

Classic Poetry Series

David MacDonald Ross

- poems -

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David MacDonald Ross (1865)

David MacDonald Ross was an Australian poet of the 19th century.

Autumn

When, with low moanings on the distant shore,
Like vain regrets, the ocean-tide is rolled:
When, thro' bare boughs, the tale of death is told
By breezes sighing, "Summer days are o'er";
When all the days we loved -- the days of yore --
Lie in their vaults, dead Kings who ruled of old --
Unrobed and sceptreless, uncrowned with gold,
Conquered, and to be crowned, ah! never more.

If o'er the bare fields, cold and whitening
With the first snow-flakes, I should see thy form,
And meet and kiss thee, that were enough of Spring;
Enough of sunshine, could I feel the warm
Glad beating of thy heart 'neath Winter's wing,
Tho' Earth were full of whirlwind and of storm.

David MacDonald Ross

Love's Treasure House

I went to Love's old treasure house last night,
Alone, when all the world was still -- asleep,
And saw the miser Memory, grown gray
With years of jealous counting of his gems,
There seated. Keen was his eye, his hand
Firm as when first his hoarding he began
Of precious things of Love, long years ago.
"And this," he said, "is gold from out her hair,
And this the moonlight that she wandered in,
With here a rose, enamelled by her breath,
That bloomed in glory 'tween her breasts, and here
The brimming sun-cup that she quaffed at noon,
And here the star that cheered her in the night;
In this great chest, see curiously wrought,
Are purest of Love's gems." A ruby key,
Enclasped upon a golden ring, he took,
With care, from out some secret hiding-place,
And delicately touched the lock, whereat
I staggered, blinded by the light of things
More luminous than stars, and questioned thus --
"What are these treasures, miser Memory?"
And slowly bending his gray head, he spoke:
"These are the multitudes of kisses sweet
Love gave so gladly, and I treasure here."

David MacDonald Ross

The Dreamer

WHO seeks the shore where dreams outpour
Their floods in Slumber Seas
Lives all night long within a song
Of murmuring mysteries.

Where stars are lit above the pit
That holds the hollow dark,
Into their dawn he shall sail on
In an enchanted barque.

He shall not fear tho' in his ear
The thrusting cranks of Time,
Thro' blaze and gloom, with crash and boom,
Ring in tremendous rhyme,

Beyond the cloud that doth enshroud
Saturn with beauteous bands,
Where at the knees of Hyades
Creation claps her hands.

He shall bow low to God and know
Keen sorrow and delight,
The day's full pride and eventide,
The inmost thoughts of night.

Into their calm white waves of balm
His soul shall plunge and swim,
Past silver-globed full moons unrobed
That float round Heaven's rim.

He shall bow low to God and know
God, and be known of Him;
He shall surprise within the skies
The watching Seraphim.

He shall be known about the Throne
When names are named above,
As one redeemed through dreams he dreamed—
As one Beloved of Love.

David MacDonald Ross

The Sea to the Shell

The sea, my mother, is singing to me,
She is singing the old refrain,
Of passion, of love, and of mystery,
And her world-old song of pain;
Of the mirk midnight and the dazzling day,
That trail their robes o'er the wet sea-way.

The sea, my mother, is singing to me
With the white foam caught in her hair,
With the seaweed swinging its long arms free,
To grapple the blown sea air:
The sea, my mother, with billowy swell,
Is telling her tale to the wave-washed shell.

The sea, my mother, is singing to me,
With the starry gleam in her wave,
A dirge of the dead, of the sad, sad sea,
A requiem song of the brave;
Tenderly, sadly, the surges tell
Their tale of death to the wave-washed shell.

The sea, my mother, confides to me,
As she turns to the soft, round moon,
The secrets that lie where the spirits be,
That hide from the garish noon:
The sea, my mother, who loves me well,
Is telling their woe to the wave-washed shell.

O mother o' mine, with the foam-flecked hair,
O mother, I love and know
The heart that is sad and the soul that is bare
To your daughter of ebb and flow;
And I hold your whispers of Heaven and Hell
In the loving heart of a wave-washed shell.

David MacDonald Ross

The Silent Tide

I heard Old Ocean raise her voice and cry,
 In that still hour between the night and day;
 I saw the answering tides, green robed and gray,
Turn to her with a low contented sigh;
Marching with silent feet they passed me by,
 For the white moon had taught them to obey,
 And scarce a wavelet broke in fretful spray,
As they went forth to kiss the stooping sky.

So, to my heart, when the last sunray sleeps,
 And the wan night, impatient for the moon,
Throws her gray mantle over land and sea,
There comes a call from out Life's nether deeps,
 And tides, like some old ocean in a swoon,
Flow out, in soundless majesty, to thee.

David MacDonald Ross

The Watch on Deck

Becalmed upon the equatorial seas,
A ship of gold lay on a sea of fire;
Each sail and rope and spar, as in desire,
Mutely besought the kisses of a breeze;
Low laughter told the mariners at ease;
Sweet sea-songs hymned the red sun's fun'ral pyre:
Yet One, with eyes that never seemed to tire,
Watched for the storm, nursed on the thunder's knees.

Thou watcher of the spirit's inner keep,
Scanning Death's lone, illimitable deep,
Spread outward to the far immortal shore!
While the vault sleeps, from the upheaving deck,
Thou see'st the adamantine reefs that wreck,
And Life's low shoals, where lusting billows roar.

David MacDonald Ross