

Classic Poetry Series

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

PoemHunter.Com - The World's Poetry Archive

Casabianca

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.
Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames roll'd on...he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He call'd aloud..."Say, father,say
If yet my task is done!"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father!" once again he cried
"If I may yet be gone!"
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll'd on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And looked from that lone post of death,
In still yet brave despair;

And shouted but one more aloud,
"My father, must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud
The wreathing fires made way,

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And stream'd above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound...
The boy-oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea.

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
That well had borne their part;
But the noblest thing which perished there
Was that young faithful heart.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

Design and Performance

o

They float before my soul, the fair designs
Which I would body forth to life and power,
Like clouds that with their wavering hues and lines
Portray majestic building--dome and tower,
Bright spire, that through the rainbow and the shower
Points to the unchanging stars; and high arcade,
Far-sweeping to some glorious altar made
For holiest rites.

Meanwhile the waning hour
Melts from me, and by fervent dreams overwrought
I sink. O friend! O linked with each high thought!
Aid me, of those rich visions to detain
All I may grasp; until thou seest fulfilled,
While time and strength allow, my hope to build
For lowly hearts devout, but one enduring fane!

o

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

Dirge

CALM on the bosom of thy God,
Fair spirit, rest thee now!
E'en while with ours thy footsteps trod,
His seal was on thy brow.

Dust, to its narrow house beneath!
Soul, to its place on high!
They that have seen thy look in death
No more may fear to die.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

Flight of the Spirit

o

Whither, oh! whither wilt thou wing thy way?
What solemn region first upon thy sight
Shall break, unveiled for terror or delight?
What hosts, magnificent in dread array,
My spirit! when thy prison-house of clay
After long strife is rent? Fond, fruitless quest!
The unfledged bird, within his narrow nest,
Sees but a few green branches oer him play,
And through their parting leaves, by fits revealed,
A glimpse of summer sky; nor knows the field
Wherein his dormant powers must yet be tried.
Thou art that bird!--of what beyond thee lies
Far in the untracked immeasurable skies
Knowing but this--that thou shalt find thy guide!

o

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

Sabbath Sonnet

o

How many blessed groups this hour are bending,
Through England's primrose meadow-paths, their way
Towards spire and tower, 'midst shadowy elms ascending,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day!
The halls from old heroic ages gray
Pour their fair children forth; and hamlets low,
With those thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways, to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound; yet, O my God! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbings stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness.

o

Felicia Dorothea Hemans

The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England

"Look now abroad--another race has fill'd
Those populous borders--wide the wood recedes,
And town shoots up, and fertile realms are till'd;
The land is full of harvests and green meads."--BRYANT

The breaking waves dash'd high
On a stern and rock-bound coast,
And the woods against a stormy sky
Their giant branches toss'd;

And the heavy night hung dark,
The hills and waters o'er,
When a band of exiles moor'd their bark
On the wild New England shore.

Not as the conqueror comes,
They, the true-hearted, came;
Not with the roll of the stirring drums,
And the trumpet that sings of fame;

Not as the flying come,
In silence and in fear;--
They shook the depths of the desert gloom
With their hymns of lofty cheer.

Amidst the storm they sang,
And the stars heard and the sea:
And the sounding aisles of the dim woods rang
To the anthem of the free!

The ocean eagle soar'd
From his nest by the white wave's foam
And the rocking pines of the forest roar'd--
This was their welcome home!

There were men with hoary hair
Amidst that pilgrim band:--
Why had they come to wither there,
Away from their childhood's land?

There was woman's fearless eye,
Lit by her deep love's truth;
There was manhood's brow serenely high,
And the fiery heart of youth.

What sought they thus afar?
Bright jewels of the mine?
The wealth of seas, the spoils of war?--
They sought a faith's pure shrine!

Ay, call it holy ground,
The soil where first they trode.
They have left unstained, what there they found--

Freedom to worship God.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans