

S. T. Coleridge (1772-1834)

2 *Love*

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are but ministers of Love,  
And feed his sacred flame.

Oft in my waking dreams do I 5  
Live o'er again that happy hour,  
When midway on the mount I lay,  
Beside the ruined tower.

The moonshine, stealing o'er the scene 10  
Had blended with the lights of eve;  
And she was there, my hope, my joy,  
My own dear Genevieve!

She leant against the arméd man,  
The statue of the arméd knight;  
She stood and listened to my lay, 15  
Amid the lingering light.

Few sorrows hath she of her own,  
My hope! my joy! my Genevieve!  
She loves me best, whene'er I sing 20  
The songs that make her grieve.

I played a soft and doleful air,  
I sang an old and moving story —  
An old rude song, that suited well  
That ruin wild and hoary.

She listened with a flitting blush, 25  
With downcast eyes and modest grace;  
For well she knew, I could not choose  
But gaze upon her face.

I told her of the Knight that wore  
Upon his shield a burning brand; 30  
And that for ten long years he wooed  
The Lady of the Land.

I told her how he pined: and ah!  
The deep, the low, the pleading tone  
With which I sang another's love, 35  
Interpreted my own.

She listened with a flitting blush,  
With downcast eyes, and modest grace;  
And she forgave me, that I gazed  
Too fondly on her face! 40

But when I told the cruel scorn  
That crazed that bold and lovely Knight,  
And that he crossed the mountain-woods,  
Nor rested day nor night;

That sometimes from the savage den, 45  
And sometimes from the darksome shade,  
And sometimes starting up at once  
In green and sunny glade, —

There came and looked him in the face  
An angel beautiful and bright; 50  
And that he knew it was a Fiend,  
This miserable Knight!

And that unknowing what he did,  
He leaped amid a murderous band,  
And saved from outrage worse than death 55  
The Lady of the Land!

And how she wept, and clasped his knees;  
And how she tended him in vain —  
And ever strove to expiate

The scorn that crazed his brain; — 60

And that she nursed him in a cave;  
And how his madness went away,  
When on the yellow forest-leaves  
A dying man he lay; —

His dying words — but when I reached 65  
That tenderest strain of all the ditty,  
My faltering voice and pausing harp  
Disturbed her soul with pity!

All impulses of soul and sense  
Had thrilled my guileless Genevieve; 70  
The music and the doleful tale,  
The rich and balmy eve;

And hopes, and fears that kindle hope,  
An undistinguishable throng,  
And gentle wishes long subdued, 75  
Subdued and cherished long!

She wept with pity and delight,  
She blushed with love, and virgin-shame;  
And like the murmur of a dream,  
I heard her breathe my name. 80

Her bosom heaved — she stepped aside,  
As conscious of my look she stepped —  
Then suddenly, with timorous eye  
She fled to me and wept.

She half enclosed me with her arms, 85  
She pressed me with a meek embrace;  
And bending back her head, looked up,  
And gazed upon my face.

'Twas partly love, and partly fear,  
And partly 'twas a bashful art, 90

That I might rather feel, than see,  
The swelling of her heart.

I calmed her fears, and she was calm,  
And told her love with virgin pride;  
And so I won my Genevieve,  
My bright and beauteous Bride.

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*1799*

(From *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*. Ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge. Oxford, 1912)