

Alfred Tennyson (1809-92)

9 *Mariana in the South*

With one black shadow at its feet,
The house thro' all the level shines,
Close-latticed to the brooding heat,
And silent in its dusty vines:
A faint-blue ridge upon the right, 5
An empty river-bed before,
And shallows on a distant shore,
In glaring sand and inlets bright.
But 'Ave Mary,' made she moan,
And 'Ave Mary,' night and morn, 10
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

She, as her carol sadder grew,
From brow and bosom slowly down
Thro' rosy taper fingers drew 15
Her streaming curls of deepest brown
To left and right, and made appear
Still-lighted in a secret shrine,
Her melancholy eyes divine,
The home of woe without a tear. 20
And 'Ave Mary,' was her moan,
'Madonna, sad is night and morn,'
And 'Ah,' she sang, 'to be all alone,
To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

Till all the crimson changed, and past 25
Into deep orange o'er the sea,
Low on her knees herself she cast,
Before Our Lady murmur'd she;
Complaining, 'Mother, give me grace
To help me of my weary load.' 30
And on the liquid mirror glow'd
The clear perfection of her face.
'Is this the form,' she made her moan,

‘That won his praises night and morn?’
And ‘Ah,’ she said, ‘but I wake alone, 35
I sleep forgotten, I wake forlorn.’

Nor bird would sing, nor lamb would bleat,
Nor any cloud would cross the vault,
But day increased from heat to heat,
On stony drought and steaming salt; 40
Till now at noon she slept again,
And seem’d knee-deep in mountain grass,
And heard her native breezes pass,
And runlets babbling down the glen.
She breathed in sleep a lower moan, 45
And murmuring, as at night and morn,
She thought, ‘My spirit is here alone,
Walks forgotten, and is forlorn.’

Dreaming, she knew it was a dream:
She felt he was and was not there. 50
She woke: the babble of the stream
Fell, and, without, the steady glare
Shrank one sick willow sere and small.
The river-bed was dusty-white;
And all the furnace of the light 55
Struck up against the blinding wall.
She whisper’d, with a stifled moan
More inward than at night or morn,
‘Sweet Mother, let me not here alone
Live forgotten and die forlorn.’ 60

And, rising, from her bosom drew
Old letters, breathing of her worth,
For ‘Love,’ they said, ‘must needs be true,
To what is loveliest upon earth.’
An image seem’d to pass the door, 65
To look at her with slight, and say
‘But now thy beauty flows away,
So be alone for evermore.’
‘O cruel heart,’ she changed her tone,
‘And cruel love, whose end is scorn, 70
Is this the end to be left alone,

To live forgotten, and die forlorn?

But sometimes in the falling day
An image seem'd to pass the door,
To look into her eyes and say, 75
 'But thou shalt be alone no more.'
And flaming downward over all
From heat to heat the day decreased,
And slowly rounded to the east
The one black shadow from the wall. 80
 'The day to night,' she made her moan,
 'The day to night, the night to morn,
And day and night I am left alone
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

At eve a dry cicala sung, 85
 There came a sound as of the sea;
Backward the lattice-blind she flung,
 And lean'd upon the balcony.
There all in spaces rosy-bright
 Large Hesper glitter'd on her tears, 90
 And deepening thro' the silent spheres
Heaven over Heaven rose the night.
And weeping then she made her moan,
 'The night comes on that knows not morn,
When I shall cease to be all alone, 95
 To live forgotten, and love forlorn.'

1832

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