Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835)
CASABIANCA

The boy stood on the burning deck
Whence all but him had fled;
The flame that lit the battle's wreck
Shone round him o'er the dead.

Yet beautiful and bright he stood,
As born to rule the storm;
A creature of heroic blood,
A proud, though childlike form.

The flames rolled on — he would not go
Without his father's word;
That father, faint in death below,
His voice no longer heard.

He called aloud — "Say, father, say,
If yet my task is done?"
He knew not that the chieftain lay
Unconscious of his son.

"Speak, father!" once again he cried,
"If I may yet be gone!"
And but the booming shots replied,
And fast the flames rolled on.

Upon his brow he felt their breath,
And in his waving hair,
And looked from that lone post of death
In still, yet brave despair.

And shouted but once more aloud,
"My father! must I stay?"
While o'er him fast, through sail andshroud,
The wreathing fires made way.

They wrapt the ship in splendor wild,
They caught the flag on high,
And streamed above the gallant child,
Like banners in the sky.

There came a burst of thunder sound–
The boy — oh! where was he?
Ask of the winds that far around
With fragments strewed the sea!–

With mast, and helm, and pennon fair
That well had borne their part–
But the noblest thing that perished there
Was that young, faithful heart.