

TRANSLATION

# The Song of the Bell

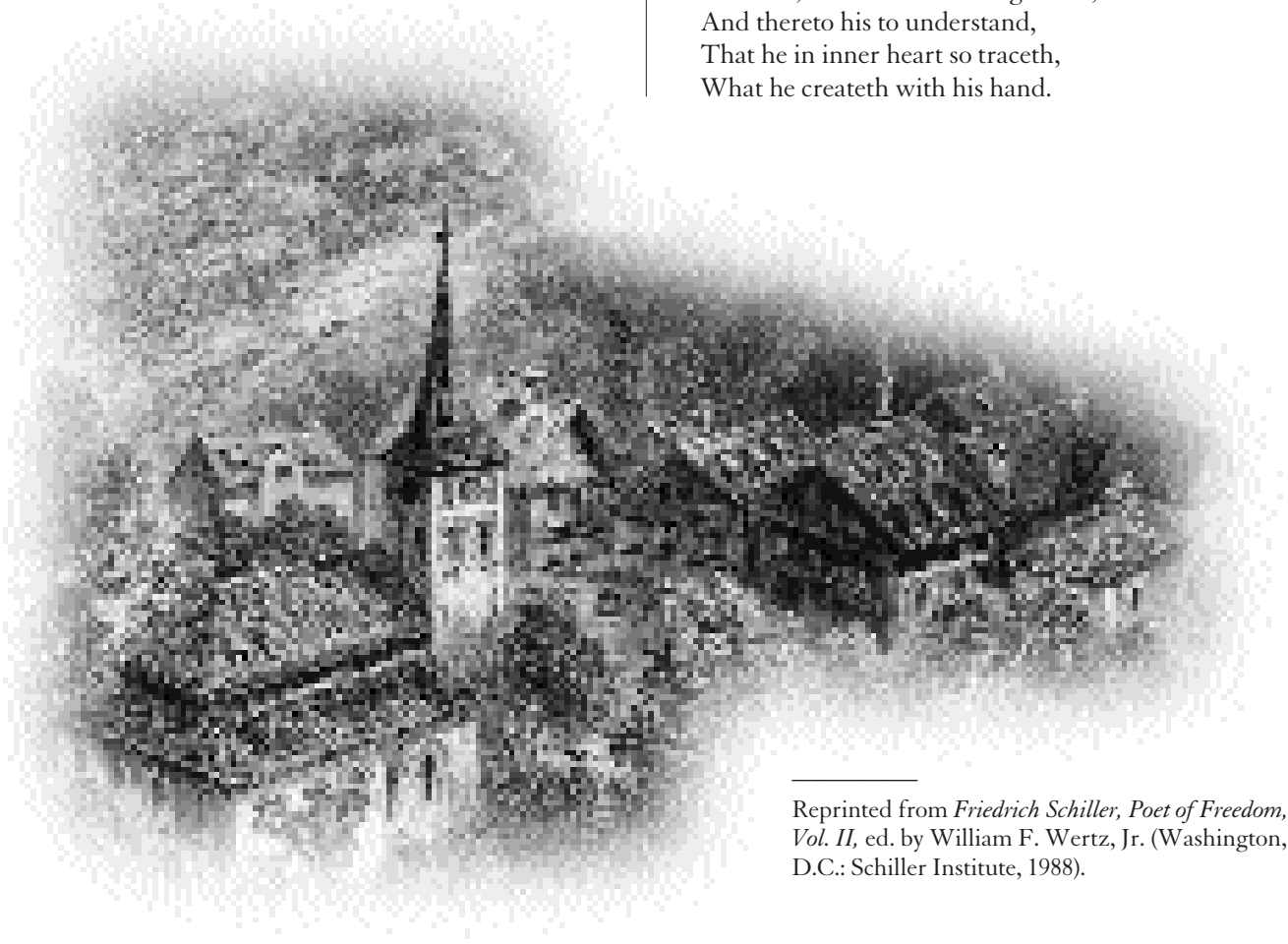
(1799)

Friedrich Schiller

*I call the living • I mourn the dead • I break the lightning*

Walled up in the earth so steady  
Burned from clay, the mould doth stand.  
This day must the Bell be ready!  
Fresh, O workmen, be at hand!  
From the heated brow  
Sweat must freely flow,  
That the work may praise the Master,  
Though the blessing comes from higher.

OUR WORK in earnest preparation,  
Befitteth well an earnest word;  
When joined by goodly conversation,  
Then flows the labor briskly forw'd.  
So let us now with care consider,  
What through a frail power springs forth:  
The wicked man one must have scorn for,  
Who ne'er reflects, what he brings forth.  
This it is, what all mankind graceth,  
And thereto his to understand,  
That he in inner heart so traceth,  
What he createth with his hand.



The Granger Collection, NY

Reprinted from *Friedrich Schiller, Poet of Freedom, Vol. II*, ed. by William F. Wertz, Jr. (Washington, D.C.: Schiller Institute, 1988).

Take the wood from trunk of spruce tree,  
Yet quite dry let it abide,  
That the flame compressed so tightly  
Strike the gullet deep inside!  
Cook the copper brew,  
Quick the tin in, too!  
That the glutinous bell-metal  
Flowing rightly then will settle!

WHAT IN the dam's dark cavern dour  
The hand with fire's help did mould,  
High in the belfry of the tower  
There will our story loud be told.  
Still will it last as years are tolling  
And many ears will it inspire  
And wail with mourners in consoling  
And harmonize devotion's choir.  
What here below to son terrest'ral  
The ever-changing fate doth bring,  
Doth strike the crown which made from metal,  
Uplifting it doth sound its ring.

Bubbles white I see creating,  
Good! the mass doth flow at last.  
Now with potash permeating,  
Let us hasten quick the cast.  
And from lather free  
Must the mixture be,  
That from metal pure abounding  
Pure and full the voice be sounding.

FOR WITH its joyful festive ringing  
It doth the child beloved greet  
On that first step his life is bringing,  
Which starts in arms of slumber sweet;  
For in the womb of time's attesting  
His fortune black or bright is resting,  
The mother's tender cares adorning  
With love, to guard his golden morning.—  
The years they fly like arrows fleet.  
From maiden breaks the lad so proudly,  
And into life so wild doth roam,  
Throughout the world he wanders widely.  
As stranger, seeks his father's home,  
And glorious, in youthful splendor,  
Like creature from the heav'nly land,  
With cheek so modest, shy and tender  
Sees he the maid before him stand.  
Then seized by nameless longing, aching,  
The young lad's heart, alone he leaves,  
From out his eyes the tears are breaking,

His brothers' ranks so wild he flees.  
Her steps he blushing doth follow  
And is by her fair greeting blessed,  
The fairest seeks he in the meadow,  
With which by him his love is dressed.  
Oh! gentle longing, sweetest hoping,  
The first love's time of goldenness!  
The eye doth see the heavens op'ning,  
So feasts the heart in happiness—  
Oh! that it last forever greening,  
The beaut'ous time of love's beginning!

How indeed the pipes are browning!  
This small staff do I dip in:  
When its glaze to us is shining,  
Will the casting time begin.  
Now, men, lively be!  
Test the mix for me,  
If the brittle with the nimble  
Join together 'tis good symbol.

FOR WHERE the rough is with the supple,  
Where strong itself with mild doth couple,  
The ringing will be good and strong.  
So test therefore, who join forever,  
If heart to heart be found together!  
Delusion is short, remorse is long.  
In the bridal locks so lovely  
Plays the virgin's modest crown,  
When the churchbells pealing brightly  
To the festive gleam call down.  
Ah! Life's fairest celebrating  
Doth the May of life end, too,  
With the girdle, with the veiling  
Tears delusion fair in two.

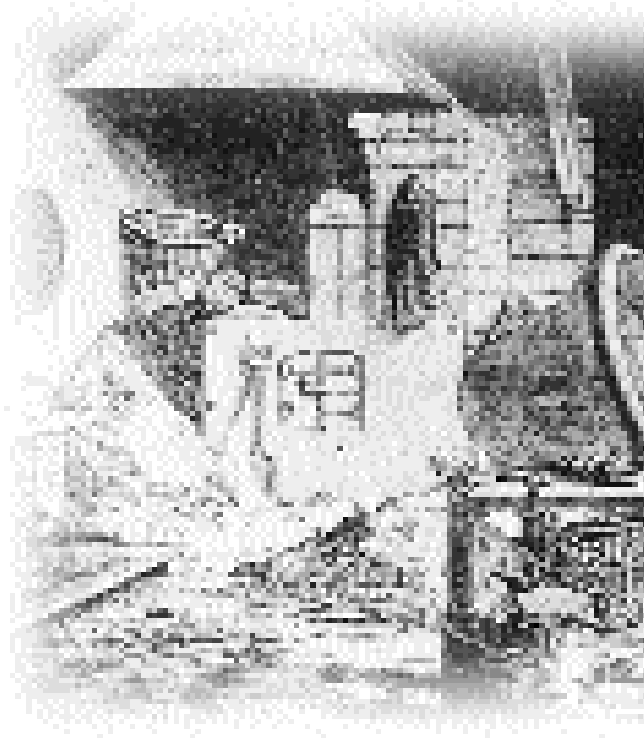
The passion doth fly.  
Love must be enduring;  
The flowers fade by,  
Fruit must be maturing.  
The man must go out  
In hostile life living,  
Be working and striving  
And planting and making,  
Be scheming and taking,  
Through hazard and daring,  
His fortune ensnaring.  
Then streams in the wealth in an unending measure,  
The silo is filled thus with valuable treasure,  
The rooms are growing, the house stretches out.  
And indoors ruleth

The housewife so modest,  
 The mother of children,  
 And governs wisely  
 In matters of family,  
 And maidens she traineth  
 And boys she restraineth,  
 And goes without ending  
 Her diligent handling,  
 And gains increase hence  
 With ordering sense.  
 And treasure on sweet-smelling presses is spreading,  
 And turns 'round the tightening spindle the threading,  
 And gathers in chests polished cleanly and bright  
 The shimmering wool, and the linen snow-white,  
 And joins to the goods, both their splendor and shimmer,  
 And resteth never.

And the father with joyful glance  
 From the house gable's view oh so vast  
 Surveying his fortune's enhance,  
 Seeth the posts of trees that are tow'ring  
 And the rooms of his barns o'erflowing  
 And the silos, bent low from the blessing,  
 And the billows of corn unceasing,  
 Boasting with haughty mouth:  
 "Firm, as the soil o' th' earth,  
 'Gainst all misfortune's pow'r  
 Splendid my house doth tow'r!"—  
 Yet with mighty fate supernal  
 Is entwined no bond eternal,  
 And misfortune strideth fast.

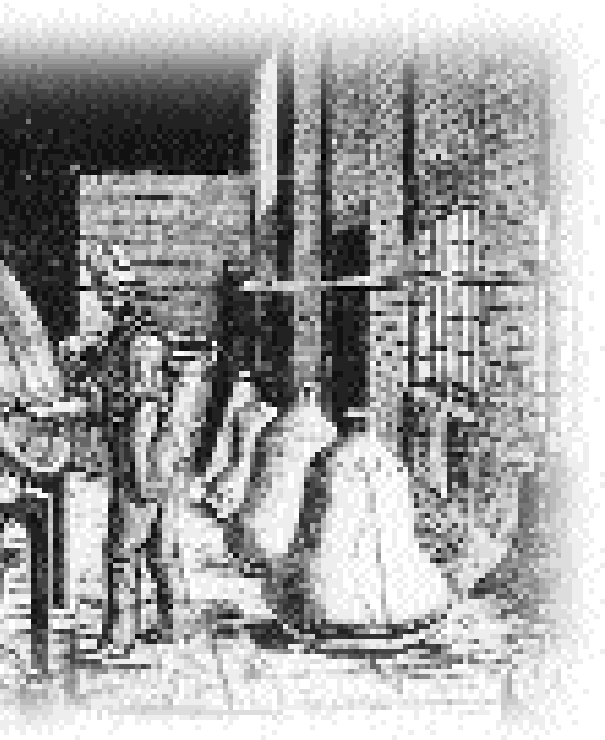
Good! now be the cast beginning,  
 Finely jagged is the breach.  
 Yet before it start to running,  
 Let us pious verses preach.  
 Make the tap eject!  
 God our house protect!  
 Smoking in the handle's hollow  
 Shoots with fire-brownéd billow.

BENEF'CENT is the might of flame,  
 When o'er it man doth watch, doth tame,  
 And what he buildeth, what he makes,  
 For this the heav'nly powers he thanks;  
 Yet fright'ning Heaven's pow'r will be,  
 When from its chains it doth break free,  
 Embarking forth on its own track,  
 Nature's daughter, free alack.  
 Woe, when it is liberated  
 Growing such that none withstand,  
 Through the alleys populated  
 Rolls the monstrous firebrand!



The Bettmann Archive

For by elements is hated  
 The creation of man's hand.  
 From the heavens  
 Blessing's teeming,  
 Rain is streaming;  
 From the heavens, unforeseen,  
 Strikes the beam!  
 Hear in belfry whimpers form!  
 That is storm!  
 Red as blood  
 Heavens broil,  
 That is not the daylight's flood!  
 What a turmoil  
 In the roads!  
 Steam explodes!  
 Climbs the fire column glowing,  
 Through the streets' long rows it's going  
 Forth it goes with wind's speed growing,  
 As in jaws of ovens cooking  
 Glows the air, the beams are cracking,  
 Pillars tumble, windows quav'ring,  
 Children wailing, mothers wand'ring,  
 Whimp'ring cattle  
 Under rubble,  
 All is running, saving, flying,  
 Bright as day the night is shining.  
 Through long chain of hands, not resting  
 As contesting  
 Flies the bucket, lofty bowing



Spouts the fountain, water flowing,  
Howling comes the storm a-flying,  
Which doth seek the roaring flames.  
Crackling in the well-dried grains,  
Falls it, in the roomy silo,  
On the wood of rafters hollow,  
And as if it would by blowing  
With itself the earth's full weight  
Drag it, in its vi'lent flight,  
Into Heaven's summit growing  
Giant tall!  
Hopeless all  
Yields the man 'fore God's great powers,  
Idle sees he all his labors  
And amazed to ruin going.

All burnt out  
Is the setting,  
Of the savage storm's rough bedding;  
In the empty window op'ning  
Horror's living,  
And high Heaven's clouds are giving  
Looks within.

Just one peek  
To the ashes  
Of his riches  
Doth the man behind him seek—  
His wanderer's staff then gladly seizes.

Whatever fire's rage has cost,  
One solace sweet is e'er unmovéd:  
He counts the heads of his belovéd  
And see! not one dear head is lost.

In the earth it is receivéd  
Full the mould is happ'ly made;  
Will its beauty be perceivéd,  
So be toil and art repaid?  
Should the cast not take?  
Should the moulding break?  
Ah! perhaps, whilst we are hoping,  
Harm is us already gripping.

TO HOLY earth's e'er-dark'ning bosom  
Do we entrust our hands' true deed,  
The sower doth entrust his seed  
And hopes, indeed, that it will blossom  
To bless, as Heaven hath decreed.  
Still costlier the seed we've buried  
With sorrow in the womb of earth  
And hope, that from the coffin carried  
'Twill bloom to fairer fortune forth.

From cathedral,  
Anxious, long,  
Bell is sounding  
Funeral song.  
Earnestly its doleful toll doth carry  
Some new wanderer on the final journey.

Ah! the wife it is, the dear one,  
Ah! it is the faithful mother,  
Whom the swarthy Prince of Shadeland  
Carries off from arm of husband,  
From the group of children dear,  
Whom she blooming to him bare,  
Whom she on her breast so true  
Watched with pleasure as they grew—  
Ah! the bonds of home so giving  
Will forevermore be loose,  
For in shadowland she's living,  
Who was mother of the house,  
For her faithful rule now ceases,  
No more keepeth watch her care,  
Henceforth in the orphaned places  
Rules the foreign, loveless e'er.

Till the Bell be coolly laying,  
Let no stringent work ensue;  
As the bird in leaves is playing,  
May each person goodly do.

Nods the starlit sky,  
Duty's all foreby,  
Hears the lad the vespers sounding,  
For the Master toil's abounding.

BRISKLY hastens he his paces  
Far in forest wild the wand'rer,  
To the lovely cottage-places.  
Bleating homeward draws the sheep herd,  
And the cattle  
Broad-foreheaded, flocks so glossy,  
Come in lowing  
To accustomed stalls they're going.  
Heav'ly in  
Shakes the wagon,  
Harvest-laden,  
Colored brightly  
On sheaves sightly  
Garlands lie,  
And the young folk of the reapers  
Dancing fly.  
Street and market-place grow stiller,  
Round the social flame of lighting  
Gather those in household dwelling,  
And the town gate closes creaking.  
Black bedighted  
All the earth be  
Yet the burgher is affrighted  
Not by night,  
Which the wicked has excited,  
For the watchful law's clear eye keeps sight.

Holy Order, blesséd richly,  
Heaven's daughter, equals has she  
Free and light and glad connected,  
City buildings hath erected,  
Who herein from country dwelling  
The uncivil savage calling,  
Ent'ring into human houses,  
Gentler custom she espouses,  
With the dearest band she's bound us,  
Love for fatherland weaves 'round us.

Thousand busy hands in motion  
Help in cheerful unity,  
And in fiery commotion  
Will all forces public be.  
Master and the men take action  
Under freedom's holy care,  
Each is pleased with his position,  
Scorn for every scoffer share.  
Work's the burgher's decoration,  
Labor's prize is to be blest;

Honor kings by royal station,  
Busy hands *us* honor best.

Peace so gentle,  
Charming concord,  
Tarry, tarry  
Friendly o'er this city be!  
May the day be ne'er appearing,  
When the rugged hordes a-warring  
Through this quiet vale are storming,  
When the heavens,  
Which the evening's blushes pretty  
Paint so fine,  
From the village, from the city  
Wildly burning frightful shine!

Now for me break up the building,  
Its intent is filled a-right,  
That our hearts and eyes be feasting  
On the most successful sight.  
Swing the hammer, swing,  
'Til the mantle spring!  
If the Bell be now awoken,  
Be the frame in pieces broken.

THE MASTER can break up the framing  
With wisen'd hand, at rightful hour,  
But woe, whene'er in brooks a-flaming  
Doth free itself, the glowing ore!  
Blind-raging with the crash of thunder,  
It springs from out the bursted house,  
And as from jaws of hell asunder  
Doth spew its molten ruin out;  
Where senseless powers are commanding,  
There can no structure yet be standing,  
When peoples do themselves set free,  
There can no common welfare be.

Woe, when in womb of cities growing,  
In hush doth pile the fiery match,  
The people, chains from off it throwing,  
Doth its own help so frightful snatch!  
There to the Bell, its rope-cord pulling,  
Rebellion, doth it howling sound  
And, hallowed but for peaceful pealing,  
To violence doth strike aloud.

Liberty, Equality! Men hear sounding,  
The tranquil burgher takes up arms,  
The streets and halls are all abounding,  
And roving, draw the murd'ring swarms;  
Then women to hyenas growing  
Do make with horror jester's art,

Still quiv'ring, panther's teeth employing,  
They rip apart the en'my's heart.  
Naught holy is there more, and cleaving  
Are bonds of pious modesty,  
The good its place to bad is leaving,  
And all the vices govern free.  
To rouse the lion, is dang'rous error,  
And ruinous is the tiger's bite,  
Yet is most terrible the terror  
Of man in his deluded state.  
Woe's them, who heaven's torch of lighting  
Unto the ever-blind do lend!  
It lights him not, 'tis but igniting,  
And land and towns to ash doth rend.

Joy unto me God hath given!  
See there! like a golden star  
From its husk, so blank and even,  
Peeleth out the metal core.  
From the crown to base  
Like the bright sun plays,  
And escutcheons' decoration  
Builder's skill gives commendation.

COME IN! Come in!  
Ye workmen all, do come ye close in,  
That we commence the Bell to christen,  
*Concordia* its name be given,  
To concord, in an intimate communion,  
The loving commons gathers she in union.

And be her purpose thus fulfilled,  
For which the Master did her build:

On high above low earthly living,  
Shall she in heav'n's blue tent unfurl'd,  
Be thunder's neighbor, ever-pending,  
And border on the starry world,  
A single voice from high she raises  
Like constellations' band so bright,  
Which its creator wand'ring praises,  
And leads the wreathéd year a-right.  
Alone to grave, eternal singing  
Her metal mouth be consecrate,  
And hourly with all swiftness winging,  
Shall she be moved by time in flight,  
Her tongue to destiny is lending,  
*Herself* has heart and pity not,  
With nothing but her swing attending  
The game of life's e'er-changing lot.  
And as the ring in ears is passing  
Sent by her mighty sounding play,  
So let her teach, that naught is lasting,  
That all things earthly fade away.

Now with rope's full power bringing  
Rock the Bell from vault with care,  
That she in the realm of ringing  
Rises, in the Heavens' air.  
Pull ye, pull ye, heave!  
She doth move, doth wave.  
Joy be she this city bringing,  
*Peace* be the first chime she's ringing.

—translated by Marianna Wertz

