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John Dillon  
48 Summer Hill Dublin



cead míle fáilte.

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VISIT

OF

HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,

QUEEN VICTORIA,

AND

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

PRINCE ALBERT,

To Ireland,

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Houses of the Oireachtas

VISIT  
OF  
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY,  
QUEEN VICTORIA,  
&c. &c.

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'Tis peace and calm the British Channel o'er,  
Whose troubled billows erst, from shore to shore,  
Have quivered in the flash of spears and shields,  
Borne rival dynasties to deadly fields,  
And echoing trembled at the cannon's roar.  
Twice has immortal Cæsar's restless host  
From conquered Gaul these summer waters crossed,  
Thirsting to blazon, where unknown their fame,  
The eagle glories of the Roman name.—  
Reluctant less those waves a heroed crowd,  
With conquering William, for a kingdom ploughed,

The Norman knights, whose blood without a stain  
 Still freely flows in many a noble vein.—  
 Proudly for York the passes of this sea  
 Were long maintained by gallant Burgundy.—  
 And here the Armada spread her countless sails,  
 In Spanish pride, to strike to British gales.—  
 O'er this same Channel, to the people's prayer,  
     Another William borne received from them  
     The seal of sovereignty—the diadem  
 A Stuart king was never more to wear.  
 Hence Russell's cannons ratified *his* claims,  
 And doomed the fall of throneless, exiled James.—  
 Yet later, and how many a gallant brave  
 Found in this deep his unrecorded grave;  
 What hundreds lie, in one fell swoop of death,  
 With Kempenfeldt, these wailing waves beneath.

'Tis calm and silent now, save when a breeze,  
 Floating in light from southern lands and seas,  
 Breathes o'er the heaving surge no voice of wrath,  
 But soft and healthful freshness on its path;  
 The golden sun, too, in meridian height,  
 Beams forth a radiance of auspicious light;

And, lo! where, in that happy hour,  
 Frigates and yachts, and sloops in pride,  
 And gay reflections multiplied,  
 Adown the Channel pour.

The "Needles" were past, and the beautiful isle,  
 "The gem of the ocean," scarce cheers with a smile  
 The way of the wanderers. Its white, rocky shore  
 To them rings the screams of its sea-birds no more.  
 Reckless of sail or oar their steamers sweep,  
 Imperial rulers of the subject deep,  
 By other power impelled; and at their head,  
 With England's Standard flowingly displayed,  
 The Sovereign's vessel glides its hallowed way,—  
 Shrine of allegiance, ark of royalty.

THERE sits she, Queen of Kingdoms, who alone,  
 Amidst the wrecks of Europe, fills a throne  
 Rebellion dare not shake nor war assail;  
 Whose rule is right, and may it long prevail.  
 Beside her is the Consort of her choice,  
 The princely Albert, whom a people's voice,  
 Year after year, in union with her own,  
 Proclaims more valued ever as more known.  
 And with them, of their royal offspring, four,  
 Have come to visit Erin's favoured shore.

That eve and night their westward course is held  
 Through the mid-deep.—Another dawn revealed  
 The magic wilderness of Kynan's cove,  
 Anon by mineral-veined Penzance they move,  
 When, in magnificent confusion reared,  
 Land's End, with all its granite rocks, appeared.  
 Northward to Erin hence the vessels glide,  
 Heaven lulls the breeze, and smooths the sparkling  
 tide ;

Till with the evening its green hills are seen,  
 And Cove's enchanting harbour opens to the Queen.

Oh ! 'twas a goodly sight to view

These gallant ships, as twilight threw

A chaste enchantment o'er the path of gold

The sun had walked ; as moving music rolled

In echoes round, and from each fort and height

Joy pealed, and flags of welcome met the sight.

The fleet is moored ; and cliffs and shore and sea

Respond the embodied cheers of loyalty ;

Lingered the crowds, hills, woods, and capes be-  
 tween,

Till twilight faded from that splendid scene.—

Twilight has passed ; but it is not night,

Darkness is fired by the signals of light,



The pillars of flame from each foreland that rise,  
 And innumerable shoot o'er the edge of the skies.  
 Trabolgan has kindled a townland of fire,  
 Cove's turrets rear bonfires higher and higher;  
 Rockets, like roving stars, flash o'er the bay,  
 And lights thro' the masts shone in brilliant array;  
 While thunders of ordnance unceasingly sweep,  
 And their echoes of welcome ring over the deep.

'Twas witchery, in this region of romance,  
 To scan the varied flames that met the glance,  
 Reflected o'er the dark expanse,  
 Like votive tapers that in silent pride  
 Down Indian rivers, holy offerings, glide;  
 Designed, like these, to cheer with hope and prayer  
 The voyage of the heart-loved wanderer.  
 They passed, and every softening sound  
 Was lulled for man's repose. Night closed around,  
 Closed darkly round. One little star alone,  
 The pensive beacon-light of Erin, shone.  
 Daughter of light! thy chaste, unchanging eye,  
 From the far welkin of a boundless sky,  
 Beholds, through an eternity of years,  
 The mighty movements of the universe.

Thy path no darkness dims, no storm disturbs,  
Thou movest in brightness 'mid thy kindred orbs.  
Oh! if thy mystic influence—thy chaste smile—  
The fate can brighten of a suffering isle,  
On Erin shed the blessing of that glance:  
Her land is waste!—her children emigrants!  
On the wide ocean's verge she sits alone,  
Like the Lydian queen, a statue of stone,  
And coldly weeps unceasing tears  
O'er the sad memory of withering years.  
The rapid river through each lovely vale  
Unheeded rolls,—no industry to hail  
Its idle current. Purple hills are fraught  
With mineral treasures; they remain unwrought.  
Her noble bays are shipless. Vasts of land  
Lie as they rose from the Creator's hand.  
Her seas are teeming with the food of life,  
Yet famine stalks the shore, and pestilence is rife.  
A blight—a withering blight—has fallen o'er her;  
Her fruits are ashes perishing before her.

Star of mysterious light! if thine the power  
To guide and guard, 'tis now the trying hour;  
Oh! bid a genial vision of the night  
Upon that Royal Lady's slumber light,

Fill her freed thoughts with all this land has been  
 In other days; ay, more! inspire that Queen  
 With will and power to firm a tottering state,  
 Its rent and shattered frame to renovate;  
 To raise its treasures from exhaustless stores,  
 From sea and land, from wastes and mines and  
 moors;

Busy her sons, and gather them to learn  
 What mutual love and her's can do for Erin.

A day there was when many a minstrel band  
 Poured forth their songs, green Erin, to thy  
 praise,  
 Songs lost as shadowy fairy prints on sand,  
 Or breathed like memories of childhood's days;  
 They sang, and truly sang, of times her seas  
 Received the earliest merchants of the world,  
 Or, later, Britain's landless refugees,  
 By Roman conquest from their homesteads  
 hurled.

Proudly they told of days, when from this Isle  
 Of Saints the light of revelation flowed,  
 Spreading o'er Europe, as by miracle,  
 Baptismal waters and the word of God.

Or, in more martial strain, how peers of France,  
 England, and Wales, found shelter there. Again,  
 How in the chivalrous crusades the lance  
 Was borne by Erin's sons, and on the plain  
 Of Cressy fought they for their English king.  
 Of these and brighter themes 'twas sooth to sing;  
 But centuries of woe and civil feud  
 Have dyed their hearts with hate, their fields with  
 blood;  
 Their arts no favour found, their wrongs no check;  
 The country drooped to what she is,—a wreck.

Yet, all their cares forgetting, Erin's sons,  
 Soon as, awakened by the signal guns,  
 They knew their Queen was with them, in each  
 face  
 The confidence displayed of better days:  
 Even in remotest valleys, when the hum  
 Of welcome tidings breathed, "Our Queen has  
 come,"  
 Beings, whose hearts and thoughts, whose ears and  
 sight,  
 Whose every human channel of delight

Seemed closed, revived, as from a trance,  
To more than youthful vigilance.

Such are the spells, so can the sunny smile  
Of Majesty the depths of care beguile,  
Like stars that ever brilliantest appear,  
When beaming thro' the darkest hemisphere.  
'Twas Hope refreshed,—a hope, oh! something  
more—

A sense no Irish bosom felt before:  
In memory arked they looked into the waste  
Of time, oblivious of their sufferings past;  
Or sought to snatch back from the vale of tears  
Some green remembrance of yet cherished years.

The waking batteries thundering round the bay,  
Announced the morning of the second day,  
And at its noon, upon her "Fairy" yacht,  
Midst peals of cannon, Queen Victoria sought  
St. Finbar's city. And what cheers resound,  
When there her foot first hallowed Irish ground!  
How oft the native welcome rent the sky,  
"Cead mile failte" to the Queen and Prince!  
While THEY respond with grace of hand and eye,  
Heartening the people's hope. The Sovereign  
thence

Makes grateful progress through the living streets,  
Welcomed in each with far-prolonged huzzas,  
Triumphal arches, platform'd parapets,  
And all the outburst of a people's praise ;  
Nor left without a record of her love  
To the fair-terraced island-town of Cove,  
Queenstown henceforth : and from its hills that  
night,  
While yet their Sovereign blessed their aching sight,  
The pæans rung ; a grateful nation's voice  
Invoked the willing echoes to rejoice :  
They hailed the Queen who, in the hour of grief,  
Looked o'er their isle an auspice of relief ;  
They hailed the mother of a royal race,  
That led her offspring to their loneliness,  
And filled their infant thoughts with Erin's pride  
Of emerald green, to other lands denied ;  
They hailed her, mighty Sovereign, whom no shock  
Could move, a heaven-defended Queen,  
A tower of light on her sea-girt rock,  
And royal exiles sheltering in her sheen.

Nor was that feeling their's alone,  
Alike to every Irish heart 'twas known ;

It thrilled electrical through all the land,  
“ God save the Queen,” from every loyal band  
And breathing lip is heard. From Kingstown’s pier  
The eager eye looks forth and dreams her near.  
There, in the evening of the Sabbath, stood  
A city’s overflowing multitude:  
And, lo! just gleaming on the horizon’s verge,  
Some sails are set, and on a nearer surge,  
The dimly figured masts between,  
A pillar of wreathing smoke is seen:  
Oh! even dearer to their sight,  
Than once to the ’wilderer Israelite,  
Such pillar, his heaven-directed guide.  
Joy-reassured, they count the sails,  
Clearing Bray-Head with favouring gales;  
And one, the Royal Yacht, is traced  
With the Standard of England at its mast,  
Waving triumphant; and its current of steam  
Is racking the billows to hasten to them.  
It skimmed the waters, cleared Killiney’s Head,  
By Dalkey’s Island and the Muglins sped;  
And, shooting thro’ the barks that round it sport,  
With joyous helm, has swept into the port.—

A moment on that yacht the Sovereign stood,  
And 'twas with many a cheer of gratitude  
Her people hailed her as she fondly drew  
Her noble offspring forward to their view.  
Hailed her unceasing, till the evening gloomed,  
The flags were lowered, and the town illumed.

The sable veil *that* night too had withdrawn,  
And scarcely had the faintly glimmering dawn  
Dappled the sky, and shivered in the spray,  
When all was busy o'er the startled bay ;  
With signs of welcome land and sea were rife,  
Waving gay colours, and instinct with life ;  
Riggings and spars were to the topmast manned,  
And giddy rocks bore each its fearless band.  
A gun was fired, and on the esplanade  
The Royal Visitors a moment stayed,  
With quick but intellectual glance to trace  
The ambit of their view, the magic space  
By heaven with scenic loveliness endowed,  
And gladdening in the homage of the crowd.  
'Yond Howth and Dalkey eastwardly expands  
The lovely bay, through wider parted lands,  
Till mingling in the rough, unthankful sea,  
That severs isles which ne'er should severed be.



Its heaving waves now whiten in the wind,  
By suburbed shores and beetling cliffs confined.  
At north, from woods o'er gentle swells emerge  
Villas in groups down to the water's verge,  
Studding the shore, where centuries ago  
Gallant Boroimhe clove down his country's foe,  
And wreaked destruction on the Danish race,  
E'en to that Hill of Howth, whose rock-lashed base  
Stands forth a circling line of brighter light.  
At south, the hills, contrasted height o'er height,  
Carry the vision to the lovely land  
Where nature, circling her creative wand,  
Evoked sweet Wicklow's loughs and heathery hills,  
Her deep, dark glens, her murmuring, living rills;  
Scenes from whose bosom Liffey wends her way,  
With mountain waters to refresh this bay,  
Where westward in the view its narrowing bed  
(The full-seen city crescenting its head)  
Receives that river. Yet 'twas dearer then  
To note the glowing works, the hum of men,  
The banners o'er each ship's head wreathing,  
The music on the waters breathing,  
The love, the laurel honours, that await  
Of all the world this greatest potentate.

And well may love and laurels crown her way,  
Who not in pride and pageantry, this day,  
But in simplicity of heart and mien,  
Visits her sorrowing land, a sympathizing Queen.

Not her's is the campaign of blood and tears  
The second Henry marched this land upon;  
Nor yet the reckless pageantry of John;  
Nor Richard's twice ill-omened rash career;  
Nameless be he, the guilty, heartless thing,  
That grasped the power but mocked the name of  
king;  
Nor like the self-dethroned, whose flight betrayed  
The landless gallant cavaliers that bled  
Their hearts for him, and round his shattered throne  
In erring loyalty fell one by one,  
Chivalrous victims. Nor yet comes as he  
Of "glorious and immortal memory,"  
Whose fearless foot was doomed to tramp the soil,  
And check the harvest of a suffering isle;  
His better will by bigotry borne down,  
And future maddening factions crimsoned his re-  
nown.

One hundred years and more no sovereign's smile  
Pierced the thick gloom that gathered o'er the isle;

At length this royal lady's kinsman gave  
 A genial auspice. It remained for her,  
 The first, the best of Queens, to bridge the wave,  
 And cheer with palmy hopes the islander.

The royal group now from the terrace passed  
 To fair Eblana, while the sun o'ercast  
 Its splendours on the animated waves;  
 And peopled hills, and rocks, and caves,  
 And bannered shores, and sail-o'ershadowed bays,  
 Echoed with loyalty in long huzzas.

Thrice welcome, great Queen! to thine Isle of the  
 West!

Thrice welcome the Prince, whom thy union has  
 blest!

Thrice welcome the daughters and sons of thy love,  
 A glory and honour through time may they prove!  
 And often and long may the Emerald Isle  
 Be blest with their presence and joy in their smile.  
 Its memory of glorious achievements is o'er ye,  
 Its lonely magnificence freshens before ye;  
 And where are the mountains or valleys more fair,  
 Lakes, rivers, or harbours, or causeway, than there?

And the people, great Queen! for thy sceptre and  
throne

Braved climate and season, have fought and have  
won;

And for thee would they freely adventure this day  
More hearts than the wealth of thy treasure could  
pay.

Joy to thee, Erin! the sons of thy strength,  
Self-exiled so long, shall be with thee at length:  
Peers never seen, where their fathers abode,  
In the seats whence their power and dignity flowed,  
Who, pleasuring, in far-distant climates were known,  
But were strangers and aliens in Erin alone.

They shall bide 'midst their tenants, and see, where  
they come,

That temperance and industry smile in their home,  
That the cottager's fed, and cleanly the cot,  
The farm well soiled, and the children well taught.  
They shall warm in the reverence of shades that  
have been,

Of by-gone enjoyments the gratefulest scene;  
Shades long disowned, still enchantingly fair,  
That but sighed for such nobles as once had been  
there.—

The while, a mass of nervous toil and care,  
 The crowded city laboured to prepare  
 Its pageantry. The hum of labourers rise,  
 Here weaving wreaths, there forming balconies  
 On giddy heights, the noblest streets along.

All that rank, virtue, talent could make great  
 In Erin, came that day their Queen to meet.  
 Pedestrians, a scarfed and bannered throng,  
 Rolled in from every suburb avenue;  
 Chariots, and cars, and horsemen fill the view.—  
 With varying means, but with one heart, are seen  
 The peer and peasant gathering to their Queen;  
 While window, balcony, and parapet,  
 Nay, even roofs, displayed their human weight.  
 From heart to heart, from man to man,  
 The thrill of royalty, electric, ran.  
 Alas! but little of that heart was known  
 To her who sits upon a distant throne,  
 Till at the city-gate this day she stood,  
 Enthroned in every thought of all the multitude.—  
 Thence through that square she passed, where dig-  
 nit'ries  
 And peers spent princely fortunes once,—now ab-  
 sentees.

Yet still how beautiful its waving glade,  
 With shrubs, and flowers, and evergreens arrayed.—  
 One other arch of triumph, and the scene  
 Presents the College of the maiden Queen,  
 Its halls and library, its stately trees,  
 Endeared in boyhood's fondest memories;  
 In front the Bank, a splendid monument,  
 Where, in the days of Erin's Parliament,  
 Plunket and Grattan, Curran, Bushe, and Flood,  
 And Charlemont, their country's champions stood;  
 Have breathed the voice that hallowed domes and  
     halls,

Ay, every spot within its mystic walls.  
 'Tis past, and of the men who gave that tone,  
 Time only spares (but 'tis the brightest) one.—  
 O'er Liffey's bridge the human current pours,  
 The last that spans that river's seaward course;  
 And what diverging vistas open thence,  
 Of varying magnificence!

A bowshot eastward, splendidly displayed,  
 Alternating pavilion and arcade,

    A lengthened structure flanks the northern quay,  
     'Twas called the Custom House, 'tis so to-day;  
 Statues of Plenty, Industry, and Trade,

Surmount its pillared front; but there no more  
 Is commerce rife, or bustle on the shore:  
 Yet on the summit of its dome, great Queen!  
 The cheering auspice shines, an anchored Hope is  
 seen!—

Westward, the Liffey's upper course reveals  
 Churches and chapels on its quays, whose peals  
 Right joyous rang for thee; and at thy feet  
 The city's 'Broadway' and its noblest street  
 Presents midway, but marring half its length,  
 A massy monument, a tower of strength;  
 A pillar whose stony records speak  
 Of many an ocean victory.

There Nelson towers, as on his deck,  
 Still looking to the ships and sea;  
 And on its dizzy gallery's height,  
 Almost beyond the ken of human sight,  
 Spectators peered.—Across the streets were flung  
 Garlands of laurel and roses entwined;  
 And banners of welcome waved to the wind,  
 From mast and tower and steeple hung.  
 All without was as thoughtlessly joyous and proud,  
 As within were the hearts of that loyal crowd.  
 Yes, Lady! the streets in thy presence have shone,  
 But 'tis merry and rich in their windows alone;

Bazaars, long unlocked and consigned to decay,  
 Are disclosed for an hour, and hired to look gay :  
 From the naked mast's head the flag is unfurled,  
 To proclaim, what the people fain would, to the  
     world,

The ardour and zeal which they feel in thy praise ;—  
 But where is the commerce that crowded those quays ?  
 They would fain spread a gilding of wealth on  
     whate'er

Thine eyes may behold,—but the wealth is not  
     there !

A few days more their gracious Queen delayed,  
 Amongst her people mingling unrestrained ;  
 Their schools, their hospitals, with searching eyes  
 She visited, their learned academies ;  
 By guards or outward pomp no more removed  
 From freest commune, as with those she loved ;  
 Sought out their wants, almost their sorrows shared,  
 And promised a return not long deferred.—  
 Oh, royal Lady ! could I dare to tell  
 How on their hearts thy gentle accents fell,—  
 How to each other all expressed they praise,—  
 With glowing looks proclaimed thy “ winning  
     ways,”



And vowed, "from their last means," if thou wouldst  
 come

Again, "they'd build a palace for thy home!"  
 Would that their artless, honest prayer were heard,  
 And on some Irish scene that palace reared.

This time of her sojourn, the Queen abode  
 Within the peerless royal park, once trod  
 By Irish saints and warriors, where shone  
 Of old that glorious order of St. John,  
 Who from thy walls, Jerusalem! have torn  
 The Crescent. Here their mitred priors have borne  
 A sway imperial, in these sacred shades  
 Surrounded by their knights of the Crusades.—  
 Here 'twas Le Botiller convened those men  
 Of Irish race, who, "armed with dart and skeyn,"  
 Flew to the standard Agincourt had blazed,  
 And left the stubborn walls of Rouen razed.  
 Here Queen Victoria too a line reviewed  
 Of troops, the bravest that have e'er withstood  
 The shock of battle, braved the cannon's range,  
 Or bided tempest and the climate's change.—  
 The evening of that day her palace shone,  
 St. Patrick's Hall, with lustre long unknown,  
 While there the Majesty of England's throne

Received the dazzling groups, whose beauties beam  
 Like costly jewels round her diadem;  
 And ever still in sunny smiles rejoice  
 To catch the royal eye, to hear the royal voice.

Oh! for the progeny of Nun,  
 To stay the chariot of the sun,  
 And in the spell of lengthened day  
 The Queen Victoria's step delay.  
 But ah! it must not be,—no hope remains.  
 Black masses Kingstown thronged, and still fresh  
 trains,

With crowded coaches, o'er the railway rung.  
 The sails were hoisted, at her moorings swung  
 Each vessel to the tide;—blue Peters hung  
 From the mast heads, and down the peopled shore  
 Was frequent heard the steamers' gushing roar.  
 On Kingstown's pier again—alas!—she stood,  
 A mourning Queen amidst a mourning multitude.

Cheers, but in sadness, hailed her down the Bay;  
 From all the land a tremulous huzza  
 Fell on the royal heart:—a Queen no more,  
 She looked in sorrow o'er the sorrowing shore,

Waved her adieu from platform, deck, and stern,  
 Pressed her full heart, and sighed a sigh for Erin.

The paddles ceased, the Standard bowed, and slow  
 The yachts dropped gently down the Bay,—the  
 Queen

Still looking on her people, till the scene

Faded upon their view; then was the throe  
 Of suffering more intense, as in their ears  
 The cannons' last salute unwelcome echo bears.

Of thee, great Queen! and of thy lovely land,

Thus long presumptuous have I dared to sing;  
 Attempting theme that needed master-hand,

A golden harp, and swept by seraph's wing;  
 Hearted allegiance would not be controlled,

A troubled joy—an impulse strange—was mine,  
 It swelled my bosom as the word was told

Of thy approach,—that light again should shine  
 On my poor country's fate,—her people would be thine!

Thine ever, Royal Lady! with a love

That to their hearts shall gratitude then bind;  
 Liegeance of love, which nothing can remove,

Unawed—unbought—an empire of the mind.

There was a transient hour, when giddy dreams  
 Passed o'er their fevered fancies, and some few  
 Willed to believe imaginary schemes,  
 That, were they realized, themselves would rue:  
 The ear befooled the head, but, oh! the heart was true.

Without one widowed home, one drop of gore,  
 Thy noble Viceroy laid the baseless spell;  
 And, when sedition shadowed it no more,  
 He won thee to thine Isle.—But, ah! farewell!  
 Farewell! and be thy pathway o'er the sea  
 Charted for many a future welcome here.  
 Oft, oft remember Erin, so shall she  
 Thy advent hail with many a memory dear,  
 Of peace and wealth and industry the harbinger.

14th August, 1849.