

Classic Poetry Series

Mary Hannay Foott
- poems -

Publication Date:

2004

Publisher:

Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Mary Hannay Foott(1846 - 1918)

Mary was born in Glasgow on 26th September, 1846. she was the daughter of James Black a leader in the Prebyterian Church. Her Mother descended from the literary family of Hannay. Mary arrived in Australia, 1853 and was educated in Melbourne. She married Thomas Wade Foott in 1874, moving to live at Dundoo, Queensland.

After the death of her husband in 1884, she was to become the Literary Editor of 'The Queenslander' for ten years.

She lived and taught at school in Rocklea, a Brisbane suburb in South East Queensland.

'Where the Pelican Builds, and other Poems' (Brisbane, 1885).

'Morna Lee, and other Poems' (London, 1890).

Photograph is of a Fishing party at a Corinda house on Oxley Creek Brisbane in 1897. This large block of land, owned by her father was later donated to the Presbyterian Church where a Nursing Home had been in practice for 75 Years.

At The Fords Of Jordan

A little way farther to guide thee I go
Where the footing is firm and the waters are low;
Then we part, O my King, thou once more to thy throne,
I to dwell, in the house of my fathers, alone.

Yet think not, O David, one pang of regret
Would tempt the recall of the youth I have set
In thy presence; the strong-armed, the true-hearted one,
Last gift of my loyalty, even my son.

Ere my hand to the husbandman's toil had been trained,
Or my foot to the slow-moving flocks had been chained,
I, too, would have marched in the long line of spears,
With the youthful, the courtly, the brave for my peers.

The days when I dreamt but of battle! The lamp
Which all night I kept burning, that if from the camp
One straggler should come, I might, hang up his sword
And hearken how prospered the cause of the Lord!

How my heart used to beat; how my veins used to thrill
From freezing to fever, from fever to chill,
When the voice of the Philistine rang through our coasts,
Defying, unanswered, the Lord God of Hosts.

How I prayed day and night, ay, with many a tear,
"Lord, shorten the time till Thy champion appear!"
And if fearing or hoping myself to change blows
With the giant, God bidden, I know; and God knows!

Ah, it was not for gain, and it was not for fear,
That I wore not the warrior's glittering gear:
My father, my mother! the heart-strife was done!
For Saul had his thousands and they had but one.

I am old, but King David, I cannot forget
My hot-hearted youth; so my boy shall not fret
'Mid the safety and sameness of flocks and of fields
While the soldiers of Israel burnish their shields.

The Lord be thy keeper, henceforth and for aye,
My son whom I love! And when I am away
Be thy spirit as now, pure and lofty, and bold,
Thy strength still unwasted; thy heart never cold.

When thy soul with the minions of darkness must fight,
The Great King lend thee weapons and armour of light.
No hindrance are they, like the harness of Saul
To the boy from the folds. May'st thou bear them through all!

All blessings be thine which the promise foretells!
And, oh, when the heart of thy eldest born swells
At thy stories of many a soldierly deed,
Tell how one, not a soldier, served Israel in need.

The men are fast forming again into rank;
The river is forded; we part on the bank.
Haste where welcome awaiteth thee, David, this day,
For the joy of the people ill beareth delay!

The Lord give thy children the love-guarded crown,
When the King and his servant in dust have lain down!
Till the hope of the nations thy lineage shall close,
God's arrows be sharp in the hearts of thy foes!

Mary Hannay Foott

Ave Caesar! Morituri Te Salutant

The coup d'etat is blotted out
With fresher blood, with blacker crime,
As midnight horrors put to rout
The vaguer ghosts of twilight-time.

"Greeting from those who are to die!
Hail Caesar!" Draw the curtains round.
In vain! That mournful mocking cry
Pierces the purple with its sound.

And they who raise it enter too,
With spectral looks and noiseless tread,
Unbidden, hold their dread review,
Beside the Emperor's very bed.

They sought in his deserted tent;
They found him in the German camp.
They tarry till the oil be spent
That feeds his life's poor flickering lamp.

The hope of France, the "gilded youth,"
So answering the trumpet's peal
As if revealing how, in sooth,
The gilding oft o'erlies the steel.

Soldiers Algeria's sun has spared;
Heroes from Russia's fire and frost;
Grey veterans, scarred and scanty-haired,
Who wept at word of eagles lost.

Workmen, who leave the rattling looms
To ply, perforce, a deadlier trade;
Students, who quit their cloudy rooms
To step within a heavier shade.

Slow-breaking hearts that suffer long,
Blinded and chilled 'neath love's eclipse;
Singing no more the happy song
By horror frozen on their lips.

From castled cities battle-proof,
They press to the accusing ranks,
From cottage walls, from canvas roof,
Ere passing to the Stygian banks.

The thousands famine yet shall waste,
The holocaust disease will claim,
As to God's Judgment-Bar they haste,
They gaze on him who is to blame.

"Hail Caesar!" While Napoleon's star
From yon horizon beams "Farewell!"
Setting in exile, where, afar,
The children of St. Louis dwell.

Come from the past, once-dreaded ghosts,
Whose number and whose names he knew!
The future plants, at countless posts,
Sentries more terrible than you!

Mary Hannay Foott

David's Lament For Jonathan

Thou wast hard pressed, yet God concealed this thing
From me; and thou wast wounded very sore,
And beaten down, O son of Israel's king,
Like wheat on threshing-flour.

Thou, that from courtly and from wise for friend
Didst choose me, and in spite of ban and sneer,
Rebuke and ridicule, until the end
Didst ever hold me dear!

All night thy body on the mountain lay:
At morn the heathen nailed thee to their wall.
Surely their deaf gods hear the songs to-day
O'er the slain House of Saul!

Oh! if that witch were here thy father sought,
Methinks I e'en could call thee from thy place,
To shift thy mangled image from my thought,
Seeing thy soul's calm face.

I sorrowed for the words the prophet spoke,
That set me rival to thy father's line;
But o'er thy spirit no repining broke
For what had else been thine.

Thou wast not like to me, so rude, so hot;
The world was not in thine, as in my sight,
Like the proud giant who from Israel sought
A champion to fight.

I thought to ask, nor looked to be denied,
Of God, that in my days there might ascend
His House; not from my hands, so redly dyed,
But thine, pure-hearted friend.

My friend, within God's House thou dwellest now;
Thy wounds are healed, thou need'st no Gilead-balm;
Defeated and degraded, yet thy brow
Is crowned, with death and calm.

O God, this is Thy black and bitter sea
Which buffets so and blinds my struggling soul:
Out of the depths I cry, O God, to Thee,
Whose grief-waves o'er me roll.

God give to me the spirit that was his,
The patience, that he needs no more to blend
With the wild eagerness that mars my bliss;
I would be like my friend.

Through the dark valley soon, to where he stands,
God summon me! Till then the sword shall shine
That comes from his dead grasp into my hands:
His children be as mine!

Mary Hannay Foott

For Charles Dickens

Above our dear Romancer's dust
Grief takes the place of praise,
Because of sudden cypress thrust
Amid the old-earned bays.

Ah! when shall such another friend
By England's fireside sit,
To tell her of her faults, yet blend
Sage words with kindly wit?

He brings no pageants of the past
To wile our hearts away;
But wins our love for those who cast
Their lot with ours to-day.

He gives us laughter glad and long;
He gives us tears as pure;
He shames us with the published wrong
We meted to the poor.

Through webs and dust and weather-stains,
His sunlike genius paints,
On life's transfigured chancel-panes,
The angels and the saints.

He bade us to a lordly feast,
And gave us of his best;
And vanished, while the mirth increased,
To be Another's guest.

For Death had summoned him, in haste,
Where hands of the Divine
Pour out, for him who toiled to taste,
The Paradisal wine.

Well, God be thanked, we did not wait
His greatness to discern
By funeral lights, in that Too-Late
When ashes fill the urn.

Mary Hannay Foott

Happy Days

A fringe of rushes, one green line
Upon a faded plain;
A silver streak of water-shine,
Above, tree-watchers twain.
It was our resting-place awhile,
And still, with backward gaze,
We say: "'Tis many a weary mile,
But there were happy days."

And shall no ripple break the sand
Upon our farther way?
Or reedy ranks all knee-deep stand?
Or leafy tree-tops sway?
The gold of dawn is surely met
In sunset's lavish blaze;
And, in horizons hidden yet,
There shall be happy days.

Mary Hannay Foott

In Memoriam C. G. Gordon

Devotion! When thy name is named,
What matchless visions rise!
The Hebrew, leaving Pharoah's house,
To Israel's rescue flies;
The Moabites, gleans, content,
Beneath the burning skies.

The flower of Christendom is given
To gain the Holy Grave;
O'er Acre and o'er Askelon
The blessed banners wave;
By Edward's bed I see thee kneel,
O Queen beloved and brave!

Who art thou, girl, in warrior garb,
St. Catherine's sword in hand?
'Tis La Pucelle, and France is free;
O shame that thou must stand
Bound, helpless, at the cruel stake,
To wait the headman's brand!

And now upon the wild North Sea
From Lindisfarne's bleak shore,
To save the lives of shipwrecked men
A maiden plies the oar;
Seamen and landsmen honour thee,
Grace Darling, evermore!

And swifter, closer, as I muse,
The splendid spectres loom;
And stately stands among them one
To glory passed from gloom,
But late, by waters of the Nile,
In walls of lost Khartoum!

Mary Hannay Foott

In The Land Of Dreams

A bridle-path in the tangled mallee,
With blossoms unnamed and unknown bespread,
And two who ride through its leafy alley,
But never the sound of a horse's tread.

And one by one whilst the foremost rider
Puts back the boughs which have grown apace,
And side by side where the track is wider,
Together they come to the olden place.

To the leaf-dyed pool whence the mallards flattered,
Or ever the horses had paused to drink;
Where the word was said and the vow was uttered
That brighten for ever its weedy brink.

And Memory closes her sad recital,
In Fate's cold eyes there are kindly gleams,
While for one brief moment of blest requital,
The parted have met, in the Land of Dreams.

Mary Hannay Foott

In The South Pacific

A vision of a savage land,
A glimpse of cloud-ringed seas;
A moonlit deck, a murderous hand;
No more, no more of these!

No more! how heals the tender flesh,
Once torn by savage beast?
The wound, re-opening, bleeds afresh,
Each season at the least!

O day, for dawn of thee how prayed
The spirit, sore distressed;
Thy latest beams, upslanting, made
A pathway for the blest.

And robes, new-donned, of the redeemed,
Gleamed white past grief's dark pall:
So this, a day of death which seemed,
A birthday let us call.

Remembering, such day as this,
A soul from flesh was shriven,
By death, God's messenger of bliss;
A spirit entered Heaven.

Thy dying head no loving breast
Upheld, O early slain;
But soon, mid welcoming saints, 'twas prest
Where God's own Child has lain!

Though none at death broke Bread for thee,
Or poured the Sacred Wine;
Thou, nourished at His Board, dost see
The Substance of the Sign.

We mourned thee! Heaven's new born, and rich
Past all our prayers could claim,
Secure in blessedness, of which
We have not learnt the name.

Mary Hannay Foott

In Time Of Drought

The rushes are black by the river bed,
And the sheep and the cattle stand
Wistful-eyed, where the waters were,
In a waste of gravel and sand;
Or pass o'er their dying and dead to slake
Their thirst at the slimy pool.
Shall they pine and perish in pangs of drought
While Thy river, O God, is full.

The fields are furrowed, the seed is sown,
But no dews from the heavens are shed;
And where shall the grain for the harvest be?
And how shall the poor be fed?
In waterless gullies they winnow the earth,
New-turned by the miner's tool;
And the way-farer faints 'neath his lightened load,¹
Yet the river of God is full.

For us, O Father, from tropic seas,
Let the clouds be filled that shed
Rough rains upon Andes' eastward slope,
Soft snows on Himàleh's head.
Freight for us as for others thy dark-winged fleet,
That soon by the waters cool,
We may say with gladness, "Our need was great,
But the river of God was full!"

Mary Hannay Foott

Napoleon Iii

His silent spirit from the place
Slid forth unseen; amid the throng
Of those whose love outlived disgrace,
Whose fealty to the last was strong.
'Midst homage, 'neath Fate's adverse reign,
Paid to the star shorn of its rays,
How passed the Exile? Lingering fain,
As never once in prouder days?

The Mother and the Child were there,
Discrowned and disinherited!
No hand henceforth to right the heir;
New griefs to bow the golden head.
How passed Napoleon? Prizing more,
Old fame in camp and council won
Or fearless England's aegis, o'er
The future of her ally's son?

Gate of that World we know not yet,
What thou beheld'st who may proclaim!
Were spirit-ranks, in order set,
Haunting thy portals, as he came,
With voices murmuring, "Our life torch,
Unspent, was quenched at his behest"?
Did bygone princes fill the porch,
Bourbon, and Valois, and the rest?

How passed the soldier? Cold and stern,
'Mid weaponless reproachful ghosts,
As when he led them forth to learn
How fight the hardy German hosts?
How passed the Emperor where THEY gazed,
Once wearers of the ancient crown?
As one who knew its lustre blazed
The brighter ere he laid it down?

How passed he? brighter grows the dream!
Past yon accusing spirit-band,
Beyond the scornful Old Règime,

Another group of watchers stand!
Those hands are stretched to greet him now
That once Charlemagne's proud sceptre won;
While hastes Hortense with beaming brow,
No longer banished from her son!

Mary Hannay Foott

Nearing Port

A blue line to the westward that surely is not cloud;
A green tinge in the waters; a clamorous bird-crowd;
Then far-off foamy edges, and hill-tops timber fringed;
And, perched aloft, a light-house, o'er grey cliffs golden-tinged.

O watchers leaning landward, know ye of nothing more?
And hear ye but the sea-birds? and see ye but the shore?
Nay, look awhile, and listen who bids you welcome there;
The great seas kiss her sandals, the high stars gem her hair!
Behold her in the gateway! high-held in either hand
A blazing beacon, lighted to lead you to the land.

"Now welcome, kindly welcome, who come to me for cheer!
My forts may frown on others, but ye have nought to fear.
The cannon's flash and thunder are all for joy to-day,
No murmurs meet your coming, none wish to bar your way."

O, later called to labour, shall we who toiled at morn
Remember, as against you, the heat and burthen borne?
No, verily, we shall not! We pray the labourer's Lord
May give you after-comers a full day's full reward.

Now fear not, fair-haired maiden, for gladness waits thee here,
As by thy father's fireside in bygone days and dear.

Thy troubled brow, O matron, beneath its silvering hair,
Shall gain no fresher furrows, shall lose its look of care;
No longer for thy household the winter need'st thou dread,
Nor, fearing for to-morrow, shalt stint the children's bread.

And thou, a "mother's darling," on those young locks of thine
What midnight rains shall batter, what tropic suns shall shine!
Thy tender hands, toil-hardened, unwonted tools shall wield,
Shall fell the columned forest, shall till the furrowed field.
Yet, when at England's fireside her olden tales are told,
Perchance, 'mid tearful silence, one from the land of gold.
Shall tell a brave new story, of want, and work, and care,
Of trial and of triumph, to touch the coldest there!

Now enter ye a haven your fathers have not known;
Now dwell ye in a country that once was not your own.
Part of the New World's army, the pioneers, are ye;
For whom there waits, ungathered, the wealth of earth and sea!
No need of "fiery baptism," no blood, no tears to flow,
Ah, legions of the Caesars, had you but conquered so!
Ah, Vikings in Valhalla our fathers dead and gone
Could you have made such landing such golden shores upon!

Mary Hannay Foott

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No Message

She heard the story of the end,
Each message, too, she heard;
And there was one for every friend;
For her alone, no word.

And shall she bear a heavier heart,
And deem his love was fled;
Because his soul from earth could part
Leaving her name unsaid?

No, No! Though neither sign nor sound
A parting thought expressed,
Not heedless passed the Homeward-Bound
Of her he loved the best.

Of voyage-perils, bravely borne,
He would not tell the tale;
Of shattered planks and canvas torn,
And war with wind and gale.

He waited, till the light-house star
Should rise against the sky;
And from the mainland, looming far,
The forest scents blow by.

He hoped to tell, assurance sweet!
That pain and grief were o'er,
What blessings haste the soul to meet,
Ere yet within the door.

Then one farewell he thought to speak
When all the rest were past,
As in the parting-hour we seek
The dearest hand the last.

And while for this delaying but
To see Heaven's opening Gate,
Lo, it received him and was shut,
Ere he could say "I wait."

Mary Hannay Foott

Sonnets - I - Christmas Day

O happy day, with seven-fold blessings set
Amid thy hallowed hours, the memories dear
Of childhood's holidays, and household cheer,
When friends and kin in loving circle met,
And youth's glad gatherings, where the sands were wet
By waves that hurt not, whilst the great cliffs near,
With storms erewhile acquaint, gave echo clear
Of voices gay and laughter gayer yet.
And graver thoughts and holier arise
Of how, 'twixt that first eve and dawn of thine,
The Star ascended which hath lit our skies
More than the sun himself; and 'mid the kine
The Child was born whom shepherds, and the wise;
Who came from far, and angels, called Divine.

Mary Hannay Foott

Sonnets - Ii - The New Year

With supple boughs and new-born leaflets crowned,
Rejoicing in fresh verdure stands the tree,
Though weather-scarred and scooped by fire may be
Its ancient trunk. So may our lives be found
(God leaving still our roots within His ground.)
Where gaps of loss and waste show brokenly
May each new year that comes to greet us see
Branches, and foliage, and flowers abound.
Where Fortune, spoiling wayfarer, hath left
Unsightly rents, may garlands spring apace.
And if, perchance, some pitiless wind hath reft
Away what newer green shall ne'er replace,
May heaven-light come the closer for the cleft
O'er which no tender fronds shall interlace.

Mary Hannay Foott

The Aurora Australis

A radiance in the midnight sky
No white moon gave, nor yellow star;
We thought its red glow mounted high
Where fire and forest fought afar,

Half questioning if the township blazed,
Perchance, beyond the boundary hill;
Then, finding what it was, we gazed
And wondered till we shivered chill.

And Fancy showed the sister-glow
Of our Aurora, sending lines
Of lustre forth to tint the snow
That lodges in Norwegian pines.

And South and North alternate swept
In vision past us, to and fro;
While stealthy winds of midnight crept
About us, whispering fast and low.

The North, whose star burns steadily,
High set in heaven long ago:
The South, new-risen on the sea,
A tremulous horizon-glow.

We mused, "Shall there be gallant guests
Within our polar hermitage,
As on the shore where Franklin rests,
And others, named in Glory's page?"

And, "Shall the light we look on blaze
Above such battles as have been,
In other countries, other days,
The giants and the gods between?"

Till one declared, "We live to-night
In what shall be the poet's world:
The lands 'neath our Aurora's light
Are as the rocks the Titans hurled.

"From southern waters, ice-enthralled,
Year after year the rays that glance
Shall see the Desert shrink appalled
Before the City's swift advance.

"Shall see the precipice a stair,
The river as a road. And then
There shall be voices to declare
'This work was wrought by manly men.'"

And so our South all stately swept
In vision past us, to and fro;
While stealthy winds of midnight crept
About us, whispering fast and low.

Mary Hannay Foott

The Australiad - (A Poem For Children.)

'Twas brave De Quiros bent the knee before the King of Spain,
And "sire," he said, "I bring thy ships in safety home again
From seas unsailed of mariner in all the days of yore,
Where reefs and islets, insect-built, arise from ocean's floor.
And, sire, the land we sought is found, its coasts lay full in view
When homeward bound, perforce, I sailed, at the bidding of my crew.
Terra Australis¹ called I it; and linked therewith the name
Of Him who guideth, as of old, in cloud and starry flame.
And grant me ships again," he said, "and southward let me go,
A new Peru may wait thee there, another Mexico."

A threadbare suitor, year by year, "There is a land," said he;
While King and Court grew weary of this old man of the sea;
For there were heretics to burn, and Holland to subdue,
And England to be humbled, (which this day remains to do,)
O land he named, but never saw, his memory revere!
The gallant disappointed heart, let him be honoured here!

Meanwhile the hardy Dutchmen came, as ancient charts attest,
Hartog, and Nuyts, and Carpenter, and Tasman, and the rest,
But found not forests rich in spice, nor market for their wares,
Nor servile tribes to toil o'ertasked 'mid pestilential airs,
And deemed it scarce worth while to claim so poor a continent,
But with their slumberous tropic isles thenceforward were content.

And then came Dampier, who, erewhile, upon the Spanish Main
For silver-laden galleons lurked, and great was his disdain,
Good ships, beside, from France were sent, good ships and gallant crews,
With Marion and D'Entrecasteaux and the far-famed La Perouse.
And still, of all who sought or saw, the voyages were vain,
Australia ne'er was farm for boers nor mission-field for Spain,
Nor fleur-de-lys nor tricolor was ever planted here,
And Britain's flag to hoist was not for hands of buccaneer.

But to our lovely Eastern coast, led by auspicious stars,
Came Cook, in the Endeavour, with his little band of tars,
Who straight on shores of Botany old England's ensign reared,
With mighty dim of musketry and noise of them that cheered.
And none of all his noble fleets who sixty years was king

A prize so goodly ever brought as that small ship did bring!

And who was he, the FIRST to find Australia passing fair?
One who aforetime well had served his country elsewhere:
Who to the heights of Abraham up the swift St. Lawrence led,
When on the moonless battle-eve the midnight oarsmen sped.
No worthier captain British deck before or since hath trod,
He "never feared the face of man," but feared alway his God.
His crew he cherished tenderly, and kept his honour bright,
For with the helpless blacks he dealt as if they had been white.

A boy, erewhile, of lowly birth, self-taught, a poor man's son,
But a hero and a gentleman, if ever there was one!
And when at last, by savage hands, on wild Owyhee slain,
He left a deathless memory, a name without a stain!

'Tis but a hundred years ago, as nearly as may be,
Since good King George's vessel first anchored in Botany.
A hundred years! Yet, oh, how many changes there have been!
Unclasp thy volume, History, and say what thou hast seen.

"Old England and her colonies stand face to face as foes,
And now their orators inveigh, and now their armies close."
In vain, our mother-land, for once thy sword is drawn in vain,
Allies and enemies alike, thy children are the slain.
Though, save as victor, never 'twas thy wont to quit the field,
Relenting filled thy valiant heart and thou wast fain to yield.
Ah, well for loss of those fair States might King and Commons mourn!
There lay, in south, a goodly bough from England's rose-tree torn!
But now how deep its roots have struck, how stately stands the stem,
How lovely on its branches leaf and flower and dewy gem!
New life from that sore severance to our sister-scion came,
God speed thee, young America, we glory in thy fame!

"The storm that shook the Western World now eastward breaks anew,
And, oh, how black the tempest is which blotteth out the blue!
And over thee, ill-fortuned France, what floods resistless roll,
A tidal wave of blood no pitying planet may control!

"Like Samson toiling blind and bound to furnish food for those
Who light withheld and liberty, and mocked at all his woes,
So have thy people held their peace, so laboured, so have borne

The burden serfdom ever bears, the sorrow and the scorn.
But as with groping giant-hands he seized the pillars twain
And made Philistia's land one house of mourning for the slain,
So rise they, frenzied, at the last, by centuries of wrong,
And wreak a vengeance dreadful as their sufferings have been long,
The vile Bastille is overthrown, the Monarchy lies low,
The fetters of the Feudal Age are broken at a blow!

“Of Poland parted for a prey dire Nemesis shall tell
When o'er the dead in Cracow's vault shall ring Oppression's knell!
Now Erin from her Sister-Isle awhile was fain to part,
For Strongbow's arrow rankled long within her wounded heart;
And long by desecrated fane and fireless hearth she wailed,
Where brutal Ireton's Herod-host their murderous pikes had trailed.
Here shine the names she holdeth dear; and prize them well she may,
Past soldiers of a Frankish prince, or peers of Castlereagh;
The gifted ones who pled for her 'gainst bigotry and pride,
The gallant ones who died for her when young Fitzgerald died!”

Enough, enough, forbear to trace the record of the age,
Where elder nations are inscribed, through each distressful page:

But hearken how, for once, at least, without an army's aid,
A people's lines the lines of her who holds the South, were laid!

Five thousand leagues of ocean 'twixt the old home and the new,
And lodging strait and scanty fare the weary voyage through.
And toil and hardship safely past, and crossed the perilous main,
Never to tread on English ground 'mid English friends again!
Yet men were found to dare it all, men, ay, and women too,
(Not only those exiled perforce, who oftimes rose anew,
Out-cast upon new earth, with hope, and heart, and vigour given,
By fresh surroundings, and His grace who bids the lost to Heaven),
The brave, the fair, the gently-born, and Labour's life-long thrall,
Within those circling seas of ours there was a place for all.

For patient hands the woods to fell, the new-formed fields to till,
The huts to build, the scanty flocks and herds to guard from ill.
For bolder spirits, to forsake the sea-board settlement,
And learn the secret of the land where never white man went,
Through mountain-pass, and forest dark, and wide unsheltered plain,
Through fiery heat of summer, and through frost, and flood, and rain,

Unheeding thirst, or hunger, or the shower of savage spears,
What soldiers e'er were braver than Australian pioneers?
What though it was by axe, and plough, and miner's oft-edged tool,
And tending sheep and kine through weary years, of hardship full,
The only victories we boast were by our fathers won?
The men who won them had prevailed where feats of arms were done!
Three generations born of her our Country now can tell,
And son, and sire, and grandsire, all in turn have served her well;
Not only with the sinewy arm, the hardened hand of toil,
That wrest their wealth from rifted rock and forest-cumbered soil,
By love of order and of law; by proffered boon to all
Of learning, in the township school and in the college hall;
By liberal leisure, well-bestowed, for sports of land and wave;
And by the faith preserved to us God to the Elders gave!

And now Britannia's household send her, greetings from beside
The icy streams of Canada, and islands scattered wide
Betwixt the two Americas, from Africa's sea-marge,
And where the race of Aurungzebe held empire rich and large,
And where amid New Zealand fern the English skylarks build,
And rosy children's sun-burnt hands with English flowers are filled,
And from our own Australia too, and all unite to say,
"Bind us to thee with stronger bonds than those we own today,
Give to our sons a place with thine, for each to each is peer,
And let them share thy councils, and the dangers that endear,
And what the Olden Realm has been the Newer Realm shall be,
With a place in every freeman's heart and a port in every sea!"

Mary Hannay Foott

The Belated Swallow

And the birds of the air have nests."

Belated swallow, whither flying?
The day is dead, the light is dying,
The night draws near:
Where is thy nest, slow put together,
Soft-lined with moss and downy feather,
For shelter-place in stress of weather
And darkness drear?

Past, past, above the lighted city,
Unknowing of my wondering pity,
Seaward she flies.
Alas, poor bird! what rude awaking
Has driven thee forth, when storms are breaking,
And frightened gulls the waves forsaking
With warning cries?

Alas, my soul! while leaves are greenest
Thy heedless head thou fondly screenest
Beneath thy wing.
How bravely thou thy plumage wearest,
How lightly thou life's burthen bearest,
How happily thy home prearest,
In careless spring!

Yet Destiny the hour may bring thee
When none of all that sing can sing thee
To joy or rest!
When all the winds that blow shall blow thee;
And, ere the floods shall overflow thee,
The sunlight linger but to show thee
Thy shattered nest

Mary Hannay Foott

The Fate Of Bass

On the snow-line of the summit stood the Spaniard's English slave;
And the frightened condor westward flew afar---
Where the torch of Cotopaxi lit the wide Pacific wave,
And the tender moon embraced a new-born star.
Blanched the cheek that Austral breezes off Van Diemen's coast had tanned,
Bent the form that on the deck stood stalwart there;
Slim and pallid as a woman's was the sailor's sunburnt hand,
And untimely silver streaked the strong man's hair.
From the forest far beneath him came the baffled bloodhound's bay,
From the gusty slope the camp-fire's fitful glow;
But the pass the Indian told of o'er the cliff beside him lay,
And beyond---The Mighty River's easward flow.
"Mine the secret of the Incas; to the tyrants never told;
Mine the Cloven Rock; the league long Sculptured Way!
Ere the weary scouts awaken, ere the embers are grown cold---
Ere the dogs in dreams their quarry seize and slay!"
Freedom's threshold!---yet he tarries---gazes seaward, southward still,
Past the gulfs where fainting chain-gangs toil entombed,
And the furnace of the smelter taints the winds of every hill
With the fumes that swathe the dying and the doomed.
Never, never, gallant seaman, may the land that lit thy dreams
In the starless drive make glad thine eyes again---
Where through tropic heavens at midnight the Antarctic glory streams
And a sea of blossom floods the wintry plain.
Never more the settler's welcome, at the sinking of the sun,
Nor his godspeed; mid the fragrant Austral morn!
Shattered, spent, and broken-hearted---yet a guerdon thou hast won,
And where brave souls meet thou shalt not stand forlorn.

Mary Hannay Foott

The Future Of Australia

Sing us the Land of the Southern Sea,
The land we have called our own;
Tell us what harvest there shall be
From the seed that we have sown.

We love the legends of olden days,
The songs of the wind and wave;
And border ballads and minstrel lays,
And the poems Shakespeare gave,

The fireside carols and battle rhymes,
And romaunt of the knightly ring;
And the chant with hint of cathedral chimes,
Of him "made blind to sing."

The tears they tell of our brethren wept,
Their praise is our fathers' fame;
They sing of the seas our navies swept,
Of the shrines that lent us flame.

But the Past is past, with all its pride,
And its ways are not our ways.
We watch the flow of a fresher tide
And the dawn of newer days.

Sing us the Isle of the Southern Sea,
The land we have called our own;
Tell us what harvest there shall be
From the seed that we have sown.

I see the Child we are tending now
To a queenly stature grown;
The jewels of empire on her brow,
And the purple round her thrown.

She feeds her household plenteously
From the granaries we have filled;
Her vintage is gathered in with glee
From the fields our toil has tilled.

The Old World's outcast starvelings feast,
Ungrudged, on her corn and wine;
The gleaners are welcome, from west and east,
Where her autumn sickles shine.

She clothes her people in silk and wool,
Whose warp and whose woof we spun;
And sons and daughters are hers to rule;
And of slaves, she has not one!

There are herds of hers on a thousand hills!
There are fleecy flocks untold?
No foreign conquest her coffer fills,
She has streams whose sands are gold!

She shall not scramble for falling crowns,
No theft her soul shall soil,
So rich in rivers, so dowered with downs,
She shall have no need of spoil!

But if, wronged or menaced, she shall stand
Where the battle-surges swell,
Be a sword from Heaven in her swarthy hand
Like the sword of La Pucelle!

If there be ever so base a foe
As to speak of a time-cleansed stain,
To say, "She was cradled long ago,
'Mid clank of the convict's chain."

Ask, as the taunt in his teeth is hurled,
"What lineage sprang SHE from
Who was Empress, once, of the Pagan World
And the Queen of Christendom?"

When the toilsome years of her youth are o'er,
And her children round her throng;
They shall learn from her of the sage's lore,
And her lips shall teach them song.

Then of those in the dust who dwell,

May there kindly mention be,
When the birds that build in the branches tell
Of the planting of the tree

Mary Hannay Foott

The Magi To The Star

I. Thanksgiving.

Star, on thy Heaven-returning way,
Our message of thanksgiving bear;
To Him who answered with thy ray
The priestless Gentiles' trembling prayer.

When songs of revel shook the roof,
God, Thou didst cheer the joyless course,
Where we, like Vashti, walked aloof,
Braving the world's unjust divorce.

How rate we now all griefs and scorn
That filled our youth with bitterness!
We had not known the Christ is born
But that we sought for One to bless!

II. Prayer.

Fence Thou Thy Child, O Merciful,
When hate shall cavil at His worth;
When underlings like Haman rule
Hold Thou the golden sceptre forth.

When envy round Thy Precious One
Its tongues of scorching flame hath curled,
Unwasted let His virtue run
From the sore furnace of the world

To fill a new Colossus-mould.
When tireless unbelief hath sent;
Thy truest Image to the cold
Pure mountain-tops of banishment,

Give then, O God, Thy light, to break
Through all earth's valleys cramped and dim,
That after-times may see, and take
Their heroes' measurement from Him!

III. Farewell.

A new horizon's dim blue ring
Around our watch-fire shall be cast,
New stars replace the vanishing,
To-morrow's homeward travel past.

Word-bringer, now thine embassy
Is closed, thou stayest not to fill
A lowlier office. Thou shalt be
Soon 'mid the angels, shining still!

One priceless pearl of upper sea,
One matchless gem of heaven's rich mine;
Within the place once held by thee
God send no after-light to shine!

Yet, foremost of the host of gold,
Long-followed, thou wast never sent,
A glimpse of what the Heavens enfold,
To darken earth with discontent!

Star of the Promised! Streaming on
Through Time's long night, though thou must set,
Thy light shall spread, when thou art gone,
O'er sunless lands we see not yet!

Mary Hannay Foott

The Massacre Of The Bards

The sunlight from the sky is swept,
But, over Snowdon's summit kept,
One brand of cloud yet burns,
By ghostly hands far out of sight,
Held, glowing, in the even-light,
As Fate still keeps the weapon bright
That lingers and returns.

- - - - -

O day of slaughter! Day of woe!
But once, a thousand years ago,
Such day has Britain seen;
When blushed her hoary hills with shame
At Mona's sacrifice of flame;
While shrieks from out the burning came
Across the strait between.

Death-helping day! That couldst not find
One weeping cloud to hide behind!
Cursed day whose light was given
For search-mate to the Saxon sword
Through coverts that our rocks afford,
While Edward's godless minions poured
The blood of the unshriven!

- - - - -

Ill fare we when the trees are rent,
Whose friendly shelter erst was lent
In sun, and wind, and rain.
Ill fare we when the thunder-shocks
Let loose the torrents from their rocks,
To sweep away the mountain-flocks,
And flood the standing grain.

But where the forest-giants groan,
By winds that waste the woods o'erthrown,
New saplings blithely spring!

Sank herd and harvest 'neath the tide?
There's bleating on the mountain-side;
O'er cornfields, ere the dew has dried
To-morrow's lark shall sing!

Sore sighs the land when she has need
The dragon-jaws of war to feed
With those who love her best;
And long shall Cambria's tears be shed
For him who late her armies led,
Llewellyn, whose dissevered head
The Saxon crowned in jest!

Yet, in their stead whose blood is spilt,
Newcomers seize the sword's warm hilt,
Or o'er it reach the ground!
Llewellyn! every night-watch drear
With grief for thee, brings morning near;
That morn when Arthur shall appear,
Once more our leader crowned!

But when the blood of bards is poured,
Who gathers their forgotten hoard
From memories sealed by fate?
What daring songster e'er shall soar
For us to Heaven's death-guarded door,
And tell thereafter of the store
That glimmers through the grate?

When Famine's empty hand is filled,
When years the shattered oaks rebuild,
Shall heroes spring again,
Brave spirits of the past to greet
Who rise at minstrel-summons sweet,
When bards the olden tales repeat
Of Britain's mighty slain?

Nay, by the harps our fathers heard
No more shall Britain's heart be stirred,
Lost is the ancient lore!
Spent is the breath of song, that fanned
Freedom's low fires! The bard's light hand,

Whose beckoning brought the martial band,
Shall seek the strings no more!

Mary Hannay Foott

The Melbourne International Exhibition

Argument.

I. - The House being ready, Victoria prepares to receive the nations whom she has invited. They approach the various countries of Europe, Asia, Africa, of the American continent, the Australian colonies, and those of Polynesia, some of them greater than any which ever paid tribute to Rome, or did homage to a mediaeval monarch, and their products superior to those which in olden times were fit gifts from one king to another.

II. - Victoria salutes the other Australian colonies, and asks them to unite with her in greeting her other guests. They then welcome the various countries of Asia, Africa (Egypt to Caffraria, &c.), America (the South American Republics, Empire of Brazil, Dominion of Canada, and the United States of North America); then France, Spain, and Portugal; Italy, Greece, Russia, Switzerland; then Holland and Belgium, Denmark, Austria, Germany, Norway, and Sweden; then Britain.

III. - The triumphs of Peace and of Toil.

IV. - Aspirations for the future of Australia, that she may be happy, a generous friend, but, if need be, a formidable enemy.

I.

Ceased is the sound of the chisel, and hushed is the hammer's ring,
And the echoes that haunted the empty halls for a while have taken wing;
And the doors are open, and overhead are a thousand flags unfurled,
While with music and song to the House she has built Victoria welcomes the world.

For the nations she bade with friendly voice have hearkened to her behest,
And treasure-laden, o'er land and sea, comes many an honoured guest,
Daughters of cultured Europe, deigning her day to grace,
Children of antique Asia, Africa's dusky race,
America's mighty offspring and they of Australia's line,
And they of the Thousands Islands set where Pacific waters shine.
Oh, never a Roman triumph, nor court of mightiest Suzerain
Hath gathered such as have sailed to her. Nor gifts like to theirs have lain
At the feet of Wisdom's favoured one, when the Princes came from far,
And the swarthy Queen to the Great Sea steered by the light of the still pole star.

II.

Welcome, O fair five Sisters unto your Sister's side!
Greet we this day together them who come from far and wide.
Come ye, aflame with jewels, and each with veiled face
Whence bright eyes beam upon us like stars from cloud-swept space,
We wonder o'er the labours your slender hands have done
In ancient Asian cities, brown daughters of the sun!

And thou who once wast Pharoah's, and thou whose palm-thatched kraals
For centuries made marvel of bold De Gama's sails,
And all that dwell betwixt you, whate'er your race and name,
Who seek our shores in kindness, we thank you that you came.

And them who claim the treasures erewhile Pizarro's prize.
And her who crowned Braganza the worthy and the wise,
And Canada we welcome; the loyal and the free,
And thee, O great republic, with rule from sea to sea,
Who bravedst for our lost ones the fatal frozen main,
Thou who hast fed our famished and wept above our slain.

Fair France, we greet thee fondly as our Crusader sires
Thy knightly sons saluted by Acre's stubborn spires!
O brave in war! none brighter in peaceful arts doth shine!
Arachne's fairy fingers are not more deft than thine!

And ye, the Goth's twin-daughters, of stately mien and speech,
Spain and her queenly neighbour, a loving hand to each?
Long may thy sons be worthy the Cid's illustrious name;
And thine another Lusiad write on the rolls of fame!

Italia! as we greet thee, our hearts are all aglow,
What centuries of glory thou knowst and shalt know!
Thine are the Roman eagles, the lilies Florentine,
The sea-wed city's lion, the Church's Conquering Sign!

And Greece, we do thee reverence, who on Olympian seat
Art goddess yet; earth's greatest but learners at thy feet!

Now gladly we receive thee, within unguarded gate,
O upward-toiling Russia, whose lamp, though lit but late,

Already cheered thy children. What berg-blocked sea is thine!
God grant thee open water beyond its Arctic line!

And welcome here, Helvetia, from heights where peace abides
Beyond the wreck-strewn floodmark of battle's crimson tides:
Thou pliest, busy-fingered, each harmless handicraft,
Yet, ready in thy quiver there rests the patriot shaft.

And ye whom frugal Flanders has dowered with all her store,
Her old cathedral cities, her freedom won of yore,
When by the hands that raised them, her dykes asunder torn,
Swift poured the burghers' vengeance for Egmont and for Horn;
And thou whose peerless Princess, pure as thy Baltic foam,
Is dear in ancient Windsor as in her Danish home,
(For where thy raven reached not, thy dove hath found her rest,
And in the heart of England hath made herself a nest!)
Thou, dweller by the Danube, thou, keeper of the Rhine;
Thou, blue-eyed Scandinavia, with fragrant crown of pine;
All, all who followed Odin, the leader and the priest,
From bondage and from darkness in some forgotten East,
And tilled the trackless forest, and tamed the wild North Sea,
Account us as your kindred, for kin, in truth, are we!

And now to her we hasten, with daughterly embrace,
To whom young isles do homage, and empires old give place,
And every zone pays tribute of wealth, and earth, and wave,
The refuge of the alien, the champion of the slave!
On triple throne unshaken as adamantine wall,
Long may'st thou sit, Britannia, dear mother of us all!

III.

Mighty ones, who have hither borne your trophies manifold,
We honour them who have earned you these, as we honour your great of old,
Every worker with brain or hand, the artist, the artisan,
Whether he ride at an army's head, or march in the nameless van.
For bright is the ruddy shield of Mars, and sweet is the Sungod's lyre;
But Labour beareth the world aloft on shoulders that will not tire.

IV.

Thou, who givest the eye to see, and the ready hand to do,

And a nation's place in the earth's fair space, give us Thy blessing, too!
We hear the cool Antarctic winds in the golden wheatfields pipe,
And the chant the swart Kanaka sings where the rustling cane grows ripe,
And we ask of Thee, who hast dowered our land with the kindly sun and soil
Which fill with fruitage of farthest climes the hopeful hands of toil,
That ever in love we may nurture, too, the people which dwelt apart,
When they seek new life from our Younger World and a home within her heart.
And if, perchance, from the eaves of peace and the sheltering olive bough,
Our sons shall sail to a stormy sea and the shock of the mail-clad prow,
May they show that not in vain they have borne the stress of the tropic day,
Or lain, toil-spent, in the miner's tent, or made in the wilds a way.

Mary Hannay Foott

To Henry The Fifth

My youth was passing, Sire, whilst you among
The cradle-wrappings slept; my morning-song
Sung o'er your pillow. Winds of heaven have thrown
Us both, since then, on heights apart and lone.
Heights! For misfortune drear, our destined land,
So thunder-scarred, a-nigh to heaven must stand!
The north and south are nearer than our ways
Are near to one another; and Fate lays
The purple round you, and has not withheld
Our France's sceptre-dazzlements of eld.
I, crowned with silver hairs, say, praising you,
"Well done!" That man is to his manhood true
Who bravely, at his own behest, will do
High deeds of self -undoing; will forego
All, all, save immemorial Honour; though
She seem to earthlier eyes a phantom, more
Will follow her (as erst in Elsinore
One faithful heart obeyed the beckoning ghost),
Nor stoop to buy a kingdom at her cost.
That you are aught save honest, none may say;
The Lily must be white, all white, for aye.
A Bourbon can but reign as Capet's heir,
Or waive his kingship. History is aware
Of wrecks enough, of changing battles' din,
Of those who grandly lose, or basely win!
Better with honour, Prince, the throne to quit.
Than, where St. Louis sat, dishonoured sit!

Mary Hannay Foott

To The Virgin Mary

Mother of Him we call the Christ,
No halo round thy brows we paint,
Incense and prayer we offer not,
Nor mind to title thee as saint.

And yet, no woman's name, of all
With honour from the ages sent,
Mary, is aureoled like thine,
With love and grief and glory blent!

Oh wisely was it that He chose,
Who the unwritten future reads,
To teach the after-world, through thee,
What cherishers Messiah needs.

Thou heard'st the angel's prophecy,
The tidings which the shepherds brought,
Anna and Simeon praising God,
And saw'st that star the Wise Men sought!

Ah, who of us could bear, like thee,
With meekness, God's triumphal light;
Then, still believing, with His Charge,
At midnight take an exile's flight?

Throughout the Son's long helplessness
His good was to thine own preferred;
May we so serve; and still, like Thee,
Stand back to let His voice be heard!

Dispenser once of earthly things,
Thy Best-Beloved thou didst see;
God's hands for others blessing-full,
Could we be poor and glad like thee?

Soul-pierced with sword-like agony,
Not felon's taunt nor soldier's jest;
Beside the God-forsaken Cross,
Could drive thee from it like the rest.

Christ's banner thou alone didst hold
In face of all His foes displayed;
Valiant through all defeat, and but
Heart-stricken that He was betrayed.

Ah, Mary! Could we stand, like thee,
Steadfast; and watch the vowed depart;
And grieve for their defection less
Than for the Saviour's wounded heart?

How must the God, who favour set
On David once and kingly Saul,
And yet foresaw their wanderings,
And loved them through and after all

How must He seal the prophecy,
Declaring thee forever blest,
Whose whole life showed thy worthiness
Of that pure Child thine arms had pressed!

O single-hearted one to kiss
The lifeless and dishonored head,
Fondly as when its baby brow,
By angel wings was canopied!

O self-forgetful, to rejoice
For that Heaven's entrance had been found
By the Beloved: thou content
Thenceforth, alone to close life's round!

In the bright future, sure, though far,
Again, as once, the wide air rings
With praise to Christ! Thy vigil ends,
Meek daughter of a hundred kings!

Virgin, may we partake thy joy,
When Heaven and loyal earth shall lay
At the pierced feet of David's son
A crown He will not put away!

Mary Hannay Foott

To The White Julienne

Again above thy fragile flowers
I bend, to bring their perfume nigh;
For only in the evening hours
Thy odors pass thy blossoms by;
But when the ministering day
Deserts thee with the warmth and light
That lulled thee, waking thou wilt pay
For these, in sweetness, to the night.

O flower of Marie Antoinette!
Ungrateful to the lavish day,
Refusing it thy fragrance, yet
Relenting in such generous way,
Perchance, like thee, while life was bright
Her soul no holy savour shed,
Yet scattered incense when grief's night
Wept dews of blood upon her head!

I bend, to bring thy perfume near,
Again, I cannot leave the spot;
Damp walls and prison gloom are here!
The beauties of the garden-plot
Are gone, save thee, White Julienne,
Fond-handled by the fated queen!
I hear her sigh above thee, then
The sentry's tread behind the screen!

Mary Hannay Foott

Up North

Into Thy hands let me fall, O Lord,
Not into the hands of men,
And she thinned the ranks of the savage horde
Till they shrank to the mangrove fen.

In a rudderless boat, with a scanty store
Of food for the fated three,
With her babe and her stricken servitor
She fled to the open sea.

Oh, days of dolor and nights of drouth,
While she watched for a sail in vain,
Or the tawny tinge of a river mouth,
Or the rush of the tropic rain.

The valiant woman! Her feeble oar
Sufficed, and her fervent prayer
Was heard, though she reached but a barren shore,
And died with her darling there.

For the demons of murder and foul disgrace
On her hearthstone dared not light;
But the Angel of Womanhood held the place,
And its site is a holy site.

Mary Hannay Foott

Watch-Night

Midnight, musical and splendid,
And the Old Year's life is ended,
And the New, "born in the purple," babe yet crowned, among us dwells;
While Creation's welcome swells,
Starlight all the heavens pervading,
And the whole world serenading
Him, at birth, with all its bells!

Round the cradle of the tender
Flows the music, shines the splendor;
It is early yet for counsel, but bethink how Hermes gave,
(While the Myths were bright and brave),
Thwarted Phoebus no small battle,
Seeking back his lifted cattle,
Hour-old Hermes, in his cave!

New Year, if thy youth should blind us
Thy swift feet, perchance, may find us
Sleeping in the dark, unguarded, as the sun-god's herds were found!
Lest, unready, on his round
We be hurried, World, take warning
That already it is morning
And a giant is unbound!

Idle-handed yet, but willing,
Let us ponder ere the filling
Of his empty eager fingers with our heedless hot behest.
Be our failures frank-confessed,
'Mid the gush of gladsome greeting
Requiem in our hearts repeating
For the years that died unblest.

How they came to us, so precious!
How abode with us, so gracious!
Blindly doing all our bidding; stronger, swifter than we thought.
Like the sprites by magic brought;
Shaping dream to action for us;
Till we stood, beset with sorrows,
Wondering what ourselves had wrought!

Ere the tightening of the tether
Bind THIS YEAR and us together,
Let us pause awhile and ponder, "Whither tend we side by side,
He who gallops, we who guide?
Once we start, like lost LENORE,
Sung in B?rger's ballad-story,
Fast as ODIN'S Hunt, we ride!

Mary Hannay Foott

Wentworth

'Tis a new thing for Australia that the waters to her bear
One who seeks not strength of sunshine, or the breath of healing air;
One who reeks not of her riches, nor remembers she is fair;
One who land and houses, henceforth, holdeth not, for evermore;
Coming for such narrow dwelling as the dead need, to the shore
Named aforetime by the spirit to receive the garb it wore.

'Tis a strange thing for Australia that her name should be the name
Breathed ere death by one who loved her, claiming, with a patriot's claim,
Earth of her as chosen grave-place; rather than the lands of fame;
Rather than the Sacred City where a sepulchre was sought
For the noblest hearts of Europe; rather than the Country fraught
With the incense of the altars whence our household gods were brought.

'Tis a proud thing for Australia, while the funeral-prayers are said,
To remember loving service, frankly rendered by the dead;
How he strove, amid the nations, evermore to raise her head.
How in youth he sang her glory, as it is, and is to be,
Called her "Empress," while they held her yet as base-born, over sea,
Owned her "Mother," when her children scarce were counted with the free!

How he claimed of King and Commons that his birthland should be used
As a daughter not an alien; till the boon, so oft refused,
Was withheld, at last, no longer; and the former bonds were loosed.
How the scars of serfdom faded. How he led within the light
Of her fireside Earth's Immortals; chrism-touched from Olympus' height;
Whom gods loved; for whom the New Faith, too, has guest-rooms garnished
bright.

'Tis a great thing for Australia; that her child of early years,
Shared her path of desert-travel, bread of sorrow, drink of tears,
Holding by her to these hill-tops, whence her Promised Place appears.
Titles were not hers to offer as the meed of service done;
Rank of peer or badge of knighthood, star or ribbon, she had none;
But she breathes a mother's blessing o'er the ashes of her son.

Mary Hannay Foott

