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ISAÛRE  
AND OTHER POEMS

W. STEWART ROSS



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IS A U R E  
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

W. STEWART ROSS,

AUTHOR OF "LAYS OF ROMANCE AND CHIVALRY," ETC.



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## Dedication.

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THIS LITTLE VOLUME OF VERSE IS INSCRIBED WITH EVERY  
SENTIMENT OF RESPECT TO

CAPTAIN W. B. M<sup>c</sup>TAGGART,

AUTHOR OF "ABSOLUTE RELATIVISM,"

BY HIS FAITHFUL FRIEND,

W. STEWART ROSS.

91668

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# ISAURE AND OTHER POEMS.



## ISAURE.

### I.

OH, the sweet Isaure is dying !  
    Death chills her finger tips,  
Though girlish life still lingers there  
    Upon her warm red lips.  
Grim and umbre King of Terrors,  
    You 'll be more lovely now ;  
You take the earth's most radiant gem  
    To flash upon your brow ;  
And since Isaure has joined thee  
    On the mysterious shore,  
Love has o'er-mastered terror,  
    And I 'll dread thee nevermore !

Alas, Isaure, my heart will break  
    To see you lie so low,  
The shadow of mortality  
    Upon the crimson glow

Of the rose of budding girlhood,  
Ere the glory of its bloom  
To be rooted up and planted  
In the garden of the tomb.  
'Tis a dear one who bends o'er you,  
The dearest name you knew—  
One who would leave this earnest life  
And press that bier for you,  
For you strip off the iron  
Of his young life's battle-mail  
And don instead the coffin boards  
Joined by the coffin nail.

'Twas only in last summer, 'neath  
The beech tree's glittering sheen,  
And the dew—cool vesper ichor—  
Lay on the village green ;  
The wall-flower from the ruin  
Scattered an incense sweet,  
And tufted blue forget-me-nots  
Were tangled round our feet ;  
The gnats were dancing o'er us  
In merry, mystic whirl—  
That was the first time in my life  
I'd ever kissed a girl—  
You blushed, and then you laughed outright,  
But now you're lying low,  
And the might of love I've borne you,  
Alas, you cannot know !

It is winter, hard and cheerless ;  
    A sunbeam here and there  
Is piercing like a charnel light  
    The cold and brumal air.  
Oh, would that it were summer !  
    The roses fresh in dew,  
And flushed with morning's kisses,  
    I'd bring, Isaure, to you ;  
And my soul would leap in rapture  
    With the sense that you were fair,  
With the wall-flower in your bosom  
    And the lily in your hair.  
Ah, the flowers would bring you memories  
    Of the lay the lark has sung,  
And all the floral nipples where  
    The belted bee has hung ;  
Of the drooping honeysuckle  
    And the hare-bells on the wold,  
And the red lips of the clover  
    'Mong the buttercups of gold.

It is vain, now all is over :  
    For thy ethereal hair  
The long lush-grasses undulate  
    'Mong tombstones white and bare ;  
And beneath the dreary heaven  
    I weary stand alone,  
Dreaming above the word "ISAURE,"  
    Carved on the cold, grey stone.

And the voices of the maidens  
Come wafted from the green,  
The snatches wild of rural song  
With the loud laugh between.  
Ah, let them laugh ; they little deem  
The pain their laugh is giving ;  
I would not give to their fairest fair  
This tear-wet tress of the dead girl's hair  
For all the maidens living.

Isaure, the light gleams weirdly  
'Mong the quivering beechen sheen,  
And funeral trains of mist roll past  
Over the village green.  
By the burn side you walk with me  
In long and white attire ;  
In the lone night I see you 'mong  
The faces in the fire.

I stand on the cis-mortal,  
And I gaze with 'wilder'd eye  
To the mists of the trans-mortal  
And the signs called Live and Die.  
But the sombre wall of nescience  
Mocks at the feeble brain,  
And, from the dark, my torture cry  
Is echo'd not again.

Let me dream in this cis-mortal,  
 And the noblest dream I can,  
 Until its skirt may touch the shores  
 Yet never touched by man :  
 Let me dream far from the formulæ,  
 And I may dream more nigh  
 To the sable shore of Mystery  
 And the signs of Live and Die.

Dream ! Dream our trysting place shall be,  
 The azure's holiest star—  
 Of Love, the quenchless, deathless,  
 Life, glory, and Isaure !

## II.

For aye youth's ardent anthem's o'er  
 And sered the summer bloom ;  
 Life's day-star's set for evermore  
 Behind the trophied tomb—

The temple tomb, the marble grave ;  
 There let the maiden lie,  
 With knights as knightly and as brave  
 As ere wore sword on thigh.

In vain the hawthorn blooms afar,  
 In vain the lindens wave ;  
 There would we meet, but even's star  
 Is weeping o'er her grave.

There would we meet, as oft we met  
    In blissful days of old,  
When the red sun, a disc half-set,  
    Bathed earth in grey and gold ;

When radiant clouds far westward curled  
    Their shadows on the lea,  
And smiled like angels o'er the world,  
    But not so blest as we.

Oh ! dim is now the bright blue eye  
    That oft looked love to mine ;  
Low with the worm the sylph-like form  
    Sleeps in the pale moonshine.

The mouth is full of humid clay  
    That spake my boyish name—  
That spake of laurel leaf and bay,  
    Of triumph, might, and fame.

What are they now, e'en were they mine?—  
    The Olympian game is o'er,  
My arm is weak for fight divine,  
    Since her high heart's no more.

The lip, once like the summer rose,  
    The pallid marble brow—  
Where I have kissed, in moments blest,  
    The grave-worm revels now.

The footstep, light as thistle-down,  
    In the ruddy autumn day,  
Light hath flown to the silent town,  
    To the street of graveyard clay.

Yet, from the skirts of yonder cloud,  
    High o'er the linden tree,  
A maiden stoops in saintly shroud,  
    And beckons unto me.

'Tis her, Isaure, on Heaven's hill,  
    Her eye not closed and dim ;  
Her wavy ringlets wave at will  
    O'er Time's eternal brim.

The fairy step, the witching smile,  
    The gracefulness of mould,  
Appear the while—each mystic wile,  
    Each tress of burning gold.

And holy words, earth never hears,  
    Say : "Come, thy angel-maiden,  
From hopes and fears, from toils and tears,  
    Awaits thee now in Aidenn."

The dream, the dream, let me not wake—  
    Waking's so mean and stale ;  
Still let me see the sunlight shake  
    Across the summer vale,

And quiver on the waving grass  
And burn upon the stream ;  
And never let my footsteps pass  
The realm of mystic dream.

For there, with daisies 'neath her tread  
And roses in her hair,  
The holy wanderer from the dead  
Gleams in the earth and air.

Half-buried in the grass I lie,  
My back to the humid sod,  
And look with half-closed dreamy eye  
Through the far clouds to God.

Thus let me lie, the earth is curst,  
Isaure alone remains,  
And from the quivering beech-tree burst  
Anon immortal strains.

To the rank world 'tis but the wind  
Among the fluttering leaves,  
And eve's grey lantern left behind  
Among the yellow sheaves.

'Tis more to me, 'tis love and life,  
'Tis Isaure's song and hand,  
'Tis Heaven's own voice, with blessings rife  
Blessing a barren land,



And gilding o'er the horrent tomb  
Down by yon shuddering spire,  
Where rays lie interspersed with gloom,  
Across the graves like fire.

My eyes I will not ope to-day,  
Here let me lie and dream,  
O'er me cloud phantoms gold and grey,  
Near me the low-voiced stream.

'Tis thus alone I meet Isaure,  
As in the olden time,  
Above us sharp the vesper star,  
Round us the harvest's prime.

Her rosy lip, her rippling hair,  
Are with me as I dream;  
Her form evolves from viewless air,  
Her voice is in the stream.

I lie above and she below  
The daisies tipped with red;  
And, wake me not, I yearn to know  
That I, like her, am dead.

For death and life are really one :  
Things are not what they seem ;  
And who would live beneath the sun  
When he can die and dream,

And clasp the hand of his dear dead  
 And kiss her rippling hair,  
 And lay his eerie, weary head  
 On her bosom high and bare ?

A curse on what cold Science says !  
 I drift adown the stream ;  
 Isaure, I'll meet thee by-and-bye—  
 Isaure, the truth is but a lie  
 That wakes me from my dream.

## III.

The iron wings of Death's simoom  
 Through the great forest tears ;  
 And one fierce star of Mors and Nox  
 Down on the gravestone glares.  
 And coffins blur the gibbous moon,  
 And, of the black To Be,  
 Sings in its muffled thunder  
 The swinging, plunging sea,  
 And hurls its hills of feathery foam  
 Far up the shingly shore,  
 Where, hand in hand, my lost Isaure,  
 We'll wander never more.

My lip is cold from thy cold lip :  
 Your gold hair with my brown  
 Is mingled on the winding-sheet ;  
 And, would that tears would drown

The burning fire of tearless woe  
Over thy mortal clay,  
Lit from the altar-stone of hell  
To burn my life away.

One of the few who knew me,  
For you life's darg is o'er;  
One of the few who loved me,  
You love or hate no more.  
For the mystic Part is gathered  
Unto the mystic Whole,  
And the vague lines of non-Being  
Are scribbled o'er thy soul;  
And loftier the morning star  
Burns on the heaven's brow,  
For to the vastness of the world,  
Isaure, thou 'rt added now ;  
But I am smaller, death-cold maid ;  
Down where the shadows loom,  
For evermore I lean against  
The black door of thy tomb,  
And cry for entrance, lost Isaure,  
Till pale Death bring the key  
To open up the holy vault  
And lay me down with thee :  
To mingle bone and hair and dust,  
The benison I crave,  
The bed of clay, the sheet of stone,  
The bridal of the grave.

And the woodlands, the green woodlands,  
Where we strayed where none could see,  
Where the wild-rose climbed the hazel  
And coquetted with the bee ;  
Where the clouds, like wings of angels,  
Hung above the streaming trees,  
And the songs of gods and heroes  
Were in the sylvan breeze ;  
And I told you tales of amour,  
And the legends of lang-syne,  
In the whisper of the linden  
And the murmur of the pine ;  
And we roamed, a youth and maiden,  
'Mong the breckens on the hill,  
And your soft cheek touched my forehead  
With a glow that warms it still,  
And, blushing deeper e'en than you,  
I culled with meikle care  
The burning crown of buttercups  
To gleam upon your hair.

Hard-paced the iron years have gone  
Over my head since then ;  
I've haunted in a waking dream  
The paths of living men ;  
But of this world my kingdom's not,  
Like Him of Galilee,  
For I grasp hands they cannot feel,  
See forms they cannot see.

Wife, child!—I've these, loving and loved,  
    Yet day and night I crave  
For a virgin's child that was never born  
    And a bride that's in the grave;  
And through all toil and through all hope,  
    Forever and aye the theme  
Are my ardent years, my pale Isaure,  
    And boyhood's glorious dream;  
The shimmering beech, the sombre fir,  
    The calm and sunlit river,  
That saw my hand on the maiden's hair  
    But told the secret never;  
That saw the maiden's hand in mine,  
    But silence kept for ever.

Maiden, behold your lover  
    Out here where tempests rave,  
Though his heart for years has rested  
    'Mong the ashes in your grave;  
Tomes in the midnight study,  
    Forms at the midnight ball,  
A maiden in her winding-sheet  
    Is mingled with them all!

It is vain : now all is over,  
    For thy ethereal hair  
The long lush-grasses undulate  
    'Mong tombstones white and bare.

There moves the aërial catafalque :  
 My maid, Isaure, 'tis thou,  
 The tomb's white robe upon thy breast  
 And lilies on thy brow.

## IV.

The grass-hopper leaps in the sun-weary grass,  
 And the sun lays his hand on his brow  
 And looks slantingly down through the shimmering mass  
 Of the branches that shadow the knowe.

And I lie on the knowe, my length to its length,  
 Deep sunk in the weeds from the world far away,  
 And dim visions stream in the pomp of a dream  
 Through the long dreamy hours of the long dreamy day.

The daisies amid, I lie dead 'mong the dead,  
 For the branches are yew and the knowe is a grave ;  
 And half-waking dreams haunt my grass-covered head,  
 That the living are cowards, that the dead are the brave.

I dream, half asleep ; but I'm happy the while,  
 My pillow the weeds and my curtain the sky,  
 The world far away, and the kind solemn clay  
 So near—underneath the warm grass where I lie.

The lizard is drowsy and basks in the light,  
 And hushed is the laverock's song in the tree ;  
 'Tis mid-day, and yet 'tis a mid-day of Night,  
 Of Erebus, Terror, and Death unto me.

Deep down in the knowe, my kiss on her brow,  
Dim on the dim side of Life's harbour bar,  
With her ardour and love, her ring and her vow,  
With my heart on her breast, lies the maiden, Isaure.

Her white feet are swathed in the linen and shavings,  
My head pressed her bosom, the worm is now there,  
And the blast o'er her tomb mingles wild with my ravings,  
And the gravel is mixed with the gold of her hair!

And mourning is tame and sanity's shame  
When the light of life's lamp is away,  
And the eyes of Isaure, deep down and afar,  
Are stopped by the gravel and clay.

Yet they glare at me up through the gravel and clay,  
And they're burning twin holes in my brain;  
And there's agony, agony, all through the day,  
And pain on the shoulders of pain.

Red is the earth, red-raw is the stone,  
With the deeply-cut legend "ISAURE,"  
Where the windlestraw nods to Gehenna's dim gods,  
With their thrones on the cloud and the star.

And the ribs of the clouds widen wide with a moan,  
And through them the winter winds yell;  
And the Thunder's red heels, as from heaven he reels,  
Ring bass to the chorus of Hell.

\* \* \* \* \*

Deep lies the snow on the charnel below,  
 And weird is the wink of the moon ;  
 I am sober and sane, but there's ice on my brain,  
 Gleaming cold 'mong the roses of June.

And I lean on the stone, with Death all alone,  
 And o'er me a fiend of a star,  
 That looks with a leer, each night in the year,  
 On the deep-chiselled legend "ISAURE."

\* \* \* \* \*

And the moon keeps away, and will not come near,  
 And the winds ever thunder and roar,  
 And I know that for me, on the earth or the sea,  
 The sun will arise nevermore.

For the tread of the dance wakes a boom from the tomb,  
 And the rose sheds decay in each waft of her breath :  
 And the lily's white lips, in the flush of her bloom,  
 Are pale with the cerements and pallor of death.

No Morning, no Day, on that snow and that clay,  
 Ever Night, with that fiend of a star,  
 With its demon-like leer, every night of the year,  
 On the deep-chiselled legend "ISAURE."

And visions are limned on the canvas of Pain,  
 The robin sits mute in the wild, withered thorn,  
 And the tall yew is dim in the smurr of the rain,  
 And the cry of the land-rail is heard in the corn.



I shudder, I shriek, O fearful Isaure !

The hearse-plumes of heaven wave wild in thy breath,  
And you frown on me down like an ominous star  
Set high in the sky of the midnight of Death.

'Tis madness, I know ; but who would be sane,  
When Insanity's gonfalon flames on the shore ?  
When torches from hell light the caves of the brain,  
And illumine the moon o'er the dim Nevermore !

Ah ! stale is the sane, and pain the insane,  
For the rays cut like swords from that fiend of a star ;  
But madness is well, with its wading in hell  
To place one hot kiss on the lips of Isaure !

## THE POET TO HIS OLD COAT.

My poor old friend laid on the shelf,  
 With pockets reft of scanty pelf,  
     What hand shall now refund ye?  
 Ah, there ye hang, the wrong side out,  
 A common piece of woollen clout—  
     *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

When you were new and I was young,  
 I dreamt I heard my musings sung  
     In splendid colosseum;  
 And saw you, o'er this century's bounds,  
 Sold cheaply at a hundred pounds  
     To some high-class museum.

“The pockets! yes,” I heard them say,  
 Beside yon burnt Etrurian clay—  
     That ancient Roman jar—  
 That is the *bonâ fide* coat  
 He wore when “Larrendill” he wrote,  
     And “Lays of Runie War.”

Poor coat, how oft I've sung in you  
 The “Scots lad and his bonnet blue,”  
     And smart “Pop goes the Weazel”!

Thinking how oft my form and face  
 The future world would strive to trace  
     By chisel, lens, and easel.

Alas, the poet's empty dreams !  
 Aye looking to horizon beams,  
     Some nearer object trips him.  
 Will I e'er stand ? Then, how and where—  
 In drawing-room or city square,  
     In marble, bronze, or gypsum ?

If there's no Ego in our teens,  
 No wild, pulsating heart that leans  
     Bold out to the ecstatic,  
 Then, long ere life's dull noon has come,  
 No trumpet blast, no roll of drum,  
     Can rouse from the phlegmatic.

But, poor old coat! forgive me bland;  
 That day I asked proud Dora's hand  
     Thy worn sleeves met detection ;  
 And well I know she loved the man,  
 You scarce escaped the bardic ban—  
     You were the main objection.

And many a fête, and levée too,  
 Had I attended, but for you—  
     St Stephen's—and elsewhere !  
 And been the Laureate long ere this,  
 Nor shipwrecked on the shores of bliss—  
     But hang me, if I care !

I've held the dignity of man,  
Some way between life's rear and van,  
    And let the craven wonder—  
The lack of gold ne'er dimmed mine eye ;  
Thy nap worn off ne'er cost a sigh  
    The heart you sheltered under.

And now, old coat, a kind adieu ;  
Harmless I've lived and rhymed with you  
    By many a rural scene ;  
And you have seen more real mirth  
On deep blue sky and wild green earth  
    Than finer coats have seen.

Old friend, a daisy in your breast,  
    When skies were blue and earth was young,  
My sun of life far from the west,  
    When heart and harp were strung,  
Was joy such as a king ne'er knew,  
    When gems around him burned and glowed,  
When o'er him captured standards flew,  
    When goblets flashed and red wine flowed.

By the crow-nest high in the gloomy pine,  
    With hands and garments riven  
I shouted Bravo ! to the earth below,  
    And Hurrah ! to the flying heaven ;

And the psalms of David and songs of Burns  
Rang from my Doric tongue,  
Or the crashing battle lays of Scott  
To the mountain storm I flung.

Over the neck in breckens,  
In the burning summer days,  
Up to the waste in heather,  
With broom flowers all ablaze,  
You went with me, old garment,  
By loch and waterfall,  
And Day was then an anthem,  
And Night a madrigal.

And oh, the rough unuttered joy  
To paidle in the mountain stream,  
And see, dim mirrored far below,  
The sky shake in a world of Dream—  
As healthy as the hazel spray,  
As sunburnt as the autumn corn,  
Untroubled as the eve of day,  
And happy as the laughing morn.

My head ached not, my brow was cool,  
Cool as the fresh breeze of the hill ;  
No midnight brought the midnight lamp,  
And fevered hours with Kant and Mill.  
For all my thoughts were only dreams  
Of rock and burn that round me lay,  
And the grey mountains, stern and grand,  
Of dear and distant Galloway.

The mist rolled up Carsegowan Hill  
 In streaming layers of gold and blue,  
 And through it flashed in purple red  
 The reeking blood of Waterloo;\*  
 And the wild lore of cairns and graves  
 Was all the learning then I knew.

And on the hill at midnight,  
 In weird and starless gloom,  
 I have knelt and kissed the heather,  
 Dank on the martyr's tomb;  
 And peered in fierce abstraction  
 To life's remotest fringe,  
 And beat at heaven's portal  
 Till I broke its nether hinge;  
 And then I've trod the moorland,  
 With the air of dare and die,  
 And yearned to follow Ritchie †  
 From the heather to the sky.

\* On the summit of Carsegowan Hill, Kirkcudbrightshire, there is a rude granite monument in memory of the Battle of Waterloo.

† Richard Cameron was affectionately known in Covenanting and subsequent times as "Ritchie." He and the major portion of his little band fell fighting bravely at Airs Moss, in 1680. He was the founder of that austere sect of Scotch Presbyterians known as the Cameronians. Tradition reports that the celebrated Covenanter, Alexander Peden, died, pronouncing the words, "O to be wi' Ritchie!" In 1689 the Cameronians raised a regiment to support William III. In 1712 the Cameronians renewed their public covenants, and are described in one of their tracts as "the suffering, anti-Popish, anti-Prelatical, anti-Erasian, true Presbyterian Church of Scotland." They had, recently, between thirty and forty congregations in Scotland.

Against my open Bible  
 My heart pulsed like a drum,  
 And, through the riven clouds, I saw  
 The World that is to Come.  
 O unrest of a Heckla heart,  
 Strong with the pulse of three—  
 Who never blessed so bitterly  
 Can never curse like me !

Maturer days came trooping on ;  
 Good was half lost in worlds of ill ;  
 My fevered brow was cooled no more  
 By the fresh breezes of the hill :  
 Hard coming o'er " Defective Verbs "   
 I wore defective shoes,  
 And for long months went dinnerless  
 A-wooing of the muse.  
 Euterpe's smile brings no red gold ;  
 The fire of Clio's lyre  
 Can never boil the prandial pot  
 Upon the household fire.  
 And so you were my " singing robe,"  
 Old coat, for many a year—  
 Excuse me now, I use your tail  
 To wipe away a tear.

You warmed me, aye, as best you could,  
 When other friends were cold :  
 Your deepest pouch my coppers bore,  
 For then I had no gold :

There bits of pencil lay in store,  
 And scraps of paper scribbled o'er  
     With words from suffering wrung,  
 Harsh 'gainst a world that sneered at thee,  
 A heartless world not made for me,  
     That starved me while I sung ;  
 And, as I lean and leaner grew,  
 I thought that you would leave me too,  
     So lank and loose you hung.

'Twas sad on that eventful day  
 When your right elbow first gave way,  
     While I toiled on for Fame ;  
 For weeks before, in frost and snow,  
 The thin old shirt I wore below  
     Had done the very same !  
 Bitter, I felt I'd stick the world,  
     But I'd no knife to stick it ;  
 Gnashing I tried to kick the world,  
     But I'd no shoes to kick it.

But do not wail your fate as hard,  
 For you've been garment to a Bard ;  
     Be stern and proud as he ;  
 The finest coat in Hyam's mart \*  
 Has ne'er been warmed by minstrel's heart,  
     And likely ne'er shall be.

\* Hyam was one of the best-known tailors in Glasgow in the author's college days.



Am I a Bard? For Yes or No  
Pronounced by you, big world below,  
I care not one bawbee ;  
How best to win and lay out pelf,  
And make a snug nest for yourself,  
Is full well known to thee ;  
But if I feel the Poet's blood  
Surge through my veins, a fiery flood,  
Is better known by me,  
As I dash up Parnassus hill  
Over your vulgar shop and till  
In daring chivalrie,  
To whisper to the starry sky  
Or woo the midnight sea.

## MAGGIE HAY.

I REMEMBER, long ago,  
Where the Lochar's waters flow  
    'Mid daffodils and sedges ;  
Where summer's sunlight tints the stream,  
And trembles light with lambent beam  
    Upon the grassy ledges.

With faint, dull hum, the wild bee sipped  
The odorous heather, purple-lipped,  
    In drowsy, drowsy dream ;  
The ash-tree, with the elder bush,  
Shook hands in gloamin's solemn hush  
    Across the sombre stream.

Amid the swathes of new-mown hay  
I saw two happy children play,  
    Unconscious of life's woes :  
The prologue for its weary hours  
Was read that day among the flowers--  
    The curtain slowly rose

O happy were the children there !  
Fresh water-lilies decked the hair  
    Of little Maggie Hay ;

Her pinafore of snowy white  
Was filled with hare-bells flushing bright  
On that warm summer day.

In young life's mirth her glad blue eye  
Looked laughing to the deep blue sky,  
In sunny girlhood's joy.  
She marked, as in a lotus dream,  
Aye casting stones into the stream,  
A fair-haired pensive boy.

Deep thought was on his lofty brow,  
Or weird abstraction anyhow,  
For Frank was seldom scheming :  
A fairy world around him lay,  
The little fairy, Maggie Hay,  
Of all his mystic dreaming.

The love that makes the boy a man  
Ecstatic through life's currents ran  
And widened earth and sky ;  
And hung a harp on every tree,  
And made a bard of every bee,  
A bard sublime and high.

" O Frank, dear Frank," thus laughing said,  
Catching his sleeve, the little maid,  
" Why are you musing so ?  
O twine this wild rose wreath for me :  
Be merry, Frank, for I will be  
Your little wife, you know."

He twined the wreath with loving care,  
And placed it on the radiant hair  
    Of girlish Maggie Hay:  
The blue bell and the maiden's eye  
Were of the same celestial dye  
    Against the skirts of day.

The wild rose clinging to the ash,  
Whose roots were in the water's plash,  
    Fair in the wreath was set;  
Casting its carmine o'er a brow  
That 'neath a kiss that sealed a vow  
    Burned, blushed still lovelier yet.

Years fled: there was another scene  
'Mong mossy Lochar's ledges green.  
    The claims of life and duty  
Had made less glad that fair girl now,  
And made more stern the pensive brow  
    Of Frank in manly beauty.

“And, oh!” he said, in accents bland,  
“Your father's pride withholds your hand,  
    My Maggie, now adieu:  
Remember me, and, far away,  
I'll prove thro' many a toilsome day  
    That I am worthy you.”

They plighted vows by heaven above  
That nought but death might end their love;  
    They kissed, they wept, they parted.

Ah, who can picture forth the pain  
When long must part the heaving main,  
The fair and noble-hearted!

The world has changed the strong man's heart,  
And links that nought on earth might part,  
Until confirmed above:  
Time, plastic time, mutation brings  
To rocks and oceans, states and kings,  
But ne'er to woman's love.

Oh, hapless Frank, he battles far,  
With gallant front in fortune's war,  
With manly heart and hand;  
For many years of her he thought—  
Oh, it was long ere he forgot.  
Her in the far-off land.

With strong, rough hand and anxious brain  
He met the big world's tug and strain  
In fight by night and day,  
Till other lands and other climes,  
And wealth, and power, and other times  
Erased sweet Maggie Hay.

Man may have powerful intellect,  
Trained mind and matter to dissect,  
A will his heart to tame:  
Man, vaunt of intellectual might,  
The powers of darkness and of night!  
The fiends may do the same.

But woman has the better part,  
The tender yet the changeless heart  
    Round which mutations ring.  
A maiden's heart must love or break  
And be, deceiver, for thy sake,  
    An aching, shattered thing.

Frank gained a dark-eyed maiden's hand  
Afar off in the stranger's land;  
    But, o'er the ocean wave,  
His little trusting Maggie heard,  
Clasped her meek hands, asked heaven's regard,  
    And filled an early grave.

Now, where I saw that girl and boy  
Play 'mong the flowers in young life's joy  
    On that warm summer day;  
Flushed in the red light of the west,  
The wild-rose shades the death-cold breast  
    Of little Maggie Hay.

The tombstone in the autumn sun  
Is mossy-green and dusk and dun,  
    The letters lichened o'er;  
There's moss and lichen in my soul,  
As past me, o'er me, darkly roll  
    The years that are no more.

## THE DECLARATION OF SANQUHAR.

*June 22, 1680.*

Standing on the nether side of the gulf of two centuries, I behold men of my own blood and nationality gallantly struggling to perform the task which I am engaged in now—the establishment of mental and civil liberty. They were steeped in the dogmatic Calvinism which I have relinquished—not that I am, *per se*, wiser than they, but because I have the advantage of living two centuries later. Two centuries hence the contentions I urge will seem crude, rude, and benighted, and liberal thought will have left them far behind in the night which darkens down upon effete speculations and exploded theories. The very language in which I now write will have become old-fashioned, anachronistic, and half obsolete. The teachings I promulgate are likely to be as far out of harmony with the advanced thought of two hundred years hence as mine are out of harmony with the sermons of Peden and Renwick two hundred years ago. As Protagoras put it, “the truth is what thou trowest.” The standard is relative, not absolute. Man never can get outside his ego, made up by his heredity and environment. I do not venerate the Covenanters because they taught the truth, as it seems to me; and I cannot hope to be remembered or venerated as having taught the truth, but as having done something, considering my epoch and opportunities, to break down the cast-iron barriers of mental conservatism—not that Truth may reach her goal, but that she may march on, less impeded, less encumbered, on the journey which can never end, but every progressive milestone of which is of incalculable significance to the benighted, struggling, and embarrassed sons of men.

The Covenanters did as much for truth and liberty in their day as the best of us can attempt to do in ours, and at infinitely greater sacrifice and peril. Wherever the banner of Freedom plunges through the battle-storm, my whole heart and soul is there, the common link of manhood is remembered, the common blot of error is forgiven; and so, with heaving breast, and quivering lip, I strike the martyr lyre of my native Caledonia.

YE wha revere the ashes  
     O' your country's martyr-fires,  
 And ye wha's guid auld Scottish bluid  
     Is worthy o' your sires,  
 Come and listen to a lay  
     O' the Banner o' the Blue,  
 And what the men o' Scotland  
     Did lang syne daur and do ;  
 How they fearless to the torture  
     And to the scaffold trod,  
 And broke the tyranny o' kings  
     Against the targe o' God,  
 When cruel Dalzell and Grier o' Lag  
     And bluidy Claver'se slew,  
 Till ilka blade o' Scottish grass  
     Kep'd bluid instead o' dew.

The craftsman waxed heroic,  
     And the peasant grew sublime,  
 To confront the raeck and dungeon  
     O' the dreary "killin' time" :  
 They perished on the misty hills  
     O' rugged Galloway,  
 Their life-bluid dyed the wimplin' burns  
     O' Urr and Irongray,  
 The auld stane brig o' Bothwell  
     Was cumbered wi' their deid,  
 And the breckens became purple  
     And the heather darker reid :



The fire, the sword, the roarin' wave,  
 The scaffold gaunt and high,  
 Had seen the martyr thousands  
 O' the wale o' Scotland die ;  
 Nae siller linin' to the clud,  
 Nae whusper in the air,  
 To say that up in heeven abune  
 The airm o' God was bare.

God's witnesses in dungeon lay,  
 God's puir folk wandered lone,  
 Falsehood sat in the council chair,  
 And baseness on the throne.  
 Frae lairs amang the breckens hid,  
 Frae slaves on burnin' lands,  
 Frae whaur guilt-tortured womankind  
 Shrieked frae the Bladnoch sands,  
 Frae whaur on thy reid "sands," Dumfries,  
 The life bluid ebbit slow,  
 Frae whaur the psalms o' Zion thrilled  
 The wilds o' Kirkmahoe ;  
 Frae whaur pale Daith yankt owre Drumclog,  
 Frae Pentland, cauld and still,  
 Whaur bluidy spears and bible leaves  
 Lay on the lanely hill,  
 Whaur pee-wheets yelpt and corbies pykit  
 The deid man's graveless banes ;  
 Frae whaur the neive o' Daith doon strikit  
 The deid man's shulpit wanes.

Frae sauls beneath the altar-stane,  
 Daith-gasp and deein' groan,  
 A cry rose to the livin' God  
 That shook the Stewart's throne.

'Twas when the green leaves prinkt the trees,  
 Burns sang their peacefu' croon  
 A' in the gowden simmer prime  
 O' rosy-mantled June,  
 The laverock sang high in the air,  
 The white cluds floated slow  
 Owre twenty stern determined men  
 Twa hundred years ago ;  
 Frae the owre-hingin' deep blue hills  
 The reid sun glintin' down  
 Saw twenty o' Christ's witnesses  
 Ride into Sanquhar toun :  
 The holy psalm, the voice o' prayer,  
 And then the warnin' ring  
 O' words renouncin' fealty  
 Unto a perjured king.

Feeble and few were those wha daured  
 Foretell a kingdom's loss ;  
 But fearless they the dauntless words  
 Nailed to the Sanquhar Cross :  
 Humble heroic rebels ye !  
 If the time e'er come to fling  
 The defiance o' the People  
 'Gainst the airmies o' the King,

Here is ane sprung frae your loins  
 Wha shall grimly tak' his place,  
 And daur to hurl the gauntlet  
 Richt in the tyrant's face !

O wild it seemed when outlawed folk  
 Proclaimed an empty throne,  
 Sentenced to exile royal lives,  
 And could not save their own ;  
 Then scattered to the purple muir,  
 The mountain and the glen,  
 Against a mighty empire  
 The ban o' twenty men !

On wild Airs Moss lay Cameron low,  
 Peden slept 'neath the stane,  
 Young Renwick from the scaffold high  
 Unto his Lord had gane ;  
 Broken was Balfour's lippit sword,  
 Sair duntit Paton's mail,  
 Sair, sair was Mitchell's agony  
 And the torture o' M'Kail :  
 Few saw the signs o' comin' doom,  
 The writin' on the wa' ;  
 But the false monarch's cup was fu',  
 He tottered to his fa' :

\* \* \* \*

Wae to the race that sat enthroned  
 Upon a People's pain ;  
 Their Lord is God ; his martyred anes  
 Cry not to him in vain !

## THE SUICIDE.

*(Dedicated to the Shade of Chatterton.)*

'Tis night ! save me and the gibbous moon,  
And the world's in dreamless sleep ;  
Soon another morn of the rosy June  
Shall purple the sounding deep.

But the breath of life and the light of day,  
On the stops and chords of my heart  
Touch not with the warmth of the faintest ray  
From the lofty shrine of ART.

There beckons Fame, here yawns the Tomb :  
For neither care I now,  
Nor upas leaves nor garland's bloom  
To wreath my boyish brow.

The candent lavas scorch my feet ;  
But then—the grave is cold,  
And soon shall quench my hectic heat,  
The charnel's clammy mould.

The candle's burning to the skull,\*  
In my skull's phrenzy's reign,  
And Heckla rivers—weltering fire—  
Plunge through my frantic brain,

\* Chatterton was wont to study by the light of a candle stuck into the eye-socket of a human skull.

And on they sweep by barren hills  
 And ruins dim and hoar,  
 And there, in headlong cataracts  
 They're flashing evermore!

Pshaw! call me mad—call me aught you will—  
 Say I o'erwork this feeble clay;  
 Ah, rather than *crawl* through the centuries still,  
 I would *live* one glorious day!

One margin mark on the roll of Fame,  
 Then bury me ten miles deep,  
 And blot from your book in heaven my name—  
 Leave me in eternal sleep.

No waking needs he who never dies,  
 Absorbed in the flower and the breeze,  
 Who has conned the star-book of the midnight skies  
 And the roar of the midnight seas.

High born!—and proudly I bear my head—  
 Pen-sceptre, to me thou'rt given,  
 And my kith are the shades of the mighty dead,  
 My kin are the stars of heaven!

Do I barter life? Of a hero\* a tome  
 Speaks proud, and the Tuscan fire:  
 Cannot man do for ART what man did for Rome—  
 On the coals of her altar expire?

\* Mucius Scævola.

To my lips I upraise the poison cup,  
And I mix with the earth and the sea ;  
'Tis death, and a life over death that I sup  
At the door of the mystic To Be.

The Pale Horse champs at his bridle ring ;  
Keen, the Valkyry's breath ;  
Who lags is serf, who hastes is king,  
To the black flood of Death.

Farewell ! I dive to find the gold  
The pix of Fate contains—  
To hear songs sung ere earth was swung  
Athwart the kosmic chains.

My voice now sounds through coffin planks,  
In Styx, mid-leg I go :  
To-night I'll find what lies behind  
The Everlasting No.

I'm poor, I starve, I've nought save breath ;  
For bread it will not sell—  
I fling it on the plumes of Death  
And 'gainst the bars of hell.

Enough ! Where GENIUS is curse  
The drivelling dunce is blest—  
Leave to the dunce the universe,  
And take your kingly rest !

## LAMENT OF WALLACE FOR HIS MURDERED WIFE.

“The cause of Wallace first vowing vengeance and implacable hate to the invader was the brutal murder of his young wife by the English soldiery. She lived in the town of Lanark, where an English garrison was quartered ; and as Wallace had, on more than one occasion, resented the insults of the soldiery, it was unsafe for him to live openly in the town. Returning on one occasion from his house, which he had been visiting by stealth, he met a party belonging to the garrison, and, on their offering him insolence, a conflict ensued, in which the leader of the party was run through the body. An alarm was immediately given, whereupon the garrison poured out to the support of their comrades, who, in spite of their numbers, were being hewn down or borne back before the single arm of Wallace. But one man could not possibly cope with an entire garrison, and, to evade capture, the stalwart Scot sprang into his own house, the door of which was held open by his wife. By the time the soldiers had forced a passage, Wallace had escaped at the back of the house.

“Furious at being thus foiled, and failing to extort from her the secret of her husband’s hiding place, at the instigation of their leader, named Hazelrigg, the brutal ruffians turned upon the young wife, and stained her own floor with the blood of her faithful heart, because she would not betray the husband she loved.

“In a paroxysm of rage and grief at the horrid fate of his wife, Wallace collected a band of his countrymen. That very night they silently reached the lodging of the governor of the garrison. Wallace threw his ponderous strength against the door, which was dashed to splinters. The governor shouted from the bed, ‘Who makes that great deray?’

“It is I, Wallace, whom you have been seeking all day, responded a voice of hoarse and hollow thunder. ‘Now, vengeance for the death of my sweet Marion, whom you slew,’ and the great sword of the enraged husband was passed several times through the bed-clothes and the body of the ill-starred Englishman whom they covered, Arthur Hazelrigg, whom Edward I. had made Earl of Clydesdale.” \*

\* *History of Scotland*, by W. Stewart Ross, pp. 49, 50.

O MARION, mark a warrior weep,  
Whose patriot steel's heroic sweep  
    Ne'er shrank Death's bolts before  
But wooed the sabre's fatal flash,  
And rushed through battle's iron crash,  
    Through seas of Saxon gore.

I must conceal within my breast  
The grief that robs my soul of rest—  
    I blush the world should know;  
But lonely streams in moonbeams white,  
And all the dismal shades of night,  
    Shall hear my wail of woe!

Oh, little can the foeman know—  
Reeling in rout and overthrow  
    Before my death-clogged spear—  
The tender links death may not part  
In the deep pathos of the heart  
    That throbs so wildly here!

The vision of thy livid face,  
Mark'd with thy life blood's shuddering trace,  
    By night and day I see—  
Thy own red blood, my angel wife,  
Who poured out thy devoted life  
    To save and succour me.



Never in battle's crimson morn,  
My Marion, was thy child unborn  
    His country's foes to brave,—  
My claymore flashing through the gloom,  
I journey wifeless to the tomb,  
    And sonless to the grave.

I grasp the iron hilt of brand,  
My Marion, for thy warm white hand ;  
    And, through the deadly glen,  
The voice that whispered love to thee  
Thunders the slogan of the free  
    To battle-girded men.

Oh, Marion, innocence and truth  
Lived in the rosebud of thy youth ;  
    My first, best love was thine ;  
And, long ere thy dear lips could tell,  
I knew the holy secret well—  
    Thy girlish heart was mine.

I battled for our rightful king,\*  
My shield hung in the tourney ring,  
    I courted Fame for thee ;  
I knew a fair and high-born maid  
Wore the gay snood and rich brocade,  
    And smiled alone for me.

\* John Baliol.

My God ! how could thy pitying eye  
Behold the crime of darkest dye  
That laid my Marion low ?  
And thou, dear land, for which I've stood,  
How could'st thou drink her guiltless blood  
Warm from a villain's blow ?

But ne'er the blush of morning sky  
Could meet thy dark and damnèd eye,  
O Hazelrigg accurst ;  
And red shall flash the patriot sword,  
And free the tyrant's blood be poured,  
And slavery's shackles burst.

Departed Marion, sweet and fair,  
What earthly peril will I not dare—  
For what's the world to me ?  
Ten thousand for thy sake shall die,  
Or lowly shall thy Wallace lie  
In death, afar from thee.

Ah, blades grasped by the dead I ween,  
And banners from the Land Unseen,  
Beckon me on to doom—  
To martyr-pain and torture dire,  
To rope and axe and knife and fire,  
And death without a tomb.

My limbs are nailed to gate and wall,\*  
And Scotland stoops to tyrant's thrall,  
    But only for a day ;  
For my dead arm shall wave the free  
To martyr-death or libertie,  
    And my dead lips shall say

The word will break the despot's chain,  
And fire the coward's heart and brain,  
    By mountain, strath, and sea ;  
Till Scotland's Lion Banner waves  
O'er thirty thousand † English graves,  
    That tell the land is free.

The moonbeams kiss thy golden hair,  
A sacred halo hovers there,  
    And gilds the gloom of night !  
Oh, would that heavenly phantom last  
Of one from earth for ever passed  
    Away on forward flight !

And still 'mong Lanark's leafy trees,  
When whispers soft the evening breeze  
    O'er Nature's cradled bosom ;  
And still 'mong Elderslie's green bowers,  
All through the twilight's silent hours,  
    Thou liest on this bosom.

\* The right arm of Wallace was affixed to the bridge at Newcastle, his left was exposed at Berwick, the right limb was sent to Perth, and the left to Aberdeen. The head was raised high upon a pole on London Bridge.

† The number of the English slain at Bannockburn.

And yet thy rest is far away  
In sheen of everlasting day—  
Far realms I cannot see  
Till, mangled by the Southern hordes,  
And, breaking through Death's wall of swords,  
I come, my love, to thee.

O loved and immaterial one,  
Beyond the grave, beyond the sun,  
Illumine this weary life !  
The Virgin pray, and Jesu Lord  
For laurels for thy warrior's sword—  
My darling and my wife !

But, ah ! I see the vision fail ;  
I hear the howling midnight gale  
Sweep doleful o'er my head :  
And, oh ! such bliss can ne'er return,  
Let Wallace find the warrior's urn,  
The bloom of life is dead.

Meanwhile, 'mid groan and shriek and yell,  
And all the wild deray of hell,  
My Marion, thou art there ;  
The dagger in thy high white breast,  
Thy queenly form in breathless rest,  
The blood upon thy hair.

## ULALUME.

MADE of the warp of the chequered Past,  
And the misty Future the sibyllic woof,  
I dreamily gaze through the starry roof,  
Where the glory-flash of my soul has pass'd.

Ulalume, the vestal fire of my soul,  
With her dear white feet on the rainbow's rim  
And lit by the lamps of the cherubim,  
Is journeying skyward with my soul.

Ulalume ! Ulalume ! an angel now,  
With the hand I kissed, maid, lay it down  
'Twixt the angels' harp and the martyrs' crown,  
Thou dark-haired maiden, an angel now !

And the skies are clear and the earth is warm,  
But my heart is cold and my pulse is low,  
And the hearth of my being has ceased to glow  
Though the skies are blue and the earth is warm.

There are laurels now, but they sere my brow,  
For you are not here to behold their green,  
For you are not here to rejoice in their sheen,  
On my gloomy and thought-worn brow.

What you wait for comes, it comes at last;  
But when it comes it is time to lie down  
In the clay so chill, 'neath the grass so brown,  
For it comes too late, though it comes at last.

You are tired of the living and drift to the dead,  
Tired of the weariness, labour and sin,  
You turn from the way to the wayside inn,  
And tired of the living you drift to the dead.

The flowers you gathered were budding in dew,  
But the night settles down in mirk and gloom,  
And the withered flowers are a wreath for your tomb,  
Though your young hand grasped them, budding in dew.

And your praise is spoken by new-made friends,  
But the voices you loved can be heard nevermore,  
And phantoms stalk on Avalon's shore,  
And you're deaf to the plaudits of new-made friends.

And life circles round to where it began :  
With the frost in your heart and snow on your head,  
You slowly become kith and kin to the dead,  
And you merge in the mystery where you began.

But a glory dawns out from the gloom of the grave,  
And the sunset and hush of the eve and the west  
Lure you and lull you and sing you to rest  
'Neath the moonlight and dew-drops that gleam on the grave.

Remember, love, 'neath the linden on earth  
Where lately a mortal kissed thee, dear ;  
As immortals kiss thee, look down here,  
Remember him 'neath the linden on earth.

And remember the night 'neath the awful stars  
When your hand and your heart and your troth were given,  
To be cancelled on earth, to be kept in heaven,  
On the further side of the awful stars.

The trees grew black and the mist grew dim,  
And weird and cold as the breath of the dead ;  
And the stars disappeared and the moon grew red,  
When the trees were black and the mist was dim.

And the cold wind sighed, "Ulalume, Ulalume,"  
And a lightning flash struck the brumal sod,  
And open were flung all the doors of God,  
To receive from my arms Ulalume, Ulalume.

And open your breast in the Eden fields,  
That your heart of hearts the angels may see,  
Maiden, all of you and all of me,  
'Neath your pure white breast in the Eden fields.

And say to them I have promised you  
That I feel not pleased with this cold lyre,  
That I'll strike its chords by the altar fire  
And the urim's sheen, I have promised you.

And point them down 'mid the stars to the earth,  
    Ulalume, with that beauteous finger of thine,  
    Where a holy ring set its seal you were mine,  
When you lived in the valleys of earth.

I'll send you my love on the wings of prayer—  
    Come down to the gate to receive it, dear;  
    Sin has dimmed all the gifts I could find you here,  
Yet accept of my love from the wings of prayer!

Where a lustre sleeps on the Eden hills,  
    Rapt we'll recline where the radiance rests,  
    And my head shall lie on your high white breasts,  
In the glow of the Eden hills!



## A NIGHTMARE.

“ Exegi monumentum ære perennius ? ”

In a midnight dream, a ruined tower  
    Stood where the tempest raved,  
Wild on it splashed the thunder shower,  
    And the dreary ivy waved ;  
And the banner streamed on the midnight's breath.  
Like the hearse's plume on the march of Death.  
Oh, the dark wind wailed to the midnight sky,  
And howled in the grave of a world gone by ;  
The voice of the ages rang out sublime  
From the gloom in the belfry tower of Time.  
    And lashed around the unctuous wall,  
    Crenal and corbel dun,  
More huge than Norway's loftiest pine,  
    A dim snake coiled and spun ;  
And his vermicular grasp held up  
    The ruin rent by Time :  
Gibbous looked down the shuddering moon  
    On weltering miles of slime  
Which marked where he had coiled and trailed,  
    O'er freeman and o'er slave,  
Over the sword, across the plough,  
    The rose-bed and the grave.

Ghostly sounds, and the graveyard's breath  
Came from embrasures dark as death,  
As if earth in a fevered dream  
    Enacted her yesterday,  
Naming some with a frantic scream  
    From the millions past away.  
And 'gainst the lichened stones that rocked  
    And shuddered in the storm,  
Impalpable and statuesque,  
    There leant a human form ;  
For, through the countless myriads  
    Of ceaseless deaths and lives,  
The generations pass away,  
    And yet the race survives.  
No mortal form on the rampart stood,  
But the mossy stones seemed dyed with blood,  
As the moon looked down, thro' the black clouds riven  
With a lurid flash from the troubled heaven.  
The studded gate swung with a grating din,  
And, nerved with horror, I entered in.

'Neath the ebon beam, where a dim lamp swung,  
    An old man sat on an iron chair,  
And over his back like a torrent hung,  
    Dishevelled folds of his silver hair.  
An ample tome lay on his knee,  
    Recording Nature's birth,  
And all since on the sounding sea  
    And beautiful green earth ;

The wrecks since time began  
Lay piled around him there,  
Shreds of old worlds and fragile man  
Lay round that awful chair,  
And horrent ribs of shattered stars  
Fallen from heavens long past away,  
And moons that held, ere earth was born,  
The silvern splendour of their way,  
And brands that lit ere man was yet  
The flashing altar fires of day ;  
Dry heaps of dust, and rust, and bones,  
Old sceptres, and old sculptured stones,  
Whose days on earth were o'er ;  
The graven crest, and the battle-cry,  
And Glory's banners flapping high,  
But o'er the fight no more ;  
Dim vapours of nepenthe curl'd  
Like grave-clothes round that spectral world.

A ghostly flare from extinguished worlds  
Was the tracery on the ample tome,  
All trembling dire,  
Like strings of fire,  
In the glow of that terrible dome.  
Stunned with the thought of worlds that were,  
Of worlds that are to be,  
I climbed the moss-green battlement  
And gazed upon the sea ;

I heard the billowy thunder  
Hoarse breaking on the shore,  
And the black waves regurgitate  
And echo "NEVERMORE!"

But Time grew older, older still,  
The deep-sunk vale became a hill—  
Dry land the sea became ;  
The gods that were had passed away,  
And gods rose equal to the day  
Of glory or of shame.  
Stalked past the Buddhas and the Christs,  
The Platos and the Pauls ;  
Dead Joves and ruined Odins lay  
Lorn in the misty halls,  
And faded scrolls of buried faiths  
Hung rotting on the walls ;  
And on the mountain's dawn-kissed peak  
The shafts of light were flying,  
And from abysmal caverns rose  
The cry of gods a-dying ;  
And men tore down, with naked hands,  
Gaunt Mystery's vizer bars,  
And wandered o'er the rolling moon  
And through the whirling stars  
And then I saw that Fame was old,  
But Time was older still,  
E'en as the blue-bell on its side  
Is younger than the hill !

Dim through the mist I saw a black  
And ever-changing shore,  
Up which a deep and boundless sea  
Kept surging evermore :  
I saw, as if with finger writ,  
Men's names upon the sand,  
And here a sword and there a pen  
Held in a shadowy hand ;  
And dim there were the traces  
Of the old world's woe and joy—  
Dim the outline of Babylon,  
And dim the plan of Troy ;  
And dimmer, dimmer waxed the cross  
Upon the hero's grave,  
As the deep Sea of Forgetfulness  
Washed o'er it, wave on wave ;  
One long, black surge washed " Cæsar "   
For ever from the shore ;  
One billowy gush of blackness,  
And " Shakespeare " was no more ;  
One black wave washed " Thermopylæ "   
For aye from mortal view,  
And from the sand had passed away  
The red word, " Waterloo."   
I woke with a start, and the vision fled  
Pale the midnight stars gloated o'er my bed,  
And the wind at the window whispered calm,  
Like a guardian angel's dulcet psalm.

## LEONORE : A LAY OF DIPSOMANIA.\*

THE gnats danced in the evening air,  
 The sunbeams smote the radiant hair  
     Of maiden Leonore ;  
 The burn sang low its babbling rhyme  
 To heath and fern and mountain thyme,  
     And hawthorns green and hoar.

And at the maiden's feet I lay,  
 Half covered by the hazel spray,  
     And held her trembling hand ;  
 I saw the red blush mantling rise,  
 I looked into her holy eyes—  
     The lady of the land.

'Twas done ; I had her plighted word,  
 It clove my spirit like a sword—  
     Too true my cursèd aim—  
 I'd won the gold of purse and curl,  
 I'd won the valley's noblest girl,  
     For ruin, want, and shame !

\* Alas that these verses should have had a very special and immediate inspiration ! Everything except the mere minutiae of detail is drawn from life, and is sealed in death. The Leonore of my lay I knew well, and the John Smith was, for years, a bosom friend. We wrote our Latin exercises together, we swam in the burn together, we leapt together, we wrestled together—and a tough wrestler he was. Now *alone* I drag out the remainder of my struggling life, and many hundreds of miles away the weeds wave upon his premature and dishonoured grave.

The fiend was in my every vein,  
The quenchless fire of thirst insane,  
    The worm that never dies ;  
Remorse within me raged like hell,  
And yet I did not dare to tell  
    Her of the holy eyes.

Hateful and foul the song I sing—  
She gave me gold, I bought a ring ;  
    We're one for evermore !  
Her friends disowned the girl forthwith,  
And me, the drunken tramp, John Smith,  
    The lord of Leonore.

Garments grew bare and food grew scant,  
And sallow-checked and dull-eyed want  
    Expelled us from our sty ;  
And, weeping o'er my wasted life,  
My deadly pale and squalid wife  
    Went to the streets to die.

I yelled for drink—no drink was there ;  
I clutched the lady by the hair  
    And dragged her to her knee ;  
Arrayed in rags, and hunger-bitten—  
A *lady* still—and fever-smitten,  
    And all for wretched me !

“ Drink ! give me drink ! ” I shrieked and swore :

“ Give drink, lean, haggard Leonore.”

She took the shining shears,  
And down her glorious tresses fell  
For drunken me to clutch and sell,  
Wet with her burning tears.

I sold and drank the severed hair  
While her young head, hatless and bare,  
Went out into the rain.

Next eve, upon the workhouse bed,  
My wife I'd killed lay pale and dead,  
And madness burned my brain.

Fierce and more fierce the demons drave  
The wild March winds across her grave,  
Her rough, red, pauper tomb.  
’Twas eldritch night, and angry stars  
Glared madly on the thunder-sears  
Seen through the mountain's gloom.

The moon splashed down a bloody rain  
That hammered on my blazing brain  
And smote it evermore—  
Earth shudders, and the heavens reel,  
And every rolling thunder peal,  
Crashed out the name LEONORE.



“The ring, the ring !” I clutched a spade,  
I reached the mound where she was laid,  
    I dug with might and main ;  
I tore the ring off with my teeth,  
And the white skin, her finger sheath,  
    Then clutched my cracking brain.

I pawned and drank the bridal ring,  
But, like a wild, hell-blasted thing  
    It gleams before my sight ;  
It glares red in the light of day,  
Anon its baleful demon-ray  
    Makes hideous the night.

I filled not up the yawning tomb,  
I left it open in the gloom,  
    And fled in mad alarm :  
Next day I saw a prowling bitch,  
With ears erect and tail a-switch,  
    Crunch at a human arm.

Then my brain burst, O God, no more,  
The brown birth mark—my Leonore,  
    The withered arm was thine !  
I shrieked, and, with a fiendish ban,  
I rushed out from the world of man  
    To eat the husks with swine.

“ Blue devils and insane,” they said,  
And men for me a jacket made  
And built a padded room :  
It holds me not, nor earth nor air,  
For, gods and demons, I am there !—  
There by that open tomb.

I drink the hair, I drink the ring ;  
The arm is there, unhallowed thing—  
’Twill leave me nevermore  
You who are sane, in mercy tell  
When I shall reach my home in hell,  
Or meet my Leonore !

## AWAKE !

EIDOLON breaks ! Dim welkin wakes,  
And the coffins of the dead  
Are giving way in the dædal day  
Now touching the East with red !  
For the bottom has fallen out of the tomb,  
And the nails and the lead are gone,  
And the risen one stands in the breaking gloom  
And deciphers his burial stone.

And fire-foot rings and fire-heart sings  
Down the endless corridor ;  
And the spectral mist may melt as it list  
Of the cycles gone before :  
And the cinders die of the earth's old fires,  
And rises the morning star,  
And, from the mound of a million sires,  
The son can see afar.

Shrill, o'er the hill of broken swords,  
The lyre of the poet rings,  
And the measured majesty of words  
Is breaking the thrones of kings ;  
The martyr pyres and the altar fires  
Are ashes and decay,  
And kisses England's manly lip  
The pale check of Cathay.

The thunder's breaking on the height  
 From which the urim fell,  
 And Science, waking in the Night,  
 Strides through the flare of hell :  
 Before her eyes the flamen hies  
 Sheer to the Stygian flood,  
 Leaving the shadow of the Cross  
 On a wide wild of blood.

Are we few ? I'll face with you  
 The old dragon in his den :  
 When we've striven to shake heaven  
 We've striven to be men.  
 Wake ! agonise, arise ! arise !  
 The chain in rust is red—  
 Hot be the blood of the living,  
 Drawn from the heart of the dead ?

Awake, awake, the welkin shake,  
 With the blast of battle-horn,  
 And strike the Acheronian lake  
 With the rhabdos of the morn :  
 The thrones go down, the gelt and crown,  
 And the creeds like aspens shiver,  
 And lord and sword go gurgling down  
 In the gulf of the black Forever !

And spectres of the Brocken  
 Loom through chaotic mists,

In dim portentous token  
That the lance is in the lists,  
To Amphion lyres are singing  
The world's erst-trampled clods,  
And, at last, the blade is ringing  
Off the helmets of the gods!

\* \* \* \*

And the Armageddon's raging—  
And the Armageddon's o'er,  
And the fields of earth are blazing  
With flame and steel no more ;  
With the purple tints of Vesper  
The western heaven glows  
And the hum of bees is wafted  
On the odours of the rose.

## MABEL.

AND so, Mabel, mamma has sold you,  
And to bid I am no more free,  
For "TEKEL," she cried, as the balance  
Went bouncing up with me.

And I swallow my pain and my rancour  
With the calmest endurance I can,  
And go down through the years of the future  
A bitter and desolate man.

And the pride of the throne and the altar  
And the ear of the ages unborn  
Shall hear of my hate and my venom  
And the laugh of my merciless scorn.

And I'll strangle the priest with thy garter,  
I loved—I now hate but too well :  
My heart was the flame of the vestal ;  
It now is the cinders of hell.

And the mumbling parson muttered :  
"Take thy husband, Mabel Ord ;  
Love this coughing old abortion,  
This erratum of the Lord."

More love in my little finger,  
More brain in my topmost hair,  
Than blessed the *tout ensemble*  
Of Lord Fitz Doodle's heir.

Yet I am spurned like a spaniel  
From thy mother's damnèd door ;  
I repay the spurn with hatred  
That shall rankle evermore.

Beware, beware, the Gorgon hair  
Of him whom Furies drive,  
For neither fiend, nor man, nor god,  
Can cross his path and thrive !

Beware of him o'er whose brow coils  
Medusa's snaky hair ;  
Beware the wheel of blackened steel,  
The sabre of Despair !

And all this for a ruby lip  
And for a golden curl,  
And for a bustle of horse-hair,  
And for a paltry girl.

Mine are the tears dried up by scorn,  
The heart too proud for pain ;  
The heart, alake ! some day may break,  
But never love again.

Wildly the dragon's teeth were sown,  
    Devils start from the furrow,  
And Ate has hold of my brain and bone,  
    And the wreck of my life is thorough.

There's a sneer and a glove and a ripple of hair,  
    And a door against me slammed,  
And a world around me, gloomy and bare,  
    And the worm at the heart of the damned.

For gold I am sold like a heifer,  
    For Fitz Fiddle-Fum and his cheque ;  
Round his is the arm of my Mabel —  
    I go with a rope round my neck.

And I was so near to the winning,  
    Till came the auriferous spell ;  
And the foot of mamma sent me spinning  
    From the apex of heaven to hell.

By the living Lord, young Mabel Ord,  
    With your own sweet will you'd come  
To this warm breast 'neath the home-spun vest,  
    Not to Earl Fiddle-Fum.

But, Mabel, mamma has sold you,  
    And to bid I am no more free ;  
"UPHARSIN," she cried, as the balance  
    Went bouncing up with me !



## ARISBE.

γάλακτος.....σωμα αλς.....τειχος .....Σωκρατης.

*Sophoc.* c. 93 *passim.* Lib. l 74 ad lex. 9 alt. 2. Cod 10. 3/7.

Quod fit in L.....Mascula Sol Mugil.....Mascula sunt.

Rudd., Lib. iv.c. 50.4 *ad fin.* Codex 39. Cortex 5. et hoc balderdashimus ergo.

FROM the breakers that pulsate and quiver,  
 From the bars on the face of the sun,  
 He hangs with a shriek and a shiver  
 Where twilight is dismal and dun ;  
 Where the red flowers burn through the morrows  
 Of mystical, measureless years,  
 He shall quench the unquenchable sorrows  
 With the suck of the barren and tears.

Oh, splendid and nude at the portal  
 He'll stand with the rain in his hair,  
 Re-kindled, re-rallied, immortal,  
 A sterile and venomous snare ;  
 And the roses relapse and redouble,  
 And sting their red lips with the wine ;  
 But yours is the rind and the trouble,  
 The visions and langours are mine.

The salt surge of hate has grown muddy  
 With the wind on her feet and her hair,  
 All the noontide is bitten and bloody,  
 The midnight plays dice with despair ;

While the Tuscan is hard to discover  
And the rust in the side of the Greek  
While tortures make splendid the lover  
And the kisses that burn on her cheek.

The elders now slacken and falter  
For the poison of wine in the lees,  
The chalice is spilt on the altar  
As salt as the foam of the seas.  
Dead dust and a curse in the dorture  
And the fierce and luxurious rain,  
And the pulse of the pain that is torture  
And the flame of the joy that is pain.

For the serpents now hiss in the porches,  
And the cornflowers burn in the wheat,  
The torsos of hell have their torches,  
And the rushing of sandalled feet ;  
For the pulse and the passion are over,  
And the lust of Geneva and Rome,  
Smote are the hot hands of the lover,  
The blood is washed out by the foam.

Arisbe with litanies evil,  
Set God to the dice and the cue,  
He cannoned a ball with the Devil,  
With flakes, flame and fervour for you.

With his blushes of amorous passion,  
The serpent was sundered and fell,  
And there rose in the fiery old fashion  
The cry of a mortal in hell.

With the mildew blasted and bitten,  
Milk-budded, a crown on the head,  
The thews of the rulers are smitten,  
That ruled over death and the dead.  
For they drank in the red over-measure,  
From the lips of a kiss and a crime,  
Of the blood o'er the white feet of Pleasure  
As she treads in the wine vat of Time.

## RUDOLF.

SHE stood, in woman's beauty, on the green river side,  
The Maiden of the Valley, that was to be a bride ;  
The torture of her suffering burned in her bosom's core,  
And sorely wept the Maiden, for Rudolf was no more.

Black was the sea and gurlly, beneath the awful stars,  
Among sea-rocks, weed-laden, and split with thunder-sears ;  
And, there down in the silence, on the ocean's lethal floor,  
Under miles and tons of water, slept young Rudolf evermore.

The faithful cushat cooing, far in the forest dim,  
Lives but for her marrow, but she had lived for him.  
Now, in its roll, the river, and its incessant pour,  
Moaned in a deep-voiced elegy, Thy Rudolf is no more !

Dim night had heard her orison to the vague Him above,  
To bless with all beatitudes the Rudolf of her love ;  
And now a voice rang hollow athwart the eternal shore,  
Like echoes in lone sepulchres, Thy Rudolf is no more.

Sweet is the warmth of loving, in girlhood's early day,  
The luxury of Being, of maying in the May !  
But sudden comes December, with weird and brumal roar,  
And every heart is mourning *some* Rudolf evermore !

## REVERESCO.

A SMALL link in the chain is man,  
 The chain of Law's resistless plan ;  
 Fate hears alike our sigh and groan,  
 For Nature's heart is steel or stone.

And kind is Death, relentless Life,  
 Sweet is the Peace that follows Strife ;  
 Hectic the sultry, sweltering Day,  
 But calm the dreamless Night in clay.

And Life is weak and Death is strong,  
 The Day is short, the Night is long ;  
 Eve hastens on, we strike our tents,  
 And mingle with the elements.

Our homes, our thrones, our faith, our god  
 Are trampled down, where, iron shod,  
 The Æons tread our misty shore,  
 Looming 'twixt Now and Nevermore.

Broad rivers now were erst not rills,  
 Young are the "everlasting hills;"  
 Far younger than the wind's first wail—  
 Older than Zeus and Jah and Baal.

True to Oblivion's sombre law,  
The mists now dimly close round Jah  
Poor anthropoid with axe and rods,  
He sinks among the broken gods

Less hideous is his hell's wild roar,  
The thunder is his voice no more,  
For Reason sees him on his throne  
A solemn Puck, or Oberon.

The moaning ocean's ebb and flow  
Is the heart's throb of long ago ;  
The grass sap on the dædal plains  
Once flowed as blood in human veins.

That sap in grass upon the plain  
Shall flow as human blood again ;  
We live above and underground  
In esoteric, endless round.

The crimson on the daisy's tip  
May yet give hue to maiden's lip,  
And the cerulean blue-bell's dye  
May yet give lustre to her eye.

That ripe corn in the autumn air  
May wave yet as her golden hair ;  
The sunny stream and mountain spring  
Babbles the music she shall sing.

Bold is the bard who daring solves  
The maid a million years evolves;  
That rock may be her downy bed,  
That oak the husband she shall wed.

Why loth to be the barley ears,  
With dewdrops then our only tears?  
For now, alas! full oft they flow  
In bitter poignancy of woe!

Mark ye the wire's electric veins,  
Mark ye the lode's magnetic brains;  
Then say where Death the spectre grins,  
And where he's not and Life begins.

What heart would not give up its woes  
To be the petal of a rose,  
And all that's glorious and brave  
To feed the cypress of the grave;

To be the sweet-brier and the thyme,  
And scent the air of Summer's prime?  
Why are we loth to strike our tents  
And mingle with the elements?

## A REVERIE.

AH ! 'tis well when the lamps are shining,  
And the parlour fireside glows,  
When we thoughtless laugh and jovial quaff,  
Where the ruddy vintage flows.

But, ah ! the dark, in the fearful dark,  
When the parlour fire burns low,  
And, in dim raids, from the world of shades,  
The phantoms come and go !

And we hear the beat of our watch and heart,  
Like a duette song of cares,  
And spirits grim, in the midnight dim,  
Seem dancing among the chairs !

And floods from the seas of the bygone years  
Fill the heart with life's deep lore.  
Oh ! memories weird of the smiles and tears,  
Of the days that come no more !

Cool was the brain and strong was the nerve,  
And life was a holiday ;  
And the bright hours sped 'mong the roses red,  
And the hedges white with May.



And here, in the dark, with the lamp gone out,  
The grate cold as a funeral urn,  
All withered their bloom, with the breath of the tomb,  
The ghosts of those days return.

Weary they march through the numbing brain,  
But their green and their red are away ;  
Through mist and tears gleam the thorny spears  
Of the hedges white with May.

She's there ! Through the mist I descry it still—  
Her wavy hair's orient shine ;  
Hush ! She has a midnight darker than this—  
'Tis six feet deeper than mine.

'Tis six feet deeper ; but that is naught :  
For *her* night it is calmer far,  
For there is no gleam of a maddening moon,  
No blight of a fiery star.

Star phosphorescent, you promised me  
One laurel leaf, all my own :  
False ! I've bartered life for your baneful glare,  
And I skulk to the grave unknown.

There is one steady star, and dim from afar  
Comes the solace that lies in its gleam :  
There's the coffin nail's rust, the brain in white dust,  
And the sleeping that knows no dream.

## THE LANDLORD'S BLACK-EYED DAUGHTER.

I SING a ringing roundelay  
Of the heyday of young life,  
Ere I'd begun the hunting game  
For a sweetheart or a wife :  
With boyish form and girlish cheek,  
Down by the rushing water,  
I kissed the lips of pretty Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

I was a red-hot birkie then,  
And the world lay all before ;  
And I would climb its Glory-hill  
Through seas of ink or gore ;  
But, dreaming Tower-of-Babel dreams,  
Down by the rushing water,  
I kissed the lips of pretty Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

Down from the rainbow rim I stepped,  
And the Tishbite's chariot blaze,  
Down to the vale of parasols,  
And muffs and curls and stays ;  
My laurels turned to kail and leeks,  
Down by the rushing water,  
As I kissed the lips of pretty Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

My Muse, poor jade, picked up the plumes  
Of ducks and hens to fledge her :  
My poet's eye in frenzy rolled  
Over a musty ledger :  
And this all came of dreaming dreams  
Down by the rushing water,  
And waking to kiss pretty Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

I had dreamt of ruling nations,  
For I was proud and young ;  
My pathway through the world but lay  
Where the victor's laurels hung ;  
Ah, they darkened down to yew and rue  
When, by the rushing water,  
I kissed the rosy lips of Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

So here I go, and I must have  
A cupboard, wife, and baby,  
In lieu of a proud sleep with kings  
In old Westminster Abbey ;  
And this all comes of dreaming dreams  
Down by the rushing water,  
And the red lips of pretty Kate,  
The landlord's black-eyed daughter.

## ONE FOOT IN THE GRAVE.

THE synonyms of love and life,  
Are sundered ere we die ;  
No rapture dwells in all the earth—  
No glory in the sky ;  
For bread and breath we struggle,  
Wet with the lethal wave—  
One foot in the world's market,  
And the other in the grave.

The whole of life is lived  
Ere the beard is on the chin,  
And then roll on the iron years  
Of weariness and sin ;  
And manhood has no fruit  
For the bloom that boyhood gave,  
And the best and foremost foot  
Is ever on the grave.

Alternately we eat and sleep,  
Hope's fiery banner furl'd —  
We become a rigid cog  
In the great wheel of the world ;  
We wax full cold and cunning  
Who once were warm and brave,  
For the heart is hard with Mammon,  
And our foot is on the grave.

And the tree is growing coffins,  
And the flax is growing shrouds,  
And we cannot see the welkin  
For the cold and murky clouds ;  
And we sink to the dull bottom,  
Where we battled with the wave—  
We look longing on the sexton,  
And yearning on the grave.

None's left to understand us  
We care to understand ;  
Clay is the heart that loved us,  
And dust the kindly hand :  
A shelter in their winding sheet,  
From Life's cold night, we crave—  
A refuge from the wind and sleet,  
Down in the stormless grave.

There's no raging of the pulses,  
No aching of the head,  
With the shavings and the face-cloth  
That moulder with the dead.  
Let the vexed storms of living man  
Six feet above us rave ;  
We'll scornful lie upon our back  
Down in the sunless grave.

For Life is not worth living  
If Death were not reward,  
And red loam's soft and easy,  
Though the silken couch be hard :  
Brain in the skull a bane is,  
Dust in the skull we crave,  
And we'd give Life's bed and boarding  
For the eight boards of the grave.

Sweet are the summer grasses,  
When their tops are to our feet :  
When their roots are to our faces  
They must be doubly sweet.  
Ah, 'tis weird among the hedges  
To behold the nettle wave ;  
But, O God, to look up eyeless,  
And behold it from the grave !

## THE JOURNEY.

MERRILY on the roral strand,  
Light tinting mountains dim,  
We wander in the morning-land,  
Singing life's matin hymn.

To threnody the hymn gives way,  
The red sun burns o'erhead,  
And round us, in the toilsome day,  
Our grandest hopes lie dead.

December soils the skirts of June,  
Volcanic hearts grow cold,  
And mortal being's afternoon  
To iron changes gold.

Then slopes the twilight to the tomb,  
Morn gleams on earthquake scars ;  
On withered leaves, once glorious bloom,  
Look down the midnight stars.

## SONG OF WINTER.

*(On the Merry Birthday of the Man of Sorrows, 1884.)*

I COME thunder-shod in the plenitude of might,  
On the rack of the storm and the blackness of night ;  
Down my garments of mist from my shoulders flow,  
My garlands of cloud, of the lightning and snow.

'Mid the crash of the hail, 'mong the mist and the sleet,  
On the wave, on the gale, hear the tramp of my feet :  
The forests have gloom in their innermost soul,  
As I leap the ramparts of ice round the pole  
To the realms where the Norsemen breasted their foes,  
Till rolled dark and bloody the tide of their woes.

I have churned into foam their gioes and ferries,  
And heaved the wild wave o'er the ridge of their skerries,  
And yelled on the desolate shores of Lofoden  
The war-cry of storms in the region of Odin.

I tossed into hills, into gorges I tore  
The waves off the Scaw and off high Elsinore.  
To the caverns of ocean, dark yawning below,  
The galleys I hurled, with their shields all a-row,



When lays of stern conflict and Dagmar the Fair  
Mingled wild with the roaring of ocean and air,  
And the bolt of the lightning glared red in the gloom,  
And showed the berserker his fathomless tomb.

I have tossed the deep snows aloft in the air,  
And lifted the braids of the long yellow hair  
Of maidens, still like what the Norse mothers bore  
Who were worthy the arms of the vikings of yore.

Shut your doors, pile your fires ! I come to your clime  
To wail, as 'twere over the death-bed of Time—  
To chant as each stave of my terrible verse  
Rang lorn to the roll of the wheels of his hearse.

The misletoe branch is high in your hall,  
And the snowy skirts whirl in the swirl of the ball ;  
And the music is crashing from finger and string,  
And the night hours are passing like birds on the wing :  
The ormolu glitters, the holly is bright,  
And the panes shine like stars on the bosom of night :  
Eyes look loving down to sweet eyes that look up,  
And the radiant wine flashes red in the cup ;  
And the cares of the world speed abandoned along  
To be drowned in a torrent of laughter and song.

Cold lie my snows on the dead flowers of June,  
And mirk lie my clouds on the horns of the moon ;  
And brown torrents roar through the desolate white,  
And the day dawn is dim and mingled with night.

Buried deep lie the sheep on the desolate wold,  
In one white level lie the field and the fold,  
And eerie the hen sits half blind by the barn;  
And as white as its shores is the ice on the tarn,  
And the hare's timid feet are alone on the snows  
That to hunter and hound betray where he goes,  
Till they end near the cot, on the lonely burn side,  
And his blood on the snow marks the spot where he died.

Ha ! my stillness is stiller than aught save the tomb,  
And my crystals are brighter than midsummer bloom !  
Let the pale lilies vie with my icicles' sheen,  
And the gleam of the rime where my footstep has been,  
And the whispers of lovers, melodious and low,  
With my gentle whisper, snow falling on snow,  
As it falls in December, away on the wild,  
As it falls on the grave of the maid or the child ;  
For my heart is not cold, though my weapon be keen ;  
And my tears wash the wounds where my arrows have been.

Yet I mingle my voice with the torrents that hie  
From crags and wild jags that are lost in the sky,  
From the dim, dreamy hills, in mist, snow, and rime,  
As Eternity blended her vagueness with Time.

As I whirl the clouds of dry leaves down the vale,  
Oh, think of the houseless who cry in my wail,  
And modify over the wretched my rule,  
While icicles hang on the tresses of Yule !

And let rosy-checked Mirth find her sceptre and throne  
'Fore the red flaring log on the happy hearthstone.

To the lake with your skates, and welcome me, then ;  
All laden with snow is the fir in the glen,  
And the mighty oaks groan and toss in my breath,  
As wringing their hands over Ruin and Death.

I've left where the moonlight lies dim in the scars  
Of hills with their rock-horns a-goring the stars ;  
The caves where the drows live in runic rhyme,  
And spectres have shrieked since the morning of Time ;  
Where nornies, their blood-dripping shrouds round them cast,  
Have rode on the mist or the wings of the blast ;  
From thunder-split rocks in the grey lichen's fold,  
Once the shrine of the jarl to Odin and Thor,  
The desolate fanes of the ages of old,  
Where the wail of the tempest is heard evermore.

The pane is ornate with my ferns and my scrolls,  
Where the crumbs on the sill the robin consoles  
For the field frozen hard and the hedge-row forlorn,  
And the gleam of the ice on the desolate thorn.

To-day the heart leaps o'er the land and the sea  
To a God's natal manger in far Galilee ;  
Oh, then, to the hungry one open thy door,  
And be, like that God, a friend of the poor ;

For thy brother lies low, in this merry Yule-tide,  
With the thorns on his brow, and the spear in his side ;  
And thy sister's struck down on the pitiless sands  
With the iron nails struck through her feet and her hands.  
Think not what she is, but what she has been,  
For that God was a God to the soiled Magdalene.  
And while the high impulse your human heart warms,  
Leap forward and take the whole race in your arms.

## DECEMBER THIRTY-FIRST.

'Tis solemn night, and drifted leaflets sere  
Form the weird death-bed of the dying year ;  
The cold winds only fan his life's last ember  
With dreary wail as ends the dark December.  
Each time the belfry strikes, the weary chime  
Seems doleful as it were the dirge of Time ;  
And the tall trees, so naked, lorn, and still,  
And the wild coldness of the distant hill,  
With its hoar summit dipped into the sky,  
And viewless to the glance of mortal eye,  
Rise as to show that earth's stale trodden field  
Merges upon the mysteries unrevealed.  
In Fancy's realm I'm standing by the river,  
And see as down into the depths for ever ;  
Departed Time blends with the eternal flood,  
His pinions dipped in sunshine, tears, and blood,  
The Old Year speeds to rest his ragged wings,  
To wave no longer over mortal things ;  
The bare woods glimmer with a fitful ray  
A fevered light of blended night and day ;  
And the tall masts loom through the misty fold  
Like distant memories of the times of old,  
Ere we had braved the billows and the foam  
From the bright harbour of our childhood's home.

Behind are seen the distant church's spire,  
And the smoke curling from the cottage fire,  
Where soon the bairns shall come in joyous bands  
And warm o'er that peat fire their chubby hands,  
And rest a little till the bright moonbeam  
Lights them again upon the frozen stream,  
And there grey ruins rise in awful gloom,  
With hoary turrets, like a nation's tomb,  
Embattled once in terrible array  
On the red morn of earth's wild yesterday !  
Ah ! 'tis a dull and drear December night ;  
What mystic feelings in its troubled light  
Come wildly pouring o'er the heart and brain  
As, ne'er to be in this wide world again,  
Some cherished object were about to part  
From the torn fibres of the bleeding heart.

And the wind sobs the threnody of woe,  
And shakes from off the fir the shroud of snow ;  
And, to the sobbing, sighing, ghostly tune,  
Glimmers the curved edge of the gibbous moon,  
And rends the night-cloud's over-hanging pall,  
And waves the ivy on the castle wall,  
And breaks the nimbus into ragged bars,  
And with its floating fragments blinds the stars,

And noiseless steps into the welkin go,  
Unearthly feet are on the melting snow ;

And the weird years that lie so dim before  
Blend vaguely with the years that are no more.  
And all the energy of Man is numb,  
And all the thunders of his God are dumb,  
And all the life and light and blood and breath  
Freeze in the vestibule of Night and Death.

The tramp of twenty million years  
Has worn a pathway through the spheres ;  
The medley of their loves and wars,  
The swing of clouds, the ring of stars ;  
Their hills of cradles piled on biers,  
Blood-rivers red, though salt with tears ;  
Their merry songs all built on groans,  
Their grasses green all fed with bones ;  
Their madrigal, their roundelay,  
Ring in the coffin of decay ;  
And the hot heart of ancient lust  
Clings to your feet in frozen dust.—  
The world holds out no charm for me,  
Save the wild realm of CANNOT BE.

## ROBERT BURNS.\*

ALL hail, O Nithsdale's furrowed field,  
     A Marathon art thou;  
 The fire of God in his great heart,  
     Of Genius on his brow,  
 Thy patriot bard strode o'er thy sward,  
     His triumph ear the plough !  
 The laverock in the early dawn,  
     The merle at evening grey,  
 Sang pæans as the ploughman trod  
     His more than laurelled way,  
 And the red ridge of Scottish soil  
     Behind him grandly lay,  
 Prinked with the daisy's "crimson tip,"  
     The "rough burr-thistle's" head,  
 And rough print of the ploughman's shoe—  
     Shoe of the deathless dead.

'Tis o'er, the rig is dark with night,  
     The "lingering star's" on high,  
 And Song-land's gained another wreath  
     Of flowers that never die.

\* Written for the Competition in connection with the Dumfries Burns' Statue Movement. The Statue was sculptured by Mrs D. O. Hill, and unveiled by Lord Rosebery. The medal was awarded to the writer of this poem.



In Nithsdale, as a dreamy boy,  
 In wild ecstatic turns,  
 I've grasped the plough, to follow, rapt,  
 Thy shade, O ROBERT BURNS !  
 As "spretty nowes have rairt and riskit"  
 I've seen thee standing nigh,  
 'Mid visions of the Throne of Song  
 Too grand for mortal eye :  
 The hills around burned into verse,  
 An anthem vast and dim,  
 The "fragrant birk" an idyll grew,  
 The "stibble field" a hymn !

O sword, rust o'er thy mighty dead,  
 Pent in their funeral urns,  
 Plough, by Elisha sanctified \*  
 And glorified by Burns,  
 Thine is no roll of tears and groans,  
 The dying and the dead,  
 Thou writest on the wintry field,  
 The prophecy of Bread :  
*I'll drive my share o'er vanquished Want,*  
*My coulter's edge uprears*  
*The banners of the yellow corn,*  
*The rye's unnumbered spears.*

\* "The Poetic Genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha, at the plough, and threw her inspiring mantle over me."—BURNS, in *Dedication to second edition of his Poems*.

God speed thy "horns"—no altar horns  
 So sacred are to me,  
 The Prophet\* and the Muse † of Fire  
 Their mantle bore to thee!

Yet, would a tyrant weld our chains?  
 Then, Victory or the Grave—  
 The trumpet blast of "Scots wha hae"  
 Will make the coward brave!  
 Then Onward, Valour, "red-wat-shod,"—  
 Glory to him who dies!  
 Be his eternal infamy,  
 The "traitor knave" who flies!

Dumfries, thy cold hands hold his urn,  
 Thou guard'st his iron sleep,  
 O shrine that draws the universe  
 To worship and to weep!  
 What tribute grand of brass or stone  
 Can thy poor hands bestow?  
 What bronze or marble worthy him  
 Who lies so cold and low?—  
 Of the brave man whose fight is fought,  
 Whose weapon's sheathed, whose banner's furl'd,  
 Though still his fire and force of soul  
 Throb in the veins of half the world:

\* *Elijah*, frequently and aptly designated the Prophet of Fire, from fire being so constantly the *sign* in his divination.

† *Coila*, the Muse of Burns, peculiarly the poet of the fire of passion and poetic ardour.

Australia loves him, India too,  
 As though he had but died yestreen ;  
 Columbia knows the Banks o' Doon,  
 And Afric sings of Bonnie Jean !

Hast seen athwart the midnight stars  
 A cloud its shadow fling ?  
 Hast seen the stain from the cage's bars  
 Upon the eagle's wing ?  
 Impeach I will not ; but, Dumfries,  
 I cannot do him wrong,  
 Thy street-mire stained the singing-robe  
 Of the great King of Song :  
 Look sorrowing back on the grey hairs  
 Too early o'er his brow,  
 And, grateful, what he lacked in bread,  
 Give him in garlands now :  
 Humble am I who ask you  
 This penitence be done,  
 But, O city of St Michael,\*  
 Remember I'm thy son ;  
 I love thee though I'm far away,  
 Though you've forgotten me  
 My dreams of home and fatherland  
 Are centred all in thee ;  
 I ask for nothing for myself,  
 I tread thy streets no more,

\* Dumfries, of which St Michael was the patron saint.

Honour thyself by honouring him  
I and the world adore ;  
Joy in thy solemn heritage,  
Breaking Oblivion's wave,  
O grandest city of the world,  
For you have Burns's grave !





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