

# The Negro Girl

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

## I.

Dark was the dawn, and o'er the deep  
The boist'rous whirlwinds blew;  
The Sea-bird wheel'd its circling sweep,  
And all was drear to view—  
When on the beach that binds the western shore  
The love-loin ZELMA stood, list'ning the tempest's roar.

## II.

Her eager Eyes beheld the main,  
While on her DRACO dear  
She madly call'd, but call'd in vain,  
No sound could DRACO hear,  
Save the shrill yelling of the fateful blast,  
While ev'ry Seaman's heart, quick shudder'd as it past.

## III.

White were the billows, wide display'd  
The clouds were black and low;  
The Bittern shriek'd, a gliding shade  
Seem'd o'er the waves to go!  
The livid flash illum'd the clam'rous main,  
While ZELMA pour'd, unmark'd, her melancholy strain.

## IV.

“Be still!” she cried, “loud tempest cease!  
“O! spare the gallant souls  
“The thunder rolls—the winds increase—  
“The Sea, like mountains, rolls  
“While, from the deck, the storm-worn victims leap,  
“And o'er their struggling limbs, the furious billows sweep.

## V.

“O! barb'rous Pow'r! relentless Fate!  
“Does Heav'n's high will decree  
“That some should sleep on beds of state,—

“Some, in the roaring Sea?  
“Some, nurs’d in splendour, deal Oppression’s blow,  
“While worth and DRACO pine—in Slavery and woe!

VI.

“Yon Vessel oft has plough’d the main  
“With human traffic fraught;  
“Its cargo,—our dark Sons of pain—  
“For worldly treasure bought!  
“What had they done?—O Nature tell me why—  
Is taunting scorn the lot, of thy dark progeny?

VII.

“Thou gav’st, in thy caprice, the Soul  
“Peculiarly enshrin’d;  
“Nor from the ebon Casket stole  
“The Jewel of the mind!  
“Then wherefore let the suff’ring Negro’s breast  
“Bow to his fellow, MAN, in brighter colours drest.

VIII.

“Is it the dim and glossy hue  
“That marks him for despair?—  
“While men with blood their hands embrue,  
“And mock the wretch’s pray’r?  
“Shall guiltless Slaves the Scourge of tyrants feel,  
“And, e’en before their God! unheard, unpitied kneel.

IX.

“Could the proud rulers of the land  
“Our Sable race behold;  
“Some bow’d by torture’s Giant hand  
“And others, basely sold!  
“Then would they pity Slaves, and cry, with shame,  
“Whate’er their TINTS may be, their SOULS are still the same!

X.

“Why seek to mock the Ethiop’s face?  
“Why goad our hapless kind?  
“Can features alienate the race—  
“Is there no kindred mind?

“Does not the cheek which vaunts the roseate hue  
“Oft blush for crimes, that Ethiops never knew?

XI.

“Behold! the angry waves conspire  
“To check the barb’rous toil!  
“While wounded Nature’s vengeful ire—  
“Roars, round this trembling Isle!  
“And hark! her voice re-echoes in the wind—  
“Man was not form’d by Heav’n, to trample on his kind!

XII.

“Torn from my Mother’s aching breast,  
“My Tyrant sought my love—  
“But, in the Grave shall ZELMA rest,  
“E’er she will faithless prove—  
“No DRACO!—Thy companion I will be  
“To that celestial realm, where Negros shall be free!

XIII.

“The Tyrant WHITE MAN taught my mind—  
“The letter’d page to trace;—  
“He taught me in the Soul to find  
“No tint, as in the face:  
“He bade my Reason, blossom like the tree—  
“But fond affection gave, the ripen’d fruits to thee.

XIV.

“With jealous rage he mark’d my love;  
“He sent thee far away;—  
“And prison’d in the plantain grove—  
“Poor ZELMA pass’d the day—  
“But ere the moon rose high above the main,  
“ZELMA, and Love contriv’d, to break the Tyrant’s chain.

XV.

“Swift, o’er the plain of burning Sand  
“My course I bent to thee;  
“And soon I reach’d the billowy strand  
“Which bounds the stormy Sea.—  
“DRACO! my Love! Oh yet, thy ZELMA’S soul

“Springs ardently to thee,—impatient of controul.

XVI.

“Again the lightning flashes white—  
“The rattling cords among!  
“Now, by the transient vivid light.  
“I mark the frantic throng!  
“Now up the tatter’d shrouds my DRACO flies—  
While o’er the plunging prow, the curling billows rise.

XVII.

“The topmast falls—three shackled slaves—  
“Cling to the Vessel’s side!  
“Now lost amid the maddning waves—  
“Now on the mast they ride—  
“See! on the forecastle my DRACO stands  
“And now he waves his chain, now clasps his bleeding hands.

XVIII.

“Why, cruel WHITE-MAN! when away  
“My sable Love was torn,  
“Why did you let poor ZELMA stay,  
“On Afric’s sands to mourn?  
“No! ZELMA is not left, for she will prove  
“In the deep troubled main, her fond—her faithful LOVE.”

XIX.

The lab’ring Ship was now a wreck,  
The shrouds were flutt’ring wide!  
The rudder gone, the lofty deck  
Was rock’d from side to side—  
Poor ZELMA’S eyes now dropp’d their last big tear,  
While, from her tawny cheek, the blood recoil’d with fear.

XX.

Now frantic, on the Bands she roam’d,  
Now shrieking stop’d to view  
Where high the liquid mountains foam’d,  
Around the exhausted crew—  
’Till, from the deck, her DRACO’S well known form  
Sprung mid the yawning waves, and buffeted the Storm.

XXI.

Long, on the swelling surge sustain'd  
Brave DRACO sought the shore,  
Watch'd the dark Maid, but ne'er complain'd,  
Then sunk, to gaze no more!  
Poor ZELMA saw him buried by the wave—  
And, with her heart's true Love, plung'd in a wat'ry grave.