

IONA AND STAFFA.



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Mrs Tinsley

*with best regards
from M. R. D.*

IONA AND STAFFA.

Poems by M. R. D.



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THE HISTORY OF THE

ROYAL NAVY

IN THE

SEVENTEENTH

CENTURY

BY

ADMIRAL

ROBERT

SEMPER

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I O N A.



I.

IONA! from thy quiet retreat,
A light shone forth in ages past ;
For truth with love rejoiced to meet,
And moral beauty on thee cast.

O lovely Isle ! when girt with peace,
Thou seem'st to dreamland to belong,
Where worldly cares their turmoil cease,
Where for a time we leave life's throng.

A holy stillness thee pervades
Contrasted with the world's unrest ;
The laurel of thy fame ne'er fades ;
To Caledonia thou art blest.

An Exile from his native place,
A hero Saint in thee found rest ;
While Scotia and her ancient race
Were by his labours greatly blest.

'Twas St. Columba, who became
A helper and a friend of man ;
For he was zealous to proclaim
The gospel truth to every clan.

Green Erin was his native home,
To Britain joined by Nature's tie ;
There would his thoughts delight to roam,
For it his heart would heave a sigh.

'Mid troublous times and unrefined,
In early youth his heart was trained ;
But grace with light of truth combined
To win that heart, and conqu'ring reigned.

A Sailor, Soldier, Patriot,
An Orator of ardent mind ;

He ever loved the truth he sought,
He loved his God and loved mankind.

A moral grandeur round him shone,
Beyond the glare of kingly show ;
Justice and love in him were one,
And God he ever sought to know.

By ruling well himself, the art
Of ruling others he acquired ;
His sympathies enlarged his heart,
And love for souls his bosom fired.

To bring to Christ was his blest aim,
And lead the soul to God alone,
God's blessed message to proclaim,
And in men's hearts His grace enthrone.

Heroic Saint, and thoughtful Seer,
On holy, lofty errands bent,
He to the sorrowful drew near
With comfort as from heavèn sent.

Faith, Hope, and Love so close entwined
Around his heart, they seemed as one ;
Pure love to God his thoughts refined,
His words gave joy like summer's sun.

With kingly power o'er hearts he reigned
Of thousands spread o'er many lands ;
With gifted powers the youth he trained ;
He Scotia's first Apostle stands.

As, gifted with prophetic sight,
Into the future oft he gazed,
Rejoicing in the spreading light,
He saw the fruits his toils had raised.

The hand of death took not away
The influ'nce of his powerful mind,
Which sheds forth still a heavenly ray,
To light, and cheer, and bless mankind.

He lived to bless, no foe he feared,
God's word was his unfailing chart ;

His pious labours for him reared
A monument in Scotia's heart.

Columba's spirit higher soared,
As Death's dark messenger appeared ;
On thee, Iona, he then poured
His parting blessing, still endeared.

When, waiting his departure lone,
He Angels in bright vision saw,
A halo on his count'nance shone
In varied gleams of joy and awe.

II.

ISLE of the waves ! Columba's throne !
Of learning the beloved retreat !
Who would not thy true greatness own,
Of Scotia's light the central seat ?

What darkness reigned from sea to sea
Till truth shone forth and errors braved !
She made thy people bold and free,
And by her light were thousands saved.

The blessings of her brilliant light
Spread far beyond thy little coast ;
For thy famed learning, love, and might,
Iona, thou art Scotia's boast !

What lies there 'neath thy far-famed soil,
Whose aspect looks so calm and still?
There heroes rest from war and toil,
And Kings and Saints thy bosom fill.

Methinks the spirits of thy dead
Still linger there : how gently should
The traveller, in approaching, tread
Near those for truth who bravely stood !

Iona ! when thou wak'st the past,
Thou seem'st its sleeping depths to move ;
From thee a light is o'er it cast,
A light to guide to realms above.

Like sunlight is thy history's smile,
It cheered the past when darkness reigned ;
The sons of Scotia prized thy soil,
On it her much-loved youth were trained.

III.

LIKE tempests bursting from their bounds,
That long have slept on silent lake,
On wind's fleet wings were borne strange
sounds,
And hearts to restless fear awake.

Forlorn and wild they met the ear,
While waves fell heavy on thy shore,—
Forebodings that the ships were near,
To land the dead they sadly bore.

These sounds proclaimed : 'View not with
dread,
From thy sad heart remove thy fear ;

See galleys slowly with the dead
In solemn grandeur drawing near.'

In gentle words some mourning said,
In answer to a questioning voice :
' These ships convey to us the dead
Who of this spot for rest made choice.

' Kings, Chieftains, Saints, are gathered there,
Who longed on this blest shore to rest ;
Such great ones now these galleys bear
To loved Iona's hallowed breast.'

All gently were the dead then placed,
And softly laid on grassy mound ;
And generations long have traced
Where they were laid beneath the ground.

Thy Martyr's Bay in beauty lay,
While ocean seemed a watch to keep ;
Rude sculptured stones, all worn and grey,
Now mark where they in silence sleep.

Thy bosom ancient kings retains,
Thy sacred soil by them was sought ;
The 'Cor'nach' piped in mournful strains,
While to thy shores the dead were brought.

With wailing notes its music rose,
So thrilling to a feeling heart,
As if to wake it from repose,
And in their grief to take a part.

IV.

THE waves on thee have never slept,
They ever bathe thy storm-beat rocks ;
In constant agitation kept,
Their restless flow thy silence mocks.

Thy rugged shores they flow around,
In love to fringe them with their spray ;
They swell their tones, and echoes sound,
While wild winds round thee dirges play.

Their voices in soft tones I hear,
As if afraid to wake the dead ;
They gently whisper, low and clear,
And dry the tears that Nature shed.

From thee, O Ocean, open, vast,
What freshness comes ! what living power !
On thee the sky and mountains cast
Their varied beauties every hour.

Thy waves Iona's shores embrace,
And o'er her pebbles break their flow ;
As if they vied with life's short race
In swiftness, as they come and go.

Thou seem'st to ocean to belong,
Thou list'nest to its song of praise ;
Successive generations throng
With eagerness on thee to gaze.

Whene'er we view thy soft outline,
Thy charm to us still new appears ;
Thy history speaks of love divine,
A love that changes not with years.

STAFFA.



I.

O STAFFA lone ! thou seem'st to sleep
On surface of the mighty deep,
 With em'rald softly clad,
 'Mid dancing waters glad.

Yet in thy breast unrest doth dwell,
When billows from the ocean's swell
 Roll in their mighty waves
 Within thy hidden caves.

So may the soul thus calm appear,
As if asleep, though storms are near ;
 While hidden passions roll,
 Like waves without control.

II.

O STAFFA! round thy wild abode,
Where ceaseless waves on thee have flowed,
 They all in chorus sing
 While on thy shores they spring.

The stirring solemn sounds they raise
Are echoes of the ocean's praise,—
 A music wild, that tempests own,
 And fit for thy bleak rocks alone.

Whilst mem'ry shall thy wonders tell,
I cannot say to thee farewell,
 And will in thought prolong
 Thy bold and ancient song.

III.

THOU hast one cave surpassing all,
Where waves stupendous dashing fall :
 'Tis Fingal's cave, far famed,
 With speechless grandeur framed !

Its wondrous rocks to art unfold
What nowhere else she can behold :
 There clustered columns stand,
 Majestic, solemn, grand !

The heaving waves that ocean bóre
Burst forth on it in thundering roar,
 And roll with mighty sway
 Along the cave's dark way.

Each billow higher seems to rise,
And forward dash in wild surprise ;
 The foaming surges crave
 To view the high-arched cave,

And see the angled columns rise
In varied forms, in varied dyes,
 And reach the dark cave's length,
 To view with awe its strength.

And oft they pause, in solemn dread,
As if approaching to the dead ;
 Retreating from its gaze,
 They murmur softer lays.

Then louder wail in swelling sounds,
As oft they break against their bounds,
 Within the deep-toned cave,
 Which they in grandeur lave.

A temple in the ocean's home,
Where Nature worships 'neath its dome,

In loud and thrilling praise,
That lofty billows raise.

And not for praise alone the cave
Is reared ; methinks for wail ! each wave
Takes part in ocean's dirge
O'er lost ones in her surge.

IV.

O OCEAN, ceaseless in thy heave,
From thee we thoughts sublime receive,
That language fails to tell ;
Mysterious is thy spell !

What do thy waters rough convey,
Through all thy pathless boist'rous way,
To Staffa's distant shore ?
What treasures from thy store ?

We hear thy voice proclaim with power :
'I praise th' Almighty every hour ;
And gifts of grandeur give,
That human works outlive.

‘ Round Staffa’s temple cave I roam,
It is to me a sacred home ;
 From age to age I’ve rolled
 Around her uncontrolled.

‘ I give her music in my waves,
And peal forth praise within her caves,
 And in her beauteous art
 My fancy takes a part.

‘ God’s power is in my billow’s heave,
Whose wave-prints on the shore e’er leave
 Marks of His wisdom great :
 I on His bidding wait.’

R E S T.

—o—

As crystal streams to parchèd souls
Art thou, calm Rest !
To soothe and to refresh our hearts,
Be thou our guest !

As rivers that make cities glad,
Thy blessings bring ;
The weary ever welcome thee,
And to thee cling.

In harmony with angels' praise
Was once thy song ;
And Nature with her troubled soil
For thee doth long.

When sin with woeful train approached,
Thy joy soon fled,
And tears of lamentation were
By Nature shed.

Thy sweetness ceased, and unrest rose ;
For sin gave birth
To strife, and death, and all the woes
That saddened earth.

When, chilled beneath sin's darkening frowns,
Man's bosom quailed,
Then brightly shone a star of hope,
He gladly hailed.

That star brought joy, and peace restored
To him from heaven,
For promise of the Saviour then
Was clearly given.

Though sin has kept thee distant far,
O sacred Rest !

To those who trust in Christ thou art
A joyful guest.

From Christ the sinful storm-tost soul
Should ne'er depart,
But welcome Him still to abide
Within the heart.

With heaven-born Peace on golden wings,
Kind Rest, O come !
And give us glimpses from above
Of heaven's blest home.

Hope points to brighter mansions there
When time is gone,
And ever on untiring wing
Would lead us on.

But mysteries unfathomed lie
Beyond our thought ;

And sins and sorrows press us hard,
And fears unsought.

With thousand feelings in our hearts
Unknown before,
We feel like one shipwrecked, afar
On lonely shore.

The past appeared before his view
In hideous form,
And fear o'er fear arose, as if
To join the storm ;

Whose swelling waves seemed messengers
To sound his doom,
Wide yawning to prepare for him
A wat'ry tomb.

A desolating darkness spread,
The thunder shook
The storm-beat rock, till hope's last gleam
His heart forsook.

All joy and light from Nature fled,
 Except the glare
Of lightning's flash, o'er billows high
 That leaped in air.

No longer to despair's dread threats
 Would he submit ;
He spied across the angry surge
 A seabird flit.

With struggling boldness through the storm
 It seemed to roam,
In quest of some far distant cliff
 To find its home.

No more he brooded o'er the past ;
 Hope shed a light,
Like glitt'ring star, that pierces through
 The midst of night.

The winter of his soul was past,
And joy appeared ;
Like Spring, that gladdens earth again,
His heart was cheered.

In spirit to that lonely bird
He felt akin,
And longèd for the same bright wings,
Release to win.

The bird, to seek its distant nest,
The storm's wrath braved ;
So now the mariner, blest Rest !
Thy presence craved.

His heart to fear and dark despair
Bade long farewell,
For Peace again appeared, as if
With thee to dwell.

She told the howling wind to cease,
And wrath allay ;

And bade the storm less fearful look,
And pass away.

Soon all was hushed, and ocean seemed
In calm repose,
Except the whisper of a breeze
That gently rose,

To tell thee, Rest, of Nature's joy,
Of gentle Peace,
And how they joyed to hear the storm
Was made to cease.

The sun with light crowned Peace, who had
Thus gained the palm ;
And gilt with splendour ocean's breast
Amid the calm.

With joy the mariner beheld
The seabird flit
That cheered him in his woe ; to it
His heart was knit.

A ship he gladly spied afar,
Approaching slow ;
A tide of joy within his breast
Did gently flow.

Quick beat his heart, his count'nance shone,
At thought of home ;
He vowed that ne'er from it again
He e'er would roam.

High o'er the towering rock he waved
A cherished oar,
That had him safely borne, when wrecked,
To that lone shore.

The crew at once an answer gave,
With welcome shout ;
The ship soon reached the rock, and eased
His every doubt.

The outbursts of their mutual joy
O'erwhelmed his soul,

And scarcely could his melting heart
His tears control.

He said: 'I'm saved from ocean's grave,
From famine's pain ;
A grateful feeling of your love
I will retain.

'Now take me to my happy home,
To kindred dear ;
Their loving voice, to welcome me,
I think I hear.

'My heart to kindred and to home
Will closer cling.
O listen, listen to that song
The angels sing.'

'Proud ocean shall depart with time,
And usher in a glorious Rest,—
A Rest beholding things sublime,
Beholding earth renewed and blest,

Beholding souls replete with joy,
A joy that fills the realms above,
Where saints for God their powers employ—
The truest Rest, that springs from love.'

The mariner rejoiced in heart,
To hear of Rest
Apart from earth, and unalloyed,
For ever blest.

O Rest! thou art the harbinger
Of joy to come,
Of fullest bliss, for us prepared
In heaven our home.

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