




A Celebration of Women Writers

"The Image in Lava" by [Felicia Hemans](#) (1793-1835) [Records of Woman: With Other Poems](#). Edinburgh: William Blackwood, & London: T. Cadell, 1828, second edition. pp. 310-313.



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THE IMAGE IN LAVA.*

THOU thing of years departed!
What ages have gone by,
Since here the mournful seal was set
By love and agony!

Temple and tower have moulder'd,
Empires from earth have pass'd,—
And woman's heart hath left a trace
Those glories to outlast!

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And childhood's fragile image
Thus fearfully enshrin'd,
Survives the proud memorials rear'd
By conquerors of mankind.

Babe! wert thou brightly slumbering
Upon thy mother's breast,
When suddenly the fiery tomb
Shut round each gentle guest?

A strange, dark fate o'ertook you,
Fair babe and loving heart!
One moment of a thousand pangs—
Yet better than to part!

Haply of that fond bosom
On ashes here impress'd,
Thou wert the only treasure, child!
Whereon a hope might rest.

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Perchance all vainly lavish'd
Its other love had been,
And where it trusted, nought remain'd
But thorns on which to lean.

Far better then to perish,
Thy form within its clasp,
Than live and lose thee, precious one!
From that impassion'd grasp.

Oh! I could pass all relics
Left by the pomps of old,
To gaze on this rude monument,
Cast in affection's mould.

Love, human love! what art thou?
Thy print upon the dust
Outlives the cities of renown
Wherein the mighty trust!

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Immortal, oh! immortal
Thou art, whose earthly glow
Hath given these ashes holiness—
It must, it *must* be so!

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* The impression of a woman's form, with an infant clasped to the bosom, found at the uncovering of Herculaneum.

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A Celebration of Women Writers: Mary Mark Ockerbloom, Editor.