

Poems of
Felicia Hemans
in
The Literary Souvenir, 1827

Compiled
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THE BREEZE FROM SHORE.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

As when to them who sail
Beyond the Cape of Hope, and now are past
Mozambic, off at sea north-east winds blow
Sabeen odours from the spicy shore
Of Araby the Blessed.

Milton.

I.

Joy is upon the lonely seas
When Indian forests pour
Forth to the billow and the breeze
Their odours from the shore ;
Joy, when the soft air's fanning sigh
Bears on the breath of Araby.

II.

Oh ! welcome are the winds that tell
A wanderer of the deep,
Where far away the jasmines dwell,
And where the myrrh-trees weep !
Blessed, on the sounding surge and foam,
Are tidings of the citron's home !

III.

The sailor at the helm they meet,
And hope his bosom stirs,
Upspringing, 'midst the waves, to greet
The fair earth's messengers,
That woo him, from the moaning main,
Back to her glorious bowers again.

IV.

They woo him, whispering lovely tales
Of many a flowering glade,
And fount's bright gleam in island-vales
Of golden-fruited shade ;
Across his lone ship's wake they bring
A vision and a glow of spring.

V.

And, oh ! ye masters of the lay,
Come not even thus your songs,
That meet us on life's weary way,
Amidst her toiling throngs ?
Yes ! o'er the spirit thus they bear
A current of celestial air.

VI.

Their power is from the brighter clime
That in our birth hath part ;

Their tones are of the world, which Time
Sears not within the heart ;
They tell us of the living light
In its green places ever bright.

VII.

They call us, with a voice divine,
Back to our early love,—
Our vows of youth at many a shrine,
Whence far and fast we rove :
Welcome high thought, and holy strain,
That make us truth's and heaven's again!

THE BETTER LAND.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

I.

“ I HEAR thee speak of the better land,
Thou call'st its children a happy band ;
Mother ! oh, where is that radiant shore ?—
Shall we not seek it, and weep no more ?—
Is it where the flower of the orange blows,
And the fire-flies glance through the myrtle-boughs ?”
—“ Not there, not there, my child !”

II.

“ Is it where the feathery palm-trees rise,
And the date grows ripe under sunny skies ?—
Or 'midst the green islands of glittering seas,
Where fragrant forests perfume the breeze,
And strange, bright birds, on their starry wings,
Bear the rich hues of all glorious things ?”
—“ Not there, not there, my child ?”

III.

“ Is it far away, in some region old,
Where the rivers wander o'er sands of gold?—
Where the burning rays of the ruby shine,
And the diamond lights up the secret mine,
And the pearl gleams forth from the coral strand—
Is it there, sweet mother, that better land?”
—“ Not there, not there, my child !

IV.

“ Eye hath not seen it, my gentle boy !
Ear hath not heard its deep songs of joy ;
Dreams cannot picture a world so fair—
Sorrow and death may not enter there ;
Time doth not breathe on its fadeless bloom,
For beyond the clouds, and beyond the tomb,
—It is there, it is there, my child !”

IVAN THE CZAR.*

BY MRS. HEMANS.

He sat in silence on the ground,
The old and haughty Czar ;
Lonely, though princes girt him round,
And leaders of the war :
He had cast his jewelled sabre,
That many a field had won
To the earth beside his youthful dead,
His fair and first-born son.

With a robe of ermine for its bed,
Was laid that form of clay,
Where the light a stormy sunset shed,
Through the rich tent made way :

* Ivan le Terrible, etant deja devenu Vieux, assiegeoit Novogorod. Les Boyards, le voyant affoibli, lui demanderent s'il ne voulait pas donner le commandement de l'assaut a son fils. Sa fureur fut si grande a cette proposition, que rien ne put l'apaiser : son fils se prosterna a ses pieds ; il le repousa avec un coup d'une telle violence, que deux jours apres le malheureux en mourut. Le pere, alors au desespoir, devint indifferent a la guerre comme au pouvoir, et ne survect que peu de mois a son fils.

Dix Annees d'Exil, par Mad. de Stael.

And a sad and solemn beauty
On the pallid face came down,
Which the lord of nations mutely watched
In the dust with his renown.

Low tones at last of woe and fear
From his full bosom broke ;—
A mournful thing it was to hear
How then the proud man spoke !
The voice that through the combat
Had shouted far and high,
Came forth in strange, dull hollow sounds,
Burthened with agony.

“ There is no crimson on thy cheek,
And on thy lip no breath,
I call thee—and thou dost not speak—
They tell me this is Death !
And fearful things are whispering
That I the deed have done—
For the honour of thy father’s name,
Look up, look up, my son !

“ Well might I know death’s hue and mien,
But on *thine* aspect, boy !
What, till this moment, have I seen,
Save pride and tameless joy ?

Swiftest thou wert to battle,
And bravest there of all—
How could I think a warrior's frame
Thus like a flower should fall?

“I will not bear that still, cold look ;—
Rise up, thou fierce and free !
Wake as the storm wakes !—I will brook
All, save this calm, from thee.
Lift brightly up and proudly,
Once more thy kindling eyes !
Hath my word lost its power on earth ?
I say to thee, arise !

“Didst thou not know I loved thee well ?
Thou didst not ! and art gone,
In bitterness of thought, to dwell
Where man must dwell alone.
Come back, young fiery spirit !
If but one hour, to learn
The secrets of the folded heart,
That seemed to thee so stern.

“Thou wert the first, the first fair child
That in mine arms I pressed,—
Thou wert the bright one, that has smiled
Like summer on my breast !

I reared thee as an eagle,
To the chase thy steps I led,
I bore thee on my battle-horse—
I look upon thee—dead !

“ Lay down my warlike banners here,
Never again to wave,
And bury my red sword and spear,
Chiefs ! in my first-born's grave !
And leave me !—I have conquered,
I have slain—my work is done :
Whom have I slain ?—Ye answer not—
Thou too art mute, my son !”

And thus his wild lament was poured
Through the dark resounding night ;
And the battle knew no more his sword,
Nor the foaming steed his might.
He heard strange voices moaning
In every wind that sighed ;
From the searching stars of Heaven he shrank—
Humbly the conqueror died.

CORINNA AT THE CAPITOL.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

"Les femmes doivent penser qu'il est dans cette carrière bien peu de sorts qui puissent valoir la plus obscure vie d'une femme aimée et d'une mère heureuse."
Madame de Staël.

I.

DAUGHTER of the' Italian heaven !
Thou, to whom its fires are given,
Joyously thy car hath rolled
Where the conqueror's passed of old ;
And the festal sun that shone
O'er three hundred triumphs gone,*
Makes thy day of glory bright
With a shower of golden light.

II.

Now thou tread'st the' ascending road
Freedom's foot so proudly trod ;
While, from tombs of heroes borne,
From the dust of empire shorn,

* The trebly hundred triumphs.—*Byron.*

Flowers upon thy graceful head,
Chaplets of all hues are shed,
In a soft and rosy rain,
Touched with many a gem-like stain.

III.

Thou hast gained the summit now !
Music hails thee from below ;—
Music, whose rich notes might stir
Ashes of the sepulchre ;—
Shaking with victorious notes
All the bright air as it floats.
Well may Woman's heart beat high
Unto that proud harmony !

IV.

Now afar it rolls—it dies,
And thy voice is heard to rise
With a low and lovely tone,
In its thrilling powers alone ;
And thy lyre's deep, silvery string,
Touched as by a breeze's wing,
Murmurs tremblingly at first,
Ere the tide of rapture burst.

V.

All the spirit of thy sky
Now hath lit thy large dark eye,—

And thy cheek a flush hath caught
From the joy of kindled thought ;—
And the burning words of song
From thy lips flow fast and strong,
With a rushing stream's delight
In the freedom of its might.

VI.

Radiant daughter of the sun !
Now thy living wreath is won.
Crowned of Rome !—oh ! art thou not
Happy in that glorious lot ?—
Happier, happier far, than thou
With the laurel on thy brow,
She that makes the humblest hearth
Lovely but to one on earth !

THE DISTANT SHIP.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

I.

THE sea-bird's wing, o'er ocean's breast,
Shoots like a glancing star,
While the red radiance of the west
Spreads kindling fast and far ;
And yet that splendour wins thee not,—
Thy still and thoughtful eye
Dwells but on one dark, distant spot
Of all the main and sky.

II.

Look round thee !—o'er the slumbering deep
A solemn glory broods ;
A fire hath touched the beacon-steep,
And all the golden woods :
A thousand gorgeous clouds on high
Burn with the amber light ;—
What spell, from that rich pageantry,
Chains down thy gazing sight ?

III.

A chastening thought of human cares,
A feeling, linked to earth !
Is not yon speck a bark, which bears
The loved of many a hearth ?
Oh ! do not hope, and grief, and fear,
Crowd her frail world even now,
And manhood's prayer and woman's tear
Follow her venturous prow !

IV.

Bright are the floating clouds above,
The glittering seas below ;
But we are bound by cords of love
To kindred weal and woe !
Therefore, amidst this wide array
Of glorious things and fair,
My soul is on that bark's lone way,
For human hearts are there.