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A. POEM:

PRONOUNCED BY

JAMES BARRON HOPE,

AT THE

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

OF

THE ENGLISH SETTLEMENT

AT

JAMESTOWN,

May 13th, 1857.

RICHMOND:

CHAS. H. WYNNE, PRINTER.

1857.

For :

The Hon: Mrs. B. Clapp,

"Hills,"

Presented to Mrs M^{rs}: B. Clifton,
with the author's compliments.

Hampton, Dec: the 31st 1857

My dear Judge,

The bearer of this
will receive the notes of which I
spoke on yesterday, that is, if your
Honour has had time to prepare them.

I am fearful that my request
was answered me, but then seeing
bro's selfish, & the anecdotes are
so excellent & perfectly in harmony
with my design, that I couldn't
refrain from begging them.

With the very sincere wish for
a more numerous & happy
return I remain,

Yours faithfully,

Mrs. B. Clifton

Mrs.
M^{rs}: B. Clifton.
"In Friends"

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P O E M .

I walk these ancient haunts with reverent tread
And seem to gaze upon the mighty dead;
Imagination calls a noble train
From dust and darkness back to life again.

VIRGINIA: a Poem by J. R. THOMPSON.

Down the steep, misty crags of antique time
Leaps many a torrent in a surge sublime,
Pouring along its mystic flood, till, pale
And dim, it bursts in some sequestered vale,
Some valley of the Past, lone and remote,
Where myths and legends fancifully float
In mists through which Tradition and Romance,
ASTARTE-twins, above the torrent glance;
Where splendid hues illumine each rugged fact
Which, rock-like, bounds the rushing cataract;
Where purple shadows o'er each scene descends
And Poesie her soft enchantment lends;
Where vanished things—the very simplest—glow
With a strange beauty, which doth float and flow

Around them, in such rich and gorgeous dyes
As Autumn's sunsets mingle in our skies.
Our hist'ry, Brothers, such grand torrent makes ;
This spot, the valley where in spray it breaks,
Which, wreathed in columns or dispersed in dews,
Takes from the Past its variegated hues.
And here we meet, this sacred day apart,
To muse in solemnness of mind and heart,
While over us, like banner, floats the mist
By fair Romance and bright Tradition kist.
And, through these mists, what epic scenes arise !
What storied pictures start before our eyes !
What grand, historic forms, superb and vast,
Loom through the vapors gathered o'er the past !
While high above is seen God's awful hand
Writing, my Brothers, slowly out, His grand,
Sublime decrees, which the great Genoese
Transcribed of old upon the mighty seas—
Transcribed with those three keels which long ago
Fretted the billows into wakes of snow,
While through sad days, and nights devoid of sleep,
He ploughed the bosom of the azure deep.

The keels which sailed upon that sultry morn—
When priestly chaunt and deep sonorous horn
Broke on the summer air ; when, all agape,
The speculative throng saw them escape

Their moorings in the tranquil, sunny bay—
Those *caravellas*—went upon God's way.
And though ten thousand storms have swept the deep,
And calms have lulled it in delusive sleep—
Though, for long ages, it has tossed and yearned,
As starlight shone, or crimson sunset burned—
Still on the ocean—type though it may be
Of all that's boundless, unsubdued and free—
Remains the record to all time unfurled,
How God gave man, the second time, a world.

One heaven-directed genius laid his hand
Upon the hilt of Providence; the brand
Required the force of all the human race
To draw it from its scabbard's resting place—
Ages to wield it in the noble van
Which gave this Western Hemisphere to man.
Fain would I linger on that splendid age,
To which he gave its very brightest page;
Fain sing his god-like majesty of mind,
Which looked right onward—never glanced behind,
While, 'neath his brow, lit with the glow of hope,
It, toiling, cast the whole world's horoscope.
Fain would I paint his griefs in those sad hours,
When all his hopes seemed like the last year's flowers;
Fain follow him through all his dreary years
Of pain, and poverty, and bitter tears;

From convent porch to regal palace gate,
Tracing his footsteps as he charged on Fate,
Which built new ramparts in his path each day
Until his brow was knit—his dark locks grey.

Fain would I pause at Palos, when the breeze
His *caravellas* swept toward unknown seas;
Fain follow where his daring vessels sped,
Strange tides beneath—strange planets overhead;
Fain would I dwell upon that happy day,
When, on the new-found shore, he knelt to pray:
That Easter-day, when, with the great seas' boom,
Making the music of his mass, the tomb
Gave up his dream, which now in beauty rose,
Like CHRIST awakened after His repose.
Was this the thought! CHRIST'S was the name he gave
To that fair island smiling on the wave.

And the poor Indian! would I might narrate
His piteous story and his tragic fate!
A great mind tells us, that, on all earth's sods,
Men crucify, and then adore, their gods;
There 'twas reversed—in blood the land was dyed,
And deities their vot'ries crucified.
Had I the space, I well might pause to scan
The varied fortunes of this wondrous man;

Might follow through those ever sunny isles,
Where Nature wears her very sweetest smiles;
Deck'd in a crown of ever-blooming flowers,
Of richer hues and sweeter still than ours;
Where purple twilights tint the evening seas,
And calm stars write their solemn mysteries
In skies which seem to be the azure shield,
Where God's own arms are blazon'd on the field—
Where strand and ocean—earth and star-lit sky
With one accord give "Atheos" the lie.

But to be brief: for images apace
Crowd on my fancy, claiming each a place,
As stars claim places in a tranquil night—
So thick they come—but not, alas! so bright;
In brief, then, Brothers, to my humble song
I've made the prelude ample thus and long,
As some musician, who distrusts his art,
Will hum a bar before he takes his part.
But not alone for this have I delayed;
For other purpose, too, my fingers strayed
Along the harp strings, as 'twere in a dream—
My purpose was to weave into my theme
These humble praises of the brain profound
Which, wrapped in slumber, all its era found;
Yet woke the age from its long, fevered sleep—
Roused by the voices of the mighty deep.

And though Spain's Admiral slumbered in the grave,
He left a beacon blazing o'er the wave,
And, as years sped, the light he left waxed great—
The light he'd stricken from the flint of Fate—
Rousing all Europe, as that flame antique
Awoke to triumph the exultant Greek.

At last the visions, vast and undefined,
Which long had mustered in the general mind,
Marched forth in actions; and the age's crest
Flickered with fires enkindled in the West,
A splendid plume! which flamed and flared and flowed,
As, lance in rest, the era westward rode.
What dreams men dreamt beneath the general spell,
What visions saw—I need not pause to tell.
Nor how the tide of human fate was rolled
Upon its course by love of fame or gold,
Nor how that flood was stained in this fair clime,
By blood and tears—rapacity and crime.

I pause not now, to speak of RALEIGH'S schemes,
Tho' they might give a loftier bard fit themes;
I pause not now, to tell of Ocracock,
Where Saxon spray broke on the red-brown rock;
Nor of my native river, which glides down
Through scenes where rose a happy Indian town;

But, leaving these and Chesapeake's broad bay,
Resume my story in the month of May,
When England's cross—St. GEORGE'S ensign flowed
Where ne'er before emblazoned banner glowed—
When English hearts throbbed fast, as English eyes
Looked o'er the waters with a glad surprise—
Looked gladly out upon the varied scene,
Where stretched the woods in all their pomp of green;
Flinging great shadows—beautiful and vast,
As e'er upon Arcadian lake were cast.
Turn where they would—in what direction rove,
They found some bay, or wild, romantic cove,
On which they coasted through those forests dim,
Wherein they heard the never ceasing hymn
That swelled from all the tall, majestic pines—
Fit choristers of Nature's sylvan shrines!
For, though no Priest their solitudes had trod,
The trees were vocal in their praise of God,
Wailing grand passages and bars sublime,
To which Religion in their hearts beat time.
And, then, when capes and jutting headlands past,
The sails were furled against each idle mast,
They saw the sunset in its pomp descend
And sky and water gloriously contend
In gorgeousness of colors, red and gold,
And tints of amethyst together rolled,

Making a scene of splendor and of rest
As vanquished day lit camp-fires in the West.
And when the light grew faint on wave and strand,
New beauties woke in this enchanting land;
For, through heav'n's lattice-work of crimson bars,
Like angels, looked the bright, eternal stars.
And then, when gathered tints of purplish brown,
A golden sickle, reaping darkness down,
The new moon shone above the giant trees
Which made low music in the evening breeze;
The breeze which floating blandly from the shore,
The perfumed breath of flow'ring jasmine bore;
For smiling Spring had kist its clust'ring vines
And breathed her fragrance on the lofty pines.

In those vast forests dwelt a race of kings,
Free as the eagle when he spreads his wings—
His wings which never in their wild flight lag—
In mists which fly the fierce tornado's flag;
Their flight the eagle's! and their name, alas!
The eagle's shadow swooping o'er the grass,
Or, as it fades, it well may seem to be
The shade of tempest driven o'er the sea.

Fierce, too, this race, as mountain torrent wild,
With haughty hearts, where Mercy rarely smiled—

All their traditions—histories imbued
With tales of war and sanguinary feud,
Yet though they never couched the knightly lance,
The glowing songs of Europe's old romance
Can find their parallels amid the race
Which, on this spot, met England face to face.
And when they met the white man, hand to hand,
Twilight and sunrise stood upon the strand—
Twilight and sunrise? Saxon sunshine gleams
To-day o'er prairies, and those distant streams,
Which hurry onward through far Western plains,
Where the last Indian, for a season, reigns.

Here, the red CANUTE, on this spot, sat down,
His splendid forehead stormy with a frown,
To quell, with the wild lightning of his glance,
The swift encroachment of the wave's advance;
To meet and check the ruthless tide which rose,
Crest after crest of energetic foes,
While high and strong poured on each cruel wave,
Until they left his royalty—a grave;
But, o'er this wild, tumultuous deluge glows
A vision fair as heaven to saint e'er shows;
A dove of mercy o'er the billows dark
Fluttered awhile, then fled within God's ark.
Had I the power, I'd reverently describe
That peerless maid—the “pearl of all her tribe,”

As evening fair, when coming night and day
Contend together which shall wield its sway.
But, here, abashed, my paltry fancy stays;
For her, too humble its most stately lays.
A shade of twilight's softest, sweetest gloom—
The dusk of morning—found a splendid tomb
In England's glare; so strange, so vast, so bright,
The dusk of morning bursted into light,
Which falleth through the Past's cathedral aisles,
Till sculptured Mercy like a seraph smiles.
And though Fame's grand and consecrated fane
No kingly statue may, in time, retain,
Her name shall linger, nor with age grow faint;
Its simple sound—the image of a Saint!

Sad is the story of that maiden's race,
Long driven from each legendary place.
All their expansive hunting-grounds are now
Torn by the iron of the Saxon's plough,
Which turns up skulls and arrow-heads and bones—
Their places nameless and unmarked by stones.
Now freighted vessels toil along the view,
Where once was seen the Indians' bark canoe;
And to the woods the shrill escaping steam
Proclaims our triumph in discordant scream.
Where rose the wigwam in its sylvan shade,
Where the bold hunter in his freedom strayed,

And met his foe or chased the bounding stag,
The lazy horses at the harrow lag.
Where the rude dance was held or war-song rose,
The scene is one of plenty and repose.
The quiver of her race is empty now,
Its bow lies broken underneath the plough;
And where the wheat-fields ripple in the gale,
The vanished hunter scarcely leaves a trail.

'Twas where yon river musically flows,
The European's nomenclature rose;
A keen-edged axe, which since, alas! has swept
Away their names—those boughs, which blossoms kept,
Leaving so few, that when their story's drowned,
'Twill sink, alas! with no fair garland crowned.
What strange vicissitudes and perils fell
On the first settlers, 'tis not mine to tell;
I scarce may pause to syllable the name
Which the great Captain left behind to fame;
A name which echoes through the tented past
Like sound of charge rung in a bugle's blast.
His age, although it still put faith in stars,
No longer glanced through feudal helmets' bars,
But stood in its half armor; thus stands he
An image half of Border chivalry,
And half presented to our eager eyes,
The brilliant symbol of brave enterprise.

A knightly blade, without one spot of rust,
Undimmed by time and undefaced by dust,
His name hangs up in that past age's hall,
Where many hang, the brightest of them all.

And here, at last, there rose the rambling town,
A smile contending with the forest's frown,
And busy sounds were borne upon the breeze,
The swarming hum of England's settling bees.
Would I might linger on those ancient times,
Whose stories swell with yet unwritten rhymes;
Would I might paint the dames and cavaliers,
Whose stately forms glide down the vanished years,
Where faintly, through the dusky purple shade,
Gleam jewelled hilt and golden wrought brocade;
Whence, with a sweet and necromantic spell,
Music and laughter, song and perfume swell.
Would I might pause 'neath yonder tower, which now
No longer hears response or fervid vow;
Which only echoes to the plaintive hymn
Made by the night wind, when the stars are dim.
Where prayers for Kings and Parliaments arose,
Waves the wild vine and nodding cowslip blows.
There Solitude—that grave and solemn priest—
For meditation spreads its sacred feast;
And standing grey in sunshine and in blast,
It seems embodied "Amen" o'er the past;

An "Amen" o'er the buried past, which I
A ghostly shade have dimly seen flit by.*

How England's arts and institutions rose—
Themselves her misdirected rule's worst foes—
Was his to tell, whose eloquence, of old
Hath borne rapt senates on its tide of gold;
Whose name a calm and stately radiance throws
Upon our history, like the sun's repose;
Where, sinking slowly in a flood of light,
Serene as he is wonderfully bright!
The shut past, like that hardy plant which clings
Upon the cliffs, o'er which sweep condor's wings,
Has all its leaves unclosed beneath the spray,
Flung from his limpid eloquence to-day.

* * * * *

One other name; but no! my song is done:
As well might Persian, who adores the sun,
Think that, by hymns or solemn-chanted lays,
He gave new splendor to his bright god's rays,
As *I* aspire, in any song of mine,
To make that name in greater lustre shine.

* The modern Dryasdust will find a most interesting history of this venerable ruin in the "Church Review," (Vol. VIII, No. 1,) from the pen of that accomplished and zealous antiquary, the Rev. John Collins McCabe, Rector of the "Ascension," Baltimore.

Its fittest place is on Virginia's brow,
As, kneeling down, to God she sends her vow—
That, as her great son left her, she will be;
And live on proudly—free amid the free;
Or, finding that she may not thus remain,
Like SAMSON, grasp the pillars of the fane,
And leave all wreck, where erst in pride it rose,
Tomb for herself in common with her foes.

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