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THE SWAN AND THE SKYLARK.

BY MRS HEMANS.

Hail to thee, Mithra spirit!
Bird thou never wert,
That from heaven, or near it,
Pour'st thy full heart,
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.
SKYLARK.

MIDST the long reeds that o'er a Grecian stream
Unto the faint wind sigh'd melodiously,
And where the sculpture of a broken shrine
Sent out, through shadowy grass and thick wild flowers,
Dim alabaster gleams—a lonely swan
Warbled his death-chant, and a poet stood
Listening to that strange music, as it shook
The lilies on the wave; and made the pines,
And all the laurels of the haunted shore,
Thrill to its passion. Oh! the tones were sweet,
Ev'n painfully—as with the sweetness wrung
From parting love; and to the poet's thought
This was their language.

“ Summer, I depart!
O light and laughing Summer, fare thee well!
No song the less through thy rich woods shall swell,
For one, one broken heart!

“ And fare ye well, young flowers
Ye will not mourn! Ye will shed odours still,
And wave in glory, colouring every rill
Known to my youth's fresh hours.

“ And ye, bright founts, that lie
Far in the whispering forest, lone and deep,
My wing no more shall stir your lovely sleep—
Sweet water, I must die!

“ Will ye not send one tone
Of sorrow through the shades? one murmur low?
Shall not the green leaves from your voices know,
That I, your child, am gone?

“ No! ever glad and free!
Ye have no sounds a tale of death to tell;
Waves, joyous waves, flow on, and fare ye well!
Ye will not mourn for me.

“ But thou, sweet boon, too late
Pour'd on my parting breath, vain gift of song!
Why comest thou thus, o'ermastering, rich, and strong,
In the dark hour of fate?

“ Only to wake the sighs
Of echo-voices from their sparry cell;
Only to say—O sunshine and blue skies!
O life and love, farewell!”

Thus flow'd the death-chant on; while mournfully
Soft winds and waves made answer, and the tones
Buried in rocks along the Grecian stream,
Rocks and dim caverns of old prophecy,
Woke to respond: and all the air was fill'd
With that one sighing sound—“ Farewell, farewell!”
Fill'd with *that* sound? high in the calm blue heavens
Ev'n then a skylark sung; soft summer clouds
Were floating round him, all transpierced with light,
And midst that pearly radiance his dark wings
Quiver'd with song; such free triumphant song,
As if tears were not—as if breaking hearts
Had not a place below—as if the tomb
Were of another world; and thus that strain
Spoke to the poet's heart exultingly.

“ The Summer is come; she hath said, ‘ Rejoice!’
The wild woods thrill to her merry voice;
Her sweet breath is wandering around on high;
Sing, sing, through the echoing sky!

“ There is joy in the mountains; the bright waves leap,
Like the bounding stag when he breaks from sleep;
Mirthfully, wildly, they flash along;
Let the heavens ring with song!

“ There is joy in the forest ; the bird of night
Hath made the leaves tremble with deep delight ;
But *mine* is the glory to sunshine given ;
Sing, sing, through the laughing heaven !

“ Mine are the wings of the soaring morn,
Mine the free gales with the day-spring born !
Only young rapture can mount so high ;
Sing, sing, through the echoing sky !”

So those two voices met : so Joy and Death
Mingled their accents ; and, amidst the rush
Of many thoughts, the listening poet cried,
“ Oh ! thou art mighty, thou art wonderful,
Mysterious Nature ! not in thy free range
Of woods and wilds alone, thou blindest thus
The dirge-note and the song of festival !”

LET US DEPART !

BY MRS HEMANS.

Louder and louder, gathering round, there wander'd
Over the oracular woods and diving sea,
Prophesyings which grew articulate.—SPELLET.

Night hung on Salem's towers,
And a brooding hush profound
Lay where the Roman Eagle shone,
High o'er the tents around—

The tents that rose by thousands,
In the moonlight glimmering pale ;
Like white waves of a frozen sea,
Filling an Alpine vale.

And the temple's massy shadow
Fell broad, and dark, and still ;
In peace, as if the Holy One
Yet watch'd his chosen hill.

But a fearful sound was heard
In that old fane's deepest heart,
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a dread voice raised the cry,
" Let us depart !"

Within the fated city
Ev'n then fierce discord raved,
Though through night's heaven the comet-sword
Its vengeful token waved.

There were shouts of kindred warfare
Through the dark streets ringing high,
Though every sign was full which told
Of the bloody vintage night :

Though the wild red spear and arrows
Of many a meteor host,
Went flashing o'er the holy stars,
In the sky now seen, now lost.

And that fearful sound was heard
In the temple's deepest heart,
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a voice cried mournfully,
" Let us depart !"

But within the fated city
There was revelry that night ;
The wine-cup and the timbrel note,
And the blaze of banquet light.

The footsteps of the dancer
Went bounding through the hall,

And the music of the dulcimer
Summon'd to festival.

While the clash of brother-weapons
Made lightning in the air,
And the dying at the palace-gates
Lay down in their despair.

And that fearful sound was heard
At the temple's thrilling heart;
As if mighty wings rush'd by,
And a dread voice raised the cry—
 " Let us depart !"

THE FLOWER OF THE DESERT.

BY MRS HEMANS.

"Who does not recollect the exultation of Vaillant over a flower in the torrid wastes of Africa?—The affecting mention of the influence of a flower upon his mind, by Mungu Park, in a time of suffering and despondency, in the heart of the same savage country, is familiar to every one."—HOWITT'S *Book of the Scissors*.

Why art thou thus in thy beauty cast,
O lonely, loneliest flower!
Where the sound of song hath never pass'd,
From human hearth or bower?

I pity thee, for thy heart of love,
For thy glowing heart, that fain
Would breathe out joy with each wind to rove—
In vain, lost thing! in vain!

I pity thee for thy wasted bloom,
For thy glory's fleeting hour,
For the desert place, thy living tomb—
O lonely, loneliest flower!

I said,—but a low voice made reply:
"Lament not for the flower!
Though its blossom all unmark'd must die,
They have had a glorious dower

"Though it bloom afar from the minstrel's way,
And the paths where lovers tread,
Yet strength and hope, like an inborn day,
By its odours have been shed.

"Yes! dews more sweet than ever fell
O'er island of the blest,
Were shaken forth, from its perfumed bell,
On a suffering human breast.

"A wanderer came, as a stricken deer,
O'er the waste of burning sand,
He bore the wound of an Arab spear,
He fled from a ruthless band.

"And dreams of home, in a troubled tide,
Swept o'er his darkening eye,
As he lay down by the fountain side,
In his mute despair to die.

"But his glance was caught by the desert's flower,
The precious boon of heaven!

And sudden hope, like a vernal shower,
To his fainting heart was given.

" For the bright flower spoke of One above ;
Of the Presence, felt to brood,
With a spirit of pervading love,
O'er the wildest solitude.

" Oh ! the seed was thrown these wastes among,
In a blest and gracious hour !
For the lorn one rose, in heart made strong,
By the lonely, loneliest flower !"

THE PAINTER'S LAST WORK.—A SCENE.*

BY MRS HEMANS.

Clasp me a little longer on the brink
Of life, while I can feel thy dear excess;
And when this heart hath ceased to beat, oh! think,
And let it mitigate thy wife's excess,
That thou hast been to me all tenderness,
And friend to more than human friendship last.

GRATAEON OF WYOMING.

SCENE—*A Room in an Italian Cottage. The Lattice opening upon a Landscape at sunset.*

FRANCESCO—TERESA.

TERESA.

The fever's hue hath left thy cheek, beloved!
Thine eyes, that make the day-spring in my heart,
Are clear and still once more. Wilt thou look forth?
Now, while the sunset with low-streaming light—
The light thou lov'st—hath made the chestnut-stems
All burning bronze, the lake one sea of gold!
Wilt thou be raised upon thy couch, to meet
The rich air fill'd with wandering scents and sounds?
Or shall I lay thy dear, dear head once more
On this true bosom, lulling thee to rest
With vesper hymns?

FRANCESCO.

No, gentlest love! not now:
My soul is wakeful—lingering to look forth,
Not on the sun, but thee! Both the light sleep
So gently on the lake? and are the stems
Of our own chestnuts by that alchymy
So richly changed?—and is the orange-scent
Floating around?—But I have said farewell,
Farewell to earth, Teresa! not to thee,
Nor yet to our deep love, nor yet awhile
Unto the spirit of mine art, which flows
Back on my soul in mastery!—one last work!
And I will obtrude my wealth of glowing thoughts,
Clinging affection and undying hope,
All that is in me for eternity,
All, all, in that memorial.

TERESA.

Oh! what dream
Is this, mine own Francesco? Waste thou not
Thy scarce-returning strength; keep thy rich thoughts
For happier days! they will not melt away
Like passing music from the lute;—dear friend!
Dearest of friends! thou canst win back at will
The glorious visions.

* Suggested by the closing scene in the life of the painter Blake; as beautifully related by Allan Cunningham.

FRANCESCO.

Yes! the unseen land
Of glorious visions hath sent forth a voice
To call me hence. Oh! be thou not deceived!
Bind to thy heart no *earthly* hope, Teresa!
I must, *must* leave thee! Yet be strong, my love,
As thou hast still been gentle!

TERESA.

Oh, Francesco!
What will this dim world be to me, Francesco,
When wanting thy bright soul, the life of all—
My only sunshine!—How can I bear on?
How can we part? We that have loved so well,
With clasping spirits link'd so long by grief—
By tears—by prayer?

FRANCESCO.

Ev'n *therefore* we can part,
With an immortal trust, that such high love
Is not of things to perish.

Let me leave
One record still, to prove it strong as death,
Ev'n in Death's hour of triumph. Once again,
Stand with thy meek hands folded on thy breast,
And eyes half veil'd, in thine own soul absorb'd,
As in thy watchings, ere I sink to sleep;
And I will give the bending flower-like grace
Of that soft form, and the still sweetness throned
On that pale brow, and in that quivering smile
Of voiceless love, a life that shall outlast
Their delicate earthly being. There—thy head
Bow'd down with beauty, and with tenderness,
And lowly thought—even thus—my own Teresa!
Oh! the quick glancing radiance, and bright bloom
That once around thee hung, have melted now
Into more solemn light—but holier far,
And dearer, and yet lovelier in mine eyes,
Than all that summer flush! For by my couch,
In patient and serene devotedness,
Thou hast made those rich hues and sunny smiles,
Thine offering unto me. Oh! I may give
Those pensive lips, that clear Madonna brow,
And the sweet earnestness of that dark eye,
Unto the canvass—I may catch the flow
Of all those drooping locks, and glorify
With a soft halo what is imaged thus—
But how much rests unbreathed! My faithful one!
What thou hast been to me! This bitter world,
This cold unanswering world, that hath no voice
To greet the heavenly spirit—that drives back
All Birds of Eden, which would sojourn here
A little while—how have I turn'd away
From its keen soulless air, and in *thy* heart,
Found ever the sweet fountain of response,
To quench my thirst for home!

The dear work grows
Beneath my hand—the last! Each faintest line
With treasured memories fraught. Oh! weep thou not
Too long, too bitterly, when I depart!
Surely a bright home waits us both—for I,
In all my dreams, have turn'd me not from God;
And Thou—oh! best and purest! stand thou there—
There, in thy hallow'd beauty, shadowing forth
The loveliness of love!

THE FREE'D BIRD.

BY MRS HEMANS.

Return, return, my Bird !
I have dress'd thy cage with flowers,
'Tis lovely as a violet bank
In the heart of forest bowers.

" I am free, I am free, I return no more !
The weary time of the cage is o'er !
Through the rolling clouds I can soar on high,
The sky is around me, the blue bright sky !

" The hills lie beneath me, spread far and clear,
With their glowing heath-flowers and bounding deer ;
I see the waves flash on the sunny shore—
I am free, I am free—I return no more !"

Alas, alas, my Bird !
Why seek'st thou to be free ?
Wer't thou not blest in thy little bower,
When thy song breathed nought but glee ?

" Did my song of the summer breathe nought but glee ?
Did the voice of the captive seem sweet to thee ?
—O ! hadst thou known its deep meaning well,
It had tales of a burning heart to tell !

" From a dream of the forest that music sprang,
Through its notes the peal of a torrent rang ;
And its dying fall, when it sooth'd thee best,
Sigh'd for wild flowers and a leafy nest."

Was it with thee thus, my Bird ?
Yet thine eye flash'd clear and bright !
I have seen the glance of sudden joy
In its quick and dewy light.

" It flash'd with the fire of a tameless race,
With the soul of the wild wood, my native place !
With the spirit that panted through heaven to soar—
Woo me not back—I return no more !

" My home is high, amidst rocking trees,
My kindred things are the star and the breeze,
And the fount uncheck'd in its lonely play,
And the odours that wander afar, away !"

Farewell, farewell, then, Bird !
I have call'd on spirits gone,
And it may be they joy'd like *thee* to part,
Like thee, that wert all my own !

" If they were captives, and pined like me,
Though love may guard them, they joy'd to be free !
They sprang from the earth with a burst of power,
To the strength of their wings, to their triumph's hour !

" Call them not back when the chain is riven,
When the way of the pinion is all through heaven !
Farewell !—With my song through the clouds I soar,
I pierce the blue skies—I am Earth's no more !"

A POET'S DYING HYMN.

— Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise thee with impassion'd voice!
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine
In such a temple as we now behold,
Hear'd for thy presence: therefore am I bound
To worship, here and every where.

WORDSWORTH.

THE blue, deep, glorious heavens!—I lift mine eye,
And bless Thee, O my God! that I have met
And own'd thine image in the majesty
Of their calm temple still!—that never yet
There hath thy face been shrouded from my sight
By noontide-blaze, or sweeping storm of night:
I bless Thee, O my God!

That now still clearer, from their pure expanse,
I see the mercy of thine aspect shine,
Touching Death's features with a lovely glance
Of light, serenely, solemnly divine,
And lending to each holy star a ray
As of kind eyes, that woo my soul away:
I bless Thee, O my God!

That I have heard thy voice, nor been afraid,
In the earth's garden—'midst the mountains old,
And the low thrillings of the forest-shade,
And the wild sounds of waters uncontroll'd,
And upon many a desert plain and shore,
—No solitude—for there I felt *Thee* more:
I bless Thee, O my God!

And if thy Spirit on thy child hath shed
The gift, the vision of the unseal'd eye,
To pierce the mist o'er life's deep meanings spread,
To reach the hidden fountain-urns that lie
Far in man's heart—if I have kept it free
And pure—a consecration unto Thee:
I bless Thee, O my God!

If my soul's utterance hath by Thee been fraught
With an awakening power—if Thou hast made
Like the wing'd seed, the breathings of my thought,
And by the swift winds bid them be convey'd
To lands of other lays, and there become
Native as early melodies of home:
I bless Thee, O my God!

Not for the brightness of a mortal wreath,
Not for a place 'midst kingly minstrels dead,
But that perchance, a faint gale of thy breath,
A still small whisper in my song hath led
One struggling spirit upwards to thy throne,
Or but one hope, one prayer:—for this alone
I bless Thee, O my God!

That I have loved—that I have known the love
Which troubles in the soul the tearful springs,
Yet, with a colouring halo from above,
Tinges and glorifies all earthly things,
Whate'er its anguish or its woe may be,
Still weaving links for intercourse with Thee:
I bless Thee, O my God!

That by the passion of its deep distress,
And by the o'erflowing of its mighty prayer,
And by the yearning of its tenderness,
Too full for words upon their stream to bear,
I have been drawn still closer to thy shrine,
Well-spring of love, the unfathom'd, the divine :
I bless Thee, O my God!

That hope hath ne'er my heart or song forsaken,
High hope, which even from mystery, doubt, or dread,
Calmly, rejoicingly, the things hath taken,
Whereby its torchlight for the race was fed ;
That passing storms have only fann'd the fire,
Which pierced them still with its triumphal spire,
I bless Thee, O my God!

Now art Thou calling me in every gale,
Each sound and token of the dying day !
Thou leav'st me not, though earthly life grows pale,
I am not darkly sinking to decay ;
But, hour by hour, my soul's dissolving shroud
Melts off to radiance, as a silvery cloud.
I bless Thee, O my God!

And if this earth, with all its choral streams,
And crowning woods, and soft or solemn skies,
And mountain-sanctuaries for poet's dreams,
Be lovely still in my departing eyes ;
'Tis not that fondly I would linger here,
But that thy foot-prints on its dust appear :
I bless Thee, O my God!

And that the tender shadowing I behold,
The tracery veining every leaf and flower,
Of glories cast in more consummate mould,
No longer vassals to the changeful hour ;
That life's last roses to my thoughts can bring
Rich visions of imperishable spring :
I bless Thee, O my God!

Yes! the young vernal voices in the skies
Woo me not back, but, wandering past mine ear,
Seem heralds of th' eternal melodies,
The spirit-music, unperturb'd and clear ;
The full of soul, yet passionate no more—
—Let *me* too, joining those pure strains, adore !
I bless Thee, O my God!

Now aid, sustain me still!—to Thee I come,
Make Thou my dwelling where thy children are !
And for the hope of that immortal home,
And for thy Son, the bright and morning star,
The Sufferer and the Victor-king of Death,
I bless Thee with my glad song's dying breath !
I bless Thee, O my God!

THE SONG OF THE GIFTED.

BY MRS HEMANS.

That voice re-measures
Whatever tones and melancholy pleasures
The things of nature utter; birds or trees,
Or where the tall grass 'mid the heath-plant waves,
Murmur and music thin of sudden breeze.

COLERIDGE.

I heard a song upon the wandering wind,
A song of many tones—though one full soul
Breathed through them all imploringly; and made
All nature as they pass'd, all quivering leaves
And low responsive reeds and waters thrill,
As with the consciousness of human prayer.
—At times the passion-kindled melody
Might seem to gush from Sappho's fervent heart,
Over the wild sea-wave;—at times the strain
Flow'd with more plaintive sweetness, as if born
Of Petrarch's voice, beside the lone Vaucluse;
And sometimes, with its melancholy swell,
A graver sound was mingled, a deep note
Of Tasso's holy lyre;—yet still the tones
Were of a suppliant;—“*Leave me not!*” was still
The burden of their music; and I knew

The lay which genius, in its loneliness,
Its own still world amidst th' o'erpeopled world,
Hath ever breathed to Love.

They crown me with the glistening crown,
Borne from a deathless tree ;
I hear the pealing music of renown—
O Love! forsake me not!
Mine were a lone dark lot,
Bereft of thee!

They tell me that my soul can throw
A glory o'er the earth ;
From thee, from *thee*, is caught that golden glow!
Shed by thy gentle eyes
It gives to flower and skies,
A bright, new birth!

Thence gleams the path of morning,
Over the kindling hills, a sunny zone!
Thence to its heart of hearts, the Rose is burning
With lustre not its own!
Thence every wood-recess
Is fill'd with loveliness,
Each bower, to ringdoves and dim violets known.

I see all beauty by the ray
That streameth from thy smile ;
Oh! bear it, bear it not away!
Can that sweet light beguile?
Too pure, too spirit-like, it seems,
To linger long by earthly streams ;
I clasp it with th' alloy
Of fear 'midst quivering joy,
Yet must I perish if the gift depart—
Leave me not, Love! to mine own beating heart!

The music from my lyre
With thy swift step would flee ;
The world's cold breath would quench the starry fire
In my deep soul—a temple fill'd with thee!
Seal'd would the fountains lie,
The waves of harmony,
Which thou alone canst free!

Like a shrine 'midst rocks forsaken,
Whence the oracle hath fled ;
Like a harp which none might waken
But a mighty master dead ;
Like the vase of a perfume scatter'd,
Such would my spirit be ;
So mute, so void, so shatter'd,
Bereft of thee!

Leave me not, Love! or if this earth
Yield not for thee a home,
If the bright summer-land of thy pure birth
Send thee a silvery voice that whispers—"Come!"
Then, with the glory from the rose,
With the sparkle from the stream,
With the light thy rainbow-presence throws
Over the poet's dream ;
With all th' Elysian hues
Thy pathway that suffuse,
With joy, with music, from the fading grove,
Take *me*, too, heavenward, on thy wing, sweet Love!