Classic Poetry Series

Richard Rowe

- poems -

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Soul Ferry

High and dry upon the shingle lies the fisher's boat to-night;
From his roof-beam dankly drooping, raying phosphorescent light,
Spectral in its pale-blue splendour, hangs his heap of scaly nets,
And the fisher, lapt in slumber, surge and seine alike forgets.

Hark! there comes a sudden knocking, and the fisher starts from sleep,
As a hollow voice and ghostly bids him once more seek the deep;
Wearily across his shoulder flingeth he the ashen oar,
And upon the beach descending finds a skiff beside the shore.

'Tis not his, but he must enter -- rocking on the waters dim,
Awful in their hidden presence, who are they that wait for him?
Who are they that sit so silent, as he pulleth from the land --
Nothing heard save rumbling rowlock, wave soft-breaking on the sand?

Chill adown the tossing channel blows the wailing, wand'ring breeze,
Lonely in the murky midnight, mutt'ring mournful memories, --
Summer lands where once it brooded, wrecks that widows' hearts have wrung --
Swift the dreary boat flies onwards, spray, like rain, around it flung.

On a pebbled strand it grateth, ghastly cliffs around it loom,
Thin and melancholy voices faintly murmur through the gloom;
Voices only, lipless voices, and the fisherman turns pale,
As the mother greets her children, sisters landing brothers hail.

Lightened of its unseen burden, cork-like rides the rocking bark,
Fast the fisherman flies homewards o'er the billows deep and dark;
THAT boat needs no mortal's mooring -- sad at heart he seeks his bed,
For his life henceforth is clouded -- he hath piloted the Dead!

Richard Rowe

Superstites Rosae

The grass is green upon her grave,
   The west wind whispers low;
"The corn is changed, come forth, come forth,
   Ere all the blossoms go!"

In vain. Her laughing eyes are sealed,
   And cold her sunny brow;
Last year she smiled upon the flowers --
   They smile above her now!

Richard Rowe

The Angel of Life

LIFE’S Angel watched a happy child at play,
Wreathing the riches of the blushing May:
His eye was cloudless as the heavens above,
But there was pity in her look of love.

The flowers he gathered bloomed their brief bright hour,
Then rained their petals in a silent shower:
The boy looked up at her with strange surprise,
And sadder grew the pity in her eyes.

Richard Rowe