

# FRIEDRICH VON SCHILLER

THE POEMS OF SCHILLER  
— FIRST PERIOD

Friedrich Schiller

**The Poems of Schiller — First period**

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# Friedrich Schiller

## The Poems of Schiller — First period

### HECTOR AND ANDROMACHE

[This and the following poem are, with some alterations, introduced in the Play of "The Robbers."]

#### ANDROMACHE

Will Hector leave me for the fatal plain,  
Where, fierce with vengeance for Patroclus slain,  
Stalks Peleus' ruthless son?  
Who, when thou glid'st amid the dark abodes,  
To hurl the spear and to revere the gods,  
Shall teach thine orphan one?

#### HECTOR

Woman and wife beloved — cease thy tears;  
My soul is nerved — the war-clang in my ears!  
Be mine in life to stand  
Troy's bulwark! — fighting for our hearths, to go  
In death, exulting to the streams below,  
Slain for my fatherland!

#### ANDROMACHE

No more I hear thy martial footsteps fall —  
Thine arms shall hang, dull trophies, on the wall —  
Fallen the stem of Troy!  
Thou goest where slow Cocytus wanders — where  
Love sinks in Lethe, and the sunless air  
Is dark to light and joy!

#### HECTOR

Longing and thought — yes, all I feel and think

May in the silent sloth of Lethe sink,  
But my love not!  
Hark, the wild swarm is at the walls! — I hear!  
Gird on my sword — Beloved one, dry the tear —  
Lethe for love is not!

## AMALIA

Angel-fair, Walhalla's charms displaying,  
Fairer than all mortal youths was he;  
Mild his look, as May-day sunbeams straying  
Gently o'er the blue and glassy sea.

And his kisses! — what ecstatic feeling!  
Like two flames that lovingly entwine,  
Like the harp's soft tones together stealing  
Into one sweet harmony divine, —

Soul and soul embraced, commingled, blended,  
Lips and cheeks with trembling passion burned,  
Heaven and earth, in pristine chaos ended,  
Round the blissful lovers madly turn'd.

He is gone — and, ah! with bitter anguish  
Vainly now I breathe my mournful sighs;  
He is gone — in hopeless grief I languish  
Earthly joys I ne'er again can prize!

## A FUNERAL FANTASIE

Pale, at its ghastly noon,  
Pauses above the death-still wood — the moon;  
The night-sprite, sighing, through the dim air stirs;  
The clouds descend in rain;  
Mourning, the wan stars wane,  
Flickering like dying lamps in sepulchres!  
Haggard as spectres — vision-like and dumb,  
Dark with the pomp of death, and moving slow,  
Towards that sad lair the pale procession come  
Where the grave closes on the night below.

With dim, deep-sunken eye,  
Crutched on his staff, who trembles tottering by?  
As wrung from out the shattered heart, one groan  
Breaks the deep hush alone!  
Crushed by the iron fate, he seems to gather  
All life's last strength to stagger to the bier,  
And hearken — Do these cold lips murmur "Father?"  
The sharp rain, drizzling through that place of fear,  
Pierces the bones gnawed fleshless by despair,  
And the heart's horror stirs the silver hair.

Fresh bleed the fiery wounds  
Through all that agonizing heart undone —  
Still on the voiceless lips "my Father" sounds,  
And still the childless Father murmurs "Son!"  
Ice-cold — ice-cold, in that white shroud he lies —  
Thy sweet and golden dreams all vanished there —  
The sweet and golden name of "Father" dies  
Into thy curse, — ice-cold — ice-cold — he lies!  
Dead, what thy life's delight and Eden were!

Mild, as when, fresh from the arms of Aurora,  
While the air like Elysium is smiling above,  
Steeped in rose-breathing odors, the darling of Flora  
Wantons over the blooms on his winglets of love.  
So gay, o'er the meads, went his footsteps in bliss,  
The silver wave mirrored the smile of his face;  
Delight, like a flame, kindled up at his kiss,  
And the heart of the maid was the prey of his chase.

Boldly he sprang to the strife of the world,  
As a deer to the mountain-top carelessly springs;  
As an eagle whose plumes to the sun are unfurled,  
Swept his hope round the heaven on its limitless wings.  
Proud as a war-horse that chafes at the rein,  
That, kingly, exults in the storm of the brave;  
That throws to the wind the wild stream of its mane,  
Strode he forth by the prince and the slave!

Life like a spring day, serene and divine,  
In the star of the morning went by as a trance;  
His murmurs he drowned in the gold of the wine,  
And his sorrows were borne on the wave of the dance.  
Worlds lay concealed in the hopes of his youth! —  
When once he shall ripen to manhood and fame!  
Fond father exult! — In the germs of his youth  
What harvests are destined for manhood and fame!

Not to be was that manhood! — The death-bell is knelling,  
The hinge of the death-vault creaks harsh on the ears —  
How dismal, O Death, is the place of thy dwelling!  
Not to be was that manhood! — Flow on, bitter tears!  
Go, beloved, thy path to the sun,  
Rise, world upon world, with the perfect to rest;  
Go — quaff the delight which thy spirit has won,  
And escape from our grief in the Halls of the Blest.

Again (in that thought what a healing is found!)  
To meet in the Eden to which thou art fled! —  
Hark, the coffin sinks down with a dull, sullen sound,  
And the ropes rattle over the sleep of the dead.  
And we cling to each other! — O Grave, he is thine!  
The eye tells the woe that is mute to the ears —  
And we dare to resent what we grudge to resign,  
Till the heart's sinful murmur is choked in its tears.  
Pale at its ghastly noon,  
Pauses above the death-still wood — the moon!  
The night-sprite, sighing, through the dim air stirs:  
The clouds descend in rain;  
Mourning, the wan stars wane,  
Flickering like dying lamps in sepulchres.  
The dull clods swell into the sullen mound;  
Earth, one look yet upon the prey we gave!  
The grave locks up the treasure it has found;  
Higher and higher swells the sullen mound —  
Never gives back the grave!



## FANTASIE — TO LAURA

Name, my Laura, name the whirl-compelling  
Bodies to unite in one blest whole —  
Name, my Laura, name the wondrous magic  
By which soul rejoins its kindred soul!

See! it teaches yonder roving planets  
Round the sun to fly in endless race;  
And as children play around their mother,  
Checkered circles round the orb to trace.

Every rolling star, by thirst tormented,  
Drinks with joy its bright and golden rain —  
Drinks refreshment from its fiery chalice,  
As the limbs are nourished by the brain.

'Tis through Love that atom pairs with atom,  
In a harmony eternal, sure;  
And 'tis Love that links the spheres together —  
Through her only, systems can endure.

Were she but effaced from Nature's clockwork,  
Into dust would fly the mighty world;  
O'er thy systems thou wouldst weep, great Newton,  
When with giant force to chaos hurled!

Blot the goddess from the spirit order,  
It would sink in death, and ne'er arise.  
Were love absent, spring would glad us never;  
Were love absent, none their God would prize!

What is that, which, when my Laura kisses,  
Dyes my cheek with flames of purple hue,  
Bids my bosom bound with swifter motion,  
Like a fever wild my veins runs through?

Every nerve from out its barriers rises,  
O'er its banks, the blood begins to flow;  
Body seeks to join itself to body,

Spirits kindle in one blissful glow.

Powerful as in the dead creations  
That eternal impulses obey,  
O'er the web Arachne-like of Nature, —  
Living Nature, — Love exerts her sway.

Laura, see how joyousness embraces  
E'en the overflow of sorrows wild!  
How e'en rigid desperation kindles  
On the loving breast of Hope so mild.

Sisterly and blissful rapture softens  
Gloomy Melancholy's fearful night,  
And, deliver'd of its golden children,  
Lo, the eye pours forth its radiance bright!

Does not awful Sympathy rule over  
E'en the realms that Evil calls its own?  
For 'tis Hell our crimes are ever wooing,  
While they bear a grudge 'gainst Heaven alone!

Shame, Repentance, pair Eumenides-like,  
Weave round sin their fearful serpent-coils:  
While around the eagle-wings of Greatness  
Treach'rous danger winds its dreaded toils.

Ruin oft with Pride is wont to trifle,  
Envy upon Fortune loves to cling;  
On her brother, Death, with arms extended,  
Lust, his sister, oft is wont to spring.

On the wings of Love the future hastens  
In the arms of ages past to lie;  
And Saturnus, as he onward speeds him,  
Long hath sought his bride — Eternity!

Soon Saturnus will his bride discover, —  
So the mighty oracle hath said;  
Blazing worlds will turn to marriage torches  
When Eternity with Time shall wed!

Then a fairer, far more beauteous morning,  
Laura, on our love shall also shine,  
Long as their blest bridal-night enduring: —  
So rejoice thee, Laura — Laura mine!

## TO LAURA AT THE HARPSICHORD

When o'er the chords thy fingers stray,  
My spirit leaves its mortal clay,  
A statue there I stand;  
Thy spell controls e'en life and death,  
As when the nerves a living breath  
Receive by Love's command! <sup>1</sup>  
More gently zephyr sighs along  
To listen to thy magic song;  
The systems formed by heavenly love  
To sing forever as they move,  
Pause in their endless-whirling round  
To catch the rapture-teeming sound;  
'Tis for thy strains they worship thee, —  
Thy look, enchantress, fetters me!

From yonder chords fast-thronging come  
Soul-breathing notes with rapturous speed,  
As when from out their heavenly home  
The new-born seraphim proceed;  
The strains pour forth their magic might,  
As glittering suns burst through the night,  
When, by Creation's storm awoke,  
From chaos' giant-arm they broke.

Now sweet, as when the silv'ry wave  
Delights the pebbly beach to lave;  
And now majestic as the sound  
Of rolling thunder gathering round;  
Now pealing more loudly, as when from yon height  
Descends the mad mountain-stream, foaming and bright;  
Now in a song of love  
Dying away,  
As through the aspen grove  
Soft zephyrs play:  
Now heavier and more mournful seems the strain,  
As when across the desert, death-like plain,  
Whence whispers dread and yells despairing rise,  
Cocytus' sluggish, wailing current sighs.

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<sup>1</sup> *The allusion in the original is to the seemingly magical power possessed by a Jew conjuror, named Philadelphia, which would not be understood in English.*

Maiden fair, oh, answer me!  
Are not spirits leagued with thee?  
Speak they in the realms of bliss  
Other language e'er than this?

## GROUP FROM TARTARUS

Hark! like the sea in wrath the heavens assailing,  
Or like a brook through rocky basin wailing,  
Comes from below, in groaning agony,  
A heavy, vacant torment-breathing sigh!  
Their faces marks of bitter torture wear,  
While from their lips burst curses of despair;  
Their eyes are hollow, and full of woe,  
And their looks with heartfelt anguish  
Seek Cocytus' stream that runs wailing below,  
For the bridge o'er its waters they languish.

And they say to each other in accents of fear,  
"Oh, when will the time of fulfilment appear?"  
High over them boundless eternity quivers,  
And the scythe of Saturnus all-ruthlessly, shivers!

## RAPTURE — TO LAURA

From earth I seem to wing my flight,  
And sun myself in Heaven's pure light,  
When thy sweet gaze meets mine  
I dream I quaff ethereal dew,  
When my own form I mirrored view  
In those blue eyes divine!

Blest notes from Paradise afar,  
Or strains from some benignant star  
Enchant my ravished ear:  
My Muse feels then the shepherd's hour  
When silvery tones of magic power  
Escape those lips so dear!

Young Loves around thee fan their wings —  
Behind, the maddened fir-tree springs,  
As when by Orpheus fired:  
The poles whirl round with swifter motion,  
When in the dance, like waves o'er Ocean,  
Thy footsteps float untired!

Thy look, if it but beam with love,  
Could make the lifeless marble move,  
And hearts in rocks enshrine:  
My visions to reality  
Will turn, if, Laura, in thine eye  
I read — that thou art mine!

## TO LAURA. (THE MYSTERY OF REMINISCENCE.)<sup>2</sup>

Who and what gave to me the wish to woo thee —  
Still, lip to lip, to cling for aye unto thee?  
Who made thy glances to my soul the link —  
Who bade me burn thy very breath to drink —  
    My life in thine to sink?  
As from the conqueror's unresisted glaive,  
Flies, without strife subdued, the ready slave —  
So, when to life's unguarded fort, I see  
Thy gaze draw near and near triumphantly —  
    Yields not my soul to thee?  
Why from its lord doth thus my soul depart? —  
Is it because its native home thou art?  
Or were they brothers in the days of yore,  
Twin-bound both souls, and in the link they bore  
    Sigh to be bound once more?  
Were once our beings blent and intertwining,  
And therefore still my heart for thine is pining?  
Knew we the light of some extinguished sun —  
The joys remote of some bright realm undone,  
    Where once our souls were ONE?  
Yes, it is so! — And thou wert bound to me  
In the long-vanish'd Eld eternally!  
In the dark troubled tablets which enroll  
The Past — my Muse beheld this blessed scroll —  
    "One with thy love my soul!"  
Oh yes, I learned in awe, when gazing there,  
How once one bright inseparate life we were,  
How once, one glorious essence as a God,  
Unmeasured space our chainless footsteps trod —  
    All Nature our abode!  
Round us, in waters of delight, forever  
Voluptuous flowed the heavenly Nectar river;  
We were the master of the seal of things,  
And where the sunshine bathed Truth's mountain-springs  
    Quivered our glancing wings.  
Weep for the godlike life we lost afar —  
Weep! — thou and I its scattered fragments are;  
And still the unconquered yearning we retain —  
Sigh to restore the rapture and the reign,  
    And grow divine again.  
And therefore came to me the wish to woo thee —

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<sup>2</sup> This most exquisite love poem is founded on the platonic notion, that souls were united in a pre-existent state, that love is the yearning of the spirit to reunite with the spirit with which it formerly made one — and which it discovers on earth. The idea has often been made subservient to poetry, but never with so earnest and elaborate a beauty.

Still, lip to lip, to cling for aye unto thee;  
This made thy glances to my soul the link —  
This made me burn thy very breath to drink —  
    My life in thine to sink;  
And therefore, as before the conqueror's glaive,  
Flies, without strife subdued, the ready slave,  
So, when to life's unguarded fort, I see  
Thy gaze draw near and near triumphantly —  
    Yieldeth my soul to thee!  
Therefore my soul doth from its lord depart,  
Because, beloved, its native home thou art;  
Because the twins recall the links they bore,  
And soul with soul, in the sweet kiss of yore,  
    Meets and unites once more!  
Thou, too — Ah, there thy gaze upon me dwells,  
And thy young blush the tender answer tells;  
Yes! with the dear relation still we thrill,  
Both lives — though exiles from the homeward hill —  
    One life — all glowing still!

## MELANCHOLY — TO LAURA

Laura! a sunrise seems to break  
Where'er thy happy looks may glow.  
Joy sheds its roses o'er thy cheek,  
Thy tears themselves do but bespeak  
The rapture whence they flow;  
Blest youth to whom those tears are given —  
The tears that change his earth to heaven;  
His best reward those melting eyes —  
For him new suns are in the skies!

Thy soul — a crystal river passing,  
Silver-clear, and sunbeam-glassing,  
Mays into bloom sad Autumn by thee;  
Night and desert, if they spy thee,  
To gardens laugh — with daylight shine,  
Lit by those happy smiles of thine!  
Dark with cloud the future far  
Goldens itself beneath thy star.  
Smilest thou to see the harmony  
Of charm the laws of Nature keep?  
Alas! to me the harmony  
Brings only cause to weep!

Holds not Hades its domain  
Underneath this earth of ours?  
Under palace, under fame,  
Underneath the cloud-capped towers?  
Stately cities soar and spread  
O'er your mouldering bones, ye dead!  
From corruption, from decay,  
Springs yon clove-pink's fragrant bloom;  
Yon gay waters wind their way  
From the hollows of a tomb.

From the planets thou mayest know  
All the change that shifts below,  
Fled — beneath that zone of rays,  
Fled to night a thousand Mays;  
Thrones a thousand — rising — sinking,  
Earth from thousand slaughters drinking  
Blood profusely poured as water; —  
Of the sceptre — of the slaughter —

Wouldst thou know what trace remaineth?  
Seek them where the dark king reigneth!

Scarce thine eye can ope and close  
Ere life's dying sunset glows;  
Sinking sudden from its pride

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