

# **Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills**

Percy Bysshe Shelley

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# Lines Written Among the Euganean Hills

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Many a green isle needs must be  
In the deep wide sea of Misery,  
Or the mariner, worn and wan,  
Never thus could voyage on  
Day and night, and night and day,  
Drifting on his dreary way,  
With the solid darkness black  
Closing round his vessel's track;  
Whilst above the sunless sky,  
Big with clouds, hangs heavily,  
And behind the tempest fleet  
Hurries on with lightning feet,  
Riving sail, and cord, and plank,  
Till the ship has almost drank  
Death from the o'er-brimming deep;  
And sinks down, down, like that sleep  
When the dreamer seems to be  
Weltering through eternity;  
And the dim low line before  
Of a dark and distant shore  
Still recedes, as ever still  
Longing with divided will,  
But no power to seek or shun,  
He is ever drifted on  
O'er the unreposing wave  
To the haven of the grave.  
What, if there no friends will greet;  
What, if there no heart will meet  
His with love's impatient beat;  
Wander wheresoe'er he may,  
Can he dream before that day  
To find refuge from distress  
In friendship's smile, in love's caress?  
Then 'twill wreak him little woe  
Whether such there be or no:  
Senseless is the breast, and cold,  
Which relenting love would fold;  
Bloodless are the veins and chill  
Which the pulse of pain did fill;  
Every little living nerve

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That from bitter words did swerve  
Round the tortured lips and brow,  
Are like sapless leaflets now  
Frozen upon December's bough.

On the beach of a northern sea  
Which tempests shake eternally,  
As once the wretch there lay to sleep,  
Lies a solitary heap,  
One white skull and seven dry bones,  
On the margin of the stones,  
Where a few gray rushes stand,  
Boundaries of the sea and land:  
Nor is heard one voice of wail  
But the sea-mews, as they sail  
O'er the billows of the gale;  
Or the whirlwind up and down  
Howling, like a slaughtered town,  
When a king in glory rides  
Through the pomp of fratricides:  
Those unburied bones around  
There is many a mournful sound;  
There is no lament for him,  
Like a sunless vapour, dim,  
Who once clothed with life and thought  
What now moves nor murmurs not.

Ay, many flowering islands lie  
In the waters of wide Agony:  
To such a one this morn was led,  
My bark by soft winds piloted:  
'Mid the mountains Euganean  
I stood listening to the paeon  
With which the legioned rooks did hail  
The sun's uprising majestic;  
Gathering round with wings all hoar,  
Through the dewy mist they soar  
Like gray shades, till the eastern heaven  
Bursts, and then, as clouds of even,  
Flecked with fire and azure, lie  
In the unfathomable sky,  
So their plumes of purple grain,  
Starred with drops of golden rain,  
Gleam above the sunlight woods,  
As in silent multitudes  
On the morning's fitful gale  
Through the broken mist they sail,  
And the vapours cloven and gleaming  
Follow, down the dark steep streaming,  
Till all is bright, and clear, and still,  
Round the solitary hill.

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Beneath is spread like a green sea  
The waveless plain of Lombardy,  
Bounded by the vaporous air,  
Islanded by cities fair;  
Underneath Day's azure eyes  
Ocean's nursling, Venice lies,  
A peopled labyrinth of walls,  
Amphitrite's destined halls,  
Which her hoary sire now paves  
With his blue and beaming waves.  
Lo! the sun upsprings behind,  
Broad, red, radiant, half-reclined  
On the level quivering line  
Of the waters crystalline;  
And before that chasm of light,  
As within a furnace bright,  
Column, tower, and dome, and spire,  
Shine like obelisks of fire,  
Pointing with inconstant motion  
From the altar of dark ocean  
To the sapphire-tinted skies;  
As the flames of sacrifice  
From the marble shrines did rise,  
As to pierce the dome of gold  
Where Apollo spoke of old.

Sun-girt City, thou hast been  
Ocean's child, and then his queen;  
Now is come a darker day,  
And thou soon must be his prey,  
If the power that raised thee here  
Hallow so thy watery bier.  
A less drear ruin than now,  
With thy conquest-branded brow  
Stooping to the slave of slaves  
From thy throne, among the waves  
Wilt thou be, when the sea-mew  
Flies, as once before it flew,  
O'er thine isles depopulate,  
And all is in its ancient state,  
Save where many a palace gate  
With green sea-flowers overgrown  
Like a rock of Ocean's own,  
Topples o'er the abandoned sea  
As the tides change sullenly.  
The fisher on his watery way,  
Wandering at the close of day,  
Will spread his sail and seize his oar  
Till he pass the gloomy shore,  
Lest thy dead should, from their sleep

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Bursting o'er the starlight deep,  
Lead a rapid masque of death  
O'er the waters of his path.

Those who alone thy towers behold  
Quivering through aëreal gold,  
As I now behold them here,  
Would imagine not they were  
Sepulchres, where human forms,  
Like pollution–nourished worms,  
To the corpse of greatness cling,  
Murdered, and now mouldering:  
But if Freedom should awake  
In her omnipotence, and shake  
From the Celtic Anarch's hold  
All the keys of dungeons cold,  
Where a hundred cities lie  
Chained like thee, ingloriously,  
Thou and all thy sister band  
Might adorn this sunny land,  
Twining memories of old time  
With new virtues more sublime;  
If not, perish thou and they!  
Clouds which stain truth's rising day  
By her sun consumed away  
Earth can spare ye: while like flowers,  
In the waste of years and hours,  
From your dust new nations spring  
With more kindly blossoming.

Perish let there only be  
Floating o'er thy hearthless sea  
As the garment of thy sky  
Clothes the world immortally,  
One remembrance, more sublime  
Than the tattered pall of time,  
Which scarce hides thy visage wan;  
That a tempest–cleaving Swan  
Of the songs of Albion,  
Driven from his ancestral streams  
By the might of evil dreams,  
Found a nest in thee; and Ocean  
Welcomed him with such emotion  
That its joy grew his, and sprung  
From his lips like music flung  
O'er a mighty thunder–fit,  
Chastening terror: what though yet  
Poesy's unfailing River,  
Which through Albion winds forever  
Lashing with melodious wave  
Many a sacred Poet's grave,

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Mourn its latest nursling fled?  
What though thou with all thy dead  
Scarce can for this fame repay  
Aught thine own? oh, rather say  
Though thy sins and slaveries foul  
Overcloud a sunlike soul?  
As the ghost of Homer clings  
Round Scamander's wasting springs;  
As divinest Shakespeare's might  
Fills Avon and the world with light  
Like omniscient power which he  
Imaged 'mid mortality;  
As the love from Petrarch's urn,  
Yet amid yon hills doth burn,  
A quenchless lamp by which the heart  
Sees things unearthly; so thou art,  
Mighty spirit so shall be  
The City that did refuge thee.

Lo, the sun floats up the sky  
Like thought-winged Liberty,  
Till the universal light  
Seems to level plain and height;  
From the sea a mist has spread,  
And the beams of morn lie dead  
On the towers of Venice now,  
Like its glory long ago.  
By the skirts of that gray cloud  
Many-domed Padua proud  
Stands, a peopled solitude,  
'Mid the harvest-shining plain,  
Where the peasant heaps his grain  
In the garner of his foe,  
And the milk-white oxen slow  
With the purple vintage strain,  
Heaped upon the creaking wain,  
That the brutal Celt may swill  
Drunken sleep with savage will;  
And the sickle to the sword  
Lies unchanged, though many a lord,  
Like a weed whose shade is poison,  
Overgrows this region's foison,  
Sheaves of whom are ripe to come  
To destruction's harvest-home:  
Men must reap the things they sow,  
Force from force must ever flow,  
Or worse; but 'tis a bitter woe  
That love or reason cannot change  
The despot's rage, the slave's revenge.

Padua, thou within whose walls

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Those mute guests at festivals,  
Son and Mother, Death and Sin,  
Played at dice for Ezzelin,  
Till Death cried, "I win, I win!"  
And Sin cursed to lose the wager,  
But Death promised, to assuage her,  
That he would petition for  
Her to be made Vice-Emperor,  
When the destined years were o'er,  
Over all between the Po  
And the eastern Alpine snow,  
Under the mighty Austrian.  
Sin smiled so as Sin only can,  
And since that time, ay, long before,  
Both have ruled from shore to shore,  
That incestuous pair, who follow  
Tyrants as the sun the swallow,  
As Repentance follows Crime,  
And as changes follow Time.

In thine halls the lamp of learning,  
Padua, now no more is burning;  
Like a meteor, whose wild way  
Is lost over the grave of day,  
It gleams betrayed and to betray:  
Once remotest nations came  
To adore that sacred flame,  
When it lit not many a hearth  
On this cold and gloomy earth:  
Now new fires from antique light  
Spring beneath the wide world's might;  
But their spark lies dead in thee,  
Trampled out by Tyranny.  
As the Norway woodman quells,  
In the depth of piny dells,  
One light flame among the brakes,  
While the boundless forest shakes,  
And its mighty trunks are torn  
By the fire thus lowly born:  
The spark beneath his feet is dead,  
He starts to see the flames it fed  
Howling through the darkened sky  
With a myriad tongues victoriously,  
And sinks down in fear: so thou,  
O Tyranny, beholdest now  
Light around thee, and thou hearest  
The loud flames ascend, and fearest:  
Grovel on the earth; ay, hide  
In the dust thy purple pride!

Noon descends around me now:

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'Tis the noon of autumn's glow,  
When a soft and purple mist  
Like a vaporous amethyst,  
Or an air-dissolvèd star  
Mingling light and fragrance, far  
From the curved horizon's bound  
To the point of Heaven's profound,  
Fills the overflowing sky;  
And the plains that silent lie  
Underneath, the leaves unsodden  
Where the infant Frost has trodden  
With his morning-winged feet,  
Whose bright print is gleaming yet;  
And the red and golden vines,  
Piercing with their trellised lines  
The rough, dark-skirted wilderness;  
The dun and bladed grass no less,  
Pointing from this hoary tower  
In the windless air; the flower  
Glimmering at my feet; the line  
Of the olive-sandalled Apennine  
In the south dimly islanded;  
And the Alps, whose snows are spread  
High between the clouds and sun;  
And of living things each one;  
And my spirit which so long  
Darkened this swift stream of song,  
Interpenetrated lie  
By the glory of the sky:  
Be it love, light, harmony,  
Odour, or the soul of all  
Which from Heaven like dew doth fall,  
Or the mind which feeds this verse  
Peopling the lone universe.

Noon descends, and after noon  
Autumn's evening meets me soon,  
Leading the infantine moon,  
And that one star, which to her  
Almost seems to minister  
Half the crimson light she brings  
From the sunset's radiant springs:  
And the soft dreams of the morn  
(Which like winged winds had borne  
To that silent isle, which lies  
Mid remembered agonies,  
The frail bark of this lone being)  
Pass, to other sufferers fleeing,  
And its ancient pilot, Pain,  
Sits beside the helm again.

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Other flowering isles must be  
In the sea of Life and Agony:  
Other spirits float and flee  
O'er that gulf: even now, perhaps,  
On some rock the wild wave wraps,  
With folded wings they waiting sit  
For my bark, to pilot it  
To some calm and blooming cove,  
Where for me, and those I love,  
May a windless bower be built,  
Far from passion, pain, and guilt,  
In a dell mid lawny hills,  
Which the wild sea—murmur fills,  
And soft sunshine, and the sound  
Of old forests echoing round,  
And the light and smell divine  
Of all flowers that breathe and shine:  
We may live so happy there,  
That the Spirits of the Air,  
Envyng us, may even entice  
To our healing Paradise  
The polluting multitude;  
But their rage would be subdued  
By that clime divine and calm,  
And the winds whose wings rain balm  
On the uplifted soul, and leaves  
Under which the bright sea heaves;  
While each breathless interval  
In their whisperings musical  
The inspired soul supplies  
With its own deep melodies,  
And the love which heals all strife  
Circling, like the breath of life,  
All things in that sweet abode  
With its own mild brotherhood:  
They, not it, would change; and soon  
Every sprite beneath the moon  
Would repent its envy vain,  
And the earth grow young again.