Classic Poetry Series

William Charles Wentworth

- poems -

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A Coast View

High 'mid the shelves of a grey cliff, that yet
Riseth in Babylonian mass above,
In a benched cleft, as in the mouldered chair
Of grey-beard Time himself, I sit alone,
And gaze with a keen wondering happiness
Out o'er the sea. Unto the circling bend
That verges Heaven, a vast luminous plain
It stretches, changeful as a lover's dream --
Into great spaces mapped by light and shade
In constant interchange -- either 'neath clouds
The billows darken, or they shimmer bright
In sunny scopes of measureless expanse.
'Tis Ocean dreamless of a stormy hour,
Calm, or but gently heaving; -- yet, O God!
What a blind fate-like mightiness lies coiled
In slumber, under that wide-shining face!
While o'er the watery gleam -- there where its edge
Banks the dim vacancy, the topmost sails
Of some tall ship, whose hull is yet unseen,
Hang as if clinging to a cloud that still
Comes rising with them from the void beyond,
Like to a heavenly net, drawn from the deep
And carried upward by ethereal hands.

William Charles Wentworth

Australasia

Celestial poesy! whose genial sway
Earth's furthest habitable shores obey;
Whose inspirations shed their sacred light,
Far as the regions of the Arctic night,
And to the Laplander his Boreal gleam
Endear not less than Phoebus' brighter beam, --
Descend thou also on my native land,
And on some mountain-summit take thy stand;
Thence issuing soon a purer font be seen
Than charmed Castalia or famed Hippocrene;
And there a richer, nobler fane arise,
Than on Parnassus met the adoring eyes.
And tho', bright goddess, on the far blue hills,
That pour their thousand swift pellucid rills
Where Warragamba's rage has rent in twain
Opposing mountains, thundering to the plain,
No child of song has yet invoked thy aid
'Neath their primeval solitary shade, --
Still, gracious Pow'r, some kindling soul inspire,
To wake to life my country's unknown lyre,
That from creation's date has slumbering lain,
Or only breathed some savage uncouth strain;
And grant that yet an Austral Milton's song
Pactolus-like flow deep and rich along, --
An Austral Shakespeare rise, whose living page
To nature true may charm in ev'ry age; --
And that an Austral Pindar daring soar,
Where not the Theban eagle reach'd before.
And, O Britannia! shouldst thou cease to ride
Despotic Empress of old Ocean's tide; --
Should thy tamed Lion -- spent his former might, --
No longer roar the terror of the fight; --
Should e'er arrive that dark disastrous hour,
When bow'd by luxury, thou yield'st to pow'r; --
When thou, no longer freest of the free,
To some proud victor bend'st the vanquish'd knee; --
May all thy glories in another sphere
Relume, and shine more brightly still than here;
May this, thy last-born infant, then arise,
To glad thy heart and greet thy parent eyes;
And Australasia float, with flag unfurl'd,
A new Britannia in another world.

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Love

She loves me! From her own bliss-breathing lips
   The live confession came, like rich perfume
   From crimson petals bursting into bloom!
And still my heart at the remembrance skips
Like a young lion, and my tongue, too, trips
   As drunk with joy! while every object seen
   In life's diurnal round wears in its mien
A clear assurance that no doubts eclipse.
And if the common things of nature now
   Are like old faces flushed with new delight,
Much more the consciousness of that rich vow
   Deepens the beauteous, and refines the bright,
   While throned I seem on love's divinest height
'Mid all the glories glowing round its brow.

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Words

Words are deeds. The words we hear
May revolutionize or rear
A mighty state. The words we read
May be a spiritual deed
Excelling any fleshly one,
As much as the celestial sun
Transcends a bonfire, made to throw
A light upon some raree-show.
A simple proverb tagged with rhyme
May colour half the course of time;
The pregnant saying of a sage
May influence every coming age;
A song in its effects may be
More glorious than Thermopylae,
And many a lay that schoolboys scan
A nobler feat than Inkerman.

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