

## “Ode to Superstition” by Samuel Rogers

Text: from *The Poetical Works of Samuel Rogers*, 1875, pp 146 – 151.

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A LITERARY GOTHIC etext

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### I. 1.

Hence, to the realms of Night, dire Demon, hence!  
Thy chain of adamant can bind  
That little world, the human mind,  
And sink its noblest powers to impotence.  
Wake the lion's loudest roar,  
Clot his shaggy mane with gore,  
With flashing fury bid his eye-balls shine;  
Meek is his savage, sullen soul, to thine!  
Thy touch, thy deadening touch has steeled the breast,  
Whence, thro' her April-shower, soft Pity smiled;  
Has closed the heart each godlike virtue blessed,  
To all the silent pleadings of his child,  
At thy command he plants the dagger deep,  
At thy command exults, tho' Nature bids him weep!

### I. 2.

When, with a frown that froze the peopled earth,  
Thou dartedst thy huge head from high,  
Night waved her banners o'er the sky,  
And, brooding, gave her shapeless shadows birth.  
Rocking on the billowy air,  
Ha! what withering phantoms glare!  
As blows the blast with many a sudden swell,  
At each dead pause, what shrill-toned voices yell!  
The sheeted spectre, rising from the tomb,  
Points to the murderer's stab, and shudders by  
In every grove is felt a heavier gloom,  
That veils its genius from the vulgar eye:  
The spirit of the water rides the storm,  
And, thro' the mist, reveals the terrors of his form.

I. 3.

O'er solid seas, where Winter reigns,  
And holds each mountain-wave in chains,  
The fur-clad savage, ere he guides his deer  
By glistening star-light thro' the snow,  
Breathes softly in her wondering ear  
Each potent spell thou bad'st him know.  
By thee inspired, on India's sands,  
Full in the sun the Brahmin stands;  
And, while the panting tigress hies  
To quench her fever in the stream,  
His spirit laughs in agonies,  
Smit by the scorchings of the noontide beam  
Mark who mounts the sacred pyre,  
Blooming in her bridal vest:  
She hurls the torch! she fans the fire!  
To die is to be blest:  
She clasps her lord to part no more,  
And, sighing, sinks! but sinks to soar.  
O'ershadowing Scotia's desert coast,  
The Sisters sail in dusky state,  
And, wrapt in clouds, in tempests tost,  
Weave the airy web of Fate;  
While the lone shepherd, near the shipless main,  
Sees o'er her hills advance the long-drawn funeral train.

II. 1.

Thou spak'st, and lo! a new creation glowed.  
Each unhewn mass of living stone  
Was clad in horrors not its own,  
And at its base the trembling nations bowed.  
Giant Error, darkly grand,  
Grasped the globe with iron hand.  
Circled with seats of bliss, the Lord of Light  
Saw prostrate worlds adore his golden height.  
The statue, waking with immortal powers  
Springs from its parent earth, and shakes the spheres;  
The indignant pyramid sublimely towers,  
And braves the efforts of a host of years.  
Sweet Music breathes her soul into the wind;  
And bright-eyed Painting stamps the image of the mind.

## II. 2.

Round the rude ark old Egypt's sorcerers rise!  
A timbrelled anthem swells the gale,  
And bids the God of Thunders hail;  
With lowings loud the captive God replies.  
Clouds of incense woo thy smile,  
Scaly monarch of the Nile!  
But ah! what myriads claim the bended knee!  
Go, count the busy drops that swell the sea.  
Proud land! what eye can trace thy mystic lore,  
Locked up in characters as dark as night?  
What eye those long, long labyrinths dare explore,  
To which the parted soul oft wings her flight;  
Again to visit her cold cell of clay,  
Charmed with perennial sweets, and smiling at decay?

## II. 3.

On yon hoar summit, mildly bright  
With purple ether's liquid light,  
High o'er the world, the white-robed Magi gaze  
On dazzling bursts of heavenly fire;  
Start at each blue, portentous blaze,  
Each flame that flits with adverse spire.  
But say, what sounds my ear invade  
From Delphi's venerable shade?  
The temple rocks, the laurel waves!  
"The God! the God!" the Sibyl cries.  
Her figure swells! she foams, she raves!  
Her figure swells to more than mortal size!  
Streams of rapture roll along,  
Silver notes ascend the skies:  
Wake, Echo, wake and catch the song,  
Oh catch it, ere it dies!  
The Sibyl speaks, the dream is o'er,  
The holy harpings charm no more.  
In vain she checks the God's control;  
His madding spirit fills her frame,  
And moulds the features of her soul,  
Breathing a prophetic flame.  
The cavern frowns; its hundred mouths un close!  
And, in the thunder's voice, the fate of empire flows!

### III. 1.

Mona, thy Druid-rites awake the dead!  
Rites thy brown oaks would never dare  
Even whisper to the idle air;  
Rites that have chained old Ocean on his bed.  
Shivered by thy piercing glance,  
Pointless falls the hero's lance.  
Thy magic bids the imperial eagle fly,  
And blasts the laureate wreath of victory.  
Hark, the bard's soul inspires the vocal string!  
At every pause dread Silence hovers o'er:  
While murky Night sails round on raven-wing,  
Deepening the tempest's howl, the torrent's roar;  
Chased by the Morn from Snowdon's awful brow  
Where late she sate and scowled on the black wave below.

### III. 2.

Lo, steel-clad War his gorgeous standard rears!  
The red-cross squadrons madly rage,  
And mow thro' infancy and age;  
Then kiss the sacred dust and melt in tears.  
Veiling from the eye of day,  
Penance dreams her life away;  
In cloistered solitude she sits and sighs,  
While from each shrine still, small responses rise.  
Hear, with what heart-felt beat, the midnight bell  
Swings its slow summons thro' the hollow pile!  
The weak, wan votarist leaves her twilight cell,  
To walk, with taper dim, the winding aisle;  
With choral chantings vainly to aspire  
Beyond this nether sphere, on Rapture's wing of fire.

### III. 3.

Lord of each pang the nerves can feel,  
Hence with the rack and reeking wheel.  
Faith lifts the soul above this little ball!  
While gleams of glory open round,  
And circling choirs of angels call,  
Canst thou, with all thy terrors crowned,

Hope to obscure that latent spark,  
Destined to shine when suns are dark?  
Thy triumphs cease! thro' every land,  
Hark! Truth proclaims, thy triumphs cease!  
Her heavenly form, with glowing hand,  
Benignly points to piety and peace.  
Flushed with youth, her looks impart  
Each fine feeling as it flows;  
Her voice the echo of a heart  
Pure as the mountain-snows:  
Celestial transports round her play,  
And softly, sweetly die away.  
She smiles! and where is now the cloud  
That blackened o'er thy baleful reign?  
Grim darkness furls his leaden shroud,  
Shrinking from her glance in vain.  
Her touch unlocks the day-spring from above,  
And lo! it visits man with beams of light and love.