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GRAY'S ELEGY

cura

SIR WILLIAM FRASER



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GRAY'S ELEGY

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THE POET

TO

M A S O N

EDITED BY

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FRANCIS HARVEY

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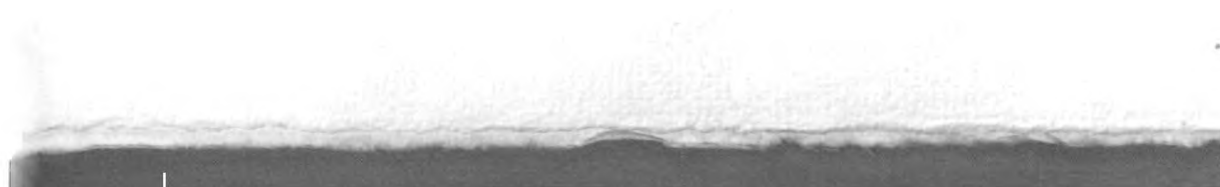
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*I bought the M.S. at Sotheby's on the
28th of May 1875; Lot 384. Its last
Appearance in the Market previous to this was
at the Sale of the Effects of Penn of Stoke at
Sotheby's on the 4th of August 1854; Lot
226.*

WILLIAM FRASER.

January 1884.



Stanzas wrote in a Country Church-Yard.

THE Curfeu tolls the Knell of parting Day,
The lowing Herd wind slowly o'er the Lea,
The Plowman homeward plods his weary Way,
And leaves the World to Darknes & to me.

Now fades the glimm'ring Landscape on the Sight,
And now the Air a solemn Stillnes holds ;
Save, where the Beetle wheels his droning Flight,
Or drowzy Tinklings lull the distant Folds.

Save, that from yonder ivy-mantled Tower
The mopeing Owl does to the Moon complain
Of such, as ^{stray too} wandering near her secret Bower
& ^{pry into} Molest her ancient solitary Reign.

Beneath those rugged Elms, that Yewtree's Shade,
Where heaves the Turf in many a mould'ring Heap,
Each in his narrow Cell for ever laid
The rude Forefathers of the ^{Hamlet}~~Village~~ sleep.

For ever sleep: the breezy Call of Morn,
Or Swallow twitt'ring from the strawbuilt Shed,
Or Chauncleer so shrill or ecchoing Horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly Bed.

For them no more the blazing Hearth shall burn,
Or busy Huswife ply her Evening Care ;
No Children run to lisp their Sire's Return,
Nor climb his Knees the ^{envied}coming Kifs to share.

doubtful

Oft did the Harvest to their Sickle yield ;
Their Furrow oft the stubborn Glebe has broke ;
How jocund did they drive their Team a-field !
How bow'd the Woods beneath their sturdy Stroke !

Let not Ambition mock their useful Toil
Their rustic Joys & Destiny obscure :
Nor Grandeur hear with a disdainful Smile
The short & simple Annals of the Poor.

homely

The Boast of Heraldry the Pomp of Power,
And all, that Beauty, all that Wealth, e'er gave
Awaits alike th' inevitable Hour.

The Paths of Glory lead but to the Grave.

Forgive ye Proud th' involuntary Fault,
If Memory to these no Trophies raise,
Where thro' the long-drawn Ile, & fretted Vault
The pealing Anthem swells the Note of Praise.

Can storied Urn, or animated Bust,
Back to its Mansion call the fleeting Breath?
Can Honour's Voice awake the silent Dust,
Or Flattery sooth the dull cold Ear of Death?

provoke

1. Perhaps in this neglected Spot is laid
Some Heart, once pregnant with celestial Fire,
Hands, that the Reins of Empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to Ecstasy the living Lyre :
7. Some Village Cato with dauntless Breast
The little Tyrant of his Fields withstood ;
Some mute inglorious Tully here may rest ;
Some Cæsar, guiltless of his Country's Blood.

2. But Knowledge to their Eyes her ample Page,
Rich with the Spoils of Time, did ne'er unroll :
Chill Penury had damp'd ^{depre's'd repress'd} their noble Rage,
And froze the genial Current of the Soul.

3. Full many a Gem of purest Ray serene
The dark unfathom'd Caves of Ocean bear :
Full many a Flower is born to blush unseen
And wast its Sweetness on the desert Air.

Th' Applause of listening Senates to command,
The Threats of Pain & Ruin to despise,
To scatter Plenty o'er a smiling Land
And read their Hist'ry in a Nation's Eyes,

 Their Fate forbad : nor circumscribed alone
Their ^{growing} struggling Virtues but their Crimes confined ;
Forbad to wade thro' Slaughter to a Throne,
And shut the Gates of Mercy on Mankind

 The struggleings Pangs of conscious Truth to hide,
To quench the Blushes of ingenuous Shame,
And at the Shrine of Luxury & Pride
 ^{With} ~~Burn~~ ^{by} Incense hallow'd ^{kindled at} in the Muse's Flame.

The thoughtless World to Majesty may bow
Exalt the brave, & idolize Success
But more to Innocence their Safety owe
Than Power & Genius e'er conspired to bless
And thou, who mindful of the unhonour'd Dead
Dost in these Notes thy^{er} artless Tale relate
By Night & lonely Contemplation led
To linger in the gloomy Walks of Fate
Hark how the sacred Calm, that broods around
Bids ev'ry fierce tumultuous Passion cease
In still small Accents whisp'ring from the Ground
A grateful Earnest of eternal Peace
No more with Reason & thyself at Strife
Give anxious Cares & endless Wishes room
But thro the cool sequester'd Vale of Life
Pursue the silent Tenour of thy Doom.

Far from the madding Crowd's ignoble Strife ;
Their sober Wishes never knew to stray :
Along the cool sequester'd Vale of Life
They kept the silent Tenour^{noiseless} of their Way.

Yet even these Bones from Insult to protect
Some frail Memorial still erected nigh
With uncouth Rhime, & shapeless Sculpture deckt
Implores the passing Tribute of a Sigh.

Their Name, their Years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse
The Place of Fame, & Epitaph supply
And many a holy Text around she strews
That teach the rustic Moralist to die.

For who to dumb Forgetfulness a Prey
This pleasing anxious Being e'er resign'd;
Left the warm Precincts of the chearful Day;
Nor cast one longing lingring Look behind?

On some fond Breast the parting Soul relies,
Some pious Drops the closing Eye requires:
Even from the Tomb the Voice of Nature cries,
And buried Ashes glow with social Fires

For Thee, who mindful &c: as above.

If chance that e'er some pensive Spirit more,
By sympathetic Musings here delay'd,
With vain, tho' kind, Enquiry shall explore
Thy once-loved Haunt, this long-deserted Shade.

Haply some hoary-headed Swain shall say,
Oft have we seen him at the Peep of Dawn
With hasty Footsteps brush the Dews away
On the high Brow of yonder hanging Lawn

Him have we seen the Green-wood Side along,
While o'er the Heath we hied, our Labours done,
Oft as the Woodlark piped her farewell Song
With whistful Eyes pursue the setting Sun.

Oft at the Foot of yonder ^{spreading} hoary Beech ^{nodding}
That wreathes its old fantastic Roots so high
His listless Length at Noontide would he stretch,
And pore upon the Brook that babbles by.

With Gestures quaint now smiling as in Scorn,
Mutt'ring his fond ^{wayward fancies} Conceits he ^{loved} ^{would he} ~~went to~~ rove :
Now ^{drooping,} woeful wan, ~~he droop'd~~, as one forlorn
Or crazed with Care, or cross'd in hopeless Love.

One Morn we mis'd him on th' ~~æ~~customd Hill,
^{Along the} By the Heath-~~side,~~ ^{near} & at his fav'rite Tree.

Another came, nor yet beside the Rill,
Nor up the Lawn, nor at th^{by}e Wood was he.

~~There scatter'd oft, the earliest~~

The next with Dirges meet in sad Array
^{by} Slow thro the Church-way Path we saw him born
Approach & read, for thou can'st read the Lay
^{Graved carved} Wrote on the Stone beneath that ancient Thorn: ^{yon}

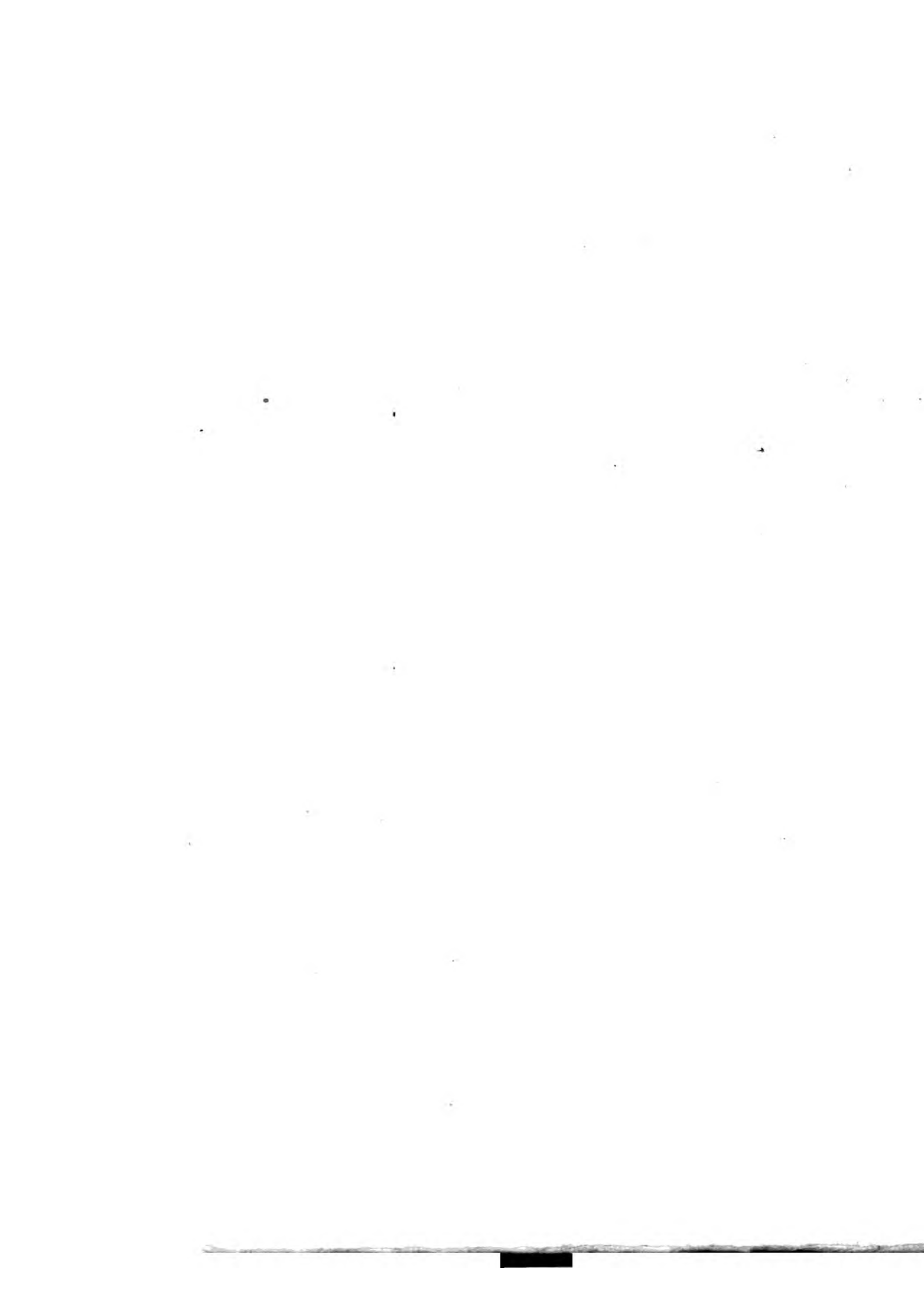
There scatter'd oft the earliest of y^{Year}e ~~Spring~~
By Hands unseen are frequent Vi lets found ^{Showers of}
The Robin ^{Redbreast} loves to build & warble there
And little Footsteps lightly print the Ground.

Here rests his Head upon the Lap of Earth
A Youth to Fortune & to Fame unknown
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble Birth
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own

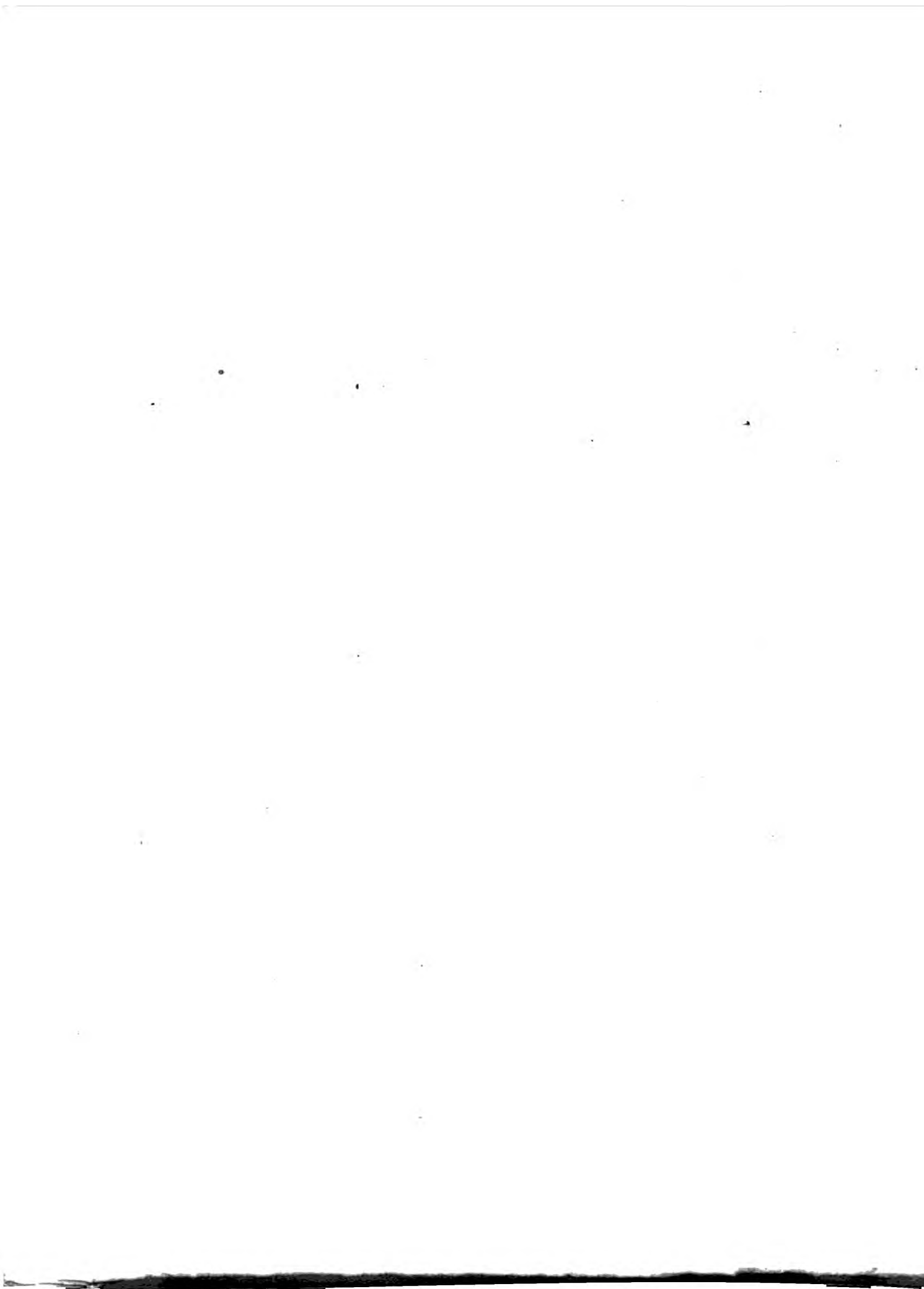
Large was his Bounty & his Heart sincere ;
Heaven did a Recompence as largely send.
He gave to Mis'ry all he had, a Tear.
He gained from Heav'n; 'twas all he wish'd, a Friend
No farther seek his Merits to disclose,
Nor ^{think} seek to draw them from their dread Abode
(His Frailties there in trembling Hope repose)
The Bosom of his Father & his God.













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