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BABY DIED TO-DAY

AND OTHER POEMS

BY THE LATE

WILLIAM LEIGHTON.

15

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NOTE.

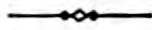
WILLIAM LEIGHTON was born at Dundee in 1841, and died at Liverpool, from an attack of typhoid fever, in 1869.

The following year a Selection from his Poems was published, and met with a most favourable reception, a second edition being very soon called for. This being now exhausted, a Complete Edition, to include other literary remains, is in course of preparation.

The object of the present publication is to secure for a few of his most admired pieces a wider circulation than they would be likely to obtain in a less accessible form.

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P O E M S.



BABY DIED TO-DAY.

LAY the little limbs out straight ;
Gently tend the sacred clay ;
Sorrow-shaded is our fate—
Baby died to-day !

Fold the hands across the breast,
So, as when he knelt to pray ;
Leave him to his dreamless rest—
Baby died to-day.

Voice, whose prattling infant-lore
Was the music of our way,
Now is hushed for evermore—
Baby died to-day.

Sweet blue eyes, whose sunny gleams
Made our waking moments gay,
Now can shine but in our dreams—
Baby died to-day !

BABY DIED TO-DAY.

Still a smile is on his face,
 But it lacks the joyous play
 Of the one we used to trace—
 Baby died to-day.

Give his lips your latest kiss ;
 Dry your eyes and come away ;
 In a happier world than this
 Baby lives to-day !

*'PEACE BE STILL.'*

(St. Mark iv. 39.)

WHEN the clouds loom dark and eerie,
 And the heavens are fraught with ill,
 Flesh is weak and heart is weary—
 Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'

When the mighty storm is surging,
 Stars are hid and winds are shrill,
 Satan striving, passion urging—
 Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'

When the waves of Doubt and Terror
 Toss me at their own wild will ;
 Light seems dark, and truth seems error—
 Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'

When affliction's storms are howling,
And its voice my soul doth thrill ;
Earth is black, and heaven is scowling—
Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'

When the shadows round me thicken,
Bitter tears mine eyelids fill,
Spirit faints and senses sicken—
Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'

When the tide of death's cold river
Shocks me with its icy chill,
Body quakes and billows quiver—
Saviour whisper, 'Peace, be still.'



A WHISPER OF THE SPRING.

SHUT out from Nature and each natural thing,
Within the city's dusty purlieus buried,
I heard to-day a whisper of the spring
As through the streets I hurried.

A soft low zephyr that had lost its way
Came, rich with balmy odour from far meadows,
And breathed on dingy piles, that all the day
Stand frowning o'er their shadows.

All timidly and sweet it crept along :
A prisoned throstle felt the wafted wonder,
And shrilled a welcome, as if gushing song
Would tear its throat asunder.

And in a moment I was borne away
From the great Babel's mighty din and bustle,
To where through woodland glades the soft winds play,
Making the young leaves rustle.

I saw the daisies gemming all the green ;
The hawthorn blossom peeping from the hedges ;
The lazy brooklet purling on between
Long lines of sleepy sedges.

The dew-drops glistened in the sun-glints fair ;
The blear-eyed cattle browsed in grassy hollows ;
The sheep-bells tinkled clear, and all the air
Was jubilant with swallows.

The honeysuckle with the sweet brier wreathed ;
The waving meadows lay in sunny stretches ;
The wooing air its wanton love-sigh breathed
Among the early vetches.

And Nature wore so beautiful a dress,
Across her features such a glory floated,
That I stood in a trance of tenderness
And like a lover gloated !

But momentary was the spell ! for soon
The zephyr's gentle breath was all expended,
And up the dreary street the throstle's tune
Grew fainter and then ended ;

And died away from me each rapturous sound !
Faded the landscape with its fresh-born beauties !
Leaving me to an uninviting round
Of dull and prosy duties !

Yet all day long in crowded street or mart,
Amid the great town's ceaseless stir and jostle,
I felt the sweet breeze play about my heart
And heard the clear-toned throstle!



GREEN LEAVES.

SUNNY Spring is here at last,
Breathing hints of buds and clover ;
Frosts, and snows, and storms are past ;
Winter's dreary reign is over :
Not a thought in Nature grieves,
All things ' babble of green leaves.'

I can hear the zephyr sigh
O'er the height and through the hollow ;
Lark-notes raining from on high ;
Hum of bee and song of swallow :
Idyls that the mavis weaves
In this ' babble of green leaves.'

Shady nook and grassy dell,
Daisy, crocus, snowdrop, pansy,
Hawthorn blossom, sweet blue-bell—
All come crowding on my fancy :
Balmy mornings, blessed eves—
In this ' babble of green leaves.'



GOD IS EVERYWHERE

MOUNTAINS, towering high and proud,
 Far above each floating cloud ;
 Forests, 'mong whose crowded trees,
 Moans the frequent midnight breeze ;
 Ocean, with its solemn roar.
 Lashing on the lonely shore,
 Thunder echoing through the air,—
 Tell us, God is everywhere !

Flowers of every scent and hue,
 Pearly with the morning dew ;
 Lake whose limpid bosom heaves
 In the light that sunset leaves ;
 Stars that shine so stilly bright
 From the azure vault of night ;
 Sunshine with its beauteous glare,—
 Tell us, God is everywhere !

Spring, with all the flow'rets sweet
 Leaping forth to kiss her feet ;
 Summer, with her foliage gay,
 And the roses on her way ;
 Autumn, with his purple skies
 And the passion in his eyes ;
 Winter, with his woodlands bare,—
 Tell us, God is everywhere !

Birds that trill their happy lays
 All along the wooded ways ;

Leaves that rustle far aloft,
Making music sweet and soft ;
Streamlet of the silvery tones
Prattling o'er its smooth gray stones ;
With all sounds of beauty rare,—
Tell us, God is everywhere !

Visions of the morning light ;
Dreams that haunt us in the night ;
Shadowy hands that beckon hence ;
Whisperings we know not whence ;
Hopes that wear angelic wings ;
Beautiful imaginings ;
Yearnings after all things fair,—
Tell us, God is everywhere !

Courage then, O fainting heart,
Worn and weary as thou art !
What though earthly joys fall fast
As the leaves in Autumn's blast !
What though seas of trouble roll
Billowy darkness o'er thy soul !
Thou canst crush the phantom Care,
While thy God is everywhere !

When the shadows round thee fall
Blacker than a funeral pall ;
When the tempest's brooding wrath
Bursts upon thy lonely path ;
In all days of deep distress ;
In all hours of loneliness,—
Bend the knee and breathe the prayer,—
For thy God is everywhere !

THE SEA.

WHAT ails thee, O thou Sea,
That thus with mad endeavour
Thou heavest thy waves on the lonely shore,
And beatest thy banks for ever?

Ah! so my weary heart
Throbs with a restless yearning,
For the golden light of the faded days,
And the joys that have no returning.

What means, O tossing Sea,
That wild and awful wailing,
Like the prayer for pity from some lost soul
Which is ever unavailing?

O even so my heart
Doth wail, and pine, and languish,
For a love that can satisfy the soul,
And a peace that can still its anguish.

Wail wilder still, O Sea!
Roar louder yet, ye billows!
And rock the mariners to sleep
As they rest on their lonely pillows!

And heave on high thy waves
Till the deeps shall seethe and shiver!
But a day will come when thy wail shall cease
And thy moan shall be hushed for ever!

And thou, O restless heart,
Still throb with thy deep emotion ;
And pine beneath thy weight of care,
And pant like the panting ocean !

And toss and tremble and thrill
Till thine inmost being quiver !
But a day will come when thy care shall cease,
And thou shalt be stilled for ever !



*'HOW WILT THOU DO IN THE SWELLING
OF JORDAN?'*

(Jeremiah xii. 5.)

FAIN'T not, O Christian ! the way may be long,
And the path for thy feet may seem toilsome and
weary ;

Courage, and faint not ; be faithful and strong ;
Though days may be dark, and though nights may be
dreary.

Onward ! though mists rise on every hand :
Upward ! though sin weigh thee down like a burden :
For if thou should'st faint in the still peaceful land,
'How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?'

Faint not, O Christian ! the night is far spent,
And the day will soon dawn in its fulness of beauty :
Let the light find thee with steps heavenward bent,
Toiling along the rough pathway of duty !

What though temptations are thronging the road !
 Has not Christ died thy transgressions to pardon ?
 And if thou shouldst wander away from thy God,
 ' How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ? '

Faint not, O Christian ! though thick on thy path
 Affliction pours down its most pitiless showers :
 Thy Father is speaking in love, not in wrath,
 And thy griefs will yet scatter thy pathway like flowers
 Courage then, Christian ! be of good cheer !
 Christ is thy guardian and Heaven is thy guerdon !
 For if on this earth thou should'st falter and fear,
 ' How wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan ? '

OUR LOST ONE.

WE lost our darling years ago,
 But have not ceased to mourn him yet :
 We ever speak of him in low
 And tender tones of deep regret :
 Old places bring his image near ;
 Old pleasures speak to us of him ;
 Old playthings make our eyes grow dim
 With memories sorrowful and dear !

We gather round the fire by night,
 And tell the tales of long ago ;
 And in the weird and ruddy light
 We watch each other's features glow :

We sing some gay and jovial air ;
Our laughter shakes the echoing walls ;
But o'er our hearth for ever falls
The shadow of his vacant chair !

And if by chance some one should wake
A merry strain he may have sung,—
Or if his whispered name should break
In trembling utterance from the tongue ;—
A moisture gathers in our eyes ;
A hush falls on us from above ;
And to the yearnings of our love
Again we see his image rise !

We see again the golden hue
Of sunny tresses waving free !
We see from eyes of deepest blue
Long lashes lifted wonderingly !
Gay noises from old corners start ;
Low laughter ringing clear and sweet,
And patterings of little feet
Waken old echoes in the heart !

Poor grovellers still among the dust,
We cannot lift our souls on high,
In purest faith and perfect trust,
To thee, our lost one, in the sky !
Still earth's delusive hopes we chase ;
Its vain, imperfect pleasures quaff ;
Half of our love is here, but half
Must reach thee in thy radiant place !

O far beyond our earth-bleared ken,
In concourse of the good and wise,
Dost thou not view the ways of men
And all their littleness despise ?
With wonder in thy downward glance
Dost thou behold our actions here ?—
Ah, pity thou our guilt and fear,
Our frailty and our ignorance !

When weary of the toilsome road,
Besprinkled with the dust of care,
Bowed down beneath the weighty load
Of burdens that we still must bear !
Wondering when all this toil shall cease !
Yearning to win the promised rest !—
Stoop from thy home among the blest
With breathings pure of heavenly peace !

Still hover near us on our way ;
Surround us with thine unseen love !
Restrain us when we seek to stray,
And gently raise our hopes above !
And when at last the heavenly land
Shall on our dazzled vision burst,
O angel-brother, be the first
To stretch to us a welcome hand !



THE LEAF OF WOODRUFF.

I FOUND a leaf of woodruff in a book,
 Gone was its scent, and lost its pristine glory ;
 Each slender bladelet wore a dingy look,
 And all was blanched and hoary.

And yet this withered leaf a spell possessed,
 Which worked upon me in mysterious measure,
 And sent old memories thronging through my breast
 Of mingled pain and pleasure—

Of childhood's days that knew no thought of care ;
 Of hours that passed on wings of rainbow fleetness ;
 Of odours floating on the wanton air,
 Sad from their very sweetness ;

Of woods that wore a garb of summer green ;
 Of knee-deep ferns, and nooks of shady stillness ;
 Of streams that glimmered in the full moon's sheen
 And mirrored back its fulness ;

Of lazy baskings on the lone hill-side
 In the fierce glow of July's sultry weather ;
 Of twilight wanderings where the enamoured tide
 Crept up to kiss the heather ;

Of voices still beneath the churchyard sod ;
 Bright eyes that glistened from behind long lashes ;
 Warm beauty early given back to God ;
 Red lips that now are ashes !

And many other memories, gay and grave,
 The woodruff brought in life-like guise before me ;
 Until I marvelled how a leaf could have
 Such magic influence o'er me.

Ah, so it is ! all that hath ever been
 Experienced by the spirit is immortal ;
 Each hope and joy and grief is hid within
 The memory's sacred portal.

And yet the soft glow of a moonlight hour,
 A strain of haunting music sweet and olden,
 A dream, a bird, a bee, a leaf, a flower,
 A sunset rich and golden,

Can fling that portal open ; and beyond
 Appears the record of each earlier feeling ;—
 All hopes, all joys, all fears, all musings fond,
 In infinite revealing.

Till all the present passes from the sight—
 Its cares and woes that make us weary-hearted,
 And leaves us basking in the holy light
 Of golden days departed.



SUMMERS LONG AGO.

HOW sweet to me the memories of happy days of
 youth,
 When my heart was full of gladness and my smile was
 full of truth ;

When everything I gazed upon seemed beautiful and fair,
And all the livelong summer day I never knew a care ;
When I could scarcely understand such things as grief
and woe ;—
Ah ! those were happy, happy days,—those summers long
ago !

The merry birds sang joyously, the sun shone brighter
then,
The flow'rets grew more fragrantly down in the grassy
glen,
The waters had a brighter flash, and bluer was the sky,
And greener were the forest trees that waved their
branches high,
And sweeter was the gentle breeze that thrilled a music
low
Throughout my heart, and made me love those summers
long ago.

Then, stretched beneath the forest trees, upon the ground
I lay,
And heard the rustling of their leaves through the long
summer day ;
The happy carol of the thrush, the blackbird's whistle
clear,
Like softly-whispered melodies fell gently on my ear,
And like Æolian harpings sweet the prattling brooklet's
flow,
Gushing and bright, came o'er my heart in summers long
ago.

And when the sun with fiery face was sinking fast to rest,
And evening's dim pale glimmering star was twinkling in
the west,
O how I loved to wander then at twilight's dreamy hour,
To feel the freshness of the breeze, the fragrance of the
flower,—
To gaze in transport at the heavens, and wonder at the
glow—
The purpling glow of eventide in summers long ago !

Ah ! those indeed were happy days, my heart knew nought
of guile,
And all God's earth then seemed to me one universal smile!
And oft amid this stern world's strife my memory ponders
o'er,
And fondly dwells upon those days,—those joyous days
of yore.
The silent stars may cease to shine, and all things fade
below,
But I never, never can forget the summers long ago !



ROSE.

ON the margin of the woodland, hidden half by leafy
shadows,
There stands a little cottage, ivy-clad and rose-em-
bowered ;
Before it stretches far and wide a wealth of waving
meadows,
Behind it lies the forest with a slumb'rous dark en-
dowered.

Here, in the sunny days of Spring, from out among the
bushes,
Spring-flowers peep on passers-by with bright eyes all
aglow ;
And through the gloaming's breathless reign the nightin-
gale in gushes
Pours forth its plaintive melody all passionate and low.

But it is not the tender flowers that tempt my feet to
wander
Down to that cottage through the weird and lonely light
of even,
Nor are those notes the nightingale's that make me pause
and ponder—
Is that wild strain a song of earth, or music sent from
Heaven !

Ah, Rose ! the rose blooms on your cheek, your bright
eyes gleam and glisten,
As standing 'mong the dewy flowers you carol clear
and wild ;
What can an old man do but stand and strain his ear to
listen,
Till all his heart is flooded and his senses are beguiled !

Strange that a voice has so much power ! and yet its
thrilling sweetness
Awakes a slumbering echo of the old delightful days,
When all the warm blood through my veins coursed with
a feverish fleetness,
And Youth and Hope lit up the world with their
bewitching rays.

Again I seem the careless boy before whose raptured vision
The Future stretched in glittering and iris-gloried
gleams,
And all the beckoning earth was bathed in light that
seemed elysian—
A light that clothed my waking thoughts and coloured
all my dreams.

Again I hear the solemn forest startled with the laughter
Of happy boys and maidens at their pic-nic 'neath the
trees ;
Till all its echoes rouse from sleep, and strange and
hoarsely after
Give forth their ghostly murmurings upon the passing
breeze.

Again I wander through the woods or down beside the
river,
To nurse mysterious yearnings, and to muse on many
things ;
To watch the dewy leaflets in the sunshine dance and
quiver,
Or see the sailing swallows skimming on their dusky
wings.

Again a soft hand seeks mine own, and in its trustful
clasping
I count a greater wealth than all the riches of a
throne !—
So small and soft !—it seems to melt within my ruder
grasping,
And yet its slightest touch hath power to thrill me to
the bone !

Again we tread the forest-paths while curious leaves are
peering
To catch a glimpse of her sweet face ere light and
shadow part :
Hand locked in hand we pass along in silent bliss, each
fearing
To break with spoken words upon the whisperings of
the heart !

Again I see her standing where her garden roses blossom—
The flow'rets listening to her as she carols all alone ;
And I think, 'When shall I wear thee, O my rosebud, on
my bosom !
O when shall all thy fragrance and thy beauty be mine
own !'

'Mine own !' and yet I sometimes deemed the thought a
wild presumption,
Would plead my dull unworthiness and press her to
forget,—
Until a shower of sunny sparkles chased the mad assump-
tion
From wonder-widened eyes that shone 'neath lashes
long and wet !

Alas ! for all the darling dreams I cherished with a holy
And tender joy ! they seemed not made to melt and
pass away !
Alas ! for all the hopes that died and left me crushed and
lowly,
To weep in wasting anguish o'er their premature decay !

'Tis long ago, and yet my heart will evermore remember
The sad and desolate day that was my darling's last on
earth,
When all the mellow beauties of the many-hued September
Seemed frowning as the winter frowns amid his dreary
dearth!

From early, early morning, I had lingered by her dwelling;
But ere the ruthless day had reached its brazen noon—
she died!
Then I rose up, my brain on fire, my breast with tempest
swelling,
And wandered, stunned and tearless, through the
woodlands vast and wide.

Instinctively my footsteps sought a spot where oft together
We rested in the shelter of the shadows cool and deep,
And there I laid me down and hid my face among the
heather,
And prayed my heart might melt in tears,—but no, I
could not weep!

The air was chilly when I rose, and evening's dews were
falling,
The parting sun poured streams of light between the
level boles;
And up among the dark tree-tops the callow rooks were
calling,
Their ghostly wailings sounding like the shrieks of
prisoned souls.

I hastened from the forest, for a sickening dread came
o'er me,
And sent a shiver through my frame,—a cold sweat to
my brow ;
I held my breath for very fear, 'till calm and still before me
I saw the village lie, and stood where I am standing
now.

It was an evening such as this ; the rosy light was streaming
On many objects, but it left *her* cottage in the shade ;
While half-way up the eastern slope the yellow moon lay
dreaming,
And faint sounds floated up from where the village
children played.

The place is little changed since then, but ah ! how
changed the feeling
From that with which I stood and gazed upon my
crushing grief !
For then the fount of woe within my breast seemed all
congealing,
But now a flood of tears can come and bring my heart
relief.

Long years have followed that sad day, and yet through
all their changes
Each spot about the village with her spirit seems im-
bued ;
I feel her warm breath on my cheek in each faint breeze
that ranges,
I hear her voice in each low sound that stirs the solemn
wood !

And standing here without the hedge while maiden Rose
is singing,
The lingering sunbeams pouring on her head their
golden blaze,
Within my heart the magic bells of memory are ringing,
With a sweet sadness in their swell, the chimes of olden
days !

Ah ! other hands are busy 'mong the flowers *she* loved so
dearly,
And other feet trip lightly down the little garden pad !
Where she once sang another voice is warbling wild and
clearly !
Another Rose blooms where she bloomed ! yet now I
am not sad !

The village church lies basking in the waning light of even,
I know the glow is fading now from chancel and from
nave ;
The tall spire points where she has gone,—up to yon
gloaming heaven,
And I grieve not that its shadow lengthens o'er her
quiet grave !

Nor do I mourn my dreary life with all its lone dejection,
Its lack of sympathy,—its lost delights,—its homeless
hearth ;
Since these have only served to lift on high the soul's
affection,
And teach the heart to build its love-nest somewhere
far from earth.

Still, often in the twilight, I can feel a Presence near me,—
Can hear the well-belovèd accents whisper as of yore !
I start,—'tis but a dream !—yet even dreams have power
to cheer me,
And I muse and muse upon it till the vision comes
once more !

Am I growing mad ? I know not. Am I wearing near
my dotage ?
I cannot tell ;—but oft the fancy makes my heart
rejoice,
That her bright spirit hovers round the dear old ivied
cottage,
And that the twilight songs are echoed by no earthly
voice !

And so each day at eventide when pale stars dusk and
glimmer
Like angel-eyes that strive to pierce through heaven's
all-placid blue,
And light wanes in the western sky, and earth grows dim
and dimmer,
And wanton wild-flowers drop asleep all drunken with
the dew,—

I wander by the forest-skirts and feel her white hands
flinging
Sweet thoughts of comfort o'er my soul to soothe its
lonely care,
While, ever and anon, there comes the fairy music ringing
In sweeps of passionate plaintiveness upon the eddying
air !

And strange thoughts struggle at my heart whene'er I
stand and hear it ;

In vain I peer into the gloom,—no glowing form is there!
But I know this body will not long beclod my straining
spirit

That yearns to fly and meet her in the sunny realms of
air !

Sweep on, O barren Day, and bring the hours that will
be sweeter !

Turn on your dusky wheels and pass from the dim
heavens, O Night !

Hasten the moments rich in bliss when I shall spring
to meet her,

And all my darkened life shall merge in everlasting
light !



LOVELY IN DEATH.

STILL, still and lovely, as some sculptured form,
She lay draped in her shroud of snowy white ;
But cold the cheek that once was purely warm,
And dim the eye that once was proudly bright.

The rich curl-clusters of her golden hair
Hung o'er the pulseless form in careless grace ;
And Death's cold shadow rested on the fair
And placid beauty of the faultless face.

The parted lips still wore a ruby tinge,
And round the mouth a smile yet seemed to play:
The right hand rested on the curtain-fringe,
As if in deep and dreamless sleep she lay :

And once or twice, when the faint summer breeze
Fluttered the golden glory of her hair,
Hope smiled above our gathering miseries,
And 'Death,' we said, 'cannot be dwelling there !'

But when the twilight fell in hazy gloom,
And 'neath the window sang the wakeful bird,
A silent horror brooded o'er the room,
And all the fountains of our being stirred ;

'And she is gone,' we said, 'for ever gone !
That silvery voice can now be heard no more !
No more those half-closed eyes shall meet our own,
Their dark blue depths with warm love running o'er !'

And a wild hunger seized upon our hearts
For all the joys possessed in days of old ;
The clinging lips—where all the life-blood starts !
The clasping hands—where neither hand is cold.

Then as the solemn night chased twilight gray,
We felt a softening influence hovering nigh :
We said, 'Our darling has not gone away :
She is not dead although she seemed to die.

'She still is in our midst, though years may roll
And life be blown away by every breath :
For beauty is immortal as the soul ;
And Love can never yield her crown to Death !'

TOLL THE BELL.

TOLL the bell, 'tis Sabbath even,
 Let it echo through the air,—
 Like a voice from yon blue heaven
 Calling to the house of prayer.

Speaking gently to our hearts,
 Calmly does its cadence fall ;
 Softly, softly, it imparts
 Joy, and peace, and love to all !

Toll the bell, then, sweetly, slowly,
 Through the still and solemn hour ;
 Let the lofty and the lowly
 Share alike its soothing power.

Toll the bell, 'tis Sabbath even,
 And I would I could reveal
 All the longings through me driven,
 All the fancies that I feel;—

Longings all too deep to utter—
 Thoughts that never can be told,
 Save in an imperfect mutter,
 Feeble, passionless, and cold !

Oh, my heart is well-nigh bursting
 With the thoughts I cannot speak,
 And my soul is thirsting, thirsting,
 For the joys I dare not seek.

Could I, could I e'er inherit
Pens of poets passed away,—
Could I have their brain and spirit
Dwelling in me night and day;—

Then would I pour forth my numbers
Through the atmosphere of Time,
Like that bell which wakes men's slumbers
With its sweet and soothing chime!

Toll the bell, 'tis Sabbath even,
Let it echo through the air,—
Like a voice from yon blue heaven
Calling to the house of prayer!

*ON THE SHORE.*

I STOOD on the shore while the sad twilight drew
Its gray veil across the blue heaven ;
And the deep-thoughted stars all looked holily through
The vast bending vault of the even :
And numberless fancies came crowding o'er me
As I gazed on the desolate sea.

I thought of the long sunny days of my youth,
When I dwelt by the murmuring billow ;
Of the yellow-ribbed sands and the pebbles so smooth,
Of the beck that crept down by the willow :
And dreams of my childhood were borne unto me
In the dimple and dash of the sea.

I thought of a flow'ret that bloomed for the sky,
A joy that was nipped in the blossom :
The eloquent glow of a love-lighted eye ;
The heave of a fluttering bosom :
And the dirge of a lost love came sounding to me
In the murmur and moan of the sea.

I thought of a ship sailing into the west ;
Of hearts on her dewy decks grieving ;
Of the tear-burdened eyelid—the quivering breast —
The sigh for the land they are leaving :
And a passionate farewell was wafted to me
In the ripple and rush of the sea.

I thought of wild moments of ruin and wrath ;
Of mad billows boiling and seething ;
Of a proud vessel swept from the tempest's dread path—
Of a low wind above her grave breathing :
And some of Death's secrets were whispered to me
In the howling and hush of the sea.

I thought of the peace of a heavenly shore ;
Of a land where no broad sea can sever ;
Of a glad light which sorrow can darken no more ;
Of a rest to the weary for ever :
And a chorus of angels seemed breathed unto me
In the tremor and thrill of the sea.



MY NEST.

THE shadows lengthen ; the twilight is falling :
 The labours and cares of the day are ended :
 A peace settles over the city's brawling,
 Like the mirrored glow of the sunset splendid.
 And sparrow and robin and skylark and throstle
 Are silent now in leafy recesses—
 Calmly and warmly and safely they nestle
 In the shadowy bliss of soft caresses.

On the skirts of the city *my* nest is waiting,
 Warm with a glow that is grateful and tender ;
 And the world with its striving and sinning and hating,
 Melts in the light of its sacred splendour.
 What though my dovecot be poor and lowly ?
 Love's kingly sway makes the dwelling royal !
 Peace, like a cherubim pure and holy,
 Fills every heart with a faith life-loyal !

Cosy warm nest ! every bounty and blessing
 Linger about thee as years o'er thee gather :
 Joys bide within thee ; and mercies unceasing
 Rain from the bountiful hand of the Father !
 Hope's budding promises break without number
 Rich 'mong thy leaflets, and burst into blossom :
 Sweet be thy glad waking hours ! and thy slumber
 Calm as the sleep of a babe on the bosom !



THE CLOUD.

I SAW a little lonely cloud
 Hung on the western verge of heaven ;
 In twilight's earliest beams it glowed,
 And mirrored back the blush of even ;
 No other cloud was in the sky,
 It lay in lonely witchery.

The twilight deepened : one by one
 The pale stars trembled through the haze ;
 The golden light of eve was gone,
 And gone the sunset's lingering blaze ;
 Yet still that little cloudlet lay
 In mellow beauty, softly gay.

A silence brooded far and nigh,
 A stillness burdened all the air,
 And the wide welkin stretched on high
 In dusky azure everywhere,—
 Save that one spot, where, earthward bowed,
 Stooped down the solitary cloud !

It looked so lovely as it lay
 Becalmed upon the waveless blue !
 Its border melting, faintly gray,
 Into the sky's diviner hue ;
 And yet, I know not how nor why,
 It brought the tear-drop to my eye !

And ever when I think upon
That cloud on the horizon's rim,
Brooding in beauty, rich and lone—
My heart is sad, my eyes grow dim!
And I could long to fly away
To where the little cloudlet lay!

'Tis ever thus! the spirit pants
For all things peaceful, fair, and sweet;
For joys that leave no aching wants;
For bliss that is not incomplete!
But all these yearnings vague and fond
Must anchor in the great Beyond!



OUR ANGEL-KINDRED.

FAR in the glories of a fadeless day,
Amid excess of beauty, and the swell
Of rich and everlasting melody,
Our angel-kindred dwell.

No care can reach them in their radiant home;
No night can trail its terror o'er their skies;
No sin can cast around its baleful gloom;
No tears can dim their eyes.

Immortal pleasures crowd the golden hours:
Undreamed-of beauty basks on every hand;
And odorous breathings from the lips of flowers
Fill all the peaceful land.

And bright forms mingling in the holy mirth,
Pure white-robed dwellers on the blissful shore,
Our kindred are,—the loved and lost of earth—
The happy 'gone before !'

Among them cherub shapes of childhood glide ;
Maidens are there with waving locks of gold ;
And manhood in its glory and its pride,
And age no longer old !

And he, the last that left us, whose young life—
By laughing, promise-laden breezes driven—
Disdained to meet the rude world's noisy strife
And sought the calm of Heaven.

I dream I see him in his radiant rest,
Among his angel-kindred up on high,
And honoured as befits the latest guest
They welcome to the sky.

Brethren on ministering missions move,
Or guide him where'er Heaven's rich marvels rise,
And sisters look unutterable love
Into his answering eyes.

Ah, blessed spirits in their balmy ease !
No cross of earth can ever chafe them now !
For them no more the trembling hands and knees,
Nor doubt-beclouded brow !

Ours is the darkness ; theirs the boundless day ;
They drink true life ; we draw the laboured breath ;
They have eternal sunshine on their way ;
We have the gloom of death.

Yet, nearing the cold river, I rejoice
That when I pass its darkness and its roar,
All these will welcome me with heart and voice
Upon the further shore.



‘THE NIGHT COMETH.’

(St. John ix. 4.)

THE daylight waning and the darkness near :
So little done, and still so much to do !
Before me the long night of cloud and fear,
Without one star to pierce its shadows through.

I hear the rumble of the swaggering wains ;
I hear the burden of the harvest song ;
And, through the hazy light in happy lanes,
I see the sun-browned reapers pass along.

And I must lay my sickle down and go
From the dim fields that look so drear and lone :
Alas ! that I have so few sheaves to show !
I shall not hear the Master say, ‘Well done !’

With what regret I look back to the past,
When the long shadows loomed so far away ;
And Morning seemed, on every wakening blast,
To waft the whispers of an endless day !

So many misspent moments, wasted hours,
Playing with pebbles on the sea-washed strand,—
Searching for butterflies, or gathering flowers,
Instead of toiling in the harvest land.

And now the Night stol'n on me like a thief,
 While yet I dreamt that it was scarcely noon,—
 Sad that the sunshine is so very brief !
 Sad that the shadows fall so very soon !

O for one other hour of God's bright day
 In which to work with sinew, heart, and will,
 Ere yet I leave the fields and pass away
 To that mysterious sleep where all is still !



THE GUIDING STAR.

SAILING o'er life's uncertain sea,
 By counter-currents driven and tossed ;
 No light to point where havens be ;
 My track amid the darkness lost :
 The toil-drops trembling on my brow ;
 The shadows thickening everywhere ;—
 Jesus of Nazareth, be Thou
 A star to guide the wanderer !

When tempests wrack my lonely bark,
 And timbers strain, and sails are rent,
 And billows howl, and heaven is dark,
 And cries are vain, and strength is spent :
 Death grappling at my plunging prow—
 Destruction moaning in the air ;—
 Jesus of Nazareth, be Thou
 A star to guide the wanderer !

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS
ON
POEMS BY THE LATE WILLIAM LEIGHTON.

'The author of these exquisite poems was born in Dundee in 1841, and died at the early age of twenty-eight. Viewed as written by one so young, they are wonderful productions. They evince throughout a poetic genius of a very high order, and all breathe a fine, gentle spirit, and a warm, tender, affectionate heart. They are full of thought and feeling, and are distinguished by felicity of imagery, great beauty of sentiment, and smoothness of versification. They abound with proofs of a passionate love of nature, and of a heart alive to sympathies and affections of friendship; and along with these there is a wholesome manliness of tone, a high view of life and duty, which imparts a healthful influence to the entire volume. We cordially commend the poems as productions of rare and varied merit, the effusions of a truly gifted and poetic mind.'—*Edinburgh Daily Review*, edited by Mr. Henry Kingsley.

'They breathe a very genuine poetic spirit. Mr. Leighton, like all true poets, threw his heart into his verses, and there is scarcely a line in all this volume but seems transcribed from that unseen and red-leaved tablet, on which had been first written by the pen of the Almighty Himself so much that was fair, and good, and true, and noble. His poetry is simply and solely the effusion of his own fine and true-hearted nature, as it comes in contact with the lovely objects of the universe, or as it is touched to fine issues by his own feelings and passions..... They breathe a pure, a meek, and a holy spirit, resembling that of a noble and gifted woman like Mrs. Hemans. They have all that tender melancholy, too, which

"Makes the beauty of a woman's brow
Diviner than an angel's in its love."

We venture to recommend this volume strongly.'—*Rev. George Gillan, in the Dundee Advertiser and People's Journal*.

'The late William Leighton came of a poetical family. We remember being struck some years ago with the remarkable powers of description shown in Mr. Robert Leighton's poems. The nephew possesses much the same power and facility. A love for Nature in her quietest moods and a vein of a delicate fancy distinguish the present poems. What Mr. William or Mr. Robert Leighton might have accomplished had their lives been spared, it is impossible to say. We can but lament the early deaths of two relatives who were certainly endowed with poetical gifts of no common order.'—*Westminster Review*.

'It abounds in passages of a rare beauty.....There is beauty, pathos, goodness of soul, and great tenderness of feeling engrained, as it were, in his productions, to an extent that young writers might envy, and the oldest and most judicious applaud. More than that, there is a vein of a true but gentle piety, so enviable among the young, which runs through them, too little imitated in the productions of the hour.Throughout the volume all is simply beautiful, serenely and tranquillisingly agreeable, full of holy breathings and a rational piety, with excellent and faithful delineations, not of natural objects alone, but of the inner mind.'—*New Monthly Magazine, edited by Mr. W. Harrison Ainsworth.*

'A strong religious feeling is ever present, and the noble and manly thoughts are expressed in language that has the ring of true poetry.'—*United Service Magazine.*

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'We have much pleasure in recommending these poems.'—*Church of England Magazine.*

'The tone of all the poems in the collection is thoughtful and earnest, and some of them breathe a spirit of deep and pure religious devotion.'—*Once a Week.*

'Softly sweet poesy from one who now sleeps with his fathers. We were in years gone by favoured with verses from the pen which now indites no more good matters. From the grave this gracious poet sings.'—*Sword and Trowel Magazine, edited by Rev. C. H. Spurgeon.*

'A bright and particular star in the realms of poesy was lost to us in the early death of Mr. Leighton, whose charming poems exhibit unusual genius, sweetness, and vigour. There is the ring of the genuine poet, as well as the philosopher, in every poem. Some of the love-songs have in their utterances a passionate tenderness—a purity of expression which exalts and refines, but never in the slightest degree sullies. They seem the yearning of a soul after all that is pure and good, yet are irresistible in their appeals to the heart. It is matter of deep regret that such genius should be so early lost; yet if the influence of Mr. Leighton's noble and tender and Christian thoughts be but impressed on young minds, he will not have lived in vain, though his life was short.'—*Treasury of Literature.*

'The poems he has left us are full of thought and feeling, and are distinguished by frequent felicity of imagery and general smoothness of versification. Some of his poems are sweet and tender enough to be independent of other qualities. But the author seems never to have written merely for the sake of saying pretty things. There is purpose in his most trifling performances.....The author of this volume

would, upon its evidence alone, be pronounced a pure lover of Nature, with an insight into her mysteries which is given only to true poets—for a true poet he plainly was. Had he lived he must have won a high place in our literature: as it is, he has enriched English poetry with many admirable pieces, which will live and set readers thinking for many a long day to come.'—*The Graphic*.

'The outcome of a generous, meditative mind.....Good taste, sensitive feeling, and easy versification are their chief characteristics.'—*Athenæum*.

'Very beautiful verse, both pictorial and didactic.'—*Court Circular*.

'All of them are good, and many are exquisitely beautiful.'—*Literary World*.

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'The same qualities of tenderness, and grace, and melodious versification are to be observed throughout.'—*Spectator*.

'The thought is generally of a high order, and there are many passages of exquisite tenderness and beauty. His strain is chiefly lyrical, and in that line he excels. ("Baby died to-day" here quoted.) Many pieces as natural and tender will be found in the volume, which we heartily commend to all who are won by poetry which unveils the personal thoughts and feelings of the writer.'—*Freeman*.

'Displays both refined feeling and culture.'—*Weekly Dispatch*.

'All, but the latter poems more especially, make us regret the early death of one who, had he lived but a few more years, must have held a distinguished position amongst our poets in the Temple of Fame. William Leighton was evidently a true lover of Nature—as, indeed, all true poets must be—and there is a seriousness about the poems which shows that his mind instinctively raised its aspirations from Nature to Nature's God. There is scarcely a poem in the volume which does not give evidences of sincere thought and deep feeling, whilst there is a sweet and tender pathos in the majority which must command the attention of the reader.'—*Era*.

'William Leighton's music is of a nature that must have endeared him to all who came within the spell of his personal influence. The aspirations are noble; the sentiments are chivalrous; the fervour is manly.'—*Lloyd's Weekly London Newspaper, edited by Blanchard Jerrold*.

'Have the right ring about them. They are thoughtful and sympathetic; and here and there among them there are passages of much beauty.'—*Fun, edited by Tom Hood*.

'A legacy of poetry instinct with tenderness and sweetness, and lovely with the perfect loveliness of truth and purity. The true poet's

gift must have been possessed by one who, even in the press and turmoil of sordid business, could sing that—

“ in all humble works
There dwells divinity beyond our dreaming ;
And that an everlasting beauty lurks
In deeds of lowliest seeming.”

Of such thoughts, as true, and brave, and tender, there is a prodigal abundance in this collection of pieces. There is not one that does not enshrine a crowd of graceful fancies, charming word-pictures, and phrases that touch the soul with the spell of perfect expression. In form they are always correct, without producing any feeling of laboured polish ; all is as spontaneous and as full of melody as the untutored songs of birds. A strong love of sweetness and purity, a deep conviction of the truth of beauty and the beauty of truth, runs through all. And, besides this, there is wholesome manliness in his tone of thought—an elevation in his views of life and duty, which is as refreshing as a breath of pure air. The only cause for regret is that we can receive no more from the same pen. We must send our readers to the book itself. We can promise them a pleasure and a surprise—pleasure, in the tender sweetness and simple beauty of the poems it contains ; and surprise, that such poetry should have been written by a young man whose occupations were so antagonistic to the cultivation of the imagination.’—*Liverpool Porcupine.*

‘ The poems are marked by an absence of pretence and by a tone of dignified humility.....The author was evidently a man of deep sympathetic feeling, and of no ordinary culture.’—*Manchester Examiner and Times.*

‘ Breathe a genuine poetic spirit, and seem the effusion of a noble, true-hearted, and, withal, pious nature.’—*Cardiff Times.*

‘ Many of the pieces in the book show clearly that he was not one of those who merely

“ Make a trembling 'mong the chords,
But cannot catch the soul of song.”

There is much to admire all through ; all of the poems are more or less tinged with earnest feeling, and convey their meaning in language of true and exquisite tenderness.’—*Glasgow Herald.*

‘ He was a member of a gifted family, Mr. Robert Leighton, a poet of a high order of genius, who, before his death, which occurred last year, had attained a wide-spread reputation as an original and gorgeous word-painter, being his uncle.....The poetic remains of William Leighton were written in the intervals of business. Yet one of the characteristics of his writings is their high artistic finish, suggestive of scholarly retirement rather than the harassing cares of commercial and city life. Gifted with a true poetic instinct, which sympathised with Nature in all her moods, his writings abound in bright pictures of some of Nature's aspects, which must appeal to the most prosaic souls.....The book, taken as a whole, well deserves perusal. It is, in fact, one of those pure wayside wells whose deep clear waters and green flower-gemmed margin refresh the traveller in the dull and parched highways of life.’—*Dundee Courier and Argus.*