Trees, woods and literature – 19

Come forth, and let us through our hearts receive The joy of verdure! – see, the honied lime Showers cool green light o'er banks where wild-flowers weave Thick tapestry; and woodbine tendrils climb Up the brown oak from buds of moss and thyme. The rich deep masses of the sycamore Hang heavy with the fulness of their prime, And the white poplar, from its foliage hoar, Scatters forth gleams like moonlight, with each gale That sweeps the boughs: – the chestnut flowers are

past,

The crowning glories of the hawthorn fail, But arches of sweet eglantine are cast From every hedge: – Oh! never may we lose, Dear friend! our fresh delight in simplest

nature's hues.

Felicia Dorothea Hemans (1793-1835) was born in Liverpool, granddaughter of George Browne of Passage, Co. Cork. Her first book of poems was published when she was fourteen. The poet Shelley, when he read it, tried to start a correspondence with her, and was dissuaded only when her mother intervened.

She married an Irishman, Captain Hemans, in 1812. They separated in 1818, and in 1831 she moved to Dublin where her brother was chief commissioner of police. There she became friendly with William Ronan Hamilton mathematician and astronomer. She died in 1835 and is buried in St. Anne's Church, Dawson Street, Dublin, where a plaque records her internment in the vault underneath.

Highly popular during her lifetime, and admired by Scott and Wordsworth, Mrs. Hemans is now remembered chiefly as the author of the poem 'Casablanca' (*The boy stood on the burning deck/Whence all but he had fled...*) from a volume entitled *Forest Sanctuary*.

'Foliage' was published posthumously. The reference to "honied lime" may refer to the sweet scent of the flowers, or to the fact that lime honey is sometimes claimed to be the bestflavoured honey of all.

(Selection and note by Wood Kerne)