

Classic Poetry Series

**William Edmondstoune
Aytoun
- poems -**

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William Edmondstone Aytoun(1813 - 1865)

Aytoun was the only son of a prosperous Edinburgh family. The fierce Jacobitism and love of ballads of his mother, Joan Keir Aytoun, had a lasting influence upon Aytoun's own political and literary preferences. His father, Roger Aytoun, was a leading writer to the Signet; this was a superior order of solicitors peculiar to Scotland, among whose privileges was that of appearing before the Court of Sessions, the supreme civil court of the kingdom. Roger Aytoun planned William's education carefully, preparing him with a private tutor for three years before sending him to the newly opened Edinburgh Academy in 1824 and to Edinburgh University in 1828. The university curriculum was basically classical, but Aytoun followed his own interests, reading widely in British literature and history, and becoming a member of the Speculative Society. His chief concern, however, was already the writing of poetry.

Aytoun finished *Poland, Homer, and Other Poems* in 1830, but the six poems were not published until 1832. Although "Poland" expresses sympathy for the Poles' struggle to regain their independence from Russia, the other poems reflect Aytoun's increasing conservatism. In them, he contrasts the virtue and nobility of the "bright ages" with the vice and sordidness of the present. This contrast became a recurrent theme in Aytoun's poetry.

After he had completed his university studies, Aytoun complied reluctantly with his father's wishes and entered the legal profession. He became a writer to the Signet in 1835 and was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates in 1840. But his first love was literature. He had spent seven months in Germany in 1833-1834 studying the language and German literature. His first contributions to Blackwood's, in 1836, were translations of German ballads. In the early 1840s he had three prose works published--two pamphlets on topical religious controversies and a biography of Richard I. More importantly, from 1841 to 1844, Aytoun and Theodore Martin wrote for Tait's and Fraser's a series of parodies that were to develop into a remarkably popular book.

The Book of Ballads, written with Theodore Martin, was published in 1845 under the pseudonym Bon Gaultier. It included, in the phrase of George Kitchin, "a mannequin's parade of Victorian modes": parodies of national ballads, of the Eastern tale, of the philosophical poem, of the reflective poem, of the "poetical puff," of the epigram, of thieves' literature, of young ladies' literature, and of the leading stylists of the day. Superior to his coauthor Martin as a parodist, Aytoun took special delight in deflating the romantic sensibility of much contemporary poetry. Today, Bon Gaultier's humor seems rather broad, but it is difficult to

overrate the historical importance of the book. Saintsbury characterized it as "that admirable book of light verse, the equal of anything earlier and certainly not surpassed since." The Book of Ballads ran through thirteen editions from 1845 to 1877 in England alone; the number of pirated editions in America was at least as large. Blackwood sold over 32,000 copies from 1857 to 1909. The number of ballads increased from thirty-nine in the first edition to fifty-six in the sixteenth. Because of its enormous scope, it served as a textbook for later parodists, showing what subjects could be legitimately exposed to laughter. Its success also encouraged Aytoun to write Firmilian.

In 1844, in the most important act of his business career, Aytoun formally joined the staff of Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. He found in the conservative Blackwood's the ideal organ for his deepest feelings and beliefs. In politics, society, and literature, he looked back to the past with an admiration approaching reverence. He disliked the new and unusual; he identified the status quo with order. Aytoun soon became Blackwood's most prolific writer and, after the death of "Christopher North" (John Wilson) in 1854, was acknowledged to be its best. His writings were in many forms, including prose, poetry, and translation, and on many subjects, including politics, literature, railways, magic, boxing, art, and wines. For his efforts in the debate over free trade, the Derby administration rewarded him with the honorary position of sheriff and lord admiral of Orkney and Zetland. In 1845 Aytoun became professor of rhetoric and belles lettres at the University of Edinburgh, a position he raised to new importance. But Aytoun's *annus mirabilis* was 1849. On 11 April, he married Jane Emily Wilson, the youngest daughter of "Christopher North." It became a marriage of great contentment. Also in 1849, Edinburgh University conferred the honorary degree of M.A. upon Aytoun (four years later, Oxford was to make him a D.C.L.). Finally, 1849 was the publication date of the book that became Aytoun's most famous work among his contemporaries and a Victorian best-seller.

Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers and Other Poems reached its fifteenth British edition in fifteen years and its thirty-second in thirty-two years. Blackwood sold over 60,000 copies during the Victorian period alone, and, with foreign editions, the final total approaches the 100,000 mark. Although the book attained considerable popularity in America, Australia, and Germany, its greatest vogue was in Scotland, where selections were included in school reading books and recited by students. Its appeal is obvious. At their best, such ballads offer blood and fire in a "cut-and-thrust" style; they have a nervous energy that appeals immediately to the heart. They lie on that thin line between admirable rhetoric and genuine poetry, neither too low nor too high for the mass of educated readers.

Aytoun's last decade was less successful and less happy. In Bothwell (1856), this Jacobite tried to vindicate Queen Mary and to show that Bothwell was the unfortunate dupe of Scottish nobles and the English queen. Challenging comparison with the Spasmodics, the monologue tells a clearly defined story, the material of which was drawn from history. Unfortunately, its chief virtue--"no spasm"--is negative, and its ballad measure becomes monotonous in a lengthy poem.

In June 1858, Aytoun's two-volume edition of *The Ballads of Scotland* was published. He aimed to present in their original forms all 139 Scottish ballads of "real intrinsic merit" that had been composed before the union of the kingdoms. Both contemporary and twentieth-century critics have praised the collection. In December 1858 Aytoun's and Martin's *Poems and Ballads of Goethe* was published (the year of publication is given as 1859 on the title page); this was a revision and expansion of their earlier translations for Blackwood's. It is an uneven collection.

His wife died on 15 April 1859, four days after their tenth wedding anniversary. Aytoun was left a childless, lonely man. He told Martin, "The great calamity of life has fallen upon me." Aggravating Aytoun's sorrow was his disappointment over public affairs, particularly the resignation of the Conservative ministry. He tried to lighten his gloom by writing the novel *Norman Sinclair* (1861). Thinly disguised as fiction, it is an objective review of his life, an attempt to distance and find pattern in the past. Valuable as autobiography and perhaps as therapy, it has little merit as literature.

Aytoun never recovered his genial spirits. A chronic stomach ailment made eating and sleeping difficult. The sedentary professor who had lived almost exclusively in Edinburgh was forced to seek relief in the health resorts of France, Switzerland, and Germany. His literary output was curtailed: he produced only occasional articles for Blackwood's and a Nuptial Ode on the Marriage of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales (1863). In his loneliness, Aytoun married for a second time on Christmas Eve, 1863. Although his mother and two sisters all lived to be over ninety, Aytoun died on 4 August 1865 at the age of fifty-two.

A minor talent and largely forgotten today, Aytoun made one lasting contribution to literature. Firmilian was so successful an attack on the Spasmodic School of Poetry that it seemingly undermined its own reason for existence; but the kind of excessive romanticism exemplified by that early Victorian school is a recurrent literary phenomenon.

Blind Old Milton

Place me once more, my daughter, where the sun
May shine upon my old and time-worn head,
For the last time, perchance. My race is run;
And soon amidst the ever-silent dead
I must repose, it may be, half forgot.
Yes! I have broke the hard and bitter bread
For many a year, and with those who trembled not
To buckle on their armor for the fight,
And set themselves against the tyrant's lot;
And I have never bowed me to his might,
Nor knelt before him -- for I bear within
My heart the sternest consciousness of right,
And that perpetual hate of gilded sin
Which made me what I am; and though the stain
Of poverty be on me, yet I win
More honor by it, than the blinded train
Who hug their willing servitude, and bow
Unto the weakest and the most profane.
Therefore, with unencumbered soul I go
Before the footstool of my Maker, where
I hope to stand as undebased as now!

Child! is the sun abroad? I feel my hair
Borne up and wafted by the gentle wind,
I feel the odors that perfume the air,
And hear the rustling of the leaves behind.
Within my heart I picture them, and then
I almost can forget that I am blind,
And old, and hated by my fellow-men.
Yet would I fain once more behold the grace
Of nature ere I die, and gaze again
Upon her living and rejoicing face --
Fain would I see thy countenance, my child,
My comforter! I feel thy dear embrace --
I hear thy voice, so musical and mild,
The patient sole interpreter, by whom
So many years of sadness are beguiled;
For it hath made my small and scanty room
Peopled with glowing visions of the past.

But I will calmly bend me to my doom,
And wait the hour which is approaching fast,
When triple light shall stream upon mine eyes,
And heaven itself be opened up at last
To him who dared foretell its mysteries.
I have had visions in this drear eclipse
Of outward consciousness, and clomb the skies,
Striving to utter with my earthly lips
What the diviner soul had half divined,
Even as the Saint in his Apocalypse
Who saw the inmost glory, where enshrined
Sat He who fashioned glory. This hath driven
All outward strife and tumult from my mind,
And humbled me, until I have forgiven
My bitter enemies, and only seek
To find the straight and narrow path to heaven.

Yet I am weak -- oh! how entirely weak,
For one who may not love nor suffer more!
Sometimes unbidden tears will wet my cheek,
And my heart bound as keenly as of yore.
Responsive to a voice, now hushed to rest,
Which made the beautiful Italian shore,
In all its pomp of summer vineyards drest,
And Eden and a Paradise to me.
Do the sweet breezes from the balmy west
Still murmur through thy groves, Parthenope,
In search of odors from the orange bowers?
Still, on thy slopes of verdure, does the bee
Cull her rare honey from the virgin flowers?
And Philomel her plaintive chaunt prolong
'Neath skies more calm and more serene than ours,
Making the summer one perpetual song?
Art thou the same as when in manhood's pride
I walked in joy thy grassy meads among,
With that fair youthful vision by my side,
In whose bright eyes I looked -- and not in vain?
O my adorèd angel! O my bride!
Despite of years, and woe, and want, and pain,
My soul yearns back towards thee, and I seem
To wander with thee, hand in hand, again,
By the bright margins of that flowing stream.

I hear again thy voice, more silver-sweet
Than fancied music floating in a dream,
Possess my being; from afar I greet
The waving of thy garments in the glade,
And the light rustling of thy fairy feet --
What time as one half eager, half afraid,
Love's burning secret faltered on my tongue,
And tremulous looks and broken words betrayed
The secret of the heart from whence they sprung.
Ah me! the earth that rendered thee to heaven
Gave up an angel beautiful and young,
Spotless and pure as snow when freshly driven;
A bright Aurora for the starry sphere
Where all is love, and even life forgiven.
Bride of immortal beauty -- ever dear!
Dost thou await me in thy blest abode!
While I, Tithonus-like, must linger here,
And count each step along the rugged road;
A phantom, tottering to a long-made grave.
And eager to lay down my weary load.

I who was fancy's lord, am fancy's slave.
Like the low murmurs of the Indian shell
Ta'en from its coral bed beneath the wave,
Which, unforgetful of the ocean's swell,
Retains within its mystic urn the hum
Heard in the sea-grots where Nereids dwell --
Old thoughts still haunt me -- unawares they come
Between me and my rest, nor can I make
Those aged visitors of sorrow dumb.
Oh, yet awhile, my feeble soul, awake!
Nor wander back with sullen steps again;
For neither pleasant pastime canst thou take
In such a journey, nor endure the pain.
The phantoms of the past are dead for thee;
So let them ever uninvoked remain,
And be thou calm, till death shall set thee free.
Thy flowers of hope expanded long ago,
Long since their blossoms withered on the tree:
No second spring can come to make them blow,
But in the silent winter of the grave
They lie with blighted love and buried woe.

I did not waste the gifts which nature gave,
Nor slothful lay in the Circean bower;
Nor did I yield myself the willing slave
Of lust for pride, for riches, or for power.
No! in my heart a nobler spirit dwelt;
For constant was my faith in manhood's dower;
Man -- made in God's own image -- and I felt
How of our own accord we courted shame,
Until to idols like ourselves we knelt,
And so renounced the great and glorious claim
Of freedom, our immortal heritage.
I saw how bigotry, with spiteful aim,
Smote at the searching eyesight of the sage;
How Error stole behind the steps of Truth,
And cast delusion on the sacred page.
So, as a champion, even in early youth
I waged by battle with a purpose keen:
Nor feared the hand of terror, nor the tooth
Of serpent jealousy. And I have been
With starry Galileo in his cell --
That wise magician with the brow serene,
Who fathomed space; and I have seen him tell
The wonders of the planetary sphere,
And trace the ramparts of heaven's citadel
On the cold flag-stones of his dungeon drear.
And I have walked with Hampden and with Vane --
Names once so gracious to an English ear --
In days that never may return again.
My voice, though not the loudest, hath been heard
Whenever freedom raised her cry of pain,
And the faint effort of the humble bard
Hath roused up thousands from their lethargy,
To speak in words of thunder. What reward
Was mine, or theirs? It matters not; for I
am but a leaf cast on the whirling tide,
Without a hope or wish, except to die.
But truth, asserted once, must still abide,
Unquenchable, as are those fiery springs
Which day and night gush from the mountain-side,
Perpetual meteors girt with lambent wings,
Which the wild tempest tosses to and fro,

But cannot conquer with the force it brings.

Yet I, who ever felt another's woe
More keenly than my own untold distress;
I, who have battled with the common foe,
And broke for years the bread of bitterness;
Who never yet abandoned or betrayed
The trust vouchsafed me, nor have ceased to bless,
Am left alone to wither in the shade,
A weak old man, deserted by his kind --
Whom none will comfort in his age, nor aid!

Oh, let me not repine! A quiet mind
Conscious and upright, needs no other stay;
Nor can I grieve for what I leave behind,
In the rich promise of eternal day.
Henceforth to me the world is dead and gone,
Its thorns unfelt, its roses cast away:
And the old pilgrim, weary and alone,
Bowed down with travel, at his Master's gate
Now sits, his task of life-long labor done,
Thankful for rest, although it comes so late,
After sore journey through the world of sin,
In hope, and prayer, and wistfulness to wait,
Until the door shall ope, and let him in.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

Charles Edward At Versailles

ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF CULLODEN

Take away that star and garter-
Hide them from my aching sight:
Neither king nor prince shall tempt me
From my lonely room this night;
Fitting for the throneless exile
Is the atmosphere of pail,
And the gusty winds that shiver
'Neath the tapestry on the wall.
When the taper faintly dwindles
Like the pulse within the vein,
That to gay and merry measure
Ne'er may hope to bound again,
Let the shadows gather round me
While I sit in silence here,
Broken-hearted, as an orphan
Watching by his father's bier.
Let me hold my still communion
Far from every earthly sound-
Day of penance-day of passion-
Ever, as the year comes round;
Fatal day, whereon the latest
Die was cast for me and mine-
Cruel day, that quelled the fortunes
Of the hapless Stuart line!
Phantom-like, as in a mirror,
Rise the griesly scenes of death-
There before me, in its wildness,
Stretches bare Culloden's heath:
There the broken clans are scattered,
Gaunt as wolves, and famine-eyed,
Hunger gnawing at their vitals,
Hope abandoned, all but pride-
Pride, and that supreme devotion
Which the Southron never knew,
And the hatred, deeply rankling,
'Gainst the Hanoverian crew.

Oh, my God! are these the remnants,
These the wrecks of the array
That around the royal standard
Gathered on the glorious day,
When, in deep Glenfinnan's valley;
Thousands, on their bended knees,
Saw once more that stately ensign
Waving in the northern breeze,
When the noble Tullibardine
Stood beneath its weltering fold,
With the Ruddy Lion ramping
In the field of tressured gold,
When the mighty heart of Scotland,
All too big to slumber more,
Burst in wrath and exultation,
Like a huge volcano's roar?
There they stand, the battered columns,
Underneath the murky sky,
In the hush of desperation,
Not to conquer, but to die.
Hark! the bagpipe's fitful wailing:
Not the pibroch loud and shrill,
That, with hope of bloody banquet,
Lured the ravens from the hill,
But a dirge both low and solemn,
Fit for ears of dying men,
Marshalled for their latest battle,
Never more to fight again.
Madness-madness! Why this shrinking?
Were we less inured to war
When our reapers swept the harvest
From the field of red Dunbar?
Bring my horse, and blow the trumpet!
Call the riders of Fitz-James:
Let Lord Lewis head the column!
Valiant chiefs of mighty names-
Trusty Keppoch, stout Glengarry,
Gallant Gordon, wise Locheill-
Bid the clansmen hold together,
Fast, and fell, and firm as steel.
Elcho, never look so gloomy-
What avails a saddened brow?

Heart, man, heart! we need it sorely,
Never half so much, as now.
Had we but a thousand troopers,
Had we but a thousand more!
Noble Perth, I hear them coming!-
Hark! the English cannons' roar.
God! how awful sounds that volley,
Bellowing through the mist and rain!
Was not that the Highland slogan?
Let me hear that shout again!
Oh, for prophet eyes to witness
How the desperate battle goes!
Cumberland! I would not fear thee,
Could my Camerons see their foes.
Sound, I say, the charge at venture-
'Tis not naked steel we fear;
Better perish in the mêlée
Than be shot like driven deer;
Hold! the mist begins to scatter!
There in front 'tis rent asunder,
And the cloudy bastion crumbles
Underneath the deafening thunder;
There I see the scarlet gleaming!
Now, Macdonald-now or never!-
Woe is me, the clans are broken!
Father, thou art lost for ever!
Chief and vassal, lord and yeoman,
There they lie in heaps together,
Smitten by the deadly volley,
Rolled in blood upon the heather;
And the Hanoverian horsemen,
Fiercely riding to and fro,
Deal their murderous strokes at random.-
Ah, my God! where am I now?
Will that baleful vision never
Vanish from my aching sight?
Must those scenes and sounds of terror
Haunt me still by day and night?
Yea, the earth hath no oblivion
For the noblest chance it gave,
None, save in its latest refuge-
Seek it only in the grave!

Love may die, and hatred slumber,
And their memory will decay,
As the watered garden recks not
Of the drought of yesterday;
But the dream of power once broken,
What shall give repose again?
What shall charm the serpent-furies
Coiled around the maddening brain?
What kind draught can nature offer
Strong enough to lull their sting?
Better to be born a peasant
Than to live an exiled king!
Oh, these years of bitter anguish!-
What is life to such as me,
With my very heart as palsied
As a wasted cripple's knee!
Suppliant-like for alms depending
On a false and foreign court,
Jostled by the flouting nobles,
Half their pity, half their sport.
Forced to hold a place in pageant,
Like a royal prize of war,
Walking with dejected features
Close behind his victor's car,
Styled an equal-deemed a servant-
Fed with hopes of future gain-
Worse by far is fancied freedom
Than the captive's clanking chain!
Could I change this gilded bondage
Even for the dusky tower,
Whence King James beheld his lady
Sitting in the castle bower;
Birds around her sweetly singing,
Fluttering on the kindling spray,
And the comely garden glowing
In the light of rosy May.
Love descended to the window-
Love removed the bolt and bar-
Love was warder to the lovers
From the dawn to even-star.
Wherefore, Love, didst thou betray me?
Where is now the tender glance?

Where the meaning looks once lavished
By the dark-eyed Maid of France?
Where the words of hope she whispered,
When around my neck she threw
That same scarf of broidered tissue,
Bade me wear it and be true-
Bade me send it as a token
When my banner waved once more
On the castled Keep of London,
Where my fathers' waved before?
And I went and did not conquer-
But I brought it back again-
Brought it back from storm and battle-
Brought it back without a stain;
And once more I knelt before her,
And I laid it at her feet,
Saying, 'Wilt thou own it, Princess?
There at least is no defeat!'
Scornfully she looked upon me
With a measured eye and cold-
Scornfully she viewed the token,
Though her fingers wrought the gold;
And she answered, faintly flushing,
'Hast thou kept it, then, so long?
Worthy matter for a minstrel
To be told in knightly song!
Worthy of a bold Provençal,
Pacing through the peaceful plain,
Singing of his lady's favour,
Boasting of her silken chain,
Yet scarce worthy of a warrior
Sent to wrestle for a crown.
Is this all that thou hast brought me
From thy fields of high renown?
Is this all the trophy carried
From the lands where thou hast been?
It was broidered by a Princess,
Canst thou give it to a Queen?'
Woman's love is writ in water!
Woman's faith is traced in sand!
Backwards-backwards let me wander
To the noble northern land:

Let me feel the breezes blowing
Fresh along the mountain-side;
Let me see the purple heather,
Let me hear the thundering tide,
Be it hoarse as Corrievreckan
Spouting when the storm is high-
Give me but one hour of Scotland-
Let me see it ere I die!
Oh, my heart is sick and heavy-
Southern gales are not for me;
Though the glens are white with winter,
Place me there, and set me free;
Give me back my trusty comrades-
Give me back my Highland maid-
Nowhere beats the heart so kindly
As beneath the tartan plaid!
Flora! when thou wert beside me,
In the wilds of far Kintail-
When the cavern gave us shelter
From the blinding sleet and hail-
When we lurked within the thicket,
And, beneath the waning moon,
Saw the sentry's bayonet glimmer,
Heard him chant his listless tune-
When the howling storm o'ertook us,
Drifting down the island's lee,
And our crazy bark was whirling
Like a nutshell on the sea-
When the nights were dark and dreary,
And amidst the fern we lay,
Faint and foodless, sore with travel,
Waiting for the streaks of day;
When thou wert an angel to me,
Watching my exhausted sleep-
Never didst thou hear me murmur-
Couldst thou see how now I weep!
Bitter tears and sobs of anguish,
Unavailing though they be:
Oh, the brave-the brave and noble-
That have died in vain for me!

William Edmondstone Aytoun

Danube And The Euxine

'Danube, Danube! wherefore com'st thou
Red and raging to my caves?
Wherefore leap thy swollen waters
Madly through the broken waves?
Wherefore is thy tide so sullied
With a hue unknown to me;
Wherefore dost thou bring pollution
To the old and sacred sea?'

'Ha! rejoice, old Father Euxine!
I am brimming full and red;
Noble tidings do I carry
From my distant channel-bed.
I have been a Christian river
Dull and slow this many a year,
Rolling down my torpid waters
Through a silence morne and drear;
Have not felt the tread of armies
Trampling on my reedy shore;
Have not heard the trumpet calling,
Or the cannon's gladsome roar;
Only listened to the laughter
From the village and the town,
And the church-bells, ever jangling,
As the weary day went down.
So I lay and sorely pondered
On the days long since gone by,
When my old primæval forests
Echoed to the war-man's cry;
When the race of Thor and Odin
Held their battles by my side,
And the blood of man was mingling
Warmly with my chilly tide.
Father Euxine! thou rememb'rest
How I brought thee tribute then-
Swollen corpses, gashed and gory,
Heads and limbs of slaughter'd men?
Father Euxine! be thou joyful!
I am running red once more-

Not with heathen blood, as early,
But with gallant Christian gore!
For the old times are returning,
And the Cross is broken down,
And I hear the tocsin sounding
In the village and the town;
And the glare of burning cities
Soon shall light me on my way-
Ha! my heart is big and jocund
With the draught I drank to-day.
Ha! I feel my strength awakened,
And my brethren shout to me;
Each is leaping red and joyous
To his own awaiting sea.
Rhine and Elbe are plunging downward
Through their wild anarchic land,
Everywhere are Christians falling
By their brother Christians' hand!
Yea, the old times are returning,
And the olden gods are here!
Take my tribute, Father Euxine,
To thy waters dark and drear.
Therefore come I with my torrents,
Shaking castle, crag, and town;
Therefore, with the shout of thunder,
Sweep I herd and herdsman down;
Therefore leap I to thy bosom,
With a loud triumphal roar-
Greet me, greet me, Father Euxine,
I am Christian stream no more!

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

Edinburgh After Flodden

I.

News of battle!-news of battle!
Hark! 'tis ringing down the street:
And the archways and the pavement
Bear the clang of hurrying feet.
News of battle? Who hath brought it?
News of triumph? Who should bring
Tidings from our noble army,
Greetings from our gallant King?
All last night we watched the beacons
Blazing on the hills afar,
Each one bearing, as it kindled,
Message of the opened war.
All night long the northern streamers
Shot across the trembling sky:
Fearful lights, that never beckon
Save when kings or heroes die.

II.

News of battle! Who hath brought it?
All are thronging to the gate;
'Warder-warder! open quickly!
Man-is this a time to wait?'
And the heavy gates are opened:
Then a murmur long and loud,
And a cry of fear and wonder
Bursts from out the bending crowd.
For they see in battered harness
Only one hard-stricken man,
And his weary steed is wounded,
And his cheek is pale and wan.
Spearless hangs a bloody banner
In his weak and drooping hand-
God! can that be Randolph Murray,
Captain of the city band?

III.

Round him crush the people, crying,
'Tell us all-oh, tell us true!
Where are they who went to battle,
Randolph Murray, sworn to you?
Where are they, our brothers-children?
Have they met the English foe?
Why art thou alone, unfollowed?
Is it weal, or is it woe?'
Like a corpse the grisly warrior
Looks from out his helm of steel;
But no word he speaks in answer,
Only with his armèd heel
Chides his weary steed, and onward
Up the city streets they ride;
Fathers, sisters, mothers, children,
Shrieking, praying by his side.
'By the God that made thee, Randolph!
Tell us what mischance hath come!'
Then he lifts his riven banner,
And the asker's voice is dumb.

IV.

The elders of the city
Have met within their hall-
The men whom good King James had charged
To watch the tower and wall.
'Your hands are weak with age,' he said,
'Your hearts are stout and true;
So bide ye in the Maiden Town,
While others fight for you.
My trumpet from the Border-side
Shall send a blast so clear,
That all who wait within the gate
That stirring sound may hear.
Or, if it be the will of heaven
That back I never come,
And if, instead of Scottish shouts,

Ye hear the English drum,-
Then let the warning bells ring out,
Then gird you to the fray,
Then man the walls like burghers stout,
And fight while fight you may.
'T were better that in fiery flame
The roofs should thunder down,
Than that the foot of foreign foe
Should trample in the town!

V.

Then in came Randolph Murray,-
His step was slow and weak,
And, as he doffed his dinted helm,
The tears ran down his cheek:
They fell upon his corslet,
And on his mailèd hand,
As he gazed around him wistfully,
Leaning sorely on his brand.
And none who then beheld him
But straight were smote with fear,
For a bolder and a sterner man
Had never couched a spear.
They knew so sad a messenger
Some ghastly news must bring:
And all of them were fathers,
And their sons were with the King.

VI.

And up then rose the Provost-
A brave old man was he,
Of ancient name and knightly fame,
And chivalrous degree.
He ruled our city like a Lord
Who brooked no equal here,
And ever for the townsmen's rights
Stood up 'gainst prince and peer.
And he had seen the Scottish host

March from the Borough-muir,
With music-storm and clamorous shout
And all the din that thunders out,
When youth's of victory sure.
But yet a dearer thought had he,
For, with a father's pride,
He saw his last remaining son
Go forth by Randolph's side,
With casque on head and spur on heel,
All keen to do and dare;
And proudly did that gallant boy
Dunedin's banner bear.
Oh, woeful now was the old man's look,
And he spake right heavily-
'Now, Randolph, tell thy tidings,
However sharp they be!
Woe is written on thy visage,
Death is looking from thy face:
Speak, though it be of overthrow-
It cannot be disgrace!'

VII.

Right bitter was the agony
That wrung the soldier proud:
Thrice did he strive to answer,
And thrice he groaned aloud.
Then he gave the riven banner
To the old man's shaking hand,
Saying-'That is all I bring ye
From the bravest of the land!
Ay! ye may look upon it-
It was guarded well and long,
By your brothers and your children,
By the valiant and the strong.
One by one they fell around it,
As the archers laid them low,
Grimly dying, still unconquered,
With their faces to the foe.
Ay! ye well may look upon it-
There is more than honour there,

Else, be sure, I had not brought it
From the field of dark despair.
Never yet was royal banner
Steeped in such a costly dye;
It hath lain upon a bosom
Where no other shroud shall lie.
Sirs! I charge you keep it holy,
Keep it as a sacred thing,
For the stain you see upon it
Was the life-blood of your King!

VIII.

Woe, woe, and lamentation!
What a piteous cry was there!
Widows, maidens, mothers, children,
Shrieking, sobbing in despair!
Through the streets the death-word rushes,
Spreading terror, sweeping on-
'Jesu Christ! our King has fallen-
O great God, King James is gone!
Holy Mother Mary, shield us,
Thou who erst did lose thy Son!
O the blackest day for Scotland
That she ever knew before!
O our King-the good, the noble,
Shall we see him never more?
Woe to us and woe to Scotland,
O our sons, our sons and men!
Surely some have 'scaped the Southron,
Surely some will come again!
Till the oak that fell last winter
Shall uprear its shattered stem-
Wives and mothers of Dunedin-
Ye may look in vain for them!

IX.

But within the Council Chamber
All was silent as the grave,

Whilst the tempest of their sorrow
Shook the bosoms of the brave.
Well indeed might they be shaken
With the weight of such a blow:
He was gone-their prince, their idol,
Whom they loved and worshipped so!
Like a knell of death and judgment
Rung from heaven by angel hand,
Fell the words of desolation
On the elders of the land.
Hoary heads were bowed and trembling,
Withered hands were clasped and wrung:
God had left the old and feeble,
He had ta'en away the young.

X.

Then the Provost he uprose,
And his lip was ashen white,
But a flush was on his brow,
And his eye was full of light.
'Thou hast spoken, Randolph Murray,
Like a soldier stout and true;
Thou hast done a deed of daring
Had been perilled but by few.
For thou hast not shamed to face us,
Nor to speak thy ghastly tale,
Standing-thou, a knight and captain-
Here, alive within thy mail!
Now, as my God shall judge me,
I hold it braver done,
Than hadst thou tarried in thy place,
And died above my son!
Thou needst not tell it: he is dead.
God help us all this day!
But speak-how fought the citizens
Within the furious fray?
For, by the might of Mary,
'T were something still to tell
That no Scottish foot went backward
When the Royal Lion fell!'

XI.

'No one failed him! He is keeping
Royal state and semblance still;
Knight and noble lie around him,
Cold on Flodden's fatal hill.
Of the brave and gallant-hearted,
Whom ye sent with prayers away,
Not a single man departed
From his monarch yesterday.
Had you seen them, O my masters!
When the night began to fall,
And the English spearmen gathered
Round a grim and ghastly wall!
As the wolves in winter circle
Round the leaguer on the heath,
So the greedy foe glared upward,
Panting still for blood and death.
But a rampart rose before them,
Which the boldest dared not scale;
Every stone a Scottish body,
Every step a corpse in mail!
And behind it lay our monarch
Clenching still his shivered sword:
By his side Montrose and Athole,
At his feet a southern lord.
All so thick they lay together,
When the stars lit up the sky,
That I knew not who were stricken,
Or who yet remained to die,
Few there were when Surrey halted,
And his wearied host withdrew;
None but dying men around me,
When the English trumpet blew.
Then I stooped, and took the banner,
As ye see it, from his breast,
And I closed our hero's eyelids,
And I left him to his rest.
In the mountains growled the thunder,
As I leaped the woeful wall,

And the heavy clouds were settling
Over Flodden, like a pall.'

XII.

So he ended. And the others
Cared not any answer then;
Sitting silent, dumb with sorrow,
Sitting anguish-struck, like men
Who have seen the roaring torrent
Sweep their happy homes away,
And yet linger by the margin,
Staring idly on the spray.
But, without, the maddening tumult
Waxes ever more and more,
And the crowd of wailing women
Gather round the Council door.
Every dusky spire is ringing
With a dull and hollow knell,
And the Miserere's singing
To the tolling of the bell.
Through the streets the burghers hurry,
Spreading terror as they go;
And the rampart's thronged with watchers
For the coming of the foe.
From each mountain-top a pillar
Streams into the torpid air,
Bearing token from the Border
That the English host is there.
All without is flight and terror,
All within is woe and fear-
God protect thee, Maiden City,
For thy latest hour is near!

XIII.

No! not yet, thou high Dunedin!
Shalt thou totter to thy fall;
Though thy bravest and thy strongest
Are not there to man the wall.

No, not yet! the ancient spirit
Of our fathers hath not gone;
Take it to thee as a buckler
Better far than steel or stone.
Oh, remember those who perished
For thy birthright at the time
When to be a Scot was treason,
And to side with Wallace, crime!
Have they not a voice among us,
Whilst their hallowed dust is here?
Hear ye not a summons sounding
From each buried warrior's bier?
'Up!'-they say-'and keep the freedom
Which we won you long ago:
Up! and keep our graves unsullied
From the insults of the foe!
Up! and if ye cannot save them,
Come to us in blood and fire:
Midst the crash of falling turrets,
Let the last of Scots expire!'

XIV.

Still the bells are tolling fiercely,
And the cry comes louder in;
Mothers wailing for their children,
Sisters for their slaughtered kin.
All is terror and disorder,
Till the Provost rises up,
Calm, as though he had not tasted
Of the fell and bitter cup.
All so stately from his sorrow,
Rose the old undaunted Chief,
That you had not deemed, to see him,
His was more than common grief.
'Rouse ye, Sirs!' he said; 'we may not
Longer mourn for what is done:
If our King be taken from us,
We are left to guard his son.
We have sworn to keep the city
From the foe, whate'er they be,

And the oath that we have taken
Never shall be broke by me.
Death is nearer to us, brethren,
Than it seemed to those who died,
Fighting yesterday at Flodden,
By their lord and master's side.
Let us meet it then in patience,
Not in terror or in fear;
Though our hearts are bleeding yonder,
Let our souls be steadfast here.
Up, and rouse ye! Time is fleeting,
And we yet have much to do;
Up! and haste ye through the city,
Stir the burghers stout and true!
Gather all our scattered people,
Fling the banner out once more,-
Randolph Murray! do thou bear it,
As it erst was borne before:
Never Scottish heart will leave it,
When they see their monarch's gore!

XV.

'Let them cease that dismal knelling!
It is time enough to ring,
When the fortress-strength of Scotland
Stoops to ruin like its King.
Let the bells be kept for warning,
Not for terror or alarm;
When they next are heard to thunder,
Let each man and stripling arm.
Bid the women leave their wailing,-
Do they think that woeful strain,
From the bloody heaps of Flodden
Can redeem their dearest slain?
Bid them cease,-or rather hasten
To the churches, every one;
There to pray to Mary Mother,
And to her anointed Son,
That the thunderbolt above us
May not fall in ruin yet;

That in fire, and blood, and rapine,
Scotland's glory may not set.
Let them pray,-for never women
Stood in need of such a prayer!
England's yeomen shall not find them
Clinging to the altars there.
No! if we are doomed to perish,
Man and maiden, let us fall;
And a common gulf of ruin
Open wide to whelm us all!
Never shall the ruthless spoiler
Lay his hot insulting hand
On the sisters of our heroes,
Whilst we bear a torch or brand!
Up! and rouse ye, then, my brothers,
But when next ye hear the bell
Sounding forth the sullen summons
That may be our funeral knell,
Once more let us meet together,
Once more see each other's face;
Then, like men that need not tremble,
Go to our appointed place.
God, our Father, will not fail us
In that last tremendous hour,-
If all other bulwarks crumble,
HE will be our strength and tower:
Though the ramparts rock beneath us,
And the walls go crashing down,
Though the roar of conflagration
Bellow o'er the sinking town;
There is yet one place of shelter,
Where the foeman cannot come,
Where the summons never sounded
Of the trumpet or the drum.
There again we'll meet our children,
Who, on Flodden's trampled sod,
For their king and for their country
Rendered up their souls to God.
There shall we find rest and refuge,
With our dear departed brave;
And the ashes of the city
Be our universal grave!

William Edmondstone Aytoun

Epitaph Of Constantine Kanaris

I am Constantine Kanaris:
I, who lie beneath this stone,
Twice into the air in thunder
Have the Turkish galleys blown.

In my bed I died-a Christian,
Hoping straight with Christ to be;
Yet one earthly wish is buried
Deep within the grave with me-

That upon the open ocean
When the third Armada came,
They and I had died together,
Whirled aloft on wings of flame.

Yet 'tis something that they've laid me
In a land without a stain:
Keep it thus, my God and Saviour,
Till I rise from earth again!

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

Hermotimus

I.

'Wilt not lay thee down in quiet slumber?
Weary dost thou seem, and ill at rest;
Sleep will bring thee dreams in starry number-
Let him come to thee and be thy guest.
Midnight now is past-
Husband! come at last-
Lay thy throbbing head upon my breast.'

II.

'Weary am I, but my soul is waking;
Fain I'd lay me gently by thy side,
But my spirit then, its home forsaking,
Through the realms of space would wander wide-
Everything forgot,
What would be thy lot,
If I came not back to thee, my bride?'

III.

'Music, like the lute of young Apollo,
Vibrates even now within mine ear;
Soft and silver voices bid me follow,
Yet my soul is dull and will not hear.
Waking it will stay:
Let me watch till day-
Fainter will they come, and disappear.'

IV.

'Speak not thus to me, my own-my dearest!
These are but the phantoms of thy brain;
Nothing can befall thee which thou fearest,
Thou shalt wake to love and life again.'

Were this sleep thy last,
I should hold thee fast,
Thou shouldst strive against me but in vain.'

V.

'Eros will protect us, and will hover,
Guardian-like, above thee all the night,
Jealous of thee, as of some fond lover
Chiding back the rosy-fingered light-
He will be thine aid:
Canst thou feel afraid
When
his
torch above us burneth bright?'

VI.

'Lo! the cressets of the night are waning-
Old Orion hastens from the sky;
Only thou of all things art remaining
Unrefreshed by slumber-thou and I.
Sound and sense are still;
Even the distant rill
Murmurs fainter now, and languidly.'

VII.

'Come and rest thee, husband!'-And no longer
Could the young man that fond call resist:
Vainly was he warned, for love was stronger-
Warmly did he press her to his breast.
Warmly met she his;
Kiss succeeded kiss,
Till their eyelids closed with sleep oppressed.

VIII.

Soon Aurora left her early pillow,
And the heavens grew rosy-rich, and rare;
Laughed the dewy plain and glassy billow,
For the Golden God himself was there;
And the vapour-screen
Rose the hills between,
Steaming up, like incense, in the air.

IX.

O'er her husband sate Ione bending-
Marble-like and marble-hued he lay;
Underneath her raven locks descending,
Paler seemed his face, and ashen gray,
And so white his brow-
White and cold as snow-
'Husband! Gods! his soul hath passed away!'

X.

Raise ye up the pile with gloomy shadow-
Heap it with the mournful cypress-bough!-
And they raised the pile upon the meadow,
And they heaped the mournful cypress too;
And they laid the dead
On his funeral bed,
And they kindled up the flames below.

XI.

Swiftly rose they, and the corse surrounded,
Spreading out a pall into the air;
And the sharp and sudden crackling sounded
Mournfully to all the watchers there.
Soon their force was spent,
And the body blent
With the embers' slow-expiring glare.

XII.

Night again was come; but oh, how lonely
To the mourner did that night appear!
Peace nor rest it brought, but sorrow only,
Vain repinings and unwonted fear.
Dimly burned the lamp-
Chill the air and damp-
And the winds without were moaning drear.

XIII.

Hush! a voice in solemn whispers speaking
Breaks within the twilight of the room;
And Ione, loud and wildly shrieking,
Starts and gazes through the ghastly gloom.
Nothing sees she there-
All is empty air,
All is empty as a rifled tomb.

XIV.

Once again the voice beside her sounded,
Low, and faint, and solemn was its tone-
'Nor by form nor shade am I surrounded,
Fleshly home and dwelling have I none.
They are passed away-
Woe is me! to-day
Hath robbed me of myself, and made me lone.'

XV.

'Vainly were the words of parting spoken;
Evermore must Charon turn from me.
Still my thread of life remains unbroken,
And unbroken ever it must be;
Only they may rest
Whom the Fates' behest
From their mortal mansion setteth free.'

XVI.

'I have seen the robes of Hermes glisten-
Seen him wave afar his serpent-wand;
But to me the Herald would not listen-
When the dead swept by at his command,
Not with that pale crew
Durst I venture too-
Ever shut for me the quiet land.'

XVII.

'Day and night before the dreary portal,
Phantom-shapes, the guards of Hades, lie;
None of heavenly kind, nor yet of mortal,
May unchallenged pass the warders by.
None that path may go,
If he cannot show
His last passport to eternity.'

XVIII.

'Cruel was the spirit-power thou gavest-
Fatal, O Apollo, was thy love!
Pythian! Archer! brightest God and bravest,
Hear, O hear me from thy throne above!
Let me not, I pray,
Thus be cast away:
Plead for me-thy slave-O plead to Jove!'

XIX.

'I have heard thee with the Muses singing-
Heard that full, melodious voice of thine,
Silver-clear throughout the ether ringing-
Seen thy locks in golden clusters shine;
And thine eye, so bright

With its innate light,
Hath ere now been bent so low as mine.'

XX.

'Hast thou lost the wish-the will-to cherish
Those who trusted in thy godlike power?
Hyacinthus did not wholly perish;
Still he lives, the firstling of thy bower;
Still he feels thy rays,
Fondly meets thy gaze,
Though but now the spirit of a flower.'

XXI.

'Hear me, Phoebus! Hear me and deliver!
Lo! the morning breaketh from afar-
God! thou comest bright and great as ever-
Night goes back before thy burning car;
All her lamps are gone-
Lucifer alone
Lingers still for thee-the blessed star!'

XXII.

'Hear me, Phoebus!'-And therewith descended
Through the window-arch a glory-gleam,
All effulgent-and with music blended,
For such solemn sounds arose as stream
From the Memnon-lyre,
When the morning fire
Gilds the giant's forehead with its beam.

XXIII.

'Thou hast heard thy servant's prayer, Apollo;
Thou dost call me, mighty God of Day!
Fare-thee-well, Ione!'-And more hollow

Came the phantom-voice, then died away.
When the slaves arose,
Not in calm repose,
Not in sleep, but death, their mistress lay.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

Oenone

On the holy mount of Ida,
Where the pine and cypress grow,
Sate a young and lovely woman,
Weeping ever, weeping low.
Drearly throughout the forest
Did the winds of autumn blow,
And the clouds above were flying,
And Scamander rolled below.

'Faithless Paris! cruel Paris!'
Thus the poor deserted spake-
'Wherefore thus so strangely leave me?
Why thy loving bride forsake?
Why no tender word at parting?
Why no kiss, no farewell take?
Would that I could but forget thee-
Would this throbbing heart might break!

'Is my face no longer blooming?
Are my eyes no longer bright?
Ah! my tears have made them dimmer,
And my cheeks are pale and white.
I have wept since early morning,
I will weep the livelong night;
Now I long for sullen darkness,
As I once have longed for light.

'Paris! canst thou then be cruel?
Fair, and young, and brave thou art-
Can it be that in thy bosom
Lies so cold, so hard a heart?
Children were we bred together-
She who bore me suckled thee;
I have been thine old companion,
When thou hadst no more but me.

'I have watched thee in thy slumbers,
When the shadow of a dream
Passed across thy smiling features,

Like the ripple of a stream;
And so sweetly were the visions
Pictured there with lively grace,
That I half could read their import
By the changes on thy face.

'When I sang of Ariadne,
Sang the old and mournful tale,
How her faithless lover, Theseus,
Left her to lament and wail;
Then thine eyes would fill and glisten,
Her complaint could soften thee:
Thou hast wept for Ariadne-
Theseus' self might weep for me!

'Thou may'st find another maiden
With a fairer face than mine-
With a gayer voice, and sweeter,
And a spirit liker thine:
For if e'er my beauty bound thee,
Lost and broken is the spell;
But thou canst not find another
That will love thee half so well.

'O thou hollow ship that bearest
Paris o'er the faithless deep,
Wouldst thou leave him on some island,
Where alone the waters weep?
Where no human foot is moulded
In the wet and yellow sand-
Leave him there, thou hollow vessel!
Leave him on that lonely land!

'Then his heart will surely soften,
When his foolish hopes decay,
And his older love rekindle,
As the new one dies away.
Visionary hills will haunt him,
Rising from the glassy sea,
And his thoughts will wander homewards
Unto Ida and to me.

'O! that like a little swallow
I could reach that lonely spot!
All his errors would be pardoned,
All the weary past forgot.
Never should he wander from me-
Never should he more depart,
For these arms would be his prison,
And his home would be my heart.'

Thus lamented fair Oenone,
Weeping ever, weeping low,
On the holy mount of Ida,
Where the pine and cypress grow.
In the self-same hour Cassandra
Shrieked her prophecy of woe,
And into the Spartan dwelling
Did the faithless Paris go.

William Edmondstone Aytoun

The Broken Pitcher

It was a Moorish maiden was sitting by a well,
And what the maiden thought of, I cannot, cannot, tell,
When by there rode a valiant knight from the town of Oviedo,
Alphonso Guzman was he hight, the Count of Tololedo.

'Oh, maiden, Moorish maiden! why sitt'st thou by the spring?
Say, dost thou seek a lover, or any other thing?
Why dost thou look upon me, with eyes so dark and wide,
And wherefore doth the pitcher lie broken by thy side?'

'I do not seek a lover, thou Christian knight so gay,
Because an article like that hath never come my way;
And why I gaze upon you, I cannot, cannot tell,
Except that in your iron hose you look uncommon swell.

'My pitcher it is broken, and this the reason is -
A shepherd came behind me, and tried to snatch a kiss;
I would not stand his nonsense, so ne'er a word I spoke,
But scored him on the costard, and so the jug was broke.

'My uncle, the Alcaydé, he waits for me at home,
And will not take his tumbler, until Zorayda come:
I cannot bring him water - the pitcher is in pieces -
And so I'm sure to catch it, 'cos he wallops all his nieces'

'Oh maiden, Moorish maiden! Wilt thou be ruled by me?
Then wipe thine eyes and rosy lips, and give me kisses three;
And I'll give thee my helmet, thou kind and courteous lady,
To carry home the water to thy Uncle, the Alcaydé.'

He lighted down from off his steed line - he tied him to a tree -
He bent him to the maiden, and he took his kisses three;
'To wrong thee, sweet Zorayda, I swear would be a sin!'
And he knelt him at the fountain, and he dipped his helmet in.

Up rose the Moorish maiden - behind the Knight she steals,
And caught Alphonso Guzman in a twinkling by the heels:
She tipped him in and held him down beneath the bubbling water -
'Now, take thou that for venturing to kiss Al Hamet's daughter!'

A Christian maid is waiting in the town of Oviedo;
She waits the coming of her love, the Count of Toledo;
I pray you all in charity, that you will never tell,
How he met the Moorish maiden beside the lonely well.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Burial March Of Dundee

Sound the fife, and cry the slogan-
Let the pibroch shake the air
With its wild triumphal music,
Worthy of the freight we bear.
Let the ancient hills of Scotland
Hear once more the battle-song
Swell within their glens and valleys
As the clansmen march along!
Never from the field of combat,
Never from the deadly fray,
Was a nobler trophy carried
Than we bring with us to-day;
Never, since the valiant Douglas
On his dauntless bosom bore
Good King Robert's heart-the priceless-
To our dear Redeemer's shore!
Lo! we bring with us the hero-
Lo! we bring the conquering Græme,
Crowned as best beseems a victor
From the altar of his fame;
Fresh and bleeding from the battle
Whence his spirit took its flight,
Midst the crashing charge of squadrons,
And the thunder of the fight!
Strike, I say, the notes of triumph,
As we march o'er moor and lea!
Is there any here will venture
To bewail our dead Dundee?
Let the widows of the traitors
Weep until their eyes are dim!
Wail ye may full well for Scotland-
Let none dare to mourn for him!
See! above his glorious body
Lies the royal banner's fold-
See! his valiant blood is mingled
With its crimson and its gold.
See! how calm he looks and stately,
Like a warrior on his shield,
Waiting till the flush of morning

Breaks along the battle-field!
See-Oh never more, my comrades!
Shall we see that falcon eye
Redden with its inward lightning,
As the hour of fight drew nigh;
Never shall we hear the voice that,
Clearer than the trumpet's call,
Bade us strike for King and Country,
Bade us win the field or fall!
On the heights of Killiecrankie
Yester-morn our army lay:
Slowly rose the mist in columns
From the river's broken way;
Hoarsely roared the swollen torrent,
And the pass was wrapped in gloom,
When the clansmen rose together
From their lair amidst the broom.
Then we belted on our tartans,
And our bonnets down we drew,
And we felt our broadswords' edges,
And we proved them to be true;
And we prayed the prayer of soldiers,
And we cried the gathering-cry,
And we clasped the hands of kinsmen,
And we swore to do or die!
Then our leader rode before us
On his war-horse black as night-
Well the Cameronian rebels
Knew that charger in the fight!-
And a cry of exultation
From the bearded warriors rose;
For we loved the house of Claver'se,
And we thought of good Montrose.
But he raised his hand for silence-
'Soldiers! I have sworn a vow:
Ere the evening-star shall glisten
On Schehallion's lofty brow,
Either we shall rest in triumph,
Or another of the Graemes
Shall have died in battle-harness
For his Country and King James!
Think upon the Royal Martyr-

Think of what his race endure-
Think on him whom butchers murder'd
On the field of Magus Muir:-
By his sacred blood I charge ye,
By the ruin'd hearth and shrine-
By the blighted hopes of Scotland,
By your injuries and mine-
Strike this day as if the anvil
Lay beneath your blows the while,
Be they Covenanting traitors,
Or the brood of false Argyle!
Strike! and drive the trembling rebels
Backwards o'er the stormy Forth;
Let them tell their pale Convention
How they fared within the North.
Let them tell that Highland honour
Is not to be bought nor sold,
That we scorn their Prince's anger,
As we loathe his foreign gold.
Strike! and when the fight is over,
If ye look in vain for me,
Where the dead are lying thickest,
Search for him that was Dundee!

Loudly then the hills re-echoed
With our answer to his call,
But a deeper echo sounded
In the bosoms of us all.
For the lands of wide Breadalbane,
Not a man who heard him speak
Would that day have left the battle.
Burning eye and flushing cheek
Told the clansmen's fierce emotion,
And they harder drew their breath;
For their souls were strong within them,
Stronger than the grasp of death.
Soon we heard a challenge-trumpet
Sounding in the pass below,
And the distant tramp of horses,
And the voices of the foe:
Down we crouched amid the bracken,
Till the Lowland ranks drew near,

Panting like the hounds in summer,
When they scent the stately deer.
From the dark defile emerging,
Next we saw the squadrons come,
Leslie's foot and Leven's troopers
Marching to the tuck of drum;
Through the scattered wood of birches,
O'er the broken ground and heath,
Wound the long battalion slowly,
Till they gained the field beneath;
Then we bounded from our covert.-
Judge how looked the Saxons then,
When they saw the rugged mountain
Start to life with armèd men!
Like a tempest down the ridges,
Swept the hurricane of steel,
Rose the slogan of Macdonald-
Flashed the broadsword of Locheill!
Vainly sped the withering volley
'Mongst the foremost of our band-
On we poured until we met them,
Foot to foot, and hand to hand.
Horse and man went down like drift-wood
When the floods are black at Yule,
And their carcasses are whirling
In the Garry's deepest pool.
Horse and man went down before us-
Living foe there tarried none
On the field of Killiecrankie,
When that stubborn fight was done!

And the evening-star was shining
On Schehallion's distant head,
When we wiped our bloody broadswords,
And returned to count the dead.
There we found him, gashed and gory,
Stretch'd upon the cumbered plain,
As he told us where to seek him,
In the thickest of the slain.
And a smile was on his visage,
For within his dying ear
Pealed the joyful note of triumph,

And the clansmen's clamorous cheer:
So, amidst the battle's thunder,
Shot, and steel, and scorching flame,
In the glory of his manhood
Passed the spirit of the Græme!
Open wide the vaults of Athol,
Where the bones of heroes rest-
Open wide the hallowed portals
To receive another guest!
Last of Scots, and last of freemen-
Last of all that dauntless race
Who would rather die unsullied
Than outlive the land's disgrace!
O thou lion-hearted warrior!
Reck not of the after-time:
Honour may be deemed dishonour,
Loyalty be called a crime.
Sleep in peace with kindred ashes
Of the noble and the true,
Hands that never failed their country,
Hearts that never baseness knew.
Sleep!-and till the latest trumpet
Wakes the dead from earth and sea,
Scotland shall not boast a braver
Chieftain than our own Dundee!

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Buried Flower

In the silence of my chamber,
When the night is still and deep,
And the drowsy heave of ocean
Mutters in its charmed sleep,

Oft I hear the angel-voices
That have thrilled me long ago,-
Voices of my lost companions,
Lying deep beneath the snow.

O, the garden I remember,
In the gay and sunny spring,
When our laughter made the thickets
And the arching alleys ring!

O the merry burst of gladness!
O the soft and tender tone!
O the whisper never uttered
Save to one fond ear alone!

O the light of life that sparkled
In those bright and bounteous eyes!
O the blush of happy beauty,
Tell-tale of the heart's surprise:

O the radiant light that girdled
Field and forest, land and sea,
When we all were young together,
And the earth was new to me:

Where are now the flowers we tended?
Withered, broken, branch and stem;
Where are now the hopes we cherished?
Scattered to the winds with them.

For ye, too, were flowers, ye dear ones!
Nursed in hope and reared in love,
Looking fondly ever upward
To the clear blue heaven above:

Smiling on the sun that cheered us,
Rising lightly from the rain,
Never folding up your freshness
Save to give it forth again:

Never shaken, save by accents
From a tongue that was not free,
As the modest blossom trembles
At the wooing of the bee.

O! 'tis sad to lie and reckon
All the days of faded youth,
All the vows that we believed in,
All the words we spoke in truth.

Severed-were it severed only
By an idle thought of strife,
Such as time might knit together;
Not the broken chord of life!

O my heart! that once so truly
Kept another's time and tune,
Heart, that kindled in the spring-tide,
Look around thee in the noon.

Where are they who gave the impulse
To thy earliest thought and flow?
Look around the ruined garden-
All are withered, dropped, or low!

Seek the birth-place of the lily,
Dearer to the boyish dream
Than the golden cups of Eden,
Floating on its slumbrous stream;

Never more shalt thou behold her-
She, the noblest, fairest, best:
She that rose in fullest beauty,
Like a queen, above the rest.

Only still I keep her image

As a thought that cannot die;
He who raised the shade of Helen
Had no greater power than I.

O! I fling my spirit backward,
And I pass o'er years of pain;
All I loved is rising round me,
All the lost returns again.

Blow, for ever blow, ye breezes,
Warmly as ye did before!
Bloom again, ye happy gardens,
With the radiant tints of yore!

Warble out in spray and thicket,
All ye choristers unseen;
Let the leafy woodland echo
With an anthem to its queen!

Lo! she cometh in her beauty,
Stately with a Juno grace,
Raven locks, Madonna-braided
O'er her sweet and blushing face:

Eyes of deepest violet, beaming
With the love that knows not shame-
Lips, that thrill my inmost being
With the utterance of a name.

And I bend the knee before her,
As a captive ought to bow,-
Pray thee, listen to my pleading,
Sovereign of my soul art thou!

O my dear and gentle lady,
Let me show thee all my pain,
Ere the words that late were prisoned
Sink into my heart again.

Love, they say, is very fearful
Ere its curtain be withdrawn,
Trembling at the thought of error

As the shadows scare the fawn.

Love hath bound me to thee, lady,
Since the well-remembered day
When I first beheld thee coming
In the light of lustrous May.

Not a word I dared to utter-
More than he who, long ago,
Saw the heavenly shapes descending
Over Ida's slopes of snow:

When a low and solemn music
Floated through the listening grove,
And the throstle's song was silenced,
And the doling of the dove:

When immortal beauty opened
All its grace to mortal sight,
And the awe of worship blended
With the throbbing of delight.

As the shepherd stood before them
Trembling in the Phrygian dell,
Even so my soul and being
Owned the magic of the spell;

And I watched thee ever fondly,
Watched thee, dearest! from afar,
With the mute and humble homage
Of the Indian to a star.

Thou wert still the Lady Flora
In her morning garb of bloom;
Where thou wert was light and glory,
Where thou wert not, dearth and gloom.

So for many a day I followed
For a long and weary while,
Ere my heart rose up to bless thee
For the yielding of a smile,-

Ere thy words were few and broken
As they answered back to mine,
Ere my lips had power to thank thee
For the gift vouchsafed by thine.

Then a mighty gush of passion
Through my inmost being ran;
Then my older life was ended,
And a dearer course began.

Dearer!-O, I cannot tell thee
What a load was swept away,
What a world of doubt and darkness
Faded in the dawning day!

All my error, all my weakness,
All my vain delusions fled:
Hope again revived, and gladness
Waved its wings above my head.

Like the wanderer of the desert,
When, across the dreary sand,
Breathes the perfume from the thickets
Bordering on the promised land;

When afar he sees the palm-trees
Cresting o'er the lonely well,
When he hears the pleasant tinkle
Of the distant camel's bell:

So a fresh and glad emotion
Rose within my swelling breast,
And I hurried swiftly onwards
To the haven of my rest.

Thou wert there with word and welcome,
With thy smile so purely sweet;
And I laid my heart before thee,
Laid it, darling, at thy feet!-

O ye words that sound so hollow
As I now recall your tone!

What are ye but empty echoes
Of a passion crushed and gone?

Wherefore should I seek to kindle
Light, when all around is gloom?
Wherefore should I raise a phantom
O'er the dark and silent tomb?

Early wert thou taken, Mary!
In thy fair and glorious prime,
Ere the bees had ceased to murmur
Through the umbrage of the lime.

Buds were blowing, waters flowing,
Birds were singing on the tree,
Every thing was bright and glowing,
When the angels came for thee.

Death had laid aside his terror,
And he found thee calm and mild,
Lying in thy robes of whiteness,
Like a pure and stainless child.

Hardly had the mountain violet
Spread its blossoms on the sod,
Ere they laid the turf above thee,
And thy spirit rose to God.

Early wert thou taken, Mary!
And I know 'tis vain to weep-
Tears of mine can never wake thee
From thy sad and silent sleep.

O away! my thoughts are earthward!
Not asleep, my love, art thou!
Dwelling in the land of glory
With the saints and angels now.

Brighter, fairer far than living,
With no trace of woe or pain,
Robed in everlasting beauty,
Shall I see thee once again,

By the light that never fadeth,
Underneath eternal skies,
When the dawn of resurrection
Breaks o'er deathless Paradise.

William Edmondstone Aytoun

The Execution Of Montrose

COME hither, Evan Cameron!
Come, stand beside my knee:
I hear the river roaring down
Towards the wintry sea.
There 's shouting on the mountain-side,
There 's war within the blast;
Old faces look upon me,
Old forms go trooping past:
I hear the pibroch wailing
Amidst the din of fight,
And my dim spirit wakes again
Upon the verge of night.

'T was I that led the Highland host
Through wild Lochaber's snows,
What time the plaided clans came down
To battle with Montrose.
I 've told thee how the Southrons fell
Beneath the broad claymore,
And how we smote the Campbell clan
By Inverlochy's shore.
I 've told thee how we swept Dundee,
And tam'd the Lindsays' pride;
But never have I told thee yet
How the great Marquis died.

A traitor sold him to his foes;
O deed of deathless shame!
I charge thee, boy, if e'er thou meet
With one of Assynt's name—
Be it upon the mountain's side,
Or yet within the glen,
Stand he in martial gear alone,
Or back'd by armed men—
Face him, as thou wouldst face the man
Who wrong'd thy sire's renown;
Remember of what blood thou art,
And strike the caitiff down!

They brought him to the Watergate,
Hard bound with hempen span,
As though they held a lion there,
And not a fenceless man.
They set him high upon a cart,
The hangman rode below,
They drew his hands behind his back
And bar'd his noble brow.
Then, as a hound is slipp'd from leash,
They cheer'd the common throng,
And blew the note with yell and shout
And bade him pass along.

It would have made a brave man's heart
Grow sad and sick that day,
To watch the keen malignant eyes
Bent down on that array.
There stood the Whig west-country lords,
In balcony and bow;
There sat their gaunt and wither'd dames,
And their daughters all a-row.
And every open window
Was full as full might be
With black-rob'd Covenanting carles,
That goodly sport to see!

But when he came, though pale and wan,
He look'd so great and high,
So noble was his manly front,
So calm his steadfast eye,
The rabble rout forbore to shout,
And each man held his breath,
For well they knew the hero's soul
Was face to face with death.
And then a mournful shudder
Through all the people crept,
And some that came to scoff at him
Now turn'd aside and wept.

But onwards—always onwards,
In silence and in gloom,
The dreary pageant labor'd,

Till it reach'd the house of doom.
Then first a woman's voice was heard
In jeer and laughter loud,
And an angry cry and a hiss arose
From the heart of the tossing crowd:
Then as the Graeme look'd upwards,
He saw the ugly smile
Of him who sold his king for gold,
The master-fiend Argyle!

The Marquis gaz'd a moment,
And nothing did he say,
But the cheek of Argyle grew ghastly pale
And he turn'd his eyes away.
The painted harlot by his side,
She shook through every limb,
For a roar like thunder swept the street,
And hands were clench'd at him;
And a Saxon soldier cried aloud,
"Back, coward, from thy place!
For seven long years thou hast not dar'd
To look him in the face."

Had I been there with sword in hand,
And fifty Camerons by,
That day through high Dunedin's streets
Had peal'd the slogan-cry.
Not all their troops of trampling horse,
Nor might of mailed men,
Not all the rebels in the south
Had borne us backwards then!
Once more his foot on Highland heath
Had trod as free as air,
Or I, and all who bore my name,
Been laid around him there!

It might not be. They placed him next
Within the solemn hall,
Where once the Scottish kings were thron'd
Amidst their nobles all.
But there was dust of vulgar feet
On that polluted floor,

And perju'd traitors fill'd the place
Where good men sate before.
With savage glee came Warristoun
To read the murderous doom;
And then uprose the great Montrose
In the middle of the room.

"Now, by my faith as belted knight,
And by the name I bear,
And by the bright Saint Andrew's cross
That waves above us there,
Yea, by a greater, mightier oath—
And oh, that such should be!
By that dark stream of royal blood
That lies 'twixt you and me,
I have not sought in battle-field
A wreath of such renown,
Nor dar'd I hope on my dying day
To win the martyr's crown!

"There is a chamber far away
Where sleep the good and brave,
But a better place ye have nam'd for me
Than by my father's grave.
For truth and right, 'gainst treason's might,
This hand hath always striven,
And ye raise it up for a witness still
In the eye of earth and heaven.
Then nail my head on yonder tower,
Give every town a limb,
And God who made shall gather them:
I go from you to Him!"

The morning dawn'd full darkly,
The rain came flashing down,
And the jagged streak of the levin-bolt
Lit up the gloomy town:
The thunder crash'd across the heaven,
The fatal hour was come;
Yet aye broke in with muffled beat
The 'larum of the drum.
There was madness on the earth below

And anger in the sky,
And young and old, and rich and poor,
Came forth to see him die.

Ah, God! that ghastly gibbet!
How dismal 't is to see
The great tall spectral skeleton,
The ladder and the tree!
Hark! hark! it is the clash of arms—
The bells begin to toll—
"He is coming! he is coming!
God's mercy on his soul!"
One last long peal of thunder:
The clouds are clear'd away,
And the glorious sun once more looks down
Amidst the dazzling day.

"He is coming! he is coming!"
Like a bridegroom from his room,
Came the hero from his prison
To the scaffold and the doom.
There was glory on his forehead,
There was lustre in his eye,
And he never walk'd to battle
More proudly than to die:
There was color in his visage,
Though the cheeks of all were wan,
And they marvell'd as they saw him pass,
That great and goodly man!

He mounted up the scaffold,
And he turn'd him to the crowd;
But they dar'd not trust the people,
So he might not speak aloud.
But he look'd upon the heavens,
And they were clear and blue,
And in the liquid ether
The eye of God shone through;
Yet a black and murky battlement
Lay resting on the hill,
As though the thunder slept within—
All else was clam and still.

The grim Geneva ministers
With anxious scowl drew near,
As you have seen the ravens flock
Around the dying deer.
He would not deign them word nor sign,
But alone he bent the knee,
And veil'd his face for Christ's dear grace
Beneath the gallows-tree.
Then radiant and serene he rose,
And cast his cloak away:
For he had ta'en his latest look
Of earth and sun and day.

A beam of light fell o'er him,
Like a glory round the shriven,
And he climb'd the lofty ladder
As it were the path to heaven.
Then came a flash from out the cloud,
And a stunning thunder-roll;
And no man dar'd to look aloft,
For fear was on every soul.
There was another heavy sound,
A hush and then a groan;
And darkness swept across the sky—
The work of death was done!

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Heart Of The Bruce

It was upon an April morn,
While yet the frost lay hoar,
We heard Lord James's bugle-horn
Sound by the rocky shore.

Then down we went, a hundred knights,
All in our dark array,
And flung our armour in the ships
That rode within the bay.

We spoke not as the shore grew less,
But gazed in silence back,
Where the long billows swept away
The foam behind our track.

And aye the purple hues decay'd
Upon the fading hill,
And but one heart in all that ship
Was tranquil, cold, and still.

The good Lord Douglas walk'd the deck,
And oh, his brow was wan!
Unlike the flush it used to wear
When in the battle van.-

'Come hither, come hither, my trusty knight,
Sir Simon of the Lee;
There is a freit lies near my soul
I fain would tell to thee.

'Thou know'st the words King Robert spoke
Upon his dying day,
How he bade me take his noble heart
And carry it far away;

'And lay it in the holy soil
Where once the Saviour trod,
Since he might not bear the blessed Cross,
Nor strike one blow for God.

'Last night as in my bed I lay,
I dream'd a dreary dream:-
Methought I saw a Pilgrim stand
In the moonlight's quivering beam.

'His robe was of the azure dye,
Snow-white his scatter'd hairs,
And even such a cross he bore
As good Saint Andrew bears.

"Why go you forth, Lord James,' he said,
'With spear and belted brand?
Why do you take its dearest pledge
From this our Scottish land?

"The sultry breeze of Galilee
Creeps through its groves of palm,
The olives on the Holy Mount
Stand glittering in the calm.

"But 'tis not there that Scotland's heart
Shall rest by God's decree,
Till the great angel calls the dead
To rise from earth and sea!

"Lord James of Douglas, mark my rede!
That heart shall pass once more
In fiery fight against the foe,
As it was wont of yore.

"And it shall pass beneath the Cross,
And save King Robert's vow,
But other hands shall bear it back,
Not, James of Douglas, thou!"

'Now, by thy knightly faith, I pray,
Sir Simon of the Lee-
For truer friend had never man
Than thou hast been to me-

'If ne'er upon the Holy Land

'Tis mine in life to tread,
Bear thou to Scotland's kindly earth
The relics of her dead.'

The tear was in Sir Simon's eye
As he wrung the warrior's hand-
'Betide me weal, betide me woe,
I'll hold by thy command.

'But if in battle front, Lord James,
'Tis ours once more to ride,
No force of man, nor craft of fiend,
Shall cleave me from thy side!'

And aye we sail'd, and aye we sail'd,
Across the weary sea,
Until one morn the coast of Spain
Rose grimly on our lee.

And as we rounded to the port,
Beneath the watch-tower's wall,
We heard the clash of the atabals,
And the trumpet's wavering call.

'Why sounds yon Eastern music here
So wantonly and long,
And whose the crowd of armèd men
That round yon standard throng?'

'The Moors have come from Africa
To spoil and waste and slay,
And King Alonzo of Castile
Must fight with them to-day.'

'Now shame it were,' cried good Lord James,
'Shall never be said of me,
That I and mine have turn'd aside,
From the Cross in jeopardy!

'Have down, have down, my merry men all-
Have down unto the plain;
We'll let the Scottish lion loose

Within the fields of Spain!

'Now welcome to me, noble lord,
Thou and thy stalwart power;
Dear is the sight of a Christian knight
Who comes in such an hour!

'Is it for bond or faith ye come,
Or yet for golden fee?
Or bring ye France's lilies here,
Or the flower of Burgundie?'

'God greet thee well, thou valiant King,
Thee and thy belted peers-
Sir James of Douglas am I called,
And these are Scottish spears.

'We do not fight for bond or plight,
Not yet for golden fee;
But for the sake of our blessed Lord,
Who died upon the tree.

'We bring our great King Robert's heart
Across the weltering wave,
To lay it in the holy soil
Hard by the Saviour's grave.

'True pilgrims we, by land or sea,
Where danger bars the way;
And therefore are we here, Lord King,
To ride with thee this day!'

The King has bent his stately head,
And the tears were in his eyne-
'God's blessing on thee, noble knight,
For this brave thought of thine!

'I know thy name full well, Lord James,
And honour'd may I be,
That those who fought beside the Bruce
Should fight this day for me!

'Take thou the leading of the van,
And charge the Moors amain;
There is not such a lance as thine
In all the host of Spain!'

The Douglas turned towards us then,
O but his glance was high!-
'There is not one of all my men
But is as bold as I.

'There is not one of all my knights
But bears as true a spear-
Then onwards! Scottish gentlemen,
And think-King Robert's here!'

The trumpets blew, the cross-bolts flew,
The arrows flashed like flame,
As spur in side, and spear in rest,
Against the foe we came.

And many a bearded Saracen
Went down, both horse and man;
For through their ranks we rode like corn,
So furiously we ran!

But in behind our path they closed,
Though fain to let us through,
For they were forty thousand men,
And we were wondrous few.

We might not see a lance's length,
So dense was their array,
But the long fell sweep of the Scottish blade
Still held them hard at bay.

'Make in! make in!' Lord Douglas cried,
'Make in, my brethren dear!
Sir William of Saint Clair is down;
We may not leave him here!'

But thicker, thicker, grew the swarm,
And sharper shot the rain,

And the horses reared amid the press,
But they would not charge again.

'Now Jesu help thee,' said Lord James,
'Thou kind and true St Clair!
An' if I may not bring thee off,
I'll die beside thee there!'

Then in his stirrups up he stood,
So lionlike and bold,
And held the precious heart aloft
All in its case of gold.

He flung it from him, far ahead,
And never spake he more,
But-'Pass thee first, thou dauntless heart,
As thou wert wont of yore!'

The roar of fight rose fiercer yet,
And heavier still the stour,
Till the spears of Spain came shivering in,
And swept away the Moor.

'Now praised be God, the day is won!
They fly o'er flood and fell-
Why dost thou draw the rein so hard,
Good knight, that fought so well?'

'Oh, ride ye on, Lord King!' he said,
'And leave the dead to me,
For I must keep the dreariest watch
That ever I shall dree!

'There lies, beside his master's heart,
The Douglas, stark and grim;
And woe is me I should be here,
Not side by side with him!

'The world grows cold, my arm is old,
And thin my lyart hair,
And all that I loved best on earth
Is stretch'd before me there.

'O Bothwell banks! that bloom so bright,
Beneath the sun of May,
The heaviest cloud that ever blew
Is bound for you this day.

'And, Scotland, thou may'st veil thy head
In sorrow and in pain;
The sorest stroke upon thy brow
Hath fallen this day in Spain!

'We'll bear them back unto our ship,
We'll bear them o'er the sea,
And lay them in the hallowed earth,
Within our own countrie.

'And be thou strong of heart, Lord King,
For this I tell thee sure,
The sod that drank the Douglas' blood
Shall never bear the Moor!'

The King he lighted from his horse,
He flung his brand away,
And took the Douglas by the hand,
So stately as he lay.

'God give thee rest, thou valiant soul,
That fought so well for Spain;
I'd rather half my land were gone,
So thou wert here again!'

We bore the good Lord James away,
And the priceless heart he bore,
And heavily we steer'd our ship
Towards the Scottish shore.

No welcome greeted our return,
Nor clang of martial tread,
But all were dumb and hushed as death
Before the mighty dead.

We laid our chief in Douglas Kirk,

The heart in fair Melrose;
And woeful men were we that day-
God grant their souls repose!

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Island Of The Scots

I.

The Rhine is running deep and red,
The island lies before-
'Now is there one of all the host
Will dare to venture o'er?
For not alone the river's sweep
Might make a brave man quail:
The foe are on the further side,
Their shot comes fast as hail.
God help us, if the middle isle
We may not hope to win!
Now, is there any of the host
Will dare to venture in?'

II.

'The ford is deep, the banks are steep,
The island-shore lies wide:
Nor man nor horse could stem its force,
Or reach the further side.
See there! amidst the willow boughs
The serried bayonets gleam;
They've flung their bridge-they've won the isle;
The foe have crossed the stream!
Their volley flashes sharp and strong-
By all the Saints, I trow,
There never yet was soldier born
Could force that passage now!'

III

So spoke the bold French Mareschal
With him who led the van,
Whilst rough and red before their view
The turbid river ran.
Nor bridge nor boat had they to cross

The wild and swollen Rhine,
And thundering on the other bank
Far stretched the German line.
Hard by there stood a swarthy man
Was leaning on his sword,
And a saddened smile lit up his face
As he heard the Captain's word.
'I've seen a wilder stream ere now
Than that which rushes there;
I've stemmed a heavier torrent yet
And never thought to dare.
If German steel be sharp and keen,
Is ours not strong and true?
There may be danger in the deed,
But there is honour too.'

IV.

The old lord in his saddle turned,
And hastily he said-
'Hath bold Dugueselin's fiery heart
Awakened from the dead?
Thou art the leader of the Scots-
Now well and sure I know,
That gentle blood in dangerous hour
Ne'er yet ran cold nor slow,
And I have seen ye in the fight
Do all that mortal may:
If honour is the boon ye seek
It may be won this day.
The prize is in the middle isle,
There lies the venturous way;
And armies twain are on the plain,
The daring deed to see-
Now ask thy gallant company
If they will follow thee!'

V.

Right gladsome looked the Captain then,

And nothing did he say,
But he turned him to his little band-
Oh few, I ween, were they!
The relics of the bravest force
That ever fought in fray.
No one of all that company
But bore a gentle name,
Not one whose fathers had not stood
In Scotland's fields of fame.
All they had marched with great Dundee
To where he fought and fell,
And in the deadly battle-strife
Had venged their leader well;
And they had bent the knee to earth
When every eye was dim,
As o'er their hero's buried corpse
They sang the funeral hymn;
And they had trod the Pass once more,
And stooped on either side
To pluck the heather from the spot
Where he had dropped and died;
And they had bound it next their hearts,
And ta'en a last farewell
Of Scottish earth and Scottish sky,
Where Scotland's glory fell.
Then went they forth to foreign lands
Like bent and broken men,
Who leave their dearest hope behind,
And may not turn again!

VI.

'The stream,' he said, 'is broad and deep,
And stubborn is the foe-
Yon island-strength is guarded well-
Say, brothers, will ye go?
From home and kin for many a year
Our steps have wandered wide,
And never may our bones be laid
Our fathers' graves beside.
No sisters have we to lament,

No wives to wail our fall;
The traitor's and the spoiler's hand
Have reft our hearths of all.
But we have hearts, and we have arms
As strong to will and dare
As when our ancient banners flew
Within the northern air.
Come, brothers; let me name a spell
Shall rouse your souls again,
And send the old blood bounding free
Through pulse, and heart, and vein!
Call back the days of bygone years-
Be young and strong once more;
Think yonder stream, so stark and red,
Is one we've crossed before.
Rise, hill and glen! rise, crag and wood!
Rise up on either hand-
Again upon the Garry's banks,
On Scottish soil we stand!
Again I see the tartans wave,
Again the trumpets ring;
Again I hear our leader's call-
'Upon them, for the King!'
Stayed we behind that glorious day
For roaring flood or linn?
The soul of Græme is with us still-
Now, brothers! will ye in?'

VII.

No stay-no pause. With one accord
They grasped each others' hand,
And plunged into the angry flood,
That bold and dauntless band.
High flew the spray above their heads,
Yet onward still they bore,
Midst cheer, and shout, and answering yell,
And shot and cannon roar.
'Now by the Holy Cross! I swear,
Since earth and sea began
Was never such a daring deed

Essayed by mortal man!'

VIII.

Thick blew the smoke across the stream,
And faster flashed the flame:
The water plashed in hissing jets
As ball and bullet came.
Yet onwards pushed the Cavaliers
All stern and undismayed,
With thousand armèd foes before,
And none behind to aid.
Once, as they neared the middle stream,
So strong the torrent swept,
That scarce that long and living wall,
Their dangerous footing kept.
Then rose a warning cry behind,
A joyous shout before:
'The current's strong-the way is long-
They'll never reach the shore!
See, see! They stagger in the midst,
They waver in their line!
Fire on the madmen! break their ranks,
And whelm them in the Rhine!'

IX.

Have you seen the tall trees swaying
When the blast is piping shrill,
And the whirlwind reels in fury
Down the gorges of the hill?
How they toss their mighty branches,
Striving with the tempest's shock;
How they keep their place of vantage,
Cleaving firmly to the rock?
Even so the Scottish warriors
Held their own against the river;
Though the water flashed around them,
Not an eye was seen to quiver;
Though the shot flew sharp and deadly,

Not a man relaxed his hold:
For their hearts were big and thrilling
With the mighty thoughts of old.
One word was spoke among them,
And through the ranks it spread-
'Remember our dead Claverhouse!'
Was all the Captain said.
Then, sternly bending forward,
They struggled on awhile,
Until they cleared the heavy stream,
Then rushed towards the isle.

X.

The German heart is stout and true,
The German arm is strong;
The German foot goes seldom back
Where armèd foemen throng.
But never had they faced in field
So stern a charge before,
And never had they felt the sweep
Of Scotland's broad claymore.
Not fiercer pours the avalanche
Adown the steep incline,
That rises o'er the parent springs
Of rough and rapid Rhine-
Scarce swifter shoots the bolt from heaven
Than came the Scottish band,
Right up against the guarded trench,
And o'er it, sword in hand.
In vain their leaders forward press-
They meet the deadly brand!
O lonely island of the Rhine,
Where seed was never sown,
What harvest lay upon thy sands,
By those strong reapers thrown?
What saw the winter moon that night,
As, struggling through the rain,
She poured a wan and fitful light
On marsh, and stream, and plain?
A dreary spot with corpses strewn,

And bayonets glistening round;
A broken bridge, a stranded boat,
A bare and battered mound;
And one huge watch-fire's kindled pile,
That sent its quivering glare
To tell the leaders of the host
The conquering Scots were there!

XI.

And did they twine the laurel-wreath
For those who fought so well?
And did they honour those who lived,
And weep for those who fell?
What meed of thanks was given to them
Let aged annals tell.
Why should they twine the laurel-wreath-
Why crown the cup with wine?
It was not Frenchman's blood that flowed
So freely on the Rhine-
A stranger band of beggared men
Had done the venturous deed:
The glory was to France alone,
The danger was their meed.
And what cared they for idle thanks
From foreign prince and peer?
What virtue had such honeyed words
The exiles' hearts to cheer?
What mattered it that men should vaunt,
And loud and fondly swear,
That higher feat of chivalry
Was never wrought elsewhere?
They bore within their breasts the grief
That fame can never heal-
The deep, unutterable woe
Which none save exiles feel.
Their hearts were yearning for the land
They ne'er might see again-
For Scotland's high and heathered hills,
For mountain, loch, and glen-
For those who haply lay at rest

Beyond the distant sea,
Beneath the green and daisied turf
Where they would gladly be!

XII.

Long years went by. The lonely isle
In Rhine's impetuous flood
Has ta'en another name from those
Who bought it with their blood:
And though the legend does not live,
For legends lightly die,
The peasant, as he sees the stream
In winter rolling by,
And foaming o'er its channel-bed
Between him and the spot
Won by the warriors of the sword,
Still calls that deep and dangerous ford
The Passage of the Scot.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Massacre Of Macpherson

Fhairshon had a son,
Who married Noah's daughter,
And nearly spoiled ta Flood
By trinking up ta water:

Which he would have done,
I at least pelieve it,
Had the mixture peen
Only half Glenlivet.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Old Camp

I.

There is a cloud before the sun,
The wind is hushed and still,
And silently the waters run
Beneath the sombre hill.
The sky is dark in every place,
As is the earth below:
Methinks it wore the self-same face
Two thousand years ago.

II.

No light is on the ancient wall,
No light upon the mound;
The very trees, so thick and tall,
Cast gloom, not shade, around.
So silent is the place and cold,
So far from human ken,
It hath a look that makes me old,
And spectres time again.

III.

I listen, half in thought to hear
The Roman trumpet blow-
I search for glint of helm and spear
Amidst the forest bough:
And armour rings, and voices swell-
I hear the legion's tramp,
And mark the lonely sentinel
Who guards the lonely camp.

IV.

Methinks I have no other home,

No other hearth to find;
For nothing save the thought of Rome
Is stirring in my mind.
And all that I have heard or dreamed,
And all I had forgot,
Are rising up, as though they seemed
The household of the spot.

V.

And all the names that Romans knew
Seem just as known to me,
As if I were a Roman too-
A Roman born and free:
And I could rise at Cæsar's name,
As though it were a charm
To draw sharp lightning from the tame,
And brace the coward's arm.

VI.

And yet, if yonder sky were blue,
And earth were sunny gay,
If nature wore the summer hue
That decked her yesterday,
The mound, the trench, the rampart's space,
Would move me nothing more
Than many a sweet sequestered place
That I have marked before.

VII.

I could not feel the breezes bring
Rich odours from the trees;
I could not hear the linnets sing,
And think on themes like these.
The painted insects as they pass
In swift and motley strife,
The very lizard in the grass

Would scare me back to life.

VIII.

Then is the past so gloomy now
That it may never bear
The open smile of nature's brow,
Or meet the sunny air?
I know not that-but joy is power,
However short it last;
And joy befits the present hour,
If sadness fits the past.

William Edmondstone Aytoun

The Old Scottish Cavalier

I.

Come listen to another song,
Should make your heart beat high,
Bring crimson to your forehead,
And the lustre to your eye;-
It is a song of olden time,
Of days long since gone by,
And of a Baron stout and bold
As e'er wore sword on thigh!
Like a brave old Scottish cavalier,
All of the olden time!

II.

He kept his castle in the north,
Hard by the thundering Spey;
And a thousand vassals dwelt around
All of his kindred they.
And not a man of all that clan
Had ever ceased to pray
For the Royal race they loved so well,
Though exiled far away
From the steadfast Scottish cavaliers,
All of the olden time!

III.

His father drew the righteous sword
For Scotland and her claims,
Among the loyal gentlemen
And chiefs of ancient names
Who swore to fight or fall beneath
The standard of King James,
And died at Killiecrankie pass
With the glory of the Graemes;
Like a true old Scottish cavalier,

All of the olden time!

IV.

He never owned the foreign rule,
No master he obeyed,
But kept his clan in peace at home,
From foray and from raid;
And when they asked him for his oath,
He touched his glittering blade,
And pointed to his bonnet blue,
That bore the white cockade:
Like a leal old Scottish cavalier,
All of the olden time!

V.

At length the news ran through the land-
THE PRINCE had come again!
That night the fiery cross was sped
O'er mountain and through glen;
And our old Baron rose in might,
Like a lion from his den,
And rode away across the hills
To Charlie and his men,
With the valiant Scottish cavaliers,
All of the olden time!

VI.

He was the first that bent the knee
When the STANDARD waved abroad,
He was the first that charged the foe
On Preston's bloody sod;
And ever, in the van of fight,
The foremost still he trod,
Until, on bleak Culloden's heath,
He gave his soul to God,
Like a good old Scottish cavalier,

All of the olden time!

VII.

Oh! never shall we know again
A heart so stout and true-
The olden times have passed away,
And weary are the new:
The fair White Rose has faded
From the garden where it grew,
And no fond tears save those of heaven
The glorious bed bedew
Of the last old Scottish cavalier,
All of the olden time!

William Edmondstone Aytoun

The Refusal Of Charon

Why look the distant mountains
So gloomy and so drear?
Are rain clouds passing o'er them,
Or is the tempest near?
No shadow of the tempest
Is there, nor wind nor rain—
'Tis Charon that is passing by,
With all his gloomy train.

The young men march before him,
In all their strength and pride;
The tender little infants,
They totter by his side;
The old men walk behind him,
And earnestly they pray—
Both old and young imploring him
To grant some brief delay.

'O Charon! halt, we pray thee,
Beside some little town,
Or near some sparkling fountain,
Where the waters wimple down!
The old will drink and be refreshed,
The young the disc will fling,
And the tender little children
Pluck flowers beside the spring.'

'I will not stay my journey,
Nor halt by any town,
Near any sparkling fountain,
Where the waters wimple down:
The mothers coming to the well
Would know the babes they bore,
The wives would clasp their husbands,
Nor could I part them more.'

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Sheik Of Sinai In 1830

I.

'Lift me without the tent, I say,-
Me and my ottoman,-
I'll see the messenger myself!
It is the caravan
From Africa, thou sayest,
And they bring us news of war?
Draw me without the tent, and quick!
As at the desert well
The freshness of the purling brook
Delights the tired gazelle,
So pant I for the voice of him
That cometh from afar!'

II.

The Scheik was lifted from his tent,
And thus outspake the Moor:-
'I saw, old Chief, the Tricolor
On Algiers' topmost tower-
Upon its battlements the silks
Of Lyons flutter free.
Each morning, in the market-place,
The muster-drum is beat,
And to the war-hymn of Marseilles
The squadrons pace the street.
The armament from Toulon sailed:
The Franks have crossed the sea.'

III.

'Towards the south, the columns marched
Beneath a cloudless sky:
Their weapons glittered in the blaze
Of the sun of Barbary;
And with the dusty desert sand

Their horses' manes were white.
The wild marauding tribes dispersed
In terror of their lives;
They fled unto the mountains
With their children and their wives,
And urged the clumsy dromedary
Up the Atlas' height.'

IV.

'The Moors have ta'en their vantage-ground,
The volleys thunder fast-
The dark defile is blazing
Like a heated oven-blast;
The lion hears the strange turmoil,
And leaves his mangled prey-
No place was that for him to feed;
And thick and loud the cries,
Feu!-Allah! Allah!-En avant!
In mingled discord rise;
The Franks have reached the summit-
They have won the victory!'

V.

'With bristling steel, upon the top
The victors take their stand:
Beneath their feet, with all its towns,
They see the promised land-
From Tunis, even unto Fez,
From Atlas to the seas.
The cavaliers alight to gaze,
And gaze full well they may,
Where countless minarets stand up
So solemnly and gray,
Amidst the dark-green masses
Of the flowering myrtle-trees.'

VI.

'The almond blossoms in the vale;
The aloe from the rock
Throws out its long and prickly leaves,
Nor dreads the tempest's shock:
A blessed land, I ween, is that,
Though luckless is its Bey.
There lies the sea-beyond lies France!
Her banners in the air
Float proudly and triumphantly-
A salvo! come, prepare!
And loud and long the mountains rang
With that glad artillery.'

VII.

"Tis they!" exclaimed the aged Scheik.
'I've battled by their side-
I fought beneath the Pyramids!
That day of deathless pride-
Red as thy turban, Moor, that eve,
Was every creek in Nile!
But tell me-' and he griped his hand-
'Their Sulstaun. Stranger, say-
His form-his face-his posture, man?
Thou saw'st him in the fray?
His eye-what wore he?' But the Moor
Sought in his vest awhile.

VIII.

'Their Sulstaun, Scheik, remains at home
Within his palace walls:
He sends a Pasha in his stead
To brave the bolts and balls.
He was not there. An Aga burst
For him through Atlas' hold.
Yet I can show thee somewhat too.
A Frankish Cavalier
Told me his effigy was stamped

Upon this medal here-
He gave me with others
For an Arab steed I sold.'

IX.

The old man took the golden coin:
Gazed steadfastly awhile,
If that could be the Sultaun
Whom from the banks of Nile
He guided o'er the desert path-
Then sighed and thus spake he-
"Tis not
his
eye-'tis not
his
brow-
Another face is there:
I never saw this man before-
His head is like a pear!
Take back thy medal, Moor-'tis not
That which I hoped to see.'

William Edmondstoune Aytoun

The Widow Of Glencoe

Do not lift him from the bracken,
Leave him lying where he fell-
Better bier ye cannot fashion:
None beseems him half so well
As the bare and broken heather,
And the hard and trampled sod,
Whence his angry soul ascended
To the judgment-seat of God!
Winding-sheet we cannot give him-
Seek no mantle for the dead,
Save the cold and spotless covering
Showered from heaven upon his head.
Leave his broadsword, as we found it,
Bent and broken with the blow,
That, before he died, avenged him
On the foremost of the foe.
Leave the blood upon his bosom-
Wash not off that sacred stain:
Let it stiffen on the tartan,
Let his wounds unclosed remain,
Till the day when he shall show them
At the throne of God on high,
When the murderer and the murdered
Meet before their Judge's eye!

Nay-ye should not weep, my children!
Leave it to the faint and weak;
Sobs are but a woman's weapon-
Tears befit a maiden's cheek.
Weep not, children of Macdonald!
Weep not thou, his orphan heir-
Not in shame, but stainless honour,
Lies thy slaughtered father there.
Weep not-but when years are over,
And thine arm is strong and sure,
And thy foot is swift and steady
On the mountain and the muir-
Let thy heart be hard as iron,
And thy wrath as fierce as fire,

Till the hour when vengeance cometh
For the race that slew thy sire;
Till in deep and dark Glenlyon
Rise a louder shriek of woe
Than at midnight, from their eyrie,
Scared the eagles of Glencoe;
Louder than the screams that mingled
With the howling of the blast,
When the murderer's steel was clashing,
And the fires were rising fast;
When thy noble father bounded
To the rescue of his men,
And the slogan of our kindred
Pealed throughout the startled glen;
When the herd of frantic women
Stumbled through the midnight snow,
With their fathers' houses blazing,
And their dearest dead below.
Oh, the horror of the tempest,
As the flashing drift was blown,
Crimsoned with the conflagration,
And the roofs went thundering down!
Oh, the prayers-the prayers and curses
That together winged their flight
From the maddened hearts of many
Through that long and woeful night!
Till the fires began to dwindle,
And the shots grew faint and few,
And we heard the foeman's challenge
Only in a far halloo;
Till the silence once more settled
O'er the gorges of the glen,
Broken only by the Cona
Plunging through its naked den.
Slowly from the mountain-summit
Was the drifting veil withdrawn,
And the ghastly valley glimmered
In the gray December dawn.
Better had the morning never
Dawned upon our dark despair!
Black amidst the common whiteness
Rose the spectral ruins there:

But the sight of these was nothing
More than wrings the wild dove's breast,
When she searches for her offspring
Round the relics of her nest.
For in many a spot the tartan
Peered above the wintry heap,
Marking where a dead Macdonald
Lay within his frozen sleep.
Tremblingly we scooped the covering
From each kindred victim's head,
And the living lips were burning
On the cold ones of the dead.
And I left them with their dearest-
Dearest charge had everyone-
Left the maiden with her lover,
Left the mother with her son.
I alone of all was mateless-
Far more wretched I than they,
For the snow would not discover
Where my lord and husband lay.
But I wandered up the valley
Till I found him lying low,
With the gash upon his bosom,
And the frown upon his brow-
Till I found him lying murdered
Where he wooed me long ago.
Woman's weakness shall not shame me;
Why should I have tears to shed?
Could I rain them down like water,
O my hero, on thy head,
Could the cry of lamentation
Wake thee from thy silent sleep,
Could it set thy heart a-throbbing,
It were mine to wail and weep.
But I will not waste my sorrow,
Lest the Campbell women say
That the daughters of Clanranald
Are as weak and frail as they.
I had wept thee hadst thou fallen,
Like our fathers, on thy shield,
When a host of English foemen
Camped upon a Scottish field;

I had mourned thee hadst thou perished
With the foremost of his name,
When the valiant and the noble
Died around the dauntless Græme.
But I will not wrong thee, husband!
With my unavailing cries,
Whilst thy cold and mangled body,
Stricken by the traitor, lies;
Whilst he counts the gold and glory
That this hideous night has won,
And his heart is big with triumph
At the murder he has done.
Other eyes than mine shall glisten,
Other hearts be rent in twain,
Ere the heathbells on thy hillock
Wither in the autumn rain.
Then I'll seek thee where thou sleepest,
And I'll veil my weary head,
Praying for a place beside thee,
Dearer than my bridal-bed:
And I'll give thee tears, my husband,
If the tears remain to me,
When the widows of the foemen
Cry the coronach for thee.

William Edmondstoune Aytoun