

Felicia Hemans
in
The Monthly Magazine
Volume 1
1826

Compiled
By
Deter J. Bolton

Contents

	Page
Tasso and his Sister	20-21
The Song of the Curfew	380
The Songs of our Fathers	597

TASSÒ AND HIS SISTER. *

"Devant vous est Sorrente; là, demeurait la sœur de Tasse, quand il vint en Pèlerin demander à cette obscure amie, un asile contre l'injustice des Princes: ses longues douleurs avaient presque égaré sa raison; il ne lui restait plus que du génie."

Corinne, vol. ii, p. 289.

She sat where, on each wind that sighed,
The citron's breath went by,
While the deep gold of eventide
Burn'd in th' Italian sky.
Her bower was one where day-light's close
Full oft sweet laughter found,
As thence the voice of childhood rose
To the high vineyards round.

But still and thoughtful, at her knee,
Her children stood that hour—
Their bursts of song, and dancing glee,
Hush'd as by words of power.
With bright, fix'd, wondering eyes, that gaz'd
Up to their mother's face,
With brows through parting ringlets rais'd,
They stood in silent grace.

While she—yet something o'er her look
Of mournfulness was spread—
Forth from a poet's magic book
The glorious numbers read:
The proud undying lay which pour'd,
Its light on evil years;
His of the gifted pen and sword,*
The triumph—and the tears.

She read of fair Erminia's flight,
Which Venice once might hear
Sung on her glittering seas, at night,
By many a gondolier:
Of Him she read, who broke the charm
That wrapt the myrtle grove,
Of Godfrey's deeds—of Tancred's arm,
That slew his Paynim-love.

Young cheeks around that bright page glow'd;
Young holy hearts were stirr'd,
And the meek tears of woman flow'd
Fast o'er each burning word;
And sounds of breeze, and fount, and leaf,
Came sweet each pause between,
When a strange voice of sudden grief
Burst on the gentle scene.

The mother turn'd—a way-worn man
In pilgrim-garb stood nigh,
Of stately mien, yet wild and wan,
Of proud, yet restless eye:
But drops, that would not stay for pride,
From that dark eye gush'd free,
As, pressing his pale brow, he cried—
"Forgotten, ev'n by thee!"

* It is hardly necessary to recall the well-known Italian saying, that "Tasso, with his sword and pen, was superior to all men."

“ Am I so chang’d?—and yet, we two,
Oft hand in hand have play’d ;
This brow hath been all bath’d in dew,
From wreaths which thou hast made !
We have knelt down, and said one prayer,
And sang one vesper-strain ;
My thoughts are dim with clouds of care—
Tell me those words again !

“ Life hath been heavy on my head ;
I come, a stricken deer,
Bearing the heart, ’midst crowds that bled,
To bleed in stillness here !”
She gaz’d—till thoughts that long had slept
Shook all her thrilling frame,—
She fell upon his neck, and wept,
And breath’d her Brother’s name.

Her *Brother’s* name !—and who was He,
The weary one, th’ unknown,
That came, the bitter world to flee,
A stranger to his own ?
He was the Bard of gifts divine
To sway the hearts of men—
He of the song for Salem’s shrine,
He of the sword and pen !

F. H.

THE SONG OF THE CURFEW.

Hark ! 'tis the curfew's knell !—the stars may shine,
But of the lights that cherish household cares
And festive gladness, burns not one that dares
To twinkle after that dull stroke of thine,
Emblem and Instrument, from Thames to Tyne,
Of force that daunts, and cunning that ensnares.

Wordworth.

Hark ! from the dim church-tower,
The deep slow curfew's chime !
A heavy sound, unto hall and bower,
In England's olden time !
Sadly 'twas heard by him who came
From the fields of his toil at night,
And who might not see his own hearth's flame
In his children's eyes make light.

Sadly and sternly heard,
As it quench'd the wood-fire's glow,
Which had cheer'd the board with the mirthful word,
And the red wine's foaming flow ;
Until that sullen-booming knell,
Flung out from every fane,
On harp, and lip, and spirit fell,
With a weight and with a chain.

Woe for the wanderer then,
In the wild deer's forests far !
No cottage-lamp, to the haunts of men,
Might guide him as a star.
And woe for him, whose wakeful soul
With lone aspirings fill'd,
Would have lived o'er some immortal scroll,
While the sounds of earth were still'd !

And yet a deeper woe
For the watchers by the bed,
Where the fondly lov'd in pain lay low,
And rest forsook the head !
For the mother, doom'd unseen to keep
By the dying babe her place,
And to feel its throbbing breast, and weep,
Yet not behold its face !

Darkness, in chieftain's hall !
Darkness, in peasant's cot !
While Freedom, under that shadowy pall,
Sate mourning o'er her lot.
Oh ! the fire-side's peace we well may prize,
For blood hath flow'd like rain,
Pour'd forth to make sweet sanctuaries
Of England's homes again !

Heap the yule-faggots high,
Till the red light fills the room !
It is home's own hour, when the stormy sky
Grows thick with evening gloom.
Gather ye round the holy hearth,
And by its brightening blaze,
Unto thankful bliss we will change our mirth,
With a thought of the olden days !

F. H.

THE SONGS OF OUR FATHERS.

———“ Sing aloud
Old Songs, the precious Music of the Heart.”

Wordsworth.

Sing them upon the sunny hills,
When days are long and bright,
And the blue gleam of shining hills
Is loveliest to the sight !
Sing them along the misty moor,
Where ancient hunters rov'd,
And swell them through the torrent's roar,
The songs our fathers lov'd !
The songs their souls rejoiced to hear,
When harps were in the hall,
And each proud note made lance and spear
Thrill on the bannered wall :
The songs that through our valleys green,
Sent on from age to age,
Like his own river's voice, have been
The peasant's heritage.
The reaper sings them when the vale
Is filled with plummy sheaves ;
The woodman, by the starlight pale,
Cheered homeward through the leaves :
And unto them the glancing oars
A joyous measure keep,
Where the dark rocks that crest our shores
Dash back the foaming deep.
So let it be !—a light they shed
O'er each old fount and grove ;
A memory of the gentle dead,
A lingering spell of love.
Murmuring the names of mighty men,
They bid our streams roll on,
And link high thoughts to every glen
Where valiant deeds were done.
Teach them your children round the hearth,
When evening-fires burn clear,
And in the fields of harvest mirth,
And on the hills of deer :
So shall each unforgotten word,
When far those lov'd ones roam,
Call back the hearts which once it stirred,
To childhood's holy home.
The green woods of their native land
Shall whisper in the strain,
The voices of their household band,
Shall breathe their names again ;
The heathery heights in vision rise
Where, like the stag, they rov'd—
Sing to your sons those melodies,
The songs your fathers loved !