

Classic Poetry Series

Richard Rowe
- poems -

Publication Date:
2004

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Richard Rowe()

Richard Rowe (9 March 1828 – 9 December 1879) was an English author, also active in Australia.

Rowe was born at Spring Gardens, Doncaster, South Yorkshire, England, the son of Thomas Rowe, a Wesleyan minister. Thomas Rowe died while Richard was still very young; the remaining family moved to Colchester, where Richard was educated at Mr Bradnack's school.

Rowe came to Australia in 1853; by 1857 he was working on the *Month* and *The Sydney Morning Herald* sometimes using the pseudonym 'A Sassenach Settler'. In 1858 his *Peter 'Possum's Portfolio* was published at Sydney, a volume of prose and verse dedicated to his benefactor Nicol Stenhouse. The prose included a short novel, *Arthur Owen--An Autobiography*, and most of the verse consisted of translations.

Rowe belonged to a circle of writers which included Frank Fowler, William Wilkes and Sheridan Moore.

Rowe returned to England, wrote for the newspapers and magazines, and was also the author of several books for young people, some of which did not appear until after his death on 9 December 1879 in Middlesex Hospital. Amongst his better works were *Episodes in an Obscure Life* (1871) and *Friends and Acquaintances* (1871). Rowe married in 1860 Mary Ann Yates, daughter of Jonathan Patten, who survived him with a son and three daughters.

Rowe was in Australia for relatively short period, but two of his lyrics have been included in more than one anthology of Australian verse, and *Peter 'Possum's Portfolio* is one of the earliest books of serious literature published in Australia. E. Morris Miller lists 18 of Rowe's books in his *Australian Literature from its Beginnings*, at least three of which have an Australian setting.

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