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McElwee Bertomeu, Monica; Font Paz, Carme , dir. Female Firmness in the Face of Adversity : Felicia Hemans' Records of Woman. Bellaterra: Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2022. 38 pag. (1482 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

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Universitat Autònoma
de Barcelona

**Female Firmness in the Face of Adversity:
Felicia Hemans' *Records of Woman***

A BA Dissertation

Author: Monica Natalia

Supervisor: Dr. Carme Font Paz

Submitted to the Department of English and German Studies

Degree in English Language and Literature

June 2022

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Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my teacher and supervisor, Dr. Carme Font for her aid in choosing a late Romantic writer that dealt with themes of my profound interest. I also want to thank you, Carme, for inviting to the university well renowned scholars with an expertise on early modern women's writing as their seminars have been of insightful relevance during the writing period of my essay.

I would also like to thank the few but meaningful friendships I have made at university and those that have remained present while living abroad, for your perpetual support and interest in the completion of my dissertation.

Finally, special thanks are due to my dad Colin for inspiring me to dig deeper into the English language and its derivatives. *També vull donar les gràcies a les dones més properes a mi, a la meva mare Núria i germana Clara: us agraeixo l'empenta que m'heu donat per recórrer el trajecte com a filòloga de la llengua anglesa.*

Abstract

During her lifetime in Great Britain, Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835) was a well-known and respected female poet. Today, she stands just outside the Romantic canon. Scholars have recently begun to dig into her life and published work, exploring relevant matters such as her striving for financial independence to support her family as well as the broad spectrum of female subjects in her writings.

The following BA dissertation aims to explore Hemans' *Records of Woman* (1828), focusing exclusively on the representation of female experience in the face of adversity. A selection of three distinct poems is examined with respect to the use of memory as a tell-tale mechanism and the overarching themes of mourning and firmness of mind. This focus is key to understanding the deeper meaning of what a woman is expected to bear for Hemans. While the factual context of Hemans' time frame is relevant, it is the interpretation of the women's voices and experiences in the poems that is much more meaningful.

This analysis will be undertaken through the close-reading of Hemans' manuscripts, university and academic research on Hemans' work and extracts from the poems themselves. This paper suggests that Hemans' use of figurative and narrative language in the portrayal of female engagement with adversity is representative of a personal and collective preoccupation. Furthermore, the female voice hints at a revolutionary embrace of adversity, where the woman grants a Romantic sovereign-like agency to the acceptance and overcoming of dealt distress. A careful evaluation of Hemans' poems suggests that in confiding women's private affairs, Hemans makes use of an effective telltale mechanism for the portrayal of bold women in the face of suffering.

Keywords: English poetry, early nineteenth century, mourning, melancholy, women and literature, Felicia Hemans, *Records of Woman*

Introduction

“Deep in the dark there shall be something at least that endures”
Friedrich Hölderlin in *Bread and Wine*, 1801

The following research essay aims to explore the trope of adversity in three of Felicia Hemans' poems in her volume *Records of Woman* (1828). A close reading of the source material has been undertaken by tracing specific passages with a focus on the overarching theme of mourning and firmness of mind in “The Switzer's Wife”, “Gertrude, or Fidelity till Death” and “Madeline. A Domestic Tale”, respectively. The selection of these poems has been made due to its different instances of adversity; the presence and overcoming of it expressed by women characters. The first two poems are drawn from a 13th century Swiss tale and the third poem is a product of Hemans' own vision. My research question for this paper centers on Hemans' use of memory as a tell-tale mechanism for the depiction of female experience in the face of adversity. Hemans' women, named or unnamed, face enduring trials of hardship and in doing so, Hemans gives a voice to women of generations gone by and generations to come. I argue that these women do not falter in the face of adversity such as the approach of tyranny or death. Instead, they take command of their emotions and gather the strength necessary to overcome their hardships. In doing so, Hemans rewrites the version of history that she has been predisposed with and re-writes it through her story and her memory, hence redefining the experiences of women in domestic and national spheres.

It is of relevance to mention the primary sources selected for the reading of Hemans. My paper uses two primary sources dating back to the nineteenth century, each of which are digital versions. The first book is *Records of Woman: With Other Poems* published in 1828 (ed. William B. Gilley). The second book is *The Poems of Felicia Hemans* published in 1875 (ed. by William P. Nimmo). Complementary to these two sources, I have consulted Susan Wolfson's book *Felicia Hemans: Selected Poems, Letters, Reception Materials* (2000) for insightful information on Hemans' biography and correspondences. Hence it goes without saying, that my interpretation of Hemans' poems rests on the reliability and authenticity of the aforementioned editor.

Equally important to the unfolding of this paper is the need to contextualize Felicia Hemans so as to understand the value of her poetry as a writer and a woman in the early nineteenth century. Today, Hemans is recognized by scholars by the opening line in “Casabianca” (1826); *the boy stood on the burning deck* and the poem “Homes of England” (1827) which had acquired classical status and was often recited in classrooms during her time. Wolfson notes that “it was with such pieces that “Mrs. Hemans” became the “undisputed representative poet of Victorian imperial and domestic ideology” (Wolfson, 2001: xiii). Many of her poems became public favorites; memorized, anthologized and illustrated. It is to note that Hemans’ best volumes were issues by William Blackwood (1776-1834) given that he preserved Hemans’ copious textual notes.

By the 1820s, Hemans’ fame increased substantially. She began selling her work to popular magazines and newspaper publishers across Britain and America. She also started contributing to annuals and literary magazines. In doing so, Hemans quickly understood the influence that these venues posed on women's writing and their distribution at the time. As Tucker asserts: “the annuals purveyed a medley of relentlessly charming, mutually illustrative engravings and texts, so successfully calibrated to maximize consumer pleasure that they set the pattern for their current descendant, the bestselling coffee-table book” (Tucker, 1994: 526).

Hemans’ increasing popularity, however, also had its downsides. The attention she received put her on the spotlight, hence she was constantly negotiating her identity as a woman of domestic adherence or ambitious poet. As a woman, Hemans could not have the best of both worlds as Wordsworth did. Her works were also parodied and set in music halls to make fun of. Hemans’ relationship with fame accounts for a further potential research paper.

Her fame continued throughout the Victorian period and her works stayed in print until just after the First World War, where the rise of Modernism in literature incited the rejection of tradition and with it, the decline in popularity of Romantic literature. Despite her passing in 1835, her writing remained central to literary studies throughout the nineteenth century. So, what precipitated her decline? How did her star fall?

Chapter 1: Felicia Dorothea Browne Hemans: A Romantic Voice Glossed Over in Time

Felicia Hemans (1793-1835) was one of the most widely read, published and successful poets of her time, but her greatness has been put on hold up until recently. Wolfson notes: “The bicentennial of her birth, in 1993, passed without the parade of conferences, exhibits, special issues of journals, anthologies of essays, and new editions that have been marking other bicentennial milestones of the “Romantic” era” (Wolfson, 2001: xiv).

Felicia Hemans was born as Felicia Dorothea Browne in Liverpool on September 25th, 1793. The year of her birth also marked the beginning of England’s war against France. Given the political climate during the French Revolution (1789-1799), her father’s imported wine business suffered casualties which prompted the families’ move to Gwrych, a village by the sea in the North of Wales. Later on, the Hemans re-located further inland to St. Asaph. Wales would soon become what Felicia would refer to as the “green land of my childhood, my home and my dead” in her poem “A Farewell to Wales” (1827). In William M. Rossetti’s edition of *The Poetical Works of Felicia Hemans* (1879), he describes Wales as “close to the sea and amid mountains... the very scene for the poetically minded child to enjoy” (see Matthew). We shall see that the influence of Hemans' surrounding landscapes is a key characteristic in her writing.

Born into a well-bred household with a family library, Hemans began to read and write at an early age. By the age of fourteen, she had published her first volume of poetry, an illustrated quarto titled *Poems* (1808) which she dedicated to the Prince of Wales and had published with the help of her mother, Felicity.

In 1812, Hemans married Captain Alfred Hemans, an Irish army officer several years her senior. She moved with him to Daventry, Northamptonshire and bore five sons between 1813 and 1818. However, given the political climate with Napoleon’s campaign in Russia, the marriage did not hold enough money to support the family, hence their re-location to Wales to live with her mother. This most likely resulted to be an uncomfortable situation for Captain Hemans, who also had to deal with his wife’s synchronous success as a writer. The eldest child was approaching six years of age

when Captain Hemans left on a voyage to Italy, with no intention of returning. It is argued that Captain Hemans was uneasy living off his wife's income. His departure eventually strengthened Hemans' determination to support her family with her writing. In the next few pages, we will find strong similarities between her husbands' desertion and the women presented in her work.

Following Hemans' death in 1835, poets such as Laetitia Landon, Elizabeth Barrett Browning and William Wordsworth wrote commemorative stanzas. Wordsworth referred to her as the "holy Spirit" in his poem "Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg" (1835):

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
For Her who, ere her summer faded,
Has sunk into a breathless sleep (Wordsworth, 1835).

It is almost two centuries after her death, at the end of the 20th century, that a renewed interest has appeared for Felicia Hemans' life and work. There are arguments in favour of Romantic poetry perceived as a thing of the past, most especially after the First World War. Feldman notes: "After the turn of the twentieth century, Romantic and Victorian literature came to be seen as naïve, melodramatic, old-fashioned, and embarrassingly sentimental" (Feldman, 1999: xii). Hence, it was not until the mid-twentieth century that Romantic literature was revived, but the academic focus seemed to be put solely on "The Big Six" (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, Blake, Byron and Shelley). Influential women writers, such as Hemans, continued to be omitted from literary studies.

Chapter 2: *Records of Woman: Analysis of Selected Poems*

2.1 Introduction to the *Records*

Records of Woman: With Other Poems is an ambitious compilation of nineteen poems that circulate around the lives of women and the relationships to those around them. While some of the poems are drawn from historic events, others are bi-products of Hemans' own experience. Significant themes that tie the female protagonists together are their sense of patriotic and domestic duty and the recurrent pattern of loss, often if not always, of someone they love.

Records was first published by William Blackwood (1776-1834) in May of 1828. However, some of the poems had already been published earlier, either in *The New Monthly Magazine* or in

literary annuals, of which Hemans made a reasonable profit out of. Having had this volume compiled at the height of Hemans' career resulted in its immediate success. Its reception called for a second edition that was due in October that same year and a third edition was to be launched the following year.

It is of relevance that the term "record" originates from the Latin *cor* or *cord*, meaning "heart". From here, the derivation recorder: "to bring to remembrance". Hemans' *Records* are what Feldman describes as "the recording not so much of grand occurrences but of human emotion and its implications" (Feldman, 1999: xxi). Notably, the publication of *Records* coincided with Hemans' recent passing of her mother and the desertion by the father of her children. Hence it is no wonder that she poured much of her personal, emotional distress into the compilation of these poems. In them, Hemans reveals the pains and pleasures of family and nation, as fiction and non-fiction blur the lines with the aid of memory.

Hemans' structure in the unfolding of her poems is that of a brief narrative, an epigraph and finally, the lyric poem. This three-part structure is what Lundeen calls a formatting that "orchestrates the distinct literary units in a way that creates a middle ground between rational thought and feeling, and, at a metaphysical level, between the material and the mystical" (in Reno, 2015: 15).

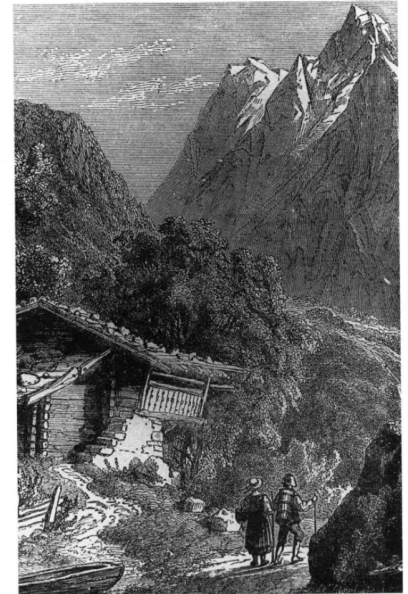
Although the women in *Records* all differ in terms of social, ethnic and gendered subjectivities, they all face moments of adversity. This ultimately leads these female protagonists to go through intense periods of mourning and melancholy. The intense emotional experience in the absence of a loved one and the determination to overcome this anguish comes to appear as Hemans' overarching theme. *Records* is designed to elicit an understanding by its readers in focusing on the fluctuating emotions and consequent actions of female protagonists in overcoming distress. In doing so, Hemans allows her women to speak of domestic and collective preoccupations.

2.2 "The Switzer's Wife"

"The Switzer's Wife" first appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* in January of 1826. In order to delve into it, we must first note that Hemans takes inspiration from a tale that recounts the 13th

century revolt by the Swiss against Albert I (c.1250-1308) of Austria. Feldman reveals (1999: 168-9):

The legendary tale of Werner Stauffacher and his unnamed wife appears in the early “White Book of Sarnen.”¹ According to this account, “There was a man in Swiz called Stoupacher [Stouffacher] who lived at Steinen... [in] a pretty stone house. Now at that time a Gesler was bailiff there, in the name of the empire; he came one day, and rode by there, and called to Stoupacher, and asked him, whose the pretty dwelling was. Stoupacher, answered him and spake sadly: ‘Gracious lord, it is yours and mine in fief,’ and dared not say it was his, so greatly did he fear the lord. The lord rode away. Now Stoupacher was a wise man and well to do. He had also a wise wife, and thought over the matter, and had great grief, and was full of fear before the lord, lest he should take his life and his goods from him. His wife, she noticed it and did as women do, and would like to have known what was the matter with him, or why he was sad; but he denied her that. At last she overwhelmed him with great entreaty, that he might let her know his matter, and spake: ‘Be gso good and tell me thy need; although it is said, women give cold counsels, who knows what God will do?’ She begge him so often in her trusting way, that he told her what his grief was. She went and strengthened him with words and spake: ‘There’ll be some good plan,’ and asked him if he knew any one in Ure [Uri] who was so trusted by him that he might confide his need to him, and told him of the family of Furst and of zer Fraowen [zur Frauen]. He answered her and spake: ‘Yea, he knew them well, and thought about the consel of his wife, and went to Ure, and stayed there, until he found one who had also a like grief. She had also bid him ask in Unterwalden; for she thought, there were people there also, who did not like such tyranny. [...] So there came three of them together, Stoupacher of Schwitz, and one of the Fursts of Ure, and he from Melche in Unterwalden, and each confided his need and grief to the other, and took counsel, and they took an oath together.



“The Switzer’s Wife.” Illustration by the Society of Decorative Art; published in *The Poetical Works of Mrs Felicia Hemans*, ed. William Michael Rossetti (London: Ward, Lock, and Co., [ca. 1882]).

Figure 1. “The Switzer’s Wife” in Feldman, 1999: xxi.

Fragments from this legendary tale re-appear in Hemans’ poems. In fact, Hemans treats different aspects of it in “Gertrude, or Fidelity Till Death” and “A Monarch’s Death Bed”, both included in *Records*. However, while the tale above is not explicit in the poem itself, Hemans does make reference to it in the epigraph that precedes the lyric poem, as follows:

Werner Stauffacher, one of the three confederates of the field of Grutli, had been alarmed by the envy with which the Austrian Bailiff, Landenberg, had noticed the appearance of wealth and comfort which distinguished his dwelling. It was not, however, until roused by the entreaties of his wife, a woman who seems to have been of a heroic spirit, that he was induced to deliberate with his friends upon the measures by which Switzerland was finally delivered. (1828)

¹ A collection of medieval manuscripts put together in the late 15th century by Hans Schriber.

This insertion of background information in a narrative-like format serves as an anticipation of what Hemans will subsequently present. In doing so, Aliff suggests that Hemans “allows the audience to assume the worst before engaging in the poems themselves” (Aliff, 2020: 187) with the intention of creating an interplay between Hemans’ narrative voice and the audiences’ speculations. Following this historical annotation, Hemans inserts two epigraphs that are relevant to the unfolding story. The first one hints at the power of woman despite her “quiet” standing. The second one is quoting Wilhelm Tell² who advocates for the need of Swiss independence in the face of foreign rule.

“Nor look nor tone revealeth aught
Save woman's quietness of thought;
And yet around her is a light
Of inward majesty and might.”

M.J.J.

“Wer solch ein herz an seinen Busen drückt,
Der kann fur herd und hof mit freuden fechten.”

WILLHOLM TELL.

“The Switzer’s Wife” is particularly interesting, because it is of the few poems in the volume whose protagonists’ name is addressed in relationship to that of her man. Other women in the volume are referred to by their given name such as “Pauline”, “Juana” or “Imelda”. Here, the unidentified woman is the Switzer’s wife and she comes into being only when establishing the relationship she holds to her husband. While Hemans’ contemporaries may be familiar with this legendary Swiss tale and the woman in question, whom is also known as Gertrud Stauffacher, others may argue that her unnamed being may be conflicting in studies of female identity. I argue that in presenting the woman unnamed, Hemans rewrites history in a way that any woman can identify with, or what Aliff claims as to “sacrifice the women of the past for the sake of the women of the present” (Aliff, 2020: 196).

The poem begins by setting the scene:

IT was the time when children bound to meet
Their father's homeward step from field or hill,
And when the herd's returning bells are sweet
In the Swiss valleys, and the lakes grow still,

² Tell is a central figure in Swiss national historiography; he is perceived as a symbol of resistance against aristocratic rule.

And the last note of that wild horn swells by
Which haunts the exile's heart with melody.

And lovely smiled full many an Alpine home,
Touch'd with the crimson of the dying hour,
Which lit its low roof by the torrent's foam,
And pierced its lattice through the vine-hung bower;
But one, the loveliest o'er the land that rose,
Then first look'd mournful in its green repose. (1-12)

“In the Swiss valleys”, “an Alpine home”: Switzerland, a country under Austrian rule at the time will undergo open rebellion against its foreign rulers. The first stanza depicts an uncertain rustling with Hemans’ use of alliterative sibilant sounds such as “step”, “sweet”, “Swiss”, “still” and “swells”. Sibilant comes from the Latin *sibilare* or “to hiss” suggesting a cautionary forewarning on what is to come. In the second stanza we begin to perceive danger, “the crimson of the dying hour” (8), hinting to the image of a rather oppressive coming of dawn. We are also introduced to the emotion of mourning, as the land itself is looking so “in its green repose”. Notably, Hemans was fond of describing her provisional dwellings and their effect on emotional states of mind, as she did so in her *jeux d'esprit* titled “Dramatic Scene between Bronwylfa and Rhyllon” (1825). Soft “l” sounds are also visible in this stanza; “lovely”, “lit”, “low”, “lattice”, “loveliest”, “land” and “look’d”, evoking a lightness in relation to Hemans’ trope of “home and hearth” that will be disrupted subsequently.

For Werner sat beneath the linden tree,
That sent its lulling whispers through his door,
Even as man sits, whose heart alone would be
With some deep care, and thus can find no more
Th' accustom'd joy in all which evening brings,
Gathering a household with her quiet wings. (13-18)

We are now introduced to Werner, sitting under the linden tree, an exemplary image of a saddened individual. A “heart alone” who is unable to find joy in what is already familiar to him. “Gathering a household with her quiet wings” makes reference to his wife whom we will meet shortly. The symbolism of wings is associated to that of birds and flight, perhaps even angels; close to the heavens and spiritual heights. This foreshadows Werner’s troubles and his ensuing emancipator.

His wife stood hush'd before him—sad, yet mild
In her beseeching mien !—he mark'd it not.
The silvery laughter of his bright-hair'd child
Rang from the greensward round the shelter'd spot,
But seem'd unheard; until at last the boy
Raised from his heap'd up flowers a glance of joy,

And met his father's face. But then a change
Pass'd swiftly o'er the brow of infant glee,
And a quick sense of something dimly strange
Brought him from play to stand beside the knee
So often climb'd, and lift his loving eyes
That shone through clouds of sorrowful surprise. (19-30)

His wife and son enter the scene together. The boy's "silvery laughter" indicates a clear ringing and unconcerned conduct, which is bound to change. It is clear that his wife has noticed Werner's low-spirited aspect immediately while his son is oblivious to it up until he meets his father's eye: "a change pass'd swiftly o'er the brow of infant glee" which brings upon him "clouds of sorrowful surprise" (another metaphor to denote his sudden unclarity, a mind confused by his father's gaze) and a change from "play to stand beside the knee". I argue that in the child's changing expression, Hemans expresses both national and domestic preoccupations. On the one hand, the child standing beside his father's knee is a symbolic gesture of patriotism; the young boy believes the nation is in danger. On the other hand, his concern is also of a domestic nature, in that his father's mournful gaze ultimately affects his ability to remain serene at home. As Takiguchi suggests, Hemans "turns (male) warriors into home-oriented men, and boys into little heroes hoping to protect their homes and land" (Takiguchi, 2011: 95).

But tenderly his babe's fair mother laid
Her hand on his, and with a pleading look,
Thro' tears half-quivering, o'er him bent, and said,
"What grief, dear friend, hath made thy heart its prey,
That thou shouldst turn thee from our love away?"

"It is too sad to see thee thus, my friend!
Mark'st thou the wonder on thy boy's fair brow,
Missing the smile from thine? Oh, cheer thee! bend
To his soft arms: unseal thy thoughts e'en now!
Thou dost not kindly to withhold the share
Of tried affection in thy secret care." (31-42)

Werner's wife inquires and pleads him to share his sadness, hence he feels compelled to share his grief. "What grief, dear friend, hath made thy heart its prey": the metaphoric "heart as prey" signals Werner as subject to his emotions; he feels confined within his own sorrow which aggravates his sense of freedom. At this point, Hemans demands an inquisitive take upon the nature of emotion. As a late Romantic writer, Hemans' lyrics are filled with emotion, but they are presented in a strategic matter; balancing emotion and reason so as to leave us, readers, with just a fair amount of sentiment to keep reading. This literary style in Hemans gave her the reputation "restrained Wordsworth", as Rudy posits, "providing readers with just enough emotional outpouring in a literary world that had become saturated by it" (Rudy, 2006: 546): a remarkably innovative feature of which to acknowledge.

He look'd up into that sweet earnest face,
But sternly, mournfully: not yet the band
Was loosen'd from his soul; its inmost place
Not yet unveil'd by love's o'ermastering hand.
"Speak low!" he cried, and pointed where on high
The white Alps glitter'd through the solemn sky:

"We must speak low amidst our ancient hills
And their free torrents; for the days are come
When tyranny lies couch'd by forest rills,
And meets the shepherd in his mountain-home.
Go, pour the wine of our own grapes in fear,
Keep silence by the hearth! its foes are near.

"The envy of th' oppressor's eye hath been
Upon my heritage. I sit to-night
Under my household tree, if not serene,
Yet with the faces best-beloved in sight:
To-morrow eve may find me chain'd, and thee—
How can I bear the boy's young smiles to see?" (43-60)

In confessing his burning fear, Werner points to the "ancient hills" that designate home. He comments on the rushing of the "free torrents" and the cultivated goods of his land, "the wine of our own grapes": his concern on these two flowing streams (river and wine) serve to express his national concern in the face of tyranny. The soil is relevant for the fermentation of wine production and the streams of water rushing through the Swiss Alps is symbolic of the beginnings of life in its purest form. Life for

Werner springs up from these two landmarks and he speaks of them in reverence: “we must speak low” and “keep silence by the hearth!”.

“I sit to-night under my household tree”, “To-morrow eve may find me chain’d”: Here, Hemans cleverly draws attention to “night” and “morrow”; to the potentiality of abrupt change from one day to the next. These lines also foreshadow the approach of mourning in their correlation to the expressions “to mourn” or to be melancholy “to-day”. In his rigorous study of the use of melancholy in post-medieval poetry, Klibansky asserts: “In all modern European literature the expression “melancholy” (when not in a scientific context) lost the meaning of a quality and acquired instead the meaning of a “mood”; a purely mental, temporary mood” (Klibansky, 1979: 220), hence the melancholy of Werner’s apparent sorrow in this stanza.

The bright blood left that youthful mother's cheek;
Back on the linden stem she lean'd her form;
And her lip trembled, as it strove to speak,
Like a frail harp-string, shaken by the storm.
'Twas but a moment, and the faintness pass'd,
And the free Alpine spirit woke at last. (61-66)

In hearing the perils, Werner's wife is momentarily struck, her lips are unable to find the language to her fright “like a frail harp-string”: Hemans’ simile here is not only indicative of the strong communicative relation between poetry and music, but the harp itself has long been associated with angels, hence it foreshadows the woman's role in the poem as angel to become. “And the free Alpine spirit woke at last”: in regaining composure, Werner’s wife is now ready to face adversity. Her “awakening” also contrasts with her husband's prior mourning “tonight” (56), suggesting the influential force that she will have on her husband.

And she, that ever through her home had moved
With the meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile
Of woman, calmly loving and beloved,
And timid in her happiness the while,
Stood brightly forth, and steadfastly, that hour,
Her clear glance kindling into sudden power. (67-72)

This is a woman who may initially fall under the etiquette of the Victorian “angel of the house” with her “meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile”, “calmly loving” and “timid in her happiness”. However, the power she withholds is eventually brought forth: “her clear glance kindling into sudden power”.

Ay, pale she stood, but with an eye of light,
And took her fair child to her holy breast,
And lifted her soft voice, that gathered might
As it found language:—"Are we thus oppress'd?
Then must we rise upon our mountain-sod,
And man must arm, and woman call on God! (73-78)

The woman now finds the words to speak in inquiring on the degree of threat that her husband’s announcement poses on the family. She is alert “with an eye of light”, indicative of clarity and awareness. She is bracing herself for what is to come; “lifting her soft voice, that gathered might”. She proceeds by suggesting to take action: “man must arm, and woman call on God”: here emerges Hemans’ recurrent conviction in the faith of God and the need to protect the nation.

"I know what thou wouldst do: –And be it done!
Thy soul is darken'd with its fears for me.
Trust me to heaven, my husband! This, thy son,
The babe whom I have borne thee, must be free!
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth
May well give strength—if aught be strong on earth. (79-84)

The woman re-assures her husband of her plan of action: “trust me to heaven”, for the sake of freedom in their son and hearth.

"Thou hast been brooding o'er the silent dread
Of my desponding tears; now, lift once more,
My hunter of the hills! thy stately head,
And let thine eagle glance my joy restore!
I can bear all, but seeing thee subdued—
Take to thee back thine own undaunted mood.

"Go forth beside the waters, and along
The chamois paths, and thro' the forests go;
And tell, in burning words, thy tale of wrong
To the brave hearts that midst the hamlets glow.
God shall be with thee, my beloved! Away!
Bless but thy child, and leave me— I can pray!" (85-96)

She addresses her husband as her "hunter of the hills", imploring on his "eagle glance" to make her feel better. An eagle glance hints at courage and liberty, propelling her husband to act daringly. In these stanzas, Hemans gives the Switzer's wife the voice of command; she gathers the strength necessary to move beyond her domestic sphere. As Takiguchi claims, Hemans "turns domestic women into militant heroes, who appropriate men's patriotic glory" (Takiguchi, 2011: 95). "Leave me" she proclaims; a voluntary act of solitude. Her resting faith in God will bring her luck and protection for herself and family. This strong conviction in religion recurs throughout the rest of poems in the *Records*.

He sprang up, like a warrior youth awaking
To clarion sounds upon the ringing air;
He caught her to his heart, while proud tears breaking
From his dark eyes fell o'er her braided hair;
And "Worthy art thou," was his joyous cry,
"That man for thee should gird himself to die! (97-102)

Lines 97-98 depict Werner's reaction to his wife's words: suddenly he is re-vitalised from grief. Again, Hemans uses music as a simile to allude to Werner's new state of mind. Her words have been healing and inspiring on him.

"My bride, my wife, the mother of my child!
Now shall thy name be armour to my heart:
And this our land, by chains no more defiled,
Be taught of thee to choose the better part!
I go— thy spirit on my words shall dwell:
Thy gentle voice shall stir the Alps: Farewell!" (103-108)

In this stanza we perceive Werner expressing gratitude to his wife's aid by addressing her as everything but her name. However, while she remains unnamed, she remains mighty. Werner asserts: "thy gentle voice shall stir the Alps: Farewell!": the woman's voice shall cause commotion in the nation as it has done in the domestic sphere.

And thus they parted, by the quiet lake,
In the clear starlight: he the strength to rouse
Of the free hills; she, thoughtful for his sake,
To rock her child beneath the whispering boughs,
Singing its blue half-curtain'd eyes to sleep
With a low hymn, amidst the stillness deep. (109-114)

Hemans' poem ends with the parting of husband and wife, "by the quiet lake" and "in the clear starlight": there is a sense of serenity and hope in the unknown future". In the same way wife and son enter together, they bring down the curtain together, too. She is putting her son to sleep, "with a low hymn": suggestive of the emotional baggage now defeated for what is yet to come.

In adapting the original Swiss folk tale to "The Switzer's Wife", Hemans remains loyal in portraying Gertrud Stauffacher as a strong, self-determined woman with a mind set in defending her nation and hearth. In engaging with her husband's fear of foreign tyranny, she takes command over the situation. In doing so, especially in addressing this woman as lacking the proper name, Hemans grants voice to women beyond her own time frame.

2.3 "Gertrude or Fidelity till Death"

"Gertrude or Fidelity till Death" was first published as "Gertrude" in *The New Monthly Magazine* in May of 1826. The poem begins anew with a prose styled paragraph that outlines the historical tale that Hemans takes as a base on which to establish a remarkable instance of female courage and self-sacrifice:

[Baron Von Der Wart accused—though it is believed unjustly— as an accomplice in the assassination of the Emperor Albert, was bound alive on the wheel, and attended by his wife Gertrude, throughout his last agonizing hours, with the most heroic devotedness. Her own sufferings, with those of her unfortunate husband, are most affectingly described in a letter which she afterwards addressed to a female friend, and which was published some years ago, at Haarlem, in a book entitled Gertrude Von Der Wart, or Fidelity unto Death.]
(1828)

Following the historical annotation is a recitative styled epigraph drawn from a play by Hemans' contemporary Scottish poet Joanna Baillie titled *De Monfort, A Tragedy* (1798). In it, Baillie depicts Jane de Monfort speaking to her brother shortly after he murders her lover: "I never will forsake thee (9)". This quote anticipates Gertrude's voluntary duty in staying beside her husband in his departure. It also foreshadows her strength in the tragic witnessing of her lover's death.

Although Gertrude remains bound to the conditions of her tale, Hemans has put her into a

lyrical space in which it is possible to perceive Gertrude removed from her historical narrative. In this way, we perceive this woman's compelling experience from a close up perspective. Hemans begins the poem by leaping straight to the scene of the Baron's death. She describes Gertrude and her surroundings:

HER hands were clasp'd, her dark eyes raised,
The breeze threw back her hair;
Up to the fearful wheel she gazed—
All that she loved was there.
The night was round her clear and cold,
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold
The might of earthly love. (1-8)

Despite Gertrude's imminent loss taking place in a "clear and cold" night, suggestive of a gloomy evening cast upon her, she remains by her husband's side. The intimidating features in this stanza that will shortly take her husband away from her, such as "the fearful wheel" and "holy heaven above" do not cease Gertrude's determination in taking leave. Her body language is depicting that of a heroine primed to endure any trial of hardship. The personified "pale stars watching to behold" and the symbolic "holy heaven above" evoke nature's celestial grandiosity and its potential for providing divine guidance and protection. There is a desire for communication between heaven and the lovers.

"And bid me not depart," she cried,
"My Rudolph, say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side,
Peace, peace! I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear,
When death is on thy brow?
The world! what means it? Mine is here—
I will not leave thee now. (9-16)

The approaching death manifests itself: "when death is on thy brow". Gertrude reinforces her determination in remaining by his side. "Mine [world] is here", a metaphor to express her deeply entrenched love, the substance of meaning that he has in her life. Moreover, the religious vocabulary

in this poem is significant, especially in its relation to death. Gertrude's words of religious conviction reveal the depths of love she holds for her husband. It is almost taken for self-evident that Gertrude's husband is going to heaven when he dies.

"I have been with thee in thine hour
Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not its memory's living power
To strengthen me through this!"
And thou, mine honour'd love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won."

And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Through all that night of bitterest woe
She bore her lofty part;
But oh! with such a glazing eye,
With such a curdling cheek—
Love, Love! of mortal agony,
Thou, only thou, shouldst speak! (17-32)

Gertrude refers to "memory's living power" to "strengthen" her through this period of sorrow. Hemans' explicit reference to memory plays on the intensity of Gertrude's emotional states of mind and her eventual overcoming of this adversity. Feldman argues that Gertrude is "unable to stop the slow death by torture of the one she loves, but she musters strength to attend the dreadful event and heroically provides comfort while she herself is comfortless" (Feldman, 1999: xxii). In "We have the blessed heaven in view", the role of religion is heightened in that it suggests that even though they will part ways, their love will be long-lasting and continue to endure in heaven. There is also a sense of duty emanating from Gertrude's reasoning. It is clearly unconditional as she stands beside him and keeps supporting him until his dying hour. Her love is so intense, that she is unable to leave him to his undeserved fate.

The wind rose high—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear:—
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To happy bosoms near;
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm. (33-40)

Nature continues to allude to Gertrude's emotions by means of auditory imagery: "the wind rose high" and the rushing storm". It is as if the sound is in synchrony with the lovers' emotional states of mind. "The rushing of the storm" contrasts with the solemnity of the first stanza's "the holy heaven above, pale stars watching to behold". Here, the magnitude of loyalty is also demonstrated vocally, Aliff notes that Hemans "emphasizes Gertrude's strength by revealing that her voice competes with the wind. [Hemans'] use of the sonic and acoustic paradigms and develops a counter to the objectification of women and landscape through a multi-sensory, rather than visually dominant, approach to communication" (Aliff, 2020: 191).

She wiped the death-damps from his brow
With her pale hands and soft,
Whose touch upon the lute-chords low
Had still'd his heart so oft.
She spread her mantle o'er his breast,
She bathed his lips with dew,
And on his cheek such kisses press'd
As hope and joy ne'er knew. (41-48)

In this moment, Gertrude is preparing her husband's body for decease; "wiped the death-damps from his brow", "spread her mantle o'er his breast" and "bathed his lips with dew". This is evocative of what Cottingham suggests as a ritual anointment: "reminiscent of the Gospel story in which woman anoints Jesus' feet with "an alabaster flask of ointment, [...] her tears, [and] her hair" (in Laird, 2013: 511). In lines 42-44 Hemans inserts the music in the lute as symbolic of Gertrude's love for her husband, "Had still'd his heart so oft".

Oh! lovely are ye, Love and Faith,
Enduring to the last!
She had her meed—one smile in death—
And his worn spirit pass'd.
While even as o'er a martyr's grave
She knelt on that sad spot,
And, weeping, bless'd the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not! (49-56)

The final stanza begins and ends with an exclamation, suggesting Gertrude's passion in the tragic witnessing of her lover's passing. In retreating from her husband's decease, we find Hemans' emphasis on the abstract values of "Love and Faith" (49). In addition, Hemans escorts the lovers together in the union they share: "one smile in death". In this way, Hemans allows the Baron to die as martyr, but it is in the final image that grieving Gertrude takes center stage. It is argued that Hemans "restages the crucifixion" by putting the focus on the woman at the foot of the cross (Laird, 2013: 510).

The two concluding lines of the poem reinforce Jane de Monfort's certainty in staying beside her now deceased brother. Gertrude, in this case, is likened to the holy figure of the poem as if seizing her husband's honour. Feldman writes that "death, as Hemans sees it, may be at times a woman's most forceful adversary but can also be her salvation" (Feldman, 1999: xxi). In accepting the dismal and inevitable fate coming to her, Gertrude uses memory and affection for her husband as a means to overcoming her fear of death.

2.4 "Madeline. A Domestic Tale"

In "Madeline. A Domestic Tale", emotional wounds are at its epicenter. The poem was first published in the *Literary Souvenir* of 1828, and it recounts the story of a mother and daughter whose parting marks important moments of solitude and the desire for embrace once again. While the mother laments her daughter's leaving to set off in marriage, Madeline leaves home only to find her future spouse already dead. Mother and daughter hold emotional wounds when apart and Hemans make

explicit emphasis to the suffering of the human heart. Hemans begins by inserting an epigraph by Joanna Baillie in which she emphasizes the comforting reassurance that a mother can provide:

“Who should it be?—Where shouldst thou look for kindness?
When we are sick where can we turn for succour;
When we are wretched, where can we complain;
And when the world looks cold and surly on us,
Where can we go to meet a warmer eye
With such sure confidence as to a mother?”

JOANNA BAILLIE.

The poem begins with the voice of Madeline’s mother. In the style of dramatic monologue, she laments her daughter’s leaving from France to marry the man she loves:

"MY child, my child, thou leavest me!—I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance; I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft-breathing hymn at twilight's close,
And thy ‘Good-night’ at parting for repose. (1-6)

The mother recalls moments of the past when her daughter was still young enough to be taken care of. Lines of melancholy imbue her monologue: “I shall hear/The gentle voice no more” and “I shall miss the sound/Of thy light step amidst the flowers around”: the nostalgic sounds of voice and footsteps; Hemans makes reference to auditory imagery. The mother’s voice sounds heartbroken, she feels torn by the upcoming change, a change she had so well established as a habit: nurturing her daughter. Klibansky contends: “The adjective in French ‘*mélancolique*’ or, more commonly ‘*mélancolieux*’ could be transferred from the person experiencing this feeling to the circumstance that caused it”: hence the circumstances that have forestalled Madeline’s mother in feeling melancholic rather than joyful for her daughter’s wedding. Klibansky also notes on one of Christine de Pisan’s women in love³ whom sings about “entering into melancholy” when assuming her

³ Christine de Pisan. *Cent Ballades d’Amant et de Dame*, No. 88. *Oeuvres poétiques Vol. III*, ed. M. Roy, Société des anciens texts français, Paris 1896, p. 295.

chevalier has lost interest in her: “Je suis entrée en grande mérencolie” (In Klibansky, 1979. 219). To “enter” into a temporary emotion as if subsumed by it, she continues expressing the painful realisation of her loneliness:

Under the vine-leaves I shall sit alone,
And the low breeze will have a mournful tone
Amidst their tendrils, while I think of thee,
My child! and thou, along the moon-light sea,
With a soft sadness haply in thy glance,
Shalt watch thine own, thy pleasant land of France,
Fading to air. Yet blessings with thee go! (7-13)

Similar to Werner’s lone melancholy “under the linden tree”, Madeline’s mother is on her own “under the vine-leaves” listening to the breeze that also acquires a personified “mournful tone”. The mother and daughter’s parting turns pleasant sounds in nature into somber tones.

Despite her sadness, her mother still hopes for the best in the future of her daughter. She perceives a “soft sadness” in Madeline’s look, suggesting that she, too, will miss her mother and her land.

Love guard thee, gentlest! and the exile's wo
From thy young heart be far! And sorrow not
For me, sweet daughter! in my lonely lot,
God shall be with me. Now, farewell! farewell! (14-17)

In emigrating from France, the mother wishes her daughter to steer clear from homesickness; “and the exile’s woe/from thy young heart be far!”. Hemans also employs metaphors such as to be protected by love and to be freed from sorrow; implying that the mother does not want to imagine her daughter in danger. In the absence of Madeline’s father, it is her mother that gives away her daughter to her soon to be husband, as the tradition recalls, as a sign of love and support. The mother also reinforces her strength in remaining lonesome, “in my lonely lot/God shall be with me”. Again, religious faith makes Madeline’s departure all the more bearable.

Thou that hast been what words may never tell
Unto thy mother's bosom, since the days
When thou wert pillow'd there, and wont to raise

In sudden laughter thence thy loving eye
That still sought mine: these moments are gone by,
Thou too must go, my flower!—Yet with thee dwell
The peace of God! One, one more gaze—farewell!” (18-24)

She calls her daughter “my flower”, a word which will garner its deeper significance further on in the poem. Here, flower designates a term of address that is sweet and affectionate. Hemans, however, uses it to implicitly address her daughter as her “flower of life”, evoking the meaningful and sacred bond between mother and daughter. This dramatic monologue serves as a means to re-create the thoughts and emotions of a mother in watching her daughter depart. Robertson notes that according to Byron, whom Hemans was highly influenced stylistically, “the dramatic monologue as it is written by female poets becomes less about exploring the consciousness of an individual poetic speaker and more about expressing a common femininity which all women to some degree share” (Robertson, 2007: 42). Certainly, Hemans is painfully aware of the link between mother and child given her very recent loss of her mother.

In following, Hemans distances herself from the mother’s voice and continues the narrative in third person. In fact, it is this use of third person narration that Hemans developed from Byron. In assuming that this poem is filtered through Hemans’ own autobiography, the loneliness in Madeline’s mother may also be pronouncing Hemans’ own sadness in the departure of her relatives. In a letter to Mitford, Hemans confesses:

“I have been a drooping creature for months, ill and suffering much from the dispersion of a little Band of Brothers and Sisters, amongst whom I had lived, and who are now all scattered –and, strange as it may seem to say, I am now for the first time in my life holding the reins of government – independent – managing a Household myself – and I never liked any thing less than “ce triste empire de Soi-même”. (23 March 1828) (in Rothstein 1999: 66)

This was a mother's parting with her child—
A young meek bride, on whom fair fortune smiled,

And woo'd her with a voice of love away
From childhood's home; yet there, with fond delay,
She linger'd on the threshold, heard the note
Of her caged bird through trellis'd rose-leaves float,
And fell upon her mother's neck and wept,
Whilst old remembrances, that long had slept,
Gush'd o'er her soul, and many a vanish'd day,
As in one picture traced, before her lay.

But the farewell was said; and on the deep,
When its breast heaved in sunset's golden sleep,
With a calm'd heart, young Madeline ere long,
Pour'd forth her own sweet, solemn vesper-song,
Breathing of home. Through stillness heard afar,
And duly rising with the first pale star,
That voice was on the waters; till at last
The sounding ocean solitudes were pass'd, (25-42)

“A young meek bride, on whom fair fortune smiled”: In this personified description of Madeline, Hemans expresses the prospect of a bright future. However, Madeline’s heart stings with the sudden realization of parting from her beloved mother. She is saddened, like a “caged bird” in reminiscing on her childhood and the memories she holds of it.

And the bright land was reach'd, the youthful world
That glows along the West: the sails were furl'd
In its clear sunshine, and the gentle bride
Look'd on the home that promised hearts untried
A bower of bliss to come. Alas! We trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface, (43-49)

Hemans’ interchange between sadness and hope remains vivid throughout the poem. Madeline’s journey and arrival to the “bright land” (the Americas) is that of “ocean solitudes”, “clear sunshine” and “stillness heard afar”, indicating a promising destination. Nothing obscures Madeline’s sight. Hemans use of the seeking refuge in nature is most present here, as a place of communion. However, Hemans’ love tales don’t tend to end in a happy ever after.

On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears!
That home was darken'd soon: the summer breeze
Welcomed with death the wanderers from the seas:
Death unto one, and anguish—how forlorn!
To her, that widow'd in her marriage morn,
Sat in her voiceless dwelling, whence with him
Her bosom's first beloved, her friend and guide,
Joy had gone forth, and left the green earth dim,
As from the sun shut out on every side,
By the close veil of misery. Oh! but ill,
When with rich hopes o'erfraught, the young high heart
Bears its first blow! It knows not yet the part
Which life will teach—to suffer and be still,
And with submissive love to count the flowers
Which yet are spared, and through the future hours
To send no busy dream! She had not learn'd
Of sorrow till that hour, and therefore turn'd
In weariness from life. Then came th' unrest,
The heart-sick yearning of the exile's breast,
The haunting sounds of voices far away,
And household steps: until at last she lay
On her lone couch of sickness, lost in dreams
Of the gay vineyards and blue-rushing streams
In her own sunny land; and murmuring oft
Familiar names, in accents wild yet soft,
To strangers round that bed, who knew not aught
Of the deep spells wherewith each word was fraught.
To strangers? Oh! could strangers raise the head
Gently as hers was raised? Did strangers shed
The kindly tears which bathed that feverish brow
And wasted cheek with half-unconscious flow?
Something was there, that thro' the lingering
night,
Outwatches patiently the taper's light—
Something that faints not through the day's distress,
That fears not toil, that knows not weariness—
Love, true, and perfect love! Whence came that

power,
Uprearing through the storm the drooping flower? (50-89)

The approach of the storm indicates forthcoming danger, and with it, the end of a joyful marriage for Madeline. Her tragic shock lies the “close veil of misery” that encumbers her from speaking, in a “voiceless dwelling”. Madeline now yearns for home and the cradling of her mother’s arms, she dreams of her sunny homeland, “of the gay vineyards and blue-rushing streams”. In this search for memory, her mother appears to take her back home.

Whence?—who can ask? The wild delirium pass'd,
And from her eyes the spirit look'd at last
Into her mother's face, and wakening knew
The brow's calm grace, the hair's dear silvery hue,
The kind sweet smile of old!—and had she come,
Thus in life's evening, from her distant home,
To save her child? Even so—nor yet in vain;

In that young heart a light sprung up again,
And lovely still, with so much love to give,
Seem'd this fair world, though faded; still to live
Was not to pine forsaken. On the breast
That rock'd her childhood, sinking in soft rest,
"Sweet mother! gentlest mother! can it be?"
The lorn one cried, "and do I look on thee? (90-103)

Take back thy wanderer from this fatal shore,
Peace shall be ours beneath our vines once more.” (104-105)

Naturally, Madeline’s spirit is heightened: “In that young heart a light sprung up again”. None but her mother could release her from this agony. “The kind sweet smile of old!”: in personifying Madeline’s mother’s image, it is beaming with heartfelt joy. Mother and daughter are now reunited in “this fatal shore”, primed to depart back to their native land of vines. “On the breast/That rock'd her childhood, sinking in soft rest”: an idyllic image of sorority between mother and daughter. It is ultimately in mother and daughters’ own search for memory in seeking solace that Hemans allows them to reunite and overcome this particular instance of adversity.

Conclusions and Suggestions for Further Research

In closing, the aim of this dissertation was to identify and interpret Felicia Hemans' thematic choice in the selected poems corresponding to *Records of Woman*. During the process of my analysis, I have confirmed that Hemans' use of memory as a tell-tale serves to provide a binding force and continuity in the overcoming of hardship among women in literature. Her strategic use of narrative and lyric combined, meditates upon the death of important historical figures as well as Hemans' own personal loss. Therefore, her poems serve to preserve snippets of history by permeating factual details with intimate, emotional elements of herself.

As a late Romantic writer, Hemans was undervalued for her ability to consolidate motherhood and the pursuit of writing. In my opinion, and as a means to understanding her purposefulness as a writer, Hemans' poems in *Records of Woman* project new, transgressive ideals of Victorian womanhood by breaking down fixed identity markers of the nineteenth century, the embodying feminine qualities such as nurturing family with one's tenderness and taking a discrete interest in the husband's business without taking part in it. Instead, Hemans proposes new feminist traits in the duties of womanhood; a sense of female agency that resulted in firmness and self-determination in attitude.

Furthermore, I suggest that it is necessary to have further access to Hemans' primary sources in order to make diverse, academic discussions available. One of the problems I have encountered is that modern editions that I have consulted on Hemans' work omits her less renowned writings such as plays, essays, letters and commercial correspondences. In this absence, I find that academic discussions have only relied on revisions of her poetry and classroom-oriented texts. In addition, I believe it would be compelling to research further on Hemans' corpus of letters, particularly those concerning her correspondence with William Wordsworth, given their joint reputation as distinguished poets yet their gendered and therefore, restrained subjectivities. I hope I have contributed to Hemans' literary studies in providing a new perspective on her poetic tales, revealing aspects of her story that are to be acknowledged and revived.

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Figure 1. "The Switzer's Wife" In Paula Feldman (ed.), *Records of Woman, with Other Poems*. The University Press of Kentucky, 1999. 24.
(Access date: 10 May, 2022)

Annex

THE SWITZER'S WIFE

[Werner Stauffacher, one of the three confederates of the field of Grutli, had been alarmed by the envy with which the Austrian Bailiff, Landenberg, had noticed the appearance of wealth and comfort which distinguished his dwelling. It was not, however, until roused by the entreaties of his wife, a woman who seems to have been of a heroic spirit, that he was induced to deliberate with his friends upon the measures by which Switzerland was finally delivered.]

“Nor look nor tone revealeth aught
Save woman's quietness of thought;
And yet around her is a light
Of inward majesty and might.”

M.J.J.

“Wer solch ein herz an seinen Busen drückt,
Der kann fur herd und hof mit freuden fechten.”

WILLHOLM TELL.

IT was the time when children bound to meet
Their father's homeward step from field or hill,
And when the herd's returning bells are sweet
In the Swiss valleys, and the lakes grow still,
And the last note of that wild horn swells by
Which haunts the exile's heart with melody.

And lovely smiled full many an Alpine home,
Touch'd with the crimson of the dying hour,
Which lit its low roof by the torrent's foam,
And pierced its lattice through the vine-hung bower;
But one, the loveliest o'er the land that rose,
Then first look'd mournful in its green repose.

For Werner sat beneath the linden tree,
That sent its lulling whispers through his door,
Even as man sits, whose heart alone would be
With some deep care, and thus can find no more
Th' accustom'd joy in all which evening brings,
Gathering a household with her quiet wings.

His wife stood hush'd before him—sad, yet mild
In her beseeching mien!—he mark'd it not.
The silvery laughter of his bright-hair'd child
Rang from the greensward round the shelter'd spot,
But seem'd unheard; until at last the boy
Raised from his heap'd up flowers a glance of joy,

And met his father's face. But then a change
Pass'd swiftly o'er the brow of infant glee,
And a quick sense of something dimly strange

Brought him from play to stand beside the knee
So often climb'd, and lift his loving eyes
That shone through clouds of sorrowful surprise.

Then the proud bosom of the strong man shook;
But tenderly his babe's fair mother laid
Her hand on his, and with a pleading look,
Thro' tears half-quivering, o'er him bent, and said,
"What grief, dear friend, hath made thy heart its prey,
That thou shouldst turn thee from our love away?"

"It is too sad to see thee thus, my friend!
Mark'st thou the wonder on thy boy's fair brow,
Missing the smile from thine? Oh, cheer thee! bend
To his soft arms: unseal thy thoughts e'en now!
Thou dost not kindly to withhold the share
Of tried affection in thy secret care."

He look'd up into that sweet earnest face,
But sternly, mournfully: not yet the band
Was loosen'd from his soul; its inmost place
Not yet unveil'd by love's o'er-mastering hand.
"Speak low!" he cried, and pointed where on high
The white Alps glitter'd through the solemn sky:

"We must speak low amidst our ancient hills
And their free torrents; for the days are come
When tyranny lies couch'd by forest rills,
And meets the shepherd in his mountain-home.
Go, pour the wine of our own grapes in fear,
Keep silence by the hearth! its foes are near.

"The envy of th' oppressor's eye hath been
Upon my heritage. I sit to-night
Under my household tree, if not serene,
Yet with the faces best-beloved in sight:
To-morrow eve may find me chain'd, and thee—
How can I bear the boy's young smiles to see?"

The bright blood left that youthful mother's cheek;
Back on the linden stem she lean'd her form;
And her lip trembled, as it strove to speak,
Like a frail harp-string, shaken by the storm.
'Twas but a moment, and the faintness pass'd,
And the free Alpine spirit woke at last.

And she, that ever through her home had moved
With the meek thoughtfulness and quiet smile
Of woman, calmly loving and beloved,
And timid in her happiness the while,
Stood brightly forth, and steadfastly, that hour,
Her clear glance kindling into sudden power.

Ay, pale she stood, but with an eye of light,
And took her fair child to her holy breast,
And lifted her soft voice, that gathered might
As it found language:—"Are we thus oppress'd?
Then must we rise upon our mountain-sod,
And man must arm, and woman call on God!

"I know what thou wouldst do: —And be it done!
Thy soul is darken'd with its fears for me.
Trust me to heaven, my husband! This, thy son,
The babe whom I have borne thee, must be free!
And the sweet memory of our pleasant hearth
May well give strength—if aught be strong on earth.

"Thou hast been brooding o'er the silent dread
Of my desponding tears; now, lift once more,
My hunter of the hills! thy stately head,
And let thine eagle glance my joy restore!
I can bear all, but seeing thee subdued—
Take to thee back thine own undaunted mood.

"Go forth beside the waters, and along
The chamois paths, and thro' the forests go;
And tell, in burning words, thy tale of wrong
To the brave hearts that midst the hamlets glow.
God shall be with thee, my beloved! Away!
Bless but thy child, and leave me— I can pray!"

He sprang up, like a warrior youth awaking
To clarion sounds upon the ringing air;
He caught her to his heart, while proud tears breaking
From his dark eyes fell o'er her braided hair;
And "Worthy art thou," was his joyous cry,
"That man for thee should gird himself to die!

"My bride, my wife, the mother of my child!
Now shall thy name be armour to my heart:
And this our land, by chains no more defiled,
Be taught of thee to choose the better part!
I go— thy spirit on my words shall dwell:
Thy gentle voice shall stir the Alps: Farewell!"

And thus they parted, by the quiet lake,
In the clear starlight: he the strength to rouse
Of the free hills; she, thoughtful for his sake,
To rock her child beneath the whispering boughs,
Singing its blue half-curtain'd eyes to sleep
With a low hymn, amidst the stillness deep.

GERTRUDE, OR FIDELITY TILL DEATH.

[The Baron Von Der Wart, accused—though it is believed unjustly— as an accomplice in the assassination of the Emperor Albert, was bound alive on the wheel, and attended by his wife Gertrude, throughout his last agonizing hours, with the most heroic devotedness. Her own sufferings, with those of her unfortunate husband, are most affectingly described in a letter which she afterwards addressed to a female friend, and which was published some years ago, at Haarlem, in a book entitled Gertrude Von Der Wart, or Fidelity unto Death.]

“Dark lowers our fate,
And terrible the storm that gathers o'er us;
But nothing, till that latest agony
Which severs thee from nature, shall unloose
This fix'd and sacred hold. In thy dark prison-house,
In the terrific face of armed law,
Yea, on the scaffold, if it needs must be,
I never will forsake thee.

JOANNA BAILLIE.

HER hands were clasp'd, her dark eyes raised,
The breeze threw back her hair;
Up to the fearful wheel she gazed—
All that she loved was there.
The night was round her clear and cold,
The holy heaven above,
Its pale stars watching to behold
The might of earthly love.

"And bid me not depart," she cried,
"My Rudolph, say not so!
This is no time to quit thy side,
Peace, peace! I cannot go.
Hath the world aught for me to fear,
When death is on thy brow?
The world! what means it? Mine is here—
I will not leave thee now.

"I have been with thee in thine hour
Of glory and of bliss;
Doubt not its memory's living power
To strengthen me through this!
And thou, mine honour'd love and true,
Bear on, bear nobly on!
We have the blessed heaven in view,
Whose rest shall soon be won."

And were not these high words to flow
From woman's breaking heart?
Through all that night of bitterest woe

She bore her lofty part;
But oh! with such a glazing eye,
With such a curdling cheek—
Love, Love! of mortal agony,
Thou, only thou, shouldst speak!

The wind rose high—but with it rose
Her voice, that he might hear:—
Perchance that dark hour brought repose
To happy bosoms near;
While she sat striving with despair
Beside his tortured form,
And pouring her deep soul in prayer
Forth on the rushing storm.

She wiped the death-damps from his brow
With her pale hands and soft,
Whose touch upon the lute-chords low
Had still'd his heart so oft.
She spread her mantle o'er his breast,
She bathed his lips with dew,
And on his cheek such kisses press'd
As hope and joy ne'er knew.

Oh! lovely are ye, Love and Faith,
Enduring to the last!
She had her meed—one smile in death—
And his worn spirit pass'd.
While even as o'er a martyr's grave
She knelt on that sad spot,
And, weeping, bless'd the God who gave
Strength to forsake it not!

MADELINE. A DOMESTIC TALE.

“Who should it be?—Where shouldst thou look for kindness?
When we are sick where can we turn for succour;
When we are wretched, where can we complain;
And when the world looks cold and surly on us,
Where can we go to meet a warmer eye
With such sure confidence as to a mother?”

JOANNA BAILLIE.

"MY child, my child, thou leavest me!—I shall hear
The gentle voice no more that blest mine ear
With its first utterance; I shall miss the sound
Of thy light step amidst the flowers around,
And thy soft-breathing hymn at twilight's close,
And thy 'Good-night' at parting for repose.
Under the vine-leaves I shall sit alone,
And the low breeze will have a mournful tone

Amidst their tendrils, while I think of thee,
My child! and thou, along the moon-light sea,
With a soft sadness haply in thy glance,
Shalt watch thine own, thy pleasant land of France,
Fading to air. Yet blessings with thee go!
Love guard thee, gentlest! and the exile's wo
From thy young heart be far! And sorrow not
For me, sweet daughter! in my lonely lot,
God shall be with me. Now, farewell! farewell!
Thou that hast been what words may never tell
Unto thy mother's bosom, since the days
When thou wert pillow'd there, and wont to raise
In sudden laughter thence thy loving eye
That still sought mine: these moments are gone by,
Thou too must go, my flower!—Yet with thee dwell
The peace of God! One, one more gaze—farewell!”

This was a mother's parting with her child—
A young meek bride, on whom fair fortune smiled,
And woo'd her with a voice of love away
From childhood's home; yet there, with fond delay,
She linger'd on the threshold, heard the note
Of her caged bird through trellis'd rose-leaves float,
And fell upon her mother's neck and wept,
Whilst old remembrances, that long had slept,
Gush'd o'er her soul, and many a vanish'd day,
As in one picture traced, before her lay.

But the farewell was said; and on the deep,
When its breast heaved in sunset's golden sleep,
With a calm'd heart, young Madeline ere long,
Pour'd forth her own sweet, solemn vesper-song,
Breathing of home. Through stillness heard afar,
And duly rising with the first pale star,
That voice was on the waters; till at last
The sounding ocean solitudes were pass'd,
And the bright land was reach'd, the youthful world
That glows along the West: the sails were furl'd
In its clear sunshine, and the gentle bride
Look'd on the home that promised hearts untried
A bower of bliss to come. Alas! we trace
The map of our own paths, and long ere years
With their dull steps the brilliant lines efface,
On sweeps the storm, and blots them out with tears!
That home was darken'd soon: the summer breeze
Welcomed with death the wanderers from the seas:
Death unto one, and anguish—how forlorn!
To her, that widow'd in her marriage morn,
Sat in her voiceless dwelling, whence with him
Her bosom's first beloved, her friend and guide,
Joy had gone forth, and left the green earth dim,

As from the sun shut out on every side,
 By the close veil of misery. Oh! but ill,
 When with rich hopes o'erfraught, the young high heart
 Bears its first blow! It knows not yet the part
 Which life will teach—to suffer and be still,
 And with submissive love to count the flowers
 Which yet are spared, and through the future hours
 To send no busy dream! She had not learn'd
 Of sorrow till that hour, and therefore turn'd
 In weariness from life. Then came th' unrest,
 The heart-sick yearning of the exile's breast,
 The haunting sounds of voices far away,
 And household steps: until at last she lay
 On her lone couch of sickness, lost in dreams
 Of the gay vineyards and blue-rushing streams
 In her own sunny land; and murmuring oft
 Familiar names, in accents wild yet soft,
 To strangers round that bed, who knew not aught
 Of the deep spells wherewith each word was fraught.
 To strangers? Oh! could strangers raise the head
 Gently as hers was raised? Did strangers shed
 The kindly tears which bathed that feverish brow
 And wasted cheek with half-unconscious flow?
 Something was there, that thro' the lingering
 night,
 Outwatches patiently the taper's light—
 Something that faints not through the day's distress,
 That fears not toil, that knows not weariness—
 Love, true, and perfect love! Whence came that
 power,
 Uprearing through the storm the drooping flower?
 Whence?—who can ask? The wild delirium pass'd,
 And from her eyes the spirit look'd at last
 Into her mother's face, and wakening knew
 The brow's calm grace, the hair's dear silvery hue,
 The kind sweet smile of old!—and had she come,
 Thus in life's evening, from her distant home,
 To save her child? Even so—nor yet in vain;
 In that young heart a light sprung up again,
 And lovely still, with so much love to give,
 Seem'd this fair world, though faded; still to live
 Was not to pine forsaken. On the breast
 That rock'd her childhood, sinking in soft rest,
 "Sweet mother! gentlest mother! can it be?"
 The lorn one cried, "and do I look on thee?
 Take back thy wanderer from this fatal shore,
 Peace shall be ours beneath our vines once more."