

A Poem of  
Felicia Hemans  
in  
The Keepsake, 1829

compiled  
by  
Peter J. Bolton

The Broken Chain

## THE BROKEN CHAIN.

BY MRS. HEMANS.

Lift not the festal mask!

SCOTT.

I AM free! I have burst through my heavy chain,  
The life of young eagles is mine again!  
I may cleave with my bark the glad sounding sea,  
I may rove where the wind roves—my path is free!

The streams dash in joy down the tameless hill,  
The birds pierce the depths of the skies at will;  
The arrow goes forth with the singing breeze—  
And is not my spirit as one of these?

Oh! the glad earth, with its wealth of flowers,  
And the voices that ring through its forest-bowers,  
And the laughing glance of the founts that shine,  
Lighting its valleys!—all, all are mine!

I may urge through the desert my foaming steed,  
The wings of the morning shall lend him speed!  
I may meet the storm in its rushing glee,  
Its blasts and its lightnings are not more free!

Captive! and hast thou then riven thy chain?  
Art thou free in the wilderness, free on the main?  
Yes! *these* thy spirit may proudly soar,  
But must thou not mingle with crowds once more?

The bird, when he pineth, may cease his song,  
Till the hour when his heart shall again be strong;  
But thou—wilt thou turn in thy woe aside,  
And weep midst thy brethren?—no, not for pride!

May the fiery word from thy lip find way,  
When the thought burning in thee would rush to day?—  
May the love or the grief of thy haunted breast,  
Look forth from thy features, the banquet's guest?—

No! with the shaft in thy bosom borne,  
Thou must hide the wound from the eye of scorn,  
Thou must fold the mantle that none may see,  
And mask thee with laughter, and say thou art free.

Free!—thou art bound, till thy race is run,  
By the might of all on the soul of one!  
On thy heart, on thy lip, must the fetter be—  
Dreamer, fond dreamer! oh! who is free?