

Heloise to Abelard: a sonnet

Elizabeth Oakes Smith

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Must I not love thee? When the heart would leap,
With all its thrilling pulses, unto thee,
Must it be staid? Is not the spirit free?
Can human bonds or bars its essence keep?
Or drugs and banes hold love in deathful sleep?
Love thee I must—yet I content will be,
Like the pale victim who, on bended knee,
Presents the chalice, which his blood must steep,
And prostrate on the altar falls to die.
So let me kneel, a guiltless votary sink,
Prayer on my lips, and love within my heart—
Thus from these willing eyes recede the sky—
Thus let these sighs my ebbing life—blood drink,
May I but love thee still, but feel how dear thou art?