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LOVE AND DEATH.

*By Mrs Hemans.*

By thy birth, so oft renew'd  
From the embers long subdued;  
By the life-gift in thy chain,  
Broken links to weave again;  
By thine Infinite of woe,  
All we know not, all we know;  
If there be what dieth not,  
*Thine*, Affection! is its lot!

MIGHTY ones, Love and Death!  
Ye are the strong in this world of ours,  
Ye meet at the banquets, ye strive midst the flow'r—  
—Which hath the Conqueror's wreath?

*Thou* art the victor, Love!  
Thou art the peerless, the crown'd, the free—  
The strength of the battle is given to thee,  
The spirit from above.

Thou hast look'd on death and smiled!  
Thou hast buoy'd up the fragile and reed-like form  
Through the tide of the fight, through the rush of the storm,  
On field, and flood, and wild.

Thou hast stood on the scaffold alone:  
Thou hast watch'd by the wheel through the torturer's hour,  
And girt thy soul with a martyr's power,  
Till the conflict hath been won.

No—*thou* art the victor, Death!  
Thou comest—and where is that which spoke  
From the depths of the eye, when the bright soul woke?  
—Gone with the fitting breath!

Thou comest—and what is left  
Of all that loved us, to say if aught  
*Yet loves*, yet answers the burning thought  
Of the spirit lorn and reft?

Silence is where thou art!  
Silently thou must kindred meet;  
No glance to cheer, and no voice to greet;  
No bounding of heart to heart!

Boast not thy victory, Death!  
It is but as the cloud's o'er the sunbeam's power—  
It is but as the winter's o'er leaf and flower,  
That slumber, the snow beneath.

It is but as a tyrant's reign  
O'er the look and the voice, which he bids be still:  
—But the sleepless thought and the fiery will  
Are not for him to chain.

They shall soar his might above!  
And so with the root whence affection springs,  
Though buried, it is not of mortal things—  
*Thou* art the victor, Love!

THE LADY OF PROVENCE.\*

BY MRS HEMANS

Courage was cast about her like a dress  
Of solemn comeliness,  
A gather'd mind and an untroubled face  
Did give her dangers grace.

The war-note of the Saracen  
Was on the winds of France;  
It had still'd the harp of the Troubadour,  
And the clash of the Tourney's lance.

The sounds of the sea and the sounds of the night,  
And the hollow echoes of charge and flight,  
Were around Clotilde, as she knelt to pray  
In a chapel where the mighty lay,  
On the old Provençal shore;  
Many a Chatillon beneath,  
Unstirr'd by the ringing trumpet's breath,  
His shroud of armour wore.

And the glimpses of moonlight that went and came  
Through the clouds, like bursts of a dying flame,  
Gave quivering life to the slumbers pale  
Of stern forms couch'd in their marble mail,  
At rest on the tombs of the knightly race,  
The silent throngs of that burial-place.

They were imaged there with helm and spear,  
As leaders in many a bold career,  
And haughty their stillness look'd and high,  
Like a sleep whose dreams were of victory:  
But meekly the voice of the lady rose  
Through the trophies of their proud repose.  
Meekly, yet fervently, calling down aid,  
Under their banners of battle she pray'd;  
With her pale fair brow, and her eyes of love,  
Uprais'd to the Virgin's pourtray'd above,  
And her hair flung back, till it swept the grave  
Of a Chatillon with its gleamy wave.  
And her fragile frame, at every blast  
That full of the savage war-horn pass'd,  
Trembling as trembles a bird's quick heart,  
When it vainly strives from its cage to part,—  
So knelt she in her woe:  
A weeper alone with the tearless dead—  
Oh! they reck not of tears o'er their quiet shed,  
Or the dust had stirr'd below!

Hark! a swift step! she hath caught its tone,  
Through the dash of the sea, through the wild wind's moan;—  
Is her Lord return'd with his conquering bands?  
No! a breathless vassal before her stands!  
—“Hast thou been on the field?—Art thou come from the host?”  
—“From the slaughter, Lady!—All, all is lost!”

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\* Founded on an incident in the early French history.

Our banners are taken, our knights laid low,  
Our spearmen chased by the Paynim foe,  
And thy Lord"—his voice took a sadder sound—  
"Thy Lord—he is not on the bloody ground!  
There are those who tell that the leader's plume  
Was seen on the flight through the gathering gloom."

—A change o'er her mien and her spirit pass'd;  
She ruled the heart which had beat so fast,  
She dash'd the tears from her kindling eye,  
With a glance as of sudden royalty;  
The proud blood sprang, in a fiery flow,  
Quick over bosom, and cheek, and brow,  
And her young voice rose, till the peasant shook  
At the thrilling tone and the falcon-look:  
—"Dost thou stand midst the tombs of the glorious dead,  
And fear not to say that their son hath fled?  
—Away! he is lying by lance and shield—  
Point me the path to his battle field!"

The shadows of the forest  
Are about the Lady now;  
She is hurrying through the midnight on,  
Beneath the dark pine-bough.

There's a murmur of omens in every leaf,  
There's a wail in the stream like the dirge of a chief;  
The branches that rock to the tempest-strife,  
Are groaning like things of troubled life;  
The wind from the battle seems rushing by  
With a funeral march through the gloomy sky;  
The pathway is rugged, and wild, and long,  
But her frame in the daring of love is strong,  
And her soul as on swelling seas upborne,  
And girded all fearful things to scorn.

And fearful things were around her spread,  
When she reach'd the field of the warrior-dead;  
There lay the noble, the valiant low—  
—Aye! but *one* word speaks of deeper woe;  
There lay the *loved*!—on each fallen head  
Mothers vain blessings and tears had shed;  
Sisters were watching, in many a home,  
For the fetter'd footstep, no more to come;  
Names in the prayers of that night were spoken  
Whose claim unto kindred prayers was broken;  
And the fire was heap'd, and the bright wine pour'd  
For those, now needing nor hearth nor board;  
Only a requiem, a shroud, a knell,  
—And oh! ye beloved of woman, farewell!

Silently, with lips compress'd,  
Pale hands clasp'd above her breast,  
Stately brow of anguish high,  
Death-like cheek, but dauntless eye;  
Silently, o'er that red plain,  
Moved the lady midst the slain.

Sometimes it seem'd as a charging cry,  
Or the ringing tramp of a steed came nigh;  
Sometimes a blast of the Paynim horn,  
Sudden and shrill, from the mountains borne

And her maidens trembled :—but on *her* ear  
No meaning fell with those sounds of fear ;  
They had less of mastery to shake her now,  
Than the quivering, erewhile, of an aspen bough.  
She search'd into many an unclosed eye,  
That look'd without soul to the starry sky ;  
She bow'd down o'er many a shatter'd breast,  
She lifted up helmet and cloven crest—

Not there, not there he lay !  
“ Lead where the most hath been dared and done,  
Where the heart of the battle hath bled,—lead on !”  
And the vassal took the way.

He turn'd to a dark and lonely tree,  
That waved o'er a fountain red ;  
Oh ! swiftest *there* had the current free  
From noble veins been shed.

Thickest there the spear-heads gleam'd,  
And the scatter'd plumage stream'd,  
And the broken shields were toss'd,  
And the shiver'd lances cross'd,  
And the mail-clad sleepers round  
Made the harvest of that ground.

He was there ! the leader amidst his band,  
Where the faithful had made their last vain stand ;  
He was there ! but affection's glance alone,  
The darkly-changed in that hour had known ;  
With the falchion yet in his cold hand grasp'd,  
And a banner of France to his bosom clasp'd,  
And the form that of conflict bore fearful trace,  
And the face—oh ! speak not of that dead face !  
As it lay to answer love's look no more,  
Yet never so proudly loved before !

She quell'd in her soul the deep floods of woe,  
The time was not yet for their waves to flow ;  
She felt the full presence, the might of death,  
Yet there came no sob with her struggling breath,  
And a proud smile shone o'er her pale despair,  
As she turn'd to his followers—“ Your Lord is there !  
Look on him ! know him by scarf and crest !  
Bear him away with his sires to rest !”

Another day—another night—  
And the sailor on the deep  
Hears the low chant of a funeral rite  
From the lordly chapel sweep :

It comes with a broken and muffled tone,  
As if that rite were in terror done,  
Yet the song midst the seas hath a thrilling power,  
And he knows 'tis a chieftain's burial-hour.

Hurriedly, in fear and woe,  
Through the aisle the mourners go ;  
With a hush'd and stealthy tread,  
Bearing on the noble dead,  
Sheathed in armour of the field—  
Only his wan face reveal'd,

Whence the still and solemn gleam  
Doth a strange sad contrast seem  
To the anxious eyes of that pale band,  
With torches wavering in every hand,  
For they dread each moment the shout of war,  
And the burst of the Moslem scymitar.

There is no plumed head o'er the bier to bend,  
No brother of battle, no princely friend ;  
No sound comes back, like the sounds of yore,  
Unto sweeping swords from the marble floor ;  
By the red fountain the valiant lie,  
The flower of Provençal chivalry,  
But *one* free step and one lofty heart,  
Bear through that scene, to the last, their part.

She hath led the death-train of the brave  
To the verge of his own ancestral grave ;  
She hath held o'er his spirit long rigid sway, ?  
But the struggling passion must now have way.  
In the cheek half seen through her mourning veil,  
By turns doth the swift blood flush and fail,  
The pride on the lip is lingering still,  
But it shakes as a flame to the blast might thrill ;  
Anguish and Triumph are met at strife,  
Rending the cords of her frail young life ;  
And she sinks at last on her warrior's bier,  
Lifting her voice as if death might hear.

" I have won thy fame from the breath of wrong,  
My soul hath risen for thy glory strong !  
Now call me hence by thy side to be,  
The world thou leav'st hath no place for me.  
The light goes with thee, the joy, the worth—  
Faithful and tender ! Oh ! call me forth !  
Give me my home on thy noble heart,  
Well have we loved, let us both depart !"

And pale on the breast of the Dead she lay,  
The living cheek to the cheek of clay ;  
The *living* cheek !—Oh ! it was not vain,  
That strife of the spirit to rend its chain,  
She is there at rest in her place of pride,  
In death how queen-like—a glorious bride !

Joy for the freed One !—she might not stay  
When the crown had fall'n from her life away ;  
She might not linger—a weary thing,  
A dove with no home for its broken wing,  
Thrown on the harshness of alien skies,  
That know not its own land's melodies.  
From the long heart-withering early gone ;  
She hath lived—she hath loved—her task is done !

THE REQUIEM OF GENIUS.

BY MRS HEMANS.

Thou art fled  
Like some frail exhalation, which the dawn  
Roses in its golden beams—ah! thou hast fled!  
The brave, the gentle, and the beautiful;  
The child of grace and genius. Heartless things  
Are done and said 't the world, and mighty earth,  
In vesper low or joyous ecstacy,  
Lifts still her solemn voice—but thou art fled!

No tears for thee!—though light be from us gone  
With thy soul's radiance, bright, yet restless one!  
No tears for thee!  
They that have loved an exile must not mourn  
To see him parting for his native bourne,  
O'er the dark sea.

All the high music of thy spirit here,  
Breathed but the language of another sphere,  
Unechoed round;  
And strange, though sweet, as midst our weeping skies,  
Some half-remember'd song of Paradise  
Might sadly sound.

Hast thou been answer'd? Thou that from the night,  
And from the voices of the tempest's might,  
And from the past,  
Wert seeking still some oracle's reply,  
To pour the secrets of Man's destiny  
Forth on the blast.

Hast thou been answer'd?—thou that through the gloom,  
And shadow, and stern silence of the tomb,  
A cry didst send,  
So passionate and deep, to pierce, to move,  
To win back token of unburied love  
From buried friend.

And hast thou found where living waters burst?  
Thou that didst pine amidst us in the thirst  
Of fever-dreams!  
Are the true fountains thine for evermore?  
Oh! lured so long by shining mists that wore  
The light of streams!

Speak! is it well with thee? We call as *thou*,  
With thy lit eye, deep voice, and kindled brow,  
Wert wont to call  
On the departed! Art thou blest and free?  
Alas! the lips earth covers, ev'n to *thee*,  
Were silent all!

Yet shall our hope rise, fann'd by quenchless faith,  
As a flame foster'd by some warm wind's breath,  
In light upsprings.  
Freed soul of song! Yes! thou hast *found* the sought,  
Borne to thy home of beauty and of thought,  
On morning's wings.

And we will deem it is *thy* voice we hear,  
When life's young music, ringing far and clear,  
O'erflows the sky:  
No tears for thee! the lingering gloom is ours—  
Thou art for converse with all glorious powers  
Never to die!



TRIUMPHANT MUSIC.

BY MRS HEMANS.

*Tacetis, tacete, O suoni triumfanti !  
Risvegliate in vano 'l cor che non può liberarsi.*

WHEREFORE and whither bear'st thou up my spirit,  
On eagle-wings, through every plume that thrill ?  
It hath no crown of victory to inherit—  
Be still, triumphant Harmony ! be still !

Thine are no sounds for Earth, thus proudly swelling  
Into rich floods of joy :—It is but pain  
To mount so high, yet find on high no dwelling,  
To sink so fast, so heavily again !

No sounds for Earth ?—Yes, to young Chieftain dying  
On his own battle-field at set of sun,  
With his freed Country's Banner o'er him flying,  
Well mightst thou speak of Fame's high guerdon won.

No sounds for Earth ?—Yes, for the Martyr leading  
Unto victorious Death serenely on,  
For Patriot by his rescued Altars bleeding,  
Thou hast a voice in each majestic tone.

But speak not thus to one whose heart is beating  
Against Life's narrow bound, in conflict vain !  
For Power, for Joy, high Hope, and rapturous greeting,  
Thou wak'st lone thirst—be hush'd, exulting strain.

Be hush'd, or breathe of Grief!—of Exile-yearnings  
Under the willows of the stranger-shore ;  
Breathe of the soul's untold and restless burnings,  
For looks, tones, footsteps, that return no more.

Breathe of deep Love—a lonely Vigil keeping  
Through the night-hours o'er wasted health to pine ;  
Rich thoughts and sad like faded rose-leaves heaping,  
In the shut heart, at once a Tomb and Shrine.

Or pass as if thy spirit-notes came sighing  
From Worlds beneath some blue Elysian sky ;  
Breathe of repose, the pure, the bright, th' undying—  
Of Joy no more—bewildering Harmony !