142. “High hovering above the deep,” early November, MS VIII. Previously unpublished.

This draft fragment on the release of Israel from bondage in Egypt sustains the apocalyptic subjects characterizing nos. 140-41, which this poem follows. The untitled no. 142 is clearly a distinct poem from no. 141, separated from the latter by an ornamental horizontal line.

Collingwood did see the fragment, identifying it as a failed first version of a poem of 1832 he called “The Destruction of Pharaoh,” no. 161. In his note on the 1832 poem, he argued that no. 161, along with “The Site of Babylon,” no. 140, “seem to be modelled on the ‘Hebrew Melodies,’ and exhibit a more sonorous and intellectual style, derived from Byron. . . . After writing ‘The Site of Babylon’ on Nov. 6, he began ‘The Destruction of Nineveh’ [sic, no. 141], but gave that up for ‘The Destruction of Pharaoh’ [i.e., the fragment no. 142]; the first attempt at which was a failure, and was dropped for a translation from Anacreon [no. 143], whom he was reading with Dr. Andrews at the time. . . . Then, after ‘The Southern Breeze’ [no. 160], occurs ‘Mourn, Mizraim, Mourn’ [no. 161, the untitled poem Collingwood named ‘The Destruction of Pharaoh’], not dated, but earlier than the Birthday Address of the year” (PJR, 1:281).

Cook and Wedderburn obviously investigated no further, for the Library Edition merely reprints Collingwood’s note along with the so-called “The Destruction of Pharaoh,” no. 161 (Works, 2:336), and fails to list the fragment no. 142 under MS VIII (Works, 2:533). While nos. 142 and 161 are related in their subjects, however, no. 142 is not even a variant of no. 161, much less necessarily a “failed version.” It is either a separate poem altogether or the opening stanzas for no. 161.

High hovering above the deep

The angels wing with cloudy sweep

<And> Came feathered all with flame<s>

As round the death fraught breezes swell

He bore the curse of Israel

On Egypt and her chains

Forth flashing from its cloudy sheath

Red <flashed> glanced the <angels> lightning sword of death

And ocean thundered from afar

He comes he comes Egypt[ea(?)]

The shriek came bursting on the breeze

From haughty Pharaohs palaces

As drearily it came

The <w> moaning oer the desert spread

[O those(?)] lamenting for the dead

Lamenting but in vain

The camps of Jacob heard the cry

That broke their long captivity

And oer the desert and the sea

The shout rose. Israel Thou art free!