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ALMA:
AND OTHER POEMS.



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ALMA:

AND OTHER POEMS.

BY

RICHARD CHENEVIX TRENCH.



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NOTICE.

OF these poems, the second, third, and fifth have already appeared in the *Times*. I should also mention that the two last, which on the ground of a certain affinity of subject I have added to the others, are not published for the first time. Inserted, however, in the second edition of a volume of poems, which even in its first edition had but a limited circulation, it is little likely that they will have come into the hands of half a dozen of the purchasers of this little book.

I am indebted to the kindness of Lord Lyttelton for the Greek version of the lines on Alma. As

many of my readers as are Greek scholars will share in the obligation.

I will only add that if any profits should be derived from this publication, they will be devoted to one of the funds in connection with the army, at present being raised.

ITCHENSTOKE,

Dec. 9, 1854.

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WHAT though yet the spirit slumbers,
That should clothe great acts in song,
Stirring but in feeble numbers,
Loosening but a stammering tongue ;

Still, as well my soul presages,
Mightier voices soon will sound,
Which shall ring through all the ages,
While the nations listen round.

For even now the thoughts are waking,
And the deeds are being done,
Deeds and thoughts, the poet's making,
Whence his solemn heart is won.

If Thermopylæ's three hundred,
They who kept the pass so well,—
If at them all time has wondered,
As they fought, and as they fell,

With their deed of duty cast they
Our six hundred in the shade,
When at that same bidding past they
To their closing death-parade?

Let them their due praise inherit,
Those of weaker woman-kind,
Who in times past owned a spirit,
Which has left man's strength behind;

Yet our hearts and hearts' devotion
 . Wait upon that noble train,
Who have crossed the distant ocean
 For a fellowship with pain;

Seeking, as men seek for riches,
 Painful vigils by the bed
Where the maimed and dying stretches
 Aching limbs beside the dead:

And for this great suffering nation
 Sealed those fountains shall not prove,
Those old springs of inspiration,
 Mighty death and mightier love.

But meanwhile, the pauses filling,
 Till that deeper soul be stirred,
Mother-land, thou wilt be willing
 That some fainter notes be heard.

What if thou in bitter mourning
 Dost beside the graves recline
 Of thy lost and unreturning,
 Yet no Rachel's grief is thine.

Stately grief, not wild and tameless,
 Thine, the privileged to see
 Gentle, simple, named and nameless,
 Willing all to die for thee ;

Foremost names in thine old story
 Foremost in these death-rolls shown,
 Heirs no more of others' glory,
 But the makers of their own.

Thy great mother-heart is bleeding,
 Torn and piercèd through and through,
 Post on heavy post succeeding,
 Bearing each some anguish new

Yet the right thy bosom strengthens,
Nought in thee of courage dies,
Though the long sad death-list lengthens,
Ever lengthens in thine eyes.

These are gone; thou nursest others
Of the same heroic breed,
Good as they, their spirits' brothers,
To their hazards to succeed.

Then, while this thy grief's great fashion,
From all weakness far removed,
This thy steadfast solemn passion
By the graves of thy beloved,

Thou wilt let him pass unchidden,
Wilt perchance vouchsafe an ear,
Who too weakly and unbidden
Dares to sound their praises here;

This slight tribute of his bringing
Thou wilt not in scorn put by;
And wilt pardon one for singing,
While so many do and die.

A L M A.

THOUGH till now ungraced in story, scant although
thy waters be,
Alma, roll those waters proudly, proudly roll them to
the sea.

Yesterday unnamed, unhonoured, but to wandering
Tartar known,
Now thou art a voice for ever, to the world's four
corners blown.

In two nations' annals graven, thou art now a death-
less name,
And a star for ever shining in their firmament of
fame.

Many a great and ancient river, crowned with city,
 tower, and shrine,
 Little streamlet, knows no magic, boasts no potency
 like thine;

Cannot shed the light thou sheddest around many a
 living head,
 Cannot lend the light thou lendest to the memories of
 the dead.

Yea, nor all unsoothed their sorrow, who can, proudly
 mourning, say—
 When the first strong burst of anguish shall have
 wept itself away—

‘He has past from us, the loved one; but he sleeps
 with them that died
 By the Alma, at the winning of that terrible hill-
 side.’

Yes, and in the days far onward, when we all are cold
as those,

Who beneath thy vines and willows on their hero-beds
repose,

Thou on England's banners blazoned with the famous
fields of old,

Shalt, where other fields are winning, wave above the
brave and bold:

And our sons unborn shall nerve them for some great
deed to be done,

By that twentieth of September, when the Alma's
heights were won.

O thou river! dear for ever to the gallant, to the free,
Alma, roll thy waters proudly, proudly roll them to
the sea.

IDEM GRÆCE REDDITUM.

Παῦρά περ ἀγνώτων, Ἄλμη, βάλε νάματα κρηνῶν
γαυριοῶσ' ἱεροῖο ποτὶ ῥοδὸν Ὠκεανοῖο.

ἦ πω Σαυροματαῖσι μόνον νομάδεσσι συνήθης,
νῦν ἰαχεῖς ἐσάει μακρῆς ἐπὶ πείρατα γαίης,

ἄστεροῦν στίλβουσα δυοῖν ἐν μνήμασιν ἔθνοϊν.

πολλὰ μάλ' ἀρχαίων ποτάμων περίσεμνα ρεέθρα,

εὐστεφάνων νηοῖσι καὶ ἄστεσι πυργοφόροισι·

σὸν δ' ὑπὲρ ὄρτο κλέος, ζώντων μέγ' ἄγαλμα, θανόντων

φῶς ἐπιτυμβίδιον· οὐδ' ἔκλαυσέν τις ἄθελκτον

κῆδος, ἐπεὶ πρώτης νέα δάκρυα λῆξεν ἀνίης,

“ ὤλετο τηλύγετος, μετὰ δ' ἄλλων ὄλβιος εὔδει

ἥρώων, Ἄλμης φοβερὸν κατὰ πρῶνα παλαίσας.”

καὶ ποτ', ἐπὴν ἡμᾶς περιτελλομένων ἐνιαύτων

ἶς κρυεροῦ μάρψῃ θανάτου σὺν τοῖσδε λαχοῦσιν

οἰσύνῃν ὑπὸ φυλλάδ', ἐν ἔρκεσιν ἀμπελεώνων,

κυδαλίμου μνημεῖα τάφου, σὸν τούνομ' ὕπερθεν,
 ἔνθαδ' ὅπου προγόνων τὰ παλαιὰ διαπρέπει ἄθλα
 σήμασι τηλεφανές, ἄλλους ἄλλαις ἐπὶ νικαῖς
 θαρσυνεῖ ἥρωας, τούτων εὖ μνήμονας ἔργων.
 ὦ μέγ' ἐλευθερίας, ἀρετῆς μέγα χάρμα θεορτοῦ,
 γαυριοῶσ' αἶξον ἐπὶ ῥοὸν Ὀκεανοῖο.

AFTER THE BATTLE.

WE crowned the hard-won heights at length,
Baptized in flame and fire;
We saw the foeman's sullen strength,
That grimly made retire;

Saw close at hand, then saw more far
Beneath the battle smoke
The ridges of his shattered war,
That broke and ever broke.

But one, an English household's pride,
Dear many ways to me,
Who climbed that death-path by my side,
I sought, but could not see.

Last seen, what time our foremost rank

That iron tempest tore ;

He touched, he scaled the rampart bank,

Seen then, and seen no more.

One friend to aid, I measured back

With him that pathway dread ;

No fear to wander from our track,

Its waymarks English dead.

Light thickened ; but our search was crowned,

As we too well divined ;

And after briefest quest we found

What we most feared to find.

His bosom with one death-shot riven,

The warrior boy lay low ;

His face was turned unto the heaven,

His feet unto the foe.

As he had fall'n upon the plain,
 Inviolatè he lay ;
No ruffian spoiler's hand profane
 Had touchèd that noble clay.

And precious things he still retainèd,
 Which by one distant hearth,
Loved tokens of the loved, had gainèd
 A worth beyond all worth.

I treasurèd these for them who yet
 Knew not their mighty woe ;
I softly sealèd his eyes, and set
 One kiss upon his brow.

A decent grave we scoopèd him, where
 Less thickly lay the dead,
And decently composèd him there
 Within that narrow bed.

O theme for manhood's bitter tears,
 The beauty and the bloom
 Of less than twenty summer years
 Shut in that darksome tomb!

Of soldier sire the soldier son—
 Life's honoured eventide
 One lives to close in England, one
 In maiden battle died;

And they that should have been the mourned,
 The mourners' parts obtain:
 Such thoughts were ours, as we returned
 To earth its earth again.

Brief words we read of faith and prayer
 Beside that hasty grave;
 Then turned away, and left him there,
 The gentle and the brave;

I calling back with thankful heart,
 With thoughts to peace allied,
Hours when we two had knelt apart
 Upon the lone hill-side :

And, comforted, I praised the grace,
 Which him had led to be
An early seeker of that face,
 Which he should early see.

BALAKLAVA.

MANY a deed of faithful daring may obtain no
record here,

Wrought where none could see or note it, save the
one Almighty Seer.

Many a deed, awhile remembered, out of memory
needs must fall,

Covered, as the years roll onward, by oblivion's
creeping pall :

But there are which never never to oblivion can give
room,

Till in flame earth's records perish, till the thunder-
peal of doom.

And of these through all the ages married to im-
 mortal fame,
 One is linked, and linked for ever, Balaklava, with
 thy name ;

With thine armies three that wond'ring stood at gaze
 and held their breath,
 With thy fatal lists of honour, and thy tournament of
 death.

Oh our brothers that are sleeping, weary with your
 great day's strife,
 On that bleak Crimean headland, noble prodigals of
 life,

Eyes which ne'er beheld you living, these have dearly
 mourned you dead,
 All your squandered wealth of valour, all the lavish
 blood ye shed.

And in our eyes tears are springing ; but we bid
 them back again ;

None shall say, to see us weeping, that we hold your
 offering vain ;

That for nothing, in our sentence, did that holocaust
 arise,

With a battle-field for altar, and with you for
 sacrifice.

Not for nought ; to more than warriors armed as you
 for mortal fray,

Unto each that in life's battle waits his Captain's
 word ye say—

“What by duty's voice is bidden, there where duty's
 star may guide,

Thither follow, that accomplish, whatsoever else
 betide.”

This ye taught ; and this your lesson solemnly in
blood ye sealed :

Heroes, martyrs, are the harvest Balaklava's heights
shall yield.

'H TAN, 'H 'EIII TAN.

“ **T**HIS, or on this;”—“Bring home with thee this
shield,

Or be thou, dead, upon this shield brought home”—

So spake the Spartan mother to the son

Whom her own hands had armed. Oh strong of heart!

Yet know I of a fairer strength than this—

Strength linked with weakness, steeped in tears and
fears,

And tenderness of trembling womanhood;

But true as hers to duty's perfect law.

And such is theirs, who in our England now,
Wives, sisters, mothers, watch by day, by night,

In many a cottage, many a stately hall,

For those dread posts, too slow, too swift, that haste

O'er land and sea, the messengers of doom ;
Theirs, who ten thousand times would rather hear
Of loved forms stretched upon the bloody sod,
All cold and stark, but with the debt they owed
To that dear land that bore them duly paid,
Than look to enfold them in fond arms again,
By aught in honour's or in peril's path
Unduly shunned, reserved for that embrace.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER THE FIFTH,

1854.

CHEERLY with us that great November morn
Rose, as I trace its features in my mind;

A day that in the lap of winter born,

Yet told of autumn scarcely left behind.

And we by many a hearth in all the land,

Whom quiet sleep had lapped the calm night
through,

Changed greetings, lip with lip, and hand to hand,

Old greetings, but which love makes ever new.

Then, as the day brought with it sweet release
 From this world's care, with timely feet we trod
 The customary paths of blessed peace,
 We worshipped in the temples of our God;

And when the sun had travelled his brief arc,
 Drew round our hearths again in thankful ease;
 With pleasant light we chased away the dark,
 We sat at eve with children round our knees.

So fared this day with us;—but how with you?
 What, gallant hosts of England, was your cheer,
 Who numbered hearts as gentle and as true
 As any kneeling at our altars here?

From cheerless watches on the cold dank ground
 Startled, ye felt a foe on every side;
 With mist and gloom and deaths encompassed round,
 With even to perish in the light denied.

And that same season of our genial ease,
It was your very agony of strife;
While each of those our golden moments sees
With you the ebbing of some noble life.

'Mid dark ravines, by precipices vast,
Did there and here your dreadful conflict sway:
No Sabbath day's light work to quell at last
The fearful odds of that unequal fray.

Oh "hope" of England, only not "forlorn,"
Because ye never your own hope resigned,
But in worst case, beleaguered, overborne,
Did help in God and in your own selves find;

We greet you o'er the waves, as from this time
Men, to the meanest and the least of whom,
In reverence of fortitude sublime,
We would rise up, and yield respectful room:

We greet you o'er the waves, nor fear to say,
Our Sabbath setting side by side with yours,
Yours was the better and far nobler day,
And days like it have made that ours endures.

THE UNFORGOTTEN.

WHOM for thy race of heroes wilt thou own,
And, England, who shall be thy joy, thy pride?
As thou art just, oh then not those alone
Who nobly conquering lived, or conquering died.

Them also in thy roll of heroes write,
For well they earned what best thou canst bestow,
Who being girt and arméd for the fight,
Yielded their arms, but to no mortal foe.

Far off they pined on fever-stricken coast,
Or sunk in sudden arms of painful death,
And faces which their eyes desired the most,
They saw not, as they drew their parting breath.

Sad doom, to know a mighty work in hand,
Which shall from all the ages honour win ;
Upon the threshold of this work to stand,
Arrested there, while others enter in.

And this was theirs ; they saw their fellows bound
To fields of fame, which they might never share ;
And all the while within their own hearts found
A strength that was not less, to do and dare ;

But knew that never never with their peers
They should salute some great day's glorious close,
The shout of triumph ringing in their ears,
The light of battle shining on their brows.

Sad doom;—yet say not Heaven to them assigned
A lot from all of glory quite estranged;
Albeit the laurel which they hoped to bind
About their brows for cypress wreath was changed.

Heaven gave to them a glory stern, austere,
A glory of all earthly glory shorn;
With firm heart to accept fate's gift severe,
Bravely to bear the thing that must be borne;

To see such visions fade and turn to nought,
And in this saddest issue to consent;
If only the great work be duly wrought,
That others should accomplish it, content.

Then as thou wouldst thyself continue great,
Keep a true eye for what is great indeed;
Nor know it only in its lofty state
And victor's robes, but in its lowliest weed.

And now, and when this dreadful work is done,
England, be these too thy delight and pride ;
Wear them as near thy heart as any one
Of all who conquering lived, or conquering died.

SONNETS.

I.

TOGETHER lay them in one common grave,
These noble sons of England and of France,
Who side by side did yesterday advance,
And to their foes a dear example gave
Of what a freeman's price beyond a slave.
Theirs was a noble fellowship in life,
They breathed their lives out in one glorious strife ;
Then let them lie, the brave beside the brave.
And sleep with them, for evermore to cease,
Sleep with the sleep which no awaking knows,
The long contention of eight hundred years :
While from their ashes the fair tree of peace
Springs, under which two nations may repose
In love, which ancient discord more endears.

II.

FROM what of passion and of earthly pride,
Presumptuous confidence and glory vain,
Will cleave to justest cause which men sustain,
Till Thou their cause and them hast purified,
From what too much of these Thou hast espied
In us, oh! cleanse us from this dangerous leaven,
At any cost oh! purge us, righteous Heaven,
Though we herein be sorely searched and tried.
So, purified from these, may we fulfil,
Upon thy strength relying, not our own,
The dreadful sentence of thy righteous will;
And this by us unto the nations shown,
May burn no incense to our drag, but still
All honour give to Thee, and Thee alone.

III.

YES, let us own it in confession free,
That when we girt ourselves to quell the wrong,
We deemed it not so giant-like and strong,
But it with our slight effort thought to see
Pushed from its base; yea, almost deemed that we,
Champions of right, might be excused the price
Of pain, and loss, and large self-sacrifice,
Set on great things by Heaven's unchanged decree.
What if this work's great hardness was concealed
From us, until so far upon our way
That no escape remained us, no retreat:
Lest, being at an earlier hour revealed,
We might have shrunk too weakly from the heat,
And shunned the burden of this fiery day?

IV.

TO _____

IN huts and palaces are mourners found,
 As on the far-off fields of death in turn
 Leap the dread lots from fortune's fatal urn :
 And those not yet in cords of sorrow bound,
 But listening everywhere the doleful sound
 Of others' griefs, still ask, Who next shall mourn,
 Of brother, son, or dearer yet forlorn ?
 To whom shall next the cup of pain go round ?
 We know not ; if anon to thee and me,
 Let not our hearts then chide us that we heard
 Of pangs, which other souls did search and try,
 To this their anguish yielding, it might be,
 The trivial offering of a passing sigh,
 While all our deeper heart remained unstirred.

LINES WRITTEN ON THE FIRST TIDINGS
OF THE CABUL MASSACRES.

JANUARY, 1842.

WE sat our peaceful hearths beside,
 Within our temples hushed and wide
We worshipped without fear:
With solemn rite, with festal blaze,
We welcomed in the earliest days
 Of this new-coming year.

O ye that died, brave hearts and true,
How in those days it fared with you
 We did not then surmise;
That bloody rout, which still doth seem
The phantasm of an horrid dream,
 Was hidden from our eyes:

But haunts us now by day and night
The vision of that ghastly flight,
 Its shapes of haggard fear :
While still from many a mourning home
The wails of lamentation come,
 And fill our saddened ear.

O England, bleeding at thy heart
For thy lost sons, a solemn part
 Doth Heaven to thee assign.
High wisdom hast thou need to ask,
For vengeance is a fearful task,
 And yet that task is thine.

Oh then fulfil it, not in pride,
Nor aught to passionate hate allied ;
 But know thyself to be
The justicer of righteous Heaven ;
That unto thee a work is given,
 A burden laid on thee.

So thine own heart from guilty stains
First cleanse, and then, for what remains,
 That do with all thy might;
That with no faltering hand fulfil,
With no misgiving heart or will,
 As dubious of the right;

That do, not answering wrong for wrong,
But witnessing that truth is strong,
 And, outraged, bringeth woe.
'Tis this by lessons sad and stern,
To men who no way else would learn
 Which thou art set to show.

MOOLTAN.

“A company of Moolraj’s Muzubees, or outcasts turned Sikhs, led on the mob. It was an appalling sight; and Sirdar Khan Sing begged of Mr. Agnew to be allowed to wave a sheet, and sue for mercy. Weak in body from loss of blood, Agnew’s heart failed him not. He replied, ‘The time for mercy is gone; let none be asked for. They can kill us two if they like, but we are not the last of the English; *thousands of Englishmen will come down here when we are gone, and annihilate Moolraj, and his soldiers, and his fort!*’ The crowd now rushed in with horrible shouts; made Khan Sing prisoner, and pushing aside the servants with the butts of their muskets, surrounded the two wounded officers. Lieutenant Anderson, from the first, had been too much wounded even to move; and now Mr. Agnew was sitting by his bedside, holding his hand, and talking in English, Doubtless, they were bidding each other farewell for all time Anderson was hacked to death with swords, and afterwards the two bodies were dragged outside, and slashed and insulted by the crowd, then left all night under the sky.”—MAJOR EDWARDES’ *Year on the Punjaub Frontier*, vol. ii. p. 58.

“The besieging army did not march away to other fields without performing its last melancholy duty to the memory of Agnew and Anderson. The bodies of those officers were carefully—I may say affectionately—removed from the careless grave where they lay side by side; and, wrapped in Cashmere

shawls, (with a vain but natural desire to obliterate all traces of neglect,) were borne by the soldiers of the 1st Bombay Fusiliers (Anderson's own regiment) to an honoured resting-place on the summit of Moolraj's citadel. By what way borne? Through the gate where they had been first assaulted? Oh, no! through the broad and sloping breach, which had been made by the British guns in the walls of the rebellious fortress of Mooltan."—*The Same*, p. 588.

BEAR them gently, bear them duly up the broad
and sloping breach
Of this torn and shattered city, till their resting-
place they reach.

In the costly cashmeres folded, on the stronghold's
topmost crown,
In the place of foremost honour, lay these noble relics
down.

Here repose, for this is meetest, ye who here breathed
out your life,
Ah! in no triumphant battle, but beneath the
assassin's knife.

Hither, bearing England's message, bringing England's
just command,
Under England's ægis, came ye to the chieftain of the
land :

In these streets beset and wounded, hardly borne with
life away,
Faint, and bleeding, and forsaken, in your helplessness
ye lay.

But the wolves that once have tasted blood, will ravin
still for more ;
From the infuriate city rises high the wild and savage
roar.

Near and nearer grows the tumult of the gathering
murderous crew ;
Tremble round those helpless couches an unarmed but
faithful few :

“ Profitless is all resistance: let us then this white flag
wave,
Ere it be too late, disdain not mercy at their hands to
crave.”

But to no unworthy pleading would descend that
noble twain:

“ Nay, for mercy sue not; ask not what to ask from
these were vain.

“ We are two, betrayed and lonely; human help or
hope is none;
Yet, O friends, be sure that England owns beside us
many a son.

“ They may slay us; in our places multitudes will here
be found,
Strong to hurl this guilty city with its murderers to
the ground.

“ Yea, who stone by stone would tear it from its deep
foundations strong,
Rather than to leave unpunished them that wrought
this treacherous wrong.”

Other words they changed between them, which none
else could understand,
Accents of our native English, brothers grasping hand
in hand.

So they died, the gallant hearted! so from earth their
spirits past,
Uttering words of lofty comfort each to each unto the
last;

And we heed, but little heeded their true spirits far
away,
All of wrong and coward outrage, heaped on the
unfeeling clay.

—Lo! a few short moons have vanished, and the
promised ones appear, .

England's pledged and promised thousands, England's
multitudes are here.

Flame around the blood-stained ramparts swiftest
messengers of death,

Girdling with a fiery girdle, blasting with a fiery
breath;

Ceasing not, till choked with corpses low is laid the
murderers' hold,

And in his last lair the tiger toils of righteous wrath
enfold.

Well, oh well—ye have not failed them who on
England's truth relied,

Who on England's name and honour did in that dread
hour confide:

Now one last dear duty render to the faithful and the
brave,

What they left of earth behind them rescuing for a
worthier grave.

Oh then, bear them, hosts of England, up the broad
and sloping breach

Of this torn and shattered city, till their resting-place
they reach.

In the costly cashmeres folded, on the rampart's top-
most crown,

In the place of foremost honour, lay these noble relics
down.

THE END.

