



AUTUMN
LEAVES.



REV. JOHN ANDERSON, D.D.



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AUTUMN LEAVES

BY

REV. JOHN ANDERSON, D.D.,

Author of "Holy Ground" and "Sprigs of Heather," &c.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

1893.



Dedication.

A MAN WHO
HAS REASON TO LOVE HIS
NEIGHBOURS, BEGS TO OFFER THEM THESE
FEW LEAVES, AS A NEW
YEAR'S SALUTE.

JOHN ANDERSON, D.D.,

Minister of Kinnoull.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY K. TAINSH,
35 HIGH STREET, PERTH.

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AUTUMN LEAVES.

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“Crossing the Bar.”

The Laureate sleeps,
And a Nation weeps,
Yet why his demise bemoan?
He strikes his lyre
'Mid the Holy Choir,
Around the Eternal Throne.

He has crossed the Bar,
Where the surges war,
And the loud-tongued blasts are raving—
But his Bark now rides
On the sunlit tides
Of Heaven's untroubled haven.

He has sung on earth
Of the woe and the mirth
That deal with the human soul.
Now his lay is love
In realms above,
While the ages of glory roll.

Let him sleep! let him sleep!
For his slumber is deep,
And the waves of life's voyage are o'er.
Not lost! not lost!
We shall meet on that coast,
Where the tempest is heard never more!

When our day-dream is past,
 Falls our night at last,
 With the chill of a dismal shade—
 But a morn of gold
 Shall the spirit enfold
 In a splendour that never can fade.

It is meet he should rest
 With the brightest and best
 Who have played in the world their part—
 But a Shrine nobler still
 His image shall fill,
 And that is the Human Heart.

Burns and the Falls of Foyers.

When Burns, of Scottish bards the King,
 Beheld thee take thy fearful leap,
 With master-hand he swept the string,
 Whose echoes vibrate loud and deep.

In rugged verse we see thee bound,
 Like Madness plunging to its doom,
 Then in the "Cauldron's" gloom profound,
 Behold thee find a living tomb.

For, like some crushed gigantic snake,
 Thine eddies coil in restless sweep,
 And still thy tortured waters take
 Through centuries their endless leap.

Thy Life, O Bard! was like that stream,
 A clouded morn—a troubled noon—
 And ere the night had lit his beam
 Thy spirit made its plunge—too soon!

But still thy soul shall live in song,
Thy words shall strike a chord in all ;
And, as the years shall course along,
We'll boast thy rise, and mourn thy fall.

A Parent's Feeling on the Loss of Children.

They are gone to prepare a home for me,
Where never a pain nor a sorrow can be,
Where the dark rain-cloud may not blot the sky,
Nor the blast sweep on with its mournful sigh—
'Tis there, in the land of eternity,
They have gone to prepare a home for me.

But, ah ! I must weep in a world of woe,
When I think of the bright ones gone—
Their smiles cannot shed the olden glow
Through a heart that is lorn and lone,
And my feet must travel a weary way,
That seems to have lost the sunlight of day.

But, courage, my heart ! and bear the load
That is laid on thee by the hand of God ;
For the end is bright to the soul of faith,
That shines like a lamp in the valley of death,
And the Lost, whom the mortal eye cannot see,
Shall whisper, Thy home is ready for thee,
In the tearless land of eternity.

I thought they were far too young to die,
 But in Heaven there is no youth nor age ;
 For the children of Immortality
 Partake of the one bright heritage,
 A beauty that knows not the touch of time,
 So blest is the sunny cloudless clime
 Where the Lost are whispering now to me—
 With us there's a home prepared for thee.

Verses Written on a Visit to the Castle of Hermitage during a Thunderstorm.

Grim relics of a feudal age,
 Still dost thou brave the thunderstorm,
 That hurls its force in roaring rage
 Against thy high and hoary form.

Thou tellest of that Baron bold,
 Who dared to scale our Scottish throne,
 But perished in a foreign hold
 In chains, unpitied and alone.

Bothwell ! whene'er we breathe thy name,
 Or think of thy unhallowed bier,
 Pity shall mingle with our blame,
 And o'er thy *madness* shed a tear.

For thou wer't mad as gamesters are,
 When on a *cast* they stake their all.
 Ambition was thy ruling star,
 And like a meteor was thy fall.

The grass waves in thy castle moat,
The weed clings to thy rifted wall,
No pennons from thy rampart float,
And gloom reigns in thy banquet hall.

Yet courtly knights and ladies gay
Once issued from these portals wide,
And sported through the live long day,
Where Hermitage still pours his tide.

And one—the fairest of the fair—
Poor victim of a ruthless race—
Hath shed upon thy moorlands bare
The magic of a deathless grace.

Methinks I see the lady bright
Gaze wistful from thy turrets high,
Or wander 'neath the falling night
Beside the stream that murmurs by.

Reared in the lap of sunny climes,
Thy future seemed to promise fair ;
But thou wer't cast on "evil times,"
And doomed to wear a Crown of Care.

Oh ! tell me not that blood was spilt,
Queen Mary ! by thy foul design ;
For never did a *deed of guilt*
Lead to a *tranquil death* like thine.

Ah ! had it been thy lot to reign
Where Truth and Honour ruled the day,
There had not been a *murder stain*,
Within thy hall, red Fotheringay !

Chained to the Wall.

[In the Monastery of Erfurth, Luther discovered a copy of the Bible fastened to a wall of the library by an iron chain. He read till his own soul was free, and determined that the Word should be free also.]

Chained to the wall ! the blessed Page
Was long in slumber bound ;
It had a voice for every age,
Yet gave no sound.

Within it glowed a living light
Sent forth for all—
Yet round it closed the deepest night—
Chained to the wall !

It had a power to touch the heart,
A ray to light the mind—
Yet long it burned, a lamp apart,
In gloom confined.

Thou hast a cure for every ill,
A balm for every pain—
But what is thy most *loving will*,
Bound by that chain !

But now a hand—a human hand—
Has rescued Thee ;
Cast to the dust that iron band,
And thou art free.

Free to proclaim the words that light
The wanderer's way—
Bright stars upon the brow of night,
They speak of Day.

Yes ! long wert thou a prisoner
In dark captivity—
But now, like heaven's own blessed air,
Thy wing is free :

Free as the wind to waft that sound
Which comforts all—
Souls once, like thee, in prison bound
By Satan's thrall :

Free to console the saddest heart,
That throbs with grief,
And to the sinner's sorest smart
To bring relief.

Fountain of Life ! thy living waves
Can never fail ;
For great is Truth—the Truth that saves—
And shall prevail.

No time shall stop thee on thy course,
Till suns have ceased to roll,
And thou hast raised beyond the curse
Each ransomed soul.

Luther ! the world will long confess
Its debt to thee,
And long the fearless hand will bless
That set the Bible free.

The Word a Discerner.

Man! would you see thyself?
 Open the Book of Heaven,
 And there, as in a glass,
 Thy picture shall be given.

If Jesus has the power
 To lead thee, like a spell,
 The Gospel read one hour,
 Thy soul shall tell.

If holiness has charms
 To lure thee on life's road,
 If sin has strength of arms
 To keep thee from thy God,

Thy state shalt thou discern
 From Book, both kind and wise,
 That speaks the truth, however stern,
 And opes all honest eyes.

Ayrshire Relics.

It is very singular that I, a Scot and an enthusiastic votary of Burns, should never until now have visited his Ayrshire haunts. With his Dumfries ones I have been long familiar. Ayr is a pretty town, with clean, wide, residential streets, outside of the densely-built city, and has a fine sea esplanade over a mile long, commanding noble views of the Arran mountains and Ailsa Craig. Of course, I stood on the "Brigs of Ayr," and rhymed over to myself the graphic poem of Burns anent these structures. Of the "Auld Brig," with its narrow, stony causeway, no better picture can be given than the words wherein it is said, "whaur twa wheel-barrowes tremble whan they meet." It is now the

haunt of cripples and blind folk, who rather spoil the classic scene by their importunate clamours for a "bawbee." Saw the little hostelrie, wherein the "heroic Taul," by virtue of the "reaming swats," became "ower a' the ills o' life victorious." Then drove out to the "Auld Brig o' Doon," passing the humble thatch, beneath which Scotia's greatest poet beheld the light. Thereafter stood deeply impressed beneath the dome, where Park's noble bust of the Bard speaks to the soul, and where also there are relics of the past, which touch the heart to its innermost core. There the marriage ring o' "Bonnie Jean," the star-pattern wine-glasses given to "Clarinda, mistress of my soul," and the Bible, or parting gift, to Highland Mary. The Bard's strains to this interesting girl breathe a purity of devotion, in which many of his other amatory verses were painfully deficient. Last of all came the statues of Tam and Soutar Johnnie, by an obscure sculptor, Thom, who never succeeded in surpassing these marvellous works of art. They cannot be described. You must see them. And the longer you gaze, the more vividly do the quaint characteristics of the twa cronies rise before the mind. The humour, more especially in the pursed-up mouth, auld-fashioned nightcap, and inturnd toes of the Soutar, is past all description. Of course, we paused and gazed on "Kirk Alloway" until we almost felt that we saw the reeling witches, with their awesome surroundings, and heard the fearful music of the "towsie tyke, baith grim and large," who "screwed his pipes and made them skirl, till roof and rafters a' did dirl." Looking on these things, I could not prevent my prevailing epidemic from catching me once more, and brimmed over in some slip-shod verses.

TO THE SHADE OF BURNS.

Shade of the mighty dead !
 Beneath that dome I stand,
 Where visions of the days long fled
 Rise up, a bright-robed band.

I hear the "gurgling" Ayr,
 That queen of moorland streams,
 Where Mary, like some spirit fair,
 Roams through her poet-lover's dreams.

There pours the flooded Doon,
As on that awesome night,
When Tam, that drouthy, graceless loon
Beheld his "unco sight."

Their lies, within its sacred nook,
To gentle Mary given,
The ne'er-to-be-forgotten Book,
That winged her sainted soul to heaven.

That massive brow, the Muse's groat—
That eye, aglow with living fire—
Remind us of the greatest Scot
Who ever swept the tuneful lyre.

But yet, what needs that classic Bust
To speak of him who long hath gone
His short-lived Body sleeps in dust—
His deathless Spirit lights a Throne!

And there the golden ring
Beneath the glass is seen,
That Burns, auld Scotia's poet-king,
Placed on the hand of "Bonnie Jean."

And there, inviting still to sip,
The glass that once was thine,
Clarinda! when thy ruby lip
To nectar turned the ruby wine.

Ah! yes, the Ayr may cease to run,
And Doon to pour its "floods" along,
But Burns, their heaven-illumined son,
Shall "live and move" in wondrous song.

Still shall the fall of Sorrow's tear
Repeat that "Man was made to mourn,"
And still the Star of Eve so clear
Shall tell us of a soul forlorn.

The lowly daisy of the field,
That labour's gleaming ploughshare turns,
Or "sleekit mousie's" ruined beild,
Shall both recall their loving Burns.

The native scenes he sung so well,
And where he drew his latest breath,
Long of the rustic bard shall tell,
And raise him o'er the power of death.

While Beauty in her pride shall bloom,
And Honesty all baseness spurns,
There is no victory for the tomb
O'er thy great soul, immortal Burns.

Oban, as it was, and is.

'Tis fifty years this very day
Since first I looked on Oban Bay,
Old time is ever flying ;
Then auburn curls were round my head,
But now, alas ! alas ! instead
The snows of age are lying.

And this bright bay is altered too,
For where the grass or heather grew—
Stands many a human dwelling—
Where once one steamer sought the shore,
There's now, I'm sure, at least a score
In noisy concert yelling.

And where upon the breeze would float
The curlew's wild and wailing note,
 Or bleat of vagrant sheep,
The engine's harsh, unearthly screech,
Invades the quiet of the beach,
 And thrills the trembling deep.

'Tis vain to fret o'er change and time,
We can't for aye enjoy our prime,
 Or stop the hours from flying ;
But in the dreamy past I see
A picture dearer far to me
 Than that before me lying.

Then would I live the past again
With all its joy, with all its pain ?
 The question foils decision ;
But Oban ! thou art not to me
The pictured page of Memory,
 The old, the treasured vision.

But Nature in her grander features
Is different from the feebler creatures,
 That change and die.
Still rolls aloft the blazing sun,
Still in their course the rivers run,
 While mountains heave on high—
And in its calmness far above,
Like banner of Almighty love,
 Bends the eternal sky.

The Quirang.

Twenty miles and more I sped,
The weird Quirang to see.
By noon I stood on the "Table" head
With a cloth of the greenest moss o'erspread,
Where the guests around are grim and dead
As the stony Dead can be.
'Tis thirty feet high if it be an inch,
And is ever fresh with the spray of the Minch.

Abroad I gazed on the ocean blue
To the haven of Stornoway,
And far below, like a bright sea-mew,
A gallant barque o'er the surges flew
To the shelter of that calm bay ;
While, borne aloft on the briny gale,
I could hear the song of the crew,
As they double-reefed the straining sail,
That bore them along at a headlong speed.
Like the wild career of the desert steed,
As he spurns with his hoof the sea of sand,
Yet bows to the rule of the rider's hand.

And oh ! there is something fierce and free
To stand on this tower of the Western Sea,
And hear the sea-bird's cry and clang,
As he wheels o'er the peaks of the strange Quirang,
Then drops, like a meteor, down on the wave,
That proves in its wrath the sailor's grave,
Or smoothes the crests of its billows wild,
And sleeps with the calm of a sleeping child.

The Emerald Isle.

There never was a land, however old,
 Where God with loving hand hath done so much,
 And man so little. Would some magic touch
 Open the eyes of Ireland to behold
 Her glorious birthright—rich with Nature's gold,
 And learn the lesson of a wise content
 For all that Heaven hath in its bounty sent.
 Avaunt ye Fiends! who, for a selfish end,
 The bonds of peace in this Green Isle would rend.

Tibbie Shiels.

MOORLAND MEMORIES.

Ance mair I muse whaur days gane by
 Twa clever chiels
 Their e'enin' stoup were wont to ply,
 At Tibbie Shiels.

The tane they ca'ed him Jamie Hogg,
 The tither bauld Kit North.
 The rhymes o' baith are still in vogue,
 And fou o' worth.

And there they crackit ower the glass,
 And filled their creels,
 While merrily the hours did pass
 At Tibbie Shiels.

The tane o' fair Kilmeny sang,
And Yarrow's bonniest "Flower ;"*
The tither reigned in "Blackwood" lang,
Through mony a word o' power.

St. Mary's Loch is still the same,
And still the swan floats there ;
But whaur is Tib, that weel-kent name,
And whaur that jovial pair ?

A' sleep in dust, as we maun sleep,
Whaun Death pits in his claim ;
But lang St. Mary's inland deep
The dear-lo'ed memory shall keep
O' ilka treasured name.

*Mary Scott of Dryhope Tower.

Among the Hills.

Where Meggat wanders from the hills,
Fed by a thousand tinkling rills,
I've late been roaming,
While gently, with a summer-breath,
O'er mossy stone and purple heath
Fell the soft gloaming.

And then in lone St. Mary's breast
The troubled waters find their rest,
And slumber deep,
While in its mirror, broad and clear,
The shadow lies of feeding steer,
Or fleecy sheep.

A Sabbath calmness seems to reign
O'er hill and wave and grassy plain,
 Broke by no sound,
Save plaintive bleating of a lamb,
That 'mid the moor has lost its dam,
 And mourns around.

And now the mist from Meggat-dale
Draws over all a fleecy veil,
 And hides yon hill,
While the shy cuckoo's parting note
Is heard upon the air to float,
 And all is still.

Like stream long-fretted on its way,
That meets at last some quiet bay
 Wherein to sleep,
How happy is the troubled life
That, after days and years of strife,
Finds in Eternity's dim sea
A haven of tranquillity,
 For dreams too deep.

OLD LANBERIS.

A calmer spot heart never chose
 To build its nest in,
And, after Life's eventful close,
 To take its rest in.

How fit that holy Fane appears
 To prompt devotion,
To plume the hopes, or sooth the fears,
That often fret the stream of years
 To wild commotion.

Our human passions find their way
To scenes most quiet,
And sadly mar our mortal day
With restless riot,
Till, like the stream that ends its course
In this lone deep,
They wear their strength and spend their force
Then fall asleep.
Bubbles, no more to vex the sea
That laps thy shores, Eternity?

Twas thus I mused one eventide
Among the graves,
That nestle closely side by side,
Like gentle waves,
Whose crests have fallen before they reach
The pebbly strand of some lone beach.

Yes! there, methought, the wanderers rest,
Safe from the perils of Life's main—
Their folded hands upon their breast,
And closed the lips that breathed of pain—
Sleepers, whose souls have reached that shore
Where travel ends and tempests beat no more.

The Wish.

I would not wish to die in spring,
When buds are on the tree ;
When birds begin to plume the wing,
And flowers to paint the lea.

In summer-time I would not die,
When blossoms open fair ;
When sunbeams wander through the sky,
And odours through the air.

When autumn leaves are falling fast,
Or wintry tempests rave,
'Tis then I'd wish to breath my last,
And find some peaceful grave—

That valley, through whose starless gloom
The soul escapes to rest ;
Immortal victor of the tomb,
Companion of the blest.

Christmas.

" A merry Christmas ! " 'tis to me
The saddest day of all the year ;
For Fancy's eye again can see
The forms of those who were most dear,
But now have ceased to be.

The Yule-log, crackling on the hearth,
The holly, with its berries red,
Each is a cheery call to mirth ;
But each recalls to me the dead—
A plummet dropt by Memory
Into the depths of days gone by.

And yet upon its wintry wings
It bears a healing balm.
" Glad tidings " from the Past it brings
My troubled soul to calm,
Breathing of Him, through whom I trust
To join the Lost who slumber in the dust.

A spectre-band, they dimly flit—
 From out the mist of bygone days,
 While musing by the fire I sit,
 And gaze upon its flickering blaze—
 And, though the loved are dead and gone,
 I cannot deem myself alone ;
 For in thy halls, O Memory !
 The friends of early days I see—
 Lost ? No ! they're only gone before,
 And wait to hail me home on yonder sunbright shore.

The Bell ! it tolls the mystic hour,
 When Truth and Mercy came from heaven,
 To pour of love a golden shower
 On lowly cot and lofty tower ;
 The God-like, the impartial dower
 Of sinners saved, and sins forgiven.

The Creative Pipe.

The Pipe is the best digestive
 That ever a mortal can find—
 It is also of thoughts suggestive,
 To a man of reflective mind.

'Tis the parent of many a story,
 Of sermon, of song, and of joke—
 And fancies it summons before you
 That do not *all end in smoke !*

A Book.

A book is better than a friend—
 It can talk both night and morn ;
 You have only to attend,
 And no answer need return.
 When you tire, you've but to pause
 And no umbrage e'er will cause.
 Once more, when weary of thyself,
 There's your Book upon the shelf,
 Ready to descend once more,
 And beguile you with its lore ;
 To raise the smile, to draw the tear,
 Correct the error, point the way to steer,
 And make you feel a loving friend is near.
 East or west, where'er you look,
 No friend is better than a book.
 Friendship's ties are prone to sever ;
 A book's the same—the same for ever.
 One Book there is in value worth them all—
 The Book of God, *and never out of call.*

The Sleeping Dead.

(*Written in the Burial-Ground of Kinnoull.*)

How near ! and yet how far !
 How far ! and yet how near !
 Methinks I hear a well-known voice
 Low-sounding in mine ear.
 We are not far from Heaven—
 It has a thousand gates ;
 And by each one, from morn till even,
 A white-robed Angel waits.

'Tis vice alone debars ;
 'Tis virtue points the way ;
 And passing souls in yon bright stars
 Find rest both night and day.
 Then let us dread to mar
 The Life that should be clear ;
 And what seems now both faint and far,
 Like some dim-twinkling evening star,
 Shall breathe a welcome near.

**Lines Written in the Cemetery
 of Rothsay,**

(NEAR KEAN'S COTTAGE.)

I've seen a sea-bird, battered by the gale,
 Folding her wings behind some sheltering rock ;
 I've seen a noble ship, with riven sail,
 Moored safe at last beyond the billows shock.
 So, Kean, thy fiery spirit found a rest
 In this calm spot—this haven of the west.
 Even as the bird a stormy joy might own,
 Tossed on the summit of a bursting wave,
 So did thy restless spirit find a throne
 On plaudits, doomed to antedate thy grave ;
 But here, methinks, was built a fitting nest,
 Wherein to draw thy breath and take thy rest.
 How soft the breeze, that sighs along the hill !
 How green the woods, that cast a tender shade !
 The sleeping lake below, how bright and still !
 As if to soothe man's passions these were made.
 Well had it been if here thy youth and age
 Had reared their theatre, and trod their stage ;
 And, like the sleepers of this burial-slope,
 Had lived in humble faith and died in holy hope.

Nature the True Artist.

The hand of Nature never did misplace
 A single living thing.
 The harebell, bending o'er the bubbling spring,
 Gains and imparts a double grace ;
 The primrose, smiling from the dewy shade,
 By fallen trunk, or moss-grown fragment made,
 Lends a new beauty to the tree, or stone,
 And boasts a charm that is not all her own.
 To man 'twas left to bungle and to blunder,
 And what the Lord had joined "to put asunder!"

God's Common Blessings are His Best.

O man ! whose life is full of care,
 So eager, vain, and void of rest,
 This truth within thy bosom bear,—
 God's common blessings are His best.

'Tis not in wealth, 'tis not in power,
 To make a thoughtful spirit blest ;
 And we are told by every hour
 God's common blessings are His best.

The air we breathe, the vernal breeze,
 The gentle eve that woos to rest,
 There is a voice in each of these—
 "God's common blessings are His best."

The sun, that calls to daily toil,
 Man's blessing ere by sin distressed ;
 The products of the teeming soil,
 That labour draws from east and west,

The dews that weep, the rains that fall
 Upon the fields, by heat opprest,
 A message bear to one and all—
 God's common blessings are His best.

The lofty peak the lightning rends ;
 The lowly vale oft leads to rest ;
 And man may find his fastest friends
 Far from ambition's dazzling crest.

A soul, to feel the kindly care
 By which we're every day carest,
 A mind contented with its share,
 Is doubly rich and doubly blest.

For it has treasures everywhere,
 E'en though at times by grief opprest,
 And learns to say, while doomed to bear,
 God's common blessings are His best.

The Gospel, with its wealth of love,
 That soothes the soul of sin to rest,
 Said, when it left its home above—
 " God's common blessings are His best "

The Vacant Chair.

(REPRINTED BY SPECIAL DESIRE.)

Ah ! many a saddening sight we see
 In this dark world of care ;
 But saddest of them all to me—
 The Vacant Chair.

The face, no more on earth to smile,
 Smiles sweetly, sadly there ;
 Fond, foolish fancy for awhile
 Refills the Vacant Chair !

It stands, as if the Lost would come
Our evening mirth to share.
Vain dream ! he fills another Home,
That sees no Vacant Chair.

It keeps the place it always kept—
Can change have fallen there ?
Have bosoms throbb'd, have eyelids wept
Above that Vacant Chair ?

Hark ! well-known steps the threshold press !
A voice is in the air !
Vain fancy ! add not to distress—
Oh ! leave that Vacant Chair !

What earthly Home hath stood for years
Amid this world of care,
Nor seen its smiles melt into tears,
Nor mourn'd its Vacant Chair ?

In one it is a parent old ;
In one an infant fair ;
In one the playmate blithe and bold,
That makes the Vacant Chair.

And oft, when Christmas revels call
Sad hearts to banish care,
A spectre slowly treads the hall,
And fills the Vacant Chair.

Oh ! may we reach that Home above,
Where sadness hath no share—
Where breath is bliss, where life is love—
Where stands no Vacant Chair.

The Seasons.

The *Year of Nature* is a varied thing,
 And much reminds us of a *human life* ;
 It opens with the promises of Spring—
 Then follows Summer, with her blossoms rife—
 Next, russet Autumn pours her wealth of fruit ;
 And Winter lowers, when even the streams are mute.

But though no blossoms crown the hoary king,
 He offers charms to many a cheery soul—
 The crackling fire, the social evening ring,
 Where song goes round, and “reams” the Christmas
 When kindred spirits quit the roaring rink, [bowl.
 And fight their focs again aboon the gude “Scotch
 [drink.”

Inspiring game ! at thee distinctions cease,
 And feuds rub shoulders in a friendly peace.
 A whole wide valley pours to worship thee,
 And at thine altar differing Priests agree ;
 Tenant and landlord cope with jovial air,
 And the best curler is the best man there.

The Falling Leaf.

The falling leaf ! it speaks to me
 Of days that never more can be—
 Of freshness gone, of vigour fled,
 And pleasures numbered with the dead.

The falling leaf ! it speaks of those
 Who slumber in the last repose ;
 Who bloomed, then vanished from the tree,
 And now are what I soon must be.

The falling leaf ! the falling leaf !
 It says that life is frail and brief ;
 It bids me seize the vernal year,
 For death's cold winter hovers near.

When through autumnal groves I tread,
 I seem to wander 'mid the dead ;
 For what are leaves that sapless lie,
 But types of men that bloom and die ?

No, falling leaf ! there waits for me
 A destiny denied to thee.
 Thou livest but to fade away—
 I die to live, and live for aye—
 A leaf on that unfading tree,
 Whose name is Immortality !

Disestablishment ; or, The Man with the Axe.

Woodman ! spare that Holy Tree,
 If it sacred be to thee,
 As it is to mine and me.

'Tis no "cumberer" of the ground—
 Lo ! the fruit it showers around !
 On poor folks it lays no tax—
 Wherefore, stay thy murdering axe !
 'Tis a Church both cheap and "free,"
 As *the bread of life* should be.
 Countless souls beneath its shade
 Places of repose have made,
 Finding, as their sires have found,
 Peace upon that "holy ground."

Infaney hath slumbered there,
Rocked as on a mother's breast ;
Youth, with feverish dreams opprest ;
Manhood, with its load of care.
Age, whose sands are ebbing low ;
Pain, and weariness, and woe,
All unite in prayer to thee,
Woodman ! spare our blessed Tree.

If thou wilt not hear the prayer
Rising from a nation's lips,
Thine may be the dire eclipse
Of a *power* that scorned to see
Blessings on our old Scotch Tree.

London ; or, Shadows and Realities.

Where pours that stream, that swelling human stream,
From princely porch, wide street, and alley dim,
Still onward drawn, as by some magnet spell ?
Yon gorgeous theatre, with doors cast wide,
Engulfs the tossing crowd, as caverns huge
Devour old ocean's surging, sounding waves.
What fires the crowd ? It hastes to pour its tears
O'er Juliet's fate, or Desdemona's doom !

Come hither ! ye whose eyes are ripe for tears,
Whose bosoms boast such wealth of sympathy,
As if no bleak and bare realities
Closed round your home, and vainly sought relief !
Need ye the aid of fancy ? Hither come,
Step from the "madding crowd," and learn that life
Has countless scenes to make a good man weep.

Beneath that ragged roof behold a band,
Where crime and sorrow shiver side by side,
And vie in hideous aspect. Crouching hunger,
With wolfish, eager glance ; dark, plotting *guilt*,
Nursing within its brain the midnight theft ;
Pale, haggard misery, whose hollow eyes
Seem dry from woe's excess ; *age*, weak with want ;
And *youth*, so branded that you may discern
The wreck of sin, ere yet the wreck of years !

But trial here can only discord breed ;
For griping selfishness hath wound its coils
Around the unnatural hearts of sire and son,
And, in that den of horrid sights and sounds
Contention reigns ; and scarce the skinny babe
Can waken Nature in the mother's breast,
Where foul intemperance and pinching want
Combine to hunt all finer feelings forth.

Gaze on this picture, statesman ! skilled to speak
Of social ills, while party passions move
Thy plotting soul, defeating nobler ends.

Gaze on this picture, controversial zealots !
Who shake religious fabrics about trifles
Lighter than air, while guilt and grief increase.

Gaze on this picture, pampered sybarite !
Whose nerves are jarred full twenty times a day
By vulgar causes. Gaze on this dark scene,
And earn a night's repose by Christian work.

Under yon ruined archway, where the blast
Pipes doleful music, while some withered leaves
Are whirled in fitful dance, a motley crew
Gather, like shadows, as the night draws on.

There hoary men, who scarce can crawl from age ;
And stunted boys, exposed to life's worst ills,
Ere they have tasted of a single pleasure ;
And reckless females, sadly lost to shame.
There, as the shades of night fall coldly round,
And high-born joy speeds past on glowing wheels,
Unconscious of the envy it awakes—
The envy and despair—there, like vile wrecks,
From every quarter, huddled by the storm,
All sins and sorrows seek a common lair,
With none to ask what chance hath wrecked them so.
Their sufferings much alike—how stands the blame ?
But double night enwraps them all in gloom,
And we must leave to God what *man* neglects.
The heathen world is ever on his lips—
Are there no heathens at our doors at home ?

Fast by the buttress of yon slimy bridge,
For ages bent above the boiling flood,
As if that bridge were Time—that river Death !
There lies a corpse, once buoyant with the ebb
And flow of lusty life—but now the stream
Sways it to right or left with every surge,
Sweeping the dank locks o'er the pallid brow.
The night grows deeper, and still there it lies,
Though rugged bargeman, at his sooty trade,
Or ruined female, brooding o'er like end
To life's long list of sorrows and of sins,
Have passed the wreck that was a noble form.
'Tis common sight, and scarce can draw a crowd !
The lazy mists close in, and lazier Watch,
Flashing his link across the haggard face,
Removes the corpse—and there the matter ends !
For all bespeaks the desperate suicide,
Goaded to madness by his own rash deeds—

Madness whose fearful, fatal cure is—death !
But now a different picture let us scan ;
For life's bleak desert, thank a loving God !
Can boast its floweret, and its sparkling fount.
Track we in healthy hope that gentle form—
That female form so neat, yet poorly clad.
Not bold the step—not confident the mien—
And yet there breathes alike from form and face
A calm, but firm reliance. Happier days
Less full of care than those experienced now,
Have passed o'er that young head—but time and change
Have brought their burden—ay ! and strength to bear.
The tempered sadness of a grief subdued,
But not forgotten, sobers that clear eye,
And casts a pensive beauty o'er that cheek.
A simple story hers : her father died—
Died after long-drawn sickness, a poor man ;
Her mother pined, and broken-hearted slept
Ere long beside the partner of her home.
Three little children to her care are left—
Herself scarce past the thoughtless date of childhood—
But earnest purpose, with sweet faith in God,
Call forth her soul to battle with the blast—
And with those fingers, pale and delicate,
She wins her brothers' and her sisters' bread.
Oh ! may they live to cheer and shield her age,
As she has cheered and blest their helpless youth !

Man ! who would faint beneath some cross of life,
And in despair would lay thy burden down,
Follow that fragile figure to her home—
See how she comes, like sunshine, to its inmates—
Witness the power and beauty of the will,
When rightly ruled—regard what *duty done*
Can do to smooth life's rough and toilsome road,

To pluck the sting of anguish from the heart,
And light with holy gleams the brow of care.
Go ! witness these, and, blushing for thy weakness,
Resume thy load, and God will give thee strength.

How strange the history of a single street,
Through which the passenger unthinking walks !
Here merry voices signalise a birth—
There straining eyes watch o'er the work of death !
Here *probity* pursues the bootless task,
Conscience alone rewarding. *Knavery* there
Moulds the base purpose, till for action ripe.
Here *revelry* flits past in mazy dance—
There *madness* rends the air with hideous shriek,
A thin partition severing such extremes !
Life and *reality* go hand in hand—
Nor need we *airy fictions* to awake
The slumbering thought, or thaw the frozen tear.

The fate of Juliet, Desdemona's doom,
The craze of Lear, great Wolsey's sudden fall,
The asp of Cleopatra, Cæsar's death,
Macbeth's red dagger, Banquo's sleepless ghost,
Are sad ;—but equal miseries walk the world—
That "stage," whose characters have claims on all,
And deepest interest for the good and wise.
While shines the searching sun in Heaven's blue depths,
'Twill light them on to scenes "too deep for tears."

Dura Den.*

How many pass, unthinking and unmoved,
 Through scenes that wake in others noble thought—
 O'er vivid footprints of the unseen God—
 'Mid speaking witnesses of scheming man!
 Pause, traveller! for thou treadest such a scene;
 Records of God and man surround thee here!

That Ruin, beetling o'er the rippling stream,
 Where pensile wild flowers drink the crystal wave,
 And flitting flies betray the lurking trout
 To the keen angler; mark that mouldering wreck; †
 'Tis the hoar remnant of a famous pile,
 Where the last Scottish Parliament convened,
 And feebly grasp'd a sceptre, soon to pass
 To other hands, stretch'd eagerly for power.

Note yonder hill, by far-seen pillar crown'd,
 And encircled by a zone of stately trees;
 A prouder glory rests upon its brow;
 More deathless verdure clothes its classic side;
 For there a bard, whose name shall never die,
 Sir David Lindsay, sang his Dorie lay.

Dim in the distance, like the tales they tell,
 St. Andrew's sacred turrets pierce the sky—
 Grey spectres standing sadly by the sea,
 As if they mourn'd some ravage it had wrought.
 A different sea † swept o'er them—it is gone!
 But these bleak fragments live to tell its fury.

* The scene of remarkable fossils discovered by the late
 Dr. Anderson of Newburgh.

† Dairsie Castle.

† The Reformation.

Where winds the quiet, greenly-mantled dell
Into the bosom of the uplands, rich
With russet grain, or dappled o'er with flocks—
There stretch'd, in days gone by, a dreary moor—*
Dreary and voiceless; save when one wild night
It rang with ringing steel and cries of terror—
And blood, by murder shed, its heath-bloom deepen'd,
Leaving a stain no floods can wash away!
There Sharp—weak zealot of a despot-creed—
Died; and so dying half redeemed his life.
Thus ruthless violence defeats its end,
And makes a martyr where it sought a victim!

Far up the crag, where waves the feathery fern,
And the gay foxglove hangs its purple bloom;
Where glides the weasel on its noiseless way,
And clings the bat till evening shadows fall;
The damp and dripping cavern wont to hide
Devoted men, who worshipp'd God by stealth,
When "temples made with hands" refused their praise.

These are the records, these the deeds of men;
But other deeds and dates find record here.
Far different wrecks lie buried 'neath your feet,
Proclaiming other changes, other times.
No billow breaks upon this sealess beach—
Nought save a tiny brook runs wimpling here;
Yet forms of life—once sporting 'mid the waves,
Their home green ocean-caves and plains and vales—
Start from the rock at every clanging blow,
Filling the dusty workman with amaze,
And wafting back the sage's puzzled thoughts
O'er the dusk gulf of dim, unnumber'd years!
What sea, receding from what former world,
Consign'd these tribes to stony sepulchres?

* Magus Muir.

Bewilder'd sage ! proclaim thy wisdom folly,
And where thy REASON fails let FAITH begin :
The rocks have sacred secrets of their own,
That teach the wise humility and praise.

The Lamp of Rona.

On the deck of the *Glencoe*, we speed southward, past shores of beauty and of grandeur, till the "misty Skye" receives us into the haven of Portree. Pursuing our course, we skirt the islands of Rona and Rassay, and of the former I gleaned a touching legend. A poor fisherman's wife was wont to place a lighted candle in the window of her humble cabin to guide the boat of her husband and their three sons to the mooring-place in the little narrow creek. One night they came not. Another and another passed away, and still the boat came not with its precious freight. Still, night after night, the lonely light was seen shedding its beams of mercy over the waves that wash the shores of the desolate isle. The flame of hope still continued to burn, nourished and kept alive by the unwearied hand of undying love. The Commissioners of the Northern Seas at last built a lighthouse on the dangerous reef of Rona, and made the fisherman's wife the keeper of the lonely beacon. She still, I believe, survives.

Night after night

A lonely light

Flamed high over Rona's bay,

And the sailor's bark,

Through the storm-clouds dark,

Was led by the friendly ray.

And a holier ray,
By night and day,
 Burned strong in a woman's breast.
Love was its name—
From heaven it came,
 The land of the bright and blest.

They came no more
To the cottage door,
 The loving, the leal, and the brave ;
On the tempest tost,
The bark was lost,
 And the deep is the sailor's grave.

But still on the shore,
As in days of yore,
 Two lamps are shedding their flames ;
They never die
Though the storm is high,
 And *hope* and *love* are their names.

A lonely dame
Still trims the flame,
 And hope never ceases to burn ;
But in vain does she gaze
Through the drift and the haze,
 For the lost who can never return.

On the sea of life
Through storm and strife,
 We drift to the far-off land
But a guardian light
From heaven shines bright,
 Ever fed by our Saviour's hand.

Then hold on thy way,
Through blast and spray,
 With your eye on that friendly flame.
It will never die,
Though the storm beats high.
 And *love* is its holy name.

A Hidden Brook.

A hidden brook ran warbling through a glade,
 Filling the air with gladness and with song ;
A path of green its devious course betrayed,
 Where still it rolls in seerey along,
Like holy charity, whose way is known
By the blest influence of deeds alone.

Thus, through a world of wickedness and woe,
 The spirit pours a hidden, holy tide ;
No eye can mark its blessed waters flow,
 But fairest flowers drink beauty by their side ;
And ever in the ear of listening souls
A "still small voice" of touching music rolls.

Thus many a life, by men unseen, unknown,
 Glides through the glade of Time with gentle tread,
Making a holy music of its own,
 While bright-winged seraphs bend the approving
 head,
And God accepts the notes that sweetly rise
To blend with Heaven's high choral melodies.

Not the proud victor God alone commends,
Rushing impetuous on his conquering course ;
Nor the rapt sage, whose daring genius rends
The veil of error with resistless force ;
Like hidden brooks, obscurer spirits sing
A grateful song to Heaven's Eternal King.

The mighty hand that piles the giant hill,
And holds the waters of the weltering main,
Pours from a bounteous urn the hidden rill,
And scatters cowslips o'er the laughing plain,
Lights up the glow-worm's twinkling taper small,
Moulds the bright dew, and notes the sparrow's fall.

Nations to Him are but as drifting *dust*,
One breath of His can scatter kingly states ;
They only stand who in His greatness trust,
Goodness alone for Him delight creates ;
A drop, an ocean, are to Him as one,
A grain of sand and yonder blazing sun.

Oft have I sat within that lonely dell,
Beneath the shadow of an ancient thorn,
While on the turf a shower of blossoms fell,
Or floated free, on gentle breezes borne.
Deep in the soil of vernal memory set,
Beside the brook that hawthorn blossoms yet.

Burns Corrected.

When a stone is cast from a rugged height by a powerful hand, it is not easy to say where it may rest, or what mischief it may do upon its erratic course. When Burns flung into the world his "Man's a Man for a' that," he little thought, and did not intend, to preach a lesson of discontent to the humbler classes of society. But such was, and still is, the result; and teaches the mortifying and humbling lesson, that no good is unmingled with evil. The noble poem to which I allude may be styled the *Scottish Marseillaise*; and I believe that, if many political fanatics were to come and burn your house about your ears, they would do it to the blatant tune, "A Man's a Man for a' that!"

Now, such an outcome Burns never for one moment contemplated. He had too strong a sense of honour to stimulate class warfare. He meant nothing more than to inculcate the feeling of a *manly independence*, founded upon the basis of a *common intelligence—the property alike of Peer and Peasant*. Burns was far too sensible to mean anything else. Through all his works he shews a *fine recognition of the grades* into which the Creator has divided society. To the upper grade he ever evinced a manly respect—utterly divested of one tinge of servial subservency—and his lament over the death of the noble Glencairn is the most worthy flower that the hand of humble gratitude ever cast upon the grave of departed greatness.

Yet, let me venture to add my humble amendment to words well meant by their famous author.

“Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,
 Wha struts and stares, and a' that ;
 Though hundreds worship at his word,
 He's but a coof for a' that :
 The rank is but the guinea's stamp,
 The man's the gowd for a' that,”

It has been said, “What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander,” and so—

See yonder *worker*, ca'd a man,
 Wha fumes and frets, and a' that ;
 Although his *wage* is duly paid,
 He's no' content for a' that !
 For a' that and a' that,
 His politics and a' that,
 Forgetting Him, who fixed his place,
 He's but a fule for a' that.

Tak a' thing at its honest worth,
 Whatever name ye ca' that—
 The *Rank* is naething to the point,
 The *Man's the stuff* for a' that.
 For a' that and a' that,
 Ye're Tories, Whigs, and a' that,
 Let duty guide ye in yer sphere,
 And ye're the man for a' that.

Sympathy.

I.

It suiteth well the merry heart
To court the beams of morn,
And to listen to the songs of birds
On summer breezes borne ;
But the pensive shades of twilight,
And the sighing of the sea,
When it moaneth on a wintry beach,
Are sweeter far to me.

II.

It pleaseth well the happy breast,
That never felt a care,
To drink the witching music
Of the gay and festive air ;
But the night-blast mingling sadly
With the dirges of the sea,
When it moaneth on a wintry beach,
Are dearer far to me.

III.

The summer song, the festive lute
Seem mockery of my pain,
For they speak of vanished faces
That ne'er can smile again ;
But the wailing of the wintry wind
And the sobbing of the sea,
Seem the mourning notes of nature
Breathing sympathy for me.

What is Religion ?

What is Religion ? hundreds ask—
And many a thoughtful brain
Therein has found a hopeless task—
Philosopher ! explain.

No deep philosophy have I —
That path I never trod ;
Yet, in all humbleness reply,
A heart that treasures God.

The Foam-Bell.

I.

A bright foam-bell on the waters rose,
On the ripples it danced away,
And from time to time a brief repose
It found in some quiet bay.

II.

Then around and around on the eddies it spun,
Then it shot on the shooting tide ;
And, lit by the rays of a glorious sun,
It laughed and it gleamed in pride ;
When lo ! in a golden flash it sank !
But the sun shone bright as ever,
And still as of old from bank to bank
Swept on that rippling river.

III.

'Tis thus, methought, with the great and gay :
A gleam !—and their glory's gone ;
While o'er the spot where they passed away
The sun still sheds as bright a ray,
And the River of Time rolls on.



PICTURES OF PALESTINE.

No. I.

A Dream Picture.

Land of the East ! a thousand visions rise,
Obedient to thy name's familiar sound ;
Too bright they almost seem for memories,
Too near for shadows cast by distant ground.
Kingdoms have laws to limit, or to bind,
But thou art Commonwealth to all mankind.

There Eden heard her new-born rivers flow,
And deck't her bowers with more than summer
bloom ;
There God-like man, the lord of all below,
Fell from a throne, and wandered to a tomb !
There the *first promise* breathed with seraph
tongue,
And bright-eyed Hope to life exultant sprung.

There burst the fountains of the prisoned deep,
And swept a wicked world with angry haste,
Till tree and tower and lightning-splintered steep
Lay buried sadly 'neath the watery waste—
That dreary waste, where every weltering wave
Rolled on—a shroud, a coffin, and a grave !

There grew the Olive, sign of softened wrath—
 There steamed the grateful Altar to the skies—
 There Enoch "walked" upon his holy path—
 There Abra'm bound his priceless sacrifice—
 There Moses led his heaven-befriended flock,
 Fed from the sky, and watered from the rock.

There, like the glorious gate of Paradise,
 O'er cloud and storm the Rainbow cast its span,
 Glowing with love's and pity's blended dyes,
 And shedding promise o'er the homes of man.
 How bright thy temple, and how blest thy state,
 Thou blooming Paradise, if such thy gate!

There Jacob's ladder, like the path of prayer,
 Rose, angel-guarded, to the throne of God.
 There, swiftly wafted through the startled air,
 Elijah's car with living glory glowed.
 There Christ hath trod the wild, and walked
 the wave,
 And spoiled thy heritage, insatiate grave!

There the mean Cradle, where a Saviour slept—
 The Garden, witness of no mortal grief—
 The Tomb, where sorrow conquered, and He "wept"—
 The Mount of *Splendour*, dazzling, bright, and brief—
 The Hill of Doom, where closed the awful
 strife—
 The Rock-bier, gate of victory and life.

Dry is the fount, where life's refreshing wave
 Persuasion murmured to the thirsting heart.
 The Moslem, kneeling o'er thy Saviour's grave,
 Tells, Land of miracle! how changed thou art;
 But what of wasting time, or bigot zeal,
 Can rob thy forehead of Jehovah's seal?

Still shall the mind, by doubts and fears oppressed,
 Draw near the cross, and find its deepest calm ;
 Still shall the heart, by cares and woes distressed,
 Seek from the *words of life* its sweetest balm.

The voice, that chased disease and chained the sea,
 Hath still the holiest peace, O man, for thee.
 Raise to yon cross one look of honest faith,
 And where thy blunted sting, O vanquished Death!

No. II.

Thagar in the Wilderness.

GENESIS XXI., 14-19.

I.

What wail in the waste of Beer-Sheba is heard,
 Like the cry of bewildered and famishing bird
 As it drifts, weary winged, through a pitiless sky,
 When no covert is near and the tempest is high?

II.

Perchance 'tis a raven in search of its way
 'Mid the shadows of eve, closing coldly and grey?
 Or some beast of the desert by hunger oppressed,
 Prowling forth in the sullen, red glare of the west?

III.

No! the accents are human that float on the air!
 What heart, save a mother's, could nurse such despair?
 'Tis a woman that weeps for her perishing child,
 And fills with her trouble that shelterless wild.

IV.

From the dwellings of Abra'm that morning had gone
The heart-heavy Hagar with Ishmael her son,
For the envy of Sarah to hatred has turned,
And the offspring of Egypt in mockery is spurned.

V.

A desert surrounds the disconsolate pair—
No fountain of life-giving water is there—
No rain cloud appears in the merciless sky—
And a voice waileth out, "Let me not see him die!"

VI.

But God, who is found in the loneliest wild,
Hears the outcast appeal for her perishing child,
And a well, like the voice of some blessed reprieve,
Gushes out with a murmur that tells them to "live!"

VII.

Poor convict of sin, thus unhappy thy case,
When remorse drives thee forth to a shelterless place;
No rest for the sole of thy foot can'st thou find—
Before is perdition and vengeance behind.

VIII.

Thy soul is a desert—no fountain is there
To give thee fresh vigour to combat despair.
Below there is fear—there is judgment on high.
Oh! say what is left but to sit down and die?

IX.

No! life shall be thine. Faith will lead thee to see
A well of pure waters o'erflowing for thee;
For hopeless and bleak must that wilderness prove,
Where Christ cannot water thy soul with his love.

No. III.

The Rock of Horeb.

EXODUS XVII., 1-7.

I.

In the waste of Rephedim a murmur is heard,
And strangely the silence of ages is stirred,
For the voices of myriads tumultuously swell
Where a stream never ran and a leaf never fell.

II.

A thousand dark eyes flashing glances of fire,
A thousand swart brows working wildly in ire,
A thousand loud tongues where Apostacy flowed,
Are turned against Moses, the Servant of God.

III.

"Give us water to drink!" is the turbulent cry.
"Are we led to this wilderness merely to die?
Could the slave-land of Egypt afford us no bier,
That our children and flocks perish painfully here?"

IV.

In that hour of rebellion the goodness of heaven,
Like mist on the wind, to oblivion is driven;
The Plagues, the Red Sea, and the Manna forgot,
They shout, "Is Jehovah among us or not?"

V.

Then Moses appealed to his King and his God—
"To Horeb go forth, and forget not the rod
That quelled the proud Pharoah and blighted his land,
And smite the dry rock where Jehovah shall stand."



VI.

With the people and elders the Prophet has gone—
He smites with his rod the unpromising stone—
And lo! with a voice more enchanting than song,
A stream rushes out and pours brightly along.

VII.

Weary pilgrim of earth, let no murmur arise,
Though rough be the road and unfriendly the skies,
Though the desert of toil seems of water bereft,
For the grace and goodness of Jesus are left.

VIII.

His heart is the rock that was stricken for thee,
Be faithful and streams from its fulness thou'lt see;
For it pours in a constant and life giving-tide,
Through the waste of the world by the penitent's side.

No. IV.

Jacob's Dream.

GENESIS XXVIII., 11-22.

I.

In Bethel's wild the lonely Jacob slept,
A stone his pillow, and the turf his bed;
A whispering watch the night winds round him kept,
And the calm heaven hung, dome-like, overhead.

II.

He dreams a dream—and lo! from earth to air
A ladder stretches, like a path of light—
Angels, ascending and descending there
Like moving sunbeams, cross the vault of night.

III.

From its far top an awful voice awakes—
“The God of Abra’m and of Isaac hear—
The ground whereon thou sleepest, for their sakes,
Both thee and thine shall bless for many a year.

IV.

Thy seed in number shall be like the dust,
East, south, and west, and north thy line shall know;
God shall abide the fortress of their trust,
And be with thee where’er thy feet may go.”

V.

The voice is hushed, the vision melts in air,
The dreaming pilgrim from his slumber wakes;
Nought, save the morning star, keeps vigil there—
Nought, save the sighing wind, the silence breaks.

VI.

But Jacob's eye another watcher sees,
And Jacob's ear another speaker hears—
’Tis God's own voice gives music to the breeze—
’Tis God's own eye that lights the starry spheres.

VII.

“This place how dread,” with solemn voice he said,
“A present Deity this grace hath given;
The house of God hath been to me a bed,
Yea! I have slept within the gate of heaven.”

VIII.

Despond not then, thou friendless child of woe!
The dream of Bethel bids thee be of cheer,
Lone though thy road and bleak the winds that blow
Around thy homeless form, a God is near.

IX.

No mortal hand may prop thy drooping head,
No mortal eye may watch thee anguish-riven ;
Yet faith in Christ can make thy dying bed
The house of angels and the gate of heaven.

No. V.

Vision of the Dry Bones.

EZEKIEL XXXVII., 1-10.

I.

While glowed Ezekiel's sainted soul
With bright, prophetic flame,
The spirit of the Great Unseen
In power upon him came.
That spirit bore him as a cloud
Is borne upon the gale,
And set him down amid the hush
Of a sepulchral vale.

II.

Around him gazed the gifted seer
In deep, expectant dread—
He stood, a trembling thing of life,
Amid unnumbered dead.
For lo ! about him, cold and still,
And dumb and dry as stones,
There gleamed a ghastly multitude
Of bare, unburied bones.

III.

And as he looked upon the wrecks
Of mortals dead and gone,
"Say! can they live?" pealed forth a voice—
"Lord, thou can'st tell alone."
Again the awful voice arose—
"Speak to these silent bones;
Speak in the spirit and the power
Of old Prophetic tones.

IV.

Say, 'God will clothe your skeletons
And fill your forms with breath,
And bring ye forth, an army great,
From the abodes of Death.'"
The spirit of the sainted seer
Obeys the mighty word,
And lo! like rustling autumn winds,
A sound—a stir is heard!

V.

As withered leaves together crowd
When evening breezes moan—
Behold! beneath the Prophet's breath
Bone seeketh unto bone—
And forms of strength and beauty rise
Raised by an unseen hand,
Until a host of living men
Amid the vale they stand!

VI.

Thus, blighted sinner! can the Lord
Thy barren branches bless,
And clothe them with the blooming fruit
Of vital holiness.

Thus "dead in trespasses and sins
Christ saw the souls of men—
Dry bones amid a vale of tears—
And bade them live again.

VII.

Oh! then exult, thou man of God!
Though trouble vex thee sore,
And though the grave thy body claims,
Life's weary journey o'er—
A breath shall wake thy silent dust,
And break thy dreary tomb,
And a new Eden for thy soul
Shall wear eternal bloom.

No. VI.

The Transfiguration.LUKE IX., 28-36.

I.

Amid Judæa's sacred hills,
Jesus, a man of toil and grief,
Behind him leaves a world of ills,
To seek in prayer a sweet relief.
With him to Tabor's sacred brow,
Peter and John and James repair
To see what saints can witness now,
The beauty and the power of prayer.

II.

They sleep—but as the Man of Woes
Pours out his soul—a sacred urn—
With light from heaven his visage glows,
And all his raiment seems to burn.
And lo! in glory from the sky
Two spirits of the blest descend—
Elijah, destined ne'er to die,
And Moses, Israel's ancient friend.

III.

And from their lips, in blessed tones,
High converse comes of life and death ;
When, dead his pains, and hushed his groans,
The Lamb of God shall yield his breath.
While there they speak, the slumbering three
Wake to the glory streaming round,
“ Oh ! blessed Lord ! 'tis good that we
Are here on this anointed ground.”

IV.

“ Three tabernacles let us raise,”
Peter exclaims in fervid tone ;
“ One, Sainted Master ! to Thy praise—
To Moses—to Elias one.”
While yet he spake, a thickening cloud
O'ershadowed Tabor's holy hill ;
In fear the mute disciples bowed,
Till broke a voice the silence still.

V.

“ This is my dear, beloved Son,
His words with sacred reverence hear ;”
The sound is o'er, the cloud is gone,
The “ Man of Griefs ” alone is near.

Back to the scenes of care they wend,
No beam of Tabor gilds them there ;
But never can they want a friend,
While open stands the gate of prayer.

VI.

Behold the refuge, child of sin !
To God in all thy troubles flee—
For, outcast ! He will let thee in,
And brighten life's sad vale for thee.
Dark tho' the cloud of sorrow close
Around thy path, faint not, nor fear,
For one who felt the force of woes,
Thy Saviour and thy God is near.

VII.

The goodly tabernacle raise
Of deeds by faith and virtue blest—
These are the monuments of praise
The Great Jehovah loves the best.
Nor breathes a prayer so dear to God
From Time's dark scene of toil and strife
As that which seeks him by the road
Of a long, patient, holy life.

No. VII.

The Garden of Gethsemane.

MATTHEW XXVI., 36-45.

I.

Beyond the vale where Cedron flows,
When shades of eve began to close,
Christ, with his highly-favoured three,
Repaired to sad Gethsemane.
The holy men on Tabor's brow
Had seen Him glorified—and now
They see Him in the darkest hour
That o'er His spirit yet had power.

II.

“My soul is sorrowful to death,”
Sighed forth the Christ with troubled breath ;
“Watch here awhile”—and 'mid the shade
He fell upon his face and prayed.
No beam of Tabor lights it up—
“Father avert this fiery cup,
Filled with a world's unransomed guilt—
But, Father, only as Thou wilt.”

III.

Back comes He to the chosen three—
“Can ye not watch one hour with Me ?”
For sleep had sealed their weary eyes—
“Both watch and pray !” the Saviour cries.
Again he leaves them for the shade—
Again fell on his face and prayed ;
“Oh ! let Me shun this cup of guilt—
But, Father, only as Thou wilt.”

IV.

Again He seeks his followers' side—
Again in sleep their woes they hide—
“Watch,” cries the Saviour, “watch and pray,
Lest Satan steal your souls away.”
Once more He strives in prayer profound,
Till drops of blood bedew the ground ;
Then, like a rainbow 'mid the storm,
To cheer Him comes an angel form.

V.

Emerging from the dismal shade,
“Rest calmly now,” the Saviour said ;
Behold, the appointed hour is nigh,
When sinners for My life-blood cry.
“Sleep on, for soon the world will close
The period of your brief repose ;
Here ‘tribulation’ must be yours,
But blest is he who well endures.”

VI.

Ye sons of fervent prayer, good cheer !
Angels, attend your wanderings here ;
To beam upon the place of strife,
And bless the bitterest cup of life.
Then weary not, but watch and pray,
An evening waits the longest day ;
And He who died to make ye blest
Will call ye home to heaven's own “rest.”

VII.

Oh ! let us shun to fill anew
That awful cup of pain ;
For every deed of guilt we do
Torments our Lord again.

And let us learn, though every life
Its Tabor-gleams may see,
Each thoughtful soul is sure to have
Its dark Gethsemane.

VIII.

There is a cup, from which the lip
Of every soul recoils—
The cup of pain and want and woe,
The cup of fruitless toils ;
But in our night of dreariness,
Still look we to the Son,
And cry, unconquered by distress,
“ Father ! Thy will be done.”

No. VIII.

The Raising of Lazarus.

JOHN XI., 1-46.

I.

While Jesus with his followers dwelt
Remote from Judah's soil,
Reposing from the holy cares
Of long, religious toil—
From Bethany a tale of woe
Two sorrowing sisters send,
“ Lord ! sickness lays a heavy hand
On Lazarus, Thy friend.”

II.

When Jesus heard, "Not unto death
This sickness is," He said—
"But for the glory of our God,"
And there in peace He stayed.
Two days are gone. He tarries still.
His friend lies in the tomb.
The weeping sisters think "one word
Had changed this dreary doom."

III.

"To Bethany," at length He said,
"Let us in haste repair,
For Lazarus I fain would wake,
Who slumbers lonely there."
"If thus he sleep," his followers cry
With one consenting breath,
"Lord Jesus, it is surely well ;"
"His sleep," said Christ, "is death."

IV.

While yet afar, the sacred band
By Martha were espied,
"Had'st Thou been here, O Lord," she said,
"My brother had not died."
"Martha, the dead shall rise again."
"Yes, at the judgment day."
"The dead who die in me," said Christ,
"Shall wake and live for aye."

V.

"Had'st Thou been here he had not died,"
Once more the Saviour hears ;
And lo ! before Him Mary stands,
Despondent, drowned in tears.

A sad companionship of woe,
A crowd beside her kept ;
Troubled in soul the "Man of Grief"
Looked on them long—and "wept."

VI.

"Where sleeps the dead?" the Saviour cries—
"Come, see," exclaims the crowd.
"Lazarus, come forth," commands the Christ,
And in his ghastly shroud
The buried man to day comes back
To comfort them that mourn,
And tell the grave that victory
Hath from its grasp been torn.

VII.

Why, then, should mortal men repine
Though they in dust must lie?
For them that trust bright thrones of life
And glory shine on high.
One word from Him who vanquished death
Shall open all your graves;
Nor tears shall fall on pastures green
Bathed by immortal waves.

VIII.

Sorrow and sighing, sin and pain
Haunt not that land of light;
To Paradise there steals no care—
In Heaven there frowns no night.
From biers of earth the faithful come
To joys that have no end;
And He who bids each Lazarus rise
Shall hail Him as a "friend."

The Fountain ; or, The "Diamond of the Desert."

It gleamed amid the desert rude,
It sent its voice afar ;
On the face of sterile solitude
It sparkled, like a star.

Around, around, to heaven's dim bound,
Was scarce a tree or flower,
But that solitary fountain's sound
Knelled with a mystic power.

It breathed a life where all was dead,
A joy where all was gloom,
And round its brink it softly shed
Green grass and starry bloom.

And many a weary limb has prest
That fountain's flowery side,
And many a burning lip has blest
That sparkling desert tide.

A moonbeam on a troubled deep
Was never half so bright,
Nor a trembling star when tempests sweep
Through the dusky vault of night.

And thus in every life, I've thought,
However cares deform,
A beautiful and sacred spot
Smiles kindly through the storm.

Around, around, the world is sad,
But memory hath its hour,
Like fount with freshest verdure clad,
And graced with many a flower.

Oh ! life to man were worse than waste
Bereft of some bright wave,
Where Faith could muse, and Hope might taste
What fortune never gave.

Life ! thou art bright and beautiful
To Faith's unclouded gaze ;
The meek, the pure, the dutiful,
See God in all their ways.

He gives its music to the stream
That warbles through the vale ;
Its brightness to the morning beam,
Its freshness to the gale.

To every wilderness a well
His providence hath given ;
He robes the lilies of the dell,
And lights the stars of heaven.

He makes his Bethel in the mind,
His Horeb in the heart ;
And where His Spirit is enshrined,
There, Paradise, thou art !

Elijah; or The Still Small Voice.

I. KINGS, XIX., 9-12.

He spake not from the fire,
 Nor in the blast that rent the murky air;
 Like fettered giant writhing in his lair,
 The earthquake groaned, and shook his chains in ire;
 God was not there!

As o'er the settling deep,
 When tempests cease to war,
 A tremulous whisper faint and far
 Is felt to creep,—
 So, 'mid that hush of fear,
 Softer than dews of even,
 Fell on the prophet's ear
 A voice from heaven!
 That "still small voice" to hear
 To Faith alone is given.

Speaks God to man no more?
 Have "still small voices" ceased
 Their balm divine to pour
 Through troubled breast?
 No! by the solemn bier,
 Where gold might strive in vain
 To charm away one tear,
 Or soothe the frenzied brain,
 Falls on the ear of Faith
 A whisper low and deep,
 "Weep not—that is not death—
 Not death, but only sleep!
 Mourner, thy cause of woe
 Rapture to saints hath given!

What makes a blank to man below
May fill an angel-throne in heaven !”

Need we a tongue to prove
That God is light and love,
When every happy brook
Adds to his holy Book

Its gentle voice,
And every opening flower,
Drinking the vernal shower
Fresh from a loving Power,
Whispers, “ Rejoice !”

Lo ! where the dewdrops linger,
Bathing the flower, but never breaking !
Lo ! where the sunbeam with its magic finger
Gilds the green leaf, a silent glory making,
Warm as the light that fills a mother’s eyes,
Love’s vigil keeping
Above the cradle where her infant lies,
Like some fair bud in folded beauty sleeping.

Man, has thy soul no ear ?
Fails thy dull sense to hear
The “ still small voice ” of grace,
Peace breathing all around,
And making holy ground
Of every place ?

O blessed Nature ! one brief hour with thee,
At golden eve, or under dewy morn,
Might shame the scoffer’s heartless sophistry,
And light with love the atheist’s brow of scorn !
For every desert teems with wisdom’s food,
And every rill is Cherith to the good,
And Faith communes with God in night and solitude !

Sunset and Sunrise—A Family Incident.

My father began his ministry as a clergyman of the Church of Scotland in the beautiful parish of Dunbarney, and closed his labours in the no less beautiful parish of Newburgh, on the estuary of the "lordly Tay." What he left, in one shape or another, chiefly scientific, speaks for him still as to natural mental powers and widely-gathered accomplishments. However, he had a younger brother, the flower of the flock, who, at the University of St. Andrews, "stood head and shoulders" above all his youthful compeers, and was looked forward to by all the professors as a man of undoubted mark. The family possess a letter from the notable Principal Hill to the young licentiate's aged father, predicting great things of his youthful son. Alas, the hand of death was soon laid upon the frame of the promising preacher, and closed the lips which the "live coal" from the altar-fire of heaven had already touched. He expired in the Manse of Dunbarney, which looks down on the placid, silver river Earn, and up to the wooded rocks of the beautiful Hill of Moncreiffe, which stands on a peninsula between the two rivers of the Tay and the Earn—"the smiling Ida of the sister-floods." Feeling the cold hand that knows no remorse upon him, the pale invalid muttered a last request, as the soft gloaming fell over field and stream, that he might be raised up to behold for the *last time* the "God of Day" sinking

brightly to his bed of rest behind the pine-clad hill. The touching close is faintly shadowed in the following lines of family affection :—

“ Oh, raise my head,” said the dying youth—
“ That setting sun I fain would see ;
For a voice is whispering the solemn truth—
‘ That setting sun is the last for thee.’ ”

They raised him up as the orb of day
Was sinking behind the pine-clad hill ;
And his breath with the light ebb'd slow away,
Till all was silent and dark and chill.

The moon looked in through the lattice pane,
It slept on the pallid brow of the dead ;
And it silvered the tears that fell like rain
O'er a blossom to them untimely shed.

But clear your eyes of the bitter dew,
Let not a drop their light bedim ;
For what was a Setting Sun to you,
Was a Sunrise of life and love to him.

The Last.

There's something in that word, the “ Last,”
That soundeth like a knell—
Of things now numbered with the Past,
It seems the Funeral Bell.

The *Sunset*, with its rosy glow,
Can never gleam again—
Like the last winter's melted snow,
'Tis gone though we remain.

Many still feel in memory
The pressure of a hand
That said a long, a last good-bye
To one, with anguish in his eye,
Who knew a distant land
Had reft a brother from his side,
For whom he would have toiled and died.

They played upon the same green lea,
Beside the wimpling burn ;
But now between them rolls a sea,
That speaks of no return.

The last day of a dying year,
How full of varied memories !
It speaks of those no longer here—
Some doomed to close a brief career—
Others, whose leaf was in the "sere,"
Cut down no more to rise.

It speaks of vigils of the brain,
Of sacrifices made in vain,
Of sorrow-drops that fell like rain
Above the brave and beautiful.
Thank heaven ! that year could also tell
Of those who fought life's battle well,
Winning the victory ere they fell,
The wise, the good, the dutiful.

And oh ! the last, the treasured look,
That gazed into the Bier,
And saw the wife, the child, the friend,
Laid low in that untimely end,

That brings the scalding tear ;
Yet quenches not Hope's holy ray,
That speaks of an unsetting day,
Where never more shall grief be cast
Upon the aching heart by that bleak word, the
 "last."

A Good New Year.

Friends of a long-gone carly day,
When life was yet a thing of play,
 To care unknown—
The blessings of "A Good New Year,"
Devoid of grief, of pain, and fear,
 I fondly wish each one.

The *brook* became a *bonnie burn*,
That lost it's character in turn,
 And 's now a *river*,
Down which our bark is gliding fast,
With half-high pennon at the mast,
To that dark deep that comes at last,
 And *takes*, but is no *giver*.

Whatever, comrades, ye have seen—
Whate'er on earth your lot has been
 Of joy, or sorrow—
When drops the curtain on life's play,
I hope t'will rise, and rise for aye,
 Upon a bright to-morrow.

an



Finis.



