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Epigrams

Percy Bysshe Shelley

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Epigrams
1839

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1839

Circumstance

A man who was about to hang himself,
Finding a purse, then threw away his rope;
The owner, coming to reclaim his pelf,
The halter found; and used it. So is Hope
Changed for Despair—one laid upon the shelf,
We take the other. Under Heaven's high cope
Fortune is God—all you endure and do
Depends on circumstance as much as you.

Contents

To Stella	5
Kissing Helena	5
Spirit of Plato	5
Circumstance	6

To Stella

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
Ere thy fair light had fled;—
Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
New splendour to the dead.

Kissing Helena

Kissing Helena, together
With my kiss, my soul beside it
Came to my lips, and there I kept it,—
For the poor thing had wandered thither,
To follow where the kiss should guide it,
Oh, cruel I, to intercept it!

Spirit of Plato

Eagle! why soarest thou above that tomb?
To what sublime and star-ypaven home
Floatest thou?—
I am the image of swift Plato's spirit,
Ascending heaven; Athens doth inherit
His corpse below.