

The Poor Singing Dame

Beneath an old wall, that went round an old castle,
 For many a year, with brown ivy o'erspread,
 A neat little hovel, its lowly roof raising,
 Defied the wild winds that howl'd over its shed:
 5 The turrets, that frown'd on the poor simple dwelling,
 Were rock'd to and fro, when the tempest would roar,
 And the river, that down the rich valley was swelling,
 Flow'd swiftly beside the green step of its door.

The summer sun gilded the rushy roof slanting,
 10 The bright dews bespangled its ivy-bound hedge,
 And above, on the ramparts, the sweet birds were chanting,
 And wild buds thick dappled the clear river's edge.
 When the castle's rich chambers were haunted and dreary,
 The poor little hovel was still and secure;
 15 And no robber e'er enter'd, nor goblin nor fairy,
 For the splendors of pride had no charms to allure.

The Lord of the castle, a proud surly ruler,
 Oft heard the low dwelling with sweet music ring,
 For the old Dame that liv'd in the little hut cheerly,
 20 Would sit at her wheel, and would merrily sing:
 When with revels the castle's great hall was resounding,
 The old Dame was sleeping, not dreaming of fear;
 And when over the mountains the huntsmen were bounding
 She would open her lattice, their clamors to hear.

25 To the merry-ton'd horn she would dance on the threshold,
 And louder, and louder, repeat her old song:
 And when winter its mantle of frost was displaying,
 She caroll'd, undaunted, the bare woods among:
 She would gather dry fern, ever happy and singing,
 30 With her cake of brown bread, and her jug of brown beer,
 And would smile when she heard the great castle-bell ringing,
 Inviting the proud—to their prodigal cheer.

Thus she liv'd, ever patient and ever contented,
 Till envy the Lord of the castle possess'd,
 35 For he hated that poverty should be so cheerful,
 While care could the fav'rites of fortune molest;
 He sent his bold yeomen with threats to prevent her,
 And still would she carol her sweet roundelay;
 At last, an old steward relentless he sent her—
 40 Who bore her, all trembling, to prison away!

Three weeks did she languish, then died broken-hearted,
 Poor Dame! how the death-bell did mournfully sound!
 And along the green path six young bachelors bore her,
 And laid her for ever beneath the cold ground!
 45 And the primroses pale 'mid the long grass were growing,
 The bright dews of twilight bespangled her grave,

And morn heard the breezes of summer soft blowing
To bid the fresh flow'rets in sympathy wave.

The Lord of the castle, from that fatal moment
50 When poor singing Mary was laid in her grave,
Each night was surrounded by screech-owls appalling,
Which o'er the black turrets their pinions would wave!
On the ramparts that frown'd on the river, swift flowing,
They hover'd, still hooting a terrible song,
55 When his windows would rattle, the winter blast blowing,
They would shriek like a ghost, the dark alleys among!

Wherever he wander'd they follow'd him crying,
At dawnlight, at eve, still they haunted his way!
When the moon shone across the wide common they hooted,
60 Nor quitted his path till the blazing of day.
His bones began wasting, his flesh was decaying,
And he hung his proud head, and he perish'd with shame;
And the tomb of rich marble, no soft tear displaying,
O'ershadows the grave of the Poor Singing Dame!

1799-1800

1800

The Haunted Beach

Upon a lonely desert Beach,
Where the white foam was scatter'd,
A little shed uprear'd its head,
Though lofty barks^o were shatter'd.
5 The sea-weeds gath'ring near the door
A somber path display'd;
And, all around, the deaf'ning roar
Re-echo'd on the chalky shore,
By the green billows made.

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10 Above a jutting cliff was seen
Where Sea Birds hover'd, craving;
And all around the craggs were bound
With weeds—for ever waving.
And here and there, a cavern wide
15 Its shad'wy jaws display'd;
And near the sands, at ebb of tide,
A shiver'd mast was seen to ride
Where the green billows stray'd.

And often, while the moaning wind
20 Stole o'er the Summer Ocean,
The moonlight scene was all serene,
The waters scarce in motion;
Then, while the smoothly slanting sand
The tall cliff wrapp'd in shade,
25 The Fisherman beheld a band