

A Poem of  
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Elysium

## Poetry.

### ELYSIUM.

BY MRS. HEHANS.

'In the Elysium of the ancients, we find none but heroes and persons who had either been fortunate or distinguished on earth; the children, and apparently the slaves and lower classes, that is to say, Poverty, Misfortune, and Innocence, were banished to the infernal regions.'

CHATEAUBRIAND, *Génie du Christianisme*.

FAIR wert thou, in the dreams  
Of elder time, thou land of glorious flowers,  
And summer-winds, and low-ton'd silvery streams,  
Dim with the shadows of thy laurel-bowers!  
Where, as they pass'd, bright hours  
Left no faint sense of parting, such as clings  
To earthly love, and joy in loveliest things!

Fair wert thou, with the light  
On thy blue hills and sleepy waters cast,  
From purple skies ne'er deepening into night,  
Yet soft, as if each moment were their last  
Of glory, fading fast  
Along the mountains!—but *thy* golden day  
Was not as those that warn us of decay.

And ever, through thy shades,  
A swell of deep Eolian sound went by,  
From fountain-voices in their secret glades,  
And low reed-whispers, making sweet reply  
To summer's breezy sigh!  
And young leaves trembling to the wind's light breath,  
Which ne'er had touch'd them with a hue of death!

And the transparent sky  
Rung as a dome, all thrilling to the strain  
Of harps that, midst the woods, made harmony  
Solemn and sweet; yet troubling not the brain  
With dreams and yearnings vain,  
And dim remembrances, that still draw birth  
From the bewildering musick of the earth.

And who, with silent tread,  
Mov'd o'er the plains of waving Asphodel?  
Who, of the hosts, the night-o'erpeopling dead,

Amidst the shadowy amaranth-bowers might dwell,  
 And listen to the swell  
 Of those majestick hymn-notes, and inhale  
 The spirit wandering in th' immortal gale ?

They of the sword, whose praise,  
 With the bright wine at nations' feasts, went round !  
 They of the lyre, whose unforgotten lays  
 On the morn's wing had sent their mighty sound,  
 And in all regions found  
 Their echoes midst the mountains !—and become  
 In man's deep heart, as voices of his home !

They of the daring thought !  
 Daring and powerful, yet to dust allied ;  
 Whose flights thro' stars, and seas, and depths had sought  
 The soul's far birth-place—but without a guide !  
 Sages and seers, who died,  
 And left the world their high mysterious dreams,  
 Born midst the olive-woods, by Grecian streams.

But they, of whose abode  
 Midst her green valleys earth retain'd no trace,  
 Save a flower springing from their burial-sod,  
 A shade of sadness on some kindred face,  
 A void and silent place  
 In some sweet home ;—thou hadst no wreaths for these,  
 Thou sunny land ! with all thy deathless trees.

The peasant, at his door  
 Might sink to die, when vintage-feasts were spread,  
 And songs on every wind !—From *thy* bright shore  
 No lovelier vision floated round his head ;  
 Thou wert for nobler dead !  
 He heard the bounding steps which round him fell,  
 And sigh'd to bid the festal sun farewell !

The slave, whose very tears  
 Were a forbidden luxury, and whose breast  
 Shut up the woes and burning thoughts of years,  
 As in the ashes of an urn compress'd ;  
 —*He* might not be thy guest !  
 No gentle breathings from thy distant sky  
 Came o'er *his* path, and whisper'd ' Liberty !'

Calm, on its leaf-strewn bier,  
 Unlike a gift of nature to decay,  
 Too rose-like still, too beautiful, too dear,  
 The child at rest before its mother lay ;  
     E'en so to pass away,  
 With its bright smile !—Elysium ! what wert *thou*,  
 To her, who wept o'er that young slumberer's brow ?

Thou hadst no home, green land !  
 For the fair creature from her bosom gone,  
 With life's first flowers just opening in her hand,  
 And all the lovely thoughts and dreams unknown,  
     Which in its clear eye shone  
 Like the spring's wakening !—But that light was past—  
 —Where went the dew-drop, swept before the blast ?

Not where thy soft winds play'd,  
 Not where thy waters lay in glassy sleep !—  
 Fade, with thy bowers, thou land of visions, fade !  
 From thee no voice came o'er the gloomy deep,  
     And bade man cease to weep !  
 Fade, with the amaranth-plain, the myrtle-grove,  
 Which could not yield one hope to sorrowing love !

For the most lov'd are they,  
 Of whom Fame speaks not with her clarion-voice  
 In regal halls !—the shades o'erhang their way,  
 The vale, with its deep fountains, is their choice,  
     And gentle hearts rejoice  
 Around their steps !—till silently they die,  
 As a stream shrinks from summer's burning eye.

And the world knows not then,  
 Not then, nor ever, what pure thoughts are fled !  
 Yet these are they, that on the souls of men  
 Come back, when night her folding veil hath spread,  
     The long-remember'd dead !  
 But not with *thee* might aught save Glory dwell—  
 —Fade, fade away, thou shore of Asphodel !

