

ROMANTIC POETRY AND OTHER WRITINGS; LUDDITE LITERATURE

BYRON

LETTER FROM LORD BYRON TO LORD HOLLAND, FEB. 25, 1812

MY LORD,--With my best thanks, I have the honour to return the Notts. letter to your Lordship. I have read it with attention, but do not think I shall venture to avail myself of its contents, as my view of the question differs in some measure from Mr. Coldham's. I hope I do not wrong him, but his objections to the bill appear to me to be founded on certain apprehensions that he and his coadjutors might be mistaken for the "original advisers" (to quote him) of the measure. For my own part, I consider the manufacturers as a much injured body of men, sacrificed to the views of certain individuals who have enriched themselves by those practices which have deprived the frame-workers of employment. For instance; --by the adoption of a certain kind of frame, one man performs the work of seven--six are thus thrown out of business. But it is to be observed that that work thus done is far inferior in quality, hardly marketable at home, and hurried over with a view to exportation. Surely, my Lord, however we may rejoice in any improvement in the arts which may be beneficial to mankind, we must not allow mankind to be sacrificed to improvements in mechanism. The maintenance and well-doing of the industrious poor is an object of greater consequence to the community than the enrichment of a few monopolists by any improvement in the implements of trade, which deprives the workman of his bread, and renders the labourer "unworthy of his hire."

My own motive for opposing the bill is founded on its palpable injustice, and its certain inefficacy. I have seen the state of these miserable men, and it is a disgrace to a civilized country. Their excesses may be condemned, but cannot be the subject of wonder. The effect of the present bill would be to drive them into actual rebellion. The few words I shall venture to offer on Thursday will be founded upon these opinions formed from my own observations on the spot. By previous inquiry, I am convinced these men would have been restored to employment, and the country to tranquillity. It is, perhaps, not yet too late, and is surely worth the trial. It can never be too late to employ force in such circumstances. I believe your Lordship does not coincide with me entirely on this subject, and most cheerfully and sincerely shall I submit to your superior judgment and experience, and take some other line of argument against the bill, or be silent altogether, should you deem it more advisable. Condemning, as every one must condemn, the conduct of these wretches, I believe in the existence of grievances which call rather for pity than punishment. I have the honour to be, with great respect, my Lord, your Lordship's

Most obedient and obliged servant,
BYRON.

P.S.--I am a little apprehensive that your Lordship will think me too lenient towards these men, and half a frame-breaker myself.

BYRON

DEBATE ON THE FRAME-WORK BILL, IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS, FEBRUARY 27, 1812

THE order of the day for the second reading of this Bill being read, Lord BYRON rose, and (for the first time) addressed their Lordships as follows:

My Lords,--The subject now submitted to your Lordships for the first time, though new to the House, is by no means new to the country. I believe it had occupied the serious thoughts of all descriptions of persons, long before its introduction to the notice of that legislature, whose interference alone could be of real service. As a person in some degree connected with the suffering county, though a stranger not only to this House in general, but to almost every individual whose attention I presume to solicit, I must claim some portion of your Lordships indulgence, whilst I offer a few observations on a question in which I confess myself deeply interested.

To enter into any detail of the riots would be superfluous the House is already aware that every outrage short of actual bloodshed has been perpetrated, and that the proprietors of the frames obnoxious to the rioters, and all persons supposed to be connected with them, have been liable to insult and violence. During the short time I recently passed in Nottinghamshire, not twelve hours elapsed without some fresh act of violence ; and on the day I left the county I was informed that forty frames had been broken the preceding evening, as usual, without resistance and without detection.

Such was then the state of that county, and such I have reason to believe it to be at this moment. But whilst these outrages must be admitted to exist to an alarming extent, it cannot be denied that they have arisen from circumstances of the most unparalleled distress: the perseverance of these miserable men in their proceedings tends to prove that nothing but absolute want could have driven a large, and once honest and industrious, body of the people, into the commission of excesses so hazardous to themselves, their families, and the community. At the time to which I allude, the town and county were burdened with large detachments of the military; the police was in motion, the magistrates assembled; yet all the movements, civil and military, led to--nothing. Not a single instance had occurred of the apprehension of any real delinquent actually taken in the fact, against whom there existed legal evidence sufficient for conviction. But the police, however useless, were by no means idle : several notorious delinquents had been detected, --men, liable to conviction, on the clearest evidence, of the capital crime of poverty ; men, who had been nefariously guilty of lawfully begetting several children, whom, thanks to the times I they were unable to maintain. Considerable injury has been done to the proprietors of the improved frames. These

machines were to them an advantage, inasmuch as they superseded the necessity of employing a number of workmen, who were left in consequence to starve. By the adoption of one species of frame in particular, one man performed the work of many, and the superfluous labourers were thrown out of employment. Yet it is to be observed, that the work thus executed was inferior in quality; not marketable at home, and merely hurried over with a view to exportation. It was called, in the cant of the trade, by the name of "Spider-work." The rejected workmen, in the blindness of their ignorance, instead of rejoicing at these improvements in arts so beneficial to mankind, conceived themselves to be sacrificed to improvements in mechanism. In the foolishness of their hearts they imagined that the maintenance and well-doing of the industrious poor were objects of greater consequence than the enrichment of a few individuals by any improvement, in the implements of trade, which threw the workmen out of employment, and rendered the labourer unworthy of his hire. And it must be confessed that although the adoption of the enlarged machinery in that state of our commerce which the country once boasted might have been beneficial to the master without being detrimental to the servant; yet, in the present situation of our manufactures, rotting in warehouses, without a prospect of exportation, with the demand for work and workmen equally diminished, frames of this description tend materially to aggravate the distress and discontent of the disappointed sufferers. But the real cause of these distresses and consequent disturbances lies deeper. When we are told that these men are leagued together not only for the destruction of their own comfort, but of their very means of subsistence, can we forget that it is the bitter policy, the destructive warfare of the last eighteen years, which has destroyed their comfort, your comfort, all men's comfort? that policy, which, originating with "great statesmen now no more," has survived the dead to become a curse on the living, unto the third and fourth generation! These men never destroyed their looms till they were become useless, worse than useless; till they were become actual impediments to their exertions in obtaining their daily bread. Can you, then, wonder that in times like these when bankruptcy, convicted fraud, and imputed felony are found in a station not far beneath that of your Lordships, the lowest, though once most useful portion of the people, should forget their duty in their distresses, and become only less guilty than one of their representatives? But while the exalted offender can find means to baffle the law, new capital punishments must be devised, new snares of death must be spread for the wretched mechanic, who is famished into guilt. These men were willing to dig, but the spade was in other hands: they were not ashamed to beg, but there was none to relieve them: their own means of subsistence were cut off, all other employments pre-occupied; and their excesses, however to be deplored and condemned, can hardly be subject of surprise.

It has been stated that the persons in the temporary possession of frames connive at their destruction; if this be proved upon inquiry, it were necessary that such material accessories to the crime should be principals in the punishment. But I did hope, that any measure proposed by his Majesty's government for your Lordships' decision, would have had conciliation for its basis; or, if that were hopeless, that some previous inquiry, some deliberation, would have been deemed requisite; not that we should have been called at once, without examination and without cause, to pass sentences by wholesale, and sign death-warrant, blindfold. But, admitting that these men had no cause of

complaint; that the grievances of them and their employers were alike groundless; that they deserved the worst;--what inefficiency, what imbecility has been evinced in the method chosen to reduce them! Why were the military called out to be made a mockery of, if they were to be called out at all? As far as the difference of seasons would permit, they have merely parodied the summer campaign of Major Sturgeon ; and, indeed, the whole proceedings, civil and military, seemed on the model of those of the mayor and corporation of Garratt. --Such marchings and countermarchings!--from Nottingham to Bullwell, from Bullwell to Banford, from Banford to Mansfield! And when at length the detachment, arrived at their destination, in all "the pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war," they came just in time to witness the mischief which had been done, and ascertain the escape of the perpetrators, to collect the "spolia opima" in the fragments of broken frames, and return to their quarters amidst the derision of old women, and the hootings of children. Now, though, in a free country, it were to be wished that our military should never be too formidable, at least to ourselves, I cannot see the policy of placing them in situations where they can only be made ridiculous. As the sword is the worst argument that can be used, so should it be the last. In this instance it has been the first; but providentially as yet only in the scabbard. The present measure will, indeed, pluck it from the sheath; yet bad proper meetings been held in the earlier stages of these riots, had the grievances of these men and their masters (for they also had their grievances) been fairly weighed and justly examined, I do think that means might have been devised to restore these workmen to their avocations, and tranquillity to the county. At present the county suffers from the double infliction of an idle military and a starving population. In what state of apathy have we been plunged so long, that now for the first time the House has been officially apprised of these disturbances? All this has been transacting within 130 miles of London; and yet we, "good easy men, have deemed full sure our greatness was a-ripening," and have sat down to enjoy our foreign triumphs in the midst of domestic calamity. But all the cities you have taken, all the armies which have retreated before your leaders, are but paltry subjects of self-congratulation, if your land divides against itself, and your dragoons and your executioners must be let loose against your fellow-citizens.--You call these men a mob, desperate, dangerous, and ignorant; and seem to think that the only way to quiet the "Bellua multorum capitum" is to lop off a few of its superfluous heads. But reduced to reason by a mixture even a mob may be better of conciliation and firmness, than by additional irritation and redoubled penalties. Are we aware of our obligations to a mob? It is the mob that labour in your fields and serve in your houses,--that man your navy, and recruit your army,--that have enabled you to defy all the world, and can also defy you when neglect and calamity have driven them to despair! You may call the people a mob; but do not forget that a mob too often speaks the sentiments of the people. And here I must remark, with what alacrity you are accustomed to fly to the succour of your distressed allies, leaving the distressed of your own country to the care of Providence or--the parish. When the Portuguese suffered under the retreat of the French, every arm was stretched out, every hand was opened, from the rich man's largess to widow's mite, all was bestowed, to enable them to rebuild the their villages and replenish their granaries. And at this moment, when thousands of misguided but most unfortunate fellow-countrymen are struggling with the extremes of hardships and hunger, as your charity began abroad it

should end at home. A much less sum, a tithe of the bounty bestowed on Portugal, even if these men (which I cannot admit without inquiry) could not have been restored to their employments, would have rendered unnecessary the tender mercies of the bayonet and the gibbet. But doubtless our friends have too many foreign claims to admit a prospect of domestic relief; though never did such objects demand it. I have traversed the seat of war in the Peninsula, I have been in some of the most oppressed provinces of Turkey; but never under the most despotic of infidel governments did I behold such squalid wretchedness as I have seen since my return in the very heart of a Christian country. And what are your remedies? After months of inaction, and months of action worse than inactivity, at length comes forth the grand specific, the never-failing nostrum of all state physicians, from the days of Draco to the present time. After feeling the pulse and shaking the head over the patient, prescribing the usual course of warm water and bleeding,--the warm water of your mawkish police, and the lancers of your military,--these convulsions must terminate in death, the sure consummation of the prescriptions of all political Sangrados. Setting aside the palpable injustice and the certain inefficiency of the Bill, are there not capital punishments sufficient in your statutes? Is there not blood enough upon your penal code, that more must be poured forth to ascend to Heaven and testify against you? How will you carry the Bill into effect? Can you commit a whole county to their own prisons? Will you erect a gibbet in every field, and hang up men like scarecrows? or will you proceed (as you must to bring this measure into effect) by decimation? place the county under martial law? depopulate and lay waste all around you? and restore Sherwood Forest as an acceptable gift to the crown, in its former condition of a royal chase and an asylum for outlaws? Are these the remedies for a starving and desperate populace? Will the famished wretch who has braved your bayonets be appalled by your gibbets? When death is a relief, and the only relief it appears that you will afford him, will he be dragooned into tranquillity? Will that which could not be effected by your grenadiers be accomplished by your executioners? If you proceed by the forms of law, where is your evidence? Those who have refused to impeach their accomplices when transportation only was the punishment, will hardly be tempted to witness against them when death is the penalty. With all due deference to the noble lords opposite, I think a little investigation, some previous inquiry, would induce even them to change their purpose. That most favourite state measure, so marvellously efficacious in many and recent instances, temporising, would not be without its advantages in this. When a proposal is made to emancipate or relieve, you hesitate, you deliberate for years, you temporise and tamper with the minds of men; but a death-bill must be passed off-hand, without a thought of the consequences. Sure I am, from what I have heard, and from what I have seen, that to pass the Bill under all the existing circumstances, without inquiry, without deliberation, would only be to add injustice to irritation, and barbarity to neglect. The framers of such a bill must be content to inherit the honours of that Athenian law-giver whose edicts were said to be written not in ink but in blood. But suppose it passed; suppose one of these men, as I have seen them,--meagre with famine, sullen with despair, careless of a life which your Lordships are perhaps about to value at something less than the price of a stocking-frame;--suppose this man surrounded by the children for whom he is unable to procure bread at the hazard of his existence, about to be torn for ever from a family which he lately

supported in peaceful industry, and which it is not his fault that he can no longer so support;--suppose this man--and there are ten thousand such from whom you may select your victims--dragged into court, to be tried for this new offence, by this new law; still, there are two things wanting to convict and condemn him and these are, in my opinion,--twelve butchers for a jury, and a Jeffreys for a judge!

BYRON

SONG FOR THE LUDDITES

IN LETTER FROM LORD BYRON TO THOMAS MOORE, DEC. 24, 1816

. . . Are you not near the Luddites? By the Lord! If there's a row, but I'll be among ye!
How go on the weavers--the breakers of frames--the Lutherans of politics--the reformers?

As the Liberty lads o'er the sea
Bought their freedom, and cheaply, with blood,
 So we, boys, we
 Will die fighting, or live free,
And down with all kings but King Ludd!

When the web that we weave is complete,
And the shuttle exchanged for the sword,
 We will fling the winding-sheet
 O'er the despot at our feet,
And dye it deep in the gore he has pour'd.

Though black as his heart its hue,
Since his veins are corrupted to mud,
 Yet this is the dew
 Which the tree shall renew
Of Liberty, planted by Ludd!

There's an amiable chanson for you--all impromptu. I have written it principally to shock your neighbour * * , who is all clergy and loyalty--mirth and innocence--milk and water. . . .

BYRON

AN ODE TO THE FRAMERS OF THE FRAME BILL

[The Morning Chronicle, Mar. 2, 1812]

Oh well done Lord E---n! and better Lord R---r!
Britannia must prosper with councils like yours;
HAWKESBURY, HARROWBY, help you to guide her,
Whose remedy only must kill ere it cures:
Those villains, the Weavers, are all grown refractory,
Asking some succour for Charity's sake--
So hang them in clusters round each Manufactory,
That will at once put an end to mistake.

The rascals, perhaps, may betake them to robbing,
The dogs to be sure have got nothing to eat--
So if we can hang them for breaking a bobbin,
'Twill save all the Government's money and meat:
Men are more easily made than machinery--
Stockings fetch better prices than lives--
Gibbets on Sherwood will heighten the scenery,
Showing how Commerce, how Liberty thrives!

Justice is now in pursuit of the wretches,
Grenadiers, Volunteers, Bow-street Police,
Twenty-two Regiments, a score of Jack Ketches,
Three of the Quorum and two of the Peace;
Some Lords, to be sure, would have summoned the Judges,
To take their opinion, but that they ne'er shall,
For LIVERPOOL such a concession begrudges,
So now they're condemned by no Judges at all.

Some folks for certain have thought it was shocking,
When Famine appeals, and when Poverty groans,
That life should be valued at less than a stocking,
And breaking of frames lead to breaking of bones.
If it should prove so, I trust, by this token,
(And who will refuse to partake in the hope?)
That the frames of the fools may be first to be broken,
Who, when asked for a remedy, sent down a rope.

BYRON

PROMETHEUS

Titan! to whose immortal eyes
The sufferings of mortality,

Seen in their sad reality,
Were not as things that gods despise;
What was thy pity's recompense?
A silent suffering, and intense;
The rock, the vulture, and the chain,
All that the proud can feel of pain,
The agony they do not show,
The suffocating sense of woe,
Which speaks but in its loneliness,
And then is jealous lest the sky
Should have a listener, nor will sigh
Until its voice is echoless.

Titan! to thee the strife was given
Between the suffering and the will,
Which torture where they cannot kill;
And the inexorable Heaven,
And the deaf tyranny of Fate,
The ruling principle of Hate,
Which for its pleasure doth create
The things it may annihilate,
Refus'd thee even the boon to die:
The wretched gift Eternity
Was thine--and thou hast borne it well.
All that the Thunderer wrung from thee
Was but the menace which flung back
On him the torments of thy rack;
The fate thou didst so well foresee,
But would not to appease him tell;
And in thy Silence was his Sentence,
And in his Soul a vain repentance,
And evil dread so ill dissembled,
That in his hand the lightnings trembled.

Thy Godlike crime was to be kind,
To render with thy precepts less
The sum of human wretchedness,
And strengthen Man with his own mind;
But baffled as thou wert from high,
Still in thy patient energy,
In the endurance, and repulse
Of thine impenetrable Spirit,
Which Earth and Heaven could not convulse,
A mighty lesson we inherit:
Thou art a symbol and a sign
To Mortals of their fate and force;

Like thee, Man is in part divine,
A troubled stream from a pure source;
And Man in portions can foresee
His own funereal destiny;
His wretchedness, and his resistance,
And his sad unallied existence:
To which his Spirit may oppose
Itself--and equal to all woes,
And a firm will, and a deep sense,
Which even in torture can descry
Its own concentr'd recompense,
Triumphant where it dares defy,
And making Death a Victory.

BYRON

DARKNESS

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.
The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars
Did wander darkling in the eternal space,
Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth
Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;
Morn came and went—and came, and brought no day,
And men forgot their passions in the dread
Of this their desolation; and all hearts
Were chill'd into a selfish prayer for light:
And they did live by watchfires—and the thrones,
The palaces of crowned kings—the huts,
The habitations of all things which dwell,
Were burnt for beacons; cities were consum'd,
And men were gather'd round their blazing homes
To look once more into each other's face;
Happy were those who dwelt within the eye
Of the volcanos, and their mountain-torch:
A fearful hope was all the world contain'd;
Forests were set on fire—but hour by hour
They fell and faded—and the crackling trunks
Extinguish'd with a crash—and all was black.
The brows of men by the despairing light
Wore an unearthly aspect, as by fits
The flashes fell upon them; some lay down
And hid their eyes and wept; and some did rest
Their chins upon their clenched hands, and smil'd;

And others hurried to and fro, and fed
Their funeral piles with fuel, and look'd up
With mad disquietude on the dull sky,
The pall of a past world; and then again
With curses cast them down upon the dust,
And gnash'd their teeth and howl'd: the wild birds shriek'd
And, terrified, did flutter on the ground,
And flap their useless wings; the wildest brutes
Came tame and tremulous; and vipers crawl'd
And twin'd themselves among the multitude,
Hissing, but stingless—they were slain for food.
And War, which for a moment was no more,
Did glut himself again: a meal was bought
With blood, and each sate sullenly apart
Gorging himself in gloom: no love was left;
All earth was but one thought—and that was death
Immediate and inglorious; and the pang
Of famine fed upon all entrails—men
Died, and their bones were tombless as their flesh;
The meagre by the meagre were devour'd,
Even dogs assail'd their masters, all save one,
And he was faithful to a corse, and kept
The birds and beasts and famish'd men at bay,
Till hunger clung them, or the dropping dead
Lur'd their lank jaws; himself sought out no food,
But with a piteous and perpetual moan,
And a quick desolate cry, licking the hand
Which answer'd not with a caress—he died.
The crowd was famish'd by degrees; but two
Of an enormous city did survive,
And they were enemies: they met beside
The dying embers of an altar-place
Where had been heap'd a mass of holy things
For an unholy usage; they rak'd up,
And shivering scrap'd with their cold skeleton hands
The feeble ashes, and their feeble breath
Blew for a little life, and made a flame
Which was a mockery; then they lifted up
Their eyes as it grew lighter, and beheld
Each other's aspects—saw, and shriek'd, and died—
Even of their mutual hideousness they died,
Unknowing who he was upon whose brow
Famine had written Fiend. The world was void,
The populous and the powerful was a lump,
Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless—

A lump of death—a chaos of hard clay.
The rivers, lakes and ocean all stood still,
And nothing stirr'd within their silent depths;
Ships sailorless lay rotting on the sea,
And their masts fell down piecemeal: as they dropp'd
They slept on the abyss without a surge—
The waves were dead; the tides were in their grave,
The moon, their mistress, had expir'd before;
The winds were wither'd in the stagnant air,
And the clouds perish'd; Darkness had no need
Of aid from them—She was the Universe.

EBENEZER ELLIOTT

FROM CORN LAW RYHMES

HOW DIFFERENT!

POOR weaver, with the hopeless brow,
And bare woe-whiten'd head;
Thou art a pauper, all allow,
All see thou begg'st thy bread;
And yet thou dost not plunder slaves,
Then tell them they are free;
Nor hast thou join'd with tax-fed knaves,
To corn-bill mine and me.

What borough dost thou represent?
Whom bid'st thou toil and pay?
Why sit'st thou not in pauperment,
If baser beggars may?
Where are thy hounds, thy palaced w---e,
To feed on mine and me?
Thy reverend pimp, thy coach and four,
Thy thieves in livery?

No house hast thou, no food, no fire;
None bow to thee, alas
A beggar! yet nor lord, nor squire?
Say how comes this to pass?
While yon proud pauper, dead to shame,
Is fed by mine and me?

And yet behind the rascal's name
The scoundrel writes M.P.!

EBENEZER ELLIOTT

FROM CORN LAW RYHMES

THE FOUR DEARS

DEAR Sugar, dear Tea, and dear Corn
Conspired with dear Representation,
To laugh worth and honour to scorn,
And beggar the whole British nation.

Let us bribe the dear sharks, said dear Tea;
Bribe, bribe, said dear Representation;
Then buy with their own the dear humbugg'd and be
The bulwarks of Tory dictation.

Dear Sugar and Tea, said dear Corn,
Be true to dear Representation;
And then the dear crown will be worn,
But to dignify dearest taxation.

Dear Sugar, dear Corn, and dear Tea,
Stick to me, said dear Representation;
Let us still pull together, and we
Shall still rob the dear British nation.

EBENEZER ELLIOTT

FROM CORN LAW RYHMES

DRONE v. WORKER

How God speeds the tax-bribed plough,
Fen and moor declare, man;
Where once fed the poor man's cow,
ACRES drives his share, man.
But he did not steal the fen,

Did not steal the moor, man;
If he feeds on starving men,
Still he loves the poor, man.
Hush! he bullies state and throne,
Quids them in his jaw, man;
Thine and mine he calls his own;
Acres' lie is law, man.
Acres eats his tax on bread,
Acres loves the plough, man;
Acres' dogs are better fed,
Beggar's slave! than thou, man.
Acres' feeder pays his debts,
Waxes thin and pale, man,
Harder works, and poorer gets,
Pays his debts in jail, man.
Acres in a palace lives,
While his feeder pines, man;
Palaced beggar ne'er forgives
Dog on whom he dines, man.
Acres' feeder, beggar'd, begs,
Treadmill'd rogue is he, man;
Scamp! he deals in pheasants' eggs,--
Hangs on gallows tree, man!
Who would be an useful man?
Who sell cloth, or hats, man?
Who make boiler, or mend pan?
Who keep Acres' brats, man?
Better ride, and represent--
Better borough tools, man;
Better sit in pauperment--
Better corn-law fools, man.
Why not right the plunder'd poor?
Why not use our own, man?
Plough the seas, and not the moor?
Why not pick a bone, man?
Lo, the merchant builds huge mills,--
Bread-tax'd thinks, and sighs, man!
Thousand mouths and bellies fills,--
Bread-tax'd breaks, and dies, man!
Thousand mouths and bellies, then,
Bread-tax'd, writhe and swear, man:
England once bred honest men,
Bread-tax'd, Burke and Hare, man!
Hark ye! millions soon may pine,
Starving millions curse, man,

Desperate millions long to dine
A-la-Burke, and worse, man!
What will then remain to eat?
Who be eaten then, man?
"Few may part, though many meet,"
At Famine's Feast, ye ken, man.

ROBERT BURNS

FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT

Is there, for honest poverty,
That hings his head, an' a' that?
The coward slave, we pass him by,
We dare be poor for a' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,
Our toils obscure, an' a' that;
The rank is but the guinea's stamp;
The man's the gowd for a' that,

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin-gray, an' a' that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine,
A man's a man for a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
Their tinsel show an' a' that;
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie, ca'd a lord
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that;
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,
He's but a coof for a' that:
For a' that, an' a' that,
His riband, star, an' a' that,
The man o' independent mind,
He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might,
Guid faith he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, an' a' that,

Their dignities, an' a' that,
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,
As come it will for a' that,
That sense and worth, o'er a' the earth,
May bear the gree, an' a' that.
For a' that, an' a' that,
It's coming yet, for a' that,
That man to man, the world o'er,
Shall brothers be for a' that.

ROBERT BURNS

TO A MOUSE, ON TURNING UP HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH, NOVEMBER, 1785

Wee, sleeket, cowrin, tim'rous beastie,
Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty
Wi' bickerin brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion
Which makes thee startle
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve:
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
'S a sma' request;
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
An' never miss 't!

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,
An' weary winter comin fast,
An' cozie here beneath the blast
 Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
 Out thro' thy cell.

That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out for a' thy trouble,
 But house or hald,
To thole the winter's sleety dribble
 An' cranreuch cauld!

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' mice an' men
 Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain
 For promis'd joy.

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e'e
 On prospects drear!
An' forward, tho' I canna see,
 I guess an' fear!

ANON.

LETTER [FEB. 16, 1812, SIGNED JOE FIREBRAND SECRETARY, FROM ROBIN HOODS CAVE

We are much concerned to find that you and your neighbors Biddies and Bowler continue to oppose the public good by working those bad articles Single Press & 2 Course Warp ———

Now do you think that we who have encountered such difficulties & hazarded our lives for the good of the Trade are to be opposed & our past efforts made of no effect by your mean obstinacy no it shall not be so you may think that because your frames are secured by the presence of so large a civil & military force you have nothing to fear but can defy us with impunity but you must understand there are more methods of revenge than frame-breaking to be resorted to when that is not practicable! for our past labors

shall not be in vain. In order that it may not be the case it is thought proper to inform you what will be done to such of you that persist in making the aforementioned Articles.

This information is designed for your good that no Children may perish which if they do blame your own obstinacy not us: as we have at all times manifested a disposition to spare life we wished still to show the same especially where Innocent Blood is concerned. You may think we shall not be able to fire your houses but the means which will be used will be so effectual that the flame will rise to the highest room in the house in a moment The composition to be used is Spirits of Turpentine Tar & Powdered Gunpowder mixed together a Proper Quantity of this mixture powered in at the bottom of the door & lighted by the application of a bit of Touchpaper will do the business instantly. [. . .]

ANON.

THE CROPPER'S SONG

Come, cropper lads of high renown,
Who love to drink good ale that's brown,
And strike each haughty tyrant down,
 With hatchet, pike, and gun!
Oh, the cropper lads for me,
The gallant lads for me,
Who with lusty stroke,
The shear frames broke,
The cropper lads for me!

What though the specials still advance,
And soldiers nightly round us prance;
The cropper lads still lead the dance,
 With hatchet, pike, and gun!
Oh, the cropper lads for me,
The gallant lads for me,
Who with lusty stroke,
The shear frames broke,
The cropper lads for me!

And night by night when all is still
And the moon is hid behind the hill,
We forward march to do our will
 With hatchet, pike, and gun!
Oh, the cropper lads for me,
The gallant lads for me,
Who with lusty stroke,

The shear frames broke,
The cropper lads for me!

Great Enoch still shall lead the van.
Stop him who dare! stop him who can!
Press forward every gallant man
 With hatchet, pike, and gun!
Oh, the cropper lads for me,
The gallant lads for me,
Who with lusty stroke,
The shear frames broke,
The cropper lads for me!

ANON.

HORSFALL'S MILL

Come all ye croppers, stout and bold,
Let your faith grow stronger still,
These cropping lads in the County of York
Broke the shears at Horsfall's Mill.
They broke the shears and the windows too,
Set fire to the tazzling mill;
They formed themselves into a line,
Like soldiers at the drill.

The wind it blew, and the sparks they flew,
And awoke the town full soon.
People got up in the middle of the night,
And they ran by the light of the moon;
When these lads around the mill did stand,
And they all did vow and swear,
Neither blanket nor can, nor any such thing,
Should be of service there.

ANON.

GENERAL LUDD'S TRIUMPH

[to the tune, "Poor Jack"]

Chant no more your old rhymes about bold Robin Hood,
His feats I but little admire
I will sing the Atchievements of General Ludd
Now the Hero of Nottinghamshire
Brave Ludd was to measures of violence unused
Till his sufferings became so severe
That at last to defend his own Interest he rous'd
And for the great work did prepare

Now by force unsubdued, and by threats undismay'd
Death itself can't his ardour repress
The presence of Armies can't make him afraid
Nor impede his career of success
Whilst the news of his conquests is spread far and near
How his Enemies take the alarm
His courage, his fortitude, strikes them with fear
For they dread his Omnipotent Arm!

The guilty may fear, but no vengeance he aims
At [the] honest man's life or Estate
His wrath is entirely confined to wide frames
And to those that old prices abate
These Engines of mischief were sentenced to die
By unanimous vote of the Trade
And Ludd who can all opposition defy
Was the grand Executioner made

And when in the work of destruction employed
He himself to no method confines
By fire and by water he gets them destroyed
For the Elements aid his designs
Whether guarded by Soldiers along the Highway
Or closely secured in the room
He shivers them up both by night and by day
And nothing can soften their doom

He may censure great Ludd's disrespect for the Laws
Who ne'er for a moment reflects
That foul Imposition alone was the cause
Which produced these unhappy effects
Let the haughty no longer the humble oppress
Then shall Ludd sheath his conquering Sword
His grievances instantly meet with redress
Then peace will be quickly restored

Let the wise and the great lend their aid and advice
Nor e'er their assistance withdraw
Till full fashioned work at the old fashioned price
Is established by Custom and Law
Then the Trade when this arduous contest is o'er
Shall raise in full splendour its head
And colting and cutting and squaring no more
Shall deprive honest workmen of bread.

KEATS

TO one who has been long in city pent,
 'Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven,--to breathe a prayer
Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
Who is more happy, when, with hearts content,
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
And gentle tale of love and languishment?
Returning home at evening, with an ear
 Catching the notes of Philomel,--an eye
Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
 That falls through the clear ether silently.

KEATS

ROBIN HOOD

TO A FRIEND.

NO! those days are gone away,
And their hours are old and gray,
And their minutes buried all
Under the down-trodden pall
Of the leaves of many years:
Many times have winter's shears,
Frozen North, and chilling East,
Sounded tempests to the feast

Of the forest's whispering fleeces,
Since men knew nor rent nor leases.

No, the bugle sounds no more,
And the twanging bow no more;
Silent is the ivory shrill
Past the heath and up the hill;
There is no mid-forest laugh,
Where lone Echo gives the half
To some wight, amaz'd to hear
Jesting, deep in forest drear.

On the fairest time of June
You may go, with sun or moon,
Or the seven stars to light you,
Or the polar ray to right you;
But you never may behold
Little John, or Robin bold;
Never one, of all the clan,
Thrumming on an empty can
Some old hunting ditty, while
He doth his green way beguile
To fair hostess Merriment,
Down beside the pasture Trent;
For he left the merry tale
Messenger for spicy ale.

Gone, the merry morris din;
Gone, the song of Gamelyn;
Gone, the tough-belted outlaw
Idling in the "grenè shawe;"
All are gone away and past!
And if Robin should be cast
Sudden from his turfed grave,
And if Marian should have
Once again her forest days,
She would weep, and he would craze:
He would swear, for all his oaks,
Fall'n beneath the dockyard strokes,
Have rotted on the briny seas;
She would weep that her wild bees
Sang not to her--strange! that honey
Can't be got without hard money!

So it is: yet let us sing,
Honour to the old bow-string!

Honour to the bugle-horn!
Honour to the woods unshorn!
Honour to the Lincoln green!
Honour to the archer keen!
Honour to tight Little John,
And the horse he rode upon!
Honour to bold Robin Hood,
Sleeping in the underwood!
Honour to Maid Marian,
And to all the Sherwood-clan!
Though their days have hurried by,
Let us two a burden try.

HUNT

HOW ROBIN AND HIS OUTLAWS LIVED IN THE WOODS

Robin and his merry men
Lived just like the birds;
They had almost as many tracks as thoughts,
And whistles and songs as words.

Up they were with the earliest sign
Of the sun's up-looking eye;
But not an archer breakfasted
Till he twinkled from the sky.

All the morning they were wont
To fly their grey-goose quills
At butts, or wands, or trees, or twigs,
Till theirs was the skill of skills.

With swords too they played lustily,
And at quarter-staff;
Many a hit would have made some cry,
Which only made them laugh.

The horn was then their dinner-bell;
When like princes of the wood,
Under the glimmering summer trees,
Pure venison was their food.

Pure venison and a little wine,

Except when the skies were rough;
Or when they had a feasting day;
For their blood was wine enough.

And story then, and joke, and song,
And Harry's harp went round;
And sometimes they'd get up and dance,
For pleasure of the sound.

Tingle, tangle! said the harp,
As they footed in and out:
Good lord! it was a sight to see
Their feathers float about;--

A pleasant sight, especially
If Margery was there,
Or little Ciss, or laughing Bess,
Or Moll with the clumps of hair;

Or any other merry lass
From the neighbouring villages,
Who came with milk and eggs, or fruit,
A singing through the trees.

For all the country round about
Was fond of Robin Hood,
With whom they got a share of more
Than the acorns in the wood;

Nor ever would he suffer harm
To woman, above all;
No plunder, were she ne'er so great,
No fright to great or small;

No,-not a single kiss unliked,
Nor one look-saddening clip;
Accurst be he, said Robin Hood,
Makes pale a woman's lip.

Only on the haughty rich,
And on their unjust store,
He'd lay his fines of equity
For his merry men and the poor.

And special was his joy, no doubt
(Which made the dish to curse)

To light upon a good fat friar,
And carve him of his purse.

A monk to him was a toad in the hole,
And an abbot a pig in grain,
But a bishop was a baron of beef,
With cut and come again.

Never poor man came for help,
And went away denied;
Never woman for redress,
And went away wet-eyed.

Says Robin to the poor who came
To ask of him relief,
You do but get your goods again,
That were altered by the thief;

There, ploughman, is a sheaf of your's
Turned to yellow gold;
And, miller, there's your last year's rent,
'Twill wrap thee from the cold:

And you there, Wat of Lancashire,
Who such a way have come,
Get upon your land-tax, man,
And ride it merrily home.

G. TAYLOR

DISTRESS OF THE POOR; A NEW SONG

In Sherwin's Political Register 1818 (III, 336)

Tune--Derry Down.

The spinners of Manchester loudly complain
How toilsome their labour, how trifling their gain;
The hatters, the dyers, the weavers also,
Are starving with hunger you very well know.
Derry Down, &c.;

We fondly did hope when the wars were all o'er,

That hunger and thirst we should never feel more,
But woeful experience shews us the reverse,
That the peace only served to complete our distress.

The widows' salt tears often dropp'd for the dead,
May now flow afresh for the loss of her bread;
Her fatherless children are starving also,
Is this a fit recompence, tell me, or no!

An adequate price for our labour we want,
But this our proud gentry never will grant;
So far they from striving our wrongs to redress,
They laugh at our sufferings, and mock our distress.

Your cringing, soliciting, never will do,
Too oft it has proved unsuccessful to you;
I could tell you a way to relieve your distress,
But I can't bring the words in to metre my verse.

But a word of advice I would give to you all,
Let no party spirit your bosoms enthrall;
Religious divisions, forget them likewise,
Unite in the cause, and you're sure of the prize.

SMITH

ELEGIAC SONNETS: SONNET XLIV

Written in the Church-yard at Middleton, in Sussex.

PRESS'D by the moon, mute arbitress of tides,
While the loud equinox its power combines,
The sea no more its swelling surge confines,
But o'er the shrinking land sublimely rides.
The wild blast, rising from the western cave,
Drives the huge billows from their heaving bed;
Tears from their grassy tombs the village dead,
And breaks the silent sabbath of the grave!
With shells and sea-weed mingled, on the shore,
Lo! their bones whiten in the frequent wave;
But vain to them the winds and waters rave;
They hear the warring elements no more:
While I am doom'd by life's long storm oppress,

To gaze with envy on their gloomy rest.

WORDSWORTH

ON THE PROJECTED KENDAL AND WINDERMERE RAILWAY

IS then no nook of English ground secure
From rash assault? Schemes of retirement sown
In youth, and 'mid the busy world kept pure
As when their earliest flowers of hope were blown,
Must perish;--how can they this blight endure?
And must he too the ruthless change bemoan
Who scorns a false utilitarian lure
'Mid his paternal fields at random thrown?
Baffle the threat, bright Scene, from Orresthead
Given to the pausing traveller's rapturous glance:
Plead for thy peace, thou beautiful romance
Of nature; and, if human hearts be dead,
Speak, passing winds; ye torrents, with your strong
And constant voice, protest against the wrong.

October 12, 1844

WORDSWORTH

STEAMBOATS, VIADUCTS, AND RAILWAYS

MOTIONS and Means, on land and sea at war
With old poetic feeling, not for this,
Shall ye, by Poets even, be judged amiss!
Nor shall your presence, howsoe'er it mar
The loveliness of Nature, prove a bar
To the Mind's gaining that prophetic sense
Of future change, that point of vision, whence
May be discovered what in soul ye are.
In spite of all that beauty may disown
In your harsh features, Nature doth embrace
Her lawful offspring in Man's art; and Time,
Pleased with your triumphs o'er his brother Space,
Accepts from your bold hands the proffered crown
Of hope, and smiles on you with cheer sublime.

[1833]

P.B. SHELLEY

SONG TO THE MEN OF ENGLAND

I
Men of England, wherefore plough
For the lords who lay ye low?
Wherefore weave with toil and care
The rich robes your tyrants wear?

II
Wherefore feed, and clothe, and save,
From the cradle to the grave,
Those ungrateful drones who would
Drain your sweat--nay, drink your blood?

III
Wherefore, Bees of England, forge
Many a weapon, chain, and scourge,
That these stingless drones may spoil
The forced produce of your toil?

IV
Have ye leisure, comfort, calm,
Shelter, food, love's gentle balm?
Or what is it ye buy so dear
With your pain and with your fear?

V
The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

VI
Sow seed,--but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth,--let no impostor heap;
Weave robes,--let not the idle wear;
Forge arms,--in your defence to bear.

VII

Shrink to your cellars, holes, and cells;
In halls ye deck another dwells.
Why shake the chains ye wrought? Ye see
The steel ye tempered glance on ye.

VIII

With plough and spade, and hoe and loom,
Trace your grave, and build your tomb,
And weave your winding-sheet, till fair
England be your sepulchre.

P.B. SHELLEY

ENGLAND IN 1819

An old, mad, blind, despised, and dying King,
Princes, the dregs of their dull race, who flow
Through public scorn,--mud from a muddy spring;
Rulers who neither see nor feel nor know,
But leechlike to their fainting country cling
Till they drop, blind in blood, without a blow.
A people starved and stabbed in th'untilled field;
An army, whom liberticide and prey
Makes as a two-edged sword to all who wield;
Golden and sanguine laws which tempt and slay;
Religion Christless, Godless--a book sealed;
A senate, Time's worst statute unrepealed--
Are graves from which a glorious Phantom may
Burst, to illumine our tempestuous day.

P.B. SHELLEY

THE MASQUE OF ANARCHY

I.

As I lay asleep in Italy,
There came a voice from over the sea,
And with great power it forth led me
To walk in the visions of Poesy.

II.

I met Murder on the way--
He had a mask like Castlereagh--
Very smooth he look'd, yet grim;
Seven bloodhounds followed him:

III.

All were fat; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one, and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew,
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

IV.

Next came Fraud, and he had on,
Like Lord E ----, an ermined gown;
His big tears, for he wept well,
Turned to mill-stones as they fell;

V.

And the little children, who
Round his feet played to and fro,
Thinking every tear a gem,
Had their brains knocked out by them.

VI.

Clothed with the * * as with light,
And the shadows of the night,
Like * * * next, Hypocrisy,
On a crocodile rode by.

VII.

And many more Destructions played
In this ghastly masquerade,
All disguised, even to the eyes,
Like bishops, lawyers, peers, or spies.

VIII.

Last came Anarchy; he rode
On a white horse, splashed with blood;
He was pale even to the lips,
Like Death in the Apocalypse.

IX.

And he wore a kingly crown;

And in his grasp a sceptre shone;
On his brow this mark I saw--
"I am God, and King, and Law!"

X.
With a pace stately and fast,
Over English land he past,
Trampling to a mire of blood
The adoring multitude.

XI.
And a mighty troop around,
With their trampling shook the ground,
Waving each a bloody sword,
For the service of their Lord.

XII.
And with glorious triumph, they
Rode through England proud and gay,
Drunk as with intoxication
Of the wine of desolation.

XIII.
O'er fields and towns, from sea to sea,
Passed the pageant swift and free,
Tearing up, and trampling down,
Till they came to London town.

XIV.
And each dweller, panic-stricken,
Felt his heart with terror sicken,
Hearing the tempestuous cry
Of the triumph of Anarchy.

XV.
For with pomp to meet him came,
Clothed in arms like blood and flame,
The hired murderers who did sing,
"Thou art God, and Law, and King.

XVI.
"We have waited, weak and lone,
For thy coming, Mighty One!
Our purses are empty, our swords are cold,
Give us glory, and blood, and gold."

XVII.

Lawyers and priests, a motley crowd,
To the earth their pale brows bowed;
Like a bad prayer not over loud,
Whispering--"Thou art Law and God."

XVIII.

Then all cried with one accord,
"Thou art King, and God, and Lord;
Anarchy, to thee we bow,
Be thy name made holy now!"

XIX.

And Anarchy, the skeleton,
Bowed and grinned to every one,
As well as if his education,
Had cost ten millions to the nation.

XX.

For he knew the palaces
Of our kings were nightly his;
His the sceptre, crown, and globe,
And the gold-in-woven robe.

XXI.

So he sent his slaves before
To seize upon the Bank and Tower,
And was proceeding with intent
To meet his pensioned parliament,

XXII.

When one fled past, a maniac maid,
And her name was Hope, she said:
But she looked more like Despair;
And she cried out in the air;

XXIII.

"My father, Time, is weak and grey
With waiting for a better day;
See how idiot-like he stands,
Fumbling with his palsied hands!

XXIV.

"He has had child after child,
And the dust of death is piled
Over every one but me--

Misery! oh, Misery!"

XXV.

Then she lay down in the street,
Right before the horses' feet,
Expecting with a patient eye,
Murder, Fraud, and Anarchy.

XXVI.

When between her and her foes
A mist, a light, an image rose,
Small at first, and weak and frail
Like the vapour of a vale:

XXVII.

Till, as clouds grow on the blast,
Like tower-crown'd giants striding fast,
And glare with lightnings as they fly,
And speak in thunder to the sky,

XXVIII.

It grew--a shape arrayed in mail
Brighter than the viper's scale,
And upborne on wings whose grain
Was as the light of sunny rain.

XXIX.

On its helm, seen far away,
A planet, like the morning's, lay;
And those plumes its light rained through
Like a shower of crimson dew.

XXX.

With step as soft as wind it passed
O'er the heads of men--so fast
That they knew the presence there,
And looked--and all was empty air.

XXXI.

As flowers beneath the footstep waken,
As stars from night's loose hair are shaken,
As waves arise when loud winds call,
Thoughts sprung where'er that step did fall.

XXXII.

And the prostrate multitude

Looked--and ankle deep in blood,
Hope, that maiden most serene,
Was walking with a quiet mien:

XXXIII.

And Anarchy, the ghastly birth,
Lay dead earth upon the earth;
The Horse of Death, tameless as wind
Fled, and with his hoofs did grind
To dust the murderers thronged behind.

XXXIV.

A rushing light of clouds and splendour,
A sense, awakening and yet tender,
Was heard and felt--and at its close
These words of joy and fear arose:

XXXV.

(As if their own indignant earth,
Which gave the sons of England birth,
Had felt their blood upon her brow,
And shuddering with a mother's throe,

XXXVI.

Had turned every drop of blood,
By which her face had been bedewed,
To an accent unwithstood,
As if her heart had cried aloud:)

XXXVII.

"Men of England, Heirs of Glory,
Heroes of unwritten story,
Nurslings of one mighty mother,
Hopes of her, and one another,

XXXVIII.

"Rise, like lions after slumber,
In unvanquishable number,
Shake your chains to earth like dew,
Which in sleep had fall'n on you.

XXXIX.

"What is Freedom? Ye can tell
That which Slavery is too well,
For its very name has grown
To an echo of your own.

XL.

"'Tis to work, and have such pay
As just keeps life from day to day
In your limbs, as in a cell
For the tyrants' use to dwell:

XLI.

"So that ye for them are made,
Loom, and plough, and sword, and spade:
With or without your own will, bent
To their defence and nourishment.

XLII.

"'Tis to see your children weak
With their mothers pine and peak,
When the winter winds are bleak:--
They are dying whilst I speak.

XLIII.

"'Tis to hunger for such diet,
As the rich man in his riot
Casts to the fat dogs that lie
Surfeiting beneath his eye.

XLIV.

"'Tis to let the Ghost of Gold
Take from toil a thousand fold,
More than e'er its substance could
In the tyrannies of old:

XLV.

"Paper coin--that forgery
Of the title deeds, which ye
Hold to something of the worth
Of the inheritance of Earth.

XLVI.

"'Tis to be a slave in soul,
And to hold no strong controul
Over your own wills, but be
All that others make of ye.

XLVII.

"And at length when ye complain,
With a murmur weak and vain,

'Tis to see the tyrant's crew
Ride over your wives and you:--
Blood is on the grass like dew.

XLVIII.

"Then it is to feel revenge,
Fiercely thirsting to exchange
Blood for blood--and wrong for wrong:
DO NOT THUS, WHEN YE ARE STRONG.

XLIX.

"Birds find rest in narrow nest,
When weary of the winged quest;
Beasts find fare in woody lair,
When storm and snow are in the air.

L.

"Asses, swine, have litter spread,
And with fitting food are fed;
All things have a home but one:
Thou, oh Englishman, hast none!

LI.

"This is Slavery--savage men,
Or wild beasts within a den,
Would endure not as ye do:
But such ills they never knew.

LII.

"What art thou, Freedom? Oh! could Slaves
Answer from their living graves
This demand, tyrants would flee
Like a dream's dim imagery.

LIII.

"Thou art not, as impostors say,
A shadow soon to pass away,
A superstition, and a name
Echoing from the caves of Fame

LIV.

"For the labourer thou art bread,
And a comely table spread,
From his daily labour come,
In a neat and happy home.

LV.

"Thou art clothes, and fire, and food
For the trampled multitude:
No--in countries that are free
Such starvation cannot be,
As in England now we see.

LVI.

"To the rich thou art a check,
When his foot is on the neck
Of his victim; thou dost make
That he treads upon a snake.

LVII.

"Thou art Justice--ne'er for gold
May thy righteous laws be sold,
As laws are in England:--thou
Shield'st alike the high and low.

LVIII.

"Thou art Wisdom--Freedom never
Dreams that God will damn for ever
All who think those things untrue,
Of which priests make such ado.

LIX.

"Thou art Peace--never by thee
Would blood and treasure wasted be,
As tyrants wasted them, when all
Leagued to quench thy flame in Gaul.

LX.

"What if English toil and blood
Was poured forth, even as a flood!
It availed,--oh Liberty!
To dim--but not extinguish thee.

LXI.

"Thou art Love--the rich have kist
Thy feet, and like him following Christ,
Give their substance to the free,
And through the rough world follow thee.

LXII.

"Oh turn their wealth to arms, and make
War for thy beloved sake,

On wealth and war and fraud: whence they
Drew the power which is their prey.

LXIII.

"Science, and Poetry, and Thought,
Are thy lamps; they make the lot
Of the dwellers in a cot
So serene, they curse it not.

LXIV.

"Spirit, Patience, Gentleness,
All that can adorn and bless,
Art thou: let deeds, not words, express
Thine exceeding loveliness.

LXV.

"Let a great assembly be
Of the fearless, of the free,
On some spot of English ground,
Where the plains stretch wide around.

LXVI.

"Let the blue sky overhead,
The green earth, on which ye tread,
All that must eternal be,
Witness the solemnity.

LXVII.

"From the corners uttermost
Of the bounds of English coast;
From every hut, village, and town,
Where those who live and suffer, moan
For others' misery and their own:

LXVIII.

"From the workhouse and the prison,
Where pale as corpses newly risen,
Women, children, young, and old,
Groan for pain, and weep for cold;

LXIX.

"From the haunts of daily life,
Where is waged the daily strife
With common wants and common cares,
Which sow the human heart with tares;

LXX.

"Lastly, from the palaces,
Where the murmur of distress
Echoes, like the distant sound
Of a wind alive around;

LXXI.

"Those prison-halls of wealth and fashion,
Where some few feel such compassion
For those who groan, and toil, and wail,
As must make their brethren pale;

LXXII.

"Ye who suffer woes untold,
Or to feel, or to behold
Your lost country bought and sold
With a price of blood and gold;

LXXIII.

"Let a vast assembly be,
And with great solemnity
Declare with measured words, that ye
Are, as God has made ye, free!

LXXIV.

"Be your strong and simple words
Keen to wound as sharpened swords,
And wide as targes let them be,
With their shade to cover ye.

LXXV.

"Let the tyrants pour around
With a quick and startling sound,
Like the loosening of a sea,
Troops of armed emblazonry.

LXXVI.

"Let the charged artillery drive,
Till the dead air seems alive
With the clash of clanging wheels,
And the tramp of horses' heels.

LXXVII.

"Let the fixed bayonet
Gleam with sharp desire to wet
Its bright point in English blood,

Looking keen as one for food.

LXXVIII.

"Let the horsemen's scimitars
Wheel and flash, like sphereless stars,
Thirsting to eclipse their burning
In a sea of death and mourning.

LXXIX.

"Stand ye calm and resolute,
Like a forest close and mute,
With folded arms, and looks which are
Weapons of an unvanquished war.

LXXX.

"And let Panic, who outspeeds
The career of armed steeds,
Pass, a disregarded shade,
Thro' your phalanx undismay'd.

LXXXI.

"Let the Laws of your own land,
Good or ill, between ye stand,
Hand to hand, and foot to foot,
Arbiters of the dispute.

LXXXII.

"The old laws of England--they
Whose reverend heads with age are grey,
Children of a wiser day;
And whose solemn voice must be
Thine own echo--Liberty!

LXXXIII.

"On those who first should violate
Such sacred heralds in their state,
Rest the blood that must ensue,
And it will not rest on you.

LXXXIV.

"And if then the tyrants dare,
Let them ride among you there;
Slash, and stab, and maim, and hew;
What they like, that let them do.

LXXXV.

"With folded arms and steady eyes,
And little fear and less surprise,
Look upon them as they stay
Till their rage has died away:

LXXXVI.

"Then they will return with shame,
To the place from which they came,
And the blood thus shed will speak
In hot blushes on their cheek:

LXXXVII.

"Every woman in the land
Will point at them as they stand--
They will hardly dare to greet
Their acquaintance in the street:

LXXXVIII.

"And the bold, true warriors,
Who have hugged Danger in wars,
Will turn to those who would be free
Ashamed of such base company:

LXXXIX.

"And that slaughter to the nation
Shall steam up like inspiration,
Eloquent, oracular,
A volcano heard afar:

XC.

"And these words shall then become
Like Oppression's thundered doom,
Ringing through each heart and brain,
Heard again--again--again.

XCI.

Rise like lions after slumber
In unvanquishable NUMBER!
Shake your chains to earth, like dew
Which in sleep had fall'n on you:
YE ARE MANY--THEY ARE FEW.

P.B. SHELLEY

LETTER TO MARIA GISBORNE

The spider spreads her webs, whether she be
In poet's tower, cellar, or barn, or tree;
The silk-worm in the dark green mulberry leaves
His winding sheet and cradle ever weaves;
So I, a thing, whom moralists call worm,
Sit spinning still round this decaying form,
From the fine threads of rare and subtle thought—
No net of words in garish colours wrought
To catch the idle buzzers of the day—
But a soft cell, where when that fades away,
Memory may clothe in wings my living name
And feed it with the asphodels of fame,
Which in those hearts which must remember me
Grow, making love an immortality.

Whoever should behold me now, I wist,
Would think I were a mighty mechanist,
Bent with sublime Archimedean art
To breathe a soul into the iron heart
Of some machine portentous, or strange gin,
Which by the force of figured spells might win
Its way over the sea, and sport therein;
For round the walls are hung dread engines, such
As Vulcan never wrought for Jove to clutch
Ixion or the Titan: — or the quick
Wit of that man of God, St. Dominic,
To convince Atheist, Turk or Heretic,
Or those in philanthropic council met,
Who thought to pay some interest for the debt
They owed————*————*————*————
By giving a faint foretaste of damnation
To Shakespear, Sidney, Spenser and the rest
Who made our land an island of the blest,
When lamp-like Spain, who now relumes her fire
On Freedom's hearth, grew dim with Empire:—
With thumbscrews, wheels, with tooth and spike and jag,
Which fishers found under the utmost crag
Of Cornwall and the storm-encompassed isles,
Where to the sky the rude sea rarely smiles
Unless in treacherous wrath, as on the morn
When the exulting elements in scorn
Satiated with destroyed destruction, lay
Sleeping in beauty on their mangled prey,

As panthers sleep: — and other strange and dread
Magical forms the brick floor overspread—
Proteus transformed to metal did not make
More figures, or more strange; nor did he take
Such shapes of unintelligible brass,
Or heap himself in such a horrid mass
Of tin and iron not to be understood;
And forms of unimaginable wood,
To puzzle Tubal Cain and all his brood:
Great screws, and cones, and wheels, and grooved blocks
The elements of what will stand the shocks
Of wave and wind and time. — Upon the table
More knacks and quips there be than I am able
To catalogize in this verse of mine:—
A pretty bowl of wood — not full of wine,
But quicksilver; that dew which the gnomes drink
When at their subterranean toil they swink,
Pledging the demons of the earthquake, who
Reply to them in lava-cry halloo!
And call out to the cities o'er their head,—
Roofs, towers and shrines, the dying and the dead,
Crash through the chinks of earth — and then all quaff
Another rouse, and hold their sides and laugh.
This quicksilver no gnome has drunk — within
The walnut bowl it lies, veined and thin,
In colour like the wake of light that stains
The Tuscan deep, when from the moist moon rains
The inmost shower of it's white fire — the breeze
Is still — blue heaven smiles over the pale seas.
And in this bowl oft quicksilver — for I
Yield to the impulse of an infancy
Outlasting manhood — I have made to float
A rude idealism of a paper boat—
A hollow screw with cogs — Henry will know
The thing I mean and laugh at me, — if so
He fears not I should do more mischief. — Next
Lie bills and calculations much perplexed,
With steam-boats, frigates, and machinery quaint
Traced over them in blue and yellow paint.
Then comes a range of mathematical
Instruments, for plans nautical and statical;
A heap of rosin, a queer broken glass
With ink in it; — a china cup that was
What it will never be again, I think,
A thing from which sweet lips were wont to drink

The liquor doctors rail at — and which I
Will quaff in spite of them — and when we die
We'll toss up who died first of drinking tea,
And cry out, — heads or tails? where'er we be.
Near that a dusty paint box, some odd hooks,
A half-burnt match, an ivory block, three books,
Where conic sections, spherics, logarithms,
To great Laplace, from Saunderson and Sims,
Lie heaped in their harmonious disarray
Of figures, — disentangle them who may.
Baron de Tott's Memoirs beside them lie,
And some odd volumes of old chemistry.
Near those a most inexplicable thing,
With lead in the middle — I'm conjecturing
How to make Henry understand; but — no,
I'll leave, as Spenser says, with many mo,
This secret in the pregnant womb of time,
Too vast a matter for so weak a rhyme.

And here like some weird Archimage sit I,
Plotting dark spells, and devilish enginery,
The self-impelling steam-wheels of the mind
Which pump up oaths from clergymen, and grind
The gentle spirit of our meek reviews
Into a powdery foam of salt abuse,
Ruffling the ocean of their self-content;—
I sit — and smile or sigh as is my bent,
But not for them — Libeccio rushes round
With an inconstant and an idle sound,
I heed him more than them — the thunder-smoke
Is gathering on the mountains, like a cloak
Folded athwart their shoulders broad and bare;
The ripe corn under the undulating air
Undulates like an ocean; — and the vines
Are trembling wide in all their trellised lines—
The murmur of the awakening sea doth fill
The empty pauses of the blast; — the hill
Looks hoary through the white electric rain,
And from the glens beyond, in sullen strain,
The interrupted thunder howls; above
One chasm of heaven smiles, like the eye of Love
On the unquiet world; — while such things are,
How could one worth your friendship heed the war
Of worms? the shriek of the world's carrion jays,
Their censure, or their wonder, or their praise?

You are not here! the quaint witch Memory sees
In vacant chairs, your absent images,
And points where once you sat, and now should be
But are not. — I demand if ever we
Shall meet as then we met; — and she replies,
Veiling, in awe her second-sighted eyes;
"I know the past alone — but summon home
My sister Hope, — she speaks of all to come."
But I, an old diviner, who knew well
Every false verse of that sweet oracle,
Turned to the sad enchantress once again,
And sought a respite from my gentle pain,
In citing every passage o'er and o'er
Of our communion. — How on the sea shore
We watched the ocean and the sky together,
Under the roof of blue Italian weather;
How I ran home through last year's thunder-storm,
And felt the transverse lightning linger warm
Upon my cheek: — and how we often made
Feasts for each other, where good will outweighed
The frugal luxury of our country cheer,
As well it might, were it less firm and clear
Than ours must ever be; — and how we spun
A shroud of talk to hide us from the sun
Of this familiar life, which seems to be
But is not, — or is but quaint mockery
Of all we would believe, and sadly blame
The jarring and inexplicable frame
Of this wrong world: — and then anatomize
The purposes and thoughts of men whose eyes
Were closed in distant years; — or widely guess
The issue of the earth's great business,
When we shall be as we no longer are;
Like babbling gossips safe, who hear the war
Of winds, and sigh, but tremble not; — or how
You listened to some interrupted flow
Of visionary rhyme; — in joy and pain
Struck from the inmost fountains of my brain,
With little skill perhaps; — or how we sought
Those deepest wells of passion or of thought
Wrought by wise poets in the waste of years,
Staining their sacred waters with our tears;
Quenching a thirst ever to be renewed!
Or how I, wisest lady! then indued
The language of a land which now is free,

And winged with thoughts of truth and majesty,
Flits round the tyrant's sceptre like a cloud,
And bursts the peopled prisons, and cries aloud,
"My name is Legion!" — that majestic tongue
Which Calderon over the desert flung
Of ages and of nations; and which found
An echo in our hearts, and with the sound
Startled oblivion; — thou wert then to me
As is a nurse — when inarticulately
A child would talk as it's grown parents do.
If living winds the rapid clouds pursue,
If hawks chase doves through the aetherial way,
Huntsmen the innocent deer, and beasts their prey,
Why should not we rouse with the spirit's blast
Out of the forest of the pathless past
These recollected pleasures?

You are now
In London, that great sea, whose ebb and flow
At once is deaf and loud, and on the shore
Vomits its wrecks, and still howls on for more.
Yet in its depth what treasures! You will see

—————*—————*—————*—————*—————
You will see C—; he who sits obscure
In the exceeding lustre, and the pure
Intense irradiation of a mind,
Which, with its own internal lightning blind,
Flags wearily through darkness and despair—
A cloud-encircled meteor of the air,
A hooded eagle among blinking owls.—
You will see H—t; one of those happy souls
Which are the salt of the earth, and without whom
This world would smell like what it is — a tomb;
Who is, what others seem; — his room no doubt
Is still adorned by many a cast from Shout,
With graceful flowers tastefully placed about;
And coronals of bay from ribbons hung,
And brighter wreaths in neat disorder flung;
The gifts of the most learn'd among some dozens
Of female friends, sisters-in-law and cousins.
And there is he with his eternal puns,
Which beat the dullest brain for smiles, like duns
Thundering for money at a poet's door;
Alas! it is no use to say, "I'm poor!"
Or oft in graver mood, when he will look
Things wiser than were ever read in book,

Except in Shakespear's wisest tenderness.
You will see H—, and I cannot express
His virtues, — though I know that they are great,
Because he locks, then barricades the gate
Within which they inhabit; — of his wit
And wisdom, you'll cry out when you are bit.
He is a pearl within an oyster shell,
One of the richest of the deep. And there
Is English P— with his mountain Fair
Turned into a Flamingo, — that shy bird
That gleams i' the Indian air. Have you not heard
When a man marries, dies, or turns Hindoo,
His best friends hear no more of him? but you
Will see him, and will like him too, I hope,
With the milk-white Snowdonian Antelope
Matched with the cameleopard; his fine wit
Makes such a wound, the knife is lost in it;
A strain too learned for a shallow age,
Too wise for selfish bigots; — let his page
Which charms the chosen spirits of the time,
Fold itself up for the serener clime
Of years to come, and find its recompense
In that just expectation. Wit and sense,
Virtue and human knowledge, all that might
Make this dull world a business of delight,
Are all combined in H. S. — And these,
With some exceptions, which I need not tease
Your patience by descanting on, are all
You and I know in London.

I recall
My thoughts, and bid you look upon the night.
As water does a sponge, so the moonlight
Fills the void, hollow, universal air.
What see you? — Unpavilioned heaven is fair
Whether the moon, into her chamber gone,
Leaves midnight to the golden stars, or wan
Climbs with diminished beams the azure steep;
Or whether clouds sail o'er the inverse deep,
Piloted by the many-wandering blast,
And the rare stars rush through them dim and fast.
All this is beautiful in every land.
But what see you beside? A shabby stand
Of hackney-coaches — a brick house or wall
Fencing some lonely court, white with the scrawl
Of our unhappy politics; — or worse—

A wretched woman reeling by, whose curse
Mixed with the watchman's, partner of her trade,
You must accept in place of serenade—

I see a chaos of green leaves and fruit
Built round dark caverns, even to the root
Of the living stems that feed them; in whose bowers
There sleep in their dark dew the folded flowers;
Beyond, the surface of the unsickled corn
Trembles not in the slumbering air, and borne
In circles quaint, and ever changing dance,
Like winged stars the fire-flies flash and glance,
Pale in the open moonshine; but each one
Under the dark trees seems a little sun,
A meteor tamed; a fixed star gone astray
From the silver regions of the milky way.
Afar the Contadino's song is heard,
Rude, but made sweet by distance; — and a bird
Which cannot be the nightingale, and yet
I know none else that sings so sweet as it
At this late hour; — and then all is still:—
Now Italy or London, which you will!

Next winter you must pass with me; I'll have
My house by that time turned into a grave
Of dead despondence and low-thoughted care,
And all the dreams which our tormentors are.
Oh! that — — and — were there,
With every thing belonging to them fair!—
We will have books, Spanish, Italian, Greek;

Though we eat little flesh and drink no wine,
Yet let's be merry: we'll have tea and toast;
Custards for supper, and an endless host
Of syllabubs and jellies and mince-pies,
And other such lady-like luxuries,—
Feasting on which we will philosophise.
And we'll have fires out of the Grand Duke's wood,
To thaw the six weeks' winter in our blood.
And then we'll talk; — what shall we talk about?
Oh! there are themes enough for many a bout
Of thought-entangled descant; — as to nerves
With cones and parallelograms and curves,
I've sworn to strangle them if once they dare
To bother me, — when you are with me there.
And they shall never more sip laudanum,

From Helicon or Himeros; — we'll come,
And in despite of * * * and of the devil,
We'll make our friendly philosophic revel
Outlast the leafless time; — till buds and flowers
Warn the obscure inevitable hours,
Sweet meeting by sad parting to renew;—
"To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new."