

# CRITICISM

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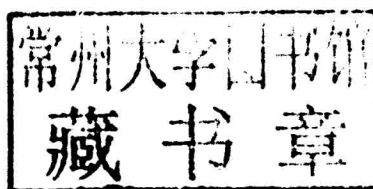
170

# Poetry Criticism

*Criticism of the Works  
of the Most Significant and Widely  
Studied Poets of World Literature*

## Volume 170

*Lawrence J. Trudeau*  
Editor



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## Preface

**P**oetry Criticism (PC) presents significant criticism of the world's greatest poets and provides supplementary biographical and bibliographical material to guide the interested reader to a greater understanding of the genre and its creators. This series was developed in response to suggestions from librarians serving high school, college, and public library patrons, who had noted a considerable number of requests for critical material on poems and poets. Although major poets and literary movements are covered in such Gale Literary Criticism series as *Contemporary Literary Criticism* (CLC), *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism* (TCLC), *Nineteenth-Century Literature Criticism* (NCLC), *Literature Criticism from 1400 to 1800* (LC), and *Classical and Medieval Literature Criticism* (CMLC), librarians perceived the need for a series devoted solely to poets and poetry.

### Scope of the Series

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- The **Introduction** contains background information that introduces the reader to the author and the critical debates surrounding his or her work.
- The list of **Principal Works** is ordered chronologically by date of first publication and lists the most important works by the author. The first section comprises poetry collections, book-length poems, and theoretical works by the author about poetry. The second section gives information on other major works by the author. In the case of authors who do not write in English, an English translation of the title is provided as an aid to the reader; the translation is either a published translated title or a free translation provided by the compiler of the entry. In the case of such authors whose works have been translated into English, the **Principal English Translations** focuses primarily on twentieth-century translations, selecting those works most commonly considered the best by critics.
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Glen, Heather. "Blake's Criticism of Moral Thinking in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." *Interpreting Blake*. Ed. Michael Phillips. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1978. 32-69. Rpt. in *Poetry Criticism*. Ed. Michelle Lee. Vol. 63. Detroit: Gale, 2005. 34-51. Print.

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# Felicia Hemans

## 1793-1835

(Born Felicia Dorothea Browne) English poet, playwright, and critic.

### INTRODUCTION

Felicia Hemans is regarded as an important Romantic poet who brought a feminine perspective to the movement. She published more than twenty collections, book-length poems, and works of dramatic verse during a career that began in her teens and spanned twenty-five years. Her early verse frequently addressed such subjects as nationalism and war while her later poems dealt with women's issues and religion. Despite engaging demanding themes, she was often cast as a writer of home and hearth, a poetess whose best work explored, and rarely criticized, domesticity.

Although her poetry was published in gift books and other large-circulation periodicals, Hemans earned acclaim during her lifetime from serious reviewers and fellow poets. In Great Britain and North America, her popularity increased after her death. Her works were often anthologized, taught in schools, and set to music, making them a popular source of entertainment in the drawing rooms and parlors of the middle classes. Her reputation as a domestic poet helps to account for the neglect her works suffered during most of the twentieth century. Recently, however, a growing body of scholarship has led to the recognition of Hemans as an incisive critic of gender and a poet whose deceptively conventional verse disguises passionate meditations on politics and history.

### BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Born on 25 September 1793 in Liverpool, England, Felicia Dorothea Browne was the fifth child of George Browne, an Irish immigrant of German and perhaps Italian ancestry, and Felicity Wagner, the daughter of a successful English merchant. In 1799, her family's wine-importing business went bankrupt, and the next year, when Felicia was seven, the family moved from Liverpool to North Wales, where the poet remained for much of her life.

Educated by her mother, who encouraged her to pursue her literary ambitions, Felicia developed a voracious reading habit, as well as an extraordinary gift for memorizing poetry. Her younger sister, Harriett, recalled her lounging in an apple tree deep in study of William Shakespeare's plays. In a letter, quoted by Henry F. Chorley (1836; see

Further Reading), Harriett also wrote, "I do not think I ever saw her with only one book within reach; she was always surrounded by five or six, on every diversity of topic." In 1808, the fourteen-year-old Felicia published her first two volumes of poetry. Her readers included sixteen-year-old Percy Bysshe Shelley, who initiated a correspondence with her that her mother soon stopped.

In 1811, Browne traveled to Quebec in search of employment and never returned. Committed to helping support her mother and siblings, Felicia began publishing energetically. In 1812, in addition to producing another volume of poems, *The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems*, she married Captain Alfred Hemans, an army officer roughly twelve years her senior. The couple briefly moved to Daventry so that Captain Hemans could join the Northampton Militia, but after a year, the militia disbanded and the Hemanses returned to Wales with their first son, Arthur; four more sons—George, Claude, Henry, and Charles—were born during the next six years. Just before Charles's birth in 1818, Captain Hemans departed, ostensibly for his health. He eventually traveled to Rome and did not return. The reason for the couple's separation is unknown, though friends, among them the author and literary critic Maria Jane Jewsbury, later hinted that Hemans's earnings and ambitions as a writer humiliated her husband. In his absence, she relied on her mother, as well as her siblings, to help manage the household and raise her sons.

The early 1820s were Hemans's happiest years, both personally and professionally. She wrote major poems on Italy, Greece, and Wales, secured Lord Byron's publisher John Murray for eight books, and placed the first of many poems in the *New Monthly Magazine* and *Blackwood's Magazine*. In June 1821, her long poem *Dartmoor* won a Royal Society of Literature prize. She also wrote dramas and the transatlantic epic *The Forest Sanctuary* (1825) during this period. In 1826, her mother fell ill, and she died the following January. Almost immediately thereafter, Hemans's familial support crumbled: her sister married, her brother moved to Ireland, her two eldest sons went to live with their father in Rome, and the family's home in Wales was sold. In the following years, Hemans grew increasingly unwell. She lived in Wavertree, a Liverpool suburb, with her youngest children and, in 1831, moved to Dublin to be close to her brother and the family of new admirer R. P. Graves, a student at Trinity College. She had extended her social circle to include intellectual visitors and other literary women, among them Jewsbury and Joanna Baillie. Hemans visited Edinburgh twice, spending

time with Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, and spent several weeks in the summer of 1830 at Rydal Mount with William Wordsworth, but she never regained the security she had treasured in Wales. By 1834, she was unable to travel but compiled two final, substantial volumes for publisher William Blackwood. She battled fever throughout the winter and died on 16 May 1835, presumably of tuberculosis complicated by scarlet fever. Later the same year, in his poem "Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg," Wordsworth paid homage to Hemans as "that holy Spirit, / Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep."

## MAJOR POETIC WORKS

Hemans's 1808 debut volumes, *Poems* and *England and Spain*, already signaled a writer of evolving talent and ambition. Whereas *Poems* features shorter, simply metered verse, *England and Spain* consists of a single twenty-eight-page poem of 530 couplets. Deemed "a fierce celebration . . . of the alliance against Napoleon, with a long view of British history as synonymous with glorious warfare" by scholar Susan J. Wolfson (2009; see Further Reading), the poem implores the apostrophized Liberty and Chivalry to do away with France, an "iron scepter, o'er mankind," in Hemans's words. Upon reading the work, Matthew Nicholson, a patron of *Poems*, urged Hemans to avoid writing about war, a topic he viewed as unladylike. Undeterred, she wrote more martial lyrics for her third collection, ironically titled *The Domestic Affections*. Best known for military poems boasting such titles as "War and Peace," "War-Song of the Spanish Patriots," and "To My Younger Brother, on His Return from Spain," the volume oscillates between praising and questioning patriotism. It also highlights the ways in which the domestic overlaps with the military by focusing on characters such as soldiers' mothers and Hemans's own brother, who fought in Spain and Portugal during the Peninsular War (1808-14).

Hemans's fascination with militaristic and patriotic themes continued throughout the decade. Her book-length poem *Modern Greece* (1817) compares the country's past and present through a series of nonlinear glimpses of geography and archaeology. Occasionally, the work introduces a human subject, most notably an exiled Greek patriot struggling to find happiness in the East. Hemans's next original collection, *Tales, and Historic Scenes, in Verse* (1819), gathers additional historical, conflict-ridden narratives. The volume includes the miniature epic "The Abencerrage," three cantos that chronicle a tragic romance set against the fall of Granada to the Christians in 1492.

The book-length historical verse tragedies *The Siege of Valencia* and *The Vespers of Palermo* were both published in 1823. *The Vespers of Palermo* was staged that year as a play to mixed reviews. In the mid-1820s, Hemans turned to shorter compositions that largely focused on feminine subjects. One major exception, published in 1826, was

"Casabianca." An account of a thirteen-year-old who died during the 1798 Battle of the Nile, the poem became one of Hemans's most anthologized and frequently taught works. *Records of Woman* (1828) remains her most celebrated collection. Containing traditional lyrics and odes, monologs and elegies, the volume imagines the female experience through a series of historical characters, including queens, peasants, writers, and even a mother and infant preserved in the ash of a volcanic eruption, whom Hemans memorialized in "The Image in Lava." One of the collection's most famous poems, "Properzia Rossi," depicts a suicidal sculptor as she revels in artistic creation while suffering over the unrequited love in her life.

In 1834, the year before her death, Hemans published *National Lyrics, and Songs for Music*, which includes "The Last Song of Sappho," and *Scenes and Hymns of Life, with Other Religious Poems*. The latter borrows heavily from the themes of Wordsworth, to whom Hemans dedicated the volume with "fervent gratitude." Poems such as "Cathedral Hymn" and "Wood Walk and Hymn" connect Hemans's feminine concerns with the religious and spiritual observations for which Wordsworth was best known. At the time of her death, Hemans had not yet completed another long poem to be titled "The Christian Temple," in which she intended to combine her early political preoccupations with her newfound interest in the Romantic poetry of Wordsworth.

## CRITICAL RECEPTION

Critics writing about Hemans during her lifetime and for some time thereafter focused predominantly on her gender. In an article in the October 1820 *Quarterly Review*, William Gifford, noted that the poet "is a woman in whom talent and learning have not produced the ill effects so often attributed to them; her faculties seem to sit meekly on her, at least we can trace no ill humour or affectation." In the June 1847 issue of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, the Scottish poet George Gilfillan claimed that the charm of Hemans's poems "springs from their unstudied and extempore character. This, too, is in fine keeping with the sex of the writer."

Given these standard reactions, many contemporary scholars have refuted the notion that Hemans was a docile, domesticated woman. In her study of "The Image in Lava," Kathleen Lundeen (2003) contended that the female characters in Hemans's verse "attain a moral victory over patriarchal domination through what could be described as hyper-domesticity." Lundeen observed that the mother in "The Image in Lava" "redefines femininity as courage, determination, and fearlessness, and thus refutes the assumption that domesticity is by nature weak."

Instead of feminizing Hemans, others, including Nanora Sweet (2003), have proposed that she feminizes the history



occurring around her and, by her influential writings, the history that is to come. For readers like Barbara Taylor (2004), gender is secondary to Hemans's alertness to current events and intellectual life and in no way hampers her full participation in the political theater of her time. Beginning with her absorption in Britain's campaign against Napoleon in Spain, Taylor observed, she demonstrated her interest in world affairs.

Issues of gender sometimes arise in scholarly discussions of Hemans's relationship with her male Romantic contemporaries. Although some critics viewed Hemans's poetry as technically efficient but sometimes highly derivative of such writers as Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, others have remarked that Hemans pushed those influences in new directions. In his profile of the author, Gilfillan noted similarities between Hemans and Shelley, finding that, like her male contemporary, "verse flowed for and from her, and the sweet sound often overpowered the meaning." However, Gilfillan contended that Hemans "has never reached his heights, nor sounded his depths, yet they are, to our thought, so strikingly alike, as to seem brother and sister, in one beautiful, but delicate and dying family." Noah Comet (2009) compared Hemans's vision of Greece to that of the male Romantic poets. Comet found that Hemans's "Modern Greece" depicts the Greek past as "subordinate to England's future" whereas the male Romantics viewed Greece as "a monumental, idealized inheritance" being destroyed.

A subset of scholarship has attempted to explain why Hemans has not enjoyed the popularity of her peers. In a close reading of "Casabianca," Catherine Robson (2012) posited that the poem's reputation suffered from overuse in the classroom, where students commonly memorized and declaimed it. By so closely associating "Casabianca" with its pedagogical role of "unthinking recitation," Robson asserted, academics soon allowed Hemans's relatively simple meter to "triumphantly overthrow" and devalue her poem's meaning. Over time, however, Robson contended, "Casabianca," much like the entire Hemans corpus, reclaimed "a place in the academic canon."

Sam Krowchenko

## PRINCIPAL WORKS

### Poetry

*England and Spain; or, Valour and Patriotism, by Felicia Dorothea Browne.* London: Cadell and Davies, 1808.

*Poems, by Felicia Dorothea Browne.* Liverpool: Cadell and Davies, 1808.

\**The Domestic Affections, and Other Poems.* London: Cadell and Davies, 1812.

*The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy: A Poem.* Oxford: Pearson and Ebers, 1816. Rev. ed. London: Murray, 1816.

*Modern Greece: A Poem.* London: Murray, 1817.

*Translations from Camoens, and Other Poets, with Original Poetry.* Trans. Felicia Hemans. London: Murray, 1818.

†*Tales, and Historic Scenes, in Verse.* London: Murray, 1819.

*Wallace's Invocation to Bruce: A Poem.* Edinburgh: Blackwood/Cadell and Davies, 1819.

*The Sceptic; a Poem.* London: Murray, 1820.

*Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King.* London: Murray, 1820.

*Dartmoor: A Poem; Which Obtained the Prize of Fifty Guineas Proposed by the Royal Society of Literature.* London: Royal Soc. of Lit., 1821.

*The Vespers of Palermo.* Theatre Royal, Covent Garden, London. 12 Dec. 1823. Pub. as *The Vespers of Palermo: A Tragedy, in Five Acts.* London: Murray, 1823. (Dramatic poetry)

‡*The Siege of Valencia: A Dramatic Poem; The Last Constantine; with Other Poems.* London: Murray, 1823. (Dramatic poetry and poetry)

§*The Forest Sanctuary: And Other Poems.* London: Murray, 1825. Enl. ed. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1829.

*Poems by Mrs. Hemans.* Ed. Andrews Norton. 2 vols. Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1826-27.

*Hymns on the Works of Nature: For the Use of Children.* Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1827. Pub. as *Hymns for Childhood.* Dublin: Curry, 1834.

||*Records of Woman: With Other Poems.* Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1828.

#*Songs of the Affections, with Other Poems.* Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1830.

\*\**National Lyrics, and Songs for Music.* Dublin: Curry, 1834.

††*Scenes and Hymns of Life, with Other Religious Poems.* Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1834. Pub. as *Hymns and Scenes of Life, and Other Poems.* Philadelphia: Ash, 1835.

*Poetical Remains of the Late Mrs. Hemans.* Ed. D. M. Moir. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1836.



*The Poetical Works of Mrs. Felicia Hemans.* Philadelphia: Grigg and Elliot, 1836.

*Early Blossoms.* London: Allman, 1840.

*Poems by Felicia Hemans, with an Essay on Her Genius, by H. T. Tuckerman.* Ed. Rufus W. Griswold. Philadelphia: Sorin and Ball, 1845.

*The Poetical Works of Mrs. Felicia Hemans.* Ed. William Michael Rossetti. London: Moxon, 1873.

*The Poetical Works of Felicia Dorothea Hemans.* London: Oxford UP, 1914.

*Records of Woman with Other Poems.* Ed. Paula R. Feldman. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1999.

### Other Major Works

*A Selection of Welsh Melodies.* London: Power, 1821. (Songs)

*The Works of Mrs. Hemans: With a Memoir of Her Life, by Her Sister.* Ed. Harriett Browne Hughes. 7 vols. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1839. (Play, poetry, and songs)

*Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials.* Ed. Susan J. Wolfson. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000. (Letters and poetry)

*Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Prose, and Letters.* Ed. Gary Kelly. Peterborough: Broadview, 2002. (Letters, poetry, and prose)

\*Includes "War and Peace," "War-Song of the Spanish Patriots," and "To My Younger Brother, on His Return from Spain."

†Includes "The Abencerrage," "The Widow of Crescentius," and "The Wife of Asdrubal."

‡Includes the dramatic poem *The Siege of Valencia*.

§Includes the epic *The Forest Sanctuary*; and, in the enlarged edition, "The Lost Pleiad," which was originally published in the *New Monthly Magazine* in December 1823, and "Casabianca," which was originally published in the *Monthly Magazine* in August 1826.

||Includes "Properzia Rossi," "The Homes of England," "The Image in Lava," and "Arabella Stuart."

#Includes "A Spirit's Return."

\*\*Includes "The Last Song of Sappho."

††Includes "Cathedral Hymn" and "Wood Walk and Hymn."

*Translations from Camoens, and Other Poets, with Original Poetry; The Sceptic, a Poem; and Stanzas to the Memory of the Late King,* by Felicia Hemans. *Quarterly Review* Oct. 1820: 130-39. Print.

[In the following review, Gifford assesses selections from Hemans's poetry collections, considering the author "a woman in whom talent and learning have not produced the ill effects so often attributed to them; her faculties seem to sit meekly on her, at least we can trace no ill humour or affectation."]

This certainly is not the age in which those who speak slightly of female talent should expect to be listened to with much attention. In almost every department of literature, and in many of art and science, some one or other of our own contemporaries and countrywomen will be found, in spite of all the disadvantages of an imperfect education, occupying a respectable, at least, if not a prominent situation. And this remark, if true any where, is undoubtedly so when applied to poetry: no judicious critic will speak without respect of the tragedies of Miss Baillie, or the *Psyche* of Mrs. Tighe; and, unless we deceive ourselves greatly, the author of the poems before us required only to be more generally known and read to have her place assigned at no great distance from that of the two distinguished individuals just mentioned. Mrs. Hemans indeed, if we may judge from her writings, is not merely a clever woman, but a woman of very general reading, and of a mind improved by reflection and study. There is another circumstance about these poems in which we cannot well be deceived, and which demands notice, the progressive and rapid improvement of them; not five years have elapsed from the appearance of the first to that of the last, and the difference of the two is very surprising; the merits of the one are little more than correct language, smooth versification, and chaste ideas; the last, written on a difficult subject, is one of the most able productions of the present day. The facility given by practice may have done much towards this; but when the improvement is principally in the richness and novelty of thought, careful study and diligent training of the reason must have borne a much larger share. If we may judge too of her, in another point, from her writings, Mrs. Hemans is a woman in whom talent and learning have not produced the ill effects so often attributed to them; her faculties seem to sit meekly on her, at least we can trace no ill humour or affectation, no misanthropic gloom, no querulous discontent; she is always pure in thought and expression, cheerful, affectionate, and pious. It is something at least to know, that whether the emotions she excites be always those of powerful delight or not, they will be at least harmless, and leave no sting behind: if our fancies are not always transported, our hearts at least will never be corrupted: we have not found a line which a delicate woman might blush to have written. When speaking of an English lady this ought to be no more than common praise, for delicacy of feeling has long been, and long may

## CRITICISM

### William Gifford (review date 1820)

SOURCE: Gifford, William. Rev. of *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy; Tales and Historic Scenes, in Verse;*

it be, the fair and valued boast of our countrywomen; but we have had too frequent reason of late to lament, both in female readers and writers, the display of qualities very opposite in their nature. Their tastes, at least, have not escaped the infection of that pretended liberality, but real licentiousness of thought, the plague and the fearful sign of the times. Under its influence they lose their relish for what is simple and sober, gentle or dignified, and require the stimulus of excessive or bitter passion, of sedition, of audacious profaneness. Certain we are, that the most dangerous writer of the present day finds his most numerous and most enthusiastic admirers among the fair sex; and we have many times seen very eloquent eyes kindle in vehement praise of the poems, which no woman should have read, and which it would have been far better for the world if the author had never written. This is a melancholy subject on which we have much to say at a fit opportunity, but which it would not satisfy us to treat so cursorily as our present limits would render necessary:—with Mrs. Hemans, at least, such thoughts as it suggests have no connection, and we will not, therefore, any longer detain our readers with general remarks, but give them a brief account of her several poems, with such extracts and observations as may serve to justify what we have before advanced respecting the author. The earliest on the list is a Poem on the **Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy**, and, as we have intimated above, is decidedly inferior to all that follow it. We do not think the subject, indeed, very happily chosen, except for a very short and spirited sketch: when treated of at so much length as by Mrs. Hemans, it was sure to lose all unity, and be broken up into a number of separate descriptions, which, even if very truly drawn and striking, when severally examined, can never form a complete whole. The versification, however, is always flowing, though the style wants clearness and compression.

The next volume, the ‘**Tales and Historic Scenes,**’ is a collection, as the title imports, of Narrative Poems. Perhaps it was not upon consideration that Mrs. Hemans passed from a poem of picture-drawing and reflection to the writing of tales; but if we were to prescribe to a young poet his *course* of practice, this would certainly be our advice. The luxuriance of a young fancy delights in description; and the quickness and inexperience of the same age, in passing judgments;—in the one richness, in the other antithesis and effect are too often more sought after than truth: the poem is written rapidly, and correctness but little attended to. But in narration more care must be taken; if the tale be fictitious, the conception and sustainment of the characters, the disposition of the facts, the relief of the soberer parts by description, reflection, or dialogue, form so many useful studies for a growing artist: if the tale be borrowed from history, a more delicate task is added to those just mentioned, in determining how far it may be necessary or safe to interweave the ornaments of fiction with the groundwork of truth, and in skillfully performing that difficult task. In both cases the mind is compelled to make a more

sustained effort, and acquires thereby greater vigour, and a more practical readiness in the detail of the art.

The principal poem in this volume is the **Abencerrage**; it commemorates the capture of Granada by Ferdinand and Isabella, and attributes it in great measure to the revenge of Hamet, chief of the Abencerrages, who had been induced to turn his arms against his countrymen, the Moors, in order to procure the ruin of their king, the murderer of his father and brothers. During the siege he makes his way by night to the bower of Zayda his beloved, the daughter of a rival and hated family; her character is very finely drawn, and she repels with firmness all the solicitations and prayers of the traitor to his country. The following lines form part of their dialogue;—they are spirited and pathetic, but perfectly free from exaggeration.

Oh wert thou still what once I fondly deem'd,  
All that thy mien express'd, thy spirit seem'd,  
My love had been devotion—till in death  
Thy name had trembled on my latest breath.  
But not the chief, who leads a lawless band  
To crush the altars of his native land;  
The apostate son of heroes, whose disgrace  
Hath stain'd the trophies of a glorious race;  
Not *him* I lov'd—but one whose youthful name  
Was pure and radiant in unsullied fame.  
Hadst thou but died ere yet dishonour's cloud  
O'er that young name had gather'd as a shroud,  
I then had mourn'd thee proudly—and my grief  
In its own loftiness had found relief,  
A noble sorrow, cherish'd to the last,  
When every meaner woe had long been past.  
Yes, let affection weep—no common tear  
She sheds when bending o'er a hero's bier;  
Let nature mourn the dead—a grief like this,  
To pangs that rend *my* bosom, had been bliss.

p. 98

The next volume in order consists principally of translations. It will give our readers some idea of Mrs. Hemans's acquaintance with books, to enumerate the authors from whom she has chosen her subjects; they are Camoens, Metastasio, Filicaja, Pastorini, Lope de Vega, Francisco Manuel, Della Casa, Cornelio Bentivoglio, Quevedo, Juan de Tarsis, Torquato and Bernardo Tasso, Petrarca, Pietro Bembo, Lorenzini, Gessner, Chaulieu, Garcilaso de Vega; names embracing almost every language in which the Muse has found a tongue in Europe. Many of these translations are very pretty, but it would be less interesting to select any of them for citation, as our readers might not be possessed of, or acquainted with the originals. We will pass on, therefore, to the latter part of the volume, which contains much that is very pleasing and beautiful. The poem which we are about to transcribe is on a subject often treated; and no wonder:—it would be hard to find another which embraces so many of the elements of poetic feeling; so soothing a mixture of pleasing melancholy and pensive hope; such an assemblage of the ideas of tender beauty, of artless

playfulness, of spotless purity, of transient yet imperishable brightness, of affections wounded, but not in bitterness, of sorrows gently subdued, of eternal and undoubted happiness. We know so little of the heart of man, that when we stand by the grave of him whom we deem most excellent, the thought of death will be mingled with some awe and uncertainty; but the gracious promises of Scripture leave no doubt as to the blessedness of departed infants, and when we think what they now are, and what they might have been; what they now enjoy, and what they might have suffered; what they have now gained, and what they might have lost; we may, indeed, yearn to follow them; but we must be selfish indeed to wish them again 'constrained' to dwell in these tenements of pain and sorrow. The dirge of a child, which follows, embodies these thoughts and feelings, but in more beautiful order and language.

No bitter tears for thee be shed,  
Blossom of being! seen and gone!  
With flowers alone we strew thy bed,  
O blest departed one!  
Whose all of life, a rosy ray,  
Blushed into dawn, and passed away.

Yes, thou art gone, ere guilt had power  
To stain thy cherub soul and form!  
Clos'd is the soft ephemeral flower  
That never felt a storm!  
The sunbeam's smile, the zephyr's breath,  
All that it knew from birth to death.

Thou wert so like a form of light,  
That heaven benignly called thee hence,  
E'er yet the world could breathe one blight  
O'er thy sweet innocence:  
And thou that brighter home to bless  
Art passed with all thy loveliness.

Oh hadst thou still on earth remain'd,  
Vision of beauty, fair as brief,  
How soon thy brightness had been stain'd  
With passion, or with grief!  
Now not a sullyng breath can rise  
To dim thy glory in the skies.

We rear no marble o'er thy tomb,  
No sculptured image there shall mourn,  
Ah! fitter far the vernal bloom  
Such dwelling to adorn.  
Fragrance and flowers and dews must be  
The only emblems meet for thee.

Thy grave shall be a blessed shrine,  
Adorn'd with nature's brightest wreath,  
Each glowing season shall combine  
Its incense there to breathe;  
And oft upon the midnight air  
Shall viewless harps be murmuring there.

And oh! sometimes in visions blest,  
Sweet spirit, visit our repose,  
And bear from thine own world of rest  
Some balm for human woes.

What form more lovely could be given  
Than thine to messenger of heaven?

p. 61

Had Mrs. Hemans stopped here, she might have claimed a considerable share of praise for elegant composition; but her last two publications are works of a higher stamp—works, indeed, of which no living poet need to be ashamed. The first of them is entitled the *Sceptic*, and is devoted, as our readers will easily anticipate, to advocating the cause of religion. Undoubtedly the poem must have owed its being to the circumstances of the times, to a laudable indignation at the course which literature in many departments seemed lately to be taking in this country, and at the doctrines disseminated with industry, principally (but by no means exclusively, as has been falsely supposed,) among the lower orders. Mrs. Hemans, however, does not attempt to reason learnedly or laboriously in verse; few poems, ostensibly philosophical, or didactic, have ever been of use, except to display the ingenuity and talent of the writers; people are not often taught a science or an art in poetry, and much less will an infidel be converted by a theological treatise in verse. But the argument of the *Sceptic* is one of irresistible force to confirm a wavering mind; it is simply resting the truth of religion on the necessity of it, on the utter misery and helplessness of man without it. This argument is in itself available for all the purposes of poetry; it appeals to the imagination and passions of man, it is capable of interesting all our affectionate hopes and charities, of acting upon all our natural fears. Mrs. Hemans has gone through this range with great feeling and ability, and when she comes to the mind that has clothed itself in its own strength, and relying proudly on that alone in the hour of affliction, has sunk into distraction in the contest, she rises into a strain of moral poetry not often surpassed.

Oh what is nature's strength? the vacant eye  
By mind deserted hath a dread reply,  
The wild delirious laughter of despair,  
The mirth of phrenzy—seek an answer there!  
Turn not away, though pity's cheek grow pale,  
Close not thine ear against their awful tale.  
They tell thee, reason wandering from the ray  
Of faith, the blazing pillar of her way,  
In the mid-darkness of the stormy wave  
Forsook the struggling soul she could not save.  
Weep not, sad moralist, o'er desert plains  
Strew'd with the wrecks of grandeur—mouldering fanes  
Arches of triumph, long with weeds o'ergrown—  
And regal cities, now the serpent's own:  
Earth has more awful ruins—one lost mind  
Whose star is quench'd, hath lessons for mankind  
Of deeper import, than each prostrate dome  
Mingling its marble with the dust of Rome.

p. 17

After a few more lines to this effect, she addresses the maniac himself in a passage almost too long for citation, yet which we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of transcribing.