

Felicia Hemans (1793-1835)

1 *Casabianca*

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but he had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck,
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood, 5
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though child-like form.

The flames roll'd on — he would not go,
Without his Father's word; 10
That Father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He call'd aloud: — "Say, Father, say
If yet my task is done?"
He knew not that the chieftain lay 15
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, Father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!
And" — but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames roll'd on. 20

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And look'd from that lone post of death,
In still, yet brave despair

And shouted but once more aloud, 25
"My Father! must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail and shroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendour wild,
 They caught the flag on high, 30
And stream'd above the gallant child,
 Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound —
 The boy — oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around 35
 With fragments strew'd the sea! —

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair,
 That well had borne their part —
But the noblest thing which perish'd there
 Was that young faithful heart! 40

1826

(From *The Poetical Works of Mrs. Felicia Hemans*.
Philadelphia, 1873)