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THE BOYS' BROWNING



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THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

THE BOYS' BROWNING

POEMS OF ACTION AND INCIDENT
COMPILED FOR THE USE OF
YOUNG PEOPLE

FROM THE WORKS OF
ROBERT BROWNING

Illustrated



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THE BOYS' BROWNING.

THE PIED PIPER OF HAMELIN.

A CHILD'S STORY.

I.

HAMELIN Town's in Brunswick,
By famous Hanover city ;
The river Weser, deep and wide,
Washes its wall on the southern side ;
A pleasanter spot you never spied ;
But, when begins my ditty,
Almost five hundred years ago,
To see the townsfolk suffer so
From vermin, was a pity.

II.

Rats !
They fought the dogs and killed the cats,
And bit the babies in the cradles,
And ate the cheeses out of the vats,
And licked the soup from the cooks' own
ladles,

Split open the kegs of salted sprats,
 Made nests inside men's Sunday hats,
 And even spoiled the women's chats
 By drowning their speaking
 With shrieking and squeaking
 In fifty different sharps and flats.

III.

At last the people in a body
 To the Town Hall came flocking :
 " 'Tis clear," cried they, " our Mayor's a
 noddy ;
 And as for our Corporation — shocking
 To think we buy gowns lined with ermine
 For dolts that can't or won't determine
 What's best to rid us of our vermin !
 You hope, because you're old and obese,
 To find in the furry civic robe ease ?
 Rouse up, sirs ! Give your brains a racking
 To find the remedy we're lacking,
 Or, sure as fate, we'll send you packing ! "
 At this the Mayor and Corporation
 Quaked with a mighty consternation.

IV.

An hour they sat in council ;
 At length the Mayor broke silence :
 " For a guilder I'd my ermine gown sell,
 I wish I were a mile hence !

It's easy to bid one rack one's brain —
I'm sure my poor head aches again,
I've scratched it so, and all in vain.
Oh, for a trap, a trap, a trap!"

Just as he said this, what should hap
At the chamber-door but a gentle tap?
"Bless us," cried the Mayor, "what's that?"
(With the Corporation as he sat,
Looking little though wondrous fat;
Nor brighter was his eye, nor moister
Than a too-long-opened oyster,
Save when at noon his paunch grew mutinous
For a plate of turtle green and glutinous)
"Only a scraping of shoes on the mat?
Anything like the sound of a rat
Makes my heart go pit-a-pat!"

v.

"Come in!" — the Mayor cried, looking
bigger:
And in did come the strangest figure!
His queer long coat from heel to head
Was half of yellow and half of red,
And he himself was tall and thin,
With sharp blue eyes, each like a pin,
And light loose hair, yet swarthy skin,
No tuft on cheek nor beard on chin,
But lips where smiles went out and in;
There was no guessing his kith and kin:

And nobody could enough admire
The tall man and his quaint attire.
Quoth one: "It's as my great-grandsire,
Starting up at the Trump of Doom's tone,
Had walked this way from his painted
tombstone!"

VI.

He advanced to the council-table:
And, "Please your honours," said he, "I'm
able,
By means of a secret charm, to draw
All creatures living beneath the sun,
That creep or swim or fly or run,
After me so as you never saw!
And I chiefly use my charm
On creatures that do people harm,
The mole and toad and newt and viper;
And people call me the Pied Piper."
(And here they noticed round his neck
A scarf of red and yellow stripe,
To match with his coat of the self-same
cheque;
And at the scarf's end hung a pipe;
And his fingers, they noticed, were ever
straying
As if impatient to be playing
Upon this pipe, as low it dangled
Over his vesture so old-fangled.)

“ Yet,” said he, “ poor piper as I am,
In Tartary I freed the Cham,
Last June, from his huge swarms of gnats ;
I eased in Asia the Nizam
Of a monstrous brood of vampire-bats :
And as for what your brain bewilders,
If I can rid your town of rats
Will you give me a thousand guilders ? ”
“ One ? fifty thousand ! ” — was the exclamation
Of the astonished Mayor and Corporation.

VII.

Into the street the Piper stept,
Smiling first a little smile,
As if he knew what magic slept
In his quiet pipe the while ;
Then, like a musical adept,
To blow the pipe his lips he wrinkled,
And green and blue his sharp eyes twinkled,
Like a candle-flame where salt is sprinkled ;
And ere three shrill notes the pipe uttered,
You heard as if an army muttered ;
And the muttering grew to a grumbling ;
And the grumbling grew to a mighty rumbling ;
And out of the houses the rats came tumbling.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats, brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, gray rats, tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives —
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street he piped advancing,
And step for step they followed dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser,
Wherein all plunged and perished!
— Save one who, stout as Julius Cæsar,
Swam across and lived to carry
(As he, the manuscript he cherished)
To Rat-land home his commentary:
Which was, “ At the first shrill notes of
the pipe,
I heard a sound as of scraping tripe,
And putting apples, wondrous ripe,
Into a cider-press's gripe:
And a moving away of pickle-tub-boards,
And a leaving ajar of conserve-cupboards,
And a drawing the corks of train-oil-flasks,
And a breaking the hoops of butter-casks:
And it seemed as if a voice
(Sweeter far than by harp or by psaltery
Is breathed) called out, ‘ Oh, rats, rejoice!
The world is grown to one vast drysaltery!

So munch on, crunch on, take your muncheon,
Breakfast, supper, dinner, luncheon !'
And just as a bulky sugar-puncheon,
All ready staved, like a great sun shone
Glorious scarce an inch before me,
Just as methought it said, ' Come, bore me !'
— I found the Weser rolling o'er me."

VIII.

You should have heard the Hamelin people
Ringing the bells till they rocked the steeple.
" Go," cried the Mayor, " and get long poles,
Poke out the nests and block up the holes !
Consult with carpenters and builders,
And leave in our town not even a trace
Of the rats !" — when suddenly, up the face
Of the Piper perked in the market-place,
With a, " First, if you please, my thousand
guilders !"

IX.

A thousand guilders ! The Mayor looked blue ;
So did the Corporation, too.
For council dinners made rare havoc
With Claret, Moselle, Vin-de-Grave, Hoek ;
And half the money would replenish
Their cellar's biggest butt with Rhenish.
To pay this sum to a wandering fellow
With a gypsy coat of red and yellow !

"Beside," quoth the Mayor with a knowing
 wink,
 "Our business was done at the river's brink;
 We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
 And what's dead can't come to life, I think.
 So, friend, we're not the folks to shrink
 From the duty of giving you something for drink,
 And a matter of money to put in your poke;
 But as for the guilders, what we spoke
 Of them, as you very well know, was in joke.
 Beside, our losses have made us thrifty.
 A thousand guilders! Come, take fifty!"

X.

The Piper's face fell, and he cried,
 "No trifling! I can't wait, beside!
 I've promised to visit by dinner-time
 Bagdat, and accept the prime
 Of the Head-Cook's pottage, all he's rich in,
 For having left, in the Caliph's kitchen,
 Of a nest of scorpions no survivor:
 With him I proved no bargain-driver,
 With you, don't think I'll bate a stiver!
 And folks who put me in a passion
 May find me pipe after another fashion."

XI.

"How?" cried the Mayor, "d'ye think I brook
 Being worse treated than a Cook?"

Insulted by a lazy ribald
With idle pipe and vesture piebald ?
You threaten us, fellow ? Do your worst,
Blow your pipe there till you burst ! ”

XII.

Once more he stept into the street,
And to his lips again
Laid his long pipe of smooth straight cane ;
And ere he blew three notes (such sweet
Soft notes as yet musician's cunning
Never gave the enraptured air)
There was a rustling that seemed like a
bustling
Of merry crowds justling at pitching and
hustling ;
Small feet were pattering, wooden shoes clat-
tering,
Little hands clapping and little tongues chat-
tering,
And, like fowls in a farmyard when barley
is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily after
The wonderful music with shouting and
laughter.

XIII.

The Mayor was dumb, and the Council stood
As if they were changed into blocks of wood,
Unable to move a step, or cry
To the children merrily skipping by,
— Could only follow with the eye
That joyous crowd at the Piper's back.
But how the Mayor was on the rack,
And the wretched Council's bosoms beat,
As the Piper turned from the High Street
To where the Weser rolled its waters
Right in the way of their sons and daughters!
However, he turned from South to West,
And to Koppelberg Hill his steps addressed,
And after him the children pressed;
Great was the joy in every breast.
“ He never can cross that mighty top!
He's forced to let the piping drop,
And we shall see our children stop!”
When, lo, as they reached the mountainside,
A wondrous portal opened wide,
As if a cavern was suddenly hollowed;
And the Piper advanced and the children
followed,
And when all were in to the very last,
The door in the mountainside shut fast.
Did I say, all? No! One was lame,
And could not dance the whole of the way;

And in after years, if you would blame
His sadness, he was used to say, —
“ It’s dull in our town since my playmates
left !

I can’t forget that I’m bereft
Of all the pleasant sights they see,
Which the Piper also promised me.
For he led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit-trees grew
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange and new ;
The sparrows were brighter than peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our fallow deer,
And honey-bees had lost their stings,
And horses were born with eagles’ wings :
And just as I became assured
My lame foot would be speedily cured,
The music stopped and I stood still,
And found myself outside the hill,
Left alone against my will,
To go now limping as before,
And never hear of that country more ! ”

XIV.

Alas, alas for Hamelin !

There came into many a burgher’s pate
A text which says that heaven’s gate
Opes to the rich at as easy rate

As the needle's eye takes a camel in!
The Mayor sent East, West, North, and
 South,
To offer the Piper, by word of mouth,
 Wherever it was men's lot to find him,
Silver and gold to his heart's content,
If he'd only return the way he went,
 And bring the children behind him.
But when they saw 'twas a lost endeavour,
And Piper and dancers were gone for ever,
They made a decree that lawyers never
 Should think their records dated duly
If, after the day of the month and year,
These words did not as well appear,
"And so long after what happened here
 On the Twenty-second of July,
Thirteen hundred and seventy-six:"
And the better in memory to fix
The place of the children's last retreat,
They called it, the Pied Piper's Street—
Where any one playing on pipe or tabour
Was sure for the future to lose his labour.
Nor suffered they hostelry or tavern
 To shock with mirth a street so solemn;
But opposite the place of the cavern
 They wrote the story on a column,
And on the great church-window painted
The same, to make the world acquainted
How their children were stolen away,

And there it stands to this very day.
And I must not omit to say
That in Transylvania there's a tribe
Of alien people who ascribe
The outlandish ways and dress
On which their neighbours lay such stress,
To their fathers and mothers having risen
Out of some subterraneous prison
Into which they were trepanned
Long time ago in a mighty band
Out of Hamelin town in Brunswick land,
But how or why, they don't understand.

xv.

So, Willy, let me and you be wipers
Of scores out with all men — especially
pipers!
And, whether they pipe us free fróm rats
or fróm mice,
If we've promised them aught, let us keep
our promise!

HERVÉ RIEL.

I.

ON the sea and at the Hogue, sixteen hundred ninety-
two,

Did the English fight the French, — woe to France!
And, the thirty-first of May, helter-skelter through
the blue,

Like a crowd of frightened porpoises a shoal of sharks
pursue,

Came crowding ship on ship to Saint Malo on the
Rance,

With the English fleet in view.

II.

'Twas the squadron that escaped, with the victor in
full chase;

First and foremost of the drove, in his great ship,
Damfreville;

Close on him fled, great and small,

Twenty-two good ships in all;

And they signalled to the place

“ Help the winners of a race!

Get us guidance, give us harbour, take us quick —
or, quicker still,

Here's the English can and will!”

III.

Then the pilots of the place put out brisk and leapt
on board ;

“ Why, what hope or chance have ships like these
to pass ? ” laughed they :

“ Rocks to starboard, rocks to port, all the passage
scarred and scored,

Shall the *Formidable* here with her twelve and eighty
guns

Think to make the river-mouth by the single nar-
row way,

Trust to enter where 'tis ticklish for a craft of twenty
tons,

And with flow at full beside ?

Now, 'tis slackest ebb of tide.

Reach the mooring ? Rather say,

While rock stands or water runs,

Not a ship will leave the bay ! ”

IV.

Then was called a council straight.

Brief and bitter the debate :

“ Here's the English at our heels ; would you have
them take in tow

All that's left us of the fleet, linked together stern
and bow,

For a prize to Plymouth Sound ?

Better run the ships aground ! ”

(Ended Damfreville his speech.)

“Not a minute more to wait!

Let the Captains all and each

Shove ashore, then blow up, burn the vessels on
the beach!

France must undergo her fate.

v.

“Give the word!” But no such word

Was ever spoke or heard;

For up stood, for out stepped, for in struck amid all
these

—A Captain? A Lieutenant? A Mate — first,
second, third?

No such man of mark, and meet

With his betters to compete!

But a simple Breton sailor pressed by Tourville for
the fleet,

A poor coasting-pilot he, Hervé Riel the Croisickese.

vi.

And “What mockery or malice have we here?” cries
Hervé Riel:

“Are you mad, you Malouins? Are you cowards,
fools, or rogues?

Talk to me of rocks and shoals, me who took the
soundings, tell

On my fingers every bank, every shallow, every swell
’Twixt the offing here and Grève where the river
disembogues?

Are you bought by English gold? Is it love the
lying's for?

Morn and eve, night and day,

Have I piloted your bay,

Entered free and anchored fast at the foot of Solidor.

Burn the fleet and ruin France? That were worse
than fifty Hognes!

Sirs, they know I speak the truth! Sirs, believe
me there's a way!

Only let me lead the line,

Have the biggest ship to steer,

Get this *Formidable* clear,

Make the others follow mine,

And I lead them, most and least, by a passage I know
well,

Right to Solidor past Grève,

And there lay them safe and sound;

And if one ship misbehave,

— Keel so much as grate the ground,

Why, I've nothing but my life, — here's my head!"
cries Hervé Riel.

VII.

Not a minute more to wait.

"Steer us in, then, small and great!

Take the helm, lead the line, save the squadron!"
cried its chief.

Captains, give the sailor place!

He is Admiral, in brief.

Still the north wind, by God's grace!
 See the noble fellow's face
 As the big ship, with a bound,
 Clears the entry like a hound,
 Keeps the passage as its inch of way were the wide
 sea's profound!
 See, safe through shoal and rock,
 How they follow in a flock,
 Not a ship that misbehaves, not a keel that grates the
 ground,
 Not a spar that comes to grief!
 The peril, see, is past,
 All are harboured to the last,
 And just as Hervé Riel hollas "Anchor!" — sure as
 fate,
 Up the English come — too late!

VIII.

So, the storm subsides to calm:
 They see the green trees wave
 On the heights o'erlooking Grève.
 Hearts that bled are stanch'd with balm.
 "Just our rapture to enhance,
 Let the English rake the bay,
 Gnash their teeth and glare askance
 As they cannonade away!
 'Neath rampired Solidor pleasant riding on the Rance!"
 How hope succeeds despair on each Captain's counte-
 nance!

Out burst all with one accord,
 “This is Paradise for Hell!
 Let France, let France’s King
 Thank the man that did the thing!”
 What a shout, and all one word,
 “Hervé Riel!”
 As he stepped in front once more,
 Not a symptom of surprise
 In the frank blue Breton eyes,
 Just the same man as before.

IX.

Then said Damfreville, “My friend,
 I must speak out at the end,
 Though I find the speaking hard.
 Praise is deeper than the lips :
 You have saved the King his ships,
 You must name your own reward.
 ’Faith, our sun was near eclipse!
 Demand whate’er you will,
 France remains your debtor still.
 Ask to heart’s content and have! or my name’s not
 Damfreville.”

X.

Then a beam of fun outbroke
 On the bearded mouth that spoke,
 As the honest heart laughed through
 Those frank eyes of Breton blue :
 “Since I needs must say my say,

Since on board the duty's done,
 And from Malo Roads to Croisic Point, what is it
 but a run? —
 Since 'tis ask and have, I may —
 Since the others go ashore —
 Come! A good whole holiday!
 Leave to go and see my wife, whom I call the Belle
 Aurore!"
 That he asked and that he got, — nothing more.

XI.

Name and deed alike are lost:
 Not a pillar nor a post
 In his Croisic keeps alive the feat as it befell;
 Not a head in white and black
 On a single fishing-smack,
 In memory of the man but for whom had gone to wrack
 All that France saved from the fight whence Eng-
 land bore the bell.
 Go to Paris: rank on rank
 Search the heroes flung pell-mell
 On the Louvre, face and flank!
 You shall look long enough ere you come to Hervé
 Riel.
 So, for better and for worse,
 Hervé Riel, accept my verse!
 In my verse, Hervé Riel, do thou once more
 Save the squadron, honour France, love thy wife the
 Belle Aurore!



“ LEAVE TO GO AND SEE MY WIFE, WHOM I CALL THE
BELLE AURORE.”

CAVALIER TUNES.

I. MARCHING ALONG.

KENTISH Sir Byng stood for his King,
 Bidding the crop-headed Parliament swing :
 And, pressing a troop unable to stoop
 And see the rogues flourish and honest folk droop,
 Marched them along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

God for King Charles! Pym and such carles
 To the Devil that prompts 'em their treasonous
 parles!
 Cavaliers, up! Lips from the cup,
 Hands from the pasty, nor bite take nor sup
 Till you're —

CHORUS. — Marching along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song.

Hampden to hell, and his obsequies' knell.
 Serve Hazelrig, Fiennes, and young Harry as well!
 England, good cheer! Rupert is near!
 Kentish and loyalists, keep we not here,

CHO. — Marching along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song?

Then, God for King Charles! Pym and his snarls
 To the Devil that pricks on such pestilent carles!
 Hold by the right, you double your might;
 So, onward to Nottingham, fresh for the fight,

CHO. — March we along, fifty-score strong,
 Great-hearted gentlemen, singing this song!

II. GIVE A ROUSE.

King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!

Who gave me the goods that went since?
 Who raised me the house that sank once?
 Who helped me to gold I spent since?
 Who found me in wine you drank once?

CHO. — King Charles, and who'll do him right now?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now?
 Give a rouse: here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles!

To whom used my boy George quaff else,
 By the old fool's side that begot him?
 For whom did he cheer and laugh else,
 While Noll's damned troopers shot him?

CHO. — King Charles, and who'll do him right now ?
 King Charles, and who's ripe for fight now ?
 Give a rouse : here's, in hell's despite now,
 King Charles !

III. BOOT AND SADDLE.

Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !
 Rescue my castle before the hot day
 Brightens to blue from its silvery gray.

CHO. — Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !”

Ride past the suburbs, asleep as you'd say ;
 Many's the friend there, will listen and pray
 “ God's luck to gallants that strike up the lay —

CHO. — “ Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !”

Forty miles off, like a roebuck at bay,
 Flouts Castle Brancepeth the Roundheads' array :
 Who laughs, “ Good fellows ere this, by my fay,

CHO. — “ Boot, saddle, to horse, and away !”

Who ? My wife Gertrude ; that, honest and gay,
 Laughs when you talk of surrendering, “ Nay !
 I've better counsellors ; what counsel they ?

CHO. — “ Boot, saddle, to horse and away !”

“HOW THEY BROUGHT THE GOOD NEWS
FROM GHENT TO AIX.”

I SPRANG to the stirrup, and Joris, and he ;
I galloped, Direk galloped, we galloped all three ;
“ Good speed ! ” cried the watch, as the gate-bolts
 undrew ;
“ Speed ! ” echoed the wall to us galloping through ;
Behind shut the postern, the lights sank to rest,
And into the midnight we galloped abreast.

Not a word to each other ; we kept the great pace
Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our
 place ;
I turned in my saddle and made its girths tight,
Then shortened each stirrup, and set the pique
 right,
Rebuckled the check-strap, chained slacker the bit,
Nor galloped less steadily Roland a whit.

'Twas moonset at starting ; but while we drew near
Lokeren, the cocks crew and twilight dawned clear ;
At Boom, a great yellow star came out to see ;
At Düffeld, 'twas morning as plain as could be ;
And from Mecheln church-steeple we heard the half-
 chime,
So Joris broke silence with, “ Yet there is time ! ”



“I GALLOPED, DIRCK GALLOPED, WE GALLOPED ALL
THREE.”

At Aershot, up leaped of a sudden the sun,
 And against him the cattle stood black every one,
 To stare through the mist at us galloping past,
 And I saw my stout galloper Roland at last,
 With resolute shoulders, each butting away
 The haze, as some bluff river headland its spray :

And his low head and crest, just one sharp ear bent back
 For my voice, and the other pricked out on his track ;
 And one eye's black intelligence, — ever that glance
 O'er its white edge at me, his own master, askance !
 And the thick heavy spume-flakes which aye and anon
 His fierce lips shook upwards in galloping on.

By Hasselt, Dirck groaned ; and cried Joris, “ Stay
 spur !
 Your Roos galloped bravely, the fault's not in her,
 We'll remember at Aix ” — for one heard the quick
 wheeze
 Of her chest, saw the stretched neck and staggering
 knees,
 And sunk tail, and horrible heave of the flank,
 As down on her haunches she shuddered and sank.
 So, we were left galloping, Joris and I,
 Past Looz and past Tongres, no cloud in the sky ;
 The broad sun above laughed a pitiless laugh,
 'Neath our feet broke the brittle bright stubble like
 chaff ;

Till over by Dalhem a dome-spire sprang white,
And "Gallop," gasped Joris, "for Aix is in sight!"

"How they'll greet us!" and all in a moment his
roan

Rolled neck and croup over, lay dead as a stone;
And there was my Roland to bear the whole weight
Of the news which alone could save Aix from her
fate,

With his nostrils like pits full of blood to the brim,
And with circles of red for his eye-sockets' rim.

Then I cast loose my buffcoat, each holster let fall,
Shook off both my jack-boots, let go belt and all,
Stood up in the stirrup, leaned, patted his ear,
Called my Roland his pet-name, my horse without
peer;

Clapped my hands, laughed and sang, any noise, bad
or good,

Till at length into Aix Roland galloped and stood.

And all I remember is — friends flocking round
As I sat with his head 'twixt my knees on the ground;
And no voice but was praising this Roland of mine,
As I poured down his throat our last measure of wine,
Which (the burgesses voted by common consent)
Was no more than his due who brought good news
from Ghent.

THROUGH THE METIDJA TO ABD-EL-
KADR.

As I ride, as I ride,
With a full heart for my guide,
So its tide rocks my side,
As I ride, as I ride,
That, as I were double-eyed,
He, in whom our Tribes confide,
Is descried, ways untried,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride
To our Chief and his Allied,
Who dares chide my heart's pride
As I ride, as I ride?
Or are witnesses denied —
Through the desert waste and wide
Do I glide unespied
As I ride, as I ride?

As I ride, as I ride,
When an inner voice has cried,
The sands slide, nor abide
(As I ride, as I ride)
O'er each visioned homicide
That came vaunting (has he lied?)

To reside — where he died,
As I ride, as I ride.

As I ride, as I ride,
Ne'er has spur my swift horse plied,
Yet his hide, streaked and pied,
As I ride, as I ride,
Shows where sweat has sprung and dried,
— Zebra-footed, ostrich-thighed —
How has vied stride with stride
As I ride, as I ride!

As I ride, as I ride,
Could I loose what Fate has tied,
Ere I pried, she should hide
(As I ride, as I ride)
All that's meant me — satisfied
When the Prophet and the Bride
Stop veins I'd have subside
As I ride, as I ride!

INCIDENT OF THE FRENCH CAMP.

You know, we French stormed Ratisbon :

 A mile or so away,
On a little mound, Napoleon
 Stood on our storming-day ;
With neck out-thrust, you fancy how,
 Legs wide, arms locked behind,
As if to balance the prone brow,
 Oppressive with its mind.

Just as perhaps he mused “ My plans
 That soar, to earth may fall,
Let once my army-leader, Lannes,
 Waver at yonder wall, — ”
Out ’twixt the battery-smokes there flew
 A rider, bound on bound
Full-galloping ; nor bridle drew
 Until he reached the mound.

Then off there flung in smiling joy,
 And held himself erect
By just his horse’s mane, a boy :
 You hardly could suspect —
(So tight he kept his lips compressed,
 Scarce any blood came through)
You looked twice ere you saw his breast
 Was all but shot in two.

“ Well,” cried he, “ Emperor, by God’s grace
We’ve got you Ratisbon !
The Marshal’s in the market-place,
And you’ll be there anon
To see your flag-bird flap his vans
Where I, to heart’s desire,
Perched him !” The chief’s eye flashed ;
his plans
Soared up again like fire.

The chief’s eye flashed ; but presently
Softened itself, as sheathes
A film the mother-eagle’s eye
When her bruised eaglet breathes ;
“ You’re wounded !” “ Nay,” the soldier’s
pride
Touched to the quick, he said :
“ I’m killed, Sire !” and his chief beside,
Smiling the boy fell dead.



“A RIDER, BOUND ON BOUND FULL-GALLOPING; NOR
BRIDLE DREW UNTIL HE REACHED THE MOUND.”

CLIVE.

I AND Clive were friends — and why not? Friends!

I think you laugh, my lad.

Clive it was gave England India, while your father
gives — egad,

England nothing but the graceless boy who lures him
on to speak —

“Well, Sir, you and Clive were comrades —” with a
tongue thrust in your cheek!

Very true: in my eyes, your eyes, all the world’s eyes,
Clive was man,

I was, am, and ever shall be — mouse, nay, mouse of
all its clan

Sorriest sample, if you take the kitchen’s estimate for
fame;

While the man Clive — he fought Plassy, spoiled the
clever foreign game,

Conquered and annexed and Englished!

Never mind! As o’er my punch
(You away) I sit of evenings, — silence, save for bis-
cuit crunch,

Black, unbroken, — thought grows busy, thrids each
pathway of old years,

Notes this forthright, that meander, till the long past
life appears

Like an outspread map of country plodded through,
 each mile and rood,
 Once, and well remembered still,—I'm startled in
 my solitude
 Ever and anon by — what's the sudden mocking light
 that breaks
 On me as I slap the table till no rummer-glass but shakes
 While I ask — aloud, I do believe, God help me! —
 “ Was it thus ?
 Can it be that so I faltered, stopped when just one
 step for us — ”
 (Us, — you were not born, I grant, but surely some
 day born would be)
 “ — One bold step had gained a province ” (figurative
 talk, you see)
 “ Got no end of wealth and honour, — yet I stood
 stock-still no less ? ”
 — “ For I was not Clive, ” you comment: but it needs
 no Clive to guess
 Wealth were handy, honour ticklish, did no writing on
 the wall
 Warn me “ Trespasser, 'ware man-traps ! ” Him who
 braves that notice — call
 Hero! None of such heroics suit myself who read
 plain words,
 Doff my hat, and leap no barrier. Scripture says, the
 land's the Lord's :
 Louts then — what avail the thousand, noisy in a
 smock-frocked ring,

All-agog to have me trespass, clear the fence, be Clive
their king?

Higher warrant must you show me ere I set one foot
before

T'other in that dark direction, though I stand for ever-
more

Poor as Job and meek as Moses. Evermore? No!
By and by

Job grows rich and Moses valiant, Clive turns out less
wise than I.

Don't object "Why call him friend, then?" Power
is power, my boy, and still

Marks a man,—God's gift magnificent, exercised for
good or ill.

You've your boot now on my hearth-rug, tread what
was a tiger's skin;

Rarely such a royal monster as I lodged the bullet
in!

True, he murdered half a village, so his own death
came to pass;

Still, for size and beauty, cunning, courage—ah, the
brute he was!

Why, that Clive,—that youth, that greenhorn, that
quill-driving clerk, in fine,—

He sustained a siege in Arcot . . . But the world
knows! Pass the wine.

Where did I break off at? How bring Clive in? Oh,
you mentioned "fear!"

Just so: and, said I, that minds me of a story you shall hear.

We were friends then, Clive and I: so, when the clouds, about the orb

Late supreme, encroaching slowly, surely threaten to absorb

Ray by ray its noontide brilliance, — friendship might, with steadier eye

Drawing near, bear what had burned else, now no blaze — all majesty.

Too much bee's-wing floats my figure? Well, suppose a castle's new:

None presume to climb its ramparts, none find foothold sure for shoe

'Twixt those squares and squares of granite plating the impervious pile

As his scale-mail's warty iron cuirasses a crocodile.

Reels that castle thunder-smitten, storm-dismantled? From without

Scrambling up by crack and crevice, every cockney prates about

Towers — the heap he kicks now! Turrets — just the measure of his cane!

Will that do? Observe moreover — (same similitude again) —

Such a castle seldom crumbles by sheer stress of cannonade:

'Tis when foes are foiled, and fighting's finished that
 vile rains invade,
 Grass o'ergrows, o'ergrows till night-birds congregat-
 ing find no holes
 Fit to build like the topmost sockets made for banner-
 poles.
 So Clive crumbled slow in London, crashed at last.

A week before,
 Dining with him, — after trying churchyard chat of
 days of yore, —
 Both of us stopped, tired as tombstones, head-piece,
 foot-piece, when they lean
 Each to other, drowsed in fog-smoke, o'er a coffined
 Past between.
 As I saw his head sink heavy, guessed the soul's ex-
 tinguishment
 By the glazing eyeball, noticed how the furtive fingers
 went
 Where a drug-box skulked behind the honest liquor,
 — “One more throw
 Try for Clive!” thought I: “Let's venture some good
 rattling question!” So —
 “Come Clive, tell us” — out I blurted — “what to
 tell in turn, years hence,
 When my boy — suppose I have one — asks me on
 what evidence
 I maintain my friend of Plassy proved a warrior every
 whit

Worth your Alexanders, Cæsars, Marlboroughs, and
— what said Pitt? —

Frederick the Fierce himself! Clive told me once”
— I want to say —

“ Which feat out of all those famous doings bore the
bell away

— In his own calm estimation, mark you, not the
mob's rough guess —

Which stood foremost as evincing what Clive called
courageousness!

Come! What moment of the minute, what speck-
centre in the wide

Circle of the action saw your mortal fairly deified?

(Let alone that filthy sleep-stuff, swallow bold this
wholesome Port!)

If a friend has leave to question, — when were you
most brave, in short?”

Up he arched his brows o' the instant — formidably
Clive again.

“ When was I most brave? I'd answer, were the in-
stance half as plain

As another instance that's a brain-lodged crystal —
curse it! — here

Freezing when my memory touches — ugh! — the time
I felt most fear.

Ugh! I cannot say for certain if I showed fear — any-
how,

Fear I felt, and, very likely, shuddered, since I shiver
now.”

“Fear!” smiled I. “Well, that’s the rarer: that’s a
specimen to seek,
Ticket up in one’s museum, *Mind-Freaks, Lord Clive’s
Fear, Unique!*”

Down his brows dropped. On the table painfully he
pored as though
Tracing, in the stains and streaks there, thoughts en-
crusted long ago.
When he spoke ’twas like a lawyer reading word by
word some will,
Some blind jungle of a statement,—beating on and
on until
Out there leaps fierce life to fight with.

“This fell in my factor-days.
Desk-drudge, slaving at Saint David’s, one must game,
or drink, or craze.
I chose gaming: and,—because your high-flown
gamesters hardly take
Umbrage at a factor’s elbow, if the factor pays his
stake,—
I was winked at in a circle where the company was
choice,
Captain This and Major That, men high of colour, loud
of voice,

Yet indulgent, condescending to the modest juvenile
 Who not merely risked, but lost his hard-earned
 guineas with a smile.

“Down I sat to cards, one evening, — had for my
 antagonist
 Somebody whose name’s a secret — you’ll know why
 — so, if you list,
 Call him Cock o’ the Walk, my scarlet son of Mars
 from head to heel!
 Play commenced: and, whether Cocky fancied that a
 clerk must feel
 Quite sufficient honour came of bending over one green
 baize,
 I the scribe with him the warrior, guessed no penman
 dared to raise
 Shadow of objection should the honour stay but play-
 ing end
 More or less abruptly, — whether disinclined he grew
 to spend
 Practice strictly scientific on a booby born to stare
 At — not ask of — lace-and-ruffles if the hand they
 hide plays fair, —
 Anyhow, I marked a movement when he bade me
 ‘Cut!’

“I rose.

‘Such the new manœuvre, Captain? I’m a novice:
 knowledge grows.

What, you force a card, you cheat, Sir?’

“ Never did a thunder-clap
 Cause emotion, startle Thyrsis locked with Chloe in
 his lap,
 As my word and gesture (down I flung my cards to
 join the pack)
 Fired the man of arms, whose visage, simply red
 before, turned black.

“ When he found his voice, he stammered ‘ That ex-
 pression once again ! ’

“ ‘ Well, you forced a card and cheated ! ’

“ ‘ Possibly a factor’s brain,
 Busied with his all-important balance of accounts,
 may deem
 Weighing words superfluous trouble : *cheat* to clerkly
 ears may seem
 Just the joke for friends to venture : but we are not
 friends, you see !
 When a gentleman is joked with, — if he’s good at
 repartee,
 He rejoins, as do I — Sirrah, on your knees, withdraw
 in full !
 Beg my pardon, or be sure a kindly bullet through
 your skull
 Lets in light and teaches manner to what brain it
 finds ! Choose quick —
 Have your life snuffed out or, kneeling, pray me trim
 yon candle-wick ! ’

“ ‘ Well, you cheated ! ’

“ Then outbroke a howl from all the friends around.
To his feet sprang each in fury, fists were clenched
and teeth were ground.

‘ End it ! no time like the present ! Captain, yours
were our disgrace !

No delay, begin and finish ! Stand back, leave the
pair a space !

Let civilians be instructed : henceforth simply ply the
pen,

Fly the sword ! This clerk’s no swordsman ? Suit
him with a pistol, then !

Even odds ! A dozen paces ’twixt the most and least
expert

Make a dwarf a giant’s equal : nay, the dwarf, if he’s
alert,

Likelier hits the broader target ! ’

“ Up we stood accordingly.
As they handed me the weapon, such was my soul’s
thirst to try

Then and there conclusions with this bully, tread on
and stamp out

Every spark of his existence, that, — crept close to,
curled about

By that toying, tempting, teasing, fool-forefinger’s
middle joint, —

Don't you guess?—the trigger yielded. Gone my
 chance! and at the point
 Of such prime success moreover: scarce an inch
 above his head
 Went my ball to hit the wainscot. He was living, I
 was dead.

“Up he marched in flaming triumph—'twas his
 right, mind!—up, within
 Just an arm's length. ‘Now, my clerkling,’ chuckled
 Cocky, with a grin
 As the levelled piece quite touched me, ‘Now, Sir
 Counting-House, repeat
 That expression which I told you proved bad man-
 ners! Did I cheat?’

“‘Cheat you did, you knew you cheated, and, this
 moment, know as well.
 As for me, my homely breeding bids you—fire and
 go to Hell!’

“Twice the muzzle touched my forehead. Heavy
 barrel, flurried wrist.
 Either spoils a steady lifting. Thrice: then, ‘Laugh
 at Hell who list,
 I can't! God's no fable either. Did this boy's eye
 wink once? No!
 There's no standing him and Hell and God all three
 against me,—so,
 I did cheat!’

“And down he threw the pistol, out rushed — by the
door
Possibly, but, as for knowledge if by chimney, roof or
floor,
He effected disappearance — I'll engage no glance was
sent
That way by a single starrer, such a blank astonish-
ment
Swallowed up their senses: as for speaking — mute
they stood as mice.

“Mute not long, though! Such reaction, such a
hubbub in a trice!
‘Rogue and rascal! Who'd have thought it? What's
to be expected next,
When His Majesty's Commission serves a sharper as
pretext
For . . . But where's the need of wasting time now?
Naught requires delay:
Punishment the Service cries for: let disgrace be
wiped away
Publicly, in good broad daylight! Resignation? No,
indeed!
Drum and fife must play the Rogue's-March, rank and
file be free to speed
Tardy marching on the rogue's part by appliance in
the rear
— Kicks administered shall right this wronged civil-
ian, — never fear,

Mister Clive, for — though a clerk — you bore yourself
 — suppose we say —
 Just as would beseem a soldier ?

“ ‘ Gentlemen, attention — pray !
 First, one word ! ’

“ I passed each speaker severally in review.
 When I had precise their number, names, and styles,
 and fully knew
 Over whom my supervision thenceforth must extend,
 — why, then —

“ ‘ Some five minutes since, my life lay — as you all
 saw, gentlemen —
 At the mercy of your friend there. Not a single
 voice was raised
 In arrest of judgment, not one tongue — before my
 powder blazed —
 Ventured “ Can it be the youngster plundered, really
 seemed to mark
 Some irregular proceeding? We conjecture in the
 dark,
 Guess at random, — still, for sake of fair play —
 what if for a freak,
 In a fit of absence, — such things have been ! — if our
 friend proved weak
 — What’s the phrase ? — corrected fortune ! Look
 into the case, at least ! ”

Who dared interpose between the altar's victim and
the priest?

Yet he spared me! You eleven! Whosoever, all or
each,

To the disadvantage of the man who spared me,
utters speech

— To his face, behind his back, — that speaker has
to do with me:

Me who promise, if positions change, and mine the
chance should be,

Not to imitate your friend and waive advantage!

“Twenty-five

Years ago this matter happened: and 'tis certain,”
added Clive,

“Never, to my knowledge, did Sir Cocky have a
single breath

Breathed against him: lips were closed throughout
his life, or since his death,

For if he be dead or living I can tell no more than
you.

All I know is — Cocky had one chance more; how he
used it, — grew

Out of such unlucky habits, or relapsed, and back
again

Brought the late-ejected devil with a score more in
his train, —

That's for you to judge. Reprieval I procured, at any
rate.

Ugh — the memory of that minute's fear makes
 gooseflesh rise! Why prate
 Longer? You've my story, there's your instance:
 fear I did, you see!"

"Well" — I hardly kept from laughing — "if I see
 it, thanks must be
 Wholly to your Lordship's candour. Not that — in
 a common case —
 When a bully caught at cheating thrusts a pistol in
 one's face,
 I should under-rate, believe me, such a trial to the
 nerve!
 'Tis no joke, at one-and-twenty, for a youth to stand
 nor swerve.
 Fear I naturally look for — unless, of all men alive,
 I am forced to make exception when I come to Robert
 Clive.
 Since at Arcot, Plassy, elsewhere, he and death —
 the whole world knows —
 Came to somewhat closer quarters."

Quarters? Had we come to blows,
 Clive and I, you had not wondered — up he sprang
 so, out he rapped
 Such a round of oaths — no matter! I'll endeavour to
 adapt
 To our modern usage words he — well, 'twas friendly
 license — flung

At me like so many fire-balls, fast as he could wag
his tongue.

“ You — a soldier ? You — at Plassy ? Yours the
faculty to nick

Instantaneously occasion when your foe, if lightning-
quick,

— At his mercy, at his malice, — has you, through
some stupid inch

Undefended in your bulwark ? Thus laid open, — not
to flinch

— That needs courage, you'll concede me. Then,
look here ! Suppose the man,

Checking his advance, his weapon still extended, not
a span

Distant from my temple, — curse him ! — quietly had
bade me, ‘ There !

Keep your life, calumniator ! — worthless life I freely
spare :

Mine you freely would have taken — murdered me
and my good fame

Both at once — and all the better ! ‘ Go, and thank
your own bad aim

Which permits me to forgive you ! ‘ What if, with
such words as these,

He had cast away his weapon ? How should I have
borne me, please ?

Nay, I'll spare you pains and tell you. This, and only
this, remained —

Pick his weapon up and use it on myself. If so had
 gained
 Sleep the earlier, leaving England probably to pay on
 still
 Rent and taxes for half India, tenant at the French-
 man's will."

"Such the turn," said I, "the matter takes with you?
 Then I abate
 — No, by not one jot nor tittle, — of your act my
 estimate.
 Fear — I wish I could detect there: courage fronts me,
 plain enough —
 Call it desperation, madness — never mind! for here's
 in rough
 Why, had mine been such a trial, fear had overcome
 disgrace.
 True, disgrace were hard to bear: but such a rush
 against God's face
 — None of that for me, Lord Plassy, since I go to
 church at times,
 Say the creed my mother taught me! Many years in
 foreign climes
 Rub some marks away — not all, though! We poor
 sinners reach life's brink,
 Overlook what rolls beneath it, recklessly enough, but
 think
 There's advantage in what's left us — ground to stand
 on, time to call

‘Lord, have mercy!’ ere we topple over — do not
leap, that’s all!”

Oh, he made no answer, re-absorbed into his cloud.

I caught

Something like “Yes — courage: only fools will call
it fear.”

If aught

Comfort you, my great unhappy hero Clive, in that
I heard,

Next week, how your own hand dealt you doom, and
uttered just the word

“Fearfully courageous!” — this, be sure, and nothing
else I groaned.

I’m no Clive, nor parson either: Clive’s worst deed —
we’ll hope condoned.

MULÉYKEH.

IF a stranger passed the tent of Hóseyn, he cried
 “A churl’s!”

Or haply “God help the man who has neither salt nor
 bread!”

—“Nay,” would a friend exclaim, “he needs nor
 pity nor scorn

More than who spends small thought on the shore-
 sand, picking pearls,

—Holds but in light esteem the seed-sort, bears
 instead

On his breast a moon-like prize, some orb which of
 night makes morn.

“What if no flocks and herds enrich the son of
 Sinán?”

They went when his tribe was mulet, ten thousand
 camels the due,

Blood-value paid perforce for a murder done of old.

‘God gave them, let them go! But never since time
 began,

Muléykeh, peerless mare, owned master the match of
 you,

And you are my prize, my Pearl: I laugh at men’s
 land and gold!’

“So in the pride of his soul laughs Hóseyn — and
right, I say.

Do the ten steeds run a race of glory? Outstripping
all,

Ever Muléykeh stands first steed at the victor's staff.
Who started, the owner's hope, gets shamed and
named, that day.

‘Silence,’ or, last but one, is ‘The Cuffed,’ as we used
to call

Whom the paddock's lord thrusts forth. Right, Hó-
seyn, I say, to laugh!”

“Boasts he Muléykeh the Pearl?” the stranger replies:
“Be sure

On him I waste nor scorn nor pity, but lavish both
On Duhl the son of Sheybán, who withers away in heart
For envy of Hóseyn's luck. Such sickness admits no
cure.

A certain poet has sung, and sealed the same with an
oath,

‘For the vulgar — flocks and herds! The Pearl is a
prize apart.’”

Lo, Duhl the son of Sheybán comes riding to Hóseyn's
tent,

And he casts his saddle down, and enters and “Peace!”
bids he.

“You are poor, I know the cause: my plenty shall
mend the wrong.

'Tis said of your Pearl — the price of a hundred cam-
 els spent
 In her purchase were scarce ill paid : such prudence
 is far from me
 Who proffer a thousand. Speak ! Long parley may
 last too long."

Said Hóseyn, " You feed young beasts a many, of fa-
 mous breed,
 Slit-eared, unblemished, fat, true offspring of Múzen-
 nem :
 There stumbles no weak-eyed she in the line as it
 climbs the hill.
 But I love Muléykeh's face : her forefront whitens
 indeed
 Like a yellowish wave's cream-crest. Your camels —
 go gaze on them !
 Her fetlock is foam-splashed too. Myself am the
 richer still."

A year goes by : lo, back to the tent again rides Duhl.
 " You are open-hearted, ay — moist-handed, a very
 prince.
 Why should I speak of sale ? Be the mare your
 simple gift !
 My son is pined to death for her beauty : my wife
 prompts ' Fool,
 Beg for his sake the Pearl ! Be God the rewarder,
 since

God pays debts seven for one : who squanders on Him
shows thrift.' ”

Said Hóseyn, “ God gives each man one life, like a
lamp, then gives
That lamp due measure of oil : lamp lighted — hold
high, wave wide
Its comfort for others to share ! once quench it, what
help is left ?
The oil of your lamp is your son : I shine while Muléy-
keh lives.
Would I beg your son to cheer my dark if Muléykeh
died ?
It is life against life : what good avails to the life-
bereft ? ”

Another year, and — hist ! What craft is it Duhl
designs ?
He alights not at the door of the tent as he did last
time,
But, creeping behind, he gropes his stealthy way by
the trench
Half-round till he finds the flap in the folding, for
night combines
With the robber — and such is he : Duhl, covetous
up to crime,
Must wring from Hóseyn's grasp the Pearl, by what-
ever the wrench.

“ He was hunger-bitten, I heard : I tempted with half
my store,
And a gibe was all my thanks. Is he generous like
Spring dew ?
Account the fault to me who chattered with such an
one !
He has killed, to feast chance comers, the creature he
rode : nay, more —
For a couple of singing-girls his robe has he torn in
two :
I will beg ! Yet I nowise gained by the tale of my
wife and son.

“ I swear by the Holy House, my head will I never
wash
Till I filch his Pearl away. Fair dealing I tried, then
guile,
And now I resort to force. He said we must live or
die :
Let him die, then, — let me live ! Be bold — but not
too rash !
I have found me a peeping-place : breast, bury your
breathing while
I explore for myself ! Now, breathe ! He deceived
me not, the spy !

“ As he said — there lies in peace Hóseyn — how
happy ! Beside

Stands tethered the Pearl: thrice winds her headstall
about his wrist:

'Tis therefore he sleeps so sound — the moon through
the roof reveals.

And, loose on his left, stands too that other, known
far and wide,

Buhéysch, her sister born: fleet is she yet ever missed
The winning tail's fire-flash a-stream past the thunder-
ous heels.

“No less she stands saddled and bridled, this second,
in case some thief

Should enter and seize and fly with the first, as I
mean to do.

What then? The Pearl is the Pearl: once mount
her we both escape.”

Through the skirt-fold in glides Duhl, — so a serpent
disturbs no leaf

In a bush as he parts the twigs entwining a nest:
clean through,

He is noiselessly at his work: as he planned, he per-
forms the rape.

He has set the tent-door wide, has buckled the girth,
has clipped

The headstall away from the wrist he leaves thrice
bound as before,

He springs on the Pearl, is launched on the desert
like bolt from bow.

Up starts our plundered man : from his breast though
the heart be ripped,
Yet his mind has the mastery : behold, in a minute
more,
He is out and off and away on Buhéyseh, whose worth
we know !

And Hóseyn — his blood turns flame, he has learned
long since to ride,
And Buhéyseh does her part, — they gain — they are
gaining fast
On the fugitive pair, and Duhl has Ed-Dárraj to cross
and quit,
And to reach the ridge El-Sabán, — no safety till that
he spied !
And Buhéyseh is, bound by bound, but a horse-length
off at last,
For the Pearl has missed the tap of the heel, the
touch of the bit.

She shortens her stride, she chafes at her rider the
strange and queer :
Buhéyseh is mad with hope — beat sister she shall
and must,
Though Duhl, of the hand and heel so clumsy, she has
to thank.
She is near now, nose by tail — they are neck by
croup — joy ! fear !

What folly makes Hóseyn shout " Dog Duhl, Damned
son of the Dust,
Touch the right ear and press with your foot my
Pearl's left flank ! "

And Duhl was wise at the word, and Muléykeh as
prompt perceived
Who was urging redoubled pace, and to hear him was
to obey,
And a leap indeed gave she, and vanished for ever-
more.
And Hóseyn looked one long last look as who, all
bereaved,
Looks, fain to follow the dead so far as the living
may :
Then he turned Buhéyseh's neck slow homeward,
weeping sore.

And, lo, in the sunrise, still sat Hóseyn upon the
ground
Weeping : and neighbours came, the tribesmen of Bénu-
Asád
In the vale of green Er-Rass, and they questioned him
of his grief ;
And he told from first to last how, serpent-like, Duhl
had wound
His way to the nest, and how Duhl rode like an ape,
so bad !

And how Buhéysch did wonders, yet Pearl remained
with the thief.

And they jeered him, one and all: "Poor Hóseyn is
crazed past hope!

How else had he wrought himself his ruin, in fortune's
spite?

To have simply held the tongue were a task for boy
or girl,

And here were Muléykeh again, the eyed like an
antelope,

The child of his heart by day, the wife of his breast
by night!" —

"And the beaten in speed!" wept Hóseyn. "You
never have loved my Pearl."

TRAY.

SING me a hero! Quench my thirst
Of soul, ye bards!

Quoth Bard the first:

“Sir Olaf, the good knight, did don
His helm and eke his habergeon” . . .
Sir Olaf and his bard —!

“That sin-scathed brow” (quoth Bard the
second),

“That eye wide ope as though Fate beckoned
My hero to some steep, beneath
Which precipice smiled tempting death” . . .
You too without your host have reckoned!

“A beggar-child” (let's hear this third!)

“Sat on a quay's edge: like a bird
Sang to herself at careless play,
And fell into the stream. ‘Dismay!
Help, you the standers-by!’ None stirred.

“Bystanders reason, think of wives
And children ere they risk their lives.
Over the balustrade has bounced
A mere instinctive dog, and pounced
Plumb on the prize. ‘How well he dives!

“ ‘Up he comes with the child, see, tight
 In mouth, alive too, clutched from quite
 A depth of ten feet — twelve, I bet!
 Good dog! What, off again? There’s yet
 Another child to save? All right!

“ ‘How strange we saw no other fall!
 It’s instinct in the animal.
 Good dog! But he’s a long while under:
 If he got drowned I should not wonder —
 Strong current, that against the wall!

“ ‘Here he comes, holds in mouth this time
 — What may the thing be? Well, that’s prime!
 Now, did you ever? Reason reigns
 In man alone, since all Tray’s pains
 Have fished — the child’s doll from the slime!’

“ And so, amid the laughter gay,
 Trotted my hero off, — old Tray, —
 Till somebody, prerogativéd
 With reason, reasoned: ‘Why he dived,
 His brain would show us, I should say.

“ ‘John, go and catch — or, if needs be,
 Purchase — that animal for me!
 By vivisection, at expense
 Of half-an-hour and eighteenpence,
 How brain secretes dog’s soul, we’ll see!’”

A TALE.

WHAT a pretty tale you told me
 Once upon a time
 — Said you found it somewhere (scold me!)
 Was it prose or was it rhyme,
 Greek or Latin? Greek, you said,
 While your shoulder propped my head.

Anyhow there's no forgetting
 This much if no more,
 That a poet (pray, no petting!)
 Yes, a bard, sir, famed of yore,
 Went where suchlike used to go,
 Singing for a prize, you know.

Well, he had to sing, nor merely
 Sing but play the lyre;
 Playing was important clearly
 Quite as singing: I desire,
 Sir, you keep the fact in mind
 For a purpose that's behind.

There stood he, while deep attention
 Held the judges round,
 — Judges able, I should mention,
 To detect the slightest sound
 Sung or played amiss: such ears
 Had old judges, it appears!

None the less he sang out boldly,
 Played in time and tune,
Till the judges, weighing coldly
 Each note's worth, seemed, late or soon,
Sure to smile "In vain one tries
Picking faults out: take the prize!"

When, a mischief! Were they seven
 Strings the lyre possessed?
Oh, and afterwards eleven,
 Thank you! Well, sir, — who had
 guessed
Such ill luck in store? — it happed
One of those same seven strings snapped.

All was lost, then! No! a cricket
 (What "cicada?" Pooh!)
— Some mad thing that left its thicket
 For mere love of music — flew
With its little heart on fire,
Lighted on the crippled lyre.

So that when (Ah, joy!) our singer
 For his truant string
Feels with disconcerted finger,
 What does cricket else but fling
Fiery heart forth, sound the note
Wanted by the throbbing throat?

Ay, and ever to the ending,
 Cricket chirps at need,
Executes the hand's intending,
 Promptly, perfectly, — indeed
Saves the singer from defeat
With her chirrup low and sweet.

Till, at ending, all the judges
 Cry with one assent
“Take the prize — a prize who grudges
 Such a voice and instrument?
Why, we took your lyre for harp,
So it shrilled us forth F sharp!”

Did the conqueror spurn the creature,
 Once its service done?
That's no such uncommon feature
 In the case when Music's son
Finds his Lotte's power too spent
For aiding soul-development.

No! This other, on returning
 Homeward, prize in hand,
Satisfied his bosom's yearning:
 (Sir, I hope you understand!)
— Said “Some record there must be
Of this cricket's help to me!”

So, he made himself a statue:
 Marble stood, life-size;

On the lyre, he pointed at you,
Perched his partner in the prize ;
Never more apart you found
Her, he throned, from him, she crowned.

That's the tale : its application ?
Somebody I know
Hopes one day for reputation
Through his poetry that's — Oh,
All so learned and so wise
And deserving of a prize !

If he gains one, will some ticket,
When his statue's built,
Tell the gazer " 'Twas a cricket
Helped my crippled lyre, whose lilt
Sweet and low, when strength usurped
Softness' place i' the scale, she chirped ?

" For as victory was nighest,
While I sang and played, —
With my lyre at lowest, highest,
Right alike, — one string that made
' Love ' sound soft was snapt in twain,
Never to be heard again, —

" Had not a kind cricket fluttered,
Perched upon the place
Vacant left, and duly uttered
' Love, Love, Love,' whene'er the bass

Asked the treble to atone
For its somewhat sombre drone."

But you don't know music! Wherefore
Keep on casting pearls
To a — poet? All I care for
Is — to tell him that a girl's
"Love" comes aptly in when gruff
Grows his singing. (There, enough!)



"HAIR, SUCH A WONDER OF FLIX AND FLOSS."

GOLD HAIR.

OH, the beautiful girl, too white,
Who lived at Pornic, down by the sea,
Just where the sea and the Loire unite!
And a boasted name in Brittany
She bore, which I will not write.

Too white, for the flower of life is red:
Her flesh was the soft seraphic screen
Of a soul that is meant (her parents said)
To just see earth, and hardly be seen,
And blossom in heaven instead.

Yet earth saw one thing, one how fair!
One grace that grew to its full on earth:
Smiles might be sparse on her cheek so spare,
And her waist want half a girdle's girth,
But she had her great gold hair.

Hair, such a wonder of flix and floss,
Freshness and fragrance — floods of it, too!
Gold, did I say? Nay, gold's mere dross:
Here, Life smiled, "Think what I meant to do!"
And Love sighed, "Fancy my loss!"

So, when she died, it was scarce more strange
Than that, when delicate evening dies,

And you follow its spent sun's pallid range,
There's a shoot of colour startles the skies
With sudden, violent change, —

That, while the breath was nearly to seek,
As they put the little cross to her lips,
She changed; a spot came out on her cheek,
A spark from her eye in mid-eclipse,
And she broke forth, "I must speak!"

"Not my hair!" made the girl her moan —
"All the rest is gone or to go;
But the last, last grace, my all, my own,
Let it stay in the grave, that the ghosts may
know!
Leave my poor gold hair alone!"

The passion thus vented, dead lay she;
Her parents sobbed their worst on that;
All friends joined in, nor observed degree:
For indeed the hair was to wonder at,
As it spread — not flowing free,

But curled around her brow, like a crown,
And coiled beside her cheeks, like a cap,
And calmed about her neck — ay, down
To her breast, pressed flat, without a gap
I' the gold, it reached her gown.

All kissed that face, like a silver wedge
 'Mid the yellow wealth, nor disturbed its hair :
E'en the priest allowed death's privilege,
 As he planted the erueifix with care
On her breast, 'twixt edge and edge.

And thus was she buried, inviolate
 Of body and soul, in the very space
By the altar ; keeping saintly state
 In Pornie church, for her pride of race,
Pure life and piteous fate.

And in after-time would your fresh tear fall,
 Though your mouth might twitch with a dubi-
 ous smile,
As they told you of gold, both robe and pall,
 How she prayed them leave it alone awhile,
So it never was touched at all.

Years flew ; this legend grew at last
 The life of the lady ; all she had done,
All been, in the memories fading fast
 Of lover and friend, was summed in one
Sentence survivors passed :

To wit, she was meant for heaven, not earth ;
 Had turned an angel before the time :
Yet, since she was mortal, in such dearth
 Of frailty, all you could count a crime
Was — she knew her gold hair's worth.

* * * * *

At little pleasant Pornic church,
 It chanced, the pavement wanted repair,
 Was taken to pieces : left in the lurch,
 A certain sacred space lay bare,
 And the boys began research.

'Twas the space where our sires would lay a saint,
 A benefactor, — a bishop, suppose,
 A baron with armour-adornments quaint,
 Dame with chased ring and jewelled rose,
 Things sanctity saves from taint ;

So we come to find them in after-days
 When the corpse is presumed to have done with
 gauds
 Of use to the living, in many ways :
 For the boys get pelf, and the town applauds,
 And the church deserves the praise.

They grubbed with a will : and at length — *O cor*
Humanum, pectora caeca, and the rest ! —
 They found — no gaud they were prying for,
 No ring, no rose, but — who would have
 guessed ? —
 A double Louis-d'or !

Here was a case for the priest : he heard,
 Marked, inwardly digested, laid
 Finger on nose, smiled, “ There's a bird

Chirps in my ear :” then, “ Bring a spade,
Dig deeper !” — he gave the word.

And lo, when they came to the coffin-lid,
Or rotten planks which composed it once,
Why, there lay the girl’s skull wedged amid
A mint of money, it served for the nonce
To hold in its hair-heaps hid !

Hid there ? Why ? Could the girl be wont
(She the stainless soul) to treasure up
Money, earth’s trash and heaven’s affront ?
Had a spider found out the communion-cup,
Was a toad in the christening-font ?

Truth is truth : too true it was.

Gold ! She hoarded and hugged it first,
Longed for it, leaned o’er it, loved it — alas —
Till the humour grew to a head and burst,
And she cried, at the final pass, —

“ Talk not of God, my heart is stone !
Nor lover nor friend — be gold for both !
Gold I lack ; and, my all, my own,
It shall hide in my hair. I scarce die loth
If they let my hair alone !”

Louis-d’or, some six times five,
And duly double, every piece.
Now, do you see ? With the priest to shrive,

With parents preventing her soul's release
By kisses that kept alive, —

With heaven's gold gates about to ope,
With friends' praise, gold-like, lingering still,
An instinct had bidden the girl's hand grope
For gold, the true sort — "Gold in heaven, if
you will ;
But I keep earth's too, I hope."

Enough ! The priest took the grave's grim yield :
The parents, they eyed that price of sin
As if *thirty pieces* lay revealed
On the place to *bury strangers in*,
The hideous Potter's Field.

But the priest bethought him : " ' Milk that's spilt ' —
You know the adage ! Watch and pray !
Saints tumble to earth with so slight a tilt !
It would build a new altar ; that, we may ! " —
And the altar therewith was built.

Why I deliver this horrible verse ?
As the text of a sermon, which now I preach :
Evil or good may be better or worse
In the human heart, but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse.

The candid incline to surmise of late
That the Christian faith proves false, I find ;

For our Essays-and-Reviews' debate
Begins to tell on the public mind,
And Colenso's words have weight :

I still, to suppose it true, for my part,
See reasons and reasons ; this, to begin :
'Tis the faith that launched point-blank her dart
At the head of a lie — taught Original Sin,
The Corruption of Man's Heart.

DONALD.

Do you happen to know in Ross-shire
 Mount Ben . . . but the name scarce mat-
 ters :
 Of the naked fact I am sure enough,
 Though I clothe it in rags and tatters.

You may recognise Ben by description ;
 Behind him — a moor's immenseness :
 Up goes the middle mount of a range,
 Fringed with its firs in denseness.

Rimming the edge, its fir-fringe, mind !
 For an edge there is, though narrow ;
 From end to end of the range, a strip
 Of path runs straight as an arrow.

And the mountaineer who takes that path
 Saves himself miles of journey
 He has to plod if he crosses the moor
 Through heather, peat, and burnie.

But a mountaineer he needs must be,
 For, look you, right in the middle
 Projects bluff Ben — with an end in *ich* —
 Why planted there, is a riddle :

Since all Ben's brothers little and big
 Keep rank, set shoulder to shoulder,
 And only this burliest out must bulge
 Till it seems — to the beholder

From down in the gully, — as if Ben's breast,
 To a sudden spike diminished,
 Would signify to the boldest foot
 “ All further passage finished ! ”

Yet the mountaineer who sidles on
 And on to the very bending,
 Discovers, if heart and brain be proof,
 No necessary ending.

Foot up, foot down, to the turn abrupt
 Having trod, he, there arriving,
 Finds — what he took for a point was breadth,
 A mercy of Nature's contriving.

So, he rounds what, when 'tis reached, proves
 straight,
 From one side gains the other :
 The wec path widens — resume the march,
 And he foils you, Ben my brother !

But Donald — (that name, I hope, will do) —
 I wrong him if I call “ foiling ”
 The tramp of the callant, whistling the while
 As blithe as our kettle's boiling.

He had dared the danger from boyhood up,
And now, — when perchance was waiting
A lass at the brig below, — 'twixt mount
And moor would he standing debating?

Moreover this Donald was twenty-five,
A glory of bone and muscle :
Did a fiend dispute the right of way,
Donald would try a tussle.

Lightsomely marched he out of the broad
On to the narrow and narrow ;
A step more, rounding the angular rock,
Reached the front straight as an arrow.

He stepped it, safe on the ledge he stood,
When — whom found he full-facing ?
What fellow in courage and wariness too,
Had scouted ignoble pacing,

And left low safety to timid mates,
And made for the dread dear danger,
And gained the height where — who could
guess
He would meet with a rival ranger ?

'Twas a gold-red stag that stood and stared,
Gigantic and magnific,
By the wonder — ay, and the peril — struck
Intelligent and pacific :

For a red deer is no fallow deer
 Grown cowardly through park-feeding ;
 He batters you like a thunderbolt
 If you brave his haunts unheeding.

I doubt he could hardly perform *volte-face*
 Had valour advised discretion :
 You may walk on a rope, but to turn on a rope
 No Blondin makes profession.

Yet Donald must turn, would pride permit,
 Though pride ill brooks retiring :
 Each eyed each — mute man, motionless beast —
 Less fearing than admiring.

These are the moments when quite new sense,
 To meet some need as novel,
 Springs up in the brain : it inspired resource :
 — “ Nor advance nor retreat but — grovel ! ”

And slowly, surely, never a whit
 Relaxing the steady tension
 Of eye-stare which binds man to beast, —
 By an inch and inch declension,

Sank Donald sidewise down and down :
 Till flat, breast upwards, lying
 At his six-foot length, no corpse more still,
 — “ If he cross me ! The trick’s worth
 trying.”

Minutes were an eternity ;
 But a new sense was created
 In the stag's brain too ; he resolves ! Slow,
 sure,
 With eye-stare unabated,

Feelingly he extends a foot
 Which tastes the way ere it touches
 Earth's solid and just escapes man's soft,
 Nor hold of the same unclutches

Till its fellow foot, light as a feather whisk,
 Lands itself no less finely :
 So a mother removes a fly from the face
 Of her babe asleep supinely.

And now 'tis the haunch and hind-foot's turn
 — That's hard : can the beast quite raise it ?
 Yes, traversing half the prostrate length,
 His hoof-tip does not graze it.

Just one more lift ! But Donald, you see,
 Was sportsman first, man after :
 A fancy lightened his caution through,
 — He wellnigh broke into laughter :

“It were nothing short of a miracle !
 Unrivalled, unexampled —
 All sporting feats with this feat matched
 Were down and dead and trampled !”

The last of the legs as tenderly
Follows the rest: or never
Or now is the time! His knife in reach,
And his right hand loose — how clever!

For this can stab up the stomach's soft,
While the left hand grasps the pastern.
A rise on the elbow, and — now's the time
Or never: this turn's the last turn!

I shall dare to place myself by God
Who scanned — for he does — each feature
Of the face thrown up in appeal to him
By the agonising creature.

Nay, I hear plain words: “Thy gift brings
this!”

Up he sprang, back he staggered,
Over he fell, and with him our friend
— At following game no laggard.

Yet he was not dead when they picked next
day
From the gully's depth the wreck of him;
His fall had been stayed by the stag beneath
Who cushioned and saved the neck of him.

But the rest of his body — why, doctors said,
Whatever could break was broken;

Legs, arms, ribs, all of him looked like a toast
 In a tumbler of port wine soaken.

“That your life is left you, thank the stag!”
 Said they when — the slow cure ended —
 They opened the hospital door, and thence
 — Strapped, spliced, main fractures mended,

And minor damage left wisely alone, —
 Like an old shoe clouted and cobbled,
 Out — what went in a Goliath wellnigh, —
 Some half of a David hobbled.

“You must ask an alms from house to house :
 Sell the stag's head for a bracket,
 With its grand twelve tines — I'd buy it myself —
 And use the skin for a jacket!”

He was wiser, made both head and hide
 His win-penny : hands and knees on,
 Would manage to crawl — poor crab — by
 the roads
 In the misty stalking season.

And if he discovered a bothy like this,
 Why, harvest was sure : folk listened.
 He told his tale to the lovers of Sport :
 Lips twitched, cheeks glowed, eyes glistened.

And when he had come to the close, and spread
 His spoils for the gazers' wonder,
 With "Gentlemen, here's the skull of the stag
 I was over, thank God, not under!" —

The company broke out in applause ;
 " By Jingo, a lucky cripple !
 Have a munch of grouse and a hunk of bread,
 And a tug, besides, at our tippie ! "

And " There's my pay for your pluck ! "
 cried This,
 " And mine for your jolly story ! "
 Cried That, while T'other — but he was drunk —
 Hiccupped " A trump, a Tory ! "

I hope I gave twice as much as the rest ;
 For, as Homer would say, " within grate
 Though teeth kept tongue," my whole soul
 growled,
 " Rightly rewarded, — Ingrate ! "

THE GLOVE.

(PETER RONSARD *loquitur.*)

"HEIGHO," yawned one day King Francis,
 "Distance all value enhances!
 When a man's busy, why, leisure
 Strikes him as wonderful pleasure:
 'Faith, and at leisure once is he?
 Straightway he wants to be busy.
 Here we've got peace; and aghast I'm
 Caught thinking war the true pastime.
 Is there a reason in metre?
 Give us your speech, master Peter!"
 I who, if mortal dare say so,
 Ne'er am at a loss with my Naso,
 "Sire," I replied, "joys prove cloudlets:
 Men are the merest Ixions" —
 Here the King whistled aloud, "Let's
 — Heigho — go look at our lions!"
 Such are the sorrowful chances
 If you talk fine to King Francis.

And so, to the courtyard proceeding
 Our company, Francis was leading,
 Increased by new followers tenfold
 Before he arrived at the penfold;

Lords, ladies, like clouds which bedizen
 At sunset the western horizon.
 And Sir De Lorge pressed 'mid the foremost
 With the dame he professed to adore most.
 Oh, what a face! One by fits eyed
 Her, and the horrible pitside;
 For the penfold surrounded a hollow
 Which led where the eye scarce dared follow,
 And shelved to the chamber secluded
 Where Bluebeard, the great lion, brooded.
 The King hailed his keeper, an Arab
 As glossy and black as a scarab,
 And bade him make sport and at once stir
 Up and out of his den the old monster.
 They opened a hole in the wire-work
 Across it, and dropped there a firework,
 And fled: one's heart's beating redoubled;
 A pause, while the pit's mouth was troubled,
 The blackness and silence so utter,
 By the firework's slow sparkling and sputter;
 Then earth in a sudden contortion
 Gave out to our gaze her abortion.
 Such a brute! Were I friend Clement Marot
 (Whose experience of nature's but narrow,
 And whose faculties move in no small mist
 When he versifies David the Psalmist)
 I should study that brute to describe you
Illum Juda Leonem de Tribu.

One's whole blood grew curdling and creepy
 To see the black mane, vast and heapy,
 The tail in the air stiff and straining,
 The wide eyes, nor waxing nor waning,
 As over the barrier which bounded
 His platform, and us who surrounded
 The barrier, they reached and they rested
 On space that might stand him in best stead :
 For who knew, he thought, what the amazement,
 The eruption of clatter and blaze meant,
 And if, in this minute of wonder,
 No outlet, 'mid lightning and thunder,
 Lay broad, and, his shackles all shivered,
 The lion at last was delivered ?
 Ay, that was the open sky o'erhead !
 And you saw by the flash on his forehead,
 By the hope in those eyes wide and steady,
 He was leagues in the desert already,
 Driving the flocks up the mountain,
 Or catlike couched hard by the fountain
 To waylay the date-gathering negress :
 So guarded he entrance or egress.
 "How he stands !" quoth the King : "we may
 well swear,
 (No novice, we've won our spurs elsewhere
 And so can afford the confession,)
 We exercise wholesome discretion
 In keeping aloof from his threshold,
 Once hold you, those jaws want no fresh hold,

Their first would too pleasantly purloin
 The visitor's brisket or sirloin :
 But who's he would prove so foolhardy ?
 Not the best man of Marignan, pardie !”

The sentence no sooner was uttered,
 Than over the rails a glove fluttered,
 Fell close to the lion, and rested :
 The dame 'twas, who flung it and jested
 With life so, De Lorge had been wooing
 For months past ; he sat there pursuing
 His suit, weighing out with nonchalance
 Fine speeches like gold from a balance.

• Sound the trumpet, no true knight's a tARRIER !
 De Lorge made one leap at the barrier,
 Walked straight to the glove, — while the lion
 Ne'er moved, kept his far-reaching eye on
 The palm-tree-edged desert-spring's sapphire,
 And the musky oiled skin of the Kaffir, —
 Picked it up, and as calmly retreated,
 Leaped back where the lady was seated,
 And full in the face of its owner
 Flung the glove.

“ Your heart's queen, you dethrone her ?
 So should I !” — cried the King — “ 'twas
 mere vanity,
 Not love, set that task to humanity !”

Lords and ladies alike turned with loathing
From such a proved wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not so, I ; for I caught an expression
In her brow's undisturbed self-possession
Amid the Court's scoffing and merriment, —
As if from no pleasing experiment
She rose, yet of pain not much heedful
So long as the process was needful, —
As if she had tried in a crucible,
To what "speeches like gold" were reducible,
And, finding the finest prove copper,
Felt the smoke in her face was but proper ;
To know what she had *not* to trust to,
Was worth all the ashes and dust too.
She went out 'mid hooting and laughter ;
Clement Marot stayed ; I followed after,
And asked, as a grace, what it all meant ?
If she wished not the rash deed's recal'ment ?
"For I" — so I spoke — "am a poet :
Human nature, — behooves that I know it !"

She told me, "Too long had I heard
Of the deed proved alone by the word :
For my love — what De Lorge would not
dare !
With my scorn — what De Lorge could com-
pare !
And the endless descriptions of death



“AND FULL IN THE FACE OF ITS OWNER FLUNG THE
GLOVE.”

He would brave when my lip formed a breath,
I must reckon as braved, or, of course,
Doubt his word — and moreover, perforce,
For such gifts as no lady could spurn,
Must offer my love in return.
When I looked on your lion, it brought
All the dangers at once to my thought,
Encountered by all sorts of men,
Before he was lodged in his den, —
From the poor slave whose club or bare hands
Dug the trap, set the snare on the sands,
With no King and no Court to applaud,
By no shame, should he shrink, overawed,
Yet to capture the creature made shift,
That his rude boys might laugh at the gift,
— To the page who last leaped o'er the fence
Of the pit, on no greater pretence
Than to get back the bonnet he dropped,
Lest his pay for a week should be stopped.
So, wiser I judged it to make
One trial what 'death for my sake'
Really meant, while the power was yet mine,
Than to wait until time should define
Such a phrase not so simply as I,
Who took it to mean just 'to die.'
The blow a glove gives is but weak :
Does the mark yet discolour my cheek ?
But when the heart suffers a blow,
Will the pain pass so soon, do you know ?''

I looked, as away she was sweeping,
And saw a youth eagerly keeping
As close as he dared to the doorway.
No doubt that a noble should more weigh
His life than befits a plebeian ;
And yet, had our brute been Nemean —
(I judge by a certain calm fervour
The youth stepped with, forward to serve her)
— He'd have scarce thought you did him
the worst turn
If you whispered, “ Friend, what you'd get,
first earn ! ”
And when, shortly after, she carried
Her shame from the Court, and they married,
To that marriage some happiness, maugre
The voice of the Court, I dared augur.

THE END.

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