

Poems of  
Felicia Hemans  
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Compiled  
by  
Peter J. Bolton

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Song of a Guardian Spirit

## THE DEATH-SONG OF ALCESTIS.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

“——Mightier far  
Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway  
Of Magic, potent over sun and star,  
Is Love, though oft to agony oppress'd,  
And though his favourite throne be feeble woman's breast.”

WORDSWORTH.

SHE came forth, in her bridal robes arrayed,  
And, midst the graceful statues round the hall  
Shedding the calm of their celestial mien,  
Stood pale, yet proudly beautiful as they:  
Flowers in her bosom, and the star-like gleam  
Of jewels trembling midst her braided hair—  
And death upon her brow! But *glorious* death!  
Her own heart's choice—the token and the seal  
Of love—o'ermastering love, which, till that hour,  
Almost an anguish in the brooding weight  
Of its unutterable tenderness,  
Had burdened her full soul. But now—oh! now  
Its time was come!—and, from the spirit's depths,  
The passion and the mighty melody  
Of its immortal voice in triumph broke,  
Like a strong rushing wind.

The soft pure air  
Came floating through that hall—the Grecian air,  
Laden with music—flute-notes from the vales,  
Echoes of song, the last sweet sounds of life ;  
And the glad sunshine of the golden clime  
Streamed, as a royal mantle, round her form,  
The glorified of love ! But she—she looked  
Only on *Him* for whom 'twas joy to die—  
Deep, deepest, holiest joy ! Or if a thought  
Of the warm sunlight, and the glowing air,  
And the sweet Dorian songs, o'erswept the tide  
Of her unswerving soul ; 'twas but a thought  
That owned the summer loveliness of life  
For *Him* a worthy offering ! So she stood,  
Wrapt in bright silence, as entranced awhile,  
Till her eye kindled, and her quivering frame  
With the swift breeze of inspiration shook,  
As the pale priestess trembles to the breath  
Of inborn oracles ; then flushed her cheek,  
And all the triumph, all the agony,  
Borne on the battling waves of love and death,  
All from her woman's heart, in sudden song,  
Burst like a fount of fire !—“ I go ! I go !

“ Thou sun—thou golden sun ! I go,  
Far from thy light to dwell ;  
Thou wilt not find my place below ;  
Dim is that world :—bright sun of Greece ! farewell !

“ The laurel and the glorious rose  
Thy glad beam yet may see ;  
But where no purple summer glows,  
O'er the dark wave, I haste from them and thee !

“ Yet, doth my spirit faint to part ?  
—I mourn thee not, O sun !  
Joy, solemn joy, o'erflows my heart,  
Sing me triumphal songs !—My crown is won !

“ Let not a voice of weeping rise ;  
My breast is girt with power ;  
Let the green earth and festal skies  
Laugh, as to grace a conqueror's closing hour !

“ For thee, for *thee* !—my bosom's lord !  
Thee, my soul's loved, I die !  
Thine is the torch of life restored,  
Mine, *mine*, the rapture !—mine the victory !

“ Now may the boundless love, that lay  
Unfathomed still before,  
In one consuming burst, find way,  
In one bright flood, all, all its riches pour !

“ Thou know'st, thou know'st what love is now,  
Its glory and its might !  
Are they not written on my brow ?  
And will that image ever quit thy sight ?

“ No ! deathless, in thy faithful breast,  
There shall my memory keep  
Its own bright altar-place of rest,  
While o'er my grave the cypress-branches weep.

“ Oh ! the glad light !—the light is fair,  
The soft breeze pure and free,  
And rich notes fill the scented air,  
And *all* are gifts—*my* love's last gifts to thee !

“ Take me to thy warm heart once more ! —  
Night falls ; my pulse beats low ;  
Seek not to quicken—to restore—  
Joy is in every pang—I go ! I go !

“ I feel thy tears, I feel thy breath,  
I meet thy fond look still ;  
Keen is the strife of love and death !  
Faint and yet fainter grows my bosom's thrill !

“ Yet swells the tide of rapture strong,  
Though mists o'ershade mine eye ;  
Sing Pæan !—sing a conqueror's song !  
For thee, for *thee*, my spirit's lord, I die !”

SONG OF A GUARDIAN SPIRIT.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

“They sin who tell us love can die.  
With life all other passions fly—  
All others are but vanity!  
In heaven ambition cannot dwell,  
Nor avarice in the vaults of hell;  
Earthly these passions, as of earth—  
They perish where they have their birth!  
But love is indestructible!—  
Its holy flame for ever burneth,  
From heaven it came, to heaven returneth!

SOUTHEY.

OH! droop thou not, my gentle earthly love—  
Mine still to be!

I bore, through death, to brighter lands above,  
My thoughts of thee.

Yes! the deep memory of our holy tears—  
Our mingled prayer—

Our suffering love, through long devoted years,—  
Went with me there!

It was not vain, the hallowed and the tried—  
It was not vain!

Still, still, though viewless, hovering at thy side,  
I watch again!

From our own paths, our love's attesting bowers,  
I am not gone ;  
In the deep hush of midnight's whispering hours,  
Thou art not lone !

Not lone, when by the haunted stream thou weepest—  
That stream whose tone  
Murmurs of thoughts, the holiest and the deepest,  
We two have known :

Not lone, when mournfully some strain awaking  
Of days long past,  
From thy soft eyes the sudden tears are breaking,  
Silent and fast :

Not lone, when upwards, in fond visions, turning  
Thy dreamy glance,  
Thou seek'st my home, where solemn stars are burning  
O'er night's expanse !

My home is near thee, loved one ! and around thee,  
Where'er thou art ;  
Though still the o'ershadowing veil of earth hath  
bound thee,  
Oh, trust thy heart !

Hear its low voice, nor deem thyself forsaken !  
Let faith be given  
To the still tones that oft our being waken—  
They are from heaven !