

Classic Poetry Series

Sir Samuel Ferguson
- poems -

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Sir Samuel Ferguson()

Cashel Of Munster

I'D wed you without herds, without money or rich array,
And I'd wed you on a dewy morn at day-dawn gray;
My bitter woe it is, love, that we are not far away
In Cashel town, tho' the bare deal board were our marriage-
bed this day!

O fair maid, remember the green hill-side,
Remember how I hunted about the valleys wide;
Time now has worn me; my locks are turn'd to gray;
They year is scarce and I am poor—but send me not, love,
away!

O deem not my blood is of base strain, my girl;
O think not my birth was as the birth of a churl;
Marry me and prove me, and say soon you will
That noble blood is written on my right side still.
My purse holds no red gold, no coin of the silver white;
No herds are mine to drive through the long twilight;
But the pretty girl that would take me, all bare tho' I be and lone,
O, I'd take her with me kindly to the county Tyrone!
O my girl, I can see 'tis in trouble you are;
And O my girl, I see 'tis your people's reproach you bear!
—I am a girl in trouble for his sake with whom I fly,
And, O, may no other maiden know such reproach as I!

Sir Samuel Ferguson

Cashel Of Munster, From The Irish

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Paul Veronese: (Three Sonnets)

I

Paul, let thy faces from the canvas look
Haply less clearly than Pietro's can,
Less lively than in tints of Titian,
Or him who both the bay-wreath-chaplets took:
Yet shalt thou therefore have no harsh rebuke
Of me whom, while with eager eye I scan
O'er painted pomps of Brera and Vatican,
The first delight thou gavest ne'er forsook.
For in thy own Verona, long ago,
Before one masterpiece of cool arcades,
I made a friend; and such a friend was rare.
For him, I love thy velvet's glorious show,
Thy sheens of silk 'twixt marble balustrades,
Thy breathing-space and full translucent air.

II

Loved for themselves, too. Oft as I behold,
Adown the curtain'd gallery's sumptuous gloom,
A separate daylight shining in the room,
There find I still thy groupings manifold
Of holy clerks, of nobles grave and bold,
Swart slaves, brave gallants, maidens in their bloom,
With what of Persian and Ligarian loom
May best consort with marble dome and gold:
There find thy dog, whose teeth Time's teeth defy
To raze the name from less enduring leaves
Of loved Canossa: there, in cynic ease,
Thy monkey: and beneath the pearly sky
See lovely ladies wave their handkerchiefs,
And lend sweet looks from airy balconies.

III

They err who say this long-withdrawing line
Of palace-fronts Palladian, this brocade
From looms of Genoa, this gold-inlaid
Resplendent plate of Milan, that combine
To spread soft lustre through the grand design,
Show but in fond factitious masquerade
The actual feast by leper Simon made
For that great Guest, of old, in Palestine.
Christ walks amongst us still; at liberal table
Scorns not to sit: no sorrowing Magdalene
But of these dear feet kindly gets her kiss
Now, even as then; and thou, be honorable,
Who, by the might of thy majestic scene,
Bringest down that age and minglest it with this.

Sir Samuel Ferguson

The Fair Hills Of Ireland

A PLENTEOUS place is Ireland for hospitable cheer,
Uileacan dubh O!

Where the wholesome fruit is bursting from the yellow barley ear;
Uileacan dubh O!

There is honey in the trees where her misty vales expand,
And her forest paths in summer are by falling waters fann'd,
There is dew at high noontide there, and springs i' the yellow
sand,
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.

Curl'd he is and ringleted, and plaited to the knee—
Uileacan dubh O!

Each captain who comes sailing across the Irish Sea;
Uileacan dubh O!

And I will make my journey, if life and health but stand,
Unto that pleasant country, that fresh and fragrant strand,
And leave your boasted braveries, your wealth and high
command,
For the fair hills of holy Ireland.

Large and profitable are the stacks upon the ground,
Uileacan dubh O!

The butter and the cream do wondrously abound;
Uileacan dubh O!

The cresses on the water and the sorrels are at hand,
And the cuckoo's calling daily his note of music bland,
And the bold thrush sings so bravely his song i' the forests
grand,
On the fair hills of holy Ireland.

Sir Samuel Ferguson

The Fairy Thorn

“GET up, our Anna dear, from the weary spinning wheel’
For your father’s on the hill, and your mother is asleep;
Come up above the crags, and we ’ll dance a highland reel
Around the fairy thorn on the steep.”

At Anna Grace’s door ’t was thus the maidens cried,
Three merry maidens fair in kirtles of the green;
And Anna laid the sock and the weary wheel aside,
The fairest of the four, I ween.

They ’re glancing through the glimmer of the quiet eve,
Away in milky wavings of neck and ankle bare;
The heavy-sliding stream in its sleeply song they leave,
And the crags in the ghostly air;

And linking hand in hand, and singing as they go,
The maids along the hill-side have ta’en their fearless way,
Till they come to where the rowan trees in lovely beauty grow
Beside the Fairy Hawthorn gray.

The hawthorn stands between the ashes tall and slim,
Like matron with her twin grand-daughters at her knee;
The rowan berries cluster o’er her low head gray and dim
In ruddy kisses sweet to see.

The merry maidens four have ranged them in a row,
Between each lovely couple a stately rowan stem,
And away in mazes wavy like skimming birds they go,—
Oh, never caroll’d bird like them!

But solemn is the silence of the silvery haze
That drinks away their voices in echoless repose,
And dreamily the evening has still’d the haunted braes,
And dreamier the gloaming grows.

And sinking one by one, like lark-notes from the sky
When the falcon’s shadow saileth across the open shaw,
Are hush’d the maidens’ voices, as cowering down they lie
In the flutter of their sudden awe.

For, from the air above and the grassy ground beneath,
And from the mountain-ashes and the old white thorn between,
A power of faint enchantment doth through their beings breathe,
And they sink down together on the green.

They sink together silent, and, stealing side by side,
They fling their lovely arms o'er their drooping necks so fair,
Then vainly strive again their naked arms to hide,
For their shrinking necks again are bare.

Thus clasp'd and prostrate all, with their heads together bow'd,
Soft o'er their bosoms beating—the only human sound—
They hear the silky footsteps of the silent fairy crowd,
Like a river in the air, gliding round.

Nor scream can any raise, nor prayer can any say,
But wild, wild, the terror of the speechless three,
For they feel fair Anna Grace drawn silently away,
By whom they dare not look to see.

They feel their tresses twine with her parting locks of gold,
And the curls elastic falling, as her head withdraws;
They feel her sliding arms from their tranced arms unfold,
But they dare not look to see the cause:

For heavy on their senses the faint enchantment lies
Through all that night of anguish and perilous amaze;
And neither fear nor wonder can ope their quivering eyes,
Or their limbs from the cold ground raise,

Till out of night the earth has roll'd her dewy side,
With every haunted mountain and streamy vale below;
When, as the mist dissolves in the yellow morning-tide,
The maidens' trance dissolveth so.

Then fly the ghastly three as swiftly as they may,
And tell their tale of sorrow to anxious friends in vain:
They pin'd away and died within the year and day,
And ne'er was Anna Grace seen again.

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