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W A R .

An Ode

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF
EDINBURGH.

ON

THE OCCASION OF HIS SECOND VISIT

TO

THE SOUTH AFRICAN COLONIES,

1867.

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QUEENSTOWN, SOUTH AFRICA.

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1867.

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE DUKE OF
EDINBURGH.

ILLUSTRIOUS scion of our royal line,
Ten thousand loyal loving hearts, now hail
Thy second advent to our southern shores.
We personate, in thee, our fatherland ;—
With all its glories ;—and its wide renown ;—
Its cherished freedom,—and its ancient fame.
In thee, we hail our nation's noblest pride ;—
And, in imagination, gather round the one,—
Beneath whose sway thine own great sire achieved
A victory of Peace,—more brilliant far,
Than all the blood-stained laurels gained
Amid the roar, and turmoil of a thousand fights ;—
Crowning himself with higher, purer praise.
The praise of gathered nations, and the assenting world.
His deeds have every heart inspired ;—but now, my Muse
With fiercer passion, sweeps the sounding strings.
No more I sing a soft and pensive lay.
The melting lute, and soul-persuading lyre
Diffuse no soothing melodies around :—
Stern WAR's relentless ire is now my theme.

Arouse, ye powers, the furious blast of trump ;—
Or clarion shrill :—now let the kettle-drum ;—
The martial clangors ;—and the ringing arms awake
The deep-mouthed cannon :—while the loud fierce neigh
Of fiery steeds ; the champéd bits ; and pawing hoofs
Shall form the fitting music to my song.
Bare !—Bare the blood-stained arm of iron War !
Let Terror loose,—with all your savage aids :—
Let the bright swords, from steely scabbards leap :—
Wave gonfalon ; and ensign now ;
Let every banner dance, upon the scorching winds :—
Standards unfurl ; and let them rustle in the breeze
While, in a vision, I would see
A monarch's troops advance
With trump and drum ;—and shining sword and lance.

W a r .

A VERY IRREGULAR ODE.

"Bella horrida bella."

Thou spirit-stirrer of untutored man,
Who taught him to rehearse
High deeds of daring fame combined
In rude, and broken verse :—
Thou spirit of the ancient bards
Who struck the sacred strings
With magic hand :—whose glowing words
A halo round them fling :—
Who, in the old stern feudal-halls
Made every heart beat high,
With scorn,—or fear,—or love,—or hate,
With songs of deeds of chivalry.

Thou who could'st make the weapon leap
 Unbidden from its sheath ;—
 Or tears flow down the weathered cheek
 At tales of woe, or death ;—
 Be thou my aid !—Do thou appear ;
 And be thou ever ; ever near ;—
 Ever ready ; ever willing ;—
 Melody my soul instilling,
 With every fit and tuneful measure,
 Culled from out her hidden treasure :—
 Joy, featly, on her timbrel sounding ;
 The voice of Love, in vales, resounding ;
 Peace, at her side, with soothing lute ;
 Till War, aroused, makes Beauty mute,
 Sounding her trump, in furious haste ;
 With all her might, prolongs the blast ;—
 Till, with its clangors, are awoke
 The echoes of the forest-oak ;
 And rock,—and mountain,—hill and dale
 Repeat, and tremble, and bewail.

Ye heavenly powers, all ye that shed
 A radiance round meek Mercy's head ;
 And upward turn Hope's beaming eyes
 To gaze in rapture, on the skies ;—
 Why, hither, came Mistrust and Fear ;
 And pining Want, and wrinkled Care ;—
 Revengeful Hate, and unrelenting War ?

Oh hence !—avaunt !—ye grisly crew,
 Let earth the arts of Peace pursue :—
 Why will ye urge my theme,

To break the soft, and peaceful slumbers,
 That Love would shed, with tuneful numbers,
 Beneath her silvery beam.

Blest is the land,—whose happy vales among;
 Soft echoes catch the peaceful song:—
 Such peace, as when the Arcadian groves,—
 Whispered their guardian Dryads' loves:—
 Such peace, as early poets sung,
 Ushering in the golden year;—
 Then unknown Envy, Hate, and Wrong;
 The din and turmoil of rude War.

Where youth could climb the cloud-clad mountain
 Hanging o'er the dizzy steep:—
 Then seek the side of glassy fountain;
 Whose murmuring music lulls to sleep;
 Or wander through the forest-dells;
 Where fairies crouch in nodding bells
 Wiling the day in luscious dreams:—
 Or through the blossoms peep,
 Watching, beneath the circling streams,—
 That o'er the rocky ledges dashing;
 Are breaking, sparkling, brightly flashing
 In every mazy leap.

But ruder measures rule my lay;
 A ruder impulse I obey:—
 And thou, Oh War, now bearest sway;
 Thy threat'ning form I trace.
 Beneath thy thunder-canopy;
 In all thy iron-panoply;
 Unbare thy vizored face!
 Thy naked features, now, display;

Yet, why does Pity shrink away;—
 And shun thy mailed-embrace?
 Art thou evil? Art thou good?
 Hast thou the despot's path withstood;
 Or heard the patriot's prayer?
 Freedom does, herself, proclaim
 Thou oft does rivet fast her chain;
 And Poland tells us where!

Thou raisest now thy banner high;
 Thy shout is nought but "Victory"!
 And yet;—and yet I hear
 Another cry:
 It is the cry of Fear.

'Tis then the childless, from afar,
 Bow down their head;—whilst thou, oh War,
 The brave and good,—the beautiful and fair,
 'Mid frantic rushing and defeat,
 With fevered-sick; and travel-worn;—
 And terror-flying, bear them down,
 And crush them, 'neath thy feet.

Why startles all, thy victor-cry,
 Hard-featured war;
 Is it that thou dost glut in misery;
 Sneer'st at the widow's sunken eye;
 Her wringing hands,—her piteous cry:
 Her shrieks, despondence, and despair?

With unutterable grief and anguish,
 'Mid thy tempest-roll of drums;
 'Mid slain, where dying wretches languish;
 Many a heart-crushed maiden comes.

Crushed, in hope,—and crushed, with sorrow ;
 The lone one seeks,—but seeks in vain ;
 Dreads the night, and dreads the morrow ;
 Till madness presses on her brain.
 Fly Memory fly,—for Hope has fled :—
 Oh dreams of youth remain !
 For now beside his gory bed
 She kneels entranced :—she lifts his head ;
 Re-kissing his cold lips again.
 Hast thou no pity for the weary-laden ?
 Cease !—Ah, cease,—poor hapless maiden
 For never shall they warm again.

Stern power of the remorseless eye !
 Ambition's cherished friend ;
 (That base betrayer of kind sympathy ;
 Who, 'spite affection's holiest band,
 Destroys the life he should defend ;
 And with his rude and gauntlet-hand,
 Strangles his benefactor's son :
 Pale, in his grasp, the infant lies ;
 Nor mother's tears,—nor mother's cries,
 Can for its life atone :
 While deep beneath his castled-throne,
 Where bursting sigh, and heart-rent moan
 The stony dungeon tells to none ;
 He leaves his friend, in fetters thrown,
 In damps, and glooms to die :)
 Canst thou tell
 Where thou didst dwell
 Before upon the outraged earth,—
 Thy swarming hosts,
 With sounding tread,
 Foretold thy reign of death ?

Thou wilt not speak!—And yet before mine eyes
 Dire visions rise
 Of the dark Stygian cave
 Where horrid Tartarus rolls its wave ;
 Screams, yells, and agonising cries ;—
 Dire imprecations, and soul-chilling blasphemies
 Assail the ear
 Of shrinking, quaking, timorous Fear.
 By incantations raised, wild horror-piercing sounds
 Of jarring music,—the infernal concert crown ;
 While shrieks, on shrieks,
 (As if of struggling, ravished women) mixed, I ween,
 With furious trumpets' fiery blast ;
 And kettle-drums, with sudden haste,
 Burst in between.

Horror of horrors ! here didst thou dwell ;
 Congenial queen of such a hell !
 High o'er them all I see thy form ;
 And from thine eyes flash forth a storm
 That would arouse ten-thousand fights.
 Here, dread Imperatrix, thy fierce commands,
 Whose very breath would scorch up other lands
 Were met, with loud acclaim, and high delights.
 Whatever met thy eagle-gaze
 Burst into instantaneous blaze :
 Wherever thou didst turn thy head
 There anarchy and chaos spread.

Why hither wast thou sent,
 Thou spirit of contagion,—Discontent ?
 Though puny at thy birth ;
 Distempered and deformed,

Thy self-uprearing form so quickly grew ;
 That o'er the space thy shadow flew.
 As swells the smoke, from kindling fire,
 So swelled thy bulk ;—and in the hour
 Thou into being burst, and spread thy power.

This was thy sire, oh War,—this moody god
 Would rule, supreme, thy grim abode :
 Fretful,—wayward,—ever-changing ;
 Scorning thus confined to dwell ;
 Fickle passion,—thought deranging ;
 Could he break the hated spell ?
 Rebellion whispered in his ear ;
 His arm was touched by cautious Fear ;
 By fits, he muttered forth a word ;
 By fits, he tightly grasped his sword :
 And deep, beneath his breath, he swore,
 Nor other god,—nor dread infernal power,
 Should there his time engage.

 With looks askant,
 Right, to the midst, his foot is bent ;
 Muttering many a sullen argument,
 Till, where he meets his brother Rage,
 To whom, scarce single word he spoke ;—
 When, from his kinsman's eyes there broke
 Such flashes of impetuous ire
 As set all hell, itself, on fire !

Again the same dire visions rise ;
 Again I hear the shrieks, the cries,
 The trumpet's blast, the rattling drum ;
 As rushing to thy parents aid,
 In tempest and black night arrayed,
 The fiends, infernal, come.
 Instant, amid thy loud alarms ;

One look of thine Restraint disarms :—
 Sets free Destruction from his den,
 As breaking, crushing, bursts the monster forth,
 Foaming with ungovernable wroth ;
 He stamps enraged,—hell trembles at the sound ;
 And the black walls, high bulging rocks, & gloomy cliffs
 Fall tottering, tumbling round :
 While o'er the ruins now, the giant strides unbending ;
 His thunder-shouts before him sending ;
 “Down with the portals! Down!”—The roofs are rending
 And powers of darkness gather round.
 Ten thousand tongues repeat the theme ;
 Contagion spreads throughout the throng ;
 And like an overgrowing stream,
 They urge along :
 While all around,
 With hurricanes of sound,
 Huge beams, and monstrous rocks rebound,
 In thunder, on the doors.

Alas ! oh fairest earth,—thy verdant fields ;
 Thy cities, palaces, and towers
 Shall reek with smoke and flame.
 For see !—Ah see !
 The horrid gate, now shakes, now yields ;
 And blood-stained War has burst forth, free,
 With all her hellish powers ;
 While Pity, weeping, shrinks from sight,
 And Mercy hides her name.

Now,—in thy bloody car,
 By fiery dragons drawn,
 Ride on,—oh, cruel War !
 Attended by thy train.

Battles, sieges, storms,
 Are thy mere pastimes ; these are thy delight,
 Till in the savage, and murderous fight,
 Thy banners all, are dipt in human gore.
 Go!—seek the Lombard plain,
 Where marshalled nations hail thy reign ;
 Frank,—Hun,—and Allemann !
 Where thousand pennons, rustling, fly ;
 “ Italia ! ” still ;—“ Italia ! ” cry ;
 And say she shall be free !
 But, ah !—in vain ; the midnight groan ;
 The sigh ; the sob ; the useless moan :
 Crushed still with chains ! Why dost thou scoff,
 When she would shake her fetters off ?
 Is it,—thou know’st, at thy command
 Crowned despots kiss thy mailed hand,
 And falsely call thee Liberty ?

High triumph then ;—assert thy sway ;
 And let thy brazen clarions bray ;
 While thy red, in the ensanguined fray,
 Shall mow the human harvest down.
 What heed thy pomp ; and haughty pride,
 The slaughtered patriot’s crimson tide,
 If thou canst win a crown !
 But still a day,
 Thou canst not stay,
 Shall drive the headlong from thy prey :—
 Nor all thy fierce vindictive powers ;
 Nor iron gates,—nor moated towers
 Shall save thy hated throne :
 When outraged, and repentant man
 By universal ban,
 Shall send thee, baffled, back to hell ;
 And horrors fell ;
 And choose another arbiter.
