**Classic Poetry Series**

# William Percy French

## - poems -

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**Abdul Abulbul Amir**

The sons of the Prophet are brave men and bold
And quite unaccustomed to fear,
But the bravest by far in the ranks of the Shah,
Was Abdul Abulbul Amir.

If you wanted a man to encourage the van,
Or harass the foe from the rear,
Storm fort or redoubt, you had only to shout
For Abdul Abulbul Amir.

Now the heroes were plenty and well known to fame
In the troops that were led by the Czar,
And the bravest of these was a man by the name
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

One day this bold Russian, he shouldered his gun
And donned his most truculent sneer,
Downtown he did go where he trod on the toe
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

Young man, quoth Abdul, has life grown so dull
That you wish to end your career?
Vile infidel, know, you have trod on the toe
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

So take your last look at the sunshine and brook
And send your regrets to the Czar
For by this I imply, you are going to die,
Count Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

Then this bold Mameluke drew his trusty skibouk,
Singing, "Allah! Il Allah! Al-lah!"
And with murderous intent he ferociously went
For Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

They parried and thrust, they side-stepped and cussed,
Of blood they spilled a great part;
The philologist blokes, who seldom crack jokes,
Say that hash was first made on the spot.

They fought all that night neath the pale yellow moon;
The din, it was heard from afar,
And huge multitudes came, so great was the fame,
Of Abdul and Ivan Skavar.

As Abdul's long knife was extracting the life,
In fact he was shouting, "Huzzah!"
He felt himself struck by that wily Calmuck,
Count Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

The Sultan drove by in his red-breasted fly,
Expecting the victor to cheer,

But he only drew nigh to hear the last sigh,
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir.

There's a tomb rises up where the Blue Danube rolls,
And graved there in characters clear,
Is, "Stranger, when passing, oh pray for the soul
Of Abdul Abulbul Amir."

A splash in the Black Sea one dark moonless night
Caused ripples to spread wide and far,
It was made by a sack fitting close to the back,
Of Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

A Muscovite maiden her lone vigil keeps,
'Neath the light of the cold northern star,
And the name that she murmurs in vain as she weeps,
Is Ivan Skavinsky Skavar.

William Percy French

**Andy McElroe**

My brother Andy said, that for a soldier he would go,
So great excitement came upon the house of McElroe.
My father sold a bog-hole to equip him for the war.
And my mother sold the cushions of her Sunday jaunting car.
And when brave Andy reach'd the front, 'twas furious
work he made,
They appointed him a private in the Crocodile Brigade.
The sound of Andy's battle cry struck terror thro' the foe.
His foot was on the desert and his name was McElroe.
At least that's what the letter said that came across the foam.
To Andy's anxious relatives awaiting him at home.
The papers say he ran away before he met the foe.
But that was quite unlike the style of Andy McElroe.

One morning brave Lord Wolseley for a battle felt inclined;
But all could see the general had something on his mind;
Sez he, 'My staff, 'twere dangerous to face yon deadly foe,
Unless we're sure that quite prepared is Andy McElroe.'
Then Andy cried, 'I'm here, my lord, and ready for the fray,'
'Advance then,' cried Lord Wolseley, 'and let every trumpet bray.'
Then England, Ireland, Scotland, rolled together on the foe,
But far ahead of everyone rushed Andy McElroe.
At least, that's what the letter said that came across the foam
To Andy's anxious relatives, awaiting him at home.
The government despatches had another tale- but no!
We won't believe a word against brave Andy McElroe.

The Mahdi had gone up a tree, a spyglass in his eye,
To see his Paynim chivalry the northern prowess try;
But soon he saw a form of dread, and cried in tones of woe,
'Be jabers let me out of this - there's Andy McElroe.'
Then down he hurried from his tree, and straight away he ran,
To keep appointments, as he said, in distant Kordofan,
And fled those Arab soldiery like sand siroccos blow,
Pursued (with much profanity) by Andy McElroe.
At least, that's what he told us when returning o'er the foam
To greet his anxious relatives, awaiting him at home.
So sing the song of triumph, and let all your bumpers flow,
In honour of our countryman, brave Andrew McElroe.

William Percy French

**Are Ye Right, There, Michael?**

You may talk of Columbus's sailing
Across the Atlantical Sea
But he never tried to go railing
From Ennis as far as Kilkee
You run for the train in the morning,
The excursion train starting at eight
You're there when the clock gives the warnin'
And there for an hour you'll wait
And as you're waiting in the train,
You'll hear the guard sing this refrain-

Are ye right there, Michael, are ye right?
Do you think that we'll be there before the night?
Ye've been so long in startin',
That ye couldn't say for startin'
Still ye might now, Michael,
So ye might!

They find out where the engine's been hiding,
And it drags you to Sweet Corofin;
Says the guard, Back her down on the siding
There's the goods from Kilrush comin' in.
Perhaps it comes in two hours,
Perhaps it breaks down on the way;
If it does, says the guard, be the powers,
We're here for the rest of the day!

Spoken:
And while you sit and curse your luck
The train backs down into a truck.

Are ye right there, Michael, are ye right?
Have ye got the parcel there for Mrs. White?
Ye haven't, oh begorra,
Say it's comin' down tomorra -
And well it might now, Michael,
So it might.

At Lahinch the sea shines like a jewel,
With joy you are ready to shout,
When the stoker cries out, There's no fuel,
And the fire's taytotally out.
But hand up that bit of log there -
I'll soon have ye out of the fix;
There's fine clamp of turf in the bog there.
And the rest go a-gatherin' sticks.

Spoken:
And while you're breakin' bits of tree,
You hear some wise remarks like these -

Are ye right there, Michael? Are ye right?

Do ye think that you can get the fire to light?
Oh an hour you'll require,
For the turf it might be drier -
Well it might now, Michael,
So it might.

William Percy French

## Celestial Painting (Sunset at Renvyle)

When painters leave this world, we grieve
For the hand that will work no more,
But who can say that they rest alway
On that still celestial shore?
No! No! they choose from the rainbow hues,
And winging from Paradise,
They come to paint, now bold now faint,
The tones of our sunset skies.
When I see them there I can almost swear
That grey is from Whistler's brain!
That crimson flush was Turner's brush!
And the gold is Claude Lorraine.

William Percy French

**Gortnamona**

Long, long ago in the woods of Gortnamona,
I thought the birds were singing in the blackthorn tree;
But oh, it was my heart that was ringing, ringing, ringing,
With the joy that you were bringing, oh my love, to me

Long, long ago in the woods of Gortnamona,
I thought the wind was sighing round the blackthorn tree;
But oh, it was the banshee that was crying, crying, crying,
And I knew my love was dying far across the sea.

Now if you go through the woods of Gortnamona,
You hear the raindrops creeping through the blackthorn tree;
But oh, it is the tears I am weeping, weeping, weeping,
For the loved one that is sleeping far away from me.

William Percy French

**If I should die tonight**

"If I should die tonight
And you should come,
And stand beside me,
Lying cold and dumb,
And if while standing there,
You whispered low,
'Here's the ten pounds
You lent me years ago,'
I would arise, although they'd laid me flat,
And say, 'What's that?'

If I should die tonight
But rose to count
With trembling fingers,
That long lost amount
I might live on;
But when
You said' Here's your umbrella
And your fountain pen,'
For one short space
I'd gaze into thy face
And then
Drop dead again."

William Percy French

**Remember me**

Remember me is all I ask,
And yet
If the remembrance prove a task,
Forget.

William Percy French

**The Mountains of Mourne**

Oh Mary this London's a wonderful sight
With people here workin' by day and by night
They don't sow potatoes, nor barley, nor wheat
But there's gangs of them diggin' for gold in the street
At least when I asked them that's what I was told
So I just took a hand at this diggin' for gold
But for all that I found there I might as well be
Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea.

I believe that when writin' a wish you expressed
As to how the fine ladies in London were dressed
Well if you'll believe me, when asked to a ball
They don't wear no top to their dresses at all
Oh I've seen them meself and you could not in truth
Say that if they were bound for a ball or a bath
Don't be startin' them fashions, now Mary McCree
Where the Mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea.

There's beautiful girls here, oh never you mind
With beautiful shapes nature never designed
And lovely complexions all roses and cream
But let me remark with regard to the same
That if that those roses you venture to sip
The colors might all come away on your lip
So I'll wait for the wild rose that's waitin' for me
In the place where the dark Mourne sweeps down to the sea.

William Percy French

**To the West**

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William Percy French