

Classic Poetry Series

Caroline Hayward

- poems -

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Inkerman. The Battle Field by Moonlight.

Above the vale of Inkerman,
Calmly the moon's rays fell,
Revealing as by light of day,
That deep and lonely dell;
Tchernaya's waters as a band
Of silver graceful flowed,
But who can paint the ghastly scene,
Which those bright rays disclosed!
Thickly as leaves around the path
Through copse and brush-wood dense,
Lay piles of dead and wounded men,
Slain in that fierce defense.
The fearful moan, the struggles fierce,
The hoarse and gurgling cry
Comes on the night wind sweeping past,
Of mortal agony!

Around were groups of comrades true,
To succour those who still
From bloody contest breathing lay,
Upon that fatal hill.
Their slippery fearful way they take
Through paths beslimed with gore,
Ne'er on those Crimean hills had moon
Such sight revealed before.

But who are these with noiseless tread,
Who hurry fearful by,
Now fling them down beside the dead,
With soul-despairing cry,
As trembling, with wild eager gaze,
They search with sickening dread,
And the moon's rays too sure reveal,
Their husband with the dead!

Yet one redeeming feature still
Those moonbeams yet displayed,
Of men who with their British hearts
Their enemies forgave.
And tended gently, lovingly,
Their cruel bitter foe,
Who never yet had quarter given
To our brave men laid low.

For even then, above their heads,
Came murd'rous bullets sent
Among our brave and gallant men,
On mercy's errand bent;
And some there were who fiendish slew,
With their last parting breath,
The very hand which tended them,
Upon that field of death.

Caroline Hayward

The Christmas Homes of England

The Christmas homes of England!
How far-famed and how dear;
In bright array they ever stand,
That glad day of the year;
When gathered round the hearth-stone,
The loved ones joyful meet,
With one accord from far and near,
The circle glad to greet.
The Christmas homes of England!
O, many a joyous brow,
Which ever yet hath hailed that day,
Will sorrowfully bow,
When this one now returneth;
For they look, but look in vain,
The pride and joy of that glad home,
They ne'er shall see again!

The Christmas homes of England!
In manhood's noblest bloom,
On Alma's bloody fields thy lords
Have found their lowly tomb;
The warrior grey, whose stalwart arm
Had prostrate laid the foe;
And gallant sons of noble sires,
By them in death lie low!

The Christmas homes of England!
Alike in peasant's cot,
Where hath the death-wail not been heard,
Where hath it entered not?
And the widowed mother silent weeps,
And sheds the bitter tear,
As fancy sees her gallant boy,
The cold ground for his bier!

The Christmas homes of England!
In that far-off Eastern land,
What thoughts will be awakened
Among that gallant band?
How from scenes so dark and fearful,
Their spirit will take flight
To the bright home of their childhood,
And the happy Christmas night!

The Christmas homes of England!
The love of many years
Is turned into a ceaseless fount
Of bitterness and tears;
The mother and the widow,
The maiden and the child,
They call; but none shall answer,
Those loving accents mild!

O, Christmas homes of England!
There's One, the widow's God!
Who, while He chastens, pitieth
The sad ones 'neath His rod;
His arm beneath supported
Thy loved ones in the field,
And whispered, "Leave thy little ones
To me, their God, their shield!

O, Christmas homes of England!
Let all unite in prayer,
That He, the widow's God, may take
Such to His special care;
And we to whom he spareth
Our hearts best treasure yet;
The widow and the orphan,
O let us not forget!

Caroline Hayward

The Dream

I stood in a princely hall, and where
Round me gather'd the brave and fair,
Music in softest strains flew by,
Flashing like gems was each radiant eye;
Joining the fair in the festal dance,
Now the proud warrior lays down his lance,
And the hand which but lately the sword had grasp'd
In love's fond pressure was gently clasp'd.
But who of such lofty stature there,
Comes to unite in the revels fair,
Beauty and grace, in his movements are,
Born but to rule, 'tis the Czar, the Czar!
See the blush deepen on beauty's cheek,
As that eagle eye to the heart doth speak,
For the softest glance, yet how fierce in war,
Is the eye of the proud Imperial Czar!

The dance has ceased, and he stands alone,
Far from the scene has his spirit flown,
That spirit proud which no more can see,
Aught of the dance or minstrelsy;
For o'er barren steppes it has wander'd far,
Where the trumpet's blast tells of fiery war,
And his strongest city beleaguered lies
By the army brave of the bold Allies!

Crushing the thoughts which his bosom swell,
He leaves the scene, as the vesper bell,
Of the dim cathedral calls to prayer;
The scene is changed, we behold him there;
Soft falls the light on the chequer'd floor,
And the form of Him who our deep sins bore,
Is raised on high, whilst around are seen,
Relics of those who have sainted been.

Still dreamed I on, as sweet chaunting stole
With soothing accents upon the soul,
And quivering banners above were hung,
While incense sweet thro' the air was flung;
Now rose with triumphant swell the strain,
Then with plaintive sweetness it died again;
And the long aisles echoed its dying tone,
Till it ceased in a low and farewell moan.

Hush'd is the strain, but its tones seemed fraught
With pain and dread to the conqueror's thought,
And there swept o'er his brow a deeper gloom,
As if it betokened mysterious doom;
For the workings fierce in that mighty breast,
Of remorse and passion forbade him rest;
And near to the altar's step he came,
To seek for peace from that passion's flame.

The Priest advanced, and that proud form shook,
As the sacred bread in his hand he took;
He bowed his head to the marble floor,
But cold big drops on his brow he bore,
For a shadowy hand on the wall pass'd by,
And he knew 'twas an omen which call'd to die;
Then a voice which but he alone could hear,
The summons gave that he soon appear--

Before the throne of the King of Kings;
Still on his ear that dread voice rings,
The Priest beholds him with awe, who dare,
Encounter the ray of that eye's fierce glare?
He turned that eye on the casement dim,
And shadowy forms rose up to him,
Bleeding and dying, who still enfold,
Their banners around them in death's last hold.

He gazes still, and a weeping throng,
Widows and orphans come sweeping on,
And he hears their low and bewailing cry,
For their bosoms lords who have gone to die.
And beyond in the barren steppes below,
Lie Russia's serfs in the drifted snow,
While a glorious form is hovering nigh,
The avenging angel with sword on high!

He sees it all -- and a secret pang,
Through that all unconquered spirit rang,
And I turned to look on the conqueror dread,
I woke, 'twas a dream, and the vision fled.

Caroline Hayward