

An EPITAPH on BIGOTRY
by
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Here lies, and may it here forever lie,
The carcass of dead piety,
Shadow of grace, substantial sin,
Religion's mask and gaudy dress,
The form and foe of holiness,
The image and the plague of zeal divine,
Its dwelling was the church; in double shape,
Half was a murdering wolf, and half a mimic ape.

A monster horrid to the sight,
Hideous, deformed, and void of light;
'Twas born at Rome,
'Twas nursed at home,
In the dark cloisters of the Vatican;
Its lungs inspired with heaving lies,
Its bulk well fastened to prodigious size
With gunpowder and blood of man.

Ancient inhabitant of Spain,
And long in France a welcome guest;
Over the continent and main,
Over the old world and the new,
Mankind and money to pursue,
On dragon's wings the harpy flew,
And gave its feet no rest...

Under the name and habit of the church,
Under the countenance and clothing of a sheep,
It became the most savage and rampant
Plunderer and waster of human society,
Made fearful inroads on all civil commerce,
And left religious liberty expiring.

A warrior well furnished
With all arts politic and polite,
With the knotty embarrassments of criticism,
The hampering chains and subtleties of logic,
And the javelins of pen and tongue,
With the roaring ordinance of councils and canons,
And all the artillery of the schools and gown...

Fury, hatred and mischief,
Love of this world, pride and disdain,
With perjuries, falsehoods, and pious frauds,
And raging party-zeal,
Were its necessary and everlasting attendants.
High Encomiums and endless applause
Of guides infallible, and faith implicit,
Of hereditary and divine right,
Of unlimited power and passive obedience
To tyrant priests and kings,
With the immortal praise and merit
Of stupid ignorance, and bland submission,
Were heralds to prepare its way.

Trifles, and tricks, and solemn fooleries,
Legends and silly tales,
Old almanacs, and mouldy, musty reliques,
Sweepings of ancient tombs,
Vows, pilgrimages, charms and consecrations,
Rites obsolete and novel ceremonies
Both decent and indecent,
Monkish vows, and superstitious austerities,
With words of sacerdotal absolution,
And sacerdotal vengeance,
Squibs, crackers, excommunications, curses,
Roaring bulls, and vain thunders,
Mixed up with priestly choler, bitter and black,
Were its delicious food...

At what dark hour soever
The cursed divan at Rome were met,
Catholic faith to propagate,
This monster filled the chair.
The conclave dressed in bonnets red,
With three-crowned tyrant at their head,
Made it their privy-counselor.
The inquisition court (a bloody crew,
Artful to set the solemn trap
That lets no heretic escape)
Owns it her president and founder too.

Oft as the church in east or western lands
Rising against herself in arms,
In her own blood imbrued her hands,
This chief led on the unnatural war,
Or did the bloody standards bear,
Or sound the fierce alarms;
Victorious still. (And what can more be said
Of all the living warriors, or the heroes dead?)

Britain, a land well stored with every good,
That nature, law, religion give;
A land where sacred freedom thrives;
Blest isle! If her own weal she understood!
Her sons, immured with guardian ocean, sleep,
And castles floating on the deep,
Fenced from all foreign foes, O shame! O sin!
Her sons had let this baleful mischief in;
This hellish fury, who with flattering breath
Did first divide, and then devour,
And made wild waste wherever she spread her power,
Behold she meets her fatal hour
And lies enchained in death.

Shout at the grave, O traveler!
Triumphant joys that reach the skies

Are here the justest obsequies:
Shout thrice – then flee afar
The poisonous steams and stench of the sepulcher
Go, turn thy face to Heaven, and pray,
That such a hateful monster never may
Obtain a resurrection-day.