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Excelsior.



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# Excelsior.

A TALE IN RUSTIC VERSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF  
"THE TWO SCHOOL-FELLOWS," "RURAL RHYMES," ETC.



---

LONDON: WILLIAM MACINTOSH,  
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280. n. 329.



IN

*Affectionate Memory*

OF

MY BELOVED BROTHER

ARTHUR,

THIS LITTLE WORK

IS

DEDICATED.



## In Memoriam.

---

“I am distressed for thee, my Brother : very pleasant hast thou been unto me : thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.”—2  
*Samuel i. 26.*

---

THERE'S sadness in that happy home  
Where grief ne'er reigned before ;  
The Master hath been called hence,  
His place knows him no more.

And, only yesterday, we thee  
In vigorous health had deemed.  
To day thou'rt gone, and all the past  
Seems nothing but a dream.

It cannot be that thus our hearts  
Should be so sorely tried ;  
Oh ! Lord, if Thou had'st but been there,  
My brother had not died.

But in thy calm and noble face,  
Without a care or pain,  
I read those blessed words, and know  
That thou shalt rise again.

Oh! more than brother best beloved,  
My heart is sick with grief;  
My willing tears still flow apace,  
And still find no relief.

I think that I can see thee now,  
Thy kind and cheerful face;  
Nor can the knowledge, thou art not,  
Thee from my mind efface.

The happy meetings that we've had,  
So lately gone and past,  
How little did we all think then  
That they would be the last.

We fondly hoped that thou would long  
Be our support and stay,  
And, as the eldest, years remain  
Head of the family.

Successful in thy walk of life,  
By all who knew esteemed;  
'Mongst men thou held an honoured place,  
Who well thy true worth deemed.



They'll miss thy counsel and advice,  
Thy pleasant looks to see ;  
But oh ! within thy own dear home,  
How more than missed thou'lt be.

A tender husband, more than kind  
To her thou held'st so dear ;  
And thy two sons thou well did'st strive  
To bring up in God's fear.

Oh ! Thou who raised the widow's son,  
For Lazarus shed the tear ;  
Look down in mercy on her grief,  
Help her the loss to bear.

Be Thou her husband, and to those  
Dear boys a father be ;  
For Thou hast said, Thy widow leave,  
And orphans trust to me.

Guide Thou their course, direct their ways,  
That they may walk upright,  
And follow in their father's steps,  
Do all as in Thy sight.

Thou art laid to rest, my brother dear,  
Near loved ones of our race ;  
And I can watch where thou dost sleep,  
From thine and my birthplace.

While we who still must journey on,  
With hearts that pain has riven,  
Look forward with an eye of faith  
To meet again in Heaven.



## EXCELSIOR.

---

THE world is growing very old, and time is passing fast,  
A few short years, and what we call our life will then have passed;  
How short they seem, those only know, as near the Goal they tend,  
And think how swift the years have gone that daily nears the  
end.

Like one who treads with weary steps to reach some distant height,  
Ever anon with earnest zeal he keeps the end in sight;  
He little heeds the toilsome road, the hard and trying way,  
When from the topmost point attained he all his steps survey.  
Thus all mankind, with one consent, are ever striving for,  
Nor wearying in their eager race for their Excelsior;  
Rising up with constant zeal, and taking late their rest,  
Their only hope, the nearest way which would attain it best,  
So little does the thought engage that on these years depend  
That wondrous word eternity which all of us must spend;  
For like the man with muck-rake that John Bunyan doth describe,  
Midst straws and sticks seemed ever well too willing to abide.  
Nor recked he of the stars and crowns which glistened o'er his head,  
With dust and muck his earthly soul contented to be fed;

And thus, it seems, our future hope is, that we may attain  
 Some larger and more cumbrous heap of straws for all our pain.  
 The merchant-princes, whose fair ships on every coast are seen  
 With anxious venture, hoping still larger success to glean ;  
 The farmer, tradesman, and the man, who works with cunning art,  
 Have each and all this anxious hope implanted in their hearts.  
 And e'en the sober rustic who, with well-contented gain,  
 Slow ploughs the field that soon will yield a golden crop of grain ;  
 E'en as across the dusty fields, with heavy steps and slow,  
 He treads the spot his father did perchance some years ago.  
 Thinks that some day, perhaps, the field that he has often sown  
 May by his patient care and toil, himself as master own ;  
 Nor is the feeling one that owes its origin from earth,  
 Its universal potency shews it of Heavenly birth.  
 Implanted by the great Creator, who, with wondrous skill,  
 Worketh and orders all things here by His Almighty will,  
 That man, His likeness, should not find fit rest in things below,  
 Nor be contented, but still strive some higher good to know.  
 Finding not peace or comfort while he thus is earthly riven,  
 Should seek to gain the highest joys alone in things of Heaven ;  
 But so encompassed are we all by earthly wants and cares,  
 Full oftentimes we find our hearts no other feeling shares.  
 It's then some cherished idol He pitying for us takes,  
 In kind and loving tenderness for our best happiness ;  
 With all a father's tender care He does in safety keep,  
 That where our treasure is our hearts Himself be led to seek ;  
 And musing o'er such thoughts as these bring one well known to  
 mind,

Who far exemplified the lot that falls to human kind.  
Possessed of present means his thoughts seemed but for getting  
wealth,  
And laying up for future years a store for child and self;  
Not that he quite forgot from whence all earthly blessings flow,  
But that his heart ensnared him thus to live on things below;  
Nor was it always thus, for he for long had too well known  
That poverty so often felt, and yet so rarely shown.  
For scarce had he five years the home of happy childhood left,  
When he of parents suddenly by sickness was bereft.  
The few friends that his father knew were scattered far and wide,  
And he as eldest brother had his sisters to provide.  
Yet still he murmured not at what at first seemed hard to bear;  
He did his best and friends were raised to ease much of his care;  
And diligent in business he had lived that truth to see,  
Who waiteth on his master, himself shall honoured be.  
For after years of service he was left the greater share,  
That now in business he was free from anxious toil and care;  
But while it prospered in his hand many he loved had died.  
Two children and his dearest wife were taken from his side,  
A darling little girl was all now on earth that he had left,  
Which seemed more doubly dear to him through being thus bereft;  
For her he lived, and she was now his daily thought and care,  
That God would spare her many years his earnest anxious prayer.  
Nor marvel at his tender love, so wondrous fair the child,  
In all the innocence of youth seemed free from sin and guile,  
That many who had watched the child, and knowing her from  
birth,  
Deemed her too good and beautiful to stay for long on earth,

It seemed as though some precious seed from Eden's lovely bower  
 Was wafted down by Angel's wings to bud on earth and flower,  
 As if to show what Heavenly flowers are in that garden fair,  
 And thus to draw our hearts away to seek the treasures there.  
 For from her earliest childhood she had never given pain,  
 No clouds bedimmed that happy face which ever smiled again,  
 Losing when young that greatest loss—a mother's tender care,  
 But not ere she had oft received full many a mother's prayer.  
 Oh, mothers! what a wondrous power is yours o'er all our race:  
 How oft can we a mother's prayer in youth and manhood trace!  
 There's not a seed by mother's hand that sown in childhood's  
 years,

However young that child may be, but what some fruit appears.  
 Perchance it long may dormant lay in hard and stony place,  
 When some forgotten chord is touched, and all the memory wakes,  
 While others like an opening bud show what the flower will be,  
 Ere yet their little tongues essay, we can the future see.  
 Thus daily as she grew in years her mind seemed upward bent,  
 So rare to see in one so young, for Heavenly things intent.  
 What honour does our Lord Himself to little children show:  
 We read He set the child before Him when He lived on earth  
 below.

For children oft are teachers sent, when the lesson is severe,  
 That we might learn the better from one we hold so dear.  
 And day by day she fairer grew until the summer came,  
 When of her head that sultry time she often would complain.  
 And change was tried and quietude, but all of no avail,—  
 The morning's brighter hopes were oft dispelled by evening's tale.



Her father dared not think the worst, and every means he tried;  
Nothing that skill could think or do was ere by him denied.

One day as by her bed he sat, raising her head she said,—

“ You must not grieve you know, Papa, when your dear Edith’s  
dead ;

For I shall be in that bright place where there is no more pain,  
And see dear little Henry and Mamma’s face again.

You told me she was gone up there in that bright happy place ;  
And God, you said, would wipe away the tears from every face.

And our dear little Henry’s crown will be of bright pure gold,  
And we shall both have Angels’ wings, like the holy ones of old.

But I shall wait for you, Papa, by those bright shining gates,  
And watching when they are opened wide that I may see your face.

You wont be long before you come, or think I have forgot,

For I shall sure to watch for you.” The father answered not.

“ Oh, God,” he said, “ spare but this one, the only one now left,  
Thou knowest how I have of wife and children been bereft.”

Then came these Heavenly words of faith, taught by the Master’s  
hand,

“ What I do now thou knowest not, but thou shalt understand,  
Shall see in all these higher paths I’m leading thee aright:”

The morning may be dark with clouds, but eventide brings light.

Weaker she grew and weaker still, yet still did not complain

Although the little body seemed wearing away with pain.

The little voice was gently heard as so distressed she lay

With simple childlike faith “ Oh, Jesus, take my pain away.”

Her little faith was strong enough, nor did she feel afraid,

And thus though sore the trial was she perfect through suffering  
made.



One calm and lovely summer's eve she lay as though asleep,  
 And only one had then remained of those who watch would keep.  
 The balmy air, rich with perfume, came softly through the trees,  
 Which gratefully responded with the music of their leaves :  
 When all at once she said aloud, " Papa, oh ! where is he,"  
 He quickly came ; her eyes were dim, no longer could she see.  
 There are those shining gates, she said, a bright and glorious sight,  
 " Angels will take me up, I know, in robes of dazzling light."  
 He knew her time was very short, but feared to think his pain :  
 The thin worn face would never now look up to his again.  
 The silver cord was loosening fast, the housekeepers laid low ;  
 The windows long had darkened been, and street doors shut below,  
 Nor could the pitcher longer now the life it held contain :  
 The sound of grinding was not heard, and music's daughters vain,  
 The cistern wheel of fragile earth was crumbling into clay,  
 And those who watched her knew full well she soon must pass  
 away.

Then came those heavy conflicts, so sad and full of pain ;  
 The flesh and spirit striving each the mastery to gain.  
 When for awhile in trance she lay the struggle being o'er,  
 As one who waited ere she crossed to that bright happy shore ;  
 While on her face suffused a smile, as though she saw the light  
 Reflecting from the golden streets where there is no more night.  
 Already round about the bed Angels unseen were there,  
 The little lamb to gather up and in their arms to bear.  
 When suddenly with all her strength and feeble voice she said,  
 " Good-bye, Papa, you'll not be long,"—and that short life had  
 fled.

And in that bright and happy land, all clothed in dazzling white,  
Her angel form now joins the choir of those who have won the  
fight :

And who shall say her spirit may watch those on earth she loved,  
Ready to welcome them with joy in those blest realms above.

What can describe a parent's grief? Prophets themselves do own,  
The mourning for an only child, no heavier grief is known ;  
To think that frame we loved so well with us but yesterday,  
And spoke, and smiled, now what remains is cold and lifeless  
clay.

The little winning ways she had, the bright and lovely smile,  
And joyous laugh which ever would a father's heart beguile.  
What lesson does a parent learn how hard it is to say,  
Thy kingdom come, and will be done by me, Lord, day by day.  
All clothed in white they laid her down within the narrow bed ;  
A lily in her hand was placed—fit emblem of the dead.  
Softly they shut the chamber door where her little body lay ;  
And long and heavy were the hours that bore the time away.  
He had to see to earthly cares—the living must be fed ;  
Nor could he give up all his time to mourning for the dead.  
Still she was there, and as he kissed her little lips each night,  
He felt that still his only one had not passed from his sight.  
Then came at last with certain speed the long unwished-for day,  
Which would too surely in its course bear all he loved away.  
He softly to her chamber went, her chamber soon no more ;  
His heavy breathing showed alone how great the cross he bore.  
So sweetly innocent she looked in that straight narrow bed,

And fervently he pressed once more those lips now cold and dead,  
 With beating heart and trembling hands the coffin lid he took ;  
 " Not one," said he, " shall rob me of that last and fondest look."  
 And as they bore her then away, the children in the street,  
 Who well had known that happy face, followed with willing feet.  
 They halted at the churchyard gate ere those blessed words were  
 said,

Of Him, that who believeth on shall live though he were dead.  
 The father heeded not the words ; his thoughts were far away—  
 " When earth shall render up the dead on that great meeting  
 day :"—

He heard with listless ears the words that mournful David said,  
 And those St. Paul sublimely wrote, which were reverentially  
 read.

Then following those loved remains to her little grave was brought,  
 And where the hardest lesson learnt is most severely taught.  
 No vaulted arch or stone built cell, but a plain and simple grave,  
 Earth to receive with jealous care what first of earth was made.  
 It had been raining all the morn, but now the sun shone clear,  
 And brightened up the snow-white flowers they placed upon the  
 bier.

It was a sad and solemn scene, and nought the silence broke,  
 But the clear voice of the preacher, speaking of faith and hope,  
 " He cometh up, and is cut down like as a flower," he said ;  
 " For in the very midst of life we are ever near the dead."  
 " Ashes to ashes, dust to dust," as they softly laid her down,  
 While the clay fell on those blossoms white with dull and hollow  
 sound.

And then, and not till then, he knew how much the heart can bear,  
 That in the deepest throes of grief there lay a deeper there ;  
 For there is not a sound on earth that holds such pain and fear,  
 As when the clay falls on that form which once we held so dear.  
 It snaps the chords that hold us to the loved and lifeless clay,  
 And drives as like a summer cloud those lingering hopes away.  
 Slowly the mourners left the grave, each going to his place,  
 And soon a simple earthen mound was all that could be traced.  
 He to his home returned, where now all things seemed dark and  
 drear ;

None of his own to welcome him, or call him " father dear."'  
 How very different now his home, empty and desolate ;  
 No watchings by the little bed where oft would be his place.  
 With heavy steps, and heavier heart, he sought him where to  
 weep,

And in the chamber where she died in prayer he found relief.  
 Time which to many only brings blest seasons of relief,  
 Seemed but to keep alive, with him, the embers of his grief ;  
 The weeks and months fulfilled their course, the seasons came  
 and went,

But still the grief would hold its sway until his mind seemed spent.  
 And thus he found at last the place too straight for him to bear,  
 For mind and body both were worn with sorrowing toil and care ;  
 The thought would come, for whom are all these things I have  
 prepared,

And for whose earthly good is this for which my soul hath cared.  
 Then came the thoughts of childhood's days and his own native  
 place,

And all those early happy scenes his mind would fondly trace.  
 Perchance that change of place and air might bring him better  
 health,

For he had none to care for now, or share his love and wealth ;  
 So gathering all that he possessed, which years of toil had made,  
 And anxious thoughts oft times at night ere what he owed was paid,  
 He counted up the sum of all, enough there was and spare—  
 Though what he hoped he should enjoy seemed vanity and care.  
 The few friends he had made in life, and they were now but few,  
 For real friends are so rarely met who constant prove and true.  
 (He went and bid them all farewell), then at his daughter's grave,  
 The few remaining hours he had to contemplation gave.

It was a bright and lovely day, all nature seemed in tune,  
 With buds and summer's sun and flowers, her bridal month of  
 June.

And he had travelled all the day, and now the western sun  
 Was shedding all his glorious rays, gilding the work he'd done ;  
 The pleasant smell of new-mown hay came sweetly o'er the plain,  
 And toilers ceased awhile from work to note the passing train.  
 The loosened cattle scampered by, free from their daily work,  
 Enjoying freedom with the zest that liberty gives birth ;  
 But nearing now the well-known spot, nothing but change was  
 seen,

Houses had here and there sprung up where nought but fields  
 had been,

And following on he reached the street, which well he knew again,  
 But alteration had been here, and much was not the same :  
 Smaller the houses looked to him, and narrower the street,



Though still the place was there where oft the idle ones would  
meet.

Yet no one noticed him or thought but as some stranger there,  
Pursuing each their several way without a thought or care.

Onward he went towards the hill where ofttimes he had seen  
The bright rays of the setting sun descend on verdant green ;  
This now was fenced, a winding path skirted the hill around,  
Nor could a vestige of the seat where oft he sat be found.

Sadly he turned through stragglng street which to the common  
led,

This was enclosed and houses built where always cattle fed ;  
The old schoolhouse was standing there with playground fenced  
around,

Scarcely he knew the place again, so much had been pulled down :  
He looked around, all, all was changed, nothing remained the  
same ;

He felt agrieved, yet knew not which, himself or them to blame ;  
Still in the west bright crimson rays were lingering as of yore,  
“He changeth not,” faith whispered him, the same for ever-  
more.

What though all earthly comforts fail, He whom thou trusts is  
nigh,

Nor should we doubt his loving care, who hears the raven’s cry.  
Thus musing onwards he desried, within an open door,  
One by her dress a widow, who, though clean, seemed very poor :  
Accosting her, he found that she would like her house to share  
To one who thus would help to pay the rent—her anxious care ;  
He quickly settled there to lodge, and sometime to remain,

And quieted her troubled thoughts with hopes of future gain ;  
 He found that she had been the wife of one whom well he knew,  
 Whose story told with faltering speech proved, as he feared, to  
     true :

Not native of the place was she, her friends all lay apart,  
 Contented well to live with him to whom she gave her heart.  
 When that malignant fever came which early her bereft,  
 And brought to many happy homes both misery and death ;  
 The impure source had been removed that was no doubt the cause,  
 Though sad to think the evil wrought neglecting nature's laws.  
 And then, ere they each retired to rest, around the throne of grace,  
 Gave thanks to Him who thus had spared to see his native place.  
 Now rose the silent moon and decked the earth in silver grey,  
 While nightingale in distant bush warbled the night away ;  
 Like some old friend it welcomed him with music low and sweet,  
 And with serene and thankful heart he laid him down to sleep.

The next morn was the Sabbath, a bright and glorious day,  
 All seemed at rest, and work-day sounds of toil had passed away ;  
 The busy forge, whose cheerful ring would waken with the sun  
 Was silent, and from farmer's yard no pleasant cadence rung.  
 And following then the well-known path where stood the house of  
     God,  
 He entered in the old churchyard his youthful feet had trod :  
 How changed and altered all things were, the pleasant ivy green,  
 Which once had covered half the Church was nowhere to be seen ;  
 The old quaint doors and windows small, grotesquely placed  
     around  
 Were gone, and in their place new aisles, and old one taken down ;



And standing there he mused of those who round about him lay,  
 How many so well-known in youth had long since passed away.  
 The master, who for forty years, in that old common school,  
 Had well and truly taught all those who came beneath his rule.  
 The Squire and Lady both lay there, and time had not effaced  
 Those pleasant early memories of his kind and gentle face,  
 His oft repeated visits to their school—and when at play,  
 To take a class or join their sport on many a summer's day.  
 The faithful Pastor who so long and earnestly had taught,  
 And scarce was spared to see the fruits of labours he had wrought,  
 For in that subtle battle, and the sharp and bloodless fight,  
 Continuing faithful to the end he found the higher life.  
 Those all had been, and now, alas, their places knew them not,  
 But many a memory held them dear and kept them unforget.  
 And as he mused and wandered on, he came upon the place  
 Where slept those who had gone before of his own name and race;  
 Brother with sister side by side, whose sun while yet 'twas day  
 Had brightly set; and left a name that would not pass away.  
 He was the eldest son, and a better there could not have been,  
 Gentle and loving; angry thoughts in him were rarely seen;  
 Nor sought he great things, but with full mind and purpose bent,  
 Where God had placed him there to work, ever was he content;  
 And though he never reaped the fruits of many seeds well sown,  
 A bright crown waits him on that day when all things are made  
     known;  
 His life and death to many souls in after years were blessed,  
 And good men mourned and carried him to where he now does rest.  
 While at his side his father lay so strictly just and true,

And whose grey hairs were gathered in with honour fitly due ;  
 His gentle patient mother, so loving true and kind,  
 And all her long and tender care passed quickly o'er his mind,  
 As mother, wife, and daughter, to equal few could find,  
 Her constant care in life and death for those she left behind.  
 Her little infant grandson, too, lay by her just outside,  
 Whom for his burial she had decked the last thing ere he died.  
 His little son, how seemed it like a story that is told,  
 So young and fair, but little still—the dead they grow not old ;  
 But lower down, and nearer where the early sunbeams played,  
 Fondest of brothers most beloved was in his last home laid ;  
 Cut off in manhood's prime ere yet his worth was fully known,  
 None but a brother knew the loss which years could not atone.  
 It seemed to bring them all now back those pleasant years again ;  
 The past all welled before him a pleasurable pain ;  
 The summer meetings when as boys together they had played,  
 How many future prospects formed, and resolutions made ;  
 The winter gatherings at the home, 'neath laden Christmas tree,  
 Where none was missing that could come of all that family ;  
 Or meeting round his own fireside with fond and loving wife,  
 They helped each other to allay the many cares of life ;  
 Then came remembrance of that day, the startling message sent,  
 To find the worst forebodings true and that unlooked event ;  
 To think that one who seemed to be in health but yesterday,  
 And ere the morning's noon had passed was nought but lifeless  
     clay ;  
 The dreary time that followed then,—the widow's prostrate  
     grief ;

The sleepless nights and tearful days, and still came no relief;  
 Like as a dream when one awakes, and as some vision fled,  
 The sickening thought would still be there: he whom she loved  
     was dead.

The pleasant smile could still be traced in that calm face of death,  
 But the living spirit had returned to him who gave the breath.  
 What honour was he held by those who in his city dwelt,  
 Who knew his worth and usefulness; not living for himself,  
 For his was not a useless life, nor did he live for fame;  
 Content was he to do the good, he cared not for the name;  
 His works do follow; while his sons whom he has left behind  
 Will, treading in their father's steps, a bright example find.  
 While good men at his burial every respect did give,  
 And showed how much they felt his loss who thus in death could  
     live.

Mysterious are thy ways, O God! who shall be liked to Thee,  
 And well it is that earthly flesh Thy purpose cannot see.  
 Afflictions are not sent to us, nor troubles come in vain,  
 But that all those who follow Thee a higher life may gain:  
 And thus he mused and pondered on of things that once had been,  
 The well-known forms of other days, and pleasant faces seen,  
 When all at once the old church clock commenced to strike the  
     time,  
 And one by one the pleasant peals of bells began to chime;  
 He listened like as one spell bound hearing that well-known  
     strain,  
 And all the past came up before. He felt a child again,  
 As when one plays with skilful hand some long-forgotten song,

But little thinks what memories wake as each chord rolls along.  
 Those pleasant sympathetic bells, what different scenes had passed  
 Since he had stood in that churchyard and heard their music last,  
 It seemed as though some bygone friend of youth had spoke once  
 more,

And brought back all the early scenes and faces as of yore ;  
 He saw the rustics in white frocks beneath the old yew tree,  
 Whose goodly boughs had given shade for many a century ;  
 The homely matrons, with their books in clean white kerchief  
 wrapped,

Wending their way exchanged with each the Sabbath morning  
 chat,

The sickness of a neighbour's child, the place their daughters got,  
 Changes of weather, and the yield of future autumn crop ;  
 His father's upright gait as with his co-churchwarden walked,  
 His mother leaning on his arm and listening to their talk ;  
 He saw his brother's cheerful face heading the Sunday class,  
 Now waiting just within the porch for all his boys to pass,  
 Pressing his calm and cheerful face on entering with them there,  
 As if to put away all thoughts of week-day toil and care ;  
 The boys and girls from Sunday-school to raise the ire would try,  
 Of the poor witless who stood where they would pass him by ;  
 The well-known gossip of the place, whose chief concern to see  
 The fashions in the Squire's pew, and what the styles would be ;  
 How solemnly she walks along, with scarce a word to spare,  
 So condescending thus for her to attend the house of prayer,  
 Nor thinks but that she honour pays to Him who seeth all ;  
 Her righteous self is ever first to note a neighbour's fall ;

Suspicion ripening into deeds is by her quickly spread,  
 Nor heeds the rankling wounds so that her vanity is fed ;  
 The service o'er, so glibly talks on all that she has heard,  
 And to her neighbours aptly does apply the preacher's word.  
 While standing 'neath the old church porch in smalls of sombre

hue,

The village clerk, and quite prepared for what he had to do,  
 Now talking blandly to this group, waiting the parson's bell,  
 Then back into the church again to note that all was well ;  
 He magnified his office, and of him the boys all stood in fear,  
 For they all knew his dreaded frown forwarned the stocks were

near,

The village stocks, where those confined for deed of erring done,  
 With silence eloquence appealed to all such ways to shun ;  
 Then came the parson in his gown from vicarage hard by,  
 A man whose look spoke holiness, and kindness in his eye.  
 The sitters 'neath the old yew tree quickly began to thin,  
 And ere he reached the churchyard gate they all had entered in ;  
 When suddenly the scene was changed, the pleasant vision fled,  
 The bells had ceased and he was now alone amidst the dead.

A little bell was calling still the worshippers to prayer,  
 And turning back towards the door he with them entered there ;  
 What alterations there had been, how much was changed and

new ;

Gone were the galleries, organ loft, and narrow-high-back pew,  
 The old square-galleried pew in which for years had been his  
 place,

And pleasant window looking out he could not see a trace.



Benches were free and open now, that all might find a seat  
 In God's own house, where rich and poor equal together meet ;  
 And as he gazed all round the church wondering such change to  
 see,

He walked towards the chancel aisle, not as that used to be ;  
 The old Commandments all were gone, nor Creed or Lord's  
 Prayer left,

But in the place that held them once a curious painting set,  
 It looked, as far as he could judge by windows' coloured light,  
 A kind of foreign landscape scene, and figures painted bright,  
 A Flemish gallant bowing down to lady stout and fair,  
 Who wore a dress of brightest green and amber-coloured hair ;  
 A patient donkey just hard by was kneeling on the ground ;  
 And high suspended in the air a child looked wondering down ;  
 While round about pourtrayed on wall and ceiling over head,  
 Were curious forms and figures drawn in bright vermilion red ;  
 He thought him of that vision strange shown to the ancient seer,  
 To whom was said that he should see far worse than such things  
 there.

Six figures on the coloured glass, and underneath them all,  
 The names of four evangelists, Saint Peter and Saint Paul,  
 But most grotesquely were they shaped, unlike all forms of men ;  
 Nor could the humble worshipper aught good discern of them ;  
 They all had hats of monstrous size, and faces it was said  
 Copied from Roman cardinals, the living for the dead.

And on the table, underneath two candlesticks were placed,  
 Whose lofty summits either side, were by two candles graced :  
 Is this, thought he, God's house of prayer, these forms and  
 fashions new

This worshipping a jealous God, the holy, just, and true?  
 These candlesticks seem like the Church that had no oil of grace,  
 And who repenting not was soon removed from her place,  
 When turning round he saw a man with long black coat and  
     hair,  
 Who sternly asked him how, that he, to stand there thus could  
     dare.  
 "Saw not you, then, the rood screen gates, where the holiest  
     began ;"  
 Which as he calmly went out by, were shut to with a clang,  
 And sitting on the nearest bench, again rebuked was he,  
 For men with women sitting now, was not allowed to be ;  
 So he betook him to that side where poor and labourers sat,  
 Whose chief concern to him appeared to look about and chat.  
 He noticed, as some entered in, they of the Cross made sign,  
 And when they came to where he stood, they bowed as to a  
     shrine :  
 Some foreign Romanist, he thought, come here for change of air,  
 Nor thinking this is England's land, and England's Church for  
     prayer ;  
 When as the bell ceased many rose, others began to smile,  
 As a long train of men and boys in white, came up the aisle ;  
 While as they passed all those who rose, bowed low, and then  
     knelt down,  
 As in the holy place they stood, and crossed themselves around ;  
 Then one in harsh, discordant voice, the service read alone,  
 And other the responses joined in a mumbling sort of tone ;  
 They sang the appointed daily psalms to a kind of growling air,



And the holy words in different forms, turned and divided  
were,

With uncouth twists, that scarcely one the sense could under-  
stand ;

And congregation, listless stood, with prayer books in their hand :  
No glad and joyous note of praise, that all could take a part ;

But a kind of private concert of the mediæval art ;

And when the words of our Belief, as appointed to be said,  
They turned their backs on all in Church, and to the east then  
read ;

And at the end each crossed himself with many a gesture queer,  
As if they saw some demon strange, and were in mortal fear.

How sad the sight in God's own House, e'en to make angels weep,  
Such monkish tricks by those who came a jealous God to seek :

To think that God at special times, by special act of grace,  
Was only to be found by those who seek Him in that place.

How many a poor weak brother is by such cause kept away,  
And who shall answer for his soul on that great reckoning day ?

Another one then read the prayers of our fine Liturgy

With careless voice and hurried tone, that sounded painfully ;

He thought him of the times before, how oft he'd heard them  
prayed,

And how in many a troubled hour they had his spirit stayed.

The hymn, when given out, was sung in quick, indecent haste,

And the tune was quite incongruous, as regards both time and  
place.

Two others then the service took, and as they went up tried

Whether should make the lowest bow at the table's either side.

And when again the Creed was said, as each and all turned  
round,

They made a curious kind of cross and bowed low to the ground ;

A notice then was given to all who to confession came,

The preparation they should make, and what from to abstain :

Then as he knelt as custom was after the hymn was sung,

He heard a voice which plainly said the sermon had begun ;

No prayer before that God would deign to give His Word success,

And to the congregation there the preaching please to bless ;

The minister no Bible had, but a large cross on his book,

Which, when to flatness he had rolled, he thus his sermon took,

In the 18th of Saint Matthew and part of 17th verse

The words you'll find are written thus, of my text, " Hear the  
Church ! "

The preacher then began to speak of the present evil days,

How many still would go astray in their own wicked ways,

Nor heed the voice of Mother Church, divinely as she taught,

And still would not her courts attend, though they were vainly  
sought.

" How many of you here," said he, " do not confession seek,

The fasts and vigils to observe, how few of them you keep.

Think you that all such sins as those do not for judgment call,

That thus to our authority you pay no heed at all ;

For from St. Peter we've received the heavenly unction down,

That whom we will to loose on earth, and whom we will have  
bound."

He thought not of that impure source, thro' those Roman Popes  
of old—

A woman and a boy once Pope, in history we are told ;  
 That he who cannot trace his rights, from the Spirit inward  
     given,  
 Can never guide, whate'er his creed, poor erring souls to heaven.

And then he spoke in solemn words of schism awful sin,  
 Of those who heard and they who taught, and the danger they  
     were in ;

But God was merciful, he said, and might in goodness spare,  
 Though they could not expect it shown, who dared to enter  
     there :

And as he spoke he looked around, nor did he look in vain,  
 For several fair ones seemed afraid, and crossed themselves again ;  
 He thought not of his Master's Word, who would not others  
     chide :—

“ He that with us is not against, must be on our side.”

But who was he, weak erring man, God's will to arrogate ?  
 Was this a faithful pastor's work, this narrowing heaven's  
     gate ?

Hearing all this he could but think those words of that Divine,  
 “ Blame not the preacher, oftentimes the light may dimly shine,  
 The worst say something good, if all seem bad, he said.

God takes the text, and patience then preaches to us instead.”

And patience well was needed, for more than this he spoke ;  
 For that the Church had got the power, the Saviour's words I  
     quote,

Had he not read that others too could quote as he had done,  
 By leaving out the part of text where he should have begun.

At last the sermon ended, and collections then were made  
 In long white handled crimson bags, while the offertory was said,  
 Half was for our St. Agnes Home, the other other half to be  
 For altar lights and banner screens, and such like charity.

A prayer was read, no blessing asked, when several rose again  
 And lowly bowed as men and boys passed out, before the same ;  
 The congregation followed next, when some few stopped behind,  
 He with them stayed, hoping he might some peace and comfort  
 find ;

That in that church again he might those blessed emblems take,  
 And thus the wondrous dying love with them commemorate.  
 He had not waited long, when lo ! from open vestry door  
 A wondrous train of men and boys, dressed different from before ;  
 One bore a banner held on high, a most imposing sight,  
 And brightly too the colours looked, as it shone before the light,  
 While others carried different things, until the last came by  
 With silver vessels in his hand, which he held up on high.  
 He wore a dress of gorgeous form, amazing to behold,  
 While o'er his shoulders seemed to shine a scarlet cloth of  
 gold,

As some great Eastern potentate, who homage seeks to gain,  
 And walks with royal majesty among his regal train :  
 When they approached the chancel steps together all knelt down,  
 And after three bows lowly made, lay prostrate on the ground ;  
 Then slow advancing bowed again, as they had done before ;  
 This time they did not lie prostrate, but only touched the floor,  
 He could not sit while mummeries such as these were going on:

Do those new doctrines now, thought he, to England's Church  
belong ?

This outward worshipping and show, I dare not stay to see,  
Nor can I thus fulfil His Word, "In memory of me."

Our martyrs have they died in vain, in vain their blood been  
shed ?

Is this the way our pastors feed their flock with heavenly bread ?  
Where are our Bishops, have they not some power such to  
restrain ?

Who will the reckoning give of those lost souls that have been  
slain ?

With painful thoughts and sickened heart he turned his steps  
away,  
And through the porch and churchyard gate that quiet Sabbath  
day.

He stopped before a fine old oak, whose boughs afforded shade,  
And under which in years gone by full many a game he'd played ;  
And as he meditated long on that strange morning's scene,  
His heart was full of sadness for the changes there had been.  
And sitting there to rest awhile, an old man passed him by,  
Whose hoary locks bespoke the age appointed man to die ;  
He greeted him in rustic phrase, and wished him a good-day,  
And said 'twas kindly weather now for gathering in the hay.  
When as he courteously replied, the old man gave a start,  
" You're, Master Edward, ar'n't you, Sir ? I know that voice by  
heart,  
I think I saw you near the church this morn as I passed by,



And thought I ought to know your face, so like your father's bly  
 "And you are Richard Blake," said he, "and so much older  
 grown ;

That if you had not spoken now I scarce your face had  
 known :

You've changes had, since I was here, enough to make one  
 shocked ;

Though you I see go on the same and wear your old smock  
 frock."

"The only one," the old man said, "in all this parish here ;  
 We've had some changes lately, though, and some things very  
 queer :

I never thought I should have lived to see what I have seen,  
 Or the different alterations, too, about the church there's been.

What would our good old pastor say, if he could see the place ?  
 He said, I mind, when he first came, the whole was a disgrace.

I well remember his first start, but that's afore your time,  
 Your father did, and says to me, 'we shan't a better find :

I really think our parish now a different place will be,  
 Its sad to think the goings on we every Sunday see.'

Those were the bad old times, Master, and I was one with them ;  
 How often have I wished that I could call them back again !

For there was only service here, you see, but once a day,  
 And when 'twas in the morning time, in afternoon we'd play  
 At marbles, cricket, or what ere the amusement we could find :

Our parents never cared, or, if they did, we did'nt mind.

What ! play at cricket Sunday's ? Ay, many's the time I've done,  
 And many a game at marbles or at football I have won.

Why! when we used to go to church, and the service it was o'er,  
 The men-folks used to light their pipes behind the belfry-door.  
 My father if on afternoons he felt a little queer,  
 Would often take beneath his frock some of his home-brewed  
 beer :

They all knew what the sermons were, so often they were read ;  
 And if sometimes but few at church, a Collect had instead.  
 I know a fact (you may believe that what I say is true)—  
 There was a steady young man here, and one we all well knew ;  
 It pleased God to give him grace deeply to mourn for sin ;  
 And his parents told the pastor of the trouble he was in.  
 The parson saw him, and advised a different change of scene,  
 Should get him cheerful company, as too lonely he had been ;  
 So flock and shepherd both you see were pretty near the same,  
 But though the flock had gone astray, the shepherd was to blame.  
 And things were worse, too, I have heard, before my father's  
 time—

Baiting the bull and cock fighting was reckoned very fine.  
 Why! 'twa'n't so very long ago they dug up in the street,  
 The ring and stumps of the old post, where the people used to  
 meet.

But when the good old parson came, he was only curate first,  
 He round the parish went to all for them to come to church.  
 One of the singers told me then he that day felt quite bad,  
 And took as usual to the church some spirits which he had ;  
 When he bethought to take a sip before he had to sing,  
 The parson with a solemn voice began to give the hymn :  
 He said he never in his life felt in such mortal fear,

For the hymn began 'Great God,' it said, 'what do I see and hear:'

He put it down and prayed He would forgive the wicked sin,  
 For those solemn words had plainly shown the danger he was in:  
 And what a sermon, too, that was I never shall forget—  
 Thank God I am not too old but that I can remember yet:  
 'Twas John the third and seventh verse,—it seems to come so  
 plain;

I think I hear his solemn voice—'Ye must be born again.'  
 And wasn't there some talk that day outside the old porch-door;  
 Some laughed, while others angry got, and said they'd come no  
 more;

But all agreed great difference was from what the other taught,  
 And many from that very day were to the Saviour brought.  
 And I was one, thank God, although at first was sore displeased;  
 But still do what I would I found my mind would not be eased,  
 Until, like Nicodemus, I was to the Saviour brought,  
 Who has forgiven me all my sins, and out of trouble brought:  
 And then we had the Sunday-school, that every little child  
 Might get some real good that day instead of growing wild;  
 And different districts he had made, for each Parishioner  
 Should be well cared, and once a month to see their visitor.  
 He certainly got well backed up by the good old Squire his friend,  
 For different schemes for any good his help would always lend.  
 Two full services we had and an evening lecture too—  
 In fact, as we all used to say, 'twas more than he could do:  
 But this was some time afterwards when the living he had got;  
 That sermon, too, it will be long before that is forgot:



I mind the words 'twas all about 'Christ and Him crucified ;'  
 And like Saint Paul, who said the words, would nothing know  
 besides.

But as I said, he worked too hard, for he wasn't very strong ;  
 And so we told him we was sure he couldn't stand it long.  
 So by and by he went away for change of scene and air,  
 And though at first he seemed to mend, he was not stronger  
 there ;

But when the last time that he went, we all a change could see,  
 And we felt sure that in the end he'd never better be.

He died, Sir, as you may have heard, not very far from here :  
 They brought him where he wished to lay, among his people  
 dear ;

And what a funeral, too, he had !—scarcely was one dry eye ;  
 I thought the end would never come of people passing by ;  
 For he was faithful to his work, and spoke the truth out plain ;  
 And 'twas so sad to think that voice we ne'er should hear again.

The next we had to fill his place, was well-disposed and kind,  
 Who did his best to let none of the good works fall behind.

And then the old Squire died, although another of his race,  
 Both worthily and well, filled up, his deeds about the place.

And then in course of some few years the parson was no more :  
 Then this one came, who different seemed from all we'd had  
 before ;

He hadn't been above a week, when folks began to talk,  
 And say, they'd seen some smoke about, they'd sure, as didn't  
 ought.

It made my cough so bad one day, I thought I should have  
choked ;

So close and thick it seemed to get right down into your throat.  
Well this soon reached the Squire's ears, who would not hurt a  
worm,

And very kind he was, although in some things monstrous firm.  
He soon had all that altered, for the parson felt afraid,  
He knew how sharp the Squire would act if any fuss was made ;  
But he's got old as I am now, its not for long he's here,  
And those who live when he is gone will see things worse I fear.  
Our parson I thought different the first time he came nigh,  
For he said the Church did pretty well, but wasn't very high :  
" I like religion raised," said he, " as high as you can go,  
Though many bishops seem to try to bring it down too low."  
" We've got it now, Sir, high enough, its far beyond my reach,  
I can't a quarter understand the sermons that they preach :  
I used to wonder years ago, why Pilate did of old,  
Ask ' What is truth,' and would not stop to hear the answer told.  
I often hear that question asked, but never wonders more,  
For something every Sunday's changed from what we had before ;  
Sometimes there's long processions formed to walk the Church  
all round,

And several instruments are played to make a louder sound,  
While flowers are tied in bunches up all round the Chancel screen,  
At other times its all in black, and light can scarce be seen.  
There's many goes to Chapel for a good man's there, I hear,  
But I cannot leave the old Church where I sat for many a year ;  
For I was christened, and 'twas there I married my dear wife,

And I look back often to that day as the happiest in my life.  
 I buried her where she had wished, beside the old yew tree,  
 "And every Sunday you'll be there," she said, "and think of me;"  
 I could not put a tombstone up to show where was the spot,  
 So often had the mound fresh turfed to keep her unforgot;  
 But now the mound is done away to make it all look plain,  
 It hurt me so to think I could not tell the place again.  
 So I cannot leave the old Church, whatever they may say,  
 There's always two good sermons preached in the lessons for the  
     day,  
 And there's the same old prayers to pray which I so often find,  
 When trouble comes they always give most comfort to my mind.  
 Sometimes I think when I look on the window's coloured pane,  
 What would the Apostles think and say could they come back  
     again ;  
 To think Saint Paul who no offence would give in ought he'd  
     done,  
 Should thus be made the scoffer's laugh, and on the scorner's  
     tongue ;  
 For though there's many goes to Church, there's very few I see  
 With open Bible in their hands, as it often used to be ;  
 It mostly seems they go to see what people they know there,  
 For half the time they loll about, and nothing do but stare :  
 It seems quite like a fair sometimes after they all come out,  
 Such loud and merry laughter while the children play about.  
 And missionary meetings too are all quite done away,  
 There hasn't been a sermon preached I can't tell when the day ;  
 Our place in the old pastor's time, was known for that all round,

And often times has been held up as quite a model town ;  
 But now its all for convents, or the homes of sisterhoods,  
 Although I can't quite see such places do a world of good.  
 But I shan't live to see the worst, that wont be in my time,  
 Though when it comes I hope they will a deal of hindrance find ;  
 There's not the young men comes to Church who were so often  
     seen,

For many never goes there now but saunters on the green.  
 You know Will Tyler, him who was an out and out bad boy,  
 Well, our old parson had that lad sometime in his employ ;  
 And such an altered man he is grown, you'd hardly think the  
     same,

I don't suppose, the last few years, once gave him cause for blame.  
 Of course, when this new parson came, he was his servant too,  
 But soon he left the ways he found were not what he could do,  
 Nor since that has he been to Church, not that he has gone astray,  
 But says that he can't sit under those who teach a different way ;  
 And so with others he has joined, who in fine pleasant weather  
 Go to some distant Church, or else meet at their homes together.  
 So here and there we seem split up in parties, sects, and creeds,  
 While many hardly know the truth, or what they do believe.  
 And thus the old man chatted on with many a deep-drawn sigh,  
 For age is garrulous of years that have long since gone by.  
 "Well, Blake," he said, "changes I have had wherever I have  
     been,

But not one thing I missed so much as the pleasant ivy green ;  
 I scarcely knew the old Church as it looked so plain and bare,  
 And thought perhaps I made mistake as the ivy was not there ;

It always looked so fresh and gay at most times of the year  
 That I was sad—a friend was gone that once I held so dear.  
 Oh, Master Edward, that change was the very best we had,  
 I thought you must have heard the tale, the Church walls got  
     so bad,

For when they did repair the place, they found the ivy grown  
 Between the timber and the beams, right in the solid stone,  
 All underneath it had intertwined, and round about the wall,  
 They said they were afraid at first the Church itself would fall,  
 You see though green it looked outside, and flourishing so fair,  
 It hid the mischief going on that no one thought it there ;  
 For all was rotten with the wet, and wood-work got so thin,  
 It was a mercy seen in time or roof had fallen in ;  
 But I must go, Sir, or they will be looking after me,  
 For children's children arn't the same as one's own use to be ;  
 Touching his hat with rustic grace, the old man said his say,  
 And through the copse and down the hill he took his homeward  
     way.

The wise man went forth, as we read, to view the sluggard's field,  
 And reaped the only harvest that the scanty crops could yield ;  
 He looked, and did consider well, and thus instruction came  
 Where noisome weeds had grown apace instead of healthful grain ;  
 For lilies of the field we're told, and hyssop from the wall,  
 Do by the great Creator's teach a lesson to us all ;  
 And thus the ivy brought to him instruction very plain,  
 And out of the destroying plant forthwith their wisdom came.  
 I see, thought he, those fair green leaves screen only thus to aid



The slow but sure and fearful work that's growing neath their  
shade,

It clothes and stealthy hides its deeds, and wraps the naked wall,  
Until at last, in one dire heap, they both in ruin fall.

And so those ceremonious forms, and ritualistic ways,  
Which have thus surely grown apace in these enlightened days,  
The fasts and vigils that are kept, confessions made for sin,  
Seem only now to show how far the evil has crept in.

Too surely thus the walls are sapped, built on the corner stone,  
Which holds a living faith in Christ, His works and His alone ;  
While outward forms and symbols of the Christian faith are made,  
The life and not the emblem, the truth and not the aid.

And thus the house of prayer is but the register of deeds,  
Each act and service being part of what one will receive ;  
While souls are lost for faith is wrecked, and other trust is made,  
Than the only firm foundation on which it can be laid.

Musing on this he reached his home, and read the word of life,  
That he must to the end endure who conquers in the strife,—  
“Oh ! Lord, how long,” he said, “ere I attain that bright and  
happy place,

Where sin can never enter there, and I shall see Thy face.”

But days and weeks passed by, when those who in his youth  
he'd known,

In earlier days, had gladly met and his acquaintance owned ;  
And soon a kindred band of souls met on each Sabbath day,  
Where now he dwelt to read God's Word together and to pray,  
And He who said where two or three are met with one accord,  
Was always present there to bless the reading of His Word ;

And many a sorrowing soul was blessed, and mourning ones were  
cheered,

For those united earnest prayers were heard in that they feared.

But tidings to the Vicar came, and much disturbed was he,

These doings in his parish, where such things ought not to be ;

What would come next ? for ought he knew, the flock with one  
consent,

Might leave the pale of holy Church and turn to rank dissent ;

He'd preach a sermon in which should their guilt be plainly  
shewn,

Who thus had left their parish Church to worship God alone.

The following Sunday then he preached in language plain and  
terse

The sixth of Jeremiah, and my text the seventeenth verse,—

Ask for the old paths, and enquire which is the way therein,

Rest for yourselves you then shall find, and pardon from all sin.

He preached it from the chancel steps, and his voice seemed most  
severe :

“My friends, said he, I speak to those who are now present here,

You know to have ingratitude from those you've given birth

Is to receive the sharpest pang that we can have on earth ;

What must be thought of those who set at nought a mother's  
care,

Who stretches out her arms all day in fulness of despair ;

And yet far worse are those who thus God's holy Church do leave,

Forsaking all her ancient forms in which they once believed ;

They ask not for the old paths, they wish for something new,

And thus no certain rest they find, leaving the good and true :



Who shall award their dreadful fate who thus in schism dwell,  
 What can avert from them the flames of a destroying hell ;  
 The lessons that they teach is now from all such to abstain,  
 If we would hope in that great day salvation to obtain :  
 Never forsake your Mother Church but to her courts attend,  
 Remember in her holy priests alone you can depend.”  
 This and much more than this he preached, and then no blessing  
 said,

But the prayer for Turks and heretics repeated in its stead.  
 But who hath this sad schism made ? what caused the first  
 offence,  
 And drove them from the Church’s fold, and who broke down the  
 fence ?

Alas ! we say as Nathan did, thou art the very man,  
 As thou must plainly see thyself if but the cause thou scan ;  
 How came these ceremonious forms, by whose wish or desire  
 Bowings and crossings that are made, and incense burning fire,  
 The copes, the tippets, and the stoles for which thou takest such  
 care,

Changes of dress for litany, for preaching, and for prayer ;  
 The gorgeous robes thou deck’st thyself, with crosses rich and  
 rare,

Are made to simple country folk a stumbling-block and snare.  
 Are these the articles of faith that thou didst swear to keep ?  
 Is this the way thou wert enjoined the poor lost souls to seek ?  
 The sword which thou should’st rightly hold, dividing each his  
 part.

Canst thou not yield, but courts instead the millinery art ?

Holding for worship sacraments for those to gaze upon,  
 Is by thy Church's articles forbidden to be done ;  
 Yet thou dost hold them upon high, and worship down before,  
 And this thou teachest to thy flock each Sunday more and more,  
 Husband and wife whom God ordained as one should always be.  
 But they must not together sit as ordered now by thee ;  
 And thus you have deserted from the good old paths and ways,  
 By bringing back remembrance of those dark and stormy days,  
 And have by your sad schism for the sake of novelty  
 Scattered the flock who wearied were by your sad mimicry.  
 Think you with pleasure they have left their Father's house of  
     prayer,  
 Because they cannot worship that which thou did'st set up there ?  
 How gladly would they tread those courts where oft their fathers  
     trod,  
 And worship in their simple way in praise and prayer to God ;  
 But they have sadly left the Church, and more are leaving still,  
 Because they dare not countenance such deeds against their will.  
 Oh ! ye who lay your learned hands on those ordained to preach,  
 See that they rightly understand and know the truths they teach.  
 How many by such deeds as these have thus been led astray,  
 And so fall easy victims for the great destroyer's prey ;  
 How oft in country districts is this found to be the case,  
 Where Christian unity once reigned, now discord fills the place ;  
 Would they but look and learn more of the Church's living Head,  
 And not in empty emblems seek the living 'midst the dead,  
 And thus their stewardship give up with joy and not with grief  
 A faithful rendering of the souls they did profess to keep,

That when the corn is fully ripe and the harvest is begun,  
A bright crown may await them of the souls that they have won.

The autumn winds were blowing, for the summer time had  
passed,

And trees were sighing for the leaves which now were falling fast.  
There had been long and sultry heat which caused a serious  
drought ;

And now a different change had come, it had much sickness  
brought,

And many who had borne the heat and burden of the day

Had faded like the autumn leaves, and so had passed away ;

And though the meetings still were held on each Lord's day for  
prayer,

Yet there were several empty seats whose owners were not there ;

The summons had been sent to them, " The time is drawing nigh,

The Master's come, and calleth thee to live with Him on high."

And earnestly the flock had prayed, nor had they prayed in vain,

That God would spare the tender plant and take the ripened  
grain,

For many young and careless souls through the sad sickness  
came,

And thus were to the Saviour brought, and called upon His name ;

But he who first had been the means was taken very ill,

Brought on 'twas thought through slight neglect in taking cold  
and chill ;

Nor heeded not the wise advice he should more careful be ;

The time was short, he felt the work was for eternity.

For he the sick and poor sought out to ease their want and pain,

And many who the gifts received knew not the giver's name.  
While thus his left hand had not known whate'er the right had  
done.

His was the highest meed of praise—"faithful and good," "well  
done,"

Yet now unwillingly laid by the lesson learnt of faith :  
'Twas ordered thus, they also serve who only stand and wait.  
The Vicar heard that he was sick, a righteous doom said he  
For all who thus like Korah act will sure afflictions see ;  
And then the Curate called on him, a melancholy man,  
Whose frequent self-appointed fasts had made him thin and wan ;  
His coat, which he had buttoned up, came far below his knees,  
A little white around his neck was all that one could see ;  
He crossed himself devoutly as he entered in his room,  
Was sorry thus to see him ill, hoped would be better soon,  
And then he asked the poor sick man whether he would confess,  
It might some pain alleviate, or comfort give and rest ;  
I have confessed to Him, he said, who has my sins forgiven,  
And who has blessed me with sweet peace and future hopes of  
heaven.

The Curate paused, here was a case the like he had not known ;  
He felt perplexed, and what to do he could not say or own,  
And looking through the book he held—the Book of Common  
Prayer,

He could not find a single one to meet his wants in there.  
Canst thou not pray, the sick man said, to Him who sees the  
heart,

Thou surely dost not rest upon what only books impart,

Not knowing the blest privilege of casting all thy care,  
 And feeling sure that He will then listen and answer prayer?  
 And the sick man then was minister, and for the preacher sought,  
 That he who had to teach aright might well himself be taught.  
 And when the curate left that house, an altered man was he;  
 His eyes were opened to those truths before he could not see;  
 His outward life and daily walk had been correct indeed,  
 No form or deed omitted ought of that he did believe.  
 But now his eyes were opened, and he saw things as they were;  
 Then, and not till then he knew, the privilege of prayer,  
 The structure that he built upon had all dissolved away,  
 And would not stand the searching light of the great reckoning  
 day.

Henceforth his works were wrought by faith, and thus his faith  
 was shown;

For he, for his salvation, built on Christ the corner stone.  
 But days and weeks had come and gone, until the winter came,  
 While still with Christian fortitude the sick man bore the pain,  
 And as he daily weaker grew, and heavier came his breath,  
 He knew the loving hand had sent this sickness unto death.  
 And then a good old clergyman, who near the parish dwelt,  
 Much comfort gave the dying man as by his side he knelt;  
 Then with those Christian friends of his, who gathered round  
 the bed,  
 They celebrated there the death of that Great Living Head,  
 And in the prayers that followed then his voice was plainly  
 heard

In weak but earnest emphasis, repeating every word.



It was a wond'rous solemn scene, which those would ne'er forget,  
 Who silent knelt around that bed, so soon the bed of death !  
 The softened light which dimly burned, a halo threw around,  
 And nought the holy calmness broke, those words of solemn  
 sound :

Take this and eat ; emblem of Him by whom thy soul is fed,  
 And drink this wine, remembering Him whose blood for thee  
 was shed ;

And He Himself drew nigh to bless, by whom the feast was  
 made ;

They felt His presence in their hearts love making not afraid.  
 The minister then took his leave, " We'll met again," he said.  
 " Where shall be no more partings, no sorrowings for the dead ;"  
 Yet but a little while He comes, He cannot tarry long,  
 And then of Moses and the Lamb we'll sing the joyful song.  
 Then one by one each left the room, and only two were left  
 To keep their sad and silent watch, and ease the dying breath :  
 It had been raining all the day, and now the rising wind  
 Was beating on the window pane, seeking ingress to find :  
 Louder and fiercer came the blast, a dark and stormy night,  
 Like evil spirits loosed abroad, revelling in fierce delight ;  
 The sick man turned uneasily, for the Tempter knew his power,  
 And girded on his utmost strength for that last awful hour ;  
 Then all the sins of his past life, the evil he had done,  
 The faults and follies of his youth and rancour of his tongue,  
 Came up before, and he was filled with trouble and dismay ;  
 Despair had filled his soul with fear, and drove all hope away.

“Where is thy God,” the Tempter said, “He listeneth not to thee ?

How can'st thou look with all thy sins on One so just as He ?  
 Christ is my hope,” the sick man said, “I know He died for me :  
 Oh ! Jesus, Thou wilt not forsake the soul that waits for Thee.”  
 The drops stood out upon his brow, for the conflict was severe ;  
 And then those words of healing balm were breathed into his  
 ear—

When thou passeth through the deeps, they shall not overflow ;  
 And in the water's greatest power Thou shalt my presence know :  
 When through the valley Thou dost walk, and in that dreaded  
 shade,

My rod and staff shalt comfort thee, only be not afraid.

It fell like showers on thirsty ground, “my fears are gone,”  
 said he—

“Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, who giveth victory.”  
 But flesh and blood were all too weak to bear such heavy strain,  
 And those who watched beside him thought he ne'er would  
 speak again ;

And then awhile he lay in trance until the morning broke,  
 When on his face there came a smile, as thus he softly spoke—  
 “I see the bright and shining light, I see that glorious Face ;  
 Oh ! what unmeasurable love, a sinner saved by grace.”  
 And then a shadow passed before, while harder came his breath,  
 And the watchers knew the vale was passed, the shadowy vale  
 of death.

The fight was o'er, the race was run, gotten the victory,  
 Excelsior in Excelsis merged, through all eternity.



The sun had risen on the earth, and shining clear and bright ;  
But he was with that better Sun, where there is no more night.  
His funeral was by his wish simple and very plain ;  
As in his life, so in his death, he sought not earthly fame ;  
Though rich and poor both followed him, and many tears were  
    shed,  
For each remembered some kind deed of him who now was dead.  
They laid him in the old churchyard, where he had loved to  
    tread ;  
Near those whom he had known in life, they made his narrow  
    bed ;—  
A simple stone now marks the spot, with name, and date, and  
    place,  
And underneath his dying words, “A sinner saved by grace.”

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