Classic Poetry Series

Robert Southey
- poems -

Publication Date:
2004

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive
Robert Southey (1774 - 1843)

Robert Southey was expelled from Westminster School for criticising the practice of flogging in the school magazine. This incident helped to fire his youthful revolutionary ideals, which found expression a few years later in his first long poem Joan of Arc (1796). He went to Balliol College, Oxford, but failed to gain a degree; his attention was taken up by a new friend, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and his ideas about 'pantisocracy', a scheme to set up a utopian community in America. Southey and Coleridge married two sisters, Edith and Sara Fricker. Though there was some ill-feeling over the abandonment of pantisocracy, the two men remained friends.

By this time Southey had resolved to make his living as a writer. In 1797 he was already printing the second edition of his Poems, and a trip to the Continent resulted in the publication of Letters Written During a Short Residence in Spain and Portugal. In this year he also began to receive an annual sum of £160 from his friend Charles Wynn; this was replaced in 1807 by a government pension for the same amount.

Southey and his family moved into Greta Hall, Keswick, in 1803, where he lived for the rest of his life. They shared the house with the Coleridges, and Southey also got to know William and Dorothy Wordsworth, who lived nearby. When Coleridge went to Malta in 1804 Southey worked extremely hard to provide for both families.

As he grew older, Southey seemed increasingly a part of the Establishment he had sought to rebel against in his pantisocratic days. Like Wordsworth and Coleridge, he became disillusioned by the progress of the French Revolution, and he was criticised as a political turncoat by the younger generation of Romantic writers, notably in Byron's Don Juan. He became Poet Laureate in 1813, a responsibility he later came to dislike.

Though he has been subject to some neglect since his death, Southey was an influential writer in his own day, and even his enemies, like Byron and Hazlitt, professed admiration for his prose style. His later years were clouded by his wife's madness and death in 1837, and his own deteriorating mental and physical health.
A Ballad, Shewing How An Old Woman Rode Double,
And Who Rode Before Her

The Raven croak'd as she sate at her meal,
And the Old Woman knew what he said,
And she grew pale at the Raven's tale,
And sicken'd and went to her bed.

Now fetch me my children, and fetch them with speed,
The Old Woman of Berkeley said,
The monk my son, and my daughter the nun
Bid them hasten or I shall be dead.

The monk her son, and her daughter the nun,
Their way to Berkeley went,
And they have brought with pious thought
The holy sacrament.

The old Woman shriek'd as they entered her door,
'Twas fearful her shrieks to hear,
Now take the sacrament away
For mercy, my children dear!

Her lip it trembled with agony,
The sweat ran down her brow,
I have tortures in store for evermore,
Oh! spare me my children now!

Away they sent the sacrament,
The fit it left her weak,
She look'd at her children with ghastly eyes
And faintly struggled to speak.

All kind of sin I have rioted in
And the judgment now must be,
But I secured my childrens souls,
Oh! pray my children for me.

I have suck'd the breath of sleeping babes,
The fiends have been my slaves,
I have nointed myself with infants fat,
And feasted on rifled graves.

And the fiend will fetch me now in fire
My witchcrafts to atone,
And I who have rifled the dead man's grave
Shall never have rest in my own.

Bless I intreat my winding sheet
My children I beg of you!
And with holy water sprinkle my shroud
And sprinkle my coffin too.

And let me be chain'd in my coffin of stone
And fasten it strong I implore
With iron bars, and let it be chain'd
With three chains to the church floor.

And bless the chains and sprinkle them,
And let fifty priests stand round,
Who night and day the mass may say
Where I lie on the ground.

And let fifty choristers be there
The funeral dirge to sing,
Who day and night by the taper's light
Their aid to me may bring.

Let the church bells all both great and small
Be toll'd by night and day,
To drive from thence the fiends who come
To bear my corpse away.

And ever have the church door barr'd
After the even song,
And I beseech you children dear
Let the bars and bolts be strong.

And let this be three days and nights
My wretched corpse to save,
Preserve me so long from the fiendish throng
And then I may rest in my grave.
The Old Woman of Berkeley laid her down
And her eyes grew deadly dim,
Short came her breath and the struggle of death
Did loosen every limb.

They blest the old woman's winding sheet
With rites and prayers as due,
With holy water they sprinkled her shroud
And they sprinkled her coffin too.

And they chain'd her in her coffin of stone
And with iron barr'd it down,
And in the church with three strong chains
They chain'd it to the ground.

And they blest the chains and sprinkled them,
And fifty priests stood round,
By night and day the mass to say
Where she lay on the ground.

And fifty choristers were there
To sing the funeral song,
And a hallowed taper blazed in the hand
Of all the sacred throng.

To see the priests and choristers
It was a goodly sight,
Each holding, as it were a staff,
A taper burning bright.

And the church bells all both great and small
Did toll so loud and long,
And they have barr'd the church door hard
After the even song.

And the first night the taper's light
Burnt steadily and clear.
But they without a hideous rout
Of angry fiends could hear;

A hideous roar at the church door
Like a long thunder peal,
And the priests they pray'd and the choristers sung
Louder in fearful zeal.

Loud toll'd the bell, the priests pray'd well,
The tapers they burnt bright,
The monk her son, and her daughter the nun
They told their beads all night.

The cock he crew, away they flew
The fiends from the herald of day,
And undisturb'd the choristers sing
And the fifty priests they pray.

The second night the taper's light
Burnt dismally and blue,
And every one saw his neighbour's face
Like a dead man's face to view.

And yells and cries without arise
That the stoutest heart might shock,
And a deafening roaring like a cataract pouring
Over a mountain rock.

The monk and nun they told their beads
As fast as they could tell,
And aye as louder grew the noise
The faster went the bell.

Louder and louder the choristers sung
As they trembled more and more,
And the fifty priests prayed to heaven for aid,
They never had prayed so before.

The cock he crew, away they flew
The fiends from the herald of day,
And undisturb'd the choristers sing
And the fifty priests they pray.

The third night came and the tapers flame
A hideous stench did make,
And they burnt as though they had been dipt
In the burning brimstone lake.

And the loud commotion, like the rushing of ocean,
Grew momently more and more,
And strokes as of a battering ram
Did shake the strong church door.

The bellmen they for very fear
Could toll the bell no longer,
And still as louder grew the strokes
Their fear it grew the stronger.

The monk and nun forgot their beads,
They fell on the ground dismay'd,
There was not a single saint in heaven
Whom they did not call to aid.

And the choristers song that late was so strong
Grew a quaver of consternation,
For the church did rock as an earthquake shock
Uplifted its foundation.

And a sound was heard like the trumpet's blast
That shall one day wake the dead,
The strong church door could bear no more
And the bolts and the bars they fled.

And the taper's light was extinguish'd quite,
And the choristers faintly sung,
And the priests dismay'd, panted and prayed
Till fear froze every tongue.

And in He came with eyes of flame
The Fiend to fetch the dead,
And all the church with his presence glowed
Like a fiery furnace red.

He laid his hand on the iron chains
And like flax they moulder'd asunder,
And the coffin lid that was barr'd so firm
He burst with his voice of thunder.
And he bade the Old Woman of Berkeley rise
And come with her master away,
And the cold sweat stood on the cold cold corpse,
At the voice she was forced to obey.

She rose on her feet in her winding sheet,
Her dead flesh quivered with fear,
And a groan like that which the Old Woman gave
Never did mortal hear.

She followed the fiend to the church door,
There stood a black horse there,
His breath was red like furnace smoke,
His eyes like a meteor's glare.

The fiendish force flung her on the horse
And he leapt up before,
And away like the lightning's speed they went
And she was seen no more.

They saw her no more, but her cries and shrieks
For four miles round they could hear,
And children at rest at their mother's breast,
Started and screamed with fear.

Robert Southey
After Blenheim

It was a summer evening,  
Old Kaspar's work was done,  
And he before his cottage door  
Was sitting in the sun,  
And by him sported on the green  
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin  
Roll something large and round,  
Which he beside the rivulet  
In playing there had found;  
He came to ask what he had found,  
That was so large, and smooth, and round.

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,  
Who stood expectant by;  
And then the old man shook his head,  
And, with a natural sigh,  "Tis some poor fellow's skull,' said he,  'Who fell in the great victory.

'I find them in the garden,  
For there's many here about;  
And often when I go to plough,  
The ploughshare turns them out!  
For many thousand men,' said he,  'Were slain in that great victory.'

'Now tell us what 'twas all about,'  
Young Peterkin, he cries;  
And little Wilhelmine looks up  
With wonder-waiting eyes;  'Now tell us all about the war,  
And what they fought each other for.'

'It was the English,' Kaspar cried,  
'Who put the French to rout;  
But what they fought each other for,  
I could not well make out;
But everybody said,' quoth he, 'That 'twas a famous victory.

'My father lived at Blenheim then, Yon little stream hard by; They burnt his dwelling to the ground, And he was forced to fly; So with his wife and child he fled, Nor had he where to rest his head.

'With fire and sword the country round Was wasted far and wide, And many a childing mother then, And new-born baby died; But things like that, you know, must be At every famous victory.

'They say it was a shocking sight After the field was won; For many thousand bodies here Lay rotting in the sun; But things like that, you know, must be After a famous victory.

'Great praise the Duke of Marlbro' won, And our good Prince Eugene.' 'Why, 'twas a very wicked thing!' Said little Wilhelmine. 'Nay... nay... my little girl,' quoth he, 'It was a famous victory.

'And everybody praised the Duke Who this great fight did win.' 'But what good came of it at last?' Quoth little Peterkin. 'Why that I cannot tell,' said he, 'But 'twas a famous victory.'

Robert Southey
Ariste

Let ancient stories round the painter's art,
Who stole from many a maid his Venus' charms,
Till warm devotion fired each gazer's heart
And every bosom bounded with alarms.
He culled the beauties of his native isle,
From some the blush of beauty's vermeil dyes,
From some the lovely look, the winning smile,
From some the languid lustre of the eyes.

Low to the finished form the nations round
In adoration bent the pious knee;
With myrtle wreaths the artist's brow they crowned,
Whose skill, Ariste, only imaged thee.
Ill-fated artist, doomed so wide to seek
The charms that blossom on Ariste's cheek!

Robert Southey
Birth-Day Ode 01

O my faithful Friend!
O early chosen, ever found the same,
And trusted and beloved! once more the verse
Long destin'd, always obvious to thine ear,
Attend indulgent.

Robert Southey
Birth-Day Ode 02

Small is the new-born plant scarce seen
Amid the soft encircling green,
Where yonder budding acorn rears,
Just o'er the waving grass, its tender head:
Slow pass along the train of years,
And on the growing plant, their dews and showers they shed.
Anon it rears aloft its giant form,
And spreads its broad-brown arms to meet the storm.
Beneath its boughs far shadowing o'er the plain,
From summer suns, repair the grateful village train.

Nor BEDFORD will my friend survey
The book of Nature with unheeding eye;
For never beams the rising orb of day,
For never dimly dies the refluent ray,
But as the moralizer marks the sky,
He broods with strange delight upon futurity.

And we must muse my friend! maturer years
Arise, and other Hopes and other Fears,
For we have past the pleasant plains of Youth.
Oh pleasant plains! that we might stray
For ever o'er your faery ground--
For ever roam your vales around,
Nor onward tempt the dangerous way--
For oh--what numerous foes assail
The Traveller, from that dearful vale!

With toil and heaviness opprest
Seek not the flowery bank for rest,
Tho' there the bowering woodbine spread
Its fragrant shelter o'er thy head,
Tho' Zephyr there should linger long
To hear the sky-lark's wildly-warbled song,
There heedless Youth shalt thou awake
The vengeance of the coiling snake!

Tho' fairly smiles the vernal mead
To tempt thy pilgrim feet, proceed
Hold on thy steady course aright,
Else shalt thou wandering o'er the pathless plain,
When damp and dark descends the night
Shivering and shelterless, repent in vain.

And yet--tho' Dangers lurk on every side
Receive not WORLDLY WISDOM for thy guide!
Beneath his care thou wilt not know
The throb of unavailing woe,
No tear shall tremble in thine eye
Thy breast shall struggle with no sigh,
He will security impart,
But he will apathize thy heart!

Ah no!
Fly Fly that fatal foe,
Virtue shall shrink from his torpedo grasp--
For not more fatal thro' the Wretches veins
Benumb'd in Death's cold pains
Creeps the chill poison of the deadly asp.

Serener joys my friend await
Maturer manhood's steady state.
The wild brook bursting from its source
Meanders on its early course,
Delighting there with winding way
Amid the vernal vale to stray,
Emerging thence more widely spread
It foams along its craggy bed,
And shatter'd with the mighty shock
Rushes from the giddy rock--
Hurl'd headlong o'er the dangerous steep
On runs the current to the deep,
And gathering waters as it goes
Serene and calm the river flows,
Diffuses plenty o'er the smiling coast,
Rolls on its stately waves and is in ocean lost.

Robert Southey
Birth-Day Ode 03

And wouldst thou seek the low abode
   Where PEACE delights to dwell?
Pause Traveller on thy way of life!
With many a snare and peril rife
   Is that long labyrinth of road:
Dark is the vale of years before
   Pause Traveller on thy way!
Nor dare the dangerous path explore
Till old EXPERIENCE comes to lend his leading ray.

Not he who comes with lanthorn light
Shall guide thy groping pace aright
   With faltering feet and slow;
No! let him rear the torch on high
And every maze shall meet thine eye,
   And every snare and every foe;
Then with steady step and strong,
Traveller, shalt thou march along.

Tho' POWER invite thee to her hall,
Regard not thou her tempting call
   Her splendors meteor glare;
Tho' courteous Flattery there await
And Wealth adorn the dome of State,
   There stalks the midnight spectre CARE;
PEACE, Traveller! does not sojourn there.

If FAME allure thee, climb not thou
To that steep mountain's craggy brow
   Where stands her stately pile;
For far from thence does PEACE abide,
   And thou shall find FAME'S favouring smile
Cold as the feeble Sun on Heclas snow-clad side,

And Traveller! as thou hopest to find
That low and loved abode,
Retire thee from the thronging road
And shun the mob of human kind.
Ah I hear how old EXPERIENCE schools,
"Fly fly the crowd of Knaves and Fools
"And thou shalt fly from woe;
"The one thy heedless heart will greet
"With Judas smile, and thou wilt meet
"In every Fool a Foe!"

So safely mayest thou pass from these,
And reach secure the home of PEACE,
And FRIENDSHIP find thee there.
No happier state can mortal know,
No happier lot can Earth bestow
If LOVE thy lot shall share.
Yet still CONTENT with him may dwell
Whom HYMEN will not bless,
And VIRTUE sojourn in the cell
Of HERMIT HAPPINESS.

Robert Southey
Once more to daily toil--once more to wear
The weeds of infamy--from every joy
The heart can feel excluded, I arise
Worn out and faint with unremitting woe;
And once again with wearied steps I trace
The hollow-sounding shore. The swelling waves
Gleam to the morning sun, and dazzle o'er
With many a splendid hue the breezy strand.
Oh there was once a time when ELINOR
Gazed on thy opening beam with joyous eye
Undimm'd by guilt and grief! when her full soul
Felt thy mild radiance, and the rising day
Waked but to pleasure! on thy sea-girt verge
Oft England! have my evening steps stole on,
Oft have mine eyes surveyed the blue expanse,
And mark'd the wild wind swell the ruffled surge,
And seen the upheaved billows bosomed rage
Rush on the rock; and then my timid soul
Shrunk at the perils of the boundless deep,
And heaved a sigh for suffering mariners.
Ah! little deeming I myself was doom'd.
To tempt the perils of the boundless deep,
An Outcast--unbeloved and unbewail'd.

Why stern Remembrance! must thine iron hand
Harrow my soul? why calls thy cruel power
The fields of England to my exil'd eyes,
The joys which once were mine? even now I see
The lowly lovely dwelling! even now
Behold the woodbine clasping its white walls
And hear the fearless red-breasts chirp around
To ask their morning meal:--for I was wont
With friendly band to give their morning meal,
Was wont to love their song, when lingering morn
Streak'd o'er the chilly landskip the dim light,
And thro' the open'd lattice hung my head
To view the snow-drop's bud: and thence at eve
When mildly fading sunk the summer sun,
Oft have I loved to mark the rook's slow course
And hear his hollow croak, what time he sought
The church-yard elm, whose wide-embower'd boughs
Full foliaged, half conceal'd the house of God.
There, my dead father! often have I heard
Thy hallowed voice explain the wonderous works
Of Heaven to sinful man. Ah! little deem'd
Thy virtuous bosom, that thy shameless child
So soon should spurn the lesson! sink the slave
Of Vice and Infamy! the hireling prey
Of brutal appetite! at length worn out
With famine, and the avenging scourge of guilt,
Should dare dishonesty--yet dread to die!

Welcome ye savage lands, ye barbarous climes,
Where angry England sends her outcast sons--
I hail your joyless shores! my weary bark
Long tempest-tost on Life's inclement sea,
Here hails her haven! welcomes the drear scene,
The marshy plain, the briar-entangled wood,
And all the perils of a world unknown.
For Elinor has nothing new to fear
From fickle Fortune! all her rankling shafts
Barb'd with disgrace, and venom'd with disease.
Have pierced my bosom, and the dart of death
Has lost its terrors to a wretch like me.

Welcome ye marshy heaths! ye pathless woods,
Where the rude native rests his wearied frame
Beneath the sheltering shade; where, when the storm,
As rough and bleak it rolls along the sky,
Benumbs his naked limbs, he flies to seek
The dripping shelter. Welcome ye wild plains
Unbroken by the plough, undelv'd by hand
Of patient rustic; where for lowing herds,
And for the music of the bleating flocks,
Alone is heard the kangaroo's sad note
Deepening in distance. Welcome ye rude climes,
The realm of Nature! for as yet unknown
The crimes and comforts of luxurious life,
Nature benignly gives to all enough,
Denies to all a superfluity,
What tho' the garb of infamy I wear,
Tho' day by day along the echoing beach
I cull the wave-worn shells, yet day by day
I earn in honesty my frugal food,
And lay me down at night to calm repose.
No more condemn'd the mercenary tool
Of brutal lust, while heaves the indignant heart
With Virtue's stiffled sigh, to fold my arms
Round the rank felon, and for daily bread
To hug contagion to my poison'd breast;
On these wild shores Repentance' saviour hand
Shall probe my secret soul, shall cleanse its wounds
And fit the faithful penitent for Heaven.

Robert Southey
(Time, Noon.)

HUMPHREY:

See'st thou not William that the scorching Sun
By this time half his daily race has run?
The savage thrusts his light canoe to shore
And hurries homeward with his fishy store.
Suppose we leave awhile this stubborn soil
To eat our dinner and to rest from toil!

WILLIAM:

Agreed. Yon tree whose purple gum bestows
A ready medicine for the sick-man's woes,
Forms with its shadowy boughs a cool retreat
To shield us from the noontide's sultry heat.
Ah Humphrey! now upon old England's shore
The weary labourer's morning work is o'er:
The woodman now rests from his measur'd stroke
Flings down his axe and sits beneath the oak,
Savour'd with hunger there he eats his food,
There drinks the cooling streamlet of the wood.
To us no cooling streamlet winds its way,
No joys domestic crown for us the day,
The felon's name, the outcast's garb we wear,
Toil all the day, and all the night despair.

HUMPHREY:

Ah William! labouring up the furrowed ground
I used to love the village clock's dull sound,
Rejoice to hear my morning toil was done,
And trudge it homewards when the clock went one.
'Twas ere I turn'd a soldier and a sinner!
Pshaw! curse this whining--let us fall to dinner.
WILLIAM:

I too have loved this hour, nor yet forgot
Each joy domestic of my little cot.
For at this hour my wife with watchful care
Was wont each humbler dainty to prepare,
The keenest sauce by hunger was supplied
And my poor children prattled at my side.
Methinks I see the old oak table spread,
The clean white trencher and the good brown bread,
The cheese my daily food which Mary made,
For Mary knew full well the housewife's trade:
The jug of cyder,—cyder I could make,
And then the knives—I won 'em at the wake.
Another has them now! I toiling here
Look backward like a child and drop a tear.

HUMPHREY:

I love a dismal story, tell me thine,
Meantime, good Will, I'll listen as I dine.
I too my friend can tell a piteous story
When I turn'd hero how I purchas'd glory.

WILLIAM:

But Humphrey, sure thou never canst have known
The comforts of a little home thine own:
A home so snug, So cheerful too as mine,
'Twas always clean, and we could make it fine;
For there King Charles's golden rules were seen,
And there—God bless 'em both--the King and Queen.
The pewter plates our garnish'd chimney grace
So nicely scour'd, you might have seen your face;
And over all, to frighten thieves, was hung
Well clean'd, altho' but seldom us'd, my gun.
Ah! that damn'd gun! I took it down one morn--
A desperate deal of harm they did my corn!
Our testy Squire too loved to save the breed,
So covey upon covey eat my seed.
I mark’d the mischievous rogues, and took my aim,
I fir’d, they fell, and--up the keeper came.
That cursed morning brought on my undoing,
I went to prison and my farm to ruin.
Poor Mary! for her grave the parish paid,
No tomb-stone tells where her cold corpse is laid!
My children--my dear boys--

HUMPHREY:

Come--Grief is dry--
You to your dinner--to my story I.
To you my friend who happier days have known
And each calm comfort of a home your own,
This is bad living: I have spent my life
In hardest toil and unavailing strife,
And here (from forest ambush safe at least)
To me this scanty pittance seems a feast.
I was a plough-boy once; as free from woes
And blithesome as the lark with whom I rose.
Each evening at return a meal I found
And, tho' my bed was hard, my sleep was sound.
One Whitsuntide, to go to fair, I drest
Like a great bumkin in my Sunday's best;
A primrose posey in my hat I stuck
And to the revel went to try my luck.
From show to show, from booth to booth I stray,
See stare and wonder all the live-long day.
A Serjeant to the fair recruiting came
Skill’d in man-catching to beat up for game;
Our booth he enter’d and sat down by me;--
Methinks even now the very scene I see!
The canvass roof, the hogshead’s running store,
The old blind fiddler seated next the door,
The frothy tankard passing to and fro
And the rude rabble round the puppet-show;
The Serjeant eyed me well--the punch-bowl comes,
And as we laugh’d and drank, up struck the drums--
And now he gives a bumper to his Wench--
God save the King, and then--God damn the French.
Then tells the story of his last campaign.
How many wounded and how many slain,
Flags flying, cannons roaring, drums a-beating,
The English marching on, the French retreating,--
"Push on--push on my lads! they fly before ye,
"March on to riches, happiness and glory!"
At first I wonder'd, by degrees grew bolder,
Then cried--"tis a fine thing to be a soldier!"
"Aye Humphrey!" says the Serjeant--"that's your name?
"'Tis a fine thing to fight the French for fame!
"March to the field--knock out a Mounseer's brains
"And pick the scoundrel's pocket for your pains.
"Come Humphrey come! thou art a lad of spirit!
"Rise to a halbert--as I did--by merit!
"Would'st thou believe it? even I was once
"As thou art now, a plough-boy and a dunce;
"But Courage rais'd me to my rank. How now boy!
"Shall Hero Humphrey still be Numps the plough-boy?
"A proper shaped young fellow! tall and straight!
"Why thou wert made for glory! five feet eight!
"The road to riches is the field of fight,--
"Didst ever see a guinea look so bright?
"Why regimentals Numbs would give thee grace,
"A hat and feather would become that face;
"The girls would crowd around thee to be kist--
"Dost love a girl?" "Od Zounds!" I cried "I'll list!"
So past the night: anon the morning came,
And off I set a volunteer for fame.
"Back shoulders, turn out your toes, hold up your head,
"Stand easy!" so I did--till almost dead.
Oh how I long'd to tend the plough again
Trudge up the field and whistle o'er the plain,
When tir'd and sore amid the piteous throng
Hungry and cold and wet I limp'd along,
And growing fainter as I pass'd and colder,
Curs'd that ill hour when I became a soldier!
In town I found the hours more gayly pass
And Time fled swiftly with my girl and glass;
The girls were wonderous kind and wonderous fair,
They soon transferred me to the Doctor's care,
The Doctor undertook to cure the evil,
And he almost transferred me to the Devil.
'Twere tedious to relate the dismal story
Of fighting, fasting, wretchedness and glory.
At last discharg'd, to England's shores I came
Paid for my wounds with want instead of fame,
Found my fair friends and plunder'd as they bade me,
They kist me, coax'd me, robb'd me and betray'd me.
Tried and condemn'd his Majesty transports me,
And here in peace, I thank him, he supports me,
So ends my dismal and heroic story
And Humphrey gets more good from guilt than glory.

Robert Southey
Where shall I turn me? whither shall I bend
My weary way? thus worn with toil and faint
How thro' the thorny mazes of this wood
Attain my distant dwelling? that deep cry
That rings along the forest seems to sound
My parting knell: it is the midnight howl
Of hungry monsters prowling for their prey!
Again! oh save me--save me gracious Heaven!
I am not fit to die!

Thou coward wretch
Why heaves thy trembling heart? why shake thy limbs
Beneath their palsied burden? is there ought
So lovely in existence? would'st thou drain
Even to its dregs the bitter draught of life?
Dash down the loathly bowl! poor outcast slave
Stamp'd with the brand of Vice and Infamy
Why should the villain Frederic shrink from Death?

Death! where the magic in that empty name
That chills my inmost heart? why at the thought
Starts the cold dew of fear on every limb?
There are no terrors to surround the Grave,
When the calm Mind collected in itself
Surveys that narrow house: the ghastly train
That haunt the midnight of delirious Guilt
Then vanish; in that home of endless rest
All sorrows cease.--Would I might slumber there!

Why then this panting of the fearful heart?
This miser love of Life that dreads to lose
Its cherish'd torment? shall the diseased man
Yield up his members to the surgeon's knife,
Doubtful of succour, but to ease his frame
Of fleshly anguish, and the coward wretch,
Whose ulcered soul can know no human help
Shrink from the best Physician's certain aid?
Oh it were better far to lay me down
Here on this cold damp earth, till some wild beast
Seize on his willing victim!

If to die
Were all, it were most sweet to rest my head
On the cold clod, and sleep the sleep of Death.
But if the Archangel's trump at the last hour
Startle the ear of Death and wake the soul
To frenzy!--dreams of infancy! fit tales
For garrulous beldames to affrighten babes!
I have been guilty, yet my mind can bear
The retrospect of guilt, yet in the hour
Of deep contrition to THE ETERNAL look
For mercy! for the child of Poverty,
And "disinherited of happiness,"

What if I warr'd upon the world? the world
Had wrong'd me first: I had endur'd the ills
Of hard injustice; all this goodly earth
Was but to me one wild waste wilderness;
I had no share in Nature's patrimony,
Blasted were all my morning hopes of Youth,
Dark DISAPPOINTMENT follow'd on my ways,
CARE was my bosom inmate, and keen WANT
Gnaw'd at my heart. ETERNAL ONE thou know'st
How that poor heart even in the bitter hour
Of lewdest revelry has inly yearn'd
For peace!

My FATHER! I will call on thee,
Pour to thy mercy seat my earnest prayer,
And wait thy peace in bowedness of soul.
Oh thoughts of comfort! how the afflicted heart,
Tired with the tempest of its passions, rests
On you with holy hope! the hollow howl
Of yonder harmless tenant of the woods
Bursts not with terror on the sober'd sense.
If I have sinn'd against mankind, on them
Be that past sin; they made me what I was.
In these extremest climes can Want no more
Urge to the deeds of darkness, and at length
Here shall I rest. What tho' my hut be poor--
The rains descend not thro' its humble roof:
Would I were there again! the night is cold;
And what if in my wanderings I should rouse
The savage from his thicket!

    Hark! the gun!
And lo--the fire of safety! I shall reach
My little hut again! again by toil
Force from the stubborn earth my sustenance,
And quick-ear'd guilt will never start alarm'd
Amid the well-earn'd meal. This felon's garb--
Will it not shield me from the winds of Heaven?
And what could purple more? Oh strengthen me
Eternal One in this serener state!
Cleanse thou mine heart, so PENITENCE and FAITH
Shall heal my soul and my last days be peace.

Robert Southey
Donica - A Ballad

Author Note: In Finland there is a Castle which is called the New Rock, moated about with a river of unfounded depth, the water black and the fish therein very distasteful to the palate. In this are spectres often seen, which foreshew either the death of the Governor, or some prime officer belonging to the place; and most commonly it appeareth in the shape of an harper, sweetly singing and dallying and playing under the water.

It is reported of one Donica, that after she was dead, the Devil walked in her body for the space of two years, so that none suspected but that she was still alive; for she did both speak and eat, though very sparingly; only she had a deep paleness on her countenance, which was the only sign of death. At length a Magician coming by where she was then in the company of many other virgins, as soon as he beheld her he said, "fair Maids, why keep you company with the dead Virgin whom you suppose to be alive?" when taking away the magic charm which was tied under her arm, the body fell down lifeless and without motion.

The following Ballad is founded on these stories. They are to be found in the notes to The Hierarchies of the blessed Angels; a Poem by Thomas Heywood, printed in folio by Adam Islip, 1635.

High on a rock, whose castled shade
Darken'd the lake below,
In ancient strength majestic stood
The towers of Arlinkow.

The fisher in the lake below
Durst never cast his net,
Nor ever swallow in its waves
Her passing wings would wet.

The cattle from its ominous banks
In wild alarm would run,
Tho' parched with thirst and faint beneath
The summer's scorching sun.

For sometimes when no passing breeze
The long lank sedges waved,  
All white with foam and heaving high  
Its deafening billows raved;  

And when the tempest from its base  
The rooted pine would shake,  
The powerless storm unruffling swept  
Across the calm dead lake.  

And ever then when Death drew near  
The house of Arlinkow,  
Its dark unfathom’d depths did send  
Strange music from below.  

The Lord of Arlinkow was old,  
One only child had he,  
Donica was the Maiden’s name  
As fair as fair might be.  

A bloom as bright as opening morn  
Flush’d o’er her clear white cheek,  
The music of her voice was mild,  
Her full dark eyes were meek.  

Far was her beauty known, for none  
So fair could Finland boast,  
Her parents loved the Maiden much,  
Young EBERHARD loved her most.  

Together did they hope to tread  
The pleasant path of life,  
For now the day drew near to make  
Donica Eberhard’s wife.  

The eve was fair and mild the air,  
Along the lake they stray;  
The eastern hill reflected bright  
The fading tints of day.  

And brightly o’er the water stream’d  
The liquid radiance wide;  
Donica’s little dog ran on
And gambol'd at her side.

Youth, Health, and Love bloom'd on her cheek,
Her full dark eyes express
In many a glance to Eberhard
Her soul's meek tenderness.

Nor sound was heard, nor passing gale
Sigh'd thro' the long lank sedge,
The air was hushed, no little wave
Dimpled the water's edge.

Sudden the unfathom'd lake sent forth
Strange music from beneath,
And slowly o'er the waters sail'd
The solemn sounds of Death.

As the deep sounds of Death arose,
Donica's cheek grew pale,
And in the arms of Eberhard
The senseless Maiden fell.

Loudly the youth in terror shriek'd,
And loud he call'd for aid,
And with a wild and eager look
Gaz'd on the death-pale Maid.

But soon again did better thoughts
In Eberhard arise,
And he with trembling hope beheld
The Maiden raise her eyes.

And on his arm reclin'd she moved
With feeble pace and slow,
And soon with strength recover'd reach'd

Yet never to Donica's cheek
Return'd the lively hue,
Her cheeks were deathy, white, and wan,
Her lips a livid blue.

Her eyes so bright and black of yore
Were now more black and bright,
And beam'd strange lustre in her face
So deadly wan and white.

The dog that gambol'd by her side,
And lov'd with her to stray,
Now at his alter'd mistress howl'd
And fled in fear away.

Yet did the faithful Eberhard
Not love the Maid the less;
He gaz'd with sorrow, but he gaz'd
With deeper tenderness.

And when he found her health unham'd
He would not brook delay,
But press'd the not unwilling Maid
To fix the bridal day.

And when at length it came, with joy
They hail'd the bridal day,
And onward to the house of God
They went their willing way.

And as they at the altar stood
And heard the sacred rite,
The hallowed tapers dimly stream'd
A pale sulphureous light.

And as the Youth with holy warmth
Her hand in his did hold,
Sudden he felt Donica's hand
Grow deadly damp and cold.

And loudly did he shriek, for lo!
A Spirit met his view,
And Eberhard in the angel form
His own Donica knew.

That instant from her earthly frame
Howling the Daemon fled,
And at the side of Eberhard
The livid form fell dead.

Robert Southey
STRANGER.
Old friend! why you seem bent on parish duty,
Breaking the highway stones,—and 'tis a task
Somewhat too hard methinks for age like yours.

OLD MAN.
Why yes! for one with such a weight of years
Upon his back. I've lived here, man and boy,
In this same parish, near the age of man
For I am hard upon threescore and ten.
I can remember sixty years ago
The beautifying of this mansion here
When my late Lady's father, the old Squire
Came to the estate.

STRANGER.
Why then you have outlasted
All his improvements, for you see they're making
Great alterations here.

OLD MAN.
Aye-great indeed!
And if my poor old Lady could rise up--
God rest her soul! 'twould grieve her to behold
The wicked work is here.

STRANGER.
They've set about it
In right good earnest. All the front is gone,
Here's to be turf they tell me, and a road
Round to the door. There were some yew trees too
Stood in the court.
Aye Master! fine old trees!
My grandfather could just remember back
When they were planted there. It was my task
To keep them trimm'd, and 'twas a pleasure to me!
All strait and smooth, and like a great green wall!
My poor old Lady many a time would come
And tell me where to shear, for she had played
In childhood under them, and 'twas her pride
To keep them in their beauty. Plague I say
On their new-fangled whimsies! we shall have
A modern shrubbery here stuck full of firs
And your pert poplar trees;--I could as soon
Have plough'd my father's grave as cut them down!

STRANGER.
But 'twill be lighter and more chearful now,
A fine smooth turf, and with a gravel road
Round for the carriage,—now it suits my taste.
I like a shrubbery too, it looks so fresh,
And then there's some variety about it.
In spring the lilac and the gueldres rose,
And the laburnum with its golden flowers
Waving in the wind. And when the autumn comes
The bright red berries of the mountain ash,
With firs enough in winter to look green,
And show that something lives. Sure this is better
Than a great hedge of yew that makes it look
All the year round like winter, and for ever
Dropping its poisonous leaves from the under boughs
So dry and bare!

OLD MAN.
Ah! so the new Squire thinks
And pretty work he makes of it! what 'tis
To have a stranger come to an old house!

STRANGER.

It seems you know him not?
OLD MAN.
No Sir, not I.
They tell me he's expected daily now,
But in my Lady's time he never came
But once, for they were very distant kin.
If he had played about here when a child
In that fore court, and eat the yew-berries,
And sat in the porch threading the jessamine flowers,
That fell so thick, he had not had the heart
To mar all thus.

STRANGER.
Come--come! all a not wrong.
Those old dark windows--

OLD MAN.
They're demolish'd too--
As if he could not see thro' casement glass!
The very red-breasts that so regular
Came to my Lady for her morning crumbs,
Won't know the window now!

STRANGER.
Nay they were high
And then so darken'd up with jessamine,
Harbouring the vermine;--that was a fine tree
However. Did it not grow in and line
The porch?

OLD MAN.
All over it: it did one good
To pass within ten yards when 'twas in blossom.
There was a sweet-briar too that grew beside.
My Lady loved at evening to sit there
And knit; and her old dog lay at her feet
And slept in the sun; 'twas an old favourite dog
She did not love him less that he was old
And feeble, and he always had a place
By the fire-side, and when he died at last
She made me dig a grave in the garden for him.
Ah I she was good to all! a woful day
'Twas for the poor when to her grave she went!

STRANGER.
They lost a friend then?

OLD MAN.
You're a stranger here
Or would not ask that question. Were they sick?
She had rare cordial waters, and for herbs
She could have taught the Doctors. Then at winter
When weekly she distributed the bread
In the poor old porch, to see her and to hear
The blessings on her! and I warrant them
They were a blessing to her when her wealth
Had been no comfort else. At Christmas, Sir!
It would have warm'd your heart if you had seen
Her Christmas kitchen,--how the blazing fire
Made her fine pewter shine, and holly boughs
So cheerful red,--and as for misseltoe,
The finest bough that grew in the country round
Was mark'd for Madam. Then her old ale went
So bountiful about! a Christmas cask,
And 'twas a noble one! God help me Sir!
But I shall never see such days again.

STRANGER.
Things may be better yet than you suppose
And you should hope the best.

OLD MAN.
It don't look well
These alterations Sir! I'm an old man
And love the good old fashions; we don't find
Old bounty in new houses. They've destroyed
All that my Lady loved; her favourite walk
Grubb'd up, and they do say that the great row
Of elms behind the house, that meet a-top
They must fall too. Well! well! I did not think
To live to see all this, and 'tis perhaps
A comfort I shan't live to see it long.

STRANGER.
But sure all changes are not needs for the worse
My friend.

OLD MAN.
May-hap they mayn't Sir;--for all that
I like what I've been us'd to. I remember
All this from a child up, and now to lose it,
'Tis losing an old friend. There's nothing left
As 'twas;--I go abroad and only meet
With men whose fathers I remember boys;
The brook that used to run before my door
That's gone to the great pond; the trees I learnt
To climb are down; and I see nothing now
That tells me of old times, except the stones
In the church-yard. You are young Sir and I hope
Have many years in store,--but pray to God
You mayn't be left the last of all your friends.

STRANGER.
Well! well! you've one friend more than you're aware of.
If the Squire's taste don't suit with your's, I warrant
That's all you'll quarrel with: walk in and taste
His beer, old friend! and see if your old Lady
E'er broached a better cask. You did not know me,
But we're acquainted now. 'Twould not be easy
To make you like the outside; but within--
That is not changed my friend! you'll always find
The same old bounty and old welcome there.
Robert Southey
English Eclogues II - The Grandmother's Tale

JANE.
Harry! I'm tired of playing. We'll draw round
The fire, and Grandmamma perhaps will tell us
One of her stories.

HARRY.
Aye--dear Grandmamma!
A pretty story! something dismal now;
A bloody murder.

JANE.
Or about a ghost.

GRANDMOTHER.
Nay, nay, I should but frighten you. You know
The other night when I was telling you
About the light in the church-yard, how you trembled
Because the screech-owl hooted at the window,
And would not go to bed.

JANE.
Why Grandmamma
You said yourself you did not like to hear him.
Pray now! we wo'nt be frightened.

GRANDMOTHER.
Well, well, children!
But you've heard all my stories. Let me see,--
Did I never tell you how the smuggler murdered
The woman down at Pill?

HARRY.
No--never! never!
GRANDMOTHER.
Not how he cut her head off in the stable?

HARRY.
Oh--now! do tell us that!

GRANDMOTHER.
You must have heard
Your Mother, children! often tell of her.
She used to weed in the garden here, and worm
Your uncle's dogs, and serve the house with coal;
And glad enough she was in winter time
To drive her asses here! it was cold work
To follow the slow beasts thro' sleet and snow,
And here she found a comfortable meal
And a brave fire to thaw her, for poor Moll
Was always welcome.

HARRY.
Oh--'twas beary-eyed Moll
The collier woman,--a great ugly woman,
I've heard of her.

GRANDMOTHER.
Ugly enough poor soul!
At ten yards distance you could hardly tell
If it were man or woman, for her voice
Was rough as our old mastiff's, and she wore
A man's old coat and hat,--and then her face!
There was a merry story told of her,
How when the press-gang came to take her husband
As they were both in bed, she heard them coming,
Drest John up in her night-cap, and herself
Put on his clothes and went before the Captain.

JANE.
And so they prest a woman!
GRANDMOTHER.
'Twas a trick
She dearly loved to tell, and all the country
Soon knew the jest, for she was used to travel
For miles around. All weathers and all hours
She crossed the hill, as hardy as her beasts,
Bearing the wind and rain and winter frosts,
And if she did not reach her home at night
She laid her down in the stable with her asses
And slept as sound as they did.

HARRY.
With her asses!

GRANDMOTHER.
Yes, and she loved her beasts. For tho' poor wretch
She was a terrible reprobate and swore
Like any trooper, she was always good
To the dumb creatures, never loaded them
Beyond their strength, and rather I believe
Would stint herself than let the poor beasts want,
Because, she said, they could not ask for food.
I never saw her stick fall heavier on them
Than just with its own weight. She little thought
This tender-heartedness would be her death!
There was a fellow who had oftentimes,
As if he took delight in cruelty.
Ill-used her Asses. He was one who lived
By smuggling, and, for she had often met him
Crossing the down at night, she threatened him,
If he tormented them again, to inform
Of his unlawful ways. Well--so it was--
'Twas what they both were born to, he provoked her,
She laid an information, and one morn
They found her in the stable, her throat cut
From ear to ear, 'till the head only hung
Just by a bit of skin.
JANE.
Oh dear! oh dear!

HARRY.
I hope they hung the man!

GRANDMOTHER.
They took him up;
There was no proof, no one had seen the deed,
And he was set at liberty. But God
Whose eye beholdeth all things, he had seen
The murder, and the murderer knew that God
Was witness to his crime. He fled the place,
But nowhere could he fly the avenging hand
Of heaven, but nowhere could the murderer rest,
A guilty conscience haunted him, by day,
By night, in company, in solitude,
Restless and wretched, did he bear upon him
The weight of blood; her cries were in his ears,
Her stifled groans as when he knelt upon her
Always he heard; always he saw her stand
Before his eyes; even in the dead of night
Distinctly seen as though in the broad sun,
She stood beside the murderer's bed and yawn'd
Her ghastly wound; till life itself became
A punishment at last he could not bear,
And he confess'd it all, and gave himself
To death, so terrible, he said, it was
To have a guilty conscience!

HARRY.
Was he hung then?

GRANDMOTHER.
Hung and anatomized. Poor wretched man,
Your uncles went to see him on his trial,
He was so pale, so thin, so hollow-eyed,
And such a horror in his meagre face,
They said he look'd like one who never slept.
He begg'd the prayers of all who saw his end
And met his death with fears that well might warn
From guilt, tho' not without a hope in Christ.

Robert Southey
The coffin as I past across the lane
Came sudden on my view. It was not here,
A sight of every day, as in the streets
Of the great city, and we paus'd and ask'd
Who to the grave was going. It was one,
A village girl, they told us, who had borne
An eighteen months strange illness, and had pined
With such slow wasting that the hour of death
Came welcome to her. We pursued our way
To the house of mirth, and with that idle talk
That passes o'er the mind and is forgot,
We wore away the time. But it was eve
When homewardly I went, and in the air
Was that cool freshness, that discolouring shade
That makes the eye turn inward. Then I heard
Over the vale the heavy toll of death
Sound slow; it made me think upon the dead,
I questioned more and learnt her sorrowful tale.
She bore unhusbanded a mother's name,
And he who should have cherished her, far off
Sail'd on the seas, self-exil'd from his home,
For he was poor. Left thus, a wretched one,
Scorn made a mock of her, and evil tongues
Were busy with her name. She had one ill
Heavier, neglect, forgetfulness from him
Whom she had loved so dearly. Once he wrote,
But only once that drop of comfort came
To mingle with her cup of wretchedness;
And when his parents had some tidings from him,
There was no mention of poor Hannah there,
Or 'twas the cold enquiry, bitterer
Than silence. So she pined and pined away
And for herself and baby toil'd and toil'd,
Nor did she, even on her death bed, rest
From labour, knitting with her outstretch'd arms
Till she sunk with very weakness. Her old mother
Omitted no kind office, and she work'd
Hard, and with hardest working barely earn'd
Enough to make life struggle and prolong
The pains of grief and sickness. Thus she lay
On the sick bed of poverty, so worn
With her long suffering and that painful thought
That at her heart lay rankling, and so weak,
That she could make no effort to express
Affection for her infant; and the child,
Whose lisping love perhaps had solaced her
With a strange infantine ingratitude
Shunn'd her as one indifferent. She was past
That anguish, for she felt her hour draw on,
And 'twas her only comfort now to think
Upon the grave. 'Poor girl!' her mother said,
'Thou hast suffered much!' 'aye mother! there is none
'Can tell what I have suffered!' she replied,
'But I shall soon be where the weary rest.'
And she did rest her soon, for it pleased God
To take her to his mercy.

Robert Southey
WOMAN.
Sir for the love of God some small relief
To a poor woman!

TRAVELLER.
Whither are you bound?
'Tis a late hour to travel o'er these downs,
No house for miles around us, and the way
Dreary and wild. The evening wind already
Makes one's teeth chatter, and the very Sun,
Setting so pale behind those thin white clouds,
Looks cold. 'Twill be a bitter night!

WOMAN.
Aye Sir
'Tis cutting keen! I smart at every breath,
Heaven knows how I shall reach my journey's end,
For the way is long before me, and my feet,
God help me! sore with travelling. I would gladly,
If it pleased God, lie down at once and die.

TRAVELLER.
Nay nay cheer up! a little food and rest
Will comfort you; and then your journey's end
Will make amends for all. You shake your head,
And weep. Is it some evil business then
That leads you from your home?

WOMAN.
Sir I am going
To see my son at Plymouth, sadly hurt
In the late action, and in the hospital
Dying, I fear me, now.
TRAVELLER.
Perhaps your fears
Make evil worse. Even if a limb be lost
There may be still enough for comfort left
An arm or leg shot off, there’s yet the heart
To keep life warm, and he may live to talk
With pleasure of the glorious fight that maim’d him,
Proud of his loss. Old England’s gratitude
Makes the maim’d sailor happy.

WOMAN.
'Tis not that--
An arm or leg--I could have borne with that.
'Twas not a ball, it was some cursed thing
That bursts and burns that hurt him. Something Sir
They do not use on board our English ships
It is so wicked!

TRAVELLER.
Rascals! a mean art
Of cruel cowardice, yet all in vain!

WOMAN.
Yes Sir! and they should show no mercy to them
For making use of such unchristian arms.
I had a letter from the hospital,
He got some friend to write it, and he tells me
That my poor boy has lost his precious eyes,
Burnt out. Alas! that I should ever live
To see this wretched day!--they tell me Sir
There is no cure for wounds like his. Indeed
'Tis a hard journey that I go upon
To such a dismal end!

TRAVELLER.
He yet may live.
But if the worst should chance, why you must bear
The will of heaven with patience. Were it not
Some comfort to reflect your son has fallen
Fighting his country's cause? and for yourself
You will not in unpitied poverty
Be left to mourn his loss. Your grateful country
Amid the triumph of her victory
Remember those who paid its price of blood,
And with a noble charity relieves
The widow and the orphan.

WOMAN.
God reward them!
God bless them, it will help me in my age
But Sir! it will not pay me for my child!

TRAVELLER.
Was he your only child?

WOMAN.
My only one,
The stay and comfort of my widowhood,
A dear good boy!--when first he went to sea
I felt what it would come to,--something told me
I should be childless soon. But tell me Sir
If it be true that for a hurt like his
There is no cure? please God to spare his life
Tho' he be blind, yet I should be so thankful!
I can remember there was a blind man
Lived in our village, one from his youth up
Quite dark, and yet he was a merry man,
And he had none to tend on him so well
As I would tend my boy!

TRAVELLER.
Of this be sure
His hurts are look'd to well, and the best help
The place affords, as rightly is his due,
Ever at hand. How happened it he left you?
Was a seafaring life his early choice?
WOMAN.
No Sir! poor fellow--he was wise enough
To be content at home, and 'twas a home
As comfortable Sir I even tho' I say it,
As any in the country. He was left
A little boy when his poor father died,
Just old enough to totter by himself
And call his mother's name. We two were all,
And as we were not left quite destitute
We bore up well. In the summer time I worked
Sometimes a-field. Then I was famed for knitting,
And in long winter nights my spinning wheel
Seldom stood still. We had kind neighbours too
And never felt distress. So he grew up
A comely lad and wonderous well disposed;
I taught him well; there was not in the parish
A child who said his prayers more regular,
Or answered readier thro' his catechism.
If I had foreseen this! but 'tis a blessing
We do'nt know what we're born to!

TRAVELLER.
But how came it
He chose to be a Sailor?

WOMAN.
You shall hear Sir;
As he grew up he used to watch the birds
In the corn, child's work you know, and easily done.
'Tis an idle sort of task, so he built up
A little hut of wicker-work and clay
Under the hedge, to shelter him in rain.
And then he took for very idleness
To making traps to catch the plunderers,
All sorts of cunning traps that boys can make--
Propping a stone to fall and shut them in,
Or crush them with its weight, or else a springe
Swung on a bough. He made them cleverly--
And I, poor foolish woman! I was pleased
To see the boy so handy. You may guess
What followed Sir from this unlucky skill.
He did what he should not when he was older:
I warn'd him oft enough; but he was caught
In wiring hares at last, and had his choice
The prison or the ship.

TRAVELLER.
The choice at least
Was kindly left him, and for broken laws
This was methinks no heavy punishment.

WOMAN.
So I was told Sir. And I tried to think so,
But 'twas a sad blow to me! I was used
To sleep at nights soundly and undisturb'd--
Now if the wind blew rough, it made me start
And think of my poor boy tossing about
Upon the roaring seas. And then I seem'd
To feel that it was hard to take him from me
For such a little fault. But he was wrong
Oh very wrong--a murrain on his traps!
See what they've brought him too!

TRAVELLER.
Well! well! take comfort
He will be taken care of if he lives;
And should you lose your child, this is a country
Where the brave sailor never leaves a parent
To weep for him in want.

WOMAN.
Sir I shall want
No succour long. In the common course of years
I soon must be at rest, and 'tis a comfort
When grief is hard upon me to reflect
It only leads me to that rest the sooner.
Robert Southey
NATHANIEL.
Father! here father! I have found a horse-shoe!
Faith it was just in time, for t'other night
I laid two straws across at Margery's door,
And afterwards I fear'd that she might do me
A mischief for't. There was the Miller's boy
Who set his dog at that black cat of hers,
I met him upon crutches, and he told me
'Twas all her evil eye.

FATHER.
'Tis rare good luck;
I would have gladly given a crown for one
If t'would have done as well. But where did'st find it?

NATHANIEL.
Down on the Common; I was going a-field
And neighbour Saunders pass'd me on his mare;
He had hardly said 'good day,' before I saw
The shoe drop off; 'twas just upon my tongue
To call him back,--it makes no difference, does it.
Because I know whose 'twas?

FATHER.
Why no, it can't.
The shoe's the same you know, and you 'did find' it.

NATHANIEL.
That mare of his has got a plaguey road
To travel, father, and if he should lame her,
For she is but tender-footed,--

FATHER.
Aye, indeed--
I should not like to see her limping back
Poor beast! but charity begins at home,
And Nat, there's our own horse in such a way
This morning!

NATHANIEL.
Why he ha'nt been rid again!
Last night I hung a pebble by the manger
With a hole thro', and every body says
That 'tis a special charm against the hags.

FATHER.
It could not be a proper natural hole then,
Or 'twas not a right pebble,--for I found him
Smoking with sweat, quaking in every limb,
And panting so! God knows where he had been
When we were all asleep, thro' bush and brake
Up-hill and down-hill all alike, full stretch
At such a deadly rate!--

NATHANIEL.
By land and water,
Over the sea perhaps!--I have heard tell
That 'tis some thousand miles, almost at the end
Of the world, where witches go to meet the Devil.
They used to ride on broomsticks, and to smear
Some ointment over them and then away
Out of the window! but 'tis worse than all
To worry the poor beasts so. Shame upon it
That in a Christian country they should let
Such creatures live!

FATHER.
And when there's such plain proof!
I did but threaten her because she robb'd
Our hedge, and the next night there came a wind
That made me shake to hear it in my bed!
How came it that that storm unroofed my barn,
And only mine in the parish? look at her
And that's enough; she has it in her face--
A pair of large dead eyes, rank in her head,
Just like a corpse, and purs'd with wrinkles round,
A nose and chin that scarce leave room between
For her lean fingers to squeeze in the snuff,
And when she speaks! I'd sooner hear a raven
Croak at my door! she sits there, nose and knees
Smoak-dried and shrivell'd over a starved fire,
With that black cat beside her, whose great eyes
Shine like old Beelzebub's, and to be sure
It must be one of his imps!--aye, nail it hard.

NATHANIEL.
I wish old Margery heard the hammer go!
She'd curse the music.

FATHER.
Here's the Curate coming,
He ought to rid the parish of such vermin;
In the old times they used to hunt them out
And hang them without mercy, but Lord bless us!
The world is grown so wicked!

CURATE.
Good day Farmer!
Nathaniel what art nailing to the threshold?

NATHANIEL.
A horse-shoe Sir, 'tis good to keep off witchcraft,
And we're afraid of Margery.

CURATE.
Poor old woman!
What can you fear from her?
FATHER.
What can we fear?
Who lamed the Miller's boy? who rais'd the wind
That blew my old barn's roof down? who d'ye think
Rides my poor horse a' nights? who mocks the hounds?
But let me catch her at that trick again,
And I've a silver bullet ready for her,
One that shall lame her, double how she will.

NATHANIEL.
What makes her sit there moping by herself,
With no soul near her but that great black cat?
And do but look at her!

CURATE.
Poor wretch! half blind
And crooked with her years, without a child
Or friend in her old age, 'tis hard indeed
To have her very miseries made her crimes!
I met her but last week in that hard frost
That made my young limbs ache, and when I ask'd
What brought her out in the snow, the poor old woman
Told me that she was forced to crawl abroad
And pick the hedges, just to keep herself
From perishing with cold, because no neighbour
Had pity on her age; and then she cried,
And said the children pelted her with snow-balls,
And wish'd that she were dead.

FATHER.
I wish she was!
She has plagued the parish long enough!

CURATE.
Shame farmer!
Is that the charity your bible teaches?
FATHER.
My bible does not teach me to love witches.
I know what's charity; who pays his tithes
And poor-rates readier?

CURATE.
Who can better do it?
You've been a prudent and industrious man,
And God has blest your labour.

FATHER.
Why, thank God Sir,
I've had no reason to complain of fortune.

CURATE.
Complain! why you are wealthy. All the parish
Look up to you.

FATHER.
Perhaps Sir, I could tell
Guinea for guinea with the warmest of them.

CURATE.
You can afford a little to the poor,
And then what's better still, you have the heart
To give from your abundance.

FATHER.
God forbid
I should want charity!

CURATE.
Oh! 'tis a comfort
To think at last of riches well employ'd!
I have been by a death-bed, and know the worth
Of a good deed at that most awful hour
When riches profit not.
Farmer, I'm going
To visit Margery. She is sick I hear--
Old, poor, and sick! a miserable lot,
And death will be a blessing. You might send her
Some little matter, something comfortable,
That she may go down easier to the grave
And bless you when she dies.

FATHER.
What! is she going!
Well God forgive her then! if she has dealt
In the black art. I'll tell my dame of it,
And she shall send her something.

CURATE.
So I'll say;
And take my thanks for her's. ['goes']

FATHER.
That's a good man
That Curate, Nat, of ours, to go and visit
The poor in sickness; but he don't believe
In witchcraft, and that is not like a christian.

NATHANIEL.
And so old Margery's dying!

FATHER.
But you know
She may recover; so drive t'other nail in!

Robert Southey
English Eclogues Vi - The Ruined Cottage

Aye Charles! I knew that this would fix thine eye,
This woodbine wreathing round the broken porch,
Its leaves just withering, yet one autumn flower
Still fresh and fragrant; and yon holly-hock
That thro' the creeping weeds and nettles tall
Peers taller, and uplifts its column'd stem
Bright with the broad rose-blossoms. I have seen
Many a fallen convent reverend in decay,
And many a time have trod the castle courts
And grass-green halls, yet never did they strike
Home to the heart such melancholy thoughts
As this poor cottage. Look, its little hatch
Fleeced with that grey and wintry moss; the roof
Part mouldered in, the rest o'ergrown with weeds,
House-leek and long thin grass and greener moss;
So Nature wars with all the works of man.
And, like himself, reduces back to earth
His perishable piles.
I led thee here
Charles, not without design; for this hath been
My favourite walk even since I was a boy;
And I remember Charles, this ruin here,
The neatest comfortable dwelling place!
That when I read in those dear books that first
Woke in my heart the love of poesy,
How with the villagers Erminia dwelt,
And Calidore for a fair shepherdess
Forgot his quest to learn the shepherd's lore;
My fancy drew from, this the little hut
Where that poor princess wept her hopeless love,
Or where the gentle Calidore at eve
Led Pastorella home. There was not then
A weed where all these nettles overtop
The garden wall; but sweet-briar, scenting sweet
The morning air, rosemary and marjoram,
All wholesome herbs; and then, that woodbine wreath'd
So lavishly around the pillared porch
Its fragrant flowers, that when I past this way,
After a truant absence hastening home,
I could not chuse but pass with slacken'd speed
By that delightful fragrance. Sadly changed
Is this poor cottage! and its dwellers, Charles!--
Theirs is a simple melancholy tale,
There's scarce a village but can fellow it,
And yet methinks it will not weary thee,
And should not be untold.

A widow woman
Dwelt with her daughter here; just above want,
She lived on some small pittance that sufficed,
In better times, the needful calls of life,
Not without comfort. I remember her
Sitting at evening in that open door way
And spinning in the sun; methinks I see her
Raising her eyes and dark-rimm'd spectacles
To see the passer by, yet ceasing not
To twirl her lengthening thread. Or in the garden
On some dry summer evening, walking round
To view her flowers, and pointing, as she lean'd
Upon the ivory handle of her stick,
To some carnation whose o'erheavy head
Needed support, while with the watering-pot
Joanna followed, and refresh'd and trimm'd
The drooping plant; Joanna, her dear child,
As lovely and as happy then as youth
And innocence could make her.

Charles! it seems
As tho' I were a boy again, and all
The mediate years with their vicissitudes
A half-forgotten dream. I see the Maid
So comely in her Sunday dress! her hair,
Her bright brown hair, wreath'd in contracting curls,
And then her cheek! it was a red and white
That made the delicate hues of art look loathsome,
The countrymen who on their way to church
Were leaning o'er the bridge, loitering to hear
The bell's last summons, and in idleness
Watching the stream below, would all look up
When she pass'd by. And her old Mother, Charles!
When I have beard some erring infidel
Speak of our faith as of a gloomy creed,
Inspiring fear and boding wretchedness.
Her figure has recurr'd; for she did love
The sabbath-day, and many a time has cross'd
These fields in rain and thro' the winter snows.
When I, a graceless boy, wishing myself
By the fire-side, have wondered why 'she' came
Who might have sate at home.
One only care
Hung on her aged spirit. For herself,
Her path was plain before her, and the close
Of her long journey near. But then her child
Soon to be left alone in this bad world,--
That was a thought that many a winter night
Had kept her sleepless: and when prudent love
In something better than a servant's slate
Had placed her well at last, it was a pang
Like parting life to part with her dear girl.

One summer, Charles, when at the holydays
Return'd from school, I visited again
My old accustomed walks, and found in them.
A joy almost like meeting an old friend,
I saw the cottage empty, and the weeds
Already crowding the neglected flowers.
Joanna by a villain's wiles seduced
Had played the wanton, and that blow had reach'd
Her mother's heart. She did not suffer long,
Her age was feeble, and the heavy blow
Brought her grey hairs with sorrow to the grave.

I pass this ruin'd dwelling oftentimes
And think of other days. It wakes in me
A transient sadness, but the feelings Charles
That ever with these recollections rise,
I trust in God they will not pass away.

Robert Southey
Go, Valentine

Go, Valentine, and tell that lovely maid
Whom fancy still will portray to my sight,
How here I linger in this sullen shade,
This dreary gloom of dull monastic night;
Say, that every joy of life remote
At evening's closing hour I quit the throng,
Listening in solitude the ring-dome's note,
Who pours like me her solitary song;
Say, that of her absence calls the sorrowing sigh;
Say, that of all her charms I love to speak,
In fancy feel the magic of her eye,
In fancy view the smile illume her cheek,
Court the lone hour when silence stills the grove,
And heave the sigh of memory and of love.

Robert Southey
God's Judgment On A Wicked Bishop

The summer and autumn had been so wet,
That in winter the corn was growing yet,
'Twas a piteous sight to see all around
The grain lie rotting on the ground.

Every day the starving poor
Crowded around Bishop Hatto's door,
For he had a plentiful last-year's store,
And all the neighbourhood could tell
His granaries were furnish'd well.

At last Bishop Hatto appointed a day
To quiet the poor without delay;
He bade them to his great Barn repair,
And they should have food for the winter there.

Rejoiced such tidings good to hear,
The poor folk flock'd from far and near;
The great barn was full as it could hold
Of women and children, and young and old.

Then when he saw it could hold no more,
Bishop Hatto he made fast the door;
And while for mercy on Christ they call,
He set fire to the Barn and burnt them all.

"I'faith 'tis an excellent bonfire!" quoth he,
"And the country is greatly obliged to me,
For ridding it in these times forlorn
Of Rats that only consume the corn."

So then to his palace returned he,
And he sat down to supper merrily,
And he slept that night like an innocent man;
But Bishop Hatto never slept again.

In the morning as he enter'd the hall
Where his picture hung against the wall,
A sweat like death all over him came,
For the Rats had eaten it out of the frame.

As he look’d there came a man from his farm—
He had a countenance white with alarm;
"My Lord, I open’d your granaries this morn,
And the Rats had eaten all your corn."

Another came running presently,
And he was pale as pale could be,
"Fly! my Lord Bishop, fly," quoth he,
"Ten thousand Rats are coming this way,...
The Lord forgive you for yesterday!"

"I'll go to my tower on the Rhine," replied he,
"'Tis the safest place in Germany;
The walls are high and the shores are steep,
And the stream is strong and the water deep."

Bishop Hatto fearfully hasten’d away,
And he crost the Rhine without delay,
And reach’d his tower, and barr’d with care
All the windows, doors, and loop-holes there.

He laid him down and closed his eyes;...
But soon a scream made him arise,
He started and saw two eyes of flame
On his pillow from whence the screaming came.

He listen’d and look’d;... it was only the Cat;
And the Bishop he grew more fearful for that,
For she sat screaming, mad with fear
At the Army of Rats that were drawing near.

For they have swum over the river so deep,
And they have climb’d the shores so steep,
And up the Tower their way is bent,
To do the work for which they were sent.

They are not to be told by the dozen or score,
By thousands they come, and by myriads and more,
Such numbers had never been heard of before,
Such a judgment had never been witness’d of yore.
Down on his knees the Bishop fell,
And faster and faster his beads did he tell,
As louder and louder drawing near
The gnawing of their teeth he could hear.

And in at the windows and in at the door,
And through the walls helter-skelter they pour,
And down from the ceiling and up through the floor,
From the right and the left, from behind and before,
From within and without, from above and below,
And all at once to the Bishop they go.

They have whetted their teeth against the stones,
And now they pick the Bishop's bones:
They gnaw'd the flesh from every limb,
For they were sent to do judgment on him!

Robert Southey
Henry The Hermit

It was a little island where he dwelt,
Or rather a lone rock, barren and bleak,
Short scanty herbage spotting with dark spots
Its gray stone surface. Never mariner
Approach'd that rude and uninviting coast,
Nor ever fisherman his lonely bark
Anchored beside its shore. It was a place
Befitting well a rigid anchoret,
Dead to the hopes, and vanities, and joys
And purposes of life; and he had dwelt
Many long years upon that lonely isle,
For in ripe manhood he abandoned arms,
Honours and friends and country and the world,
And had grown old in solitude. That isle
Some solitary man in other times
Had made his dwelling-place; and Henry found
The little chapel that his toil had built
Now by the storms unroofed, his bed of leaves
Wind-scattered, and his grave o'ergrown with grass,
And thistles, whose white seeds winged in vain
Withered on rocks, or in the waves were lost.
So he repaired the chapel's ruined roof,
Clear'd the grey lichens from the altar-stone,
And underneath a rock that shelter'd him
From the sea blasts, he built his hermitage.

The peasants from the shore would bring him food
And beg his prayers; but human converse else
He knew not in that utter solitude,
Nor ever visited the haunts of men
Save when some sinful wretch on a sick bed
Implored his blessing and his aid in death.
That summons he delayed not to obey,
Tho' the night tempest or autumnal wind.
Maddened the waves, and tho' the mariner,
Albeit relying on his saintly load,
Grew pale to see the peril. So he lived
A most austere and self-denying man,
Till abstinence, and age, and watchfulness

www.PoemHunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive
Exhausted him, and it was pain at last
To rise at midnight from his bed of leaves
And bend his knees in prayer. Yet not the less
Tho' with reluctance of infirmity,
He rose at midnight from his bed of leaves
And bent his knees in prayer; but with more zeal
More self-condemning fervour rais'd his voice
For pardon for that sin, 'till that the sin
Repented was a joy like a good deed.

One night upon the shore his chapel bell
Was heard; the air was calm, and its far sounds
Over the water came distinct and loud.
Alarmed at that unusual hour to hear
Its toll irregular, a monk arose.
The boatmen bore him willingly across
For well the hermit Henry was beloved.
He hastened to the chapel, on a stone
Henry was sitting there, cold, stiff and dead,
The bell-rope in his band, and at his feet
The lamp that stream'd a long unsteady light

Robert Southey
High In The Air Exposed

High in the air exposed the slave is hung,
To all the birds of heaven, their living food!
He groans not, though awaked by that fierce sun
New torturers live to drink their parent blood;
He groans not, though the gorging vulture tear
The quivering fiber. Hither look, O ye
Who tore this man from peace and liberty!
Look hither, ye who weigh with politic care
The gain against the guilt! Beyond the grave
There is another world: bear ye in mind,
Ere your decree proclaims to all mankind
The gain is worth the guilt, that there the Slave,
Before the Eternal, "thunder-tongued shall plead
Against the deep damnation of your deed.

Robert Southey
His Books

MY days among the Dead are past;
   Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
   The mighty minds of old:
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal
   And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
   How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead; with them
   I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
   Partake their hopes and fears;
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead; anon
   My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
   Through all Futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

Robert Southey
Hold Your Mad Hands

Hold your mad hands! for ever on your plain
Must the gorged vulture clog his beak with blood?
For ever must your Niger's tainted flood,
Roll to the ravenous shark his banquet slain?
Hold your mad hands! and learn at length to know,
And turn your vengeance on the common foe,
Yon treacherous vessel and her godless crew!
Let never traders with false pretext fair
Set on your shores again their wicked feet:
With interdict and indignation meet
Repel them, and with fire and sword pursue!
Avarice, the white cadaverous fiend, is there,
Who spreads his toils accursed wide and far,
And for his purveyor calls the demon War.

Robert Southey
Hymn To The Penates

Yet one Song more! one high and solemn strain
Ere PAEAN! on thy temple's ruined wall
I hang the silent harp: there may its strings,
When the rude tempest shakes the aged pile,
Make melancholy music. One Song more!
PENATES! hear me! for to you I hymn
The votive lay. Whether, as sages deem,
Ye dwell in the inmost Heaven, the COUNSELLORS
Of JOVE; or if, SUPREME OF DEITIES,
All things are yours, and in your holy train
JOVE proudly ranks, and JUNO, white arm'd Queen.

And wisest of Immortals, aweful Maid
ATHENIAN PALLAS. Venerable Powers!
Hearken your hymn of praise! tho' from your rites
Estranged, and exiled from your altars long,
I have not ceased to love you, HOUSEHOLD GODS!
In many a long and melancholy hour
Of solitude and sorrow, has my heart
With earnest longings prayed to rest at length
Beside your hallowed hearth--for PEACE is there!

Yes I have loved you long. I call on you
Yourselves to witness with what holy joy,
Shunning the polished mob of human kind,
I have retired to watch your lonely fires
And commune with myself. Delightful hours
That gave mysterious pleasure, made me know
All the recesses of my wayward heart,
Taught me to cherish with devoutest care
Its strange unworldly feelings, taught me too
The best of lessons--to respect myself!

Nor have I ever ceas'd to reverence you
DOMESTIC DEITIES! from the first dawn
Of reason, thro' the adventurous paths of youth
Even to this better day, when on mine ear
The uproar of contending nations sounds,
But like the passing wind--and wakes no pulse
To tumult. When a child--(for still I love
To dwell with fondness on my childish years,
Even as that Persian favorite would retire
From the court's dangerous pageantry and pomp,
To gaze upon his shepherd garb, and weep,
Rememb'ring humble happiness.) When first
A little one, I left my father's home,
I can remember the first grief I felt,
And the first painful smile that cloathed my front
With feelings not its own: sadly at night
I sat me down beside a stranger's hearth;
And when the lingering hour of rest was come,
First wet with tears my pillow. As I grew
In years and knowledge, and the course of Time
Developed the young feelings of my heart,
When most I loved in solitude to rove
Amid the woodland gloom; or where the rocks
Darken'd old Avon's stream, in the ivied cave
Recluse to sit and brood the future song,
Yet not the less, PENATES, loved I then
Your altars, not the less at evening hour
Delighted by the well-trimm'd fire to sit,
Absorbed in many a dear deceitful dream
Of visionary joys: deceitful dreams--
Not wholly vain--for painting purest joys,
They form'd to Fancy's mould her votary's heart.

By Cherwell's sedgey side, and in the meads
Where Isis in her calm clear stream reflects
The willow's bending boughs, at earliest dawn
In the noon-tide hour, and when the night-mists rose,
I have remembered you: and when the noise
Of loud intemperance on my lonely ear
Burst with loud tumult, as recluse I sat,
Pondering on loftiest themes of man redeemed
From servitude, and vice, and wretchedness,
I blest you, HOUSEHOLD GODS! because I loved
Your peaceful altars and serener rites.
Nor did I cease to reverence you, when driven
Amid the jarring crowd, an unfit man
To mingle with the world; still, still my heart
Sighed for your sanctuary, and inly pined;
And loathing human converse, I have strayed
Where o'er the sea-beach chilly howl'd the blast,
And gaz'd upon the world of waves, and wished
That I were far beyond the Atlantic deep,
In woodland haunts--a sojourner with PEACE.

Not idly fabled they the Bards inspired,
Who peopled Earth with Deities. They trod
The wood with reverence where the DRYADS dwelt;
At day's dim dawn or evening's misty hour
They saw the OREADS on their mountain haunts.
And felt their holy influence, nor impure
Of thought--or ever with polluted hands
Touched they without a prayer the NAIAD'S spring;
Yet was their influence transient; such brief awe
Inspiring as the thunder's long loud peal
 Strikes to the feeble spirit. HOUSEHOLD GODS,
Not such your empire! in your votaries' breasts
No momentary impulse ye awake--
Nor fleeting like their local energies,
The deep devotion that your fanes impart.
O ye whom YOUTH has wilder'd on your way,
Or VICE with fair-mask'd foulness, or the lure
Of FAME that calls ye to her crowded paths
With FOLLY's rattle, to your HOUSEHOLD GODS
Return! for not in VICE's gay abodes,
Not in the unquiet unsafe halls of FAME
Does HAPPINESS abide! O ye who weep
Much for the many miseries of Mankind,
More for their vices, ye whose honest eyes
Frown on OPPRESSION,--ye whose honest hearts
Beat high when FREEDOM sounds her dread tocsin;--
O ye who quit the path of peaceful life
Crusading for mankind--a spaniel race
That lick the hand that beats them, or tear all
Alike in frenzy--to your HOUSEHOLD GODS
Return, for by their altars VIRTUE dwells
And HAPPINESS with her; for by their fires
TRANQUILLITY in no unsocial mood
Sits silent, listening to the pattering shower;
For, so SUSPICION sleep not at the gate
Of WISDOM,--FALSEHOOD shall not enter there.
As on the height of some huge eminence,
Reach'd with long labour, the way-faring man
Pauses awhile, and gazing o'er the plain
With many a sore step travelled, turns him then
Serious to contemplate the onward road,
And calls to mind the comforts of his home,
And sighs that he has left them, and resolves
To stray no more: I on my way of life
Muse thus PENATES, and with firmest faith
Devote myself to you. I will not quit
To mingle with the mob your calm abodes,
Where, by the evening hearth CONTENTMENT sits
And hears the cricket chirp; where LOVE delights
To dwell, and on your altars lays his torch
That burns with no extinguishable flame.

Hear me ye POWERS benignant! there is one
Must be mine inmate--for I may not chuse
But love him. He is one whom many wrongs
Have sicken'd of the world. There was a time
When he would weep to hear of wickedness
And wonder at the tale; when for the opprest
He felt a brother's pity, to the oppressor
A good man's honest anger. His quick eye
Betray'd each rising feeling, every thought
Leapt to his tongue. When first among mankind
He mingled, by himself he judged of them,
And loved and trusted them, to Wisdom deaf,
And took them to his bosom. FALSEHOOD met
Her unsuspecting victim, fair of front,
And lovely as Apega's sculptured form,
Like that false image caught his warm embrace
And gored his open breast. The reptile race
Clung round his bosom, and with viper folds
Encircling, stung the fool who fostered them.
His mother was SIMPLICITY, his sire
BENEVOLENCE; in earlier days he bore
His father's name; the world who injured him
Call him MISANTHROPY. I may not chuse
But love him, HOUSEHOLD GODS! for we were nurst
In the same school.
PENATES! some there are
Who say, that not in the inmost heaven ye dwell,
Gazing with eye remote on all the ways
Of man, his GUARDIAN GODS; wiselier they deem
A dearer interest to the human race
Links you, yourselves the SPIRITS OF THE DEAD.
No mortal eye may pierce the invisible world,
No light of human reason penetrate
That depth where Truth lies hid. Yet to this faith
My heart with instant sympathy assents;
And I would judge all systems and all faiths
By that best touchstone, from whose test DECEIT
Shrinks like the Arch-Fiend at Ithuriel's spear,
And SOPHISTRY'S gay glittering bubble bursts,
As at the spousals of the Nereid's son,
When that false Florimel, by her prototype
Display'd in rivalry, with all her charms
Dissolved away.

Nor can the halls of Heaven
Give to the human soul such kindred joy,
As hovering o'er its earthly haunts it feels,
When with the breeze it wantons round the brow
Of one beloved on earth; or when at night
In dreams it comes, and brings with it the DAYS
And JOYS that are no more, Or when, perchance
With power permitted to alleviate ill
And fit the sufferer for the coming woe,
Some strange presage the SPIRIT breathes, and fills
The breast with ominous fear, and disciplines
For sorrow, pours into the afflicted heart
The balm of resignation, and inspires
With heavenly hope. Even as a Child delights
To visit day by day the favorite plant
His hand has sown, to mark its gradual growth,
And watch all anxious for the promised flower;
Thus to the blessed spirit, in innocence
And pure affections like a little child,
Sweet will it be to hover o'er the friends
Beloved; then sweetest if, as Duty prompts,
With earthly care we in their breasts have sown
The seeds of Truth and Virtue, holy flowers
Whose odour reacheth Heaven.

When my sick Heart,
(Sick with hope long delayed, than, which no care
Presses the crush'd heart heavier from itself
Seeks the best comfort, often have I deemed
That thou didst witness every inmost thought
SEWARD! my dear dead friend! for not in vain,
Oh early summon'd in thy heavenly course!
Was thy brief sojourn here: me didst thou leave
With strengthen'd step to follow the right path
Till we shall meet again. Meantime I soothe
The deep regret of Nature, with belief,
My EDMUND! that thine eye's celestial ken
Pervades me now, marking no mean joy
The movements of the heart that loved thee well!

Such feelings Nature prompts, and hence your rites
DOMESTIC GODS! arose. When for his son
With ceaseless grief Syrophanes bewail'd,
Mourning his age left childless, and his wealth
Heapt for an alien, he with fixed eye
Still on the imaged marble of the dead
Dwelt, pampering sorrow. Thither from his wrath
A safe asylum, fled the offending slave,
And garlanded the statue and implored
His young lost Lord to save: Remembrance then
Softened the father, and he loved to see
The votive wreath renewed, and the rich smoke
Curl from the costly censer slow and sweet.
From Egypt soon the sorrow-soothing rites
Divulging spread; before your idol forms
By every hearth the blinded Pagan knelt,
Pouring his prayers to these, and offering there
Vain sacrifice or impious, and sometimes
With human blood your sanctuary defil'd:
Till the first BRUTUS, tyrant-conquering chief,
Arose; he first the impious rites put down,
He fitliest, who for FREEDOM lived and died,
The friend of humankind. Then did your feasts
Frequent recur and blameless; and when came
The solemn festival, whose happiest rites
Emblem'd EQUALITY, the holiest truth!
Crown'd with gay garlands were your statues seen,
To you the fragrant censer smok'd, to you
The rich libation flow'd: vain sacrifice!
For nor the poppy wreath nor fruits nor wine.
Ye ask, PENATES! nor the altar cleans'd
With many a mystic form; ye ask the heart
Made pure, and by domestic Peace and Love
Hallowed to you.

Hearken your hymn of praise,
PENATES! to your shrines I come for rest,
There only to be found. Often at eve,
Amid my wanderings I have seen far off
The lonely light that spake of comfort there,
It told my heart of many a joy of home,
And my poor heart was sad. When I have gazed
From some high eminence on goodly vales
And cots and villages embower'd below,
The thought would rise that all to me was strange
Amid the scene so fair, nor one small spot
Where my tir'd mind might rest and call it home,
There is a magic in that little word;
It is a mystic circle that surrounds
Comforts and Virtues never known beyond
The hallowed limit. Often has my heart
Ached for that quiet haven; haven'd now,
I think of those in this world's wilderness
Who wander on and find no home of rest
Till to the grave they go! them POVERTY
Hollow-eyed fiend, the child of WEALTH and POWER,
Bad offspring of worse parents, aye afflicts,
Cankering with her foul mildews the chill'd heart--
Them WANT with scorpion scourge drives to the den
Of GUILT--them SLAUGHTER with the price of death
Buys for her raven brood. Oh not on them
GOD OF ETERNAL JUSTICE! not on them
Let fall thy thunder!

HOUSEHOLD DEITIES!
Then only shall be Happiness on earth
When Man shall feel your sacred power, and love
Your tranquil joys; then shall the city stand
A huge void sepulchre, and rising fair
Amid the ruins of the palace pile
The Olive grow, there shall the TREE OF PEACE
Strike its roots deep and flourish. This the state
Shall bless the race redeemed of Man, when WEALTH
And POWER and all their hideous progeny
Shall sink annihilate, and all mankind
Live in the equal brotherhood of LOVE.
Heart-calming hope and sure! for hitherward
Tend all the tumults of the troubled world,
Its woes, its wisdom, and its wickedness
Alike: so he hath will'd whose will is just.

Meantime, all hoping and expecting all
In patient faith, to you, DOMESTIC GODS!
I come, studious of other lore than song,
Of my past years the solace and support:
Yet shall my Heart remember the past years
With honest pride, trusting that not in vain
Lives the pure song of LIBERTY and TRUTH.

Robert Southey
Inchcape Rock

No stir in the air, no stir in the sea,
The Ship was still as she could be;
Her sails from heaven received no motion,
Her keel was steady in the ocean.

Without either sign or sound of their shock,
The waves flow’d over the Inchcape Rock;
So little they rose, so little they fell,
They did not move the Inchcape Bell.

The Abbot of Aberbrothok
Had placed that bell on the Inchcape Rock;
On a buoy in the storm it floated and swung,
And over the waves its warning rung.

When the Rock was hid by the surge’s swell,
The Mariners heard the warning Bell;
And then they knew the perilous Rock,
And blest the Abbot of Aberbrothok.

The Sun in the heaven was shining gay,
All things were joyful on that day;
The sea-birds scream’d as they wheel’d round,
And there was joyaunce in their sound.

The buoy of the Inchcape Bell was seen
A darker speck on the ocean green;
Sir Ralph the Rover walk’d his deck,
And fix’d his eye on the darker speck.

He felt the cheering power of spring,
It made him whistle, it made him sing;
His heart was mirthful to excess,
But the Rover’s mirth was wickedness.

His eye was on the Inchcape Float;
Quoth he, “My men, put out the boat,
And row me to the Inchcape Rock,
And I’ll plague the Abbot of Aberbrothok.”
The boat is lower’d, the boatmen row,
And to the Inchcape Rock they go;
Sir Ralph bent over from the boat,
And he cut the bell from the Inchcape Float.

Down sank the Bell with a gurgling sound,
The bubbles rose and burst around;
Quoth Sir Ralph, “The next who comes to the Rock,
Won’t bless the Abbot of Aberbrothok.”

Sir ralph the Rover sail’d away,
He scour’d the seas for many a day;
And now grown rich with plunder’d store,
He steers his course for Scotland’s shore.

So thick a haze o’erspreads the sky,
They cannot see the sun on high;
The wind hath blown a gale all day,
At evening it hath died away.

On the deck the Rover takes his stand,
So dark it is they see no land.
Quoth Sir Ralph, “It will be lighter soon,
For there is the dawn of the rising Moon.”

“Canst hear,” said one, “the breakers roar?
For methinks we should be near the shore.”
“Now, where we are I cannot tell,
But I wish we could hear the Inchcape Bell.”

They hear no sound, the swell is strong,
Though the wind hath fallen they drift along;
Till the vessel strikes with a shivering shock,
“Oh Christ! It is the Inchcape Rock!”

Sir Ralph the Rover tore his hair,
He curst himself in his despair;
The waves rush in on every side,
The ship is sinking beneath the tide.

But even is his dying fear,
One dreadful sound could the Rover hear;
A sound as if with the Inchcape Bell,
The Devil below was ringing his knell.

Robert Southey
Here Stranger rest thee! from the neighbouring towers
Of Oxford, haply thou hast forced thy bark
Up this strong stream, whose broken waters here
Send pleasant murmurs to the listening sense:
Rest thee beneath this hazel; its green boughs
Afford a grateful shade, and to the eye
Fair is its fruit: Stranger! the seemly fruit
Is worthless, all is hollowness within,
For on the grave of ROSAMUND it grows!
Young lovely and beloved she fell seduced,
And here retir'd to wear her wretched age
In earnest prayer and bitter penitence,
Despis'd and self-despising: think of her
Young Man! and learn to reverence Womankind!

Robert Southey
Inscription 02 - For A Column At Newbury

Art thou a Patriot Traveller? on this field
Did FALKLAND fall the blameless and the brave
Beneath a Tyrant's banners: dost thou boast
Of loyal ardor? HAMBDEN perish'd here,
The rebel HAMBDEN, at whose glorious name
The heart of every honest Englishman
Beats high with conscious pride. Both uncorrupt,
Friends to their common country both, they fought,
They died in adverse armies. Traveller!
If with thy neighbour thou should'st not accord,
In charity remember these good men,
And quell each angry and injurious thought.

Robert Southey
Inscription 03 - For A Cavern That Overlooks The River Avon

Enter this cavern Stranger! the ascent
Is long and steep and toilsome; here awhile
Thou mayest repose thee, from the noontide heat
O'ercanopied by this arch'd rock that strikes
A grateful coolness: clasping its rough arms
Round the rude portal, the old ivy hangs
Its dark green branches down, and the wild Bees,
O'er its grey blossoms murmuring ceaseless, make
Most pleasant melody. No common spot
Receives thee, for the Power who prompts the song,
Loves this secluded haunt. The tide below
Scarce sends the sound of waters to thine ear;
And this high-hanging forest to the wind
Varies its many hues. Gaze Stranger here!
And let thy soften'd heart intensely feel
How good, how lovely, Nature! When from hence
Departing to the City's crouded streets,
Thy sickening eye at every step revolts
From scenes of vice and wretchedness; reflect
That Man creates the evil he endures.

Robert Southey
Inscription 04 - For The Apartment In Chepstow-Castle

For thirty years secluded from mankind,
Here Marten linger'd. Often have these walls
Echoed his footsteps, as with even tread
He paced around his prison: not to him
Did Nature's fair varieties exist;
He never saw the Sun's delightful beams,
Save when thro' yon high bars it pour'd a sad
And broken splendor. Dost thou ask his crime?
He had rebell'd against the King, and sat
In judgment on him; for his ardent mind
Shaped goodliest plans of happiness on earth,
And peace and liberty. Wild dreams! But such
As PLATO lov'd; such as with holy zeal
Our MILTON worshipp'd. Blessed hopes! awhile
From man withheld, even to the latter days,
When CHRIST shall come and all things be fulfill'd.

Robert Southey
Inscription 05 - For A Monument At Silbury-Hill

This mound in some remote and dateless day
Rear'd o'er a Chieftain of the Age of Hills,
May here detain thee Traveller! from thy road
Not idly lingering. In his narrow house
Some Warrior sleeps below: his gallant deeds
Haply at many a solemn festival
The Bard has harp'd, but perish'd is the song
Of praise, as o'er these bleak and barren downs
The wind that passes and is heard no more.
Go Traveller on thy way, and contemplate
Glory's brief pageant, and remember then
That one good deed was never wrought in vain.

Robert Southey
Inscription 06 - For A Monument In The New Forest

This is the place where William's kingly power
Did from their poor and peaceful homes expel,
Unfriended, desolate, and shelterless,
The habitants of all the fertile track
Far as these wilds extend. He levell'd down
Their little cottages, he bade their fields
Lie barren, so that o'er the forest waste
He might most royally pursue his sports!
If that thine heart be human, Passenger!
Sure it will swell within thee, and thy lips
Will mutter curses on him. Think thou then
What cities flame, what hosts unsepulchred
Pollute the passing wind, when raging Power
Drives on his blood-hounds to the chase of Man;
And as thy thoughts anticipate that day
When God shall judge aright, in charity
Pray for the wicked rulers of mankind.

Robert Southey
Inscription 07 - For A Tablet On The Banks Of A Stream

Stranger! awhile upon this mossy bank
Recline thee. If the Sun rides high, the breeze,
That loves to ripple o'er the rivulet,
Will play around thy brow, and the cool sound
Of running waters soothe thee. Mark how clear
It sparkles o'er the shallows, and behold
Where o'er its surface wheels with restless speed
Yon glossy insect, on the sand below
How the swift shadow flies. The stream is pure
In solitude, and many a healthful herb
Bends o'er its course and drinks the vital wave:
But passing on amid the haunts of man,
It finds pollution there, and rolls from thence
A tainted tide. Seek'st thou for HAPPINESS?
Go Stranger, sojourn in the woodland cot
Of INNOCENCE, and thou shalt find her there.

Robert Southey
Inscription 08 - For The Cenotaph At Ermenonville

STRANGER! the MAN OF NATURE lies not here:
Enshrin'd far distant by his rival's side
His relics rest, there by the giddy throng
With blind idolatry alike revered!
Wiselier directed have thy pilgrim feet
Explor'd the scenes of Ermenonville. ROUSSEAU
Loved these calm haunts of Solitude and Peace;
Here he has heard the murmurs of the stream,
And the soft rustling of the poplar grove,
When o'er their bending boughs the passing wind
Swept a grey shade. Here if thy breast be full,
If in thine eye the tear devout should gush,
His SPIRIT shall behold thee, to thine home
From hence returning, purified of heart.

Robert Southey
Jaspar

Jaspar was poor, and want and vice
Had made his heart like stone,
And Jaspar look'd with envious eyes
On riches not his own.

On plunder bent abroad he went
Towards the close of day,
And loitered on the lonely road
Impatient for his prey.

No traveller came, he loiter'd long
And often look'd around,
And paus'd and listen'd eagerly
To catch some coming sound.

He sat him down beside the stream
That crossed the lonely way,
So fair a scene might well have charm'd
All evil thoughts away;

He sat beneath a willow tree
That cast a trembling shade,
The gentle river full in front
A little island made,

Where pleasantly the moon-beam shone
Upon the poplar trees,
Whose shadow on the stream below
Play'd slowly to the breeze.

He listen'd--and he heard the wind
That waved the willow tree;
He heard the waters flow along
And murmur quietly.

He listen'd for the traveller's tread,
The nightingale sung sweet,--
He started up, for now he heard
The sound of coming feet;
He started up and graspt a stake
And waited for his prey;
There came a lonely traveller
And Jaspar crost his way.

But Jaspar's threats and curses fail'd
The traveller to appal,
He would not lightly yield the purse
That held his little all.

Awhile he struggled, but he strove
With Jaspar's strength in vain;
Beneath his blows he fell and groan'd,
And never spoke again.

He lifted up the murdered man
And plunged him in the flood,
And in the running waters then
He cleansed his hands from blood.

The waters closed around the corpse
And cleansed his hands from gore,
The willow waved, the stream flowed on
And murmured as before.

There was no human eye had seen
The blood the murderer spilt,
And Jaspar's conscience never knew
The avenging goad of guilt.

And soon the ruffian had consum'd
The gold he gain'd so ill,
And years of secret guilt pass'd on
And he was needy still.

One eve beside the alehouse fire
He sat as it befell,
When in there came a labouring man
Whom Jaspar knew full well.

He sat him down by Jaspar's side
A melancholy man,
For spite of honest toil, the world
Went hard with Jonathan.

His toil a little earn'd, and he
With little was content,
But sickness on his wife had fallen
And all he had was spent.

Then with his wife and little ones
He shared the scanty meal,
And saw their looks of wretchedness,
And felt what wretches feel.

That very morn the Landlord's power
Had seized the little left,
And now the sufferer found himself
Of every thing bereft.

He lent his head upon his hand,
His elbow on his knee,
And so by Jaspar's side he sat
And not a word said he.

Nay--why so downcast? Jaspar cried,
Come--cheer up Jonathan!
Drink neighbour drink! 'twill warm thy heart,
Come! come! take courage man!

He took the cup that Jaspar gave
And down he drain'd it quick
I have a wife, said Jonathan,
And she is deadly sick.

She has no bed to lie upon,
I saw them take her bed.
And I have children--would to God
That they and I were dead!

Our Landlord he goes home to night
And he will sleep in peace.
I would that I were in my grave
For there all troubles cease.

In vain I pray'd him to forbear
Tho' wealth enough has he--
God be to him as merciless
As he has been to me!

When Jaspar saw the poor man's soul
On all his ills intent,
He plied him with the heartening cup
And with him forth he went.

This landlord on his homeward road
'Twere easy now to meet.
The road is lonesome--Jonathan,
And vengeance, man! is sweet.

He listen'd to the tempter's voice
The thought it made him start.
His head was hot, and wretchedness
Had hardened now his heart.

Along the lonely road they went
And waited for their prey,
They sat them down beside the stream
That crossed the lonely way.

They sat them down beside the stream
And never a word they said,
They sat and listen'd silently
To hear the traveller's tread.

The night was calm, the night was dark,
No star was in the sky,
The wind it waved the willow boughs,
The stream flowed quietly.

The night was calm, the air was still,
Sweet sung the nightingale,
The soul of Jonathan was sooth'd,
His heart began to fail.
'Tis weary waiting here, he cried,  
And now the hour is late,—  
Methinks he will not come to night,  
'Tis useless more to wait.

Have patience man! the ruffian said,  
A little we may wait,  
But longer shall his wife expect  
Her husband at the gate.

Then Jonathan grew sick at heart,  
My conscience yet is clear,  
Jaspar--it is not yet too late--  
I will not linger here.

How now! cried Jaspar, why I thought  
Thy conscience was asleep.  
No more such qualms, the night is dark,  
The river here is deep,

What matters that, said Jonathan,  
Whose blood began to freeze,  
When there is one above whose eye  
The deeds of darkness sees?

We are safe enough, said Jaspar then  
If that be all thy fear;  
Nor eye below, nor eye above  
Can pierce the darkness here.

That instant as the murderer spake  
There came a sudden light;  
Strong as the mid-day sun it shone,  
Though all around was night.

It hung upon the willow tree,  
It hung upon the flood,  
It gave to view the poplar isle  
And all the scene of blood.

The traveller who journies there  
He surely has espied
A madman who has made his home
Upon the river's side.

His cheek is pale, his eye is wild,
His look bespeaks despair;
For Jaspar since that hour has made
His home unshelter'd there.

And fearful are his dreams at night
And dread to him the day;
He thinks upon his untold crime
And never dares to pray.

The summer suns, the winter storms,
O'er him unheeded roll,
For heavy is the weight of blood
Upon the maniac's soul.

Robert Southey
Lord William

No eye beheld when William plunged
Young Edmund in the stream,
No human ear but William's heard
Young Edmund's drowning scream.

Submissive all the vassals own'd
The murderer for their Lord,
And he, the rightful heir, possessed
The house of Erlingford.

The ancient house of Erlingford
Stood midst a fair domain,
And Severn's ample waters near
Roll'd through the fertile plain.

And often the way-faring man
Would love to linger there,
Forgetful of his onward road
To gaze on scenes so fair.

But never could Lord William dare
To gaze on Severn's stream;
In every wind that swept its waves
He heard young Edmund scream.

In vain at midnight's silent hour
Sleep closed the murderer's eyes,
In every dream the murderer saw
Young Edmund's form arise.

In vain by restless conscience driven
Lord William left his home,
Far from the scenes that saw his guilt,
In pilgrimage to roam.

To other climes the pilgrim fled,
But could not fly despair,
He sought his home again, but peace
Was still a stranger there.
Each hour was tedious long, yet swift
The months appear'd to roll;
And now the day return'd that shook
With terror William's soul.

A day that William never felt
Return without dismay,
For well had conscience kalendered
Young Edmund's dying day.

A fearful day was that! the rains
Fell fast, with tempest roar,
And the swoln tide of Severn spread
Far on the level shore.

In vain Lord William sought the feast
In vain he quaff'd the bowl,
And strove with noisy mirth to drown
The anguish of his soul.

The tempest as its sudden swell
In gusty howlings came,
With cold and death-like feelings seem'd
To thrill his shuddering frame.

Reluctant now, as night came on,
His lonely couch he prest,
And wearied out, he sunk to sleep,
To sleep, but not to rest.

Beside that couch his brother's form
Lord Edmund seem'd to stand,
Such and so pale as when in death
He grasp'd his brother's hand;

Such and so pale his face as when
With faint and faltering tongue,
To William's care, a dying charge
He left his orphan son.

'I bade thee with a father's love
My orphan Edmund guard--
Well William hast thou kept thy charge!
Now take thy due reward.'

He started up, each limb convuls'd
With agonizing fear,
He only heard the storm of night--
'Twas music to his ear.

When lo! the voice of loud alarm
His inmost soul appals,
What ho! Lord William rise in haste!
The water saps thy walls!

He rose in haste, beneath the walls
He saw the flood appear,
It hemm'd him round, 'twas midnight now,
No human aid was near.

He heard the shout of joy, for now
A boat approach'd the wall,
And eager to the welcome aid
They crowd for safety all.

My boat is small, the boatman cried,
This dangerous haste forbear!
Wait other aid, this little bark
But one from hence can bear.

Lord William leap'd into the boat,
Haste--haste to yonder shore!
And ample wealth shall well reward,
Ply swift and strong the oar.

The boatman plied the oar, the boat
Went light along the stream,
Sudden Lord William heard a cry
Like Edmund's drowning scream.

The boatman paus'd, methought I heard
A child's distressful cry!
'Twas but the howling wind of night
Lord William made reply.

Haste haste--ply swift and strong the oar!
Haste haste across the stream!
Again Lord William heard a cry
Like Edmund's drowning scream.

I heard a child's distressful scream
The boatman cried again.
Nay hasten on--the night is dark--
And we should search in vain.

Oh God! Lord William dost thou know
How dreadful 'tis to die?
And can'st thou without pity hear
A child's expiring cry?

How horrible it is to sink
Beneath the chilly stream,
To stretch the powerless arms in vain,
In vain for help to scream?

The shriek again was heard. It came
More deep, more piercing loud,
That instant o'er the flood the moon
Shone through a broken cloud.

And near them they beheld a child,
Upon a crag he stood,
A little crag, and all around
Was spread the rising flood.

The boatman plied the oar, the boat
Approach'd his resting place,
The moon-beam shone upon the child
And show'd how pale his face.

Now reach thine hand! the boatman cried
Lord William reach and save!
The child stretch'd forth his little hands
To grasp the hand he gave.
Then William shriek'd; the hand he touch'd
Was cold and damp and dead!
He felt young Edmund in his arms
A heavier weight than lead.

The boat sunk down, the murderer sunk
Beneath the avenging stream;
He rose, he scream'd, no human ear
Heard William's drowning scream.

Robert Southey
Mary - A Ballad

Author Note: The story of the following ballad was related to me, when a school boy, as a fact which had really happened in the North of England. I have adopted the metre of Mr. Lewis's Alonzo and Imogene--a poem deservedly popular.

I.
Who is she, the poor Maniac, whose wildly-fix'd eyes
Seem a heart overcharged to express?
She weeps not, yet often and deeply she sighs,
She never complains, but her silence implies
The composure of settled distress.

II.
No aid, no compassion the Maniac will seek,
Cold and hunger awake not her care:
Thro' her rags do the winds of the winter blow bleak
On her poor withered bosom half bare, and her cheek
Has the deathy pale hue of despair.

III.
Yet cheerful and happy, nor distant the day,
Poor Mary the Maniac has been;
The Traveller remembers who journeyed this way
No damsel so lovely, no damsel so gay
As Mary the Maid of the Inn.

IV.
Her cheerful address fill'd the guests with delight
As she welcomed them in with a smile:
Her heart was a stranger to childish affright,
And Mary would walk by the Abbey at night.
When the wind whistled down the dark aisle.

V.

She loved, and young Richard had settled the day,  
And she hoped to be happy for life;  
But Richard was idle and worthless, and they  
Who knew him would pity poor Mary and say  
That she was too good for his wife.

VI.

'Twas in autumn, and stormy and dark was the night,  
And fast were the windows and door;  
Two guests sat enjoying the fire that burnt bright,  
And smoking in silence with tranquil delight  
They listen'd to hear the wind roar.

VII.

"Tis pleasant," cried one, "seated by the fire side  
"To hear the wind whistle without."  
"A fine night for the Abbey!" his comrade replied,  
"Methinks a man's courage would now be well tried  
"Who should wander the ruins about.

VIII.

"I myself, like a school-boy, should tremble to hear  
"The hoarse ivy shake over my head;  
"And could fancy I saw, half persuaded by fear,  
"Some ugly old Abbot's white spirit appear,  
"For this wind might awaken the dead!"

IX.

"I'll wager a dinner," the other one cried,
"That Mary would venture there now."
"Then wager and lose!" with a sneer he replied,
"I'll warrant she'd fancy a ghost by her side,
"And faint if she saw a white cow."

X.

"Will Mary this charge on her courage allow?"
His companion exclaim'd with a smile;
"I shall win, for I know she will venture there now,
"And earn a new bonnet by bringing a bough
"From the elder that grows in the aisle."

XI.

With fearless good humour did Mary comply,
And her way to the Abbey she bent;
The night it was dark, and the wind it was high
And as hollowly howling it swept thro' the sky
She shiver'd with cold as she went.

XII.

O'er the path so well known still proceeded the Maid
Where the Abbey rose dim on the sight,
Thro' the gate-way she entered, she felt not afraid
Yet the ruins were lonely and wild, and their shade
Seem'd to deepen the gloom of the night.

XIII.

All around her was silent, save when the rude blast
Howl'd dismally round the old pile;
Over weed-cover'd fragments still fearless she past,
And arrived in the innermost ruin at last
Where the elder tree grew in the aisle.
XIV.

Well-pleas'd did she reach it, and quickly drew near
And hastily gather'd the bough:
When the sound of a voice seem'd to rise on her ear,
She paus'd, and she listen'd, all eager to hear,
And her heart panted fearfully now.

XV.

The wind blew, the hoarse ivy shook over her head,
She listen'd, --nought else could she hear.
The wind ceas'd, her heart sunk in her bosom with dread
For she heard in the ruins distinctly the tread
Of footsteps approaching her near.

XVI.

Behind a wide column half breathless with fear
She crept to conceal herself there:
That instant the moon o'er a dark cloud shone clear,
And she saw in the moon-light two ruffians appear
And between them a corpse did they bear.

XVII.

Then Mary could feel her heart-blood curdle cold!
Again the rough wind hurried by, --
It blew off the hat of the one, and behold
Even close to the feet of poor Mary it roll'd, --
She felt, and expected to die.

XVIII.

"Curse the hat!" he exclaims. "Nay come on and first hide
"The dead body," his comrade replies.
She beheld them in safety pass on by her side,
She seizes the hat, fear her courage supplied,
And fast thro' the Abbey she flies.

XIX.

She ran with wild speed, she rush'd in at the door,
She gazed horribly eager around,
Then her limbs could support their faint burthen no more,
And exhausted and breathless she sunk on the floor
Unable to utter a sound.

XX.

Ere yet her pale lips could the story impart,
For a moment the hat met her view;--
Her eyes from that object convulsively start,
For--oh God what cold horror then thrill'd thro' her heart,
When the name of her Richard she knew!

XXI.

Where the old Abbey stands, on the common hard by
His gibbet is now to be seen.
Not far from the road it engages the eye,
The Traveller beholds it, and thinks with a sigh
Of poor Mary the Maid of the Inn.

Robert Southey
Metrical Letter, Written From London.

Margaret! my Cousin!—nay, you must not smile;
I love the homely and familiar phrase;
And I will call thee Cousin Margaret,
However quaint amid the measured line
The good old term appears. Oh! it looks ill
When delicate tongues disclaim old terms of kin,
Sirring and Madaming as civilly
As if the road between the heart and lips
Were such a weary and Laplandish way
That the poor travellers came to the red gates
Half frozen. Trust me Cousin Margaret,
For many a day my Memory has played
The creditor with me on your account,
And made me shame to think that I should owe
So long the debt of kindness. But in truth,
Like Christian on his pilgrimage, I bear
So heavy a pack of business, that albeit
I toil on mainly, in our twelve hours race
Time leaves me distanced. Loath indeed were I
That for a moment you should lay to me
Unkind neglect; mine, Margaret, is a heart
That smokes not, yet methinks there should be some
Who know how warm it beats. I am not one
Who can play off my smiles and courtesies
To every Lady of her lap dog tired
Who wants a play-thing; I am no sworn friend
Of half-an-hour, as apt to leave as love;
Mine are no mushroom feelings that spring up
At once without a seed and take no root,
Wiseliest distrusted. In a narrow sphere
The little circle of domestic life
I would be known and loved; the world beyond
Is not for me. But Margaret, sure I think
That you should know me well, for you and I
Grew up together, and when we look back
Upon old times our recollections paint
The same familiar faces. Did I wield
The wand of Merlin's magic I would make
Brave witchcraft. We would have a faery ship,
Aye, a new Ark, as in that other flood  
That cleansed the sons of Anak from the earth,  
The Sylphs should waft us to some goodly isle  
Like that where whilome old Apollidon  
Built up his blameless spell; and I would bid  
The Sea Nymphs pile around their coral bowers,  
That we might stand upon the beach, and mark  
The far-off breakers shower their silver spray,  
And hear the eternal roar whose pleasant sound  
Told us that never mariner should reach  
Our quiet coast. In such a blessed isle  
We might renew the days of infancy,  
And Life like a long childhood pass away,  
Without one care. It may be, Margaret,  
That I shall yet be gathered to my friends,  
For I am not of those who live estranged  
Of choice, till at the last they join their race  
In the family vault. If so, if I should lose,  
Like my old friend the Pilgrim, this huge pack  
So heavy on my shoulders, I and mine  
Will end our pilgrimage most pleasantly.  
If not, if I should never get beyond  
This Vanity town, there is another world  
Where friends will meet. And often, Margaret,  
I gaze at night into the boundless sky,  
And think that I shall there be born again,  
The exalted native of some better star;  
And like the rude American I hope  
To find in Heaven the things I loved on earth.

Robert Southey
Musings On A Landscape Of Gaspar Poussin

Poussin! most pleasantly thy pictur'd scenes
Beguile the lonely hour; I sit and gaze
With lingering eye, till charmed FANCY makes
The lovely landscape live, and the rapt soul
From the foul haunts of herded humankind
Flies far away with spirit speed, and tastes
The untainted air, that with the lively hue
Of health and happiness illumes the cheek
Of mountain LIBERTY. My willing soul
All eager follows on thy faery flights
FANCY! best friend; whose blessed witcheries
With loveliest prospects cheat the traveller
O'er the long wearying desart of the world.
Nor dost thou FANCY with such magic mock
My heart, as, demon-born, old Merlin knew,
Or Alquif, or Zarzafiel's sister sage,
Whose vengeful anguish for so many a year
Held in the jacinth sepulchre entranced
Lisvart and Perion, pride of chivalry.
Friend of my lonely hours! thou leadest me
To such calm joys as Nature wise and good
Proffers in vain to all her wretched sons;
Her wretched sons who pine with want amid
The abundant earth, and blindly bow them down
Before the Moloch shrines of WEALTH and POWER,
AUTHORS of EVIL. Oh it is most sweet
To medicine with thy wiles the wearied heart,
Sick of reality. The little pile
That tops the summit of that craggy hill
Shall be my dwelling; craggy is the hill
And steep, yet thro' yon hazels upward leads
The easy path, along whose winding way
Now close embowered I hear the unseen stream
Dash down, anon behold its sparkling foam
Gleam thro' the thicket; and ascending on
Now pause me to survey the goodly vale
That opens on my vision. Half way up
Pleasant it were upon some broad smooth rock
To sit and sun me, and look down below
And watch the goatherd down that high-bank'd path
Urging his flock grotesque; and bidding now
His lean rough dog from some near cliff to drive
The straggler; while his barkings loud and quick
Amid their trembling bleat arising oft,
Fainter and fainter from the hollow road
Send their far echoes, till the waterfall,
Hoarse bursting from the cavern'd cliff beneath,
Their dying murmurs drown. A little yet
Onward, and I have gain'd the upmost height.
Fair spreads the vale below: I see the stream
Stream radiant on beneath the noontide sky.
Where the town-spires behind the castle towers
Rise graceful; brown the mountain in its shade,
Whose circling grandeur, part by mists conceal'd,
Part with white rocks resplendent in the sun,
Should bound mine eyes; aye and my wishes too,
For I would have no hope or fear beyond.
The empty turmoil of the worthless world,
Its vanities and vices would not vex
My quiet heart. The traveller, who beheld
The low tower of the little pile, might deem
It were the house of GOD: nor would he err
So deeming, for that home would be the home
Of PEACE and LOVE, and they would hallow it
To HIM. Oh life of blessedness! to reap
The fruit of honorable toil, and bound
Our wishes with our wants! delightful Thoughts
That sooth the solitude of maniac HOPE,
Ye leave her to reality awak'd,
Like the poor captive, from some fleeting dream
Of friends and liberty and home restor'd,
Startled, and listening as the midnight storm
Beats hard and heavy thro' his dungeon bars.

Robert Southey
My Days Among The Dead Are Past

My days among the Dead are past;
Around me I behold,
Where'er these casual eyes are cast,
The mighty minds of old;
My never-failing friends are they,
With whom I converse day by day.

With them I take delight in weal,
And seek relief in woe;
And while I understand and feel
How much to them I owe,
My cheeks have often been bedew'd
With tears of thoughtful gratitude.

My thoughts are with the Dead, with them
I live in long-past years,
Their virtues love, their faults condemn,
Partake their hopes and fears,
And from their lessons seek and find
Instruction with an humble mind.

My hopes are with the Dead, anon
My place with them will be,
And I with them shall travel on
Through all Futurity;
Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
That will not perish in the dust.

Robert Southey
Ode Written On The First Of December

Tho' now no more the musing ear
Delights to listen to the breeze
That lingers o'er the green wood shade,
I love thee Winter! well.

Sweet are the harmonies of Spring,
Sweet is the summer's evening gale,
Pleasant the autumnal winds that shake
The many-colour'd grove.

And pleasant to the sober'd soul
The silence of the wintry scene,
When Nature shrouds her in her trance

Not undelightful now to roam
The wild heath sparkling on the sight;
Not undelightful now to pace
The forest's ample rounds;

And see the spangled branches shine,
And mark the moss of many a hue
That varies the old tree's brown bark,
Or o'er the grey stone spreads.

The cluster'd berries claim the eye
O'er the bright hollies gay green leaves,
The ivy round the leafless oak
Clasps its full foliage close.

So VIRTUE diffident of strength
Clings to RELIGION'S firmer aid,
And by RELIGION'S aid upheld
Endures calamity.

Nor void of beauties now the spring,
Whose waters hid from summer sun
Have sooth'd the thirsty pilgrim's ear
With more than melody.
The green moss shines with icy glare,
The long grass bends its spear-like form,
And lovely is the silvery scene
When faint the sunbeams smile.

Reflection too may love the hour
When Nature, hid in Winter's grave,
No more expands the bursting bud
Or bids the flowret bloom.

For Nature soon in Spring's best charms
Shall rise reviv'd from Winter's grave.
Again expand the bursting bud,
And bid the flowret bloom.

Robert Southey
Ode Written On The First Of January

Come melancholy Moralizer--come!
Gather with me the dark and wintry wreath;
   With me engarland now
   The SEPULCHRE OF TIME!

Come Moralizer to the funeral song!
I pour the dirge of the Departed Days,
   For well the funeral song
   Befits this solemn hour.

But hark! even now the merry bells ring round
With clamorous joy to welcome in this day,
   This consecrated day,
   To Mirth and Indolence.

Mortal! whilst Fortune with benignant hand
Fills to the brim thy cup of happiness,
   Whilst her unclouded sun
   Illumes thy summer day,

Canst thou rejoice--rejoice that Time flies fast?
That Night shall shadow soon thy summer sun?
   That swift the stream of Years
   Rolls to Eternity?

If thou hast wealth to gratify each wish,
If Power be thine, remember what thou art--
   Remember thou art Man,
   And Death thine heritage!

Hast thou known Love? does Beauty's better sun
Cheer thy fond heart with no capricious smile,
   Her eye all eloquence,
   Her voice all harmony?

Oh state of happiness! hark how the gale
Moans deep and hollow o'er the leafless grove!
   Winter is dark and cold--
   Where now the charms of Spring?
Sayst thou that Fancy paints the future scene
In hues too sombrous? that the dark-stol'd Maid
   With stern and frowning front
   Appals the shuddering soul?

And would'st thou bid me court her faery form
When, as she sports her in some happier mood,
   Her many-colour'd robes
   Dance varying to the Sun?

Ah vainly does the Pilgrim, whose long road
Leads o'er the barren mountain's storm-vext height,
   With anxious gaze survey
   The fruitful far-off vale.

Oh there are those who love the pensive song
To whom all sounds of Mirth are dissonant!
   There are who at this hour
   Will love to contemplate!

For hopeless Sorrow hails the lapse of Time,
Rejoicing when the fading orb of day
   Is sunk again in night,
   That one day more is gone.

And he who bears Affliction's heavy load
With patient piety, well pleas'd he knows
   The World a pilgrimage,
   The Grave the inn of rest.

Robert Southey
On The Death Of A Favourite Old Spaniel

And they have drown'd thee then at last! poor Phillis!
The burthen of old age was heavy on thee.
And yet thou should'st have lived! what tho' thine eye
Was dim, and watch'd no more with eager joy
The wonted call that on thy dull sense sunk
With fruitless repetition, the warm Sun
Would still have cheer'd thy slumber, thou didst love
To lick the hand that fed thee, and tho' past
Youth's active season, even Life itself
Was comfort. Poor old friend! most earnestly
Would I have pleaded for thee: thou hadst been
Still the companion of my childish sports,
And, as I roam'd o'er Avon's woody clifts,
From many a day-dream has thy short quick bark
Recall'd my wandering soul. I have beguil'd
Often the melancholy hours at school,
Sour'd by some little tyrant, with the thought
Of distant home, and I remember'd then
Thy faithful fondness: for not mean the joy,
Returning at the pleasant holydays,
I felt from thy dumb welcome. Pensively
Sometimes have I remark'd thy slow decay,
Feeling myself changed too, and musing much
On many a sad vicissitude of Life!
Ah poor companion! when thou followedst last
Thy master's parting footsteps to the gate
That clos'd for ever on him, thou didst lose
Thy truest friend, and none was left to plead
For the old age of brute fidelity!
But fare thee well! mine is no narrow creed,
And HE who gave thee being did not frame
The mystery of life to be the sport
Of merciless man! there is another world
For all that live and move--a better one!
Where the proud bipeds, who would fain confine
INFINITE GOODNESS to the little bounds
Of their own charity, may envy thee!
Hold your mad hands! for ever on your plain
Must the gorged vulture clog his beak with blood?
For ever must your Nigers tainted flood
Roll to the ravenous shark his banquet slain?
Hold your mad hands! what daemon prompts to rear
The arm of Slaughter? on your savage shore
Can hell-sprung Glory claim the feast of gore,
With laurels water'd by the widow's tear
Wreathing his helmet crown? lift high the spear!
And like the desolating whirlwinds sweep,
Plunge ye yon bark of anguish in the deep;
For the pale fiend, cold-hearted Commerce there
Breathes his gold-gender'd pestilence afar,
And calls to share the prey his kindred Daemon War.

Robert Southey
Why dost thou beat thy breast and rend thine hair,
And to the deaf sea pour thy frantic cries?
Before the gale the laden vessel flies;
The Heavens all-favoring smile, the breeze is fair;
Hark to the clamors of the exulting crew!
Hark how their thunders mock the patient skies!
Why dost thou shriek and strain thy red-swoln eyes
As the white sail dim lessens from thy view?
Go pine in want and anguish and despair,
There is no mercy found in human-kind--
Go Widow to thy grave and rest thee there!
But may the God of Justice bid the wind
Whelm that curst bark beneath the mountain wave,
And bless with Liberty and Death the Slave!

Robert Southey
Oh he is worn with toil! the big drops run  
Down his dark cheek; hold--hold thy merciless hand,  
Pale tyrant! for beneath thy hard command  
O'erwearied Nature sinks. The scorching Sun,  
As pityless as proud Prosperity,  
Darts on him his full beams; gasping he lies  
Arraigning with his looks the patient skies,  
While that inhuman trader lifts on high  
The mangling scourge. Oh ye who at your ease  
Sip the blood-sweeten'd beverage! thoughts like these  
Haply ye scorn: I thank thee Gracious God!  
That I do feel upon my cheek the glow  
Of indignation, when beneath the rod  
A sable brother writhes in silent woe.

Robert Southey
'Tis night; the mercenary tyrants sleep  
As undisturb'd as Justice! but no more  
The wretched Slave, as on his native shore,  
Rests on his reedy couch: he wakes to weep!  
Tho' thro' the toil and anguish of the day  
No tear escap'd him, not one suffering groan  
Beneath the twisted thong, he weeps alone  
In bitterness; thinking that far away  
Tho' the gay negroes join the midnight song,  
Tho' merriment resounds on Niger's shore,  
She whom he loves far from the chearful throng  
Stands sad, and gazes from her lowly door  
With dim grown eye, silent and woe-begone,  
And weeps for him who will return no more.

Robert Southey
Did then the bold Slave rear at last the Sword
Of Vengeance? drench'd he deep its thirsty blade
In the cold bosom of his tyrant lord?
Oh! who shall blame him? thro' the midnight shade
Still o'er his tortur'd memory rush'd the thought
Of every past delight; his native grove,
Friendship's best joys, and Liberty and Love,
All lost for ever! then Remembrance wrought
His soul to madness; round his restless bed
Freedom's pale spectre stalk'd, with a stern smile
Pointing the wounds of slavery, the while
She shook her chains and hung her sullen head:
No more on Heaven he calls with fruitless breath,
But sweetens with revenge, the draught of death.

Robert Southey
High in the air expos'd the Slave is hung
To all the birds of Heaven, their living food!
He groans not, tho' awaked by that fierce Sun
New torturers live to drink their parent blood!
He groans not, tho' the gorging Vulture tear
The quivering fibre! hither gaze O ye
Who tore this Man from Peace and Liberty!
Gaze hither ye who weigh with scrupulous care
The right and prudent; for beyond the grave
There is another world! and call to mind,
Ere your decrees proclaim to all mankind
Murder is legalized, that there the Slave
Before the Eternal, "thunder-tongued shall plead"
"Against the deep damnation of your deed."

Robert Southey
Porlock

Porlock! thy verdant vale so fair to sight,
Thy lofty hills which fern and furze imbrown,
The waters that roll musically down
Thy woody glens, the traveller with delight
Recalls to memory, and the channel grey
Circling its surges in thy level bay.
Porlock! I shall forget thee not,
Here by the unwelcome summer rain confined;
But often shall hereafter call to mind
How here, a patient prisoner, 'twas my lot
To wear the lonely, lingering close of day,
Making my sonnet by the alehouse fire,
Whilst Idleness and Solitude inspire
Dull rhymes to pass the duller hours away.

Robert Southey
Rudiger - A Ballad

Author Note: Divers Princes and Noblemen being assembled in a beautiful and fair Palace, which was situate upon the river Rhine, they beheld a boat or small barge make toward the shore, drawn by a Swan in a silver chain, the one end fastened about her neck, the other to the vessel; and in it an unknown soldier, a man of a comely personage and graceful presence, who stept upon the shore; which done, the boat guided by the Swan left him, and floated down the river. This man fell afterward in league with a fair gentlewoman, married her, and by her had many children. After some years, the same Swan came with the same barge into the same place; the soldier entering into it, was carried thence the way he came, left wife, children and family, and was never seen amongst them after.

Now who can judge this to be other than one of those spirits that are named Incubi? says Thomas Heywood. I have adopted his story, but not his solution, making the unknown soldier not an evil spirit, but one who had purchased happiness of a malevolent being, by the promised sacrifice of his first-born child.

Bright on the mountain's heathy slope
The day's last splendors shine
And rich with many a radiant hue
Gleam gayly on the Rhine.

And many a one from Waldhurst's walls
Along the river stroll'd,
As ruffling o'er the pleasant stream
The evening gales came cold.

So as they stray'd a swan they saw
Sail stately up and strong,
And by a silver chain she drew
A little boat along,

Whose streamer to the gentle breeze
Long floating fluttered light,
Beneath whose crimson canopy
There lay reclin'd a knight.

With arching crest and swelling breast
On sail'd the stately swan
And lightly up the parting tide
The little boat came on.

And onward to the shore they drew
And leapt to land the knight,
And down the stream the swan-drawn boat
Fell soon beyond the sight.

Was never a Maid in Waldhurst's walls
Might match with Margaret,
Her cheek was fair, her eyes were dark,
Her silken locks like jet.

And many a rich and noble youth
Had strove to win the fair,
But never a rich or noble youth
Could rival Rudiger.

At every tilt and turney he
Still bore away the prize,
For knightly feats superior still
And knightly courtesies.

His gallant feats, his looks, his love,
Soon won the willing fair,
And soon did Margaret become
The wife of Rudiger.

Like morning dreams of happiness
Fast roll'd the months away,
For he was kind and she was kind
And who so blest as they?

Yet Rudiger would sometimes sit
Absorb'd in silent thought
And his dark downward eye would seem
With anxious meaning fraught;
But soon he rais'd his looks again
And smil'd his cares eaway,
And mid the hall of gaiety
Was none like him so gay.

And onward roll'd the waining months,
The hour appointed came,
And Margaret her Rudiger
Hail'd with a father's name.

But silently did Rudiger
The little infant see,
And darkly on the babe he gaz'd
And very sad was he.

And when to bless the little babe
The holy Father came,
To cleanse the stains of sin away
In Christ's redeeming name,

Then did the cheek of Rudiger
Assume a death-pale hue,
And on his clammy forehead stood
The cold convulsive dew;

And faltering in his speech he bade
The Priest the rites delay,
Till he could, to right health restor'd,
Enjoy the festive day.

When o'er the many-tinted sky
He saw the day decline,
He called upon his Margaret
To walk beside the Rhine.

"And we will take the little babe,
"For soft the breeze that blows,
"And the wild murmurs of the stream
"Will lull him to repose."

So forth together did they go,
The evening breeze was mild,
And Rudiger upon his arm
Did pillow the sweet child.

And many a one from Waldhurst's walls
Along the banks did roam,
But soon the evening wind came cold,
And all betook them home.

Yet Rudiger in silent mood
Along the banks would roam,
Nor aught could Margaret prevail
To turn his footsteps home.

"Oh turn thee--turn thee Rudiger,
"The rising mists behold,
"The evening wind is damp and chill,
"The little babe is cold!"

"Now hush thee--hush thee Margaret,
"The mists will do no harm,
"And from the wind the little babe
"Lies sheltered on my arm."

"Oh turn thee--turn thee Rudiger,
"Why onward wilt thou roam?
"The moon is up, the night is cold,
"And we are far from home."

He answered not, for now he saw
A Swan come sailing strong,
And by a silver chain she drew
A little boat along.

To shore they came, and to the boat
Fast leapt he with the child,
And in leapt Margaret--breathless now
And pale with fear and wild.

With arching crest and swelling breast
On sail'd the stately swan,
And lightly down the rapid tide
The little boat went on.
The full-orb'd moon that beam'd around
Pale splendor thro' the night,
Cast through the crimson canopy
A dim-discoloured light.

And swiftly down the hurrying stream
In silence still they sail,
And the long streamer fluttering fast
Flapp'd to the heavy gale.

And he was mute in sullen thought
And she was mute with fear,
Nor sound but of the parting tide
Broke on the listening ear.

The little babe began to cry
And waked his mother's care,
"Now give to me the little babe
"For God's sake, Rudiger!"

"Now hush thee, hush thee Margaret!
"Nor my poor heart distress--
"I do but pay perforce the price
"Of former happiness.

"And hush thee too my little babe,
"Thy cries so feeble cease:
"Lie still, lie still;--a little while
"And thou shalt be at peace."

So as he spake to land they drew,
And swift he stept on shore,
And him behind did Margaret
Close follow evermore.

It was a place all desolate,
Nor house nor tree was there,
And there a rocky mountain rose
Barren, and bleak, and bare.

And at its base a cavern yawn'd,
No eye its depth might view,
For in the moon-beam shining round
That darkness darker grew.

Cold Horror crept thro' Margaret's blood,
Her heart it paus'd with fear,
When Rudiger approach'd the cave
And cried, "lo I am here!"

A deep sepulchral sound the cave
Return'd "lo I am here!"
And black from out the cavern gloom
Two giant arms appear.

And Rudiger approach'd and held
The little infant nigh;
Then Margaret shriek'd, and gather'd then
New powers from agony.

And round the baby fast and firm
Her trembling arms she folds,
And with a strong convulsive grasp
The little infant holds.

"Now help me, Jesus!" loud she cries.
And loud on God she calls;
Then from the grasp of Rudiger
The little infant falls.

And now he shriek'd, for now his frame
The huge black arms clasp'd round,
And dragg'd the wretched Rudiger
Adown the dark profound.

Robert Southey
Sappho - A Monodrama

Argument.

To leap from the promontory of LEUCADIA was believed by the Greeks to be a remedy for hopeless love, if the self-devoted victim escaped with life. Artemisia lost her life in the dangerous experiment: and Sappho is said thus to have perished, in attempting to cure her passion for Phaon.

SAPPHO

(Scene the promontory of Leucadia.)

This is the spot:--'tis here Tradition says
That hopeless Love from this high towering rock
Leaps headlong to Oblivion or to Death.
Oh 'tis a giddy height! my dizzy head
Swims at the precipice--'tis death to fall!

Lie still, thou coward heart! this is no time
To shake with thy strong throbs the frame convuls'd.
To die,--to be at rest--oh pleasant thought!
Perchance to leap and live; the soul all still,
And the wild tempest of the passions husht
In one deep calm; the heart, no more diseas'd
By the quick ague fits of hope and fear,
Quietly cold!

Presiding Powers look down!
In vain to you I pour'd my earnest prayers,
In vain I sung your praises: chiefly thou
VENUS! ungrateful Goddess, whom my lyre
Hymn'd with such full devotion! Lesbian groves,
Witness how often at the languid hour
Of summer twilight, to the melting song
Ye gave your choral echoes! Grecian Maids
Who hear with downcast look and flushing cheek
That lay of love bear witness! and ye Youths,
Who hang enraptur'd on the empashion'd strain
Gazing with eloquent eye, even till the heart
Sinks in the deep delirium! and ye too
Shall witness, unborn Ages! to that song
Of warmest zeal; ah witness ye, how hard,
Her fate who hymn'd the votive hymn in vain!
Ungrateful Goddess! I have hung my lute
In yonder holy pile: my hand no more
Shall wake the melodies that fail'd to move
The heart of Phaon--yet when Rumour tells
How from Leucadia Sappho hurl'd her down
A self-devoted victim--he may melt
Too late in pity, obstinate to love.

Oh haunt his midnight dreams, black NEMESIS!
Whom, self-conceiving in the inmost depths
Of CHAOS, blackest NIGHT long-labouring bore,
When the stern DESTINIES, her elder brood.
And shapeless DEATH, from that more monstrous birth
Leapt shuddering! haunt his slumbers, Nemesis,
Scorch with the fires of Phlegethon his heart,
Till helpless, hopeless, heaven-abandon'd wretch
He too shall seek beneath the unfathom'd deep
To hide him from thy fury.

How the sea
Far distant glitters as the sun-beams smile,
And gayly wanton o'er its heaving breast
Phoebus shines forth, nor wears one cloud to mourn
His votary's sorrows! God of Day shine on--
By Man despis'd, forsaken by the Gods,
I supplicate no more.

How many a day,
O pleasant Lesbos! in thy secret streams
Delighted have I plung'd, from the hot sun
Screen'd by the o'er-arching groves delightful shade,
And pillowed on the waters: now the waves
Shall chill me to repose.

Tremendous height!
Scarce to the brink will these rebellious limbs
Support me. Hark! how the rude deep below
Roars round the rugged base, as if it called
Its long-reluctant victim! I will come.
One leap, and all is over! The deep rest
Of Death, or tranquil Apathy's dead calm
Welcome alike to me. Away vain fears!
Phaon is cold, and why should Sappho live?
Phaon is cold, or with some fairer one--
Thought worse than death!

(She throws herself from the precipice.)

Robert Southey
Sonnet

With wayworn feet a Pilgrim woe-begone
Life's upward road I journeyed many a day,
And hymning many a sad yet soothing lay
Beguil'd my wandering with the charms of song.
Lonely my heart and rugged was my way,
Yet often pluck'd I as I past along
The wild and simple flowers of Poesy,
And as beseem'd the wayward Fancy's child
Entwin'd each random weed that pleas'd mine eye.
Accept the wreath, BELOVED! it is wild
And rudely garlanded; yet scorn not thou
The humble offering, where the sad rue weaves
'Mid gayer flowers its intermingled leaves,
And I have twin'd the myrtle for thy brow.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 01

Go Valentine and tell that lovely maid
Whom Fancy still will pourtray to my sight,
How her Bard lingers in this sullen shade,
This dreary gloom of dull monastic night.
Say that from every joy of life remote
At evening's closing hour he quits the throng,
Listening alone the ring-dove's plaintive note
Who pours like him her solitary song.
Say that her absence calls the sorrowing sigh,
Say that of all her charms he loves to speak,
In fancy feels the magic of her eye,
In fancy views the smile illume her cheek,
Courts the lone hour when Silence stills the grove
And heaves the sigh of Memory and of Love.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 02

Think Valentine, as speeding on thy way
Homeward thou hastest light of heart along,
If heavily creep on one little day
The medley crew of travellers among,
Think on thine absent friend: reflect that here
On Life's sad journey comfortless he roves,
Remote from every scene his heart holds dear,
From him he values, and from her he loves.
And when disgusted with the vain and dull
Whom chance companions of thy way may doom,
Thy mind, of each domestic comfort full,
Turns to itself and meditates on home,
Ah think what Cares must ache within his breast
Who loaths the lingering road, yet has no home of rest!

Robert Southey
Sonnet 03

Not to thee Bedford mournful is the tale
Of days departed. Time in his career
Arraigns not thee that the neglected year
Has past unheeded onward. To the vale
Of years thou journeyest. May the future road
Be pleasant as the past! and on my friend
Friendship and Love, best blessings! still attend,
'Till full of days he reach the calm abode
Where Nature slumbers. Lovely is the age
Of Virtue. With such reverence we behold
The silver hairs, as some grey oak grown old
That whilome mock'd the rushing tempest's rage
Now like the monument of strength decayed
With rarely-sprinkled leaves casting a trembling shade.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 04

What tho' no sculptur'd monument proclaim
Thy fate-yet Albert in my breast I bear
Inshrin'd the sad remembrance; yet thy name
Will fill my throbbing bosom. When DESPAIR
The child of murdered HOPE, fed on thy heart,
Loved honored friend, I saw thee sink forlorn
Pierced to the soul by cold Neglect's keen dart,
And Penury's hard ills, and pitying Scorn,
And the dark spectre of departed JOY
Inhuman MEMORY. Often on thy grave
Love I the solitary hour to employ
Thinking on other days; and heave the sigh
Responsive, when I mark the high grass wave
Sad sounding as the cold breeze rustles by.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 05

Hard by the road, where on that little mound
The high grass rustles to the passing breeze,
The child of Misery rests her head in peace.
Pause there in sadness. That unhallowed ground
Inshrines what once was Isabel. Sleep on
Sleep on, poor Outcast! lovely was thy cheek,
And thy mild eye was eloquent to speak
The soul of Pity. Pale and woe-begone
Soon did thy fair cheek fade, and thine eye weep
The tear of anguish for the babe unborn,
The helpless heir of Poverty and Scorn.
She drank the draught that chill'd her soul to sleep.
I pause and wipe the big drop from mine eye,
Whilst the proud Levite scowls and passes by.

Robert Southey
As thus I bend me o'er thy babbling stream
   And watch thy current, Memory's hand pourtrays
The faint form'd scenes of the departed days,
Like the far forest by the moon's pale beam
Dimly descried yet lovely. I have worn
   Upon thy banks the live-long hour away,
When sportive Childhood wantoned thro' the day,
Joy'd at the opening splendour of the morn,
Or as the twilight darken'd, heaved the sigh
   Thinking of distant home; as down my cheek
At the fond thought slow stealing on, would speak
The silent eloquence of the full eye.
Dim are the long past days, yet still they please
As thy soft sounds half heard, borne on the inconstant breeze.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 07

(to the rainbow)

Mild arch of promise! on the evening sky
Thou shinest fair with many a lovely ray
Each in the other melting. Much mine eye
Delights to linger on thee; for the day,
Changeful and many-weather'd, seem'd to smile
Flashing brief splendor thro' its clouds awhile,
That deepen'd dark anon and fell in rain:
But pleasant is it now to pause, and view
Thy various tints of frail and watery hue,
And think the storm shall not return again.
Such is the smile that Piety bestows
On the good man's pale cheek, when he in peace
Departing gently from a world of woes,
Anticipates the realm where sorrows cease.

Robert Southey
With many a weary step, at length I gain
Thy summit, Lansdown; and the cool breeze plays,
Gratefully round my brow, as hence the gaze
Returns to dwell upon the journeyed plain.
'Twas a long way and tedious! to the eye
Tho fair the extended vale, and fair to view
The falling leaves of many a faded hue,
That eddy in the wild gust moaning by.
Even so it fared with Life! in discontent
Restless thro' Fortune's mingled scenes I went,
Yet wept to think they would return no more!
But cease fond heart in such sad thoughts to roam,
For surely thou ere long shall reach thy home,
And pleasant is the way that lies before.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 09

Fair is the rising morn when o'er the sky
The orient sun expands his roseate ray,
And lovely to the Bard's enthusiast eye
Fades the meek radiance of departing day;
But fairer is the smile of one we love,
Than all the scenes in Nature's ample sway.
And sweeter than the music of the grove,
The voice that bids us welcome. Such delight
EDITH! is mine, escaping to thy sight
From the hard durance of the empty throng.
Too swiftly then towards the silent night
Ye Hours of happiness! ye speed along,
Whilst I, from all the World's cold cares apart,
Pour out the feelings of my burthen'd heart.

Robert Southey
Sonnet 10

How darkly o'er yon far-off mountain frowns
The gather'd tempest! from that lurid cloud
The deep-voiced thunders roll, aweful and loud
Tho' distant; while upon the misty downs
Fast falls in shadowy streaks the pelting rain.
I never saw so terrible a storm!
Perhaps some way-worn traveller in vain
Wraps his torn raiment round his shivering form
Cold even as Hope within him! I the while
Pause me in sadness tho' the sunbeams smile
Cheerily round me. Ah that thus my lot
Might be with Peace and Solitude assign'd,
Where I might from some little quiet cot,
Sigh for the crimes and miseries of mankind!

Robert Southey
The Battle Of Blenheim

It was a summer evening;  
Old Kaspar’s work was done,  
And he before his cottage door  
Was sitting in the sun;  
And by him sported on the green  
His little grandchild Wilhelmine.

She saw her brother Peterkin  
Roll something large and round,  
Which he beside the rivulet  
In playing there had found.  
He came to ask what he had found,  
That was so large, and smooth, and round.

Old Kaspar took it from the boy,  
Who stood expectant by;  
And then the old man shook his head,  
And with a natural sigh,  
“‘Tis some poor fellow’s skull,” said he,  
“Who fell in the great victory.

“I find them in the garden,  
For there’s many here about;  
And often, when I go to plow,  
The plowshare turns them out;  
For many thousand men,” said he,  
“Were slain in that great victory.”

“Now tell us what ’twas all about,”  
Young Peterkin, he cries;  
And little Wilhelmine looks up  
With wonder-waiting eyes;  
“Now tell us all about the war,  
And what they fought each other for.”

“It was the English,” Kaspar cried,  
“Who put the French to rout;  
But what they fought each other for,  
I could not well make out;
But everybody said,” quoth he,  
“That ’twas a famous victory.

“My father lived at Blenheim then,  
Yon little stream hard by;  
They burnt his dwelling to the ground,  
And he was forced to fly;  
So with his wife and child he fled,  
Nor had he where to rest his head.

“With fire and sword the country round  
Was wasted far and wide,  
And many a childing mother then,  
And new-born baby, died;  
But things like that, you know, must be  
At every famous victory.

“They say it was a shocking sight  
After the field was won;  
For many thousand bodies here  
Lay rotting in the sun;  
But things like that, you know, must be  
After a famous victory.

“Great praise the Duke of Marlboro’ won,  
And our good Prince Eugene.”  
“Why, ’twas a very wicked thing!”  
Said little Wilhelmine.  
“Nay, nay, my little girl,” quoth he;  
“It was a famous victory.

“And everybody praised the Duke  
Who this great fight did win.”  
“But what good came of it at last?”  
Quoth little Peterkin.  
“Why, that I cannot tell,” said he;  
“But ’twas a famous victory.”

Robert Southey
'How does the water
Come down at Lodore?'
My little boy asked me
Thus, once on a time;
And moreover he tasked me
To tell him in rhyme.
Anon, at the word,
There first came one daughter,
And then came another,
To second and third
The request of their brother,
And to hear how the water
Comes down at Lodore,
With its rush and its roar,
As many a time
They had seen it before.
So I told them in rhyme,
For of rhymes I had store;
And 'twas in my vocation
For their recreation
That so I should sing;
Because I was Laureate
To them and the King.

From its sources which well
In the tarn on the fell;
From its fountains
In the mountains,
Its rills and its gills;
Through moss and through brake,
It runs and it creeps
For a while, till it sleeps
In its own little lake.
And thence at departing,
Awakening and starting,
It runs through the reeds,
And away it proceeds,
Through meadow and glade,
In sun and in shade,
And through the wood-shelter,
Among crags in its flurry,
Helter-skelter,
Hurry-skurry.
Here it comes sparkling,
And there it lies darkling;
Now smoking and frothing
Its tumult and wrath in,
Till, in this rapid race
On which it is bent,
It reaches the place
Of its steep descent.

The cataract strong
Then plunges along,
Striking and raging
As if a war waging
Its caverns and rocks among;
Rising and leaping,
Sinking and creeping,
Swelling and sweeping,
Showering and springing,
Flying and flinging,
Writhing and ringing,
Eddying and whisking,
Spouting and frisking,
Turning and twisting,
Around and around
With endless rebound:
Smiting and fighting,
A sight to delight in;
Confounding, astounding,
Dizzying and deafening the ear with its sound.

Collecting, projecting,
Receding and speeding,
And shocking and rocking,
And darting and parting,
And threading and spreading,
And whizzing and hissing,
And dripping and skipping,
And hitting and splitting,
And shining and twining,
And rattling and battling,
And shaking and quaking,
And pouring and roaring,
And waving and raving,
And tossing and crossing,
And flowing and going,
And running and stunning,
And foaming and roaming,
And dinning and spinning,
And dropping and hopping,
And working and jerking,
And gurgling and struggling,
And heaving and cleaving,
And moaning and groaning;

And glittering and frittering,
And gathering and feathering,
And whitening and brightening,
And quivering and shivering,
And hurrying and skurrying,
And thundering and floundering;

Dividing and gliding and sliding,
And falling and brawling and sprawling,
And driving and riving and striving,
And sprinkling and twinkling and wrinkling,
And sounding and bounding and rounding,
And bubbling and troubling and doubling,
And grumbling and rumbling and tumbling,
And clattering and battering and shattering;

Retreating and beating and meeting and sheeting,
Delaying and straying and playing and spraying,
Advancing and prancing and glancing and dancing,
Recoiling, turmoiling and toiling and boiling,
And gleaming and streaming and steaming and beaming,
And rushing and flushing and brushing and gushing,
And flapping and rapping and clapping and slapping,
And curling and whirling and purling and twirling,
And thumping and plumping and bumping and jumping,
And dashing and flashing and splashing and clashing;
And so never ending, but always descending,
Sounds and motions for ever and ever are blending
All at once and all o'er, with a mighty uproar, -
And this way the water comes down at Lodore.

Robert Southey
And wherefore do the Poor complain?
The rich man asked of me,--
Come walk abroad with me, I said
And I will answer thee.

Twas evening and the frozen streets
Were cheerless to behold,
And we were wrapt and coated well,
And yet we were a-cold.

We met an old bare-headed man,
His locks were few and white,
I ask'd him what he did abroad
In that cold winter's night:

'Twas bitter keen indeed, he said,
But at home no fire had he,
And therefore, he had come abroad
To ask for charity.

We met a young bare-footed child,
And she begg'd loud and bold,
I ask'd her what she did abroad
When the wind it blew so cold;

She said her father was at home
And he lay sick a-bed,
And therefore was it she was sent
Abroad to beg for bread.

We saw a woman sitting down
Upon a stone to rest,
She had a baby at her back
And another at her breast;

I ask'd her why she loiter'd there
When the wind it was so chill;
She turn'd her head and bade the child
That scream'd behind be still.
She told us that her husband served
A soldier, far away,
And therefore to her parish she
Was begging back her way.

We met a girl; her dress was loose
And sunken was her eye,
Who with the wanton's hollow voice
Address'd the passers by;

I ask'd her what there was in guilt
That could her heart allure
To shame, disease, and late remorse?
She answer'd, she was poor.

I turn'd me to the rich man then
For silently stood he,
You ask'd me why the Poor complain,
And these have answer'd thee.

Robert Southey
The Cross Roads

There was an old man breaking stones
To mend the turnpike way,
He sat him down beside a brook
And out his bread and cheese he took,
For now it was mid-day.

He lent his back against a post,
His feet the brook ran by;
And there were water-cresses growing,
And pleasant was the water's flowing
For he was hot and dry.

A soldier with his knapsack on
Came travelling o'er the down,
The sun was strong and he was tired,
And of the old man he enquired
How far to Bristol town.

Half an hour's walk for a young man
By lanes and fields and stiles.
But you the foot-path do not know,
And if along the road you go
Why then 'tis three good miles.

The soldier took his knapsack off
For he was hot and dry;
And out his bread and cheese he took
And he sat down beside the brook
To dine in company.

Old friend! in faith, the soldier says
I envy you almost;
My shoulders have been sorely prest
And I should like to sit and rest,
My back against that post.

In such a sweltering day as this
A knapsack is the devil!
And if on t'other side I sat
It would not only spoil our chat  
But make me seem uncivil.

The old man laugh'd and moved. I wish  
It were a great-arm'd chair!  
But this may help a man at need;  
And yet it was a cursed deed  
That ever brought it there.

There's a poor girl lies buried here  
Beneath this very place.  
The earth upon her corpse is prest  
This stake is driven into her breast  
And a stone is on her face.

The soldier had but just lent back  
And now he half rose up.  
There's sure no harm in dining here,  
My friend? and yet to be sincere  
I should not like to sup.

God rest her! she is still enough  
Who sleeps beneath our feet!  
The old man cried. No harm I trow  
She ever did herself, tho' now  
She lies where four roads meet.

I have past by about that hour  
When men are not most brave,  
It did not make my heart to fail,  
And I have heard the nightingale  
Sing sweetly on her grave.

I have past by about that hour  
When Ghosts their freedom have,  
But there was nothing here to fright,  
And I have seen the glow-worm's light  
Shine on the poor girl's grave.

There's one who like a Christian lies  
Beneath the church-tree's shade;  
I'd rather go a long mile round
Than pass at evening thro' the ground
Wherein that man is laid.

There's one that in the church-yard lies
For whom the bell did toll;
He lies in consecrated ground,
But for all the wealth in Bristol town
I would not be with his soul!

Did'st see a house below the hill
That the winds and the rains destroy?
'Twas then a farm where he did dwell,
And I remember it full well
When I was a growing boy.

And she was a poor parish girl
That came up from the west,
From service hard she ran away
And at that house in evil day
Was taken in to rest.

The man he was a wicked man
And an evil life he led;
Rage made his cheek grow deadly white
And his grey eyes were large and light,
And in anger they grew red.

The man was bad, the mother worse,
Bad fruit of a bad stem,
'Twould make your hair to stand-on-end
If I should tell to you my friend
The things that were told of them!

Did'st see an out-house standing by?
The walls alone remain;
It was a stable then, but now
Its mossy roof has fallen through
All rotted by the rain.

The poor girl she had serv'd with them
Some half-a-year, or more,
When she was found hung up one day
Stiff as a corpse and cold as clay
Behind that stable door!

It is a very lonesome place,
No hut or house is near;
Should one meet a murderer there alone
'Twere vain to scream, and the dying groan
Would never reach mortal ear.

And there were strange reports about
That the coroner never guest.
So he decreed that she should lie
Where four roads meet in infamy,
With a stake drove in her breast.

Upon a board they carried her
To the place where four roads met,
And I was one among the throng
That hither followed them along,
I shall never the sight forget!

They carried her upon a board
In the cloaths in which she died;
I saw the cap blow off her head,
Her face was of a dark dark red
Her eyes were starting wide:

I think they could not have been closed
So widely did they strain.
I never saw so dreadful a sight,
And it often made me wake at night,
For I saw her face again.

They laid her here where four roads meet.
Beneath this very place,
The earth upon her corpse was prest,
This post is driven into her breast,
And a stone is on her face.

Robert Southey
The Curse Of Kehama

I charm thy life,
From the weapons of strife,
From stone and from wood,
From fire and from flood,
From the serpent’s tooth,
And the beast of blood.
From sickness I charm thee,
And time shall not harm thee;
But earth, which is mine,
Its fruits shall deny thee;
And water shall hear me,
And know thee and flee thee:
And the winds shall not touch thee
When they pass by thee,
And the dews shall not wet thee
When they fall nigh thee.
And thou shalt seek death,
To release thee, in vain;
Thou shalt live in thy pain,
While Kehama shall reign,
With a fire in thy heart,
And a fire in thy brain.
And sleep shall obey me,
And visit thee never,
And the curse shall be on thee
Forever and ever.

Robert Southey
The Holly-Tree

O reader! hast thou ever stood to see
The Holly-tree?
The eye that contemplates it well perceives
Its glossy leaves
Ordered by an Intelligence so wise
As might confound the Atheist's sophistries.

Below, a circling fence, its leaves are seen,
Wrinkled and keen;
No grazing cattle, through their prickly round,
Can reach to wound;
But, as they grow where nothing is to fear,
Smooth and unarmed the pointless leaves appear.

I love to view these things with curious eyes,
And moralize;
And in this wisdom of the Holly-tree
Can emblem see
Wherewith, perchance, to make a pleasant rhyme, -
One which may profit in the after-time.

Thus, though abroad, perchance, I might appear
Harsh and austere;
To those who on my leisure would intrude,
Reserved and rude;
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be,
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree.

And should my youth - as youth is apt, I know, -
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I, day by day,
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the Holly-tree.

And as, when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green,
The Holly-leaves their fadeless hues display
Less bright than they;
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,
What then so cheerful as the Holly-tree? -

So, serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng;
So would I seem, amid the young and gay,
More grave than they;
That in my age as cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the Holly-tree.

Robert Southey
The Old Man's Comforts And How He Gained Them

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
The few locks which are left you are grey;
You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,
Now tell me the reason I pray.

In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
I remember'd that youth would fly fast,
And abused not my health and my vigour at first
That I never might need them at last.

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
And pleasures with youth pass away,
And yet you lament not the days that are gone,
Now tell me the reason I pray.

In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
I remember'd that youth could not last;
I thought of the future whatever I did,
That I never might grieve for the past.

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
And life must be hastening away;
You are cheerful, and love to converse upon death!
Now tell me the reason I pray.

I am cheerful, young man, Father William replied,
Let the cause thy attention engage;
In the days of my youth I remember'd my God!
And He hath not forgotten my age.

Robert Southey
The Pauper's Funeral

What! and not one to heave the pious sigh!
Not one whose sorrow-swole and aching eye
For social scenes, for life's endearments fled,
Shall drop a tear and dwell upon the dead!
Poor wretched Outcast! I will weep for thee,
And sorrow for forlorn humanity.
Yes I will weep, but not that thou art come
To the stern Sabbath of the silent tomb:
For squalid Want, and the black scorpion Care,
Heart-withering fiends! shall never enter there.
I sorrow for the ills thy life has known
As thro' the world's long pilgrimage, alone,
Haunted by Poverty and woe-begone,
Unloved, unfriended, thou didst journey on:
Thy youth in ignorance and labour past,
And thine old age all barrenness and blast!
Hard was thy Fate, which, while it doom'd to woe,
Denied thee wisdom to support the blow;
And robb'd of all its energy thy mind,
Ere yet it cast thee on thy fellow-kind,
Abject of thought, the victim of distress,
To wander in the world's wide wilderness.

Poor Outcast sleep in peace! the wintry storm
Blows bleak no more on thine unshelter'd form;
Thy woes are past; thou restest in the tomb;--
I pause--and ponder on the days to come.

Robert Southey
The Race Of Banquo

Fly, son of Banquo! Fleance, fly!
Leave thy guilty sire to die.
O'er the heath the stripling fled,
The wild storm howling round his head.
Fear mightier thro' the shades of night
Urged his feet, and wing'd his flight;
And still he heard his father cry
Fly, son of Banquo! Fleance, fly.

Fly, son of Banquo! Fleance, fly
Leave thy guilty sire to die.
On every blast was heard the moan
The anguish'd shriek, the death-fraught groan;
Loathly night-hags join the yell
And see--the midnight rites of Hell.

Forms of magic! spare my life!
Shield me from the murderer's knife!
Before me dim in lurid light
Float the phantoms of the night--
Behind I hear my Father cry,
Fly, son of Banquo--Fleance, fly!

Parent of the sceptred race,
Fearless tread the circled space:
Fearless Fleance venture near--
Sire of monarchs--spurn at fear.

Sisters with prophetic breath
Pour we now the dirge of Death!

Robert Southey
The Rose

Nay EDITH! spare the rose!--it lives--it lives,
It feels the noon-tide sun, and drinks refresh'd
The dews of night; let not thy gentle hand
Tear sunder its life-fibres and destroy
The sense of being!--why that infidel smile?
Come, I will bribe thee to be merciful,
And thou shalt have a tale of other times,
For I am skill'd in legendary lore,
So thou wilt let it live. There was a time
Ere this, the freshest sweetest flower that blooms,
Bedeck'd the bowers of earth. Thou hast not heard
How first by miracle its fragrant leaves
Spread to the sun their blushing loveliness.

There dwelt at Bethlehem a Jewish maid
And Zillah was her name, so passing fair
That all Judea spake the damsel's praise.
He who had seen her eyes' dark radiance
How quick it spake the soul, and what a soul
Beam'd in its mild effulgence, woe was he!
For not in solitude, for not in crowds,
Might he escape remembrance, or avoid
Her imaged form that followed every where,
And fill'd the heart, and fix'd the absent eye.
Woe was he, for her bosom own'd no love
Save the strong ardours of religious zeal,
For Zillah on her God had centered all
Her spirit's deep affections. So for her
Her tribes-men sigh'd in vain, yet reverenced
The obdurate virtue that destroyed their hopes.

One man there was, a vain and wretched man,
Who saw, desired, despair'd, and hated her.
His sensual eye had gloated on her cheek
Even till the flush of angry modesty
Gave it new charms, and made him gloat the more.
She loath'd the man, for Hamuel's eye was bold,
And the strong workings of brute selfishness
Had moulded his broad features; and she fear'd
The bitterness of wounded vanity
That with a fiendish hue would overcast
His faint and lying smile. Nor vain her fear,
For Hamuel vowed revenge and laid a plot
Against her virgin fame. He spread abroad
Whispers that travel fast, and ill reports
That soon obtain belief; that Zillah's eye
When in the temple heaven-ward it was rais'd
Did swim with rapturous zeal, but there were those
Who had beheld the enthusiast's melting glance
With other feelings fill'd; that 'twas a task
Of easy sort to play the saint by day
Before the public eye, but that all eyes
Were closed at night; that Zillah's life was foul,
Yea forfeit to the law.

Shame--shame to man
That he should trust so easily the tongue
That stabs another's fame! the ill report
Was heard, repeated, and believed,—and soon,
For Hamuel by most damned artifice
Produced such semblances of guilt, the Maid
Was judged to shameful death.

Without the walls
There was a barren field; a place abhorr'd,
For it was there where wretched criminals
Were done to die; and there they built the stake,
And piled the fuel round, that should consume
The accused Maid, abandon'd, as it seem'd,
By God and man. The assembled Bethlemites
Beheld the scene, and when they saw the Maid
Bound to the stake, with what calm holiness
She lifted up her patient looks to Heaven,
They doubted of her guilt. With other thoughts
Stood Hamuel near the pile, him savage joy
Led thitherward, but now within his heart
Unwonted feelings stirr'd, and the first pangs
Of wakening guilt, anticipating Hell.

The eye of Zillah as it glanced around
Fell on the murderer once, but not in wrath;
And therefore like a dagger it had fallen,
Had struck into his soul a cureless wound.
Conscience! thou God within us! not in the hour
Of triumph, dost thou spare the guilty wretch,
Not in the hour of infamy and death
Forsake the virtuous! they draw near the stake--
And lo! the torch! hold hold your erring hands!
Yet quench the rising flames!--they rise! they spread!
They reach the suffering Maid! oh God protect
The innocent one!
They rose, they spread, they raged--
The breath of God went forth; the ascending fire
Beneath its influence bent, and all its flames
In one long lightning flash collecting fierce,
Darted and blasted Hamuel--him alone.
Hark--what a fearful scream the multitude
Pour forth!--and yet more miracles! the stake
Buds out, and spreads its light green leaves and bowers
The innocent Maid, and roses bloom around,
Now first beheld since Paradise was lost,
And fill with Eden odours all the air.

Robert Southey
He stopt,—it surely was a groan
That from the hovel came!
He stopt and listened anxiously
Again it sounds the same.

It surely from the hovel comes!
And now he hastens there,
And thence he hears the name of Christ
Amidst a broken prayer.

He entered in the hovel now,
A sailor there he sees,
His hands were lifted up to Heaven
And he was on his knees.

Nor did the Sailor so intent
His entering footsteps heed,
But now the Lord's prayer said, and now
His half-forgotten creed.

And often on his Saviour call'd
With many a bitter groan,
In such heart-anguish as could spring
From deepest guilt alone.

He ask'd the miserable man
Why he was kneeling there,
And what the crime had been that caus'd
The anguish of his prayer.

Oh I have done a wicked thing!
It haunts me night and day,
And I have sought this lonely place
Here undisturb'd to pray.

I have no place to pray on board
So I came here alone,
That I might freely kneel and pray,
And call on Christ and groan.
If to the main-mast head I go,
The wicked one is there,
From place to place, from rope to rope,
He follows every where.

I shut my eyes,--it matters not--
Still still the same I see,--
And when I lie me down at night
'Tis always day with me.

He follows follows every where,
And every place is Hell!
O God--and I must go with him
In endless fire to dwell.

He follows follows every where,
He's still above--below,
Oh tell me where to fly from him!
Oh tell me where to go!

But tell me, quoth the Stranger then,
What this thy crime hath been,
So haply I may comfort give
To one that grieves for sin.

O I have done a cursed deed
The wretched man replies,
And night and day and every where
'Tis still before my eyes.

I sail'd on board a Guinea-man
And to the slave-coast went;
Would that the sea had swallowed me
When I was innocent!

And we took in our cargo there,
Three hundred negro slaves,
And we sail'd homeward merrily
Over the ocean waves.

But some were sulky of the slaves
And would not touch their meat,
So therefore we were forced by threats
And blows to make them eat.

One woman sulkier than the rest
Would still refuse her food,--
O Jesus God! I hear her cries--
I see her in her blood!

The Captain made me tie her up
And flog while he stood by,
And then he curs'd me if I staid
My hand to hear her cry.

She groan'd, she shriek'd--I could not spare
For the Captain he stood by--
Dear God! that I might rest one night
From that poor woman's cry!

She twisted from the blows--her blood
Her mangled flesh I see--
And still the Captain would not spare--
Oh he was worse than me!

She could not be more glad than I
When she was taken down,
A blessed minute--'twas the last
That I have ever known!

I did not close my eyes all night,
Thinking what I had done;
I heard her groans and they grew faint
About the rising sun.

She groan'd and groan'd, but her groans grew
Fainter at morning tide,
Fainter and fainter still they came
Till at the noon she died.

They flung her overboard;--poor wretch
She rested from her pain,--
But when--O Christ! O blessed God!
Shall I have rest again!

I saw the sea close over her,  
Yet she was still in sight;  
I see her twisting every where;  
I see her day and night.

Go where I will, do what I can  
The wicked one I see--  
Dear Christ have mercy on my soul,  
O God deliver me!

To morrow I set sail again  
Not to the Negroe shore--  
Wretch that I am I will at least  
Commit that sin no more.

O give me comfort if you can--  
Oh tell me where to fly--  
And bid me hope, if there be hope,  
For one so lost as I.

Poor wretch, the stranger he replied,  
Put thou thy trust in heaven,  
And call on him for whose dear sake  
All sins shall be forgiven.

This night at least is thine, go thou  
And seek the house of prayer,  
There shalt thou hear the word of God  
And he will help thee there!

Robert Southey
The Soldier's Wife

Weary way-wanderer languid and sick at heart
Travelling painfully over the rugged road,
Wild-visag'd Wanderer! ah for thy heavy chance!

Sorely thy little one drags by thee bare-footed,
Cold is the baby that hangs at thy bending back
Meagre and livid and screaming its wretchedness.

Woe-begone mother, half anger, half agony,
As over thy shoulder thou lookest to hush the babe,
Bleakly the blinding snow beats in thy hagged face.

Thy husband will never return from the war again,
Cold is thy hopeless heart even as Charity--
Cold are thy famish'd babes--God help thee, widow'd One!

Robert Southey
The Surgeon's Warning

The Doctor whispered to the Nurse
And the Surgeon knew what he said,
And he grew pale at the Doctor's tale
And trembled in his sick bed.

Now fetch me my brethren and fetch them with speed
The Surgeon affrighted said,
The Parson and the Undertaker,
Let them hasten or I shall be dead.

The Parson and the Undertaker
They hastily came complying,
And the Surgeon's Prentices ran up stairs
When they heard that their master was dying.

The Prentices all they entered the room
By one, by two, by three,
With a sly grin came Joseph in,
First of the company.

The Surgeon swore as they enter'd his door,
'Twas fearful his oaths to hear,—
Now send these scoundrels to the Devil,
For God's sake my brethren dear.

He foam'd at the mouth with the rage he felt
And he wrinkled his black eye-brow,
That rascal Joe would be at me I know,
But zounds let him spare me now.

Then out they sent the Prentices,
The fit it left him weak,
He look'd at his brothers with ghastly eyes,
And faintly struggled to speak.

All kinds of carcasses I have cut up,
And the judgment now must be—
But brothers I took care of you,
So pray take care of me!
I have made candles of infants fat
The Sextons have been my slaves,
I have bottled babes unborn, and dried
Hearts and livers from rifled graves.

And my Prentices now will surely come
And carve me bone from bone,
And I who have rifled the dead man's grave
Shall never have rest in my own.

Bury me in lead when I am dead,
My brethren I intreat,
And see the coffin weigh'd I beg
Lest the Plumber should be a cheat.

And let it be solder'd closely down
Strong as strong can be I implore,
And put it in a patent coffin,
That I may rise no more.

If they carry me off in the patent coffin
Their labour will be in vain,
Let the Undertaker see it bought of the maker
Who lives by St. Martin's lane.

And bury me in my brother's church
For that will safer be,
And I implore lock the church door
And pray take care of the key.

And all night long let three stout men
The vestry watch within,
To each man give a gallon of beer
And a keg of Holland's gin;

Powder and ball and blunder-buss
To save me if he can,
And eke five guineas if he shoot
A resurrection man.

And let them watch me for three weeks
My wretched corpse to save,
For then I think that I may stink
Enough to rest in my grave.

The Surgeon laid him down in his bed,
His eyes grew deadly dim,
Short came his breath and the struggle of death
Distorted every limb.

They put him in lead when he was dead
And shrouded up so neat,
And they the leaden coffin weigh
Lest the Plumber should be a cheat.

They had it solder'd closely down
And examined it o'er and o'er,
And they put it in a patent coffin
That he might rise no more.

For to carry him off in a patent coffin
Would they thought be but labour in vain,
So the Undertaker saw it bought of the maker
Who lives by St. Martin's lane.

In his brother's church they buried him
That safer he might be,
They lock'd the door and would not trust
The Sexton with the key.

And three men in the vestry watch
To save him if they can,
And should he come there to shoot they swear
A resurrection man.

And the first night by lanthorn light
Thro' the church-yard as they went,
A guinea of gold the sexton shewed
That Mister Joseph sent.

But conscience was tough, it was not enough
And their honesty never swerved,
And they bade him go with Mister Joe
To the Devil as he deserved.

So all night long by the vestry fire
They quaff'd their gin and ale,
And they did drink as you may think
And told full many a tale.

The second night by lanthorn light
Thro' the church-yard as they went,
He whisper'd anew and shew'd them two
That Mister Joseph sent.

The guineas were bright and attracted their sight
They look'd so heavy and new,
And their fingers itch'd as they were bewitch'd
And they knew not what to do.

But they waver'd not long for conscience was strong
And they thought they might get more,
And they refused the gold, but not
So rudely as before.

So all night long by the vestry fire
They quaff'd their gin and ale,
And they did drink as you may think
And told full many a tale.

The third night as by lanthorn light
Thro' the church-yard they went,
He bade them see and shew'd them three
That Mister Joseph sent.

They look'd askance with eager glance,
The guineas they shone bright,
For the Sexton on the yellow gold
Let fall his lanthorn light.

And he look'd sly with his roguish eye
And gave a well-tim'd wink,
And they could not stand the sound in his hand
For he made the guineas chink.
And conscience late that had such weight,
All in a moment fails,
For well they knew that it was true
A dead man told no tales,

And they gave all their powder and ball
And took the gold so bright,
And they drank their beer and made good cheer,
Till now it was midnight.

Then, tho' the key of the church door
Was left with the Parson his brother,
It opened at the Sexton's touch--
Because he had another.

And in they go with that villain Joe
To fetch the body by night,
And all the church look'd dismally
By his dark lanthorn light.

They laid the pick-axe to the stones
And they moved them soon asunder.
They shovell'd away the hard-prest clay
And came to the coffin under.

They burst the patent coffin first
And they cut thro' the lead,
And they laugh'd aloud when they saw the shroud
Because they had got at the dead.

And they allowed the Sexton the shroud
And they put the coffin back,
And nose and knees they then did squeeze
The Surgeon in a sack.

The watchmen as they past along
Full four yards off could smell,
And a curse bestowed upon the load
So disagreeable.

So they carried the sack a-pick-a-back
And they carv'd him bone from bone,
But what became of the Surgeon's soul
Was never to mortal known.

Robert Southey
The Triumph Of Woman

Glad as the weary traveller tempest-tost
To reach secure at length his native coast,
Who wandering long o'er distant lands has sped,
The night-blast wildly howling round his head,
Known all the woes of want, and felt the storm
Of the bleak winter parch his shivering form;
The journey o'er and every peril past
Beholds his little cottage-home at last,
And as he sees afar the smoke curl slow,
Feels his full eyes with transport overflow:
So from the scene where Death and Anguish reign,
And Vice and Folly drench with blood the plain,
Joyful I turn, to sing how Woman's praise
Avail'd again Jerusalem to raise,
Call'd forth the sanction of the Despot's nod,
And freed the nation best-belov'd of God.

Darius gives the feast: to Persia's court,
Awed by his will, the obedient throng resort,
Attending Satraps swell the Prince's pride,
And vanquish'd Monarchs grace their Conqueror's side.
No more the Warrior wears the garb of war,
Sharps the strong steel, or mounts the scythed car;
No more Judaea's sons dejected go,
And hang the head and heave the sigh of woe.
From Persia's rugged hills descend the train.
From where Orontes foams along the plain,
From where Choaspes rolls his royal waves,
And India sends her sons, submissive slaves.
Thy daughters Babylon to grace the feast
Weave the loose robe, and paint the flowery vest,
With roseate wreaths they braid the glossy hair.
They tinge the cheek which Nature form'd so fair,
Learn the soft step, the soul-subduing glance,
Melt in the song, and swim adown the dance.
Exalted on the Monarch's golden throne
In royal state the fair Apame shone;

Her form of majesty, her eyes of fire
Chill with respect, or kindle with desire.
The admiring multitude her charms adore,
And own her worthy of the crown she wore.

Now on his couch reclin'd Darius lay,
Tir'd with the toilsome pleasures of the day;
Without Judaea's watchful sons await
To guard the sleeping pageant of the state.
Three youths were these of Judah's royal race,
Three youths whom Nature dower'd with every grace,
To each the form of symmetry she gave,
And haughty Genius curs'd each favorite slave;
These fill'd the cup, around the Monarch kept,
Serv'd as he spake, and guard'd whilst he slept.

Yet oft for Salem's hallowed towers laid low
The sigh would heave, the unbidden tear would flow;
And when the dull and wearying round of Power
Allowed Zorobabel one vacant hour,
He lov'd on Babylon's high wall to roam,
And stretch the gaze towards his distant home,
Or on Euphrates' willowy banks reclin'd
Hear the sad harp moan fitful to the wind.

As now the perfum'd lamps stream wide their light,
And social converse chears the livelong night,
Thus spake Zorobabel, "too long in vain
"For Sion desolate her sons complain;
"In anguish worn the joyless years lag slow,
"And these proud conquerors mock their captive's woe.
"Whilst Cyrus triumph'd here in victor state
"A brighter prospect chear'd our exil'd fate,
"Our sacred walls again he bade us raise,
"And to Jehovah rear the pile of praise.
"Quickly these fond hopes faded from our eyes,
"As the frail sun that gilds the wintry skies,
"And spreads a moment's radiance o'er the plain,
"Soon hid by clouds that dim the scene again.

"Opprest by Artaxerxes' jealous reign
"We vainly pleaded here, and wept in vain.
"Now when Darius, chief of mild command,
"Bids joy and pleasure fill the festive land,
"Still shall we droop the head in sullen grief,
"And sternly silent shun to seek relief?
"What if amid the Monarch's mirthful throng
"Our harps should echo to the cheerful song?

"Fair is the occasion," thus the one replied,
"And now let all our tuneful skill be tried.
"Whilst the gay courtiers quaff the smiling bowl,
"And wine's strong fumes inspire the madden'd soul,
"Where all around is merriment, be mine
"To strike the lute, and praise the power of Wine.

"And whilst" his friend replied in state alone
"Lord of the earth Darius fills the throne,
"Be yours the mighty power of Wine to sing,
"My lute shall sound the praise of Persia's King."

To them Zorobabel, on themes like these
"Seek ye the Monarch of Mankind to please;
"To Wine superior or to Power's strong arms,
"Be mine to sing resistless Woman's charms.
"To him victorious in the rival lays
"Shall just Darius give the meed of praise;
"The purple robe his honor'd frame shall fold,
"The beverage sparkle in his cup of gold;
"A golden couch support his bed of rest,
"The chain of honor grace his favor'd breast;
"His the soft turban, his the car's array
"O'er Babylon's high wall to wheel its way;
"And for his wisdom seated on the throne,
"For the KING'S COUSIN shall the Bard be known."

Intent they meditate the future lay,
And watch impatient for the dawn of day.
The morn rose clear, and shrill were heard the flute,
The cornet, sackbut, dulcimer, and lute;
To Babylon's gay streets the throng resort,
Swarm thro' the gates, and fill the festive court.
High on his throne Darius tower'd in pride,
The fair Apame grac'd the Sovereign's side;
And now she smil'd, and now with mimic frown
Placed on her brow the Monarch's sacred crown.
In transport o'er her faultless form he bends,
Loves every look, and every act commends.

And now Darius bids the herald call
Judaea's Bard to grace the thronging hall.
Hush'd is each sound--the attending crowd are mute,
The Hebrew lightly strikes the cheerful lute:

When the Traveller on his way,
Who has toil'd the livelong day,
Feels around on every side
The chilly mists of eventide,
Fatigued and faint his wearied mind
Recurs to all he leaves behind;
He thinks upon the well-trimm'd hearth,
The evening hour of social mirth,
And her who at departing day
Weeps for her husband far away.
Oh give to him the flowing bowl,
Bid it renovate his soul;
Then shall sorrow sink to sleep,
And he who wept, no more shall weep;
For his care-clouded brow shall clear,
And his glad eye shall sparkle thro' the tear.

When the poor man heart-opprest
Betakes him to his evening rest,
And worn with labour thinks in sorrow
Of the labor of to-morrow;
When sadly musing on his lot
He hies him to his joyless cot,
And loathes to meet his children there,
The rivals for his scanty fare:
Oh give to him the flowing bowl,
Bid it renovate his soul;
The generous juice with magic power
Shall cheat with happiness the hour,
And with each warm affection fill
The heart by want and wretchedness made chill.

When, at the dim close of day,
The Captive loves alone to stray
Along the haunts recluse and rude
Of sorrow and of solitude;
When he sits with moveless eye
To mark the lingering radiance die,
And lets distemper'd Fancy roam
Amid the ruins of his home,--
Oh give to him the flowing bowl,
Bid it renovate his soul;
The bowl shall better thoughts bestow,
And lull to rest his wakeful woe,
And Joy shall bless the evening hour,
And make the Captive Fortune's conqueror.

When the wearying cares of state
Oppress the Monarch with their weight,
When from his pomp retir'd alone
He feels the duties of the throne,
Feels that the multitude below
Depend on him for weal or woe;
When his powerful will may bless
A realm with peace and happiness,
Or with desolating breath
Breathe ruin round, and woe, and death:
Oh give to him the flowing bowl,
Bid it humanize his soul;
He shall not feel the empire's weight,
He shall not feel the cares of state,
The bowl shall each dark thought beguile,
And Nations live and prosper from his smile.

Husht was the lute, the Hebrew ceas'd the song;
Long peals of plaudits echoed from the throng;
Each tongue the liberal words of praise repaid,
On every cheek a smile applauding play'd;
The rival Bard advanced, he struck the string,
And pour'd the loftier song to Persia's King.

Why should the wearying cares of state
Oppress the Monarch with their weight?
Alike to him if Peace shall bless
The multitude with happiness;
Alike to him if frenzied War
Careers triumphant on the embattled plain,
And rolling on o'er myriads slain,
With gore and wounds shall clog his scythed car.
What tho' the tempest rage! no sound
Of the deep thunder shakes his distant throne,
And the red flash that spreads destruction round,
Reflects a glorious splendour on the Crown.

Where is the Man who with ennobling pride
Beholds not his own nature? where is he
Who but with deep amazement awe allied
Must muse the mysteries of the human mind,
   The miniature of Deity.
For Man the vernal clouds descending
   Shower down their fertilizing rain,
For Man the ripen'd harvest bending
Waves with soft murmur o'er the plenteous plain.
   He spreads the sail on high,
The rude gale wafts him o'er the main;
For him the winds of Heaven subservient blow,
Earth teems for him, for him the waters flow,
He thinks, and wills, and acts, a Deity below!

Where is the King who with elating pride
Sees not this Man--this godlike Man his Slave?
Mean are the mighty by the Monarch's side,
Alike the wife, alike the brave
With timid step and pale, advance,
And tremble at the royal glance;
Suspended millions watch his breath
Whose smile is happiness, whose frown is death.

Why goes the Peasant from that little cot,
Where PEACE and LOVE have blest his humble life?
In vain his agonizing wife
With tears bedews her husband's face,
And clasps him in a long and last embrace;
In vain his children round his bosom creep,
And weep to see their mother weep,
Fettering their father with their little arms;
What are to him the wars alarms?
What are to him the distant foes?
He at the earliest dawn of day
   To daily labor went his way;
   And when he saw the sun decline,
   He sat in peace beneath his vine:--
The king commands, the peasant goes,
From all he lov'd on earth he flies,
And for his monarch toils, and fights, and bleeds, and dies.

What tho' yon City's castled wall
   Casts o'er the darken'd plain its crested shade?
What tho' their Priests in earnest terror call
   On all their host of Gods to aid?
Vain is the bulwark, vain the tower;
   In vain her gallant youths expose
Their breasts, a bulwark, to the foes.
In vain at that tremendous hour,
Clasp'd in the savage soldier's reeking arms,
   Shrieks to tame Heaven the violated Maid.
By the rude hand of Ruin scatter'd round
Their moss-grown towers shall spread the desart ground.
   Low shall the mouldering palace lie,
Amid the princely halls the grass wave high,
And thro' the shatter'd roof descend the inclement sky.

   Gay o'er the embattled plain
Moves yonder warrior train,
Their banners wanton on the morning gale!
   Full on their bucklers beams the rising ray,
Their glittering helmets flash a brighter day,
The shout of war rings echoing o'er the vale:
Far reaches as the aching eye can strain
   The splendid horror of their wide array.
Ah! not in vain expectant, o'er
Their glorious pomp the Vultures soar!
Amid the Conqueror's palace high
   Shall sound the song of victory:
Long after journeying o'er the plain
The Traveller shall with startled eye
See their white bones then blanched by many a winter sky.

Lord of the Earth! we will not raise
The Temple to thy bounded praise.
For thee no victim need expire,
For thee no altar blaze with hallowed fire!
The burning city flames for thee--
Thine altar is the field of victory!
   Thy sacred Majesty to bless
Man a self-offer'd victim freely flies;
   To thee he sacrifices Happiness,
And Peace, and Love's endearing ties,
To thee a Slave he lives, to thee a Slave he dies.

Husht was the lute, the Hebrew ceas'd to sing;
The shout rush'd forth--for ever live the King!
Loud was the uproar, as when Rome's decree
Pronounc'd Achaia once again was free;
Assembled Greece enrapt with fond belief
Heard the false boon, and bless'd the villain Chief;
Each breast with Freedom's holy ardor glows,
From every voice the cry of rapture rose;
Their thundering clamors burst the astonish'd sky,
And birds o'erpassing hear, and drop, and die.
Thus o'er the Persian dome their plaudits ring,
And the high hall re-echoed--live the King!
The Mutes bow'd reverent down before their Lord,
The assembled Satraps envied and ador'd,
Joy sparkled in the Monarch's conscious eyes,
And his pleas'd pride already doom'd the prize.

Silent they saw Zorobabel advance:
Quick on Apame shot his timid glance,
With downward eye he paus'd a moment mute,
And with light finger touch'd the softer lute.
Apame knew the Hebrew's grateful cause,
And bent her head and sweetly smil'd applause.

Why is the Warrior's cheek so red?
Why downward droops his musing head?
Why that slow step, that faint advance,
That keen yet quick-retreating glance?
That crested head in war tower'd high,
No backward glance disgrac'd that eye,
No flushing fear that cheek o'erspread
When stern he strode o'er heaps of dead;
Strange tumult now his bosom moves--
The Warrior fears because he loves.

Why does the Youth delight to rove
Amid the dark and lonely grove?
Why in the throng where all are gay,
   His wandering eye with meaning fraught,
   Sits he alone in silent thought?
Silent he sits; for far away
His passion'd soul delights to stray;
Recluse he roves and strives to shun
All human-kind because he loves but One!

Yes, King of Persia, thou art blest;
   But not because the sparkling bowl
To rapture lifts thy waken'd soul
But not because of Power possest,
Not that the Nations dread thy nod,
And Princes reverence thee their earthly God,
Even on a Monarch's solitude
Care the black Spectre will intrude,
The bowl brief pleasure can bestow,
The Purple cannot shield from Woe.
But King of Persia thou art blest,
For Heaven who rais'd thee thus the world above
Has made thee happy in Apame's love!

Oh! I have seen his fond looks trace
Each angel feature of her face,
Rove o'er her form with eager eye,
And sigh and gaze, and gaze and sigh.
Lo! from his brow with mimic frown,
Apame takes the sacred crown;
Her faultless form, her lovely face
Add to the diadem new grace
And subject to a Woman's laws
Darius sees and smiles applause!

He ceas'd, and silent still remain'd the throng
Whilst rapt attention own'd the power of song.
Then loud as when the wintry whirlwinds blow
From ev'ry voice the thundering plaudits flow;
Darius smil'd, Apame's sparkling eyes
Glanc'd on the King, and Woman won the prize.

Now silent sat the expectant crowd, alone
The victor Hebrew gaz'd not on the throne;
With deeper hue his cheek distemper'd glows,
With statelier stature, loftier now he rose;
Heavenward he gaz'd, regardless of the throng,
And pour'd with awful voice sublimer song.

Ancient of Days! Eternal Truth! one hymn
One holier strain the Bard shall raise to thee,
Thee Powerful! Thee Benevolent! Thee Just!
Friend! Father! All in All! the Vines rich blood,
The Monarch's might, and Woman's conquering charms,--
These shall we praise alone? Oh ye who sit
Beneath your vine, and quaff at evening hour
The healthful bowl, remember him whose dews,
Whose rains, whose sun, matur'd the growing fruit,
Creator and Preserver! Reverence Him,
O thou who from thy throne dispensest life
And death, for He has delegated power.
And thou shalt one day at the throne of God
Render most strict account! O ye who gaze
Enrapt on Beauty's fascinating form,
Gaze on with love, and loving Beauty, learn
To shun abhorrent all the mental eye
Beholds deform'd and foul; for so shall Love
Climb to the Source of Virtue. God of Truth!
All-Just! All-Mighty! I should ill deserve
Thy noblest gift, the gift divine of song,
If, so content with ear-deep melodies
To please all profitless, I did not pour
Severer strains; of Truth—eternal Truth,
Unchanging Justice, universal Love.
Such strains awake the soul to loftiest thoughts,
Such strains the Blessed Spirits of the Good
Waft, grateful incense, to the Halls of Heaven.

The dying notes still murmur'd on the string,
When from his throne arose the raptur'd King.
About to speak he stood, and wav'd his hand,
And all expectant sat the obedient band.

Then just and gen'rous, thus the Monarch cries,
"Be thine Zorobabel the well earned prize.
"The purple robe of state thy form shall fold,
"The beverage sparkle in thy cup of gold;
"The golden couch, the car, and honor'd chain,
"Requite the merits of thy favor'd strain,
"And rais'd supreme the ennobled race among
"Be call'd MY COUSIN for the victor song.
"Nor these alone the victor song shall bless,
"Ask what thou wilt, and what thou wilt, possess."
"Fall'n is Jerusalem!" the Hebrew cries.
And patriot anguish fills his streaming eyes,
"Hurl'd to the earth by Rapine's vengeful rod,
"Polluted lies the temple of our God,
"Far in a foreign land her sons remain,
"Hear the keen taunt, and drag the captive chain:
"In fruitless woe they wear the wearying years,
"And steep the bread of bitterness in tears.
"O Monarch, greatest, mildest, best of men,
"Restore us to those ruin'd walls again!
"Allow our race to rear that sacred dome,
"To live in liberty, and die at Home."

So spake Zorobabel--thus Woman's praise
Avail'd again Jerusalem to raise,
Call'd forth the sanction of the Despot's nod,
And freed the Nation best belov'd of God.

Robert Southey
The Victory

Hark--how the church-bells thundering harmony
Stuns the glad ear! tidings of joy have come,
Good tidings of great joy! two gallant ships
Met on the element,—they met, they fought
A desperate fight!—good tidings of great joy!
Old England triumphed! yet another day
Of glory for the ruler of the waves!
For those who fell, 'twas in their country's cause,
They have their passing paragraphs of praise
And are forgotten.

There was one who died
In that day's glory, whose obscurer name
No proud historian's page will chronicle.
Peace to his honest soul! I read his name,
'Twas in the list of slaughter, and blest God
The sound was not familiar to mine ear.
But it was told me after that this man
Was one whom lawful violence had forced
From his own home and wife and little ones,
Who by his labour lived; that he was one
Whose uncorrupted heart could keenly feel
A husband's love, a father's anxiousness,
That from the wages of his toil he fed
The distant dear ones, and would talk of them
At midnight when he trod the silent deck
With him he valued, talk of them, of joys
That he had known--oh God! and of the hour
When they should meet again, till his full heart
His manly heart at last would overflow
Even like a child's with very tenderness.
Peace to his honest spirit! suddenly
It came, and merciful the ball of death,
For it came suddenly and shattered him,
And left no moment's agonizing thought
On those he loved so well.

He ocean deep
Now lies at rest. Be Thou her comforter
Who art the widow's friend! Man does not know
What a cold sickness made her blood run back
When first she heard the tidings of the fight;
Man does not know with what a dreadful hope
She listened to the names of those who died,
Man does not know, or knowing will not heed,
With what an agony of tenderness
She gazed upon her children, and beheld
His image who was gone. Oh God! be thou
Her comforter who art the widow's friend!

Robert Southey
The Vision Of The Maid Of Orleans - The First Book

Orleans was hush'd in sleep. Stretch'd on her couch
The delegated Maiden lay: with toil
Exhausted and sore anguish, soon she closed
Her heavy eye-lids; not reposing then,
For busy Phantasy, in other scenes
Awakened. Whether that superior powers,
By wise permission, prompt the midnight dream,
Instructing so the passive faculty;
Or that the soul, escaped its fleshly clog,
Flies free, and soars amid the invisible world,
And all things 'are' that 'seem'.

Along a moor,
Barren, and wide, and drear, and desolate,
She roam'd a wanderer thro' the cheerless night.
Far thro' the silence of the unbroken plain
The bittern's boom was heard, hoarse, heavy, deep,
It made most fitting music to the scene.
Black clouds, driven fast before the stormy wind,
Swept shadowing; thro' their broken folds the moon
Struggled sometimes with transitory ray,
And made the moving darkness visible.
And now arrived beside a fenny lake
She stands: amid its stagnate waters, hoarse
The long sedge rustled to the gales of night.
An age-worn bark receives the Maid, impell'd
By powers unseen; then did the moon display
Where thro' the crazy vessel's yawning side
The muddy wave oozed in: a female guides,
And spreads the sail before the wind, that moan'd
As melancholy mournful to her ear,
As ever by the dungeon'd wretch was heard
Howling at evening round the embattled towers
Of that hell-house of France, ere yet sublime
The almighty people from their tyrant's hand
Dash'd down the iron rod.
Intent the Maid
Gazed on the pilot's form, and as she gazed
Shiver'd, for wan her face was, and her eyes
Hollow, and her sunk cheeks were furrowed deep,  
Channell'd by tears; a few grey locks hung down  
Beneath her hood: then thro' the Maiden's veins  
Chill crept the blood, for, as the night-breeze pass'd,  
Lifting her tattcr'd mantle, coil'd around  
She saw a serpent gnawing at her heart.

The plumeless bat with short shrill note flits by,  
And the night-raven's scream came fitfully,  
Borne on the hollow blast. Eager the Maid  
Look'd to the shore, and now upon the bank  
Leaps, joyful to escape, yet trembling still  
In recollection.

There, a mouldering pile  
Stretch'd its wide ruins, o'er the plain below  
Casting a gloomy shade, save where the moon  
Shone thro' its fretted windows: the dark Yew,  
Withering with age, branched there its naked roots,  
And there the melancholy Cypress rear'd  
Its head; the earth was heav'd with many a mound,  
And here and there a half-demolish'd tomb.

And now, amid the ruin's darkest shade,  
The Virgin's eye beheld where pale blue flames  
Rose wavering, now just gleaming from the earth,  
And now in darkness drown'd. An aged man  
Sat near, seated on what in long-past days  
Had been some sculptur'd monument, now fallen  
And half-obscured by moss, and gathered heaps  
Of withered yew-leaves and earth-mouldering bones;  
And shining in the ray was seen the track  
Of slimy snail obscene. Composed his look,  
His eye was large and rayless, and fix'd full  
Upon the Maid; the blue flames on his face  
Stream'd a pale light; his face was of the hue  
Of death; his limbs were mantled in a shroud.

Then with a deep heart-terrifying voice,  
Exclaim'd the Spectre, 'Welcome to these realms,  
These regions of DESPAIR! O thou whose steps  
By GRIEF conducted to these sad abodes
Have pierced; welcome, welcome to this gloom
Eternal, to this everlasting night,
Where never morning darts the enlivening ray,
Where never shines the sun, but all is dark,
Dark as the bosom of their gloomy King.'

So saying he arose, and by the hand
The Virgin seized with such a death-cold touch
As froze her very heart; and drawing on,
Her, to the abbey's inner ruin, led
Resistless. Thro' the broken roof the moon
Glimmer'd a scatter'd ray; the ivy twined
Round the dismantled column; imaged forms
Of Saints and warlike Chiefs, moss-canker'd now
And mutilate, lay strewn upon the ground,
With crumbled fragments, crucifixes fallen,
And rusted trophies; and amid the heap
Some monument's defaced legend spake
All human glory vain.

The loud blast roar'd
Amid the pile; and from the tower the owl
Scream'd as the tempest shook her secret nest.
He, silent, led her on, and often paus'd,
And pointed, that her eye might contemplate
At leisure the drear scene.
He dragged her on
Thro' a low iron door, down broken stairs;
Then a cold horror thro' the Maiden's frame
Crept, for she stood amid a vault, and saw,
By the sepulchral lamp's dim glaring light,
The fragments of the dead.
'Look here!' he cried,
'Damsel, look here! survey this house of Death;
O soon to tenant it! soon to increase
These trophies of mortality! for hence
Is no return. Gaze here! behold this skull,
These eyeless sockets, and these unflesh'd jaws,
That with their ghastly grinning, seem to mock
Thy perishable charms; for thus thy cheek
Must moulder. Child of Grief! shrinks not thy soul,
Viewing these horrors? trembles not thy heart
At the dread thought, that here its life's-blood soon
Now warm in life and feeling, mingle soon
With the cold clod? a thought most horrible!
So only dreadful, for reality
Is none of suffering here; here all is peace;
No nerve will throb to anguish in the grave.
Dreadful it is to think of losing life;
But having lost, knowledge of loss is not,
Therefore no ill. Haste, Maiden, to repose;
Probe deep the seat of life.'
So spake DESPAIR
The vaulted roof echoed his hollow voice,
And all again was silence. Quick her heart
Panted. He drew a dagger from his breast,
And cried again, 'Haste Damsel to repose!
One blow, and rest for ever!' On the Fiend
Dark scowl'd the Virgin with indignant eye,
And dash'd the dagger down. He next his heart
Replaced the murderous steel, and drew the Maid
Along the downward vault.
The damp earth gave
A dim sound as they pass'd: the tainted air
Was cold, and heavy with unwholesome dews.
'Behold!' the fiend exclaim'd, 'how gradual here
The fleshly burden of mortality
Moulders to clay!' then fixing his broad eye
Full on her face, he pointed where a corpse
Lay livid; she beheld with loathing look,
The spectacle abhorr'd by living man.

'Look here!' DESPAIR pursued, 'this loathsome mass
Was once as lovely, and as full of life
As, Damsel! thou art now. Those deep-sunk eyes
Once beam'd the mild light of intelligence,
And where thou seest the pamper'd flesh-worm trail,
Once the white bosom heaved. She fondly thought
That at the hallowed altar, soon the Priest
Should bless her coming union, and the torch
Its joyful lustre o'er the hall of joy,
Cast on her nuptial evening: earth to earth
That Priest consign'd her, and the funeral lamp
Glares on her cold face; for her lover went
By glory lur'd to war, and perish'd there;
Nor she endur'd to live. Ha! fades thy cheek?
Dost thou then, Maiden, tremble at the tale?
Look here! behold the youthful paramour!
The self-devoted hero!'  
Fearfully
The Maid look'd down, and saw the well known face
Of THEODORE! in thoughts unspeakable,
Convulsed with horror, o'er her face she clasp'd
Her cold damp hands: 'Shrink not,' the Phantom cried,
'Gaze on! for ever gaze!' more firm he grasp'd
Her quivering arm: 'this lifeless mouldering clay,
As well thou know'st, was warm with all the glow
Of Youth and Love; this is the arm that cleaved
Salisbury's proud crest, now motionless in death,
Unable to protect the ravaged frame
From the foul Offspring of Mortality
That feed on heroes. Tho' long years were thine,
Yet never more would life reanimate
This murdered man; murdered by thee! for thou
Didst lead him to the battle from his home,
Else living there in peace to good old age:
In thy defence he died: strike deep! destroy
Remorse with Life.'
The Maid stood motionless,
And, wistless what she did, with trembling hand
Received the dagger. Starting then, she cried,
'Avaunt DESPAIR! Eternal Wisdom deals
Or peace to man, or misery, for his good
Alike design'd; and shall the Creature cry,
Why hast thou done this? and with impious pride
Destroy the life God gave?'
The Fiend rejoin'd,
'And thou dost deem it impious to destroy
The life God gave? What, Maiden, is the lot
Assigned to mortal man? born but to drag,
Thro' life's long pilgrimage, the wearying load
Of being; care corroded at the heart;
Assail'd by all the numerous train of ills
That flesh inherits; till at length worn out,
This is his consummation!--think again!
What, Maiden, canst thou hope from lengthen'd life
But lengthen'd sorrow? If protracted long,
Till on the bed of death thy feeble limbs
Outstretch their languid length, oh think what thoughts,
What agonizing woes, in that dread hour,
Assail the sinking heart! slow beats the pulse,
Dim grows the eye, and clammy drops bedew
The shuddering frame; then in its mightiest force,
 Mightiest in impotence, the love of life
Seizes the throbbing heart, the faltering lips
Pour out the impious prayer, that fain would change
The unchangeable's decree, surrounding friends
Sob round the sufferer, wet his cheek with tears,
And all he loved in life embitters death!

Such, Maiden, are the pangs that wait the hour
Of calmest dissolution! yet weak man
Dares, in his timid piety, to live;
And veiling Fear in Superstition's garb,
He calls her Resignation!
Coward wretch!
Fond Coward! thus to make his Reason war
Against his Reason! Insect as he is,
This sport of Chance, this being of a day,
Whose whole existence the next cloud may blast,
Believes himself the care of heavenly powers,
That God regards Man, miserable Man,
And preaching thus of Power and Providence,
Will crush the reptile that may cross his path!

Fool that thou art! the Being that permits
Existence, 'gives' to man the worthless boon:
A goodly gift to those who, fortune-blest,
Bask in the sunshine of Prosperity,
And such do well to keep it. But to one
Sick at the heart with misery, and sore
With many a hard unmerited affliction,
It is a hair that chains to wretchedness
The slave who dares not burst it!
Thinest thou,
The parent, if his child should unrecall'd
Return and fall upon his neck, and cry,
Oh! the wide world is comfortless, and full
Of vacant joys and heart-consuming cares,
I can be only happy in my home
With thee--my friend!--my father! Thinkest thou,
That he would thrust him as an outcast forth?
Oh I he would clasp the truant to his heart,
And love the trespass.'
Whilst he spake, his eye
Dwelt on the Maiden's cheek, and read her soul
Struggling within. In trembling doubt she stood,
Even as the wretch, whose famish'd entrails crave
Supply, before him sees the poison'd food
In greedy horror.
Yet not long the Maid
Debated, 'Cease thy dangerous sophistry,
Eloquent tempter!' cried she. 'Gloomy one!
What tho' affliction be my portion here,
Think'st thou I do not feel high thoughts of joy.
Of heart-ennobling joy, when I look back
Upon a life of duty well perform'd,
Then lift mine eyes to Heaven, and there in faith
Know my reward? I grant, were this life all,
Was there no morning to the tomb's long night,
If man did mingle with the senseless clod,
Himself as senseless, then wert thou indeed
A wise and friendly comforter! But, Fiend!
There is a morning to the tomb's long night,
A dawn of glory, a reward in Heaven,
He shall not gain who never merited.
If thou didst know the worth of one good deed
In life's last hour, thou would'st not bid me lose
The power to benefit; if I but save
A drowning fly, I shall not live in vain.
I have great duties, Fiend! me France expects,
Her heaven-doom'd Champion.'
'Maiden, thou hast done
Thy mission here,' the unbaffled Fiend replied:
'The foes are fled from Orleans: thou, perchance
Exulting in the pride of victory,
Forgettest him who perish'd! yet albeit
Thy harden'd heart forget the gallant youth;
That hour allotted canst thou not escape,
That dreadful hour, when Contumely and Shame
Shall sojourn in thy dungeon. Wretched Maid!
Destined to drain the cup of bitterness,
Even to its dregs! England's inhuman Chiefs
Shall scoff thy sorrows, black thy spotless fame,
Wit-wanton it with lewd barbarity,
And force such burning blushes to the cheek
Of Virgin modesty, that thou shalt wish
The earth might cover thee! in that last hour,
When thy bruis'd breast shall heave beneath the chains
That link thee to the stake; when o'er thy form,
Exposed unmantled, the brute multitude
Shall gaze, and thou shalt hear the ribald taunt,
More painful than the circling flakes that scorch
Each quivering member; wilt thou not in vain
Then wish my friendly aid? then wish thine ear
Had drank my words of comfort? that thy hand
Had grasp'd the dagger, and in death preserved
Insulted modesty?'
Her glowing cheek
Blush'd crimson; her wide eye on vacancy
Was fix'd; her breath short panted. The cold Fiend,
Grasping her hand, exclam'd, 'too-timid Maid,
So long repugnant to the healing aid
My friendship proffers, now shalt thou behold
The allotted length of life.'
He stamp'd the earth,
And dragging a huge coffin as his car,
Two GOULS came on, of form more fearful-foul
Than ever palsied in her wildest dream
Hag-ridden Superstition. Then DESPAIR
Seiz'd on the Maid whose curdling blood stood still.
And placed her in the seat; and on they pass'd
Adown the deep descent. A meteor light
Shot from the Daemons, as they dragg'd along
The unwelcome load, and mark'd their brethren glut
On carcasses.
Below the vault dilates
Its ample bulk. 'Look here!'--DESPAIR addrest
The shuddering Virgin, 'see the dome of DEATH!'
It was a spacious cavern, hewn amid
The entrails of the earth, as tho' to form
The grave of all mankind: no eye could reach,
Tho' gifted with the Eagle's ample ken,
Its distant bounds. There, thron'd in darkness, dwelt
The unseen POWER OF DEATH.
Here stopt the GOULS,
Reaching the destin'd spot. The Fiend leapt out,
And from the coffin, as he led the Maid,
Exclaim'd, 'Where never yet stood mortal man,
Thou standest: look around this boundless vault;
Observe the dole that Nature deals to man,
And learn to know thy friend.'
She not replied,
Observing where the Fates their several tasks
Plied ceaseless. 'Mark how short the longest web
Allowed to man! he cried; observe how soon,
Twin'd round yon never-resting wheel, they change
Their snowy hue, darkening thro' many a shade,
Till Atropos relentless shuts the sheers!'

Too true he spake, for of the countless threads,
Drawn from the heap, as white as unsunn'd snow,
Or as the lovely lilly of the vale,
Was never one beyond the little span
Of infancy untainted: few there were
But lightly tinged; more of deep crimson hue,
Or deeper sable died. Two Genii stood,
Still as the web of Being was drawn forth,
Sprinkling their powerful drops. From ebon urn,
The one unsparing dash'd the bitter wave
Of woe; and as he dash'd, his dark-brown brow
Relax'd to a hard smile. The milder form
Shed less profusely there his lesser store;
Sometimes with tears increasing the scant boon,
Mourning the lot of man; and happy he
Who on his thread those precious drops receives;
If it be happiness to have the pulse
Throb fast with pity, and in such a world
Of wretchedness, the generous heart that aches
With anguish at the sight of human woe.

To her the Fiend, well hoping now success,
'This is thy thread! observe how short the span,
And see how copious yonder Genius pours
The bitter stream of woe.' The Maiden saw
Fearless. 'Now gaze!' the tempter Fiend exclaim'd,
And placed again the poniard in her hand,
For SUPERSTITION, with sulphureal torch
Stalk'd to the loom. 'This, DamSEL, is thy fate!
The hour draws on--now drench the dagger deep!
Now rush to happier worlds!'
The Maid replied,
'Or to prevent or change the will of Heaven,
Impious I strive not: be that will perform'd!'

On a rock more high
Than Nature's common surface, she beholds
The Mansion house of Fate, which thus unfolds
Its sacred mysteries. A trine within
A quadrate placed, both these encompass in
A perfect circle was its form; but what
Its matter was, for us to wonder at,
Is undiscovered left. A Tower there stands
At every angle, where Time's fatal hands
The impartial PARCAE dwell; i' the first she sees
CLOTHO the kindest of the Destinies,
From immaterial essences to cull
The seeds of life, and of them frame the wool
For LACHESIS to spin; about her flie
Myriads of souls, that yet want flesh to lie
Warm'd with their functions in, whose strength bestows
That power by which man ripe for misery grows.

Her next of objects was that glorious tower
Where that swift-fingered Nymph that spares no hour
From mortals' service, draws the various threads
Of life in several lengths; to weary beds
Of age extending some, whilst others in
Their infancy are broke: 'some blackt in sin,
Others, the favorites of Heaven, from whence
Their origin, candid with innocence;
Some purpled in afflictions, others dyed
In sanguine pleasures': some in glittering pride
Spun to adorn the earth, whilst others wear
Rags of deformity, but knots of care
No thread was wholly free from. Next to this
Fair glorious tower, was placed that black abyss
Of dreadful ATROPOS, the baleful seat
Of death and horour, in each room repleat
With lazy damps, loud groans, and the sad sight
Of pale grim Ghosts, those terrours of the night.
To this, the last stage that the winding clew
Of Life can lead mortality unto,
FEAR was the dreadful Porter, which let in
All guests sent thither by destructive sin.

Robert Southey
The Vision Of The Maid Of Orleans - The Second Book

She spake, and lo! celestial radiance beam'd
Amid the air, such odors wafting now
As erst came blended with the evening gale,
From Eden's bowers of bliss. An angel form
Stood by the Maid; his wings, ethereal white,
Flash'd like the diamond in the noon-tide sun,
Dazzling her mortal eye: all else appear'd
Her THEODORE.

Amazed she saw: the Fiend
Was fled, and on her ear the well-known voice
Sounded, tho' now more musically sweet
Than ever yet had thrill'd her charmed soul,
When eloquent Affection fondly told
The day-dreams of delight.

'Beloved Maid!
Lo! I am with thee! still thy Theodore!
Hearts in the holy bands of Love combin'd,
Death has no power to sever. Thou art mine!
A little while and thou shalt dwell with me
In scenes where Sorrow is not. Cheerily
Tread thou the path that leads thee to the grave,
Rough tho' it be and painful, for the grave
Is but the threshold of Eternity.

Favour'd of Heaven! to thee is given to view
These secret realms. The bottom of the abyss
Thou treadest, Maiden! Here the dungeons are
Where bad men learn repentance; souls diseased
Must have their remedy; and where disease
Is rooted deep, the remedy is long
Perforce, and painful.'
Thus the Spirit spake,
And led the Maid along a narrow path,
Dark gleaming to the light of far-off flames,
More dread than darkness. Soon the distant sound
Of clanking anvils, and the lengthened breath
Provoking fire are heard: and now they reach
A wide expanded den where all around
Tremendous furnaces, with hellish blaze,
Flamed dreadful. At the heaving bellows stood
The meagre form of Care, and as he blew
To augment the fire, the fire augmented scorch'd
His wretched limbs: sleepless for ever thus
He toil'd and toil'd, of toil to reap no end
But endless toil and never-ending woe.

An aged man went round the infernal vault,
Urging his workmen to their ceaseless task:
White were his locks, as is the wintry snow
On hoar Plinlimmon's head. A golden staff
His steps supported; powerful talisman,
Which whoso feels shall never feel again
The tear of Pity, or the throb of Love.
Touch'd but by this, the massy gates give way,
The buttress trembles, and the guarded wall,
Guarded in vain, submits. Him heathens erst
Had deified, and bowed the suppliant knee
To Plutus. Nor are now his votaries few,
Tho' he the Blessed Teacher of mankind
Hath said, that easier thro' the needle's eye
Shall the huge camel pass, than the rich man
Enter the gates of heaven. 'Ye cannot serve
Your God, and worship Mammon.'
'Missioned Maid!'  
So spake the Angel, 'know that these, whose hands
Round each white furnace ply the unceasing toil,
Were Mammon's slaves on earth. They did not spare
To wring from Poverty the hard-earn'd mite,
They robb'd the orphan's pittance, they could see
Want's asking eye unmoved; and therefore these,
Ranged round the furnace, still must persevere
In Mammon's service; scorched by these fierce fires,
And frequent deluged by the o'erboiling ore:
Yet still so framed, that oft to quench their thirst
Unquenchable, large draughts of molten gold
They drink insatiate, still with pain renewed,
Pain to destroy.'
So saying, her he led
Forth from the dreadful cavern to a cell,
Brilliant with gem-born light. The rugged walls
Part gleam'd with gold, and part with silver ore
A milder radiance shone. The Carbuncle
There its strong lustre like the flamy sun
Shot forth irradiate; from the earth beneath,
And from the roof a diamond light emits;
Rubies and amethysts their glows commix'd
With the gay topaz, and the softer ray
Shot from the sapphire, and the emerald's hue,
And bright pyropus.
There on golden seats,
A numerous, sullen, melancholy train
Sat silent. 'Maiden, these,' said Theodore,
Are they who let the love of wealth absorb
All other passions; in their souls that vice
Struck deeply-rooted, like the poison-tree
That with its shade spreads barrenness around.
These, Maid! were men by no atrocious crime
Blacken'd, no fraud, nor ruffian violence:
Men of fair dealing, and respectable
On earth, but such as only for themselves
Heap'd up their treasures, deeming all their wealth
Their own, and given to them, by partial Heaven,
To bless them only: therefore here they sit,
Possessed of gold enough, and by no pain
Tormented, save the knowledge of the bliss
They lost, and vain repentance. Here they dwell,
Loathing these useless treasures, till the hour
Of general restitution.'
Thence they past,
And now arrived at such a gorgeous dome,
As even the pomp of Eastern opulence
Could never equal: wandered thro' its halls
A numerous train; some with the red-swoln eye
Of riot, and intemperance-bloated cheek;
Some pale and nerveless, and with feeble step,
And eyes lack-lustre.
Maiden? said her guide,
These are the wretched slaves of Appetite,
Curst with their wish enjoyed. The epicure
Here pampers his foul frame, till the pall'd sense
Loaths at the banquet; the voluptuous here
Plunge in the tempting torrent of delight,
And sink in misery. All they wish'd on earth,
Possessing here, whom have they to accuse,
But their own folly, for the lot they chose?
Yet, for that these injured themselves alone,
They to the house of PENITENCE may hie,
And, by a long and painful regimen,
To wearied Nature her exhausted powers
Restore, till they shall learn to form the wish
Of wisdom, and ALMIGHTY GOODNESS grants
That prize to him who seeks it.'

Whilst he spake,
The board is spread. With bloated paunch, and eye
Fat swoln, and legs whose monstrous size disgraced
The human form divine, their caterer,
Hight GLUTTONY, set forth the smoaking feast.
And by his side came on a brother form,
With fiery cheek of purple hue, and red
And scurfy-white, mix'd motley; his gross bulk,
Like some huge hogshead shapen'd, as applied.

Him had antiquity with mystic rites
Ador'd, to him the sons of Greece, and thine
Imperial Rome, on many an altar pour'd
The victim blood, with godlike titles graced,
BACCHUS, or DIONUSUS; son of JOVE,
Deem'd falsely, for from FOLLY'S ideot form
He sprung, what time MADNESS, with furious hand,
Seiz'd on the laughing female. At one birth
She brought the brethren, menial here, above
Reigning with sway supreme, and oft they hold
High revels: mid the Monastery's gloom,
The sacrifice is spread, when the grave voice
Episcopal, proclaims approaching day
Of visitation, or Churchwardens meet
To save the wretched many from the gripe
Of eager Poverty, or mid thy halls
Of London, mighty Mayor! rich Aldermen,
Of coming feast hold converse.
Otherwhere,
For tho' allied in nature as in blood,
They hold divided sway, his brother lifts
His spungy sceptre. In the noble domes
Of Princes, and state-wearied Ministers,
Maddening he reigns; and when the affrighted mind
Casts o'er a long career of guilt and blood
Its eye reluctant, then his aid is sought
To lull the worm of Conscience to repose.
He too the halls of country Squires frequents,
But chiefly loves the learned gloom that shades
Thy offspring Rhedycina! and thy walls,
Granta! nightly libations there to him
Profuse are pour'd, till from the dizzy brain
Triangles, Circles, Parallelograms,
Moods, Tenses, Dialects, and Demigods,
And Logic and Theology are swept
By the red deluge.
Unmolested there
He reigns; till comes at length the general feast,
Septennial sacrifice; then when the sons
Of England meet, with watchful care to chuse
Their delegates, wise, independent men,
Unbribing and unbrib'd, and cull'd to guard
Their rights and charters from the encroaching grasp
Of greedy Power: then all the joyful land
Join in his sacrifices, so inspir'd
To make the important choice.
The observing Maid
Address'd her guide, 'These Theodore, thou sayest
Are men, who pampering their foul appetites,
Injured themselves alone. But where are they,
The worst of villains, viper-like, who coil
Around the guileless female, so to sting
The heart that loves them?'
'Them,' the spirit replied,
A long and dreadful punishment awaits.
For when the prey of want and infamy,
Lower and lower still the victim sinks,
Even to the depth of shame, not one lewd word,
One impious imprecation from her lips
Escapes, nay not a thought of evil lurks
In the polluted mind, that does not plead
Before the throne of Justice, thunder-tongued
Against the foul Seducer.'
Now they reach'd
The house of PENITENCE. CREDULITY
Stood at the gate, stretching her eager head
As tho' to listen; on her vacant face,
A smile that promis'd premature assent;
Tho' her REGRET behind, a meagre Fiend,
Disciplin'd sorely.

Here they entered in,
And now arrived where, as in study tranced,
She sat, the Mistress of the Dome. Her face
Spake that composed severity, that knows
No angry impulse, no weak tenderness,
Resolved and calm. Before her lay that Book
That hath the words of Life; and as she read,
Sometimes a tear would trickle down her cheek,
Tho' heavenly joy beam'd in her eye the while.

Leaving her undisturb'd, to the first ward
Of this great Lazar-house, the Angel led
The favour'd Maid of Orleans. Kneeling down
On the hard stone that their bare knees had worn,
In sackcloth robed, a numerous train appear'd:
Hard-featured some, and some demurely grave;
Yet such expression stealing from the eye,
As tho', that only naked, all the rest
Was one close fitting mask. A scoffing Fiend,
For Fiend he was, tho' wisely serving here
Mock'd at his patients, and did often pour
Ashes upon them, and then bid them say
Their prayers aloud, and then he louder laughed:
For these were Hypocrites, on earth revered
As holy ones, who did in public tell
Their beads, and make long prayers, and cross themselves,
And call themselves most miserable sinners,
That so they might be deem'd most pious saints;
And go all filth, and never let a smile
Bend their stern muscles, gloomy, sullen men,
Barren of all affection, and all this
To please their God, forsooth! and therefore SCORN
Grinn'd at his patients, making them repeat
Their solemn farce, with keenest raillery
Tormenting; but if earnest in their prayer,
They pour'd the silent sorrows of the soul
To Heaven, then did they not regard his mocks
Which then came painless, and HUMILITY
Soon rescued them, and led to PENITENCE,
That She might lead to Heaven.

From thence they came,
Where, in the next ward, a most wretched band
Groan’d underneath the bitter tyranny
Of a fierce Daemon. His coarse hair was red,
Pale grey his eyes, and blood-shot; and his face
Wrinkled by such a smile as Malice wears
In ecstacy. Well-pleased he went around,
Plunging his dagger in the hearts of some,
Or probing with a poison’d lance their breasts,
Or placing coals of fire within their wounds;
Or seizing some within his mighty grasp,
He fix’d them on a stake, and then drew back,
And laugh’d to see them writhe.

'These,' said the Spirit,
Are taught by CRUELTY, to loath the lives
They led themselves. Here are those wicked men
Who loved to exercise their tyrant power
On speechless brutes; bad husbands undergo
A long purgation here; the traffickers
In human flesh here too are disciplined.
Till by their suffering they have equall’d all
The miseries they inflicted, all the mass
Of wretchedness caused by the wars they waged,
The towns they burnt, for they who bribe to war
Are guilty of the blood, the widows left
In want, the slave or led to suicide,
Or murdered by the foul infected air
Of his close dungeon, or more sad than all,
His virtue lost, his very soul enslaved,
And driven by woe to wickedness.

These next,
Whom thou beholdest in this dreary room,
So sullen, and with such an eye of hate
Each on the other scowling, these have been
False friends. Tormented by their own dark thoughts
Here they dwell: in the hollow of their hearts
There is a worm that feeds, and tho' thou seest
That skilful leech who willingly would heal
The ill they suffer, judging of all else
By their own evil standard, they suspect
The aid be vainly proffers, lengthening thus
By vice its punishment.'
'But who are these,'
The Maid exclam'd, 'that robed in flowing lawn,
And mitred, or in scarlet, and in caps
Like Cardinals, I see in every ward,
Performing menial service at the beck
Of all who bid them?'
Theodore replied,
These men are they who in the name of CHRIST
Did heap up wealth, and arrogating power,
Did make men bow the knee, and call themselves
Most Reverend Graces and Right Reverend Lords.
They dwelt in palaces, in purple clothed,
And in fine linen: therefore are they here;
And tho' they would not minister on earth,
Here penanced they perforce must minister:
For he, the lowly man of Nazareth,
Hath said, his kingdom is not of the world.'
So Saying on they past, and now arrived
Where such a hideous ghastly groupe abode,
That the Maid gazed with half-averting eye,
And shudder'd: each one was a loathly corpse,
The worm did banquet on his putrid prey,
Yet had they life and feeling exquisite
Tho' motionless and mute.
'Most wretched men
Are these, the angel cried. These, JOAN, are bards,
Whose loose lascivious lays perpetuate
Who sat them down, deliberately lewd,
So to awake and pamper lust in minds
Unborn; and therefore foul of body now
As then they were of soul, they here abide
Long as the evil works they left on earth
Shall live to taint mankind. A dreadful doom!
Yet amply merited by that bad man
Who prostitutes the sacred gift of song!
And now they reached a huge and massy pile,
Massy it seem'd, and yet in every blast
As to its ruin shook. There, porter fit,
REMORSE for ever his sad vigils kept.
Pale, hollow-eyed, emaciate, sleepless wretch.
Inly he groan'd, or, starting, wildly shriek'd,
Aye as the fabric tottering from its base,
Threatened its fall, and so expectant still
Lived in the dread of danger still delayed.

They enter'd there a large and lofty dome,
O'er whose black marble sides a dim drear light
Struggled with darkness from the unfrequent lamp.
Enthroned around, the MURDERERS OF MANKIND,
Monarchs, the great! the glorious! the august!
Each bearing on his brow a crown of fire,
Sat stern and silent. Nimrod he was there,
First King the mighty hunter; and that Chief
Who did belie his mother's fame, that so
He might be called young Ammon. In this court
Caesar was crown'd, accurst liberticide;
And he who murdered Tully, that cold villain,
Octavius, tho' the courtly minion's lyre
Hath hymn'd his praise, tho' Maro sung to him,
And when Death levelled to original clay
The royal carcase, FLATTERY, fawning low,
Fell at his feet, and worshipped the new God.
Titus was here, the Conqueror of the Jews,
He the Delight of human-kind misnamed;
Caesars and Soldans, Emperors and Kings,
Here they were all, all who for glory fought,
Here in the COURT OF GLORY, reaping now
The meed they merited.

As gazing round
The Virgin mark'd the miserable train,
A deep and hollow voice from one went forth;
'Thou who art come to view our punishment,
Maiden of Orleans! hither turn thine eyes,
For I am he whose bloody victories
Thy power hath rendered vain. Lo! I am here,
The hero conqueror of Azincour,
HENRY OF ENGLAND!--wretched that I am,
I might have reigned in happiness and peace,
My coffers full, my subjects undisturb'd,
And PLENTY and PROSPERITY had loved
To dwell amongst them: but mine eye beheld
The realm of France, by faction tempest-torn,
And therefore I did think that it would fall
An easy prey. I persecuted those
Who taught new doctrines, tho' they taught the truth:
And when I heard of thousands by the sword
Cut off, or blasted by the pestilence,
I calmly counted up my proper gains,
And sent new herds to slaughter. Temperate
Myself, no blood that mutinied, no vice
Tainting my private life, I sent abroad
MURDER and RAPE; and therefore am I doom'd,
Like these imperial Sufferers, crown'd with fire,
Here to remain, till Man's awaken'd eye
Shall see the genuine blackness of our deeds,
And warn'd by them, till the whole human race,
Equalling in bliss the aggregate we caus'd
Of wretchedness, shall form ONE BROTHERHOOD,
ONE UNIVERSAL FAMILY OF LOVE.'

Ay, you are wretched, miserably wretched,
Almost condemn'd alive! There is a place,
(List daughter!) in a black and hollow vault,
Where day is never seen; there shines no sun,
But flaming horror of consuming fires;
A lightless sulphur, choak'd with smoaky foggs
Of an infected darkness. In this place
Dwell many thousand thousand sundry sorts
Of never-dying deaths; there damned souls
Roar without pity, there are gluttons fed
With toads and adders; there is burning oil
Pour'd down the drunkard's throat, 'the usurer
Is forced to sup whole draughts of molten gold';
There is the murderer for ever stabb'd,
Yet can he never die; there lies the wanton
On racks of burning steel, whilst in his soul
He feels the torment of his raging lust.

Robert Southey
The Maiden, musing on the Warrior's words,
Turn'd from the Hall of Glory. Now they reach'd
A cavern, at whose mouth a Genius stood,
In front a beardless youth, whose smiling eye
Beam'd promise, but behind, withered and old,
And all unlovely. Underneath his feet
Lay records trampled, and the laurel wreath
Now rent and faded: in his hand he held
An hour-glass, and as fall the restless sands,
So pass the lives of men. By him they past
Along the darksome cave, and reach'd a stream,
Still rolling onward its perpetual waves,
Noiseless and undisturbed. Here they ascend
A Bark unpiloted, that down the flood,
Borne by the current, rush'd. The circling stream,
Returning to itself, an island form'd;
Nor had the Maiden's footsteps ever reach'd
The insulated coast, eternally
Rapt round the endless course; but Theodore
Drove with an angel's will the obedient bark.

They land, a mighty fabric meets their eyes,
Seen by its gem-born light. Of adamant
The pile was framed, for ever to abide
Firm in eternal strength. Before the gate
Stood eager EXPECTATION, as to list
The half-heard murmurs issuing from within,
Her mouth half-open'd, and her head stretch'd forth.
On the other side there stood an aged Crone,
Listening to every breath of air; she knew
Vague suppositions and uncertain dreams,
Of what was soon to come, for she would mark
The paley glow-worm's self-created light,
And argue thence of kingdoms overthrown,
And desolated nations; ever fill'd
With undetermin'd terror, as she heard
Or distant screech-owl, or the regular beat
Of evening death-watch.
'Maid,' the Spirit cried,
Here, robed in shadows, dwells FUTURITY.
There is no eye hath seen her secret form,
For round the MOTHER OF TIME, unpierced mists
Aye hover. Would'st thou read the book of Fate,
Enter.'
The Damsel for a moment paus'd,
Then to the Angel spake: 'All-gracious Heaven!
Benignant in withholding, hath denied
To man that knowledge. I, in faith assured,
That he, my heavenly Father, for the best
Ordaineth all things, in that faith remain
Contented.'
'Well and wisely hast thou said,
So Theodore replied; 'and now O Maid!
Is there amid this boundless universe
One whom thy soul would visit? is there place
To memory dear, or visioned out by hope,
Where thou would'st now be present? form the wish,
And I am with thee, there.'
His closing speech
Yet sounded on her ear, and lo! they stood
Swift as the sudden thought that guided them,
Within the little cottage that she loved.
'He sleeps! the good man sleeps!' enrapt she cried,
As bending o'er her Uncle's lowly bed
Her eye retraced his features. 'See the beads
That never morn nor night he fails to tell,
Remembering me, his child, in every prayer.
Oh! quiet be thy sleep, thou dear old man!
Good Angels guard thy rest! and when thine hour
Is come, as gently mayest thou wake to life,
As when thro' yonder lattice the next sun
Shall bid thee to thy morning orisons!
Thy voice is heard, the Angel guide rejoin'd,
He sees thee in his dreams, he hears thee breathe
Blessings, and pleasant is the good man's rest.
Thy fame has reached him, for who has not heard
Thy wonderous exploits? and his aged heart
Hath felt the deepest joy that ever yet
Made his glad blood flow fast. Sleep on old Claude!
Peaceful, pure Spirit, be thy sojourn here,
And short and soon thy passage to that world
Where friends shall part no more!
'Does thy soul own
No other wish? or sleeps poor Madelon
Forgotten in her grave? seest thou yon star,'
The Spirit pursued, regardless of her eye
That look'd reproach; 'seest thou that evening star
Whose lovely light so often we beheld
From yonder woodbine porch? how have we gazed
Into the dark deep sky, till the baffled soul,
Lost in the infinite, returned, and felt
The burthen of her bodily load, and yearned
For freedom! Maid, in yonder evening star
Lives thy departed friend. I read that glance,
And we are there!' He said and they had past
The immeasurable space.
Then on her ear
The lonely song of adoration rose,
Sweet as the cloister'd virgins vesper hymn,
Whose spirit, happily dead to earthly hopes
Already lives in Heaven. Abrupt the song
Ceas'd, tremulous and quick a cry
Of joyful wonder rous'd the astonish'd Maid,
And instant Madelon was in her arms;
No airy form, no unsubstantial shape,
She felt her friend, she prest her to her heart,
Their tears of rapture mingled.
She drew back
And eagerly she gazed on Madelon,
Then fell upon her neck again and wept.
No more she saw the long-drawn lines of grief,
The emaciate form, the hue of sickliness,
The languid eye: youth's loveliest freshness now
Mantled her cheek, whose every lineament
Bespake the soul at rest, a holy calm,
A deep and full tranquillity of bliss.

'Thou then art come, my first and dearest friend!' The well known voice of Madelon began,
'Thou then art come! and was thy pilgrimage
So short on earth? and was it painful too,
Painful and short as mine? but blessed they
Who from the crimes and miseries of the world
Early escape!'  
'Nay,' Theodore replied,
She hath not yet fulfill'd her mortal work.
Permitted visitant from earth she comes
To see the seat of rest, and oftentimes
In sorrow shall her soul remember this,
And patient of the transitory woe
Partake the anticipated peace again.'

'Soon be that work perform'd!' the Maid exclaimed,
'O Madelon! O Theodore! my soul,
Spurning the cold communion of the world,
Will dwell with you! but I shall patiently,
Yea even with joy, endure the allotted ills
Of which the memory in this better state
Shall heighten bliss. That hour of agony,
When, Madelon, I felt thy dying grasp,
And from thy forehead wiped the dews of death,
The very horrors of that hour assume
A shape that now delights.'

'O earliest friend!
I too remember,' Madelon replied,
'That hour, thy looks of watchful agony,
The suppressed grief that struggled in thine eye
Endearing love's last kindness. Thou didst know
With what a deep and melancholy joy
I felt the hour draw on: but who can speak
The unutterable transport, when mine eyes,
As from a long and dreary dream, unclosed
Amid this peaceful vale, unclos'd on him,
My Arnaud! he had built me up a bower,
A bower of rest.--See, Maiden, where he comes,
His manly lineaments, his beaming eye
The same, but now a holier innocence
Sits on his cheek, and loftier thoughts illume
The enlighten'd glance.'

They met, what joy was theirs
He best can feel, who for a dear friend dead
Has wet the midnight pillow with his tears.

Fair was the scene around; an ample vale
Whose mountain circle at the distant verge
Lay softened on the sight; the near ascent
Rose bolder up, in part abrupt and bare,
Part with the ancient majesty of woods
Adorn'd, or lifting high its rocks sublime.
The river's liquid radiance roll'd beneath,
Beside the bower of Madelon it wound
A broken stream, whose shallows, tho' the waves
Roll'd on their way with rapid melody,
A child might tread. Behind, an orange grove
Its gay green foliage starr'd with golden fruit;
But with what odours did their blossoms load
The passing gale of eve! less thrilling sweet
Rose from the marble's perforated floor,
Where kneeling at her prayers, the Moorish queen
Inhaled the cool delight, and whilst she asked
The Prophet for his promised paradise,
Shaped from the present scene its utmost joys.
A goodly scene! fair as that faery land
Where Arthur lives, by ministering spirits borne
From Camlan's bloody banks; or as the groves
Of earliest Eden, where, so legends say,
Enoch abides, and he who rapt away
By fiery steeds, and chariotted in fire,
Past in his mortal form the eternal ways;
And John, beloved of Christ, enjoying there
The beatific vision, sometimes seen
The distant dawning of eternal day,
Till all things be fulfilled.
'Survey this scene!'
So Theodore address'd the Maid of Arc,
'There is no evil here, no wretchedness,
It is the Heaven of those who nurst on earth
Their nature's gentlest feelings. Yet not here
Centering their joys, but with a patient hope,
Waiting the allotted hour when capable
Of loftier callings, to a better state
They pass; and hither from that better state
Frequent they come, preserving so those ties
That thro' the infinite progressiveness
Complete our perfect bliss.
'Even such, so blest,
Save that the memory of no sorrows past

www.PoemHunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive
Heightened the present joy, our world was once,
In the first aera of its innocence
Ere man had learnt to bow the knee to man.
Was there a youth whom warm affection fill'd,
He spake his honest heart; the earliest fruits
His toil produced, the sweetest flowers that deck'd
The sunny bank, he gather'd for the maid,
Nor she disdain'd the gift; for VICE not yet
Had burst the dungeons of her hell, and rear'd
Those artificial boundaries that divide
Man from his species. State of blessedness!
Till that ill-omen'd hour when Cain's stern son
Delved in the bowels of the earth for gold,
Accursed bane of virtue! of such force
As poets feign dwelt in the Gorgon's locks,
Which whoso saw, felt instant the life-blood
Cold curdle in his veins, the creeping flesh
Grew stiff with horror, and the heart forgot
To beat. Accursed hour! for man no more
To JUSTICE paid his homage, but forsook
Her altars, and bow'd down before the shrine
Of WEALTH and POWER, the Idols he had made.
Then HELL enlarged herself, her gates flew wide,
Her legion fiends rush'd forth. OPPRESSION came
Whose frown is desolation, and whose breath
Blasts like the Pestilence; and POVERTY,
A meagre monster, who with withering touch
Makes barren all the better part of man,
MOTHER OF MISERIES. Then the goodly earth
Which God had fram'd for happiness, became
One theatre of woe, and all that God
Had given to bless free men, these tyrant fiends
His bitterest curses made. Yet for the best
Hath he ordained all things, the ALL-WISE!
For by experience rous'd shall man at length
Dash down his Moloch-Idols, Samson-like
And burst his fetters, only strong whilst strong
Believed. Then in the bottomless abyss
OPPRESSION shall be chain'd, and POVERTY
Die, and with her, her brood of Miseries;
And VIRTUE and EQUALITY preserve
The reign of LOVE, and Earth shall once again
Be Paradise, whilst WISDOM shall secure
The state of bliss which IGNORANCE betrayed.'

'Oh age of happiness!' the Maid exclaim'd,
Roll fast thy current, Time till that blest age
Arrive! and happy thou my Theodore,
Permitted thus to see the sacred depths
Of wisdom!'
'Such,' the blessed Spirit replied,
Beloved! such our lot; allowed to range
The vast infinity, progressive still
In knowledge and encreasing blessedness,
This our united portion. Thou hast yet
A little while to sojourn amongst men:
I will be with thee! there shall not a breeze
Wanton around thy temples, on whose wing
I will not hover near! and at that hour
When from its fleshly sepulchre let loose,
Thy phoenix soul shall soar, O best-beloved!
I will be with thee in thine agonies,
And welcome thee to life and happiness,
Eternal infinite beatitude!'

He spake, and led her near a straw-roof'd cot,
LOVE'S Palace. By the Virtues circled there,
The cherub listen'd to such melodies,
As aye, when one good deed is register'd
Above, re-echo in the halls of Heaven.
LABOUR was there, his crisp locks floating loose,
Clear was his cheek, and beaming his full eye,
And strong his arm robust; the wood-nymph HEALTH
Still follow'd on his path, and where he trod
Fresh flowers and fruits arose. And there was HOPE,
The general friend; and PITY, whose mild eye
Wept o'er the widowed dove; and, loveliest form,
Majestic CHASTITY, whose sober smile
Delights and awes the soul; a laurel wreath
Restrain'd her tresses, and upon her breast
The snow-drop hung its head, that seem'd to grow
Spontaneous, cold and fair: still by the maid
LOVE went submiss, with eye more dangerous
Than fancied basilisk to wound whoe'er
Too bold approached; yet anxious would he read
Her every rising wish, then only pleased
When pleasing. Hymning him the song was rais'd.

'Glory to thee whose vivifying power
Pervades all Nature's universal frame!
Glory to thee CREATOR LOVE! to thee,
Parent of all the smiling CHARITIES,
That strew the thorny path of Life with flowers!
Glory to thee PRESERVER! to thy praise
The awakened woodlands echo all the day
Their living melody; and warbling forth
To thee her twilight song, the Nightingale
Holds the lone Traveller from his way, or charms
The listening Poet's ear. Where LOVE shall deign
To fix his seat, there blameless PLEASURE sheds
Her roseate dews; CONTENT will sojourn there,
And HAPPINESS behold AFFECTION'S eye
Gleam with the Mother's smile. Thrice happy he
Who feels thy holy power! he shall not drag,
Forlorn and friendless, along Life's long path
To Age's drear abode; he shall not waste
The bitter evening of his days unsooth'd;
But HOPE shall cheer his hours of Solitude,
And VICE shall vainly strive to wound his breast,
That bears that talisman; and when he meets
The eloquent eye of TENDERNESS, and hears
The bosom-thrilling music of her voice;
The joy he feels shall purify his Soul,
And imp it for anticipated Heaven.'

Robert Southey
The Well Of St. Keyne

A Well there is in the west country,
And a clearer one never was seen;
There is not a wife in the west country
But has heard of the Well of St. Keyne.

An oak and an elm-tree stand beside,
And behind doth an ash-tree grow,
And a willow from the bank above
Droops to the water below.

A traveller came to the Well of St. Keyne;
Joyfully he drew nigh,
For from the cock-crow he had been travelling,
And there was not a cloud in the sky.

He drank of the water so cool and clear,
For thirsty and hot was he,
And he sat down upon the bank
Under the willow-tree.

There came a man from the house hard by
At the Well to fill his pail;
On the Well-side he rested it,
And he bade the Stranger hail.

"Now art thou a bachelor, Stranger?" quoth he,
"For an if thou hast a wife,
The happiest draught thou hast drank this day
That ever thou didst in thy life.

"Or has thy good woman, if one thou hast,
Ever here in Cornwall been?
For an if she have, I'll venture my life
She has drank of the Well of St. Keyne."

"I have left a good woman who never was here."
The Stranger he made reply,
"But that my draught should be the better for that,
I pray you answer me why?"
"St. Keyne," quoth the Cornish-man, "many a time
Drank of this crystal Well,
And before the Angel summon'd her,
She laid on the water a spell.

"If the Husband of this gifted Well
Shall drink before his Wife,
A happy man thenceforth is he,
For he shall be Master for life.

"But if the Wife should drink of it first,--
God help the Husband then!"
The Stranger stoopt to the Well of St. Keyne,
And drank of the water again.

"You drank of the Well I warrant betimes?"
He to the Cornish-man said:
But the Cornish-man smiled as the Stranger spake,
And sheepishly shook his head.

"I hasten'd as soon as the wedding was done,
And left my Wife in the porch;
But i' faith she had been wiser than me,
For she took a bottle to Church."

Robert Southey
The Widow

Cold was the night wind, drifting fast the snows fell,
Wide were the downs and shelterless and naked,
When a poor Wanderer struggled on her journey
    Weary and way-sore.

Drear were the downs, more dreary her reflexions;
Cold was the night wind, colder was her bosom!
She had no home, the world was all before her,
    She had no shelter.

Fast o'er the bleak heath rattling drove a chariot,
"Pity me!" feebly cried the poor night wanderer.
"Pity me Strangers! lest with cold and hunger
    Here I should perish.

"Once I had friends,—but they have all forsook me!
"Once I had parents,—they are now in Heaven!
"I had a home once—I had once a husband--
    "Pity me Strangers!

"I had a home once—I had once a husband--
"I am a Widow poor and broken-hearted!"
Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining.
    On drove the chariot.

On the cold snows she laid her down to rest her;
She heard a horseman, "pity me!" she groan'd out;
Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining,
    On went the horseman.

Worn out with anguish, toil and cold and hunger,
Down sunk the Wanderer, sleep had seiz'd her senses;
There, did the Traveller find her in the morning,
    GOD had releast her.

Robert Southey
To A Goose

If thou didst feed on western plains of yore
Or waddle wide with flat and flabby feet
Over some Cambrian mountain's plashy moor,
Or find in farmer's yard a safe retreat
From gipsy thieves and foxes sly and fleet;
If thy grey quills by lawyer guided, trace
Deeds big with ruin to some wretched race,
Or love-sick poet's sonnet, sad and sweet,
Wailing the rigour of some lady fair;
Or if, the drudge of housemaid's daily toil,
Cobwebs and dust thy pinion white besoil,
Departed goose! I neither know nor care.
But this I know, that thou wert very fine,
Seasoned with sage and onions and port wine.

Robert Southey
To Contemplation

Faint gleams the evening radiance thro' the sky,
The sober twilight dimly darkens round;
In short quick circles the shrill bat flits by,
And the slow vapour curls along the ground.

Now the pleas'd eye from yon lone cottage sees
On the green mead the smoke long-shadowing play;
The Red-breast on the blossom'd spray
Warbles wild her latest lay,
And sleeps along the dale the silent breeze.
Calm CONTEMPLATION,'tis thy favorite hour!
Come fill my bosom, tranquillizing Power.

Meek Power! I view thee on the calmy shore
   When Ocean stills his waves to rest;
Or when slow-moving on the surge's hoar
Meet with deep hollow roar
   And whiten o'er his breast;
For lo! the Moon with softer radiance gleams,
   And lovelier heave the billows in her beams.

When the low gales of evening moan along,
   I love with thee to feel the calm cool breeze,
And roam the pathless forest wilds among,
   Listening the mellow murmur of the trees
Full-foliaged as they lift their arms on high
   And wave their shadowy heads in wildest melody.

Or lead me where amid the tranquil vale
The broken stream flows on in silver light,
And I will linger where the gale
O'er the bank of violets sighs,
Listening to hear its soften'd sounds arise;
And hearken the dull beetle's drowsy flight,
And watch the horn-eyed snail
Creep o'er his long moon-glittering trail,
And mark where radiant thro' the night
Moves in the grass-green hedge the glow-worms living light.
Thee meekest Power! I love to meet,
As oft with even solitary pace
The scatter'd Abbeys hallowed rounds I trace
And listen to the echoings of my feet.
Or on the half demolished tomb,
Whole warning texts anticipate my doom:
Mark the clear orb of night
Cast thro' the storying glass a faintly-varied light.

Nor will I not in some more gloomy hour
Invoke with fearless awe thine holier power,
Wandering beneath the sainted pile
When the blast moans along the darksome aisle,
And clattering patters all around
The midnight shower with dreary sound.

But sweeter 'tis to wander wild
By melancholy dreams beguil'd,
While the summer moon's pale ray
Faintly guides me on my way
To the lone romantic glen
Far from all the haunts of men,
Where no noise of uproar rude
Breaks the calm of solitude.
But soothing Silence sleeps in all
Save the neighbouring waterfall,
Whose hoarse waters falling near
Load with hollow sounds the ear,
And with down-dasht torrent white
Gleam hoary thro' the shades of night.

Thus wandering silent on and slow
I'll nurse Reflection's sacred woe,
And muse upon the perish'd day
When Hope would weave her visions gay,
Ere FANCY chill'd by adverse fate
Left sad REALITY my mate.

O CONTEMPLATION! when to Memory's eyes
The visions of the long-past days arise,
Thy holy power imparts the best relief,
And the calm'd Spirit loves the joy of grief.
Robert Southey
To Horror

Dark HORROR, hear my call!
Stern Genius hear from thy retreat
On some old sepulchre's moss-cankered seat,
Beneath the Abbey's ivied wall
That trembles o'er its shade;
Where wrapt in midnight gloom, alone,
Thou lovest to lie and hear
The roar of waters near,
And listen to the deep dull groan
Of some perturbed sprite
Borne fitful on the heavy gales of night.

Or whether o'er some wide waste hill
Thou mark'st the traveller stray,
Bewilder'd on his lonely way,
When, loud and keen and chill,
The evening winds of winter blow
Drifting deep the dismal snow.

Or if thou followest now on Greenland's shore,
With all thy terrors, on the lonely way
Of some wrecked mariner, when to the roar
Of herded bears the floating ice-hills round
Pour their deep echoing sound,
And by the dim drear Boreal light
Givest half his dangers to the wretches sight.

Or if thy fury form,
  When o'er the midnight deep
  The dark-wing'd tempests sweep
Watches from some high cliff the encreasing storm,
  Listening with strange delight
As the black billows to the thunder rave
  When by the lightnings light
Thou seest the tall ship sink beneath the wave.

Dark HORROR! bear me where the field of fight
  Scatters contagion on the tainted gale,
  When to the Moon's faint beam,
On many a carcase shine the dews of night
  And a dead silence stills the vale
Save when at times is heard the glutted Raven's scream.

Where some wreck'd army from the Conquerors might
Speed their disastrous flight,
With thee fierce Genius! let me trace their way,
And hear at times the deep heart-groan
Of some poor sufferer left to die alone,
His sore wounds smarting with the winds of night;
And we will pause, where, on the wild,
The Mother to her frozen breast,
On the heap'd snows reclining clasps her child
And with him sleeps, chill'd to eternal rest!

Black HORROR! speed we to the bed of Death,
Where he whose murderous power afar
Blasts with the myriad plagues of war,
Struggles with his last breath,
Then to his wildly-starting eyes
The phantoms of the murder'd rise,
Then on his frenzied ear
Their groans for vengeance and the Demon's yell
In one heart-maddening chorus swell.
Cold on his brow convulsing stands the dew,
And night eternal darkens on his view.

HORROR! I call thee yet once more!
Bear me to that accursed shore
Where round the stake the impaled Negro writhes.
Assume thy sacred terrors then! dispense
The blasting gales of Pestilence!
Arouse the race of Afric! holy Power,
Lead them to vengeance! and in that dread hour
When Ruin rages wide
I will behold and smile by MERCY'S side.

Robert Southey
To Mary Wollstonecraft

The lilly cheek, the "purple light of love,"
The liquid lustre of the melting eye,--
Mary! of these the Poet sung, for these
Did Woman triumph! with no angry frown
View this degrading conquest. At that age
No MAID OF ARC had snatch'd from coward man
The heaven-blest sword of Liberty; thy sex
Could boast no female ROLAND'S martyrdom;
No CORDE'S angel and avenging arm
Had sanctified again the Murderer's name
As erst when Caesar perish'd: yet some strains
May even adorn this theme, befitting me
To offer, nor unworthy thy regard.

Robert Southey
To My Own Minature Picture Taken At Two Years Of Age

And I was once like this! that glowing cheek
Was mine, those pleasure-sparkling eyes, that brow
Smooth as the level lake, when not a breeze
Dies o'er the sleeping surface! twenty years
Have wrought strange alteration! Of the friends
Who once so dearly prized this miniature,
And loved it for its likeness, some are gone
To their last home; and some, estranged in heart,
Beholding me with quick-averted glance
Pass on the other side! But still these hues
Remain unalter'd, and these features wear
The look of Infancy and Innocence.
I search myself in vain, and find no trace
Of what I was: those lightly-arching lines
Dark and o'erhanging now; and that mild face
Settled in these strong lineaments!—There were
Who form'd high hopes and flattering ones of thee
Young Robert! for thine eye was quick to speak
Each opening feeling: should they not have known
When the rich rainbow on the morning cloud
Reflects its radiant dies, the husbandman
Beholds the ominous glory sad, and fears
Impending storms? they augur'd happily,
For thou didst love each wild and wonderous tale
Of faery fiction, and thine infant tongue
Lisp'd with delight the godlike deeds of Greece
And rising Rome; therefore they deem'd forsooth
That thou shouldst tread PREFERMENT'S pleasant path.
Ill-judging ones! they let thy little feet
Stray in the pleasant paths of POESY,
And when thou shouldst have prest amid the crowd
There didst thou love to linger out the day
Loitering beneath the laurels barren shade.
SPIRIT of SPENSER! was the wanderer wrong?
This little picture was for ornament
Design'd, to shine amid the motley mob
Of Fashion and of Folly,—is it not
More honour'd by this solitary song?

Robert Southey
To The Chapel Bell

"Lo I, the man who erst the Muse did ask
Her deepest notes to swell the Patriot's meeds,
Am now enforst a far unfitter task
For cap and gown to leave my minstrel weeds,"
For yon dull noise that tinkles on the air
Bids me lay by the lyre and go to morning prayer.

Oh how I hate the sound! it is the Knell,
That still a requiem tolls to Comfort's hour;
And loth am I, at Superstition's bell,
To quit or Morpheus or the Muses bower.
Better to lie and dose, than gape amain,
Hearing still mumbled o'er, the same eternal strain.

Thou tedious herald of more tedious prayers
Say hast thou ever summoned from his rest,
One being awakening to religious awe?
Or rous'd one pious transport in the breast?
Or rather, do not all reluctant creep
To linger out the hour, in listlessness or sleep?

I love the bell, that calls the poor to pray
Chiming from village church its chearful sound,
When the sun smiles on Labour's holy day,
And all the rustic train are gathered round,
Each deftly dizen'd in his Sunday's best
And pleas'd to hail the day of piety and rest.

Or when, dim-shadowing o'er the face of day,
The mantling mists of even-tide rise slow,
As thro' the forest gloom I wend my way,
The minster curfew's sullen roar I know;
I pause and love its solemn toll to hear,
As made by distance soft, it dies upon the ear.

Nor not to me the unfrequent midnight knell
Tolls sternly harmonizing; on mine ear
As the deep death-fraught sounds long lingering dwell
Sick to the heart of Love and Hope and Fear
Soul-jaundiced, I do loathe Life's upland steep
And with strange envy muse the dead man's dreamless sleep.

But thou, memorial of monastic gall!
What Fancy sad or lightsome hast thou given?
Thy vision-scaring sounds alone recall
    The prayer that trembles on a yawn to heaven;
And this Dean's gape, and that Dean's nasal tone,
And Roman rites retain'd, tho' Roman faith be flown.

Robert Southey
To The Genius Of Africa

O thou who from the mountain's height
Roll'st down thy clouds with all their weight
Of waters to old Niles majestic tide;
Or o'er the dark sepulchral plain
Recallest thy Palmyra's ancient pride,
Amid whose desolated domes
Secure the savage chacal roams,
Where from the fragments of the hallow'd fane
The Arabs rear their miserable homes!

Hear Genius hear thy children's cry!
Not always should'st thou love to brood
Stern o'er the desert solitude
Where seas of sand toss their hot surges high;
Nor Genius should the midnight song
Detain thee in some milder mood
The palmy plains among
Where Gambia to the torches light
Flows radiant thro' the awaken'd night.

Ah, linger not to hear the song!
Genius avenge thy children's wrong!
The Daemon COMMERCE on your shore
Pours all the horrors of his train,
And hark! where from the field of gore
Howls the hyena o'er the slain!
Lo! where the flaming village fires the skies!
Avenging Power awake--arise!

Arise thy children's wrong redress!
Ah heed the mother's wretchedness
When in the hot infectious air
O'er her sick babe she bows opprest--
Ah hear her when the Christians tear
The drooping infant from her breast!
Whelm'd in the waters he shall rest!
Hear thou the wretched mother's cries,
Avenging Power awake! arise!
By the rank infected air
That taints those dungeons of despair,
By those who there imprison'd die
Where the black herd promiscuous lie,
By the scourges blacken'd o'er
And stiff and hard with human gore,
By every groan of deep distress
By every curse of wretchedness,
By all the train of Crimes that flow
From the hopelessness of Woe,
By every drop of blood bespilt,
By Afric's wrongs and Europe's guilt,
Awake! arise! avenge!

And thou hast heard! and o'er their blood-fed plains
Swept thine avenging hurricanes;
And bade thy storms with whirlwind roar
Dash their proud navies on the shore;
And where their armies claim'd the fight
Wither'd the warrior's might;
And o'er the unholy host with baneful breath
There Genius thou hast breath'd the gales of Death.

So perish still the robbers of mankind!
What tho' from Justice bound and blind
Inhuman Power has snatch'd the sword!
What tho' thro' many an ignominious age
That Fiend with desolating rage
The tide of carnage pour'd!
Justice shall yet unclose her eyes,
Terrific yet in wrath arise,
And trample on the tyrant's breast,
And make Oppresion groan opprest.

Robert Southey
Wat Tyler - Act I

ACT I.

SCENE, A BLACKSMITH'S-SHOP

Wat Tyler at work within. A May-pole before the Door.

ALICE, PIERS, &c.

SONG.

CHEERFUL on this holiday,
Welcome we the merry May.

On ev'ry sunny hillock spread,
The pale primrose rears her head;
Rich with sweets the western gale
Sweeps along the cowslip'd dale.
Every bank with violets gay,
Smiles to welcome in the May.

The linnet from the budding grove,
Chirps her vernal song of love.
The copse resounds the throstle's notes,
On each wild gale sweet music floats;
And melody from every spray,
Welcomes in the merry May.

Cheerful on this holiday,
Welcome we the merry May.

[Dance.

During the Dance, Tyler lays down his
Hammer, and sits mournfully down before
his Door.

[To him.
HOB CARTER.

Why so sad, neighbour?—do not these gay sports,
This revelry of youth, recall the days
When we too mingled in the revelry;
And lightly tripping in the morris dance
Welcomed the merry month?

TYLER.

Aye, we were young;
No cares had quell'd the hey-day of the blood:
We sported deftly in the April morning,
Nor mark'd the black clouds gathering o'er our noon;
Nor fear'd the storm of night.

HOB

Beshrew me, Tyler,
But my heart joys to see the imps so cheerful!
Young, hale, and happy, why should they destroy
These blessings by reflection?

TYLER.

Look ye, neighbour—
You have known me long.

HOB.

Since we were boys together,
And play'd at barley-brake, and danc'd the morris:—
Some five-and-twenty years!

TYLER.

Was not I young,
And hale and happy?

HOB.

Cheerful as the best.

TYLER.

Have not I been a staid, hard-working man?
Up with the lark at labour—sober—honest—
Of an unblemish’d character?

HOB.
Who doubts it,
There's never a man in Essex bears a better.

TYLER.

And shall not these, tho' young, and hale and happy,
Look on with sorrow to the future hour?
Shall not reflection poison all their pleasures?
When I—the honest, staid, hard-working
Tyler, Toil thro' the long course of the summer's day,
Still toiling, yet still poor! when with hard labour
Scarce can I furnish out my daily food—
And age comes on to steal away my strength,
And leave me poor and wretched! Why should this be?
My youth was regular—my labour constant—
I married an industrious, virtuous woman;
Nor while I toiled and sweated at the anvil,
Sat she neglectful of her spinning wheel.—
Hob—I have only six groats in the world,
And they must soon by law be taken from me.

HOB

Curse on these taxes—one succeeds another—
Our ministers—panders of a king's will—
Drain all our wealth away—waste it in revels—
And lure, or force away our boys, who should be
The props of our old age!—to fill their armies
And feed the crows of France! year follows year,
And still we madly prosecute the war;—
Draining our wealth—distressing our poor peasants—
Slaughtering our youths—and all to crown our chiefs
With Glory!—I detest the hell-sprung name.

TYLER.

What matters me who wears the crown of France?
Whether a Richard or a Charles possess it?
They reap the glory—they enjoy the spoil—
We pay—we bleed!—The sun would shine as cheerly
The rains of heaven as seasonably fall;
Tho' neither of these royal pests existed.

HOB.

Nay—as for that, we poor men should fare better!
No legal robbers then should force away
The hard-earn'd wages of our honest toil.
The Parliament for ever cries more money,
The service of the state demands more money.
Just heaven! of what service is the state?

TYLER

Oh! 'tis of vast importance! who should pay for
The luxuries and riots of the court?
Who should support the flaunting courtier's pride,
Pay for their midnight revels, their rich garments,
Did not the state enforce?—Think ye, my friend,
That I—a humble blacksmith, here at Deptford,
Would part with these six groats—earn'd by hard toil,
All that I have! To massacre the Frenchmen,
Murder as enemies men I never saw!
Did not the state compel me?
(Tax gatherers pass by)
There they go, privileg'd r———s!—

(PIERS and ALICE advance to him. )

ALICE.

Did we not dance it well to-day, my father?
You know I always lov'd these village sports,
Even from my infancy, and yet methinks
I never tript along the mead so gaily.
You know they chose me queen, and your friend Piers
Wreath'd me this cowslip garland for my head—
Is it not simple?—you are sad, my father!
You should have rested from your work to-day,
And given a few hours up to merriment—
But you are so serious!

TYLER.

Serious, my good girl!
I may well be so: when I look at thee
It makes me sad! thou art too fair a flower
To bear the wintry wind of poverty!

PIERS.

Yet I have often head you speak of riches
Even with contempt: they cannot purchase peace,
Or innocence; or virtue—sounder sleep
Waits on the weary plowman's lowly bed,
Than on the downy couch of luxury
Lulls the rich slave of pride and indolence.
I never wish for wealth! My arm is strong,
And I can purchase by it a coarse meal,
And hunger savours it.
TYLER.

Young man, thy mind
Has yet to bear the hard lesson of experience.
Thou art yet young, the blasting breath of want
Has not yet froze the current of thy blood.

PIERS.

Fare not the birds well, as from spray to spray
Blithsome they bound—yet find their simple food
Scattered abundantly?

TYLER

No fancied boundaries of mine and thine
Restrain their wanderings: Nature gives enough
For all; but Man, with arrogant selfishness,
Proud of his heaps, hoards up superfluous stores
Robb'd from his weaker fellows, starves the poor,
Or gives to pity what he owes to justice!

PIERS.

So I have heard our good friend John Ball preach.

ALICE.

My father, wherefore was John Ball imprisoned?
Was he not charitable, good, and pious?
I have heard him say that all mankind are brethren,
And that like brethren they should love each other;—
Was not that doctrine pious?

TYLER.

Rank sedition—
High treason, every syllable, my child!
The priests cry out on him for heresy,
The nobles all detest him as a rebel,
And this good man, this minister of Christ,
This man, the friend and brother of mankind,
Lingers in the dark dungeon!—my dear Alice,
Retire awhile.

(Exit ALICE.)

Piers, I would speak to thee
Even with a father's love! you are much with me,
And I believe do court my conversation;
Thou could'st not chuse thee forth a truer friend;
I would fain see thee happy, but I fear
Thy very virtues will destroy thy peace.
My daughter—she is young—not yet fifteen—
Piers, thou art generous, and thy youthful heart
Warm with affection; this close intimacy
Will ere long grow to love.

PIERS.

Suppose it so;
Were that an evil, Walter? She is mild
And cheerful, and industrious—now methinks
With such a partner life would be most happy!
Why would you warn me then of wretchedness?
Is there an evil that can harm our lot?
I have been told the virtuous must be happy,
And have believed it true; tell me, my friend,
What shall disturb the virtuous?

TYLER

Poverty—
A bitter foe?

PIERS.
Nay, you have often told me
That happiness does not consist in riches.

TYLER.

It is most true: but tell me, my dear boy,
Could'st thou be happy to behold thy wife
Pining with want?—the children of your loves
Clad in the squalid rags of wretchedness?
And when thy hard and unremitting toil
Had earn'd with pain a scanty recompense,
Could'st thou be patient when the law should rob thee,
And leave thee without bread and pennyless?

PIERS

It is a dreadful picture.

TYLER.

'Tis a true one.

PIERS.

But yet methinks our sober industry
Might drive away the danger, 'tis but little
That I could wish—food for our frugal meals,
Raiment, however homely, and a bed
To shield us from the night.

TYLER.

Thy honest reason
Could wish no more: but were it not most wretched
To want the coarse food for the frugal meal?
And by the orders of your merciless lord,
If you by chance were guilty of being poor,
To be turned out adrift to the bleak world,
Unhoused, unfriended?—Piers, I have not been idle,
I never ate the bread of indolence—
Could Alice be more thrifty than her mother?
Yet but with one child, and that one, how good
Thou knowest, I scarcely can provide the wants
Of nature: look at these wolves of the law,
They come to drain me of my hard earn'd wages.
I have already paid the heavy tax
Laid on the wool that clothes me—on my leather,
On all the needful articles of life!
And now three groats (and I work'd hard to earn them)
The Parliament demands—and I must pay them,
Forsooth, for liberty to wear my head.—

Enter Tax-gatherers.

COLLECTOR.

Three groats a head for all your family.

PIERS.

Why is this money gathered?—'tis a hard tax
On the poor labourer!—It can never be
That government should thus distress the people.
Go to the rich for money—honest labour
Ought to enjoy its fruits.

COLLECTOR.

The state wants money.
War is expensive—'tis a glorious war,
A war of honour, and must be supported.—
Three groats a head.
TYLER.

There, three for my own head,
Three for my wife's!—what will the state tax next?

COLLECTOR.

You have a daughter.

TYLER.

She is below the age—not yet fifteen.

COLLECTOR.

You would evade the tax.—

TYLER.

Sir Officer,
I have paid you fairly what the law demands.

(Alice and her Mother enter the Shop. The Tax-gathers go to her. One of them lays hold of her. She screams. TYLER goes in.)

COLLECTOR.

You say she's under age.

(ALICE screams again. TYLER knocks out the Tax-gatherer's Brains. His Companions fly.

PIERS.
A just revenge.

TYLER.

Most just indeed; but in the eye of the law
'Tis murder—and the murderer's lot is mine.

(PIERS goes out.)
(TYLER sits down mournfully.)

ALICE.

Fly, my dear father! let us leave this place
Before they raise pursuit.

TYLER.

Nay, nay, my child,
Flight would be useless—I have done my duty;
I have punish'd the brute insolence of lust,
And here will wait my doom.

WIFE.

Oh let us fly!
My husband, my dear husband!

ALICE.

Quit but this place,
And we may yet be safe, and happy too.

TYLER.

It would be useless, Alice—'twould but lengthen
A wretched life in fear.

(Cry without. )

Liberty! liberty!

(Enter Mob , HOB CARTER, &c.)
(Cry ) Liberty! liberty!— No Poll tax!— No War!

HOB.

We have broke our chains—we will arise in anger—
The mighty multitude shall trample down
The handful that oppress them.

TYLER

Have ye heard
So soon then of my murder?

HOB

Of your vengeance.
Piers ran throughout the village—told the news—
Cried out, to arms!—arm, arm for Liberty!
For Liberty and Justice!

TYLER

My good friends,
Heed well your danger, or be resolute;
Learn to laugh menaces and force to scorn,
Or leave me. I dare answer the bold deed—
Death must come once; return you to your homes,
Protect my wife and child, and on my grave
Write why I died; perhaps the time may come,
When honest Justice shall applaud the deed.

HOB

Nay, nay,—we are oppressed, and have too long
Knelt at our proud lords' feet—we have too long
Obey'd their orders—bow'd to their caprices—
Sweated for them the wearying summer's day,
Wasted for them the wages of our toil;
Fought for them, conquer'd for them, bled for them
Still to be trampled on and still despis'd;
But we have broke our chains.

TOM MILLER.

Piers is gone on
Thro' all the neighbouring villages, to spread
The glorious tidings.

HOB

He is hurried on
To Maidstone, to deliver good John Ball,
Our friend, our shepherd.

(Mob increases.)

TYLER

Friends and Countrymen,
Will ye then rise to save an honest man
From the fierce clutches of the bloody law?
Oh do not call to mind my private wrongs,
That the state drain'd my hard-earned pittance from me;
That, of his office proud, the foul Collector
Durst with lewd hand seize on my darling child,
Insult her maiden modesty, and force
A father's hand to vengeance; heed not this:
Think not, my countrymen, on private wrongs,
Remember what yourselves have long endured.
Think of the insults, wrongs, and contumelies,
Ye bear from your proud lords—that your hard toil
Manures their fertile fields—you plow the earth,
You sow the corn, you reap the ripen’d harvest,—
They riot on the produce!—That, like beasts,
They sell you with their land—claim all the fruits
Which the kindly earth produces as their own.
The privilege, forsooth, of noble birth!
On, on to Freedom; feel but your own strength,
Be but resolved, and these destructive tyrants
Shall shrink before your vengeance.

HOB

On to London—
The tidings fly before us—the court trembles—
Liberty!—Vengeance!—Justice!

END OF THE FIRST ACT

Robert Southey
Wat Tyler - Act II

ACT II.

SCENE— BLACKHEATH.

TYLER, HOB, &c.

SONG.

' When Adam delv'd, and Eve span,
' Who was then the gentleman?'

Wretched is the infant's lot,
Born within the straw-roof'd cot!
Be he generous, wise, or brave,
He must only be a slave.
Long, long labour, little rest,
Still to toil to be oppress'd;
Drain'd by taxes of his store,
Punish'd next for being poor;
This is the poor wretch's lot,
Born within the straw-roof'd cot.

While the peasant works— to sleep;
What the peasant sows— to reap;
On the couch of ease to lie,
Rioting in revelry;
Be he villain, be he fool,
Still to hold despotic rule,
Trampling on his slaves with scorn;
This is to be nobly born.

' When Adam delv'd, and Eve span,
' Who was then the gentleman?'

JACK STRAW.

The mob are up in London— the proud courtiers
Begin to tremble.

TOM MILLER.

Aye, aye, 'tis time to tremble;
Who'll plow their fields, who'll do their drudgery now?
And work like horses, to give them the harvest?

JACK STRAW.

I only wonder we lay quiet so long.
We had always the same strength, and we deserved
The ills we met with for not using it.

HOB.

Why do we fear those animals called lords?
What is there in the name to frighten us?
Is not my arm as mighty as a Baron's?

Enter PIERS and JOHN BALL.

PIERS (to TYLER).

Have I done well, my father?— I remember'd
This good man lay in prison.

TYLER.

My dear child,
Most well; the people rise for liberty,
And their first deed should be to break the chains
That bind the virtuous:— O thou honest priest—
How much has thou endured!

JOHN BALL.
Why aye, my friend!
These squalid rags bespeak what I have suffered.
I was revil’d— insulted— left to languish
In a damp dungeon; but I bore it cheerily—
My heart was glad— for I have done my duty.
I pitied my oppressors, and I sorrowed
For the poor men of England.

TYLER.

They have felt
Their strength—look round this heath! 'tis thronged with men.
Ardent for freedom; mighty is the event
That waits their fortune.

JOHN BALL.

I would fain address them.

TYLER.

Do so, my friend, and teach to them their duty;
Remind them of their long withholden rights.
What ho there! silence!

PIERS.

Silence there, my friends,
This good man would address you.

HOB.

Aye, aye, hear him—
He is no mealy mouthed court orator,
To flatter vice, and pamper lordly pride.
JOHN BALL.

Friends! Brethren! for ye are my brethren all;
Englishmen met in arms to advocate
The cause of freedom! hear me! pause awhile
In the career of vengeance; it is true
I am a priest; but, as these rags may speak,
Not one who riots in the poor man's spoil,
Or trades with his religion. I am one
Who preach the law of Christ, and in my life,
Would practice what he taught. The son of God
Came not to you in power: humble in mien,
Lowly in heart, the man of Nazareth
Preach'd mercy, justice, love: 'Woe unto ye,
Ye that are rich:—if that ye would be saved,
Sell that ye have, and give unto the poor.'
So taught the Saviour: oh, my honest friends!
Have ye not felt the strong indignant throb
Of justice in your bosoms, to behold
The lordly Baron feasting on your spoils?
Have you not in your hearts arraign'd the lot
That gave him on the couch of luxury
To pillow his head, and pass the festive day
In sportive feasts, and ease, and revelry?
Have you not often in your conscience ask'd
Why is the difference, wherefore should that man,
No worthier than myself, thus lord it over me,
And bid me labour, and enjoy the fruits?
The God within your breasts has argued thus!
The voice of truth has murmur'd; came ye not
As helpless to the world? Shines not the sun
With equal ray on both?— Do ye not feel
The self same winds of heaven as keenly parch ye?
Abundant is the earth—the Sire of all,
Saw and pronounc'd that it was very good.
Look round: the vernal fields smile with new flowers,
The budding orchard perfumes the soft breeze,
And the green corn waves to the passing gale.
There is enough for all, but your proud Baron
Stands up, and arrogant of strength exclaims,
'I am a Lord—by nature I am noble:
These fields are mine, for I was born to them,
I was born in the castle—you, poor wretches,
Whelp’d in the cottage, are by birth my slaves.’
Almighty God! such blasphemies are utter’d!
Almighty God! such blasphemies believ’d!

TOM MILLER.

This is something like a sermon.

JACK STRAW.

Where’s the bishop
Would tell you truths like these?

HOB.

There was never a bishop among all the apostles.

JOHN BALL.

My brethren!

PIERS.

Silence, the good priest speaks.

JOHN BALL.

My brethren, these are truths, and weighty ones:
Ye are all equal: nature made ye so.
Equality is your birth-right;—when I gaze
On the proud palace, and behold one man
In the blood-purpled robes of royalty,
Feasting at ease, and lording over millions,
Then turn me to the hut of poverty,
And see the wretched lab'rer worn with toil,
Divide his scanty morsel with his infants,
I sicken, and indignant at the sight,
'Blush for the patience of humanity.'

JACK STRAW.

We will assert our rights.

TOM MILLER.

We'll trample down
These insolent oppressors.

JOHN BALL.

In good truth
Ye have cause for anger: but, my honest friends,
Is it revenge or justice that ye seek?

MOB.

Justice, justice!

JOHN BALL.

Oh then remember mercy;
And though your proud oppressors spar'd not you,
Shew you excel them in humanity.
They will use every art to disunite you,
To conquer separately, by stratagem,
Whom in a mass they fear— but be ye firm—
Boldly demand your long-forgotten rights,
Your sacred, your inalienable freedom—
Be bold—be resolute—be merciful!
And while you spurn the hated name of slaves,
Shew you are men!
MOB.

Long live our honest priest!

JACK STRAW.

He shall be made archbishop.

JOHN BALL.

My brethren, I am plain John Ball, your friend,
Your equal: by the law of Christ enjoined
To serve you, not command.

JACK STRAW.

March we for London.

TYLER.

Mark me, my friends—we rise for liberty—
Justice shall be our guide: let no man dare
To plunder in the tumult.

MOB

Lead us on—
Liberty!—Justice!

(Exeunt, with cries of Liberty— no Poll Tax — no War.)

SCENE CHANGES TO THE TOWER.

KING RICHARD, ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,
SIR JOHN TRESILIAN,
WALWORTH, PHILPOT.

KING

What must we do? the danger grows more imminent—
The mob increases—

PHILPOT.

Every moment brings
Fresh tidings of our peril.

KING.

It were well
To yield them what they ask.

ARCHBISHOP.

Aye, that my liege
Were politic. Go boldly forth to meet them,
Grant all they ask—however wild and ruinous—
Mean time the troops you have already summoned,
Will gather round them. Then my Christian power
Absolves you of your promise.

WALWORTH.

Were but their ringleaders cut off—the rabble
Would soon disperse.

PHILPOT.

United in a mass
There's nothing can resist them—once divide them,
And they will fall an easy sacrifice.

ARCHBISHOP.

Lull them by promises—bespeak them fair—
Go forth, my liege—spare not, if need requires,
A solemn oath, to ratify the treaty.

KING

I dread their fury.

ARCHBISHOP.

'Tis a needless dread,
There is divinity about your person;
It is the sacred privilege of Kings,
Howe'er they act, to render no account
To man. The people have been taught this lesson,
Nor can they soon forget it.

KING.

I will go—
I will submit to everything they ask;
My day of triumph will arrive at last.

(Shouts without.)

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

The mob are at the city gates.
ARCHBISHOP.

Haste, haste,
Address them ere too late. I'll remain here,
For they detest me much.

(Shouts again. )

Enter another Messenger.

MESSENGER.

The Londoners have opened the city gates,
The rebels are admitted.

KING.

Fear then must give me courage; my Lord Mayor,
Come you with me.

(Exeunt. Shouts without.)

SCENE— SMITHFIELD.

WAT TYLER, JOHN BALL, PIERS, &c. Mob.

PIERS.

So far triumphant are we: how these nobles,
These petty tyrants, who so long oppress'd us,
Shrink at the first resistance!

HOB.

They were powerful
Only because we fondly thought them so.
Where is Jack Straw?

TYLER.

Jack Straw is gone to the tower
To seize the king, and so to end resistance.

JOHN BALL.

It was well judg'd: fain would I spare the shedding
Of human blood: gain we that royal puppet,
And all will follow fairly: depriv'd of him,
The nobles lose their pretext, nor will dare
Rebel against the people's majesty.

Enter Herald.

HERALD.

Richard the Second, by the grace of God,
Of England, Ireland, France, and Scotland, King,
And of the town of Berwick upon Tweed,
Would parley with Wat Tyler.

TYLER.

Let him know
Wat Tyler is in Smithfield.

(Exit Herald.)

I will parley
With this young monarch; as he comes to me
Trusting my honour, on your lives I charge you
Let none attempt to harm him.
JOHN BALL

The faith of courts
Is but a weak dependence! You are honest—
And better is it even to die the victim
Of credulous honesty, than live preserved
By the cold policy that still suspects.

Enter KING, WALWORTH, PHILPOT, &c.

KING.

I would speak to thee, Wat Tyler: bid the mob
Retire awhile.

PIERS.

Nay, do not go alone—
Let me attend you.

TYLER.

Wherefore should I fear?
Am I not arm'd with a just cause?—retire,
And I will boldly plead the cause of Freedom.

(Advances.)

KING.

Tyler, why have you kill'd my officer?
And led my honest subjects from their homes,
Thus to rebel against the Lord's anointed?

TYLER.
Because they were oppress'd.

KING.

Was this the way
To remedy the ill?— you should have tried
By milder means—petition'd at the throne—
The throne will always listen to petitions.

TYLER.

King of England,
Petitioning for pity is most weak,
The sovereign people ought to demand justice.
I kill'd your officer, for his lewd hand
Insulted a maid's modesty: your subjects
I lead to rebel against the Lord's anointed,
Because his ministers have made him odious:
His yoke is heavy, and his burden grievous.
Why do we carry on this fatal war,
To force upon the French a king they hate;
Tearing our young men from their peaceful homes;
Forcing his hard-earn'd fruits from the honest peasant;
Distressing us to desolate our neighbours?
Why is this ruinous poll tax imposed,
But to support your court's extravagance,
And your mad title to the crown of France?
Shall we sit tamely down beneath these evils
Petitioning for pity?
King of England!
Why are we sold like cattle in your markets—
Deprived of every privilege of man?
Must we lie tamely at our tyrant's feet,
And, like your spaniels, lick the hand that beats us?
You sit at ease in your gay palaces,
The costly banquet courts your appetite,
Sweet music soothes your slumbers; we the while,
Scarce by hard toil can earn a little food,
And sleep scarce shelter'd from the cold night wind:
Whilst your wild projects wrest the little from us
Which might have cheer'd the wintry hour of age:
The Parliament for ever asks more money:
We toil and sweat for money for your taxes:
Where is the benefit, what food reap we
From all the councils of your government?
Think you that we should quarrel with the French?
What boots to us your victories, your glory?
We pay, we fight, you profit at your ease.
Do you not claim the country as your own?
Do you not call the venison of the forest,
The birds of heaven your own?—prohibiting us,
Even tho' in want of food, to seize the prey
Which nature offers?—King! is all this just?
Think you we do not feel the wrongs we suffer?
The hour of retribution is at hand,
And tyrants tremble—mark me, King of England.

WALWORTH.

(Comes behind him, and stabs him.)

Insolent rebel, threatening the King!

PIERS.

Vengeance! vengeance!

HOB.

Seize the King.

KING.

I must be bold. (Advancing.)
My friends and loving subjects,
I will grant all you ask: you shall be free—
The tax shall be repeal'd— all, all you wish.
Your leader menaced me, he deserv'd his fate.
Quiet your angers; on my royal word
Your grievances shall all be done away.
Your vassalage abolish'd.—A free pardon
Allow'd to all: so help me God it shall be.

JOHN BALL.

Revenge, my brethren, beseems not Christians.
Send us these terms sign'd with your seal of state.
We will await in peace: deceive us not.—
Act justly, so to excuse your late foul deed.

KING.

The charter shall be drawn out: on mine honour,
All shall be justly done.

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

Robert Southey
ACT III.

SCENE—SMITHFIELD.

PIERS (meeting JOHN BALL.)

You look disturb’d, my father?

JOHN BALL.

Piers, I am so.
Jack Straw has forced the Tower: seized the Archbishop,
And beheaded him.

PIERS.

The curse of insurrection!

JOHN BALL.

Aye, Piers! our nobles level down their vassals—
Keep them at endless labour like their brutes,
Degrading every faculty by servitude:
Repressing all the energy of the mind.
We must not wonder then, that like wild beasts,
When they have burst their chains, with brutal rage
They revenge them on their tyrants.

PIERS.

This Archbishop!
He was oppressive to his humble vassals:
Proud, haughty, avaricious.—
JOHN BALL.

A true high-priest!
Preaching humility with his mitre on!
Praising up alms and Christian charity
Even whilst his unforgiving hand distress'd
His honest tenants.

PIERS.

He deserv'd his fate then.

JOHN BALL.

Justice can never link with cruelty.
Is there among the catalogue of crimes
A sin so black that only Death can expiate?
Will Reason never rouse her from her slumbers,
And darting thro' the veil her eagle eye,
See in the sable garment of the law
Revenge conceal'd? —This high priest has been haughty—
He has oppress'd his vassals: tell me, Piers,
Does his Death remedy the ills he caused?
Were it not better to repress his power
Of doing wrong—that so his future life
Might expiate the evils of the past,
And benefit mankind?

PIERS.

But must not vice
Be punished?

JOHN BALL.

Is not punishment revenge?
The momentary violence of anger
May be excus'd: the indignant heart will throb
Against oppression, and the outstretch'd arm
Resent its injured feelings: the Collector
Insulted Alice, and roused the keen emotions
Of a fond father. Tyler murder'd him.

PIERS.
Murder'd!—a most harsh word.

JOHN BALL.

Yes, murder'd him:
His mangled feelings prompted the bad act,
And Nature will almost commend the deed
That Justice blames: but will the awaken'd feelings
Plead with their heart-emoving eloquence
For the cool deliberate murder of Revenge?
Would you, Piers, in your calmer hour of reason
Condemn an erring brother to be slain?
Cut him at once from all the joys of life,
All hopes of reformation! to revenge
The deed his punishment cannot recall?
My blood boil'd in me at the fate of Tyler,
Yet I revenged not.

PIERS.

Oh my Christian father!
They would not argue thus humanely on us,
Were we within their power.

JOHN BALL.

I know they would not!
But we must pity them that they are vicious,
Not imitate their vice.
PIERS.

Alas, poor Tyler!
I do repent me much that I stood back,
When he advanced fearless in rectitude
To meet these royal assassins.

JOHN BALL.

Not for myself,
Tho' I have lost an honest virtuous friend,
Mourn I the death of Tyler: he was one
Gifted with the strong energy of mind,
Quick to perceive the right, and prompt to act
When Justice needed: he would listen to me
With due attention, yet not yielding lightly
What had to him seem'd good; severe in virtue
He awed the ruder people whom he led
By his stern rectitude.

PIERS.

Witness that day
When they destroy'd the palace of the Gaunt;
And hurl'd the wealth his avarice had amass'd,
Amid the fire: the people, fierce in zeal,
Threw in the flames the wretch whose selfish hand
Purloin'd amid the tumult.

JOHN BALL.

I lament
The death of Tyler, for my country's sake.
I shudder lest posterity enslav'd
Should rue his murder!—who shall now control
The giddy multitude, blind to their own good,
And listening with avidity to the tale
Of courtly falsehood!
PIERS.

The King must perform
His plighted promise.

(Cry without) —The Charter!—the Charter!

(Enter Mob and Herald.)

TOM MILLER.

Read it out—read it out.

HOB.

Aye, aye, let's hear the Charter.

HERALD.

Richard Plantagenet, by the grace of God,
King of England, Ireland, France, Scotland,
and the town of Berwick upon Tweed, to all
whom it may concern, These presents,
Whereas our loving subjects have complained
to us of the heavy burdens they endure,
particularly from our late enacted
poll-tax; and whereas they have risen in
arms against our officers, and demanded the
abolition of personal slavery, vassalage, and
manorial rights; we, ever ready in our sovereign
mercy to listen to the petitions of our
loving subjects, do annul all these grievances.

MOB.
Huzza! long live the king!

HERALD.

And do of our royal mercy, grant a free pardon to all who may have been anyways concerned in the late insurrections. All this shall be faithfully performed on our royal word. So help us God.

God save the King.

(Loud and repeated shouts.)

HERALD.

Now then depart in quiet to your homes.

JOHN BALL.

Nay, my good friend—the people will remain Embodied peaceably, till Parliament Confirm the royal charter: tell your king so: We will await the Charter's confirmation, Meanwhile comporting ourselves orderly As peaceful citizens, not risen in tumult, But to redress their evils.

Exit Herald, &c. HOB, PIERS, and JOHN BALL, remain.

HOB.

'Twas well order'd.

I place but little trust in courtly faith.
JOHN BALL.

We must remain embodied; else the king
Will plunge again in royal luxury;
And when the storm of danger is past over,
Forget his promises.

HOB.

Aye, like an aguish sinner,
He'll promise to repent when the fit's on him,
When well recover'd, laugh at his own terrors.

PIERS.

Oh! I am grieved that we must gain so little!
Why are not all these empty ranks abolish'd;
King, slave, and lord, 'ennobl'd into MAN?'
Are we not equal all?—have you not told me
Equality is the sacred right of man,
Inalienable, tho' by force withheld?

JOHN BALL.

Even so: but Piers, my frail and fallible judgment
Knows hardly to decide if it be right,
Peaceably to return; content with little,
With this half restitution of our rights,
Or boldly to proceed through blood and slaughter,
Till we should all be equal and all happy.
I chose the milder way:—perhaps I erred.

PIERS.

I fear me—by the mass, the unsteady people
Are flocking homewards! how the multitude
Diminishes!
JOHN BALL.

Go thou, my son, and stay them.
Carter, do you exert your influence.
All depends on their stay: my mind is troubl'd,
And I would fain compose my thoughts for action.

(Exeunt HOB and PIERS.)

Father of mercies! I do fear me much
That I have err'd: thou gav'st my ardent mind
To pierce the mists of superstitious falsehood;—
Gav'st me to know the truth. I should have urg'd it
Thro' every op, perhaps,
The seemly voice of pity has deceiv'd me,
And all this mighty movement ends in ruin!
I fear me, I have been like the weak leech,
Who, sparing to cut deep, with cruel mercy
Mangles his patient without curing him.

(Great tumult.)

What means this tumult? hark! the clang of arms!
God of eternal justice! the false monarch
Has broke his plighted vow!

Enter PIERS, wounded.

PIERS.

Fly, fly, my father—the perjur'd king—fly! fly!

JOHN BALL.

Nay, nay, my child—I dare abide my fate,
Let me bind up thy wounds.
PIERS.

'Tis useless succour,
They seek thy life; fly, fly, my honour'd father.
Fain would I die in peace to hope thee safe.
I shall soon join thee, Tyler!—they are murdering
Our unsuspecting brethren: half unarm'd,
Trusting too fondly to the tyrant's vows,
They were dispersing:—the streets swim with blood.
O! save thyself.

Enter Soldiers.

SOLDIER.

This is that old seditious heretic.

(Seizes JOHN BALL.)

SECOND SOLDIER.

And here the young spawn of rebellion;
My orders ar'n't to spare him.

(Stabs PIERS.)

Come, you old stirrer-up of insurrection,
You bell-wether of the mob—you ar'n't to die
So easily.

(They lead off JOHN BALL—the tumult increases—Mob fly across the Stage—the Troops pursue them—loud cries and shouts.)
SCENE—WESTMINSTER HALL.

KING, WALWORTH, PHILPOT, SIR JOHN TRESILIAN, &c.

WALWORTH.

My liege, 'twas wisely order'd to destroy
The dunghill rabble, but take prisoner
That old seditious priest: his strange wild notions
Of this equality, when well exposed,
Will create ridicule, and shame the people
Of their late tumults.

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

Aye, there's nothing like
A fair free open trial, where the king
Can chuse his jury and appoint his judges.

KING.

Walworth, I must thank you for my deliverance;
'Twas a bold deed to stab him in the parley!
Kneel down, and rise a knight, Sir William Walworth.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

I left them hotly at it. Smithfield smoked
With the rebels' blood: your troops fought loyally,
There's not a man of them will lend an ear
To pity.

SIR WILLIAM WALWORTH.
Is John Ball secur'd?

MESSENGER.

They have seiz'd him.

Enter Guards with JOHN BALL.

GUARD.

We've brought the old villain.

SECOND GUARD.

An old mischief-maker—
Why there's fifteen hundred of the mob are kill'd,
All thro' his preaching!

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

Prisoner! are you the arch-rebel, John Ball?

JOHN BALL.

I am John Ball; but I am not a rebel.
Take ye the name, who, arrogant in strength,
Rebel against the people's sovereignty.

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

John Ball, you are accus'd of stirring up
The poor deluded people to rebellion;
Not having the fear of God and of the king
Before your eyes; of preaching up strange notions
Heretical and treasonous; such as saying
That kings have not a right from heaven to govern;
That all mankind are equal; and that ranks
And the distinctions of society,
Aye, and the sacred rights of property
Are evil and oppressive:—plead you guilty
To this most heavy charge?

JOHN BALL.

If it be guilt—
To preach what you are pleas'd to call strange notions.
That all mankind as brethren must be equal;
That privileg'd orders of society
Are evil and oppressive; that the right
Of property is a juggl[e] to deceive
The poor whom you oppress;—I plead me guilty.

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

It is against the custom of this court
That the prisoner should plead guilty.

JOHN BALL.

Why then put you
The needless question?—Sir Judge, let me save
The vain and empty insult of a trial.
What I have done, that I dare justify.

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

Did you not tell the mob they were oppress'd,
And preach upon the equality of man;
With evil intent thereby to stir them up
To tumult and rebellion?
JOHN BALL.

That I told them
That all mankind are equal, is most true:
Ye came as helpless infants to the world:
Ye feel alike the infirmities of nature;
And at last moulder into common clay.
Why then these vain distinctions!—bears not the earth
Food in abundance?—must your granaries
O'erflow with plenty, while the poor man starves?
Sir Judge, why sit you there clad in your furs?
Why are your cellars stor'd with choicest wines?
Your larders hung with dainties, while your vassal,
As virtuous, and as able too by nature,
Tho' by your selfish tyranny depriv'd
Of mind's improvement, shivers in his rags,
And starves amid the plenty he creates.
I have said this is wrong, and I repeat it—
And there will be a time when this great truth
Shall be confess'd—be felt by all mankind.
The electric truth shall run from man to man,
And the blood-cemented pyramid of greatness
Shall fall before the flash!

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN

Audacious rebel!
How darest thou insult this sacred court,
Blaspheming all the dignities of rank?
How could the Government be carried on
Without the sacred orders of the king,
And the nobility?

JOHN BALL.

Tell me, Sir Judge,
What does the government avail the peasant?
Would not he plow his field and sow the corn,
Aye, and in peace enjoy the harvest too:
Would not the sunshine and the dews descend,
Tho' neither King nor Parliament existed?
Do your Court Politics ought matter him?
Would he be warring even unto the death
With his French neighbours?—Charles and
Richard contend;
The people fight and suffer:—think ye, Sirs,
If neither country had been cursed with a chief,
The peasants would have quarrell'd?

KING.

This is treason!
The patience of the court has been insulted—
Condemn the foul mouth'd, contumacious rebel.

SIR JOHN TRESILIAN.

John Ball, whereas you are accused before us
Of stirring up the people to rebellion,
And preaching to them strange and dangerous doctrines;
And whereas your behavior to the court
Has been most insolent and contumacious;
Insulting Majesty—and since you have pleaded
Guilty to all these charges; I condemn you
To death: you shall be hanged by the neck,
But not till you are dead—your bowels opened—
Your heart torn out and burnt before your face—
Your traitorous head be sever'd from your body—
Your body quartered, and exposed upon
The city gates—a terrible example—
And the Lord God have mercy on your soul!

JOHN BALL.

Why be it so. I can smile at your vengeance,
For I am arm'd with rectitude of soul.
The truth, which all my life I have divulg'd
And am now doom'd in torment to expire for,
Shall still survive—the destin'd hour must come,
When it shall blaze with sun-surpassing splendor,
And the dark mists of prejudice and falsehood
Fade in its strong effulgence. Flattery's incense
No more shall shadow round the gore-dyed throne;
That altar of oppression, fed with rites,
More savage than the Priests of Moloch taught,
Shall be consumed amid the fire of Justice;
The ray of truth shall emanate around,
And the whole world be lighted!

KING.

Drag him hence—
Away with him to death! order the troops
Now to give quarter and make prisoners—
Let the blood-reeking sword of war be sheathed,
That the law may take vengeance on the rebels.

THE END.

Robert Southey
Winter

A wrinkled crabbed man they picture thee,
Old Winter, with a rugged beard as grey
As the long moss upon the apple-tree;
Blue-lipt, an icedrop at thy sharp blue nose,
Close muffled up, and on thy dreary way
Plodding alone through sleet and drifting snows.
They should have drawn thee by the high-heapt hearth,
Old Winter! seated in thy great armed chair,
Watching the children at their Christmas mirth;
Or circled by them as thy lips declare
Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire,
Or troubled spirit that disturbs the night,
Pausing at times to rouse the mouldering fire,
Or taste the old October brown and bright.

Robert Southey
Written On Sunday Morning

Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
I to the Woodlands wend, and there
In lovely Nature see the GOD OF LOVE.
The swelling organ's peal
Wakes not my soul to zeal,
Like the wild music of the wind-swept grove.
The gorgeous altar and the mystic vest
Rouse not such ardor in my breast,
As where the noon-tide beam
Flash'd from the broken stream,
Quick vibrates on the dazzled sight;
Or where the cloud-suspended rain
Sweeps in shadows o'er the plain;
Or when reclining on the clift's huge height
I mark the billows burst in silver light.

Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
I to the Woodlands shall repair,
Feed with all Natures charms mine eyes,
And hear all Natures melodies.
The primrose bank shall there dispense
Faint fragrance to the awaken'd sense,
The morning beams that life and joy impart
Shall with their influence warm my heart.
And the full tear that down my cheek will steal,
Shall speak the prayer of praise I feel!

Go thou and seek the House of Prayer!
I to the woodlands bend my way
And meet RELIGION there.
She needs not haunt the high-arch'd dome to pray
Where storied windows dim the doubtful day:
With LIBERTY she loves to rove.
Wide o'er the heathy hill or cowslip'd dale;
Or seek the shelter of the embowering grove,
Sweet are these scenes to her, and when the night
Pours in the north her silver streams of light,
She woos Reflexion in the silent gloom,
And ponders on the world to come.