

Los 'at the Forge' with Loge

1.

An epic check is sometimes forged
By an impertinent sort of person
Like Chatterton or like Macpherson.
Obtusely by the critics scourged

For an imaginative act
Of a high order, they give new
Life to a dead age. Faining's true
Feigning discovers a strange tract

Between the Nightmare History's
Time and Dream Time: Malvern the place,
Rowley the monk dwell in a space
That is so purely poetry's

That they, like Beauty, are their own
Excuse for being. Call them spurious,
If ye will, scholars, and wax furious
At having had your ignorance shown,

And dismiss Rowley's or MacPherson's
Work as a literary mockery, full
Of trumped-up episodes apocryphal—
And such disreputable persons!

*'Tis true, one was a 'marvellous boy
Who perished in his pride', but mad.
What nerve this Bristol orphan had
To perpetrate this insolent ploy!*

What's forgery but plagiarism
Of works that happen not to exist?
Thus adding a delicious twist
To literary vandalism.

2.

Ah, Chatterton, poor, hungry, lone
Genius! Each line of verse he forges
Has that peculiarly gorgeous
Finish that stamps it as his own.



I lectured on you, marvellous 'whelp'.
(My notes were plagiarised; my grief
Is real.) Set drifting like a leaf
In London, with so little help,

Prolific in satiric rhymes,
Too proud to admit your hunger and
Accept a meal, cursed with too grand
A talent for such prosy times,

For livelihood in vain you cast
About and, lonely in your garret,
Struggled on till you could not bear it
And turned to arsenic at last.

So it was left to Shelley, Keats,
Wordsworth and Coleridge, too late,
To shower on your gifts, how great!
The honour out of which Fate cheats

Time and again the living poet.
You, more precocious than Rimbaud,
Your genius keep in youthful glow
Who were not destined to outgrow it.

*'It is wonderful how the whelp has
written such things'.—Samuel Johnson*



*Like Keats and Shelley; unlike
Coleridge and Wordsworth.*

