

THE SHEFFIELD IRIS 1794-1796.

16. 'The Captive Nightingale' *The Iris*, Issue 86, 19/02/1796

Nocturnal Silence reigning;
A nightingale began,
In his cold cage, complaining
Of cruel, cruel man,
His drooping pinions shivered,
Like withered moss to dry;
His heart with anguish quivered,
And sorrow dimmed his eye.

His grief, in soothing slumbers,
No balmy power could steep;
So sweetly slowed his numbers,
The Music seemed to weep.
Unfeeling Sons of Folly!
To you the Mourner sung,
While tender melancholy
Inspired his plaintive tongue.
"Now reigns the Moon in splendour
"Amid the heaven serene;
"A thousand Stars attend her,
"And glitter round their Queen,
"Sweet hours of Inspiration!
"When I, the still night long,
"Was wont to tell my passion,
"And breathe my soul in Song.
"But now delicious Season I
"In Vain thy charms invite:
"Entombed in this dire prison
"I sicken at the sight.
"This morn, this vernal morning,
"The happiest bird was I,
"That hailed the sun returning,
"Or swam the liquid Sky.

"In yonder breezy bowers,
"Among the foliage green,
"I spent my tuneful hours,
"In Solitude unseen.
"There soft Melodia's beauty

Transcriptions by James Earley.



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“First sired my ravished Eye:

“I vowed eternal Duty:

“She looked- half kind, half coy!

“My plumes with ardour trembling,

“I fluttered, sighed and sung;

“The fair one, still dissembling,

“Refused to trust my tongue

“A thousand arts I tried:

“Till the sweet Nymph, relenting,

“Confessed herself my bride,

“Deep in the grove retiring

“To choose our secret seat,

“We found an oak aspiring,

“Beneath whose mossy feet,

“Where the tall herbage swelling

“Had formed a snug alcove,

“We built our humble dwelling,

“And hallowed it with love.

“Sweet Scene of vanished pleasure!

“This day, this fatal day,

“My little ones, my treasure,

“My Spouse, were stolen away!

“I saw the precious plunder

“All in a napkin bound:

“-That moment, smit with thunder,

“I fluttered on the ground!

“O man! Beneath whose vengeance

“All Nature, bleeding lies!

“Who charged thine impious engines

“With lightnings from the Skies?

“What! Though from heaven descended,

“The world be all thine own;

“Say, how have I offended?

“What have my children done?

“Ah! Is thy bosom iron?

“Does it thine heart enchain?

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"As these cold bars environ
 "And, captive, me detain?
 "How could'st thou wound and plunder
 "The innocent and weak?
 "Why rend those bands asunder,
 "Which Death alone should bread?

"Where are my offspring tender?
 "Where is my widowed mate?
 "-Thou Guardian Moon! defend her!
 "Ye Stars! avert their fate! -
 "O'erwhelmed with killing anguish,
 "In iron cage, forlorn,
 "I see my poor babes languished!
 "I hear their mother mourn!

"O Liberty inspire me,
 "And eagle strength supply!
 "Thou love almighty! fire me! -
 "-I burst my prison- or die! -"
 He said; and forward bounded;
 He broke the yielding door!
 -But, with the shock confounded,
 Fell, -lifeless, -on the floor!

Farewell, then, Philomela!
 Poor matyr'd Bird! Adieu!
 There's One, my charming fellow!

Who thinks, who feels, like you.
 The bard, that pens thy story,
 Amidst a prison's gloom,
 Sighs-not for wealth nor glory;
 -But freedom, or thy tomb!

Castle of York, Feb 12. 1796

Paul Positive.