

THE ROSE¹

AUTHOR: UNKNOWN

ENGRAVING DESIGNER: HAMMATT BILLINGS²

ENGRAVING ARTIST: J. G. CHANDLER³

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Edited and Annotated by Colin Pedron
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1.

In his tower sate⁴ the poet
Gazing on the roaring sea,
“Take this rose,” he sighed, “and throw it
Where there’s none that loveth me.

2.

“On the rock the billow bursteth
And sinks back into the seas,
But in vain my spirit thirsteth
So to burst and be at ease.

3.

“Take, oh sea, the tender blossom
That hath lain against my breast,
On thy black and angry bosom
It will find a surer rest.

¹ This romance poem, published anonymously, is divided into three sections of equal length. In the original text, engravings demarcate the points of separation for each of the three divisions. Here, the divisions are seen each time that the numerical stanza count returns to 1.

² The beautiful engravings accompanying this poem (not shown here) were originally designed by Charles Howland Hammatt Billings (1818 – 1874), a well-known American artist. Notably, he is credited with the illustrations found in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. He was also known for several major architectural achievements, such as The Boston Museum (no longer standing) and the Monument to the Forefathers (Stoddard 57-76).

³ Joseph Goodhue Chandler (1813 – 1884) completed this poem’s engravings based upon Billings’ designs. Chandler was primarily known for his work in portraits and still-life paintings (“Joseph Goodhue Chandler”).

⁴ *Sate*: an outdated spelling of “sat.”

4.

Live is vain and love is hollow,
Ugly death stands there behind,
Hate and scorn and hunger follow
Him that toileth for his kind.”

5.

Forth into the night he hurled it
And with bitter smile did mark
How the surly tempest whirled it
Swift into the hungry dark.

6.

Foam and spray drive back to leeward,⁵
And the gale with dreary moan
Drifts the helpless blossom seaward,
Through the breakers all alone.

1.

Stands a maiden on the morrow,⁶
Musing by the wave-beat strand,
Half in hope and half in sorrow
Tracing words upon the sand.

2.

“Shall I ever then behold him
Who hath been my life so long, --
Ever to this sick heart fold him, --
Be the spirit of his song?”

3.

Touch not, sea, the blessed letters
I have traced upon thy shore,
Spare his name whose spirit fetters
Mine with love forevermore!”

4.

Swells the tide and overflows it,⁷
But, with omen pure and sweet,
Brings a little rose and throws it
Humbly at the maiden’s feet.

⁵ *Leeward*: Situated on the side turned away from the wind; having a direction away from the wind.

⁶ *On the morrow*: i.e., the following day

⁷ *Swells . . . it*: i.e., the tide washes over the name of her lover inscribed in the sand

5.

Full of bliss she takes the token,
And, upon her snowy breast,
Soothes the ruffled petals broken
With the ocean's fierce unrest.

6.

"Love is thine, oh heart, and surely
Peace shall also be thine own,
For the heart that trusteth purely
Never long can pine⁸ alone."

1.

In his tower sits the poet,
Blisses new and strange to him
Fill his heart and overflow it
With a wonder sweet and dim.

2.

Up the beach the ocean slideth
With a whisper of delight,
And the moon in silence glideth
Through the peaceful blue of night.

3.

Rippling o'er the poet's shoulder
Flows a maiden's golden hair,
Maiden-lips with love grown bolder,
Kiss his moonlit forehead bare.

4.

"Life is joy, and love is power,
Death all fetters doth unbind,
Strength and wisdom only flower
When we toil for all our kind.

5.

"Hope is truth, -- the future giveth
More than present takes away,
And the soul forever liveth
Nearer God from day to day,"

⁸ *Pine*: To yearn; to languish with desire, to hunger for something; to long eagerly.

6.

Not a word the maiden uttered,
Fullest hearts are slow to speak,
But a withered roseleaf fluttered
Down upon the poet's cheek.



EDITOR'S NOTE

Throughout the course of *The Pioneer's* anonymously published poem "The Rose," loneliness and a fatalistic viewpoint towards mortality construct a strong message of anthropocentrism. The original manuscript's accompanying engravings give the lustrous words even further clarity, beauty, and depth. The progression of "The Rose's" illustrations and the verbal proclamations, taken in context with the rest of the first issue of *The Pioneer*, allow us to see a message that mankind's ultimate purpose is closely intertwined with his own mortality.

The engravings depicted in the original manuscript initially illustrate the lonesome figure of a man on a barren rock at the poem's outset. The illustration is given voice through the poet's despondent outcry that "Hate and scorn and hunger follow / Him that toileth for his kind" (15-16). Here we see an initial hopelessness for the cause of man's self-improvement. Similarly, the subsequent engraving of a lonesome female on the beach is given life in the words "Love is thine, oh heart, and surely / Peace shall also be thine own, / For the heart that trusteth purely / Never long can pine alone" (45 – 48). Here we see an interrelation between companionship, love, and peace of mind. Whereas the poet's loneliness leads to his despair, the maiden's hope of love leads to her contentment.

At the poem's conclusion, the engravings show the previously forlorn poet and the amorous maiden united on the barren rock. Their unity seems to be the primary force behind the poet's final proclamation that "Strength and wisdom only flower / When we toil for all our kind" (63-64). Through the development of interpersonal love as key component towards the speaker's inner peace, then, the message is constructed that the primary duty of mankind is to itself. That is to say, the course of the speaker's initial loneliness and subsequent companionship seem to build towards a key idea concerning the importance of mankind's self-improvement.

Intermixed into this equation is the factor of man's mortality. Adjacent to the aforementioned quote concerning mankind's duty is the statement that, "Life is joy, and love is power, / Death all fetters doth unbind" (61-62). The question of which fetters death unbinds here is slightly ambiguous. These may be death's own fetters, which would signify death's yielding to the combined powers of life and love. In a darker sense, these may also be all the typical fetters of life, which would signify that death itself is in fact a source of liberation from life's travails. To this end, it is important to recognize that even the lover's spirit is listed as one factor of life that "fetters" the maiden (35). Thus, though it is portrayed in a generally positive light throughout the rest of the poem, love itself is shown to be one of the possible binding forces of life. Ultimately, then, as captors of humanity, love and life might not be viewed as completely positive forces by the speaker. Seemingly, the speaker's reference to death as a liberator could be a statement of gratitude.

"The Rose's" ebbs and flows of loss, love, hope, meditation, and death reveal that the purpose of life is perhaps the betterment of life itself for the rest of mankind. However, death constantly looms over this goal as a "withered roseleaf" of inevitable mortality (71). As seen throughout the rest of this issue in poems such as "The Poet and Apollo" and short stories such as Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart," *The Pioneer* constantly seems to take a morbid viewpoint towards death as a force of liberation. "The Rose," as no exception to the rule, allows us to see an apparently fatalistic trend in the mentality of the editors. Readers of the first issue of *The Pioneer* are constantly reminded that all of man's earthly endeavors, whether despondent or magnanimous in nature, are ultimately limited by their temporality.

COLIN PEDRON



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