

Ode to the Nightingale. 1819.

53

My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as tho' of hemlocke I had drunk,
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains
One minute past, and ^{had} hitherwards sunk;
'Tis not thro' envy of thy happy lot,
But being too happy in thine happiness
That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees
In some melodious plot
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,
Singest of summer in full throated ease.

2

O, for a draught of vintage, that has been
Cool'd a long age in the deep delved earth,
Tasting of Flora, and the country green,
Dance, and Provencal song, and sunburnt mirth,
O, for a beaker full of the warm south,
Full of the true and blissful Hippocrene,
With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
And purple stained mouth,
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
And with thee fade into the forest dune.

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget,
 What thro' among the leaves hast never known,
 The weariness, the fever, and the fret,

Here, where men sit and hear each other's groan,

Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last grey hairs,
 Where youth grows pale, and specter-thin, and dies;
 Where but to think is to be full of sorrow,

And leaden-eyed despair;

Where beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,

Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

4

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,

Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,

But on the wingless wings of Poesy,

Tho' the dull brain perplexes and retards;

Already with thee tender is the night,

And haply the Queen-moon is on her throne,

Cluster'd around by all her starry fays;

But here there is no light,

Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown,

Thro' verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,
 Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,
 But in embalm'd darkness guess each sweet
 Wherewith the seasonable ^{months} endows

The grass, the thicket, and the fruit tree wild,
 White hawthorn, and the pastoral yew,
 Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves,
 And mid-may's eldest child,

The coming musk-rose, full of sweetest bloom,
 The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

6

Darting I steter, and for many a time,
 I have been half in love with easeful death,
 Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,
 To take into the air my quiet breath;

Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
 To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
 While thou art pouring thus thy soul abroad
 In such an ecstasy!

Still wouldst thou sing and I have ears in pain
 For thy high requiem, become a sod.

7

Thou wast not born for death, immortal bird,
No hungry generations tread thee down:
The voice I hear this passing night was heard,
In ancient days by Emperors and Clowns;
Perhaps the selfsame song that found a path
Thro' the sad heart of Ruth, when sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in fairs, lands forlorn.

8

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf!
Adieu! Adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades
Past the near meadows over the still stream,
Up the hill side and now 'tis buried deep
In the next valley-glades:
Was it a vision? or a waking dream?
Fled is that music? do I wake or sleep?
