thro’ night and day,

Unvarying in her aim the vessel went 80

As if some inward spirit ruled her way

And her tense sails were conscious of intent,

Till Albion’s cliffs gleamed o’er her plunging bow

And Albion’s river-floods bright sparkled round her prow.

Then on the land in joy Kathema leaped 85

And kissed the soil in which his hopes were sown—

These even now in thought his heart has reaped.

Elate of body and soul he journeyed on,

And the strange things of a strange land past by

Like motes and shadows prest upon his charmed eye. 90

Yet Albion’s changeful skies and chilling wind

The change from Cashmire’s vale might well denote:

There, Heaven and Earth are ever bright and kind;

Here, blights and storms and damp forever float,

Whilst hearts are more ungenial than the zone— 95

Gross, spiritless, alive to no pangs but their own.

There flowers and fruits are ever fair and ripe;

Autumn there mingles with the bloom of spring

And forms unpinched by frost or hunger’s gripe

A natural veil o’er natural spirits fling; 100

Here, woe on all but wealth has set its foot.

Famine, disease and crime even wealth’s proud gates pollute.

Unquiet death and premature decay,

Youth tottering on the crutches of old age,

And ere the noon of manhood’s riper day, 105

Pangs that no art of medicine can assuage,

Madness and passion ever mingling flames,

And souls that well become such miserable frames—

These are the bribes which Art to man has given

To yield his taintless nature to her sway. 110

So might dark night with meteors tempt fair Heaven

To blot the sunbeam and forswear the day

Till gleams of baleful light alone might shew

The pestilential mists, the darkness and the woe.

Kathema little felt the sleet and wind, 115

He little heeded the wide-altered scene;

The flame that lived within his eager mind

There kindled all the thoughts that once had been.

He stood alone in England’s varied woe

Safe, mid the flood of crime that round his steps did flow. 120

It was an evening when the bitterest breath

Of dark December swept the mists along

That the lone wanderer came to a wild heath.

Courage and hope had staid his nature long;

Now cold, and unappeased hunger spent 125

His strength; sensation failed in total languishment.

When he awaked to life cold horror crept

Even to his heart, for a damp deathy smell

Had slowly come around him while he slept.

He started . . . lo! the fitful moonbeams fell 130

Upon a dead and naked female form

That from a gibbet high swung to the sullen storm

And wildly in the wind its dark hair swung,

Low mingling with the clangor of the chain,

Whilst ravenous birds of prey that on it clung 135

In the dull ear of night poured their sad strain,

And ghastlily her shapeless visage shone

In the unsteady light, half mouldered thro’ the bone.

Then madness seized Kathema, and his mind

A prophecy of horror filled. He scaled 140

The gibbet which swung slowly in the wind

High o’er the heath.—Scarcely his strength avail’d

To grasp the chain, when by the moonlight’s gleam

His palsied gaze was fixed on Zeinab’s altered frame.

Yes! in those orbs once bright with life and love 145

Now full-fed worms bask in unnatural light;

That neck on which his eyes were wont to rove

In rapture, changed by putrefaction’s blight,

Now rusts the ponderous links that creak beneath

Its weight, and turns to life the frightful sport of death. 150

Then in the moonlight played Kathema’s smile

Calmly.—In peace his spirit seemed to be.

He paused, even like a man at ease awhile,

Then spoke—“My love! I will be like to thee,

A mouldering carcase or a spirit blest, 155

With thee corruption’s prey, or Heaven’s happy guest.”

He twined the chain around his neck, then leaped

Forward, in haste to meet the life to come.

An iron-souled son of Europe might have wept

To witness such a noble being’s doom 160

As on the death-scene Heaven indignant frowned

And Night in horror drew her veil the deed around.

For they had torn his Zeinab from her home,

Her innocent habits were all rudely shriven;

And, dragged to live in love’s untimely tomb, 165

To prostitution, crime and woe was driven.

The human race seemed leagued against her weal,

And indignation cased her naked heart in steel.

Therefore against them she waged ruthless war

With their own arms of bold and bloody crime,— 170

Even like a mild and sweetly-beaming star

Whose rays were wont to grace the matin-prime

Changed to a comet, horrible and bright,

Which wild careers awhile then sinks in dark-red night.

Thus, like its God, unjust and pityless, 175

Crimes first are made and then avenged by Man,

For where’s the tender heart, whose hope can bless

Or man’s, or God’s, unprofitable plan—

A universe of horror and decay,

Gibbets, disease, and wars and hearts as hard as they. 180

The Retrospect.

Cwm Elan 1812

To trace Duration’s lone career,

To check the chariot of the year

Whose burning wheels forever sweep

The boundaries of oblivion’s deep . . . .

To snatch from Time the monster’s jaw 5

The children which she just had borne

And, ere entombed within her maw,

To drag them to the light of morn

And mark each feature with an eye

Of cold and fearless scrutiny . . . . 10

It asks a soul not formed to feel,

An eye of glass, a hand of steel;

Thoughts that have passed and thoughts that are

With truth and feeling to compare;

A scene which wildered fancy viewed 15

In the soul’s coldest solitude;

With that same scene when peaceful love

Flings rapture’s colour o’er the grove,

When mountain, meadow, wood and stream

With unalloying glory gleam 20

And to the spirit’s ear and eye

Are unison and harmony.

The moonlight was my dearer day:—

Then would I wander far away

And lingering on the wild brook’s shore 25

To hear its unremitting roar,

Would lose in the ideal flow

All sense of overwhelming woe;

Or at the noiseless noon of night

Would climb some heathy mountain’s height 30

And listen to the mystic sound

That stole in fitful gasps around.

I joyed to see the streaks of day

Above the purple peaks decay

And watch the latest line of light 35

Just mingling with the shades of night;

For day with me, was time of woe

When even tears refused to flow;

Then would I stretch my languid frame

Beneath the wild-wood’s gloomiest shade 40

And try to quench the ceaseless flame

That on my withered vitals preyed;

Would close mine eyes and dream I were

On some remote and friendless plain,

And long to leave existence there 45

If with it I might leave the pain

That with a finger cold and lean

Wrote madness on my withering mien.

It was not unrequited love

That bade my wildered spirit rove; 50

’Twas not the pride disdaining life,

That with this mortal world at strife

Would yield to the soul’s inward sense,

Then groan in human impotence,

And weep, because it is not given 55

To taste on Earth the peace of Heaven;

’Twas not, that in the narrow sphere

Where Nature fixed my wayward fate

There was no friend or kindred dear

Formed to become that spirit’s mate, 60

Which searching on tired pinion found

Barren and cold repulse around . . . .

Ah no! yet each one sorrow gave

New graces to the narrow grave:

For broken vows had early quelled 65

The stainless spirit’s vestal flame.

Yes! whilst the faithful bosom swelled

Then the envenomed arrow came

And apathy’s unaltering eye

Beamed coldness on the misery; 70

And early I had learned to scorn

The chains of clay that bound a soul

Panting to seize the wings of morn,

And where its vital fires were born

To soar and spurn the cold control 75

Which the vile slaves of earthly night

Would twine around its struggling flight.

O many were the friends whom fame

Had linked with the unmeaning name

Whose magic marked among mankind 80

The casket of my unknown mind,

Which hidden from the vulgar glare

Imbibed no fleeting radiance there.

My darksome spirit sought. It found

A friendless solitude around.— 85

For who, that might undaunted stand

The saviour of a sinking land,

Would crawl its ruthless tyrant’s slave

And fatten upon freedom’s grave,

Tho’ doomed with her to perish, where 90

The captive clasps abhorred despair.

*They* could not share the bosom’s feeling,

Which passion’s every throb revealing

Dared force on the world’s notice cold

Thoughts of unprofitable mould, 95

Who bask in Custom’s fickle ray,

Fit sunshine of such wintry day!

*They* could not in a twilight walk

Weave an impassioned web of talk

Till mysteries the spirit press 100

In wild yet tender awfulness,

Then feel within our narrow sphere

How little yet how great we are!

But they might shine in courtly glare,

Attract the rabble’s cheapest stare, 105

And might command where’er they move

A thing that bears the name of love;

They might be learned, witty, gay,

Foremost in fashion’s gilt array,

On Fame’s emblazoned pages shine, 110

Be princes’ friends, but never mine!

Ye jagged peaks that frown sublime,

Mocking the blunted scythe of Time,

Whence I would watch its lustre pale

Steal from the moon o’er yonder vale! 115

Thou rock, whose bosom black and vast

Bared to the stream’s unceasing flow,

Ever its giant shade doth cast

On the tumultuous surge below!

Woods, to whose depth retires to die 120

The wounded echo’s melody,

And whither this lone spirit bent

The footstep of a wild intent—

Meadows! whose green and spangled breast

These fevered limbs have often pressed 125

Until the watchful fiend Despair

Slept in the soothing coolness there!

Have not your varied beauties seen

The sunken eye, the withering mien,

Sad traces of the unuttered pain 130

That froze my heart and burned my brain?

How changed since nature’s summer form

Had last the power my grief to charm,

Since last ye soothed my spirit’s sadness—

Strange chaos of a mingled madness! 135

Changed!—not the loathsome worm that fed

In the dark mansions of the dead,

Now soaring thro’ the fields of air

And gathering purest nectar there,

A butterfly whose million hues 140

The dazzled eye of wonder views,

Long lingering on a work so strange,

Has undergone so bright a change!

How do I feel my happiness?

I cannot tell, but they may guess 145

Whose every gloomy feeling gone,

Friendship and passion feel alone,

Who see mortality’s dull clouds

Before affection’s murmur fly,

Whilst the mild glances of her eye 150

Pierce the thin veil of flesh that shrouds

The spirit’s radiant sanctuary.

O thou! whose virtues latest known,

First in this heart yet claim’st a throne;

Whose downy sceptre still shall share 155

The gentle sway with virtue there;

Thou fair in form and pure in mind,

Whose ardent friendship rivets fast

The flowery band our fates that bind,

Which incorruptible shall last 160

When duty’s hard and cold control

Had thawed around the burning soul;

The gloomiest retrospects that bind

With crowns of thorn the bleeding mind,

The prospects of most doubtful hue 165

That rise on Fancy’s shuddering view,

Are gilt by the reviving ray

Which thou hast flung upon my day.

The wandering Jew’s soliloquy

Is it the Eternal Triune, is it He

Who dares arrest the wheels of destiny

And plunge me in this lowest Hell of Hells?

Will not the lightning’s blast destroy my frame?

Will not steel drink the blood-life where it swells? 5

No—let me hie where dark Destruction dwells,

To rouse her from her deeply-caverned lair

And, taunting her curst sluggishness to ire,

Light long Oblivion’s death-torch at its flame

And calmly mount Annihilation’s pyre. 10

Tyrant of Earth! pale misery’s jackall thou!

Are there no stores of vengeful violent fate

Within the magazines of thy fierce hate?

No poison in thy clouds to bathe a brow

That lowers on thee with desperate contempt? 15

Where is the noonday pestilence that slew

The myriad sons of Israel’s favoured nation?

Where the destroying minister that flew

Pouring the fiery tide of desolation

Upon the leagued Assyrian’s attempt? 20

Where the dark Earthquake demon who ingorged

At thy dread word Korah’s unconscious crew?

Or the Angel’s two-edged sword of fire that urged

Our primal parents from their bower of bliss

(Reared by thine hand) for errors not thine own, 25

By thine omniscient mind foredoomed, foreknown?

Yes! I would court a ruin such as this,

Almighty Tyrant! and give thanks to thee.—

Drink deeply—drain the cup of hate—remit; then I may die.

To Ianthe. ~~Oct~~ Septr 1813

I love thee, Baby! for thine own sweet sake:

Those azure eyes, that faintly dimpled cheek,

Thy tender frame so eloquently weak,

Love in the sternest heart of hate might wake;

But more, when o’er thy fitful slumber bending 5

Thy mother folds thee to her wakeful heart,

Whilst love and pity in her glances blending,

All that thy passive eyes can feel, impart;

More, when some feeble lineaments of her

Who bore thy weight beneath her spotless bosom, 10

As with deep love I read thy face, recur,

More dear art thou, O fair and fragile blossom,

Dearest, when most thy tender traits express

The image of thy Mother’s loveliness.—

Evening—to Harriet. Sep. 1813

O thou bright Sun! beneath the dark blue line

Of western distance that sublime descendest,

And gleaming lovelier as thy beams decline,

Thy million hues to every vapour lendest,

And over cobweb lawn and grove and stream 5

Sheddest the liquid magic of thy light,

Till calm Earth with the parting splendor bright

Shews like the vision of a beauteous dream;

What gazer now with astronomic eye

Could coldly count the spots within thy sphere? 10

Such were thy lover, Harriet, could he fly

The thoughts of all that makes his passion dear,

And turning senseless from thy warm caress,

Pick flaws in our close-woven happiness.

July 31st 1813.

To Harriett

Thy look of love has power to calm

The stormiest passion of my Soul

Thy gentle words are drops of balm—

In lifes too bitter bowl.

No grief is mine but that alone 5

These choicest blessings I have known.

Harriett! if all who long to live

In the warm sunshine of thine eye

That price beyond all pain must give

Beneath thy scorn to die 10

Then hear thy chosen own too late

His heart most worthy of thy hate.

Be thou then one among mankind

Whose heart is harder not for state—

Thou only virtuous gentle kind 15

Amid a world of hate

And by a slight endurance seal

A fellow beings lasting weal.

*Cook’s Hotel*

For pale with anguish is his cheek

His breath comes fast his eyes are dim 20

Thy name is struggling ere he speak,

Weak is each trembling limb.

In mercy let him not endure

The misery of a fatal cure.

O trust for once no erring guide 25

Bid the remorseless feeling flee

Tis malice tis revenge tis pride

Tis any thing but thee.

O deign a nobler pride to prove

And pity if thou canst not love. 30

*May 1814*

“Full many a mind”

Full many a mind with radiant genius fraught

Is taught the dark scowl of misery to bear

How many a great soul has often sought

To stem the sad torrent of wild despair

T’would not be Earth’s laws were given 5

To stand between Man, God & Heaven

To teach him where to seek & truly find

That lasting comfort peace of mind.

Stanmore. 1815

May 1813: To Harriet . . . . . . . . .

Oh Harriet love like mine that glows

What rolling years can e’er destroy

Without thee can I tell my woes,

And with thee can I speak my grief?

Ah no—past all the futile power 5

Of words to tell is love like mine.

My love is not the fading flower

That fleets ere it attains its prime

A moment of delight with thee

Would pay me for an age of pain 10

I’ll tell not of Rapture and Joy

Which swells thro’ the Libertine’s frame

That breast must feel bliss with alloy

That is scorched by so selfish a flame

It were pleasure to die for my love 15

It were rapture to sink in the grave

My eternal affection to prove

My ever dear Harriet to save.

Without thee all pleasure were gloom

And with thee all sorrow were joy. 20

Ere I knew thee my Harriet each year

Passed in mournful rotation away

No friend to my bosom was dear

Slow rolled the unvarying day.

Shall I wake then those horrors anew 25

That swelled in my desperate brain

When to death’s darkened portals I flew

And sought miseries relief to my pain?

That hour which tears thee from me

Leaves nothing but death and despair 30

And that Harriet never could be

Were thy mind less enchantingly fair.

Tis not for the charms of thy form

Which decay with the swift rolling year

Ah no Heaven expands to my sight 35

For Elysium with Harriet must be.

Cum Elam

Adieu my love good night

“Late was the night”

Late was the night the moon shone bright

It teinted the wals with a silver light

And threw its wide uncertain beam

Upon its rolling mountains stream

That stream so swift that rushes along 5

Has oft been dyed by the murderes song

It oft has heard the exulting wave

Of one who oft the murderer braved

The Alpine summits which raised on high

Peacefully frown on the Valley beneath 10

And lift their Huge forms to the Sky

Oft have heard the voices of death

Now not a murmur floats on the air

Save the distant sounds of the torrents tide

Not a cloud obscures the moon so fair 15

Not a Shade is seen on the rocks to glide

See that fair form that [ ? ] [ ? ]

Her garments are tattered her bosom so bare

She shrinks from the yawning watery grave

And shivering around her enwraps her dark hair 20

Poor Emma has toiled oer many a mile

The victim of misery’s own sad child

Pale is her cheek all trembling awhile

She totters & falls on the cold-striken wild.

1815

14

Febry 28th 1806— To St Irvyne

Oer thy turrets St Irvyne the winter winds roar

The long grass of thy Towers streams to the blast

Must I never St Irvyne then visit thee more

Are those visions of transient happiness past

When with Harriet I sat on the mouldering height 5

When with Harriet I gazed on the star spangled sky

And the August Moon shone thro’ the dimness of night

How swiftly the moments of pleasure fled by.

How swift is a fleeting smile chased by a sigh

This breast this poor sorrow torn breast must confess 10

Oh Harriet, loved Harriet tho’ thou art not nigh

Think not thy lover thinks of thee less.

How oft have we roamed thro’ the stillness of Eve

Through St Irvyne’s old rooms that so fast fade away

That those pleasure winged moments were transient I grieve 15

My Soul like those turrets falls fast to decay

My Harriet is fled like a fast fading dream

Which fades ere the vision is fixed on the mind

But has left a firm love & a lasting esteem

That my soul to her Soul must eternally bind 20

When my mouldering bones lie in the cold chilling grave

When my last groans are borne oer Stroods wide Lea

And over my Tomb the chill night tempests rave

Then loved Harriet bestow one poor thought on me.

To H Grove