

Miscellaneous Poetry 7

1833

By

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Compiled

by

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PROLOGUE, BY MRS. HEMANS, TO THE
TRAGEDY OF 'FIESCO.'

(Translated from the German of Schiller by Lieut.-
Col. D'AGUILAR, and performed at the Dublin
Theatre, Dec. 1832.)

Too long apart, a bright but severed band,
The mighty minstrels of the Rhine's fair land
Majestic strains, but not for us, had sung,—
Moulding to melody a stranger tongue.
Brave hearts leaped proudly to their words of
power,
As a true sword bounds forth in battle's hour ;
Fair eyes rained homage o'er th' impassioned
lays,
In loving tears, more eloquent than praise :
While we, far distant, knew not, deemed not
aught
Of the high marvels by that magic wrought.
But let the barriers of sea give way,
When Mind sweeps onward with a conqueror's
sway !
And let the Rhine divide high souls no more
From mingling on its old, heroic shore,
Which, e'en like ours, brave deeds through
many an age,
Have made the Poet's own free heritage !
To us, though faintly, may a wandering tone
Of the far minstrelsy at last be known ;
Sounds which the thrilling pulse, the burning
tear,
Have sprung to greet, must not be strangers
here.
And if by one, more used, on march and heath,
To the shrill bugle, than the Muse's breath,
With a warm heart the offering hath been
brought,
And in a trusting loyalty of thought,—
So let it be received!—a soldier's hand
Bears to the breast of no ungenerous land
A seed of foreign shores. O'er this fair clime,
Since Tara heard the Harp of ancient time,
Hath song held empire ;—then if not with *Fame*,
Let the green Isle with *kindness* bless his aim,
The joy, the power, of kindred song to spread,
Where once that Harp "the soul of music
shed" !

PINDEMONTE'S SONNET ON THE HEBE OF
CANOVA.

TRANSLATED BY MRS. HEMANS.

Dove per te, celeste ancella, or vassi?

Whither, celestial maid, so fast away?
What lures thee from the banquet of the skies?
How canst thou leave thy native realms of day,
For this low sphere, this vale of clouds and
sighs?
—O thou, Canova! soaring high above
Italian art,—with Grecian magic vying!
We knew thy marble glowed with life and love,
But who had seen the image footsteps flying?
—Here to each eye the wind seems gently playing
With the light vest, its wavy folds arraying
In many a line of undulating grace;
While Nature, ne'er her mighty laws suspending,
Stands, before marble thus with motion blending,
One moment lost in thought, its hidden cause
to trace.

SONG.

BY FELICIA HEMANS.

LOOK on me with thy cloudless eyes,
Truth in their dark transparence lies;
Their sweetness gives me back the tears
And the free trust of early years.

My gentle child!

The spirit of my infant prayer,
Shines in the depths of quiet there;
And Home, and Love, once more are mine,
Found in that dewy calm divine.

My gentle child!

Oh! Heaven is with thee in thy dreams,
Its light by day around thee gleams;
Thy smile hath gifts from vernal skies—
Look on me with thy cloudless eyes!

My gentle child!

THE LAST WORDS OF THE LAST WASP
OF SCOTLAND,

—A *jeu-d'esprit* produced at this time, which owed its origin to a simple remark on the unseasonableness of the weather, made by Mrs Hemans to Mr Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, whom she was in the habit of seeing at Sir David Wedderburn's. "It is so little like summer," she said, "that I have not even seen a butterfly." "A butterfly!" retorted Mr Sharpe, "I have not even seen a wasp!" The next morning, as if in confutation of this calumny, a wasp made its appearance at Lady Wedderburn's breakfast table. Mrs Hemans immediately proposed that it should be made a prisoner, inclosed in a bottle, and sent to Mr Sharpe: this was accordingly done, and the piquant missive was acknowledged by him as follows:—

"SONNET TO A WASP, IN THE MANNER OF
MILTON, &c., BUT MUCH SUPERIOR.

POOR insect! rash as rare!—Thy sovereign,¹ sure,
Hath driven thee to Siberia in disgrace—
Else what delusion could thy sense allure
To buzz and sting in this unwholesome place,
Where e'en the hornet's hoarser, and the race
Of filmy wing are feeble? Honey here
(Scarce as its rhyme) thou find'st not. Ah, beware
Thy golden mail, to starved Arachne dear!²
Though fingers famed, that thrill the immortal lyre,
Have pent thee up, a second Asmodeus,
I wail thy doom—I warm thee by the fire,
And blab our secrets—do not thou betray us!
I give thee liberty, I give thee breath,
To fly from Athens, Eurus, Doctors, Death!!"³

To this Mrs Hemans returned the following rejoinder:—

Sooth'd by the strain, the Wasp thus made reply—
(The first, last time, he spoke not waspishly)—
"Too late, kind Poet! comes thine aid, thy song,
To aught first starved, then bottled up so long.
Yet, for the warmth of this thy genial fire,
Take a Wasp's blessing ere his race expire:—
Never may provost's foot find entrance here!
Never may bailie's voice invade thine ear!
Never may housemaid wipe the verd antique
From coin of thine—Assyrian, Celt, or Greek!
Never may Eurus cross thy path!—to thee
May winds and wynds³ alike propitious be!
And when thou diest—(live a thousand years!)—
May friends fill classic bottles⁴ with their tears!

¹ Beelzebub is the king of flies.

² A beautiful allusion to our starving weavers.

³ Alluding to antiquarian visits to these renowned closets.

⁴ Referring to certain precious lachrymatories in the possession of Mr Sharpe.

I can no more—receive my parting gasp !—
Bid Scotland mourn the last, last lingering Wasp !”