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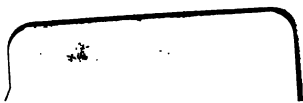
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DOVE VALLEY RHYMES

F. REDFERN



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DOVE VALLEY RHYMES.

DOVE VALLEY RHYMES.

BY

F. REDFERN,

AUTHOR OF "HISTORY OF UTTOXETER," ETC.

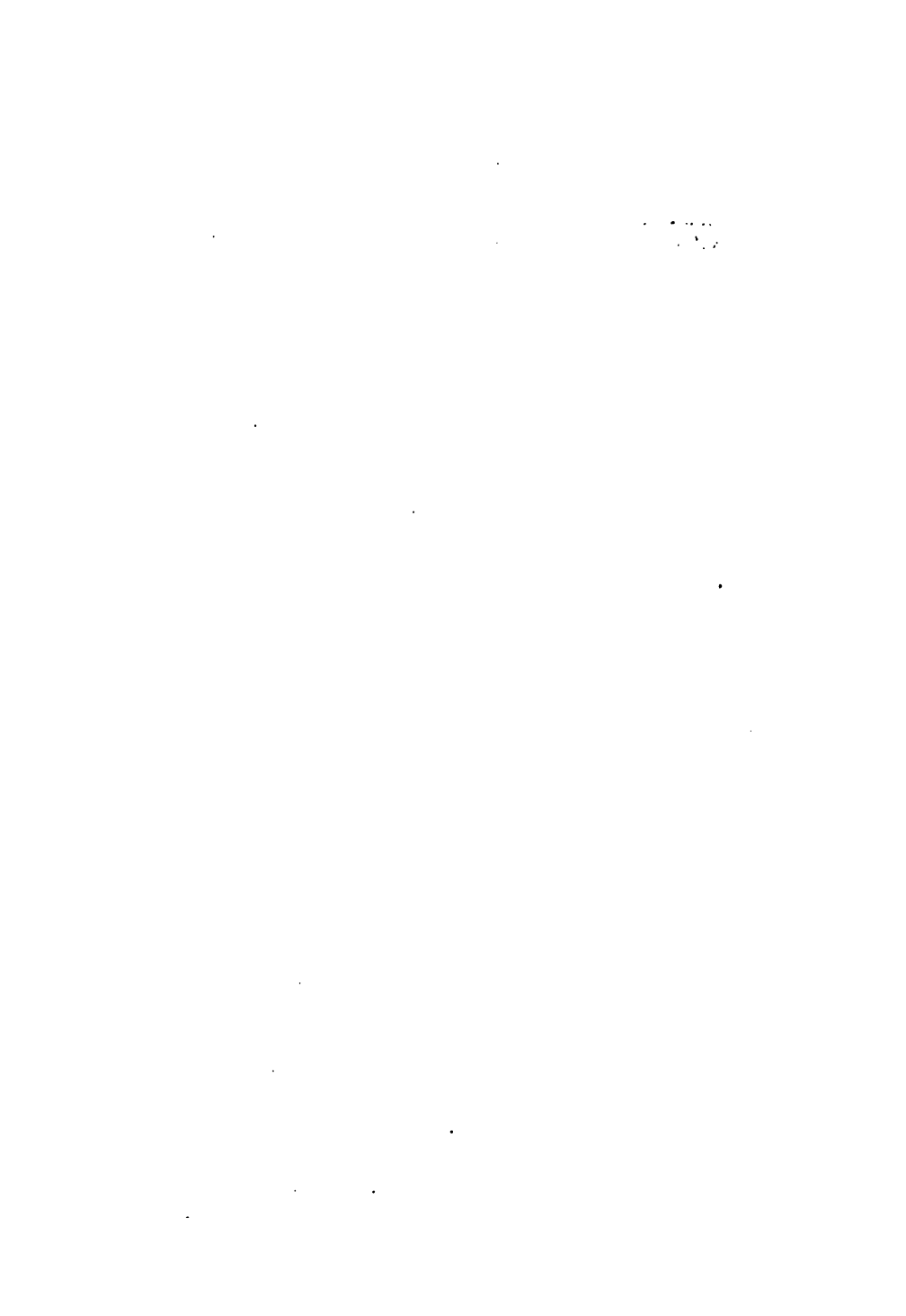


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1875.

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P R E F A C E .

THE legend on which is founded the most lengthy attempt in this little publication, is one which appears to have been handed down in Uttoxeter from a remote period ; but how far truth lies at the foundation of the story, it is impossible to say. It is necessary, however, to observe that the legend is related with some slight variations. One account makes it appear that the alleged Abbess arrived at Uttoxeter from the north, but whether from Rocester Abbey, Croxden Abbey, Dieulacres-Abbey, or Haulton Abbey, is not mentioned. Another account would induce us to suppose that she came from the south, and in particular from Tutbury, and became lost in the formerly-existing extensive woods south of Uttoxeter ; but as I could not conceive of any event which might have driven a lady from the religious house there, I have taken the liberty of associating her with the nunnery which stood at Hanbury, and of which there are brief notices of it having been overrun by the Danes. Indeed that is the catastrophe most generally mentioned as having occasioned her expulsion into the outer world.

It is not certain that William the First instituted the general ringing of the curfew bell in England, for it was a custom observed in many other countries before his reign ; consequently, no disagreement may exist in point of time as to the period when the nunnery at Hanbury, founded by the pious Wurburga, was overrun by the Danes, and the existence of the interesting custom referred to of the ringing of the curfew bell.

I have not attempted in the rhyme to enter upon the political relationship of the Saxons and Danes, and only touch upon the hint given by one of our old chroniclers—Hollinshead—of the opening scene of the tragedy of the extermination of the Danes taking place at Houndhill. Of course that event is not mentioned as having necessarily arisen out of the destruction of Wurburga's nunnery.

As the rhymes are the product, to a considerable extent, of time hardly abstracted from evening rest after daily toil, I feel (I trust not unreasonably) justified in expressing a hope that the kind reader will be oblivious of such imperfections as may be apparent, especially as the author has never attempted anything of the kind before. It is trusted that the title to the collection, "Dove Valley Rhymes," is not inappropriate, inasmuch as they have been produced on the banks of the Dove.

F. REDFERN.

Uttoxeter, January 29, 1875.

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DOVE VALLEY RHYMES.

THE HANBURY ABBESS.

A Legend.

INTRODUCTORY COLLOQUY.

“Rude popular traditions and old tales
Shine as immortal poems, at the touch
Of some poor, houseless, homeless, wandering bard,
Who had but a night's lodgings for his pains.”

Longfellow.

LEAVE we awhile the worldling's busy mart,
Where interests prompt each one to take a part ;
Where banter, pompous threats to leave alone
The bargain proffered by some easy drone ;
Where beauty swells the eager chaffing crowd,
Or turns askance with lured head and proud ;
Where winning lass smiles fresh from country air,
Or dame goes slow with weight of worldly care.

Leave we the toil which daily on us grows :
The plough which gleams as seam o'er seam it throws ;
The forge, where sparks from ponderous hammer splash,
And round in anger into darkness dash ;
The rails where moves, with calm majestic mien,
The iron horse with depth of power unseen ;
The shop where wealth, by tact and smiles secured,
Comes from the purse of flattered dupes allured ;
The busy hives where, at the subtle loom,
Youth takes a pallor for its rosy bloom ;
Leave we the fields where health inhales its power,
Bees nectar sip and pass from flower to flower ;
Rich landscapes ope in many a pleasing form,
And beauties take from shades of lowering storm ;
Where herds, depastured, fill the shining pail,
And crops have ripened for the swinging flail ;
Where flocks grow lusty with their silken fleece,
And gently browse o'er swelling hills in peace.

For one brief space the hearth we'll gather round,
Turn toil to rest, and care to ease profound ;
Join in the circle where the beaming eye
Gives and receives a glow of friendly joy,
Where chastened thought inspires the eager mind,
And all a pleasure in true friendship find.

The scene bedimmed where welcome guests are met,
Has oaken stand with bounty plainly set,
And wide the chimney opes to upper air,
Whilst crocks and shells can boast no ledge to share.
But peace prevails ; warm glows the evening fire,
And absent all prognostications dire.

The stairs ascend with rails of form of old,
And clock with tick goes on both firm and bold ;
In massive form a slide protrudes in place,
Well filled with books, in room of showy case ;
And children each with face of ruddy shade,
And hope expectant in their eyes display'd,
Sit eager listening for the talk to start
From lively tongue and warmly pulsing heart.

“ Shall politics,” says one, “ our time employ,
Say how the clamorous factions each decoy ;
How we some tax or duty may repress
And public ill by timely change redress ;
Give votes to men whose brains would be betrayed
By phantoms empty as an evening shade ;
Say we approve old Britain's power to maim
King Koffee's arm and sweep his town with flame ;
His town besmeared with human victims' gore,
And ripe for vengeance as the towns of yore,

Whence Lot escaped by God's command to fly,
Nor turned to see the towns in ruin lie ;
How good benign from such sad judgment springs
And freedom's sparks where keen oppression stings." ?

Macenus then, with bright and open mien,
Replied, " O let it not with us be seen
To launch on themes which end in hot dispute,
But rather keep our lips restrained and mute.
With social subjects break the silent reign ;
With harmless mirth both health and wisdom gain ;
And so avenge disquiet, plot, and strife,
And warring tempests waged in human life ;
So gain a happy freedom to the mind
With thoughts excelling, lofty, pure, and kind."

" Your words," said Hermes, " we can all admire,
And to your happy climax would aspire ;
But every day such social subjects start
To mould the manners and improve the heart.
To ward from life a frigid chilling air
And soothe the mind inwrought with fleeting care,
For once let lapsed events be brought to view,
And hoary stories, pleasing, rare, and true ;
Let rolling clouds from o'er the past distill,
And clear as shapes respond in crystal rill,

May legends form an image in each mind,
Distinct and showing both their birth and kind.
In days which number with the rosy past,
And youth flowed freely through our veins and fast,
When tales enchanted by their mystic air,
And life glow'd bright with luring visions rare,
The 'thralling stories of a vanished time,
In simple prose or in melodious rhyme,
In every heart obtained a faithful hold,
As gems firm set and clasped in rims of gold.
Impelled for themes we need not seek afar ;
They echo near 'neath distant glimmering star,
In fields and woods which bound the lingering Dove ;
'Mid scenes commixed with those of whispered love ;
Or where has traversed on the evening air
The voice of joy or moan of deep despair.
If each relate some story dwelling near,
The youth to transport, and the aged to cheer ;
The hour to pass with pleasant moving speed,
And unrecording aught in word or deed
Except what conscience owns and God approves,
Or through Truth's holy temple chastely moves,
We each shall own how welcome the design,
How happy, too, and little to repine."

Approval soon the project all subscribe ;
Hope glow'd expectant and delay did chide,
And eager each some worthy theme should ope,
And interest, praise, and pleasing smile evoke,
And on kind Hermes looked with wistful view
First to relate some legend, ere the dew
Of coming years efface its fading dawn,
Like monumental name by ages worn ;
Who thus began, as soon a theme he found,
And woke the interest of the group around.

The Legend.

In days bye-gone, a thousand years,
Elate with joy, bedewed with tears,
And draped in misty shreds of morn,
When England, glorious land ! was torn
By contest warm, so often tried
'Twixt Saxons brave, in battle's pride,
And Danish foes with purpose stern
Wide conquests o'er the land to earn,
But baffled in their deep design,
And sore rebuffed with long repine,
A house for pious uses stood
O'er valley laved by gentle flood,

On Hanbury's dome, sublimely high,
'Lumed by a pure and sunny sky.
Wurburgah good and princess mild
The house in ample glory piled,
And lavished wealth immense with care
On sculptured shafts and shrines for prayer ;
On doorways fine, with arches crowned
With art in graceful features round ;
On altar where the incense rose,
And souls in trouble found repose ;
And all bespoke both taste and skill,
Devotion pure and reverent will.

The godly fervour of the saint
Spread its mild power without a taint,
And virgins, though of noble birth,
Bearing loved beauty's seal and worth,
Came meekly from their homes afar,
Guided by bright religion's star,
And sought that hallowed house of prayer,
Its saintly peace and Wurburgh's care.

The scenes which round seductive lay
And drank the cheering smiles of day,
Were such as purest lives might own,
And from them take a nobler tone ;

For nature calms the mind for prayer
And wins it from delusive care,
Inspires with pleasure's purest rays
And beauteous themes for poet's lays.
Groves grew with soft enchantment calm,
And o'er them broke, with power to charm,
Sweet carols poured from woodland bird,
And welcome e'en by hermits heard.
'Trees grew to grand majestic size,
And grouped in forms for art to prize,
Whilst flowers profuse gemmed all the ground,
And wide diffused their sweets around ;
And near in finely rolling forms
(Tho' dashed by wintry raging storms)
Old Needwood waved his massive brow
O'er sunny glades bright opening now ;
Whilst down the lovely quiet vale,
Endeared by many a lingering tale,
The Dove with pleasant murmur flowed,
And in its crystal bosom glowed
The landscape vast of varied form,
Streaked with the kindling tints of morn ;
And prospects bound by distant skies
Dissolved to grey with hills that rise ;

The lover's sigh was breathed in vain
From courtly knight and rural swain ;
Within no name but Christ's was dear ;
Without but God and nature near ;
A sacred halo hung around
Where peaceful virtues' ways were found.

So one by one years passed away ;
The house grew flecked with tints of grey,
And mossy, ivy-hung, and wed
With lichen, golden, brown, and red,
And all the scene, in dappled tone,
Like the old place had mellowed grown,
And pleased the musing serious mind
From earthly thoughts and stains refined.

The kindness in the house which dwelt
Was o'er the spacious district felt,
And from its ample sources flowed
Its alms, to cheer each poor abode,
Within the hamlets reared below,
Where life moved simply on and slow,
And mercy's streams, diffusive, found
Man's deepest wounds and gently bound.

Successive troops of nuns appeared
Within the pile fair Wurburgh reared,

And her own form, grown so sublime,
Lay calm within her sculptured shrine,
So massive, richly wrought, and chaste,
Worked with great skill, not careless haste.

A fane to godly use assigned,
And maids to pious life inclined,
Famed too for holy acts of love
And hopes of fadeless joys above ;
For vows sincere and earnest prayer,
And inward searchings made with care ;
Strict, too, in vigils morn and even,
And sheltered 'neath the smile of heaven,
We might assume were safe from ill,
From threatening foe and scornful will.
But as when summer's sun is high
And cloudless the cerulean sky,
And larks their strains so rapid pour
The firmament and landscape o'er ;
When hill and dale serenely lie
In tints of beauty's purest dye ;
And bright and charming looks the scene,
Nor waves the robe of mingled green
Which nature takes a pride to wear,
In shame of winter rude and bare,

A sudden gloom descends o'er all ;
The lightnings flash ; the torrents fall ;
The thunder peals ; the waters roar,
And shiverings seize creation o'er,
Which in its glorious dress despoiled,
Now tattered looks and woeful wild :
So when this house on Hanbury stood
Displayed o'er hamlet, field, and wood,
And praise from near its altar woke,
And prayer to heaven in fervour broke ;
When saintly alms flowed from within,
And vain suspicion's search for sin,
And envy, guile, and malice fled,
And peace its downy pinions spread
O'er temple raised both broad and high,
Lit with the effulgence of the sky :
A wrathful tempest trailed with gore
Surged Hanbury, peaceful village, o'er.

Not near encamped, but restless grown,
Rough Danish hordes, for conquest prone,
Bent on the Mercian power to break,
And Saxon freedom's strength to shake,
Rushed eager o'er Dove's valley wide,
Like prowling wolves with hunger tried.

The dreaded hosts were seen in view ;
Fear seized fair Wurburgh's temple through,
And all the saintly maidens there
Low bent in grief and earnest prayer.
But vain their life of guileless worth,
And their devotion, alms, and birth ;
Vain all the motives reaching wide,
To spare their temple, Wurburgh's pride.
The Danish bandits onward moved,
(Nor yet in fray their prowess proved)
To pour their anger, gathering wild,
Where innocence and goodness smiled.
The woody cliffs, though frowning low,
Failed to avert the intended blow ;
And o'er the fragrant slopes they sped
Where musing saints were wont to tread ;
And soon their hoarse unmanly calls
Sounded through Wurburgh's hallowed walls :
" Unbar these doors," the heathen cried ;
" Out of this den of selfish pride ;
Quit without form this place of sloth,
Rank with pretence and foolish oath ;
Mocked with low moans and senseless face,
Traced but with chant and measured pace.

Out of this pile ; we'll lay it low,
Daring your knights, our Mercian foe ;
Stone upon stone in ruin lay,
Stern warning for some future day."
The hordes environed swift the place,
And swift their acts wrought their disgrace,
By all the ruin they designed,
And basely prompted by their mind.
The temple's firm embedded stones
Were prostrate hurled with deafening tones,
Which in the clefts arising round
A sad repeating echo found ;
Whilst through the wide champaign were chased,
And timorous in their painful haste,
Its nuns, white like the angels pure,
The world's rough usage to endure.
But one more noble than the rest,
Stately in form, for goodness best,
'Scaped with her maid, perturbed with fear,
Down a deep wooded ravine near,
Thick with outbranching bush and brier,
Hid from marauder's rankling ire.
And when they from their tangled path
Emerged, they o'er wide fields of math,

O'er knolls and quiet valleys trod,
Invoking guidance from their God,
And with their minds to heaven resigned,
Northward they felt their way inclined.
By rude and straggling homes they passed ;
Eve's shades grew flickering, long, and fast ;
Stretching like palls o'er scenes of woe,
Where tears from bending mourners flow,
Whilst woods, in softly sighing strain,
Uttered the anguish of their pain,
Nor less the Dove mourned its lament,
And bore it to the wailing Trent.
But on with wearied feet they sped,
The day's last lingering gleams were fled,
By Houndhill, hoary height, their way ;
Wolves strayed from Needwood for their prey,
And as thick darkness mantled round,
And hushed the woodman's mirthful sound,
And hogs from gathering mast had hied,
From russet-hurst and forest wide,
The lady fair and maid so true
Both weary, worn, and fainting grew.
But gloomier hour their thoughts beset
And dews their slender covering met,

As in the woods, Utcester bound,
Toilsome with fear they paced the ground,
Whilst hunger, autumn breeze, and cold,
Sufficed to chill the strong and bold.
Yet when in painful need so great,
And trembling o'er a threatening fate ;
When foul fledged, dark, and dull despair
Sat brooding in the nightly air,
They strung their hearts with feeble tone,
And raised a low, sad song alone,
Which cheered, like soothing breath of flowers,
Their minds through weary moving hours,
And in these words their lay expressed,
Rousing the low lodged birds from rest,
Calm nestled in the bushes near,
In dreamless peace unknown to fear,
Ere morn released their silent mood
And each from needful slumbers wooed :

PLAINTIVE SONG.

“ How sad our fate since morn arose,
And op'd a pure and cloudless sky ;
What griefs from either bosom flows,
And in the heedless breezes die.

“When from our couches, calmed with rest,
And eager each our duties sued,
Little we deemed our holy zest
Would check receive so base and rude.

“But now our feet are weary grown ;
Our home despoiled, once strong and fair ;
And though to rest so strongly prone,
No bed or shelter smooth our care.

“Darkness the wide dominion spreads ;
No gleam of hope, so cheering, dawns ;
Terror the sounding forest treads,
Nor e’en at shrinking damsel fawns.

“What shall we do now pathless, lost,
And amorous moon deigns not to rise ?
Nought seen but heaving branches tossed,
Dimly in play against the skies.

“Faint is our strength and power to call ;
None to respond in forest deep ;
Sip may we up our cup of gall,
Cheerless in tears of sorrow weep.”

'Their lay had been but scarcely flung
On breeze which played the trees among,
When sound on sound thrilled through the air,
Piercing the heart of fell despair :
The curfew bell, prompt to the hour,
Pealed from Utcester's sacred tower,
'Neath which, in fane to rev'rent wrought,
Sinners the way to heaven were taught.
And then, above the sacred pile,
Clouds broke and let the twinkling smile
Of radiant stars shine mild and free
On forest, rippling meer, and ley.
"What now," fair damsel to her maid
Freely and calm and kindly said,
"Further shall hold us pining here,
Dying for want of friendly cheer ?
Calm watchful stars the skies adorn,
Where curfew loud the people warn
Their fires to quench, though guileless mirth
Brightly reflects their glowing worth."

The maid replied, "My guide and friend,
Whate'er the way you choose to wend,
Or should you only plod to death,
With you I'll spend my latest breath."

At once, though weary, worn, and lone,
And languor o'er their heart had grown,
They paced towards that now hopeful spot,
Meaning its life to mould their lot.
But slow their march, and hind'rance rude
And various in their path were strewed ;
Bush, ditch, and stream did constant greet
The progress of their tortured feet.
But out upon a path they came,
Carved ere the sound of wrongful Dane
Fell sadly upon British ear,
Fit but for their reproachful cheer.
Fosse-like it stretched its lengthy line,
Dark down the High Wood's steep incline.
And lonely o'er its rugged course,
Dejected, feeble, cold, and hoarse,
Like Sorrow's sprites incarnate grown,
And bearing depth of care unknown,
They reach their destined end with pain,
Hoping for friendly help to gain.

When at Utcester's guarded verge,
A throng debated to emerge,
Through rumour (spurring into rage
Youth, maiden, and the hoary sage,)

Of deeds with ruthless fingers traced,
O'er pile which Hanbury's summit graced.
When in the watcher's ear they shed
Their touching tale, and fervent pled
For entrance through Utcester's gates,*
From cruel and relentless fates,
A gentle whisper passed through all,
"She is an abbess ! reverent fall !
That is her maid, companion now,
Driven from Hanbury's tearful brow."

The interest spread Utcester through ;
Priest—people of all stations drew,
With torches and with reverent air,
To gaze on the unhappy pair,
Holy in life ; by solemn deed
From worldly occupations freed.
The priest bestowed his blessing mild ;
The people warm their welcome smiled,

* During the Saxon period the entrances to many towns and villages were closed by gates, called, in Saxon, Ludgates, and these were in turn watched by the inhabitants. There are but few places now, however, to which the name is applied, or in connection with which it has been retained, and that mostly in a corrupt form. On the right hand on going out of Rocester to Ashbourne, there is a field named Luggets, meaning Ludgates, and indicating the situation of a closed entrance to the place at a very remote period. Watching and warding were customs observed in Uttoxeter several hundred years back, and as it was a Saxon town prior to subsequent occupancy, there can be no doubt its entrances during that period were protected in the way specified.

And vowed, by righteous heaven inspired,
By patriot indignation fired,
That Danish crowds, though brave in sin,
Should nought by desecration win.
But scarcely could the abbess meek
Her thanks in more than whispers speak,
For as the tale as long rehearsed,
Fatal disease she inly nursed,
From seeds sown by the nightly air,
By pressure of a deep despair ;
From languor of her travail born,
Since Sol so brightly rose that morn.

A Saxon lady, kindly bent,
The abbess to her mansion sent,
And on a bed of snowy down—
The softest in Utcester town—
The pious, toilworn abbess lay,
With priest to gently heal and pray,
And comforts great as heaven could pour
To soothe, to strengthen, and restore.
But still she felt that placid death
Waited the empire of her breath,
Nor kindness, healing art, nor care,
Longer her flickering life could spare ;

And, gathering all her strength, she cried,
“ Father, within my packet tied
Are deeds of moderate wealth I own,
Snatched from dear Hanbury’s house o’erthrown.
I leave an annual modus clear
Your curfew bell which sounds to cheer,
To peal each evening through all time
And in remembrance but of mine ;
Through summer’s scented evening air,
And winter’s o’er the forests bare,
To guide lost travellers on their way,
Through woods benighting, fierce, and grey ;
And kindly on my maid bestow,
Sufficient for her wants below ;
And may my blessing ever rest
On this old town the kindest—best.”

She stopped, and o’er her features grew
A pallor strange of something new,
And on the saintly being there
The priest breathed out his parting prayer.
She looked farewell, and with a smile
Lingering upon her face the while,
Her spirit fled on wings away
To happier climes and ceaseless day.

When on the bright succeeding morn
Tidings from house to house were borne,
In words restrained, with sad surprise,
And tearlets trembling in the eyes,
That o'er life's final bourne had passed
From form where noble features cast
Exquisite, lingering beauties rare,
Chastened and sweet beyond compare,
The spirit of the abbess mild,
From Hanbury's fane in ruin piled,
A deepening cloud of gloom o'erspread
Utcester town, and from it fled
Aught but was of solemn air,
Or tinted with a pensive care.

The graceful form the abbess wore
With heavenly dew was sprinkled o'er,
And solemn prayers were often said,
For the immortal spirit fled,
Whilst anxious throngs, with careful pace,
Sought to behold her lovely face,
And catch an influence from the scene
Where such a hallowed death had been.
But mortal frame, however fair,
Must to its native earth repair,

Nor could exception plead but vain
For abbess fled from ruthless Dane.
A stone was scooped in which to lay
Her body drooped to lifeless clay,
And on its lid, and richly traced,
A floral cross its surface graced,
Wrought from the priest's minute design,
With mouldings chastely turned and fine,
And deep within God's house of prayer
Her grave was delved with mournful care.

At length the day decreed arose,
To lay her in her long repose,
Amongst the silent lonely dead,
Where hope looks from their mouldering bed.
Maids robed in snowy-white drew round
The burial scene, to catch the sound,
As from the lips of priest they fell
(Whilst slowly tolled the funeral bell),
Of holy, solemn rites divine,
Though for the dead, yet so sublime,
And deeper pity held the sway
For abbess from that sombrous day.

But ere we finish all the tale,
And cease the abbess to bewail,

The ancient mount of Hanbury high,
Beckons the tribute of a sigh,
And retribution's sore design,
Pants for a measure of our time.

Long ere the sad and rueful day
Had passed with its last glimmering ray,
And still whilst passion's rousing ire
The bosom lit with vengeful fire,
The Saxons from the district sped ;
They from their halls of pleasure fled ;
Their ploughs were turned in haste aside ;
Their homes were left with wife and bride ;
And gathering near dear Hanbury's base,
And pledged the barbarous Danes to face,
They from the sylvan plains below
Sprang to engage their daring foe
High up on Hanbury's fields around,
Where loud for vengeance spoke the ground,
Where doubly loud it rang among
The foully base despoiling throng.
With patience armed and courage bright,
The Saxons moved their foe to fight ;
And brave the rushing shock they bore,
And firm as rocks which bound the shore ;

When on the Danes advanced along,
Boasting aloud their prowess strong ;
Bow, spear, and axe their purpose plied ;
Gore sped in many a crimson tide,
As o'er the scene the battle strayed,
And Death his slaughtered victims made,
Till the bright day refused to shine,
For the still sombre night to pine.

Victory so glorious on the field
Scarcely decisive marks could yield,
But sturdy Saxons, stung with ire,
Sons by the side of brawny sire,
Fought, though in numbers counting few,
Bravely and to their feelings true,
And of the Danes no trace was seen
Save where the tug of strife had been.

O mount ! of such sad scenes of woe,
O Hanbury ! bruised by baneful blow !
What fane thy apex once o'erspread
And stately raised its sacred head !
O Wurburgh ! where thy massive pile ?
Where all thy sacrifice and toil,
Wrought with such deep and loving zeal,
And hope of long enduring weal ?

O where ? the Dove still murmurs loud,
And where ? wafts Needwood, rearing proud,
And where ? the unprotected dust,
Thy nuns disposed in thee to trust,
O where ? the vacant scene instills,
And deep the mind with sorrow fills ;
No stone, no mound, no line to tell
Where Wurburgh reared her pile so well !
But let us from such thoughts away
And close our legendary lay.

Time moved its round, and in disguise
Saxons more cautious, firm, and wise,
Resolved their freedom to retain
And crush their haughty foe, the Dane,
And nursed their purpose deep and long
And grew in zeal and courage strong ;
And near fair Wurburgh's hallowed bowers,
On Houndhill's fields of crimsoned flowers,
Their anger bore resistless sway
First on the dread revengeful day.

Through centuries' long and changing times,
And now, 'tis said, the curfew chimes
Are for the abbess, passing fair,
Driven from Hanbury in despair,

And lost in woods in darksome hour,
Till loud from old Utcester's tower,
The curfew bell with swelling sound,
Passed o'er the dales and hills around.

These tangs the curfew always led
For the good abbess ages dead,
Till, as is held as strangely true,
A daring sexton careless grew,
And ceased the tangs to gently chime
Late within living memory's time,
When the pained abbess, all in white,
Suddenly rose before his sight,
High in the grey and silent tower
At the dim, wild, and spirit hour ;
Then with sad look she passed away,
Leaving him bent in awe to pray.

So did good Hermes, fearful all the while,
Strive to delight and gain a pleasing smile,
Pleading that this, his first essay, might find
Gentle forbearance and rebuke as kind.
But then small space remained that closing day,
For other legend and more charming lay,
And 'twas agreed such tale should further wait
Some future evening and more glorious fate.

ALTON CHOSEN BY FLORA.

THE goddess Flora rose betime
In fairy beauty in her prime,
Amid the nations formed of old
And cast in goodliest mental mould,
Where arts beloved engrossed the sway,
And finely blended in their day
The subtle power of thought divine,
Perception's sense of graceful line,
And Execution's envied skill
Controlled by e'er unflinching will ;
Where thoughts by men of grave design,
Thoughts glowing bright with truths benign,
Inspired, by preacher's words, their race,
And left in moral deeds their trace ;
Where patriot's zeal infused the throng
And dared all base aspiring wrong,
And nerved for martial prowess grand
With love for country's circling strand.

The poets sang her praises wide,
Whilst floral offerings wreathed the tide
Of crystal streams which flowed along,
And bore the sound of minstrel's song,
With streaks of wine of ruby shade,
Which mingled with the offerings made.
The bubbling springs were scattered round
With wildling flowers which decked the ground,
And breathed their scents along the vales,
Where softly moved the gentle gales,
In May's delightful vernal time,
Which danced so gay for summer fine,
With all its new awakening powers,
And bounty so profuse in flowers.

But peoples, where the goddess fair
Received such beauteous homage rare,
And reared her temples carved around
With wreaths which chastely friezes bound,
Have left her temples, built with zeal,
Forlorn, inscribed with ruin's seal ;
Her customs once renowned among
The nations and embalmed in song,
Drooped to but lingering vestige rare,
And slight degree of loving care.

And so expelled she wandered long,
But still retained her beauty young ;
She blushed with Spring's fresh tinted bloom,
And smiled o'er Winter's vanished gloom ;
Enchanting everywhere, she fled
From place to place with flowery tread
In search of some secure retreat,
And village springs for offerings meet.
She then the Churnet vale descried,
Where beauty weds it for its bride,
And tripping o'er its banks she found
A scene which all her wishes crowned,
And though with rudeness still embraced,
Nor art its sloping features graced,
She knew that with her touch awhile,
It like a paradise would smile.
She then enamoured Shrewsbury's powers
With love for scenic art and flowers ;
The wildness of the valley fled ;
The slopes the mind with beauty fed ;
Groves sprang enchanting 'mid the scene,
Which left abashed the poet's dream
Of fairy grounds extending where
No mortal footsteps claim a share.

Sweet fountains rose with rushing spray,
And Naiads graced the scene in play ;
Grots, springs, and gentle waterfalls,
Smooth yielding sward and floral halls ;
Fair wending paths for leisure's tread,
All through the odorous regions led ;
Exquisite temples deftly planned,
And palace famed through all the land ;
Whilst on the heights secluding round,
Tall sheltering trees the prospects bound ;
And like some Abyssinian vale
The scene bore but the softest gale,
And harpings as in days of old,
Whose numbers mystic feelings told,
Which lingered 'mongst the gentle flowers,
Till sleep hushed their last whispering powers.
Those grateful features swift displayed
Where Nature's rudeness once dismayed,
When Flora spoke her wishes fair,
And Shrewsbury fixed the plan with care.

The songs the ancient minstrel poured
Wide o'er the vale fair nymphs adored,
Were oft in praise of martial powers,
Romantic love and beauty's dowers,

Of scenes which his first fancy caught,
And still his best remembrance fraught.
But oftener his fine spirit strayed
(As o'er his harp his fingers played)
Among the scenes of grandeur round,
And o'er the fairy-woven ground,
And back to startling themes of old,
When Britons roved those regions bold,
With fiery eye scanned all the scene,
And taught on native skill to lean ;
For ramparts raised their earthen mound
High upon rising Bonebury round,
And by their priests, the Druids wise,
Their lowering offerings reached the skies,
From the tall rocks where Toothill rears,
Washed by the rush of Churnet's tears.
His lays glanced at the varied traits
Which stamped brave Saxons in their frays
Upon that glorious British ground,
And o'er the rising giant mound,
Where stood for fight bold Ceolred,
'Gainst valiant hosts by Ina led,
Where frowns the rock which bears his name,
High o'er the vale where victims, slain,

Lay piled in heaps on heaps in gore,
In those unsettled days of yore.

He loved to thrill a wondrous strain
From out his sounding harp again,
To show through chinks of vanished years
The scenes which flit in joy, in tears,
Within and round proud Alton's keep,
Where famous deeds and memories sleep,
But catch the eye with vivid power,
And living rise, with vanished tower,
When touched by minstrel's magic lyre,
When lit by his wild prophet fire.

He poured a song, loud, deep, and free,
For brave and daring Shrewsbury,
Who at Châtillon nobly fought,
And honour to his country brought,
By deeds and life which ebb'd away
In that his last stern glorious fray.

And now o'er all this famed retreat,
Fair Flora reigns in triumph meet,
Whilst o'er the world, profuse, she throws
(To gently lighten human woes)
The charming product of her powers,
Sweet, varied-tinted lovely flowers.

And if through all the boundless sphere,
Where springs rise sparkling, fresh, and clear,
Pure Flora's offerings charm the eye,
And breathe their fragrance to the sky,
'Tis where, O Tissington ! thy bowers
Smile back with Beauty's charming powers,
Thy floral scenes brought with sweet May,
And spreading round thy fountains gay,
Whilst hymnings sacred swell the air,
With thanks and mingling sounds of prayer.

LINES ON AUTUMN.

THE radiant months which gemmed the flowering year
Now lave the distant past. The flowery dreams
Of Hope have been enjoyed. Nature's pure bliss
From scenes of loveliest form has filled the soul
Where'er the feet have sauntered, and the mind
In contemplative mood has seized upon
Its various attributes so fair and coy.
The woods in sleepy softness, tinted o'er
With every shade of emerald, or embossed
In massive form in deeper hue ; and, too,
The murmuring companionship of streams,
The pleasant lake with sunny bosom cool,
And vales for rich retirement, poet's dreams,
And sacred to the lover's whispered tales,
The artist's eye and skill, devotion calm
With hope aspiring high above the stars ;
The beauteous village with its ivied fane
For sacred reverie, and all its spots

Made famous in the far seductive past ;
The castles raised on mounts' commanding brows,
And abbeys clasped in vales on wandering streams,
And all their walls o'erhung with tresses green,
Clombed from the earth, and in profusion rich,
Hiding the rifts and blanks which wasting Time—
The all-effacing hand—and brooding man,
In angry passion or through reason warped,
Have sadly gaped, have thrilled a glowing sense
Of welcome ecstasy through all the powers
Of mind and frame. But now dismantling fast
Each pondered scene, sere Autumn wins apace
Its graver reign. No longer grandly wave
The recent golden fields, but rank the math ;
Secluding trembling hare and watchful bird,
Till sturdy sportsman sweeps their covert o'er.
No longer orchards tempt with luscious yield,
And floral scenes, with recent summer hues
Emitting fragrance, are sadly tangled
With the fallen stems, once beauty bearing.
The forest boughs are shaking off their garb
So russet-grown by Autumn wear, and lank
Their branches stare, invoking Pity's eye.
The vales are dank, and the chill sweeping breeze

Ruffles the lonely lake, and northward bears
The sighing of the distant falling streams.
Once more upon its wonted chimney top,
O'erlooking gable whence its well fledged brood
'Scaped to the air, the glossy starling pours
A flood of song. 'Mid evening's early shades
The redbreast thrills its plenteous autumn strains.
Wide o'er the expectant fields, with trustful mind,
The farmer casts the willing grain, but still
With animation less elate, and hopes
More distant fixed, than when the gaining sun
Brings the unfolding year with floral wreaths.
Eve flames the heavens with scarlet tinge, and soon
The blustering winds, with faint restraint withheld,
Sweep o'er the scene ; or calm the closing day
With nipping air, and spreading o'er the trees
A silvery incrustation for the gaze
Of waking morn. The herds warm shelter seek,
In plenteous stalls ; and man by reason led,
And, too, impelled by instinct's powerful plea,
Draws round the hearth where mirth and burning logs
Inspire a genial glow and welcome song.
But soon, by gradual change, fierce Winter frowns,
And holds in rigid grasp the wide domain.

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once beauty

The balmy air, and vales of quiet joy,
And the beguiling scenes of summer hours
And lengthened days, are now a treasured gain
In Memory's hold, to be again, mayhap,
Renewed in time, if oft delusive Hope
Be not undone and vanish into gloom.

A MONODY ON UTTOXETER TOWN CRIER'S OLD CRACKED BELL.

WRITTEN BY REQUEST.

"The bell referred to in the ensuing lines was procured by William Alport, who was appointed town crier for Uttoxeter by a vestry meeting near a hundred years ago. He died in or about the year 1832, when he was succeeded by his son, the late Mr. Thomas Alport, who held the appointment of town crier and used the original bell of his father's until 1868. Mr. Thomas B. Alport, his son, and grandson of William, the first crier of the name, then took up the office, and employed the old bell until by some accident it became cracked and useless in 1871. Although unused to such kind of composition, I was requested to write some lines on the old familiar bell, ere it was cast to the old metal heap, to be recited at a penny reading in memory of its services through so many generations."

ALAS! old Bell of vanished days,
My heart, in tender plaintive lays,
Would sing in lines immortal born
The earliest clangour from thy form;
Till now I find thy sounds are fled,
Thy virtues gone and uses dead,

And thou, like other earthly things
To which fond memory eager clings,
Hast lost thy magic power to please
And vice its darkest haunts to tease.
I know, old Bell, 'twere useless now,
With age so stained upon thy brow,
To ask thee to relate awhile
(And so our listening ears beguile)
The history of thy lengthened days,
So worthy of our fervent praise ;
And as we're old familiar friends,
And oft have met each other's ends,
I'll now at once rehearse thy deeds,
As duty points or friendship pleads.

So now, good people, list, I pray,
I'll hasten through my humble lay,
Though tears I fear will start apace,
And check my new poetic race.

The dear old bell, you'll like to know,
Was moulded near an age ago ;
Has nobly passed from sire to son,
And we have jointly duty done ;
Have braved your streets in frost and snow ;
Been scorched by summer's burning glow ;

Been drenched by heedless pouring rain
Whilst boomed the thunder's loud refrain ;
At morn, at noon, and cheerful eve,
Our calling's found but brief reprieve.

The butcher's tripe and jelly clear,
Cow heels, plump ducks, and bonny deer,
Fat pork, rump beef, and rabbits too,
We've rung and shouted out to you ;
Potatoes round, and turnips fine,
And water wanted for your wine ;
And Johnny missed through too much beer,
His head besotted, sick, and queer,
His master's work all standing still,
Waiting his energy and will ;
Gold watches lost, and locket's fair,
Gemmed with fond mystic treasures rare,
Or bonnet made in lovely form,
Or muff, or cape for wintry storm,
Or child from mother's circle strayed,
With ringlets held in golden braid,
Or fleecy flocks all missing where
Tall neighing steeds their pastures share,
Or cur with silken coat and brown
Mixed with white patches, and a frown

Upon his solemn pate so queer,
Such as must cause a mirthful cheer ;
All these in turn I've to you cried,
The bell with clangour surging wide,
The notes of warning on the ear,
Distinct, diffusive, strong, and clear.
And when, alas ! some vengeful fire,
With flames expanding in their ire,
And lighting up the midnight gloom
From cot or mansion far too soon,
We've roused you from your beds at ease,
The cruel demon to appease,
And snatch from ruin's pauseless aim
The wreck it girt in fiery chain.

I cannot tell you all we've done,
To make you merry, give you fun,
Nor now relate in serious mood,
Distinct announcements for your good ;
But this I'll say, when trade's ran high,
Each tradesman's vowed he'd sooner die
Than once be beaten in his price,
In beef, in rabbits, or in rice,
In mealy bulbs and apples fine,
Or plums with smack of russet wine,

As you have witnessed year by year,
With merry laugh and ringing cheer,
As round my faithful bell and I
Have told out to the bending sky.
The poor have blessed our cheerful tread,
When holly, fringed with berries red,
And spangling in the window frame
Of every worthy cottage dame,
Has noted it was Christmas time
For jolly doles and jingling rhyme.
The rich have blessed our casual round,
When we've announced that trout abound,
Or salmon, grouse, and pheasants rare,
Or turkeys, downy geese, or hare.

Nor less have youthful faces smiled,
When we've their tickled fancies 'guiled
With pictures of the pretty things
Which chance or changing season brings
Within our mart of gilded shows,
Or toys in shops on shelving rows.

We've trailed out politics, and bold,
Have aid to Whigs and Tories sold,
Blessing our luck when on the sly,
For pence will many needs supply.

•

To auctioneers, a worthy race,
I've just reserved a little space,
To say how well for them we've plied,
That bell has rung and I have cried.

And now, my friends, my case deplore,
Mourn the famed bell for days of yore ;
Its tale I've told with many a smart
Crossing the threshold of my heart.
With me lament, for now no more
Its swelling notes will longer pour
Upon the passing gale, nor sound
Familiar through your mansions round ;
It's cracked, and like a fractured bowl,
No sound remains within its soul.
We'll place it on the shelf and say,
Like other things it's done its day.

But one word more just let me frame,
Since my old bell is cracked and lame,
Another bell I here have found
Of recent mould, in duty bound
To join me in my future race,
As through your friendly streets I pace.
We'll haste at every nod and call,
And daily try to please you all.

This bell, I think, will willing play
My old friend's part from day to day,
And if I'm not mistaken quite,
Or dreaming like some orient knight,
In balmy odours at Hong Kong,
'Twill now ring out its best ding ! dong
Ding ! dong.

SPRING-TIME.

RABERTY ! Draperty ! Traperty !

I am prancing the road along,
In the pleasant, the odorous Spring-time,
Which smiles on the fields, and among
The hedges, and lanes, and the brambles
Which stray down the banks where I roam,
And tempt me, I know not how happy,
Further and further from home.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !

What a glorious day, and how clear,
As the sun in his burnishing splendour
Puts a new bright face on the year,
Restores o'er the scars of the Winter
The freshness and charm of the Spring,
Brings carols from woodlands, and laughter
From every soul-throbbing thing.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !

I on to the forest green

Canter on Bunk, the old pony,

The surest and best ever seen ;

I use all the eyes that do glisten,

Beneath the eaves of my brow,

And gaze on each scene of the landscape,

So tempting with beauty just now.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !

O what a heart-stirring thing

It is to scamper so easy

By the bloom of the crimson ling

Where Nature was never yet lonely ,

Though far from the strife and noise

Which jar on the soothing harpings,

Which fill the soul with their joys.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !

How sweet the scent of the flowers,

Which drape the banks of the hedgerows

And enamel all nature's bowers ;

How pure are the white star-daisies !

How rich the hawthorn bloom,

O'erhanging the fair modest primrose,
And the violets blue in gloom.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !
Why all the fields are asmile,
With tokens of Spring in its beauty,
And devoid of the trappings of guile.
The lambs skip in frolicsome pastime ;
The cowslips gem all the leys,
And cheerful life-giving whispers
Awake with the hum of the bees.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !
Why almost before I'm aware,
I've reached the edge of the forest,
And have time for a stay to spare.
What harmony trills as I listen,
And as thrushes listen themselves ;
'Tis surely a home for the fairies
And the bright-hearted types of elves.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !
The forest home of my fair,
The cottage encircled with roses,
And fann'd with the balmy air ;

Is bright beyond any dwelling
Which studs the green forest bounds,
Which glads me beyond any telling,
And oft with soft melody sounds.

Raberty ! Draperty ! Traperty !
I've seen the loved maid of my mind,
Whose bloom is as fresh as the rose's,
Whose heart is both gentle and kind :
O I'll make her my life's fairest treasure,
And she'll make it a long pleasant May,
Both sunny and happy with pleasure,
And as Spring both lightsome and gay.

A POETIC REVERIE.

A FRAGMENT.

LET me paint the poet's mission
In this state of quick transition,
In the blissful dreaming season,
When the Fancy culls from Reason,
Culls from Nature all its beauties,
And performs its glorious duties,
While the soul aspires and trembles,
And around its shrine assembles
All its sweet ambrosial treasures,
Culled for rare poetic pleasures—
All the stars that twinkle faintly,
And the moon when sailing saintly,
And the thousand voices teaching—
All around us fitly preaching—
Forests hoarse in wild endeavour ;
Billows when they clash and sever ;

Hills which kiss the early morning ;
Flowers in silent vales adorning ;
And the pastures for the dairy,
With their flocks, though peaceful, wary ;
And the meadows ever smiling,
And their footpaths all beguiling ;
Too the rippling brooklets playing,
Merry round the sedges straying,
O'er the rounded pebbles leaping,
In the quiet corners sleeping ;
Rivers streaking every valley ;
Shades that in the rivers dally ;
Cot with shy and beauteous maiden ;
Breeze with floral sweetness laden ;
Children in their pleasant rambles,
And their chat by rosy brambles
Gushing from their hearts so merry,
On the banks with scarlet berry—
Innocence so sweetly streaming,
Fervent from their features beaming ;
These it is the poet's mission
To transfer whilst in transition,
Through this present state of seeming,
Into fair poetic dreaming.

For each soul attuned to pleasure,
Cheered by cadence, rhyme, and measure ;
Pleased by beauties culled for rareness,
And for poet's art with fairness—
Culled from damsel's cheek of roses,
Where its virgin tint reposes ;
Culled where Art divine has moulded,
'Neath the tresses all unfolded ;
Culled where legends thrill the hoary,
More than wit and modern story,
And where noble deeds are famous,
Rising in each face of Janus ;
Culled where freedom's flag is waving ;
Daring hearts their country saving ;
Where the prophet's voice is teaching,
Slander's venom'd quiver reaching,
Where fair Virtue's truths are leading
Men to crowns immortal wreathing—
Such the themes both stern and tender,
Which the poet loves to render
Into music sweetly flowing,
Into prophet raptures glowing.
So sing he and yet be fearless ;
Let him aim at what is peerless,

Till the voices in him swelling
Find an outward welcome dwelling
On the people's treasured pages,
And immortal as the ages.

TO A MOTHER ON THE DEATH
OF A CHILD.

(WRITTEN FOR A LADY'S ALBUM.)

GRIEVE not in thy maternal breast
Because thy darling, fair and wee,
Has winged its peaceful way to rest,
And ceased to raise its smiles to thee.

Though in Affection's tendrils kind
It lay caressed by loving eyes,
It gentle care above will find
Safe with the Saviour in the skies.

For never tenderer Friend than He ;
For when upon this earth of care,
He drew the children to His knee,
The lambkins in His arms He bare.

Then hope amid the transient gloom
Which dwells where sacred Sorrow flows,
To see thy loved, sweet angel bloom
Where life in perfect beauty glows.

AN ADDRESS TO THE RIVER DOVE
IN SPRING.

A FRAGMENT.

ONCE more along thy peaceful banks I roam,
O famous Dove ! by long endearment true
Inwrought upon my memory's surest page,
And tenderly entwined amid the strong
Warm filaments of deep affection pure.
Sweet Spring, and lovely blooming May, have passed
Again, with virgin tenderness drooped,
Gently smiling from empyrean bowers,
Soft o'er the many charming features
Of thy tranquil vale and fine acclivities.
The anemone, so gentle and so frail,

And yet in vast profusion, has adorned
Thy woods, and kissed sweet scents, with lovely tinge,
And meek embrace of old companionship,
From primrose pale and statelier hyacinth.
And now, o'erspreading all thy varied scenes,
Has crept an emerald richness, exquisite
To the eye ; to the imagination
Rare dainty food and solace, such as true
Happiness inspires, and adoration
High of Deity.
Thy rocky isle is vocal with thy sounds,
Amid whose vast fantastic towering piles,
With vegetation feeding at their base,
And spreading up thy steep in ravishment
Of grandeur, the gentle Walton flung his
Silken line ; whilst 'Telbin and a hundred
Other names, strong in their love of nature,
Have won fame by pictures of thy beauties ;
Or the doomed prisoners in the towns remote
Have sought amid thy sacred silences
And soul-renewing tendencies, to lose
The cares, the scathes, and tyrannies of life.



