

## 182. THE BALLAD OF THE DARK LADIE:

## A FRAGMENT

[Mar 1798-1800?]

The poem began as a companion piece to 176 *Christabel*, continuing to explore themes and issues raised by 161 *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, and it flourished for similar reasons. It also contains echoes of 155 *Continuation of "The Three Graves"*. C's feelings on first meeting SH at Sockburn in Oct-Nov 1799 encouraged him to think that he might carry the poem forward; there is no evidence of his working on it at this time, and he soon afterwards referred to a 190-line version (projected rather than realised). Only the first part (of three?) is extant, presumably more or less as it was recited to William Sotheby's daughter in 1802 (CL II 812; to W. Sotheby 13 Jul 1802; and see CN I 1577 f 53<sup>v</sup>; CL II 1094; to W. Sotheby 17 Mar 1804). It was not copied out until Sept 1827, when C had given up hope of completing it. A note on a version copied for an unknown recipient on 30 Jul 1831 (see vol II TEXT MS 2) describes how he came to view what he had written:

The DARK LADIE, however, was interrupted by griefs & darkneses of a less poetic description, and was never completed. But the first 8 or 9 Stanzas may be worth preserving, and as they have never appeared and are not likely ever to appear in print, I imagined, they might have some little interest for you.

S. T. C.—

Poem 253 *Love* was drafted and first published as an "Introduction" to the present poem after it bogged down. In fact, *Love* is better understood as a companion piece which celebrates the kind of energy needed to complete it. There are three ms versions, the first of which appears to have supplied copy for the only printed version, in *PW* (1834). Neither they nor a partial ms version copied for an autograph-collector vary significantly from one another. C's complicated relation to the poem is reflected in the fact that he apparently found it easier to copy it for complete strangers than for friends. The present version reproduces the earliest ms, taking in a minor emendation in line 59 common to the other mss and the published version.

**title.** A FRAGMENT] The ms originally composed as the Preface." describe the poem as "Introductory Stanzas . . . to which the Poem in the Sibylline Leaves entitled LOVE, was what confusing justification.

182. *The Ballad of the Dark Ladie*

Beneath yon Birch with Silver Bark  
And Boughs so pendulous and fair  
The Brook falls scatter'd down the Rock:  
And all is mossy there!

And there upon the moss she sits,  
The Dark Ladie in silent pain:

The heavy Tear is in her eye,  
And drops, and swells again.

Three times she sends her little Page  
Up the castled Mountain's breast,  
If he might find the Knight, that wears  
The Griffin for his Crest.

The Sun was sloping down the Sky,  
And She had linger'd there all day,  
Counting Moments, dreaming fears—  
O wherefore can he stay?

She hears a rustling o'er the Brook,  
She sees far off a swinging Bough!  
Tis He! Tis my betrothed Knight!  
Lord Falkland, it is thou!

She springs, she clasps him round the Neck,  
She sobs a thousand hopes and fears.

20. Falkland] In the 1790s the name would have recalled the character in William Godwin's novel *Caleb Williams* (1794), who for WW and C was afflicted by the same scorn or intellectual pride which afflicts the knight in the companion piece of the present poem, *Love* (see 253.41BC, 60BC).

The partial ms version (ms 4) gives the name as Albert (as in 146.XI *Osorio* and WW's *The Borderers*), which connects with the theme of scorn or intellectual pride. The name Mortimer, also in *The Borderers*, is borrowed from George Colman's stage version of Godwin's novel (*The Iron Chest*, 1796), and this suggests some self-consciousness over how strongly to reinforce the allusion.

Her kisses glowing on his Cheeks  
She quenches with her tears.

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"My Friends with rude ungentle Words,  
"They scoff and bid me fly to thee!  
"O give me shelter in thy breast,  
"O shield and shelter me!

25

"My Henry! I have given thee much!  
"I gave what I can ne'er recall!  
"I gave my Heart, I gave my Peace—  
"O heaven! I gave thee all."

30

The Knight made answer to the Maid,  
While to his heart he held her Hand:  
"Nine Castles hath my noble Sire,  
"None statelier in the Land.

35

"The fairest one shall be my Love's,  
"The fairest Castle of the Nine!  
"Wait only till the Stars peep out,  
"The fairest shall be thine.

40

"Wait only till the Hand of Eve  
"Hath wholly closed yon Western Bars;  
"And thro' the Dark we two will steal  
"Beneath the twinkling Stars!"

The Dark? the Dark? No! not the Dark?  
The twinkling Stars? How, Henry? How?  
O God! 'twas in the eye of Noon  
He pledged his sacred Vow!

45

24. The ms notes that the asterisks represent a single, forgotten (?) stanza.

33. Knight] C commented in the margin of the ms: "N.B. a *solemn* Scoundrel."

45-60. There is no ms authority for putting these lines in quotation-marks, as the published version does. They

are thought, not spoken, in the silence following Lord Falkland's reply.

And in the Eye of Noon my Love  
Shall lead me from my Mother's Door,  
Sweet Boys and Girls all cloath'd in White  
Strewing Flowers before.

50

But first the nodding Minstrels go  
With Music meet for lordly bowers:  
The Children next in snow-white Vests,  
Strewing buds and flowers!

55

And then my Love and I shall pace,  
My jet-black Hair in pearly braids  
Between our comely Bachelors  
And blushing Bridal Maids.

60

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### 183. TRANSLATION OF AN INSCRIPTION IN STOWEY CHURCH

[1797-8?] ]

C's poem translates the Latin inscription on a tablet at the west end of Nether Stowey parish church, erected in memory of Richard Camplyn by his father. Camplyn was a Deputy Receiver of the Royal Exchequer, who died suddenly on 22 Jan 1792, and his father was rector of Brumpton Ralph in Somerset. The only copy of C's translation is to be found among the papers of TP, who notes that William Bowles was the author of the Latin. C perhaps made the translation at TP's request—TP must have known the Camplyn family—or perhaps because Bowles was the author of the original.

The Latin text is as follows:

Laetus abi! Mundi Strepitu Curisque remotus  
Laetus abi! Coeli quâ vocat alma Quies.  
Ipsa Fides loquitur, Lacrymanque incusat inanem  
Quae cadet in vestros, care Pater, Cineres.  
Heu tantum liceat meritis hos solvere Ritus  
Naturâ, et tremula dicere Voce, Vale!